A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VALLETTA 2018 CULTURAL PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

programme in terms of the cultural offer, participation and European collaboration. It draws on to previous evaluations of ECoC programmes and the Bid Book objectives to establish elements and criteria against which to evaluate the programme. It takes a longitudinal and cultural production studies approach to examine the practices and decision-making processes from 2015 to 2018. The 2015 preliminary findings reveal the complexity of developing an ECoC programme and an ongoing refining of the vision and objectives by the Valletta 2018 Foundation. The interpretation of themes and orientations is flexible and used more for internal guidance rather than for external communication of projects. The programme is being further developed to include community based projects targeting specific groups as well as a number of large, special event projects targeting large audiences. The report further signals that the programming balance is currently in flux with a leaning towards a contemporary approach, a range of art forms and a focus on process-led projects rooted in Valletta and across Malta. Content programmers are intent on prioritising audience participation, European collaboration and legacy. The research needs to assess how this is translated into programming strategies and content over the next years leading up to the final 2018 cultural programme.

Keywords: Cultural programme; participation; European collaboration; cultural offer; programme development.

Introduction

THE VALLETTA 2018 CULTURAL PROGRAMME IN CONTEXT

The European Capital of Culture (ECoC) Programme is a much-coveted title that brings with it high expectations for multiple objectives. It offers unique opportunities for cultural visibility, vibrancy and participation. However, hosting cities are often overwhelmed by the range of goals they need to reach and the often contradictory choices that need to be made. Trevor Davis, the Director of Copenhagen ECoC 1996 and Director for Aarhus 2017 during its successful bidding phase, aptly captured this tension in the words "the ECoC model fascinates us, but it is also traumatic" (Palmer, Richards & Dodd, 2012).

This multi-faceted dimension of the ECoC has attracted a growing body of academic literature and commissioned reports on the subject. O'Callaghan (2012) reflects on the programme's unrealistic expectations and deliverables that many cities do not achieve, resulting in alienation (p. 186). However, Garcia and Cox (2013) interpret this as an increase in the standard and ambition of the ECoC. These challenges make the research and evaluation of the programme's objectives and effectiveness ever more pertinent. The Valletta 2018 ECoC offers a unique opportunity to design and conduct research in parallel with the development of the Cultural Programme.

The three main reports evaluating ECoCs, namely Myerscough (1994), Palmer/Rae (2004) and García and Cox (2013), caution on the comparability of results and the heterogeneity of the ECoC. Cities vary in context, size and also in the programming approach. Moreover, investigating cultural outcomes requires a longitudinal approach as impacts often emerge after the event itself (Quinn & O'Halloran, 2006).

The Valletta 2018 Foundation will measure the ECoC objectives through five research themes[1]. This study commissioned by the Foundation is being conducted over five years (2015-2019) and focuses on the creation and development of the Valletta 2018 cultural programme and the individual projects included in this programme. The study falls under the category Cultural and Territorial Vibrancy and covers aspects related to the cultural offer and participation in Valletta 2018 initiatives.

Scope of study

This qualitative study aims to examine the life-cycle of the Valletta 2018 cultural programme from the development to the production stage. In 2015, the focus was the analysis of the programme's vision as articulated in the published material and as experienced by the content programmers.

More specifically, the study has 3 main objectives (i) to analyse how the cultural programme is developed, devised and implemented; (ii) to explore the factors that influence the creation of the cultural programme projects; (iii) to track the long term development of the programme's effectiveness in terms of the cultural offer, participation and European collaboration.

The study sets out to investigate the following research questions:

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[1] The Valletta 2018 Evaluation and Monitoring Research plan (2015-2019) has identified the following themes: Cultural and territorial vibrancy, Governance and finance, community inclusion and space, the tourist experience, the Valletta Brand.

1. What are the main aims and objectives of the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme?
2. How is it developed and devised and how are projects/events selected?
3. What is the range and diversity of the cultural offer and programming balance?
4. How do the projects included in the Cultural Programme fulfil ECoC objectives on cultural participation? What strategies are being devised to engage audiences?
5. How do the project/events reflect the European Dimension?
6. What are the challenges encountered in the delivery of the Valletta 2018 Programme? What are the barriers to participation as perceived by the Cultural Programmers and creators?

Firstly there is a need to understand the objectives set by the 2006 Decision No 1622/2006/EC[2], in particular Article 4 and the emphasis that the ECoC should include two sets of criteria (i) European dimension and (ii) city and citizens. Secondly, the objectives set at application stage also need to be examined.

It should be emphasised from the outset that the 2015 findings are based on a Programme which is in progress and the full range of projects and events programme will take place in 2018. The focus throughout 2015 was therefore the planning stage and the projects which have been announced to date. Moreover, the study focuses on three aspects of the Cultural Programme in line with the Foundation's terms of reference. However, the effectiveness of the Cultural Programme is also dependent on various factors including governance and funding, infrastructure and communications.

Evaluating the ECoC Culture Programme
In recent years, the ECoC has developed to be more than a high-profile cultural festival. Nonetheless, the Cultural Programme and its projects are a main element and need to be assessed within the specific context of each city.

The extensive Palmer/Rae report (2004) documenting the impact of 21 ECoCs between 1996 and 2014 observes that the Cultural Programme represents around 63% of the operation expenditure of the ECoC. Furthermore, the study reflects on the scale of the Cultural Programme, the diversity of stakeholders targeted and the variety of elements required for programming balance (p.15).

Other more recent studies evaluating ECoC's overall impact, such as the ECORYS post-evaluation studies (2011-2014) also examine the various aspects of programming and effectiveness concerning objectives set by the European Commission. Innovative content and distinct programming are identified as key success strategies for ECoC (Garcia & Cox, 2013).

This study draws onto the elements identified by these authors and adapts these elements to analyse the Valletta 2018 Programme and its individual projects. Table 1 illustrates the relevant elements that need to be investigated in the analysis of a Cultural Programme. The studies use the European Commission terms of reference and similar terminology to refer to various components and categories: cultural participation, community development, inclusion engagement or outreach; cultural offer, programming processes or balancing; and European dimension and perspective.

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[2] Decision No 1622/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2017 to 2019.

Table 1

Elements to be analysed in the ECoC Cultural Programme

Elements for Evaluation	
Garcia & Cox (2013)	**Palmer & Rae (2004)**

1. Vision
   a. Aims and objectives
 	
2. Programming Processes
   a. Themes, Strands and Seasons
   b. Duration of Programme
   c. Location of the programme
   d. Art forms and activity genres
   e. New and additional programming
   f. Programme balance
   g. Programme consultation and funding processes
 	
3. Programme size and scale
	1. Location and Timing
	2. Programme themes and Orientation and Coherence
	3. Project Selection
	4. Scale of Programme
	5. Programme Management
	6. Programme Range
	7. Art and Culture
	8. Tradition and Innovation
	9. Cultural Institution and Independent Groups
	10. Public Space
	11. Block Busters and International Stars
	12. Community development, participation and Inclusion
	13. Support for Local talent
	14. Spin-off
	15. Programme Expenditure
	16. Event vs. Process

Sources: ECORYS (2014); Garcia & Cox (2013) & Palmer/Rae (2004)

These categories can be further elaborated into success criteria as shown in Table 2. Participation goes beyond attendance of citizens to performances and includes co-creation strategies, approaches to audience development and volunteering programmes. The European Dimension includes cooperation with European artists and cities and promoting cultural diversity in Europe. These categories and criteria guide this reasearch in analysing.

Table 2

Success Criteria to Evaluate ECoC Cultural Programme

ECORYS (2014)	
Category	**Criteria**
Cultural and Artistic Offer	1. Clear and coherent artistic vision for the cultural programme; 2. Involvement of local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme; 3. Range and diversity of activities and their overall artistic quality; 4. Combination of local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions.
European Dimension	1. Scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding; 2. Scope and quality of activities highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history and European integration; 3. Scope and quality of activities featuring European artists, co-operation with operators or cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships; 4. Strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public.
Outreach	1. Involvement of the local population and civil society in the application and implementation of the ECoC; 2. New and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people, marginalised and disadvantaged people, and minorities; 3. Accessibility of activities to persons with disabilities and to the elderly; 4. Overall strategy for audience development, in particular the link with education and the participation of schools.

Sources: ECORYS (2014); Garcia & Cox (2013)

Overview of the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme

Valletta was selected as an ECoC on the 12th October 2012. The Valletta 2018 Foundation, which spearheaded the application process, is the entity responsible for the organisation of the ECoC and the creation and implementation of the cultural programme. The Cultural Programme at Bid Book stage focused on four main themes: Routes, Cities, Generations and Islands.

Access to culture and participation are main challenges being addressed by the ECoC programme. The Bid Book highlights the concerns on audience participation in the local cultural scene:

> *''Valletta 2018 also faces a key challenge in breaking down entrenched societal barriers to audience development. Culture Statistics issued by Eurostat indicate that we have among Europe's lowest levels of audience participation in comparative cultural activities.''*

> (Bid Book, September 2012)

In recognising increased cultural participation as a key priority, there is a need to analyse the Cultural Programme's effectiveness in engaging audiences. Quantitative studies provide valuable data on for example the frequency of attendance to cultural events. However, other insights on the meaning, motives and barriers to participation are useful in devising culture strategies and ensuring cultural vibrancy. Moreover, the role of producers in making culture accessible and encouraging participation is often overlooked. The following section explains the methodology used to conduct this analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Data Sources

This qualitative study adopts a mixed method approach to reflect multi-dimensional dynamics of the programme and the developments unfolding over five years. Data is being gathered from primary and secondary sources as follows:

1. An institutional level analysis: An overview of Valletta 2018 and the ECoC is required to set the context of the wider institutional framework in which the Programme is drawn up. In this first year of analysis, the main focus was the collection of secondary data from Valletta 2018 documentation, European Commission selection panel reports and background literature, legal documents, academic literature, newsletters and websites, programme schedules and other relevant material. This was done to refine further the criteria by which to assess the programme effectiveness.

2. A mapping and surveying of projects to be fully produced by the Foundation: This is being carried out to understand the different types of projects and to establish criteria for the overall analysis of the programme. The official cultural programme starts in 2018. However, Valletta 2018 has 33 projects listed on its website as at December 2015 (with this number expected to grow exponentially as 2018 approaches) and, therefore, these serve as a ramp up for the ECoC year. The mapping helps establish categories and criteria such as themes, disciplines, genres, dimension and objectives. It should be emphasised that each project is unique and it is, therefore, problematic to use rigid categorisation. However, the mapping of all the projects will help to identify the long-term vision and evolution of the programme. Unlike most studies that are post evaluation (ECORYS 2011, 2012,2013, 2014), the ongoing evaluation implies that members of the research team can directly observe and survey the individual projects as they progress.

3. In-depth interviews: In 2015 primary data information was gathered through interviews or consultation meetings, primarily with those responsible for programming and relevant stakeholders. The participants' knowledge and experiences were used to gain an in-depth understanding on the subject. The interviews and focus group studies over the next years need to include:
   1. Valletta 2018 Foundation Programming team and Artistic Direction;
   2. Creators, Co-Creators and producers of projects in the cultural programme;
   3. Key persons from Public Cultural Organisations;
   4. Civil society organisations and NGOs;
   5. Independent artists and groups.

The study attempts to achieve reliability by triangulating the data collected from the institutional analysis, the mapping exercise and the semi-structured interviews and focus groups over the five-year period.

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[3] The Foundation supports and endorses a number of cultural events. The focus of this study is the main programme and fully supported projects.

Strengths and Weaknesses in methodology

The variety of projects makes it problematic to draw comparisons between the different events. The Programme is also organic and changes are constant. While acknowledging that there are time constraints, the research has to ensure that the data updates are frequent and that the methodology is flexible.

The proposed methodology is adequate to gain detailed and in-depth perspectives on the ECoC Cultural Programme. However, this approach is not an ideal methodology for making generalisations. Moreover in-depth interviews have their limitations particularly because of biases by both the interviewees and interviewers. Caution is needed so as not to take personal interpretations for granted what Tinic refers to as the "situatedness" (Caldwell, 2008, p.8). In personal interviews, it may sometimes be difficult to filter through the self-promotion. Caldwell (2008) invites production studies researchers to sift through the personal branding and industry parlance (p. 318). Also, studies on events commissioned by event organisers also tend to focus on positive aspects and neglect other critical aspects or do not focus sufficiently on social impact (Richards, 2013). In 2015, the data was gathered mainly from ECoC sources but in 2016, the study needs to widen its scope to include more critical perspectives.

Previous studies have noted the limitation of conducting interviews after the ECoC event as they were reliant on respondents' recollections and perceptions (ECORYS, 2014). This study has the advantage of analysing the Programme while it is still in progress.

As the Programme range continues to grow, particularly in 2018 when Valletta 2018 delivers the full official Programme, it may difficult to conduct project visits and in-person surveys of all the projects. Other studies (ECORYS 2011, 2012,2013,2014; Quinn & O'Halloran, 2006) have used online surveys. The online survey for project organisers can be considered as an additional method to ensure coverage of projects happening in 2018.

Based on this methodology, the preliminary observations follow in the next section.

ANALYSING THE VALLETTA 2018 CULTURAL PROGRAMME

Vision and objectives

The Pre-Selection Report (2012) of the Valletta 2018 bid remarks that culture had never been a main focus in Malta's national budget and that this is a challenge for the long-term development of culture in Malta (p. 4). This observation is important in understanding the particular context of Valletta 2018. The bid entitled *Imagine 18* was the only one submitted and one which included all of Malta. The small size of the city with a population of some 6,000 residents and the inclusion of all other localities, are also distinguishing features of this ECoC.

Recent evaluations on ECoCs particularly after 2005 indicate that hosts are setting wider ambitions with cultural, economic and social objectives included and in most cases core objectives remain the same between the application stage and the implementation phase. However, the reworking of goals for practical reasons was also observed (Garcia & Cox 2013).

The analysis of secondary data sources shows that from the outset the Valletta 2018 ambition had broad objectives emphasising cultural regeneration and impact on various sectors including education, economy, social issues and the environment (Bid Book, 2012).

A reworking of the objectives can be observed from the first Bid Book's 8 objectives to the final Bid Book and later to the strategic plan published in 2013 (see Table 3). There are clear connections between all objectives but throughout the planning phase, these are being further clarified and refined.

Table 3

Reworking of objectives Valletta 2011-2013

Bid Book 17 October 2011	Bid Book September 2012	Strategic Plan March 2013
Supporting a European Vision for Democracy and Culture	Establishing Valletta as a creative city	To transform Valletta into a creative city
Ensuring Cultural Sustainability through the Reinvention of Cultural Education	Making careers of culture	To stimulate awareness of Malta's diverse cultural identities
Encouraging the Dynamic Flourishing of Diversity	Growing internationally from the world within us	To drive collaboration and excellence in culture and the arts in Malta

	Nurturing sustainable relationships with our environment	To improve the quality of life in Valletta through culture
Interpreting and Developing Multifaceted Cultural Identities		
Incentivising and Sustaining the Economy of Culture	-	-
Benefitting European Cooperation by Promoting International Networking	-	-
Contributing to the ECoC Legacy by Supporting Monitoring and Research	-	-
Nurturing a Sustainable Relationship to Our Environment	-	-

Sources: Valletta 2018 Foundation Bid Book 2011, Bid Book 2012, Strategic Plan 2013.

It is relevant to note the developments from Bid Book stage to implementation stage to understand how the Programme is devised. The Bid Book organisation structure originally proposes an artistic director responsible for the full Programme and artistic programme directors responsible for different areas. Respondents explained that the Artistic Director Special Events Mario Philip Azzopardi is responsible for a category of programming referred to as special events. These events include the opening ceremony; the Valletta Pageant of the Seas; a newly commissioned opera dealing with migration and entitled Refuġjati, the production of four low budget films co-produced with the Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) and a visual arts exhibition which will seek cooperation of an internationally established organisation.

There are two distinct set-ups responsible for the Cultural Programme: the core programming led by the Foundation's Executive Team and the Artistic Direction Team. In his response, the Artistic Director Special Events was intent on emphasising that while his team focused on the large events, other Programme activities are being led and managed by the programming team.

The Artistic Director Special Events emphasised the importance of quality, professionalisation and particularly legacy. He summed up this vision in the guiding motto "mill-qiegħ tal-imgħoddi għall-quċċata tal-ġejjieni" (from the roots of our past to the heights of our future), acknowledging a focus on what is contemporary and innovative.

This contemporary approach is consistent with the Programme Coordinator's views that a focus on innovation is important and that quality is a priority. In Margerita Pulè's words "history always feeds into inspiration…but it's a nod to the past rather than a foot in the past." Palmer/Rae findings also show that designated cities focus on contemporary culture rather than tradition.

Themes and Orientation

Valletta 2018 developed four themes and orientations for the Cultural Programme: Generations, Cities, Routes and Islands. These themes were later further matched to areas, namely education, skills, community and events. However, respondents said that the themes are evolving continuously and are being used as guidance within the formation and structuring of the Cultural Programme. This finding is consistent with ECORYS post evaluation studies that note that the themes are mostly useful for internal organisation.

The Valletta 2018 website lists a number of projects and these are divided into categories (genre/type) and not under theme headings, unlike the Bid Book approach which included the four themes.

Timing and location

Palmer/Rae (2004) report that programme planning duration is usually between two to three years. In 2015, Valletta 2018 started its cultural activities with some 33 projects listed on its website under the heading Cultural Programme. Projects are in progress and the projects in the core programme are mainly perceived as process-led initiatives and not as one-off event. The run-up to 2018 therefore serves to consolidate and further develop these projects.

The planning for 2018 events also considers the timing of other long-standing activities such as the Malta Arts Festival, the Valletta International Baroque Festival, Carnival and Local Council activities. The equal distribution of projects across different months and seasons and other practical issues for open air events are being considered in devising the project timing.

In mapping the 33 projects, the study observes that each project is categorised by location with a list that includes Malta, Valletta, particular locality, Leeuwarden, International, European and Mediterranean. The majority of projects (44%) are linked to the Valletta location, 29% are being implemented across all of Malta while 15% are connected to particular localities, including two projects in Gozo (Figure 1). The projects to be implemented outside of Malta are significantly less in the current offer.

Figure 1: Cultural Programming project locations

Legend:
- Malta
- Valletta
- Regional
- International
- Europe and the Mediterranean
- Leeuwarden
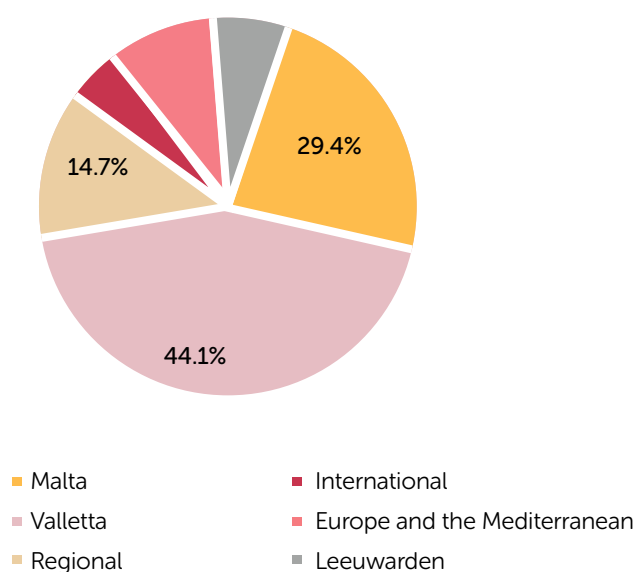
Size, scale and range

In assessing the size and magnitude of programmes, Garcia and Cox (2013) caution on the varying interpretations of what constitutes a project as opposed to an event. As suggested, this study focuses on the number of projects as defined by Valletta 2018.

The average number of projects included in the ECoC cultural programme is around 500 programmes (Palmer/Rae 2004) or 187 projects or 1,140 events per 100,000 population (Garcia and Cox, 2013). However, a large number of events are not necessarily a success indicator and past ECoCs have been criticised for including too many projects. On the other hand, having fewer projects was not identified as a weakness (ibid. 2004). The range of projects included in the Valletta 2018 Programme will continue to grow over the next two years, with the full range of events launched in 2018.

ECoC activities include different art forms namely dance, music, theatre, film, visual arts, literature, heritage and crafts. Some ECoCs choose to include a wider anthropological interpretation of culture and include food and sport as categories. Figure 2 shows the range of projects and categories covering the 33 Valletta 2018 projects which are already in development. This should not be interpreted as representative of the range of the 2018 Cultural Programme but as an initial mapping of the projects being piloted in 2015.

Most of the 33 projects are categorised both in terms of genre and type of activity (education, community). The focus on community projects is clear, with projects covering different art forms and genres. Literature and theatre are the least represented while elements of music and film/audiovisual are the most frequently represented in the projects listed. Nineteen projects are listed as interdisciplinary indicating artistic collaboration across sectors. The list of art forms included by ECoCs varies and it will be relevant to observe how the scale and range of the Programme and the range set in 2015 will evolve over the next three years. The diversity of projects across art forms, genres also indicates that different audience development strategies need to be devised as discussed in the next section.

Figure 2: Range of the Cultural Programme projects art forms and categories in 2015
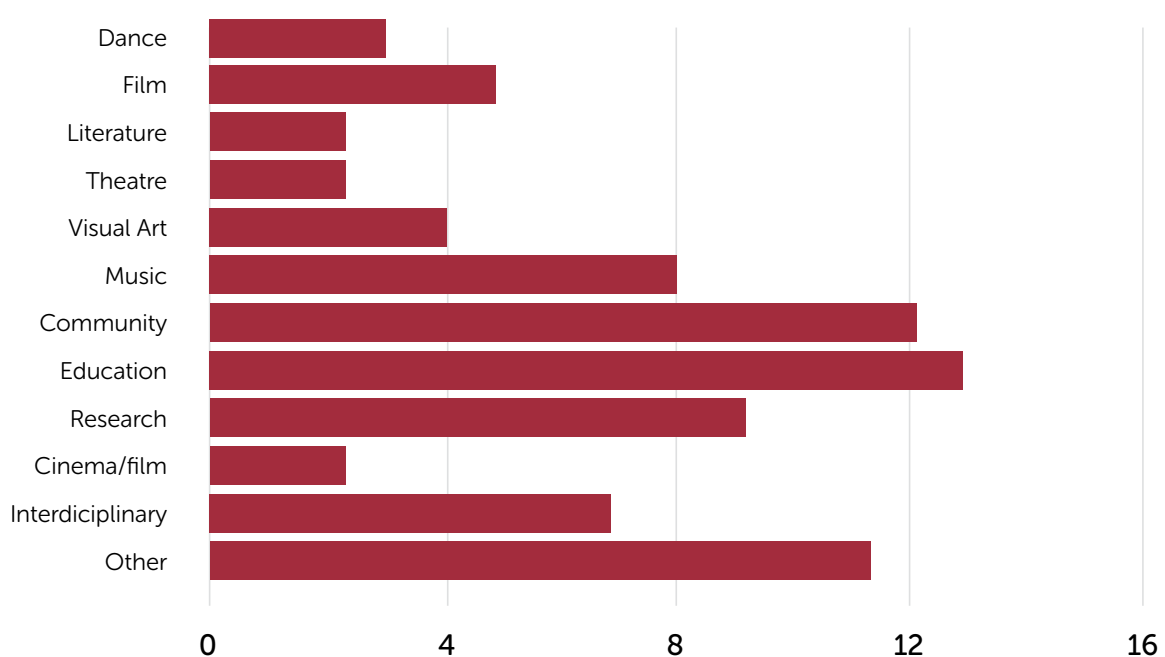
Cultural Participation

The ECoC discourse is strongly characterised by participation, community outreach and public engagement. The study needs to acknowledge that participation is a wide-ranging term to define. Increasingly, the emphasis on participatory culture is to involve citizens not only as spectators but also as creators or co-creators (Jenkins, 2016).

Secondary data shows that Valletta 2018 places a strong focus on community engagement and the need to eliminate societal barriers to participation. The Programme Coordinator described public engagement as a long-term process where citizens are encouraged to participate throughout the run-up on to 2018. The ultimate aim is ownership of the Cultural Programme by different target groups.

The Programme includes projects targeting residents and projects like MUŻA and the Valletta Forum were highlighted as initiatives that strengthen community engagement in Valletta. The Foundation also recruited three Regional Coordinators, one of whom will focus on audience engagement initiatives with Valletta residents.

In particular, the participation of schools and migrants was emphasised and coordinators will be assigned to oversee projects with these target groups. The core programming approach is to focus on community engagement and to work with different target groups. Projects that adopt a grassroots approach include Ħaga u Taħdita, Recycled Percussion Workshop, l-Ikla t-Tajba, Darba Waħda, Valletta Forum, Minn Fomm il-Bormliżi, Belti, Il-Warda tar-Riħ, Move Week, Community Hip Hop, Qatt ma Ninsa and Pjazza f'Pjazza. Furthermore the volunteering programme in collaboration with SOS Malta is another initiative aimed at mobilising citizens and ensuring public engagement in the 2018 Cultural Programme. Capacity building projects such as Storyworks and the Curatorial School encourage the participation of artists and creative industry professionals.

For the special events, an audience centric approach and attracting new, large audiences is a priority. In the words of the Deputy Artistic Director Sean Buhagiar "everything is devised with the audience in mind". The use of public space and "free" events were strategies for audience participation in previous ECoCs (Palmer/Rae, 2004). Strategies are currently being discussed such as the use of public space for the closing exhibition event. Other possible strategies for the large events include a nominal fee for the opening ceremony for audience organisation purposes and pricing strategies such as tiered ticketing for the opera event.

Respondents considered marketing and communications as playing a significant role in attracting participation. The use of social media and the posting of comments by users is also an aspect of participation that was acknowledged by respondents. The Programme Coordinator acknowledged that attracting participation was an ongoing challenge, as this is dependent on various factors including marketing, education, and awareness of the Cultural Programme as well as competing with other activities and priorities in people's hectic lives.

In the build up towards 2018, it will be pertinent to observe the audience development strategies that are used by co-organisers and collaborators of individual projects.

European Dimension
In November 2012, the selection panel observed that the Valletta 2018 bid needed improvement in highlighting the European dimension of the programme and that this should not be solely interpreted as a showcasing of Malta to Europe but rather raising awareness on Europe with Maltese citizens (Final Selection Report Valletta, 11 November 2012). The monitoring report (September 2015) recommends that the European dimension should be further emphasised.

For the special events, difficulties in attracting high profile European artists include budget constraints. On the participation of European Artists, the Artistic Director Special Events spoke about the importance and practicality of choosing those who are available and best suited for the particular work, whether Maltese or European, whether an independent group of artists or a public cultural organisation.

The European dimension is mostly interpreted as collaboration with or participation of European artists in Valletta 2018 projects. Specific projects like Modern Music Days and the Curatorial School are working with international collaborators and take an outward looking approach. Malta Showcase encourages Maltese performers to raise their profile internationally. The mobility fund in collaboration with the Roberto Cimetta Fund is another initiative that encourages mobility and collaboration with artists in the Euro-Arab region.

As 2018 approaches, the programming team is intent on encouraging project organisers to involve more artists from outside Malta. The study will need to analyse how this European perspective is further executed over time and how the individual projects include this perspective.

CONCLUSIONS AND
WAY FORWARD

The preliminary findings show the complexity of developing an ECoC cultural programme and the practical, day-to-day challenges encountered by those developing the Programme. The core programming is managed by the Executive Team and the high profile large events are led by the Artistic Direction Team.

The main Programme includes community initiatives targeting different groups while the special events focus on an arts spectacle for large audiences. Participation is perceived as desirable and strategies for community engagement include the volunteering programme and projects targeting specific groups. To date the programming balance leans towards a more contemporary approach and a representation of various art forms with music topping the list. The European perspective is interpreted primarily as participation of international artists in Valletta 2018 projects.

As has been identified in various ECoC evaluations (ECORYS 2012, 2013, 2014; Palmer/Rae 2014a, 2014b) the Cultural Programme, is constantly in development and changes are frequent. The research, therefore, needs to be flexible and adapt to these changes to avoid inaccurate, outdated results and reporting.

The research conducted throughout 2015 took an introspective approach and focused mainly on information provided by the Valletta 2018 Foundation and direct collaborators of the Foundation. The researcher had complete access to data and the work was facilitated by the Foundation team members. In 2016, there is a need to include cultural stakeholders from the wider artistic sector, to keep track of new developments in the Programme and to follow the participation strategies of individual projects and events. The research design will be further fine-tuned to reflect the diversity of the Cultural Programme.

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