

A Mediterranean capital of culture: a Maltese case study

Dr Karsten Xuereb

<https://culturalpolicy.blog/>

A Mediterranean narrative?

How Malta saw and sees itself: pre-EU, since joining in 2004

European Capital of Culture bidding process 2010-2012

Focus on Diplomacy

Focus on Place Branding

Focus on Regeneration

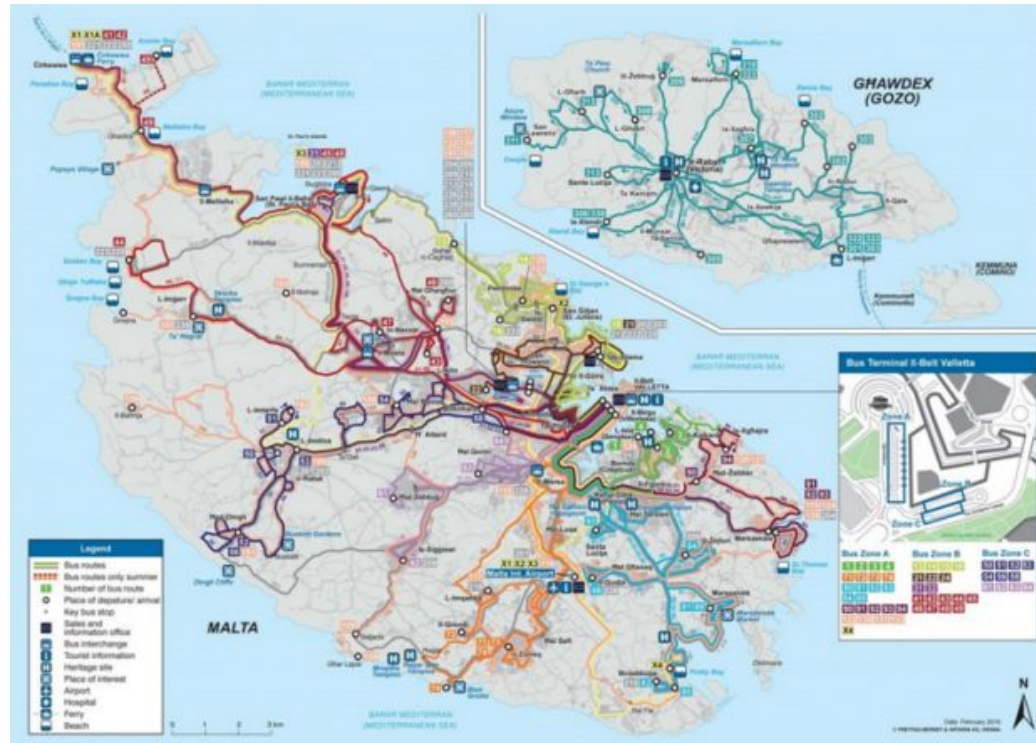
Where is Malta?



What is Malta (to whom)?



'Malta is Malta'



Valletta: from Knights of St John to Renzo Piano



Heritage, heritage, heritage...

12

The Business OBSERVER | August 31, 2017

CASE STUDY

Protecting Malta's historical heritage costs over €12m each year

A WEDDING HELD AT VILLA BIGHI, KALKARA



Rebecca Anastasi

With palaces, old forts and Neolithic temples demanding endless skilled and expensive repairs, the annual operational expenditure of Heritage Malta, the national agency for museums, conservation practice and cultural heritage, amounts to around €12 million per year. Noel Zammit, the Head of Corporate Services and ICT at Heritage Malta confirmed to The Business Observer.

"The central Government injects circa €5 million per year and the agency itself generates more than €5 million from admission fees," Mr

Zammit explained. "The rest is revenue generated from business development, including the rental of Heritage Malta-managed venues."

Indeed, this is just one of the reasons why Heritage Malta has opened some of its sites for special events and functions - with a variety of venues becoming living, breathing spaces once again.

These include outdoor venues such as Fort St Elmo, Bighi and Villaherba Palace, where open-air events, ranging from concerts to product launches, have been organised. The majestic front courtyard at Villaherba Palace, now the National Museum of Natural History, just a few steps away from the main gate of Mdina,

for example, was recently transformed into a reception venue, where guests enjoyed dinner under the stars, surrounded by more than 250 years of history.

Other notable events organised at these sites include the Malta Fashion Week, hosted in 2016 at Fort St Angelo, and in 2017 at Fort St Elmo, as well as various theatrical productions, screenings, and concerts as part of the Malta Arts Festival, the Valletta Film Festival, and the World Music Festival.

Smaller closed spaces, such as the Inquisitor's Palace, the Malta Maritime Museum and Fort St Angelo, able to accommodate small to medium-sized groups for meet-

ings or dinners, are also available, as well as the stunning Grand Saloon in the National Museum of Archaeology, which may also be used for conferences.

"Organisers want to impress their clients. Our venues are not ordinary, and we already hold years of experience within the field. By making these spaces available, we are also promoting Malta's cultural heritage presented as a unique backdrop - something very few other venues can offer," Mr Zammit explained.

The conservation of these sites is key, Mr Zammit insisted. In fact, "the rental of any museum or site is done via a contract that is specific to

that location, including detailed terms and conditions with the aim of safeguarding the location and its usage." All the necessary precautions are taken. For instance, no fireworks and no naked flame equipment are allowed in any of these venues, and, in some (such as the Grand Saloon), food and drinks are prohibited. In the latter case, an alternative adjacent hall, where refreshments can be served, is offered.

With regard to the more sensitive sites, such as the Neolithic temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra, as well as Ġgantija and Ġhar Dalam, "the cultural heritage fabric of these attractions is never exposed to any large event," Mr

The colonial connection

THE SUNDAY TIMES OF MALTA

NATIONAL



St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral is a major landmark on the Valletta skyline, earmarked to open in 1997 inside the ruins of the Cavalier House.

Royal support for Save Valletta's Skyline appeal

The Prince of Wales has just signalled his support for the St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral Save Valletta's Skyline Restoration Appeal by making a generous personal donation. Prince Charles, first, was elected at the ceremonial investiture of a Cullinagh, representing the underground on two official holiday visits to Malta in 1984 and 1976, when he dined with the then governor-general's family.

The amount he donated was not disclosed. "This valuable endorsement by The Prince of Wales has given the appeal a great fillip and reinforces the strong connections that the cathedral has with the island nation," said Peter McScann, co-chairman of the appeal. The St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral Save Valletta's Skyline Restoration Appeal was launched with some fanfare on February 8, the eve of the Feast of St Paul's Shipwreck in Malta. The cathedral is a universally recognised Valletta landmark but the fabric is in dire need of restoration. Architectural inspections have identified severe problems threatening the tower, the spire and the external and internal structures.

"We have been greatly encouraged by the response, raising over €500,000 from charities, foundations, individuals and corporate bodies"

The appeal has set itself the target of raising €1 million by November 2018, which will be the 175th anniversary of the construction of the cathedral. It hopes the Prince of Wales will see the church as he renewed, as well as providing reasonable endorsement for its future restoration and well-being.

"We have been greatly encouraged by the response to the appeal over the last six months, raising over €500,000 in donations from charities, foundations, individuals and



Prince Charles has made a generous personal donation to the appeal. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

corporate bodies in Malta and the United Kingdom," Mr McScann said. Reasonable sums, he added, have already been pledged for 2018. One of Malta's leading architectural firms, Architects' Project (AP), has been engaged to undertake the restoration, expected to start in earnest by the first quarter of next year, once all the technical surveys and planning applications for the Grade I listed building have been completed.

Prince Philip is patron of the Friends of the Cathedral and President of the Friends of the Prince is patron of the appeal.

"We have been highly assisted in our efforts by the unstinting support which has

been offered by Maltese, British and other volunteers in raising funds for the appeal through the organisation of events and in encouraging individuals, charities and institutions through their personal donations to the appeal.

"I think it is fair to say that the Save Valletta's Skyline Appeal has struck a chord in Malta. With Valletta becoming the European Capital of Culture in January 2018, we hope to be able to maintain the momentum of our fundraising efforts and to witness the first visible improvements to the physical restoration of the cathedral in at least 60 years."

Regeneration?



Showing off Valletta

Fashion designer Ritienne Zammit's most recent collection is an ode to our capital. **Anna Marie Galea** finds a lot that celebrates the city's beating heart.

I've always felt that Ritienne Zammit's collections have something of the wistful surrounding them. Whether she went bold in transparent plastic and studs, or quasi-nostalgic in prints and accessories that would be more at home in one of our churches, there is always a dream.

It's a wish of sorts, a reaching out into the void between what is real and surreal. Ever since Zammit launched her first collection five years ago, I have watched her go from strength to strength and from dream to dream. Yet the more her work evolves, the easier it is to see where her heart lies. I love Valletta's mission statement is a simple one: Zammit simply wanted to create a living, breathing ode to a place that she describes as a "palimpsest of hidden mysteries".

But why Valletta? "There is no place on Earth like Valletta. Valletta can't just be seen as a whole, but as a tapestry of detail upon detail. It's amazing to see all the marks that the city bears from its 451-year-old history." In order to be able to represent the city, which she describes as "stealing her heart every day", Zammit spent months and months sifting through archives and choosing what she felt would fit best into her collection.

"I knew that I wanted black and white in the collection, because it reminded me of all the old photos I found of cabaret girls, sailors and the burnt-down theatre, to name a few. These are all motifs running through the timeline of the city's history."

While black and white were two of the most significant colours used, Zammit also focused on the baroque architecture of what she considers to be the jewel of Valletta, St John's Co-cathedral.

"Zammit also focused on the baroque architecture of what she considers to be the jewel of Valletta, St John's Co-Cathedral"

"I really loved the idea of having black and white as a canvas and that canvas being set off by other colours. The turquoise blue ribbons that could be seen on some of the pieces are the same shade as the blueish tinge that you see around the edges of the white lapidi (tombs) in St John's. The themes I chose included the cathedral itself and the history of Valletta as a whole. I wanted a colour composition that didn't incorporate too many prints, and which made sense as a whole. It's easier for artwork to pop on black and white dresses, and when I put candy colours against that backdrop, everything just fit."

From abattoir to design cluster



While development takes over



Massive increase in development

CHRISTOPHER PACE

I sometimes want to pinch myself for being born and bred Maltese – when I see the extraordinary construction boom going on around us, which all has its beginnings from when Malta joined Europe 13 years ago and adopted the euro currency thereafter.

This line in the sand changed the perception of Malta from a tiny rock in the middle of the Mediterranean sea to being part of a much bigger continent – Europe – and all that goes with it: freedom of movement and a world class stable currency, the euro.

“Unfortunately, our infrastructure particularly the road network, leaves much to be desired”

This has encouraged many overseas companies to relocate to our shores, both in the financial services industry and other industries of that unheard of till a few years ago: the iGaming business, which today accounts for double digit GDP growth of our economy.

We are now witnessing new government schemes to encourage non-EU nationals to opt for our citizenship or residency schemes by their thousands. This is creating a business in its own right and is having a very positive ripple effect on the Maltese economy and property values, as part of the requirements for such schemes is the mandatory

purchase or rental of property in Malta or Gozo.

Today Malta has only four high towers; incredibly, over 25 more have recently been given the green light by the Planning Authority, giving a clear indication of the massive increase in development to come over the next five to 10 years.

All of this just to catch up with the demand we have coming from industries that are growing by leaps and bounds.

This demand is mainly for bespoke office and residential developments or mixed use with

shopping malls in tow. Besides the golden mile, where most of the activity is centred, we are witnessing new towns being built from scratch. One fine example is Smart City in the south of the island, which today has a cluster of office blocks and is about to see a new residential and shopping mall built over the next four years. To serve this new area of business activity, a new hospital and a Marriott hotel is also being built within the city.

We are witnessing new industries, such as health, tourism and education tourism,

all contributing to a higher demand for property on the island.

Unfortunately though, our infrastructure particularly the road network, leaves much to be desired, we are constantly trying to catch up on this front – at the cost of the frustration of a nation that spends far too much time commuting instead of being productive.

Interestingly enough, rental income still generates a yield of over five per cent in many cases for a property investment; this is enticing many local and international investors to have a Malta property portfolio as part of their

international holdings, particularly for those who want a good return on capital together with long-term capital growth.

While we expect the market to continue to grow, we must be mindful that the government has an important role in ensuring that it continues to invest in the islands' expanding infrastructure.

Especially if we are to expect major international companies to fly the Maltese flag.

Christopher Pace is chairman, Chamberlain Malta.

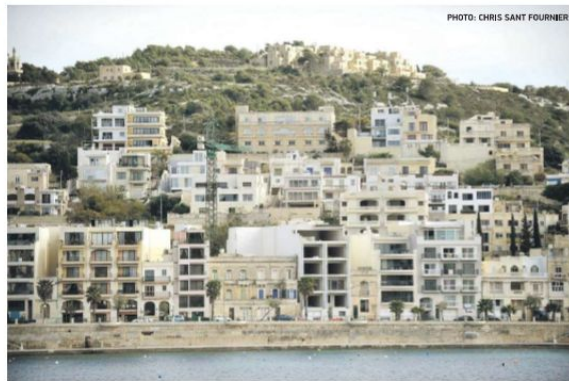


PHOTO: CHRIS SAINT FOURNIER

With ecosystem in peril

16 | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2017

COMMENT&LETTERS

TIMES OF MALTA



Buġliet, a Natura 2000 site, has a Cabinet-approved management plan sitting somewhere in the ministry's shelves.

Masters in eco destruction



ALFRED BALCICHINO

The Majjistral Park has been struck, not by blows from prevailing north-easterly winds, but by the Ministry for the Environment, who conspired to pressure and increase the time for the destruction of biodiversity at the park, and diminished the park's environmental potential. Added to this is the last approval and the clearing of all details for off-roading in the park, despite it being illegal. It was during Parliament's Environment and Development Planning Committee that I met and met Bercera, his colleague, completely unrelated to the subject under discussion, was of presence of invasive species and tree protection regulations, which never materialised, and I do not have any telling that they ever will. The first environmental battle cost the ministry flat on its face and the second one ended in a far leap. The Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), the authority responsible for our environment, was silent and absent from the Planning Authority decision on the power station and from the decision related to environmental permits, because of divine intervention and conflict of interest. I can almost understand this better today. The sound of silence rings across at ERA and the ministry when confronted with anti-environment decisions. It was very evident from day one that under this tenure, the Maltese people and our environment had to listen our seat belts for a very rough ride. And so it was to be. Months later 60 mature olive trees at the University campus

were chopped down, because the leaves of the trees were falling on a car parked below. And down went the trees with the order from University of the Bishop of BGA. More recently, half a score of old indigenous mature oak trees of 150, some centenarians, were also chopped down with the blessing of Bercera, without any consideration of any tree protection order. Instead, the minister boasted that they were not protected, confirming his failure to do so. Shows they went too with ministry blessing. Rubbing salt in the wound, the strip where they grew is still there, and the only invasive tree which grew in the area is still here too. Who can understand endemic political intelligence, backed by ignorance, University academics? The University saw no harm in chopping 60 old olive trees on its campus, so why should they worry about chopping down half a score of old oaks on public land? The strange environmental (or anti-environmental) mentality within this ministry is also evident at Buġliet, a Natura 2000 site, which has a Cabinet-approved management plan sitting somewhere on the ministry's shelves. Works are being undertaken by the ministry's employees with funds from the EU, in a LPT, saving Buġliet project. A stretch of maquis in this Natura 2000 site was bulldozed to accommodate machinery to build rubble walls. Two oaks, already protected trees, were chopped down, to enable machinery manoeuvring. Adjacent trees were 'pruned' with a slash machine. My terrace was damaged on rare species of Borneo plants in EU funds and ERA. From my understanding, University professional personnel are monitoring such works at Buġliet. If true, what kind of qualifications is the University discharging? Undoubtedly "one" will find something new in a slash machine. The trees and stones teach what one never learns from the master (Bernard De Chateau). University professors abound on the board of ERA, including the rectors of the University himself. The environmental

massacre taking place under the watch of this ministry makes one wonder if the University is academically competent to prepare professional, scientific, non-partisan qualified citizens. Their role should be to direct or indirect involvement in environmental matters can only lead one to start asking if they are head in glove in such official environmental loss. And one cannot help but ask if party politics are having their toll on university academics? Herera's ministry is more renowned for chopping and killing trees and biodiversity than anything else, despite the fact that it should be "planting a tree in the name of every newborn or adopted child in Malta", as the electorate had been assured and promised. Besides his ministry's tacitly or not, has never taken any stand on the control of invasive species, despite by the now official landscape contrary to national and international obligations, and with negative

impacts on the social and biological detriment of our islands. His view on the EU on the complete ban of glyphosate, which is declining pollinators, is now evaded. Herera knows that these decisions are diametrically opposite to his government's election at promise where all the people were assured that "environmental protection will be given priority and strength in all major decisions of the government". Why can't we have a real ministry for the environment? Why cannot we have an environmental minister on the side of biodiversity protection and conservation, in the national interest? No country, its people and our environment come first and foremost, above any Maltese partisan mentality. This is what prevents me from keeping silent. What is wrong in wearing for my country to stand socially, ecologically, spiritually, ethically, and financially? It is anti-good governance to hope that the few fortunate, educationally, financially and socially, are not exploited for the benefit of a selected few? Is there anything wrong to expect that such aims and social justice are encouraged, and help given to those involved trying to achieve such noble aims? Minister's silence alone be upheld by all those who have erred Maltese blood running in their veins? Unfortunately it seems that it is becoming usual to view dare those such as demons. Some are being labelled 'vulture', and may also be exposed to danger of life and limb, as has indeed happened. He has led a partisan politics devoid, for security benefits, even our strong character, which has seen us Maltese win over every evil done to us but on three islands? Have we evolved to a state where 'it is dangerous to be right when the established authorities are wrong', as the French enlightenment writer Voltaire said.

After Balcichino is no longer assistant director of the Media Environment and Planning Authority's environment directorate.

From an environment of exchange

An Environment of EXCHANGE

A ●

"Most Mediterranean cities have 'History'. That is in the nature of being a 'Mediterranean City', especially those that are Capitals: Rome, Athens, Madrid...Indeed, most modern southern European nation states consciously sited their national centres to capitalise on some glorious past: Rome soon became the capital of Italy after Florence, and Athens the capital of Greece after Navplion. But no modern European nation-state started from a City. That is Valletta, known as *Citta Humilissima* or more prosaically, but indicatively in Maltese and to the Maltese, as '*Il-Belt*' ('The City'). Small matter that the island is one of the most densely populated and urbanised places in Europe, and that these are not countrymen visiting the City-Capital. They are all urbanites and have been so for over a hundred years. Yet they still all refer to Valletta as 'the City', echoing without perhaps being aware that a similar experiment in Capital city generation of a polity had been enacted some 1600 years ago in another extremity of the Mediterranean: Constantinople, then Byzantium, and finally 'Istanbul': *stin poli*: 'To the City', the origins of the name Istanbul. Every time a Maltese refers to THE city in his native language, *il-Belt* (i.e. Valletta), he is unconsciously evoking a massive experiment in administrative and political transference some 1500 years ago that still casts its historical shadow over contemporary Europe and its future shape. But Istanbul, the European Capital of Culture for 2010, is no longer the political capital, although it could be argued that it is the showcase window to a rediscovered cosmopolitanism through imagined pasts..."



To festivities



A European phenomenon?

Post-war festivals: *Focus on Festivals*

Aiming at regeneration

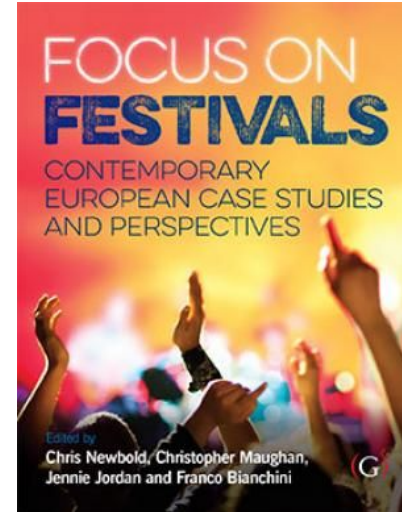
Aiming at citizenry

Aiming at European citizenship

Nationalism?

Populism?

Xenophobia?



Malta at the Biennale di Venezia



Collateral critique

Off the cultural roundabout



Following the Budget for 2018, as was to be expected, most of the preceding and ensuing discussion focused on the situation of our economy, prospects for the coming year, the state of our financial services industry, unions requests, pensions, healthcare and education. A great deal has also been said and written regarding what has been described by our Prime Minister, and repeated since, as our Achilles' heel, namely our weak infrastructure.

Any familiarity with Greek mythology should remind us that the Athenian champion's chink in the armour was fatal – let us hope not to be exposed to as much and have our helmet, shield and other prize possessions fought over by others.

In this year of commemorating Ovid's numerous narrations of metamorphoses, the engorged yet static waters the Maltese cultural scenario seems to be experiencing may provide an interesting setting to get things flowing. As shown again by the latest budget, the finances dedicated to culture, or what is being addressed as cul-

ture, have reached a climax in conjunction with the European Capital of Culture year now round the bend, with almost €8 million being dedicated to the Valletta 2018 Foundation alone.

It is a matter of giving credit where it is due when the Ministry of Finance, in tandem with Arts Council Malta, is praised for its constant support of the arts on the principles of making culture and the arts more accessible to people, supporting profes-

sionalism in the sector and attempting to make inroads in the international markets through various schemes dedicated to networking and showcasing cultural expression from Malta.

It is also worth noting that the various funding streams managed by the council have not only been conserved but strengthened.

However, it is not clear where all this is leading to. Like most rainwater that falls on Malta and runs off to the sea, efforts so well defined in the National Cultural Policy (2011) and the Create 2020 Strategy (2015) and the resources mobilised by the government and the private sector over the past years seem to make a quantitative mark, but not enough of a qualitative one.

A regular observation by officials within public cultural organisations, particularly those with their feet on the ground and active in brokerage and hands-on support, is that very little new work of excellent quality is being produced, with the result that while our theatre spaces, TV airtime and showcasing exercises for export are full, innovative and meaningful work that speaks to a contemporary, diverse, Maltese and hence Euro-Mediterranean audience is lacking.

It is maybe not a coincidence that the best work being produced is that which is furthest removed from the centralised control of funding, more free to express and explore tensions in society without the self-censorship structures that, in spite of

recent legislation against censorship by the same ministry that is responsible for cultural as well as judicial matters, still subtly exists and channels expression into safe waters.

A Chinese proverb has it that one cannot step into the same river twice, given the inexorable passage of time. The cultural sector in Malta seems to manage this feat, also judging by what Budget 2018 does not address.

While a recurrent vote has been dedicated to support local theatre spaces, still no contemporary performing art space is scheduled, the budgetary increase for MiCAS is minimal, details on the management plan for MUZA are sparse and more so for the Valletta Design Cluster and a decades-old discussion on the future of the site of the former Royal Opera House and whether to have a roof installed or not defies the passage of time by being one of the main concerns of local authorities.

Rather than laying out the necessary stepping stones to plan for the further contribution of the cultural sector to society at large and the economic sustainability of the island in particular, we seem to be stuck on a circular route. Let us hope this does not lead to our own navels, though indications give one the impression that we'll be celebrating ourselves, and the best time of our lives, yet again.

Karsten Xuereb is a researcher in cultural policy and relations.



It is maybe not a coincidence that the best work being produced is that which is furthest removed from the centralised control of funding

Sustainable reflection and action

16 | FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2017

TIMES OF MALTA

COMMENT&LETTERS

Cities of tomorrow

KARSTEN
XUEREB



The annual conference on cultural expression in contexts of urban development organised within the framework of Valletta 2018: European Capital of Culture, starting today, will allow stakeholders to take stock, exchange views and plan ahead in an international milieu.

One expects discussions to focus on the various tensions that make Valletta alive, including a respectful attitude towards the heritage, both tangible and intangible, of the city that struggles to harness the commercial investment in boutique hotels, restaurants and cafes that have breathed an economic vibrancy into the capital.

It is true that the capital city has received much attention resulting in a long-awaited regenerative effort that has spilled over to surrounding localities. After all, as a project of a European dimension, a tiny peninsula, whose tangible cultural heritage has been taken over by State-serving offices in turn serving their respective institutions, leaving barely enough space for cultural activity

to grow without having the need to be supported, sponsored or controlled by the various manifestations of the State itself (be this a public cultural organisation, a ministry or a government-funded agency), would not have done justice to the vision of an international cultural hub professed by different ministers, chairmen and artistic directors responsible for State cultural entities over the years.

The structuring of the Maltese islands into five regions was aimed at adding weight to individual local councils when working together by joining forces in addressing local matters within a European perspective. Having been part of the EU for more than a decade, it would be interesting to learn what economic and social contribution have our regions made to national development also thanks to EU funds.

The Valletta 2018 Foundation itself pioneered a closer rapport between the capital and other localities within the different regions thanks to the establishment of regional officers enabling closer collaboration between players in the different cultural ecosystems.

It is also worth noting the timely survey of theatre spaces that has literally put tens of underutilised cultural spots back on the map, enabling cultural and commercial services to invest further in growing audiences and their particular demands.

While this has been achieved and will be channelled into the festivities organ-

ised for the cultural capital year, one wonders whether strong enough foundations have been set for the sustainable development of the creative sector in Malta in the coming years, including the run-up to the next capital of culture in 2030.

The declared ambition of the foundation to establish a regular village of culture every other year sounds underwhelming. Mimetic post-colonial exercises transplanted to one's territory may struggle to go beyond a surface-level branding stunt.

It is also interesting to note that while research into the thought-out UK exercise is giving indications of positive results in terms of urban regeneration in

relation to culture, its Italian copy looks like it is lagging behind.

One also wonders whether the State would consider addressing the cultural scene there where it can make a difference in the long-term, that is, not by encouraging further dependence through funding schemes that are prone to suffer from degrees of piloting and control.

Rather, a better investment in the physical, educational and financial infrastructure should be envisaged, to allow creatives and innovators to operate in ways that thrive on and lead to greater change, as opposed to copies of copies that lower standards that are difficult to recover.

The results experienced and projected in the independent scene, including literature, film and design, albeit small and scattered, are promising.

As queried by the Valletta 2018 Foundation itself in relation to the keynote speech by Sebastian Olma addressing the concept of the serendipitous city: "What kind of infrastructures, programmes or, indeed, cultures do we need to nurture today so that together we can invent and discover the city we want to live in tomorrow?"

Echoling the questions set by urban historian Peter Hall over the past decades, it's time for a serious discussion about our future.

Karsten Xuereb is a cultural policy researcher and lectures on cities and culture at the University of Malta.



The timely survey of theatre spaces has literally put tens of underutilised cultural spots back on the map

Identity matters

LES MOTS DE LA CAMPAGNE

Macron et l'offense à la «culture française» : l'argument qui fédère LR et le FN

Par Cédric Mathiot(<http://www.liberation.fr/auteur/7104-cedric-mathiot>)

— 14 mars 2017 à 10:57



Emmanuel Macron le 8 mars, à Paris. Photo Eric Feferberg, AFP

Horizontal and vertical heritage



Cultures, peoples, identities

François
Jullien
Il n'y a pas
d'identité
culturelle
L'Herne

Cave Canem



There is hope



Quietism

**GAIA: GROWING UP
IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

PAGE 33

**FREE WITH
TODAY'S PAPER**



70 artists voice serious concerns on V18 foundation

PHILIP LEONE-GANADO

Seventy artists, including several high-profile figures, have written to the Valletta 2018 Foundation board flagging up serious issues in the running of the European Capital of Culture initiative six months before its start.

In an open letter, a copy of which was sent to *The Sunday Times of Malta*, the 70 signatories denounce the "erosion of rigour, autonomy and accountability" in the governance of the foundation and the creation of a "climate of insecurity" among its participants.

They also claim that the foundation's top-down approach and politically appointed leadership has effectively silenced key cultural stakeholders and discour-

aged "dialogue, openness and critical thinking".

Among the high-profile signatories are writers Immanuel Mifsud, Trevor Zahra and Alex Vella Gera, actors Pia Zammit and Jo Caruana, curator Raphael Vella, theatre director Christopher Gatt, Science in the City director Edward Duca, artist Austin Camilleri and photographer Darrin Zammit Lupi, alongside dozens of others.

Artists who spoke to this newspaper said the signatories were not an established group with leaders or representatives "but individuals from different fields who agreed to take a common stand on an important issue".

"We note with dismay the erosion of qualities like rigour, autonomy and accountability in the governance of Valletta 2018

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Children play where umbrellas and sunbeds once stood on the sandy beach at Armier Bay after the authorities seized them, enforcing the limit on occupation by lidos in the area. PHOTO: MATTHEW XUEREB

Priorities

TIMES OF MALTA

Friday, August 11, 2017 | No. 25,433

www.timesofmalta.com | €1



FIREWORKS

Abandoned structures
litter Msida garden

PAGE 3

WEATHER

No storms due,
says Met Office

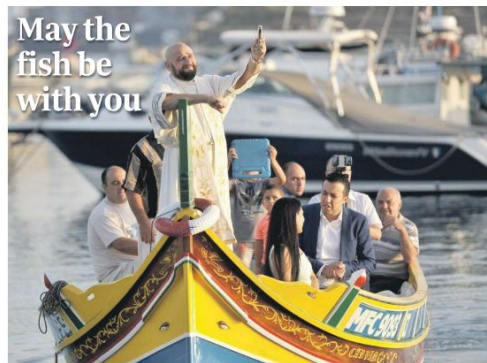
PAGE 3



FOOTBALL

Man. Utd look
to dominance

PAGE 39



Fr Luke Segura blessed vessels and fishermen in Marsaxlokk ahead of the opening of the limguoli season. Also on the boat was Animal Rights Parliamentary Secretary Clint Camilleri. PHOTO: CHRIS SANT FOURNIER

Sliema thieves gang 'vanish' off police radar

Attorney General had insisted bail should be granted

IVAN CAMILLERI

case could not believe that all their work could

"They should have never been granted bail

Valletta residents dreading business 'takeover'

CLAIRE CARUANA

Valletta residents dread the day the newly-redeveloped Is-Saq tal-Dej opens its doors, insisting the over-commercialisation of the capital is already an issue with bars and restaurants "taking over".

Residents who live close to the building located between Merchants Street and St Paul Street expressed concern that once the new place was up and running, they would have to deal with even more noise as restaurants and bars set up shop close by.

"Noise at night
will only
get worse"

The residents, who did not wish to be named, said they were already forced to live with excessive noise emanating from beverage and catering establishments that remained open until the early hours of the morning, often blasting loud music throughout the night.

"We have had to put up with construction works at 10-lug tal-Dej going on until three in the morning. We have now been told the works have been completed but that only means one thing: noise at night will only get worse," one resident complained.

She insisted that many of the bars and restaurants in the area

Nepotism, servilism

TIMES OF MALTA

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2017 | 3

NATIONAL

Critics slam PM's Playlist concert as 'an odd idea'

IVAN CAMILLERI

Music critics yesterday described a planned public concert by the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) dubbed "The PM's Playlist" as "an odd idea normally fit for regimes like China or North Korea".

Social media sites were yesterday inundated with posts poking fun at an announcement made by the MPO about a concert in February based on music Prime Minister Joseph Muscat likes to listen to.

Described by the organisers as a "unique concert for the MPO, organised by the Office of the Prime Minister", the announcement said that concertgoers should "expect a varied selection of pop and rock tunes, featuring the Prime Minister's favourite choice of timeless hits".

MPO sources told the Times of Malta that the concert, to be staged at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, was a joint idea of the MPO's management – a State entity – and top officials from the Office of the Prime Minister.

"We wanted to create something unique and elevated. We

don't really find anything odd about it. There are other countries that hold these type of concerts," a senior official at the MPO said.

"This is another attempt to create a personality cult"

However, when asked, the official could not name other countries, and said: "This does not mean that we should not do it."

Various music critics contacted by this newspaper described the idea as "in very bad taste" and could not understand the cultural reason behind the initiative.

"I've been to concerts all around the world and I've never come across this type of concert," music expert Albert Storace said.

"However, I don't want to enter into any political controversy on music and I am not saying that this shouldn't be done. It's just something I've never encountered and I've been to concerts all over the world," he said.

Two other critics, who preferred to remain anonymous, were less diplomatic.

"This is obviously another attempt to create a personality cult typical to undemocratic regimes," one of the critics said.

"It would have been somehow acceptable had it to be a concert for the head of State on some special occasion. But for a Prime Minister of such a politically divided country, it's quite insensitive."

Another critic said he had initially thought it was a joke.

"I really find it pointless. What are the organisers' trying to push?" he asked.

"We are not talking about the Pope or the Queen here. I think that the organisers' intentions were quite genuine in the sense that they wanted to come out with something different. However, it's really in bad taste."

Social media users, mostly of PN tendencies, put up tongue-in-cheek comments on what Dr Muscat's playlist at the concert should be, suggesting the Dire Straits hit *Money for Nothing* or Celine Dion's *Because You Love Me* – dedicated recently to Dr Muscat by former minister Edward Zammit Lewis.



The PM's Playlist will be a "unique concert for the MPO".

A government spokesman said the Prime Minister had been invited to participate by the MPO. "The concert was an idea of the MPO, which the Prime Minister accepted," he said.

"The event will be open to a paying audience and will be funded in this manner."

"All proceeds from the concert will go to the Mari-gold Foundation."

Governance, representation, competence



In the meantime, China builds bridges



Ponte 25 de Abril Bridge, Lisbon



Lantern Festival in Yu Yuan Garden, Shanghai

2018 EU-CHINA TOURISM YEAR

EU-China Light Bridge



A Mediterranean context

My subjective experience of the Mediterranean

Union for the Mediterranean

Arab Spring

Libya & Syria

Migration, integration - from Simshar to Funky Monkey and Hamrun/Gżira

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnOLsCGV8XQ>

Inclusion, community



Exclusive, communitarianism



Religion as resolution? Ritual? Show?



The tourism dimension

Malta as a quintessential Mediterranean destination?



Abandoned lido at Qui-si-Sana

A dilapidated beach lido in Qui-si-Sana has become a cause of concern, as it risks collapsing over a public passageway, posing a danger to visitors.

During a visit to the site, still easily accessible to the public, parts of the roof were seen to be barely hanging on, while walls appeared to be collapsing piece by piece.

Debris littered the ground around the building and a low gate that may have once blocked access lay rusted and discarded.

The site close to Tigné Point is government-owned and leased to the NSTS, a language institute, which used it as a private club for members until a few years ago.

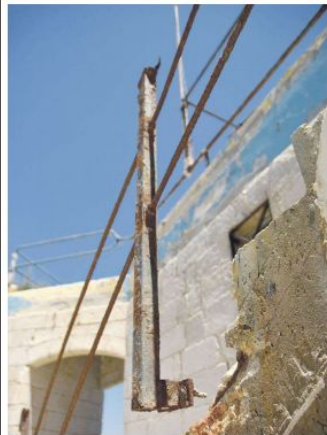
Following enquiries from this newspaper, the Planning Authority's enforcement sec-

tion said it was in contact with officials from the NSTS to tackle the issue.

The organisation has been asked to submit a dangerous structure clearance to remove the collapsed roof and walls from the site and to build a temporary wall to avoid any further danger to the public.

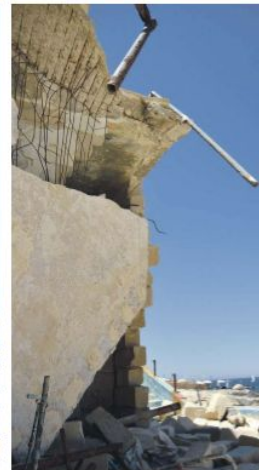
The stretch of coast between the disused Chalet, a once-prominent entertainment venue, and Tigné Point has been earmarked by the government for upgrading through public-private partnerships.

Plans are also being considered to rebuild the Chalet, built in 1928 and closed for good in 1983, as well as to develop a new public beach close to it, which would feature improved facilities.

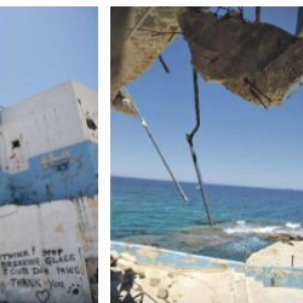


poses a danger to the public

The derelict building which was previously a private lido in Qui-si-Sana, close to Tigné Point. PHOTOS: JONATHAN BORG



Parts of the roof at the government-owned shoreline property are barely hanging on, while walls appear to be collapsing piece by piece.



Getting stuck?



Coda. The market: Malta/EU/global art market

Import/Export artefacts (art works, archaeological goods)

Luxury market

Import and national duties and taxation

Customs grey areas

Seizure

International market: Louvre in Abu Dhabi

Maria Altmann



Jean Nouvel with Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan



Road to...? Going nowhere fast vs critical and strategic thinking

