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COMMUNITY INCLUSION & SPACE

COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN VALLETTA 2018

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Objectives

This research aims to identify factors affecting participation by various community groups in the Valletta 2018 project, with particular emphasis on elements that promote or hinder inclusion of a diverse audience, and accessibility (including physical, geographical, financial, linguistic, and intellectual). The research cycle for 2016 also explored the awareness that respondents have of the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme, both in terms of individual events and its general aims and impact, and brings to the fore concerns and observations related to gentrification.

Methodology

The Methodology remains largely unchanged from the previous cycle, with semi-structured interviews being carried out with four individuals from each of six groups, namely (1) Beltin¹ residing in Valletta; (2) Beltin residing outside Valletta; (3) non-Beltin residing in Valletta; (4) respondents from the Inner Harbour area, also defined as Greater Valletta; (5) respondents from other parts of Malta; and (6) persons with disability.

¹ Beltin refers to people who define themselves as originating from Valletta

Results to date

There is an overarching realisation among all community groups that the social fabric of Valletta is changing at a rapid rate. There is a generally positive attitude with regard to the changes which are understood to have been triggered by Valletta 2018, even if not directly related to the Cultural Programme, since these changes are often seen as upgrading Valletta's profile both culturally and infrastructurally.

Changes observed by respondents, in part, echo last year's results, namely the increase in effort related to the upkeep of buildings, and the number of cultural events, catering establishments and boutique hotels. Other observations include the typical day-to-day issues related to Valletta, including cleanliness and accessibility. There is an increased concern over affordability, particularly in terms of property prices.

With regard to the Cultural Programme, there has been an increased awareness in comparison to the previous year, although most respondents were unsure or unaware that certain projects or events fell under the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme. Initiatives of a more overtly public and collective nature, such as the Notte Bianca and the Valletta Green Festival, were understandably more widely known than projects which have so far had limited visibility. It was noted by many respondents that they felt the Cultural Programme as a whole needed more visibility.

Cultural infrastructure projects, were generally welcomed as updates to the existing infrastructure. However respondents also expressed concerns in terms of affordability and affordability for locals. Respondents also expressed hope that Valletta 2018 will further improve accessibility in the city.

Way forward

The model used so far with regard to individual interviews from six identified community groups will be retained. This model has since been complemented by meetings with the Valletta 2018 Programme Coordinator, which will be maintained on a quarterly basis, as well as meetings with persons leading community-based programmes.