

*Defying Convention: Devising new approaches
to heritage values in Valletta, Malta.*

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July 2023

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with heritage values and significance in the context of the World Heritage listed city of Valletta, the capital of the Maltese Islands, and the author's home. Though the city's fortunes have ebbed and flowed over the years, it has recently experienced a period of accelerated regeneration. Now a popular destination for cultural tourists, Valletta is a city in transition, where renewal has led to the conservation and restoration of its urban fabric yet change wrought by these processes has had a demonstrable, detrimental effect on its lesser recognized heritage. An intentional focus on these 'unofficial' heritage values is the principal subject of this research, in order to produce an alternative reading of a heritage landscape most often associated with more traditional criteria.

This research is framed and informed by more contemporary approaches to heritage values, and the intellectual foundation for this approach is drawn from recent scholarship and related heritage conventions. Of particular note are the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2013 [1979]) and the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005) which reconceptualize the ideas of significance and emphasize public contribution in the process of defining what it is about a heritage place that is significant.

This thesis adopts an innovative, in-situ data collection method, where the participants lead the researcher on walks around the city. Interviews were conducted with 19 participants in three phases between 2021 and 2022. The interviews themselves are participant-defined and captured on video as well as audio. The resultant data are analysed, organized and presented thematically. This analysis demonstrates the pivotal role of social values in understanding significance from a grassroots perspective, an approach that has never previously been applied in the context of Valletta.

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Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the support of my two funding bodies. This work was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/R012733/1) through the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities. Additionally, the research presented in this publication was funded by Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme (TESS) from National Funds (Malta).

Personal Acknowledgments

I would firstly like to thank project participants, who enthusiastically and readily shared their personal stories with me. This research is entirely reliant on their candid contributions.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Professor John Schofield, who since posing the question during a MA supervision in 2019, “have you considered doing a PhD?” has guided me and provided insightful advice every step of the way. I also would like to thank the members of my Thesis Advisory Panel, Dr Aleks McClain and Dr Lou Cooke, who over the course of three years offered much welcome feedback and support. A special thank you to Dr Huw Groucutt who kindly offered to read through my final draft.

Completing this PhD is the culmination of a long, often interrupted, academic trajectory. It would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the vital impact of my undergraduate advisors all those years ago. Thank you therefore to Dr J.P. Staeck, Dr Daniel Rabuzzi and Dr Jyoti Grewal for the transformative effect each of you had on me.

A doctorate can be a very isolating experience. Starting one under the dark cloud of a global pandemic only exacerbates this. I am grateful to the King’s Manor Lockdown Crew, Richard Lee and Aubrey Steingraber, for the companionship that enabled us to weather the storm and keep sane during that strange year that was 2020. Peer support and friendship are a crucial part of any PhD experience, and I would like to thank all of the G65 regulars for helping to foster community spirit through banter and pub visits.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who, in the face of my often-faltering conviction, believed that a PhD was something I should and could pursue and complete. For always providing a home away from home, I am truly grateful to my unconventional Valletta family, Charlie, Otto and Bub.

Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references.



Strait Street (2000) by photographer David Pisani, from the Vanishing Valletta Archive. (Source: Courtesy of David Pisani).

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter introduction

This thesis explores heritage values in the context of a World Heritage city: Valletta, the historic capital of the Maltese Islands. Drawing on the participation of residents and non-residents, by way of a mobile interview around the city, the aim of this exploration is to uncover the ways in which ordinary people derive heritage value and assign significance to the urban fabric. By way of introduction, this chapter is prefaced by a positionality statement, a consideration of how I, as the researcher, relate to the subject area personally and how this in turn informs my practice. Though the primary focus of this thesis is how heritage is valued in the present, the present must be understood as the product of the historic, political, cultural, and socio-economic context of the Maltese islands. A brief survey will highlight the key processes which had, and continue, to have an impact on heritage locally, with special attention to the main subject area of Valletta. Though the city's heritage is celebrated and well represented in the literature, critical examinations of how heritage is valued has not received the appropriate attention. The outlined aim and objectives below, are designed to address this knowledge lacuna.

'The City' and me

"Do you live in Valletta?" a project participant asked as I fumbled with the lapel mic, preparing for one of the final interviews of the fieldwork phase. "Yes, for about 11 years, in St. Frederick's Street", I replied, wondering what he would make of this. The participant, born and bred in the city, winked, smiled warmly, and seemed to approve of this, saying "ah, you are almost a *Belti* then." Valletta, the historic capital of the Maltese islands, is colloquially known as *Il-Belt*, or the 'The City', unashamedly elevating it to a position at once unique and revered. To be *Belti* (fem. *Beltija*) means to be from the city, and with it all the complexity of belonging to this particular place. From personal experience, I know it to represent a badge of honour, imbued with a sense of authentic belonging, not simply to the physical entity that is the city, but to the community who reside there. Heartened by this apparent seal of approval, we proceeded to walk towards Archbishop's Street and start the interview together.

As I looked back at my notes and interview transcripts, this fleeting, jocular moment, encapsulates much about this thesis, which is precisely why I have chosen this anecdote to introduce the project. From one perspective it exposes a key reason underlying my motivation to focus attention on the historic city of Valletta: that it is my home. It also hints at the tone,

approach, content, and methods you, the reader, will encounter throughout this research, which, fundamentally, is as much about the people who live, work, or simply enjoy visiting Valletta as it is about the urban landscape of the city itself. Importantly it also actively places me, as the researcher, as an active agent within the context of the study area.

Researcher positionality is relevant to the complete arc of the project, from locating the researcher's relationship to the subject area, to their relationship with the participants and the contextual process or methods adopted (Savin-Baden and Major 2013, 71). Now well integrated into the application of qualitative research, this reflexive consideration requires the researcher to be mindful of their political, cultural, philosophical, and personal beliefs (Holmes 2020, 4). This extends to the ontological position of the researcher and how this impacts knowledge production which, ultimately, is the output of the project. Traditionally, there are diametrically opposed, yet interrelated, ontological positions, the emic versus etic distinction, which can be reduced, in simplistic terms, to the 'insider' versus 'outsider' stance adopted by the researcher. The emic or insider perspective attempts to understand the worldview as constructed and lived by the subjects under investigation, whereas the etic or outsider perspective is more rationalist and detached, the knowledge produced subjected to more scientific and empirical scrutiny. In many contexts the approaches are not mutually exclusive; rather they are often complementary, and research output derived by adopting emic methods can later be analysed from an etic perspective, particularly when applied to cross-cultural studies (see Fetterman 2008).

This returns us to the anecdote regarding my status as a *Belti*, and by implication a local, and the question of my own positionality with respect to this project. There are two dimensions to my specific position, a dialectic that straddles the emic versus etic distinction, and which creates an intersection between the subject matter and the participants.

The first of these dimensions relates directly to my actual connections with the city itself whereas the second is bound and defined by the direction and approach adopted as a researcher. Whilst on the surface, the participant statement appears to be an affirmation of my insider status, it is not that simple. Insider status is a broad, contextually sensitive definition perhaps better understood as a sliding scale or spectrum, one shaped by the unique biography of the researcher. I am myself a Maltese national, which already positions me as an insider in comparison to a researcher from abroad. I am also a Valletta resident, one that by the very typology adopted by this project would be classified as a long-term resident of the city. My family is originally from Valletta, a familial connection to the city, the material evidence of which can still be found in the abandoned office premises of my great-grandfather (Figure 1). This familial connection informs this research in a number of ways. On the one hand it forms an integral part



Figure 1 - The premises of Degiorgio & Azzopardi, located in upper Merchant's Street (Source: Author's Own).

of the personal and emotional 'place attachment,' the 'rootedness' I experience towards Valletta, an historical, familial kinship with urban fabric (see Madgin and Lesh 2021; Cresswell 2004; Tuan 1977; Relph 1976). It also adds a veneer of authenticity to my insider status, a point of reference to be shared with residents to allow them to better position me within their personal frame of reference, validating and reinforcing my connection to the participants' own experiences. The reality however is that these connections do not truly make me a *Belti*. I was not raised in The City, and my familial connection is one that is remembered, not lived. The social milieu in which I operate as a resident is linked to the new generation of emigres to the city, with a corresponding network of connections, professional and friendship based, that situate me firmly within the new community of the recently arrived.

Insider ambiguity aside, the second dimension to researcher positionality is less about the researcher's personal lived relationship with the study area and the participants, but with their ontological stance and how this affects researcher positionality. As the second chapter of this thesis will make clear, I have positioned my research squarely as one that seeks to counter normative approaches, shifting my 'expert' lens away from the materiality of heritage to uncover more people-centred assessments of heritage value. The methodological approach was designed to enable this and has deliberately attempted to minimize my position as a perceived expert. This was done by obfuscating the exact nature of the research when contacting participants, by not including any mention of archaeology or heritage in any of the documentation or ensuing conversations during the interviews themselves.

As a researcher, I am therefore actively manipulating my positionality to a certain degree, a conscious decision not, however without its challenges and limitations. There is an element of futility in attempting to create an objectivity barrier for the purposes of academic rigour, and this stems from the nature of living in a small city on a small island, where community links are almost inevitable. I was once told by an acquaintance that you are always somebody in Malta, meaning that it is impossible to be anonymous, so pervasive are kinship and social links. I have come to recognize the truth in this observation and that it therefore has real-world repercussions on this research. Of the 19 participants interviewed, only three were complete strangers, and even then, we were only ever one degree of separation away from a common friend or acquaintance. This is in part a function of doing research in my own town of residence, but also the product of how participants were recruited, using social media and through organizations to which I already belonged. In the context of a project to which I, as a resident, have a personal connection, these local factors are not something to be concerned about; rather they are championed for contributing positively to making this research novel and interesting.

The scope of including this researcher statement at this stage of the thesis, prior to the presentation of the results, is that the reader gets some idea of the internal and external factors that shape this study. As a statement of position, I hope it offers some transparency into the motivation for selecting this particular subject, whilst also framing the overall approach adopted. As the title of this thesis suggests, it is specifically the idea of heritage value that is the primary line of inquiry, and that this research sets out to explore this subject matter in a way, which in the context of Valletta, is innovative, unconventional, and importantly, meaningful. 'Defying Convention' here is not a combative overture; rather it is a deliberate pun to emphasize that the approach applied to this research allows for an alternative perspective to the way its heritage would normally be accredited in international charters and conventions, with World

Heritage Status being a prime example. Certainly, this raft of ideas will require unpacking, but before that can occur, it is important to 'set the scene' and to provide some context.

Heritage in peril? The broader context

In the same way that I have positioned myself in terms of my relationship to the subject area of Valletta, it is equally important to place the city within the broader context of the Maltese Islands. The reality of small islands is that processes of change are rarely contained or specifically localized; rather, they are enacted and experienced on a national level. To understand Valletta in the present, one must consider that it is the product of specific historical, economic, and political developments.

Though small in geographical footprint, this archipelago has a rich heritage, in great part due to its strategic location in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea; a crossroads on a well-trodden path, dating back at least to the Neolithic and an estimated 6000 BC (McLaughlin et al. 2020). This archaeological and monumental inventory spans millennia, from the renowned megalithic structures of the Neolithic 'temples' (Evans 1971; Trump 2002), the remnants of the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean (Bonanno 2005), through to the medieval and early modern town and villages cores (Dalli 2006). Given that the islands' total area covers only 316km², the three inscriptions on the World Heritage List - one consisting of six individual temple sites - and over 2,600 scheduled entries on the national planning authority register¹ illustrates just how richly furnished its monumental catalogue is.

Of Malta's long history of being passed among foreign powers, it is arguably the final two substantive chapters of the island's occupation that have the most enduring legacy culturally speaking, but also notably in terms of impact on the physical landscape. These are namely the Knights of the Order of St. John (1531-1798) and, after a two-year French occupation, the British Empire (1800-1964). As Malta set upon a path to independence, eventually granted in 1964, the large-scale industries developed to support the British Armed Forces began to wind down, most notably the shipyard services in the Grand Harbour, adjacent to Valletta. This required local authorities to reimagine the economic landscape of the islands, to diversify and invest in new commercial enterprises. As early as the 1950s, tourism was recognized as one potential avenue of growth, though this really began to establish itself as international mass-tourism began to flourish in the late 1960s and 1970s (Boissevain and Serracino Inglot 1979, 266). From the 1960's onwards, developing an infrastructure to entice and accommodate incoming tourists

¹ The Malta Planning Authority lists these as Building, Engineering and Archaeological types (<https://www.pa.org.mt/>)

became a priority, from hotels to upgraded airport facilities (Ebejer and Tunbridge 2021). This was a period of frenzied development as the construction sector boomed, one which impacted coastal towns of the northeast shore most heavily but had a knock-on effect across the island meaning that in the 40 years from 1960s until the early 2000s the percentage of land claimed by construction rose from 4.5% to 18% of the total space (Boissevain 2001, 280-281). This process has continued unabated, and since the early 2000s, this percentage has crept inexorably, with the Environment and Resource Authority putting the figure at around 30% in 2018 (Government of Malta 2018). If tourism numbers are the sole metric of success, these policies certainly enabled a meteoric rise in touristic visits to the island, from circa 20,000 in 1960 (Briguglio and Briguglio 1996, 166) to a pre-COVID maximum of 2.8 million in 2018 (Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association 2022, 18).

Though tourism, and the construction industry it helped foster, inarguably allowed the country to reinvent itself, supporting its newfound independence, the negative impact on the built and natural environment came under scrutiny quite early on. The effects of burgeoning tourism were already a concern in the 1970s (see Boissevain 1977; Boissevain and Serracino Inglott 1979), and though the industry's economic contribution continues to grow, it now approaches that dangerous tipping-point, where 'over-tourism' gives way to unsustainability, with little regard to the social or environmental consequences (Briguglio and Avelino 2019, 18). In conjunction with nascent environmental lobby groups and green-focused political movements, these issues crystalized around key touristic infrastructure projects such as the development of the Hilton Hotel in the 1990s, prompting public outcry and demonstrations (Boissevain and Theuma 1998). 'Conflict' between localized interests and the public and private push to develop has become a motif of the Maltese experience, from 'anti-tourism' sentiment (see Boissevain 1996), to changing attitudes towards the landscape (See Boissevain 2001, 2006). Heritage is a core component of both the urban and rural environment, and this contestation has found expression in the problematic, often ambiguous, relationship between heritage, the government and traditional land-use, which resulted in the World Heritage-listed megalithic temples being vandalized in the mid-1990s (see Grima 1998).

This summary represents a snapshot of a much larger, more complex discussion. Its inclusion in the introduction is however vital, as this difficult relationship between the economic drive to develop and the need to protect the environment, frames most discourse and commentary on the pressures being exerted on historic places in the Maltese Islands. Reports in local newspapers and on social media flag a new heritage emergency on a weekly basis, from new builds falling foul of planning-defined Urban Conservation Areas (UCAs), the unflinching

creep of high-rise buildings, to proposed demolition of historic buildings and gardens to make way for new development. As if to exacerbate the issue, the construction industry has been beset by constant allegations of corruption and political collusion with depressing regularity (see Caruana Galizia and Caruana Galizia 2018; The Shift 2023). Though heritage protection and lobby groups, such as ‘Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar,²’ have added their voices to existing organizations like ‘Din l-Art Hejwa³’ in rallying for more protection and better planning, there is a resigned, almost fatalistic sense that it is an uphill struggle, a sentiment well captured by the *Times of Malta* headline from 2019, “The Rape of Malta”, which bemoaned the commercialization and destruction of the historic Manoel Island (Galea 2019).

‘Il-Belt Valletta’: The study area

The planned, fortified town of Valletta, capital of the Republic of Malta, is the protagonist and subject of this research. The compact and historically dense collection of honey-coloured bastions, churches, palaces, and dwellings set in a grid pattern, sits atop a peninsula that bisects the natural harbours of Marsamxett to the west and the Grand Harbour to the east (see Figure 2). The city itself was built under the instruction of the Knights Order of St. John who were given possession of the island by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, having been forced out of Rhodes in 1522 by the Ottoman Turks. After some initial hesitation, Grand Master of the Order L’Isle Adam accepted the offer in 1530 (Cassar 2000, 84), signalling the start of a new chapter in the occupation of the Malta that was to last until 1798, when the islands were briefly ceded to the French under Napoleon.

Valletta was purposely designed in response to the looming threat of an Ottoman invasion of the island, a justifiable concern following the events that came to be known as The Great Siege of Malta in 1565. Upon first arriving on the island, the Order settled in the harbour town of Birgu across the water from present day Valletta (Figure 2). It became readily apparent that the peninsula, on which Valletta would ultimately be built, known locally as ‘Sceberras’, which rose above the harbour to the north of them, posed a threat in that it would allow invaders a raised vantage point from which to launch bombardments across the harbour. Understandably, this vulnerability was of grave concern and plans for the development and fortification of the peninsula were proposed at the very start of the Knight’s period (see de Giorgio 1985.) By the time of the Great Siege, the only completed major project was the construction of Fort St. Elmo at the distal end of the peninsula, with works commencing in 1552. The

² English: *Together for a better environment.*

³ English: *This fair land/National Trust of Malta.*

construction of Valletta itself began in earnest after the events of 1565, with the foundation stone of the city being laid by the Grand Master de la Valette in March 1566.

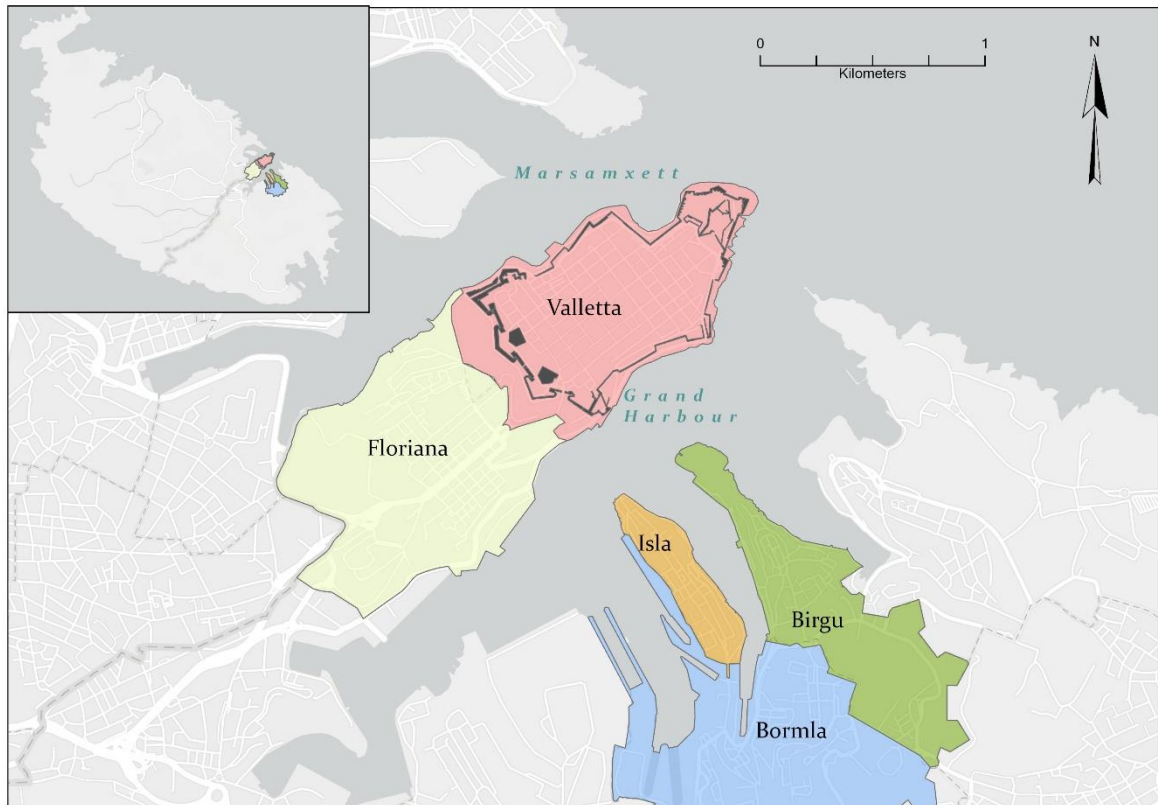


Figure 2 - Modern layout of the Harbour area, now heavily urbanized. The Valletta peninsula, which includes the suburb of Floriana, separating the natural harbours of Marsamxett and the Grand Harbour. To the southeast, the “Three Cities” of Isla, Bormla, and Birgu.

The Valletta of today is still recognizably the planned town that was laid out by the Italian architect Francesco Laparelli in the mid-16th century. The city has certainly undergone modification, reflecting changes in economy, fashion, and historical context, as Malta transitioned through different periods of occupation. In the mid-20th century, Malta was embroiled in the Mediterranean sphere of the Second World War, during which the islands, especially the harbour towns, were on the receiving end of an intense Axis bombing campaign which damaged a significant number of structures in the capital (see Micallef 2018.) Despite these forces of change, the city, thanks to a concerted and nationwide drive of post-war reconstruction, retained its essential form and aesthetic (Figure 3). The diminutive capital, its boundaries forever delineated by the 16th Century fortified walls and the surrounding sea, measures less than 1km² in total area, where the streets follow the natural topography of the terrain of the Sceberras peninsula upon which it was built (Figure 4). As a result, the streets

follow an undulating path as they dissect the capital, north to south and east to west, rising and falling with the contours of the topography.



Figure 3 - Aerial View of Valletta today. The city's fortified walls and grid pattern layout evident (Source: Bellina 09, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons)

That the city was inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980, attests to not only the survival of the original fabric of the city and its fortifications, but also the success of the reconstruction work that was carried out post-war (see Chapman 2005.) Valletta's inscription to the list qualified by two criteria, the second of which is its historical affiliation with the Order of the Knights of St. John. The first criterion however pertains directly to the physical and aesthetic qualities of the urban fabric, and though the implications of inscription are analysed critically in Chapter 2, the criterion is worth reproducing here in full:

Criterion (i): The city is pre-eminently an ideal creation of the late Renaissance with its uniform urban plan, inspired by neo-platonic principles, its fortified and bastioned walls modelled around the natural site and the voluntary implantation of great monuments in well-chosen locations (UNESCO 2021 [1980]).

This awarding of the survival of an "ideal creation" has remained a focal point of local heritage discourse, with the maintenance of World Heritage Status a primary concern in all discussions relating to the heritage management of the capital. This emphasis on the monumental heritage

of the city will be discussed in more detail in the section that follows. However, it is important at this juncture to briefly discuss a vital aspect of what it is that constitutes “Valletta” that a monument-focussed discourse on change and regeneration overlooks. This is a discussion that considers the city not simply as a collection of buildings and streets, but as a living entity, one filled with people; the lifeblood of any city.

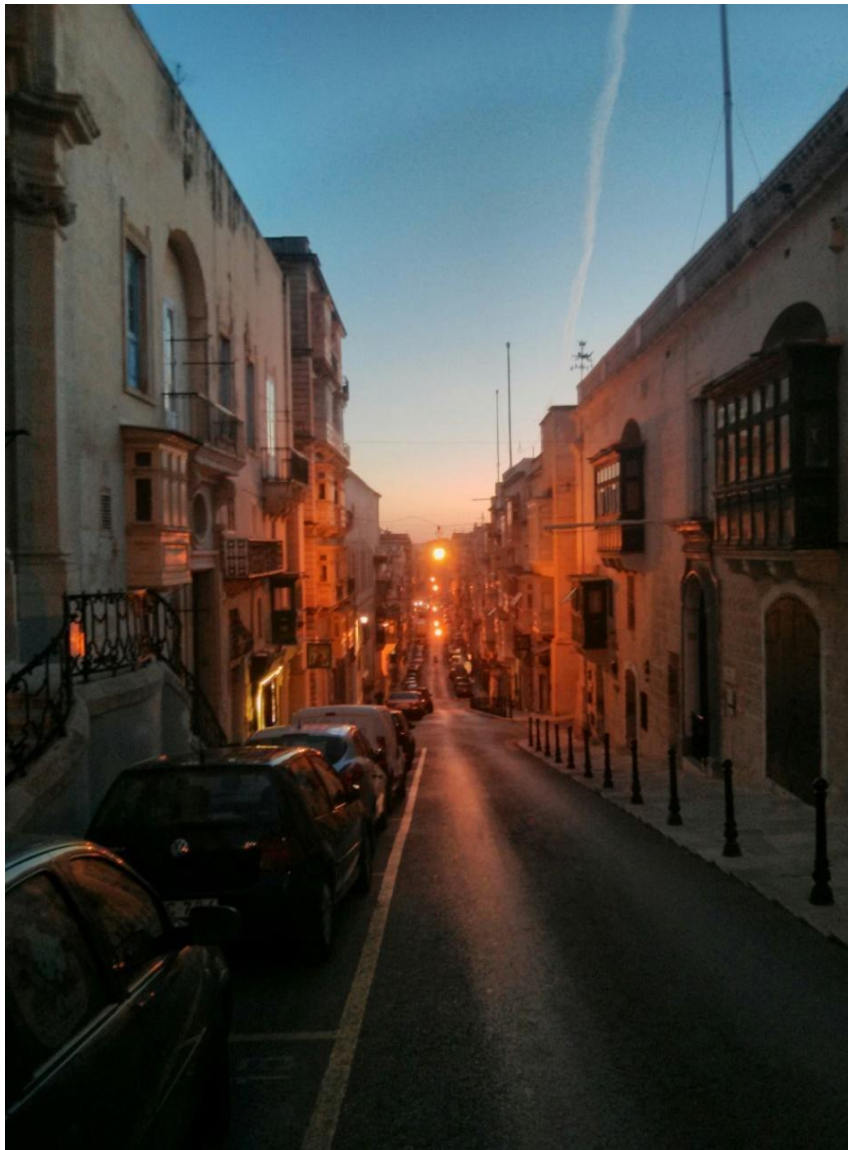


Figure 4 - Republic Street, the main thoroughfare of Valletta, illustrating how the grid pattern of streets follow the natural topography (Source: Author's own).

Reconstruction and later regeneration projects aside, in simple population terms Valletta has long been a city in decline. Malta’s commercial, financial, and administrative centre was once a pull factor in the depopulation of rural areas, as people moved out of the countryside to seek security and employment in the city and adjoining harbour towns of Birgu, Isla and Bormla

(Cassar 2000, 122-124.) The period of British rule (1800-1964) witnessed a continued emphasis placed on the harbour area, as job creation developed around servicing the Royal Navy and associated shipping and mercantile activities. Between the turn of the 20th century and the outbreak of the Second World War, Valletta's population rose steadily to peak at circa 24,000 in 1939 (Government of Malta 2016, 24). This trend however was interrupted with the outbreak of the war, when many residents, my family included, moved or were evacuated out of the city into rural towns or villages, or if they could afford it, into newer and more fashionable conurbations notably Sliema (Mitchell 2002, 59.) This depopulation of the capital was not reversed with the cessation of hostilities (Figure 5).

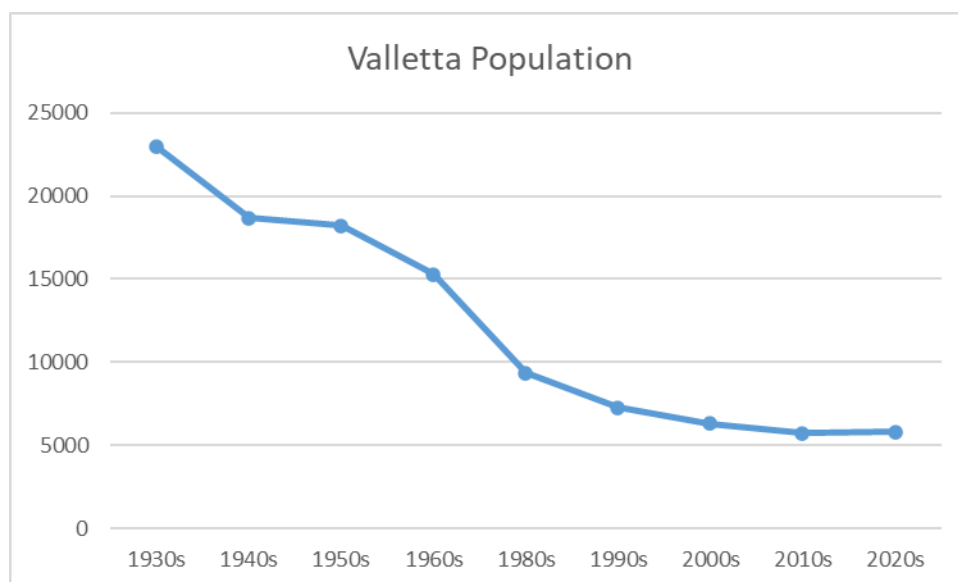


Figure 5 - Valletta population figures 1930-2020. No census data present for the 1970s (Source: National Statistics Office 2014, 2023).

The population dropped to 18,000 in the late 1940s, halving again to circa 9000 by the mid-1980s (Government of Malta 2016, 24.) The most recent figures issued by the National Statistics Office puts the number at 5859 as of December 2020 (National Statistics Office 2023). From the statistics it would appear that population numbers have remained stable in the last 10 years, however it is not possible to interpret from these figures the dynamics of these population changes; as new individuals and families move into the city and long-term residents, the born and bred 'Beltin', move out. This process of long-term residents moving out - initiated by the tragic consequences of the Second World War - was exacerbated by slum clearance and social housing projects in the 1970s (Mitchell 2002, Ebejer 2016) and continued to accelerate in years of economic decline in the city in the 1980s and 1990s (Ebejer 2016).

Heritage in Valletta, though embedded within the rich historical and artistic context of the city, must be understood and interpreted through the lens of the present. The early tourism

boom described in the previous section focused mainly on the sea-side destination towns, and Valletta, perhaps because of its state of abandonment and its World Heritage status, escaped the encroachment. The city's current resurgence and economic revival is however the result of a long-term plan of regeneration and restoration of the urban fabric that started in the 1980s. This was coupled to a tourism policy that placed greater emphasis on culture and heritage tourism (Foxell and de Trafford 2010; Ebejer 2019, 308.) EU accession in 2004 provided access to development funds which were used for large-scale infrastructural projects, such as the restoration of the bastions and Fort St. Elmo on the distal end of the city (Grima 2017, 126). As a result of this combination of factors, the city has undergone a period of rapid change, further fuelled by the inherent gentrifying forces often associated with improvements to tourist destinations. These forces of change were amplified in the run up to the city's tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2018, prompting further private and public investment in the city, in the form of boutique hotels, catering establishments and the flourishing of a buy-to-rent property market (Ebejer et al. 2021). Economic recovery is rarely a benchmark by which to measure the success of policy. Indeed, by most metrics the overall impact, especially on the residents of the city, is best classified as negative (Deguara et al. 2019; Carabott 2021).

Valletta exists, in a sense, as a microcosm of the broader picture of heritage at risk in the context of a rapidly developing and changing island. Due to many factors, not least its role as the nation's capital, its historical fabric, and its UNESCO World Heritage status, heritage protection of the fortified town is always in the limelight, and closely scrutinized. This fact is certainly amplified by the city being the administrative, political, and cultural capital of the islands, and the location of arguably the country's highest concentration of heritage assets of national importance, from the auberges of the Knights, the many churches, and of course the national collections in museums.

Positioning this research and finding the 'gap'

Earlier in this introductory chapter, I examined how my personal relationship with Valletta was a fundamental motivation in conducting this project. My 'position' vis-à-vis the city, must also be factored into the 'how and what' of this research. As a resident who settled in the city as the regeneration initiatives intensified, I have witnessed the transformation first-hand. Influenced by my own educational background, experiences, and research interests, I was of the opinion that heritage in the local context was limited in definition and conventional in approach, which taken together did not appropriately address the complex interaction of heritage and change in the city. How heritage is valued and by whom is a fundamental component of heritage study and practice. That heritage holds 'significance' can be determined on a values-based system defined

by certain criteria. Valletta for example is recognized internationally, via its UNESCO World Heritage Status granted on the basis of the city's historical and aesthetic merit. But the conceptualization of heritage values, as we shall explore later in this thesis, has developed into a broader, equally important set of considerations, not limited to 'what' is valued, but by 'whom'. This thesis is concerned with the full spectrum of valuations, but importantly, seeks to emphasize those values that have remained unexplored in the context of Valletta, particularly the social value of heritage.

Approaches to Valletta's heritage in the scholarly literature traces a line that straddles the preoccupation with the protection of the built environment, the concern with resuscitating a city in decline, and how the city's distinct history and heritage could be a pivotal agent in countering that decline. The most prominent body of work emerges from Tourism Studies, where research has documented the changing face of industry in the context of Valletta, and how regeneration contributes to an enhanced cultural product, whilst also charting the negative impacts (see for example Ebejer 2013, 2016; Ebejer & Tunbridge 2020; Ebejer et.al 2019; Smith and Ebejer 2012). In the context of regeneration and conservation, important new research is being conducted from an archaeological perspective to better understand the development of the city overtime. Building on the seminal work of Hughes (1956) and de Giorgio (1985), which was architectural in focus, new research is applying an interdisciplinary and archaeological lens to the urban fabric (see Mifsud 2020, Spiteri 2018). This assures that the historic environment and how it has altered over time will be better understood and classified. These are important considerations, as this emerging approach to the city, whilst contributing to the net knowledge available, also allows for more insightful and appropriate management of the urban fabric to be applied. This research is vital in the context of the changing city; however, it is rarely concerned with asking questions about heritage value and significance. This is not failing by any measure; rather it is simply an observation that primacy has been placed on certain values, thus prioritizing a select few over others.

This does not mean, however, that the question of heritage significance and value has not been critically explored in the Maltese context. The pre-gentrified Strait Street, once the 'red-light' district for visiting servicemen, was documented over 10 years ago by Schofield and Morrissey (2007, 2013). This research, ground-breaking in the Maltese context, combined archaeological documentation of streetscapes, archival research, and ethnography to highlight the rich interaction of tangible and intangible heritage of part of the city that, at the time, was largely overlooked and forgotten. Also of note, Grima (2013) utilized a values-based system to address the complexity of the conflicts that often arise in the regeneration of an urban, lived

environment, arguing for broader consideration of values, especially in the process of impact assessments to mitigate for social vulnerabilities (Grima 2013, 63). Though not specifically about Valletta, Camilleri's (2018) doctoral research on community heritage in Bormla across the harbour, has already demonstrated how the social value of heritage provides insight into the complexities of identity and belonging in an historic urban setting. This is an important contribution, and though this thesis approaches the subject in a different way, it is hoped that it will enrich an ongoing discussion, which in the Maltese context, is very much in its infancy.

Thesis aim

With the unique, island-based context of this research outlined, and a lacuna identified, I will now illustrate the research's central aim and the affiliated sub-aims proposed for this research. The central aim of this research is to explore which heritage values inform significance from the perspective of residents and other stakeholders in the context of Valletta. To that end, these aims are illustrated graphically in Figure 6 below:

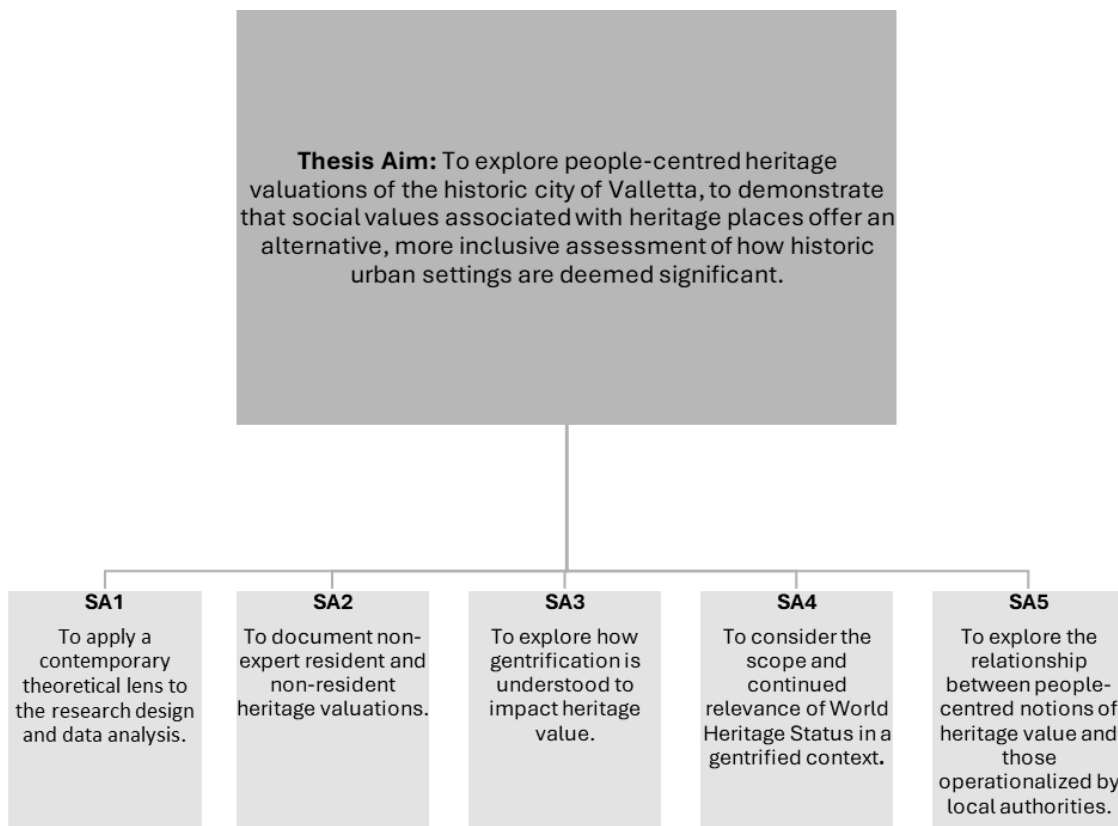


Figure 6 - Research Design, illustrating central Thesis Aim and the five associated Sub-Aims.

Thesis structure

The 'new' perspective this research aims to achieve, is only truly alternative in the context of heritage studies in the Maltese Islands. At source, it builds upon a body of scholarly work and ideas that have developed out of the broader context of archaeology, museum studies, geography, and heritage studies since the 1970s. **Chapter Two** presents the epistemological framework which informs and underpins this research. A fundamental theme of this chapter is the paradigm shift, the recognition that heritage practice is the product of modernity, one born of, defined by, and a perpetuator of constructs such as 'nationhood', and the historical baggage to which it is linked. New orientations in the humanities, especially Archaeology and Museum Studies, cast an inward, critical eye on the problematic links between these disciplines and the colonial past in which many of them were developed. What emerges is a new approach to the past, one that is self-conscious about the westernising, colonial bias of these disciplines. This self-reflexive stance examines the role of practitioners themselves and questions the role of the expert as the sole administrator of the past. As part of this reconceptualization, a broader definition of heritage was required, beyond the monumental, often elite, and object-centred, concerns to embrace more inclusive notions of heritage. The value of heritage traditionally attributed to the historic and aesthetic properties of a place, therefore, expands to include more commonplace, approachable, and everyday aspects. This is the central idea that shapes the interpretive and methodological focus of this thesis, that there is more to heritage than important things and places, and that people might value heritage places in unique and interesting ways, beyond, or in conjunction to, the standard parameters of significance definition.

Ideas are only ever as effective as their implementation is successful. I wanted the data production and gathering to reflect the spirit of the intellectual framework, and so **Chapter Three** details the methodological approach that was adopted to be able to address the aim and objectives of this research in this manner. In the simplest of terms, this approach is qualitative and based on a series of interviews. However where perhaps this practice innovates is in how those interviews are conducted and captured. To document the interaction between person and space, and record the outcomes of that interaction, interviews were carried out on the move and recorded on a small hand-held video camera. Nineteen interviews were conducted and were designed to represent a broad spectrum of voices. The focus was made on producing a rich data set from each interview. To analyse and interpret these data, the textual output was run through the NVivo software suite, which allows for thematic analysis and organisation. To complement

the thematic data and allow for spatial visualization, ArcGIS was used to build a representative model of the city.

The central section of the thesis is a series of three chapters that are independent yet highly interrelated. **Chapter Four**, **Chapter Five**, and **Chapter Six** present the results of the textual analysis, collected as a series of thematically defined narratives. These narratives and the relative importance granted to them in the text is the result of the NVivo analysis and the tabulated data it produces. The data are presented as a series of tables, by way of introduction and context, but the bulk of the chapter is dedicated to the actual content of the relevant text. Rather than reduce the rich data sets to a series of numerical counts however, primacy is therefore given to the voices of the participants themselves, for if one is making an argument that people's opinions count, then it is only correct to reproduce them faithfully and in a representative way. These chapters therefore make extensive use of textual data directly transposed from the interview transcripts. The chapters are loosely differentiated by collective 'meta-theme,' a term I have used to describe the agglomeration of thematic types. **Chapter Four** is built around the key themes of change, community, and the lived city experience, and as such is a deeply biographical account of how Valletta is valued. Whilst relying on a similar approach and data set, **Chapter Five** identifies themes and ideas that are more closely aligned to the idea of explicitly assigning value to a place, whether that be from a professional or lay-person's perspective. The final data chapter in the series, **Chapter Six**, is more rooted in the urban fabric of the city itself. Whereas the previous data chapters focussed on classifying and presenting themes relating to personal memory, experience and opinion on Valletta, this final data chapter delves into the catalogue of places and elements of the physical world, creating an inventory of place as a companion to the stories told.

The walking interviews shed light on a city that is valued in a myriad of ways, some unexpected. **Chapter Seven** examines these outcomes, and how they relate to the central aim and sub-aims that frame the research. The chapter is prefaced by an overview of the results reported in the preceding chapters. By comparing the thematic data, based on the textual reference metric, a picture of people-centred evaluation of the city emerges, where significance is predominantly linked to personal connections and experiences with and within the urban fabric. In light of these findings, the chapter considers how gentrification and commodification of Valletta shapes how heritage is valued 'officially', and what the theoretical implications of this are. As a counter, and the 'unofficial' heritage of Valletta, it is argued, are the social values that participants derive from the city, made of sense of place, memory, identity, and community connections. A key premise underlying the motivation to conduct this research was to

demonstrate that significance of heritage places is often linked to values that transcend, yet coexist with, the traditional attributes of heritage significance. The chapter ends therefore, with a discussion on the problematic nature of international heritage accreditation, in particular World Heritage Status, especially when local implementation they fails to address the full spectrum of heritage values impacted by the change being wrought on the city.

By way of conclusion, **Chapter 8** reiterates the main findings and how these have successfully addressed the aims and objectives of this research. It considers how this contextually innovative take on heritage value is timely indeed, especially in the context of escalating local concerns on the negative impact of commodification of Valletta's heritage. Furthermore, it will reflect on the project holistically, from the outcomes to the methodological approach, to consider where improvements can be made. As a coda, the chapter will put forward some recommendations, on both national and local level, and consider some tangible outcomes that could result from taking this style of research to its logical conclusion, and an implementable form of heritage practice.

Chapter summary

This introductory chapter has defined the research aim, the related objectives and introduced the subject area: the UNESCO World Heritage City of Valletta. The research aim is the product of specific contexts. The first of these contexts revolves around my own position in relation to the study area, both as a researcher and as a resident, an important consideration not only in the formulation of the research aim, but also in the implementation of the proposed methods. The second context to consider is the historical background of the Maltese Islands themselves, with specific reference to the economic development after independence in 1964, and the implications for the study area. Critical approaches to heritage values, and social values in particular, have not been explored extensively in the Maltese context and the aims, objectives and approaches proposed for this thesis have been designed to address this lacuna. The following chapter lays out the intellectual framework and the relevant literature which has inspired and informs the research aim of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter introduction

As explained in Chapter 1, the central aim of this thesis is to explore the diverse ways in which people value the historic urban environment of Valletta. Underlying this seemingly straightforward goal and related objectives, however, lie some fundamental epistemological precepts about the nature of heritage values, how they are used, defined, and who gets to define them. This chapter provides a theoretical and historiographical foundation for these precepts and ideas in conjunction with developments within an interdisciplinary body of scholarly work that has challenged and debated ideas of heritage uses and definitions. As a framework, it draws on a broad section of contemporary approaches to heritage and archaeological theory and practice, representative of the conceptual and self-critical approach to past places, spaces, objects, and social practices that has emerged since the late 1970s and in particular the 1980s. A contemporary approach to heritage is not limited to rarefied academic settings and outputs; rather it is represented in the portfolio of charters and conventions, which develops over time to reflect how heritage management and practice adapts to a changing world. Of particular relevance to this research are the developments in values-based assessment in heritage management in the UK in the 1990s which, inspired by these new charters and conventions, foregrounded community inclusion and the social values of heritage (Jones and Leech 2015; Clark and Maeer 2008). The scope of this chapter is to position this original research within the historiographical development of heritage studies with special reference to new orientations in the field. This is especially significant in a context, that of Maltese heritage, where many of these questions and approaches have only just started to receive attention.

In terms of organization, this chapter is divided into three distinct sections. The first section covers the development of critical heritage, examining how heritage came to be ‘used,’ to adopt Laurajane Smith’s term (Smith 2006), to shape the past in the present. It explores the complex set of historical and present-day manifestations of uses of the past to influence or control present day interpretations, interactions, and narratives. An emphasis is made on the mechanisms employed by heritage institutions, professionals, and heritage discourse itself to support and maintain dominant or normative heritage narratives. World Heritage Status, the maintenance of which is a dominant theme in Maltese heritage discourse, is included in this examination. The section concludes with an exploration of the related issues of heritage tourism and commodification and the impact of these on ‘uses’ of the past.

The second section builds on the key ideas presented in the previous section and is primarily concerned with contextualizing the counter proposal that the research aims to embody. In some ways the framework presented in this section acts as the manifesto for this thesis. It champions perspectives on heritage that are in direct opposition to the normative approaches highlighted in the opening section. Focusing on the key doctrinal documents and critical theory that has emerged since the 1990s, it traces the principal ideas that inform and inspire this research and the methodological approach it adopts. This re-conceptualization of heritage broadens definitions, based on a more decentralized, inclusive approach to heritage. It also considers the development of values-based assessment in heritage, and how social values are a crucial way of accessing and promoting people-centred definitions of heritage significance. This broadening of heritage definitions goes beyond the vital question of 'who' gets to define, to consider also what is being defined. In this regard, an argument is made to decouple the notion of heritage being solely the domain of the past, to include more contemporary timescales. This section concludes with an examination of recent Critical Heritage literature, particularly work that engages with the materiality of the past to allow for new interpretations into the meaning and relevance of places and things.

Having established the epistemological framework for this research, the third and final section of this chapter is contextual. Examining, in brief, the development of heritage management and practice. Through local legislation and scholarly work, this final section positions Maltese heritage and the practices associated with it, within the context outlined in the opening two sections of this chapter. This is an important inclusion as the aims and objectives of this thesis are best understood and justified within the local context.

Uses of the past (in the present)

Section introduction

The research aim of this thesis can be construed as aiming to critically evaluate official or normative definitions of what constitutes heritage. These definitions, in relation to the central aims of the project, are viewed as problematic in that they limit the production of heritage meaning by favouring certain values over others. This section will explore the scholarship that underlies this statement. The key concepts addressed are the question of how institutional forces came to shape or control heritage narratives, what motivated this process, and how these are relevant to this research. Furthermore, this section will examine the response of critical

heritage theory to the normative approach and how it has been theorized in a cross-disciplinary manner.

Change and the development of critical heritage studies

A fundamental use of the past is how it is purposefully incorporated into mechanisms that mitigate or explain change. This often manifests itself on the grand scale. A prime example is to be found in State-level uses of the past, particularly to explain the present. Examined via a macro lens, heritage can be seen to be selectively repurposed to explain a broad array of phenomena in the contemporary world, be they economic, cultural, political, or social (Graham et al., 2000, 17). Social, political, and economic change in the context of the Maltese Islands has, for most of the archipelago's history, been precipitated at the whim or discretion of larger players in wider Mediterranean or European geo-politics. As we shall see later on in this thesis, these colonial experiences have shaped and continue to shape expressions of national identity and the construction of the concept of 'nationhood.' From a more generalized international perspective, however, we need to first examine how a series of concurrent and interdisciplinary paradigm shifts developed and fed off and into each other to impact heritage discourse.

Heritage is central to the genesis of the concept of nationhood. Museums, as reconceptualized in the 19th century, acted as the repository of the cultural artefacts that were deemed to be the cultural expressions of national identity (McLean 1998; Smith 2006). The collections and the very structures that housed them - the Louvre for example - came to be specifically curated as a 'pedagogical tool to further nation building...to fashion modern citizens.' (Marstine 2006, 24). It is this relationship between nation building and heritage institutions that sparked debate, leading to the issue being examined and theorized from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Some of the early key ideas filter into heritage discourse through historical scholarship of the 1980s (Harrison 2013, 97). Of particular relevance is Hobsbawm's concept of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1983a; 1983b) where, in demonstrating how seemingly ancient traditions are often very recent, he argues that these heritage-bound constructs were created to promote social cohesion, legitimize social structures, institutions, and cement relationships of authority (Hobsbawm 1983a, 9). Importantly, Hobsbawm observes that the motivating factor for using the past in this manner would 'occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys social patterns' (Hobsbawm 1983a, 4); that is to say, invented traditions were employed to mitigate social change and disruption. Anderson, a contemporary of Hobsbawm, treats nationalism, or 'nation-ness,' as a cultural artefact, that similarly gets invented - or by his nomenclature

‘imagined’ - a process that he also attributes to the accumulative effect of technological and socio-political change (Anderson 1983, 36).

The impact of this historical perspective on the uses of the past was broad and cross-disciplinary, prompting a critical evaluation of the relationship between states, institutions, and uses of the past. Though stemming from historical discourse, this conversation extended the debate to the fields of archaeology and museology, thus setting a critical template for the nascent critical heritage that acts as a foundation to this thesis. Of particular note to the context of this research, is the intellectual shift concurrent with the emergence of the postcolonial critique which stemmed from the work of Fanon (1966) and Said (1978). Initially concerned with Western constructions of ‘The Orient’ as the ‘Other,’ postcolonial theory addressed embedded ethnocentric or Eurocentric cultural constructions across disciplines (Young 2013, 153-6). This in turn led to the development of a more self-critical approach in archaeological theory, one that was cognisant of the social and political role of the discipline in the modern world. This was especially true in relation to its practices and its relationship to indigenous cultures in post-colonial settings (see Byrne 1991, 1996; Díaz-Andreu 2007; Lydon and Rizvi 2010; Harrison and Hughes 2010; Trigger 1984; Smith 2004, 2006). As Trigger notes: ‘There is a relationship between the nature of archaeological research and the social milieu in which it is practised’ (Trigger 1984, 356).

This set of shifting and interrelated cross-disciplinary paradigms serve as the backdrop or starting point for discussions which, as noted in the introduction, have impacted academic interest in heritage and its management. It is now widely acknowledged that the resultant critical debate in heritage studies was further precipitated in reaction to the expansion of the museum sector and the contemporaneous growth of heritage as an industry, and ultimately its commercialization on a global scale (see Harrison 2010, 2013; Hewison 1987; Lowenthal 1998a, 2015; Smith, 2004, 2006; Urry 1995; Walsh 1992; Wright 1985). As new museums were established, they introduced practices and approaches, often supported and enabled by new interactive technologies, that challenged the expertise and objectivity of more traditional institutions (Smith 2006, 195). These developments triggered a counter-response, leading to debate on how these new institutions contribute to the creation of ‘sanitized pasts’ and the ‘Disneyfication’ of heritage (Lowenthal 2015; Hewison 1987; Wright 1985; Walsh 1992). These concerns were prefaced with a broadly similar set of questions over the institutional control of the past that museums enabled (see Bennett 1995), and the role they played in supporting the national myths of nationhood through collections and interpretation (McClean 1998; Smith 2006). This ‘New Museology’ (see Vergo 1989) represented a critical standpoint, one that aimed to

decolonize and democratize the museum space, museum collections, and their interpretation in a non-monolithic and multivocal way (see Marstine 2006).

Of this first wave of critical reflection on the socio-political uses of heritage, the work of Lowenthal (1998a, 2015), Wright (1985) and Hewison (1987) have arguably left the largest imprint on heritage scholarship, particularly in the context of the UK. It has been remarked that this discrete body of work can be seen to be a product of its time (Harrison 2013, 99), a specific temporal context overshadowed by, in the case of the UK, the social changes wrought by deindustrialization, globalization and transnationalism (Harrison 2010, 17). Three decades later, however, they continue to feature in library collections, and their ubiquity can be inferred from their continued referencing in current heritage scholarship (see Gentry and Smith 2019). Ubiquity however does not absolve them from scrutiny, and as Gentry and Smith (2019) have argued, this turn-of-the-century heritage canon is, in the context of the present day, at times problematic and understandably out of step with current theoretical outlooks and approaches. Considered outmoded from certain perspectives perhaps, many of the core ideas and issues raised during this period of scholarship remain of continued relevance to the research aim of this thesis and are worthy of some exploration.

David Lowenthal's 'The Past is a Foreign Country,' published in 1985 and later revised in 2015, takes the stance that the "past and future alike are inaccessible" (Lowenthal 2015, 23) therefore unknowable or foreign. Mining a vast array of sources, from literature to film, Lowenthal examines the various relationships and heritage outlooks that have waxed and waned in popular imagination overtime, dividing these into broad positive and negative categories, or "benefits and burdens." Importantly, he acknowledges how the past, though unknowable, can be the product of the present, (Lowenthal 2015, 69): 'The past as known is partly a product of the present, for we continually reshape memory, rewrite history, refashion relics.' This manipulation of the past, for Lowenthal is particularly motivated by nostalgia, an attempt to mitigate for the deleterious effects of time and the 'pace of evanescence' which in the face of 'wholesale change we cling to familiar vestiges' (Lowenthal 2015, 28).

Nostalgia is a prominent and problematic theme for both Wright (1985) and Hewison (1987), however, in a more specific way than Lowenthal's broad assessment. Here the concern is more focused on how people's nostalgic yearnings for the past can be appropriated to serve political goals or ideology in the present, specifically in the context of Britain in the 1980s. Hewison is particularly scathing in his critique, using the term 'heritage industry' with a derogatory slant to describe an obsessive relationship with nostalgia, which acts to disconnect the public from history, turning Britain into a 'Living Museum' (Hewison 1987, 15). The danger of

this use of the past for Hewison has deep roots, extending back in time to the very development of museums and the conservation movements in the nineteenth century. It presents a history that does not engage with the present, a “history that stifles, but above all a history that is over” (Hewison 1987, 141). This view is echoed by Walsh (1992) who bemoans the resultant ‘historical amnesia’ that shallow or limited representation of the past engenders (Walsh 1992, 79-83).

In a similar vein to the way the past traditions were ‘invented’ or ‘imagined’, this early heritage debate took issue with a construction of the past, accelerated by the growth of museums and the emergent ‘business’ of heritage, that mined nostalgia to create a sanitized version of the past to distract from the problems of the present (Harrison 2010, 17). In creating or manipulating the past, state actors and institutions created an imagined heritage narrative that was far removed from lived experiences of the communities in question. This ability to control and direct this narrative serves as the subtext for the paradigm shift examined in the section that follows.

Deconstructing authority, a paradigm shift

If the previous section explored how institutional uses of the past came to be theorized and problematized, this section will look at the outcomes of this debate. Here discussion moves beyond the recognition of the big-picture themes grappled with by a multitude of disciplines as the heritage debate developed, to look more specifically at the repercussions it had on heritage management as a practice. Here two key ideas are explored: the authoritative imbalance of heritage discourse and the role of expert knowledge in heritage practice. Together these two factors form the basis of the paradigm shift that this research project advocates for and aligns itself with.

Moving from the broad, interdisciplinary critique we must focus this discussion to a thread that develops from an examination of the relationship between archaeological theory, in its various permutations over time, and the politics of cultural heritage; or more specifically, on the relational symbiosis between cultural heritage management practices (or Cultural Resource Management in the context of the US) and archaeological knowledge and expertise. The roots of this perspective emerge from the postcolonial critique, which as discussed earlier, came to prominence in the 1980s. Scholars began to interrogate the legacy of archaeological research and practice in relation to colonial experiences, and how archaeological interpretation and theorization of the past was, in many instances, inherently imperialist in the way it imposed a particularly western way of understanding the world onto native cultural heritage and practice (see Trigger 1984.) As Byrne (1991, 230-231) notes, if archaeological practice can be represented

as Western or Imperialist in this manner, then the same is surely true of practices of management of that heritage, a state of affairs compounded by the lasting legacy of the heritage legislation that is bequeathed to the colonized countries. These ideas are further developed by Laurajane Smith (2004; 2006), who stresses the impact these Eurocentric agendas can have on decision-making processes in social and cultural policy. Heritage practices as a result become actively involved in the politics of cultural identity (Smith 2004, 3), a situation that, it should be noted, is particularly relevant in the socio-political realities of settler-colonies, such as Australia. Crucially, a distinguishing feature of this perspective is that it is not constructed to simply explain external influences or factors; rather it positions the heritage professional and management practices at the centre of the debate.

Early in the previous section, it was proposed that this thesis offers a challenge to normative heritage approaches in heritage management in Malta, specifically in the context of the capital city of Valletta. The terminology used in this statement suggests that these heritage ideas are established, maintained and therefore sanctioned, or more succinctly authorized. This position derives principally from the work of Smith (2006), who develops an interpretative counter stance, a set of critiques that frame heritage discourse in a self-critical or reflexive way, to make its inherent western, professional biases more transparent. Though informed by her earlier work with indigenous heritage in Australia, as a critical set of tools, they are not bound solely to heritage contexts of the postcolonial world. Rather, in adopting the Foucauldian power/knowledge differential as intrinsic to her theoretical framework, coupled with critical discourse analysis (CDA), this critique becomes applicable in all heritage contexts, which Smith demonstrates in her case studies on country houses for example (see Smith 2006).

Smith's critique is not only a reaction to the immediate socio-political context of the present day; rather it identifies a set of systemic biases whose roots are firmly located in the early conservation and preservation movements of the 19th century, biases that have come to be imbedded in heritage management legislation and practice. To capture the broad analytical scope of this critique, Smith coined the term Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) to refer to the discourse that is created, promoted, and maintained by state sanctioned institutions, international organizations and heritage professionals. The recognition of how the AHD operates and is maintained has been found to be applicable in a wide range of heritage contexts and has as a result been brandished as a theory-driven critical tool in a varied set of situations. It has been used to identify macro level inequalities in social-class relations (see West 2010), to more specific case studies where the AHD directly impacts living communities in real terms through heritage management and conservation practice and policy (see Fredholm 2015; Wang, 2012;

Yan 2015). On a finer grained scale, the approach has also been insightful in deconstructing the language specific to heritage canonical documents to expose the inherent AHD (see Smith 2006; Waterton et al., 2006). Smith (2006, 29) summarises the intent and outcome of this discourse in the following way:

The authorized heritage discourse (AHD) focuses attention on the aesthetically pleasing material objects, sites, places and/or landscapes that current generations must care for and revere so that they may be passed to nebulous future generations for their 'education', and to forge a sense of common identity on the past.

The AHD therefore does several things simultaneously. Firstly, it determines what it is about the past that is important, with a specific inherent bias towards the material world, the artefact, exhibit, or place. Secondly it fixes the authority to make these value judgements within the maintenance or creation of this discourse, that is to say within parameters defined by the expert knowledge of the archaeologist, heritage manager or the museum curator (Smith 2006, 36). The purpose, Smith suggests, is to preserve these selectively curated elements of the past to serve the present and the future, to promote or preserve as a sense of continuity. Continuity, a feature of 'linear time' as conceptualized in the post-enlightenment, gives meaning to the material past and underpins the very development of archaeological thought (Cleere 1989; Byrne 1991) and demonstrates that "heritage is no ephemeral fancy but a rooted verity" (Lowenthal 2015, 119). This is very much the heritage of the tangible world, the world of important objects and places.

Beyond defining the parameters of what heritage is, the AHD also supports and fosters a dichotomous relationship between expert knowledge held by the agency, institution or professional and the general public. It posits that the public is treated as passive, as a consumer of heritage, and excluded from the process of heritage practice or interpretation due to a lack of knowledge, a state of things that is reinforced by management practices that legitimize the special position of the expert (Harrison 2010, 27). This exclusion is reinforced institutionally through the conventions, charters and other advisory documents produced by international heritage agencies such as UNESCO and ICOMOS that universalize and standardize this relationship. With the case study of this research being one closely associated with, and defined by, its inclusion on the World Heritage List, this of particular relevance to this discussion and as a result requires to be examined more carefully and will be tackled in more detail later in this chapter.

The counter to this materially-defined heritage is perhaps most succinctly defined by the now oft quoted “[t]here is, really no such thing as heritage” (Smith 2006, 11), with which Smith controversially opens her seminal text ‘Uses of Heritage.’ For Smith, heritage is not about the object, the building or the place; it is about the meanings that people associate with them: ‘If heritage is a mentality, a way of knowing, then all heritage becomes, in a sense, ‘intangible’ (Smith 2006, 54). This is heritage reconceptualized as a process, not a series of objects or places, but of a particular set of values which give meaning and validate heritage values, values which in and of themselves are intrinsically intangible (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 6). Furthermore, by thinking about heritage as a process or a mentality, this approach lends itself to the idea that heritage is not static (Smith 2006, 83), that the invented and imagined are constantly being re-imagined, thus extending the ideas pioneered by Hobsbawm and Anderson and considered earlier.

Administering the universal past

The previous section explored how several factors contribute to the construction and maintenance of the AHD. This section will examine how one of the primary mechanisms of the AHD on the macro level is that of the global convention or charter. Supported by a growing bureaucratic and governmentalized approach to heritage (Donnachie 2010, 118), these documents formalize definitions, frame notions of heritage and do so across time, space and cultural distinctiveness. The critical framework that AHD encompasses forms a subtext to the research agenda of this research, serving as a tool to be applied on the specifically local level of an historic urban space, Valletta. As suggested in the introduction, this research aims to ‘defy convention,’ which refers both to the problematic context of definitions of heritage as framed by international statute and the alternative approach which has been formulated into opposition or ‘defiance’. In the context of this case study, particular attention needs to be paid to the Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972, and the resultant list of World Heritage Sites, the exclusive membership of which Valletta attained in 1980.

One of the key issues that is highlighted by Smith (2006) as being a defining feature of the AHD is the over emphasis on the heritage that is tangible, the heritage of the monumental and the grand architecture. That this is a reaction, in part, to the over-representation of this category of heritage in global conventions comes as no surprise when the development and historical context is taken into consideration. Prior to the adoption of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, international agreements on heritage were especially concerned with codifying best practice in terms of conservations and restoration, a process that was initiated by the Athens

Charter (ICOMOS 1931) and further refined in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964). Both are products of their time, with the Athens Charter understandably prioritizing the inter-war agenda of heritage recovery and enabling the spirit of international collaboration. The history and context of this development has been covered and discussed in detail elsewhere (see Cleere 2001; Donnachie 2010; Harrison 2013) and, though it is beyond the scope of this research, basic scrutiny of the principles and recommendations proposed and enacted by these various charters and conventions is required.

In the critical context of the AHD as described in the previous section, these charters establish and propagate hegemonic discursive practices in a number of fundamental ways. Firstly, they establish a heritage vocabulary that is dominated by the monumental, specifically the care and restoration of ancient monuments and their historical surroundings. In doing so they exhibit the hallmark Western concern with notions of cultural continuity as represented by the select tangible past (Cleere 2001), and as a result therefore are symptomatic of the Western or European assumptions about heritage that underpin the AHD (Smith 2006). Secondly, they privilege specialist knowledge, where heritage meanings can only be accessed and interpreted by the expert, a discourse, particularly evident in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964), that also legitimizes the authority of the expert (Smith 2006, 96). This feature is readily apparent in the emphasis placed on the scientific knowledge, as evidenced in Article 2 of the Venice Charter:

The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage (ICOMOS 1964).

Furthermore, this expertise discourse is extended by the Venice Charter to definitions of heritage value beyond aesthetic attributes, to the recognition of the historical value, and therefore the historical evidence by association, of heritage places and their environment. These values are presumed inherent, which also presumes that they are 'fixed in time', and the relationships of these values to the heritage fabric is validated by its 'authenticity' (Harrison 2010, 28). This has important implications for the heritage practices as enacted by the AHD, in that these principles go beyond the practicalities of conservation and management of historic fabric and environments, to determining the heritage values, and as a corollary, the heritage meanings of places and things. The complex issue of defining the potentially ambiguous, often contested, notion of 'value' is crucial to this thesis and will be treated in much more detail later in this chapter.

Drafted in 1972, the Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage encompasses many of the features of the AHD that were formalized by the charters that predate it, whilst at the same time introducing a new set of discourses and themes. Of these, the standout theme is the concept of “outstanding universal value,” implying an inherent consensus that certain heritage, be it historic or natural, is of uncontested importance, an outlook that is certainly exclusionary. This discourse, which Harrison aptly labels “totalizing” (Harrison 2013, 64) also suggests that heritage significance can be understood to be universally resolved. This blanket approach has been described as overly vague and inherently paradoxical, suggesting that the understanding of cultural importance transcends differing cultural contexts (Cleere 2001, 24). Reliant on sites meeting criteria predefined by the Convention, the vagueness is compounded by seemingly arbitrary attributes such as ‘masterpiece’ which, as Smith (2006) duly noted, reinforces the idea of the cross-cultural inherence of the sites that meet the criteria and successfully obtain World Heritage status. This then is the AHD on a global-scale, a cross-cultural, cross-geographical set of predefined rules and obligations that define and authorize heritage definitions and values.

Heritage conventions and instruments reflect the historical contexts in which they are formulated. Harrison has characterized the 1960s and 1970s as witnessing an increased professionalism in the approach to the past, not only in heritage management practices, but also in archaeology (Harrison 2013, 56). Smith (1996) draws our attention to the fact that these conventions and charters self-perpetuate professionalism and the concomitant increase of the emphasis on expertise, by producing a generation of practitioners who are guided by the principles of these doctrinal documents. These conventions can be interpreted as a logical extension to this process, as part of the global mechanism that drives ‘heritage industry,’ thus harking back to the criticism of Hewison (1987). Indeed, as the following section will illustrate, UNESCO and its World Heritage List can be interpreted as fundamentally complicit in the process of the commercialization of heritage.

Tourism, authenticity, and the commodified past

An examination of the role and function of the World Heritage List as part of a global economic system requires some context, whilst allowing for the exploration of new avenues of critical analysis. This introduces a broadly theorized preoccupation with the role and value of heritage places in specific economic activities. At this juncture it is important to emphasize that it is not the complex, financial value that heritage brings to the economic system that is important to this research. Rather, it is the implications these economic functions have on how heritage narratives and values are produced and interpreted. Specific emphasis is given to tourism in this

context, the study of which intersects with critical heritage perspectives on a number of key issues, adding a new dimension to discussions of authorized heritage narratives and imagined pasts from the previous sections. Furthermore, tourism and heritage in Maltese context are fundamentally interlinked, an interaction in which World Heritage Status plays a significant role. This section provides some of the intellectual tools with which to unpick this relationship and what it means for the primary research questions of this thesis.

The commercialization of the past on a grand scale, as we have seen, was a causal factor in prompting the ‘Heritage Debate’ in the 1980s. The intellectual resistance, and resultant critique, to the heritagization or commodification of the past, as understood by Hewison (1987) and Wright (1985), suggested that the past as represented by this heritage boom was somehow a fabricated, one which “for all its seductive delights, is bogus history’ (Hewison 1987, 144). Heritage, in the increasingly globalized world of the twenty-first century, has not been detached from this commercial trajectory; if anything, it is now firmly entrenched as part of a global network of differentiated economic activities that define the post-industrial, hyper-connected internet age. As Graham et al. (2000, 130) wryly note, heritage costs money, is often inherently valuable and can, if managed correctly, make money. This pragmatic assessment aside, there is still a palpable stigma attached to the relationship between heritage and economics; the commodification of the past continues to arouse negative sentiment in the heritage community (Baillie et al. 2010). This unease is well expressed by Graham et al. (2000, 129):

Indeed, there is a strongly felt, and frequently articulated, view that any attempt to attach economic values to heritage....is at best a pointless irrelevance and at worst an unacceptable soiling of the aesthetically sublime with the commercially mundane.

Whatever the academy may think of the relationship between heritage and economic interests, the general public’s interest, and involvement, be it through membership of heritage trusts or site visitation, has overall, demonstrated stable growth since the boom of the 1970s (see Harrison 2013, 70-71). This sustained interest in heritage, for good or for bad, has become an integral part of national and local economic plans, often through its symbiotic relationship with the tourism sector. This is particularly the case in contexts that have witnessed drastic socio-economic change for a variety of reasons, be it the disappearance of long-established industries, such as coal mining in the Rhondda Valley (see Dicks 2000) or, as in the case of this research case study, the national economic reinvention required as countries transition to independence.

We should briefly consider the impact that the World Heritage Status (WHS), and the 'List' it manages, has on heritage-driven economic activity. From a purely commercial perspective, WHS is highly prized, having a direct bearing on cultural tourism, where heritage is the primary product consumed (Woodward and Cooke 2022). Cultural tourism is not a new phenomenon, the lineage of this leisure practice often linked to the 'Grand Tours' of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, after the tourism boom of the 1970s, the 1980s witnessed the sector undergoing market segmentation which encouraged more specialized approaches to leisure travel, thus cementing cultural tourism as a distinct market offering (Richards 1996, 7). Within this restructuring it is not surprising that WHS quickly established itself as a powerful, instantly recognizable, and global brand. As Harrison (2013, 89) observes, in the realm of heritage commodities, WHS represents the most marketable format. The realization of the economic potential of capturing a share of this new tourist demographic saw local and national agencies scrambling to apply to UNESCO for consideration and inclusion in the World Heritage List (Ryan and Silvanto 2009, 291).

If the 'bottom-line' is used as a measure of success, then pushing for inclusion on the World Heritage List can be a very persuasive argument. China's Lijiang Ancient Town is a case in point, witnessing a five-fold increase in tourist expenditure after being awarded its WHS in 1997 (Kurtz 2010, 206). On the flipside, focusing on the immediate economic benefits masks the innumerable other processes and ramifications of increased economic activity. As a counterpoint, the fallout of Lijiang's newfound prosperity has been demographic displacement, rapid commodification and increased living costs and a growing sense that the 'city is not for the people, but for profit' (Xiaobo 2015, 2877). World Heritage, in this globalized market-driven world, becomes enmeshed in global processes and conflicts, obfuscating the divide between the local and the global (see Gotham 2005), and increasingly connected to the private sector and commercial enterprise (see Starr 2010). Though WHS inscription can enable localized benefits, such as increasing civic pride and social capital, and jump starting the regeneration process to attract more tourism (Woodward and Cooke 2022, 96), it can create new challenges, especially in urban settings, especially when conflicts of interests arise from different stakeholders (Pendlebury et al. 2009, 357).

If the economic incentives to commercially exploit heritage as a capital generating resource is particularly linked to tourism, it is not surprising that there exists much overlap between Critical Heritage and Tourism Studies scholarship. Though it is far beyond the scope of this research to analyse the inherent complexities of global economics per se, the relationship between tourism and heritage can be understood in terms of the discourse of consumption and

the variables that motivate it. Of these variables, it is perhaps the emergence of what has been defined as the “experience economy” which is particularly relevant in understanding the commercialization of heritage, its relationship to tourism and how this raises issues on the uses of heritage. This analytical stance foregrounds the consumption ‘experience’ as an economic offering, commensurate with goods and services, one which has become greatly in demand, arguably overshadowing the ‘service economy’ which preceded it (Pine and Gilmore 2011, 19).

Tourism, from this perspective, can therefore be understood as an experience-driven activity, one in which the consumption of goods generates pleasurable experiences. The ‘Tourist Gaze’, a concept first proposed by John Urry, is understood as a social practice that is directed towards aspects of the landscape or urban settings which are out of the ordinary and distinct from everyday experience (Urry 1990, 3). In this reconceptualization, the tourist is imbued with agency, actively pursuing personal, niche interests of which cultural travel is but one of many. This more nuanced reading of tourist behaviour and motivation is particularly relevant to discussions on the authorized heritage narrative approach with regards to visitors to heritage places. As Smith (2006) notes, this position sits in direct contradiction to the idea of heritage visitors as ‘empty vessels,’ allowing heritage tourists to be understood to be far more critical, analytical and engaged with the places and objects ‘gazed upon’. Though originating from a need to understand how tourist experiences are produced and consumed, this analysis can be extended more broadly to public interactions with historic places and things and adds a new dimension to the expertise issue that was singled out in the AHD critique as noted earlier in this chapter.

This argument however is not universally accepted. The tension between authorized narratives or interpretations, and subjective experience of them, continues to be a common theme in the literature on commodified heritage and tourism. A popular flashpoint revolves around the problematic concept of ‘authenticity’, again harking back to the notion of a sanitized or fabricated past, a central tenet of the heritage debate, yet one that continues to appear in the literature. This familiar argument holds that in producing these commodified heritage experiences, museums and heritage places are ‘dumbing down’ heritage to create a more palatable, inauthentic and, as a result, sellable, product (Baillie et al. 2010, 53; Gable and Handler 1996). A heritage place in possession of WHS status is equally embroiled in this discussion, whether intentionally or not. As a brand, WHS implies – or is sold as – a mark of quality. By its association to this trusted brand, a heritage place is perceived to have been expertly selected for its authenticity and integrity (Ryan and Silvanto 2009, 292). It has been noted that this can be exploited by marketers, using the illusion of authenticity to re-affirm

national or official narratives, in the process excluding more difficult or uneasy narratives (Wiatt 2000). Implicit in this argument, and for it to be tenable, is the notion that authenticity is not immediately accessible to the tourist or the layperson. The general public are believed to not be equipped with the requisite specialized knowledge to differentiate the authentic, 'to penetrate beyond appearances, and discover the deception of "staged authenticity" (Cohen 1988, 374).

Though there is merit to the above argument, especially the implications it has for the construction of authorized discourses of the past, it is also useful to examine other perspectives on authenticity. The first consideration to take into account is that, fundamentally, the notion that there is some immutable or ineffable authenticity, or "aura" as defined in Walter Benjamin's (1934) 'The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction', is problematic and culturally loaded. This contentious issue did not go unrecognized by the academy, heritage organizations and institutions alike. With new ideas filtering into heritage from the various debates as outlined earlier, a debate arose around the cultural conceptual bias which ultimately resulted in the drawing up of the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994) that determined authenticity as being dependant "on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time."

Authenticity can therefore be thought of as culturally or historically constructed, a position that is therefore conceptually closer to Urry and Smith's foregrounding of the subjective experiences of visitors. Urry famously likened the tourist to the pilgrim of the contemporary world (Urry 1990, 9), on a quest seeking authenticity that is far removed from their personal experiences. From this perspective, authenticity is not an expert-defined set of attributes as championed by the heritage canon. Rather it is about the *perception* of authenticity, moving the discussion away from ideas about the heritage experience as a true representation of the past, to understanding how visitors to heritage sites are intrinsically involved in the process of heritage creation (Harrison 2013, 107). Lowenthal likens heritage to belief as 'heritage relies on revealed faith rather than rational proof' (Lowenthal 1998b, 6). Though he considers the distinction between history and heritage as self-evident, he understands them as serving separate purposes, observing that it is heritage practitioners who create artifice for consumption by the public (Lowenthal 1998b, 13). Though principally about the public's understanding and relationship with archaeology, Holtorf's (2005, 2008, 2009) work resonates with this issue directly:

Cultural appreciation of the past is not now, and has never been, to any large extent dependant on original ancient sites and objects (Holtorf 2008, 128).

It is not originality, or by extension, authenticity that is being appreciated; rather, it is what Holtorf describes as the perception of 'pastness' (Holtorf 2005, 112). This pastness is a culturally constructed experience, an 'aura' of sorts, but not one as Benjamin intended. Focusing on the visitor's experience of the past, be it a museum, a World Heritage Site or a pastiche historical recreation, acts to subvert expert definitions of heritage experience and the debate on the homogenization and commodification of the past by commercial enterprise. It highlights that, for all good intentions, it is impossible to fully control public understanding of the past.

Heritage and the commercial world are inherently interlinked, part of a global economic system where heritage and cultural tourism have developed into a distinct and valued economic sector. This relationship can be described as a two-way interaction, a collaboration where heritage is a medium for converting places into destinations which tourism makes economically viable (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 151). It has also been argued that heritage can be construed as economic activity, even without its association to external commercial interests, in that it commodifies 'past structures, associations and cultural productivity' which it then trades for 'economic return that can be measured in jobs, profits and incomes' (Graham et al. 2000, 157). This relationship continues to spark debate across a broad spectrum of issues, from the global influence and impact of World Heritage Status to how commercial interests affect the heritage experience.

New orientations, heritage values and the contemporary past.

Section introduction

The purpose of the previous section was to contextualize the problematic nature of normative modes of using the past - within the broad framework of interdisciplinary, scholarly literature, and theory. This broadly followed some of the key critiques of heritage and heritage practice, and how the resultant discourse, or AHD, "normalized a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage to privilege particular practices, especially those of heritage professionals and the state" (Harrison 2013, 112). In addition, attention was paid to the commercialization of heritage, not simply because of its role in sparking the heritage debate in the first place, but importantly because the dynamics of the relationship of heritage with the tourism industry raises some important questions of how heritage is constructed and

understood. In the context of the Maltese Islands, so heavily reliant on its heritage to drive its tourist economy, these considerations are vitally important.

Outlining this development in heritage theory serves a very specific purpose, acting as a cautionary reflection that underlies and defines the parameters of the central research aim of this thesis. How heritage is conceptualized and understood, as with most things, changes over time to reflect new outlooks and ideas, and this interdisciplinary debate on how the past is defined, for what purpose and by whom, is reflected in more contemporary approaches to heritage. The concepts explored in this section range from the shift to more inclusive, people-centred perspectives, to how heritage is defined and valued. Inclusivity of definition extends to the 'stuff' of heritage, specifically looking to decouple heritage from simply being about the past, to a sense of heritage rooted in the contemporary world of everyday objects and places. A fundamental component of this research is the concept of heritage value. Having argued for a more people-centred heritage of the everyday, a consideration must be made into qualifying these people to place relationships. To do this, we must consider the well-established, concept of values-based assessment of significance in more general terms, however paying special attention to a subset of this practice-based approach, that of social value. Taken together, these ideas and practices form a framework to which this research's aim is aligned, one that calls for a relatable, democratized, and accessible heritage of and for living communities.

New orientations, new conventions

Some of the key issues noted in the previous section revolve around issues of heritage definition and management practice which in part were created and maintained by the doctrinal documents that guide the profession. Reflecting changing attitudes towards heritage and the conceptual outcomes of the preceding heritage debates, a new generation of charters and conventions emerged that introduced novel approaches and attitudes. This section will investigate some of the key principles they introduce, and the paradigm shift they embody.

The Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter) was originally drafted in 1979, in attempt to reframe the Venice Charter (1964) to better reflect the postcolonial realities with a sensitivity appropriate to the Australian context (Marquis-Kyle and Walker 2004, 6-7). The charter itself underwent several revisions, most notably in 1999, in response to a number of criticisms levelled at the document (Waterton et al. 2006, 341). Though the document, much in the same vein as its predecessor the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964), is primarily concerned with conservation, the approach it takes breaks away from the standard mould and introduces a

fundamentally new way of framing heritage definitions. Firstly, it deemphasizes the monumental focus, that staple of western heritage practice, which as we saw in the previous section forms part of the critique put forward by Smith (2006). In its stead, the charter focuses on the idea of 'Place' and the 'Cultural Significance' assigned to it by people for a variety of possible reasons. Terminology is important, and the choice to use the term 'places of cultural significance' as opposed to 'monuments' challenges the dominant European and North American emphasis on the monumental (Ireland et al. 2020, 830). This radically extends the scope of definitions of 'stuff' of heritage, where place is understood to not only comprise the historic built environment, an inevitably Western construct, but rather to include a more comprehensive and inclusive conceptualization of heritage places:

Place means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, groups of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views (The Burra Charter, Article 1.1, Australia ICOMOS 2013).

Secondly, and in relation to this previous point, the charter specifies that the definition of place and the significance assigned is understood to be flexible and multi-vocal:

Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups (The Burra Charter, Article 1.2, Australia ICOMOS 2013).

In recognizing a multiplicity of views and values, heritage is no longer defined as monolithic and unchanging, its importance inherent and self-evident. This represents a departure from the idea of irrefutable authenticity or unquestionable universal value. This redefinition of what constitutes heritage, arising from a need to be more representative of non-western understanding of heritage places, is an influential idea. UNESCO itself redrafted its World Heritage criteria in the 1990s to allow 'cultural heritage landscapes' to be nominated (Harrison 2013, 123-125). These canonical updates instituted by the organization are best exemplified in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) which beyond extending universal value to cultural practices, highlighted the important of the communities of practitioners and their participation in the process of safeguarding the listed practice (see Blake 2009). This orientation means that the motivation to conserve or maintain heritage is no longer enshrined uniquely in the physicality of the subject matter, rather in the cultural significance, however defined, that people associate with a place and not only how it was valued in the past, but importantly how it is valued by people in the present.

The legacy of the reconceptualization of heritage places and significance is evident in the manner in which the ideas became widely accepted to feature in later conventions and

charters (Jones and Leech 2015, 9), of particular note the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe 2000) where landscape is abstracted and defined by the varied ways in which people value it. This sense of enfranchising people and their personally-held perspectives on heritage is further emphasized by the Council of Europe's (2005) Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro). The Faro Convention was conceived of in a specific historical and geopolitical context and was drafted against a backdrop of countries emerging from the end of communist dominance, an expanding European Union and desire to address an imbalance of cultural control of the large metropolises over more regional and local entities (Fojut 2009, 15-16). Designed specifically to distance itself from the conservation-oriented, science and technology emphasis of earlier documents, the Faro Convention finds communality in the human-right to cultural heritage, to "contemplate the ways in which the heritage is meaningful and beneficial for societal progress" (Thérond 2009, 9).

The Faro Convention defines heritage much in the same way as the Burra Charter does before it; however more explicit reference is placed on the fluctuating nature of these inherited resources: '... which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions.' (Council of Europe 2005, Article 2a). Where Faro innovates however is its emphasis on the human right of community participation in all aspects of the process of heritage. Article 12a (Council of Europe 2005) of the convention outlines the parameters of this participation to include:

- the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation, and presentation of the cultural heritage.
- public reflection and debate on the opportunities and challenges which the cultural heritage represents.

This participation is extended to all stakeholders, parties or actors that fall within the consciously broad 'heritage community' which the text of the Convention defines as consisting of '... of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future' (Council of Europe 2005, Article 2b). The convention, as Schofield (2015) notes, fundamentally considers ethical dimensions of heritage by promoting communal participation in cultural life (Schofield 2015, 197-198). The underlying premise is that active participation and public engagement are vital for heritage. Palmer (2009) clearly believes this to be the case stating that '[h]eritage atrophies in the absence of public involvement and public support' (Palmer 2009, 8). The impact of this new canonical orientation is perhaps best exemplified by the implications they create for heritage management, specifically on the relationship of the professional and the heritage community.

As discussed previously, expert knowledge in its various forms has been identified (Smith 2004, 2006), as one of the functional means by which ‘authorized heritage discourses’ are constructed, maintained, and justified. Taken together, Burra and Faro provide new stimulus for this debate and provide a direct counterpoint with their emphasis on community, participation, and the recognition of a plurality of perspectives. This is not an unintended consequence of Faro, but very much intrinsic to the philosophy that underlies the document. The emphasis on participation is intended to counteract the situation where the public is accorded the position of passive spectator and witness to a process they have traditionally had little say in (Palmer 2009, 8; Smith 2006; Harrison 2013).

The call to increase public participation and community inclusion also extended to the global heritage stage during this period, as organizations like UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee (WHC) sought to bridge the scalar divide of a heritage that is globally valued, but locally managed and lived. Though as an organization it originally displayed a distinct resistance to local community inclusion in the process of World Heritage Site nomination (Poulios 2014, 16), the Convention framework underwent a philosophical rethink, echoing the precepts that came to underly the Faro Convention. The World Heritage Convention can be understood to be malleable and iterative, a state of affairs well-articulated by Sullivan (2004, 54):

World Heritage idea has proved to be a more powerful and adaptive concept than its creators probably envisaged – like the spreading ripples in a pool, the unsophisticated, naively unselfconscious original ‘Western’ idea has gradually widened and deepened...., so that the paradigm of World Heritage now includes cultural landscapes, living sites, intangible values, and associative cultural values.

The principle of community involvement is not a particularly new concept within WHSs however, where issues surrounding participatory practices emerged in the early 1980s in the context of managing regional development in heritage rich, yet structurally weak regions (Albert 2012, 33). Following the sea change heralded by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage (UNESCO 2002), as discussed above, there was an initiative to incorporate sustainability into World Heritage Site management. As concerns about the potentially negative impact of globalization on heritage places, practices and communities increased, it became clear that the involvement of local communities was crucial to the process of bridging the global versus local divide (Edroma 2004, 40). As of 2007, ‘Community’ has been enshrined as a fundamental strategic objective in the World Heritage Convention (Brown and Hay-Edie 2014, 11). Within the broader framework of UNESCO instruments, the *Vienna Memorandum* (UNESCO 2005) is of special significance to this case study, in that it identifies and repositions

‘community’ as being central to the management of historic urban landscapes and recognizes the importance of their attachments to urban places and the sense of place they construct within them. These personal, emotional attachments are defined as contributing to people’s quality of life.

In more general terms, this new heritage orientation aligns itself with a more widespread, public resentment of authoritative narratives, where people are keen to determine for themselves which past to believe in (Thomas 2008, 139), what Walsh (1992, 66) terms the creation of ‘personal pasts’. As a result, it also permits for what Robertson (2012, 1) has described as “heritage from below,” or a deliberate pushback to top-down, politically, or commercially motivated manifestations of heritage that promote and maintain authorized or hegemonic discourse. By extension, and in light of the principles of Burra and Faro, this line of argument has developed into a fundamental questioning of the role heritage professionals play in the process of heritage making and how this relates to the heritage communities associated with the area of research or management. It essentially begs the question ‘Who needs Experts?’ which is precisely what an edited volume (Schofield 2014a) addresses in some detail. The introductory chapter (Schofield 2014b) sets the agenda and distils the principles and spirit of the Burra Charter and the Faro Convention into three essential points, namely that heritage is everywhere, for everyone and that ultimately, in some small way or another, everybody is a heritage expert.

These constitute a reflexive set of statements, with the heritage professional as intended audience and therefore represents a deliberate way of getting the industry to be more conscientious of its privileged position and the possible impact on heritage communities. In this reconceptualized incarnation, the expert does not simply dole out ‘knowledge’ in a unidirectional stream; rather, there is more a sense of the heritage professional acting as a facilitator, a mediator that can manage and navigate the complex multiple perspectives that this new orientation calls for (Wolferstan 2014). It is this mindful, active engagement that Burström (2014, 110) alludes to when mandating that heritage experts should have ‘more than a sensitive ear,’ in dealing with the multitude of, at times conflicting, heritage perspectives that this new orientation calls for.

There is certainly a counterpoint to this argument, that in the absence of expertise or the expert, there is a loss of ‘objective truth.’ It certainly concerned Lowenthal (2015, 14), who muses that in the absence of ‘truth’ “[a] past that feels appropriate, that suits any ephemeral personal need, is accorded validity”. Objective truth is not the remit of heritage however, a position which Lowenthal (1998b) himself recognizes and was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Others have commented that this stance is too inward looking; that there is indeed a discernible distinction between expertise and non-expertise and that it be more useful to frame the discussion within existing multidisciplinary work on the role of experts (see Hølleland and Skrede 2019). Though there is certainly merit in broader positioning of the argument Schofield (2014a) and others have made, that the discussion is inward looking is not in and of itself problematic, if one assumes that the intended audience is the heritage professional. The argument made is not necessarily a call for dismissing expertise; rather it is a call for blurring the divide by recognizing that other, local forms of expertise exist and are equally valid, and worthy of inclusion.

There are certainly other considerations too. Waterton et al. (2006) have argued that the language of the Burra Charter, and by extension that of the Faro Convention, can be determined to constitute and reinforce dominant discourses, much in the same way as the doctrinal documents that proceed them. There are also pragmatic or real-world granularities to factor in; it is never a straightforward expert versus public dichotomy. As Fairclough (2014, 245) rightly points out, it should not be assumed that the attachment to hegemonic, normative or conventional heritage discourse may not be down to the individual practitioner's particular opinion, and conversely the public can also freely adopt a passive stance, one where guidance is desired or expected. A final and important consideration highlights the real-world political dimension in which heritage exists, in that calling for participation and championing of multiple viewpoints also adds the difficult dimension of dealing with discordant or extremist views (Fojut 2009, 17).

The canonical innovations explored thus far have operated on a conceptual level, addressing the fundamentals of heritage definition and outlook. Valletta is a living city, a tangible urban historic environment, the management of which requires balancing conservation and regeneration with the maintenance – or improvement – of the quality of life of its residents. How recent urban planning frameworks incorporate new heritage orientations into guidelines for managing cities connects discourse and theory to real-world practice. Of particular note in terms of context applicability of contemporary frameworks is the UNESCO (2011) *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* (HUL). The recommendation is the product of a historical series of developments in conservation and urban planning frameworks at UNESCO, the trajectory of which are outlined above. It can therefore be understood as a development cycle that overlaps with many of the key conceptual shifts in heritage theory and practice that inform this project (See Jokilehto 2015). As a document it can be interpreted as proposing a holistic approach to the changing cityscapes of the modern world, that recognizes that urban spaces face modern challenges, and argues that it is imperative to move urban

planning away from being a primarily socio-economic process, a poignant outlook in a world dominated by global market capitalism (Bandarin 2015, 1). As a counter, it promotes the idea that management of historic urban areas can contribute to enhancing the liveability of these spaces, whilst fostering economic development and social cohesion (UNESCO 2011).

Valletta's applicability to this recommendation's aims and objectives goes beyond its inherently historic fabric. Rather, the HUL's particular synergy with the case study, is in how heritage is conceptualized, and how heritage forms part of the larger picture of urban planning in an historic setting. Heritage is not viewed as static; the document recognizes that cities are shaped by generations of people who each contribute to the everchanging fabric, all contributing their own memories and experiences to the heritage landscape. By the same token, though a values-based system of significance is integral to the HUL approach, its implementation echoing contemporary scholarship and critique. Reflecting the influence of the heritage charters and conventions that precede it, the HUL's approaches to value and significance are therefore understood to be fluid, contestable and open to renegotiation, embracing the idea of concurrent and multiple values and significances that can be revisited as required (Buckley and Fayad 2017, 52). Another useful distinction these guidelines stress is the move from focusing on the historic, thus recognizing that for the HUL to be successful it needs to look beyond the emphasis of the historic cores, traditionally the focus of heritage in urban context, to "reconnect" these zones to the broader urban landscape (Bandarin 2015, 16). In the context of Valletta, which broadly speaking can be characterized in its entirety as an "historic core", this sense of reconnection is applicable to how the urban fabric of Valletta, its suburb Floriana and the three harbour cities of Bormla, L-Isla and Birgu, connect to the sprawling, seamless conurbation that now characterizes the island.

The contemporary past and the heritage of the everyday

Thus far, the intellectual framework this chapter has formulated, has followed the developmental trajectory of canonical documents, charters and instruments and the academic debate related to their core principles. Whereas much of this has been about approaches to heritage in the abstract, this section of the chapter will consider the question of the 'what' of heritage. The central aim of the thesis is to demonstrate the varied ways in which people value heritage places. Though not explicit, this predicted variation broadens the possible classification of heritage assets. This represents a mindset towards heritage perhaps best captured by the quote below:

That's what the heritage should be about: the everyday, the everywhere and the something for (and of) everybody (Schofield 2009, 112).

This represents a conceptual break with the traditional, elite, or nationally important concerns of heritage as identified by Smith (2006) and discussed in the preceding section of this chapter. In this instance it is the subject matter of the expert gaze that undergoes repositioning, to take into consideration a more personal, public-led sense of what it is about landscapes and places that informs and provides meaning and identity to them (Schofield & Szymanski 2011; Schofield 2009, 2014a, 2015; Schofield et al. 2012; Henson 2014). Furthermore, by adopting this outlook, the temporal domain of heritage is shifted from one firmly rooted in the past, to one that is intimately and vividly connected with lived experiences in the present, contemporary world. Palmer (2009, 8) neatly articulated this sentiment:

Heritage is not simply about the past; it is vitally about the present and the future. A heritage that is disjoined from ongoing life has limited value.

In being everywhere, the heritage of the everyday is a very accommodating category, as it essentially includes all objects or places that are meaningful to somebody in the present day. Whilst this could certainly include an historic and nationally important building that is encountered on a daily commute or a significant church that holds special familial significance, it is in recognizing the impact of far more ordinary, but no less meaningful, heritage experiences that the notion of the everyday provides new insight. In making space for ordinary heritage experiences, the everyday approach allows research to engage with the materiality of the recent or contemporary past in an interdisciplinary manner.

This new orientation in heritage outlook intersects with archaeological analysis and interpretation of the contemporary past, a relatively recent subfield of material culture studies. At this stage it would be useful to define precisely what is meant by the 'contemporary past.' and how this distinguishes its study from other branches of the field which deal with more recent aspects of the material past such as Historical or Industrial Archaeology. A good place to start is the definition below:

The Contemporary past is that period with which we are most closely familiar: the present, the age that we live in and have lived through, whose fabric and landscapes we shape and that influences our everyday lives and actions (Harrison and Schofield 2010, 4).

It is evident from this definition that there exists a strong affinity of views and perspectives between archaeology and recent, contemporary approaches to heritage. This complementary

relationship extends beyond the temporal domain and displays a similar inclusive stance encountered in the Burra Charter and Faro Convention. As an approach it eschews limited, normative narratives and the elite objectification of the immutable 'past' to instead capture meaning in the ordinary world of the present. Anchored in living memory, the temporal framework that defines the contemporary past covers a timeframe that spans at most three generations, a framework that is ever-changing and one that constantly shifts its boundaries in synchronicity with the passing of time. Change is a fundamental theme in the study of the contemporary past as we currently experience it, a period that has been characterized by large-scale transformative processes. Amongst these are the transition from modernity to late-modernity, globalization, the rise of new technologies of connectedness and changing patterns of consumption and production associated with them (Harrison 2013, 76).

Usefully, it can therefore be understood as an archaeology of 'us', which in the broadest of terms tells of the economic, social, and historical realities that shaped and are shaped by our interactions with the material world (Wilkie 2001, 108). The theoretical underpinnings of archaeologies of the contemporary past can be traced to the innovations of the New Archaeology movement of the 1960s (Harrison and Schofield 2010, 24), where the focus on method and data rendered the temporal setting of the subject matter being studied extraneous (Buchli and Lucas 2001a, 3). Thus, unshackled from the necessity of specifically studying the past, archaeological investigations were seen to be able to tell us about ourselves in the present. The often-referenced progenitor to this approach is very much an archaeology of 'us', namely 'The Garbage Project.' Starting in the early 1970s, archaeological techniques both of excavation and interpretation were – and continue to be – used to gain understanding of the present day, via the consumption, discard and recycling practices discernible in modern day waste (see Rathje 1979, 2001). Almost 50 years later, the archaeological study of the contemporary past has become established as an interdisciplinary sub-field in its own right, with monographs and edited volumes covering the broad range of perspectives on the modern world (see Buchli and Lucas 2001a; Graves-Brown 2000, 2013; Harrison and Schofield 2010).

Of this broad range of perspectives, it is in its approach to investigating place that an archaeology of the contemporary past contributes most relevantly to the principal theme of this section. A heritage of the everyday is an expression of inclusivity; it is made up of all the experiences that create a rootedness, and importantly a sense of place, where place is understood to be "not just a thing in the world, but a way of understanding the world" (Cresswell, 2004, 11). This is the 'cultural significance of place' that is enshrined in the Burra Charter. Place is therefore the result of a cultural process of transformation, emerging from undifferentiated

space to become known and valued (Tuan 1977, 6). As a construct, place is not fixed; it is constantly evolving, its meaning re-evaluated and renegotiated (see Massey 2005). Augé has observed, however, that the particular socio-cultural context of the contemporary world has also witnessed the creation of ‘non-places,’ that is to say places devoid of historical or relational properties (Augé 1995, 77). This perhaps is too extreme a position, and it is more likely that these places are ones that are simply invisible and overlooked, intentionally or otherwise. Indeed, it is these ordinary places that are often the subject of examinations of the contemporary past, where the process of archaeological investigation creates a sense of distance or alienation that renders the familiar, unfamiliar (see Buchli and Lucas 2001a; Graves-Brown 2011; Graves-Brown et al. 2013; Harrison and Schofield 2010). By their very nature these places are often very quotidian: a recently abandoned council flat (Buchli and Lucas 2001b) or the shifting morphology of a shopping centre (Graves-Brown 2007). A common thread is a concern for liminal or interstitial places that acquire significance not by design, but simply on the merit of being, of forming part of the ‘typology of nowhere’ (Graves-Brown 2014). Atkinson (2008, 381) attributes this interest to the increased democratization of memory and as evidence of the shift from traditional perspectives to discovering the social, industrial and cultural histories that exist within these ‘mundane places’ that surround us.

Beyond archaeology, there is also a growing interest in the contemporary past, specifically with the conservation of the modernist landscape of the 1960s and 1970s, a sentiment well captured by the ‘Heritage at Risk’ Conference (UNESCO 2006) that demonstrated a concern for the traditional as well as the relatively new (see Harrison and Schofield 2010, 36-37). Similarly, the English Heritage project, ‘Change and Creation’ (2004) acknowledges the ambiguous but also often contentious nature of our relationship with the modern landscape of the 20th century, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to the fact that in this fast-changing world, with its exaggerated cycle of obsolescence, these modern landscapes to which so much of our living memory is attached are fast disappearing (see Bradley et al. 2004). These ideas were further explored in English Heritage’s related publication, ‘Images of Change’ (Penrose 2007) which documented the diversity of urban and rural landscape types that characterize the Britain of today, from motorways, airports, social housing and business parks to holiday camps and golf courses and many more besides. Not to be mistaken with a simple compendium of modern architecture and landscapes, the purpose lay more in challenging conventional ideas and reactions to landscape change. Penrose and the other contributors drew our attention to the transience of the modern material world, the provocative premise being that the heritage of the contemporary world does not necessarily need to be defined by what we chose to preserve, that “[a] things passing is sometimes its contribution” (Penrose 2007, 10). This is an important

point, and one that continues to surface in heritage literature. For Harrison (2013, 166-167), the act of not forgetting, of letting something pass on, generates a 'crisis of accumulation' where we become oversaturated by the past and the burden of memory. DeSilvey (2017) approaches the problem from a different angle, arguing that decay and loss of the fabric does not result in a complete loss of meaning; that "curating the decay" in some instances can be seen as a valid and meaningful heritage process in and of itself.

In the previous section of this chapter, it was argued that one of the features of the new orientation of heritage was the de-emphasis of the monumental in favour of the concept of 'cultural significance of place'. So far, this section has focused on re-imagining the monumental; that is to say, to introduce new, non-normative categories of heritage places. The point here is to demonstrate that these everyday places, that often jar with the accepted idea of what constitutes heritage, are increasingly considered to form part of the inclusively-defined modern heritage landscape. In being the product of a particular time frame, one that is linked to living memory, these contemporary heritage places enable a new forum to action the principles of the new heritage orientations.

The shift in gaze away from places of prominence, to instead increasingly recognize and acknowledge the geography of the margins, provides a platform for heritage that is hidden in plain sight. Often it is not only places themselves that exist on the margins, but they are inhabited, experienced, and valued by the marginal and the dispossessed, as captured by the participatory project carried out with homeless people of York and Bristol (Kiddey 2017, see also Kiddey and Schofield 2011; Schofield et al. 2012). Similar processes of marginalization and invisibility can also be created by other forms of social stigma. A very appropriate example of this can be found within the boundaries of Valletta, our case study city, where a street which was once home to a night-life district of bars and music halls that serviced sailors visiting the harbour town. It's association with prostitution and bawdy behaviour, at odds with Malta's religious moral values and mainstream heritage narrative, contributed to the street falling into abandonment and disrepair, and the significance to those who experienced it as a visitor or resident became hidden or forgotten (see Schofield and Morrissey 2007, 2013).

The integration of the new orientations of heritage discourse and cross-disciplinary evaluations of materiality of the recent past, collectively inform the principal aim of this research, that of actively seeking the cultural significance of place at the fringes of what is considered heritage. Adopting this stance makes it possible to counter-map mainstream narratives, to propose alternative and equally important alternative histories of place, what Harrison (2011, 73) refers to as "hidden or non-mainstream geographies" of the margins. This

concern with heritage of the recent past is not in and of itself innovative. As this section has demonstrated, there exists a growing consensus that the urban and rural landscapes of the modern era possess heritage significance which is uniquely their own. Emphasizing heritage of the recent past in the context of the case study of Valletta enables this from several different perspectives. Firstly, it acts as a counterpoint to normative heritage constructs, away from the palaces and grandeur of normative narratives, to look at more ordinary and everyday experiences in everyday places. Temporal proximity to the present also enables this research to interact directly with the people and communities that continue to engage in the process of place making, of participating in the act of “doing heritage” (Lashua and Baker 2014, 134).

Heritage values and significance.

How heritage is valued, by whom and for what reasons are essentially the questions that this thesis has set out to answer. Values-based approaches to determine heritage significance have a history as long as the conservation movement itself (see below). In practice this is an approach to quantifying the significance of a heritage site based on a series of value-laden categories. Significance is therefore a representation of a combination, or an aggregate, of predetermined values (de la Torre and Mason 2002; de le Torre 2015; Fredheim and Khalaf 2016; Schofield 2008). In this section of the chapter, I will briefly outline the development of heritage values and significance, how current notions of these concepts have been analysed critically, and how they fit into the contemporary approach framework to heritage that the previous chapter presented.

The concept of heritage value and its role with the determination of what constitutes heritage significance is intrinsically tied to modernist philosophies and their impact on the museum and conservation movements in the 19th century. Characterized by a drive for continuous improvement, rational advancement, and conceptual shift in the perception of time and history (Walsh 1992, 7-9), modernism is underpinned by a drive to order and classify the world into discrete and distinct categories, processes which have a direct implication on perceptions of the past (Harrison 2013, 27-28).

The formal creation of distinct heritage value characteristics, as we understand them today, first make an appearance in Austrian art historian Aloïs Riegl’s seminal work, ‘The modern cult of monuments: Its character and its origins’ (1903 [1982]). Concerned with understanding the complex interaction of associative values a monument might possess, Reigl devised a scheme which covers a broad spectrum, from historic and commemorative values to artistic merit and functional or ‘use value’. This classificatory system was, by definition, monument focused, a series of observations on the inherent nature of the physical fabric. This reading of

the historic fabric through a system of values had a lasting impact, driving approaches to conservation and historic environment as evidenced in the early heritage charters, especially the Athens (1931) and Venice (1964) Charters. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the conceptual pushback to a focus on the monumental, and reimagining of heritage definitions did happen, ideas enshrined in the Burra Charter (2013 [1979]) placing a new emphasis on ‘cultural significance of place’.

Though most commonly associated with heritage and conservation planning and policy, value systems also came to be applied more broadly to the material past, including archaeology where it begins to appear in the literature in the late 1970s (Darvill 2005, 22). Lipe’s (1984) contribution to the discussion presents itself as the next substantial evolution in value system-based thinking (Schofield 2008, 23). Lipe condenses his value typology into four main categories: Associative or Symbolic, Informational, Aesthetic and Economic, a model that remains influential in heritage practice and policy today (cf. English Heritage 2008).

Notwithstanding their ubiquity, values-based systems undergo constant re-appraisal, especially in light of ever-evolving contemporary critical approaches to heritage. The critical framework adopted by this research is informed by a conscious need to recognize the role that heritage practitioners and academic output, this research included, can contribute to the creation and maintenance of the AHD. This is motivated by a desire to promote an approach to heritage that is more community inclusive, and mindful of the role of the relationship of the contemporary past to community’s heritage sensibilities. It is critical therefore, that the utilization of a values-based system of heritage assessment contributes positively to this research whilst simultaneously remaining consistent with the contemporary heritage framework that underpins this thesis.

A key theme in contemporary approaches to heritage relates to re-enfranchising or democratising the process of heritage values and significance attribution, the recognition that multiple voices should be acknowledged in the process of heritage. The tension between the expert versus the public, a recurrent theme in heritage scholarship, is a discussion that also concerns value systems (see Carver 1996; Darvill 2005). This reflects the current preoccupation with the possibility that expert-led or top-down approaches to heritage can exclude other viewpoints. The approach advocated for by this thesis however is one that consciously recognizes that heritage places, objects and experiences simultaneously embody a multiplicity of heritage values, what Mason refers to as the “multivalent” properties of heritage places (Mason 2002, 8). In doing so, heritage assessments can be formulated that foster the idea that

all heritage stories are accorded importance, assuring a system that accepts that “everybody’s treasured places deserve some recognition” (Schofield 2008, 17).

However, for this goal to be achievable, it is important at this stage to recognize some inherent issues or weaknesses in values-based assessments. It has been broadly noted that significance can be problematic if the heritage values used in the attribution are skewed, overlapping or at worst support a system where certain value types feature more prominently than others, a state of affairs this research aims to address in the context of Valletta. By favouring some values over others, thereby marginalizing some value types (see Mason 2002; Fredheim and Khalaf 2016), such approaches run the risk of formalizing, through expert-driven processes, a restrictive, top-down and, crucially, incomplete picture of the heritage meaning. The very idea of ‘significance’ implies, as Ireland et al (2020) have noted, the idea of ‘insignificance’, a duality that must be taken into consideration when adopting a values-based system. Furthermore, there are also other possible pitfalls in the implementation of values-based systems, which although commonplace and implemented broadly, are not governed or rationalized by a standardized working methodology for implementation (de La Torre and Mason 2002). This fact is further complicated by the sheer number of possible, often competing value typologies, a state of affairs that can cause confusion and obfuscate heritage meaning. Lack of clarity can have real-world consequences. As Fredheim and Khalaf (2016) point out, if the language used in value systems - a system designed to capture and represent meaning - is unclear or opaque, it is unlikely that conservation decisions made on such systems will necessarily achieve the desired outcome.

The reason why these considerations are important, is that value attributions are the basis for the attribution of heritage significance, which in turn affects conservation and policy processes that manage heritage places and by extension the communities they relate to. Values-based heritage assessments must account for, and reconcile, a wide spectrum of objective and subjective responses to heritage, responses that originate from a large and diverse array of stakeholders, implying that such assessments will always require a degree of compromise. The inherent weakness of these systems has led to the suggestion that other systems can be implemented to replace value system approaches altogether (see Poullos 2010; Walter 2014). On the other hand, in the context of a World Heritage City, as in the case of Valletta, where few alternative perspectives have been undertaken, using commonplace, broadly implemented frameworks can be an effective counter to orthodox assessments of heritage significance. As an urban space most commonly defined by its inclusion in the World Heritage list, it seems appropriate to apply the same assessment language and methodology, to

demonstrate that beyond its historic and aesthetic characteristics, heritage significance is constructed and defined in a myriad of more unexpected ways.

Social values and sense of place

In order to highlight how community heritage narratives or values may differ from heritage values that are proffered by well-established official entities, this research places emphasis on a relatively recent addition to the value system, that of social value. If the overemphasis on historic and aesthetic values is most commonly associated with older paradigms of heritage interpretation, then the social value of heritage is the 'poster child' of new approaches to heritage.

Previously in this chapter, the idea of heritage possessing some inherent, definable, and timeless authenticity was challenged, in favour of the idea of heritage representing a cultural construct, a process. Similarly, heritage values can also be conceived of as socially constructed; reference points in a process of constant renegotiation and change (Schofield 2008, 24). This is heritage as envisaged in contemporary foundational doctrinal documents, such as the Burra Charter (1979-2013) and later in the Faro Convention (2004), which as we have seen, represent a paradigm shift that places community concerns and participation at the heart of the process of heritage. Community participation allows for new unofficial narratives of heritage places to be documented whilst also co-existing with more conventional, official, and expert-led assessments of heritage places and spaces.

In 2008, English Heritage published a new set of guidelines, its *Conservation Principles*, which reflect the influence of this paradigm shift demonstrating that even established, national heritage organizations have incorporated them into their own philosophical and practical approach. Their system of values, obviously indebted to earlier work, especially Lipe (1984), follows a familiar schema that includes the usual attributes of heritage. However, these principles also embraced innovation, specifically with the inclusion of a category of heritage values it terms Communal Values, a 'meta-value' that aims to capture place-meaning, collective experience, and memory (English Heritage 2008, 31). A distinct subsection of this meta-value is social value, and below are series of key definitions taken from directly from the text (English Heritage 2008, 32):

- *Social value is associated with places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction, and coherence.*

- *Some [values] may be comparatively modest, acquiring communal significance through the passage of time as a result of a collective memory of stories linked to them.*
- *The social value of a place may indeed have no direct relationship to any formal historical or aesthetic values that may have been ascribed to it.*

Social values differ from the traditional value-set of historical, aesthetic, scientific, evidential, or academic that often inform professional assessment, in that they are locally held, personal and often not evident in the physical fabric (de la Torre 2013, 160). As Jones (2017, 22) has observed, expert modes of significance assessment often do not “capture the dynamic, iterative and embodied nature of people’s relationships with the historic environment in the present”. The integration of social value into orthodox or established forms of heritage assessment and conservation practices enables community participation, disrupting the real or perceived divide between the practitioner or expert and the community to whom the heritage in question is significant (Lesh 2019, 43). In the context of a city that is experiencing rapid change and gentrification, the social values that communities derive from their local environment and how this affects what they consider as significant is a primary concern (Schofield and Szymanski 2011, 1). The HUL, as noted earlier, lists ‘liveability’ as one of key objectives, implying that integrating social value into systems of assessment and championing what it is that communities and individuals cherish, identify with, commemorate, and dispute provides what Giddens’ (1991) terms as “ontological security”, which Grenville (2007, 2015) notes is integral part of what sense of place in historical settings.

This final point introduces an important concept, that of sense of place. The idea of place, explored earlier in this chapter, has become an important frame of reference in heritage studies. Sense of place represents a complex set of ideas about how place is socially constructed, from considering the topography of landscapes and urban environments and what makes them distinctive, to the more experiential understanding of place, where more emphasis is made on place ‘attachment’ or ‘identity’ (Graham et al. 2009, 14). This connection can be seen to operate on an emotional, and self-perceptual level, particularly in the way people form bonds, or attachments, to place. Place-attachment is a theme that was first explored by humanist geographers in the 1970s (See Relph 1976; Tuan 1977) later developing into a distinct cross-disciplinary research area connected by a shared interest in person-place relationships (see Lewicka 2011.) Attachment here represents a complex, multi-layered relationship between people and the places that define and situate their lives in space, to create a sense of rootedness, and as such has a broad range of applications especially in contexts where the

challenges of the contemporary world are keenly felt such as community and environment issues (see Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014). Sense of place is also bound to the unique physical and communal particularities of the places people form these bonds or attachments to. This resonates with the idea of 'local distinctiveness', built of local knowledge and attention to everyday details which, as Clifford and King describe, must be defined as "... talking of a fineness of grain – the neighbourhood, the locality, the parish, the housing estate, the high street...." (Clifford and King 1993, 11).

In terms of its contribution to the intellectual framework underpinning this thesis, sense of place can be conceived of as a way of positioning social values in space. The *Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place* (ICOMOS 2008) formalizes this idea, and though the actual nomenclature differs, the principles it proposes overlap considerably with the multidisciplinary way sense of place is operationalized in heritage studies. The declaration's innovative contribution is to be found in the way it frames the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage as intrinsically interrelated and mutually constituted (Jones and Leech 2015, 14-15), whilst advocating for a pluralistic understanding of what place means and to whom. In the context of this research, each of these lines of inquiry can be harnessed to better classify and document how people derive value and assign significance to Valletta. Sense of place therefore is a useful construct in articulating how social values contribute to the perception of heritage significance in the urban setting. In a previous section, it was argued that a heritage of everyday places constitutes a way of countering normative heritage narratives. This is realized by interrogating people's deep, meaningful connections with everyday places to understand how these contribute to creating a sense of place. These lines of inquiry have demonstrably been used to access people-centred notions of heritage in opposition to top-down approaches. Waterton (2005) has shown how, when communities evaluate places, especially those dear to them, their personal constructions of sense of place clash with authorized or official practices making the same evaluation. In a related fashion, Hawke (2012, 241) argues that sense of place allows for an "alternative heritage discourse", that better represents the diversity of narratives and values attributed to ordinary places by local communities.

To conclude this chapter, it is worth considering some of the potential pitfalls or weaknesses of social value assessments. The inclusion of social values into policy and practice does not suddenly result in a sea-change event; there are significant challenges in moving from theory into practice (Díaz-Andreu 2017, 4). In tracing the role that public inclusion in the heritage process has developed across a series of conventions, starting from the Granada Convention (Council of Europe 1985), through the Valletta Convention (Council of Europe 1992) culminating

in Faro (2004), Oliver (2017) has pointed out that often, these frameworks are difficult to implement in a meaningful way, to translate the aspiration to tangible action. Social values can be ephemeral, prone to change, fragmented, and often contested, a reality that real-world utilization of social values in heritage practice can gloss over (Ireland et al. 2020, 833). These values, by extension, are often highly localized and personal, incongruous to generalized systems or national policy. Participatory community engagement has developed into a self-contained, distinct sub-discipline in archaeology (see Grima 2016a; Merriman 2004; Schadla-Hall 1999), and likewise is a common theme in contemporary heritage practice (see Waterton and Watson 2013). Whilst this research advocates for community engagement, it should be recognized that concerns have been raised on the idealized notion of ‘community’ in the social sciences in general, and how it has become a fuzzy, overutilized concept that can be operationalized uncritically for its “feel-good factor” (Waterton and Smith 2010, 6). Though it is vital to keep these considerations in mind, for purposes of this research, social value provides an inroad into new (and old) perspectives on the city of Valletta that are not normally captured by conventional assessments.

New directions in Critical Heritage

The scope of this section is to briefly explore the evolution of Critical Heritage, with reference to those elements that synergize with the research aim and subject area. The genesis of Critical Heritage as a discipline, as this chapter has documented, stems from a number of critical reflections on the uses of the past, be it by the state, state authorities, or by practitioners themselves. Following the pioneering work of Smith (2006), this reflexive, auto-critical exercise has challenged the practitioner to be aware of the inherent power/knowledge differential that expertise maintains and enacts discursively through heritage practices and official instruments and documentation.

Though highly influential and vital in decoupling heritage from its inherently Western or Eurocentric bias, criticism has been levelled at this approach due to the inordinate focus on heritage discourse at the expense of other possible avenues of inquiry. The main point of contention here is that a principally discursive approach disconnects theory from the ‘stuff’ of heritage; the places and objects people form attachments to and derive value from. In the last two decades, heritage theory has taken a ‘material turn’, which has revaluated the agency of objects and the nature of the relationship between human and non-human actors. This mode of analysis, of theorizing about the world, was prefaced by a long-running, cross-disciplinary debate regarding the relationship between “cultural subjects and cultural objects” across the social sciences, including archaeology, where it was ushered in with the emergent field of

Material Culture Studies (Dicks 2010). Focusing – or turning to – the material world implies a paradigm shift from ‘human-centred’ to ‘object-centred’ modes of knowledge creation, from humanist or anthropocentric ontologies to ones that place equal weight to non-human agency (Sterling 2022, 1037). This approach has drawn on theoretical concepts from across humanities, notably assemblage theory, which Harrison (2013, 2015, 2020) employs to dissociate heritage theorization from Cartesian dualities - nature/culture, human/non-human, for example – to instead focus attention on the ways people and things are interconnected, across time and space (Harrison 2013, 34.) This has found application in contexts that resonate with this research. Guttormsen et al. (2023) have postulated that an ‘urban assemblage theory’, where the active agency of materials and the interplay of objects, people, and practices, allow for a better understanding of the role heritage can play in urban regeneration. The outcome of these new theoretical approaches to the material world is that the remit of heritage has been expanded considerably, to find application across a wide range of present and future realities, and, indeed, problems.

Heritage theory reflects the political and ecological uncertainties of the Anthropocene and evaluates the implications this has for heritage and conservation practices. Heritage significance, traditionally considered inherent in the ‘materials’ of objects and places, is reconceptualized as relational, moving away from a preservation ethos to consider change or transformation as constitutive of heritage, helping to understand long-term trajectories of change and the implications for the communities these transformations affect (DeSilvey et al. 2020, 360). A key line of inquiry in current Critical Heritage, therefore, is to reflect on what heritage practices can contribute in the context of a rapidly changing world, across a range of cultural and natural landscapes and systems: heritage as a ‘future-making’ practise and process (see Harrison et al. 2020). Scholarly output from this broad set of ‘material turn’ theorizations have, as a result, engaged with many of the problematic issues of the current world, from archaeologies of pollution and waste (Pétursdóttir 2020; Praet et al. 2023) to new ways of enabling community healing in post-war contexts (Naguib 2020). Part of this expanding remit has been an extension of the very idea of materialities, of note to the digital realm, where new practices, interactions, archives, and processes coalesce as a ‘heritage resource’ (Bonacchi 2021, 2).

From this new-found concern with the materiality of heritage, a specific avenue of inquiry resonates with the research aim of this thesis. Theorizing about engagement with the material world and how we ‘know’ it allows for new ontologies or ways of knowing. As Olsen et al. note this:

This draws our attention to the difference between emphasizing the world as primarily intellectually mediated - that is as something consciously “read” or interpreted - versus acknowledging the world as also bodily experienced and known through our tactile and lived engagement with it (Olsen et al. 2020, 3).

When making a case for new, post-discursive approaches to heritage theory, Harrison states that, “...it seems important to bring the affective qualities of heritage ‘things’ more squarely back into the critical heritage studies arena”. (Harrison 2013, 112). Affective or emotional qualities of heritage are those embodied memories and emotions; deeply felt reactions to places and things. Affect is omnipresent yet ephemeral: “it is not something that we can easily put our finger on or even put into words, yet it is something we are familiar with nonetheless.” (Waterton 2014, 827). The ‘affective turn’ has independently produced a new corpus of scholarly work, including edited volumes exploring themes and applications within the affective sphere (see Smith et al. 2018; Olsen et al. 2020) and others dedicated to appropriate new methodologies (see Knudsen and Stage 2015). The concept of sense of place, discussed in the previous section, encapsulates all the place-specific elements that people use to construct and nurture a feeling of rootedness, thus contributing to an individual or communal sense of identity. These affective or emotional approaches to the materiality of heritage provide a new angle with which we “deepen our understanding of how people develop attachments and commitments to the past, things, beliefs, places, traditions and institutions” (Wetherell et al. 2018, 2).

These new theoretical directions that have emerged in Critical Heritage in the last two decades provide new avenues for interpreting not only the relationships between the heritage subject (people) and the materiality of heritage (places/objects) in the present but ask questions about what heritage can contribute to important global issues in the future. Certainly, as with all new theoretical inclinations, they are subject to critique and revision. Smith (2020) has taken issue with the degree with which ‘object agency’ has been elevated, warning that it might represent more of an exercise in anthropomorphic reflection, and that often the language used to convey ideas is overly convoluted and thus exclusionary (Smith 2020, 34-35). These are important considerations, especially when the spirit of this research is to demystify heritage and to advocate for everyday, people-centred assessments of heritage places. That notwithstanding, the ‘affective turn’ provides an intellectual framework that extends the ideas of sense of place to the emotional sphere, which I would argue enables new research into people/place relationships.

Value and Significance in ‘The City’

Malta has a diverse, multi-layered history, yet its formal relationship with its own material past has recent roots. Though its earliest documented museum, very much in the cabinet of curiosities tradition, was set up in the late 17th century (Gambin 2003, 9), later engagement with its heritage, more recognizably archaeological in scope, is intimately intertwined with the island’s colonial experience. Early debates on how to interpret its Neolithic temples became entangled in the divided political realities of Malta at the turn of the 20th century (see Vella and Gilkes 2001; Pessina and Vella 2021), a period when archaeology, and the idea of “proto-Malteseness” rooted in Malta’s material past, was part of a creation story appropriated to fuel nationalistic stirrings during the British period (see Grima 2014).

It is not surprising that the colonial experience had a formative influence on the early legislation enacted to safeguard heritage, from the founding of the Museum Department (1903), the Preservation of Antiquities Ordinance (1910) to the Antiquities Protection Act (1925). This last item of legislation, reminiscent of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act (1882) in Britain, created the Antiquities Committee that advised government on the protection of Malta’s heritage assets and drew up the official Antiquities List, which included basic documentation of the sites deemed important (Pace and Cutajar 2001, 203). Listing, where buildings, monuments and sites are granted differing levels of protection based on certain criteria, was not introduced into Malta until almost 70 years later, with the ‘Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands’ (1990) and the subsequent passing into law of the Development and Planning Act (1992). Together these introduce and formalize the process of Listing, Urban Conservation Zones, and the foundation of a centralized Planning Authority for Malta.

How built heritage is assessed for Listing - termed Scheduling in Maltese policy - in the Structure Plan provides a starting point for insight into the formalized, official description of what is considered as significant heritage in the Maltese context. Buildings within Urban Conservation Areas are deemed worthy of preservation on the basis of “outstanding historical or architectural interest,” and graded on a three-tiered scale that evaluates how modifications would impact the visual appearance of the structure (Government of Malta 1990, 77). The Structure Plan makes further recommendations to conserve the fabric of built heritage, noting the general state of decay of urban historic environment. In its recommendations, it singles out Valletta’s special significance and justifies its status by its inclusion on the World Heritage List. The centrality of this special significance remains a prominent theme, from national policies such as ‘The

Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development' (Government of Malta 2015) to localized plans like 'VALLETTA - A quality heritage city for tomorrow' (Government of Malta 2016). The latter document lists as one of its two primary purposes, the ability "[t]o satisfy the requirements of the Operational Guidelines for World Heritage Site" (Government of Malta 1990, 6), again attesting to the importance placed on this status. This concern is mirrored in public discourse, where change and development in or around the city are often framed and debated in terms of endangering the city's membership in what is often thought of as the world heritage 'club' (see for example Bondin 2007; Vassallo 2009; Carabott 2011).

Heritage in the Maltese context, at least until the 1990s, reflected a heritage mindset and approach that focused on the historical and aesthetic properties of the grand and the monumental, one that was recognized, and thus validated, on the global stage through the inclusion on the World Heritage List of the City of Valletta and the island's Neolithic monumental architecture. How this monumental heritage mattered, or not, to the Maltese community at large, was brought into sharp relief during the 1990s after a series of politically motivated acts of vandalism targeted the Neolithic temples, museums, and the walled medieval city of Mdina. As Grima (1998) noted, this singling out of certain monuments is indicative of a more complex relationship between local communities and the material past, a sense of 'otherness' where the monuments represent the state, demonstrating that heritage can also be a site of discord and an avenue for political retribution. In reaction to these events, other commentators identified that the relationship between Malta's material past had been under-theorized, and that certain fundamental issues surrounding heritage, such as both physical and intellectual access through education, required urgent attention (Pace 1998).

Contemporaneously, the limited definitions of heritage enabled and required by legislation, of lists of buildings and sites based on simplistic historical or aesthetic attribution, also came into question at the turn of the new millennium. The realization that such heritage systems supported and perpetuated a "monument philosophy" (Pace and Cutajar 2001), was not only out of step with heritage management practice on the continent and elsewhere, but also did not reflect changing attitudes of the Maltese with regards to heritage (Pace 2001, 247). New legislation was required, and the Cultural Heritage Act entered into law in 2002 (with multiple revisions over the years), introducing a broad restructuring of the national approach to cultural heritage which included the creation of new entities and agencies (notably Heritage Malta, and The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage).

Of particular interest to this project are the definitions enshrined in this new law, and what they can tell us about more contemporary notions of cultural heritage in Maltese context. What actually constitutes cultural heritage is defined in Article 2 of the document:

[C]ultural heritage" means movable or immovable objects of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, palaeontological and geological importance and includes information or data relative to cultural heritage pertaining to Malta....as well as intangible cultural assets comprising arts, traditions, customs and skills employed in the performing arts, in applied arts and in crafts and other intangible assets which have a historical, artistic or ethnographic value (Government of Malta 2002).

This definition demonstrates a willingness to move away from object-based notions of what heritage might entail to include intangible elements of heritage. It remains unclear however what exactly makes these categories, neatly divided by academic discipline, significant. There is no indication of process, implying inherent and self-evident assessments of significance and value, a determination that it is assumed, is controlled by the very entities that the Cultural Heritage Act brings into being. Community engagement with regards to heritage does feature in Article 4(2) of the act, vis-à-vis the public's right to have access to and benefit from heritage, whilst at the same time outlining their duty to protect and preserve heritage. Public participation in the heritage making is therefore enshrined in law.

It would be unfair to chastise the Cultural Heritage Act for not fully adhering to the parameters of the framework for a contemporary approach to heritage. The purpose of the Act was that of restructuring heritage practice in Malta, to professionalize, rationalize and standardize heritage management and procedure. Much of the document is concerned with defining what expertise is, how it is quantifiable, and what responsibilities and requirements to expect of individual heritage professionals. Being the first major legislative rethink of heritage since the 1920s, it at once sought to broaden heritage definitions to move away from the strictly tangible monument focus, whilst concurrently professionalizing the industry in a context where cultural tourism was an increasingly important part of the tourism package, as described in the introduction to this thesis. More recently, government policy in heritage and arts and culture sectors has taken an active approach that reflects a more contemporary, people-centric outlook. The 'State of the Heritage Reports' published by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage – created by the Cultural Heritage Act – from 2007 began to propose measures to increase public participation. In more general terms, the 2011 National Culture Policy (Government of Malta 2011) singles out 'inclusivity' as one of its core objectives, where the right of access and participation in cultural life empowers communities. Ten years later, how this

impacts heritage is more explicit in the current draft National Culture Policy document (Government of Malta 2021). The draft policy places renewed emphasis on Intangible Heritage, the impact of development and planning policy on Malta's World Heritage Assets (with particular reference to Valletta), and the importance of continued commitment to international charters and conventions. Of these, the policy's recommendation to fulfil its obligation to the *European Landscape Convention*, which Malta signed but did not ratify, and to signing and ratifying the *Faro Convention*, represent two of desired outcomes of this document.

It is clear therefore, that in the last 20 years, local legalisation and policy have moved towards recognizing and embracing aspects of international approaches to heritage. Championing Intangible heritage and public participation in cultural life are two key areas that address some of the concerns of contemporary, critical approaches to heritage. However, though laudable, there is still a distinct reliance on a top-down, authoritative approach, one focused on conventional assessments where primacy is bestowed on historic and aesthetic attributes of heritage.

Chapter summary

The scope of this chapter was to create a framework to support the research aim of this thesis, that of discovering the myriad ways in which the heritage of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Valletta is valued and deemed significant by ordinary, non-practitioner people, be they residents or otherwise connected. The framework itself has been crafted not only to address the aim itself, but also with the specific economic and historical realities of the city in mind. To do this, attention was drawn to the multidisciplinary context from which Critical Heritage Studies emerged, and how the central tenets represented a paradigm shift within heritage study and practice. There was a deliberate focus on the work of Smith (2004, 2006) and her analysis of how the control of normative modes of heritage interpretation are constructed, maintained, and propagated through various mechanisms within the industry or scholarship. The second half of the chapter looks to a new generation of international heritage guidelines and instruments that introduce a people-centred, multi-vocal and inclusive approach to heritage, very different from the elitist, monument-led and expert-defined heritage outlined earlier in the chapter. The argument for this paradigm shift extends beyond the 'how' of heritage to the 'what', and it is therefore argued that approaches to the contemporary past are well suited to capture the everyday heritage. Representing diversity in the ways people value heritage is a core aim of this thesis; therefore, the validity of values-based approaches was critically explored in light of

contemporary heritage discourse. As a subset of this, it was argued that social values and the related concept of sense of place, are particularly useful mechanisms of accessing people-centred, bottom-up assessments of value and significance. Heritage Studies is dynamic and ever evolving, and an exploration of the current theoretical approaches was presented, with particular emphasis on the affective or emotive research, which offers up new analytical opportunities when trying to document the dynamics of the social values of heritage places. The chapter concludes with a critical overview of how heritage has developed in the Maltese context, to better position this thesis' research aim within a local frame of reference.

The chapter that follows documents the transition from idea to implementation. It describes the complete arc of the project from the approach design and participant recruitment to the data gathering phase which was carried out in Valletta between 2021 and 2022. Part of the chapter is dedicated to validating the data capture methods, which have been borrowed from ethnography and social geography and are based on participant-led walking interviews. How the captured data - textual and visual - were processed, analysed, and interpreted thematically is outlined to act as a contextual prelude to the later results chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology: Devising new approaches

Chapter introduction

The guiding principle of this thesis is that value-based assessments and the heritage significance they define, require the inclusion of social values to capture the nuanced, unexpected, and often unconventional ways in which people and communities experience or define heritage places in the present. The previous chapter outlined how the research questions posited by this thesis are framed by fundamental preoccupations with how ‘heritage’ is understood, conceptualized, propagated, and administered. Drawing on forty years of multidisciplinary approaches to the past, creates a contextual basis of heritage scholarship that provides a foundation for the primary research aim of this thesis. If distilled, the principal concepts, though many years in the making, can be condensed into the following conceptual framework:

- Rather than simply being concerned with the material and the monumental, heritage can be conceived of as a process enacted by people and communities in the past, the present and the future. The social values derived from heritage is a key feature in determining significance in this process.
- Heritage professionals and practitioners must be cognisant of the role they might play in the maintenance and dissemination of an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), recognizing that this can result in expert-led and potentially restrictive and exclusionary heritage assessments.
- The “stuff” of heritage can be conceived of as including the personal and the everyday. This particular outlook extends the portfolio of heritage to consider the materiality of the contemporary past and the potentially infinite number of stories attached to it.

Having defined an intellectual niche for the research aim of this project, it now follows that there must be a methodological resolution, a suite of concepts and approaches that in unison combine to constitute the ‘new methods’ that the title of this thesis alludes to. This chapter, therefore, will define what these methods are and how they relate to and satisfy the requirements put forward by the research aim and the research objectives identified in the introductory chapter. Figure 7 builds on the project model presented in Chapter One,

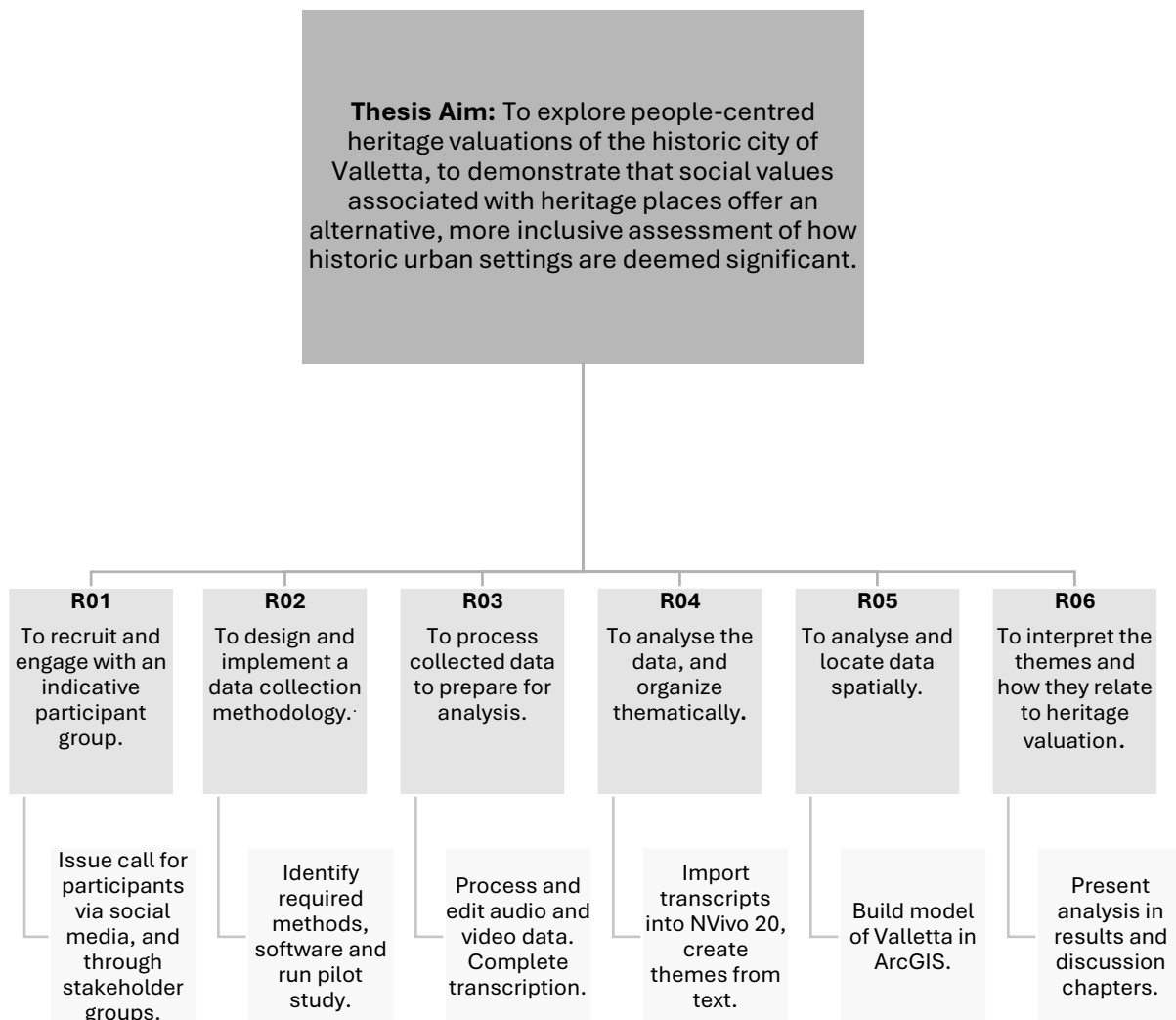


Figure 7 - Relationship between Thesis Aim, Research Objectives and Methods adopted to complete each objective.

adding a new layer that illustrates the relationship between the individual objectives and the methods that were employed to achieve them. The formulation and implementation of these methods are subject of this chapter.

New approaches to established heritage concepts often accommodate or introduce new methodological approaches. This research employs a hybrid methodology, based on video-recorded, mobile, and in-situ interviews conducted with volunteer participants taking part in

walks around the city of Valletta. That this methodology is a hybrid is not defined simply by the way that it was conducted; rather it also refers to its provenance. The first section of this chapter explores how in-situ and on-the-move interviews have been utilized in a range of disciplines, and how being 'in place' offers distinct advantages, enabling an approach that has the potential to produce complex, nuanced and rich data. The section also considers the various available approaches available when conducting walking interviews, and why a particular format was selected for this project. Walking interviews, though rare, are not an entirely new phenomenon, and where this research innovates is in the inclusion of video. The section covers all logistical aspects of the implementation of the data gathering from approaching the potential participants, scheduling the interviews around COVID restrictions, and the ethical implications of the research and how best practice was observed in this regard. Before the project was implemented fully, a pilot study was carried out as a proof of concept, to test both the feasibility of the walking interview and the data processing and analysis procedures and logic, and how the resultant data could begin to address the thesis aim.

Having established, through the pilot study, how walking whilst talking allows for an unconventional yet meaningful method for gathering qualitative data, the final section of this chapter provides an overview of the data themselves. The first of these data are those pertaining to the participants, specifically the limited demographic information collected and how they characterize the participant group. The bulk of the chapter is dedicated to the process of creating themes, how they are organized and constituted, and how those themes transition from NVivo to the thesis. The final part of this section explores spatial data visualization, and the construction of a model of the city in ArcGIS. Though this ultimately did not feature in the results as much as expected, the exercise was useful and enabled the reproduction of detailed maps of the city to contextualize the rich place data.

Fieldwork: Walking the City

Section introduction

In general terms, the basic methodological approach for data collection for this thesis is qualitative and based on in-situ interviews with a broad cross-section of participants who in some way have a connection to the city. Though interviews are a staple of qualitative research, the approach to interviewing adopted for this research mines a host of ideas and methods from social anthropology and geography, methods which in recent years have found increasing

applicability in the field of heritage studies. Reliant on direct contact with participants, the interviews are designed not as static, face-to-face encounters, but rather as conversations on the move. The primary method for data collection centres on a shared experience between the researcher and the participant, one which occurs within – and in some instances without – the city of Valletta, as together we walk along its streets, through its piazzas and along the fortified walls that define its seabound periphery.

Walking and talking

Of course, there needs to be a specific, and productive set of reasons to justify these walking interviews, a set of research guided expectations that will contribute to this research and its central aim and its related objectives in ways which differ from a standard interview format. The first of these reasons rests in how walking relates to the concept of ‘place’, and how it can provide insights into how the ‘places’ of Valletta are significant to different people in different ways. This is important for, as we have seen earlier, the way place is defined and valued plays a fundamental role in current critical approaches to heritage, approaches that move away from a material focus to consider the significance of places to the specific communities that value them. This way of conceptualizing place represents an essentially phenomenological approach, where the meaning of place derives from the conscious experience of it, that conjunction between ‘Being’ and ‘Being-in-the-World’ as Tilley puts it (1994, 14-15). Experience of place, from this perspective, is rooted in bodily experience, in sensorial input and motion. Contextually therefore, walking is at once a form of locomotion, a way of corporeal propulsion through space, whilst also a way of experiencing the world. Rebecca Solnit, who in her writing has explored the profound impact of walking as a human cultural, political and spiritual activity, similarly notes that “[w]alking shares with the making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world” (Solnit 2001, 29).

This interest in embodied movement has been broadly embraced across the whole spectrum of the humanities, particularly in geographical and sociological research, thus collectively contributing to a generalized concern in ‘mobilities’ as an inquiry paradigm (see Spinney 2011). Mobilities as a concept is concerned with bodily movement, be that human powered or otherwise, where mobility refers to a “practiced mobility that is enacted and experienced through the body” (Cresswell 2010, 20). Acting as an overarching paradigm that frames research into the political, social, and environmental dimensions of movement, its broad scope is supported and enabled by an array of methodologies from motion mapping to autobiographical journaling (see Fincham et al. 2009). Within this methodological milieu,

walking interviews have become a mainstay, applicable in a multitude of research contexts, from gender and ethnicity (Warren 2017), physical or cognitive impairment (Butler and Derrett 2014, Marcotte et al. 2022), mobility and the elderly (Van Cauwenberg et al. 2012) and how urban environments impact well-being (Lauwers et al. 2021).

This embodied representation of walking has also found application in archaeology, where it has been a useful way of conceptualizing and interpreting landscapes and the experience of landscapes, where movement, and walking in particular, becomes a way of knowing, allowing researchers to tap into “.... experiences of tactile, feet-first engagement with the world” (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, 3). In this application, walking therefore presents itself as method of simultaneously accessing and creating those experiences of place, an interface between the physical landscape, the interviewee, and the researcher. How then do we translate this phenomenological way of knowing the world (Tilley 1994) and apply it to this project?

Outside the realms of the social sciences, walking has a long association with the specific landscape of urban environments. There is a tradition of urban perambulation and exploration of modern urban cityscapes, especially of London and Paris, where the ‘flâneurs’ pioneered a ‘psychogeography’ of urban space, an oft-used term that encompasses literary, avant-garde practices and political commentary, from the late 19th Century to the present day (see Coverley 2006; Pierce & Lawson 2015, 2). It is however the recent application of walking as method within the social sciences, which though not widespread, directly informs and inspires the methods for this research in the way in which the format enables a very particular set of place-specific responses beyond the conventional interview process.

A key consideration would be the ‘in-situ’ nature of the interview, which alters the relational dynamic of the researcher and participant, and similarly impacts the resultant data. Strang (2010, 132) has described how, from an ethnographic perspective, in-situ interviews elicit more nuanced, detailed, place-specific stories and memories through the interviewee’s interactions with place. Geertz (1996, cited in Convery et al. 2012, 4) argued that being in-situ was inevitable, stating that “[t]o study place or, more exactly, other’s sense of place, it is necessary to hang around with them”. Walking interviews are indeed a form of in-situ interviews, albeit on the move, and as a result should produce a rich set of place responses. Lee and Ingold (2006, 68-9) extoll the benefits of the in-situ mobile interview, adding that the act of walking, in their view, sharpens the connection to the environment being studied, whilst importantly adding the dimension of understanding how people navigate through space to create routes. Walking also adds an element of surprise, the “...opportunity for serendipitous discovery of [the] unexpected....” (Pierce and Lawson 2015, 8), the spatial counterpart to the interesting interview

deviation. In a review of walking as method for the ethnographic study of place, Evans and Jones (2011, 856) came to similar conclusions when comparing walking interviews with more formal, stationary interviews, noting that walking interviews produced more spontaneous discussion about the places that mattered to the interviewees. This spontaneity and nuance are in great part the result of the participant being allowed to interact with familiar places on their own terms, an approach that has found particular application and suitability in situations when the researcher is working with marginalized or vulnerable groups (see Kiddey 2017; Kiddey and Schofield 2011; Schofield and Morrissey 2013).

As a method, walking interviews produce data in ways which are compatible with the epistemological framework, informed by contemporary and critical heritage scholarship, that defines this project's research aim. By providing access to a multiplicity of perspectives on place, it enables a new way of understanding how heritage values are attributed to the historic fabric, and consequently why they might be memorable or significant. Inherently, this is an approach that focuses in on people's interaction with place, be it a grand baroque palazzo, a crumbling shopfront, a preened garden or a quirky, overlooked architectural detail. It enables a perspective on heritage that factors in the significance of the everyday place or object. Though much of the literature on this mobile approach to data collection – with the noticeable exception of Kiddey and Schofield (2011)- comes from social geography and anthropology, a very recent publication by Whitehead et al. (2021) has successfully integrated walking as methodological framework in a specifically heritage-oriented project. The authors set out to challenge – much in the same vein as this project – the limitation of prescribed, official heritage ontologies, and argue that walking whilst interviewing their project participants provides them the opportunity to reveal a plurality of heritages, ones often unrecognized in official heritage practice (Whitehead et al. 2021, 48). Furthermore, the authors argue that in tandem with interviewee co-production, the methodology can directly challenge the hegemony of the AHD by complicating, subverting or simply bypassing the “pasts” it presents and controls (Whitehead et al. 2021, 92).

It is the promise of accessing a multiplicity of heritage meanings, a plurality of personal heritages, that walking whilst talking has been demonstrated to produce, that has informed the decision to build this approach into the primary data collecting methodology for this thesis. The following section outlines how these principles translated into a working method, tailored specifically for this project.

How to walk 'The City': Designing the interview

The topography and built environment of Valletta have a bearing on how the walking interview methodology was implemented. Its diminutive size coupled with its boundaries being clearly and unequivocally defined both by immense fortifications and the fact that it was built on a peninsula of rock, provides a definite spatial context for this research. Valletta can be crossed, even at a leisurely pace, in 15 minutes, from the main entrance at City Gate, to Fort St. Elmo at the tip of the peninsula. It was decided early on therefore, due to the dimensions of the city, that it was not required to use a targeted approach to specific streets, districts, or areas of Valletta. It was perfectly plausible to define the entirety of the city as the 'research area.' It is important to note however, that the original bastion trace of the city is what is being used in this definition, and it does not extend to the later, 18th century suburb of Floriana which is now an independent municipality (see Chapter 1, Figure 2).

Having defined the specific research area, the next consideration was how to conduct the interviews, that is to say, what sort of approach to walking with the participants would suit the research aim of this project. From the literature it became apparent that there were a few different possibilities and techniques to consider, the differing variables creating a vast array of possible interview configurations (Jones et al. 2008, 1). In the broadest sense, these research typologies can be categorized by how involved the participant is in defining the route, assuming that a route is part of the research design in the first place, but also importantly how familiar the researcher and the interviewee are with the area being studied (see Evan and Jones 2011, 850).

One technique is that of "bimbling" or unstructured, spontaneous roaming (Anderson 2004) which has an affinity with semi-structured interviews, favouring an exploratory approach based around in-situ, and often impromptu, conversations with the community. This is a technique that has been applied in the context of Valletta before, where Schofield and Morrissey (2013) used this approach to acquaint themselves with geographical context and the residents in Valletta's Strait Street. I would argue that this approach works best, however, in a situation where the parameters of the study are very exploratory in nature, where the researcher is getting a 'feel' for a neighbourhood, its community and their relationship with the study area. Here again, my positionality as a researcher, as discussed in the introductory chapter, must be factored in.

As a resident of Valletta, I would be coming at this project with social and spatial baggage of my own, a predetermined set of ideas and relationships with the urban fabric and the various communities who call it home. What was required therefore, was a different interview type, one

that assumes that both the researcher and the participant already possessed an accumulated knowledge and experience of the city. Kusenbach (2003) proposes the “go-along” approach, where the researcher follows the participant on their quotidian routes, engaging with them as part of the process, a method that allowed Kiddey (2011, 2017) rare insight into the homeless community of Bristol. Drawing on an ethnographic tradition of participant observation, the focus here is on attempting to capture how the interviewee behaves naturally within the socio-spatial context of the research area, providing qualitative data coupled with discrete spatial information. As a method, the researcher would normally not possess local knowledge when adopting this approach, placing the onus on the interviewee to lead with little interference. My connection to the subject area means that this method is not applicable in the context of this project. Furthermore, the community pool in this instance would be restricted to those who either live in or commute to the research area daily. The target community for this project is however broader and includes non-resident participants who might visit Valletta infrequently.

Interview format

Taking into account these interview design parameters, the approach to walking interviews proposed focussed on letting the interviewee design the interview route, with no fixed starting or ending points, only a loose set of guidelines as to how the interview would be conducted, what the expectations might be and how long the interview might take. This is a deviation from the minimal impact or ethnographic approach taken by other researchers (Kusenbach 2003; Kiddey and Schofield 2011; Kiddey 2017; Whitehall et al 2021) and acknowledges that there is an element of fabrication embedded in this process, which may detract from the informality of the researcher/interviewee encounter. However, I would argue that the proposed approach attempts to minimize the researcher’s pre-existing familiarity with the subject area, whilst also recognizing the reality that most of the interviewees will already have a high level of spatial awareness of Valletta, whether or not they are residents. The walking interview was designed around the following guidelines:

1. The interviewees each come with a list of five places that were meaningful to them in Valletta. It was made clear that the ‘meaning’ attached to these places could be positive or negative.
2. The interviewees would each agree to meet the researcher at their selected starting point, and that we would walk together to each stop that they had selected. The guidelines suggest four or five stops, but also encourages the participant to point out or comment on aspects of the city as the walk progresses.

3. At each predetermined stop, the researcher would briefly ask why this particular element of the city was selected.
4. The route is not fixed, and the interviewees should feel comfortable making changes to the route as required. The route and all spatial references are collected and noted.
5. The interview would end after the final interviewee-determined place is reached and discussed.

Data capture

Walking interviews differ from static, face-to-face interviews in that they produce categories of complementary data beyond the textual data that result from the interview transcripts. With the route being defined by the participants, the walking interviews also produce an array of spatial data unique to each individual encounter. Not only was there variation as to where the interviews started and ended, but so too was the route navigated by each participant unique. Some interviewees could talk at length about each stop on the route, others would get distracted or reminded of some other aspect of the city they thought was interesting or memorable. As we moved through the streets it became clear that some routes had been planned and considered, whereas other interviewees made it up as we went along. This relationship with the streets of Valletta needed to be recorded, because taken as a whole, it can tell a lot about how people relate to individual neighbourhoods and streets, and by extension to the city.

There are many different options for collecting these data, from hi-tech solutions such as GPS dataloggers, to more manual systems such as detailed notetaking. I wanted to implement a hybrid solution that not only recorded the routes taken, but simultaneously created a visual record of the interview. To achieve this, it was decided that the interviews would be filmed as well as audio recorded. In previous experience of documenting a community of heritage significance, in this case of a music community at the 18th century Fort Tigné also in Malta, a trial filmed in-situ interview, provided a much richer, place-specific set of responses (de Giorgio, 2021). Being on site, allowed the interviewees to engage with the physical presence of the fort which triggered collective memories and emotional responses that were immediately captured on film. Having the entire interview as a video file allowed the route of the interview to be documented, removing the need for bespoke mapping equipment or additional note taking.

Visual data are often captured using still photography, documenting the interview process to create a record of the spatial context in which the encounter took place. This location specific information is central to this project, charting the relationship between the textual data

– people’s recollections, reactions, ruminations on place – with the specific elements, tangible or otherwise, of Valletta. Video and filmmaking are a well-documented and tested complement of approaches in ethnographic fieldwork and where video contributes both to the capturing and documenting of the subject area of study, whilst also acting as a narrative medium for presenting and engaging with the research in the form of documentaries or short and feature length films. With the digital revolution making filmmaking more accessible, video documentation is increasingly common on archaeological sites, and used in a number of ways from information dissemination and public engagement to experimental genres that reflect more progressive, contemporary approaches to archaeological research (Morgan 2014, 333). Film provides a counterpoint, “mediating the lived experience of people, animals, objects, and places immersively, rather than situating subjects within a discursive, overtly informational frame (Redmon 2019, 9). This observation suggests a synergy between filmmaking, the video data it captures, and phenomenological approaches to place, in particular with the mobile interview methodology that this research has adopted.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, walking interviews have been broadly implemented in the humanities as an effective way of investigating embodied relationships with space to address a wide array of research interests. Video documentation has established itself as a meaningful addition to the mobile interview toolkit and has found application in a varied corpus of research contexts. Video is particularly adept at capturing the minutiae of place interaction, and thus indispensable for research on multi-sensorial experiences of place (c.f. Patterson and Glass 2020, Pink 2007, 2008). By its very nature, video is well suited to capturing rich data when on the move and has been an insightful primary source of data capture in several mobile ethnographic contexts, particularly in transport-related research, from cycling (Brown and Spinney 2009, Spinney 2011) to automotive (Laurier 2010). Though videography, in conjunction with walking interviews, has not yet applied in the context of critical heritage research, as method, when recalling the ‘affective turn’ explored in Chapter 2, their symbiotic relationship can act as a framework to better appreciate how “objects inhabit the same field of affects, meanings, and sensualities of human actions” (Yi ‘En 2013, 6).

On this basis, I would argue that using video documentation, represents an effective way of maximizing the methodological benefits of the walking interview, where the immediacy of the subject’s engagement with, and reaction to, space and place sets the method apart from static interviews. Evans and Jones (2011) expressed concerns that the logistics of filming interviews can be cumbersome and counterproductive to the ethos of the walking interview. However, recent technological developments, as tested in the pilot study discussed in more detail later in

this chapter, allow for image-stabilized cameras are not only affordable, but self-contained and handheld, meaning that they are entirely unobtrusive to the process of conducting the interview.

Furthermore, the pilot study provided the first indication of the complimentary relationship between the data types captured. Though the textual data would be principally responsible in the constructions of thematic and narrative threads, video data would anchor the interviewee and the text in space. Mapping these people/place interactions, expanded on in the section below, was one of the original goals of the project. From one perspective these video data would act as complimentary tool in capturing the interview on the move. Referring back to the video file during the transcription, would allow me to precisely locate the interviewee's position in Valletta, thus providing a spatial reference that facilitated the mapping of the specific routes each of the participants elected to take. Beyond that however, it was envisaged that analysis of the video data would play an important role in allowing for the spatial data to be described and pictorially conveyed to the reader. Arguably, the video data's greatest contribution became evident when the focus shifted from the biographical to the physical, when the analytical lens shifted from the stories shared by participants to the physical setting of Valletta's streets, buildings, and squares. This place-centric analysis is best exemplified in Chapter 6, the final result chapter.

Mapping the City

In reviewing methods and approaches to walking interviews, Evans and Jones (2011, 851) commented that one of the potential weaknesses of some the studies reviewed, was that little regard was paid to mapping the projects. This research is concerned with understanding how various communities derive social value and assign significance within very specific spatial parameters, the boundaries of the city of Valletta. Mapping has therefore been incorporated into methodological approach of this thesis to achieve two specific goals: firstly, that of allowing for the spatial visualization of the data collected during the interview phase of the project; and secondly as a tool for analysing the data.

Mapping of the historic landscape is an established practice, often associated with national programmes such as Historic Landscape Characterization (HLC) introduced by English Heritage (now Historic England) in the early 1990s (English Heritage 2003). Facilitated by the advent of Geographical Information Systems (GIS), HLC represented an innovative way of creating easily understandable, visually rich maps that captured the complexity and time-depth of cultural landscapes, becoming invaluable in heritage practice and planning. In the context of Valletta, where HLC has yet to be implemented, cartographical interpretation and

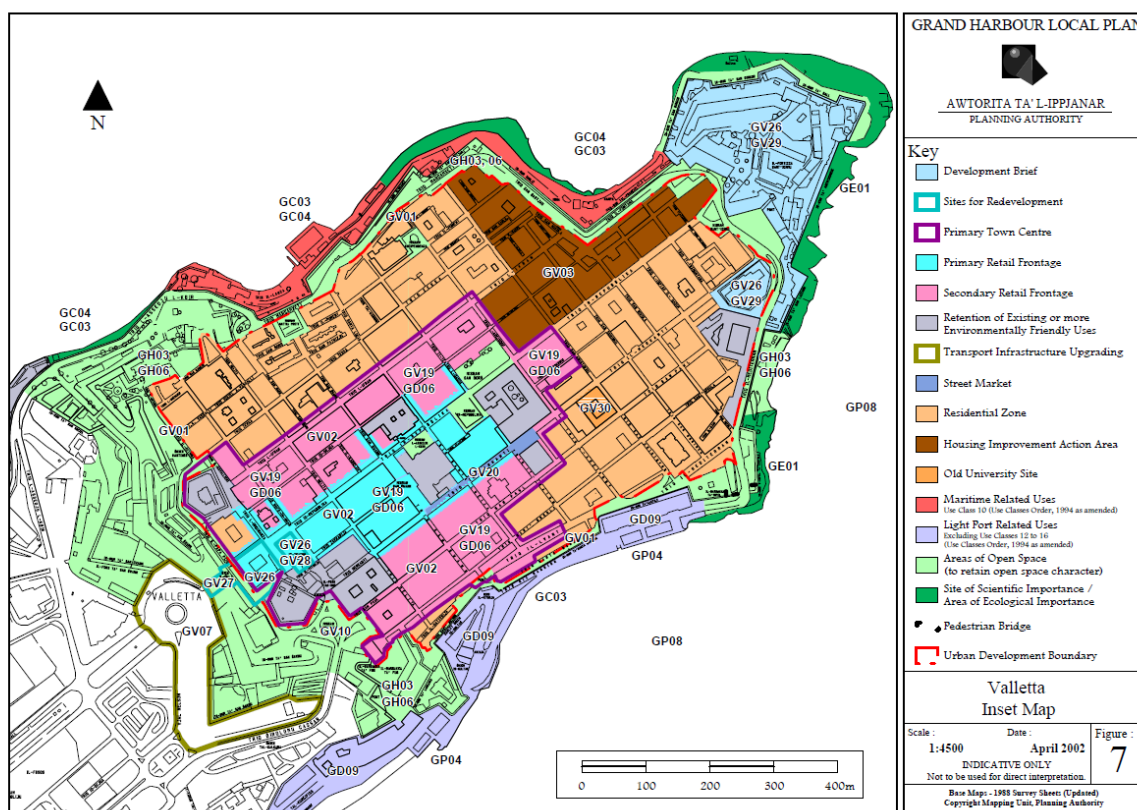


Figure 8 - Grand Harbour Local Plan, Malta Planning Authority (Source: Malta Planning Authority 2002).

representation of heritage has been limited to defining planning development zones within the city walls (see Figure 8).

Taking the HLC approach to cultural landscapes as a starting point, this thesis uses GIS tools to create a spatial representation of the user-defined heritage value and significance that emerges from the analysis of the textual and spatial information collected during the walking interviews. Though similar in principle, this spatializing of values is perhaps better classified as ‘cultural mapping’ where multiple, often overlapping, cultural landscapes can be cartographically analysed and compared. (Smith 2015, 229). This approach does not supplant character mapping; rather it coexists and is complementary. Not limited to documenting physical form, this is better understood as a process for describing socio-spatial dynamics, the relationships between people and place (Avrami 2019) and thus synergistic with the people-centred approach that is an integral aspect of the intellectual framework of thesis. Mapping can be an essential tool, especially in conjunction with civic engagement, of enacting the agenda of contemporary heritage approaches. Certainly, maps are normally the domain of the expert, a tool of the professional. However, through appropriation, the same application allows for a counter-mapping of place, where underrepresented groups are empowered to engage with

planning and heritage practice to develop and disseminate alternative histories of place (see Harrison 2011; Lashua et al. 2010).

Fieldwork: Implementation and logistics.

Section introduction

This section of the chapter moves the discussion from the abstract to the actual. It outlines how the project was implemented, and what considerations were made in order to facilitate its implementation. It covers defining and recruiting participants, the logistics and ethical best practices adopted, and the fieldwork schedule.

Defining the stakeholders

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Valletta's Outstanding Universal Value would suggest that the list of stakeholders should be reckoned in global terms. It is however a more localized take on significance that this project aims to understand, which does not exclude the global perspective; rather it is more concerned with looking out from within. As such, therefore, the potential pool of interviewees was designed in a way that would best resolve or engage with the questions underlying the research aim.

To access the official, expert heritage narratives of Valletta, in view of the sparsity of published commentary on heritage value and significance in the literature, specific stakeholders were identified. These can be broadly categorized into two distinct camps, based on their professional standing. The first group would include those entities and organizations who, in some professional capacity, are involved with official heritage practice on the Maltese Islands. These entities were approached individually, provided with standard *Project Description Documents* (see Appendix A), and cordially asked to put forward contacts to participate in the interview phase of the project (Table 1).

A secondary, but no less relevant, group of participants were to be recruited from the members of the major heritage NGOs and other similar organizations. Participants from these entities could either be heritage professionals, if in the employ of the organizations, or members with specialized interests, or simply community members with a particular interest in heritage matters. In belonging to these organizations, which have been openly critical at times of how Malta's heritage is managed, it is assumed that the interviewees would provide useful counterpoint, an insider's perspective on the management of heritage places, and as a result an alternative set of "semi-official" heritage values and significance shaped by their relevant

experiences. These organizations were contacted individually, and the project documentation was forwarded to their respective members via email distribution (Table 2).

Entity	Description
<i>The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SHC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established by the Cultural Heritage Act (2002). The SCH advises the Maltese government on all aspects of heritage policy and practice. . It also advises on international heritage commitments as is the contact point with organizations such as UNESCO, European Council etc. Its functions were formerly part of the ‘Museums Department’.
<i>Heritage Malta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established by the Cultural Heritage Act (2002). Also formerly part of the ‘Museums Department’, Heritage Malta is responsible of the management of Malta’s national museums and sites.
<i>The Malta Planning Authority</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National agency that governs land use, issues development permits, and maintains the Scheduled building list.
<i>Valletta Cultural Agency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A legacy of Valletta’s tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2018, this agency is involved in devising and promoting plans to strengthen Valletta’s artistic and cultural heritage. Its cultural programme places much emphasis on inclusivity and community engagement.
The University of Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With departments dedicated to Classics and Archaeology, Tourism Studies, Heritage Studies, and the Built Environment, the University of Malta trains and prepares many of the professionals who go on to occupy prominent positions in many of the stakeholder entities.
Malta Tourism Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official agency for the promotion of Malta as a tourist product.

Table 1- List of Heritage or Heritage Affiliated Institutions and Agencies.

It is the heritage values that communities assign to place in Valletta that is the primary concern of this research, and this has a direct impact on the interview phase of the project. It was therefore imperative that the majority of interviewees be drawn from the community at large. The main data collection phases were conducted between October 2021 and February 2022. In order to assign primacy to community, non-expert responses, the aim was to establish a 1:5 ratio between ‘expert’ and ‘non-expert’ participants. Recruitment of participants for the main corpus of interviews was conducted in a number of ways; some were targeted, while others were more piecemeal and reliant on serendipity, chance encounter and word of mouth.

Entity	Description
<i>Din l-Art Hejwa</i> (This Beautiful Land)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Malta’s National Trust established in 1965. A not-for-profit NGO that promotes and advocates for Malta’s built and natural heritage. Lobbies on conservation and preservation issues. Has restored and taken custodianship of a portfolio of historic landmarks.
<i>Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar</i> (Together for a better environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A not-for-profit NGO that advocates for natural heritage protection, campaigning for a socially inclusive and sustainable approach.
<i>The Archaeology Society Malta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Founded in 1993, this NGO promotes all matters concerning archaeology and often takes a stance on matters of heritage and planning. Publish a quarterly journal and organize regular lectures and seminars for their members.
<i>Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna</i> (Our Country’s Inheritance Foundation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not-for-profit NGO and trust. Conservation and preservation focussed, with a specific interest in Malta’s military heritage. Has stewardship of a raft of heritage sites and runs its own museum together with a number of other attractions.

Table 2 - List of Heritage Not-For-Profit NGOs.

The preliminary enquiries were conducted via a number of Valletta-centric social media pages, with the starting point being the ‘Valletta Residents Revival’ page⁴. Later, and in order to attract participants who would not necessarily be Valletta residents, more general interest social media

⁴ Group can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1609759889287946>

groups were approached in much the same manner, ‘Vintage Malta History’ being a notable example⁵. With permission from relevant page administrators, the project was introduced and the call for participants made, each post providing a contact point for interested candidates to approach me directly via personal message or via the provided email address. The outcome of this approach resulted in an engagement with a sub-set of the Valletta community, residents who in general have moved to Valletta in the last decade or two, from other towns in the Maltese island and often further afield.

Outside organizational contact and social media, a different approach was adopted to connect with the immediate community. As noted in the introduction, Valletta has long suffered from a dwindling population (see Chapter 1, Figure 5). Many of the self-described true locals, the multi-generational residents who identify as ‘Beltin’, are these days most likely to occupy specific districts associated with the post-war social housing areas. My position as a researcher in relationship to this tightknit community was impacted by my status as a resident. Though, in their eyes, I would fit squarely into the category of the recently arrived, being a resident was an invaluable icebreaker. Personal contacts and striking up conversations with shop owners or locals encountered at neighbourhood bars and cafes, enabled me to connect with and recruit participants from outside my own social network.

For record keeping purposes and later analysis, interviewees were categorized by their relationship with the city in terms of residency status (Table 3). Creating a participant typology based on residency status allows the analysis to distinguish how heritage significance and the values associated with it differs between the casual visitor, the recent resident, and those who have called Valletta home for a generation or more. The typology adopted is as follows:

Relationship Type	Code	Description
<i>Multi-generational resident</i>	MGR	Denoting a longest, most establish familial relationship with the city.
<i>Long-term resident</i>	LT	Local or non-local resident of the city for ten years or more.
<i>Recent resident</i>	RR	Local or non-local resident of the city for two years or less.
<i>Non-Resident local</i>	NRL	Local or non-local but not a resident.

⁵ Group can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/768456500209072>

<i>Other</i>	O	Additional type to accommodate other visitors to the city [Not used]
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Table 3 - Participant Typology.

Conducting interviews

The interviews were conducted with the participants wearing a lapel microphone attached to professional-grade portable digital recorder which ensured that the responses to questions and additional commentary during the walk was captured faithfully. Video was captured independently using a gimble-stabilized portable camera mounted on a bespoke cradle to secure it whilst on the move. The video track also captured audio from the perspective of the interviewer, which allowed the participant to wander freely, out of range of the camera microphone. The video and audio tracks were later synchronized in Adobe Photoshop to output a seamless file of the entire interview.

Fieldwork schedule

The schedule was designed around a pilot study and two primary data collection drives (see Table 4). These primary data gathering phases were designed as month-long initiatives straddling the second and third years of the doctoral programme. As a contingency, an additional session was scheduled in 2022 to account for any logistical issues that might arise.

Phase Label	Date	# of Participants
Pilot Study	March-April 2020	6
Primary Data 1	October 2021	4
Primary Data 2	December 2021-Janurary 2022	9
Additional Data	Summer 2022	Not Required

Table 4 - Fieldwork Schedule.

Ethics

To assure ethical best practice, this project was fully vetted by the University of York's Archaeology Department Ethics Committee in conjunction with the dedicated Ethics officer prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. A standard submission form was completed to address

specific key areas of concern, which in general are designed to mitigate against potential harm to the participants, the researcher and to the University. It was therefore important that each participant was clearly briefed on the project, what it entailed, and what was expected of them, whilst also clearly defining the ethical obligations of the researcher. Further protection was afforded to participants through comprehensive anonymity options in the consent form, whilst highlighting their right to withdraw from the project at any time.

Research that is people-centred or involves communities in some way, often requires the acquisition of personal data, the handling of which would need to comply with strict GDPR regulation. Personal data collected for this project was limited, involving no special category data thus minimizing risk to the participants due to researcher negligence. As part of best practice protocol, all participants also were provided with detailed information regarding how data would be processed, stored, and deleted within a stipulated timeframe (see Appendix A).

Testing new approaches: A pilot study

Methodological approaches to data gathering require testing, fine-tuning and validating. Built into the research design of this thesis was a proof-of-concept study, a full run through of the methods described above, from data capture to a preliminary analysis of the results. This was conducted during a travel window in the COVID pandemic in March and April 2021.

For the pilot study to be rigorous, it was decided that rather than a single interview, it would be ideal to test the methods with a cross-section of participant types. A general call for participants was made on social media channels (specifically Facebook), through NGO mail-outs and finally through personal connection. In total six participants were interviewed, representing three differing participant types (Table 5), which included long-term residents, non-resident locals and one recent arrival to the capital. These six were selected from a pool of 13 respondents who had agreed to participate in the project within the allotted timeframe, to provide the best representational sample of responses. Of the six participants, one would be explicitly considered a heritage professional, whereas another had research interests that overlap with themes in heritage scholarship. The remaining four participant's relationship to the city centred on personal memory and experience, be it residential or otherwise.

Participant Code	Participant Type	Age
LT1	Long Term Resident	48
LT2	Long Term Resident	71
NRL1	Non-Resident Local	47
NRL2	Non-Resident Local	36
NRL3	Non-Resident Local	48
RR1	Recent Resident	34

Table 5 - Pilot Study participant list and information.

Pilot Study: Early insights and results

This test phase of the research was conducted over a number of weeks in March and April 2021, which allowed me to familiarize myself with the process and the equipment and adjust the parameters of the interviews iteratively. This was undertaken not only to test viability of the methods, but importantly to test how they would work under local COVID restrictions. Though interviewing with a mask did interfere somewhat with the video production, audio quality was not affected. In some ways, the pandemic guidelines facilitated the interviewing process. The social-distancing rules, coupled with shop and service closures, meant that Valletta was a veritable ghost town, and therefore much easier to navigate.

During this process it became clear that though interviews were intended to be a semi-structured and conversational interaction, some ground rules needed to be implemented. These required me to intercede on occasion to steer the conversation back to the interview at hand, either to elicit specific responses or, more prosaically for time keeping purposes, to assure that interviews respected the artificial time limit of 45min.

The selection of a diverse group of interviewees coupled with a research design that allowed for a participant-led route yielded a promising set of preliminary results. Some interviews revolved around locations that had very personal connection be they familial or domestic, whereas some locations were selected for the sense of history or place they evoked. Other common themes emerged very early on in the process, always unsolicited, often dealing with aspects of change in the city, both positive and negative, the proliferation of boutique hotels and new entertainment venues making a frequent appearance.

The pilot study successfully generated a sizeable data set. The interviews themselves were transcribed from the audio recordings to produce a 23,500-word document. During this process, further annotations were made to the document recording location, route and the specific element or space being described or discussed, these being all of the data that would assist and inform later spatial analysis or interpretation of place selection. To illustrate and communicate the viability of the methodology in its entirety, a short, edited film sequence was created, capturing some of the highlights of the interviews⁶. At this stage of the project, the actual textual analysis methodology had not been defined; however, it was possible, even at this early stage, to discern some distinct thematic possibilities for later consideration. Whether using a thematic, or the more iterative theory-lead approach, the data provided early insight into how people relate to, experience or value heritage in the context of Valletta. Drawn directly from the pilot study transcripts, below are some examples of how the data were thematically categorized and interpreted to answer questions regarding significance or heritage value:

- Heritage that is personal. In this instance the condition of the, recently restored, Triton Fountain at the entrance to Valletta, makes connection between the object and the interviewee's familial link to the artist who was commissioned to create it:

So, it has that personal connection. I know that it must have grieved him terribly to see the terrible state that fountain was in. Full of rust, not able to be run with water, and then of course the damage done when the Government was running motorcycles over the top of it a few decades ago (Participant Interview LT2, 2021).

- Walking interviews, as noted earlier, can elicit experiential reactions to the city. Here a participant muses on the transition from a walled, closed environment to the expanse of the sea (Figure 9):

⁶ The pilot study film is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdXISgDGqqw>

We are going out of the gate soon (Jews Sally Port) and that's very important moment because that's actually were you, from the walled environment, from the stony environment you come here to the corner, you go around and you have this beautifully framed blue piece of sea, which is fantastic (Participant Interview LT1, 2021).

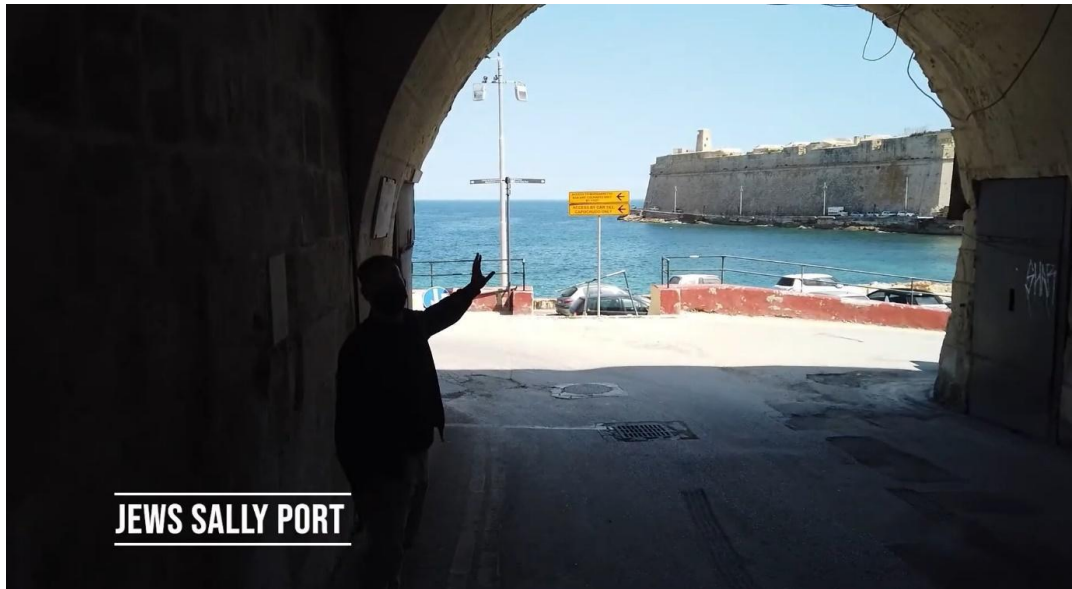


Figure 9 - Still from pilot study video footage where participant explains why 'Jews Sally Port' was selected as a meaningful location.

- Sometimes it is just about the unexpected details, in this case two encounters with morbid, forgotten aspects of the city:

Actually, we can look at some drama here, we can look at the house of Oscar Bonnici, who got murdered in there. In the brutalist building (Participant Interview NLR1, 2021).

This is my last site and it's one of favourite things ever, this very evil niche which apparently was carved by [an] assassin who was imprisoned in Malta (Participant Interview NLR1, 2021).

- In the context of a city that is undergoing rapid change and gentrification, a recurring theme is how to interpret and react to that change:

Let me tell you, I have no objections to adding modern onto old because it's a reflection of the time when it was built (Participant Interview NLR3, 2021).

- Expert opinions can often present a very academic view of the subject matter, often in stark contrast to more emotive or personal reflections on place:

So, at the end of the day, my training as an archaeologist kick[s] in – the site tells you the story, let[s] the site speak for itself. It's no use romanticising, the building, the past – you know the usual romanticised concept (Participant Interview NLR2, 2021).

Spatial analysis of the data taken at this stage of the process was limited in scope by the restricted sample size, and by the fact that the actual thematic analysis had not been initiated. It did however represent a good juncture to test an early version of the GIS Model, adding route data to a basic plan version of the city map. The outcome of this experimentation is presented in Figure 10 which demonstrates how some patterns emerged even at this early stage in the research. At first glance, there is a distinct favouring of the eastward, Grand Harbour facing side of the city and the open spaces of Upper and Lower Barrakka Gardens, two rare green spaces in an enclosed, monumental city.

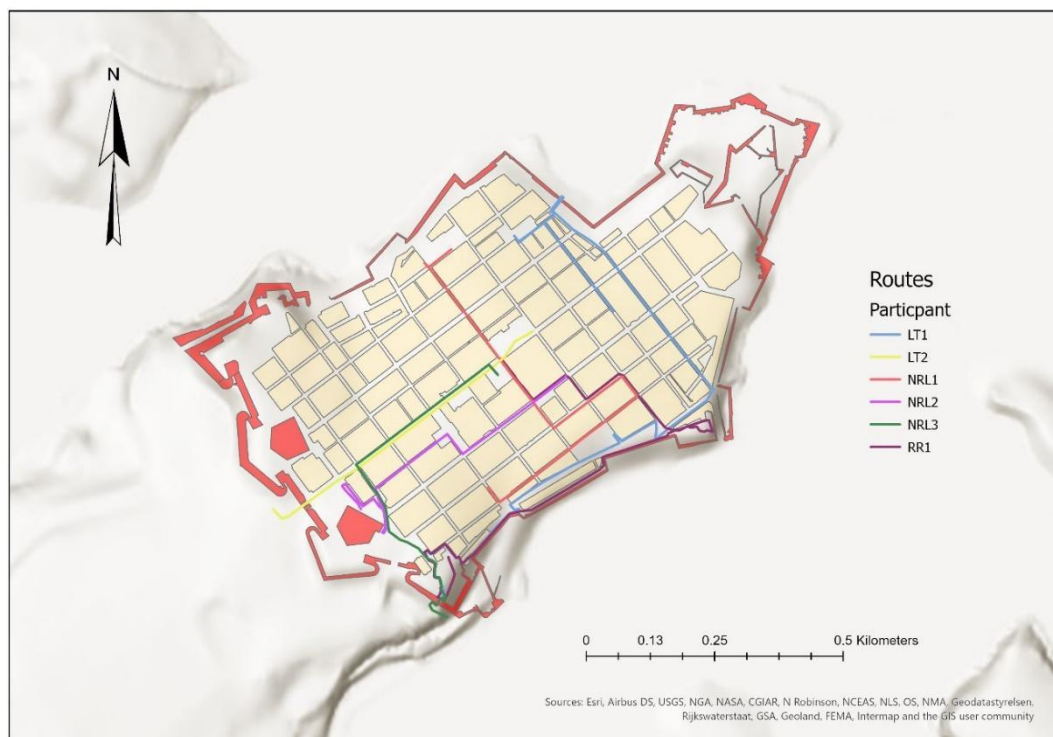


Figure 10 - Pilot study participant routes through the city.

Pilot Study: Implications on the project methods and processes

The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to test the data gathering methods, post-collection processing and to evaluate if, combined, they would produce data which, through analysis, would directly and effectively address the central aim of the thesis. This process of evaluation did positively impact the methodological processes in a number of important ways.

Firstly, it demonstrated that the method for documenting the walking interviews was feasible, that the equipment selected for the fieldwork captured both the audio and the video data, whilst not encumbering myself or the participant. It also validated the participant-led route approach. During formulation of the idea, I was concerned with how much structure to introduce to the interview, and how rigidly defined the parameters would need to be. Through the pilot study, it was apparent that the quality of the data produced was not contingent upon formula, and that participants that roamed and made up the route in an impromptu fashion, produced data that were equally engaged with the city fabric, as those who followed a preordained route.

The second impact of the pilot study relates to the sample size. The original proposal made to my supervisory team called for a sample size of 30 to 40 participants. Once the annotated transcripts were completed for the pilot study, it became readily apparent that the biographically rich output indicated that the participant group be limited to 15 to 20. Ultimately 19 interviews were conducted. The content of the first six interviews also helped to define the make-up of participant recruitment going forward. The pilot study did not include any multi-generational participant types, so a concerted effort was made to approach members of this community, which was achieved through word of mouth and actively recruiting in person. Another important outcome was that less emphasis was made on recruiting directly from heritage institutions or heritage professionals, and more placed on getting an indicative cross-section of resident types. Of the potential stakeholder groups, only the *Archaeology Society Malta* was involved in a call for participants from its membership, which usefully is composed of people with both lay and professional or academic backgrounds. The pilot study, beyond acting as a proof-of-concept, helped guide the remainder of the fieldwork and the resultant data. It is important to note that the data themselves were of sufficient quality and scope that rather than just inform a pilot study, they have been incorporated into the main presentation of the results in later chapters. The section that follows explores the data, how they were approached and how NVivo 20 was utilized to structure them into themes which form the framework for the results chapters that follow.

The Data

Section introduction

Walking interviews produce a sizeable amount of data, ranging from the personal details of the participants to the multiple gigabytes of video footage and the extended transcripts that result from the audio recordings. In the broadest terms, these data can be classified as textual, spatial, and visual; the differing nature of the data requiring individualized processes which are discussed in more detail below. These processes are contingent upon one another, the analysis of the interview data acting as the basis for a substantial part of the spatial analysis. Taken together, these data sets, and their subsequent analysis, form the knowledge base for more in-depth exploration in the dedicated results chapters later in this thesis.

Demographics & the Participants

To provide context for the data or results analysis, this section looks to the source of the material, the participants themselves. Personal data collected on the participants was limited, and specifically selected to test for trends based on demographic descriptors. The key categories presented below form the comparative basis for the descriptive analysis of the data, setting fixed points by which responses will be examined and contrasted. Table 6, below, is the full list of participants and relevant demographic data, which are expanded on individually below. The list includes the original six pilot study participants (shaded). Direct references to the participants and their interview data will be made via the anonymized 'Participant Code', which only identifies them in numerical sequence and by type. LT1 for example represents the first Long-term Resident interview conducted.

Participant Code	Participant Gender	Age Bracket	Participant Type	Nationality	Profession
LT1	Male	40-49	Long Term Resident	Belgian	Architect/Artist
RR1	Female	30-39	Recent Resident	Finnish	Psychologist
NRL1	Male	40-49	Non-Resident Local	Maltese	Lawyer
NRL2	Male	30-39	Non-Resident Local	Maltese	Archaeologist
LT2	Female	70-79	Long Term Resident	American/Maltese	Tour Guide
NRL3	Female	40-49	Non-Resident Local	Maltese	Academic
LT4	Male	50-59	Long Term Resident	German	Architect
LT3	Female	40-49	Long Term Resident	Maltese	Photographer/Gallery owner
MGR2	Male	40-49	Multi-Generational Resident	Maltese	Shop Owner

MGR1	Male	50-59	Multi-Generational Resident	Maltese	Chef Patron
NRL4	Male	50-59	Non-Resident Local	Maltese	Archaeologist
MGR3	Male	30-39	Multi-Generational Resident	Maltese	Shop Owner
RR2	Female	50-59	Recent Resident	Maltese	Personal Assistant
MGR5	Male	40-49	Multi-Generational Resident	Maltese	NGO Director
LT5	Female	40-49	Long Term Resident	Maltese	Doctor
LT6	Female	60-69	Long Term Resident	Maltese	Administrator, Council of Europe
MGR4	Male	40-49	Multi-Generational Resident	Maltese	Chef Patron
LT7	Male	60-69	Long Term Resident	Maltese	Architect
RR3	Female	20-29	Recent Resident	Maltese	Actor

Table 6 - List of participants and relevant demographic data. Participants from pilot study shaded.

1. **Participant Type.** The primary category is participant type which is defined by the individual participant's residential relationship with the city. Figure 11, below, demonstrates a clear bias towards participants who have a longer temporal relationship with the city. This bias represents two mechanisms at work. The first of these is best explained by the reality that those who have the longest experience of the city, or relationship that is personal and deep-seated, were more likely to want to participate. The second mechanism is researcher bias, developed during the course of the project, as it became apparent that the experience of having lived in Valletta for longer provided a far more detailed, nuanced and situated set of responses. Residential status is of course a fluid description, one that transcends the artificial imposition set by this category type and is best described as a snapshot of a participant's current residential relationship with the city. People and families relocate, for a variety of reasons, and this is reflected in the experiences of some of the participants, especially those who left Valletta in their youth. Their current residential status does not necessarily best capture their life experience in the city.

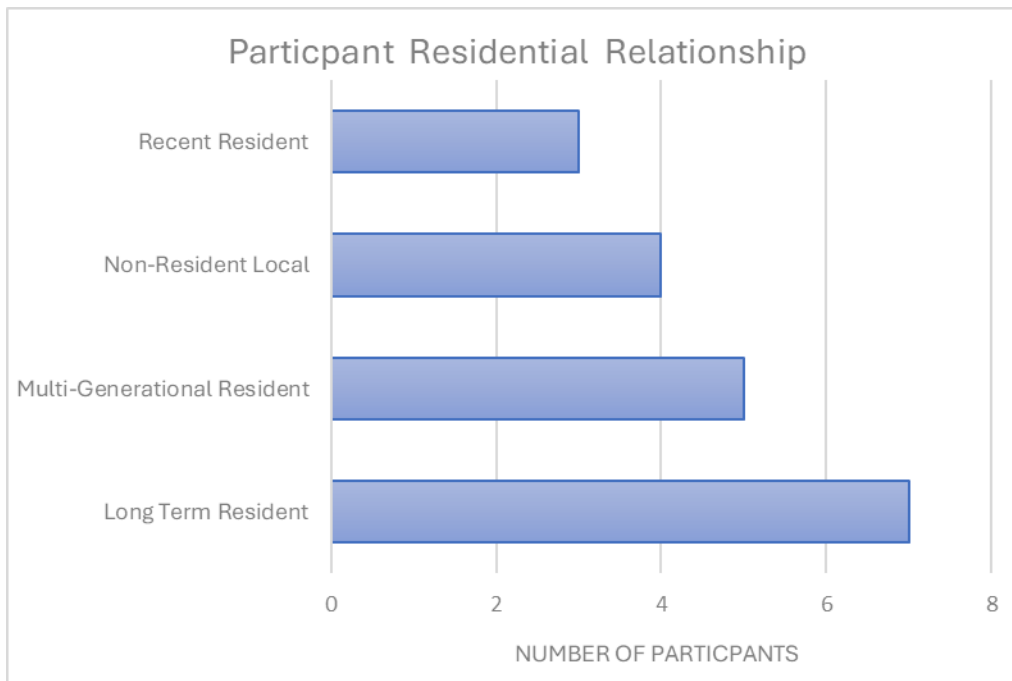


Figure 11 - Participants split by residential relationship.

2. **Age Bracket.** The participant age spans over 40 years, with the youngest participant being in their late 20s and the oldest in their early 70s. There is a definite clustering of participants in the two middle brackets, covering participants whose ages range from 40 to 60 (Figure 12). Of this central cluster, the 40 to 49 bracket is clearly favoured, with almost 50% of participants (eight in total) pertaining to this age group. Though perhaps this in part reflects the general age group of professionals who have made Valletta their home in the last 10 to 15 years, it also reflects the particular nature of small-island connectivity, as outlined in the introductory chapter, where my own position as both researcher and long-term resident of the study area affects the outcomes of calls to participate in the study, resulting in a evident bias in the 40-49 age bracket which is the very bracket which I belong to.

3. **Participant Gender.** The gender distribution of participants is fairly even, with 42% of participants identifying as female to 58% identifying as male (Figure 13). The option to identify with other gendered identities was provided but not selected by any of the interviewees. The distribution of participant gender reflects a deliberate attempt during the participant selection process. Though it may not reflect the actual participation response, there was a conscious decision to favour some participants over others in order for there to be a relatively equal distribution.

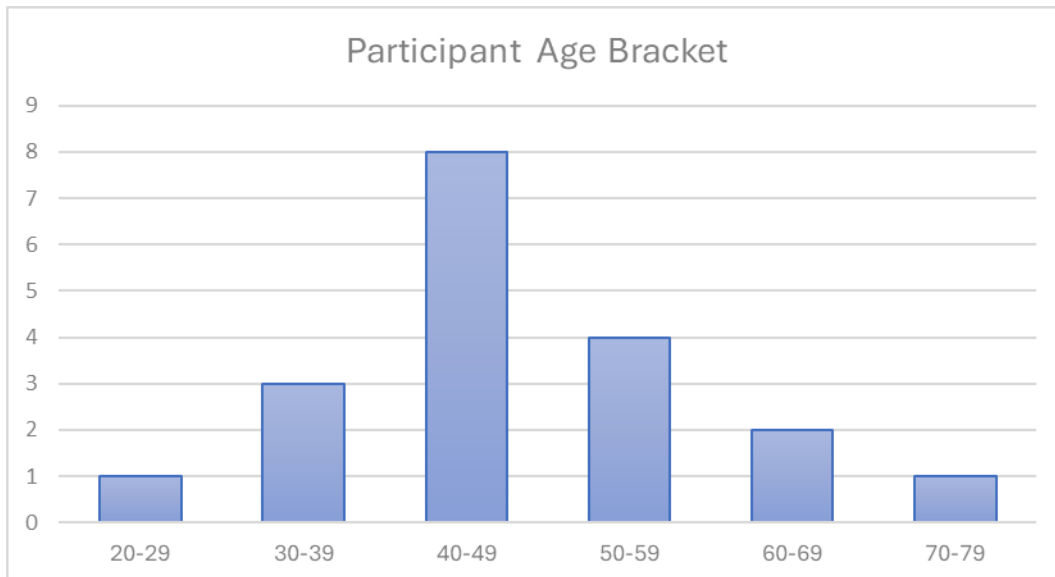


Figure 12 - Participant split by age bracket.

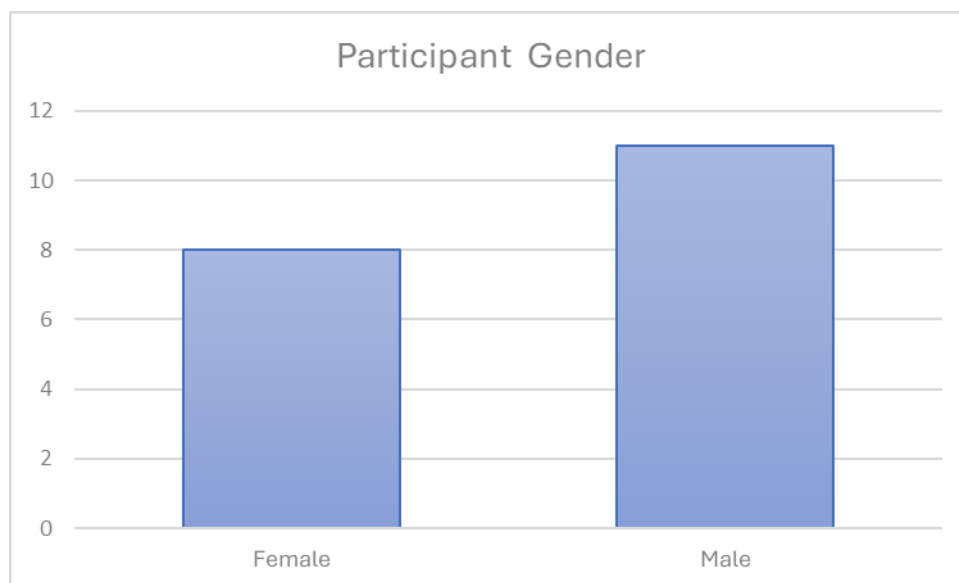


Figure 13 - Participant split by gender.

- Other demographic data.** Nationality and occupation specifics were also collected. In terms of nationality, the majority of the participants were Maltese nationals (78%), three participants were foreign-born nationals, and one final participant was half-Maltese. The incidence of foreign nationals is indicative of the professional and creative classes that have made Valletta their home in recent years. In terms of occupation, a range of professional backgrounds are represented, from artists and architects, academics, and

heritage professionals, to shop owners and chefs. The two heritage professionals interviewed both have an archaeological background and are involved professionally with national heritage institutions. As such, these are targeted interviewees, selected specifically for participation in order to introduce a degree of expert opinion on heritage in the city.

Textual data processing and analysis

Interview data represents the bulk of the primary material upon which this thesis bases its analysis and draws its conclusions. Processing the data requires each interview to be transcribed, and it is estimated that an average interview, which ran between 35-45 minutes, would produce a transcript that would generally be around 3500 to 4000 words. These transcripts are the product of the research design, the raw material resulting from the walking interview. The full transcripts are available for review both in this text (Appendix B) or alternatively the individual interviews and respective transcripts are available to view on the Archaeology Data Service website⁷.

The intended outcome of the textual analysis is that of knowledge creation, to sift through the data to answer the questions posed by the research aim of this thesis. The data and its analysis are therefore bound by the ontological framework, the parameters that are defined and underscored by critical approaches to contemporary heritage as explored in the previous chapter. The qualitative approach to research often favours an analytical framework that foregrounds the data themselves. This enables the researcher to make sense of conversational, often random dialogue, to formulate concepts and ideas that address specific research questions. The data are suitable for analysis based on the precepts of Grounded Theory, a flexible, data-lead approach that allows the researcher to build concepts through direct interaction with the rich data sets generated in qualitative research (Charmaz 2006, 2-3). A similar approach, though one that does not require the formulation of theories derived from, and tested against, the data, is Thematic Analysis (see Han et al. 2018). Both approaches closely follow the text to create codes or themes, often in conjunction with bespoke software such as NVivo 20. After some experimentation, it was decided that the most suitable approach would be to carefully follow the text and use subjectively-defined themes to create coherent and

⁷ <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/1005416/index.cfm>.

accessible narratives informed by the themes themselves. This theme-driven narrative approach provides the structure and format for results chapters later in this thesis.

Data structure and analysis approach

Before critically examining and presenting content outcomes of the fieldwork and resultant data, some general observations and definitions need to be made to provide the reader with an insight into the analysis process and the nature of the data. These data sets are the product of a particular qualitative approach, one that is guided and shaped by the flexible nature of the software selected to enable the analysis, NVivo 20.

The active, researcher-led process of extracting themes from interview data is simultaneously subjective and objective and, it should be noted, is highly dependent on what the researcher is coding for. NVivo 20 allows for the relationships between code types to be visualized, quantified, and understood as the work progresses. This distinction is apparent in the coding structure adopted for this project. In being research-led and iterative, the codes were generated over multiple parses and refined over time. These multiple code types coalesce into specific categories which for the purposes of analysis, are nested under three main code groups (Table 7). These codes, which are essentially meta-tags applied to strings of text, are often interrelated on a number of different levels. An item of text that is coded can be at once cause and effect, or an issue and simultaneously an example of that issue. An example of this is the following comment:

I think it's a shame because, I think it is so beautiful, they could have restored it. But I don't know what is going to happen now (LT6).

Here a participant is referring to a specific place (a church), making an aesthetic judgement (beauty) and bringing up a conservation theme (restoration). This single textual reference could potentially feature in three or more subcodes. Textual data from the interviews form the backbone of this thesis and its results. Where possible these results will be presented verbatim, always anonymized and referenced by use of the participant code, as in the example above.

Primary Code Groups (Meta-Groups)	Number of Meta-Codes	Number of subcodes	Participant contribution (19/19)	Total number of textual references
Experience of Place	2	16	19	816
Evaluation of Place	2	8	19	391
Inventory of Place	N/A	10	19	499
Route	N/A	47	19	159
			Total references:	1,865

Table 7 - Overview of results post-NVivo thematic mapping, showing the results organized in the three main 'meta-groups'.

Table 7 presents a generalized overview of data that will be presented in the following chapters. They are organized into three main thematic groups which themselves are an aggregation of further sub-categories, or daughter codes, themselves often subdivided into sub-codes when the granularity was required. The final data category, *Routes*, is not thematic; rather it is positional and maps the textual reference to specific locations. In the main however, the code structure for the thematic data can be visualized as a descending hierarchy, with the broadest categories at the top of the hierarchical chain (Figure 14). To simplify the structure as much as possible, the hierarchy was limited to four relational steps at most. Figure 15 gives an example from the data, demonstrating how two sub-codes, each containing specific daughter codes, relate back to the primary organizational code (meta-group), in this instance the *Experience of Place* code group via the meta-code *Lived City*.

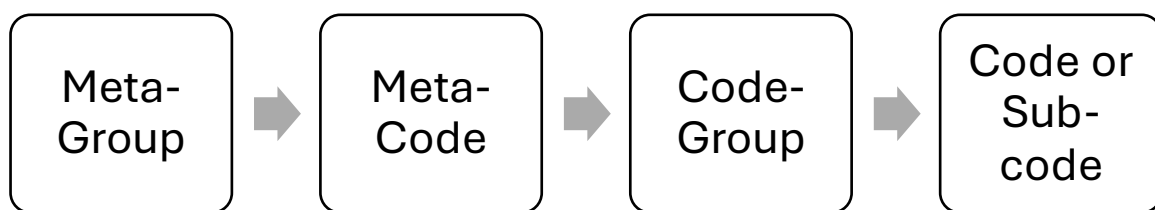


Figure 14 - Basic Coding Structure.

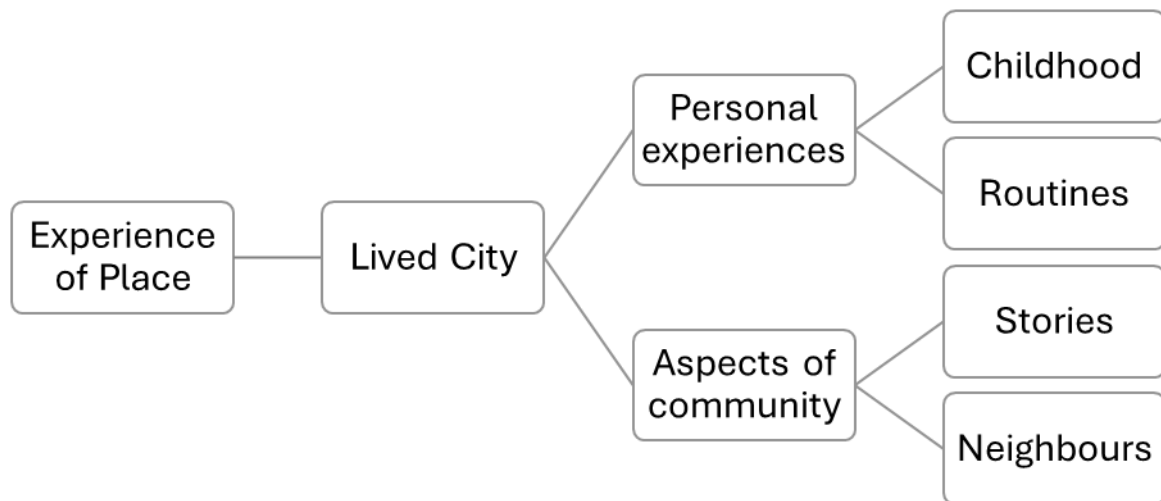


Figure 15 - Code hierarchy example.

Though this chapter will not detail a complete break-down of codes, a complete catalogue is included as Appendix C in the form of an annotated ‘code book’. Additionally, the specific result chapters themselves will contain a detailed breakdown of the relevant meta-groups, meta-codes, code-groups and sub-codes and how these have been utilized contextually. These will serve to frame the chapters and guide the narrative arc of the results.

The code typology, and the themes they code for, can in essence be generalized into two groups:

- 1) **Subjective, research-led coded themes.** These codes, and the themes they underwrite, are the product of the interpretive and analytical stance of the researcher. They can be understood to be actively defined by the research aim of the project, being formulated in response to the research questions posited. In the original analysis these codes have been grouped into two main categories, *Experience of Place* and *Evaluation of Place* (Chapters Four and Five). For presentation of the results, however, data from these distinct categories were grouped in clusters that best enabled coherence and comparison. In order to clearly link data to theme, an outline of the individual code and sub-code clusters from which the themes were built will be present in each of the results chapters that follow.

2) **Spatial or Factual codes.** This second substantial set of codes is complementary to the first category and the codes are objective in nature, in that they are sets of codes that reference specific places, buildings and objects. These codes represent the spatial, positional aspects of the transcribed text, the physical world that is encoded in every interview. As a group of codes, they encompass elements of the city ranging from a specific building or place to more micro-observations, such as design elements of the signage of a commercial building. The ability to superimpose codes in NVivo allows direct correlation between the experience of the city with the specific physical details that stage these experiences. These code types are collectively nestled under the code group *Inventory of Place* (Chapter Six).

A note on reporting, charts, and data visualisations

For the sake of transparency and accountability, this sub-section of the chapter explains how coded data are quantified for comparison and reporting purposes. This research is firmly qualitative in nature; however, it does depend on justifying trends in the data on the numerical patterns the process of encoding the data produces. The goal here is to be able to make interpretive assessments that, whilst not statistically rigorous in the strict sense, are indicative and meaningful.

When using textual analysis software like NVivo, the metric which denotes comparative importance or relevance is the simple count. The software aggregates codes into user-defined groups, termed ‘references’, where the reference is a specific part of the text that is coded. The software will also display the number of files in which the code is present. Within the software parameters configured during this project, each file represents a unique participant transcript. An example of this can be seen in Table 8:

Parent Code (Meta-Group)	Daughter code (Meta-Code)	Sub Code	File count	#Reference Count
Experience of Place	Live City	Social Activities	14	61

Table 8 - Example of sub-code, Social Activities, demonstrating number of files present and total references linked.

In this example, coded references to *Social Activities*, itself a sub-code under the *Lived City* meta-code, which in turn is attached to *Experience of Place* parent code, accounts for 61 references across 14 files. That is to say that 14, from a total of 19, participants make 61

references to *Social Activities*⁸. This counting system repeats itself for all coded categories thus allowing for a point of comparison, in being able to make judgements on the distribution and relative importance of certain themes in relation to other themes. This mode of comparison is utilized to define and structure the results chapters, where in general, more analysis and interpretation is possible for themes where more textual examples are available.

Whereas the above example examines thematic distribution across the collective sum of participants, the analysis of thematic data will, in certain instances, require the comparative analysis that, rather than take the participants as a collective, looks at the specific demographic qualities of the individual participants. In order to achieve this, a degree of processing of the responses is required to impart a degree of proportionality to the data. This is required because the number of individuals of each ‘participant type’ is not equal).

To illustrate this, the below example demonstrates the impact this can have on the interpretation of the data and, as a consequence, the potential impact on the interpretation of the thematic data and the research outcomes. Figure 16 takes a particular parent code, Heritage Management Issues, and breaks down the total count of references by participant type. The graph suggests that as a collection of concerns, the types of participants who had the most to say about how heritage is managed in the city are skewed towards two participant types, namely

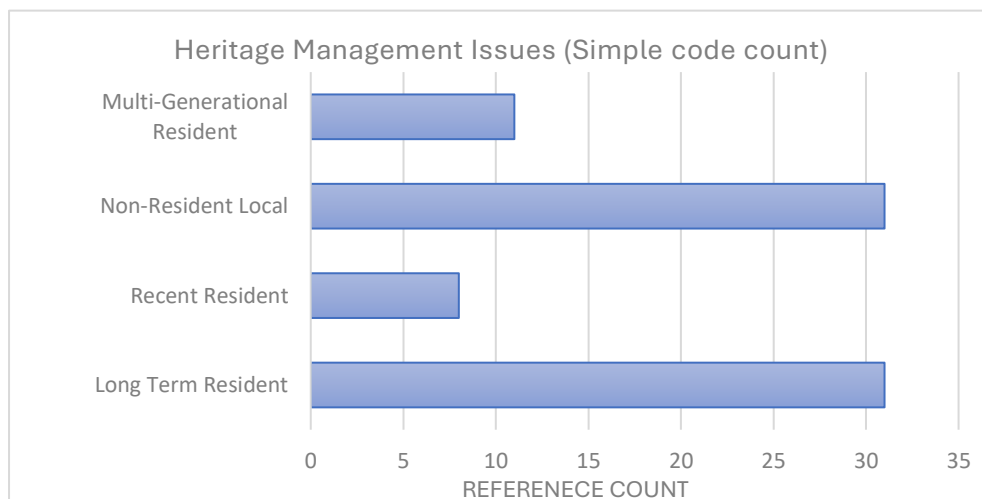


Figure 16 - Chart illustrating simple count of number of references to the Heritage Management Issues theme by Participant Type.

the long-term residents (LT) and the non-resident locals (NRL). The graph also suggests that recent residents (RR) and multi-generational residents (MGR) place less emphasis on specific heritage management issues during their respective interviews.

⁸ Social Activities is itself an aggregated code, made up of seven subcodes. These range from sports and religious activities to the arts and dining out.

This graph however displays a simple count of responses per participant type and does not factor in the numerical disparity of participants across types. In order to neutralize these differences and thus generate visual representations of the data more indicative of the relative importance of specific themes to informants, the data require some further processing prior to the production of the charts. The small size of the data sample (N=19) does not warrant complex statistical modelling; rather the data can be normalized or rendered proportional and indicative using averages. Simply put, the total number of responses is replaced by an average of responses per participant type, thus providing an appropriate, standardizing metric that allows for interpretation across types.

The application of this filter presents a very different perspective on the same data (Figure 17). Here the MGR group becomes the residential demographic who make the least references to heritage management issues, with RR respondents representing a greater proportion of the engagement with the topic. The most dramatic change is on the upper part of the scale, with the new calculation demonstrating that it is clearly the NRL demographic which exhibits the most concern with HMI.

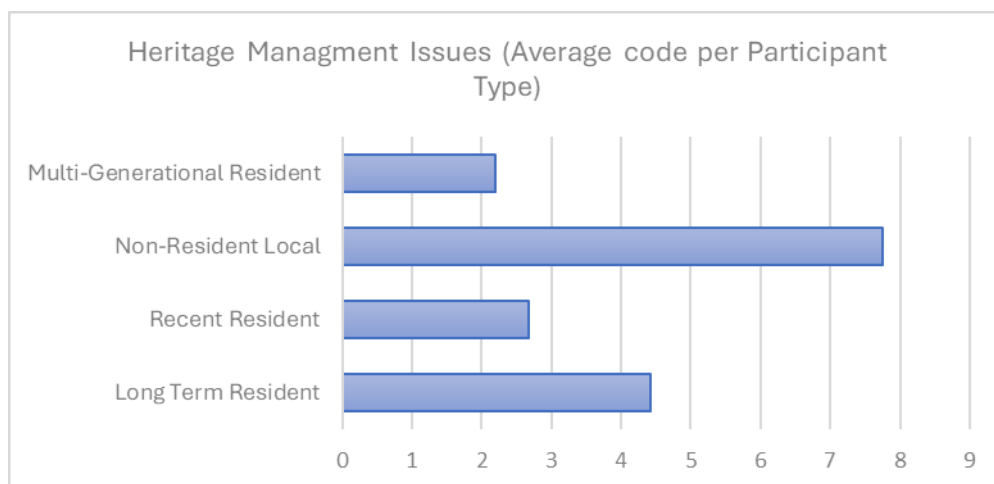


Figure 17 - Example of references adjusted to be a count by participant type.

What explains this particular pattern is not immediately evident by focusing on a single variable, but the answers are in the data once other details are considered. At this stage, suffice it to say that the heritage practitioners and architects primarily belong to the LTR and NRL groups, accounting for the majority of the coverage for this particular topic. Contextual filtering of data will be conducted only where appropriate and required. The implications of the scenario

depicted above is expanded upon in more detail in Chapter 6 for example. The purpose of this section is to provide a degree of transparency as to how the data will be visualised going forward.

Spatial data processing and analysis

The aim of the spatial analysis is to ground the textual themes that emerge from the interviews firmly within the geographical boundaries of Valletta, to produce a rich, value-map that captures the multiplicity of ways people interact with or experience the city. In order to achieve this, a model of Valletta was produced to be able to spatially locate the thematic data and to trace the movements of the individual interviews. ArcGIS was used to build the 2D model of Valletta. This process, following a period of experimentation, was facilitated by reaching out to the Malta Planning Authority who maintain a public-facing, web-based GIS⁹, a geoportal that integrates base maps, local plans, development applications and imagery (SintegraM Data Service 2018). This resource, which has all structures on the island digitized, was added as webservice to my local copy of ArcGIS, creating a layer from which it was possible to create a model of Valletta.

Model design required a number of key decisions to be made. Mapping often involves subjective decisions; what is displayed and how is it displayed reflecting the underlying assumptions or biases of the mapmaker. This is also true of the map produced for this project, the difference being that these assumptions need to be documented and critically considered openly. The first of these considerations revolved around what to include in the model. Valletta has a defined outline, one shaped from its very inception as a fortified town. The starting point was therefore to digitize the bastions, counterguards, ravelins and curtains that form its distinctive plan view (see de Giorgio, 1985) which includes Fort St. Elmo at the distal end of the peninsula (Figure 18). Valletta's regular grid plan, which also naturally defines the layout of its streets was the next aspect to model and this was easily achieved by digitizing its city blocks resulting in a simple map that already conveys the city's unique form (Figure 19).

⁹ The Malta Planning Authority portal is available at: <http://geoserver.pa.org.mt/publicgeoserver>

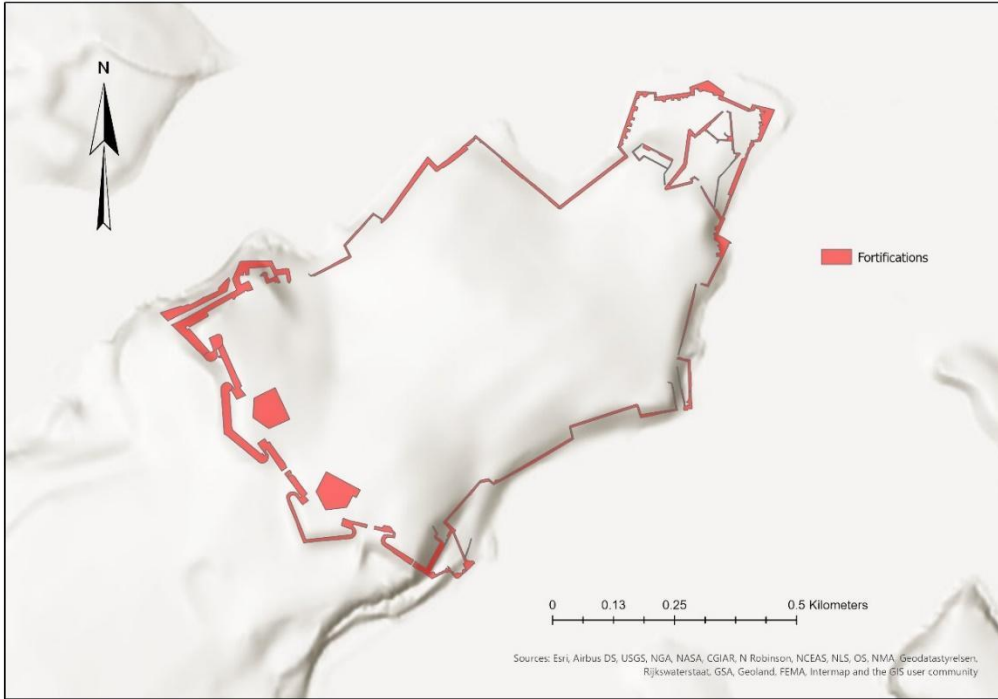


Figure 18 - Valletta's outline as defined by the trace of its fortifications.

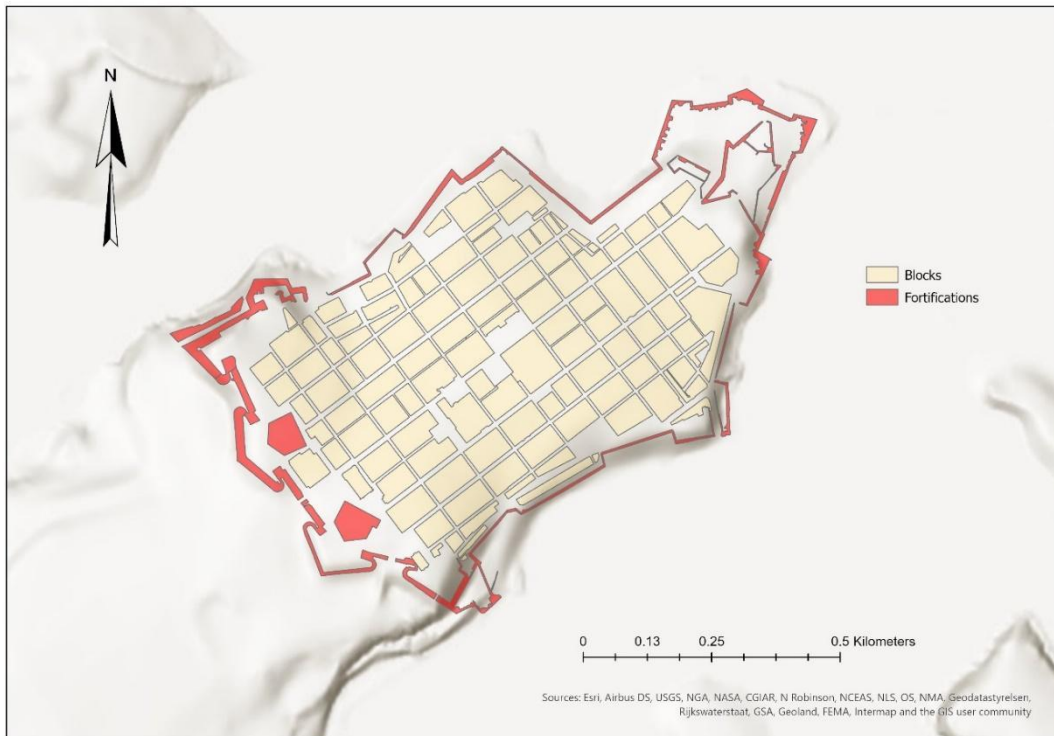


Figure 19 - Defining the shape of the city, adding the city blocks.

The second consideration is that of level of detail. With the fortifications defining the city outline and the digitized city blocks clearing articulating the inner form of the city, it was then a matter of deciding how much fine-grained information would be useful. It was decided that erring on the side of caution and including as much detail as possible would future proof the model. As a result, each individual building, as defined by the parameters provided by the Planning Authority webservice, was digitized as its own, unique polygon (Figure 20). Further to this, all sizable green spaces, be they private or public gardens, were also added to the map. In total, circa 2000 individual map features were added to the model as digitized polygons. The underlying dataset was customized so that a basic typology would define the individual spaces, the intention being that these would be further refined as the project developed. Though the visualization of the data would be carried out on the macro level, great attention was still paid to ensuring that each polygon was mapped as accurately as possible to the webservice base-map, again to ensure that the model was future proofed (Figure 21).

Designing a model with differing levels of complexity was intended to allow for granular application of thematic data and plotting the participant routes in relation to those that positional data. The ability to easily swap from fine grained to broader visualization levels, allows the relationships of the data to specific areas of the city to be understood. This was to be achieved by plotting themes to specific buildings, roads, or places of interest as point data, to build a rich data model of spatialized heritage value. In a similar fashion, plotting the routes that the interviews traced as they meandered through the city provides insight into how, consciously, or unconsciously, the city is navigated or negotiated spatially. Ultimately, though the groundwork to enable this level of spatial interpretation was completed, it did not come to feature prominently in the results chapters. This is expanded upon in Chapter Eight, where the project methods as a whole are evaluated, both in terms of their limitations, but also the potential for further development.



Figure 20 - Finalized Model of Valletta in ArcGIS.



Figure 21 - Detailed view of individually digitized buildings.

Chapter summary

This thesis makes the assertion in its title that it aims to devise new methods of inquiry, new ways of understanding heritage value in the context of the capital of Malta, Valletta. These new methods of inquiry frame the research aim and objectives of this project, which were contextualized within a corpus of scholarly work on heritage values and significance presented in Chapter Two. This framework advocates for an approach to heritage that deemphasizes

traditionally important tropes, is conscious of the position and power of the practitioner in the process of heritage making and seeks to promote the benefits of people-centred, everyday heritage values.

To access and foreground these people-centric perspectives, I have proposed a methodology that draws inspiration from a number of other disciplines interested in understanding people/place interactions. I have argued that employing an in-situ interview technique that actively engaged with the physical city, will produce data that better represents people's interactions and responses to the city. In conjunction to the more customary audio recording methods, it is proposed that filming the actual interviews complements the walking and talking interview style adopted, by contributing visual data to the more traditional medium. Video data is particularly adept at capturing the interactions of people and place, whilst also providing logistical advantages, such as documenting location data. To test these methods, a pilot study, run as a proof-of-concept exercise, demonstrated not only the viability of the methodology for data capture, but also that the resultant data could meaningfully address the research aim. The chapter concluded with a detailed look at how the textual and spatial data were processed, analysed and structured using the appropriate software packages, namely NVivo 20 and ArcGIS Pro respectively. The outcome of these processes are the results chapters that follow.

The data chapters are distinguished by their unique, yet interconnected, thematic content, and closely follow the coded patterning from the textual analysis. Chapter Four is concerned with the personal and lived experiences of the participants with regards to Valletta, whereas Chapter Five considers how a city might be appraised, and the sensorial responses that it can engender. Finally, Chapter Six catalogues the places and fabric of the city itself, to contextualize the results presented in the previous two chapters in terms of the fabric of Valletta itself.

Chapter 4: Experience of Place

Chapter introduction

In keeping with the enduring contribution that the Burra Charter (2013[1979]) has made by placing emphasis on the cultural significance of place as discussed in Chapter 2, the principal data group of this research has been codified as *Experience of Place*. This over-arching, meta-group code traces the diverse ways in which the participants talked about their relationship with the changing urban landscape of Valletta. In line with the framework set out in the aforementioned chapter of this thesis, this is a very broad category of responses that are people-centred, and as a result personal. It is their experiences, memories and reactions to the urban environment that is prominent. Embracing the multitude of outlooks - the product of a conversational and informal methodological approach - produces a complex web of results. The codes presented here were constructed to reflect the thematic content that emerged from the data.

In total the *Experience of Place* meta-group, the largest of the three coding groups created, encompassed two meta-codes *Change in the City* and *The Lived City* (Table 9). These meta-codes were themselves further broken down into sub-categories with distinct daughter codes. In total 52 codes were required to capture and classify the interview data and were linked to 816 textual references. The principal thematic collections of these codes, their relevance and the type of data collected will be described collectively in the sections that follow. To be able to summarise and present the results in a coherent, accessible way, the detailed breakdown of results has been coalesced into two meta-code groups. *Change in the City* meta-code comprises data aggregated from five major code groups, and largely addresses responses relating to the experiences of a city that is regenerating. *The Lived City* brings together data from eight codes, and in general terms collectively accounts for the lived experience of the city. The larger code groups, those comprised of a substantial number of sub-codes, will be detailed independently, whilst themes and sub-themes which can be considered interrelated will for the sake of coherence and brevity be grouped together. The code *Beyond the City* was created to capture participant references that were specifically not about Valletta. At 14 references only, these data are not included in this chapter.

Experience of Place Meta-Codes	Associated Code-groups	References per Meta-Code
Change in the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Impact of Gentrification ● Loss of Community ● Pedestrianization & Traffic ● Abandonment ● Tourism & Noise 	355
The Lived City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aspects of community ● Social Activities ● Personal Experiences ● Identity ● Politics ● Historical ● The City and COVID ● Beyond the City 	461
	Total References	816

Table 9 - Experience of Place Meta-Group code structure.

Change in the City

Urban development, as the introductory chapter suggested, is a prominent point of discussion in the Maltese context, and therefore not entirely unexpected that the changes the city has been undergoing was the most prominent conversational topic, with all 19 participants contributing to this category. As a result, the total number of textual references coded to cover this particular theme amounted to 43% of the total number of *Experience of Place* references. The issue of ‘change’ and the myriad effects ascribed to it is certainly complex and varied, and the responses were grouped into a cluster of eight sub-codes (Table 10) to capture this variety of comments and concerns in a way that is consistent and representative with the variety of participants.

Change in the City Meta-Code	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Generic references	8	20
Abandonment	14	24
Impact of Gentrification	16	77
Improvement	3	3
Loss of Community	9	36
Noise	5	8
Pedestrianization & Traffic	14	29
Responses to change	19	136
Tourism	5	11

Table 10 - Change in the City meta-code, itemizing the code-groups that it comprises.

The results presented in Table 10 do, at a glance, provide a sense of what it is about a changing city that preoccupies the participants. The codes represented here cover not only the reaction to change, but also some of the specific processes and experiences that prompt those reactions. The *Change in the City* code group is a means of capturing the process, impact and experience of living in Valletta during a period of renewed interest, development and regeneration.

As noted earlier, the nature of this qualitative data is deeply interconnected, and the themes map lines of connectedness to each other, reflecting differing viewpoints to the specific issues or processes. An example of the interrelatedness of themes, is evident in the *Change in the City* meta-code and relates to how the participant might described cause and effect. A newly restored Palazzo can feature in issues of ‘abandonment’ if a participant were to comment on its

pre-restoration state; however equally, the same palazzo could be the subject of opinion when considering other aspects of change, such as the overall impact of gentrification, the loss of community or the contribution to noise in the city. As a group, therefore, the intersection of sub-codes within a meta-code contribute to providing a nuanced, experience-led sense of how the city, and the changes occurring within it, contribute to the overall sense or experience of place.

Impact of Gentrification

The *Impact of Gentrification* is an umbrella term which is used in the context of this thesis to code for references to commercial activity and in many instances is directly related to other codes in the group, notably for example, the codes for *Noise* and *Pedestrianization & Traffic*. In terms of raw textual references, it is the largest subset of the *Change in the City* code group and therefore provides insight into how everyday Valletta is affected by regeneration. What this allows is a detailed investigation into what specific areas of this process are particularly salient, at least from the perspective of residents and other stakeholders. Some common themes were easy to predict, as they reflect my own experiences, having witness the changes happen in person. An example of this would be the adaptive reuse of Valletta townhouses to enable the boom in the boutique hotel industry, which have become so ubiquitous in some streets that they become the dominant feature:

But as you can see, this for example became a hotel. This guy bought all these [houses], you could almost say he owns half of the buildings on St Barbara's Bastion, he basically bought the lot (MGR1).

The success of this new tourism product - boutique hotels or rental apartments - provides the impetus for complementary commercial activities to flourish, themselves contributing to the wave of economic renewal and interest:

...it has been taken over by so many bars – I mean it's good and it's bad, I don't really know what to say about that (LT6).

Commercial activity, be it the raft of new boutique hotels, or the proliferation of new bars and restaurants has perceptible knock-on effects, qualified by the frequency of mentions by interview participants. An example of this would be the coded sub-themes which drew attention to the concern with traffic and the pedestrian experience, and how it places additional stress on mobility within the city, and as a result the quality of life of the resident. Public transport does not come directly into Valletta, rather it deposits passengers at the national bus terminus just outside City Gate. Though increasingly busy with pedestrian foot traffic, it is vehicular traffic that has become one of the most bemoaned leitmotifs of a regenerated Valletta, a cyclical loop that

feeds itself. More bars, shops and restaurants require frequent resupplying, and the delivery vans choke up the narrow streets (Figure 22). This has a direct impact on the quality of life for residents:

But also, to get away from exhaust fumes, construction, cranes and trucks everywhere. Delivery vans all the time (MGR3).



Figure 22 - Early morning in Merchant Street (Source: Author's own).

In a related fashion, the bars and restaurants require customers, and renewed local interest means that more people fight for the limited parking space available, spaces which continue to dwindle as the limited availability become inaccessible to the general public.

Of course, the government controls three quarters of the city's parking. I have no idea where these parking spaces came from, if they descended from heaven (MGR1).

The throttling of city spaces as a result of commercial activity is not limited to modes of transportation. To incentivise the sort of business that is now thriving and to draw locals and tourists to Valletta, the government has actively pursued a strategy of pedestrianization of large portions of the city's most popular streets. Whilst this does remove vehicular access to what

were once main thoroughfares, this space has now been occupied by external seating for businesses. This creates a palpable sense of claustrophobic congestion, making certain areas difficult to navigate:

For example, you can no longer really walk up Old Theatre Street, as a couple. Because there are so many tables you have to walk in single file (LT6).

The ramification of this increased activity extends beyond the physical to the soundscape of the city. The Maltese Islands are not best described as being peaceful at the best of times, Lord Byron's clichéd quip about it being characterized by its 'Bells, Yells and Smells' still ringing true today. In the case of Valletta, noise pollution from entertainment venues is historically linked to confines of the narrow, alley-like Strait Street which hosted clubs and bars hosting servicemen stationed or visiting the island during British rule (see Schofield and Morrissey 2007).

At the time that the fieldwork was conducted, noise pollution in general was already a concern of participant residents, and symptomatic of their perceived marginalization by economic interests:

For me at least, I associate it with noise, and the aspects where residents are not considered in Valletta. It's kind of like we are expected to just suffer the consequences of tourism, and the consequences of all the restaurants and cafeterias, because it is extremely noise here at times, especially in summer (RR 1).

Perhaps the greatest contributing factor in the sonic barrage is live and recorded music, and reminiscent of the heyday of Strait Street, has become a prominent feature of the soundscape of the gentrifying city:

But the other side of the coin is a lack of regard shown towards residents, as it has resulted in excessive noise, especially music (MGR2).

This has been exacerbated recently, with the extension of operating hours and the relaxation limits placed on live music. Noise has become a very current issue to residents of the city (Galea De Bono 2022) and one that has prompted clashes between local authorities and an association of residents (Arena 2022).

It would be disingenuous to suggest that all change is solely perceived of in a negative light, and gentrification and commercialization do introduce quality of life improvements to the city. The counterfoil is that pedestrianization, whilst it creates parking issues for residents and logistical problems for businesses, certainly improves the experience of the city for the visitor

and resident alike. If traffic is universally disliked, then the lack of traffic creates a different atmosphere:

I love this street, there is a serenity to it, maybe it's also related to the fact that there aren't so many cars. It's very pedestrian (NRL1).

Other respondents pointed out that the removal of what were dead spaces operating as carparks in the city, has provided more public space. The site of the new parliament building and what is now St. George's Square operated as makeshift car parks for much of the post-war period, and making this space open, public and car free is universally received as a positive change in the city, and this despite misgivings about the actual nature of the space. This complex and multifaceted issue is explored in greater detail in the following Chapter 6.

Abandonment

As described earlier in this thesis, until the recent resurgence of interest in the city, Valletta was a place forgotten, a place you moved away from. Abandoned, empty properties came to characterise the city. Memories of Valletta often centre on this, as evidenced by the participant coverage, with 14 of 19 participants contributing to this theme.

The theme of Abandonment, in contrast with the theme of commercialization, is more concerned with how Valletta was rather than how it is today. It is a glimpse into the state of the city prior to commercial interest and urban renewal. That notwithstanding, the rundown Valletta of the past still looms large in the minds of participants, irrespective if they lived in the city or not. This abandonment features in memories of moving to Valletta for example:

And obviously it was – I believe – about 85% abandoned or empty (LT5).

Or in some cases, visiting family that lived in the city:

And I always remembered my mother's mother, in the 70s and 80s when Valletta really became a ghost city (NRL3).

Whatever opinion the participants may have about the reality of the resurgent, 'new' Valletta, empty properties are generally considered to negatively impact the city:

I do not like seeing abandoned places (MGR1).

This 'ghost town' Valletta is not something multi-generational participants [MGR] participants think should be romanticized, and the ongoing restoration is considered by many to a necessity:

The restoration of these buildings was not just needed, it had to happen, so that it did not keep looking like a “war-zone” (MGR4).

On the surface, this theme documents the urban decay of the city during its years of decline. However, these once empty properties housed families and their abandonment is indicative of a larger aspect of social change in the city which is presented in the section that follows.

Loss of Community

If abandonment concerned the empty homes of Valletta, the expressions of loss of community centres on the people that lived in them. Loss of community in this instance refers mainly to individuals and families moving out of Valletta over the years and how this may affect those who have remained. The issue is of course complex and multifaceted, with perhaps as many angles as there are individuals and families.

This aspect of the changing city emerged most poignantly from the interviews conducted with the long-term and specifically MGR residents of Valletta, the *Beltin*. By querying the data by participant type, this is abundantly clear. As Figure 23 illustrates, it is evidently – and understandably - the members of the embedded Valletta community who are most concerned about this aspect of the changing city. Recent residents or non-residents responses are negligible or simply do not feature at all in the response. Long-term residents are more likely to be attuned to this, having had the possibility of watching this community attrition unfold first-hand and to have built relationships with the *Beltin*.

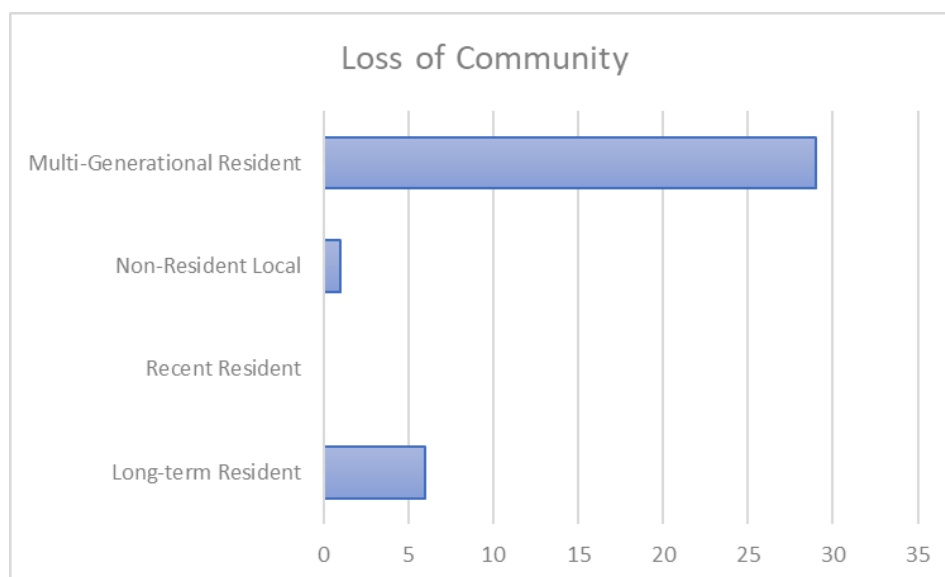


Figure 23 - Loss of Community Textual References by Participant Type.

A closer investigation of the interview text provides some narrative detail as to how the MGR participant demographic experience and quantify community loss. The most common response centres on people leaving the city; an ongoing process that in the opinion of residents is accelerating. This attrition cannot be understated, and is quantifiably real to them, as one participant was reminded of as we approached a residential area he frequented as a child:

I can tell you, that of the friends I grew up with, none of them live in Valletta anymore. And we were a group of about 30 friends, between altar boy friends to school friends (MGR4).

Though new residents move in to take the place of established families, there is understandably a nostalgic sense that things were better before, that new communities do not really fit with what defined Valletta in the past:

The people from Valletta in the past were more familiar, much closer knit. Today, from my own experience in my own street, I am the last Maltese person living there (MGR1).

This idea that the city is defined by its residents is a key theme in attempting to unravel what Valletta means to its community. This is perhaps best expressed by one of the MGR participants, who really wanted to emphasize how pivotal people are to what makes up the city:

Because Valletta is not made of stone, Valletta is about the individual, the personality (MGR1).

Personality here is a reference not only to the communal or collective, but to the existence of ‘community characters’, quasi-totemic individuals who come to be associated with specific streets, neighbourhoods, shops, and hangouts. Their disappearance from the city becomes emblematic of this loss, a non-material aspect of the city’s heritage that is particularly associated with change in the city.

Something else you don’t see any more, was the phenomenon of special characters, residents who became the landmark of the street (MGR4).



Figure 24 - Bumping into a local 'Character' during one of the interviews.

Loss of people is not simply a factor of a diaspora of people. In leaving the city people did not simply leave behind homes, but often it signalled the disappearance of familiar local business or services that themselves came to be associated as being part of the community. Shops and businesses serve as community hubs, places to meet and reinforce communal bonds, and their disappearance is yet another symptom of community attrition. A recently returned resident remarked that one of the most evident changes in the community make-up of the city is this loss of the family-run business. Having lived outside of Valletta for over ten years, they described change in these terms:

The difference I would say is that most of the little shops, the little cute shops, family run businesses have closed (RR3).

This loss of community has not only affected the MGR demographic. The social and economic reality of a city that is rapidly gentrifying is that all residents are affected in some meaningful way. The fragmentation of the even recently formed communities, for example those formed in the last 10 to 15 years, has also become a reality, as one participant remarked:

...most of the people who originally moved here who I really enjoyed spending time with don't live here anymore, so they were in and out. We skipped over ten gentrification steps (LT5).

Valletta's community in 2022 is therefore very much in flux. The MGR residents have the most keen and deep-time sense of this change, based on a lifetime of experience. However, it is evident that it has affected all resident communities to some extent, as rents increase or the temptation to cash-in on investments shortens the lifespan of newly formed communities. It is here that 'loss of community' intersects with another key theme to emerge from the coded data. The relationship can be interpreted in terms of cause and effect. If gentrification and the commercial emphasis are the perceived motivational force behind this change, then the loss of community can be considered one of its principal effects. And one of the primary underlying drivers of this is the real-estate business and how this impacts property and rental prices.

Property Prices

From the 'ghost-city' described above, Valletta became a gold-mine for investors and property speculators. This was perhaps preceded by a wave of early adopters, individuals taking advantage of the opportunities presented to them by the abandoned or undervalued property for which no market existed, thus facilitating easy investment. This is certainly no longer the case.

This quantifiable index of the impact of gentrification featured often enough in conversations about change in the city during the interviews to merit its own sub-code, *Property Prices*. This was brought up in a number of different contexts. For one participant who was brought up in Valletta but is now resident elsewhere, it was a somewhat regretful reminder of opportunity lost:

This is actually where I used to live...[w]hich my father sold in 1988 for 7000 Malta Liri¹⁰, today they are worth six or seven hundred thousand euros (NRL1).

Though it is not within the scope of this thesis to analyse price fluctuations of Maltese property, the above comment gives some indication to just how steep and exaggerated property prices within the city have become. Figure 25, though representing data from across the island, does illustrate the trend. This certainly is a barrier to be overcome in terms of attracting new residents to the city, rather than inviting more speculative investment for short-let weekend apartment

¹⁰ LM 7,000 would be equivalent to €16,300 based on the conversion rate set in 2008 when Malta adopted the Euro.

conversions. As two of the participants, who have both moved to the city recently made very clear, it is an insurmountable hurdle:

Like I said I have always loved the city, and my ultimate dream is to actually own my own place here. But suddenly, prices are eye-watering (RR2).

We just won't own them [the properties] that's the sad thing. Because we won't be able to afford [it] (RR3).

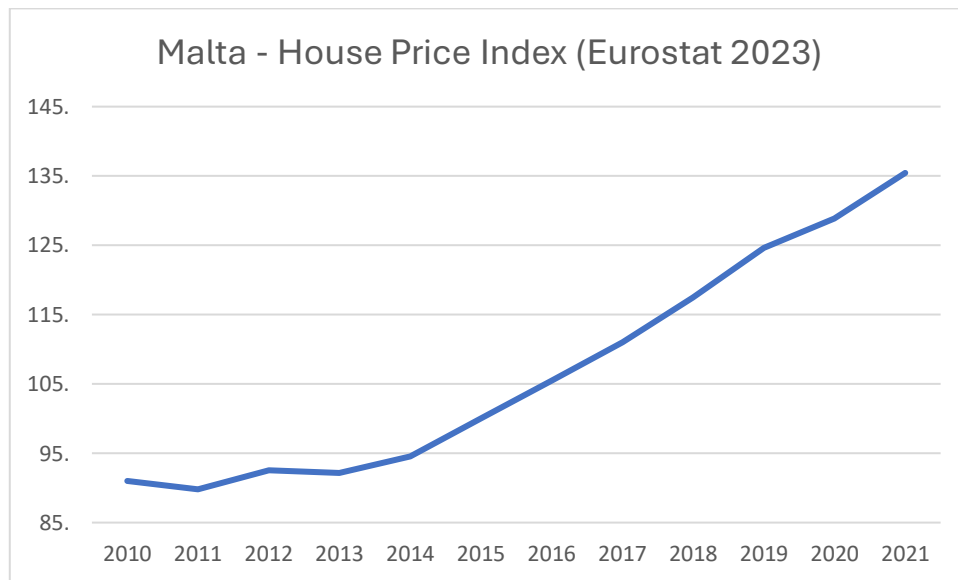


Figure 25 - Malta House Price Index from 2010-2021 (Source: Eurostat 2023).

It is however the *Beltin* themselves who have had to endure the harshest effects of this renewed interest in property development and investment in the city. Property owners wanting to cash in on the new value of their property, as a direct result of the burgeoning demand, choose either to sell or raise their rents to match the market. This of course has an immediate effect on many of those families from a lower socio-economic bracket who are suddenly priced out of the market. In the opinion of many of the participants, this was the most palpable driver of change in the city and responsible for the dispersal of the community of Beltin forced to move out of the city. Commercial interests foster a dispassionate outlook, one where economic interest trumps social concerns, a process that can be very traumatic for the displaced residents. Often it affects the most vulnerable in the community, especially the retirees who by default have a limited income stream. It has resulted in much contestation, with residents attempting to fight back through the court system. An interviewee with friendships in the elderly community brought this up as the interview started:

A lot of the Valletta people, let's say, are in court cases because they can't afford the rent anymore. And before there was a rent, and they had a contract, but they passed away

and then people just want them [the families] out. They just want to build hotels or put the rent up too high for them and a lot of them are in their 60s, 70s, you know, 80s (RR3).

This sentiment is well captured in the below comment by a local resident, themselves forced to move out of the city though they still run their business from there:

They are literally being kick out, whether you have money to afford the property or not, whether you have alternative accommodation or not. They kick you out or they set rent so high they are essentially kicking you out anyway, as you simply cannot afford it (MGR3).

The Changing City as a thematic construct was created to capture the research participants' concerns and experiences of Valletta in the transcript data and is itself nestled under the overarching *Experience of Place* theme. It became clear early on during the data analysis that Valletta's dramatic shift in economic fortunes is one of the most relevant and unavoidable subjects, almost by default. It is most clearly expressed through the experiences two participant types that account for the majority of the data within this cluster of coded themes. These are the long-term and multi-generational residents, participants who have witness and lived through the processes of gentrification first-hand.

These results are also in part, a function of the methodological approach that was implemented for the project as a whole. In not having a set of fixed questions governing the interviews, participants were free to steer the conversation and commentary. This expressive freedom was amplified by the fact that the interview was carried out on foot and on the move. In exploring the streets, they experienced and examined the effects of these changes in person, coming directly in contact with the agents of change. The changes wrought by commercial interests have changed the way the city is navigated, creating broad pedestrian thoroughfares, at the expense of vehicular mobility. These new pedestrian zones, with new bars and restaurants clamouring for attention, is the daily lived experience of the city. As the interviews meandered around the city streets, they witnessed the conversion of abandoned places into high-end apartments or commercial ventures, particularly boutique hotels. As one participant observed in his childhood street of St. Ursula, at least 15 buildings have been converted to hotels or guesthouses.

This thematic construct tried to encompass both cause and effect. If over-commercialization through the process of gentrification is the motivational force behind the changing city, then the current fragmentation and dispersal of Valletta's traditional and longstanding residential community is its most damaging legacy, at least with respect to the

MGR participant bracket. Though this is an understandable, almost predictable outcome perhaps, it does posit an interesting set of heritage value considerations, in that it demonstrates to what degree people derive social value from the intangible elements of communal life in the city. These values are linked irrevocably to the intangible sense of belonging that community's foster, values that transcend physical place.

These ideas are further explored in the following section, *The Lived City*, which is dedicated to the everyday activities and associations the participants associate with Valletta. As a collection of thematic codes, it represents the largest of the meta-codes created to make sense of the experiential responses to the city.

The Lived City

As a meta-code, the *Lived City* encompasses the largest set of codes and responses collected under the *Experience of Place* meta-group, based on 461 textual references representing over 57% of the total (Table 11). Collectively, these codes capture thematic subjects that are concerned with the everyday experiences of the city. In general, these themes are narrative in nature, and in general terms cover many of the stories of place, past and present, that were shared during the interviews. Stories from the participant's past are often related to themes of family and family history, of childhoods spent playing in the streets or swimming at the coast. They are also very likely to tell of lived experiences in the city today, of social and communal practices that are specifically tied to the physical place that is the city. There is also room for the ephemeral and personal; each participant's unique take finding some form of representation in the coded values. The sub-codes will be presented individually, with primacy given to those with larger reference counts, following the order of Table 11 below.

The Lived City Meta-Code	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Aspects of community	16	165
Personal Experiences	18	138
Social Activities	14	61
Identity	7	25
Politics	6	10
The Historical City	12	30
City and COVID	10	18

Table 11 - The Lived City meta-code, broken down into its constituent code-groups.

Aspects of community

The previous section illustrated how the dissolution of local city communities greatly contributed to the anxiety surrounding the changing city. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that in collecting and coding for elements of the lived experience of the city, that communal memories and practices surrounding events, locations and people should feature prominently. This then is a very broad category, reflecting the range of textual references, and as such is composed of 8, often interrelated, codes (Table 12). As has been the protocol thus far, these code results will not be reported individually; rather they will be used to frame the narrative with less frequently occurring codes used to bolster and inform the main themes from the code-group. In this instance, four minor codes have been grouped together, as collectively they did not display the expected number of references.

The largest of these sub-codes captured references to what was generalized as *Community Life*, an amorphous grouping that accounts for close to a third of code-group responses. This is life remembered or lived and represents both the city as it was and the city as it is, straddling past and present. In many instances, depending on the interviewee type, codes within this group link directly to contemporary lived experience, the Valletta of today, whilst for other responses this is best understood as harking back to remembered communal life, the Valletta of the past. The examples listed here present some of the broader themes of lived communities, many of which are elaborated upon in later sections of this thesis.

Aspects of Community code-group	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Community life	14	63
'Characters'	10	28
Maltese Networks	9	23
New Residents	4	13
Communities Stories	6	13
Long-term Residents	5	7
Elderly Community	3	6
Other (Carnival, Festa, Religion, Neighbours)	N/A	13

Table 12 - Codes related to the Aspects of Community code-group.

One of the most pervasive of these themes is one that is in a sense self-referential, where participants reflected on the residents themselves. These textual references were coded for individually during the analysis, to differentiate between the different residential relationship, recent arrivals versus established *Beltin* for example. Predictably however, any discussion of

residential life returned to themes that were explored earlier in this chapter, the most poignant perhaps, harks back to the issue of ‘loss of community’. This was most evident when interviewing MGR participants who would often want to point out which areas or districts still housed residents, a descriptor which to them would always mean established, long-term Valletta families:

Yeah, lots of residents still live here, I think it is one of the only parts of the city where there are full blocks of people that are residents, the places are not rented out, just residential. And many of them are the sort of people that were born here and continue to live here (MGR2).

The reality about many of these ‘proper’ resident communities is that they are ageing. With many of their children and grandchildren falling victim to the price explosion of the commercialized city, a large proportion of these traditional Valletta communities are now elderly. As a group, this elder community are a link, a reminder of better times:

These days, the Valletta community is essentially made up of the elderly, and I do not think it would be easy to return back to those beautiful days (MGR4).

The lived experience of the changing city for this demographic segment, was understandably of concern to the MGR participants, particularly if they still had family living in Valletta. Rumours of a large government building¹¹, which previously housed the Passport and Identity Card office, being converted into yet another hotel was particularly riling, with these interviewees expressing that it would be better suited to cater for the local ageing population:

Our elderly community, they grew up in the city – and we know how difficult it is for them to leave the city. It would be great for them if they could stay here too, in the environment they spent their lives in (MGR3).

This communal experience is not exclusive to MGR type participants. The experiences of more recent arrivals to Valletta certainly feature in the textual data too. Long-term residents, who from one perspective can be described adopters of the gentrifying city have witnessed, as well as participated in, this process of gentrification. Contextually, this ties in with my research positionality statement, which clearly defines that I myself am implicated in this process, being firmly entrenched within the gentrifying demographic. In contrast to the gradual and painful communal attrition experienced by established residential communities, more recent residents

¹¹ Since the interview, this rumour has now been confirmed, and the building in question is earmarked for commercial redevelopment. (see Sansone 2022a)

were able to provide insight into the formation of new communities, which by one reckoning happened in punctuated influxes, injecting a new, non-local dynamic into the city:

They all started buying left right and centre, one, two, three, four apartments each. And they started doing them up – and marketing them. And yes, the kind of people who were moving here, for instance I had a Japanese concert pianist living next to me, an American couple (LT5).

This new community, what one participant jokingly referred to as “neo-Valletians” represents the early wave of adopters, generally a new, socially active and relatively young community who jump-started the process of revitalizing the city. There is a duality to this residential dynamic. On the one hand though they represent change, there is a sense, at least from some of the MGR residents interviewed, that they also contribute positively to the city, because they demonstrate an appreciation and respect for the it that they perceive it is due:

And I sometimes tell myself, and I don't like it, but these people (foreigners) are more conscious of this connection – they love the city so much – compared to those Maltese...(MGR1).

This positivity is tempered however, by the reality that many of this new generation of residents are defined as such by deed of paperwork, Valletta representing an investment opportunity and not a home or community:

... [A]nd mostly the new generation is mostly loads of foreigners who aren't here really. They own houses, they are not here (RR3).

Residents, therefore, within the broader thematic discourse on *Aspects of Community* feature in the interviews generally framed within the context of broader socio-economic changes that Valletta has been, and continues too, experience. A different, more personal angle of residential experiences also emerged from the data, one that highlights individual connectivity of the participant, the researcher and the community at large.

Earlier in this chapter, I made a statement about my own position as a researcher, and how my status as a resident of Valletta has the potential to impact or influence this research. Malta, as I have described before, is a small, and intensely connected place. In conducting research with residents, many of whom I have some degree of connection with already, whilst walking streets that are intimately familiar to me, it was inevitable that my own connection to the city and the community would filter into conversation. Similarly, the participants themselves are, in many instances, deeply embedded in a diverse range of Valletta communities, which often resulted in the interviewee taking an unplanned detour to greet a friend or acquaintance.

A specific code was assigned to capture these instances of interactions between myself and the participant but also importantly, of the participant and the community. Called somewhat humorously *Maltese Networks* it best captures the spirit of a city lived, where the community is not abstract and distant, but familiar and accessible.

This found expression in many different ways. At times the interviewee would contextualize or introduce a location by attempting to draw a common connection:

Liz Falzon used to live there, the notary, I don't know if you know her (NRL1).

Name-dropping like this is commonplace in Malta, as there is an assumption made that a thread of common acquaintance exists, however tenuous, as it works to position you in a familiar experiential framework. This is evident in the example below, where, in telling me about the motivation to move to the city, a participant references an architect¹² whose work is synonymous with the city:

So, I came to Valletta because my ex-boyfriend is an Architect, he used to work with KonradB. And at the time Konrad was the chairman of the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee (LT5).



Figure 26 - 'Maltese Networks' in action. Participant conversing with an acquaintance in St. Ursula Street (Source: Author's own).

¹²KonradB is an architect. His practice is based in Valletta and has been involved in several key projects, including City Gate, the new Parliament building, and the Barrakka Lift. He also participated in this project as an interviewee.

Often, these serendipitous interactions, enabled by the fact that the interviews were conducted in-situ and on the move, just acted as punctuation marks to the conversation. This occurred more frequently with participants who have lived in the city for longer. Nonetheless it clearly demonstrates how central the resident is to the concept of what makes the city: This centrality is well captured in the below example, where having randomly met some acquaintances and had a casual conversation about restaurant experiences, the interviewee muses on the role of residents in defining the city:

See, it's in the simple things. I just spoke to two Italians and an Englishman at the same time, where else does that happen? These are people that are part of the city. They work in the city, they live in the city, they are part of the city (MGR1).

Whereas the above example interestingly suggests that living and working in the city are prerequisites to become 'part of the city,' the casual encounters more often than not involved members of the community whose *Belti* status was unquestionable and established. These are the emblematic 'characters' introduced in the previous section, the loss of whom is a big part of what is perceived as a fundamental characteristic of loss of community. These storied individuals become weaved, embroiled almost, through their links with the participants who were always keen to acknowledge and engage them, even if to a small degree, in the project itself, as this encounter with 'Pawlu' attests to:

MaramaC: This guy is amazing. Pawlu!

Pawlu: Off for a walk?

MaramaC: Yep – we are doing a project on the city.

Pawlu: You doing a project on the city?

MaramaC: Not me, Joshua.

Pawlu: Oh yeah, what about?

Maltese networks is an apt term for this exchange, because it links the participant, the local casual encounter and me as a researcher together, and again links back to the notion of research reflexivity and positionality. Pawlu, involved in the casual encounter from the conversation quoted above, ran together with his son and grandson, the QE2 bar near the entrance to the Lower Barrakka Gardens overlooking the Grand Harbour. This is where I first met him, but also where I first met the participant, thus making it a case of the 'network' coming full circle.

The emblematic 'characters' merited their own sub-code, and as such together with the concept of 'Maltese Networks' formed the bulk of the textual references in the *Aspects of Community* code group. Whilst these 'characters' have been covered above and earlier in the thesis; it is useful here to expand a little on how they appear in the text. These 'characters' are often eccentric or larger than life, an aspect which is amplified by the fact that they were very much in the public eye, say for example by being involved in a local business. One specific 'character' embodies this description, making multiple appearances in the interviews, and seemingly having left a lasting impression on those who remember the city before the changes wrought by commercialization:

There used to be a baker here, in the mid-80s, and it used to be like going into a Fellini film. There's this lady with very big, red hair who deals with everyone, with these big gold earrings in a cloud of dust. It was a really nice cacophony inside (NRL1).

.... there was this lady, always wearing black, she was amazing.... she was a little bit scary as well...(RR3).

Clearly, these emblematic characters anchor the participants in a particular place in time, whilst contemporaneously coming to represent the communal experience in the microcosm, that is to say they contribute to a specific sense of place. The infamous, fiery-haired baker is but one example, many of the interviewees with long relationships to the city had similar stories, often related to specific local events. These could relate to the Valletta carnival, a tradition with roots in the 16th and 17th centuries (Cremona 2016, 78), with many families from the city heavily involved in the organization of the annual spectacle:

Of course, it always involved my Uncle Pawlu, 'il-Pampalun', God bless him. He is still alive, another of those interesting city personalities, much loved by everyone. He deserves a monument as we say in Valletta, it's true that what we say of him (MGR3).

Or similarly characters associated with the weekly street market, known locally as 'Il-Monti,' that was traditionally held on a Sunday¹³ and brought people into the city:

'Ix-Xigo', he was an important character in Valletta, not only to the residents, but especially to those who worked on the 'Monti' like my father did. You cannot talk about the Monti and not mention 'ix-Xigo' (MGR2).

These localized cultural events that are associated specifically with the city were coded independently as a contributing code set within *Aspects of Community*. Essentially textual data

¹³ In recent years this street market has moved outside the walls of Valletta.

all revolved around two main themes: the yearly parish feasts (Festa) and Carnival. However, the frequency of mentions was low and often emerged as a tangential discussion, as in the examples above, where the subject was more concerned with these Valletta personalities, than with the importance of the event itself.

As a code-group, *Aspects of Community* is mostly characterized by references that centre on the residents themselves from a number of different perspectives, be they specific demographic groups or individuals. The codes that are presented following this one will look more closely at some of the specific details of the lived experience, the principal theme of this section. However there is space here to include some of the other community connected data which contribute to the *Aspects of Community* code-group, adding detail to how community is seen to function, and how participants interact with it. There is an interesting intersection of past and present in some of the stories or interests shared, one best categorized as the championing of continuity in the face of change. An example of this was brought up by a participant who specifically selected to start the interview outside a family business that had operated on the same site for generations:

They will be sitting down all day, out here with the coffins next to them. It's quite something to watch, they have the whole area for them. They have been here for 100 years, because they are the official funerary undertakers for the Ta' Karmnu Church, so anyone who dies in this area comes to them (NRL1).

The above example is also a reminder, that though commercialization is perceived as the villain in the context of change, Valletta has always, somewhat ironically, been a centre of business and trade. These historic businesses can develop a sub-culture of their own, café culture being a good example. This is evident below, where a typical 'Valletta day' experience is described as:

That you wake up in the morning....and you head to Strada Rjali (Republic Street) for a coffee, you meet up with a couple of friends, perhaps they came from outside the city, then you head to lunch. This is all part of the culture of Valletta, that you live it (MGR1).

There are very specific bars and cafes that have come to embody this Valletta culture, and often these associated behaviours and traditional patronage, and this was noted by a participant as we walked past one of these storied venues:

I am guessing – they would be sitting down over there, everyone sipping their coffee, or supposedly sipping their coffee, but all eyes are scanning who is going up the street, who is talking to who. There is this aspect of social trading sort of thing and all the gossip...(NRL3).

This selection of textual responses again emphasized the centrality of ‘community’ in the participants’ determination of what constitutes the lived experience of the city. This was often self-referential or positional, where the participant located themselves within the context of Valletta communities as a resident themselves. In a scalar sense, these themes embrace the collective, external aspects of lived experience. The following section turns the focus inward, to more personal, individual facets of the experience.

Personal experiences

If *Aspects of community* explored how participants value and consider the residential facets of the city, this code-group reflects a more personal, first-person or biographical set of insights. *Personal experiences* is a code-group consisting of nine subcodes, and the second largest collection of textual references with the *Lived City* meta-code with contributions from almost all of the participants (Table 13).

Personal Experiences Code-Group	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Childhood in the City	7	43
Family history	10	26
Family memories	7	21
Reasons for moving	4	12
School or Education memories	8	12
Friendships	6	8
Routines	4	4
Exploration & Discovery	2	4
Working in the City	2	2

Table 13 - Codes and number of textual references linked to the Personal experience code-group.

The majority of the data associated with this code-group are linked to three specific sub-codes, all of which centre on personal recollection and memory. In the broadest terms, these are personal memories of family, family histories and childhood recollections of the city. Whatever the residential relationship the participant may have with Valletta in the present, the data described here charts the value of familial links to the city over time.

Memories of childhood are often vivid and nostalgic, harking back to simpler and better times. Cliché and rose-tinted perhaps, they however represent the most cohesive, single collection of textual references associated with *Personal experience*. This is possibly

attributable to the age of the participants¹⁴ and a sense of temporal dislocation exacerbated by the socio-economic change the city has experienced. This is well captured in the example below, where the memory of childhood is obviously important to the participant. What is interesting however is that, in the participant's mind, the idyllic childhood memory is at odds with the reality of the city today, suggesting that the sort of experiences they had as children in Valletta would not be possible today:

My childhood was incomparable to me, there is little like it. The memory of my childhood is something wonderful for me, where we ran around the city, problem free – especially no traffic (MGR4).

The general age demographic of the people who contributed to this project implies that the Valletta of their childhood is the city of 30 or 40 years ago at the minimum, and therefore understandably discordant and disconnected with the bustling, gentrified city of today. Memories are therefore, as we see above, often framed in the context of change, be it the increase in traffic, or for example the once ubiquitous abandoned properties:

Up here, in the top corridor of this building was always open, so we played a lot in there, in all those rooms. It was abandoned at the time, but today it has all changed (MGR2).

These are commonplace memories of fun, games and adventure, be it playing football on makeshift pitches, or building 'forts' in the public gardens, or perhaps daredevil bike stunts on the many steeply inclined, stepped streets. As the interviews meandered through the streets, people would map out these memories anchoring them in time and place. These are memories attached to streets, buildings, and gardens, but also specific shops:

This is another shop that evokes strong nostalgia, 'Tal-Hollywood'. When school started, we would all be there, picking up copybooks, rubbers that sort of thing (MGR3).

In a similar way, recollections of the years spent in school or training colleges within the city, transport the interviewee to a particular place and time. Some of these memories were triggered by the interview method, as participants found themselves retracing their morning walks to school:

In fact, this used to be my walk from home to school when I was at the Pillar (school), yes down here passed Biagio steps (MGR5).

¹⁴ The average age of the participants is 48.

Similarly, interviews would intersect with specific buildings and offices linked to memories of training or tuition:

Yes, I did my typewriting lessons in this very building. That's over 40 years ago, well over 40 years ago (NRL4).

This is where I used to come to my first lessons up this...and she was called Miss Italia... learning how to write, like A,B,C and 1,2,3. Like early school (LT6).

References to the city from 40 years ago seems to invite comment on the state of the urban environment, and the theme of abandonment resurfaces to contextualize scholastic memories:

But I remember Valletta when there was nothing, everything was falling apart in the 70s, I used to come here to Sixth Form at Evan's Labs at the bottom of Merchant Street (LT7).

A major memory-defined theme within the *Personal experiences* code-group are those which link the city to the families of the participant. These familial stories are either recounted from first-hand experience or reference long-told family histories. Either way, as a body of memory in an urban setting, they constitute a sort of genealogy of place and time. With some of the participants, this link was incontrovertible and unambiguous, the link between family and place almost blurring into one cohesive entity:

I was born here; I still live here, and I will die here. I am not leaving from here for sure...[m]y family is from Valletta, both my parents belong to Valletta families (MGR1).

Those participants whose connection to Valletta had been severed by time or locality at some point will often situate themselves in connection with the city via a parental or familial link:

But what I wanted to say is that Valletta for me has lots of different layers of importance. First of all, two of my grandmothers used to live here when they were young (NRL3).

Time and place operate in conjunction here. Much in the same way I have positioned myself within the research area, within a temporal and spatial context, so too do participants. The connection to the city is reckoned in generational units of memory, in uncles, mothers and grandparents. Of equal importance is familial place, the memories linked to specific streets and buildings, to family homes and workplaces. As the examples below demonstrate, this a popular connection across the responses gathered:

Yes, since my grandparents at least yes. So, my grandparents lived down the road here actually.... (MGR5).

I moved to Valletta because, well, I have always loved this city, ever since I was a little girl. My grandmother, used to live in St. Ursula Street.... (RR2).

This is Old Bakery Street; my father had his office down here.... (LT6).

These experiences of place do not simply serve to link or position the participant within the Valletta sphere of influence; they give insight to current or past lives of the participants and their respective families. At times these are biographical strands of family history, charting, for example, how young families settled and relocated around the city:

I grew up here – from 0 to 10, we lived in Merchant’s Street, initially in my grandfather’s house, and then we moved down to St Dominic’s Street, waiting to move to the house my parents were building (LT6).

This sense of belonging to the city can introduce new aspects beyond the domestic or residential connection. In some cases, the familial link extends its remit to working in the city. Valletta is not then just your home, but your place of work:

I grew up in this street. I don’t know if I ever told you, but that shop was my fathers. Of course – that was my father’s workshop. So, I was brought up thanks to that shop, I lived off the takings of that shop, as that was my father’s source of income. And I still am (MGR3).

And my great-grandfather, who I obviously didn’t know, had a shop opposite St. Paul’s Co-Cathedral.... (RR3).

The experience of the city, for many of the participants, is one embedded in family memory, a lived city over time. These are often bittersweet memories of family members long since passed, a sentiment that is brought into sharp focus by the changing city itself, as more sites of memory that connect to that family member cease to be recognizable or simply disappear. The mobile interview often triggered these emotions, as they often represented literal journeys down memory lane. One participant came to the realization as a result of the interview that these family stories need to be shared, and that to do so effectively would require the same in-situ approach:

These are all important memories. And it upsets me...I realize now I should take my kids on the same tour (MGR4).

Though mostly characterized by family connection and history, the *Personal Experience* code-group also collected other experiences, though these accounted for a small proportion of the

overall number of textual references. However, they do merit inclusion as they contribute to the *Lived City* narrative, and are testament to the granular complexity of the interview data. Of these lesser textual groupings, references to friendships are worth exploring further.

In the same way that family creates deep-seated links to the city, other kinships further personalize these experiences of place. Friendships are created and maintained on Valletta's streets, schools, places of entertainment and events:

It brings a lot of things together, a lot of fun memories together of meeting up with a lot of friends in what used to be called QE2¹⁵ (LT1).

We would just get a bottle of wine during the Jazz Festival and sit on the bastions.... (RR1).

The walking whilst talking method of interviewing again triggers these type of in-situ recollections; as familiar routes were followed, often unintentionally, specific memories come to mind:

So as went along we would collect our friends. My friend Michael Debono used to live in this house for example, in this this one here Andre and Clint lived, the house with the scaffolding now (MGR4).

Social Activities

The previous section demonstrated that for many of the participants, the urban landscape of Valletta is saturated in memories of family, kinship, and networks of friends. The *Social Activities* code-group was implemented to foreground other elements of the experience of living in the city that interviewees valued and chose to share. Made up of seven discrete codes, and referenced 61 times in the text, the thematic code-group essentially details the special, yet everyday, cultural and social life of the Valletta resident or visitor. I will not present all of the data from all the codes here, as many of them are somewhat ephemeral and underrepresented in the text; however this section remains important, as social and cultural life is a central aspect of *Lived City* and is significant because it illustrates yet another facet of how Valletta is lived and valued.

What will be described are the most prevalent themes, starting with Arts & Performance, a theme that accounted for the bulk of the responses within the *Social Activities* code-group. Certainly, this is a broad category of responses, reflecting the individual's tastes and interests. These range from conventional artistic interests, specific exhibitions or art festivals run by

¹⁵ QE2 (Queen Elizabeth 2nd) was a bar located at the entrance of the Lower Barrakka Gardens.

national museums and institutions for example, but also to more contemporary and independent projects, shops and collectives that have appeared in the city. What this represents then, is the recognition of the benefits of regeneration and renewal, a city that was previously described as being a ‘ghost town’ now supporting a vibrant and thriving cultural life:

The intensity of what’s on offer here is unparalleled, as in find one square kilometre on Earth which gives you a couple of things to go to everyday (LT5).

Perhaps the above reference overstates the on-the-ground reality of the arts scene; however the evident enthusiasm points to an important development in the life cycle of Valletta, tempering the narrative of loss that so preoccupies many of the participants. The condensed scale of the city itself, puts this cultural life right at your doorstep:

Here you step out and go straight into the theatre, and the Malta Philharmonic and we have good stuff (LT5).

As noted in the previous section, noise pollution is a current concern of many residents, and this new cultural vibrancy is perhaps the greatest contributor to the issue. However, this can be re-interpreted as a positive change, and simply part of the evolution of the city, as the below participant suggests:

...[B]ut that’s the theatre participating in city life, and city life incorporating the theatre experience in its own experience (LT7).

The role of the arts in the lived experience can therefore be understood to now be a part of the new “life” of the city, at least from the perspective of some of the interviewees. This is particularly true for those residents who are themselves engaged with the arts scene personally. This is evident in the below musing by an artist/architect who singles out a privately owned art space during the interview:

Then there is Valletta Contemporary, which is one of the last places left for Contemporary Art, which is obviously important to me and my existence (LT1).

The cultural and artistic rebirth of the city is perceived as a productive, though at times disruptive, change, one that is deemed a fitting counter to the abandonment:

I would absolutely make used of all the empty public buildings for culture, not just Biagio Steps, St. Elmo. Such a pity and it’s so sad.... (LT5).

It is not just specialist high-art interest that features within the remit of *Social Activities*, and other interests do appear in the text. Live music, as discussed earlier, has developed into a

flashpoint for resident concerns, but which can in the right context, come to symbolize something about the essence or feel of the city:

Obviously, we are going to be passing the Bridge Bar, which is another spot that is, that captures the something, the best parts of Valletta (RR1).

Of course, social life in the city does not simply revolve around high or popular culture; in fact, it does not need to involve culture at all. A common and dearly held activity forgoes any connection to the urban space entirely, and is a powerful reminder that Valletta is built on a peninsula surrounded by the sea. Swimming as an activity, intersects with many of the themes already explored. It is woven into childhood memories of the city and summer breaks from school, or just somewhere to spend time away from the heat of the city with your friends. It can become part of a routine or a lifestyle:

...[W]hen I moved to Valletta.... for nearly the first 2 years I would actually almost every day come down here in the evening and swim, as long as the weather would permit...(LT4).

As a *Belti*, where you choose to swim could be dictated by your neighbourhood affiliation. Neighbourhoods on the north side of the Valletta would most likely swim in Marsamxett Harbour, whilst the southern facing neighbourhoods descend to the swimming spots of the Grand Harbour. At times this was complicated by having allegiances to two neighbourhoods:

My mother's side of the family is from the Mandraġġ and a spent a lot of my childhood on that side of town. Even to swim – though I lived here [Camerata¹⁶] I would always swim on that side of town (MGR3).

The spatial dynamics of neighbourhoods are explored in more detail in a later Chapter 7, however this particular example of the intersection of social activities and the urban landscape draws the discussion to the next theme of the *Lived City* meta-code, *Identity*.

Identity

If swimming, a commonplace leisure activity in a Mediterranean setting, can inform how city identities are constructed, sport can similarly contribute to this discussion, and in the context of Valletta that sport is football. This sport presents a more complex set of meanings than simple physical activity and allows for a segue into the next thematic sub-group of the *Lived City*, that of *Identity*. MGR type participants often recalled fond childhood memories of playing on

¹⁶ The Camerata neighbourhood is a centrally located, micro-community at the end of Merchant Street, it is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

makeshift pitches on roads and public gardens. What set this data apart from being coded primarily as a *Social Activity*, are the responses from participants which highlighted what it was the sport represented for residents. The spatial context for this insight was the car park of the Evan's Building at the northern tip of the Valetta, and the scenario is a familiar one to anyone who grew up playing football:

This was our "ground" – nothing special, a couple of stones for goal posts – that's how it used to be – and there were some fiercely competitive tournaments held here (MGR2).

Football, as a sport, is deeply entwined with national, regional and municipal identities, and this rings true in the context of Valetta:

It is very important, very. It's not just history, it is part of our culture, in our blood (MGR2).

This comment by a *Belti* participant really captures the complex, deep-seated role football plays in the identity of local residents. Armstrong and Mitchell have explored this relationship, noting how Valetta football fans play on this sense of deep history to distinguish themselves from other football fans, imbuing them with the perceived attributes of "tradition and authenticity" that in their estimation, the city embodies (Armstrong and Mitchell 2006, 202).

The previous textual reference also recalls local football tournaments (Figure 27). What these 'tournaments' represent is a glimpse into the complex negotiation of city identity in action. The spatial organization of Valetta into distinct micro-communities will be discussed in more depth in a later chapter, however it is important to note here that if you are a MGR resident or a *Belti* it is very likely that you identify with your specific neighbourhood when interacting with other Beltin. It is your primary identifier, and this is manifest in how these tournaments were structured:

It is here that where you came from made a difference, if you were from Mandraġġ or the Arċipierku or from the upper part of the city – this is where that exciting rivalry existed (MGR2).

This internecine rivalry, though fiercely felt, is only truly manifested internally. Differences were quickly forgotten beyond the walled city perimeter, where you were collectively *Beltin* again:

And the nice thing about it is that between the different groups, we did not get on or mix. But if we were all in a group together, we were one family. So, from the boundaries of the city – once were outside the city we all the same, we are from Valetta. But in Valetta we are different, it's really interesting (MGR4).

The idea of *Belti* identity was, not surprisingly, mostly confined to interviews with the MGR participant group, and as a theme it surfaced in a number of the different situations during the interview process. Underlying this complex construct is a sense of pride in belonging to the city:

I mean it might sound strange – but we people from Valletta have this thing – let's call it pride – you know what I mean, we have this sort of character (MGR3).



Figure 27 - RenaldA demonstrating the location of the ad-hoc 'tournament' football ground in the car park of the Evan's Building, Valletta (Source: Author's own).

One of the interviews concluded in Upper Barrakka Gardens, where from the bastion edge you get a real sense of how self-contained Valletta is. From that vantage point on top of the highest bastions in the city you perceive how fundamentally, underneath all the accretions of time and slow creep of development, it remains a fort. To this participant this signified a metaphor for communal identity of city dwellers:

But when you look from here – from this viewpoint – you get a sense of what Valletta is – that is a fort. What does this do to people from Valletta, whatever district they come from, together we become a fortress. Unbeatable. I am not talking about in a fight – I mean in the sense of belonging to a community (MGR4).

In the context of themes previously explored in this chapter, especially those of community diaspora and loss, there is an underlying anxiety that this fort-like identity is another aspect that is being eroded:

This is my fear, we are losing all this. Even in the way we speak to each other is changing. For example, to speak we normally shout, we are loud. Residents of Mandragġ have their own dialect (MGR3).

This diaspora outside - and recently inside - of the city impacts other major elements of city identity. Though religious identity did not feature particularly strongly in the data directly, it did so by implication, as all discussion of neighbourhood communities within the city walls are essentially tied to the local parishes. As smaller sub-communities disappear, local churches become homes for new congregations:

Yes and no, because the way people are tied to their parishes is still very visceral and very strong. But there is a situation that there are so many churches, that actually some of the churches have been given to other denominations. Like for example, St Nicholas' church down here, is being used by the Russian Orthodox, one is being used by the Romanians (NRL1).

Belti identity through the eyes of more recent arrivals to the city, who themselves now identify as being from the city, lends a little more objectivity to the construct. However harmonious and unified it may be portrayed to outsiders, this identity is far more nuanced and diverse:

Yes, and there then are two types of 'original Beltin' as in people who were born and bred here (LT5).

It is beyond the scope of this research to comment in great detail about the intricacies of communal identity and the veracity of the participants' observations. However, the relevance of identity as a sub-theme to the *Lived City* meta-code is that it demonstrates how communal and individual practices link residents to the historic urban fabric in a web of socially derived values. *Belti* identity is a fundamental element in the creation of place attachment for residents, and much of it derives from the city itself:

Well listen. That is what probably makes Valletta different. If you are from here, you feel at home wherever you walk, whatever street you take. Once you leave you feel the change, but as soon as you return to the city you feel it (MGR2).

Politics and the City

Valletta is the administrative and symbolic centre of the Maltese Islands, and local political life has a tangible presence in the city, housing the national law courts, many of the Ministries, and of course Parliament itself. This has a perceptible effect on how certain residents or visitors experience the city, and this in turn draws attention to the political angle of many of the principal

themes encountered so far. This is particularly applicable to those themes that orbit the complex changes the city is being subjected to which lend themselves best to being viewed through a political lens.

This is reflected in the textual information in a number of different ways. Some participants discern an unequivocal convergence of the historic environment with local political history, this particular example referring to the new Barrakka Lift that connects the harbour area to Valletta itself:

But I chose this because I think it reflects a number of different stages in the political history of Valletta as well (NRL3).

The political landscape of the city does not speak solely to the past; it is very much manifest in the present. The plight of Valletta, to those who perceive it as embattled, is often blamed on politicians and the political system in general. In commenting about the 'state' of the city, which to the particular MGR resident was the primary topic of conversation during the entire interview, politics and politicians are squarely to blame:

Disgracefully, politicians – why politicians you might ask, well they run the country – politicians are not cultured, will all due respect (MGR1).

In less general terms, the politics angle is most evident at heritage flashpoints, spaces and places in the city that have elicited most public debate and contestation. These were singled out for different, albeit equally political, reasons. The 19th century covered market known locally as *Is-Suq tal-Belt*, the intricacies of which will be expounded upon in the following chapter, is interpreted as having an underlying political connection:

For example, we are going towards the market now. The Market has, over the last 5 years been regenerated, there was a massive project, intended towards Valletta 18....linked to the political, not with a capital P (NRL2).

Similarly, and perhaps more evidently, the most contested and controversial spaces in the city are represented by the changes to City Gate, which included the gate itself, the new Parliament building and the repurposed Opera House ruins, now converted into an open-air theatre. This site was specifically selected by a participant who was involved professionally with the project itself, where he recognized how deeply ingrained politics and heritage practice can be:

The problem was politized since the beginning. The issue with that is especially in Malta, you are either in favour or you are against, there is no middle ground (NRL2).

A different perspective, raised by another participant, on the political implications of new buildings in the midst of a historic city, is that the debate contributes to fostering communication and transparency:

For the simple reason that it has brought the democratic process in the foreground of daily life. Everything before was always hidden away (LT4).

The intention, during the interview process, was to not trigger specific reactions or prompt certain discussions. However, participants specifically selected these sites because of the debate surrounding them. Though limited to a select few participants, and mostly limited to a handful of places in the city, this was clearly a subject that mattered to them.

One example certainly worthy of inclusion is the Great Siege Memorial, a monument set on a raised, tree-covered area facing the law courts and adjacent to St. John's cathedral. In October 2017, the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was murdered, following her investigation into alleged corruption and collusion between government officials and 'big business' (Garside 2017). The resultant public uproar started a series of ongoing protests and vigils which centred on the Great Siege Monument, transforming into a site of tribute and remembrance (Figure 28).

And this memorial kind of spontaneously grew, it's a daily call for justice. And it's facing the law courts for a reason, as a constant reminder (RR2).



Figure 28 - Participant discussing what the Daphne Memorial at the Great Siege Monument means to them (Source: Author's own).

Local authorities resisted this popular appropriation of a national monument, implementing a surreptitious, overnight campaign to ‘clean up’ the site, removing candles, pictures, and tributes on the basis that they could possibly damage the statue. Here then is an example of political involvement in heritage practice by imposing a limited and sanctioned set of meanings to a heritage space or object, and resisting the new meanings associated with it.

The final theme within this code relates the issue of public demonstration, which as we have already seen above, centres on particular areas of the city, depending on the nature of the protest. Valletta, with its straight roads, and unencumbered sight lines, makes for an ideal location for gatherings and marches. As one participant notes, the route from City Gate to St. George’s Square follows a ley-line of political power. This route either starts at the current seat of parliament (City Gate) or old parliament (The Grand Master’s Palace) which are linked by the commercial artery of the city, Republic Street:

I mean because you mentioned the political activism kind of stuff, I mean they are mostly on this street. Old Parliament was there before (Pjazza San Ġorġ) so it used to be walking from City Gate all the way here and then doing something in front of Parliament (MGR5).

An unintentional side-effect of creating more public spaces, especially the new ‘pjazzas’ [squares] in proximity to centres of political power, is that it creates new spaces for protest and demonstration, a new place for public engagement in political life. This is especially evident in two locations as indicated by the participants. The first of these is the new square created opposite the Office of the Prime Minister at Auberge de Castille:

Whilst now in actual fact, in recent years since this has been done it has become more of a place of protest, there were all the ‘Occupy Justice’ protests taking place over here which were very important events in recent years marking a very dark history that we are going through at the moment I personally believe (NRL3).

The second of these, as discussed earlier, is the new Parliament building at the entrance to the city. As a public space that is encountered daily by those entering the city on foot, it serves as a continuous reminder of the lived experience of political protest. This reminder is reinforced by the permanent presence of barriers erected during the Daphne protests, yet which remain in place months, even years later:

Because it’s a place which...it’s also place that has seen a tremendous amount of protests...and this is how the state responds, with barriers. And not barriers during the

protest as the necessary security, let's call it that, but they've never left. If you look around there is no protest so, why are the barriers still here? (LT3).

Though not a pervasive theme across the participants interviewed, *Politics* remains an important one. It captures, at least in a limited way, how the historic environment can be understood to be involved with political issues in the present, and how this impacts the lived experience of the city.

The Historical City

It would have been unusual if Valletta's much celebrated history did not factor in the participant's observations on city life, beyond the deeply personal family histories encountered earlier in this chapter. This code sub-group flagged instances of the city's past engaging the participants in a number of different ways, from the sharing of historical stories to making observations on the complexities of Malta's past as made evident in the historic fabric of the city. This latter category would often intersect with Malta's colonial past, and the influence of British rule. This is unsurprising and understandable considering that the many changes were made to the urban fabric of Valletta during the almost 150 year relationship with the Empire and the island. One participant singled out Ball's Monument at the Lower Barrakka Gardens, and the introduction of new, distinctly colonial architecture:

Well personally I like neo-classicism a lot, its cleaner than Baroque, and in Malta we are used to, we are seated in Baroque, no? And this is, I think the first relationship between early British period cultural..hmm..I don't know is it imposition or interaction with Maltese culture (NRL4).

Reference here is made to the colonial experience of the Maltese Islands, which has left an indelible imprint on the historic fabric of the city. The nature of the relationship of the British and the Maltese continues to affect how notions of national identity can centre on heritage places and monuments, an issue which was raised when pausing during an interview near the statue of Queen Victoria located, quite appropriately, at the centre of Republic Square:

We were part of the British Empire, you can't just refute it and cancel it off the history books, you know (RR2).

One of the outcomes of projecting the idea of the *Lived City* backwards in time is that it problematizes the idea that the changes the city is currently experiencing are entirely new. As a participant whose home is located at Vincenti Buildings (Figure 29) - which occupies an entire

city 'block' between Strait Street and Old Bakery Street - noted, redevelopment is not a new idea in the city:

And this is actually an interesting building, this is where the bakeries were of the Knights, which then after the British built the new bakeries in Birgu¹⁷, this building became obsolete, and not only today there is a lot of development and speculation (LT4).



Figure 29 - Vincenti Buildings, built in the 1930's. Picture taken from Strait Street (Source: Author's own).

However, the relationship between the historical and the participants' experiences with the city is not limited to larger political or cultural issues, a perspective that is overtly academic in nature. It could equally be prompted by everyday historic ephemera, aspects of the city now obscure or forgotten, what one participant termed as 'the little things'. These 'little things' can reference different chapters in the city's history, an important reminder that living cities are always a palimpsest where change is constant. One such example is the brief French occupation at the end of the 18th Century, the scant traces of which were noted during one of the interviews:

¹⁷ One of the 'Three Cities', south of Valletta across the Grand Harbour.

Then there are little things, fun things like there, but it's not visible anymore. The sign in French, one of the last examples of streets signs in French, obviously its and dusty and nobody took care of it. From the two years when they were here (NRL1).

Or simply the presence of famous literary figures, who sojourned in Valletta for some time:

Even little snippets like this, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge worked here', interesting. And you will find all these little reminders here and there in the city. Plaques on the walls (RR2).

Often, the historical connection is not obvious or visible, rather it requires a little 'local knowledge' well exemplified by the tragic tale associated with an otherwise unremarkable building in St. Ursula Street:

This is the very interesting place where there was the 'carnival tragedy' in 18... (Participant cannot remember exact date) I don't know when, where like 150 kids. It a very hidden story in Maltese history¹⁸ (NRL1).

The textual data presented here demonstrates that the patently unavoidable historic attributes of the city surface in interesting ways, enmeshed with the way residents and visitors interpret, understand and therefore live the city.

The City and COVID

Well, I moved here during Covid, I moved here last May. It was completely dead, obviously it was still part of the lockdown (RR1).

As a coda to the *Lived City* meta-code, this final section will present a data sub-group that is shaped by current affairs. The fieldwork phase of this project was conducted under varying stages of the COVID pandemic, with the pilot study being run in the midst of crisis, just outside a lockdown window. Though in reality only about 25% of the interviews were held under these restrictions, the pandemic had a noted effect on how the city was experienced by the participants in general, warranting a specific code. At the peak of the crisis, global city lockdowns temporarily altered the busy dynamic of urban centres, as shops closed, and non-essential workers remained home. In Valletta's case, where the abandonment was a historical theme most considered a negative facet, for some resident participants, this enforced inward turn helped to create new communal links, when external connections were severed:

¹⁸ The 'Carnival Tragedy' was a stampede that killed 100 children in 1823 (Times of Malta 2015).

Like so for example during COVID lockdowns, and I used to spend a lot of time on the terrace, it was the time when I spoke most to my neighbours, having lived here for like 6 years (LT3).

Pandemic-themed interview data collected from those who actually live in the city again serves to emphasize the impact of the gentrification on Valletta, the perceived effects of which were documented earlier in this chapter. For residents, accustomed to being inundated with visitors, tourists and the general hustle and bustle of a thriving city, COVID presented a brief window of respite. This was a Valletta that could be appreciated in quasi-isolation, perhaps for the first time since regeneration altered the city:

For us in Valletta it was a dream, it was so beautiful to be able to appreciate the city (RR2).

Emptiness here was expressed in ways that were not unexpected, especially in the context of the themes already presented. The lack of people made places more accessible, peaceful and therefore more liveable:

Thanks to COVID this garden has become much more beautiful again because it has the right amount of people as you can tell you know.... But this is the right amount of people, everybody finds a spot in the shade, people can have a chat, its lovely. It's a nice atmosphere here (LT1).

This emptied landscape allowed the city to be experienced differently, allowing for a sense of discovery enabled by the increased accessibility:

Like I said, during COVID I used to walk all around...there is one place which I discovered more recently, which is a bakery actually (MGR5).

The COVID pandemic temporarily altered the living dynamics of how Valletta operates, and therefore briefly brought into sharp relief the impact of change on the city, and how it affects the experiences of residents and visitors alike.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results from the largest thematic data set that was created from the textual analysis and codification of the 19 walking interviews conducted with the project participants. *Experience of Place* was the meta-group created to collate and interpret 56 separate codes into two meta-codes, which were presented as distinct sections in this chapter.

At 816 textual references, these two meta-codes account for 44% of the 1,865 coded textual data across all themes.

Conceptually, all these codes and responses revolved around the idea of a place 'experienced' and by extension, lived. These experiences are shaped by two primary vectors, those being the fabric of the city and the individual experiencing it. Many variables factor into this set of outcomes: the age of the participant, their residential relationship with the city, and of course their own individual, personal set of experiences and ideas. From this cauldron of possibilities, some primary themes and sub-themes were immediately obvious: For example, how Valletta is changing, has changed and how this impacts the residential community. This data was presented under the meta-theme of *Change in the City*.

Working with residents, unsurprisingly, also generated a large amount of biographical data. The meta-code *The Lived City* presented an aggregated collection of themes that in general terms, focused less on the large-scale processes at work, and more on the individual, personal experiences of a city lived. Again, there is a large focus on community life, but beyond this, the data also details connections on a granular level, of family connections and social experiences. In being biographical, some of the data are explicitly linked to issues of identity, political life of the city, and the impact of the COVID pandemic on residents.

The chapter that follows presents results that, collectively, evaluate how the urban fabric is appraised or valued in two distinct ways. The first of these presents data on how the environment of Valletta influences or nurtures the creation of a sense of place, how it is perceived and what sort of emotional and sensorial responses the fieldwork captured during the interview process. The second set of results is less esoteric, and more tied to conventional ideas of heritage practice and assessment. Intersecting with many of the concerns over the impact of gentrification, and general attributes towards change presented in this chapter, it provides insight on both how professionals and residents interpret heritage management decisions with an emphasis on some key locations and buildings around the city.

Chapter 5: Evaluating Place

Chapter introduction

The subtext of the thesis aim is to question normative assessments of heritage places in the Maltese context. The argument made is that a focus on traditional methods of heritage assessment of historic places, leaves little room for everyday, people-centred assessments to contribute to the process. The previous chapter, guided by the thematic data produced through the analysis of the interview transcripts, presented a broad spectrum of results, and accounted for the largest proportion of the data. What emerged from this analysis was a deep concern with the plethora of changes Valletta has and continues to undergo as a direct result of the economic revival of the city's fortunes. Participant commentary and reaction to this rejuvenated city shone a light on how personal connections, memories and practices created a web of meaning that was fundamentally linked to intangible aspects of a lived experience, within the tangible construct of Valletta's urban fabric.

The results presented in this chapter are framed by the primary themes that emerged from these results, from the impact of gentrifying forces to familial histories that link participants to the city. The data presented here, though originating from the same sources and following the same narratives, has been coded to capture elements in the transcript that could specifically be construed as contributing to an 'evaluation' of the urban fabric both in a tangible sense, but also in the intangible ways that may impact participants reading of the same fabric. Results are presented in two discrete sections (Table 14). The first, and largest of these categories, is *Appraising the City*, and is based on 278 textual responses. This sub-group of codes investigates the more sensorial reactions to Valletta that were captured during the fieldwork. Primarily they revolve around the concept of sense of place, how it is formed, maintained and what it contributes to the value the participants derive from the urban fabric of the city.

Evaluating Place Meta-Group	#Meta-Code Groups	#References Count
Appraising the City	4	278
Heritage Matters	3	113
	Total Reference Count	391

Table 14 - Meta-code composition of Evaluating Place and total references coded for.

Much of the data presented thus far have not directly intersected with heritage practice in an explicit way. The fieldwork however did generate data which addressed heritage management and practice in more conventional ways. *Heritage Matters*, the final section of this chapter, is

based on a more modest number of textual responses in comparison to other meta-codes. However small, it does address some important issues, and provides insight into how the interviewees conceptualize notions of conservation, restoration and adaptive re-use in the context of the subject area Valletta.

Appraising the City

This meta-code presents the first sets of code groups in the *Evaluating Place* meta-group. Cumulatively it accounts for 278 textual references, derived from four main code groups (Table 15). As a collective of coded responses, this meta-group primarily represents the sensorial aspects of how the city is experienced or imagined by the participants. These sensorial categories, be they positive or negative impressions, can be construed as all contributing to the process of creating a “Valletta Sense of Place”. These are collectively presented under the *City Impressions* code-group.

Appraising the City Meta-Code	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
City Impressions	17	99
Aesthetics	17	83
Emotional Responses	15	59
Perceptions of the City	15	37
	Total Reference Count	278

Table 15 - Appraising the City meta-code composition, showing the participant coverage and reference count for main code-groups.

A theme that emerged from the analysis, which though still concerned with impressions or notions of the city, instead centred on how Valletta is perceived from the outside looking in, at least through the medium of the participant’s own experiences. *Perceptions of the City* therefore presents these value judgements, which include not only data concerning the city, but also judgements about the community of residents themselves.

Appraising the City meta-code concludes by again returning the focus on personal interactions with the city, specifically presenting data from the code groups *Aesthetics* and *Emotional Responses*. Numerically, with 142 textual data references, this section accounts for over half the meta-group’s data set. The coding process here however did not ‘tag’ complex ideas; rather it simply selected for key words – “this makes me sad” for example - that would qualify them for inclusion in the thematic group, thus accounting for the large number of references in the text.

The data presented here often intersect with many of the themes explored in the previous chapter. This section focuses on some of the distinct specifics relating to those themes, often an additional element or outcome, requiring dedicated qualification and codification.

City Impressions

The largest category of textual references within the *Appraising the City* meta-code is what has been collectively generalized as *City Impressions* and in total is referenced 99 times in the text. This subgroup itself is further subdivided into five codes, the primary of which is *Sense of Place* which constitutes the bulk of the responses and is well represented across all interviews with 17 participants contributing to the data set (Table 16). The other codes are best defined as specializations within the genre of Sense of Place, in that they embody very specific impressions of the city and as such are better qualified independently where appropriate.

City Impressions Code-Group	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Sense of Place	17	61
Sense of History	12	23
Sense of Danger	8	9
Sense of Attachment	3	4
Sense of Community	2	2
	Total Reference Count	99

Table 16 - Code composition of the City Impressions code-group.

Sense of Place, as noted in the literature survey chapter of this thesis, has become an important conceptual framework in heritage, a way of bridging the gap between the tangible heritage associated with buildings and objects and the intangible heritage of cultural practices. Sense of place is personal in the same way as it is communal; it is equally made up of individual readings of place and shared, created places that communities enable and maintain. It is a compound construct, and a key element in understanding how attachments to place are made.

The range of responses that were grouped together under this subgroup cover a very broad spectrum of impressions and emotions linked to Valletta. For those who have called the city their home for extended periods of time, the primal sense of the city is one of home. The concept of home is yet again a complex idea, ranging from the enclosed space that is one's actual home, to the more nebulous, less sharply delineated, and larger definitions of home, like street and neighbourhood. Yet, whichever definition you settle on, home helps define a place in contrast to other places that are not home:

Well listen. That is what probably makes Valletta different. If you are from here, you feel at home wherever you walk, whatever street you take. Once you leave you feel the change, but as soon as you return to the city you feel it (MGR2).

The physical geography and urban topography can also contribute to generating a sense of place. This is especially true in a city so defined by its immutable perimeter of fortifications, further underlined by the natural barrier that is the sea. In the previous section, one participant described how this sense of place contributed to a sense of identity for those who grew up in the city, the idea of the fortress projecting back onto the community itself. The fixed space that is Valletta makes an impression on resident and visitor alike, yet always filtered through a personal perspective. The sharp distinction between the city and the periphery is very particular to walled towns, and something that creates a very specific sense of place:

So, I love the density of the city and the fact that it's contained, but it's also that containment that makes it interesting because it means you can actually go to the edge (LT1).

So marked is the distinction between the ordered, yet chaotic, reality of the city and the liminal areas of the surrounding coast, that it allows for very a different sense of place to co-exist in the same footprint:

Sometimes it's hard to understand the character of the city. All that chaos, and then you find yourself in an area and you think to yourself, is this even Valletta? (MGR3).

The sense of place that Valletta creates is as varied as the life experiences of the participants themselves. As a subjective quality, it is difficult to convey or quantify. Sense of place is not an attribute that can exist on a scale or be given a numerical value; it remains a subjective collection of impressions, made of memory and experience, more metaphor than spreadsheet. One useful way is to use comparison, to draw attention to similarity of experience, and this appears in the text in a number of ways. One way is to draw parallels, imagined or otherwise, to specific cities based on the participant's knowledge of them:

I am a New Yorker by birth, so this is my New York and people laugh and smile, so this to me is my New York now (LT2).

Other comparisons are less clearly defined, and make reference to the island's historical position as a place where east meets west, whilst simultaneously commenting on how Valletta may clash with the rest of Malta's built environment:

Because like, looking over to Sliema in the evening....and you have the right soundtrack you think you are somewhere like in the Middle East, Beirut or something like that. And if you look in the other direction it is like you are in Rome or somewhere (LT4).

The construction of a sense of place is not necessarily firmly rooted in reality; it can equally be the product of the imagination. This takes sense of place as a metaphor beyond simple comparison; rather it weaves the impressions of the city into narratives of the participant's own making. St. Paul's Building, an elegant, block of apartments built in 1908 during the British period opposite the Anglican Cathedral on West Street evokes a sense of place that, to the participant, is more literary fiction than 21st century (Figure 30):

I think it's very interesting because I think they are one of the few Dickensian, Victorian areas of Valletta, here and East Street a bit (NRL1).

This imagined sense of place allows the city to be a proxy for other places, where Valletta is an element in a bricolage of popular culture:

Once I wanted to do a film in old Mint Street, called "Valletta, Città Violenta" [Italian: Valletta, the violent city] which was meant to be a spoof of those Italian police films (NRL1).

Sense of place can also be rooted in specific attributes of the city. The imagined city examples described above do share a commonality, in that they are both linked to a sense of history to a certain degree. This is again a sensorial assessment of place that is easily recognized, but at times difficult to clearly define. One participant, in referring to the partially restored Fort St. Elmo, used terminology reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's (1934) aura of authenticity concept, as described in Chapter 2:

I hope they will not restore it. It has such a powerful aura...it has such powerful energy, to look over a railing and see that old section there (LT2).



Figure 30 - St. Paul's Building, built in 1908, featured in several interviews. This photograph was taken from Old Theatre Street (Source: Author's own).

What the aura is precisely is uncertain. However, since it used to describe the unrestored elements of the fort, it suggests that the visible effects of time are a more potent evoker of a *Sense of History*, a category which warranted its own code. This is certainly an important consideration, especially in the context of investment in Valletta's heritage, the restoration works completed and those planned. Patina is an important signifier of time, a seal of authenticity, the removal of which raised some concerns with participants:

...I mean whilst Valletta is all old, this in my mind always looked genuinely old. Again, now it has been cleaned up and polished and restored, and I think it lost a bit of its enigmatic feeling, but up till three years ago this was a point for me that I found extremely interesting (LT1).

This visible effect of time resonates with the *Lived City* of the previous section, and considers how the city was lived and experienced in the past:

Yes, I think it is the sense of knowing, just knowing how many people have walked these streets if that makes sense (RR1).

This is not to suggest that a sense of the past is somehow ineffable. In many cases, what it is that constitutes a sense of history for the participants is less ambiguous, and more directly linked to historical attribution. This is the Valletta of the Knights of St. John and the Great Siege or perhaps the Valletta of the British period, when the city formed an integral part of the harbour economy. This is then a past that is less about a subjective impression, more one prompted by the physical traces of the past; the fortifications, the palaces, the monuments, and the great deeds associated with them:

...[Y]ou can still see the old towns, where the knights came, where the siege was held, and formed our history really (LT6).

A more abstracted, academic connection to the city's past is evident in interviews with those who have received training in archaeology or heritage, and as a result have a very particular, almost typological way relating to this sense of history:

I love walking, the streets are my favourite space in Valletta because they tell you a history. And if you walk, and you want to relax and follow a history of the Baroque, you just walk looking at the upper floors. If you want to understand Valletta during the British period you just walk at ground floor level and you start seeing the shops and the transformations, the economy (NRL2).

Sense of history then is a specialized form of sense of place and an element of that complex set

of attributes which are experienced on almost an emotional level. It is prompted by association to real or imagined events and places and is an essential component of the narrative that the participants use to make sense of how they relate to and experience the city.

The primary category, the final element within the spectrum of sense that constitutes the *Sense of Place* group of impressions, is *Sense of Danger*. This was not a widely distributed theme; however, it did occur in eight of the interviews, which is impactful enough to merit inclusion. Valletta has somewhat of a ‘reputation’ on the Maltese islands, the implications of which will be examined in more detail in a sub-section below. However, ‘danger’ is a powerful impression, one that can remain seared into your memory of a place and shape your perspective. In the text, this appears in a number of variations, ranging from the fairly innocuous and commonplace to far more serious and life-threatening.

The interesting aspect of this sense of danger is that it is not based on the experiences of present-day Valletta but is connected with childhood memories of the city before the current regeneration drive. This revisits the issue of abandonment yet again, when things like basic infrastructure were absent, including street lighting. Night-time in the city of the 1970s and 80s was, in the memories of the participants, dark, empty, and ominous. This left a marked impression on visitors and residents alike who recall:

Not actually scared of walking, if you were from here you were used to it. But you still felt it, it affected you, that you would not see anyone in the evenings (MGR2).

It is not unusual for participants to pine for the Valletta of the past, often framed by the notion of ‘authenticity,’ emphasising that the city was somehow more real before it was regenerated. One of the hallmarks of authenticity is perceived by some to be these underworld elements, now lost to the forces of improvement:

There was a bar underneath me called ‘Sidney Bar’ – they used to say about him ‘kellu il-kaxxa’ [Maltese: He had the money box] – so there was illegal gambling. They were sweethearts, they had two strongmen at the door, like ‘lurches’¹⁹ and the police used to drink there you know...this is why we love it (the city) right? And I know a lot of people say we are losing out on a lot of those things (LT5).

The sense of danger felt by the participants was not simply imagined; the danger was bodily experienced in one instance, as the one interviewee recalled of their experiences in the mid-1990s:

¹⁹ Reference to the character ‘Lurch’ from the American TV Show, ‘The Addams Family’.

I remember getting beaten up. Myself, my sister and my friend, walking from McDonalds, by four boys like. You wouldn't just walk around at night that much; you would be a bit careful. It was dark, barely any lights used to work I remember (RR3).

The mention of McDonald's introduces an additional consideration. The American fast-food giant opened its first branch in Republic Street in 1995 (Malta Independent 2015), a portent of the commercial renewal to come. Though the incident detailed above post-dates the opening of the restaurant, new commerce changed the 'feel' of the city immeasurably:

Of course, I remember. It was scary to walk down Strada Rjali (Republic Street) But then places started opening up, like McDonalds (MGR3).

Since sense of place is an individual or personal construct, it would be impossible, given the space here, to fully explore this diversity. Coding for these aspects of sense of place therefore focused on those that related directly to how the city is experienced by the project participants, whilst remaining mindful of how these categories relate to the underlying aim and objectives of the thesis. Though it would have been possible to create further categories of sensorial themes, those presented here represent the prevalent coded themes available in the text, which though abridged in the analysis, still capture the diversity of responses to the city gathered during the fieldwork.

Perceptions of the City

Thus far, *Appraising the City* has documented how the interview participants themselves interpret the city through a sensorial lens, and how this narratively informs their sense of Valletta. One of those sensory memories harks back to Valletta as a more inhospitable place, at least on the surface.

This is a subject that came up in a number of different ways during the interviews. This code-group describes the way Valletta, its residents, and its neighbourhoods, are perceived from the outside looking in. It is important to note that the opinions expressed made here are filtered via the perspective of the residents themselves and may or may not reflect qualitatively how Valletta was truly understood or interpreted by non-residents. Nevertheless, these outlooks voiced during the interviews capture how residents, especially the *Beltin*, perceive this external judgement. The *Perceptions of the City* code group comprises three distinct codes which handled textual references to the city's reputation, the distinction of local versus outsider, and finally the specific areas that are considered most detrimental to Valletta's reputation.

The veracity of the troubled city narrative aside, that pre-regeneration Valletta had a negative reputation will come as no surprise to local Maltese people. It is something I encountered myself when I first moved to the city, the reaction of some peers and family mirrored in the stories shared by two of the long-term residents interviewed:

I got talked out of moving to Valletta in 1995 when I first moved to Malta. Some of my well, meaning relatives said, “Oh no, you don’t want to live in Valletta” (LT2).

It was absolutely dead, and all of my friends said “Valletta, you’re mad, your absolutely mad” (LT6).

The stigma of Valletta was not associated just with the abandoned, ominous city we have encountered elsewhere in this thesis; it also relates to an ingrained, class-based prejudice toward the multi-generational residents, the *Beltin*. Some of this found expression in childhood experiences, where Valletta’s dangerous reputation was exaggerated by school-boy hyperbole:

...[W]hen I was a kid, when I was at school it was like “Ah you live in Valletta” it’s like someone is going to murder you (laughs). There was that stigma actually in a way (MGR5).

Humorous anecdotes aside, this prejudice is keenly felt by the *Beltin*, who recognize this external judgemental classification, and understandably reject it. Based on the interview data, local residents also comprehend the deleterious effect it had on city communities, and how it contributed to the loss of community that, as we have seen earlier, has been so formative in the lived experiences of the residents.

It came down to this, if you live in city, you are like a ‘ħamallu.’ That’s how we were considered. So, everyone, when raising their families, left (MGR4).

The term ‘ħamallu’ is a derogatory term in Maltese that references not only the class status of a person or a family, but also assumes low education and implies certain negative personality traits. As Armstrong and Mitchell (2011, 306) put it, they are considered “uncouth and backward”. Local residents are rightly indignant about the label, and feel it contributes towards the erosion of the city’s community culture:

What many may find ħamallu, for me, is culture. You may ask me what I mean. I no longer see the people from Valletta that I used to see (MGR1).

I hate it when people say that those from the city are ‘ħamalli’ [pl.]. Because the city has a lot of character. And those who get to know us, will tell you that this character is a nice one (MGR3).

This derogatory appraisal of long-term residents of the city contributes to reinforce an ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ divide, one defined by the somewhat nebulous Local versus Outsider dichotomy, perhaps a pertinent distinction in the context of a walled city. As a definition this is somewhat problematic however, even though the prejudice perceived by *Beltin* is not imagined. Communities are porous constructs, and people move in and out of them with regularity. Many of this project’s participants, have historical connections to the city, measured in generations, yet they too can be made to feel like imposters:

I always felt like an outsider, it was never in a malicious way or anything like that. And I used to find it very strange because in reality, the generations who would have been here before would know my family, who were kind of very respected.... (LT3).

The very definition of *Beltin* is complicated by the fact that in reality they are not a homogenous group, even when discounting the neighbourhood identities discussed in the previous chapter. This is not a statement that is meant to undermine their communal concerns; rather it is an observation that acknowledges the complex history of diaspora and government relocation schemes. It was also a comment made by an interviewee who had lived in the city for 15 years and had their own explanation of the make-up of local MGR communities:

One of them is the ‘real Beltin’ they call themselves who have generations of living here, who didn’t leave. And then the other lot, which is the one which had a bad reputation, was the during and post-war people – who squatted or were given requisitioned properties (LT5).

A final element to the perceptions of the city is less concerned with the stigma surrounding the residents; rather it collects commentary on what one participant called “the unsavoury” parts of the city. Perhaps the most notorious area of Valletta is Strait Street, once home to the bars and clubs that thrived during the years that Malta served as a naval base. Strait Street is interesting in this context because it was universally classified a ‘no-go’ area by residents and visitors alike. An MGR participant recalled what it was like in the 1980s, well after its heyday, yet still considered a place to avoid:

I sometimes look at Strait Street in disbelief. When I was a kid that street was taboo, I would not even walk down it (MGR3).

This is echoed by another participant who though not a resident, attended school in Valletta in the 1970s and recalled that:

As a kid we used to have our scout meeting at school, and this was in the 70s before the British forces left. So, I remember these streets were no go (NRL4).

Strait Street of today is a very different place, and one of the archetypal symbols for the renewal of the city. Long gone are the shuttered establishments as documented by Schofield and Morrissey a decade ago (2007, 2013), replaced now by a new generation of bars and restaurants, some entirely new, some capitalizing on the street's reputation to reopen historic venues. As far as local agencies are concerned, the success of Strait Street reimagined is evidence of a regeneration plan bearing fruit. Earlier in the thesis, I examined how over commercialization, with particular reference to noise and places of entertainment, were negatively impacting residents. The larger question of how this regeneration fits in with perceptions of the city as a place have yet to be examined. The comments of a particular interviewee raise some important issues and fundamental questions:

Recent Valletta people, proper old bourgeois Valletta people and even the grassroots Valletta people don't like it very much. Because it's very noisy and because they feel that's its very disrespectful to the solemnity of the city and to the decent living of the residents and it jars with the general atmosphere of it (NRL1).

Strait Street is not the only area of the city to have negative connotations associated with it (Figure 31). Mitchell's (2002) anthropological study of the Arċipierku neighbourhood in the 1990s makes some observations about class divisions in the city, noting that these can be mapped onto the topography of Valletta. Elite zones, he notes, are associated with the higher areas, whilst the working-class neighbourhoods exist in the lower, peripheral areas of the town (Mitchell 2002, 102). These lower areas are the ones which generally and historically were perceived of as no-go areas. One participant shared memories of their grandparents and how they navigated through the city in the post-war period. She uses the expression 'qiegħ il-belt' (from the bottom of the city) a catch-all, and common phrase in Maltese that conjures images and ideas of danger, poverty and 'unsavoury' behaviour, thus supporting Mitchell's topographic assessment of city zones:

And I say most because there were certain parts of the city where they would never go to. Which would have been the lower areas, the "Manderaggio"²⁰ area for example, what we would say in Maltese "qiegħ il-belt"²¹. Those were the more colourful sides of Valletta or maybe at some point they might have considered them the more dangerous parts of

²⁰ Original Italian name for the neighbourhood known in Maltese as il-Mandraġġ.

²¹ English: The lower end of the city.

Valletta. I very much doubt that my grandmothers would have walked through Strait Street for example you know (NRL3).



Figure 31 - Strait Street by night. The once abandoned clubs and bars have been reopened and the street is now a popular nightlife venue for locals and tourists alike (Source: <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/minister-defends-vallettas-1am-music-rule-as-two->).

What the code-group *Perceptions of the city* demonstrates is that preconceived notions about city zones and residents are rooted in the city's past yet linger to the present day. Regeneration has, however, lessened the stigma associated with certain neighbourhoods:

And Valletta has changed a lot. Back in the day we wouldn't be walking around like this in 'il-Mandraġġ' you know. It used to be quite unsavoury (RR2).

The untold truth behind the above observation is that one of the reasons why many of these neighbourhoods are no longer stigmatized relates to the issue of community loss. Again, this a chapter in the story of transition. As the city regenerates, perceptions of the city will evolve to encompass the city in the present.

Aesthetics and Emotional responses

Whereas the previous code-groups within the *Appraising the City* meta-code for complex, multi-faceted ideas, the final two code-groups are somewhat more streamlined and direct. Together they cover two distinct, yet related, ways in which the city, its environs, and the stories or memories connected to them evoke aesthetic judgements or provoke emotional responses. These textual data often have a very defined spatial component. A particular place is beautiful, and a certain street connects to sad memories. This spatial correlation will be explored in detail in the final chapter of the results section, where the data analysis will switch the focus to look more closely at the buildings and places themselves. This section will instead conclude the code-group of *Appraising the City*, by describing the range and diversity of responses collected within these two codes.

A well-established, standard attribute of value-based heritage assessment is that of aesthetic value. A good working definition of this potentially amorphous value is found in English Heritage's 'Conservation Principles':

Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place (English Heritage 2008, 30).

This definition places the onus of this appraisal on people, in line with one of the key principles of the document which emphasizes participation in the workings of heritage should be extended to everyone (English Heritage, 2008: 20). Further to this, I would clarify that what I would categorize as 'stimulating' can be equally positive and negative. This section of the chapter will examine how this value is represented in the text. It is a complementary category, one that in many ways intersects with the construct of sense of place from the previous section. The stimulation the English Heritage definition describes is, I would argue, a fundamental quality in the construction of a sense of place.

When the *Aesthetics* sub-group was coded for during the analysis, it was originally built to represent a plethora of specialized sub-codes. These included 'Uniqueness,' which suggested the aesthetic was meaningful or important to the interviewee predominantly because it was different. Other codes included 'Generic', 'Cleanliness' and the related, but opposite, 'Dirtiness'. What became clear however, is that the vast majority of the 83 textual references are best expressed by two binary opposite codes, that of Beauty or Ugliness. Furthermore, it is important to note that the references to beauty in the city far outweigh those to its binary opposite (Figure 32), where beauty accounted for 52 references made by

12 participants as opposed to 14 references to ‘ugliness’ made by nine participants.

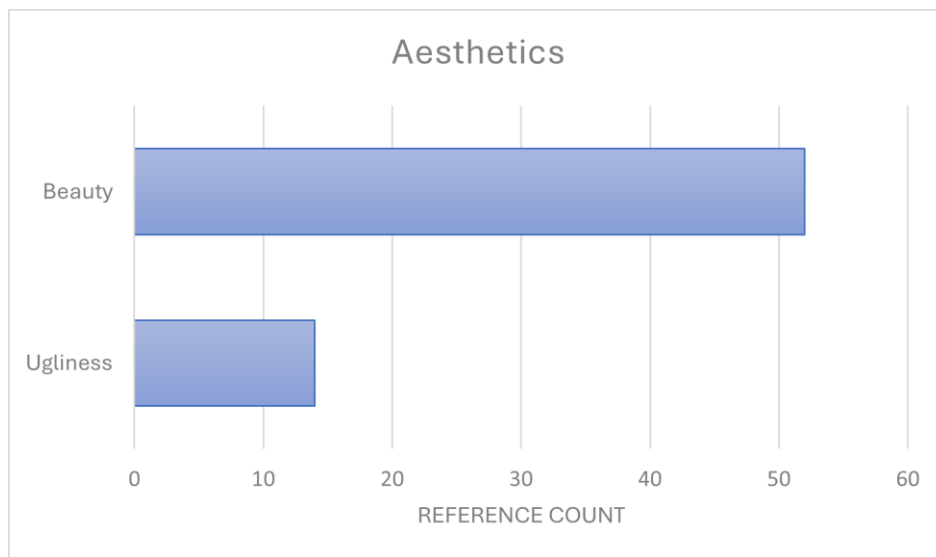


Figure 32 - Simple count of textual references to Beauty & Ugliness in the interview text.

The aesthetic judgments coded for in the textual data are, in the main, linked to the tangible heritage of the city, which was the expected outcome. In a city that has survived relatively unscathed for more than 400 years and recognized for the baroque flourishes of its palaces and churches, it was always likely that these would feature in this category. It is no surprise that those who have come to love the city and call it home would have positive, often heartfelt, reactions to the aesthetic qualities of the town:

First of all, ...I think you had to be blind not to see the beauty of this place. There is no, literally no – even the social housing – there is no building you walk into and not fall in love with (LT5).

Perhaps triggered by the fact that the city was experienced on foot during the in interviews, participants often commented when passing certain buildings, squares or gardens. These were often brief, on-the-fly observations:

Well, this is our gem, St John's, really beautiful (LT6).

These brief observations were often made in passing, almost like an afterthought. However, though brief, this allowed access into the internal catalogue of interests and ideas that participants may have of the city. These on-the-move, spur of the moment assessments would include architectural elements:

This is a beautiful façade, of St Ursula's buildings...(NRL1).

Upper and Lower Barrakka - which as we shall see in the following chapter proved to be popular spots with the participants - though singled out for their own intrinsic beauty, enable another kind of aesthetic experience. Due to their position, located on the bastions' edge and facing the Grand Harbour, they allow for a panoramic view over the historic towns and infrastructure of the harbour. As one interviewee commented:

So here we are, this is the most beautiful scene I think In Malta, where you can still see the old towns...(LT6).

Restoration and beauty are correlates for many of the interviewees, and buildings and monuments were often singled out for the beautiful restoration, the implication in many of the comments being that they are more beautiful and worthy of note because they had been restored:

First on my list of places that are most important to me in Valletta is the Triton Fountain, the fact that it has been so beautifully restored (LT2).

Interventions in the city are therefore, in certain instances, considered an aesthetic improvement. Even the much maligned, commercial intrusions in the city can atone for their presence, minimizing their visual impact by respecting traditional architectural details:

Though I have noticed recently, because I pay attention to these things, that they have started to take this into consideration. For example, two shops that opened recently, opposite the BOV (Bank of Valletta), have really beautiful frontages (MGR3).

However, beauty can be perceived in more intangible, generalized terms. This is the beauty of place in the abstract, which, for want of a better word, is more 'aura' than solid object.

Yes, because really people want, deep down, beautiful places, but when you plonk something which is ugly on a beautiful setting (NRL4).

In a similar vein, the beauty of the city is perceived as inaccessible due to the sheer volume of people, a situation that the COVID lockdowns reversed:

For us in Valletta it was a dream, it was so beautiful to be able to appreciate the city (RR2).

The binary opposite, 'Ugliness', does not appear with the same frequency. However, it is still useful to examine how this label is used and why. Ugly is a word that shows up with considerable regularity in reference to the Maltese built environment, especially in newspapers and online media. A Facebook community page called 'Ugly Malta' (<https://www.facebook.com/uglymalta>)

has a following of 8000+ members, with most content flagging new developments or aesthetic ‘atrocities’ in a mocking manner. It is a place where people can vent their frustration with the overzealous development that afflicts the island. Valletta and other historic centres rarely feature, unless they are somehow compromised from some new development in some way. Valletta, as one participant emphatically points out, is therefore the antithesis to this:

All over Malta there are horrible streets, ugly villages, like Hamrun²² to mention one – I don’t even want to experience it on a map. Or Bugibba²³, I don’t even consider it part of Malta (MGR1).

When applied in the context of Valletta, is it generally reserved for the recent accretions of commercial activity, especially the makeshift outdoor extensions of restaurants and cafes which have come to fill the newly pedestrianized zones:

Voila! I think the plastic covers are so tacky, I really wish we could do something else you know, but I don’t know what (LT6).

For some participants it is about more than specific details, and commercialization is seen to ‘uglify’ whole areas. Strait Street, no stranger to controversy as we have already seen, is one such zone, entirely reshaped by the forces of gentrification.

You have the middle section, which is just utter disaster, and then you have the lower parts – the part where there is Loop²⁴ and Tico Tico, it’s a mess it has become a dump.... (LT3).

There is a real sense that these intrusions are perceived as disrespectful to the dignity of the city, that change is more manageable if done in an appropriate and beautiful way:

I really cannot stand this sort of thing. I’m sorry – but if you are setting up shop in the city do it properly (MGR3).

These personal aesthetic valuations on the part of the participants contribute evaluative detail to many of the broader themes encountered so far and, as a result, provide a more nuanced insight into how the city is valued. The code-group *Emotional responses* present a more diverse range of responses, rather than being represented by the simple binary exhibited in the *Aesthetics* sub-group. This final subgroup is made up of nine sub-codes covering a total of 59

²² Hamrun is a large town on the outskirts of Valletta, about 15min walk from city gate.

²³ Bugibba is a tourist resort/town on the northern coast of Malta.

²⁴ Loop and Tico Tico are bars/clubs in Strait Street.

textual references from 15 of the 19 interviewees. In terms of the diversity of emotional typology, they range from the most common, *Sadness*, with 12 references, to *Anger*, with one reference (Figure 33). Examination of these types will be restricted to the larger categories, those connected to a diverse range of textual references in order to create an indicative narrative that relates back to the themes presented and explored in this thesis.

Coding for emotional response based on textual data is not always straightforward and was accomplished in a number of different ways. The most direct was one based on the use of language, on the choice of words used during the interviews. The other, a more subjective method of creating codes, was based on interpretation, on what was implied rather than outright declared. The differing approaches found successful application across the different types, dependent on how explicit the emotional response was.

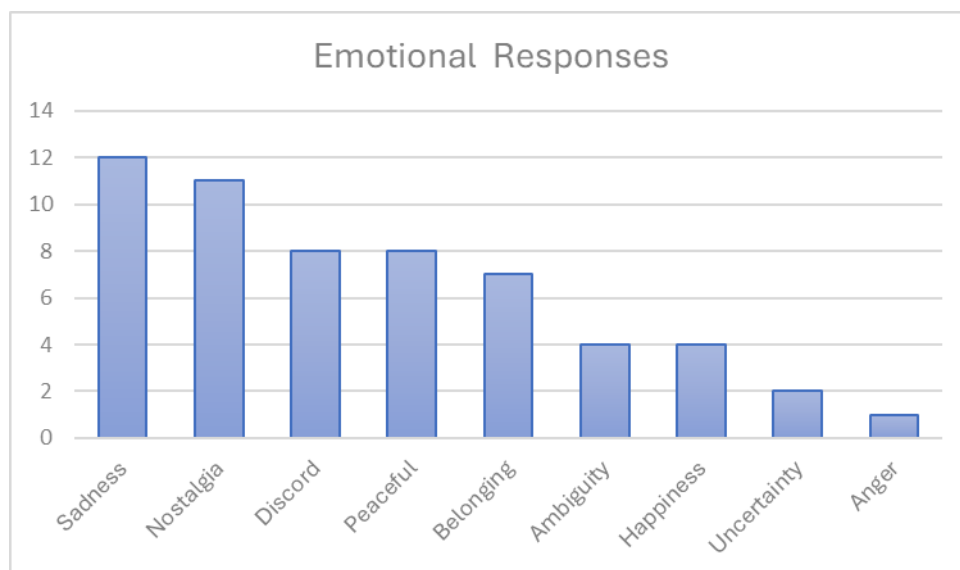


Figure 33 - Emotional Responses by number of textual references.

An example of the former type of coding is presented below. This is an unambiguous emotional statement about the city, in this instance a participant's disappointment at how the public space near the Triton Fountain, just outside City Gate, has fallen victim to overzealous commercial enterprise and how they felt it negatively impacted the original intent and design of the area:

Sadly, we are going to head that way (towards City Gate) and sadly because I heard there is some kind of structures there which completely negate Renzo Piano's open city, open gate, but there is a reason why we are going there (LT3).

Similarly, references are made to commercial interests and development contributing to the

loss of community, a painful subject for MGR residents as we explored earlier in the chapter. When asked if many residents still lived in the area where they grew up in, the participant expressed sadness at the fact that many had left, with family homes replaced by the now ubiquitous guesthouses or hotels:

No, sadly very few are left. Perhaps a few still in this bit, but today its mostly guesthouses (MGR2).

Sadness can be read into many of the responses concerning change in the city, being the underlying subtext in many of the conversations had with residents concerning the city's rapid development. During one particular interview a chance encounter with an elderly resident, an acquaintance of the interviewee, the conversation between them very quickly turned the changes in the city, with the acquaintance interjecting emphatically:

Not changing, it is changed already (non-participant encounter²⁵)

Though not explicit, it is the resigned, fatalistic manner in which comment was delivered which implies a strong sense of sadness. The second largest sub-code of emotional responses is the feeling of *Nostalgia*, which perhaps is more of a compound emotion, one that switches emotional tone depending on the context in which it is expressed, one which by definition harks back to a time in the past. Nostalgia is expressed in conjunction with many of the themes examined so far, and was strongly manifested in recollections of community or family:

I have a very kinda strange relationship with the city and the house, because it is very much a relationship based on a nostalgia that I don't know. Ok, so it's kind of a nostalgia of my family, of my mum (LT3).

As the above example illustrates, as an emotional construct, nostalgia bridges family, place and urban fabric, creating a link to the past. A similar sentiment underlies memories of childhood, a prominent and powerful memory for those who grew up in the city:

...[T]hat is the Church of the Pillar, it's incredibly beautiful inside. Again, it also very nostalgic for me, as I used to go to school nearby, a lot of school events would happen inside it (MGR5).

Discord and *Peaceful*, again are not exactly base emotive responses; they encapsulate a diversity of emotional states of being. The former, *Discord*, was used to code for instances when aspects of the urban setting evoked memories or discussion with an implication of controversy

²⁵ The encounter with this elder resident occurred during the interview with participant RR3.

or contestation. This was most commonly attributed to areas like City Gate, one of the heritage-flash points of Valletta, or the covered market, *Is-Suq*:

I chose this because this is where I live basically, around this area. And I am aware that this building has, let's say, upset quite a few people to put it mildly (RR1).

The above example is useful in that it demonstrates that emotive responses to buildings, development and change in the city are important enough to certain participants that they designed their interview routes to feature specific examples. The final section of this chapter will look more closely at these particular examples and what about them elicits contestation or discord. *Peaceful* denotes a polar opposite emotive state, one that is sought to counter the claustrophobia of the busy city. A case in point, the same participant (RR1) who selected the covered market to highlight the sense of discord they associated with ill-conceived development, singled out Upper Barrakka as their first points of interest during the interview, specifically because, as a quiet space, it provides a degree of peace and privacy. This need to disconnect, at least temporarily, from the confines of the city is what drives residents to seek the gardens or the periphery:

Sometimes I just need to get away, you all the busyness – the shop and that sort of thing – just go for a stroll around the city, I just enjoy coming down by the sea (MGR3).

The final sub-code, *Belonging*, refers to the emotive positivity derived from attachment to Valletta. Though they do not overtly factor in the textual reference to a great extent, it is arguable that this category is already implied in many of the themes explored earlier. However, there are elements of attachment that are independent expressions. With the MGR participant types for whom Valletta has always been home, a sense of attachment is understandably a given. It is expressions from long-term residents that provide some interesting deviations from this norm. One aspect is the development of belonging as a function of time, as one participant considered, when they realized that the interview was being conducted on the 20th anniversary of their residency:

It's an important marker for me, as a foreigner living here for 20 years (LT1).

Other long-term residents, for reasons of their own, just feel like Valletta with all its complexities, is bespoke:

So, this is the stairs down to the shore and its gorgeous you know, like it's made for me (LT5).

Ambiguity, Uncertainty, Happiness and Anger, could be grouped together as miscellaneous emotive responses. Like all the code categories described above, they relate back to the major themes that emerge from this research, specifically *Change in the City* and *Aspects of Community*. Though not a numerically prominent grouping of emotional themes within the *Appraising the City* meta-code, I would suggest that this lack of representation is a side effect of the coding process. Their connection to the major thematic outcomes in this analysis does suggest that with a more targeted methodological approach, emotional responses would be a demonstrably important dimension in understanding how Valletta is appraised and experienced.

Heritage Matters

To conclude the *Evaluating Place* chapter, this final section brings together themes and perspectives that are recognizably from the realm of heritage practice. Thus far, the results presented in the previous chapter and the opening sections of this chapter have been characterized as thematic data related to personal recollection and reflection on the city. This chapter presents the textual references that have been coded as having a direct relationship to issues of heritage practice or management in the context of Valletta.

Though representing a comparatively smaller subset of references, the meta-code is itself organized into three main code-groups (Table 17). As in the previous data sections, the code-groups presented are themselves made up of multiple codes which have been condensed for clarity and coherence, to form three aggregated code-groups from the original 11 code-groups developed during the data analysis, many of which themselves contained sub-groups of their own (see Appendix C).

Heritage Matters Meta-Code	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Heritage Judgements	12	40
Managing Heritage	13	37
Heritage Debates	11	20
	Total Reference count:	97

Table 17 - *Heritage Matters meta-code composition.*

The *Heritage Judgements* captures the key elements of these conversations, thematically correlating to reactions or commentary to specific interventions and changes to the city's urban fabric, its buildings and streetscapes. The theme itself was organized in two generalized codes, to capture whether these judgements were deemed appropriate or inappropriate by the participants. Of the 40 references coded for this theme, 30 references fell into the inappropriate category, with only 10 references coded for appropriate judgements made.

Managing Heritage is a highly generalized code used to flag textual references to management decisions or policies and their implementation in the context of Valletta. The code-group also aggregates three specialized codes to capture references to local and international heritage agencies, and specific mentions of restoration projects. Whilst the former two categories only comprise 10 textual references, restoration accounts for almost 50% of the sub-group's total references.

The final code-group within *Heritage Matters* is *Heritage Debates*, that collects references to heritage issues that have caused local debate. These heritage 'flash-points', as described by the participants, provide insight into how different stakeholders assess specific aspects of managing heritage in the urban context of a world heritage site. The sub-group aggregates specific codes, as all sub-groups have, which address specific references to themes which intersect with the intellectual framework outlined in Chapter 2. These include explicit references to public participation, the role of the expert, heritage value and authenticity.

As has been a recurring analytical outcome from this data, the neat compartmentalization of thematic data into code groups can at times hinder the interpretation. There is a substantial amount of overlap and interlinking between the code groups. A reference to a particular architectural intervention in the city might on the one hand elicit a comment that contributes to the *Heritage Judgements* category whilst at the same time represent a reflection within the broader category of *Heritage Debates*. To present the data in a coherent and consistent narrative, data were thus drawn from across code groups as required. The data from the first two code groups, *Heritage Judgements* and *Managing Heritage* are presented in a singular narrative. The *Heritage Debates* section then specifically looks at case studies that emerge from these two categories, to provide specific detailed examples from a number of different perspectives.

Participants and the data

In comparative terms, the total textual references (204) coded to these thematic groups are far lower in number than the other main meta groups explored in the previous chapters. This is due to a number of factors and variables and should not suggest that 'heritage matters' are simply a secondary consideration; rather it primarily reflects the makeup of the participant group whilst also being a direct reflection of the methodological approach.

The latter variable has been expounded in some detail in Chapter 3. However, because this final section of the chapter makes some specific demographic distinctions based on participant profession, it is worth revisiting in the context of this section of the results. Project documentation that was distributed to potential participants was consciously ambiguous with regards to the researcher's outlook and research goals. This methodological subterfuge was intended to provide some mitigation to the interviewee-researcher bias. The assumption here was that should the project's central aims of understanding heritage value have been outlined in clear terms; it would have influenced participant expectations of what was required of them. Textual references to *Heritage Matters* are therefore allowed to emerge organically, reflecting the opinions and interests of the participants. This is a contributing factor to the low numerical outcome of this section of the coding exercise.

Participant composition, the former variable mentioned above, has potentially played a more pivotal influence on this subset of the results. Of the 19 interviews conducted, only two participants can be described as full-time heritage professionals, whereas four others had professional interactions with the city in varying capacities. The pool of participants who could possibly professionally engage with specific heritage themes or issues was in the minority, thus creating an in-built limitation on this category of responses. This statement makes a value judgement of the participants and how their subjective experiences of the city are shaped by their professional lives, the expectation being that this would result in a specific set of responses from this sub-set of participants. The data do however support this statement, as visualized in Figure 34, which clearly demonstrates that the majority of textual references in this meta group are attributable to those participants who in some way have had professional interaction with the city, through research or practice. Of these, archaeologists (n=2) and architects (n=3) interviewed are overrepresented in this list of results just as they are over-represented in the overall distribution of 'employment' types.

Notwithstanding this result being weighted by profession, it is important to note that all participants are represented in the meta-code data, with contributions from all featuring in the

19 interviews conducted. However, as Figure 34 makes abundantly clear, much of this textual data originates from conversations with professionals, though the overall participant coverage demonstrates that a large proportion of the participants engaged with these themes to some extent.

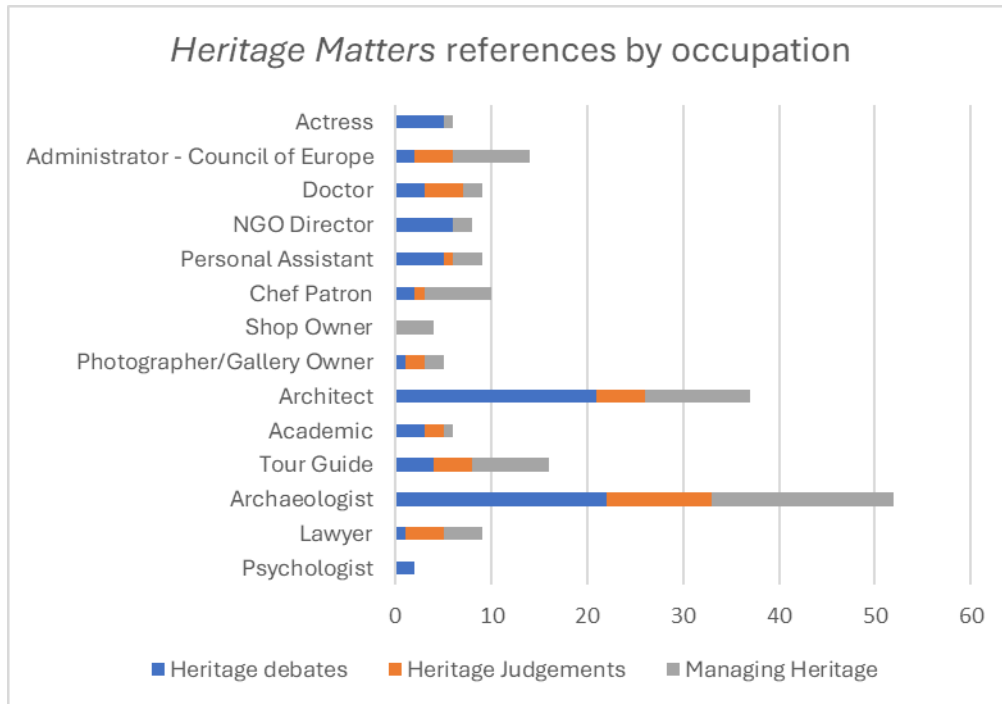


Figure 34 - Count of references to *Heritage Matters* codes displayed by participant profession.

Heritage Judgements and Management

This section presents a selection of results drawn across code types to create an indicative representation of the responses which were coded as *Heritage Judgement* or *Managing Heritage*. For these data to be meaningful, it is useful to describe them within the broader context of themes presented earlier, thus adding a new interpretative dimension to the overall narrative of the thesis.

People were drawn to participate in this project, to a large extent, because it was about Valletta; it provided them with an opportunity and platform to express their opinions on the current state of affairs. As the introduction to this thesis made clear, the historic built environment of the Maltese Islands is in a particularly precarious state, and the vulnerability of historic buildings and places is a prominent feature on social media and the local news portals. This reaction is amplified in the context of Valletta. Unsurprisingly, this concern for the historic fabric became the subject of many of the conversations held with participants, both from a

professional perspective, but also from the viewpoint of a concerned citizen or resident. Valletta's historic, symbolic and administrative place in Maltese life, coupled with its UNESCO World Heritage status, sharpen and elicit opinion. This vulnerability narrative is not overstated or exaggerated. Valletta has survived despite the development drive of the last 40 years which irrevocably altered other towns on the island, as one participant was keen to point out:

I can assure that if...if in the 1980s so few people had a sense of conservation, and I remember the first people applying to demolish buildings in Valletta to build flats. Not understand that Valletta is aso we are lucky that it exists today, and it didn't have the same fate as Sliema²⁶ (LT7).

Much of the textual data coded as *Heritage Judgment* was an explicit, personal opinion, where visual impact and aesthetic appropriateness are, by and large, the primary area of concern. Valletta's default appropriate aesthetic is popularly measured by the survival of an abundance of Baroque features and stylistic cues; it is indeed one of the defining characteristics informing its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Officially therefore, one way Valletta is valued is by its visual historicity. In this context, modern styles and architectural language are perceived to be incompatible with the city's visual aspect. The building in Figure 35, was singled out as an example of this stylistic incongruence. St. Albert the Great, on Old Bakery Street, is a secondary school completed in the 1960s and is fairly representative of that era's more functional design. It is therefore seen as anomalous or, as the below interviewee suggests, non-conforming, to the broader context of the street in which it stands:

Interesting feature of Valletta, here at the St Albert's school, which aesthetically does not really conform with the general style of Baroque Valletta (NRL1).

A more general comment on the later inclusions of modernist architecture within the walls of the city echoes this sentiment, suggesting it alters their perception of place:

[A]nd I think it does not work; the scale is not right. For me a place, part of it is the aesthetic, if the aesthetic is not correct, if its ugly, if it jars.... [t]hat hurts my perspective of how to look at the place (NRL4).

²⁶ Sliema is a popular seaside town to the west of Valletta across the Grand Harbour. It's 19th century seafront architecture long since succumbed to apartment and high-rise development.



Figure 35 - Albert the Great secondary school. Photo taken from Old Bakery Street, corner with Old Theatre Street (Source: Author's own).

This notion of ‘jarring’ with a sense of place, implies a historic dimension to the city’s ‘spirit’. What is jarring here is the intrusion of the modern, ‘temporally out of place’ building in the context of a historic urban environment. The homogenizing modernity of the global high street aesthetic is singled-out as a salient example:

Not having restaurants looking like restaurants in any other part of the modern world. A bit more effort, could have made things look a bit nicer, especially like for example...I can think of one or two examples. The restaurant next to the water polo pitch is aesthetically its...let’s just say it’s unacceptable. You can’t have something which has nothing to do whatsoever the visual weave of a city like this (NRL1).

This incongruence operates on many levels. The new square in front of the Auberge de Castille, now a large, pedestrianized zone, is deemed unsuccessful conceptually:

I am trying to find the correct word. It’s not to scale with the concept of the city (NRL2).

It also extends down the scale to the actual details, from an entire building or square, to architectural features such as fenestration (i.e., if the apertures correct and appropriate) to details such as modern lighting fixtures:

...[T]hese lights they don’t really do anything to enhance the Grand Master’s Palace or the fountains on either end of the piazza (LT2).

Often this commentary comes from a professional perspective; not simply a subjective opinion of a concerned stakeholder, rather it is based on the experiences of those who have engaged with the process of managing the city’s urban fabric, and the negotiation of this process. As a heritage professional participant noted:

So, what is it with modern architects who want to leave an imprint on something which is beautiful? (NRL4).

Gentrification, as the previous chapter discussed, is a prominent theme in the data. A complex mechanism of many parts and processes, it intersects with *Heritage Matters* meta-code in discussions concerning the conservation and adaptive reuse of the city. The regeneration of the city has favoured commercial enterprise which, as the data has suggested in the previous chapter, adversely affects the liveability of the city. Tilting the focus from those personal experiences of residents, the data lends itself to understanding how the process of gentrification impacts aspects of the heritage of Valletta. These responses were categorized under the *Heritage Judgements* rubric, on the basis that they offer an insight into how change, in the physical context, is interpreted and judged to positively or negatively impact the city’s

heritage. This is often an innately contradictory predicament, one that is constituted of conflicting perspectives. The following excerpt from the participant interview transcript demonstrates the innate dissonance between change and non-change that underlies much of this discussion:

I mean, it's really a lack of respect for our heritage in a way. Then having said that, I love the idea that there are so many places to go to now in Valletta (LT6).

What is manifest in this participant contribution is the complicated process of managing expectations of the role of heritage in the context of urban renewal. Recalling the theme of 'Abandonment' in the previous chapter, the 'war-zone' Valletta prior to regeneration, in many ways it concerns the process of transitioning between state of non-use and re-use which can be somewhat of a paradox:

There are these beautiful buildings, it's a pity we are not using them. We are trying to revamp the city by creating all this hyper entertainment, when in actual fact there these spaces which are crying out to be used on an everyday level (NRL3).

This is compounded by so much of the adaptive re-use having a commercial purpose, which in the estimation of some participants who, though openly critical of over-commercialization, do recognize that non-governmental investment has its benefits, and provides real-world balance to the exploitation narrative:

Again, you cannot stop progress, in other words, those who have money like to invest it, they have invested in Valletta, there has been a lot of progress from the from the perspective of private enterprise (MGR1).

What is not implied by this comment is the fact that this investment has all been positive; rather it is more of a veiled criticism on governmental input in the renewal of Valletta.

The final element under the rubric of *Managing Heritage*, are data which are best categorized as insider perspectives. The amount of textual data coded comprises a small percentage of the total, and understandably, originating solely from interviews with those who have a professional relationship to some degree with Valletta's heritage. The purpose of their inclusion in the results, is that they provide a window into the real-world of heritage practice in the context of the Maltese Islands, in contrast to the resident responses which have been detached from this professional world. This professional perspective on heritage in general, offers commentary on the perceived underlying malaise in attitudes to local heritage:

This is a Maltese problem, it's different. There is a gap between what Maltese think is heritage and culture and the materiality of Cultural heritage itself. On the one hand Maltese are in general detached from, and they think that all this is good for tourism, but not necessarily for them (NRL4).

This quote suggests, in line with lay perspectives on the city, that economic gain blinkers or hinders the process of heritage management in fundamental ways. The same participant, who has worked in heritage related fields for a lifetime, goes on to speculate the cause of this detachment:

Not only. You also need planners that actually believe in cultural heritage and culture, not just cultural heritage. You need architects who actually believe in cultural heritage and culture (NRL4).

There is an educational lacuna suggested here, one that was touched upon in another participant interview where the participant similarly suggested that focussing on the functional or technical inhibits the 'correct judgement' when addressing issues of a more cultural nature:

The point is, how do you educate people to make a right judgement about things, think anything from which part of the building to keep. And my theory is that we are slowly moving towards a very technical and technological education based on the idea that when you study at university you get a job afterwards. And we are abandoning the humanities.... (LT7).

Implied in these comments, is that specific expertise is required for judgements to be made correctly, as was humorously suggested in another interview with an architect.

And I think in architecture, unfortunately, everybody has an opinion and very few have an idea and if you are working in that profession you have to deal with that constantly (LT4).

The goal of this section was to introduce new voices and perspectives, in this instance from the professional realm, to include some of the experiences and opinions from the practice-side of the heritage world. Though these data were captured from interviews with a small sub-set of the participants, the themes and outlooks they introduce serve as backdrop for the final section of this chapter which presents two case studies which emerged not by design, rather coalescing from the frequency of their inclusion in participant routes and commentary.

Heritage Debates

The data linked to the codes of appropriate or inappropriate management of heritage in the context of Valletta, though handled as a distinct set of codes, are inherent and at times explicit in the *Heritage Debates* subgroup on many levels. The principal scope of this code-group is that it codifies the textual data to create two thematic threads. Firstly, it captures the ‘hot’ heritage issues relating to Valletta’s historic environment, what could be described as heritage flashpoints, where decisions concerning heritage intervention become the forum of much public debate. The secondary scope of this code-group is to aggregate a number of sub-themes that link back to the themes in heritage literature outlined in Chapter 2. Though minor in terms of textual counts, they refer to issues of public participation, the role of the expert and the concept of authenticity, some of the key ideas that underpin the framework adopted by this thesis.

In a similar and related fashion, this section will present the results in two ways. Firstly, it will look in more detail at two specific locations in the city that feature prominently in the data, as clear textbook examples of sites of heritage debate. The segment will conclude with a look at themes related to heritage debate that emerge in the data, but which are not site specific and contribute to the discussion in a more academic sense.

Analysis of the interview transcripts easily identified two primary sites that could be characterized as location-specific areas of heritage debate. This debate centres on the two of the key projects of redevelopment, namely the City Gate project and *Is-Suq* covered market. The source of the debate behind both issues are somewhat different. The City Gate project consisted of two large scale interventions, the demolition of the old gate into the city (built in the 1960s) re-imagined as an open access portal, and the construction of a new building to house parliament (Figure 36). Further to this, it also repurposed the crumbling ruins of the Royal Opera House, which had suffered the ignominy of being used as a car park, refitting it to again serve as a performative space, in the guise of an open-air theatre. *Is-Suq tal-Belt* [the covered market] which housed a number of independent, family-owned stores, was taken over by a large corporation and turned into a slick, modern food court.



Figure 36 - City Gate Development. In the left foreground is the open-air theatre building incorporating the ruins of the Royal Opera House. Behind in (middle) is the New Parliament building and, in the back, (right) is City Gate itself (Source: Author's own).

The core issues surrounding the City Gate development were well captured by one of the heritage professional participants, in this instance an archaeologist:

There was no participatory planning, they just imposed a design. Some might think it worked, others might not. But it's a question of point of view. It's always the situation that you have to get this fine balance, between what is historical, what is unfortunately Disneyfication and what is contemporary value (NRL2).

What is useful about the above quote is that it is not simply a personal, subjective perspective, nor a matter of having positive or negative feelings towards the outcome of the project. Perhaps betraying the participant's background and training, this perspective on the development considers the project holistically, within a broader framework of ideas, a commentary on how landmark projects impact specific heritage values of the city. At the same time, it also suggests that the project was conceived of in isolation, disconnected from public participation in the process, though he does not go as far as explicitly stating that this would have been favourable,

it is implied.

The debate however was also played out in the public sphere with the public engaging in a sort of crowd-sourced assessment. This was evident in the many reactions to the project that surfaced in the interview. Interestingly, it was not the modernist Renzo Piano designed parliament or the portal-like gate that provoked most controversy; rather it was how the remains of the Royal Opera House were adaptively reused. Its reinvention as an open-air concert venue, where the bones of the ruined building were incorporated into the minimalist intervention, was controversial and generated a public outcry (see Briguglio 2010), with many feeling that reconstruction of the original structure was the only correct outcome. There is a longer historical context to this debate, that has seen many unrealized projects come and go, themselves shrouded in controversy (see Carabott 2022). Though this is beyond the scope of this research, this state of affairs provides a backdrop to why this particular building is still very much at the forefront of heritage debate in Valletta. This fact was well illustrated in the recent results of a government-led survey that reported that up 65% of respondents disliked the current iteration of the site, and a major proportion favoured its reconstruction (Figure 37).

Participants in this project who selected the Opera House for commentary would squarely be classified in the opposing camp. The popular argument for reconstruction is the sentiment that



Figure 37 - Times of Malta report on the public disappointment with the adaptive re-use of the Royal Opera House, pictured here in its heyday in the late 19th Century (Source: Times of Malta - Calleja 2022).

doing so will return the structure to its “pre-war glory” (Calleja 2022). The evocations of popular sentiment aside, the original building is in reality anomalous in the context of a ‘Baroque’ city, an artefact of British Rule, as was noted by two of the interviewees:

Rebuilding, I’m not so convinced, because it was a British building, ...I think they should have either done something in line with the rest of the architecture here or something very modern like the entrance and the parliament (RR2).

I mean in a way it’s interesting because you have these people who still look at Valletta as a majestic city, not realizing maybe that the theatre was actually a British contribution to the architecture of the city (NRL3).

Professional engagement with this debate provided a different perspective, one that provided insight into some of the parameters of the development of a landmark project. Usefully for this research, a number of the participants were directly involved with the project, either as architects associated with the development project, or in one instance, an official representing the institutions entrusted with managing the heritage implications of the project.

The sort of responses gathered from this specialized group of participants was varied, from opinion on why what factors motivated the debate, to the realities of managing heritage in the broader context of the Maltese Islands. The fundamental underlying debate, for example, is portrayed as problematic, and forming part of a broader polarization of opinion, deemed to be characteristic on the island:

Because part of the problem with the debate here was that people sort of took sides – I like it and I don’t like it – but the fact that you don’t like it, does not mean that it is bad. And unfortunately, in Malta that’s the underlying message – “I don’t like it means I think it’s bad,” but the fact that you don’t like it does not mean it is bad (LT7).

Polarization in a political sense is particularly symptomatic of many processes in the Maltese context, a situation which can impact on the planning and management of heritage:

It’s either black or white, most of the time there is no pragmatism. And when there is pragmatism, they see it as very politized because I propose an idea, to someone, they will say “no because you are with that political party.” If that party changes and becomes government, the same situation repeats itself. So I am always on the losing side, and that is the situation where the authorities are... (NRL2).

Interestingly, the reconstruction debate is trivialized when a particular expertise is applied to the problem. The reality is that faithful reconstruction would never be possible, as it would fall foul of current building regulations:

So, thing is there have been studies...of how actually the shell could be repurposed if one would restore the original... since it would be a new build it would need follow fire regulations, escape routes etc. So, you can't exactly rebuild it, and it would fit less people than Manoel Theatre²⁷. So, it is completely inefficient, it would not make any sense (LT4).

As a heritage flashpoint, *Is-Suq tal-Belt* renovation illustrates a different set of attitudes or responses to major projects in the city (Figure 38). In this instance it is not new construction or the adaptive re-use of a beloved building, as was the case in the previous example. Also, whereas the Opera House heritage debate was essentially a clash of popular ideas as to what is 'heritage' in the context of the city, the popular sentiment in the case of the market is rather one-sided. This was more of an internal Valletta issue, where the debacle pitted residents versus business interests, in contrast to the City Gate project, where the debate was conducted on the national stage.

The project itself was one of the infrastructure 'legacy' projects of the Valletta 18 program, when the city held the mantle European Capital of Culture (Valletta 2018 Foundation, 2017, 199). The Suq went from being a community hub, characterized by family-run, often locally owned, butchers and grocers, to being operated as a single business that rents out space to restaurant operators; in essence a large private food court. As a building, the *Suq tal-Belt* has heritage DNA in common with the Royal Opera House. Built in the mid-19th century on a site that historically hosted market activities, it was damaged during the same air-raid that destroyed the

²⁷ The Manoel Theatre was built in the 18th century by Knights of St. John and is located on Old Theatre Street in Valletta. It has recently undergone restoration and is still in use.

Opera House (Times of Malta 2016). This is where the similarities end however, as the market was rebuilt post-war and remained in operation, with varying fortunes until its current iteration.



Figure 38 - Is-Suq tal-Belt today (Source: Author's own).

The debate around this site, therefore, is not primarily about alterations to the historic fabric or the aesthetic of the city; rather it is about the impact renovation and adaptive re-use has on other sets of heritage values that people associate with the building. The market, as a community focal point, has already appeared in the previous chapter. It is indeed the role the market played in the everyday interactions of residents and visitors to the city that disappeared, though the building still functions as a food vendor. A MGR resident singled the market out as the location he wished to end his interview, because, of all the changes in the city he was most aggrieved by the renovated, reimagined market:

...[T]he building of the Suq, the principal act of construction that upset me the most (MGR1).

The participant, who until this point had proudly championed the city's culture for most of the interview, chose a site that to him embodied all the negative aspects of urban gentrification, where economic value and return is emphasized above all else. For him, the newly opened Suq tal-Belt was:

A real disgrace. You give it to a capitalist to run it, when it is the market of the people. And the Piazza tal-Poplu (People's Piazza) that big one right in front of the market, that too was given over to private enterprise, to turn them into cafes. I mean really! These things really irritate me (MGR1).

It was not simply the ousting of independent businesses that impacted the social dynamics of commercial community behaviour; it was the privatisation of space. In the proposed plans for the renovation, a percentage of the planned footprint was to be retained for cultural activity. In particular it was the external patio area which was to be reserved for art and performance; however, this was never implemented. The MGR participant, quoted above, singles this fact out as particularly upsetting:

And that was not enough. The Square which was meant to be a Piazza Tal-Arti (Artist's Square), ended up being Piazza Ta Mizzi (Mizzi's Piazza²⁸) to create two more unnecessary cafes (MGR1).

This is perhaps the fundamental issue underlying this particular heritage debate. Commercial appropriation of community places and spaces by redevelopment projects which purport to value or contribute to communal life, but ultimately do not. In the case of *Is-Suq tal-Belt*, this encroachment has a knock-on impact in how the space functions for the community. The ideal outcome, from a resident's perspective, would favour the promotion of public space:

...[I]t should be open, this should be where people, sit, talk, communicate, it's a square, as such. And that's what it used to be (RR3).

Professional commentary on the question of this heritage flashpoint, adds a historical dimension to the square's role as a community space, the area of the *Suq Tal-Belt* having functioned as such for hundreds of years:

... [T]his was originally a piazza the market was built by the Grand Master, from his own money, to give a space for the people. When you see the documents, it says "a space for the people" (NRL2).

Beyond the actual utilization of this space, the brash, commercial signage and decoration are yet another example of what some participants deem to be aesthetically inappropriate:

Then all of a sudden, they decided to change it, and nobody did anything about it, then they took over this outdoor area over here and made it look like Dubai with the fake

²⁸ Reference to the family whose company manage the site and financial backed its redevelopment.

flowers. It's what it is, let's say it's not very in keeping with the style of the city, to be nice, to be a bit clement. (NRL1)

The idea that this overly commercialized aesthetic does not have a place in the city is somewhat ironic given the many ways the city is characterized by its historic links to commerce and the mercantile classes. However, it does draw objection from the participants in particular with respect to ideas of 'character' and 'harmony' in relation to the historic environment, as is very evident in the opinions expressed in terms of aesthetic appropriateness above. This relates to the final main data segment to be included under the rubric of *Heritage Debates*, specifically notions of authenticity.

In general, authenticity, in the context of Valletta and in the opinion of those interviewed, has two primary dimensions. The first of these is naturally related to physical authenticity, the idea of something being historically correct or accurate in form. The second, though related to the first type, is more ephemeral, nondescript and subjective – and that is an authentic sense of place. Notions of authenticity, as expressed by participants, provide clues as to how this fundamental heritage concept is understood by professionals and non-experts alike. Expert participants commentary on this theme is clearly informed by their training, reflecting an understanding of authenticity framed by literature and convention. A participant archaeologist and heritage manager provides a very good example in reference to restoration of the city in general:

That is one thing which when we study at university, we tend to see authenticity, we tend to criticise the Chinese authenticity, the oriental idea of authenticity when they pull down whole historic buildings and reconstruct it. Then we tend to do something similar, we falsify and Disneyfy the past (NRL2).

The participant brings up issues of how authenticity is perceived locally, how it might be out of synch with the values expounded in the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994), whilst also noting how in reality, conservation projects in the local context can be problematic and not truly 'authentic' in other ways. In practice, the act of conservation is always a balancing act, a fixing in time of a building that must consider a multitude of variables, from attribution of heritage values to the application of ethical and sustainable principles and processes. Considering 'authenticity' is but one aspect of the process. The negotiation of this process emerges in another interview with a heritage regulator, when considering the recently restored façade of the Manoel Theatre (Figure 39), an act of conservation which made an authenticity judgement that

has altered the façade considerably. When asked if the restoration has architectural elements which are ‘imagined’ he responded:

Not exactly. It’s a very intelligent pastiche, based on original plans and facades drawn. But we never know whether they were actually executed. So, we had an archaeological dig to try to find the base of the columns and anyway. It’s a good compromise. The problem is you mustn’t fossilize (NRL4).



Figure 39 - Manoel Theatre before (left) and after (right) restoration (Composite by author).

This statement is interesting in that it acknowledges the uncertainty that conservation often entails, and the steps taken to mitigate that uncertainty. Importantly, it also makes a concession to change, that not all things must be fixed in time. This point is made by a number of respondents in a variety of contexts in the interviews and is particularly focused upon by architects working in Valletta, who are almost by default, agents of change.

Age is often a key component in the authentic, yet as Chapter 2 affirms, the perception of age is often an adequate, and independent substitute for age itself, especially from an experimental perspective (see Holtorf 2005). Age and authenticity, in a sense, operate on a flexible, subjective scale in many respects, as Lowenthal suggests when he states that “authenticity is in practice never absolute, always relative” (Lowenthal 1995, quoted in Jerome 2008, 4). The appearance of age can therefore be deceiving:

...because Malta is a strange fish, because it looks like such an old place, but in a way like, lots of the stuff here is really not as old as it looks because it has all been rebuilt after the war (LT4).

Expert knowledge is then applied to the issue which allows the participant to rationalize the fundamental truth about historic towns, that they are rarely all that they seem:

...I mean it was always a dynamic town. I mean it started off as a Renaissance Town with the respective architecture so that is why as well, I can only wonder when people go on about the Baroque City Valletta and so on. Because essentially it is not what it is (LT4).

Professional or expert notions of authenticity are often, therefore, framed by their training, their expertise and their practice. Authenticity, when decoupled from professional practice, is less objective truth and more subjective experience, and central to the construction of a sense of place. This sense of place, as the opening section of this chapter investigated, is personal, communal and experiential and an integral component of the way many residents develop attachments to the city. The connection to the physicality of the city is still present; it is just interpreted differently. A good example of this is encapsulated in the quote below, where a long-term resident remarks about how a residential area in the lower end of the city makes him feel:

But I do like this area again, because it still feels a bit genuine, and when I say genuine it means like you find a lot of people living here who have been living here even longer than me you know. So, in that sense it feels a bit like the continuation of energy, around here, in these places (LT1).

The authentic, or genuine as the participant phrases it, attributes of this area are understood to be as much a product of the built environment as the people living there. It is the residents who are authentic to Valletta and thus play an important factor in the creation of a particular sense of place. The various pressures that have resulted in community dissolution in Valletta is a key theme of this research. The perceived authenticity of Valletta erodes as this community dissipates, and life in the city becomes more transitional, less fixed:

It's different, people come and go now...the people that are working here are just temporary, they haven't worked for many years to make something out of the little shop or.... [t]hey were very poor but they somehow businesses and they take care of the place, it just feels authentic (RR3).

Of course, like with all cities, populations are subjected to varying degrees of change overtime. This, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis, is also true of Valletta, which experienced extreme depopulation in the post-war years. This perceived erosion of the 'authentic' echoes the phenomenon that J.P. Mitchell termed a "nostalgic construction of community" (2004, 125-127). He observed this when conducting his anthropological research embedded in the L-Arċipierku neighbourhood, and attributed it, in part, to slum clearances that

altered the communal and physical fabric of many of Valletta's districts in the 1960s and 1970s. These interview responses therefore represent a reaction to change experienced within the limited timescale of the participant's lifespan. As such they contrast with other responses, explored earlier in the thesis, which positively acknowledge the fluctuating demography of the city's population, highlighting the problematic notion of a monolithic community identity.

Valletta's urban fabric factors into the creation of a defined sense of place. Gentrification, and the globalized homogenization that often accompanies it, affects the 'feel' of the city. This complex of processes, the impact of which have been outlined in more detail in the previous chapter, alters this authentic sense of place, as it is perceived by some participants:

Everything is expensive now, everything is like a replica of something else, nothing is original anymore (RR3).

Originality is often a key component of people's perception of the authentic, the idea that authenticity is hardwired in a particular moment in space and time. In the context of a city that is regenerating, it is understandable that elements that are 'unchanged' are interpreted as authentic. This emerges in a number of participant interviews, as they justified certain routes they chose, often on the basis of them being 'original':

And it's one of the best preserved, the war didn't...you can look around. I think it's pretty much the only complete space I know which didn't have any damage. Beautiful, everything is...you know those are some of the oldest buildings in Valletta (LT5).

There is also the consideration of what it is that set Valletta apart in the broader urban context of the Maltese Islands, where so many towns have been redeveloped and expanded to the point where they are almost unrecognizable.

Valletta is one of the only villages, or towns rather, that kept its structural identity, perhaps like Mdina, Żurrieq.... [b]ut Valletta has remained aesthetically unchanged since the war (MGR4).

Chapter summary

A key theme identified in heritage literature and discussed in Chapter 2, is the proposition of heritage places having many stories to tell and many voices to tell them. Critical heritage theory has embraced the notion of expanding the scope and vision of heritage practice to enable the

inclusion of this multi-vocal approach, whilst also advising caution and self-awareness of the role professional practice plays in enabling, or conversely, hampering this approach. The methodology and approach adopted during the textual analysis of the participant interviews created codes and code-groups in order to determine what multi-vocal, people-centred responses were generated. The results were organized into two meta-codes to capture this form of assessment. *Appraising the City* and *Heritage Matters* were specifically conceptualized during the analysis to contribute to this discussion. The data presented in this chapter bring together the different ways in which a heritage place is perceived, interpreted. It provided an opportunity to present two very different perspectives on the idea of ‘appraising’ an historic landscape. The first of these was centred on the participant’s sensorial perception of the city, the subjective impression it made upon them. In a related fashion, the textual responses were analysed for emotional responses in reaction to the urban fabric. As an aside, it also considered how Valletta is viewed from the outside in, and how this external appraisal is received by the interviewed participants. The second, and very different perspective, provided space to explore how the participants engaged with heritage management issues, whether or not it was consciously or purposefully framed that way in the responses. These coded themes revealed how the participants appraise conventional heritage management choices, from both the lay and from the professional angle.

Walking interviews were adopted as the primary method for the gathering of data for this project, specifically because of benefits of them occurring *in-situ*. One of the key benefits is that the majority of the results presented in the *Experience of Place* and the *Evaluating Place* chapters, are not generalized commentary. Rather, the data have very specific spatial attributes. Participants select specific places to walk to discuss and comment on. They also select specific routes at the expense of others. The final chapter in the data presentation series differs in that it foregrounds the spatial layer present in much of what has been presented so far, to document the streets, buildings and public spaces, local spots and all bound by the periphery of the walled city.

Chapter 6: An inventory of place

Chapter introduction

The results presented in the previous chapters utilized the transcript text to build sets of thematic categories, designed to address the research aim identified in the introduction of this thesis. These results are best characterized, in general terms, as the experiences, memories, and assessments of place from the personal perspectives of those who participated in the fieldwork. Walking whilst talking, the primary methodological approach utilized to collect data, was selected because it placed the interviewee and the researcher in-situ. The resultant interviews capture the immediacy of the participants' interaction and experience of the city, within the physical context of the urban environment itself.

The thematic results reported thus far, have in the main, focused on the content of experiences, consciously favouring the perspective of the participant as the narrator. This chapter is more concerned with the setting, with the fabric and topography of the heritage place taking centre stage. The interviews were all conducted on the move, within – and on occasion – beyond the walls of the city. Part of the process involved the participants making conscious and unconscious decisions on how the interview experience would play out. As a result, the themes that emerged from the data are inexorably linked to the tangible fabric of the city, to the streets, buildings, shops, and public spaces. This connection is either direct or explicit, a personal connection to a public garden for example, or implied or alluded to, almost metaphor-like, to convey a connection, and to illustrate a sense of place.

Though still rooted in the interview text, this chapter makes use of the complementary data that video footage provides. In this instance, the NVivo software was used not to code subjective themes; rather, codes were created and applied to location-specific data. If an interview referenced a particular building or zone, these textual data were assigned their own codes. Another form of spatial data was collected by proxy. Using the video footage as a guide, the route each individual interview took was annotated, therefore creating a coded link between the transcript data and the location of the interviewee. The spatial data collected therefore can be generalized into two distinct categories. The largest of these categories are the lists of references to places and things, an inventory of what it is about the city that is meaningful or significant to the interviewees. The secondary data set is positional, tracking the routes of each individual interviewee.

To reflect these two strains of data, this chapter is divided into two distinct sections. The first section presents data that were coded for under the rubric of *Geographical & Physical Place*. These can be categorized primarily as tangible elements data set. The second data set is purely positional and relates to the routes taken by the participants during the interview process.

Inventories of Place

In organizing the coded textual information for this chapter, it became apparent that what had been categorized and documented was an inventory of place, an organized and catalogued collection of physical and spatial references and selections by the project participants. This section will present and contextualize these choices following the code structure created in NVivo 20 (see Appendix C). In some instances, and where appropriate, codes will be grouped for the purposes of cohesion and brevity. In order to familiarize the reader with Figures 41 and 42 locate a selection of the key places featured in this chapter,

General overview of spatial and descriptive data

Overall data for this final section of the results chapter arc are subdivided into two groups (Table 18). The largest data set is collected in the *Geographical & Physical Place* meta-group which accounts for 499 references. The second data set, *Routes Data*, is much smaller but still significant, at 199 references. Participant-count for these meta-groups is 100%, as all respondents, by default, generated data in these categories simply through participation. Routes data will be presented independently later in the chapter.

Main Data Categories	Participant Count 19/19	#Reference Count
Geographical & Physical Place	19	499
Routes Data	19	159

Table 18 - Overall count of references from the two spatial data sets.

Geographical & Physical Place as a meta-group, is based on 10 code groups (Table 19), which in turn are themselves comprised of specific sub-codes. The codes within this meta-group primarily refer directly to elements of Valletta’s urban fabric, where a code has a direct relationship with a specific building or location (a palace or a garden for example). Table 19 below shows the category distribution of these references, with the three largest – by reference count – code groups fitting this description. These code groups serve as the location inventory for the project.

Geographical & Physical Place Code Groups	Participant Count 19/19	#Reference Count
Commercial Places	17	141
Buildings	18	94
Monuments & Design Elements	17	65
Neighbourhoods & Zones	16	50
Views	14	32
Roofs	11	19
Home	12	29
Spaces - Urban	13	28
Architectural Styles	7	16
Spaces - Natural	6	12
Access to space	4	10

Table 19 - Detailed look at the code groups that make up the Geographical & Physical Place Meta-group.

That *Commercial Places* is so prominently represented in the data is primarily a product of participant observations on the commercialization of the city, which frequently referred to specific venues or locations in the context of the gentrifying city, as was noted in the case of *Is-Suq tal-Belt* as detailed in the previous chapter. Beyond this, however, it also reflects Valletta's role as a centre for commerce, shopping, restaurant, and café culture, with many references being made to its established, iconic businesses. All these factors contributed to making this the largest of the inventory categories.

As we have seen already, Valletta is compact, and densely packed, with little room for open spaces. The *Buildings* code-group reflects this, and demonstrates that a large proportion of the coded inventory of places refers directly to the built environment in some way or another. This code-group is itself made up of a host of sub-codes to help organize the data, with the majority of the references attached to *Notable Buildings*, *Hotels & Guesthouses*, and *Churches* sub-groups.

Monuments & Design Elements is the third inventory sub-group, implemented to capture the urban fabric in a more granular fashion, to fully represent the rich transcript data, which made clear that these details mattered to the participants. It includes codes for specific monuments in the city that feature as part of the interview process. An example of this is the 'Triton Fountain' which dominates the entrance to the city, and for one of the long-term residents interviewed (Figure 40), was loaded with meaning and familial connection. Beyond the monument, this code group also categorizes references to the ubiquitous, at times unique, architectural artefacts,

from steps and balconies to the iconic historic signage of the older shops and businesses. These categories document in some detail, the physical attributes of the city and how these might be important to the participants, and how everyday ephemera connects them to the ‘stuff’ of heritage.



Figure 40 - Long-term resident ClothildeM explaining why she chose the Triton Fountain (background) as her starting point for the interview (Source: Author's own).

Neighbourhoods & Zones codes for larger geographic entities, the characteristic Valletta neighbourhoods, and specific areas within those neighbourhoods which constitute a point of reference for residents. Similarly, it also maps more large-scale, conceptual designations, like ‘centre’ or ‘periphery’. The comparatively large number of references reflects the trend for the communal aspects of the lived city experience to have been the emphasis in some interviews. This was particularly true of MGR type residents, where the neighbourhood is a defining, fundamental component of their sense of belonging to the city and their identity.

The remaining code groups document other elements of the urban landscape, those not specifically linked to building types or their usage. These range from the ‘spaces’ both urban and natural – piazzas and the coastline for example, to specific aesthetic or design qualities of the fabric. Included in this grouping are the references to views both internal and external. In the latter, Valletta ceases to be the focus of attention, but rather, it becomes an observation point onto those surrounding townscapes on either side of the peninsula. Roofs and the roofscape of the city complete this data category.

Commercial Places

It is the business and hospitality industry that dominates the largest of the *Geographical & Physical Place* meta group, accounting for 30% of the total references. Table 20, below, breaks the code-group down to its constituent parts. The largest of these is the generic *Local Business* sub-code, which was used to capture both general and specific references in the text. Textual references attached to this code are therefore also attached to specific codes where required. A reference to a locally run restaurant would feature in its own specific code group, whilst also nestling under the *Local Business* rubric. It was certainly not feasible to have a code for every type of commercial entity in Valletta, thus necessitating a generic code to capture these cumulatively. Conversely, the bulk of the sub-group is comprised of business specific codes, which are generally grouped by type, with the notable exception of the covered market, or *Is-Suq tal-Belt* which has featured in some detail in Chapter 5.

Commercial Places	Participant count 19/19	#References Count
Local Business	10	39
Hotels & Guesthouses	10	21
Is-Suq	11	21
Restaurants	7	14
Bars	7	14
Bakers	7	9
Cafes	6	8
Shops	4	7
Family Grocers	3	3
Il-Monti	2	2
Other	1	1
Art Galleries	1	1

Table 20 - Details of codes making up the Commercial Places code-group.



Figure 41 - Enlarged section of Northern Valletta showing location of prominent place examples from the text.



Figure 42 - Enlarged section of Southern Valletta showing location of prominent place examples from the text.

Hotels and Guesthouses references, though largely not focusing on a specific building, appear with equal frequency to the covered market. Most references occur in passing, as a generalized comment on just how many of the, often vacant, ‘palazzi’ are being converted into high-end accommodation for the well-heeled weekend visitor. A good example of this is St Ursula Street, a quiet, relatively untouched residential area which featured as part of the route of five participants. One specific interviewee grew up in this street, and selected it as an illustration of the many symptomatic changes being wrought through commercial exploitation:

Now – many of these buildings we are walking past have become boutique hotels, rental apartments (MGR4).

Less commonly, specific boutique hotels were singled out for reasons other than their ubiquity or for being perceived as accomplices in the commercialization of the city. In these instances, it was to comment on their appropriateness of design – a common preoccupation as noted in Chapter 5 – and in another instance to draw attention to the historical origins of the hotel’s name and its association with the Knights of the Order of St. John.

Even before the development of the boutique hotel industry, Valletta already possessed a well-established, if on somewhat smaller scale, associated hospitality industry in the form of restaurants, snack bars, and cafés. These varied widely and are distinguished by which audience they attract and service, from resident, tourist, local worker, or local visitor. The textual data associated with the *Bars*, *Restaurant*, and *Café* sub-codes are almost entirely references to traditional businesses, in contrast to the multitude of new establishments that now vie for the attention of the consumer.

The *Bars* sub-code adheres to this participant preference. The bars, and snack bars, are included in the participant Valletta narrative because they are considered ‘historical’, and therefore contribute meaningfully to an authentic experience. There is something intrinsically ‘Valletta’ about these locales, which raises concomitant concerns about their vulnerability:

It is, good old ‘Tiks’, one of the last Valletta bars (LT6).

The establishments in question are always independently owned, often threadbare and somewhat ramshackle, but always well-loved community places. ‘Bert’s Bar’ is one such archetype (Figure 43), and a throwback to a time before international franchises homogenised food and drink options. For these specific reasons it was selected as a starting, and therefore focal point, for one the interviews. These venues are fixtures in the urban landscape, fulcrums of community interaction, and anchor points for communal and personal memory.

These little snack bars, though open to all, are community specific and dotted around the various neighbourhoods. As such, though open to all, they subsist mostly on local, residential business. *Restaurants* and *Cafés*, also refers to more metropolitan establishments, those that attract a wider clientele from beyond Valletta. Their inclusion in the data follows the same selection pattern encountered with local bars, and places selected are generally those businesses that are quintessentially ‘Valletta’. ‘Cordina’s’ is perhaps one of the best examples of this (Figure 44). A grand establishment on Republic Street, its tables spill out on Republic Square, which now has become inseparable from its connection to the Café:

And everyone usually associates this square with ‘Cordina’....it is an institution (RR2).

Though more informal, ‘Café Prego’, though now closed, features in three of the interviews for similar reasons. Its classified as ‘traditional’, and another text-book example of the changing city:

These were all sort of, charming elements of the old Valletta which have disappeared. (LT7).



Figure 43 - Bert's Cafe (known as 'Bertu's') on Merchant's Street, corner with St. Nicholas Street (Source: Author's Own).



Figure 44 - Caffè Cordina. Iconic establishment on Republic Street (Source: Author's own).

Additionally, of course, these cafés are social spots, and firmly part of the social life of the city, as discussed in Chapter 5, and another reason why they feature in the data. *Restaurant* selection, in terms of textual reference, occurs with the same frequency as *Snack Bars*. Again, the criterion for their inclusion references the historical associations, with old establishments linked directly to familial stories and memory, with the unsurprisingly popular ‘Rubino²⁹’ (see Figure 45). Where this category of data diverges from the nostalgic reverie that has been so prevalent in these place codes, is in how it reflects one of the positives of gentrification, the increase in quantity and quality, of eateries. Perhaps reflecting the centrality of food to Maltese culture, and though participants did reference established restaurants, such as ‘Rubino’ or ‘Malata’, and popular vendors of local street food, notably the ‘pastizzerijas³⁰’, the influx of new

²⁹ Rubino is a family run restaurant in Old Bakery Street. Though it has changed hands in the last 10 years, the style of food and the period correct Valletta signage remain unchanged.

³⁰ ‘Pastizzi’, a national staple, are flaky pastry parcels, traditionally filled with ricotta or crushed peas. ‘Pastizzerijas’ can be found all over the island, and provide a popular, affordable, and much-loved snack.

places to eat generally is considered positive and worthy of mention. These new food cultures are now woven into the fabric of city life:

Yes of course, these have become part of the culture of the city, you don't find vegan restaurants everywhere! (MGR1).

Completing the inventory of commercial enterprise places that featured in the data, are *Shops, Bakers, and Family Grocers*. These selections occur in the data, in the main, in conjunction with themes of lived experience of the city, or as examples of glimpses of pre-gentrified Valletta. Like the community of residents, these places are viewed as vulnerable or disappearing:

But that's the thing there are no other options, the small shops have been completely eradicated, to the periphery (NRL 2).

Family Grocers (Figure 46) would be heavily impacted by the arrival of modern supermarkets, and the renovation of *Is-Suq tal-Belt* as discussed in Chapter 5, dislodged many of the family run businesses. For now, some of these grocers continue to exist, and are frequented by *Beltin* and more recent additions to the city (me included). Bread is a traditional staple on the Maltese Islands, the traditional 'Ftira'³¹ having been inscribed onto the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2020. The disappearance of traditional bakeries from Valletta, is more evidence of the creeping effects of gentrification and perhaps its effect on the culinary tastes of the Maltese and the visitor, one that meaningfully impacts resident's cultural practices and foodways:

Valletta Bakers, I think only two [remain]. It used to be full of bakers (MGR3).

Traditional, small shops, be they bakers or family run stores, also play a role, as we have seen, in the creation of a sense of place, historical connection, and place attachment. This is particularly true if, as discussed above in the section on bars, they look the part. Figure 47 illustrates a good example of this, where 'Wembley Stores,' though refurbished in recent years, continues to capitalize on a sense of the authentic, replicating the traditional frontage of the city shop. Its position on Republic Street, close to City Gate and the very mouth of the city, is a prestigious one, which mirrors its historical association with the finer side of grocery shopping:

³¹ The 'Ftira' is a flattened sourdough bread, with a central hole.

Here you can even see Wembley Store for instance, on the corner, which was one of the main go-to places for people who grew up here to go and buy the nice stuff, the more luxury bit of shopping perhaps (NRL 3).



Figure 45 - Rubino, establish in 1906. The restaurant is located in the centre of Old Bakery Street. Note the surviving, traditional shop frontage (Source: Authors own).



Figure 46 - Uptown Mini Market, a typical family-run grocer, located on Archbishop's Street (Source: Author's Own).



Figure 47 - Wembley Store. Located on Republic Street, corner with South Street. Note the traditional looking wooden frontage, which was installed when the store was refurbished (Source: Author's Own).

Commercial places feature in the experiences of the participants – and as a result in the data – for a number of important reasons. Old shops, bars, and restaurants recall the Valletta of the past, played an important communal role for residents, and formed an integral part of the urban setting and sense of place they help invoke. It is generally their disappearance that prompted discussion and inclusion in the interviews, and tangible evidence of change in the city, whether it is considered positive or not.

Buildings

The generically named *Buildings* code group is the second largest data set in the *Geographical & Physical Place* meta-group, accounting for almost 20% of the 499 total references. Table 21 itemizes the eight component sub-code groups that comprise the *Buildings* code-group. The breakdown of types clearly demonstrates that the bulk of the data is associated with *Notable Buildings* and *Churches & Related* in terms of references in the text. The remaining code groups cover architectural elements of the city in more generic terms. *Boats & Summer Houses* refers to two pockets of ad-hoc construction by the shore on both sides of the peninsula, which consist of small, single-room family units that are generally only used in the summer. Another of the minor sub-groups is *Palazzi & Houses*, which collects references to specific homes, generally more a comment on the resident than the building itself. The code-group is completed by a

number of sub-codes that have less than five references each in the text, these being *Fortifications, Offices, Schools, and Museums*. Though minor in terms of the percentage of textual references, the absence of specific references to these buildings or architectural types is interesting because of what they could be expected to represent in the context of a fortified and historic city.

Buildings code-group	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Notable Buildings	15	58
Churches & Related	9	17
Boat & Summer Houses	4	6
Palazzi & Houses	5	5
Fortifications	2	3
Offices	1	1
Schools	1	1
Museums	1	1

Table 21 - List of sub-codes that make up the 'Buildings' code-group.

The *Notable Buildings* code-group the largest subcategory of buildings data by some margin, with 15 specific buildings associated with 58 textual references. The bulk of the references are linked directly to three buildings that as such, can be considered as a single entity. Table 22 shows just how prominent the weighting towards the Royal Opera House, the New Parliament building, and City Gate are when compared to other equally notable buildings in the city. As explored in the previous chapter, these three structures have been a focal point for heritage debate, and this was certainly a factor that influenced the participants' selection of these places to be a feature of their interview. This factor is further amplified by the fact that a number of the participants had been involved in the City Gate Project itself, which makes their inclusion almost inevitable. As a result, all the data concerning these three buildings within the data are directly related to the project which spawned them, the professional and popular debate of their impact on the city, and the appropriateness of their design, a theme that was mostly linked to the Royal Opera House. The exception to this is a small data subset concerning the exterior, public space outside the New Parliament building. In this instance, it is the temporary barriers, there to create a barrier for protestors, that have become a permanent feature, which is perceived as ugly and perpetuating a hostile, authoritative sense of exclusion.

Buildings are not always singled out for the heritage misdemeanour they are considered to represent, however. Often it is simply a building that is considered magnificent, either

aesthetically or from the sheer weight of its historic attribution, that merits it being singled out. This is surprisingly not a very common occurrence in the text, with the Grand Master’s Palace and the Bibliotheca (Figure 48), or National Library, being included on this basis. The Bibliotheca is furthermore linked to memories related to its function as a library and research facility, which is why it is more represented in the data than other buildings.

Notable Buildings code-group	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Royal Opera House	7	13
New Parliament	6	13
City Gate	5	8
Bibliotheca	4	4
St. Paul’s Buildings	2	3
St. Albert the Great School	1	3
Grand Master's Palace	2	2
Fortifications Interpretation Centre	2	2
Evans Building	2	2
Times Building	2	2
Old University	1	2
Casino Maltese	1	1
Vincenti Buildings	1	1
Main Guard	1	1
Law Courts	1	1

Table 22 - Notable Buildings sub-code, listing the codes ordered by reference count.

The other buildings attached to the code group appear in the text in a number of different ways. Evans Buildings was referenced in connection with childhood memory and its impending redevelopment, as we explored in an earlier chapter. ‘The Times Building’ located at the top of St Ursula Street, where the national newspaper ‘The Times of Malta’ until recently was printed, was similarly referenced because of its current redevelopment – unsurprisingly into luxury apartments. The sparsity of the data associated with these outliers in the code group, means that they represent individual selections, chosen by participants because of some personal connection, or a comment in passing as the interview proceeded.



Figure 48 - Bibliotheca - National Library. Located on Republic Square in the heart of the city (Source: Author's Own).

On an island whose culture and identity are so fundamentally enmeshed with Roman Catholicism, this connection leaves a notable physical presence on the urban landscape; villages and towns alike are often dwarfed by the out of scale, ornate parish church. The capital is no different. Home to 28 churches in 1km², its profile is defined as much by its church cupolas and spires as by its fortified walls. Churches feature as the second largest structure type in the *Buildings* code group, with 17 references from nine participants, covering eight different churches around the capital. None of the churches featured were selected as an interview highlight by the participants, and only three get multiple references in the text. The thematic context in which churches feature is somewhat unexpected, and not simply the case of the participant making a comment on the aesthetic qualities of the building. The Carmelite Church on Old Mint Street, whose cupola dominates the western aspect of the city (Figure 49), is the most common church in the data. Though comment is made on its beauty, most of the conversations are on its historic context, built to outshine the nearby Anglican Cathedral, which one participant humorously labels “the outcast church” (Interview LT4).

In general, however, churches feature in the data for reasons similar to entries under the *Notable Buildings* sub-code. It is less about the structure, and more about the participants’ connection to it. Residents would have memories of attending churches, whilst others link particular churches to a family memory or anecdote, such as the one participant stopping to consider the recent history of a church, which had sustained damage during the war. In a more

contemporary context, the depopulation of Valletta coupled with dwindling congregations means that some churches are now used by different denominations, reflecting an increasingly international and diverse country. This fact was featured in an interview, with the participant stopping to mention how they liked this re-use, noting that the St. Roque Chapel in St. Ursula Street is now home to the Romanian Orthodox Church.



Figure 49 - Valletta on the Marsamxett Harbour side. Note the spire of the Anglican Pro-Cathedral of St. Paul in the foreground, and the vast cupola of the Carmelite Church behind it (Source: Martin Furtschegger, via Wikimedia Commons).

The remainder of the building types in the data are associated with a broad spectrum of types, with six categories linked to 17 references. Of note are the *Boat & Summer houses*, which are more prominent in the data than the palaces, fortifications and museums which conventionally define the city's heritage. These often overlooked, coastal dwellings emerge from interviews with participants who are almost exclusively of the MGR type, or *Beltin* (Figure 50). The one exception is a recent resident who spent her childhood in the city and was very familiar with socio-cultural customs of the locals. These clusters of buildings are therefore linked with

communal life in the city, specifically with particular adjoining areas or neighbourhoods. Though their legal status is uncertain³², they act as community refuge in the face of the changing city:

Yeah, a lot of them are from Valletta yeah, and they have had these for many generations...but they all know each other, and I guess take care of each other. And it is a little space for them to connect keep this sort of community alive that there is in Valletta. They bring it down by the sea. I think it's really special here (RR3).



Figure 50 - Boat and summer houses built on the shore under the bastions. These face the Grand Harbour (Source: Author's own).

Monuments, Design elements and Architectural styles

Though data for this section were coded as two independent sub-groups, in the context of this chapter, they can be presented in unison. In essence, the data in this code group contain references to two distinct elements of the historic environment of Valletta. *Monuments* is more akin to the data from the preceding sections in that it handles references to specific, discrete monuments in the city – the Great Siege Monument for example. *Design Elements* is more concerned with physical details at a granular level. It includes typological categories, such as

³² Illegally built summer houses are a feature of many of Malta's popular bays, and a point of contention with the public and the planning authorities.

niches or balconies, which are typical urban features of Maltese urban settings, but also contribute to a visual construct that is unequivocally ‘Valletta’. The *Architectural Styles* code-group contains references to a very defined set of aesthetic attributes, ones framed by architectural language and for Valletta, as the nation’s capital, is home to a great number of national monuments and landmarks. They however are not a standout feature in the data, with only four unique entries into the inventory of places (Table 23). What sets these selections apart relates to the context of their selection, where each of the entries related to specific ‘meaningful places’ in an interview, often by multiple participants. The Barrakka Lift is the prominent example of this. The lift, built on the footprint of an earlier British Era example, connects the harbour to Valletta, linking Lascaris Wharf to the Upper Barrakka Gardens, close to Castille Square. The has always served foot passengers, and nowadays is used by the tourists who disembark from their cruise liners nearby, as well as those who enter Valletta by ferry from the Three Cities across the harbour. The modern incarnation of the lift, is a bold, modern structure (Figure 51), introducing a new design language, whilst echoing its past form and function. As a ‘meaningful place’ selected by the participants, it features on the basis of professional association and interaction with the city. Two participants, both architects, select the lift as an important structural element in the city, not only because of their direct involvement in its design and construction, but also because of what it symbolizes and how it represents a facet of the city’s heritage. Through this professional lens, the lift is understood to memorialize the industrial heritage of the port, and as a vector of connectivity and transport, historically and in the present, thus linked to one of the key functions of the city:

For me it’s historically quite significant, and it’s got a lot to do with even the purpose why Valletta was constructed in the first place. (LT7)

Monuments	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Barrakka Lift	4	6
Triton Fountain	2	3
The Great Siege Monument	2	2
Ball monument	1	1

Table 23 - Monument code data.



Figure 51 - New Barrakka Lift, opened to the public in 2012 (Source: By Georg Karl Ell <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=102027263>)

Certainly, there are more prosaic reasons for including the lift as part of the interview, and like many of the physical elements of the city, it is a memory landmark for familial histories:

This lift is also part of my youth, I used to come here with my grandfather, and we used to go up and down on the old lift, for a ha’penny (LT6).

The Triton Fountain and the Great Siege Monument have surfaced in the results in the thematic contexts of *Aesthetics* and *Politics* respectively and discussed in the preceding chapters. Places, as the data have already made clear, always have multiple associations, and the Triton Fountain is chosen as the final ‘special place’ for one participant because it reminded her of family that had since passed on, but also importantly as an example of how economic activity in the city impacts the fabric of peoples place attachments, sullyng the connection between place and memory:

But my ending here is related to the fountain, but you cannot see the fountain anymore, I used to be able to see it from there, from the road (LT3).

Eleven sub-code categories were originally implemented in the *Design Elements* code-group; however, in retrospect, the small number of references associated with the minor types could in reality have been aggregated into the *Ephemera* sub-code (Table 24).

Design Elements code-group	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Ephemera	4	11
Materials	6	8
Statue	3	5
Niches	1	4
Signage	3	4
Balconies	3	4
Steps	3	4
Embellishments	2	3
Lighting	1	2
City Plan	1	1
Coats of arms	1	1

Table 24 - Design Elements code-group.

Unlike *Commercial Places, Buildings or Monument* data, what is captured here are not locations, buildings or structures, rather is fine grained detail, from the materials used in construction, to how the city is illuminated. At 48 references, it is a larger data group in terms of numbers, but often the content is, much like the subject matter, somewhat fleeting and ephemeral, the result of casual observations made during the interview walk. It is important however to underline that, although often made-in-passing, this does not imply that these comments are not of value. Often, one small detail of a given building is what makes it memorable and special to the people who cherish it; it is part of what makes the everyday approach to heritage compelling and important. A comment made by one of the first participants to collaborate and engage with the project, reinforces the role of everyday, overlooked details in the experience of an urban cities:

[I]t's one of those things that very strange but very close to you at the same time. And in Valletta there is a lot of that. There is a lot of very mundane things, but at the same time they are very particular although they are very mundane (NRL1).

The *Ephemera* sub-code is a case in point, truly encapsulating how new perspectives on heritage places can be gleaned when the locus of interpretation is shifted to the individual; a fundamental tenet of people-centred heritage approaches. The content of the data for much of the *Design Elements* data is filtered through the medium of the participants personality, observational ability, and ultimately local knowledge. Often these are almost comically mundane or simply unusual and quirky. Boot scrapers, made of wrought iron, were apparently a feature of the city, and not many survive, which prompted a participant to point them out. The same participant, currently not living in Valletta but having grown up in the city, provided the bulk of these *Ephemera* reference data. The interview started off in West Street, and he was keen to point out one of his personal favourite architectural elements, which he termed a 'Gallatrina'³³ (Figure 52). The underlying theme that connects many of the choices in this particular group of references is that these are aspects of the urban environment that are rendered unique by their vulnerability in the context of a gentrifying city. They need not be part of the original fabric; this is of less importance than their perceived appropriateness, yet they contribute to the city in interesting ways. At times they can be classified as alien to the historic fabric, but still cherished, for simply being there. The flower shop under the arcade at the entrance to the Bibliotheca is a good example of this (Figure 53), and it is reflected in the language used by a participant to describe it:

³³ A portmanteau of the Maltese word for balcony (*Gallerija*) and toilet (*Latrina*).

I mean I love these kind of parasites, these intrusions – my favourite flower shop (LT4).



*Figure 52 - The 'Gallatrina' - Or Balcony-Toilet - identifiable by its opaque windows and plumbing.
(Source: Author's Own)*



*Figure 53 - 'A kind of Parasite' - the beloved flower vendor stall under the arcade in Republic Square.
(Source: Author's own).*

Statues and *Niches*, a common sight in most town and village cores in Malta, are perhaps less likely to be vulnerable elements, being actively venerated and used. The *Statues* sub-code is not limited to those celebrating saints or other religious figures; it also encompasses secular and historical figures. This context aside, how these ubiquitous decorative, commemorative, or religious elements are interpreted or selected by the participants will always add a subjective and unique contextual layer. One statue is singled out because the subject is for a distant relative, and in another interview a corner shrine is commented on because, in the words of the participant, it is the 'Jerry Lewis Statue' (Interview NRL1).

This category of data is very much the product of the subjective interest of the participants, and a reflection of their personalities. This is evident even in more generalized codes, like *Materials* for example, which catalogued interest shown into the specific construction or embellishment materials that make up the urban fabric. These references are generally interlinked with themes of restoration and the ideas of authenticity, mostly stemming from professional perspectives on the urban fabric. However, even *Materials* type content can represent more personal, subjective themes and a material sense of place, as exemplified by this characterization of an eroded wall:

This is how I know Valletta, with stone looking like this (MGR4).

With 17 total references, this code-group only accounts for 3.5% of the total data in the *Geographical & Physical Place* metagroup (Table 25). As such, *Architectural Styles* is more of a complementary data set to themes that have already been explored earlier in the thesis, and in contrast to much of the data presented thus far in this chapter, is firmly entrenched in discussions on the conservation or restoration of the historic fabric. Evoking architectural styles is a method of contextualizing and critiquing change, and a measure by which to assess appropriateness in heritage management scenarios, as established in Chapter 5. As such, many of these references occur in the text in relationship to one another, especially in the context of recent alterations to the city's fabric, where for example the Baroque style is seen as a counter to modernist styles. Neoclassicism is mostly associated with later British period interventions and gauging public sentiment from the reactions in the press to the Royal Opera House, is not considered stylistically anathema to the aesthetic of the city.

Architectural Styles (Totals)	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References
Modernist	4	7
Baroque	4	5
Neoclassicism	1	2
Renaissance	1	1

Table 25 - Architectural Styles code-group and sub-codes.

Neighbourhoods and Zones

Whereas the preceding sections were mostly concerned with specifics of the urban fabric, the buildings, businesses, material and aesthetic features, the data for this section deals with communally constructed space. At 52 references, data for this section represents just over 10% of the total data for the meta-code, with 16 unique participants contributing to the data. Neighbourhoods, as established earlier in Chapter 4, are a foundational aspect of localized identities in Valletta, particularly with MGR or *Beltin*. The analysis of the data also brought to light another theme, which is a more abstracted idea of space division, and that is captured by the *Core vs Periphery* sub-code, which at 15 references, is the largest within the code-group, reflecting the generalized nature of this theme.

The remaining sub-codes document the phenomenon of neighbourhood zones in Valletta. 'Arcipierku', 'Mandraġġ', and 'Due Balli' are the best known such zones, which is reflected in the results (Table 26). However, Valletta, historically, had many more zones, which in essence are nicknames for specific areas of the city, with as many as 22 being recorded historically (Zahra 1999, 55). What constitutes these distinct areas can differ. Most of the sub-codes in Table 26 refer to Valletta zones defined as residential areas or neighbourhoods; however, an area can also be defined by a landmark feature or place. This is true of the area known as Jew's Sally Port which is essentially a tunnel through the bastions in the 'Due Balli' district that leads down to the sea and the area known as 'Il-Fossa'.

Neighbourhoods & Zones	Participant Coverage (19/19)	#References Count
Centre Vs Periphery	7	15
Arcipierku	5	8
Il-Mandraġġ	4	6
Due Balli	3	4
Bridge Bar	3	3

Il-Biċċerija	2	2
Il-Kamrata	2	2
Hastings	1	1
Tal-Karmnu	1	1
St. Barbara's Bastion	1	1
Jews Sally Port	1	1
Il-Fossa	1	1

Table 26 - Neighbourhood & Zones code-group.

Though the majority of these place names are of some antiquity, others can be more recent. On the basis of the text, 'Bridge Bar' is one such example. The area is named after the eponymous bar, which was one of the early night-life hotspots that become popular in the new 'era' of the city, with frequent live performances:

I am very fond of especially in summer and that is the area of The Bridge Bar. That I think is one of the very nicest aspects of Valletta and one of the nicest Valletta happenings that occurs on a yearly basis (LT2).

Bridge Bar becomes a colloquial spatial shortcut, a quick way to refer to the popular and picturesque area.

The zones vary a great deal in size, and the definition of their boundaries is not well documented and as a result not clearly defined. Figure 54 is a composite created using a map produced by J.P. Mitchell (2002) to which detail from interview data has been added to provide a more complete interpretation of the complexity of Valletta neighbourhoods. The large residential zones such as 'Il-Mandraġġ' or 'Due Balli' span a number of city blocks, areas that were and remain densely populated, and today are home to many of the remaining family groups who self-define themselves as *Beltin*. Other areas are surprisingly compact (Figure 54 and 55). The aforementioned 'Jew's Sally Port' and 'Bridge Bar' are examples unto themselves, as they are not residential zones. However, there are micro-zones within neighbourhoods, which are considered independent and distinct from others, which a long-term resident made reference to during their interview, questioning the need for such spatial specificity:

I mean there is always an imaginary boundary, but to have these 50X50m zones (LT5).



Figure 54 - Map illustrating zones and neighbourhoods (after Mitchell 2002).

Figure 55 illustrates this clearly, with the examples ‘Il-Biċċerija’ and ‘Il-Kamrata’. ‘Il-Biċċerija’ is again not clearly defined in the literature or in the interview text, but it is commonly understood to describe the area immediately surrounding the old abattoir of the Knights period, which is the block highlighted in the figure. As a residential zone, it must therefore encompass the housing adjacent to the abattoir site, and as such is better described as a sub-neighbourhood of the ‘Due Balli’ zone. ‘Il-Kamrata’ is easier to identify, as it is named after a specific housing block at the northern end of Merchant Street, which was previously the site of a retreat or prayer house from the Knights Era and built in the 16th century (Ganado and Soler 2018, 70). As if to reinforce the ambiguity of place definition, an MGR participant who grew up in the area pointed out that the

name itself was perhaps interchangeable and not fixed:

No, but I grew up here. They call this area – “Near the Dar Mediterran (Mediterranean Conference Centre)” or Camerata³⁴, it does not have a specific name (MGR3).

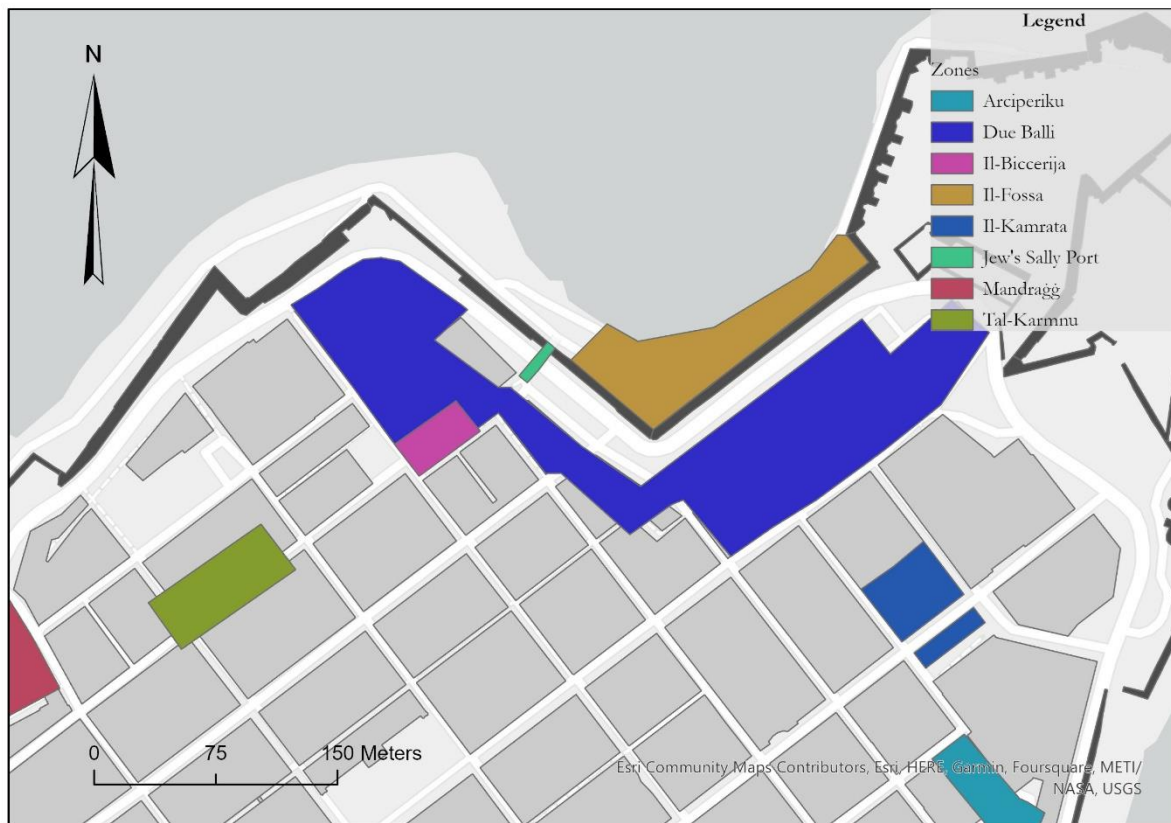


Figure 55 - Enlarged area of residential zone 'Due Balli'. Note micro-zones.

There are other ways in which zones are defined, which though outliers in the data, are interesting because they illustrate the diverse ways in which physical space informs identity or simply how space is remembered and navigated. Zoning can be defined by Parish, such as 'Tal-Karmnu' (or pertaining to the Carmelite Church) indicating that one lives within the zonal boundaries of the parish.

Definition of space in the urban context need not be articulated on the basis of residency or association; there are more generalized, abstracted ways of subdividing space. In Chapter 5 this was touched upon in the context of identity and how the topography of the city creates an 'upper' and 'lower' Valletta, a case where class perceptions are geographically or spatially defined. The *Centre vs Periphery* sub-code was adopted to categorize issues or comments that address a similar divide, and as a generalized code it has the largest number of references in the

³⁴ Like many streets and places in Valletta, there is a language interchangeability to how places are referred to. 'Camerata' would be the original, Italian word for the building, where 'Il-Kamrata' is the Maltese naming.

Neighbourhoods & Zones code group. In many cities that develop organically outwards from an historic centre, the boundaries between these abstract spaces are harder to define; even when there is a circumscribed 'historic centre' there can be any number of peripheral areas. The physical and geographical characteristics of Valletta make this distinction more clear-cut perhaps. If the bastions do not provide a clear enough demarcation, then the surrounding sea emphatically establishes geographical boundaries.

In the context of the study area, the 'centre' is best defined as those areas of most footfall, the upper reaches of Merchant, and particularly, Republic Street; the commercial heart of the city. Though the bastion walls are the most likely boundary candidate in defining the 'periphery', the textual data helps identify and extend this definition to encompass more liminal areas outside the city walls, such as the 'il-Fossa' zone. As one participant, whose route focussed on the coastal landscape of the city, observed:

For many people, Valletta is 'Strada Rjali'³⁵, from 'Putirjal'³⁶ at most to Pjazza San Ġorġ (MGR3).

This quote clearly encapsulates the distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider' readings of the city. As a *Belti* participant, he is suggesting the existence of multiple 'Vallettas', some only accessible with local knowledge, a notion reinforced early in the interview when he states:

So – I will take you for a walk you will find hard to forget. For me, you really need to be from the city to know it. Not to say that people who are not from Valletta don't know about this place (MGR3).

Living in Valletta means you are very conscious of the boundaries that exist between these two spatial zones, and what it is that defines the boundary between the two:

Very few other places have.... such determined edges that for example Valletta has, which makes it partly fascinating for me of course, the fact that it's based on a peninsula and therefore limited (LT1).

As a dialectical relationship, meanings attached to the spatial construct of 'centre' or 'periphery' can be conceived of as being in opposition to one another. Space in the centre is attached to

³⁵ Republic Street, also called Kingsway under the British.

³⁶ City Gate was at some point its history renamed 'Porta Reale' (Italian: Royal Gate), from which the Maltese 'Putirjal' derives.

thematic strands such as gentrification, change and all the sub-themes they represent. Periphery is spatially linked to other themes, particularly relating to the lived city experience. Of course, thematic separation is never clear-up and immutable; there is always a degree of overlap. There is an underlying preoccupation that the processes that are so characteristic of the 'centre' will creep to the liminal areas of the city. One participant describes one such overlap:

Basically, people just think that Valletta is just urban areas only, but there are some pockets, especially around the coast, so far though I don't know how long that will last to be honest (MGR5).

The periphery, in this context, is also perceived to contribute positively to the quality of life, which can be compromised by commercialization and related vectors of change. It serves as a place to walk, to access swimming spots, a different way of engaging in communal interaction:

Often, I come here around sun set, especially on a busy date of work, especially where you notice that you have been locked in all day, it's like I need to have this escape you know (LT1).

[W]here else do you live in a capital where you see from your living room if the ferry to the other town is working or not and you walk in 5 min to the Mediterranean Sea (LT4).

The quote above raises another important consideration about the periphery, where role of the sea introduces one final sub-theme of these data which are issues of mobility and access. The periphery does not only represent containment; it is also an area of connectivity, a place where you can move in and out of the city.

Public space in the city

The penultimate category in the typological presentation of participant-selected places in Valletta is distinct in that, like the *Neighbourhoods & Zones* section that precedes it, it is not about specific, tangible buildings; rather it is about accessible, open space. This section groups together the data from three categories of data, namely *Spaces*, *Views*, *Roofs* and *Access to space*. Though *Spaces* was collected and categorized as two separate codes in the data, the content is similar enough to be presented as a single analytical unit, and once merged, the code comprises 40 textual references. The sub-code *Views* is itself made up of four codes, three of which refer to specific viewpoints, and the fourth captures references to *Sightlines*, the architectural or town planning consideration of visibility in the urban areas from the perspective of a spectator. The *Roofs* sub-code is somewhat of a hybrid, referring to both roofs as a useable,

lived-in space, but similarly to the *Views* sub-code, it also relates to the visual impact of the shifting silhouette of the city due to gradual development at roof level.

Valletta is, by design, very compact, with little concession to open space. The code *Spaces* documents instances of its public squares and gardens featuring in the data. On the basis of participant selection, *Spaces* is one of the most diagnostic codes within the *Geographical & Physical Place* meta-group, both in terms of route and ‘place of interest’ selection. The three major public gardens in the city, Upper Barrakka, Lower Barrakka and Hastings were selected as starting points or special places by participants 11 times. The ‘Pjazzas’ or Squares of Valletta, most prominently New Parliament and Castile Square, were fixtures on seven of the interview routes. On the basis of those numbers alone, it is possible to surmise that literal ‘space’ is something that is fundamentally important to the participants. Even if not vocalized directly, the decision to locate extended sections of the interview away from the busy streets of Valletta, has, I would argue, a subtext that is clear to read. In the data however, the importance of ‘space’ in the context of a compact, busy city is often unequivocal and direct:

I mean I am from somewhere in the middle of nowhere with just countryside around I thought that I would feel claustrophobic in Malta without any nature and stuff, but it's just a different thing. I mean all the history and it's just so picturesque. And for me this just is the kind of place where you, I don't know, this is as much nature as you are going to find in Valletta (RR1).

COVID restrictions temporarily changed the dynamics of Valletta, as discussed in Chapter 4. Lockdowns brought the importance of literal ‘space’ into sharp relief, and the gardens of the city, in this case Upper Barrakka Garden (Figure 56), was one of the places where the benefits became apparent:

Gardens are important to me, if you don't have many around. Thanks to COVID this garden has become much more beautiful again because it has the right amount of people as you can tell you know (LT1).

The programs of city improvement over the years have increasingly favoured the pedestrian, and as of 2018 many streets and nine public squares have been pedestrianized (Costa 2018). Like gardens, these squares contribute to the liveability of the city, especially for families with young children:

Yes, the children love to come and splash in it in the summertime. But then, build a splash pool for children somewhere you know? (LT2).



Figure 56 - One of the six interviews being conducted in Upper Barrakka Gardens (Source: Author's Own).

The *Spaces* code intersects with other major themes discussed in the earlier chapters. For MGR type participants, the gardens formed part of their extended playground, a place to play football or ride a bike. These spaces, just like other elements of the urban fabric, represents places of memory:

So, this place was seat/headquarters of our 'Grand Master'. So, whoever was the leader of the pack at the time, this was 'their place'. On these walls we all used to carve girlfriends names or who we loved; I mean we were kids. I would love to find my name here (MGR4).

There are other reasons to select these spaces as part of the interview route, and in these instances, the spaces themselves are just staging grounds for other perspectives on the city. Some of these other thematic perspectives have already been discussed, such as the Barrakka Lift as an example of professional practice in the context of Valletta. A specific interview initiated in Lower Barrakka Gardens, which was in this instance selected for the historical and political meaning connected with the Monument to Sir Alexander Ball, which sits in the centre of the garden. This is an instance of the space being secondary subject to its contents, at least for the purposes of the interview.

Following this notion of the spaces being selected for reasons other than the space they provide, the frequency of gardens occurring in the data is also explained by their position. In

Figures 41 and 42 at the beginning of this chapter, the location of the three main public gardens in Valletta is clear to discern, perched atop the bastion walls, overlooking the harbours. Upper and Lower Barrakka Gardens overlook the Grand Harbour, and the walled, historic towns of the Three Cities, whilst Hastings Gardens provides views of Marsamxett Harbour and Manoel Island. Certainly, one of the motivations for seeking these views and incorporating them into the interview route is the sheer majesty of the view itself (Figure 57). The *Views* code-group captured these comments, many of which were also coded for their aesthetic and sensory association as presented in Chapter 5. As a code-group, *Views* fulfils a complementary and contextualizing role. The views from the gardens locate Valletta in the broader historic urban landscape, and connect it to its rich maritime history, or just to the sea itself. These views are not limited to the gardens; the topography and grid pattern of the city means that, if you stand in the right place, on the right street, you can glimpse the sea:

And strangely enough a lot of people who have never lived in Valletta forget that there is the sea. They only see the congestion, the parking problems...Valletta is surrounded by sea, there is nowhere else [like it]. For example, at the top of some roads you can see the sea in three directions, it's gorgeous (LT5).



Figure 57 - View of the Three Cities from the parapet of the Upper Barrakka Gardens (Source: Author's Own).

The *Views* code is also therefore about how space is experienced in the city, from the perspective of the observer, and a small sub-set of this code-group collected references to 'sightlines' and the role it plays in their understanding or appreciation of the city. As per the example above, one

of the iconic 'sightlines' in the city is that of being able to see the sea. 'Sightlines' are referenced in different contexts, however. City Gate, with its open, portal-like design allows for you to look right through the city to the new square around the Triton Fountain:

So, standing here you could see the entrance to Valletta, and the wide-open space leading to the Triton Fountain, and all these clean cut, beautiful lines (LT3).

The roofscape of the city features in the data in several ways. Firstly, this relates to roofs, specifically roof tops, as a useable space, and is referred to by participants in ways similar to public spaces and gardens. Roofs, for those who have access to them, offer the possibility of private outdoor 'space' in an otherwise crowded urban environment. For one participant, the roof of their residence was selected as the starting point for the interview, as not only did it represent a private, personal space, but also linked back to previous family occupation:

This is kinda the most private space and it's also the space which to me...if I look what the property looks like today and I look at say the photos which to me make me think I know the house occupied...(LT3).

These private spaces were deemed an untapped resource by another participant, who when discussing what they would like to see change in the city in terms of improvements to liveability, was quick to suggest that roofs were under-utilized spaces:

I think it is so strange, that the people here, the vast majority don't use their roof. I think it's bizarre. As in this is some of the most beautiful outdoor spaces in the world (LT5).

Recalling the *Views* sub-code, the second prominent inclusion of *Roofs* in the data relates to the shifting aesthetic and function of roofs, specifically roof-top development, serving as a reminder that changes to Valletta do not solely occur at street level. Though difficult to discern when walking the streets of the city, for some residents these changes are personally experienced, impacting their view upon the city:

Now I see just a little sliver of sea, but before I could see all of Tigné in fact (MGR5).

The slow accretion of roof-top development, is again interpreted as a symptom of the commercialization of the city, as one participant reflected as we walked down East Street:

Again, you see the battle going on of everyone one wanting to build a higher and getting a better view of the harbour. At the same time, it's very pathetic this fight for the view and it symbolizes of course our human greed, but it also makes me laugh of course (LT1).

Home

There is a powerful subtext underlying the final category in the inventories of place, one that pervades the project explicitly and implicitly: the notion of *Home*. It is a subtext that underpins researcher positionality; Valletta has been my home for almost 15 years at the time of writing. It is also the current or ancestral home of many of the participants. In categorizing *Home* in the catalogue of places that featured in the interviews, three sub-codes were used, which included 'Personal Home,' 'Extended Family Homes' and 'Historical Family Homes'. When combining these definitions, the *Home* code is attached to 29 references across the interview text. In simply numerical terms, at 6% of the physical places data, it is comparably a smaller category. However, it is one of those place categories that is not simply a reference to a place; rather it is a reference to place that is loaded with meaning. A sample of these have been explored earlier in this thesis, where *Home* particularly linked conceptually to the construction of sense of place.

Home as a place, was a common feature in the interview routes, with four participants choosing their residence as the first location of their route, and thus framing the interview opening sections:

So, this is my first spot, I thought definitely the house had be part of it, it made sense to be part of it (LT1).

Yes, we are in the first spot, this is the home I'm renting, which I've been renting for almost a year now (RR2).

Though anomalous in the general scheme of how participants selected locations to visit, one interview was structured around one main category of place, specifically the different homes they had occupied since moving to Valletta over 15 years ago. The interview therefore started with the first apartment they rented, and proceeded to meander around the city, following their occupation history, ending at their current home at the lower end of St. Paul's Street. In this instance *Home*, and what it represents, was the leitmotif of their entire interview narrative.

The simple act of selecting their residence, even if it was a casual quick comment, cements the participants' connection to the city, through personal place, or home. Though distanced by time, including the home you grew up served a similar function, and many of the participants designed the routes specifically to include childhood homes:

And that is where I used to live, up there.... It's falling to bits. I loved it. But it was a government building, so the state should do something about this you know. There was

a lovely roof, where we kept a chicken, and we went up to get our eggs in the morning. In Valletta! (LT6).

Home is certainly a countable, physical entity, an apartment or house. However, as Read notes, “[a]s well as the space it occupies, people conceptualize their home as the function it performs” (Read 1996, 102). The underlying reason for participants selecting or referencing home, therefore operates on differing levels of connectivity, from the intimate, personal home of the resident, to home referenced in family history or extended kinship. Whatever the temporal scale of the relationship, current or historical, a fundamental function for this inclusion in the participant narrative is of fixing attachment to the city, much in the same way I have done by referencing my own current and historical attachments earlier outlined in the introduction to this thesis.

City routes

To complete this chapter, and to finalize presentation of the results, this section features a very specific, self-contained data set, the route data. Thus far, the results have focused on the content of the transcripts generated by the interviews. The physical and spatial characteristics of Valletta have been protagonists in this narrative, featuring specific buildings, zones, streets, and open spaces of the city. Route data are different in that they concern the actualization of the interview itself, mapping how the participants interpreted the brief provided in the project documentation and ultimately its application in interview form. How a route was decided upon varied from interview to interview, the only commonality being that the start of the interview would be the first ‘meaningful’ place the participant wanted to discuss, and similarly the interview would generally end at their final selection. The actual route itself was left up to the participants, and was predicated upon by circumstance, personality, and logistical considerations. Some routes were entirely pre-planned and followed dutifully. Other participants had route locations in mind, however, chose an exploratory approach to complete them, resulting in a meandering that contributed spontaneity to an already rich data set by triggering an almost unexpected reaction to places and things. The interviewees were not consistently asked how routes were designed, and if the route itself was meaningful in some way. Nonetheless, contemplating the route was something that occurs in the text in direct and indirect reference, particularly in relation to what they perceived as the expectation of the project. When queried, route selection could reflect commonplace, or routine ways of navigating the city:

I wouldn't call it a routine but it's definitely a track that I take a lot because I want to, my most favourite spot and my most used spot is the place I take you to second. But I am on the same route here and it's an important route for me because as much as living in two walled cities is always interesting for me (LT1).



Figure 58 - Following a project participant down East Street (Source: Author's Own).

Others would ask if their selection had been made before, and would specifically alter the route to show me something different:

Well East Street has some attractivities and there would be stories we could talk about there as well, but you know. Especially since you say you had a lot of people there already – what's the point? (LT4).

It is interesting that 'original content' is something that preoccupied some of the participants, possibly most evident in one participant who justified their route and place selection on the basis of it being purposefully 'unconventional':

...I assumed that other people would go for more conventional things. So, I said let me go for less conventional things, because it will probably give it a broader scope (NRL1).

Underlying motivations that shaped the route selections aside, how the routes map out onto the urban topography of Valletta is also an important consideration. This chapter therefore concludes by looking at the final inventory of place, the catalogue of streets that make up each route.

Routes Data.

The code data itself amounts to a list of city streets, with the number of references indicating the number of times that street featured in an interview. Table 27 lists the 34 streets that featured in participant interviews, where the two busiest streets in the city, Republic Street and Merchant Street, prove to be the most frequently included (Figure 59). These counts are not unique per interview; rather they count every instance of the street being included in the route of the interviews. In Table 27, for example, St Lucy's Street, though selected by four participants, however, has seven entries, indicating that one or more of the interviews circled back through the street as the interview progressed. These data have two applications in the context of this project: one descriptive, the other functional. Firstly, it tells us about how each interviewee planned and constructed their interview, where it started and ended, and how they decided to get between those two points. Secondly, it acts as a spatial reference for thematic data, a spatial map for other data types. All transcript data, every line of text, is therefore locked in physical place by using location codes.

Street/Route	#Reference Count	Participant Count
Republic Street	10	8
Merchant's Street	9	7
Old Theatre Street	9	7
Strait Street	7	7
St. Christopher's Street	7	7
St. Lucy's Street	7	4
Archbishop's Street	6	5
St. Ursula	5	5
Mediterranean Street	5	4
East Street	4	4
South Street	4	3
St. Dominic's Street	4	4
St. Paul's Street	4	4
Old Bakery Street	4	4

West Street	3	3
St. Mark's Street	3	3
Boat Street	3	3
St. Patrick's Street	3	3
St. Nicholas Street	3	3
Zachary Street	2	2
St. John's Street	2	2
Felix Street	2	2
Marsamxett Street	2	2
Biagio Steps	2	2
Grand Harbour Steps	2	2
Bull Street	2	2
Old Mint Street	1	1
Melita Street	1	1
Sapper's Street	1	1
St, Sebastian Street	1	1
St, Elmo Place	1	1
Windmill Street	1	1
St. Andrew's Street	1	1
Battery Street	1	1

Table 27 - Valletta streets by number of inclusions in the participant interviews.



Figure 59 - Republic Street, the main thoroughfare of the city and its commercial high street. It was the most commonly used street during the interviews (Source: Author's Own).

Numerical tabulation of streets visited can only be evaluated in a limited way, as it presents the routes in a disconnected fashion. At first glance, the routes selected by the participants demonstrate a great deal of variation, whilst simultaneously displaying several congruences. Figure 60 plots the mapped route of every individual interview conducted during the fieldwork phase. At the resolution required to display all of the routes in the same map layout, it is difficult to discern each route with clarity. However, enough information is displayed to demonstrate the variety of routes selected, and how though many appeared to be clustered on the Grand Harbour facing, south-western edge of the city or its main thoroughfare Republic Street; other routes trace an entirely different pattern, including outside the limits of the city walls.

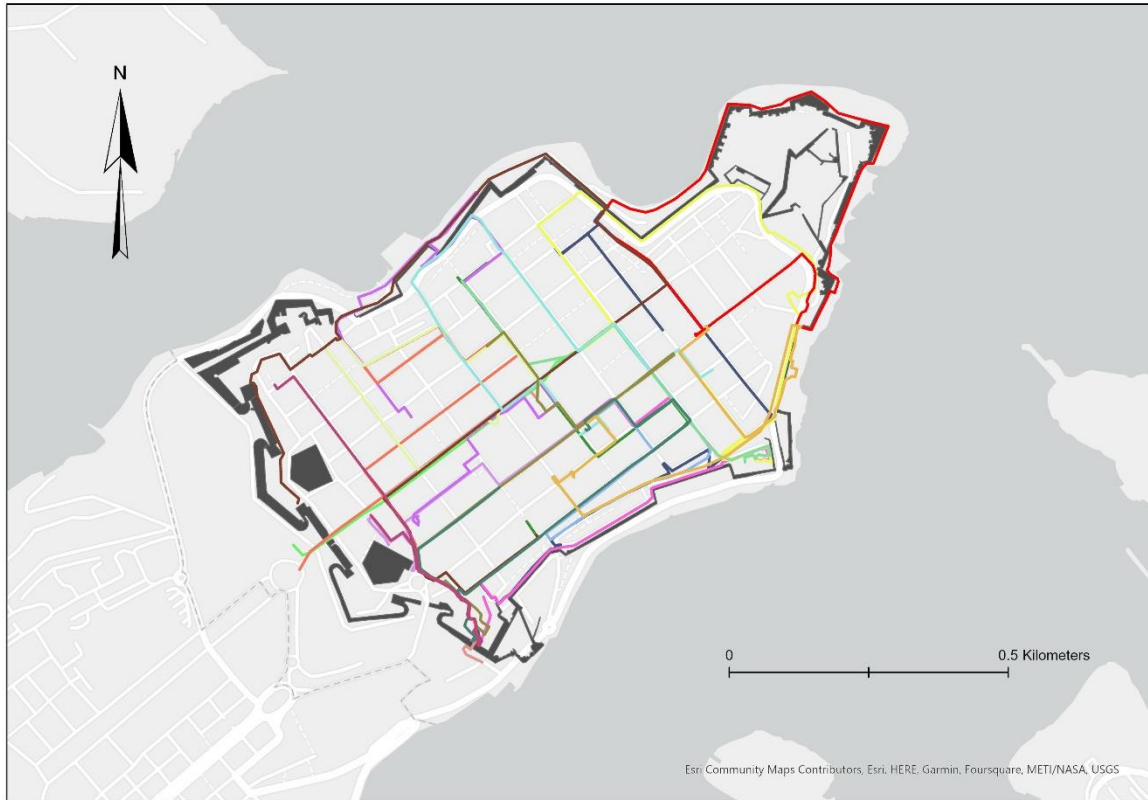


Figure 60 - All interview routes mapped.

The density of some of the route intersections are better understood when magnified, as demonstrated in Figure 61. This close-up of the junction of Republic Street and Old Theatre Street - which also coincides with two popular public spaces, St. George's and Republic Square - is a prime example of how densely packed the interview route overlap can be in specific areas. This example, barely covering a few city blocks, maps 11 individual interviews, where many participants used the junction to turn off or onto Republic Street. The junction in question is with Old Theatre Street, which featured in seven interviews and is the third most frequently included street overall (Table 27). Old Theatre Street is a predictable selection, for though the grid pattern of Valletta means most of the major transverse streets intersect with all the longitudinal ones, Old Theatre does so at some key entertainment areas, notably Strait Street, whilst also linking to two open 'pjazzas' (Figure 61). The application of GIS interpretative tools allows for clearer visualization of these data, to emphasize route congruence that remains evident when adopting resolution that includes the entirety of the study area. Applying a basic Line Density calculation to the route data produces a heat map of this route intersection, and as demonstrated in Figure

62, the zones of the city most frequently included as part of the participant interview are easily distinguishable.

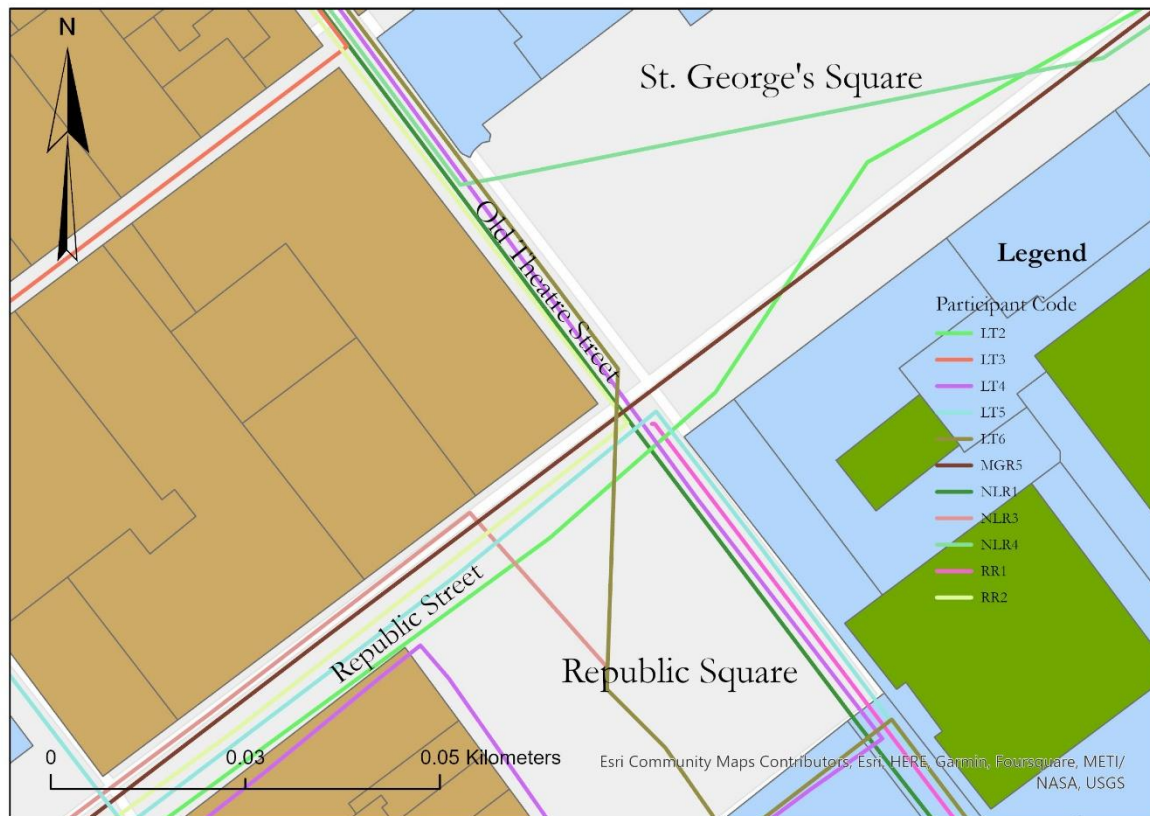


Figure 61 - Expanded view of interview route intersection.

At this scale, it is clear to discern four ‘hot spots’ in the Routes data. Two of these (labelled 1 and 2), on the south-eastern, Grand Harbour facing aspect of Valletta are the product of the popularity of Upper and Lower Barrakka Gardens in the data, a visual representation of the importance of public greenspaces in the city to those interviewed. The centrally located ‘hot spots’ occur for a number of different reasons. Location 3, depicts the junction between Republic Street and Old Theatre Street, described in detail above. The final ‘hot spot’ (labelled 4) is caused by a number of factors. Firstly, it is located on Merchant Street, which is included in seven of the 19 interviews. Secondly this junction with Archbishop’s Street is in close proximity of Is-Suq tal-Belt (the covered Market), the centre of the ‘hot spot’ centring on the open area in front of the market. The market has been the protagonist of many of thematic discussions in previous chapters, and this is reflected in this visualization of the route data.

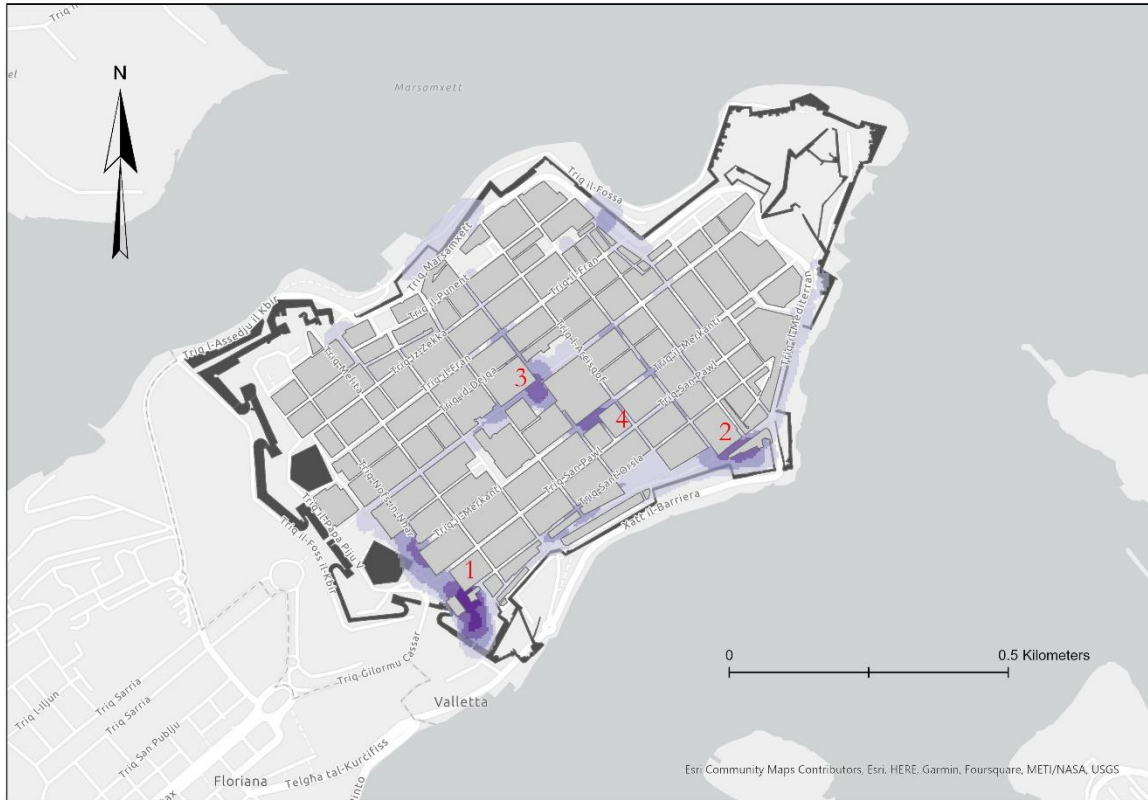


Figure 62 - Line density render, showing areas of intersection. Route overlap indicated by darker regions.

Specific demographic or participant typology can also be applied as filter in the mapping process, allowing for new interpretative possibilities. As an example, Figure 63 displays the same 19 routes. However, rather than treating each one individually, it groups them by residence type. What this type of analysis seems to suggest is that MGR type residents, with one exception, avoid the central, busy thoroughfare of Republic Street, rather they spend they focus in the more residential zones of the city, particularly in the St Ursula Street area and the lower reaches of Valletta in and around the neighbourhoods of their childhood. LT residents often started or ended their interviews at home, and Figure 63 suggests that the ‘upper’ parts of the city are more likely to be home to this new generation of Valletta residents.

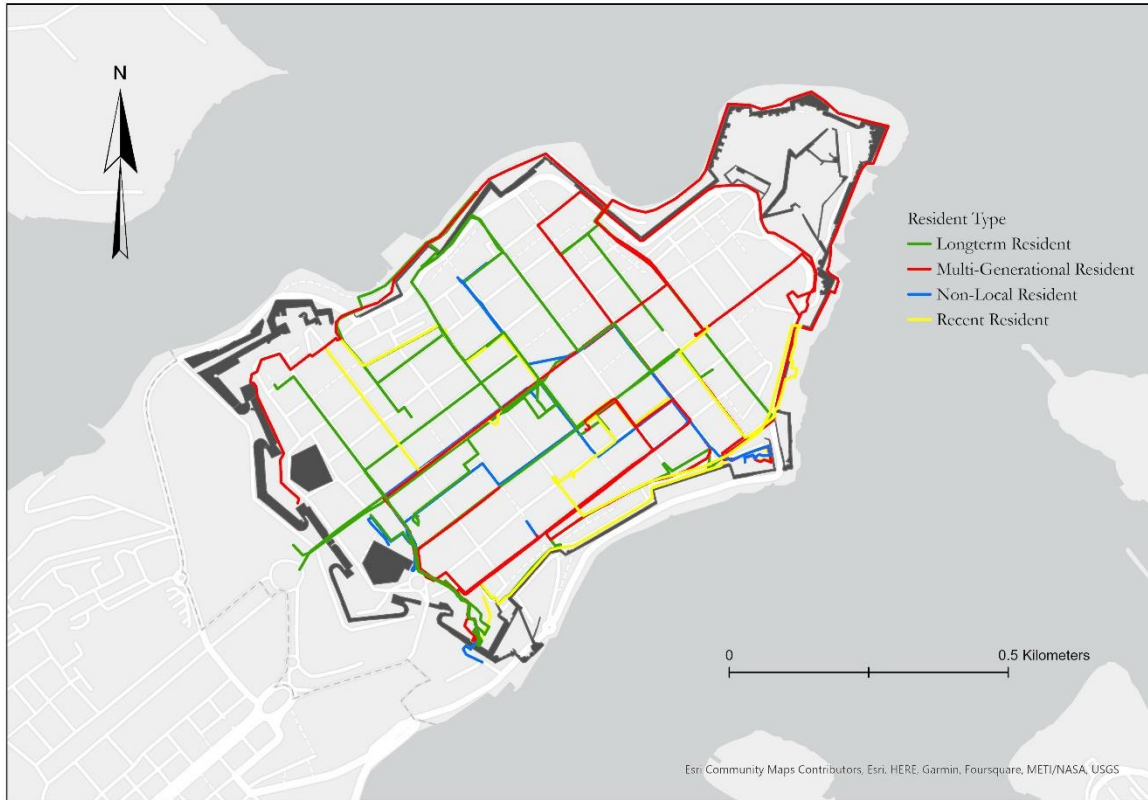


Figure 63 - Interview routes by participant type.

Chapter summary

This thesis is fundamentally about people’s notions of heritage value within a defined heritage place, Valletta. Whereas thematic discussion based primarily on the textual element of the data set has been central to the analysis and presentation of the results of the fieldwork, this chapter focuses on the physical and spatial components of the city which feature in the data and anchor the thematic analysis in space.

There is a strong degree of confluence between the thematic analysis and the catalogue of place data. Change and gentrification in the city is one of the main themes that emerges from the text, and this is strongly reflected in the place data, with commercial buildings (businesses, shops, catering establishments) easily being the most prominent type. This confluence extends across other major themes from previous chapters, from concerns on the attrition of local communities, the realities of the city lived experience, to notions of appropriateness of heritage interventions in the city. By focusing on the actual materiality of the city, this chapter has provided a complementary analysis of these themes, by focusing on the specifics of the historic urban environment of Valletta. Tracing the routes taken by the participants documents how the

interviewees chose to navigate the streets, mapping similarities, and highlighting differences in participant choices. The route maps visualize the trends noted in the textual data in terms of place or location selection, where particular streets or spaces are favoured by participants as spatial settings for their memories and commentary.

With the presentation of the results completed, the chapter that follows examines the outcome of the data analysis in relation to the research aim posited in the introduction to this thesis. The broader implication of this analysis is examined in light of the intellectual framework outlined in the Chapter 2, framing this original research in the context of the existing body of scholarly work.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Chapter introduction

The methodological approach adopted for this research generated a large and varied corpus of data, with over 250 thematic codes linked to 1600 textual references contributing to the results chapters. Organized thematically across three chapters, the outcome is a tapestry of memories, opinions, and observations gathered from the participants over the course of 19 interviews. The iterative parsing of the interview data created a data-rich web of codes and associated textual references, which ranged from complex, multifaceted issues such as gentrification, to personal place interactions and serendipitous ephemera. This qualitative approach was designed specifically to realise this project's research aim, which as stated in Chapter 1 is:

- To explore people-centred heritage valuations of the historic city of Valletta, to demonstrate that social values associated with heritage places offer an alternative, more inclusive assessment of how historic urban settings are deemed significant.

This aim encompasses goal and method. It posits that the people-centred, multi-vocal assessments of heritage value produce a large range of responses which require documenting. For this to represent an 'alternative' implies that there is a 'normative' counterpart to value assessment. Furthermore, and as argued in Chapter 2, this normative approach can limit the recognition of the full spectrum of heritage values that can be associated with heritage places and inform significance. The aim of the project narrows in on social values as a powerful and meaningful counter to the potential limitations of normative approaches.

This chapter will explore the connections between the thesis aim and the results presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. To do this, the discussion will be contextualized by referring to the intellectual framework laid out in Chapter 2 which informs and underpins the central aim of this thesis. This will be done in four distinct ways:

Firstly, the outcomes that follow must be understood in relation to the dataset itself. To facilitate this, this chapter will first present a redux of the results from Chapters 4 through 6, to contextualize and justify the key discussion sections that follow. Whereas the data chapters documented thematic detail and content at a granular level, the goal here is to identify high-level trends in the data, to make sense of the dense, data-rich narrative and thus act as a framework for interpretation.

Second, many of the themes in the results section are directly or indirectly related to the impact of regeneration of Valletta. This section examines how local initiatives to regenerate the city have, unintentionally or by design, placed an inordinate amount of emphasis on a restricted set of heritage values, therefore facilitating the process of gentrification.

Third, the results chapters document the personal and communal ways in which people value Valletta, and how they react to and interpret the changes that the city has and continues to experience as a result of urban renewal. This section will consider what this approach has contributed to our understanding of how people value the city in the broader framework of heritage scholarship. The key ideas explored are those of social value, place, and community and how taken together, these offer a more contemporary, inclusive, and as a result holistic, way of determining the heritage significance of Valletta from a people-centric perspective.

The fourth and final section considers how local discourse and commentary on Valletta's heritage continues to emphasize its status as a World Heritage Site (WHS), and how changes to the city's fabric can potentially impact the maintenance of the accolade. Having made an argument for the centrality of social values in the data, I explore the problematic nature of this status, how it features in the data, and how its implementation and management inadequately represents the broad spectrum of heritage values people derive from the city.

Searching for patterns, or what the data tell us

The results chapters adopted a narrative approach, reliant on the textual data to link specific themes to create groups of codes collectively grouped as meta-groups. Each chapter was prefaced with a table of meta-codes and relevant codes with the intention of clearly defining the detail and the structure of these meta-groups, and as a result the narrative structure of the results chapters themselves. Conceptually, these constructed a framework for more complex, multifaceted processes, the scope being that of distilling a large corpus of information into more manageable groups to allow for the categorization of the results. Following the hierarchical principle of interlinked code groups outlined in Chapter 3, the data was classified into three main thematic groups, each of which received a dedicated chapter.

Though the use of thematic codes may appear to reduce complex ideas to simple categories, effort was made to demonstrate how the data are deeply interconnected. There are many instances of this, where simple descriptive data, participants selecting locations for example, are linked to the broader narratives and issues; the meta-themes that drive the narrative. This interconnectedness extends across the full spectrum of the data structure, reflecting the web-like nature of the data set, thus not trivializing through oversimplification the

complexity of the ideas being presented. This observation is made to dispel the notion that the results chapters are silo-like constructs; rather they are fair representations of the detailed contributions of the participants.

Organizing and categorizing data into their respective structures, makes it possible to have a macro-perspective on how the themes relate to each other, thus making it possible to make an assessment of the interpretative relationships these enable. Figure 64 compares the major themes, or meta-groups, at the highest hierarchical level. The pie-chart clearly demonstrates that the largest body of textual data relates to the *Experience of Place* meta-group, which accounts for almost 50% of the data, with the remaining percentage shared relatively equally between *Geographical and Physical Place* and the *Evaluation of Place*. This does require a degree of adjustment as this comparison is not entirely accurate, since it does not take into account the nature of the data connected to each category. *Experience of Place* and *Evaluation of Place* are composed of references to the conversational body of text that are the transcripts. *Geographical and Physical Place* is more of a complementary data set, an amalgam of textual references to places and positional data that provide additional texture and detail to the main themes of Chapters 4 and 5.

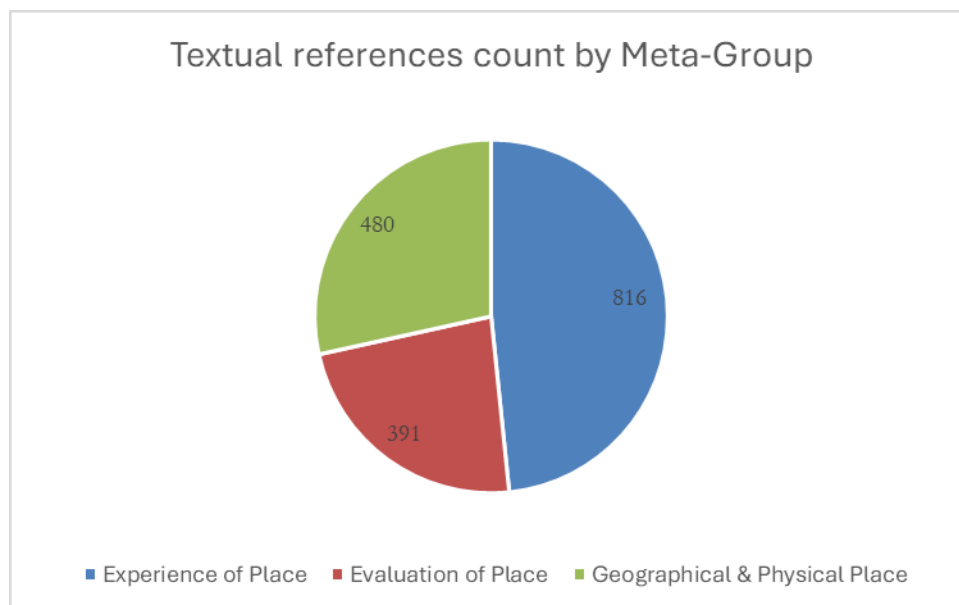


Figure 64 - Pie-chart illustrating the total number of textual references associated with the three meta-codes from the results chapters.

Eliminating the positional data and descending one hierarchical position in the code-structure gives a much clearer picture of the main thematic strands and how they relate to each other. By comparing these, again on the basis of the textual reference counts, Figure 65

illustrates the relationship of the main themes from *Experience of Place* and *Evaluation of Place*. Arguably reductive, a comparison of textual counts does however prioritize the input of the participant, a key principle of the method employed. Textual counts refer directly back to the interview data and therefore correlate with the input of the participant. Simply put, it serves as an indication of the time dedicated to certain subjects, certain strands of conversation, and in doing so, provides an additional way of measuring and assessing how the participants contributed to and interacted with the project and the subject area. As such, it can be understood as a way of measuring what the participants considered to be important to convey to me, the researcher. In using this count system, I recognize that these are not categories that are always quantifiably or directly comparable. As a case in point, I am not suggesting that the relative importance of multifaceted issues relating the adaptive reuse of a national monument, the Royal Opera House debacle for example, is to be equally weighed with an individual's memory of childhood on the basis of number of textual references. However, I am suggesting that these counts support and represent the idea that people conceptualize significance in a multitude of ways beyond the management of the urban fabric.

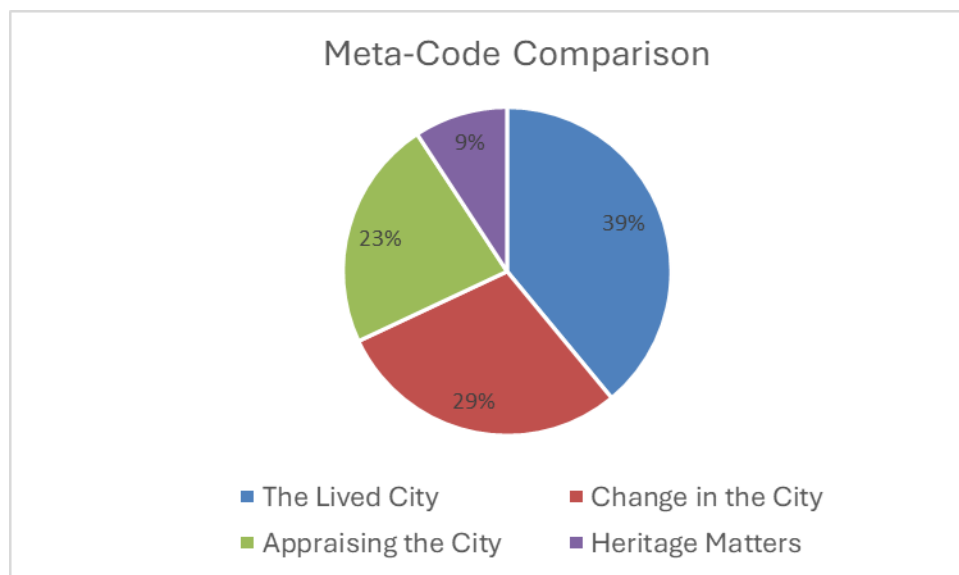


Figure 65 - Comparison of main narrative themes (meta-codes), expressed as a percentage of total coded references, once positional data has been removed.

Overall, the data certainly support this, especially when a values-based categorization is superimposed upon the data. Applying this interpretive filter in conjunction with the well-defined category differentiation illustrated in the above figure, there is a very strong indication that the communal or social values are a critical way in which the participants engage with the tangible and intangible aspects of Valletta's heritage. This assertion is clarified when the themes from the data chapters are categorized in light of the key themes identified in the literature in Chapter 2. In this context, the *Lived City*, the largest category of textual responses, helps to emphasize

this. It demonstrates that significance is entwined with a lived experience of the city, built on memory, informing identity, and connecting communities, fundamental elements of the social value of heritage as defined in Chapter 2. *Appraising the City*, the third largest data category, documented the sensory realm of participant interaction, from how it made them feel, to notions of beauty, and how the city is perceived internally and externally. Broadly contributing to the construction of a Valletta sense of place, these themes document the intangible links that are formative to the creation of the social value of heritage. *Change in the City*, with its prominent themes of gentrification and community degradation, is best described as presenting a set of themes that represent the outcomes of heritage values in conflict. Here we can see the interaction of cause and effect, where valorising the economic value of heritage marginalizes the social values that communities derive from the city. *Heritage Matters*, provided insight into how participants engage with ideas of conservation, planning and changes to the urban fabric. It was not however limited to observations on authenticity or visual appropriateness, with the *Is-Suq Tal-Belt* providing a particularly sobering reminder that maintaining the ‘outward’ aspects of a building but erasing its social relevance adversely affects how it is valued and deemed significant.

What can we conclude from this macro-perspective, and what does it contribute to the research objectives? Fundamentally, this thesis’ chief line of inquiry sets out to re-evaluate heritage significance in Valletta, by demonstrating that people might value the city in ways which are out of step with how heritage is being defined, managed or used in the local context. This is not heritage as prescribed by local policy or practice; rather it seeks to understand heritage significance as defined at a grassroots level, the idea of “heritage from below” (Robertson 2012, 1). By examining the results in a top-down, comparative way it is possible to get a holistic sense of not only the primary outcomes of the data analysis, but by referring back to the detail of the relevant data chapters, it is also possible to define and understand their relationships to one another. Whilst the above analysis does begin to address the research aim, by specifically defining how social values of heritage are the framework which best captures and characterizes the results, to understand the ramifications of these outcomes, they need to be contextualized in the broader themes identified and explored in the intellectual framework.

Considering gentrification, heritage values and the uses of heritage

It has changed so much. It has become so commercialized, and it is no longer restricted to just Republic Street or Merchant Street. These used to be the main areas, now it's the whole of the city. Guesthouses now appear everywhere, shops everywhere and lots of restaurants all over the city, be it by the sea or on the periphery. The city really has changed (MGR2).

As the meta-code comparison in the opening section illustrates, *Change in the City* is one of the primary categories of thematic data that emerged from the data analysis. That the gentrification of Valletta has cast a long shadow over much of this thesis, was not unexpected. This reflects back on my own 'position' as a researcher, but also as an insider, where the impetus to embark on this research stems from my own experiences of the very same processes of change. This sentiment is poignantly captured in the above excerpt from one of the interview transcripts. The changing face of the city was always likely to be referenced by most, if not all, of the participants to some degree or another. As the capital, Valletta is symbolic and representative of a nationwide concern with the degradation of the quality of the urban landscape and the environment of the Maltese Islands as a whole. Had roles been reversed, and had I been on the other side of the microphone, my interview would have followed a similar content trajectory. As an insider, *Belti* or not, I know these to be issues that truly trouble residents and non-residents alike.

So, what have we learnt about this process of change and how it interacts with heritage values? The emphasis in the data on these changes, be they physical, social, or economic, raises some fundamental questions regarding the 'use' of heritage in the context of Valletta, and how heritage values have, or conversely have not, informed and guided this 'use'. The subtext to the research aim hypothesized that in the context of Valletta, certain heritage values are given more prominence than others. This is a problematic issue that was explored in the literature review, where I suggested that new orientations in heritage scholarship and practice offered not only a critical review, but also alternative perspectives which address this imbalance in heritage valorisation.

The emphasis on specific heritage values needs to be understood as part of an historical process and characterized by two different, yet sequential, periods of change. The first of these periods can, broadly speaking, be understood as the early phase of regeneration where the focus of attention is on conservation of the urban fabric. This first phase of change then enables and contributes to the later phase, gentrification, which is more disruptive. The early phase is

justifiable, and not initially problematic. Chapter 2 outlined how throughout its development, managing heritage in a local, Maltese context has historically been linked to the practices of conservation, and later urban development, where the protection and restoration of the historic fabric was the primary consideration, a trajectory that is not uncommon. With the Structure Plan (1990) as a starting point, and progressing through time to the local plans for the harbour area (Planning Authority 2002), the focus was firmly on the conservation of the historic fabric. This was very much out of necessity, a reality that surfaced in the data under the theme of 'Abandonment' in Chapter 4, where participants recalled Valletta as a crumbling ghost-town. Local conceptualizations of heritage developed over time. The Cultural Heritage Act of 2002 was a watershed moment for Maltese cultural heritage, not simply because it professionalized practice in clear terms, but because it broadened discourse and definitions of heritage value. The Strategy for Valletta (Government of Malta 2016, 26) demonstrates the local impact of this policy, and although it does stress the importance and vulnerability of the city's World Heritage Site status, it also actively advocates for the values which "may appear intangible and transient". There exists the intention therefore, in the local context, to define heritage values broadly, beyond the concern with a "monument philosophy" (Pace and Cutajar 2001, 205), to consider culturally defined values.

It is here however where the problem arises, a situation which is well documented in the results chapters, and what I would describe as characteristic of the later phase of the rehabilitation project: the Valletta of the present day. Though the extensive regeneration program has positively impacted Valletta in some respects, through the pedestrianization of roads or the restoration of key buildings and historic structures like the bastions, all of which were favourably commented upon during the interviews, it has come at a cost. This cost is an inherently complex issue, reckoned in financial and social terms, acting as a subtext that underlies many of the themes presented in the results chapters. Its presence is at times explicit and quantifiable, as evidenced in rising rent costs and other quality of life metrics. Other times it is implicit and seen as contributing to the erosion of a Valletta sense of place, the degradation of community identity, and the raft of social values that, as the previous section argued, are a vital component of heritage significance in the city.

This indicates that there is indeed a disconnect between what is being advocated for in local strategy and policy, and what actually is implemented in reality. This might seem somewhat self-evident to local residents, those who live through and experience these processes first hand. This again links back to my own connection to the subject matter, and why the thesis aim and approaches have been constructed in the way they have, a reminder of my

vested interest. Certainly, there are many dimensions and dynamics at play in urban renewal. However, the particular focus here are the implications relevant to the valorisation of heritage. I would argue that this later phase of renewal and regeneration, which moved beyond conservation of urban fabric to bring 'life' back to the city, is where the marginalization of certain heritage values occurs.

To contextualize this idea of value marginalization, it is useful to position these localized processes into the broader scope of heritage scholarship, in particular the observational critiques posited by the idea of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). A key idea proposed by the critique, argues that AHD is likely to focus on select, often elite, elements of heritage, at the expense of other values. For Smith (2006, 36) this represents an intentional maintenance of hegemonic relationships be it by the state, the practitioners, or other actors. This is a useful way of interpreting how heritage is 'used' in the context of a gentrified Valletta. There is however a caveat to this. Whilst I agree that heritage values are being operationalized in a hegemonic relationship, it is not simply the case of one set of heritage values being given more importance than others (though that is also true). Rather, I think the situation is more correctly expressed as pertaining to the process of heritage commodification, where heritage values are promoted, not because of what they signify, but because of what they enable.

This phenomenon in the context of Valletta can, I would argue, be squarely attributed to those deliberate policies that sought to capitalize on its cultural cache, to mine the city's rich heritage in order to diversify the island's tourism product. Though this is a process which dates back to the 1990s (Ebejer and Tunbridge 2020, 4), it remains a vital part of current policy, where heritage has a functional role, to quote the recent national tourism policy document, "... as an integral component of the Malta Brand" (Government of Malta 2021, 44). Heritage is therefore operationalized for its economic benefits, which in this scenario means that whatever the values a place may possess to make it significant somehow - be they historic, social, or aesthetic - ultimately come to service economic value. As described in Chapter 2, heritage value-based systems have evolved over time, with each iteration presenting revised and reconceptualized categories (see de La Tore and Mason 2002). The economic value of heritage features in many of these schemas. It is certainly an important consideration, particularly in the context of conservation practice, which operates in an environment where decision making is bound by market forces and other criteria, and where justification for conservation can be measured on a cost-benefit analysis scale (see Allison et al. 1996). Mason makes a convincing argument that fully understanding the fundamentals of economics can contribute positively to heritage

management and practice, whilst astutely noting that it is often economic value that motivates societies to promote conservation in the first place (Mason 2008, 309).

This real-world observation that heritage has intrinsic economic value and that it can contribute ideas to the management process is not what is being questioned here. Rather, it is how this commodification of heritage has become authoritative, where discourse on value is bound to its benefits to tourism, at the expense of the complex value assessments that contribute to significance. As Smith (2006, 73) observes:

The intricacy of the web of associations and values that can overlay any heritage site, object or place is often not only obscured not only by the nature of the AHD, but also specifically by the dismissal of heritage of performativity and ‘experience’ as a touristic commodity.

In the context of Valletta, I would argue that tourism-driven gentrification does more than simply ‘dismiss’ other values; rather I would agree with Pace (2007, 732), who in considering the impact of policy in a broader Maltese context, noted that this increasingly close alignment of heritage and tourism has a transformative effect on heritage, imbuing it with a sense of ‘otherness’, of belonging not to the public but to the ‘authorities’. Part of this process, that functions to disconnect the public from their heritage, is this transformation of values that can occur in the context of heritage tourism; as Mason (2008) notes: “[t]ourism development... promotes cultural values but in the process converts them into economic values” (Mason 2008, 309).

Conceptualizing regeneration through the lens of value assessment and attribution serves two purposes. Firstly, it creates a common framework, so that complex processes of socio-economic change can be understood in relation to personally held, people-centred notions of value and significance. Secondly, it positions gentrification in stark contrast to the social values defined significance that was so prevalent in the participant responses, as the next section expands on.

Social values, sense of place, and community: Valletta’s ‘unofficial’ heritage of the present.

But if you go down there on a Friday night, on a full moon, over Grand Harbour and listen to the, you know, not too great jazz, but it’s just the whole ambience is so wonderful. And to me it’s just so Valletta (LT2).

So far, I have argued that the processes of renewal and regeneration have created and maintained a form of AHD by proxy: commodification of heritage exploits the full range of heritage values, to single-mindedly focus on the economic value of heritage. This discussion is given prominence because it serves two vital purposes in terms of the overall aim of this thesis. Firstly, it describes, in value-based terms, the fundamental, almost existential problem Valletta has been facing for the last decade or more: a not unfamiliar, complex array of issues often associated with the 'tourist-historic city' (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990). Secondly, and I would argue most importantly, it validates the impetus behind the primary research aim of this thesis in presenting an alternative heritage narrative, and in doing so giving due importance to a wider range of values. This alternative narrative of the heritage that Valletta deserves, is one that is more representative of the complex associations, attachments, and values so evident in the data. This is not based solely on the author's prerogative, a bias I have made no attempt to conceal. Rather, it is supported by the data themselves, which as the opening section of this chapter illustrated in no uncertain terms, demonstrated how prevalent social values featured in the data, which at 62% of the total³⁷ of the coded textual references makes for a compelling argument.

Valletta's regeneration has been spearheaded and implemented in a 'top-down' framework, where government entities selectively emphasized certain heritage attributes. The social value of heritage however cannot be accessed and understood under this sort of framework, because the very people who define and create these values are excluded from the process; rather their role is that of passive spectators. The decision to configure the primary aim of this thesis to specifically approach heritage from a people-centred perspective, was motivated by a desire to comply with the ethical principles of the Faro Convention (2005) which decrees that participation processes of heritage is a human right. Social values of heritage are, by their very definition, people-centred, encompassing the wide array of attachments to places that individuals or communities created and maintained. Necessarily broad in scope, as a concept it encompasses all the ways in which urban environments sustain and underpin identity, distinctiveness, and belonging, and in doing so accommodates forms of heritage-making practices such as memory, oral history and cultural practices amongst others (Jones and Leech 2015, 6). Importantly, social values exist independently from the formal, historic, and

³⁷ If one were to calculate this percentage to include reference counts which include the geographical data presented in Chapter 6, the percentage would decrease to 44%. This drop is based on the total count decreasing from 1687 to 1027 once you remove the references to individual places and streets. It is felt that these are not comparable to text based thematic counts.

aesthetic values attributed to heritage places (English Heritage 2008, 31) which conventional notions of significance so often default to.

The Lived City meta-code described the complex ways in which the particularities of Valletta are the basis for a complex set of identities. These are mostly manifest in multi-generational residents, who described the highly localized nature of identity in the city, which adapts in scale depending on the context of the situation. Valletta identity is therefore at once unifying and cohesive when looking outwards, such as when the local football club is playing, yet internally fragmentary and bound to micro-communities and parishes when describing intra-city relations. Memory is a vector that unifies all respondents, whatever their residential relationship to the city, and is one of the largest categories of data catalogued in the results chapters. Memory can nurture belonging, forge attachments to place, and generate the emotive or affective attributes of social value. The data provided many examples of this, from personal memories of childhood or school, to narratives that read like family biographies of place, maintaining deeply-felt historic connections to the city.

The *City Impressions* meta-theme demonstrates social value from a different angle, through the sensorial and experiential dimension. The epigraph to this section is an example of this in the data, where a participant juxtaposes music and the city to capture how Valletta ‘feels’ to them. This construct relates to ‘place’ from the perspective of how it is experienced, how it contributes to creating a ‘sense of place’. This recalls the paradigm shift, when the Burra Charter (2013 [1979]) introduced the idea of the ‘cultural significance of place’, as a way of countering normative, western ideas of heritage value attribution, an egalitarian approach that put social and spiritual values on an equal footing with more conventional criteria (Jones and Leech 2015, 9). Sense of place and social value are difficult concepts to separate, with Convery et al. (2012, 5) noting that sense of place is an “overarching concept which subsumes other concepts describing the relationships between human beings and spatial settings”. In the context of heritage value, this relationship is defined by the way sense of place is itself a social value. Sense of place was a prominent theme in the data, perhaps facilitated by the methodological approach which literally situated the participant in the context of the subject matter. These participant constructions referenced the city’s history, its topography, its urban architecture both grand and mundane. Social values are entwined with the ‘local distinctiveness’ of an area, much like in the epigraph above, because it makes people feel like they belong. This sense of belonging is partly attributable to the fact that it is familiar to them, which as discussed in Chapter 2, is a familiarity that is based on everyday, local details and places (Clifford and King 1993, 11). Local distinctiveness and how it relates to the creation of sense of place is well represented in Chapter

6, which detailed the physical elements of the city that become reference points during the interviews. These are intrinsically 'Valletta' places, and range from smart, centrally located venues like Cordina Café, to the smaller, community-centric local places, like Bert's Café on the tail-end of Merchant Street, Tik's Bar or the hive of small, family run grocers like Uptown Mini Market (see Chapter 6). Beyond defined locations, the 'everyday' interaction of people with the city is also documented, with participants expressing the joy or interest they derive from specific details, be they architectural features, religious niches or random ephemera. Sense of place is not defined solely on the physicality of the city; rather there is a strong experiential dimension, expressed in the form of emotions or sensation. Other data categories, *Aesthetics & Emotional Responses* for example, illustrate the specific affective responses to pleasing or displeasing visual stimuli and a range of emotional states.

These attachments to place often resonated with my own story, with participants often taking routes or selecting sites and places that I too would single out as being important, somehow reflecting my ideas about attachment, identity, and those often-ineffable qualities that inform a sense of place. I was at times surprised by places or details I had missed, or micro-histories of a place I was not familiar with. In truth, it was a vivid reminder that though being a resident myself, my personal history with the city is relatively recent. Interviews with multi-generational residents, *Beltin*, stood in stark contrast to my experiences. Their intimate knowledge of the city added a coherent time-depth to the data, full of rich biographical information that clearly illustrated the connections of people to place. It was in the connection of people to other people, the foundations of community, that raised some unexpected insights into how heritage is conceptualized by residents.

Community engagement with, and participation in, the process of heritage making, is a well-established principle in heritage practice. Research into the social values of heritage, is by its very definition, research into the very same community that holds those values. Enfranchising the community into the processes of heritage, valorises locally held notions of significance, thus recognizing that heritage expertise is something all possess to some degree or another (see Schofield 2014b). The Faro Convention, as noted in the literature survey, introduces the concept of 'heritage community' to emphasize the collective nature of heritage valuation and transmission. Community, in the abstract, came to be a ubiquitous feature of the results, a lens by which to gauge the impact of change. Considering these data from a different perspective and moving on from focusing on what has been 'lost', it can be interpreted as a map of what the heritage communities value. On the one hand it is of course the changing streetscapes, where the familiar is being replaced, the erosion of a communally-constructed sense of place, the

deterioration of quality of life in broad terms. This however alluded to something more fundamental. In examining relationships between loss and value, and how these relate to which aspects of community life appeared in the data, it was clear that the communally-held social values are derived from the community itself; a case of the heritage of a ‘heritage community’ being self-referential, echoing the eponymous way they refer to themselves as *Beltin*. This blurs the distinction of heritage place and heritage community. Valletta, the historic urban entity, and its multi-generational residents, from their point of view, are inseparable.

In and of themselves, the social values of heritage offer an alternative to normative valuations of the city. If gentrification is reductive, then searching for social value in Valletta is expansive and inclusive, and as a result more representational of the myriad ways in which historic environments are appreciated and importantly lived. Though this research was not designed as an in-depth, comparative study of how heritage professionals conceptualize value in the Maltese context, their input was solicited because it helps to emphasize the different ways in which the ‘expert’ and the ‘non-expert’ might address similar places, as was demonstrated in the *Heritage Matters* section of Chapter 6. By accepting that everybody is a heritage expert in some way (Schofield 2014b) we discover that, as Clifford has observed, “[l]ocal people may well choose to describe their place quite differently, in ways that confound or complement the findings of experts” (Clifford 2010, 30).

Embracing an approach to heritage values that is expansive and inclusive therefore empowers and enfranchises. Providing a platform for the everyday, hidden, and ‘unofficial’ importantly also highlights the inadequacies of limiting heritage definitions. Though articulated differently, I had a sense that many of the interviewees understood that this was the underlying spirit of the project, and that they were grateful for the platform. In doing so, it enabled them to perhaps ponder and reaffirm their connection to Valletta, as an exercise of bolstering their ontological security (Grenville 2007, 2015; after Giddens 1991). In the face of the challenges posed by the forces of gentrification, it allows for a modicum of reasserting control on their construction of place. This is consistent with the observation that the social values that places may hold sometimes only surface when they are threatened (English Heritage 2008, 32).

Questioning Convention: The problematic position of World Heritage

Status

Obviously, I don't mind that Valletta has the UNESCO status and all that, but I really don't want it to turn into – I am not sure which term to use – but a bit of a theme park in a way

which then becomes more, I don't know, sterile in a way, and not kind of liveable kind of (MGR5).

Contesting conventional ideas of what constitutes 'heritage' and how values are attributed within a normative framework, has been a poorly disguised subtext underscoring the entire arc of this project, from the thesis aim to the methods implemented to address it. The thesis' title, though a playful nod to the idea of contestation, is not motivated by whimsy or some misguided attempt to be different for the sheer sake of it. Rather, it stems from my own frustration with what I considered the limited and reactionary discourse surrounding heritage in Maltese professional and public sphere. Though an 'insider' in terms of residence status, I was and remain, very much an outsider with regards to the practice of heritage in Malta, and therefore my observations are based on the personal experience of how heritage is managed, contested and discussed in the public realm. With regards to Valletta, these notions originate around the heritage 'hotspots', or those specific issues arising out of new interventions in the city. These unsurprisingly also featured in the data, with particular reference to Is-Suq Tal-Belt (the covered market) and the controversy around the re-imagining of City Gate and the adaptive reuse of the Royal Opera House.

Though these present two different interventions to Valletta's historic fabric, there seemed to be a palpable and underlying anxiety about the impact on the city's World Heritage Site status. Figure 66 is a clear example of this preoccupation, as expressed in a letter published in the Times of Malta in 2014. Though it obviously reflects genuine concern for the preservation of Valletta's heritage, it struck me as focusing on a limited set of places and heritage values. This realization is of course framed in the context of the critical heritage discourse I was increasingly exposed to, which warned against limited definitions of heritage that focused only on grand and important architecture, as discussed in Chapter 2. Specifically, it made me realize that this popular concern with the 'big projects' in the city - such as City Gate for example - failed to acknowledge the widespread changes which were slowly, one new business, hotel or bar at time, having a deeply felt impact on the broader heritage landscape. As the results chapters and the preceding sections have discussed, heritage can be equally conceptualized, experienced, and valued by people in ways which are rarely attached to those elements of the historic fabric which link directly to the criteria associated with, and defined by, its WHS status.

This thesis' research aim is not an investigation into the relevance, problematic or not, of WHS status. However, as an accolade, I felt it has been assigned far too much importance in Maltese official vision or strategy documents, at the expense of the ordinary, everyday heritage-making practices of residents and visitors. In particular, it was the realization that the State Party

Jeopardising Valletta's Unesco heritage status

The unsightly metal structure on the site of the old Opera House has not only scarred our unique baroque capital, but has also jeopardised Valletta's status as a Unesco heritage site. Valletta will still be considered as a city of outstanding universal...

Opinion

24 February 2014 | Joseph Muscat, Attard | 16

1 min read



Figure 66 - Local concerns over Valletta's World Heritage Status in the Times of Malta Editorial in 2014
(Source: <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/Jeopardising-Valletta-s-Unesco-heritage-status.508234>)

continued to adopt a selective and limited reading of World Heritage values and significance, one that did not reflect the broader vision and scope that the updated World Heritage Convention (WHC) now embodies, as described in Chapter 2 of this thesis. There is an important caveat that must be acknowledged here. As the literature survey demonstrates, contemporary approaches to heritage that foster inclusion of the community have made substantial inroads locally, featuring both in institutional documents and in policy proposals.

This anxiety concerning the status of Valletta's continued inscription as a WHS is not simply a localized reaction to change, however. In 2009, predating the period of accelerated gentrification in the city, the World Heritage Committee's decision on Valletta highlighted the potential impact of new development, particularly with regards to height control, requesting the State Party to carry out a detailed 'views and vistas analysis' to be able to better protect the skyline configuration of the site, coupled with the designation of a buffer zone for the property (UNESCO 2009). As of 2023, this buffer zone is yet to be delineated. In fact, the most recent

UNESCO publication, whilst recognizing efforts to restore state-owned properties in the city, emphasizes the increasing urgency of fulfilling these management requirements, calling on the State Party to submit the required documentation with the addition of a detailed management plan (UNESCO 2023). The management plan was originally requested in 2017, and this delay in satisfying the deliverable commitments of the State Party to UNESCO has reignited the concern over Valletta's status in the local press (see Cummings 2023; The Malta Independent 2023)³⁸.

To explore the relevance of this to this research, it is worth considering how UNESCO or its WHS status features in the data, and how this relates to the organization's vision for World Heritage Sites. These data can be categorized into two distinct strands, the first of which are deliberate and direct references to the status itself, whilst the second are the associative data, or those themes that, perhaps unbeknownst to the participant, intersect with current UNESCO principles. Direct references to Valletta's inscription on the list did not factor into the data in a meaningful way, appearing in only four of the 19 transcripts, often as a side note or in response to direct elicitation on my part. The responses, though few, are interesting in that they reveal different perceptions of what the status embodies and what its maintenance entails. However, if you move beyond direct reference to the status in the interview transcripts, there are many occurrences of user responses echoing not only the re-imagined remit of the Convention but also displaying a distinct synchronicity with the WHC's own concerns with the city's development trajectory.

Both strands are worth exploring briefly, as collectively they document the tension between intent and implementation of broad heritage frameworks, and how these are perceived from the perspective of those who participated in this research. The first of these strands are the direct references to UNESCO as an organization or WHS status itself, and, in the main, were restricted to those participants who engage with the city in their professional capacity. This is likely due to the fact that management and retention of this status problematizes heritage practices, as it places an external layer of control on all projects. As one participant commented on the impact of these on development in the city, where failure to follow procedure "will create havoc with UNESCO" (NRL2). When you consider the dramatic changes that overzealous development has wrought on other towns in Malta, I would suggest that the city's inscription was very timely indeed, a reality attested by this recollection by a participant:

³⁸ According to Dr A. Pace, director of the Malta World Heritage Nomination Project, the management plan will be released for public consultation in December 2023 (Pace 2023).

...[I]n the 1980s so few people had a sense of conservation, and I remember the first people applying to demolish buildings in Valletta to build flats.so, we are lucky that it exists today, and it didn't have the same fate as Sliema (LT7).

Other observations made by the same participant were more cynical with regards to the meaning and value of possessing WHS:

I mean the World Heritage status is just a title. I think the Maltese are obsessed with titles, and they just use it as necessary. They'll use it to get more tourists, they'll use it if there is a project that they want to shoot down.... (LT7).

There is much to unpack in the above quote, from the internal jibe at the Maltese 'character', to allegations of WHS status being 'weaponized' strategically to derail projects. However, in terms of its relevance to the aim of this thesis, it does highlight the issue of World Heritage's potential to contribute to the commodification of heritage, echoing Harrison's (2013) assessment of it serving as a recognizable, and thus marketable, metric which is internationally respected. This is a particular and pointed observation in the context of a city where regeneration discourse and implementation are often inseparable from the objectives set by the tourism industry. The commodification of heritage has been discussed at length in heritage literature as we have seen. It was a key argument in the 'heritage debate' in the UK in the 1980s (see Hewison 1987; Wright 1985) where, as a process, it was considered complicit in the fabrication of sanitized, inauthentic pasts. This very concern was raised by the only non-heritage professional or architect to comment on Valletta's UNESCO status and was chosen as an appropriate epigraph to this section.

This rather insightful quote (see above), made by a multi-generational resident, not only raises the issues of 'Disneyfication' of the city, but importantly draws attention to a key aspect of the issue, the impact of commodification on that most vital of city qualities, that of 'liveability'. The interviewee appears neutral in his disposition to Valletta's inscription yet conditions his response by being upfront about his concern that inscription contributes to degrading those aspects of city life – community, sense of place, identity, general well-being – that engender a sense of liveability. It is important to note that the participant is not suggesting that WHS status is the root cause of this. Rather, it is more about wanting to emphasize that they believe that other values must not be overlooked in the process. I would suggest that this interpretation is symptomatic of WHS status being understood as pertaining simply to the grander aspects of the city, perhaps a function of how inscription has been presented in local discourse and

documentation. Indeed, as noted earlier, this had a bearing on my own motivation to embark on this research in the first place.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2 -and briefly this very chapter- the WHC has incorporated many new ideas and principles since its inception in 1972. It is at this juncture the second strand of data, the associative data, adds a new interpretive dimension. Unlike the direct references above, which did explicitly feature in the results, these data have been presented already in chapters that preceded this discussion. Issues surrounding community, and the social values derived from communal belonging and identity, are a key finding of the results for example. This is congruent with how community focused practices and inclusion are now one of the central strategic pillars of the WHC. However, there are also very specific, tangible intersections that appear in the data, where UNESCO's own concerns regarding the impact of development on Valletta's fabric align precisely with the observations of the project participants. Chapter 6 provides a clear example of this, in the form of the codes for *Views* and *Roofs*, where the participants highlight the degradation of views, be they within the city itself or looking out towards the heavily developed areas across the harbour. Alterations at roof level in the city is similarly perceived as negatively impacting the lived experience, whilst also degrading the visual aesthetic of Valletta. Here is a case of the agenda of the WHC, which has long requested the State Party to actively engage with and mitigate against these changes, mirroring community concerns.

This brings us back to the important point made by the participant regarding 'liveability,' in the quote that prefaces this section. It is an important reminder of a city being more than a collection of historic walls, buildings and monuments, but a place where people live; conservation in an urban context must equally relate to living societies (Bandarin 2015, 14). UNESCO's 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) was introduced in Chapter 2 as indicative of the impact of new orientations of heritage, a framework that sought to redefine how heritage in urban settings is conceived of and managed. This is a holistic vision for managing heritage in an urban setting, which encompasses the physicality of cityscapes and their natural elements but also considers the intangible values associated with authenticity and sense of place (Rodwell 2008, 101). As Smith notes, it moves the discussion away from simply being about the morphology of the city, to how it is experienced (Smith 2015, 222).

Comparing these principles with the primary data outcomes of this thesis reveals a substantial degree of synchronicity between them and the framework and ideas underpinning this offering from UNESCO. There also are indications that these ideas have percolated into local

heritage discourse and practice, perhaps reflecting the broader definitions of heritage now enshrined in law by the 2002 Cultural Heritage Act. An example this is excerpt from 'A Strategy for Valletta' (2016) which recognizes a broad spectrum of management issues, but positions future Valletta in terms of sustainability and recognizes the importance of it being a living city:

To this end Valletta needs to reconcile the conservation and maintenance of its historic fabric with the residential, cultural, administrative, Governmental and commercial roles to transform itself into a truly sustainable and living city (Malta Planning Authority 2016, 6).

Though UNESCO's HUL recommendation presents a compelling, practical framework, which be complementary to sites with WHS status, its implementation needs to be localized. Pendlebury et al. (2009, 357), in warning, make the following observation that the HUL framework:

[W]ill inevitably be part of a universalising approach to heritage which denies space to, or at least exists in competition with, locally produced notions of heritage, authenticity and sense of place.

Because a HUL approach has not been implemented in the Maltese context, this outcome is of course uncertain and at this stage a matter of conjecture. However, should it reflect reality it would certainly be counterproductive. Locally produced notions of significance are already marginalized as it is, though encouragingly these issues are increasingly a feature of local heritage discourse.

Ultimately at this juncture, the 'defying convention' quip that is coded into the thesis title acquires multiples layers of meaning. From one perspective, I would suggest that defiance arises from a desire to champion grassroots assessments of heritage value. Here the path forward is forged and informed by - yet independent of - international frameworks. This is suggested in order to mitigate against the possibility of homogenising what should be an approach to heritage that focuses on local, people-centred valuations of heritage places. Additionally, however, I must acknowledge a secondary reading of 'defying convention'. Here it is those national instruments, the agencies and government bodies responsible with administering all aspects of heritage that are the agents of 'defiance', in that they defy the very conventions they have committed to by failing to fully engage with the evolving spirit of the World Heritage Convention. I would argue that these contemporary principles and guidelines – the HUL being a prime candidate - correctly implemented and managed, could contribute to bridging the gap between the national and the local. As the data attests to, a lot of work is yet to be done.

Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the contextual, large-scale outcomes of the data analysis, by relating the data presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 back to the major themes outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2. The opening section of this chapter summarizes the results, by stripping the complexity of the coded data structures presented in the data chapters, to look at how the main themes, or meta-codes, relate to each other comparatively. What emerges from this reductive exercise, is a series of simplified illustrations, culled from 15hrs and 85,000 words of interview text, that clearly demonstrate how central the social values of heritage are when people-centred approaches to the heritage of Valletta are employed. Having established the general trends in the data, the chapter then examines the implications of these trends. The *Change in the City* meta-code, which primarily captured themes of change and impact wrought by gentrification, provided a useful example of ‘uses’ of heritage. I argue that in the context of Valletta, the favouring of historic and aesthetic heritage values is not solely a function of selectivity. Rather I suggest that these values are co-opted to service the economic value of heritage, and how this can be considered an instance of authorized heritage discourse. As a counterpoint to the discussion on commercialization, this chapter also examines in more detail the primary outcomes of this research. The section examines how the social values of heritage characterize the data, with specific reference to the relationship of social value to participant constructions of sense of place, and how this is significant to the participants. With community being at the centre of contemporary approaches to heritage, the section also explores how ‘community’ itself is part of the intangible fabric of social value. The final section considers some of the ramifications of World Heritage Site status in the context of Valletta, and its enduring influence on discourse and practice. Though the accolade is still accorded prominence locally, the data analysis indicates that, outside the professional sphere, maintenance of WHS status is not prioritized at a grass-roots level. This however is attributable to a limited reading and promotion of WHS values, as the data clearly indicates an alignment between key grassroots concerns and the expanded remit of the WHC, which has evolved over the years to be more amenable to community inclusion in heritage practice. On this basis, I argue that local implementations of universalizing approaches to historic urban environments must account for locally held ideas about value or significance.

The chapter that follows concludes this thesis with a consideration of the contextual impact of focusing on the social values of heritage and its relevance to the subject area, a critical reflection on the methods used, and finally what future research and collaboration the outcomes of this thesis could potentially enable.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Where do new approaches take us?

Chapter introduction

Following the discussion of the implications of this research to broader heritage themes in the local context, this final chapter brings this thesis to conclusion, doing so in three distinct sections. The first of these looks specifically at the immediate relevance of this research and its applicability to Valletta and why research into people-centred heritage values, specifically social values, is especially timely in 2023. The section that follows represents a critical, post-project evaluation of some of the constraints or limitations encountered during the whole arc of the project. This is followed by a brief section that reflects on the contribution to Heritage Studies this research achieves and what role the methodology plays in that contribution. The final section looks to the future, proposing a series of recommendations and avenues for potential research stemming directly from the insights that this thesis provides. The chapter, and indeed the thesis, is concluded with a final summary of the original contributions to knowledge this research delivers.

Why people-centred approaches are relevant right now

As a prelude to introducing Valletta in Chapter 1 of this thesis, special attention was paid to the issue of over-development and tourism in the Maltese Islands in general. The purpose was to give the reader a sense of the challenges and the threats to urban heritage, and the historical circumstances in which they arose. Beyond providing context, however, it also imbues the research aim with an immediate sense of purpose, where social values are documented within the broader framework of a city in transition. Since the project's inception, the context has shifted; if anything, the challenges to tangible and intangible heritage in Valletta have become more acute.

In 1977 when tourism on the Maltese Islands was, as an industry, still in its infancy, Boissevain made an assessment of its overall impact from an economic and cultural perspective which he concluded provided a positive overall contribution (Boissevain 1977, 535). However, he also issued a startlingly prescient warning, that if tourism development was left unchecked "...it is possible that the conception of development, of progress, of the quality of life will continue to evolve in ways which make continued expansion of tourism contradictory to these notions." (Boissevain 1977, 536). This warning from over four decades ago has lost none of its relevance. A recent report commissioned by the Malta Hotel and Restaurant Association

suggests that for current tourism carrying capacity to be met, Malta will need to attract 4.7 million tourists annually (Sansone 2022b), 2 million more than the current record (see Chapter 1). If this is the vision that some authorities have for Malta in coming years, then it is logical to surmise that vectors of change, and the pressure they place on urban heritage, will be exponentially augmented.

The impact of change in the city, as apparent both in the results and discussion chapters, is not a recently discovered phenomenon; rather it exists within a broader concern of the social, economic, and environmental degradation of the Maltese Islands. Regeneration in Valletta was born of a well-intentioned program of improvements to breathe life into a city that had been in decline for many decades. As the data provided in this thesis have clearly demonstrated, ultimately, the implementation of the regeneration and renewal programs has followed a different path, where business interests have been given primacy. As argued in the previous chapter, in the context of value-based assessments of historic environments, this represents a form of value marginalisation motivated by hegemonic interest, with the sole purpose of sustaining economic growth.

Though this research promotes the idea of focusing on alternative perspectives, it also aligns itself with local heritage discourse, which is increasingly concerned with the implications of change in Valletta. A decade or so after the renewal and regeneration programs initiated the process of change in the early 2000s (Fabri 2016, 20), discourse shifted beyond concerns for the WHS, to begin asking the same genre of questions that this thesis has posited. An examination of the issues by local academics and professionals recognized the imbalance between these authorized and non-authorized perspectives, well expressed in the quotation below taken from a paper presented at a 'Valletta: Beyond 2020' seminar in 2016:

Could it be that we have tackled the Valletta problem the wrong way? Were the decisions on Valletta taken without consultation with its residents? Does this new Valletta reflect the ethos of the city? Or is it a superficial dressing to our capital city which does not resonate with the aspirations of its inhabitants? (Zahra 2016).

These intentionally rhetorical statements clearly suggest not only that the implementation of Valletta's regeneration has been derailed, but that residents have been marginalized in the process. The implications of this are well defined in another contribution to the seminar, where Reuben Grima, an academic and resident of the city himself, recalls the historical sieges the city has endured, likening the impact of gentrification to a modern-day siege "of a different kind, which is however no less of a threat to its fabric, its sense of place, and the quality of life of its

residents” (Grima 2016b, 31). These assessments are clearly aligned with the key findings of this thesis, lending weight to the relevance of the research aim. As Valletta continues to attract more tourists, more of the limited urban stock of buildings is given over to boutique hotels, short-let rental flats, restaurants and places of entertainment. Seven years after this conference, no mitigation strategies have been implemented of note, and at the time of writing local media paint a picture of a situation that is, if anything, worsening. In recent months, disruption of the traditional Easter procession in Valletta caused by the inexorable loss of public-space as bars, cafés and restaurants claim more space for external seating, best articulates this. In the Editorial article from *The Times of Malta* (2023) the underlying problem is clearly defined:

Valletta needs to protect the tangible and intangible aspects of its cultural heritage. Historic public spaces are places for social interaction. The interaction of people living or visiting Valletta should help them experience the everyday life of a historic city. Valletta’s popular culture and routines are intangible aspects of our capital’s culture that create a unique spirit or sense of place (Times of Malta 2023).

The former mayor of Valletta, Alexei Dingli, interviewed for the article, was unequivocal as to the underlying causes of the problem described above:

This is simply greed. We are prostituting the city, using it and then discarding it. The professed love for Valletta is hypocritical when such obscenities occur. (Times of Malta 2023)

The results chapters of this thesis document this process in detail, particularly in the *Change in the City* meta-theme in Chapter 4. Put simply, to protect the intangible, the unique spirit, or the sense of the place the editorial alludes to, you must first be able to define it. The results chapters of this thesis have demonstrated that a grass-roots approach that puts the social-values of heritage on equal footing with normative heritage values is a meaningful way of defining and cataloguing the complex parameters that contribute to this sense of place. If the aforementioned report to aggressively expand the tourist market transitions from recommendation to reality, then a social values approach to heritage research and practice is more relevant now than ever. As Grima (2017, 127) succinctly puts it:

Valletta is clearly at a crossroads, and what happens in the next few years will be decisive for the long-term preservation of its values. The current trend is to give priority to speculation and unbridled exploitation of the tourist market over the sustainable management of the values of the city. Unless there is a drastic reordering of those priorities in the near future, the prospects for the future liveability of the city appear grim.

Reflections on method: Insights on limitations

A key, original feature of the research design of this thesis was the methodological approach adopted to answer the main research aim. Though many options were considered, past experience with qualitative, in-situ interviews (de Giorgio 2021) demonstrated that it produced richer people/place interaction data. Research design, however, involves a decision-making process, where choices or constraints, are explicitly applied to streamline the project. These limitations cannot always be planned for, and often only become apparent or come to be identified as the project itself evolves. Those encountered during this project can be categorised into distinct areas, from formulating the research aim to the methodological approach and data analysis.

The first of these limitations was dictated by the nature of the inquiry itself. The boundaries of research limitation can be defined by the previous work in the field, which helps shape and formulate the research aims and objectives. In terms of this thesis, the opposite is the case, where there is a total absence of any defined research into how social values inform heritage significance within the context of Valletta. Whilst this presents an excellent opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship, it did result in an approach that attempted to capture scope at all costs. This was expected however and is reflected in the research aim, which embraced this lack of research boundaries and proposed that heritage values documentation be defined in the widest possible terms. As the results chapters and the discussion chapter have illustrated, the diverse ways of valorising urban heritage from a people-centric perspective provides an alternative to prescribed, expert-led notions of heritage. Rather than a limitation, I would argue that foregrounding this diversity highlights the possibility of future avenues of research into people-centred heritage assessment in the Maltese context.

The selection of participants introduced several limitations. On the basis of the pilot study data analysis, it was decided that the approach would call for a smaller number of participants (19 in total.) As an approach, it sacrificed the number of participants in favour of a more detailed analysis of the interview text. This then was constrained by design, and as the three results chapters have illustrated, it served as a sound basis for the method adopted. A smaller sample size, however, limits the ability to proportionally balance out all demographic characteristics. To get an indicative distribution of responses, the primary concern was to balance the participant group by residential relationship (see Chapter 3). Though the gender composition remained relatively equal, the age distribution heavily favoured the 40-49 age bracket. I would have liked to engage more with younger participant groups, not simply to achieve a better age distribution, but also to have input from participants whose experiences

and impressions of Valletta would be more closely linked to the present-day city, rather than firmly rooted in memory. An attempt to counter this discrepancy was actively pursued, however the two potential interviewees in the 20-29 category who had indicated a willingness to participate, were not able to do so within the stipulated time frame allocated to the final fieldwork phase.

The final category of limitations relates to the data processing phase of the research design. Data for this project can be generalized as being textual, that is relating to the context of the interviews, and spatial data that relate to specific places and participant location. These data were to be analysed thematically and spatially, using two discrete software packages, NVivo and ArcGIS respectively. Research design can often require the tempering of over-ambition, especially in the initial stages. The ArcGIS element of this research design was conceived of when fieldwork was not possible due to the COVID lockdown, before the main body of the interviews had been completed. This allowed for the creation of the model of Valletta, a process that in and of itself allowed me to consider the physicality of space, and how people interact and navigate around an urban environment. The original intent was to translate thematic data onto the model, to understand how certain themes related to the urban environment spatially. As the textual analysis and relevant chapters began to take shape, it became readily apparent that of the two methods envisaged, one would need to take precedence. Primacy was accorded to the textual data because I felt it better represented the participants' contributions and reflected the people-centric approach advocated for. Though ultimately, the mapping of themes was not included in the presentation of the results, the inclusion of location and positional data in the transcript annotation allowed for a detailed consideration of urban fabric, as described in Chapter 6.

Heritage Values in Valletta: Contributions to the field

This research project was conceived of - and ultimately framed by - the work of scholars from a broad spectrum of specialisms and research interests. The research area presented a wonderful, and unusual, scholarly opportunity: A World Heritage Site, that is a functioning, lived-in capital city where little to no contemporary investigation into heritage values had been undertaken. To address this knowledge gap, the primary aim of this thesis was consciously general in scope, drawing on the full range of approaches across the Heritage Studies cannon.

Certainly, particular avenues of research within the broad remit of the thesis aim proved more fruitful than others. These can be divided into two generalized categories, the first of which is contributions to practise, whilst the second would be classified as contributions to ideas

about heritage. The first category is location and audience specific. I set out to demonstrate that people-centred approaches to assessing heritage places – a practise that is well established in the UK and elsewhere – would generate unique perspectives in the context of a living, World Heritage Site. Here the emphasis was on ‘people’, representing an experiment in enfranchisement that builds on existing research and heritage instruments – the Faro Convention for example – that enshrine participation as right. By default, this approach has the additional dimension of World Heritage Status to contend with. This people-centred approach to heritage, highlights the inherent tensions this status embodies; a globalized value that requires localized management, whilst entangled in localized issues and concerns. The second category is more thematic, and centres more on the contribution to heritage concepts and theory. A key tenet espoused in the literature survey is Smith’s (2006) proposition that expertise and expert discourse, or Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), is entwined in the maintenance of hegemonic relationships between practitioners, regulators, and the public. The commercialization of Valletta can be interpreted via this analytical lens yet is problematized by the apparent disconnect between what is advocated for in local heritage discourse and what is implemented. This research provides insight into the difficulties of theorizing about power relations in the context of a World Heritage Site that is gentrifying and transforming. The most rewarding aspect for me personally, is how this research has contributed to further defining ‘sense of place’ – and all that it entails – as central to understanding people/place relationships. The data analysis clearly shows how memory, materials, and emotions contribute to a more complete description of place attachment.

These contributions to knowledge relate directly back to the data collection strategy. In retrospect, the methodological approach selected enabled some serendipitous, unintentional congruences with specific research approaches. Video documentation was originally a means to an end, a way of simplifying the logistics of interviewing on the move whilst keeping track of the interviewee location. From this perspective, this thesis demonstrates the validity of including video in mobile interviews as a reliable, multipurpose tool. However, it is the synergy of the walking, filmed interviews with ideas of ‘new materialities’ and affective heritage that, on reflection, are most surprising. The results chapters, particularly Chapter 5, which presented the different categories of place evaluation, showed that in articulating responses to the city, the affective realm was a crucial part of the vocabulary required to convey how Valletta ‘felt’ to the participants. These were embodied, at times visceral reactions, especially in the context of expressions of belonging or loss. In thinking about the resultant video output, I came to the realization that there was a complex interplay of processes, practices, and things evident here, from the text of the interview, the materiality of the city, and the negotiated movement of the

participant. This, coupled with the freedom the interviewees had to design their own path around Valletta recalled the idea of ‘encounter’, which Waterton and Watson posit as representing the “...energies, realities, and responses of bodies as they move around and interpret places that present pasts...” (Waterton and Watson 2015, 103). It makes for a compelling argument for continued work in the field of affective heritage interpretation.

Recommendations and future possibilities

The nature of new research is that it inevitably also highlights new possibilities, new avenues of inquiry which emerge either tangentially or as a direct result of the particular questions asked and methods adopted, or simply as noted above, out of the constraints of the research itself. On the basis of the outcomes of this thesis, this section will propose changes to future practice and the potential of new research which specifically resonate with the research aim.

A criticism levelled at social values approaches in heritage practice, as noted in the literature survey, is that real-world, meaningful integration into practice is often difficult (Oliver 2017). This, however, is a moot point if public participation is limited, and decision-making remains the exclusive prerogative of the expert, however they may be defined. People-centred assessments of heritage places by default require public participation, or as Tenzer and Schofield (2023) have recently demonstrated, and discussed briefly below, through the analysis of public opinion using existing data sources such as social media. This thesis has advocated for approaches to heritage assessment that at their core, are based on the idea of direct public participation, of *directly* involving people in the process. As noted in Chapter 2, the promotion of public participation in cultural life has become a core value in local discourse and policy. A year after the agency’s inception, a report by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) noted that “[t]he engagement of the Maltese public in heritage matters is still very uneven” (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage 2003, 5).

Though this thesis has advocated for a bottom-up approach, it recognizes that a paradigm shift is required in local heritage practices, which in turn requires that state-level institutions and agencies embrace contemporary approaches and outlooks. The first recommendation is, therefore, the renewed call for the appropriate local authorities to ratify international conventions. This is not a leftfield suggestion, as in Chapter 2 it was noted that the draft National Cultural Policy document in 2021 included the signing and ratification of international conventions as part of its desired optimal outcomes (Government of Malta 2021, 120). This concern for convention ratification is not new either. In the same report from the SCH in 2003 quoted above, the agency made recommendations in its “State of Heritage” annual

report on the importance of ratifying international conventions, on the basis that they carry with them important obligations whilst providing frameworks and guidelines for practitioners and relevant authorities (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage 2003, 9). In light of the outcomes of this thesis, the ratifying of the European Landscape Convention (2000) and the Faro Convention (2005) should be accorded primacy because, at their core, they advocate for a holistic, values-based approach to landscape and heritage, where community participation is embedded at all levels of the process. Enshrining public involvement in all aspects of culture and heritage as a human-right, lends the argument much required weight.

For public participation in the process to be meaningful, it must find applicability in the actual process of heritage making. This thesis has demonstrated the rich, biographical data that can be ascribed to heritage places through people-centred approaches. These social values themed data, though central to the way places are deemed significant from the point of view of the community and other stakeholders, are not actively included in current heritage assessment or practice. The management, planning and protection of the urban environment in Malta are conducted through highly centralized authorities, where the Local Plans are produced to manage all aspects of urban planning including heritage protection. Though it would certainly be unrealistic or over ambitious to propose the de-centralization of statutory institutions, that does not discount other ways of enabling public agency at more localized levels. Local listing, or the concept of community-curated lists of monuments or buildings of significance that currently do not benefit from protection, is one way in which communities contribute to defining the heritage significance of local and everyday places, which either do not meet the classificatory parameters that listing or scheduling at a national level requires, or simply have yet to be nominated or recognized (Historic England 2021). As in the UK, these local lists would provide an alternative and complementary data set to consider when updating local plans or determining the outcome planning applications (Jackson 2014). The production of local lists is also a great outreach opportunity, allowing professionals and the public to work more closely, to redress the currently top-down approach that favours expert opinion over locally held knowledge in the decision-making process. There are positive signs that this sort of approach, if in a limited fashion, is being recognized and applied in the Maltese context. A recent initiative launched this year is the Malta Ship Graffiti Project³⁹ which actively encourages the general public to engage with the project and contribute to the documentation of historic graffiti. This sort of public outreach demonstrates how local knowledge, coupled with clear guidance, can usefully contribute to heritage projects, even on a national scale.

³⁹ <https://maltashipgraffiti.org/>

One of the ‘limitations’ discussed earlier in this chapter related to the nature of operating in an environment where the specific research questions being posited had received scant scholarly attention. Conversely, of course, it means that there is huge scope for further research into social values, sense of place and community constructions of heritage not only within the context of Valletta, but also in the Maltese Islands in general. Social values lend themselves to community engagement, because often what communities find significant is not rarefied or detached from their everyday experiences; rather, as we have seen throughout the thesis results, it is personal, commonplace and familiar. What this means in practical terms is that there exists huge scope in the local context for social values in heritage to be explored, interpreted and with an ultimate view of becoming integrated into local practice. Strategies for this can be borrowed from UK or Australian practice, where a social values approach, and community engagement are well developed and established (see Clark 2019). It is beyond the scope at this junction to make an exhaustive list of approaches and methods; however, some inevitably resonate with this research. In a highly interconnected digital age, gauging public interactions with place does not even require direct contact with the public. Rather it can rely on mining the wealth of information available on social media (Tenzer 2022) or applying innovative data modelling based to questionnaire data (Tenzer and Schofield 2023) and spatializing the results in GIS. A complete map of Valletta was digitized during the course of this research, and integrating these new data capture and modelling techniques offers the opportunity to utilize this model in future research on heritage value in Valletta.

Concluding remarks

This thesis has established that Valletta’s heritage significance, beyond the accepted historic and aesthetic criteria, is defined by the social values residents and stakeholders attribute and derive from its historic places and spaces. Their experiences and memories are embedded in, and shaped by, its buildings and streets, its shops and squares, its bastions and shoreline. These social values inform and maintain local identities, contribute towards individual and communal sense of place, and are foundational to place attachment. This thesis has argued that these values contribute immeasurably to defining heritage significance in the context of Valletta.

Searching for social values within this context is in and of itself is a ‘new approach’, but where this thesis innovates is how these values were elicited and documented. Filmed walking interviews effectively drew on the local knowledge of the participants, by placing them in-situ and giving them the ability to explore these connections to the city on their own terms. Thematic analysis allowed for these connections to be catalogued, interpreted, and presented in a

cohesive and accessible narrative, and in doing so, it foregrounded the contributions of the participants. It is their voices that drive this research.

These social values are contextualized against a backdrop of a city that has rapidly transitioned from a long period of decline, into an increasingly gentrified and popular tourist and nightlife venue. This overarching context of social, economic, and cultural change pervades the responses given and the data captured. As a result, it also shapes the interpretation of the project outcomes, problematizing an approach to heritage that is restricted not only by limited definitions but how heritage is commodified, 'using' historic and aesthetic criteria to hegemonically further economic potential at all costs.

This research can be construed as manifesto-like, where the agenda of championing a people-centred, social values-led approach is framed by principles drawn from almost 40 years of theoretical and practice-led innovation. Valletta truly is at a "crossroads" (Grima 2017), and this research conclusively demonstrates that going forwards, heritage in 'The City' requires and deserves new approaches and new ideas.

Appendix A: Interview documentation

Valletta Research Project, Summer 2021.

Interview Consent Form

- I have read the information sheet for the project and fully understand its content.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the video and audio recorded interview for this research project.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any point.
- I also understand that I may request that data relating to my interview not being included in the thesis or resultant future publications related to this research project.
- I am aware that all personal data collected will be handled, stored and disposed of in accordance with the guidelines established by the University of York's Ethics Framework.

I give consent for the route, video and audio and the resultant transcribed text to be used in the doctoral thesis by the named researcher [Joshua de Giorgio ID Card number 567075M], under the following condition (tick as appropriate):

- I am happy to be identified, by name and title of role, when material from the interview is quoted. **(When selecting this option, the researcher may include still and/or video data captured during the interview)**
- I am happy for material from the interview to be quoted under the condition of anonymity. **(When selecting this option, the researcher will not include any still and/or video data captured during the interview)**

I agree to allow the researcher to use the following interview methods & data:

Map of the interview route

Video Recorded Interview

Audio Recorded Interview

Interviewee Name: _____

Interviewee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Valletta Research Project, Summer 2021.

Participant Information Sheet

Background

The University of York would like to invite you to take part in this study being conducted by **Joshua de Giorgio**, a PhD candidate at the University of York. Before agreeing to take part, please read this information sheet carefully and let the researcher know if anything is unclear or you would like further information.

Researcher Contact Info

Email: jdg541@york.ac.uk

Mobile: +356 99114432

Project Description

This project is a data gathering exercise and is the primary research method required for the completion of a PhD at the University of York in the UK. The focus of the project is the capital city of Malta, Valletta. The city is many things to many people. It is at once the cultural and administrative centre for the Maltese islands, as well as being home to long-time residents and, increasingly, newcomers. It is also a city that, for better or for worse, is rapidly changing. Valletta's cultural importance is recognized beyond our shores, and its UNESCO listing as a World Heritage City is a feature that is central to the concern of the entities entrusted with its stewardship. A city is however more than a collection of buildings, roads, shops, and services, it is as much about the people that live, work or spend time in it. This project's primary interest is in understanding what is about Valletta that is important to you in the present.

Project Information

- **What is my contribution to the study?** Your contribution to this study is a filmed walkabout in the city of Valletta. There will be a fixed starting point and participants and researcher will then walk to 5 spots selected by you. Recording (both video & audio) will be carried out for the entirety of the interview.
- **How long will it take?** From start to finish, the interview should not take more than 1hr. This is not a fixed timeframe, and we can adapt as we go along.
- **Where does it start?** This is entirely up to you. The starting point to this interview could be anywhere in Valletta, including outside the city walls. I will be collecting this response before the meeting date & time is set. Once we have started the interview you will be asked why you selected this particular place or area as your starting place before we start our stroll around the city.
- **What route to take?** Again, this is entirely your choice. I would like you to perhaps think of a minimum of 5 places in Valletta that, in addition to our starting point, will comprise the route. These places can be any aspect of the city, from buildings and streets, cafés and shops, to open spaces and vistas. I will not need these in advance and there is no obligation to rigidly follow any particular route or list. The route can be flexible and impromptu.
- **Are there any places to avoid?** No, all places & routes are valid. There are two important considerations to keep in mind:
 - We must sensibly follow current **COVID** recommendations as put forward by Public Health authorities. This will include the wearing of masks, social distancing (where possible) and respecting maximum occupancy regulations.
 - I would restrict locations that would require payment to gain entry (Museums, Cathedrals). These places can certainly form part of your route, but any discussions will need to occur outside the location.

General Information

Is there anything else I need to prepare?

The only requirement is the completion of pre-interview process which consists of:

1. Carefully reading this Project Information document (I will happily answer any questions you may have)
2. Completing the Consent Form and Participant Details Form (These can be filled just before the interview starts)

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is optional. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records. If you change your mind at any point during the study, you will be able to withdraw your participation without having to provide a reason.

Participant Data

The personal data supplied to the researcher as well as data from the interviews will be stored and processed in accordance with confidentiality and security protocols as outlined by General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). These procedures have been implemented in line University of York's ethic's policy and best practice guidelines.

- **What will my data be used for?** Data from this project will be used and analyzed to produce a PhD thesis and possible associated publications. Your anonymity preferences as selected in the Consent Form will be respected for all products resulting from this research project.
- **Where will your data be processed and stored?** Data will be processed on a password protected laptop and then transferred to be stored on a 2-factor authenticated Google Drive
- **How long will it be stored for?** In general, primary data is stored for a maximum of ten (10) years. Should you, for whatever reason, decide to withdraw from the project, your data will be deleted upon withdrawal.

Participant Code: _____

Valletta Research Project, Summer 2021.

Participant Details

Participant Name: _____

Contact (email or phone number): _____

Participant Gender:

Female

Male

Non-binary

Other: _____

Age: _____

Citizenship:

Maltese

Other: _____

Relationship to the City of Valletta:

Multi-generational resident

Long-term resident (10+ years)

Recent resident (+- 2 years)

Non-resident local

Tourist

Occupation: _____

Appendix B: Interview transcripts

Transcript Correspondence Table

Excerpts from the transcripts utilized as direct quotes in the thesis text are referenced using the Participant Code (Ex. LT1). The table below links these codes to the specific transcript name.

Transcript Name	Participant Code	Interview Date
TomVM	LT1	26/03/2021
LauraH	RR1	02/04/2021
AntonioT	NRL1	17/04/2021
ChrisM	NRL2	21/04/2021
ClotildeM	LT2	24/04/2021
RachelR	NRL3	29/04/2021
AlexP	LT3	12/10/2021
JensB	LT4	14/10/2021
CharlesB	MGR1	14/10/2021
RenaldA	MGR2	15/10/2021
AnthonyP	NRL4	03/01/2022
KurtS	MGR3	05/01/2022
WarrenC	MGR4	12/01/2022
JoannaD	LT5	14/01/2022
BeckyD	RR2	15/01/2022
AnnaT	LT6	15/01/2022
MartinGD	MGR5	22/01/2022
KonradB	LT7	26/01/2022
MaramaC	RR3	02/02/2022

Video and Interview Archive

The full transcript and video archive is available online, hosted by Archaeology Data Service.

Archive is available here: <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/1005416/>



Archaeology
Data Service

Interview transcript for TomVM.

Interview date: 26/03/2021

Tell me a little bit about why you have selected this as your first spot? (St Dominic's)

Because it is home. That's where I come to and that's where and that's where I leave from. I find it difficult; I had no specific or intuitive other reason to start anywhere else.

Have you thought about why you are walking this route particularly? Or is it the most convenient way of getting through the city?

No, I thought like would be interesting to take to tracks that I take very often.

Ok so this is a routine for you? (St. Dominic's Street)

I wouldn't call it a routine but it's a track that I take a lot because I want to, my most favourite spot and my most used spot is the place I take you to second. But I am on the same route here and it's an important route for me because as much as living in two walled cities is always interesting for me. You will see it in the choices of the buildings I will show you, is that the edges seem to be very important to me, but I think that is also characteristic if you live in a walled city, that I think the edges become very important, because they define at the same time the place that you actually live and where you gather, but they also identify the fact that you always need to have that feeling that you need to escape, even if the escape is only visual.

Do you think is a general characteristic of living in a walled city?

Yeah, something that is at the same time comfort and protection, but on the other hand it's also a limitation that you want to and have to break through. So, I love the density of the city and the fact that its contained, but it's also that containment that makes it interesting because it means you can actually go to the edge. Very few other places have a, such a determined edges that for example V has, which makes it partly fascinating for me of course, the fact that it's based on a peninsula and therefore limited.

(Stepped streets)

The stepped Streets are important to me not only because they are... I mean they are very testimony(sic) of a different time, because at that time a geographically a step was more than enough to overcome places, but if there has been more motorized vehicles like today, they probably would have evened it or you know. They would never have dealt with it. So, I find these

streets interesting they are more traces of time, and I don't know, I find it good living in a place that oozes history and these are really clear testimonies of it.

(Heads to next spot – move to Biččerija)

This street recently changed dramatically, with the doing up of the Valletta design cluster. It used to be a very dodgy, dark grungy street, which obviously I liked because Valletta has become very polished over the last ten years, and this was very rough and unpolished you know. Even this street and the steps that you see, and how the light breaks into it, it's almost a tourist cliché but it is very gorgeous you know. But this now has been cleaned out, it's probably at the cleanest that you can find it. Hopefully it will bring new life this building and it will pick up some rust or whatever you know. I don't mean rust literally, but you know what I mean, some patina, because now it's a bit clinical. And they went for the cliché colours on the doors, which is also like a bit of lack of imagination of course but...

(First spot – Fountain/VDC Old Mint Street corner with St Christopher's)

This is my first spot that I chose. And it's not so much about the top part, it's about the thing that you see at the bottom, what used to be a fountain. It actually used to be a source, I never knew much about it, and I found that I am not so history minded, in the sense that I automatically want to find out, very often I leave it to my imagination...so in the beginning I found it a very fascinating object. It's also one of those places that looks, I mean whilst Valletta is all old, this in my mind always looked genuinely old. Again, now it has been cleaned up and polished and restored, and I think it lost a bit of its enigmatic feeling, but up till three years ago this was a point for me that I found extremely interesting. Also, it was a less visited area in town, its actually quite busy now, normally its quite dead and quiet here which I liked about it. And the fact that it is placed on a corner. Then the whole thinking that, there's this myth that they decide to build Valletta here because they were stimulated by the fact that there was actually a fresh water source. This used to be the only source that was found on Mt Sciberras, but there wasn't much water to found because 2 or 3 years after they started using it, it was already depleted.

It's an important marker for me, as a foreigner living here for 20 years.

Is that how long you have been living here?

Soon, soon – actually today!

(Walking)

So now we are walking to the second spot. I am going to walk to a specific spot but it's almost, just a part of the whole thing because I think the Marsamxett waterfront is in its entirety is actually a very important element for me. And I don't think only for me I think it's important for a lot of people.

We are going out of the gate soon (Jews sally Port) and that's very important moment because that's actually were you, from the walled environment, from the stony environment you come here to the corner, you go around and you have this beautifully framed blue peace of sea, which is fantastic. This is definitely a prime moment for me, and I find this a very important spot. Every time I come here and see the sea, even if the sea is rough or a beautiful day for me this is fantastic. And this is literally breaking through the walls, and yeah, it does a lot to me. So, while this was built as a gate into the city, for me this is a gate to the sea, the other way around.

Again, this entire waterfront is important to me. Again, this is used by a diverse amount of people, especially after hours and the weekends when it's not so much of a car park. I think it's a very informal community spot, where it does not feel like too many rules apply, people feel quite free here. And again, it's very rough and unpolished and quite broken but I quite like it because we live in this place which is hyper commercialized at certain points and I never moved in for that reason, so this is some sort of mental escape for me. Apart from the fact that you are with the sea. One of the beautiful things about living in Valletta is its close connect with the sea and the visual escape, so I come here almost daily you know. Often, I come here around sun set, especially on a busy date of work, especially where you notice that you have been locked in all day, it's like I need to have this escape you know. I just come and look at the horizon and the sea and have a moment. Then there is the practicality of getting something from Gigi's. It's a little easy walk from home that ticks a lot of boxes.

(Moving to next spot)

Now we are going to cross town.

So, we are literally crossing now, and this crossing for me is very important, just the crossing of town you know. Let's say the contrast and the dichotomy between MX Harbour where you are looking at the ugliness of Sliema and Tigné Point and everything, and as you cross in like 7-8 minutes, you're in the Grand Harbour. And the Grand Harbour whenever I see it I get a bit emotional, so that's why we're are walking to the Grand Harbour.

(St Nicholas corner with Merchants)

Now this is one of the most horrible parts of Valletta for me, lower Valletta because of this very high wall, where is the very little activity, very little living. I think it's part of the church still, pushing out from the back and there's only some smaller houses on the front. It makes this street very dodgy and shaded many times, so it's one of my least comfortable points walking in this whole area.

Is it dodgy in how it makes you feel?

Dodgy in the way it makes you feel, I have no anxiety or fears of that sort.

So, are we taking these streets just for convenience?

Well living in Valletta, I also make it almost a point to keep on...I mean it's almost a combination of what is most convenient but also, I will also I will never go out of a way of a change. I live in the street next door, and normally where we walked to I would take my street you know. But now we have an opportunity because we came from there to take a different street. Space is rather limited, the amount of streets are rather limited in Valletta so I force myself to make a variation in my routine as much as possible. So, if you looking for people for your research for people who have fixed routes, I don't really have a fixed route, I make it a point not to have one. Once someone told me that its apparently good for your creativity, for your brain to keep on changing to roads you take to places. And whether that's true or not, it's something that is always on my mind and that I keep trying to apply.

(End of St Nicholas)

But I do like this area again, because it still feels a bit genuine, and when I say genuine it means like you find a lot of people living here who have been living here even longer than me you know. So, in that sense it feels a bit like the continuation of energy, around here, in these places.

And this also quite beautiful you know, walking towards the sky and I love the Bocci club as well, I can see it at the end. (Pointing to the streetlights) Unfortunately they did something dramatic, there used to be the normal streetlights, lighting it up, which they used everywhere in Bocci Clubs, and for me they were enigmatic and fantastic, and they have recently replace them with LED. Much more compact, but it does not make sense, for me its beauty lost you know. So again, that's a decade of change. But this is a fantastic spot, it's always been you know. It's such a moment you know, when you come on the edge, and you see the breakwater and then also the bell these canyon-like spaces. It's quite nice what they have done with the texture of the wall, it kinda reminds me of Jože Plečnik from the 20s and 30s he was doing this similar, giving texture

to walls. It's funny because you don't see a lot of these experiments with Maltese Stone to be honest.

So, it's nice to see the break with the traditional form?

Yeah, for me the tradition lies with the use of the stone, much more maybe that the size and the shape, but that's for me of course.

(Third spot Lower Barrakka Gardens)

That looks beautiful. That looks very beautiful with the tent, wow.

This is my third spot, and I find myself often gravitating to it a bit in the same way that walk to the water I often come to this point. It brings a lot of things together, a lot of fun memories together of meeting up with a lot of friends in what used to be called QE2, now they have changed the name. Then there is also Lower Barrakka Gardens, we don't have a lot of gardens in Valletta so gardens, the little bit we have is important to me, especially as it is one of the few gardens which they have not messed around with too much and there is quite a lot of vegetation. Because I noticed that a lot of gardens are being cleaned out and less plants means less vegetation, they have been taking away a lot of plants.

But the prime reason is obviously for this beautiful, this natural beauty the Grand Harbour. It's another cliché but it remains I think, enigmatic and fantastic. It always makes a bit, almost emotional, when I come here. I remember leaving for London for a year and a half, not know that was actually going to be coming back. And when we took a taxi, at 5-6 in the morning driving past I was almost crying that I was going to miss this you know. Because I think I can't get enough of looking at it. But as much as looking at it, it tells you a lot of the identity of living here. Again, being on this peninsula. And yeah, lots of people seem to have had reasons to come to this spot and that fascinates me.

(Forth Spot Lower Archbishops street- walk via little alley)

(The most pragmatic way was from there but let's take the small alley from the back. I often take it, it's also quite a nice place because its pedestrianized. You feel the layering of Valletta – the opportunism of making the most of the topography you know, of building of other buildings set a bit higher, also a bit of the fight for the views.

It looks a lot cleaner than I remember.

Yeah, it's been cleaned out, but I think a lot by the people who are living here. There seems to be a collective re-painting (of doors) job.

But it's also quite a comical street with these big buildings dominating these smaller ones and obviously you have the social housing, which is a bit of an eye sore, but I know from people living there that it's a great building and they have some of the best views in the world.

Spot number four is this building here. I don't think it's known to many people, and it's so exaggerated in its expression, if you see the woodwork. I like a bit of woodwork myself, not for those reasons, but I can feel the passion of the carpentry that went into it. Its abandoned but a couple of months ago there was a notice on it so it seems like it's going to be restoring it. It's going to be a tough job to do it, I don't know if they are going to simplify the design, because if they redo it as it is it's a hell of a job.

It's a dangerous spot to walk close because of the pigeons, because you can easily be pooped on, but that always makes me laugh when I walk past here because I sometimes see tourist being pooped on. It's always comical, no?

Otherwise, I don't know anything about this building, but I always found it fascinating and I also did not do any of the effort to look into the history, but for me it just lives in my own brain as a but of a fascination.

But it's also on my way back often, when I walk or go for walks and one of the reasons that I would take this street is that it's another street that is not really used by cars. So as long as I can still physically take these steps and deal with the steepness, I will do. You know, Valletta is really not made for cars and it always feels threatening if you are in a street and there are cars behind you, so I tend to take these streets where there is no traffic.

But the building looks like a bad cake no? It's a bit funny, over decorated.

(Waking towards Bridge Bar via East Street)

It's a nice walk, it's worth the walk.

What street is this?

Triq Lvant (East Street) it has a great dynamic to it, because you have the road diving towards Victoria Gate, but then you have the pedestrian passages on the same level. Then you come to the intricate architecture of the bridge over there and Bridge Bar, it's quite a beautiful spot.

Again, you see the battle going on of everyone one wanting to build a higher and getting a better view of the harbour. At the same time, it's very pathetic this fight for the view and it symbolizes of course our human greed, but it also makes me laugh of course. Look them trying to protrude a bit more. So, in my mind, if though its maybe a negative thing, I turn it into a comical affair.

There is also a guy, I don't think he is here today, but most of the time he is hanging out in his garage looking at things and doing stuff and I just like the guy. He just cannot get enough of his own space. It's the guy from the Leicester Garage, and in my mind, I make up that it must have been an active garage in the past and that he cannot get enough of his own past (30.36) and he keeps returning to this place. I like these small gestures.

(End of St. Lucia facing Church of St Lucy)

Then there Valletta Contemporary, which is one of the last places left for Contemporary Art, which is obviously important to me and my existence. Then we pass by a series of beautiful streets with a fantastic endpoint, this nice little church at the end. But also, all the jumping of the levels, I love this area.

This is the workshop space of the St Paul's festa guys, there is always afterhours activity here and they have their little BBQs outside. I love it. It's because of this platform you know, it almost has the function of a public square even though it's very compact in the city.

I like the two-bridge situation. I have always wondered why, there is one bigger one and one smaller one, but somehow again, I find it a bit comical. And I don't need to tell you that this is a beautiful spot, it's a cliché spot, but it's a very beautiful spot.

(Near Bar Sicilia)

I mean you can tell that this side of the harbour has there always been more active one historically, and there is something interesting about it. But I like the difference between the two, between the other one being less grand and this one. Its two totally different phases.

I still walk here from time to time, because this view was very familiar to me because a friend was living here for a couple of years, and I spend a lot of time on his roof up there. And I don't know why but sometimes I need to recapture it.

(Heading up narrow steps to Upper Barrakka)

As you may have noticed I like the informal corners of the more formal areas like this one.

And the obsession with our car parks.

But I love this walk – you have all these views; you have the alleys (top of St Ursula) and the perspective is really beautiful.

We are walking to Upper Barrakka, this very interesting wall, it has always been, this kinda public graffiti. It is kinda graffiti in the dirt you know more than in the stone.

Upper Barrakka Lift – Final Spot

Gardens are important to me if you don't have many around. Thanks to Covid this garden has become much more beautiful again because it has the right amount of people as you can tell you know. Sometimes during the real tourist season when, pre and probably post it can be too busy here, people crammed all together. But this is the right amount of people, everybody finds a spot in the shade, people can have a chat, its lovely. It's a nice atmosphere here.

The Barrakka Lift is a nice object if you see it from there, from Castile Square. But I just think that as a machine I think it is very important, because this city has been built as something that you cannot penetrate and go in. And it never lived up to the fear you know, the Ottomans never really came back and since that time we have been trying to overcome all the obstacles that were built you know in the first place to make this city. The Barrakka Lift is one of these symbols, and I was also involved in the project. And as an architect or maybe even ex-architect I always have a bit of a.... all the projects I was part of would be a part success, but this for me is a full success. I thought we would never pull it off, to build something as a structure in such an old environment that would stand up and I actually think it does the job. The structure itself, and not so much the landscaping.

A fun thing, and I do it regularly you can down for free...I regularly do that. I literally go up and down.

Interview transcript for Laura H.

Interview Date: 02/04/2021

(First Spot – Upper Barrakka Gardens)

This so this is your first spot, so, I guess why have you chosen this spot?

This is the first place I usually take people, when I have guests from overseas staying in Valletta, and this was probably the first where I spent any substantial amount of time in Valletta. I didn't live here in the past, but I would have just come here on a bicycle, and I would spend a lot of time studying there (points to a spot)

I used to come here to study when I was doing my bachelors.

So, you have been to Malta before you moved to Valletta?

I have been in Malta for 14 years, so I have been here for a while. And Valletta has always been very special to me, and I never get bored of this view. I think it's just magnificent and in fact whenever I walk up to Castille from Floriana or from the bus depot, I make it a point that I appreciate that view. I think it would be a sin if I let myself take that for granted, because I still feel very lucky that I get to live in a place like this. (1.36) I mean.... this view, where can you find this. I mean I am from somewhere in the middle of nowhere with just countryside around I thought that I would feel claustrophobic in Malta without any nature and stuff, but it's just a different thing. I mean all the history and it's just so picturesque. And for me this just is the kind of place where you, I don't know, this is as much nature as you are going to find in Valletta.

Yeah, there is not much open space, right?

Yeah, so that's another reason why I like this but the same time it gets crowded. I mean right now it's full and its Covid times and there are barely any tourists here and it still has quite a few people in it, but obviously when there are people, when tourists here it's just packed. So, over the past few years I been coming here much less than I would have in the past. But there is another reason why I like this place, which I discovered recently, that from this side (faces Marsa) you can actually see all the planes taking off. So, when my best friend moved out of Malta in the beginning of the year, I took him to the airport then I came here and sat on the bastions, right here and checked online the timing of the plane and then I saw it taking off, so there is this significance in this place also. And it's also like a nice public to meet new people as well, when you don't want

to meet somewhere, like, too noisy but at the same time you want to go somewhere safe. So, I think that's my relationship with this place in a nutshell.

That's interesting, do you feel unsafe in Valletta at all?

No, not really, but what I mean, its slightly embarrassing for some reason but meeting from dating apps. It's nice to go into a place immediately that is too intimate, so that is what I mean, there is this open space that gives safety but at the same time it's not like you are sitting in the middle of a street on a bench. It's like a compromise between those two, and that's another thing that I wanted to mention, what for obvious reasons is kind of missing in Valletta is this ability to find private spaces, and in fact one of my favourite places I am not even going to take you, because I don't want too many people to know it, because it is one of the few places I can go and almost nobody would ever even run around there at all.

(Walking to second spot St Barbara's Bastion)

I mention this because I was once able to get into Upper Barrakka when it was closed. It was not open, but I was able to get in, so it's because I would have this need to find spaces which are, which have this feeling that are no people around, and obviously Valletta is not great for that. But funnily enough its almost easier to find these places which are just a bit isolated. Because everyone looks in the countryside for these nooks where there is no one, and in some ways, you have more chance of seeing people around sometimes, than if you find a quiet spot on the bastions somewhere, where you are technically not supposed to be. So basically, that's the point, so here if you want to find a bit more private you practically do something you are not supposed to do.

(Via Lascaris War Rooms)

Yeah, I have never actually managed to find where these "war rooms" are or been to them, I just keep seeing these signs.

Hmm – I love these little alleyways as well.

So, we are seeing the second spot where I wanted to take you, which I is St Barbara's Bastion. That is another place that I wanted to go because it also has some memories linked to it and I think I had come there for the first time when I did my BA here, and my other subject was Geography. And we did field work that took us here, to St Barbara's Bastions. And I had never been, I have never been to this part, this side of Valletta. So, I was quite taken by it and ever since then, I have said like this is my favourite street in Valletta, this is my favourite place. And I am

very aware that many people seem to share my opinion and its ridiculously expensive to love there.

Obviously, we are going to be passing the Bridge Bar, which is another spot that is, that captures the something, the best parts of Valletta. Especially pre-covid. It's like this perfect mixture between a bit fancy so Jazz, but then low key because you are just sitting on the steps with cockroaches coming out of the drains half the time. So, it's kind of this, I don't know, it's my comfort zone. It's kinda that sort of place where you go and you just run into people...

It's also one of those places in Valletta that was around pre-boom.

Yeah, I probably would have come here the first year I moved, so 2007. So, I remember it was always there for me, but obviously 14 years is not the biggest frame of reference.

But yeah, we had come here for this Geography fieldwork and the reason we had come here was because of the Grand Harbour Regeneration Project or something and our lecturer had thought that this was a good spot to kind of see everything and I had learned about Villa Bighi. That is when I had fallen in love with this street, but then after that this place became the place where I would to watch the Jazz Festival when I did not want to go into the Jazz Festival. Which I had done a good few times, then there were reasons why I did not want to go there.

So, I spent quite some time here for that and there was some kind of regatta or something two years ago. And I had met here for the first time with someone who then became one of my best friends.

We would just a bottle of wine during the Jazz Festival and sit on the bastions, listening and looking and you can see stuff better than when you actually go into the festival.

(Walking to next spot – Lower Barrakka)

The route you have chosen is skirting around the bastions, is that intentional?

Its partially intentional, also because we will end up closer to the centre eventually, but I think that's also a bit of me I feel more comfortable on the periphery, in general. I live here now but I am not a city person at heart. But Valletta to me does not feel like a city, it feels like a town. That's part of the reason why I wanted to start from the outside, because these are the places I would be looking for in fact. But the "outside part" will end here at Lower Barrakka.

I am from an area originally where there are quite a lot of hills, so I would always, so I am used being able to go somewhere and have a view, far away. And I think that's why also that I like this bit, I love the fact that Valletta is high up, and you can go around and just have a view even if it's

built up and what not. You can see far and unobstructed. And I would be very happy if those cranes and whatever were not there, that would be a lot better! But I do understand that industry is important too.

(Third Spot – Lower Barrakka)

It took me a couple of years to discover that there is a LB, because the UB that everyone knows. Yeah, and ever since I found it, I thought this is so much better. Probably because its forgotten, because there are less people. I like that, that it's not so full and it's a bit more peaceful. Again, this is a place where I have come when the gates are closed as well.

Now this has become my lunch spot. I have not come here many times but it's very to close, I live in this area. I find it very relaxing to just come here and look at the view, and even in COVID times, there are not a lot of people, so I don't feel bad.

(Walking towards railings overlooking Bell Monument)

There were other places I had in mind, but I don't want to walk too far! Not because I don't want to walk but it would take too long. But if had to I think of the theme of the places when I first think of when I think of Valletta it's the hidden, the places where you can find some sort of privacy, like this place. There aren't many people, and even more so a night when they close them.

But I find that a pity, that they close these places at night. I mean in summer they are open longer, but I cannot remember how long exactly. But still, I find it a pity that they aren't open at the moment for as long as I would like them to be. It would be good to have access to somewhere were you can stay in a public space away from the streets, that isn't somewhere where you have to pay to sit on someone's table.

I wanted to come here, because that (Bell Monument) is another place like the ones I have spoken about, like behind that Bell is a place where you can pretend that there aren't people around.

The Breakwater as well, I mean you cannot go there, especially now. But as an area, I had gone there, not completely aware of how much you should go there. Then I found the sign saying "Whoever comes here will be fined €3000". It was shortly after they had put that bridge on because that bridge is quite new. I still remember when it was just this archway into nothingness. I know someone who thought that was a very special bit and were really sorry when the archway into nothingness disappeared and was replaced by something more functional.

I never see people there, I just see it closed.

And obviously, there is the beach down there which has become a place where, especially in summer, I would be there. I mean it gets very dirty, if you wanted to really appreciate how we have screwed up the sea, come here when the wind is coming from that direction.

(Moving to the centre via St Christopher's Street, St Paul's, Archbishop's to Suq Square)

Ok we are going to get more towards the centre now. So, this is going towards where I am staying at the moment. I had always wanted to live in Valletta, and I have been renting here (Malta) the whole time I have been here. But Pre-Covid this was not affordable.

Why Valletta specifically?

It's a bit hard to answer because, even when I chose to move here, I was very scared, because I like peace and quiet in reality, and I was very aware that that is not compatible with living in Valletta. But I wanted to come here, it's just the feel of the place. In fact, I would always come here to relax eve during weekends. I told you I would with the bicycle go to Upper Barrakka and just stay there, but even other places, just coming in and walking around.

And I spent the first few months after I moved here just every now and then I would say I can't believe that I live here and do a bit of a happy dance. It was just unbelievable to me that I actually live in this city.

I am not sure how to explain the feeling, there is something related to history for sure. Because it's a different feeling that I would get in any other place. But even the other historical places, I am thinking of the oldest bits of Attard and all of that.

Are you suggesting a particular sense of place?

Yes, yes it's very particular. There is this sense that this has been lived in. Very much, I think that's the difference if I had to compare this with the more secluded places in Malta, maybe not secluded but slightly more rural feeling places like Attard for example. Even if they were the same age which I think they are not, because this is probably older than most of those areas. But even if they were, the sense is that this place has seen a lot more life in it. A lot more has happened.

That sense of History is important to you?

Yes, I think it is the sense of knowing, just knowing how many people have walked these streets if that makes sense. I remember even when I was a very young girl, that I had gone to the house where my father had grown up....and I remember that sense of awe, think "Oh he has walked here when he was 5 years old"....it felt like a privilege that I could go there.

I honestly did realize they had taken the parking areas away because it was pedestrianized. For a while I was upset about it, but then I have to agree it's much nicer now. It's better like this. It's just annoying to know why it happened, at least the version I heard is that the guy who owns the place on the corner he got it all done for his tables.

Valletta change driven by business?

It's unfortunate because this space, because there is a lot of space and not much has been done with it ever since it was pedestrianized, what 7 or 8 months ago? There are people who believe in pedestrianization less than I do who would be very annoyed seeing and saying it was so much better when I could actually leave my car here.

(Fourth spot – Is-Suq)

This part of Merchant Street, especially from here – where it was pedestrianised earlier. This bit and the square in front of Is-Suq Tal-Belt. I chose this because this is where I live basically, around this area. And I am aware that this building has, let's say, upset quite a few people to put it mildly.

Why do you think that is?

Well, the views that I have heard, is that it had so much potential it could have been used so much better. And it's kind of been wasted by having a pretty cheap food court in it, something that does not have much quality and does not really to the place as much as it should and could. I mean I have heard people compare it to food courts in other cities where were it would be more artisanal, and there would be more something local. This is commercial, at least there isn't McDonalds, not that level of commercial but it stops just short of that.

For me at least, I associate it with noise, and the aspects where residents are not considered in Valletta. It's kind of like we are expected to just suffer the consequences of tourist, and the consequences of all the restaurants and cafeterias, because it is extremely noise here at times, especially in summer. Even last summer, which apparently was a quiet summer, but I would sleep every night with all my windows and doors closed with earplugs in and on some nights I could still hear the music.

But this place is kind of home now as well, that's my super market....that's the part I can't really object to. I can see how that is part of the problem to, but I benefit from it in all honesty at the moment, so it's a bit hard to complain, because it is very convenient.

It's also convenient that there is a really good coffee place here too, Lot 61, a lot of people say that it's the best coffee in Malta. That's what I have heard but I am not sure I agree with that.

Especially now working from home I like that I have a million nice lunch places within a 5 min walking distance.

(Walking to final spot – St George's square)

Have you noticed a difference in Valletta under Covid?

Well, I moved here during Covid, I moved here last May. It was completely dead, obviously it was still part of the lockdown. I had moved here a few weeks after restaurants had opened, and I had gone to a restaurant with a friend of mine that you normally cannot get into without a booking, and we were the only people there the whole night.

Then it slowly slowly opened up more and by July or whatever it ended up being very loud. It was funny, everything was dead, but my street was the loudest!

(Final spot – St George's Square)

This is my last place on my list of places, and I wanted to choose this because this has changed so enormously from when I moved to Malta 14 years ago. This was a gigantic parking lot; I don't think it even had asphalt. And I remember the "Karozzin Horses" they all used to be park on this corner. It was such contrast with this rather nice café (Cordina) a few steps away. I remember the smell of the horse urine; it would hit you anytime that you passed from here. Then they created this square, and it may not be the style that I identify with much, but I really enjoy that fountain. I have spent a lot of time just sitting on one of these benches. I used to have piano lessons down by St Elmo, and it was part of routine that I would come after my lesson on Saturday, and I would and get a croissant and a coffee from Café Cordina and I would sit here at the square.

And back in the day they would have the light show with the music, with the water as well. I don't when they stopped it, but I think it's been years. I never got bored of it, I would always watch it. It was a thing; I would come and maybe I had a book to read but when the show would start, I would look at it even though it was the same music and the same pattern.

There was this particular time when they had this project where they brought a bunch of pianos in a bunch of different places in Malta in general but there was one here. And I remember this one particular time where this was this old man was playing on the piano, and I had my croissant and my coffee, and the sun was shining, and it was just perfect.

Interview transcript for Antonio T.

Interview Date: 17/04/2021

(First Stop – Coffin Maker – East Street)

This is your first choice of spot?

Yeah, this is my first choice, it's a very interesting funerary equipment maker who has been here for about 100 years. What's very interesting about it is that is that the use the place in a very social manner. They will be sitting down all day, out here with the coffins next to them. It's quite something to watch, they have the whole area for them. They have been here for 100 years, because they are the official funerary undertakers for the Ta' Karmnu Church, so anyone who dies in this area comes to them. But what has always impressed me, because I lived round the corner as a kid, is how close they are to 'death'. They see it everyday sort of. They will be having a sandwich, hanging out sitting on deck chairs with the coffins around them....it's a very impressive place. Very characteristic, it hasn't changed at all.

So, it's very much part of the heritage of the neighbourhood?

Completely! There are photos of it, like 60 or 70 years ago with children jumping in and out of the coffins. It's quite Dantesque actually as a place.

(Moving along East Street)

Something interesting here is a fully functional 'Gallatrina' which is a Maltese style Gallarija (Balcony) and there is a toilet in it. In fact, the windows are sort of covered or frosted.... that one is for the Carmelite priests. There is the earthenware leading all the way down (pipes).

It's a pity, this convent was very beautiful. It's a pity they ruin the church because they built this mega monster here instead. This one, the cupola, the really big cupola. This was a really sweet church, in fact the convent is ancient it's like 400 years old and really beautiful inside.

(Second Spot – St Paul's Buildings)

This is another site I wanted you to see which is St Paul's Buildings. I see that they are just doing it up completely now. I used to live here for many years. Like this it's all decked up and you cannot really see what it's like, but there is a very OCD friendly array of Galleriji all next to each other and they have finally become all green, because there were two which were yellow because of a dispute which the tenant had with the owner.

It think it's very interesting because I think they are one of the few Dickensian Victorian areas of Valletta, here and East Street a bit. And here in fact, I always like this sort of entrance, Style-wise its very interesting, there used to be an old an old house which was a hotel before and then in 1908 they built this block. They are really lovely apartments, and what is interesting about them is that the planimetry of them is not identical, all of them are different. One door is a block of flats, the next is a mezzanine, the next one is a ground floor.... and they are all intertwined onto of each other. The plans are very strange.

This is actually where I used to live, in these apartments here 43. Which my father sold in 1988 for 7000 Malta Liri, today they are worth 6 or 7 hundred thousand. And this is where I also worked for a while (indicates flat next door). They are really nice flats, especially the ones overlooking the sea. But they are very interesting aesthetically, we had three balconies right onto top of here, and it was very interesting in the morning and from your bedroom and look out of your window and see this brute here. It's like enormous and out of proportion with everything, it's one of those things that very strange but very close to you at the same time, although you know that it's not a normal thing you would see visually as an everyday thing.

And in Valletta there is a lot of that. There is a lot of very mundane things, but at the same time they are very particular although they are very mundane.

Do you think this sort of thing is overlooked?

I think they are very overlooked, maybe less by the Valletta people who used to live here historically. Maybe the newer people, depends on who they are, because there is a crowd of people who find them interesting and would have the same eye for detail. But some others will overlook little details like little niches or some little drawing on a wall, like graffiti or things of that sort.

(7.51) Pink door! See, I cannot really...I feel like judging it, but I know that if I judge it, it will be because I have always seen them in a different colour, not because I don't like them as they are.

Do you think there is scope of control over the colours of doors and balconies in Valletta?

I would say so yes. There is a little part of me which says no, because it's unfair and you are controlling reasonable chaos. But ultimately, I think in a place like this, you have to look at the unitary beauty...there is a bit of uniformity that needs to be kept up to a certain extent. Then again, it's not nice to be super rigid because then you are sort of killing the inspiration that some people might sort of have.

(Comments on a foot scraper – heading up Old Theatre Street)

Talking about little details, these are something that when you are a kid are very impressive. Foot scrapers, there are I think, well I have seen 20 or 30 in Malta, there are not very many left.

(Comments on the Niche of St Elias)

And this here is very interesting thing. This is Elias he is the inspiration of the Carmelites....and it has been restored in a very particular way as you can see because he looks like a Playmobile guy now. In fact, he has a key that looks like the key you would open the Playmobile Castle and a homemade lightsabre. Not a very nice effort considering that it's really a very beautiful statue. But anyway, restoration is a very strange beast at times.

(Comments on Manoel Theatre)

We have the MT here obviously, not much to say about it. They have made efforts to go back to the original design, before all the accretions of the 20th century, and actually they are doing a very good job of it. I think what Michael Grech wanted was to go back to the correct façade. It's plainer, a bit baroque, I think they have done a decent job of it.

I don't remember these pillars – if someone were to ask me if they were there or not, I would not be sure.

(More comments enroute to spot 3)

Here we have Palazzo Bonici, I think they are restoring it. They have a famous ghost in the kitchen apparently.

Interesting feature of Valletta, here at the St Albert's school, which is aesthetically does not really conform with the general style of Baroque Valletta.

This is what, 1960s?

Yes, after the war, there used to be another school there, Flores College which got bombed in the war. But what is interesting here is that there is a 5-a-side football pitch on the roof, it's the only one in Malta probably....and unfortunately, I have never played in that pitch. They will be moving eventually, and it will probably be dropped down and turned into some kind of Boutique Hotel.

(Approaching Strait Street)

Now we are obviously getting to the gentrified area of this street (Old The). It's where some popular restaurants are, these things (ramps) put in the street without any permits whatsoever.

And Strait Street, which is a bit snobbed by Valletta 'buffs' now, because it has been turned into a very commercial area, very noisy area. And the Valletta people feel like it's been taken over by the non-Valletta people.

Which Valletta people, recent? *Recent Valletta people, proper old bourgeois Valletta people and even the grassroots Valletta people don't like it very much. Because it's very noisy and because they feel that's its very disrespectful to the solemnity of the city and to the decent living of the residents and it jars with the general atmosphere of it.*

That's a bit ironic don't you think when it is, historically, a noisy street?

Yes, but probably when it used to be noisy before, it was accepted because it was part of the revenue that was coming from the navy and people of that sort. So, it was an area, that we know, that rude area, but the people there are making money at least so that's ok. Today it's a superfluous area when these people could be having fun in Paceville instead of the doing it here. Maybe? It's my idea as to what could be the reason why this is not very loved at this moment in time.

What about the route, is it intentional or is it random?

It's not really intentional, but it's still one of my favourite streets (Old Theatre – top). This view here, I really like it, I like taking photos from in there and out here, next to the last building of the Knights.

Which one?

This one, the Bibliotheca. The only pity, because we have to criticise where were have to criticise, is that there is that very, very heavy dustbin which always ruins everyone's photos. It shouldn't be put there, it should be put out of sight – I actually tried to move it myself but it's too heavy.

(Comments Old Theatre/Bibliotheca)

Then there are little things, fun things like there, but it's not visible anymore. The sign in French, one of the last examples of streets signs in French, obviously its and dusty and nobody took care of it. From the two years when they were here.

This is a nice site, unfortunately he is closed at the moment, he has been here for 40 or 50 years and he is ancient, and he sells flowers and 'orzata' (almond squash) and Maltese lemonade.

Here very interesting there is...I don't know where it went...ah there it is, a cross. That, I have been told by one of these elderly people in Valletta, it delimits the dividing wall between the government property which is on this side and the church property which is on that side.

(Is-Suq: Heading towards St Paul's Street Sundial)

The market, not impressive at all. It's extremely unpopular and has been for a number of reasons. First of all because there was sort of an element of cheating, because the original plan was to rebuild it according to, Barry, I think it was, well to the original design, with a thing on the top, a triangular thing on top. Then all of a sudden, they decided to change it, and nobody did anything about it, then they took over this outdoor area over here and made it look like Dubai with the fake flowers. Its (18.38) what it is, let's say it's not very in keeping with the style of the city, to be nice, to be a bit clement.

I always loved this area when there was the old market, there were all these little shops around it. There used to be a baker here, in the mid-80s, and it used to be like going into a Fellini film. There's this lady with very big, red hair who deals with everyone, with these big gold earrings in a cloud of dust. It was a really nice cacophony inside. The building is super, super ancient, I think its owned by Simon Galea Testaferrata. Its super, super, super mega ancient that arch, what do you think? It's probably 16th century.

(Entering St Paul's Street)

The lovely St Paul's Street, one of my favourite streets for many reasons. Its visually stunning, because it is practically untouched by the bombs. So, what you see here is what you would see in a 19th century engraving. Because apart from the times building right up there, everything else is as it was 100 years ago. And I really like also, the sinuous curvature of the street...here and Old Mint Street. Once I wanted to do a film in old Mint Street, called 'Valletta, Citta Violenta' which was meant to be a spoof of those Italian police (Alfa Romeo) films. The idea was that you get one guy who was a sort of spy, you fill his mouth with walnuts, tie his hands and throw him in an Austin 1100 next to Hastings and let him roll all the way down Old Mint Street until like he crashes and dies.

(on Balconies and corbels)

I really love the 'saliature', the corbels, I find them really amazing. I am not an expert so what I know is from what I read in 'Treasures of Malta' and all these things. It was really interesting to read that you can tell which Galleriji are the older ones, they are shortened, because they were longer when used to have open balconies instead. One of these semi-relevant facts which I revel in.

How do you feel about the places that you have chosen so far fit in with what is, perhaps sold, as the heritage of Valletta?

Some of it is seen as heritage. I think what is put forward is more like the sure-fire things like, things that can attract more mainstream tourists like St John's Cathedral, the Caravaggio painting and that sort of thing. I think there is a market for quaint and interesting corners and stuff.... it's an issue of people who like history...we were taught at school that history is mostly what happens in wars and who was in government. To me what's much more interesting than that is how people lived their real life, what they did every day, what they ate in the morning, how they went to the bathroom, this sort of thing.

That was a really sweet shop – the knife sharpener dude, he died about three years ago. And he is one of those sights that impress you as a kid. He used to be very impressive because it was fun seeing him sharpening a knife against another knife...very manly and very violent.

Another niece part of St. Paul's Street, the Jesuit Convent, which is empty unfortunately at the moment, they have a lovely view. They stopped using it about 4 or 5 years ago. They have the refectory on the top floor, with a view on the harbour. They will probably rent it. I don't know if they own it or if it was given to them as some kind of 'holy thingy'. It's a real pity.

I think it's a pity what's happening to religious institutions, like some convents, have gone bone dry. It's very sad as well because it's really changing things from a social point of view.

Is the religious fabric of Valletta eroding?

Yes and no, because the way people are tied to their parishes is still very visceral and very strong. But there is a situation that there are so many churches, that actually some of the churches have been given to other denominations. Like for example, St Nicholas' church down here, is being used by the Russian Orthodox, one is being used by the Romanians. And one by the Eritreans, St Jacob. That's fun, because at least you are getting something culturally different visually, to see and watch.

For example, once about 5 years ago we were passing by and saw all the shoes outside. Which is strange to look at, because you are used to a place which is a Catholic church – I was best man to a friend's wedding in that church – now it's Christian Coptic. And it was very interesting to see a place, which you completely associate with Catholicism being used by another denomination; the shoes outside, although the Copts do it as well, it makes you think of the Muslims straight away, it was very interesting.

(Next spot – Sundial, Old University Building St Paul's Street)

I always found this sundial quite impressive. I checked today and I think it's from 1695 or 1698, and they just restored it. It's very sweet, the only problem is that it is very difficult to get a good

photograph of it. Recently I learned that they had some sort of 'servitude' over this property, so that they don't build further, because obviously they would ruin the sundial.

(Heading to final spot)

Here we can go round to see the 'mono-gallerija' which is one of my favourite places. Actually, we can look at some drama here, we can look at the house of Oscar Bonnici, who got murdered in there. In the brutalist building. His brother just died too, Paolo Bonnici. In 1990 they were there, him and his wife, these thieves put a ladder a in the road at 1 or 2 in the morning. Just climbed into the bedroom, bound them and gagged them and he died. The guys never got jail time for it, because 'hargu liberati' (They were acquitted).

(Entering St Ursula)

Shall we go to St Ursula? Lots of things to see there and we have the last site, next to Ta' Giezu (The Franciscan Church of St Mary of Jesus). There is so much to see here. I wish to make a television program about every little thingy there is in Valletta, but I don't think it will be of general interest though. Probably not, I think it would be too specific.

Look – this is St Roque's Chapel; it has become the Romanian Orthodox Church. It's a cool building this. This used to be under San Pawl, it used to be the 'Muzew' of San Pawl. I like it because it looks very Roman, I love it when the church's look very Roman – they remind me of Rome! Not those big ones, but the ones when you go to a piazza and you find this great church.

Boutique Hotels, with their particular style...

This is the house of the Priest, what's his name, the restorer. Father Charles, I forgot his surname.

Ah here, apart from 'Faldus' shop obviously – legend.

This is a nice niche, a nice statue. It's quite nice because the devil looks like a pig as well, because of the 'snouty' nose and the chain – it's a very kinetic statue – and his feet wrapped around the corner. It's very, how should I say, very cinematographic as a niche.

And this I always wondered, this 'one-unit gallerija' whether it was built for a child, because it's very small, it's about one meter 50 in height, and I always found it particularly interesting. It's probably in the staircase of this house. It was restored 15 years ago, and nothing happened, no one ever used it, it's been closed ever since. Usually when they are 're-abandoned' it's because of some succession which never finalized, but to have done all this work to it and then not use it.

This is the reality of Valletta, that there are still a lot of empty properties.

Yes, and also some of the properties are difficult to sell, because their value has gone up so much now. What's very strange I think is that, no its normal. The prices weren't realistic 10 years ago, they were too cheap for what it is Valletta. Now they've reached their high for a Maltese person, they are almost unattainable for the average person. I think they are at par with the value or what you would spend on a property in a beautiful city centre anywhere in Europe, it's that sort of thing. But the problem of that is that, the properties that are of a super high value are very difficult to sell now. Because a property worth 3 million euros, how many potential acquirers can it attract ultimately? That's an issue, that some of the larger ones cannot be sold.

And also, the usual problem of like, having 100 people owning a property and only two people doing something about it, and 95 of the others criticizing them and the other 2 never agreeing to anything. So, what happens is a lot of people just give up on doing these things because, usual story.

Once I was going to buy this house for 90,000. One day we will do a tour of the houses I was going to buy.

This street is pretty unchanged to, right?

Yes, and it has the caress of not having thru-traffic. Because traffic has to stop here and turn back up.

That's a very interesting niche, which doesn't look old, but it is. 'The Holy House of Loreto'

This is a beautiful façade, of St Ursula's buildings, Liz Falzon used to live there, the notary, I don't know if you know her.

We are making our way to Ta' Giezu right, via St Ursula?

The Franciscans, obviously, not to fall behind they also have their 'Gallatrina' over here. But I don't think they use theirs anymore. These are the grey Franciscans, like the originals, because they fight a lot between themselves.

(Bump into friend in common, Roderick then proceed to final stop)

This is the very interesting place where there was the 'carnival tragedy' in 18 (1823) in don't know when, where like 150 kids. It a very hidden story in Maltese history. Basically here, they had united a lot of children to take them away from the dangers of carnival, cause carnival at the time was out of control. They were in here, something happened, a candle fell or something and there was a stampede and more than 100 children died. 1820 something.

I love this street, there is a serenity to it, maybe it's also related to the fact that there aren't so many cars. It's very pedestrian.

This is another of these boutique hotels, they seem to have become a bit of a characteristic of Valletta.

Yes, unfortunately yes. I don't know what today. When I say its negative maybe I am being a bit elitist and being a bit conservative, I don't know. I like to question myself on all these things. But I don't think its beneficial because it could have done in a way which were a bit more aesthetically related to the city. Not having restaurants looking like restaurants in any other part of the modern world. A bit more effort, could have made things look a bit nicer, especially like for example...I can think of one or two examples. The restaurant next to the water polo pitch is aesthetically its.... let's just say it's unacceptable. You can't have something which has nothing to do whatsoever the visual weave of a city like this.

Ok, you would tell me that there are 20th century things that we now consider to be part and parcel of Valletta, so it might happen in the future.

(Final site – Niche)

This is my last site and it's one of favourite things ever, this very evil niche which apparently was carved by assassin who was imprisoned in Malta. I think he was a 'bonavoglia' a slave rower. It's very cool, because I feel that features themselves, although they are typical features of a niche which has to do with funerary things...it's looking at people and sneering at them and laughing at them. Even the elements themselves, the faces, are funny faces...the skull here has the teeth coming out. Even the winged hourglass looks evil in some manner. I don't know why.

I love this Ta' Giezu area.

How far does it extend? *I think convent goes round the corner, so it takes up almost half a block. Then the convent also has a door onto St Paul's Street. Then there are some buildings on this side and on that side.*

And there is Jerry Lee Lewis (statue)

(Moving up onto St John Street)

Well here people are always very impressed with this Manwel Dimech's house Infront of Nerik Mizzi's house. I don't like the way they have stripped the door, I used to prefer it when it was a bit darker. I don't think they have money to restore it, but I quite like it like this, a bit 'mitluqa' (abandoned). With an array of celebratory pigeons on the gallerija on top.

Ah there is a Lands Authority sign on it as well, let's see what it says. 'Urgent, came to speak to you, no one answered'!

Well, it's all empty, it's probably government property and it was used by squatters.

Manwel Dimech was a political figure, right?

Yes, a very interesting political figure but a very divisive political figure. He very much believed in helping the poor who were like very poor 120 years ago. He was completely self-taught, a teacher just learning on his own. And he was murderer – he had murdered someone when he was 17... He was very important apparently, in trying to raise the people against the colonial powers...

Then there is Enrico Mizzi over here, and this is going to become the museum of Enrico Mizzi. This is the house where he lived. He was another one who was quite a hot head, but he was very dedicated. He was exiled to Uganda, and then he came to Malta, became prime minister and died 6 months in 1950. There is a photo of him in this gallerija here. They 'internati' (interned in a prison camp)....but you have to look at both sides. The pro-Italians will tell you they were interned without due process, which is true, because when they were shipped to Uganda the appeals court had not decided their appeal.... the other side of the story was that it was a time of war and they used to suspect that some of them had ties with the fascist government...(more detail.)

.....

When you think back on the places you have chosen, is there a reason for the choice?

I wanted to do things that were different because, because I wanted to make sure that I would amplify...I assumed that other people would go for more conventional things. So, I said let me go for less conventional things, because it will probably give it a broader scope.

Interview transcript for Chris M.

Interview Date: 21/04/2021

So, we are choosing five spots, have you selected your starting spot?

Yes, I am rather choosing areas, rather than actual sites. Let me start a bit from the beginning. What do I value? My background is an archaeologist, I have worked in heritage for the last ten years and I am moved from the SCH, which is the regulating body in sense of cultural heritage and planning in Malta, to management. I was working at the Valletta Management Unit which was meant to manage the city, and now I am curator for Historic Buildings. The linking thread has always been Valletta. I do value the history of the space, the history of the building primarily, because throughout my research I repeatedly keep seeing as being misread, interpreted and even politized.

Ok, so tell me about this area, your first choice (City Gate/New Parliament Building)

Ok so when the project started.... The city gate project...it has been in the making for at least 30 years. Originally after the 1960s, 1964 when the gate was built, there were ideas of building a new parliament, building a new entry to Valletta. You have to consider that this part was hit by bombs, then it was demolished, they created a piazza (a car park). This space is from the gate and includes the opera house. The opera house is a controversial space, it is a contested space. What happened over here is that situation where I was involved first-hand. I was the case officer following the onsite works. The problem was politized since the beginning. The issue with that is especially in Malta, you are either in favour or you are against, there is no middle ground. That was one of the issues, people couldn't see objectively they all involved in favour of preserving, reconstructing. It's not a question of reconstructing, if they wanted to reconstruct the opera house, they could have done it 50 years ago, they could have done it nowadays and they could still do it. My role as the case officer to make sure that we leave the possibilities open. The problem I started seeing since then, this was 2010/11 the project kept going on till 2015. As you get involved with the project and other projects in Valletta, at the times I was following major projects, mostly related with UNESCO, with the authorities, with NGOs, following also what the public wanted. You start seeing that the narrative changes. The narrative how I know it, the narrative the normal joe knows it and the case officer and everyone else, it changes. It was always contesting the value – what is the real value? The problem I was always seeing was, how to understand value. This is something which in heritage its always an issue. What I value and what other cultures value are not the same thing. So, at the end of the day, my training as an

archaeologist kicks in – the site tells you the story, let the site speak for itself. It's no use romanticising, the building, the past – you know the usual romanticised concept. So, I started working towards measuring the value of a space. And this was practically the first site where...

We can walk down a little – to give a bit of context.

For example, we had of clashes with Renzo Piano, discussions, proposing ideas. For example, the idea of the Piazza it wasn't included in the original plans. What happened was, through research, through discussions through excavations the picture started to change and in the long run I learnt how well researched and what good background Renzo Piano had, and his team. Eventually, a few years ago, I came across his original project for City Gates, from the 1970s. And it is impressive in itself. For example, nobody has ever studied it, in comparison to what has been done. Obviously, there are limitations there are impositions, the usual history of a project. So that is one subject that is open for research yet, no one has understood.

How do you feel about this project, how it actually turned out, what is your personal not professional opinion?

I tend to value that it is a living city, you cannot 'museumify' it. It is a living space. The thing is, I am very interested to understand how RP perceived it, and how we as locals, as Maltese interpreted it. For example, this space was meant to be an open space, now its barriered. People tend to say because it's not safe, but yes that was one of the discussions during the project discussion. Obviously, there was an imposition. If someone had told RP don't do a square beneath the Parliament, they would have left it open. It is full of symbology, like every architecture since the 1600. Valletta has a stratum of significance, it can be either political, it can either be social, it can either be economical, (or) propaganda. In this case, my interpretation, the parliament select by the people, is based on the people, on the open space for the people.

Others see it as a missed opportunity, the Opera house.

How do you feel about that, it's a pretty temporary intrusion right?

But if you know the history of its development. So, it was hit during the war....and it was not so badly damaged. They could have reconstructed it. Why did they choose not to? That's another question. I cannot answer that question without going through the archives, through the material and understanding why. However, for me it was an opportunity, we could have reconstructed it, I personally don't like it reconstructed, primarily because it is out of scale with the rest of the city. When the design was done for the opera house, the architect had not even seen the site. If you see a reconstruction, with the scale of the streets, it's out of scale, like most colonial

constructions which took place. Some are very meticulous in blending in, like Victoria Gate, it blends very well.

Do you think blending in is important?

It's not a question of importance, but every architecture, every style every period has its ideas, has its values. So, I cannot impose my values on them. The anthropological perspective, I cannot say mine is good yours is incorrect, or bad or evil or....

So, what would you consider a more sensitive use of this space or are you happy with how it is?

No, I am happy with it as an opera house, how it turned out it did the least damage. We managed to give it a use give it a purpose without damaging it further. If in the next 20 years or 5 years they decide to rebuild it or remove it completely, they can do it. I don't think they will be removing it because it's a scheduled building. So, there's a whole structure, official formal protection.

(Moving towards Castille Square)

*But it's always the personal narrative. In this case for example, City Gate was very polarizing. If we go to Kastilja, when they redid the Pjazza, there was no actual communication with the people. There was no participatory planning, they just imposed a design. Some might think it worked, others might not. But it's a question of point of view. It's always the situation that you have to get this fine balance, between what is historical, what is unfortunately Disneyfication and what is contemporary value. For example, over here I am still trying to understand the idea why this was left as a pjazza (**space enroute to Castille**). Historically, we keep saying that the Auberge's had piazza in front, so leaving a pjazza over here what is it saying? Is it saying that this was the façade or not? Even by doing some urban changes, some urban development you need to understand what you are implying. It's not like you are doing changes just to do changes, you are narrating a story and you are imposing a story. Over here we removed a couple of buildings, most of them were post-war reconstructions but they were telling a history of provenance from the 1600s and 1700s. So, it is always a balance, between the past, the present and, most importantly, the future. That is what we miss sometimes. In Malta we tend to miss the wood for the trees, not just in Malta, but we tend to be more keen on doing that. For example.*

(Piazza in front of Castille – extension of first spot)

Over the discussion was, ok we don't have an issue with the design of the piazza. The issue arose when they were doing the lighting in the façade. People were saying that the works were drilling through the façade, demolishing the cornices and stuff, when in actual terms there was a whole

methodology. I hindsight I can say that government entities would be more in involving or maybe getting the PR up and rolling sometimes, more formalized. This wasn't the case of destruction, I have seen far worse cases where whole facades of certain period were removed, illegally, and the planning didn't take action. Instead, they sanction it. You cannot sanction something like this because if its lost you cannot get it back. And if you sanction you are telling them "Ok, you have your way." So, it's always a balance between past, present and future. And what I value and what other people value are not the same. At the end of the day, who is going to decide what is best, is it my perspective or the other people's perspective. In that case no, I don't see it like that I tend to go on – not the conservationist's side – but it's the building that tells you the story. It's useless to impose a system, a narrative on the building and its use without other knowing its original use. For example, if you have a large building with large spaces and you propose to transform it into a boutique hotel you can divide the spaces and it might work. But sometimes we've figured out through these 10 years that when you have these types of spaces and specifically in the heart of the city, they don't work. Why? Because the amount of modifications you need to do is extensive. You'd rather find a building, the type they call "Kerrejja" with small rooms around a courtyard and create a lift and then technically you retrofit modern amenities and you don't touch the structure. Those buildings tend to work better. So, it's about the survivability of the city, not just in terms of the community, but also in terms of fabric of authenticity. That is one thing which when we study at university, we tend to see authenticity, we tend to criticize the Chinese authenticity, the oriental idea of authenticity when they pull down whole historic buildings and reconstruct it. Then we tend to do something similar, we falsify and Disneyfy the past. We tend to fail, as a society, to understand what is the real value of a building and how to integrate it. Sometimes you don't have to go over the moon to find a viable use. The problem is that the market nowadays is imposing how, if you are going to do a boutique hotel you can't have 10 rooms, you have 12. But for those two you have gut and destroy the whole building. It would have been much better if, for example, the government creates some sort of scheme which can help, help with the placement of these (hotels).

You seem to be selecting places that are significant to you based on how they relate to your work and your view on the city...and these are almost case studies for your work relationship with the city.

Yes, it's never a clear...it's a case by case. But at the end of the day, you also have to have a general vision. It's useless.... **(points at building)** if you want to go up there, you can create an external lift, but if you put a lift externally you are going to impact aesthetics. You will create havoc with UNESCO, Local authorities...you can proceed with it but it's very controversial. On

the other hand, if I go inside within the building and propose to go through the roof then there is an issue with ICOMOS there is an issue...there is no middle ground. It's either black or white, most of the time there is no pragmatism. And when there is pragmatism, they see it as very politicized because I propose an idea, to someone, they will say "no because you are with that political party." If that party changes and becomes government, the same situation repeats itself. So I am always on the losing side, and that is the situation where the authorities, entities like the SCH (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage) especially, are always criticized, are always on the receiving end. They can never win, and it's a question of how we tackle...we are reactive.

(I stop Chris and we move)

I am going ask you what you feel about this piazza, as a person now, can you separate the "baggage" and have an opinion on it independently from your professional capacity?

*I tend to see it as...I cannot say dehumanizing...I am trying to find the correct word. It's not to scale with the concept of the city. How would you define a piazza? **(By it's purpose?)** A piazza, in an urban context is more of a communal space, this is not. Ok they fitted benches...*

(Moving along through Zachary Street)

The aim behind it, the scope of the street, was to introduce from the palace (which was meant to be there). The Grand Masters Palace was not meant to be in front of Castille, as they keep saying. That is completely wrong, the location was the Opera House, therefore linking to St Johns. Today there is the Piazza, but originally the building used to go closer to the façade. The concept was that you come out of this narrow street and see this imposing façade.... like this you just see a portal. When you go up there you see the belfries on two sides, its more architectural, its more encompassing.

(Stop in St John's Square)

Over here, the subject I wanted to discuss with you is how we misinterpret our history and the consequences of that primarily.

Practically, Valletta when it was built, the idea was of having several communities. Throughout my research I was always intrigued by the use of space, how does a city come into formation and how does space define the city and is defined by the city. By society, by politics by economy. For example, one of the key places which as a Maltese I value the most are churches, are my religion. So studied the placement of churches. Cutting the story short, what came out is that there is a

strategy for location of churches in Valletta, but this was never analysed. How does this affect, the planning for example. It affects the planning, because you start seeing different zones with different architectural styles, not just the facades but even the distribution of the houses and that, in the case for example of the boutique hotels, in some areas, the boutique hotels work because they need minor modifications you just need the installation of a lift in the courtyard. Others, for example in the heart of the city, they can be very controversial because you are gutting, gutting an existing space. This did not take years; this took a few years for my Master's degree – where I was investing time to understand the spatiality of the city. That opened up a whole series of investigations about the economy...

(Moving to Palace/Market walking along Merchant's Street)

These are key buildings – I would have loved to tell you, these places, these houses but unfortunately it doesn't work like that. When you are studying a city, you need to understand the political aspect and the community aspect. We are mixing the two, we study the city primarily from the monument only, and that gives you a skewed perspective, because it's all about the monument, it shouldn't be like that. When you study cities, it should be a multi-layered approach. The narrative, the diachronic development, society and how it's changing, use, function. The long-term is something which, sometimes, you miss...once again missing the wood for the trees. It's that narrative, that nuance which I am trying to grasp.

Is there any particular reason why we have chosen this route in particular?

I used to walk through the streets every morning practically, coming into Valletta, however this was the Merchants' Street, in fact it is still called Merchant's Street. For example, we are going towards the market now. The Market has, over the last 5 years been regenerated, there was a massive project, intended towards Valletta 18, which however transformed.... linked to the political, not with a capital P. This changed, the project transformed to give it a different....

This has been a very popular choice, so far everyone has mentioned this spot.

For me it's very special, because it is one of the most understudied spaces in Valletta.

Do you think you think the regeneration has been a successful intervention?

How do you define success, what is a success story. That is one of the issues. What would be a success for me can be a complete....

It's your opinion I am interested in.

For example, for tourists it's a success story, for the community there was a lot of criticism because used to be a very permeated building, is now confined. However, when you study the history of this space, from its origins, and even how it was transformed, you see that this changed because of sanitary issues, because of politics. The British did not want the market to be here, they wanted to relocate it externally, there was an idea of relocating it from here instead of MUŻA, Auberge d'Italie...

Why would that have been better?

It was further towards the entrance of the city, they even studied options on Floriana, and what they ended up doing was distributing it out across Malta. But markets are a notorious hotspot for community uprisings, the British did not want that. The Grand Master had kept it as close as possible, this was originally a piazza – the Market was built by the Grand Master, from his own money, to give a space for the people. When you see the documents, its says “a space for the people.” Over here, had you come here 3 years ago the situation would have been very different. The community would use that space, but it was, lets say, very “picturesque.” It was in the heart of the city and it wasn't maximised. Not everyone might agree with it, some uses I would have done differently. There was an idea of using the upper space as a cultural space, that did not happen – the project changed.

What do you think of it in terms of aesthetics, do you think it fits in?

I would have reconstructed the external part, instead of leaving it “damaged” as is but that's another issue. Because what could have been a good opportunity, ended up being a missed opportunity, because we tend to, as conservationists...The concept of conservation in Malta is, you have this object, and you leave it as is you don't touch it. That could have been reconstructed to recreate the volumes, the spaces the feeling. That's part of the city. Maybe in 20 years tome someone will come and the planning authority at the time settles it. It's something in transformations.

Apart from the fact that it is now a commercial entity, what do you think the building represents in Valletta today?

For the community I don't think it has any positive connotations. But that's the thing there are no other options, the small shops have been completely eradicated, to the periphery. Another thing for example – we tend to see gentrification as a negative thing, it has also the positive. Local communities living in Valletta used to have the negative connotation “Għax int mil Belt” (Translation: Because you are from Valletta), a derogative term. It's not like that anymore, and it's not just because of the market. There has been a lot going on, it started before V18 and

happened during V18, but for example very little has been done towards including the community. One problem I constantly see is how to engage community, when you are deal with people that's the more problematic part. You agree on somethings and people keep changing your benchmark. So, with a building you know where you are at, with people that changes.

Is there a space or a place in Valletta which you would have a relationship that is outside your work?

As a kid you have these ideas of what you wanted to do in the future, and I always wanted to be an archaeologist. But for me archaeology was not about buildings. When I started working at SCH, and even before, I started realizing that future and what we were missing in Malta was Urban Archaeology. Before that you couldn't do an excavation in an urban context, and document, because people would tell you "you're a nutter" full out. There have been occasions, but the quality of the excavations wasn't giving any relevant information, except in very rare conditions. I as a researcher, invested my whole career in understanding the city. In Malta it's more difficult than in Italy, Sicily or anywhere else in the world, because we are an island, and we just have this blessed city which is comparable to others. The other problem is I cannot compare to another city in the same context because we don't have another. The closest is Mdina, but it's a century, two centuries, three centuries before...

What about the harbour cities?

It is difficult, because today for example, if there is research about it going on, you tend to see that is very patronizing by the researchers themselves, and very parochial. They don't see it from a critical perspective. If I write something on this church, I am the expert on this church. It doesn't work like that in the normal world.

*Valletta, every corner of Valletta is important for me, because it tells me a different story. It's not like I have a specific space...I love walking, the streets are my favourite space in Valletta because they tell you a history. And if you walk, and you want to relax and follow a history of the Baroque, you just walk looking at the upper floors. If you want to understand Valletta during the British period you just walk at ground floor level and your start seeing the shops and the transformations, the economy.... **(Pointing to the tower on the Palace)**. That is the result of technology, of modernity...it can change.*

Years ago, there were projects to remove all the cables in Valletta. It started happening in some areas, then it stopped...why? Because they were removing these lights. These lights are very typical of Maltese streetscapes, so removing them you would have removed part of the

character. So, heritage, and understanding the city.... it's a very fine line, a double-edged blade you know. It can be positive, it can help you to cut, but you can also cut yourself.

Interview transcript for ClotildeM.

Interview Date: 24/04/2021

(First spot – Triton Fountain)

First on my list of places that are most important to me in Valletta is the Triton Fountain, the fact that it has been so beautifully restored. I have a special connection to Vincent Apap, because when I came to Malta to bury the remains of my father, I had to have the signature of 8 members of my father's family in order to inter him at 'Addolorata' in the burial place.

Have you got a family Crypt?

It's a crypt per se. My godfather, who was a career diplomat...he had gone around and collected this list of 8 people who were relatives of my grandmother, for whom I was named, Clotilde Mifsud, who married judge Pascal Mifsud. And she was, before her marriage, an Enriquez, so I met about 8 Enriquez. Vincent Apap was married to one of the Enriquez relatives, Maria, and I forget what her surname might have been. So, I met her, and through her I met Vincent her husband. So, I loved them both, but Vincent was just bigger than life, he was just one of the most wonderful people I have ever met in Malta, or anywhere for that matter.

So, this place has a personal connection for you?

So, it has that personal connection. I know that it must have grieved him terribly to see the terrible that that fountain was in. Full of rust, not able to be run with water, and then of course the damage done when the Government was running motorcycles over the top of it a few decades ago.

How do you feel about the changes to the square itself?

I think it's good, I think it's wonderful. The one thing that is on the end of my list is cleanliness, and in many areas, and this particular square they do seem already to have cleaned up the dirty chewing gum wads and I wish there was a squad that went around continuously, picking these things up with the steam machine and scraping them up. Because there have been psychological studies that have been made, that if people deface something, an edifice or flooring it gives other people permission to do the same. Whereas if you clean up a public area, people are less likely to come along and trash it. If only they would realize this and keep on top of this. It would be much, much lovelier space.

I am guessing that the fountain and this square are linked to your second spot, the Parliament buildings, how do you find this new gateway to the city?

Well, I don't mind it, because I worked for a design architect in New York City, I worked for several years for Richard Meier. And so, I like modern architecture. I think Renzo Piano did jolly good job of this. At least it was limestone, it's not some tower like you have over in St Julian's that is so abrasive. This fits in, and it really does. I don't like the location of it, I think it should have been at the tip of Valletta, not at the entrance. If, God forbid, there is any situation in terms of security breach, the people in Valletta are trapped. We will have to swim across the Grand Harbour like the Turks and the Knights of old did, to get out of the place. The placement of it, I think, is an example of hubris and ego run wild.

I think it's done quite well, very nicely. The thing that I think is deplorable is that money was not spent to have Renzo Piano build into the design some proper structure for security. Look at those tatty, decades old barriers that the police use. Oversight, maybe? But I think it's much more likely that the people paying the ticket for this, just said "oh well we don't need this we will do something else."

So, you feel that aesthetically it is fine, but I am sure you saw the reactions to it in the local papers? It seems to be a question of adapting to change. How do you feel a city like this can adapt to accommodate change?

I'm ok with it. What I am not ok with those gratuitous, stupid faux columns that were put up on the old opera house, that have no sense, no point in being there.

(Moving towards Opera House, over bridge)

Oh, and while we are here. On the last of my list of things, lighting. Why is there not some proper lighting under those railings the way there was occasionally in the beginning. These right here! The sun goes down and you cannot see where you are walking, you don't know if you are walking into a pile of dog poo or whether you are walking into anything that's on here. It's dangerous and it's very unpleasant, there needs to be lighting so people can see where they are walking.

And this is what I am talking about, the black wads of chewing gum that people have dropped and stay there, forever and ever word without end amen. These lines of old cigarettes in these troughs, last here for weeks and weeks and months. Quite unnecessary.

(Outside New Parliament Building)

Now look at this, look at the barriers for the grand police of Valletta, to protect the Parliament building. You can't tell me that RP didn't design something that was then 'X'ed' out of the plans, he is a professional.

These might be here because of all the recent public demonstrations?

No, but all the public demonstrations, and I was out here every single night for them to see what was going on. They were so orderly, it was amazing. People were out here with their children in prams, with their dogs. I mean it was a family outing for god's sake...

Why couldn't they have taken the money from these stupid columns and put them, a little more money obviously. These things should be water trenches, and it should be some kind of a barrier, that if there is a security threat, would then lift out of the ground. This does not take rocket science, it seems to me, but I have worked for architects.

(Heading down Republic Street)

In terms of time, I am just going to mention the Barrakka, upper and lower, I am sure other people have done that. I think they are a wonderful addition, nice to have them spiffed up, and a greater presence made.

People have mentioned them and pointed out that under COVID they were a nice quiet retreat. Yes, yes...

Here again, here is one of the classier boutique hotels, with its door closed. I have actually not gone for a walkaround in this one. Anyway, one of my mixed comments is on the whole rise of boutique hotels in Valletta. It is wonderful that they have taken so many of these derelict villas and done something with them, because from the beginning of first coming to visit Malta back in the 80s, I have seen this real estate that's just languishing, lying dormant closed and thinking, oh gosh this needs a really wonderful developer to do something excellent with these beautiful buildings. Well excellent is not really what we got.... I may have just waved at a complete stranger... These boutique hotels, they have been reigned in from... they have been made to keep the façade the same. Which is a good thing because some of them in Sliema have ruined the outside of buildings, trying to chip away to try and make it look older or something and it's ruining the stone. That hasn't happened here, but what has happened is that they have taken and been given carte blanche with their designs for what happens inside the building. So, with a four-storey building, or a three-storey building they have made five levels, so they have lowered the ceiling, they have gutted inside. And I consider this wrong. If you look at place from the outside and see this beautiful façade and think you are going to get the same feeling, the same ambience inside,

you're in for a huge mistake. Now if you just got kids coming to Malta, that don't give a darn about architecture or anything then you don't mind if you have closet that's this wide and tiny rooms, that are barely wider than the bed. It's got a bed and a nightstand either side and basta, that's it.

They have ruined the inside; they have ruined the interior, and this cannot be brought back. There are a few that have kept the main structure inside, but I swear I have not been in many whore houses, but this is the impression that I have when I have gone in to check out these hotels when I have had clients that wanted stay in a boutique hotel. It's just way over the top and in many cases, in my opinion and know the audience that I was dealing with, too religious! I mean nobody wants to look a great mural from the bible facing them when they wake up in the morning or go to sleep at night. It needs to be toned down! I mean this was not original to the building, they have painted it on there.

So, I think the boutique hotels are a very mixed bag.

(Still walking along Republic Street)

Ok the other place I did not get onto to was Castille square, which is one of my thumbs down places. There is not an appropriate focus to it, it looks like somebody's attic or warehouse for sculpture. It's too many strange sculptures or sculptures that have been rejected. I think it was Conrad Thake who had a marvellous article after that was unveiled and he said, "my first-year architecture students could do better" and I am sure he is right because I have a lot of respect for his acumen.

(Approach St George's Square)

The other thing I wish could be done is to resurrect the beautiful fountain that was taken away from Pjazza San Ġorġ, that is languishing on the side of Argotti Gardens. That needs to be on display somewhere. You cannot be all things to all people, and this includes an architectural space. So, they at least, thank heavens, they have not continued the very poor habit and practice of having the car park which I remember very clearly. The car park, in front of the Grand Master's palace.

The places we have selected, though not perfect and oft commented upon are all public spaces and popular, especially so this Pjazza and the new fountain they have installed.

Yes, the children love to come and splash in it in the summertime. But then, build a splash pool for children somewhere you know? This is where that fountain was, there aren't that many parades taking place on that square, you couldn't move it of course, you know to put a parade in

there or some kind of situation like that. But I think it would have been lovely to have that fountain restored and put back in place. This fountain is not bad, but ho-hum.

The other thing that is not ho-hum are these bloody lights, there were beautiful light fixtures in this square, which nobody much noticed, because of all the cars parked here. So, in addition to very uncomfortable seating here, these lights they don't really do anything to enhance the Grand Master's Palace or the fountains on either end of the piazza. One is being restored, the other one either they will get to it next time or I don't know if they have actually done it. But this light fixture, the two of them, they're too modern, they are in keeping with the uncomfortable benches, and with the fountain but so what. As far as I am concerned this a design fault a design mistake.

The other building, I bet nobody has mentioned this to you, FIC, the Fortifications Interpretation Centre. Has anyone body mentioned it? I didn't think so. Stephen Spiteri did the most beautiful job, that he supervised of restoring that building, of creating the displays. He is a scholar; he is meticulous about doing things correctly. I have the utmost regard for him and his knowledge and his thoroughness. Thoroughness is a trait that doesn't often raise its head around here and that the problem.

I am told that those two dogs belong to some sort of Mafioso kinda person, that lives nearby here because they walk around here a lot. They look terrifying to me, and I am a dog person. But apparently, he is supposed to live somewhere up there. I don't know if he is the owner of the dog or simply the dog walker, I don't know. I was on the street one day when they came by and whoever was with seemed to know what he was talking about, and he said, "be careful of that one."

Where shall we head to next, where is the next spot on your itinerary?

The other place is not exactly a building but is a section of Valletta, that I am very fond of especially in summer and that is the area of The Bridge Bar. That I think is one of the very nicest aspects of Valletta and one of the nicest Valletta happenings that occurs on a yearly basis. Probably did not happen last summer, but I don't know I didn't go by to check actually, I hope it will regenerate this summer when things seem to be a little more open.

That's quite a popular selection, other people have mentioned it.

Really? Oh, that's good. I am glad about that, I'm glad to hear it, that there is a consciousness about it, cause it's charming. And if you go down to the Bridge Bar, have a drink I am passed the age of wanting to sit on the steps on a cushion. But it's a wonderful photo op for one thing. But if you go down there on a Friday night, on a full moon, over Grand Harbour and listen to the, you

know, not too great jazz, but it's just the whole ambience is so wonderful. And to me it's just so Valletta.

This seems to be alluding to a sense of place, do you think this affected your decision to move to Valletta in the first place?

I am a New Yorker by birth, so this is my New York and people laugh and smile, so this to me is my New York now. I don't need to be living in midtown Manhattan, but to me, the convenience.... I have been self-employed for some many decades I cannot even begin to count, so if I am not on tour with people or in American seeing career counselling clients, I would be sitting at the computer working at my desk, a solitary kind of work experience. So, if I need to go out and do something, I get my people fix by going out, running two or three local errands, I don't have to have a car, I don't have a car here, because I was used to decent public transportation, hint, hint. If I have to, I will go to somewhere like Sliema where there are big supermarkets and I will do certain shopping every couple of weeks or ten days, but basically, I can get most of what I need here. Certain things I want a certain way or a certain brand, then I go over to a big supermarket and have things delivered to me.

Living here and being here more than 25 years, I can never go out the door that I don't run into somebody I know, and this is fun, this is nice. I like this. It gives me the socialization that I need, that you don't get from just making a phone call or having a Skype call or a Zoom conference or something like that. It's different, when you run into somebody you don't expect and have little chat for 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 minutes. This really suits my temperament; the way was living in both New York and when I moved to New Hampshire those last 10 years. This is a combination that works for me, and I know it works for me.

I got talked out of moving to Valletta in 1995 when I first moved to Malta. Some of my well-meaning relatives said, "Oh no, you don't want to live in Valletta." Now in 1995, Valletta was very quiet, not like this now. But it would have been fine, but I listened to them instead of my own instincts, that was a mistake, every now and then I make a mistake and I give somebody else credit for knowing more than they really do and having their interest at heart or their life experience at heart not considering mine. Big mistake, you need to follow your own inner voice.

So, where are we heading to next for your final spot?

The only other thing on my list here is Fort St Elmo. Has anybody else mentioned it, hah!

Very few people have walked to the southern end of Valletta.

The thing is, how familiar are you with Fort St. Elmo? Now its owned and managed now by Heritage Malta, so there are parts of it for which you have to pay an entrance fee, but there is another little section in the beginning that anyone can go in and there is no entrance fee.

The thing is, maybe they ran out of money, but they have restored most of Fort St. Elmo very nicely, very discretely. The other thing that they did though...you know of course that part of 'Midnight Express' was filmed down there, the old section of Fort St. Elmo where they filmed 'Midnight Express' has not been restored. And I hope they will not restore it. It has such a powerful aura...it has such powerful energy, to look over a railing and see that old section there. And if you are familiar with 'Midnight Express' you really get the feeling of that place and what it would have been like. Of course, that was supposed to be a proxy for Turkey, you know, and the bad circumstances in which prisoners were kept.

This is a great dog by the way, great looking foxy breed.

So, at any rate, I hope they keep that as it is because it's very powerful in its own right. But they have done a wonderful job with the rest of Fort St. Elmo.

What are they using it for?

Well one thing that I appreciate very much is that there is a literature and poetry festival that happens every summer, usually it is the end of August, or end of July beginning of August. And they get Mediterranean people to come and read their poetry and I think University of Malta probably does most of the organizing of it. But it's a very nice project, I have been going to it, oh my god, in the old days they held this over at the cemetery down by the public library. So, Jesus, you took your life in your hands, you know if you could get out of that cemetery without breaking a couple of legs you were very lucky. Thank heaven the poetry and literature festival moved from there up to here.

Of course, it's very convenient for me, but it's a lovely space there is place for the food to all be in one section, it works very nicely for that particular event every summer. Then there some other musical events that take place over the summer.

Do you think the setting adds a particular Valletta ambience to it?

Yes, but what doesn't particular add is when Heritage Malta schedule a Christmas get together for their patrons that you know have yearly ongoing membership and they put it down there at Christmas time and you get blown away...

The moto of Malta should be, instead of...whats is it, "something and conquer" it should be "confuse and conquer". You never know where you are, the street signs aren't proper way placed and then they will restore a building and take down the street name where you look for it if you live here long enough and you are used to seeing the name of the street on the corner in the building.

Basically, many of the changes that have come to Valletta are basically good. There are things that need improving there needs to be, as always, more accountability in Malta, so that boutique hotel contractors need to be responsible in what they are doing and not squeeze out the last 2 ft.

Interview transcript for RachaelR.

Interview Date: 29/04/2021

(Ditch, bottom of Valletta Lift)

You have selected a very particular area for your first spot, why is that the case?

Yes, I have chosen this spot for a number of reasons. For me it's historically quite significant, and it's got a lot to do with even the purpose why Valletta was constructed in the first place. But I chose this because I think it reflects a number of different stages in the political history of Valletta as well. On a personal level there is something somehow quite majestic about this spot, you know having all the walls surrounding us, and all this stone, it really makes you feel quite small as a human being in this huge historical space. You have all these layers of markings on the stone, and construction abutting the stone and all that. But also, in recent years – obviously I have been accessing Valletta all my life, for the past 48 years – but it was only about 15 years ago when I was working on a project that I realized that we are so used to coming into Valletta from the area near the Triton fountain, where in my days there used to be the bus terminal and coming in through City Gate, so from a landward perspective. It was normal for us to be accessing through that route, and I always remember for example my grandparents talking about the days when they used to be out socializing, trying to pick up boyfriends and things like that and walking Republic Street, which in their times was Kingsway.

So, for me at the time, access to Valletta was always landward, or through land. But really and truly, the Grand Harbour is extremely important to Valletta, which is just right outside here. So, for me, this is symbolic of the original access point of Valletta. Until recently as well a lot of goods, were transported by sea, so logistically speaking this was a very important connection to the Grand Harbour, where the key trading access into Valletta was from the sea, not from the land. So for me this access – it might not have been the original access that all the merchants used to use – but for this is symbolic of that kind of access, that for the most part of the history of Valletta was central to the economic activity that used to take place in the city. Nowadays at best you might get a few cruise liner tourists coming in and using it, if at all, because very often they have the big coaches outside waiting to whisk them off to Mdina or Ta Qali and these sort of places.

But this as well then has a second meaning, this lift is quite symbolic politically as well. It had been here for quite a while, I don't know when the original (lift was built), possibly late 1900C,

probably even at the same period of the railway. And it was demolished at the time by the prime minister Mintoff, who had sold of the metal to raise funds for the government basically, for the state.

When was that?

Probably in the 1970s, but I stand to be corrected on that...but Mintoff actually demolished the original lift and sold the metal for money, at least that's the story on the street and that's the story I know, you might want to check the facts⁴⁰.

So when, and then, in the 90s I think, this was rebuilt (2012 actual) it kind of was a bit of a political statement, renewing this access to Valletta from the seaside. It became a very practical way to access Valletta again, and a bit more of a nostalgic, even romantic way accessing Valletta, which I really like using, because somehow that heady feeling of going up this lift, you are seeing the walls disappear and seeing the Grand Harbour suddenly when you are on the top, there is always somehow that childish, magical feeling to it which I really quite enjoy. It's part of this of this grandiose nature of the city in a sense.

What is your opinion on a modern architectural intrusion on the city?

Let me tell you, I have no objections to adding modern onto old because it's a reflection of the time when it was built. There's this big debate obviously, about the Opera House for example, its not one the things I had thought of actually speaking about. However, people always want to recreate the old Barry architecture and rebuilt the Opera House as it was before it was bombed before during the war. I don't agree with that, because that building was destroyed, so unless we are going to show the "newness" of whatever might be reconstructed instead, then we are not really doing a service to that point in history when that building was destroyed, that's a part of the history as well. So just because it was destroyed does not mean that we have to erase that moment. And I quite like, not many people like the idea, but I quite like the idea that an openair theatre was built instead, very modern with all the spotlights and metal work and everything. Because it is one of the only actual formal outdoor theatres that we have on the island really. So, they made use of the same space for the same artistic purpose, but in a different style....

I mean in a way it's interesting because you have these people who still look at Valletta as a majestic city, not realizing maybe that the theatre was actually a British contribution to the architecture of the city. I mean I am not undermining the British period, but I mean my grandmother has always spoken Italian and there was a reason for that probably you know, my

⁴⁰ Lift was built in 1903, and was dismantled in 1983.

grandmother and her sisters actually. It was a product of its time, and many people still believe that it was one of the shining periods of our history, there is still a lot of this colonial approach, “ah at the time we had work, we had food, we had everything,” we were looked after kind of. So, there is that element of nostalgia perhaps, where people want to go back to the past, back to the former glory. Is it a form of escapism? I don’t know. Is it a bit of a romanticised approach to the past? Possibly.

But I don’t agree with the reconstruction, because we need to reflect the signs of today. Not everything we do today is perfect, there is a lot of destruction of our heritage, which we are doing today which I don’t agree with either because we should know better. If heritage is destroyed during the war, you know “all is fair in love and war”but when we are doing things nowadays, when we are living in such a comfortable period in life, you know, that I disagree with then, the destruction of heritage.

(Moving to catch the lift)

So this is symbolic of these different layers basically, relating to access and logistics to Valletta, and also the changing periods when different political powers either destroyed it, or built it, or destroyed it and rebuilt it, as a kind of finger to the past.

(Waiting to catch the lift)

So, I love this eerie feeling, dwarfing us sort of thing, about the whole structure. And the whole spot we’re in, even all the walls and everything. I quite like the whole juxtaposition of the old and the new.

...Lets, wait for this one, as it has a view of the sea.

The sea features commonly in people’s characterization of Valletta.

It’s funny, because I actually was born in St Julian’s, grew up in Sliema and then I lived in St Julian’s for many years. So for me, the sea was always important. And in a way this why I also like Valletta, you have this majestic city that’s surrounded by the sea, it’s a promontory you know.

But what I wanted to say is that Valletta for me has lots of different layers of importance. First of all two my grandmothers used to live here when they were young, I am not exactly sure where. One used to live close to Hastings...somewhere between Hastings and South Street. So, they used to live in different parts of the island at different parts of the year....

(In Lift)

So, this view, you have the rock ok, the buildings and suddenly you see the sea, that wow moment...anzi, we don't have a big cruise liner blocking our view.

(Out of the lift – Second Spot, Upper Barrakka)

So, in a way this would be the obligatory "walk-through," for me personally...In a sense I love this harbour, because for me this idea of movement, all this trade. I know that it is not directly part of Valletta, technically speaking, logistically...Valletta is like the headquarters of all that trade and stuff that was going on in the area. So, for me having Marsa and The Three Cities really formed part...of the whole logistical hub, that was so important for the island for so many years. In fact, my research now was on the wine industry in Malta, the wine sector in Malta. So obviously I had a chance to visit 4 wineries which were really located here in the harbour, whether its on the Marsa side, technically Paola. There is Delicata and Marsovin down there, close to each other, then there was also Coleiro and Dacoutros, those were merchants really more than winemakers.

I had the chance to visit the Coliero building, which was a time-warp, where they had no computers...its down there, near the tourist bus. They were located there, because logistically speaking it was easier for them to bring in goods and export, and it was all transported by sea. So, for me this is all part what made Valletta, such an economic importance. And then obviously, all the huge fortifications are here to protect Valletta because this is where all the trading used to happen in the past. Anyway, this is more recent thinking, now that I am a little older, I'm thinking about these aspects.

But for me Valletta was also, the fact that....my grandmothers both lived here when they were children so they all went to school here, though I don't think they went to the same schools. And my father was actually born in Valletta, I know the building, but I have never actually been inside it. He was born on Christmas day, and called Noel. So there is always that connection in a sense, and I always remember their stories of coming to Valletta, of my grandmothers walking up and down Kingsway to try and catch the attention of the men walking up and down at the time.

In fact, my paternal grandmother always says that she caught my grandfather's attention when she was a schoolgirl, he used to follow her to school you know, and they used to flirt with each other. But always in Valletta you know, so for me there is that aspect of family heritage, although I never actually saw the buildings, and never actually been in the buildings. There is an aspect of imagination, where I built up this scenario in my head of how my family came together. And I always remembered in my mother's mother, in the 70s and 80s when Valletta really became a ghost city, but she was like the older generation where she always had to come, once a week religiously, to go to the old market to buy something, even if it was just a zip. We always used to

joke that she was going to Valletta to safety pins or buy some buttons – my grandmother was very good with her hands. So once a week, she always used to come and she didn't drive or anything so she would come in by bus and used to walk quite a bit, always dressed really smart because everyone came to Valletta very smart...

So there is this family story, which to me is obviously very personal, but that overlaps most of the city, and I say most because there were certain parts of the city where they would never go to. Which would have been the lower areas, the “Manderaggio” area for example, what we would say in Maltese ‘qih il-belt’ (the lower part of the city). Those were the more colourful sides of Valletta or maybe at some point they might have considered them the more dangerous parts of Valletta. I very much doubt that my grandmothers would have walked through Strait Street for example you know. Because of all the sailors and the bars and the fun that was going on at the time, the life that was taking place over there.

It was a different generation as well, these were two women who grew up during the war, their most important development years – they were teenagers during the war – so this idea of walking around, like we do nowadays, normally through different parts of Valletta – I know people who have houses or offices in Strait Street nowadays, its changed use. They would probably be like “ah you are going down to that part of Valletta, be careful...” I can hear my grandmother saying that to me.

So in a way, what I am talking about here are different parts of my life and the different meanings that Valletta has come to have in different stages of my life.

Where are we heading to next? (Next spot Republic Street)

So now I actually want to do go down to Republic Street, which is the former Kingsway. The objective is to end up at the Bibliotheca, which is where I actually did a lot of research for my PhD, so I came to really enjoy that particular building. And it was a really magical opportunity to spend hours working there.

In a way I was thinking of actually stopping a little in this square and talking about spaces and how they have gone through so many changes. I remember it, having these central strips which were planted over, with flowers and different trees, and the roundabout. It kind of gave the impression of a different type of access point to Valletta, when you were driving in you had to navigate this square, it was part of the vehicular land driven access. Whilst now it has been pedestrianized, which is nice in itself the idea of pedestrianization, just its just created an empty space in a sense.

Do you think it functions as a public space?

Not as much as it used to, I find it's keeping people out. In the past somehow people used to fill up that whole space, hanging on to the trees usual during celebrations more than protests, say for example there was a change of government, very often the party that won would have all their supporters come over to the square to go and wait for the prime minister, the king to come out!

Whilst now in actual fact, in recent years since this has been done it has become more of a place of protest, there were all the "Occupy Justice" protests taking place over here which were very important events in recent years marking a very dark history that we are going through at the moment I personally believe. In a sense this is one area which has really been revamped quite a bit. So, in terms of all this regeneration of Valletta, this has been one of the focal points. It's also one of the more visible points.

One perhaps very interesting initiative which is quite new, is actually the creation of the stock exchange. Which for an independent nation, is actually a relatively recent formal structure, for a different kind of trading obviously nowadays.

(Walking to Rep Str – beginning of Merchants Street)

So here for me, this particular spot is another kind of crossroad. On the one hand you have some of the key shopping streets we would call them nowadays not really trading streets. You have Merchant's Street, I mean the name is obviously symptomatic of what it's all about, and this would be the road I would always imagine my maternal grandmother, Nanna Miriam, coming into to do all her shopping once a week....she would have her different stops, whether it was Anastasi whether it was this or that, the Suq. She always had her places, these tiny little shops, it looks like a bazaar kind of thing. It was a different approach to shopping as well, to the whole consumer traditions that we have. Nowadays if you want a set of water glasses, you have 10 or 20 to choose from, whilst they had one or two maybe, different sizes and that was it....

But for them there was that social aspect of doing all their daily needs and daily routines, because they used to meet people and whatever. For me the social aspect of Valletta is a little different, and we are walking in that direction now. This is the route I would normally take; I love this feeling of the two chapels, the two oldest chapels over here.... Santa Katarina, which services the Italian Community. My family were always very Italophile, so also feel that kind of affinity but have no justification for that.

This was the old Theatre which we had discussed earlier. Which I quite like as it is, not in an aesthetic sense, more in a functional sense, but I don't mind this like – you know the old railway

stations for example where you always had these iron structures, the industrial epoch. There is something so beautiful about it because it shows the development and modernity, but there was a certain beauty to it, we hadn't lost those aesthetics.

(Head of Zachary Street)

Obviously here you get a nice glimpse of the cathedral as well. My father used to work at BoV(Bank of Valletta), there was a time as well when he used to work at the Bank over here, so occasionally we stop into his office you know. So again, another point which has a lot of meaning to me. Here you can even see Wembley Store for instance, on the corner, which was one of the main 'goto places' for people who grew up here to go and buy the nice stuff, the more luxury bit of shopping perhaps.

Hi John! You should be here in Valletta having coffee with us ok!

(Third Spot – Republic Street)

So, this is in a way, the access point which I always...its probably the road I have threaded most, through or at different points in my life.

The revamped Renzo Piano constructions and everything – I should be ashamed to say this, but I am not ashamed because it is something we did at the time, but I have often parked over there in the old square. I like Renzo Piano's work a lot, because had spent 2 years studying in Perugia in my very early 20s, there was an old medieval city which was buried and they had excavated and Renzo Piano had done an intervention to let people pass through the old city underground as a kind of access point between lower Perugia and upper Perugia, that is how I became really rather fascinated with his work. I quite like the work of Renzo Piano; I like the way he has played with the shadows on that building.

So this is the view, the vista which I always remember all my life, it has never changed. There is always the crowds of people, there are the different shops, the different colours the flags hanging out kind of thing...the pigeons, the flying rats!

So even for example, whatever she needed to buy, even if it was jewellery or anything like that, there were specific streets that she would go to. So, for example, St Lucy's Street, that was famous for all the old jewellers, and it still is like that.

Valletta is really technically a tiny city, in 15 min you walk from one extreme to the other, birds-eye approach. But there was always a place for everything. So, you could come to Valletta and do everything you needed in past. It had areas of specialization, of specialized trades.

(Approaching the Great Siege Monument/Daphne Monument)

It's the Great Siege Memorial, that's right. But yes, I think it is a very important memorial, especially since its located right opposite the law courts, so its very symbolic of fighting for justice.

Again, here there is another point which to me is relevant, and this is where it gets into a more intimate aspect perhaps of Valletta. In two ways, my grandfather used to have an office here in Kingsway Palace....and my mother used to work here when we were children. So very often, after school, we would come here and just go up to the offices of my grandfather – they used to import shoes – so I remember this office full of the smell of leather. We used to go in from one of these doors over here which is a really hidden kind of door. There would be a staircase behind one of these shops and you would just sneak in and get into this whole warren of offices and stuff. It's the hidden innards of these buildings, the guts which is quite fascinating as well.

(Republic Street – Near Casino Maltese)

So, this now is another crossroad. My Father's Father was quite involved with Casino Maltese. So again, a lot of events we used to come in and it used to fasciate me at the time. It was a very male dominated space sort of thing. Not quite a gentlemen's club perhaps as you would refer to it nowadays, but you know. But as long as you were with one of your male relatives who were members of this place you could come in and there was a section for the women, we would go into the lady's bathroom. Which I sometimes still do, they have very nice lady's bathrooms here! It is a relic of old Valletta, in fact Victor, my uncle who you know, got married over here, they had their reception over here. So, there are quite a few family memories as well.

But one thing which I normally love, obviously we cannot really see it happening today. There are loads of lovely coffee shops in Valletta, and I like some of the more traditional ones like Prego for example. But I like to sometimes come and sit at Cordina, and many people like to come and sit at Cordina. Because it's a people watching spot. Its close to the law courts, there are many legal offices down the road, and now one of most important trades in a sense in Valletta are the legal services. So often see the front row of tables, unfortunately we cannot see it today, occupied by groups of lawyers – like these four gentlemen for example, I am guessing – they would be sitting down over there, everyone sipping their coffee, or supposedly sipping their coffee, but all eyes are scanning who is going up the street, who is talking to who. There is this aspect of social trading sort of thing and all the gossip....

It is a stark contrast to Castille Square

It's the polar opposite!

(Final Spot – Victoria Statue and Bibliotheca)

But then for me, if we just walk a little to the back of this (tables), the opposite side of the square, there is something a bit more historic. There are two things. One is a contested spot, item or thing, which would be this statue. Many people say why do we have this queen, sitting here – it's actually called Pjazza Regina so, ironically, we are using the Italian name for that. But on a personal level I like it because there are certain textiles used in the statue, its not textile is sculpted of course, but – and there is a word for it – when you are imitating one medium on another I forget the name for it, like the same technique they use in the hypogeum. Imitating architecture through sculpture – in this case they are imitating cloth weaving. There is a lot of lace on this robe, and I have worked a bit with lace makers, and I have an interest in trying to get lace recognized as a UNESCO heritage thingy – intangible heritage.

The statue is important, but I want to go one step further back now, onto the Bibliotheca. Right behind that green door (indicates upwards to the second floor) behind the balcony marking the bibliotheca, is the researchers reading room. Have you every been inside? It's a lovely space where you can actually register as an academic, thus allowing you into the “sancta sanctorum” of the library itself. It's a wonderfully, maybe I wouldn't say primitive, but it's a rather archaic system where you just order the things you want to read and they go and get them for you, so you don't just browse. But they have reams of historical knowledge archived over there, so for me it is a wonderful historic archive, where I found more information than I ever expected. When I was doing my research, I actually came here, just to eliminate that there was nothing of interest to me in the library but in actual fact there were a lot of coincidences....

(Break – conversation digresses to the participant's research)

And that all happened here in this particular space, it started joining a lot of dots for me on personal and on a professional level as well. So, it this kind of hidden space, not many people know about it, maybe a few interested tourists might walk into a look around.

But it's that beautiful space, right behind those doors over there, where you can just sit and get lost in this historical world, this social aspect of history. It's bang in the heart of the city, but I don't know how many Maltese would have actually gone into it for example.

This is the last special spot which I wanted speak about, thought its more of a route kind of thing, but for me these spaces are the various overlaps between my personal history, my grandmothers stories, to my professional history as well. I had done my research here, I had worked on different

projects in Valletta, worked sometime in the Archaeology Museum. One time we had actually excavated in Castille underneath, we had gone to the older sewers of the Knights, proper archaeology! And there is also the more posh side to my life, these fancy weddings in these very exclusive spots, supposedly anyway. There are these beautiful buildings, it's a pity we are not using them. We are trying to revamp the city by creating all this hyper entertainment, when in actual fact there these spaces which are crying out to be used on an everyday level. That's my Valletta for now.

Interview transcript for AlexP.

Interview Date: 12/10/2021

(Starting point – Blitz Gallery/Home – St Lucy’s Street)

So, this is my first spot, I thought definitely the house had to be part of it, it made sense to be part of it. I have a very kinda strange relationship with the city and the house, because it is very much a relationship based on a nostalgia that I don’t know. Ok, so it’s kind of a nostalgia of my family, of my mum.

So, this a family house then?

This was my grandparent’s home, so my mum together with all her siblings were brought up in the house. My parent’s engagement party was actually held in the house, in a room which is now a gallery. My mum from here for her wedding, but the house was vacated in the very late 70s and I have no memories of the house as a lived-in home. So, then it’s either through hearing so many stories or pictures or whatever, I for some reason feel like I know it lived in. It just bizarre.

So, the family left in the late 70s when it was kinda no longer fashionable to live in Valletta unlike today. And then it was abandoned for like 33 years I think, and then I took it on in 2007 I believe, something like that, when still nobody really gave a shit about it, about the city about the house, I mean it was almost worthless. We had it on the market for a while and besides the fact that my father was a person who was impossible to buy property from, there was simply no market for it. So, it remained with us.

(moving to a specific location – the roof top terrace)

And the reason kinda I picked this part of the house to start with, is because it is the part of the house that the least number of people have seen, because the building was eventually...I made part of it as an Art Gallery, part of it is my own studios and the top floor is my home. So, in the sequence of how I explain this is the sequence of least people that see it. So the gallery is the one that is most seen....

So, this is mostly a private space?

This kinda the most private space and it’s also the space which to me...if I look what the property looks like today and I look at say the photos which to me make me think I know the house occupied, it’s drastically different obviously, but this looks exactly the same, apart from the fact

that it's got waterproofing. I think it's the part which through it being changed for use still looks kinda like it always looked. So, I have a photo of my mum sitting there with her big you know, 60s hairdo and it kind of looks practically the same. And over time kind of you know it sort of turned into this area which is trying to overcompensate for the lack of green outside in the city by kind of making your own bit of green.

Unfortunately, it's kind of, in the past year or so, quite a bit of the being here has been taken away you know, because that wall has been built. You where the nicest thing about this place is being here when the sun is going down and seeing the dome of the Carmelite church start to light up. When it's lit up, until the lights warm up, it's red, its bathed in this red light and then eventually you know it becomes this normal light. But that **(the wall)** has, you know, eliminated half of it.

I am going to make a huge effort not to complain throughout this....

It's fine, it does not necessarily have to be positive.

Yeah, but you know, I mean there is a reason, if I am still here, there is a reason for it.

(Pointing to the physical changes around her roof top)

You know so certain things have (changed)..there's a roof top pool on the Embassy, there's that extension there, there's that wall which has gone up. We used to properly be between three churches here, and this (change) is in the past year you know, even though I have been at this house, fixing at this house for many years, in this past year we're starting to lose that church, we've lost half of that. You know St Paul's is still kind of peeping over the building there.

I mean I am extremely privileged to have you know to actually have four stories of a building, I am up high in a sense, but kind of you know, you still feel this...so you know kind of the rest of the building is kind of safe in the sense that it's always been surrounded by neighbouring buildings. So, its status or its experience is not really challenged. But this (the open space) is extremely challenged, so for me this is kind of the place, an area which I treasure most like I said because it's kind of....

It's the one that's most exposed to change for you?

Yes, and it's the one that, that was least exposed to change by me, but most exposed to change by outside forces. And it's the one which I think like, the most vivid memories that I have constructed myself through stories are of the roof and of the stairs....

And they are particularly family connections?

Yeah, yeah, they are totally you know, family connections so, and sort of yeah, it's kind of...Like I say, it's a very strange relationship I have, a relationship with the nostalgia, because it's not a nostalgia I know. It's not because I remember the family here, it's almost sometimes bizarre to me, because I almost done understand why I have such nostalgia for the memory of the house, because I have none of it.

I think it's what attracts a lot of people to Valletta, a sense of nostalgia for a past you have not experience yourself.

Yes, a lot of people are attracted to a past that's not related to them, this is specifically like my family you know.... so, for example I know that my grandfather was a very big patron of that church, and I think that a lot of the carpets which are in that church were actually donated by him.... these are all stories that I know out of hearing them being told. He was the kind of man who was a very, you know, he was somewhat wealthy and generous man, but a very like...nobody knew the things that he did, like when he died there were so many people at his funeral which none of us knew, and a lot of people were kind of...I particularly remember one story of this woman who came like to his funeral and was speaking to my mum, and she was like, as politely as possible, like "thank you, but who are you?" . Apparently, my grandfather had put all her children through school, had helped them and nobody knew.

So, he was a humble benefactor?

Yeah, yeah, he was a very humble benefactor we figured out afterwards. So, this (the house) is part of him, and we could have lost it, because for various reasons, some of them also being the fact that it was unwanted, it was worthless.

Well, it's good that you popped onto the scene then!

Well, everyone though I was mad then.

(Leaving the roof, via the 'garigor' (traditional spiral staircase), and Alex tells me about small room now used to house the washing machine)

The washing machine room! Yeah, this has the original frame, because there was a door that use to open onto here. And when I found the place and started fixing it, it had shelves of some sort, and my mum always says that my grandfather use to dry sausages in it.

The stairs (main internal) have an interesting story as well, because my grandmother was an obsessive clean freak, washing everywhere. OCD before anyone knew what OCD was, and she used to wash these stairs every single day, all four floors, so the kids weren't allow...it used to

have this velvet carpet and the hooks for the brass bars are still here and it used to run all the way down the stairs...and children weren't allow to use these stairs, so they used to have to use the spiral staircase.

Is that why there are gates?

Haha, no these I put in myself. But when she was in the bathroom, where she used to spend hours, the kids used to run up and down the stairs.

(Heading out of Blitz – meeting Mary the cleaner)

Mary has been with my family longer than I have; she was with my mum a year before I was born.

(Speaking to Mary) You remember her (my mum) coming to Valletta every day.

Mary: Yes of course, I use to come to meet up with her, to work for her.

Alex: Because when my mum got married, and my dad built a house in Balzan, opposite the Corinthia, not where you know me, the other one. She (my mum) couldn't get used to not living in Valletta, so she used to come every day. My dad used to go to work, she used to come here...and then you wonder why it am here (laughs)

Mary: Just imagine how happy she is that you are here. It nice Valletta though, but it was nicer, but everywhere was, everywhere was better. I live in Bugibba now, but I'm from Hal-Ghaxaq.

(Heading out – Lucy Street)

Which way shall we go? That's up to me aye, that's the problem.

Totally up to you.

Let's go through here, let's go through the tunnel. The problem is that...over time my world has become more inside the building rather than outside the building.

What do you think is the cause for that, is it work or is it just what's happening in Valletta?

It's just what's happening everywhere you know.

(Turn into St Patrick's Street)

So, this was like one of the, when I first moved into the house, I used to go to that little shop, to buy bags of Jelly Babies. I used to be a 'jelly babies person' – then I tried to develop slightly more healthy and ethical habits of eating. But it's kind of, I don't know, these little areas kind of don't change. So don't walk through here anymore because I don't eat jelly babies anymore but today I am going to happily walk through here because it is still looks the same.

This is one, from a certain perspective, one of the remaining authentic areas or sides of Valletta?

Yeah, I mean for example when first started living here...so I opened the gallery in 2013, but I moved into the building in 2015, so there is a three year gap. This is kinda more related to what I used to do when I used to....when I started living in the city. So, the things I used to do most is actually walk down the road to go swim, get jelly babies from here.

Where did you swim?

Where did I swim, just down the bottom, just to the side of the where the water polo pitch was, which now you can't actually go there. It's some lido, marina whatever, lido not marina. So, I used to triangulate this a lot, go down to have a swim, come here (the shop) not just for jelly babies, but you know various things...yeah...and I used to go to, there is a tiny baker in a parallel road, you know the one?

No, I don't know the one.

If you have not seen it, you may have seen him on his like scooter with a box at the back and he takes bread to 'Trabuxu' (a wine bar) and various other places.... he is round here.

(turning out of St Patricks on to St Mark and into Old Mint Street towards the bakery)

I guess these local shops are far and few in-between nowadays.

Yeah, pretty much, I mean, there weren't that many to begin with I think, but yes.... this is the bakery. And it's funny actually because even though I lived here, I had my pattern, I spoke to everyone in Maltese, everyone still always kind of treated me like an outsider, like a foreigner.

I used to come here and get bread, and actually had a really bizarre experience here and I had stopped coming. I always used to come and get the same, like, little buns of bread. And I came here and there was this little kid one of the family, I think they live in the bakery or something. He came to give me the bread and take the money and as I was giving him the money – I tend to be quite clumsy – so the many fell on the floor; I went to pick it up and it fell again. And one of the adults, probably his mum said, I am going to tell you in Maltese – “look at this one – she is throwing the money on the floor for my son” – like she is paying him by throwing the money on the floor. And I was like.... obviously they thought I – even though I used to go there like so many times, they obviously still – I used to go there and speak to them in Maltese – they obviously kept treating me or assuming I was a foreigner, an outsider. And although I would never throw money on the floor to anyone, I felt embarrassed to walk in there again, because these people thought

that I actually threw money on the floor for the kid. So I kind of stopped going there. It's weird no, it's a bizarre thing to happen.

It is bizarre, especially when you are trying to fit in?

Yeah exactly, it's like. I also thought it was quite shocking that someone would actually think that someone could do that.

Maybe it feeds into how people from Valletta see themselves right?

Maybe, yes, yes. Or even like the previous or the first shop that we went to...

(Turning up onto Lucy Street)

We are back here – we have done a loop.

Yeah, we have done a loop, let's go up this way. This is Lucy Street, so we are walking back passed the building, my building and up. But I mean it's never, apart from something like (previous incident/story) which was like a complete like bizarre situation - and clearly a misunderstanding – even though I always felt like an outsider it was never in a malicious way or anything like that. And I used to find it very strange because in reality, the generations who would have been here before would know my family, who were kind of very respected – like I was telling you about my grandfather. Like so for example during COVID lockdowns, and I used to spend a lot of time on the terrace, it was the time when I spoke most to my neighbours, having lived here for like 6 years. Always very chatty with the people who live across the road – then eventually after months of being chatty, they started to mention my family by name. “So, Yvonne was your aunt, and so your...” You know, but I had been living here for years.

(Turn off St Lucy's onto Old Bakery – stop at Rubino)

Now we are turning up Old Bakery Street.

Yeah, now it's very busy, a busy road. So, this is kind of a bit of, I always remember, just like everybody has their pathways and patterns. So, my mum always... - so my grandmother never used to cook for the family – so my mum used to...my mum and her dad used to kind of take care of everyone. And she used to have a pattern, with my grandfather, and these were all places which are non-existent or existing in a bad way. So, they would go to the Suq to get the meat and the fish, they would stop at the flower booth to buy flowers and they would stop at Rubino for cannoli. So, the Suq looks like hell, the flower booths are – there is one left and the moment he dies the flower booths will be gone. This (Rubino Restaurant) is the only one that has been – so besides it still existing it still has all the signage of the stuff that they used to come and buy.

Thankfully – obviously it's not owned by the family who owned it then, its owned by the Diaconos (Maltese surname), the foodies – but at least its owned by people who the sensitivity and the sensibility to respect the heritage and retain you know, some of it. But don't get me wrong, I mean obviously progress is the way of the world, you can't let nostalgia hinder things growing or getting better, but there's ways and ways. I mean Rubino is one of the best restaurants we have here, its multiple Michelin star awardee, it's not like they are stuck in the past and clinging onto something that does not exist anymore, they are just doing it with a certain amount of sensitivity, which I think is what I kind of also tried to do or I do with my own building. I mean even when I restored it to a gallery, I made sure that I did not eradicate its domestic fabric, its history. I kept the fireplaces, I kept the...I retained as much of the colours that were on the walls for example. But it is not feasible for it to be a home today, it's too big. It's from an era when people had much bigger families...

(Turning onto Old Theatre, up to Strait Street, heading towards the law courts)

This is Strait Street, do you want to go through?

But let's go that way, because this way is terrible.

Why would you say it is terrible?

Because it is the opposite of what I have been saying, but like I said I try not to make my opinion sound like a constant complaint. The thing is, it's very easy to just complain. I think complaints that fuels some kind of action is one thing.

But it is quite a large part of what is considered an improvement in Valletta.

Yeah, I mean, Strada Stretta at some point also had an artistic director (laughs). Yeah, I mean again, it was one of the places that first attracted a lot of change, from its history as a former redlight district.... you I mean this is the story of many cities. It's always these kinds of areas which attract people first because the heritage appears like something quite cool and attractive, and then you have this sense of action and things changing, and then there's like a very important crossroads....

Tip one way or the other?

Yeah, this is exactly what I feel about Valletta in a sense. When I started the gallery, it was really nice, it was a time where you could feel there was a lot of things happening, it was quite organic.

A sense of potential?

And you had quite a few...I could think of quite a few people who at the time, like myself, who at the time were living abroad and came here and wanted to give back or be part of it again- exactly yourself included – so you know exactly which time I am talking about. But then that's where it could have either continued with that kind of energy or commercial interests would kick-in and overcome the energy which is I think what happened. Now that kind of commercial interest completely reconfigured the dynamic of the city to make it inaccessible to those came with that energy.

Let alone those who have lived here all their lives who are now further excluded.

Exactly, that's another problem in itself for sure.

(Strait Street – Vincenti Buildings)

*But this part of Strait Street, maybe because it is so much occupied by governmental buildings and occupied entirely by one ginormous building is kind of I think the one that is least affected or can change too drastically. Unless you know it is all sold for a massive hotel and they will still call it a boutique hotel, even though it will have like 500 rooms, but anyway. So kind of - I feel these two sections(**Vincenti Buildings and the road of Trabuxu**), this part for that reason, and that one, they are still what I know them as. It hasn't changed. You have the middle section, which is just utter disaster, and then you have the lower parts – the part where there is 'Loop' and 'Tico Tico', it's a mess it has become a dump – and then you have got...that extends a couple of blocks. And then you have the lower part, the Gut, which has gone through a massive regeneration. I think has been, I mean from a design perspective it has been done well, I don't like the stage in the middle of the road that's a personal view, but think it has been regenerated quite well. But still hugely, vastly changed. This on the hand, even though you have Airbnb's here, you know you've got 10 Strait Street, you've got lawyers offices here, but it still does not feel destroyed or intrusive – it does not feel exploited. You have financial offices and things like that but...*

Well, they are the previous occupiers of Valletta.

Yeah exactly, so like you said, it's not like I expect this place to be an Mdina, that's not what capitals are really, but I do have a problem where one kind of attacks the other.

They are competing forces, right?

Yeah, they are very competing forces...

(Strait Street onto South Street)

Oh, what's this? I haven't seen this.

This is South Street, right?

Yeah, this is South Street. I always remember I got my first... There used to be a really nice AGFA sign, I think somewhere on this building because I think it was the offices of, I think they were called ONV Photographic and they had a – actually where there is that office, the financial services office, that used to be a photography supplies shop, I think I bought my first set of proper studio lights from there.

The Nani sign is still up (a shop sign).

Yeah, but the Nani property is still in the hands of the same family, you know. Prego (coffee shop) who is walking on a tightrope at the moment, we don't know what's happening there.

I remember close by, there was – definitely it was somewhere here the AGFA sign I was talking about – and there was another one on St Johns, and they were agents for this Czech brand of photographic enlargers, which you saw I still have in my studio, 'Myopta', I think they were Czech. And I had bought it from this tiny, I don't even think it was a shop, I think it was like someone's office and he was the agent. And as well they had a really nice AGFA sign, but it was on St. Johns (street).

(South Street onto Republic Street)

Where are we headed next?

Sadly, we are going to head that way (towards City Gate) and sadly because I heard there is some kind of structures there which completely negate Renzo Piano's open city, open gate, but there is a reason why we are going there. This is where my tour is going to end.

So, City Gate and the Royal Opera House come up quite a lot with my interviewees.

No, I think, building it to what it was is the wrong kind of nostalgia, because there are things which are appropriate and relevant to their time, and I think we already have enough trouble filling the theatres that we have without having you know... So I'm all for more contemporary experimental way of approaching a theatre space or a performance space. But having said that it (the Royal Opera House) doesn't work, because I have sat there through performances and if you are sitting through a performance in summer all you hear are the fireworks. You are surrounded by restaurants with any amount of live music on various corners which seeps into there. And quite frankly I'm sure it's the opposite way as well, because the last time I sat in there, I was sitting

through a performance of 'ŻfinMalta⁴¹' which was fantastic but involved a lot of screaming. So I can just imagine, you know, the people sitting here who are not in the theatre trying to have dinner with all the screaming out of context and not being interested in theatre and dance.

Interesting that you are bringing up contemporary changes to the city, standing right next to new Parliament building.

Yeah, it's been a big example architecturally, but it's a very bad example socially as well. Because it's a place which...it's also place that has seen a tremendous amount of protests...and this how the state responds, with barriers. And not barriers during the protest as the necessary security, let's call it that, but they've never left. If you look around there is no protest so, why are the barriers still here? That is a passive-aggressive sign of power then. So, you know...do we need to talk about this (Flower Planters) not really?

There has been a lot of mockery on social media.

Yeah, huge mocking, there is nothing good to say about it. I mean, we have no green in the city, we have beautiful gardens in Floriana, but the city was never made to have public gardens, and just because you place a couple of plants to try and distract people from the amount of damage you are doing to the environment, is quite frankly just insulting. Besides, they're ugly – I mean it's a baroque city not a farmhouse.

(Moving towards City Gate and the bridge)

Actually, Josh come – so this is extremely sad, I don't know what that is. I haven't walked out here, I've just heard that it's here. We should cross, because the reason I am ending here is a personal one, beside the problematic public ones. But my ending here is related to the fountain, but you cannot see the fountain anymore, I used to be able to see it from there, from the road.

Do you have any idea what that structure is for? (Tent near Triton Fountain Square)

That one? I don't know. We can take a few guesses, it can be a Christmas market, it could be an ice rink in the middle of the sunny Mediterranean. The reason I wanted to end here...maybe it's a sample of what a Metro Station will look like.

The big new discussion.

It's crazy...it's crazy.

⁴¹ ŻfinMalta is the National Dance Company

To me this is why you know an example of the reason why I wanted to end here, for me it's very hard, just like with the building its very hard, to separate the personal from the public in a sense when it comes to the city or when it comes to the house and everything. And this place is a little bit of a bittersweet place for me, because my father passed away 2017, so come December it will be 4 years. I remember one of the last times – so this the fountain spent a long time being restored and remember it was for a long time covered with whatever, huge panels, you could not see the fountain. And I think one of the last times he went out, actually one of the last times we were together in Valletta, I walked with him here, with my parents here, because they always used to park in the carpark, and it was still clad. And every time he used to peak through the boards, to sort of see the progress. So, it he never saw it completed, he never saw it uncovered. So, kind of one the ways for me to kind of deal with his passing, I used to come here and see it for him. So, for me, there were times when I could come and see it for him and times when I couldn't, but when I couldn't... I could still see it from near St Georges square, you know all the way. So, you know what I mean, it's kind of....

Today, I mean you never get over something like that, but enough time has passed for me to be able to come here whenever I want. But that the fact that has been taken away from me, that I cannot see it from there, is almost like unexpectable on a personal level. Because was not designed for me, but it was architecturally designed for you to have a clear straight-line from the heart of the city all the way to Floriana. The way that our city gate has always been before was a very, it was something which closed the city, and this is a gate which opened the city. So, it's kind of, you know, it's a huge lack of sensitivity to put something like this, when all you need to do is, if you really have to do it, is make it shorter, put it on the other side and not kill the openness of the architecture. So yeah, it's a sore point.

And actually, when I thought about this and I thought we should start in the house and we should end here, it's like a personal start and end, all I was aware of was that thing, that light up at night (on the bridge). I did not know this was here (the tent) so this was like an added knife to the heart.

Interview Transcript for JensB.

Interview Date: 14/10/2021.

(Starting point – Home – Vincenti Buildings - Out onto Old Bakery Street)

We are at your starting point, which is what?

Ok, we are at the starting point, well this is not really the starting point, this is an intermediate point, but this is where I live, or better no, I am not living in the stairwell, but this is the building in which I live and I live here for I think 12-13 14 years. And this is actually an interesting building, this is where the bakeries were of the Knights, which then after the British built the new bakeries in Birgu, this building became obsolete, and not only today there is a lot of development and speculation. In the 30s, somebody called Vincenti bought the entire block and built new apartments and that is why this is called Vincenti Buildings. Remarkably, it was built in 1934 and even though everything was destroyed around, this didn't get a single hit.

No damage during the war at all?

No there was a slight, in fact there are these kind of photos along Old Bakery Street where you have the rubble from part of the church, from all the buildings around and you have this looking as it had just been pristinely built.

(Exit Old Bakery – Onto St Mark's)

There was on the side (of the building) a small corner damage, it is just in the centre, at the end of...I call them the "Happy Steps" – well not really, I call them the Happy Steps, my wife calls them Happy Steps because there were loos on those steps and that's where she would go. So, she was happy when she was a kid if they would reach that point, I guess. So just where that narrow alley ends on Strait Street, exactly opposite VB had got a hit.

Now what we are doing at the moment we are marching here through St Mark's Street and what I will do is we take a brief, well we are not actually taking a brief tour we kind of going to the outside of Valletta, and...

Is there any particular reason why we are heading to the outside of Valletta?

Yeah, because I find Valletta particularly important from the outside.

That is a strange coincidence because the only other architect I interviewed made the same comment, so maybe it has something to do with the way you guys see the world or the city?

I suppose its two-fold, but in this case it's a bit personal as well, because I want to take you there – originally, I had wanted to start the whole thing from there and then going back in. But I think we can actually kind of, go down there, I quickly explain that to you and then we can go along the shore and go through the tunnel bottom back and then we climb up the hill and end on the top I think that should round up that time frame we have.

I mean I can start telling you already – the thing is why we are going down there is essentially the first time I got....when...Before I moved to Malta I come to Malta in the 1990s for some student summer thingy, and we lived in Fort Manoel, or we camped out in Fort Manoel, this was way pre-restoration of that place so it was completely...

(Windy conditions – Heading down to coastal road)

We might have an issue down there by the sea.

Well, if it is too bad, we just change plan, because it is windy down there, is that potentially a problem for you? Let's see!

So, you were telling me about Fort Manoel.

I am telling you about Fort Manoel, so we would live there and I obviously was as well a little bit of – A I was in the my own head and I had a habit of just like going swimming in the morning and...So actually the closest I came to Malta the first time, not to Malta to Valletta, was that would go from Ft Manoel, the open stairs down to the sea and actually jump into the sea and swim across to Valletta.

Oh, from Manoel?

*Yes, and essentially, I ended up just down here (near **Cockney's Restaurant**)*

So, your approach was very marine to Valletta?

Yes...so where now there is the rough sea there were all little boats and so on, so I swum onto these boats. The problem was I could not get out because I figured that it was a very bad idea that I didn't wear swimming trunks (laughs). So, I really couldn't go ashore.

Are you telling me you swam naked to Valletta?

Yes indeed, which is a pleasant way to do, but not when want to go ashore, especially in a Catholic Country. So basically, my first near landing Valletta happened exactly here, and that's why I thought a good point to start actually here. We don't need to go directly there we can just go down and then march there (coastal road). And that's why I thought it was a good point, and when I moved to Valletta or Malta in general in 2001, as well for the nearly the first 2 years I would actually almost every day come down here in the evening and swim, as long as the weather would permit, from down there or from the steps – I can show you – or here in the pool which as long as it was not too dirty. Now it is demolished, and they build something new.

Was there a reason that you chose Valletta above anywhere else in Malta, was there no other option or?

No for me it was actually, I did not consider any other option. I came to Malta because of personal contacts and a friend who had asked me to work for him. And interestingly enough the reason why even consider Malta as a possibility to live and to work at least for a while – I mean I never thought I would stay 20 years frankly but – even at the student workshop on one of the last days, I had been over to his flats and he has place quite prominently located on top of Valletta from where you can have a very good, round view like. One side you kind of seeing Sliema and the other you are overlooking the silhouette of Valletta. And I always used to say in later days – I even lived there for a bit more than a year in that apartment – and for me it was very emblematic for what Malta, and Valletta in particular, stands in a way. Because away, especially in the evenings when you are at a high point and you are looking out of two windows, and on one side you are looking out to Sliema, today even more, but even then - and on the other window you are looking out and you have the steeple of the Anglican Co-Cathedral and the Carmelite church dome, you are essentially totally between orient and occident. Because like, looking over to Sliema in the evening with temperature and you have the right soundtrack you think you are somewhere like in the Middle East, Beirut or something like that. And if you look in the other direction it is like you are in Rome or somewhere. So, you cannot be more on the threshold between cultures or I mean even geographically we are on this kind of threshold of different identities. And I found that interesting, it was a small place, it had the sea and it gave as well the impression that there were lots of books in that department. So that for me it made it interesting, so I thought like “Ok – you can be cultured here, and still South”. So essentially how I ended up here.

(Walk interrupted by collapsed lighting rig)

Well, we will take the shortcut. So, that is like the context of everything. So basically here, down here, I go swimming, and it's as well one of the things, where else do you live in a capital where you see from your living room if the ferry to the other town is working or not and you walk in 5 min to the Mediterranean Sea. So, under that aspect, the quality of life, if that is what one cares about – but what I care about the quality of life is a remarkable point of...

Do you find that has changed since you have moved here?

Well, this aspect not.... Has it changed? Many things have changed and lots of things not necessarily to the better but going down here and jumping into the sea still works. I mean, they cordoned off the swimming zone, make it smaller year by year.

Commercial interests creeping in?

Well, when I came here there wasn't any kind of swimming zone cordoned off.

(Heading up tunnel – shortcut to bastion walls along Marsamxett Street)

It was a very public space.

Yes, and it still is essentially, but I think it's the increasing boat traffic – there was always boat traffic – but yachting and the amount of motorboats and the boat traffic in and out on a normal day, especial in summer and on the weekends, has increased quite a bit. One doesn't always realize so much because you see it every year, so the difference is like not.... you don't see the radical change. But when you dig in the memory and you kind of remember then it is quite a bit more.

Did the fact that it was a historical town have any bearing on your choice?

That it was a historical town as such not necessarily, but I guess I would find it – I would not be attracted to going to a town without history. Essentially any kind of town which exists does have a history, and this one doesn't even have such a long one in the context of other places considering. I guess as an architect what is fascinating is that it a planned town, that it's one of the few executed examples of a planned renaissance town. But is that really what would trigger the decision to move somewhere I wouldn't say no? I don't think that's the case, I mean it makes it interesting, it makes it interesting to be there. I think it contributes to what it is about, but I wouldn't say this played any role in my decision making. My decision making was more based on, what could I do and work and how could I live.

This area has been intensively restored.

Yes, I am actually surprised, something must have happened with this, because these are all essentially private apartments so...I wonder how that was organized and financed. The entire block is done in one go and they even managed to convince people to have the same colours on the balcony so there must have been some incentives. I don't know, maybe there is a Lands (dept) ground rent on that or something like that so that there is a kind of...

It's a government restoration?

It looks like a government restoration.

It's also the side of Valletta that is displayed to the yacht marinas and the expensive apartments across the harbour.

For whom Valletta is nothing more than a mere silhouette picture from there expensive balcony vistas.

(Heading off Marsamxett Road, up steps to Independence Square and Archbishops Street)

What I find a real pity - even though I can see somehow the practicality for certain people of these handrails – when the local council started installing them everywhere in the centre of the stepped streets, they really kind of impair the natural appearance of these streets in a not advantageous way I would say. Because you always had the handrail on the side which would assist people. Why they had to be a bulky one in the middle of it has always failed my understanding, though I guess in some streets there are too many doors to have a consistent handrail so....and then the principle is applied across everywhere in a broad brush.

(Onto West Street)

So, this is West Street.

Yeah, I think this is West Street. Well, if was a Bruce Springsteen fan we would obviously needed to go to East Street, not that I don't like him but not that much that I have to go to East Street especially for him.

East Street figures often in people's itinerary so far.

Well East Street has some attractivities and there would be stories we could talk about there as well, but you know. Especially since you say you had a lot of people there already – what's the point? I am very happy to walk along the 'Outcast Church' even though it was the church of the rulers for a while.

(Onto Old Theatre Street)

But the funny thing is that after the war they made this real big effort – I mean the Carmelite church was not even fully destroyed – but they made a big effort to kind of build this thing, to rebuild this thing, just to be able to build the dome which was higher than steeple of Anglican Church. What is even more interesting is that actually this thing is actually a very interesting architectural feat, the dome itself. We can see a bit (entering church). Because it's not round, its oval, which obviously has a lot of reference in Baroque, Roman Baroque church architecture especially from Borromini. But the interesting here it really works well for the silhouette, because it appears to the...when you are looking from above the dome appears narrower, and when you look at across from Sliema it appears wider.

So, it makes it more imposing?

It's in a way like – if what I wanted to say now wasn't an oxymoron – one could almost say it is like a three-dimensional 'trompe-l'œil' – I doesn't make sense to say that, I understand that. But it still works that way because it gives illusions of scale and relationship. In fact, if you are looking at it from the front, if nobody knows, and you say "where is the Cathedral" everyone will point to the dome and not to the two pokey towers you hardly see from anywhere.

Where are we heading towards?

Now we are heading towards Library Square (Republic Square). It's going to be a bit architecture heavy, but you expected that no? But the funny thing is like, in a way architecture...because Malta is a strange fish, because it looks like such an old place, but in a way like, lots of the stuff here is really not as old as it looks because it has all been rebuilt after the war.

And modified since it was built originally.

And modified anyway, I mean it was always a dynamic town. I mean it started off as a Renaissance Town with the respective architecture so that is why as well, I can only wonder when people go on about the Baroque City Valletta and so on. Because essentially it is not what it is. Neither in its foundation or its architectural expression, just because there are a couple of Churches which got a baroque overhaul...

And some of the buildings.

Yeah but like the palace isn't I mean, the palace is still Renaissance much more than Baroque really, in its austerity.

(Onto Republic Square)

So....but the palace is kind of interesting, seen in connection with the overall for library square which they had started, just before they (the Knights) were kicked out. I mean we can already see the passage over there, which is part of the library in fact. And the end of the Palace which we can see here, where they had as well started to change the façade of the Palace, to be more grand, more decorated, bigger openings. And so, they had kind of approach of, of change to the urban fabric. I mean probably the intention was to change the façade of the entire palace to manifest itself like those two blind windows. So, there was an intent to basically have the wrapping of the square to a continuous architectural element, as for instance from the library the corners matches directly over there. But is as well like my favourite...one of my favourite corners in town is not where it happened but where it didn't happen.

(Walking under arcade)

I mean I love these kind of parasites, these intrusions – my favourite flower shop he is only here in the morning – he is very ancient, he has only two teeth left, and I don't think he is very well, because sometimes he is really happy and smiles at me, but I think that's when I have my hair open he thinks I am a girl!

But the library is a very nice building, fantastic hall upstairs. But what I really like is this end point where you see where they kind of already prepped everything to turn around the corner just on the other side. And you have this kind of pieces of stones which are meant to join to something which never materialized. Hitting on to the old building which still remained there which is the original, a much older building and the passageway. Then you see as well that they were thinking in very economic terms because they kind of still considered to retain a passageway over here, but it would have been much narrower than the old one. And the building line would have moved forward. I find it quite, I mean I find it really interesting because its so representative of, and so counter, against anything for anybody ever saying “No everything has to be restored the way it was and it has to be stagnant and it has to be...”

It's a demonstration that in the past things change and are malleable, not fixed in time.

Because things are not fixed in time, if are saying “oh this is timeless” (pointing up)..of course it's timeless in a way but, it was as well new and different than what was before, and back then and many things which now considered a nuisance and eyesore or too modern or this and that. People would have probably said the same when this was built or not God knows, I don't know I wasn't there. But people just like to complain and people just like to be comforted by the things they know. And I think in architecture, unfortunately, everybody has an opinion and very few have an idea (laughs) and if you are working in that profession you have to deal with that constantly.

(Moving to Republic Street via the arcade – Kingsway side – stay in arcade on Republic Street)

How are we doing for time? Ok let's just make it through here so we are protected (from the wind) as long as we can have it and so we kind of make it to the top of Valletta. Then you find – I mean, it's interesting – we did not go there now but like, as well a place like Valletta obviously always as well has been politized. When one thinks of the post-war kind of, the post-war arrangement of population, leave alone the Mandraġġ area which was kind of built with social housing which then was filled with people on the cards of a particular political party. There is as well the whole, St Paul's area where practically they kind of just kicked out people and demolished a whole quarter, just to break the political leaning of the town, which is like quite amazing.

I always find it sad that, they are lately going on about all these cisterns and everything, but somehow all these cisterns were mainly there to feed, I mean there were fountains on everything. They missed the opportunity on Palace Square, they missed the opportunity over here. I have no problem with the monuments they put instead, but like its more the loss of the fountains which....but I guess like its water and....

(Off Republic Street on to St. John's Square)

Let's go underneath there (arcade around square). So we can just have a chat in the votive pictures (unclear). There is as well this whole history that they kinda of have chopped these trees, which the British have planted, with most of the time with crafted arguments of damage to the structures, because none of them really has evident that anything has been damaged.

Which ones?

Well, they chopped a couple down here, but I don't know if you recall for instance in front of the Suq there were 6 big Ficus trees which created this very shaded beautiful front square, and I found that place got completely destroyed essentially, but that is a completely different story.

Crops up a lot.

But that the Suq is a kind of missed opportunity. I mean I am not agreeing with people that kind of, the dedication of the building should have changed. I think it should have surely remained a market and remained a food place, but there are so many places in Italy and in Spain for Mediterranean open markets like that, which work well, but didn't need to do this kind of over commercialized stupidity, and one didn't need to change to a museum. I mean we have enough museums in Valletta, and we have enough empty places which still be museums if they needed to. But in this case I think its like the whole set out approach, the urbanity and the access to

people as well. It's the same problem, a little bit, like with the whole Parliament. I mean the Parliament was lifted from the ground so that everything underneath would kind of remain an open piazza, and now it's all cordoned off by police barriers. I remember they wanted the theatre itself an open piazza, and I remember discussing with Renzo's people when that was a plan, and they said "Ah this needs to be open and people go through." We had the discussion that that would not happen because this is Malta.

What was the consideration?

Well, the consideration was...well Renzo's people had this key idea that things would just kind of be open for everyone as one plans ideas. There wasn't an immediate objection from the then client, but obviously there was as well to the end of the project a kind of change in Government and there were cost issues and I think as well, the whole opera part was the most contested, publicly contested part of the project. I think RPBW (Renzo Piano Building Workshop) made one big mistake because when cost issues came into play in the end, even from their own end, they started making compromises and chopping on the budget for the theatre. So, they as well intervened with architectural concepts. So, for instance the steel columns framing the whole thing they chopped by 2 metres so the whole thing became much more heavy and clumsy. The whole project was cutting out the entire sound system, the deflector panels over the stage. This was meant to have, it was planned and catered for everything to have a dedicated sound system around so you would be a nuisance to the surroundings, but everybody has a perfect listen.

(Walking down Zachary Street)

All that was cut out but is cause for a completely different story but in the end, by cutting on all these things for a theatre, they proved everyone right who was critical about it. I mean it still works as an open theatre space, but you have all these makeshift additions afterwards, the speakers and the panels, so it looks a bit shabby. I mean they don't use the backstage; they have the backstage filled. I mean they use the – when they built MUŻA they filled, in front of the windows of the changing rooms and breakout rooms for the actors and so on, you have now ACs and Generators. I don't know who comes up with something like that...but yeah...its that kind of thing. But it was as well interesting working on that. But whole corners are a kind of ways where you can see like, as well, how things change. And sometimes things work out, they function, and other don't. And for instance, the parliament functions very well, because – one can discuss the architecture, one can discuss – but the place which many people questioned I think is the least thing to be criticised. For the simple reason that it has brought the democratic process in the foreground of daily life. Everything before was always hidden away. They would go into the

palace; nobody knows exactly which room they were in or anything and here it is forefront. Even protests are easier. But that is what democracy is about. And with a place like Malta, well where democratic system and an independent democratic system is in its infancy and all these things have to happen. It has to grow through mistakes or whatever, I think it is very important....

(Move off to the shelter of MUŻA's Café)

You want to go there? And we can stand in the dry and finish off?

So it is that kind of thing which is interesting, and which interests me. Even the reaction of people, I don't mind when people don't like something. Because everybody is entitled to his own thing.

This is the key for me, what is determined to be heritage and what it is that represents heritage to ordinary people and residents with an emphasis on the Opera House as a flashpoint.

For me, the opera was built by the British as a statement – it burnt once already and then they rebuilt it again – and I mean Valletta was offered to be rebuilt by the Germans, by the German Government straight after the war and Malta refused. So, thing is there have been studies, and we made studies before this whole thing happened, of how actually the shell could be repurposed if one would restore the original shell to repurpose it for a theatre the fact is, since it would be a new build it would need follow fire regulations, escape routes etc. So, A, you can't exactly rebuild it, and it would fit less people than Manoel Theatre. So, it is completely inefficient, it would not make any sense. That's the thing. Over there, what was there, there was a bit more of a hill there was an entrance to the railway station and there were some houses on top of it. And for many decades there was a car park and there was a car park inside the opera as well, so from my position this is a major improvement.

And even the gate, the gate that was there. The gate was changed in the 1950s or something to make it wide enough so to make carnival floats go through.

And it was quasi-fascist in design.

Ok, but then again, I am not kind of judging by historical language in that sense, if that was at the time.... nobody goes to Como and destroys Casa del Fascio just because it has been built as a party headquarters, it still has architectural value. I mean there are so many buildings which have a political package to carry, for me that is not an argument because content can change meaning. Its not as much important what it looks like on the outside than what happens inside that defines at the end of the day.

It is also about personal attachments and experiences to a space that maybe differ from intent. That's why lots of these discussions where certain architectural languages and expressions are politically stigmatised, I do not agree with. It is like that, but I do not agree with it on a personal level.

I think one needs to as well detach oneself from the opinions of people, at the end of the day there are decisions and there are certain ways one goes about it. But to round it up, going away from that, when you are talking about Valletta and how it feels for instance, what is really remarkable is when I came to Valletta and I lived here and I would visit a friend across the town there would be, after eight, nobody in town. The town would be completely empty. People thought it was like....I thought it was great. I mean the semi-Ghost-town had certain quality of life to it, even sound levels and everything. And now during Corona it was almost like that again. And you got completely 'delusioned' – how quiet, you could go out with your child without being runover by an electric scooter or falling over a million tables – obviously now after Corona everything got much worse now. Its anarchy at the moment, I mean so much so that there are concerns that an ambulance can pass if somebody needs emergency treatment. Everybody puts tables and chairs without any permit – I mean I don't care about permits in that respect – but if it endangers other people's lives, I think there is something wrong.

So yes, Valletta changes but it has always gone through up and downs and will be always...it is as well a proof for, I mean many people denounce this gentrification, but on the other hand it is a very good example for a place where lots of people have written off, but it still came back.

Interview transcript for CharlesB.

(Translated from Maltese)

Interview Date: 14/10/2021

(Start in Christopher's Street – outside German Circle – Heading down towards Grand Harbour)

So where are we going to go?

So, we will walk down St Christopher's Street down to area of the Grand Harbour, so we can talk a little about the residents. Then we will head up to the centre of Valletta where are there no residents, although of course there are residents as well. But there are few of them, a limited number. In the lower areas of Valletta is where residents, the few that remain, are to be found. Because the resident is leaving, they are leaving Valletta.

Why do you think they are leaving Valletta?

They are leaving Valletta for many reasons. They are leaving Valletta, firstly because they can no longer afford to buy in Valletta. The rent law does not make things easier.

Did the laws change?

The Laws became, and continue to become, in favour of the capitalist. In other words, the world is moving increasingly in that direction, that of capitalism. Especially when you have a town like this, that is so monumental in and of itself. Today, Valletta is appreciated a lot more than it has in the past, however as a resident, we are losing the culture of the people of 'Il-Belt'.

What is your relationship with Valletta?

I was born here; I still live here, and I will die here. I am not leaving from here for sure.

So, your family is from Valletta?

My Family is from Valletta, both my parents belong to Valletta families.

Changes in Valletta have been radical, there have been huge changes, which have resulted in a loss of character. Because Valletta is not made of stone, Valletta is about the individual, the personality. What many may find 'Hamallu' (Lower class), for me, is culture. You may ask me what I mean. I no longer see the people from Valletta that I used to see.

What sort of people?

The people from Valletta in the past were more familiar, much closer knit. Today, from my own experience in my own street, I am the last Maltese person living there.

Which street is that?

East Street. A big part of East Street became a hotel. I have nothing against it becoming a hotel, but I like to think that moderation is nice in all things. Again, you cannot stop progress, in other words, those who have money like to invest it, they have invested in Valletta, there has been a lot of progress from the perspective of private enterprise. The central government did involve itself a little, but mostly private involvement. The Central Government focused on specific projects, like City Gate, Republic Street...

(Briefly turning on to Mediterranean Street and heading towards East Street)

So, you live somewhere here?

Yeah, East Street, at the bottom, where Leicester Garage was in the past.

(He greets a passer-by)

So many of the things that I hope to keep seeing I no longer see, but we have seen new things. I am not the sort of person that changes history/the story, and nobody really is, but Valletta has experienced many different stories, many changes, for centuries. So, in the times when Valletta was being built there was a certain type of person. When it was completed, there was a new type of person. In the first war (World War 1) under the British, there was another sort of person in Valletta, and in the second world war, Valletta was one of the only places to find work, so the population grew yet again! So, people came moved into the city from outside, I think the population rose to some something like 26,000 at the time. So, the story/history always changes....but the way it is changing now, this intense progress all at once, I think is positive but also negative culturally. Positive because of the restoration of city blocks, the houses were no longer abandoned as they had been in the 70s and 80s.

When I bought a place in Valletta, 25 years ago everyone thought I was mad. With the money I spent to buy my place, at that time, you could buy a sizeable bungalow. That never concerned me, I love Valletta, I love the culture of Valletta and I love to live Valletta, and that is very important. For me, my greatest fear is not the development – of which there has been a lot of abuse, a frenzy of abuse by the capitalists. Again, there is no way of stopping them, because the small fish never swallowed the big one. My fear now however is that we are losing the character of the street, and Valletta's beauty is that you live it not that you live in it. That you wake up in the morning, on a day off, and you head to 'Strada Rjali' (Republic Street) for a coffee, you meet up

with a couple of friends, perhaps they came from outside the city, then you head to lunch. This is all part of the culture of Valletta, that you live it, that you appreciate what you have. In fact, even foreigners, the first thing I tell them if they are buying a place in Valletta, it will not be the ideal house to live comfortably. As you know how the houses are: stairs, two rooms, stairs, two rooms...but you have to live Valletta. Your house is actually the whole of Valletta, in other words the streets of Valletta are part of your home. It's not like elsewhere, you have a villa or a house, and your space is from the door inwards. In Valletta, everywhere is yours, all the streets are yours, and the steps. It's all nice in a way.

This is what is changing, what is being lost.

That's it, the lived culture. Us, at least the Arcipierku community, because we still recognize 'periferiji' (Districts)

They are still in place?

Yes of course, for now at least they still exist. And for us, the Arcipierku community are still very close, we still meet up often, we have reunions, we invite people who no longer live in Valletta so we can all meet up. Once a year, on the 10th of February we all go up to Gozo, which is something we keep up. We have a great time!

Ah yes you go to Sonya (who owns a bar in Qala Gozo)

Yeah, we always go to Sonya, we were there last week. But this is something that keeps us connected, united.

Strange that you need to organize a reunion now to meet up with people from your district, where before you just needed to open the front door.

Yeah and no, we have to organize a reunion, at least we still have this though, I hope this does not end too. Why? Because if these last elements disappear, people like me, that still organize these events, and still love Valletta since forever, if these things stop, who is going to do this sort of stuff. We will disperse and will become a community that once existed.

(Lower East Street – near the Iniala Hotel)

To give you an example, were you and I are at the moment, here used to be the community of St. Lucija (St Lucy), where the famous San Frangisk de Paola festa (St Francis of Paola), his statue is on the corner here. That used to be a big festa, over 200 years ago, in the Arcipierku community. So, it would involve people who lived from Victoria gate, or 'Ġnien is-Sultan' (The sultan's garden) all the way to where the MCC is today, it is all connected to the Arcipierku, well all under that

banner, as Arcipierku proper is down there. But it was all one community, so it was different, very different back then.

But as you can see, this for example became a hotel. This guy bought all these, you could almost say he owns half of the buildings on St Barbara's Bastion, he basically bought the lot. Ok, no problem, but its dead. I mean, if you could say it had some culture, something beautiful, different, art. It offers nothing, a Spa, a gym, things that you can find anywhere, in any hotel in any place.

You lose the individuality of the city.

Exactly, there is no character, there isn't the creation of art, there is nothing that attracts the tourist, you are not offering the tourist something that he cannot get at home. We are not offering these things. We need to offer own our thing, the tourist comes to Malta, and we need to offer them something.

Maltese?

It does not need to be Maltese, it needs to be ours, something we (the 'Beltin') created and made.

I do not like seeing abandoned places – and on the whole this guy restored it all, well lets be clear, he restored the bits he bought, because he damaged loads. What do I mean by that? The railings for example, which date to the British period, all got damaged during the construction. Lighting, if you see the 'Fanali' (light fittings), are not appropriate for the city. These are not cultured people, these are businessmen. A cultured person, even if they own a single room, they would use the appropriate light fitting for the façade, or maybe puts a small Madonna under the 'fanal'. That is our way, make sense. This is my fear, we are losing all this. Even in the way we speak to each other is changing. For example, to speak we normally shout, we are loud. Residents of Mandraġġ have their own dialect.

Really?

Yes of course, they have their own dialect, but it is lost with the passing of time.

How can I explain myself? You don't need to be an artist, to love Valletta, you don't need to be a sculptor or a painter. You just need to love the culture that is born in this city, that you were brought up in by your mother and father, you lived it and then you pass it on to your own children. That what I tell my own children: Maybe there will be a time when you no longer live in the City, but maintain your Valletta Culture, plan on coming into to Valletta daily if possible. Like that you can continue to live the city, because this culture you will not find anywhere else in Malta. I know what I am saying. Mdina is a beautiful town, but it's a dead town. I don't want to see Valletta

become like Mdina, not at all. I don't want a palatial building; I want a room that allows me to live the city. There is so much history here, so much beauty, so many positive aspects. Not in art alone, not in history alone, but also in the conduct of business. You, for example, meet someone for a meeting, but in the City. This is something that has been happening forever, and the worry is that we will lose it.

You might ask me, are we trying to prevent this? Maybe, this time we have spent together today represent the start of change, someone is listening. Disgracefully, politicians – why politicians you might ask, well they run the country – politicians are not cultured, will all due respect. A lawyer, for example, comes to the city in the morning, has a coffee at Cordina or whatever. Spends those four morning hours living the city culture, but then lives in Dingli. It has not always been like that, in the past the lawyer would have lived in the city, you know what I mean. They don't live in the city anymore, because one it is no longer accessible or convenient, two he probably does not have a garage, three there are stairs, and four for the price of a place in Valletta these days, you can buy yourself the nicest villa money can buy elsewhere in Malta.

Yes, that is definitely part of the problem.

It has just become exorbitant.

(Off East Street, upstairs near Bridge Bar – heading to St Ursula Street)

Charlie, is there a specific reason you chose this route or this road specifically?

Well, this is a street that I think is unique in Malta. It is a street that draws you in. You are not in Republic Street with all those crowds of people. This is a street, that in and of itself is picturesque. If you look at it, even as it is now, it's enough, it has a feel. It fascinates me. I have lived here sometime, and I as a result pass through it every day.

Of course, you live right here don't you.

My house is the brown one up there. The house belonged to Mons. Laspina, and below me was where Guillaumier (business) started. The house itself has a story. Mons Laspina was a person who lived for the city, he was a historian and wrote books about the city.

It's interesting that you mention Guillaumier, because so many family businesses started in Valletta.

Of course, this street was commercial, wherever you look you can see that. Pisani, Persjan, [unclear] and these are the British era ones, imagine before that. You have to accept, the existence of eras, that history is not static.

(Starting St Ursula)

Where from next?

We can pass through St Ursula, and head up to the centre, we have a lot to talk about there. I have brought you to places, that are beautiful and residential.

You have focus on the community.

Exactly, I did not take you to places where the residents live and have a low standard of living. You might ask me why? We could discuss this from different perspectives, but this history, you have to accept that you are part of it but be satisfied to belong to this city's history.

(Refers to local person)

A case in point, this person is part of the history of Valletta, Paul Lapira, from family that has always lived in the city.

“Bonju Pawl!” (to a passer-by)

St Ursula is one of those streets...I simply cannot begin to express how beautiful it is.

It is the most beautiful in my opinion.

We were just discussing that East Street is the most, and now we are another street, and we now think this is the most beautiful one. Every street we will pass through in the city will be the most beautiful street. There are no ugly streets in Valletta. All over Malta there are horrible streets, ugly villages, like Hamrun to mention one – I don't even want to experience it on a map. Or Bugibba, I don't even consider it part of Malta. But then you look at Valletta...and it's not just an attractive city, it's a fortification, structural engineering from 450 years ago. It's just phenomenal.

This place for example, is the house of the first Bishop of Malta. It has been for sale for so long, and they say it is haunted. This the 'Remissa' (garage/stall), they say the 'Karuzella' (horse drawn buggy) is still in there. So, you can see just how diverse the culture is, all intermingled.

Lots of stories.

Full of stories, for example, this door, the house itself is abandoned these days, the upper bit is not part of it, it is part of the other house, but this house belonged to Collins & Williams.

Who?

Collins & Williams, they have pharmacies on Republic Street, this was their first house in the city. Joe Gasan (renowned Maltese business magnate) used to live in East, he was born there. These

are important people, running big businesses. I really wish that these people, whose heart is Beltija, born in the city, help us, so that the investment that is happening in Valletta, is not made to the detriment of the populace. We can look at this from lots of different angles (**points to the passing delivery van**). Like what you are seeing now, this van, carelessly rides over the pavement, damages it and keeps going. That pavement is part of the city. I don't want Valletta to continue down this path, I would love to stop cars from coming into Valletta for example, one of our biggest issues.

(Meets another friend)

This is Vince Farrugia, he is part of the city (laughs and addresses him):

CB: We are looking at some of the history.

VF: If we remain part of this history!

CB: See, everyone says the same thing "if we remain part of it, are we going to keep belonging or is it going to end for us."

VF: I think outside is where we will end up.

CB: We meet up some evenings, but not at the Kazini (clubs), they are in the centre of Valletta.

VF: Sometimes at the Barrakka (Garden)

CB: Yeah, sometimes at the Barrakka, sometimes we meet at the 'Maħzen' (warehouse associated with the preparations for the feast). The 'Maħzen' now has become as expensive as hotel, how long will we last in it?

VF: Who know, they say 3 more years.

CB: They will kick us out and it will become another Spa. We are going to head off Vince, ciao!

(Continue down St. Ursula)

So, this is what I wanted to tell you about. Maybe I sound too negative, and this negativity relates to how people are reacting against the things that are happening in the city, and they are right. I never see things that they share on social media that does not ring true. It is all true.

Are you a member of the Valletta Resident Group on Facebook?

Yes, I am a part of it. They are right, but how long am I going to listen to this negativity. Negativity because chairs were put into the street that clash with it, or because a pavement was broken, or because of the building of the Suq, the principal act of construction that upset me the most.

Because that is the market of the people, and its no longer that, it is the market of Mizzi (the family that renovated and run the market). A real disgrace. You give it to a capitalist to run it, when it is the market of the people. And the 'Pjazza tal-Poplu' (People's Square) that big one right in front of the market, that too was given over to private enterprise, to turn them into cafes. I mean really! These things really irritate me. Again, I don't want to be negative, I want to talk about the positive aspects of the city, of the little that remains for us, and we need to cherish.

(Off St Ursula – onto Archbishop Street)

Is there an effort on behalf of the government to save this? No, the effort was not made. As an example, do you think I am content because you tarmacked some of the roads, that this is something exceptional? So, you tarmacked the roads, and the pavements remain ignored. Not in the peripheral areas, like next to the War Museum, remember the tourist does just visit these parts, they wander all over the city. Look we don't even have to look hard to find this, look at that pavement, its destroyed, and it will remain that way forever and ever amen. Because there is no real interest in get these things done. Things of course do get done – and this might be a flaw we Maltese have – that government affairs belong to the colonial period. Government affairs are our affairs, the government has nothing and is nothing.

We voted for them after all.

We voted and we pay them too, from our taxes! And they go on about getting money from the EU – “We got 20 million!” – these need to be paid, they don't give you money for being cute, or your island is pretty. If only a little effort is made, there would be so much beauty.

(Stop outside “Uptown Market” shop)

Look at this place, this is a 'Hanut tal-merca' (grocery store).

I imagine it has been here a long time.

It has been here since the Suq closed, as he was located inside the Suq, where he was one of the best shops. Local residents kept shopping at these grocers, if these places close do you think someone will come to replace them? With all this confusion, the difficulties of getting deliveries – this area is famous for its parking fines! I think wardens are instructed to head to Valletta in the morning to cash in, like they are running a prostitute ring. There is no effort to stop this sort of thing.

(Meet another friend and local resident)

How's it going Xibi? This is another part of the city (laughs).

CB: *We are having a chat about the city.*

Xibi: *I am going to get my hair cut at It-Taljan (the Italian)*

CB: *Shall we get a coffee?*

Xibi: *I need to get the car key first.*

CB: *Ok – get that done, we will be finished with the interview by then, meet you up there. (Centre of Valletta)*

(Outside the Chinese Massage Parlour)

(Laughing) I mean it has to be said. One of the things I think about is, if it is really true that Christ considers us in the same way he considers the world, he would say “The Jews crucified me, but the Maltese made me laugh” – because to set up a Chinese Massage in Valletta, you really have really hit rock bottom. At nobody bat an eyelid – before if you just tried to put a sign outside your store you would be hounded by the MEPA (Malta Planning Authority) people. Today it’s a free for all. I don’t want the past restrictiveness, but at the same time I don’t approve of the liberal approach that exists today.

(Stop Archbishop Street corner with St Paul’s Street)

The Jesuit Church, for me one of the most works of art that remain. Look it’s a church within a church, if you look up there you can see the old church there, built within the new church. So that part is the old church, and the rest is the new church as the old one had collapsed.

In the war?

No before the war. And right there you can see the sundial, which was restored (the church & sundial) properly, it’s really beautiful. They did not build a penthouse on top of it.

(Looks down St. Paul’s Street to the back of the Suq)

Then compare it to the Suq Tal-Belt. The most beautiful market we have in Malta, the only indoor market we have in Malta. If we have to look at it from the side of Merchant’s Street, we will see an obscenity.

(Meets another group of friends – Italians – Translated from Italian)

CB: *You guys eat well yesterday?*

Friends: *Nah, it was really bad.*

CB: *Revolting (laughs)*

Friends: Yeah, never going again...ciao for now Charlie, see you this evening.

See, its in the simple things. I just spoke to two Italians and an Englishman at the same time, where else does that happen? These are people that are part of the city. They work in the city, they live in the city, they are part of the city. And I sometimes tell myself, and I don't like it, but these people (foreigners) are more conscious of this connection – they love the city so much – compared to those Maltese that come to the city to warm the seats in Parliament. And another thing, their driver (the minister's driver) drops them off outside parliament or the palace – and the driver just parks there casually.

I lost my parking to them.

Of course, the government controls three quarters of the city's parking. I have no idea where these parking spaces came from, if they descended from heaven (laughs) – I see new ones every day. It fascinates me, the disabled parking – it seems like half of Valletta is disabled – I seen them everywhere. But the government parking is much worse, once you get to the stage that you also take up the spaces on St Barbara's Bastion as well, but oh well.

(Archbishop Street corner with Merchant Street, by the Italian owned "Soul Food" Restaurant)

Today we seem to have covered both the good and the bad of the city.

That's the reality of the city today.

Yeah, and the nice thing is this mix of cultures, that have started coexisting again.

These new "cultures" really are fitting in, becoming part of the city.

Yes of course, these have become part of the culture of the city, you don't find vegan restaurants everywhere – and if there ever was a carnivore, I am number 1- but we can cater for vegans.

And this restaurant used to be a pastizzeria when I was young, it was known as 'Taz-Ziemel' (The Horse). He would prepare the pastizzi upstairs and sell them at the shop front below.

(Roberto the owner of Soul Food greets us – translated from Italian)

CB: I am discussing your shop; we are making a documentary.

Rob: A documentary? Grande! Say good things about me.

CB: Always – We always speak well of Valletta (laughs)

So today this place is no longer a pastizzi place, the guy died, its no longer viable as a pastizzi place. In fact, I am not interested in it becoming a pastizzeria again, there is no demand for it, demand has changed. Instead, we have vegetarians and vegans who come specifically for this restaurant, foreigners too.

What I don't agree with, how Merchant Street has developed. It was pedestrianized, and bits were gobbled up (reference to the tables/chairs put out by establishments - but that it is pedestrianized, and people can access the restaurants is fine, but there should be some limitations – to make it useable/accessible by all, and not annoy anyone. And this is not the case, because people have been getting annoyed by these restaurants. Sometimes however this is what progress is; progress itself brings about intense regression.

(Approaching the Suq Tal-Belt, at the rear of the Palace of the Grand Master)

What's next Sur Bone, we have covered a lot of ground already.

Ah yeah, but we also only covered a minute part of the story. But the fact that we started, means that at some point there will be an end. One last thing before we end the interview. Look at this majestic Palace, and this is the rear façade, not even the front. Beautiful, well-maintained, and restored, as it should be. Inside, parts of it are also being restored like the old parliament chambers, and then you turn round and see this 'maqjel' (animal pen, or pigsty) of ravenous capitalism, its horrendous. You would not even find such rubbish in St. Julian's. And if he had been pushed it could have been so much better, because one of the elements that changed the whole structure of the building is that glass box on the top floor. And that was not enough. The Square (in front) which was meant to be a Piazza Tal-Arti (Artist's Square), ended up being Piazza Ta Mizzi (Mizzi's Piazza – a reference to the developers) to create two more unnecessary cafes. Anyhow, we should end it here and thank you, let's hope there will be a more contentious approach to the city.

Interview Transcript for RenaldA.

(Translated from Maltese)

Interview Date: 15/10/2021

(Starting outside “Have a Look 2” shop, Archbishop Street corner with Republic Street)

Ready to go!

So where are we going to start from?

(Laughs), we can start from down here.

Up to you, I will just walk behind you, I am recording you so we don't need to stand close. Anyhow – firstly thank you very much for agreeing to participate.

It's ok, very welcome.

So, you were brought up in Valletta?

That's what they say! Tal-Belt ta Vera! (A proper city boy).

And what does that mean?

It means I was born here; I live here, and we will remain here.

(Heading down Republic Street, turning into St Christopher's Street)

Where will we be headed?

Leaving from my shop, we will head down here, where I was brought up.

Do you still live on this side of the city?

Not anymore. This area is different now, before to meet up with friends, you would set a day, and everyone meet up at Nanna's (Grandma). And all the kids, from the whole street all together playing marbles, something that no longer happens unfortunately. So, this is where we brought up.

So where are we here, St Christopher's right?

Yeah.

So, something Charlie Bone told me, is that the streets are part of your home if you are from Valletta.

Well listen. That is what probably makes Valletta different. If you are from here, you feel at home wherever you walk, whatever street you take. Once you leave you feel the change, but as soon as you return to the city you feel it.

(On St Christopher's, lower section on the Marsamxett side, beyond Bakery Street)

Do you still have family living in this area?

Yeah, where my aunt used to live right here, my cousin now lives. Up here then my uncle still lives. And this bit is where all the kids used to congregated to play, it was all residents here.

Are there many left?

No, sadly very few are left. Perhaps a few still in this bit, but today its mostly guesthouses.

This little whole here was famous, it is where we played marbles. Basically, there used to be these small holes (chipped into the old pavement) that we used to hold the marbles for the game.

(Outside Biččerija – now the community design cluster, previously the abattoir during the knights period)

Up here, in the top corridor of this building was always open, so we played a lot in there, in all those rooms. It was abandoned at the time, but today it has all changed.

A community design centre now.

I am not sure what it is to be honest. In these rooms below, one was used by my mother's uncle who was a carpenter, so he was always around.

His woodworking shop was there?

Yeah, he had everything down there, made lots of things even furniture. His name is Freddie.

Is he still alive?

Yeah, but he no longer works, he is retired.

(Continue walking along St Christopher's)

And back here, we used to meet every Saturday, the kids of the 'MUZEW' (Society for Christian Doctrine), and we would play table tennis.

Where this building?

Yeah, it's no longer used for that, a hotel or something now.

How many of these guesthouses are there now?

I don't know, but unfortunately, they have caused a lot of residents to leave.

(St Christopher corner with West Street)

Right here look, that door. This is where we used to meet to play, the kids from this whole area.

Does this area have a particular name, like the other districts?

Hmm I think it does, I am not sure, I have forgotten.

(Heading down West Street to the Sea and ring road)

So, from what we have seen, the important parts of the city for you are those tied to your memories of childhood.

Yeah, pretty much.

This is West Street right; I don't pass from here much because I never find parking.

You find parking nowhere these days. Last time I left the house at 8am, I did not find parking until after 9am.

It's a problem right, and I assume you have residents parking (permit)?

It does not help, still a problem to park.

You in a rush?

Nope, only have you on my schedule today.

Ok, then we are going to head to the other side, round the bastions.

So, we are headed towards Diju Balli (district).

No, Diju Balli is behind us...actually no you are right, Mandragg is behind us, Diju Balli is in front, I had a severe lapsus!

(Looking down to the sea over Jew's Sally Port)

We always used to come and swim down here, but there is a problem with this place. Whether in summer or winter there is like a tromba (siphon/riptide) that forms, and if you are not careful it can be dangerous. There is something particular about the seabed here, and the currents are always strong, so you need to be careful. It's actually more dangerous when it is calm – you can

get distracted, and in a second it all can change. (Indicates spot) this bit in particular, near the light post. I am really not sure what causes it.

What do you know about these buildings down here?

Those are boathouses, I always remember them.

Do they belong to residents?

Yeah, residents for sure. My father had one down there at some point.

How do you go about getting one?

I really have no clue, wrong person to ask. I think it was the case that you have a boat and then try and get one of them. But I am not really interested in boats myself.

(Walking along bastions)

How do you feel about the changes in Valletta?

It has changed so much. It has become so commercialized, and it is no longer restricted to just Republic Street or Merchant Street. These used to be the main areas, now it's the whole of the city. Guesthouses now appear everywhere, shops everywhere and lots of restaurants all over the city, be it by the sea or on the periphery. The city really has changed. From certain perspectives, it is positive because all zones in the city have renewed life. But the other side of the coin is a lack of regard shown towards residents, as it has resulted in excessive noise, especially music.

It is louder near your shop nowadays.

No, that does not bother me, in that area it is permissible as it was always business area. But these new "areas" where you have residents and lots of bars and restaurants have opened.

Give me an example of such a place.

Well, the area of Karamata, or in the Mandraġġ, or the worst offender Strait Street...

But was Strait Street not always quite loud?

I don't think that the music was as loud as it is now. Don't forget, the way the streets are in Valletta, if noise is made at the entrance to the city, you will hear it at the lower end of town. So that makes it even more important how you go about things.

(Looking out at Fort Tigné)

The view or the skyline has probably changed since you were young.

Unbelievable. How many times we used to cross from here to that side when we were young. There used to be a Gabbana (Kiosk) on that slope on the Tigné side.

The rockers used to hang out there in the 80s and 90s.

Yeah? I don't remember them. There used to be an area that jutted out, so we used to jump off it into the sea for a bit, then swim back.

How long would that take, 30 minutes?

Yeah, something like that, but if we saw the Gozo Ferry coming we would cross in 10 we were so scared! Today it is impossible to cross, far too many boats.

(On the ring road, passing social housing area of Diju Balli)

This area is seems to be one of the areas where there are still residents.

Yeah, lots of residents still live here, I think it is one of the only parts of the city, where there are full blocks of people that are residents, the places are not rented out, just residential. And many of them are the sort of people that were born here and continue to live here.

So, when you were young, did you mix with kids from other parts of Valletta or did you keep yourselves?

There are zones, but it did not really make a difference to us. The only time it really counted, as we shall see in a bit, was when the football tournaments were held. Then the zone you belonged to counted, it would tigger that pika (rivalry), but it was temporary.

(Approaching St Elmo on Mediterranean Road)

Over there, behind that area is the school, and I think there is the 'maħzen' of St Dominic's (the warehouse for the feast of the parish.) And this building (The St Elmo Examination Centre) was used for exams.

This is a popular spot for tourists (Granaries in front of St Elmo)

Very much so, there is also such a nice view of the port. Everything is restored, the bastions too. I remember it is being in a terrible state here, you couldn't even walk safely here, there was so much broken glass.

(Overlooking the harbour)

It really is a nice view from here, all restored now. There was meant to be a road here now, but there are no cars. Another sad thing is they are saying that a hotel is going to replace that building,

Evans building. Instead of fixing it up to provide 4 floors of space for to serve elderly community of Valletta, they are just adding to the population. The population of the city is in reality, very small (meaning residents).

I don't think they are considering the local community in that decision.

No, at the moment it is just business, business, business.

Charlie Bone also commented on this problem with capitalism.

I don't think that is the issue. Remember, before there was nothing in Valletta, zero.

When in the 80s and 90s?

Yeah, up to the 90s, what was there in Valletta? There was the Monti (street market) in the mornings, and after 5pm, you were scared to walk the streets. Today it is totally different.

You felt that way too, scared to walk?

Not actually scared of walking, if you were from here you were used to it. But you still felt it, it affected you, that you would not see anyone in the evenings.

A Ghost town.

Exactly like a ghost town. But if you were not from here, and you were not sure which routes to take, the city was not a nice place in the past. The fact that it was so dark added to this. So you had narrow streets and they were dark. Not nice.

(Moving to the Evan's building car park.)

Now we have completely reversed this, and everywhere is lit up.

There seems to be very little balance between development and the quality of life for the residents. *The thing is, in the evening you want to relax and rest – which is why I mentioned noise earlier – but when you get home and all the changes work against you resting, it's upsetting. You begin questioning if what you thought were positive changes are actually bad changes. If you cannot rest, you get fatigued. And this is because we changed too much.*

(Evan's Building)

So, this place played a big part of my childhood, since I loved football. This was our "ground" – nothing special, a couple of stones for goal posts – that's how it used to be – and there were some fiercely competitive tournaments held here. It is here that where you came from made a

difference, if you were from Mandraġġ or the Arċipierku or from the upper part of the city – this is where that exciting rivalry existed. It was not like this before – we played on tarmac.

So, there would be no cars.

Not on Saturday or Sunday, just football being played.

This is something nice that was ours, and also part of why we feel that the Valletta football team is part of us, it goes back to when we were small.

Football seems very important to the Belti.

It is very important, very. It's not just history, it is part of our culture, in our blood.

Is this similar to the experience of those who come from Floriana?

But for us in the city it is different – because we have been here through the ages.

So, you have a sense of history?

There is that sense but there is also pride, you know, we feel like we have always been here, so we always want to remain here (in the competitive sense). And when we were young playing these tournaments, this same feeling was in us then. It was not just about having fun, we wanted to win. It was about the mentality of wanting to win. But one of the nice things that we had here back then though, was that once (the tournament) was over, the rivalry ended there and then. We all just became Beltin. When the game was over, whether you from this area, or from down there, made difference, the game was over. Sometimes we might just go for a swim down there all together, as if there never had been a competition.

That's interesting, would there be spectators too?

Yes, for sure, especially if it was the semi-finals or the finals.

This was a yearly event?

No, it would happen more than once a year. You know at the time there were no computers or anything, so football was a place where one could release their emotions. Because of this, every chance we had we come here and play football.

(Continuing along Mediterranean Street – passed the conference centre)

Where we headed now?

We are going to head down this way (road overlooking the sea).

Down here there are boathouses to, right?

Yeah, there are down here too. This place, especially for those from this side of Valletta, from Arcipierku, this is a really important place.

Why is that?

Because you cannot be from this district and not come swimming here. In other words, if you were young you would have come here at some point or another.

So, these boat houses belong to people from Arcipierku?

Yep. Down here there is also a kiosk, which is finally fixed up. It was derelict, but now fixed up. They really fixed this place up. This place can get really busy.

We also used cross this to the opposite sure here too, to jump of there.

The Breakwater?

Yeah, but that mad act you would not do today for sure. Out there the sea changes, if you are not a confident swimmer.

I once got hurt here, Il-Bambin (the baby Jesus) saved my life that day. I jumped off that ledge, and there is a reef there which is hidden, and we did not see it from on top. I chose to jump first, I scraped the whole of my chest – I was lucky. I will not tell you what my mum said when found out, she heard about the accident from others.

(Boat/Naval Graffiti on the shore)

Have those boat graffiti always been there, they look like they have been repainted.

They have always been there, as far back as I remember. I am not sure if they have been restored, but they are as I remember them. It could be that it is because they are not in direct sunlight.

(Approaching Lower Barrakka Gardens, following Mediterranean street up)

Is this the beginning of the Arcipierku? Where does it start?

Yes, this is the area, it basically starts from the back wall of the Mediterranean Conference Centre, runs up to the Lower Barrakka and up to St Barbara's Bastions.

Do you remember them taking down the slums in the 70s?

It could be, but I am born in 1979 so I don't know about this. I remember this area always being like this, these buildings were always here.

This is my famous mechanic.

Still operating!

Yep, still around. This was his father's business, and he took over. This has always been here too (St Paul's Restaurant)

Interesting that its full of tourists, when it's not in the centre, like they are looking for something authentic, is he Maltese?

Yeah Maltese, one of the few remaining ones. Most of the restaurants are run by foreigners. You asked them for something, and many of them hardly speak English.

(Heading into Lower Barrakka Gardens)

So, to the gardens. When we were young, we played here a lot, I learnt how to ride a bike here. The Upper Barrakka is nice, but for me this is nicer. It always quiet, but perhaps nowadays they organize more events here than in the past. But it has always been well looked after. After school, we sometimes had 30min -1hr of free time and we come here to hangout, kids my age. We often played football up here too.

Tricky if you lost the ball up here (into the drop below)

It used to happen all the time, ball would go over the railings and boom as it hit a car below. This was followed by shouting, well I cannot tell you what they shouted! This is where we played football (open parapet overlooking the Bell Monument).

There are not that many open spaces in the city.

No, there really are not. Here, the car park, and it is said that in the past they used to play opposite Gigi (a shop), in the street. I don't remember it, but they used to close the road in the weekend, and they used to run tournaments. I have photos of my father playing.

The first football stadium of the city!

(Laughs) Yeah, possibly! There used to be the famous 'Xigo'.

Who?

'Ix-Xigo', he was an important character in Valletta, not only to the residents, but especially to those who worked on the Monti like my father did. You cannot talk about the Monti and not mention 'Ix-Xigo'. And it appears he was a great footballer too.

Professional?

No, no but between friends.

What else can I tell you about this place. This really was our garden. As kids we used to meet here a lot. We never went anywhere different or special really. We would go to the 'MUZEW' and then you would come here. There were not the outside options like there are today. Our pastimes were here, you either played a little football, rode your bike, meet the other kids. Remember in the past we did not have these gadgets. I see from my own daughter today, she is always on the mobile or the internet, doing homework and everything else on there. We rushed our homework and came here.

We are on schedule – we have about 10min left.

Ok, that's cool – I can show you where I live if you like.

(Leaving the gardens to head up to central Valletta via Dominic's Street)

When we were young, the place to find ice-cream was here, at this Kiosk.

It has been here a while, right?

Yeah, always as far back as I remember. In summer we would be able to get ice-cream here or down by the sea, where I told you we used to swim. There were not all these shops you get today. Ah St Paul's (The restaurant)

What is the AFT stand for (The restaurant is called St Paul's AFT).

Hmm, Amateur Football Team. Because here, well mostly in the older times because there are less people about, there used to be a rivalry between the smaller clubs, like St Paul's, the Stars. They still play today, MAFA (Malta Amateur Football Association) or YASC(?), I think only MAFA. But there was a rivalry, one internal to the city, between these clubs. Goes to show how important football is to the city.

Amazing to have all these teams and rivalry considering how small the population is, how many people lived here back then six thousand?

I think there were less back then, maybe there were three thousand five hundred? There are probably less than two thousand residents from the city today

(St Dominic's corner with St Ursula.)

This is where I live, where the green balcony is.

Rented or does it belong to you?

No, it's mine. My parents still there too.

It's a lovely street this.

It is long as there is no activity opposite.

Where?

The conference centre, they started using the roof for events. They have weddings up there, and some festivals or modelling events, they use it for that sort of thing. When they do have them, you begin to get confused if it is day or nighttime with the amount of light they use. This is what distresses us, progress is good, but it has gone over and above. You go home to rest, after a day of work, only to have to deal with this headache.

(Outside Nenu Restaurant)

This used to be the famous forn (baker) we used to have in the past, different to what we have today. How many times my mum would give me a dish of meat and potatoes to bring here to cook.

It's more of a tourist restaurant now?

Yes, but Maltese people who like Maltese food come too. But this used to be a proper bakery before.

(St Dominic Street onto Merchant Street into Archbishop Street)

How many are left now there are two, I think?

There is the one next to Gigi and one next to 'Mannarinu' (Valletta based catering firm) and think there is one in Strait Street behind them, but I am not sure if he is still open.

There was one near the Suq right?

Of course, of Rita!

Yes, I never knew of her.

You don't? She had good bread and was well known

So, I hear. Why?

(Laughs) for me it was because of the bread. What else, we done?

I think so, we are almost back at your shop, you did not take me to the swings (reference to a story participants wife told me)

Which swings, there are none left, they have all disappeared.

The swings, you know the ones (laughs).

I was going to tell you about them you, because there is a similar story.

Which ones were they?

The ones in the Mandragg, in the piazza, that was the main one. When there was no school, I would be there often, there are a lot of my aunties living in that area. So, until my father finished his rounds, I would play at the swings, it was nice. None are left though. Again, I don't think today's kids even know how to have fun at the swings.

(Up Republic Street to end back at the Shop)

These things are no more, when I tell my kids "I used to do this or that here" they just look at me as if to say, "these things actually amused you?" These activities we used to do as children were also good exercise and you would be tired by the evening. These days energy is not used up the same way.

And here we are, our famous shop, and that is the woman who stole my heart (smiles at his wife).

Interview transcript for AnthonyP.

Interview Date: 03/01/2022

(First/Second Spot) Lower Barrakka Gardens. Ball monument)

Where have we started from?

Okay this is the lower Barrakka in Valletta, and again for me it's a mix of personal ideas and professional.

That you chose this spot?

Yes, the reasons why I chose the Lower Barrakka, if you want to start, we can....as we go in the first footage that we should look at is the Ball Monument, the memorial.

Any particular reason for that?

Well personally I like neo-classicism a lot, its cleaner than Baroque, and in Malta we are used to, we are seated in Baroque, no? And this is, I think the first relationship between early British period cultural.... hmm....I don't know is it imposition or interaction with Maltese culture.

So, this neo-classical design is a new feature of Valletta?

There is a reason why. The Maltese at the time were coming out of the blockade, two years of blockade with the French being locked in here in Valletta and the British surrounding the islands basically on the sea and in the hinterlands. So, the Maltese wanted to build a sort thank you memorial to Ball, who was governor of the island at the time. And what happens then is, first there is Giorgio Pullicino, who apparently tried to make some design, they built a monument and then shortly afterwards, I would say after 1813, perhaps 1815, George Whitmore.

Do we know what the original monument looked like?

No, but this is basically a royal engineer, coming here with full textbooks.

Of design standards?

Of a British perspective on Neo-Classicism.

Did Neo-Classicism exist in Malta before the British arrived?

Some of it, you get traces of it in.... some church architecture, but not a lot.

We still clinging to what?

To the Baroque, will still build baroque today. If you at the hideous church of St Venera for instance or...that's the most recent baroque.

What period is that church?

It's being built, its being used, but if you look at the back of it, it's just a huge rectangle with no features, nothing. It's just the façade....

That is given primacy?

Yes.

Anyway, back to the story. Whitmore was the royal engineer and he said "no no we use our brand of neo-classicism not the continental one" because Pullicino studied in Rome, so his idea of the neo-classical was more Italianate. He came here, he never worked as an architect, and so the British wanted to redo the monument, so Whitmore redesigned the monument, he designed Bighi, and this block over here (Points at social housing block) was meant to be the Anglican Cathedral. This is where it was supposed to be. The idea is that when you come through the opening (harbour) without the breakwater, you come into a maritime city enclave which consisted of Valletta and the Three Cities. And Whitmore's idea was to leave a Neo-Classical, Georgian stamp on the existing Maltese Baroque. The idea was that once you come in, you come up through Valletta's main gate, which today is called Victoria Gate, and as you come up you see the Cathedral in front of you. So, you come in your ship or whatever, you see neo-classical stuff and yes....

So, it is trying shape the city in an architectural language that was tied to Empire? Of the time yes. This building though is post-war, right?

This used to be the slave prison during the Knights, so it was already a bit of a mess.

Is this 70s though?

Slightly earlier, this is the war damage, the whole process of that time.

So, for me this is this interaction, this unusual interaction which I think you only find this in Corfu. Because that is where Whitmore then worked. He used to work there, they used to come and go.

I guess they had a similar colonial relationship.

They were, the British took the Ionian Island, and they turned it into the United States of the Ionian Islands and it remained a British protectorate up to well after the Greek War of Independence.

There were 7 islands and Governor Maitland used to commute, with George Whitmore, they built wonderful palace, using the same idiom, the same forms. If you look at that palace (in Corfu) and you compare it to Bighi there are many, many similarities. And basically, their idea was to set up this palace, and that is where the Order of St. Michael and St. George was established.

So, you see this place a microcosm of Maltese history, in the physical sense?

It's really strange because, then craftsmanship is Maltese, and you see a stark difference between the finesse of the Maltese craftsmanship and what you see in the buildings of the Knights of St John. This is more refined stonework, in general terms. And these Maltese craftsmen also worked in Corfu, so they were the first people to unknowingly introduce neo-classical architecture in Greece, and then the Austrians took over and all this stuff. But basically, my story here is that these (the monuments) were planted here on top of the fortifications because this is where the beautiful views are. The same for the British cemeteries on the other side of Valletta. The cemeteries are on that side, industry is on this side, but this is where you make your first impression on incoming vessels.

Is this garden the same age as Upper Barrakka?

They are more or less the same age.

I guess the first place you have chosen is something that attracts/chimes with the way you see the city, as a historical artifact and how it has changed or been manipulated.

Yes. And it's always this problem of how to deal with contemporary architecture and trying desperate to imagine it as the future heritage of this city. Then I will show some...

(Moving to viewing area overlooking Bell Monument)

So, every time I come here – sometimes I come here for a quick walk.

So you have a relationship with the place that is more personal

It's professional as well, it's a lot of things. I wrote a little monograph on George Whitmore and a paper on this guy as well so..

(Viewing area)

Here again we lose sight of, strangely we lose sight of the maritime context of Valletta and the Three Cities, for me it's one city, but unfortunately, we only refer to Valletta as "The City" mostly because it is the capital, and this juxtaposition has an old history. When the Knights finally moved out of Birgu to come and settle here, that is when it all started. And yet the harbour area was the

heart of industry of commerce of trade of banking, literally it was in this area here. So, the idea was like, in Venice, once you come into the harbour, then you are there. And this is where you start your voyage, your business.... it's still like that today. The technology has changed, but the not the principal essence of the city, of the harbour area. That is one reason why we are trying to put the other fortifications on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Because they form part of one system?

Yes, they are one philosophy, one objective. From I would say after 1565, that was the plan, that was the entire plan. And these areas still shape a lot of our politics today, what happens today. Most of it still happens here in this area. I think it is a pity that we don't value – the term is valorise – the setting itself. As perhaps other countries do.

Do you think it's too narrowly focused, like by the UNESCO listing criteria for example? Or is it a reflection on Maltese heritage outlooks? Is this a Maltese problem or is it an international one?

This is a Maltese problem, its different. There is a gap between what Maltese think is heritage and culture and the materiality of Cultural heritage itself. On the one hand Maltese are in general detached from, and they think that all this is good for tourism, but not necessarily for them. So, they give up on certain qualities of life because they think this is just a product which is there to attract tourism and that is where the money is made. This is putting it crudely. But there is this 'distacco' (disconnection) this.... they are divorced, Maltese seem to be divorced from their cultural setting and that creates a vacuum. And once there is a vacuum somebody will fill the vacuum. And from experience I can tell you that you don't need a lot of people – developers, commercial interests – you a lot of them to make drastic changes in a vacuum.

I guess especially if there is no resistance.

I mean should there be resistance, you know what I mean, should there be? This is the way they think. Whereas I always think of this place as historic fabric which can actually be lived in – it has its own aesthetic – the place is beautiful in its own right. There are, believe it or not, at Bighi alone, you can see at least three layers of architecture. There is the original Villa, 'Ta Bicci'. Then you have the 1829 building by George Whitmore, and then on the very edge there are the buildings which went up in 1901.

The extensions on the side?

Yes, when you look at them you see modernity itself, you see? So, the middle Villa, that is Bighi, then George Whitmore and then....

So, the central villa is original?

A bit modified obviously because of...

1901 is Queen Victorian's death, her passing, so when you look at it, it's happening here as well.

So where are we heading next?

*I wanted to show you my old school, St Albert the Great College. I think here we have two things?
Or one Place?*

I would say its multiple, there is the monument and there is the setting, right? This garden has featured 3 times in 11 interviews, for different reasons.

Ah ok. Excellent.

(Exiting Gardens)

You can switch it off right?

Yep, but I leave the camera running, to capture the walk too.

(Walking up St Christopher's)

So, you have a personal connection to Valletta in that you went to school here, not only have you worked here professionally for many years.

Yes, I did my typewriting lessons in this very building (Social housing block)

Not to date you or anything (laughs).

That's over 40 years ago, well over 40 years ago.

So what street are we in now?

This is St Christopher. My office was here, my last office was here.

Just noticed this development.

It's a beautiful house, its being redone.

Do you have any idea what it might be turned into? I think it's a residence, but I am not sure.

Do you see the plaque? Shoot it.

What does it say?

No, he is a different knight – look it up, it's interesting.

What is the appeal of the city to you? Especially as a heritage professional? Is that a correct way of describing you?

That's a bit complex, I guess.

You work in the city, right? So, you have a daily commute an experience of the city in the same way other people do, or is it different?

Well, it's very difficult to explain. I look at it differently. It's...for me it's.... it's an aesthetic which we should have made sure to preserve in other places on the island.

(Walking off St Christophers – up Republic Street to St Georges Square)

And in Valletta this has been preserved by a function of its abandonment or through direct action?

Some of us yes. There have always been a bunch of professionals who ultimately influenced government to allocate budgets, restoration budgets and that sort of thing. We did a lot of urban archaeology here as well. A lot of restoration when into...still a lot to be done. It's always a struggle to....

Valletta was abandoned for a while and there was an inability to bulldozer over a lot of Valletta – do you think this was a result of its UNESCO World Heritage status?

No, it wasn't popular, people wanted big houses. There weren't any schemes to put in lifts at the time. Which is still a consideration but less so.

(St George's Square)

So I think it's all about values, it's how....

(Main Guard)

So that is another piece of work by George Whitmore. And he plonked the Doric columns into a Knight's period building, which is the Main Guard.

Doric columns with the imperial coat of arms?

Yes, of British. Probably that is made by the Darmanin family.

You have this arrangement in Gibraltar as well. So, the governor would rule everything from here, all the civil service was in here, you would have the guards here.

It was converted into a Main Guard?

Yes.

And always the Doric, the order that's....

(Off Square onto Old Theatre Street)

So, we are on a street now which embodies Valletta as it's become.

*As it has become. As a kid I used to.... we used to have our scout meeting at school, and this was in the 70s before the British forces left. So, I remember these streets were no go (**Strait Street**)*

What year are we talking, late 60s?

From 1971-78. The military people used to park their vans here across this road, to trap sailors and the military people, the drunks. Throw them in the van and lock them up.

What sort of time was that?

Any time of the day.

It was still quite a "scene" then.

Yes, and then suddenly it died. I mean for us teenagers; it was strange and....

Was there a sense of excitement or was it alien?

It was alien and it was all difficult to grasp and understand why. And now everything has become like open street bar.

(Approaching crossroads of Old Theatre Street and Old Bakery Street)

This is my old school.

Same building exactly?

Yes.

How long were you there for, was it secondary school?

5 Years.

Now the reason I got you here, it's because, ok this is where I learned stuff. I wasn't into history at the time, but also.... then I came to understand that we had golden opportunities to have good reconstructions, but we went for a modernist, brutal....

This is from the early 60s?

Ok so this from war damage, you war damage on this side. I remember that building being built (points to social housing block further down Old Bakery Str.) That was turned into social housing.

I got into my heritage awareness from home. I was born in Siggiewi and lived there.

Was Siggiewi very rural at the time?

Of course. Going into catacombs near Mnajdra, running around in Mnajdra (Neolithic Megalithic complex).

It's a side of Malta that does not exist anymore, not even Siggiewi.

No, not anymore. I have a feeling that sort of rubbed off onto me, and without knowing, you live in an environment, both "green" and cultural.

I understand you mean because I grew up in a rural part of Malta and as a child, I was very upset by the development that started encroaching.

I think there was a lot of ignorance at the time, in my opinion, at academic levels. Because the idea at the time was to build something new which could be read as being different from the past, it had to be read as something new. But that in my opinion was incorrect, because at the time there was quite a bit of reconstruction in Europe, across Europe, and some places were beautifully redone. Replicas, good pastiche, but not this.

So, this is a building that has two emotions for you, one is memories of childhood, but also I take it you don't like these modernist intrusions.

No, I think you could still have a school here, but with a different aesthetic. Today we push the idea of the Baroque and the Baroque city, and we want Baroque festivals and whatever. But at the time we did not want that, somebody wanted to make a personal statement by building this. So again, for me it's personal and later it becomes professional.

So, one informs the other?

Yep, yep.

It still operates as a school though, and as one of my interviewees pointed out it has a roof top football pitch. So, for you there is a level of acceptable intrusion on the city but they should be bound by certain aesthetic constraints?

Yes, because really people want, deep down, beautiful places, but when you plonk something which is ugly on a beautiful setting.

Would you be ok with something which was modern but also beautiful?

You have to see the design.

Is it something you would be open to, it's not that something has to look like it's from the 16th century?

Well, there are two ways of looking at that. One is to say, ok let me see what the design is going to be. If it's acceptable, the test of that modern design is how will it age, how will Renzo Piano age? You know, within another 50 years or so. The other perspective is to treat it in the same way as you would treat a painting and you would create an aesthetic which is more in line with the scale and the beauty of the city.

Contextual restoration in other words?

Yes

I don't notice this building, and I live here, and I ask myself, why does it not bother me as much? And I think it is because a lot of this sort of aesthetic appears all over Malta, in towns and small villages, and perhaps I have become desensitized to it, as I feel that in some contexts it works. But as you point out, when you compare it to the other buildings it is very noticeable.

And you have the General workers Union (building) that's a modern building, it replaced one of the Auberges. You have the Embassy Complex, the Bank of Valletta.

The Law Courts as well

The Law courts, which is a bit of a mess. They try hard to design a Neo-classical courthouse, and I think it does not work, the scale is not right. For me a place, part of it is the aesthetic, if the aesthetic is not correct, if its ugly, if it jars, if you have jarring. That hurts my perspective of how to look at the place.

The idea of perspective is interesting, because of the scale of change – looking from a building to changes to shopfronts and the street level.

Yes, for instance, the windows (of the school) are not aligned to the neighbouring buildings. So if that one has like French windows, the original French windows, these are just easy squares. Then eventually these lines are taken over by ACad (AutoCad Software) and all this modern stuff, which pushes you to use lines and..

We have time for one last conversation, where are we headed too?

(Continue down Old Theatre Street)

It's interesting that we discussed that modern building and now we have the newly restored theatre where the Baroque Festival happens.

Yes, yes. We had a huge argument here on whether to build the columns or not. And the actual plans, the original plans were inconclusive as to what was happening in the façade. So, this is now redone recently.

So, is this façade somewhat imagined?

Not exactly. It's a very intelligent pastiche, based on original plans and facades drawn. But we never know whether they were actually executed. So we had an archaeological dig to try to find the base of the columns and anyway. It's a good compromise.

The problem is you mustn't fossilize.

Is the city fossilized? Or is it the perception of the city is fossilized – some people might perceive the city as one patina, one phase.

No but I think, I think major problem could be the heritage people themselves because....

(Stop outside cathedral)

By the way I saw this being built as a kid, from school in the 70s.

..

(Heading towards St Paul's buildings)

For some reason I like this corridor, this is what I want to show you....

This is also a fairly recent building.

It's British period. It's a few years after Queen Victoria dies, a few years after the modernist buildings at Bighi were built and they are being used as a hospital and this is it, it's a beautiful...I like this, sometimes when I come here and shoot photographs of the perspective. It's so well designed, again this is one example of how good design finds its place.

So why is this successful and the college isn't? The reason is because here, the architect went into details, so it's all about detailing. Why? Because when you look at the scale of typical windows, balconies in Valletta they have particular sizes. So, you should design to replicate that rather than being bold and want to make a statement.

So, it's a sense of aesthetic harmony, all though different in the details it is still harmonious.

So, what is it with modern architects who want to leave an imprint on something which is beautiful?

Do you know if when the college was designed if there was an approval process?

There would have been a sort of equivalent the planning authority, but I think it's all this...

Do you know if there was a reaction to the building at the time?

No I think they just...

Do you think that that reflects attitudes post-war – when people needed buildings and services?

No, no, Warsaw was rebuilt, a lot of European cities were rebuilt in a beautiful way. And they had a far...on a much, much, much larger scale of problems then we had. So, it's no excuse. And it says a lot about the society we live in. I believe that ugly – I want to be careful – ugly people, ugly communities create ugly places. So its evening more important for architects to design beautiful places, because psychologically a beautiful place would help raise a beautiful community.

I guess you mean having a social conscious when making alterations within the context of a city that has the added limitations.

And today we have all this planning philosophy, planning ideas and sometimes I look around me and it is not happening, it is not really happening. If you look at the policy statements in our planning laws, they are basically to contain as much as possible the land grab, and to rebuild what has already been built.

Rather than using up new land, and we both know that's not the case.

That is not the case, but is also say also, that if there are historic centres outside.... Remember parallel to the building of Baroque Valletta there is the building of Baroque villages. Those are being pressured into demolishing, losing their streetscapes their aesthetic.

I would think they are under more pressure; they do not have WHS to protect them.

Exactly. I am now, after all these years thoroughly convinced that a lot bad decisions have been made and are still being made, because certain individuals cannot be controlled. And there is a certain sense of entitlement here, "we can do whatever we want" and you can always talk to the

right people and use the right networks...but at the end, some individuals will gain but in general we will all lose.

I guess this is why we might need heritage professionals that are able to engage with all of these very thorny subjects.

Not only. You also need planners that actually believe in cultural heritage and culture, not just cultural heritage. You need architects who actually believe in cultural heritage AND culture. You architectural courses here as in Italy which are really...they start off in a city like this to understand the problem of the city, its beauty, its social problems and how you can tackle these issues. After all communities here are entitled to live in a beautiful place as well, why not? And yet, places like Valletta initially – turn of the century and after the war as well – they turned into little ghettos and internal villages.

Has anything been written about that?

No, but you can understand the zoning, no? The ‘Mandraggio; here, the ‘Baveria’ down there.... they are like different villages. You have St. Pauls Street, which is another place all together, and this is how it is. And now.... there was a mass exodus of people leaving Valletta to live in places like Sliema, Birkirkara, Balzan after the war. So again, there was a de-gentrification and today that is being replaced, ironically, by a different sort of gentrification.

A commercially led one.

Exactly, exactly.

(Time up)

If you think it is useful to have another place...God I love this place (St Paul’s Building)

It’s just...it reminds me of the “Stoa of Attalos” the reconstructed Stoa in Athens. That has this sort of perspective, this is really something.

A lot of flats in each block!

A lot of stairs! Remember these were built at a time when places like New York were being built – but there they started investing in elevators, here it’s all steps.

Interview transcript for Kurt S.

(Translated from Maltese)

Interview Date: 05/01/2022

(Start – Merchant Street outside ‘Jeff’s Pastizzeria’)

We can start whenever you like. Let’s go!

Where are we going to start from? From your shop basically.

Exactly! I grew up in this street. I don’t know if I ever told you, but that shop was my fathers. Of course – that was my father’s workshop. So I was brought up thanks to that shop, I lived off the takings of that shop, as that was my father’s source of income. And I still am. He was an upholsterer – what we called a ‘Tapezzar’ in Maltese. Sofas, car sets and covers. Then he got fed up of that sort of work, and he started to work with the Movies. Not to show off, but he was pretty big – he made it. When films came, they would seek him out – he would not need to try and get the work. Gladiator, Troy...

That’s why there was a mannequin in roman armour outside!

Ah, you remember it? That’s still at my mum’s place. (Greets his friend Charlie).

*So I grew up in this road (**lower Merchant’s Street**)....this very balcony (points up) that one with the air-conditioning, that was my bedroom at my mums place. My mum still lives there, and so does my sister.*

You were telling me earlier that you are not from this area.

No, but I grew up here. They call this area – ‘Near the Dar Mediterran’ (Mediterranean Conference Centre) or Camerata, it does not have a specific name. Because the main area’s here are – on this side ‘Arċipierku’ – from ‘Dar Mediterran’ onwards, from the bell monument. It’s all called ‘Arċipierku’. Then in the middle – ‘Id-Diju Balli’ they are nice guys, they have a nice character. Then on the other side you have the Marsamxett side, there those who called Mandraġġ and those who call it Marsamxett. My mother’s side of the family is from the ‘Mandraġġ’ and a spent a lot of my childhood on that side of town. Even to swim – though I lived here I would always swim on that side of town.

Is the swimming area on this side more that of the ‘Arċipierku’?

No...(distracted by microphone unclipping..)

Sometimes it's hard to believe/understand the character of the city. All that chaos, and then you find yourself in an area and you think to yourself, is this even Valletta?

What sort of areas do you mean?

Like for example, I often like to do this walk – the one I will take you on – let me get away from it all, and go down to the sea. For many people, Valletta is 'Strada Rjali' (Republic Street – formerly Kingsway). From 'Putirjal' (Old Name for City Gate from the 16th C) – at most to Pjazza San Gorg.

You mean for city people?

No, no, no...

I guess there is a difference.

100 %!

....

Something about Valletta is the characters, not that most would recognize it or them. They are all nice characters, like you have the people from up at the top (of Valletta), at Hastings (The gardens).

(Crossing towards St. Elmo – Heading towards Mediterranean Conference Centre)

Oh yeah? There is separate 'culture' there too?

Yes, there is a distinct culture there – it is surprising, but it is different to down here. Don't ask me how.

How do you tell – there is no accent or anything like that.

No, it's not a matter of accent – how do I explain it? They just have a different character.

..

Sometimes I just need to get away, you all the busyness – the shop and that sort of thing – just go for a stroll around the city, I just enjoy coming down by the sea.

(Evan's Building – Ex-Government Office)

This is Evan's Building. It was all offices – for me, businesswise it was really good. Now there is something like a single department left.

They are going to close it I heard.

There is a lot being said – the most common thing I hear, and it is unfortunate, is that it going to become a hotel.

What do you think about all these hotels appearing around Valletta?

I think we are losing something in Valletta as a result. To be honest.

In what way?

How do you put it. Firstly, I think we need – for sure – for our elderly community, we need an old people’s home. I am suggesting Evan’s building necessarily – but any building. We need it. Our elderly community, they grew up in the city – and we know how difficult it is for them to leave the city. It would be great for them if they could stay here too, in the environment they spent their lives in.

That is something that is important for the elderly city community?

I mean it might sound strange – but we people from Valletta have this thing – let’s call it pride – you know what I mean, we have this sort of character.

(Stairs heading down to the sea – facing the Grand Harbour)

This is the place I was telling you about – this for me – is ‘relax ta vera’ (really chilled). Shall we have a stroll down here?

Sure! This is the first time an interviewee has taken me down here.

Really? You feel like heading down here?

Of course!

So – I will take you for a walk you will find hard to forget. For me, you really need to be from the city to know it. Not to say that people who are not from Valletta don’t know about this place. It surprising, right now we are in January – but in summer it’s a proper beach. However, here every season is beautiful, every season.

Who do these boathouses belong to?

They belong to families – they have been here for years. They really don’t bother me – they have become part of the city. Keep them looking smart like they are.

And those boat graffiti!

They have been there for years too – there is someone who touches them up every now and then. Otherwise, they would just peel off. If there is a ‘Grigalata’ (Westerly Storm) you would not be

able to use this area, the sea comes up really high, not to here perhaps, but high enough. It's beautiful though, isn't it? I really love it here.

Its special isn't it.

You can cut off. You can keep walking, to the area under St. Elmo as we call it. Good for you here, right?

...

What was I saying about the city. The city in the last 10 years, has had a boost, especially for business. As residents – I would say we are not that happy. Especially at weekends.

What are the issues?

It's like the city has turned into Paceville (Entertainment district in St. Julian's.) So, problem has become – say my mum invites me to come on the weekend – I often don't feel like it. It has become really stressful, especially to park. You know, because you live here and know what I am talking about. Not that I disagree with business, because sometimes I myself go out into the city for a drink or something to eat, and always think to myself this is such a nice place.

Where do you go? Do you have your favourite places in the city?

These days I avoid crowded places. I used to like them, but I am not that person anymore (laughs). There are places that I enjoy – and these days I prefer to have a nice meal. I would say Valletta is now one of the best places to come for a meal in Malta. There are some 'top' restaurants.

On the other hand, this focus on the commercial aspect in the city, I sometimes don't like. It loses some of its culture – especially these tents to eat in, tables everywhere. Before, coming to Valletta was an event – not that I want to advertise anyone – but 'Cordina' (The Café) for example – with tablecloths etc, it was something 'high class'. Today they setup with wooden pallets – I really cannot stand this sort of thing. I'm sorry – but if you are setting up shop in the city – do it properly.

You think it clashes with the city's aesthetic?

Definitely. That's how I feel at least. You need to have keep a certain standard.

Is this tied to the pride you feel being from the city?

Let me tell you something else, you might find it funny that I feel this way. In the past – if I was playing down here and my mother asked me to go up to 'Strada Rjali' you would need to get

changed first. She would not let you go up in the same clothes, for 'Strada Rjali' you needed to have an outfit. It's as if you are going out to an event – how do you put it? You need have a certain respect. I was brought up that way, to respect the city.

I hate it when people say that those from the city (tal-belt) are 'Hamalli' (Lower Class). Because the city has a lot of characters/facets. And those who get to know us, will tell you that this character is a nice one.

So, you have not done this walk in a while?

It has been a while yes.

I Love it, I love it. Hopefully they don't touch down here, but you never know!

I guess that's one of the nice aspects of this area – it hasn't and cannot be changed.

Valletta has become so crazy – it's one of the few places you can get away from it all, away from the craziness of the city.

There are few green spaces, and they are normally full of tourist.

But also, to get away from exhaust fumes, construction, cranes and trucks everywhere. Delivery vans all the the time.

What did you do before you had the shop?

I used to work in a factory, I work there for 17 years. It was 17 years great years of my life. We used to make stainless steel sinks; it was called 'Stainless Steel Products'.

In Marsa?

Exactly. I was very happy there. Then what happened, happened – the flyover project – and we had to close the factory. They tried to relocate us to the 'Bulebel Estate' – not the same work – but it did not work out.

This work as Pasticceria is new for you then.

Yes. That shop – my father had unfortunately passed away, and I thought to myself, 'I have a place in the city, its in a good location' – you are not in the centre, and you cater for a different crowd.

And you are close to your neighbourhood

Yeah, I am in my neighbourhood, the neighbourhood I group up in. The community, fortunately, like me and like them too and they have sort of become part of my family.

Yeah, I notice the same people there often.

You learn how they like their tea and coffee, they don't need to tell you these things.

This is a nice thing – you are part of the community again.

*It's wonderful. And if I don't see one of them for a while, I always get concerned and think to myself, how have I not seen 'Peppi' or 'Cikku' (Maltese generic names). Then they show up the next day, tell you they had been sick, or they had been out fishing for a few days to get away. As an example, one of my friends, Gorg, did not show up. My wife took over the shop for a bit and I came down here with his pastizzi – as I knew he would be fishing on this rock over here. When I showed up he stared incredulously at me – since he did not show up I did. I came to pester him!
(laughs)*

How is this commercial pressure affecting people here, with all the rental flats etc?

It does affect us. There is something worrying happening in Valletta right now. There are those who have lived here for years – those who have rental agreements not with the government – but with landlords. They are literally being kicked out, whether you have money to afford the property or not, whether you have alternative accommodation or not. They kick you out or they set rent so high they are essentially kicking you out anyway, as you simply cannot afford it. And when does this happen to you, these poor people, when they have retired. It's not as if they were young, working and could just up and move elsewhere to rent or buy a place. Do these people that grew up in the city and now retired have to leave? I am not saying for myself specifically – as I myself left the city, which upsets me, but....

Oh, you no longer live here?

No, I don't live here anymore, no. I am married and live in Pembroke.

So, you are one of those who had to leave.

Yes, I had to leave.

Because of the prices?

These days, it's just unaffordable. But also – we always say this – you need to be from Valletta to live here. My wife did not live here when she was young, so...there was always the question that she did not want to live here. And I do understand her.

I guess she does not have the same connection.

It's not that only – she likes it here. What I can tell you to – especially with me – if my kids ask me to go outing – we end up in Valletta always even without realizing, even if I have spent 12hrs working here already (laughs). Sunday morning for example – a day I do not work – where do I come for my coffee – The city of course. Is there nowhere near where I live, and of course there is, but I always come into the city. And as soon as I am on the road we call 'The new road', I breathe a sigh of relief and tell myself I am now in the city (laughs).

Let me jump backwards to what we were talking about earlier. My father was a true patriot, he was one of the 'Beltis' who would not distinguish if you were from 'San Duminku', 'San Pawl', 'Tal Karmnu' (3 major Valletta Parishes). He was a 'Belti' and he loved everything about the city. And was 'dilettant' (appreciator) of everything, Christmas and Good Friday celebrations that sort of thing. And I grew up in that culture. I am a 'Belti' that appreciates everything, and we have much to be proud of, Churches, statues – we have a little of everything. I was drawn a little bit by the side of my mum's family, because they are Curmi's (Maltese Surname⁴²) – and I love the Carnival, though I am not as involved as I used to be, perhaps because I got older. Having said that, Carnival is not what it used to be – and not because I don't take part anymore.

You used to participate?

You bet I took part. What I can tell you is my parents got together during carnival and my wife and I also got together during carnival. Of course, it always involved my Uncle Pawlu, 'il-Pampalun', god bless him. He is still alive, another of those interesting city personalities, much loved by everyone. He deserves a monument ('haqqu monument' – Maltese expression) as we say in Valletta, it's true that what we say of him.

(Approaching 'Il-Fossa' along the coast towards Jew's Sally Port)

Now we are getting to the area we call 'il-fossa', we are almost there. Those that live in Valletta know it. It's a place of fisherman and those boathouses, another character of the city.

Near Jew's Sally Port!

Exactly.

It's not that I don't like 'luxury' – because 'luxury' is a nice thing. But no, don't like everything being 'luxury' – like those fancy shops appearing in the city, damaging the city's character, removing the traditional wooden shop frontages. It's disappointing, because you can bring a new business to the city and keep Valletta unique. Though I have noticed recently, because I pay

⁴² Curmi family in Valletta is renowned for their association with the annual carnival celebrations, particularly Pawlu Curmi, aka 'il-Pampalun'.

attention to these things, that they have started to take this into consideration. For example, two shops that opened recently, opposite the BOV (Bank of Valletta), have really beautiful frontages.

In Strada Rjali, the Rolex store?

Yes, they have such beautiful frontages. This is the sort of character that needs to be encouraged, not these aluminium ones, and I don't know what.

Yeah, it looks like they did their research before building the shop.

It's research that's needed, and also absolute enforcement.

This is important to you then?

Of course. You know how lowdown I am in the city; I still took this into consideration. You will notice that I keep door closed, used wood for the door. The sign is a little different to other shops, keeping my company name but using wood. I told them, it is required to be made out of wood, though perhaps it was not exactly required at the time, I still want to follow the correct procedure. It was not a case of "let's open this shop to make money". I want to do it correctly, I was looking out for Valletta, I want to do it nicely. So I can say to myself, when I have locked up and left the city, I have added my contribution. You will be surprised how many tourists, just walking by, end up taking pictures of themselves near the door. A door! So, I was careful of my surroundings.

So, you are contributing or careful of the historic and aesthetic qualities of the city?

I am a 'Belti.' I could have just removed the old door and put a shutter, as many have. But I am not made like that. No. I spent more money, to respect the city. Respect that's the word.

Let's go back to what we were saying about the commercialization of Valletta. B&Bs, for example. I am not against them really. Often, it's an abandoned house, somebody buys it, does it up nicely. So, someone has an opportunity and business is business as they say. If you have the money to do it, good luck to you. If I had the money and could find a property to do up as a B&B – always of course done correctly – I would, it's obvious. However, having said that, I don't like a lot of these – what's the word – modernizations.

I guess you remember Valletta how it used to be a few years ago, even in the 1990s, people would not come into the city.

Of course, I remember. It was scary to walk down 'Strada Rjali'.

Scared really?

Yes, I was young too. But then places started opening up, like McDonalds⁴³. When McDonalds opened, I was a young boy, and going out at 14-15 would meet up there to eat. Then we grew up and went to Paceville of course.

It was different back then right.

It was very different, but I was not really around (when it changed), for my friends and I to go out for a drink. I had already gotten married by the time the city took off again. I sometimes look at Strait Street in disbelief. When I was a kid that street was taboo, I would not even walk down it. It was a street I used to hear a lot about – as I told you earlier my mum is a Curmi. My mother's father made a living with music – and this living was made on Strait Street. My grandfather's father had a place/shop there.

Really? Do you remember what it was called?

One of them was something like Q for Queen Victoria, I forget now what they were called, also something like 'Jazz Variety.' There were a lot of brothers.

All musicians?

A lot of them, the one I mentioned earlier, 'Il-Pampalun' was one of them, a great drummer. My grandfather was a saxophonist. **Do you play an instrument?**

I learnt how to play the violin for 7 years, but it was not my thing.

What was nice back then, is that depending on how old you were, there were particular timeframes. They were a lot of brothers, and say for example, if you were, say, 24 – not let's do it the other way around – if you were 15-16 you would play at six o'clock in the afternoon. At eight o'clock your older brother would take your place and you would have to go home. The discipline/order was still there. So, if you were not involved with Strait Street directly, you would not walk there as a young person. They would not let you pass!

It was not as bad as people have made it out to be – I have heard things and stories.

It was just popular fear of the street?

It was a taboo at the time, I think these days it's probably worse, there is more going on than at that time.

(Arrive at 'il-fossa')

⁴³ First McDonalds opened for business in Malta in 1995.

So now we have arrived 'il-fossa.' People here all the time, even winter. Some perhaps working on their boats, preparing for summer, working on a 'xibka or xolfa' (nets and fishing lines), getting ready slowly. But for these people here, there is no summer or winter – you will still find them here, its their place.

I took you for quite the walk, right?

Yeah – it's good to be out and see this side of the town.

It's needed sometimes! Sea is so clear right. You see, they put the boats down here and then exit using the tunnel.

I come here quite often – to Maori Bar.

This one?

No, the one with the ship painted on it.

Oh ok – I have never been.

It's nice – you can be outdoors, near the sea.

You are right.

There is another bar here too.

Yeah, I know who owns this one.

'Johann Cryuff' (name of the bar) – maybe that's why its painted orange.

Yeah – he supports Holland, exactly.

...

The view from the city has changed a lot from when you were young (looking towards Tigné Point).

Yet another mess, and a big mess. Its looks like something that is never complete to my eye. I might be mad perhaps – but that's how I see it. I remember it very different. Tigné right?

Yep – it used to have army barracks – like Pembroke where you live.

Yeah, and even there, that main road, they are knocking down beautiful houses.

It busy there too I guess, traffic etc.

Only to get there – because Pembroke itself is quiet. But it has no real culture to say the truth. People are coming to Pembroke from everywhere, younger people like myself.

(Passing through Jew's Sally Port)

Where are we now?

This area is known as 'Il-Biċċerija' (The Abattoir). They really fixed it up nicely. Now we are heading up through that area I mentioned before, known as 'Id-Diju Balli' – really it should be 'Due Balli' (Italian). I have heard that it is said that in past, during carnival, two large dances/performance (Balls or Balli) and that's where the name come from. We know carnival traces its roots back to the time of the Knights, and that culture has remained. And for Valletta, carnival is a big event. I remember that as soon as the Christmas holidays were over, you would not see a lot of young people in the street. We would all be all be in the carnival warehouses, preparing a 'karru' (Carnival trailer) and that sort of thing.

(Bumps into friend opposite Gigi supermarket – walking up St Nicholas Street)

Hey Charlie boy! (laughs)

I'm tired – I need walk more often! The mask does not help either, it all works against you.

(Another friend.)

This is our Marie – Marie!

(Outside baker – Agius Bakery)

How many bakers are left in the city?

Valletta Bakers, I think only two [remain]. It used to be full of bakers – this little bit we walked past had loads of them.

Even up next to 'Is-Suq'

Yeah, that one was well known, 'Tas-Sonny' we used to call it (belonging to Sonny), I remember it well.

This is another shop that evokes strong nostalgia, 'Tal-Hollywood'.

Yeah, what sort of stuff did he sell?

When school started we would all be there, picking up copybooks, rubbers that sort of thing. They removed his sign for him **They are meant to be protected.**

We used to call him ‘Leli Tal-Baxx’ (Leli the low) – that was his nickname, he would be well stocked all year round. Footballs, in summer flippers and masks. He would sort you out all year long. A big part of my childhood. I remember it so well, when school was about to start – a big queue would form to get our stationery.

Where did you go to school, here in the city?

Yeah – the Pillar School – unfortunately another thing that no longer exists. It was near the Church of the Pillar⁴⁴ – have you ever been in it?

Where is it?

It’s in West Street. Round the corner from ‘Baveria’⁴⁵, that is the Church of the Pillar, it’s incredibly beautiful inside. Again, it also very nostalgic for me, as I used to go to school nearby, a lot of school events would happen inside it.

And we are back to where we started.

30 minutes on the dot!

Did it go well?

Yes, very. You see you had things to say.

If you get me talking about the city...

⁴⁴ Church of Our Lady of the Pillar

⁴⁵ Auberge de Bavière

Interview transcript for WarrenC.

(Translated from Maltese)

Interview Date: 12/01/2022

(Starting at 'Is-Suq' – Merchant's Street)

Whenever you are ready, we can start.

So as an introduction, my name is WarrenC, 49 years old, lived in Valletta for the past 49 years and 9 months.

So, you were born and bred in Valletta.

Yes, yes – well born in Sliema but...

My childhood was incomparable to me, there is little like it. The memory of my childhood is something wonderful for me, where we ran around the city, problem free – especially no traffic. We were a community of children, where one leads and the other one follows [unclear]. So, we were groups of childhood neighbours. It was fun – we ran about and played. I see a difference compared to today – I have three children, they are 23, 14 and 10....

Do they live in the city too?

No

Do you still live in the city?

Yes – I do.

... The difference is that we amused ourselves with really simple things. Let pass this way.

(Merchant Street onto Archbishop's Street)

So which part of Valletta are you from?

From down here, where we are headed, L-Arcipierku we call it, from near the Bell⁴⁶. I am passing this way for a reason. As children, we played physically. My kids today are locked in a bubble, in love with their gadgets, and I don't think that is how childhood should be spent. Childhood should

⁴⁶ Siege Bell War Memorial on St Christopher's Bastion – a WWII memorial, built in 1992 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Malta receiving the George Cross.

be a nice experience, where you have fun meeting people – of course problems between friends do arise, especially with backstabber. But that teaches you a lot....

(Archbishop onto St Paul's)

...so lets go this way, as I want to show you some places.

You chose this street on purpose?

I will let you know in a bit. So used to live two minutes away from here, just round the corner – cross St Christopher's and onto St Ursula. And this was our street – at the time, if I did not do my homework I would not be allowed to go to church. We were 'abbatini' (altar boys) always together, and we always chose this road to walk down. In this door here, if I remember correctly – this one or the other green one. This used to be a 'hajjat' (a tailor), I am talking in my early teens 12 to 15 something like that. This tailor was already 70 years old, in my family we have tailors too – but they were further down (in the city). So, we would be passing through this street, and this tailor would give us some of the extra material – up the road was a stationery and we would buy tape – and with these we would make our football. These were our toys. This would be around the late 70s early 80s – there were none of the things available these days.

I guess Valletta was very different back then.

Very different!...

(St Paul's onto St Christopher's)

Here there was a gilder's shop. So, to make our footballs special we would come here and pick up some of the leftover gilding – he would make frames etc. So yeah, we would add bits of gold to our footballs – this the stationery – and it's still here. Oh, and the gilder has moved down the road bit. This building had a printing press – so if we did not have access to cloth would be able to make a football from leftover paper anyway!

These marvellous buildings I remember being abandoned, as if you were in a rough area or a warzone. So looking here down St Ursula....

St. Ursula was run down too?

*Yes of course. You see the state of those two houses – that's how the whole area was. I used to live in that house, with the balcony full of drying clothes, and slightly down the road were my cousins (**looks to the north/end bit of St Ursula**) This parapet was a place we would play, on it and just below it. These days you don't see that. It is as if children don't exist today in Valletta.*

Don't you think that is a more widespread issue, not just a Valletta issue, more of a social issue.

I think it is a social issue – because the communities – the 'klikkek' (cliques) as we called them – got disconnected.

Valletta is known for them, right?

Yes of course. We are from L-Arcipierku, so we are attached to San Pawl (Parish), and there was of San Duminku, the Due Balli, there was also the Mandraġġ. There were a lot.

And the nice thing about it is that between the different groups, we did not get on or mix. But if we were all in a group together, we were one family. So from the boundaries of the city – once we were outside the city we all the same, we are from Valletta. But in Valletta we are different, it's really interesting. This is why we are known as from coming from L-Arcipierku, il-Mandraġġ, Due Balli. But, for example, if we were to go and watch a game of football – then God forbid they touched anyone of us, you would be asking for trouble.

But today this is not the same. It is so, so rare to see children these days, and why is this? This is because people my age, got married and all moved out of Valletta. Everyone wants to come back, but its not affordable, the prices...

Why did they leave Valletta in the first place?

At the time, Valletta was not attractive.

What was it that was not attract, was there no work or was it just the state of the place?

It was down this, if you live in city, you are like a 'hamallu.' (Lower class) That's how we were considered. So, everyone, when raising their families, left. I can tell you, that of the friends I grew up with, none of them live in Valletta anymore. And we were a group of about 30 friends, between altar boy friends to school friends.

In the last 20 years we have seen Valletta grow and evolve, but it is a shame that the city community was lost. These days, the Valletta community is essentially made up of the elderly, and I do not think it would be easy to return back to those beautiful days.

I'm just remember, that down this street and round the corner, what would street be – St. Dominic's – back there was what we called 'il-bitha' (courtyard).

The courtyard of this big building (social housing). *It is massive – that was our 'ground' – basketball, volleyball – we played everything there, we also had parties there.*

Has this building always been here in your memory? I think it dates from the 1960s or 70s.

This is a government building, so I think it is something from the 1960s, I am not sure if it was war damage or not.

I think it might have been slum clearance.

Yes, it is possible that it was that. But yeah – in this courtyard we would have really big parties too – especially if we won the league (football) or something like that – everyone would show up there, we are talking 100s of people. These flats all have balconies facing the courtyard, so it created a special atmosphere – it gives me the chills thinking about it.

Something else you don't see any more, was the phenomenon of special characters, residents who became the landmark of the street. The "character/personality" of the street. I remember for example that up this street there was this old lady, 'Iz-Zabura' we used to call her and being kids we used to pester her. So, as soon as school was over, before we went home, we would meet in a spot, to agree where we would meet at 6 o'clock. We did not have mobiles or emails. And these spots would place like, near 'Iz-Zabura' or down there at Polly the Grocer. And from there, we would decide where we would go to hang out.

Where are we going to pass from next?

St. Ursula. We would generally come up this street, because there less traffic, not that there was much back then, mostly because it's a street that does not lead anywhere. So, we would pass from here, and keep heading upwards before stopping – I will take you there – we used to call it 'the field' – the little piazza on top of Bridge Bar. That was like, how do you put it, our fort. Here in this building, we would come for 'Duttrina' (Catechism).

Where exactly?

Santu Rokku (St Roque), right opposite the small church.

'Iz-Zabura' used to live somewhere here, in these houses. This here is where the girls went to Catechism, so when we were done with the 'Muzew' we would come here to wait for the girls to come out.

Do you think St. Ursula has changed much?

No, aesthetically it has remained the same, from the outside. But from the inside, perhaps not physically, but morally it has. Because people have changed, there is a lot of tourism. In my time if you saw a tourist in the city it was it was like seeing an alien.

They were that rare?

That rare! So, after meeting near 'Iz-Zabura' – we would head down street on our way to the Upper Barrakka, which was a major 'fort'. Because it was not only the kids from this area, but also the kids from 'Hastings'.

So as went along we would collect our friends. My friend Michael Debono used to live in this house for example, in this this one here Andre and Clint lived, the house with the scaffolding now. This used to be Peresso Printing Press if I remember correctly. Not Peresso – It was Giovanni Muscat Ltd. It was a printing press.

It's a beautiful building.

It's beautiful.

This is how I know Valletta, with stone looking like this⁴⁷. So, with regards to the modernization of today, and I am not referring to myself as I adapt, but for the elderly of Valletta is a big shock, a cultural shock.

(St Ursula corner with Old Theatre Steps)

Up there was the tinsmith and the lathe worker. These are all important memories. And it upsets me...I realize now I should take my kids on the same tour (laughs). This is probably one of the best-looking balconies in Valletta⁴⁸ - I really hope remains untouched.

The bishop's residence?

You really should capture the whole of the façade – I don't think it was Bishops, at least to the best of my knowledge. As far as I know it's a private building, whatever it's a proper palace.

It's for sale too, just in case you are interested.

Of course! (laughs)

*Now – many of these building we are walking past have become boutique hotels, rental apartments. As a result, the Valletta community is automatically becoming smaller. A '**push factor**'. Yes, it is a push factor.*

And how do you feel about that, on the one hand they are restoring the build and it looks great.

⁴⁷ Points at eroded, unrestored stonework.

⁴⁸ Previously labelled the Bishop's Palace/Home in a different interview

The restoration of these buildings was not just needed, it had to happen, so that it did not keep looking like a 'war-zone'. Selfishly, it pays me business-wise that there is more tourism in Valletta, but on the other hand the result is that the city's character is being lost – what makes us from Valletta.

What are the key elements of this “Valletta Character”? Perhaps that can be a complicated question.

No, it's not complicated at all. The key element is the group of people from the neighbourhood. These days, I generally go out for a walk every day, Republic Street etc, To see a contemporary of mine is a very rare occasion. And I am not saying a contemporary from Valletta, to come across a contemporary from this era here in Valletta would be nothing short of a miracle. It one happens when we meet once a year for the 'Festa Ta San Pawl' (St. Pauls Feast). That's when the whole group meets.

It's odd that you have to have reunion for a community, almost like a school community.

It's like a school reunion but for different reasons.

(Approaching stairs at the top of St Ursula)

Here we played a different game. Here is where the BMX races used to take place. The person who won was the one who made it down without taking a tumble (laughs). From the very top to the foot of the stairs here. Whoever made it down here to this spot without a scratch won. I always lost (laughs).

(Square of Bar Sicilia)

This was our first stop, we called it the 'the field'.

Was it a restaurant back then?

No, just the hotel round the corner. Looking back, I realize, not that we were ignorant, we did not have knowledge. Today – looking at that view you would say 'Wow!'. Back then however we just did not notice it.

(Stairs)

Do you know why the stairs were made so shallow/low?

I have heard some theories.

As I know it and learned it from my grandparents, and whether it is true or not I don't know. However, they say that at the time of the knights, they wore this metal armour, which did not allow you to bend your knees. So you would bend like this and get up the stairs – which makes sense.

This part of the street was not very attractive to us as kids, because we just have memories of injuries as we use to ride down it on our bikes (laughs).

But as you can see, every centimetre of property has been transformed into something luxurious on the inside. This sends a message that 'we know how to do things'. I am not suggesting that it has something to do with the city, its whoever the owners are. We know what tourists want; we know how to attract tourism. Obviously, the pandemic did what it did.

So, I am going to keep taking you up as far as the Barrakka and I am going show you the landmarks that were notable for us.

Earlier before we started, you suggested that a lot of the people complaining about Valletta's change are people that have just arrived in the city – how do you feel about this change?

The change does not bother me, as long as it remains a positive change. I mean, if someone were to tell me that they were going to knock down St Ursula Street to redevelop it, it's of course a big No!

In the same way – going back to where we met – I don't agree with the Suq. I mean structurally its nice. However, the idea or the heart of the 'suq' as it was, you did not need to leave Valletta to go to the supermarket – though at the time there were no supermarkets. But the 'Suq' was a one-stop shop, and unfortunately it no longer is that.

As a resident I can confirm that it is not a one stop shop.

I don't use it much, since as I run a restaurant and get deliveries all the time, I buy for home at the same time. It's pity to see and hear things – I speak a lot to tourists in my line of work – it's a pity to hear complaints about a lack of quality and service in the only shopping complex in Valletta.

It is not serving the community or the tourist.

No.

And we have this new sort of community – those who come in for a few days and rent a place.

Yes – Weekend Break – even locals. In fact, I had couple in the restaurant last night.

(Behind the old Times of Malta Building)

And as you see here – the famous Times Building – down it goes too. Which means yet another hotel. Its not that I am against there being as many hotels as are required. But who are we catering for now? Where do we go from here with all these hotels? Do we have enough tourism? Firstly, I don't think so. All these restaurants – do we have enough tourism to sustain them? I really don't think so. And this is not because of COVID.

Long-term you mean. Long-term...you need to strike a balance.

It makes you wonder if we are asking the question, why do people come here – what is the attraction to the city?

Valletta is one of the only villages, or towns rather, that kept its structural identity, perhaps like Mdina, Zurrieq – actually not Zurrieq, its being developed a lot too. But Valletta has remained aesthetically unchanged since the war.

(Entering Upper Barrakka)

I can tell you something based on facts. In 1999, after the death of my father, I took over the family business, which was 'The Pub' which is right where you live. We were there for 24 years and at the time we were the only pub in Valletta. A that time there were no bars.

None at all? Not even 'It-Tiks?'

Nothing, all there was at the time was 'Tikka Bar', also the traditional 'Kazini' of the marching bands and the football clubs. Apart from that there was very little, no restaurants...I mean there were restaurants, but very few.

A few of the old ones like 'The Carriage'.

Yeah, The Carriage, The Lantern, Giannini, Rubino, the old ones – also Da'Pippo which I remember being a bar – The Fox.

The Fox, where was that?

Near South Street, I mean I was still a young kid at the time, but thank god my memory is still ok.

I guess there no going out to eat culture at the time?

Not at all – nowhere was pedestrianized. I remember Republic Street you could drive through and park in, Merchant Street the same, Old Bakery also the same. There were no pedestrian

zones. Which is something positive, because today I feel ok bringing my children to the city for a bite to eat and let them run around and play, because there are car free zones. So, it is safe for them. It is something that really pains me, the traffic situation. Whereas I grew up in car-free zones, my street, today kids cannot do that in most places.

Going back to what we were talking about before. At the time when we had The Pub, the tourists that came to the city at the time – we are talking in 1999 and a little before – would come to Valletta in memory of their grandparents. What was always mentioned was the famous area known as ‘The Gut’ which is in Strait Street, and a place where let’s say certain cultural activities used to take place (laughs). So did come not specifically for Valletta, but for the family memories attached to it, and what they had heard about ‘The Gut’. You know, they would have family in the military.

There was no real reason to visit Valletta really. All there was Palace Armoury, the Barrakka (Upper) to see this, in my opinion, majestic view that is without comparison, anywhere in the world.

But let’s go back further in time. We are familiar/surrounded by the history of the Knights; this is what were taught. So, this place⁴⁹ was seat/headquarters of our ‘Grand Master’. So, whoever was the leader of the pack at the time, this was ‘their place’. On these walls we all used to carve girlfriends names or who we loved; I mean we were kids. I would love to find my name here. **So, you added your name to the wall?**

Yes of course. I hope these walls don’t talk! (Laughs) I hope! There is a lot of scribbling on top of each other, but somewhere there are my notations...

Here I clearer remember the old lift – there was a gate about chest height. I remember the lift, you would open a sort of shutter, and you could get into the lift. We used to jump it – but it was a ‘danger zone’. We used to jump into it and hang from it. We were naughty but nice, but very naughty.

Unfortunately, up here, we witnessed certain situations where people died, voluntarily, which was a very negative experience.

(Looking out over Floriana)

But when you look from here – from this viewpoint – you get a sense of what Valletta is – that is a fort. What does this do to people from Valletta, whatever district they come from, together we

⁴⁹ Thomas Maitland Monument, located in the Upper Barrakka Gardens.

become a fortress. Unbeatable. I am not talking about in a fight – I mean in the sense of belonging to a community.

I don't know how we did it – but one time we managed to get down into that 'Gardjola'⁵⁰ - I hope my mum does not see this video! As far as I remember we hung down from that wall over there **(on the main road)**....

So, as I was telling you – the parents would be hanging out behind that kiosk, we would be here (near monument) – the other group would be gathered hanging out next to that other monument back there, and at some point, we would gather here to play football. This was our place – we owned it; it was literally our 'fortress'.

(Overlooking Upper Barrakka Saluting Battery)

At the time – this lower bit was not complete. If my memory serves me well, it was just flat ground, there was nothing. These canons were definitely not around, or we would have used them! (laughs).

What is the nature of this change. Where the parents previously gather, has today just become a commercial enterprise – its no longer about the family. Similarly – in summer we would go to the pitch to play waterpolo and for training. The pitch was a fortress of families – always the same people – year after year. Once a person stopped showing up, perhaps they left the city or died – you would feel the absence of that person, we were that tight knit – we were family. Today this is just not the case, you will simply not find this sort of thing.

Let me know if you have any more questions.

Do you think there is any chance of Valletta recapturing a bit of that spirit?

No. Every morning I pop out for a coffee at 8, 8.30. I have a quiet spot, at a particular place – no adverts! – and watch the school kids coming in. Very few of these kids come in on foot, along and carrying their school bags on their backs. Today most are dropped off at school by their mums in a car. This tells me, that's 99%, they do not live in Valletta. Most likely is that it is convenient as their parents might work in city. So, they can pick them up and drop them off at their convenience. Nothing wrong with that. But it is impossible to build a Valletta community, as I experienced it in my time, it's not possible, I really don't think it is. And it is a consequence of development.

⁵⁰ Bartizan or échaugnette – an overhanging or wall mounted turret.

(Leaving Upper Barrakka – heading to Castille square)

I know lots of people who want to move back to Valletta, back to where they lived or at least close by. But when you consider that it is a good €2500 per square metre to buy an apartment its no joke, its no joke. The limitation of people's pockets are what they are, and few have can buy, unless it is commercial venture. In the street we just walked though, so in St Ursula only, I noticed about 15 boutique hotels. In one street.

How many families those replaced.

Exactly. And I don't blame them, for many families it's an opportunity. I cannot expect a family to stay in Valletta, however much they love the city. If you consider how much of the property was bought for nothing and today is worth millions. Because of where I work you hear things, who bought this and that, so I get a sense of what places cost. But we are talking millions, its not thousands or hundreds of thousands. Nothing wrong, if that's what some people can afford and accept – its only fair I think. But by the same token – you cannot expect that the common Valletta citizen can come back to his roots, it does not make sense. Unless they inherited something or can afford to buy.

(Castille Square)

This I remember being a car park for example – there was a road here (running alongside Castille) and the rest was all parking. Wouldn't you say this is nicer – of course it is. Look how much cars have been forced out. There was parking here, there was parking where the new Parliament is, there was parking were the old Parliament was (Pjazza San Ġorg).

Before MCP.

Yeah, before the MCP (car park).

So today you can head out, have a walk about and really appreciate what beauty there is in Valletta. I remember these places before the restoration projects started in the city.

And how where they?

Black, literally black. If you see the roof of that chapel, everywhere was like that. Thank god, there has been a lot of investment, and it was very expensive. This is when the city began to regenerate – because that's when people began to take an interest in it.

(Merchant Street)

The first business I had was in 2009, after I left 'The Pub', I opened a restaurant in Old Bakery Street.

What was it called?

Omerta it was called. And I tried to attract people from the community. It did not work.

You needed to cater for the visitor to the city.

These days I have over 20 years' experience in the restaurant business. The locals - not the local business, the local community of Valletta – if I had 10 visiting my two restaurants is about maximum. I don't know why. Also these locals that came did so because they are friends of mine. You are not going to see someone from the city, walk around to see where they are going to eat, unless its for a quick coffee if you know what I mean. I really don't understand why. Business or working locals is one thing, but locals who come are from the outside, Msida, Siggiewi etc.

Now here (Merchant Street) – if we return to the discussion of progression. When you see just catering, I get concerned, and ask where are we going now? I remember this used to be where the 'Monti' was held. It used to start near the Suq and come all the way up to here.

The 'Monti' was a big deal in the city, right?

And how, if you did not go to the 'Monti' it is like you had not been out properly. So, what is it I want to say. Progress is something I accept, perhaps selfishly because of what I do for a living, but those in the 70s and 80s still living in the city, this is an eyesore for them. It's not his Valletta where he grew up, even though it has become more controlled, because I remember it with payments and cars parked all over the place.

From the perspective of the tourist I would say, wow it's nice. From the perspective of the elderly, what the hell are they doing? What's going on?

This is where you mentioned your own family's business.

Yes, right here.

Warren thank you; you have given me a lot to think about.

I tried to go into as many aspects as possible.

Interview transcript for JoannaD.

Interview Date: 14/01/2022

(Start – Coffee shop – ‘Lot Sixty One’ – next door to the ‘Suq’)

Alright Jo, we can start.

Ok – lets walk there.

(First stop – first residence in Valletta on Felix Street)

So how long have you lived in Valletta?

I bought this flat in 2003.

What brought you to Valletta in 2003?

So it was that flat with the blue balcony, which used to be green, then became grey, then became blue. And you entered from number 8. One of the funny things is that my first flat was number 8, the second one was 86 and the third one was 186. So, funny.

So I came to Valletta because my ex-boyfriend is an Architect, he used to work with KonradB. And at the time Konrad was the chairman of the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee. My relationship to Valletta before was non-existent, literally, I probably came here...

Where did you live here before this?

So when I was born I lived, my parents lived in Kirkop, then we moved to B’Kara, then we moved to L-Iklin when I was six, when I was nine we moved to Naxxar, when I was 16 I moved to St. Paul’s Bay on my own, when I was 19 I moved to Sliema, and in the middle I lived in Żebbuġ for six months. So was not from anywhere, which of course in Malta – if you tell that to a foreign person it means nothing it’s a joke – but over here you still get asked ‘where are you from’ – and I couldn’t say. I mean, I lived in Naxxar for seven years, and that was the longest before I moved here, and that was 9 to 16 so it’s very kind of formative.

Would now say you are from Valletta? If so, are you comfortable saying that?

Yes, and proudly, and I love Valletta, like an entity, like a room, like Valletta is my house. It’s one of the smallest capitals in the world, and I believe it’s about 1 by 1 kilometres within the walls, and I call it human scale. I love seeing – lets slowly walk – I love saying that I know my city, I know it, I know every single corner, I know every street, I can name it. Who can say that? (laughs).

And I experience it very physically, you know. And within Valletta I have lived in four places, and that was the first one

So how was Valletta in 2003 when you first moved in?

(Felix Street onto Merchant's Street)

So, this was not pedestrianized yet, the Monti use to set up here.

The Suq was still the Suq at the time?

Oh, for years – all the way through. Until I left. The hawkers used to park there (in her street), we had put the bedroom at the back thank God, because at around 4.45am the hawkers used to come in and begin setting up. Very, very noisy, a lot of clanging and screaming and swearing. There was a bar underneath me called 'Sidney Bar' – they used to say about him 'kellu il-kaxxa'⁵¹ – so there was illegal gambling. They were sweethearts, they had two strongmen at the door, like 'lurches' and the police used to drink there you know. Very. This is why we love it (the city) right? And I know a lot of people say we are losing out on a lot of those things. It has changed very quickly but...

(Passing Bibliotheca)

So, for you, Valletta when it was run down, a little rough, a little criminal was exciting?

Of course. And it was never – at least in my lifetime here – it was not dangerous. I mean my brother used to say, 'A thief won't rob his own home' so...(laughs). So, they protect you.

Your brother lives in Valletta too right?

My brother moved to Valletta when he had returned from abroad, and he refused to house share – because obviously in those days you could rent a Palazzo for a hundred a month.

Even my sister – around that time – moved to Valletta, and because of that my mother said, 'Is there some demon that is stealing my children and taking them to the city?'

So, all your siblings were also drawn to Valletta?

Yes, around – they moved little later – in the first 10 years of my living here.

(Republic Street)

Then it got pedestrianized, I mean this is all Konrad's suggestion.

⁵¹ Lit. "He had a box"

So, you remember Republic Street full of cars?

Of course. I think it was still like that – there were still cars in, what's it called, Independence Square (New Parliament). I mean obviously that is an improvement, because we complain that it is losing character, but you can't deny that – what is it - about 30% pedestrianization is amazing you know.

(Off Republic Street – Onto St Lucy Street)

So, there was already a small community building of “Neo-Vallatians” (laughs) and it did attract sort of, artists, free-lancers, creatives. But there was nowhere to go. I think Trabuxu (wine bar) was the first thing, and obviously we did go and hangout at the Gazini⁵² and have breakfasts at the band clubs. The lawyers were always around.

I remember Valletta being like that – a handful of places. I found it interesting that so many foreigners had moved here first, almost as if they appreciated more than the Maltese themselves.

First of all, I think some...I think you had to be blind not to see the beauty of this place. There is no, literally no – even the social housing – there is no building you walk into and not fall in love with. And obviously it was – I believe – about 85% abandoned or empty. And again – I keep mentioning Konrad – but he had about 40 architects from 16 different countries, I think all living Valletta without exception. They all started buying left right and centre, one, two, three, four apartments each. And they started doing them up – and marketing them. And yes, the kind of people who were moving here, for instance I had a Japanese concert pianist living next to me, an American couple.

That is very different to what a ‘Belti’ would have been 10 years ago.

Yes, and there then two types of ‘original Beltin’ as in people who were born and bred here. One of them is the ‘real beltin’ they call themselves who have generations of living here, who didn't leave. And then the other lot, which is the one which had a bad reputation, was the during and post-war people – who squatted or were given requisitioned properties. And obviously by the time I had moved here, they were in the third generation.

So, they had become ‘Beltin’ themselves?

Yes, but they were the ones who were seen to be disrespecting the city. And there is a very big element of that. Now I have been living here almost 20 years – so all my neighbours and everyone

⁵² Band clubs.

I met in all these different used to talk about it. And the 'original Beltin' don't like those ones (laughs) – because those were given properties for free, they unfortunately still litter a lot. You know there is no respect for the city. They took over the most beautiful spaces with their cars, obviously the car thing happened in the same time, in parallel to the post-war.

Sort of 50s and 60s when cars started becoming affordable.

Exactly. And when you speak...for example my neighbours, next door to me now, there are two families with children my age. One is an 'original Belti' family, very proud, very...you know...talking about the history, [unclear] the war. Generations and generations...they have furniture and paintings and that kind of stuff. And they live in twin properties – you know those houses that (makes gesture to symbolize mirror image) And then the other ones were the ones who came in after the war, were given a stupidly cheap rent.

...

(Bottom of St Lucy Street – Marsamxett Side.)

This was my second house. I only lived here for a few a months, because right after I bought it for LM 20,000 (Maltese Liri) I sold it for triple, and I was homeless (laughs). From the balcony you could sit and see the sea, which was nice. And strangely enough a lot of people who have never lived in Valletta forget that there is the sea. They only see the congestion, the parking problems...Valletta is surrounded by sea, there is nowhere else (like it). For example, at the top of some roads you can see the sea in three directions, its gorgeous.

What's this area called? This is in one of the famous districts of Valletta, no?

You know don't know...yes, yes this is the Mandraġġ. In fact, I did not have windows at the back, but its back on the courtyard of the massive block – that one you know, the one the square.

My neighbour there was a very eccentric guy.

Valletta person?

Yeah, really fun guy. It was eventually bought by two photographers and his plan was to open a photographic studio or something like, this other one was abandoned at the time.

It looks like they (photographers) sold too?

No, he still owns it.

I have always worked in Sliema throughout these years and from here there is like a 'secret staircase', let's just walk there and then slowly make our way up. There is like a secret staircase

to go down to the ferry, so my commute was 'board'...you just come here, go into the playing field over there and walk down the stairs and onto the ferry.

(Crossing circular road)

Look at this, this one road...

This is a travesty for instance. Here there were these gigantic trees and a rundown playing field and now they built this terrible cage. I mean they have the audacity to call this a garden, it's called 'Peacock Garden' – and actually Chris Briffa (local architect) had designed a very nice thing, keeping the trees, but the people from Sliema (across the harbour) complained that Chris Briffa's design would interfere with their experience of Valletta.

(Stairs to shore)

So this is the stairs down to the shore and its gorgeous you know, like it's made for me (laughs)...

.. So after that (previous flat) sort in the 'konvenju⁵³' period of my sale I actually had found my current house, but obviously it was a ruin. As in it hadn't been lived in since the war.

Oh really – empty that long?

It had no roof, there were pigeons inside, the walls were green.

(Walking along Great Siege Road)

So – we are going.... not here next one. The periphery of Valletta is, I think, 5km which is also a nice number because it is a one hour walk. It's like everything was designed to...it's perfection, no? Straight roads, a 5km periphery, a 1km commute from sea to sea. It's just human scale.

How beautiful, they just restored this **(flats facing Marsamxett)**

I was wondering about those – as they have all been restored at once, so it must be some sort of Government grant or initiative.

I mean they might have collaborated for once (laughs). I know that entire blocks are owned by the same person but.

It's a bit bittersweet restoration – even these garages, gorgeous – but at the same time you lose a bit of patina.

(Steps – Archbishop's Street)

⁵³ promise of sale or preliminary agreement

And from here we go directly to my next place of residence, so once again my commute was like this (points to the sea).

It really is a beautiful commute.

Even if you had a car, and you are a Valletta resident you are always going against the traffic. Because when you leave people are coming in.... but when you don't (have a car) and you cross the water.

So, you don't own a car and you catch the ferry to go to work. *Yes, I don't have a car – super proud. We should lobby for those who can do the same.*

(Coming up to Independence Square)

I think visually, this was the best place I lived in. This corner here, as we go up.

So, the aesthetics of Valletta, whether restored or not, are very important to you.

Extremely, absolutely. Today there is no blue sky, but even when it was still a complete derelict ruin...

There was an attraction.

And the proportions – like anything Baroque really, is just gorgeous, framed by blue all the way round.

*Oh my, I need to catch my breath. 'The damned stairs of Valletta' – what's his name, Byron said that? Like I said, this I think – because I lived right there, I will show you – but I think this was the nicest area (**Independence Square**). It's a pity we still have cars here, again you know, if they pave it there is a chance that you get a café or two, and some people will complain. I absolutely don't mind, actually I think...a lot of people complain about tables and chairs and public spaces being taken over.*

How do you feel about that? Some people complain that they are shabby.

Yes, there is a lot of that. I would take shabby chairs over cars anytime of the day or night. I mean it's such a waste you know, a bunch of lazy civil servants (laughs) who can't imagine walking 200m.

This is an interesting space as well; this is the most disrespected space because traditionally the Catholics hated the fact that there was a nice Anglican Cathedral. But it's just gorgeous, I spend probably collectively hours and weeks here, walking the dogs around this unusable greenspace. And it's one of the best preserved, the war didn't...you can look around. I think it's pretty much the

only complete space I know which didn't have any damage. Beautiful, everything is...you know those are some of the oldest buildings in Valletta.

Do you know what this square is called?

You know I don't know! This is Auberge D'Aragon. It's literally one of my favourite spots.

From there on (**Up West Street**) there was already some damage and you start seeing...but the proportions of the older houses were so interesting. Like this little one here, this is what they all looked like originally and then they eventually added floors, and that's a new block. So as you leave this square... (things change?)

So, the historic aspect of the city is another important factor for you?

Absolutely. The house I lived in Naxxar was 15th Century. I was very lucky.

Even older than Valletta. Yes...I living room was a chapel. After that it scarred me, in a good way (laughs). As in a like contemporary design and architecture, but I am in love with something which has history.

(Walking up Archbishop's Street towards the centre)

A friend of mine lives here, Wayne M, and before him Cesar Attard used to live here, the artist, now its Wayne's – its gorgeous. And a very old one, it's beautiful.

Here I had my bohemian days, in this street, I call them that (laughs). Because I used to live in an apartment that had not been renovated since the 1950s, huge palatial, three 'Sala Nobiles' it had, and I was single so...

(Bumps into her friend Anna)

Hey Sweetie...

...

So, my next apartment was there, the blue balcony as well (laughs) This is the one I was talking about, this is an apartment that had 21 courses, 3 rooms and one corridor, you know one going into the other. So, to get to the bathroom you had to go through the bedroom, that sort of thing. Loved it, loved it. I have always had some – 70 steps – to get to my living room since I moved to Valletta, but you get used it. The least problem, shallow people want lifts, then they go to gym.

Lifts have come up, one of my interviewees told me one of the reasons Valletta was not popular was the lack of lifts.

Exactly, exactly! That is what I am saying. In the beginning, when I was looking with agents and so on, there was this whole fuss about 'area'. 'It's a good area, St. Ursula Street is a good area, but here no!'

So, they were actually makes zones themselves?

50m zones (laughs) – 'Here is 100,000 more...' I mean there is always an imaginary boundary, but to have these 50X50m zones.

It is something I have learnt from these interviews – is how different people see themselves within the city, like coming from 'Hastings' and having a distinct 'character'.

I know, I know (laughs) 'Mill Camerata⁵⁴ dak' (He is from Camerata that one) and Camerata is 20 meters away from me.

It's a micro-district!

(Off Archbishop Street onto Republic Street)

Totally. At the time I moved to Valletta, literally, it was a decision I made – essentially that is when I graduated right – we were 60 (doctors) and 6 of us remained in Malta. 50 or whatever left.

Sorry can you say that again.

When I graduated there were 60 in my class, an 6 remain. 54 have moved, some came back eventually, I don't know how many not much, and some even came and left again. And these are people I had spent 5, 6, 7 years almost living with you know. So, it was very sad, and I assumed that I would leave as well. I had jobs I had everything. But once I touched Valletta I couldn't leave. Then I used to go to London a week every five, initially I was planning to move there.

(Off Republic Street onto St Christopher's Street)

Anyway, I used to go and visit my friends, and compared to life I had in Valletta, theirs paled I'm sorry. I loved going for the week, you know, enjoying whatever London has to offer. But then they lived in 25, 30, 40m² places, the weather is horrible, it's extremely expensive. Despite them having much higher salaries, I seemed to always have more expendable income.

The quality of life does not always scale in the same.

⁵⁴ Camerata is a social housing building, and considered a distinct neighbourhood.

Exactly. And because in Malta we had a miniature of everything, of metropolitan life, you know. So there was, as we said before, and still are – I wonder what the proportion of Non-Maltese born persons are living in Valletta.

I was interested in that too – I looked at the NSO stats.

Not in Malta, in Valletta, in Malta its 20%.

The statistics for Valletta – the population has not gone down in the last 10 years but it has not gone up. But it is not broken down by age, nationality etc.

Unfortunately, Valletta went through.... the sad thing is that there was around that time, around 20 years ago there was this...

(off St. Christopher's Street onto Merchant Street)

Always pass by the vegetable guy – hope they stay.

.... what I was going to say was that there was an influx of people, there was a lot of excitement, people bought properties, fixed them, speculated, sold them, made some money. And then it got to their head, and they ended up even selling their own homes to turn them into tourist accommodation. Although I also really don't mind tourists, I mean ideally tourism should have the smallest carbon footprint possible, but I can't say 'oh I hate tourists.' But most of the people who originally moved here who I really enjoyed spending time with don't live here anymore, so they were in and out. We skipped over ten gentrification steps.

So as soon as people realized they could make money, it went from being a 'scene' to being an investment opportunity.

Exactly. I mean even my own sister for instance, she moved out. Massimo, Venetian artist who had been here a while moved out. And I don't blame them either because they pretty much all moved to the Three Cities and as a residential space its fantastic. It's just that the culture is not on your doorstep you know? Here you step out and go straight into the theatre, and the Malta Philharmonic and we have good stuff.

(Off Merchant Street onto St Dominic's Street)

Yes, I mean you can't have what's on offer in London or in Paris, but it's really not bad you know. The intensity of what's on offer here is unparalleled, as in find one square kilometre on Earth which gives you a couple of things to go to everyday.

So, for you the value of Valletta, apart from the history, is the social, cultural life.

It's the life now, absolutely.

However, complicated it might be at times.

I don't see why its complicated at all. Its extremely easy, very safe, beautiful, has a lot to offer. I love it, I am in love. I wish I could have more say on how its run.

(Off St Dominic's Street on to St. Pauls)

What you would you like to see change about how it's run?

The list is endless, and not because...

What would be one of the chief offenders?

Cars. As in pedestrianize more, much more, make it almost car free if possible. Not because I have a personal tiff with cars, but because it does not suit it. And it's small enough, its literally one kilometre. Maybe have one tram with the hills because I understand, if I had to walk from here to Castille.

For the elderly community, because its sizeable.

Yes, but there are.... this is not, this is not....they don't say in Ljubljana lets not pedestrianize it, they don't do in Paris. Most people in Paris can never approach their abode with a car (laughs). Because even if you could there is absolutely....in cities in Holland for instance even if you are a resident, to park on the road, is €60 a day, even if you are a resident, there is no exception.

So apart from the cars, what else would be something that you would you like to see changed?

I think it is so strange, that the people here, the vast majority don't use their roof. I think its bizarre. As in this is some of the most beautiful outdoor spaces in the world. Because most beautiful, medieval preserved or baroque cities don't have the possibility of a roof-top terrace, while here you have this courtyard sort of which you can use, especially in winter. Because in summer its too hot. And I think it would reduce frustration, you know, because there are a lot of not so well-lit properties. It would increase community spirit and apparently in the past they used to use them much more. This is what the elderly locals say. Obviously, they also sat in the street – which how can you? And the children used to play when there were no cars.

You don't really see children now.

These two things I would definitely, forcefully impose (laughs).

Obviously have much more strict guidelines for any interventions, like as we said – chairs, tables, apertures.

So, the aesthetic fixtures of the building?

No not just that – I think the buildings there has been a lot of respect (shown), as in...

So, you think they are doing a good job in how they are restoring them.

Absolutely yes. But no, the commercial engagement with the city. External eating spaces I have absolutely no problem with them, but you know as we always say: the tents, the types of chairs, the tables, the amount.

I would absolutely make used of all the empty public buildings for culture, not just Biagio Steps, St. Elmo. Such a pity and it's so sad, and the Pixkerija.⁵⁵ In the Valletta 18 'dal-bahar madwarha'⁵⁶ show, I hadn't been – I had my exams in there – it's still there sitting empty.

Oh, the examinations centre you mean, not the fort.

No, the fort, well what can you do, but that depends on who is running it. But no, St. Elmo Examination Centre, my good goodness. I mean art studio or workshops, tomorrow I would do it. A community space, a performance space whatever...

What else, what shall we call them, facilities or amenities for children.

Valletta is currently not a very family friendly place or is it.

I think it is the most family friendly place in Malta.

You think so?

Yes, because there is 30% pedestrian, so there is no other place in Malta where you can...my children do play on the roads, I mean in a new kind of way up there. I mean we go for a coffee, they play in St Georges Square, they roller-skate, they skate, they....

(Outside her house at the end of St Paul's)

That's Great Jo – we are bang on time.

And this is where I live now!

⁵⁵ Old Fishing Market

⁵⁶ The title 'Dal-Baħar Madwarha' is inspired by a quote from the work of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, 'The island is what the sea surrounds'.

I wanted to ask you about 'The House,' was the name accidental?

So, it used to be called Hatherley House, and Hatherley is one of these 'sailor surnames I've been told. And we wondering, shall we change it, shall we keep it, shall we remove it? And then we were here one day in the middle of the night, came home and we were like 'Oh there a THE in the centre' so we got our keys, and we pried out the other letters. (laughs). Done.

Interview transcript for BeckyD.

Interview Date: 15/01/2022

(Staring – Home – West Street, corner with St. Lucy Street)

Ok we've started!

Ok great – hello.

So, we are in the first spot.

Yes, we are in the first spot, this is the home I'm renting, which I've been renting for almost a year now. I moved to Valletta because, well, I have always loved this city, ever since I was a little girl. My grandmother, used to live in St. Ursula Street.

Ok so you have family links.

...and growing up she used to tell me all these stories about Valletta, and I have always felt a special affinity to the city. But moving here and actually experiencing it first-hand.

Has it been a disappointment?

.... has been, oh my god, it's the best move I ever made. This city has ruined me for anywhere else, I can't imagine living elsewhere. Honestly, it would break my heart I think leaving.

So, let's go.

So, you live on West Street.

I live on West Street, corner with Santa Lucija Street and I love this little corner. It's got so much character, and actually you know what, let me show you something, something that you would want to see actually, I should have thought of this before. Come in again sorry.

So, my daughter gave me this as one of my Christmas presents, and this is a sonogram, of Valletta in the morning.

Amazing, who did that.

I don't know, she found this site, where you send this audio recording, and they transform it into art. So, she sent them a clip of all the Valletta sounds in the morning, and this is the result.

And the sound of Valletta is really particular isn't it.

And this is what I was getting to, when I first moved in – because you have certain expectations of course – but I never realized how early Valletta wakes up (laughs). Moving from Sliema, St. Julian's to here, I said OK, 4 o'clock in the morning is kind of when you start hearing the city wake up.

Ok – sorry about all the jangling.

No Problem! All part of Valletta's soundscape.

Exactly! So yeah, this is my little corner, and this was sort of formerly, well the area is known as 'il Mandraġġ'. But it has changed a lot.

It has a bit of a reputation 'il Mandraġġ'

It had a reputation, they would say ugh 'mill qiñ il Mandraġġ'⁵⁷ and it was like really a slummy area in the past, but it's really changed a lot.

There is still government social housing here though, right?

The social housing is here.

Right there.

In fact, they've been working on this building since I moved in. Now the scaffolding has gone down and they've renewed parts of it.

And I love this corner, my Clyde guy, he is like a mini-market and 'pastizzi' and everything and good old Miceli Store, very handy.

So home is an important location for you because you have always wanted to live in Valletta...and so now you have your place.

Completely – so yes waking up here every morning and especially coming back to it, after a day working in St. Julian's is like one of the highlights of my day.

Ok so where are we going to go next?

So, we are just going up the road, where there is that blue poster thing outside, that's the second location I would like to show you.

(Heading up St. Lucy's Street)

⁵⁷ From the deep end of the Mandraġġ

So up St. Lucy or Santa Lucija Street, to this little place here. The sign says, 'Studio 104' but it's actually known as 'Desko'. And 'Desko' is usually an art gallery, they have art exhibitions every so often, but the woman who runs this gallery, Nicole,....there is a vintage pop-up market once a month. Like this weekend it's on today and tomorrow. And sometimes I myself set up a stall and sell retro and vintage clothing, because I love it.

Let me just see if Nicole is here, because she also moved to Valletta when I did, or very soon after I did.

(Stops to say hello to Laura who works at the shop.)

So why is it nice for you to have a place like this in Valletta?

First of all, it's on my doorstep and you always meet really interesting people who share the same things...

Is it a younger crowd?

It's a good crowd. Obviously when there is an art exhibition and an opening and it's always very interesting, just nipping up, literally I never had an art gallery on my doorstep.

The thing about Valletta is you get a lot of things on your doorstep.

It's quite special – yes exactly. And also, what I like about this particular area is it's away from the noisy bars, so it's quite quiet at night.

The noisy bars being places like Strait Street or?

Places like Strait Street you know and places that can keep you up and night (laughs) Down here it's very quiet.

What are your thoughts on how Strait Street has evolved into...

Interesting question. It's a bit of a double-edged sword isn't it. I mean gentrification and places being done up, all these boutique hotels opening up. On the one hand a lot of the 'Palazzos' have been given a new lease on life and they look beautiful, and they are being used. On the other hand, I don't know there's a part of that decaying, decadent Valletta which I miss. So, you know.

You do have 'Tiks' though – that's a good bar!

It is, good old 'Tiks', one of the last Valletta bars....so I don't know do you want to push off from here or?

No, it's ok – you can talk as much about a place as you like.

...but even coming here and setting up my own (stall) – because I love vintage clothes and retro stuff – setting up my own stand, it's just fun you know? Something I really look forward to.

(Interrupted by ex-colleagues on a work treasure hunt)

Oh, this a treasure hunt, what fun.

That was my old office, the people I used to work with.

Are you back living in Valletta.

Yes, I am.

(Up St. Lucy's Street)

Right let's head up to the next location. I'll be taking you to 'Piazza Regina'⁵⁸, it's such a landmark.

You are going to be hearing me puffing and panting up the hill.

Don't worry I can hear myself doing it.

(All Season Vegetable Grocer)

This is this really sweet fruit and veggie guy, he has really good stuff. I sometimes stop here when he is open.

That's where you get the best potatoes, its good Valletta still has some of these small shops right?

Yes people think, you know, that we don't get grocery shopping in Valletta, but they are wrong. There are quite a few grocers, still around. I mean occasionally I will nip down to 'Arcadia' (The Suq) but that's really exhausted any other possibilities. **The 'Suq' you mean?**

The Suq.

(Off St Lucy, onto Old Bakery)

We are in Old Bakery, let's go up this way. I like that certain shop fronts have retained their charm.

It's a busy street this one

It is, it is.

Did you used to come into Valletta often before you moved here?

⁵⁸ Now Republic Square.

As often as I could. Any excuse to come to Valletta. Like I said I have always loved the city, and my ultimate dream is to actually own my own place here. But suddenly, prices are eye-watering.

(Off Old Bakery Street onto Old Theatre Street)

Now we're in Old Theatre Street.

This has changed a lot.

This has changed a lot, lots more bars and restaurants here now.

It was quite quiet before I guess.

Yes, I mean, during the lockdown, it was such a pleasure walking around the city, it was a ghost town. And some people were like 'how depressing, how awful'.

Were those people who live here?

Not people who lived here, I think. For us in Valletta it was a dream, it was so beautiful to be able to appreciate the city.

Do you think it is too busy now with all these boutique hotels and the amount of tourists?

As I said you know. Yes, a city is vibrant, a city is full of life, yes, it is good to have a lot of people around. But I don't know....it's a bit of a difficult one for me. I like to write, so when the city was quiet it was more inspiring to me. But I also appreciate that businesses must function, and tourism brings in cash flow and so on. And yes, it is lovely also to walk about and see other people appreciating the city.

(Off Old Theatre on Republic Square)

Now we are coming up to my third location, which Piazza Regina. And everyone usual associates this square with 'Cordina' (laughs)

Cordina is a bit of a Valletta institution, right?

It is, it is an institution, although strangely they don't open for Sunday Tea. Cordina's are always closed on a Sunday, at least in the afternoon.

It's a lovely square to sit in and watch the world go by, people watch. I particularly love it at night with the Bibliotheca which looks so much grander in the evening. And one of the reasons I brought you here was I really used to enjoy coming here, it was two years ago I think, before COVID hit us badly. I am probably thinking summer 2019 here. And every Wednesday night they used to have a live Jazz/String band. And it was wonderful, my friends and I from a Swing Dance

class I used to attend used to come here every Wednesday and dance in this area here. And it was almost experiencing Valletta in its heyday, you know in the forties.

A historic or sense of pastness.

Yes, and just such a special feeling. Every time I pass, I think I really can't wait to be dancing here again, hopefully soon, but who knows.

But yes, good old Queen Victoria has been sitting there presiding over it all.

People have not commented on it, but there was some public sentiment, in the papers, questioning why the Queen is still there in the Piazza.

Yeah, I mean there is a lot of things in the papers, 'Why do we still have the George Cross the flag' and so on.

How do you feel about that?

There absolutely no question. Removing it would be bizarre. The George Cross is something that the country earned, and it deserves to be displayed....'for valour' (laughs). It (the country) does not always live up to the name. But I mean yes, I think we should be proud of our heritage, why not.

Whether it is positive or negative?

We were part of the British Empire, you can't just refute it and cancel it off the history books, you know.

And the British left a big imprint on the city.

Of course. And not only the city, our language our culture our diet. They were here for a long time so, you can't really eradicate whatever markers they left behind. It would be foolish.

(Walking down Republic Street)

Even little snippets like this, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge worked here' ⁵⁹, interesting. And you will find all these little reminders here and there in the city. Plaques on the walls.

One I discovered thanks to these interviews are the French street names under the arcade of this square.

⁵⁹ Plaque outside the members only social club, the 'Casino Maltese', celebrating the English poet's connection to the building in the period from 1804 to 1805.

Ah whereabouts would those be?

Near the flower stall in the corner.

Ok, I will look out for them. Amazing, and they were only here for two years!

So now we are coming up to my penultimate location. One which is very, very, very important to me. This is the Great Siege Monument, which for the past 5 years almost, is it? Yes 5 years this year. On October 16th 2017, journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was assassinated, and that was a turning point for this island in many, many ways. And this memorial kind of spontaneously grew, it's a daily call for justice. And its facing the law courts for a reason, as a constant reminder.

I am very glad you chose this because it is a really good example of how anything heritage related is fluid. This which was best known as the Great Siege memorial is now known as the Daphne Memorial, its no longer just he Great Siege Memorial.

As an activist myself, with 'Occupy Justice', we had a lot of trouble daily over here. Whenever we came to place flowers and candles, they would almost immediately be swept away by the government, by the cleaners, the Cleansing Department. And many excuses were given, that we were defacing the memorial, the monument. That we were destroying it. And quite frankly I have never seen it looking better. We constantly plant things and, there are still the poinsettias we left from Christmas. And every month we gather here, on the 16th of every month, tomorrow we have another vigil at six-thirty. And every month we remember.

The monument was selected mainly for its location?

Its location mainly, but also.... Daphne was a hero; Daphne is a national hero. She died, she was killed not just died, she was assassinated for what she was writing, for what she was yet to write, for what she was exposing, all the layers of filth and corruption that were coming out and have yet to emerge. She was one woman with a blog, one woman whose pen brought down a prime minister, brought down his chief of staff, you know. Her and then all of us crying out for justice, we still are.

Five years later.

Five years later we're still calling for choice.

I'm happy with this choice, because it's an example of heritage being contested.

It's also interesting Joshua to see how they still, how this current government, still treats Daphne despise the conclusions from the recent, what do you call it, the paper, the public inquiry, I forgot

for a second. The public inquiry which placed responsibility at the foot of the state, for failing to offer her enough protection, for creating this culture of impunity which led to the assassination.

Even for example when we have our feasts, national feasts, where the president comes to lay a wreath, at the foot of the Great Siege Monument in honour of the fallen during the Great Siege. Daphne is completely ignored. Not only ignored but last September they actually took away everything and placed everything behind the monument. Of course, I forgot to mention that in 2020 the then minister lost his court case against us for constantly removing the candles and flowers. It was in breach of our right to protest. Since then, they've allowed...they've let all the flowers and candles stay...for the most part.

But then on the 8th of September last year, everything was not taken away, but placed behind. But still you know.

Interesting though that conserving heritage is being used as an excuse to change the current narrative.

Much as they would like to ignore her, forget her....

(Two members of the public, paying their respect at the memorial walk by)..

First member: *She was so right, so was so right.*

Second member: *Of, course she was right, and they murdered her those bastards.*

There you go...

I am very glad you selected this; it might need to feature in its own section.

That's good, I mean, one day, hopefully one day justice will be done. In the meantime, we carry on (laughs).

Where are we going to head now?

We are now heading for a little walk; down busy Republic Street and we will be taking a right down Melita Street. Its quite busy for a COVIDY Saturday morning! (laughs)

Maybe it's in expectation of these new rules.

Yes, come Monday we can remove these masks.

We are not going to go there, but you mentioned the changes at the entrance to Valletta.

Oh God...

Did you find the new City Gate a positive change?

New Parliament? Yes absolutely, absolutely.

So, you are not of the opinion that everything so looks old or match the city.

Oh no, I think rebuilding the Opera House as it once was would have been...no, I don't think it would have been successful. But I am not saying that the current Opera House is ideal. As a theatre itself it has its drawbacks being open to the elements, but then again there are amphitheatres the world over that are open to the elements, so...

As an architect friend pointed out, if they were to rebuild it, it would have to comply to modern health & safety and it would fail.

Yes, so trying to recreate the once resplendent Royal Opera House would have been a bit of a joke I think in comparison. So no, I very much like the new Parliament and I loved emphasis on the past tense, the wide open public space in front of it, which was all part of one cohesive design. So, standing here (Rep. Street) you could see the entrance to Valletta, and the wide-open space leading to the Triton Fountain, and all these clean cut, beautiful lines. But then recently, was it towards the end of last summer – I can't remember exactly when they mushroomed – but they put these really awful planters, cheap wooden planters right in the in middle, which complete marred the clean lines in my opinion. They even look quite tacky, and I don't even know what damage they are doing to the travertine flooring underneath. And that was obviously.... then the next step was that the tables from nearby cafes decided to extend out right to the planters, so that's half that space lost. So, all you get is a little passageway (laughs). Bizarre.

(Off Republic Street onto Melita Street)

Here we are heading down to Melita Street. I really the love the way you're on a busy street, like the main street in Valletta, Republic Street, and all you do is turn a corner and suddenly it gets you know.... you are into another quiet area. I love discovering corners in Valletta, I frequently take walks, I even have a little guidebook I use. You always learn something new, even though I have lived in Malta all my life and I have only being living in Valletta for just under a year.

Another thing you always have to do in Valletta is always look up. You miss so much gazing around at eye-level, look up there is always something new that you haven't seen before. A balcony, a cornice. Like the other day I was walking down this particular street, here we come to a statue of the Madonna and if you look up, there is this huge coat of arms that I've never seen before.

I've never noticed it before either.

(Melita Street corner with Strait Street)

There you go! At the top there.

The actual coat of arms is missing.

The actual coat of arms is missing, there are angels who are missing their wings.

Wait a minute because we are about to get hit. What's this guy doing? Oh, he is backing down the street.

And we can proceed...down Melita. This is Melita Street, which itself has quite a few interesting spots, for example we are coming up to the French Embassy here on our right. This is 'Din L'Art Helwa'⁶⁰ right here.

There aren't that many embassies left in Valletta are there.

Nah, there are still a few left. There is one in Merchant Street I think, this is the French Embassy. This boutique hotel here (opposite) which is now called 'La Falconeria Hotel' but this was the Knight's Falconry. This is where they actually used to breed their falcons.

For hunting I'm assuming.

No well, interesting this, because when Malta was given to the Knights, one of the provisos was that every year they had to present a falcon to the king of Naples or Sicily, I cannot remember exactly where they had to take it. But this is where they used to place importance on breeding the falcons and so on.

Yes, you still get some beautiful old houses here.

Some very grand ones over here.

Yes, all legal offices now.

There is that professional class that always existed in Valletta and never really left.

Yes (laughs). Some of these houses have been turned into apartments.

We are coming up to, good old British Legion (bar/club).

Why have you selected British Legion in particular, are you a snooker player?

⁶⁰ National Heritage Trust

(Laughs) No not a snooker player, but for me it's one of these spots which, you know...Basically the British Legion is interesting, it was founded in Malta in 1921 and they are actually the ones who introduced 'Poppy Day'. As a location I find, again, quirky, interesting. You know you can still go in and have a game of snooker and have an inexpensive drink at the bar. They have a hall/theatre right inside, which is still used for screenings and shows.

Kinemastik⁶¹ uses the space.

Kinemastik, I was here a couple of months ago, there was a short film screening.

I myself probably came here the first time in 2013, where friends of mine put up a burlesque theatre show, and I was roped in and found myself....it was really interesting this (laughs). I met this woman, who would later become a very close friend, and she was looking for an assistant to help her produce the show. And so, I turned up for the first rehearsal with a script that they gave me, and said you just sit here with the script. And then one of the directors, was missing an actress and she said 'you with the script can you go on stage and read that part.' And I ended up actually not assisting with the production but carrying on as the actress who eventually took part. A very happy memory of that and parties here.

It's one of those few unchanged places in Valletta, right? It epitomizes what attracted you to the city.

Completely, completely.

As opposed to perhaps, the fancy new bars in places like Strait Street.

Yes, and it saddens me, for example sometimes I am walking along in South Street, there used to be a really small bar called 'Metropolis' – do you remember 'Metropolis'? The University film club would have parties there, good old days. And this is probably how older people feel when they pass by their spots in the past.

I like this area as well, because there is a lovely view of the harbour from the top of Biagio Steps⁶². Biagio, aka St. Blaise.

Oh, is who Biagio is? I just know it as the place I failed a lot of exams in.

So, yes Biagio Steps. St. Blaise is an interesting character, he is the patron saint of a host of things – oh a bit of noise here – apparently St. Blaise is also one of the patron saints that pregnant ones pray to during labour, during childbirth. A very interesting invocation which is 'Dear St. Blaise,

⁶¹ NGO that organizes film related events, the main being the annual Short Film Festival.

⁶²

make the opening large and the head small' (laughs). One of those quirky things. And that's good old San Biagio.

(End of Melita Street, heading down Biagio Steps)

And you get this(view), you are walking along and suddenly bang! Wow! And this is a great little cut-through, especially going down, up not so much. But we are going down and we will end up back to where we started – in my neighbourhood.

It's interesting that Valletta has these distinct neighbourhoods. From what I have been told, by people who have lived here all their lives, is that their identity, whilst coming from Valletta, but they are from their neighbourhood first and foremost.

Yes, they will tell you, they will tell you, 'I'm from 'Diju Balli' or the 'Mandraġġ' or from the 'Arċipierku', which is the St Paul's side. In fact, my grandmother was from L-Arċipierku, she was born in a house in St. Lucija street, corner with St. Ursula Street and was baptised at St. Pauls. I know this because recently my mother looked up her baptism records for me. And there it was with her address and everything.

Have you gone to see the house?

Yes, and my parents had a painting as well commissioned for me. They got an artist to paint the actual doorway and that particular corner of St. Ursula. Such is my love of this city (laughs).

(Off Biagio Steps onto St. Mark's Street)

So yes. This is another.... First of all, St. Mark's Street was once very quiet, and is now very busy because all cars entering Valletta...

Yes, it has become one of the main entry points.

Yes!

Then you get these buildings, like this old furniture factory, the signage still here.

And Valletta has changed a lot. Back in the day we wouldn't be walking around like this in 'il-Mandraġġ' you know. It used to be quite unsavoury.

Was it unsafe perhaps in the past? Or a perception of it being unsafe.

There were certain areas where you know, you would try to avoid. For example, a very good example of gentrification is this street here, which I want to show you.

(Off St. Mark's Street onto St. Patricks)

This is St. Patrick's Street, and back in the day...and this was the hub of 'il-Mandraġġ' and 'Mandraġġ' was actually like cave in the ground where people loved. Nowadays you get a boutique hotel, you know, a mini market.

But yet you still have a bit of the old Valletta here (Social Housing opposite the Boutique Hotel)

Yes. Now there is a bit of a mix. (Looks at a spa) Valhalla, a place of Bliss! (Laughs).

And I love hearing snippets. Like when I am in my balcony, on my corner I love hearing snippets of conversations, or know people passing by. It's very colourful. Yeah,

*And this brings us almost full circle. Right, I don't know where you want me to stop. **Anywhere you like!***

This will now take us back up to 'Desko'.

We can continue up the to the top of the stairs.

This is a great mix of very old and new.

These are the back of apartments and houses on Old Mint Street, parallel to here. Very big some of them, a whole block.

And this is the other social housing element in 'il-Mandraġġ' – perhaps one of the last traditional Valletta communities.

Have you been down to the 'Diju Balli' area? There is loads more social housing down there. I would say that is still the "roughest spot" (participant parenthesis) in Valletta. There are certain areas there in St. Joseph Street and Fountain Street, but also the location of one of the last bakers left.

There is one here, in the next street.

In Old Mint, but I have never found him open. Borg's Bakery is open and make fantastic bread. And here we are back in Santa Lucija Street.

Perfect position for you to go to the....

To the Market.

Interview transcript for AnnaT.

Interview Date: 15/01/2022

(Starting location – and first spot – Upper Barrakka Gardens)

So, Anna – thank you for taking part. We can start whenever you are ready.

Pleasure.

So shall we start in the Barrakka, I know it's where everybody goes, but it is so beautiful. It's the place where I bring all my friends to, my foreign friends. Because it is a lovely harbour – I remember in Montenegro thinking, 'Now which is the loveliest, Montenegro or Malta, in the end it's Malta. Because in Montenegro you have sheer mountains going into the bay, into the port, whereas here you have got buildings you've got the human influence, you know. So, you see the fortifications the buildings and the scene of such a big siege actually. Our history really.

So, help me along! (laughs)

What is your relationship to Valletta?

I grew up here – from 0 to 10, we lived in Merchant's Street, initially in my grandfather's house, and then we moved down to St Dominic's Street, waiting to move to the house my parents were building.

So, you were part of the post-war exodus. Do you know what drove your parents to move away?

That's right. I think they wanted a healthier environment really for the family.

(Approaching Viewing area – music is playing)

Oh, we've got music! So here we are, this is the most beautiful scene I think in Malta, where you can still see the old towns, where the knights came, where the siege was held, and formed our history really. With our beautiful breakwater and now the modern film facilities. How we've moved on from the old to the new and everything. So that's all – that's what I wanted to say really. Also, the Drydocks which are really wonderful. People interested in Industrial Heritage, really need to come here, because it is really quite amazing what we do here.

One of our traditional industries.

Absolutely, it used to employ 30% I think of our population at the time. I mean I don't know what it is today but there we are. So, for me this is a must, in fact the think all Maltese should come here and admire this port which is endless. I really hope there are ideas of what to do with the end of the port - the Marsa side – and some ideas are wonderful, like why not an Opera House, you know, why not a cultural centre down there. Turn it around, do something.

This lift is also part of my youth, I used to come here with my grandfather, and we used to go up and down on the old lift, for a ha'penny, I don't know if you know what that is. So, we used to go up and down and I used to really enjoy doing that, and now of course this lovely new lift and I think it is really well done, which takes you down you know, and you can just take a little boat and cross to the other side. I think all this has made living in Valletta much easier.

The ease of getting to Sliema or the Three cities.

Yes, to Sliema or to Birgu, it's so much nicer. And also, now with a ferry to Gozo! We took it last time I was here and in 45 min you are in Gozo, no hassle driving.

I guess it is also a great spot because it reminds you that Valletta is a peninsula in the sea.

Absolutely.

...

If I may, but this is really off the record (laughs), Valletta was built on Mount Sciberras, I am a Sciberras, so we are rather proud. In fact, it was given to the Knights, one says, but this is off the record - I really don't want to be boasting - for a glass of water. The peninsula was given to the Knights to build their city, in exchange for a glass of water per year, from the fountain which is now at the Grand Master's Palace. But this is just for you.

That's a great story, I don't see why that should be off the record.

No, no I don't want to be seen – it isn't proven you know.

But it is a great family story and connection to the city.

So that is a little bracket.

These asides are what make this research interesting to be honest.

Yes, to learn a bit more about it (the city).

There may be no truth in it, but if it is an old family story, that links you to the city, I think that is a really important one.

Yes, absolutely. And we always say, we were such bad businessmen, imagine just for a glass of water! (laughs)

And there's the lovely 'Gavroche'⁶³ – well I actually I think that is a copy there, the real one is in the Museum. So, yes, it's a lovely garden it's really a lovely garden.

(Points at a commemorative plaque to Capt. R. Sciberras⁶⁴)

There you are you, see?

Is that family?

Aha...well there we are.

It has been quite a common theme, whether people live here, or have moved out, that they have family links to the city, or memories of coming in for the 'passegiata' (a stroll).

Absolutely, this is what meant to show on the way, as we go to the Bibliotheca⁶⁵ as well. Well, this is it, so this is the lovely garden which I wanted to mention, because I came here as a child, and I still come here with all my visitors, so here we are.

And now I suppose we can go down Merchant Street, no?

Sure! It's quieter than Republic Street and easy now that it has been pedestrianized. As positive change to many.

Very good! Except that it has been taken over by so many bars – I mean it's good and it's bad, I don't really know what to say about that.

Yeah – its good to have life back in the city, but what are we losing as a result?

For example, you can no longer really walk up Old Theatre Street, as a couple. Because there are so many tables you have to walk in single file. And I don't think that should be allowed, the way they changed the table settings in Queen's Square opposite Cordina's, that you can now see the statue of the Queen and the Bibliotheca behind, I think that is so much better than just having random tables everywhere, you know. Improvements, improvements (laughs).

(Crossing Castille Square)

⁶³ Statue, one of many memorials in the Upper Barrakka Gardens.

⁶⁴ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/A-Maltese-officer-s-death-in-India.548394>

⁶⁵ National Library

So, you remember what Valletta was like when you moved back the city, it was probably quite different.

It was absolutely dead, and all of my friends said 'Valletta, you're mad, your absolutely mad'. And at the time I was looking for a place with a view, in fact I was looking anywhere with a view of the sea. Because I live in Strasbourg, which is the furthest city from the sea in France. So, you know there is absolutely no sea and thought I really want to be able to see the sea. Then I saw the flat here, which has lovely views of the sea, so I went for it. So that is now I managed to come back, and people said to me you are going to hate living in Valletta, I said no...no I'm not. And now it's become a gem with all the lovely restaurants and everything, the only problem is parking now, before it used to be so easy to park.

(Approaching Merchant's Street)

This Opera house, I'm very sorry that we have never done anything better than that.

What do you think should have been done.

They should not rebuild it, but for example the Richard England⁶⁶ & Renzo Piano real plans where much better, where you have it covered...I mean how can you ignore in Malta that you cannot have open air theatre in Malta in summer because of the festas and because of the noise and in winter because of the rain.

What are your thoughts about the whole argument about rebuilding the theatre as it was?

Rebuilding, I'm not so convinced, because it was a British building, it was not part...I think they should have either done something in line with the rest of the architecture here or something very modern like the entrance and the parliament. I think those really worked well; you know. But not leave it like that with all those plastic chairs, I think that was a mistake but anyway.

(Walking down Merchant's Street)⁶⁷

And here this is the MUŻA where I want to come to see new Caravaggio.

I haven't been yet you know. Do you want to go and have a look?

I don't think I can continue filming in there!

Ok so this is Merchant's Street, where you can still see the sea, unlike in some places where you can't.... this is the lovely things about Valletta as well, wherever you are you see the sea. You're

⁶⁶ Maltese Architect

⁶⁷ Malta's National Community Art Museum

either seeing it there or there you know. And this is why I get a bit annoyed with all these extra plastic canopies, which block the view of the sea. So anyway.

This is where I used to come to my first lessons up this...and she was called Miss Italia. **What sort of lessons?** Learning how to write, like A, B, C and 1,2,3. Like early school.

Well, it's right opposite my own family connection to Valletta.

Where? what was that?

You see that sign, "Degiorgio & Azzopardi" – that was my grandmother's father's business.

Oh, how interesting, what did they do, did they import?

They were importers, mostly fuel.

Ah, very good. Well on my mother's side, the Enriquez's had shops and I will show you further up. So this where we walked up to the Barrakka nearly every weekend with grandfather and later a bit on my own, you know.

So, your family connection to Valletta is on both sides?

No on my mother's side, yeah. My father was in Sliema, but he came to live here obviously. And those days there wasn't all this driving children to school. When I was young a minivan picked us up and took us to Mdina and then I just took a bus, you know so, I think would really solve everything, but my young friends tell me it's not the same era, people are scared for their children, so forget that. But I thought you know, I used to walk up to the terminus and take a bus when I was 10.

Yep, I was collected at 6.45 in the morning when I was young, it was perfectly normal back then.

But I suppose parents are scared now aye.

(Stop at St. John's Co-Cathedral)

Well, this is our gem, St John's, really beautiful.

You are the first person to single it out you know.

Really? No, it's a gem, really a gem. And thanks to the baroque festival, which unfortunately had to be curtailed to only 8 concerts this year rather than 36, there is always something, in fact there will be the Handel's Messiah here next Tuesday. And it's so beautiful you come to a concert in this surrounding and all this beautiful work of art. You know it's really...and we have it here, on

our doorstep, and some people don't even know what there is inside, you know the Caravaggios, I mean they are beautiful really so.

So, for you there is an historic and aesthetic connection...

And Cultural! I mean we are forever grateful to the Knights. I mean people tend mix up abroad the nights and the Maltese. I kept telling them we are separate entities, you know, they came in as lords if you like, but they have left us this, you know, how happy should we be they've left us this, this lovely city and all the treasures. In fact, one of the previous baroque festivals had the Beheading of St. John in front of the Beheading of St. John (the painting) it was so beautiful. This beautiful opera if you like, or don't know what to really call it, sung just underneath that beautiful painting. There was only place for 50 people I think, not more, it was before COVID, but still it had to be only 50 people. It was tremendous, something like that is unique in the world, you know. So, very proud of that, very proud of that.

This is Valletta as a suitable place for cultural activities, is what you are suggesting.

Yes, there are all these lovely gems.... The 'Monte di Pieta'⁶⁸ which used to frighten me as a child.

How come?

Because this is where you came when you couldn't afford anything, and you had to start selling.

Like an alms or poor house?

That's right! 'Monte di Pieta' – where is it, I am sure it is there somewhere (looking for the sign). There we are, up there. So, you came here to pawn your stuff, when you were going through a bad period. So that's what it was.

(Still on Merchant Street)

And this is where my uncles then took over my grandfather's business – I don't think there is anyone left now – Enriquez they were called.

These were the importers?

Importer of very good prams and very good toys, and I think there I only this one left (Outside the Enriquez perfumery, now closed.) And that is where I used to live, up there.

Oh, that's fantastic, what was that like?

⁶⁸ Charitable intuition that lends money to those in need at modest interest rates.

It's falling to bits. I loved it. But it was a government building, so the state should do something about this you know. There was a lovely roof, where we kept a chicken, and we went up to get our eggs in the morning. In Valletta!

(Approaching the 'Suq')

And this is the favourite Suq, which I loved, but it was not very hygienic you know. I mean it was smelly and they plucked chickens underneath there, so on a windy day all the feathers would come up here and go all over the place (laughs). But they had lovely meat, lovely fish. Everything was fresh and all Malta would come and shop here because there were no other supermarkets. So, we could see them – going in and out...

What are your thoughts on the new one.

Well, I think it worked, but I am very sorry that they have abandoned the idea of a cultural space, you know there was meant to be a cultural space.

In front in fact.

Hah, and look at that. So that I find very sad. And the supermarket has helped us because we do shop there when we don't want to do a big shop, it has got everything. So, its ok.

But if you compare with some of the market's abroad, where you still have the vendors selling pieces of meat you and know. And if you go to, I don't know now, Spain or Italy you still have these lovely covered markets. I think we should have done that, rather. Still the idea of the little shops at the top is not too bad, the little restaurants, where you can sit down and choose what you want, you know. But I think they could have done lovely food, lovely fresh fruit everywhere, but anyway.

Something I learnt during these interviews is that a lot of the vendors went on to open their own shops in Valletta and their older clientele still go to them exclusively. Including a butcher, now near the Bell Monument who proudly displays photos and his original contracts to supply the British garrisons.

How lovely – very good to know.

Another thing that is sad is that the cashiers don't speak Maltese. I mean how can you have a Maltese Market – with all due respect they are very nice – but I heard an old man saying something in Maltese they said 'Please speak English' – I mean we are in Malta you know! They have the right to be able to speak Maltese in the market – I think they should have employed bi-

lingual people, I am not saying Maltese, but bi-lingual people for the market, at the cash desk at least. So I think that is a bit sad you know.

It's a common problem in shops and supermarkets in Malta today.

Yes!

--

(Merchant Street – Corner with Old Theatre Street)

Shall we do this now (pointing in the direction of Bibliotheca) or on the way back?

Whatever suits you!

Ok then we can go down to Sant Duminku ⁶⁹ but it's a bit far aye really, do you have enough? (battery life). I just wanted to go to Sant Duminku because I was baptised there, but also because they are celebrating the centenary, but now I can't remember what centenary it is. And they have had it (the church) beautifully, and I think is one of those churches that get ignored. Because St Paul's, which is very beautiful, you know people go and visit it and....

St. Paul's has remained very vibrant and active, in terms of the people who...

Very. There are baptismal fonts donated by my grandfather there (laughs)

Amazing, really?

Enriquez yes. To lovely angels at the entrance.

I know the Enriquez family, but the ones from Attard I don't know if they are any relation to you. Probably, because I was quite a small family.

Of Spanish extraction.

I think so, especially with a 'Z' you know. Though I have never really gone into that you, to busy making my life, in France.

(Old University – Merchant's Street)

So, this has also been...the beautiful old University and the Jesuit Chapel where there also be a concert actually next week here. Thanks to internet, you know people complain about business you know – I have managed to keep so much more in touch now with Malta than when I first moved out. When I first moved out, I only received the Times of Malta once a week, usual one

⁶⁹ St Dominic's Parish Church.

week late you know, in those days, and that was it. And the occasional phone call, because then they were so expensive, from my family. But then we used to write letter.

A forgotten art!

Exactly.

So, and now thanks to the internet really, I know what's happening I know you know...its great really.

(Outside Grain – Merchant Street)

I did have dinner here once, it's very good.

The top bit?

No, no I went downstairs, I wanted to see why they got a star (Michelin) and it was very good I have to say.

(Valletta City – Fruit & Vegetables)

And yes, this was our grocer

This still is my grocer! I don't know how long the family have been doing it, one of the last proper ones.

Aha, they have nice vegetables

(Childhood home – Merchant's Street corner with St. Domenic's Street)

And my bedroom, when we moved out of that house (up Merchant's Street) was the one there, just near the belfry, the modern one building – while we were waiting to move to Msida – so we had, in those days, the 'Pater Noster' at four or five in the morning, with the bells peeling just next to our bedrooms (laughs). When we first moved-in we thought 'We'll never survive this!' but it's surprising how much you get used to, you know? I really wanted to bring you here, because it is such a lovely building

The church?

The Church sorry, not this (laughs). And look how beautifully they have restored the stonework, this is what I miss so much, the stonework. Because I live in a part of France where it is mostly bricks or grey or rose stone, but never this lovely honey-coloured stone. And this I love; I just love this. And to have a whole town, a capital built out of this stone is such a pleasure for the eyes, for everything. So, ok, I just wanted to come through here, I mean we don't have to go all the way

down, you can just see how lovely the...they've done it up, really nice done, in time for the centenary, and I still have to check which centenary it is. And as I said that bell woke us up, 'Boom!', at four in the morning.

So, you lived in this building? (Post-war block)

That was my room, that little balcony there was my room (laughs). All the top floor, all the way round. 14, stroke 3, St. Dominic's Street, Valletta I knew how to write that (laughs). No lift of course you went up and down.

(Heading back up Merchant Street)

I just wanted to show you also the Bibliotheca. So my aunt lived there, and another aunt lived in Fredrick's Street.

So you have a very strong family connection to the city.

On my mother's side yes, yes.

Did any of them stay in the city?

I think they all left, ahh maybe a cousin still living here, maybe I have a cousin still living here. But mostly not full time, mostly again out in 'better air', Marsaskala⁷⁰ I think she stays most of the time.

(Abandoned, traditional shopfront – Merchant's Street, corner with St. Christopher's)

This was 'Portelli', they used to sell the threads for needlework – because of course we learnt something very important in life, needlework! How often do I use it? (laughs). So, we used to have to buy the threads from here.

They have just removed the sign, it used to be up on top.

Have they, it was 'Portelli' no?

Yes, it was.

I think it's a shame because, I think it is so beautiful, they could have restored it. But I don't know what is going to happen now.

They are meant to be scheduled or protected.

Yes? Because it is so much part of Valletta that, you know.

⁷⁰ Fishing village in the south of Malta

It is right?

Aha.

But then as I said, you know, all the exodus, all the people who wanted to go to bigger houses with gardens which you couldn't have here you know, well mostly you couldn't have here. Very few people did.

So here we are, the Old University which as been done up rather nicely as well.

Puff, pant. Is this being recorded, my puff-panting? Can you [unclear] it out? Can you take it away?

It is hard to breath in these masks.

I know!

(Merchant's Street corner with Archbishop's Street)

Voila! I think the plastic covers are so tacky, I really wish we could do something else you know, but I don't know what. And also, I don't think it is normal that there are tables against the....

Against the palace at the end (Babel Bar)

Yes! I don't think it is normal you know. I mean, it's really a lack of respect for our heritage in a way. Then having said that, I love the idea that there are so many places to go to now in Valletta.

(Off Merchant Street, onto Old Theatre Street)

That's an important consideration, especially when it comes to valuing heritage. The traditional ones are the historic or aesthetic. So, a place might have historic connections and be attractive and Valletta is full of that. One of the things I was interested in, was social value, for example how people would draw some sort of identity from the city, and that can come from anything really, their parish their allegiance to the football club. Focusing on one set of values is often at the detriment of other values. Like pushing the economic value of heritage.

Yes, I mean...but I worked on heritage, mostly in the Balkan countries, for maybe ten years. And it was mostly helping the former Yugoslavia, the Balkan countries, to come a market economy. And introduce them, for example, to restoration, we took them to Venice for the restoration, what to do and that sort of thing. So, you see it can be done, and you think don't we do it here really, but...

(Onto Republic Square – under the arcade)

So here, this is also one of my favourite streets in Valletta. I know it's not as old as the rest of Valletta, but the Bibliotheca is where I learn how to borrow books to read. My father had brought me here, and in the old days halfway up to the 'real' Bibliotheca – the library – there was lending library for young people. Here through here...where you still filled out a form with ink and pen, you dipped the ink and the pen, filled out the form of the book you were going to borrow, blotter, and give it in in exchange for the book you could keep for two weeks. So, for me this was something fantastic, it opened up a new world. I could read as many books as I want, I don't have to buy them, they are just round the corner, literally. So, you just came here, you went up halfway – you cannot really see so much because there is a lovely reflection (doors are closed) – and turned right and that's where all the books for the children were, you know. So, I came here really often, and so this street was something exciting, you came home with a book, you know, and took it home to read.

I wonder how many people use the library for that reason.

Well now it's in Belt is-Sebh⁷¹ so it is a bit out of the way. I still used it, when I was still living here, but it was not very encouraging to go there. I think there should be one in Valletta, there should be a lending library in Valletta.

There is clearly a lack of community spaces in Valletta.

There's that new one down in....

The 'Biččerija'.

That is rather nice. It's a bit sad because it opened during COVID, so nothing is really happening.

I am not sure what it actually does to serve the community, though I know it has a garden space.

The roof garden is very nice.

I have not been to the garden, but I have visited a group who have a space there, because that's the idea, it's a design cluster.

Very good, at least it's encouraging to know that something exciting is happening.

⁷¹ Area outside Valletta, home to many government departments.

What it actually does to benefit the community itself. Some have commented that it is nice not to see it not being a ruin, perhaps in and of itself that is already a positive thing.

No, it's interesting...

And This where there used to be the Premier Music Evenings⁷². So sometimes we used to be allowed to come here and listen to this band you know, and my parents and their friends would sit around and drink you know. The Premier is finished, but it had a band here, so now all we do is come to little 'Tikka' (Bar), which is great, we love it, we really love it. So, there we are (laughs).

So just wanted to show you Rubino (restaurant) but I don't know if we have enough time.

We are ok for time if you want to walk down to Rubino.

Yes? Because for me it is an institution and I am so glad that Edward (Chef Patron) is getting all the acclaim that he deserves you know, because he's a really good chef. And I was going to tell actually before, when you mentioned the social aspect. When Julian Sammut ran Rubino, he had discovered in fact the poorest people in Malta lived in Valletta. The poorest, down in the Marsamxett area mostly, but even down at the bottom down there (Id-Diju Balli). And he used to organize a certain delivery with the parish priest Sant Wistin, St Augustines. And I was very surprised. And he told me as well that some people actually locked in their houses, because as there are no lifts, they could no longer up and down. Because Valletta is full of stairs. And I remember trying to contribute to that, but I don't know if anything happened after, when he moved out.

(Leaving Republic Square heading down Old Theatre Street)

So that is the first information I had got when I first moved into Valletta went it was still quite deserted, and you could see the poverty actually, you could really see the poverty, you know.

That has changed in the city – perhaps if you walk to certain areas you can.

But that you can't see it really anymore....

...Straight ahead is where I live, that entrance.

St Paul's buildings, amazing, well purchased, possibly one of my favourite buildings.

In those days it was nothing! Well, you must come round and have a drink! I won't say now because my partner is probably still asleep after yesterday's adventure!

⁷² Café Premier was a famous café in the square, now closed.

So, there you are. That was lucky really.

I will tell you that two previous interviewees have walked me specifically to St. Paul's Buildings.

Oh, should I take you in then?

I thought that it would be nice for you to know that many people find them very special.

(Off Old Theatre Street onto Old Bakery Street)

This is Rubino here. So, thought we would come here.... No seriously though, come over with your partner for a drink.

I don't have a partner.

Oh, I thought you said you have one.

No, I live with my ex-partner.

Oh, I see, well we all have ex-partners (laughs).

And I just love the way they are doing up this street, this street now has some really beautiful.... look at this grey building here.

And there is the one with the different balcony.

Yes, and that is a relic of an art deco period which is unusual, rounded balconies with the holes in it. And that is so beautiful.

So, this is Old Bakery Street.

This is Old Bakery Street, my father had his office down here, well now my brother and niece have an office down there.

And this is Rubino, our lovely Rubino where we come every time, every time we come to Malta we come here. And we are heartbroken because he (chef) is away on holiday next week. (laughs). So, there we are. And when I was young, we used to get out Sunday Cassata Siciliana, because Rubino was the place...

So now they still make a lovely Cassata I have to say. But we just love the menu, love it. It's not pretentious, its very, very good homemade food. I mean last week we had, we had, in fact I think I even mentioned it on Facebook, a mixture of 'encre de seiche' what is that in English, drat, the ink of squid. So, we had lamb in squid ink, that's right. Who would ever imagine, who would every imagine, and it works beautifully. And he does it, so he really deserves his Michelin Bibendum

which he got and now this big prize which he received, and I really think I should plug him, because he is doing a really good job.

Something I like about Rubino is that it is a constant, it has remained.

Toni has been there forever, Edward has been there for ever, they have extra help obviously. So, it's like coming home to wonderful food, and we do like eating well so that is very important. And he told me he is opening up a little place over here, where you can just go in for a snack, on the corner. But they got behind because of COVID and everything.

So, there we are, this is the end.

Thank you!

Interview transcript for MartinGD.

Interview Date: 22/01/2022.

(Start – Hastings Gardens)

So, we have started at Hastings – is there a reason for this?

Well, it is close to where I live! I don't know, is it fine if we walk this way?

Any way you like, the route is flexible and up to you.

Ok sure.

Interestingly I have not been taken up here yet.

Really. No, mainly it's because it's mostly residential I guess, and you only visit either because you live here, or you want to visit someone here or you are desperate to find parking.

The perennial Valletta parking situation! So how long have you lived here?

Well, I am 44 actually and lived here for most of my life except for one solid year kind of when I was living abroad.

Were brought up here and your family is from here?

Yes, since my grandparents at least yes. So, my grandparents lived down the road here actually and then.... In fact, we have had some works at home, because we needed to re-organize the house a bit actually.

So, your family is from the Hastings Area?

Yes, yes actually...most of it, except for – but maybe we will go there as well – because my mother's aunties actually used to live in another part of Valletta, and they are the ones that kind of used to be the duties of babysitting and that sort of thing. By the way, is it in Maltese in English or it doesn't matter really?

Up to you – whatever you are more comfortable with.

Ok, sure, sure.

I will translate everything into English anyway when I am transcribing.

...

So, I know you live somewhere in this area.

Yes, we are walking in that direction.

You forget how nice the view is from here.

Yes, it's a very overlooked garden actually. They fixed it, not so recently, but I remember it when it was a bit more, how do you say, rough. I mean there weren't many other kids my age at the time when I was a kid actually, so most of my childhood was basically not spent with friends in this area, kind of.

But in Valletta itself?

No, not actually....

...Well, I live on this street, actually, so I get part of the view of here, so I get to see sunset very often in fact.

I have memories myself of this park – it was where we would come and hangout after we had done out O-levels⁷³

Ah ok, (laughs).... So, I used to go around with my bike here but when the terrain was different, when you fell of your bike your doomed kind of yes. You would go back home full of scratches and bruises.

This part of Valletta has not changed that much, other than having been 'tidied up'.

Yes, they did. In fact, that's one thing, I wanted to come here because this is also the view I see from the roof, which I turned into a roof garden at home in fact. I mean I guess it gives a bit of a perspective of the size of Malta. I mean if you look all that way you can see I mean you can see Dingli Cliffs basically because there's the Radar Station at Dingli. So, it kind of keeps you grounded, in the sense that...

We are actually a really small island!

Yeah (laughs).

If you compare this garden to Upper or Lower Barrakka, they are much busier.

Yeah, I know, exactly actually.

⁷³ Two national examination centres for secondary examinations (O & A level) were based in Valletta.

Yeah, so this is basically where I spent well, most of my childhood, but as I said, normally, especially when I was younger, I don't know, I used to prefer exploring other places actually. Outside Valletta, rather than Valletta. So, I used to go hiking a lot actually. Cause I was thinking a bit about this in fact – maybe we can walk this way if you want, I guess.

(Out of Hastings onto Windmill Street)

So, for a while I think I was looking more kind of towards the view on the gates of Valletta in a way I mean. Yeah, I used to live here, I used to go to primary school here down the road.

Pillar School?

Yeah exactly, with all the nuns and all that (laughs)

Some else mentioned it, and I had no idea where it was, so I looked it up.

Ah really, in fact now it has been turned into come government kind of thing or they are still fixing it up in fact.

But here then I also remember stories that my mother used to tell or my other uncle actually who lives here as well, about this place being called 'l-qalqa' (the field) where they used to play even in their childhood kind of.

That's interesting because I interviewed someone from the Arcipierku, and they had a similar thing on their side of Valletta.

Ah ok! So basically....

(Through Car Park onto South Street – onto St. Andrews Street)

Having lived in Valletta your whole life I guess you have seen it change a lot over the years.

Yes, definitely a lot....

I was thinking. One of the things I wanted to do was walk outside of gates, I mean outside of the bastions, which is by the coast, which is kind of the other side of Valletta in a way, which people don't normally see. That there is a bit of a more natural side of Valletta actually. Which actually got a bit of new meaning in times of COVID where I used to just go around for a walk around all the bastions actually, when it was actually really quiet. I mean it was actually – I mean if you want, we maybe we can walk that way as well – and I will be mentioned this when we are there, but yeah it's a bit of an overlooked area of Valletta actually as well. Basically, people just think that Valletta is just urban areas only, but there are some pockets, especially around the coast, so far though I don't know how long that will last to be honest.

Yes, there are the first signs of commercialisation, the restaurants or the polo pitch.

Yes, exactly.... we can walk from here.

(St. Andrews Street – stairs down to Melita Street – stairs to Biagio Street)

In fact, this used to be my walk from home to school when I was at the Pillar, yes down here passed Biagio steps. In fact, that's another kind of...a bit of a memory from exams and all that (laughs).

It's now an interpretation centre, right?

Yes, I mean considering how it was before and how it is now, I mean it's like you don't remember it, you won't consider it (the same place).

Some of my interviewees, particularly architects, have commented on this transition from “inside to outside” – like when you are passing through ‘Jews Sally Port’.

Yes, completely outdoors. I mean as you wish, if want to we can walk part of it or if you want, we can just walk over it.

Up to you, I really don't mind....

.... So, as you know, one of the reasons why I am doing this is that I am interested – in the context of Heritage Management – what it is that makes places significant, apart from the usual attributes, but to the social value people might derive from a place. Like Social Value for example.

...

(Onto Boat Street)

No, I mean sometimes I have actually started to appreciate or discovered more recently.

Such as what?

Erm, like there is also a community of people here who are fisherman

Like in the green boathouses?

No and also here, these boats here. So the guy who owns the grocery shop next door – I mean before that used to be another person actually, until some 20 or 25 years ago but he retired – he actually has a boat which he parks over here and he built it himself actually, so. And he is also from Valletta, but it is something that I was never kind of aware of. Even though it's just down the road.

There is the boathouse community round the corner from here too.

Ah yes, as well that one. That's another one aha – there are a lot of fishermen as well in fact, and cats!

Valletta used to be pretty famous for its cats – though I see less nowadays.

In fact, there used to be a cat on our street called Puma, and he was kind of the king of the neighbourhood actually.

The one on our side was called 'Morris'.

...

So one recent development was actually the ferry to Sliema and to the Three Cities, this part of Valletta is now a gateway to somewhere else, before it was just...

And also, Gozo now on the other side

Yes, which is really nice actually. I have used it a few times, and once I came straight from 'Ramla l-Hamra' (Beach on the island of Gozo) and ended up in Merchant Street on a Saturday evening kind of...

(Encounter a prospective participant, DuskaM)

This is the thing – as a resident doing this sort of work, I was concerned that it would look like I was just selecting people I know, but that is how Malta operates.

You cannot avoid it! (laughs)

So here, apart from these new things and developments kind of, I remember these aunties of my mother who used to bring us to swim here, once in a while kind of. But then when I grew up I never came to swim here again, but then when Raisa (wife) starting living here in Valletta as well, she kind of discovered it again and she said "Ah why don't we come swim here once in a while at least"

It's nice here when the sea is not coming in.

Aha. So, then we started coming here but then we actually discovered another bit further up in fact, which is quieter normally. **On the rocks over there?**

Yeah, on those rocks.

I am not much of a swimmer, but if I do come for a swim I tend to go there too.

Not even me actually.

Some people think of Valletta as timeless and unchanging and then...

You get this kind of stuff which is very new actually. I mean there used to be this other, open-air terrace kind of thing.

I think it was called 'Zmerc'

Oh yes.

I guess one of the main features of Valletta currently is the commercialisation.

Yeah, I have heard that there are plans even for down here to increase the commercialisation actually.

More commercial activity on the seashore?

Aha, that's what I have heard, which is a bit scary, I guess. Cause we (the Maltese) go a bit overboard when it such things. I mean you can prettify an area but don't necessarily have to turn it into a concrete mess.

(Boat Street? – facing Tigné)

So normally I end up coming to swim here once in a while, which is ironic because then you get to see this in front of you (Tigné Point Development) which is basically those who are capitalizing on the view and were getting their not so nice view.

Yeah, they are really designed to look at Valletta. That's the selling point. It's interesting that – perhaps that's why there is concern about how the city looks, because it affects investment outside the city.

Yes, that's it actually.

...

The Pillar school is up here...

Is that the church?

Yeah, but the school actually this one here. This used to be the orphanage, a nun's orphanage. I don't know if the nuns are still live here, but it was a different kind of setup. Obviously when I was a kid and not being so good, they (my parents) would say 'ah we will take you there.' But next door there was the school which was...it was a primary school basically only, so I spend there until I think grade 5, because then there was a chance to move on to another school. But it was

actually quite a nice place, I mean you could see the waves crashing.... that is one thing I remember very clearly, looking out of the window which was pointing in this direction and when the sea was very rough you could see the waves, especially at Tigné Point in fact, you would see the waves going all the way up. And could see part of this view even from home in fact, but then – I guess I can mention them – AP ⁷⁴ just built another floor on top and the view was gone basically. Now I see just a little sliver of sea, but before I could see all of Tigné in fact. To be honest they almost did me a favour now that turned out to be like that (laughs).

(Boat Road? – approaching Jew’s Sally Port)

This is ‘Diju Balli’ right? One of the last communities.

Aha, no, exactly because I think that is one thing that is happening to Valletta aye, the community feel is being lost completely. I mean it was already being lost, at least in my area there were some families we kind of knew of or we spoke to, but I could see it already kind of not being so much present. But there were some places, like here where there was(is) a lot of community feeling and that kind of stuff.

I find it so interesting that such a small area has these distinct...

Pockets sort of aye?

That’s how I found out about the ‘klikka ta Hastings’ (Hastings Clique) I was very surprised, I was told they are nice, but different to us.

(Laughs) I am curious about that actually.

(Through Jew’s Sally Port onto St. Nicholas Street)

If you want, we can go up from here....

...Like I said, during COVID I used to walk all around, and sometimes all the way to Marsa ⁷⁵in fact and then go all the way back. But then, there is one place which I discovered more recently, which is a bakery actually. And it is amazing that one.

There are not many left!

Exactly. I never used to come to this one because there used to be quite a few of them next to the playing field, the one in Marsamxett and I am not sure if there’s any of them left in fact.

⁷⁴ AP – a large architecture firm based in Valletta.

⁷⁵ Industrial Port town at the end of the Grand Harbour.

And a bakery is so central to Maltese community life.

Aha – and I saw a sign – I am vegetarian but – I saw a sign that he was advertising that they were doing a ‘fornata’ which I assume when everyone brings their tray with food.

This area is kind of interesting, because all the businesses serve the people that live here and not visitors.

Which is something which is being lot in Valletta. Obviously, I don’t mind that Valletta has the UNESCO status and all that, but I really don’t want it to turn into – I am not sure which term to use – but a bit of a theme park in a way which then becomes more, I don’t know, sterile in a way, and not kind of liveable kind of.

It’s interesting that you bring up UNESCO status, because it features a lot in any plans for the city, it’s one of the primary concerns.

Ah, that we will lose the status aye.

So yeah, I agree with what you said, at what expense do we maintain it, if it turns the town into a museum.

Exactly that.

So, we are at the bottom of Republic Street.

We can go up Republic Street maybe in fact, ok.

(Up Republic Street)

‘Ġugar’⁷⁶ is also one of those places where you end up.

One of your stops?

Yeah cause you normally go there and meet people without kind of (having to plan).

It’s a bit of a, not countercultural, maybe alternative stops, where Graffiti⁷⁷ meet.

Yes, they gather there after their meeting. But you know that if you want to meet someone, without asking if they would be there, you can assume that someone (you know) will be there.

Have you noticed how many temporary residents there are now in the city – people renting or coming in stay at the restored building turned into hotels.

⁷⁶ Bar on Republic Street, popular with musicians and activists.

⁷⁷ Moviment Graffiti is a left-wing Maltese organisation/lobbying group set up in 1994.

Yes, I have noticed actually, but that's the thing. I mean obviously it's a bit of a balance, but sometimes I think we went from one extreme to another, because I remember when there a time when in Valletta the only hotel you could think of was Osbourne Hotel and British Hotel.

And The Grand Harbour Hotel next to it.

Ah yes, next to each other. But now its mostly go the other way around almost I think, which is sad, I guess.

(Republic Street corner with St. Christopher's Street)

I wanted to mention actually the German-Maltese Circle ⁷⁸ because I was part of the Astronomy Society in Malta, yeah for a long time, and for 20 years or so this was the place where we used to meet because the guys here gave us the space for having a club. Anyway its close actually but....

I have gone in a couple of times, because I live right there on Fredrick Street, and there is a proper 'Kazin' on the ground floor.

Yeah, the downstairs is like this 'kazin', an then they have a hall up there actually and the ceiling is painted with stars! **Appropriate!**

Exactly.

Are you no longer a member of the society?

Yeah well, I am a member, but not an active kind of...I used to be on the committee and all that. And I had been there since I was in the Junior Astronomy Club, so it was like since I was 14 or something (laughs).

So, from what you are telling me, Valletta's significance for you is linked personal connections to the city.

I would say so yes.

How do you feel about modern buildings in Valletta, like for example the King Albert School?

I mean obviously you have to understand that it is a living city as well, I mean I hope it is and stays like that. So yeah, it depends on how they are and what function they serve.

(Republic Str corner with Archbishop Str)

⁷⁸ Housed in Messina Palace and founded in 1962.

So right down that is where I told you that my mother's aunties used to live.

What's that area called?

That's called 'Fuq il-Palm' because there is a palm tree in that square. So that is another section of Valletta in fact, because then there is the Church of 'Tal-Karmnu' (Carmelites) which is another bubble I guess as well, which is quite an active one or it used to be at least. Because they used to have a lot of...like this youth club or whatever and then they used to have this kind of Easter drama, or whatever it was. So, it's one of those...and they used to have quite a lot of youths involved in that. I like – I mean I am not very religious – but I used to see what was going on around as well. But I mean my parish itself is one of the most dormant.

Which one is your parish?

That would be the one of St. Augustine actually.

I did not even know about it.

Well, the thing is that sometimes, well not sometimes, I would never remember when the feast is and all of a sudden, we have the feast. But it's a very low-key kind of thing unlike all the other ones.

Like St Paul's or St Domenic's.

Yeah, those are the ones which are kind of the bigger ones I guess, but even this one, 'Tal-Karmnu', is quite big.

'Tal-Karmnu' is that very large church which competes with the Anglican Cathedral.

Yeah exactly, you know the story right (laughs) that they had to do something about it other it (the Anglican Cathedral) would be the highest steeple in Valletta.

Obviously during COVID I used to walk through here and literally meet no one, so in fact when we were walking down by the sea I would meet more people down there, because they would be doing some BBQ or just sitting by the sea quietly. And then you come up in the middle of Valletta where it's kind of meant to be the centre and you meet literally no one. Maybe for a Bolt or a Wolt (food delivery). I mean, at the same time in Republic Street – I don't know how old you are – but you couldn't live in Valletta, or other places in Malta, without being an altar boy or something like that.

I was for a bit yes.

I was as well, in the Church of St. Francis up the road, which is kind of one of the central churches, but at the same time it's not like the ones of the Parishes.

This is the one on Republic Street on the left?

On the right actually. But then that's another thing actually, since we are walking by St. Johns (Cathedral)... ah because I forgot to mention something about the square up there (San Ġorġ). So, just to mention this – on Sunday for the family mass requirement we used to come here to St. John's – and now obviously to walk into St. John you need to pay.

Even for mass?

I am not sure actually – it's not that I got to church any longer` – but most of the time you can't just walk in anymore, like it was before.

People line up right here (opposite law courts) to visit

Yeah – you got in from here. But now most of the time there is a security guy next to the door (of the church) on the frontside telling people to come in from this entrance.

I mean because you mentioned the political activism kind of stuff, I mean they are mostly on this street. Old Parliament was there before (Pjazza San Ġorġ) so it used to be walking from City Gate all the way here and then doing something in front of Parliament.

And now it has kind reversed.

Yeah exactly, you start here, and you walk to City. But we also had something here, before the Daphne Monument was here – because this was in 2015 and we had this huge Trojan Horse, like an inflatable Trojan Horse and it was basically about the Transatlantic Trade Deal, the TTIP I don't know if you are aware of it. So we set it up here and we spent a week with this inflatable thing...

I guess this square is symbolic for a number of reasons.

Yeah, the lawcourts – this was mostly because of the legal implications of all that.

The law courts are not exactly old themselves.

No, they were basically bombed.

I cannot remember which building it replace.

I think it was one of the Auberges actually.

That reminds me a bit of the 'no-go areas' as well.

Ah in Valletta, like what?

Like the lower part of Strait Street.

The Gut? *Yes exactly, when I was a kid basically.*

So was it still active?

*Well not as active but it still was, and obviously the 'City Lights'⁷⁹ – I have never been there but that's how it was kind of. **Was sex work still happening in the gut or was it just still a taboo.***

I think it was mostly taboo at the time, or else people who were active in the past were still living there or something. And what else was there, because I wrote them down. Ah yes, then there was another area which I kind of set the boundary myself, which is where the fisheries are and behind the Suq.

Why?

Because of the smell.

Where you vegetarian already?

No but I have never eaten fish in my life, so that's one thing.

Is it a dislike?

Yeah, it is a complete dislike, almost bordering on an allergy. And behind the old Suq was the other place, an in the old Suq – I used to really hate going there. When someone needed to buy something from there it used to be like – 'no I don't want to go!' But now obviously it has been kind of very much commercialised and gentrified to an extreme I guess even.

It's not an uncommon reaction that people have a negative view of the Suq, and the community it displaced.

As much as I didn't enjoy the smells and the way it was in terms of hygiene and all that, I think a balance could have been found.

(Off Republic Street – Up South Street)

Because that is one thing – even going back to what I do as my activism and all that – and right now we are working a lot on Food & Agricultural issues, and Valletta I think is one of the few cities

⁷⁹ Adult Film Cinema operating since 1977.

where you don't find a proper fruit & vegetable market. And actually, I get people asking me – 'Where is it?' - and there is one.

We are about to walk past probably the biggest fruit vendor (Zachary Street)

Yeah, that one is still there – and its closed actually.

So where are we headed now?

Well, this place is where my parents got married in fact.

This church, isn't this one of the oldest churches in Valletta?

Yes, in fact for a while it was closed and then they restored it, I think 'Din L-Art Helwa' (National Trust) was involved. **Yes, the plaque seems to confirm that. I guess was one of the first restored landmarks in Valletta.** Yes, I think so....

(Castille Square)

...Hold on – let me check my list again because I made a list. Actually, I mean St James⁸⁰ itself is one those places which kind of.... find a cafeteria, especially if you are trying to work or having a meeting in Valletta, most places have loud music so you cannot even chat or anything – but St James, and the cafeteria 'Inspirations' was ok – so that was a nice place to work or have a work meeting. But St. James, I like the theatre it's kind of a cosy little theatre.

The one that you surround the stage? I had seen a couple of band play there.

Ok, aha – but even productions and performances which were really good. Just you have to be careful, because if someone misses something – it's really close, you are part of the stage sometimes, I feel part of it.

I mean that's more of a modern thing, but I also like Manoel Theatre, especially this year the baroque festival, I don't know if you have ever been to any of those.

(Outside Upper Barrakka)

Normally the Upper Barrakka is one of the places that, if someone is visiting, is the first place I bring them to, we just walk up the road and then walk this way.

It has probably been one of the most mentioned or feature areas of Valletta in my interviews.

⁸⁰ Restored Cavalier, now housing galleries, a theatre etc.

Ok, but at the same time it's kind of one of those areas which are – how would you say it – I mean like the area where I live is not as touristy kind of, but this is kind of one of the obvious places to get someone. But then there are other places, like for example, if we go around to St. Ursula Street its one of the nicest streets in Valletta, I think.

We can go that way if you like.

Ok

(Top of St. Ursula Street)

This is Ursula Street, and it has some amazing bits to it. As you know, Valletta its mostly about looking up but at the same time trying not to fall into some basement or something (laughs). But when you look up in Valletta you see so many.... I mean you discover a new side to Valletta actually.

I mean this is a new kind of development here, The Times⁸¹ is gone basically.

You can see the remains of the building that preceded it.

Yeah, you can see some of the older bits, I did not realize actually because I thought it was just a new building. Wow.

This is being turned into another hotel.

Yeah, or residential spaces.

I have walked through Ursula Street with a few participants, and one noted just how many places are now hotels.

Yeah now most of these places actually are, closer to this side (of town) but probably its just moving in that direction as well.

(Break whilst some tourists film content for their blog)

And at the same time, they are prettifying it in terms, more shrubs and trees, which is more what they have done in the Three Cities, I think that's where it started and its quite nice in fact.

They have removed a lot of trees around Valletta, like around the periphery.

Yeah, and even in the middle of Valletta, in front of the Suq for example, I remember protesting against the removal of them, because that is where all the 'wagtails' (a bird) used to sleep.

⁸¹ The Times – Offices and printing press of Malta's largest independent newspaper.

Obviously, this must be something that is very close to your heart, do you think this loss of green area is symptomatic of a city that is not designed for the community anymore. Do you think there is some truth to that?

Yeah, I mean I remember, now the area for example in front of 'Is-Suq', I remember more people from the community just going there to sit in the shade, I mean older people maybe but, but now you cannot just sit there because you want to sit there.

I guess people still do at Cordina round the corner, where they have left the trees.... this is the place on this side that was also known as 'the field'.

Ah yes, where Sicilia now is.

(St. Ursula Str, corner with St. John's Street)

...Up here there is 'Croce Bonaci' which is the place where you would get all the 'figolli'⁸² and the St. Martin's sweet, I forget what they are called now. Those anyhow.

Was there anywhere else I wanted to go? (checks phone) No that's it.

That's perfect and bang on the time limit. Thank you. It's going to be interesting to see what happens to Valletta in the 5 years.

Yeah exactly, as I said – its changed so much – before when I was a kid, when I was at school it was like 'Ah you live in Valletta' its like someone is going to murder you (laughs). There was that stigma actually in a way. And at my school, there were only 4-5 people in my secondary school who were from Valletta, everyone else was from elsewhere. But not many people, like I said in my area I don't remember many kids in fact, maybe 3 or 4.

I think you were of that generation where families had already moved. I guess you would need to be 50 and above to remember Valletta with lots of kids. I interviewed someone from this street, and of the 30 friends he had growing up, he is the only one left.

That's it basically, most of these people who I am telling you about who were my age they don't live in Valletta.

It's interesting right.

Yeah. I always considered, even at the time when it was kind of a bit of a rough diamond, I still saw that Valletta had so much potential, not in a commercial sense, but that it could be a very

⁸² Traditional, almond based baked sweet associated with Easter.

liveable city – in a comfortable way even – but yeah then it went overboard in the opposite direction.

As money flooded in.

Yeah, exactly.

Interview transcript for KonradB.

Interview Date: 26/01/2022

(Start – Parliament Square/City Gate)

Thank you, Konrad, for agreeing to take part.

Are you going to use this footage or are you just going to transcribe it?

I will use parts of the footage and the entirety of the transcript, but if you want me to send you a copy of the material before I use it, I am happy to do so.

No, no – just wondering whether I should look at you or whatever, that’s all.

Oh, that does not matter – it is not structured or designed as a documentary, I am just capturing the conversation.

As I said, I have done this a hundred times and more, as we were building that building, so many journalists came from everywhere, from every TV channel and cultural magazine and tourism magazine. So, I took them around and I sort of slowly had perfected the pitch.

It’s interesting that there was so much foreign interest, how come?

Well because of Renzo Piano. As we spoke about the building, we spoke about Maltese architecture, and I kind of said ‘There is quite a revival in architecture today, a lot of young architects doing really good stuff’ and if you are going to talk about the architecture of Valletta, why not also talk about some of the stuff being done by local people. But they weren’t interested.

So, they were more interested/drawn by the rock star status of Renzo Piano.

Yeah, rock star, because that’s what gets people to read it. Which is a bit of a shame. Because if we are talking about Maltese vernacular, then there is an infinite amount of information that you can glean from publications or going around Malta, and they weren’t so interested, they were only interested in this (City Gate Project).

The project has, understandably, featured in some of my other interviews, it was a ‘battle-zone’ of opinion at the time. It would be silly to ask you what you think of modern interventions in the city since you were directly involved with this project, but what did you make of the discussion? Were you frustrated by arguments about the place of new buildings in the city or did you think that it was a healthy discussion to have?

That there is a discussion is always healthy. And it kind of proves.... I remember reading when Victor Hugo wrote "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame" he says 'The book will kill the building' and I never quite understood what that meant. And really what it means is that, before the invention of the printing press and the potential of a book be read widely, the only other means of mass communication was a building, because people didn't have pictures, they didn't have paintings. They witnessed or enjoyed paintings was in the churches. But really and truly, the image, as we know it today and what we are inundated with, didn't exist then. So, the only thing that people were able to see in a common way or in a public way were buildings. So, it is understandable that buildings evoke such a response.

What bothered me was the very prejudiced views of some people, and the lack of information, and the lack of honest criticism. And strangely enough, way back in about 2012-13, you know the French sit for their Baccalaureate when they are 16. The questions that are asked are actually printed in the press, so that the whole nation knows what questions were being asked. And I remember in 2012-13 the question which was asked to about 700,000 16 or 17 year-olds was this - and it was quite interesting for Malta – it was 'Is it possible to appreciate a work of art, even if you don't like it.'

Because part of the problem with the debate here was that people sort of took sides – I like it and I don't like it – but the fact that you don't like it, does not mean that it is bad. And unfortunately in Malta that's the underlying message – 'I don't like it means I think it's bad,' but the fact that you don't like it does not mean it is bad.

A lot of the debate, and I did not follow it very closely at the time, this building behind us. The public debate and reaction in the press is one of the inspirations behind this project.

Well, the story of the building is that the Maltese government asked Renzo Piano to design a parliament on the site of the Opera House. And Renzo Piano said – now don't forget he is Italian, and he comes from a background of socialism, communism in Italy in the 70s, where the public realm is very important, but Italy has a big tradition of public spaces and their most important work (book) on architecture, which was written by Leon Battista Alberti in 1440, is about the city and how beauty and the city go hand in hand. But that is all for the benefit of a sound, healthy and happy society. So, the city and society come together, as opposed to Vitruvius which was 1500 years earlier which was actually about the art of building, this was about the connection between society and...

So, Renzo Piano said, the parliament building doesn't fit on the site of the opera house and what I would do is put the parliament building on what used to be called 'Freedom Square,' which was

a car park and a failed project really, because originally the land was, as you know, at a higher level and there were two large stair ramps leading up to the it. And then it was excavated when, in the 50s after the war...

There was a lot of war damage in this area, the stairs were hit, no?

Yes it was hit, but so was the theatre hit. Then in 50s there was a competition to rebuild the theatre and there were various contemporary schemes presented, and this square, which was reduced, the level was reduced, including City Gate, were part of that project. And his theories [unclear] was one that the parliament would not fit on the theatre, secondly you cannot rebuild the theatre because too many contemporary requirements for use of theatres and operations of theatres will not allow the various functions to be accommodated on the site. And the third one is that – again because he is Italian, he comes from a culture or a cult of ruins which was part of the charm of Italy during the Grand Tour in the 18th and 19th century – and he said, this is a memory of the city, it should be kept as memory, the fact that it is a ruin adds – there is also the romantic overtones of ruins – and it's part of the memory, not only the theatre but that fact that it was bombed is part of the memory. So, it's one of those...

That's interesting, because it's acknowledging the many layers of history in the lifecycle of a building.

But what is also quite interesting is that it was a Neo-classical building, which was built by an architect who was infatuated by the ruins of ancient Rome and ancient Greece, so the original building itself was inspired by the ruins ancient Greece. So, it returned to what the original inspiration was. Then Italy has a big tradition of having performances and spectacles in public spaces and open theatres since Roman times, so for him it was a no-brainer to put an open air theatre – which I must admit, not only because I was involved with the project – when during the summer months there is a clear starry sky and I walk down the street where I live and I hear the music leaking out and there is people standing on the various ruins watching – its magical.

It's true that there is a lot of sound interference from outside.

That is something people have mentioned, that in summer if there is a festa, the sound can bleed inwards.

Yes, yes – but that's the theatre participating in city life, and city life incorporating the theatre experience in its own experience.

And then what was also quite interesting was that – so if you look at the original plans – this I discovered later – that were drawn up by Laparelli⁸³, there are four plans which are in Cortana because Laparelli was from Cortona, you will see that he put the seat of government, which was the Grand Master's palace, on the entrance, so that it was the first building that you came across. So, it is quite odd to see how in a way his thought of where it should be was actually realized so many years later.

Also, this is quite an interesting space, because as I said the land was at a higher level, and this formed part of the fortifications network. Now when Valletta was built, in the 16th century, it was a typical renaissance town, an ideal city, it was built as a military machine, so there were fortifications all around and nothing outside, because you couldn't build anything outside because that was the vulnerable part of the city. By the 18th century, the fear of an attack had disappeared and the Knights, who at the time their main industry was slavery, so they used to capture slaves from infidel boats and put them on the market, and that stopped at the time when the Ottoman empire was put in check and there was peace in the Mediterranean. Then a lot of trade was happening between the east and the west, and the Knights tried to find a different spirit, and another way of getting a revenue for the city which was not based on slavery and on war. And since so much commerce was happening between the Orient and western kingdoms, they decided to turn Valletta into a kind of freeport. So, anybody passing by, could leave their goods, they would pay something like 1%, so without buying and selling, which the Maltese couldn't do because it was a very small population, the government made money. So, they built all the stores which are outside the bastions, and which are still there.

So, the commercial centre moved from inside the walls to outside the walls, which meant that the walls had lost their original function and became almost an obstacle for all the traffic that was going on. So, for about 5 centuries, the gate was always an enlarged.

Yeah, this is what, the 7th intervention?

The 5th, and the bridge was widened every time. So, you can see that the idea was to make this always more open. This area was extremely changed, a million times, from being a place which was, as I said military, it became almost a place – it became the centre of the town – before it was on the periphery – but then it became the nucleus, the sort of pivot, between the commercial centre outside the walls and the residential centre inside the walls.

⁸³ Architect credited with the design of Valletta.

And the transportation hub in later years, with the bus terminus just outside the gate. It goes back to the conversation we were having before you we were recording, where we were discussed heritage being in the now, how things are fluid and not fixed time. Fixing something in time does not serve any purpose.

No, because everything is constantly changing. It's fascinating – because I work in restoration – it's really fascinating to see how really human nature doesn't change, but technologies change. And our way of life changes with new technologies – so transport technologies, today digital technologies it changes the way we deal with the city.

So, you told me that you were involved with the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee, do you want to tell me about that as we head somewhere?

We can yes...because I thought we could walk to the Upper Barrakka where there is the lift, which is also an interesting part of our heritage.

Yes, and also one of those ways of getting passed those transportation issues!

Yes, and what it did was, and what is fascinating about the lift is that first of there was a lift which was designed and built by the British at the turn of the century and which served mostly the Navy.

Was that a goods lift, or a people lift?

No, it was a people lift. But it took you up to the highest point of Valletta, from sea level, but the most fascinating social benefit of that lift is that it linked the Three Cities to Valletta, it catalysed the....

The current lift you mean?

The current lift, but even the previous lift, because what is fascinating about Valletta is that harbour was the most important, let's say life-line of the city, and there wasn't so much of a distinction between land and sea, the sea was constantly being used for transport. And the lift re-introduced the ferry, the traditional crossing, the vision of the city from sea-level, which we were losing. All the writers of the 19th century who wrote about Valletta, speak about the view of the city from sea-level. It was their image of the city when they entered Valletta, so it was the traditional viewpoint.

(Crossing Castille Square)

So, it does a lot of things, besides being comfortable, besides making it a shorter journey. It also brings back old, traditional views of the city, which were practically only preserved in writings and painting. I mean I don't think I ever saw Valletta from the sea....

I did from a boat...

....but let's say when I was growing up, nobody had boats. I remember when I was in Rome, I was 22, and on the first day – you know how it is you're very excited, and it's your first lecture, all this sea of new faces around me – and there was a girl, she was from Geneva, she was Swiss, and she said 'Where are you from?' and I said 'Malta' and she said 'Oh Malta, I went to Malta,' she told me 'it's like Geneva' and I said 'Like Geneva??' and she replied 'yeah all the well-dressed ladies, with the little dog on the waterfront' – she was talking about Sliema, before Sliema became what it is now – and she told me 'and you must have a boat'. And I can assure that the first thought that came to my head was 'she thinks my father is a fisherman' (laughs) – because nobody had a boat, at least a pleasure boat, or a few very wealthy families, but not more than 10. My father didn't even drive, let alone have a boat.

(Entering Upper Barrakka Gardens)

What year are we talking about, are we in the late 70s?

I'm talking 1982.

This was when you trained in Rome?

When I was training in Rome yeah. But this is to tell you how things are changing, and I suppose – I don't know – you can't bring back the past.

This relates back to the conversation we were having before we started filming about the trouble with nostalgia.

Although – so we started working, in the office we started working on the idea of creating contemporary additions or interventions which were in harmony with the past. So, we did that by understanding the past, reading the existing building or the existing context etc. And we began to realize that in fact sometimes you can build a building which looks new but which ages really fast. So, what are the qualities that make a building look fresh and new even several years after...

It could be dissonance, right?

Aha, but it could look like so good that even 10, 20, 30 years (after) you can say 'this could have been done yesterday'. And this kind of timelessness, what are the qualities that make something timeless? – which of course there is no real recipe. But I... like when I give these lectures on timelessness I always mention Plutarch who said, who wrote his book "Parallel Lives" in about 100 after Christ. And when he talks about the Acropolis, the Parthenon, he says 'It was old when

it was born, and acquired the vigour of youth with the passage of time.’ So, it got kinda of younger – a bit like Benjamin Button.

How can you get younger with time? How can a building look younger with time? And that is what we applied to City Gate, for example all those crenelations in the façade are inspired by a corroded surface and that idea is that when you see it, it doesn’t really look new, it looks like the elements have corroded the surface. But then its made of hardstone so it will always remain sharp, so hopefully in a 100 years’ time when all the other soft-stone, globigerina buildings around have crumbled a little bit more, it will still look kind of new, that’s the idea.

(By the Barrakka Lift)

That’s the idea of timelessness there, but its timelessness built on that sort of idea that its “pre-aged”, and therefore timeless.

Yes – in the past the Greeks used to use pre-aging techniques.

To protect the stone or was it a visual thing?

It was....so if they were building a temple, it was a house of God, so it had to have that feeling that it was eternal. So, it had to resemble nature, and a build is built of parts, of stones. So, what they used to do was to try and hide the joints. So, they used to use very, very narrow joints and then give texture to the whole, that way they disappear. And it could look like a mountain or hill, that was the idea.

That’s interesting.

There were many techniques, and various writers like Vitruvius spoke about them. How to make a building look the work of nature, rather than the work of man.

We were talking about the Lift...

Ah yes – the lift – what to say about the lift. Let me talk about the lift....

We don’t have too!

Then the lift takes you down to the ‘Waterfront’⁸⁴ which were the old magazines, whereas I said, merchants travelling in the Mediterranean would come and leave their stuff and then pick them up on the way back for example....

(Interrupted by music blaring)

⁸⁴ Harbourside development, which is comprised of restored shipping merchant stores.

This is part of the...(laughs) Did you see the video that Bettina⁸⁵ had made of the lift?

Yes – no wait – not of the lift.

And she had done the demolition of City Gate. It's a day in the life of the lift sort of thing, with the changing light

So, I was just wondering, I don't normally ask questions, but I think in this instance. When you the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee⁸⁶ (VRC) was formed, a lot of it, I guess, really focussed on the materiality of the city. What were some of the considerations you made as to what bits were more important to restore? Was it a functional decision or?

My time at the VRC.... I once went to the minister and I told him 'Honourable Minister if you want me to do nothing – there was this lady on the committee and she just wanted to destroy everything – so just keep that lady on.... then one day somebody told me 'Konrad don't you understand that he doesn't want to do anything' and I said 'why?'. 'He doesn't want you to get the limelight, you're there you're just a name' We did nothing. I know Joanna mentioned that I was on the Rehabilitation committee but...(laughs)

You know why ask though, because I have come across the committee in my reading, but there is nothing, there is no material I can look at...

No there is nothing. It's almost like a ghost, a heritage ghost.

I told them, if you want me to every week and drink coffee and eat biscuits, we'll do it.

Were you involved with creating a plan, was there a plan? Was anything ever drawn up?

Lots of things, but they all failed. Like I said, I don't think it was designed for things to happen. It was designed to say "I have Konrad Buhagiar as the chairman of this committee and everything goes wrong it's his fault, and if any does happens its mine (the minister)" (laughs). So, he didn't want me to be there.

Well, that's interesting because....

If you found anything? There must be files and things, but it's mostly rubbish.

I was trying to look at these things, and the various narratives, because the central narrative in heritage management comes from the institutions that make the actual

⁸⁵ Artist Bettina Hutschek: <https://bettina-hutschek.com/portfolio/lift/>

⁸⁶ Valletta Rehabilitation Committee, founded in 1987.

decisions, manage change. I found some documents, various plans for Valletta, some quite recent, but nothing published by the VRC. There is always a big focus, whatever you are doing, on Valletta's UNESCO World Heritage Status, and my research question centres on looking beyond that idea, of defying that convention, to see what other things people might value of the city. Not that I am saying that we should do away with our World Heritage Status, but there are other 'heritages' that need to be acknowledged. So, I have been looking at what is being put forward, what is the official line, and from the committee I could find nothing, not even online.

I mean the World Heritage status is just a title. I think the Maltese are obsessed with titles, and they just use it as necessary. They'll use it to get more tourists, they'll use it if there is a project that they want to shoot down, and they'll say 'we will inform UNESCO' as they did with St. John's⁸⁷ for example...

So, it's a political or lobbying tool...

Yes, it doesn't mean anything really. I mean when we applied to build the extension to the Museum of St. John's, on the day that the permit was going to be issued a damning report came from UNESCO. Obviously, somebody called and made a big fuss about it, and then Planning Authority said you can either postpone the decision until you have spoken to UNESCO and had a discussion with them and explained your intentions for the project and we said, yes we would do that. Then this guy came along, quite an elderly guy, and realized that all he said in his report was rubbish, and to save face he started giving us design advice, which was not his remit. I mean he just had to see whether what we were doing was going to in anyway cause an erosion of the status of a World Heritage Site. Anyway, amongst the things he said is – we had this glass wall which was straight – and one of the things he said was, it should be curved like they did at the Paris Opera. And said no, why should it be curved, there is nothing curved in St. John's it's not like.... anyway. Our client kept saying, 'yes you have got to apply with a curve, just do what they say, do what they say' so we applied with this curve. Then I said, this is going to cost so much more money and I phone a number of suppliers. And one supplier told us, 'Oh who recommended us to you?' and we said 'well we were having a discussion with UNESCO and she said 'Oh we do a lot of work with UNESCO' (Laughs)... That explains a lot.

⁸⁷ New Museum extension to house tapestries at St. John's Cathedral, Valletta.

So, what does it mean? It's just people having....it doesn't mean anything. It's a way of regulating and creating jobs for people and giving them free trips. They come and have free meals and then they go.

(Moving out of Upper Barrakka)

Well, that's all very interesting...

So, a lot of the things we bring up seem to revolve with your professional relationship to the city? What about your personal connections? Because as much as I appreciate the historical or aesthetic attributes, but there are other "significances" to stretch the term, but I am interested in those intangibles perhaps...

Well again what we are experiencing today is going to become an intangible no? I mean I enjoy the city, as I am sure you do. But I remember Valletta when there was nothing, everything was falling apart in the 70s, I used come here to Sixth Form at Evan's Labs at the bottom of Merchant Street.

What Sixth Form was that?

It was called Upper Secondary at the time, my father was Headmaster, so I had the disadvantage of being the son of the headmaster. Anyway, and going to eat 'ravjul'⁸⁸ at 'Malata' (restaurant) was a luxury sort of thing. And then when I came back from Rome I worked for the public works department, a section which used to be called the Antiquities section – which was a misnomer – I remember this messenger who was very – he was very close to retirement age and a little bit crazy, they used to use him as a form of clown – whose son worked at this place called 'Still Alive Bar' which was near the market. They had the best cheesecakes I remember. Then there was the cheesecake guy in St. Paul's Street, I don't know if you remember him. These were all sort of, charming elements of the old Valletta which have disappeared. I mean 'Prego'⁸⁹ I used to skive from work with my friends when I was a student worker and we used to go and have coffee and cheesecakes at Prego...and this going.

Oh, Prego is definitely going now?

Yes it is.

(Outside Upper Barrakka)

⁸⁸ Maltese for 'Ravioli'

⁸⁹ Prego Café – Valletta institution, opened in the 1940s and little changed since then.

<https://lovinmalta.com/news/local/prego-a-75-year-old-valletta-institution-is-permanently-closing-its-doors/>

I guess they are being replaced by new places, like ‘Trabuxu’⁹⁰ is going to go down as a ‘new place’ it’s been there for almost 20 years.

Absolutely, I think so. This summer since we were doing works, because of COVID, at the office and we were all working from home, we rented two offices at the Stock Exchange over here, and I would sit over there and have a coffee⁹¹ and in the space of a summer it became quite a mythical place for me, in the sense...Unfortunately things don’t last as long as they used to in the past, where they would last decades. So I wouldn’t be surprised if one day I walk here and it’s changed hands and suddenly it’s changed.

I have a feeling that this is why so many people are nostalgic, in a world that changes so quickly, you are always going to hark back to something unchanging and reassuring.

Something that is there forever. You feel as though it is there for ever but...

In the face of change people do react like that I find.

(Castille Square)

So, this is just a general comment – so your relationship with Valletta, is 25 years old now, and the city has changed a hell of a lot in that time, I mean it’s changed a lot in my time. Do you consider that change mostly positive or? Is it a transitional period? I mean there are a lot of hotels being built, but there is not really much of a community left – depending on which community you refer to, because that is a complicated one.

Well because communities are changing as well. I don’t know...it just reminds me, when I went to Rome in 1982, Malta was socialist, almost communist. Nothing in the shops, nothing. And I landed in Rome, and it was like I landed in New York. The shops were full of incredible stuff, there were restaurants and sometimes when I walk down the streets of Valletta today, I get the sound of what Rome was like in 1981-82. So, I guess that this type of development is inevitable. And as long as....and this is what makes these buildings timeless, because the buildings will always be there. People sometimes tell me ‘Ah because they are putting tables in the streets and they are putting tents’ – what do you care, the tents are here today and tomorrow they are gone

(Castille Square onto South Street)

I am more worried about the people who are sitting at the tables quite frankly. Because, like I said tables you are in control of tables, but you are not in control of people. And unless we do

⁹⁰ Wine bar at the top of Strait Street.

⁹¹ Coffee shop at the Castille Hotel

something about our educational system, were people do more in life than just consume or work to consume...I mean these are the roots of the problem, its not so much....Like I said, Valletta is a renaissance city, if you read Alberti you understand these cities, this city, was built for people and if people are enjoying themselves in an open space, that's a wonderful thing. As long as they are not demolishing or removing important – I don't know.

It's how you determine what's important which is one of those conundrums. I mean how would you determine, and this can be very general, because it is bloody complicated. I mean when you look at any of these buildings, how do you determine what is the important phase, since many have been modified so much over time. Is there an essence you have to capture? The bare bones of it?

Ahem, frankly it doesn't really matter. What matters is the education of people. I can assure that if...if in the 1980s so few people had a sense of conservation, and I remember the first people applying to demolish buildings in Valletta to build flats. Not understand that Valletta is aso we are lucky that it exists today, and it didn't have the same fate as Sliema, Valletta. The point is, how do you educate people to make a right judgement about things, think anything from which part of the building to keep. And my theory is that we are slowly moving towards a very technical and technological education based on the idea that when you study at university you get a job afterwards. And we are abandoning the humanities, which if you ask anybody would be considered to be a useless activity, studying the humanities. When I think everybody from politicians, down to the grocer – which is why I believe that Italy, because they are a bit slow and they haven't really changed their curricula, still have a very healthy and sound educational system. Because it is diverse, and it has good foundations, based on the classics, based on the Iliad and the Odyssey, something like that, based on Greek and Latin, which I didn't study but.

I didn't even have the option of O-Level History at school.

Really? Did you go to school here –

St. Edwards

Really, you did have history?

Nope, we had to ask for it to be added to the curriculum....they restored that church?

No, why does it look painted? Maybe.

I need to look up more in Valletta – where are we headed Conrad, are we just walking?

I don't know, I am just walking to my office. I thought you were leading me.

We can walk to your office, why not!

(Outside General Workers Union HQ, South Street)

I had some conversations with some people about how they dislike these sort of quasi-brutalist interventions in the city, and they thought they were out of scale. It is personal opinion perhaps.

Really? But it is still part of our...

This was an Auberge before right, which one was it?

France. And I must say this is quite a French quarter, it feels very French no? These buildings. They look like – have you been to Aix-en-Provence and Arles? It's that type of building.

These are later flourishes I guess right? (Specifically, the ornate door surround)

Yes, these are 18th Century. These are the building, which were built after Valletta became much more secure, like this building. But then this one, this plain one would be 16th century.

So, more renaissance, more austere?

More austere, and probably lower....

...for example, this, this is Renaissance you see, without the extra floor over there. The 'Osbourne' without the extra floors, with the quoins. So, there were these low buildings and then what is really lovely is that you look down the street and you see the sky and the tree. Which gives you this feeling of being fortified small town. And here there is 19th century buildings which makes this...see this would be a 16th century building, and then this is 19th, 'belle époque', turn of the century.

It interesting to unravel this history.

Yes, and sometimes a lot of my friends tell me "tell us about this street" and I tell them, this is 19th century, that's 16th century. And they say 'so when you go to Paris, what do you see, can you tell the difference between a medieval and...'

(Turning off South Street on Sappers Street)

I was with Martina, a very good friend of mine, and we went to wedding in Alicante in Spain, and we were in a Church and there was an extremely Baroque altar full of cherubs and things, and then it was in a Gothic church. And she was sitting next to me and she told me- she is a lawyer – 'I think the altar was added later' and I looked at her and I said hah, baroque and gothic – but we

don't have this artistic education in Malta, so what do you see when you are in a city? Do you see the differences, do you read the different walls and the different styles? I think we should do studies of the city at school.

Even basic art history!

(Entering AP offices)

So now here we are at your offices.

Yes, come, come. So this was probably a 17th century [building], Florence Nightingale was going to turn it into a hospital.

We can unplug now.

Can I get you a coffee?

Interview transcript for MaramaC.

(Translated from Maltese)

Interview Date: 02/02/2022.

(Start Bertu's Take-Away – Merchant Street)

Cool and where are we going, here?

Wherever you like.

You going to ask me questions?

No not necessarily, I might!

Oh god, yeah ask me because I don't know what the hell to talk about.

(Desmond – “il-Gallozz” joins in the conversation)

You asked to start at Bertu's – why did we start here?

There's always loads of characters here.

Valletta Characters?

D: do you want me to be out of shot?

M: No stay, its better if anything.

You don't mind me filming you a little right?

M: No, he enjoys this sort of stuff, he is in all the films I make.

D: Eat and drink....finish it come on.

M: Eat and drink, so that from work you can.... escape

D: Slip away! (laughs)

So, this is why you like Bertu's because of these characters?

I mean Bertu's is great because it is not pretentious, the people are just down to earth. There is always someone to talk to here, you can come here at 5. Is it 5 this place opens?

D: 5.30

5.30 he is open, I am going to flip to Maltese, I feel like I am talking in English.

Whatever you like.

M: So yeah, they open at 5.30 in the morning.

D: No in the morning they open at 6.30

M: But there is always some 'Karatru' (character) here

And is this a place that Valletta people come to only, or it is a mix.

M: Everyone!

D: Everyone! There are people from everywhere here. People from the villages come out to this place sometimes, to eat a proper 'Hobza biz-Zejt'⁹²

M: Many of them who used to work or still work here...

So, they had some link with the city.

M: Yeah, they had links. They might have had shops, or they lived here and had to leave, but they continue to come here because allows them to feel like they still live here.

D: For a 'Hobza biz-Zejt' they come all the way here

Also, an outing too – to say you went out somewhere.

D: Understand, it's not expensive. It's a just/honest product, not fried or rubbish, an honest product. Fresh. Daily bread...

M: give us this day⁹³ Good one? 'Give us this day, our daily bread.'

M: Anyway – there is always some character at this place, someone like you.

D: I am always here; I have told you. I have done all my interviews here.

M: You have ended up more famous than Bertu himself. These guys watch the news or sometimes a Telenovela, and they all gather here to watch it.

A community spot then?

D: Yeah – a community spot

⁹² Hobz Biz-Zejt (lit. Bread and Oil) is the traditional sandwich made oil and tomatoes, often featuring olives, capers, sardines or tuna.

⁹³ Reference to the Lord's Prayer.

There are not a lot of these left right?

D: Here [in the city] if this place were to close, it would affect people like me, I would go crazy. I am not used to going to many places, just here and to the 'Topsy' like I told her (Marama). I would go nuts, where can I go, to this place (indicates bar across the road) where they would rob you blind? Or there and there where they would also rob you blind? I am being honest man.

It's become more expensive here, right?

D: There is nothing I can do. I don't drink one, I drink a bottle of whisky or a drink a box of beer, how the fuck am I going to pay 3euros for a can of beer.

M: That's it and the place you hangout in has to match your lifestyle. (Laughs and pats him on the back) Ciao people. We are off! (to the shop owners)

D: Ciao Mar

M: Ciao and thank you.

(Walking up Merchant Street)

Anyway, sorry – I did not talk about the place much.

Don't worry about it.

But Bertu's is very welcoming, doesn't matter where you are from, you always feel like...they always say good morning...you a little like you have actually spoken to people from the city, even if they don't actually come from city, but they are that kind of person.

So is there a 'type' of person from the city.

And he (Bertu) has been here for ages, so those who lived here all know Bertu. Unfortunately, the ID cards place was down there (Evan's Building) so he used to have more customers, so he could keep operating. But they have now closed, and his customers are these 'characters' and people who have been going for years.

(Merchant Street onto St. Domenic's Street)

Ok – where shall we go? Let's go 'Taht Iz-Ziemel' (Under the Horse) there usual are people down there. In the summer, when I have free time, I spend a lot of time at this place known as 'Taht Iz-Ziemel' because there are horses drawn on the walls and they have been there many, many years. I think they were painted just after or during the war, and they kept calling it 'Taht Iz-Ziemel' it's just under the Conference Centre.

So, you just moved to Valletta right?

Yeah, for a year I have moved back, I was living in London. And then the Pandemic happened, I was in St Paul's Street, where we were when I was a kid.

You still have a family place there or something?

My sister still lives there, my parents had a community, like a new religion at the time, and they had their meeting place and that sort of thing over there. So that is where we used to be most of the time. And then I moved to London for many years and then...

And when you came back to Malta it was Valletta you wanted to live in?

Ah yes, I can't see myself living in Malta if I am not in Valletta. It is Valletta or away...

What do you think the attraction is?

Just because we were here when we were children, I feel at home here. Like I don't feel the same about any other places in Malta, I don't know, it's a very specific place here. The architecture, the people its everything about it really.

(End of St. Domenic's onto Mediterranean Street)

And I guess you have seen it change a hell of a lot since you lived here when you were a kid, even over the last 10 years right.

Yeah, for sure. The difference I would say is that most of the little shops, the little cute shops, family run businesses have closed. They can't afford their rent. I mean my uncles used to have a.... two of my uncles had a watch repair shop, by the old theatre, literally opposite. So, they were there for many, many years and it was a thing to come into Valletta and go and hangout with them.

These are your mum's brothers?

My mum's brothers yeah. And my great-grandfather, who I obviously didn't know, had a shop opposite St. Paul's Co-Cathedral, he used to sell leather and he used to import back in the day. I don't know, but all these places have like shutdown, there is like all these hotels now and bars and restaurants. But they are not authentic anymore you know...

(Top of steps – opposite Conference Centre – heading down to the boathouse community)

What do you think makes something inauthentic to you?

Erhm, they're just not...they are not from here, they haven't got the history. It's different, people come and go now...the people that are working here are just temporary, they haven't worked for many years to make something out of the little shop or.... a lot of the people had been through a lot I think. They were very poor but they somehow businesses and they take care of the place, it just feels authentic. Everything is expensive now, everything is like a replica of something else, nothing is original anymore. But obviously we have to move with the times like what can you do.

What do you think could be done better? To maybe minimize that impact, like you said we have to move on. The people who seem to be suffering the most, well maybe suffering is a strong word...

But they are, because a lot of them are in court cases. A lot of the Valletta people, let's say, are in court cases because they can't afford the rent anymore. And before there was a rent, and they had a contract, but they passed away and then people just want them out. They just want to build hotels or put the rent up too high for them and a lot of them are in their 60s, 70s, you know, 80s. I mean I have a friend who is renting he is 82....

(Marama stumbles 10:30)

...so yeah like he is still renting, but his rent went up. I mean in his 80s, that's ridiculous, no?

Here for example, is a great example of a community that they have built. You know, in summer here its full, but even in winter they come, and they work on their little houses, and they talk to each other and in the evenings they cook together.

Are these people from Valletta specifically.

Yeah, a lot of them are from Valletta yeah, and they have had these for many generations. Ahem, but they all know each other, and I guess take care of each other. And it is a little space for them to connect keep this sort of community alive that there is in Valletta. They bring it down by the sea. I think its really special here.

This is where I come to swim mostly, summertime, but also a couple of weeks I was swimming here.

You swam?⁹⁴

Yeah, it's really nice! And you can hangout, I've got quite a few friends here who have little houses and they feed the cats and...

⁹⁴ Interview was conducted in February 2022

.... In summer like, one of my friends who has a little house here let me use one of his little rooms and I got a few friends over and we cooked, it was really wonderful. It was hot, everyone had a swim, we made fish.

This is where the boat images/graffiti are as well!

Yeah, and so the horses are around, you can't exactly see the horses, they are around that way. Its quite rough yeah.

But yeah, it is really beautiful....and in summer they set up a little burger place here.

Like a little take away? Yeah, like a little takeaway and then everyone...

I am going to take a picture of this, because I actually stuck that up there.... we came and had some wine one night, a few friends, and we put this on here just to remember. And it's still there....cute.

What is it a picture of?

So, one night, at the end of summer, myself and another two people came here, we had some wine had burger and we stuck that wine thing [label] on their just to remember...and it's still there.

But yeah, in the morning there's always a couple of the elderly they're quite old, like in their 80s.

A lot of Valletta's population is old though right, there just does not seem to be that many young people, a lot of them just cannot afford to live here anymore.

Exactly, and mostly the new generation is mostly loads of foreigners who aren't here really. They own houses, they are not here.

And I guess there are a lot of new Maltese people who have moved in – I myself have been here 12 years now.

Yeah, and how there is a new generation – like our generation – who are staying here, which is nice, its new sort of start to something. It's just sad that the...that there is a gap now, it's like a gap. These characters and people who have made it what it is and then it feel like there is a gap of like, people who – not to say they don't care about Valletta, they are just not here, they just own houses and they are not here. And then there is our generation who have a connection with Malta, with Valletta and we are going to create our own...[thing]

Yeah, I was having a conversation with another participant about this new influx of residence the Valletta that they might create.

We just won't own them (the properties) that's the sad thing. Because we won't be able to afford...

And we might not be able to do it because we might get priced out ourselves.

Exactly, so that is the sad thing. And the thing is...it's our fault really, it's our fault, the Maltese's fault really, because everyone sees the money and they are selling.

And no one was interested in Valletta!

No. When we used to live here people used to laugh at us, cause it's so ugly. And it's true it was quite rough when we were growing up, like, I remember being....

Is that just because it was poor or was it dangerous? I know it had that reputation.

I remember getting beaten up. Myself, my sister and my friend, walking from McDonalds, by four boys like. You wouldn't just walk around at night that much; you would be a bit careful. It was dark, barely any lights used to work I remember. But there was always.... like people would take care of each other. Cause I remember when it happened, like, these guys stopped in a car and chased these boys. You are taken care of, people are watching all the time. But it wasn't like super safe, it never felt that safe when we were kids.

How funny this guy (walking passed some locals). Shall we just go up here yeah?

(Heading up stairs to street level)

Yeah, we just can't afford to live here, or to buy, I mean you need at least half a million now to buy anything.

I would take you down there but it's pretty much the same [back around costal path].

Where else can we go?

It's a great spot this though, because it is kind of like Valletta on the periphery, one of the last bits of the community that nobody has tried to commercialize.

Yeah. But they care of it you see, they all paint their houses in winter, they work on it. If you come here like on the weekend, its busy, they are here. In the evenings they are here doing little jobs, fixing their windows. Most of them don't have electricity here so, they come up with different ways to cook and enjoy the time here you know. They are preparing themselves for the summer, so then in summer it's going to be fun. And you will everyone here, the families are out making BBQs and cooking fish and...its really sweet. But yeah, who knows? Who knows how long it's going to be[here].

(Onto Mediterranean Street)

Trying to think were else we can go, without getting run over! Maybe we should go down St. Paul's Street. You are living with Charlie right at the moment, that's a nice place. She got lucky with that, it's quite big as well. It seems big at least.

That's my old flat – we got it when we were still together.

Ah that's good. And they kept the same rent for you?

No, it has gone up, but it is reasonable.

What do you feel about all the restoration that has been going on, do you prefer Valletta when it looked a little more....do you think it was more authentic when it was run-down, or do you think it can remain authentic but be clean and have all this nice new stonework?

I mean, I think it is important that they restore and fix, otherwise everything is going to fall apart, which it was. There was a lot of abandoned houses, you know. It just a balance we need, it's just....it went from nobody wanting to live in Valletta, nobody gave a shit about it, then suddenly regenerated and everyone is like 'ok!' And now it's overly commercialized, it needs a balance, and how is that balance going to happen now? I don't know. It's a bit tricky.

(Heading towards East Street)

But like for example the Market, the Suq. That used to be amazing! Used to have the fish downstairs, meet people, everyone is like a community...

This guy used to be there (Derek Butchers)

Yeah, this guy used to be there...and then they just gave them little shops here and there but come on now. It's like rather than taking care....they should actually have made that space for them and made it better rather than chucking them out, now what is that[the Suq], I don't know, I don't like it at all. It looks horrible from the outside, they have put a massive tent up, I mean you can't even see the building really.

It was meant to have an arts-space outside.

Nah, it's all closed up with fencing and fake trees....sorry there used to be trees there, it's got fake plastic what do you call it..

Yeah, there are not many green spaces in Valletta...

(Bumps into common friend Pawlu/Paul outside the QEII Bar & Restaurant)

This guy is amazing. Pawlu!

P: Off for a walk?

M: Yep – we are doing a project on the city.

P: You doing a project on the city?

M: Not me, Joshua.

P: Oh yeah, what about.

About the city, the people and how it is changing.

P: Not changing, it is changed already.

(Conversations continues for a few minutes)

One of the people I wanted to interview.

Yeah, oh you must speak to him. He has been here for some many years.

Yeah, I used to come here [the bar] a lot when I first moved here.

Yeah, me too, I used to come so much and have a burger, with Ed ⁹⁵ and...I used to come here all the time.

I think probably met you here.

Could be, with Ed probably...

What street is this, West Street right?

Yeah, West Street, 'Triq Lvant' [Maltese]

So, we are in the Arcipierku now, in the heart.

Yeah, I mean that's like, a beautiful street with a beautiful view [St. Barbara's Bastion].

I interviewed a couple of people from the Arcipierku, which was interesting, as their part of Valletta has changed a lot.

Yeah?

Well like even this is gone, there is a big hotel. Ursula, street has changed, maybe not visually, its just there is nobody there they know anymore.

⁹⁵ Common friend.

Yeah, it's true. There used to be a lady called Violetta, and she used to be amazing. I have some footage of her somewhere.

Where did she live, St. Ursula?

St. Ursula yeah, but her sons live here. She used to just sit around, because when the Italians used to be here a lot, she started.... you know she was one of those that start speaking Italian instead of Maltese – and she would start talking to me in Italian, half-Maltese, half-English. And then she would tell me about the sailors when they used to come and.... She was so naughty, because she'd wait over there and if she saw anyone kissing, she starts yelling at them, saying 'You're going to get pregnant!' Like 'No, no, no don't do it!' [Italian] She just liked poking her nose in. She was sweet.

It's such a feature of the interviews I carried out with people who lived here, it's all about the people that lived in certain places, memories of that.

Yeah...but that's the thing. But I guess every town has those people, those characters, that make the place. This is the thing, I mean when this is all gone, it just won't be the same, but it won't be the same for me, or somebody who used to live here. But maybe for the new generation there just going to create other – I don't know – stories?

(Off West Street onto St Lucy's Street)

I hope that's the case because it makes it interesting aye.

Yeah. It's just a pity that the people with the money won't be those people. Because most of them are artists living here, I think, its more creative like, self-employed.

Yeah, when I moved here it was like that. Lots of foreign architects and younger people and art stuff happening.

Yeah, this street has pretty much stayed the same [St. Ursula]

But you will notice just how many [development] permits there are on the doors.

I know, I know. All been bought by people...

(St Lucy's corner with St. Pauls – Near 'San Pawlu Nawfragju' [Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck])

...It's going to be St. Paul's Feast so, they're getting ready here.

It's one of the biggest ones [feasts] in Valletta I suppose.

This was like our favourite feast; we would be here every feast.

When you were kids?

Aha, because that balcony over there was my parent's bedroom. And so, we were right by the church, so we would see the whole feast in all of its glory. And here at night you would hear....at night we used to sleep in that room over there, the big white one and then there is another balcony next to it. And...

(Marama meets more friends)

Guz!! I haven't seen her in ages....

Yeah, like at night you would hear the music coming out of this bar. So, the guy that owns this place, Keith, - his uncle used to own it before him Lawrence. So yeah, at night we used to hear all of them having conversations in there and we used just go and buy some crisps or something. And it would be everyone in there, the village priest, the village...

By village you mean this Arcipierku?

Mostly it's like everyone who used live on this street or that street there, used to come here. There would be like the town criminal, the priest, like, I don't know, the elderly, the young people. They will all be in the together, having like a beer together having a cigarette together. I don't know there was like a real sense of community, everyone used to get together.

There was a guy called Lungu, super, super tall...he was amazing. We would see him walking down the street, you hear like noises, I remember massive noises. And there were liked these [planters] they have just put them up, and he dropped them all - he had a few too many drinks - and I remember the priest coming out of there [the bar] and helping up, helping him to put them back up, and bring him into the bar. And I was like, aww they are so sweet they are taking care of him. That priest passed away now, but he was great.

It's quite strong the community here aye.

No yeah, definitely, St. Pauls is always - it's like family run. All these guys [sitting outside the bar] I remember, like the guy over there, the guy with the beard, him and his brother, his parents used to have a shop here, they used to sell the videos, they used to rent out videos and then had like a bag shop for many years. They're all friends.

M: Hey how are you, thanks for my hat last time.

Guy⁹⁶ : Yes, I gave it to your sister.

M: Thank you I got it, appreciate it, see you soon.

M: Hey guys all good? Are you going to manage to do it? ⁹⁷ Come on, fingers crossed.

So yeah, this was like our [house] – we had St Paul’s Statue over there....and we used to know a lot of people over here, some of them are gone...

(Interrupted by another friend.)

Friend: Marama!!

M: Hey – how you are doing? You still here, right?

Friend: Yeah, of course!

Yeah, I remember once we were up there and we saw – it was the middle of the night and we heard noises – because Valletta you always know what’s going on, you’d hear people walking or talking because it was so quiet no one was really out after 6oclock – and heard like banging on a door. Then we look out and there were these guys with a balaclava on, trying to break into there, into Camilleri store. And we were like shouting “Ma there is someone with a balaclava, like get in get in!” And we called the police and luckily, they came in time, and they were always so grateful that family, that we had seen them. Because they weren’t in, they were somewhere at the time and they yeah, they tried to break in. I mean everyone would look out for each other, that’s the thing there.

(Walking up St. Lucy’s towards centre)

St. Paul’s church is my favourite church. I don’t know if it is still open or no, but we can go in. If that’s interesting – I don’t know?

If it’s interesting to you....

It is, I love it! Let me see if it is still open. I don’t know if it’s open on the other side (St.Pauls Street), was it open?

I didn’t check.

⁹⁶ Bar worker – name not known.

⁹⁷ Marama addresses group of friends at table. She is asking whether the feast will actually happen or not due to COVID.

Let me check.

(Heading back down Lucy Street)

There was a lady here, she used to sell 'perlini'⁹⁸-here- and we used to...

How long did you live here for so? Five, Six years?

That's the thing, because then we went to live with my grandparents, but we were still here, 4 times a week. Cause my parents were working here. So, this was like a house, with loads of families living together. We would just be here all the time, like a community together.

But yeah, she (sweet lady) was sweet, we used to put down this basket (from their balcony) and she used to give us 'perlini'.

(Walking up St. Pauls towards the church)

This is now owned by Keith as well, their family. He took this one (points to two restaurants/bars)

(Outside Church)

Closed. But it is a really beautiful church. I have been up on the roof recently.

How come?

Well, I know the priest and know people who run it.

The view must be amazing

Erm. It's less about the view its more about the actual ceiling, because its got the...(vaulted ceiling)...so when you go up its like, like you have just landed on some, I don't know, like a different planet with these (cupolas)...its the top of the church and its really steep. But you can't really see [view], just there I mean, I've got some photos somewhere. Nah, it's amazing I love this...but the inside so beautiful, so dense like fucking marble everywhere.

(Marama enters a bar to speak to friends)

Can I just say a quick hello because I haven't seen (her in ages)...

M: Guz – you didn't recognize me!

(Discusses her recent feature on life of Valletta on national papers, the stories shared with me and whether the feast of St. Paul would go ahead)

⁹⁸ Sugar coated almonds, traditionally associated with carnival.

Do you think they will be able to do the feast?

Oh, I don't think so. Seems like not. Which way shall we go.

We have another 5-10min or more if you like, so if there is another place you want to tell me about.

I mean I don't know. This was where we used to buy 'pastizzi' (Agius Confectionery) and he was so sweet. Because we were a lot of families living there, on Sundays when he finished work, he used to bring whatever was left to us. Such sweet guy.

Yeah, I never tried it, but a lot of people have mentioned him, and I have seen pictures of it on Facebook as well, people mention memories of it a lot.

Now they have one 'pastizzeria' somewhere else, I am not sure where.

So, they are still in business?

Yeah, I think so.

This was where we came to get our videos from [New Wave Video Store, now closed], rent out the videos, back in the day.

VHS!

Yeah VHS, show's my age doesn't it (laughs).

(Continuing along St. Pauls – behind Is-Suq)

There used to you be a baker, just down this street (Old Theatre).

I heard it was quite famous.

Aha, it was like really, really narrow, you walk all the way in and there was this lady, always wearing black, she was amazing. She had her gold... she died recently, someone told me she passed away, but she hadn't been working there quite a long time.

She shows up in many people's memories, apparently, she was legendary.

Yes, she was, she was a little bit scary as well...

(Up Felix Street)

I don't know where else we can go...

Well, we are on time, and we have got to the Suq which you have mentioned quite a few times.

Oh yeah...

This one just opened again [Italian-run restaurant] apparently its good Pizza.

You can eat well in Valletta now.

Yeah no, that's a good thing, you can eat anything, like they have got everything.

I don't know it used to be really nice with trees, a bit more inviting, I guess.

(In front of Is-Suq)

I mean like this for example, not to diss it or anything, but I mean come on. Look at all these signs, closing it off and this glass [wall]...it should be open, this should be where people, sit, talk, communicate, it's a square, as such. And that's what it used to be. Trees, there used to be people shopping and talking, the smell of fish...maybe not always good, but you know, there was something here.

Appendix C: Codebook

The codebook is exported from the NVivo 20 (Release Version 1.7). The table has been edited and annotated to add the code type that is used in the text and reflecting the code hierarchy relationship described in the Methodology Chapter (see Chapter 3). Sub-code order in this table reflects the order of the codes in NVivo and will not relate directly to the order presented in the thesis.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
Experience of Place	Meta-Group	This group of codes collectively represents responses that capture the intangible aspects to the city as observed in the text. More specifically they categorize the types of stories told, the feelings felt and the connections to the fabric made. Its codes are grouped under two main meta-codes, <i>Change in the City</i> and <i>The Living City</i> .
Beyond the City	Code	Though much of the conversation would naturally centre around Valletta, the informal nature of the interview would often digress into aspects of life beyond the walls. This code captures these instances.
Change in the City	Meta-Code	Change in Valletta is a common topic of conversation. This code group collects positive and negative responses to perceived/real change as experienced by the participants. Continuity is also coded it for, as a counter to change.
Abandonment	Code	A feature of the recent history of Valletta is abandonment.
Impact of Gentrification	Code-Group	A common theme in many of the transcripts is the impact gentrification forces, driven by commercial interests, have had on the social and physical fabric of Valletta.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Prices 		This code relates to both the price of property itself as well as the price of renting a property in the City
Improvement	Code	Specific references to the city being better now than in the past. (I may delete this).

Code Name	Code Type	Description
Loss of Community	Code	This refers to the breakdown of communities due to people moving out of Valletta for a variety of reasons, as indicated in the interview data.
Noise	Code	A specific impact of a busier town is a noisier environment.
Pedestrianization & Traffic	Code	In the confined space of a walled city, one that is developing rapidly, issues of parking and increased traffic feature prominently in the experiences of visitors and residents alike. This is exacerbated by the otherwise generally positively received pedestrianization of many of the most commercial streets. This code extends beyond the confines of the city to the impact of increased maritime traffic in the harbour.
Responses to change	Code-Group	The sub-codes of this particular code are used to track participant responses to perceived social or physical change of the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity 	Sub-code	Code used when participant expresses a favourable opinion on some element of the city NOT changing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative Response 	Sub-code	Expressions of negativity to elements of change. Ex. Things were better before.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Change 	Sub-code	Expressions of positivity to elements of change. Ex. Things are better now.
Tourism	Code	Code to track assessments of tourism on the city.
Lived City	Meta-Code	This meta-code collects all codes and code-groups that capture textual references to the lived or remembered experiences of the participants. These codes range from personal experience and memory, to community life and interaction.
Aspects of community	Code-Group	These codes track the elements of communal life, specifically people or people-centred events both religious or secular.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carnival 	Sub-Code	Normal celebrated at the end of February, the national carnival celebrations are mostly associated with Valletta and is a central event in the cultural calendar.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Characters' 	Sub-Code	Direct translation from the Maltese "Karattru". It is used to describe stand out personalities/individuals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community life 	Sub-Code	A more general code used to describe the experience of living - or life in - the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community stories 	Sub-Code	Code for references stories/histories specific to a place and/or community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elderly Community 	Sub-Code	Valletta has an ageing local community. This codes for references to life in the city for the elderly community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festas 	Sub-Code	Festas are a characteristic feature of Maltese cultural/religious life. It is the annual celebration of the parish saint. Valletta has a number of these - one per parish - and it forms a big part of community life in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term residents 	Sub-Code	This codes for specific mentions of the multi-generational residents (MGR) of the city, the 'Beltin'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maltese Networks 	Sub-Code	Malta is a small island; this code is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the island's "smallness". This code captures instances of references to personal connection with the researcher, instances of the participant bumping into an acquaintance etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbours 	Sub-Code	Codes for references to specific references to resident's neighbours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New residents 	Sub-Code	References by long-term residents to the newly arrived residents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religion 	Sub-Code	This general code references the role of religious life and its role in the community in more general terms.
City and COVID	Code	All interviews were carried out during the COVID pandemic. This codes for any responses that figure the impact of the pandemic on the participants use/experience of the city.
Historical	Code-Group	A group of codes that flag stories or references that specifically allude to the history of the city. Two subcategories separate this into events and historical figures.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events 	Sub-Code	Code for references to historical events tied to specific buildings or places in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figures 	Sub-Code	Code for references to historical figures, specifically those who lived in the city (politicians etc).
Identity	Code	Code(s) for attributions of personal or communal identity derived from some aspect of the city or life in the city.
Personal Experiences	Code-Group	Set of codes that track personal recollection and connection to the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childhood in the city 	Sub-Code	Memories tied to growing up in Valletta or visiting the city as a child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration & Discovery 	Sub-Code	Captures references to actively looking for new or coming across "new" places in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family history 	Sub-Code	Code for family history in the context of Valletta. This differs from the Family Memories code in that the participant is referencing a connection to the city that was not experienced directly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family memories 	Sub-Code	Code for family memories tied to Valletta.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendships 	Sub-Code	Code for references to friendships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for moving 	Sub-Code	A general code to capture what it was about the city that attracted the participant to the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines 	Sub-Code	Code for specific references to daily or habitual interactions with the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School or Education memories 	Sub-Code	Valletta has both a primary and secondary school, an Art College and more recently the repurposing of the Old University buildings by the University of Malta.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in the City 	Sub-Code	Code for memories of employment in the city.
Politics	Code	Local politics loom large in the fabric of the city, from politicians who were born or lived in Valletta, the fact that the seat of government and many of its departments are based in the city, or from how politics are involved in the enactment of heritage practices.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protest 	Sub-Code	As the seat of government and the law courts, Valletta is the focal point for protest.
Social Activities	Code-Group	A group of codes for references to categories of social interaction in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art & Performance 	Sub-Code	This code is used to flag reference to social activities in the arts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating & Food 	Sub-Code	Valletta has become a city of bars and restaurants. This codes for references to culinary experiences in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football 	Sub-Code	Football is a big part of community life and identity, be it playing football in the street as a child or the importance of the Valletta football club to residents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music 	Sub-Code	Code for specific social activities centred on music in the city, a concert or live music in a bar for example.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parties 	Sub-Code	Valletta is often the location selected for parties be in people's homes or in bars etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious 	Sub-Code	Codes for social/communal activities run by the church.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swimming 	Sub-Code	Valletta is surrounded by the sea, and swimming is popular form of relaxation.
Evaluation of Place	Meta-Group	This meta-group contains two meta-codes that form the basis for Chapter 5, namely <i>Appraising the City</i> and <i>Heritage Matters</i> . These two meta-codes related to textual references on the emotive, experiential, or simply on the participants opinion. The former group is about personal reactions to places and how it made people feel. The second group, in contrast, groups reference to specific heritage issues, concerns and debates.
Appraising the City	Meta-Code	This meta-code is comprised of themes that related to how the city is experiences in a sensorial manner. It extends to the idea of visual aesthetics and external perceptions of the city and its people.
Aesthetic	Code-Group	Parent code for capturing how a street, building or square elicits a response relating to its aesthetic qualities.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
• Beauty	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Cleanliness	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Dirtiness	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Generic	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Nonconforming	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Ugliness	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Uniqueness	Sub-Code	Not Required
Emotional Responses	Code-Group	Many of the participants expressed a range of emotional responses to places. These could be directed at both the tangible but also the intangible elements of Valletta. This collection of codes tracks these various responses.
• Ambiguity	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Anger	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Belonging	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Disbelief	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Discord	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Happiness	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Nostalgia	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Peaceful	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Sadness	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Uncertainty	Sub-Code	Not Required
City Impressions	Code-Group	This set of subcodes attempts to qualify if the participants are expressing or experiencing specific sensorial or affective responses to social or physical elements of Valletta.
• Sense of Attachment	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Sense of Community	Sub-Code	Not Required

Code Name	Code Type	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Danger 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of History 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Place 	Sub-Code	Not Required
Perceptions of the City	Code-Group	This code set is designed to flag social themes that are particular to City. In particular this relates to the city's reputation and how the locals are perceived and perceive themselves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local vs Outsider 	Sub-Code	Code handles any discussion of divisions between those who consider themselves "true residents" (or 'Beltn') versus those from outside the city, be they local or foreign.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-Go Areas 	Sub-Code	Zones & Streets of the city that are considered dangerous or 'taboo' for a variety of reasons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation 	Sub-Code	References to the reputation of people and places.
Heritage Matters	Meta-Code	This meta-code of codes tracks elements of the interviews that are directly relatable to Heritage Management and familiar themes in Heritage Studies.
Heritage debates	Code-Group	Groups textual references heritage issues that relate directly to some of the key themes that relate to some of the key themes presented in Chapter 2.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity 	Sub-Code	In this context authenticity can relate to the authenticity of an experience (' this place feels authentic') or the originality, and therefore, of the historical fabric.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Authenticity 	Sub-Code	Codes for specific reference to material/physical authenticity of the urban setting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Authenticity 	Sub-Code	Codes for any expression of an authentic experience or sense of place in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert vs non-Expert 	Sub-Code	Specific views on the relationship between heritage practitioners and the public.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Value 	Sub-Code	How places are valued within heritage management.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overlooked or forgotten 	Sub-Code	Has a place or a building not been considered significant enough for restoration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public opinion or participation 	Sub-Code	References to public opinion or participation in Heritage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local attitudes and heritage 	Sub-Code	Perceptions of heritage and local attitude towards it.
Heritage Judgements	Code-Group	This group codes for specific appraisals of the managing of places and spaces, be in through renovation/conservation (or lack thereof) or repurposing. This is separated into two main categories to track management choices and strategies deemed appropriate and those deemed inappropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate or correct 	Sub-Code	Has a place been restored or managed appropriately?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate or Incorrect 	Sub-Code	Has a place or building been restored or managed inappropriately?
Managing Heritage	Code-Group	A general code to capture broad references to the management of heritage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Heritage Institutions 	Sub-Code	References to local heritage institutions (ex. Heritage Malta).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration 	Sub-Code	Code to flag specific mentions of restored elements of the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO 	Sub-Code	References to the organization or the world list it administers.
Professional relationships	Code	A subset of participants have a working relationship with the built heritage of the city. This codes for the elements of the transcript where explicit reference to city via their occupational connection to aspects of the city.
Geographical & Physical Place	Meta-Group	Primary category that comprises all codes relating to physical elements of the city as featured in the project transcript. These codes encompass the broad spectrum of spaces that are visited or mentioned by the participants.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
Access to space	Code-Group	Not specific to any given space. A group of codes to cover mentions of private vs. public space and more specifically restricted areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private 	Sub-Code	References to spaces that considered private, or out of bounds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public 	Sub-Code	References to places open to the public.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive 	Sub-Code	References to restrictions in places that are normally public.
Architectural Styles	Code-Group	A group of sub-codes to collect references to specific architectural traditions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baroque 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernist 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoclassicism 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renaissance 	Sub-Code	Not Required
Buildings	Code-Group	This code and its daughter codes track specific types of buildings in the text. These are the buildings singled out for comment by the participants.
Boat & Summer Houses	Code	The DIY summer & boathouses that exists on the periphery of the city outside the walls. These exist in two distinct groupings, one on the Grand Harbour side and the other on the Marsamxett side.
Churches & Related	Code	Specific references to churches and related institutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carmelite Church 	Sub-Code	Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of the Jesuits 	Sub-Code	Also known as The Church of the Circumcision of Our Lord.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesuit Convent 	Sub-Code	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Dominic's 	Sub-Code	Basilica of Saint Dominic & Porto Salvo.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. John's Cathedral 	Sub-Code	St. John's Co-Cathedral.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
• St. Paul's	Sub-Code	St. Paul of the Shipwreck.
• St. Roque	Sub-Code	The Church of St Roque.
• Ta' Giezu	Sub-Code	The Franciscan church of St Mary of Jesus
• Fortifications	Sub-Code	References to the bastions or fortified heritage of the city.
• Bastions & Ditches	Sub-Code	References to specific architectural features.
• Fort St. Elmo	Sub-Code	Mid-16 th century fort built on the northern tip of the city. It pre-dates the construction of Valletta.
• Museums	Sub-Code	Specific references to museums.
Notable Buildings	Code	This group allows for the most commonly referenced buildings and places to be coded independently.
• Bibliotheca	Sub-Code	National Library
• Casino Maltese	Sub-Code	Private Members Club on Republic Street.
• City Gate	Sub-Code	Main gate into the city.
• Evans Building	Sub-Code	British era building, once part of the University of Malta. House various government offices.
• Fortifications Interpretation Centre	Sub-Code	Museum dedicated to the fortifications.
• Grand Master's Palace	Sub-Code	Formerly also the Houses of Parliament.
• Law Courts	Sub-Code	National Law Court, on Republic Street.
• Main Guard	Sub-Code	Guardhouse facing the Grand Master's Palace.
• New Parliament	Sub-Code	This code contains two daughter codes to capture references to the area immediately outside the parliament building.
• Barriers	Sub-Code	Reference to police barricade outside the New Parliament Building.
• Planters	Sub-Code	References to recently installed decorative planters

Code Name	Code Type	Description
• Old University	Sub-Code	Recently restored Old University Campus on Merchant & St. Pauls Street.
• Royal Opera House	Sub-Code	Built in the 19th century under British rule, the opera house was damaged during WW2 and never reconstructed.
• St. Albert the Great School	Sub-Code	Secondary School located on Old Bakery Street.
• St. Pauls Buildings	Sub-Code	A turn of the century block of flats.
• Times Building	Sub-Code	The Ex-Location of the Time of Malta Printing Press and Offices. Now being redeveloped as luxury apartments.
• Vincenti Buildings	Sub-Code	A pre-war apartment block that escaped damage in WW2.
• Offices	Sub-Code	Reference to workspace/office blocks.
• Palazzi & Houses	Sub-Code	General group to code for references to grand homes.
• Schools	Sub-Code	Code to references to school buildings.
Commercial Places	Code-Group	Valletta is one of the commercial hubs of the island. This collection of codes caters for the variety of commercial offices and outlets that are part of the fabric of the city.
• Art Galleries	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Bakers	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Bars	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Cafes	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Cordina	Sub-Code	Iconic café on Republic Street. Still trading.
• Prego	Sub-Code	Much loved, traditional café on South Street. Now closed.
• Family Grocers	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Hotels & Guesthouses	Sub-Code	A prominent feature of the rebirth of the city has been the conversion of town houses into boutique hotels and guesthouses. Included in this code are

Code Name	Code Type	Description
		the apartment conversions for rental purposes (ex. Airbnb).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Il-Monti 	Sub-Code	Hawker's Market. Used to be set up in Merchant's Street, now moved outside the city walls.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is-Suq 	Sub-Code	<i>Is-Suq Tal-Belt</i> . Valletta's covered market, dating from the British Era. Recently restored.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Business 	Sub-Code	General comment on local business.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubino 	Sub-Code	Family-owned, celebrated restaurant in Old Bakery's Street.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shops 	Sub-Code	Not Required
Home	Code-Group	Participants were recruited from members of the residential community and/or often had a connection to city through family. This subset classifies the home types into the following three main categories.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Family Home(s) 	Sub-Code	To code references to the dwellings of family members in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Family home 	Sub-Code	Code for references to homes where family lived in the past.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Home 	Sub-Code	References to participant's places of residence in the city.
Monuments & Design Elements	Code-Group	Category of codes to track specific monument or architectural elements of the city. This can range from a National Monument to mundane elements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balconies 	Sub-Code	References to traditional Maltese balconies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball Monument 	Sub-Code	Monument to Sir Alexander Ball, first Civil Commissioner of Malta. Located in the Lower Barrakka Gardens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrakka Lift 	Sub-Code	Located in the Upper Barrakka Gardens. Lift links Valletta to the shore.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Plan 	Sub-Code	References to the layout of the city plan.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
• Coats of Arms	Sub-Code	References to
• Embellishments	Sub-Code	References to decorative elements on buildings etc.
• Ephemera	Sub-Code	General code to collect references to quirky elements of the city that participants found interesting.
• Lighting	Sub-Code	Reference to street light furnishings.
• Materials	Sub-Code	Reference to specific material. Ex. Limestone.
• Niches	Sub-Code	Often recessed, decorative architectural element often housing a religious statue.
• Signage	Sub-Code	Reference to traditional wooden shop frontages or antique advertising signage.
• Statue	Sub-Code	General reference to statues.
• Steps	Sub-Code	Reference to stepped streets of the city.
• The Great Siege Monument	Sub-Code	Also now know colloquially as the Great Siege Monument.
• Triton Fountain	Sub-Code	Large fountain located the square that formerly served as the main bus terminus outside City Gate.
Neighbourhoods & Zones	Code-Group	Valetta has a number of distinct districts or neighbourhoods. Internally, a city resident would identify with their neighbourhood as being 'home'.
• Arcipierku	Sub-Code	A residential neighbourhood, centre on the parish church of St. Paul on the side of Valletta overlooking the Grand Harbour.
• Bridge Bar	Sub-Code	A short-hand way of referring to a popular night-life location that has come to be associated with the Bridge Bar.
• Centre Vs Periphery	Sub-Code	Not a specific area as such. The general area of the centre of Valletta is considered the commercial hub and heart of the town and is often considered to be starkly different to the peripheral zones defines by the ring-road and the sea.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Balli 	Sub-Code	An area of social housing in the lower (northern) part of the city. Also known as 'Id-Diju Balli' (Maltese).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hastings 	Sub-Code	A residential area at the southern end of the city, near Hastings Gardens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Il-Biċċerija 	Sub-Code	A sub-area of 'Due Balli' – named for the old abattoir of the Knight's period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Il-Fossa 	Sub-Code	Zone outside the bastions of Valletta, accessed through the Jew's Sally Port.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Il-Kamarata 	Sub-Code	Residential zone, associated with two social housing blocks at the bottom of Merchant's Street.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jews Sally Port 	Sub-Code	Near 'Due Balli' this tunnel provides access to the sea.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandraġġ 	Sub-Code	A zone of social housing on the western edge of Valletta, facing Sliema & Manoel Island.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Barbara's Bastion 	Sub-Code	A short street on top of St. Barbara's Bastion with perhaps the most prestigious and expensive properties in Valletta.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ta' Karmnu 	Sub-Code	Area immediately adjacent to the Carmelite Church
Spaces - Natural	Code-Group	Nature-defined physical space in the urban environment. In the case of Valletta this concerns the shorelines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sea 	Sub-Code	References to the sea as natural, public space.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees & Green areas 	Sub-Code	Valletta's rare green spaces and tree population have diminished with the wave of recent regeneration. This codes for people's responses to this recent phenomenon.
Spaces - Urban	Code-Group	Spaces or gaps in the urban environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car Parks 	Sub-Code	References to car parks, past or present.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofs 	Sub-Code	Textual references to roofs, roof-tops and rooflines. This code encompasses roofs as space and aesthetic element, capturing how they are used but also participant reaction to changes in the city's visual aspect at roof-level.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
Gardens	Code-Group	Public gardens in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hastings Garden 	Sub-Code	Garden on the south-western end of Valletta, offering views of Floriana and Marsamxett Harbour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Barrakka 	Sub-Code	Garden on the North-Eastern tip of Valletta. Views of Three Cities and the Grand Harbour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper Barrakka 	Sub-Code	Garden on the South-Eastern tip of Valletta. Views of Three Cities and the Grand Harbour and access point for the Barrakka Lift.
Squares	Code-Group	Public squares in the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Castille Square 	Sub-Code	New square created opposite Auberge de Castille, the Office of the Prime Minister.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Parliament Square 	Sub-Code	Square created near City Gate outside new Parliament Building.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Republic Square 	Sub-Code	Also known as Piazza Regina (The Queen's Square)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. George's Square 	Sub-Code	Previously used as a carpark, this square is opposite the Grand Master's Palace in Republic Street.
Views	Code-Group	A group of codes to track mentions in the text of views within and without the city.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sea views 	Sub-Code	General reference to views of the sea.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View of Sliema & Tigné 	Sub-Code	Referring to view across Marsamxett Harbour to Tigné Point and the town of Sliema.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View of Three Cities 	Sub-Code	Referring to views of the historic cities of Isla, Bormla and Birgu across the Grand Harbour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View lines 	Sub-Code	Referring to 'Sight Line' – or the ability to see encumbered views across the city.
Routes	Meta-Code	This code group handles the routes taken by all participants, data which forms part of the annotation in the transcripts. Together with the specific building codes, these are included to spatially locate textual data and interpretation.

Code Name	Code Type	Description
Locations	Code-Group	This code-group collects specific “special” places the participants selected to form part of their route.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Castile Square 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Grand Harbour Boat Houses 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Hastings Garden 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Home 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Independence Square 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Is-Suq 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Lift Ditch 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Lower Barrakka Gardens 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location New Parliament Square 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location St John's Square 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Triton Fountain 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Upper Barrakka Gardens 	Sub-Code	Not Required
Route selection	Code-Group	List of streets that featured in the interviews.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archbishop's Street 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battery Street 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biagio Steps 	Sub-Code	Not Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat Street 	Sub-Code	Not Required

Code Name	Code Type	Description
• Bull Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• East Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Felix Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Grand Harbour Steps	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Marsamxett Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Mediterranean Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Melita Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Merchant's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• North Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Old Bakery Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Old Mint Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Old Theatre Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Republic Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Sapper's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• South Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Elmo Place	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Sebastian Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Andrew's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Christopher's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Dominic's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. John's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Lucy's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Mark's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required

Code Name	Code Type	Description
• St. Nicholas Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Patrick's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Paul's Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• St. Ursula Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Strait Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• West Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Windmill Street	Sub-Code	Not Required
• Zachary Street	Sub-Code	Not Required

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