



L-Università
ta' Malta

*Community and Heritage in a Post-Museum Context:
conceptualising sense of place, space and identities in Bormla, Malta.*

Patricia Camilleri

Thesis (Ph.D.)

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ta' Malta

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "*Community and Heritage in a Post-Museum Context: conceptualising sense of place, space and identities in Bormla, Malta*", submitted to the Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta for the degree of Ph.D., is my own original work.



Patricia Camilleri

*for Gino
our children
and our grandchildren*

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questions.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the conceptualisation and practice of heritage within a particular community in Malta. It looks at museum theory with regard to mainstream museums, historic sites and notions of heritage which also underpin the concepts of community and of ecomuseums and post-museum spaces. These theories are based on issues of objectivisation; hegemony; democracy; identity; memory; community and the collective. Chapter One discusses some of these theories and looks at the many variables that are part of the remembering process that is crucial to any attempt to record the past or view the present. It looks at the way in which community and post-museum ideas have given importance to tangible and intangible heritage, participation and notions of space, place and time, thus creating a broader museum context.

The value and meaning of authenticity is examined and its importance for creators of all types of museum – from the galleries of capital cities to the community projects of a small town. It is discussed with regard to heritage sites and with it the issue of official and unofficial memory and the tensions that can arise between the two. The thesis also looks at the question of community as idea and as an ideal – from its seemingly simple definition to its sometimes problematic realities.

The case study through which these theories are contextualized is the city of Cospicua, Malta, which lies on the southern side of the Grand Harbour, between the peninsulas of Senglea and Vittoriosa.¹ The methodology used in the fieldwork was qualitative. This consisted in one-to-one interviews and focus groups. It also involved several previously arranged ‘conversations’ with people from or connected with Bormla as well as *ad hoc* discussions with people encountered in the streets and shops of the city during my many walks in its different areas. The main reason for which Bormla was chosen for this fieldwork was that it has no mainstream museum, only one small private museum and no community museum or space for expressing Bormla’s cultural heritage beyond the very significant religious celebrations both inside and, as performative cultural manifestations, outside the Church.

The research questions, therefore, aimed to unpack the realities of Bormla’s community or communities and to engage people from various sections of that society so as to examine issues of identity, sense of place as well as to generally look at those variables regarding the process of memory mentioned above. The research questions focused on the community’s regard for the history of the city and those aspects of heritage that are still significant and evident in the life of the

¹ This area is also known as Cottonera which includes the town of Kalkara which lies to the east of

city at the present time. They also endeavoured to discover whether the people of Bormla wished to promote their city within its own walls as well as to other Maltese and to tourists. The two final chapters look at practical ways in which the coordinates for such a development regarding all kinds of cultural activity could be achieved.

The findings that result from the fieldwork undertaken show that there are different groups within the community of Bormla that, however, interact more than is probably perceived by each of those groups. There was an understanding and appreciation of Bormla's long history even amongst those who did not have detailed knowledge of the city's past. There was a significant recognition of the importance of the Church with regard to present heritage practices even amongst those who declared themselves not to be regular churchgoers. The figure of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception, to whom the Parish Church is dedicated, is a unifying element that transcends political, social and even anti-clerical sentiments.

Several local historians, both professional and amateur, have gone to great lengths to create awareness amongst the Bormlizi about the city's history and heritage that is not connected directly with the Church. This has not translated into activities that might celebrate Bormla's more secular assets. This is in contrast to Vittoriosa/Birgu, in particular, but also to Senglea/L-Isla. What is lacking is not the interest on the part of the local population. On the contrary, most are well aware that such promotion would go a long way to easing the stigma associated with the city. However, there are not the structures in place to make this happen.

Bormla is changing physically before our very eyes. Elements of gentrification are becoming ever more evident. My conclusion/recommendation is that with a grassroots effort, with help from local communities workers and NGOs and with the endorsement and support of the authorities such as the Bormla Local Council, there could be a wider spectrum of contemporary heritage events and greater recognition of local history. This would go some way to improving the image of Bormla, to creating economic activity associated with small businesses and tourism and to giving the city the place it deserves alongside its neighbours not through imitation but through innovative approaches to Bormla's diverse narratives.

Keywords: community, memory, sense of place, identity, heritage, museum spaces, authenticity, tourism, gentrification, leadership, community participation.

INTRODUCTION

My interest in Cottonera goes back to the 1980s when in Birgu there was one bar on the main square, apart from the Band Club. The only place to buy a sandwich was the Boċċi (Bowls) Club. There was no waterfront marina at that time and many of the war-damaged buildings still lay frozen in time, circa 1943. To get into Fort St Angelo I would have to shout out to the custodian, who would let me in, on sufferance, to wander amongst its warm, historic walls. I fell in love with Birgu's narrow streets, the small auberges, the late-Norman window casements, probably recycled from some earlier building, and the places where de Valette and his men fought during the Siege. I looked across at Fort St Elmo and tried to imagine its last stand. At that time, Birgu had not yet undergone the renaissance of later years. It was not a sought after destination for tourists or Maltese. But somehow even the rather unkempt streets and the lack of amenities contributed to its emotivity. I also got to know L-Isla with its pretty tree-lined waterfront and watched a waterpolo game or ate dinner with friends who had a house on Siren Street, known already as 'little Italy'.

Of Bormla I knew almost nothing. At that time, the Dockyard dominated Galley Creek, the high wall was unwelcoming and the siren intimidating. I felt that there was nowhere I could comfortably go, even to have a cup of coffee. I would gaze at the Parish Church which stands on the hill but never had the confidence to venture into the narrow, stepped streets. Now I regret not having tried to get beyond the initial picture and look further than its reputation – not having got to know Bormla sooner.

My introduction to Bormla came in October 2012 when the University of Malta organized a project entitled: *Skopri l-Università fit-tlett ibliet (Discover the University in the Three Cities)*.² A tent was set up for one day in each locality and a programme of activities was held during the day with debates in the evening. Through this project I got to know the then Mayor of Bormla and some of his councillors. I also met up with youth and community workers and some very articulate young people and started to explore the city. By this time the Dockyard had closed its doors (in 2010) and was already dismantled. Galley Creek was starting to take on its new look.

A life-long interest in and love of museums has led me to the voluntary sector,³ to produce a series of radio interviews with archaeologists,⁴ and, together with a colleague,⁵ to produce a series on catacombs shown on Malta TV.⁶ As a very

² The Three Cities: Senglea (L-Isla), Vittoriosa (Birgu) and Cospicua (Bormla).

³ The Archaeological Society Malta (present President).

⁴ *The Artefact* CampusFM 108.7

⁵ Ann Gingell Littlejohn

⁶ *Katakombi* was a 13-part documentary series featuring local rock cut burials, (2009).

interested visitor, I have also spent hundreds of hours in museums and galleries from London to Bucharest and from Oslo to Tripoli. My first degree⁷ led me into a career in public relations and communications. My Master degree then allowed me to explore museum semiotics⁸ and drew me into the expanding world of museum theory. When it was suggested that I conduct my Ph.D. fieldwork in Bormla I was enthusiastic – slightly daunted perhaps – but more than happy to take up the challenge.

That challenge then had to be translated into a goal, backed up by a clear rationale.

My reasons for choosing Bormla to undertake this kind of research arise from the fact that the city does not, at present, manifest its potential heritage objects except within the ecclesiastical paradigm. It does not contain any national museum nor any other traditional museum ambience with the exception of one small but significant private museum. Nor does it appear to promote its skills, and potential heritage objects within the less structured parameters of a community or ecomuseum or other more post-museum spaces.

The overarching aim of this thesis is thus to explore and discover what the Bormlizi feel defines their identity, how the local people, the informal and formal groups and organisations of Bormla articulate their heritage, what they think is important about it and why and whether they are interested in extending their vision of cultural heritage so as to enhance their own and other people's understanding of the city and its value.

The achievement of that goal would require a level of understanding that can only be attained through dialogue with the Bormlizi and asking questions about their idea of Bormla as a city – listening to their perceptions of its present and their memories of the past. This would create a conversation through which one could identify those generative themes through which Freire thought people moved both physically and mentally in their own environment.

To investigate the generative theme is to investigate people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality, which is their praxis.⁹

Freire believed that the underlying themes of an age, "characterized by a complex of ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges in dialectical

⁷ B.A. (Italian, Communications & Archaeology)

⁸ M.A. dissertation, University of Malta, 2001: *L'analisi strutturale: verso una semiologia museale* (Structural Analysis: towards a semiology of museums).

⁹ P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M. Bergman Ramos, Penguin Books, London, 1996, p. 87.

interaction with their opposites”¹⁰ could also find expression in a more localized way. This thesis will try to identify some of those themes with regard to approaches to history and past and contemporary heritage, the diverse ways in which those realities are being expressed, and the relationship between the communities of Bormla and what surrounds them.

Such conversations about the important ‘objects’ in their lives – the tangible and the intangible - are not easy. Recall can be painful and, on occasions, indeed it was.

However, without enquiring what the Bormlizi feel defines their identity, without looking at what they consider as their past and their present heritage, it would be impossible to suggest ways in which to craft an extension of a local vision of culture in any meaningful way. Or, at least, in any way that would be meaningful for the local community.

This leads to another important research enquiry. Who really makes up the community, or who are the communities of Bormla? How can those from outside the community(ies) of Bormla, including researchers, identify, theorise about and communicate with the different communities in this place? There is no doubt that outside researchers, including museum theorists, could ‘come into’ the city and create a cultural identity for the place based upon historical circumstance and present heritage but will that identity reflect the various communities of the place? Would that ‘personality’ be one with which the Bormlizi could identify?

When I initially mooted the concepts of my enquiry amongst some friends who know Bormla they were generally unsure how interested the Bormlizi would be in anything beyond the Church. I did soon find that the Church’s events are what enthuse the local population the most. This, in itself, is a discourse that requires unravelling – the hegemony of the Church with regard to manifestations of Bormla’s heritage.

Another fundamental issue is the unassailable fact that the city does not enjoy a good name within the wider Maltese community. It is easy to imagine that Bormla’s woeful reputation has repercussions internally as well as outside the community that need to be unpicked with care and attention. To reach into these and many other issues one has to get to know what supports the sense of identity of the people of Bormla – how they see themselves and why.

Through these research questions I hoped to achieve an understanding of what the Bormlizi identify with within their own environment and what they think

¹⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 82.

their city might be able to display to others through its past and present heritage and to themselves, their families and those who belong to the city. I wished to discover whether they wanted to reveal themselves to others in ways that went beyond the present manifestations of their ecclesiastical heritage. And if this was so, what were the spaces, both physical and metaphorical, that could be found to encourage such cultural development.

The Church, as we have said, is a key element in Bormla's cultural life, as it is in many other towns and villages in Malta and Gozo. However, as I was to discover, the relationship is profound and complicated, linked, as it is, both to tradition and to modernity, to processions and to politics.

A story that helps to explain a part of that complexity is one that everyone wanted to tell me. It concerns the return to Bormla after World War II of the titular painting and the statue of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception, the patron saint of the city, from safe storage in Birkirkara. The year was 1944 and the date of the great pilgrimage was 19th November – dates that every Bormliż or Bormliża commits to memory from childhood. It is said to have been the biggest procession Malta has ever known. It reminded me so much of a story recounted by James Cuno of people going to museums and art galleries after 9/11 to be “safe in the company of things that are beautiful and impossibly fragile, yet that have lasted for centuries through war and tumult to lay claim still on our imaginations.”¹¹ Cuno tells of a similar story he heard from Neil MacGregor¹² of people in London during the blitz asking for the National Gallery to take some works out of safe storage as though “the gallery’s visitors were saying that as long as their artistic legacy was on view for them to enjoy (...) they could be assured that life would go on as before and that they still had the right to see (,,) beauty in the world, *their* world, a just and purposeful world.”

Bormla was ravaged by bombing from 1941 to 1943. The whole of the Cottonera area was so badly damaged as to be almost unrecognizable. However, one building was spared, the Parish Church of Cospicua. The return of those two objects, revered by the population, must have meant that somehow normal life could return to Bormla. In this way they too could be assured and that theirs could again be “a just and purposeful world.”

This story is a perfect link with the people of this predominantly working class population that has no traditional style museums or galleries within its walls. It is clear that Bormla knows it has a past and can certainly appreciate and find

¹¹ James Cuno, “The Object of Art Museums’ in James Cuno (ed.), *Whose Muse, art museums and public trust*, Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 49-75, p. 49.

¹² Neil MacGregor is a former Director of both the National Gallery and the British Museum in London.

solace in beauty, just as those Londoners or those New Yorkers did. For the Bormliži, the statue of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception is a paragon of beauty. The Parish Church where she 'lives' is a building of Baroque elegance as are the artefacts of which it is custodian.¹³ The importance of the Church is something about which there is little discussion, neither amongst those who live in Bormla nor amongst the Bormliž diaspora – many of whom return to Bormla for the Feast day and to baptize their children. The Church's calendar of events is well supported and well patronized by local people.

These strands that make up this city's relationship with the Church culture and how it has influenced the citizens' sense of identity and of place is going to be key to any understanding of Bormla. I was curious to see if there could be something beyond that all important Church and whether, given the changes that the city has already undergone and is still undergoing, the people might be prepared to 'show' themselves to others in diverse ways.

To start my research I had to create parameters that would give me direction but room to breathe. I then needed to transpose that enquiry into questions that would tease out the information that I believed was necessary to achieve my goals. The methodology considered most appropriate was qualitative and based on individual interviews as well as focus groups with a significant social, gender and demographic mix. It would also require informal conversations with people who are already working 'on the ground' through voluntary organizations, or a government run agency, or initiatives such as the local radio. I would also speak to people I met in the street, in doorways, bars and cafés. The aim was to engage with people from within the community, people who have adopted Bormla as their home and with those who may not live permanently in Bormla but who still take great interest in the city.

The questions asked to the individual respondents and to the focus groups were identical and none of the respondents was made aware of the questions in advance of the interviews. In this way one could aim at eliciting immediate and, hopefully, sincere responses.

I discussed the early history of Bormla with local people and with historians and watched the contemporary heritage performed as it has been for decades. I participated both in the intimate, emotional moments inside the church and the external processions and watched the statue of the Risen Christ being 'run' up the streets early on Easter Day. I visited artisans in their workshops, was welcomed

¹³ For an illustrated description of Parish Church of Bormla, vide. S. Schembri, 'The parish church of the Immaculate Conception, Cospicua: history, architecture and works of art', BA(Hons)HistoryofArt, University of Malta, 2010.

into many homes and was privileged to hear personal stories and narratives of Bormla from people with diverse backgrounds and differing experiences.

There are publications concerning Bormla, written from a wide-angled, sociological viewpoint and also regarding individual social issues. Some have written about aspects of the city's history, others from an anthropological standpoint. I am indebted to them, acknowledge their invaluable work and will be referring to them frequently. However, whilst those perspectives will all have a place in this thesis, I shall not be attempting a study in one of those particular areas. My main aim with these chapters is to look closely at my respondents' words and, through them, to discover what aspects of Bormla's cultural heritage and historical narratives - both personal and public - they consider as being most important to them. I shall seek to discover whether they are interested in using their concept of cultural heritage to enhance their own and other people's consciousness of the city and its value. And I shall also be listening to their ideas about how this might be achieved. I would like this thesis to establish a sound structure on which local post-museum spaces and further research in this field can be based.

Bormla is changing physically. Gone are those high walls of the 1980s. Now the yachts from the Birgu waterfront stretch out along the waterside of Bormla almost as far as the now water-filled dry dock. The city has a history and heritage with enormous potential. My ideas about how this potential can be achieved are fluid. The whole concept of the museum, its function and how it presents itself to its publics has changed considerably in the last decades. Museums all over the world have had to examine closely their *raison d'être*. The modernist museum model is, as Hooper Greenhill says, 'an enduring model' and "still a force to be reckoned with." The post-museum will not replace it but will be a space where "exhibition will become one among many other forms of communication."¹⁴ The literature on different aspects of museum culture and modes of communication has grown exponentially in the last years. It has become a multi-faceted concept with a growing involvement with its diverse audiences and an emphasis on community realities and post-museum spaces.

Bormla already enjoys a part of that heritage through the Church events, the much-loved regatta and other activities that can boast a certain tradition. However, its reputation still needs a boost to put it on an equal footing with its historic neighbours, L-Isla and Birgu, and for it to take its deserved place on Malta's cultural map.

¹⁴ E. Hooper Greenhill, 'Interpretive Communities, Strategies, Repertoires', in S. Watson (ed.), *Museums and their Communities*, Routledge, London & N.Y., 2007, p. 81.

To romanticize Bormla would be an affront to this colourful city. It has been and still is a place of difficulty for some. It does have a variegated history – at times dramatic. But that narrative has enriched the city and should not be something to be swept away in an attempt to re-invent its past or its present. This walled city has so much to be proud of but is in need of ways of increasing public awareness of it. The Bormlizi themselves should be evaluating, setting the scene and creating that awareness before others step in and do it for them.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

□ *Introduction*

With this first chapter I would like to introduce my four main research questions and give a very brief outline of my aims with regard to each of these queries. Following this I shall look at the discourse of theorists who have dealt with core issues such as objectivisation, hegemony, memory, democracy, authenticity, heritage, community, sense of space, place and identity, that all lie within a vision of the museum in its widest possible meaning. Some of these theorists were not involved in a specific discourse regarding museums but these are all issues that then feed into the modernist museum paradigm and on into the more recent approaches to museum culture.

The phenomenon of the ecomuseum or community museum, as initially envisaged in the early 1970s, will be discussed and defined and this will then inform a consideration of the current theories about mainstream, modernist museums and post-museum realities. The theorists of the last decades have looked at contemporary community and heritage theory and have developed, through their research and the actions of their projects, a wealth of information and experience of working with the kind of topics and situations that my thesis will take me to. These are subjects such as the need for more communication between museum and visitor, ideas about outreach and the development of spaces that can grow outside a museum context but that retain some of the same basic tenets of a museum that “acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”¹⁵

Through this discussion, I wish to make reference to these theories with regard to my fieldwork and arrive at a meaningful analysis of the diversity of today’s museum culture and provide some working examples of diversity within those descriptions.

Finally, I shall link the concepts and issues discussed in this chapter with the methodology that will be used in my fieldwork, the details of which will then be examined in the following chapter.

¹⁵ ICOM definition of a museum, (ICOM Statutes art.3 para.1). Available from: <http://archives.icom.museum/definition.html>, (accessed 03 July 2018).

If Hall is right when he says that:

In serious, critical intellectual work, there are no 'absolute beginnings' and few unbroken continuities. (...) What we find, instead, is an untidy but characteristic unevenness of development.¹⁶

this chapter will, necessarily, be a patchy story of 'back and forth' and changes of direction, a story of hegemony and a fight for liberty, a desire to educate and also to democratize. It will be a story of contradictions, high ideals and down to earth realities.

□ *Aims and objectives of the research*

Four main research questions

1. What sense of time and place do the people of Bormla have with regard to their city and its environs? What does this local population see as its own heritage and the heritage of its place?
2. Who is the community, or who are the communities of Bormla? How can those from outside the community(ies) of Bormla, including researchers, identify, theorise about and communicate with the different communities in this place?
3. How do local community groups conceptualise and practise their heritage and that of their city? Are the local people and the informal and formal groups and organisations of Bormla interested in extending their vision of cultural heritage so as to enhance their own and other people's understanding of the city and its value?
4. Do the communities of Bormla want to exercise their right for cognitive democracy and civic action or indeed feel that this can be beneficial to them in the short and long term?

The research will aim to answer the research questions as outlined above.

With regard to the **first** research question, I shall be exploring issues such as memory and history as seen and understood by the various groups in Bormla. It will be important to see which memories are retained and which are not and by whom. I would also be interested in whether the memories are held to be of collective importance and if they have a bearing on the city and the sense of place

¹⁶ S. Hall, 'Cultural studies: two paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1980, pp. 57-72, p. 57. Available from: SAGE journals.

which the 'Bormlizi' attribute to it. And linked to this memory and sense of place is the idea of heritage which may or may not be called by that name.

Heritage is not a passive process of simply preserving things from the past that remain, but an active process of assembling a series of *objects, places and practices* that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future.¹⁷ (*My emphasis*)

This statement by Harrison offers an explanation as to how heritage can be perceived, taking it out of a museum context into one that encompasses the community. He goes on to propose a "(...) 'dialogical' model in which heritage is seen as emerging from the relationship between people, objects, places and practices, (...)" and that

The concept of heritage not only encompasses a nation's relationship to history and history-making, but also refers increasingly to the ways in which a broad range of other constituencies are involved in the production of the past in the present.¹⁸

Through the **second** question I will attempt to unpack the attitudes of the people of Bormla to their community or communities and discover how someone like myself, from outside the community, can communicate with those different community groups. The method, as discussed above, will be a qualitative one and within that qualitative approach there will need to be, embedded in the methodology, a flexible engagement which will involve the refining of questions and even the rethinking of strategies. I have selected a number of people in the community whom I shall be approaching but it may result that some of the questions posed will not be the most appropriate. The qualitative nature of the question will allow me to be opportunistic and nimble enough to extend or change the questions if the need arises.

With reference to the **third** research question, I would like to see how this community measures its past and through which channels it expresses its heritage. Answering this question will also involve talking to those who already have a stake in the development of Bormla's heritage and also those who, until now, have not taken an active part in it.

The **fourth** research question concerns the way in which the people of Bormla might wish to develop their heritage. This investigation is political, with a small 'p', and looks into what kind of set up is desired and desirable in the context of the formation of a heritage 'culture' and collective problem-solving in Bormla.

¹⁷ R. Harrison, *Heritage: Critical approaches*, Routledge, 2013, p. 4

¹⁸ Harrison, *Heritage: Critical approaches*, p. 5.

Farrell and Rohilla Shalizi suggest that

Democracy can do this better than either markets and hierarchies, because it brings these diverse perceptions into direct contact with each other, allowing forms of learning that are unlikely either through the price mechanism of markets or the hierarchical arrangements of bureaucracy. Furthermore, democracy can, by experimenting, take advantage of novel forms of collective cognition that are facilitated by new media.¹⁹

The methodology can be used to see whether this kind of structure is considered to be the best for the future of cultural heritage in Bormla.

The method employed will include 'the analysis of visual data, the collection of life-histories or personal narratives, and the conduct of multiple varieties of interviews' usually associated with qualitative methodology.²⁰ The variety of interviews will comprise focus groups, individual and small group sessions but could also involve analysis of online material associated with Bormla, the examination and analysis of photographs, recordings, local blogs and other digital elements which will be discussed later in this chapter.

□ ***What is an object?***

Objects of significance will inhabit streetscapes and landscapes as well as the memories of individuals and communities. Some of those objects may no longer exist, like the Dockyard in Bormla, but still be very clearly pictured. It is also a contested object that, whilst spoken about in wistful tones by those who benefitted from it, lived it and loved it, was also recognized as a physically dangerous place as well as being politically charged. Acceptance that heritage objects are always complex and often contested, is to remember that

There is no underlying order available for us to access or disseminate, no matter how elevated our perspective.²¹

The object is something that has been discussed throughout the modernist museum period and continues to be a central theme in more recent museum

¹⁹ Farrell, H. and C. Rohilla Shalizi, 'An Outline of Cognitive Democracy', La Pietra Dialogues, New York University, 2015, p. 1. Available from: <http://www.lapietradialogues.org/area/pubblicazioni/doc000071.pdf>, (accessed 01 May 2018).

²⁰ B. Dicks, B. Mason and A. Coffey, *Qualitative Research and Hypermedia: Ethnography for the Digital Age*, New Technologies for Social Research series, Thousand Oaks, US, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006. Available from ProQuest ebrary, (accessed 28 April 2016).

²¹ G. Hoskins, 'Overlooking affect? Vertigo as geo-sensitive industrial heritage at Malakoff Diggins, California', in D.P. Tolia-Kelly, E. Waterton, S. Watson, (eds), *Heritage, Affect and Emotion: politics, Practices and Infrastructure*, Routledge, London & NY, 2017, p. 148.

discourse. It follows that the object will be a central theme in this research and for this reason it should be first among those theories to be discussed in this chapter.

Many years ago I was taken to my first museum and, with Donald Preziosi,²² I wonder whether I ever left it. The reasons why this is so are complex and involve me as subject perceiving 'IT', the object/s within a world of people. This, as Cassirer tells us,²³ is really the theoretical explanation of the world. We experience the 'IT' as part of a wide list of objects which we know lie in, or come from, different temporal zones. At the same time, the 'I' perceives people that are similar to ourselves. However, Cassirer continues, all theoretical explanation must face the 'spiritual force', the force of myth.²⁴ Both philosophy and science, he says, fight to crush myth. To do this, science has constructed a world of replicated experiment so as to create an objective reality. Philosophy, on the other hand, is more than simply a critique of knowledge. If it were to be posited as a science it would be possible to have, Cassirer suggests, a 'science' of language but it would not be able to take account of 'expression'. Anything that was 'unverifiable' would be considered simply mythical and therefore outside the sphere of science of language or indeed Art or any other of the 'sciences of culture'. It would mean that these 'sciences' would have to disregard 'meaning'. We know that philosophy, and thus the science of culture, does actually venture beyond the confines of physical rules – the rules of Nature. Cassirer suggests that we should not dismiss either the sciences of culture nor the science of Nature but try to understand each and every science and its contribution to 'the construction of a "common world"'.²⁵ It is the physical that underpins every object but

Religion, language, art: these are never tangible for us except in the monuments that they themselves have created. They are the tokens, memorials, and reminders in which alone we can grasp a religious linguistic, or artistic meaning. And it is just in this reciprocal determination that we recognize a cultural object. Like every other object (objekt), a cultural object has its place in space and time.²⁶

Such an object, the German philosopher continues, can be described in its temporality and spatiality – how it appeared, where it went and how it fell into disuse. However, beyond that physical description, there is another angle to the story: function. So we know how and where the object was created but what it was and what place it had in that time and space are equivalent to a search for meaning.

²² D. Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums, and the Phantasms of Modernity*, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 1.

²³ E. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, Yale University, trans. Stephen G. Lofts, 2000, p. 41.

²⁴ Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, p. 40.

²⁵ Cassirer, p. 42.

²⁶ Cassirer, p. 42.

This, says Cassirer, “is the factor common to all those contents that we denote by the term culture.”²⁷

Symbolic value can, of course, be discounted but it would be a travesty of the relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘IT’ if the meaning were to be systematically ignored. A recently aired TV advertisement states, with obvious irony: we only use transport to move from place to place and we only eat to survive and we only have sex so as to procreate. A Positivist²⁸ approach, that bases knowledge on perception, would examine *The Beheading of St John* by Caravaggio (St John’s Co-Cathedral, Valletta) with regard to the artist’s use of the *chiaroscuro* technique in the 17th century; the identification of the story of Salome; the size of the painting in relation to other canvases of that period but that would be saying all and yet nothing of the meaning of the painting, not to mention the storiography of the painter himself.

So here we have a relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘IT’ which is being informed through the analysis of meaning. However, that meaning does not only include an elucidation of the historical, social, anthropological situation with regard to the object but it involves me as ‘I’. And here one can return to that first museum that I ever visited. I was too small in stature and too young in age to appreciate elucidations about context or even to view the objects properly but despite this they took a grip on my soul or my psyche or whatever one likes to call that place in the brain where such memories reside. The turn-of-the-century doll’s house, high up on the table, beyond my reach, was imprinted in that special place and has served as a mnemonic for that period of my life for some sixty years. Preziosi writes “that objects always seem to pursue us in our pursuit of objects to sustain and focus our pursuit of ourselves.”²⁹ He talks about art history and museology as being the heirs

to an ancient European tradition of using things to think with, to reckon with (in both senses of the term), and of using them to fabricate and factualise the individual and collective realities that in our modernity they so coyly and convincingly present themselves as merely re-presenting.³⁰

²⁷ Cassirer, p. 43.

²⁸ Although the term 'positivism' had been used earlier by Saint Simon (1760-1825) it is usually attributed to Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and advocates research through experience, observable events, the rejection of value judgements and the adoption of the scientific method. Positivism, (website), <http://www.strath.ac.uk/aer/materials/1educationalresearchandenquiry/unit2/originsofpositivismandsomekeyprimitives/> (accessed: 26 June 2014).

²⁹ Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body*, p. 1.

³⁰ Preziosi, p. 3.

Preziosi refers to both art galleries and museums as professional institutions but also as “epistemological technologies.”³¹ The creation and gestation of knowledge in these institutions not only lends itself to personal identities but also to identities of the whole. Preziosi refers to the museum object but, one could say that every object that is of significance to us in any way is inexorably linked to the desire to find a place for ourselves in an ever-evolving present which will lead, in a teleological mode, to a ‘better future’.

The objects, whether they are in a modernist museum context or part of an informal discussion group, have their baggage which translates into meaning for itself which is taken on board by the ‘I’ observing it but beyond that the object gives so much more.

Objects are therefore actors in the story, not just the reflection of action, and themselves have a role in creating that change which we call the process of history.³²

As Pearce says, this is a communication issue whereby objects and subjects commune with each other and feed off each other with the subject creating an object of material culture and then re-appropriating that object so as to use its energy to go on to “the next burst of creative activity”.³³

The phenomenological approach would be to analyse what actually happens when the ‘I’ views anything, be it a piece of street furniture, a mug from your grandmother’s kitchen, or an object in a museum.

The same object can be the object of perception, of judgment, of inference, of love or hate, of desire or aversion.³⁴

It is a mix of the objects’ historical and contemporary narrative and the reception of the viewer. The viewers’ understanding or interpretation of the object itself will depend on all sorts of elements including ethnicity, gender, education, mood, expectation, as well as that of its context in the widest sense of the word.

Thus, objects do not only reflect or embody external realities but also exert their own influence and *enact* relationships.
(...)

³¹ Preziosi, p. 8.

³² S.M. Pearce, *Museum, Objects and Collections: A cultural study*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1993, p. 211.

³³ Pearce, *Museum, Objects and Collections*, p. 211.

³⁴ J. N. Mohanty, ‘The ‘Object’ in Husserl’s Phenomenology’ in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1954, p. 345. Available from JSTOR.

Such awareness should not, however, be reduced to an object-centred focus. Rather, meaning arises out of the interpretive space *in-between* objects and people, and vice versa (Schorch, 2015c)³⁵

□ *Hegemony*

The context from which this thesis will take its fieldwork, the city of Bormla (Cospicua), Malta, is not one which is familiar with the rituals of mainstream museums. However, it is very familiar with the idea of a ceremonial monument, which is intrinsically ideological.³⁶ One can see a nexus between the comfort that Duncan and Wallach suggest is supplied by the ritualistic enjoyment of the museum with that of the comfort found in the special rituals of the Feast such as the ‘panegyric’ homily given during solemn Mass on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. This is a ceremony which lasts around two hours and is attended by many local residents and a great number of ‘Bormliži’ from all over the island and even from overseas. It is also easy to see how cultural hegemony can infiltrate an ecclesiastical context. The Church is a site of dominance in Bormla which reaches into the areas of strongest heritage and heritage performance but it is not the only one. Hegemony will be an important part of the discussion regarding the key structures of Bormla.

In a mainstream museum context it follows that the curator, as expert, is thus the mediator between the object and the research that has gone into its origins and the viewer. The visitor, if s/he is a member of a certain interpreting community will be able to interpret the object up to a point but will also have to benefit from the expertise of the curator. Thus the curator is placed in a position of responsibility both with regard to the object itself and to the visitor. One could say the same with regard to creators or curators of a community museum. There are always choices that have to be made at some point by somebody.

The word ‘responsibility’ could, of course, be replaced by the word ‘power’. Ideologies can use and have used objects to express power. As Tilley writes referring to cultural practices:

Furthermore, the meaning of signification, may be analogous for those who ‘produce’ and those who ‘consume’ the signs. At other times signs

³⁵ P. Schorch, E. Waterton, S. Watson, ‘Museum canopies and affective cosmopolitanism: cultivating cross-cultural landscapes for ethical embodied responses’, in D.P. Tolia-Kelly, E. Waterton, S. Watson (eds), *Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructure*, Routledge, London & NY, 2017, p. 101.

³⁶ C. Duncan and A. Wallach, ‘The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: an iconographic analysis’, in D. Preziosi & C. Farago (eds), *Grasping the World: the idea of a museum*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, UK, 2003, p. 483.

act asymmetrically, becoming ideological, linked to the maintenance of power.³⁷

Extreme examples of this use of objects and icons were seen during the rise and reign of National Socialism in Germany and in revolutionary Russia.

The anxieties felt by the new post-revolution Russian state when confronted with the antiquities of the old régime is investigated by Groys. He points out that whilst the great Art was wrested from the hands of the defeated nobility the new régime recognized the potential of the museum as a place to re-enforce attitudes and had to devise a way of retaining them whilst changing the content to suit the new ideals of proletariat life.

The museum is, according to surveys undertaken in the UK,³⁸ one of the most trusted institutions in the West and the Russian museums used that perceived authenticity to their advantage.

Socialist realist art at once depicts reality and creates it, since it is part of a social force that simultaneously creates both reality and its representation (namely, the Communist Party).³⁹

Here we have a ruling Party that purports to be creating Art for the masses that is a reflection of the life of the masses when in fact it is a reflection of an ideology. This is very far from the democratisation process which developed in the latter part of the 20th century in Western Europe.

Duncan and Wallach tell us that

By means of its objects and all that surrounds them, the museum transforms ideology in the abstract into living belief.⁴⁰

There lies the great strength of the object. It is not rhetoric or simply words. It is, however small or large, something that is real in front of our eyes, the historicity of which can be attested to and its meanings interpreted. The things that go on in a museum are essentially ritualistic and that is what gives a museum visit, especially to the 'initiated', that sense of coming home and comfort. Who has not

³⁷ C. Tilley, 'Interpreting Material Culture', in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 69.

³⁸ G. Kendall, 'MA report shows high levels of trust in museums', 2020 *Public Attitude Research*, Museums Association, 03 April 2013. MA website: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/03042013-public-attitudes-research-published> (accessed 03 July 2016).

³⁹ B. Groys, 'The Struggle against the Museum', in D. Sherman and I. Rogoff (eds), *Museum Culture - Histories Discourses Spectacles*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994, p. 157.

⁴⁰ Duncan and Wallach, *Grasping the World*, p. 483.

felt disappointment at finding that a well-loved object has been lent to another museum. It is easy to see then how cultural hegemony can infiltrate such a context.

The museums of the late 18th and of the 19th centuries and also those of the earlier part of the 20th century were created with a certain ideology in mind. It might have been of the political type, particularly in post-revolutionary France, it was certainly of a socio-political kind when one thinks of the National Gallery and the British Museum. Referring to the post-Revolutionary development of museums in France, Bennett attests

(...) the Revolution transformed the museum from a symbol of arbitrary power into an instrument which, through the education of its citizens, was to serve the collective good of the state.⁴¹

And it is also clear that Western style museums played a part in the development of national identity that for many countries of Western Europe only came to pass with unification in the late 1800s – Italy and Germany being the most obvious but not the only examples. If the museums were marking out their own space to accommodate ritual ceremonies,⁴² at the same time, on a macro level, they were assisting in the furtherance of the ideals of the Industrial Revolution and the determinist ‘take’ on the betterment of society.

Gramsci⁴³ studied the reasons why Capitalism, with its mix of consent and coercion, made the Capitalist world go around – to the detriment of the working classes. The latter, he felt, could never get their authentic voice heard above the rumbling of the Capitalist cart as it moved inexorably forward. It could be argued that the museum of the 19th century was part of that culture of hegemony because it was created in a format that coincided with the high point of Capitalist advancement, the Industrial Revolution, along with “the international exhibitions, the arcades and the department stores”.⁴⁴

In her analysis of Gramsci’s thoughts on hegemony, Margaret Ledwith comments that

Whereas coercion is exercised overtly through the armed forces, the police, the courts and prisons, consent is subtly woven through the institutions of civil society – the family, schools, the media, political parties, unions, religious organisations, cultural, charitable and

⁴¹ T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, Routledge, London & NY, 2005, p. 89.

⁴² Duncan and Wallach, *Grasping the World*, p. 483.

⁴³ Antonio Gramsci, born: January 22, 1891, Ales, Sardinia, Italy, died: April 27, 1937, Rome, Italy.

⁴⁴ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, p. 59.

community groups – in a way that permeates our social being and asserts hegemonic control by influencing our ideas.⁴⁵

Museums are not mentioned in her book but Ledwith could well have added them to this list. They fulfill an innately public role and are monuments built to recall the past and carry semiotic strengths that undoubtedly aim at influencing their audience – even before a visitor has crossed the threshold.

These were all institutions that, in Gramsci's view, served to re-enforce the dominance of the ruling classes. However, he recognized that the flexibility exercised through coercion and consent, which allowed for occasional compromises between groups from both 'camps', gave rise to the acceptance of a 'common sense' understanding of society. This understanding led to acceptance of the dominant order which was difficult to dislodge. Gramsci's answer to this situation was to encourage the "potential for participation in the process of social action"⁴⁶ and, like Freire, to put "critical education at the heart of the process of transformative change."⁴⁷

With regard to coercion, Messner and Jordan discuss Foucault's reading of critique as an agent of change.⁴⁸ They are of the opinion that Foucauldian critique is possible because it is enabled by power but that

Relations of power need to be distinguished from states of domination.⁴⁹

Foucauldian critical reflection, Messner and Jordan contend,

(...) clearly has to do with emancipation, not in the sense of overcoming power relations in general, but of opposing certain forms of power to achieve a state of less coercion, and thus more freedom.⁵⁰

Messner and Jordan suggest that Foucault recognized that changes can be made within institutions that have functioned in a certain way for many years if only the instigator of change has the power to overcome coercion and thus open the door to a different way of doing things. The one doing the critical reflection is adjusting the power relations to balance the power with knowledge, the concept being that less coercion will result in change.

⁴⁵ M. Ledwith, *Community Development: A critical approach*, The Policy Press, Bristol, 2011, (1st pub. 2005), p. 139.

⁴⁶ Ledwith, *Community Development*, p. 139.

⁴⁷ Ledwith, p. 139.

⁴⁸ M. Messner and S. Jordan, 'Knowledge and Critique - A Foucauldian Perspective', presented at the Organizational Knowledge and Learning Conference, Innsbruck, 2004. Available from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ed3c/f5ac8925883cdc00863979aef44b19bb8fed.pdf>, (accessed 02 February 2018).

⁴⁹ Messner and Jordan, 'Knowledge and Critique', p. 9.

⁵⁰ Messner and Jordan, p. 14.

The second half of the 20th century, particularly after 1968, saw the development of a much more questioning audience and a change in attitude to the paternalistic view of curatorship. This helped lead to a change in approach to the thinking surrounding museums. The early 1970s saw the raising of museum studies to university level both as a taught subject and as a research field. This meant that new research projects were coming out from the pioneering museum studies departments. In tandem or perhaps because of this, the museum studies saw the adherence of academics from several different study areas. The work of the Australian sociologist Tony Bennett is a prime example of this new interest from outside the museum studies departments and with him came others from the fields of anthropology and psychology. This widened the scope of museum studies and helped to shift it away from the realm of art history. The new museology, or museum practice, that developed at the same time represented a new approach to museum procedures and structures. The mainstream museums started to look outwards, and opened up to outreach. They began to show greater interest in their diverse visitors and communities in which they were placed. These changes ran in parallel and sometimes in tandem with other museum realities such as the ecomuseum and the community-run heritage centres creating a diversity of museal approaches.

The barrier felt by the majority of those I spoke to in Bormla with regard to mainstream museums was palpable. As shall become clear in later chapters, the idea of a mainstream national museum in the city did not resonate with the residents. Nor did the Bormliži, living outside Bormla, feel that the local people would feel any sense of ownership of a national museum. They felt that it would be considered as something imposed from the outside. However, the idea of a museum that reflected local history and heritage narratives was clearly attractive to the interviewed respondents and focus group participants. This suggests that an ecomuseum that incorporated environmental, intangible and heritage elements would be most suited to the Bormliž environment and that this idea could be extended to flexible post-museum spaces.

Where (...) ecomuseum principles are utilized there is often an emphasis on: self-representation; full community participation in, and ownership of, heritage resources and the management processes; rural or urban regeneration; sustainable development; and, responsible tourism.⁵¹

Regarding post-museum spaces, Hooper-Greenhill was already envisaging such flexibility nearly twenty years ago.

⁵¹ G.E. Corsane, P.S. Davis, S.K. Hawke, M.L. Stefano, 'Ecomuseology: a holistic and integrated model for safeguarding 'spirit of place', in the North East of England', in 16th ICOMOS General Assembly and International Symposium: *Finding the spirit of place – between the tangible and the intangible*, 29 Sept – 4 Oct 2008, Quebec, Canada, 2008, p. 4. Available from: www.icomos.org/quebec2008/cd/toindex/77_pdf/77-7kft-231.pdf, (accessed 20 July 2017)

The post-museum in the future may be imagined as a process or an experience. The post-museum will take, and is already beginning to take, many architectural forms. It is, however, not limited to its own walls, but moves as a set of process in the spaces, the concerns and the ambitions of communities.⁵²

□ **Memory**

Without memory, our lives would be lived like a permanent ‘Groundhog Day’, starting afresh every morning. From the very first narratives to our present day history books, we have recorded our past – or at least our memory of it. The written word has helped to create a “mnemonic socialization”.⁵³ However, it has not done it alone. Zerubavel mentions the “mnemonic community’s calendar” or those days which a group with common referents uses to re-enforce those referents. For the prehistoric population of Malta, the mnemonic community calendar must surely have been marked out by the equinoxes. The Neolithic temple of Mnajdra is calendrical and also has evidence of the heliacal record. In our own epoch, July 4th, July 14th, November 11th are all dates that members of the USA, French and British ‘community’ groups will recognize as significant. In ancient Malta, at the Tarxien Neolithic Temple, the members of that community carved a larger than life statue of a figure, possibly a goddess, or maybe an ancestor. Whoever the figure was supposed to represent, it is very likely that s/he was a mnemonic referent for that group. A walk around Parliament Square in London will reveal similar larger than life mnemonic referents – Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, Benjamin Disraeli, to mention only three. Commemorative plaques have been in use since Roman times. The Romans also had a habit of obliterating the features on reliefs or statues of any disgraced Emperor and replacing them with the latest incumbent. Other statues, in modern times, have found themselves literally toppled following revolutions.

In this way, communities are altering their referents and thus history can develop into a narrative which is often, as Churchill famously said, of the victors. An important point that Zerubavel makes is that the mnemonic battles, to use his words, which are fought are not simply subjective individual ones but belong to the wider community – whether this is a whole country or part of it – and thus have a hand in the moulding of that community. These discussions, which can be more or less violent even if it is just verbal sparring, are held in the public arena making “memory a social, intersubjective phenomenon”.⁵⁴

⁵² E. Hooper Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, Routledge, London & NY, 2000, pp. 152-153.

⁵³ E. Zerubavel, ‘Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past’, *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1996, p. 286. Available from: SPRINGER Link.

⁵⁴ Zerubavel, ‘Social Memories’, p. 297.

These ideas have their origin in the work of Halbwachs,⁵⁵ a student and follower of Durkheim, through whom the discourse of memory was placed in the realm of social phenomenon.

In the early 20th century, Halbwachs posited that there exists a collective memory which was dependent upon the framework of a particular group in society. Individual memory, according to Halbwachs, co-exists with and is heavily influenced by group consciousness.⁵⁶

Halbwachs argues that all remembering relies on the dynamics of groups such as families, social classes, and religious communities.⁵⁷

Nicholas Russell⁵⁸ points out that Halbwachs did not consider the individual memory of a community member as being different to the collective memory of that group as the member's memories would be coloured by those of the community as a whole.

Durkheim spoke not only about how people remember but also about how those memories are created through 'collective effervescence', particularly "through memorized culturally specific postures, gestures and practices in the highly emotionally charged co-presence of others" through which they "enact their past" and through which "their mutual bonds and feelings of belonging are reinforced".⁵⁹ Halbwachs goes beyond the effervescent stage and explains the ways in which collective memory upholds the product of that effervescence.⁶⁰

Where Halbwachs diverges from Durkheim is in his approach to historical memory. Halbwachs saw history as a social construction made up of snapshots the subject of which will be very different depending on who the photographer is – a 'presentist' approach.⁶¹ If, as Marx and Engels sustained, "history' is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims"⁶² it follows that history is shaped by human

⁵⁵ M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, ed. & trans. L.A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.

⁵⁶ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, p. 48.

⁵⁷ S. Jones and L. Russell, 'Archaeology, Memory and Oral Tradition: An Introduction', *International Journal Historical Archaeology*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2012, p. 796. Available from: SPRINGER.

⁵⁸ N. Russell, 'Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs', *The French Review*, vol. 79, no. 4, 2006, pp. 792-804, American Association of Teachers of French. Available from: JSTOR (accessed: 24 May 2017).

⁵⁹ B. A. Misztal, 'Durkheim on Collective Memory', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 123–143, p. 127. Available from: SAGE publications.

⁶⁰ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, p. 25.

⁶¹ Halbwachs, p. 25.

⁶² K. Marx and Engels, F., *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. R. Dixon, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956, p. 125.

subjectivity.⁶³ Halbwachs did not have a sense of historical continuity such as Durkheim had. In one of the chapters in what is considered Halbwachs' major contribution to memory studies⁶⁴ he describes how, in his opinion, one's own personal memories actually fit into and indeed could not happen without being part of the wider context. This argument is of great interest within the context of community and worth quoting at length:

It is correct that in reality memories occur in the form of systems. This is so because they become associated within the mind that calls them up, and because some memories allow the reconstruction of others. But these various modes by which memories become associated result from the various ways in which people can become associated. We can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group. We cannot properly understand their relative strength and the ways in which they combine within individual thought unless we connect the individual to the various groups of which he is simultaneously a member.⁶⁵

Halbwachs goes on to admit the individuality of people's capacity to recall but insists that "individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory (...) connected with thoughts that come to us from the social milieu."⁶⁶ This approach to memory fits in to the discourse of community as shared experience and links up with the discussion about contemporary communities which are often made up of members that are also connected to groups outside the main community.

Others have taken a middle road on this issue and whilst accepting that viewpoints of history will inevitably offer diverse pictures there is a thread of continuity that somehow holds those pictures together.⁶⁷ Today's cognitive scientists have tended to divide personal memory into three types: procedural, semantic and episodic.⁶⁸ Within these parameters, personal memory is refined and its function within the collective memory explained.

⁶³ F. Ferudi, 'Does man make history, or does history make man?' from a talk given at *The Academy* organised by the Institute of Ideas in July 2012. Available from: <http://www.frankfuredi.com/index.php/site/article/592/>, (accessed 28 August 2013).

⁶⁴ Halbwachs, pp. 52/53.

⁶⁵ Halbwachs, p. 53.

⁶⁶ Halbwachs, p. 53.

⁶⁷ B. Schwarz, 'The Social Context of Commemoration. A Study in Collective Memory', *Social Forces* vol. 61, no. 2, 1982, pp. 374-397, cited in L.A. Coser, 'Introduction to M. Halbwachs', *The Collective Memory*, (ed. & trans.) L. A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 26.

⁶⁸ E. Tulving developed the distinction between semantic and episodic memory thirty years ago (*Elements of Episodic Memory*, esp. pp. 34-57) cited in N. Russell, 'Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs', *The French Review*, vol. 79, no. 4, 2006, p. 793, American Association of Teachers of French. Available from: JSTOR.

In his introduction to *Present Pasts*, Andreas Huyssen makes a relevant point about the difference between attitudes to memory creation prevalent in the 19th century and those of today saying that, broadly,

(...) the main concern of the nineteenth-century nation-states was to mobilize and monumentalize national and universal pasts so as to legitimize and give meaning to the present and to envision the future: culturally, politically, socially.⁶⁹

He sustains that things can no longer be measured in that way and points out that there is now

a fundamental disturbance not just of the relationship between history as objective and scientific, and memory as subjective and personal, but of history itself and its promises.⁷⁰

The Enlightenment, writes Huyssen, gave a new freedom and mobility to ideas – imagine the affect of Darwinian Theory in the middle of the 19th century – but it initiated at the same time a forgetting process that was, to say the least, upsetting to certain sectors of society. In his discourse about the way in which we ‘need’ or do not ‘need’ history today, Huyssen states

Modernity has brought with it a very real compression of time and space.⁷¹

This has come about for two main reasons that are closely connected. On the one hand, the world has undergone a seismic change with regard to technology and, as a consequence, our vision is now global. Even our vision of the ‘national’ is coloured by the ‘international’ in a way that could not have happened in previous centuries. Such has been the tearing apart of history as a ‘given’ in the recent past that it is difficult to imagine the subject having validity at all. However, if in its ‘canonical form’ history may have lost its status, it does remain very much felt within the sphere of memory. As Huyssen suggests

The desire for narratives of the past, for re-creations, re-readings, re-productions, seems boundless at every level of our culture.⁷²

One of Huyssen’s aims is to de-compartmentalise memory, to open it out from issues of trauma that seemed to dominate it in the 1990s – the Holocaust, War and social deprivation discourses – and to give it back its larger picture. It is not

⁶⁹ A. Huyssen, *Present Pasts, Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2003, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Huyssen, *Present Pasts, Urban Palimpsests*, p. 2.

⁷¹ Huyssen, p. 4.

⁷² Huyssen, p. 5.

surprising, he says, that trauma and memory are drawn together but feels that the intimate association with it limits the scope and strengths of memory discourse. If memory studies have in some way taken the place of history studies it is important to be aware of the pitfalls of a reductive approach to memory so as not to end up being criticised in the same way as history has been.

One of the themes that Huyssen discusses is that of the globalization of memory analysis and its relationship with the national. He introduces the idea of time and space analysis being important so as to profoundly understand what is happening in the present with respect to the past.

What these theories suggest is that the relationship between memory, history and communal values is very complex. There are certain monuments, such as the Cenotaph – reproduced throughout the Commonwealth – which, wherever they are, will evoke a certain response from the viewer. This is not because intrinsically the Cenotaph represents death in war but because it is a repeated image that is imprinted in those persons who hold that referent in the mind's eye. Our reasons for ascribing certain meanings to objects, language, customs as well as buildings depend on a number of variables that operate in that context.

Our complex relationship with objects – as producers, owners and collectors – is itself a characteristic modern meta-narrative, and so, in its way, is our effort to understand material culture and our interest in it.⁷³

What Pearce is saying here is similar to that which Halbwachs sustained regarding individual and collective memory. We have a rapport with our own objects – they are our reality and our lives. However, that rapport is directly linked to the bigger picture and can explain the seemingly insatiable desire to explore and know better, material culture in general. We need to create memories and knowledge through the discovery of the meta-narrative.

However, the 'Dream Spaces' used by Kavanagh⁷⁴ and picked up by Carnegie,⁷⁵ remind us of the vagaries of local memory, to the desire, in some cases, to 'improve' upon the past and in others to say it 'as it was' or how those interviewed remembered it.

Individuals who participate in creating these histories whether as interviewees, as members of formal focus groups or through informal

⁷³ Pearce, *Museum, Objects and Collections*, p. 3.

⁷⁴ G. Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, Leicester University Press, 2000.

⁷⁵ E. Carnegie, "It wasn't all bad": representations of working class culture', *Museum and Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, July 2006, pp. 69-83. Available from: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/carne-gie.pdf>, (accessed 02 February 2018).

community consultation, often have mixed views about what stories are appropriate.⁷⁶

Macdonald's approach to memory is to look at it as a 'complex' or 'assemblage'. She does not use 'complex' in the sense of 'complicated' but of something 'layered'. This is similar to the idea of the 'object' and, in fact, Macdonald says that 'complex' "should be seen as shorthand for something like 'the memory-heritage-identity complex' for these are all interwoven."⁷⁷ In the environment of Bormla, in which the discourse will concern identity and heritage issues it will be important to try to understand the roots of memory as "what is remembered, how and by whom, is deeply entangled with both the present and the future."⁷⁸

□ **Democratisation**

A dictionary definition of 'democratisation' is: 1) to introduce a democratic system or democratic principles to, 2) make (something) accessible to everyone.⁷⁹ With regard to museums, and in its literal sense, the second part of that definition was a principle held by the founders of the iconic 19th century museums and even today "museums in democratic nation states actively pursue their publics and occasionally cater to their desires because museums, like modern democracies, are premised on the willing participation of a citizenry."⁸⁰ The entrance to many of those museums remains free of charge today as it was in the 19th century.

Gable, an anthropologist, uses Monticello – a plantation and the home of Thomas Jefferson – as an example of a shift in approach to the 'history' of the venue due to pressure from African Americans even before the publication of DNA findings in 1998 that "showed the genetic connection between Jefferson and the descendants of Hemings" who was believed to have had a liaison with Thomas Jefferson. Gable's narrative refers to a museum which started off telling one particular history promoted by the state at that time which was obliged to change because of audience pressure.

Another, very different example of democratisation of museums is that described by Chris Bruce in the same volume. Bruce describes how, right from the beginning, the EMP – Experience Music Project – aimed at throwing its audience net as wide as possible. It began in a 'traditional' way, that is, through the

⁷⁶ Carnegie, "It wasn't all bad", p. 2.

⁷⁷ S. Macdonald, *Memorylands*, Routledge, London & NY, 2013, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, p. 216.

⁷⁹ English Oxford Living Dictionaries, (website):

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/democratization>, (accessed 03 July 2016).

⁸⁰ E. Gable, 'How we study history museums: or cultural studies at Monticello', in J. Marstine (ed.), *New Museum Theory and Practice – an introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2006, p. 110.

accumulation of artefacts. It soon moved on from the 'collection' to the development of a "theme park ride, a concert venue, and the state-of-the art interactive that could teach you to play an instrument."⁸¹

These examples do not necessarily negate those original 19th century principles but refer to the change in attitude that came about with regard to the content of museums, the newly perceived need to engage and include the public in ways that had not happened before and many other modes of renewal and development. One area of particular interest is that of disability. Studies such as *Rethinking Disability Representation in Museums and Galleries*⁸² raise issues that emanated from a social model of disability developed in the 1970s.⁸³ This document

(...) provides a powerful lens through which to challenge and reconfigure such negative representations by highlighting the environmental, attitudinal and social barriers that disabled people face in struggles for equality and basic human rights.⁸⁴

Apart from looking at attitudes to disability, historically and within a contemporary context and how disability has been represented in museums and galleries, the studies examine and trace the development of nine diverse museum projects which were advised by disabled practitioners in the field of culture, both managers and artists.

It is this kind of deep analysis and bold practical approaches that have really prompted the development of more profound democratic processes than were previously apparent.

One can immediately see that the process of democratisation, whether it is with regard to content, or to access, or to learning, or to education, will always involve a discourse of power. Somebody is taking the decision about how this knowledge is accessed and who will have the opportunity to participate.

Just at the time that Michel Foucault's work was being written and translated into English, along with the works of Antonio Gramsci⁸⁵ and Paulo Freire⁸⁶ – all

⁸¹ C. Bruce, 'Spectacle and Democracy: experience music project as a post-museum' in Janet Marstine (ed.), *New Museum Theory and Practice – an introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2006, p. 134.

⁸² J. Dodd et al (eds.), *Rethinking Disability Representation in Museums and Galleries*, RCMG, University of Leicester, 2008.

⁸³ 'Fundamental Principles of Disability', a document published by The Union of Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS), 1976, (website), <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/UPIAS-fundamental-principles.pdf>, (accessed 20 July 2018).

⁸⁴ Dodd et al (eds.), *Rethinking Disability Representation*, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Gramsci's notebooks were smuggled out of prison in the 1930s but were not published until the 1950s. They were first translated into English in the 1970s.

⁸⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970.

with a strong social agenda, – in the early 1970s, the ‘new’ museology was taking hold. Critical questions started to be asked by museum professionals and museum boards: “Why do we exist? What do our visitors and supporters consider of value? What are our strengths as educational institutions? or What do we have to offer to our communities?”⁸⁷ There are questions that Hein says the “eccentric amateurs who founded the great traditional museums of the 19th century” would not have asked themselves as they were very confident in their “self-assured sense of entitlement”. The ontology of museums started to shift as well as the epistemology which went with them. The very essence of what it was to ‘be’ a museum and the ways in which the museum paradigm would be used both for leisure and educational purposes were just about to be re-written. Not all heritage monuments or museums or sites took on this new approach at the same time or the same rate but things were starting to move in that direction.

Significant changes took place in the very fabric of society after the Great War and, even more so, after WWII. One of the great shifts was the new place that women had in society. From obtaining the vote (in the UK) in 1928 to replacing men in the work place while they were at war, women started to find a new position and a new worth. The fact that we are still celebrating a ‘Women’s Day’ means that the aim of gender equality has not been reached but, despite this, women have often been the drivers of change. In the world of mainstream museums, female curators are in the majority and the volunteers within communities as well as adult educators are also, more often than not, women.⁸⁸

In 2012, 57 percent of museum directors in the United States were women, according to the American Alliance of Museums. In Washington, about 50 percent of museums and historical sites are led by women, with many at the helm of active, popular museums with regional and national appeal, such as the National Portrait Gallery, the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Phillips Collection.⁸⁹

A key moment in the development of this museum theory came in 1972 when a ‘round table’ meeting was held in Santiago, Chile under the aegis of UNESCO and ICOM, presided over by the then President of ICOM, Hugues de Varine. The ‘round table’ delegates were from South America but the discussion addressed the idea of integrating culture with development and ecomuseums took their place within that discourse.

⁸⁷ H.S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition – A Philosophical Perspective*, Smithsonian Institution, 2000, p. 142.

⁸⁸ D. Clover, K. Sanford, F. Dogus, L. Bell, A. Monteiro, ‘A study of women, adult education and community development work in art galleries and museums in Canada and the United Kingdom (UK)’, in C. Kawalilak, J. Groen (eds), *CASAE/ACÉÉA Conference Proceedings University of Victoria, British Columbia June 3-5, 2013*, p. 90.

⁸⁹ K. Boyle, L. O’Neal Parker, ‘The Directors’, *The Washington Post*, 28 February 2014. Available from: The Washington Post online, (accessed 18 August 2018).

Davis describes the basic tenets of the ecomuseum thus

Ecomuseums have provided a platform for such 'living museums' by promoting the distinctiveness of individual places, sustaining heritage resources and aiding community development.⁹⁰

These might include the "the adoption of a territory that may be defined, for example, by landscape, dialect, a specific industry, or musical tradition" or the identification and celebration of particular heritage objects. Even the fact of "empowerment of local communities" involved in managing something of their own could be immensely satisfying.

Benefits may be intangible, such as greater self-awareness or pride in place, tangible (the rescue of a fragment of local heritage, for example) or economic. There are often significant benefits for those individuals in the local community most closely associated with ecomuseum development.⁹¹

Although Davis is referring to the expression 'ecomuseum', the name 'community museum' could be said to fit the same tenets. It will be interesting to discover if such a museum will be seen to express best that which the context of Bormla requires. What will be important is the dynamic that is described, uncovered and created during the research between the elements of space, place and time. Here, the discussion concerning heritage and identity, or rather 'heritages' and 'identities' as Graham and Howard point out⁹², come into play. It may very well transpire that the manifestation of heritage, in its widest sense, will include some type of eco or community museum or, again, perhaps something less delineated but nonetheless a reflection of what the people of Bormla would like to preserve and celebrate.

That moment in Chile in 1972, Davis tells us, was when the 'pivotal role of museums' in that context was recognized.⁹³

Hugues de Varine⁹⁴ was to be a key figure in the democratisation process in the museum world. In a speech he gave to the International Ecomuseum Forum (Guiyang, China, 1-4 June 2005), he outlines what, in his opinion, were the origins of the new museology concept of the late 1960s and the 1970s. He states that those

⁹⁰ P. Davis, 'Ecomuseums and Sustainability in Italy, Japan and China' in S. Knell et al (eds), *Museum Revolutions: How museums change and are changed: concept adaptation through implementation*, Routledge, London and NY, 2007, p. 198.

⁹¹ Davis, *Museum Revolutions*, p. 198 - 199.

⁹² B. Graham and P. Howard, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Ashgate, UK & USA, 2008, p. 1.

⁹³ P. Davis, *Ecomuseums – a sense of place*, Continuum, London & NY, 2011, p. 202.

⁹⁴ From 1965 to 1974, Hugues de Varine was President of the International Council of Museums ICOM founded in Paris in 1946.

origins are owed to several political as well as cultural factors. Amongst these he cites the independence of the majority of the former colonies, from the sub continent of India to many countries of Africa. 1972 was a period of decolonisation worldwide and there was a thirst for the search for identity coupled with the absolute necessity of finding ways to develop as sovereign nations. The museum as a phenomenon was perceived as a tool to the re-enforcing of an identity especially if, through the ecomuseum mode, it could be divorced from the 'European-centred' mind-set. Davis is convinced that, from that point on, the number of ecomuseum projects burgeoned beyond the official list. This was due to the fact that these often small scale initiatives failed to reach the pages of mainstream museology literature.⁹⁵

Other major influences were the equal rights movements in the US, particularly the Afro-American, Latino, and American-Indian groups whilst in Latin-America there were the revolutionary movements, the emergence of aboriginal and mestizo cultures. De Varine also mentions the 1968 'students' movement' in Europe and in the US.

The overall contestation of the intellectual and political establishment resulted in the creation of small groups of pioneers of new ways for expressing the essential problems of society, in education, culture, economy. The idea was to encourage imagination and creativity, and to go back to basic values.⁹⁶

Beyond this, de Varine cites the "rediscovery of the cultural and social values of small local communities" which coincided with, or rather resulted in, the creation of those early open-air museums in Scandinavia, and regional parks in France. These, he says, were

the visible examples of a new awareness of the need to reinforce community identity as an antidote to the growing standardization of culture.⁹⁷

De Varine also suggests that, at the same time, the traditional historical site, monuments and museums began to move further away from the less traditional, often for reasons of funding with regard, amongst other things, to expensive restoration works and extension of their exhibition space. They became, he

⁹⁵ Davis, *Ecomuseums*, p. 202.

⁹⁶ H. de Varine, 'The origins of the new museology concept and of the ecomuseum word and concept, in the 60s and the 70s', *International Ecomuseum Forum*, Guiyang, June 1-4 2005. (Text provided by the author, dated 05.05.06.)

⁹⁷ de Varine, 'The origins of the new museology', p. 2.

protests, “a leisure place for the rich and the educated, an educational aide for school parties, a “must” for wandering tourists.”⁹⁸

The challenges faced by mainstream museums and why these museums seem to no longer fulfill those traditional ideals as places of discovery, question and social responsibility continued to be the subject of academic discussion. Writing in 2007, Janes starts off his chapter thus:

These challenges range from declining attendance to finding the appropriate balance between earned revenues and public funding, and none of them are easily overcome.⁹⁹

Janes tries to assess the effect that these pressures have on the mainstream museums. There are, he sustains, challenges that are close to home such as lack of funding which tend to push a museum into becoming more a place of entertainment than of thoughtful discovery. Another ‘solution’ for a museum in its search for audiences and revenue is sometimes to invest in projects which may not actually have the desired effect. Instead, the project may push a museum further into debt. Other challenges are more about the existential attitudes prevailing in our 21st century – what the author refers to as an “assault on meaning”. In Janes’s opinion,

This erosion of meaning is a result of various scientific, technological and societal developments (...).¹⁰⁰

He finds that the professional economists “do not use full-cost accounting, which means that they fail, for example, to recognize the depletion of natural resources as a cost.”¹⁰¹ Janes’s thesis is that the wealth of the country (in his particular case, Canada) is spent on things that do not add or even give importance to meaning. He feels that this inevitably hurts the mainstream museum that must live within these economic parameters. Janes identifies the need for society to examine the marketplace economic approach and the need to develop social capital and emphasizes the importance of social responsibility. The author quotes a statistic from de Geus (1997:vii) that “the average lifespan of a multinational corporation (Fortune 500 or its equivalent) is between 40 and 50 years.” And his argument is clearly that if museums are treated economically as ‘Museum.plc’ the same lifespan will apply. His answer is the development of social capital born of

⁹⁸ de Varine, p. 2.

⁹⁹ R.R. Janes, ‘Museums, Social Responsibility and the Future We Desire’, in S.J. Knell, S. MacLeod, S. Watson (eds), *Museum Revolutions: how museums change and are changed*, Routledge, London & NY, 2007, p. 134.

¹⁰⁰ Janes, *Museum Revolutions*, p. 135.

¹⁰¹ Janes, p. 136.

social responsibility that encourages connection to these areas of long-term relationships.

Davis, writing in 2011, accepts the hypothesis that “most civic museums in developed countries, whether they operate at national, regional or local level, have adopted or begun to adopt many of the tenets of new museology.”¹⁰² The examples suggested by Janes seem to attest to this reality. So Davis now asks is there “a clear distinction between ecomuseums and new museology.”¹⁰³ His conclusion is that:

New museology is a suite of ideas about the purpose and function of museums; ecomuseology is just one variation of new museology whose tangible expression is an ecomuseum.”¹⁰⁴

This is a helpful way of explaining that new museology is a ‘suite of ideas’ that were put into practice whilst there is a variety of possible manifestations of museums of different types that owe their origins to a new practice but are different to the mainstream type of museum.

Maggi and Falletti comment on the growth of ecomuseum and others ‘enhanced’ in different ways.

Interest in ecomuseums and, more generally, museums’ enhancement of the ethnographic, local or material cultural heritage is growing all the time. Museums of this type are now springing up all over Europe. Over 80% of such initiatives¹⁰⁵ saw the light in the last 30 years, and the phenomenon multiplied notably in the 1980s.¹⁰⁶

From neighbourhood museums in the US, to the creation of the National Institute for Travelling Exhibitions in Sweden, set up as a state institution in 1966, to the development, initially in France and later on in other European countries, of small local museums such as Zuiderzeemuseum in the Netherlands. This started in 1983 as an open air museum celebrating the birth and development of the artificial lake of IJssel and then opened a second indoor museum.¹⁰⁷ Another example of an open-air museum is Museumdorf Duppel. Work first began on this medieval site in 1940 but was vastly extended in 1975, “at the private initiative of the ‘Circle for the promotion of the Museum of Duppel’.”^{108 109}

¹⁰² Davis, *Ecomuseums*, p. 261.

¹⁰³ Davis, p. 263.

¹⁰⁴ Davis, p. 263.

¹⁰⁵ The figure is taken from the IRES Piemonte survey and is based on a study of over 200 European museums, cited in M. Maggi and V. Falletti, *Ecomuseums in Europe, What they are and what they can be*, IRES – Istituto di Ricerche Economico-Sociali del Piemonte, Torino, 2000, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Maggi and Falletti, *Ecomuseums in Europe*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Maggi and Falletti, p. 74.

¹⁰⁸ Maggi and Falletti, p. 59.

¹⁰⁹ In 1995, Museum of Duppel’ became the property of the City of Berlin, and was taken over by ‘Stadtmuseum Berlin’, a foundation dedicated to public municipal museums.

All the political and cultural points mentioned by de Varine, together with the philosophical discussions mentioned above, contributed to the growth of those new museums that no longer sat exactly within the traditional museal paradigm. Contemporary artists started to “demand a voice in determining how their works were displayed, interpreted, and conserved.”¹¹⁰ And museums were challenged “to be more inclusive, to solicit work by women and artists of colour.”¹¹¹ And this was all happening before the appearance of computers, the internet and other new technologies.

The world of the late 20th and the start of this 21st century requires engagement with the public, outreach, participation in the museal choices made and the exhibitions held, as well as the more mundane issues of cafeterias to alleviate ‘museum fatigue’ and shops selling museum merchandise. New museum theory affected all aspects of these museum spaces including the buildings themselves as Davis writes when commenting on the widening of the museum audience.

What they (clients and public) want and what they are getting, over and over is an architectural form far more complex than that implied by the saintly connotations of the term *Museumion*, a form that harbors lecture halls, theaters, restaurants, bookstores, and, on occasion, classrooms. Despite its unprecedented catholicity, this form is inherent in the historical evolution of this museumlike (not museum-pure) institution, which responds in our time to a public unimaginable to Ptolemy I, to Louis XV, or even to Diderot and David.¹¹²

As a counter-culture to this widening of the museal/gallery context, there were some artists that not only insisted on a new way of hanging their works but also attempted to subvert the ‘normal’ ways of doing things. Marstine cites several such attempts.¹¹³ Under this irreverent and iconoclastic critique, mainstream museums could not retain the aura of ‘the shrine’ in quite the same way but there was a fear that democratisation of museums would lead to a dumbing down of their academic credentials. However, as Marstine says

Becoming more democratic does not mean that a museum has to abandon scholarship, but instead that it engages in research that has resonance for the communities it serves.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ J. Marstine, (ed.), *New Museum Theory and Practice an introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2006, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Marstine, *New Museum Theory*, p. 6.

¹¹² D. Davis, *The Museum Transformed*, Abbeville Press, Publishers, NY, 1990, p. 16.

¹¹³ Marstine, *New Museum Theory*, pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁴ Marstine, pp. 10-11.

These years of change also saw a heightened interest in the environment, in the widest sense of the word.

Museums, rather than being bastions of the specialist, had to focus on the relationship of people with their natural and cultural environments (...).¹¹⁵

The appreciation of the old, the antique and even newer archaeologies of our industrial past began to grow. The landscape, with both its urban and rural realities, started to take on a new importance as the idea of environmentalism and a fascination with what began to be called 'heritage' sites took hold. This led to the development of the many different types of museum mentioned above.

The idea of new museology as a suite of ideas is attractive because it allows for maximum flexibility with regard to how museums can be envisaged. The site of my fieldwork is an urban reality which holds both contemporary heritage – particularly with regard to the Church – and industrial heritage which has been, to a large extent, eliminated from the environment but which remains in people's memory. Also present are monuments of national interest that all have a significance special to the residents themselves. The democratisation process that has grown over the last decades will, if the Bormlizi wish to pursue it, support the development and conservation of localized memories and those heritage objects that they wish to recognize as such.

□ ***Authenticity***

The question of authenticity brings up a number of difficult issues that conservationists the world over have to contend with. The public often looks at artworks, be they paintings or statues or indeed temples and castles and takes them at face (or restored) value, imagining them to look exactly – or very nearly – like the original. In the past, this has definitely not been the case. Otero-Pailos, Gaiger and West use the example of the east pediment assemblage from the temple of Aphaia at Aegina which is housed at the Glyptothek in Munich¹¹⁶ to illustrate how restoration can have a political narrative as well as a conservation one. There are other examples such as the multi-layered site of Sabratha in Tripolitania, Libya which was excavated by Giacomo Guidi in the 1930s and completed by Giacomo Caputo in later years. Libya, at that time, was part of an incipient Italian Empire which Mussolini was keen to develop. The restoration, ordered by the Governor of Libya, Italo Balbo, fitted into the political drive to link Italy with the Roman Empire

¹¹⁵ Davis, *Ecomuseums – a sense of place*, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ J. Otero-Pailos, J. Gaiger, S. West, 'Heritage Values', in S. West (ed.), *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2010, p. 50.

that Mussolini wished to emulate “because it was seen as the physical embodiment of the supremacy and influence of the Roman Empire.”¹¹⁷

Fortunately, the restoration method used by the archaeologists and conservators was an enlightened one, considering it happened in the days before new techniques became generally accepted. The restoration was conceived by using the extant elements of the monument within the new structure which

keeps not only the “where and how it was”, but also lets the observer compulsorily recognize at first glance the use of new material, limited to the indispensable response to architectural features. This is the first example of a philological restoration.^{118 119}

This method allowed for the relatively easy discernment of the original and modern parts. However, in this case, the size of the theatre, including the front stage, was halved by reducing the size of the modern bricks. The originals were placed quite arbitrarily. The result is that, although an amazing sight today, the theatre holds far fewer people and is considerably less grand than it would have been in its glory days.

So here we have an example of a restoration aimed at political aggrandisement which reinvents a theatre that had almost completely collapsed, the stones of which had been recycled in post Roman occupation. This restorer’s creation is nonetheless one of the most magnificent and impressive sights in northern Africa. Purists would, no doubt, baulk at such a result and it would probably not be possible to recreate in that way today but the general public is always impressed with it whether they know about the reduction in size and the philological restoration techniques or not.

As I write this chapter, a discussion is going on about the newly created copy of the ‘Tomb of Tutankhamen’ at Luxor. However, the theories behind the significance of the ‘real’ experience compared to the ‘copy’ have been constantly aired over many years. To examine the philosophy behind the authenticity discourse, one can look at the Marxist approach of Walter Benjamin in his essay of

¹¹⁷ Raabe, A.W. ‘Imagining Roman-ness: a study of the theater reliefs at Sabratha’, MA Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA, 2007, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ C. Pisa, F. Zeppa, G. Fangi, ‘Spherical Photogrammetry for Cultural Heritage - San Galgano Abbey, Siena, Italy and Roman Theatre, Sabratha, Libya’, in *eHeritage '10*, Proceedings of the second workshop on eHeritage and digital art preservation, Polytechnic University Marche, Ancona, Italy, pp. 3-6, p. 5. DOI: 10.1145/1877922.1877926

¹¹⁹ Philological restoration is a technique derived from the theoretical work of Camillo Boito which includes seven fundamental principles towards guaranteeing the preservation of the documental value of a historic building. Vide: C. Boito, *Os restauradores*, Tradução: Beatriz Mugayar Kühl e Paulo Mugayar Kühl São Paulo, Ateliê Editorial, Coleção Artes & Ofícios, 2002.

1934, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*,¹²⁰ Umberto Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality*,¹²¹ written in 1975 after a tour of America and Vilém Flusser's fascinating *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*.

Benjamin commences his second part of *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* with the much-cited words:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.¹²²

He goes on to discuss the fact that, although copying of works of art has been done from time immemorial in various ways, it is only now that technical reproduction has taken 'copying' to new heights. And this was before the appearance of today's 3D printers that can reproduce any object with perfect accuracy. In Benjamin's time, it was photography and cinema that were the new techniques of reproduction and he acknowledges that these techniques were also capable of providing interesting details of the original which were not visible to the naked eye. So the camera could reproduce but could also assist in the understanding of an original piece. Benjamin speaks of the 'aura' of the original, that '*hic et nunc*' that only the original with its historical narrative and tradition can offer. In the same breath, Benjamin recognizes, however, the changeable nature of tradition. He cites the negative attitude of Medieval monks towards Classical Greek statues compared to the way in which they are venerated in his own time. But, he insists, those same statues always had an 'aura' of the original around them. The change lies not in the fact that the original no longer has an aura but in the fact that the reproduction no longer has to participate in the ritual of exposition. The Mona Lisa, in perfect reproduction, is no longer hanging in the Louvre. It has been removed from ritual and tradition. The participation of the masses in cinema and the reproduction of artworks must, Benjamin attests, change the world of Art for ever. No longer a secretive, ritualistic, traditional body but democratized and open to discussion.

Eco, writing many years after Benjamin, travelled to the US to examine a world in which reproductions were apparently culturally acceptable. Eco recounts his visit to Disney World, the genuinely fake world, as well as Las Vegas which promotes a fake world in which, for example, Venice is not simply imitated but improved upon. The palaces are perfect in their pristine condition. Eco also discusses the paradox of our present day view of authentic artworks such as the

¹²⁰ W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Hannah Arendt (ed), Harry Zohn, (trans.), *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, NY, 1969, pp. 217-252.

¹²¹ Eco, Umberto, *Travels in Hyperreality*, Mariner Books, 1990.

¹²² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 220.

Classic Greek sculptures which we look upon as the *non plus ultra* of Western taste, revelling in the purity of the white marble, when in fact we now know that the originals would have been painted in life-like colours. The more human the statues looked, the more prestigious the work of the ancient Greek painter. Authenticity is therefore mediated by, as Benjamin pointed out, ritual and tradition and may have many different manifestations over time.

Flusser, on the other hand, examines the differences between pre-writing art and texts and post-photography art. The invention of linear writing, he sustains, reduced the magical quality of images and eventually these found refuge in “ghettos, such as museums, salons and galleries, became hermetic (universally undecodable) and lost their influence on daily life.”¹²³ According to Flusser, photography and the technical, pixelated image, which may have been expected to revive the traditional images, has not done so. Instead, it has absorbed them and “absorbed history and form(ed) a collective memory going endlessly round in circles.”¹²⁴ There is no everyday activity, Flusser tells us, “which does not aspire to be photographed, filmed, video-taped. For there is a general desire to be endlessly remembered and endlessly repeatable.”¹²⁵ Flusser feels that the image itself – perhaps a poster flapping, torn in the wind – is without value but the power of the advertising agency remains strong. It is no longer the product that is the valued image.

This obliges us to revalue our traditional economic, political, moral, epistemological and aesthetic values.¹²⁶

Flusser wrote his philosophy of photography to show that we live in a world dominated by apparatuses that threaten to robotize our lives. The essay is a warning that apparatuses can be arid companions and that it must still be possible to retain our freedom to create that magical image and “unmask the interests behind the apparatuses”.¹²⁷

Through looking at the ideas of these three philosophers, we can conclude that authenticity is in some sense a construct of Western taste which has been developed over hundreds of years. A work of art or a revered object becomes a part of the ritual and tradition of great houses, museums and galleries and retains its aura. However, the copy should not be sneered at as it takes the art work out of the rarefied ‘ghettos’ and opens it up to discussion in a more democratic way.

¹²³ V. Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Reaktion Books, London, 2000, pp. 18.

¹²⁴ Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, pp. 18 – 19.

¹²⁵ Flusser, p. 19.

¹²⁶ Flusser, p. 52.

¹²⁷ Flusser, p. 72.

The copy is also, in some cases such as the Lascaux cave paintings, the only chance of seeing the paintings at all. A glance at the Tripadvisor opinions about Lascaux II gives quite a good idea of diverse thoughts concerning the 'copy' experience. Of 380 opinions, 140 ranked the site as excellent; 116 as very good; 61 average; 35 poor; and 28 terrible.¹²⁸ Reading the actual opinions, one suspects that the 'poor' and 'terrible' opinions might have been due more to the bad guiding techniques than to the actual copy itself. Here are a few quotations from the Tripadvisor visitor reports from Lascaux II:

Reviewed April 21, 2014

Nice replica of the real thing. Better some of the pudding than none of the pie. If you know the pictures from the books this is the closest you can get to the saved real ones.

Reviewed April 27, 2014 via mobile

I enjoyed my visit – the reproduction is amazing, the guide was knowledgeable, the staff was friendly. Then the next day I went to Peche Merle and saw ACTUAL 25,000 year old drawings and was utterly blown away. I then felt my time at Lascaux II was essentially wasted.

Reviewed April 21, 2014

I have seen a few of the genuine caves. This replica is amazing and by far the best visit. Open and well lit, the guides are friendly and well informed. The whole experience gives an inside (sic) into the cave art and the artists without damaging the fragile cave environment.

Reviewed April 7, 2014

I have wanted to see these caves for many years and was skeptical when I learnt it is now a reproduction. I was not disappointed. (...) We travelled well over an hour to go and see it and thought it worthwhile.

It will be interesting to see whether Tutankhamun's replica tomb will satisfy the tourists at Luxor. The two examples of the new Tutankhamun tomb and Lascaux II also have one important thing in common – they are both sited within 200m of the actual sites. Does this proximity make a difference to the visitor experience? If the replicas are sited in a different country, will the atmosphere be the same? Is the experience diminished by distance? A stimulating comment from the opinions above concerns the fact that the visitor could get a closer look at the paintings. A proximity was achieved with the kind of lighting that could not be permitted in the real cave. This combination of quality copying and increased access might well make up for the loss of 'aura' contained in the original. The key word here is probably 'quality'. There are copies and then there are copies. The torn poster flapping in the wind is one kind of copy that provides satisfaction at one

¹²⁸ TripAdvisor (website), http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g2044790-d246632-Reviews-Lascaux_II-Montignac_Dordogne_Aquitaine.html, (accessed 05 May 2014).

level, whilst the studied copy such as the new Tutankhamun tomb provides emotional and intellectual satisfaction at another level.

In a study using Peirce's semiotic analysis, Grayson and Shulman comment

Our two studies, (...), suggest that regardless of any trend toward substituting signs of the real for the real itself, consumers still have ways of negotiating clear distinctions between the real and the fake. To our respondents, the factual certainty of the indexicality embodied in irreplaceable special possessions is neither pretense nor a substitution of the fake for the real.¹²⁹

It seems from this study that certain 'objects', as perceived by Peirce, are for some reason seen to be irreplaceable at a personal level.

Although between individuals, indexicality can be seen as a continuous phenomenon, we were struck by the finality and boundedness inherent in individual consumers' distinctions between their own replaceable and irreplaceable possessions. This distinction reveals that consumers can and do connect possessions with the factual reality of a nonmental world—a connection that, due to indexicality, is neither unreal nor imaginary.¹³⁰

Perhaps it is unwise to extrapolate from the personal to the general but perhaps, for similar reasons, the authentic object continues to resonate with the audience in ways in which a replica simply cannot.

Grayson and Shulman's study tells us about the importance of authenticity as a concept and about the meaning of possession. To those who embrace the Western aesthetic and emotionally buy into the work of art as exposed in mainstream museums that are often filled with works 'given to the nation', perhaps they feel a sense of possession and subsequent irreplaceability. There will be others who do not feel that they have an emotional stake in such authenticity and will be interested in other aspects of heritage, other ways of expressing their past in which authenticity and possession as concepts may well play a part.

Authenticity concerns the representations of the past within so called 'heritage sites' and the question of whether heritage is representing history. Harrison defines the difference as being that "Heritage must be seen as separate from the pursuit of history, as it is concerned with the re-packaging of the past for

¹²⁹ K. Grayson and D. Shulman, 'Indexicality and the Verification Function of Irreplaceable Possessions: A Semiotic Analysis', *Journal of Consumer Research*, The University of Chicago Press, vol. 27, no. 1, 2000, p. 28. Available from: JSTOR.

¹³⁰ Grayson and Shulman, 'Indexicality and the Verification Function', p. 28.

some purpose in the present.”¹³¹ These reasons, as we have seen with Sabratha, can be political but they can also be social, especially with regard to smaller community style museums and heritage trails.

(...) as a process of ‘memory talk’; as an expression of cultural distinctiveness or in its built or natural physical form, heritage contributes to sense of place by providing a network of references helping individuals place themselves in the past and the present.¹³²

Authenticity of a physical building, as we have seen, is already difficult to discern. If heritage is something that is from the past but is carried on into the present then authenticity and agreement over meaning may be a contested area. Macdonald makes the point that commodification of heritage is sometimes looked down upon by the purists who worry that “(h)istorically themed places will be manufactured as part of an essentially standardizing identity industry.”¹³³ However, Macdonald does not see a direct nexus between commodification and loss of authenticity. After all, she continues, “we do not usually assume that selling a product is also selling the people who made it.”¹³⁴

These ideas are of interest with regard to my fieldwork because it may well be that certain representations of heritage might not be viable if there is no way in which to financial support them. Also, there are examples of good practice in other areas of Malta in which Malta’s British heritage, for example, is represented and enjoyed and the financial gain is reinvested in the work of the VO concerned. Its well-researched shows provide employment for local people and are part of the touristic offering of the Island.¹³⁵

It is easy to recognise the importance of long term planning with regard to such projects. One only has to examine some of those sites created after the coal mine closures of the Seventies and the regeneration of some northern UK towns and ports funded by the then abundant North Sea gas. For example, in Hartlepool, after the closures, the dock was transformed in the ‘Hartlepool Historic Quay’ which including access to the historic warship HMS Trincomalee. The Quay later became the ‘Hartlepool Maritime Experience’ when lack of revenue became a problem.¹³⁶ It was a top down project, financed by government. Some would say that it has contributed, along with other wellknown examples to what Wright

¹³¹ R. Harrison, (ed.), *Understanding the politics of heritage*, Manchester University Press, Manchester & NY, 2010, p. 10.

¹³² S.K. Hawke, *Belonging: the contribution of heritage to sense of place*, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle, University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2010, p. 1.

¹³³ Macdonald, *Memorylands*, p. 112.

¹³⁴ Macdonald, p. 112.

¹³⁵ For example: Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, (website), www.wirtartna.org, (accessed 20 July 2018).

¹³⁶ Hartlepool Maritime Experience website:

<http://www.hartlepoolsmaritimeexperience.com> (accessed 02 May 2014).

refers to as the increasing ‘museumification’ of the UK¹³⁷ – “a distraction from engaging with the issues of the present.”¹³⁸

However, in defence of such heritage venues, it has to be said that, when they are well presented, they do offer edu-entertainment to hundreds of people, many of whom would not usually darken the doorsteps of mainstream museums. At the same time, they may well impart a sense of pride and a sense of place in the residents of the town even if the population is multi-racial and in no way autochthonous, whilst benefitting from employment opportunities and revenues.

Looking for authenticity in Bormla with regard to the ‘real’ and ‘original’ physical aspects of the place will be quite difficult as the city has changed over the last two hundred years – that fact in itself will be part of the narrative of place. There is a plethora of old maps, drawings, late 19th century photos that can all attest to those changes. Bormla’s ability to adjust has been its hallmark. There are of course many other aspects of the city that can be authentically recounted: prominent Maltese who hailed from Bormla would be one. The authentic voice could be more difficult to define when discussing community and social issues. Authenticity must also be seen within the context of social memory. Watson makes the point that

The past will be reworked as the needs of the present dictate, with heroes and heroines, lives and deaths of the general populace, victories and defeats, along with technological change, notions of good and evil, all being reinterpreted according to contemporary emotional political and cultural contexts.¹³⁹

There has been “a growing recognition that heritage (...) is an emotional practice, and that narratives, causes, and events are constructed within emotional, cultural, and hegemonic frameworks that preclude neutrality”.¹⁴⁰ Once this has been understood then authenticity takes on a different hue and the discussion of it can be situated in “the fluid, slippery space between people and things”.¹⁴¹

At the end of the day, as Carnegie says when discussing the frequently contested construction of other people’s stories

Authenticity often matters less than perceived truths.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ P. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, OUP, 1985 cited in Rodney Harrison, (ed.), *Understanding the politics of heritage*, Manchester University Press, Manchester & NY, 2010, p. 17.

¹³⁸ Harrison, *Understanding the politics of heritage*, p. 17.

¹³⁹ S. Watson, ‘Emotions in the History Museum’, in A. Witcomb, K. Message, (eds), *Museum Theory: an expanded field*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2013, pp. 283-301, p. 288.

¹⁴⁰ Watson, *Museum Theory: an expanded field*, p. 289.

¹⁴¹ R. Harrison and D. Rose, ‘Intangible Heritage’ in T. Benton, (ed.), *Understanding heritage and memory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester & NY, 2010, p. 240.

¹⁴² Carnegie, “It wasn’t all bad”, p. 74.

□ *Heritage*

Heritage, says Smith, “is a multi-layered performance.”¹⁴³ The performance involves the heritage item itself, the people who work for its conservation and other management actions made to it, its contestations and its confirmations. Heritage is as much about the ‘sacred’ and the anointing from above, as about the politics of place and identity. One heritage spot can be both revered and contested. The Uluru, previously known as Ayers Rock, springs to mind amongst many others.

This idea that the heritage object, be it a building, an object, a landscape, a language or a costume, has intrinsic importance at an international and possibly universal level is the basis for having a World Heritage Site list; of countries looking upon their heritage as something that they own in a legal sense but that is ‘owned’ by the whole of Mankind because of its overarching significance. From the setting up of the ‘International Museums Office’ in 1922 to the UNESCO Venice Charter in 1964 and to the Sofia Conference in 2008, UNESCO has provided the yardstick for conservation of, in the first instance historic monuments and, as the definition of ‘heritage’ widened, to modern restoration techniques and, most recently to the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

Conventions such as Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society^{144 145} have emphasized the individual right to engage with cultural heritage of their choice. In the Conventions Preamble it speaks about recognizing “individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage”. Article 2 of this Convention defines cultural heritage thus:

- cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time;
- a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.¹⁴⁶

As we can see, the definition of heritage can be very wide and open to discussion about what is accepted as cultural heritage and by whom. When is it ‘official’ and when is it ‘unofficial’ and what is the difference between the two? This

¹⁴³ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro, 27.X.2005. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/search-on-treaties/-/conventions/treaty/199>

¹⁴⁵ It should be noted that Malta has neither signed nor ratified Treaty No. 199, Faro 2005.

¹⁴⁶ Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro, 27.X.2005, p. 1. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/search-on-treaties/-/conventions/treaty/199>

problem of definition is examined by West when she makes her own convenient and useful distinction between official and unofficial heritage.¹⁴⁷ She describes the official heritage as that which is promoted and supported both morally and financially by the state or local government or by supra national bodies such as UNESCO with its World Heritage Sites list. These would include those museums that hold artefacts of national and international significance and which must justify their existence through “categories, measurements and evaluation”. Unofficial heritage, West suggests, “sits outside the bureaucratic processes, lacking formal protection by legislation” and “is more likely to be intangible, encompassing, for example, living traditions of song, dance, craft and other expressions of what is often called folk or traditional culture.”¹⁴⁸

In this definition we can see that the much-admired national collections have now taken on a ‘heritage’ status but one which is placed within a certain paradigm. In this way, ‘heritage studies’ can be said to now encompass both the traditional, prescriptive museum and the other museums such as community museums and myriad other kinds albeit within the parameters of ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’. There may, in some cases, be some overlap but it gives ‘heritage studies’ an all-encompassing definition.

This understanding of heritage as a paradigm divided into ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ begs the question of choice and the issue of aesthetics. One could say that the mainstream museums in the West have, in the past, tended to collect what fits in to the aesthetic mind set of European taste. The challenge will follow when the thinking behind such a method begins to be questioned and the “process of understanding heritage as inclusive, relevant and responsive”¹⁴⁹ begins.

It is, of course, not an easy task to explain what ‘taste’ and ‘aesthetic sense’ are. West seeks an answer to this thorny question in the works of Kant and Hume¹⁵⁰ examining particularly Kant’s understanding of the subjective nature of judgments on aesthetic merit and Hume’s explanation of the importance of expertise in the judgment process. Aesthetic judgments, says West, “are grounded in the subject’s feeling in response to the object and yet raise a claim to universal or intersubjective validity.”¹⁵¹ This, she continues, leads us

to bring others to see why we respond in the way we do; at the same time, we must remain open to the possibility of revising our own judgement in response to the views of others. Aesthetic considerations are only one

¹⁴⁷ West, *Undertanding Heritage in Practice*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ West, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ West, p. 50.

¹⁵⁰ West refers to Hume’s essay ‘Of the standard of taste’, published in 1757 and Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment’, published in 1790.

¹⁵¹ West, *Undertanding Heritage in Practice*, p. 56.

factor in the complex decision-making processes that surround the designation and conservation of heritage, and they need to be weighed up against other historical, social and practical concerns.¹⁵²

The general paradigm of Western culture is one aspect of those 'historical, social and practical concerns' which tends to have a Eurocentric nature as highlighted in this quotation from Ondaatje's novel, *Anil's Ghost*.

While the West saw Asian history as a faint horizon where Europe joined the East, Palipana saw his country (Sri Lanka) in fathoms and colour, and Europe simply as a landmass on the end of the peninsula of Asia.¹⁵³

Definitions of heritage can really be as broad or as narrow as you wish but it is always useful to look at the dictionary definition and in this case it is particularly enlightening. Heritage is described as property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance; valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations; as denoting or relating to things of special architectural, historical, or natural value that are preserved for the nation, and, (interestingly), as N. Amer. (of a plant variety) not hybridized with another; old-fashioned e.g. *heritage roses*.¹⁵⁴

We are familiar with the idea that heritage is something that is passed on from generation to generation and that it – whatever 'it' is – has a value

(...) material heritage is identified as the carrier for abstract values in such a way that the values become *inherent* to the object and *universal* in their importance.¹⁵⁵

Heritage has so many different faces: monuments, small community museums, country houses, living history venues, poetry, recorded life stories, languages, images of the past and present. Each one of these, as well as lived experiences, is open to differing interpretations. In fact, heritage is

about negotiation – about using the past, and collective or individual memories, to negotiate new ways of being and expressing identity.¹⁵⁶

(...) heritage is not a known thing – nor is it a thing at all. Rather, it is mutable and intangible and means many different things to many different people and communities.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² West, p. 57.

¹⁵³ M. Ondaatje, *Anil's Ghost*, Picador, Pan Macmillan Ltd, Basingstoke & Oxford, 2000, p. 79.

¹⁵⁴ The Oxford Dictionary of English (ODE), single-volume English dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹⁵⁵ West, *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, p. 50.

¹⁵⁶ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ L. Smith and E. Waterton, *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology*, Duckworth, London, 2009, p. 43.

This thesis will be looking closely at the discourses of heritage. It will also try to understand how heritage can, on the one hand, be tied to officialdom in its various guises and, on the other, how heritage works within a community. This discussion will examine how the kind of counter-hegemony mentioned by Bennett may develop in certain circumstances and how the 'hegemonic 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD) as described by Laurajane Smith¹⁵⁸ will play out within the context of my research context.

Five years after Smith's first reference to AHD, heritage theories are examined in a paper by Waterton and Watson.¹⁵⁹ The authors try to look at the development of theories of heritage and divide them into 'Theories *in* Heritage, Theories *of* Heritage and Theories *for* Heritage'. Their aim is to historicise "some of the major theoretical approaches that have been applied to the concept, whilst simultaneously pushing debate towards developments in broader social and cultural thinking."¹⁶⁰ In this paper, Waterton and Watson examine the heritage theories within a certain chronology but add that "the overlaps are at least as significant as the sequencing." The premise was that the 'theories *in* heritage' emphasized the objects themselves, in which "matters of conservation, visitor management and interpretation" were prioritized. As the field developed in the 1980s and 1990s, continue the authors, other more conceptually oriented issues started to emerge such as "(a)uthenticity, identity, commodification and community heritage (...)."¹⁶¹

As for theories *of* heritage, these were

(...) concerned with questioning the representation of meaning, especially hegemonic meanings, about a part that effectively validates a national present or re-inscribes it with essentialisms when it might be considered to be under threat from economic restructuring, changing social attitudes or the nation-negating effects of globalization.¹⁶²

The authors define the third category of 'theories *for* heritage' thus.

At their core, they are questions about the role played by the personal, the ordinary and the everyday, within spaces of heritage, whether they are physical, discursive or affective.¹⁶³

Here the authors are entering into the area of emotions, feelings,

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁹ E. Waterton and S. Watson, 'Framing theory: towards a critical imagination in heritage studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 19, no. 6, 2013, pp. 546 – 561.

DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2013.779295

¹⁶⁰ Waterton and Watson, 'Framing theory', p. 547.

¹⁶¹ Waterton and Watson, p. 549.

¹⁶² Waterton and Watson, p. 550.

¹⁶³ Waterton and Watson, p. 551.

Deleuzian explorations of living, life, expression and experience, feeling and emotions, and the new relationalities that emerge from the uncoupling of action from preexisting cultural contexts shifts the focus of attention onto performativity as a description of the emerging dynamics of subjective engagements with things, space and time.¹⁶⁴

This is a somewhat reductive review of this important paper but it just gives an indication of the way in which heritage discourse has developed and how the theories do overlap and how other disciplines enter into the discourse as we come to have a wider picture of heritage. It is no longer simply an object but, as Hooper Greenhill says of the post-museum, it

(...) will be equally interested in intangible heritage. Where the tangible material objects of a cultural group have largely been destroyed, it is the memories, songs, and cultural traditions that embody that culture's past and future.¹⁶⁵

Bormla still has some very impressive solid monuments and a rich contemporary heritage but it has also lost several manifestations of itself over the centuries that can now only be recalled through an appreciation of its intangible narratives.

In fact, Smith goes further and says that she "starts from the premise that all heritage is intangible."¹⁶⁶ Here we go back to the argument that heritage 'objects', whatever they are, do not hold, of themselves, heritage significance but are endowed with it through human intervention.

(...) it is now largely accepted that most heritage has little intrinsic worth. Rather, values are placed upon artefacts or activities by people who, when they view heritage, do so through a whole series of lenses, the most obvious of which are: nationality; religion; ethnicity; class; wealth; gender; personal history and that strange lens known as 'insideness'.¹⁶⁷

This last issue of 'insideness' will, I suspect, be a very important one with regard to the area in which the fieldwork for this thesis will be done. The reason for this is that the landscape, the geography, that surrounds the Three Cities is defined by the 'in' or 'out' effect of real walls built by the Knights of Malta to surround and protect these three areas as well as the very distinctive nature of being 'from Bormla' and not from 'L-Isla' and neither from Birgu. These distinctions do not have solid walls but are no less robust in their manifestations. We might be talking of three small communities but the 'insideness' that Graham and Howard

¹⁶⁴ Waterton and Watson, p. 552.

¹⁶⁵ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and their Communities*, p. 81.

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Graham and Howard, *The Ashgate Research Companion*, p. 2.

refer to is felt by both the casual visitor and, even more so by the inhabitants themselves.

The so called Three Cities appear to have all the elements of heritage which have been described under the dictionary definition: inherited property and valued objects in the urban landscape such as historic buildings as well as cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations. The families themselves are people of a port that has been busy since the Middle Ages and their names reflect that historical fact. They are fiercely 'of their city'. In a saussurean way their cultural and human identity seems to lie in their feeling of difference.

□ ***Community as an idea, an ideal, a reality***

Communities have existed since the earliest manifestations of human existence. The work of scholars such as Lillios¹⁶⁸ and Van Dyke and Alcock,¹⁶⁹ provides evidence for remembering within the group in the archaeological context. Moving on from prehistory and from oral traditions into the literate world, the power of the written word begins to permeate through the community with those who acquired this skill often becoming the arbiters of cultural mores. At this point, 'community' also started to develop as a philosophical concept.

Aristotle upheld the idea of *Koinonia* by which he meant an urban community sharing things in common in contrast to a group with rural or tribal rural relations. The idea of the 'polis' went beyond the concept of people living together but extended to citizens taking part in a common goal. Aristotle saw the state as made up of these individual citizens. For the Greek philosopher, there was no distinction between community and society. The state and the citizens were one and the same thing.¹⁷⁰

This concept of *Koinonia* served for many hundreds of years as the model for a good society which encouraged the good life. It was with the Enlightenment¹⁷¹ that attitudes started to change. The concept of the state started to metamorphose into something that overarched the citizen. And by the 1880s, after the unification

¹⁶⁸ K.T. Lillios, 'Creating Memory in Prehistory: The Engraved slate Plaques of Southwest Iberia', in R.M. Van Dyke and S.E. Alcock (eds), *Archaeologies of Memory: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, USA & Oxford, 2003, pp. 128-149, p. 146.

¹⁶⁹ R.M. Van Dyke and S.E., Alcock (eds), *Archaeologies of Memory: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, USA & Oxford, 2003, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ F. Miller, 'Aristotle's Political Theory', E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2017 Edition)*. Available from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/aristotle-politics/>, (accessed 18 June 2018).

¹⁷¹ Enlightenment: Originating circa 1650 to 1700, its leading philosophers were Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), John Locke (1632–1704), Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), Voltaire (1694–1778), Isaac Newton (1643–1727) and Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794).

of Italy and Germany, the state had become associated with 'society' whilst the 'community' was seen as something different and possibly opposed to it.

Ferdinand Tönnies, for example, writing in the 1880s, makes this distinction:

We have a community of language, custom, belief; but a society for purposes of business, travel, or scientific knowledge.¹⁷²

Tönnies' perception of the two 'institutions' was that a community was an inclusive group but society was "simply (...) individuals living alongside but independently of one another."¹⁷³ Tönnies took a rather traditional view of the two concepts. Community, in his mind, was associated with 'genuine' and 'enduring' sentiments whilst society "is a transient and superficial thing."¹⁷⁴ He outlines those elements that make up a community: blood relations and/or community of place that "in turn becomes community of *spirit* working together for the same end and purpose." In Tönnies' opinion these "direct mutual connections are reinforced by others" including memory which "(...) seems to play the strongest part in creating, maintaining and consolidating emotional ties."

Tönnies believed that community was "a living organism in its own right" whilst society was "a mechanical aggregate and artefact."¹⁷⁵ He was nostalgic for community which he saw as the more attractive option but looked upon the state to reverse the affects of the rampant individualism of his 'mechanical' society.

Durkheim, on the other hand, did not support the strict dichotomy as argued by Tönnies. He imagined that large groups of citizens, associated with society rather than community, could also manifest solidarity. Durkheim was convinced that civic solidarity could achieve the goal of stifling harmful extremes of individualism without the help of the state and that a moral individualism was possible.¹⁷⁶

The concept of community has undergone various changes since the onset of modernity. At first, community was seen as a paradise lost, then as a disadvantaged grouping that needed help from the mainstream. With the development of sociology it took on the cloak of 'a search for identity and belonging'. Postmodern politics pushed 'community' into the political arena with the "collective WE opposing injustice."¹⁷⁷ The arrival of advanced communication technology has now taken community up to another level and pushed the concept into a global arena.

¹⁷² F. Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, J. Harris, (ed.), J. Harris and M. Hollis (trans.), CUP, Cambridge, 2001, p. 18. (1st pub. in German, London, 1887).

¹⁷³ Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴ Tönnies, p. 19.

¹⁷⁵ Tönnies, p. 19.

¹⁷⁶ G. Delanty, *Community*, Routledge, London & NY, 2003, p. 37.

¹⁷⁷ Delanty, *Community*, p. 4.

Community, as we have seen, contains layers of memory that are laid at different stages of an individual's life, of a community's life and may involve practices, objects, and relationships. Community initiatives are part of the practical effort to have a genuine voice heard above the official. These voices may coincide but they may also be very different. This can be said both of how events, traditions and occupations are remembered and what the community itself is interested in remembering.

This point is made by Amit and Rapport when they put in question mainstream anthropological approaches to community. They are uneasy about the very concept of community as something that unites people and insist that today's communities are sometimes made up of variegated individuals or small groups that come together momentarily or temporarily as communities but for whom definitions of identity may not fit very closely. Referring to Part I of their book Amit states

Here is an elaboration of situations in which she has had to posit 'fields of investigation' that do not necessarily conform to fields of social relations but instead involve diffuse fields of personal links and ephemeral groupings; and had to seek out individuals who are conceptually but not personally connected, or, conversely, who do not imagine their personal commonalities in ongoing collective identities.¹⁷⁸

This may or may not prove to be true of the particular community under discussion but it is as well to take note of the way in epistemological notions of community need to be handled with care.

Elizabeth Carnegie¹⁷⁹ looks at some thought-provoking visitor and professional reactions to government funded social history museums that purported to represent or to explore the 'People's' stories. Her enquiry looks at both visitor responses and curatorial decisions and examines the complex levels at which visitors approach such exhibitions. Sometimes the reactions were visceral in their intensity to the extent that certain exhibits actually had to be amended. And this despite the fact that the curators had already gone to great lengths to dialogue with those whose cultural space was being put in the spot light. The story of the setting up of 'People's Palace' in Glasgow and the 'People's Story' in Edinburgh (both local government institutions) provokes the obvious question – should these exhibitions be placed in a mainstream context and curated by museum professionals, even when the research refers to 'in living memory' narratives? Carnegie outlines some of the pitfalls of this kind of project which included some very difficult curatorial decisions concerning 'dark' memories that came to the

¹⁷⁸ V. Amit and N. Rapport, *The Trouble With Community: Anthropological Reflections on Movement, Identity* (Anthropology, Culture and Society), Pluto Press, 2002, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Carnegie, "It wasn't all bad", 2006.

surface. These were no 'pretty' social history museums but were purposely provocative and thus engaging at every level. Carnegie clearly saw this institutional effort as a positive one that gave voice to those who would not otherwise have had the opportunity or even the courage to recount their narrative to their peers or to outsiders.

Also touched upon in this paper is the interesting point that the displays in institutional social history museums are usually slow to react to change. As one is dealing with a dynamic subject, this inability to quickly amend display cabinets could skew the true picture and cause visitors to adversely criticize their contents. Looking at it from another angle, the consulted 'people' may feel that they want to see a display about issues that may have only been peripheral to their narrative.¹⁸⁰ Or again, despite wide consultation it may be revealed at a later stage that the 'people' concerned suffer a kind of collective amnesia regarding an industry that was key to their history but was possibly not perceived as 'romantic' as other industries. An example of this was given in a conference paper in 2006,¹⁸¹ by Sheila Watson. She recalled her own research into the community memory of Great Yarmouth and her surprise at discovering, at a very late stage in the proceedings, that an industry – the making of mourning cloth – was totally missing from the memory of the community. This particular cloth making activity was actually, it transpired, one of the industries that had contributed in large part to the success of the city in the 19th century and the factory was still standing well into the 20th.

As Carnegie states:

[...] local audiences may actively seek to protect their communities through participating in the curatorial process, by withholding participation, or by offering censored and selective views of their history or present.¹⁸²

One of the main discussions in this thesis will be about communities. The four research questions listed and discussed above are all about Bormla's community or communities. Firstly, there are questions about who that community or those communities are and secondly the ways in which the people of Bormla conceptualise and practise their heritage. There is also the question of how others can identify and communicate with that community.

¹⁸⁰ Carnegie, p. 9.

¹⁸¹ S. Watson, 'History museums, community identities and a sense of place: rewriting histories' in S. Knell, S. MacLeod, S. Watson (eds), *Museum Revolutions, How museums change and are changed*, Routledge, 2007, p. 165.

¹⁸² Carnegie, "It wasn't all bad" p. 12.

The fieldwork will be undertaken chiefly in what can be considered as an economically and socially challenging environment. Will remembering be important to them? What will be their referents? What will they wish to remember for themselves? And will they wish to extend that remembering to visitors from outside their city? In a literary context, Stanley Fish¹⁸³ talks about the interpreting communities through which commonalities of referents will result in understanding in particular ways. His thesis is that those with similar systems of referents will 'understand' and 'interpret' in similar ways.

From what Cassirer states:

(...) the science of culture teaches us to interpret symbols in order to decipher their hidden meaning – in order to make the life from which they originally emerged visible again.¹⁸⁴

one can see that to be able to decipher those hidden meanings one still has to belong to that interpreting community which will then allow the 'I' to recognize that 'life' when and as it emerges. However, belonging to an interpreting community is not without its pitfalls in the assessment of objects. For example, that uncomfortable feeling that Bourdieu, Darbel and Schapper refer to thus:

A vague awareness of the arbitrary nature of admiration for works of art haunts the experience of aesthetic pleasure.¹⁸⁵

They go on to say that it is accepted that objects are not "capable of creating natural preferences by their own power." This opinion is an important one within the discussion not only of museum objects but also of heritage issues as well.

However, one must also acknowledge that, since Bourdieu, those sensitivities towards referents associated with class and cultural capital, which caused him and his colleagues anxiety, have necessarily changed as society has itself changed and as modes of museum culture have changed.

This has been discussed by Bennett *et al* as they argue:

that distinction now plays out through forms of knowingness and self-reflection. Rather than differentiating themselves from the working class by their command of a fixed cultural canon, the educated middle classes seek to position themselves through demonstrating competence in

¹⁸³ S. Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, UK, 1980.

¹⁸⁴ Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, p. 86.

¹⁸⁵ P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel with D. Schnapper, 'Conclusion to *The Love of Art*' in B. Messias Carbonell (ed.), *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004, p. 432.

handling a diversity of cultural products in a context where knowledge, information and media proliferate.¹⁸⁶

□ *Sense of space, place and time*

A sense of place is, says Massey, still very much a contemporary need both with regard to contemporary activities and to our various pasts. Place, space and a sense of both do not just appear independently but “are the product of relations and interactions, both within the place itself and more widely.”¹⁸⁷ Factors that need to be included in an analysis of place include “the topographical, the cosmological and spiritual, the built environment and people’s emotional and psychological engagement with place.”¹⁸⁸

The complexities of space and place begin to be apparent when one looks at issues such as gypsies and transient people.¹⁸⁹ Convery and O’Brien’s research shows the affects of stigma on responses, the difficulties of defining a home place when much of the year is spent on the road, the importance of family links as a way of ‘containing’ a sense of place and memory as well as the complexities of identity when there are so many different ethnicities that answer to the name ‘gypsy’ and ‘traveller’. Some researchers use the concept of ‘lifescapes’¹⁹⁰ in an attempt to fit together groups that might not share backgrounds but who “share similar spaces, experiences and characteristics” at any given time. There is no ‘one-size-description’ of space and place that fits all situations.

Within the context of the fieldwork for this thesis, this search for the significance of space and place in this particular community will form a large part of the discovery process. Bormla is a special kind of city in that it is walled and probably shares the characteristics of other walled towns.

The phenomenology of historic walls embodies concepts reminiscent of all sorts of divides (urban/rural; citizen/alien; in/out) and power struggles, being loaded with symbolic meanings related to protection, isolation, exclusion, and dominance.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ T. Bennett et al, *Culture, Class, Distinction*, Routledge, Oxon, NY, 2009, p. 177.

¹⁸⁷ D. Massey, ‘Preface’, in I. Convery, G. Corsane, P. Davis (eds), *Making Sense of Place – Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2014, p. xiii.

¹⁸⁸ I. Convery, G. Corsane, P. Davis (eds), *Making Sense of Place – Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2014, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ I. Convery, V. O’Brien, ‘Gypsies, Travellers and Place: A Co-ethnography’, in I. Convery, G. Corsane, P. Davis (eds), *Making Sense of Place – Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2014, p. 43.

¹⁹⁰ C. Hartworth, J. Hartworth and I. Convery, ‘Survival Sex Work: Vulnerable, Violent and Hidden Lifescapes in the North East of England’, in I. Convery, G. Corsane and P. Davis (eds), *Making Sense of Place – Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2014, p. 145.

¹⁹¹ Y. Erkan, P. Ceccarelli, ‘Communicating Heritage: New Symbolic Values for Historic Walls - Concept Paper’, *Walled Cities - Open Societies Managing Historic Walls in Urban World Heritage Properties*, Conference, Siena, Italy, January 26-27, 2017, p. 1. Available from:

This kind of analysis also enters into the realm of cultural landscape through which cultural meaning can be mapped through the “iconography of landscape”. Cultural geography has been with us since the 1980s but this developed into a vision of “the emblematic representation, a constructed space, comprising elements that play a pivotal role in the construction, mobilization, and representation of identity.”¹⁹² Amongst these, Whelan mentions street names, which are so much part of Bormla’s urban language.

The over 5,000 residents live within a very confined area which is very hilly and this has necessitated the creation of picturesque but uncomfortable stepped streets. The houses are very close to each other, set within narrow streets. Storey refers to a

Personal or family identity (which) intersects with place both in the sense of home as the domain of a ‘private’ domestic life and a rootedness within a locality.¹⁹³

Because of the proximity of the houses in Bormla, one imagines that a ‘private’ domestic life would be a difficult thing to actually maintain which might increase the sense of living within a locality. Storey also warns of the potential of romanticizing these kinds of intimate, space and place connections.

There is a danger of fetishizing the links between people and place whereby these linkages are seen as ‘natural’ rather than conditioned via a variety of social, economic and cultural processes (Harvey,1996).¹⁹⁴

It is indeed those “social, economic and cultural processes” that will have to be examined very closely in the context of Bormla, particularly because there is a section of the local population that considers itself very much linked to the place. Davis tells us that it is best to

(...) treat the idea of place with some care however, since it embodies much more than physical components; for each individual it is a unique experience. Terms such as ‘belonging’, ‘sense of place’, ‘identity’ and ‘community’ are entwined with ideas about place.¹⁹⁵

Davis makes the link between the place to which people are attached because of family ties, familiar ‘touchstones’ and the fact that this ‘place’ is where heritage

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Venice/pdf/news/HW2017_Panel3.pdf, (accessed 09 August 2018).

¹⁹² Y. Whelan, ‘Mapping Meanings in the Cultural Landscape’, in G.J. Ashworth and B. Graham, (eds), *Senses of Place: Senses of Time*, Ashgate, UK & USA, 2005, p. 61.

¹⁹³ D. Storey, ‘Land, Territory and Identity’, in I. Convery, G. Corsane, P. Davis, (eds), *Making Sense of Place – Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2014, p. 12.

¹⁹⁴ Storey, *Making Sense of Place*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁵ Davis, *Ecomuseums*, p. 20.

markers are understood “as signifiers of place” and have important messages and meanings for visitors but “even greater significance for local people.”¹⁹⁶

Such meanings “are imaginary”, as Ashworth and Graham point out but which “still constitute a powerful part of the individual and social practices which people use consciously to transform the material world into cultural and economic realms of meaning and lived experience.”¹⁹⁷

It is clear that trying to unravel place from space, and time from heritage is almost impossible because the combination of all those goes to create an identity. And this equation is further complicated by the idea of an official identity and an unofficial one since individuals may have an internal identity but conform to an official one as well.

□ *Community museums, spaces and creative ventures*

As mooted above, it may result that the preferred means of representation of heritage amongst the Bormlizi is some type of ecomuseum – a space that reflects aspects of Bormla that are significant for the Bormlizi. This does not, of course, mean that this museum would not be enjoyed at a national level, as well as by interested tourists. This would also fit in with the idea of post-museum spaces as theorized by Hooper Greenhill and others such as Marstine.

Hooper-Greenhill, while acknowledging the modernist museum as still being “a force to be reckoned with,” sets the scene for something that goes beyond it.

The post-museum will take, and is already beginning to take, many architectural forms. It is, however, not limited to its own walls, but moves as a set of process into the spaces, the concerns and the ambitions of communities.¹⁹⁸

Hooper-Greenhill admits that this kind of openness may be challenging but she says “(o)nce (...) the museum is understood as a form of cultural politics, the post-museum will develop its identity.”¹⁹⁹ Others have taken up the baton of post-museum politics and it has led to further theorizing but also to a vast array of representations all over the globe. The post-museum space may still be a museum with walls but one that is part of the post-museum ethos as presented by Marstine.

¹⁹⁶ Davis, p. 22.

¹⁹⁷ G.J. Ashworth and B. Graham, *Senses of Place: Senses of Time*, Ashgate, UK & USA, 2005, p. 3.

¹⁹⁸ Hooper Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, p. 152-153.

¹⁹⁹ Hooper-Greenhill, p. 162.

The post-museum actively seeks to share power with the community it serves. (...) It recognizes that visitors are not passive consumers and gets to know its constituencies.²⁰⁰

Perhaps the theory of the post-museum context of community involvement, visitor participation, use of heritage and flexible spaces can be expressed by looking at a few diverse examples.

In the early 2000s, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, UK underwent a significant community regeneration project. This project did result in a history museum dedicated to the local scene. It was the fruit of years of discussion and collaboration with focus groups from amongst residents of and visitors to the town. Their approach was one driven by questions that aimed at sharing power and knowing their constituencies – the kind of relationships advocated by the post-museum theorists. Whilst considering the diverse identities present in the town, Watson tells us that

This study reveals that while these identities appear to be located in an essentialist past, they are, in fact, fluid, complex and emotional, related to perceptions of others and to contemporary contexts, and are dependent as much on material culture as on experience and memory.²⁰¹

The project coordinators did not start off with the idea that the community would desire a museum with walls but their research resulted in the much-acclaimed and award-winning 'Time and Tide' museum which opened in 2004. There are several parallels that can be drawn between Great Yarmouth and Bormla in that both have had industries that sustained them for decades but that have now faded away. Both towns have sea-faring narratives. The previously elegant and 'well-to-do' towns both fell into disrepair – Bormla after WWII and Great Yarmouth after the decline of the fisheries in the 1960s. And in both cases there resulted a certain amount of deprivation and the ensuing social problems. In fact, both towns suffer a bad reputation with regard to crime, drugs and other negative narratives.

Watson describes Great Yarmouth as

(...) a seaside holiday town classified as suffering from severe economic and social deprivation (GYBC 2004). After the Second World War, nearly all the surviving Rows were demolished in slum clearance. In the 1960s the fishing industry collapsed and, although the oil and gas industry briefly provided work for some ex-fishermen, these employment opportunities were not enough to prevent the town's economic decline.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Marstine, *New Museum Theory and Practice an introduction*, p. 19.

²⁰¹ Watson, *Museum Revolutions*, p. 160.

²⁰² Watson, p. 161.

However, despite this less than inspiring background situation, the researchers found that the general reaction to the idea that “history and heritage, in particular improved museums, could play (a role) in supporting the regeneration of the town by fostering a sense of self-esteem and pride”²⁰³ was surprisingly positive.

Local people from all socio-economic groups were enthusiastic about this as were the seaside holidaymakers and heritage-minded visitors.²⁰⁴

In her conclusion to this story of how ‘Time and Tide’ was created, Watson discusses a feature that I feel will be present in Bormla – the presence of the mythic memory in heritage. She suggests that there must be an understanding that heritage is subject to responses that may hold elements of myth but concludes that this is not the same as fiction – the myth is to be considered as something that gives “emphasis or focus to that aspect which is most important to the narrative.”²⁰⁵

These are some more examples of community collaboration that have been successful over time whether they are labelled as community or ecomuseums or simply as community projects. Not all were born after the advent of the post-museum ‘project’ but have stood the test of time. The reasons for their formation and the ways in which they have been set up and sustained are diverse.

The Seixal Ecomuseum trail (Southern Portugal)²⁰⁶ is one example of community effort in which the catalyst has been the Municipal authority coupled with anthropologists and other museum professionals. Seixal lies to the south of Lisbon, across the Tagus River (about 25 mins by car from the centre of the capital). It used to be a busy estuary port where there was manufacturing as well as important peripheral industries such as boat building. After the first suspension bridge was built in the 1960s the area started to lose economic importance. The passenger boats lost their clients and cargo also started to be carried by road. In the 1980s factories began to close and the whole area lost its shine. Nowadays, thanks to an active Municipal authority, Seixal has experienced a certain renewal. It is within commuting distance from Lisbon and seems to be very attractive to families with children.

A tour of the Seixal Ecomuseum²⁰⁷ made me think that the area I am interested in Malta may be well suited to the creation of a fragmented Community

²⁰³ Watson, p. 162.

²⁰⁴ Watson, p. 162.

²⁰⁵ Watson, p. 170

²⁰⁶ EULAC Museums, (website), <https://eulacmuseums.net/index.php/news-all/details/3/59>, (accessed 13 April 2018).

²⁰⁷ Seixal Ecomuseum includes: a restored cork factory and plantation; a restored gunpowder factory; a cargo and sailing boat museum and a mill which works using the tide in the estuary of which there were originally some eight working simultaneously.

Museum. I also learned that this type of museum could be created through different stakeholders and sections of society. There is gentrification but the townspeople seem to have stayed on and gained by the museum initiatives and there was an unmistakable sense of pride in this area of great natural beauty. The boatmen may have now turned into restaurant owners but they still live in the area.²⁰⁸ The whole of the South Tagus Estuary is now being looked at in the light of a wider plan for waterfront revitalization.²⁰⁹

Another community museum project which seems to embody many of the collaborative aspects that are so necessary for leadership development is the Museo de Hualcayán.²¹⁰ The principal driver behind this project is the Proyecto de Investigación Arqueológico Regional Ancash (PIARA), the mission of which is

to conduct archaeological investigations that reveal the rich prehistory of the region; to co-create heritage and development projects with the Quechua-speaking communities whose past we investigate; and to educate the next generation of archaeologists.²¹¹

This small museum has ‘walls’ but uses various techniques to encourage the interest of all ages. Amongst images of the region’s prehistory and ancient iconography are “images of the local community and residents, and a virtual exhibit that displays cultural materials and their contexts excavated at Hualcayán and nearby sites.”²¹²

In his online article, Robert Connolly and his team recount how

At the Museum opening, community members attending were particularly attracted to the exhibits that told their story – the photographs, videos, and portions of the virtual exhibit specific to their cultural identity.²¹³

One of the aims of the team was to train the younger members of the community to “create digital content such as 3D visualizations of artefacts for the

²⁰⁸ Author visited Seixal in September 2012 for the 1st International Conference on Ecomuseums, Community Museums and Living Communities.

²⁰⁹ A. Fernandes et al, ‘The Cultural Heritage in the Postindustrial Waterfront: A Case Study of the South Bank of the Tagus Estuary, Portugal’, *Space and Culture*, vol. 21, no. 2, 170–191, 2018. Available from SAGE. DOI: 10.1177/1206331217734539

²¹⁰ The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), (website), <http://blogs.aaslh.org/from-peru-to-memphis-successful-community-museum-projects/>, (accessed 13 April 2018).

²¹¹ The Proyecto de Investigación Arqueológico Regional Ancash, or “PIARA”, (website), <http://www.piaraperu.org/>, (accessed 13 April 2018).

²¹² The Proyecto de Investigación Arqueológico Regional Ancash, or “PIARA”, (website).

²¹³ R. Connolly, Director, C.H. Nash Museum; Rebecca Bria, PhD Candidate, Founder & Co-Director of PIARA; Elizabeth Cruzado Carranza, Graduate Student, Co-Director of PIARA, ‘From Peru to Memphis: Successful Community Museum Projects’, November 21, 2014, (website), <http://blogs.aaslh.org/from-peru-to-memphis-successful-community-museum-projects/>, (accessed 19 June 2018).

community's virtual museum exhibit." Thus they were providing the means for the more technology-savvy members of the group to have a stake in the exhibits themselves. The team also "developed several projects that encouraged the students to actively explore their local identity and history."²¹⁴

Clearly, in this project there was a coming together of a request from the community to be involved with PIARA and the entity offering its support and expertise. However, the aim of PIARA was that the museum should then take on a life of its own through the training of the local community.

There are many other examples of collaboration such as co-creative exhibitions. "Co-creative projects", writes Nina Simon "progress very similarly to collaborative projects, but they confer more power to participants."²¹⁵ With reference to the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle, WA, she says that

Their community process is based on a dedication to empowering community members to tell the stories that are most meaningful to them, and community members are engaged in every step of exhibition development.²¹⁶

In this case, however, a group of people has approached a museum to help them and to provide staff "who facilitate the process as technical advisors, project administrators, and community managers."²¹⁷ In the case of Bormla, it may not be possible or even desirable to approach a mainstream museum for this kind of assistance. It is something that could be discussed by collaborative groups created within the community.

One of the warnings that Simon imparts in her publication is that co-creation has to be a very much negotiated deal in the sense that everyone needs to be clear about the aims of the exhibition. One person's vision of 'our past' may be very different to someone else's – even from the same community. One can easily imagine a situation in which social media presence and what gets posted could be an area of conflicting opinions.

In *Ecomuseums, A Sense of Place*, Davis describes the iter of ecomuseums first in France and then all over the world. He explains how some museums such as the *Écomusée du Pays de Rennes* were supported by the town and financed initially to the tune of thirteen million Francs. This museum opened its doors in 1987 and holds a permanent exhibition of the history of the town of Rennes from the

²¹⁴ R. Connolly, Director, C.H. Nash Museum; Rebecca Bria, PhD Candidate, Founder & Co-Director of PIARA; Elizabeth Cruzado Carranza, Graduate Student, Co-Director of PIARA, 'From Peru to Memphis: Successful Community Museum Projects', November 21, 2014, (website).

²¹⁵ N. Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, Museum 2.0, 2010, p. 264.2

²¹⁶ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, p. 264.

²¹⁷ Simon, p. 266.

sixteenth century. It also describes and documents the changes in rural practices and local architecture. However, it also has a large space for temporary exhibitions and events.

In addition to playing a major role in conserving a very special genetic heritage, this enterprise has proved extremely popular with museum visitors.²¹⁸

This example can be contrasted with one from the city of Metepec outside Mexico City. Davis describes the collapse of the main industry in Metepec, a textile company, in 1967. This caused unemployment and a degraded environment in the area despite some attempts to revitalize it. In 1985 “an association was formed to celebrate the local industries and develop the area for tourism” and a museum complex was opened in 1988. Using some important archival documentation, the museum was able to illustrate “the history, archaeology and anthropology of the area.”²¹⁹

Then there are particular EU co-funded project, such as Genius Loci, the purpose of which is to focus on

the heritage of small-scale industrial enterprises, to (re)valuate their heritage significance and to increase understanding and appreciation by tourists and the general public.²²⁰

The Industriana Label is being developed through the Genius Loci EU funded project. Six industrial/heritage operations in Malta²²¹ have applied to receive the Industriana Label.²²² The Label holds a QR with which local people, tourists or simply passers by can find out more about the site. The sites can be very diverse – from venues in need of rehabilitation to a site that creates a particular narrative to and site of industrial history.²²³

EU funded projects do require human resources and much commitment but today there are specialized companies that will do the paper work and help in the relationship with the EU in return for a small commission on the monies obtained.

Some projects are very well funded, especially in the UK where National Lottery money is often used for heritage protection and development of areas that have, for various reasons, been left with a cultural and/or environmental deficit.

²¹⁸ Davis, *Ecomuseums*, pp. 108-109.

²¹⁹ Davis, p. 218.

²²⁰ Genius Loci, (website), <http://www.heritageportal.eu/News-Events/Latest-News/Genius-Loci-Industrial-Heritage-Project.18535.shortcut.html>, (accessed 30 June 2018).

²²¹ Farsons Brewery; Limestone Heritage; Malta Tiles; Subterranean Mills; Salina St Paul's Salt Pans; Ta' Kola Windmill.

²²² Industriana, (website), <http://industriana.eu/?q=Industriana-labels>, (accessed 19 April 2018).

²²³ Industriana, (website).

Water, Mills & Marshes²²⁴ is “a multi-million pound project to enrich, protect and help people make the most of unique heritage sites and landscapes.” The project has a wide geographical range (Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Acle and Loddon following the course of the rivers Yare, Bure and Waveney) and serves to “further conserve and enhance the built and natural heritage of the area between.” Amongst its aims and objectives are that:

The project will identify opportunities to document and repair iconic drainage mills on Halvergate marshes, an area which boasts one of the greatest concentration of such mills in Europe, explore potential archaeological sites and provide training to maintain heritage skills.

It also aims to improve local people's access to, and understanding of, activities within their landscape and will engage their help in telling the story of Halvergate's watery landscape from past to present.²²⁵

Apart from the above-mentioned ‘Time and Tide’ museum project, over the years there have been continued efforts to keep Great Yarmouth culturally active also through collaboration between the long-term immigrant Portuguese local population and other groups in the area. Amongst these initiatives is a network called Creative Collisions.²²⁶ According to its website, Creative Collisions “is an imaginative youth arts network for Great Yarmouth where likeminded young people can share ideas, produce events and exhibitions.” It also aims “to empower young people to develop leadership qualities and contribute to community building.” The underlying aim in inspiring creativity in Great Yarmouth’s youth is to introduce them to a greater “awareness of career paths in the creative industries.” Through their projects “young people get to work along side professional artists and gain training & enterprise skills.” Importantly, Creative Collisions “involves young people in decision making and co production of events via a youth led steering group.” It also tries to “connect young people with their heritage by working closely with Great Yarmouth Museums and wider networks, regionally and nationally.” The group has a good, user-friendly website but its main communication is through social media sites, facebook, twitter and instagram.

This project might be a good model for Bormla with regard to youth participation because it is an essentially working class city without any pretensions to high art but which has a reputation for engagement with youth culture in the city that goes back many years.

There are many other examples of community projects from the UK and the US, some of which might fit Bormla’s coordinates whilst others might not but there

²²⁴ Broads Authority, (website), <http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk/lookingafter/projects/water,-mills-and-marshes>, (accessed 01 May 2018).

²²⁵ Broads Authority, (website).

²²⁶ Creative Collisions, (website), <https://creativecollisions.org.uk/>, (accessed 01 May 2018).

is always something to be learned from these projects, ideas to be gained and failures to be noted. However, the kind of initiative that took place on 20 April 2018 would be a good opportunity to listen to others and to discuss with like-minded people ideas about possible community museum and creative projects in Bormla. This was the *Creative Workplace Summit: The Role of Creatives in Creating Great Places*.²²⁷ This was how the event was described on the internet.

The Creative Workspace Summit will explore the role of creatives (individuals and organisations) in creating great places and how creative workspaces can help make the most of a town's potential.²²⁸

It involved an analysis of around thirteen case studies from all over the UK, from Folkestone in the south to Manchester in the north. Although one might think that this would be an event of particular interest to creatives looking for unusual workspaces, the activity was billed as being of interest to

Artists, creatives, students, budding entrepreneurs, SMEs, councillors, planners, policy decision-makers, economists.²²⁹

The organisers were taking a very wide-angled view of the issues surrounding the work of creative people by involving all those who could be supportive and instrumental in the development of these creative ventures.

Such ventures can also include good public art initiatives which Vegas very forcefully suggests

(...) serves as a catalyst for municipal and economic development, raises the value and quality of life, defines an area, creates place making, and cultivates a sense of collective pride and ownership.²³⁰

□ ***Link to the methodology***

Above we have seen that the positioning of museums, which are mainstream within a community context, has its difficulties. This scenario can be an awkward one. Mainstream museums that do not relate to the local community, or seem to have unwelcoming semiotics, or are expensive to access, are often shunned by the local community. The Malta Maritime Museum at Birgu, Malta is a case in point. The content of this museum is very much linked to the area in which it has been

²²⁷ Creative Workplace Summit, 'The Role of Creatives in Creating Great Places', (website), <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/creative-workspace-summit-the-role-of-creatives-in-creating-great-places-tickets-43094738523#>, [accessed 01 May 2018].

²²⁸ Creative Workplace Summit, 'The Role of Creatives in Creating Great Places', (website).

²²⁹ Creative Workplace Summit, 'The Role of Creatives in Creating Great Places', (website).

²³⁰ R. Vegas, 'Art and Civic Engagement' in J.L. DeShazo, Z. Smith (eds), *Developing Civic Engagement in Urban Public Art Programs*, Rowan & Littlefield, Lanham, Boulder, NY, London, 2015, pp. 63-72.

very appropriately and conveniently placed. However, it does not appear to attract a local audience except through school visits.

Elizabeth Crooke could have had the Malta Maritime Museum at Birgu in mind when she discusses the

“simple duality [that] suggests that communities need the histories and identities preserved and interpreted in museums; and the museum sector needs the people, in the many communities, to recognize the value of museums and justify their presence.”²³¹

Crooke goes on to reveal a much more complex relationship between heritage and communities and the different ways in which issues of, for example, identity are dealt with. She makes reference to ‘heritage’ as a political tool and the dangers of trying to link certain, traditional ideas of heritage with communities that may not feel an affinity with those ideas – who, indeed, may manifest their sense of identity in a totally different manner and independently of those who were trying to create that link. Mainstream town or county museums may appear to be covering the perceived needs of the local communities through well thought out exhibitions but the home grown museums, created within the confines of a particular community may express or manifest the desires and aspirations or even desperation of those same communities in a very different way. This poses the question: can the mainstream museum truly be representative of a community? One imagines that, as Crooke suggests, the sense or meaning within a particular community is complex enough to allow for a plethora of diverse manifestations of that community. Some of these might be placed in a mainstream context whilst others will sit better and more appropriately within a much more constrained community situation.

We have seen that the museal attitude and approach to relationships with community has changed from the idea of simply imparting knowledge, to more of an ‘outreach’ approach, to a much more nuanced understanding of the very word community. This has led to what O’Neill refers to as the change from a ‘welfare model’ to one of ‘social justice’.²³² The latter is a model that puts community at the heart of the museum rather than simply stretching a hand outside its confines to bring about community participation. However, this discussion is still ‘museum-centric’. In the context of Bormla it may be that the approach has to have the characteristics of the ‘social justice’ model but one that is created from inside the community.

²³¹ E. Crooke, *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges*, Routledge, Oxon, 2007, p. 1.

²³² C. Breward, ‘From the Margins to the Core? Conference Reflections’, (on Mark O’Neill’s presentation), 24 March 2010, p. 2. Available from: http://www.vam.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/179529/vanda_christopher_breward_conference_reflections.pdf, (accessed 15 June 2018).

The methodology to be used in the research for this thesis must take into account what I have learned of the complexity of dealing with community. The aim will be to see if the creation of heritage connections within the community, through traditional artisan crafts such as boat building, practices such as drama, traditional cooking methods and others, can work together with an initiative to re-evaluate the archaeology and history of the area. The product could be a 'heritage trail' or a series of creative and discussion spaces, the telling of narratives in formal or informal situations or all of those. It remains to be seen if these ideas or products are acceptable, helpful to, and sustainable in a community such as Bormla, Malta.

In this research, it will be necessary to discover how the community members see the occupations that take, or used to take place within the community; find out what the community itself would like to retain and develop or even perhaps revive with regard to past practices. It will also be important to examine how the community sees itself within the wider narrative of the island. This will be achieved through a process of discovery through dialogue with the various groups comprising the community of Bormla. The methodology of this research is outlined in the following chapter – a methodology designed to answer the research questions that are set out above. Whilst following this methodology and whilst keeping to the research questions, it is very important that this dialogue should be continually accompanied by reflection on the part of the researcher. With reference to Allman,²³³ Mayo writes

The relationship between action-reflection-transformative action is not sequential but dialectical.²³⁴

□ ***Reason why we need to know***

If convinced that heritage can bring benefit to the community, one needs to know much about heritage and even more about the community in which one is going to interact. Without the theory, the analysis and the research, an important part of our social, economic, community and private lives will be lived in the breach. And where there is a breach, the strongest and most powerful usually step in. To know the subject – both its dark underbelly and its spotless image – is to own it. It is only when one knows something very well that one can begin to play

²³³ P. Allman, *Revolutionary Social Transformation: Democratic Hopes, Political Possibilities and Critical Education*, Bergin & Garvey, Westport, Connecticut and London, 1999.

²³⁴ P. Mayo, 'Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire: some connections and contrasts' in C. A. Torres and P. Noguera (eds.), *Social Justice Education for Teachers. Paulo Freire and the Possible Dream*, Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, 2008, p. 19. Available from: https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/1799/G-F_for_Torres_book.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y, (accessed 15 June 2018).

with it and experiment with it. And it is then that innovation and creativity can gain space and time.

□ ***Conclusion***

In this chapter I have looked at the main points emerging from central theories concerning both mainstream museums and other heritage and cultural manifestations. The evolution of museum discourse from mainstream to ecomuseums and post-museum spaces has also been explored. The complexity of museum theory has been revealed, showing aspects of so many different disciplines. As I said in the Introduction, in this study there will be elements of sociology, historicity, anthropology as well as memory studies and theories of ownership, preservation and heritage – a plethora of diverse angles and viewpoints on which to contemplate and with which to work.

The first part of the following chapter will deal with the methodology to be used in the fieldwork for this thesis. There will also be an introduction to Bormla, the city where that fieldwork will take place. In the second part, the post-fieldwork analysis will be outlined and discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

Part I Bormla (Città Cospicua) – an overview

Part II Methodology pre-Fieldwork

Part III Methodology post-Fieldwork

Part I

Bormla (Città Cospicua) – an overview

□ *Introduction*

In Part I, I present a description of Bormla, briefly highlighting its geography, history, social situation and population. The main stakeholders are identified, as are some of the social challenges that the city has and is still facing. I also provide some education statistics and look at some museums and heritage sites in the Cottonera area.

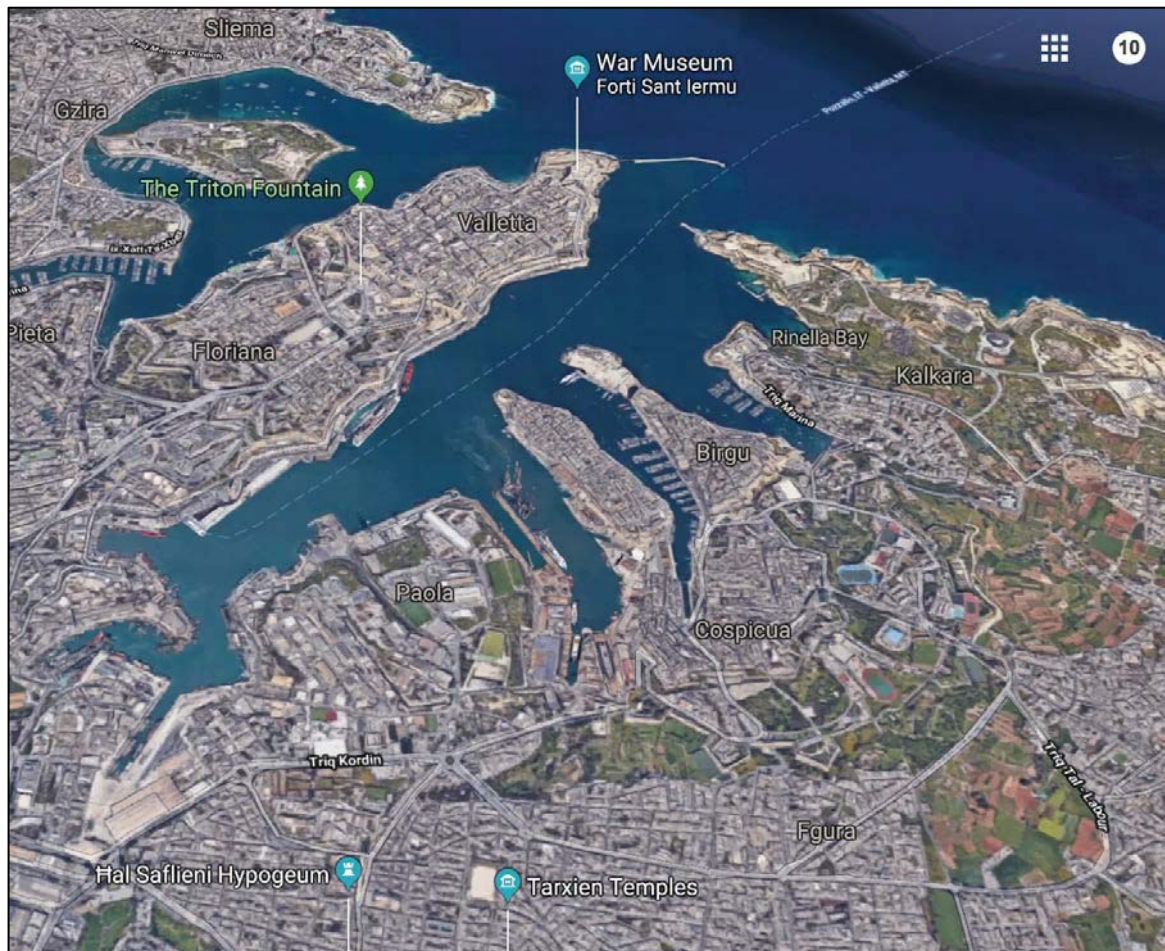


*Malta and Gozo*²³⁵

²³⁵ Google Maps, 2018, (accessed 14 July 2018).

□ *Geographical Area*

The geographical area in which I shall conduct my research is Cospicua, Malta. The city is referred to in Maltese as Bormla. Bormla is one of the Three Cities: Senglea (I-Isla), Cospicua (Bormla) and Vittoriosa (Birgu). Together with the nearby town of Kalkara they make up an area known as Cottonera which is part of a larger region known as the Inner Harbour Area which also includes Valletta and Marsa.



*Bormla and the Southern Harbour area in relation to Valletta*²³⁶

²³⁶ Google Maps, 2018, (accessed 14 July 2018).



Base map of Bormla showing district outline in red²³⁷

□ **History of Bormla – Città Cospicua**

The city is generally known in Malta as a place of mainly working class people and an area of poverty and crime, although it is now undergoing both regeneration and gentrification. However, although its history and archaeology are ignored by many, it has a long and distinguished past, parts of which the local communities cherish and use to maintain their identities as peoples separate from the rest of the area. What follows is a description of the history of the areas in order to place the fieldwork findings into context.

A comprehensive history of Bormla has still to be written. However, it has been mentioned in literature since the 16th century. Quintinus d'Autun, writing in 1536,²³⁸ may not mention Bormla by name but from his famed map²³⁹ it can be clearly noted that the main areas of activity on the island were the southern harbour and the capital, Melite (Mdina). The area known variously as Burmola, Birmula or Bormla is spoken about by Balbi di Correggio in his 1568 description of

²³⁷ S. Formosa, *Crimemalta*, (website), www.crimemalta.com, (accessed 13 July 2018).

²³⁸ J. Quintin D'Autun, *The Earliest Description of Malta* (Lyons 1536), trans & notes, H.C.R. Vella, DeBono Enterprises, Sliema. 1980.

²³⁹ Vide Appendix No. 8.

the Siege of Malta;²⁴⁰ by Giacomo Bosio²⁴¹ and by Giovanni Francesco Abela^{242 243} in the 17th century; by numerous travellers and visitors to Malta from the Knights' period through the British period and up to the present day and by local historians of the 19th century such as Pietru Pawl Castagna (1827-1907) and Richard Taylor (1818-1907).

With regard to more contemporary writing, there are academics who have taken a profound interest in Bormla such as Cutajar who has written a sociological study of Bormla, published in 2014.²⁴⁴ Other academic writers include Mercieca²⁴⁵ who, apart from writing his doctoral thesis on Bormla, has written many texts concerning aspects of Bormliż life and history. Some of Mercieca's are academic papers or chapters in books but others are articles in local, Bormla publications. Falzon, an anthropologist and some time resident of Bormla, has written papers about various aspects of Bormliż life.

Other writers include John Vella, who has written papers about Bormla's history and runs his own house as a museum of Bormliż history.²⁴⁶ There are some prolific local historians such as Mario Attard and Joseph Serracino and the late Sunny Aquilina. Mario Attard has, for example, been a constant contributor to *Sehemna*, a newsletter issued by the Bormla Local Council; to *Leĥen il-Banda San Ġorġ Bormla*, published annually. Joseph Serracino is probably best known for his research on the Regatta but also for his short stories and his innumerable educational programmes on the local radio Kottoner98FM. The late Sunny Aquilina, apart from having been a much-appreciated teacher for hundreds of Bormliżi, was also a songwriter and an assiduous contributor to local publications. Edwin Delceppo, both independently and together with John Vella, has researched many aspects of Bormla's history and there are others. If it were not for these local historians and enthusiasts of Bormla's past and present many aspects of Bormla's narrative may well have been lost. References and information about Bormla are also found in the prestigious publication *Birgu: A Maltese Maritime City*²⁴⁷ and in

²⁴⁰ Balbi di Correggio, F., *The Siege of Malta 1565*, trans. from the Spanish edition of 1568, E. Bradford, Penguin, London, 2003.

²⁴¹ G. Bosio, *Histoire des Chevaliers de l'Ordre de l'Hospital de S. Jean de Hierusalem, Héritiers de G. Roville*, 1612, pp. 867, 868, 875.

²⁴² G.F. Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta Isola nel Mare Siciliano*, Libro Quattro, MDCXLVII, pp. 18, 19, 105, 361.

²⁴³ G.F. Abela, *Della Descrittione de Malta*, p. 18. *Description of Bormla, 1647: Bormula is under the aegis of the Post of the Captain of Senglea. The name derives from Bir Mula, that is, the well of the Lord. It is made up of 642 households and 2,778 people. (my trans.)*

²⁴⁴ J. Cutajar, *Bormla A Struggling Community*, FARAXA, Malta, 2014.

²⁴⁵ Vide some further articles by S. Mercieca, 'L-Organi Maestuż ta' Bormla: Ġhalaq 150 sena', *Ktieb tal-Festa, 2012*, Ċentru 19 ta' Novembru 1944, pp. 63 – 71; 'Ir-Razza Cauchi u l-Banda San Ġorġ ta' Bormla A.D. 1862', *Ktieb tal-Festa 2016*, pp. 96 -99.

²⁴⁶ Bir Mula Heritage, 79 Triq Santa Margarita, Bormla.

²⁴⁷ L. Bugeja, M. Buhagiar and S. Fiorini, (eds), *Birgu - a Maltese Maritime City*, Vol. 1, Malta University Services Ltd., 1993.

*The Grand Harbour and its Dockyard*²⁴⁸ and appears in *Bliet u Rħula Maltin, Vol. 1*.²⁴⁹ There are several University of Malta theses/dissertations that concern particular aspects of Bormla from the sociological to the historical.²⁵⁰ The city is also referred to in many publications not mentioned here. However, to date, no historian has taken it upon him or herself to write or to edit a comprehensive history of Bormla. It is long overdue.

What follows is a very brief outline of the major historical events that have shaped the area both physically and existentially. The area is likely to have been inhabited in the Neolithic (c. 5000BCE to 3000BCE). There is a significant Neolithic temple site on Corradino hill which was once part of Bormla and which overlooks both French Creek and Dockyard Creek. Originally, there were three temples but only the remains of Kordin III are still extant. There are Punic tombs on high ground around Bormla (on the Tal-Horr hill that is now the Addolorata Cemetery, at Ġhajj Dwieli and Tal-Liedna).²⁵¹ Bormla was a fishing village throughout the medieval period. It played a part in the Great Siege of 1565²⁵² ²⁵³ ²⁵⁴ and its 'Galley Creek' was the venue for much ship building both prior to the arrival of the Knights and throughout the Knights' period. It was enclosed in the huge double fortifications of Cottonera in the 17th and 18th centuries.

When in the 1840s the British built the first dry dock in Galley Creek, Bormla changed radically in shape and character. The industrial activity generated by the new dockyards and ancillary buildings created an industrial landscape for Bormla that would become its hallmark. The Dockyard required specialized equipment and men with the skills to work the machinery. The Naval buildings and the Dockyard transformed Galley Creek, from Fort Sant Angelo to Senglea, into an industrial hub with high walls, loud tones, new jobs and changed lives. A plan of the Dockyard ²⁵⁵ gives a flat picture of the extent and extension of the industrial landscape but photos of the period show just how the Dockyard started to dominate the city as early as the middle of the 1830s. It continued to do so until 2010 - almost two

²⁴⁸ J. Bonnici and M. Cassar, *The Malta Grand Harbour and its Dockyard*, Malta, published by the authors, 1994.

²⁴⁹ A. Guillaumier, *Bliet u Rħula Maltin*, Vol. 1, Klabb Kotba Maltin, Sta Venera, Malta, 2002.

²⁵⁰ There are circa nineteen dissertations concerning various aspects of Cospicua/Bormla listed in the University of Malta Library archive.

²⁵¹ G.A. Said-Zammit, 'The Punic tombs of the Maltese islands' in K. Sciberras (ed.), *Proceedings of History Week 1993*, Malta Historical Society, 1993, p. 68.

²⁵² Balbi di Correggio, *The Siege of Malta 1565*, 2003.

²⁵³ S.C. Spiteri, *The Great Siege Knights vs Turks mdlxv Anatomy of a Hospitaller Victory*, published by the author, printed by Gutenberg Press, Malta, 2005.

²⁵⁴ M. Attard, 'Bormla u l-Bormlizi fl-Assedju l-Kbir ta' 1565, Part I', *Festa 2002, Marija Immakulata - Bormla*, pp. 153-163 and Part II, *Festa 2003, Marija Immakulata - Bormla*, pp. 159-165.

²⁵⁵ Vide Appendix No. I: *A plan of the original Dock No.1 layout and the proposed extension in red in relation to the market building*. My thanks to Stephen Serracino Inglott for providing me with this image from S. Serracino Inglott, 'Cospicua's Dock No. 1 and what it replaced', *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 3 May 2015, p. 38-39.

hundred years of industrial development which truly shaped Bormla and created a narrative and potential heritage that is both tangible and intangible.

Despite the removal of its important market building,²⁵⁶ the city remained the epicentre of the Maltese economy during the best economic periods of British rule. The city continued to support a mixed society of professionals, businessmen, clerical workers, tradesmen of all sorts as well as skilled and unskilled workers and was considered a lively and important city. Prior to WWII, there was a movement of businesses and professionals towards Valletta. However, things changed radically after the Italian air fleet and the German Luftwaffe in the Second World War commenced their bombing raids.

The population statistics for Bormla and Birgu during this period speak for themselves.²⁵⁷ When the bombing of the Grand Harbour commenced in 1941 it became clear that there was going to be much collateral damage. It has been said that Malta in 1942 was the most bombed place on earth. The result of this, for the towns around the Harbour, was that only essential personnel remained. Most families went to stay with friends and family or in accommodation expropriated by the government in safer areas of Malta. Those who remained were either soldiers or people with the skills to service the frigates and other naval vessels that made it in and out of the Harbour.

After the war ended, the whole of the Inner Harbour area lay devastated. In L-Isla the damage was most extensive with the main basilica razed to the ground along with at least the top floor of practically every building in the city. Birgu and Bormla did not fare much better. In the rush to accommodate the population some

²⁵⁶ Vide Appendix No. I: *A plan of the original Dock No.1 layout and the proposed extension in red in relation to the market building*. S. Serracino Inglott, 'Cospicua's Dock No. 1 and what it replaced', *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 3 May 2015, p. 38-39.

²⁵⁷ Population statistics:

Bormla (Cospicua)

Population:

1901 - 12,148

1931 - 12,163

1948 - 4,822

2016 - 5,147

Birgu (Città Vittoriosa)

1901 - 6,093

1931 - 6,673

1948 - 3,816

2016 - 2,451

L-Isla (Senglea)

1901 - 8,200

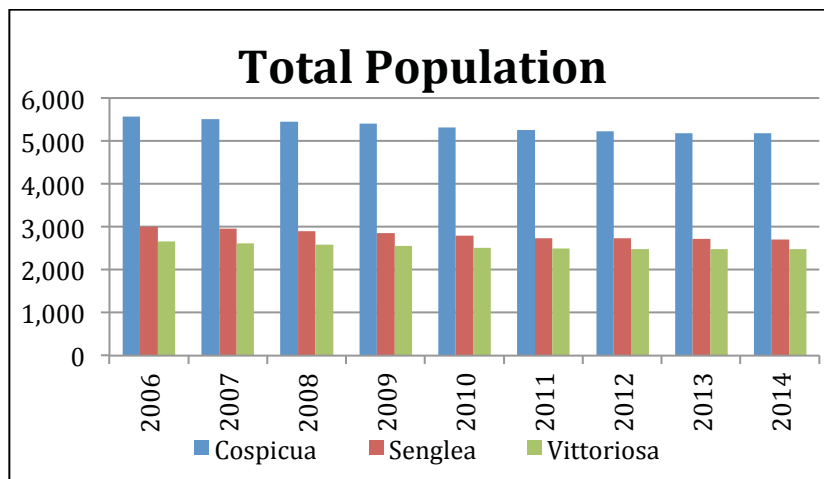
2016 - 2,691

less than attractive housing was built in the area. It should also be said that, whilst many historic buildings were lost, there was a large amount that was rebuilt often using the same stones that lay strewn around the buildings. Also, the many works of art were stored away during the worst of the bombing and having survived the war they now embellish the many churches, convents and a few museums in the area.

After 1944, those most desperate for work returned to Cottonera and others from across Malta with them. However, the large majority of its original inhabitants never came back to live in the area. The social mix, with a few notable exceptions, was virtually lost. The Three Cities became almost totally peopled by blue collar workers. This has affected the economic and social and political development of the whole of Cottonera which became somewhat isolated from the rest of the island. There is fierce rivalry between the Three Cities (particularly between Bormla and Birgu) but when they feel threatened they will act as one.

From the earliest days of the city's existence, the Church, through its parish church as well as through the other churches such as the Discalced Carmelite Church of Santa Teresa and the cloistered nuns of Santa Margarita, has exerted its influence on the city. This influence has sometimes been a source of inner conflict for the Bormlizi but in recent years any split loyalties seem to have been smoothed over.

NSO demographic statistics for Bormla, L-Isla and Birgu 2006 – 2014²⁵⁸



The population statistics of these last years tell a story of people moving out of Bormla, especially after the closure of the Dockyard in 2010. However, this may

²⁵⁸ National Statistics Office, Malta, 'Selected Indicators', (website), https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Selected_Indicators/Pages/Selected-Indicators.aspx, (accessed 17 July 2018).

soon be counteracted by the influx of people from outside of Bormla, wishing to take up residence in the city as part of the gentrification process. The population of Bormla in 2015 was 5167 and in 2016 was 5,164, showing a further slight decline.

□ ***The Stakeholders***

The Three Cities appear to have diverse networks that sustain their communities. The most long-standing are the ecclesiastical groups. Each city has its parish church. Bormla's is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception; Birgu's is dedicated to St Lawrence whilst the Parish Church of L-Isla is dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These are the most important focal points but they are not the only ones as each of the cities has more than one church. Within the churches there are different groups and fraternities, youth groups and drama groups. Even a superficial investigation into the social structures of the Three Cities will show just how important these diverse groups are. The Good Friday pageants are particularly popular but other drama projects go on throughout the year.

Linked with the ecclesiastical groups are the Band Clubs which provide, as the name suggests, brass bands for the many marches that occur during the church year – patron saint days, Holy Week, church feasts etc. However, they provide much more than that. They are usually sited in prominent positions in the towns, they have a bar with TV and spacious seating areas for patrons – almost always male. One imagines that these clubs would be the places where opinions are exchanged, confirmed and discussed. Bormla has only one Band Club whilst Birgu has two. This is not an uncommon occurrence which can sometimes create problems of rivalry especially if the Band Clubs follow diverse political lines. The town of Qormi actually has three band clubs. Not infrequently, arguments between these clubs end up in the Courts.

Another very important stakeholder is the Local Council – one for each of the Three Cities.²⁵⁹ The Mayors and Councillors of the three Local Councils hold great sway in the community as they are holders of a budget and also act as disseminators of information through networks of local people, local media and access to local groups of activists. Doing anything significant within the community needs to have the *nihil obstat* of the Mayor.

²⁵⁹ Local Government was established in 1993 following the Maltese Parliament's approval of the Local Councils Act (Chapter 363 of the Laws of Malta) on 30 June 1993. This law set up Local Councils in 67 localities (later increased to 68). Furthermore, it now serves as a regulatory mechanism for Local Councils' operations. Today, Malta has 68 Local Councils – 54 in Malta and 14 in Gozo. The Local Councils Act was revised considerably by the Local Councils (Amendment) Act 1999 [Act No. XXI (1999)] published on 21 December 1999. Information taken from the Malta Local Council Association website, <http://www.lc.gov.mt>, (accessed 12 July 2017).

Other groups representing social activities of importance in the area include the Regatta Clubs, model making groups and others. These voluntary groups may or may not have official VO status but they do have a key position within the social fabric and will be of great interest with regard to my intended research.

Stakeholders with regard to heritage include, of course, the citizens of each of the Three Cities – the general public – those that do and those that do not involve themselves in any of the above mentioned activities. The communities of the Three Cities appear from the outside to be quite discrete groups. They are less isolated than before but are still very closed communities which seem to be self-referential and not given to looking to the outside for support. I realize that this is not the whole story and that even amongst the few thousand people that call themselves citizens of Birgu, Bormla and L-Isla, there are diverse groups which need to be taken into account.

□ **Social Challenges**

As I have mentioned, this area has its social problems, including drug-related difficulties, that have necessitated the setting up of a permanent base for social assistance. AĊĊESS is a Government agency that is dedicated to community development and has a centre in Cottonera. As indicated on its website, local community development is targeted via AĊĊESS through a process of change, which results in improved living conditions for people.

- It is involving people in the community to participate as opposed to service consumption;
- It is getting to the grassroots of the community and creating services according to the needs;
- It is empowering people to participate in the process of change;
- It is helping people to become owners of their own community;
- It is helping emarginated groups of people to become aware of their rights and act towards social justice.²⁶⁰

AĊĊESS in Cottonera is serviced by various entities including: APPOĠĠ; Employment and Training Corporation (ETC); Sapport; Housing Authority; Fondazzjoni għal Servizzi Edukattivi and a Social Security Office. It also provides a computer lab, ICT courses and Internet access for the local population.

²⁶⁰ AĊĊESS Cottonera Information webpage, <https://family.gov.mt/en/access/Pages/Cottonera-A%C4%8B%C4%8Bess.aspx>, (accessed 24 July 2018).

Aġenzija Appoġġ²⁶¹ is a Government agency providing help to both adults and children with various problems from challenging behaviour to domestic violence. ETC provides training and re-skilling schemes for the unemployed. Support provides day centres for persons with disabilities. The Housing Authority tries to find solutions to the diverse housing problems in the area which has quite a large amount of social housing and also many squatters who have no legal title to the properties that they live in. Child Care Centres²⁶² are available in the area and the district office of Social Security deals with applications for social benefits and similar assistance.

There are a large number of people in Cottonera that are caught in the welfare system. Clearly, these entities form part of the social structures in the area.

Between 2010 and 2015, the Southern Harbour region still held the lowest place in the average household disposable income index, moving from circa €19,000 in 2010 to marginally more than €22,000 in 2015, slightly overtaking Gozo and Comino in that year.²⁶³

□ **Education**

The Cottonera area, including some of the Inner Harbour area, is served by a College with different branches.²⁶⁴ These schools have been upgraded in recent years and particularly the Verdala College is very well served both in its classrooms and sports spaces. The number of children from the area reaching the Secondary Schools has increased in recent years but the area still has high truancy levels and high numbers of children leaving school without gaining any qualifications. There is also a correspondingly high level of illiteracy.

²⁶¹ Aġenzija Appoġġ, (webpage),

<https://fsws.gov.mt/en/appogg/Pages/welcome-appogg.aspx> (accessed 24 July 2018).

²⁶² Child Care Centres, (webpage), https://fes.gov.mt/en/Pages/Centres/centres_child_care.aspx (accessed 24 July 2018).

²⁶³ *Regional Statistics Malta 2017*, National Statistics Office, Malta, 2017, p. 26.

²⁶⁴ List of Schools (Kinder/Primary Schools) in Cottonera:

St Margaret College **Cospicua Primary School**

St Margaret College **Kalkara Primary School**

St Margaret College **Senglea Primary School**

St Margaret College **Vittoriosa Primary School**

List of Schools (Secondary Schools):

St Margaret College Cospicua Middle School, **Cospicua**

St Margaret College Verdala Secondary School, **Verdala**

Government Education, (webpage), <https://education.gov.mt/en/education/Pages/Colleges/St-Margaret-College.aspx>, (accessed 24 July 2018).

With regard to further education, from the statistics below one can see that there is an education deficit at tertiary level.

Current number of students from Cottonera at the University of Malta:

	Female	Male	Total	Population (2016)	
Cospicua		18	23	41	5,164
Senglea		15	10	25	2,691
Vittoriosa		15	7	22	2,451

By comparison, Luqa, which is not considered to be a particularly wealthy town and which only has circa 500 more people than Cospicua, has three times the number of students at the University of Malta:

	Female	Male	Total	Population (2016)
Luqa 70		50	120	5,793

Total University of Malta student body 2016/17:

Female	Male	Total
6874	4919	11793

University of Malta figures as at: 01.03.2017

The University of Malta works to try to reverse this deficit with various initiatives including the setting up of its Cottonera Resource Centre.²⁶⁵

□ **Museums and heritage sites in Cottonera**

The government museums in Malta are all run by the Government agency Heritage Malta.²⁶⁶ In the Cottonera area there are three: the Malta Maritime Museum and the Inquisitor's Palace and the Fort Sant Angelo Museum in Vittoriosa (Birgu). There are no government run museums in Bormla, L-Isla, or in nearby Kalkara and Marsa. In Birgu there is the 'Malta at War' museum which is run by a voluntary organization called 'Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna'.²⁶⁷ In Bormla there is one museum in a private house called 'Bir Mula Heritage Museum'²⁶⁸ run by the owners of the house. In a town nearby, Haż-Żabbar, which is within the Southern Harbour

²⁶⁵ University of Malta, Cottonera Resource Centre, (website), <https://www.um.edu.mt/crc>. (accessed 20 July 2108).

²⁶⁶ Heritage Malta, (website), www.heritagemalta.org, (accessed 20 July 2018).

²⁶⁷ Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, (website), www.wirtartna.org, (accessed 20 July 2018).

²⁶⁸ Bir Mula Heritage Museum, (website), www.birmula.com, (accessed 20 July 2018).

region,²⁶⁹ there is the Haż-Żabbar Sanctuary Museum. Founded by Mgr Joseph Zarb, it was opened in 1954 and renovated in 2003. It is run by a committee with a group of volunteers and is headed by the Archpriest of Żabbar.

One should also not forget the many churches which hold some magnificent works of art: paintings, sculptures, frescoes. These are open to the public at certain times of the day and the works of art are definitely much appreciated by the local population. Within some of these churches and chapels there are objects of general and not specifically ecclesiastical interest. For example, the chapel next to the Parish Church of Saint Lawrence in Birgu holds what are purported to be an original hat and a sword of Grand Master Jean de Valette.

With regard to the government run museums, one doubts if the majority of local citizens has ever been there. At the Malta Maritime Museum in Birgu there is a charge of €5 Adults; €3.50 Seniors; €2.50 Children. At the Inquisitor's Palace, Birgu the charges are: €6 Adults; €4.50 Seniors; €3 Children. Even if there is interest on the part of the local people, those prices would certainly be a deterrent for many families from the area. I have been told, however, that local schools do take their students on school outings to both Heritage Malta museums.

□ **Conclusion**

It is within this context that I shall be working. My points of reference will be, as indicated, the Church; the Local Councils; the organized groups; the voluntary organisations; interested individuals. Much has been done by the Local Councils to valorize the activities within the communities. Birgu, in particular, has been very active through the creation of Birgu by candlelight evenings which bring in thousands of people from outside the city²⁷⁰ whilst L-Isla has its Maritime Festival.²⁷¹

However, to my knowledge, there has not been any attempt to create a home-grown community museum or post-museum space initiative in any of the Three Cities. I feel that the area is suited to this kind of development as the activities highlighted will be particular to the towns which have a history and skills, some of which were highly prized but which have become commercially redundant, artisan

²⁶⁹ The Southern Harbour region is defined for statistical purposes as including: Cospicua; Fgura; Floriana; Hal Luqa; Haż-Żabbar; Kalkara; Marsa; Paola; Santa Luċija; Senglea; Hal Tarxien; Valletta; Vittoriosa; Xgħajra. Source: *Regional Statistics Malta 2017*, NSO, p. 5.

²⁷⁰ No author, 'Vittoriosa glows in candlelight', *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 21 October 2012. Available from The Times of Malta online: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20121021/local/vittoriosa-glows-in-candlelight.441975>

²⁷¹ Maritime Senglea International Festival, (website), <http://www.maritimesenglea.com/>, (accessed on 20 July 2018).

skills which are still part of the living culture, communities which are seeking to keep an identity but to open themselves up to the 'outside' world at the same time. The communities seem to be keen to develop activities that will leave a commercial benefit for the townspeople and encourage entrepreneurs from their own ranks to stay in the area or at least to invest in Cottonera.

These, however, are my suppositions. I hope to verify this hypothesis through the research that will need to be done in Cottonera and with the people from the Three Cities.

Part II - Methodology pre-Fieldwork

□ *Introduction*

I shall briefly return to my four main research questions after which I shall discuss the qualitative methodology that I shall be using and describe why this particular type of methodology has been chosen and exactly what it entails. In the light of this, ethical issues and the limitations of this study are then considered as well as my own position as a researcher. Also important is a description of the method of analysis which will be undertaken after the data has been collected.

□ *Aims and objectives of the research*

Four main research questions

1. What sense of time and place do the people of Bormla have with regard to their city and its environs? What does this local population see as its own heritage and the heritage of its place?
2. Who is the community, or who are the communities of Bormla? How can those from outside the community(ies) of Bormla, including researchers, identify, theorise about and communicate with the different communities in this place?
3. How do local community groups conceptualise and practise their heritage and that of their city? Are the local people and the informal and formal groups and organisations of Bormla interested in extending their vision of cultural heritage so as to enhance their own and other people's understanding of the city and its value?
4. Do the communities of Bormla want to exercise their right for cognitive democracy and civic action or indeed feel that this can be beneficial to them in the short and long term?

□ *Qualitative analysis theory in general and within a community context*

As Denscombe states

There is no single approach to research that is indisputably the best. What is best will tend to depend on the specific question being investigated and the kind of knowledge that is required.²⁷²

²⁷² M. Denscombe, *Ground Rules for Social Research, Guidelines for Good Practice* (2nd ed.), Open University Press, UK, 2010, p. 129.

In this particular research, the decision to adopt a qualitative approach was taken because, in the context, a quantitative approach could not be nuanced enough to acquire the kind of knowledge sought. This is not the type of venue in which a questionnaire would be appropriate. In fact, there may be some groups that do not have significant reading skills and would best be addressed on a verbal basis. The variables, as mentioned previously in this chapter, are so numerous and the diversity of the subjects so wide that a researcher will need to interview several different groups: from youngsters in a drama group to church groups. One can anticipate that different types of stimulation will be required to actually encourage participation during the sessions. This can be best achieved through a qualitative method. This approach has proven to be very effective in teasing out emotional responses, realities and experiences and unravelling sometimes very complex narratives. There are many examples. One of these is the concerted attempt made in 1995 by The Norfolk Museums Services, the National Trust and English Heritage to help the Great Yarmouth Borough Council that wished to raise the profile and aspirations of an economically deprived area of their town.²⁷³ There was enough funding to create some interesting cultural activities but the Great Yarmouth Borough Council wanted to make sure that the people of the town, including those less advantaged, would be 'on board' with these ideas.

Susie Fisher, project consultant, was determined to introduce focus groups. Sheila Watson, project leader, describes the preconceived ideas that were in the minds of many of those involved in the project concerning the efficacy of this method. In the end, the results were astonishing. "We could not have been more wrong,"²⁷⁴ states Watson candidly. What was particularly surprising was that all the different focus groups (local people on low income, seaside tourists and higher income bracket locals amongst others) were substantially in agreement over how they wished the town's heritage to be 'displayed'. It became clear that lower income groups as well as the seaside tourist visiting Great Yarmouth for its entertainment value, far from being uninterested in the heritage of the town, were very keen to manifest it through the local vision and memory. They wanted the local narrative to be told and to be accessible. This resulted in a rethink regarding displays current at the time and the eventual decision to create the award-winning 'Time and Tide' museum. These focus groups were key to the way the plan of action was developed over time. And, in this case, it also meant that the funds were spent by the Borough, in the knowledge that there had been genuine consultation with main stakeholders.

²⁷³ S. Watson, 'Using Focus Groups: the Great Yarmouth Experience' in *SHCG newsletter of Social History Curator's Group*, no. 44, 1999, pp. 6 – 12.

²⁷⁴ S. Watson, 'Using Focus Groups', p. 7.

For a full description of the the community excavation organised by Great Yarmouth Museums in Norfolk, England in 2001 vide: S. Watson, "Why can't we dig like they do on Time Team? The meaning of the past within working class communities' in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2011, pp. 364-379.

The importance of approaching interviews and larger focus groups with an open mind is also born out in other examples. Wedgwood has done significant research amongst underprivileged, post-industrial communities in North Carolina in the US. Her hypothesis was that, whilst the working class in a post-industrial area were the people most adversely affected by demolition of their buildings and places,²⁷⁵ maybe they were also the ones “to have the most to gain from preservation.”²⁷⁶ Wedgwood interviewed “(l)ocal working people (...) about their feelings for and involvement in heritage projects. (...) Responses showed an interest in history that was remarkable for its intensity and its emotion.”²⁷⁷

It seems clear from these examples that interviews and focus groups were key to the discovery of their intimate knowledge of the place and their emotions concerning it.

□ ***Collecting the qualitative data through interviews and focus groups***

Conversation is a basic human interaction. (...) Through conversations we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes and the world they live in.²⁷⁸

Kvale starts his book *Doing Interviews* with this statement but follows it up immediately with the following:

The research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee.²⁷⁹

The similarities and the differences between ‘conversation’ and ‘interview’ are thus explained from the first page. Kvale further defines the interview as “a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by the one party – the interviewer.”²⁸⁰ He later delves deeply into the range of interviews and focus groups and explains the diverse elements involved in their successful outcome but the main definition remains there as a reminder that this is always going to be a ‘professional interaction’.

The focus group method is not without its critics. Denscombe writes at length about the pitfalls of what he refers to as ‘manufactured’ data.

²⁷⁵ Vide: T.K. Hareven, and R. Langenbach, ‘Living Places, Work Places and Historical Identity’, in D. Lowenthal and M. Binney, *Our Past Before us: How do we save it?*, The Blackwell Press, 1981.

²⁷⁶ T. Wedgwood, ‘History in Two Dimensions or Three? Working Class Responses to History’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2009, pp. 277-297, p. 278.

DOI: 10.1080/13527250902933611

²⁷⁷ Wedgwood, ‘History in Two Dimensions or Three?’ p. 278.

²⁷⁸ S. Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, SAGE Publication, London UK, 2007, p. 1.

²⁷⁹ Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, p. 1.

²⁸⁰ Kvale, p. 7.

(...) the majority of contemporary qualitative researchers prefer to select a small group of individuals to interview or to place in focus groups. In this sense, by assembling a specific research sample, linked only by the fact that they have been selected to answer a pre-determined research question, such researchers prefer to 'manufacture' their data rather than 'find' it in the 'field'.²⁸¹

By 'finding it in the field', Denscombe refers to observation techniques, videography and photography as well as unstructured discussion with individuals or groups. However, he himself goes on to say

"(...) everything depends upon how you analyse data rather than the data's source."²⁸²

A valuable caveat from Patton when considering using a focus group is that

The focus group interview is, first and foremost, an interview. It is not a problem-solving session. It is not a decision-making group. It is not primarily a discussion, although direct interactions among participants often occur. It is an *interview*.²⁸³

There is also the possibility of actually using group discussion rather than interview mode. Some writers on the subject prefer this to the interview as it mitigates the possibility of a certain artificiality which can be present in an interview. The supposition being that '(g)roup discussions (...) correspond to the way in which opinions are produced, expressed, and exchanged in everyday life.'²⁸⁴

□ ***Who will be interviewed and who will constitute the focus groups?***

Certain people will be identified for one-to-one interviews. I shall make sure that the individuals include gatekeepers of opinion and information but also ordinary members of the general public. These could comprise a member of the Church hierarchy (e.g. Archpriest); the Mayor of the city; older people as well as young mothers as well as Bormlizi who no longer live in the area.

The participants in my focus groups will have a group communality but they will also be defined by their sub-groups such as age, occupation, education, gender or status. Within some groups there will inevitably be some group overlapping in which the participants belong to more than one communal group. There will be many people who fall within two or three or more sub groups such as Church

²⁸¹ M. Denscombe, *Ground Rules for Social Research*, p. 31.

²⁸² D. Silverman, *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Qualitative Research*, SAGE Publication, London UK, (2nd ed.), 2013, p. 49.

²⁸³ M.Q. Patton, 'Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods', Sage, London, (3rd ed.), 2002, pp. 385-386 cited in Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Sage, London, (5th ed.), 2014, p. 243.

²⁸⁴ Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, p. 244.

groups, former dockyard workers, digitally literate groups, Cospicua Heritage Society, other groups interested in Cospicua's past, 'Outsiders' (Maltese not considered by some as Bormliži) and ethnic newcomers.

□ ***Ethical Issues***

Much has been written about ethical considerations in qualitative research: Silverman;²⁸⁵ Cresswell;²⁸⁶ Denscombe;²⁸⁷ Kvale;²⁸⁸ Mertens & Ginsberg;²⁸⁹ Krueger²⁹⁰ amongst others. These chapters, with their different emphases, are full of recommendations. One of the first messages is that a researcher must first and foremost be aware of what is required of them by their university with regard to the institution's rules and regulations concerning ethical consideration and data collection protocols in qualitative research. This may require that the researcher provides general information to an ethics committee or, depending on the type of research, further details about the focus group/interview questions that are going to be used.

It goes without saying that the researcher must inform potential groups or individuals of the aims of the research and the anonymity that will be part of the research. Where individuals have no objection to being mentioned by name and/or designation, this must be had in writing – if this is allowed by the University's Ethics Committee. In one of Silverman's Ph.D. student examples regarding keeping sensitive information 'under wraps', this particular student chose to create a system of number-coded transcripts. Thus "(t)he names of the individuals and interested parties were changed without destroying the integrity and usefulness of the research."²⁹¹ One can imagine that this could be created in any qualitative research project if thought is given to this possibility prior to starting fieldwork. The place where I shall be doing my fieldwork has a relatively small physical area and a population of only 5000. I can imagine that guaranteeing total anonymity in the context of Bormla may very well be a challenge.

Silverman makes an important point about understanding 'cultures'²⁹² in their widest sense. This is particularly important if the researcher comes from outside the particular 'culture' which s/he intends to investigate. Preconceptions,

²⁸⁵ D. Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, Sage, London UK, (4th ed.), 2013, pp. 159-186.

²⁸⁶ J.W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design-Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Sage, London UK, (3rd ed.), 2013, pp. 56-85.

²⁸⁷ Denscombe, *Ground Rules for Social Research*, pp. 59-80.

²⁸⁸ Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, pp. 23-33.

²⁸⁹ D.M. Mertens and P.E. Ginsberg, *The Handbook of social research ethics*. Sage, London, UK, 2009, pp. 23-38.

²⁹⁰ R.A. Kreuger and M.A. Casey, *Focus Groups A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, SAGE, 2015, p. 34-35.

²⁹¹ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, p. 172.

²⁹² Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, p. 167.

stereotyping and simple ignorance can be avoided if the research can benefit from good mentoring. It is also important to read up about the community in question before commencing fieldwork.

“An interview inquiry is a moral enterprise. Moral issues concern the means as well as the ends of an interview inquiry. The human interaction in the interview affects the interviewees and the knowledge produced by an interview inquiry affects our understanding of the human condition. Consequently, interview research is saturated with moral and ethical issues.”²⁹³

With this statement Kvale makes it very clear that the ethical issues concern every aspect of the interview. He summarises this in seven stages: thematizing; designing; interview situation; transcription; analysis; verification and reporting. Cresswell has created a similar list²⁹⁴ which summarises the challenges and offers ways of addressing the issues. The main concerns remain the same. For example, honesty in disclosing the aims of a study; not putting pressure on potential participants; making sure that you, the researcher, understand the inevitable power balance hierarchies and try to mitigate these in intelligent ways; always try to keep a researcher’s impartiality without seeming aloof; communicate in clear, appropriate language and when you finally publish, make sure that the data is shared with others – including those who have participated in the research.

What comes out of all the lists, recommendations and case studies in these specialist publications is the message of honesty, integrity, understanding and above all respect for those who you are involved with.

□ ***Limitations of the research***

I have already established that the methodology I shall be using in this research project will be qualitative and that it will involve the introduction of focus groups, small group and individual interviews. However, the literature suggests that there are some challenges and some limitations that go together with this type of research which should be fully understood by the researcher embarking on this method. These limitations are not restricted to the focus groups per se but also to the other aspects of qualitative research such as the large amount of data produced and the subsequent difficulties in analyzing the data.

Jenny Kitzinger, for example, whilst discussing how useful a tool focus groups and interviews are, mentions the difficulties that might occur when the group is not of equal participation capacity. In her case example she was dealing with a group

²⁹³ Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, p. 23.

²⁹⁴ Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, pp. 58-59.

interview with members of a care home for the elderly, the residents of which had differing mental and physical problems. She states

This severely restricted interaction between research participants and confirmed some of the staff's predictions about the limitations of group work with this population. However, such problems could be resolved by thinking more carefully about the composition of the group, and sometimes group participants could help to translate for each other. (...) Communication difficulties should not rule out group work, but must be considered as a factor.²⁹⁵

This caveat and Kitzinger's answer to the issue are instructive. What they suggest is that preparation is always going to be of great importance when creating the focus group so that one can understand and react when even a meticulously planned situation goes awry.

Anderson²⁹⁶ makes a brief 'strengths and weaknesses' analysis and outlines her ideas about the limitations of qualitative analysis. Anderson comments that the quality of any research largely depends upon the skills of the researcher but that there is a risk of personal bias and of the researcher's presence influencing the participants. She also says that it is harder to "maintain, assess, and demonstrate" in a qualitative methodology situation than a quantitative one. The sheer size of the data, continues Anderson, makes analysis complex and time consuming and that qualitative research is also, sometimes, not so readily accepted by the scientific community. Anderson also mentions issues of anonymity and confidentiality as being problematic when presenting findings and that results are not so easy to present in a visual way.²⁹⁷

Several issues in Anderson's list of limitations are really ethical considerations which are mentioned above or concern the challenges of analysis that are referred to in the following section.

□ **Methods of Analysis**

Kvale states quite clearly that

No standard method exists, no *via regia*, to arrive at essential meanings and deeper implications of what is said in an interview.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ J. Kitzinger, 'Introducing focus groups', *BMJ*, vol. 311, 29 July 1995, p. 301. Available from: ProQuest.

²⁹⁶ C. Anderson, 'Presenting and Evaluating Qualitative Research' in *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, vol. 74, no. 8, 2010. Available from: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21179252, (accessed 10 July 2017).

²⁹⁷ Anderson, 'Presenting and Evaluating Qualitative Research', pp. 2-3.

²⁹⁸ Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, p. 103.

There are diverse systems for the analysis of qualitative data. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson propose several: content analysis; grounded analysis; narrative analysis, conversation analysis, argument analysis.²⁹⁹ There is also action research which is some way resembles grounded theory in that any data analysis that is made influences the way in which the rest of the data is collected.

Ultimately, “(t)he techniques of analysis are tools, useful for some purposes, relevant for some types of interviews, and suited for some researchers.”³⁰⁰ It is perhaps one of the positives of qualitative research that it does not fit into a set type of analysis but one that is negotiated and informed by the research itself.

In the literature, two main philosophically based analytical methods are used within qualitative analysis: phenomenology, which could be described, somewhat reductively, as an analysis of the objects and phenomena as a way to unpack deep meaning, and hermeneutics which deals with the interpretation of texts in the humanities tradition. It also seems that the two philosophical methods can and do often overlap within the context of qualitative methodology and the analysis that follows it. Given the research questions listed at the beginning of this Chapter, I can imagine that there may be situations in which a phenomenological approach might be very appropriate whilst there are others in which a more general, interpretative approach would be most relevant.

There are many suggestions as to the practical steps of analysis. Kvale, for example, referring to analyses of meaning, mentions three main tools: meaning coding; meaning condensation and meaning interpretation. Coding and categorization, when linked to content analysis, involve linking certain elements of a text to be analysed to key words. This method can be extended to “(...) a more systematic conceptualization of a statement, (...)”.³⁰¹ The idea behind coding is that it can be used to analyse content data in a way that is quantifiable but that it can also be used as a comparative tool when analyzing the content of diverse groups. This would be useful not only to ‘measure’ the reactions to questions but also as a sounding board for the researcher to know what are the keywords that come up frequently or perhaps even too frequently indicating to the researcher that perhaps the questions are not leading to the knowledge that s/he is aiming for.

There is also the challenging question of the validity of the knowledge achieved. Referring to Action Research methods, Checkland and Holwell make this comment

²⁹⁹ M. Easterby-Smith, R. Thorpe and P.R. Jackson, *Management Research*, Sage, London UK, (3rd ed.), 2008.

³⁰⁰ Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, p. 103.

³⁰¹ Kvale, *Doing Interviews*, p. 105.

Unable to match the complete replicability of experimental happenings which characterize natural science, researchers investigating social phenomena via AR must at least achieve a situation in which their research process is *recoverable* by interested outsiders. In order to do this it is essential to state the epistemology (the set of ideas and the process in which they are used methodologically) by means of which they will make sense of their research, and so define what counts for them as acquired knowledge.³⁰²

This comment, although made with AR particularly in mind, does seem to encapsulate the aims of qualitative research in general and the importance of acquiring knowledge that is as near to the social reality as possible. In the same article of 1998, Checkland and Holwell say that it is now generally accepted “that “social reality” is not a given, but is the changing product of a continual intersubjective discourse (...).³⁰³ The particular venue that I shall be working within, Bormla, is one in which I imagine there will already be internal discussion about the ‘social reality’ of the city which is the result of change outside the confines of the city, education, the media and myriad other influences.

Having made the decision to use a qualitative methodology, it will be up to me, the researcher, to examine the situation ‘on the ground’ and, always with close reference to my research questions, create and conduct the interviews with individuals or focus groups, gather the data in a comprehensive and comprehensible manner and to analyse it with the aim of obtaining as much actual and deep knowledge as possible which genuinely reflects the diverse social realities I might encounter and which, in turn, will help me answer my research questions with confidence.

□ *My position as a researcher*

I think it is only right to take a long hard look at myself as a researcher embarking on this significant journey. On the positive side, I can say that I do not lack enthusiasm for the project. Nor do I lack experience of interviewing people – albeit in a different context.³⁰⁴ My age is possibly, on this occasion, an advantage as I have a lifetime’s experience and a long career in communications behind me. I have also had the privilege to bring up two sons, so I do have a certain amount of experience with young people.

However, I am and always shall be, an outsider on this island. I may be half Maltese but I was born and brought up in England and my accent rather reveals my

³⁰² P. Checkland and S. Holwell, ‘Action Research: Its Nature and Validity’, *Systematic Practice and Action Research*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1998, p. 20. Available from Springer.

³⁰³ Checkland and Holwell, ‘Action Research: Its Nature and Validity’, p.20.

³⁰⁴ CampusFM Radio presenter/interviewer of the following series: The Lecture Room, Talking Books, The Artefact, Research Matters, University Matters. Circa 400 people interviewed over a twelve year period.

origins. I read and understand the Maltese language very well but my spoken Maltese is not excellent. I hope that, instead of being a disadvantage, this could possibly be turned to my advantage. Being not once but twice removed from the Bormla context may actually allow me to be seen as neutral and therefore not in any way a threat. Whether this will actually be the case, remains to be seen. I shall be following closely the advice of my supervisors concerning this issue.

□ ***Community and the Community of Cospicua (Bormla)***

“(...) the act of recovering, telling and then preserving one’s own history is not merely one of intellectual vanity; nor can it be dismissed – as some still seek to do – as a mildly diverting leisure activity with some socially desirable outcomes. Instead the endeavour by individuals and social groups to document their history, particularly if that history has been generally subordinated or marginalized, is political and subversive.”³⁰⁵

I have chosen the above quotation because I feel that it well reflects the challenges that the people of Cottonera – the area in which Bormla falls geographically - face when trying to highlight themselves, their history and their present. Cottonera is not an easy place to be. A glance at the titles of University of Malta dissertations written about the area in the last twenty years confirms this. However, on a positive note, a title from 2011, ‘Attitudes and perceptions of heritage events as tourism attractions: the Cottonera community’, by Veronique Vella, also shows that things may now be changing. The finalizing of the promenade project and other improvements in Bormla have brought more people to the city who are willing to invest in coffee shops, boutique hotels and other endeavours that have certainly enhanced the look and feel of the city.

³⁰⁵ A. Flinn and M. Stevens, ‘It is noh mistri, we mekin histri. Telling our own story: independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream’, in J.A. Bastian and B. Alexander, *Community Archives The Shaping of Memory*, Facet Publishing, London, 2009, p. 3.

Part III – Methodology post-Fieldwork

□ *Introduction*

Part II introduces the reality of my methodology post-fieldwork by examining how the methodology framework set out before the fieldwork translated into the real situation. I discuss the organization of the thesis which provides a structure upon which the methodology and the analysis that follows can be placed. The actual interview method is discussed in some detail with indications of the main codes obtained from the analysis of them. The focus groups are then examined in a similar fashion. A short description of the informal conversations is also given.

I conclude the chapter by discussing the validity of my methodology, the computer software adopted for the analysis and some details concerning the transcription of the interviews.

□ *Methodology Framework*

In my methodology I have maintained the framework that I set myself in Part II of this Chapter, i.e. that it should be qualitative; that there would be one-to-one-interviews, focus groups and conversations with interested persons. How this framework actually panned out is described below.

Silverman warns researchers that

Analysis is not simply one of the later stages of research, to be followed by an equally separate phase of 'writing up results'³⁰⁶

With this advice in mind, in Part II of this Chapter, I also looked at some of the possible theoretical approaches that could be used in the analysis of the data created through the qualitative methodology I would be using in my thesis. The two main philosophical approaches are phenomenological and hermeneutical. Writing, as I was, before gathering the data, I did imagine that the kind of questions would lend themselves to a phenomenological approach. However, the literature did also suggest that a more generalized, interpretative analysis would usually overlap with an object analysis.

In my focus groups I did use a typical narrative tool, that of photographs, to initially stimulate discussion. However, I did not use visuals during my one-to-one interviews and the aim of the interviews was not to create a narrative of the respondents' lives. Clearly, there are parts of the interview through which I wanted to have answers to questions of identity – this was particularly in Question One –

³⁰⁶ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, p. 230.

and the answers did sometimes create a life narrative with memories of childhood, family, place and past. However, my main aim in the thesis is to see if there could be a living connection between the local population and their heritage past and present. The other four questions were much less narrative oriented but aimed more at finding out what was important to the interlocutors with regard to heritage, present day mores and the challenges that there might be to creating a community awareness and manifestation of that heritage.

The grounded theory looks at categories that are developed through an examination of the phenomena that emerge from careful coding of the data. The categories can then be taken a step further so as to create theories that hold good generally and not just in that particular study. This requires a very rigorous analysis including repeated triangulation of material. For the purposes of my thesis, whilst I definitely think that careful coding, characteristic of grounded theory, would be absolutely essential for understanding the data, I did not feel, in the face of that data, that there was a necessity to create the coordinates for extrapolating any general theory. This is a situation-based inquiry and, as such, may shed light on aspects common to other situations but the aim was not specifically that.

The characteristics of an ethnographic study, such as being embedded in a community for a long period of time with all that this kind of connection would entail, were not present in my study. As stated, I did try to spend time in Bormla, walking around the streets, speaking to people in shops and bars, speaking to artisans, discovering the historic remains with a local amateur historian as well as attending almost all of the events in the Church calendar such as Holy Week and the Feast. However, by no means can this be described as being an ethnographic study.

Neither could mine be described as a case study. The breadth of the questions and the analytical aims of the study went beyond the scope of a single issue. One could say that I took Bormla as a 'case study' with regard to heritage awareness and community museum development in a city that has little or no museum experience but I feel that would be stretching the definition of case study in this context.

The type of analysis that I feel most fits the study in question is that guided by phenomenology with the addition of hermeneutical techniques. This will involve looking at the subjects and the material that emerges from the interviews, focus groups and also the conversations held during my fieldwork, categorizing them in a coding process and then examining the texts themselves. These methods will enable me to look deeply into the identity or identities of the community/ies of Bormla within the framework of my research questions and, perhaps, especially through analysis of the texts, even beyond those questions.

□ **Structure**

Calling on the work of Alasuutari (1995), Silverman encourages researchers to create a macrostructure and a microstructure for a thesis. This involves looking at the overall organization of a thesis and that of the individual chapters.³⁰⁷ A well-organized macrostructure allows for an holistic vision of the work, whilst a solid microstructure can only be created through an understanding of the message that the researcher is trying to put across and through that message the analytical form will emerge.³⁰⁸

With regard to the structure of this thesis, the macrostructure, or the holistic picture will include the literature review and the methodology, followed by the voice of the respondents. I feel that I owe it to the many people I interviewed, one-to-one or in focus groups as well as through conversations, to show what they had to say about the various subjects that came to the fore through the questions. I have coded quite a number of categories for each question (for interviews and focus groups). Some have high frequency, others have low occurrence. I have taken each category and illustrated them through quotations. I have commented briefly about some of the answers so that the reality of Bormla can become clear to the reader for whom Bormla may be a totally unknown quantity.

These chapters will be followed by an analysis of the present cultural landscape of Bormla both ecclesiastical and secular.

There will then follow a discussion, or several discussions, which will pick up on and dovetail the information that was collected through the interviews with documentary research as well as reference to the various informal conversations had with various figures on the Bormla scene. Through this discussion, I hope to draw some conclusions about the relevance, the timeliness and the feasibility of the diverse suggestions made by my respondents. I shall also address some suggestions on my part which I shall put forward after careful consideration of the information given to me and with reference to the literature and the experience of others in the field. No doubt, these suggestions will present challenges that shall have to be evaluated on my part but, ultimately, by those who may be interested in propelling those ideas forward – be they members of the public, VOs or figures in authority.

□ **One-to-One Interviews**

The twenty-two, one-to-one, interviews were held over a period of six and a half months (October 2016 to April 2017). Several criteria were used in choosing

³⁰⁷ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, p. 361.

³⁰⁸ Silverman, pp. 366 – 367.

the interviewees. They either hailed from Bormla or were representative of Bormla in some capacity or had a special interest in the city. It was considered important to try to find examples across the demographic spectrum and to retain a gender balance. In reality, with regard to the demographic, there is a leaning toward males over 40 years old. This is possibly a reflection of the apparent male ascendancy within the city. This was balanced, however, by the focus group gender mix and also by the four women with whom I had very illuminating informal conversations, all of which were recorded, lasting at least one hour each.

At this stage, it is important to point out that before I embarked on making any contacts with regard to my fieldwork in Bormla, a meeting was held between my Ph.D. supervisor, Professor Carmel Borg, the Mayor of Bormla, Ms Alison Zerafa Civelli and myself. We went through the list of names that I had put together along with my wish list of focus groups and the Mayor was most helpful in suggesting names that I had not listed and providing contact details where I did not have them. At this point, my choice, made in conjunction with my supervisor, was to give primacy to local and extended community members, with the Mayor chosen in her capacity as a community leader and one former politician interviewed as a member of the community.

My approach with regard to organizing meetings was to contact the person concerned by telephone, when I had the number, or by email³⁰⁹ or by follow up email after the initial phone call.

I also attached a brief biography³¹⁰ with the email so that the recipient was able to have some information about me without giving away too many details. Fortunately, Camilleri is a very common name in Malta. I felt it was important for the interviewees to understand that I was not a native speaker of Maltese but that I had been living on the island long enough to have learned the language and therefore had good understanding of the written and spoken word but that my own spoken Maltese would not be faultless. I feel that this short biography satisfied the interviewees that I was a serious/genuine researcher. It also satisfied any curiosity they may have had in my regard and I was pleased to note that nobody asked me who my husband was or whether I had children or even, except in one or two occasions, where I actually resided. One interviewee looked at my wedding ring and commented that I must be married. I replied that I had been married but was now a widow and the conversation ended there.

I cannot tell whether the interviewees felt satisfied with the information they had been given or whether they understood that the whole exercise was about

³⁰⁹ Vide Appendix No. 2.

³¹⁰ Vide Appendix No. 3.

them and not about the researcher. Whatever the reasons, I think I managed to remain in the background with regard to most of my participants except, of course, those who knew me from my years as an employee of the University of Malta. However, those were mainly academics who would have understood very well what the position of a researcher should be within the context of a qualitative, one-to-one interview.

None of the people I approached refused to be interviewed. On the contrary, they were all willing and enthusiastic. I made it as easy as possible with regard to venue and time so that they would be inconvenienced as little as possible. This led to interviews being held at the Bormla Local Council premises, a Valletta coffee shop, the sacristy of a church in Valletta, the bar at the St George's Band Club premises, Bormla, the University of Malta and in some private homes including my own.

Each interviewee was asked to fill in, with an ID number, and sign a consent form stating that they agreed in general to the interview and also that they agreed to being quoted in the thesis. All participants signed up for both parts of the consent form.³¹¹

One-to-One Interview Respondents:

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Brief description</i>
Male	From L-Isla but has great attachment to Bormla, has written extensively about the city - Academic
Male	Bormla resident - writer and researcher of the history of the Regatta - Dockyard admin. (ret.)
Male	Born in Bormla but living in a nearby town - has a close interest in Bormla, and its heritage - Teacher
Female	Came to live in Bormla as a child – Teacher and present Mayor of Bormla
Male	Born and brought up in Kalkara - Chair of the Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee - Broadcaster and Journalist
Male	Born and brought up in Bormla, present Archpriest of Bormla
Male	Not born in Bormla - Dockyard admin. (ret.)
Male	Not born in Bormla - former Archpriest of Bormla

³¹¹ Vide Appendix No. 7.

Male	Born and brought up in Bormla - Teacher and local historian
Male	Born and brought up in Bormla - Advocate, former Minister and President of the Republic Emeritus
Male	Not born in Bormla - Founder of Dar it-Tama - Priest
Male	Born in Bormla but no longer resident, but retains attachment to the city - Academic
Male	Born in Bormla but no longer resident – retains attachment to the city – Academic and present Rector of the University of Malta
Male	Born and brought up in Bormla – Teacher, local historian and owner of Bormla’s only museum
Male	Born and brought up in Bormla - organiser of ecclesiastical events in Bormla
Male	Bormla born but resident in Valletta - organiser of ecclesiastical events in Bormla and in Valletta
Male	Born in Bormla but no longer resident – retains childhood memories of the city - Academic
Male	Born and brought up in Bormla now resident in Kalkara - owner of a media company
Female	Resident in the city - Maltese/English descent - Artist
Female	Birgu born but now living in Bormla – works in the media
Male	Born and brought up in Bormla - ex RAF & Dockyard admin. (ret.)
Male	Bormla resident - Teacher and choirmaster

Age range: 40 to 85 years. Average age: 59 years.

Twenty two one-to-one interviewees were held with three females and nineteen males between the ages of forty and eighty five. The average age was fifty nine years. Occupations were various – from artists to amateur historians and from teachers to former dockyard workers. A full list of these interviewees is found in the Appendix.³¹²

I asked the same questions to all the interviewees. The average length of the recorded interview was 1hr 2mins. Twelve of these lasted over 1hr and, of those

³¹² Vide Appendix No. 9.

that lasted less than 1hr, eight lasted 40mins or more. The shortest interview was of 35mins' duration and the longest 1hr 44mins. The secondary or further prompt questions depended upon the particular knowledge base of the person concerned. For example, there were several interviewees who had good knowledge of Bormla's ancient and modern history so it was clearly worth asking further and deeper questions on that subject. Others, though they showed interest in Bormla's history, clearly had little direct knowledge so it was more worthwhile asking follow up and prompt questions about aspects that came to the fore through the other questions about which they felt on firmer ground.

Some were reticent to speak about more recent history, for example, about Bormla/Maltese politics after WWII, whilst others were more than willing to give their opinion on the subject. Where there seemed to be reticence, I did try to prompt but there is a balance that needs to be kept between seeking an opinion and losing the trust of the interviewee.

□ *Questions*

The questions were taken from the four main research questions formulated in the first part of this Chapter on Methodology. Those four main research questions remained in the foreground but clearly they were not suitable for a one-to-one interview or focus group situation. For this reason, I had to create initial questions (with the possibility of further secondary questions) that would represent the essence of the original research questions. I looked closely at the aims of each of the research questions. The first research question:

1. What sense of time and place do the people of Bormla have with regard to their city and its environs? What does this local population see as its own heritage and the heritage of its place?

aimed at understanding the Bormliż feeling of identity. Through this question, I wished to hear their memories of the city of their youth and their present day sensations and emotions with regard to the place and its surroundings. I also wanted to try to identify attitudes to heritage, in a very wide interpretation of the word. In fact, in the final analysis, I decided to split this first research question into two separate interview questions.

1. When you hear the word Bormla what comes into your mind?

- What does Bormla mean to you?

1. *Meta tisma' l-kelma Bormla, x'jigik f'moħħok?*

- *Xi tfisser Bormla għalik?*

2. What are the parts of Bormla's past that interest you?

- Why did you remain in Bormla?
- What interests you or what do you like about the city?
- 2. *X'jolqtok l-aktar mill-istorja ta' Bormla*
- *Għaliex bqajt toqgħod hawn?*
- *X'jinteressak/jogħgbok dwar dan il-lokal?*

The second research question:

2. Who is the community, or who are the communities of Bormla? How can those from outside the community(ies) of Bormla, including researchers, identify, theorise about and communicate with the different communities in this place?

aimed at discovering whether there was homogeneity in the Bormla community; whether there were diverse communities within the main one and whether there were separate communities and how much these communities recognized and communicated with each other. With this information, I hoped to be able to find those entry points that would allow me to understand the community realities of Bormla.

- 3. Do you feel part of a community or communities here in Bormla?
- If so, which ones do you feel part of?
- 3. *Tħoss li int parti mill-komunità/jjet Bormliża/i?*
- *Għaliex iva/le?*

3. How do local community groups conceptualise and practise their heritage and that of their city? Are the local people and the informal and formal groups and organisations of Bormla interested in extending their vision of cultural heritage so as to enhance their own and other people's understanding of the city and its value?

With research question three, I aimed to discover what the local population imagined their heritage to be and how they practise their present day heritage activities. I decided to do this by asking about positive and negative narratives of Bormla as I felt this would give me a genuine feel for what they felt was going to enhance that vision of Bormla that would help both Bormliži and others understand Bormla at a deep level.

- 4. So, what do you feel are the positive and negative narratives of Bormla?
- How would you describe the true Bormla?
- 4. *Allura, x'inhu l-ħelu (narrattivi sbieħ) u l-morr ta' Bormla (narrattivi koroh)?*
- *Kif tiddekrivi l-vera Bormla?*

The last question asked during the interviews reflects the fourth research question:

4. Do the communities of Bormla want to exercise their right for cognitive democracy and civic action or indeed feel that this can be beneficial to them in the short and long term?

This question reflected clearly that those interviewed, including those in the focus groups, would very much like to participate in a discussion about cultural manifestations in Bormla. There was enthusiasm but also doubt about successful outcomes and I feel that the reasons for these diverse sentiments can be found within the answers to all the questions.

5. Are you interested in having a 'say' in how your Bormla's culture is projected both within your own boundaries and to those outside it?
- If so, what suggestions can you make in this regard?

5. *Interessat li tkun parti minn deċiżżjonijiet ta' kif Bormla trid tidher f'għajnejn in-nies?*
- *Għandek xi suġġerimenti?*

Some secondary questions that spring from these basic five have been added to this list and discussions have led down some unexpected paths. This has enriched the research and helped to provide profound answers to the research questions. However, initially these five questions were covered so that a 'compare and contrast' analysis exercise could be made on all the single person interviews.

The resulting themes were coded by theme, sources and references.³¹³

□ **Focus Groups**

The same questions as above were asked of all the three Focus Groups. Summaries of all the recorded Focus Groups were made.

Setting up focus groups proved to be a very challenging task. It was important to find groups that reflected a gender, social and demographic mix. I attempted to gather seven groups together:

1.	Ċentru Dsatax ta' Novembru	7 March 2017	2000hrs
2.	Aġenzija Appoġġ Women's group	10 March 2017	1030hrs
3.	Fort Verdala	20 November 2017	1830hrs
4.	Bormla Day Care Centre –		
5.	St George's Football Club –		

³¹³ Vide Appendix No. 4.

6. MCAST Cospicuan Students –
7. University of Malta - Cospicuan University Students

I managed to organize three focus groups (1, 2 & 3 above). With regard to the Bormla Day Care Centre, I went myself to the Centre after which there followed an email correspondence with the person in charge of activities but it became clear, after a number of weeks passed, that this focus group was not going to take place. There may have been organizational, internal reasons for this but I thought it best not to pursue the initiative further. The same can be said for the St George's Football Club. After initial enthusiasm on the part of the contact person, it may be that the footballers were not so keen and after several attempts to fix a date I realized that this attempt was not going to be successful. I had a similar experience with the University of Malta students hailing from Bormla. I made contact with one student who assured me that he would get at least another two friends together to participate in a focus group. However, after numerous reminders and further messaging it became clear that they had changed their minds and I ceased to follow up with them. With regard to the students from the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, although the Principal was willing to try, I myself decided not to pursue after I realized that the students would all have been under 18 and therefore minors. My supervisors had taken a decision, with me, at the start of my fieldwork not to involve minors in interviews or focus groups.

Despite the fact that I was unable to get together all the focus groups that I would have liked to hold, the three that I conducted proved to be an invaluable source of information and understanding on my part. They were from three diverse sections of Bormla's community and had a good overall gender and demographic mix.

Focus Group No. 1 took place on 07 March 2017 and consisted of eight (8) persons, three (3) females and five (5) males. They are all participants in a group called: Ċentru Dsatax ta' Novembru which is a mixed gender and age group that takes care of the Good Friday Procession and Holy Week/Easter events. The duration of the focus group interview was 01:52:07. The average age of the participants was 32yrs and 9mths.

Ages and occupation of the group members:

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Female	25	employed
Male	47	employed
Female	30	Student in tertiary education
Male	26	employed
Male	59	retired
Female	22	University graduate - working

Male	53	employed – he and his wife both originally from Bormla but now living outside the city.
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Present at this focus group was Professor Carmel Borg. It was agreed with Dr Sheila Watson, my co-supervisor, that Professor Borg would act as monitor but also intervene when he felt it appropriate. His interventions are recorded on the transcript of the interview.

Focus Group No. 2 took place on Friday 10 March 2017 and consisted of six (6) persons, all female and all participants in a Ladies Group run by an arm of Social Services called ACCCESS. It was held at the Social Services Centre for Cottonera called Centru LEAP. The focus group interview lasted 01:14:15. The average age of the participants was 60yrs and 6mths.

Ages and occupation of the group members:

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Female	66	housewife
Female	56	housewife
Female	66	housewife
Female	33	housewife
Female	77	housewife
Female	65	housewife

As with Focus Group One, present at this focus group was Professor Carmel Borg. Professor Borg acted as monitor but also intervened when appropriate. His interventions are recorded on the transcript of the interview.

Focus Group No. 3 took place on Monday, 20 November 2017 and consisted of six (6) persons, four females and two males, all of whom are residents of Fort Verdala. Fort Verdala was built by the British enclosing an area which backs on to the Cottonera Lines for use as a barracks for British Army and Navy personnel. During WWII it was used as a prison camp for German and Italian soldiers caught during operations around Malta. After the British Army and Navy left Malta it was taken over by the government, refurbished and given over to social housing.

The Focus Group lasted 1:34:18 and was held at the premises of the Bormla Local Council. The ages of the participants ranged from circa 55 to 73 years. Most of the participants were housewives or retired, mostly from government employ. The average age of the participants was c. 64 years.

Ages and occupation of the group members:

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Female	73	housewife
Male	63	retired
Male	65c.	retired
Female	65c.	housewife
Female	55c.	employed
Female	68c.	housewife (widow)

As with Focus Groups One and Two, present at this focus group was Professor Carmel Borg. Professor Borg acted as monitor but also intervened when appropriate. His interventions are recorded on the transcript of the interview.

□ ***Conversations – recorded***³¹⁴

I also held informal conversations with several people who I thought could shed light on Bormla, its people and its history and heritage. This is a list of those with whom I held conversations together with a brief outline of what was discussed.

Local Boat Builder and Restorer – duration 38mins

This gentleman is a boat builder in his spare time and, in particular, a boat restorer. He occupies a space the size of a garage in the area underneath the new promenade at Bormla. Next to his garage/studio is an area where the regatta boats are kept.

Sculptor – duration 50mins

A professional sculptor who works in various media – clay, plaster, glass fibre. He works mainly for churches all over Malta but he also works with the Rinella film studios creating props and objects for films.

Manager of the local radio station – duration 1hr 13mins

A graduate of the University of Malta and runs the local radio station.

Chair of the Cospicua Heritage Society – duration 2hrs recorded and many hours of unrecorded conversation

Chair of the Cospicua Heritage Society and dedicates much of his spare time to research regarding many aspects of Bormla's history.

Historian of the Regatta – duration 2hrs 43mins

³¹⁴ For a full list of respondents in informal but recorded conversations vide Appendix No. 10.

A retired Dockyard administrator, this gentleman spoke to me about the history of the Regatta. This is an important archival record of a sporting and social event that is still strongly felt by the people of Bormla.

Teacher of Sociology – duration 1hr 41mins

A teacher of sociology by profession, this person was one of the drivers behind the project 'Din Mhix Taxxa'.

Youth Social Worker – duration 1hr 10mins

A social worker with the government agency Appoġġ, this gentleman has been working closely with Bormla youths for many years.

Chair of the Forum Komunità Bomliża – duration 1hr

At present, Chair of the *Forum Komunità Bomliża* and has been involved in many social projects in Bormla.

Anthropologist – duration c.1hr 30mins

A professor of anthropology at the University of Malta and some time resident of Bormla who has written on attitudes to danger at the Dockyard and on other aspects of Bormla life.

Sociologist – duration 53mins

Has a doctorate in Sociology, was born in Birgu but living in Bormla. She is particularly interested in feminist sociology.

Director of Ċentru Tbexbix– duration 41mins

Director of the humanist-oriented Ċentru Tbexbix³¹⁵ in Bormla.

Group of c. 20 participants at Ċentru Tbexbix – ad hoc meeting – duration 30mins

Other, unrecorded informal conversations were held with several other people from or working in Bormla including:

A sculptor of small and life-sized models for various church events. He is best known for his exhibition held during Holy Week at the Auberge d'Angleterre, Birgu.

³¹⁵ "The Sunrise Centre – Ċentru Tbexbix is a centre for education and social service based in Cospicua, Malta. It hosts a variety of projects and activities aimed at the all-round development of children and women from the Cottonera area." "The Sunrise Centre was founded by the Women's Welfare Department (WWD) of Ananda Marga Malta. Ananda Marga is a worldwide network of volunteers, who work towards a better society through self-development and community-based service. The WWD branch specifically aims to meet the needs of women and children. Its members include teachers, psychologists and other professionals." Information taken from: Ċentru Tbexbix, (website), www.tbexbix.org, (accessed 04 April 2018).

A local historian with a particular interest in Bormla who has regular and popular TV slots during which he often uses photographs of churches and old buildings and monuments to explain their historical significance to a wide audience. He is also closely involved with the Domus Piju IX centre.

Further, innumerable, informal conversations were held with people that I met during the Feast and during the Holy Week events as well as those I met on the street or sitting in front of their houses during my wanderings around Bormla over a period of some eighteen months.

□ *Ethical Issues*

In Part II of this chapter I referred to the fact that, where needed, keeping anonymity might be a problem in a small community such as Bormla and indeed, with regard to some well-known persons, Malta.

All focus group participants signed a participation consent form but anonymity was promised to them all. In this text they are listed only by gender, age and a very brief description of their occupation e.g. 'housewife'; 'university student' etc.

All one-to-one respondents and those with whom I had recorded conversations signed a consent form both agreeing to the interview and, under a separate signature, to be cited by name. After the interviews and conversation took place, it was decided to code these respondents. The intra-text excerpts from the transcripts have thus been given a code that corresponds to a particular respondent. Although I had written consent from each of these respondents to use their names, I felt that some of the excerpts from the transcripts were of a personal nature and that it would be more fitting to retain anonymity. Thus, for the sake of consistency, excerpts from all the transcripts are coded. There are a few exceptions to this and those excerpts from interviews which are attributed to specific respondents, are mentioned in a corresponding footnote. A brief description of each of the one-to-one interviewees is to be found in a list intra-text. Their names are listed at Appendix No. 9. The names of those with whom I had conversations can be found at Appendix No. 10.

Recordings and transcriptions of the twenty-two interviews and the three focus group as well as the eleven conversations are stored digitally on a password protected external hard drive and on my personal laptop which is also password protected.

□ **Translation**

The interviews and focus groups were all held in Maltese except in one case in which the interviewee was a British born Bormla resident who did not speak Maltese and in another case in which the Maltese participant seemed to be more comfortable speaking in English. On that occasion, I did give the gentleman ample chance to return to Maltese but he clearly was happier to speak in English.

The transcriptions, whilst not 'verbatim', are as close to the original as possible. For example, significant repetitions were retained; quotation marks were used for English words used by the participant in the course of the interview – perhaps for emphasis or because it seemed to them more appropriate to use the English name or expression. Each translation took many hours to compile as care had to be taken regarding nuance of meaning. When necessary, a hard copy Maltese dictionary was used.³¹⁶

□ **Validity**

David Silverman, whilst discussing the validity of data in qualitative methodology, asks

How are they [qualitative researchers] to convince themselves (and their audience) that their 'findings' are genuinely based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen 'examples'? This is sometimes known as the problem of anecdotalism.³¹⁷

I did not hold a vast number of interviews and focus groups. However, I did interview men and women from a range of backgrounds and ages. The risk of anecdotalism was thus reduced. To reduce this risk further, I attempted to use methods, suggested by Silverman,³¹⁸ such as triangulating certain answers with replies provided by the interviewees and also with those of the conversation respondents. Coding the frequency of particular themes for every one-to-one interview also provided a good basis for conclusions concerning various subjects of discussion.

³¹⁶ J. Aquilina, *Concise Maltese English – English Maltese Dictionary*, MidseaBooks Ltd, 2006.

³¹⁷ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, p. 286.

³¹⁸ Silverman, p. 287.

□ ***NVivo 11.4.0 for Mac***

NVivo is one of the most popular software packages used in qualitative methodology. The core features of NVivo, with regard to data analysis, are that, having performed a content analysis on the transcripts, the researcher can input the transcripts and develop a coding system for each transcript. This coding system can be applied to parts of the transcript e.g. individual questions or the whole text. This allows the researcher to easily access the same codes across all or some of the transcripts. Each transcript can be individually identified by name, age and occupation. This further allows the researcher to cross identify responses to themes or codes according to age and/or occupation.

The presentation of the summaries of the sections coded can be by number of occurrences or section by section. Also, two codes can be attributed to the same piece of text. There is also a very useful feature with regard to word frequency. Again, this feature can be used in various ways. One can call up not just the sentence coded but also the context in which it was said. This enables a better understanding of coded section.

All the above are basic features – there are several more complex ones. They contribute to clarify and to avoid the anecdotalism referred to above.

□ ***Cultural Mapping***

Cultural mapping should be

a community exercise that would identify the cultural resources of the city, together with problem areas in the field of culture, thereby creating a preliminary framework for future cultural policy development.³¹⁹

This is something very necessary that could very well be undertaken by a local collaborative group. However, over the months of working in Bormla and with Bormliži, in a very limited way, I was able to put together a list, which I am sure is by no means exhaustive, of artisans working in Bormla. Not all of them live in the city. Some are part time and some make their living from their work.

These include:

four sculptors (*skulturi*);
two gilders (*induraturi*);
one mould maker (*jaħdem il-forom*);

³¹⁹ H.K. Anheier, H.K., *Cultures and Globalization: Cities, Cultural Policy and Governance*, SAGE Publications Ltd, (1st ed.), 2012, p. 213.

one sculptor of small figures (*jaħdem karattri żgħar, speċjalment il-pasturi tal-presepju*);
one silversmith (*jaħdem il-fidda*);
three boat builders (*jiddiżinja, jibni u jirrestawra d-dgħajjes*);
one artist who contributes to the Domus Piju IX Apostles' Table (*jaħdem il-melħ*);
one French polisher (furniture restorer) (*lustratur*);
one embroiderer – particularly of ecclesiastical vestments (*rakkmatatur*);
one designer/draughtsman (*diżinjatur*);
one carpenter (*mastrudaxxa*) known for his large ecclesiastical pieces;
one painter of 'marbling' (*irħamar*) a feature of Feast decorations;
one inlayer (*interzjatur*).

□ **Conclusion**

The above sections have outlined my theoretical framework and explained the methodology adopted. I have explored my reasons for choosing qualitative methodology whilst looking both at its appropriateness and its limitations. The facts about Bormla have been delineated in an effort to make this city accessible to those who may not be familiar with it.

The narrative of my fieldwork was then told through a description of the one-to-one interviews, the focus groups and the conversations had with various people associated with Bormla and its various informal and formal groups. Whilst not every attempt was successful, the main aims of the fieldwork were achieved and have provided a large amount of data on which, after appropriate analysis, I have been able to build my thesis.

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to Bormla's long and distinguished past. It did become clear that certain forms of heritage such as the church and its rituals do continue to play a key role in the identities of the people of Bormla, holding them together as a community. Attitudes to other heritage objects, such as the Dockyard, were somewhat ambivalent and there were narratives that some respondents were not keen to pursue. There was great interest in shining a light on heritage objects such as the local monuments and buildings, both old and more modern, local activities that they considered as long-standing, and in retaining a memory of people from the past.

Their reasons for this can be heard in the following chapters which will give voice to those respondents with respect to these and many aspects of community, the theories of which have been discussed in Chapter One. The coding of the material touched upon by the individual respondents created a thematic structure which I have tried to adhere to in the following chapters. However, the analysis of

these themes is looked at from varying standpoints both in Chapters Three and Four.

CHAPTER THREE

SEARCHING FOR COMMUNITY, IDENTITY AND SENSE OF PLACE IN BORMLA

□ *Introduction*

Chapter Three will introduce Bormla to the reader and the Bormliži will, more importantly, introduce themselves through their replies to the interview questions. The main aim will be to examine all those elements of the city that emerge not only from the fabric of Bormla but from its people with their memories, their experiences, their contradictions, their desires. With these elements one can start to form an idea about their own sense of identity and what contributes to it. Through their own words I shall be looking at the community or communities of Bormla, in an attempt to discover how they perceive themselves within their own groups and with those whom they consider, in their own individual way, as 'outsiders'.

Bormla is a city of rituals, like many in Malta. The most significant concern ecclesiastical celebrations, with internal and external performances. Through these actions and the discussions that surround them, one can begin to understand the complex relationship that the Bormliži have with the Church. The city has a history of tolerance and many of the secular rituals have grown from the relationship with the overlords of the time – the Knights of St John and the British. This tolerance has been broken occasionally when confronted with a religious 'other' and these snippets of history also contribute to a deeper understanding of the religious backdrop in the city. Also, recalling the words of one of the respondents who described Bormla as 'Mother, Friend and Beloved', I examine the anthropomorphism attributed to Bormla with its links to the figure of the patron saint.

There are certain historical realities and happenings that still affect the way in which Bormla is perceived. I shall be looking at those occurrences with a brief but necessary historical background so that certain of today's attitudes can be given context. A number of these important narratives are now passing into historical time and Bormla is undergoing gentrification. I also examine the effects of such changes which will be a recurring theme throughout this thesis.

□ *Looking at aspects of Bormla*

When I chose Bormla as the centre of my fieldwork I did so for diverse reasons. I wanted to discover whether Bormla had a sense of its own history and in what ways the Bormliži already used that sense of history through contemporary heritage activity. I was also interested to know if there could be innovative ways in

which the people of Bormla could express their memories, their undoubted cultural connections and their history through a museum project or set of different heritage projects. In the initial stages of my research, I had no idea whether that would be of interest to Bormla nor had I a clear idea of what would work.

One of the main reasons for this lack of knowledge was that the city has no museum culture at all, except for one, small scale, private house museum.³²⁰ There is no mainstream museum, nor is there an ecclesiastical museum, nor is there a community museum in any shape or form. There was, on the other hand, a community, traditions associated with the Church going back centuries, a large number of professional and amateur artisans, a successful local radio, an intriguing and engaging history and a regeneration project, the first stages of which were already completed. In theory, Bormla seemed an ideal place to examine the possibility of developing some sort of creative spaces or community museum generated 'bottom up' rather than 'top down', a museum that would not necessarily have walls but that could reflect the rich cultural heritage of the past as well as the active heritage of present day Bormla. An overarching question was: Would this community 'museum' or creative memory spaces be something the people of Bormla would want and would they support its creation?

To see whether this was something that the community would wish to develop, I needed to find a way into the thought processes, the perceived challenges, the interests of the Bormliži themselves and those who have a stake in the city's future. I thus set out on my journey using qualitative methodology in the form of one-to-one interviews, focus groups and informal conversations. I was very soon reminded of the fact that the elements that make up a community are manifold and that to make sense of a situation, or come to conclusions one has to venture into very different areas. Referring to cultural regeneration, which is aligned to my research aims, Melanie K. Smith says

It is multidisciplinary and requires holistic or joined-up thinking. No one field can claim to own this subject as it arguably sits equally comfortably in urban studies, planning, architecture, cultural geography or sociology.³²¹

This is an important observation and one which needs to be constantly taken into account in these discussions. However, another significant reflection is made by Breakwell, in an early paper which discussed an integration of theories of social identity and social representation, that the intra-group dynamics and inter-group relations were aspects not to be ignored.

³²⁰ Bir Mula Heritage, 79 Triq Santa Margerita, Bormla, owned and run by Mr John Vella.

³²¹ M.K. Smith, *Tourism, Culture, Regeneration*, CABI, UK, 2007, p. xi.

It (social representation) suggests that intra-group dynamics and inter-group relations will direct or channel the formation of any specific social representation. (...) It emphasises that representations are embedded in complex representational networks and that they are liable to change, whether subtle or global, as a result of their relationships to each other.³²²

Looking at 'social representation' in a wide sense of the expression, this description is particularly apposite within the Bormla context where there is a layering of groups that may not be immediately obvious to the casual observer.

In the same paper, Breakwell defines a

(...) model of identity process (which) is based on the argument that identity is a dynamic product of the interaction between on the one side the capacities for memory, consciousness and organised construal which are characteristic of the biological organism and on the other the physical and societal structures and influence processes which constitute the social context (Breakwell, 1986).³²³

She then goes on to list her four principles of identity: "self-esteem, continuity, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness."³²⁴

The desire for self-esteem is a basic tenet of every theory of identity. It has been shown to induce selective perception of information, channel value formation and modify attribution processes.

Place referent continuity refers to the maintenance of continuity via specific places that have emotional significance for a person (...)

(In) the distinctiveness principle - the individual will strive to optimise distinctiveness from other people; pinpointing unique elements of identity.

(In) the efficacy principle - the individual will try to maintain an identity structure which is characterised by competence and control (...). The absence of efficacy is associated with feelings of futility, alienation, and "helplessness".³²⁵

My first research question, which was represented in my interviews as Question One, was set in a deliberately broad way so that the many aspects of identity could be reflected in the answers and then reflected upon during the analysis. After reading all the answers to Question One, I separated the various themes that were indicated in those answers. There were at least twenty-eight

³²² G.M Breakwell, 'Social Representations and Social Identity', *Papers on Social Representations*, (1021-5573) vol. 2, no. 3, 1993, pp. 1-217, p. 1. Available from: http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/Psr/PSR1993/2_1993Brea2.pdf, (accessed 02 February 2018).

³²³ Breakwell, 'Social Representations and Social Identity', p. 7.

³²⁴ Breakwell, p. 8.

³²⁵ Breakwell, p. 8.

objects mentioned and I decided to code all of them because, whilst some were mentioned several times and others not so frequently, they all contributed to the various aspects of identity.³²⁶ This Chapter includes replies that reflect themes coded under the other questions as I feel that they too have a place in the search for Bormliž identity or identities.

My respondents discussed their memories, their families, objects, sounds and buildings. They made comparisons between their parents' and grandparents' lives, their own earlier experiences and their present-day lives. From these responses I have tried to understand the current identity patterns of the people of Bormla. Listening to individuals, I attempted to recognise those tropes, those recurrent themes that might shed light on a collective identity. Ashworth and Graham say that

The concept of 'collective identity', like the notions of 'collective memory' or 'collective heritage', with which it is strongly related, does not supersede or replace individual identity. It does, however, allow generalization and the location of ideas of belonging within political and social contexts.³²⁷

Ultimately, my aim was to get to know what it means to be Bormliž. Of course, I shall always be an outsider but that should not mean that I cannot know Bormla and empathise with those motifs that have modelled their lives. I wanted to unpack their identity enough to be able to understand if they wished to celebrate their city and share it with people outside their direct environment. This would mean looking at those things that occupy their minds and memories as well as their present-day activities. Will it become clear from the discussions that the Bormliži are anxious to retain the heritage that they are dealing with on a daily basis? Does the historical heritage come across as important and does it play a part in the continued activities – be they ecclesiastical or secular? And is the heritage of today foremost in their minds as being under threat? These are all queries to examine and, hopefully, answer through an analysis of those themes. Ashworth and Graham again

(...) it is vital to understand that this concept (heritage) does not engage directly with the study of the past. Instead heritage is concerned with the ways in which very selective material artefacts, mythologies, memories and traditions become resources for the present.³²⁸

The ancient and the modern histories of Bormla have, as these respondents will testify, made Bormla and its people what they are today. Witness their

³²⁶ Vide Appendix No. 4.

³²⁷ Ashworth and Graham, *Senses of Place*, p. 3.

³²⁸ Ashworth and Graham, p. 4.

relationship with the fortifications, old rivalries with the other cities of Cottonera, with the Dockyard and with the Church. In Chapter One, I discussed Preziosi's definition of museums as "epistemological technologies,"³²⁹ that is, his idea that objects in a museum can affect ideas about self or personal identity and can also affect the identity of a wider community. Here, without the existence of any form of museum, I am looking at the 'things' – metaphorical or real – that help the people of Bormla to find their place in 'their' world and 'the' world. I shall be trying to comprehend how they understand those objects in a wide-angled phenomenological way. It will be interesting to discover if the Bormliži wish to project their world, their present-day heritage in such a way that it can be affective in maintaining that world.

Wray describes 'community' as

An amalgam of place; occupation; class; and culture; and not simply a geographically specific area of living space.³³⁰

Is this community homogenous enough to have goals that dovetail? Will a heritage project, or diverse projects, be of interest to a younger generation? Would it be possible to widen the self-image of the community through a heritage project? I am interested in looking at the cultural richness of Bormla to see if it could be channelled into a wider context than that of the Church. There will surely be some objects within the Bourdieusian meaning of the expression 'cultural capital' - examples of Western ideals of beauty of the kind that confer prestige and status. However, I am interested in seeking out the less obvious aspects of Bormla's cultural capital that do not fit so neatly into ideas of prestige but are nonetheless part and parcel of the cultural depths of the city and its population. These are all questions that I hope to answer through this peregrination.

In this Chapter, I shall be moving between the Questions to locate and bring to the fore those elements that I feel have a relevance to the discovery of a Bormliž identity or identities. The basis for such choices will be made on the literature spoken about in Chapter One and upon my own reading of the respondents' replies and my conversations with people close to the workings of Bormla's communities.

□ ***Community, identity and a sense of place***

When listed like this, these three issues may look separate and discrete but the reality is that they are interlinked and inseparable one from the other. No

³²⁹ Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body*, p. 8.

³³⁰ D. Wray, 'Images, icons and artefacts: Maintaining an industrial culture in the post-industrial environment' in L. Smith, P.A. Shackel and G. Campbell (eds), *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes*, Routledge, London & New York, 2011, p. 107.

sooner does one start to think about and discuss one of these issues, that another enters into the discourse – sometimes quietly, other times stridently.

In Chapter One, before embarking on any fieldwork, I looked at what some philosophers and social scientists thought about community. I considered Durkheim, for example, and his ideas about the importance of networks.

Thus, Durkheim observes, whereas a society may have the appearance of a unity, it more accurately consists of these networks of associations or social worlds. These groups exist in varying relations to one another and the larger community but it is in these smaller associations that people live (and act) out their lives.³³¹

This observation then echoed through the discussions that were afterwards held with both individuals and focus groups and through the many conversations of the subsequent fieldwork. And this in turn linked into the discourse on recall.

(...) individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory
(...) connected with thoughts that come to us from the social milieu.³³²

In one way, it is legitimate to speak of ‘the community’ of Bormla because it does exist as ‘those who live within the confines of the district of Bormla’. However, there are layers of community life, groups and subsets of the city. The diverse areas have all revealed themselves to belong to Bormla in a general sense but some are perceived as separate groups. Part of that perception is that the different groups may not all feel the same way about the city’s past, present or indeed its future. I use the word ‘perception’ as the divisions may not be quite as clear as each one of the groups contends.

This discussion about how much one can or should define Bormla as having a community fits into a critique of traditional approaches to the collective posited by Rapport and Amit.

Expressions of community (whether announcing its presence or bemoaning its absence) thus require sceptical investigation, rather than providing a ready-made social unit upon which to hang analysis.³³³

Portney and Berry discuss the importance of neighbourhoods in large US cities which may give the impression of creating isolation.

³³¹ R. Prus, ‘Reconceptualizing the Study of Community Life: Emile Durkheim’s *Pragmatism and Sociology*’, *The American Sociologist*, vol. 40, no. 1/2, 2009, pp.106–146, p. 118.
DOI: 10.1007/s12108-009-9066-1

³³² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 53.

³³³ Amit and Rapport, *The Trouble With Community*, p. 14.

We emphasize neighborhoods because neighborhoods are where the bonds of community are built. They are the wellsprings of social capital. People's sense of community, their sense of belonging to a neighborhood, their caring about the people who live there, and their belief that people who live there care about them are critical attitudes that can nurture or discourage participation.³³⁴

I believe that in the context of Bormla this citation is particularly relevant. It became clear from my discussions that the Bormlizi do care deeply about their neighbours and, as Portney and Berry indicate, it is upon this caring that rests the positivity that allows for participation in what is already happening in the neighbourhood and hope for further community development.

In their 1986 paper, McMillan and Chavis offer four elements in their definition of Community.

The first element is membership. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness. The second element is influence, a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members. The third element is reinforcement: integration and fulfillment of needs. This is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. The last element is shared emotional connection, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences.³³⁵

This comprehensive definition of community did, as Mannarini and Fedi state, hold sway for about 20 years and still the "model remains the primary theoretical anchorage for most studies on SOC."³³⁶ However, in recent years there has been a widening of this viewpoint and a better understanding of the complexity and the nuance of meaning regarding 'community' which cannot be underestimated.

Waterton and Smith for example discuss the idea that the image of community, especially with regard to heritage studies, has been a conveniently positive one that is in need of a reappraisal. They feel that community has become a political byword that sprinkles "the 'feel good' notion of community" and "does little to alleviate or diminish (...) formidable challenges."³³⁷

³³⁴ K.E. Portney and J.M. Berry, 'Mobilizing minority communities: Social capital and participation in urban neighborhoods', *The American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 40, no. 5, 1997, pp. 632-644, p. 633. DOI:10.1177/0002764297040005009

³³⁵ D.W. McMillan and D.M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory', *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 14, January 1986, pp. 6-23, p. 6. Available from: Wiley online library.

³³⁶ T. Mannarini and A. Fedi, 'Multiple Senses of Community: the experience and meaning of community', *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2009, pp. 211-227, p. 212. DOI: 10.1002/jcop.20289

³³⁷ E. Waterton and L. Smith, 'The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1-2, 2010, pp. 4-15, p. 9. DOI: 10.1080/13527250903441671

With regard to Bormla, this is an important caveat given the paradox that shows on the one hand Bormliži who are very attached to one another but who, at the same time, are rather individualistic and not easily corralled into participation – as those who have tried to organize events outside the remit of the Parish Church have found. This ‘feel good factor’ also fails to take into account the reality that those who perceive themselves to be the ‘real’ Bormliži, still have difficulty in accepting the people who came in from outside immediately post war. This difficulty increases with regard to those who came into Bormla through the social housing provisions of the 1980s.

These are complex divisions with blurred edges that crisscross each other and balk at facile descriptions or explanations. I came across some of those who went to live and work in Bormla after the war who felt themselves to be one hundred percent Bormliži and others who had never managed to reconcile themselves to their new environment – although their children had enthusiastically taken on the mantle of ‘Bormliži’. The influx of ‘foreigners’ in the 1980s was made up of families who were taken out of substandard housing in other parts of Cottonera and placed in Bormla’s newly built social housing whilst some were placed there from other parts of the island because they had social problems. This created a kind of internal hierarchy that was not based on financial standing or class as such but more on ‘how connected are you to Bormla?’. Some groups never seem to have passed that test and what I heard repeated time and time again became almost a mantra and it went something like: Those people aren’t really Bormliži, they behave badly and give Bormla a bad name.

The darker side of community is, of course, that

They can be an exercise in resistance and used as a means to define or declare community members, isolate those who do not belong, and forge a sense of identity that will endorse this view.”³³⁸

Although this sounds a bit extreme, it is always good to “ask why a community has formed or to unpick the motivations of those who are calling for the creation or re-creation of community.”³³⁹

Schorch suggests that even though the significance of the word ‘community’ is now more nuanced than before, “‘community’ is still a common label widely used by cultural actors in practice to conceptualise, interpret and articulate a sense of belonging to a collective.”³⁴⁰

³³⁸ E. Crooke, ‘An exploration of the Connections among Museums, Community and Heritage in Heritage and Identity’, in B. Graham and P. Howard, (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd. UK & USA, 2008, p. 420.

³³⁹ Crooke, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, p. 420.

³⁴⁰ P. Schorch, ‘Assembling Communities: Curatorial Practices, Material Cultures and Meanings’, in O. Bryony, M.L. Stefano and S. Hawke, (eds), *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2017, pp. 31-46, p. 32.

'Community', then, has not lost its theoretical and empirical validity but, rather, should be seen differently, less homogenous and territorially confined and more complexly assembled, disassembled and reassembled.³⁴¹

Convery, Corsane and Davis go on to examine the 'plurality of approaches' amongst academics who have researched the subject of place. They mention, for example, the interrelation of 'place identity, place attachment and place dependency' (Graham *et al* 2009) and 'the product of attaching oneself to a place' (Giuliani 2002) and several others. One can also return to Breakwell and her four principles of identity: "self-esteem, continuity, self-efficacy, and distinctiveness" outlined in the introduction above.³⁴²

Place referent continuity refers to the maintenance of continuity via specific places that have emotional significance for a person (...)³⁴³

With regard to Bormla, the idea of continuity as a place referent is very relevant and those specific 'places' extend not just to the territory but to the objects, both physical, such as the fortifications and the Parish Church and those that are social representations such as the Feast, Holy Week, the Regatta, St George's football club, the Banda San Ġorġ amongst the most significant.

Place, as distinct from space, provides a profound centre of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties and is part of the complex processes through which individuals and groups define themselves.³⁴⁴

Also, as Tuan intuitively, place does not have to be physical, or obvious but can be subtle and express 'place' which would only be felt by those of that place.

Many places, profoundly significant to particular individuals and groups, have little visual prominence. They are known viscerally, as it were, and not through the discerning eye or mind.³⁴⁵

Although, as I have said in the introduction to this chapter, I did not attempt a total immersion in Bormla, I spent more than eight months going to and from Bormla from my residence in central Malta to undertake my fieldwork. As a consequence, the city also became a 'place' for me in a way that it was not before.

³⁴¹ Schorch, *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, p. 32.

³⁴² Breakwell, 'Social Representations and Social Identity', p. 8.

³⁴³ C.L. Twigger-Ross and D.L. Uzzell, 'Place and Identity Processes', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 16, 1996, pp. 205–220, p. 208.

³⁴⁴ Convery, Corsane and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, p. 1.

³⁴⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1977, p. 162.

And whilst always attempting to stand back as a professional researcher, I doubtless changed as a person because of my proximity to rituals and to the history and therefore to the heritage of Bormla. It is something like learning a new language as an adult. You soon learn that language is not simply a tool that allows you to make yourself understood in daily life, but that, along with the words come the baggage of a society. And once you have learned that language there is no going back. You are necessarily changed for ever. Even the journey to get to Bormla made me understand my respondents' replies more deeply. Entering the city from the west is to enter the walled city and come out the other side into what for many Maltese and, in a different way, also for the Bormlizi, is another world.

It is worth describing what that journey is like. The area known as the Three Cities (Senglea, Cospicua and Vittoriosa – L-Isla, Bormla and Birgu) lies to the southern harbour area – that is, on the southern side of Valletta and the Grand Harbour.

The main road into Bormla takes one up the hill known as Corradino and down the other side towards the *Għajn Dwieli* valley. One enters through a short, dark tunnel constructed by the British for easy access to the Dockyard.³⁴⁶ Several of those who I interviewed – some were Bormlizi still living in Bormla whilst others were not - told me that on entering that tunnel they would heave a sigh of relief in the knowledge that they had come 'home'. This was true of a man who has been married and living in Valletta for over thirty years and it was true of another man who has lived in Bormla all his life.

But also – and my wife (who is from Valletta) used to laugh at me – as we approached Bormla and passed through the tunnel of *Għajn Dwieli*, I'd say 'Thank God!' (għall-erwieh!) I'm home! She used to tell me, 'Home! When all we can see is a high wall all around the Dockyard with smoke rising out of it!'. But Bormla has remained my home, I feel I'm home. (16)

Another of my interviewees told me that, whilst he lives outside Bormla now, he makes sure that he goes there everyday that he can.

As you probably know, those of us who come from Bormla have a great sense of patriotism. Even as I'm speaking to you I can feel goose bumps. I feel more Bormliż than I feel Maltese. Perhaps not everyone will understand that. (18)

Another resident of Bormla who had previously lived outside of Bormla for several years still feels the same way.

³⁴⁶ This tunnel is cut into a bastion which forms part of the Cottonera Lines. After the completion of this tunnel, it was no longer possible to totally close off Bormla behind its fortifications.

When I hear the word Bormla I imagine my hometown, my family, my friends, my primary school. My whole family is from Bormla. It is a soft spot for me. However long I may be away it's always 'Bormla' for me. (06)

Comments in this vein were made by every interviewee. Even those who were not from Bormla, possibly not even Maltese as in the citation below, felt this draw.

I think Bormla means to me the heart of Malta. If you were to dig for the roots of Maltese culture and society you would find it here. (...) So when I opted to move to Bormla it was my first property. This has been my first home in my entire life. Here there is an overwhelming sense of community. It's quite stunning in fact that once I demonstrated that I was willing to embrace and accept the community I'd moved into, their response was remarkable.³⁴⁷ (19)

One could say that a sense of place is understandably common amongst those who have lived in a community for some time, some of whom will come from families who have lived in a particular town or village for generations. However, listening to various 'voices' of Bormla, I came to the conclusion that their attachment to Bormla ran so deep that it demanded an explanation that was not going to be uncovered through simplistic declarations of familial connections. Breakwell's principles of continuity and of distinctiveness are well documented throughout the interviews.

The visceral attachment to Bormla demonstrated by the respondents above chimes with the thinking of Tuan when he describes the attachment of a farmer to his land – however difficult his life is.

The farmer's topophilia is compounded of this physical intimacy of material dependence and the fact that the land is a repository of memory and sustains hope. Aesthetic appreciation is present but seldom articulated.³⁴⁸

This idea of topophilia, as expressed by Tuan, extends to those in places of hardship "who hang on (and) seem to develop a curious pride in their ability to endure."³⁴⁹ This was certainly a sentiment that I heard directly or simply understood from many of my respondents.

³⁴⁷ Words of a resident whose father was Maltese but who had lived away from the island all her life, visiting only for holidays and stayed in a village in central Malta.

³⁴⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1979, Kindle Edition, Loc. 1299.

³⁴⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*, Kindle edition, Loc. 1307.

Of course, some participants have voluntarily shed their bond with Bormla and lead happy and fulfilled lives outside the city. However, I got the distinct impression from listening to them that wherever they ended up – professors, doctors, teachers, accountants, civil servants or business people living outside Bormla, there remains, at least in this generation, a bond that still runs incredibly deep.

Here I would like to connect again to Convery, Corsane and Davis, when they say that factors which need to be included in an analysis of place include “the topographical, the cosmological and spiritual, the built environment and people’s emotional and psychological engagement with place.”³⁵⁰ Through listening to the respondents, through discussions with those close to Bormla and with the artists and artisans of that city, I cannot but concur with their analysis.

In the case of Bormla, the physical presence of the fortifications is perhaps one of the most significant factors that can be attributed to the sense of place and of distinctiveness of the population that live within them. Of course, nowadays the fortifications have been breached in several places and Bormla can no longer be closed off as it was during the French occupation (1798-1800). However, it became very clear in the discussions that the fortifications played a role in the ‘emotional and psychological engagement’ of the Bormliži.

One respondent told me, with tears in his eyes, that when he married and went to live outside Bormla he could not sleep properly for months and has never actually reconciled himself to leaving Bormla. In fact, he is another of those who finds every possible reason and excuse to return on a daily basis.

After about four years, they (the government) gave me a flat in Birkirkara, Ta’ Paris. I was crazy about this girl (his wife), I thought she was Elizabeth Taylor! But I couldn’t sleep – and I asked myself what was happening to me. I felt naked and unprotected. Then I realized: ‘Where are the city walls?’ The walls had an enormous effect – physical and metaphorical.
(03)

Such is the importance of the fortifications that it would be useful to include a very brief description of how they envelop the individual Cities of Cottonera. Known locally as bastions,³⁵¹ the fortifications are a common factor linking Bormla, Birgu and L-Isla as well as Valletta. Many books and papers have been written about the significance of walled cities, their origins and the consequences of living behind a fortified line, including Mumford, the author of the seminal publication *The City in History*. Mumford writes on many aspects of walled cities including their

³⁵⁰ Convery, Corsane and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, p. 2.

³⁵¹ Bastion: Projecting part of fortifications, irregular pentagon with its base in the line (or at an angle) of the main works, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964.

psychological importance.³⁵² There is evidence of walls that date back to the Neolithic period “to prevent the low-lying city from being flooded by a nearby river during the rainy season”³⁵³ but their construction carried on into the Bronze Age and continued for well over 2000 years. The desire for safety became the main motivation for such labour-intensive endeavours, and local examples of protective walls, from the Bronze Age onwards, abound. After the Great Siege of 1565, which had its last battle fought across the Grand Harbour, the Knights of St John must have blessed their prescience regarding the strengthening of the fortifications around Fort St Angelo, Birgu and the promontory of L-Isla prior to the arrival of the Ottoman Turks.

When the Siege was over, they immediately started work on the building of a new capital city and in a relatively short time managed to build Valletta and the kilometres of high protective walls around it. It took until the end of the 16th century to achieve this and as soon as they thought they could afford to do so they set about building the first set of fortifications around Bormla, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1638. These were the Santa Margarita or Firenzuola Lines designed by the Italian engineer, Fra Vincenzo Maculano de Firenzuola, a Dominican friar.³⁵⁴ The Knights were anxious to create a system of defence that would protect Bormla itself and the approaches to the fortifications of Birgu and L-Isla. Work on the second set of fortifications, which surround the earlier Santa Margarita Lines, commenced in 1670 at the behest of Nicolas Cottoner, Grand Master of the Order of Malta. These huge ramparts were planned by the military engineer Antonio Valperga but the project suffered from lack of funding and took almost 100 years to complete. Some of the planned bastions were never built. However, they remain to this day like a huge double embrace around Cottonera.

Until the arrival of the British in the early 1800s, it was possible to close Bormla off completely from the surrounding hinterland by closing the few gates and sally ports that were built into the Cottonera Lines. The British did change the walls slightly when they came to build their own Dockyard and they created Fort Verdala in 1852 and built the entrenchment of St Clement but they left the outer and inner walls virtually intact. The British were always in fear of the French returning to take over the island so, from their point of view, the more fortifications there were, the more comfortable they felt.³⁵⁵

³⁵² L. Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, Harcourt Brace International, 1968, p. 304.

³⁵³ A. Newitz, ‘Why do we build walls around our cities?’, posted 09 March 2014, io9, (website), <https://io9.gizmodo.com/why-do-we-build-walls-around-our-cities-1630142347>, (accessed 19 August 2018).

³⁵⁴ Guillaumier, *Bliet u Rħula Maltin*, p. 108.

³⁵⁵ M. Cassar, ‘19th century memories of Dockyard Creek – The building of No. 1 Dock’, *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 20 September 2015, p. 36-37.

For 1844 was a poor year for relations between the British and French governments. It was almost as troubled as 1840, when disagreements over Syria had brought the two to the brink of war ³⁵⁶

There is also the curious fact that the 'windows' of Fort Verdala, look inwards towards the city as though the British wanted to keep a careful eye on what was going on internally.³⁵⁷

At the top of Bormla there is Fort Verdala and you can see in the bastion walls of this Fort that there are windows. And these windows face into Bormla and I was informed that they were keeping a good eye on Bormla. And I love that. They have a deep sense of pride and this lead to guerilla resistance and I love that about it. (19)

The effect of these two rings of walls has been to consolidate the idea that Bormla did not look back to the hinterland but out to sea. In fact, when one is in Bormla one cannot, even today, see anything beyond L-Isla, Birgu and Valletta, with the stretch of harbour water in between. The rest of Malta could simply not exist.

They (the people of Bormla) were closed within the bastions. There was no need for anybody else. There were many artisans and so many, seven or eight, churches. They are still there because they are made of stone! Other things have just disappeared. (18)

The Bormlizi are very aware that their fortifications are part of their physical heritage and several respondents lamented the fact that they were not as well looked after now as they should be.

I lived in the Santa Liena area and we used to play on the bastions all day. I was a child and I appreciated the place but as a child would. Later, when I started to discover the history of Bormla I appreciated these places more as I realized that they were part of the history of Bormla. (09)

They were mentioned more than once as a potential heritage asset.

There is great potential with regard to the fortifications. Have you any idea of what a beautiful walk there is on top of them and also in between them? They are enormous – Cottonera Lines and Firenzuola Lines – two lines. Even inside them would be interesting as they are enormous. If the

In this article, Cassar recounts that at the laying of the foundation stone at the new dock in 1844 there were some visiting French naval officers. It seems that, in a pamphlet the Prince de Joinville infers that the British were spending the money and that the French would ultimately benefit if and when they took back Malta.

³⁵⁶ C.I. Hamilton, 'The Diplomatic and Naval Effects of the Prince de Joinville's *Note sur l'etat des forces navales de la France* of 1844', *The Historical Journal*, CUP, vol. 32, no. 3, 1989, pp. 675-687, p. 675. Available from: JSTOR.

³⁵⁷ Vide Appendix No. 5, p. 1. (Fort Verdala Wall)

government were to restore and open the inside of the fortifications it would be very attractive for tourists and for Maltese. Something marvellous. We concentrated on Valletta but now perhaps we are 'moving' a bit. (16)

However, this evidently important physical attribute is now becoming a bit of a problem for the demographics of Bormla. This ring of ramparts has meant that, unlike the villages and towns of the rest of Malta, Bormla and the other Cities of Cottonera have nowhere to grow. There can be no fields, few open areas, no suburbs, little new building, no expansion and, consequently, nowhere for the younger generation to live. The expression 'close-knit' in the context of Bormla takes on a multi-layered significance.

Yes, exactly, like the Valletta people as well. They live behind the fortifications. There is no space to spread out. (16)

Valletta's steps have been made famous by Lord Byron in his 'Farewell to Malta':

"Adieu, ye cursed streets of stairs!". Bormla's steps are not as well known but no less awkward and no less beautiful. They are another tile in the mosaic of 'place' and 'distinctiveness' that the Bormlizi recognize as being so very much theirs. Of course, nothing is simple when you come to discuss people's deepest feelings and, as I have found with so many other markers of 'place', there is ambivalence: an appreciation of the singularity of the topography and of the steps and knowledge that they make life burdensome. The Mayor lamented the fact that the steps made street cleaning and garbage pick up so very difficult whilst a local artist told me

I asked her (the Mayor) to get Heritage Malta involved, get an expert in to see that the steps are not damaged but to do something with them – paintings or something and she actually managed to recruit an artist. They painted the steps around the bus stop on Ix-Xghajra. (19)

The demanding terrain of Bormla, built on five hills, was actually a theme of Question Four about narratives of the city and was deemed to be a bitter narrative. It is all part of that vision of Bormla as being a problematic place to live in but one that puts off other people from the hinterland from coming in, which one suspects the Bormlizi consider as a positive rather than a negative.

Exactly, it's not an easy place. You need to have quite a bit of stamina to walk from Ix-Xghajra to San Ġwann t'Għuxa. Just the hill in front of the Church is quite a strain. (18)

On a banal level, Bormla is not comfortable to live in. There is an incredibly steep hill between our flat and my grandmother's. The house she lived in, for example, was big but with one room on top of the other. (13)

A former Parish Priest, speaking about social difficulties but also about the environment, sums it up.

Those who live there - for them those difficulties are simply part of life. You may use adjectives like 'poor things' etc. but they don't see things that way. The Bormlizi are quite street-wise. They are very sharp and they manage to get by well despite the environment. You might see things differently because you are looking from a different angle or viewpoint.
(08)

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, to support and explain the importance of place and identity and how they are created, nurtured and assumed by individuals and by communities then one must turn to the literature of diverse disciplines: sociology, anthropology as well as museology. Ashworth and Graham describe place and identity thus

Senses of places are therefore the products of the creative imagination of the individual and of society, while identities are not passively received but are ascribed to places by people.³⁵⁸

Here Ashworth and Graham are looking at the objects within a community that are ascribed identities by people. But those people themselves take on identities, personal and also as groups within a community, through their contact with those objects. There is a reciprocal 'ascribing' process which allows for some change over time.

This very much fits in with Waterton and Smith's hypothesis that community is "an ongoing process in which identity is explored and (re)created (...)".³⁵⁹

Mitchell discusses, in a paper concerned with past identity and history in Malta, the idea of 'identity' being more of a verb than a noun. With reference to Cohen (2000)³⁶⁰ and Bauman (1996),³⁶¹ Mitchell proposes the idea that identity is not a teleological 'given' but a process.

The role of the teleological accounts of national identity is to attempt to turn the verb into a noun, and to turn the future tense into the present. In doing so, however, they also frequently invoke the past.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Ashworth and Graham, *Senses of Place*, p. 3.

³⁵⁹ Waterton and Smith, 'The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage', p. 12.

³⁶⁰ A.P. Cohen, 'Peripheral Vision: Nationalism, National Identity and the Objective Correlative in Scotland', in A.P. Cohen (ed.), *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 145-169.

³⁶¹ Z. Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist-Or a Short History of Identity', in S. Hall and P. du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Sage, London, 1996, pp. 18-36.

³⁶² J.P. Mitchell, 'Looking Forward to the Past: National Identity and History in Malta', *Identities*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2003, pp. 377-398, p. 380. DOI: 10.1080/10702890390228919

Identity is a constant looking backward, examining the present and looking forward. Clearly, as Mitchell comments in the same paper, s/he who is writing the history that we commemorate is important. However, we have seen in Chapter One that written history is not an objective animal, and that objects of historical and contemporary heritage can get tied up in national narratives.

“The problem with official forms of heritage is not so much that it is ‘bogus history’ but that it is often directed towards establishing particular national narratives in reaction to the influence of globalization on the one hand, and the local on the other.”³⁶³

This is not necessarily a criticism of historians but more a caveat for those who are creating spaces for memories.

Closely interlinked with the idea of identity being a process, and the dangers of ‘official forms of heritage’ is the phenomenological approach to emotions. Baldacchino states that

The categorical imperatives³⁶⁴ that have animated the debate fail to take into account the emotions that give experiential purchase to identity.³⁶⁵

‘The debate’ is that surrounding the importance of ‘affect’ in processes of identification.

The discourse of emotion has taken on a more nuanced meaning through research in these last years. Theories of emotion have been formulated, discussed, discarded and reborn “dating back to Plato and Aristotle in Western philosophy and back to the Upanishads, the Buddhists, Confucius, and the Taoists in Asia.”³⁶⁶ In the 18th century, “(t)he quintessential model of Enlightenment politics is the atomized individual as the embodiment of a self-contained rationality”³⁶⁷ which viewed emotions as irrational. In more recent times, Freud, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint and later Jean Paul Sartre, from a phenomenological stand point, have examined closely the place of emotions in shaping our existence as human beings. However, whilst the research and the scholarly discussions continue

Emotions in public life are viewed as inimical to the modern state and the

³⁶³ Harrison, *Understanding the politics of heritage*, p. 18.

³⁶⁴ The ‘categorical imperatives’ referred to arise from Kantian ethics defined as “a moral law that is unconditional or absolute for all agents, the validity or claim of which does not depend on any ulterior motive or end.” Encyclopaedia Britannica, (website), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/categorical-imperative>, (accessed: 28 January 2018).

³⁶⁵ J.P. Baldacchino, ‘The eidetic of belonging: Towards a phenomenological psychology of affect and ethno-national identity’, *Ethnicities* vol. 11, no. 1, 2011, pp. 80–106, p. 82.
DOI:10.1177/1468796810388702

³⁶⁶ R.C. Solomon, *True To Our Feelings - what our emotions are really telling us*, OUP, 2008, p. 4.

³⁶⁷ Baldacchino, ‘The eidetic of belonging’, p. 82.

rational rule of law. There has been a long-standing tradition in western political theory considering emotions as dangerous, irrational and best left out of the public sphere.³⁶⁸

Solomon aims to turn that attitude on its head and, using phenomenology, to show that emotions “are sometimes *strategies* for getting along in the world.”³⁶⁹

And, far from being irrational, uncontrollable impulses

They are sometimes means of motivating, guiding, influencing, and sometimes manipulating our own actions and attitudes as well as influencing and manipulating the actions and attitudes of others.”³⁷⁰

Our responses to our environment, to the things we love and the things we love less, are often emotional responses which we have developed through experience and our reactions are not simply those of the moment but deeply ‘intentional’.

By intentionality we mean the fact that mental phenomena are ‘directed’ to and are ‘about’ things (cf. Hickerson, 2007: 1–20).^{371 372}

Solomon describes it as having several different mechanisms through which we participate in our world³⁷³ and observes

I also want to contend that we are not merely passive victims of our emotions but quite active in cultivating and constituting them. (...) Furthermore, I want to argue that emotions are not only intelligent but also purposeful in a surprisingly robust way.³⁷⁴

In his paper, Baldacchino aims to show that “(o)ne cannot begin to discuss the proper role of identity in the public sphere without first considering the emotional dynamics that underlie such group formations.”³⁷⁵ The author’s main interest is in ethnicity and nations but one could be justified in extrapolating that approach to a smaller ‘ethnic’ group such as the one in Bormla.

As Watson suggests, emotion is partly social construct

³⁶⁸ Baldacchino, p. 82.

³⁶⁹ Solomon, *True To Our Feelings*, p. 3.

³⁷⁰ Solomon, p. 3.

³⁷¹ Baldacchino, ‘The eidetic of belonging’, p. 89.

³⁷² R. Hickerson, *The History of Intentionality*, New York: Continuum, 2007.

³⁷³ Solomon, *True To Our Feelings*, p. 140.

³⁷⁴ Solomon, p. 3.

³⁷⁵ Baldacchino, ‘The eidetic of belonging’, p. 80.

(...) if we accept that emotions are affected by social and cultural contexts and these, in part, regulate how we respond to stimulus, then we move into the realm of emotionology.³⁷⁶

Watson continues

Thus we can refer to ‘feeling rules – the recommended norms by which people are supposed to shape their emotional expression and react to the expression of others’ (Stearns 1994:2) and it is these rules that help shape our responses to heritage.³⁷⁷

The nub of Watson’s thesis is that heritage can evoke emotions from those who ‘understand’ the historical context of a heritage object whilst those who don’t can have strong emotions which are based on a different reading of the same object. She cites a visit to the rather remote Burgh Castle, a Roman walled fort near Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. The Castle is representative of the Roman occupation of the area. The following is an excerpt from one of the information boards from the site:

The formidable walls of the Roman fort of *Gariannonum*, known today as Burgh Castle, were built around AD 300. Occupation by Roman soldiers and sailors may have continued into the early fifth century AD, accompanied by a large civilian settlement just outside the walls.

The same information board goes on to explain how Burgh Castle “formed part of an extended defensive system around the coast of Britain.”

As Watson points out, those who search for an authentic academic reading of this heritage site will be satisfied by the information and their emotions will be in sync with the significance of the site, its history and its setting in what is a rather wild, and often very cold, part of East Anglia. However, the author suggests that

For many local people their emotional engagement with this site is through stories of (...) ghosts and through memories of family visits to the place.³⁷⁸

Talk of the supernatural is usually ranked along with myths and unproven ‘stories’ passed through the generations. But to those who have lived with these narratives, ghost stories hold a very real emotional appeal and Watson recounts several ghost stories associated with Burgh Castle. The supernatural emerged strongly from my fieldwork in Bormla – particularly, as one might imagine, with regard to the Church, but also, for example, in a simple but heartfelt ghost story

³⁷⁶ S. Watson, ‘Emotional engagement in heritage sites and museums: ghosts of the past and imagination in the present’, in S. Watson, A.J. Barnes and K. Bunning, (eds), *A Museums Studies Approach to Heritage*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 442-443.

³⁷⁷ Watson, *A Museums Studies Approach to Heritage*, p. 443.

³⁷⁸ Watson, p. 446.

from one of my most down-to-earth respondents. Ghosts are also proving to be a very popular hook with which to seriously engage the interest of local and tourist groups.³⁷⁹

On the one hand we have objects – artefacts, buildings, memories – that have helped to model, frame and even perhaps ‘brand’ a certain way of life, whilst on the other, we have the process of history, that ‘verb’ that allows for changing attitudes and approaches. This process can be subtle and almost imperceptible but it can also create confrontation as in the recent cases of the philanthropist and slave trader, honoured for years in Bristol, Edward Colston or the #RhodesmustFall movement which aimed at toppling statues of Cecil Rhodes both in South Africa and at Oxford University, UK, just to mention two.

The phenomenological approach is one in which the researcher gives respondents a chance to embrace that caveat concerning the creation of national narratives and to describe and explain their own lived experience through the objects that surround them.

The meanings are usually implicit, and need to be made explicit with thematic analysis.

(...)

In the theme analysis, meanings do rely on socio-cultural & linguistic or artistic context; just as in everyday conversations, you must often "go beyond the words" to the context "given with" the narrative or art.³⁸⁰

Wedgwood tackles this issue in a paper which compared research carried out by the author in a working class environment in North Carolina, USA with work done by Sheila Watson in Great Yarmouth, UK - the latter culminating in the creation of the ‘Time and Tide’ museum. Wedgwood tells us that

Responses showed an interest in history that was remarkable for its intensity and its emotion. Also outstanding was the emotion invested in historic buildings.³⁸¹

What follows, in this search for Bormla’s identity, is an effort to expand the narrative of each respondent without over-interpreting or seeking possibly erroneous generalisations.

In Chapter One, I cited a passage from Graham and Howard³⁸² and imagined that the issue of ‘insideness’ would feature in my fieldwork in Bormla. My reasons

³⁷⁹ M. Hanks, *Haunted Heritage: the Cultural Politics of Ghost Tourism, Populism, and the Past*, Routledge, London & NY, 2016.

³⁸⁰ J. Waters, Phenomenological Research Guidelines (revised 2017), Capilano University, North Vancouver, (website), <https://www.capilanou.ca/psychology/student-resources/research-guidelines/Phenomenological-Research-Guidelines/>, (accessed 23 September 2017).

³⁸¹ Wedgwood, ‘History in Two Dimensions or Three?’, p 278.

³⁸² Graham and Howard, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, p. 2.

for surmising this were the geography, the topography, the urban landscape, the history of the Three Cities, Cottonera, including its societal development and the politics, inasmuch as I was aware of them at the time. The interviews and focus groups that I held and the conversations had with protagonists in this area have, I feel, borne out those initial thoughts. Heritage, Laurajane Smith says, is “a multi-layered performance” and I would say the same about Bormla’s sense of place and identity. Peeling apart those layers has to be done with sensitivity and understanding.

□ *Perception of self*

One of Breakwell’s four principles of identity is self-esteem, and this was reflected very clearly during the interviews in two ways. One was the disgust felt in connection with those who would disown their Bormla origins and the other was the stigma Bormla has amongst the general population about which all Bormliži feel very frustrated.

There were several comments about people who actually disavow their Bormla roots. This was mentioned in the first question by three interviewees. Two were university academics and one was a teacher.

In Raħal Ġdid (a town near to Bormla) there were many Bormliži. Some no longer admit to their Bormla ancestry but they are in fact from Cottonera (here he mentions one or two families). (01)

At one point, I came to teach at Verdala. There I met an acquaintance and I told him: Hi, aren’t you ‘so and so’ from Bormla? No, he answered, I’m not from Bormla. I knew he was Bormliž. (03)

It could be in the most academic of situations but I would still say that I am from Bormla. It is irrelevant if Bormla is not thought of as the best place to come from but even so for me I’m Bormliž, my formation comes from Bormla. I have no desire to not say I’m from Bormla. (12)

Most of the people I interviewed were from Bormla. However, some of them were born outside Bormla because their parents were living outside the city during WWII. Those that I spoke to were from families that did return after the war – many did not.

The subject of stigma was mentioned by thirteen sources who referred to it eighteen times in Question One. However, it cropped up elsewhere as stigma in Question Four, referred to five times by four sources and also as attitudes towards Bormla in the media. ‘Stigma’ was referred to by its English name. Everyone was very well aware of what it was and I feel sure that there was not one participant

that did not refer to stigma, even if indirectly. It was as though it was an open wound.

A few citations from interviews will help to illustrate the issues tied up with the idea of stigma.

The image that Bormla has is not fair. (...) There are others who have come from outside and have given Bormla a bad name. For example, the media always mentions it if some criminal is from Bormla. Bormlizi get really irritated by this. Other townspeople are not mentioned in the same way. (02)

One of the things that comes to mind and I hope I'm not digressing here, is from the journalism aspect there is such a stigma still attached to Bormla that if you look at the reports in the papers, especially the Maltese language ones, if something happens the report will say that the person sent to prison came from Bormla. If someone comes from Santa Venera, the home town is not mentioned! This is all fruit of the stigma. (05)

When you look at the media and see headlines and reports of this or that criminal 'from Bormla' most of the time he will have his ID card on Bormla and not even live here. This hurts me a lot. (18)

Someone just rents a room in Bormla, does something wrong and the media reports: a man from Bormla stole ID on Bormla but he won't really know Bormla. Now that isn't happening so much. (21)

People from Bormla get very offended with the stigma re-enforced by the reports in the newspapers. (10)

You cannot make value judgments about people any more. People from Bormla are not standoffish (*Bormlizi dhulin*). They are not saints but very genuine and certainly not the devils (*dimonji*) that is suggested in the media. Even the Sant'Eliena and Santa Margarita differences are not quite the same any more. Even the ones that came from outside are not all awful. I know many of these so-called outsiders who are offering their services to the community, to the church, the Band Club. They have come to love Bormla as much as the locals. It is therefore a mistake for the media to tar everyone with the same brush. (02)

Certain elements in this discussion are obvious in these citations whilst others are more subtle and hidden. The impression that the Bormlizi who consider themselves almost 'autochthonous' – of course, I place that word firmly within inverted commas – is that the Maltese population look down on them and that the reputation for excessive criminality is undeserved. As one can see from some of the statements above, the 'real' Bormlizi sometimes blame that reputation on those 'foreigners' (Maltese from other localities) who have come into the area from outside Bormla and therefore care little for the reputation of the city.

The first wave of Maltese people from outside Bormla came in after WWII. Most of the population, certainly those who could afford to do so, left when the bombing started and, as already stated, many did not return. However, Bormla needed workers for the Dockyard and people came in looking for work. Some of these came from villages a long way off from Bormla and were unable to return home on a daily basis. These workers would find a room or two to live in during the week and return to their village on the weekend. Inevitably, they eventually set up home in Bormla where they could find abandoned houses which they simply took over. Not many of those who left came back to claim what was probably a half bombed out building after the conflict. Given that this happened some seventy years ago one might imagine that most of these families would have integrated by now. Surprisingly, this is not always the case.

Furthermore, the issue of social housing and placing families with various social problems in hastily built social housing units in the late Seventies and Eighties did nothing to help the divisions between the 'real' Bormlizi and the 'foreigners' (*il-barranin*).

The "locals" blame policy makers for building flats in an area which was already overpopulated and then "dumping" problem families there.³⁸³

No doubt some of these new arrivals have also integrated. However, the statistics do seem to bear out the relatively high level of criminality in the area.

*Official crime rate in the Maltese Islands and Bormla in 2009.*³⁸⁴

National Population	395,000
Crimes	11,953
Crimes per 1000 persons	30.26
Bormla Population	5,600
Crimes	187
Crimes per 1000 persons	33.39

³⁸³ J. Cutajar, S. Formosa, T. Calafato, 'Community Perceptions of Criminality: The Case of the Maltese Walled City of Bormla', *Social Sciences*, vol. 2, 2013, pp. 62–77, p. 64.
DOI:10.3390/socsci2020062

³⁸⁴ S. Formosa. Crimemalta, 20 January 2010, (website), <http://www.crimemalta.com>, in J. Cutajar, S. Formosa, T. Calafato, 'Community Perceptions of Criminality: The Case of the Maltese Walled City of Bormla', *Social Sciences*, 2, 62–77, 2013, p. 66.

*Official crime rate in the Maltese Islands and Bormla in 2016.*³⁸⁵

National Population	460,297
Crimes	17,316
Crimes per 1000 persons	37.6
Bormla Population	5,164
Crimes	220
Crimes per 1000 persons	42.6

These two statistics show that Bormla retains a higher than the national average crime rate. With regard to reported crimes, Bormla also sits within the band of 'up to twice the national rate', as do Birgu and L-Isla.³⁸⁶

The Bormlizi who feel that they are the genuine population look upon those who they perceive as not part of their group, or who are part of a sub culture of Bormla – the foreigners (*il-barranin*), as the origin of this negative crime rate.

It is interesting to read the comment of two researchers discussing social cohesion in Bormla in 2008.

Bormla has one feast, so the perception among the respondents was that this cultural event served to help bond the community in this locality. When the data was analysed though, one could note that the community leaders were continually differentiating between 'us' and 'them'. The 'us' was used to refer to people who had lived in Bormla prior to World War II. The 'them' was used to refer to people who had migrated to Bormla after the war. There were also a number of allusions made to the fact that Bormla was used by the social services to 'dump' social cases in the myriad social housing units spread around this locality.³⁸⁷

I repeatedly heard the narrative of bad media publicity with regard to Bormla, particularly from many of the one-to-one respondents. I listened to this narrative so often that I actually looked up all the reports in *The Times of Malta* and *The Sunday Times of Malta* going back to the 1930s to see if this bias could be corroborated. This was not a scientific assessment but I did find that Cospicua was often headlined in capital letters whilst other offenders' villages or towns were rather less in evidence.

³⁸⁵ S. Formosa. *Crimemalta*, (website), <http://www.crimemalta.com>, (Information provided by S. Formosa, 13 July 2018.)

³⁸⁶ S. Formosa, *Crimemalta*, The RISC League of Tables: 2017, (website), <http://www.crimemalta.com/riscn.html>, (accessed 17 July 2018.)

³⁸⁷ J. Cutajar and J. Vella, 'The Role of Cultural Events in Promoting Community Cohesion: The Case of Two Socially Deprived Areas in the Maltese Islands', 2008, p. 8. Available from: http://malta.academia.edu/JosAnnCutajarCutajar/Papers/558014/Tourism_in_Malta, (accessed 01 November 2017).

These are a few examples.

LAW REPORTS

By Our Law Reporter

COSPICUA MAN CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED MURDER

Anthony Bonavia, 23, of Cospicua, was yesterday afternoon arraigned before Magistrate Dr. J. Herrera and charged with having attempted to murder two men, Eddie Gatt, 39, and Joseph Galea, 24, both of Cospicua, on March 11, 1976, at about 11 p.m. The prosecution alleged that Bonavia had attacked the two men with a sharp and pointed instrument causing several injuries of a grievous nature to Gatt and of a slight nature to

Galea.

He was also charged with having carried the weapon without a Police licence, and with having threatened and insulted Police Sergeant Carmel Fava while in the execution of his duty.

Bonavia was further charged with having contravened the conditions imposed on him by the Magistrates' Court, on February 14, 1976, in granting him bail, on a surety of £M50, in connexion with other criminal

The Times of Malta -09-07-1982

Cospicua men charged with attacking MLP Kalkara club

Five Cospicua men were yesterday arraigned before Magistrate Dr. Silvio Meil and charged with attacking and causing less than £M500 damages to the Kalkara MLP club last Sunday night.

Accused were: Joseph Schembri, 26, a minister's personal driver; Emanuel Cachia, 36, and George Grech, 30, both labourers; Christopher Camilleri, 21, a messenger and Trevor Camilleri, 18,

unemployed.

Schembri was also charged with instigating and inciting the other four accused to commit the crime and break the law.

All the accused were further charged with threatening and attacking several members of the police force, lawfully charged with a public duty, or with intent to intimidate or unduly influence them.

Monday and Saturday between 5.30 a.m. and 7.30 a.m. They have to be at home between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. and if for any valid reason they need to leave their house during that period they must inform the Cospicua police station.

Police Superintendent Angelo Farrugia prosecuted. Dr. Mario de Marco and Dr. Ray Zammit were defence counsel.

CHARGED WITH DRUG POSSESSION

The Times of Malta -17-07-1991

STABBING CASE AT COSPICUA

Magistrate Dr. S. Camilleri yesterday heard the prosecution's evidence in the case instituted by the Police against Anthony Brignone, 22, of Cospicua, charged with the attempted murder of 23-year-old John Magro, also of Cospicua, by stabbing him with a knife, causing him injuries of a grievous nature.

his face could leave permanent disfigurement.

Brignone who has been held in custody since he was arraigned on December 21, was yesterday released on bail against a deposit of £M150.

Police Inspector Saviour Galea prosecuted. Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici was defence counsel.

ANNUAL REFIT

The P.&O. Company's school-

The Times of Malta-06-01-1976

Man on bus shot dead at Cospicua

By a Staff Reporter

A man in his sixties riding on a bus in Cospicua was shot dead accidentally, yesterday afternoon. He was Karmenu Farrugia, 64, of Zabbar, better known as il-farnuq.

he was taken away for treatment to shock.

Two bullet holes could be seen on either side of the bus, one near the front and another at the very back, indicating the entry and exit holes of the bullets.

Policemen at Sta Margherita Square marked at least 15 places on the road where these were signs of bul-

The Times of Malta -18-04-1987

One of the contributing factors to Bormla's down at heel reputation was, I heard from participants, the fact that it took so long for Bormla to be rebuilt.

The reason for this (workers from outside coming into the area) was that Bormla was not immediately rebuilt. People couldn't reclaim their houses. The working class was prepared to put up with low standard housing so this situation set over a number of years and it is that which is

regretted by these people who would like Bormla to return to what it was before the War. (11)

One of my respondents, who during the interview was particularly keen to impress upon me the undying Leftist politics of Bormla, told me, after making sure that I was not recording him, that the reason for this unsettling influx of people from outside Bormla was the then Labour Party Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff. This was because he, Mintoff, insisted on building the social housing around the 1980s which brought in those people who gave Bormla a bad name. This gentleman was an admirer of Mintoff in every other way but he felt so strongly about the issue of the social housing that it actually drove him to criticize the usually unimpeachable Mr Mintoff.

Pre-war Bormla was already losing population owing to the increase in importance of Valletta and other towns which were perceived as healthier than Bormla. However, until the really severe bombing started in 1942, it was still a diverse community with a normal social mix consonant with the image of a reasonably thriving town. The people who stayed in Bormla or who returned to their homes immediately after the War still yearn for a return to the prestige of those years. They feel that the city was respected then, and therefore that, even if they themselves were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, they were respected too. A brief story, relevant to this idea of commanding respect, is told by Falzon.

A man from Żabbar told me how, in spite of the fact that many residents of neighbouring Cospicua were working-class, they were 'different': 'They used to dress differently, you see. We wore flat caps and waistcoats, they wore proper hats and jackets, no matter how tatty'.³⁸⁸

In today's world, the idea that Bormla is not interested in education is one of the myths that the Bormliži would like to debunk as they feel it contributes to the negative attitude of outsiders. This interviewee insisted that

In Bull Street, from one small offshoot, from 20 houses there came 20 teachers. We have been teaching in the last 40 years all around Malta and there are even some who are now teaching the teachers at University. (03)

This respondent was very keen to show the world outside Bormla that the Bormliži do love education and education was indeed mentioned by practically every respondent as a positive memory of their childhood.

³⁸⁸ M.A. Falzon, 'The Disparate Wings of Malta's Bleak House, An essay on Cottonera, local histories and regeneration', in G. Abela et al (eds), *Lino a tribute, Festschrift in honour of Lino Spiteri*, Publishers Enterprises Group (PEG) Ltd, 2008, p. 145.

In some cases, this annoyance at the undeserved – in their eyes - stigma turns into a kind of inverted snobbery, as in the case of this participant who said he liked to ‘shock’ people by declaring his city of origin.

It could be I had an inferiority complex and it could be that this represented those ‘walls’ that my father used to tell me that I would have to face up to eventually and it could simply have been an excuse to go back to card playing. When I went finally to University I used to love shocking people by telling them that I was from Bormla. I knew in myself that I was ‘good’ (up to their level). I used to study on my own – the Egyptians, the Romans. I was self-taught but well educated. (03)

The Bormlizi are aware of their own worth, they know they are capable of facing adversity, they have always looked out to sea and not to the hinterland. For them, Bormla is the best and they do not need anybody else. They are extremely proud of their place in history. Their self-esteem is actually very high. They sincerely cannot understand why others look at them as though they were the bottom of the pile. It is yet another contributing factor to that deep sense of place and space that characterizes the Bormlizi. Their ‘place referent continuity’ was highly evident in every interview held. They like to retreat behind their walls to the one place where they feel they are fully understood and at ease. The paradox continues when one looks at the evidence regarding Breakwell’s theory of ‘self-efficacy’ which is ‘characterised by competence and control’. The Bormlizi know that they can be competent and in control but the constant living with stigma tends to lead to that sense of alienation that Breakwell states is the result of the absence of efficacy - another reason for what seems to outsiders to be an almost morbid attachment to their ‘territory’.

□ *Rituals*

In the initial stages of this research, during preparatory discussions about procedure, I was often told to avoid that researcher’s sin: the tourist gaze. I could intuitively understand that if I tried to keep too aloof I would not manage to peel away even one layer of any issue. With this in mind, but in the full knowledge that I was always going to be the outsider, I decided to participate in some of Bormla’s present day rituals. It did give me a chance to be with the people of Bormla in those moments which they hold very dear. I could thus better relate to those same rituals when they came up, again and again, in conversation, during my fieldwork. They are going to come up in my discussion of issues of identity so it is perhaps worth outlining in what those rituals consist without, as yet, ascribing particular meanings to them.

All the most important rituals are religious.³⁸⁹ The Parish Church celebrates the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8th December. This involves various ceremonies. The first of these takes place as the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception is removed from its niche in the side aisle of the church and is placed in another, specially prepared niche in the main aisle for the duration of the Feast. The next day sees the start of the Novena, the recitation of the Rosary and other prayers, which takes place early in the morning on the nine days prior to the Feast. On the day of the Feast itself a solemn High Mass is celebrated with an extended homily (the panegyric lasts circa 45minutes) made by a different, invited preacher every year. The subject of the homily is traditionally a eulogy to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. The Parish Church is always packed with the Bormla population as well as those Bormliži who live outside the city. It is also attended by all the 'great and the good' from both sides of the political spectrum. In the afternoon, the statue is taken out of the Parish Church and paraded along the streets of Bormla.

The other main religious rituals concern Holy Week, leading up to Easter. These include a pageant organized by a local drama company which animates different aspects of the last days of Christ's life. It lasts for about two hours and draws a large and dedicated audience, mainly from Bormla. Other activities take place during Lent and in Holy Week in the city, such as the Domus Piju IX exhibition of the Apostles' Table with exquisite designs made chiefly out of coloured salt granules, and exhibitions of models associated with Holy Week which are set up in public and private buildings. These exhibitions attract people from Bormla, L-Isla, Birgu, Kalkara and nearby towns and also from further afield. On Good Friday, after the religious ceremony in the Parish Church, a procession of statues and people in costume, representing biblical stories as well as scenes from the road to Calvary, is held. This procession involves the participation of some 500 people including dressed participants, carriers of the statues, bandsmen and organisers. On Easter Sunday there is a celebratory mass after which the statue of the Risen Christ is carried and 'rushed' up the streets of Bormla. This ritual now takes place in several parishes in Malta and is extremely popular with locals and with Maltese from around the island. It includes the blessing of the children's 'figolli', a traditional Easter sweet, by the Parish Priest which is always very well attended.

This repetitive act of ritual links up with Benton's "frequent rehearsal" theory. Benton sees it as a survival technique that embeds the status quo. Bormla's rituals

³⁸⁹ Other rituals involve sports events such as the two Regattas (31 March, Freedom Day and 8 September, Feast of Our Lady of Victories) and also the activities of St George's football club. These were referred to by every single person interviewed as, in the case of the Regatta, an event of historical and present day significance and in the case of the St George's football club as a jewel in the crown of Bormla's past but potentially also of its present. The importance of the latter goes far beyond its function as a club that organises football games.

certainly are colourful and vivid, not to say thrilling in the case of the statue of the Risen Christ. Benton's words ring true in this context.

A memory attached to a strong and vivid image is usually more persistent and more likely to be recalled.³⁹⁰

In 2016 and 2017, I was able to participate in all of the above activities except for the Novena.

Just reading the above brief and necessarily reductive description of the rituals of Bormla will indicate that the sense of place and identity and therefore of 'home' is not only based on individual but also on group/community identity, particularly connected with the Church. And the Church, in the context of Bormla, does seem to be the most significant key to a discussion about identity. The Church is the central point of Bormla's social structure but it does not have the same kind of resonance for everyone. This comment just gives a taste of that ambivalence.

What links them – the statue of the Immaculate Conception. My own religious feelings are not directly linked to the Church. But if I go to the Church in December I get emotional. For me there is a conflict because I realize that this is not devotion but rather paganism! I'm against all statues except the one of Bormla's Immaculate Conception! (03)

This respondent uses the word 'emotional' and nothing I had ever previously experienced had prepared me for the outpouring of emotion during these Bormla rituals.

Here again we have to unpack the meaning of emotion. The respondent above refers to getting emotional when he goes into the Parish Church in December (at the time of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception when the Church is decorated with its rich damasks, its polished silver candlesticks and is brightly lit with chandeliers). He understands that his emotion is probably not directly connected to his religious beliefs. By saying this he is showing his awareness of the intentionality of emotion, one that is part of a social construct, a process learned over years of repetition and enjoyment in the collective. Of course, that is not to say that the emotion is devoid of devotion but he himself suspects this, through his admission that he only approves of statues with regard to the Bormla's Immaculate Conception.

One ritual, which is quite breathtaking for those who are not used to it, is the 'spontaneous' chanting of short eulogies to the Madonna which are cried out by individual men in the crowd as the statue is brought out of its niche before the

³⁹⁰ T. Benton, *Understanding heritage and memory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2010, p. 11.

commencement of the Procession around the city. The chants are always made by men, usually younger males though not exclusively and are loud outpourings of 'devotion', in the form of a paean to the Madonna. This is surely an example of a learned emotion, used intentionally, to paraphrase Robert Solomon, to motivate, influence and sometimes manipulate their own actions and attitudes as well as influencing and manipulating the actions and attitudes of others.

Here I have suggested that the emotions may not be directly connected to religious fervor. However, to underestimate the power of the Church in Malta, both overt and subliminal, would lead to a misinterpretation not only of the ancient past but of more recent history and the present day.

Harvey states

In medieval Europe, it was the Catholic Church that dominated the mediation of official heritage through its control over access to, and interpretation of, symbolic heritage resources and the technology (especially through writing and monumental architecture) for conveying these resources to the population.³⁹¹

The Catholic Church has always been very well aware of the semiotics of grandeur. A glance down the main nave from the high altar of any cathedral or large church will instantly manifest the semiotics of control and dominance. The Bormla Parish Church³⁹² is typical of its time in this respect. Set high up above what was, at the time of the Knights, Galley Creek, it must have stood out even more than it does today. Add to that the narrative behind the titular painting and the statue of the Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and you have the coordinates for an emotional tie that has withstood centuries.

There will be opportunity later on in the thesis to look closer at the historical and social narrative of the Parish but there are one or two elements of that story that are directly concerned with the distinct identity of Bormla. One concerns the rivalry between Birgu and Bormla. Briefly, and my reference here is to Guillaumier's³⁹³ recounting of the events, the early church in Bormla, pre-Knights, was connected administratively with Birgu. However, in 1572, after the Great Siege of 1565, when the population of Bormla started to grow again, Mons. Pietro Dusina allowed the Bormliži to bring in a priest to cover the ritual needs of the local people. This they did at their own expense. At the same time, however, Bormla remained under the auspices of the Birgu parish. Here the dates get a little

³⁹¹ D.C. Harvey, 'The History of Heritage', in B. Graham, P. Howard (eds), *The Ashgate Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., UK & USA, 2008, p. 20.

³⁹² The original church was built before the Great Siege. The present church was started in 1684, finished around 1725 and consecrated in 1732. It was given Collegiate status in 1822.

³⁹³ Guillaumier, *Bliet u Rħula Maltin*, pp. 117–121.

controversial. This is how one of the respondents, a teacher and historian of Bormla recounts it.

(...) (T)he parish priest of Birgu (back in the 16th century) didn't want to accept that Bormla would become a parish. In 1984 Bormla celebrated the 400th anniversary of the parish. The permission was given in 1584 but it was 1586 before the first baptism was held! (09)

In Guillaumier's publication, it is stated that in 1586, the Bishop's Vicar, Mons. Pietro Francesco Costa, agreed that Bormla should be divided from Birgu and attain parish status. Permission was actually given in 1584³⁹⁴ but some sustain that a parish initiates from its first baptism. As it seems unlikely that no children were born in Bormla between 1584 and 1586, one could read into this the tension between the two cities. Birgu not being very willing to give up its religious hegemony over Bormla. Here we have an example of the Church authorities cementing the boundary for a community that already existed as a separate entity but which thus became even more discrete.

This example of the birth of Bormla as a separate parish illustrates that edginess between the cities goes back a very long way. As Falzon has demonstrated in a recent paper, the characters of people of Birgu and of Bormla are still diverse today.

Problem is, such a hybrid is hard to imagine. Birgu and Bormla may be neighbours but they are very distinct, in two ways. First, each town is separately fortified; the lines of early modern bastions and works leave little doubt as to the line of demarcation between the two. Second, there is no evidence of schizophrenia among Bormliži and Girbin (as locals from Bormla and Birgu respectively are known) themselves. In no uncertain terms, one is either from Bormla or from Birgu.³⁹⁵

Of course, the influence of the Church upon the contemporary identity of Bormla is not simply one of control but of assistance. An early manifestation of this is the founding of confraternities.

A confraternity (*fratellanza*) is an organized institution created by a group of devoted people, united together for the purpose of encouraging special works of Christian Charity.³⁹⁶

It seems that there was some sort of support created through the confraternities which existed in Malta as early as the 15th century and their number

³⁹⁴ Notary Andrea Alban vol. 12/5, ff. 326-327. (*I thank Dr Simon Mercieca for this reference.*)

³⁹⁵ M.A. Falzon, 'Gifts for some, coal for others. Gentrification in two neighbouring fortified cities in Malta', in C. Vella (ed.) *At Home in Art, Essays in Honour of Mario Buhagiar*, BDL, Malta, 2016, p. 605.

³⁹⁶ M. Spiteri, 'The Artistic Patronage of the Religious Confraternities at the parish church of St Paul Shipwreck in Valletta: an art-historical analysis', MA Thesis, University of Malta, 2014, p. 5.

continued to grow right up to the 19th century. Some still exist to this day, such as the Confraternity of the Crucifix (*Il-Fratellanza tal-Kurċifiss*) in Bormla.

It is possible that a confraternity dedicated to the Immaculate Conception was set up in Bormla as early as 1581 when the Bormla church was still dedicated to the Our Lady of Perpetual Succour.³⁹⁷ More certain is the founding in 1634 of “a Confraternity of the Agony (...) referred to as the Confraternity of the Dying (Agonizzanti)”³⁹⁸ which was probably part of a number of institutions that were already well embedded in Malta’s religious landscape. Galea Scannura’s research takes the existence of this confraternity right up to 1926.

The Confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary was founded in Bormla in 1602 whilst that of the Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was set up in 1649.³⁹⁹ Some of these confraternities were linked solely with the Church and their members were individuals with a devotion to a particular patron saint. Others had members that belonged to a group of workers in a similar trade who linked together under the patronage of an appropriate saint. For example, a Confraternity of St Joseph might be made up of carpenters or the Confraternity of St Crispin would be made up of shoemakers.⁴⁰⁰

One of my respondents spoke about the importance of confraternities for the survival of tradesmen and about the link between the trade and the religious aspect of the confraternities.

After their workday they used to get together and in fact that is how many of the Confraternities were formed. In those days there were no unions. Their unions – for the woodworkers – would be the Confraternity of St Joseph; for the sailors it would be the Confraternity of St Andrew. These used to meet together and each would give a bit of their pay into a general pot so that just in case someone died and had no money for the funeral they would pay for it and perhaps help his family. Remember that there were no pensions. This was a way also of doing things for the Church. They also had their own graves. If you go to the Addolorata Cemetery you will find the tombs of the Confraternity of St Joseph, of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the Crucifix. The Confraternities still exist but are not nearly so big. The tombs at the Addolorata Cemetery do exist still and people are still buried there. (22)

³⁹⁷ No author, ‘Bormla, Immaculate Conception Parish Church’, Malta-Canada.com, (website), <http://www.malta-canada.com/churches-chapels/Bormla.htm>, (accessed 19 August 2018).

³⁹⁸ C. Galea Scannura, ‘Holy Week Celebrations At Cospicua’, *Cospicua Parish Church online*, 2018. Available from: <http://www.cospicuaparish.org.mt/>, (accessed 19 August 2018).

³⁹⁹ K. Ellul Galea, *Fratellanzi u Xirkiet tas-Snajja*, Stamperia Il-Hajja, Malta 1981, p. 48.

⁴⁰⁰ Ellul Galea, *Fratellanzi u Xirkiet tas-Snajja*, p. 48.

The confraternities still function today, helping in ecclesiastical activities but clearly no longer need to have an element of mutual help. However, the idea that the Church is a source of succour in adversity remains as this witness attests.

The Archpriest's office was always full of these people with issues. I was President of the Parish Pastoral Council (Kunsill Pastoral Parokkjali) – for everyone regardless of course whether they were Bormliži or people coming in from outside Bormla. (15)

□ *Secular Rituals*

Although it is quite clear that the Church is a major creator of rituals to which the people of Bormla and the diaspora Bormliži are still attached, there are some other rituals which emerged from the interviews. The two main ones which have a regular following amongst a large number of Bormliži are the Regatta and St George's Football Club (1890).

The Bormla Regatta team is very popular at present, having won two Shields in the Open category and in category B during the 8 September 2017 Regatta.⁴⁰¹ The *L-Istorja tal-Klabb Regatta Bormla* Facebook page boasts 2,257 'likes', equivalent to about one third of the population of Bormla – although many 'likes' could be from the diaspora enthusiasts. It represents a ritual coming together at least twice a year of a large group of the community with a common interest.

One of my one-to-one interviewees happened to be an historian of the Maltese Regatta and, before we started the formal questions for the interview I recorded the gentleman talking about his interests including a comment about the Regatta.

About the Regatta I did a series of interviews thirty to forty years ago. Races between the Wars and then until 1990. I have recordings and I feel they should be used and known. People should know that we have this important tradition. Until I started no one had written about the Regatta. I have also written about the races going back to the Greeks, then to Venice 1334, then our races started some time later in the 1600s. (02)⁴⁰²

A 'traditional' activity can be difficult to define, but, as traditions go, this one can claim quite a history. I cannot say that the Regatta was a major point of conversation, as can be seen from the source and reference numbers for it in the

⁴⁰¹ No Author, 'Double joy for Cospicua at Victory Day regatta', September 8, 2017. Available from: The Times of Malta online. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/double-joy-for-cospicua-at-victory-day-regatta.657537>

⁴⁰² I later returned to this respondent's home and recorded an interview of over two hours solely about the Regatta.

coding. However, it is clearly a very popular source of entertainment when it comes along – and especially when the team is on a winning streak.

My conversation with one of the few traditional boat builders and restorers left in Malta took me into the place where the boats are kept. I was introduced to a former President of the Bormla Regatta Club and given a tour and an explanation of the different kinds of boats and their characteristics. It was immediately evident that this would be a very good tourist attraction which could link the history, the sport and the boat building expertise. And, in fact, the Regatta Club has already improved its financial position which will help to secure its continued existence.

This was the comment of a Bormliz who has had close connections with the St George's Football Club in the past.

Football in Bormla is in the disastrous state it is not because of the image of Bormla but because everything is in a disaster. Like the Regatta. But they were lucky. In life things often happen through luck! They (the Regatta Club) were given that large space under the new project near Dock 1. The Bormla Boat Club bought up the large area, made business out of it and then bought the best oarsmen! If that hadn't happened the Regatta would be in the same position as the football club. (18)

The same respondent was seriously worried that St George's Football Club, that he could see as a major potential social marker and tourist attraction for Bormla, would have to close down because of lack of funds and lack of leadership.

When you try to understand it you can say that it is one of the oldest clubs in the world and there is a strong chance it will have to close its doors. It has cups that are unique. The Admiral used to invent a competition, then he would get a team together from the British Navy personnel and they would play against the team of youngsters from Bormla. The winning team would take the cup. Where are you going to find that kind of a cup anywhere else in the world? Nowhere. Thick solid silver! All dusty! (18)

However, a glance at the St George's Football Club Facebook page shows that there are still people running the Club and purchasing new players. They appear to be sponsored by the new American University of Malta (AUM). This is surely an indication of a changing Bormla.

There is a feeling amongst the older people that sport is 'not what it was'. They lament the fact that money is now so important.

Before the attitude to sport was different. It was really the desire to play for Bormla. Now it's like: Yes, I'll play but I want a financial return.

I can mention the Regatta in the old days. No money just medals. They used to go out with the Banda and ask for a penny from all the families.

The older rowers got fame but no money. Football is the same. No one used to get money if you lose. Things have changed. Football is now about betting. (21)

This may be so but it seems that a sense of place and identity are still linked to these regularly held local sporting events – helped, of course, by the rivalry between the Three Cities which creates a point of ‘distinctiveness’.

These two sporting events are also evidence of the relationship of the local population with the British Forces. As in so many other colonies of Britain, football came to Malta with the British troops in the 1800s. There was a level of British resident that did not feel the need, or possibly even the desire, to sustain contact with the Maltese. However, the Commanders of the Army and the Navy must have seen the benefits of keeping their own troops fit and entertained whilst also gaining a foothold in the affections of the local people. The history of British popularity amongst the people of the Three Cities, in particular Bormla which was most affected by the construction of the Dockyard, was patchy to say the least. Football must have played a part in creating a better connection.

In 1885, after the Maltese lads saw the soldiers and sailors play, three teams from Cospicua were set up: Cospicua St Andrew's, Sta Margarita and St George's. In 1890 they amalgamated and chose to keep the name of St George's.

Over the years there were a few hiccups as one of my respondents recounts

I like football, in fact I was involved in the publication about Maltese Football and St George's. We organised the first tournaments for kids – football. There was a bit of an issue. We used to have English people playing in the Maltese teams and then there was an incident – Valletta was playing if I remember rightly. The referee was Flight Lieutenant Bent. He was in the Air Force (c. 1960).⁴⁰³ He made a mistake and the supporters wanted to kill him – you know how the Maltese are – short tempered. The English authorities put out a ruling that the English couldn't play with the Maltese teams. The Squadron Leader sent for me. He said: (...) can't we fix something so that my 'boys' play with the Maltese? Finance?, I asked. He said: No problem. I said I need referees, pitches and the money to buy gears etc. No problem he said. I got together eight groups under 18 and under 14. Six weeks of tournament with plenty of pitches around the area. And we bought the medals. Gold, silver and bronze for all the tournament winners and the trophies and the reception after the prize-giving.

We had the reception at the Astra cinema in Hal Luqa. The Wing Commander came and we did the presentations. *The Times* came and they did a good report. (21)

⁴⁰³ No author, 'Luqa Admin/Flying Wind Win R.A.F. Inter-Unit Soccer Cup', *The Times of Malta*, Saturday, 6 February 1960, p. 15.

St George's was referred to by the respondents more as a local institution than simply the local football club. There are challenges associated with this kind of emotional response, as exemplified in this comment from one of the interviewees.

I wouldn't go to live in Fgura or Marsaskala if you paid me because it is a great mixture of cultures. There is no sense of identity. In Bormla, if you dig a bit, I will find that sense of identity. If I go to the Regatta – even if we are only 20 people – I will still feel that flutter of happiness. If you open up to everyone you will lose that. (18)

The anxiety of loss is genuine. There is the fear of losing an identity that the Bormlizi feel they need to cling to if their distinctive character is to be maintained. It is truly an existentialist angst. It recalls that definition mentioned in Chapter One that recorded 'heritage' as also meaning a plant that was not hybrid. This is one of the paradoxes of Bormla that manifests itself in many diverse situations. The Bormlizi like to think of themselves as an original group and yet they know that they have opened their city to 'the other' for centuries and are anything but pure. However, for them, purity is not a matter of DNA but of dedication to Bormla, preferably one that goes back a few generations.

Maintaining St George's Football Club is a mission at various levels. These include the desire to provide Bormla with a place for young people to train as a way of keeping youth on the straight and narrow and the yearning to keep hold of an institution that holds good history for the city and that has potential to go there again. There is real sadness in this comment from a respondent.

There was an Italian entrepreneur and we begged him to invest in the club. We told him with a bit of financing we could be 1st Division which could lead to European matches. He didn't want to know. (18)

Another link with the British culture of keeping young people occupied with sport and education is the Scouts. Although it seems that the Scout movement may no longer be as strong in Bormla today, it certainly was in the past. My research into Bormla in *The Times of Malta* and *The Sunday Times of Malta* (1930 to present day) has revealed numerous references and features about the Bormla Scouts Group and there would certainly be a narrative to tell about them and about the Girl Guides. In 2017, the Bormla Scouts group celebrated its centenary.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ The Malta Boy Scouts Association was a branch of the British Association formed in the UK in 1908. The 'Bernard's Own' (Sliema) scout group was founded in 1909, the first outside the UK.

□ *Bormla meets the religious 'other'*

There is another aspect of Bormla's history that is almost unique to the city and which has, I sustain, helped form the Bormliż vision of themselves. That is the contact with Protestantism, particularly in the shape of the Methodist Church. I feel, therefore, that it is a tale worth telling in a little detail. Catholicism was deeply embedded in Maltese society from the arrival of the Normans in the late 11th century, strengthened also by the narrative of the coming of St Paul, shipwrecked on Malta in around AD60 on his way to martyrdom in Rome.⁴⁰⁵ When the British took over the running of Malta, in effect, from the Treaty of Paris of 1814,⁴⁰⁶ they brought with them hundreds of military and naval personnel, many of whom were Protestants and Methodists. Initially, the concentration of these troops was mainly in the Three Cities, Valletta and Floriana. In 1815,⁴⁰⁷ a request was made, by some Methodist soldiers, that a pastor should be sent from the UK to care for their religious needs. They already rented a place for prayer and services but felt the desire for a permanent religious reference. This led to an investigative visit to Malta by Rev. Charles Cook DD which, in turn, resulted in the appointment of Rev. John Keeling as the first Methodist pastor in Malta in 1824.

The vicissitudes of Rev. Keeling and his successors are recorded in several sources mentioned by Mario Attard in his 2009 article.⁴⁰⁸ This is a fascinating story which I feel would definitely be of interest to Bormliżi, Maltese and tourists. However, in this context, suffice to say that the Bormliżi were not happy with the arrival of the Methodists and that their hostility continued almost unabated towards the various pastors and also to those Maltese who actually converted to the Methodist practice.

A doctor, a certain Dr Naudi, who had also become a Methodist lost a good many of his patients who used his services. Around 1842, the printer Izzo and his workers were interdicted by the Catholic Church because they printed the Methodist newspaper, *The Illuminator*. This happened in the time of Rev. John Jenkins.⁴⁰⁹ (*my trans.*)

In 1826, there was an incident concerning a Methodist pastor named Dr W. H. Rule which ended up in a court of law. After this, the authorities threatened to throw out of their house any Bormla resident who caused trouble. This had the

⁴⁰⁵ There is no archaeological evidence for Christianity in Malta until the 4th century. This evidence is the Hayes Type II lamps, found mainly in local Roman catacombs, which create a terminus post quem for Christianity in Malta.

⁴⁰⁶ Treaty of Paris, (website),

http://www.napoleonseries.org/research/government/diplomatic/c_paris1.html.

⁴⁰⁷ M. Attard, 'Bormla, ir-Rest u l-Knisja tal-Metodisti' (1) in *Festa Marija Immakulata 2009*, Ċentru 19 ta' Novembru, Bormla, 109-119, p. 109.

⁴⁰⁸ M. Attard, 'Bormla, ir-Rest u l-Knisja tal-Metodisti', p. 109.

⁴⁰⁹ M. Attard, p. 109.

required affect and, despite this antipathy on the part of the local church, the Methodists continued to be served by pastors from the UK and actually built their first church in Floriana in 1883 which is still extant today.⁴¹⁰ Keeling had started the Malta Charity School in 1831 for poor Maltese children and orphans but, at that time, the Bormliži children still had to be brought to the school by officials in uniform.⁴¹¹

By the time The Rest,⁴¹² a place where British soldiers and sailors could meet, was set up in 1884, the atmosphere seems to have improved. The Rest became a popular place providing copious amounts of tea and much entertainment. The venue for The Rest, now the headquarters of the Bormla Local Council, looks onto the Xgħajra, an open space on Sta Margarita hill. There is not much evidence to suggest that The Rest was frequented by local Bormliži, except perhaps by a few converts. But the club probably added a pleasant atmosphere to the city and it appears that locals and Methodists alike managed to live together in relative harmony.

Across the way from The Rest was built a Methodist Church in 1927 which went on serving the needs of Methodists up until WWII when it was used for other purposes and received a direct hit from enemy fire. The Rest was also damaged. After the War there was a decision taken not to rebuild the Church itself but to rely on the services of the Methodist Church in Floriana.

A comment I heard from several different respondents was that Bormla looked upon other people with a tolerance because they were used to seeing, meeting and working with people who were not cut from the same cloth as they were. I have told this story to illustrate the kind of experience and the learning curve that the Bormliži had to undergo that was not the case in other areas of Malta. There is also the understanding that the Bormliži have always mixed and tolerated 'the other' in a way that those in the other towns and villages in Malta could not. I would suggest that this made Bormla's identity considerably different to that of other Maltese.

For example, Cottonera was much more permissive as a society than other places in Malta and Gozo. Permissiveness, e.g. homosexuality, was common even before the Knights. Homosexuality was common amongst the many slaves because of their type of work (proximity on boats and no women) and the fact that there were many young boys amongst them. In the villages these things (homosexuality and illegitimacy) were considered an aberration. (Illegitimacy was also a way of strengthening

⁴¹⁰ The Methodist church in Floriana has been put to a secular use as a rehearsal room for the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO).

⁴¹¹ M. Attard, 'Bormla, ir-Rest u l-Knisja tal-Methodisti', p. 115.

⁴¹² The Rest is now the premises of the Bormla Local Council.

the gene pool.) So culturally and morally Cottonera was looking towards the outside. It took no notice of the rest of Malta and Gozo – it didn't need to. (11)

Transgender people found a place in Bormla. They felt comfortable perhaps because the locals appreciated the problems they had. Even though the Bormliži might joke with them they do not ridicule them. They were used to having a lot of different types. Not like other villages that were very closed. (05)

□ ***Mother, Friend and Beloved — Omm, Habiba, Maħbuba***

One interviewee answered my question: 'What does the name Bormla mean to you?' with the following

Firstly, I think that Bormla is between being a Mother, Friend and Beloved (Omm, Habiba, Maħbuba) (03)

Another told me

But, in simple terms, you can't not love your mother but love your wife, and that's how I feel. (18)

The anthropomorphic transformation of Bormla into mother figure is hardly surprising given the undying attachment of all Bormliži to the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception. The image of the statue is in probably in every household and, nowadays, on many a mobile phone. The people of Bormla compare all beautiful females (children or mothers or wives or girlfriends) to that statue of the Madonna⁴¹³ by saying: she is comparable to the Madonna! (Qisha l-Immakulata!) I heard more than one man say that his mother and the Madonna (as illustrated by the statue) were the two 'people' he held most dear. The word 'mother' was mentioned twenty seven times by the participants who answered Question One.

From the interview answers to Question One, as one might imagine, family and the home were recurrent themes and constituted a large percentage of the discussion. Hay has written that

Insider status and local ancestry are important toward the development of a more rooted sense of place.⁴¹⁴

Certainly, in the context of Bormla, this seems to ring very true.

⁴¹³ The 19th century statue was originally the work of Abram Gatt, a Bormla-born sculptor. However, it was sent to Milan, Italy in 1905 to be silvered and of the wooden statue there remain only the hands and the head.

⁴¹⁴ R. Hay, 'Sense of Place in Developmental Context', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 18, 1998, pp. 5 – 29, p. 1. Available from: Researchgate.

Yes, the side of my mother are all from Bormla. My father was from Sliema but when he got married he came to live in Bormla. Mamà wanted to be near her mother and her siblings. Her family still live in or around Bormla. My Nanna was from Bormla. I come from a Bormla family and I think that that side of the family was the most influential in my life because we lived with or near them. (12)

My mother came from a family of thirteen generations all from Bormla. My father was from Kalkara but his mother was from Bormla. My father was born in Kalkara and his father before him. (18)

I have a special attachment to Bormla, I was born here, I've always lived here except for a short time during WWII when we were in Gozo and then when I was President of the Republic – in the same house. I've just moved from one bedroom to another. But it is not just my city but that of my father and my ancestors also on my mother's side. I used to represent Bormla in Parliament. I am emotionally tied to Bormla. The football club I love most is St George's. I feel I am from Bormla and thus I am Maltese and thus I am a citizen of Europe. (10)

Some of the younger participants and those who were not actually born in Bormla mentioned going to their grandmother's home.

Bormla: my youth, my family, a sense of belonging. Bormla is part of my youth. Although the early part of my life was spent in Fgura, my aunts and my grandmother lived in Bormla. My father was in the army so he used to have some night shifts and we would quite often stay with our grandmother. I have happy memories of those times. The Regatta and the Feast were important and we used to go down to the Xatt (Dockside or Strand) to discuss the loss or win of the Regatta. When I was 8 years old we moved to Bormla. So it became my home. (04)

This respondent is a typical example of someone born outside the city but who was brought up to love Bormla and was very happy to go to live there. The influence of the family ties cannot be overstated. However, there are exceptions.

My mother was from Senglea and my father from Bormla but neither of them was particularly interested in Bormla. They lived here and that's that. Once someone offered my father a place in Wardija – my father used to work in the Bank – and came home very pleased about this offer. (...) I was still small but I told him I don't want to come. I live here. (...) but then my mother said no because she was near all the things she needed and also our schools. Anyway, it ended in our not going. When I got married it was on condition that we remain in Bormla. My wife is from Bormla and her father was very keen on Bormla so I didn't have a problem. My son, (...) knows more about Bormla than I do. He (...) appreciates Bormla's history and knows a lot about it. (22)

This respondent has a passion for Bormla but it seems he did not ‘inherit’ it from his parents. Another respondent lamented that family life was not the same any more.

Now there are so many other things such as the internet which is alienating many from educating themselves, interacting with society and with their families – even at table. The family is not what it was. They don’t eat together any more. Everyone is on his/her own. Education is not only what you learn at school but it is important to learn how to behave. (07)

In Bormla the family is not just your direct family – mother, father, siblings, grandmother etc. but also extends to one’s neighbours.

(...) here there are people who if they have only two euro in their pocket and someone asks them for something to eat they will give that person what he needs. This is the character of the true Bormliż. (02)

Bormla – I’m going to say something a bit outrageous – neighbours don’t exist in Bormla. You either know him or you don’t. The idea that you don’t go to their houses reciprocally doesn’t exist. In Sliema you can have neighbours who you do not know and do not communicate with. In Cottonera, in this order Bormla and Senglea and then Birgu – they do not live in the same street, they are part of a community. People who live side by side live together in the sense that they know each other’s lives and are part of each other’s lives. In Sliema and other places it is possible to live as individuals. In Bormla you are either part of the community or not.

This last comment, made by one of the founders of *Dar it-Tama*,⁴¹⁵ picks up on a very fundamental element of Bormla life. It is a community in a way that is peculiar to Bormla. That is not to say that communities do not exist in other villages. On the contrary, villages or small towns such as *Had-Dingli*, *Iż-Żurrieq*, *Haż-Żebbuġ* and *Hal Għaxaq* do have groups of people who are extremely attached to the Feast of their hometown – a core of people, young and old, who run the local feast and populate the local band club. Today, despite Boissevain’s predictions⁴¹⁶ that the “*festa partiti*” would, in time, be weakened “by national political issues”, feasts are still alive and well. However, the Bormla community, whilst it has its internal divisions, is a community with a difference. There is something which, *volens nolens*, keeps them together in a physical way that then translates into a psychological closeness.

What came across very strongly in my discussions was the phenomenon of trust between those who declare themselves to be Bormliżi. The shared ancestry, the shared background of the Dockyard, the shared politics and the perceived need

⁴¹⁵ The *Dar it-Tama* project was started before the setting up of the Local Councils. It was a community centre through which the potential of children could be tapped in an educational way.

⁴¹⁶ J. Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks, Religion and Politics in Rural Malta*, The Athlone Press, NY, 1965, p. 119.

to stick together in adversity, including the stigma that emanates from certain outsiders, leads the Bormliži to trust another Bormliž. This may seem like an unlikely and overly-romantic picture, and, no doubt, there are Bormliži that would let each other down. However, the answers I got within the context of every question asked during the interviews indicated that the members of the community trusted each other much more than they would trust an outsider. I repeatedly heard the expression: *Bormliž l-ewwel!* First I am Bormliž! The picture of trust is, however, complicated by the divisions in the community. The feelings might not be the same with regard to those who are not perceived by the mainstream as 'true' Bormliži.

The third Question that I asked my respondents, both in the one-to-one interviews and in the focus groups was: Do you feel part of a community or communities here in Bormla? If so, which ones do you feel part of? Most of the single interviewees, but not all, were from the community that I have referred to before as Bormliži with deep family roots in the city. These people would have Bormla connections going back at least one or two generations. Many were connected in some way to the Dockyard or were first or second generation teachers. It became very clear to me that there also existed another stratum of the community consisting of those who had come to Bormla as far back as the 1940s and who for one reason or another had not integrated fully. There was also another stratum of those who came to Bormla after social housing was built for them in the 1980s. I felt it was important to hear the voice of representatives of these two strata.

My second focus group was of six women who meet on a regular basis at the Ċentru LEAP which is situated on the Birgu/Bormla/Kalkara border. Here, the social service, AĊCESS, offers advice to anyone wishing to know about social assistance but also organizes discussion groups for young mothers, pensioners and others with common interests. The group consisted of six ladies with an average age of 65 years. Some had probably had a modest education and one or two had some difficulty signing their names. They all seemed to have had somewhat disadvantaged backgrounds – one recounted that her father had made a living selling from a cart. However, they were all very attached to Bormla and were anxious about the same things that the one-to-one interviewees were anxious about including the perceived threat of gentrification; the stigma attached to Bormla; the idea that young people were leaving the city. They seemed to also perceive those who lived in social housing as somewhat 'set apart', more because they lived, literally, on the periphery of the city than for other reasons as this reply below indicates.

PC: Do the people in the social housing come to Bormla centre?

Yes, they do. They come to the Parish and the children go to school. Even though they are a little cut off from the rest of Bormla. They don't really have a bus stop which is a bit awkward. Now it's a bit better. Gives them a chance to come more often. They come down for the fireworks.^{417 418}

What came over very strongly was a sense of Bormla's historic value, the famous sons and daughters of Bormla, the tourist potential of the fortifications and the many churches of Bormla. They were aware of the Underground Chapel⁴¹⁹ and lamented the fact that it was always closed.

One voluntary group that was mentioned with enthusiasm was Ċentru Tbexbix. This group organizes educational opportunities for children, projects and outings both for the young and older people in Bormla. The Ċentru was mentioned several times by the focus group participants that I met at Ċentru LEAP and also by the participants of the third focus group who all hailed from social housing, but very little by the one-to-one interviewees.

The importance of obtaining the views of representatives living in social housing became clear early on but it did not prove to be an easy task – something that I have described in the previous chapter on methodology. After quite some effort and assistance from a local person and the kind cooperation of one of the residents of Fort Verdala, a group was put together. It was made up of four females and two males who had an average age of 65 years. Some of the group had come to Bormla in the last thirty years, others had lived in Bormla from early childhood. From this focus group one can see that certain people, who may have been in Bormla all their lives, had not experienced social mobility within Bormla. One of the two men in the group was from a town outside Bormla and clearly felt that his heart still lay in his hometown. However, he admitted that his children considered themselves Bormliżi. The other male had clearly been living in Bormla for most of his life and his children were proud to be Bormliżi. Three of the females had either been in Bormla all their lives or had married Bormliżi. They all felt themselves emotionally attached to the city. One participant, the youngest of the group, said that, although she moved from Birgu to Bormla she still considered herself as coming from Birgu and admitted that, though she respected the local Feast, she was more attached to St Lawrence.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ The Bormla Local Council has recently started a van service to facilitate the movement of older people and those living on the periphery of Bormla.

⁴¹⁸ The interest in the fireworks was confirmed during the third focus group held with a group from social housing.

⁴¹⁹ J. Vella, 'The Rock-cut Church of Bormla: Origins and Developments', *Journal of Maltese History*, vol, 5, no. 1, 2016, pp. 49-74. Available from: University of Malta Library Online. (accessed 05 April 2017).

⁴²⁰ The Parish Church of Birgu is dedicated to St Lawrence. The Dominican Priory and its Church of the Annunciation (rebuilt after being destroyed in WWII) celebrate the Feast of St Dominic. As happens elsewhere in Malta, this creates two 'rival' feasts within one town.

It appeared that the older members of the group had found themselves in Fort Verdala because they had previously been living in sub-standard housing in other parts of Bormla. The Fort, having served as a barracks until the exit of the British Services in the 1970s and a store after that, was refurbished around the start of the 1980s as social housing. In the context of 'remembering', this group was an essential piece in the jigsaw of Bormla's community landscape. These residents lie in a grey area of adherence to the wider Bormla community. The reasons seem to be based on a certain lack of social mobility within the Bormla context despite the fact that many of them were born in Bormla or have been resident in Bormla from a very early age. Whilst the older generation seems to have remained fixed in their situation some of their children have gone on to further education. For these children, academic achievement will very probably translate into social mobility both within and outside Bormla.

The situation of one of the participants rather exemplified the changing face of Bormla and in particular of those living in social housing. One of the children of this particular participant has just graduated from the University of Malta whilst another of her children was in prison on a drugs offence. Change is taking place but certain problems continue and these give rise to the criticisms expressed by other of my respondents, especially with regard to those who came to the area from outside Bormla in the 1980s but also with regard to families who have been in Bormla for years.

I believe that all these problems started with the social housing situation going back years.

PC: Is there no way of integrating the so-called newcomers into Bormla's general society?

I don't think that cultures can mix – I'm not a racist at all but I think that the cultures cannot mix. We are only 5,000. We used to be 20,000. If 15,000 more people used to live here it means that there are a lot of empty houses! What happened to those places? That's why I think that it is the social housing that is the problem. As much as Social Housing can be of benefit it can also be a negative. If you bring people from outside and put them in social housing *you have killed off the sense of identity.* (18) (my emphasis)

The answers from the participants in the third focus group were also generally indicative of a divide between the Bormla of the periphery and the more central areas of Bormla.

PC: Are your friends mostly from Fort Verdala or do you have friends who live in other areas?

I have friends because I go to coffee mornings.

PC: For example, the Tota Pulchra choir, is there anyone from Fort Verdala who participates in the choir?

Not from Fort Verdala. (General multi-voice answer)

When asked about other people's opinion of Fort Verdala none of the participants suggested that they were victims of bad feeling towards them on the part of the general Bormliż population. They felt that attitudes were improving with regard to Bormla in general and that the residents of the Fort needed be responsible for the place but needed the help of the authorities.

One of the complaints during the discussion was that the position of Fort Verdala did not lend itself to easy mobility which they felt also served to cut them off from the main areas of Bormla. Their perception was also that the Local Council did not respond to their concerns e.g. lack of 'sleeping policemen'; slow reaction time when public lighting was not working. It should be mentioned that the Bormla Local Council has recently started a van 'pick up' system for those on the periphery of Bormla in an effort to increase the opportunities for these residents to enjoy what the other parts of Bormla have to offer e.g. the social amenities; the Band Club; coffee shops; the promenade and retail shops.

The one-to-one interviews, the focus groups and the informal conversations that I have had show that this issue of cohesion, or lack of it, is one that does divide the community but possibly more in the perception than the reality. It is not a cut and dried division but one that shows itself to be one with inevitable grey areas but that could potentially put Bormla's community regeneration at risk. Amongst this particular group, one could surmise that those who were born or at least have been in Bormla for many years are very interested in what is going on and that their children are even keener than they are on the Feast and other activities.

□ *Poverty*

One of the things that surprised me about the content of my one-to-one interviews was the general unwillingness to speak about poverty. People would tell me how difficult life had been when they were young,

The situation was that we really had no money so my mother used to try to find the cheapest accommodation.

(...)

As we were so hard up she sent me to Saint Patrick's⁴²¹ to get rid of me. She had no choice. We were naughty as it was a hard life. Even the bread ... you had to make sure you kept your piece of bread. (21)

⁴²¹ St Patrick's is an institution run by the Salesian Brothers in Malta that provides residential care for children from problem backgrounds. It still fulfills this role from its church and home in Sliema.

However, their stories tended to emphasise how their parents or they themselves had managed to rise above poverty. The same respondent told me

During the War, my sister (...) was almost a teacher but because of certain circumstances she went to work at the Victory Kitchen. When the Kitchen closed my sister, (...), and I used to go to the back door and we would take some stuff which Rita used to pass to us. We would take it on a cart to another supervisor nearby and she would divide it up. And lately I met with this old lady and she remembered what we used to do. (21)

An example of this reluctance to admit to the difficulties of being poor was the fact that only one respondent, who was not from Bormla, mentioned a phenomenon known as '*il-gaxin*'.⁴²²

The Dockyard was a great source of jobs but when they weren't needed any more – after the war for example – they just used to let them go and this created poverty.

Il-gaxin - every one of the three cities has a family with the nickname '*tal-gaxin*'. *Il-gaxin* was the leftovers of the British sailors which were put into one big pot and which were then sold as food to the Maltese. That is a very social issue. Don't leave that out – *il-gaxin*. The families with the nickname would have had a contract with the British admiral. Anything left from Sant'Angelo, the Dockyard, visiting warships they would put into this large pan, mix it and sell it.

But if you don't have a job and you are hungry that would be a God send. Many families of the Three Cities used to survive on the *gaxin*. This is a very sorry story but very important. *Gaxin* from the official officers were meat leftovers. Then there was the *gaxin* of the other ranks. It's shocking but it went on until the early 1960s. We were lucky because my father worked in the Navy and could bring home a piece of meat – probably we ate courtesy of the Queen! (05)

I deliberately only asked one other respondent about '*il-gaxin*' and he brushed me off with a brusque reply saying that he thought there was a lot of exaggeration regarding the whole story of '*il-gaxin*'. It may not have happened exactly as my first respondent recounts but it certainly is an economic indicator that cannot be ignored.⁴²³

⁴²² N. Camilleri, 'Author sheds new light on working class heroes of Strada Stretta, *The Malta Independent*, 16 November 2015. Available from: The Malta Independent online, (accessed 10 April 2017). "The Maltese were very clever. They even accepted navy uniforms and food smuggled from ships in return for drinks. They then sold the products for a hefty profit. Some would make a killing by selling the *gaxin* (leftovers) they bought from navy ships. Remember, this was a time of great poverty."

⁴²³ For a description of exactly how the '*il-gaxin*' system worked, vide, Joseph Bonnici & Michael Cassar, *The Malta Grand Harbour and its Dockyard, Malta*, pub. by the authors, 1994, pp. 187 & 190.

It was only when I interviewed the third focus group made up of residents from social housing that someone actually volunteered the information, during a general discussion about poverty, that she had eaten *gaxin* food.

We used to make a ball out of squashed papers and play with it in the street. *Il-Gaxin*, who knows how many times I ate the *gaxin* food.

PC: Really!

Yes. The poverty - we were very poor.

Where we used to live, there were a lot of children, in Oratorio Street, all in one house. There wasn't enough to eat. But still we managed to survive.

Collective amnesia is a well-known phenomenon in memory studies. It is sometimes an amnesia promoted by some authority

Amnesia is related to 'amnesty', to what used to be called 'acts of oblivion', official erasure of memories of conflict in the interests of social cohesion.⁴²⁴

Or it can also be, as in this case, a community erasure which, nevertheless, has been very effective in casting '*il-gaxin*' into oblivion. I took a straw poll from amongst some of my friends who are from central Malta and none of them had ever heard of '*il-gaxin*'. It seems to have remained one of Cottonera's best-kept secrets.

In the third focus group from which emerged the information about the *gaxin* there was also a poignant reminder from another participant of just how bad things were for some families in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the respondent's own words.

From my window under the barracks when I was small I used to hold up my hand and beg: 'Johnny, gimme penny' so they (the soldiers) would throw us 6 *habbiet* (halfpenny) or 1 *sold* (penny). Where we live now (Fort Verdala) was a barracks, they (the soldiers) used to go down in groups to work at the dockyard. When we got about 6d I would hide it.

If one is going to measure Bormlġz identity with the yardstick of Breakwell's principle of self-esteem, then this attitude to poverty is a good example of an element that has involved a 'selective perception of information' and has 'channell(ed) value formation and modif(ied) attribution processes'. This 'forgetting' has allowed the people of Bormla the space for positive self-esteem on the surface but that does not mean that the reality of '*il-gaxin*' is not felt internally

⁴²⁴ P. Burke, 'Excerpt from 'History of Social Memory'' in J.K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, D. Levy (eds), *The Collective Memory Reader*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 189.

or that it does not play a part in the Bormliž sense of identity today. And from the Fort Verdala focus group one can see that memories of grinding poverty do subsist. This participant felt comfortable enough to mention it probably because she felt she was amongst people who had endured the same conditions.

□ *Belonging*

The word 'glue' as in: What is the 'glue' that keeps the city together? is not exactly an academic term much recommended for the serious researcher to use. However, as a metaphor, it is useful because a good 'glue' has the capacity to join several items together but it also has a stickiness that attaches itself to something and from which it is difficult to detach. Here I return to the subject of the Church which, like politics, is never far from the surface in Bormla. The respondents referred to the Church in their interviews directly with regard to the Feast, the figure of the Immaculate Conception and the importance of the events surrounding the Feast and Holy Week. The direct references amounted to over sixty-five and the Church in all its manifestations appeared indirectly in the general narrative running through the interviews. The Church and its activities were clearly the *leitmotif* of their lives and, apart from the sporting activities of Bormla, were really the only cultural events in which they participated. Even the Band Club was and is tied to the participation in Church activities and with concerts dedicated to sacred music. The interview respondents clearly expressed the fact that the Church's activities in Bormla have been and still are central to their lives.

There is a lot tied to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. First of all people come into the Church for it. In December it often rains! The ceremonies inside the Church are very beautiful and people really like them. Everyone sings. The statue is beautiful, paintings by Cali – prophets. The paintings are exceptional and people are tied to the Church. (10)

Answering my question: What keeps Bormla together? one respondent replied

It is a sure thing that the Immaculate Conception plays a large part in this. The Immaculate Conception for Bormla is the bond that keeps the people of Bormla together. That's why I love it when I go to the Feast and I start seeing people I knew as a child – who no longer live in Bormla – but they return for the Feast – you see them coming in from the towns and villages. (16)

There is a strong sense of competition between the feasts of the Three Cities, which was expressed by one of the respondents who hails from Senglea where the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady is celebrated on 8th September. She told me that the competition starts before the Senglea feast even takes place!

Also, in August you will already see pictures (on Facebook) of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception even though there is still plenty of time before the Feast! The competition already starts to appear. (20)

The importance of the Church in Malta within a wider context as a bulwark of Christianity provides a solid basis for religious belief on the island. Going back to 1st century Malta, there is actually a legend that purports that St Paul left the island, after the shipwreck, from the beach at Bormla and, of course, the Great Siege of 1565 was fought on Bormla's doorstep. The first remains a legend but the second was certainly a hard fought battle. The taking of Malta by Roger the Norman in 1091 is popularly seen as the continuation of Christianity in Malta. This is still up for discussion amongst academics but when Pope John Paul II visited Malta in 1990, he referred to the 'collective memory (of Christianity) of your forefathers'. A brilliant way of leaving feathers unruffled. With that background, the Church has inevitably instilled a sense of belonging in Bormla, which cannot be over emphasized and this fact will be examined closely with regard to where Bormla's cultural capital lies; how keen younger people in Bormla are to carry on certain traditions and how they might be drawn into those traditions, as well as looking at how Bormla can perhaps begin to also look outside the sphere of the Church in search of cultural development. However, it is interesting to see how the Church as 'education' was viewed by some of the respondents through the lenses of their personal memory.

A respondent recalled

(...) I was very involved in the Society of Christian Doctrine ('Mużew'). I used to teach the children there and sometimes we used to go to the St Nicholas married quarters – a sort of outreach twice a week teaching doctrine. Mużew was very important to me. (06)

Another told me

I, apart from being Bormliż, I was brought up at the Society of Christian Doctrine (Mużew) – you learn so that you can teach. Dun Ġorġ Preca's motto. I applied my learning to contribute to Bormla as the level of culture is not too good. (09)

This is the Church as 'education' through the Society of Christian Doctrine (il-Mużew)⁴²⁵ which almost every child in Malta since 1907 has experienced. It was therefore as much part of the lives of the younger respondents as of the older ones.

⁴²⁵ The Society of Christian Doctrine, Origins (website), <http://www.sdcmuseum.org/Page.aspx?menu=1&pv=850q89LhwS4=>, (accessed 5 July 2017).

After school there was the Society of Christian Doctrine (Mużew – where catechism classes were held) and then you went out to play, then you went home, had supper and slept. That was the rhythm of our lives. (12)

With regard to leaders here in Malta, I say that if it weren't for the structure of the Society of Christian Doctrine (Mużew) everything would die. The leaders come out from there. And even the little moral compass that remains comes from there. We have lost much of that compass ('morna l-baħar rigward il-morali'). The Mużew is keeping it going. (22)

However, politics is never far away in Bormla and the 'Mużew' was not immune to controversy. This respondent got caught up in the period in the 1960s when the Church, under Archbishop Michael Gonzi, was trying to dissuade the Maltese – under threat of interdiction⁴²⁶ - from voting for the Labour Party, mainly because it feared that Mr Mintoff's leftist views would lead to Communism in Malta and therefore atheism. This action by the Church authorities caused friction within families, and enormous distress to many. It is now considered to have been a monumental mistake on the part of the conservative Catholic Church in Malta of the time. The interdiction was felt all over the island but particularly in the Lower Harbour areas where the Malta Labour Party had gained a strong following.

My father took a job in the GWU and became involved with the interdiction by the Church and was considered excommunicated.⁴²⁷ (...) And I was very religious and was keen to join il-Mużew. However, one day, the Mużew asked me to take a whistle and blow it whilst he (Mintoff) was speaking at a rally so that he couldn't be heard. I remember I said that I couldn't go to meetings. The reply was that I would be put down a class (at the Mużew). For me that was a big trauma as I had this religious bent. So I decided not to go to the Mużew any longer. This had a big effect on me. (03)

"The origins of the Society of Christian Doctrine date from the beginning of the 20th century; or, to be more precise, the 7th of March, 1907 - the day when the first meeting was held between Fr Preca and a group of youths. As a young priest, Saint George Preca was imbued with the idea of using lay men and women to serve the Church, primarily by helping them lead a truly Christian life and a dedication to evangelisation. Saint George Preca seemed to have been preoccupied with the state of catechism in the local Church. He had realised that although Malta was practically all Catholic and all the population was church-going, most Maltese Catholics knew very little about the truths of Christianity. In general, religion was based on the practice of popular devotions and little else."

⁴²⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica online under the word 'Excommunication', <https://www.britannica.com/topic/excommunication#ref2522>, (accessed 19 August 2018).

"Excommunication should be distinguished from two related forms of censure, suspension and interdict. (...) interdict does not exclude a believer from the communion of the faithful but forbids certain sacraments and sacred offices, sometimes to an entire area, town, or region."

⁴²⁷ In the discourse surrounding the period of the interdication in Malta, the two terms 'excommunication' and 'interdiction' are very often used as though they were synonyms.

Just as politics in general is never far from the surface, so Dominic Mintoff was mentioned by several of the respondents who made a total of fifteen (15) direct references to him in Question One apart from coming up in discussion concerning politics and poverty throughout the interviews.

My father was very pro-British because he joined the army. There were some Boffisti (followers of Dr Paul Boffa)⁴²⁸ and there were others who favoured Mintoff because they thought he could offer them improvements to their day to day living. In my own family, the whole time, there were arguments - hot ones. My mother's family before the War were the initiators of the Labour Party. I was conscious that there were differences between my father, who was between Strickland and Boffa, and my grandfather who was deeply in favour of Mintoff, and my aunts from my mother's side who were in favour of the Italians, the Church - they used to read 'Il-Lehen is-Sewwa' (a newspaper/pamphlet of the Curia). (03)

This comment gives some idea of the complexity of politics in pre and post-war Malta. This is not the place to give a detailed description, much less an evaluation of Dom Mintoff and his long and still controversial political career. However, to ignore him would be to ignore a cult figure that most Bormliži revere as a social saviour and someone who, through his relations with the British and his foreign policy, is felt to have put Malta on the world map. Mintoff is, most definitely, part of the 'glue', although his influence as a cult figure will possibly wane with the appearance of a new generation that has no direct experience of him.

In this particular context, the most important factor regarding Dom Mintoff is that he was Bormla born and bred. He did not come from the best part of the city but he was a Bormliż 'made good'. He graduated B.Sc. in 1937 along with about sixty other graduates from the various faculties of the time and as an architect in 1943. In between, in 1939, he went, as a Rhodes Scholar, to Hertford College, Oxford to study for a Master degree. It was there that he joined the Fabian Society. He was a professional, which was not very common amongst Bormla's working class and despite his early interest in the time-consuming world of politics,⁴²⁹ he did manage to have a successful professional career. He was Prime Minister from 11 March 1955 to 26 April 1958 and from 21 June 1971 to 22 December 1984. He

⁴²⁸ 'Paul Boffa', in M. J. Schiavone, *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies* Vol. I, PIN publications, 2009, p. 213-214. Paul Boffa was elected leader of the Labour Party in 1927. In 1932 he was the only Labour Party candidate elected to the Legislative Assembly until its dissolution in 1933. He led a Labour Party majority government in 1947. In 1949 the Labour Party split. Mintoff became leader of the Labour Party and Boffa formed the Malta Workers' Party but lost the election of 1950. In 1951 and 1953 he was re-elected to Parliament and served in a coalition government with the Nationalist Party. He retired from politics in 1955.

⁴²⁹ 'Dominic Mintoff', in M. J. Schiavone, *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies* Vol. II, PIN publications, 2009, pp. 1183-1185. Dominic Mintoff became assistant secretary at the Cospicua Labour Party club in 1935 and served as General Secretary of the Labour Party from 1935 to 1937, leaving to pursue his studies abroad.

continued his political career as a backbencher until 1998 when he was instrumental in bringing down the Labour led Government. His name was not on the ballot sheet in the election that followed and the Malta Labour Party lost heavily. In 2012, he died at the age of 96 and was given a state funeral. There were eulogies declaimed after his death by his political supporters but not only. Even some of those who had fought most vehemently against his methods spoke about Mintoff's political acumen and his fundamental desire to improve the lives of the working class.

I have entered houses in Bormla where there are still photos of Dom Mintoff on the walls or simply his dates: 1916 – 2012, in a frame. Those dates need no further explanation, no photo, no name.

□ *Il-Perit and social change*

When I conducted a focus group with women with an average age of 60 years, I asked the usual first question: When you hear the word Bormla what comes into your mind? Immediately, one of the women literally jumped up from her chair and declared: '*Il-Perit!*'.⁴³⁰

Today, the local population may not wish to talk about the periods of dire poverty which they may still consider in some way 'shameful' but their admiration for '*Il-Perit*', the person who, they feel, lifted them out of such economic difficulty became heartfelt and their loyalty to him became almost an obsession. The two citations below indicate the admiration for Mintoff but also their understanding of him. Not everyone in Bormla, even the most loyal, may have approved of his methods all of the time but they clearly feel to this day a deep sense of gratitude towards him that makes them accept him, warts and all.

The people of Bormla, if you want to really quarrel with them then interfere with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception or the people they have loved. You can't say anything against Mintoff because you'll be in big trouble here because he was from here, Bormliż. There were people here who were hungry and didn't have money to clothe themselves and he dressed them. The same can be said about '*Il-Gross*', Carmelo, the father of Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici. But I think that Mintoff is more popular than '*Il-Gross*'. *Il-Gross* died young, in his early 50s and Mintoff died at 96 so he lasted much longer. He worked for 50 more years! So don't touch their own things (the things that Bormliżi really care about). (22)

The Bormliżi have the cult of the Madonna – a woman – and for 40 years the cult of a man was imposed upon them – that of Mintoff. The Bormliżi for many years were used as a political 'ball' in the sense that when we

⁴³⁰ Dominic Mintoff was referred to as '*Il-Perit*' (The Architect) by antonomasia.

came to face the English there was a certain aspect of Mintoff such that he wanted to show his strength not only politically but also violently. (03)

This controversial figure, who as we have seen, sometimes divided families, was frequently referred to by his followers as the Saviour of Malta - '*Is-Salvatur ta' Malta*'. To use a cliché, one imagines that eventually history will be his judge but to those who benefitted from the welfare reforms that he promoted he must have seemed indeed a saviour. Some would argue that the reforms would have come in whoever was in power because, at home, Britain was already giving birth to the welfare state but the fact remains that Mintoff was in government when the process started here in earnest and it was he who grabbed the baton of the workers. An outline of events at this point might be useful.

In the late 1800s there had been various efforts by private individuals to improve the lot of those workers and the families who found themselves in severe difficulties. In 1863, Dr Nicola Zammit, from Siggiewi (director and editor of the periodical *L'Arte*) first mooted the idea of a 'Mutual Help Society' but he was unable to complete the project.⁴³¹ Some twenty years later, naval dockyard Eng. Angelo Caruana set up the Mutual Help Society for Maltese Artisans which later changed its name to '*Società Operaia Cattolica*' which in turn gave rise to other, similar associations linked to band clubs and dockyard workers.⁴³²

It was not until 1929, after Malta achieved self-government in 1921, that a contributory pension, called the Workers Compensation Act, was first conceived.⁴³³ This made provision for compensation to workers who sustained an injury while at work.

As Valletta increased in importance as a commercial centre, more Bormla families with commercial interests left to set up shop in the capital. Using the electoral register for Cottonera between the years 1849 and 1939 and taking into consideration the widening franchise in that period, Fenech states

⁴³¹ 'How much do you know about the history of Social Security in Malta?' Leaflet compiled by the Department of Social Security, 2016, p.3. Available from: <https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/en/Publications/Documents/history%20of%20social%20security%20system%20bi-lingual%20final%2018-5-16%20press.pdf>, (accessed 5 July 2017)

⁴³² 'How much do you know about the history of Social Security in Malta?' p.5.

⁴³³ 'How much do you know about the history of Social Security in Malta?', p. 5. This Act covered those workers who sustained injury on duty and were rendered incapable of holding a permanent job. As a means of compensation, such workers used to be awarded the equivalent of €1.40 per week. Additionally, those widows whose husbands had died on duty, were awarded the equivalent of €1.16 weekly. The contributions paid were the equivalent of €0.03 for the Social Security Card, whereas the employer and the employee paid €0.01 per week each.

From comprising 23 per cent of Malta's highest status group in 1849, the district contained no more than 11.5 per cent of a much less elitist electorate in 1939.⁴³⁴

This observation proves the point that the exodus of the higher status individuals, normally associated with the commencement of hostilities in 1941, actually started well before then. However, what had been a trend became a veritable mass exodus as the WWII bombing started.

It is clear that Bormla in the postwar years was left in a state of degradation. Men were laid off and were left economically stranded. It is true that close-knit communities tend to help each other in adversity but, if there is no income at all, families can soon find themselves out of their depth.

Post war Britain elected a Labour government and the move towards the welfare state as it stands today in the U.K. began. Aneurin (Nye) Bevan was Prime Minister Clement Atlee's Minister of Health from 1945 to 1951 and he is generally recognized as being the driving force behind social welfare legislation, most famous of which being the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948. Here in Malta things were moving as well.

In the years following the end of WWII, Malta was still a British colony with a British Governor.⁴³⁵ However, it did enjoy parliamentary democracy with hard fought elections every five years or, in certain circumstances even less. In 1945 Dom Mintoff was elected Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and in 1947 there was a Labour victory in the polls with Paul Boffa holding the office of Prime Minister. In 1948 Dom Mintoff became Deputy Prime Minister and, in the same year, the Old Age Pensions Act came into being.

1948: (the) Old Age Pension Act provided for payment of pension to persons over the age of 60 years based on a financial means test. In succeeding years, the Act was amended to include other categories of persons liable to receive non-contributory pension benefits.⁴³⁶

A Cabinet crisis led to a split within the Labour Party. Paul Boffa created the Malta Workers Party whereas Mintoff refounded the Labour Party as the 'Malta Labour Party'. This weakened the Labour camp which probably contributed to the loss of the next two elections to the Nationalist Party. In 1955 a Malta Labour Party

⁴³⁴ D. Fenech, 'Birgu during the British Period', in L. Bugeja, M. Buhagiar, S. Fiorini (eds), *Birgu – a Maltese Maritime City*, Malta University Services Ltd., Malta, 1993, p. 157.

⁴³⁵ For a history regarding the politics in the colonial years, vide: H. Frenco, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, Midsea, Valletta, (2nd ed.), 1991); H. Frenco, *The Origins of Maltese Statehood*, PEG, Malta, 1999. For a history of Malta in the years between WWI and WWII, vide: D. Fenech, *Responsibility and Power in Inter-war Malta: Book One, Endemic Democracy*, PEG, Malta 2005.

⁴³⁶ OECD, (website), <https://www.oecd.org/countries/malta/43469300.pdf>, (accessed 08 July 2017).

victory brought Dom Mintoff to the position of Prime Minister and in May 1956 the National Insurance Act was introduced bringing cash benefits in cases of marriage, sickness, orphanhood, old age, widowhood, unemployment and industrial injury. In the following month, the National Assistance Act entered the statute books. This provided social and medical assistance on a means-tested basis to heads of households. Mintoff's reputation was thus consolidated.⁴³⁷

□ *The Dockyard Narrative*

The Dockyard did figure significantly in all the interviews and in the focus groups that I held. In fact, before starting my fieldwork, I was a bit anxious that the Dockyard would dominate the discourse. I can now say that it did not. That is not to say that the Dockyard was not a constant presence during our discussions. It appeared as by far the most mentioned historical memory in Question Two, with at least eighteen references from nine sources but it was not the dominant overall discourse that I expected.

The Dockyard was very much part of the childhood of almost all the people interviewed. In Question One, I tried to tease out the interviewees' connections both with place and people and how their memories were formed and how they those memories remained etched on their lives – if indeed they did. Their replies concerning the Dockyard reminded me of Verga's *I Malavoglia*. At one point in the book Verga describes how the life of the villagers was 'scandita' or divided at regular intervals by the chimes of the church bells. Sound plays a huge part in ethnographic research such as that of Steven Feld who, back in the 1990s, started to write about the significance of sound with regard to sense of place.^{438 439}

Most of the work presented in Feld's 'Senses of Place' refers to sounds made by the community or certain members of that community through music or singing. A local example is given by a visitor to Malta writing in 1800.

They spin both with the spindle and the wheel, and the female manufacturers, are generally heard to cheer their toil with airs of a pleasing and sprightly melody.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ D. Mintoff, *Mintoff, Malta, Mediterra My Youth*, The Association for Justice, Equality and Peace in collaboration with The National Archives of Malta, 2018, was published after this thesis was finalised. It was launched on 18 November 2018. Just a glance at the contents page of this volume gave me an inkling of how it could have informed this thesis. Any further research I undertake within the ambit of Bormla will surely make reference to this significant publication.

⁴³⁸ S. Feld and D. Brenneis, 'Doing Anthropology in Sound', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2004, pp. 461-474. Available from: JSTOR.

⁴³⁹ S. Feld, (ed.), *Senses of Place*, SAR Press, 1996.

⁴⁴⁰ A. Anderson, *A Journal of the Forces which sailed from the Downs, in April 1800*, London, 1802. Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2013, <http://archive.org/details/journalofforcesw00ande>, (accessed 02 July 2018).

However, one could extrapolate from that evidence that sounds heard in the community such as church bells or, in the case of Bormla, the Dockyard siren, can have a very similar affect of creating emotional, phonic ties to a place. The interviewees referred to the wail of the siren with affection. Though not a particularly pleasant sound, the siren meant stability, it was a reference point. On a Friday evening it would have meant money coming home. These are some of the comments that sustain this notion.

You also have to consider the Dockyard ... I can still hear the whine of the Balomba (siren). I used to live on top of it. I remember the siren at 6:45am and at 3.15pm. (18)

The thing that immediately comes to mind is the sound of the Balomba (Dockyard siren). I used to live in Oratorio Street. The Balomba was a feature of life and the sound is still fixed in my mind. (13)

From when I was small you could hear the siren, see the boiler suits etc. now without the wall and the workers - the wall has fallen. (04)

When discussing historic things of Bormla with the third focus group, one of the participants remembered that it used to be sounded at midnight on New Years' Eve.

Dock 1 itself is so interesting. The Balomba was very important. I think we should make a petition for it to be heard again. I used to wait for it. Even on New Year's Eve at midnight it used to sound. As Birgu is fighting for the Clock Tower⁴⁴¹ we should fight for the Balomba. It could be that it is still there. (FG3)

The economic importance to Bormla and its residents of the British Dockyard, from its opening in 1848 until its closure in 2010 cannot be overstated. When Bormla was still a city with a social mix, the Dockyard and the presence of the British Navy created jobs at every level. At its height, the Dockyard gave work to thousands but, as Michael Cassar amply illustrates in his writing about the early years of the Dockyard,⁴⁴² the relationship between the Bormliži and the British Admiralty was not always cordial. The people of Bormla were already incensed when William Scamp was designated to design the first Dock 1. But when it came to the building of a new Dock extension that took up all that was left of the inner end of Dockyard Creek in 1857, the population was deeply disturbed.

From *'Il Cospicvano'*, 1842,

⁴⁴¹ The Clocktower in Birgu stood in the main square but was damaged and dismantled during WWII. From time to time there are efforts to have it rebuilt.

⁴⁴² Cassar, '19th century memories of Dockyard Creek', pp. 36-37.

(...) the Cospicuan hope that the damage that is being done to the boatmen and the fishermen of this city will be avoided. They used to enjoy the right to tie up their boats in the boat berthing area of this city (manderaggio) which is convenient both in summer and winter. In summer because it is out of the sun and in winter because it is protected from the NE winds, so common in that season. The boatmen have been completely deprived of these advantages after the building of the new dock. As soon as works began, the boatmen and the fishermen were thrown out (*licenziati*) without being given a satisfactory place where they could tie up their boats safely, except for the *Scalo dei Vascelli* outside the Burmola Gate.⁴⁴³ (*my trans.*)

Borg describes the tense situation thus.

“Another difficulty that had arisen was that of the boatswains who had to stop their activity which was that of transporting people or goods to and from Valletta. These had to shift their anchorage towards Vittoriosa so as to leave enough room to manoeuvre their craft.”⁴⁴⁴

Cassar further explains the change for the users of the Market and those who moved the produce in and out of it.

Building the extension inwards is a brilliant idea as the works do not interfere with the use of the dock. However, it marks the definitive end of Cospicua as a maritime city in Dockyard Creek (there is still French Creek) because the new section is being dug on the site of the food market that was built on the timber lake. It is from here that produce from the south is carried by boat for sale in Valletta.⁴⁴⁵

The writers of *Il Cospicuo* in 1842⁴⁴⁶ talk about Cospicua being in the perfect position, surrounded by the countryside from where produce comes and from where it is then distributed around the towns and villages. They boast of the number of retailers and businessmen who live and work in Cospicua. It is no wonder that they were so shocked at the turn things were about to take.

Cassar continues

The negative effects from No. 1 Dock continued to haunt the lives of the Bormliži for decades. After the loss of their sea views came the unsightly factory buildings behind high walls and the daily noise, smells and pollution. The dock had effectively divided the city.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ *Il Cospicuo*, 26 Agosto 1842, (eds) The Stocker Brothers, 96 Strada Zecca Valletta, p. 6, cited in the original Italian in Cassar, ‘19th century memories of Dockyard Creek’, p. 36.

⁴⁴⁴ M.P. Borg, ‘Social Interaction at Cospicua during the first 50 years of British Rule: 1800-1850’, MA Thesis, University of Malta, 2016, p. 64.

⁴⁴⁵ Cassar, ‘19th century memories of Dockyard Creek’, p. 36.

⁴⁴⁶ *Il Cospicuo*, 26 settembre 1842, p. 10.

⁴⁴⁷ Cassar, ‘19th century memories of Dockyard Creek’, p. 36.

One of the interview respondents, in the context of recounting that the young Bormliži used to have to go to Kalkara to swim, tells of that feeling of loss of the shoreline

I remember that there was a piece in front of Sta Tereža, where Alexander Ball and Nelson had landed. Then they closed it because it became part of the Dockyard. It's called – Baħarhom. It's in the history here. When the British came, they put up a very high wall. Very dirty with soot because of the ships. As they had taken our piece of water edge, our neighbours used to tease us by saying that we had nowhere to swim any more. (21)

So, whilst both the working and upper classes in Bormla complained at every stage of the development of the Dockyard, they came to accept the fact that it was of economic advantage to them. The Dockyard became a major employer in the area and after the pre and post WWII exodus of the professional classes became practically the only employment except for those who continued in commercial and retail business in Bormla. My impression from all the interviews and the focus groups that I held was that they appreciated fully the fact that the Dockyard had been important and that they were rightly proud of the skills that the Maltese dockers developed. However, I failed to note great disappointment at its demise in 2010. Of course, by that time, the number of workers was reduced to around 60 and the end had been long coming.⁴⁴⁸

The Dockyard is central to the history and the life of Bormla from the laying of the foundation stone in 1844 right up to 2010. There were several respondents who expressed a wish to have the Dockyard remembered in some substantive way. But in this context of identity I think one can say that it consolidated the idea of Bormla being a workingman's domain. The Dockyard saw the development of the trade unions and an understanding of that shift in power from the authorities to workers, especially after independence in 1964.⁴⁴⁹

It favoured the industrial development of Malta, through the evolution of engineering methodologies at the Dockyard. In 1848, it was the first dry dock outside of Britain and could contain two huge ships in its graving dock. Divided by a caisson in between, those ships must have been an awe-inspiring sight. It created a community of workers all within the same ambience. Of course, internal conflicts were ever present but to the outside world Bormla became synonymous with the Dockyard. Until comparatively recently, the high British built wall surrounded Dockyard One. It was an area closed off to outsiders. The interviewees admitted that the Dockyard was far from salubrious and there were complaints about the

⁴⁴⁸ For an historical perspective on the Dockyard vide: M. Cassar, *Malta Drydocks 1963 – 2010*, BDL, Malta, 2013.

⁴⁴⁹ M. Cassar, *Malta Drydocks 1963 – 2010*, BDL, Malta, 2013.

black grit that often emanated from the blasting of ships' hulls. They know that it provided work but there was always an underlying sense of ambivalence towards this Leviathan, which was both benefactor and source of strife; which identified Bormla but contributed to its unhealthy atmosphere.

Whenever I asked my respondents about Palumbo, the Italian firm that most recently took over the Dockyard and works out of French Creek, I was met with a derisive comment or reaction – usually a flip of the hand. It was patently obvious that the Bormlizi I spoke to had no sense of ownership regarding Palumbo and I was told repeatedly that the company only employed workers from overseas. Koreans were often mentioned.

So here we have a long-standing love-hate relationship with the physicality of the Dockyard and with the British for imposing it upon Bormla but, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the fact that it offered long-term opportunity of work and served to attract commerce. One of the respondents described how the men in orange boiler suits would surge out of the Dockyard on a Friday evening and, pay in hand, would go to spend something in the shops around the square outside the Dockyard gate.

The Dockyard was a source of commerce for all. You can imagine when, at the end of the shift, the Dockyard workers would come out of the Docks. Suddenly Bormla would be full of men in boiler suits. This is one of the first visions I have of men in boiler suits, orange, blue, some with safety helmets, safety shoes – they would buy pastizzi, bread and eggs, all over the market area in front of the Dockyard gate. They created an enormous amount of commerce on an everyday basis. As soon as that finished the market was empty. Bormla used to be a hub. Until today it has a polyclinic – Birgu, L-Isla and Kalkara do not. Bormla has a bank – the other cities don't. So everyone used to come into Bormla. Bormla had a daily market so people used to come in to buy things. Now all that has gone. (18)

With the Breakwell definitions in mind, the Dockyard cannot but be a source of self-esteem because the Dockyard produced skilled workers in an industrial environment which was state of the art at its inception and cutting edge for many years after that. It also fits in to the idea of the maintenance of continuity that refers to 'specific places that have emotional significance for a person'. 1840 is now a long time ago but many families can trace their connections with the Dockyard back many years. The Dockyard was always limited to the Grand Harbour area and in particular to Bormla, especially when Corradino Hill, which lies above French Creek, was still considered Bormla territory. The Bormlizi did not have to try very hard to 'optimise distinctiveness from other people' through the Dockyard. It also fulfills the Breakwell's 'efficacy principle' in that the Dockyard was known to be the most important driver of Malta's economy, its biggest employer. The Dockyard

workers must have felt very much in control whilst their skills were appreciated and things were going well.

As we have seen from this necessarily brief description of the Dockyard narrative, the situation has now changed. However, its glory days have not yet faded in the memory of those who worked there. Recollection will inevitably fade but it will take at least a generation to erase. The respondents were all in agreement that the significance of the Dockyard needed to be recorded.

□ *Gentrification and changing Bormla*

From amongst my one-to-one respondents, I coded 'Gentrification' both within Question Three regarding communities of Bormla and also under 'Bitter Narratives' resulting from Question Four. In the first case, it was mentioned fourteen times by twelve sources and in the second case, six times from four sources. It was also the subject of discussion amongst all three focus groups.

Blokland comments thus about gentrification.

Transformations may be discussed in terms of community loss, and processes of urban renewal and gentrification are known to displace people, affecting their networks.⁴⁵⁰

In reality, there were varying opinions about the process of gentrification, positive and almost enthusiastic,

Lately, it hasn't been so bad because the foreigners are coming in and loving many of the things that people here just take for granted. On the strength of this interest, and EU admission Bormla has started to take on the facelift that I always wished it would have. (09)

negative

Gentrification can be a bad thing because it raises prices and speculation. Contractors have a control over things. It is important that Bormla does not get involved in that. (01)

as well as simply an attitude of acceptance of a new situation.

Now we have the foreigners coming in – a house is bought by an English person and he restores it to its former glory. In Strada San Giorgio and Strada Oratorio there are several, not just one or two. They are finding old

⁴⁵⁰ T. Blokland, *Community as Urban Practice*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2017, p. 82.

houses and they are settling here. This is a new influx and mix. They have to try to integrate with our traditions. (16)

Conceptually, gentrification is intertwined with the changing external face of Bormla which, it was hoped by some, would result in a better place to live. However, the increase in property prices, already felt in Birgu, was a worry amongst many residents.

There is a realization that previously Bormla was, to a certain extent, disadvantaged and now the people want to 'catch up'. This is a young teacher and mother

The family has changed everywhere. There was a time when the young people used to try to get out of Bormla because of the stigma - that is changing. But they find it difficult to return because of the expense. Housing has gone up. (04)

From when I was small you could hear the siren, see the boiler suits etc. now without the wall and the workers - the wall has fallen. The same people are now in the same area but it is no longer the same. Now they are in 'mufti' chatting in the square. Bormla is changing. (04)

It was the inflated price of property that seemed to be the biggest fear.

My fear is that Bormla will be beautiful but will it be for the Bormliži? In fact there is the temptation to sell your house and then just to come back for the Feast. (05)

There is certainly a fear that if these changes are not well-directed further divisions might be created. This is comment from the Bormla Archpriest.

It (Bormla) will be great again. These new strengths are already being felt. Gentrification is creating a bit of separation of the good parts with the lesser parts. Many Bormliži are leaving the area because of rising rents. Some are going to Qajjenza where they are now seeing the same social difficulties as Bormla. It could be that if someone looks at the best way to direct the progress things could go well. The new development is very different to that dreadful wall. On the waterfront (Xatt) up to the Police Station there are new shops aimed at the new people of Bormla.

The reality may be that, as one respondent commented during our conversation,

The subsidies aren't enough. For a few people there has to be something done as even two years ago six families in one month had to leave Bormla because they couldn't afford the rent.

PC: So where is the next place with less rent?

Wied il-Għajn and Xgħajra. (32)⁴⁵¹

On this same issue of gentrification, and social disadvantage, Cutajar and Vella state

The slum-clearing projects which took place in the 1980s and recent regeneration projects in Birgu and Senglea, saw the 'forced' geographical displacement of so-called 'problem families' to Bormla. Moreover, this has led to 'gentrification' in the other two areas which (...) sometimes leads to social cleansing. Now that Bormla, Senglea and Birgu (the Three Cities, Cottonera) are all being earmarked for regeneration projects, one questions what will happen to these disenfranchised social groups since the focus seems to be on embellishing localities for the benefit of those who are already privileged, while shuffling the less privileged around.⁴⁵²

Presumably, these families will end up in lower rent areas, such as Wied il-Għajn and Xgħajra, as suggested by Bland Mintoff. Whilst citing authors such as Pearson and Smith⁴⁵³ and Hoyle⁴⁵⁴, Cutajar and Vella propose that regeneration must come from within the community that knows what its needs are so as to avoid the negative aspects of gentrification such as the actual displacement of the local community.

Changes are apparent in various sectors, not least amongst those who organize the very important moments in the Church calendar such as the Feast and Holy Week.

We have a problem of getting young boys to get involved in Good Friday – so much so that we have had to bring in girls. This was not a tradition in Bormla although it has been common in other areas for some time but even in Bormla we have had to bring in girls! This lack of interest amongst young people for these activities does not augur well for the future. (15)

From these comments it is clear that there is an anxiety about keeping up those traditional events upon which the glue of Bormla's community is spread. However, this comment does show that a solution was found i.e. the introduction of girls into a male-dominated area. The solution may not be to everybody's taste but

⁴⁵¹ Wied il-Għajn is the Maltese name for Marsascala, in the south of the island. Xgħajra is a locality just beyond Kalkara to the south.

⁴⁵² J. Cutajar and J. Vella, 'Contentious' Politics and the Production of Place: The Case of Cottonera, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 2017, pp. 58–67, p. 60.

⁴⁵³ J. Pierson and J. Smith, *Rebuilding Community Policy and Practice in Urban Regeneration*, Palgrave, NY, 2001.

⁴⁵⁴ B. Hoyle, 'Scale and Sustainability: the Role of Community Groups in Canadian Port-city Waterfront Change', *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1999, pp. 65-78. Available from: ProQuest.

it could actually mean some significant changes are being made that will mean the survival of these heritage manifestations.

This is another fresh, positive approach

If you are living in a place that nobody is really looking after, even to sell a property was difficult – now the situation has changed and there are many people coming to find property in Bormla. Because the place has been given a ‘push’ and a good facelift and today it is a lovely thing to take a walk along the front, all the way around the Cottonera Waterfront with the embellishment. Property is now worth a lot of money and people are buying up properties and restoring them to their former glory – boutique hotels. With the AUM there should be a new modern dynamic dimension to Cottonera in general. (20)

Gentrification has definitely left its benefits. The waterfront is now returned to the Bormliži who can enjoy an evening saunter by the sea – for so long denied them. The increase in property value has also been a godsend for anyone wishing to borrow money from the bank and interest in real estate in Malta should never be underestimated.

However, although it is clear that “gentrification creates pride and thus is regarded as a gift,”⁴⁵⁵ and can seem like a wonderfully uplifting scenario for the winners, there are always going to be the losers. As one respondent commented, gentrification needs to be ‘managed’ well so that everyone can be on board and benefit.

□ **Conclusion**

This Chapter has been mainly concerned with understanding, from the respondents’ replies, indicators of identity and community and sense of place. The referents here are both historical and contemporary – religious and secular. I have looked at how heritage fits in to identity and posited, with Gilman, that

Heritage is not an objective fact about the world but a social construction, to which historical and religious narratives, customary law and particular individuals have contributed in important ways.⁴⁵⁶

One can say that the main elements of Bormla’s sense of identity and heritage are linked to the Church and its many manifestations and influences; to politics of the past and present; to the ambivalent relationship with the British during and after their colonial presence and their legacy in the form of the Dockyard; to the stigma attached to the city and to the challenging effects of social housing.

⁴⁵⁵ M.A. Falzon, pers. comm. during a recorded conversation on 30 April 2018.

⁴⁵⁶ D. Gilman, *The Idea of Cultural Heritage*, CUP, NY, 2010, p. 66.

To the outsider, to someone not from Cottonera, this community has only one face. To the insider there is more than one community and the split is not so much class-based as concerned with a hierarchy of place and space within the confines of Bormla. I have explained the reasons for this division within the community that I feel must be addressed and understood if community regeneration is going to happen.

In the next Chapter, I shall be looking at the respondents' sense of history and the things about Bormla's past that interviewees remembered enough to want to recall them and talk about them.

CHAPTER FOUR

REMEMBERING BORMLA'S PAST AND CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE

□ *Introduction*

At the beginning of Chapter One I indicated that I would be asking the questions: What will museums or remembering mean to the people of Bormla? What will be their referents? Will they be interested in remembering at all and, if so, what will they wish to remember and record for themselves? And will they wish to extend that remembering and recording to visitors from outside their city?

This Chapter will look closely at what the respondents thought was important to remember both in history and with regard to contemporary activities. I shall also expand a little on those historical or heritage indicators so as to put them in a context and by way of explanation as to why the respondents might have recalled them. I have chosen to explore politics as a possible heritage referent owing to Bormla having been the main protagonist in the story of trade union development and the birth of the Malta Labour Party. I shall also, through the voices of the respondents, examine the place of the early British presence, the Dockyard and later on WWII in their memories and see how much of that relationship still lives on and in what way.

There are also aspects of Bormla that are not immediately recognisable as heritage markers but which were mentioned by the respondents as important narratives. These include the seafaring tradition from before the Dockyard was built and peculiarities such as the stepped and narrow streets and the difficult topography of the city. In this chapter I am also examining some theories and practical experiences linked to working class readings of heritage and am also looking into the importance of recording the ephemeral autobiographies of those who are unlikely to write about themselves. The church is never far from the discussion in this thesis and here I am looking specifically at the memories and opinions and the uses that Bormlġz people make of the church and how they also express themselves in secular rituals and narratives.

□ *A sense of history*

Many of the events and circumstances mentioned in the previous chapter, were touched upon by the respondents and the members of the focus groups in reply to the second question that I put to them. "What are the parts of Bormla's past that interest you?" This question was aimed at exploring their sense of historic

Bormla. From their replies I was able to code thirty-two different themes⁴⁵⁷ and amongst these were many different names and objects. Some came from Bormla's past history whilst others were drawn from its more recent and contemporary events.

Some of the respondents had a level of education from which one would expect some specific knowledge of local history but there were others whose schooling was quite basic and yet every respondent had something to say in this regard. They may not all have had a clear idea about how these personages, past events and present activities could be remembered or recorded but they were all adamant that they should.

Eighteen references were coded from ten respondents to history in a general sense. There were positive comments such as

History is very important as it carries you into the future. (04)

Even though the level of education may not be very high, there is a lot of interest about the history of Bormla. (09)

Other respondents recognized the importance of introducing the young to Bormla's historical narrative from an early age and of recognizing the complexity of that narrative.

The Bormlizi are not really attached to the ancient past but more to the local things. Some don't care for history. This depends on your upbringing. If you don't learn by the time you are five years old you are lost in certain ways. (07)

A city that has a lot of history and a place that left a great effect on the economy of the country. But today it has lost much of what used to make it 'sublime' - both as a large town and with regard to population because of the things that happened in the history of this city. (08)

This was a significant comment made by a professional teacher and local historian.

But when people get to know some interesting information about Bormla they discover something and become interested. It is also important that whoever is teaching puts him/herself in a position to project that information properly to those who are listening. (09)

This indicates those two pivotal issues of knowledge and presentation. This respondent seems to be saying that if there is a modicum of interest then it can be

⁴⁵⁷ Vide Appendix No. 4.

stimulated by appropriately presented knowledge and, if there is some knowledge, then further interest can also be stimulated by the right approach and presentation.

Another significant comment came from a university professor who links the sense of history with the contemporary heritage activities of the Bormliži. He echoes the theory of Preziosi that we pursue objects “to sustain and focus our pursuit of ourselves.”⁴⁵⁸ He is not sure that everyone is taking away the same thing from these events – a very phenomenological comment. In fact, Preziosi does not say that everyone is looking for the same identity or exactly the same unfolding future.

I think this is one place in Malta where the young people feel strongly about their history. I see many young people who work in the many activities of Bormla. They organise the Feast, processions of Good Friday etc. What they love about it is more difficult to analyse. If you had to ask me what I like I would answer that I like to remember my happy past but what exactly it is they love I’m not quite sure. But even if it is for selfish reasons, on the other hand, things still happen and fundamentally anyway we are all selfish beings! (12)

There were some respondents who were worried about the ageing demographic of Bormla and the perceived lack of interest in what one can call ‘contemporary heritage activities’. This was expressed also in a research paper of 2008.

The community leaders who participated in this research agreed on the fact that they have witnessed a decrease in the rate of participation among those who volunteer in the preparation of feasts, in the running of band clubs and other voluntary organisations within the community in which they are located.⁴⁵⁹

And it was expressed by some other interviewees and also during the focus group sessions and in separate conversations that I had with people close to the Bormla community several years later.

The demographic has changed. There is an ageing population. From those hundred that were involved in the pageant I think only about three of them actually still live in Bormla. You don’t have people who are from Bormla any more. They don’t give a damn. I can go around Bormla recognizing the places where members of my family lived: that was my grandmother’s house etc. Those who are not from Bormla don’t have that kind of tie with the place. They don’t have memory of Bormla. They don’t feel it. (18)

⁴⁵⁸ Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth’s Body*, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁹ Cutajar and Vella, ‘The Role of Cultural Events’, p. 8.

This idea about not 'feeling' Bormla is a complex one. This respondent clearly felt that, although these people are helping out in a traditional Bormla context, they are simply outsiders who cannot fully comprehend what it means to be Bormla born and bred. She or he is a guest in the city. The respondent seems to be saying that the performed past, the traditions of Bormla, knowing the physicality of Bormla are what makes today's contemporary heritage events meaningful.

However, there were other more positive voices. This was a reply to my query about continued interest in Bormla's traditional activities.

If you asked fifty years ago people may have said no and yet fifty years later these things are still happening. That Centre (Ċentru 19 ta' Novembru 1944) organises the Feast. The Secretary is younger than me. I've spoken to him about this. The man who plays Jesus is also very young. Circumstances do change. But those two, and I think there are others, are very committed. Their life is Bormla, the Feast. Even if they marry and go out of Bormla I think they will still return (to help with the Feast). There is that sense of belonging. For various reasons many left but they still remained tied to Bormla. Not just for the feasts but they still give their lives for Bormla. (28)

In Bormla there are physical reminders of the past such as a small monument to Abram Gatt, who was the original sculptor of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception statue; the constant presence of the Knights' period fortifications; the indelible imprint that the British made on the collective memory of the Lower Harbour area and a statue of Dominic Mintoff in the main square and, of course, the Parish Church which houses the statue of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception and its equally famous titular painting.⁴⁶⁰ There are also the manifestations of contemporary heritage that have been discussed in the previous chapter. These are physical markers of which local people are most definitely aware.

The Rialto Cinema was one building mentioned several times. In fact, the Rialto itself is part of that quite recent past that many of the respondents, individually and within the focus groups, mentioned with enthusiasm and a certain irritation that it has been left to degenerate.

There was the time when we had the Rialto. I remember it starting up. We would go to the 'talkies' in the morning at 10am – it cost seven pence. So I used to go to my grandmother and ask her to give me a penny a day so that by Sunday I had seven pence to go to the cinema! The place was really impressive: the front curtain was red, then, behind it was a curtain of 'lamé' with lots of draping in gold. It was a spectacle! It's finished now. The entrance is used by HSBC – the entrance had tall green columns.

⁴⁶⁰ The titular painting represents the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception and is the work of the Maltese painter, Pietro Paolo Caruana.

There sometimes used to be opening nights of films and people used to turn up in their suits and lovely dresses. Now it is being used by a few groups but basically it has just been left to rot. It is such a pity. During Lent they used to get films like: Ben Hur, the Robe, The Greatest Story Ever Told but of course it was shut during Holy Week and even on 'Id-Duluri'.⁴⁶¹ (16)

This is one of the iconic modernist buildings in Bormla that is now only partly used by a commercial bank. As can be seen from the above comment, there are still many who remember it very fondly in its heyday and expressed the hope that it would be returned to its former glory either as a cinema or for some other purpose useful for the community.

This example goes some way to answering the questions posed by Hareven and Langenbach.

What invests buildings with life? How do they emerge into the consciousness of people as entities possessing an intangible worth beyond their usefulness or the value of their brick and stone? Is there a basic difference between what they mean to the 'informed' architectural expert or conservationist, and what they mean to the people whose lives are interwoven with them?⁴⁶²

This memory of the Rialto was linked to the image of the bustling, lively city Bormla was before WWII and to how it is now changing again. Many of the respondents were very keen to record their perception of the pre-war 'glory days'. They could see how Bormla has now changed physically and how, in some ways, things are looking up. They were also interested in remembering the famous names of notable Bormlizi.

They (It-Torċa newspaper) did a wonderful double page spread (in 1992) for me. This article spoke about the famous and important people who have done us proud. Abram Gatt, Il-Gross, Mintoff, Paolino Vassallo etc. (03)

When Valletta was built there were still important people already here. Even Nelson had a house here. (07)

Abram Gatt was a statue carver. Some people do know about him. But then there are others who were scientists such as Ġuseppi Despott⁴⁶³ – not within the popular culture. He wrote about birds and fish and corresponded internationally. The things that are not connected to the Church have been rather forgotten. Ġużé Chetcuti is known for example as he wrote about local things. Wallace Gulia was from Bormla but he went to live in Żebbug and did not write about 'things' of Bormla. (...)

⁴⁶¹ The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (Id-Duluri) falls on the Friday before Holy Week.

⁴⁶² Hareven and Langenbach, *Our Past Before us*, p. 2.

⁴⁶³ G. Despott, *The Ichthyology of Malta*, Critien's Press, 1919. (Example of his work.)

Paolino Vassallo wrote music, studied in France with Massenet and wrote operas. He was Bice Mizzi's father (Nerik Mizzi's wife⁴⁶⁴). (...) He is known as the best musician we had in Bormla. (10)

In September 2012, the University of Malta created a three-day information session in the Three Cities entitled: *Skopri l-Università fit-Tlett Ibliet* (Discover the University in the Three Cities) and, as part of the décor for the tent, a list of nearly a hundred names of well-known (deceased) Maltese who hailed from Bormla was drawn up. The list proved to be a great source of interest amongst the visitors to the tent. Some were keen to mention Bormliži that had not been included on the list whilst others were amazed to see the names of well-known people whom they did not realize were from Bormla. That experience led me to think that the Bormliži would probably like to see a Bormla 'hall of fame' with images and descriptions of their most important sons and daughters. There are many different ways in which this could be achieved.

The respondents were all enthusiastic about the contemporary heritage that takes place in Bormla. Even the few who said they did not really like to participate were still glad that these events were happening. The Feast, Holy Week, the Regatta, as we have seen, are still very much celebrated. However, there is virtually no other ritual celebration in Bormla. Nearby Birgu, on the other hand, has created a 'Birgufest' that includes a candlelit extravaganza.⁴⁶⁵

Some of the respondents mentioned the BirguFest in rather wistful tones.

□ *Politics as Heritage*

If we are to look at those aspects of Bormla's past and present that the Bormliži themselves consider as worth recording then politics is most definitely near the top of the list - perhaps not on a par with the Feast but almost. Much has been written about the politics of heritage but this is really politics as heritage.

Bormla, in the minds of Maltese all over the island is linked to the Trade Unions, and to Leftist politics. This is what one of the respondents had to say about Cottonera but more particularly about Bormla.

⁴⁶⁴Government online, 'Prime Ministers of Malta', (website), <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Prime%20Ministers%20of%20Malta/Pages/Dr-Enrico-Mizzi.aspx>, (accessed 20 July 2018). Born in Valletta on the 20 September 1885, Dr Enrico Mizzi, popularly known as Nerik Mizzi, was the son of Fortunato Mizzi (founder of the Nationalist Movement) (...). He read law at the Universities of Rome and Urbino from where he obtained his LL.D. degree in 1911.

⁴⁶⁵ Visit Malta, (website), www.visitmalta.com/en/event-details/2013-10/birgufest-6470, (accessed 08 January 2018).

Why does Labour have such strength in the 2nd District⁴⁶⁶ – why? I don't think that Labour did anything extraordinary for the people. They didn't say: Stay at home and I shall send you a cheque. People are culturally Left. Even if the political Right were to cover Bormla or Cottonera with gold, still they wouldn't vote for them. Maybe they would win votes but it would take generations because the mindset of the people is Leftist. When you think of the trade unionists – (Tony) Coleiro⁴⁶⁷ – Leftist more than Mintoff – Sammy Meilaq⁴⁶⁸ extreme Left.

L-Isla isn't quite the same. They would say: let's do a museum of boatmen. For them the Xatt – the waterfront – is important. You cannot separate L-Isla from the sea. In the same way, you cannot separate Bormla from its Leftist past. (18)

Of course, there are those that might contest this respondent's views. The Dockyard was made up of workers not only from Bormla but also from Birgu and from l-Isla and other areas of Malta. And despite my respondent's intimation that L-Isla's 'leftist past' was not quite as strong as that of Bormla, Chircop points out that in 1926

The Senglean club was the most active Labour district-branch, and had the largest concentration of radical elements.⁴⁶⁹

However, anyone who is familiar with Maltese politics would have to admit that the Dockyard is seen as the cradle of Left wing ideology in Malta and that Bormla was inexorably linked to the Dockyard because it literally lay in its midst.

What follows is simply a brief outline of a long, complex narrative, involving some of Malta's most significant individuals and some of the most contested periods of its modern history.⁴⁷⁰ It leads to Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici and on to Dominic Mintoff who are both sons of Bormla and whose names were mentioned time and time again during my conversations in Bormla. It is a tale worth telling because it helps to explain Bormla's past and its present and the vision that the Bormliži have of themselves.

⁴⁶⁶ Malta is currently divided into 13 electoral districts. Today the 2nd District comprises: il-Birgu, L-Isla, il-Bormla, Haż-Żabbar (including St Peter's), Il-Kalkara, Ix-Xghajra, Il-Fgura (Tal-Gallu area).

⁴⁶⁷ No author, *Tony Coleiro dies*, Times of Malta, Saturday, December 14, 2002. Available from The Times of Malta online, (accessed: 9 March 2018). "Mr Tony Coleiro had joined Malta Drydocks as an apprentice in August 1967. When he finished his apprenticeship in 1971, he was nominated a union delegate of the shipwrights' afloat section and section secretary for 11 years before his death in 2002".

⁴⁶⁸ Sammy Meilaq was born in 1949 in Cospicua. Elected Chairman of the Board of the Malta Drydocks Corporation in 1985, he held the position until his retirement. His autobiography is entitled: *Bicċiet minni*, and was self-published, 2013.

⁴⁶⁹ J. Chircop, *The Left within the Maltese Labour Movement*, Mireva Publications, Malta, 1991, p. 73.

⁴⁷⁰ For full details about Malta's trade unions, the birth of the Malta Labour Party and politics from the end of the 19th to the middle of the 20th centuries: D. Fenech, 2005; H. Frendo, 2013; J.M. Pirota, *L-istorja kostituzzjonali u l-isfond storiku*, Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza, Pietà, 2005.

The island's economy, initially buoyant after the arrival of the British in 1800, started to fluctuate after the relative peace brought about by the Treaty of Paris (1814). Peacetime over, the rest of the century did not favour Malta's economy. There were upturns during and immediately after the Crimean War (1853-1856) and another upturn with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

In 1849 a new constitution was instituted and this political status quo ran on without much contention until the 1870s. A renewed constitution arrived in 1887 but did not resemble effective democracy. And there continued to be internal divisions between the Reformists, and the *Anti-riformisti*.⁴⁷¹

The British went on building their defences, including the new Breakwater in Grand Harbour (1903). The Dockyard employed about 5,000 before 1900 and doubled that number in the first years of the 1900s.⁴⁷²

Malta, however, was heading for another lull that would mean more enforced lay offs and result in a depression. The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 did help but the Maltese workers were beginning to realize that their work was precarious and their pay not as good as their British counterparts.

Labour organisations took off in the crowded Dockyard, giving the working class its first voice and assertiveness.⁴⁷³

The Dockyard had already, through the *Xirka ta' l-Imdawlin* (League of the Enlightened) led by Manwel Dimech (1860-1921),⁴⁷⁴ been made aware of the socialist cause. The British administration did not wish such ideas to spread and, with the outbreak of WWI, acted to eliminate Dimech from the Dockyard and from Malta.^{475 476}

However, the discontent in the Dockyard was not going to go away. The Imperial Government Workers' Union, affiliated with the UGWF of Great Britain was set up and only a short time afterwards the more militant British Workers' Union took over the milder IGWU.

⁴⁷¹ The Reformist political group was led by Sigismondo Savona and the pro-Italian group, the *Anti-Riformisti*, was led by Fortunato Mizzi.

⁴⁷² B. Blouet, *The Story of Malta*, Progress Press, Malta, 2004, p. 189.

⁴⁷³ D. Fenech, *Responsibility and Power in Inter-war Malta: Book One, Endemic Democracy*, P.E.G., Malta, 2005, p. 18.

⁴⁷⁴ A bronze statue of Manwel Dimech, modelled and cast by sculptor Anton Agius, was erected in Castille Square, Valletta, on May 1, 1976.

⁴⁷⁵ For details of Manwel Dimech's life and work, in English vide: M. Montebello, *The amazing story of Manuel Dimech*, BDL, Malta, 2014.

⁴⁷⁶ For Manuel Dimech's poetry, vide: H. Frenndo, *Dimech's Lost Prison Poems*, Midsea Books, Malta, 2014.

The post war economic decline, with lay offs from the Dockyard, fermented discontent, with hardship being felt widely. The seeds of the Sette Giugno riot in 1919 were sown. Rivers of ink have been spilled to explain the how and the why of the riots but in this context Blouet's succinct description can suffice.

The riots reflected the unsatisfactory nature of economic and political life in Malta. Economically, the islands had become a fortress in which a few prospered when military spending was high. Strategically, the imperial fortress was so important that political development was stifled.⁴⁷⁷

In the 1920s, political parties started to materialize "when Malta still had many attributes of a traditional society."⁴⁷⁸ This is an important point because it contributes to the significance of the Dockyard, in Bormla, which was not nearly as traditional as the other sectors of society.

The group from the IGWU and others, described by Fenech as "twelve mainly moderate men from Branch No. 3 of the Workers' Union", joined to form a group that was originally called the *Camera del Lavoro* and after bringing in "two prominent public figures from outside the labour ranks" formed the Labour Party. In 1921, the Amery-Milner Constitution granted Self-Government to the island and Joseph Howard,⁴⁷⁹ UPM, became Malta's first Prime Minister and led the first Maltese Government with the support of the Labour Party.

For the LP, some initial success at the ballot box was not followed by a continuous upward trend. The LP fared fairly well again in the 1924 elections and in 1926 the LP allied with the Constitutional Party, whilst the Maltese Political Union (UPM) and the Democratic Nationalist Party (DNP) formed the *Partito Nazionale*. With the 1927 elections to the Legislative Assembly, Gerald Strickland, supported by his LP allies, became Prime Minister.

As a novice political party, the LP suffered a lull in those pre-war years which saw the rise of a politician who ran first for the DNP and then for the PN alliance: Dr Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici. He was a son of Bormla and a much-respected lawyer, known more for his academic and legal career than for his political activism.

⁴⁷⁷ Blouet, *The Story of Malta*, p. 190.

⁴⁷⁸ Blouet, p. 192.

⁴⁷⁹ In 1912, Joseph Howard was elected member to the Council of Government after being nominated by the Comitato Patriottico. In 1921, he joined the Maltese Political Union (UPM) of Mgr. I. Panzavecchia and was elected Senator in the first Maltese Parliament. As Panzavecchia did not accept the premiership, Governor Lord Plumer offered the post to Howard. Government online, 'Sir Joseph Howard Prime Minister of Malta 1921-1923', (website), <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Prime%20Ministers%20of%20Malta/Pages/Sir-Joseph-Howard.aspx>, (accessed 19 August 2018).

Bonello recounts that Eric Shepherd, a teacher at the University of Malta in the Twenties, not known for his complimentary remarks about the Maltese, marked out Mifsud Bonnici for future greatness.

His (Shepherd's) favourite, possibly the only Maltese student he really respected and praised unreservedly, though squarely a nationalist resistant, was Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici, 'il-Gross', a corpulent young law hopeful who had studied literature, and was then president of the students' union.⁴⁸⁰

Professor Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici took his place in the government as a Minister in 1922. He was then re-elected from the Cospicua district in 1924, 1927 and in the 1932 elections, with the largest number of votes on each of those occasions. During that period, such was Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici's popularity that one could have described his voting district as 'Nationalist'. Mifsud Bonnici's political career was cut short when, at the young age of 42, he suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered. He passed away some six years later.

Post-war Malta then saw the arrival on the political scene of another Bormliz who was to have a permanent place in the annals of Malta's political history, Dominic Mintoff. Mintoff was Secretary of the Labour Party between 1935 and 1945, resigning for a short time to pursue his studies at Oxford in the war years.

During that period (1943), the General Workers' Union (GWU) was set up and formed a close link with the LP from the outset.

The GWU towered head and shoulders above all other union bodies in Malta for over three decades.⁴⁸¹

In the elections of 1932, the Labour Party had only managed to gain one seat, that of Dr Paul Boffa. However, in 1947, after a devastating wartime period "the P.N. were heavily defeated by Boffa's party and Boffa became Malta's first Labour prime minister."⁴⁸²

With the LP success in the 1947 elections Mintoff became Deputy Prime Minister. After a split with Boffa in 1949, and the refounding, by Mintoff, of the party as the Malta Labour Party, Mintoff did not have electoral success again until 1971. He was Prime Minister between 1971 and 1984 and was Leader of the MLP between 1949 and 1984. He went on influencing Maltese politics from the backbenches until 1998 and died in 2012 at the age of 96.

⁴⁸⁰ G. Bonello, 'Malta and Me: colonial politics, Il-Gross and university students', *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 28 September 2014. Available from: The Times of Malta online, (accessed 16 March 2018).

⁴⁸¹ G. Baldacchino, *Trade unions in Malta*, Report 110, European Trade Union Institute, 2009, p. 19.

⁴⁸² H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony*, Midsea Books, Malta, 2013, p. 209.

The Dockyard, at one time the bulwark of trade-unionism and workers' participation, is no more. However, those events forged memories of a Bormla that the Bormliži might not want to return to but which some may wish to recall, at least in the annals of the city. It may also be that they would wish to recall that the origins of the Labour Party, that the majority of them, at present, support, were laid in Bormla.

The people of Bormla with whom I spoke were all very aware of the changes in the local political scene between the years prior to WWII and the political world that emerged post-War. They know that when Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici was in government Bormla could be described as 'Nationalist'. And it is also certainly a fact that the majority of Bormliži have now long been dedicated to the Malta Labour Party and the figure of Dominic Mintoff. However, in their discussions with me, it was not so much the triumph of Mintoff, the socialist, about which they spoke but more about the peculiarity of Bormla politics that meant that part of the Mifsud Bonnici family remained in Bormla after the War and continued the political tradition. Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, a son of Carmelo, was Minister during Nationalist administrations and then went on to become President of the Republic from 1994 to 1999. The people of Bormla may be politically Left leaning and, in their great majority, supporters of the Malta Labour Party – recently renamed Partit Laburista - but their respect and interest in the Mifsud Bonnici family has not been extinguished. It is still part of the family of Bormliži and, in their eyes, deserves respect simply for that fact alone. This extraordinary political local milieu is something that respondents spoke about as part of, and an exemplar of their undying respect for those who have Bormla at heart.

Tal Gross kollha nies mill ahjar irrispettati mill Bormliži kollha....m hemmx kuluri.⁴⁸³

The family of Il-Gross (Carmelo Mifsud Bonnici) are good people, respected by all Bormliži political colour doesn't come into it. (*My trans.*)

This is surely part of the heritage of every Bormliž and through it they feel that they, as a city, have carved their place in the history of Malta.

□ ***Working Class and Heritage***

This is also a population that would consider itself as mainly working class. If one looks at the statistics⁴⁸⁴ it is clear that, although there are a number of

⁴⁸³ G. Bedingfield, 'Despite PN's dislike for Bormla', *Glenn Bedingfield Blog*, 26 August 2016, <https://glennbedingfield.com/despite-pns-dislike-for-bormla/>, (accessed 20 August 2018). Comment taken from the comments board under this article.

professionals residing in Bormla these are considerably outnumbered by clerical or skilled workers (many formerly employed at the Dockyard), manual workers, as well as a significant number of unemployed. Several research projects, conducted in the US, Australia and in the UK and publications since the turn of this century, have dispelled any residual myth that working class people are not interested in heritage. For example, Rosenzweig and Thelen, cited in Tamasin Wedgwood,⁴⁸⁵

discovered that of the lowest US income group (\$0-\$14,999/annum), a large majority watched history programmes, 48 per cent visited historical sites, 40 per cent read history, and 21 per cent participated in 'groups devoted to studying, preserving, or presenting history'.⁴⁸⁶

Wedgwood also makes the point that the Internet has been a "hugely democratizing influence" and that

Communities and individuals today can build their own websites, post articles, and circulate their views to a worldwide audience."⁴⁸⁷

This, Wedgwood continues, has meant that history is no longer the preserve of adepts and that "more 'versions' are being authorized." This was borne out in the Bormla context throughout my particular experience with interviewees, focus group participants and through informal conversations had with many people in Bormla from across the social spectrum. And with regard to the Internet, as one might imagine, Bormla has several social media Facebook pages from the Parish Council to the Bormla Subbuteo Group.

However, something that clearly worried some of my respondents was the idea of nostalgia which might choke an ability to accept the new, be they ideas, concepts, heritage manifestations and change in general. Here are two comments expressing this anxiety.

The people that are Bormlizi have a certain nostalgia for the past - they would like to see the city as they knew it. Others don't seek better because this is the reality they know. (08)

These are two different realities - culture today. It's useless to cry about the old past of Bormla. I need to think about Bormla today. If I'm going to be involved in a re-creation of the past - Feasts, etc. my fear is that we will not create something new. I ask myself about our love of the Immaculate Conception but the sentiment comes from your mother's milk -

⁴⁸⁴ Cutajar, *Bormla, A Struggling Community*, p. 61.

⁴⁸⁵ T. Wedgwood, 'A working town empowered' in L. Smith, P.A. Shackel and G. Campbell (eds), *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes*, Routledge, London & New York, 2011, p. 132.

⁴⁸⁶ R. Rosenzweig and D. Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular uses of History in American Life*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 242-46.

⁴⁸⁷ Wedgwood, *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes*, p. 132.

sentiment. I'm frightened that this aspect will be emphasised rather than new cultures of Bormla. (06)

Whilst one might understand the fears expressed by these two respondents, much research in recent years has gone into the significance of nostalgia and it has lost its rather negative connotations. For example, Constantine Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, and Routledge conclude that

Regarded throughout centuries as a psychological ailment, nostalgia is now emerging as a fundamental human strength. It is part of the fabric of everyday life and serves at least four key psychological functions: It generates positive affect, elevates self-esteem, fosters social connectedness, and alleviates existential threat. By so doing, nostalgia can help one navigate successfully the vicissitudes of daily life. More generally, nostalgia is uniquely positioned to offer integrative insights across such areas of psychology as memory, emotion, the self, and relationships. Nostalgia has a long past and an exciting future.⁴⁸⁸

Viewed from this perspective nostalgia is a state of mind that can be harnessed to stimulate interest and to enrich the experience of both the older and younger members of the community. Far from being something that holds one back through a sentimental pining for the past, it is thus seen as a feeling that can help to cope with life and to create awareness of one's surroundings – past and present.

Blokland tells us that

Nostalgia and community go hand in hand, as nostalgia gives meaning to current experiences of self and identity.⁴⁸⁹

And in an earlier publication,⁴⁹⁰ Blokland looks at long-term resident nostalgia by placing it in counterpoint to that practised by those who experience 'elective belonging' i.e. people who make a very deliberate choice to live in a particular part of a city or a particular town or village. This angle on nostalgia is apposite for Bormla as gentrification, mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, has already started to occur. The ability to remember and to be nostalgic for the past could create "distinctions between 'insiders' and outsiders', and becomes a resource for the relatively under-privileged to counter the moral claims of the newly arrived."⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ C. Sedikides, T. Wildschut, J. Arndt, and C. Routledge, 'Nostalgia Past, Present, and Future in Current Directions', *Psychological Science*, Volume 17—Number 5, 2008, pp. 304-307, p. 307.

⁴⁸⁹ Blokland, *Community as Urban Practice*, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁰ T. Blokland, *Urban Bonds*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003, cited in M. Savage, 'Histories, belongings, communities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2008, pp. 151 – 162, p. 153.

⁴⁹¹ Savage, 'Histories, belongings, communities', p. 153.

Smith, Schakel and Campbell, claim to demonstrate that

(...) working class people have a remarkable ability to avoid *reactionary* nostalgia and self-pity, and can build on their history, traditions and sense of place and community in novel ways.⁴⁹² (my italics)

The previous chapter has shown that the Bormliži are very aware of the challenges of 'reactionary' nostalgia and are not at all drawn to self-pity. The concept of self-pity amongst those people interviewed, in the focus groups and in the informal conversations was almost absent. I have mentioned the reticence with regard to remembering poverty and this deep sense of pride did not leave space for self-pity. There were regrets about how certain things happened but, to me at least, there was no attempt to cast themselves as victims.

Amongst the respondents there was, however, much emotion which we can now look at with reference to the phenomenal approach discussed in the previous chapter. It was interesting to watch the reactions of the groups when images of Bormla were passed around⁴⁹³ prior to the start of the focus groups and when discussing historic landmarks of the city. The emotional response to the Rialto Cinema, for example, has been discussed above. As it is more likely that the people of Bormla would be familiar with the buildings around them, rather than written descriptions of their past, the emotions that buildings and places create are probably some of the best indicators of what is really important to them. Wedgwood puts it like this.

Memory is the third dimension, and the buildings the '3-D glasses' with which to enter that dimension.⁴⁹⁴

One of the respondents spoke about the Rialto and the physical area around that part of Bormla with such a clear description riven with emotion that, as he recounted the story, it allowed him to remember more and more. He was certainly being sincere but his reactions were a reflection of his vision of the place, his experience of the past and his pride in that heritage.

The first vision goes back to the market in Bormla as it was set up in the early 1980s. Sometimes I go for a walk near the Dock (Bačir) and think about how the market was set up all those years ago. The garages were shops one after the other; one with meat; the next one selling washing bowls; the next one seed. It was the same as the ones you find in Tunis. There was the tinsmith for example with the hot soldering iron and a woman would come to have her kettle mended with a bit of lead or perhaps an oven dish. I remember so many of those things. (18)

⁴⁹² L. Smith, P.A. Shackel and G. Campbell, *Heritage, Labour and the Working Classes* (Key Issues in Cultural Heritage), Routledge, 2011, p. 1.

⁴⁹³ Vide Appendix No. 5.

⁴⁹⁴ Wedgwood, 'History in Two Dimensions or Three?', p. 279.

The second thing is the Rialto (cinema) on a Sunday at 2.30pm. We used to book from Sunday to Sunday otherwise you couldn't find a place – although the Rialto was a big place. Every Sunday I used to get a clip over the ear because I used to go to see the films of Bruce Lee with my brother and as we were leaving I'd give him a hit and then he used to run up the Žigužajg⁴⁹⁵ towards the house. The first film I saw was in 1979 called Octopus – I was ten. Then there was Lucy who sold fried chips by weight, 'tač-čips bil-piž'. She had a small shop from which she would sell chips freshly fried. She'd cut paper bags in two and put the chips in them in portions – they would be full of vinegar! They were good! I still remember her hitting the pot and pouring the chips into the bags. (18)

Now I remembered something else. On Saturdays my mother used to give me 5 shillings (25c) and I used to spend it like this: In the morning I used to go and play football in a small piazza; then I bought a lemonade for 8 cents and a chewing gum 1cent; then we used to go down to the Kazin to play snooker and go on playing until the evening. There weren't really many places to go and you had to write your name and wait your turn to play. Then, we used to buy two cheese cakes 'pastizzi' at 2c5mils each. I remember at that time – Famagusta which was below us (meaning near his house) and then a lollipop for 3c. So I would spend a whole day out in Bormla for 25c. (18)

As has been outlined in the previous chapter (pp. 127-129), emotions fit closely into the discourse on identity and on a phenomenal approach to that discourse. Bortolan, referring to Scheler (1973: 255), puts it simply.

(...) thanks to our feelings we experience contents that could not be adequately experienced through the exercise of cognitive capacities only (Scheler 1973: 255).⁴⁹⁶

Emotional responsiveness is therefore something that is connected to the possibility of intentionality, (i.e. the way in which an object is set in one's experience and how it is seen within a certain context), but that goes beyond it. It is one of the points at which heritage meets with identity.

And this takes us back to the discussion in Chapter One involving Cassirer and the search for meaning.⁴⁹⁷

In the Bormla context, the respondents indicated many different subjects of past and present heritage about which some were well informed whilst others less so. The emotional responses were various but nevertheless significant and indicative of that individual's relationship with the object. There were certain

⁴⁹⁵ *It-Taraġ it-Tarznari l-Antiki*. These steep steps zigzag up a slope with houses on either side.

⁴⁹⁶ A. Bortolan, 'Affectivity and moral experience: an extended phenomenological account', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2017, pp. 471–490, p. 474.
DOI: 10.1007/s11097-016-9468-9

⁴⁹⁷ Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, p. 42.

memories and sensations, which, within phenomenology, can be seen not as “strange entities in the mind but rather aspects (the ‘material’) of the various acts of consciousness,”⁴⁹⁸ that elicited positive and negative emotions whilst emotions were also aroused by completely different objects of a more concrete nature. Helm argues that

(...) emotions are intentional feelings of import: essentially affective modes of response to the ways our circumstances come to matter to us.⁴⁹⁹

Each respondent has an emotional response to what they perceive as heritage that was born of a lived experience. As Smith and Campbell point out, the idea that people react to heritage sites in different ways is fairly obvious but it is interesting to see why people wish to refer to certain sites.

That is, museums and heritage sites may be defined as perhaps “safe” or simply “appropriate” or permissible places for people to not only feel particular emotions, but to work out or explore how those emotions may reinforce, provide insight or otherwise engage with aspects of the past and its meaning for the present.⁵⁰⁰

Many of the respondents show, in their support of contemporary heritage, that they are more than capable of building on their own history. And several of the respondents showed themselves to be very open to the idea of presenting their traditions, the things which make up their sense of place and community in innovative ways. For example, through the Holy Week procession presented in at least four languages for a tourist audience, or the sculptor who warmed to the idea of presenting his work to a wider public through digital and time-lapse video, or the pride of the organisers of the Apostles’ Table set up with great artistry by the Domus Piju IX.

A good example of an object which is also a memory is the Balomba. This siren and its accompanying sound have been discussed in Chapter Three with regard to identity. It is an item of no intrinsic value, except as a piece of industrial heritage and by no means unique, and yet it was one item that the Bormlizi would, it seems, very much like to retain as heritage. At the time, it was used instead of a clock as it could be heard all over the Three Cities. Now it would simply be a ‘live’ reminder of the past – emblematic of the Dockyard with all its ambivalent facets.

One of the group suggested that it could be sounded at noon from the Dockyard and I remembered that the cannon are fired at noon from the Saluting

⁴⁹⁸ Solomon, *True To Our Feelings*, p. 154.

⁴⁹⁹ B.W. Helm, ‘Emotions as Evaluative Feelings’, *Emotion Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2009, pp. 248–255, p. 254. DOI: 10.1177/1754073909103593

⁵⁰⁰ L. Smith and G. Campbell, ‘The elephant in the room’ in W. Logan, M.N. Craith, U. Kockel, (eds) *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, 2011, p. 445.

Battery⁵⁰¹ at the Upper Barrakka in Valletta. It seemed like an interesting juxtaposition of sounds – mixing one historical tradition with another!

□ *The Economy*

There were several respondents who discussed the economy as an important element of their history. There was an understanding amongst the respondents that Bormla's historical vicissitudes were linked in many ways to its economy. Other towns and villages of Malta's hinterland were, for most of their history, based on agriculture whilst Bormla has always been a village and then a town of commerce on which depended the lives of its local population.

As we have seen, Bormla is the town in Malta that has changed most over the years since its earliest occupation in the Neolithic (5000-3000BCE) and the Phoenician/Punic period (750BCE-218BCE). Some of those changes were so dramatic as to reshape the face of Bormla completely, from fishing village to early boat building area and commercial hub in Medieval times; from market town to a larger boatyard in the time of the Knights of St John; from market town and boatyard to an ever-expanding Dockyard under the British; from Dockyard to a town just catching up with the tourist industry, started in the Sixties in other parts of Malta and Gozo. If the American University of Malta, which opened an embryonic campus in Bormla in 2016, really takes off, it will also take on the mantle of university town.

All those I spoke to, in their own way, were aware that each of those periods gave Bormla a different *raison d'être* and that the city's fortunes and misfortunes were inextricably linked to economic factors.

Having said that, one of the reasons for wishing to keep trace of a changing Bormla is perhaps to show that certain things have not changed whilst others are sometimes looked at only superficially. One of my respondents put it this way.

Bormla was well known for its metal work, silversmiths, upholstery (tapezzerija) culture of the Port, like the other cities that changed. A few years ago there was a very good project organised by a Jesuit. He had the idea that the industrial revolution in Malta started in Bormla because of the Dockyard. The agricultural life was the dominant one prior to the

⁵⁰¹ "The Saluting Battery is one of Malta's most vibrant visitor attractions where history is brought to life daily! Located high along Valletta's eastern historic ramparts, it enjoys unrivalled spectacular views of the Grand Harbour and its surrounding fortified towns. It is also perhaps the oldest saluting battery still in operation anywhere in the world. For almost 500 years, its guns protected the harbour against naval assault. Its prominent position also ensured it becoming the island's principal saluting platform." Visit Malta, (website), <https://www.visitmalta.com/en/saluting-battery>, (accessed 24 January 2018.)

development of the Port. He wanted to bring in the element of the environment. I think he had a good point. The machinery and engineering could develop in Bormla. There were exhibitions suggesting that we need to look after the environment. (08)

Here he is remembering that Bormla was a centre for artisans prior to WWII; that it had a different life before the Dockyard and that the Dockyard was a fount of industrial knowledge for the whole of Malta. But, in addition he acknowledges that Bormla needs to look after its environment.

One industry, cigar production, present already in the 19th century, gave employment to many in Bormla, particularly women. This local industry was mentioned by many people I spoke to.

The only other pursuit of note at this time was cigar-manufacturing. This appears to have been viable, and by the 1830s it was employing some 600 workers. Although we do not know anything about their earnings, we know that about 50 million cigars were being manufactured annually with exports contributing around £10,000 to foreign earnings.⁵⁰²

Mercieca recounts that his grandmother, born in 1897, used to work for a tobacco factory in Bormla. The industry was centred around an area known as ‘tal-Bastjun’ and, over the years, there were several agents working in the Cottonera district: Brincat, Howard, Sciberras, Licari.

Ġeneralment, ix-xogħol fuq is-sigarri kien isir eżattament wara l-ikla ta’ nofsinhar. (...) Kien xogħol kollu bbażat fuq il-ħeffa tal-id. Kull mara kien ikollha t-tavla tagħha. (...) Kienu jithallsu skont kemm kienu kapaċi jlestu sigarri. Biss ta’ Licari kienu jippretendu li n-nisa li jaħdmu għalihom jilħqu ċertu kwota. Il-ħlas kien ta’ xi sikspens għax-xogħol tagħhom ta’ sagħtejn.⁵⁰³

One factory still thrives in Bormla today.

With regard to niche products, Mercieca also writes about an excavation ‘find’ that was pointed out to him from Poland.⁵⁰⁴ It was a glass beer bottle with the

⁵⁰² A.G. Clare, ‘Features of an Island Economy: Malta 1800-1914’, *Hyphen*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1981, pp. 235-255, p. 248. Available from:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/20450>, (accessed 20 July 2018).

⁵⁰³ S. Mercieca, ‘Il-Perit Duminku Mintoff u l-Immakulata (1916-2012)’ in S. Grech, (ed.), *Duminku Mintoff Bejn Storja u Miti*, Horizons, 2012, pp. 61-62. Translation: Usually, work on the cigars was done immediately after lunch. (...) The work was based on hand skill. Every woman had her own block to work on. (...) They were paid according to how many cigars they could prepare. Except that Licari used to demand a quota from each woman. The payment was about sixpence for two hours’ work.

⁵⁰⁴ S. Mercieca, ‘Cospicua’s beer in Poland’, *The Malta Independent*, 01 January 2018. Available from: The Malta Independent online blogs & opinions, (accessed 09 August 2018).

inscription 'M. Callus&Sons/Cospicua'. This company might have bitten the dust but it must have been a source of employment in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Some industries have come and gone but the artisans mentioned above are still present in Bormla, working on statues, embroidery, silver, gilding, costumes, model-making, boat-building as well as the artists who create the Apostles' Table at the Domus Piju IX house. Some are amateurs and others professional but that history of artisanship has survived the ravages of War and has continued, very often from father to son. These artisans regularly work quietly away in a one-room studio in some small corner of Bormla and are recognized by the local people and by their clients, many of whom are from outside Bormla. It is a well-kept secret that Bormla has this talent from within and which does not contribute to the general perception of Bormla from the outside. I have heard that the work of one embroiderer of vestments takes orders from the Vatican – though I have been unable to confirm this.

Here one can speak about the link between development and the economy mooted by de Varine in the early 1970s, as discussed in Chapter One. His was a particularly political agenda through which he saw the democratization of the museum as a search for identity, sometimes in the face of a post-colonial world. De Varine speaks of "re-discovery of the cultural and social values of small local communities".⁵⁰⁵ I would say that in Bormla it is not a case of rediscovery of cultural and social values but the need for a re-evaluation of those cultural values such as the undoubted artisanal skills of quite a large group of Bormliži, whose work has been perhaps taken for granted by the local population. Whenever I mentioned the work of artisans during my interviews and focus groups I managed to enter a new name on my list. Everyone seemed to know at least one person who is a gilder or a sculptor. These people – all men I might add – are contributing to the economy of the city. With a well-organized community effort these talented individuals could introduce Bormla to a whole new audience, both Maltese and tourists.

How exactly this can be achieved is still to be discussed but at this point I would cite again Davis when he describes the new museology of the 1970s and how it affected the museum world.

New museology is a suite of ideas about the purpose and function of museums; ecomuseology is just one variation of new museology whose tangible expression is an ecomuseum.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵ de Varine, 'The origins of the new museology', p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ Davis, *Ecomuseums – a sense of place*, p. 263.

A 'suite of ideas' is a very good way of looking at the huge variety of approaches that can be used given today's technology and openness to diverse ways of expressing art, heritage and culture in general.

□ ***Relationship with the British***

Malta was a British colony for a hundred and sixty four years and had a naval and military presence on the island up until 1979. Like the Knights before them, the British were not initially very keen on taking over the island but through a rather complex set of political circumstances the British did take complete control of Malta after the Treaty of Paris in 1814.⁵⁰⁷ Initially, the British presence consisted of some administrative and governmental posts, mostly based in Valletta with the largest group consisting of military or naval personnel. Inevitably, the Grand Harbour and the Southern Harbour area became the main home for the sailors and the soldiers stationed on the islands. From 1800 the people of Cottonera had to share their home with the British. And in the worst moments it must have seemed to the Bormlizi that the British had actually taken over their home completely. As already pointed out, it was not always an easy relationship. The uneasy symbiosis was referred to by several respondents when discussing Bormla's past.

A book in the 1830s, a guide book to Malta by George Percy Badger has a horrible description of Bormla – there was great negativity. (01)

George Percy Badger is really the bugbear of all those Bormlizi who take even a passing interest in Bormla's history.⁵⁰⁸ The feeling of getting a bad press which contributes to the ever present 'stigma' is not something that cropped up recently but has been a thorn in the side of the Bormlizi for the last 180 years. These are just two excerpts from Badger's book of 1838.

The parish church called Della Concezione is a spacious building, but contains little worthy the attention of the traveller.

The chief part of the town of Birmula is situated on a low site, and is very thickly populated. The streets are generally narrow and irregular, and a great proportion of the houses, especially those situated near the walls, are nothing better than hovels. In this quarter, the city presents a very miserable appearance, not only from the mean aspect of the dwellings, but from the great accumulation of stones and rubbish which crowd the fortifications. One side of the wharf of the small harbour of Birmula is occupied by the Dockyard and Naval arsenal, provided with every thing requisite for the supply of the British fleet in the Mediterranean. Part of

⁵⁰⁷ Definitive Treaty of Peace, *Concluded at Paris on the 30 day of May, 1814*. Art. VII. The island of Malta and its Dependencies shall belong in full right and sovereignty to his Britannic Majesty. http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/diplomatic/c_paris1.html, (accessed 14 January 2018).

⁵⁰⁸ G. P. Badger, *Description of Malta and Gozo*, Malta, 1838.

the opposite shore is also taken up with magazines, destined for the same purpose.⁵⁰⁹

To be fair to Badger, one has to put his negative comments in an historical context. The Maltese did have a hard time towards the end of the Knights' period. The Knights started to lose their lands in France with the political unrest of the French Revolution during which time a large part of their income was curtailed. They could no longer keep up an appearance of largesse and cracks started to show in that long-standing symbiotic relationship by which the Knights and the Maltese lived through the good times. The French Revolution over and Napoleon in command, France saw Malta as a strategically useful and easy prey in the full knowledge of just how weak the Grand Master was. This led to Napoleon's relatively easy take over of the islands in 1798. Move on two years and the Maltese realized that they were no better off and asked the British for help. With the Treaty of Amiens 1802, strictly speaking, Malta should have been returned to the Knights of St John but international politics intervened and the Maltese seem to have had little appetite to see the Knights back on the island. Britain must have seemed a much safer bet. And so it was at the beginning of the British period when war in the Mediterranean was still going on but this period was punctuated by many ups and downs. Over the 164 years of British Rule, the visitors to the island, both official and not, did not hold back from their criticism of the island and, it must be said, were not always very culturally sensitive in their declarations. However, there are some exceptions. Anderson, for example, in Malta in 1800 was quite complimentary about Bormla.

This town, like Vittoriosa, is built on the slope of an hill, and displays an equal irregularity. There is only one spacious street the rest are narrow, and without any kind of pavement. The houses, however, being regularly built, present a pleasing appearance. The barracks for troops are handsome and spacious; and frequent fountains pour forth their cooling and salubrious streams. Adjoining to the quay is an excellent and commodious market-place, where butchers meat, poultry, vegetables and fruits, are supplied in ample abundance.⁵¹⁰

The first fifty years of British Rule were not easy for Malta. There were various causes for the island's economic ups and downs. The first thirteen years were prosperous as the international situation was still fluid and there was need for the repair and care of ships which provided jobs of all sorts. However, after the plague in Malta of 1813 and also because of a slow down in military and naval efforts as the Mediterranean became less of a centre for war, a certain decline set in. For example, the cotton production and trade which had sustained the Maltese economy for years, began to decline from the first years of the early 1800s. In 1838, Badger wrote:

⁵⁰⁹ Badger, *Description of Malta and Gozo*, pp. 12-13.

⁵¹⁰ Anderson, *A Journal of the Forces which sailed from the Downs*, p. 123.

The cotton of Malta is of a very fine quality, and forms the chief article of export.

(...) In the year 1801, the value of raw cotton produced in these islands amounted to about half a million sterling.⁵¹¹

Badger then explains that, owing to cheaper products from Egypt, the “value of late years has diminished one half.” As always, the reasons for decline did not have one source. Other reasons were, as mentioned, the plague of 1813; the treaty between Britain and Naples of 1816 through which Naples, a principal market for Maltese cotton, prohibited its importation; the signing of the Anglo-Sicilian treaty of 1819 and later with reciprocity agreements concluded by Britain with both Austria and Greece.⁵¹²

However, Bormla and the other Cities of Cottonera had benefitted from the economic spurt of the early years of British colonial rule and managed to build up businesses that survived the down turn in the cotton trade, which mainly affected the spinners and weavers, many of them women, within the villages.⁵¹³ Bormla, on the other hand, had continued to develop its boat building skills and went on building boats up to the 1830s. This meant that what work there was to be had was mostly concentrated on the harbour area, including Bormla, but even here the vagaries of the international market and the tight quarantine laws and “the advent of the steamer (which) was destined to thwart local production”⁵¹⁴ still kept trade and therefore jobs at low levels.

There is a profound story to be told about the relationship of the Bormlizi and the British⁵¹⁵ and it was one that was constantly referred to by the respondents. Some were more anglophile than others.

When the British came, Cottonera greeted them with enthusiasm. British were more friendly than the French. The British got on well and when they were stationed here they brought their families and mixed with Maltese. Traditions were taken on: the Christmas Tree, Football – St George first team in Malta. Some British lived in larger houses of Maltese people. Cottonera Three Cities were better off than other villages. (02)

Battle mode has been part of the background of Bormla’s history for generations. Bormlizi once threw a British sailor into the sea and let him drown rather than pay him. One was hanged and the other freed. Mintoff continued the battle mode but he did not invent it. Protestants tried to enter Bormla but were treated very badly by the inhabitants. This seems

⁵¹¹ Badger, *Description of Malta and Gozo*, p. 53.

⁵¹² Borg, ‘Social Interaction at Cospicua’, p. 79.

⁵¹³ Clare, ‘Features of an Island Economy’, p. 246.

⁵¹⁴ Clare, p. 248.

⁵¹⁵ For information on this subject vide: M.P., Borg, ‘Social Interaction at Cospicua during the First Fifty Years of British Rule 1800 – 1850’, M.A. Dissertation, University of Malta, 2016.

very bad now but at the time they were seen as a threat. Religion was not the only issue of course. (01)

One story, which is perhaps emblematic of the relationship between the British Navy and the Maltese, is that of HMS Hibernia. It is not specifically a Bormla story but the ship always shows up in photos of Dockyard Creek and was a fixture in the entrance to the Creek up until 1903. It is a tale that has been told in detail by Michael Cassar.⁵¹⁶

The Hibernia was launched in 1804. She served in the Napoleonic Wars and in 1854 spent some time in the Mediterranean. In 1855 she was refitted in England and sailed to Malta to serve as a receiving ship, a floating military barracks. And there the Hibernia remained at a fixed berth in Dockyard Creek for the next forty years. Finally, in 1903 she was broken up and her wood sold off. Unfortunately, some of that wood ended up in some bakers' ovens and caused many cases of lead poisoning.

The figurehead of the Celtic god Dagda was eventually returned to Malta from Portsmouth. It stood for some time at the entrance to Fort St Angelo and is now on view at the Malta Maritime Museum in Vittoriosa.⁵¹⁷

The Hibernia was a memory of British naval dominance in the days of sail, that lived on into the time of steam and was 'worn', like a favourite old coat, long past its 'use by' date. It became a piece of heritage for both the British and the Maltese but was ultimately abandoned, visible now only in photographs.

The word Hibernia, derived from the classical Latin name for the island of Ireland, and the image of Dagda are also a reminder of a particularly positive relationship that the Maltese in general had with the Irish troops. In the words of one of the respondents

(The Irish) really worked to keep us together. They worked as a go between with the English and the Maltese. The Irish knew how to keep in with the Church. They used to lower their flags when the church authorities passed by. They showed respect.⁵¹⁸

The up and down trajectory of the Maltese economy during the British period, good in times of conflict and decidedly less so in times of peace, continued right up and into the 20th century. However, Bormla had its Dockyard and it continued to be

⁵¹⁶ M. Cassar, *From Plymouth to Pietà HMS Hibernia, L-Arbanja at the Grand Harbour Malta*, Design & Printing: Best Print Co. Ltd., Qrendi, Malta, 2012.

⁵¹⁷ J.A. Mizzi, 'A Slice of Naval History', *The Times of Malta*, 11 September 2012. The Times of Malta online, (website), <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120911/books/A-slice-of-naval-history.436482>, (accessed 24 January 2012.)

⁵¹⁸ Excerpt from an interview with Mr Harry Garrett. (21 March 2017).

a commercial centre for whatever trade there was. Until the mass exodus of WWII it remained an active, diverse city with three 'talkies' and some of the best retail establishments.

Post war Bormla was a difficult place. It took some years for the Dockyard to cope with a changed economic situation and the bombed out city took even longer. Tourism emerged in Malta in the early 1960s and particularly after Independence from Britain, attained in 1964, but did not even touch the Three Cities. In the years after Independence, and even after Mintoff started his diversification of industry plans in the 1970s: textile factories from Germany; chocolate factories from China and the like, Bormla remained joined at the hip to the Dockyard which after 1959, was run by civilian ship repair firms and later by a Workers' Council. The British Forces remained in Malta until their final departure in 1979. Until that time they were still providing some work for local people but with a very diminished sphere of influence and effect on the economy. The final departure was an emotional affair for both the British and the Maltese and, as Zammit says,

(...) it would be unrealistic to expect these events to signal the actual termination of the influences of former colonial policies on Malta's social life. These are likely to remain with us - even if imperceptibly - for some time to come.⁵¹⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, sports such as football and waterpolo, particularly around the harbour area, must have provided that mix of camaraderie and rivalry that helped to keep the relationship running smoothly. And that legacy most certainly lives on.

□ ***The Dockyard***

The Bormliži are well aware that the Dockyard has played a significant part in the economy and in the political history of the island and were all keen that the Dockyard should be remembered in some way.

Part of the history of Bormla which links up with the physical changes that were effected after the arrival of the British and the building of the dry dock in 1840 is that of its changing economy. Many people spoke about the market that was probably built on a log base and stood in a shallow area of Galley Creek from the 17th century until the middle of the 19th century. This disappeared with the construction of Dry Dock No. 2. This market was clearly a central point for

⁵¹⁹ E. L. Zammit, 'Aspects of British Colonial Policies and Maltese Patterns of Behaviour', *Hyphen*, vol. II, no. 5, 1981, p.195 – 211, p. 211. Available from: <http://melitensiawth.com/Hyphen.html>, (accessed 14 August 2018).

exchange and purchase of goods that came from all over the southern part of the island. From the market, goods were then carried across the harbour by boatman to supply Valletta – a much quicker way to get to the capital city than going overland from the south. Reminders of this market can be seen in the street names such as ‘Bull Street’ through which livestock passed to get to market. Several respondents remarked on this and bemoaned attempts to change the names of the streets as they saw it as an erasure of their past history.

When the market was destroyed, access to the sea became so limited that there was no longer any work for the boatmen.

At the same time, the boatmen who used to be in their thousands just crashed. You could no longer and didn’t need to enter from the sea. So the function became obsolete. Today there is the small ferry that crosses the Grand Harbour but it is nothing to how it was before. The boatmen before provided the ‘road’ to Valletta – a highway. (11)

This connects with the development of the Dockyard and accounts for the ambivalent attitude of the local people towards its construction. The emotions ran from initial fear, to plain hatred, to respect and grudging gratitude. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Church had something to do with this anxiety and distrust but it goes much further than simply a religious issue. It would be interesting to see how the Bormliži would wish to frame a record of the Dockyard.

From my interviews, focus groups and open conversations, it seems that the Bormliži consider themselves as rather different from the rest of the island. They look outwards towards the harbour and the sea. Many of them were, for several generations, dockers and ‘keepers’ of the Dockyard. They may not have loved the Dockyard for its aesthetics but it created a self-contained group of like-minded people. This attitude is not uncommon amongst those who do similar work often under difficult conditions.

David Wray describes the creation of the New Herrington Miners Banner Partnership which was set up mainly because its members felt that they (the former miners) were the ones in a position to best describe, remember and celebrate their mining culture. They did not want to be represented in a mainstream museum, the displays of which ‘are primarily representations of how others interpret the residual fabric of that industry and culture.’⁵²⁰ I am not aware that there is any formal group in Bormla of former Dockyard workers at the present time. However, from the previous chapter, one can see that the Dockyard still features large in the memory and thoughts of the Bormliži. Wray cites a statement by the Treasurer of the New Herrington Miners Banner Partnership with

⁵²⁰ Wray, ‘Images, icons and artefacts’, p. 106.

which I suspect the former Dockyard workers of Bormla would concur should they be asked to create a memory place for the Dockyard.

We want a proper history written, a people's history; the truth. We have to keep it alive ourselves because no one else will tell the kids what our lives were about and how those lives have changed. We are talking about educating the kids, so that they will know what it was like to live in a mining community. The miners are a class in themselves, different from the rest of the working class. This is what we are trying (to) tell our children, to give them some pride in who they are.⁵²¹

However, comparisons are sometimes troublesome. The Dockyard did have its decade of strikes in the 1960s but after 1971, with Mintoff's return to power, there was no more trouble of that nature. The end of the Dockyard in Bormla, when it came, was not the trauma that is the narrative of the Durham miners. There were, no doubt, regrets in Cottonera and workers that did not agree to the idea of the closure but there were not the emotional scars that the UK Miners' strike left upon that section of society. However, with that caveat in mind, it is still of interest to explore what happened to a community that had relied, as Bormla had, on one particular employer for its sustenance over many years.

What one can take from the comparison between the Durham miners and the Bormliži Dockyard workers is that Stephenson and Wray make the point that the members of the Partnership

are united in their identification with all that mining communities represent: occupation, class, culture, union and tradition, all of which they subsume under the term 'heritage'.⁵²²

In their initial comments to the same paper, the authors state that

Despite the pessimistic examples of the social and economic decline of post-industrial mining given in the literature, there is emerging evidence that some of these communities appear to be regenerating themselves using the cultural capital accrued through tradition, and maintained by festival and exhibition. This is being achieved through attempts to ensure that this unique heritage, grounded in solidaristic and inclusive social networks, is not lost to succeeding generations. Through participation in the annual Durham Miners' Gala and the refurbishment of old community banners, some community activists are seeking to use their cultural and traditional heritage as a form of 'emotional regeneration'.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Wray, p. 116.

⁵²² C. Stephenson and D. Wray, 'Emotional regeneration through community action in post-industrial mining communities: The New Herrington Miners' Banner Partnership', *Capital & Class*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2005, pp. 175 – 199, p. 190.

⁵²³ Stephenson and Wray, 'Emotional regeneration through community action', p. 175.

With regard to Bormla's former Dockyard workers, it would appear that they and those who were not actually employed by the Dockyard, are almost unanimous in their desire to see the Dockyard remembered. It is extremely important, for the Bormla context, to note that in Durham the initiative was successfully taken up by leaders from within the Partnership i.e. the Durham mining 'family', and that these leaders recognized the importance of 'their cultural and traditional heritage' as a basis on which to grow 'emotional regeneration'. That said, I have my doubts, based on what I heard during my fieldwork, whether there would be an appetite to do more than simply recall the Dockyard and the memory of those who worked there.

The Dockyard was mentioned as something very well worth remembering and recording for diverse reasons – positive and negative.

Work was very important – the Dockyard. I think many people wanted to educate their boys rather than their girls so they could work at the Dockyard. (06)

The development of the Dockyard took away the Xatt of Bormla – the strand giving access to the sea. It used to be a port of call. 'Xatt ix-Xwieni'. The British built that huge wall which closed off the city. The Dockyard was a great source of jobs but when they weren't needed any more – after the war for example – they just used to let them go and this created poverty. (05)

When the dry dock was dismantled, very little was done to retain physical reminders of it except in a rather haphazard way – such as pieces of machinery incorporated into the design of the promenade. The caisson was damaged to such an extent that, I have been informed, it will no longer ever be possible to create the dry dock again. If you view that place where the dry dock once was, it is almost as though there has been a deliberate attempt to erase it. For the reasons discussed in the previous chapter, one can understand why this might be so but nevertheless there are many voices who regret that annihilation and would wish to see it remembered in some way. I can imagine that it would not be a 'look back with nostalgia' moment but more of a 'look back with respect and recognition'. However, it could well be that, when it comes to making a decision about remembering the Dockyard, there may be some opposition. It could be that, now that the wall is gone, replaced by a promenade complete with green sward, the now upwardly mobile Bormla may find it hard to see itself reflected in that memory. The 'how' it should be remembered will have to be considered very carefully.

□ *The War*

The war had a great effect on the social situation in Bormla. Not that there weren't problems before but WWII certainly changed things drastically.

There were issues with the blue collar workers at the docks but the War brought dramatic social change as the upper/professional classes moved out. (08)

No discussion about Bormla's past or present can ignore the effect that World War II had on the city. As has been stated before, the departure of certain commercial families from Bormla did start before WWII. There were issues of health linked to the pollution caused by the Dockyard activities; the perception that Valletta was becoming more modern, with gaslight,⁵²⁴ in the middle of the 1800s, and then electricity arriving in the capital before anywhere else⁵²⁵ and the consequent feeling that Valletta was more commercially attractive. However, everything precipitated with the outbreak of WWII on 10th June 1940.

The first bombs were dropped on the Grand Harbour by the Italian Airforce in 1940 but on 16 January 1941 the first German Luftwaffe bombs fell. What happened next was not a gentle seeping of families out of Bormla but a veritable stampede.⁵²⁶ In just a few months, the symbiotic relationship between the professional, the middle class and the working classes broke down. Anyone who could afford to be out of the area took what belongings they could and found refuge in somewhat safer towns inland. Not that anywhere was really safe but certainly more secure than the towns around the Grand Harbour.

This was the comment of a Senglean married and living in Bormla.

After the war poverty and illness and other issues set in. And slowly, slowly it started to go downhill. And we remained for a long time with the effect of the war years - on Bormla, L-Isla and Birgu. It did affect psychologically as well. The fact that you take ages to get back on your feet again without being given the necessary 'push' by successive governments, you remain behind, unstable, psychologically with regard to one's self esteem when you compare yourself to others. (20)

⁵²⁴ "I am looking into various documents. When gaslight was introduced. A petition was initiated by Michelangelo Ross (Legal Procurator), my great-grandfather. In the 1860s the Government had promised to give gas to Cottonera after Valletta and Floriana. The gas works were in Kalkara. The petition was so they would get gaslights. The Government said it couldn't afford it. But they answered that if it could afford to build the opera house it could give gas to the streets of Bormla! The (gas) lights used to go out in the wind. The petition was signed by 143 people. This shows that there was already some civic awareness." Excerpt from interview with Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, (10 December 2016).

⁵²⁵ "1882. Electric lighting was introduced for the first time in Malta during the opera "Un Ballo in Maschera" at the Royal Opera House in Valletta. During the same year, Piazza San Giorgio in Valletta was also illuminated by electric lighting". 'Maltese History & Heritage', a project run by the Vassallomalta.com, (website), <https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/electricity-in-malta/>, (accessed 24 January 2018).

⁵²⁶ By April 1942, 70% of the buildings in Bormla had been affected by bomb damage. Twenty nine people died in the air raids between 1940 and 1942. Their ages ranged from 5 months to 70 years with at least seven of the dead under the age of 15 years. 'Maltese Casualties During World War II, (website), http://website.lineone.net/~remosliema/maltese_casualties_during_world.htm, (accessed 24 January 2018).

There were many issues that exacerbated the reconstruction of the devastated post-War Cottonera. Like the rest of Malta, Bormla was subject to a rebuilding plan which has been much criticized for not having been sympathetic to the organic structure of the city. And, as this respondent points out, the delay in sorting out the problem

The exodus of the War was not really such a problem as Bormla was overpopulated but what really ruined things was the reconstruction post-war of Mintoff. Harrison and Hubbard⁵²⁷ wanted to knock down roads full of houses in Valletta and Bormla and build flats. (01)

In the Harrison and Hubbard report, Chapter X is dedicated to the *The City of Cospicua*. Figure 29 in Chapter X indicates the areas that the Director of Health 'regards as slums'. There are no less than eight of these areas and the report states that

The Bormla Gate slum, (giving on to French Creek) is, in his opinion, beyond hope of redemption; the others are capable of amelioration.⁵²⁸

This sounds quite positive. However, in the next section of the report, under the title 'PROPOSALS', it becomes clear that their remit will colour their interpretation of 'amelioration'.

General. – There may be some among those who live in Cospicua who would wish to see the city rebuilt as it was before the war. Were this desirable, it is not possible; for we have been instructed to allow for the surrender to the imperial Government of lands required for the extension of the Dockyard. Our proposals therefore are framed to take advantage of the destruction done by enemy action and of the necessity of this surrender, to plan a city more convenient and hygienic and pleasanter to live in. In particular we propose to improve the traffic-arteries; to provide in the Reconstruction areas, sites convenient for flats and houses; to create a formal Civic Centre, and to ameliorate the setting of the Parish Church.⁵²⁹

Judging from some of the diagrams in the Report, not all the suggestions for Bormla made by Harrison and Hubbard were adopted – both for good and for bad – but the fact remains that their maxim, mentioned in another section of the Report did not help in retaining the shape of the medieval town, the post war architecture of which is not very admirable.

⁵²⁷ A. ST.B. Harrison and R.P.S. Hubbard, *Valletta, A Report to accompany the Outline Plan for the Region of Valletta and the Three Cities*, Govt. of Malta, Valletta, 1945.

⁵²⁸ Harrison and Hubbard, *Valletta, A Report to accompany the Outline Plan for the Region of Valletta and the Three Cities*, p. 51.

⁵²⁹ Harrison and Hubbard, pp. 50-51.

"After what we have said (about the value of modern architectural ideas), it is hardly necessary to add that where, as in the case of the Auberges of France and Auvergne, ancient monuments have been destroyed by enemy action, we are *categorically opposed* to the suggestion that advantage should be taken of the existence of drawings which make it possible, to build replicas of the lost buildings.⁵³⁰ (my emphasis)

With this dogma Valletta lost two Knights' period auberges which could have been rebuilt. If Harrison and Hubbard took that attitude in the face of auberges in the capital, one can imagine that they were not that interested in recreating areas of much less architectural importance.

In defence of those rebuilding after the war, there were constraints of time and the fact that many people had been rendered homeless and some housing, which was already sub standard before the war, must not have seemed worthy of restoration. Walking around Bormla today, one has to appreciate that in fact the city does still exude the atmosphere of an old city helped also by the many stepped streets which give it a very distinctive character. The fine Bormla War Memorial⁵³¹ which stands below the Parish Church reminds today's Bormlizi of those most difficult years. The narrative of Bormla could not be told without including this most significant milestone in the city's history.

□ *Remembering the Church*

The Church is really the 'constant' throughout the varied history and the myriad vicissitudes of Bormla and several respondents expressed their disappointment that there was not a specific museum connected with the Parish Church which is, in itself, a piece of history but one with a particular narrative covering centuries. Its present form was finalized in the 1700s but the early church goes back much further than that.

A myth that was repeated several times to me during my fieldwork is one which recounts the story behind the building of the first Chapel to the Madonna of Succour. Here it is recounted in brief by the Archpriest of the Parish of Bormla.

Tales of Bormla - here was a Sicilian ship's captain, (a myth!) they came into Bormla and came on land. He started to hear the crying of a baby and they looked around and began to see a tree underneath which there was the devil hitting a child. He prayed to the Madonna and the Madonna sent away the devil and the captain took the child back to Sicily. There he

⁵³⁰ Harrison and Hubbard, p. 102.

⁵³¹ The Bormla War Memorial was created by Michael Camilleri Cauchi in 1994 as part of the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the pilgrimage held at the end of WWII, when the statue of the Immaculate Conception and the titular painting were returned to Bormla from Birkirkara where they had spent the War years.

realized that the devil had stolen his own child from his home in Sicily. He made a promise to build a chapel to the Madonna of Succour (tas-Sokkors). A myth but it shows the connection between the people of Bormla and the Sea.⁵³²

The present church building also gained mythic status for the fact that 'miraculously' it was left untouched by enemy bombs in WWII when the buildings all around it were razed to the ground. Then there was the procession from Birkirkara on 19th November 1944 which saw the return of the revered statue of the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception and the titular painting. I believe that there was not one respondent who did not recount this event to me.

The Church's role was stronger before but still the Feast is connected with the Church – ours is an indoor Feast (Festa ta' ġewwa). Our procession was really something brought in from an outside Feast. Nobody wanted it to be in summer. The Church has lost its human resources. We used to have many more priests than today. Then there are the Patrijiet ta' Santa Tereża. Now there are only two. (08)

I think that whilst the idea of a museum for the whole community felt slightly alien to my respondents, I can say with some certainty that they would like to see a museum of some sort that gave space to the history of the church and its many invaluable artefacts – some of which have monetary value while others have inestimable value as emotional and community markers for the people of Bormla. However, this would fall within the remit of the Parish Church and the Church authorities.

The Feast and the Liturgical Year were mentioned by several correspondents as being something that should be remembered, including, quite understandably, by the Parish Priest.

I think the Church's liturgical seasons were very important. Carnival, Lent, Good Friday, Easter, Summer, All Souls etc. (06)

The Panegyric, a homily delivered during the Solemn Mass about the Madonna of the Immaculate Conception usually lasts at least 30 to 40mins. However, in 2004, the panegyric delivered by the brother of Dominic Mintoff, Father Dionisju Mintoff, has remained famous.

Once, Patri Dionsiju, Mintoff's brother, delivered the panegyric, he couldn't stop! Afterwards I went over to congratulate him and he told me that he just didn't want to get down from the pulpit as he had been waiting all his life to give this panegyric.^{533 534}

⁵³² Excerpt from an interview with Fr Anthony Cassar. (16 November 2016).

⁵³³ Excerpt from interview with Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, (10 December 2016).

⁵³⁴ This panegyric delivered by Fr Dionisju Mintoff in 2004 is said to have lasted over 2hrs.

There have been other memorable deliveries over the years and this tradition is one of those that really does go back some years and which is still part of Bormla's contemporary heritage.

Apart from the Parish Church, there are at least five other active churches in Bormla: St Paul; St Theresa of Jesus; St Margaret Monastery; the Conservatory Chapel (dedicated to St Joseph and now a home for the elderly); St John the Almoner. There is also the underground chapel⁵³⁵ of unknown date that lies between Gavin Gulia Square and the Gate of St Helen. Some of these churches are open to the public during the day but not all. The underground chapel can only be visited with special permission from the Local Council that holds the key. These churches are spaces that are much loved by the Bormlizi and which have a great amount of appeal for the local visitor and tourist alike.

The confraternities discussed in the previous Chapter do form part of the concept of remembering the Church and were mentioned several times during my discussions with respondents and in casual conversations. They are a truly long-standing tradition of mutual-help within the community. These groups were, on the one hand, life-savers when there was no security net for workers and, on the other, consisted of people who gave their talents and skills to the Church or to their Guild. The memory of these Confraternities, although very few continue to exist and function, was still very much part of the collective memory as far as I could gauge from my contacts during my fieldwork. There was an understanding of their social and cultural importance apart from, but also together with, any religious significance they had. It was clear that this was a memory they considered worthy of recall and record.

□ *The Seafaring Narrative*

In the 1840s when the dockyard started to be built, Bormla lost its contact with the sea. There was no longer an association with fishing. The centre was lost, the fishmarket was lost. A few remnants, like the altar (statue) of St Andrew^{536 537} remained. There are no fishermen any more. One doesn't associate Bormla with fishing any more. One thinks of Marsaxlokk but Bormla used to have a direct connection with fishing and

⁵³⁵ Vella, 'The Rock-cut Church of Bormla: Origins and Developments', pp. 49-74.

⁵³⁶ Probably originally sited at the bottom of a stepped alley, St Andrew Street, which now lies behind the central area of the No.1 Dock's British Building. (*Thanks to Stephen Serracino Inglott for this indication*)

⁵³⁷ A statue of St Andrew was still extant near the Dock until at least the beginning of the 20th century. Vide: S. Mercieca, 'La pesca a Malta: usi, tecniche e cercati tra età moderna e contemporanea', in M. Gangemi (ed.), *Pesca e Patrimonio Industriale, Tecniche, strutture e organizzazione (Sicilia, Puglia, Malta e Dalmazia tra XIX e XX secolo)*, Caccuci Editore, Bari, 2007, pp. 397-446, p. 408.

the sea and it had a fishmarket as well. Bormla was an important centre.
(01)

Several respondents referred to the sea as being something that used to be the very essence of Bormla. They felt the city had been robbed of its access to the sea and therefore to its lifeblood. They saw this as being part of the dark narrative of Bormla because the city's was always the connection with the harbour and the sea. The historic record certainly bears out this attachment. From the Phoenician tombs at *Għajn Dwieli* and *Tal-Liedna* that overlook the water, to its beginnings as a small fishing village with a few houses, the sea has always been a significant part of Bormla's heritage and has possibly shaped its *forma mentis*.

Many of today's Bormlizi may not be aware of the particular significance of the Grand Harbour in ancient history but that narrative feeds directly into the overall understanding of the importance of the Grand Harbour in the lives of their forebears. Diodorus Siculus, writing between 60BC and 30BC, mentions the fact that the Phoenicians "found it (Melite) a place of safe retreat, since it was well supplied with harbours and lay out in the open sea."⁵³⁸

As Gambin⁵³⁹ explains, the largest and best protected harbour in Malta was Marsa, which lies to the west of L-Isla. It was the only part of the harbour that could be used in all seasons. It also had the advantage of the vantage point of Kordin (until recently within the confines of the district of Bormla) behind it with its perfect view across to the harbour entrance as well as the hinterland around.⁵⁴⁰ Gambin continues to explain the presence of the Phoenicians and, after them, the Romans in the area with a series of references to archaeological finds in the inner part of Marsa of Roman quays as well as several possible *horrea* (public warehouses) which lead one to imagine that the harbour was used as a wintering post for trading ships in the Mediterranean. Intriguingly, Gambin cites from the Acts of the Apostles XXVIII.I.11:

One such ship from Alexandria carried St Paul to Rome via Syracuse after wintering in Malta.⁵⁴¹

This piece of history again feeds into a narrative keenly felt by the Bormlizi who have long adhered to the tradition that St Paul left Malta from Bormla⁵⁴² and

⁵³⁸ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*: Book V. 12. Loc. 13765, Kindle edition.

⁵³⁹ T. Gambin, 'Ports and Port Structures for Ancient Malta', in A. Gallina Zevi, R. Turchetti, (eds), *Le strutture dei porti e degli aprodi antichi*, Rubbettino Editore, 2004, pp. 159-174.

⁵⁴⁰ Gambin, *Le strutture dei porti e degli aprodi antichi*, p. 161.

⁵⁴¹ Gambin, *Le strutture dei porti e degli aprodi antichi*, p. 173.

⁵⁴² S. Mercieca, St Paul's departure from Malta, 19 April 2010, p.12, The Times of Malta online, (website), <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100419/local/st-pauls-departure-from-malta.303453>, (accessed 17 February 2018).

Gambin's narrative of Roman Marsa's situation would certainly lend a certain credence to this tradition.

The very myth of the foundation of the first church in Bormla, recounted in an earlier chapter, indicates how in medieval times Bormla was probably in constant contact with Sicily.

Brincat describes the growth and longevity of that contact through linguistic investigation.

He describes the appearance of Arabic with the coming of the Arabs from Sicily in 870 as so "sudden and overpowering" a change that it drove out the previously spoken language totally. The author makes the point that agricultural terminology used today reflects the Arabic spoken at that time.⁵⁴³

This contrasts with the entry of Sicilian into Maltese.

The penetration of Sicilian elements can be compared to drip irrigation, because the process was slow and lengthy.⁵⁴⁴

After the conquest of the Maltese islands by Count Roger in 1091, Brincat sustains that the seeping of those Sicilian elements into Maltese started and would have had most effect in the harbour areas and particularly the Grand Harbour where the *Castrum Maris* (now Fort St Angelo) was situated. The author indicates many instances in which Maltese currently uses names for fish as well as boats which have specifically Sicilian origins and illustrates this point with three particular words: *luzzu* (large fishing vessel), *bdot* ((harbour) pilot) and *tarzna* (dockyard), all of which have significant connection to Bormla and the Cottonera region.⁵⁴⁵

There is a recorded tradition of boatbuilding in the Grand Harbour area and, since Bormla creek was well protected from the elements for most of the year, it is most likely that it was practised there. In fact, Brincat tells us that

The centre of all maritime activities was the creek behind the Castle-by-the-Sea, which had been the feudal lord's residence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where galleys had already been built for the Count of Malta around 1200 (Enrico Pescatore was the admiral of Frederick II's fleet) and where Aragonese and Castilian ships had been serviced long before the coming of the Knights.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ J.M. Brincat, *Maltese and other languages: A Linguistic History of Malta*, Midsea Books, Malta, 2011, p. 151.

⁵⁴⁴ Brincat, *Maltese and other languages*, p. 145.

⁵⁴⁵ Brincat, p. 157.

⁵⁴⁶ Brincat, p. 159.

This activity must have contributed to the trading that was going on during the medieval period. The trading was with Gozo but also between Malta and Sicily which meant that the ships had to be of quite a size.

There were several different models of boat that plied Maltese waters: the *luzzu*; the *kajjik*; the *ferilla*;⁵⁴⁷ the *frejgatina* for fishing and the *dghajsa* for moving around the Port and others, such as the '*tal-Latini*', for ferrying people and goods.⁵⁴⁸ This would suggest there was an active fishing 'industry' that sold its goods at a fishmarket sited in the inner reaches of Bormla creek. This would have provided fish for local consumption but must also have been bought and sold on the spot by traders from all over the island. At the landing stage, opposite the market there probably stood a statue of St Andrew, as mentioned above.



*An early 19th century view of the market building in Cospicua prior to the construction of the dock.*⁵⁴⁹

We can presume that when the Knights of St John arrived in Malta in 1530 and took over the *Castello al Mare* they found that there was already a tradition of boatbuilding and fishing in the Harbour. It was thus likely that a number of workers joined other artisans who came from Rhodes to assist in the building and maintenance of their small fleet.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁷ S. Said, 'Documenting the last surviving traditional boats on the Maltese Islands: a case study on the *firilla*', *Malta Archaeological Review*, Issue 11, 2012-2013, pp. 79-90.

⁵⁴⁸ J. Muscat, 'The Gozo Boat, Maltese History & Heritage', a Project Run by the vassallomalta.com, (website), (accessed 17 February 2018).

⁵⁴⁹ S. Serracino Inglott, 'Cospicua's Dock No1 and what it replaced', *The Times of Malta*, 03 May, 2015, pp. 38-39. (My thanks to the author for providing me with the image.)

⁵⁵⁰ J. Muscat, *The Birgu Galley Arsenal*, PIN, Malta, 2001, pp. 2-4, cited in Brincat, *Maltese and other languages A Linguistic History of Malta*, p. 159.

After the Great Siege, and the building of Valletta, the Knights started to look for a place where they could safely build and maintain their fleet. Having come up against insuperable physical and technical problems, their only option was to turn to the creek that became known as *Posto delle Galere* between Birgu and L-Isla – that is Galley Creek, Bormla.⁵⁵¹

Finally, in 1689, the foundation stone for an up-to-date dockyard was laid. *It-Tarzna* was born. It “included stores, cooperages, residences and, most importantly, three arches for slipping galleys.”⁵⁵² This use of Galley Creek for the building and maintenance of the Knights’ fleet, which, according Bonnici and Cassar was usually around twelve ships, must have been very successful and mutually satisfactory. Grand Master de Rohan was later responsible for building storehouses Nos. 9 to 12, on the north side of Galley Creek which “still show the names of four of the Order’s galleys carved on to the lintels: Nave S. Giosepe M, Nave S. Giacomo, Nave S. Caterina, Nave S. Giovanni.”⁵⁵³

Almost every respondent mentioned the amazing fact that these names had survived the changes and the damage wreaked on Galley Creek in the following centuries.

During the Knights’ period, apart from normal sea trading, corsairing was a major activity and the harbour area was the place where local and many foreign sailors congregated. As Gauci explains, in the second half of the 18th century, the largest number of such sailors came from Valletta, Isla, Bormla and Birgu, in that order.⁵⁵⁴ The foreign sailors, who hailed not only from the Mediterranean but also from Scandinavia, England and Russia, must have contributed to the cosmopolitan reality of Bormla and the whole harbour area.

The corso can be considered to be a major factor for the harbour’s multi-ethnic flavour.⁵⁵⁵

Serracino Inglott outlines the kind of life that the local population enjoyed in the years leading up to the arrival of the British and the subsequent decision to build the first and then the second dry dock that was to change Bormla for ever.

Through the latter half of 18th and first half of 19th centuries, the centre of Cospicua, along the *Porto delle Galere*, had become a zone used for multiple purposes. Lending itself to naval services and stores, it served as a fishermen’s haven and the base for commercial expeditions in the

⁵⁵¹ Bonnici and Cassar, *The Malta Grand Harbour*, p. 26.

⁵⁵² Bonnici and Cassar, p. 26.

⁵⁵³ Bonnici and Cassar, p. 26.

⁵⁵⁴ L. Gauci, *In the name of the Prince: Maltese Corsairs 1760-1798*, Heritage Malta, 2016, p. 40.

⁵⁵⁵ Gauci, *In the name of the Prince*, p. 43.

Mediterranean and for corsairs' exploits, but probably more importantly, it housed a large market building.⁵⁵⁶

It would be disingenuous and misleading to suggest that there was no poverty in Bormla or Cottonera as a whole before the arrival of the British or in those first years of British rule. However, it seems that the Bormlizi, despite the ups and downs of those first years, including the 1813 plague and other less ruinous ones that followed, were managing to make a living through fishing and buying and selling their products at their market.⁵⁵⁷ And there were traders who were actually running merchant vessels around the Mediterranean.

Records show that a large proportion of the captains and crew members of the merchant vessels were from Cospicua and Senglea. The flowing trade was ultimately reflected in the architecture. Elegant houses lined the waterfront, a result of the wealth generated by sturdy commerce.⁵⁵⁸

The arrival of the British did not have an immediate deleterious effect on Bormla, as we have seen. However, the construction of the first dry dock heralded the end of the boat building tradition in Bormla which had survived throughout the time of the Order. In fact, there was a thriving community of boat builders in French Creek (still considered part of Bormla at that time) right up until the British decided to take over that area to dig out the docks as part of the 1880s expansion plan.

Dock 1 was divided into two. The Admiralty wanted to take over the part up to Santa Tereza. But it was decided to use French Creek – known as 'Daħla ta' San Franċisk' – there was a community there with a chapel to Sant Vincent de Paul. (02)

The Admiralty bought out all the small boat builders and the whole community simply disappeared. The link with the sea was maintained to a certain extent through the boatmen but Bormla eventually lost all connection with the water.

The Bormlizi, as has been discussed, were not pleased to have their city changed so rapidly and so radically but there was little they could do about it except embrace the job opportunities as they arose. Right at the beginning of the British Colonial period, when the Mediterranean was still considered a war zone, a ropery was built on top of the Knights' storehouse employing "96 men including 6 English ropemakers, 16 hemp breakers, 16 hemp dressers, 24 spinners and 12 boys

⁵⁵⁶ Serracino Inglott, 'Cospicua's Dock No. 1 and what it replaced', p. 38.

⁵⁵⁷ Population of Bormla: 1806: 6,753; 1833: 10,087 from Borg, 'Social Interaction at Cospicua', p. 137.

⁵⁵⁸ Serracino Inglott, 'Cospicua's Dock No. 1 and what it replaced', p. 38.

engaged in wheel turning, unloading and spinning thread.”⁵⁵⁹ However, by 1814, with peace in the air, they were all sacked. But then again, one has to say that the ropery later became a sail loft and went on functioning as such and employing local people right up until the 1950s. The ropery could be said to be emblematic of those good and bad times that Bormla and the rest of Cottonera had to face during the British period.

One opportunity for many Bormlizi was that of signing on with the Royal Navy or the Merchant Navy and ‘seeing the world’. One of the respondents, who was unable for health reasons to join up, recounted his disappointment at seeing his friends sailing off on what must have seemed like an adventure. There must be many Bormlizi who spent years in the Navy and other British forces, who then retired in Malta and live on a pension from H.M. government.

A record of the dangers of the sea is illustrated by two ex-voto paintings, from the days of sail, at the Church of the Discalced Carmelites in Bormla.

The offering of ex-votos has stopped completely (...) however, this does not preclude that important, dramatic events and briny exploits on the high seas cease to be of historical interest.⁵⁶⁰

Few younger-generation Bormlizi have any personal experience of Bormla’s seafaring narrative. However, many of the respondents were very aware of it as they referenced it through the language, the family nicknames, through their knowledge of boats, their sadness at the loss of a boating community.

There were also *latini* (a largish boat with sails). There are only thirty *dghajjes* (small boats) left, whilst I remember three hundred! (02)

Now, the Regatta does echo that narrative with great importance given to the different types of boats, to the building and maintenance of those craft and to the oarsmen of the deeply competitive teams. The narrative thus continues in a slightly different direction and remains an important building block of Bormla’s heritage. It is probably a very good moment to record that long seafaring heritage going back to Phoenician times, to the birth of *it-Tarzna* in Galley Creek during the Knights’ period, on to the British Dockyard and beyond. The city has now had the sea restored to it. The Bormlizi can no longer be called out with the epithet of

⁵⁵⁹ Bonnici and Cassar, *The Malta Grand Harbour*, p. 28.

⁵⁶⁰ S. Mercieca, ‘Hazards at sea: a case-study of two ex-voto paintings from the Church of the Karmelitani Skalzi in Bormla, Malta’, in D.A. Agius, T. Gambin, & A. Trakadas (eds.), *Ships, saints and sealore: cultural heritage and ethnography of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea*, Oxford, Archaeopress Archaeology, 2014, p. 13. Available from: <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/25591>

'baħarhom'⁵⁶¹ although the ships that you see on the quayside today are mostly pleasure yachts.

□ *Autobiographical Writing/Recording and oral Heritage*

Whilst investigating previous cultural activities held in Bormla, I came across a project entitled 'Din Mhix Tazza' (This is not a glass). It was organized by a group of women and was

(...) born from a chat between four friends during a concert one summer. It began to take a more definite shape later on, around a table littered with mugs of tea and notebooks, in an old stone house in Bormla.⁵⁶²

The idea was to invite women from Bormla to bring to the group an object that had some particular significance in their lives and to discuss it with the project organisers.

It was no more than a mug and yet, it was more than that.⁵⁶³

The narratives of this project and a record of the subsequent exhibition, curated by Dr Raphael Vella, were published in a book. The exhibition, that brought the project to a close, was set in an underground chapel, little known to the people of Bormla, let alone to people from outside the city. The stories are so surprisingly diverse, beautifully edited in Maltese and translated also into Italian. The exhibition itself is illustrated in the book both through images and through a text by the curator entitled: *The Poetics of Things*. Vella describes the chapel thus.

Out of sight, like the women's narratives themselves, the cavernous chapel is reached via two flights of steps. (...) Finally, standing alone like an altarpiece without an altar, Darren Tanti's painting records a moment in the lives of Bormla women surrounded by what he refers to as the "saintliness" of the simple domestic interiors they inhabit. Interiors packed with objects that are weighed down by the stories they carry.⁵⁶⁴

This project was creatively thought out and exquisitely executed but it is, at the same time, an example of the ephemeral existence of such an initiative if there is no permanence, if there is no record of such a project. Had there been no tangible reminder of 'Din Mhix Tazza' then this valuable insight into Bormliż life, seen from the female viewpoint, as well as the exhibition, would have been lost. In

⁵⁶¹ Vide Chapter Three, p. 157 for origin of the term 'baħarhom'.

⁵⁶² V. Monteforte, N. Grima, S. Falconi, C. Azzopardi, *Din Mhix Tazza*, Printed by Gutenberg Press Ltd., Tarxien, Malta, 2013, p. 1.

⁵⁶³ Monteforte, *et al*, *Din Mhix Tazza*, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁴ R. Vella, 'The Poetics of Things', in Monteforte, *et al*, *Din Mhix Tazza*, 2013.

a certain way, it is symbolic of all those memories that are going to be forgotten in Bormla unless they are reflected in some permanent way.

This project fits into the questions addressed in Chapter One regarding the intrinsic value of heritage objects – or rather the lack of such value and the fact that heritage is

“about negotiation – about using the past, and collective or individual memories, to negotiate new ways of being and expressing identity.”⁵⁶⁵

Another project, *Minn Fomm il-Bormliži*⁵⁶⁶ (The Voice of the Bormliži) is described on the website of the same name as

A community-oriented, volunteer-driven project which delves into the social and historical identity of the Bormla area and its residents. Through the process of oral storytelling, this project strives to forge a sense of friendship, solidarity and belonging in the community by creating an oral history produced by the people of Bormla for all to enjoy.⁵⁶⁷

It was a project that involved young people who were asked to interview Bormliži about their part in those “iconic images – such as the Dockyard and its role during the war and post-war period – while also aiming to uncover personal stories about living and working in Bormla.” The aim was to have “a lasting account of the area’s oral history, rooted in historical fact and tinged with personal anecdotes.”

One of the other important aims was to provide young people with skills in media production that would serve them well in their education and give them an edge when applying for jobs and provide them with basic knowledge that would enable them to move on to undertake other similar projects and produce exhibitions requiring media skills.

This was a one-off project organized by the *Forum Komunità Bormliža*⁵⁶⁸ within the remit of the Valletta 2018 City of European Culture but one hopes that it would become a regular project that could be developed in different ways. It is very much a grassroots project that fits in to the Community Museum ethic.

⁵⁶⁵ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁶ This project was a Valletta 2018 collaboration with the *Forum Komunità Bormliža* set up in 2015.

⁵⁶⁷ Valletta 2018, (website), <http://valletta2018.org/cultural-programme/bormla-community-project/>, (accessed 01 November 2017).

⁵⁶⁸ *Forum Komunità Bormliža* is chaired by Dr Yana Bland Mintoff.

All the interviews are available on the *Minn Fomm il-Bormlizi* YouTube Channel⁵⁶⁹ and serve as a great memory bank for the city.

These two projects really illustrate the importance of working class autobiographical voices as heritage as discussed by Tim Strangleman. Strangleman talks about the early scholarly misgivings about this kind of record as being untrustworthy memories and therefore ones that tend towards the mythic rather than the truth. However, since those early days there has been a growing acceptance of the validity of such a record.

In essence the acceptance of autobiographical reflection as legitimate material for understanding the social world reflects the recognition of the need for a plurality of viewpoints as well as a wider questioning of the foundations of 'hard fact' found in official documentation and archives.⁵⁷⁰

Interviews, similar to the ones that took place during the fieldwork for this thesis, could be gathered together as part of a community project. They could be anonymous but still valuable as a record of past experience.

A potential record of historical experience is also outlined by Borg, Cauchi and Mayo in a discussion concerning the Malta Maritime Museum, sited in Birgu.

Oral history offers great opportunities for capturing the authentic voice of the seafaring community that traditionally belonged to the localities surrounding the Malta Maritime Museum. The community where the Museum is situated provides an invaluable wealth of real Maritime experiences. There are no indications within the Maritime museum of an urgency to record and share such genuine experiences.⁵⁷¹

In a concrete way, the record of experiences of the Bormlizi who grew up in a Bormla that has radically changed would be important in retaining that sense of 'lived' history. As Strangleman states

Working class autobiography is heritage in that it records, and is attentive to the social processes of being and becoming, of agency being formed and exercised.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁹ *Minn Fomm il-Bormlizi* youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHeYpK1Zob4kKj0ttGyLWEQ>, (accessed 01 November 2017).

⁵⁷⁰ T. Strangleman, 'Working class autobiography as cultural heritage', in L. Smith, P.A. Shackel and G. Campbell (eds), *Heritage, Labour & the Working Classes*, Routledge, London & New York, 2011, pp. 147-159, p. 148.

⁵⁷¹ C. Borg, B. Cauchi and P. Mayo, 'Museums' Education and Cultural Contestation. The case of the Malta Maritime Museum', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2003, pp. 1-31, p. 20. Available from: University of Malta library online,

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/21534>, (accessed 07 May 2018).

⁵⁷² Strangleman, *Heritage, Labour & the Working Classes*, Routledge, p. 157.

The same author makes the point that working class memories are more important now than perhaps ever before because

(...) whole industries, communities and ways of life have been irrevocably changed beyond recognition.⁵⁷³

This is certainly the case in Bormla which has undergone a sea change in the last ten years almost equal to that of the 1840s.

Another important oral tradition is illustrated by Chircop in his study of the Maltese *għana*,⁵⁷⁴

This kind of biographical song transmits the historical experiences needed for the new generation of *għannejja*.⁵⁷⁵

Għana was referenced by quite a few respondents and by others to whom I spoke in and outside Bormla. It has regained a certain popularity which has led to the creation of competitions and *għana* concerts around Malta. However, there is one very particular type of *għana* referred to as '*Il-Bormliża*'.

This form of *għana* is known to the initiated as *għana fil-għoli* (high pitched singing). It is a tremendously demanding style requiring great vocal power and control.⁵⁷⁶

Historically, the *għana Bormliża* functioned as a cry for protest and resistance against both Colonial and social oppression. Maltese women who until the pre-Second World War period were still expected to wear the *għonnella*⁵⁷⁷ covering their face had no social standing whatsoever if not that of reproduction.⁵⁷⁸

McLeod and Herndon,⁵⁷⁹ cited in Chircop's paper, do say that "(t)he word *bormliża*, according to folk etymology, comes from Bormla, the old name still in use among many people for the village of Cospicua." However, today it is no longer connected to Bormla and is sung around the island. It is difficult for men to sing as it is sung in a female register and there are now few *għannejja* that choose to use it.

⁵⁷³ Strangleman, p. 158.

⁵⁷⁴ '*Għana*' is a local mode of folk song and '*għannejja*' refers to those who sing in the mode of *għana*. It is a traditional type of singing to the accompaniment of an accordion or a guitar and has various forms.

⁵⁷⁵ J. Chircop, 'Oral Tradition and Historical Source: The Maltese Għannejja', *Oral History*, vol. 21, no. 1, Ethnicity and National Identity (Spring, 1993), pp. 63-67, Oral History Society. Available from: JSTOR, (accessed 15 December 2017).

⁵⁷⁶ Chircop, 'Oral Tradition and Historical Source', p. 65.

⁵⁷⁷ *Għonnella* refers to the traditional Maltese dress for women.

⁵⁷⁸ Chircop, 'Oral Tradition and Historical Source', p. 65.

⁵⁷⁹ N. McLeod and M. Herndon, 'The Bormliża: Maltese Folksong Style and Women', *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 88, no. 347, 1975, pp. 81-100, p. 87. Available from: JSTOR, (accessed 02 November 2017).

It was, however, famously picked up by Charles Camilleri (1931-2009) in his folklore-inspired music.

In *Intermezz*, the first of the two orchestral excerpts from the opera which are being performed this evening, a flute solo leads to a more extended clarinet solo based on the *għana* style known as *il-Bormliża*.⁵⁸⁰

Mifsud Chircop has also written about the skill needed to sing in the *Il-Bormliża* style.

It is imperative that the La Bormliża singer have great vocal and lung power, breath and vocal control, and a magnificent full voice to sustain the melismatic intricacies of the presentation of its inherently long phrases. In spite of its simple diction, La Bormliża singing demands a sound knowledge of its intricate rules.⁵⁸¹

Here lies an opportunity to tell a story of intangible heritage that may have tenuous connections to Bormla but through which it could justifiably do its part in retaining this dying art.

However, this account of *l-Għana Bormliża* has an intriguing follow up - the connection with Luigi Pirandello.⁵⁸² Brincat recounts that Giovanni Ricci Gramitto, the grandfather of the Italian Nobel laureate, was exiled in 1848 after the uprising in Sicily and came to Malta. He took up residence with his family in Bormla where he died in 1850. Brincat tells us that Pirandello never visited Malta but that he must have listened to memories of the island and particularly Bormla retold by his mother, Caterina who accompanied her father to Malta in 1848 when she was thirteen years old. In fact the famous Sicilian author mentioned Malta in four of his writings which he revised a few times between 1894 and 1915.

The best known is an episode from Pirandello's long novel, *I Vecchi e I Giovani* in which one of the characters, Mauro Mortara, describes to a young girl how Bormla appeared when he first arrived in Malta.

In una di queste è Bùrmula, dove il Generale aveva preso stanza. Grossi porti, selve di navi; e gente d'ogni razza, d'ogni nazione: Arabi, Turchi, Beduini, Marocchini, e poi Inglesi, Francesi, Spagnuoli. Cento lingue.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Programme Notes from the booklet 'University of Malta Foundation Day Concert 2015', p. 6.

⁵⁸¹ G. Mifsud Chircop, 'A new look at Maltese high pitched folk singing "La Bormliża"', *Insaniyat, Revue algérienne d'anthropologie et de sciences sociales*, nos. 32-33, 2006, pp. 197-215, p. 199.

⁵⁸² J.M. Brincat, 'Pirandello u Malta: Ir-Risorgiment, tifikiriet familjari u l-immaginazzjoni letterarja', in J. Borg (ed.), *Mill-Petali ta' Hajtek – Kitbiet f'Ġieħ Oliver Friggieri*, Klabb Kotba Maltin, 2018.

⁵⁸³ L. Pirandello, 'I Vecchi e I Giovani', in G. Macchia, *Tutti i romanzi*, vol. II, pp. 3-515, pp. 146-147, cited in Brincat, *Mill-Petali ta' Hajtek – Kitbiet f'Ġieħ Oliver Friggieri*, p. 257. Translation: In one of these is Burmola, where the General rented a room. Large ports, hundreds of ships; and people of

Mortara then recalls a song that he learned whilst living in Bormla.

Socchiuse gli occhi, buttò indietro il capo e si mise a canticchiare in falsetto, pronunciando a suo modo le parole di quella canzonetta popolare:

Ahi me kalbi, kentu giani...

(...)

“Ahimè, il cuore come me duole”.^{584 585}

Pirandello was writing his novel in the early twentieth century but recalling his mother’s memories of 1850. Although these are recollections of many years before, they still suggest that *l-Għana Bormliza* was indeed sung in Bormla in the mid-nineteenth century and also that, for those living in the area of the port, the experience of the ‘other’ was very real well on into the British period.

□ *Stepped Streets – a blessing or a curse?*

Referring to P.P. Castagna’s history of Malta, written in Maltese, Mario Attard tells us

(Castagna) makes specific reference to the stepped streets of Bormla as they were in his time (1827-1907). Amongst these were Triq Matty Grima, with 132 steps, Triq il-Gendus with 170 steps, Triq Santa Liena with 200 steps and Triq l-Oratorju⁵⁸⁶ with 215 steps.⁵⁸⁷ (*my trans.*)

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the steps of Bormla are another of the loci which define the city. They were variously described by my respondents as a disadvantage when restoring or repairing of a house because of the difficulty of access,

On a banal level, Bormla is not comfortable to live in. There is an incredibly steep hill between our flat and my grandmother’s. The house she lived in, for example, was big but with one room on top of the other.
(13)

a reason for the litter in the streets as the garbage vans cannot pass through,

every race and nation: Arabs, Turks, Bedouins, Moroccans, and also English, French and Spanish persons. A hundred languages are spoken there.

⁵⁸⁴ Pirandello, *Tutti i romanzi*, vol. II, p. 148, cited in Brincat, p. 258.

⁵⁸⁵ Translation: He shut his eyes, threw his head back and began singing in a falsetto voice, uttering that folksong’s words as he remembered them: *Ahimé kalbi kentu giani*. Oh, how my heart bleeds. L. Pirandello, *I Vecchi e I Giovani* is available online at: http://www.classicalitaliani.it/pirandel/romanzi/Pirandello_vecchi_giovani_1.htm (accessed 01 August 2018).

⁵⁸⁶ I have used the contemporary Maltese names of these streets as that is how they are found on the recent maps of Bormla.

⁵⁸⁷ M. Attard, ‘Pietru Pawl Castagna (1827-1907)’ in *Marija Immakulata – Bormla*, Festa Booklet 2005, pp. 33-41, p. 41.

PC: It is topographically difficult.

Yes, a couple of years ago I was talking to the Mayor and she was saying that they get grants for road maintenance which are based on roads and a quarter of Bormla is based on steps so they are very stretched. Can't they approach Parliament and ask for some flexibility? This is a blanket ruling definition. Bormla is by definition hilly so why aren't they fighting for change? The streets are a mess. Rubbish collection is big problem. (19)

and a source of curiosity for tourists and a thing of beauty for local artists.

PC: Do you think that the steps could become another feature of Bormla?

Oh my goodness, this is another thing I suggested to the Mayor. I asked her to get Heritage Malta involved, get an expert in to see that the steps are not damaged but to do something with them – paintings or something and she actually managed to recruit an artist. They painted the steps around the bus stop on Ix-Xghajra. (19)

Lately, it hasn't been so bad because the foreigners are coming in and loving many of the things that people here just take for granted. On the strength of this interest, and EU admission, Bormla has started to take on the facelift that I always wished it would have. (09)

During a discussion with the participants of the third focus group, my positive comments about the stepped streets were met with a certain surprise. However, there was a clear appreciation of the attractive, narrow streets of central Bormla and evidence of a growing recognition of the value of the old buildings.

PC: For me the steps are very beautiful! I know they are uncomfortable.

General comment: when you get to our age!

Nelson Street and the little streets are really beautiful. Civic sense is missing but the places are wonderful. (focus group participant)

Next door to my daughter an English couple bought a house. Il-Polverista area. My daughter's house is large and antique. (focus group participant)

The hilly terrain and the resulting stepped streets are part of Bormla's charm but they are one of the aspects of the city that the residents at best take for granted and at worst grumble about. Those attitudes could be changed if the steps were shown to be something that would attract visitors and given the care and attention they need.

□ ***Remembering some past events***

A tragic incident was singled out for particular mention during an informal meeting with a group of senior citizens. On 3rd February 1995 nine Dockyard workers were killed in an explosion on board a small Libyan tanker in the dry dock.

The Um El Faroud tanker was in Dock No. 3 when, at around 10:15pm, an explosion on board ripped through the tanker's central section. Nine workers died.

In 1998, when the inquiry was concluded, the ship was towed out to sea outside Wied iż-Żurrieq for use as an artificial shipwreck and a diving attraction. A brass plaque was stuck to the ship as a memorial to the nine workers.⁵⁸⁸

The victims came from all over Malta with one 26-year old hailing from Birgu. However, the Dockyard workers were like a Brotherhood and the disaster was deeply felt by all. These seniors expressed a very strong wish that the terrible accident should be remembered.

A phenomenon that was mentioned in general conversation, but not in answer to my formal questions, was that of the plague. The respondents did not seem to highlight it, possibly because it was an event that affected not just Bormla but the wider harbour area and several other places in Malta and Gozo. Most Bormlizi would, however, be aware that the 1675 plague cemetery in Bormla is set behind the church of St Paul at the end of a narrow alley, aptly named 'Sqaq l-Erwieħ' (Alley of the Souls), in Bormla.^{589 590}

The plague was visited upon Malta several times over the centuries - in 1592-1593, 1623 and 1655, but after the 1675 event, during which 1320 people in Bormla alone lost their lives,⁵⁹¹ the Knights brought in draconian quarantine measures to try to make sure it did not happen again. In fact, during the 18th century plague events are not recorded.

The last serious visitation by the plague in Malta was in 1813, shortly after the arrival of the British and during the time of Governor Thomas Maitland. The impact on Cottonera was heavy not so much for the loss of life as for the fact that the area was closed off to people and therefore commerce. This left a double effect of death and poverty.

⁵⁸⁸ No author, '20 years ago this evening: the Um el Faroud tragedy', *The Malta Independent*, 03 February 2015. Available from: *The Malta Independent* online: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2015-02-03/local-news/20-years-ago-the-Um-el-Faroud-tragedy-6736130038>, (accessed 24 January 2018).

⁵⁸⁹ I am told that the cemetery belongs to the Church of St Paul but is being looked after by a private individual. I was not given access to the cemetery.

⁵⁹⁰ M. Attard, 'Il-Purċissjoni tal-Kunċizzjoni u l-Pesta tas-snin 1675-1676', Parts I,II,III,IV, *Sehemna*, Bormla Local Council, Union Print, Marsa, December 2006 p. 3, March 2007 p. 3, June 2007 p. 3, December 2007 p. 3.

⁵⁹¹ S. Pisani, 'The Malta Plague Epidemic of 1675 - 1676', *The St. Luke's Hospital Gazette*, Malta, vol. 5, no. 1, 1970, p. 44.

The single mention amongst the respondents is quoted below and, written 'between the lines', is a polemic concerning the disinterment of those who died in the 1813 plague when the new China Dock was built.

After the 1813 plague people were buried behind French Creek in an area that became No. 6 dock which was later built by the Chinese. (02)

□ **Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the objects of history and heritage that the respondents remembered and felt strongly about. Their replies tell us that the Bormliži have an affinity with the past and identify with the contemporary heritage taking place in Bormla today. Many participate actively in the ecclesiastical events but also in those of other more secular institutions that have a long history in Bormla. There was an undoubted desire to retain the church activities and to expand the secular ones if circumstances were favourable.

The many objects the respondents mentioned as being of historical interest were recognized as having national value but were perceived also as part of their own memory bank. This important reality came over very strongly with regard to many places that 'outsiders' would want to keep as heritage, such as the fortifications, but to which the respondents were attached in a personal way. One was reminded that this was, so to speak, their 'backyard'. This reflects the complexity of what constitutes a semiotic landscape which Waterton and Watson refer to as "cartographies of meaning carried along in streams of knowledge and experience."⁵⁹²

This is linked to the section of working class relations with heritage in which a comparison was made to international examples with similar dynamics such as the Welsh miners in the post-closure period. This, in turn, led to a discussion about nostalgia and its connection with emotion. In the past, both have had negative connotations within the heritage discourse but lately several theorists and practitioners have re-evaluated both of these responses.

Left-wing political leanings in Bormla were discussed openly by some respondents and the strong feelings with regard to Dominic Mintoff were never far from the surface. I therefore looked briefly at the historical context of trade-unionism at the Dockyard, the birth of the Malta Labour Party and the socio-political dynamics that created them. This drew me to suggest there could be place in a post-museum space for a discussion of 'politics as heritage'.

⁵⁹² E. Waterton and S. Watson, *The Semiotics of Heritage Tourism*, Channel View Publications, 2014, p. 34.

The internal and external lack of awareness about Bormla emerged many times during my discussions with my respondents and other local people. One of those interviewed, who used to organize walking tours of Bormla, put it like this.

I had one particular couple from Qawra and Bugibba who organised tours and they were negative at the beginning. Then afterwards they were honest enough to tell me: You really have something to be proud of. And that is the thing that I'm sorry about that the Bormliži don't really know about the city. (26)

However, several respondents did express a desire not to lose certain things that characterize Bormla such as the use of particular nicknames and the tradition of the boatmen. Some mentioned the *Għana Bormliža* which, whilst no longer being directly associated with the city, was seen as a tradition that could perhaps be revived.

I have included some historical background because I wished to show that what the correspondents were referring to regarding, for example, seafaring and the connection with boats and fishing, was based on actions and a way of life that goes back many hundreds of years.

In the following chapter, I shall be examining ideas about ways in which one could create a record, a memory bank, a place of discussion, a showcase for past and contemporary heritage that would be suited to the context of Bormla.

CHAPTER FIVE

POST-MUSEUM OPTIONS IN BORMLA

□ *Introduction*

In introducing this chapter, I shall revisit the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter One so as to recall the kind of thinking that has informed the thesis so far and which has led me to this point.

Initially, I looked at the ideas of some theorists who may not have made direct reference to museums as institutions but whose theories have focused on referents that are all closely related to the museum. These theorists debated issues such as community, memory, social justice, power and hegemony which are all elements of today's museum theories. Others, particularly the French literary, social and cultural theorists of the 1960s, develop new ideas about 'networks of relations', 'identity', 'arbitrariness' and the 'genuine', all key components of any museal discussion today.

New Museology theorists such as Bennett (1995) and Pearce (1993) mark the move away from the traditional museum and towards a more visitor-oriented approach. Davis (1999) is a key driver of ecomuseology and community-based museums whilst Hooper-Greenhill (1995; 2000) and others, such as Marstine (2006), provide the theory and the vision for the development of post-museum cultural spaces. Heritage is discussed particularly through Smith (2006), Dicks (2000) and also Harrison (2010). Other authors, who look at the wider community museum world and issues of identity and social justice are Ashworth and Graham (2005), Sandell and Nightingale (2012). These theories will link up with the work of those sociologists, educationalists and anthropologists as well as the historians who have written about Bormla, its past and its present.

In Chapter Three, I discussed those concepts of place, time, space and identity with reference to Bormla through that which the respondents expressed in the interviews and focus groups. Chapter Four examined those parts of Bormla's history, and past and contemporary heritage that the respondents thought of as important.

With Chapter Five I intend to revisit those initial theories and link them to the knowledge gained in the field to see how they work in the context of Bormla. In this way, I hope to be able to express a sense of the way people already use the historic past and contemporary heritage in Bormla and suggest some ways of expanding what is already achieved. I shall look at themes such as the difference between history and heritage, and issues of authenticity, whilst exploring ways in

which Bormla's historical narrative and heritage can be projected. I shall suggest ways in which Bormla can be promoted within the city and outside it and suggest what Bormla can achieve through these actions.

If Bormla is to manage its great historical and heritage riches it must make maximum use of its many sources of social capital. These sources will be discussed in this chapter with special regard to the youth of this city and ways of engaging their interest. Strategies for integrating the digital into the local heritage paradigm will be explored with some international examples.

As I have indicated throughout this thesis, the parameters of heritage manifestations have widened enormously in the last decades. The post-museum space is a flexible one. There are so many different ways in which Bormla can find a heritage voice that will carry past its boundaries, across Malta and beyond. I have tried to devise some directional signs that might outline ways in which a record, a memory bank, a place of discussion, a showcase for past and contemporary heritage that would be suited to the context of Bormla could be created. Bormla needs to examine some of these, choose what is best suited to it and try them out. This involves risk – the effects that such initiatives might have on the community may not always be those imagined. However, from calculated but courageous decisions there will come more and more ideas. Crooke reminds us.

Community is a multi-layered and politically charged concept that, with a change in context, alters in meaning and consequence. According to the situation, different priorities will come to the fore and the purpose of community-heritage engagement will differ.⁵⁹³

In this changing Bormla, intangible heritage will be a key element in the heritage discussion. Eilean Hooper Greenhill tells us how post-museum communities must take responsibility for this.

The great collecting phase of museums is over. The post-museum will hold and care for objects, but will concentrate more on their use rather than on further accumulation. In addition, the post-museum will be equally interested in intangible heritage. Where the tangible material objects of a cultural group have largely been destroyed, it is the memories, songs, and cultural traditions that embody that culture's past and future."⁵⁹⁴

The subtlety of personal narratives and their link with the physicality of place can be woven into the narratives of this city in which different voices can be

⁵⁹³ E. Crooke, 'The politics of community heritage: motivations, authority and control', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 16, nos. 1-2, 2010, pp. 16-29. Available from: Taylor & Francis online.

⁵⁹⁴ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and their Communities*, p. 81.

captured and diverse experiences expressed. The phenomenological approach can almost be seen as an all-encompassing philosophy with regard to these stages outlined by Waterton and Watson.

Phenomenology's most basic premise is that it is more difficult to capture the essence of everyday lived experience completely and accurately than one might have thought.⁵⁹⁵

In this chapter I wish to catch divergent angles and odd shapes of the historic 'objects' – physical or ephemeral - so that the wealth of stories I heard can find expression in the post-museum spaces of this city.

□ ***Heritage and History***

Bormla has little previous experience of looking at itself in terms of historical sites, heritage activities, intangible heritage, tourist attractions, history museums, or art galleries except within the sphere of the Church calendar. As I have said, this is, on the one hand, an advantage because little has been imposed by others on Bormla in relation to their cultural 'objects' and, on the other, a disadvantage because one is perhaps 'disturbing' a reality that may or may not wish to be disturbed. However, expressed in the previous chapters, the Bormlizi are very aware that this is a moment of change within their society, within their groups, within the city itself. And community development research shows⁵⁹⁶ that local people should make those changes themselves, or at least to be a very strong voice in the making of them, rather than have changes pressed upon them. As I shall argue below, the social capital is there but strategies have to be found to gather that social capital together in a positive way.

Heritage, like 'community', is one of those encompassing words which hold meaning at different levels. As Samuel comments

'Heritage' is a nomadic term, which travels easily, and puts down roots – or bivouacs – in seemingly quite unpromising terrain (...). It sets up residence in streets broad and narrow, royal palaces and railway sidings, canalside walks and town hall squares.⁵⁹⁷

In its early meaning of something passed down from one person to another, this 'legacy' could have been money, goods or physical assets. Today heritage has also come to mean the legacy of a group, which may have meaning for that particular group and possibly to larger groups and in some cases to the whole

⁵⁹⁵ S.D. Kelly, 'Husserl and Phenomenology', in R. Solomon & D. Blackwell, (eds), *The Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy*, Blackwell Philosophy Guides, 2002, pp. 112 – 142, p. 114.

⁵⁹⁶ A. Gilchrist, *The well-connected community*, Policy Press, 2011, p. 36.

⁵⁹⁷ R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, Verso, 2012, p. 205.

world. It has a relation to 'history' but 'history' is in the past and may or may not constitute heritage.⁵⁹⁸

Before trying to identify historic sites and heritage past and present it is important to define the two. In grappling with this differentiation between history and heritage, Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge state

The concept of time has remained central: heritage is a view from the present, either backward to a past or forward to a future.⁵⁹⁹

These authors see the past or history as important for the historians who gather and archive information about what happened in the past. However, they recognize that history can become engaged with heritage when the work of the historian focuses "upon the ways in which we use the past now, or upon the attempts of present to project aspects of itself into an imagined future, (...)." ⁶⁰⁰

As Schofield says,

These multiple views of heritage, of what matters and why, take us beyond the conventional boundaries of heritage. They take us beyond its comfort zone, from the special and the exceptional places and things, to the everyday.⁶⁰¹

Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge see the 'conceptualization of heritage' as being as much about meaning as about artefact. This, they continue, "ensures that it is a field of social conflict and tension, carrying differing and incompatible meanings simultaneously." ⁶⁰²

These descriptions or definitions of heritage may sound hard but should be kept in mind because it will always alert one to the fact that expressing heritage, through a community or communities, is not a simple task. It is a cautionary note to recall when dealing with what may appear to be the more romantic elements of heritage.

If I say that there has not been external pressure with regard to local attitudes to heritage and historic 'objects' I do not mean that Bormla has grown in some kind of cultural bubble unaffected by outside influence. Clearly, there are historical and political reasons for the continued significance attributed to these objects. Some of

⁵⁹⁸ B. Graham, G.J. Ashworth, J.E. Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture & Economy*, Hodder Arnold, 2004, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁹ Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture & Economy*, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁰ Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge, p. 2.

⁶⁰¹ J. Schofield, *Heritage Expertise and the Everyday: Citizens and Authority in the Twenty-first Century*, in J. Schofield (ed.), *Who Needs Experts*, Routledge, 2014, p. 1.

⁶⁰² Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge, p. 5.

these could be considered hegemonic pressures by, for example, the Church which was always keen to keep control with regard to religious practices. Of course, this did not only happen in Bormla but all over the Island. There are also historic affinities that are more particular to the place such as Bormla's association with the Great Siege, the influence of the British Navy and also the strong political milieu that has been very 'present' since the last part of the 19th century, throughout the 20th and on into the 21st century. These influences can be viewed as hegemonic pressures or simply as influences, but they are real and extensive.

Apart from the Church's edifices, there are other markers, particular sites, that the respondents pointed out. Many people mentioned the small bronze bust of the sculptor Abram Gatt which stands under the parvis of the Parish Church at the corner with Oratorio Street. Others were very proud of the War Memorial.⁶⁰³ The last vestiges of the Dockyard can be seen in the creek where the dry dock still lies permanently flooded. Some respondents were pleased that at least something of that past remained. The underground and mysterious church near St Helen's Gate was also mentioned, though few had had the opportunity to visit it.

The fortifications are perhaps the buildings that most represent Bormla's historic past, rather than being objects of heritage – as previously defined. However, as we have seen in previous chapters, they contribute through their very presence to the way in which the community within the walls sees itself. A significant overlap is apparent between history and heritage because many of the buildings in Bormla have a direct or indirect link to past and contemporary heritage activities, the most obvious of these being the ecclesiastic buildings, of which there are many. Some of these buildings, particularly the fortifications, may no longer form part of the local contemporary heritage but are significant in ways that are understood in a more subliminal way. There was a general feeling amongst the respondents that the fortifications should be better looked after and several mentioned them as potential tourist attractions. Whilst there are several bastions which are part of the lines that could be opened up to the general public, some of the rooms within the fortifications are simply used as garages and stores. This was a worry amongst Cutajar's respondents who did bemoan "the dilapidated state of the bastions and other built structures in the area (which) aggravates this sense of neglect."⁶⁰⁴

The other large building that was constantly on the lips of the respondents and which has been discussed within different contexts in previous chapters was the Rialto cinema. Again, this is not part of Bormla's contemporary heritage. It was once the headquarters of the Malta Labour Party, the place where the Party's

⁶⁰³ This monument, created by Michael Camilleri Cauchi in 1994, is located in front of Dock 1 and below of the Parish Church of Cospicua.

⁶⁰⁴ Cutajar, *Bormla A Struggling Community*, p. 173.

annual conference was held but that all ended in the 1990s with the building of the new headquarters. In some ways it is a piece of history but it is also part of that overlap of history and heritage because it forms part of the narrative of bustling Bormla, both pre-WWII and post. Opened in 1935, this Art-Deco cinema is one of the few buildings in the area that survived the bombing and forms part of the memories of so many of my respondents and hundreds of other Bormliži.

The former grand cinema in the Three Cities, which still stands today, albeit as an abandoned building. Owned by the Labour Party, which has no plans to do anything with it such a shame.⁶⁰⁵



*Rialto Cinema – exterior and interior views 1950s*⁶⁰⁶

Then there are other, smaller markers of past heritage that the Bormliži themselves take so much for granted that they would not even see them as such. The many niches in the walls with representations of saints – St Roque, for example, Patron Saint of the Plague. Particular people are also remembered with plaques such as that found on the former house of Erin Serracino Inglott, playwright, poet, writer of the *Il-Miklem*⁶⁰⁷ and champion chess player. Several respondents mentioned him.

I had a deviation from this when I met Erin Serracino Inglott and he taught me how to play chess. (...) With Erin I continued my connection with the middle class. (03)

⁶⁰⁵ Post taken from the Historic Malta Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/pg/HistoricMalta/photos/?tab=album&album_id=627402727411003, (accessed: 21 April 2018).

⁶⁰⁶ Photos downloaded from the Historic Malta Facebook page, (accessed 21 April 2018).

⁶⁰⁷ *Il-Miklem* is a dictionary of Maltese in ten volumes compiled by Erin Serracino Inglott.

Many Bormlizi would indicate the statue of Dominic Mintoff in the main square, raised after his death in 2012, as a significant point of reference for them. He is a hero for many in Bormla and most would probably place the Labour Party (PL) in the realm of heritage. This has been amply demonstrated by quotations from the respondents in other chapters of this thesis which led to my positing earlier that 'Politics as Heritage' might be a narrative that would be part of Bormla's many heritage elements.

The intangible is inextricably mixed with the tangible. The personal and collective memories, the sounds, the colours, the passions, the beauty and the darker zones of the place are like intermingling layers. These need to be looked at holistically, as they make up many facets of Bormliż life but they also need to be discussed and negotiated if the city is going to show itself to others.

□ **Authenticity**

In Chapter One of this thesis, the subject of authenticity was discussed in some detail because it is a subject that underpins the philosophy of museum culture in general. From those considerations, evidence emerged that authenticity was definitely not a straightforward noun.

As has been mentioned, there are times when delivering the original is simply no longer possible for a variety of reasons and sites can now benefit from the kind of reproduction that is now technically possible. Visitors might complain but in the final analysis they understand that it has become a necessity.

But there is 're-creation' of another sort. There was criticism in the early days of the ecomuseum when the recreation of social situations, methods of farming, replica houses of an earlier age was deemed 'false' and there were many who said that they should not be resurrected. Baudrillard expresses our desire to give vision to our history.

We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end.⁶⁰⁸

The French philosopher thought that this was a negative trait of our post-modern age. His objection lay in his fear that we would create a past that never really existed simply to justify our present. Baudrillard was convinced that ours is a simulated environment and that our "linear and accumulative culture" requires us "to stockpile the past in plain view".⁶⁰⁹ Baudrillard's ideas are aimed at deconstructing what he feels is cultural materialism as opposed to cultural

⁶⁰⁸ J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. S.F. Glaser, Michigan, 1994, p. 10.

⁶⁰⁹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, p. 10.

production. To give Baudrillard priority in this discussion is to accentuate the fact that things are rarely what they seem and that re-evoking the past has, always, an element of simulation. It is not something that should deny a discourse of heritage, of remembering, or of projecting an identity or sense of place but serves as a reminder that nobody can actually turn the clock back.

As Knudsen and Waade discuss, we have perhaps become tired of the invention of fantasy, the technologically marvellous, all aimed at commercial gain – the cultural materialism that Baudrillard abhorred. There comes a moment, or one seeks some moments, of authenticity and they feel like a breath of fresh air. Knudsen and Waade refer to performative authenticity, which is related to objects and existential authenticity “covering bodily feelings, emotional ties, identity construction and narration related to place.”⁶¹⁰ The collection of essays in their book deals in particular with the ways in which tourists can become emotionally connected to sites, even if they arrive with an historical ‘tabula rasa’. The environment can be a mediated one – perhaps an historical re-enactment – but, as emphasized previously, the importance lies in the genuine and meticulous research that has gone into that re-enactment. It is through the quality of the product that they can feel that connection authentically. That is the level of trust that would be expected of a mainstream museum today and it should hold even for other historical or heritage manifestations.

I would agree with Knudsen and Waade when they say that

The quality of indexical authenticity that permits us to transcend the opposition between the objectivity of the place and the subjectivity of the guest is exactly its relational and phenomenological character.⁶¹¹

This presumes that the ‘indexical authenticity’ is related to common referents and adherence to similar interpretative communities. An example of this was a recent visit that I paid to the fields of Flanders in the company of some young people in their early twenties. It showed me that although those myriad white headstones referred to events of one hundred years ago, these young visitors were deeply moved by them. Some would argue that there is an element of theatre in the cemeteries and it would be difficult to say that the Thiépval monument, designed by Lutyens, is not built to impress. However, it is the historical awareness of the tragic circumstances of that ‘theatre’, the authenticity of the reasons behind these manifestations, which enables the acceptance of them. It is the quality of the interpretative strategies that offer the visitor the opportunity to engage with that authenticity, even when s/he comes to it unaware of the historical background.

⁶¹⁰ Knudsen, T.B. and A.M. Waade, (eds.), *Re-investing authenticity: tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto, 2010, p. 1.

⁶¹¹ Knudsen and Waade, *Re-investing authenticity*, p. 8.

In the case of Bormla the historical buildings together with the present physical reality are part of the narrative of the city. The old has been transformed into the 'new' over and over again. The fishing village turned into a Galley Port, which changed into one dry dock and then two. The dry docks became a Dockyard with high walls that left no access to the sea. Then the WWII bombs changed Bormla and the post-war rebuilding changed it again. And now the Dockyard has gone, the high walls taken down, access to the sea restored, the Maçina⁶¹² turned into a boutique hotel and the workshops into a university campus. There does not seem to be anything that is no longer relevant or, as in the case of the Rialto, potentially relevant to the present day. Certain buildings may be obsolete with regard to their original function but may still have a life to lead in the future. This means that there may be a time-line but that the authenticity of the object will be made up of many lives, some of which may be obscured by time and loss of knowledge.

Here we can return to consider Walter Benjamin's '*aura*' of the original,

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.⁶¹³

The original is seen within its historical narrative and venue and the fact that the philosopher follows this assertion with a recognition of the changeable nature of tradition and how things are remembered. He accepts the idea of the non-linearity of authenticity and how attitudes and environments change over time.

West and Ndlovu describe this issue of the 'authentic' as

The problem set by a western demand for authenticity (which) is based on the assumption of a linear chronology from a first (and by implication 'best') manifestation towards changes in form, practice or adoption by new communities.⁶¹⁴

Bormla's memory and identity markers have morphed over the years, have been hidden and are now rediscovered in a totally new garb. According to West and Ndlovu, this lack of linearity, with regard to Bormla's built environment, would be mitigated through intangible practices.

⁶¹² The Maçina abuts the Sheer Bastion that is part of the fortification that protects L-Isla. On top of this rampart was a device with which to mount masts on galleys. The device was technically improved over the years and used until steam ships made it redundant. Although it lies within the boundary of L-Isla it is very much part of the landscape of Bormla and Galley Creek.

⁶¹³ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 220.

⁶¹⁴ S. West and S. Ndlovu, 'Heritage, landscape and memory', in Tim Benton, (ed.), *Understanding heritage and memory*, MUP, Manchester & NY, 2010, pp. 202-237, p. 213.

(...) the essence of intangible practices is their ability to withstand considerable change, as the owners rearrange their social requirements (...).⁶¹⁵

Harrison and Rose look closely at what intangible practices and heritage can mean and include the things one would expect such as “language, song, dance, cuisine, types of crafts and forms of artistic expression”. Interestingly, they add that

It might also be seen to include people’s sense of ‘attachment’ to a place, building or object. Intangible heritage occupies the fluid, slippery space between people and things.⁶¹⁶

Paul Connerton, mentioned in this context by Harrison and Rose, asks the question “(...) how is the memory of groups conveyed and sustained?”⁶¹⁷ Whilst admitting the importance of ‘inscribed’ memory, such as texts and buildings, in the transmission of memory, Connerton sustains that social memory is more likely to be found

(...) in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms.”⁶¹⁸

Thus Connerton emphasizes the significance of performance which can occupy that “fluid, slippery space between people and things” mentioned by Harrison and Rose. In the context of Bormla’s contemporary heritage, one could cite the Panegyric at the Feast, or the Holy Week activities of the Good Friday procession, the Passion Play, the Apostles’ Table and the race up the streets with the statue of the Risen Christ as memory embodied by repetition, “the performative, bodily, behavioural contexts in which memory is produced and reproduced.”⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁵ West and Ndlovu, p. 213.

⁶¹⁶ Harrison and Rose, *Understanding heritage and memory*, p. 240.

⁶¹⁷ P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, UK, Kindle Edition, 2013, loc. 145.

⁶¹⁸ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, loc. 145.

⁶¹⁹ Harrison and Rose, *Understanding heritage and memory*, p. 240.



On Easter Sunday, the statue of the Risen Christ is taken out of the Parish Church. Carriers then run with it up the narrow streets of Bormla.

The authenticity of this kind of performative repetition lies in the fact that the activities are organized by people from Bormla, the 'audience' at the Church for the panegyric homily is local, the participants in the Good Friday procession might not all be from Bormla, but it is run by Bormliži together with former Bormliži that have now left the city. The 'indexical authenticity' is strong. However, the respondents were aware that there were no guarantees that the processions and other similar activities would persist forever. In fact, the authorities are in the process of requesting UNESCO to give Cultural Heritage status to Maltese feasts.⁶²⁰

People are 'in-the-world' that is Bormla with its past, and its vibrant present. It is, like most towns and cities, undergoing change. The question now is what shape its future will take. The Bormliži have sometimes had their future thrust upon them. One can cite the example of the British Admiralty's unilateral decision to build the two dry docks in Galley Creek in the mid-1800s, which radically changed the look and feel of the city. Now it needs to be anticipated and thought through using appropriate philosophical leads such as that suggested by Knudsen and Waade.

The phenomenological approaches all explore the 'being-in-the-world' perspective as a relational, dynamic and spatial experience of the world.⁶²¹

⁶²⁰ A. Muscat, 'It's festa time', *The Malta Independent*, 18 August 2017. Available from: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2017-08-18/blogs-opinions/It-s-festa-time-6736177949>, (accessed 24 March 2018).

⁶²¹ Knudsen and Waade, *Re-Investing Authenticity*, p. 6.

The “relational, dynamic and spatial experience” of Bormla is reflected and highlighted and can also be better understood through its ‘remembering’. Reaching back to retrieve certain aspects of its past can give the Bormliži the confidence in their contemporary heritage and the creativity to move forward without being overtaken by events.

To these arguments, I would again add the necessity for historical research about Bormla so as to be able to create ‘indexical authenticity’ that is intellectually authoritative and at the same time accepting of further knowledge created by good research.

□ *Projecting Bormla’s historical narratives and heritage*

In discussions with individuals and with focus groups, an effort was made not to influence their own image of a museum. The suggestion was always that it could be a ‘museum with or without walls’ or something radically different to the ‘idea’ of a traditional museum. This was done knowing that there was a good chance that amongst many of the respondents, the expression ‘museum’ would conjure up an image akin to the traditional mainstream museum and that they would dismiss it as something that was not ‘for them’. In nearby Birgu there is the Malta Maritime Museum which is housed in what was previously the British period Naval Bakery, built in 1845. It is a ‘must visit’ stop for tourists visiting Cottonera not only as a museum but also as a beautifully restored period building. Although it does clearly have a deep connection with the Harbour and the Cottonera area as a whole it is billed as a ‘Malta’ Maritime Museum, run by Heritage Malta, the government cultural agency. It is, no doubt, appreciated by the local Girbin (people of Birgu) but is not really ‘owned’ by them in any way. One might imagine that, for the Bormliži, a museum with walls would conjure up the image of the ‘Malta Maritime Museum’ which would not be frequented by any but the most enthusiastic and culturally oriented Bormliži. The reasons for this negative approach is explained thus by Borg, Cauchi and Mayo.

Finally ‘internalised oppression’ constitutes another possible hurdle for such a community project. The process of schooling tends to devalue the knowledge and cultural practices of the residents. Our cultural institutions tend to further accentuate the cultural contradictions obtaining between official knowledge and different types of knowledge generated by subaltern groups. As a result, activities generated by museums are generally perceived as elitist by non-dominant groups and resistance is frequently manifested through lack of participation and withdrawal.⁶²²

⁶²² Borg, Cauchi and Mayo, ‘Museums’ Education and Cultural Contestation’, p. 14.

The idea, in my discussions, was to see what images the respondents might come up with and also to recognize what they really would not have liked.

There was no immediate evidence from the respondents in Bormla of a desire for a museum with walls until I suggested that this could be a museum for Bormla and that it would not necessarily look like a mainstream museum. There were some respondents who warmed to the idea of such a museum and several suggested that it might be placed in an iconic local building such as the now virtually unused Rialto Cinema, mentioned above. But it was clear that if indeed there were to be a museum with walls it should be oriented towards Bormla rather than contain objects or exhibitions that were not directly connected with the city.

This research corroborates that published in 2014 by Cutajar in which it was clear that her respondents were interested in seeing the re-utilisation of the Rialto Cinema and several other buildings. The rehabilitation that was discussed was not in the form of a museum but more as tourist attractions. There were plenty of ideas, from creating a fun park in the ditches to creating a centre for the film industry or simply opening up renovated chapels such as San Ġwann t'Ghuxa.⁶²³

As discussed in the previous chapter, research tells us that working class groups do tend to relate to buildings and tangible objects rather than to history that has taken the form of written narrative. The buildings themselves are then often woven into their own family narratives. This is not necessarily a nostalgic recall but rather a way of using place to anchor their past.

Apart from the sites mentioned earlier, there are several other buildings in Bormla that serve as cultural mnemonics such as the Maċina, the Taraġ it-Tarznari l-Antiki, or Żigużajg, steps, of which there are two sets in the 'Fuq San Pawl' area of Bormla and the tree covered recreational area known to the Bormliżi as Il-Mixtla but renamed by the authorities as Ġnien Kottoner.⁶²⁴ These are all buildings, open areas and monuments that were mentioned by the respondents and that could play a part in communicating Bormla to the Bormliżi and to a wider audience. And, as with other historic 'objects' these too cross over the line between history and heritage.

⁶²³ Cutajar, *Bormla A Struggling Community*, p. 174.

⁶²⁴ This created much discussion amongst the Bormliżi and the Local Council of Bormla actually boycotted the opening of the newly rehabilitated garden. The name was an attempt by the Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee to create something for all the people of Cottonera but the attempt was not appreciated by the local Bormliż population.



*It-Taraġ it-Tarznari l-Antiki. Bormla
transformed into theatrical space for the
Cospicua Short Play Festival 31.08 & 01.09.18*

One respondent talked about the importance of a Master Plan for Bormla. His premise was that unless one looked at the whole picture and integrated the heritage strategy within that Plan, it would never get off the ground. What I think he wanted to say was that there has to be a strategy that values the whole of Bormla, and possibly Cottonera, and attends to the needs of the various areas bearing in mind that 'Ix-Xatt' - the waterfront promenade - is not the whole of Bormla. This same respondent insisted that the aesthetic of Bormla has to be conserved through scheduling as whole roads are being earmarked for demolition. He asked the question: if it is seen that the authorities do not really care about Bormla how are we going to create an awareness of the importance of the city and its mores – both past and present? In his opinion, there has to be a structural vision that gives value to Bormla as a whole.

Let me explain. Bormla and Cottonera in the structure of things are being valorized aesthetically. The value of them is aesthetic. In the economy they don't feature, in politics they don't feature, in culture they don't feature, as Malta Brand they do not feature. The importance and relevance of the area do not feature. So when there is a possibility of a plan like this these have to be taken into consideration. I always insisted with the Local Council, and I don't think it has grasped the concept yet, that a selling of the product has to be seen in terms of the greater context. So, if there is artisanship here and there it needs to be in this context. Otherwise they are individual bubbles and that is how they are now that are not supported officially as there is no structure plan. (11)

This is an important point because Bormla has probably been seen until recently at least as a city with two main features: the Dockyard and the Church events, with the Regatta and St George's Football club as additional sporting celebrations. The rhythm of life was inextricably linked to those features to the

general satisfaction of Bormla. Their entertainment was also covered by the St George's Club and the political clubs. But what Hooper Greenhill said about the traditional museum is also true of this city. It is changing and adding new dimensions to the overall picture.

Returning to the discussion about history and heritage, we can say that the Bormlizi look at certain 'objects' as points of reference, things that signpost their identity and remind them of their recent and their not so recent past.

At present, they appreciate them from within the confines of Bormla without, one suspects, analyzing or pondering too much about why they are important to them. At this juncture it is probable that change is not simply 'around the corner' but is happening as I write. In which case, the local population does need to examine those things that are precious to them and ask themselves why this is so. If there is awareness of what Bormla holds within its historical narrative and its cultural heritage possessions then the community will be in a stronger position to have a say in its the development.

In their analysis of the representation and construction of heritage, Watson and Waterton state

The truth is revealed by experts, aesthetes and professionals to produce an authenticated past; and when further selected and assembled in the social and cultural world view of a particular society, an *authorized* discourse which reproduces its concerns, priorities and content also emerge.⁶²⁵

This analysis may sound dire and I am not suggesting that this would necessarily happen in the case of Bormla or anywhere else in Malta. It is also clear that there is a need to have experts on board and part of the discussion. However, there is a difference between others creating an 'authenticated past' and one that has been discussed with local people within a framework of cognitive democracy. Attitudes have definitely changed in recent years, as Fairclough says,

The acceptance given to the external perspective of academic, national or elite codification and definitions has weakened, and a broad (...) relativism has arisen, drawing on internal perspectives. It is accompanied by a pride, sometimes perverse, sometimes sentimental, sometimes deeply felt, in the local as defined and appreciated locally, and in the personal (...).⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ S. Watson and E. Waterton, 'Reading the Visual: Representation and Narrative', *The Construction of Heritage, Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle*, vol. 71, 2010, p. 2.

⁶²⁶ G. Fairclough, 'What Was Wrong With Dufton? Reflections on Counter-Mapping: Self, Alterity and Community', in J. Schofield (ed.), *Who Needs Experts?*, Routledge, 2014, p. 240.

However, the local people who are interested in participating in this cultural development will have to ask themselves key questions. For example, what are the goals behind the promotion of what the Bormlizi love and appreciate? Why is it important to create awareness of those buildings and sites and also of people, sons and daughters of Bormla, who are perhaps not so well known? Is this awareness creation aimed at the local population so that they can better enjoy the narrative of Bormla's past? Does it wish to promote Bormla and show those outside the city what value it has had, its contribution to Malta's economy and its present enterprises and heritage? Does Bormla wish to attract tourists?

I think certain decisions in answer to some of these questions have already been made. Bormla is going to have to start to display itself differently now. This was how one respondent expressed the need for an expansion of ideas even amongst the more traditional cultural and heritage expressions.

I believe that people need to look around them and not to remain stuck inside their shells, closed. In the Commission (Kummissjoni) we look at what others are doing. You cannot imagine that you are living between four walls and that you are alone! You have to look around you. There is competition and people are doing things. I think that both the Każin tal-Banda and the Domus (Piju IX) have remained a bit stuck in their ways. The Domus have people with great talent. They need to change something. There are many other kinds of pictures they could create. It's a pity that it happens only in Holy Week. They could also do a Marian Table during the Feast. It's a pity as they have the talent. (15)

The Dockyard has gone, replaced by a Rehabilitation Project, the American University of Malta (AUM)⁶²⁷ has brought in a few foreign students, the gentrification has begun and the restaurants and cafés have proliferated. Bormla is moving into a new phase of its existence. This is a fact that has to be taken very seriously. One could go as far as to say that the change that is happening to Bormla today is as great as that of the 1840s.

It is true that Bormla is becoming a city with an aging population with its youth leaving because property value and rents have soared. New people are investing in Bormla's old buildings and creating restored houses and boutique hotels. At the same time, we have seen that the fact that young couples are moving out does not necessarily mean that their interest in Bormla will diminish. The community – always a complex concept – is just becoming more intricate. The physical situation around the Bormlizi is changing as is the population. Inevitably, the new arrivals, whilst they may appreciate the present day Bormla heritage practices, will want to shape Bormla to their tastes. I would argue that Bormla

⁶²⁷ It is interesting to note the the AUM is using an image of the Vedette at Senglea Point as the logo for the AUM building which is in Bormla.

today should use its history and its heritage to retain the features that make it so remarkable and develop internal structures to enable new features to flourish, features that will focus on and spark the interest of Bormla's Millennials and younger people. First and foremost amongst those internal structures should be ways in which to develop the leadership skills needed to devise and accomplish innovative actions in Bormla. The two projects that I have discussed: *Din Mhix Tazza* and *Minn Fomm il-Bormlizi* show that there are people ready to run with new ideas but there needs to be a plan and encouragement from the voluntary sector within Bormla. The stigma can be challenged but there has to be a dovetailing of efforts and not just one-off projects.

Certain social issues remain and the group divisions are there below the surface. However, the great consensus amongst every participant in my fieldwork was the desire to be rid of the stigma that has blighted Bormla for so long. And one can understand how a better-looking Bormla might seem to be the panacea for the pain of stigma, but there may be a price to pay.

Preservation organisations celebrate the restoration of old homes, even when the entire community that once lived in the neighbourhood has had to leave it to seek lower rents. The façades look spectacular, but the community missing.⁶²⁸

So writes Max Page in a book that challenges the meaning of preservation of buildings and gives as much importance to the lowly industrial building as to the great piece of architecture. If this is even half a possibility, then the preservation of Bormla's past becomes all the more important. He is particularly sensitive to the dark side of preservation. However, he does give practical examples of positive action.

In Boston, a community land trust created by Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative anchors affordable housing in the neighbourhood. New transportation is bringing increased investment opportunities and easier access to downtown, but without the social upheaval cursed by displacement and gentrification. Because the land trust holds the rights to the 225 homes it administers in perpetuity, it can keep them affordable and blunt the impact of gentrification. Few of these homes are architecturally distinguished, but as symbols of a different kind of preservation effort, they are extraordinary.⁶²⁹

Page continues

⁶²⁸ M. Page, *Why Preservation Matters*, Yale University Press, 2016, p. 12.

⁶²⁹ Page, *Why Preservation Matters*, p. 7.

We preserve for personal and collective memory, to anchor individual identity and national truths and myths, to secure a place in the river of time, to spur our imaginations.⁶³⁰

Bormla needs to think upon, contemplate, recall and record its heritage or it will lose an opportunity to 'secure a place in the river of time'. Bormla deserves a chance to tell its story and Malta deserves the chance to hear it from them – the Bormlizi.

Of course, no one is so naïve as to suggest that, by creating a novel way of communicating Bormla, it is going to solve all its problems. This would be just a 'tile' in the mosaic that is Bormla – with all its issues.

Here is Hooper-Greenhill again

In the post-museum, the exhibition will become one among many other forms of communication. The exhibition will form part of a nucleus of events which will take place both before and after the display is mounted. These events might involve the establishments of community and organizational partnerships; the production of objects during educational programmes which then enter the collections; periods of time when specific community groups use the museum spaces in their own way; writers, scientists and artists in residence; or satellite displays set up in pubs and shops. During these events, discussions, workshops, performances, dances, songs, and meals will be produced or enacted.⁶³¹

This is very much the democratic community use of museum space that I can envisage for Bormla. However, just reading that list of diverse activities one can get an idea of the kind of group cooperation, collaboration and sheer hard work – not to mention funding – which will have to go into it. It will need leaders and dialogue. However, if the local population decide that it is worth doing it, I am convinced it can be done because it has shown itself to be a resilient community, with a deep appreciation of the significance of its city.

Much of the literature about community discusses the disintegration of community. It is suggested that this has come about because higher income families have left the area leading to a disruption of a previous symbiotic rapport between social classes or because seemingly well-oiled working class communities are no longer sustainable for reasons of low employment or gentrification. Bormla shows aspects of these types of narratives but has a history that appears to have made the people very good at finding their feet, despite the darker side of the social milieu. The statistics cannot be denied. These include a proportionately higher than average crime rate, higher unemployment than in other areas as well as a number of families living in measurably real poverty. However, as we have seen, the

⁶³⁰ Page, p. 22.

⁶³¹ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and their Communities*, p. 81.

professional classes left Bormla long ago leaving a working class that survived largely because of the post-war job opportunities provided by the Dockyard, now all but disappeared. Post-war Bormla is, as we have seen, practically homogenous when it comes to political leaning. The Church has, sometimes despite itself, managed to do much to hold the Bormliži together through, as we have discussed, repetitive performance and particularly through the veneration of the Immaculate Conception. Despite its disadvantages, the message from the respondents was that Bormla is not a community in disintegration. It is not without its contradictions and its idiosyncrasies. Nor is it without its weaknesses and its threats. However, it has obvious strengths and myriad opportunities to gather internal esteem and to promote that to the extramural world.

To make sure that the valued buildings and other heritage objects within the community are retained, restored and remain within the community ambit, it is important to look closely at the conservation of the urban landscape. The European Landscape Convention, 20.X.2000⁶³² ⁶³³ provides a valuable framework within which local groups and practioners in the field can work. The Convention text begins with the usual Preamble, one clause of which reads thus,

Acknowledging that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas;

which I feel is particularly relevant to Bormla. The Convention recognises that urban areas form part of that expression 'landscape' that it interprets in a very lateral manner. The Treaty has six strong definitions of 'landscape', one of which refers to 'Landscape management' by which it

means action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes;⁶³⁴

And amongst its general measures it proposes:

to integrate landscape into its regional and town planning policies and in its cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape.⁶³⁵

⁶³² European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20.X.2000. Available at:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/176>

⁶³³ It should be noted that only Iceland and Malta out of all the members of the Council of Europe have not ratified the European Landscape Convention, 2000.

⁶³⁴ European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20.X.2000, p. 2. Available at:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/176>

⁶³⁵ European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20.X.2000, p. 3. Available at:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/176>

Bormla has to be seen within a master plan as my respondent suggested and not as a footnote or an addendum but taking its place in the big picture promoting its indubitable strengths and resources both historical and social.

□ *Promoting Bormla*

Something that came across strongly through all the contacts I had in Bormla is that Bormla was really *Omm, Habiba, Maħbuba* (Mother, Friend, Beloved). For those who live outside Bormla, returning, for whatever reason, was like returning to the womb. There are many people outside Bormla working in the civil service, at the University of Malta, in accountancy firms and other fields for whom Bormla is no longer their residence and yet returning to Bormla is like going home. Many Bormlizi might ask themselves the question: what does one need more than to have a mother to protect you, a friend whose company one enjoys and someone to love? In the words of this young artisan gilder

Bormla biss. Minn barra Bormla ma niċċaqlax ⁶³⁶
Only Bormla, I'll never move out of Bormla. (*my trans.*)

However, that 'home' is no longer dominated by a smokey, noisy Dockyard but by a harbour promenade and a marina filled with smart yachts. The residents know that things are changing and they are ready to embrace that change that, on the whole, is seen as positive. The question they have to ask themselves is what are the heritage markers that they wish to carry on into a future Bormla and are there other markers that can be highlighted and developed so as to promote Bormla? And, in the final analysis, how to make sure that, while these changes occur, Bormla retains its role as Mother, Friend and Beloved.

Cutajar's research indicates that

Almost one third of respondents (30.8%) were in favour of promoting tourism in the area. The promotion of trades/skills and crafts was suggested by 14.4% and 9.3% respectively. The idea of an art and crafts centre, an issue very much related to these two proposals, was favoured by 7.8% of respondents. Around 11.1% of the respondents were also in favour of promoting small businesses in the area. Altogether, the respondents were positively oriented towards the promotion of trades, skills and crafts prevalent in the area.⁶³⁷ (Total respondents: 317)

⁶³⁶ A. Marshall, interview with Silvio Caruana, *TVM Lenti*, 16 February 2017. Available from: https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=277461892687795&id=164764743957511&_rdr (accessed 19 July 2018).

⁶³⁷ Cutajar, *Bormla A Struggling Community*, p. 169.

Further suggestions in Cutajar's survey made it clear that there was a large percentage of her respondents, "almost two-thirds (182)" who wanted to see Dock 1 used for "tourism or industrial purposes". Another large proportion thought that the fortifications could be refurbished and "used to attract more tourists to the area."⁶³⁸ The same survey results show that the respondents were fully aware of the potential of the physical, historical sites and also of the importance of keeping the city clean and smart. However, there was reluctance on the part of people who rent their homes to improve them because they feared a rise in rents, whilst there was reticence on the part of owners because they felt that their sitting tenants were not paying enough rent to make the investment worthwhile.

One of my own respondents had this to say about the attractiveness of Bormla as a tourist destination.

But the future of the saleability of Bormla, (and Birgu has, to a certain extent, understood this), it has to be in the aesthetic line. It is aesthetic. It is not relevant substantially but aesthetically and needs to include the whole of Bormla. I see that they are still insisting on the 'Xatt' (the Strand) as if it were 'Bormla'. Whereas Verdala which has a long history WWI prisoners, involved in the changes in the Middle East, then WWII – it is ignored. (11)

(...)

There has to be fantasy and support. The Feast of chocolate in Hamrun, for example – I don't know what chocolate has to do with Hamrun; strawberries in Mġarr. You need imagination to change liabilities into assets. The bigger the problem the greater the asset can be. (11)

Other aspects of Bormla were mentioned as being areas that could be used to promote Bormla but were being under-utilised.

The yacht marina did give a big boost to Birgu. I would be interested definitely because what I do I do to raise the name of Bormla. That is what we say when I and my friends talk together. We hate it when something happens that puts Bormla in a bad light. We work hard for the Good Friday activities to improve the name of Bormla and to show people that we can do something of quality, something serious. (16)

(...)

I believe that there needs to be an upgrade. I envy Birgu as the people have a great sense of civic pride. Plants in the streets etc. Bormla needs to do the same. (16)

There is a theme expressed by one or two of the respondents of ad hoc planning that appears to be aimed mainly at developing commercial assets.

⁶³⁸ Cutajar, p. 171.

You can see the original plan of its development, which did include exhibition areas, but commercial priorities got in the way and this is the same thing we keep on seeing. The Forum actually got together and prepared a dossier that it gave to all the relevant ministers about the Dock 1 warehouses. (...) here was a chance to at least dedicate part of it to a museum, something to do with boatbuilding, maritime affairs, rotating exhibitions, photos or crafts form: No, no money in it. (19)

(...)

Falling back on the tried and tested pizza festival and stuff like that – please! Let’s have some more imagination than that. My partner actually picked up on one of Bormla’s strongest assets which is the maritime connection, and got the French involved, the history of Napoleon’s presence here. They actually got copies of Napoleon’s letters – so people felt it was relevant. At the Maçina especially, it’s an amazing place. (19)

With regard to the promotion of Bormla, one respondent took up the argument that it was the people who were important. Without the drivers, he intimated, Bormla cannot push itself. This particular respondent wanted to make the point that placing the American University of Malta in Bormla might look like a good idea but he questioned whether it would actually do Bormla any long time good. He thought that it would push up prices and therefore push the local, possible drivers of promotion and development out of town.

The AUM is not what Bormla needs. It’s no use just changing the structure – you have to develop the mind-set. It’s like a hospital – the structure can be wonderful but the internal problems are going to make or break the place. People are important. This is the only medicine that I see possible for Bormla. I gave you the number of Silvio – he is artisan. If he wants to marry he will look (to live) in Bormla but he won’t be able to find anywhere. The market – I can’t imagine why they never tried to get it going again. Il-Monti (the market up at Sta Margarita) is really full every Tuesday. Housing is everything. The Day Centre is full of old people. This shows that there are not a lot of young people any more. If you don’t have people indigenous to Bormla, the museum will never happen. (18)

Many towns and villages in Malta and Gozo are now promoting themselves through a particular annual occasion. This serves to draw people to the place, introduce them to the local attractions, shops and restaurants and thus encourage the public to return on other occasions during the year. Bormla held a ‘Jum Bormla 2017’ (Bormla Day) on 19 November. However, I do not think that it was particularly successful with regard to attracting an audience from outside the city. Picking up on what one of the respondents said, “Falling back on the tried and tested pizza festival and stuff like that – please!”, I would agree that Bormla can do better than that. Mgarr is famous for its strawberry growing so, quite rightly, promotes itself with ‘Il-Festa tal-Frawli’ (the Strawberry Feast); that the area of the Three Villages: Lija, Attard, Balzan, should have a citrus festival would be

appropriate,⁶³⁹ as would a Bread Festival at Hal-Qormi.⁶⁴⁰ If there were to be a Bormla 'Festa' that would appeal to a large number of people, it should reflect something typical and virtually unique such as 'Il-Festa tal-Elf Targa' (the Feast of a Thousand Steps) in which the steps of Bormla would lead people to different kinds of entertainment: plays, art exhibitions; culinary delicacies; artisans' workshops – the choices are endless. A new branding of Bormla would, of course, be quite possible as long as it were not promoted as an 'old tradition' but as a new venture.

However, promoting Bormla should not just be about creating an annual occasion of one-off projects. There are many cultural ventures that could be built up in such a way as to attract different kinds of audience throughout the year. There are the tried and tested projects which could and should have a place in the cultural plan. In fact, Bormla Local Council has just recently installed and inaugurated a system of information boards which have been placed outside all the major churches and chapels in the city. This is similar to the Three Villages initiative which includes some forty information boards with a map that can be picked up from the Local Council Office. QR technology can now expand the knowledge available on such information boards and it is certainly an effective and enjoyable way of getting to know the locality.

Finances, or the lack of them, can scupper even the most enthusiastic project promoters. The Cospicua Heritage Society, an NGO whose President is a Bormliż living outside Bormla, has worked on projects to promote a better knowledge of Bormla and its surroundings. One project that aimed at attracting a younger demographic was the 'Rolling Geeks'⁶⁴¹ electric vehicles which were developed to facilitate environmentally-friendly tours but which are now run by a private company. It also organized events such as guided weekend walkabouts in the Bormla area. However, the 'Rolling Geeks' vehicles are priced for tourists and the guided walks required commitment, time and financing that was beyond the capacity of one person. Finding funding for a single project is sometimes not the most difficult part. It is sustaining the momentum that requires continued commitment and reasonable financing.

Whilst there are many activities, events and permanent projects that can be done in the open it would be extremely valuable to have a multi-purpose building that could be a focal point where some of the ideas mentioned can mature and develop. As the Chair of the *Forum Komunità Bormliżi*, Dr Bland Mintoff, said during a conversation together,

⁶³⁹ The area of the three villages (Lija, Attard, Balzan) is low-lying and famous for its orange and lemon trees.

⁶⁴⁰ Qormi is said to be the town in Malta with the highest number of bakeries.

⁶⁴¹ The Rolling Geeks Tour, (website), <http://www.rolling-geeks.com/>, (accessed 01 May 2017).

We (*FKB*) have often spoken about a museum. The Mayor would like Bormla to have a museum. They did a survey and about 80% of the people responded that they would like a museum. It could be either a folklore museum or something interactive or even a community workshop museum where the skills that of the Dockyard workers, now unemployed, would be used.

If there were an appreciation of the precious social capital available in Bormla, if there were cooperation and collaboration, good leadership and some basic funding, there are many other projects that could attract a local and an outside audience as well as tourists.

□ **Social Capital**

At present, at a macro, governmental, planning level there stands the Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee,⁶⁴² which falls under the Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure. It is chaired at present by Mr Charles Flores, and includes amongst its Committee Members the Mayors of the Three Cities and three architects, including one specializing in restoration. This Committee looks at the whole of the Cottonera environment including Kalkara. In March 2018, the Local Governance Ministry announced a new strategy for the Cottonera area. A statement issued by the Ministry was quoted in the media as saying:

Conscious of the challenges people in and around the Three Cities are facing, the Government intends to launch a strategy for Cottonera aimed at the improvement of the social and environmental standards of the area.

New recent developments and investments in and around the Cottonera area brought new challenges, and the Government deems it fit that a strategy for this area is needed now more than ever.⁶⁴³

The same article reported that

Mr Bedingfield will also be tasked with coordinating meetings of the Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee and to liaise and consult with stakeholders involved with regard to the restoration projects carried out by the same committee.

Not having had access to this strategy document I do not know whether it will have an element of 'cultural planning'. Such a plan would be looking at the 'cultural' resources of Cottonera within its urban development strategy. In Chapter One I

⁶⁴² For full list of CRC members vide:

<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Ministries%20and%20Entities/Officially%20Appointed%20Bodies/Pages/Committees/Cottonera-Rehabilitation-Committee.aspx>, (accessed 05 September 2018)

⁶⁴³ 'Glenn Bedingfield tasked with 'a strategy for Cottonera', *The Malta Independent*, Friday, 9 March 2018. Available from: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2018-03-09/local-news/Glenn-Bedingfield-tasked-with-a-strategy-for-Cottonera-6736185982>, (accessed 25 April 2018.)

gave an example of the regeneration of a harbour area at Hartlepool, UK and noted the change between the original idea and its remodelling over the years as the need for self-financing increased. That example and others mentioned in research into similar situations leads one to understand the need “for a deeper understanding of the significance of the relationship between community and heritage.”⁶⁴⁴ Gibson and Stevenson, in their introduction to an issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, dealing specifically with this topic, state

It is only through the close and rigorous interrogation of the assumptions underpinning this nexus (between policy rhetoric and actual outcome), however it is articulated, that we will be able to develop achievable cultural policy recommendations that are able to deal with the complex cultural, economic, social and political factors involved in urban planning and development.⁶⁴⁵

If this strategy for Cottonera does include cultural planning then it is very important that the grassroots communities of Bormla not only get to have their say but that they should be partners in the plans. Crooke refers to the different interests that come into play with cultural planning. The author is particularly referring to the ‘community/museum’ relationship but the arguments remain valid.

It follows then that the community and museum relationship can be interrogated from multiple perspectives: that of government, the interests of the museum sector and the desires of grassroots initiatives.⁶⁴⁶

As Cornwall points out in her discussion on extending democracy

Franchise has expanded as more and more opportunities are created for citizen engagement. But translating *formal* participation into *substantive* democratic engagement is another matter entirely; having a seat at the table is a necessary but not sufficient condition for exercising voice. Nor is presence at the table on the part of public officials the same as a willingness to listen and respond.⁶⁴⁷

We have seen that the rehabilitation of Galley Creek over the last years has not been without its local critics. Some of my respondents and focus group participants did tell me that, whilst appreciating the renewed access to the sea and the sleek contemporary style promenade, they would have liked the British building, or at least the ground floor, to be given over to the Bormla community to use as artisan workshops to promote Bormla’s contemporary heritage. There was some public consultation but ultimately the decision was made to give out the

⁶⁴⁴ Crooke, ‘The politics of community heritage: motivations, authority and control’, p. 16.

⁶⁴⁵ L. Gibson and D. Stevenson, ‘Urban Space and the Uses of Culture’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 1-4, 2004, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁶ Crooke, ‘The politics of community heritage: motivations, authority and control’, p. 16.

⁶⁴⁷ A. Cornwall, *Democratizing Engagement: what the UK can learn from international experience*, Demos, London, 2008, p. 13.

building on long lease to a foreign entrepreneur to create the American University of Malta.

This statement from Crooke refers to the crucial balance between planning, guidance and control.

At each point, however, it is important to ask about the nature of the power relations and authority, and whether those are explored with equal vigour. (...) This is when community becomes an issue of exploring democracy, accountability and relations of power.⁶⁴⁸

There are groups working in Bormla, on a more micro local level, with various goals. There are the national agencies such as *Agenzija Appoġġ* and *Ċentru LEAP*,⁶⁴⁹ as well as the University of Malta's Cottonera Resource Centre. The organisation mentioned most by the respondents was the humanist group *Ċentru Tbexbix*, another is the *Forum Komunità Bormliża* (Cospicua Community Forum).⁶⁵⁰ All of these groups have a very wide remit and more or less the same goals. They just come at the issues from different angles. In synthesis, they aim to improve the life of those living in the Cottonera or, in some cases, specifically the Bormla area through social action, through giving advice, organizing activities and increasing awareness of opportunities.

Ċentru Tbexbix first started working with children who needed extra help with their school work and then found that older people were in need of socializing activities. It now organizes activities from yoga to English language classes at its premises in Bormla, as well as outings for senior citizens. The *Forum Komunità Bormliża* is a very organized group with several different aims. Its mission statement affirms that

“The mission of the Bormla Community Forum is that every resident is empowered through education, employment and a better quality of life leading to Bormla's regeneration and the attainment of respect for all residents.

This forum will give rise to a local action plan to enhance solidarity, learning, and opportunities of adequate employment, recreational spaces for youths, environmental improvements and *greater awareness of Bormla's historical heritage*.”⁶⁵¹ (*my italics*)

⁶⁴⁸ Crooke, 'The politics of community heritage: motivations, authority and control', p. 18.

⁶⁴⁹ Valletta LEAP Centre Information webpage, <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/leap/Pages/Valletta-LEAP-Centre.aspx>, (accessed 24 July 2018).

⁶⁵⁰ Cospicua Community Forum (*Forum Kommunità Bormliża*)

⁶⁵¹ Cospicua Community Forum Mission Statement taken from: K. Spiteri, R. Mamo and Y. Bland Mintoff, 'Empowering Community Participation', powerpoint presentation prepared and presented to members of the President of Malta's Institute for the Well-Being of Society, in 2015. This document was passed on to me by Dr Bland Mintoff through Mr Mamo, Secretary of the *Forum Komunità Bormliża*.

The *Forum Komunità Bormliza* has already started to act on plans such as holding a Survey of the Elderly in Bormla, Birgu, L-Isla and Kalkara in the spring of 2017 and has published its results. The Forum is dedicated to ‘Empowering Community Participation’.⁶⁵² Before formalizing the Forum it was engaged in preliminary methodologies including one-to-one meetings and engagement with ‘local and regional stakeholders in discussions and joint actions’. It also made a Mapping and Needs Assessment. Other projects included a ‘Parental Empowerment Project’ and a ‘Housing and Employment Project’. After this work the Forum was set up and continued with an ambitious local action plan covering many different aspects of Bormla life. The document recognizes ‘(...) that community participation is a central pillar of the anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy’ but also admits that locally there is a ‘Territorial attitude and implicit animosity between certain entities.’ Amongst several positive opportunities it lists the possibility of going ‘Beyond fire fighting to creative joint ventures. As one of the threats to the actions of the Forum it mentions the ‘Macro view of central government that overlooks microcosms and ignores local perceptions.’ This comment is something that was not expressed so clearly by my respondents but was something that could be read between the lines.

Although this Forum, and also *Ċentru Tbexbix*, have an agenda that goes beyond the setting up of cultural heritage projects or creating a venue where the community can ‘exhibit’ Bormla in different ways, such a project could be partner in a venture that pooled resources with others, even interested individuals, who could then join forces within a heritage plan from Bormla. The will is there and the social capital is potentially there but the key will be encouraging leadership, creating an awareness that Bormla deserves to be on the heritage map and that it will benefit in many different ways by being there and by having a stake in the plotting of the plan.

As I left the *Ċentru Tbexbix* after my interview with the Director and after my impromptu conversation with some of that day’s participants, the Director told me: “Look around you. As soon as we started to do up our place, other people living in the street started doing up their façades as well.”

Social capital is an expression that has been used and interpreted in different ways over a long period of time. Ferragina, with reference to Putnam, explains that

⁶⁵² K. Spiteri, R. Mamo and Y. Bland Mintoff, ‘Empowering Community Participation’, powerpoint presentation, 2015.

The opportunity to adapt the concept to many phenomena relies on the intrinsic multidimensional nature of this form of capital (Putnam; 1993).^{653 654}

And goes on to list about eight or nine diverse fields of research in which social capital has been utilized to explain certain phenomena: integration of social networks, giving importance to traditional community values, the decline of 'civiness', trust in society and the development of efficient institutions.⁶⁵⁵

Germane to our particular discussion about Bormla and its groups is the mention Ferragina makes of Bourdieu (1980)⁶⁵⁶ who, says the author, emphasizes "how 'closeness' and 'exclusivity' are the most important characteristics that allow groups to create club goods like social capital."⁶⁵⁷ Also appropriate is Putnam's similar definition.

By "social capital," I mean features of social life-networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.⁶⁵⁸

It can be said that groups are central to the structure of Bormla, whether they are sporting, secular, social or religious.

That there is a large amount of social capital, defined in the Bourdieusian sense, in Bormla is quite clear from the spectacular events that have become traditional in the city. The Feast is a good example of an activity that entails a pooling of resources as well as access to expertise – from lighting to acting and from carpentry to dress making. Of course, some of these services need to be paid for as Cutajar recounts.

To prepare for these events, the committees had to enlist the help of musicians, choirs, as well preachers: the latter had to deliver an oration on the saint's life. People, services and material which were not delivered by volunteers, had to be paid for, so the committee involved in the organisation of internal events tended to have sub-committees entrusted with the generation of funds.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵³ E. Ferragina, 'Social Capital and Equality: Tocqueville's Legacy: Rethinking social capital in relation with income inequalities', *The Tocqueville Review/La Revue Tocqueville*, vol. XXXI, no. 1 – 2010, p. 74. Available from: HAL Open Archive, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01314708/document>, (accessed 12 May 2017).

⁶⁵⁴ R.D. Putnam, R. Leonardi and R. Nanetti, *Making democracy work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, N.J., Chichester, Princeton University Press, 1993.

⁶⁵⁵ Ferragina, 'Social Capital and Equality: Tocqueville's Legacy', p. 74.

⁶⁵⁶ P. Bourdieu, 'Le Capital Social', *Actes De La Recherche En Science Sociale*, vol. 31, 1980, pp. 2-3.

⁶⁵⁷ Ferragina, 'Social Capital and Equality: Tocqueville's Legacy', p. 79.

⁶⁵⁸ R.D. Putnam, 'Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America', *Political Science and Politics*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1995, pp. 664-683, pp. 664-665. Available from: JSTOR.

⁶⁵⁹ Cutajar and Vella, 'The Role of Cultural Events in Promoting Community Cohesion', p. 5.

The complexity and organizational skills needed for the processions during the Feast and the complex procession held on Good Friday involving the participation of some five hundred people should not be underestimated. It is really no mean feat when the total population of Bormla is only c. 5,000. The Holy Week pageant is another event that requires months of preparation and the deep commitment of members of the community. Despite some anxiety about the lack of leadership legacy, none of these events seems to be in danger of dying out.

However, these are definitely events which are closely connected to the Church. As we have seen, the participants themselves may not all be fervent or even regular followers of the Catholic faith. Many of the respondents actually admitted that they attended the Feast and Holy Week activities for reasons that went beyond any religious fervour and were more connected with feeling comfortable in their memories of home.

The idea that there could be a museum connected to the Parish Church, in which objects of value, in the widest sense of the word, might be displayed, was mentioned by more than one respondent. Several also lamented the fact that the Parish Church was not open to visitors. Many churches in Malta and Gozo are open to the public on a daily basis and display their collections either in situ, in sacristies or nearby buildings. The church of St Paul's Shipwreck⁶⁶⁰ in Valletta is a good example of this. Entry is possible when religious services are not in progress and, whilst entry is gratis, tourists doubtless leave donations which serve as income for the upkeep of the Church fabric and the artefacts themselves. Leaving a church, rich in valuable artefacts, open to the public requires human resources and also technology which comes at a cost. The Haż-Żabbar Sanctuary Museum⁶⁶¹ is a good example of how a parish church can work in conjunction with local people. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this museum was founded by Mgr Joseph Zarb, who in 1943, was the parish priest. He saw that the Church was full of objects of beauty and of local interest, some of them going back to antiquity, others to the Knights' period and some of more recent origin. The museum was built abutting the side of the parish church and opened in 1954. It has always been headed by the local Archpriest but run by a committee and local volunteers and is open for three hours in the morning. There is a very reasonable €2 entrance fee which, with any donations, is used for the upkeep of the museum. In 2003 the museum was renovated and there are now three floors of exhibits which include a permanent exhibition of ex voto paintings. It has become quite a popular tourist bus and group

⁶⁶⁰ Viator, (website), <https://www.viator.com/Valletta-attractions/Church-of-St-Pauls-Shipwreck/d4142-a9868>, (accessed 10 April 2018).

⁶⁶¹ Haż-Żabbar Sanctuary Museum ((unofficial) Facebook page), <https://www.facebook.com/pages/%C5%BBabbar-Sanctuary-Museum/143777572306349>, (accessed 24 July 2018).

destination.⁶⁶² The exhibits are an eclectic mix but many of them were found locally or have some local interest. An example would be some parts of the Vulcan bomber that crashed in Haż-Żabbar on October 14, 1975 killing one woman and injuring some twenty others.⁶⁶³ There are also photos and stories of local people who died during WWII.

A church museum in Bormla, similar to the Haż-Żabbar Sanctuary, would require some initial funding and continued commitment. It would have to be instigated by the Archpriest of the Parish in association with the Curia. For this reason, I leave this as a possibility and concentrate the discussion on other opportunities that might be more within the remit of the local population.

A comment was made by one of the respondents that may seem somewhat exaggerated but which should also be recognized as an indication of how a changing Bormla might need to expand its present repertoire of contemporary heritage events.

The Feast is the only thing that is left. If the Church collapses, Bormla will die. It is the only breath that is left. The most important events that remain are L-Irxoxt (the Risen Christ statue that is carried on Easter morning) and the Feast. If those two activities finish you can tie up a black bow and fix it to the door of the Dockyard because everything will finish.
(18)

This comment reflects two issues. One is that the Church dominates activities of contemporary heritage based on long-standing traditions and the other is that there is, at present, as we have noted, little cultural activity that goes beyond the remit of the Church. Although, as we have seen, Bormla has a rather particular, sui generis, approach to religion and the Church and despite the fact that demographics have provoked a reduction in the population, the emotional pull of the Church and its activities continues to be extremely strong. I do not predict the demise of those Church-driven activities in the near future.

From the previous chapter, however, it is clear that the Bormliżi do have a definite sense of the historic and of contemporary heritage that is not limited to the Church. These interests also reflect a significant level of social capital and cohesion. The musical heritage of Bormla was mentioned by many respondents. The origins

⁶⁶² Vide comments from visitors to the Sanctuary Museum, (website), https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g946500-d7309431-Reviews-Zabbar_Sanctuary_Museum-Zabbar_Island_of_Malta.html, (accessed 24 July 2018).

⁶⁶³ K. Chetcuti, 'The Vulcan tragedy over Zabbar, 35 years on', *The Times of Malta*, 14 October 2010. Available from: The Times of Malta online, (accessed 28 July 2018).

of the St George's Band Club,⁶⁶⁴ strategically placed in the middle of the city, go back to the 1860s and it still plays an important part in the training of the bandsmen that play in the religious festivals but who also give concerts at the Club premises. This requires a strong sense of commitment both from the novice bandsmen to the regular players and the administration – not an insignificant number of people. The Band Club is very much dedicated to the memory of Bormla's most famous musical son, Paolino Vassallo.⁶⁶⁵

The phenomenon of the Band Club is something that the Maltese tend to take for granted as every village has at least one and they form an important part of village and town life. In recent years, they have lost their reputation as a bulwark of male dominance and have opened their doors to coffee shops, wine bars and have started renting out their usually generously proportioned premises so as to augment their revenue. St George's is no exception.

Then, of course, there is the Dockyard with its industrial, physical and social legacy. There is sure to be a group of people who would like to see the Dockyard remembered. They may not be an organized group at present but there is the potential for much interest from the local population.

To this picture of the potential social capital present in Bormla one should definitely add the contemporary artisans of Bormla who I have already singled out as a very significant cultural group. They are not all full time artisans but some do manage to make a good living from their craft. Amongst these are silversmiths, model makers in wood, sculptors in clay and wood, boat builders and restorers, embroiderers, wax model makers, gilders, French polishers and artists. Although they all know about each other's existence and some do actual work together, one gets the impression, as my respondent cited earlier suggested, that they quietly get on with their work, serving a select group of clients.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, I have gathered a list of some twenty artisans working in Bormla and have seen the quality of some of their work which is really second to none. Here lies a true heritage moment when "heritage is a view from the present, either backward to a past or forward to a future."⁶⁶⁶

The tradition of artisan work in Cottonera, and particularly in Bormla, probably goes back to the time of the Knights of St John who brought artisans with

⁶⁶⁴ The St George's Band Club was officially founded in 1862. Its first name was 'La Banda dei Cospicvani' but when Giorgio Crispo Barbaro, Marquis of St George, became first president of the Band, the name was changed to the present one.

⁶⁶⁵ Paolino Vassallo was born in 1856, studied under Massenet in Paris and returned to Malta to open his own music school and wrote, amongst other works, three operas.

⁶⁶⁶ Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy*, p. 2.

them from abroad, silversmiths being particularly popular at that time. However, the tradition of top quality artisan workmanship carried on into the British period. Following participation by Maltese silversmiths, jewellers, sculptors and furniture makers in the Great Exhibition held at the Crystal Palace in 1851,⁶⁶⁷ it was decided to hold “an exhibition on a grand scale”⁶⁶⁸ in Malta in 1864. It was decided to hold it in the Biblioteca in Valletta⁶⁶⁹ and “(a) total of 2,281 objects were exhibited.”⁶⁷⁰

Apart from the main organizing committee, which had directors appointed by the *Società d’Arti, Manifattura e Commercio*, there were two sub-committee, one for Gozo and the other for the Three Cities.⁶⁷¹ The Cottonera sub-committee was chaired by Canon Francesco Schembri whilst Gavino Gulia M.D., who hailed from Cospicua, acted as secretary.

Zahra recounts⁶⁷² that the Cottonera residents presented some 700 exhibits which constituted over one third of the total number of exhibits. The items in the exhibition went from lace to modern machinery. In fact, Ovidio Doublet from Cospicua presented a model train. Zahra refers to the “well-known foundry of Ġulju Cauchi” which “presented two bronze bells, cast at the Ġhajj Dwieli workshop.” Other pieces such as model ships and bronze ware, the work of several artisans from Vittoriosa, really do give a picture of up to date industrial design.

The description of local handiwork from Cospicua such as “(a)rtificial flowers made of velvet, silk and silver filigree, the product of the dexterous hands of Gerada and Busuttil, both from Cospicua,”⁶⁷³ was apparently singled out for particular praise. Also mentioned is “typical local craft, now almost forgotten” of wax models. Today in Cospicua there is a gentleman who, I am told, still creates wax models, mostly representing the Baby Jesus. Zahra tells us that there were some seventy female contributors from the Three Cities presenting gloves, lace, blankets, carpets, crochet and embroidery.

Whilst one cannot and indeed should not try to turn back the clock to 1864, there are many heritage activities of an artistic nature still going on in Bormla that could have a place in an entrepreneurial initiative. There is always a thirst for top quality hand made goods amongst tourists and local Maltese visitors to Malta and Gozo – so one imagines that the same could be applied in Bormla.

⁶⁶⁷ G. Bonello, (ed.), *Vanity, Profanity & Worship, Jewellery from the Maltese Islands*, Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, Malta, 2013, p. 29.

⁶⁶⁸ Bonello, *Vanity, Profanity & Worship, Jewellery from the Maltese Islands*, p. 31.

⁶⁶⁹ Vide Appendix No. 6. Engraving of the 1864 Exhibition Hall set up in the Bibliotheca in Valletta. Photo: Courtesy of Heritage Malta.

⁶⁷⁰ L. Zahra, ‘1864: an exhibition of local arts and crafts’, *The Sunday Times of Malta*, Trade Fair Supplement, 30 June 1974, p. viii.

⁶⁷¹ Bonello, *Vanity, Profanity & Worship, Jewellery from the Maltese Islands*, p. 31.

⁶⁷² Several descriptions of the 1864 exhibition are still extant.

⁶⁷³ Zahra, ‘1864: an exhibition of local arts and crafts’, p. viii.

It would also be interesting to see if it were possible to gather social capital from amongst the Bormla diaspora, not just within Malta but also further afield in Australia, Canada or the USA. Whilst they would not be physically available, they could certainly be intervening 'virtually' and would be a possible source of renewed interest in the city.

As discussed previously, St George's Football Club is clearly a source of pride to Bormla being the oldest football club in Malta and probably one of the oldest worldwide. There were several respondents who thought that, apart from the sporting side of the club, much more could be made of the history of St George's in such a way as to encourage interest from tourists. The Club has a working committee structure, a Facebook following of almost 2000 and a very large number of fans who hail from all over the Island.

The Regatta has a long-standing connection with boat building and competition. There are people who dedicate their lives to the Regatta which enjoys the enthusiasm of trainers, boat builders, fans and historians of this local tradition.

The 1st Cospicua Scout Group relies on enthusiastic and committed volunteers. It is very active and could be a great source of young social capital who could be brought into the discussion about promoting Bormla as part of a family of scout groups around Malta.

□ *Youth Participation – an important part of Bormla's social capital*

Interviewing youths was not part of the remit of this thesis. However, the participation of young people in heritage and cultural events was covered in my fieldwork through various conversations had with those involved with youths — people such as the Director of the Bormla Youth Group and a leader of the 19th November 1944 group that creates the procession that involves a large complement of young people. Very useful and first hand information about youth in Bormla was also gleaned from a long conversation with a professional youth worker, who has worked in close contact with young people both in a school context and through the organization of extra-mural activities. Also consulted were JosAnn Cutajar's 'Bormla: A Struggling Community'⁶⁷⁴ and three relevant University of Malta dissertations concerning youth perceptions in Bormla.^{675 676 677}

⁶⁷⁴ Cutajar, *Bormla A Struggling Community*, 2014.

⁶⁷⁵ L. Aquilina Marcon Cassar, 'Youth culture in Bormla: social reality in Cospicua through formal structures', B.A. Youth & Communications Studies, Dissertation, University of Malta, 2001.

⁶⁷⁶ P. Scicluna, 'The perceptions of young people in Cospicua youth centre about their locality', Diploma in Youth Studies Dissertation, University of Malta, 2008.

⁶⁷⁷ C. Farrugia, 'Community Involvement and Interaction with relation to heritage sites - Relationship between Small Heritage Sites and the Cospicua Community', Bachelor of Tourism Studies (Hons) Dissertation, Institute for Travel, Tourism and Culture, University of Malta, 2012.

I put it to the youth worker that one of the anxieties of older people was that there was no longer a sense of commitment amongst younger people, particularly with regard to the Church activities. His reply was that from his experience he can see that young people get involved and commit when it is something that really interests them.

It depends on the leaders and what they are offering. If the young people are feeling comfortable going then they will go, whether or not it's to do with the Church. (...). You can't really start though with a Mass but you start with something that interests them and you keep them interested, then they will stay. (29)

(...)

Youth Café attendance varies but when we have many young people it will be because they hear by word of mouth. The Café is inside and warm in winter but then it's up to me to organize something of interest to them. That is the reality. (29)

There is also the issue brought up by other respondents about the need for the Church activities to be updated so as to appeal to a wider audience.

I worked with the Domus Piju IX on a project with young people. They said they could actually do something with any theme. They said let's try something different. One group did super heroes, the others did Maltese scenes. Those young people then tried to do something similar in another place. In 20 sessions they gained the skills and then experimented with them. All voluntary. So there was interest to a certain group of young people. But the teacher was there available for a number of sessions and so they attended regularly. (29)

Bir Mula Heritage Museum is open to the general public and organizes cultural activities of every type and for every age group. Mr John Vella, the owner and curator, is particularly interested in gaining the attention of the younger generation of Bormliži. By way of example, my respondent recounted a successful evening dedicated to ghost stories and visits in the area.

Bir Mula Heritage organized a ghost evening which they (a group of young people) enjoyed. You had a situation in which they consumed the atmosphere of the place and listened to a story of the Knights. These were true stories mixed up with the myth of ghosts. The fact that these stories were linked to Cottonera was a font of knowledge for the participants. The youths enjoyed it. You get them in with the curiosity about ghosts but then you give them the information. (29)

In her discussion about haunted heritage tourism, Michele Hanks distinguishes between three concepts that structure this touristic practice:

“experience, knowledge, and heritage”. She sees the first two as “highly noticed concepts by ghost tourists. The last concept, heritage, is less explicit but equally important”.⁶⁷⁸ She goes on to explain that knowledge is sought through “(g)host walk guides, museums, commercial ghost hunt leaders, local ghost experts (...)” but that what is very much linked to this is the desire to experience the ghost or experience one vicariously through the story of others. Such desire may seem diametrically opposed to the ‘rationality’ of professional archaeologists and historians. However, it can possibly create what Hanks refers to as a ‘disembodied heritage’. She sees these ghost narratives as a way in which “known narratives” destabilize “the authority of historical experts”.⁶⁷⁹ The fascination concerning ghosts, according to Hanks, may not be an exclusively English phenomenon but is “an established feature of English popular culture.” Malta has several published ghost stories⁶⁸⁰ and many that are just verbal narratives and this could also be a legacy of the British in Malta. The fact that these stories subvert the expert narratives is part of their popular attraction. As mentioned in a previous chapter a ghost story was recounted by one of my own respondents who, as far as I could tell, the type given to fanciful imaginings. Successful ghost walks can certainly be intrinsically interesting but can also serve to create an awareness of past history.

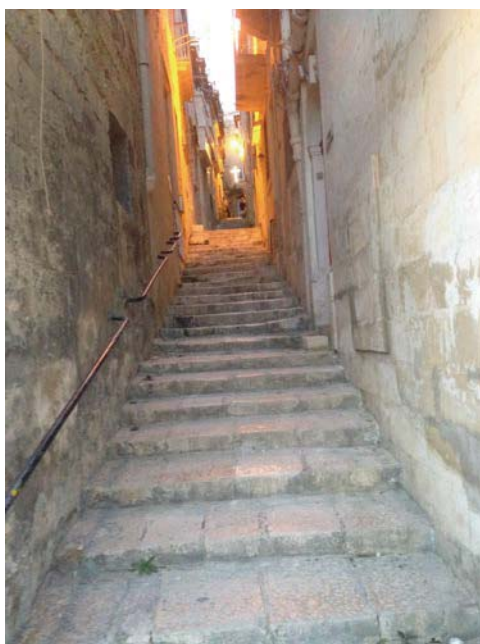
An issue that bothered several respondents, from the youth worker to the President of the Cospicua Heritage Society, was the disappearance of what might be called ‘markers of memory’. They commented on the effect that losing those memory markers such as street names, school names, buildings will be a ‘forgetting’.

If we are not going to make them (the youths) aware, we are going to go on grumbling that young people don’t know about Bormla! (29)

⁶⁷⁸ Hanks, *Haunted Heritage*, p. 13.

⁶⁷⁹ Hanks, p. 15.

⁶⁸⁰ Examples: C. Zarb, *True Maltese Ghost Stories*, trans. V. Macdonald, BDL, 2013; J. Attard, *The Ghosts of Malta*, PEG, 1997.



Triq Nelson lit up on Good Friday

It is sometimes difficult for my generation to remember that those born in the year 2000 are now coming of age. It is also strange for Maltese people to imagine that the generation of teenagers today has little knowledge of, for example, Dominic Mintoff who dominated the Island's politics, in power or not, for over fifty years. Preserving memories, as discussed by Desilvey,⁶⁸¹ can be a controversial issue. Does it really matter that Bormla's Millennials, or Generation Y, do not remember or even know much about the events of WWII that had such a dramatic effect on their city? Is this an issue of history versus heritage? If we go back to the idea of what creates a sense of place and what contributes to a sense of identity, then I think that Bormla is interested in positioning itself within the history of Malta – and, indeed, at the sharp end of the Island's past. The lament from so many respondents was that too often Bormla's contribution to Malta's history had been ignored.

The State, on the other hand, still under evaluates the historical importance of Bormla while the main stream of our local historiography fares no better. It ignores the importance of this locality to the history of Malta.⁶⁸²

So I would argue that the history is important and deserves to be recalled. Finding ways of recording Bormla's place in that narrative would certainly offer prestige and a certain counter weight to the ever-present stigma. Whereas one

⁶⁸¹ C. DeSilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage beyond Saving*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 2017.

⁶⁸² S. Mercieca, 'Bormla and its Verdala Barracks', *Independent Online*, 9 December 2014, www.independent.com.mt/articles/2014-12-09/blogs-opinions/Bormla-and-its-Verdala-Barracks-6736127023, (accessed 24 July 2018).

might normally be chary of encouraging engagement with a national heritage, for fear of its overwhelming the local story, in this particular case, a little more recognition at a national narrative level would not go amiss.

The historic aspects of Bormla may not have direct relevance to some of today's young Bormliži but are part of the ground in which their roots are embedded, an aspect of their sense of identity. Past heritage, which has developed into present heritage practice is, one could say, of more relevance to them. It is something more specifically belonging to Bormla today, something that could be manifested as a present 'good'. However, I believe that both the historic and the heritage aspects of the city can be acted upon in contemporary, innovative ways which would be attractive to those Millennials. That is one of the advantages of technology, that it can be used to enhance both the past and the present.

Historic slippage is always going to be a reality. It is an obvious truth to say that nothing stays the same forever. One only has to look across at what was the dry dock in Bormla to see how even physical things can literally disappear from sight, let alone the ephemera of life. However, street names, for example, can be reminders of past events, religious veneration or occupation. In an article about Bormla's street names, Mario Attard describes their origins which he divides broadly into devotional, personalities, events and function. He also compares the Bormla names with those of the other two Cities of Cottonera. Just to take one example, Attard recounts the story of Triq San Frangisk (Saint Francis Street), a street name that can only be explained through research but which provides valuable historical information which would otherwise be lost.⁶⁸³

An important point made by the youth worker with whom I spoke was that the younger members of Bormla society who are aware of the stigma associated with it tend to go out of the community for their entertainment. Those who are not so aware, who may be low achievers, tend to remain in the comfort zone of the community. He admitted that this was a generalization but considered it, in his experience, to be generally true. To turn back that tide, it follows that negative perceptions of Bormla must be overcome amongst its own even before the outsiders. However, this is something of a conundrum. What is going to be the catalyst that persuades outsiders that the Bormliži do not deserve the generalized stigma with which they are marked simply by being 'Bormliži'. The impression of Bormla as being a 'rough' area with a high crime rate is not going to do anything to encourage tourist companies to plan tours to the city. It is also off-putting for Maltese people from outside Bormla who might get as far as the waterfront but no further. However, Bormla cannot afford to lose this youthful resource which is part

⁶⁸³ M. Attard, 'Bormla bl-inħawi u t-toroq tagħha', *Ċentru 19 ta' Novembru 1944 - Bormla, Festa Marija Immakulata 2015*, p. 51.

of the community and needs to be not only represented but instrumental in the creation of an outward-looking city. They also need to be on top of their game so as to be successful in a world of changing styles of employment.

Learning and innovation skills increasingly are being recognized as the skills that separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and those who are not. A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future.⁶⁸⁴

My respondent also spoke about the instant gratification that is achieved through technology and identified it as an issue that involves all Maltese youths and probably youths worldwide. The 'click/delete' generation, whose entertainment is chiefly graphic, must be taken into account when planning any kind of attempt at gathering interest at a community level.

For many, however, attracting teenagers or families with young children or even young adults in their twenties and early thirties present a daunting challenge. Despite the fact that all adults once passed through these life stages themselves, the pace of social change in the early twenty-first century makes the world of contemporary youth feel like a foreign country.⁶⁸⁵

Putnam, writing in the 1990s, recognized that this change in technology could have a detrimental effect on 'social capital'. As we have seen above, he described social capital in terms of networking and group cooperation and saw that networks were beginning to break down and that the US was becoming more fragmented and possibly even anomic. Amongst a number of other reasons for this phenomenon, Putnam lists

Television, the electronic revolution, and other technological changes.⁶⁸⁶

Putman was more concerned with the influence of television at that time but the arguments for and against the increased use of technology have not stopped coming since then. On the one hand, there is the idea that social media, chat fora, game-playing and other interactive aspects to today's technology do increase and encourage social engagement as they can widen the users access to participants. The counter argument is that technology can be isolating, removing the need for an individual to seek out the company of others thus reducing networking and social engagement beyond that on the screen.

⁶⁸⁴ P21 Partnership for 21st century learning, Framework for 21st century learning, <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>, (accessed 30 June 2018).

⁶⁸⁵ B. Farrell, 'Building Youth Participation', in D. Grams and B. Farrell (eds), *Entering Cultural Communities: Diversity and Change in the Nonprofit Arts*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London, 2008, p. 115.

⁶⁸⁶ Putnam, 'Tuning In, Tuning Out', p. 667.

The debate between the individual and the community, and in particular, between the individual *in relation* to the community, is similar to the debate between culture and its place within society. It is a debate that started in an analog world hundreds of years ago and continues in a digital world where critics fear the socially isolating effects of technology.⁶⁸⁷

One is reminded of Saint Ambrose and the surprise he engendered when he insisted on reading in silence.⁶⁸⁸ His contemporaries were shocked and found his actions selfish. Clearly, Saint Ambrose's actions did not spell the end of dialogue so maybe our fears are misplaced. As Smith Bautista points out,

Discourse is critical to place, to the public sphere, to public space, to integrating culture into society, and most decidedly, to building social capital and community as an active form of participation.⁶⁸⁹

We do not have to fear the digital but embrace it for what it can do to increase the growth of social capital. The fact remains that young people today have been brought up with electronic media at their fingertips and any attempt to generate social engagement and networking will have to include an element of electronic media within it – either in the communication aspect or in the delivery or product.

Technology offers so many creative ways of re-inventing traditional methods of engaging people's interest in cultural or social activities that are only limited by our imagination – and perhaps by funding.

There are areas in which social capital exists today that fulfill that definition of heritage that looks back and looks forward - activities such as the theatre and Carnival.

□ ***Drama and Entertainment***

The older respondents and focus group participants spoke about the pre-war entertainment and cultural activities in the Three Cities such as regular theatre performances, carnival dances and a vibrant cinema scene.

L-Isla used to have 'teatrin'.⁶⁹⁰ My elder brother Charlie used to be the prompter. At Teatru Gambin every week there was a good company

⁶⁸⁷ S. Smith Bautista, *Museums in the Digital Age: Changing Meanings of Place, Community, and Culture*, AltaMira Press, 2013, p. 14.

⁶⁸⁸ 'Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith, St Ambrose – the man who invented silent reading', *The Catholic Herald*, Thursday, 8 Dec 2011. Available from: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2011/12/08/st-ambrose-the-man-who-invented-silent-reading/>, (accessed 02 April 2018).

⁶⁸⁹ Smith Bautista, *Museums in the Digital Age*, p. 14.

doing a good show - every week. Birgu also had companies. Bormla had the Rialto theatre and the Carnival matinée was held there. The L-Isla carnival was nicer than that of Valletta – between the Wars. I remember it right up to the 1960s. They used to invite other companies to dance. But between the wars there was the 'sfilata' – procession of floats. (02)

In 1938, I was six years old, the idea that I have of Bormla at Christmas is of a place with a lot of light, commercial activities, three confectionary shops; three thriving cinemas Windsor (belonged to Callus), Rialto, Rio, which got a direct hit during the war. (10)

There are still some drama groups which participate in the Holy Week pageant, described by Joe Cioffi, the Director of the Bormla Youth Group⁶⁹¹ and also other drama work put on once a year by the same Group.⁶⁹²

Theatre, in its carnivalesque guise, has probably been present in Malta since the 1500s. In the newspaper *Malta* of 1894, it is suggested that Bosio mentions carnival being played out in 1535 under the patronage of Grand Master Pierino del Ponte. It consisted in jousting, masked games (*mascherate*), dances, fake duels and similar activities that took place '*nel Borgo del Castello*'.⁶⁹³

It was certainly encouraged by the Knights of St John. This was in the years before the building of Valletta so the carnival tradition continued to grow in the Three Cities.

Grand Master Jean de la Valette can be considered as one of the pioneers of Maltese Carnival. His enthusiasm of Carnival led to the permission of the Knights to publicly wear masks during the festivities held outside the respective Auberges of each langue.⁶⁹⁴

After a break of some years owing to the French interregnum, Carnival started again after the British took effective control of Malta in 1800 although initially they insisted on a very limited festival. Cremona recounts that in February 1801, Major General Henry Pigot, who had been given the supreme command of the Island, issued a decree which banned outdoor festivities connected with Carnival. Of interest to our discussion is the fact that the list of towns and villages where this

⁶⁹⁰ 'Teatrin' n.m. (pl. -i) 1. a little theatre, gen. a village theatre. 2. a puppet show. 3. a comedy, farce, in J. Aquilina, *Concise Maltese English – English Maltese Dictionary*, Midsea Books Ltd, Santa Venera, Malta, 2006, p. 368.

⁶⁹¹ J. Cioffi, Direttur Grupp Żgħażaġh Bormliżi, interviewed for the project: *Minn Fomm il-Bormliżi*, Valletta 2018. Published YouTube, Sep 4, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1rIRBqbEbg>, (accessed 07 February 2018).

⁶⁹² M. Tonna Gilford, Segretarju Grupp Żgħażaġh Bormliżi, interviewed for the project: *Minn Fomm il-Bormliżi*, Valletta 2018. Published on Sep 4, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X9l0yB1Mxk>, 1.05 – 1.24, (accessed 07 February 2018).

⁶⁹³ No author, *Malta*, 5 Feb 1894, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁴ S. Borg, 'The Maltese Carnival as an Artistic Expression in Maltese Culture', BA Dissertation, University of Malta, 2015, p. 16.

notice was to be put up had to include those where Carnival was celebrated and each of the Three Cities was on the list.⁶⁹⁵ Cremona comments that the British colonial masters, initially, could not really understand the festival of Carnival.⁶⁹⁶

However, the Maltese clearly persisted in their desire to celebrate Carnival and in *Malta* 1895 we find that the southern harbour area was still very much involved in the festival.

Another group from Cospicua created a representation of Grand Master L'Isle Adam's entry into Mdina. It was a solemn show done with historic accuracy and was as great a success in Valletta as in the Three Cities. The songs and the music of the group were very much admired.⁶⁹⁷
(my trans.)

At the same time that Carnival was growing in following, the theatre scene also started to flourish in Valletta and in Cottonera.

The first small theatres in Malta were set up around 1847 in Valletta and in Cottonera. Their main aim was to create entertainment that differed from Carnival but it proved to be so popular that they started to produce more plays and "soon they began to have theatrical seasons of around twenty five weeks," (Galea: 1997,ix).⁶⁹⁸ (my trans.)

There was a lull in Carnival activity during and after World War I, probably due to the bad economic situation. Street parades were reduced and indoor Carnival parties started to appear. Over the next three decades the festival gained a King Carnival character and various prizes and a Carnival Committee was set up in the 1926 and the festival enjoyed a revival.⁶⁹⁹

Cremona recounts that

(t)he new interest in Carnival meant that by the 1930s, renowned Maltese artists such as Gianni Vella (1885–1977) were participating in the decoration of Carnival floats and the design of costumes. Vella first participated in Carnival in 1927 (...). In 1933, the artist was publicly praised for having created the most carnivalesque costume (*Il-Poplu*, 6 March 1933, 2). A few days later, an artist from Cospicua wrote to express his dismay at the fact that Vella's 'Royal Dancers', who had an original, well-designed costume, only obtained fifth placing (*Il-Poplu* 10 March 1933, 2).⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁵ V.A. Cremona, *Carnival & Power - Play and Politics in a Crown Colony*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 49.

⁶⁹⁶ Cremona, *Carnival & Power*, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁷ No author, *Malta*, 27 Feb 1895, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁸ R. Brincat, 'It-Teatrin f'Malta: Temi u Tendenzi Pubblici 1934 – 1964', BA(Hons) Dissertation, University of Malta, 2012, p. 26.

⁶⁹⁹ Cremona, *Carnival & Power*, p. 191.

⁷⁰⁰ Cremona, p. 194.

This excerpt shows that Cospicua was still very much involved in the Carnival festival and the complaint by the 'artist from Cospicua' was probably prompted also by his wish to support a fellow Cospicuaño. Gianni Vella, a son of Bormla, is still considered one of Malta's foremost painters

Several of my respondents talked about the excellent carnival floats of the Three Cities in the pre-war period. They also spoke of a theatrical tradition in Bormla which includes the performances at the Domus Sagra Familija set up by Dun Spiridione Penza in the early 1900s.

The main aim of the Domus was to gather together young girls and boys in their spare time, not only to receive some Christian instruction and to keep them occupied but also to teach them to sew, to cook, to embroider and to do other useful things.

(...)

The Domus was set up in 1914, and the blessing and official opening was done by Bishop Portelli, who, in his address, gave loud praise to this initiative of Dun Spir, and explained the moral and material significance of the endeavour for those who lived in the Cottonera area.⁷⁰¹

(my trans.)

This kind of education included theatricals and it could be that not all the plays were religious.⁷⁰²

In an interview in connection with the *Minn Fomm il-Bormlizi* project, Rose Caruana⁷⁰³ recounts how she was the first female actor at the Domus Piju IX theatre group which was very popular in the early 1960s right up until the 1990s. She remembers playing the part of Maria Goretti, in a play in 5 Acts, to a packed audience at the Domus. This enthusiasm for 'teatrin' went on until about 1995 when other entertainments started to take its place. However, there are youth groups which still do carry on the tradition of theatre in Bormla and could create a link between the cultural activity of the past and that of the present day.

The importance of theatre, Carnival and performance in general in Bormla is something that is remembered and appreciated not only as past history but also very much as contemporary heritage.

⁷⁰¹ S. Aquilina, *It-Twaqqif tad-Domus, Parroċċa Kolleġġjata ta' Marija Immakulata, Bormla*. Available from: Cospicua Parish website: http://www.cospicuaparish.org.mt/articles_domus_twaqqif.asp, (accessed 26 April 2018).

⁷⁰² I have been informed that the Domus Sagra Familija also used to produce Farce, which to this day is a popular genre of theatre throughout Malta, but regretfully I could find no written reference to support this assertion.

⁷⁰³ R. Caruana, interviewed for the project: *Minn Fomm il-Bormlizi*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qz0clWc1LTc&t=14s>, (accessed: 28 March 2018).

The first serious efforts began after WWII, supported by writers such as Ġużè Aquilina, Erin Serracino Inglott, Albert Cassola, Ġużè Chetcuti, amongst others.⁷⁰⁴ (*my trans.*)

It is interesting to note that of the four post-war playwrights mentioned in this comment, two (Erin Serracino Inglott and Ġużè Chetcuti) were both from Bormla.

Carnival is extremely popular in Malta today. The building of floats is taken very seriously and many people spend all their free time working on them during the year. This involves committees that decide on themes, colours and artistic issues, whilst some are dedicated to the mechanical aspects. Many of the floats are connected to dance groups which take part in the annual Carnival show in Valletta. There is also a Cottonera Carnival Defilé.

Malta Carnival 2018 organised by Festivals Malta

Sunday 4 February 2018

Cottonera Carnival

Senglea, Cospicua, Vittoriosa

9.30am – 1pm

(...) The defilé culminates in Victory Square, Vittoriosa, where participants will create a carnivalesque atmosphere for everyone to enjoy.⁷⁰⁵

Recently, the float builders were removed from government property in Valletta and a new Carnival Village is projected at nearby Marsa. So the Carnival tradition is by no means dying in Bormla. Record of its tradition of adherence to Carnival and its past reputation could fit in well with the idea of encouraging contemporary heritage.

□ *Integrating the Digital*

There are diverse aspects of digital connectivity that have a bearing on our discourse with regard to Bormla. One is the ability of groups to access the internet and through websites and interactive social media platforms to make their voices heard. As we have already noted, Bormla is no exception to this digital online activity and there are several Facebook sites, such as the Cospicua Heritage Society,⁷⁰⁶ Cospicua Parish Church,⁷⁰⁷ Cospicua Troop Parents (closed group), Places That Can Attract Tourists In Cospicua,⁷⁰⁸ *Il-Ġimgħa Mqadssa f'Bormla*,⁷⁰⁹ just

⁷⁰⁴ Brincat, 'It-Teatrin f'Malta: Temi u Tendenzi Pubbliċi 1934 – 1964', p. 21.

⁷⁰⁵ 2018, Carnival-Programme.doc: <https://valletta2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Carnival-Programme.docx>, (accessed 12 April 2018).

⁷⁰⁶ Cospicua Heritage Society Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/cospicuaheritagesociety>

⁷⁰⁷ Cospicua Parish Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=cospicua%20parish%20church>

⁷⁰⁸ Places That Can Attract Tourists In Cospicua Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/554890084699166/about/>

to mention a few. To add to these are the websites of the Cospicua Parish Church and the Bormla Local Council.

Writing in 2010, Waterton states:

I want to suggest that the Internet can become, despite the dominance of affluent users, a social space within which subordinate groups and their struggles are represented and agitations for empowerment undertaken.⁷¹⁰

There is no doubt that in the intervening years connectivity has improved to a great extent and prices of electronics have gone down, so much that digital media are now within the financial grasp of the majority. In Malta, penetration is not quite at the top of EU levels but it cannot lament a lack of broad band as can be seen from these latest statistics.

Statistics: June 2017

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Internet Users</i>	<i>Penetration</i>	
Europe:	822,710,362	659,634,487	80.2 %	
EU	506,279,458	433,651,012	85.7 %	
Malta	410,000	334,056	79.4 %	⁷¹¹

2018 statistics showed that the use of “social networks among young adults in Malta had soared, with 94% of young people being active social media users”.⁷¹² This is a 5% rise compared to the previous year.

The data also shows that of the internet users who are aged between 65 and 74 years, 71% were active social media users. (..) this was the second highest rate in Europe, where on average, a mere 34% of the older populations made use of social media last year.⁷¹³

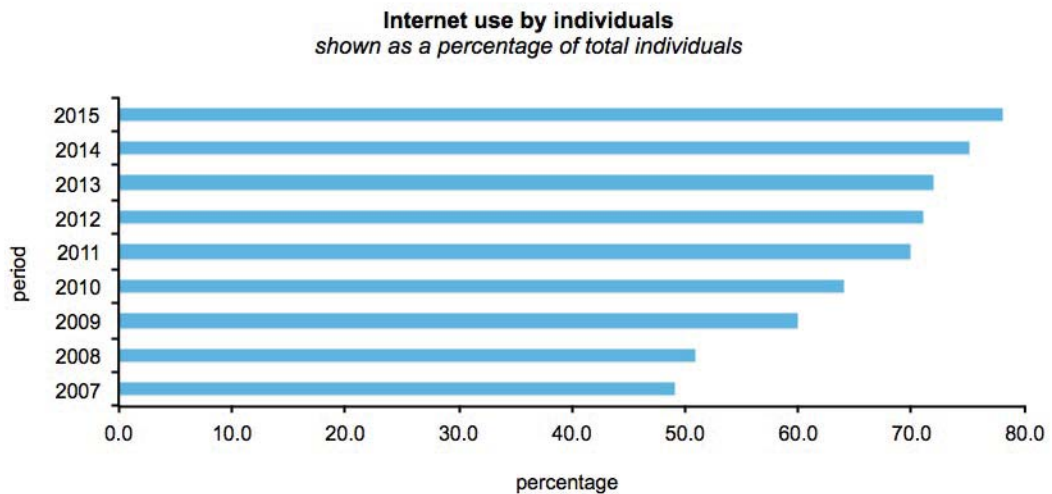
⁷⁰⁹ Il-Ġimgha Mqadssa f'Bormla Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/gmbormla/>

⁷¹⁰ E. Waterton, 'The advent of digital technologies and the idea of community', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 5-11, 2010, p. 8.
DOI: 10.1080/09647770903529038

⁷¹¹ Internet World Stats, Usage and Population Statistics (website), <https://www.internetworldstats.com/>, (accessed 30 June 2018).

⁷¹² C. Caruana, 'Just ten per cent of Maltese are not on social media', *The Times of Malta*, 04 April 2018, p. 3.

⁷¹³ C. Caruana, 'Just ten per cent of Maltese are not on social media', p. 3.



Digital in Malta is a reality. It should not be technically difficult to connect with the social capital lying behind these social media platforms.

As we have said, the younger generation now considers electronic media an integral part of their lives, providing communication, entertainment and information. We have also seen that ‘community’ is not an easily definable noun and that there are many different groups within that overarching ‘community’ of Bormla. Networking electronically could actually be a very effective way of joining the dots between the demographic groups and between the communities of practice in Bormla. This is not a new idea with regard to museums.

Museums have experimented with crowd-sourced exhibitions and now commonly use blogs and social media that solicit public comments, as well as occasional wikis for special projects.⁷¹⁵

As Smith Bautista has suggested, digital technology seems to be a very good medium for those

(...) museums (that) are generally constituted from the bottom up, representing more the specialized interest of local constituents and public masses rather than the power elite.⁷¹⁶

The aims of this exercise in communication of Bormla’s past and present heritage would be to make everyone in Bormla aware of its history and its heritage, so that it can then – perhaps also contemporaneously – reach the world outside

⁷¹⁴ National Statistics Office Malta, ‘Selected indicators’, (website), https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Selected_Indicators/Pages/Selected-Indicators.aspx, (accessed 17 July 2018).

⁷¹⁵ Smith Bautista, *Museums in the Digital Age*, p. 18.

⁷¹⁶ Smith Bautista, p. 26.

Bormla. It is probable that digital technology can make that happen more quickly than in any other way.

Whether one is talking about a large museum or a community set up, the use of digital technology means that the visitor has a participatory experience in some way and is no longer simply an onlooker. This involves

“recognizing and incorporating new digital tools for communication, but more importantly, recognizing the changing needs and aspirations of society as reflected in their communities of physical and virtual visitors.”⁷¹⁷

We spoke above about the Bormla diaspora, within Malta and in all the countries of Maltese migration with regard to social capital. This is one of the wonders of digital technology that it allows a straightforward two-way connection between those Bormlizi (and not) who live far from Malta and the heritage that they would like to see again, or show their children for the first time.

Digitalization can be an effective instrument of democratisation of cultural heritage as it opens new forms of access, e.g. by allowing entrance to previously closed heritage places or museum collections, or by allowing memberships in heritage communities without physical presence in a locality.”⁷¹⁸

Another positive aspect of using electronic media is that it can give a voice to those groups, such as the female voice, who perceive themselves as not being heard or are genuinely not listened to or interrogated.

Digital technology is an important feature, if configured carefully, enabling alternative models of women’s expertise to be documented and shared.⁷¹⁹

However, like any new technology it can be used and also abused.

In the same way that inequalities of power can arise from the institutionalization of the contact zone, so the same inability for groups to maintain localization and ownership over information exchange carries forth into the digital equivalent.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁷ Smith Bautista, p. 225.

⁷¹⁸ T. Vahtikari, ‘Innovation & Cultural Heritage’, *Royal Museum of Arts and History*, Brussels, Conference Report, RTD-Publications, 20 March 2018, p. 8.

⁷¹⁹ R. Clarke and R.M. Lewis, ‘Re-configuring inclusion, decolonising practice: Digital participation and learning in Black women’s community-led heritage’, *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2016, pp. 134–151, p. 134. DOI: 10.1177/1477971416672323

⁷²⁰ B. Lythberg, C. Hogsden, W. Ngata, ‘Co-creating a Digital Contact Network’ in B. Onciul, M.L. Stefano, S. Hawke (eds.), *Theory and Practice in Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2017, p. 208.

Technology can be used to reconstitute as well as to fragment: the direction to be taken is a matter of social, cultural and political policy (...).⁷²¹

□ *Post-Museum Spaces*

I believe, with Borowiecki, Forbes and Fresa that

Cultural heritage has enormous potential in terms of its contribution to improving the quality of life for people, understanding the past, assisting territorial cohesion, driving economic growth, opening up employment opportunities and supporting wider developments such as improvements in education and in artistic careers.⁷²²

And I also acknowledge, with them, that cultural heritage has to be viewed today within the context of a changing world. Based on my fieldwork, I think that the way in which this potential can be achieved in Bormla is by using a 'post-museum' framework i.e. one that goes beyond the mainstream museum model, beyond, perhaps, also the community museum model and moves into a model that is multi-faceted, locally driven with the addition of specific assistance where the local collective groups feel it necessary. The endorsement and intervention by the authorities will be an asset to this framework if the authorities are an equal partner in Bormla's initiatives. As we have seen above and we shall discuss a little further in the following chapter, a seat at the table is no guarantee of having your voice heard.

Graham distinguishes between the 'on behalf of' museum model of participation and one which is horizontal and based not simply on networking but on a realization of the intricacies of networking – on the importance of instigating networks that go beyond a comfort zone of people of like minds.⁷²³ Since, however, I am not working from a museo-centric position but am looking at this community simply as someone interested in heritage for the reasons stated earlier, I have to look directly, in an unmediated fashion, on how ideas of heritage appreciation – in all its forms – can be attained.

Stimulated by examples from overseas and examining my own ideas, I would like to let my imagination loose at this point and try to visualize some ventures that would, in my opinion, be appropriate for the Bormla context.

⁷²¹ S. Little, L. Holmes, M. Grieco, 'Calling up culture: information spaces and information flows as the virtual dynamics of inclusion and exclusion', *Information Technology & People*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2001, pp. 353-367, p. 365. Available from: ProQuest.

⁷²² K.J. Borowiecki, N. Forbes, A. Fresa, (eds), *Cultural Heritage in a Changing World*, Springer, 2016, open access: DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-29544-2

⁷²³ H. Graham, 'Tactical Politics for Participation and Museums' in O. Bryony, M.L. Stefano and S. Hawke (eds), *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2017, pp. 73-87, p. 83.

The objects that I shall discuss and highlight will not provide an exhaustive list, nor will they be particularly specific. I have no doubt that many of the ideas I could come up with have already been thought about by members of the Bormla community. What has been missing is the catalyst and perhaps the conviction to make things happen.

Heritage remains an elusive term which has been defined in various ways and by diverse practitioners in this thesis. Here is yet another definition which seems to encapsulate the variety of possibly memories in an area such as Bormla.

Finally, I grew to understand heritage as anything that affects us. The effect could be positive or negative, minor or major, temporary or permanent, individual or collective. Heritage could be tangible or intangible, monumental or mediocre, celebrated or oppressed. This does not mean that everything has to be celebrated as heritage. In this matter heritage is like memory; we cannot remember everything, but we have to remember enough in order to effectively move forward.⁷²⁴

Despite my references to a ‘museum without walls’ and the fact that the very expression can be metaphoric, post-museum spaces can, of course, be enclosed by walls. However, if they are, they should remain zones that leave room for metaphoric and virtual expansion.

I would like to start by imagining a dynamic talking area in which structured and not-so-structured discussions can take place - a zone where memories and ideas about the significance of those memories can be explored, a place in which the collective groups can gather and form and in which networking between diverse interest groups can grow. This will be an essential part of the process of finding out about Bormla’s tangible and intangible heritage and ways to promote it.

Before making suggestions about possible venues, I believe I should mention the present conservation status of Bormla. As one might imagine, the fortifications of Bormla are scheduled Grade 1,⁷²⁵ as are the Cottonera Lines in general, along with the fortifications of Valletta. However, apart from the Rialto, there are only a few scheduled buildings in Bormla and these are Grade 2: The Rest (which houses the Bormla Local Council); 34-38 Triq San Pawl (a palazzina); the Parish Church of the Immaculate Conception; Santa Margherita Windmill and T’Għuxa Windmill. The area of the Three Cities is, however, an Urban Conservation Area.

⁷²⁴ ‘Shatha Abu Khafajah - Interview’ in O. Bryony, M.L. Stefano and S. Hawke (eds), *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2017, pp. 113-118, p.114.

⁷²⁵ Definitions of Grade 1; Grade 2 and Urban Conservation Area are available at: <https://www.pa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=12753>

The most obvious place for these discussions to take place would be in a restored Rialto Cinema Theatre. Perhaps the present owners would consider giving this building on permanent loan to Bormla.

Picking up on some of the ideas mentioned by the respondents, an exhibition of famous sons and daughters of Bormla would make an excellent start. One can imagine that there could be many spin off initiatives considering the variety of skills attributable to these Bormlizi – from the naturalist, Giuseppe Despott (1878-1933) to the trade union leader, Peter Paul Bugelli (1892-1960) and from the sculptor, Abram Gatt (1863-1944) to the writer, Erin Serracino Inglott (1904-1983). The list includes trade unionists, journalists, painters, footballers, university professors, politicians of all parties, sportsmen, musicians, civil servants, a mystic, a number of clerics, teachers, poets, writers and members of the judiciary - a wealth of knowledge and experience and narratives to tell.

The narratives also, of course, extend to the present day as there are historians, poets and writers who currently work in Bormla or outside it or even overseas, as in the case of Nadia Mifsud. Mifsud, born and brought up in Bormla, has written poetry from an early age and has recently been short-listed for the National Book Prize⁷²⁶ with her debut novel *Ir-Rota Daret Dawra (Kwazi) Shiha*.⁷²⁷
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Above we mentioned the importance of digital technology to help retain the intangible heritage of Bormla including the female voice which is sometimes drowned in this ostensibly male-dominated society. The respondents in my fieldwork repeatedly expressed their deep appreciation of the female elements in their family and how they felt that they really held up the family structures even in difficult times. These sentiments are also those of Nadia Mifsud expressed during a recent interview.

“I grew up surrounded by women - I have these beautiful memories dating back to my childhood of four generations of women huddled in a small kitchen in Bormla, chatting away loudly, laughing, joking, teasing one another and sometimes getting into arguments,” says Mifsud.⁷²⁹

The role models of yesterday are important because they established a

⁷²⁶ The National Book Prize is run by il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ktieb. The book prize for 2018 will be announced in December 2018.

⁷²⁷ N. Mifsud, *Ir-Rota Daret Dawra (Kwazi) Shiha*, was winner of the #abbozz competition for new authors held by Merlin Publishers, Malta, 2017.

⁷²⁸ For a review of *Ir-Rota Daret Dawra (Kwazi) Shiha* vide: Ramona Depares, This will break your heart, *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 29 October 2017. Available from The Times of Malta online: <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20171029/books/this-will-break-your-heart.661719>, (accessed 09 June 2018).

⁷²⁹ No author, ‘When Language Becomes Poetic’, *Encore*, Issue 12, Merlin Publishers, May 2018.

tradition of history, scientific and academic study but there are those, like Mifsud, that are part of Bormla's contemporary heritage which everyone can appreciate today. Writing in Maltese, Mifsud can surely be a focal point of interest in contemporary literature.

The artisans of Bormla are part of the intangible heritage of the city. It is these people and their skills which are valuable not only as echoes of the past but as a present day reality. As we have said, they tend to just get on with their activities without fanfare – some of them are part timers – but each one in his or her own way has something to show that is representative of Bormla. There is a paradox of which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett speaks.

(...) the performers, ritual specialists, and artisans whose "cultural assets" become heritage through this process experience a new relationship to those assets, a metacultural relationship to what was once just habitus.⁷³⁰

It is true that they may become better known and there may be some amongst them who do not wish to share their skills or the product of their skills to others. However, I am sure that several will do so and not only because it could be of economic benefit to them. Their products are tangible in the sense that they are physical. However, most are commissioned works that do not remain in the community so are ephemeral with regard to the community. The importance of the intangible within the context of a community that wishes to let others in on its life is expressed again by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

Central to my argument is the notion that heritage is created through metacultural operations that extend museological values and methods (collection, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation, and interpretation) *to living persons, their knowledge, practices, artifacts, social worlds, and life spaces.*⁷³¹ (*my emphasis*)

There may be a place one day for the creation of a way of expressing those museological values in Bormla but it must come from within. The values mentioned in the above citations are worthy values which can start to be considered as heritage awareness grows.

There may be some groups which are already organized such as the local St George's Football team that can be encouraged to participate in early discussions about how the heritage and present reality of the club could become part of a creative venture. As Ramshaw suggests

⁷³⁰ B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'World Heritage and Cultural Economics', in I. Karp and C. Kratz, with G. Buntinx, et al (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2006, pp. 161-202, pp. 161-162.

⁷³¹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Museum Frictions*, p. 161.

(...) sport heritage offers a unique vehicle for change, in that it seeks often to celebrate victory and triumph, as well as hardship and dedication, all within a popular and (frequently) unifying discourse.⁷³²

There is already literary material⁷³³ regarding St George's and no doubt a wealth of images of past and present. At present, this much-loved club is in Second Division but, judging from the replies of the respondents and of practically everybody else I spoke to in Bormla, there would be much enthusiasm for raising its status within and outside the city.

Previously, youth participation has been discussed and if these creative ventures are going to succeed in involving a large part of Bormla's society then measures to engage young people must be written into the equation. Their physical involvement is crucial with regard to the collective groups but their virtual engagement must also be made contemporaneously so as to get a message across. Simply setting up a Facebook page is not enough. Firstly, because I gather from my younger friends that Facebook is considered a bit passé and that there are other more popular platforms and secondly because I have seen too many Cospicua-oriented Facebook pages and websites set up with great enthusiasm with their last post going back to 2015 and, in one case, 2009. There must be several young Bormliži who have an interest in technology or who have gone to MCAST or to the University of Malta who would be willing to pass on their basic skills to enthusiastic youths in Bormla.

Young people have their own stories to tell and, as we have seen with *Minn Fomm il-Bormliži*, they are interested in listening to others. Not being a 'techie' myself, I hesitate to suggest how technology can be harnessed to promote heritage. However, I can dream about an app that tells the story of Bormla in various languages as one tours the city on foot with access to QR; a blog run by young people to talk about what affects their lives. I can also envisage the time-lapse photography that could explain the complex work of the silversmith, the boat builder and restorer, the embroiderer, the gilder and the wax model maker.

A project that really lends itself to a melding of digital with storytelling is described in a paper on 'Mobile Storytelling'. This is described by the authors as a digital "system that delivers stories to handheld devices and advances the stories according to the user's mobility."⁷³⁴ These can be of the type with which we are all

⁷³² G. Ramshaw, 'Subaltern Sport Heritage', in B. Onciul, M.L. Stefano and S.Hawke (eds), *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK, 2017, pp. 179-187, p. 186.

⁷³³ S. Aquilina, L. Fsadni, H. Garrett and L. Spiteri, *Il-Pijunieri tal-Football Malti, 1990*.

⁷³⁴ H. Mügge, D. Speicher, O. Cremers, A.B. Cremers, 'Learning in community through mobile storytelling and location-based games', in S. Jelenc Krašovec and Š. Damijan (eds), *Perspectives on Community Practices: Living and Learning in Community*, Conference proceedings, ESREA 2015, Ljubljana University Press, Ljubljana, 2015, pp. 54-64, p. 55.

now familiar such as the museum audio guides. A system of this type is used on the 'Rolling Geeks' which give information about the places and towns for tourists using these electric vehicles in Cottonera. However, this project takes this concept to another level. The basic idea is that stories or 'quests' are created by writers and can be followed by multi-players. The stories are created on pages which are interactive on handheld devices or on computer. These pages would offer instructions, guides, and answer questions whilst the players find their way to their goal.

(...) the story is told while the player reaches or finds the subsequent locations. Pages can also be interactive and e.g. ask questions, take pictures or audio records and upload them to a quest-specific webpage. For indoor tours QR codes or other barcodes can be used as locators.⁷³⁵

This is such an exciting learning idea which brings in aspects of gaming, storytelling, communication and creativity. I feel sure that a project like that would be of enormous interest to young people and one definitely worth exploring.

Kottoner 98FM radio⁷³⁶ could also play a very important role – as it has already done for many years – with regard to the spread of cultural awareness. And, as the Director informed me, nowadays home technology is at such a high level that people can actually create their own programmes and provide material for the local radio – thus giving the material a wide audience. Radio programmes do have to keep a high standard but, with some initial guidance, more people could become involved.

The variety of interests will be practically as numerous as the people involved. A few years ago, as part of Evenings on Campus, the University of Malta's summer festival, a group was engaged who are interested in tattoos;⁷³⁷ the history, the artistry, the method and the health aspects. They provided an evening of education and entertainment. Tattoos have always been popular in port towns and have become a cult practice amongst footballers so one can well imagine that there would be interest amongst both young and old in Bormla to hear about and to compare and contrast tattoos. The history of tattoos goes back millennia. Only a few years ago, on a mountain range between Italy and Austria, a well-preserved natural mummy of a man, nicknamed 'Ötzi', who lived between 3400 and 3100 BCE, was found with sixty-one tattoos all over his body.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ H. Mügge et al, *Perspectives on Community Practices*, p. 56.

⁷³⁶ Kottoner98FM radio, (website), <http://www.kottoner.com/Kottonerweb/html/index.html>

⁷³⁷ 'The Tattoo Culture', Evenings on Campus, 2015. Available from: <https://www.um.edu.mt/newsoncampus/events/2015/eoc2015tattooculture>, (accessed 28 May 2018).

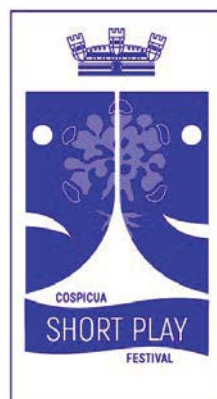
⁷³⁸ 'The 61 Tattoos of Ötzi, the 5,300-Year-Old "Iceman', Smithsonian.com, (website), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/61-tattoos-otzi-5300-year-old-iceman-180954035/>, (accessed 01 June 2018).

Bormla is blessed with some very talented residents both local and international. The creation of some kind of artistic venture would not be very difficult. However, the success of such a project would lie in its linkage to Bormla and to its residents. It is all about 'ownership'. And, in the case of an art experience, would probably need an indoor venue – depending upon what the experience was going to be.

The same could be said for music in Bormla. It is clearly a very important part of the city's past heritage and present performance, particularly through the work of the St George's Band Club. There must be so many ways of widening the audience through involving people from different artistic fields. As we have seen drama seems to be close to the local heart. I know that line and other dancing is very popular. One can imagine how all these fields could meld to create performances of local interest.

There are many teachers in Bormla and local historians who would be able to create all kinds of entertaining projects that would be awareness-creating at the same time. At present, the script-writing and performance is chiefly within the domain of the Church and that, as I have emphasized before, is an excellent thing. The Church activities are pivotal to Bormla's sense of belonging. However, it does not mean that there is no space for other activities of a more secular nature. If other towns have achieved a good mix – so can Bormla.

The Bormla Local Council has recently held a press conference to launch a cultural initiative entitled Cospicua Short Play Festival. The plays will be adjudicated and performed this year.⁷³⁹



This is an encouraging example of how the Local Council is trying to support initiatives that go beyond the religious. The words spoken during the press

⁷³⁹ Video clip, downloaded from Facebook, of the Bormla Local Council press conference to launch the Cospicua Short Play Festival, <https://www.facebook.com/275115409257889/videos/1258637650905655/>, (accessed 09 June 2018).

conference by each and every one of the participants was most significant in this regard. The groups are being offered technical help and a sum of money to help them with the expenses. The plays will then be performed in different venues around Bormla – from the Żiguzajg steps to the Dock and from the small garden near the parish church to the space under the new promenade.

Another building in Bormla which really should be under the guardianship of the Bormla Local Council is the Bastion of St Clement.⁷⁴⁰ This is, as far as I know, an unused building which used to house chickens and other animals. I have had occasion to tour the building which is vast and in surprisingly good condition. With its plethora of large and smaller spaces, it would make a wonderful workshop, seminar, meeting place and lies at the end of the Verdala entrenchment and within the boundaries of the Bormla District. On the top surface of the Bastion, nearest to the roof, is a collection of graffiti of historical and social value. Some are emblems of the regiments that have been stationed in the Bastion, cut to while away the time on look out duty, others are initials and names.

The discussion concerning St Clement could, of course, be widened to the many buildings and fortifications that could and should be open to the public. However, to keep them open to the public would need a solid commitment from a number of people. Apart from the commitment, such caretakers, as I have mentioned regarding St Clement Bastion, would have the responsibility of guardianship. There is, however, precedent for this kind of guardianship as Din l-Art Helwa (Malta's equivalent of the UK's National Trust) has several venues all over Malta which are looked after by appointed custodians who undertake to open the buildings, gardens or other spaces on particular days of the week or the month. Another example is Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna which has the guardianship of the Notre Dame Gate on the outskirts of Birgu. It is quite possible to imagine that something similar might be organized in Bormla with regard to St Clement.

The restoration of these buildings would require finances that would have to be part of a larger Malta-wide restoration scheme which is being actioned as one can see from the restoration works that have gone on and are still ongoing. Bormla can push to have more of its wonderful two lines of fortifications included in that scheme as soon as possible. As one of my respondents told me: Bormla is not just 'ix-Xatt'.

⁷⁴⁰ St Clement's Bastion – a pentagonal bastion which was heavily altered in the 19th century when it was incorporated into St. Clement's Retrenchment. It contains a demi-bastioned retrenchment, a gunpowder magazine and a World War II-era anti-aircraft battery with a control station and four concrete emplacements.
<http://www.theinfolist.com/php/SummaryGet.php?FindGo=Bastion>, (accessed: 29 May 2018).

There are many European Union initiatives that Bormla could be part of. Even if the groups do not wish to participate directly, there are many ideas to be had from, for example, Creative Europe, which is, according to its website,⁷⁴¹ the EU's programme for support to the culture and media sectors. It also has a popular Twitter account at: #CreativeEurope. 2018 has been designated the Year of Cultural Heritage and resulting initiatives abound.

One of the respondents, an active participant in religious events, suggested, following an Easter visit to Sicily, that Bormla should be linked to Trapani where performative street events take place which are very similar to the ones held in Bormla and in Malta generally. Another link that would be of interest to those who work with traditional boats in Bormla could be with Batana Ecomuseum.⁷⁴² This ecomuseum was “launched in 2004 in the multi-cultural town of Rovinj in Istria, the westernmost county of Croatia.”⁷⁴³ For the people in the community, the Batana wooden boat is the most “prominent symbol” of the town. I think that Ratković’s words would resonate in Bormla.

It was clear from the start that the Batana preserved the memories of the rich maritime tradition, but also held and reflected the continuity of the identity of the local everyday life and that the specific relationship between the people of Rovinj towards the Batana is equally, if not more important, than just the vessel as the maritime heritage artefact.⁷⁴⁴

This eco project, includes a permanent exhibition for the Batana boat but also

(the) “*SpacioMatika*”, Rovinj’s own version of a tavern, then the “Little shipyard” known locally as the “*Pećiosquèro*” and Rovinj’s regatta of traditional boats with lug and lateen sails”, the main annual ceremony celebrating maritime culture became the constituent elements of the Batana Ecomuseum.⁷⁴⁵

There could be some communality between Bormla’s boat community and that of Rovinj.

Yet another possible link would be with Great Yarmouth, UK which definitely shares some significant communality with Bormla as it is a port, a place which lost its (fishing) industry before the war. As mentioned elsewhere, Great Yarmouth has known commercial importance but slid down the social scale and suffered stigma.

⁷⁴¹ Creative Europe, (website), <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/>, (accessed 09 June 2018).

⁷⁴² Batana Ecomuseum, (website), <http://batana.org/en/home/>, (accessed 03 July 2018).

⁷⁴³ D.L. Ratković, ‘Batana Ecomuseum, Rovinj-Rovigno, Croatian ecomuseology “at the backdoor”’, in P. Davis et al, (eds), *Ecomuseums 2012*, pp. 305-314, p. 305.

⁷⁴⁴ Ratković, *Ecomuseums 2012*, p. 307.

⁷⁴⁵ Ratković, p. 310.

It is now trying very hard to regain its dignity, particularly through cultural activities and inclusion in a very post-museum way.

Malta has recently ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage which was drawn up in 2003. As expressed in *The Times of Malta* editorial of 2017,

Ratifying the convention serves to remind us what the major elements of our intangible heritage are and why we should safeguard them. It is planned to apply for Unesco recognition of the Maltese language, our religious festas and the accompanying fireworks traditions. There are other obvious candidates to be considered, such as unique foods, għana, certain trades and crafts, including lace and silver filigree.⁷⁴⁶

This Convention⁷⁴⁷ is of particular interest to Bormla which has intangible heritage that is being practised today and that certainly could benefit from official protection and the resulting prestige and encouragement of such protection.⁷⁴⁸

There are so many ideas that one could discuss concerning the practical side of the promotion of Bormla's heritage. However, I feel sure that the Bormlizi themselves can come up with many more.

□ **Conclusion**

In this Chapter I have returned to my original theoretical framework, examined the differentiation between 'history' and 'heritage' and also the overlap that these two concepts can have. Heritage, as defined by Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge, is able to look back, be in the present and be projected into the future, whilst history is something that happened in the past and stays in the past. However, in the case of Bormla, the historic objects are not purely in the past but still exist in the identity of the people, their sense of place and of community. The fortifications are not just buildings created centuries ago that have no particular meaning for today's Bormlizi. This both complicates and enriches the Bormla experience. Much of Bormla's contemporary heritage is based on ritual and performance and any attempt to reach out to people from other areas of Malta and particularly to tourists must consider the place of authenticity in these manifestations. It is one of the enduring discussions regarding eco or community museums and community projects. It has a role to play both in tangible and

⁷⁴⁶ Editorial, *The Times of Malta*, 01 April 2017. Available from: *Times of Malta* online, <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20170401/editorial/Intangible-cultural-heritage-to-protect.644069>, (accessed 09 June 2018).

⁷⁴⁷ 'Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage'. Available from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>, (accessed 09 June 2018).

⁷⁴⁸ Intangible Cultural Heritage, (website), <https://www.ichmalta.org/>, (accessed 09 June 2018).

intangible heritage. Authenticity does not refer only to an original artefact but narratives, even mythic ones, which should be an honest reflection of the past.

(...) heritage is not a 'thing', it is not a site, building or other material object. (...) Rather heritage is what goes on at these sites, and while this does not mean that a sense of physical place is not important for these activities or plays some role in them, the physical place or 'site' is not the full story of what heritage might be.⁷⁴⁹

We have seen that heritage tends to change in emphasis depending on societal changes and new narratives are perfectly acceptable as long as they are not touted as old ones.

Ways of projecting Bormla's potential historic and heritage objects were discussed using the examples that emerged from the respondents. Also examined was the use that is already being made of some of those sites and the importance of creating a place where these things can be spoken about before decisions can be taken out of local hands.

Possibly the most important issue in the whole of this discussion about Bormla's culture and the potential benefits to the community of expanding that culture is social capital. Nothing can be done without mustering the social capital of Bormla. There are already groups that manage to do that admirably with regard to Church activities and some secular ones. However, for a project like this to succeed there needs to be a drive to encourage leadership so that the message of this expansion of cultural activity can be explained and understood. My respondents showed great enthusiasm for all kinds of cultural activities so the potential is most definitely there. The discussion about youth participation is all part of the debate about social capital and requires a sensitive and professional approach from the leaders of the community. For these younger members of Bormla's society but not only to them, there must be the continued use of digital media not only for communication at a person to person or group to group level but also in the production of the cultural events, activities and programmes.

In my final Chapter I shall be looking at some of the big issues that will form the backbone of this project: good leadership; an understanding of cognitive democracy; issues of social justice; notions of ownership and the pedagogical potential of the project. In wishing to maintain the present remarkable features of Bormliż life and mores, and to retain its deserved sense of uniqueness within the Maltese milieu, it will, paradoxically, need to open up its treasures to a public that will be astounded by what Bormla has that is old, intriguing, beautiful, strange, uncomfortable and also warm.

⁷⁴⁹ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p. 44.

The 'opening up' of the 'objects' of Bormla, and, possibly, their economic potential should be a decision for the people of Bormla but first the coordinates for making those choices have to be charted.

CHAPTER SIX

SYNTHESIS AND SIGNPOSTS

□ *Introduction*

In this concluding chapter, I return to the research questions that have been the basis of this thesis and attempt to synthesize the voices that were heard and the ideas put forward by my respondents. In the following sections I try to pinpoint those fundamentals that will be essential to the success of this post-museum project – whatever form or forms it takes. In the first instance, these are leadership and a strong community structure. I put forward some examples of good practice that can encourage the development of positive leadership within a culture of community building. I have tried to link those ideas of leadership with what was expressed by so many of the respondents during my fieldwork with relation to Bormla.

The emphasis is also on an element of cognitive democracy, together with an underlying understanding of dialogue and critical thinking. Whilst acknowledging that Bormla's grassroots will need to have the assistance of people to achieve their aims – first and foremost, the Local Council – it is key to their success that the local people understand their primary place in any discussions whatever the structures that are set up. This, I point out, will necessitate good lines of collaboration and cooperation between groups with diverse viewpoints. It will not always be easy. The importance of keeping together so as to keep macro interests at bay will also be discussed.

Ultimately, this community is going to ask itself what it will gain by walking this road of dialogue and cooperation. In the final section I shall explore diverse ideas about learning in a cultural space – of whatever shape. These are issues that museum theorists are constantly asking themselves in an effort to come up with answers that resonate in different places and in diverse circumstances. There are, as Dicks tells us, “economic, cultural, social and political dimensions of heritage production and consumption.”⁷⁵⁰ From each of those dimensions, there is something to be learned that will surely benefit everybody in some way or another. A constituent part of every cultural project is communication. In this chapter, I shall argue that we all need to communicate, discuss and debate critically as equals.

⁷⁵⁰ B. Dicks, *Heritage Place and Community*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2000, p. 7.

□ *An overview of the research questions and synthesis of the results*

The starting point for this thesis were the four research questions that were posed in Chapter Two:

- What sense of time and place do the people of Bormla have with regard to their city and its environs? What does this local population see as its own heritage and the heritage of its place?
- Who is the community, or who are the communities of Bormla? How can those from outside the community(ies) of Bormla, including researchers, identify, theorise about and communicate with the different communities in this place?
- How do local community groups conceptualise and practise their heritage and that of their city? Are the local people and the informal and formal groups and organisations of Bormla interested in extending their vision of cultural heritage so as to enhance their own and other people's understanding of the city and its value?
- Do the communities of Bormla want to exercise their right for cognitive democracy and civic action or indeed feel that this can be beneficial to them in the short and long term?

Keeping in mind the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter One and revisited in Chapter Five, I undertook fieldwork in Bormla over a period of some twelve months. This included formal interviews with fixed but open-ended questions which aimed at teasing out opinions, attitudes and emotions regarding the main research questions. I also held formal focus groups with people of diverse backgrounds and demographics. These groups were asked the same open-ended questions. I also had long and totally open conversations with many people in and outside Bormla. Some of these were organized meetings and others were conversations I had with people I met in the shops and streets of Bormla. I have described the fieldwork in Part II of Chapter Two and have tried to express and analyse the findings that followed from this work in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

It is difficult to reduce that analysis into a few words but I shall try to summarise the main findings. The data leads me to conclude that the Bormlizi have a very strong sense of place. The reasons for this have been discussed in the chapters but include the siege mentality common to many walled towns, the very strong sense of the city's value within Malta's history which has to live alongside the stigma that they deal with when they leave the walls. This dichotomy between self-esteem and stigma creates a marked passion for home that is similar to that of

Valletta and the other cities of Cottonera – all of which are surrounded by walls that go back some three hundred and fifty years. The Bormliži have also, historically, looked out to sea and not towards the hinterland. There is nothing between them and the sea and the Mediterranean's commercial ports beyond. I have tried to demonstrate that the sea-faring narrative still lives within the local population despite having been denied a direct sea link for so long. They consider themselves to be self-sufficient, independent and different to the Maltese in general.

Most of my respondents were extremely articulate in expressing their view of what their past history might have been and how it links up with their past and their contemporary heritage. They were particularly interested in Church heritage in the form of rituals and performance. However, other traditions such as the Regatta were seen as heritage going back to the Middle Ages and a contemporary heritage that still animates every man and woman in Bormla. Many were aware that Bormla has a long and intriguing narrative which has its positive stories and its dark side. Not everyone had intimate knowledge of the historic past but were very keen that Bormla's part in events such as the Great Siege should be recognized. Respondents of a certain age did mourn the loss of the vibrant pre-war city that they picture in their minds but were, for the most part, very forward-looking and pleased to have their sea access returned to them after the demise of the Dockyard and with the Rehabilitation Project.

As one might have imagined the 'community' of Bormla was complex with a central core who consider themselves the 'real' Bormliži. For this group there exist two other groups whom they consider not quite Bormliži. One group was made up of those who came to Bormla in search of work after the war. Despite the fact that this group has now been in Bormla for some seventy years they constituted, in the minds of the 'real' group, a community apart. The third group comprises those that came into Bormla in the social housing movement of the 1980s. Some of these, but not all, are people who were living in sub-standard housing in Birgu and were given better accommodation in the larger city of Bormla. Some of the original 1980s 'immigrants' have kept their Birgu sentiments, others have integrated. However, members of the incoming 1980s group, repeatedly told me that their children are now Bormliži. I also found that certain perceptions might be clear in the minds of the 'real' Bormliži but in reality there is more integration than they perceive. Through the focus groups and interviews it was possible to identify different groups. As I have said previously, this is not an issue of class as most people in Bormla would probably describe themselves as working class. It is more to do with a hierarchy of whose roots in Bormla run deepest.

Local community groups connected with the Church are very keyed into their past and present heritage. Those who are involved in the Church calendar events spend much of their spare time organizing and improving upon these events.

When it comes to outdoor Church activities both during the Feast in December and during Holy Week, the organisers are keen to attract Bormlizi from outside Bormla and Maltese as well as tourists. The Good Friday procession is particularly popular with tourists who are given special seating and a commentary in various languages. Whilst the Bormlizi are aware that their city has the potential for cultural heritage exposure, there is little in the way of promotion that goes beyond the Church activities. The secular areas such as the Regatta, St George's Football Club, the Band Club and the Scouts have a local following but they do not have much of a profile outside the Three Cities. Several respondents had ideas about how this might change and lamented the fact that the previously well-known St George's Football Club was no longer in the upper leagues. When the individual respondents and the groups were asked if they would like to see an increase in local and Maltawide awareness of the merits of their city there was always an enthusiastic response.

The Bormlizi appear to be pragmatic in their approach to the changes that have been imposed upon them in the past and about the new developments with regard to the gentrification of Bormla. The most vociferous voices concerned the changes in the district boundaries that have taken place over the years and particularly when the Local Council system was set up. The constant complaint was that the changes were made before the Bormla Local Council was constituted and they, the people of Bormla, were faced with a *fait accompli*. As one the respondents put it

Another negative phenomenon was that of the Local Councils. One third of Bormla was given to Birgu. Kordin, which was one of the hills of Bormla, went to Raħal Ġdid including the football pitch. These things had an impact on society. (14)

This was the perception that many of the respondents had and I do know that this issue finds its way on to local Facebook discussions on a regular basis. When I met up with the focus groups and interviewees I asked them all the final question: Are you interested in having a say in how Bormla's culture is projected both within your own boundaries and to those outside it? If so, what suggestions can you make in this regard? The great majority said that they would be interested in discussing ways of promoting Bormla. One focus group in particular was very enthusiastic about this and wanted to set up a meeting immediately to start the ball rolling. Others were a little more circumspect but on the whole there was interest and there were suggestions. It is understandable that there was a bit of scepticism as there really is so little in the way of promotion of cultural heritage beyond the Church that it was difficult for them to visualize it actually happening.

The project that is envisaged is not something with fixed contours. It could be described as a creative community venture that would focus upon those historical

and past and present heritage objects mentioned by the respondents as being worthy of recall and remembering. The aim would be to create an engaging space or spaces that would showcase Bormla's many intriguing and stimulating narratives. These narratives could be presented and represented in such a way as to be interesting not only to a local but also to an audience from beyond Bormla.

In no way is it suggested that these creative ventures would supplant the present superb public performative art and veneration associated with the Church's religious calendar. On the contrary, those events should develop as they are doing and have done over the last centuries.

Other creative ventures would be an add-on to those Church activities and could be events held in conjunction with local secular activities or as stand-alone events throughout the year.

I have argued that Bormla is aware of its potential with regard to improving the negative image which it has amongst other Maltese towns and villages but that it is unsure of how to go about creating that improved image. The desire to expunge this negative picture is further complicated by the attitude of some Bormlizi – a kind of survival technique — which could be expressed either as: 'Others do not understand us, nor do they make an effort to understand us so we shall simply retreat behind our walls' or else as: 'We shall leave and shake the dust of Bormla off our feet.' I should emphasize that these attitudes are not universal in Bormla. There are people who make every effort to talk and write about their hometown in the hope of creating an awareness of historical events and past and present heritage. Some write about it in local publications, others simply post beautiful images of Bormla on their Facebook page. However, in the belief that it is going to take more than these very laudable efforts to solve the issue of the stigma and to bring out the cultural dimension/s of Bormla, I shall also attempt to imagine some structures and indicate some signposts that could point towards these goals. These aims will surely not be achieved by walking one road but several. The destination of those pathways may be a common one but the ways to arrive there will necessarily be manifold.

With regard to the final research question, I can also envisage a place of discussion, where people come to talk about anything and everything. This can be done in a structured or a more informal way – through verbal discourse but also through song or poetry or performance. However, the dynamism which many Bormlizi have demonstrated — the kind of enthusiasm encountered in the interviews, the focus groups and in informal conversations with local people — will always need a catalyst. There are ideas that will need champions and leaders. It will have to include a dialogic framework that is not simply a top down talking shop but one which involves people from across Bormla's internal social structure. This,

naturally, begs the question: where are these leaders and these structures going to come from?

□ *Leadership*

Throughout the previous chapters of this thesis the theme of leadership has emerged frequently in the responses of the interviewees, from within the focus groups and in the several one-to-one informal conversations. There were differing opinions amongst these respondents. Some were fearful that leaders were not going to be found amongst the younger generation of Bormliži, whilst others were more philosophical about the subject and were convinced that leaders would emerge as time went by. I tend to agree with the less pessimistic respondents with regard to the religious/Church events. As I have stated, I am convinced that for those events leaders will truly emerge. However, finding champions for other activities that reflect the heritage of Bormla that includes art, music, literature, artisanship, the historical past or initiatives such as memory banks, video and photographic archives and other, technological proposals — all of which were mentioned by my respondents as being important for Bormla — will need well thought out strategies.

These leaders could be people who are from the community(ies) of Bormla or who are connected to or have a connection with the city. However, they could also emerge from groups outside the city but who would be willing to participate in an innovative exercise involving a dialogical system aimed at getting Bormliži together to discuss and create ideas. If, initially, leaders are sought from outside Bormla, one of the aims of the discussions should be to develop and encourage leadership skills from within the groups – in effect training potential leaders. This can be done during the dialogues and also through specific leadership workshops. The ultimate aim should be to create community leaders from within. However, that may not be possible in the initial stages.

In the Cottonera, South Harbour region there are many people working for the benefit of the communities: the Local Councils, Aġenzija Appoġġ, Ċentru LEAP, the University's Cottonera Resource Centre, Forum Komunità Bormliža and others. Some are government entities and others NGOs. Some are professionals, with certificates and degrees to their name, others simply have experience and passion on their CVs. Bormla is going to need some initial help from these groups. To some, the idea of mixing NGOs with government might seem a bit of an anathema. However, as Malta is such a small country in which the proximity of government to the people is so much closer than in larger countries, it has been found, even by an NGO activist (and academic) working on contentious issues, that successful campaigns almost always included some input from government sources.

The support of any of the two major political parties – or elements within them – to the environmental movement usually aids the chances of victory.⁷⁵¹

This was also the opinion of an active member of the Bormla community, involved in performative heritage events.

I believe in the idea of leadership. There is a lack of leadership. It is useless for us to dream of something. There needs to be the help of the Local Council.⁷⁵²

Cutajar and Magro, in their paper on the effects of Decentralisation after Malta's entry into the EU, make a strong argument for the need for cooperation and collaboration if the Local Councils, which made their appearance as part of that Decentralisation, are to be a success.

Local communities, local governments, the private sector and voluntary associations need to be consulted and involved in this change which takes politics to the local level for the reforms to succeed. Decentralisation necessitates the adoption of a particular institutional and legislative framework to facilitate the process, but also a change in values and mentality at the political bottom and among political elites.⁷⁵³

Linked to the perceived need for support of the local authorities there is also the need for community members to feel respected.

Responses were high, tackling different issues. Most of them (the survey respondents) expressed that education plays a crucial role when encouraging community involvement and interaction, especially within younger generations. Others stated that sometimes they feel inferior to other communities as the government and local authorities do not always give them their full attention and co-operation. From the surveys, I could also notice that they are willing to give their part but they first want to feel respected and more involved in decision making.⁷⁵⁴

Cutajar and Magro discuss how researchers have “demonstrated that community participation and grass roots development play a key role in promoting sustainability programmes and quality of life improvements (Wood, 2002; Cutajar 2007; Cutajar, 2008b).”

⁷⁵¹ M. Briguglio, 'Sociology of planning policy', *Times of Malta*, Monday, April 09, 2018. Available from: The Times of Malta online, (accessed 15 May 2018).

⁷⁵² Pierre Bugeja, during a focus group session.

⁷⁵³ J. Cutajar, & J. Magro, 'Political Decentralisation in the Maltese Islands', in P.G. Xuereb (ed.), *Malta in the European Union: Five Years on and Looking to the Future*, EDRC, Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence, University of Malta, 2009, pp. 113-128, p. 122.

⁷⁵⁴ Farrugia, 'Community Involvement and Interaction with relation to heritage sites', p. 56.

When citizens, voluntary groups, business entities, spiritual leaders, service providers within the community meet with representatives from local, national and supra-national entities to discuss the needs and problems that beset a community and how to best address these, this helps increase interest and helps create a sense of ownership towards the project envisaged.⁷⁵⁵

Leadership, therefore, has to develop a role of dialogue that will also give confidence to those who are participating in that dialogue.

With regard to the qualities necessary in these leaders, in his *Fourth Letter*,⁷⁵⁶ Paulo Freire expands on the ‘indispensable qualities of progressive teachers’ but the outline he provides can just as well be applied to those who have a leadership role within a community. Freire points out vividly in this letter and in his seminal publication,⁷⁵⁷ that genuine leadership can only thrive in a two-way relationship in which the leader learns as much as the student.

The correct method lies in dialogue.”⁷⁵⁸

Freire writes eloquently about the role of humility in creating that all-important dialogue. Such humility, he says

(...) by no mean carries the connotation of a lack of self-respect, of resignation, or of cowardice. On the contrary, humility requires courage, self-confidence, self-respect, and respect for others.

Humility helps us to understand this obvious truth: No one knows it all; no one is ignorant of everything. We all know something; we are all ignorant of something.⁷⁵⁹

This approach is totally in keeping with the context of community development. One of the main aims of such a project is to bring out the talents, interests and skills of the community – both past and present. Without a two-way learning approach such discovery would be impossible.

Another stimulating observation concerns tolerance. In a conversation of 2009, Freire makes the point that “tolerant does not mean acquiescing to the intolerable ...”

“ Being tolerant is not a question of being naïve.” ⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁵ Cutajar and Magro, *Malta in the European Union*, p. 124.

⁷⁵⁶ P. Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Westview Press, NY, 2009, pp. 71–84.

⁷⁵⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1996.

⁷⁵⁸ Freire, p. 43.

⁷⁵⁹ Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁶⁰ Paolo Freire from: ‘An Incredible Conversation with Paolo Freire’, LiteracyDotOrg, published on Dec 30, 2009, (YouTube), www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&NR=1&v=aFWjnkFypFA,

For Freire

“Tolerance is the virtue that teaches us to live with the different. It teaches us to learn from and respect the different.”

Being a leader of a project in a community that may not be one’s own or, alternatively, amongst groups within one’s own community, requires that kind of tolerance advocated by Freire. He returns time and again to the openness that leaders/teachers must have to learning from others; the desire to take on board ‘difference’ in its multiple forms. On the other hand, the tolerance of the unacceptable is not tolerance because to be tolerant means to hold in respect, to be disciplined and to be ethical. One cannot respect the intolerable.

The words of Freire can help the community workers to recognize their role as respectful instigators or agents of change that contribute to the creation of efficient organizers or leaders going forward. The push to actuate ideas that may already be present within a community but still *‘in fieri’* has to come from somewhere. That which matters is the attitude and the aims of the professionals and the volunteers involved. The intervention of trained personnel should be about knowledge and skills transfer rather than imposition of ideas or, even worse, ideologies. One of the main aims of such a project is to bring out the talents, interests and skills of the community members. Without a two-way learning approach such discovery would be impossible.

With regard to the particular leadership needed in the context of community museums created by and through a community, one soon realizes that a definition of such leadership is complex. In her introduction to a paper by Temkin,⁷⁶¹ ⁷⁶² Kate Mansell,⁷⁶³ discusses the fact that even a group of “[...] people with varied backgrounds [...] from business, from government, from the military, from education, from associations, from the community sector itself,” could not actually come up with a definition of ‘community leadership’ and thus “initiated a project to develop a working definition” for themselves. Their definition comes in the form of a chapter entitled: *The Case for Community Leadership* in which Temkin describes what the differences might be between the usual concept of leadership in a business context and that of a leader within a community. He does this through a discussion of four leadership practices which he suggests are critical to

(accessed 10 March 2013).

⁷⁶¹ M. Temkin, ‘The Case for Community Leadership’, *The Philanthropist*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2011, p. 489–501. Available from: <https://thephilanthropist.ca/original-pdfs/Philanthropist-23-4-456.pdf>, (accessed 12 May 2018).

⁷⁶² Although authored by Mitchell Temkin, this essay is the result of collaborative work by the Board of Leadership Victoria, the members of which were able to pool their experience and expertise.

⁷⁶³ Kate Mansell is a past Board President at Leadership Victoria and Director of Development, Boys & Girls Club Services of Greater Victoria (Canada).

communities: finding and managing “passionate consensus” among the committed; social entrepreneurship; articulating a vision of public good, and enabling collaboration.

“Community leaders must have highly developed skills in finding consensus among their vociferously opinionated equals; in listening; in empathizing; in finding a plausible shared basis for action; in engagingly articulating an inclusive, accommodating vision; in brokering tradeoffs among views strongly held.”⁷⁶⁴

The above quotation is particularly pertinent where it places emphasis on ‘equals’. This is clearly going to be key to that balance of influence and persuasion that will have to be part and parcel of any community project.

Temkin also stresses the importance of entrepreneurship.

“[...] working in a community organization is like working in a perpetual business startup, because there is simply no end to need and never enough money to meet it.”⁷⁶⁵

He lays out the remit of the community leader/s with regard to this aspect of project and insists that “entrepreneurial community leaders innovate. Relentlessly. Because they must.”

For Temkin “(c)ollaboration is an imperative”; even if the community organization, small group or enterprising individual has ‘special-purpose’ aims, these have to mature in an ever more complex reality.

Bormla already has a number of what Nowell and Boyd describe as ‘community collaboratives’.⁷⁶⁶ These can be voluntary groups with focused interests. An example would be the ‘Ĉentru 19 ta’ Novembru 1944’ that takes care of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and many of the Holy Week events. Nowell and Boyd’s starting point was that whilst they agreed with the concept of ‘Sense of Community’ expounded by previous authors (Mannarini and Fedi (2009) and McMillan and Chavis (1986), which dwelt on ‘community as resource’, they proposed another element: the ‘sense of community as responsibility’. Within these ‘collaboratives’ there would be those who are there because they felt strongly a sense of community as resource but with the added psychological element of ‘responsibility’ toward that community. Through their research, the authors aimed

⁷⁶⁴ Temkin, ‘The Case for Community Leadership’, p. 493.

⁷⁶⁵ Temkin ‘The Case for Community Leadership’, p. 494.

⁷⁶⁶ B. Nowell and N.M. Boyd, ‘Sense of Community responsibility in Community Collaboratives: Advancing a Theory of Community as Resource and Responsibility’, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 54, no. 3-4, 2014, pp.229-242, p. 231. Available from: Wiley online, (accessed 01 November 2017).

to estimate the validity of the added element of 'responsibility' within the concept of the sense of community as resource. One of the variables that they examined was that of Leadership.

In their final analysis, Nowell and Boyd theorized

(...) that SOC (Sense of Community) would demonstrate a stronger association with satisfaction toward the collaborative relative to SOC-R (Sense of Community + Responsibility) while members with higher levels of SOC-R would show a stronger association with engagement and leadership behaviors.⁷⁶⁷

This highlighting of the importance and function for leadership shows that it goes beyond the actual actions of leadership and is reflected in the way in which these groups are viewed from inside the community. Not everyone in the community, happy though they might be within it, is going to join a 'collaborative'. However, the better the engagement and leadership is in those 'collaboratives', the better they are judged by the community. This reflection and analysis will be key to the success of any creative ventures.

The work of these collaboratives is the very essence of the whole project because

(b)uilding awareness is not enough. (...) If you want to make change, you need to find ways to translate information into action. That means building organizational will and developing concrete ways to support behavior change. Information does not organically spawn organisational will to change. Organisational will does not magically morph to behavior change. Each of those is a leap, and you need to engineer the jumps.⁷⁶⁸

□ ***Sustainable development and community building***

Sustainable development within an urban historic landscape is what Bormla needs to be thinking about now.

Sustained investment for conservation programmes is difficult to achieve, as opposed to short-term financing for one-off projects. This hampers the development of long-term strategies for conservation, in particular for capacity-building and monitoring activities to assess the effectiveness of conservation decisions. Part of this is due to a lack of collected data to provide clear arguments for decision makers regarding the specific benefits that cultural heritage conservation can bring in socioeconomic

⁷⁶⁷ Nowell and Boyd, p. 238.

⁷⁶⁸ N. Simon, Museum 2.0 – 'How Will You Turn Those New Ideas into Action?', posted 09 May 2018, (blog), <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com.mt/>, (accessed 09 May 2018).

terms. One participant (in a survey) commented: “It is important to see heritage as a means of development, not just as an object of pride.”⁷⁶⁹

This city is an example of how social fabric is linked with sustainable development.

In recent years, the social aspects of sustainability have gained increased recognition as a fundamental component of sustainable development.⁷⁷⁰

In a paper that proposes ‘a framework for localized decision-making in historic urban environments’, Landorf looks at the changes in praxis in, for example, the UK moving from centralized government control to partnerships of one sort or another that integrate with local non-governmental groups or collaboratives. This arrangement, prima facie, does seem like a good solution through which ‘resources’ reach out to grassroots social groups which have a vested interest social coherence in the area. However, he mentions a caveat – raised by Davies (2002)⁷⁷¹ – that sometimes this can result in ‘increased rather than decreased central government control’.

This has occurred as a result of increased central government control over the resources for collaboration and the absence of a culture of community activism amongst private sector organisations.⁷⁷²

This caveat is one which should be taken seriously against the backdrop of Bormla. Within the context of a community museum or a creative venture there is an element of community building as one would hope that it would be based on the involvement of a cross-section of Bormla’s social groups. Getting that to happen may need careful consideration and coordination. As Borrup points out

Community building is a creative and interdisciplinary activity. It requires new ways of working across established professions.⁷⁷³

However, in this particular case, that may not really be the issue or the main difficulty that will have to be addressed.

⁷⁶⁹ A. Heritage and J. Copithorne, (eds), *Sharing Conservation Decisions Current Issues and Future Strategies*, ICCROM, Rome, 2018, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁷⁰ C. Landorf, ‘Governance in historic urban environments: A theoretical review’, *International Journal of Heritage and Sustainable Development*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2011, pp. 07-16, p. 8. Available from: Taylor & Francis Online.

⁷⁷¹ J.S. Davies, ‘The governance of urban regeneration: A critique of the ‘governing without government’ thesis’, *Public Administration*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2002, pp. 301-322. Available from: Wiley online.

⁷⁷² Landorf, ‘Governance in historic urban environments’, p. 12.

⁷⁷³ T.C. Borrup, *Creative Community Builder's Handbook: How to Transform Communities Using Local Assets, Arts, and Culture*, Fieldstone Alliance, 2006, p. xv.

The greatest challenge may be to convince local people that there is value in the activism needed to sustain the promotion of local culture and heritage. This is not because of lack of interest on their part. Their interest has been demonstrated throughout the fieldwork and through the empirical evidence such as the Bir Mula Heritage Museum. However, as yet, activities other than those with an ecclesiastical connection, created with the best of intentions and with enthusiasm, have often fallen a bit flat. The reason may be that the focus has not been on something – an object in the widest meaning of the word – that the local people felt they could ‘buy into’. This could be ‘buying in’ in the sense of metaphorical ‘ownership’ or could equally be a real, financially rewarding ownership. This might be the kind of financial gain made through small business development or it could also refer to funds that are reinvested by a group in the object that they have created or that they have stewardship over.

The idea of heritage in Malta is very much linked to the Knights of St John and the Baroque. They are both present everywhere you look. To those who do not know much about, or are not interested in prehistory, Malta *is* the Knights of St John. Birgu has its Knights’ period past: St Angelo; the Collacchio; the small but elegant auberges; the Couvre Porte; the Inquisitor’s Palace upon which the city can hook its historic narrative. Senglea holds on to its Maritime history as a peninsula surrounded by its harbour waters. Although Bormla has a large stretch of exceptional fortifications which are from the period of Knights these are not in any way connected with the Siege of Malta. In that sense, “(t)here is nothing ‘knightly’ about Cospicua.”⁷⁷⁴ Also, the fortifications are hidden away from the public eye and not accessible to the general public. From the Upper Barrakka in Valletta, most visible across Grand Harbour are Fort St Angelo and Senglea Point with its iconic *vedette*. Cospicua lies somewhere between them and is actually hidden from view by the Senglea peninsula. A visitor viewing from the Upper Barrakka could be forgiven for not even noticing it was there.

The success that Birgu has had in attracting tourists to its events has not been lost on the Bormliži but one of the important lessons to be learned from the Birgu example is, as Cutajar expressed it

The more successful the events were in attracting outside attention, the higher the propensity it was for community members to cooperate in future events or projects. They were also in a better position to attract the help – financial or otherwise – of entities found outside the community.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁴ Falzon, *Lino a tribute, Festschrift in honour of Lino Spiteri*, p. 146.

⁷⁷⁵ Cutajar and Vella, ‘The Role of Cultural Events in Promoting Community Cohesion’, p. 10.

This does show that if the right kind of events or spaces were to be chosen in Bormla the more enthusiasm there would be both from without and from within the city.

With reference to Birgu, Cutajar and Magro write

Ideas regarding community development originated from the residents themselves, while the local council facilitated its implementation. These ideas coalesced into projects which sometimes necessitated the cooperation of the whole community such as the cleaning up and greening campaign as well as the participation in the preparation for the myriad cultural events which take place in this locality on an annual basis. Community commitment and involvement played a part in attracting the necessary funds and/or technical help from EU entities for the restoration and conservation of built heritage. This, in turn, helped increase the community's trust in their local council.⁷⁷⁶

This indicates that getting the community to feel 'ownership' influences commitment, which, in its turn, affects the ability to attract funds which consequently increases trust in the local council. As one of the respondents told me with regard to Bormla,

People will be aware if there is no agenda behind your project. If the local people are not going to enjoy the ownership then the responsibility of looking after the projects falls to the person wielding the power. The negative side is that if there is no local sense of ownership you will not find people to help you. The authorities including the Local Council must take notice of what people want. (14)

This point is made by Landorf when he suggests that it is imperative that local, grassroots collaboratives take 'ownership' of their urban landscape and have the opportunity to express how it translates into local heritage, memory, sense of place. If not, there is a risk that the state will take over the "management of heritage places" and "appropriate local heritage for the purposes of constructing a national identity".⁷⁷⁷ One could take as an example the narrative of Fort Verdala. For the casual visitor and for the tourist, Fort Verdala is a British fort built into the original Knights' period fortifications which is now functioning as social housing. Today's Bormliżi, their parents or grandparents on the other hand, have lived the vicissitudes of the Fort from the time during the WWII. At that time, the Fort was used as a camp for prisoners of war, as it had been in WWI when it housed a large amount of German prisoners including the surviving crew of HMS Emden. In WWII part of the Fort became 'HMS Euroclydon' and was used to house submarine crews. Emblems of regiments and names of people who passed through Fort Verdala are

⁷⁷⁶ Cutajar and Magro, *Malta in the European Union*, p. 124.

⁷⁷⁷ Landorf, 'Governance in historic urban environments', p. 11.

inscribed on the walls.⁷⁷⁸ The Fort is a profound reflection of the relationship of the Bormlizi with the British forces. It was soldiers based in those barracks who, on their way to work at the Dockyard, would pass pennies to the local youngsters. (Chapter Three, p. 167.) The Fort could easily take on a straightforward national identity narrative but for Bormla and the Bormlizi it would be a more complex story altogether.

This intriguing, multi-faceted city has many a story to tell. It is not the narrative of Senglea and neither is it the story of Vittoriosa but it has its own narrative, sometimes a little rough around the edges, historical, commercial, industrial, but no less interesting for that. It also has a potential history that has yet to be discovered underneath the actual houses.⁷⁷⁹ As a consequence of this, the creative venture has to include objects – tangible and intangible – which the city can ‘own’. I suspect that the discussion will not be about binding the community but deciding what people wish to actually recall. Many things were mentioned to me, as can be seen in the previous chapters, but when it comes to shining a light on those objects there may not be consensus. It will be the responsibility of the initial leaders to acknowledge these issues and work through them with the community.

Engaging the tangible with the intangible is likely to be a contested area. The challenges should not be underestimated as is acknowledged in a recent ICCROM publication.

Better communication and cross-cultural understanding is key, particularly when trying to find ways to integrate the conservation of tangible heritage with that of intangible heritage, and when engaging with other disciplines, traditions and knowledge systems.⁷⁸⁰

□ ***Cognitive democracy, dialogue and critical thinking***

To quote Blake,

More recently, the significance of heritage to local actors has become much better understood, and international law now calls for a greater democratisation of the heritage protection paradigm, in particular through community participation in its identification, safeguarding and management.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ E. Delceppo, ‘Fort Verdala: The Emden Connection’, powerpoint presentation, 2010.

⁷⁷⁹ Falzon, *Lino a tribute, Festschrift in honour of Lino Spiteri*, p. 153.

⁷⁸⁰ Heritage and Copithorne, *Sharing Conservation Decisions Current Issues and Future Strategies*, p. 8.

⁷⁸¹ J. Blake, ‘Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage – How the Role of Museums is Evolving in Response to a New Heritage Protection Paradigm’, in B.B. Soares et al (eds), *Defining museums of the 21st century: plural experiences*, Papers from the ICOFOM symposia in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and St Andrews, November 2017, ICOM/ICOFOM, 2018, p. 177.

From the beginning of this endeavour the thoughts and opinions of the respondents have been given priority. The aim was always that this should be a bottom up examination of the potential of Bormla to manifest its many interests, its talents, its narratives and its traditions as perceived by the Bormlizi. The imposition of a Western Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) as defined by Smith⁷⁸² has largely been avoided as there is little or no museum culture in Bormla. Smith, writing within a UK heritage professional milieu, is anxious that a particular type of heritage, which fitted within certain traditional parameters, would smother or discourage other heritage aspects that had value within the community.

As Waterton and Smith state,

Indeed, professionals within the heritage sector seem reluctant to give up a little of their power and allow other groups the status to participate on a par.⁷⁸³

An opinion also expressed by Burström,

There was a time, not so very long ago, when the professional experts in cultural heritage seemed quite self-sufficient. Then, there was not much of dialogue; it was more of a one-way communication whereby experts were supposed to inform the citizens.⁷⁸⁴

Bormla has no legacy or, at present, any pressures from those who might represent AHD in Malta and this could turn out to be an advantage. However, this situation could also have disadvantages. Whilst certain aspects of Bormla's heritage are being championed, other potential areas are lacking in people and resources to champion them. The respondents mentioned so many things that they were interested in remembering – from historic events and buildings to tales of their childhood; from the Dockyard to contemporary artisans. However, the question of how these other aspects can be given life demands a discussion not only about leadership and awareness creation but also of the modelling of creative structures. It is important that the bottom up philosophy is maintained when the discussion structures are set up. The theme of cognitive democracy is not without its critics. Most of them, however, do not criticize the concept as a bad thing. On the contrary, some critics feel that it is an ideal to be aimed for but that is most often unattainable. The reason for this attitude is that cognitive democracy demands that there be very good lines of collaboration and cooperation between groups with diverse viewpoints which is not an easy thing to achieve. However, the alternative would be a more hierarchical approach which might not succeed. And if it did, it

⁷⁸² Smith, *Uses of heritage*, 2008.

⁷⁸³ Waterton and Smith, 'The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage', p. 12.

⁷⁸⁴ M. Burström, 'More than a Sensitive Ear: What to Expect of a Professional Expert', in J. Schofield (ed.), *Who Needs Experts?*, Routledge, 2014, p. 100.

would, for the reasons expressed previously, have a reductive effect on the Bormla narrative. In their paper of 2013, in which they state a case for cognitive democracy as an efficient and effective style of negotiation between groups, Farrell and Shalizi insist that

Groups with high diversity of internal viewpoints are better able to identify optima (the best solutions) than groups composed of much smarter individuals with more homogenous viewpoints. By putting their diverse views together, the former are able to map out more of the landscape and identify possible solutions that would be invisible to groups of individuals with more similar perspectives.⁷⁸⁵

Another reason for keeping the discussion within Bormla as much as possible is that if the group includes people who have a macro interest rather than a local micro one they may interfere with what needs to be done in the local sphere.

In particular, actors who benefit from the status quo (or who would prefer less generally-beneficial solutions) may be able to use political and social power to block movement towards such peaks, and instead compel movement towards solutions that have lower social and greater individual benefits.⁷⁸⁶

Or as Falzon puts it

This might have something to do with a zero-sum mentality that sees (correctly) regeneration as a spatial realignment of resources which, in the case of Cottonera, would imply a flow of tourists (a resource) away from the established Sliema, Bugibba, Valletta, and such. Private interests in those places, therefore, will not necessarily look forward to a re-appraisal of 'the other side'.⁷⁸⁷

This might lead to a temptation to scupper attempts or at least try to dissuade the discussion group from following a particular line or action.

Democracy, then, is committed to equality of power; it is also well-suited to exposing points of view to each other in a way that leads to identifying better solutions. This is because democracy also involves debate.⁷⁸⁸

Farrell and Shalizi argue that although "this interchange of perspectives looks ugly: it is partisan, rancorous and vexatious, and people seem to never change their minds," it is reality. For the authors, the idea of a polite, reasoned debate resulting in full agreement by all parties are aspirations which "are hopelessly utopian."

⁷⁸⁵ Farrell and Rohilla Shalizi, 'An Outline of Cognitive Democracy', p. 15.

⁷⁸⁶ Farrell and Rohilla Shalizi, p. 5.

⁷⁸⁷ Falzon, *Lino a tribute, Festschrift in honour of Lino Spiteri*, p. 147.

⁷⁸⁸ Farrell and Rohilla Shalizi, 'An Outline of Cognitive Democracy', p. 15.

Although Farrell and Shalizi's ideas about interchange of ideas may sound very 'loud' in comparison to Freire's calm writings about dialogue, the power of the concept comes over just as strongly. Freire insists that

Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.⁷⁸⁹

Thus Freire sets the scene for an exchange of ideas in words that are not "alienating "blah"."⁷⁹⁰ The kind of dialogue that is meaningful in his eyes is one based on human interaction, trust and hope.

Whereas faith in humankind is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue.

(...)

Nor yet can dialogue exist without hope.⁷⁹¹

However, the validity of that dialogue will be brought about through critical thinking which Freire defines as

(...) thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved.

These may seem high ideals and Freire may have been speaking about dialogue under oppression but the concept remains the same whatever the circumstances and can be applied as 'best practice' also in the context of a creative venture.

□ ***Learning in a Post-Museum Creative Space***

We have taken a brief look at what can be done to facilitate the setting up of post-museum spaces and associated creative ventures and the kind of skills that will be useful to actually make the project work and to maintain it. But what are the audiences and visitors going to gain when they attend or visit these manifestations? As said when considering the theoretical framework of this thesis, starting in the 1970s, critical questions started to be asked by museum professionals and museum boards: "Why do we exist? What do our visitors and supporters consider of value? What are our strengths as educational institutions?"

⁷⁸⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 68.

⁷⁹⁰ Freire, p. 68.

⁷⁹¹ Freire, p. 72.

or What do we have to offer to our communities?"⁷⁹²

Or, as Bella Dicks asks:

What do visitors actually take away with them when they step out from the heritage museum into the glare of the present? How does the local history they have seen assume a form and a narrative in their minds, and how do these images fit into their wider, political consciousness, personal reminiscences or collective identifications, if at all?⁷⁹³

The answers to these questions are clearly going to depend upon many variables and Dicks "seeks to trace some of the ways in which the study of heritage opens up wider questions of representation and politics."⁷⁹⁴ Dicks's aim is to examine the relations between heritage and the "economic, cultural, social and political dimensions of heritage production and consumption."⁷⁹⁵

These questions need to be asked by those who might wish to help in the creation of a community museum and creative ventures in Bormla – or indeed in any other town or village in Malta.

The issues surrounding links between cultural heritage and identity have been and are still being researched in institutions worldwide. The Amsterdam Centre for Cultural Heritage and Identity, for example, was established in 2011 and "serves as a platform for interdisciplinary research into the role of cultural heritage in processes of identity formation."⁷⁹⁶ The continued interest in the nexus between heritage and concepts of identity and community demonstrate just how volatile the issues can be.

One can take the view that

(...) the past—a context used for identity construction—is being continually re-created in the present. Only the present is real—the past and future are representational.⁷⁹⁷

However, in that 'present', there lie lines of communication through shared heritage and experience which create an awareness of a common past and thus a clearer idea of the workings of heritage past and present.

⁷⁹² Questions taken from the AAM newsletter, Excellence and Equity (winter 1996) cited in H.S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition – A Philosophical Perspective*, Smithsonian Institution, 2000, p. 142.

⁷⁹³ Dicks, *Heritage Place and Community*, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁴ Dicks, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁵ Dicks, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁶ University of Amsterdam, The Amsterdam Centre for Cultural Heritage and Identity, Research page, <http://achi.uva.nl/research/research.html>, (accessed 07 May 2018).

⁷⁹⁷ A. Newman and F. McLean, 'The Impact of Museums upon Identity', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2006, pp. 49-68, p. 62. DOI: 10.1080/13527250500384514

Access to diverse cultural events substantially improves the quality of life, the communication and dialogue among different groups and contributes to a harmonious existence in the society.⁷⁹⁸

Certain tropes from Dicks's analysis of the Rhondda Valley project do hold some parallels with Bormla. For example, there was, for many years, one main employer. However, the project focused chiefly on the development of a Rhondda Valley Park which was firmly based within the coal mining community history of the Rhondda. Bormla has a much wider scope when it comes to heritage – a plethora of different elements. However, some of the issues that emanate from that analysis can serve as caveats for those attempting to develop heritage and community links in Bormla. It appears that the project came adrift because the “Rhondda Borough Council ced(ed) control to a consortium led by the county and by the Welsh Development Agency.”⁷⁹⁹

This loss of local political control occurs, paradoxically, in relation to a heritage project which publicly *asserts* local cultural distinctiveness and autonomy.⁸⁰⁰

And this is one of the main reasons for wishing to keep the creative part of this endeavour very much on a democratic local footing whilst not excluding the possibility of assistance from independent cultural practitioners. In a community museum and local creative ventures one would hope to find a balanced view of local history seen through the experience and eyes of the community which, no doubt, will have some very positive narratives to recount but will not exclude differing narratives on the same subject.

The view that cultural heritage should be the stuff of discourse from within communities, and not just capital cities, was emphasized during a recent EU Conference.

According to Commissioner Navracsics⁸⁰¹ it is ultimately up to the local communities and artists to harness the energy of cultural heritage, as the ultimate goal of the European Year (dedicated to cultural heritage) is to make local communities revitalize themselves through cultural heritage.⁸⁰²

And that is what I feel Bormla can and should do if it really values its sense of place, its past and present heritage. An awareness of one's past gives one power

⁷⁹⁸ UN, 'Creating an Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration', DESA 2009, p. 52, www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2009/Ghana/inclusive-society.pdf, (accessed 01 July 2018).

⁷⁹⁹ Dicks, *Heritage Place and Community*, p. 247.

⁸⁰⁰ Dicks, p. 247.

⁸⁰¹ Commissioner Tibor Navracsics is currently the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (2014-2019).

⁸⁰² T. Vahtikari, 'Innovation & Cultural Heritage', p. 7.

and strength and explains that sense of identity that is not parochial but places one firmly within the bigger picture.

Amongst the three main audiences for such activities: local Bormliži; Maltese from outside Bormla and tourists, there will always be those whose 'gaze' is superficial and others who will want to look deeply into the narratives that emanate from these manifestations.

There is a process of telling people about Bormla, reminding some and informing others about so many different aspects of Bormla's existence, past and present. As Xanthoudaki says,

The twenty-first century citizen is a privileged individual for she, potentially, has access to a quality of life never seen before; but she has to strive in order to be able to choose, use, enjoy, understand, participate, personalize, create, in other words, to become the resilient, entrepreneurial, informed, aware and active person required by today's society.⁸⁰³

Just being better off or living in an environment that looks prettier than it did a few years ago is not really going to be enough to change outsiders' opinions of Bormla or to augment the understanding of locals concerning the historic environment in which they live. The "resilient, entrepreneurial, informed, aware and active person" both male and female has to arrive at that point with some effort and commitment as Xanthoudaki suggests. The key word in this context is education but always to be considered in the Freirean dimension of dialogue and two-way communication amongst equals, on the basis that everyone has something to offer. Fischer puts it thus,

A culture-of-participation perspective for learning and education is focused not on delivering predigested information to individuals, but on providing opportunities and resources for learners to engage in authentic activities, participate in social debates and discussions, create shared understanding among diverse stakeholders, and frame and solve personally meaningful problems. It is grounded in the fundamental belief that all humans have interest and knowledge in one or more niche domains and are eager to actively contribute in these contexts.⁸⁰⁴

Whilst museums "can cement cultural hegemony, yet they can contain some of the spaces necessary for renegotiating these hegemonic relations."⁸⁰⁵ The spaces that are created through critical thinking offer that opportunity for discussion and

⁸⁰³ M. Xanthoudaki, 'Museums, innovative pedagogies and the twenty-first century learner: a question of methodology', *Museum & Society*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2015, pp. 247- 265, p. 250.

⁸⁰⁴ G. Fischer, 'Understanding, fostering, and supporting cultures of participation', *IX Interactions*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2011, pp. 42-53, p. 50. DOI:10.1145/1962438.1962450

⁸⁰⁵ C. Borg and P. Mayo, 'Museums: Adult Education as Cultural Politics', *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 127, 2010, pp. 35-44, p. 37. DOI: 10.1002/ace.379

renegotiation. The people who work on these projects are aware that they are living in a post colonial environment but in a city that has a past going a long way back to before the British period, to the Knights' period and beyond into prehistory.

Whilst the discussion has been set mostly around the idea of encouraging interest amongst the Bormlizi in the setting up of collaborative groups I would like to return to the example, mentioned several times during this thesis of the Bir Mula Heritage Museum. This is a private initiative which aims at inclusion and confirmation of a sense of identity for those who visit the museum. The owners promote and research Bormla's past and contemporary heritage and apart from having a display of local artefacts, offers the house as a centre where talks can be held and where local people can meet.

In their paper about small museums and identity,⁸⁰⁶ the authors describe how the house itself is an artefact and that it has been lovingly restored by the owners and has slowly but surely revealed many of its secrets. The objects that have been found in the house have been added to by some of the visitors who, fearing their children would get rid of them, felt the need to leave them in a place where they would be appreciated. Seeing these objects on display in the Museum, the owners felt that they were being given the importance they deserved.

In their conclusion, Vella and Cutajar make the point that this is a private enterprise and therefore it was "free to act on its objectives. It faced various challenges and limitations, but its impact on the community was noticeable."⁸⁰⁷ In fact, I can safely say that most of the people I interviewed did, spontaneously, tell me about the Museum or ask me if I had visited it. Bir Mula Heritage Museum is also important because it is one of the few empirical yardsticks that is available at present in Bormla to measure enthusiasm for history and heritage in the city outside the remit of the Church.

One of the ways that the Bir Mula Heritage found was most effective in creating interest was the narrative of the house, the story of its beginnings, its inhabitants and the graffiti they left behind. Bormla's historical narrative can be seen through the lens of its houses and through its geography. Set on different hills and pierced by a deep creek, its topography has contributed to that narrative over hundreds and possibly thousands of years. The division between history – viewed as 'the past' – and today can be bridged by stories which remain a vivid and proven way of narrowing the historical gap. Even the most remote event can be brought to

⁸⁰⁶ J. Cutajar and J. Vella, 'Small Museums and Identity in Socially Deprived Areas' in Z. Antos, A.B. Fromm and V. Golding (eds), *Museums and Innovations*, Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2017, pp. 30-43, p. 38.

⁸⁰⁷ Cutajar and Vella, 'Small Museums and Identity in Socially Deprived Areas', p. 42.

life through characters. And the glory of narrative is that it can be set at various levels and used in so many different ways to engage the interest of every age group.

The community museum and creative ventures would provide that all important opportunity for the Bormlizi to look at themselves and enjoy that introspection in a very creative way – through artefacts, through stories, through photographs whilst at the same time taking those ideas and projecting a future. Collaborative groups can help to deliver that future that has been negotiated and imagined together. They themselves will take away from these manifestations of Bormla a confirmation of what they already know, perhaps some angles about which they had never thought and also much knowledge that can empower them to make the best decisions for Bormla.

Any type of museum context – mainstream, eco or community museums or even creative telling of narratives can offer much opportunity for learning. To cite Falk and Dierking,

This participation can take many forms, including pursuing inquiries, making connections among various contexts, sharing interests with others, and learning how to learn and how to assist and collaborate with others.⁸⁰⁸

The answer to that question posited by Dicks “What do visitors actually take away with them when they step out from the heritage museum into the glare of the present?” is not clearcut but nuanced. It is a play between culture, economics, power and politics but just because it is complex it is worth exploring. Museum settings of all kinds are places where people converse, communicate, argue and listen. Bormla will be telling its multi-faceted story and families will discuss and, as part of an audience or as visitors to an exhibition, they will “engage in numerous small conversations that are constantly beginning and ending.”⁸⁰⁹

□ **Concluding remarks**

This has been a journey of understanding and, in this last chapter some suggestions have been made as to what actions might follow. As Article 6.1 of the Burra Charter Process states,

The cultural significance of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy.⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁸ J. Falk and L.D. Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, Altamira Press, Maryland, US, 2000, p. 92.

⁸⁰⁹ Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, p. 93.

⁸¹⁰ The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013, p. 6. Available from: <https://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf>

When I commenced this project and met with some scepticism about how interested people from Bormla would be in the city's history and or anything other than Church events, I admit to having felt a certain apprehension. Would my questions be welcome? Would my desire to get to know Bormla be interpreted as interference? In the event, everyone I spoke to was unfailingly cooperative, very willing to recount what were sometimes difficult narratives to someone that most of them had never met before.

The range of objects that they recalled and considered of import was far wider than I personally had anticipated. Their desire to see Bormla take its place on an equal footing with its close neighbours and with the rest of Malta was palpable. This was clearly not because they believed that their city was any less significant than another but actually because they were convinced that Bormla had a right to be known for its history, its beauty, its heritage and its people's participation in Malta's past and its present.

In these chapters, the people of Bormla to whom I spoke express what they felt about their own identity, what they felt was special about Bormla, what they felt was worth talking about. I have tried to put what they mentioned in a necessarily brief historical context. I have also indicated some signposts to increasing awareness of important people who are representative of Bormla — '*li ħargu minn hawn*'. This expression, as Falzon explains,⁸¹¹ can be interpreted as a play on words. In Maltese it can mean 'that were born here' or, more literally, 'that left here'. Some never physically left, others need to – metaphorically – return to Bormla. I have given examples of diverse types of community project and offered some suggestions as to how such projects could and should be construed and constructed.

Heritage is usually interpreted as that which comes from the past which a group of people thinks should be preserved for future generations. As we have seen, those heritage objects from Bormla were both tangible and ephemeral. Heritage is sometimes labelled as being chosen for keeping because it gives the group a 'feel good factor'. However, some of the more bitter Bormliż narratives were considered as important as the more likely candidates that could be claimed as heritage.

When trying to analyse the cultural milieu of Bormla, one has to consider the undoubted hegemony of the Church which, whilst performing an important social role within the community, also dominates the cultural scene. This may not be a hegemony that is seen as unwanted but it is still a reality that cannot be ignored.

⁸¹¹ Falzon, *Lino a tribute, Festschrift in honour of Lino Spiteri*, p. 144.

Bormla also has a particular background with regard to its political past – what I have referred to earlier as ‘politics as heritage’. It is the place that saw the first murmurings of socialism in Malta and the birth of the Malta Labour Party and there lies a hegemony with which, as with the Church, most Bormlizi may be quite content, but one that cannot be ignored either.

The diverse community groups of Bormla have been discussed through the words of the respondents, from reference to sociological studies of the city and from my own experience in conversations with people within the city. This research suggests that there is more integration than is generally accepted by those who consider themselves to have the deepest roots in Bormla. However, that does not mean to say that there is a communality of identity throughout the over 5,000 population. There are those living in Bormla who for a variety of reasons may not feel part of the city – its present or its past. My focus groups included people whose personal ties still lay with their own town of origin. Any local initiative within a post-museum scenario should aim to attract the interest of, and encourage a dialogue with, all Bormla’s groups whatever their roots or circumstances.

In this definition, taken from a recent ICCROM publication, heritage is conceptualized as both meaning and artefact. It encompasses the idea of the place of heritage in a time continuum but it also looks at the important spin off positives that heritage can create and through which action in regard to heritage can be made sustainable.

Heritage is not only just about the past – it also defines who we are and shapes the future. It embraces both the arts and the sciences and it incorporates nature and culture. Evidence and data from various countries in the world demonstrate that heritage assets serve as a catalyst, not only for conservation, partnerships, social cohesion, skills development and education, but also for job creation, infrastructure development, foreign direct investment and economic development.⁸¹²

Heritage actions need to be sustainable not simply with regard to funding but to meaning. If the action has not got real significance for the group that is trying to promote it then it is likely to end up simply as a one-off occasion. Anyone trying to create a cultural space has to accept that heritage is always going to be a selection and one which may involve finance, notions of rights, differing opinions and will thus be politically charged. That is why the selection needs to be made under the best possible leadership and in a dialogic setting. Heritage projects that work well will be those that have intellectually authentic content, and give a sense of continuity whilst at the same time showing the difference between then and now.

⁸¹² Heritage and Copithorne, *Sharing Conservation Decisions Current Issues and Future Strategies*, p. 15.

The hook that gets people involved is often the difference to the present day which creates reflection on change and on difference.⁸¹³

History is that which is in the past. It can describe huge events such as the arrival in Malta of the Knights of St John or of the British, or the devastating World War II. It can also be small things that happened locally, independently of the larger issues but also, perhaps, because of them. There are personal histories and community narratives which will have created the situation prevailing today. There is a strong case for not committing the past to oblivion because, in some strange, alchemical way, it explains who we are today. The things that were practised in the past and which are still alive now — performative events, Bormla's poets and writers and artisans — are the bridge between the past and what is to come. It is a way in which the community members can consider themselves as makers not only of their own present but also creators of their future.

⁸¹³ M. Bragg, 'Heritage', *In our time*, BBC Radio 4 podcast, first broadcast July 2002.

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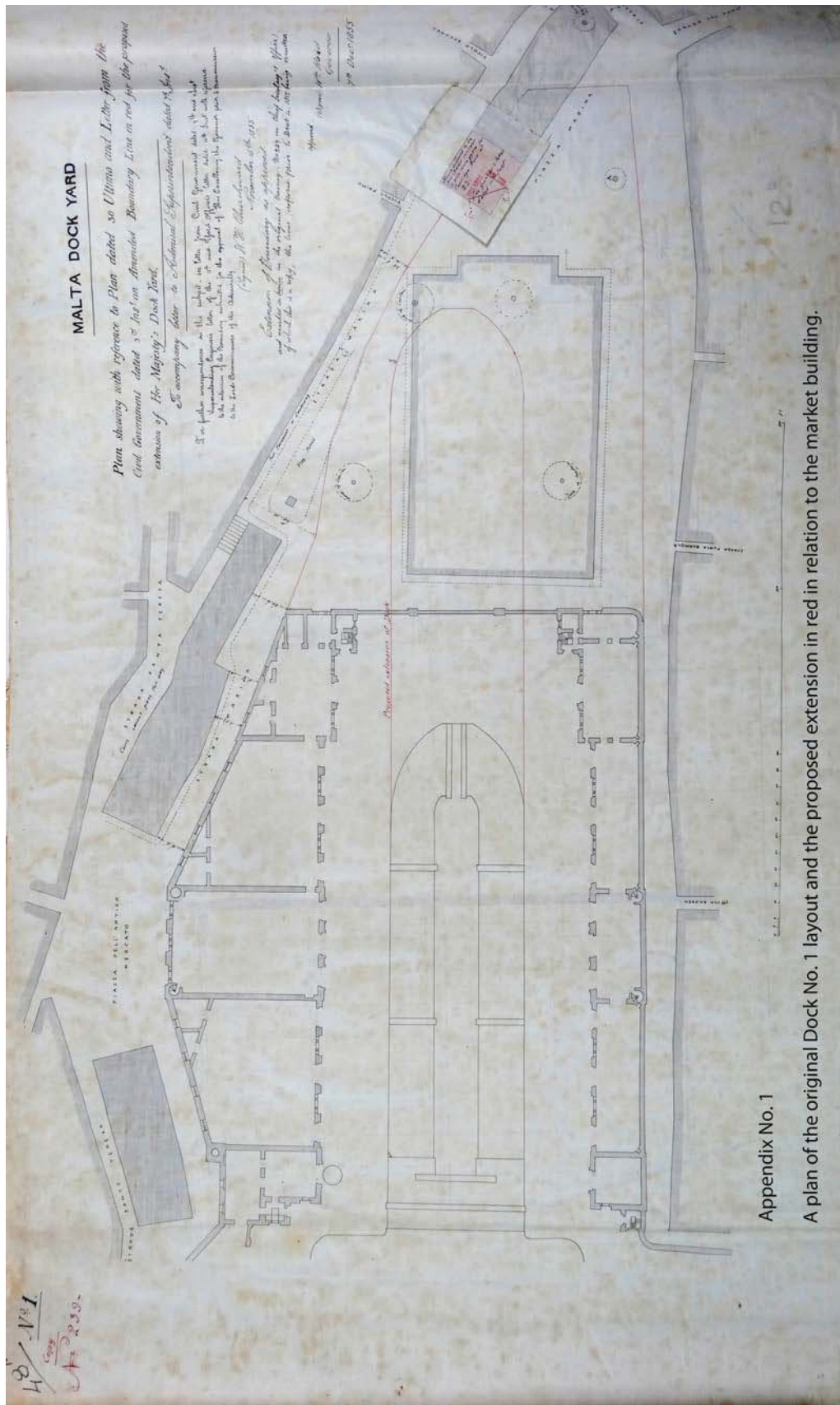
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX No. 1.



APPENDIX No. 2.

My approach with regard to organizing meetings was to contact the person concerned by telephone, when I had the number, or by email or by follow up email after the initial phone call. The basic email I sent, with some variation according to relevance, was as follows:

"I am reading for a Ph.D. at the University of Malta with the Mediterranean Institute. My two co-supervisors are Professor Carmel Borg, (Faculty of Education, UoM) and Dr Sheila Watson (Deputy Head, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, UK).

The subject of my thesis concerns community ideas about heritage, the past, traditions and museums and I have chosen Cospicua as the area in which to do my fieldwork. This will involve interviews with focus groups representing the 'communities' and diverse demographics within Cospicua, as well as one-to-one interviews with members of the community, working in various spheres, who either hail from Bormla or who have a special interest in the town.

I would be most grateful if you could participate in an interview which should last about 1hr 30" and will be recorded. The interview will be held in Maltese.

I look forward to hearing from you."

APPENDIX No. 3.

Patricia Camilleri (née Boland) was born (17.03.54) and brought up in the UK. She left England in 1973 and spent a year working in Sicily. Following some months of study in Malta, she spent a year working in Rome, returning to live on the island in 1976. In 1988 she joined the University of Malta and read for a B.A. degree in Italian, Archaeology & Communication Studies. After her final exams in 1991, she started working at the University of Malta becoming Director of the Communications & Alumni Relations Office in 2007. In 2001 she gained her Master of Arts degree with a thesis entitled: *L'analisi strutturale: verso una semiologia museale* (Structural Analysis: towards a semiology of museums). She recently retired from the University and is now reading for a Ph.D. with the same University. Her special research interests are museum theory and the catacombs of Malta. At present, she is President of The Archaeological Society Malta. For many years Patricia hosted a radio programme on campusFM 103.7 entitled *University Matters*.

October 2016

APPENDIX No. 4.

QUESTION CODING

Question One –

When you hear the word Bormla what comes into your mind?

- What does Bormla mean to you?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Education	10	20
Stigma	13	18
Dominic Mintoff	7	15
Home	10	15
Family	8	13
Cottonera	6	10
The Feast	8	10
Memories	2	9
The Immaculate Conception	6	9
International Bormla	7	8
School	6	8
Different areas of Bormla	2	5
Friendships	5	5
M.U.S.E.U.M. (Society of Christian Doctrine) Mużew	5	5
The Church as education	3	5
Coming home	3	4
Standard of living	3	4
Balomba (Dockyard siren)	3	3
Denying Bormliż ancestry	3	3
Media attitudes	2	3
Family conflicts	1	2
Neighbours	2	2
Sense of Community	1	2
Fortifications	1	1
Poverty	1	1
Survival in adversity	1	1
The Risen Christ (statue)	1	1

Question Two –

What are the parts of Bormla's past that interest you?

- What interests you or what do you like about the city?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Sense of History	10	18
The Significance of the Dockyard	9	18
Politics Recent and Pre War	9	17
Changing Bormla	9	16
Relationship between the Three Cities	7	12
Economy	7	11
Perceived Glory Days	9	10
Relationship with the British	5	8
World War II	7	8
Artistic 'Greats' that hailed from Bormla	5	6
Local Councils	2	6
Myths and Stories	3	6
Culture in Bormla and the dominance of the Church	4	5
Sporting prowess and history	4	5
Football – St George's	3	3
The Regatta	1	1
Traditions living and dead	2	5
Poverty	2	4
The Confraternities	2	4
Church – Protestant	2	3
Fortifications	3	3
Other churches and convents	2	3
Old Buildings in Bormla	2	2
Seashore economy pre-1840s	2	2
The Exodus	2	2
The Knights of Malta	1	2
The British Navy and the Maltese	1	1
The French	1	1
The Parish Church	1	1
The Plague	1	1
The role of the Catholic Irish	1	1
The slow rebuilding process	1	1

Question Three –

3. Do you feel part of a community or communities here in Bormla?
- If so, which ones do you feel part of?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Gentrification	12	14
Who are the Bormlizi d.o.c.	8	13
Social Housing	8	12
Who are the ‘foreigners’	9	11
Subcultures	4	4
The Church	3	4
Different areas of Bormla	3	3
Leadership	1	3
Why the Feast attract the non-religious	2	2

Question Four –

4. So, what do you feel are the positive and negative narratives of Bormla?
- How would you describe the true Bormla?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
<i>General Narratives</i>	6	11
<i>Bitter Narratives</i>		
Difficult Terrain in Bormla	4	5
Stigma	4	5
Unfair boundaries	4	5
Gentrification and the new AUM	2	4
Hard-hit over the centuries	3	4
Politics	4	4
Invasion of those without Bormla at heart	3	3
Poverty	2	2
<i>Sweet Narratives</i>		
Sense of Gregariousness	6	9
Resilience		
Ability to depend on own resources	2	3
Ability to overcome a bad experience (resilience)	3	3
Bormla looking out to sea and not to the hinterland	1	1

Question Five -

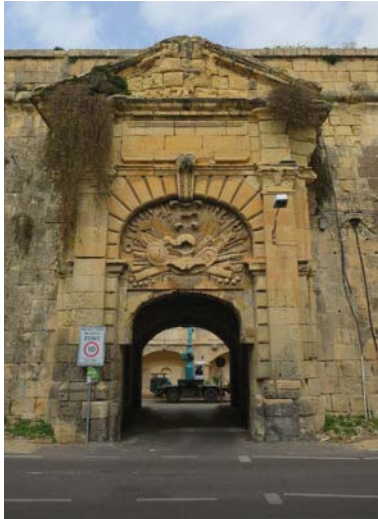
5. Are you interested in having a 'say' in how Bormla's culture is projected both within your own boundaries and to those outside it.

- If so, what suggestions can you make in this regard?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sources References</i>	
Suggestions from respondents	11	16
Would you contribute to a discussion about culture in Bormla?	11	13
Description of events that happen in Bormla	10	16
What should be remembered?	10	22
Artisans old and contemporary	10	11
General comments	8	11
Do you think a museum with walls is a good idea?	7	9
Pro-Community activities	8	17
Tourism and its peripherals	7	10
Dominance of the Church	5	9
How to engage young people?	5	7
Promoting Bormla	4	5
The challenge of apathy	4	4
Use of large empty building as a community museum	4	4
Nostalgia	3	3

APPENDIX No. 5.

Entrance Gate and wall - Fort Verdala



The Feast of the Immaculate Conception
8 December



Galley Creek after the Rehabilitation Project



Boat Restoration

The Regatta

19 November 1944

The return of the titular painting and the statue of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception from safe-keeping in Birkirkara to Bormla at the end of World War II.



Rialto Cinema, Bormla c. 1956





Stepped Streets of Bormla



APPENDIX No. 6.



ESPOSIZIONE D'INDUSTRIA MALTESE, AGRICOLA MANIFATTURIERA, E DI BELLE ARTI. 1864.

Appendix No. 6

Photo: Courtesy Heritage Malta

APPENDIX No. 7.



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

*Ph.D. Fieldwork – Patricia Camilleri
Ph.D. Candidate within the Mediterranean Institute*

Consent Form

I, the undersigned, _____, holder of identity card number

_____, hereby consent to be interviewed in regard to the above Ph.D.

fieldwork on the _____ (date).

Signature _____

*I agree that when citing my personal words or opinions Ms Patricia Camilleri can
mention me by name in the text/references of her Ph.D. thesis.*

Signature _____

Date: _____



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

*Ph.D. Fieldwork – Patricia Camilleri
Ph.D. Candidate within the Mediterranean Institute*

Consent Form

I, the undersigned, _____, holder of identity card number

*_____, hereby consent to participate in a focus group as part of the
above Ph.D. fieldwork on the _____(date). I understand that my
participation will remain anonymous.*

Signature _____

Date: _____



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

*Ph.D. Prattiku (Fieldwork) - L-Istitut Mediterranju
Patricia Camilleri B.A.,M.A.(Melit.)*

Formola ta'Kunsens

Jien hawn taht iffirnat _____,

li ghandi n-numru tal-karta tal-identità _____, naghti l-kunsens

li niehu sehem f'focus group bhala parti mill-prattiku tal-Ph.D. hawn fuq imsemmi nhar

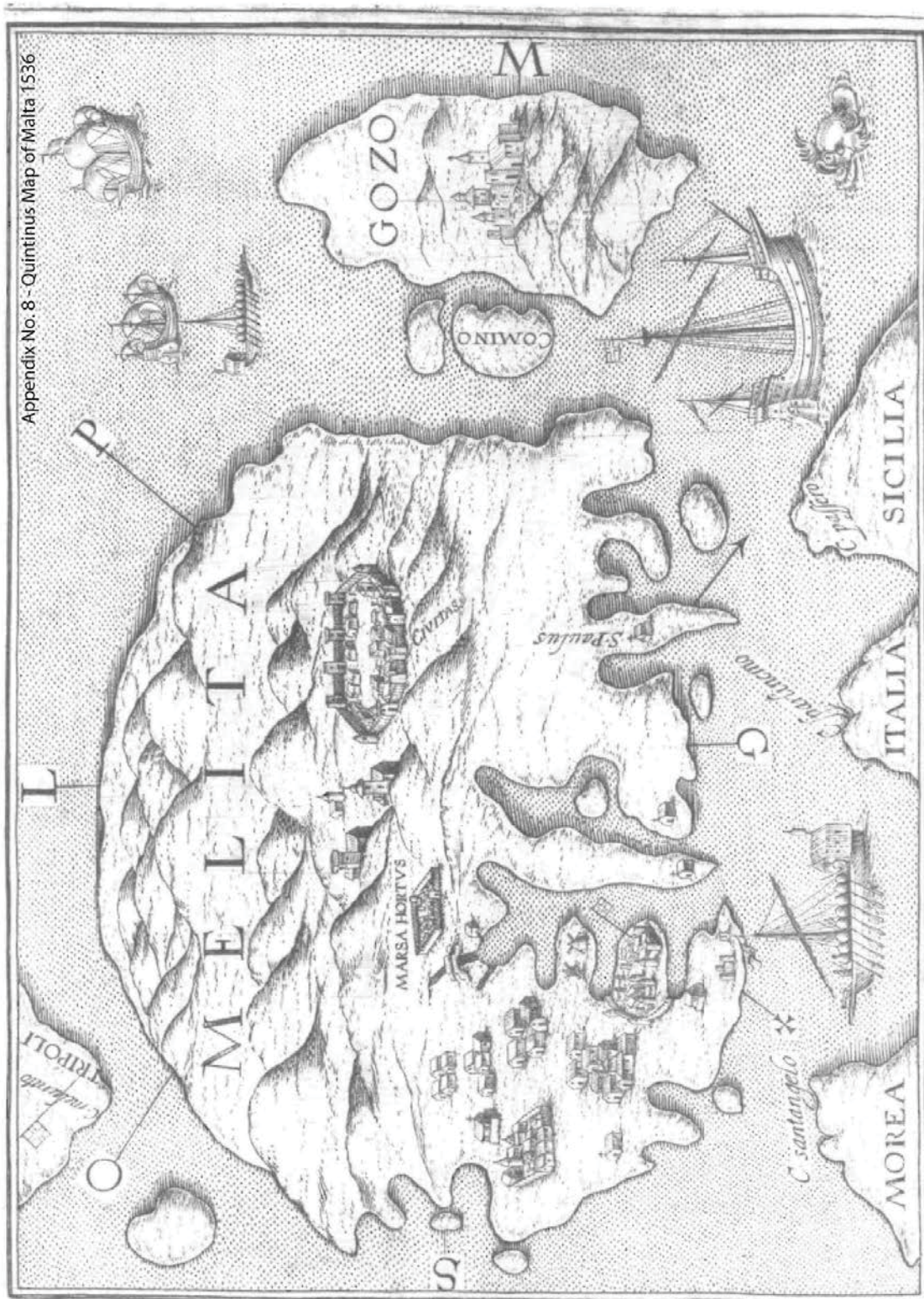
_____ (data).

Ghandi nifhem li s-sehem tieghi jibqa anonimu.

Firma _____

Data _____

APPENDIX No. 8.



APPENDIX No 9

One-to-One Interview Respondents

Name

Mr Joseph Serracino

Mr Lawrence Ancilleri

Ms Alison Zerafa Civelli

Mr Charles Flores

Dr Simon Mercieca

Fr Anthony Cassar

Mr Joseph Blackman

Fr Reuben Micallef

Mr Mario Attard

Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici

Fr Mark Montebello

Prof. Charles Scerri

Mr John Vella

Mr Pierre Bugeja

Mr Joseph Cioffi

Prof. Emmanuel Sinagra

Mr Kenneth Mizzi

Ms Caroline Said Lawrence

Prof. Alfred Vella

Ms Celaine Buhagiar

Mr Harry Garrett

Mr Walter Tonna

APPENDIX No. 10

List of Respondents in informal but recorded conversations

Alex Gatt - Local Boat Builder and Restorer – duration 38mins

This gentleman is a boat builder in his spare time and, in particular, a boat restorer. He occupies a space the size of a garage in the area underneath the new promenade at Bormla. Next to his garage/studio is an area where the regatta boats are kept.

Clive Busuttil - Sculptor — duration 50mins

A professional sculptor who works in various media – clay, plaster, glass fibre. He works mainly for churches all over Malta but he also works with the Rinella film studios creating props and objects for films.

Dorian Cassar — Manager of the local radio station — duration 1hr 13mins

A graduate of the University of Malta - runs Kottoner98FM.

Edwin Delceppo — Chair of the Cospicua Heritage Society — duration 2hrs recorded and many hours of unrecorded conversation

Chair of the Cospicua Heritage Society and dedicates much of his spare time to research regarding many aspects of Bormla's history.

Joseph Serracino — Historian of the Regatta — duration 2hrs 43mins

A retired Dockyard administrator, this gentleman spoke to me about the history of the Regatta. This is an important archival record of a sporting and social event that is still strongly felt by the people of Bormla.

Nathalie Grima — Teacher of Sociology — duration 1hr 41mins

A teacher of sociology by profession, she was one of the drivers behind the project 'Din Mhix Taxxa'.

Simon Schembri — Youth Social Worker — duration 1hr 10mins

A social worker with the government agency Appoġġ, who has been working closely with Bormla youths for many years.

Yana Bland Mintoff — Chair of the Forum Komunità Bomliża — duration 1hr

At present, Chair of the *Forum Komunità Bomliża* and has been involved in many social projects in Bormla.

Mark Anthony Falzon — Anthropologist — duration c.1hr 30mins

A professor of anthropology at the University of Malta and some time resident of Bormla who has written on attitudes to danger at the Dockyard and on other aspects of Bormla life.

Andreana Dibben — Sociologist — duration 53mins

A lecturer at the University of Malta she holds a doctorate in Sociology. Born in Birgu but now living in Bormla, she is particularly interested in feminist sociology.

Catherine Azzopardi — Director of Ċentru Tbexbix — duration 41mins

Director of the humanist-oriented Ċentru Tbexbix in Bormla.

APPENDIX No. 11

List of Research Questions and List of Questions asked of each of the one-to-one interviewees and also of the focus groups. These were formulated from the four main research questions. The research questions, below in bold, remained in the foreground but questions (with the possibility of further secondary questions) were formulated that would represent the essence of the original research questions.

1. What sense of time and place do the people of Bormla have with regard to their city and its environs? What does this local population see as its own heritage and the heritage of its place?

2. Who is the community, or who are the communities of Bormla? How can those from outside the community(ies) of Bormla, including researchers, identify, theorise about and communicate with the different communities in this place?

3. How do local community groups conceptualise and practise their heritage and that of their city? Are the local people and the informal and formal groups and organisations of Bormla interested in extending their vision of cultural heritage so as to enhance their own and other people's understanding of the city and its value?

4. Do the communities of Bormla want to exercise their right for cognitive democracy and civic action or indeed feel that this can be beneficial to them in the short and long term?

1. When you hear the word Bormla what comes into your mind?
 - What does Bormla mean to you?
 - 1. *Meta tisma' l-kelma Bormla, x'jigik f'mohħok?*
 - *Xi tfisser Bormla għalik?*

2. What are the parts of Bormla's past that interest you?
 - Why did you remain in Bormla?
 - What interests you or what do you like about the city?
 - 2. *X'jolqtok l-aktar mill-istorja ta' Bormla*
 - *Għaliex bqajt toqgħod hawn?*
 - *X'jinteressak/jogħgbok dwar dan il-lokal?*

3. Do you feel part of a community or communities here in Bormla?
 - If so, which ones do you feel part of?
3. *Tħoss li int parti mill-komunità/jjiet Bormliża/i?*
 - *Għaliex iva/le?*
4. So, what do you feel are the positive and negative narratives of Bormla?
 - How would you describe the true Bormla?
4. *Allura, x'inhu l-ħelu (narrattivi sbieħ) u l-morr ta' Bormla (narrattivi koroh)?*
 - *Kif tiddekrivi l-vera Bormla?*
5. Are you interested in having a 'say' in how your Bormla's culture is projected both within your own boundaries and to those outside it?
 - If so, what suggestions can you make in this regard?
5. *Interessat li tkun parti minn deċiżżjonijiet ta' kif Bormla trid tidher f'għajnejn in-nies?*
 - *Għandek xi suggerimenti?*

Some secondary questions that spring from these basic five have been added to this list and discussions have led down some unexpected paths. This has enriched the research and helped to provide profound answers to the research questions. However, initially these five questions were covered so that a 'compare and contrast' analysis exercise could be made on all the single person interviews.

The resulting themes were coded by theme, sources and references.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹⁴ Vide Appendix No. 4.