

Tourist experiences of urban historic areas: Valletta as a case study

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TOURIST EXPERIENCES OF URBAN HISTORIC AREAS

VALLETTA AS A CASE STUDY

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2015

TOURIST EXPERIENCES OF URBAN HISTORIC AREAS
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JOHN EBEJER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to take a closer look at the tourism experience, with special reference to the experience of historic areas. The basis for the research is an urban design model based on three elements of urban spaces, namely form, activity and meaning. The model is often used and discussed in urban design literature to explain sense of place and also to explain how urban spaces can be made more interesting and enjoyable.

The form-activity-meaning model refers primarily to the intrinsic qualities of the urban space. This thesis contends that the urban design model is useful but inadequate for a proper understanding of the tourist experience of urban spaces and urban areas. For a better understanding, it is considered useful to develop a model variant whereby the tourist, and not the urban space, is the focus. The variant, referred to as the tourist interaction model, is a representation of the tourist experience of historic areas. The variant refers to interactions of the tourist with different aspects or elements of the space. The model speaks of interaction of the tourist with self, an interaction that primarily results from the meaning that is associated with a place. The model also refers to interactions with others; interactions that are mostly non-verbal. The third element of the model is interaction with the surroundings. This involves using the senses, especially vision, to engage with buildings, sites and artefacts.

This research uses Valletta as a case study because it is a city that is characterised by numerous and diverse urban spaces and also because it contains significant tourism activity. A qualitative methodology based on face-to-face interviews was deemed the most appropriate to attain the research aims. A total of 32 interviews with tourists were conducted. The objective of the interview was to obtain the essence of the experience including feelings and emotions.

The research findings provide useful insights on the tourist experience. No two tourist experiences are the same. There are countless factors that make each

experience of a historic area unique. Even if each experience is unique, there are elements that are common to the experiences of some, or even most, tourists. The research findings suggest that the commonplace and mundane in the urban landscape are an important component of the tourist experience of historic areas. Frequently, the visual element becomes relevant to the tourist experience when it combines with the meaning of a building or site. On Valletta's stepped streets, watching one's step, while looking at the surroundings, engages the tourist and creates an element of interactivity. Even if the exertion is greater, this enhances the experience and makes it more enjoyable. The tourist explores and in exploring there is discovery of things which are new or unfamiliar. In some instances, there is also surprise. Where the surprise is more significant, a more intense and enjoyable experience will result.

Issues relating to self and identity of the tourist have a significant role in tourist motivation and behaviour and hence also on the tourist's experience. Compared to a repeat visitor, the experience of first-time tourists is more likely to involve emotion and feelings than that of a repeat visitor, because the novelty of exploration and discovery of a first time visit is stronger. On the other hand, repeat tourists are more able to satisfy the need of affiliation by befriending local people. The research also suggests that the boundaries that have traditionally separated 'tourists' from 'locals' are becoming more blurred as residents consume the city in ways that are similar to tourists.

This research notes the relevance of 'layers of experience' to the tourist experience. 'Layers of experience' signify that the area offers many different ways how the tourist can engage with it. With more layers of experience offered, the tourist will have more possibility of interaction with self/meaning, with others and with surroundings, and hence the tourist's expectations are more likely to be met. It is suggested that Valletta is enjoyable to most tourists because it offers many layers of experience.

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John Ebejer

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Dedicated to

Joanne, Jonathan and Rachel

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When visiting a new area or urban space, people sometimes experience something that goes beyond the physical properties or sensory perception. This is often referred to as “sense of place”, or using more urban design jargon ‘genius loci’. Montgomery (1998:94) points out that “*It is a relatively easy task to think of a successful place, But it is much more difficult to know why a place is successful.*” The main aim of the research is to investigate those features and aspects of urban spaces within historic areas that are most influential to the experience of the visitor and, in so doing, determine those characteristics or features that make urban spaces in historic areas successful. Valletta is being used as a case study for this purpose. Within the context of this research, an urban space that consistently provides an enjoyable experience to the tourist is considered to be successful.

1.1 How this research came about

Learning is like a journey. My metaphorical journey of learning is about understanding cities and places. This research is another stage of my journey, one that started in the 1980’s when I learnt about urban spaces and about cities in my undergraduate architectural course. I took a liking to the dynamic nature and complexities of cities and decided to learn more by doing a postgraduate in urban planning. There were many questions to which I sought answers but for each answered question, there were two or three more to consider. My list of questions on cities and urban spaces grew longer instead of shorter.

My focus started to shift from cities to urban spaces; from social and economic aspects of cities to the tourism activities within cities. The catalyst for these shifts was my involvement in tourism in the early 2000’s as a consultant to the Malta Tourism Authority on tourism product development. It was my task to try to understand why and how tourists enjoyed Malta’s tourism product, including

its historical cities, to be able to propose projects and initiatives for their improvement. I attended tourism conferences overseas and read leading works on tourism, particularly on tourism activities in cities. At that time I also developed an interest in Valletta. It was a city that I could appreciate from an architectural perspective and also in terms of its urban spaces because of my architectural training. But there was something more about Valletta; something that I could not quite figure out. From my involvement in tourism, I also noted that tourists liked Valletta, in spite of the City's many shortcomings. I could not fully understand why this was so. What is it about Valletta that make tourists like it? This is a question that could also be made for any other historic area in Malta and elsewhere. What qualities of historic areas make them enjoyable to tourists? Further on in this chapter I articulate the objectives of this research or, more specifically, I list the questions to which I am trying to find an answer. These questions crystallized in my mind, not over months or years, but over decades. The completion of this research is not the point of arrival nor is it the end of the journey. After completion of this thesis the journey continues ...

1.2 Interest in tourism use of urban spaces

This research intends to contribute to the body of existing research on the experience of tourists of urban spaces and tourism areas. Hayllar and Griffin (2007: 155) argue that the study of urban tourism precincts has traditionally been approached from a geographic or urban planning perspective, with other disciplines taking increased interest in more recent years. These other disciplines involved studies from a sociological perspective, research on the precincts' role in a destination's marketing strategy and research on the economic development role of precincts. On the other hand, Ek et al (2008:124) note that there is a growing literature on tourist experiences some of which refers to the psychological impact of such experiences and others having a geographical or place-based focus. Hayllar and Griffin (2007: 155) refer to tourism precinct as a *"distinctive geographic area within a larger urban area, characterised by a concentration of tourist related land uses, activities and visitation, with fairly definable boundaries."* In this study, rather than tourism precincts, I generally refer to the tourism use of urban spaces and urban areas.

The traditional approach of tourism as a service has gradually been replaced with increased focus on the tourism experience. It is often argued that creating memorable experiences is the essence and the *raison d'être* of the hospitality industry (Tung and Ritchie, 2011,1367). Tourism literature often refers to the concept of 'experience economy' developed by Pine and Gilmore (1998). According to this concept, the economy, including tourism, has evolved from a service paradigm into an experience paradigm. Ek et al (2008:123) contend that many writings about 'the experience economy' have privileged the supply-side over the demand-side, with tourists being reduced to more or less passive spectators. They argue in favour of studies that seek to develop "*dynamic models of how tourists actively, corporeally, technically and socially, perform and produce places*". In line with this thinking, this research seeks to investigate the tourist experience of urban spaces from the demand-side (i.e. the tourist perspective) rather than the supply side (i.e. the urban space perspective).

The research considers the topic from two distinct yet overlapping approaches. One approach is that offered by urban design literature with various studies that discuss place making (Canter, 1977; Punter, 1991; Montgomery, 1998; Roberts, 2001; Gustafson, 2001; Carmona, 2003). Urban design literature considers urban spaces and means of how to make these spaces more interesting for users. The target audience of this literature are urban design students and the objective of these works is to enable them to design urban spaces. In urban design works, very rarely is there reference to the tourist experience even if there is an implied understanding that users of these spaces will include both residents and tourists.

The second approach to the topic is from tourism literature that evaluates tourist experiences and discuss issues related to tourist motivation and authenticity. There are some tourism studies that also refer to urban design literature in their discussions. Other than one exception (Pearce, 2005:136), there is no tourism literature, however, that specifically refers to the urban design model based on form, activity and meaning and uses it in the context of the tourism experience. It is the intention of this research to fill that gap.

The three aspects of urban spaces often referred to in urban design literature are physical setting (or form), activity and meaning. This urban design model, henceforth referred to as form-activity-meaning model (or F-A-M model) provides an understanding as to how urban spaces are experienced by persons, normally residents, who are familiar with the space. This research will examine how far the model is applicable to the tourist experience. Form, activity and meaning will be examined, separately and in combination, with particular reference to the tourist experience. It will consider whether a variant to form-activity-meaning urban design model can be developed to better explain the experience of the tourist. It may be possible to develop a variant of the model, into a space experience model whereby the tourism experience is interpreted on the basis of the individual's interactions with his surroundings/environment (form), with other people (activity) and with him/herself (meaning). This research is interdisciplinary and lies between the subjects of urban design, urban tourism and heritage studies. It also includes references to environmental psychology.

1.3 Objectives of the research and choice of case study

This research will attempt to answer the following questions with reference to tourists within historic urban areas:

- What are the physical, social, cultural and psychological aspects that influence experiences of urban spaces?
- Within urban spaces, what is the nature of the interactions of the individual with the surroundings, with other people and with self?
- To what extent does the historic nature of an area impinge on the sense of place of an urban space?

The first research question refers to the urban design perspective referred to previously, whereas the second question refers to the tourism studies perspective.

The third research question refers to historic areas. The research on the tourism experience of urban spaces could have been done for a tourism resort or any tourism area. It was decided however to focus on a historic area for a

number of reasons. First, there are my own personal circumstances and interest, more specifically the interest I have developed in historic areas in general and also the interest I have developed in Valletta. Second, from what I have learnt over the years it appeared to me that heritage areas have qualities that are conducive to an enjoyable tourism experience, qualities that modern spaces generally lack. This research is a means to better understand what these qualities are. Third, in the context of Malta, tourists choose to visit historic areas such as Valletta, Mdina, Birgu and others. On the other hand, tourists go to tourism resort areas such as Sliema/St.Julians and Bugibba/Qawra, not because of their urban spaces, but for the facilities offered mainly accommodation and leisure.

There are a number of historic areas in Malta I could have chosen as a case study but I chose Valletta. There are number of reasons for this. First, Valletta has a greater diversity of uses and urban spaces when compared to other historic areas in Malta. Hence aspects related to the form-activity-meaning model are more likely to emerge. Second, Valletta displays high levels of tourism activity resulting from its built heritage and its history. In addition, because of my own interest in Valletta it only seemed natural for me to have the City as the case study for my research.

1.4 Chapters Overview

Background information (Chapter 2): This chapter sets the context by providing information on Valletta, this being the selected case study for this thesis. It provides information on diverse aspects of Valletta, each of which is relevant to the study of the tourist experience.

Literature Review (Chapters 3, 4 and 5): The literature review is provided in three chapters, the first of which, Chapter 3, considers the experience of urban spaces from two perspectives namely urban design and tourism. The chapter reconciles the physical aspects of urban space with the emotive aspects of experience and examines elements that are considered necessary to make an urban space enjoyable. In Chapter 4 the form-activity-meaning model is introduced and potential variants to the model are referred to. Two elements of

the model namely, form and activity are considered in this chapter. Chapter 5 discusses in detail the meaning element of the form-activity-meaning model. Various aspects of meaning of place are considered including background of individual, authenticity, heritage values, numinous experience and narrative.

Methodology and Methods (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9): The research method involves the use of photography as one of two different interviewing approaches. This necessitates a discussion on the role of photography in tourism and consideration on the use of visual methods as a tool for tourism research. This is dealt with in Chapter 6. Phenomenology is the approach being adopted for this research. Chapter 7 considers different researchers' understanding of phenomenology as well as the potential and constraints of this approach for the carrying out of qualitative research. Chapter 8 describes in detail the method adopted for this research. It includes descriptions on the pilot survey, data collection procedures, transcription and on coding and analysis. The chapter also includes my observations of the interviewing process. In Chapter 9, a number of observations are made about the research method.

Findings, Discussion and Conclusions (Chapters 10 to 17): The outcomes of the study are organised in eight chapters. Chapters 10 to 15 refer to the data consisting of transcripts of 32 interviews carried out with tourists on their Valletta experience. Quotes extracted from these transcripts are included in Appendix A. Chapter 10 provides two types of background information; that relating to locations visited by the interviewees and that relating to the activities in which the interviewees engaged. The chapter facilitates the better understanding of the subsequent chapters on the interviewee's experience of Valletta. Chapters 11, 12 and 13 consider the interactions of the tourist with three elements of place namely with self/meaning, with other people and with the environment or surroundings. The discussion relates to results emerging from the research data. Chapter 14 considers instances where the tourist's experience involves interacting with all three elements of place and focuses on two spaces in Valletta that were the most popular amongst the interviewees. Chapter 15 considers the information to which a tourist will have access prior or during the visit to Valletta and assesses how far it influences the experience. A number of key findings have been identified in this research and these are

presented in Chapter 16. The chapter also includes a model, termed as the tourist interaction model. The model is a representation of the tourist experience of historic areas, based on the data on the interviewee's experience of Valletta. The concluding chapter, Chapter 17, provides tentative replies to the research questions listed in Section 1.3 and identifies areas for possible further research.

CHAPTER 2

VALLETTA – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Introduction and Background

This chapter provides information on Valletta. The information included in this chapter is that which is considered relevant to this research and is intended to provide the reader with information useful to better understand the eventual research outcomes.

Valletta is the capital of Malta, a small island state that became a member of the European Union in May 2004. Valletta is a unique city. It is unusually small for a capital – both in terms of its population (between 6,500 and 7000) and geographical size (55 hectares) (Smith 2010:66,81). It is at the heart of an urban conurbation that spreads for several kilometres around the two harbours – Grand and Marsamxett. It has a high concentration of heritage artefacts within a small area reflecting its rich history. Functionally, the city provides the nation's most important transport, commercial, administrative and financial hub (Smith, 2010:66). Valletta is both a capital city and a port city. Since its beginnings, Valletta was the main entry point into Malta, with ships docking in the Grand Harbour alongside Valletta. Right up to the nineteen fifties, virtually all goods and people coming from overseas entered Malta through Victoria Gate, Valletta's gate facing the Grand Harbour.

Malta's independence in 1964 reinforced Valletta's role as the islands' political and administrative capital. Valletta has remained a leading retail centre even if there is increased competition from new commercial centres and new forms of retailing. It is also an important location for private sector offices. During the day it is full of life and activity, with innumerable offices, shops, cafes, restaurants, markets and sites to visit. It is an important national symbol and also a place that is experienced directly by a large proportion of Maltese on a regular basis, giving rise to potential conflicts between its symbolic and lived functions (Smith, 2010:63). It is the home of Malta's main cultural venues (Ebejer, 2013). Valletta is home to several parishes, each of which is the

centre of community life. There is a strong popular culture amongst the community, normal day-to-day activities and celebrations of the residents adding colour and depth to the 'cultural' experience of the city (Theuma, 2004: 297).

Until the late 1970's, Valletta was also the Malta's main leisure and entertainment centre. Newly established resort and leisure areas led to Valletta's slow decline as a centre of night activity (Theuma, 2004: 297). This trend has been reversed slightly in recent years with the opening of numerous bars and restaurants, many of which capitalise on the historic features of Valletta's buildings.

2.2 Valletta history and development

The following is an overview of the history of Valletta based on the work of Thake and Hall (1993), Spiteri (2001), Chapman (2006) and of the Rehabilitation Projects Office (2010). After the Knights of St. John were dislodged from Rhodes In 1522, Emperor Charles V offered Malta as their new home. The Knights were reluctant to accept because Malta was barren and lacked water. On the other hand, Malta had two natural harbours and these were a vital consideration for the Knights to protect their ships without the need of building expensive breakwaters. The natural harbours tipped the balance in favour of the Knight's agreement to come to Malta.

Upon their arrival in Malta in 1530, the Knights set out to strengthen the defences with the construction of Fort St. Elmo (1552-1556) at the tip of the Sciberras peninsula. The peninsula was strategically located between the two natural harbours and a new fort at its tip provided protection to the entrance of the two harbours. On the other side of the Grand Harbour, the Knights built Fort St. Michael (1552-1553) and strengthened the defences of Fort St. Angelo (1536-1550). A fact-finding commission sent over to inspect the island in 1524 considered the construction of a fortified city on the Sciberras peninsula as the most effective way to protect the two harbours. This opinion was reiterated many times by the Order's military engineers from 1530 onwards. These

intentions were not acted upon because of the short-term priorities, indecision and insufficient funds.

The Turkish peril to Christian Europe originated in 1453 when forces of the Ottoman Empire captured the city of Constantinople. Subsequently, the Turkish expansionist strategy resulted in conquests of cities and fortresses along the European and North African coastlines of the Eastern Mediterranean. Capturing Malta was part of an overall strategy to capture the Italian mainland, including Rome. For the Turks, Malta was a stepping stone to Europe. In 1565, the Turks attacked Malta with a massive force of 40,000 men. The Turks placed their heavy guns on the high ground of Sciberras peninsula overlooking Fort St. Elmo and laid siege to it. The Turks did eventually capture the fort but they lost too much time and forces. They then turned their attention to Fort St. Angelo but with an approaching winter and increasingly depleted forces, the Turks eventually decided to abandon their attack and left the island on 8 September.

The Great Siege of 1565 proved that if the Order was to be securely settled on the island, it needed a new fortified city on the Sciberras peninsula. Following their success in the Great Siege, the Knights of St. John enjoyed a period of prestige across Europe and the money poured in for the building of the City. European nobility provided financial support for the construction of the new fortified city because the retention of Malta by the Knights was in their best interest. It was urgent to complete the designs and build the new city's fortifications in the shortest time as a second major attack by the Turks was thought to be imminent. Following a request made by Grand Master la Valette, the Pope sent over his military engineer Francesco Laparelli. The first stone of the new fortified city was laid on 28 March 1566. In spite of shortages of money, labour and building material, works progressed steadily with land front fortifications taking shape by mid-1567 and most of the lateral bastions on either side of Valletta being close to completion by 1568. Laparelli left Malta in 1569 having entrusted the continuation of the work to his assistant, the Maltese military engineer Gerolamo Cassar. Building proceeded rapidly with most planned sites within the walls occupied by 1582. Later landward defences were reinforced with outer lines of fortifications. Floriana was built between Valletta's inner and outer harbour defence fronts.

Valletta was the new fortified capital city of Malta. Laparelli's plan was for a gridiron pattern of rectilinear building blocks and parallel streets. The topography of Sciberras peninsula was very uneven with a high ridge along its middle and steep slopes towards the shoreline. Levelling off the ground was considered but time and technical constraints made this impractical. The failure to alter the uneven topography resulted in flights of stairs along the gridiron layout.

Valletta was built as the capital and military stronghold for the Knights of the Order of St. John. This religious, and latterly, military Order controlled the Islands for 268 years. The Knights of the Order were drawn from many parts of Europe and belonged to 'langues' corresponding to the country of origin. The knights of each 'langue' lived in purpose-built auberges. The 'langues' of the Order were those of Provence, Auvergne, France, Aragon, Italy, Germany, Castile and England. Several auberges still survive and thus several countries and regions are in some way represented in Valletta's architecture. Apart from auberges, the new city plans provided for buildings considered essential for urban living and for the running of the order including the magisterial palace, the conventual church, the hospital, churches, bakeries and windmills.

With the decline of the Ottoman Empire, fears of a possible attack abated. As the Knights' era progressed, military priorities gave way to more symbolic concerns (Smith, 2010:67). In the late 17th century and throughout the 18th century, there was less concern for military facilities and various projects were carried out to cater for government administration and encouraging commercial growth. To the earlier group of public buildings, the Order added a theatre, a customs house and a university. In the 17th and 18th century, Valletta flourished into an impressive baroque city, not unlike some important European cities. The Order wanted to impress upon other European states its growing status and prestige. The Order's occupation of Malta came to an end in 1798. Following a short interlude of two years under French occupation, responsibility for the Maltese islands fell to the British in 1800.

Malta's location at the centre of the Mediterranean was militarily very useful to the British. The British continued to strengthen and adapt its defences, but

Malta was not subject to major attack up until the Second World War. A second siege occurred in Malta during the Second World War when Malta became the target for sustained bombardment between 1940 and 1942. The main targets were the airfield and the shipyards, the latter being located around the Grand Harbour. There was extensive destruction and loss of life in Valletta and other localities around the Harbour (Chapman and Cassar, 2004:223). In recognition of their courage, the Maltese were awarded the George Cross in April 1942. During the British colonial administration, many additions and adaptations were carried out to the urban fabric, including reconstruction of several groups of buildings following Second World War. Although the Baroque aesthetic remained dominant, British interventions were not necessarily incompatible with the existing cityscape (Smith, 2010:68).

2.3 Malta's tourism development policy – a brief history

With independence in 1964 and the end of the British military bases in Malta in 1979, there was an urgent need for Malta's economy to diversify. Because of Malta's pleasant weather and extensive coastline, tourism was an obvious choice. Hotels were developed along coastal areas to cater for the growth of tourist numbers. A typical holiday consisted of a package deal based around a week or two week stay at a hotel near the sea and a lively nightlife. The imagery used in tourist brochures was that of a typical Mediterranean summer holiday destination centering on a sun and sea experience (Foxell and de Trafford, 2010:158; Bramwell, 2003:587).

Malta presented itself also as a place of cultural importance with the occasional reference in brochures of prehistoric temples and the history of the Knights of Malta and of the two sieges. Foxell and de Trafford (2010:158) describe the appeal of these references as 'popular-historic' and argue that Malta in the 1970s and 1980s leverages only partially the pull factors for cultural tourism namely *"unique architecture and archaeology, museums and galleries, a good calendar of cultural events such as concerts, festivals and exhibitions, and good hotels and restaurants serving good local cuisine."*

The growth in Malta's volume of tourist arrivals was matched by poor product development and a series of problems such as environmental degradation and infrastructural overloading. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism activity resulted in under-employment during the winter (Markwick, 1999:231). Mass tourism's economic imperatives encouraged a marked spatial polarization with the development of the tourism infrastructure being concentrated in the resorts of Sliema and St. Julian's in the main conurbation, and in Bugibba and Qawra (Bramwell, 2003:588). Tourism accommodation is disproportionately in the coastal resorts north-west of Grand Harbour with very little accommodation being located in or within easy reach of Valletta (Tunbridge, 2008:463).

In 1988, in an effort to stimulate a recovery, government appointed UK consultants Horwath & Horwath to work with Maltese experts on the first Malta Tourism Development Plan. The Plan recommended the upgrading of the infrastructure, achieving a more heterogeneous tourist market and lengthening the tourist season. The development of cultural tourism was one of the suggested strategies. Repositioning Malta as a destination for cultural tourism was, however, seen as unfeasible given that this potential segment of the market was small compared to the potential overall mass-tourism market. Therefore the Development Plan advised that Malta should promote combined cultural and sun holidays. This led to recommendations for a marketing strategy focusing particularly on the history of the Knights of Malta and the development of cultural activities such as festivals and concerts, seeking to leverage existing appeals but with an increase in emphasis on the heritage and cultural elements (Foxell and de Trafford, 2010:158).

Markwick (1999:234) argues that climate does not give a competitive edge to Malta over rival destinations. It is the culture and history that distinguishes Malta from other tourist destinations. She points out that evidence of Malta's unique and varied history is found throughout the islands in concentrations that are probably unrivalled elsewhere in the world. On the other hand, Smith (2009:291) notes that culture and heritage is often considered by sun and sea destinations as a means of diversification in tourism. Culture and heritage, however, are nebulous concepts and the market for their product is hard to gauge and segment. They play varying roles in a tourist's motivation and

behaviour. They could form either a primary or secondary attraction, or act merely as an attractive context.

This discussion gives rise to the question: 'How can heritage tourism co-exist with an established mass tourism market?' Ashworth and Tunbridge (2005:51,52) identify three different ways that this can happen. The first scenario is one where new tourism forms an effective 'supplement' to mass markets with heritage tourism being seen as an add-on to the existing dominant tourism. The second is one where the two forms of tourism are developed in 'parallel', with heritage catering for a separate market alongside but substantially different from the existing sun and sea tourism market. The third scenario involves new tourism acting as a 'substitute' for mass tourism with a deliberate, centrally directed, shift from one form of tourism to its replacement by another.

In early 2000s, the Malta Tourism Authority carried out an in-depth evaluation of Malta's tourism offer. The conclusion was that Malta was no longer competitive in the basic sun and sea package because of larger and often newer destinations that could handle much larger volumes. What had fuelled the growth of the Maltese industry in previous decades could no longer sustain the growth and development of the industry. A policy shift was set in motion, where the Malta product was redefined and became more reliant on Malta's distinctive comparative advantage, away from the more traditional sun and sea product to one that also incorporates its rich heritage (Metaxas, 2009:1363). The Strategic Plan for Tourism 2002-2004 places more focus on offering 'place specific' and 'experience specific' holidays based on Malta's 'unique value proposition' (MTA 2002, cited in Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2005:46). Malta is oriented towards the double package of 'sun-sea and 'culture-heritage' with each image being applied to specific target market (Metaxas, 2009:1368).

In 2006, low cost airlines started to operate to Malta. It was not an easy decision for the Maltese government to take because of concerns about the impact this would have on the national airline, Airmalta. It was considered essential that Airmalta continues to operate to ensure that routes vital for Maltese tourism would be serviced in an effective manner. The introduction of low cost carriers (LCC) has resulted in sustained increases in tourism numbers

over the past decade reaching 1.5 million tourists in 2013. But did LCC bring about tourist diversification including increased cultural heritage tourism to Malta? It could be argued that the lower fares, increased flexibility, increased capacity and the access to new markets provided by LCCs would assist the development of a viable city break market. In this context, Valletta being a World Heritage Site would be a strong pull factor (Smith, 2009:290). Table 1 segments tourism arrivals for year 2006, when there were no LCC, and year 2010, when LCC were well established. The percentage of tourists classified as 'culture and history' remained constant (15% in 2006 and 14% in 2010) thus suggesting that that LCC passengers are no more likely to be motivated by culture and history than passengers who came previously. A similar conclusion was arrived at in a study based on preliminary data (Smith, 2009:302). For LCC passengers, culture and heritage provide added attractions to visit but is not a primary motivation to visit Malta. LCCs brought more tourists to Malta but, rather than being more motivated by history and culture, LCC passengers are still primarily motivated by climate (63% in 2006 and 66% in 2010). The findings reinforce (Briguglio and Briguglio 1996, cited in Smith 2009) assertion that in Malta, *"alternative forms to mass tourism are attractive only if they supplement traditional tourism"*.

	2006		2010	
	No.	%	No.	%
Summer/winter sun leisure	713,000	63	886,000	66
Culture and history	163,000	15	180,000	14
Other *	248,000	22	266,000	20
Total	1,124,000	100	1,332,000	100

*Other includes diving, sports, English language learning and CIT (conference and incentive).

Table 1 : Tourism arrivals to Malta by segment

(Derived from Table 10 of the Tourism Policy for the Maltese Islands for 2012 to 2016 issued by the Ministry for Tourism in February 2012.)

Apart from the introduction of LCC, another change this past decade has brought about major changes in the tourism industry worldwide, including Malta. This was the widespread use of internet technology as a means of promoting and booking holidays. The net effect of these changes is that Malta's tourism industry is *"more diversified, less seasonal and less dependent on tour operator business."* (Ministry for Tourism, 2012:7). The individual travel tourist (as opposed to tour operator tourist) rose from 33% of the total in 2006 to 55% of the total in 2010 (Ministry for Tourism, 2012:5).

The Tourism Policy for the Maltese Islands for 2012 to 2016 describes 'culture' as a key asset for Maltese tourism. The policy advocates *"focus on our cultural offering as it contributes to attract tourists who are interested in heritage, in our local traditions, in contemporary art and creativity and in all those spheres that create cultural distinctiveness for the Maltese islands."* (Ministry for Tourism, 2012:25). It proposes numerous culture and heritage related initiatives including for example the promotion of village cores and village festivals. Compared to previous tourism policy plans, there is significant emphasis on cultural events and activities, including encouraging visits to Malta specifically for such events. In this context, Valletta as the European Cultural Capital 2018 will become more important in the coming years. These proposals suggest that heritage and culture are increasingly being seen as potential tourist attractors rather than just add-ons to a summer and winter sun leisure holiday.

In summary, tourism in Malta started off solely as sun and sea tourism. Over the years, as Malta's heritage became more valorised, Maltese tourism adopted the supplement scenario with 'sun and sea' tourists being offered organised tours of heritage sites, including Valletta. With greater competition from destinations in the Mediterranean and further afield, the use of heritage for tourism purposes was considered and advocated in the Tourism Masterplan of 1988 and the Strategic Plan for Tourism 2002-2004 (MTA 2002). The 'supplement' role of heritage in Malta's tourism was further reinforced. More recently there are signs that a 'parallel' scenario for Maltese tourism is developing and that this trend will continue in the coming years.

The Malta Tourism Authority regularly carries out market surveys for planning purposes. It is useful to extract some data from market research analysis (Malta Tourism Authority, 2014a; Malta Tourism Authority, 2014b) and make some observations relevant to this research. The information refers to year 2013.

- More than 1.5 million tourists visited Malta, 39 per cent of which were from the UK. The other main source markets were Germany and France with 18 and 14 per cent respectively.
- British tourists are older travelers than other tourists to Malta. The average age of tourists from the UK was 56.7. This compares to an average of 50.9 for all tourists.
- The main motivators for visiting Malta were agreeable climate (57.3%), novelty of the destination (46.7%) and history and culture (39.2%). Other reasons given include English spoken widely (19.5%) and Maltese hospitality (13.5%)
- For every two British tourists to Malta, one is a repeat visit. This compares to one in every three tourists to Malta being a repeat visitor.
- The total average stay in the Maltese Islands is 8.7 nights.
- More than 60% of tourists to Malta stay in 4* and 5* accommodation. The corresponding figure for British tourists is over 60%.
- Most tourists to Malta travelled with their spouse or partner (56.1%). The corresponding figure for British tourists was 63.5%.
- In the off-peak, 50.6% of tourists spent some time walking/hiking. Sightseeing is an activity in which most tourists engage (84.4%) and this includes visits to historical sites (76.8%), visits to museums (50.2%) and visit to churches (66.8%). Although off-peak (i.e. not summer), a relatively high 34.4% spent some time swimming.

The above data suggests that most tourists to Malta do not limit themselves to one activity or interest. They will engage in a wide range of activities and this will include sight-seeing and visits to cultural sites. This does not preclude niche tourism segments with tourists coming to Malta for a specific purpose (for example diving or English language leaning) but even niche segment tourists will engage in other activities and this is likely to include sightseeing. The long average length of stay makes the involvement in a range of activities more

likely. A high proportion of tourists include a visit to Valletta in their programme.

With reference to cruise ships, 430,000 passengers visited Malta in 2013, a reduction of 23 % over the previous year. There were 286 cruise ships entering Grand Harbour with an average of 1,500 passengers per vessel (National Statistics Office, 2014). The cruise ship terminal is just ten minutes walk from Valletta's centre and inevitably a good number of cruise passengers walk or take the Barrakka lift into Valletta. Passengers also have the option to taking coach tours, buses or taxis to visit other parts of the island. No statistics are available as to how many cruise passengers disembark nor on the places they visit.

2.4 Tourism and culture in Valletta

Malta's main cultural venues are located in Valletta, including the Manoel Theatre (MTH), the Mediterranean Conference Centre (MCC), the Centre for Creativity (CFC) and the new open air theatre at City Gate, Pjazza Teatru Rjal (PTR). For Maltese people, Valletta is strongly associated with culture because of the cultural venues and also because of the history and the built heritage. Valletta has been designated as European Capital of Cultural for 2018. Although the designation includes all of Malta and Gozo, and not just Valletta itself, it is inevitable that Valletta will be the focus of cultural activities in the coming years. It also provides the opportunity to develop a more culture-oriented image for Valletta with potential tourists in other countries.

Valletta is a World Heritage Site. This is referred to occasionally in public debates, but only when a new development in or close to Valletta is being discussed. Even if largely unfounded, objectors express concern that new development will risk Valletta's WHS status. This argument was used by objectors to the new parliament building of the City Gate project (Smith and Ebejer, 2012). Valletta's skyline was a main consideration for Valletta to be designated as a WHS and therefore the WHS argument is also used against rooftop developments, even if they are very minor.

Valletta is popular with tourists. It is visited by more than 90 per cent of tourists to Malta, equivalent to 1.3 million tourists per year. In addition, thousands of cruise passengers take the short walk, and lift, from the cruise terminal to the city. With such a high number of visitors, Valletta can be referred to as a 'tourist city'. Ashworth and Page (2011:5,7) note that a tourist city is not necessarily a distinct spatial entity that the visitor can easily recognise: it is a patchwork of consumption experiences, spatially-dispersed and often grouped into districts and zones. Often it is difficult to distinguish between tourist and non-tourist uses of the city with tourists and residents making use of the same urban facilities whether they be shops, catering establishments, cultural attractions and transport facilities. These are characteristics that are evident in Valletta. Tourist activity integrates with non-tourist activity in Valletta to the extent that it is often difficult to distinguish between the two. The integration of tourist with non-tourist activity enhances the city's attractiveness to tourists.

Valletta is also a historic city as evidenced by the extensive built heritage and numerous historic sites. Section 2.2 gives a summary account of Valletta's rich history. Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990) developed the concept of the tourist-historic city on the grounds that the historic city is in part defined by tourist demand whereas the tourist city is in part delineated in terms of the location of historic attractions. Valletta meets these criteria and can thus be referred to as a tourist-historic city. The Tourism Policy for the Maltese Islands for 2012 to 2016 highlights Valletta's cultural and historic value and makes specific tourism policy proposals for Valletta (Ministry for Tourism, 2012:25) ¹ thus further confirming Valletta's role as a tourist-historic city. The document advocates the promotion of Valletta and the Grand Harbour area as a 'short-break cultural destination.'

Just 7.4% of tourists stay in Valletta/Floriana area. Most take up accommodation either in St. Paul's Bay area (24.7%) or in Sliema/ St. Julians area (37%). There are a number of development applications pending for boutique hotels and these will result in more tourism accommodation in Valletta. This is widely perceived to be a positive development for Malta's

¹ There was a change in government in March 2013 but this did not result in any major tourism policy shift. At time of writing, the policy direction set out in the document can be considered to be still applicable.

tourism because it increases choice and increases the potential for short break holidays. Living within a historic context would give added value for culturally-oriented tourists. An added benefit of hotels in historic areas is that they generate more activity, including in the evenings. In recent years there have been more restaurants and bars opening in Valletta. Their initial focus was on lunchtime to cater for Valletta's office workers, but now most cater for both daytime and weekend evenings.

Another study carried out by the Malta Tourism Authority (2013) deals with visitor satisfaction levels in selected heritage tourism areas, including Valletta. Satisfaction levels were measured by means of a set of indicators for which participating tourists were asked to assess on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 - 'very poor'; 2 - 'poor'; 3 - 'average'; 4 - 'good'; 5 - 'very good'). The results refer to autumn 2011 and winter 2012. For Valletta the top three positive indicators were (average rating given in brackets); variety of cultural attractions (4.6), viewpoints and vistas (4.49) and feeling of safety from crime (4.42). On the other hand, the indicators rated most negatively were parking facilities (2.77), state of pavements (2.87) and availability of public conveniences (3.18). On urban environment, indicators worth noting are availability of open space (3.81), upkeep of gardens and open spaces (4.03) and street cleanliness (3.67). Quality of service in restaurants, shops and cultural attractions was generally considered to be good (3.96, 3.99 and 4.2 respectively). Other indicators worth noting are on general impressions as follows: general atmosphere (4.35), feeling of welcome (4.28) and overall enjoyment of visit (4.38). Note that some indicators (for example cleanliness, state of pavements) are dependent on management and therefore significant changes in management may result in noticeable shifts, positive or negative, to these indicators.

2.5 Valletta's narrative

Valletta's history provides a narrative spanning hundreds of years from before 1565 to today. Valletta's history and narrative is part of the 'meaning' that, as discussed in Chapter 11, is an integral part of the experience of the City and its urban spaces.

The two periods in history that left the most lasting mark on Malta and its urban landscape were the Knights of St. John (1530-1798) and the British (1800-1964). Each of these two periods is linked to an important historic episode, namely the Great Siege of 1565 and Malta's role in Second World War (1940-44). Ashworth and Tunbridge (2004: 15) explain how these historic episodes are also significant in terms of tourism product:

“Malta is strongly associated, especially in the imagination of foreigners, with two short episodes in Malta's history. The focus upon the two sieges that of 1565 and of 1940-43, has a number of clear advantages. Both are highly dramatic events, easily understood, with few historical ambiguities and with clear cut personification through heroes and villains. They are both capable of interpretation through ‘experiences’ and the sites, buildings and artefacts lend themselves to easy identification by the tourist. In both the local is strongly linked to the wider world through action and ideology. Malta becomes the focal point in a global struggle with which tourists can easily identify....The sieges are thus almost an ideal tourism product.....”

A dominant element in Valletta's narrative is the sea. In its bid for European Capital of Culture, Valletta 2018 Foundation recognised the central role of the sea to Valletta in the Bid Book (Valletta 2018 Foundation, 2012: 15) as follows:

“The sea has shaped our culture, manipulated our trades and industries, and influenced almost every part of our lives. Valletta exists solely because of the sea; its peninsula and strategic location fashioning the city as both defensive fortress and safe haven thanks to the natural harbours flanking it.”

There are numerous sites in Valletta and elsewhere in the Grand Harbour that enable the visitor to see, and even physically touch, tangible evidence of these two remarkable narratives, thereby making the narrative more powerful and real and thus the experience more interesting and enjoyable

Valletta is linked forever with the Knights of St John (Bruce and Creighton, 2006: 241). Its historic built environment is considered symbolic of the Maltese nation, something *“achieved by conjuring up images of the Maltese fighting side by side with colonial powers in their main triumphs – the sieges of 1565 and World War II”* (Mitchell 2002). These victories are often projected as the glories of the Maltese nation (Smith, 2010:71).

Urban walls could be seen as a ‘heritage of atrocity’ as their use was associated with warfare and hence death and destruction (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). For Valletta and Cottonera’s fortification, the ‘dark’ association refers mostly to relatively recent wartime experience of the Second World War. For the Great Siege of 1565, the ‘dark’ association is very weak partly because of the passage of time and also because the Knight’s victory over the invading Turks is greatly romanticised. Bruce and Creighton (2006:241) refer to several instances across Europe where town walls present dilemmas for communities and heritage agencies because of potential differing interpretations based on ideological or ethnic grounds. This has not been the case in Valletta or any of Malta’s walled towns making the narrative of fortifications largely unproblematic. According to (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2005:45), Malta has a highly cohesive national identity making the use of its heritage resources free from internal cultural schism.

2.6 Valletta: urban design considerations

2.6.1 Characteristic features

The Knights of St. John left behind them a legacy of architectural achievements within the city including administrative, residential, cultural and religious buildings. Valletta is a fortified city. Its fortifications are impressive both for their extent as well as for their height. The City provides Malta’s most important venues for theatre and musical performances as well as Malta’s most important museums.

The nature of many of Valletta’s urban spaces have been determined by its location on a peninsula. Many streets and gardens at the periphery of the city

provide quiet enclaves offering open vistas of the harbours. Valletta's grid-iron street layout was based on the utopia of new town planning concepts that were in vogue at the time it was built. Straight roads are interspersed with the occasional piazza, the more important piazzas being in the centre (namely Pjazza San Gorg, PSG and Pjazza Regina, PRG). Valletta's uniform street pattern is adorned with statues, imposing civic and ecclesiastical buildings, and monumental city gates (Smith, 2010:66). Its intact city walls and coherent architecture means it has more similarities with a medieval fortress than with a contemporary city (Smith, 2010:66).²

The main central artery, Republic Street (RST), was pedestrianised in the seventies and it became Malta's main shopping street. In recent years, pedestrianisation has been extended, the more important spaces being pedestrianised were Merchants Street (MST) and Pjazza San Gorg (PSG). Pjazza San Gorg is along Republic Street (RST), halfway between City Gate (VCG) at one end of Valletta and Fort St. Elmo (FSE) at the other. On one side of the piazza is the Grandmasters' Palace, whereas on the other side is the Main Guard. Both are of historic and architectural importance. The piazza today includes seating, as well as a water fountain that 'dances' to the music. Merchants Street runs the entire length of Valletta from Castille Place to lower Valletta. People can walk freely down the road for shopping or sightseeing, safe from cars and without the nuisances of noise and pollution. The street also includes tables and chairs, confined in well-defined areas, as well as seating and potted trees. The street is characterised by the presence of people creating an enjoyable ambience. The pedestrianisation generated inward investment with the opening of new shops and refurbishment of existing ones (Times of Malta; 2010 b). Numerous stepped streets provide additional interest. Some spaces provide open-air cafeterias. Cultural activities are organised in Valletta throughout the year, many of which use the urban spaces and the historic buildings as their backdrop.

² In this chapter and in Chapter 10, place names of main locations are accompanied with three letter acronyms. The map, given in Chapter 10, shows main Valletta locations using acronyms. For some locations images are provided in Appendix E. These are to enable the reader to get a better understanding of various locations in Valletta. The referencing of the photos includes the three letter acronyms.

Valletta is a peninsula surrounded by sea on three of four sides. The sea is visible from most parts of the City, even from most of the inner streets. Wherever you are in the City, you are never more than a five minute walk away from the shoreline. The fortifications are a dominant feature along all of Valletta's shoreline. They act as a barrier between the inner parts of Valletta and the shoreline. Over a shoreline of several kilometres, the lines of fortifications limit movement between the City and the sea to just a few, the main ones being Barrakka lift, Victoria Gate (VGT), Jews Sally port and Marsamxett ferry area. Another unique feature of the shoreline is that Valletta streets are at a much higher level than the shoreline. This is due to the fortifications but also because of the peninsula's topography. Both Valletta and Floriana can be considered as waterfront towns and yet in both cases, the connectivity of the inner streets to the shoreline is poor.

Valletta has a distinctive identity because of the built heritage that is present all across the City. The distinctive identity is reinforced by well-defined edges around its perimeter namely the shoreline on three of four sides and the fortifications on all four sides. The fortifications surrounding the city are impressive both for their extent as well as for their height. A sharp well-defined boundary gives the historic town a strong identity. The urban fabric of Valletta communicates a Maltese identity as well as an international one (Smith and Ebejer, 2012). Valletta's streetscapes are characterised by distinctive timber balconies and extensive use of Maltese stone. On the other hand, the many auberges, palaces and public buildings that dominate the cityscape are visible reminders of the Order of St. John. One could also argue that Valletta has a strong Mediterranean identity with an agreeable typically sunny weather throughout the year and the blue sea clearly visible from most Valletta streets.

The iconic views of Valletta from across the Grand Harbour, and also those across Marsamxett Harbour, emphasise the City's distinct identity. A characteristic feature of Valletta's skyline is the stepping of buildings as well as two dominant landmarks, the massive dome of the Carmelite Church and the steeple of the Anglican Cathedral of St. Paul. Another feature is the line of fortifications close to the water's edge. This is a reminder not only of the defensive role of Valletta during the time of the Knights but also that this defensive role involved, to a large degree, maritime conflict. The form of the

town and its fortifications together with the meanings and associations are vital contributors to Valletta's genius loci. Relations with colonial powers were usually cordial due to the feeling that the Islands were vulnerable without the protection of an international power. This explains, in part, why the physical legacies of colonizers are not a cause of embarrassment, but rather of pride (Smith 2010, 67).

Valletta's iconic nature was given due recognition with its designation as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1980. It was the first entire city to be inscribed as such, with its well defined boundary being a contributory factor to this. For the shoreline and the bastion levels in particular, the experience is heightened with the visual contrast of the bright blue sea and the yellow stones of the fortifications. Contrary to many other walled towns that have become 'time-frozen' such as Mdina, Conwy, Urbino and Visby (Bruce and Creighton, 2006: 238), Valletta is a city that constantly needs to adapt to changing needs, within the constraints set by the need to conserve the built heritage.

2.6.2 Urban morphology study

Chapman (2006) carried out a macro analysis of urban form and space for Valletta and Floriana. The following are a few distinctive characteristics he identified for Valletta:

- (i) The fortifications are characterized by scale and by the powerful edges they produce. The seaward fortifications closely follow the peninsula, creating a high defensive walls with few gateways into the city and steep level changes between sea level and the city. On the landward side, strong edges are created with high walls and deep ditches.
- (ii) Grids and street blocks overlay the topography of the peninsula, creating dynamic changes in form and space despite the simple layout. The grid of narrow roads creates a distinctive character. Street blocks sometimes comprise single buildings, like for example an auberge. Other blocks include many buildings with a mixture of uses.

The characteristics described above give rise to two space typologies for Valletta:

- (i) At the edges two contrasting configurations meet. On the one hand, the fortifications' design and layout are dictated by defense requirements and the shoreline. On the other hand, the street layout follows a rigid grid iron pattern. The meeting of the two gives rise to coincidental spaces, with complex geometries and considerable changes in levels. Initially these spaces were for the assembling of troops in case of attack. Over the years, the use of these spaces evolved with some of them being dedicated to gardens (Upper Barrakka (UBG), Lower Barrakka (LBG) and Hastings gardens). Others were used for traffic roads and for parking.
- (ii) The main streets and squares follow a formal rectangular layout set in a grid. Open spaces are formed by a setback of one of the street blocks. Valletta's internal street layout provides for few open spaces, the main ones being located on Republic Street (RST) that is the spine connecting City Gate (VCG) to Fort St. Elmo (FSE) at the tip of the peninsula. A hierarchy of street width can be identified with Republic Street and Merchants Street (MST) being wider than all other Valletta streets.

The meeting of the formal grid with the fortifications edges is one of two 'coincidences' identified by Chapman (2006:35). The formal squares within the grids contrast sharply with the complex geometrical spaces at the edges that he claims *"can be perceived and experienced as distinctive places."* The second coincidence is that between the grid of development and the topography, that creates continuously changing relationships of forms and spaces. According to Chapman (2006:35), *"the few powerful landmarks punctuate this undulating fabric, giving identity, legibility and distinctiveness."* Overlying the broad morphological areas there is a pattern of landmarks and monuments, the main ones being two distinctive churches that add dramatically to the form and skyline of the city. The first to be constructed was St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in 1842 with its slender spire typical of many protestant churches of the time. The second is the Carmelite Church (1958-1981) that replaced an earlier war damaged building. The church's massive dome rises high above and dominates the Valletta skyline. The visual prominence in the urban form is possibly indicative of the ecclesiastical rivalry between faiths (Chapman 2006:33). Chapman also refers to a series of smaller landmarks

that give structure to the open spaces and gardens. Table 2 gives a summary analysis of Valletta at various scales of resolution according to Chapman.

Table 2:

Summary analysis of Valletta at various scales of resolution (source: Chapman, 2006)

City settlement	Collectively the diverse characters of the parts of Valletta and Floriana are subsumed into a powerful form and image. The rugged topography and the 'build-up' in the massing of the urban form produce a memorable identity, especially when seen from a distance across the surrounding harbours. The distinct relationships between the built forms and the enclosure of public space creates a similar sense of identity within.		
Districts	Valletta: dense stone character: The sub-areas in the Valletta core are strongly unified into an identifiable whole.		
Quarters	Valletta harbour edges: Powerful stone bastions, harbour edges and accretions	Valletta land front and City Gate: Areas forming an identifiable 'belt'.	Valletta core: Dense urban form of blocks enclosing tight streets and squares.
Landmarks and monuments	The Siege Bell and gun emplacements	City Gate and the Cavaliers	Carmelite Church and St. Paul's
Character sub-areas	Fort St. Elmo Marsamxett harbour edges Grand harbour edges	Civic squares within fortifications Gardens and spaces on the fortifications Ditches and spaces outside the fortifications	Republic Street - 'spine' and linked civic spaces Historic street blocks – original form Reconstructed areas
Green space	Upper and Lower Barracca 'ceremonial' gardens and linear gardens along streets	Hastings gardens on top of the fortifications	None
Forms and space	Complex geometries of 'unplanned' spaces between core and edge.	Combination of planned squares and 'unplanned' spaces defined by the fortifications.	Tightly enclosed streets and planned public square, over dramatic topography.
Street patterns	N/A		Strict grid within the peninsular edge
Blocks			Large, tall and solid rectangular block set at the back edge of pavement.
Built forms	Relatively simple geometries of long curtain walls forming the fortifications	Complex geometries of the bastions, cavaliers and ditches	Arcades in some reconstruction blocks.
Plots	N/A		
Building elements		Raking walls, 'slit' openings and ditches. Gardjola (or watch towers).	Stone walls, cantilevered balconies, metal window grills at ground floor. Arcades introduced to edges of public realm in reconstruction areas.
Materials	Predominance of globigerina (franka) limestone for fortifications and the buildings. Harder coralline limestone used for paving and exposed areas. Numerous timber balconies give distinctive character, but modern materials are intruding in places.		

2.6.3 Further comment on urban design aspects of Valletta

Apart from the morphological analysis, further observation on Valletta's urban design characteristics would be useful. Urban designers are advised to incorporate certain elements in the design of space to make them convivial – these are listed in s3.1 and are based on Roberts (2001,39-47). The following are comments on the presence or otherwise of these urban design elements in Valletta's streets and urban spaces. They are based on this writer's own in-depth knowledge of Valletta and professional training as an architect. The comments focus on four aspects of the streets and space namely active frontages, mix of uses, scale and grain and order and chaos. It was decided not to include a more detailed urban design appraisal to retain the focus of the thesis on the results emerging from the data.

In the previous section the urban morphology study distinguishes between three areas, one of which is the 'Valletta core' consisting of 'dense urban form of blocks enclosing tight streets and squares.' Two distinct areas can be identified. The central business area includes the first half kilometre of Republic Street and the adjoining streets. There is a good mix of uses with shops and catering establishments on the ground floor and offices, retail, residential on the upper floors. (This is also referred to in s2.6.5.) Although most streetscapes have an active frontage, there are some exceptions because of monumental historic buildings, most notably Auberge de Castille (ADC), Auberge d' Italie (ADI) and St. John's Cathedral (SJC). Even if the scale of the buildings is large, there is a fine grain at street level with rows of small shop frontages making the scale more amenable to pedestrians. Again exceptions to this are the historic buildings, where often the building's monumentality, and hence large scale, is intrinsic to its architecture. The streetscapes display a high level of order because of the cohesive historic architectural design and the consistent use of the building materials (Maltese stone and timber for apertures). Some post war developments have retained a similar architectural language and more important the same building materials, making them fit in well with the streetscapes and retaining the overall order. On the other hand there are sufficient differences in the architectural design to retain interest and avoid boring streetscapes.

Beyond the central business area, the predominant use is residential. There is some mix of uses but somewhat less than the central business area. The residential areas are interspersed with office use, cultural facilities and religious buildings. Ground floors do not have active frontages despite the occasional shop or catering establishment. The domestic nature of the architecture result in a fine grain at street level and on the upper floors – a grain that is compatible with the human scale. As for the business area, the streetscapes display a high level of order although there are instances of incompatible intrusions to building façades. There is no distinct boundary between the central business area and the residential areas. Visually and in terms of uses, the two areas merge with each other seamlessly.

2.7 Public sector investments in Valletta

Prior to 2006, Valletta was given low priority by successive governments. Investment was limited to minor restoration projects, with projects worthy of note being few and far between. The lack of public investment was mirrored by a lack of private investment in the City, creating a gradual yet steady downward spiral and increased dilapidation in many parts of Valletta. The exceptions to this were two projects that used Valletta's built heritage in a distinctive and unique way. The projects were the Centre for Creativity that entailed the restoration and adaptation of St. James Cavalier into a cultural centre and Valletta Waterfront that converted a row of waterfront historic stores into a cruise passenger terminal.

After 2006, a series of projects were implemented in Valletta many of them using European Union funds. The projects dealt with diverse aspects of the City, including restoration/ rehabilitation, culture/tourism, pedestrianisation, accessibility (public transport and parking) and urban regeneration. The most important of the projects are:

- Extension of pedestrianisation including Merchants Street and Pjazza San Gorg,
- Restoration of Biagio Steps and the establishment of the Fortifications Interactive Centre,

- The redevelopment of City Gate, including City Gate, the new Parliament building and 'Pjazza Teatru Rjal' within the old opera house ruins, (refer to Smith and Ebejer (2012) for project details).
- The restoration of Fort St. Elmo and Carafa Enceinte to establish 'Fort St. Elmo Heritage Experience' including a Military History Museum, Valletta Museum and a Ramparts Walk,
- The restoration of extensive stretches of Valletta fortifications including the restoration of Victoria Gate (see photos VGT1 and VGT4 on page 328 in Appendix E).

Valletta benefitted from these public investments in a number of different ways. Some restored the built heritage and brought it into financially viable use. Others created spaces that are more amenable for pedestrians and that therefore allow visitors to better appreciate the historic heritage. Still others established new visitor attractions based on Valletta's heritage.

It is important to note that at the time of the research interviews the City Gate and the Fort St. Elmo project were still underway. The former was highly visible to any visitor to Valletta because of its location within the City's main access point. The project was mentioned by several of the interviewees. The Fort St. Elmo project was within a self-contained area and therefore had no effect on tourists' experience of lower Valletta, other than restricting access to the Fort. Other projects made Valletta more accessible and these included the new terminus, the park and ride facilities at Floriana, the establishment of the Controlled Vehicle Access and the new Barrakka lift.

In recent years, there was also investment in open air cultural events in Valletta, the most notable being Notte Bianca and New Year's Eve Celebrations. The first Notte Bianca took place in 2006, and it is now a well-established event in Malta's cultural calendar. Historic buildings, churches, museums and shops remain open till late and streets come alive with recitals, opera, jazz, poetry readings, exhibitions, dance, walk tours, street theatre and more. Events are also part of the regenerative process of historic areas.

Over the years, there were also several private sector investments with historic buildings being restored and rehabilitated into residences, offices or shops.

The significant public investment in Valletta has leveraged some private investment in property, but only to a limited degree. The level of private investment is generally slow and dilapidation of buildings in some areas of Valletta still persists.

2.8 Underlying forces and recurrent issues

These are underlying forces, not immediately apparent, that have an impact on the city and its urban spaces. They also have an impact on the tourist experience. The impact of each on its own on the tourist experience will be minimal but there could be a cumulative effect of several forces that will result in a significant effect. The following is a discussion of those forces and issues. It is based on a position paper drafted by the Valletta Alive Foundation (2014), a paper that in turn was based on extensive discussions within the Foundation and of the Foundation with other Valletta stakeholders.

2.8.1 Parking and access

Parking and access to Valletta has been a constant point of discussion amongst Valletta stakeholders for decades because it effects all Valletta users. Being on a peninsula, land based transport access is limited to one side only. This makes land-based transport more difficult. Valletta's main bus terminus is located just outside City Gate, around and next to Tritons Fountain (TRF), making it relatively easy for people to get to Valletta from most parts of island. Sea borne transport across the two harbours is available but it satisfies only a very small proportion of the demand for travel to Valletta. With controlled vehicle access system, on-street parking in Valletta is against payment except for residents. There are good car parking facilities in Floriana, just outside Valletta and this includes a park and ride facility. There are no off-street parking facilities in Valletta. This is problematic mostly for lower Valletta because of the distance from the Floriana car parks. This creates intense parking pressures on the streets in lower Valletta and also on the shoreline.

2.8.2 Liveability

The decline in residents experienced over several decades has stabilised at between 6,000 and 6,500 residents. There are underlying inter-related trends that impinge on population levels. Demand for commercial uses and for higher end residential has pushed up the value of property in Valletta, making it increasingly difficult for middle and low income people to move to Valletta. Even if having a Valletta address is considered attractive, there are intrinsic disincentives for first time buyers to buy a property in Valletta including the high initial and running cost of rehabilitated properties and the difficulties to find parking close to home. Planning constraints, even if well-intentioned, create further difficulties, including additional costs, making it more difficult for people to invest in Valletta's historic properties.

The Grand Harbour Local Plan (1996) includes a policy for Valletta not allowing the conversion of residential properties to office use with some exceptions. The policy was instrumental in preventing widespread conversion of residential to office and hence prevented further significant loss in population.

Because of anachronistic rent laws, low waged tenants pay little rent, meaning that landlords are unwilling to invest in properties (Smith, 2010: 79). Rent laws were also a strong disincentive against the renting out of properties with owners preferring to leave their properties empty rather than risk having reduced control over their property. Legislation was changed in the mid-nineties to facilitate the renting out of properties but the conditions relating to then-existing tenants remained largely unchanged. The net effects are lack of investment in private residential property, degraded streetscapes and high proportion of vacant properties. A very high proportion of dwellings are vacant; in 1995, 34 per cent of a total of 3,814 dwellings were vacant (Census 2005). The high proportion of vacant properties translates itself into some streets with several buildings that are not properly maintained or even abandoned. This has a detrimental impact on the streetscape. There has been private investment to rehabilitate properties in Valletta but this was mostly for larger houses or palazzos to convert to luxury houses or to boutique hotels. Very few apartment buildings have benefited from inward investment in rehabilitation. In areas where conservation is too comprehensive, everyday urban activities tend

to shift to zones where more flexibility is allowed and where buildings can be designed to accommodate their contemporary uses (Smith, 2010:80).

2.8.3 Commercial activity

Most of the commercial activity is concentrated within the central business area along the first half kilometre of Republic Street and the adjoining streets. Extensive ground floor frontages in this area, particularly on Republic Street and Merchants street, are retail or catering, the upper floors of buildings being commercial. Most shops are very small resulting in a shopping experience largely based on the interaction between the shopper and the shop assistant. Some shops have retained the traditional Valletta shop front whereas more recent shop fronts are mostly compatible with the historic character of the City. Beyond the central business area, there are limited commercial activities as most buildings are residential.

Valletta offices tend to be small and/or fragmented into small rooms. Because of their heritage value, adapting properties for modern day offices is difficult and often office workers have to put up with some inconveniences. Despite the attractiveness of having a Valletta address, many companies have moved out of Valletta as their demands for office space grew.

2.8.4 Management of urban spaces

Many catering establishments have tables and chairs outside their premises and these generally create a pleasant ambience for diners and for passers-by. There are some instances however where the tables and chairs conflict, say, with parking requirements or where they cause some inconvenience to neighbours. In Republic Street, tables and chairs would impede the flow of pedestrians resulting in crowding. On Republic Street these are only allowed in the evenings.

Servicing of commercial properties in the pedestrian area is allowed only before 10 am. Refuse collection is carried out in the afternoons and evenings at times where there are reduced levels of activity.

The open air market has been contentious for decades. Up to some years ago it was located on Merchants Street creating serious difficulties for shops. With the pedestrianisation, the open air market was relocated further down Merchants Street where there are no shops. More recently there was talk, that the market will be relocated to Ordinance Street, a side street close to city Gate. There are concerns however that this will spill over to Republic Street and to the space adjoining the new parliament building. This will be detrimental to the flow of pedestrians on Republic Street and to the quality of urban spaces around the Parliament building.

Outside City Gate, stalls are set up generally degrading the visual aspect of the approach to the City. Despite a fairly robust regulatory framework, this is not always backed up with effective enforcement resulting in some incongruences in Valletta's urban spaces.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter sets the context for Valletta, this being the selected case study for this thesis. It provides information on diverse aspects of Valletta, each of which is relevant to the study of the tourism experience. Section 2.2 describes how Valletta came into being in 1565 and its subsequent development. This provides a useful backdrop for discussions in subsequent chapters on how the narrative and the history impinge on the experience. Section 2.3 describes the development of tourism in Malta and notes how this shifted from a tourism industry based solely on sun and sea in 1960's and 1970's to one where two parallel markets are targeted namely sun-sea and culture-heritage. In the last decade, low cost airlines and online marketing and booking has brought about radical changes in Malta's tourism industry with less reliance on tour operator traffic. Malta's tourism development is relevant to Valletta because of the City's pivotal role in cultural tourism. Over the years, it is very likely that the increased emphasis on culture and heritage in Malta's tourism policy has

impacted Valletta as well as the tourism experience of the City. In sections 2.4 and 2.5, the focus shifts once more to Valletta. In the former, the role of the City's cultural aspect on tourism is considered. The latter looks at the narrative that Valletta provides and highlights its significance for Valletta's tourism product.

The latter part of this chapter deals with urban design considerations for Valletta. A main feature of this thesis is the discussion of the form-activity-meaning urban design model. In this context, the description of Valletta's urban morphology in Section 2.6 is of particular importance. The section considers the distinct relationships between the built forms and the enclosure of public space and notes how the massing of the urban form produce a memorable identity. Section 2.7 highlights the changes that have occurred in Valletta's urban spaces this past decade primarily because of public sector investments. There are underlying forces and recurrent issues that have an impact on Valletta and its urban spaces. Awareness of these forces allow for a better understanding of issues relating to the City's urban spaces. These are discussed in Section 2.8. This chapter provides the context for discussions on the tourism experience of Valletta, particularly for readers who are unfamiliar with Valletta.

CHAPTER 3

THE EXPERIENCE OF URBAN SPACE AND THE TOURIST EXPERIENCE

In this chapter the experience of urban spaces is considered and discussed from different perspectives. In the first instance, how people experience urban space is considered primarily from an urban design point of view. The discussion then shifts to a tourism perspective and the motivations of tourists are discussed, but within the context of the experience of urban spaces. The aspect of history and of meaning of place is introduced in the discussion at the end of the chapter with a focus on people's experience of historic spaces.

This chapter reconciles the physical aspects of urban space with the emotive aspects of experience. It starts by considering the discussion in urban design literature of elements that are considered necessary to make an urban space enjoyable to be in. In a sense there is a checklist of elements that, if present, will be conducive to an enjoyable urban space. A term often used in urban design literature is 'sense of place'. A closer consideration of the discussion on this term reveals that the feeling of sense of place is more closely linked with emotion and is not limited to a sensory experience. This discussion is considered necessary as a prelude to a description and detailed discussion of the form-activity-meaning model in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.1 Making convivial places

Urban design literature provides advice to urban designers on how to make spaces convivial. To achieve this, designers are required to consider the relationships between activities, buildings and spaces (Roberts, 2001: 39). A number of features of spaces are considered useful, sometimes necessary, to make them enjoyable to be in. The following is a synthesis of these elements based on Roberts (2001: 39-47). Active frontages involve the relationship between ground floor uses of buildings and the street. It allows visual

connection between people outside with the activity inside and also movement of people from the outside to the inside and vice versa. It also gives rise to what Montgomery (1998:97) refers to as transactions. A distinction can be made between primary uses, these being uses that bring people to specific places, and secondary uses that grow in response to primary uses to serve the people that the primary uses attract. Montgomery (1998:104) argues that there must be more than one primary use for vitality to be sustained – the greater the mix of uses, the greater the vitality of the urban spaces. Other elements involve scale, diversity of detail and diversity/density of uses. Along streets and pavements it is useful to have a scale of development with which people can feel comfortable. This is not to say the buildings have to be small for spaces to be enjoyable. It is about the detail at the level of the street that avoids being excessively dominant. As much as possible the density of use of buildings around the urban space should be sufficiently high to create diversity and vitality within the space. Roberts (2001: 39-47) emphasizes the need to attract a critical mass of pedestrians by means of a diversity of uses and active ground floor frontages for places to be convivial. To some extent this is also applicable at night, in that there needs to be a minimum level of pedestrian activity for people to feel safe. Sensory pleasure can be derived from the urban landscape from the qualities of a given place both in terms of spatial qualities and also in its colours, textures and surfaces. Another consideration is order and chaos: too much order creates a boring, unstimulating environment; too much chaos may feel uncomfortable. The sensory enjoyment of a small space can be enhanced with the introduction of a tree, a planter, a fountain or a work of art. These and other aspects of the physical environment are elaborated upon in Section 4.2 where the ‘form’ element of the form-activity-meaning model is discussed.

3.2 The Experience of Place

In this section, ‘experience’, ‘urban space’, ‘place’ and ‘sense of place’ are discussed. These are concepts that are interrelated. In the context of this research, it is the experience of urban space that is the main focus of the discussion. Urban space refers to streets, squares and other spaces in towns and cities.

3.2.1 Place and sense of place

The meaning of place and sense of place is discussed by several authors. The common element in their observations is that places are more than simply geographical sites with definitive physical characteristics. There is something in 'place' that goes beyond the physical. Each writer brings to the discussion an own perspective of what this something is. People feel better in spaces that are felt to contain certain qualities. It is the users who perceive these spaces as 'places' (Castello, 2010:2). The perception develops from a range of environmental stimuli relating to the objective and material nature of the space. In perception, vision is the sense that provides most information. Senses constantly reinforce each other to extend and broaden sensory perception allowing for a broader appreciation of the surroundings, a point discussed in detail in s4.2. Perceiving space as 'place' is not just about environmental stimuli. According to Castello (2010:2), there is also the subjective aspect and the *"immaterial and imponderable"*. Place is not a constant in all circumstances. It has *"a range of subtleties and significances as great as the range of human experiences and intentions"* (Smaldone et al, 2005:400). Creswell (2004:11) describes place as a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world involving a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment. Suvantola (2002:29) refers to place as a relative location of objects in the world combined with a meaningful context of human action. With reference to meaning Suvantola (2002:35) distinguishes between private and public spheres of meaning. The former refers to personal subjective meanings that evolve in personal involvement with place; the latter refers to meanings that are shared by whole societies. For Stokowski (2002:369) sense of place refers to an individual's ability to develop feelings of attachment to particular settings based on a combination of use, attentiveness and emotion. She notes that the same setting can mean different things to different individuals. *"Places are also fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory"* (Stokowski, 2002:369). Where there is no *"emotional union"* between the physical form and the visitor *"the precinct remains a space rather than a place"* (Griffin and Hayllar, 2009:147).

Lefebvre (1991:141) distinguishes between space that is marked physically by means of visual or auditory indicators and space that is marked abstractly by means

of discourse thus acquiring a symbolic value. Symbols imply an emotional investment that is deposited at a particular place and thereafter 'represented' for the benefit of everyone elsewhere. Norberg-Schulz (1980) describes 'genius loci' or sense of place as representing the sense people have of a place, understood as the sum of all physical as well as symbolic values. It is people, individuals and society, that integrate built form, topography and natural conditions, through their value systems, to form a sense of place (Jiven and Larkham, 2003:78,79). They also note that values and attitudes of individuals and of societies change over time and therefore sense of place will change over time.

The scale of place can vary greatly. Sense of place is relevant both to small scale (such as piazza, street, courtyard) as well as to large scale (such as neighbourhoods, villages, town or even city) (Creswell, 2004:11). Aravot (2002:202) refers to the relevance of place as being from a private veranda overlooking a public path to an entire region. One could also refer to a city as having "*an endless number of smaller places.*" (Suvantola, 2002:32). Valletta, for example, could be referred to as a place in its entirety or as consisting of a large number of places, these being piazzas, streets and other urban spaces. It could also be considered as being part of a larger 'place' with the Grand Harbour being the unifying factor.

Soja (2010:18) describes human life as spatial, temporal and social, and that these are "*simultaneously and interactively real and imagined*". He argues that academic discussion of space is often too much focused on physical and philosophical attributes of space to the detriment of social aspects and aspects related to time. Lefebvre (1991:94) refers to lived experience whereby he considers the element of time as integral to the physical and social aspects of space. Time is inscribed in space because with time space is subject to changes due to changing weather conditions, different time of day and ageing of natural beings within the space. Soja (2010:18) seeks to establish a balance to make the three elements "*dynamically interactive and equivalent in inherent explanatory power.*" There should not be a predetermined disposition to subordinate any one of the triad to the others. Spatial should not be reduced merely to form nor should it be seen merely as a background to social and historical processes. Lefebvre (1991:11) seeks to construct a theoretical unity between fields that are apprehended separately namely the physical, the mental (including logical abstractions) and the social. He

describes this as the 'space of social practice' that is occupied by sensory phenomena, symbols and utopias.

Soja (1996) refers to the concept of 'thirdspace' and locates it in terms of the real and imagined. He draws on the work of Lefebvre (1991) to suggest that it is possible to identify three different but co-existing spaces namely the 'perceived' space (referring to the material); the 'conceived' space (referring to the representation of space) and the 'lived' space usually understood in terms of the merging of the 'perceived' and the 'conceived'. Soja suggests that thirdspace is a particular type of spatial consciousness that goes beyond the mixing of the real and the imagined as it *"draws upon the material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning"* (Soja, 1996:11).

3.2.2 Experience of place

Experience of place is a complex process and a hard-to-define phenomenon (Andereck, 2006). The quotations below are useful as they provide some understanding of the concept. Terms used to describe experience include 'explore', 'discover' and 'surprise' while reference is made to people's emotion and the use of intellect. To describe experience of place, Hayes and Macleod (2007:48) note how visitors are;

"... invited to 'explore' and to 'discover' for themselves: personally to find surprises or 'hidden' worlds, to seek adventure, to admire grandeur, to share secrets, to sample flavours and to uncover mysteries . . ."

An insightful interpretation of the visitor experience is offered by McCarthy and Ciolfi (2008:250) who state that:

"Experience involves acting and being acted upon, sensing and feeling both, and transforming them into something emotionally and intellectually meaningful. As sensory and affective experience becomes transformed in thought and story, a museum

(or any other environment) can become a significant place for people and contributes in some meaningful way to transforming the people themselves.”

McCarthy and Ciolfi are referring to the museum experience but it is equally applicable to the experience of urban spaces. The quote brings together several aspects of experience including the emotive and the intellectual aspects that come across through the meanings that can be read from the spaces, buildings or artefacts that are being experienced or seen. Several writers, like for example Alcock (1993), refer to feelings or emotion when discussing experience of urban space. According to Burns (2000: 68), *“Emotions are the complex conjunction of physiological arousal, perceptual mechanisms, and interpretive processes”*. They are described as *“where body, cognition, and culture converge and merge.”* The experience of museums is the result of both the cognitive that refers to stimuli and quality received, as well as the emotive (de Rojas and Camarero, 2008:532). The same applies to the experience of urban heritage. McIntosh (1999:43) refers to cultural heritage attractions as *“experiential products facilitating feelings, emotions and knowledge for visitors.”* Yuksel et al (2010:275) refers to place attachment as a sign that an individual has established an emotional link to a place and describes it as the sense of physically being and feeling ‘in place’ or ‘at home’. Aravot (2002:202) describes sense of place *“as a human need, essential for wellbeing and feelings of safety, security and orientation.”* In spaces, people can also have negative feelings and emotions. In a survey, one female respondent refers to *“a strong sense of space as oppressive”* because of fear while walking at night in her home city (Burns, 2000:74).

Experiencing place can be compared with meeting a person. Norberg-Schultz (1988:19) describes both as *“a series of qualitative components”* that are spontaneously mixed in *“a seemingly illogical manner.”* The sense of place persists over time notwithstanding many external changes just as the individuality and distinctiveness of a person persists through life (Relph,1976). Smaldone et al (2005:400) notes how both people and urban spaces are unique and yet at the same time ever-changing. The comparison of the experience of place with the experience of meeting a person is interesting but has its limitations because, no matter how emotive it may be, experiencing

place is primarily about inanimate buildings and features. Berleant (2003:48) compares the more intense experience of place with an *“encounter with the noblest works of art, whose force overwhelms and engulfs those who engage with it.”* These comparisons may be perceived to be ambiguous and yet they provide some useful insights in the nature of experience of place.

3.2.3 ‘Character’ and ‘atmosphere’ of towns and urban spaces

With reference to a town or site being visited, character and atmosphere are two terms that are often used by visitors to explain the experience. Many tourists indicate that they visit other cities for the ‘atmosphere’, even though they are unable to say exactly what this is (Richards and Wilson, 2006: 1216). These terms are rarely discussed explicitly in academic literature, partly because of the difficulty to define them and partly because alternative, possibly more technically oriented terms are used (like for example sense of place). The following is a discussion on different understandings of character and atmosphere as emerging from the literature.

The conceptualisation of the tourist has shifted from that of an ‘itinerant gazer’ to that of persons interacting with the surroundings (Wearing, 1996). Orbasli (2000:55) describes the experience of a visitor in an urban environment as one of *“discovery and appreciation”* and refers to tourists wandering, lingering and taking in the surroundings. In a study of tourism to Islington and Bankside in London, it was noted that visitors were drawn by the qualities of place rather than specific attractions. Visitors enjoyed the *“broader qualities of place – the physical environment created by architecture, building, streetscape and physical form, combined with socio-cultural attributes such as atmosphere and being in an area perceived as ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘not touristy’.”* (Maitland, 2007: 29,30). It is the uniqueness of a place, rather than its more general qualities that makes the sense of place of the tourism destination (Ashworth, 1995).

In a study of two waterfront precincts in Australian cities (Fremantle in Perth and Williamstown in Melbourne), Griffin and Hayllar (2007:9) note that one of the activities reported was simply wandering around. For some, this entailed “a

sense of exploration, with visitors mentioning the notions of 'getting lost', 'getting one's bearings'." In some cases, there was "a belief that the wandering would lead to discoveries that engaged the visitor". On the other hand, Burns (2000:73) argues that whereas "people enjoy 'crooked streets' and the richness of urban experience", they are most afraid of being lost and disoriented.

'Mystery' is a term sometimes used with reference to places with 'character'. Kyle et al (2004:440) note that "for mystery to be present, there must be a promise of further information if one could walk deeper into the scene." Examples of 'mystery' include "the trail that bends, the road that turns, or the vista temporarily hidden from view but accessible through a simple shift in position." A more holistic experience of place can be achieved where trails link different types of visitor attractions, particularly formal tourism products (such as museums, historic houses, visitor centres) and informal products that give a taste of the local culture (such as open-air markets, cafes and pubs) (Hayes and Macleod, 2007:49). For a fortified historic city, such as Valletta, it is likely that 'character' and 'ambience' are referred to by participating tourists in the research and it will therefore be one of the themes that will likely be discussed in the outcome of this research.

3.3 The tourist experience

3.3.1 Defining the tourist experience

Tung and Ritchie (2011:1369) note that there is no consensus on the definition of tourist experience³ even if many writers have offered insights as to what it means. They offer a definition as follows: "An individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) of events related to his/her tourist activities which begins before (i.e., planning and preparation), during (i.e., at the destination), and after the trip (i.e., recollection)." The general thrust of the definition is agreed with except that on-site experience should be central to the definition. The 'before' and the

³ Tung and Ritchie (2011) use the term 'tourism' experience. I prefer to refer to the 'tourist' experience as it makes reference to the person who is having the experience, rather than a generic reference to the activity of tourism.

'after' should not be put on an equal footing with the 'during'. This is not because the 'before' and 'after' are not important but because, for most tourists, the emotive and intellectual engagement will be significantly more intense for the on-site experience.

3.3.2 Tourists as performers

The 'tourist gaze' concept developed by Urry (2002) has been very influential in portraying the tourist experience as a visual experience; 'the tourist gaze' suggests that people travel to destinations that are visually striking. Ek et al (2008:125) argue that tourism requires new metaphors based more on being, doing, touching and seeing rather than just 'seeing'. This turn to performance in tourism studies is a reaction against the 'tourist gaze' and other representational approaches that privilege the eye (Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland, 2010:1165). A metaphor that is being referred to frequently in tourism literature likens tourists to performers who *"not only consume experiences but also co-produce, co-design and co-exhibit them"* (Ek et al, 2008:126). Edensor (2000:323) notes that social life is performative and dramaturgical, built of roles according to social contexts. He contends that tourist performances can be considered as a continuity of the enactments in non-tourist settings. Tourist performances are shaped by the constraints and opportunities that tour structures and tourism destinations produce and are informed by the symbolic meanings and spatial organization of tourist destinations and sites.

The following is Ek et al's (2008:125,126) interpretation of the tourism performance metaphor. The tourist is not a passive sightseer consuming sites in prescribed fashions. In the act of consuming, tourists turn themselves into producers and the distinction between producer and consumer is dissolved. Tourists enact and inscribe places with their own 'stories' and follow their own paths. There is always an element of unpredictability. The places and performances that tourists enact are never completely identical to the scripts in marketing material, guidebooks and so on. Tourists experience places in more multisensuous ways that can involve more bodily sensations, from touching, smelling, hearing and so on. *"Tourists encounter cities and landscapes through corporeal proximity as well as distanced contemplation. Metaphorically*

speaking, in addition to looking at stages, tourists step into them and enact them corporeally” (Ek et al 2008:125). Similarly, Wearing and Wearing (2001:151) highlight the role of individual tourists themselves in the active construction of the tourist experience. There are different types of stages or tourism spaces catering for different tourism activities and ventures (Edensor, 2001:63; Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland, 2010:1166). An enclavic tourist space has clearly defined boundaries and a high level of stage management of the tourism performance as well as in-house recreational facilities, normally including displays of local culture. Tourists are characteristically cut off from social contact with the local people and are shielded from potentially offensive sights, sounds, and smells (Edensor 2000:329). By contrast, a heterogeneous tourist space is a multi-purpose space in which a wide range of activities and people co-exist. Tourist facilities coincide with commercial activity and domestic housing. Tourists mingle with locals in a space with blurred boundaries. In a heritage area, tourists can wander around and explore and also come in contact with the activities of locals. It can be considered therefore as a heterogeneous tourist space that allows ample flexibility for tourists’ performances.

3.3.3 Tourist motivations

For the purpose of this research, tourism is taken to be *“visitation outside one’s normal environment for leisure purposes (i.e. excluding business and employment related travel)”* (Maitland and Smith, 2009:172) or, as described by Veal (2006:2), *“a leisure activity involving travel away from a person’s normal place of residence”*.

A detailed discussion of tourist motivation is beyond the scope of this research. It is useful however to consider aspects of motivation that will impinge on the eventual on-site experience. The activities in which the tourist engages are determined to some extent by the motivation or the intended benefits of the visit. The tourist’s activities set the context for the experience. Some understanding of tourism motivation is therefore useful to better understand the tourism experience.

Ragheb (1996:247) refers to travel and tourism as providers of meaningful pursuits. He lists three main motivations for travel, namely a need for education and learning, a social motive (namely to seek relatives and friends) and escaping from the familiar and routine. According to Wearing et al (2010:31), self-development though tourism has become an increasingly powerful motivator of travel experiences and has resulted in increased interest in various forms of tourism including heritage tourism. Uriely (2005: 203) refers to the quest for strangeness and novelty as a key element and argues that the tourism activity involves the temporary reversal of everyday activities. A tourist is *“a temporarily leisured person who visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing change”*.

Tourist motivation is correlated to human need in that the satisfying of human need can be deemed to be a motive for tourist behaviour. In his book ‘Explorations in Personality’, Henry Murray (1938 as quoted by Ross,1994) explained how human nature involved a set of universal basic needs, with individual differences on these needs leading to the uniqueness of personality. Specific needs are more important to some than to others. Murray considered each need as unique, but acknowledged commonalities among the needs. Behaviours may meet more than one need. Using a tourism example, walking around and exploring could meet the need of ‘cognizance’, in the satisfaction of curiosity, as well as that of ‘achievement’ in the satisfaction of discovering something new.

Ross (1994:20) applied Murray’s list of needs for tourism and identified those needs that may be applicable to tourist behaviour. Out of twelve needs identified by Ross, I identified four needs that I consider particularly relevant to the experience of historic areas. These are:

- (i) ‘cognizance’ - described as *“To explore. To ask questions. To satisfy curiosity. To look, listen, inspect. To read and seek knowledge.”* The experience of a tourist in an urban environment involves wandering, lingering and taking in the surroundings resulting in exploration and discovery. With exploration comes mystery, this being the promise for further information. Pursuing ‘mystery’ leads to discovery that involves the acquisition of new information. In a historic area, such as Valletta,

the 'cognizance' motive is the one most likely to be sought and satisfied because the built heritage provides ample scope for the tourist to explore, to seek knowledge and to satisfy curiosity. The information and meanings offered by heritage provide opportunities for the visualisation of the past for the enjoyment of the narrative.

- (ii) 'play' - described as *"to relax, amuse oneself, seek diversion and entertainment. To have fun, to play games. To laugh, joke and be merry. To avoid serious tension."* The experience of urban space is one of relaxation and feelings of peace and quiet. Tourism is also a means of getting away from the daily routine, including being in surroundings that are not the daily norm, thus allowing the person not to be pressurised or stressed. I would argue that, in a historic area, the 'play' motive is relevant but possibly to a lesser degree as the built heritage provides the context, rather than the object, of 'play'. Some tourists enjoy being in a historic context without necessarily referring to the meaning offered by the heritage. It is a context where they can relax and 'avoid serious tension.'
- (iii) 'achievement' - described as *"To overcome obstacles. To exercise power. To strive to do something difficult as well and as quickly as possible."* This refers to exploration and the satisfaction derived from discovering something that is different or unfamiliar. The discovery is in itself an achievement. In a built heritage context, the 'discovery' could be an unusual feature or building or an interesting narrative linked to a site. There are numerous elements that are different or unfamiliar to most tourists and therefore a tourist in a historic area will have ample opportunity to satisfy any 'achievement' motive he or she may have.
- (iv) 'affiliation' - described as *"To form friendships and associations. To greet, join and live with others. To co-operate and converse socially with others. To love. To join groups."* The association aspect of the tourist experience emerges most strongly where past events are recorded. A past event is remembered by a group of people, be it community, an ethnic group or a nation and is facilitated by means of markers such as memorials and monuments. The remembrance of that event strengthens

the feeling of association amongst that group. This is more so where the event involved suffering and/or the loss of loved ones. Malta was a British colony from 1800 to 1964 and therefore inevitably numerous cultural links have developed between the two countries. These links translate into personal links between families of British ex-serviceman and Malta. The 'affiliation' motive could also translate itself into tourists actively seeking the local life and the way people lived and thus, in a sense, seeking a connection with the local.

Ross (1994:20) identified other needs (from Murray's Classification of Human Needs) as being applicable to tourist behaviour (namely conservance, recognition, exhibition, dominance, autonomy, contrarianism, aggression, abasement) but these are considered either not relevant or, at best, very remotely relevant to the experience of historic areas.

In a study of two tourism precincts carried out by Griffin and Hayllar (2007: 9,10), respondents referred to the area as a 'relaxed' place, with a good atmosphere or feeling with frequently used words being 'peaceful', 'quiet', 'clean' and 'nice'. A good number of visitors mentioned that it *"provided a temporary escape or refuge from the fast pace of everyday urban life."* These observations conform with one of the needs in Murray's classification namely 'play'.

One of Murray's needs relevant to tourism is affiliation or association. This is confirmed by Trauer and Ryan (2005:488) who note how tourists seek a sense of belonging and that a wish for enduring involvement is not simply a temporary phase but one that implies commitment to something or to some place. This sense of wanting to belong may seem to be an oxymoron because, almost by definition, the tourist is a time constrained visitor who remains an outsider. Trauer and Ryan (2005:488) argue, however, that there is evidence in academic literature that points to the tourist wishing to sustain relationships in meaningful ways. Repeat visitation to a destination is based on memories of past interactions with people at that place. They also note that the need for affiliation in part explains why some destinations have a high proportion of repeat visitors.

3.3.4 Typologies of tourist practice

The discussion on motivation necessitates consideration of typologies as suggested by some researchers. Typologies are useful in trying to understand the behaviour of different groups of tourists (McKercher and du Cros, 2003:55). In a previous section, the performative nature of tourism activity was highlighted. This suggests that the discussion on typologies is not about different types of tourists but about describing different types of tourist practice or 'performances' (Edensor 2001:59,60).

Griffin and Hayllar (2007:13) propose a typology on the basis of which they highlight how a tourism precinct can be experienced in different ways by different people provided that the *"precinct offers opportunities for different 'layers' of experience"*. They derive the visitor typology from a study of waterfront precincts in Australian cities namely the Rocks in Sydney (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005:522) and Fremantle in Perth and Williamstown in Melbourne (Griffin and Hayllar, 2007:13). Those visitors who want to move beyond the façade of a precinct to find their own way can be referred to as 'explorers'. They seek to discover the complexities and qualities of the precinct. Several visitors to the Rocks commented on how they enjoyed exploring *"behind the buildings and through the alleyways"* (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005:522). The 'browsers' are content to stay within the confines of the main precinct area and to follow the tourist routes. For the Rocks, the 'browser's' visit involved walking along a pedestrian thoroughfare containing places of historic interest and some restaurants and shops. They also visited historic warehouses that were converted to commercial use. The experience of 'browsers' does not have the depth of the 'explorer' but they are interested in capturing the *"experiential breadth"* of the precinct.

On the other hand, there are visitors who visit a precinct as just another stop on their itinerary of city's attractions. These can be referred to as 'samplers' and are often concerned purely with visiting a specific attraction rather than experiencing the precinct for its own sake. For 'samplers', the Rocks is a place that, over a short span of time, gives some idea of historic Sydney and where

souvenirs can be bought. Alternatively, samplers use it as a place of refuge from the more dynamic environment of the nearby metropolis.

This tourist typology suggests different people can experience a precinct in very different ways provided that the precinct offers different 'layers' of experiences (Griffin and Hayllar, 2007:13). Murray's Classification of tourist motivation (discussed above in s3.3.1) also suggests that urban spaces can be experienced in different ways by different people and hence supports the concept of 'layers of experience'. I would argue that the more 'layers of experience' offered by an urban space, the more opportunities for leisure activities are offered and hence the more likely will it be enjoyed by tourists.

Another useful typology is offered by McKercher and du Cros (2003), this time of cultural tourists. They distinguish between five types of cultural tourists. At one end of the continuum, there are tourists for whom culture plays no role in their decision to travel and who have a shallow experience. These are referred to as incidental cultural tourists. At the other end, there are the purposeful cultural tourists who are highly motivated to travel for cultural reasons and who subsequently have deep experiences. In support of the typology, McKercher and du Cros (2003:46) argue that the importance of cultural motives in travel decisions varies significantly among tourists. For some it represents the central reason to travel. For most who participate in cultural tourism activities, culture is a secondary reason to visit a destination. The majority tend to participate for recreational and pleasure reasons and not for deep learning experiences (McKercher and du Cros, 2003:56).

3.4 The experience of historic urban spaces

Ashworth (1995:270) states that heritage-related tourism manifests itself in a mix of preserved buildings, conserved cityscapes and morphological patterns, as well as place association with historical events. These are the resources that create the tourist-historic city. He describes the tourist-historic city as a cluster of heritage tourism sites and facilities and also *"a more holistic idea of the heritage city as a place where tourism activities (both heritage-related and non-heritage related) occur"* (Ashworth, 1995:270). An argument relevant to

historic areas is that made by Relph (1976:49) when he states *“The essence of place lies in the experience of an ‘inside’ that is distinct from the ‘outside’.”* In the historic environment, there are competing demands and underlying tension between past and present cultures and between the familiarity of the old and the notion of progress attached with the new.

To better understand the urban qualities of historic urban areas, it is useful to consider modern spaces and development. Norberg-Schultz (1988:26) argues that the modern city does not offer enough possibilities for living as its streets and squares are no longer places for people, but simply a means of communication. Similarly, Berleant (2003:42) notes that many live in anonymous bland environments. He describes it as living *“in industrialised landscapes, in insular factories, strip malls and office towers, moving with clockwork regularity along highways that are self-propelled conveyor belts to faceless apartment buildings and generic suburbs.”* Arefi (1999:186) refers to the malaise in urban landscapes and describes non-place and placelessness as *“monotonous, homogenous, boring, ubiquitous, standardized, inauthentic and/or invented.”* Gehl (1987:23) refers to *“lifeless cities”* as being void of experiences and are thus *“dull, no matter how many colors and variations of shape in buildings are introduced.”* This, according to Gehl, is in contrast to *“living cities”* that are stimulating and rich in experiences and where people can interact with one another. Such observations should be treated with caution because they are very broad generalisations shaped by the writers’ own cultural background and might not be adequately supported by research.

Maitland (2007:27) notes a trend where cities copy each other in their efforts to regenerate areas. The tendency towards serial reproduction may give rise to ‘placelessness’ in that standardized spaces could be anywhere. Maitland and Smith (2009:182) note the lack of atmosphere and tourism potential in postwar new towns. They also note how city tourists are drawn to historic centres with a central square or monument and to the ‘jumble and bustle’ of cities. These negative qualities commonly attributed to modern development give some indication as to the positive qualities or attributes that historic urban areas potentially offer including variety, interest and authenticity. Notwithstanding the above discussion however, it is interesting to note for example, that in studies carried out by Gospodini (2004:232) in Bilbao and Thessaloniki, tourists seem

to be more interested in the city's innovative architectural and urban forms than in the carefully conserved built heritage.

In the context of heritage-related tourism, buildings and cityscapes in historic areas combine with historic associations to create interest. The qualities potentially offered to tourists by historic urban areas include variety, interest and authenticity.

3.5 Conclusion

One of the research questions set for this thesis in Chapter 1 is "What are the physical, social, cultural and psychological aspects that influence experiences of urban spaces?" There are extensive discussions in urban design literature that provide some insight into this question. This chapter gives a brief overview of these discussions. There are different perspectives as to how to approach this question. Each provide an understanding of how spaces are enjoyed. They are not mutually exclusive and often they overlap. The difference is more in emphasis than in content.

At the most basic level the enjoyment of urban space is seen as something visual, almost two dimensional, similar to seeing a beautiful scene or view. Beyond this, visual enjoyment is enhanced if spaces are considered as three-dimensional entities allowing for the juxtaposition of buildings and features and thus allowing for multiple viewpoints with each viewpoint providing an aesthetically pleasing view. This approach is reflected in the traditional design of, say, renaissance gardens where visual considerations are supreme.

With the work of writers like Jacobs (1961) the emphasis shifted. Whereas the intrinsic design of buildings and spaces remained important, the relevance of uses was brought into the discussion. Use of space and buildings is relevant because it determines the nature and extent of the activity taking place and this, in turn, impacts the experience of place. This is considered in Section 3.1 where elements to make spaces convivial are listed. To communicate that spaces can be attractive and enjoyable, literature coined a new term namely 'sense of place', a term that eventually found its way in everyday language.

Other terms commonly used with reference to places are 'character', 'ambience' and 'atmosphere', terms that are discussed in s3.2.3.

To rationalize the discussion and explain these elements, a model was developed in urban design literature. The model, referred to as the form-activity-meaning model in this thesis, notes the relevance of form but also highlights the importance of activity and meaning. This is explained in Section 4.1.1.

This discussion gives rise to a second question namely: "In what way is the discussion of sense of place relevant to the tourism experience?" Even if the intrinsic qualities of the spaces are of central importance, discussions on tourism experience are more focused on the individual i.e. the tourist. In urban design literature, the emotive aspect of place is considered but not emphasised. In this respect, the urban design discussion of place experience may be inadequate to explain the tourism experience.

With the focus of tourism experience shifted to tourist, it is useful to consider more carefully the motivation of the tourist when visiting a destination as this will, to some extent, impinge on the emotional aspect of the experience. For the purpose of understanding the tourism experience, the form-activity-meaning does not adequately cater for the emotive aspect of the experience. The need is felt therefore to develop, in s4.1.2, a variant of the form-activity-meaning model that places the emphasis more on the tourist and less on the physical and other aspects of place. In the next two chapters 4 and 5, the form-activity-meaning model is described and discussed, after the background context has been put forward in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

SENSE OF PLACE: FORM, ACTIVITY, MEANING

In this chapter, a model explaining sense of place is discussed. In Section 4.1, explanations offered by literature of the model are put forward and slight variants that emerge from the literature are also noted. The model is based on three 'qualities' or 'components' of space namely 'form', 'activity' and 'meaning' and is therefore referred to as the form-activity-meaning (F-A-M) model. In this chapter 'form' and 'activity' are discussed and amplified in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. 'Meaning' requires a more extensive discussion and is therefore considered separately in Chapter 5. Further on in this research, a variant of the F-A-M model is developed based on the data that has emerged. The description of the F-A-M model in Chapters 4 and 5 provides a good foundation for the eventual variant to be discussed.

4.1 Sense of Place

4.1.1 Form-Activity-Meaning model (F-A-M)

The research will seek a better understanding of sense of place by referring to a model frequently referred to by urban design writers. Relph (1976:47) refers to physical characteristics of places (form), activities taking place there (activity) and the meanings inherent in them (meaning) as the three basic elements of the identity of places. Explanations and/or slight variants to this model are put forward by Canter (1977), Punter (1991), Montgomery (1998), Gustafson (2001) and Carmona et al (2010). These three components are deemed to be interrelated and inseparably interwoven in experience (Relph, 1976). Montgomery (1998:95) argues there are many physical elements that can be combined with each other and with 'the psychology of place' to produce urban quality, involving architectural form, scale, landmarks, vistas, meeting places, open space, greenery and so on. He argues however that for urban quality, the social, psychological and cultural dimensions of place may be more relevant. Similarly, Carmona et al (2010:120) note that the significance of the physicality

of places is often overstated and argue that activities and meaning may be as, or more important, in creating a sense of place. Relph (1976: 48) notes that whereas physical setting and activities can probably be easily appreciated, meaning is more difficult to grasp.

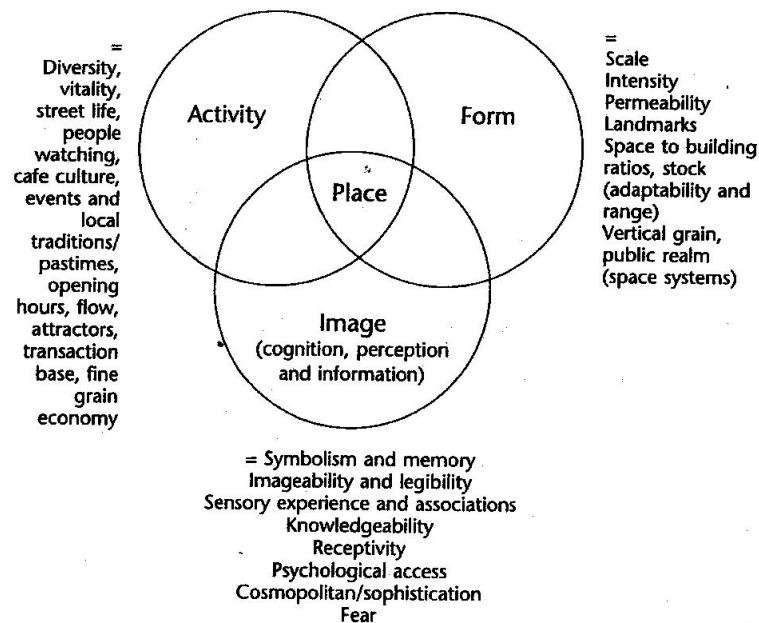


Figure 1 Urban design model to explain sense of place (according to Montgomery, 1998)

According to Relph (1976:47);

“The three fundamental components of place are irreducible to one to the other, yet are inseparably interwoven in our experiences of places. In explicating this experience, however, they can be identified as distinctive poles of focuses, and they can be further sub-divided within themselves.”

In this quote, Relph captures the ambiguities and apparent contradiction of these three components in that they are distinct and yet inseparable when experiencing place. Other than one exception, no references to the F-A-M model were found in tourism literature. Pearce (2005:135,136) presents a diagrammatic representation of the F-A-M model similar to Figure 1 above and argues that for a site to offer a positive on-site experience, it should offer clear

conceptions as to what the place is about, activities that are understood and accessible and physical elements that are distinctive and aesthetically pleasing.

4.1.2 Variants to the F-A-M model

The focus of the model as discussed above are qualities or elements pertaining to a space that combine together to create a sense of place. A variant to this model shifts the argument from the qualities of a space to the interactions of persons with the qualities of the space. Referring to form, activity and meaning, Carmona et al (2010:120) point out that sense of place does not necessarily reside in these elements but in the human interaction with them. Gustafson (2001) suggests a model whereby meanings *“can be mapped around and between the three poles of self, others and environment.”* Griffin and Hayllar (2007:10) puts the space qualities in the context of interaction as follows:

“The atmosphere is created by the interaction of the social and personal experiences of the visitor in a dialectical relationship with themselves, others and the precinct space.”

A further explanation to this variant is offered by Loeffler (2004:538, 543, 551, 554) who refers to *“significant and profound effects”* that the outdoor experience has on individuals and categorises them under three headings or themes. The first she refers to as ‘inner exploration’ and as ‘self-discovery’. The second is ‘connections with others’ or ‘attachment to friends/group’. The third relates to ‘the close interaction with the natural environment’ or ‘spiritual connection with the outdoors’ or ‘attachment to place.’ These can be summed up as interaction with self, with others and with the environment and are, I would argue, characteristic of any experience of place and not just of the outdoor natural environment.

In two studies, Griffin and Hayllar (2005, 2009) considered physical form, atmosphere and meaning in relation to a tourism precinct. From their research work on The Rocks, Sydney, Hayllar and Griffin (2005) identified three major

themes namely 'atmosphere', 'physical place' and 'history'. For 'history', the researchers state;

"The raison d'être of The Rocks as a tourist precinct is predicated in its 'history'. Like all historic precincts, the Rocks is partially captured in time. Its architecture and urban form link the present with the past."

In another similar study, this time on two tourism precincts in Melbourne, Griffin and Hayllar (2009) describe atmosphere as the overall 'feel' of the precinct, resulting from the interaction of the social and personal experiences of the visitor. Meaning was described as *"how the individual's collective experiences provide some sense of personal meaning for their visit."* Griffin and Hayllar argue that these key attributes must be recognized, protected and fostered for a tourism precinct to remain appealing to tourists.

A further variation of the the form-activities-meaning model is offered by Connell and Meyer (2004:188) in relation to the experience of a garden. A garden visitor seeks peace and a relaxing environment ('conceptions'). To do so, the visitor strolls, sits and takes in views of a garden ('activities'). The associated 'physical attributes' might be, for example, interesting plants, informal routes, adequate seating and quiet areas. Connell and Mayer argue that if the three elements are sufficiently strong, then it is more likely that a positive visitor experience will occur.

Castello (2010:9) offers a slightly different model that suggests that the perception of space is reliant on three groups of source stimuli namely 'socio-cultural' (including narrative, history, tradition), 'morphological-imaginary' (including natural assets, beauty, reputation, among others) and 'enjoyment-functional' (including services, utilities, sensory enjoyment, comfort, pleasure). These are broadly similar to 'meaning', 'form' and 'activity' of the form-activity - meaning model. Smaldone et al (2005:399) refer to a similar three-component model Meaning-Nature-Social Relations and defines place as the convergence of these components into a focal point at a particular moment in time, to create a place.

The respective influence and hence the boundaries between physical setting, activity and meaning are blurred. This notwithstanding, it is useful to consider each dimension separately. The model merits further discussion but also with a focus on the experience of a visitor to a historic area. The heritage aspect of urban spaces is of significance particularly in view of the layers of meaning that are associated with the space because of its history. Since the study will focus on historic spaces, rather than just any urban space, the aspect of meaning of space and how this is perceived by the tourist is likely to receive particular attention.

4.2 Physical Setting – Form

Broadly speaking physical setting can be associated with the senses. People gather information about the environment around them through senses. The sense that provides most information is vision. Light, particularly daylight, is an important factor that impinges on people's experience of space. Hiss (1991:23) notes that people need to see those things *"that they must know about in order to fill needs that are essentials of human nature"*. There is a link between *"a good luminous environment"* and *"physical, intellectual and emotional well-being."* The other senses with which people acquire information are hearing, smell and touch. Vision is the most effective because it is active and searching; *"we look; smells and sounds come to us"* (Carmona 2010:111).

Tuan (1977:11) also notes how the senses constantly reinforce each other. Hiss (1991: xiii) talks about a 'sixth sense' and refers to it as 'simultaneous perception'. He states that the sixth sense *"broadens and diffuses the beam of attention even-handed across all the sensations so that we can take in whatever is around us – which means sensations of touch, balance, in addition to all sights, sounds and smells."*

Wunderlich (2008:128,129) notes how people engage their senses when walking in urban places. Physical movement through space, also referred to as the 'kinesthetic' experience, together with sight, enable people to understand places as *"three-dimensional entities"* and develop a strong feeling

for spatial qualities with a “*sense of direction, geometry, perspective and scale*” (Wunderlich, 2008: 128,129). Persons can best appreciate the city’s aesthetics if they are pedestrians, giving them the possibility to walk through spaces in relaxed and irregular rhythms (Burns, 2000: 73).

Matos Wunderlich (2008:128) describes walking as an essential mode of experiencing urban space but distinguishes between ‘discursive walking’ and ‘purposive walking’, with the former being spontaneous and characterized by varying pace and rhythm. In discursive walking, people are well aware of the external environment and participate in it. According to Matos Wunderlich (2008:132);

“Discursive walking is a participatory mode of walking, during which we half consciously explore the landscape while sensorially experiencing it passing by. In this way, our familiarity with the environment is deepened.”

In contrast, in ‘purposive walking’, getting there is more important than being there with the walker taking little note of the surroundings. These observations are relevant to our understanding of the tourism experience because ‘discursive walking’ is inevitably the mode of walking that tourists adopt and that allows them to use their senses to be aware of and explore their surroundings. The concept of experiencing space through movement is mirrored by Sinha and Sharma (2009:210) who argue that, by means of design interventions a site can be interpreted so that movement is not just for reaching a destination but also for experiencing the landscape through all the senses, engaging the mind and leading to a complete, rather than fragmented, image. Staiff (2012:45) observes that when walking through a heritage landscape, the viewer is a mobile subject who is seeing the place in constant motion. He notes that:

“Movement means constant changes of perception and perspective, constant changes to me in relation to the material, changes in mood and tone, shadow and light, textures, colours, smells, air movement and sounds.”

Urban design literature often emphasises the physicality of space when discussing sense of place or place making. In his seminal work *The Concise Townscape*, Cullen (1971) explores how certain visual effects in the groupings of buildings are based on quite definable, and sometimes spontaneous, aesthetic principles. Lynch (1960:2,3) refers to environmental legibility and describes it as the *“ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern.”* He notes how people organise the environment into coherent pattern and image. A clear image enables one to move about easily and quickly. Lynch derived five key physical elements namely paths, nodes, landmarks, districts and edges. Sinha and Sharma (2009) use design interventions carried out at Champaner-Pavagadh in Gujarat, India as a case study to illustrate their understanding of the physical elements as identified by Lynch. Nodes are where paths converge. *“Memorable nodes have a strong physical form and sharp physical boundaries”* (Sinha and Sharma (2009:212). Landmarks can be seen from different angles and from afar, normally over the top of other smaller structures. Their form and/or size makes them unique and easily recognisable. Districts are areas that are bound by a common theme by reason of building type, uses or some other characteristic. Edges may be barriers, more or less penetrable that define an area and distinguishes it from surrounding areas. Two examples of edges worth noting are waterfronts and fortifications. These are relevant for the case study of this research, Valletta being a historic fortified town on a peninsula. Historic waterfronts are attractive because of open views across the water. Activity on the water, such as pleasure boats, rowing boats and so on, provide a focus of attention for passersby.

Fortifications are also distinctive features that add uniqueness and legibility. A wall around a historic town is significant in a number of ways. It provides a clear definition of the extent of the historic core. It tells a story; this is a town that was attacked or that was liable to be attacked. It is a reflection of the science of warfare prevailing at the time it was built. Ashworth (2009: 302,303) discusses the way fortifications of towns contribute to the tourist's experience and notes that the layout of a walled town is easily understandable. It is easily visualised, imagined and remembered making circulation easier and minimising the chances of becoming seriously lost in an unfamiliar place. He notes that visitors are less anxious of being lost as ramparts reorientate the erring visitor.

Town walls may be capable of being walked upon. Depending on width and other factors, a circular elevated walkway can be created – a walkway that Ashworth (2009:303) describes as *"an almost ideal tourist experience"*. The elevated walkway provides a flexible product that can be enjoyed at the pace and duration determined by the visitor, who joins or leaves at almost any point in space or time. It allows heritage to be actively used and almost for the automatic re-enactment as the strolling visitor imitates the patrolling soldier. The walkway may also offer spectacular inward views of the city itself or outward views of countryside, seascape or townscapes (Ashworth, 2009:303). Walled towns are generally small and walking along the town wall allows for the *" 'gem city' to be observed and experienced holistically"* (Bruce and Creighton, 2006:240). Walls provide a unifying force for the urban self-image with concentrated skylines being a manifestation of this.

With reference to 'district' it is useful to consider Hayllar and Griffin's (2005:517) definition of 'urban tourism precinct' as follows;

An urban tourism precinct is *"a distinctive geographic area within a larger urban area, characterised by a concentration of tourist-related land uses, activities and visitation, with fairly definable boundaries. Such precincts generally possess a distinctive character by virtue of their mixture of activities and land uses, such as restaurants, attractions and nightlife, their physical or architectural fabric, especially the dominance of historic buildings, or their connection to a particular cultural or ethnic group within the city. Such characteristics also exist in combination."*

The physical elements as identified by Lynch, namely paths, nodes, landmarks, districts and edges, come together to create interesting and legible urban spaces. Relph (1976:35) aptly describes it as follows:

"Enclaves and enclosures, city squares, walled towns and nucleated villages offer a distinctive experience of being inside, of being in a place. Similarly crossroads, central points or focuses landmarks whether natural or man-made, tend not only to draw

attention to themselves but also to declare themselves as places that in some way stand out from the surrounding area.”

Lynch (1960) provides a useful framework to analyse urban spaces even if it is limited only to the physical aspect. It provides a reference for urban designers on how to make urban spaces and areas more pleasant to be in. Lynch (1960:2,3) emphasises environmental legibility and notes how people mentally organise the environment into a coherent image, one that enables the person to move about easily and quickly through urban spaces. Five key physical elements support legibility namely paths, nodes, landmarks, districts and edges. Observations on legibility are also relevant to tourism activity as the visitation to a historic area involves walking around and exploring. Findings by Griffin and Hayllar (2009:147) support the importance of legibility in the experience of space. They comment on how the lack of legibility of Federation Square (Melbourne) created uncertainty in the minds of visitors who were unsure how to progress their experience of the place. On the basis of Lynch's work, Sinha and Sharma (2009:209) proposes measures how the environmental image of an area can be made stronger including clarifying pathways, enhancing node prominence, developing districts, strengthening edges and preserving the singularity of landmarks.

The discussion on the physicality of space is not limited to urban design but can also be extended to issues relating to tourism. Maitland and Smith (2009:171) claim that to some extent the desire to impress tourists has always influenced urban design because buildings and cities are experienced aesthetically by tourists. Ragheb (1996:250) refers to beauty and aesthetics as two of the indicators that can be considered in the meaning of leisure. Orbasli (2000) notes how old urban cores evolve over time; the form, scale and materials of a building reflecting the time it was built. Street widths in historic cores are often variable; a mix of alleyways, wider roads and piazzas is often the case. According to Orbasli (2000:55); *“In historic towns the primary attraction is the narrow, winding ‘cobbled’ streets, captured vistas, glimpses through urban fabric, texture created by architectural facades, open squares, a piazza or river front.”* Ashworth (1995: 270) refers to *“a mix of preserved buildings, conserved cityscapes and morphological patterns, as well*

as place association with historical events” as the place where tourism activities occur.

4.3 Activity and the people element of the experience

In the model being discussed, one of the three ‘qualities’ of urban space is ‘activity’. It is useful to consider activity in the context of stimulation or more specifically the extent to which the tourist is ‘stimulated’ during the experience and how this impinges on the overall enjoyment. Richards and Palmer (2010:25,26) argue that individuals seek an optimal level of stimulation, with too little stimulation producing boredom and too much stimulation producing stress. They note that an *“optimal level of stimulation may be comfortable but it may not produce feelings of excitement or joy.”*

In an urban space, one of the ways that stimulation can be created is by means of the presence of people. The same can be said of the tourist experience of urban areas. Urban design literature emphasises the importance of the presence of people to make urban spaces enjoyable. For example, Carmona et al (2003:99) notes that: *“Successful public spaces are characterised by the presence of people, in an often self-reinforcing process.”* In her ground-breaking book, Jacobs (1961) emphasises how a high concentration of people in the street makes for more interesting streets and this includes a nucleus of people who live and work there. This view is supported by Heng (2000: 50). He describes People’s Park Square, Singapore, an urban space that he considers as successful, as follows:

“At almost any one time, one could find elderly people (both residents and non-residents of the immediate surroundings), office workers, shop-keepers, labourers (from nearby construction sites), vendors, cobblers, tourists, housewives, children and teenagers using the square in a variety of manners. While the crowd of users may fluctuate during the day and reach a peak during evening hours, there are always enough passersby during the rest of the day to lend the place an air of constant activity. Some may be there

to shop or sightsee, others are happy just sitting around people-watching, chit-chatting, or simply waiting.”

The quotation illustrates how the presence of people, of different ages and backgrounds, using the space in different ways, generates activity that makes the space interesting and even enjoyable to be in. It should be noted that Heng (2000) considers the space successful even if the surrounding modern buildings are characterised by poor aesthetics (as can be ascertained from images of the space included in Heng’s article). He makes no reference to the buildings having any particular meanings. The space is considered successful with just one of the three ‘qualities’ present namely activity – the space does not have ‘form’ (because of its poor aesthetics) and nor apparently does it have significant ‘meaning’.

In relation to the activity, ‘vitality’ is a more useful concept than ‘presence of people’. According to Montgomery (1998:97,98);

Vitality is “the numbers of people in and around the street (pedestrian flows) across different times of day and night, the uptake of facilities, the number of cultural events and celebrations over the year, the presence of an active street life, and generally the extent to which a place feels alive or lively.”

Vitality of an urban space is dependent in part on the diversity of uses in the buildings around the space and within the urban space itself. It is possible to create vitality in urban spaces by organising events and activities. In the long term, however, vitality can only be achieved if there is a diversity of uses, primarily economic, in the buildings and the urban spaces (Montgomery, 1998:97,98). Montgomery argues that without ‘transactions’ places become lifeless. It is a wide range of uses that make ‘transactions’ possible. These transactions or ‘exchanges’ could be of *“information, friendship, material goods, culture, knowledge, insight, skills and also the exchange of emotional, psychological and spiritual support.”* In addition, Montgomery (2003:300) contends that it is important that some of the activity generated from diverse land uses takes place in the streets and squares i.e. in the public realm;

“For it is the public realm and associated semi-public spaces which provide the terrain for social interaction and a significant part of an area’s transaction base (the market square, the street vendor, the shop frontage, the sidewalk cafe’). It is activities such as these, and the all-important activities of promenading and people-watching, which provide the dynamic quality of successful urban places.”

Activity is in a sense the ‘social’ aspect of spaces as it involves the interaction of people within an urban space, even if there is no actual verbal communication. Griffin and Hayllar (2009:144) note that visiting a precinct is inherently a social experience. In their research on two Australian urban spaces, they include several comments of visitors on how the presence of people made the spaces more enjoyable to be in. A social activity takes place when two people are together in the same space: *“To see and hear each other, to meet, is in itself a form of social contact”* (Gehl, 1987:15). Gehl describes the opportunity to see, hear, and meet others as one of the most important attractions in city centres and on pedestrian streets. In people-watching, non-verbal communication becomes the experience and this could be offered, for example, by open air cafés, along pedestrian roads and in shopping streets. Referring to the romantic experience of a couple in the streets of Paris, Urry (2002:126) wrote ; *“The more they saw of others and showed themselves to others – the more they participated in the extended ‘family of eyes’ – the richer became their vision of themselves.”* Similarly, in gardens, Connell and Meyer (2004:188) note that a temporary bond is created between visitors with *“a spontaneous exchange of smiles and, perhaps a conversation”* and by seeing each other responding to the same setting in similar ways. Different social groups can be united by a sense of the peacefulness of the space and a sense of how to behave within it. The impression that one gets from this discussion is that, with respect to the vitality of urban space, the presence of people is what matters, rather than what those people are doing. Alcock (1993: 48) notes that whereas art is a medium of relating *“individual to individual”*, the experience of the city relates *“the individual to the collective; it is the experience of our relation to everyone else.”*

Various aspects of people in urban spaces are closely interrelated including stimulation, presence of people, vitality, transactions and non-verbal social

interaction. Although the above observations are from urban design literature, they are equally, or possibly even more, relevant to the experience of tourists of urban spaces.

The above discussion refers to the role of other people in the experience of place in the context of urban design literature. This however is not the only manner that people impinge on the experience of place. Griffin and Hayllar (2007:9) describe the presence of locals in an area as a positive tourist element because tourists wish to have encounters with local people or to have opportunities to observe and learn something about their ways of life. In research on the Rocks in Sydney, some research participants liked the community aspect and noted that a living community gives the place a unique character (Hayllar and Griffin 2005:522). Bødker and Browning (2012:208) argue that an important part of a tourist landscape are the activities of locals. The mundane practices and routines of locals become a central part of the experiential landscape for tourism. Bødker and Browning (2012:209) note that tourists also interact with networks of local people, from those specifically involved in delivering tourist services to the more fleeting interactions with locals whose everyday lives are regularly lived in the locations the tourists are visiting. The local role is intrinsic to the tourist to the extent that the tourists' making of place involves *"tourist fantasies of local cultures, of becoming local"*. Maitland (2009:9) notes that some tourists deliberately seek out the everyday lives of people as they consider these to be the 'real city'. They prefer to get off the beaten track and away from the tourism enclaves. They move away from the 'enclavic tourist space' and seek out the 'heterogeneous tourist space' which are multi-purpose spaces where a wide range of activities and people co-exist, an observation that is considered in further detail in Section 3.3.2. The interest in the activities of local is partly the outcome of the tourist need for affiliation or association (Trauer and Ryan, 2005:488). This is discussed and elaborated upon in Section 3.3 where affiliation is listed as one of the needs that are considered to be particularly relevant to the experience of historic areas.

4.4 Conclusion

To better understand how places are experienced, urban design writers have put forward a model involving three elements namely physical setting, activities and meanings. These are interrelated and combine to create a sense of place. A variant to this model shifts the focus from the intrinsic qualities of the space to the interactions of the person with the space. The model variant refers to interactions with self, interactions with others and interactions with the environment.

When discussing form, the first consideration is the senses with which a person gathers information from the surroundings. Whereas vision is the sense that provides most information, the senses constantly reinforce each other to extend and broaden sensory perception allowing a broader appreciation of the surroundings. Physical movement through space, together with sight, enable people to perceive the three-dimension and develop a strong feeling for spatial qualities.

Some writers argue that successful public spaces are characterised by the presence of people, in an often self-reinforcing process. 'Vitality' may be a more useful concept because it incorporates the presence of an active street life, the uptake and use of facilities and cultural and other activities. Montgomery (1998:97) emphasises the role of economic and social transactions between people for the vitality of space. Urban spaces are social spaces in that when two people are together in the same space there is a form of social contact, even if there is no verbal exchange. This includes people-watching that is a frequent activity in urban spaces with outside seating.

CHAPTER 5

THE RELEVANCE OF MEANING TO THE TOURIST EXPERIENCE

This chapter considers 'meaning', this being the third quality of the form-activity-meaning model; 'form' and 'activity' were considered in the previous chapter. Meaning of place can be considered from many different perspectives that are interrelated and that overlap each other. This chapter considers each of these perspectives as follows: Section 5.1 considers how a system of meanings for buildings and spaces is developed based on cultural context and associations made over time. On the other hand, in a tourism context the interpretation of meaning of buildings and spaces is subject to the tourist's own cultural and social background. The importance of meaning to people and hence its relevance in the tourism experience are noted in Section 5.2. Different typologies of tourist experiences are then discussed. These can be broadly classified into two: those for which a site is experienced primarily in relation to its meaning and those for which meaning is not involved. Authenticity is often discussed in tourism literature and this is considered in Section 5.3. Section 5.4 considers the relationship between values of conservation on the one hand and qualities making genius loci on the other. Tourist experience could in some instances generate strong emotion to the extent that it could be compared to a spiritual experience. This is discussed in Section 5.5. In the context of tourism, the role of narrative is central for the creation of meaning and this is considered in Section 5.6.

5.1 The subjectivity of meaning

5.1.1 How places acquire meaning

The tourism experience of towns and cities takes place in a context of buildings, streets and urban spaces, but to understand experience, one has to go beyond a discussion of form and consider meaning. The following is a discussion on how buildings and spaces acquire meaning. Beyond functionality, architecture communicates meaning (Eco, 1973; Cuthbert 2006).

For example, the cathedral is the focal point of the medieval European city and dominates the town. This indicates the importance of religion in urban life in medieval times (Mazumdar et al, 2004:386). Strike (1994:25) notes that architecture can be read in different ways depending on the type of construction, the structural system, the details and the materials used. He describes how a building can be a symbol of a specific place (for example the Eiffel Tower is a symbol of Paris). Moreover, different architectural features have different symbolic meanings (for example, a spire suggests that the building is a church, a crenellated parapet evokes the idea of a castle). The architectural symbol can also indicate an abstract idea or emotion (for example a portcullis is a symbol of strength and defence).

The communication of architecture is dependent on a process of codification whereby people understand messages on the basis of pre-determined meanings (Eco, 1973:62,63). Cuthbert (2006:66) notes that our cultural environment, including building and spaces, constitutes a system of meanings structured around a complex amalgam of codes.

According to Grauman (2002:96);

“Members of a culture group invest places and people with meaning and significance. Not individuals but people agree on what is a forest or a jungle, what is downtown and what is suburb. It is essentially the language that people, that is the members of a language or cultural community, share (with, of course, individual, sometimes idiosyncratic, variations) that communicates meaning.”

The quote emphasises the extent to which meanings are subject to people's understandings and the associations they ascribe to places. The acquisition of meaning of building and spaces takes on a particular significance in historic areas. Meaning is intrinsic to historic areas because it is the history of the place that is the meaning and that in turn could be a source for other meanings that the visitors will derive based on their background. Precincts consist of concentrations of signs that represent particular histories and cultures (Selby et al, 2008:186), an observation that I contend to be most applicable to historic areas.

Place acquires meaning through the interaction of human sensibility and the material environment (Berleant, 2003:43; Staiff, 2012:42) involving interactive processes between the individual, the setting and the broader social world (Sancar and Severcan, 2010:295). Historical associations can also be derived from events (Wearing, 1996:236) although an event does not necessarily make historically meaningful the space in which it occurred (Sather-Wagstaff, 2008:79). Alternatively, social and cultural practices produce cultural landscapes and meanings within cities (Maitland and Smith, 2009:175). Urban context often becomes a repository of social and cultural significance, as well as the embodiment of a collective memory (Berleant, 2003:49). To the visitor, the cultural object represents “*values, symbolic meanings and created associations*” (McIntosh, 1999:44). The meaning of place is often acquired from comparisons, similarities and differences with other places (Gustafson, 2001:14).

Staiff (2012:44) coins the term ‘excess’ to refer to something more than the physical materiality in buildings, monuments and places. The excess is what is beyond the physical entity. In heritage, it is the way things “*are valued, felt, experienced, internalized, consumed*” and that which gives the physical “*its legibility, its aura, its power, its intimacy.*” Excess also indicates “*potentiality, places of experimentation, of improvisation, of cultural formations, where heritage is a mode of relating to self, to the world, to communitas, or to whatever else.*” It may also harbour negatives such as memories of pain, fear of the future, fear of death amongst others.

5.1.2 The role of person background in meaning of place

The meaning of buildings, spaces and artefacts are created through the person-object interactions that are heavily influenced by the tourist’s own cultural and social background (Wearing, 1996; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007:65). With reference to the consumption of cultural and heritage attractions, Voase (2002:391,392) describes meaning as a creation in the mind of the visitor, rather than by the objects displayed. Meaning is not inherent in the object but is generated outside it. Whatever meanings visitors create in

their minds, they are shaped by their own memories, interests and concerns as much as by the encounter with the attraction. The heritage experience entails coding systems that are neither stable nor universal. It can be compared to a language for which individuals possess their own personal dictionary that is constantly changing (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996: 15). According to Sather-Wagstaff (2008: 79), tourist places are “*socially produced, constructed, performed, and consumed*”. For heritage artefacts, the visitor often manipulates the artefact on offer, bringing their own emotional and intellectual responses (Staiff, 2012:45). I fully concur with this idea that meaning is more a creation in the mind of the visitor than an intrinsic quality of the object.

The relevance of a person’s background and culture to the meaning of place is applicable to the experience of urban spaces (Berleant, 1997) and also to the tourism experience (Andereck, 2006). A person’s background may include attributes that are self-evident (eg. ethnicity, class, gender and social status) as well as those that are not (eg. those formed by individuals’ personal histories and life events) (Burns, 2000:69). Visitors see places and landscapes from “*the lens of (their) attitudes, experiences, and intentions, and from (their) own unique circumstances*” (Relph, 1976: 36). People attach meaning to buildings and urban spaces (Smaldone et al, 2005: 397; Watson and Bentley, 2007:4,5). Meanings are dependent on the events and artefacts that the buildings and spaces are seen as representing. Visitors produce “*their own subjective experiences through their imaginations and emotions*” and “*imbue objects in the setting provided with their own personal meanings*” (McIntosh, 1999: 57). It is meaningful social experiences, rather than simply the spatial attributes of physical settings, that drive attachment to places (Sancar and Severcan (2010:296). Timothy (1997:752) notes different levels of meaning depending on the extent of personal attachment including personal, local, national and world. There are instances where an artefact, viewed as world or national heritage by one person, is considered as personal by another.

In considering meaning of place it is useful to distinguish between people who are very familiar with a place (i.e. residents or regular visitors) and those who are much less familiar (i.e. tourists). The way the place will be read and interpreted will be different between these two groups of people.

For a building or urban space to have meaning to an individual, that individual needs to be aware of it (Poria et al, 2003: 241). McIntosh (1999:44) notes that cultural objects *“need to be activated, read, understood and assigned symbolic personal meaning to the individual if they are to be actively used in providing knowledge, appreciation and creating a sense of place and identity.”* The implication to this is that the information made available about a site may impinge on the tourist experience. It is relevant as it makes potential visitors aware of it. Information for tourists is also useful as it gives an understanding of the site’s meaning, that is likely to include also its narrative.

An alternative way for places to become meaningful is by means of prior knowledge or, as explained by Manzo (2005: 81) by means of repeated experiences in them. Repeated and varied use adds layers of meaning to places. Relationships to places is a life-long process, developing and transforming over time, with past experience of place influencing current experience (Manzo, 2005:83). Different ways for places to become meaningful signify that the way a tourist experiences place and the meanings associated with it is very different from the way a resident would experience the same place.

The above review of literature suggests that there are two interrelated factors relating to meaning that will impinge on experience of place, namely a person’s attachment to the place and the level of familiarity. Subject to background, different people will have different levels of attachment to place, and also different levels of familiarity, and hence different experiences of a place. It is useful to consider how differences in familiarity between residents and tourists impinges on the experience. Residents have repeated experiences and gain prior knowledge over time through use and from what other residents and family say about the place. This results in high levels of familiarity with the place. The converse is true for first time tourists where familiarity with the place is nil or almost nil and therefore getting to know more about the place results in novelty and the discovery of meanings and features of the place that were not previously known. A distinction could also be drawn between tourists who are totally unfamiliar to a place (normally first time visitors) and those who are familiar with the place being visited (namely repeat visitors). Suvantola (2002:34) observes that when the personal acquaintance with a place

increases, new meanings are added to the symbolic meaning. The place starts to get meanings derived from the immediate first-hand experience. Former symbolic meanings are retained, perhaps in an altered form.

5.2 Tourist experience and the search for meaning

5.2.1 The search for meaning

The search for meaning is of central importance to people so much so that Frankl (1992: 105) describes it as the primary motivation in a person's life. One should, therefore, not underestimate the relevance of meaning of urban spaces and built heritage when discussing the tourist experience. Leisure is not just a search for pleasure but also a search for meaning (Ragheb, 1996: 249). Hannabus (1999: 299) argues that tourists do not just search for what is different from their everyday lives but are *"also in search of 'meaning', of the 'genuine' or 'authentic' holiday."*

Section 3.3.1 considers tourist motivation and how it impinges on the tourist experience. Section 3.3.2 considers different typologies of tourists. A further typology, this time of tourist experiences, merits careful consideration. Cohen (1979) developed a typology of tourist experiences that distinguishes between five modes of tourist experiences. He presents them in an ascending order from the most 'superficial' motivated by 'pleasure' to one most 'profound' motivated by the search for meaning. Cohen recognises that the tourist may experience different modes on a single trip but presents them separately for analytic purposes. Broadly speaking, the five modes can be categorised into two; those for which the site does not involve meaning (namely 'recreational' and 'diversionary') and those for which meaning has a pivotal role in the tourist's experience (namely 'experiential', 'experimental' and 'existential').

In the 'recreational' mode, the trip restores the tourist's *"physical and mental powers and endows him with a general sense of well-being."* Although the experience may be interesting for the tourist, it will not be personally significant. The 'recreational' tourist does not really desire or care for the authentic and may well show interest in blatantly inauthentic or outrightly contrived displays of

culture and customs. The tourist will get what he wants namely *“the pleasure of entertainment”* for which authenticity is largely irrelevant. The ‘diversionary’ mode is *“a mere escape from the boredom and meaninglessness of routine, everyday existence, into the forgetfulness of a vacation.”*

For Cohen, the ‘experiential’ mode involves the quest for meaning outside the confines of one’s own society. It is to some degree, spurred by alienation and a sense of lack of authenticity at home. Cohen draws comparisons between ‘experiential’ mode and a religious pilgrimage in that both involve a search for what is perceived to be authentic. In tourism however, the authenticity will not provide a new meaning and guidance, even if it may reassure and uplift the tourist. ‘Experimental’ mode involves an effort to rediscover oneself in another context because of the alienation that deeply affects the individual. ‘Existential’ mode involves the search for a better world elsewhere resulting from a feeling of living in the wrong place and at the wrong time (Lengkeek, 2001).

5.2.2 Self-identity and the tourist experience

The involvement of self in the tourism experience has received greater attention in tourism academic literature in recent years (Wearing et al, 2010;40-46; Bond and Falk, 2013). Social theorists suggest that the overriding compulsion that governs actions and attitudes of individuals is the pursuit of a desired identity. The desire to ‘find one’s self’ is an important underlying cause for the growth of many forms of leisure and tourism (Uriely, 2005). Identity is not something that is defined when an individual is young and then crystalizes into a stagnant form. Places where a person lives or visits will influence the way identity evolves over time. The impact any single place makes on the identity is dependent on the intensity of the involvement of the individual with the place (Suvontola 2002:37).

Identity-related motivations are central to all tourist experiences as they provide an understanding not only why individuals engage in tourism but also what benefits they derive from the experience (Bond and Falk, 2013:431). Identity is a process that is located both within the core of the individual and in the core of his/her communal culture. Self-identity refers to the individual and also the

community to which the individual belongs. Wearing et al (2010:43) refer to a 'socially reflexive self' whereby the individual selects experiences that will contribute to the formulation of an identity in keeping with his/her self-conception. Contemporary identities are less reliant on tradition and more on social interaction. Increases in information, people, products and ideas constantly challenge the way people reflect about their lives. Increased social reflexivity can also be attributed to increased tourism activity that results in more frequent interactions between people, places, ideas and information. *"Tourism can provide the traveller self with profound centres of meanings and symbols endowed with cultural significance which are in some ways different from their own environments"* (Wearing et al, 2010:45). Many discussions on identity focus on an individual's cultural, ethnic, religious or gender identity. Bond and Falk (2013:431,437) argue that tourism-centred discussions should not be limited to these core identity attributes but should consider a number of more fluid aspects of identity that are often context and situation specific. Tourism can be conceived as a means of establishing, maintaining and at times re-creating aspects of one's identity. Mechanisms for enacting identity involve core identity attributes as well as the more mundane aspects of identity. *"This entire identity-enactment system is situated within the larger sociocultural context of both the individual and the tourism venue"* (Bond and Falk, 2013:439).

5.3 Authenticity in the tourist experience

5.3.1 Understanding authenticity

When discussing meaning of buildings and spaces, the issue of authenticity needs to be considered. In his seminal analysis of tourism, MacCannell (1976) argued that processes of modernity have resulted in increased fragmentation and a sense of dislocation. People experience a deep sense of loss of authenticity, or wholeness, in everyday life. For this reason, the tourist seeks authentic experiences elsewhere. Wang (1999) provides a conceptual clarification of the meanings of authenticity in tourist experiences. He distinguishes between objective, constructive and existential authenticity. Objective authenticity of a heritage artefact or tourism product is established on

the basis of absolute and objective criteria on how it is produced. Being described as authentic would signify traditional culture, a sense of the genuine and the real or unique. An example of this is provided in a study by Jewell and Crofts (2009:245) whereby visitors to a historic house site mentioned authenticity as an important attribute and indicated their preference to a conservation approach that provided for greater authenticity in that visitors could see how the house was built and see tangible evidence of the lifestyle of the family. Jewell and Crofts (2009) linked a fuller *“understanding of the social values of the time”* with *“feelings of pleasure and a satisfying experience.”* On objective authenticity grounds, an experience is seen to be false or fake if it is contrived or staged in any way, even if the tourists themselves think they have gained an authentic experience.

Whereas objective authenticity relies on an objectively measurable quality, constructive authenticity is the result of social construction. Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto tourism product by tourists, or by tourism producers, in terms of imagery, expectations, preferences and beliefs. In constructive authenticity things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such. This notion is thus *“relative, negotiable, contextually determined, and even ideological”* (Wang, 1999:351). Herbert (2001:317) notes that the past is reinvented by historians, heritage managers and conservationists. Tourists are unlikely to question what they see and may even be only partly interested in the historical reality of the site.

In their efforts to get away from ‘incoherence’, tourists are likely to be aware that the authenticity of the tourist experience may be faked, even if they pretend not to notice (Hannabus, 1999:299). According to Gospodini (2004:228), there are several studies which argue that much of what is considered to be built heritage in European cities is in fact *“a product of manipulations representing a deliberate encoding of symbolic meaning.”* MacCannell (1976) claims that touristic settings are always inauthentic. He does not, however, see inauthenticity as negative because he considers sightseeing a way of overcoming isolation and alienation. Visitors to historic sites wish to experience a new reality based on the tangible remains of the past, irrespective of the authenticity (Herbert, 2001:317). Referring to literary

place, Herbert (2001, 318) notes that places acquire meanings from the world of the imagination. Even if these refer to a fictitious story of a literary work, *“the meanings and emotions they engender are real to the beholder. Stories excite interest, feelings and involvement, and landscapes can be related to their narratives.”*

Both objective and constructive authenticities refer to qualities of the tourism product without reference to the tourist. By contrast, existential authenticity involves the feelings activated by the tourist activity. People feel themselves more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because of an ‘authentic’ quality of the tourism product, but simply because they are *“engaging in nonordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily”* (Wang, 1999:352). Thus, apart from objective and constructive authenticities, the existential authenticity is a distinctive source of authentic experiences in tourism. According to Steiner and Reisinger (2006:303), existential authenticity is experience-oriented and therefore it is transient, not enduring. A person is not authentic or inauthentic all the time, meaning that one can only momentarily be authentic in different situations. There are no authentic and inauthentic tourists. At their most extreme, some tourists might prefer to be authentic most of the time while some prefer being inauthentic most of the time. Most tourists are able to change from being authentic to being inauthentic or vice versa at any moment (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006:303).

Contrary to the traditional line of thought that tourists seek authenticity, tourism is a quest for experiences (Rickly Boyd, 2009:274). I would argue that debates in tourism literature on authenticity are useful but only to a point, the reason being that for most tourists the authenticity or otherwise of an artefact or site is of secondary importance. This point is further elaborated in the next section.

5.3.2 Seeking the difference

Cohen (1979:185) observed an awakening of interest in the culture, social life and natural environment of others and the outcome of this is *“a generalized interest or appreciation of that which is different, strange or novel in comparison*

with what the traveller is acquainted with in his cultural world." The discussion on a city's tourism product offer should not be framed in terms of authentic or inauthentic. Thinking in terms of 'distinctive' and the 'over familiar' may be more useful because *"it is the difference rather than the authenticity that draws visitors to a place"* (Maitland, 2007:27). I concur with the view that in discussing a destination, the focus should be on whether it can offer something different rather as to whether it is authentic or not. Wearing et al (2010:23) note that there are tourists who wish to experience *"the cultural, social and environmental differences that exist in the world."* This is not applicable to all types of tourists as there are those who desire and seek the familiar or who, at best, seek the difference from the security of the known and the predictable. This view is supported by McKercher and du Cros (2003) in their typology of cultural tourists (referred to in Section 3.3.2). McKercher and du Cros (2003:56) note that, in general, purposeful cultural tourists seek travel experiences that lie outside of their familiar environment. In contrast, the incidental tourist is likely to seek more familiar environments because of a lower *"ability to cope with strangeness"*. Strangeness reduction is achieved by greater commoditisation of the experience and the provision of experiences involving little emotional or intellectual engagement. Griffin and Hayllar (2009:147) link difference of an area to its long term appeal. They note that Southbank (Melbourne) is not particularly different from any other riverside precinct that people can experience elsewhere. Although it may be popular with tourists, it is unlikely to remain so in the long run because it does not offer anything different from other riverside developments. Section 5.1.2 considered the role of the tourist's background in meaning of place and hence in the tourist experience. The discussion suggests that, concurrent to background, the level of tourist familiarity with the destination will impinge on the experience. It is self-evident that the more familiar a tourist is with an area the less likely will it offer something different.

5.4 Linkages between heritage values and sense of place

Worthing and Bond (2008) argue that decisions on the conservation of the built heritage should be inspired by a proper understanding of the 'values' attributed to the heritage. They list and explain the values that they consider useful and

that work well when writing conservation plans. There is a close relationship between values of conservation and qualities making genius loci because both involve the appreciation of the surrounding environment, albeit for different purposes.

A closer examination of the values, as listed by Worthing and Bond (2008), reveals that some can be loosely categorised under 'form' of the form-activity-meaning model. 'Aesthetic' and 'panoramic' values involve vision, with the former possibly also involving smell and sound. The latter value refers to sweeping outward vistas. Other values that could be similarly categorised under 'form' are 'scenic', 'artistic' and 'architectural/ technological'. The latter is concerned with innovation and achievement in buildings, structures and workmanship. Valletta displays to varying degree the heritage values linked to form referred to above; 'aesthetic', 'panoramic', 'scenic', 'artistic' and 'architectural/ technological'.

Another group of 'values' can be categorised with 'meaning'. 'Associational' value refers to a site that may be important because of its association with a person (or group of persons) or event. In the case of Valletta, the 'associational' value is extensive with its history related to the Knights of St. John and also to a lesser extent to the British in Malta. This is one of many reasons why Valletta is designated a World Heritage Site. 'Commemorative' value is similar except that the commemorative place may or may not be located where the event took place (for example war memorials). Valletta includes several memorials, monuments and other features that commemorate past people and events.

With reference to 'symbolic/iconic', Worthing and Bond (2008) note that many people, when travelling, give importance to landmarks and the like as symbols of arrival, and this may well include gateway features (for example gateway to a fortified city). Symbolism in architecture was discussed previously in this chapter where it is noted how different architectural features have different symbolic meanings (Strike, 1994: 25). The relevance of symbolism also emerged in the research data with two of the interviewees (Q21.10, Q29.5) noting their disappointment that, with the City Gate project, there will be no formal gate or gateway feature to signify's Valletta entrance. Another 'value'

referred to by Worthing and Bond (2008) is 'inspirational' whereby people "*may derive enormous inspirational drive or emotions*" from a place, emotions that may also be negative. Like religion, it is a cultural value that is hard to define unambiguously because of its personal nature. Worthing and Bond (2008) discuss a number of places and their conservation values. Most are also popular tourist sites thus reaffirming the linkages between conservation values and the qualities of sense of place.

Of the form-activities-meaning model, 'activities' is the only one that is not represented by any of the conservation values as listed by Worthing and Bond (2008). Activities is primarily concerned with the presence of people and this is not a factor in the consideration of the conservation value of built heritage. On the other hand, the document Power of Place (English Heritage, 2000:4) notes that "*the historic environment is what generations of people have made of the places in which they lived. It is all about us.*" Heritage is a reflection of the society that lives in the area. In this context, the interest shown by visitors in the heritage of a place may be, in part, motivated by an interest in the people, and the heritage is seen as a means of better understanding local people.

5.5 Spirituality and sense of place

Spirituality is difficult to define. Schmidt and Little (2007: 222) refer to it as "*indefinable, immaterial and affects the core or soul of individuals.*" It has been used to describe anything from the religious and sacred through to the personal. They note that; "*spirituality is accepted as being a broad concept that refers to the ways in which people seek, make, celebrate, and apply meaning in their lives.*" Leisure has the potential as a spiritual context as it "*provides a forum to create or find meaning in life, to transcend the everyday and to connect with self and/or other.*" Increasingly the quasi-religious nature of travel has been recognized along with the potential of leisure to provide tourists with more knowledge about oneself and the meaning of life (Schmidt and Little, 2007:224, 225, 226). According to Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004:394), religion invests place with symbolic meaning and also "*actively engages the believer to experience its history and geography.*" The pilgrimage

involves engagement of all the senses (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2004: 393) whereby:

“The believer ‘sees’ the sacred sights (temples/ churches, relics, icons, monuments); he/she ‘hears’ the sacred sounds (church and temple bells, drum beats, chanting, singing, the call to prayer), ‘touches’ the sacred artifacts (icons, deities, texts); ‘eats’ special food (such as consecrated food); and ‘smells’ specific aromas (incense, fresh flowers).”

Berleant (2003: 46, 47) uses the “*idea of sacred space*” as a means for better understanding “*what is exceptional about our most compelling experiences of place.*” He points out that “*sacredness lies not in the physical place alone but in the significance that people assign to it.*” Worthing and Bond (2008) note that beliefs and teachings of organised religion provide for symbolic value of a place that may be experienced personally by a believer, but whose value can also be perceived and appreciated by a non-believer who is open to the experiences of others.

This discussion is required because there are correlations between the spiritual experience and the tourist experience of place. Lew (1989:16) considers thematic retail districts as analogous to the religious pilgrimage sites. Instead of paying homage to religious values, people pay homage to the cultural and historical symbols of society. Both thematic retail districts and religious pilgrimage sites are ways of overcoming the isolation of individuals and groups in a modern alienating world. Lew’s observation on people’s ‘homage’ at thematic retail districts may also be applicable to any other cultural or historical site. According to Suvontola (2002:177), there are similarities between the pilgrim’s journey to acquire some form of blessing or virtue at a holy destination and the tourist’s desire to have a personal experience of an attraction. They both expect to have “*an experience of the Remarkable in another place that gives them something new to their lives.*” A tourist experience could be so intense that the individual may make reference to the supernatural to explain the intensity of feeling. In a study carried out by Andereck et al (2006: 88,90), some visitors experiencing the Montana natural landscape highlight a spiritual element of the experience and describe it as “*a connection to God*”.

Numen in religious literature describes a religious emotion in the presence of something sacred or holy. Cameron and Gatewood (2012:239) borrowed and adapted the term 'numen' to describe the essential quality of visitors' personal experiences. With reference to museum collections, numinous objects can have *"special psychological significance, evoking strong associations and emotional response among visitors."* Such objects may or may not have historical relevance but they communicate emotional significance to the viewer. Cameron and Gatewood note that the most potent numinous artefacts are those associated with group suffering involving war, disaster, forced migration and slavery. Battlefields and memorials are highly numinous.

5.6 Narratives in the creation of place

Another parallel that can be drawn is between the 'meaning' component of sense of place and narratives. The social identity of communities is constructed and sustained by means of webs of stories and narratives produced by people (Rickly Boyd, 2009: 262). According to Jamal and Hollinshead (2001:73); *"There are no stories waiting to be told and no certain truths waiting to be recorded; there are only stories yet to be constructed."* Narratives are 'constructed' by people and they may, or may not, be based on historical fact. More importantly, heritage narratives are stories that people tell about themselves, about others and about the past. Human activity is rooted in place and therefore narratives about people are also narratives about places.

The combination of the lived experience with the myth produces a uniquely personal tourist narrative (Rickly Boyd, 2009:262). Narrative may further support and reinforce the tourist's experience of place. This is all the more evident in heritage sites where stories reinforce place uniqueness in part by focusing on narratives of national significance (Chronis, 2012:445). A successful tourism product is an interpretation of the local history or narrative within the context of the historical experience of the tourist or visitor (Rickly Boyd, 2009: 262). Many tourism experiences are dependent on the availability and communication of narratives. Some places are part of the tourism itinerary because they are associated with powerful stories (Chronis, 2012: 444). For

some tourists, part of the experience involves understanding 'how life really was'. Life conditions that might be unthinkable in the present day can be 'experienced', or more fully understood and appreciated, through the narrative (Chronis 2012: 451).

This discussion is of particular relevance to a historic city such as Valletta – the history of the place creates the narrative that provides for a tourist experience. The urban fabric of Valletta conveys a range of narratives, some associated with a Maltese identity whereas others are linked to past foreign occupiers. The Valletta streetscapes are characterised by the ever present Maltese balcony and the extensive use of the typical Maltese stone. The numerous churches at various locations in Valletta signify the importance of religion in the social and cultural life of the people and hence the relevance of the Catholic religion to the Maltese identity. On the other hand, the more dominant and distinctive architecture of auberges, palaces and public buildings are a reminder of the linkages of the City to the Knights of St. John. There are also buildings and structures that narrate Valletta's past during the British period from 1800 to 1964. Examples include St Paul's Cathedral, Victoria Gate and the Garrison Chapel in Castille Square (Ebejer, 2010).

Here one can further the discussion by considering those elements that make the narrative more interesting. Although aspects of narrative are beyond the scope of this research, it is useful to make an observation as follows. Chapter 2 includes a quote from Ashworth and Tunbridge (2004: 15) that explains how two major historic episodes in Malta's history, namely the Great Siege of 1565 and Malta's role in World War II (1940 – 44), provide a narrative for "*almost an ideal tourism product*". From this quote, it is possible to derive those narrative properties that Ashworth and Tunbridge would consider as ideal for an effective tourism narrative. These are;

- dramatic events,
- easily understood,
- with few historical ambiguities,
- with clear cut personification through heroes and villains,
- capable of interpretation through 'experiences',
- sites, buildings and artefacts lend themselves to easy identification by the tourist,

- linkages to the wider world through action and ideology,
- a narrative with which tourists can easily identify.

5.7 Conclusion

Buildings and urban spaces communicate meaning. Meanings are partly the result of codification based on a system of pre-determined meanings and partly are acquired over time as people give to space historical associations derived from events. The meaning of buildings, spaces and artefacts are subjective and can be read and interpreted differently by different people in accordance to their background and culture. The heritage experience entails coding systems that may change over time and that are not necessarily shared by everyone.

The chapter notes that meaning is a primary motivation in a person's life, so leisure may well be a search for meaning and not just for pleasure. Different typologies of tourists can be identified ranging from those who are motivated by fun and enjoyment without reference to meaning, to those whose primary motivation is the search for meaning. The search for meaning is not necessarily about authenticity as often the tourist's quest for experience is determined by whether the place is distinctive and different from what is familiar.

Values of conservation are compared to the form-activity-meaning model. It emerges that there is a correlation between conservation values on the one hand and 'form' on the other. These values are 'aesthetic', 'scenic', 'artistic' and 'architectural/ technological'. There is also a correlation between conservation values and 'meaning' including 'associational', 'commemorative', 'symbolic/iconic' and 'inspirational'. These correlations suggest that sites with high conservation value (i.e. where there is a predominance of conservation values) are also sites that have a sense of place as their qualities relating to 'form' and to 'meaning' are strong. This is relevant because sites that are considered to be of high conservation value are often popular tourist sites. On the other hand, no correlation was found between conservation values and 'activities' of the form-activity-meaning model.

The chapter also notes that some tourism experiences have similarities with a spiritual experience where the tourist experience is profound and involves more knowledge about oneself and the meaning of life. The tourist experience also involves narratives about the place and this is another way how the tourist can derive meaning from the experience. The narratives may be about the people of the place and therefore they provide an insight to the national identity of the country or region.

CHAPTER 6

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE USE OF VISUAL METHODS FOR TOURISM RESEARCH

The research method involves the use of photography as one of two different interviewing approaches. This necessitates a discussion on the development of photography and its role in tourism. The second part of this chapter looks at the use of visual methods as a tool for tourism research.

6.1 The changing nature of photography

The first digital single-lens reflex camera was produced by Nikon in 1999 at a retail price of under \$6,000. This catered for professional photographers and high-end consumers. It was another few years before digital cameras became sufficiently affordable for them to be used by the wider public and for digital technology to replace film photography. Digital cameras became very popular because they are more powerful, cheaper, user friendly and can be networked into the electronic distribution systems, including personal communication devices such as mobile phones, iphones and laptop computers (Prideaux and Coghlan, 2010: 173). Lee (2010) explains how digital cameras have transformed photo taking and photo sharing. They are more portable, of a better quality, cheaper and more accessible to a wider public. It is now easier for anyone without particular technical skills to take photographs of reasonable quality and place them on social networking and other sites. People have easy access to digital cameras and are more likely to carry them as a personal belonging. With digital cameras, the cost of 'wasted' shots is nil. This allows the photographer to be more experimental and also to take shots of objects and views that may be considered as mundane and commonplace. The subject matter of photography has been extended. Whereas traditional photo-taking for specific occasions persists, we are now witnessing photographic practices where ordinary, mundane moments are turned into something that is noticeable therefore recordable. Lee (2010) surveyed a group of persons who post their photos on a

social network site and who were aged between early twenties and mid-thirties. Participants noted how digital cameras allowed them to photograph 'recklessly' and 'unconditionally' without considering costs thus capturing moments that traditional photography would not value. According to Lee (2010: 267), the changing nature of photography and its use on the internet and other personal communication devices has changed not only people's photographic practices, but also ways of experiencing place. With further technological developments, good quality cameras are now an integral part of smart phones. Many people, including tourists, carry a smart phone and therefore are also carrying a camera that they can use at a moment's notice. The widespread availability of cameras, together with the possibility to take photos virtually at zero cost, suggests that a research method involving the use of cameras can be more actively considered, a point that is discussed further in s6.3.

Van Dijck (2008:58,60,61) develops an interesting debate on the social uses of photography and notes how this has shifted from *"from family to individual use, from memory tools to communication devices and from sharing (memory) objects to sharing experiences."* She notes how photos are shared and talked about by teenagers in peer-group environments for the purposes of conversation, peer-group building and confirming social bonds between friends. This is a shift from photos being shared in the context of family and home. Youngsters are sharing experiences as opposed to sharing memories. Another transformation related to digital photography is the shift towards pictures as a form of identity formation. Photos are increasingly used in social media, such as Facebook, for the affirmation of personal identities and personal bonds. With increased connectivity through smart phones, it is now possible to share a photo within moments of being taken or sharing it later from home. These changes are also relevant to tourism in that communicating experiences with the help of photos is increasingly becoming an integral part of tourist photography (Van Dijck, 2008:60).

6.2 The role of photography in the tourism experience

The nature of photography and its relevance to the tourist experience merit some discussion. It is interesting how the act of photography by the tourist is understood and explained by different researchers in many different ways. All

interpretations are a reflection of reality to varying degrees and depending on the context and individuals involved. Photography is in a sense a “*form of symbolic capture*” (Crang 1997:363) whereby the tourist captures the image of a place with the intention of viewing, appreciating and sharing it at a later time. It is communicating something about an experience taking place in a particular place and time to an audience in another place and time (Crang, 1997:367). A traveller collects experiences; that means the homecoming rituals of showing photos and telling stories is an important part of the travel experiences (Andersson Cederholm, 2004:239, Sather-Wagstaff, 2008:80).

According to Garrod (2009:347, 348) “*photographs constitutes a major focus of activity for the tourist.*” Photos are a way for the tourist to say that he/she was indeed at the site. He contends that tourists seek out particular views that were considered ‘photogenic’ or ‘iconic,’ and reproduce them in their photographs. It is not simply taking a picture of a landscape or recording an event. For some visitors, it becomes an integral and vital part of the tourist experience. Similarly, Andersson Cederholm (2004: 226, 238) refers to tourist photography “*as a ritualized activity, inherent in the activity of travelling*”. She refers to photography as an integral part of travelling to the extent that some of her research participants (backpackers) almost considered it obnoxious for someone to choose not to take photographs. Urry (2002:130) goes further and argues the practices of photography and tourism to be both conceptually and practically inseparable. Whilst accepting that for some tourists, photography is an integral part of the experience, I would argue that Urry’s contention is an overstatement. In this research, thirty two couples or individuals have been interviewed. As indicated in s10.3.2, only one, at most two, suggested that the taking of photos was central to their experience of Valletta. Some did not take photos during their visit to Valletta and, for those who did, photography was peripheral when compared to other tourist activities.

In taking a photo, a visitor is keeping a record of the form of the urban space, or at least of part of it, as well as, to a lesser extent, the activity and the meaning. The photographer takes home an image that in some way is of interest and/or has provided satisfaction. Obviously a photo cannot capture all that is relating to the space – the smells and the sounds, the breeze and the sunlight on the forehead. But at least it will be a reminder to the photographer of all these

sensation whenever he will see the picture. There is nothing, however, like actually being there to get the full sense of place (Hannabus, 1999).

People's perception of places, as well as the photo-taking practices at the tourist sites, is shaped by the image projected by mass media and tour marketers. In turn, the photos taken at the tourist sites perpetuate the iconic images of the places (Lee, 2010:268). Traditional snapshots are taken at well-known tourist sites and photogenic landmarks as a way of telling friends and relatives of having been there. Lee (2010: 271) argues that people are now more inclined to capture moments and places that previously used to be disregarded. Photography is a means for recording sights that in some way is meaningful to the viewer. Lee (2010: 270) describes it as follows

“People have photographed when they were emotionally attached to a sight Personal affections and artistic sensibilities have created situations for photo taking, privatizing a specific time and space. In this process of subjective photographing, any daily scene can be transformed into a personally meaningful and unique one.”

Some consider the consumption of places by tourists to be clearest in the stereotypical tourist activity of taking photos. Sather-Wagstaff (2008: 80,81) notes that photography is more than that – there is also an element of performance that allows for the tourist's development of social relationships and cultural realities and, in so doing, develop new 'worlds of meaningfulness'.

Andersson Cederholm (2004: 238) notes that:

“Photography is an important medium for framing the extraordinary experience, of structuring the experience by the act of photography as well as structuring the narratives of experience.”

Andersson Cederholm (2004: 231-240) provides an interesting framework for better comprehension of the practice of photography. This is based on four analytic themes. The first, *framing the unique*, refers to the taking of a picture of

those motifs that are regarded as typical for a place, in accordance to norms and conventions as to what one should photo when on holiday. Everybody knows what the Eiffel Tower looks like, but when in Paris one feels almost compelled to take a photo of it. The second, *framing the local scene*, refers to the search for authenticity and the attempt to 'the search for intimacy with the locals'. A tension between 'intimacy' and the touristic consumption of places develops. The third theme, *catching the moment*. Andersson Cederholm (2004: 236) describes it as follows:

"You want to freeze and frame the experience. Being a traveller is to be a consumer of experiences and your camera is the most important medium. The photographs are the ultimate proof of what you have consumed. However, there is an inherent contradiction in this kind of consumption. With your camera as a tool, you consume the experience simultaneously as the explicit intention of this action is to preserve the experience. Further, the paradox highlights a temporal aspect. Photography is directed to the future at the same time as the traveller wants to freeze the flow of time. You want to conserve the moment 'when it happens'".

The fourth theme, the deviants among backpackers, refers to the use of the camera in a manner that is intentionally different from the norm in an effort to dissociate oneself from the typical tourist. In the context of backpacking holidays, which was the subject of an Andersson Cederholm's research, this theme is relevant because many backpackers perceive themselves to be distinct and different from the stereotyped tourist.

Haldrup and Larsen (2003) suggest a motive for tourist photography based more on social activities than the desire to consume places. According to this view, tourism is merely the stage for framing personal stories revolving around social relations, particularly among the photographer's accompanying family, which can later be told and re-told through the medium of the photo album or slideshow. Andersson Cederholm (2004: 226) notes that, just like birthdays, graduations and other special occasions, photography is *"a tool for framing the extraordinary event of travelling."* With reference to reef trips and other water based

experiences, Prideaux and Coghlan (2010:180) note that the capture and sharing of experiences by means of photography is a means of justifying the expense of the trip and as well as for sharing the experiences of their trip with family and friends at home.

Many perceive tourist photography as a means to record fun and enjoyable experiences. Some therefore consider the taking of photographs at commemorative sites inappropriate, such as the former site of the twin World Trade Center towers in New York. Their thinking is that tourist photography should not be *“to bear witness to the aftermath of tragedy”* (Sather-Wagstaff, 2008: 80).

The act of photographing makes the observer more keenly aware of the physical surroundings. In preparing, the photographer will glance at and observe the various items that make up the overall scene. The photographer may stroll around to establish the best location from where to ‘capture’ the scene and the various elements that compose it. This was the case with Mieke, one of the interviewees in this research, who carefully composed her photos by choosing the position from where the photo is taken (s10.3.2). Lee (2010:272) describes it as *“the practice of being attentive to a series of temporal and spatial moments in the locale and trying to make sense of and interpret a subject.”* In addition, these practices *“can induce a curiosity for the memories of the locale and the people who have lived there.”* In the context of a visitor to a heritage area, these photographic practices become all the more relevant. The act of ‘finding’ interesting features and views to photograph is one of ‘discovery’ that may well be for many an important fun part of the tourist experience.

In Loeffler’s (2004:552) research of outdoor experiences, it was noted that participants took more photographs when the experience was new. They wished *“to capture every nuance of the excitement, intensity and learning of the new activity or environment.”* The converse to this is that repeat visitors tend not to take photos, something that was observed in this research with virtually all the repeat visitors interviewed saying that they had not taken photos on their last visit to Valletta. The counter to Loeffler’s observation is that few, if any, photos are taken of the more mundane moments of the experience. The experience of a visit, for example, to a heritage area is likely to span several hours. It is

inevitable therefore that that there will be stretches of time, between the moments of heightened interest, the memory of which will fade very quickly.

As noted previously, the tourist experience is not limited to the 'on-site activity', but also included the anticipation prior to the visit and the post-event recollection (Lee and Datillo, 1994:196). Interestingly the photography's involvement in the tourist activity is not limited to on-site. Sather-Wagstaff (2008:90) noted that tourists' photographs are used in the *"post-visit social construction and performance of memories, identities, and place meanings."*

According to Loeffler (2004:540), *"photographs are a reflection of the photographer's point of view, biases, and experiences."* This observation is also a reflection of something noted in this research and discussed in s11.2, namely that the experience is greatly influenced by the tourist's personal background. Tourists taking photos may seem to be a simple and straightforward activity. The above discussion has shown there is a social and cultural context to photo taking – a context that entails communication with others and that is intricately linked with tourist motivation for travel. These considerations will impinge on the tourist experience, to an extent subject to specific circumstances of the tourist and of the site.

6.3 The use of visual methods for tourism research

6.3.1 Different approaches of visual methods

The use of visual methods to research perceptions of tourism destination varies from the 'highly interventionist', whereby the visual images used for research purposes are selected by the researcher, to the 'highly participatory', whereby it is the participants in the research survey who take the photographs for subsequent analysis by the researcher (Garrod 2008: 382). Similarly, Van Aucken et al (2010:375) refer to two primary variants of photo-elicitation. One is based on the use of images preselected by the researcher. In this variant it is the researcher who controls the stimuli. It is considered by Van Aucken et al as being relatively top-down and closed-ended. Loeffler (2004:540) notes that the photographer and the viewer interpret the meaning of a photo on the basis of

their social position, personality and personal history. The choice of photographs by the researcher in photo-elicitation exercise will introduce a bias even before the data collation from the participants has even started. Another potential weakness in the use of visual material is a bias toward highlighting only positive experiences, and occasionally extremely negative experiences. Coupled with this, photo-elicitation could result in the reinforcement of *“predetermined or predominant values or modes of experience”* rather than providing better understanding of lived experiences (Stewart and Floyd, 2004:453). It may also be that moments get lost from mention because they do not fit a master narrative.

The second alternative is participant-driven with subjects producing the images that are the basis of the interview. With this variant of photo-elicitation, the control of the substantive content of the interview shifts from the researcher to the participant. This research method is referred to as participant-driven photo-elicitation (PDPE) (Van Aucken et al, 2010) or Volunteer-Employed Photography (VEP) (Garrod, 2008; Markwell, 2000: 92). The method has also been referred to as Photo-Projective Method (Yamashita, 2002). The research technique involves asking participants to take photographs based on specific subjects or themes indicated by the researcher. They could use their own cameras or if necessary they are provided with cameras. Participants take normal ‘tourist’ photos. They are then asked to interpret and explain them in an informal interviewing process. An alternative would be to ask participants to take notes immediately after taking the photograph. This alternative is not however recommended because it impinges on the tourist experience. It also reduces response rates partly because of the inconvenience and impracticality for the participant to handle both camera and notebook.

Something to watch out for in participant-driven photo-elicitation (PDPE) is the length of the interview and the resultant researcher or informant fatigue as an overzealous participant may result in an excessively long interview (Van Aucken et al, 2010). In explaining what needs to be done to the participant, the researcher needs to be careful that what is being required will not impinge or alter on the experience.

In research based on photo-elicitation, the photograph taken by the participant can be used in different ways as follows:

- (i) The image is interpreted, analysed and/or decoded by the researcher with the result being derived from the researcher's analysis of the photographs.
- (ii) The image is not just the stimulus for the interview but also the subject or topic that is described by the participant. The images will be the basis for the research conclusions. The image is not only a means to an end but also an end in itself.
- (iii) The image is used as a stimulus for the interview without necessarily being included or referred to in the research reporting of the interview. The photo is a means to an end namely to elicit the participant's views and experiences.

The different approaches are not mutually exclusive. For example, it may be possible for the researcher to be flexible and adopt either approach (ii) or (iii) depending on the specific participant and interview. Moreover, approach (i) could be used in conjunction with approach (ii).

6.3.2 Using photos in research interviewing

The use of photos is a useful approach in tourism research because the *"taking photographs is a deeply rooted, institutionalized part of the tourism experience"* (Andersson Cederholm (2004: 226). Loeffler (2004:553, 540) describes the use of photos in interviews as a powerful research tool and an underutilized methodology with nearly limitless potential.

The use of visual material result in interviews that are longer, more focused and producing more precise information. Photos can trigger responses that would otherwise not have surfaced with just verbal interviewing. Photographs can help sharpen participants' abilities to reflect upon and explain their experiences and perspectives (Van Aucken et al 2010:375). The ability of photo-elicitation to stimulate memories of past situational contexts, as well as its empowerment of participants in the representation of themselves makes photo-elicitation an effective tool to represent 'lived experiences' (Stewart and Floyd (2004:452).

Photo-elicitation is a means for triggering responses, and for making the respondent feel comfortable in the interview situation. Photographs can act as a starting point for the building of trust between the researcher and informants (Andersson Cederholm, 2004: 226).

Loeffler (2004:539) describes photo-elicitation as a collaborative process in which the researcher becomes a listener to the participant who is interpreting the photo and its meanings. The research participant could and should take a leading role in the interview. Participants function as collaborators in research rather than objects of study (Stewart and Floyd, 2004:451). Similarly, Harper (2002:20) notes the difficulty in in-depth interviewing of establishing communication between the researcher and participant. This is due in part to different cultural backgrounds. Photo-elicitation is one means for overcoming this difficulty because it is anchored in an image that is understood, at least in part, by both parties.

6.3.3 The advantages of participant-driven photo-elicitation (PDPE)

In the section above, the use of photos for interviewing was discussed. This section considers a method that does not just use photos for the interviewing, but more specifically, uses photos that have been taken by the participant – a method that as stated in s 6.3.1 above is referred to as participant-driven photo-elicitation (PDPE). One of the reasons for the very infrequent use of PDPE has been the high cost of disposable cameras and film processing (Markwell, 2000: 92). MacKay and Couldwell (2004:391) note that with the reduced cost of photography, PDPE has become much more accessible as a research tool. The development and widespread use of digital photography has made photography cheaper than ever before making PDPE even more viable as a research tool. Most tourists have their own digital cameras and there is no cost on film processing.

PDPE is able to capture aspects of lived experience in ways that would not be possible with other methods (Stewart and Floyd, 2004:450). According to Van Aucken et al (2010:375), PDPE is perceived to be less threatening and more engaging than other methods and thus produces lower refusal rates. Garrod

(2008: 386) argues that PDPE's main strength is that *"it is essentially an experiential, rather than experimental or expert approach to researching images and perceptions."* Garrod refers to PDPE as *"more holistic techniques of research"*. Another advantage of self-directed photography is that it empowers the participants to have greater control over the research process because it is they who decide what to photograph (Markwell, 2000: 97).

PDPE research participants normally enjoy the process since it is easy to take the photographs *"because we were doing that anyway"* (MacKay and Couldwell 2004:393). Van Aucken et al (2010:384) noted that most of the participants in their study found the PDPE process interesting, enjoyable and understandable and that this helped to break down barriers to participation. The participant's response to the landscape occurs while they are experiencing it and is recorded when the participant presses the shutter-release button on a camera (Jacobsen 2007:241). The use of PDPE allows participants *"to adopt an active role in the research as generators of the pictures, rather than passive respondents to pre-existing ones"* (Garrod 2009:349). It is the tangible photos taken by participants themselves that are the object of attention in PDPE interviews (Van Aucken et al, 2010:384). MacKay and Couldwell (2004:394) also note that novel data collection techniques such as PDPE may be of great assistance at a time when researchers are seeking ways to recruit and engage increasingly reluctant and skeptical study participants.

MacKay and Couldwell (2004:394) refer to PDPE's advantage of reflexivity in that the participants' perceptions and interpretations are the focus throughout the research process. The approach is based on visuals generated by the participant as opposed to other visually-based methods that make use of images supplied by the researcher. An added advantage is that the tourist experience is not in any way altered by the research project. Moreover, it does not impose restrictions on potential participants of where to go or what to do and hence these are more likely to commit themselves to the research (Markwell, 2000: 97). Stewart and Floyd (2004:454) note that *"leisure research questions increasingly are tied to values, identities, and meanings that are difficult to articulate."* Photoelicitation based on the respondents' own photographs is an effective means to elicit *"both subjective emotions, thoughts and reflections, as well as*

patterns in the cultural and social constructions of reality." (Andersson Cederholm, 2004: 240).

Despite the intimate relationship between photography and the tourist experience, qualitative studies of people's perceptions of destinations using participant-generated visual data are comparatively rare (MacKay and Couldwell, 2004:395; Garrod, 2008: 382,348; Jacobsen, 2007:235; Aucken et al, 2010:373). The continued bias towards verbal and numeric framing of research, as opposed to the use of visual material, hinders progress in the understanding of leisure (Stewart and Floyd, 2004: 447,448).

Loeffler (2004:551) lists and discusses in some detail the advantages of using participants' photographs during interviews. Photos taken by the research participants act as memory triggers and enhance the participants' ability to tell narratives of their experience. Referring to her research, she describes it as follows: *"Each photograph acted as a memory anchor for the participant as he or she recalled the moment of the photograph, its intention, and the affective context surrounding it."* They help build a rapport between participant and researcher and provide a secondary data source for data analysis. Loeffler notes words alone are inadequate to convey the essential nature of the participants' experiences. Referring to her research, she notes that photographs *"capture and preserve the sense of awe, mystery, beauty, tranquility, solitude and peace"* of the outdoor experience and the use of these same photographs in the research made it possible for the conversation to proceed to a deeper level of understanding and meaning between the researcher and participants. Loeffler (2004:539) argues that the emotional content derived from the photographs during interviewing enables the researcher a greater understanding of participant's experiences than from the spoken or written word alone. It is the participants who decide which places to depict and not the researcher. Loeffler (2004:552) notes that *"Photography enabled participants to identify peak or significant moments during and after the experience. It aided in the visual and emotional memory of the experience and it captured a greater level of detail than the participants could retain by themselves alone."* Loeffler (2004:553) notes that the researcher is able *"to access some of the profound meanings of the participants' experiences since participants used photographs to capture moments of intense emotion, connection, and celebration."* Loeffler (2004:540)

summarises the role of participant's photographs in a PDPE research as to establish rapport, share in the narrative of the experiences, and to delve into the meanings of both the photographs and the experiences. Participants take photographs during those moments of their experience that have most value and meaning. In Loeffler's (2004:551) research of outdoor experiences, these were the times of "*exploration and experimentation, adventure, and peak adventure stages.*"

6.3.4 Some examples of the use of photos in research interviewing

In her research project Andersson Cederholm (2004) approached people who had been recently on a backpacking holidays to discuss their experience by referring to photographs of the holiday. The research was not tied to a particular location but was more about the experience of a specific type of holiday namely back packing. Apart from the experience, the act of photography was also part of the research with the interviewer trying to influence the direction of the interviews both towards the act of photography as well as the activities around the photographs. The researcher used photo-elicitation to develop trust in the interview situation and to trigger the memories of the respondents.

Fairweather and Swaffield (2001:220) carried out an interpretative study of visitor experiences of landscape in Kaikoura, New Zealand. The researcher selected 30 photos of Kaikoura representing different categories of experience and landscape settings. Participants were asked to sort the photographs according to what they liked or disliked for whatever reason. They were then they were asked to explain their reasons for choosing the six top and the six bottom-ranked photographs. The combination of sorting of the photographs with in-depth interviews enabled the researcher to derive underlying attitudes and values behind the choices made by participants.

In her research, Sather-Wagstaff (2008:85,96) considered the use of photography by tourists at commemorative historical sites, using the former site of the twin World Trade Center towers in Manhattan as her case study. Sather-Wagstaff engaged tourists in conversation during their visit at the WTC and approached some respondents post-visit. She focused on the "tourists' acts of

'picturing experiences' " at the WTC through both photographic activities at the site and also use of photo for memory purposes post-visit. She was surprised to note the willingness shown by tourists to speak to her at length, in spite of claims in some literature that tourists are reluctant to give up their limited time to talk to researchers. She attributes this to her being perceived to be 'non-threatening' since in general, female journalists, protestors and other non-tourists at the site had far more success than males in approaching and speaking with both tourists and local visitors. She notes that on-site engagement with tourists provides a wealth of information that cannot be generated solely through analyses of visual or textual media or with quantitative methods (Sather-Wagstaff, 2008:96).

Markwell (2000) describes a research study involving self-directed photography. In this study, the photos submitted by the participants were decoded in that each photo was described in writing by the researcher and then categorised. This involves interpretation of the researcher both in the interpretation and the categorisation. On this approach, I would argue that the interpretation by the researcher will bring into the study a bias because of the researcher's own cultural baggage. Allowing the participants themselves to interpret the photos would be preferable because, in any case, it is they who know their thoughts when the photo was taken and it is they who can identify the specific items within the image that they consider important.

Although the most important part of the experience is the 'on-site activity', the anticipation prior to the on-site experience and the post-event recollection are also parts of the experience (Lee and Datillo, 1994:196). The research will focus almost exclusively on the on-site activity but the feedback will be gathered in the later recollection phase. When the experience is described and recorded some time after the event, there may be negative aspects of the experience that respondents tend to forget and hence not record, because the positive aspects of the experience far outweigh any negatives (Lee and Datillo, 1994: 208). Similarly, in a VEP research method the participant is more likely to take photos that reflect the more interesting and positive parts of the experience. The less enjoyable parts of the experience will not be recorded and thus more quickly forgotten.

Loeffler (2004:541,542,552,554) used a visually based approach to study the meanings of outdoor experience. She noted that there was a difference between male and female participants in their choice of photos to represent the meaning of the experience. The tendency was for the former to choose photographs of 'significant personal moments' and the latter choose images of self. Loeffler poses an interesting question *"Do male and female participants make meaning from or place value on different elements of the experience?"* Crang (1997:360) connects 'geographically reading the landscape' and 'observational discipline' with a 'male gaze' and 'masculine subjectivity in science.' Photography entails the use of observational skills and as such may well be a more male oriented activity. Crang notes that in family groups it is more likely for the men to take the pictures. The implication of this for my research is that, for a randomly selected sample, more males are likely to participate in the survey due to higher response rate. Action may have to be taken to compensate for this to ensure a more balanced sample.

6.3.5 Investigating landscape through PDPE

Crang (1997:370) argues that if taking photos is part of the tourist experience, it seems a good opportunity to use PDPE to understand how people relate to and perceive landscapes and places. In the field of landscape perception studies, Jacobsen (2007: 238) refers to four main paradigms that consider landscape perception as being a human–landscape interaction. These paradigms are: expert, psychophysical, cognitive and experiential. The expert paradigm involves the evaluation of landscape quality by skilled and trained observers. The psychophysical paradigm involves assessment through testing general public evaluation of landscape aesthetic qualities. This approach customarily claims that quality is related to both the landscape and the observer. Jacobsen describes the cognitive paradigm as "a search for human meaning associated with landscapes or landscape properties." Cognitive landscape studies relate to *"the mental process of perceiving, seeking to understand predispositions or interventions in human evaluative processes as well as meaning."* The experiential paradigm *"considers landscape values to be based on the experience of human–landscape interaction, whereby both are shaping and being shaped in an interactive process."*

It is useful to consider these different approaches to the human-landscape interaction for a more complete understanding of research methods. VEP is more oriented towards the experiential paradigm. It is likely to entail also an element of the cognitive paradigm as research participants will inevitably refer to meanings associated with the buildings and scenery being photographed. VEP is a conscious effort to move away from the expert paradigm to the extent that the visuals are selected by the participant through the act of taking photographs and not by the researcher.

CHAPTER 7

METHODOLOGY

This research study will seek to provide a better understanding of the experience of tourists in a heritage urban space. In this chapter, I consider theoretical issues relating to methodology before proceeding to discuss methods in the next chapter.

7.1 Qualitative Research

The study of cultural and tourism phenomena are intrinsically fragmentary pursuits (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001: 67,71). Qualitative research is 'messy'. Setting clear definitions and boundaries of human action and endeavours is likely to be impossible because of the complexities and multi-dimensions. Matters being studied can be looked at and assessed from different angles. Differences between the cultural background of the researcher and the respondent/research participant add to the complexity and the 'messiness' of the qualitative research.

The researcher brings order and structure to collected data in a process that is messy, ambiguous and time-consuming, but also creative, and fascinating. The process does not proceed in a linear fashion, nor is it neat (Marshall and Rossman, 2011:207). Liamputtong (2005:257) describes qualitative research as a strategy of 'calculated chaos', involving amongst other reading and rereading the data 'to discover, to understand' and notes that: *"The initial experience of immersion may result in chaotic confusion as a consequence of the complexity of the data and of exploring multiple possible interpretations. However out of this immersion emerge new perspectives, new linkages, new understandings, and theories."* 'Calculated chaos' suggests two potentially conflicting aspects of research; 'calculated' involving established procedures, techniques and methods on the one hand, chaotic with uncertain elements and lacking clarity on the other. It is often criticised for being too exploratory. The aims of the research and the nature of a problem are sometimes unclear at the start of the research

project (Liamputtong, 2005:258). According to Phillimore and Goodson (2004:4), qualitative approaches allow for the studying of things in their '*natural setting*'. In interpreting phenomena, the emphasis is on people and the meanings that people bring. The research process as described in literature was very much reflected in this research. It was a process of discovery that was non-linear for which 'calculated chaos' is an apt description. It was about understanding a phenomenon, namely the tourist experience, and the focus of the research was people.

Qualitative research is not about a set of research methods but about "*a set of thinking tools*" that allows the researchers to consider different approaches to acquire knowledge (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004:5). Bazeley (2013:161) argues that the process is primarily a thinking process that requires the researcher to step into the shoe of the other and try to see the world from their perspective. Techniques and procedures are not directives to be rigidly adhered to. They are tools to be used by the researcher to solve methodological problems. "*Analysis should be relaxed, flexible, and driven by insights gained through interaction with data rather than being structured and based on procedures*" (Bazeley, 2013:161). I fully concur with the idea that research is primarily a thinking process and that a flexible approach is required without excessively strict adherence to pre-determined techniques.

Ayikoru (2009:67) notes the difficulty to predict social behaviour because of the complexities of differing value systems, beliefs and attitude. This contrasts with the positivist approach that contends it is possible to predict social behaviour by ascertaining cause-effect relationships. Methodologies that quantify experiences are intuitively attractive. Connell and Meyer (2004: 194) note how quantitative research techniques can yield data that is reliable and replicable. They cite questionnaire surveys with Likert scales as an approach that is relatively inexpensive, time-efficient and effective. An advantage of quantitative survey methodology is that the exploration of relationships between variables is readily permitted. On the other hand, quantitative techniques can be criticized for reducing the complexities of human experiences to numbers and statistics. They are also inadequate to capture complete accounts of their understanding and meaning. Therefore, there is a need to adopt alternative approaches based "*on*

the notion that people have feelings, values and mindsets, and are able to give accurate accounts of all these” (Andriotis, 2009: 69).

Contrary to more traditional schools of thought, there isn't one reality waiting to be discovered but as referred to by Phillimore and Goodson (2004:12) there are '*multiple realities*' that can be '*reached*' by means of qualitative techniques. Social research is about people and when dealing with people, experience shows that talk of some kind of absolute truth is unreal. For this reason I consider reference to '*multiple realities*' as most appropriate. This was also confirmed in this research with the different perspectives offered by the interviewees. On the other hand, the constructivist philosophy argues that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, as people invent concepts and models to make sense of experience. Such concepts and models are continuously tested and modified on the basis of new experience (Ayikoru, 2009:72). Speaking of '*models*' in a context of '*multiple realities*' may seem contradictory but it is not. Even with multiple realities, patterns in social behaviour are identifiable and one way of communicating these is by means of a model. In this research, a model representing the tourist experience of heritage areas is developed and this is presented in Chapter 16.

Jamal and Hollinshead (2001: 65,66) acknowledge the difficulty of classifying qualitative research approaches primarily because of the inter- and multi-disciplinary influences. They challenge, for example, the labelling of interpretative work as being '*subjective*' and '*critical structural works*' as being '*objective*' as this would exclude the possibility of objectivity in interpretative work and subjectivity in critical work. They prefer a gradation of *local/emergent* versus *elite/a priori*. The former being characterised by local narratives, situational and atheoretical. A study that describes tourists and/or cultural experiences at a particular location is one example of a *local/ emergent* study. *Elite/a priori* is characterised by the grand narrative, the generalizable and theory driven. They point out that, whereas some researchers prefer the use of fixed paradigms and methods associated with specific theoretical frameworks, others prefer an eclectic approach using multi-method, multi-theoretical approaches.

Another question that merits consideration is '*How does one confirm the 'truth' or validity of the research?*' Positivists contend that there is "*a single tangible and*

fragmentable reality which can be predicted and controlled" (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001: 76). On the other hand, interpretive studies focus on experience and meaning, things that cannot be judged on the basis of positivist criteria of 'truth', 'validity' and 'reliability'. Jamal and Hollinshead (2001:77) argue that: *"The relentless hunt for a rational and 'objective' 'truth' are being challenged by critical and interpretive scholars seeking a more meaningful experience and understanding of the text and context of their study."* This argument is supported by Goodson and Phillimore (2004: 33) who note that the idea of objective, value-free research is questioned on the grounds that every researcher brings something different to a study: different attitudes, values, and perspectives. These impact the research from its inception to its dissemination. The notion that data can be interpreted objectively and then generalised to become fact has now become redundant (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004: 17).

The research outcome and narrative is influenced by the writer's *"location within culture, history, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, family and nation"* (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001: 73) or as described by Phillimore and Goodson (2004: 17) *"the researcher's standpoint, values and biases"*. To these, I would also add the researcher's professional training and experience. As Phillimore and Goodson (2004: 15,16) describe it, *"there are multiple interpretations mediated by the personal biographies of researchers and their research subjects."* Contrary to what was previously argued, replacing one researcher with another will not produce the same results. The researcher's specific interest in the topic or *"engaged interestedness"* is inevitable given that *"the self is an embodied and embedded being in the world of everyday life"* (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001: 73). It results in a dynamic tension between the topic and the researcher's own perspective. Ayikoru (2009:64) goes beyond just considering the writer or researcher and argues that the social and political forces at work in the production of tourism knowledge operate so as to legitimise some understandings of tourism while marginalising others.

Goodson and Phillimore (2004:30,37) call for transparency in research so that it can be judged as well as learnt from. They suggest that the 'individual identities' should be made known and should not be disguised behind 'labels' like for example ethnographer, anthropologist or scholar. Jennings (2005:108) calls for reflexivity by the researcher this being *"the process by which researchers reflect*

and consider the impacts of their personal subjectivity and consequences of their participation in the research process and report on the same in their writings.”

Researchers within the qualitative tradition are keen to acknowledge the situated nature of their research and to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their findings. They use reflexivity as a tool to transform subjectivity from problem to opportunity (Finlay and Gough, 2003:ix). The potential impact that my own background and value system could have had on the research was given careful thought in this research. Whilst acknowledging that my particular interest in Valletta may influence the outcome of the research, my efforts were directed towards keeping the influence of my background to a minimum. Goodson’s and Phillimore’s recommendation for transparency has been adopted in this research with some reflections on my own background included in Section 9.6.

7.2 Phenomenology

There are different approaches to the carrying out of qualitative research one of which is phenomenological. According to Grauman (2002:97), a unitary and consensual definition of phenomenology is difficult because it exists in many forms and ramifications. Phenomenology should not be referred to as the qualitative paradigm as a whole (Goulding, 2005: 303) – it is one of several philosophical understandings as to how qualitative research can be approached. Phenomenology is the approach that is being adopted in this study and it is useful therefore to consider different researchers’ understanding of phenomenology as well as the potential and constraints of this approach for the carrying out of qualitative research.

Jamal and Hollinshead (2001:65) argue that alternative research approaches are required that focus on the interpretation of human experience, actions and activities. The need to interpret and understand experience coupled with shifts in ontological and epistemological thinking challenges the notion of scientific truth, validity and objectivity. The justification for qualitative research, and hence of phenomenology, is the shift from quantitative and measurable knowledge to an understanding of the dynamic and the experienced (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001: 67). The term ‘phenomenology’ refers to “*reasoned inquiry that discovers*

the inherent essences of appearances"; put differently, it is anything that appears to human consciousness (Li 2000: 865).

Van Manen (1997:9,10,11) provides a useful discussion on phenomenology. He describes phenomenology as *"the systematic attempt to uncover and describe ... the internal meaning structures of lived experience"*. He explains that by means of phenomenology one gains *"a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experience"* as well as a description and an interpretation of meaning having depth and richness. Some disciplines discuss and explain meanings with reference to specific areas of study (ethnography on particular cultures; sociology on certain social groups; history on historical periods; biography on individuals' personal life history). Phenomenology is different in that it does not aim to explicate meanings specific to an area of study.

Andriotis (2009:69,70) argues that phenomenology involves a description of somebody's experience as it is without taking account of the causal explanations. It considers participants' subjective perceptions and sheds light on the meaning assigned to their lived experience. Phenomenology is not the mere application of methodology. It discovers the common meanings underlying empirical variations of a given phenomenon. Andriotis (2009) claims that the focus of tourism is the understanding of human experience, thus making a phenomenological approach well-suited for tourism research and for the exploration of travelers' experience. Schmidt and Little (2007: 240, 241) note how phenomenology enables an understanding of the mind/body relationship and a recognition not only of what constitutes experiences, but also how they are lived. Phenomenology reminds us of the centrality of lived experience as a way to develop insight and understanding.

Goulding (2005:303,304) refers to phenomenology as *"theory building based around lived experiences,"* By studying individuals, phenomenologists hope to discover the deeper meaning of the 'lived' experience. According to Goulding (2005: 302), *"phenomenology is a critical reflection on conscious experience, rather than subconscious motivation, and is designed to uncover the essential invariant features of that experience."* The main interest of phenomenologists is to understand and explain how people make sense of the world they inhabit (Brotherton, 2008:36). By means of phenomenological methods, the meanings

and essences of phenomena are derived (Moustakas, 1994:46). Van Manen (1997:23) refers to it as a 'human science', as opposed to a natural science, because it studies the lived experience and deals with *"the structures of meaning of the lived world."* Van Manen (1997: 4,17) argues that, although description, interpretation and critical analysis are the preferred approaches of human science, phenomenology as a human science aims for precision by striving for interpretative descriptions with fullness and completeness of detail. Van Manen (1997: 31) notes that *"No single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer or deeper description."* Van Manen (1997:23) refers to phenomenological questions as 'meaning questions'. The question is not 'how' (for example, "How do these children learn this particular material?") The question is *"What is the nature of the experience of learning?"* Van Manen (1997:11) argues that phenomenology is *"systematic, explicit, self-critical and intersubjective"* and can therefore broadly be considered as scientific.

According to Moustakas (1994:58), phenomenology is about descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses. As much as is possible, descriptions retain the original understandings and their phenomenal qualities. Moustakas argues that *"Descriptions keep a phenomenon alive, illuminate its presence, accentuate its underlying meanings, enable the phenomenon to linger, retain its spirit, as near to its actual nature as possible."* Moustakas, (1994:47) also notes that, in phenomenological studies, the researcher refrains from making suppositions and focuses on a specific topic *'freshly and naively'*. The researcher derives a question to guide the study, and generates findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection. Doorne and Ateljevic (2005) argue that phenomenological approach goes beyond mere description and involves reflective analysis and interpretation of the participant's story.

According to Castello (2010:3), legitimate topics for phenomenological investigation include any *"object, event, situation or experience that a person can see, hear, touch, smell, taste, feel, intuit, know, understand, or live through."* He describes phenomenology as *"the exploration and description of phenomena relating to things or human experience"* and contends that architectural theory, including urban design, is increasingly reliant on phenomenology as a method of

inquiry. This suggests that phenomenology is very relevant to this research work.

Brotherton (2008:17,18) distinguishes between inductive and deductive research approaches as follows: Inductive research approach works by going from the unknown to the known, with little or no reference to pre-existing theory. The starting point is the identification of a question to be addressed. The purpose of induction is to build new theory and develop explanations based on data collected from the real world. In a deductive approach, theories are built up, or deduced, from pre-existing theory - the existing body of theoretical and empirical knowledge is taken as the starting point. Theory and knowledge are accessed by conducting a review of the literature on the basis of which the deductive researcher establishes the theory or theories to be tested. Following the literature review, the deductive researcher will be able to develop the theoretical framework that informs and helps to structure and guide the remainder of the research process.

Phenomenology advocates the use of an inductive approach to research because a more valid understanding of a phenomenon or event can be derived from studying these in their real world context. On the other hand, research cannot begin with a blank sheet because it risks ignoring previous empirical or theoretical work on the issue in question. In practice therefore, although phenomenological research will work from empirical data to theoretical development, it is likely to be informed and guided by previous research findings from the literature (Brotherton, 2008: 37). The approach adopted in this research involves a combination of inductive and deductive theorizing. This conforms with Liamputtong's (2005:259) suggested methodology whereby a new theoretical approach is derived deductively and then compared with, or tested against, inductively derived theory.

According to Jennings (2005:110), positivistic research findings are generalizable and representative, and their presentation is in scientific report style. Conversely, phenomenological research adopts a narrative style. It is more localised and achieves an in-depth understanding. It is recognised that qualitative research will sacrifice generalizability but will in return provide for greater depth of knowledge about a phenomenon (Smaldone et al 2005:412).

Van Manen (1997:22) argues that, in phenomenology, any attempt to generalize could result in loss of focus on the uniqueness of the human experience.

Phenomenology developed as an alternative to positivism when researchers in particular fields, such as sociology, became increasingly disenchanted with the ability of positivist methods to adequately explain the phenomena they were interested in. Even if results of positivist research were reliable in that they could be repeated and replicated, they were criticised for not providing adequate explanations for real-world phenomena (Brotherton, 2008:36). Phenomenologists will tend to focus on soft (qualitative) data because they are more capable of revealing people's feelings, perceptions and meanings but this does not preclude reference to quantitative data in phenomenological research. On the other hand, positivist research is far more likely to concentrate on quantitative data because of its amenability to measurement and statistical manipulation, but it may also include qualitative data like interviewing (Brotherton, 2008: 38).

7.3 Other similar research approaches

It is useful to consider research approaches that have similarities with phenomenology, the reason being that the similarities are not limited to the philosophical underpinnings of the different approaches but are also in the methods of data collection and also in the analysis.

Grounded theory was one of the first qualitative methods identified as such following the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Gibbs (2007: 49) describes grounded theory as "*inductively generating novel theoretical ideas or hypothesis from the data*". Theories are said to be 'grounded' in that they emerge from and are supported by the data. Grounded theory should not be viewed as a unitary method but as a focal point for discussion within a far more wide-ranging discussion about strategies and methods of qualitative inquiry. Allegiance to a methodological school is secondary to devising manageable and worthwhile research projects (Pidgeon and Henwood, 2004:626). According to Moustakas (1994:4), the focus in grounded theory research approach is initially on the "*unraveling the elements of the experience*". By studying these elements and

their interrelationships, the researcher can develop a theory providing an understanding of the nature and meaning of an experience for a particular group of people in a particular setting.

According to Smith et al (2009:43,44), grounded theory was developed *“to offer social researchers a clear, systematic and sequential guide to qualitative fieldwork and analysis.”* When compared to other qualitative approaches, the scale of research for grounded theory is likely to be considerable. It requires time to deal with a lot of data, and the analysis is facilitated by means of a relatively structured protocol. Grounded theory provides a systematic procedure for collecting and analysing qualitative data. It guides the researcher towards theory building, from description through abstraction to conceptual categorization (Stevenson 2007:188).

Goulding (2005: 297) refers to a set of principles for analysing and abstracting the information, that include what she refers to as ‘constant comparison’ method. Interview texts are analysed line by line, provisional themes noted, and subsequently compared with other transcripts. The researcher then searches for links through the identification of concepts that may go some way to offering an explanation of the phenomenon under study. The final stage of the theory development process is the construction of a ‘core category’. A core category brings together all the concepts in order to offer an explanation of the phenomenon. It should have theoretical significance and should be traceable back through the data. The theory is then written up and considered with existing theories to demonstrate relevance, fit, and/or extension.

Another research approach is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). It is usually concerned with experience that is of particular moment or significance to the person. In IPA the researcher looks at an experience that is of importance as the person reflects on the significance of what has happened and tries to make sense of it. Typical IPA studies involve people having major experiences and facing big issues (Smith et al, 2009:33,34).

7.4 Researching the Tourist Experience

Connell and Meyer (2004:185) provide a useful discussion on the difficulties of researching the visitor experience. They note that the visitor experience arises from a combination of visitor emotions and attitudes, as well as objective and subjective assessments of sites visited. Unravelling such experiential consumption poses significant difficulties in a research context. Visitor survey research normally handles more easily identifiable issues and the collection of socio-demographic data, with experiential aspects of tourism often being omitted. Connell and Meyer (2004: 191) provide several reasons for this, the main one being that measuring the visitor experience poses many conceptual and methodological problems, including the difficulty of establishing and agreeing how the experiences are to be framed and measured. The highly subjective nature of the visitor experience, based on perception and cognitive views, makes researching the experience all the more complex. Visiting a tourist attraction is likely to be a series of experiences rather than a single experience with constant thoughts and emotional reactions throughout. I fully concur with the argumentation made on the difficulties and complexities of researching tourist experience and would further argue that the study of visitor experience should not be about determining 'level of satisfaction' – it should be about understanding the dynamics of the lived experience. For this reason, phenomenology was the preferred approach for this research.

Sather-Wagstaff (2008: 86) notes how the cultural background and life experiences of tourists influenced the way they chose to engage with the site that, in this case, was the site of the former World Trade Center in New York. She argues that such individual, complex, and diverse information cannot be derived through analyses of visual or textual media or with quantitative methods. She argues that it requires *“the ethnographic intimacy of actually engaging with those who are in the thick of lived experiences.”*

There are concerns in social science research circles about the difficulty to capture lived experiences and social reality. This *“crisis of representation”*, stems *“from the gap between the lived experience of people we study and the inability of our research to fully portray such experiences”* (Stewart and Floyd, 2004:450). Information collated in positivistic research on leisure experiences

normally relates to a summary of the experience rather than to a proper understanding of the lived experience. Stewart and Floyd (2004:450) cite as an example Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scales in which participants are required to grade the experience in relation to several categories. A category such as 'being with friends' does not truly reflect the lived experience and in any case different people may have a different understanding of 'being with friends'.

Another approach is the experience sampling method (ESM). This involves participants taking down notes in self report booklets when they receive signals by means of pagers (or messages by means of mobile). The advantage of ESM is that it collates the participants' immediate experience and minimises memory decay and mood bias (Lee, 2004: 197, 198). In the ESM method, respondents could be asked to respond to open-ended questions or to a questionnaire. Open-ended allows for the assessment of qualitative questions. The down side is that respondents will have more difficulties in dealing with open-ended questions, apart from the fact that it will be inconvenient and time consuming. Another alternative would be the use of GPS to track the movements of participants and use these as a prompt for later interviews. This would be considered too intrusive on the participants and could result in reduced response rates.

7.5 Qualitative Interviewing

People personally involved in a leisure or tourism situation are best placed to describe and explain their experiences in their own words. Hence, qualitative interviewing is considered an appropriate methodology to adopt to gain insights into the experience of tourists. Selby (2004:194) claims that research that denies the opportunity for tourists to speak about their experiences in their own words is common but flawed. The research method adopted must avoid imposing an unduly constrained framework or preconceived scheme upon the respondents (Veal, 2006; Lee, 1994). By using interviews the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2011: 529).

According to Jennings (2005:105) interviews are not just conversations; they are conversations with a purpose. Interviews involve active listening and full attention with the interviewer interacting and giving feedback. Clarifications are sought for better understanding. The interviewer monitors timing keeping track of where the interview has been and where it still needs to go. Jennings (2005: 112) notes that interviewing is not simple, even if it may appear to be so. Most qualitative research is based on interviews (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2011:529). The use of interviewing techniques does not preclude the use of quantitative methods used to support the tourist knowledge acquired from the interviews (Selby 2004: 198).

7.6 Coding of research data

Coding is central to the analysis process. Codes refer to *“the most basic segment or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.”* (Robson, 2011:478). Flick (2009: 307) describes coding as the *“operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data.”*

There are many different ways how the same set of data can be seen. There is not one single set of categories waiting to be discovered. According to Bazeley (2013:151), most samples of qualitative data have multiple stories to tell, and each researcher coming to that data brings with them their own purposes, perspectives, experiences and knowledge. He contends that an audience will be convinced by the strength of the argument and the clarity and comprehensiveness of the evidence. This requires a clear record or audit trail of coding decisions. There is no standard method for the analysis of interview data but some common approaches do exist (Kvale, 2007:103).

According to Goulding (2005:303), in phenomenology, intense reflection is an integral part of the process with the subjective experience being the overriding focus. Analysis is conducted by scrutinising the text for meaning ‘units’ that describe the central aspects of the experience. This involves reading transcripts in full, in order to first gain a sense of the whole picture. Patterns and

differences are then sought across transcripts. The meaning 'units' are synthesised to provide a general description of the 'whole'. A wide range of factors are to be considered for a holistic interpretation to be arrived at. Goulding notes that *"the final explanation represents a fusion of horizons between the interpreter's frame of reference and the texts being interpreted."* Section 8.5 gives a detailed account of the coding process and analysis as adopted in this research.

CHAPTER 8

METHODS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the process I went through to collate the research data. The process began with the pilot survey, an exercise that enabled me to adjust the subsequent data collection process (Section 8.2). Data collection procedures for this research are described in detail in Section 8.3. This includes recruitment of participants and interviewing. Apart from describing the process, I also discuss difficulties involved in recruitment and my observations of the interviewing process. The interviews were transcribed and then analysed using NVivo10. The coding and analysis of the data is described in Section 8.5. Some observations on the analysis process are also included in this section.

The research seeks to better understand the tourist experience within the context of heritage urban spaces. Lived experience is something that is difficult to articulate into words not least because it involves people's feelings and emotions. The research adopts a phenomenological approach to enable a deeper understanding of the lived experience. In this research I was guided by the phenomenological question 'what is the essence of the heritage urban space experience?' According to Hayllar and Griffin (2005:524, 2007:14), the 'essence' of the experience is not a particular action, interaction or component within the physical and social environment. It is a 'construct' that arises from the researcher's interaction with the structural components of the experience - actions, interactions and elements of the physical and social environment.

The approach is similar to that adopted in a series of precinct studies in a number of Australian cities (Hayllar and Griffin 2005, 2007; Griffin and Hayllar 2007, 2009). The question necessitated exploration of other aspects of the experience like the activities engaged in by the tourists, the locations in Valletta they visited and their likes and dislikes.

8.2 Pilot Survey

A pilot survey was carried out with nine interviews. A pilot study is a small-scale methodological test conducted to prepare for a main study and is intended to ensure that methods or ideas would work in practice. The principal benefit of conducting a pilot study is that it provides researchers with an opportunity to make adjustments and revisions in the main study (Kim, 2011:191). Pilots can be used to refine research instruments and also to foreshadow research problems and questions (Sampson, 2004).

The intention was to use the public area of a hotel to recruit hotel guests for the research. The required permissions were obtained from the management of the Santana Hotel, Qawra and the Grand Hotel Excelsior, Floriana. Different approaches to recruitment were tested namely placing notices in hotel lobbies; hotel's front office desk identifying potential participants; and direct approach to tourists in the hotel's public area. The disadvantage of putting up a notice was that there was very low take up even if the notice was visually attractive and a small gift was offered. On the other hand, the disadvantage of relying on hotel front office staff was the tendency to select repeat visitors because they were people with whom they were already acquainted. Direct approach in hotel public areas was found to be more effective in terms of time and effort and also in terms of getting a good cross section of hotel guests.

What was immediately apparent from the pilot survey was the difficulty to recruit participants. Two different interviewing approaches were to be adopted; one involving use of photographs taken by participants and another without the use of photos (using unstructured interviewing). For photo-based interviews, the difficulty was even greater as in many cases the people approached either had not taken photos in Valletta or did not have the camera at hand. For two of the interviews, I started off with the photos question but found that participants had not taken many photos in Valletta. This confirmed my original intention of being flexible in that both non-photo interviews and photo-based interviews would be used as a method, depending on the specific circumstances of the interview.

The objective of the interview was to obtain the essence of the experience including feelings and emotions. The pilot demonstrated the risk that the interview would be merely descriptive of places visited and activities engaged in, without bringing out the feelings linked with the experience. This was something I needed to look out for in the actual interviews. Although the interviewing was unstructured, the pilot showed that as interviewer, I had to put forward additional questions, mostly unprepared, with the specific intent of getting the interviewee to talk. The average time of the pilot interviews was less than 15 minutes. This compared to an average of almost 18 minutes in the actual interviews, suggesting an improved technique in the actual survey.

Pilot interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview data was analysed using pre-determined codes based on the urban design model discussed in the literature review. This was in line with concept-driven coding (Gibbs 2007: 45) whereby categories or thematic ideas are identified by the researcher prior to the application of codes to the text. Even if limited in scope, the pilot analysis demonstrated that this approach could prevent the emergence of ideas that do not fit into the framework of the urban design model. It was decided, therefore, that the data of the main survey would be data-driven i.e. coded without reference to the any pre-determined framework or preconceptions. According to Gibbs (2007:45,46), this is the preferred approach of many phenomenologists.

8.3 Data collection procedures

8.3.1 Recuitment of participants

Hayllar and Griffin carried out several studies on tourism experience (2005, 2007; Griffin and Hayllar, 2007, 2009). Their research work has several similarities to this research in that both try to develop a better understanding of the tourism experience of a tourism 'precinct' or area. Moreover, both adopt a phenomenological approach to the research involving in-depth interviewing. It is useful, therefore, to look more closely at the method of participant recruitment that they adopted in one particular study (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005). The tourism precinct under study by Hayllar and Griffin was the Rocks in

Sydney. Participants were visitors to the area who responded to a display, in the Rocks Visitor Centre, which was manned by a research assistant. The interview took place at the Visitor Centre itself. A gift was offered (two bottles of Australian wine) as an incentive. The data was collected over a three day period. It is worth noting that Hayllar and Griffin restricted participants to first time visitors to minimise the impact of previous knowledge and experience of The Rocks prior to the interview. In my research and following the pilot survey, I decided to include both first time visitors as well as repeat visitors. The initial interviews of the pilot survey did suggest that there will be differences in the experience of first-time tourists and repeat tourists. The experience of the former was more likely to involve emotion and feelings because the novelty of exploration and discovery of a first time visit is significantly stronger. Despite this impression resulting from the pilot survey, I still opted to do both first-time and repeat for two reasons. The pilot survey also showed the difficulties of recruitment. The limited resources for this research would have made it very difficult for me to recruit a sufficient number of first time visitors. Another reason was that it would be a good opportunity to draw out comparisons in the experiences of the two. Interestingly all the interviews at the Hotel Excelsior were with first time visitors, whereas the opposite was true for the Hotel Preluna; virtually all were repeat visitors. At the Santana the interviews were a mix of first time visitors and repeat visitors.

I carried out the interviews in hotel lobbies. Thirty two interviews involving 56 people were completed (10 individuals, 21 couples and 1 group of four). The resulting data consisted of ninety five pages of transcript, not including notes. More details are given in Appendix B.

Interviews were carried out in the lobbies of four hotels. The Grand Hotel Excelsior is within walking distance of Valletta. Another hotel (Preluna Hotel) is on the Sliema seafront, a 20 to 25 minute bus ride from Valletta. A third hotel (Cavalieri Hotel) is at St. Julians, 30 to 35 minutes bus journey to Valletta. It is within walking distance of Paceville which is the focus of night time entertainment in Malta. The fourth hotel (Santana Hotel) is located in Qawra which is a seaside resort further away from Valletta (at least 45 minutes by bus). There is a concentration of hotels and catering establishments in Qawra.

Needless to say, permission of hotel managements was required to approach tourists for interviews within their establishment. Two other hotels were approached requesting permission to interview but no reply was received.

Only hotels whose lobbies were considered suitable for the carrying out of interviews were selected. Participant recruitment could be made easier if the hotel lobby was of the appropriate size and layout to allow for a discreet approach to hotel residents in the lobby. It had to be large enough to allow approach to hotel residents without being excessively intrusive and/or audible to other residents or to the hotel reception. Smaller lobbies tended to be empty except for the occasional one or two couples, making participant recruitment next to impossible. This approach effectively excluded hotels in Valletta because none of them have a sizeable lobby. In an attempt to broaden the selection, I approached a small hotel in Valletta to carry out some interviews, but using a different recruitment approach. The attempt was not successful because the assistance promised by the hotel management did not eventually materialize.

The approach also excluded hotels of 3* or lower because very rarely do these hotels have a reasonably sized lobby. It can be safely said, however, that the participants of the survey included a mix of social backgrounds. During the off-peak, 4* hotels offer heavily discounted prices, meaning that hotel residents will include persons of a lower economic and social background. In fact for some of the interviews, it was evident that the interviewees were of a lower social background.

To recruit participants for interviews, a direct approach was adopted. I approached potential participants in the hotel lobby explaining that I am doing research work on tourism and asking them whether they would be willing to participate. This was the approach that provided the best results in the pilot surveys. From experience gained in the pilot survey, it was established that the best time to approach tourists was between 7pm and 9pm. At this time, several hotel residents sit in the lobby to pass the time or to have a drink or a coffee before or after dinner.

Most of the interviewees were over sixty. Although the age of interviewees may seem to be high, it is not atypical given that, as indicated in s2.7, the average age of British tourists to Malta is on the high side at 57 years. In addition, there are factors because of which interviewees were more likely to be elderly. First, the interviews were carried out in the off peak a time when retired people are more likely to take overseas holidays compared to people in full-time occupation. Second, it is older people who tend to stay to relax in the lobby or to have a drink in the hotel. Younger people are more likely to go elsewhere in the evening to explore.

By recruiting only in hotel lobbies, visitors who stay in rented apartments or with friends were excluded from the survey. Similarly, by doing the interviewing during the off-peak only, tourists who are visiting in the summer are being excluded. In recruiting participants for the survey in the hotel lobbies, I developed a sense of which persons were likely to accept to be interviewed and which were likely to refuse. The couples most likely to accept being interviewed were those who were evidently in the lobby to while away the time (sipping a drink, not particularly engaged in conversation). If for example, a couple were engaged in intense conversation, they were most unlikely to accept to be interviewed. Alternatively, if there was a family with children, it was most unlikely that the parents would accept to be interviewed. Persons who were on their own were busy reading or browsing the internet making it difficult to approach them. Because of the effort involved in approaching people, it is inevitable that I was selective.

8.3.2 Factors impinging on success rate in recruitment

The success rate of participant recruitment varied between hotels, ranging from approximately one in three approached persons accepting to be interviewed (at the Hotel Cavalieri) to approximately two of every three persons approached agreeing to be interviewed (at the Grand Hotel Excelsior). The two main factors impinging on success rate were location of hotel and hotel's client base. In a hotel located close to an evening entertainment area, residents are less likely to stay in the hotel for a drink in the evening. They would go out to a nearby cafe or bar. This was the case at the Cavalieri Hotel which is located

close to St. Julians/Paceville entertainment area. On the other hand, in a hotel which is located away from an evening entertainment area, the success rate is likely to be higher because more hotel residents are likely to go to the hotel lobby for a drink and to relax. (Note that for most hotels the lobby doubles as a cafe.) For example, the Grand Hotel Excelsior in Floriana is not located close to a popular evening entertainment area. Location is also important in terms of proximity to Valletta. The closer the hotel is to Valletta, the more likely will its residents have visited it during their stay.

The client base of the selected hotel impinges on the success rate. Cavalieri Hotel's main source markets are continental European countries. Most of the persons approached to be interviewed, therefore, were from continental Europe and most had a poor command of the English language. This necessitated a significantly greater effort to recruit participants and also more effort for the interviews themselves.

The response rate was also affected by the weather. If the weather was very hot on the day of the interview (and the days before), people were less likely to visit and walk around Valletta. They are more likely to engage in activities which are indoor or in protected environments (like having a drink or sitting by the hotel pool or visiting a museum). For example, a couple who was approached could not be interviewed because of the excessively hot weather during the day. They did go to Valletta using the hop-on hop off bus. As soon as they disembarked, they realised it was too hot to walk around the streets and therefore they got back onto the bus. On two consecutive evenings, there were two instances where the persons approached could not be interviewed for this reason. The weather could also affect the participant recruitment success rate in that, if the weather is unpleasant in the evening, more hotel residents are likely to stay in the hotel and therefore it is more likely to identify persons willing to be interviewed. The success rate was also affected by the day of the week, when recruitment and interviewing was carried out. As the survey progressed, it became evident that the best success rate was being achieved on Mondays. The reason for this was that Tuesday is the day where there are most arrivals and departures and therefore the Monday would be the last day of their stay in Malta. There were instances, on Wednesday and Thursday when the tourists approached could not be interviewed because they had not yet

been to Valletta as they had arrived a day or two earlier. This trend was evident in all the four hotels where the interviews were carried out.

8.3.3 Interviewing

After the tourist couple (or individual) accepted to participate, the actual interview could commence. I asked whether they had taken photographs when visiting Valletta and if yes whether they had their photos with them. There were one or two instances where the interviewee said that they had taken photos but the camera was in their room. In that situation, I did not ask for them to fetch the camera because I did not want to risk the participants losing interest and changing their minds. Moreover, I felt I was already imposing enough on their time and generosity and I did not wish to overdo it.

Two methods for data collection were adopted in this research namely interviews carried out without photos and interviews making use of the interviewees' photos of Valletta. The difference was that, for the former, the participants' description revolved around their memory of the most notable or interesting parts of Valletta. For the latter, the interviewees' description revolved around the selected photos. The two approaches were different and yet had many similarities. It allowed for comparison, and therefore provided some useful insight on the two. One would have wished for a larger proportion of the interviews to be photo-based. From the pilot survey, however, it was evident that achieving this was going to be difficult. The reasons for this are considered in s8.2 above.

For interviews not involving photos, the question put to participants was as follows: *"Think of three moments during your visit to Valletta which best represent your experience of Valletta? What are they?"* This was used to get the conversation started. For photo-based interviews, the question was: *"Choose five photos with which you most associate your Valletta experience and/or which most reminds you of your time in Valletta."* As much as possible the photos were the subject of the interview in that the participant's description of the experience revolved around the selected images. Note that in both interview types, the number suggested, whether three or five, was not relevant

as in the actual interviewing there was no attempt to achieve a specific number. Needless to say for both interview types, I needed to make further questions throughout the interview to try to get the most from the interview in terms of the visitor's experience. These further questions were not predetermined but were formulated on the basis of what had been said during the interview. Even if I did put forward questions, I consider the method to be unstructured rather than semi-structured interviewing because the questions were not according to a predetermined framework.

A research similar to this in its focus on experience is that carried out by Loeffler (2004). Loeffler (2004:541) describes the interview phase as follows: *"During the interviews, the participants and researcher examined and discussed the photographs, which the participants took during their outdoor trips. The interviewer asked the participants questions about their outdoor experiences including trip memories, the meaning(s) they ascribed to their experience, and the value of the photographs in explaining their experience."* This suggests that there was no specific question prepared and that it was a matter of putting the correct question in accordance to how the interview was progressing.

I discussed the photos which the participant selected and ask questions like: What is it that you liked about this photo/view/street/whatever? Can you elaborate what you mean to say by? Does this photo/view/street/whatever remind you of anything in particular? For interviews where photos were used, I took notes and memorized the details of each photo. Because of my familiarity with Valletta it was not difficult to note the position where photo was taken and what was included in the image. A day or two later, I went on site to take the same photos. The resultant photos are NOT being used as part of the analysis. Some are included in Appendix E so that the reader can better understand the content and analysis of the interviews. Most of those who will read the research have no knowledge of Valletta and hence the inclusion of photos will be an aid for better understanding.

In the coding and analysis, no distinction was made between photo-based interviews and interviews without photos. The reason for this was that although

the approach to the interview was different, the differences in the output were not sufficient to justify separate analysis. In any case, the differences, if any, may well have been due to other factors like for example, being predominantly first time visitors in the case of photo-based interviews.

Out of six interviews with photos, four were carried out at the Excelsior. (Out of eight interviews carried out at the Excelsior, four were based on photos). Excelsior is the only hotel of the four which is a 5* hotel and also the only one which is within walking distance of Valletta. It is not possible to pinpoint the reasons for a high proportion of photo-based interviews but any one of the following factors could have played a part: proportionally more first time visitors at the Excelsior; possibly hotel residents have a greater interest in Valletta and hence their selection of a hotel within walking distance; possibly greater interest in Valletta would also signify increased likelihood of using a camera on their visit. There could be other factors.

In an evening of interviewing, I carried out one or two interviews, with a total time spent per evening being between forty five minutes and two hours. Interview outings were more tiring than expected and hence I made no attempt to do more than two interviews in one evening, nor did I spend more than two hours at one go. The interview itself was tiring because it required my full attention throughout, including during small talk. I needed to make the best use of the time spent with the interviewee, to ensure I got the most of the interview.

Approaching a total stranger was difficult, especially for one like myself who, by nature, is not an outgoing person. I developed a sense of who to approach in the public area of the hotel to increase the likelihood of a positive reply. On average, for every two approaches made, one resulted in a completed interview. In an evening of interviewing, one, sometimes two, interviews were completed. On one occasion, however, at the Hotel Cavalieri, no interviews were completed with five individuals or couples being approached. In each instance it was a refusal (two because they could not speak English, two had not visited Valletta and one because he was 'at work').

At the end of each interview, I informed them that I am giving them a small gift as token of appreciation. The gift was a small guide book either on Valletta or on Malta. In the pilot survey, the offer of a small gift was made during the recruitment process but it was immediately evident that the offer made no difference in the potential participant's decision to participate. In fact I could have very easily carried out the interviews without giving anything to the participants but I decided to offer them a gift any way. In most cases, the gift even if small was greatly appreciated. Most did not expect to be given anything and some accepted the gift only upon my insistence.

For a couple of interviews, the level of background noise within the hotel lobby was high and this made the interview difficult. In the Excelsior, at certain times there was live music in a nearby restaurant and this was clearly audible in the foyer. At the Santana, background noise from a large number of people in the lobby created some minor difficulties.

8.3.4 Observations on interviews

Each interview has its own dynamics mostly determined by the interviewees' personalities. Inevitably, as the interviewer I was constantly observing. These observations were subsequently recorded with the transcripts. The comments in this section are mostly based on these observations.

Most of the interviews were carried out with couples. The decision to interview couples as well as individuals was a pragmatic one. It would have been impractical to request partners to wait until the interview was concluded. In any case, many tourists do not experience the world through a solitary gaze but in the company of partners, friends and family members (Ek et al 2008:125). Conducting the interviews with couples was more true to the way in which the interviewees experienced Valletta. Interviewing couples was similar to the approach adopted by Hayllar and Griffin (2009) in their research on experience of place.

Dynamics between couples: Most of the interviews were with couples. Inevitably, the interviewer could observe the dynamics between the two in their replies to questions. In most cases, the replies of one were supported and developed by the other indicating full, or almost full, agreement between the two. Very rarely was there a difference in opinion, and where there was, this was on minor matters and was expressed in a constructive manner. For example, in Interview 21 Michael disliked excessive crowds, whereas this was less of a concern for Elisabeth. In interview 13, the dynamics between the couple, Sean and Barbara was interesting. They seemed to agree on all things and often they supported each other in the views expressed. Having said that, Sean seemed to be the dominant character of the two; and Barbara was very much a follower. In general, and also taking into account interviews with individuals, no notable difference could be observed in the replies, and hence in the tourism experience, between male and female interviewees. The only exception to this refers to shopping with female respondents demonstrating more interest in shops and the open air market.

Small talk and interviewee questions during interviews: In some instances, interviewees engaged in small talk during the interview. A suitable balance needed to be struck. On the one hand I could not allow the interview to go off at a tangent; on the other hand, I needed to be polite and allow for some lighter conversation. For some interviewees, the interview was a good opportunity to ask and clarify questions about what they had seen. They asked me direct questions about something relating to Valletta. In most instances I complied with their request for information as I considered giving them useful information as a way of thanking them for their trouble. I did this mostly at the end of the interview primarily to avoid providing information which could influence their subsequent answers.

Use of English: Tourists who visit Valletta are of different nationalities. As indicated in Section 2.7, almost forty per cent of tourists to Malta are British. The nature of the research, with descriptions and meanings being explained, required participants who had a good command of the English language. For this reason, the initial intention was to limit research to participants whose native language was English or who were very fluent in English. As it turned out, I did attempt four interviews with persons who were not fluent in English.

In interview 02, Tanya and Bruno (from Switzerland) had difficulty to express themselves in English. For some of their comments, the interviewer had to restate what was said to ensure that the comments were being properly understood. This was also useful as it gave the interviewees further opportunity to elaborate what they had said. This was also the reason why the interview took more time (32.2 minutes compared with an average for the 32 interviews of 17.5 minutes.). In restating comments, I took great care to avoid making comments that were leading and that would influence the interviewees in their subsequent replies. There were other interviews which were even more difficult and laborious because of poor English, namely Interview 16 with Pavlo (from Germany), Interview 18 with Maryline (from France) and Interview 20 with Peter (from Germany). These turned out shorter interviews with very limited content because of the excessive effort that was required by both interviewer and interviewees. Where interviewees had a poor comment of English, the transcripts are not necessarily the precise words as used by the interviewees because this would have made it difficult to read and eventually analyse. The transcript however is precise in that it communicates the meaning of what was said by the respondents. This was the case in Interview 02 with Tanya and Bruno, Interview 16 with Pavlo (from Germany), Interview 18 with Maryline and Interview 20 with Peter (from Germany). For Interviews 18 and 20, the interviewees refused to be recorded because of their poor English. In spite of the lack of recording, notes taken were a precise record of what was said. (It so happened that my wife Joanne was with me on those evenings and she helped me out by taking notes while I conducted the interview.)

Thoughtful replies: In two of the interviews (Sean in Interview 13 and Colin in interview 03) the interviewees gave very careful thought to some of their replies to the extent that they were thinking aloud. This made them tiring to carry out and also eventually to transcribe. On the other hand, the 'thinking aloud' approach may have provided some insights which more straightforward answers might not have provided.

Length of interview: At just over 61 minutes, Interview 07 was by far the longest interview. John and Jill tended to talk and elaborate a point and in some instances switch to other unrelated subjects. They also took the opportunity to mention a long list of things which could be improved in Valletta.

They were familiar with Valletta and hence were able to mention quite a few things. The length of the interview and the tendency for small talk made the interview very tiring.

Effect of lapse of time on interview: In interview 22, the interviewees visited Valletta years earlier and not on this current visit. In a sense the interview was an experiment in that it sought to establish the extent to which the interviewees remembered their experience of Valletta. Although they recalled a lot of Valletta, a lot of the detail of the experience was lost. The interview was a struggle, with various probing questions meeting with short answers. The interviewee remembered the views, the gardens, the market and the hilly streets but they were unable to recall the feelings of their experience. The same was noted, but to a lesser extent, in interview 32 with Julia having last visited Valletta a few months earlier on a previous visit to Malta. Even if it was just a few months, the lapse of time came through in the interview as the memories of the visit were less sharp and well-defined. These two interviews demonstrate that for qualitative interviewing it is essential to have the interview as soon as possible after the experience under study. Anthony of Interview 10 visited Valletta frequently over many years and the interview was about his experience of Valletta over many visits. The interviewee was talking mostly about his past experiences of Valletta of many years ago. In part this was because in his more recent visits he was less able and therefore more restricted in his movements. Here again the recounting of experiences which happened many years ago was lacking in emotion, making the interview mostly descriptive.

8.4 Transcription

All interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. To improve on quality of transcript a three stage approach was adopted. A first draft of transcript was prepared based on a first hearing of recording. The recording was then heard a second time, to fill any parts which were not clearly understandable and also to improve some sections and achieve greater precision. During the analysis process, I heard the recording a third time to

enable me to be more familiar with the data. At this stage, there were further instances where some minor refinements to the transcripts were required.

8.5 Coding and analysis

Liamputtong (2005:259) recommends that an initial step in the analysis of qualitative data is the identification of the units of analysis and these include meanings, practices, encounters, narrative structures, organisations or lifestyles as potential units of analysis. I would argue that one should adopt a very flexible approach in determining the unit of analysis. In this research, for example, the unit of analysis could be anything which impinges on the experience of the visitor and therefore it could include places, streets, buildings, stories linked to a site, activities, events, interactions with other people, views, history, memory, family relationships, personal background and so on. Liamputtong (2005:266) refers to 'concepts' as the basic units of analysis. He describes analysis as a process by which concepts are grouped to form 'abstract categories'. Relationships between categories are then identified to develop 'formal theory'.

Gibbs (2007: 40) recommends the researcher writes notes about each code. The purpose is to note the nature of the code and the thinking behind it and to explain how the code would be applied. This will enable the researcher to apply the code in a consistent way. Flexibility is required in coding so that adjustments can be made to reflect emerging understanding and facilitate further analysis (Bazeley, 2013:161). Coding enables the researcher to methodically retrieve sections of the text that are thematically related (Gibbs, 2007: 48). Thus the researcher can collect all the text coded in the same way, read through it and derive a better understanding of what has been said and of the code. The researcher can also analyse how a thematic idea can vary depending on the context and on external factors. In phenomenological analysis a term used instead of codes is 'themes'. *"This captures something of the spirit of what is involved in linking sections of the text with thematic ideas that reveal the person's experience of the world."* (Gibbs, 2007: 39).

In the analysis of data, Gibbs (2007: 46) recommends that as far as possible, one should pull out from data what is happening and not impose an interpretation based on pre-existing theory. In the context of interpretative phenomenological analysis, Biggerstaff (2008:217) notes that the initial stages would involve the making of notes on any thoughts, observations, and reflections that occur while reading the transcript. In doing so, Biggerstaff advises for the suspension of presuppositions and judgments by the researcher to allow for focus on what is presented in the transcript.

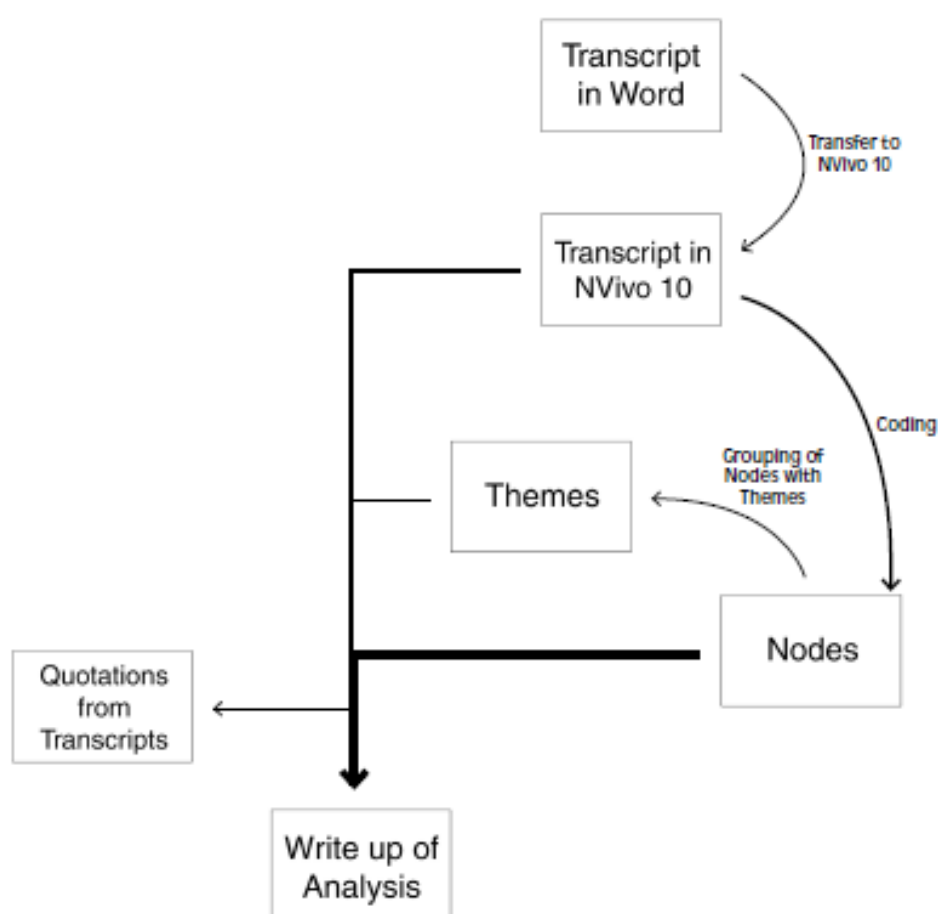
Robson (2011: 475) presents two alternative approaches. The first is in line with Gibbs' and Biggerstaff's suggested approach and the justification is that preconceptions could bias the analysis towards some aspects of the data, resulting in other potentially important themes being ignored. An alternative view offered by Robson is that the analysis would be based on predetermined codes or themes, perhaps arising from the reading of the research literature and/or the research questions. Similarly, Yin (2009:130) lists '*relying on theoretical propositions*' as one of the possible strategies that can be adopted. Possibly a third more sophisticated approach to qualitative research is offered by Liamputtong, (2005:266) who considers theory building as '*an-ongoing dialogue between pre-existing theory and new insights generated as a consequence of empirical observations.*' This involves the explicit formulation of theory at the start of the research, that is then reformulated during the fieldwork, analysing the implications of the data concurrently with the fieldwork phase.

This research adopts the first approach, namely without preconceptions or reference to predetermined models as follows: On the basis of a literature review, a theoretical proposition is developed based on an urban design model having three main elements namely form, activity and meaning. This theoretical proposition shaped my approach to the data collection in that it was considered that these elements would best be assessed with a phenomenological approach. In the analysis of the data I put the theoretical proposition aside. The analysis, including the initial coding, does not refer to any pre-determined framework. It works inductively to identify emergent patterns from the data.

The approach to coding and analysis adopted in this research is based on that advocated by Robson (2011:476). It involves four phases as follows: The first phase was familiarisation with the data involving reading and re-reading the transcripts whereas the second stage involved generation of initial codes. In the third phase, I identified themes whereby codes were grouped according to themes. This also involved reviewing initial codes. The fourth phase was the construction of thematic networks or thematic 'map' of the analysis.

The interviews generated a substantial number of codes and numerous potential thematic networks were explored. A qualitative software namely Nvivo10 was used to assist the process and ensure a thorough examination of the data.

Figure2 Schematic representation of coding and analysis process



According to Bazeley (2013:70) a code is “*an abstract representation of an object or phenomenon.*” In the context of this research, a code can be considered to be a thought, a reflection or a piece of information relating to the interviewee’s experience of Valletta. The mechanics of coding involved (i) highlighting a section of text from an interview transcript (ii) selecting the node from the available list which best reflected the thought being communicated (iii) linking the selected text with the node. If no node was available from the list which fits the thought required, a new node was created and added to the list. There is an element of subjectivity in the approach to coding. An interview can simply make reference to, for example, balconies, as one of a number of noted features or include a statement as to how interesting and visually appealing these are. Should both comments be coded or should only the latter be coded?

As far as was practicable, I tried to be consistent in the approach to coding. The approach was to code all instances where a particular element is mentioned. To check on consistency, a comparison was made between the first ten interviews and the last ten interviews – the comparison being based on the number of nodes per minute of interview. It transpired that the nodes per minute for the first ten interviews were only slightly lower than that for the last ten interviews. This suggests that the coding was fairly consistent.

Data analysis requires nodes to be grouped together under main headings or generic themes. For some nodes the categorization is fairly straightforward (for example it is evident that ‘landmark’ should be categorised under physical features). In some instances however, a node could be categorised in any one of three or four themes. For example, open air market was first considered from the aspect of shopping and was therefore categorised under ‘activities’. On the other hand, the open air market could be categorised under ‘physical features’ because it is a feature forming part of the Valletta streetscape. It could also be put under ‘locations’ in that it occupies a specific urban space in Valletta. Yet again, some of the comments on the market referred to the buzz of people which the market creates and hence it could also be categorised under ‘people’. Eventually the decision was to classify under shopping and hence ‘activities’ because that is where the emphasis is from the comments

made. The others aspects of the node 'open air market' were brought out in the writing up of the analysis.

Upon completion of the coding process, the analysis began. Notes with observations were drafted for each theme or group of nodes. This was a mechanistic process with minimal interpretative input to ensure that the process is carried in a comprehensive manner. At this stage, I considered all the nodes, knowing that some processed nodes may not eventually feature in the final text because of their marginal importance. Even if the resultant time and effort involved is greater, this approach is considered safer than deciding a priori which nodes will not be included in the final text. Another consideration at this stage is that no distinction is made between descriptive information, information on the tourist's perception and information on the tourist experience. The reason for this is that it would be difficult to make the distinction concurrent with the recording of observations on different nodes.

The next stage of the analysis involved going into greater depth in that the observations made on selected nodes were interpreted to extract elements of the tourist experience. It was at this stage that the actual drafting of the relevant chapters was carried out. When drafting, I had on NVivo10 the transcripts, the nodes and the themes, and also notes with observations. The notes enabled me to better organise my thoughts and derive suitable interpretations of the data. Concurrent with the drafting of text, I derived the relevant quotations for inclusion in Appendix A. The use of reference numbering, allowed for the text to refer to quotations where necessary.

NVivo does not develop the theory. As noted by Tung and Ritchie (2011:1377), it is a tool that reduces administrative time spent on physically organizing data. It enabled me to focus my attention on data analysis and theory development. A further advantage of using a qualitative analysis software (namely Nvivo10) is that I could work back and trace the steps taken for any observation made in the analysis. For example, if I wanted to check a statement made in the text, I could easily identify the theme and/or nodes from which it was derived and, if need be, refer back to the relevant parts of the transcripts. Another example; if I wanted to check on a quote I could refer back to the transcript held in the software and from there identify the nodes derived from that quote. Working

back to recheck source can be done in seconds thus allowing me to carry out as many checks as required. In writing up the analysis, I frequently needed to retrace the thinking process and also refer back to the data source. In analysing one set of data, I needed to refer to the analysis of other sections of the data, to ensure compatibility between different sections of the analysis. This also allowed for a more comprehensive view of the data. For example, in writing up the section on 13.4.3, 'The sea and Valletta's adjoining harbours', I reviewed the relevant nodes (namely 'harbour cruise, ferry across harbour' and 'views of Valletta, inward') but I also had to review other nodes in which the 'sea' element was involved, even if they had already been reviewed. In reviewing the other nodes, I also had to refer to the transcripts and to the quotes in Appendix A. The ease with which I could work back was essential. It reduced time lost in searches and allowed me to focus on what really mattered – the thinking and the analysis.

I limited use of the software to what I considered essential and for processes that would have been too difficult and time consuming to do with the use of other software. For example, carrying out searches in transcripts was easier to do using normal word-processing software, even if NVivo10 provides the search facility.

For each interview, the number of nodes per minute of interview was estimated. Taken overall, the average number is indicative of the level of detail of analysis of the interviews. Most interviews entail between 1.3 and 2 nodes per minutes. There are two interviews, however, which are very high at 3.25 and 3.98 nodes per minute. The variation from one interview to another is largely due to the amount of small talk in which the interviewee wished to engage. Clearly the interviewer tried to avoid entering into small talk but there is a limit how much this can be avoided without being rude. Another factor causing variation is the extent to which the interviewee explained and elaborated on a point made. Elaboration would not be small talk per se. On the contrary, it is useful for purposes of analysis. However, the elaboration of a point would not necessarily translate into a node. Variations may also arise from the point at which the recording of the interview starts and end. For example in some instances, the recording includes the interviewer's initial questions, in others it does not.

8.6 Conclusion

In describing the research process, I tried to provide significant detail for two reasons. First, for the reader to get a feel as to what each stage of the research process involved. Second, for record purposes and to provide some insights and facilitate the planning of future similar research.

The pilot survey in this research confirmed the usefulness of having a pilot survey in qualitative research work. It allows the researcher to test methods and approaches thus allowing for improvements in the actual data collection phase.

The recruitment of participants required time, effort and perseverance. In Section 8.3, I explain how this was carried out and also discuss implications of the approach I adopted. On most days, it was a fairly straightforward process, even if somewhat tiring as the recruitment was combined with the interviewing. There were days however, where recruitment proved to be problematic primarily because those approached refused to be interviewed. Once an individual or couple was recruited, the interview itself was easier, even if I had to remain totally focused to ensure I get the most possible out of the interview. On the one hand, I had to get people talking about their experience. On the other hand I had to be careful not to make leading questions or in any way suggest answers. To retain the participant's interest in the interview, my body language had to show I was actively listening and that I was interested in what they were saying. Each interview had its own dynamics and being the interviewer, I was constantly observing. My observations are noted in section 8.3.4. The observation most worthy of note refers to the use of English. On the one hand, it is advisable to ensure that the people recruited are fluent in English. On the other hand, interviews with people who were not fluent in English were still useful to this research.

In section 8.5, I describe the process of coding and analysis. Prior to embarking on the analysis I reviewed relevant literature on the subject and a synopsis of this is included in this chapter. I go into some detail on the research analysis to give some idea of what it entailed. Qualitative research

software was very useful in handling the data and to derive linkages between different parts of the data.

CHAPTER 9

REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter discusses matters related to the method used in this research. Section 9.2 considers the extent to which the results of this research can be generalised to the experience of tourists of other historic areas. Some of the interviews were carried out using photos taken by the interviewee. The usefulness or otherwise of this approach is discussed in Section 9.3. It was observed that interviewees were generally very positive about their Valletta experience. Section 9.5 considers whether this was a true reflection of their experience or whether there was some factor that tended to make replies more positive. Finally Section 9.6 considers my own position as a researcher in relation to the subject being researched.

9.1 Is there a ‘typical Valletta tourist’?

Random sampling offers the best chance of minimising selection effects because, theoretically, each person in the population has a chance of being chosen for participation.⁴ Random samples involve higher costs and the logistics may be difficult to handle. For this research, resources were very limited and therefore random sampling was not an option. On the other hand, the approach adopted for selecting participants sought to be as random as possible, within resource and other constraints.

Qualitative research does not seek to achieve representative samples in a statistical sense. It could be argued, however, that it seeks to minimise atypical selection but this then raises the question ‘what is the typical Valletta tourist?’ Pearce (2005:5) argues that tourists are not all alike. They are very diverse in age, motivation, level of affluence and preferred activities. The range of motivations are considered and discussed in Section 3.3.3. In studying tourist

⁴ In this context, population refers to tourists who visit Valletta.

behaviour, Pearce advocates avoidance of the ‘the sin of homogenisation’, of treating all travellers as the same. It is difficult to talk about the ‘typical’ tourist. The age of visitors to Malta is distributed across all age groups, even if the age bracket that is most represented is 55 to 64 years (25%). (This and other data in this paragraph are sourced from The Tourism Policy for the Maltese Islands for 2012 to 2016, Ministry for Tourism, 2012). As for nationalities, the UK is Malta’s main source market (with 39%) but other countries across Europe are also well represented. Diverse ages and nationalities suggest that tourists to Malta are characterised by a wide range of cultural backgrounds and this makes problematic any attempt to describe the ‘typical’ tourist. The discussion of the ‘typical’ tourist becomes more difficult when one considers the motivation for the visit to Valletta. Whereas 39 per cent gave history and culture as the reason for their visit to Malta, as many as 90 per cent of tourists to Malta visit Valletta. This suggests that a significant proportion of those who visit Valletta have multiple motives for the visit and that a cultural motive was often not the main one.

Tourists listed novelty of the destination (47%) and agreeable climate (57%) as reasons for their visit to Malta. The former suggests that many tourists visit Valletta because it is new to them, whereas the latter suggests that many visit Valletta not for the City itself, but for the context it offers to enjoy the pleasant weather and also the surroundings. The reliance of Maltese tourism on niche markets is another factor that makes the definition of typicality problematic. In 2009, an estimated 4% of Malta tourists came for diving and a further 5% came for English language learning. The discussion above highlights the difficulty to define ‘typical Valletta tourist’ and this is a consideration to be borne in mind in the discussion in the next section on the generalisability of the research results.

9.2 Reconciling depth of knowledge with generalisability

This research adopts a phenomenological approach in that there is a “*systematic attempt to uncover and describe ... the internal meaning structures of lived experience*” (Van Manen, 1997:9); the lived experience being the tourist experience of a historic area. Section 7.2 notes that phenomenological research adopts a narrative style and that it achieves an in-depth understanding. Qualitative research will sacrifice generalisability while providing for greater

depth of knowledge about a phenomenon (Smaldone et al 2005; Van Manen, 1997).

This research seeks depth of knowledge in line with phenomenological research approach, with the detailed knowledge being presented in Chapters 11 to 15. This research also seeks generalisability with the development of the tourist interaction model discussed and explained in Chapter 16. It may appear to be contradictory to achieve both detail knowledge and generalisability. While acknowledging limitations in generalisability, I consider the depth of knowledge achieved as supporting, rather than contradicting, generalisability as follows: The detailed knowledge of chapters 11 to 15 provides a better understanding of reality if considered in the overriding framework provided by the tourist interaction model. Concurrently, the model given in Chapter 16 is more credible and more easily understood if read with the detail knowledge provided in the preceding chapters. I would argue that detailed knowledge and generalisability are mutually dependent.

9.3 Use of photos for research method

In Section 8.3.3, it was explained that two methods for data collection were adopted for this research, namely interviews carried out without photos and interviews making use of the interviewees' photos of Valletta. The latter can be described as participant-driven photo-elicitation (PDPE), a method that is discussed and explained in Section 6.3.

This section considers the outcome of the photo-based interviews and their usefulness for this research process. The use of photos was helpful and useful in some interviews. In Interview 15, Donny (Q15.8) referred to a wall full of graffiti.^{5 6} He was very interested in the graffiti and what they were communicating, making the graffiti an integral part of his Valletta experience. Without the use of photo elicitation, it may be that the interviewee would not have

^{5 6} Appendix E photos Oth21-int 15-05a, Oth22-int15-05b and Oth23-int15-05c.

⁶ As explained in section 8.3.2, for photo based interviews, I took notes and memorized the details of each photo. Soon after, I went on site to take the same photos from the same positions and with the same perspectives. Their inclusion in the thesis, in Appendix E, is not for analysis but to aid the reader better understand the context.

referred to the graffiti. Seeing the photos of the graffiti, I could better understand what Donny was talking about. Similarly in Interview 32, the use of photos brought out a comment (about a franchise shop) from Julia that would not have otherwise been made and in this respect the method was useful to bring out the respondent's thoughts on one particular aspect of her experience. The use of photos was very useful in Interview 8 primarily because Mieke and Gert's experience of Valletta revolved around the former's interest in forms and in the visual. Discussing her photos enabled Mieke, and also Gert, to better explain their Valletta experience. For example, they emphasised how impressive the fortifications are. By showing me photo Oth 09-int 08-01, I could better understand their perception.

In other interviews, the use of photos was less successful. For Interview 01, the use of photos did not work well. The interviewees spent a lot of time to select photos and eventually only selected two or three, one of which was of the hotel itself. Interview 32 started with the use of photos. As the interview progressed however, it became evident that reference to the photos was becoming more of a hindrance than a help so I decided to switch the interview to one without photos. The interviewee had no difficulty in talking about her experience of Valletta without having to refer to photos.

Eventually, in the survey proper, just six out of the thirty two interviews carried out were based on the photos taken by the participants. In hindsight, this low proportion can be explained primarily because of two factors. First, persons who had previously visited Valletta tend not to take their camera on their second or third visit. In fact, all six interviews based on photos were first-time visitors to Malta. Second, older people, say over sixty, are less likely to use their camera when they go walking around a historic area.

As indicated in Section 8.2, based on the outcome of the pilot survey, I decided to be flexible in that both non-photo interviews and photo-based interviews would be used as a method. One could argue that it would have been possible to have all the interviews without the use of photos and the eventual outcome might not have been significantly different. On the other hand, being flexible allowed the use of photos for some interviews. This provided some benefits for some interviews whereby the experience was more effectively communicated to me.

9.4 Single vs. two stage approach to recruitment of participants

This research relied on an approach to tourists that is single stage i.e. the interview is carried out immediately upon the first approach, if the tourist accepts to be interviewed. In Sections 8.3.1 and 8.3.3 a number of limitations were identified in the recruitment method. Some of the limitations could be reduced by significantly increasing the number of tourists approached to be interviewed to achieve a higher number of interviews. For example, if a better mix of ages is sought there would need to be more careful targeting of the tourists who are approached so as to achieve a more balanced age distribution. This would require significantly more time and resources.

Other limitations, however, cannot be addressed as long as a single-stage approach is adopted. For example, if a researcher wishes to carry out solely interviews based on the participant's photos, this would not be possible with a single-stage approach. For some limitations to be addressed, a two-stage approach would have to be adopted; the first stage to recruit participants, the second stage for the actual interview. First contact would be made with potential participants before they arrive to Malta or upon arrival at the airport or the hotel. Upon first contact, the process (i.e. interviewing based on photos taken by the tourist) would need to be explained. A strong incentive would need to be offered to the potential participant to be convinced to accept to move on to the second stage and be interviewed using photos. The disadvantage of a two-stage approach is that it is more time-consuming for recruitment and interview. It would require significantly more resources and it was for this reason that a single-stage approach was used for this research.

9.5 Positivity of interview replies

Most of the interviewees were positive in their replies in that there were relatively few instances where the interviewees were critical of their Valletta experience. Moreover, even where interviewees identified something negative about Valletta, in most instances they tried to give a justification for it. Details of these are given in Section 13.7. It could be that the positivity was to 'please' me, the interviewer, by giving the answers they think are expected. In this discussion on

positivity, it is useful to consider an observation made by Vitterso et al (2000:433) with reference to the measurement of satisfaction levels and evaluation of tourism experiences. They note that people may use cognitive dissonance strategies to reduce negative inconsistency between expectations and outcome. The theory of cognitive dissonance claims that two inconsistent cognitions will produce discomfort, and motivate the individual to bring the cognitions into harmony. Having used a considerable amount of time and money to visit an attraction, it might for example be difficult for some persons to admit that the visit was a failure (Vitterso et al, 2000:433). Similarly, Pearce (2005:166) refers to a positivity bias in tourist satisfaction studies with most tourists giving very positive appraisals for a great variety of products and services. He explains this as customers not wanting to admit that they have selected badly. It would reflect poorly on personal credibility to be very dissatisfied with a situation that one has willingly entered and often paid handsomely to experience. Pearce's observation refers to quantitative research. Although it may also be applicable to qualitative research, in the case of the latter there is the possibility for the interviewer to observe and note whether there is an element of bias in the interviewee's responses.

There is no indication in any interview that there was significant bias, so it is reasonable to assume the general positivity and feedback on Valletta is a true reflection of the interviewees' thoughts and feelings. In interview 13, Sean and Barbara were exceedingly positive in their replies. It may be that they over-emphasised their like of Valletta but, if this was the case, it is safe to say that they did enjoy Valletta every time they visited, even if not to the extent that they claim. Throughout the interview, Sean made several positive comments mostly about Maltese people. These were emphasised possibly because Sean was trying to prove a point to Barbara. Having said that, for research purposes it is considered safer to take this interview, and all interviews, at face value and interpret what was said and not the how or the why it was said.

Interview 04 was the sole exception to the overall positivity of interviews. Ian and Christine were very forthcoming about shortcomings in Valletta and suggestions as to what needed to be improved. There is no evident reason why this is the case in this interview, other than the interviewees own tendency to be critical. In

spite of the shortcomings, the respondents felt they had a great holiday and intend returning.

9.6 Considerations on reflexivity

In section 7.1, a reflexive approach was advocated whereby, through a process of critical self-reflection the potential impact of my background and values on the research process is assessed (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004; Jennings, 2005). I have a keen interest in Valletta and have been an active member of a lobby group, Valletta Alive Foundation. The Foundation brings together diverse interests in Valletta to discuss issues and lobby the authorities to take action. I am also an architect and urban planner. In my architecture training and subsequently as an architect, I had particular interest in urban spaces. For many years I was consultant to Malta Tourism Authority on tourism product development. This got me involved in numerous projects and initiatives, some of them involving enhancement of urban spaces, others entailed the rehabilitation and the sustainable reuse of historic buildings. In recent years I have been lecturing tourism at the University of Malta. I often discuss urban space, regeneration and Valletta in my lectures.

As outlined in the first chapters, the main aim of the research is to investigate those features and aspects of urban spaces within historic cores that are most influential to the experience of the visitor and, in so doing, determine those characteristics or features that make urban spaces in historic areas successful. The research objective neatly brings together my various interests namely urban spaces, tourism and Valletta. In hindsight, I consider my background as an advantage rather than a hindrance to my research for two reasons. First, keen interest in the subject gave that extra energy to overcome those moments during the research where the going gets more difficult and where perseverance is needed. Second, during the interviewing there were instances when my in-depth knowledge of Valletta enabled me to understand to what the interviewees were referring.

On the other hand, I do understand that my interest in Valletta and my professional background may influence the outcome of the research. An

appreciation of the risk and self-awareness enabled me to minimise any potential impact to what I believe to be negligible or nil. To achieve this I set myself some informal guidelines applicable in particular to the interviewing and the analysis. I kept reminding myself not to promote my ideas or values, nor to focus on an urban space or project in which I have a particular interest. I reminded myself not to use the research to achieve a particular objective or use the research to seek the betterment of Valletta. I consider my own thoughts and ideas on a site, urban space, building or even Valletta to be irrelevant to the research. What matters to the research is the data that emerges from the interviews. In my view I adhered to these informal guidelines throughout the research process.

9.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, a number of observations are made in relation to the research method. Convenience sampling was the method used to select participants for the survey. The approach is sufficient for qualitative research even if it results in reduced randomness in participant selection. In Section 9.1, I acknowledge limitations in generalizability. I argue however that the detailed knowledge resulting from the interviewing process provides the basis to generalize and the development of the tourist interaction model. In this research, two methods for data collection were adopted, namely interviews carried out without photos and interviews making use of the interviewees' photos of Valletta. These are discussed in Section 9.3. The research established that the use of photos was useful to varying degrees in two or three interviews. A flexible approach was best as it allowed for maximising the advantages of both non-photo and photo-based interviewing. Even if the number of photo-based interviews was limited, these were useful although not essential. For future similar research, particularly if photo-elicitation is to be used, Section 9.3 recommends that a two-stage process is adopted with the participant recruitment being the first stage and the actual interview being the second. This would be subject to the availability of adequate resources.

First time visitors are more likely to be emotionally engaged in their tourism experience. This is discussed in Section 9.2. In Section 9.5, I note that most of the interviewees were very positive about their experience of Valletta. Although

there may be factors that induce increased positivity, I argue that there was no evidence to suggest that the interviews were not a true reflection of the interviewees' experience. In Section 9.6, I give some background information on my professional career and interests that are relevant to this research. I do this in accordance to the reflexive approach advocated in some literature. While acknowledging the risks that my familiarity with the subject may have, I took measures to ensure that the impact of my background on the research outcomes are negligible or nil.

CHAPTER 10

LOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

10.1 Introduction to Chapters 10 to 15

This section is an introduction to the second part of the thesis that gives a detailed account of the observations resulting from the analysis of the data. This consists of Chapters 10 to Chapter 15. The first of this set of chapters (Chapter 10) is mostly descriptive and lists the locations in Valletta that were visited by the interviewees and also the activities in which they were engaged.

The urban design model discussed in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 explains how the coming together of different elements namely meaning, activity and form in a space will result in the creation of a sense of place. In the context of the tourism experience, the model can be adapted to focus less on the intrinsic qualities of the space and more on the interaction of the tourist with different elements within that space. This is in line with model as proposed by Loeffler (2004:538, 543, 551, 554) who sums up the outdoor experience into the interactions with self, interactions with others and interactions with the environment. The tourists' interactions as resulting from the analysis of the research data are described and discussed in Chapters 11, 12 and 13. Chapter 11 considers the interaction of the tourist with self. This also incorporates the 'interaction' of the tourist with the meaning associated with place. Chapter 12 considers different ways how the tourist interaction with people impinges on the experience. Chapter 13 discusses and elaborates on those instances which emerge from the data where survey participants interact with the surroundings. This chapter also considers the more intangible aspects of the sensory experience of space, as experienced by the survey participants, namely 'beauty' and 'character.' These three chapters consider separately the interactions with the three different elements, even if in many instances interactions with different elements overlap onto each other. It is contended that places that provide opportunities for the tourist to interact with all three are

the most enjoyable. Chapter 14 considers instances where the tourist's experience involves interacting with all three elements of space and uses two locations namely Pjazza San Gorg and Upper Barrakka Gardens for illustration. The analysis suggests that these two spaces are the most popular because they provide opportunities for tourists to interact with two or even three elements of space.

Chapter 15 discusses aspects relating to use of information by tourists. This aspect of the tourist experience requires separate consideration because it does not fit in with any one of the three elements (self/meaning, others, environment) with which the tourist interacts.

With reference to this chapter (Chapter 10), its purpose is to provide background information for the subsequent chapters to be better understood. It includes two types of information; that relating to locations which were visited by the interviewees and that relating to the activities in which the interviewees engaged. The former is important for the overall analysis as it provides the context in which the interviewee's tourist experiences described in later chapters took place. The latter is useful as it provides a context that enables a better understanding of the experience.

(Note that in this chapter, the text includes an indicative number of the times a site or area was mentioned in interviews. This gives an indication of the popularity of that site or area with tourists. Note also that references to the place names include a three-letter acronym. These refer to the map in this chapter and also to the photos in Appendix E.)

10.2 Locations in Valletta

Many tourists enter Valletta from City Gate (VCG) because the main bus terminus is just outside the Gate. At the time of the interviews, the City Gate project was underway.⁷ City Gate (including the gate itself, the opera house

⁷ The project included City Gate itself, a new parliament building (on what was formerly referred to as Freedom square), the conversion of the old opera house ruins into an open air performance space and transforming part of the ditch below City Gate into a garden. Part of the site was boarded up and works were ongoing on the new

and project building works) was referred to in 9 interviews with 11 distinct references. Interestingly there were no references to the parliament building (then still under construction) or to the ditch below City Gate.

Being the main entrance to the City, City Gate is where most visitors will get their first impressions of Valletta. The first time Susan entered through City Gate, she was struck by the number of people. She also noted the historic buildings and the similarities of the entrance area to her home city Chester (Q14.1). Peter stated that he liked the Gate as it was previously (Q20.6). The symbolic meaning of the gate was noted by two of the interviewees (Q21.10, Q29.5), as is noted in section 11.4.3. The presence of a sizeable construction site at the entrance to the City inevitably received negative comments (Q06.10, interview 24), even if the construction site was appropriately closed off to have the least possible impact on the adjoining pedestrian areas. Interviewees were curious as to what the eventual finished buildings will look like (Q26.7, Q29.5), with Petra speculating that it will be very beautiful when finished (Q06.10). Several were confused as to what the project was and said they wished for more information on boards next to the construction site (Q29.5, interviews 07, 09, 19). Jill suggested that the old opera house ruins should be retained (similar to those of Coventry Cathedral) as a reminder to future generations of the stupidity of war (Q07.11).

Outside City Gate, there is the Tritons Fountain (TRF). This is a sizeable central feature on a large roundabout that operates as a bus terminus. The movement of buses around it does not allow for its appreciation. It was mentioned in four interviews (including in Q29.5) primarily in connection with the bus terminus.

Republic Street (RST) starts from City Gate and extends all the way down to Fort St. Elmo (FSE) at the tip of Valletta. In Valletta's street layout, it is the spine and it is often referred to as reference when giving directions to other locations in Valletta. Republic Street was referred to by several interviewees (in 8 interviews with 12 distinct references). It was mentioned either as a pedestrian street (Q18.2); or with reference to shopping (Q17.8); or because

parliament building and on the old opera house site. City Gate was demolished and a gap in the bastions left in its stead.

of the presence of large numbers of people of diverse nationalities (primarily during the mornings) (Q17.8 and Q19.2); or as part of the itinerary for visiting Valletta (Q11.9). The combination of modern with history and culture along Republic Street was something that Maryline liked (Q18.4). Thomas describes Republic Street as 'the main tourist area' that has been 'spruced' up for the tourist. He notes how this contrasts with the narrower side streets. He is more interested in the side streets because of the architecture that is a closer reflection of local identity (Q27.4). Mieke likes Republic Street because of the large number of people. On the other hand, she is put off by the shops because she has little or no interest in shopping (Q08.14).

From the survey data it seems that Pjazza San Gorg (PSG, St. Georges Square) is a popular place with tourists. The square was refurbished and pedestrianised relatively recently in 2011. It is located along Republic Street. From City Gate to Pjazza San Gorg, Republic Street is fairly level and is mostly characterised by shops. Beyond Pjazza San Gorg, Republic Street is predominantly residential and slopes down towards Fort St. Elmo at the tip of the Valletta peninsula. The Grandmasters Palace dominates one side of Pjazza San Gorg, with another historically important building, the Main Guard being on the other side of the square. The Armoury, that got a mention in five interviews, is within the Grandmasters Palace (GMP) and is accessible off Pjazza San Gorg. It includes a vast collection of guns and weapons (Q06.7) dating back to the Knights of St. John's (i.e. pre-1800).

Pjazza Regina (PRG) is located along Republic Street and adjoins Pjazza San Gorg. It has a square shape and is surrounded by buildings on all four sides. The square is dominated by the façade of the Biblioteca (BBT) built in the late 1700s by the Knights. Another side of the square is the side elevation of the Grandmasters Palace. Most of the square is taken up by tables and chairs of catering establishments operating from adjoining buildings. Pjazza Regina, and the Biblioteca, were mentioned several times in the interviews (in 7 interviews with 12 distinct references). The square was mentioned mostly as a place to have coffee or a light snack (Q17.3, Q07.12 and interview 27) but reference was also made to the surrounding buildings, especially the Biblioteca (Q09.5 and interviews 08 and 28). It was also mentioned as a place where one can watch people go by down Republic Street (Q07.4). The description that

best captures the square's potential for tourists is given by Roberta who noted how she enjoyed having a coffee, chatting, in pleasant weather and within a historic environment (Q17.3).

Valletta's tourist area is concentrated around the upper parts of Republic Street and Merchants Street (MST, i.e. from City Gate area to the Grandmasters Palace on Pjazza San Gorg). In this area, there is a predominance of retail, offices and catering outlets. Beyond Pjazza San Gorg there are the more residential areas of Valletta extending to the bastions, on one side facing onto the Grand harbour and on the other side facing onto Marsamxett Harbour. Most of the interviewees indicated that they did not remain in the traditional tourist areas on Republic and Merchants Street but went beyond to explore and discover what was considered to be a better reflection of local life in Valletta.

There were many references to 'side streets' and it was not always possible to identify precisely to where the interviewees were referring. From what could be determined there were several references to Lower Valletta and/or the area around Fort St. Elmo (7 interviews with 9 references) as well as references to Fort St. Elmo itself (in 4 interviews). At the time interviews were held, Fort St. Elmo was not open to the public because of an extensive restoration project. Next to Fort St. Elmo, there is the Malta Experience, an audio-visual show telling Malta's history. It has a cafeteria with views overlooking the entrance to the Grand Harbour. With references in four interviews (Q7.5, Q10.5, interviews 4 and 20), the Malta Experience seems to be popular with tourists, especially when one considers that this is not in the core tourist area of Valletta. Along the same stretch of coast overlooking the Grand Harbour there are the Mediterranean Conference Centre (MCC, interviews 02 and 30), the Siege Bell memorial (Q21.11, interview 3) and Lower Barrakka Gardens (LBG, interviews 27 and 30), each getting a mention in two interviews. The MCC was the hospital (Sacra Infermeria) built by the Knights. What was formerly the central courtyard of the building has been roofed over to create an auditorium seating 1,200 people. It also includes a small audio visual attraction for tourists. The Siege Bell Memorial (SBM) consists of a belfry and a monument representing the burial of a sailor at sea. Its form and location overlooking the harbour makes it attractive for tourists. The Lower Barrakka Garden is a quiet green enclave on the bastions also overlooking the Harbour.

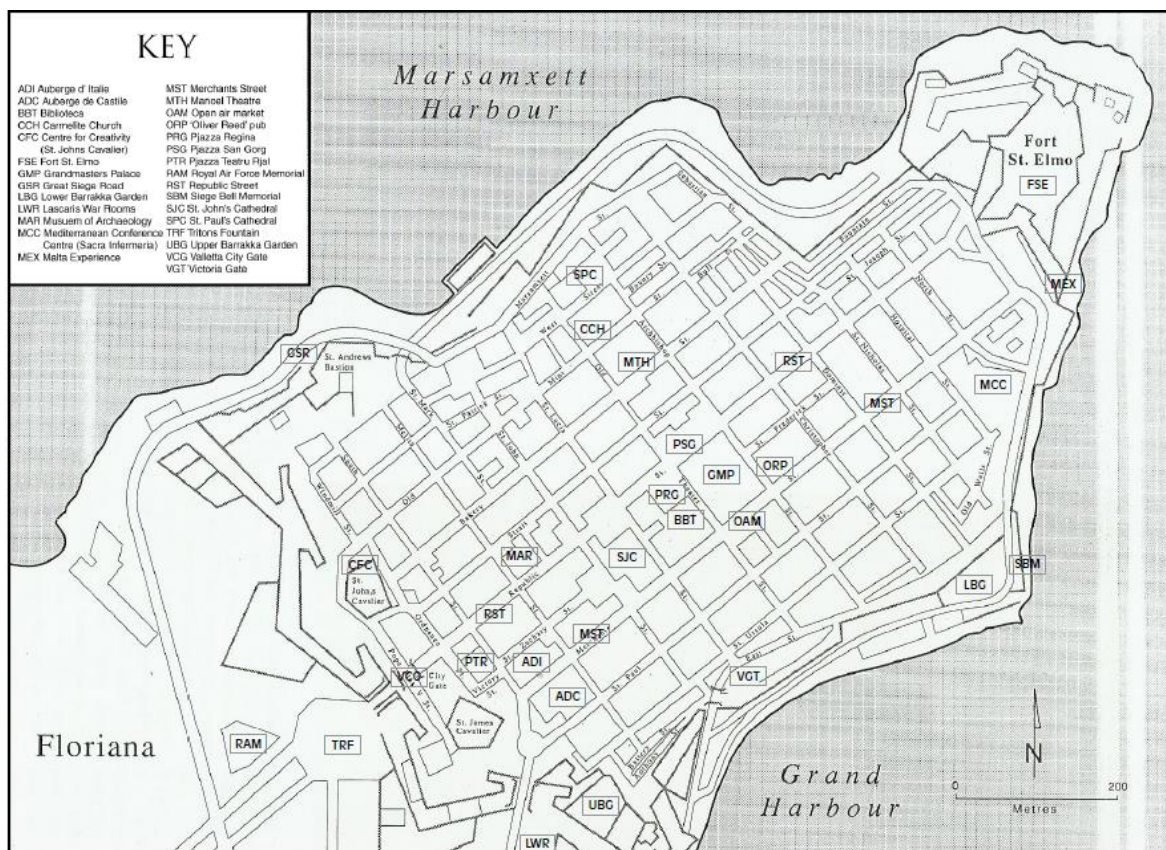


Figure 3 Map of Valletta

(Note: The map shows main Valletta locations using three letter acronyms. For some locations images are provided in Appendix E. These are to enable the reader to get a better understanding of various locations in Valletta. The referencing of the photos includes the three letter acronyms.)

Merchants Street (MST) is another important road in Valletta. It is a pedestrianised shopping street parallel to Republic Street. It also has a number of historically interesting buildings and halfway along its length, behind the Grandmaster Palace, is the daily open air market (OAM). Merchants Street received a mention in four interviews.

Other places in Valletta and Floriana that were mentioned in two or more interviews are:

- Lascaris War Rooms (LWR, Q15.2 and interview 27): These are deep within the bastion of Valletta, below Upper Barrakka Gardens, and can be reached by a long downward staircase and a tunnel in rock. They were

used as control rooms for the allies during the war and are now open as a visitor attraction.

- Great Siege Road (GSR, Q08.11 and interview 02): This is the road along the periphery of Valletta and overlooks Marsamxett Harbour. Long stretches of the road are flanked by massive bastions.
- Museum of Archaeology (MAR, interviews 17 and 18): The Museum is located on Republic Street. Because of its central location it is one of the most visited museums.
- Open air market (OAM) on Merchants Street.
- 'Oliver Reed' pub (ORP, Q12.4, Q24.5): This is a small pub on Archbishop Street where Oliver Reed died after having had a drink too many.
- Royal Airforce Memorial (RAM, Q03.7, Q15.7): This memorial is located outside Valletta at Floriana. It is a statue of a phoenix on top of a tall column.

10.3 Activities engaged in by interviewees

10.3.1 Walking Around: Many interviewees referred to walking and wandering around the streets of Valletta (16 interviews with 18 distinct references including; Q05.2, Q10.3, Q12.2, Q12.3, Q20.4, Q21.12, Q23.8, Q24.5, Q28.2). Walking may seem self-evident as how else can one see Valletta if not by walking around its streets. On the other hand, it suggests a desire to explore and discover new things, rather than limiting oneself to one or more visitor attractions. This is discussed in detail in s13.2.

10.3.2 Taking Photos: Several (9 out of 32 interviews) referred to the taking of photos as an activity engaged in during their visit to Valletta. Often it is a matter of photographing anything that one finds appealing. For some, the photo is not just a reminder of the physical aspect of the place but also of the feelings felt during the experience. Tom noted how hard it is to capture the feeling of the place *“because when you are there you can actually feel the moment.”* Having said that, he pointed out that a photo brings memories and enables both himself and his wife to look back and remember their Valletta experience when they return home (Q11.10). St. John’s Cathedral (SJC) is a

church that Sean and Barbara consider to be exceptionally beautiful. They took photos of each other both inside and outside St. John's Cathedral. The photos will be a reminder of what an exceptional experience they had at the Cathedral (Q13.4). Sometimes, a photo is taken specifically to show to friends at home. Roberta took at least two photos with this in mind. One was of people playing a piano in a garden; the photo communicated the pleasantness and humour of the situation (Q17.5). The other was of her favourite franchise shop that she was surprised to find in Valletta (Q17.8). Similarly Elisabeth took photos of timber balconies with the intention of showing them to friends at home (Q21.6). This confirms findings from the literature review (refer to s6.2) that show that the taking of photos is not just about the place being visited but also a social activity with friends at home in mind. Mieke (interview 8) took a particular interest in taking photos in Valletta because of her background as a sculptress, and hence her interest in form. She took a significant number of photos mostly of physical features like fortifications, domes and buildings. She composed her photos carefully, taking care also about the position from where the photo is taken. The time and effort she and her partner put into taking photos resulted in the activity of photography being a dominant element of their experience of Valletta. Because of their engagement with photography, Mieke and Gert's experience of Valletta could be described as 'an experience of form'. For example, they wanted to take a photo of the fortification. They sought the location from where they could get the best possible photo of the fortifications, presumably so that the impressiveness of the walls will remain fresh in her memory (Q08.11). Another example is Mieke's photo of Valletta's Grand Harbour shoreline. This included some old rooms and the Siege Bell Monument. She liked the photo because of different elements, "*the sea, the harbour, the old stones*", being brought together in an overall composition. In this instance, it was not a particular element that she found more beautiful over others (Q08.9). (Refer to photo oth 13-int 08-09 in Appendix D) Still another example is the photo Mieke took of the Carmelite dome.). (Refer to photos PSG 10-int 08-05a and PSG 11-int 08-05b in Appendix D) It is interesting how Mieke went out of her way to find a spot where she could photograph the Carmelite Dome. This was taken using a zoom lens from the most unlikely place namely from the inner courtyard of the Grandmasters palace, through the palace gateway. Joanne (Q15.6) also took an interest in composing photos,

but to a lesser extent. Photo UBG12-int15-08 is an image of the sea within the Grand Harbour, framed in an archway at the Upper Barrakka Gardens.

10.3.3 Sitting at a cafe or restaurant: About a third of the interviews referred to having a coffee or lunch in Valletta. Q06.1 Q07.12, Q11.9, Q12.2 Q17.3 and Q27.2 are a few examples. For most it was not just about the drink or food, but more about the ambience and surroundings. Two or three noted how enjoyable it was to have a drink outside in pleasant weather, and better still with a view. Dave noted: *“I can’t think of anything better than, in the afternoon, sitting at the bar with an absolutely beautiful view”* (Q05.1). There often was an element of people watching. Rebecca sums it up as follows: *“We cannot do that much at home. It was nice to just be able to sit down, and have a drink, and watch the people go by and have a taste of the local food. Just lovely”* (Q01.2). This activity is discussed in further detail in s12.2. For evening dinner, reference was made about the pleasant restaurants and the excellent service offered (interviews 1 and 4).

10.3.4 Sitting in a garden or public space: Some tourists spend some of their time sitting either in a quiet place in a garden or in a more busy place within a pedestrian area. (See Section 14.4, ‘Pjazza San Gorg.’) For example, John and Jill noted how they enjoyed sitting and relaxing in one of the gardens (Q07.3). In some places, sitting can be combined with enjoying the views.

10.3.5 Enjoying the views: Many of the interviewees spent at least some of their time in Valletta enjoying views. Open views were mentioned in at least 13 interviews (out of 32), in most cases referring to the views over the Grand Harbour. The following are a few examples; Q03.3, Q05.1, Q08.9, Q10.5, Q23.9, Q25.3, Q27.3, Q29.3, Q30.8 and Q31.4.

10.3.6 Going to paid attractions or museums: Although going to a museum and visitor attraction was mentioned by several interviewees, it was not the main purpose of the visit to Valletta. For all the interviewees, the main purpose was to see Valletta and/or spend some relaxing time walking around the City. For example, Tony and Meiner did consider visiting the Armoury but preferred instead to stay outside for *“the commotion in the street market, and the buzz of the people”* (Q19.1). Having said that, for some the visit to Valletta also

included a visit to a paid attraction or museum. By far the most popular attraction was St. John's Cathedral that was mentioned in 8 interviews. Other attractions mentioned were (number of mentions in interviews given in brackets) the Armoury (five), Museum of Archaeology (two), and Lascaris War Rooms (two). The Malta Experience was mentioned in four interviews but reference could be also for the cafeteria that adjoins the attraction.

10.3.7 Learning new things: Just two interviewees specifically referred to learning as part of their tourism activity in Valletta (Q06.7, Q15.2). It was however implied by several interviewees when they expressed an interest in a particular topic. For example, Pavlo expressed an interest in medieval history and the Crusades (Q16.2) suggesting that he was actively seeking to know more about the subject. In any case, seeing the context in terms of buildings and spaces is also part of the learning process. There were several interviewees who referred to their interest in the narrative of buildings and therefore implicitly also to learn new things.

10.3.8 Shopping: Shopping is an activity that first time visitors are not likely to engage in. The priority was to discover the City and, unless something was urgently needed, tourists would not spend much time in shops. Roberta, who was a first time visitor to Valletta, likes shopping because shopping "*gives her a good feeling*". However, she did not shop in Valletta because of lack of time (Q17.8). With repeat visitors on the other hand, the City has already been 'discovered' and therefore they are willing to engage in activities other than sightseeing, like for example shopping. In the survey, shopping was mentioned in six interviews, four of which were by repeat visitors (Q07.10 and Interviews 13, 23 and 30). The interaction between the tourist and the shopkeeper is important in that it can influence the tourist's perception of all the Valletta experience and not just the experience of shopping. This is illustrated by Tom and Barbara who were full of praise for the shop assistants and whose perception of Maltese in general was very positive as a result (Q11.8). There were also references to the open air market in six interviews. The point was not so much about the activity of shopping but more about the atmosphere of the market (Q10.7, Q19.1) and the possibility to get a glimpse of local life through the market (Q27.6, Q30.2). For the latter, the interviewees expressed

disappointment that the market was more 'touristy' than they would have wished for.

10.3.9 Special events and unexpected encounters: Some of the interviewees came across events or special instances that they were not expecting. These would be social or cultural events in Valletta's open spaces, targeting a Maltese audience, but that tourists will find interesting. For example, Byril and Murray referred to the procession of graduates to graduation hall⁸ (Q23.5). Other examples are more mundane and less formal. For example, Jane and Keith were thrilled to take photos with police horses. Two policemen on horseback were friendly, encouraging people to stand next to the horses for photos (Q12.1). As Sue notes (Q24.3), something happening makes the experience more interesting, and unusual and provides variety. Re-enactments were referred to in three interviews.

10.3.10 Boat trips in harbours: Several interviewees had the opportunity to see Valletta from the sea either because they took a harbour cruise or because they crossed to or from Valletta by ferry (Q07.5, Q12.2). Boat trips offer a different perspective to buildings and structures around the Harbour. Views of Valletta from the Grand Harbour are particularly interesting, something that was noted by several interviewees (for example Q05.7, Q26.4).

10.4 Conclusion

In this chapter reference is made to the places that were visited by the interviewees. A brief description is provided to allow the reader to better understand the context of the interviewees' experience. Chapters 11 to 15 go beyond the description of place and focus on the experience.

This chapter also considers the activities in which the interviewees engaged. For most interviews, the experience of Valletta was about walking around, exploring and discovering. Enjoying the views (primarily from Upper Barrakka) also featured prominently and was often a high point of the Valletta experience.

⁸ The 'procession' was of academics wearing togas walking from the church where the religious service was held to the graduation hall in the Old University building.

The relevance of other activities (taking photos; sitting at a cafe or restaurant; sitting in a garden or a public space; visiting attractions or museums; learning new things; shopping) to the overall experience varied across interviews and depended very much on the interviewees' likes, aptitudes and previous knowledge of Valletta. They were ancillary activities in that they are useful to enhance the overall experience, even if in most cases they were not central to it.

Each of the above activities involve interactions of the tourist with self/meaning, with other people and/or with the surroundings. The interactions that result from the above activities are considered in detail in Chapter 11, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 respectively.

CHAPTER 11

INTERACTING WITH SELF AND WITH MEANING

11.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the interaction of the tourist with self is discussed. This incorporates the 'interaction' of the tourist with the meaning associated with place. The intellectual and emotive process involved in 'processing' place meaning is more about the attitudes, needs and wants of the tourist-person. It is not just about the place.

The background of the tourist is a main influence on the interaction of the tourist with self/ meaning. The background could include the person's profession, memories of loved ones, and memories of childhood amongst others. Section 11.2 considers different circumstances in which the background of the tourist was a determining factor in the experience of the tourist. The role of Valletta's past in the tourist experience is then discussed in Section 11.3. The role of history manifests itself in different ways in the tourist experience. Just being in a historic space surrounded by historic buildings is a source of enjoyment for some people, thus resulting in a positive experience. Alternatively, the tourist could visualise daily life or events in the past, something that is not too difficult in Valletta with so many historic buildings. Alternatively the tourist can engage with the narrative linked to Valletta and its various buildings and spaces. Section 11.4 considers those aspects of the experience that involve a more direct 'interaction' of the tourist with self and this includes being at peace with oneself, humour, search for meaning/intellectual engagement and spirituality.

In this chapter, as well as in subsequent Chapters 12 to 15, reference is often made to the number of interviews in which a particular feature or element was mentioned or commented upon. This figure is given as an indicator of 'weight' or importance that should be attributed to that particular feature or comment.

Because of the subjectivity involved as well as the qualitative nature of the information, figures given are not intended for any kind of statistical analysis.

11.2 The role of the tourist's background in the tourist experience

In Section 5.1, it was argued that the tourism experience is interpreted differently by different people in accordance to their background and culture. The same applies to experience of place. Tourists perceive places and landscapes from their own perspective, based on their attitudes, experiences and intentions, and from their own unique circumstances (Relph, 1976:36). This is demonstrated from this research data with several instances where interviewees referred to their own background to explain their experience. (Examples of this are found in 11 interviews). The examples of background that emerged included the person's profession (especially if it was in the military), memories of loved ones and memories of childhood. The most immediate way this can happen is where the tourist is experiencing a place or a site that in some way has a connection to his work and profession. For example, Frank, a former nurse (interview 30) showed particular interest in the Sacra Infermeria that was a hospital during the time of the Knights. Michael (Q21.5) and Ken (Q24.1) were involved in the construction industry during their working lives. They were keenly interested in the building technologies used to construct buildings and bastions in the time of the Knights.

An unusual and somewhat amusing experience was described by Susan, an English barrister who walked into the Law Courts at Republic Street, talked to magistrates and was shown around the law courts. She also sat in on a trial by jury, something that she found very interesting, even if the proceedings were in Maltese. She did understand the body language though (Q14.2). The high level of involvement in something so closely related to her job made it most interesting for her, although it should be added that such an experience is most unusual.

Two interviewees were in the British armed forces. To varying degrees their past impinged on their experience of Valletta (Q19.3, Q30.1). S11.4.4 notes how a tourist's background can result in memories of a military past. Memories

of childhood can also play a part in the tourist experience as shown in two of the interviews. The very first thing mentioned by Roberta (in interview 17) was the doors of Valletta's more grandiose houses. She took photos of many doors because she found them impressive for their massiveness, the good wood and the detailing. These brought her memories of her childhood home that had "*a big massive door*" and that she always looked after. For Roberta, her love of doors, combined with memories of her childhood, were prominent in her experience of Valletta (Q17.1).

Pamela compared the way of life as she saw it in Valletta with that of Florida where she grew up (Q09.1). She likes a place where she can walk around and get what she needs without having to use the car. To her Valletta represented a more relaxed lifestyle. She could sit at a street table, drink coffee and have a bite to eat, all within walking distance of each other and in an environment that is safe and free of car pollution. For Pamela, Valletta represented a lifestyle that she had enjoyed in her younger years but that she now considers unattainable in most cities. Her experience of Valletta was about getting a taste of this lifestyle. Her attitude and background also impinged on her reading of stepped streets. In section 13.4, it was noted that people experienced stepped streets in different ways. For Pamela, what was important was the absence of cars, rather than the experience of climbing steps. This signified spaces and architecture where communities can develop and where people can have pleasant lives, where children can play and everyone is on foot (Q09.7).

Surprisingly a significant number of survey participants referred to their home town and compared some aspect of home with something they saw or experienced in Valletta. Comparisons were made on a very diverse range of aspects including history, weather, the practice of religion, steep roads, architecture, workmanship, dilapidated buildings, regeneration and shopping. Apart from home town or city, comparisons were also made with the other places that have been visited (62 distinct references in 21 interviews for comparisons with home and with other places). In some instances comparing Valletta with their home town or with other places was a way for interviewees to point out the uniqueness of place.

In most instances, references to home town or other places were to note the differences and thus highlight the uniqueness of Valletta, a point that is further elaborated in s14.3. There were some instances however where similarities were noted. For example, Thomas compares his reaction and feelings of Valletta to his feelings of Venice (Q27.1). For both Venice and Valletta, his first reaction was one of disappointment when he saw some side streets but then he reasoned that the deterioration of some streetscapes is what it is and that it is part of the place's charm. The narrow streets of Valletta reminded Norbert of streets in Southern France and also in Spain (Q09.05). Susan saw Valletta similar to Chester where she used to work. She claims that it was this likeness that made her fall in love with Valletta (Q14.1). For Susan, Valletta is sufficiently similar to her home town Chester to make her feel at home and yet sufficiently different to make her every visit to Valletta interesting. In some instances, the experience of Valletta was impinged upon by a past experience of Valletta. For example, Anthony described an incident, fifteen years earlier, when his wife fell and grazed her leg. Residents lowered, from upper-floor windows, baskets with cotton wool and plasters (Q10.1). This time round seeing the bread-baskets reminded him of this somewhat amusing incident.

Almost all the tourists interviewed had English as their first language. As Angie put it, Malta is *“very English in a lot of ways”* (Q05.6) and this includes the widespread use of the English language in Malta. This is another aspect of the tourists' background that facilitates matters for English-speaking tourists and that therefore provides for a more enjoyable experience. This links up with the discussion in s12.4 on how the historical and cultural links between Malta and Britain facilitates a more friendly approach of Maltese towards British tourists.

11.3 The role of Valletta's past in the tourist experience

Valletta's past is made apparent in various ways; the most evident is in the buildings and the fortifications. The appearance, form, detail and material of most buildings show that these were built many years ago and that therefore they have a story to tell.

Different buildings in Valletta communicate different meanings largely from the treatment of the façade. Residential buildings (or at least buildings that were

intended for residences when built) are immediately apparent primarily from the scale and treatment of apertures, including the timber balcony. More important buildings are evident from the more elaborate treatment of the façade and also from the scale of some elements, for example the doorways. The meaning of churches is often evident from the form. This could be from the steeples on the façade, or from a series of arches or small domes at the roofline or even a large central dome over the church. Churches are integrated in the urban fabric with their façade being a continuation of the streetscape. In some instances, therefore the church form is less communicative of the religious meaning and use of the building.

Another way in which the past is made known is through the narratives that are communicated by tour guides or by means of guide books, information panels and internet. A further way how the past is communicated is by means of certain practices that indicate aspects of a way of life that have persisted to today. Examples include religious ceremony and the parish feast. Two of every three interviewees (22 interviews with 41 distinct references) noted the importance of history, in most cases with reference to Valletta as a whole but also in some instances with reference to specific sites or buildings. Rebecca described the extent of history and the amount of historic buildings in Valletta as 'amazing' (Q01.4). The tourist experience is about how the tourist relates to Valletta's past, amongst others. Because of the extent and the way that history is ever-present in Valletta, it is inevitable that history plays a prominent role in the tourists' experience. The relationship between the tourist and Valletta's past manifests itself in a number of different, albeit interrelated, ways.

11.3.1 Being in a historic context

Rebecca liked Valletta because it has so much history and so many old buildings (Q01.4). Elisabeth stated that she enjoys going to Valletta to be immersed in a historic context (she describes it as 're-reading the tradition') (Q21.7). Similarly, Tom and Barbara pointed out that they knew very little about the history of the place but they can tell that Malta is full of history. It is something that they liked and enjoyed (Q11.4). In the three quotes referred to above, however, none of the interviewees elaborated how the history and the

old buildings 'translate' into enjoyment. For some interviewees, the historic atmosphere created by the extent of historic buildings and structures was sufficient, irrespective of the narrative. It is possible that they just like the feeling of being in a historic place and nothing else. Alternatively, there may be subtle aspects about history and old buildings that the interviewees do not express but that are factors in their experience.

11.3.2 Going back in time and visualising the past

The architecture clearly indicates that Valletta's buildings were built many years ago. In most streets and spaces of Valletta there are no buildings or structures which are evidently recent. The feeling that one gets, therefore, is that of being taken back in time, as described by Joanne (Q15.3). Joanne and Donny remark that it is evident from walking around that the place has so much history and that it has been kept exactly as it was (or at least, that is the impression that they get). In Section 14.3, it is noted that differences to home or familiar environments makes a place interesting to the tourist. In spaces where there are no evident modern features, the tourist experience is not just about being in a different place but also possibly the feeling of being in a different time. The feeling of being in a different time is further reinforced in spaces where there are no cars, like for example in Valletta's stepped streets and in the pedestrian areas.

There were several instances where the interviewee tried to imagine or visualise how it was in the past (12 out of 32 interviews with 14 references). In a sense, this is also about the feeling of being taken back in time. The 'past-visualising' was for the period of the Knights (4 references), the British period and WWII (5 references), how buildings were constructed (3 references) and past way of life (2 references). Anthony explains that old war films came to mind when he was at the Upper Barrakka looking over the Grand Harbour. Wartime aerial attacks on ships in the Harbour come to life due to old films which depict the attacks. In an interview in which Anthony was mostly showing detachment, this was the moment when Anthony showed some emotion and feeling in what he was describing. Even if it was in the imagination, the experience of 'seeing' the action was very real for him (Q10.2). Being in a

place where the war actually happened made Harry think and, as he put it, *“things started going through his mind.”* It was something that drew him to Upper Barrakka garden where he could, almost relive moments of the war, by looking over the Grand Harbour (Q28.1). Eric went further back in time and imagined the harbour at the time of the Knights with sailing ships made of timber. He said that the *“mind boggles”* (Q25.3), possibly because he would have never expected to see a context that would allow his imagination to go back hundreds of years. Because of the fortifications and relatively small scale buildings around the Grand Harbour, it was not too difficult for Eric to visualise a distant past. Pamela observes that the sea is very much part of the history and seeing the Grand Harbour from a vantage point helped her imagine what was going on; *“This force was coming from here, the defenders moved over there to defend themselves, and so on.”* For her, *“the pleasure of the day”* is visualising the history and the story of the place (Q09.3).

Michael, Ken and Eric derived enjoyment from visualising how buildings were constructed, how the large stones were handled without modern day machinery and how the required precision in the stone working was achieved. They compared these with their experience of a modern day construction site (Q21.5, Q24.1 and Q25.2 respectively). They greatly appreciated the achievements of past builders. Similarly, Byril's experience of Valletta revolves around his 'amazement' at how the original old buildings were built. He considers them to be an achievement and tries to imagine how they were built to better understand the achievement (Q23.3).

Eric was emphatic about his like of Valletta's architecture. It was the first thing he mentions upon being asked about his experience of Valletta. He then elaborated that before coming to Malta he read about history during the Knights of St. John. Referring to the grandmasters, he says *“it enthrals me to think about these great men who lived there.”* (Q25.1) For Eric the experience is mostly about the past and Valletta's buildings are an aid for him to have a stronger feeling of the past.

11.3.3 Narratives of the past

Several referred to history as an important aspect of Valletta. People see buildings and structures that are evidently of the past and they are interested in the narrative behind them. Examples include Rebecca (Q01.5), Bruno (Q02.5), Petra (Q06.7), Sean (Q13.3), Pavlo (Q16.2), Peter (Q20.3) and Sue (Q24.4). In their comments, they refer to different times of Valletta's history and often seek to get more information on the narrative from guidebooks and other sources. For some, getting to know about the narrative is what the tourism experience is all about and the more interesting the narrative, the more enjoyable is the experience likely to be. On the other hand, it should be noted that references to historical narrative in the interviews were made in generic terms. There were very few references to specific historical events. These were mostly references to World War II narratives, primarily because of personal memories of the War or of loved ones who were in the War.

11.3.4 The past reflected in local people's lives

For some interviewees, Valletta was about a way of life that existed in the past, elements of which are still evident in the present. For Pamela, Valletta's past communicates a community's relaxed way of life with children playing in the street and neighbours calling from their windows to people in the streets below (Q09.4). Similarly Norbert comments on how each old house tells a story about the people who built it and who lived in it over hundreds of years (Q09.5). For them, the past is also about the people, past and present, and that is what makes the experience. The same can be said for Roberta who sees in historic houses places "*... where someone lived, died, loved, had children,....*" (Q17.6). She also imagines the knights with their weaponry coming out of the massive buildings and emphasises that what makes it most interesting to her is that these are real stories of real people, even if in the past. Tanya refers to a garden and children's playground (King George V Gardens at Floriana) on the bastions overlooking the Grand Harbour. She is impressed how a thing of the past, namely the bastions, is used for today's residents. She notes her interest in seeing where 'the normal people' live (Q02.5). For many tourists, the history of a place as reflected in the buildings constitutes the 'character'. This point is

considered further in s14.2 where Valletta's character as reflected in the interviews is discussed.

11.3.5 Search for the genuine and the authentic

Two interviewees indicated their preference to those parts of the City which they consider to be a true reflection of Valletta's history and culture. Thomas prefers the side streets with the 'old style architecture' as opposed to the 'spruced up touristy areas' (Q27.4). He argued that when you 'spruce' up an area you risk losing its identity. He noted his preference of the old buildings with the plaster falling off and the woodwork paint peeling. For him this was the 'natural Valletta' and the 'real' Valletta that he will remember (Q27.1). This supports one of the 'laws' of cultural tourism sites namely that the more a site is manipulated for tourist consumption, the less appealing it becomes for tourists (Porter 2000, cited in Smith 2010). Lisa expresses the hope that Valletta never changes because *"it's a very special place"*. She came across a book, 'Vanishing Valletta' and expressed concern that this could possibly happen. She insists that Valletta should not be allowed to 'vanish' (Q29.1).

There were frequent references to the history of the place but there was very little consideration as to whether what is being seen is authentic or not. For most interviewees the historicity of the City was sufficient to sustain an enjoyable experience, without the need to discuss or question the historical narrative. On the other hand as noted in s11.2, many interviewees made comparisons between Valletta and their home town or another place visited. This confirms the assertion made by Maitland (2007: 27) (and referred to in s5.3) that it is the difference rather than the authenticity that makes the attraction for tourists and that therefore the discussion on a city's tourism product offer should not be framed in terms of authentic or inauthentic.

11.4 Interaction with self

11.4.1 Being at peace with oneself

The enjoyment of quiet places in Valletta was described in different ways by several participants (9 interviews with 12 distinct references). Dave described the experience that he aspired for and that he finds most satisfying, namely sitting and relaxing in a bar with “*an absolutely beautiful view*” (Q05.1). In Valletta he found one place that met his requirements. John and Jill enjoyed relaxing and watching people and cats in one of the gardens, things that they don’t have time for at home (Q07.3). Similarly, Byril and Murray just enjoyed taking it in as it is different to where they come from (Q23.1). Roberta enjoyed chatting with friends, having a coffee, in pleasant weather and within a historic environment. This was in Pjazza Regina. It made her ‘feel good’ and ‘feel so alive’ (Q17.3).

These are the various adjectives and verbs that the survey participants used to describe the experience of quiet places in Valletta: relaxing, no pressure, comfortable, enjoy all of it, just taking it in, relax and watch, feel so alive, feel good, sit in the quiet. These could be summed up in the simplest of terms as used by Maryline: “*Being there*” (Q18.1). Maybe after all there is no need to over-analyse something that is fairly simple and straightforward. It is about being in an environment that enables the person to be at peace with oneself, without any pressures; seeing, hearing, smelling and generally enjoying the surroundings.

11.4.2 Humour

Humour emerges and is best appreciated when a person is relaxed and at peace with oneself. On several occasions, interviewees referred to humour, mostly unintended, where a feature or incident is interpreted in a funny manner. For example, Tom likens Portes des Bombes (a historic archway/gateway feature on the road leading to Valletta) to a miniature of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris (Q11.3) and Sandra jokingly compares the Grandmasters Palace to Buckingham Palace (Q31.1). Mieke (Q08.13) takes a photo of a statue of small

altar boy on Merchants Street because she thinks it funny.⁹ Other humour was more intended like the sign on a piano in a public garden that said; *“play me, I’m yours”* (Q17.5) or sightseers at the noon day gun being told, with reference to the strike of noon; *“take no notice of the church bells cause they’re wrong and we’re right”* (Q31.3). For some of the survey participants, the idea of having to walk up and down steep slopes was seen, in hindsight, to be humorous (interviews 01, 22, 25, 26).

11.4.3 (a) Intellectual engagement

Thomas was inquisitive and asked himself questions on what he was seeing. He tried, for example, to comprehend the time and origin of different styles of architecture in Valletta but remained confused (Q27.5). For an area near Fort St. Elmo, Thomas (interview 27) attempted to find an explanation for large round stones that to him looked like column bases. He tried to figure out what they were and also asked other people. (They are actually capping stones of underground storage at the granaries.) He engaged himself mentally in what he was seeing. The mental engagement was a main element of his experience. It is likely that the experience would have been more rewarding if he managed to find the answers so that he could better understand what he was seeing. Donny and Joanne were intrigued with a memorial that consisted of statue of a phoenix high up on a column (Appendix E: photos RAM1 and RAM2). They were actively debating and speculating its meaning, noting that phoenix means rebirth. They were not aware that it was to commemorate Royal Airforce personnel lost in wars. Donny was so interested as to take a photo of a Latin inscription at the base of the memorial to have it translated when he got home (Q15.7). At another location, Donny (Q15.8) sought to interpret and understand the meanings of large wall graffiti¹⁰ (photos Oth21-int 15-05a, Oth22-int15-05b and Oth23-int15-05c). In the above examples, the search for meaning is not so much about self-enrichment but more an intellectual effort to try to better understand the place being visited.

⁹ The statue is put out in the doorway of a charitable organisation. Its unintended humour is because it is life like and also out of the norm.

¹⁰ Donny and Joanne lost their way in the Lascaris War Rooms area. By chance they came across large wall graffiti under road archways/bridge.

Mieke is a sculptress and as such her experience of Valletta was very visual in that she appreciated scenes that were visually interesting. She was interested mostly in the forms and shapes resulting from the architecture. Her experience of Valletta revolved around the taking of photos in a manner that is meaningful to her. In this sense, photography was Mieke's way of engaging herself intellectually to discover, understand and record various forms and shapes in Valletta's architecture (Q08.9).

11.4.3 (b) Symbolic meaning

Some comments made in the interviews suggest that landmarks are relevant to tourists also because of their symbolic meaning. Tom and Barbara noted Portes des Bombes as they were coming to Valletta by bus. This is a monumental double archway on the road leading to the City. It signified to them that they were close to arriving. They felt it had a welcoming effect and in a sense introduced Valletta (Q11.3). For City Gate, comments were made about the symbolic meaning of the gate. Apart from a point of entry, Lisa considered the gate as a landmark that signifies the main entrance to an important historic city. The City Gate project did not provide for the construction of a gate but simply left a gap in the bastions wall as an entrance to the City. For Lisa, this was not good enough because for her a gap in the bastions is not a landmark nor does it reflect the importance of the City. For her, the loss of the gate compromised the experience of entering Valletta (Q29.5). Similarly, Elisabeth was very disappointed with the removal of the gate. The extent of her disappointment was made evident by being the first thing she mentions in the interview and also referring to it again further on in the interview. For Elisabeth, the gate had a very strong symbolic meaning of welcoming them to the City. For her, the welcome gesture is lost (Q21.10). These comments are in line with observations made in the literature review, referred to in s5.4, namely that many people, when travelling, give importance to landmarks and gateways as symbols of arrival (Worthing and Bond, 2008).

11.4.4 Memories and memorials

Memories of a military past can generate emotions for visitors, especially if they are military veterans or if a close relative was involved in war action. A re-enactment, the noonday gun salute¹¹ at the Upper Barrakka Gardens, was enjoyed by both Frank and Ann primarily because of military connotations (Q30.1). The former was in the armed forces. It was to some extent a reminder of his past, because of which he could also appreciate the ceremonial aspect. The salute reminded the latter of her grandfather who was in the Royal Marines. He spent some time in Malta in the early nineteen hundreds. The memory of her grandfather may well have been the essence of her experience of the gun salute. War related memories also featured in interview 21. Elisabeth enjoyed the gun salute re-enactment because, to her, it is a way of ensuring that what happened during the war is never forgotten. Her emotive link with the war is that she was born in 1943 (Q21.4). On the other hand, her husband Michael was impressed by the military aspect, the precision, the uniforms, the artillery, the firing of the cannon (Q21.3).

The noon-day gun salute is evidently popular with tourists with several (5 out of 32) considering it as the highlight of their visit to the Upper Barrakka. For some, like Frank and Ann, the meaning behind the re-enactment is central to the experience, for others, the enjoyment is about the ceremony, the history, the people-watching and the loud bang of the shooting gun. A more detailed analysis of the nature of the experience provided by the gun-salute is given in Section 14.5.

The memory of a loved one is another aspect of a tourist's background that could play a role in the experience. Such was the case with Colin when he saw the commemorative plaques on the facade of the Grandmaster Palace. These brought memories of another visit twenty five years earlier with his father. His father, who had since passed away, was based in Malta during the war (Q03.1). One of the plaques is about the award of the George Cross to Malta;

¹¹ *The shooting of the noon-day gun at the Upper Barrakka gardens is a daily event watched by hundreds of tourists. The reenactment recreates the drill adopted by the British in the shooting of the gun at noon, complete with military uniforms.*

seeing it must have been a very special experience for Colin's father and this in turn made it special for Colin.

Interestingly, further on in the interview, Colin referred to visits to two sites involving memorials for war dead, namely the Siege Bell Monument and the Royal Airforce Memorial (in adjoining Floriana) (Q03.7). Colin described the latter as impressive both visually and for its meaning, noting that the eagle of the memorial represented people in flight. Although he did not make specific reference to his father when talking about these sites, memories of his father must have loomed large during the visit to these memorials.

In Valletta and Floriana, there are several memorials of people who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. Several survey participants (5 interviews) showed an interest in these monuments. For Michael, the monuments are a reminder of the past. He is also appreciative that lives lost in wars were commemorated appropriately by means of monuments, the Siege Bell monument in particular (Q21.11). Section 5.4 refers to 'values' that can be attributed to the heritage according to Worthing and Bond (2008). These include 'associational' value' and 'commemorative' value. The former refers to a site that may be important because of its association with a person, group of persons or event. The latter is similar except that the commemorative place may or may not be located where the event took place. Because of history, the 'associational' value is extensive and this is also partly the reason why it is liked by so many tourists, as evidenced in the analysis of the survey data. 'Commemorative' value also emerged with interviewees making emotive references to close relatives and/or past events.

11.4.5 Spirituality and numinous experience

Susan's eulogy (Q14.4) of Maltese churches is remarkable. Although the visual aspect is relevant, it is almost as if the physical stones 'absorb' some kind of 'feeling' or spirituality from *"the fact that people go in there and share their prayers."* Susan had a similar feeling at Assisi i.e. she felt that the church building had 'absorbed' the spirituality. She also compares it to Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam, but in an inverse way, where the building 'absorbed the

evil' resulting from the tragic events – an 'evil feeling' that she felt when she entered the house. Her experience of Maltese churches is intense because of the meaning associated with them; a meaning that is supported by the physical form involving buildings, statues, paintings, church ornamentation and so on. Sean's comments on churches (Q13.6, Q13.7) suggest that he felt a special bond to Valletta and to its people partly because of religion. He is a practicing Catholic and has been to religious services in Valletta. He noted that he was not shunned as a foreigner – on the contrary he was encouraged. He describes St John's Cathedral and other Valletta churches as beautiful in part because of their aesthetic appeal but also because he feels a strong affinity to them because of his religion. Maryline refers to the spiritual experience of St. John's Cathedral and considers it complementary to the cultural experience offered by the Cathedral's extensive art (Q18.3). For Elisabeth and Michael, seeing Caravaggio's painting of the beheading of St John¹² was "*a very moving experience*" as well as a very enjoyable one (Q21.13).

In the case of Colin the spiritual feeling did not come from churches but from nature. He was inspired by the combination of colours of the setting sun over Marsamxett Harbour. He described it as spiritual and said that it gave him "*a great feeling*" (Q03.3).

When discussing spiritual experiences some writers refer to numen and to numinous experiences. According to Cameron and Gatewood (2012:241), numen can be said to involve three aspects deep engagement, empathy and awe. Empathy involves "*a strong affective experience in which the individual tries to conjure the thoughts, feelings and experiences, including hardships and suffering, of those who lived at an earlier time.*" The empathic nature of the tourist experience emerged from the interviewees numerous times (with 14 distinct references in 12 interviews). These involved visualising past wartime action around the Grand Harbour. Going further back, people also visualised how buildings and fortifications were built at the time of the Knights; this was discussed in s11.3.2.

¹² The Caravaggio is in the oratory of St. John's Cathedral.

In research, even if qualitative, it is difficult to establish the depth of feeling involved (unless of course the researcher specifically seeks to investigate the intense feelings of participants, in which case the research would have to be designed accordingly). If for example somebody uses the word 'fantastic' about St. John's Cathedral, it is not by itself sufficient to conclude that the person had a feeling of awe or deep engagement, even if this may well have been the case. A subjective assessment has to be made in the analysis of what was said by the interviewee to establish whether numen was present. Places that may have provided a numinous experience, involving awe or deep engagement, include St. John's Cathedral, churches (refer to earlier in this section), the viewing terrace of the Upper Barrakka Garden (referred to in s14.5) and memorials (referred to in s11.4.1). The possibility that one or more of the interviewees had a numinous experience in these locations may be surmised from the number of superlative adjectives used to describe the place and/or from the description of the experience itself by the interviewee.

11.4.6 Emotional attachment

There were several instances where the interviewees indicated that they had developed an emotional attachment to Valletta. This was evident when they used the word 'love' but not in a casual way, but somewhat emphatically (for example, Angie with Q05.5; Susan with Q14.3 and Q14.5; and Eric with Q25.5). For some, the Valletta experience was so exceptional that an attachment developed. Sean describes this as 'the Maltese bug' (Q13.8). Sean and Barbara make it amply clear that they have got the 'bug' (Q13.1, Q13.2, Q13.3, Q13.5, Q13.7). Others also indicated that they liked Valletta very much (interviews 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 21, 27, 28, 30) but it is difficult to establish if and to what extent they have developed an emotional attachment to Valletta.

The cultural ties between the home country of the tourist and the heritage area being visited may be one factor that determines whether the tourist develops an emotional attachment to the destination. In Valletta's case, the long standing cultural ties between Britain and Malta impinged on some of the British tourist's experience to the extent that an emotional attachment may have developed. In section 11.2 the role of a person's background in the tourist experience was

discussed and this includes connections with Malta's military past and also the widespread use of English in Malta. Section 3.2 notes that one of the tourists' motivation is that of association. Cultural links between Malta and Britain support the 'association' motive that a British tourist to Valletta may have and thus increases the likelihood of an emotional attachment being developed. For Susan, for example, (a British tourist from Chester – interview 14), Valletta is sufficiently familiar not to be threatening and yet sufficiently different to be a break from the norm.

11.5 Conclusion

Interaction of the tourist with self/meaning signifies that experiencing a place involves an intellectual and emotive process influenced by a diversity of factors. The background of the tourist is a main influence. Things, places or people that are important for the tourist can be a source of influence on the tourist experience. Some of the interviewees compared Valletta with their home town or another place visited. The strongest emotions emerge when a site being visited reminded the tourist of a loved one. The site could be linked to the loved one in a number of ways like for example a previous visit or a particular event.

The history of a place impinges on the tourist experience in a number of ways. In the first instance, the buildings provide a historic context that tourists can enjoy simply for the fact that it is historic. Linked to this is the difference of the place to any other place with which the tourist may be familiar. The element of history also enables the tourist to visualize the past, something that tourists often find enjoyable. Tourists can visualize past events, like for example important military events, or they might visualize the way of life of people in the past. The narrative of the place is a further influence on the experience in that it allows the tourist to engage with the narrative. Just as story-telling in books, theatre and films is entertaining, the story-telling resulting from a place's narrative is enjoyed and appreciated by tourists.

Even if there are a diversity of factors, like background and history, impinging on the experience, ultimately it is about the tourist connecting with his/her

thoughts and feelings – what is being referred to in this thesis as ‘interacting with self’. It is something that most people would have difficulty to do for any length of time when in their daily routine. Visiting a place away from home gives the tourist the time and opportunity to interact with self. The greater the break from routine, the easier it will be for the tourist to interact with self and this may explain, at least in part, why (as suggested by Maitland, 2007: 27) it is the difference in places that the tourist often seeks. Several interviewees referred to the enjoyment of ‘being there’. It is about being in an environment where the person can be at peace with oneself, without any pressures; seeing hearing, smelling and generally enjoying the surroundings.

The nature and depth of interacting with self will be different according to the place being visited. It could entail intellectual engagement in an effort to acquire and understand new information on say the narrative of a place or the symbolic meaning of a building. It could be remembering loved ones, an emotion that places like monuments and memorials seek to facilitate. Interacting with self may involve deeper feelings that could be either spiritual or some other numinous experience.

CHAPTER 12

INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE

12.1 Introduction

This chapter considers different ways how the tourist interaction with people, mostly local, impinges on the experience. On the one hand, the presence of people in urban spaces creates vitality and increases attractiveness. This refers mostly to the pedestrianised streets of Republic Street and Merchants Street and the spaces associated with them (Piazza Regina and Piazza San Gorg). This is dealt with in Section 12.2. Section 12.3 considers how tourists seek out elements that gives insight on the lives of local people. In the final section, the friendliness of local people is considered, highlighting the positive effect this has on the tourist's overall experience.

12.2 People in urban spaces

The presence of people makes streets and piazzas more interesting and enjoyable. Reference to this was made in 14 interviews with 19 distinct references. The number of people present in the urban space varied. At one extreme there was the *“sea of people”* in Republic Street referred to by Susan (Q14.5). There was also the *“commotion in the street market and the buzz of the people”* referred to by Tony (Q19.1). Sean pointed out that the *“hustle and bustle”* was very much part of the experience of Valletta (Q13.2). These observations confirm what emerged in the literature review in s4.3, namely that the presence of people, of different ages and backgrounds, using the space in different ways, generate activity that makes the space interesting and even enjoyable to be in (Heng, 2000; Carmona et al, 2003; Jacobs, 1961).

Then there are the more quiet places with less ‘buzz’ but still with people around. For example, Mieke notes how the presence of people in Piazza Regina creates a relaxed environment and a feeling that she finds enjoyable

(Q08.2). Pjazza Regina is taken up with tables and chairs and at certain times of the day (such as at lunch time) the tables are mostly full. The people in Pjazza Regina are sitting down at tables having a coffee, chatting with each other or watching other people going by.

Outdoor tables and chairs in Valletta provide a context for a unique experience. The main aspect of the experience is that of being surrounded by people and also of watching people go by. The enjoyment of eating or having a drink outdoors is further enhanced by the pleasant weather and the surrounding historic buildings and features – the weather and the historic context are what make this very different from what north European tourists would experience at home. The aspect of people watching was mentioned by Jill and John who, referring to Pjazza Regina, considered it ‘fascinating’ watching tourists and local people go by (Q07.4). A similar ambience was enjoyed by Rebecca and her friends as they enjoyed eating at an outside restaurant table in a Valletta street. It was most enjoyable for them to be able to sit outside, with people around and also watching people go by (Q01.2). Sitting out at tables is one of the activities in which tourists engage in as discussed in s10.3.3. Positive comments were also made about the presence of people in Pjazza San Gorg. People are either walking across the square, standing (mostly around the fountain or close to the Palace main gate) or sitting on benches. There are also a few tables and chairs in one corner of the piazza. The presence of people walking, standing, sitting and chatting in a historic urban space created an ambience that interviewees described as attractive, relaxed and safe (Q06.1, Q26.1, Q31.2).

In the literature review, the social aspect of being in an urban space was noted because of the non-verbal communication that takes place between people within that space (Griffin and Hayllar, 2009; Gehl, 1987; Urry, 2002 and Connell and Meyer, 2004). This also includes people-watching where people sitting on benches or at outdoor tables watch other people go by. In people-watching, Jill refers to the mix of business people and tourists walking by (Q07.4). The former may be walking in a purposeful manner going about their daily business; some local people and most tourists are walking in a leisurely mode. This supports the distinction made by Matos Wunderlich (2008:128) between

‘discursive walking’ and ‘purposive walking’. In discursive walking, people are aware of the external environment and participate in it.

Several interviewees commented positively about the extent of pedestrian areas in Valletta. These provide distinctive advantages for pedestrians, including tourists, as they walk about “*without any problems, without any cars*” (Q07.8). Similarly Pamela emphasised the absence of exhaust fumes and traffic noise in pedestrian streets and in streets where cars are excluded because of steps (Q09.7). According to Maryline, pedestrian areas are much more enjoyable (Q18.2). Julia noted how pleasant it is when during special occasions, such as Christmas or Notte Bianca, there is so much activity going on with bands, musicians and dance performances (Q32.4). On these occasions, some of Valletta streets are full of people creating a lively atmosphere that tourists find most enjoyable.

There are different urban spaces in Valletta. The differences are not limited to shape and size but also to the nature of the people activity that takes place within them. There are spaces that are very busy with people, like Republic Street; there are others with fewer people, like Pjazza San Gorg. There are spaces where people are walking by, others where people are sitting on benches or at tables. The common element, namely the presence of people, makes these spaces interesting to be in and generally enhance the tourist experience. These findings are in line with what emerged in the literature review in Section 4.3. Richards and Palmer (2010:25,26) argue that individuals seek an optimal level of stimulation. In Valletta’s urban spaces, there are different levels of stimulation resulting from the presence of people. In most cases, there was sufficient stimulation for the space not to be boring but not too much stimulation that would result in stress.

12.3 Local people, local lives

In many interviews, it emerged that tourists had a desire to get to know or in some way be involved in the lives of local residents. Often they sought out features that they perceived to be a reflection of how people lived (11 interviews with 23 distinct references). Sandra (Q31.6) and Rebecca (Q01.7)

said they like to walk around the side streets, these being the residential parts of Valletta, to see how people live. Colin took photos of people doing chores like for example someone dusting the door or sweeping up in front of the house. He felt it added something to the place – it is not just about the architecture (Q03.2).

There are obvious limitations as an excessive show of interest in local residents could be intrusive. It is difficult to actually see local people go about their daily lives. For this reason, more often than not the desire to connect with the local refers to physical objects that the tourist interprets as a reflection of the life of local residents. Mieke looked for features that signify the way of life of local people. She saw the wash hanging outside the balcony as something beautiful because it signifies that the place was alive with people i.e. residents. For her, it was being alive with people that makes the place beautiful (Q08.10). Anthony noted how, in the older apartment blocks, women put baskets down from the windows for the bread. He was intrigued by it and perceived it to be a form of communication between the residents in their houses and the outside streets (Q10.4). Ann preferred the Sunday market, as opposed to the daily one, because it was a market selling items for locals, like clothes and vegetables. For Ann, the daily market is too touristy. She enjoyed getting a glimpse of local people's lives from what was being sold at the Sunday market (Q30.2). It is worth noting that the idea of avoiding anything that is touristy was mentioned in several of the interviews. Colin and Rosalind saw football team flags on balconies celebrating Valletta F.C. winning the national league. By taking photos of the flags, they were, in a sense, sharing or being part of the excitement of Valletta F.C. fans celebrating their team's victory (Q03.6). Similarly Rebecca liked football team flags on balconies because they reflected the fun and passion of local people (Q01.1).

Pamela observes how the architecture of the place creates an environment where residents can have a pleasant life. This also includes the absence of cars either because the street is stepped or because it is too narrow. The streets become external living spaces for residents instead of a space where they will be subject to traffic noise, pollution and lack of safety (Q09.7). She refers to 'a very cosy feeling' that communicates a community's relaxed way of life (Q09.4). Tanya remarks how the historic context, including impressive fortifications, provide a home for people. This is best symbolized by a

playground for children located on the bastions in Floriana, overlooking the Grand Harbour (Q02.5).

Aspects related to religion were cited in no less than five interviews (out of 32) as features that reflect the lives of local people. The most emphatic about this was Sean who claimed that Maltese are almost addicted to their religion and that the beauty and the extent of adornment in Valletta's churches is a reflection of this addiction. He refers to St. John's Cathedral, in particular, that he describes as 'absolutely gorgeous' (Q13.6). Churches provide insight into people's lives in different ways. There are moments when the church is quiet with a few people praying, suggesting devotion and collectedness. This was the aspect noted by Peter (Q20.5). There are other moments where there is the religious ceremony that Byril found very interesting (Q23.5). For Ann, it was the church buildings with their internal and external ornamentation that showed her how people live (Q30.7).

For Mieke, features in the streets told her about people's religiosity and therefore also about their way of life. The street decorations for the parish feast were very interesting because to her they signified that the feast and hence religion meant a lot to the people (Q08.12). She also noted the niches at street corners and the religious tablets near the doorways. As she put it, she liked them because the local people liked them (Q08.1). Mieke noted the statue of small altar boy ¹³ in a doorway on Merchants Street and considered it yet another sign of people's lives and religiosity. Without being disrespectful, she saw the funny side of seeing a life-like statue of an altar boy where least expected (Q08.13).

12.4 Friendliness of local people

A frequent comment made was about the friendliness of local people (17 distinct references in 13 interviews). In some instances, the comments were generic. For example, Susan describes the people as warm and kind (Q14.5) and Byril liked most the friendliness and helpfulness of people (Q23.6). For

¹³ The statue is put out in the doorway of a charitable organisation. Its unintended humour is because it is life like and also out of the norm.

Christine, people were helpful, friendly and kind (Q04.2). Other comments referred to local people's friendliness in specific contexts, namely in restaurants (Q04.2), in shops (Q11.8) and in Catholic religious services (Q13.7). On one occasion, Keith and Jane greatly appreciated the friendliness of two policemen on horseback who encouraged tourists to take photos with their horses (Q12.1). In a past occasion, Tony appreciated the help given to his wife after she injured herself in a fall (Q10.1). The interviews suggest that local people's friendliness is appreciated by tourists. It creates a positive experience for the tourist at two levels; at the level of the direct interaction between the local and the tourist that results in satisfaction for the tourist, and also most likely satisfaction for the local. It is also positive on their overall experience of tourists because knowing that help and friendliness will be available if and when needed provides for greater peace of mind and less potential tension.

Coupled with this is the historical connection between Malta and Britain and the positive attitude, as perceived by many visitors, of the Maltese towards the British. This view was supported by Jill who also claimed that "*the people have always been wonderful*" (Q07.9). Amanda and Scott also referred to "*a strong English connection*" and claimed that they feel 'comfortable' in Valletta (Q22.2). This referred to a greater ease of communicating with people and also possibly being in a culture that, although different from their own, has sufficient similarities to make it 'comfortable'. Sean considered Malta his second home. It seems that the main reason for this is Maltese people's "*fantastic approach to visitors especially British*". He also seemed to link Valletta's beauty with people's friendliness. By making claims on Valletta's beauty with statements on the Maltese people's 'love' of the British, he made it seem that for him Valletta would be much less beautiful if people were not so likeable and pleasant (Q13.1). A similar stance was taken by Eric who claimed to have fallen in love with Valletta primarily because he thought it was marvellous but also, to a lesser extent, because "*it is very much orientated towards the English*" (Q25.5). The connection with Britain does not only come across through people but also through architecture. The Main Guard on Pjazza San Gorg is a building of the Knights, with a portico added by the British. The coat of arms above the portico is evidently British and has an 1814 inscription in Latin that includes a reference to Britain. The building's 'Britishness' is evident even for people who know very little about architecture or history. Sandra and

Mike suggested that they felt drawn to the Main Guard because of its Britishness (Q31.7). Even if none of the interviewees, made reference to them, it is worth mentioning the typically British red phone boxes of which there are still a few in Valletta, including two on Republic Street.

The feeling of safety is an important factor in the overall tourist experience. A tourist is unlikely to have an enjoyable experience if there are concerns about safety, irrespective whether these concerns are justified or not. It was generally noted that the streets of Valletta are perceived to be safe (Q07.10, Q10.6). Similarly Petra notes the importance of feeling safe when walking around Valletta's streets. She was not unduly concerned of being robbed as she might have been in other countries (Q06.9). At face value it may seem that people's friendliness is unrelated to feeling of safety in streets. I would argue that, on the basis of the data, it seems that one of the factors that impinges on the feeling of safety is the perceived friendliness or otherwise of local people. Alison mentions people's friendliness and the feeling of safety in the same breath thus suggesting that people's positive approach to outsiders is essential to have a feeling of safety in the streets (Q26.1). Michael and Elisabeth note the importance of safety to be able to have a positive experience like for example sitting on the pavement and having coffee. It is not just about feeling safe but it is also about being able to ask for assistance when required, hence the importance of local's positive approach to visitors (Q21.9).

12.5 Conclusion

When discussing tourism experience, what comes to mind to most tourism practitioners is the interaction of the tourist with the surroundings, this being a historic building, a scenic view or some other interesting physical feature. The literature review in Section 4.3 notes how the presence of people makes streets and piazzas more interesting and enjoyable. Urban spaces are social spaces in that when two people are together in the same space there is a form of social contact, even if there is no verbal exchange. Moreover, there is also an element of people-watching as an activity in which users of an urban space engage. These observations of the literature review are largely confirmed by

the findings of this research. Section 12.2 lists and describes several instances where the presence of people impacted the experience of the interviewees.

In urban design literature, the 'people' element is limited to the presence of people in urban spaces and the impact that has on the experience of place. From this research, it emerges that the people element in the tourist experience goes beyond just the presence of people in urban spaces. Section 12.3 records several instances where the interviewee expressed a desire to get to know or in some way be involved in the lives of local residents. Some features were found to be interesting by interviewees, not because of their intrinsic beauty or visual interest, but because they were perceived to be a reflection of local people's lives. Moreover, as pointed out in Section 12.4, many interviewees noted the friendliness of local people and how important this was for their tourist experience.

CHAPTER 13

INTERACTING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

13.1 Introduction

This research work discusses, in Chapter 4, the model whereby the tourist interacts with the self, others and with the surroundings. This chapter discusses and elaborates on those instances that emerge from the data where survey participants interact with the surroundings. This entails the tourist walking around and exploring as explained in Section 13.2. In the following section, specific references to sensory engagement by survey participants with their surroundings are listed and elaborated (Section 13.3). In describing their experience, the survey participants refer to various physical features including streets, buildings and detail. These are described and discussed in Section 13.4.

Section 13.5 considers the more intangible aspects of the sensory experience of place, as experienced by the survey participants, namely 'beauty' and 'character.' These are concepts that are difficult to describe and yet need to be considered carefully for a better understanding of the tourist experience. Survey participants made several references to contexts where there was movement. The relevance of movement for the tourist experience as emerging from the data is discussed in Section 13.6. The Chapter ends with some negative remarks made by survey participants relating to their interactions with the surroundings in Valletta (Section 13.7).

13.2 Walking around and exploring Valletta

The tourist's interaction with their surroundings involves an activity, referred to in Section 10.3, that is perceived to be mundane namely that of walking around. There is however much more to it than that. Walking involves the desire to explore and discover. For some, there is a sense of adventure in discovering things that the tourist has never seen before. Mieke described her

like of exploration as *“looking in the small streets, and what there is behind”*. She derived enjoyment by satisfying her curiosity (Q08.8). Instances were recounted where the tourist sought to explore, expecting to discover and see new and unfamiliar things. Ann and Frank considered Valletta ideal for browsing and looking around the main and the side streets, something they enjoyed doing (Q30.3). For Jill, exploring the little side streets was the most interesting (Q07.1). For Sean, experiencing Valletta was about feeling the hustle and bustle of the main streets but also about getting to the small streets, to the little cafes and to the churches. It was about exploring (Q13.2). These findings confirm observations made in Section 4.2 about ‘discursive’ walking, as opposed to ‘purposive walking’. From the above comments, discursive walking comes across as spontaneous and characterized by varying pace and rhythm. Walkers *“consciously explore the landscape while sensorially experiencing it”* (Matos Wunderlich, 2008:132).

Alison described how the stepped streets of Valletta provide ample opportunities for exploration and yet, if the need arises, there are signposts and you could ask people for directions (Q26.2). She described the possibility to explore as ‘fascinating’ and ‘enchanted’. In spite of many previous visits, Sue and Ken (Q24.2) still go back to Valletta. They claim that they have seen it all but they still like to visit and explore because there is always something different to see.

Some interviewees recounted situations where they saw or heard something unexpected and this resulted in surprise. In the context of a holiday, where the tourist is actively exploring, the surprise would normally be a pleasant one. For example, Donny described how he was surprised by the bright colours of flowers in the Upper Barrakka Gardens. He felt drawn to see more (Q15.1). For Thomas and his wife, the surprise was seeing and hearing a piano play in the middle of a crowd of people in a square (Piazza San Gorg). It was most unexpected (Q27.2). He described the overall ambience created by the people around the playing piano as ‘a nice surprise’. For Donny and Joanne, there was also an element of adventure when they discovered a tunnel entrance unexpectedly, after having walked down towards the Valletta shore (Q15.2). Not knowing to where this tunnel would lead heightened the sense of adventure. Maryline describes how moving from a simple austere exterior of

the Cathedral to a richly decorated interior is a source of surprise. The surprise and the contrast combine to give her a personal and spiritual experience (Q18.3). In each case where there is surprise, the interviewees suggested that the surprise made their experience much more enjoyable. This aspect of enhanced experience because of surprise was also suggested by Petra when she notes how Valletta's beauty far surpassed her expectations (Q06.5).

Jill expresses frustration that she is unable to enter buildings that seem to be interesting on the inside and that she would like to 'investigate' (Q07.2). She would like to explore "*the little old places which are different*". At home she will not be seeing typical Maltese features and therefore it is these things that are most interesting. Similarly, Roberta would like to go into historic buildings that are not in use. She is 'curious' and senses a 'mystery' that she would like to unravel (Q17.2).

In s13.4(ii), it is noted how steep slopes and stepped streets in Valletta are a restriction for people with mobility difficulties. This highlights something that is self-evident and very often taken for granted. To be able to appreciate any historic area one needs to be able to walk around without undue difficulty. People with limited mobility are restricted as to how much exploring they can do. Parts of Valletta are difficult to access for people with mobility difficulties and this may prevent them from having a more holistic appreciation of the City.

13.3 A sensory experience of the environment

As discussed in s4.2, people gather information about their surroundings through the senses, with vision being the one that provides most information. In the interviews, several comments were made about colour and the quality of light (8 interviews out of 32). Gert notes the many diverse colours in the streetscape with the yellow of stone, the green and red windows and doors and then, occasionally, the colourful street decorations for the feast (Q08.4). Flags on balconies make the place "*colourful and fun*" for Rebecca. The flags and the colour communicate a sense of fun to visitors and also something about the

people, namely their passion for the football team¹⁴ (Q01.1). When looking at Valletta from a harbour cruise ferry, Alison noted the vibrancy of the stone colour as the sun shone onto it (Q26.4). The brightness of colour of the flowers at the Upper Barrakka came as a surprise to Donny (Q15.1). Tanya and Bruno, emphasise the importance of light and brightness: *“Here it is different and we like it because it is different. It is Mediterranean”* (Q02.3). Natural light is an important factor that greatly influences people’s experience of space. As one Valletta foreign resident describes it (Times of Malta; 2010 a); *“I immediately fell in love with the combination of stone, sea and light.”* Light brings with it shade and shade brings with it contrast – the sharp contrast of one side of the street drenched in sunlight with the other side in shade.

Light and colour can also have a personal, and even spiritual, effect on visitors. For example, the combination of colours of the setting sun over Marsamxett Harbour provides inspiration to Colin, who describes the scene as biblical and it gives him *“a great feeling”* (Q03.3). Maryline likes the natural light outside the St John’s Cathedral while describing the light inside as lovely. The light combines with other aspects of the building, inside and outside, to give Maryline an experience that she describes as fascinating, personal, cultural and spiritual (Q18.3).

In some interviews (7 out of 32) reference was made to music and to how it makes the place livelier. In most instances the reference was to the music that is synchronized with the fountain in St. George’s Square. According to Tom and Barbara, *“The water came up as if it was actually dancing to the music.”* They also enjoyed watching young children playfully *“trying to dance with the water”* (Q11.2). On a previous visit in Christmas, Julia had enjoyed the activity generated by musicians and bands (Q32.2). Excessive noise was, however, a concern to two of the interviewees (Q08.2, Q18.5)

The contrasts in the city are many and this was observed by several survey participants (5 out of 32). Tanya and Bruno commented on how the blue sea, visible at the end of the streets, contrast with the colour of buildings (Q02.4). A similar contrast between the colours of buildings and the sea was noted by

¹⁴ The flags were to celebrate Valletta FC winning the championship in previous weeks.

Alison from the harbour cruise boat (Q26.4). Another contrast is the simple exterior of St. John's Cathedral with the elaborate interior decorations (Q18.3). The small shops contrast with the large buildings around them (Interview 26). Thomas observes that one can see many contrasts in the harbour including that between the superyachts and the houses that he refers to as *"real Maltese buildings with their little balconies, and shutters."* (Q27.3).

13.4 Physical features in Valletta's urban environment

Many of the interviewees showed a particular interest in Valletta's streets and the experience they provide. The views down the streets were considered interesting (Q20.2) because of the narrowness of the street (Q03.5, Q05.4). Moreover, with perfectly straight roads, it is possible to see all the way to the other end of the street (Q02.4). Exploring the side streets was noted as something that is most enjoyable to do (Q07.1).

Valletta is constantly interesting because no two places, and no two views or scenes in Valletta, are the same (Q29.2). A good description of the experience is given by Sean who noted that, although the streets look the same, they are not. You walk down one street expecting to see more of the same but instead you find yourself in a totally different area (Q13.5). Similarly, Byril pointed out that every street is slightly different and therefore every time she went to Valletta she saw something different and therefore the streets can never become boring (Q23.4). For Ian, Valletta's character was about how around every corner you saw something different (Q04.1). Thomas compares the 'spruced up touristy areas' with the 'old style architecture' of the side streets and indicates his preference for the latter (Q27.4). For Tom the secondary streets are more interesting than the main roads because of their 'ambience' (Q11.7). Two (interviews 06, 30) noted the street layout ('chess board pattern') and how this facilitates finding your way in the City.

Section 14.3 discusses aspects of Valletta that, in the eyes of the interviewees, make it unique. The historic buildings, the architectural detail, the fortifications are mentioned by interviewees to highlight Valletta's uniqueness. Section 14.2 considers those elements that define Valletta's character as understood by the

interviewees. For both uniqueness and character, the physical element is predominant even if these combine with aspects of meaning.

13.4.1 Buildings and details

Many interviewees commented positively about the architecture and/or about specific features in facades (17 out of 32 interviews, with 27 distinct references). For them, the experience of Valletta was about observing and appreciating the architecture (Q07.1, Q24.1). Timber balconies were a feature that several of the interviewees noted and liked. This was referred to in 7 interviews including Q07.6, Q09.5, Q21.6 and Q23.4. Observation of detail, particularly craftsmanship in stone, was an important element of the experience of several (referred to in 5 interviews). Roberta was impressed by door features and materials (Q17.1) whereas Peter enjoyed exploring and seeking out details in doors, doorknobs, windows of building facades (Q20.4). Sandra and Mike admired the workmanship and the detail of stone carvings on monuments at the Upper Barrakka (Q31.5). The details were sufficiently interesting for them to take photos. Tom notes the craftsmanship that is required to produce the architecture and the details of Valletta (Q11.6).

Churches were referred to several times (in at least 9 interviews out of 32). There are two aspects of how churches impinge on the visitor's experience. In most instances, it is the sensory or visual aspect of churches that are part of the tourist's experience. This is where the church, on the outside or inside, is appreciated by the tourist for its beauty or at least for its visual interest. Churches, with domes and other building forms, act as landmarks within the urban landscape. Some comments made in the interviews suggest that landmarks in the urban landscape are relevant to the tourist experience. Mieke noted how seeing a landmark feature from far, like for example a dome, will tell the tourist that that is an interesting place (Q08.5). By provoking curiosity, the tourist may want to find out more about the feature and walk to it to explore and discover. Apart from the physical aspect, landmarks also have a symbolic meaning, a point discussed in s11.4.3(b). For some visitors to Valletta, part of the experience would be seeking out the more interesting buildings through observation. For Sean, all churches in Valletta are beautiful (Q13.4). Several

(9 out of 32) referred to the beauty of the inside of St. John's Cathedral and also of the indoors of other churches in Valletta (for example Q22.1). Sue and Ken enjoyed having a look inside churches to appreciate the paintings and ornate decoration (Q24.2).

Being what they are, it is inevitable that churches are also perceived by some visitors for their meaning, making this another aspect of how churches impinge on the visitor's experience. This point is discussed in more detail in Section 11.4.5. Peter liked churches in Valletta because they are a reflection of people's religiosity (Q20.5). Susan was a regular visitor so she became familiar with a number of churches in Valletta and could refer to them by name. She loved visiting churches and felt that the church building 'absorbed' people's spirituality and in turn the building imparted the spiritual feeling to her (Q14.4).

Several referred to the fortifications (in 10 interviews) sometimes for their symbolic significance and sometimes as part of the overall cityscape. Many were very impressed by their massiveness (Q16.2, Q21.5). Mieke and Gert were so impressed that they walked along Great Siege Road seeking a spot from where they could get the best possible photo (Q08.11). Eric notes how difficult it must have been to build buildings and fortifications using heavy stones and made him wonder how it all got done (Q25.2). For the fortifications, Pamela read a meaning into the structure namely as a means of keeping invaders out, while at the same time giving people on the inside the possibility to see distant views as well as giving a sense of safety (Q09.2).

13.4.2 Stepped streets

Several interviewees commented upon the streets and in particular noted their narrow width (Q01.6, Q03.5, Q11.4, Q16.2, Q17.7, Q23.8). The street narrowness was not mentioned in isolation and concurrently other aspects of the streets were mentioned. For example, a combination of steepness and narrow width, is something that Angie found impressive and that she will more readily remember about Valletta (Q05.4). Stepped streets and steep slopes are physical features of Valletta that were commented upon by many (in 14 interviews with 17 distinct references). For many interviewees, interacting with

stepped streets was not limited to the visual as they had to be walked up or down while exploring the City. They were an experience in their own right. Rebecca and her friends described them as memorable and taxing, apart from being hot to walk, but enjoyed them anyway (Q01.6). They considered them something out of the ordinary, as back in their home city they are more familiar with the inclined roads without steps. Similarly, Barbara and Tom liked walking down steps even if it was more tiring (Q11.5). Alison and Nick noted how walking up or down sloped streets was more interesting than walking on flat ground (Q26.5). In many instances, interviewees commented, with laughter, what hard work it was to climb up so many steps in Valletta's streets. Upon being asked about inner streets, the first thing that came to mind to Elisabeth was the hilliness. Clearly, the extent to which hilliness is noted is dependent on the person's age and fitness. Elisabeth and Michael expressed satisfaction that, in spite of their age, they still managed to walk some of the hilly streets (Q21.8) and this brought out a sense of achievement.

Tanya describes her experience of steps in more detail as follows: *"Steps take you up; as you move up the steps you see the sky; your view changes. It is more interesting and there is more variation"* (Q02.2). The experience of walking up or down steps is different to walking on a level surface with more changes and diversity in what the walker is seeing. Pamela observed that stepped streets signify the absence of cars and hence greater safety. They are places where children can play and people can have pleasant lives (Q09.7). Roberta liked the streets and the way they slope up and down across the City. To her it gave a romantic feel because it felt like something from the past (Q17.7). In other instances, steep hills were a discomfort and in some cases routes were chosen to keep steep hills to a minimum. Jill was genuinely concerned about the possibility of getting hurt on the steps (Q07.7) as both she and John were elderly and their limited mobility on steep and slippery steps and pavements could have resulted in a fall. Their experience of the stepped streets was therefore more one of concern rather than enjoyment. Anthony notes how he used to enjoy walking all around the stepped streets but he is no longer able to because he is now very elderly and less mobile (Q10.3). The above discussion suggests that different people experience the same feature, namely stepped streets in different ways, even if the tiring aspect was common to most. Several saw the funny side of having to climb so many steps. Some

were concerned about risk of injury, for some others steps were a barrier; on the other hand others considered it a challenge and hence an achievement to climb up a stepped street. Some thought them unusual; still others were impressed by the urban landscape characterised by steep slopes.

Mieke noted the big difference in levels between different parts of the City (Q08.8). Donny (Interview 15) liked the sloping nature of Valletta and noted how the city seemed to be at different levels, these being sea level close to shore, the level of the bastions and the highest level of the commercial core of the city. The different levels of Valletta is discussed further in the next section that considers the relationship between land and sea in the context of Valletta.

13.4.3 The sea and Valletta's adjoining harbours

For most if not all Valletta tourists, the sea is part of the experience. This occurs in one of a number of ways. In the first instance, in whichever Valletta street one is, the sea is visible in the distance. This was noted and liked by Norbert (Q09.8) and also by Tanya and Bruno (Q02.4). Tanya went a step further and noted that her first impression of Malta was the smell of the sea – a smell that must have been dominant in her experience of Valletta. Seeing the sea in the distance gives a feeling, even if not expressed explicitly, of being surrounded by water and being within easy reach of the shoreline. It also gives the feel of being within an area with well-defined boundaries. This is a feeling that is different and distinct from being in an urban area that merges with its surrounding hinterland. Section 4.2 discusses how, in accordance to Lynch (1960), edges act to define urban areas and that lines of fortifications are a good example of edges. Norbert describes the sea as “*belonging to the whole ambience of the city*”. He compares to other maritime cities, such as Naples, and argues that none other have the sea so much part of the ambience (Q09.3).

Another aspect of the sea is its role in Valletta's past and therefore its role in the narrative. In Section 11.3, the relevance of Valletta's past in the tourist experience is discussed. Being part of Valletta's past, the sea becomes essential to the experience, with the added advantage that it can be seen. The

views of the harbour today are not dissimilar to what the harbour looked like during the Second World War and also further back in time, during the time of the Knights. This facilitates the visualisation by tourists of past events that happened in the Grand Harbour (Q09.3, Q10.2, Q21.2, Q28.1, Q25.3). This discussion is further amplified in s11.3.2.

A further aspect refers to sea views. Valletta is a peninsula and offers sea views on both sides; of Marsamxett harbour on one side and the Grand Harbour on the other. It is surrounded with fortifications. As noted in Sections 10.3.1 and 13.2, many interviewees indicated that they walked around and explored. Those who explored the lower ends of Valletta would almost certainly have reached a street or open space over the bastions overlooking the harbour (Q12.2). Inevitably therefore the sea views were an integral part of their Valletta experience. Typically a space along Valletta's periphery would be bordered by buildings on one side and open to harbour views on the other. It would also be overlying the bastions and therefore elevated from sea level by at least twenty metres. In some instances, the advantages that such spaces offer have been maximised, most notably at the Upper Barrakka, the Lower Barrakka, Siege Bell Memorial and Hastings Gardens. These spaces have been appropriately designed and landscaped to provide a quiet and relaxing environment, with harbour views. The sea views from the fortifications were an important part of the experience of several of the interviewees (Q03.8, Q13.8, Q14.6, Q22.4, Q23.7, Q24.6, Q29.3). These findings conform with observations made by Ashworth (2009:303) and reported in Section 4.2. He notes how elevated walkways along city walls offer spectacular outward views of countryside or seascape and that they are a flexible product that can be enjoyed at the pace and duration determined by the visitor.

A boat trip (ferry crossing or harbour cruise) was an activity engaged in by some of the interviewees (s10.3.10). This provided them with a different perspective of Valletta and allowed them to get a more comprehensive view including the buildings, the fortifications and the sea. It is an experience that is well-liked and well-remembered by tourists (Q05.7, Q26.4). The movement of the boat allows for different viewpoints; some from close to the shoreline below the fortifications; others from further away across the harbour. The closer the view, the higher the level of detail that can be observed: the further away, the

more of the City can be taken in one view. For most, the experience of a boat ride is further heightened because of the proximity of water and also because it is something very different to the normal routine.

One could talk of Valletta as having different levels; the level of the sea and shoreline; the level over the bastions; and the level of the streets in the core of Valletta. When walking around Valletta, the visitor will experience the sea in diverse ways, with each 'level' providing a different experience. Along the shoreline, a walker would have high bastion walls to one side and the sea close by on the other. Along some stretches of the shoreline, the natural rock underfoot further enhances the experience. At the 'level' of the bastions, the sea is seen from a distance, and from a higher level, as part of a wider view of the Grand Harbour. The view also includes buildings and historic structures on the other side of the Harbour. At this level, the night time views of the harbours are also scenic. The third 'level', that from the inner streets of Valletta, provides yet another experience of the sea albeit very different from the previous two. The sea is visible, but barely, framed between the facades of high buildings in relatively narrow roads. From most streets in Valletta, the sea is visible in the distance. Norbert (Interview 9) was very observant about Valletta's street layout and noted how Valletta's grid iron street layout causes all east-west streets to lead directly from one waterfront to another. The visitor is constantly walking towards or away from the sea.

13.4.4 Gardens and greenery

Along the periphery of Valletta over the bastions there are several gardens including Hastings Gardens on the Marsamxett side, Upper Barrakka and Lower Barrakka on the Grand Harbour side. In addition there are at least three gardens on the landward side between Valletta and Floriana. Apart from the Upper Barrakka Gardens, interviewee references to gardens and/or greenery were few and in any case made in passing. Two interviewees, however, did mention that they enjoyed going to different gardens (Q21.12, Q30.8). Because of their location over the bastions, the garden experience was not just about the peace and quiet but also about the fortifications and the harbour views.

13.5 Intangible qualities: Beauty and character

The concept of beauty emerges when tourists were commenting about churches, particularly their interiors. Beauty is a concept that is intangible and subjective. Interviewees referred to beauty in the context of architecture with 6 out of 32 referring to the architecture as being beautiful, or at the very least visually appealing. As Petra described it; *“We were very astonished about the beauty of it. We did not know what to expect, we knew it was nice but we did not expect that wow factor”* (Q06.5). The surprise of a beauty beyond her expectations, further enhanced Petra’s strength of feeling on Valletta’s beauty. The role of surprise in the tourist experience is further amplified in s13.2. Angie describes Valletta architecture as ‘absolutely beautiful’ but refers mostly to the churches. Angie has a general interest in church architecture and finds it fascinating (Q05.5). Petra notes that, along shopping streets, one would have to look up at the upper floors because these are more beautiful and visually interesting than the shops frontage on the ground floor (Q06.8). Although Julia appreciated Valletta’s architecture, she expected it to be bigger and more grand, in part because Valletta is a capital city. Her expectations, in terms of the City’s grandness, were not met and hence she was disappointed (Q32.3).

Eric was impressed with Valletta’s architecture but upon further elaboration it became clear that it was the meaning and history behind the architecture that made him appreciate it so much (Q25.1). The visual and the meaning combine to make for an enjoyable experience for Eric. Some of the architecture in Valletta came into being hundreds of years ago and for this reason it also communicates a sense of longevity (Q09.4). Apart from beauty, another intangible and subjective concept that emerges is that of ‘character’ something that is discussed in s14.2.

13.6 The role of movement in the tourist experience

Movement creates added interest in the built environment. Movement engages people as it attracts attention, while providing a constantly changing scene to the viewer. Part of the tourist’s activity is that of watching and observing. Compared to a static image, motion provides a changing image with more

elements to observe. Several referred to how they were engaged by some kind of movement when visiting Valletta (10 distinct references in 7 interviews).

The Upper Barrakka is one vantage point from where tourists can watch activity and movement in the Grand Harbour. It is relatively high up and at the same time not too distant from the water's edge. The entrance to the Grand Harbour is visible as is most of the sea area within the harbour. Movement of ships within the harbour is therefore clearly visible from the Upper Barrakka and somewhat close to the viewer. An added advantage is that the harbour activity can be watched sitting down on one of the benches along the Upper Barrakka terrace, provided of course that there are not too many people around. Amanda and Scott noted how they enjoyed watching the activity in the harbour from the Upper Barrakka (Q22.3). Sandra and Mike described how they spent time at the Upper Barrakka gardens watching a tanker being manoeuvred into harbour by means of tugboats (Q31.4). Others who noted their enjoyment of watching movement of ships and boats in the harbour were Anthony (Q10.5), Byril and Murray (Q23.7) and Lisa and Greg (Q29.3).

The water fountain in Pjazza San Gorg is another source of movement. The activity and movement stems from the water jets and, also frequently, from children playing with the water jets. This was noted by Greg (Q29.4) and Julia (Q32.1). Another source of movement comes from a transport mode, namely the 'karozzin', the traditional horse drawn carriage. Colin notes how it provides visual interest as it moves along Valletta streets (Q03.4). He also refers to other elements that make the 'karozzin' interesting, namely it being something different, a different way of seeing the city, reminder of the past and hence nostalgic and reminder of similar modes of transport in other countries (Q03.4).

People walking along pedestrian streets is also a source of movement, where a dynamic scene is more interesting than a static one or put differently, a street with people walking is more interesting than a street with no people. This is suggested by Susan when she refers to a sea of people in Republic Street (Q14.5) and also by Tony (Q19.3) and Sean (Q13.2).

13.7 Negative aspects of Valletta's urban environment

Parts of Valletta are subject to dereliction with properties not being properly maintained and some other properties being vacant. Although these are relatively small areas, the potential effect on the tourist experience could be significant. On the other hand, some may perceive some lack of maintenance and shabbiness as being part of the City's character. Some (6 out of 32) commented on dilapidated areas but, except for one, their observations were not as negative as one would expect. Gert disliked the lack of maintenance in some buildings because it detracts 'the total atmosphere' and makes it less attractive (Q08.3). Bruno considers it normal for a historic town to have some houses that are not in a good condition, and also for sale, because the houses are expensive to renovate. He notes that this is something also happening in Switzerland (Q02.6). It is interesting how Alison and Nick give a positive spin to something that could potentially be negative. Their first reaction to dilapidated buildings was that of concern, but subsequently they started to find them appealing because it adds to the charm (Q26.3). The knowledge that something is being done makes it easier for the visitor to accept that some buildings are in derelict state, on the grounds that sooner or later the authorities will come round to those buildings as well. Similarly, Thomas refers to *"neglected old buildings with the plaster falling off and the woodwork paint peeling"* in side streets and says that that would cause some people to think they don't like it. To him however *"that's the natural Valletta – that's how it is. That's the real Valletta I remember and picture"* (Q27.1).

In most of the interviews, a direct question was included as to whether there was anything that the survey participant disliked about Valletta. In many cases, the reply was 'no' or 'not really'. Two qualified the statement by noting that you will see shortcomings in any city and that unless it is something very serious you do not remember it (Interviews 03 and 06). Even if the answer was no, this is not to say that some disappointment about Valletta was not mentioned by these respondents at some stage of the interview.

A total of 30 specific negative comments or suggestions were recorded in the interviews. Five of them related to derelict buildings and lack of building upkeep (for example Q08.3) and a further three referred to ongoing building

works. The other comments were varied and included lack of cleanliness, lack of seating, slippery steps, loud music, noise (Q08.2, Q18.5), incompatible new structure, no access to Fort St. Elmo, lack of information for tourists, lack of information on construction projects, no gate at City Gate, closed shops, open market too touristy, relocation of Sunday market, crowding in main street, traffic, parked cars, karozzini people's dishonesty, treatment of karozzini horses and old buses being replaced. On cleanliness, there was one negative comment but most comments were positive. Cleanliness was seen in a positive light in eight interviews including Q13.3 and Q26.7.

It is interesting how some survey participant (11 instances in 9 interviews) identified something negative about Valletta but then gave a justification for it. For example several noted that there are vacant house and/or houses in need of renovation. Bruno (Interview 02) said that it happens in most cities because of the high cost of renovation whereas Petra (Interview 06) commented that *"they are working on that"*. Byril complained about all the building works but then said that it is inevitable for buildings to be restored (Q23.2). Mike (interview 31) noted the amount of restoration works and emphasised that the works did not annoy him because *"they were putting their heart and soul into it."* His comments on restoration works suggest that the visitor appreciates the work carried out to restore buildings. After being asked if there is anything they disliked, Sean (Interview 13) emphasised that *"every city has to go with change"*, presumably to justify some changes that happened in Valletta that he does not particularly like. Michael complained about the crowds but Elisabeth notes it is inevitable because many visitors want to enter and see Valletta (Interview 21). Eric commented about the parking in some of Valletta's streets but then pointed out that it is inevitable in a modern age (Q25.4).

Interviewee's attempts to justify Valletta's shortcomings raises an issue namely the extent to which replies are a true reflection of the interviewee's Valletta experience. The positivity in replies suggests that tourists seek to maximise the positives and minimise the negatives in an effort to justify to themselves the cost and the decision to holiday and visit Valletta. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 17 where issues relating to research method are considered.

13.8 The dogs that did not bark

Over the years, I had numerous discussions on Valletta with people who are very familiar with the City. On the basis of these discussions, I know of issues that one would have expected to be mentioned by tourists, but that hardly received a mention in the interviews. For example, none of the interviewees mentioned that Valletta is a World Heritage Site. The likely reason for this is that it is not well known amongst tourists. In view of the importance given to the historic and other meaning aspects of the city, it is likely that some interviewees would also have given importance to Valletta's World Heritage status, had they been aware of it.

No mention was made in the interviews of the Tigne development across Marsamxett Harbour. There are many Maltese people who have expressed the view (in conversations or in writing) that this modern development is inappropriate, it being just a few hundred metres away from Valletta's shoreline. Tourists who are exploring are more likely to focus on what they find interesting, namely historic buildings within Valletta and ignore what is not of interest, especially if it is several hundred metres away across Marsamxett Harbour. An alternative explanation could be that the perceived negative impact of the modern development at Tigne has been grossly overstated in local debates.

No mention was made of Auberge de Castille. This is surprising given that its location close to Upper Barrakka and also its imposing presence over Castille Square. The Baroque facade of the Auberge is ornate with stone carvings and this should make it even more interesting. There were several interviewees who made generic references to architectural features of buildings. It may be that the interviewees did note the Auberge facade but did not refer to it by name because they were not aware of the name of the building or because they found the names of buildings confusing. It could also be that the layout of Castille Square is not conducive to having people stop and look around. Most of the square is tarmacked and functions as a roundabout / round junction.

13.9 Conclusion

Section 4.2 suggests that the visual and sensory gathering of information of the surroundings is a vital part of the tourist experience. The findings of this research largely confirm this and also provides some interesting insights. Section 13.3 highlights the importance of the sensory experience, particularly visual, and emphasises how, in the context of Valletta, light and colour have a significant impact on the experience of someone coming from a non-Mediterranean environment. Section 13.5 notes how some interviewees spoke of 'beauty' or 'visually appealing' when referring to a building or a physical feature. When there is beauty, the appreciation of the building is heightened and the tourist experience is made more remarkable.

The tourist's interaction with the surroundings is not simply a visual, or a sensory, appreciation of what is being visited. It is a complex process where various factors come into play. In the first instance, prior to 'seeing' something of interest there is a build-up in that the tourist walks around and explores, bringing with it an element of discovery. Section 13.2 recounts comments of participating tourists on this aspect of the tourist experience. This brings with it instances of 'discovery' and others of surprise. Valletta offers a diversity of buildings, features and spaces for tourists 'to see' and this is elaborated upon in Section 13.4. Even if streets may seem similar, there are differences and no two streets are the same (Q29.2, Q04.1). There is also a diversity of detail be it in doors, windows, balconies or stone work. Although they are similar in terms of material, scale and architectural language, there are differences in the detail and no two doorways or stonework features are exactly the same. Stepped streets were another feature that was mentioned prominently in some of the interviews with comments on how these impacted positively on their experience. The role of stepped streets was significantly more than expected.¹⁵ From the interviews, it emerges that movement in whatever shape or form (be it a fountain in the square, ships in the harbour, or even people walking down a pedestrian street) provides added interest and something upon which people will focus their attention (Section 13.6). This adds to the

¹⁵ Over the years, the writer of this thesis has been involved in many discussions on Valletta including tourism aspects. Stepped streets rarely featured in discussions on the Valletta experience and hence the statement that stepped streets featured more than expected in this research.

experience and, depending on the context, can make the tourist experience more relaxing.

Section 13.7 notes negative comments made by the tourists on some physical aspects of Valletta. Although there were several negative comments, it seemed that none were sufficiently strong to dent the positive aspect of the tourist's experience. Some interviewees sought to justify and explain away some negative aspect of the city, suggesting that tourists seek to emphasise positive aspects of their experience and put aside the negatives, in an effort to justify to themselves the cost and the decision to visit Valletta. This chapter ends with things that, based on my knowledge of Valletta, would have expected to be picked upon and emphasised by the interviewees. Instead they barely got a mention. This chapter highlighted the many diverse ways by which tourists interact with their surroundings when visiting a heritage area such as Valletta.

CHAPTER 14

INTERACTIONS WITH SELF, OTHERS AND SURROUNDINGS

14.1 Introduction

In the previous three chapters, interactions with three elements of space were considered, namely with self (meaning) (Chapter 11), with other people (Chapter 12) and with the environment (Chapter 13). This chapter considers instances where the tourist's experience involves interacting with all three elements of place. In this chapter, what is commonly referred to as 'character' (or 'ambience') is discussed in an effort to better understand what is signified by tourists when they use these terms. In addition, two Valletta locations are studied more closely namely Pjazza San Gorg and Upper Barrakka Gardens. These were chosen for further analysis because they emerged as the two most popular places with the interviewees. Inevitably therefore, they were most commented upon making it possible to analyse the experience they offer in greater detail

14.2 Valletta's character

Section 3.2.3 discusses the understanding to the words 'character' as emerging from the literature review. In this section, the discussion is about the understanding of the word 'character' as emerging from the comments of interviewees on Valletta. Many of the survey participants felt that all of Valletta is attractive with no single Valletta place being more enjoyable than others. Bruno considers it nice to see all sides of the city, *"the good with the bad"*, the tourist attractions as well as the side streets (Q02.1). Ian describes the experience as *"good across the board"* (Q04.1). Pamela and Norbert liked all Valletta because you can enjoy yourself in diverse ways within walking distance and without the disruption of pollution and traffic (Q09.1). Susan stated that she liked Valletta because for her it has everything. She described it as a wonderful city (Q14.3). Sue and Ken note that there are many areas of interest

so there is always something different to see (Q24.2). For Lisa, the character was in all of Valletta, and not just one area, (Q29.2) and expressed the hope that Valletta never changes because *“it’s a very special place”* (Q29.1).

Several interviewees equated the character of the City with various physical features including old buildings, balconies, stonework (Q01.3, Q03.5, Q21.6). Donny and Joanne took a photo of a typical Valletta house. To them this was a good reflection of Valletta’s character because of the use of local stone and because of the door and window features (Q15.4). For them, the experience of Valletta was also about noting, observing and understanding what makes for the City’s character. Rosalind found the atmosphere of the streets pleasant and mentioned a number of factors that contributed to the character namely the narrow width combined with high buildings, the soft landscaping in some streets and the ‘stonework’ (Q03.5). Nick compared Valletta with New York and noted that Valletta has much more character because of the slopes and also because of the history (Q26.6). One could extend the comparison and note that in Valletta the scene changes every few metres with different building facades and details. In New York, the scene remains mostly unchanged over the length of a block or more. For Ian (Q04.1), the character was about seeing something different round every corner. Similarly, Sean noted that although all the streets looked the same, in fact they were not. You walk down one street, and find yourself in a totally different area (Q13.5). Sean and Barbara linked Valletta’s character with its uniqueness (also Q13.5).

Character of a place also includes aspects which one would normally consider to be negative. Thomas argued that when you ‘spruce’ up an area you risk losing its identity. He said: *“When you get on the side streets you see the almost neglected old buildings with the plaster falling off and the woodwork paint peeling – that would cause some people to think they don’t like it, but to my mind that’s the natural Valletta – that’s how it is. That’s the real Valletta I remember and picture”* (Q27.1).

Angie referred to Valletta as a beautiful city and in the same breath referred to the amount of history Malta (and Valletta) has. To some extent, for Angie the history is an integral part of Valletta’s beauty. The ‘beauty’ was not just something visual but also something related to the meaning i.e. the city’s

history (Q05.3). Similarly for Petra, Valletta's history and its beauty were almost synonymous. She referred to the wow factor and beauty, and concurrently remarked on the extent of Valletta's history (Q06.5). In several interviews (8 out of 32), the age of the buildings was noted. As Roberta put it "*I like old buildings and the older the better*" (Q17.6). Many found the character to be appealing. It was the history as reflected in the buildings and buildings features that constitute the character. Eric noted that it was the history of the building which really interested him (Q25.1).

Nick noted that Valletta's character was not just about history but it is also about the present (Q26.6). For Sean, Valletta's character is very much the combination of present with the past. On the one hand, he loved the hustle and bustle of a modern day city mostly reflected in the central area. He described it as a working capital with a combination of modern and history (Q13.2). On the other hand, away from the centre and in the side streets, it is more possible for tourists to get a glimpse of Valletta's past. This combination allows visitors not just to "see Valletta" but to "experience it". According to Sean: "*The beauty of Valletta is that it is a modern city, but if you take the modernization out of it, you have got hundreds of years of history and experience*" (Q13.2).

Even if character may mean different things to different people, the predominant features that emerged from the research data as constituting character include the predominant historic context, visually interesting features and no two streets or spaces appearing to be the same.

14.3 Uniqueness of Valletta and its spaces

Uniqueness is a quality that will make a significant difference in the experience of the tourist. It was mentioned in many interviews but in different manners. Some made direct reference to the uniqueness of part or all of Valletta.

The aspect of uniqueness is referred to several times by Barth and Petra in their interview. They note that the history makes Valletta unique; had Valletta not had history it would be just like any other city in the Mediterranean with good weather (Q06.4). All cities have a history so Barth and Petra were most

likely referring to the extent of history and the way it is reflected in Valletta's buildings. A further argument made by Barth is that it is not enough for Valletta to have history. It has to offer unique elements – things which people would not see at home or elsewhere. He cites the Cathedral and the Grandmaster's Palace as examples. If they just wanted to see old buildings, they would not have gone to Valletta because, he argues, they can see plenty of old buildings in Belgium (Q06.2). Barth refers to the importance of uniqueness a third time when he notes that the Armoury holds a big collection of guns and weapons. The fact that he has not seen anything like it elsewhere makes it more interesting to him. Uniqueness increases value to the visitor. Similarly, Norbert considers Valletta's history and built heritage to be exceptional and therefore argues that Valletta must restore the buildings to maintain itself as "*a historical reference point*" (Q09.6).

Uniqueness was mentioned in other interviews but in a more indirect manner, namely by making comparisons with their home town or with other places. At the risk of stating the obvious, a unique place is one like which there is no other, at least in the mind of the tourist. To establish whether a place is unique, the tourist compares to other places, other places being either his/her town or places which he/she visited.

Gert and Mieke noted Valletta's uniqueness by making several comparisons to their native Holland and to other places. Gert observed that prominent buildings in Valletta, like cathedrals, churches and palaces, are integrated within the streetscape as opposed to many other cities where major buildings stand isolated surrounded by open space (Q08.5). Byril is impressed with the architectural style being different to that of England (Q23.3). Gert notes that architecture in Valletta is not dull like it is in Holland where everything is in 'straight lines.' (Q08.6). Mieke jokingly refers to the hanging of washing outside balconies as something that is not done in Holland (Q08.6).

Other features are referred to in several interviews to highlight the unique nature of Valletta. Pavlo describes "*fortifications and the whole city inside the fortifications*" as singular and a most unique experience (Q16.1). Peter noted that there are no small towns like Valletta in Bavaria where he came from (Q20.1), nor are there "*this kind of historic buildings*" (Q20.2). Referring to

buildings, balconies and the way they are constructed, Jill exclaimed that they are so different from anywhere else. She was impressed by the balconies (Q07.6). Jill commented how interesting it is to see things which you would not see at home or elsewhere (Q07.2). Similarly, Elisabeth considered the timber balconies as a most unique feature as she has not seen anything like them in other countries (Q21.6). Referring to a harbour cruise, Alison noted how lovely it is to look back at Valletta. She observed the vibrant colours of the stones and the historic buildings with the sun shining on them, pointing out that it is not something she would see at home (Q26.4). Barth expresses astonishment at the street layout. He explains that historic town centres in Europe have circular road and roads radiating from the centre. Valletta's chess board street layout is unique. It is the first time Barth saw anything like it in Europe (Q06.6). For stepped streets, Tanya notes that she had not seen old worn out steps in any other place (Q02.2). Bruno emphasised the importance of history for their Valletta experience noting its uniqueness by pointing out that, according to him, the Swiss have no history (Q02.5).

The ever-present sea is another feature that adds to Valletta's uniqueness. Norbert emphasised that the sea *"belongs to the whole ambience of the city"*. He knew of other old port cities, like Naples, but none have the sea so much part of the ambience (Q09.3). Further interviewee comments on the sea and its impact on the Valletta experience are recorded in Section 13.4.3. Tanya and Bruno's first impression was the sea because they smelt the salt of the sea in the air (Q02.3). This is unique to Malta and is also something which they liked. Yet another uniqueness of Valletta is the possibility to spend some time, at a vantage point over the Grand Harbour looking at the port activity with ships, yachts and boats manoeuvring and berthing within the harbour. Sandra and Mike described how they watched the activity in the harbour from the Upper Barrakka. As Mike rightly pointed out, it is a sight that few tourists would be able to see in their home city (Q31.4).

14.4 Pjazza San Gorg

A significant number of survey participants (13 out of 32) noted that Pjazza San Gorg (St. George's Square) was a space that was enjoyable to be in. Petra

said it was very nice to sit there with people sitting on benches and talking (Q06.1). The presence of people relaxing makes the place feel calm and safe. Alison and Nick mentioned many features about the square that rendered their experience enjoyable. There is in the first instance the history that comes across from the historic buildings surrounding the square. There is also movement (water fountain); sound (music synchronized with the fountain) and people. With artificial light, the square looks very different between night and day. They note how, in Pjazza San Gorg, different elements come together to create a *“lovely atmosphere”* (Q26.1).

Another feature that drew the attention of survey participants was the guards at the Palace entrance (mentioned in 6 interviews). Tom was impressed by the context where the changing of the guard was taking place, with the Palace facade as a backdrop. The precision of the changing of the guards exceeded his expectations and was comparable to what he saw in London (Q11.1). Sandra was intrigued and surprised to see the soldier guards at the Palace entrance when she entered the square. She thought them to be like the guards at Buckingham Palace and she was quite amused by this (Q31.1). The water fountain as well attracted attention of survey participants (mentioned in 6 interviews). Water jets ‘dance’ to the music on the hour and often small children play with the water jets. The fountain acts as a focus of attention in the middle of the square and enhances the general ambience (Q32.1).

Other features noted were the architecture around the square and the commemorative plaques on the palace facade (3 mentions each out of 32 interviews). Tony noted that one of the plaques was about the awarding of the George Cross to Malta in 1942. From this, and other commemorative plaques, visitors can learn something about history (Q19.3).

As noted in Section 11.4.4, the plaques on the Palace façade were central to Colin’s experience of Pjazza San Gorg because of memories of his father (Q03.1). There were also other elements that made the experience of place enjoyable. Colin considered attractive the overall visual aspect of the square. There was also an element of humour with Colin and his partner taking photos in the guard box. Yet another element was the historic nature of the buildings around the square (Interview 03).

Pjazza San Gorg is a good example of how the interactions of self, other and environment come together to create an enjoyable experience. In terms of self or meaning, the historic nature of the buildings around the square is the main source of meaning. The Grandmasters' Palace in particular not only provides its own narrative but is symbolic of the wider narrative involving Malta's association with the Knights of St. John from 1530 up to 1798. Meaning also emerges from the plaques on the facade of the Palace. In terms of others, the square provides (non-verbal) interactions with other people who are either sitting down relaxing on one of the benches or walking through the square. As for interaction with surroundings, apart from the buildings around the square, there are also the benches, the paving and the water fountain. Whereas most of the interactions with the surroundings are visual, there is also interaction through the sense of touch from being seated on the benches. The fountain provides further opportunities for interaction through visual (with the movement of water), through hearing (with the synchronised music) and through touch (for the children and young people who play with the jets of water). By involving other senses besides visual, interactions with surroundings are taken to a higher level within Pjazza San Gorg. The visitor's experience of place is not limited to a single element but would most likely be a combination of elements that come together to give the visitor an enjoyable experience.

14.5 Upper Barrakka Garden

Upper Barrakka is the most popular (non-paying) tourist attraction in Valletta (mentioned in 20 interviews). It is liked mostly because of the views of the Grand Harbour (mentioned in 13 interviews). A more detailed discussion of the views is warranted in the context of tourist's interactions with self /meaning and with environment (or form). The predominant element in the views from the Upper Barrakka is the sea within the harbour. The historic fortifications on the Cottonera side of the harbour, particularly Fort St. Angelo, are clearly visible. The views of the sea, the fortifications and the urban areas around the harbour constitute the tourist's interaction with the surroundings. Another aspect of surroundings is that of ships in harbour, with the tourist-form interaction being further emphasised when the ships are moving in or out of the Harbour. Many

of the buildings and structures that are visible from the Upper Barrakka gardens are evidently historic. This is especially so for the fortifications, on both the Valletta and the Cottonera side. The very shape of the fortifications tell a narrative of warfare of hundreds of years ago. This is the interaction of the tourist with self/meaning. The activity of watching the view also involves a people element in that, more often than not, there are other people enjoying the view from the terrace of the Upper Barrakka. Similar to pedestrian areas, even if there is no verbal exchange, there is interaction between people in that the presence of people relaxing and enjoying themselves makes the place more pleasant to be in. The interaction of the tourists with all three elements of place makes the activity of watching the view from the Upper Barrakka Gardens a very enjoyable experience, as evidenced by the positive comments made by the survey participants.

Many of the interviewees used superlative adjectives to describe the scene including panoramic (Q03.8), beautiful (Q14.6), spectacular (Q13.8), wonderful (Q14.6, Q21.1), interesting (Q20.7), impressive (Q03.8, Q21.1), lovely (Q22.4), stunning (Q23.7) and fantastic (Q23.7). The extent to which the views were mentioned highlights the importance of views in the visitor experience. Lisa and Greg, who are repeat visitors, like Upper Barrakka so much that that is the first place they go to when they get to Valletta (Q29.3). Colin and Rosalind were most impressed by the views from Upper Barrakka to the extent that they spent time considering from where best to take the photo (Q03.8). Elisabeth liked the views from the Upper Barrakka mostly for the history (Q21.2). Apart from seeing fortifications and other historic structures, around the harbour, she could also better understand how the harbour was defended in the past. She was intrigued by a guide's comparison of the Grand Harbour's shape to that of a hand (Q21.1). Her experience of Upper Barrakka revolved mostly around a better understanding of the geography and history of the Harbour. John and Jill enjoyed the view by sitting down on one of the benches on the outward terrace of the Upper Barrakka. It is not just the views that they watched when seated. They also watched people and one of the many cats in the garden (Q07.3).

An event that takes place at the Upper Barrakka further enhances the tourist experience. This is the Noonday Gun salute involving the shooting of cannons and it takes place every day at noon. The re-enactment recreates the drill

adopted by the British military in the shooting of the gun at noon, complete with uniforms. Here again there are opportunities for interaction with the three elements of place.

(i) Interaction with self/meaning is about the narrative of nineteenth-century British soldiers saluting ships entering harbour. This inevitably brings with it the narrative of the British occupation in Malta.

(ii) Interaction with others is about the enjoyment of the event with hundreds of tourists and Maltese, including the 'ah' from the crowd with every bang of the shooting canons. There is also interaction between the crowd and the people doing the re-enactment, the same interaction that one gets between a performer and an audience. Elisabeth noted how a re-enactor, dressed in nineteenth century British military uniform, came amongst the people watching the salute, giving out leaflets and replying to questions. It is something that she liked. The interaction between the re-enactor and tourists enhanced her overall experience (Q21.3).

(iii) Then there is interaction with the surroundings that is about the cannons as well as their context with the landscaping and the sea views behind.

The enjoyment of watching the movement of ships and boats in harbour was noted in four interviews (Q10.5), (Q23.7), (Q29.3) and (Q31.4). This was discussed in s13.6. There are other events in the Grand Harbour which can be enjoyed by tourists. For example, Sue and Ken were fortunate to be at the Upper Barrakka when there was the start of the Middle Sea Race.¹⁶ There was the visual aspect of numerous sailing boats and their sailing out of the Harbour; a scene that they describe as spectacular. Added to it there is the uniqueness of the race start: it is unique because it takes place once a year and also because of the unique context of the Grand Harbour. For Sue and Ken being part of this special occasion was a day to remember (Q24.6).

¹⁶ *The Middle Sea Race is a yachting race over 600 miles from Malta to the Strait of Messina and back. The start takes place in the Grand Harbour just opposite the Upper Barrakka. It is held in October of each year with over a hundred yachts taking part.*

The Upper Barrakka is not just about the views. Apart from the terrace overlooking the Grand Harbour there is also the garden which creates a quiet enclave away from the hustle and bustle of Valletta's main streets. The garden also includes a number of monuments and memorials, something noted by Donny (Q15.1).

Maryline referred to her enjoyment of the Upper Barrakka Gardens simply as 'Being there'. For her, the different elements of the gardens came together to create an ambience where she could feel relaxed and at peace with herself (Q18.1). Amanda also referred to the 'peace' which the Gardens offers, apart from the greenery and the views (Q22.4). Sandra listed elements that made her experience of the Upper Barrakka enjoyable. It was not one single element, but several including "*the presentation, the colours, the flower beds and the trees*", the neatness, the statues, the buildings as well as the guided tour for the noon-day gun re-enactment (Q31.3).

Part of the experience of the Upper Barrakka Gardens is that of surprise; the surprise resulting from the contrast of the quiet green spaces of the garden to the openness and the views from the terrace of the Upper Barrakka. Upon entering the garden, a first time visitor to the garden will walk through pleasant greenery with benches, a fountain and other garden furniture. Further on there is a row of arches that is visible but there is nothing to suggest that there are views beyond. Upon walking further on and through the arches, the visitor is confronted with a spectacular view of the harbour with a large stretch of sea and innumerable historic structures across the harbour. The resulting surprise makes an enjoyable view, even more enjoyable.

14.6 Conclusion

In the previous three chapters, Chapters 11, 12 and 13, interactions with three elements of space were discussed separately. A separate focus allows for a detailed discussion on each based on the research data. Section 4.1.1 introduces the form-activity-meaning model. As was noted in this section, the three components of the form-activity-meaning model are deemed to be interrelated and inseparably interwoven in experience (Relph, 1976;

Montgomery, 1998:95). They are distinct and yet inseparable when experiencing place (Relph, 1976:47). In the same manner, interactions with self/meaning, with other people and with the surroundings are inseparable in the tourist experience. This notwithstanding they are discussed separately in the previous three chapters to allow for a better understanding of each.

This chapter brings together consideration of these three tourist interactions into a single discussion. The discussion in Sections 14.2 and 14.3 revolves around terms that are often used to describe areas of interest to tourists, namely 'character' and 'uniqueness'. Even if there were differences in emphasis how interviewees understood 'character', for many character was about interaction with meaning resulting from the history of the place and with surroundings resulting from the numerous visually interesting features and buildings. There is no evidence from the data to suggest that 'character' of a place is associated with the presence of people, even if for many of the interviewees the presence of people enhanced their tourist experience, as noted and discussed in Section 12.2.

Section 14.3 records instances where interviewees referred to Valletta or a place within Valletta as unique. In addition it notes instances where the interviewees make comparisons with home or with other places and thus bringing out the difference of Valletta and hence its uniqueness. Many interviewees considered Valletta unique mainly because of physical features, such as architectural detail, buildings, streets and fortifications. Valletta's history was also often referred to in the context of its uniqueness.

The discussion in Sections 14.4 and 14.5 on tourist interactions revolves around two specific locations in Valletta namely Pjazza san Gorg and Upper Barrakka. These two locations were chosen because they were the most popular locations with the interviewees. For each of these two location, the discussion brings together interviewee comments reflecting one or more of interactions with self/meaning, with others and with the surroundings

For both Pjazza San Gorg and Upper Barrakka, the tourist experience involves interactions with self/meaning, others and with surroundings. The different interactions come together to create an enjoyable experience suggesting that

places that provide opportunities for the tourist to interact with all three are the most likely to be enjoyable. I would also contend that these two Valletta locations are the most popular because they provide opportunities for tourists to interact with all three elements namely self/meaning, others and the surroundings.

CHAPTER 15

TOURIST USE OF INFORMATION

15.1 Information at the tourism destination

The tourist makes use of only a very small portion of all that the city has to offer. This would be the case for all users of the city but it could be argued that the tourist has very limited time and knowledge to make decisions about what, when, where and how to use the range of urban resources available (Ashworth and Page, 2011:8). This inevitably brings into the discussion the information about the destination to which a tourist will have access. Section 5.1.2 considers how meaning is created through the person-object interactions that are heavily influenced by the tourist's own cultural and social background (Wearing, 1996; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007:65). For a building or urban space to have meaning to a visitor, that visitor needs to be aware of it (Poria et al, 2003: 241). The implication of this is that the information made available about a site may impinge on the tourist experience.

Tourists seek information to help them identify and evaluate options before making purchase decisions. After purchase, good use of information will enhance trip quality and optimise the allocation of scarce resources (Wong and McKercher, 2011:481). Minghetti and Celotto (2014:565) describe tourism as an information-based activity. They consider information as central to the destination competitiveness because good information helps tourists enjoy a fulfilling experience. In terms of tourist information, Ortega and Rodríguez (2007:147) distinguish between information at the tourism destination and information accessed prior to the visit. The latter includes the promotion of the tourism destination and the tourists' information search prior to making travel decisions. They argue that information at the tourism destination has received very little attention from researchers in tourism literature.

This chapter considers information at the tourism destination. According to Ortega and Rodríguez (2007:151), information at a destination allows tourists a better knowledge of the natural, historical, cultural and man-made attractions offered by the destination. They note that a wider knowledge favours the

presence of the tourists at a greater number of attractions than previously envisaged by the tourists themselves. Ortega and Rodríguez (2007:151) note that the likelihood of a return visit will increase with more awareness of what the destination has to offer. Tourists will return to experience those sites that they had not seen on their first visit or that they had seen but wish to experience again.

The link between the physical site and the tourist is what MacCannell (1976) terms as the 'marker'. For Wong and McKercher (2011:482), a tourist attractions' system consists of three elements: a tourist, a site and a marker. Markers are items of information about the site *"that are communicated to tourists formally or informally and serve as the catalyst for visiting"*. The fame of the attraction and its meaning are mediated through markers (MacCannell, 1976:111). Effective attractions' systems work when markers stimulate visitation, while the system may become defective when no markers are present, when they send conflicting messages or do not encourage visitation (Wong and McKercher, 2011:482). The significance of a historic building is not in the building elements (stone walls, doors, windows and so on) but in the knowledge of the bygone eras and events to which the building points. A 'marked' site such could be a historical feature, a monument, a historical building, a group of buildings or an entire area. It could also be a feature or site that is indistinguishable in itself but associated with a personality or event (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990:67).

An attraction is more than a physical object or visible phenomenon; it is a signifier of a concept or idea. *"The attractions are not only objects; they are also constituted as signs"* (Suvantola 2002:170,171). The mere existence of markers tends to glorify the attraction, irrespective whether the information is fully correct or not. Suvontola (2002:99,101) refers to markers as things, ideas and narratives that, by definition, are signs of what they refer to. They contribute to the image of the marked and may be on-site or off-site. Advertising and travel literature are two forms of markers but there are also others.

Jennings And Weiler (2006:58) refer to the role of mediation of the tourism experience and define mediator as someone who assists in making of meaning and in the tourist's construction and representation of that experience. They

note that mediation is a continuous process as knowledge or meaning are constantly being mediated by others and by the tourists themselves. Jennings and Weiler distinguish between people acting as mediators and non-human physical elements. The people mediators normally are tour guides (formal mediators) but could also include other people with whom the tourist will engage at the tourism destination (informal mediators). Non-people mediators refer to media with which information is communicated to the tourist like for example signage and interpretative panels.

In research carried out by Wong and McKercher (2011:491), it was observed that the depth of knowledge imparted to tourists at tourism information offices was superficial and tended to refer more to the extrinsic appeal of such places as tourist attractions rather than to their intrinsic cultural or heritage values. Tourists were advised to visit historic sites because they were 'very famous', 'important' or 'nice'. They were not provided with information as to why they were important or significant. These observations suggest that it is not only a matter of information being provided but also that the depth of information could potentially impinge on the tourist experience.

Another consideration in the discussion of information is the length of 'exposure' of the tourist at a site. Suvontola (2002:175) notes that there are limits to how much new information and how many new sensations one can encounter without getting bored. In the beginning of the encounter, the attraction and the information associated with it provides enough impulse to arouse interest. But the novelty may soon wear out. This suggests that when giving information on a site, like for example in an interpretative panel, care should be taken not to overdo it as this could detract, rather than enhance the tourist experience.


15.2 Information for Valletta tourists

Some of the interviewees made references to the use of tourist information. This was useful because it provided some indication as to whether tourist information impinges on the experience of the tourist and if yes, in what way. Looking at the interviews holistically, there did not seem to be a particular issue on information availability for tourists, even if possible improvements were pointed out. Some

said they had guide books (4 out of 32). Others were not sufficiently interested to want to know historic information. They were content to be in a historic context without necessarily learning more about it.

There were several interviewees who were more curious and who actively sought more information on what they were seeing. Roberta wished for someone, possibly a tour guide, to tell and explain the narrative because, as she put it, there is a limit to the information one can take in from reading signs or guide books. Besides, “*you do not really get to know the City unless you have information*” (Q17.4). Similarly, Thomas was curious about the capping stones of the granaries and erroneously thought that they were the bases of pillars of a building that previously existed (Interview 27). He was insistent about finding out what they were and asked some people but still did not get the correct explanation. Even if he did not get it right, trying to find explanations (or understanding what he sees) is part of the experience and possibly had he discovered what they were, his experience would have been greatly enhanced. An information panel explaining the granaries and capping stones would have made a difference for Thomas and others with an enquiring mind.¹⁷ Donny was keen to get to know about the sites he was experiencing. For example, he took a photo of a Latin inscription at the base of the Royal Airforce Memorial to have it translated when he got home (Q15.7). Four respondents indicated their interest in the works at City Gate and thought it would have been useful if there was a panel with information on the project (interviews 07, 09, 19, 29).

On the other hand, there were instances where survey participants had an enhanced experience due to available information. Colin greatly enjoyed a war memorial he found by means of heritage trail¹⁸ (Interview 3). Another example of enhanced experience with better information is illustrated by Elisabeth who was intrigued with a guide’s comparison of the shape of Grand Harbour to the fingers on a hand (Q21.1). Elisabeth also noted how, at the firing of the noonday gun at the Upper Barrakka, a guardsman went round, giving people leaflets and answering questions (Q21.3).

 Eventually Thomas did get to know what the granaries capping stones were as I explained this to him after the interview (Interview 27).

¹⁸ The heritage trail is located in Floriana, just outside Valletta, and consists of a series of sites with information and map on a panel at each of the sites.

To find one's way, the use of a map and/or direction signs would be useful. Some had a map available. Others wished for a map but did not have one at hand. Others relied on direction signs to find their way – the feedback on signs was mixed; two of the participants found them useful; two others got lost presumably because there were insufficient direction signs (Interviews 14, 15). Donny and Joanne took a wrong turn and ended up in a part of Valletta that is less sought after by tourists. Their experience therefore was very different from what they had expected and from the norm (Interview 15).

Petra and Barth used a map to find their way. They commented that if they had a different map with other points of interest, they would have taken a different route (Q24.3). This illustrates the relevance of a map for the tourist's experience. Petra and Barth established the route of their walk in Valletta on the basis of a map and information they had in hand. In turn the route determined the parts of Valletta they came in contact with and hence it determined their overall experience. Frank and Ann observed how easy it is to get from one place to another because of the grid system of streets. There are no twists and turns where you can get lost, making their visit easier and more enjoyable (Q30.4). John and Jill point out several deficiencies in direction signs in Valletta including lack of direction signs to the tourist office, to the toilets and to the terminal for the Sliema ferry. They suggest a plan of Valletta as you go in, to show you where you are and how to get to places (Q07.5). They also suggest that buildings with a story or that stand out should have an information panel so that people who wish to learn more can do so.

15.3 Observations on tourism information

The quality of information that a tourist requires varies according to the individual. Some are quite content to enjoy the surroundings without having information as to what they are seeing; others would want to know more. With guide books, information panels or other media, the desire to know more may be satisfied. There may also be instances where the inability to have more information about a particular feature causes a degree of frustration (like for example Thomas with the granaries capping stones).

The outcome of the research suggests that tourist information effects the experience of the tourist in two main ways. It influences which sites the tourist will visit and hence the context within which the tourist experience will take place. Moreover, the availability of information about a site will aid the tourist to understand and better appreciate the site. In the case of Valletta, the information that was available to the interviewees was somewhat superficial; most interviewees did not have at hand information about what they were seeing. A few interviewees desired information but this was not readily available. Many interviewees did not require better wayfinding facilities partly because Valletta's gridiron street layout makes it easy to find your way. In any case, many interviewees were more intent on exploring rather than visiting particular sites. There were, however, a few interviewees for whom better wayfinding would have been useful.

CHAPTER 16

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter considers the findings as reported in previous chapters and discusses possible implications. The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the tourist experience of historic areas. Section 16.1 considers the tourist interaction with surroundings and explores various aspects of this interaction including mundane elements in the urban landscape; beauty and visual interest; 'interactive' walking and the surprise element in experience. Aspects of self and of meaning are considered in Section 16.2. An important finding of this thesis is about the importance of 'layers of experience'. This is discussed and explained in Section 16.4, with Section 16.5 demonstrating the 'layers of experience' offered by Valletta. The discussion in this section is based on tourist motivation. A main outcome of this thesis is the tourist interaction model. This is explained and discussed in Section 16.7 and 16.8.

16.1 Tourist interactions with surroundings

In this section various aspects related to the tourist interaction with surroundings are noted and discussed.

16.1.1 The mundane vs. the monumental

The findings of this thesis suggest that the commonplace and mundane in the urban landscape are an important component of the tourist experience of historic areas. Section 13.4 describes features that the interviewees noted during their visit of Valletta. The interviewees referred mostly to features in the city that are common place and mundane. They spoke about doorways, timber balconies and stone features; about streetscapes and stepped streets. References to more symbolically important buildings or structures were much less frequent. For example, fortifications were mentioned a few times, sometimes for their symbolic significance and sometimes as part of the overall cityscape. St. John's Cathedral was mentioned in several interviews mostly for the beauty of the

inside. Buildings and structures with potentially greater symbolic meaning barely got a mention. Grandmasters Palace was perceived more as providing the backdrop to Pjazza San Gorg rather than for what it represents. Auberge de Castille was not even mentioned. These findings support Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland's (2010:1165) observations on the importance of the commonplace features of the landscape in shaping the experience of place. Whereas the power of the symbolic remains strong in the tourist imagination, the on-the-ground experience of tourists appears to rest heavily upon their actual encounters with the everyday elements. Tourists may visit some key sites of symbolic value, but most of the experience is about moving through unfamiliar areas *"that require some improvisation."* Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland (2010:1167) go further and claim that it is the commonplace, mundane features, and not the symbolic attractions, that are the 'seductive' aspects of place. These observations are not inconsistent with the findings of this research.

On the other hand, one aspect of Valletta is its monumentality. Maitland (2009:4) notes that it is inevitable for capital cities to be symbolically rich and that their effect would be achieved through layout of urban spaces, style of architecture and monumentality. This is also applicable to Valletta with several buildings particularly the Grandmasters Palace and Auberge de Castille reflecting its capital status. Smith (2009) notes Valletta's monumentality and considers it in relation to Valletta's role as a tourism destination. As indicated in Section 13.8, there were very few comments in the interviews about Valletta as a capital and also on its monumentality. As it happens, there was one interviewee (Q32.3) who expressed her disappointment that Valletta is not as grand as one would expect from a capital city.

16.1.2 Interactive walking

The tourist has to walk around and explore to become aware and experience the mundane elements referred to in the previous section. In the case of Valletta, stepped streets and steep slopes add a further dimension to the activity of walking (Sections 10.3.1 and 13.2). Stepped streets featured very frequently in the interviews. Interviewees noted that walking up or down stepped streets is a different experience to walking on level or slightly sloping ground. It involves

greater exertion and in a sense also greater interactivity between the tourist and the steps as one has to watch where to place the foot. Stepped streets signify steep slopes and steep slopes signify vistas down the street.¹⁹

Section 4.2 discussed two different forms of walking namely ‘purposive’ and ‘discursive’. It may be that one could talk about a third type of walking – one that actively engages the walker because of the nature of the terrain. In walking up and down the steps, the tourist is doing two things namely watching one’s step and looking at the surroundings. The latter entails observing interesting features in the surrounding streetscapes (balconies, architectural detail, doors, windows and so on). The latter also involves observing the vistas up and down the street and noting how the views change at different levels.²⁰ One interviewee describes it as follows: *“Steps take you up; as you move up the steps you see the sky; your view changes. It is more interesting and there is more variation”* (Q02.2). The difference in height offers new perspectives. From the data (refer to S13.4.2 and Q01.6, Q10.3, Q11.5, Q26.5), it appears that even if the exertion is greater, the increased interactivity of this kind of walking enhances the experience and makes it more enjoyable. This type of walking may be termed as ‘interactive walking’.

16.1.3 Beauty and visual interest

From the data analysis a number of observations could be made about the role of visual interest²¹ in the experience. There were no specific comments on the beauty or visual interest of the exterior of individual buildings. This suggests that tourists are not so much interested in the external visual qualities of individual buildings. Alternatively tourists have difficulty to absorb and appreciate the visual qualities of individual buildings. One exception is a particular interviewee who was a sculptress and had a keen interest in form (Interview 08). In contrast, when speaking about open views, the survey participants were more

¹⁹ See photos Oth04-int02-4, Oth19-int15-02, Oth27 in Appendix E.

²⁰ Photos Oth03-int01-03, Oth04-int 02-4 and Oth05-int02-05 in Appendix E give some idea of what this would involve.

²¹ In the context of this thesis visual interest also includes beauty.

forthcoming. The views over the Grand Harbour were often referred to as beautiful by the interviewees (Section 14.5).

For many interviewees, the visual interest was mainly about specific features that (as suggested in Section 16.1.1 above) in most cases were common and mundane (for example doors and balconies). Visual interest also referred to the overall context of the streetscape. Frequently, the visual element became relevant to the tourist experience when it combined with the meaning of a building or site. Whereas historic buildings and features provided added visual interest, the fact that they were historic and that they had meaning greatly enhanced the experience of the tourist. The visual element may well have not been noted or considered by the tourist had it not been for the meaning that enticed the tourist to consider how the meaning is reflected in the visual. For example in Interview 15, Donny and Joanne discussed how the form of the Royal Airforce memorial with the phoenix at the top of the column reflected the meaning. Visual interest is accentuated, and is also referred to as beauty, where the building or structure has a meaning that entails more intense emotions and feelings of the tourist. This could relate to religion or to a loved one. Susan, for example, is a repeat visitor and knows several churches in Valletta. She talks about the beauty of the churches concurrent with comments she makes about spirituality and religion (Q14.4). Similarly, Sean talks about the *“Maltese addiction to their Churches”* concurrent with his emphasis of the beauty of some of Valletta’s churches (Q13.6).

Beauty, as opposed to just visual interest, was referred to the interior of St. John’s Cathedral, but not to its exterior. Several interviewees were very impressed by the beauty of St. John’s Cathedral (Q13.6, Q18.3, Q21.13). In the data analysis, I did not dwell on this because the Cathedral is an indoor paid visitor attraction and this thesis is about the experience of external spaces. For some of the interviewees, the visit to Valletta included external urban spaces as well as indoor visitor attractions. Although there is a clear distinction between, say, the indoor experience of St. John’s and the external experience of Pjazza San Gorg, the tourist tends to perceive them as parts of a single whole, rather than distinct experiences. The nature of the experience of one part is likely to influence another part. The excitement and emotion generated by a visit to St. Johns is likely to ‘spill over’ to the other parts of the tourist’s Valletta experience.

Put differently, an exceptional experience in St. John's creates a state of mind that will result in more tourist enjoyment of the streets and piazzas of Valletta. This observation is based on my interpretation of the interviews and on the way some interviewees spoke very highly of their experience of St. John's and then just as highly of the streets and piazzas they visited.

16.1.4 The surprise element in the tourist experience

The element of surprise impinges on the tourist experience more than is generally acknowledged in academic literature. Suvantola (2002:180) describes his delight when, after a couple of hours of strenuous walking along a creek, he came across a waterfall that cascaded into a pool. This "*spontaneous encounter*" came to him and his travel companions as a total surprise. He points out that the "*most intense aesthetic experience of nature*" is likely to catch one by surprise. He compares this experience with another where his group was told that they would be visiting three waterfalls along a road. They went to the waterfalls one after the other by car. The intensity of their experience was nowhere near the intensity of the one they had when they accidentally found the waterfall.

Exploration is an activity in which tourists often engage, something that has been confirmed in this research (s10.3.1, s13.2). The act of exploration is about seeking out things that are largely unknown to the explorer. Referring to heritage trails, Hayes and Macleod (2007:48) note how visitors are "*..... invited to 'explore' and to 'discover' for themselves: personally to find surprises or 'hidden' worlds*" When, in the act of exploration, something new or different is discovered, inevitably there is surprise, even if limited. In some instances, the surprise will be more significant and this will give rise to a more intense and enjoyable experience.

In this research, several interviewees met with unexpected features when walking and exploring Valletta's streets (referred to in Section 13.2). The features were nothing out of the ordinary but they were unexpected and therefore they were a source of enjoyment to the interviewees. Section 14.5 describes how the configuration of the Upper Barrakka Gardens is conducive to

give a most pleasant surprise to first time visitors. Upon entering the garden, a visitor will walk through pleasant greenery with garden furniture typical of a normal garden. Further on there is a row of arches that is visible but there is nothing to suggest that there are views beyond. Upon walking further on and through the arches, the visitor is met with spectacular harbour views. The surprise element is not dissimilar to the surprise experienced by Suvontala (2002:180) of the waterfall referred to above, even if the contexts are completely different. In some ways, Valletta itself is a surprise. Before visiting Valletta, first-time tourists are likely to imagine it to be similar to a historic town they may have seen elsewhere. Differences include the straight roads (as opposed to the winding streets), the ever-present sea, the predominance of the timber balcony and the countless features reflecting the Knights' legacy. Upon noting the differences of Valletta from what they imagine, the experience becomes a surprise almost in its totality.

16.1.5 The role of weather in the tourist experience

Weather impacts the tourist experience in several different ways, both positive and negative. When approaching tourists in hotel lobbies, there were two instances where the tourists said they did not visit Valletta because the weather was too hot when they got off the bus. This suggests that weather has a much greater influence on the experience of historic areas than what would normally be acknowledged in academic literature. Suvantola (2002:172) refers to his own experience of seeing the Eiffel Tower for the first time on a cold rainy winter evening. He was more concerned in keeping warm than, as he put it, trying to contemplate the Tower.

The impact of weather on the experience can also be tempered by the urban morphology. In Chapter 10, it was noted that walking around is a main activity in which the tourists engage in. Valletta's narrow streets and relatively high buildings provides ample shade allowing for tourists and visitors to walk the streets without too much discomfort on sunny summer days. Compared to large open spaces, historic areas provide smaller urban spaces with more protection from the elements.

In a Mediterranean context, good weather has a significantly positive impact due to the quality of light and the resulting brightness of colours. In the analysis of the data, Section 13.3 notes the role natural light plays in the tourist's experience.

16.2 The role of self in the tourist experience

From this research it emerges that issues relating to self and identity of the tourist have a significant role in tourist motivation and behaviour and hence also on the tourist's experience. This is reflected in the tourist interaction model that includes interaction with self/meaning as one of three key elements of the tourist experience. The role of tourist self and identity is significantly more than what most tourism practitioners, and possibly some academic literature, would care to acknowledge. It is also much more significant than what I had envisaged at the start of this research. It is suggested in Section 5.2.2 that identity-related motivations are central to all tourist experiences as they provide an understanding why individuals engage in tourism.

Identity-enactment in the tourism activity was also evident in some of the interviews of this research. The following are some examples:

Tanya (Interview 2) seemed to be a person who was very receptive to sensory stimuli and her visit to Valletta gave her ample opportunity to engage her senses. She made several comments about the colours and even commented on the smell of salt in the air (Q02.3). She also noted the changing views as one walks the streets (Q02.2) and also distant views along the streets (Q02.4). Her visit to Valletta reinforced her identity as a person who enjoys sensory experiences.

Pamela (Interview 9) yearned for a lifestyle where she can use and enjoy facilities in an environment which is safe, free from stress and pollution and without having to travel by car. It was a lifestyle that she had in her younger days but which she now believes unattainable in most cities (Q09.1). This aspect of her identity emerged in the interview. She liked spaces and architecture where communities can develop and where children can play and everyone is on foot (Q09.7). For her, Valletta represented a lifestyle that she

longs for. Certain aspects of her identity made her look for features in Valletta that conformed to her aspired lifestyle.

Susan (Interview 14) is a regular visitor to Malta and to Valletta. Her experience of Valletta supported her identity in two distinct ways. First there was her work as a barrister. She had the opportunity to be shown around the Maltese court building on Republic Street and witness a trial by jury. (Q14.2). Even if it was a one-off, her attachment to Valletta became stronger because of an experience that had supported and reinforced her own identity. Second, Susan's reference to her experiences in Assisi and at Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam suggest that she actively sought deep and numinous experiences (Q14.4). Valletta's churches provided her with the possibility of having the numinous experiences that she sought thus further reinforcing this aspect of her identity.

Donny (Interview 15) is a person who likes to engage himself intellectually and there were two locations in Valletta where this occurred. The first was the Royal Airforce Memorial. With Joanne, he was actively debating and speculating its meaning and went so far as to take a photo of an inscription in Latin which he intended to have translated when he got home (Q15.7). The second was an archway under a road bridge within which there were some large wall graffiti. Donny was eager to understand the message that the graffiti artists sought to communicate. He was even fascinated by the message (*"you can never arrest an idea"*), partly because it found resonance with his own views and outlook of life (Q15.8). A more intellectual and possibly philosophical approach to life is part of Donny's identity. His experience of Valletta helped him maintain and develop this aspect of his identity.

16.3 Comparisons of tourists

16.3.1 Comparison between first-time and repeat tourists

In this research, the interviewees included both first time tourists as well as tourists who visited Malta several times. I could observe that there were some differences in the experiences of the two groups. The following comparison is based on my own observations during the interviews, the transcription and eventually during the analysis. The Valletta experience of first-time visitors is

more likely to involve emotion and feelings because the novelty of exploration and discovery of a first time visit is stronger. For some repeat-visitor interviewees the desire to explore was evident but for some others the emphasis was more on spending some relaxing time in a pleasant environment.

In Section 12.3, it was noted that some interviewees displayed a desire to get to know or in some way be involved in the lives of local residents. 'Affiliation' is one of the needs that may be applicable to tourist behaviour, a point considered in the literature review in Section 3.3. For repeat tourists it is possible to meet this desire by becoming acquainted with Maltese and subsequently developing friendships. This was the case with two or three of the interviewees. By being repeat visitors, these tourists were able to satisfy the need for 'affiliation' in a more effective manner. Tourism activity is a means for seeking a sense of belonging. This results in a commitment and hence to repeat visitation to a destination (Trauer and Ryan, 2005:488). The desire for affiliation may also be the reason for the high number of repeat visitors to Malta. As reported in Section 2.3, the proportion of repeat visitors to Malta is approximately one in every three tourists. For British tourists, the proportion is even higher with one in every two being a repeat visit (2013 data from MTA, 2014a and MTA, 2014b). The latter may be attributed to Malta's past colonial links with Britain and also to the continued commercial and cultural post-colonial links between Malta and Britain.

16.3.2 Comparison between tourist and non-tourist

Maitland and Newman (2008:226) note that the boundaries that have traditionally separated 'tourists' and 'locals' are dissolving even if their cultural references may be different. Their consumption of cities and attractions are increasingly similar with residents behaving in a touristic manner and visitors having similar consumption demands as residents (Maitland 2009:8). Many visitors to cities are now "*experienced users of cities*" who seek to go beyond the traditional tourism areas. Some are frequent visitors who develop a sense of belonging to the place they visit (Maitland 2009:9).

These observations are also applicable to a degree to the Valletta context. Some tourists visit Malta frequently and the research results suggest that a few

tourists consider it as a second home (for example Q13.1). This results in a level of familiarity with Valletta that made their experience somewhat dissimilar to those of other tourists, whereby their level of excitement of getting to know a new or different place is diminished. Some repeat visitors have also developed friendship networks in Malta. For tourists who visit Malta and Valletta very frequently, the familiarity and the nature of the attachment to Malta and to Valletta will have some similarities to that of local people. On the other hand, many Valletta and Malta residents engage in leisure activities in Valletta that are similar to activities enjoyed by tourists. This includes visiting gardens, going to museums and other visitor attractions, eating out and other activities. There are many non-Maltese who have taken up residence in Malta. Their visits to Valletta, especially the initial ones, are likely to have many similarities to that of tourists. There are also many Maltese who are keenly interested in Maltese culture and history. For them, visits to historic and cultural sites, including ones in Valletta, is a main source of leisure. In these instances, the distinction between the tourist and local becomes blurred. The observations from the research data are compatible with arguments made in tourism literature about dissolving boundaries between touristic behaviour and daily life.

16.4 Layers of experience

The research data reveals that Valletta offers tourists a wide range of experiences. If we take the tourist interactions model as a reference, Valletta is not about interactions with surroundings alone, or just about interactions with meaning. Valletta in its totality, as well as its various streets and piazzas, offer opportunities for tourist interactions with all three elements namely self/meaning, other people and surroundings. This brings into the discussion the concept of 'layers of meaning' referred to by Griffin and Hayllar (2007:13) who note how a tourism precinct can be experienced in different ways by different people provided that the *"precinct offers opportunities for different 'layers' of experience"*. Hayllar and Griffin (2005:526) propose a strategy of 'layering of experiences' to guide ongoing development and management of a precinct. Such a strategy seeks to ensure that diversity of experience is privileged over homogeneity. This is similar in concept to a management and planning tool developed for recreation (recreation opportunity spectrum) and a further tool

developed for tourism planning (tourism opportunity spectrum) (Butler and Waldbrook, 1991; Boyd and Butler, 1996; Huang and Confer, 2009). Hayllar and Griffin (2005:526) acknowledge the potential of the opportunity spectrum as a planning tool. They distinguish it from the notion of layers of experience because the former focuses on providing a range of settings for a variety of different experiences, whereas the latter implies that the same setting must be capable of concurrently accommodating a range of experiences. In an urban historic context, the accommodation of a range of experiences within the same place is essential, not least because the tourism activity is integral to city life and not divorced from it. This research on Valletta suggests that the concurrent provision of 'layers' within a historic setting is possible without compromising the experience of a visitor who only wishes to engage with a particular 'layer'. Moreover, it is safe to conclude that the interviewees found Valletta to be enjoyable because it offers many layers of experience, a point that is further amplified in the next section. With more layers of experience offered, the tourist will have more possibility of interaction (with self/meaning, with others and/or with surroundings) and hence expectations and aspirations are more likely to be met.

Another reason why more layers of experience result in more enjoyment may be less evident. In recounting his experiences of visiting archaeological sites in Egypt, Suvnatola (2002:175) notes how he and his fellow tourists got tired of the continuous exposure to attractions. After their 'saturation point' was reached they just routinely inspected the sites without the feelings of excitement they felt at the start of the sightseeing. This suggests that the different layers of experience offered by historic areas allows the tourist to change from one activity to another, with the second activity offering a break and respite from the first. For example, after spending time contemplating a memorial, the tourist could walk around the streets exploring. The interaction with the surroundings (walking around and exploring) would not just be enjoyable in its own right, but it will also provide a mental break from the emotive interaction with self/meaning (contemplating memorial).

Wearing (2010:25) notes that no typology can ever effectively provide the basis for the analysis of tourism experiences since the tourist will move in and out of being a certain type of tourist as he or she progresses through the trip. In the

discussion on tourist typologies (section 3.3), it was noted that for most who participate in cultural tourism activities, culture is a secondary reason to visit a destination.

The majority tend to participate for recreational and pleasure reasons and not for deep learning experiences (McKercher and du Cros, 2003:56). This observation is supported by data for Valletta as follows: Of all tourists to Malta, 90 per cent chose to visit Valletta. Yet just 39 per cent gave history and culture as the reason for their visit to Malta. This suggests that 51 per cent of tourists to Malta visit Valletta for a reason other than culture. Being Valletta, this 51 per cent are likely to participate in some kind of cultural activity (visit to St. John's cathedral, appreciate the historic architecture, visit to a museum and so on). They are therefore cultural tourists. On the other hand, their motive to visit Valletta was not related to culture making them what McKercher and du Cros (2003) describe as incidental cultural tourists (Section 3.3). It also further confirms the relevance of 'layers' to the tourism experience.

16.5 Evidence of layers of experience based on tourist motivation

Section 3.3 considers needs that may be applicable to tourist behaviour based on 'Murray's Classification of Human Needs' (Ross, 1994:20). In the same section, I highlight four needs that may be particularly relevant to the experience of historic areas namely 'play', 'cognizance', 'affiliation' and 'achievement'. There is a correlation between tourist motivation and human need in that the satisfying of human need can be deemed to be a motive for tourist behaviour. The discussion on human need, and hence on tourist motivation, provides a useful framework within which the presence or otherwise of 'layers of experience' can be assessed.

The following discussion provides evidence of different 'levels of experience'. The evidence is derived from the research data and is based on different tourist needs. The research data provides substantial evidence in relation to three needs, namely 'play', 'cognizance' and 'affiliation'. With reference to the fourth

identified need, 'achievement', the research data provides little or no evidence and is therefore not included in the following analysis.

The evidence for 'play', 'cognizance' and 'affiliation' is presented in table format in Tables 3a, 3b and 3c respectively. For each table, the description of the need according to Murray's Classification is given in the first row. Subsequent rows note the relevance of need to the experience of historic areas in the left column. The right column gives evidence based on the research data as to how the specific need was catered for in the Valletta experience. Relevant sections (from Chapter 10 to 13) and relevant quotes (from Appendix A) are given in brackets.

The conclusion that can be derived from this analysis is that Valletta offers many diverse ways how tourists' needs can be satisfied. In a sense, each row of Tables 3a, 3b and 3c represents a layer of experience that Valletta offers. It is safe to conclude that the interviewees found Valletta to be enjoyable because it offers many layers of experience.

Table 3 Analysis of tourism needs in historic areas

Table 3a

'Play'	"to relax, amuse oneself, seek diversion and entertainment. To have fun, to play games. To laugh, joke and be merry. To avoid serious tension."
<i>Relevance of need to the experience of historic areas</i>	<i>Evidence from research data</i>
Includes relaxation and diversion. The experience of urban space is one of relaxation and feelings of peace and quiet. Tourism is also a means of getting away from the daily routine, including being in surroundings which are not the daily norm, thus allowing the person not to be pressurised or stressed.	Several interviewees described how they enjoyed relaxing in pleasant surroundings in Valletta. Various adjectives and verbs were used by interviewees to describe the experience of quiet places in Valletta: relaxing, no pressure, comfortable, enjoy all of it, just taking it in, relax and watch, feel so alive, feel good, sit in the quiet (S11.4.1 - Q05.1, Q07.3, Q23.1, Q17.3). These could be summed up in the simplest of terms as used by one interviewee "Being there" (Q18.1).
Opportunities for humour are sought by some tourists thus providing for more relaxation and an experience free from stress	On several occasions, interviewees referred to humour, mostly unintended, where a feature or incident is interpreted in a funny manner (S11.4.2 – Q08.13, Q11.3, Q17.5, Q31.3).
For some being in a historic context without necessarily knowing about the history is what the experience is all about.	Some interviewees enjoyed being in Valletta historic atmosphere created by the extent of old buildings. They enjoyed the place irrespective of the narrative (S11.3.1 – Q01.4, Q11.4, Q21.7).
Appreciating beauty makes a person feel good and hence has an element of fun. The same applies to buildings or features that provide visual interest.	<p>Beauty or visual interest were referred to by several interviewees. This was referred to in the context of Valletta's architecture (S13.5 - Q05.5 Q06.5, Q06.8; S13.4.1 - Q13.4, Q22.1, Q24.2).</p> <p>Visual interest was also referred to in the context of character of urban spaces and also to the history and historical aspects of the architecture (S14.2 – Q02.1, Q14.3, Q29.1, Q01.3, Q03.5, Q21.6, Q15.4, Q03.5, Q26.6, Q04.1, Q13.5, Q27.1, Q05.3, Q17.6, Q25.1, Q26.6, Q13.2).</p> <p>This is discussed in further detail in S 16.1.3</p>
Being told stories or narratives is a widespread form of entertainment in books, films and other media. It is also a form of entertainment at a tourism destination where the tourist enjoys being told stories linked to the place being visited. For some, getting to know about the narrative is what the tourism experience is all about and the more interesting is the narrative, the more enjoyable is the experience likely to be.	<p>Several interviewees referred to history as an important aspect of Valletta. They saw buildings and structures that were evidently of the past. They were interested in the narrative behind them and often sought to get more information on the narrative from guidebooks and other sources (S11.3.3 - Q01.5, Q02.5, Q06.7, Q13.3, Q16.2, Q20.3, Q24.4).</p> <p>Several interviewees tried to imagine or visualise what Valletta, or some aspect of it, was like in the past. For some of them the feeling was about being taken back in time. The past-visualising were was for the period of the Knights, the British period, WWII, past construction techniques and past way of life (S11.3.2 - Q09.3, Q10.2, Q15.3, Q21.5, Q24.1, Q23.3, Q25.1, Q25.2, Q25.3, Q28.1).</p>

Table 3b

'Cognizance'	"To explore. To ask questions. To satisfy curiosity. To look, listen, inspect. To read and seek knowledge."
<i>Relevance of need to the experience of historic areas</i>	<i>Evidence from research data</i>
<p>The experience of a tourist in an urban environment involves wandering, lingering and taking in the surroundings resulting in exploration and discovery. With exploration comes mystery, this being the promise for further information. Pursuing 'mystery' leads to discovery that involves the acquisition of new information.</p>	<p>Many interviewees referred to walking and wandering around the streets of Valletta. This suggests a desire to explore and discover new things, rather than limiting oneself to one or more visitor attractions. (S10.3.1 - Q05.2, Q10.3, Q12.2, Q12.3, Q20.4, Q21.12, Q23.8, Q24.5, Q28.2).</p> <p>Several interviewees indicated their enjoyment at exploring and satisfying their curiosity. (S 13.2 - Q07.1, Q08.8, Q13.2, Q24.2, Q26.2, Q30.3).</p> <p>In some instances, interviewees were inquisitive and actively sought to learn more about what they were seeing (Section 11.4.3(a) – Q27.5, Q15.7, Q08.9).</p>
<p>Getting to know narratives about a place is a means for satisfying curiosity as well as seeking new knowledge.</p>	<p>Several interviewees referred to history as an important aspect of Valletta. They saw buildings and structures that were evidently of the past and they were interested in the narrative behind them. (S11.3.3 - Q01.5, Q02.5, Q06.7, Q13.3, Q16.2, Q20.3, Q24.4).</p>

Table 3c

'Affiliation'	"To form friendships and associations. To greet, join and live with others. To co-operate and converse socially with others. To love. To join groups."
<p>This was evident in interviews where respondents had actively sought the local life and the way people lived. In a sense, the visitor was seeking a connection with the local – the more that is discovered about local life, the stronger the feeling of having connected.</p>	<p>In many interviews, it emerged that tourists had a desire to get to know or in some way be involved in the lives of local residents. Often they sought out features that they perceived to be a reflection of how people lived (S12.3 - Q01.1, Q01.7, Q03.2, Q03.6, Q08.10, Q09.4, Q10.4, Q30.2 Q31.6).</p> <p>For some interviewees, Valletta was about a way of life that existed in the past, elements of which are still evident in the present (S11.3.4 - Q02.5, Q09.5, Q17.6).</p>
<p>A friendly approach by locals is considered important by several interviewees, in part because it gives the feeling of having 'connected' or created some form of association with the local.</p>	<p>A frequent comment made was about the friendliness of local people (S12.4 - Q04.2, Q10.1, Q11.8, Q12.1, Q13.7, Q14.5, Q23.6).</p> <p>Coupled with this is the historical connection between Malta and Britain and the resulting positive attitude, as perceived by many visitors, of the Maltese towards the British (S12.4 - Q07.9, Q13.1, Q22.2, Q25.5, Q31.7).</p>
<p>Collective memory of a past event is a means for individuals to associate with other individuals. Memorials are tangible reminders of the past event and hence become a means for association. Spirituality, or more specifically religion, is also a means for people to associate with each other.</p>	<p>There were several instances where memories of a military past generated emotions for interviewees, particularly where a relative was involved in war action (S11.4.4 - Q03.1, Q03.7 Q21.3, Q21.4, Q21.11, Q30.1).</p> <p>The comments of some interviewees suggest that they felt a special bond to Valletta and to its people partly because of religion or because of a numinous experience of a church or site (S11.4.5 - Q14.4, Q13.6, Q13.7, Q18.3, Q21.13, Q03.3).</p>
<p>The development of emotional attachment with a place because of its physical qualities and/or aspects of its meaning facilitate a greater feeling of association of the tourist to the local people.</p>	<p>There were several instances where the interviewees indicated that they had developed an emotional attachment to Valletta. (S 11.4.6 - Q05.5, Q14.3, Q14.5, Q25.5 and also Q13.1, Q13.2, Q13.3, Q13.5, Q13.7)</p>

16.6 Uniqueness of experience vs commonalities between experiences

From the analysis of the research data, two apparently contradictory conclusions can be derived. On the one hand, each of the thirty two interviewees referred to places, activities and emotions which, taken holistically, were different from those of any other interview. This suggests that no two tourist experiences are ever the same. The idea that each tourist experience is unique is supported in tourism literature. Wearing et al (2010:24) refer to *“the diversity and plurality of tourist experiences”*. McKercher and du Cros (2003:46) note that two tourists may have substantially different experiences, even if they are both highly motivated culture tourists. The reason for this is that different tourists will engage with cultural tourism attractions at different levels due to interests, level of knowledge, time availability and the number and type of travel partners.

On the other hand, there are many similarities between the different interviews of this research suggesting that there are many commonalities in experiences of tourists. Tourism literature often discuss typologies of tourism practice (Section 3.3.4) and implicit in such discussions is that there are sufficient similarities between tourism experiences to group them into types. The two opposing positions can be reconciled in part as the former, namely uniqueness of experience, refers to the experience in its totality whereas the latter, namely commonalities between experiences, refer to parts, rather than whole experience of a destination. Put differently, although taken in its totality a tourism experience is unique, parts of the experience will have similarities to many other experiences.

The following considers the uniqueness of experience and the reasons why it comes about. In part, differences in the tourist experience stem from different motivations. The tourist may wish to relax and seek diversion, or to explore and satisfy curiosity or to seek associations (Section 3.3.3). Tourist motivations can be very diverse and therefore they will inevitably give rise to experiences that differ from one another.

As identified in both the literature review and the results analysis, there are countless factors contributing to uniqueness of experience. The following is an

overview of factors that could potentially give rise to divergences of experiences and hence contribute to uniqueness:

- (a) In terms of interactions with surroundings, the survey participants noted a vast range of different features in Valletta's urban spaces. These were mainly buildings and their architectural details; streets as defined by their width, slope and height of buildings; and the sea and the way it can be experienced differently from different Valletta spaces (section 13.4).
- (b) Interactions with others in the tourism experience can manifest itself in a number of diverse ways including the presence of people in urban spaces and interactions with people for a service (for example in a restaurant or a shop). Moreover, the extent to which local people's lives can be experienced by outsiders also gives rise to differences in experiences. (These are considered in Section 4.3 in the literature review and in Chapter 12 in the results analysis.)
- (c) There are a range of factors that result from interactions with self and with meaning. Tourists have different social and cultural background and each tourist has his or her own life story. The experience of the heritage area is influenced by the background of the tourist (be it work or profession, general interests, life experiences, past knowledge/ experience of Valletta and so on). (Section 5.1.2 and Section 11.2). The experience is dependent on the tourist's reading of meanings and, as suggested by Selby et al (2008:100), interpretations of representations and landscapes vary significantly between different individuals. The age and mobility of the tourist may be a determining factor as to how much walking around the tourist can do and also which sites are seen and which are left out of the walking itinerary. From the literature review and the research analysis, a number of other factors can be identified the main ones being the extent to which tourist is seeking meaning (Section 5.2); the relevance or otherwise of authenticity (Section 5.3 and Section 11.3.5) and the tourists' interest in the narrative (Section 5.6 and Section 11.3.3).

In developing for tourism, cities have adopted similar approaches to the extent that reproduction of similar areas has undermined city distinctiveness (Maitland and Newman, 2008:225). This observation is less applicable to Valletta as it possesses some features that make it very different from what may be perceived

to be a typical historic area. These include, for example, the scale and height of fortifications, timber balconies, the Maltese building stone and its workmanship, the proximity to the sea and a history linked to a military order. Because of the uniqueness of these elements, it is very unlikely that they will be compromised or diminished through development. For this reason and because of the combination of unique features, it is unlikely that Valletta will lose its distinctiveness over time.

Different levels of familiarity with a tourism destination (Section 5.1.2) will also give rise to different experiences. The activities engaged in and the walking itinerary will be, to some extent influenced, by previous knowledge of the site and hence many differences are likely between the experiences of a repeat visitor to that of a first time visitor. A tourist experience is also determined by the choices made during the visit. Some of these choices are down to chance. While walking, does one turn left, walk straight ahead or turn right at a crossroad? Other choices are based on information that the tourist may have available, an aspect of the experience that is discussed in Chapter 15. This could include information from websites and guidebooks as to which sites are worth visiting. It could also include maps and on-site direction signs to find one's way. Further factors that make for different experiences are different circumstances. This could be related to weather or to an event or activity that the tourist comes across while walking around Valletta. The factors that shape the tourism experience are so numerous that it is not possible for the experience of two tourists to be exactly the same, even if there may be similarities.

Whereas the uniqueness of the tourism experience is acknowledged, this research seeks to identify commonalities in the tourist experiences of Valletta. The analysis of the research data has provided many useful insights on the tourism experience and these insights have been brought together into a conceptual model that is explained in the next section.

16.7 The tourist interactions model

16.7.1 The Context

Urban design literature proposes approaches on how to design urban spaces and make them more amenable and enjoyable for users. This research considers an urban design concept and applies it to tourism. The justification for this approach is that tourism activity in historic areas involves the use of urban space for enjoyment and leisure.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide a detailed discussion of the form-activity-meaning (F-A-M) model allowing for a better understanding of the experience of place. The discussion considers separately each of the three elements namely form, activity and meaning. A separate understanding of each provides an appreciation of how they combine together to create a sense of place. In addition, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 amplify the discussion to bring out the relevance of the F-A-M model to the tourist experience.

When considering the literature on the F-A-M model and applying it to tourism experience, it seems more appropriate to consider a variant of the F-A-M model. The F-A-M model refers primarily to the intrinsic qualities of the urban space, namely form, activity and meaning. For a better understanding of the tourism experience, it is considered useful to develop a variant whereby the tourist, and not the urban space, is the focus. The model variant refers to interactions of the tourist with different aspects or elements of the space. The model illustrates interaction of the tourist with self, an interaction that primarily results from the meaning that is associated with a place. It also refers to interactions with others; interactions that are mostly non-verbal. The third element is interaction with the surroundings. This involves using the senses, especially vision, to engage with buildings, sites and artefacts. The focus on the interactions of the individual, rather than on the intrinsic qualities of place, emerges also from the literature review as discussed in Section 4.1.2

Chapters 11, 12 and 13 consider the interactions of the tourist with three elements of place namely with self/meaning, with other people and with the

environment or surroundings. The discussion relates to results emerging from the research data. Chapter 14 considers instances where the tourist's experience involves interacting with all three elements of place. It focuses on two spaces in Valletta, namely Pjazza San Gorg and Upper Barrakka, that were the most popular with the interviewees. From the analysis it emerged that these two spaces provide opportunities for the tourist to interact with self/meaning, with others and with the surroundings. It is reasonable to conclude that these two spaces are popular because they provide opportunities for interactions with all three elements, rather than just one or two.

The tourist interactions model is derived from this research and is represented graphically in Figure 4. The tourist is the focus of the model and this is reflected with the tourist being at the centre of the diagram, surrounded by the various elements with which he or she will interact in the tourism experience. Elements are represented with colour shapes that in turn are grouped (by means of dotted lines) into three; interactions with self/meaning, interactions with others and interactions with surroundings.

16.7.2 Interactions with self and with meaning: (1), (2) and (3)

Self (1): Section 5.2 notes that the search for meaning is described by some writers as a primary motivation in a person's life (Frankl, 1992:105) and that therefore its relevance to the tourism experience should not be underestimated. In a similar vein, in the discussion on tourism authenticity in Section 5.3, reference is made to existential authenticity with some tourists feeling themselves more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life because they are *"engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of daily commitments"* (Wang, 1999:352). These feelings of self-actualisation are generally referred to in this research as interaction with self and have emerged in various diverse forms as illustrated in Section 11.4. In section 11.4.1, for example, I explain how interactions with self entail feelings and emotions that may have little or no reference to context. It is about being in an environment that enables you to be at peace with yourself. For example, John and Jill spend time at the Upper Barrakka garden just sitting, relaxing and watching whatever is happening around them (Q07.3). Interaction with self is

also about the tourist being engaged intellectually to understand an area, building or feature (Section 11.4.3(a)). For example, Donny and Joanne were intrigued by a memorial and were intellectually engaged to try to understand what it was about (Q15.7). Intellectual engagement also involves the reading of the symbolic meaning of buildings and landmarks (Section 11.4.3(b)). For example, Lisa (Q29.5) and Elisabeth (Q21.10) considered the symbolic meaning of City Gate to be important; the symbolism includes gateway to a fortified city and also an element of welcome. Another aspect of interaction with self are the tourist motivations resulting from an individual's pursuit of a desired identity. Identity-related motivations are relevant to the tourism experience as discussed in Section 5.2.2.

Background of tourist (2): Thoughts and feelings are inevitably linked to and influenced by a person's background. In the literature review (Section 5.1.2), it was noted that the meanings of buildings, spaces and artefacts are heavily influenced by the tourist's own cultural and social background as well as memories, interests and concerns (Wearing, 1996; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007:65; Voase, 2002:391,392). This was confirmed in the analysis of the research data (Section 11.2) where elements of the tourist background that came out most were the person's profession, memories of loved ones and memories of childhood. Moreover, many interviewees compared Valletta with their home town or a place visited previously. In the discussion on authenticity in Section 5.3, it was noted that the difference draws visitors to a place rather than the authenticity (Maitland, 2007: 27). To establish difference, and hence the uniqueness of a place, the tourist will need to refer to other places that are familiar or that may have been visited. It is inevitable therefore that the tourist background, in terms of knowledge and acquaintance with other places, will impinge on the tourist's experience. This conclusion is supported by the findings of this research in section 14.3 where several references made by interviewees to other places are recorded.

History and narrative (3): This is an element that, for many tourists, is dominant in the experience of a historic area. The relevance of narrative in the creation of place was discussed in Section 5.6 in the literature review. It may be that

narratives of place are not grounded in historical fact, but for most tourist sites it is the idea of 'history' that provides the narrative and the meaning that visitors will find interesting. Many tourism experiences are dependent on the availability and communication of narratives. Some places are part of the tourism itinerary because they are associated with powerful stories (Chronis, 2012:444). Based on a quote from Ashworth and Tunbridge (2004: 15) on Valletta, Section 5.6 notes certain qualities of the narrative that will make the tourist experience more enjoyable. The relevance of narrative and history to the tourist experience emerges in the analysis of the research data (Section 11.3.3) with several interviewees displaying interest in Valletta's past. On the other hand, contrary to what one would expect, there were few references in the interviews to specific historic episodes. In most cases, it was the historic atmosphere (involving buildings perceived to be historic) that the interviewees liked. History of the place also features in how the tourist visualises or imagines the past. Several instances of this are recorded in Section 11.3.2. Whereas the discussion in Section 14.3 suggests that the tourist experience is about being in a different place, certain comments made by interviewees suggest a desire for a feeling of being in a different time.

16.7.3 Interactions with surroundings: (4), (5)

Interactions with surroundings involves the sensory engagement of the tourist with the surroundings. By means of the senses, primarily vision, the tourist will gather information about shapes, colour, detail and texture of buildings and features. Physical movement through space, together with sight, enable people to perceive the three-dimension and develop a strong feeling for spatial qualities. Considerations on sensory perception were discussed in the literature review in Section 4.2 and subsequently supported by the research findings in Section 13.3. From the findings it appears that, in the case of Valletta, the quality of light and the colours were an important element of the experience. Interactions with surroundings also entails exploration and discovery of 'new' locations and of interesting features – aspects that were discussed in the literature review in Sections 3.2.3 and 3.3. This was supported in the analysis of the results in Section 13.2 with several interviewees noting that they enjoyed walking around and exploring the streets of Valletta.

Locations (4): This refers to urban spaces and visitor sites that the tourist will come across while walking and exploring the heritage area. Locations in Valletta seen or visited by the interviewees are listed in Section 10.2. Some locations may be well known to tourists and frequently visited. Two locations in Valletta were considered the most enjoyable by the survey participants. These were Pjazza San Gorg (Section 14.4) and Upper Barrakka Gardens (Section 14.5). Other locations may be less well known and possibly 'discovered' or visited by chance. For some interviewees (Q07.1, Q08.8, Q30.3), exploration resulted in the discovery of 'new' and potentially more interesting locations at the lower end of Valletta.

Physical features (5): Interaction with surroundings is also about the tourist noting and observing physical features on buildings and within urban spaces. For character of urban areas, the most relevant are buildings, streetscapes and physical form. This was highlighted in the literature review in Section 3.2.3. It also emerged in the research analysis in Section 13.4 where numerous interviewee comments on physical elements are recorded. Moreover, Section 14.2 highlights how the physical form contributes to Valletta's character as perceived by the interviewees.

The literature review in Section 4.2 features the work of Lynch (1960) who notes how people mentally organise the environment into a coherent image. He refers to five key physical elements that support legibility namely paths, nodes, landmarks, districts and edges. The literature review on Valletta includes an analysis of Valletta's urban morphology (Chapman, 2006) in Section 2.6. Of Lynch's five physical elements, the two that feature most prominently in Valletta are 'landmarks' and 'edges'. There are numerous 'landmarks' in Valletta of diverse sizes. The most evident are two church buildings that dominate the skyline. 'Edges' in Valletta refer to the extensive fortifications and the shoreline. Other features considered in the urban morphology study include street layout, urban spaces, built form, architectural detail and materials.

Interviewees made numerous comments about a variety of features in Valletta (Section 13.4). In most instances, the features noted were not specific to that

street or space but were representative of Valletta. For example, the typical Maltese balcony was mentioned in several interviews, including Q07.6, Q09.5, Q21.6 and Q23.4. Fortifications were also referred to several times, including Q08.11, Q09.2, Q16.2, Q21.5 and Q25.2. Interviewees noted that, although there is conformity in the streetscapes, all streets are different. No two streets are the same (Q29.2, Q04.1). The same can be said for architectural detail. Although there is conformity in material, scale and architectural language, no two doorways or stonework features are exactly the same. Section 13.6 highlights the positive impact that movement of physical features can have on the tourist experience. Examples includes ships moving into harbour or the movement of water jets of a fountain.

16.7.4 Interaction with other people (6), (7) , (8)

People in urban spaces (6): The presence of people makes urban spaces more interesting and enjoyable. Section 4.3 in the literature review notes how successful public spaces are characterised by the presence of people, in an often self-reinforcing process. Urban spaces are social spaces in that when two people are together in the same space there is a form of social contact, even if there is no verbal exchange (Griffin and Hayllar, 2009; Gehl, 1987). For places to be convivial, the attraction of a critical number of pedestrians is required and this can be achieved by means of a diversity of uses and active ground floor frontages (Roberts, 2001: 39-47). The literature review also notes that people-watching is a frequent activity in spaces with pedestrians. Gehl (1987:15) describes the opportunity to see, hear, and meet others as one of the most important attractions in city centres and on pedestrian streets. The people element of Valletta's tourist experience emerged in the analysis of the research data with numerous interviewee comments as reported in Section 12.2. For example, the pleasant ambience created by the presence of people in Pjazza San Gorg was commented upon by several interviewees (Q06.1, Q26.1, Q31.2). People in urban spaces also involves people-watching, an activity that is enjoyed by many (Q07.4, Q01.2). A pleasant ambience could also be the outcome of a special occasion with organised activities such as bands, musicians and dance performances (Q32.4).

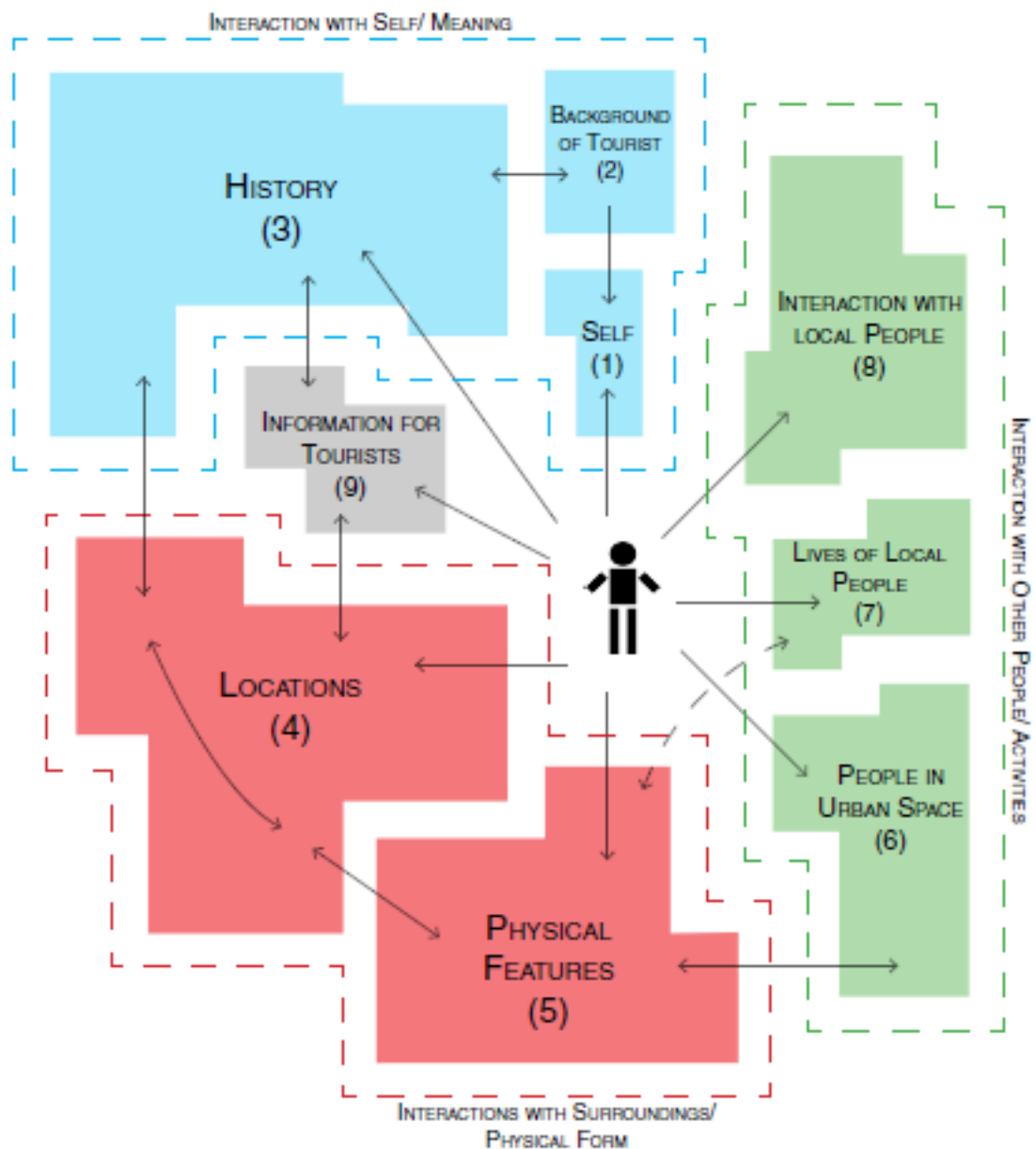


Figure 4 Tourist interactions model

Lives of local people (7): Another aspect of the interaction of the tourist with the local is the way the tourist seeks out actions or activities by locals that are perceived to be a reflection of how people lived (Bødker and Browning, 2012:208). This is noted in the literature review in Section 4.3. It is supported in the research analysis in Section 12.3. This records several instances where interviewees expressed a desire to get to know or in some way be involved in the lives of local residents. For example, Colin noted, and even took photos, of people doing daily chores like sweeping in front of the house (Q03.2).

Interaction with local people (8): This involves interactions, most likely verbal, of the tourist with another person for the purpose of a service. In this context, friendliness is considered essential by the tourist (Section 12.4). Friendliness of local people featured frequently in interviews (Q04.2, Q11.8, Q14.5, Q23.6) suggesting its importance in the overall tourist experience.

16.7.5 Linkages between different elements of the model

The model is a simplified representation of what happens in the real world. A particular tourist activity may indeed be associated with two or three different elements of the model suggesting that there are various linkages, and even overlaps, between different model elements. The following are some examples.

- The history of a site is often read and interpreted by the tourist in accordance to his or her background. For example, Frank (Interview 30) showed a particular interest in the Sacra Infermeria²² and its history because he was a former nurse. This connects the 'background of the tourist' (2) with the 'history and narrative' of the site (3)
- For some tourism sites, it is the combination of narrative with the physical aspect of the site that makes for an enjoyable experience. So whereas

²² The Sacra Infermeria (Holy Infirmary) was built by the Knights in 1574. The Knights raison d'être was caring for the sick including people who were injured at sea – hence its location close to the Grand Harbour shoreline in Valletta.

the tourist can interact with a site without the need for a narrative, the availability of a heritage interpretation to the site is likely to enhance the tourist's experience of that site. This connects the 'location' (4) with the 'history and narrative' (3).

- Features in the urban environment provide for more enjoyable experience if they are linked to a narrative. For example, Valletta's fortifications support numerous narratives about the building of the City and also about important past events (for example Q09.2 and Q21.5). This connects the 'physical features' (5) with the 'history and narrative' (3).
- The historic context combines with the presence of people to create a convivial place for people to enjoy (Q06.1, Q26.1, Q31.2). It makes the pedestrian experience different from non-historic and hence potentially more enjoyable. This connects the 'people in urban spaces' (6) with the 'physical features' (5).
- Some features were found to be interesting by interviewees, not because of their intrinsic beauty or visual interest, but because they were perceived to be a reflection of local people's lives. Mieke liked the niches at street corners and tablets near doorways because they gave her an insight in local people's way of life (Q08.1). This connects the 'lives of local people' (7) with the 'physical features' (5).

16.7.6 Information for tourists (9)

One aspect that emerged from the research data was the importance of tourist information. Chapter 15 considers how the tourist information at the destination could potentially effect the tourist experience. Information influences which sites the tourist will visit and hence the context within which the tourist experience will take place. Information increases the awareness of the lesser known tourist locations and therefore increases the number of visitors to these sites. The availability or otherwise of information about a site will influence the tourist's experience of the site. At the destination, tourists can get information about a

site from printed material (information leaflets or guidebooks), from information panels at the site or through a mediators (for example tourist guide).

Tourist information and its use by the tourist impinges on each of the tourist interactions discussed in previous chapters; it enables the tourist to choose which sites to visit and how to get to them; it enables the tourist to get information about the history of a site and other aspects related to its meaning; it could also enable the tourist to get to know about the lives of local people and potentially learn how and where the tourist could be able to experience part of that life. Because it impinges on each kind of tourist interaction it cannot be neatly categorised with any one of them. It is therefore kept as a separate element in the model.

16.8 Discussion of the tourist interactions model

16.8.1 Interpreting the model

The relevance of an element in the overall tourist experience is dependent on many factors. As discussed previously, no two experiences are the same. It may be that for one person a particular element is dominant in the overall experience, whereas that same element may be of little or no significance to another tourist. For example, the forms of buildings and landmarks were important to Peter who enjoyed exploring and seeking out details in facades (Q20.4). This was of much lesser importance, say, to Julia who seemed more interested in people and in the activity that was going on (interview 32). The model therefore should not be interpreted as a precise representation of any tourist experience. It suggests interactions of the tourist that may occur and that are likely to enhance the tourist experience of a historic area.

16.8.2 Comparison of models

This section compares the form-activity-meaning model (F-A-M) with the tourist interaction model (TIM). The two models are closely related in that one is a derivative of the other. The main similarity between the two is that they are

both based on three elements and there is a clear parallelism between the respective elements as follows:

- Form in F-A-M model corresponds with interactions with surroundings in TIM.
- Activity in F-A-M corresponds with interaction with people in TIM.
- Meaning in F-A-M corresponds with interaction with self/meaning in TIM.

There are also some differences. First, the focus of F-A-M model is the place or location and how people experience it; the focus of TIM is the individual tourist and how he or she interacts with self/meaning, other people and surroundings. Second, the TIM model disaggregates each of the three interactions into elements; three interactions are disaggregated into eight elements. Each element is explained and justified on the basis of analysis of the data and, to a lesser extent, on the literature review. The TIM also offers explanations on the linkages between different elements. Literature offers a number of variants of the F-A-M model (Section 4.1) but most remain at the level of the three elements with limited discussion on what constitute the three elements. A third difference is that F-A-M does not consider information available to user of the place because in any case the focus is on the place and not the user; TIM model acknowledges the relevance of information for tourists by including it as an element separate to the other three 'interactions' elements.

16.8.3 Applicability of model to non-tourists

Although the model refers to tourist interactions, the various elements identified in the model (possibly with the sole exception of tourism information) may also be applicable to other users of Valletta's urban spaces, henceforth referred to as non-tourists. These could be Valletta residents, people who work in Valletta and/or residents of other parts of Malta and Gozo. For non-tourists, use of Valletta's urban spaces will be mostly functional and therefore their walking in these spaces will be 'purposive' (refer to Section 4.2 for a discussion on 'purposive' and 'discursive' walking). There will be instances where non-tourists will make use of Valletta's urban spaces for leisure purposes, in which case the tourist interaction model may also be applicable.

Apart from my role as a researcher, I have been involved over the years in discussions about Valletta with many Maltese people and noted various writings in local newspapers about Valletta. In some instances, these discussions and writings referred to leisure aspects of Valletta's urban spaces. With reference to 'people in urban spaces', pedestrian streets with high level of activities (such as Republic Street) are enjoyed by tourists and also by non-tourists. The activity is enjoyed by both groups in very much a similar way except that for some tourists the activity in Republic Street is not just about the 'buzz' but also because the people in the street are a reflection of local life.

On the other hand, I would argue that there are two main differences between tourist and non-tourist experiences of Valletta's urban spaces. First, for non-tourists the meaning element of the experience will be significantly different to that of tourists. For Maltese people, national identity features strongly in meanings associated with Valletta. Valletta's cultural significance provides a reaffirmation of one's identity and is also a source of pride. Other than for minor exceptions, national pride and identity are not likely to feature in tourists' experiences. The second difference relates to the level of familiarity. Non-tourists would be very familiar with most aspects of Valletta, including its urban spaces and its history. For Maltese residents in Malta, a high level of familiarity is inevitable. Children learn about Malta's culture and heritage in school; most people visit Valletta regularly for an activity, for shopping or for some other errand; local media frequently includes features on Malta's culture and heritage including aspects on Valletta. Because of a high level of familiarity, non-tourists will perceive Valletta very differently from tourists and hence the Valletta experience will also be different.

16.8.4 Applicability of model to non-historic areas

The elements comprising the model are also relevant to urban areas that are not historic. New areas and modern development can be enjoyed by tourists if and where one or more model elements are present. One example would be of a food market specialising in fresh local food. Such markets are enjoyed by tourists because of the colours and the smells (interaction with surroundings) and also because they are a reflection of local life (interaction with people).

There may be little or no history about the market but still it would be considered enjoyable. Another example is referred to in the literature review in Section 4.3. It is People's Park Square in Singapore, an urban space that Heng (2000) considers enjoyable because of the activity generated by people. The space lacks any particular meaning or visual interest. Apparently, the urban space offers interaction with people but little or no interaction with meaning or with surroundings. Another example would be the Guggenheim museum at Bilbao. The tourist interaction model can also be applied even if it is not a historic site. The dominant element is certainly the interaction with the surroundings or more specifically with the shapes and forms of the building. Although not historic, the building also has meaning in the narratives relating to its design and construction and also in relation to the museum that it houses.

16.8.5 Potential practical use of model

The tourist interaction model as developed in this thesis may also have a practical use. It provides a framework to evaluate a site (building, urban space or urban area) and its potential to provide an enjoyable experience for tourists. The site could be evaluated systematically for each element of the model; the more elements it caters for, the greater is the site's tourism potential. By adopting a systematic approach, site deficiencies can be identified and therefore resolved. One could also identify which tourist source markets are most likely to appreciate and enjoy the site. The model could be used to evaluate historic as well as non-historic sites.

16.9 Conclusion

This chapter discusses various implications of the findings of this thesis. Several observations are made in Section 16.1 about the tourist interactions with surroundings. The research findings suggest that the commonplace and mundane in the urban landscape are an important component of the tourist experience of historic areas. They also suggest that often tourists are not so much interested in the external visual qualities of individual buildings. Frequently, the visual element becomes relevant to the tourist experience when

it combines with the meaning of a building or site. The fact that a building or site is historic, and that it has meaning, greatly enhances the experience of the tourist.

The tourism experience of a historic area is reliant on the activity of walking and in the case of Valletta, stepped streets and steep slopes add a further dimension to walking. Watching one's step, while looking at the surroundings, engages the tourist and creates an element of interactivity. Even if the exertion is greater, this enhances the experience and makes it more enjoyable. The tourist explores and in exploring there is discovery of things which are new or unfamiliar. In some instances, there is also surprise. Where the surprise is more significant, a more intense and enjoyable experience will result.

Another research finding suggests that issues relating to self and identity of the tourist have a significant role in tourist motivation and behaviour and hence also on the tourist's experience. Section 16.2 refers to some examples where identity-enactment in the tourism activity were evident in the research data.

Section 16.3 draws out some comparisons between first-time and repeat tourists. The Valletta experience of the former is more likely to involve emotion and feelings because the novelty of exploration and discovery of a first time visit is stronger. On the other hand, repeat tourists are more able to satisfy the need of affiliation by becoming friends with Maltese. Comparisons are also drawn between tourists and residents of a tourism destination. It is suggested that the boundaries that have traditionally separated 'tourists' and 'locals' are becoming more blurred as residents consume the city in ways that are similar to tourists.

Sections 16.4 considers the relevance of 'layers of experience' to the tourist experience. With more layers of experience offered, the tourist will have more possibility of interaction with self/meaning, with others and with surroundings, and hence expectations and aspirations are more likely to be met. It is possible for an urban historic context to accommodate concurrently a range of experiences. This is desirable, not least because the tourism activity is integral to city life. Section 16.5 demonstrates the 'layers of experience' offered by Valletta and hence the many diverse ways how tourists' needs can be satisfied.

It is suggested that the interviewees of this research found Valletta to be enjoyable because it offers many layers of experience.

A main outcome of this thesis is the tourist interaction model that is a representation of the tourist experience of historic areas. This is explained and discussed in Section 16.7 and 16.8. The model suggests that the tourism experience is reliant on the tourist's interaction with three different elements namely with self/meaning, with others and with the surroundings. The tourist is the focus of the model. For each interaction, different elements have been identified as follows:

- self, background of tourist and history for the tourist interaction with self/meaning;
- locations and physical features for interactions with the surroundings;
- people in urban spaces, lives of local people and interaction with local people for interactions with others.

The research findings also suggest that the information to which the tourist has access is also relevant to the tourist experience.

Section 16.8 discusses various aspects of the model including interpretation, applicability and potential practical use. It also compares the tourist interaction model to the form-activity-meaning model from which it is derived.

CHAPTER 17

CONCLUSION

17.1 A brief overview

Discussions in tourism literature are increasingly focusing on the experience aspect of tourism. The purpose of this research was to take a closer look at the tourism experience, with special reference to the experience of heritage areas. There are many works in urban design literature that discuss how urban spaces can be made more interesting for users. These works are design-focused because they are intended to provide guidance on how to design urban spaces. Aspects relating to the experience of tourists are rarely featured in urban design studies. There are some works in tourism studies that consider the experience of urban spaces from a tourism perspective. There is no tourism literature, however, that specifically refers to the urban design model based on form, activity and meaning and uses it in the context of the tourism experience. It was the intention of this research to fill that gap.

The thesis includes detailed information on the case study, Valletta. Apart from giving a historical overview of Valletta, Chapter 2 considers Valletta from perspectives relevant to this research namely urban morphology and tourism. The urban morphology study reveals that Valletta has many diverse and interesting urban spaces. Moreover, the combination of historical context with the living city aspect of Valletta provides a narrative with significant tourism potential. These various features relating to urban spaces and to tourism make Valletta well suited as a case study for research on tourism experience.

To better understand how places are experienced, urban design academics have put forward a model involving three elements namely physical setting, activities and meanings. These are interrelated and combine to create a sense of place. When discussing form, the first consideration are the senses with which a person gathers information from the surroundings. Whereas vision is the sense that provides most information, the senses constantly reinforce each

other to extend and broaden sensory perception allowing a broader appreciation of the surroundings. Some writers argue that successful public spaces are characterised by the presence of people, in an often self-reinforcing process. Urban spaces are social spaces in that when two people are together in the same space there is a form of social contact, even if there is no verbal exchange. Another element of the urban design model is meaning. The meaning of buildings, spaces and artefacts are subjective and can be read and interpreted differently by different people in accordance to their background and culture. The literature review also considers issues related to authenticity and suggests that the tourist's experience is determined mostly on whether the place is distinctive and different from what is familiar, rather than issues of authenticity.

For the purpose of understanding the tourism experience, the form-activity-meaning model does not adequately cater for the emotive aspect of the tourist experience. The need is felt therefore to develop a variant of the form-activity-meaning model that focuses less on the intrinsic qualities of the space and more on the interaction of the tourist with different elements within that space. The model variant refers to interactions with self, interactions with others and interactions with surroundings. This is in line with the model as proposed by Loeffler (2004). The idea of a variant to the urban model is considered in the literature review (in Chapter 4) and then developed further in the discussion on the analysis of the data (in Chapter 16).

The data for this research was derived by means of thirty-two unstructured interviews with tourists who visited Valletta. A chapter is included (Chapter 10) to list the locations in Valletta that were visited by the interviewees and also to describe the activities in which the interviewees engaged. This is important as it provides a context to the interviewees' tourist experiences.

17.2 Is Valletta a 'typical' historic area?

Valletta is well suited for a study on tourism experience of historic areas. With so many historic buildings, it is self-evident that Valletta is historic. The architectural style, features and the materials used indicate that most of its buildings were built many years ago. The City displays high levels of tourism

activity resulting from its built heritage and its history. Valletta has a diversity of uses and urban spaces all within walking distance. With such a diversity of spaces, aspects related to the form-activity-meaning model are more likely to emerge.

Valletta is located within a larger urban conurbation. The conurbation stretches 8 to 12 kilometres around Valletta encompassing a population of 200,000 to 250,000 people, making it similar to a medium sized city. So although Valletta is Malta's capital, it is more akin to an urban area or zone within a larger urban conurbation. In terms of tourism, this makes Valletta a destination for a day or half-day visit for tourists, as most hotels in Malta are at some distance from Valletta. The nature of the tourism activity in Valletta is different from that of other capitals where the accommodation and most of the places being visited would be within the capital city. For other capital cities, the experience is not just about a few hours but for the duration of the visit.

Some differences between Valletta and other historic cities raise the question about the extent to which the results of this case study can be generalised to other historic areas. One could argue that Valletta is not a typical historic area. Historic areas are often associated with narrow winding streets. As one walks down winding roads, there is always something 'new' to discover round the corner. With winding roads, it is easy to get lost and this in some sense enhances the charm of historic areas (Orbasli, 2000:55). On the other hand, a cursory examination of some of the tourist historic cities discussed by Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990) reveals that it is difficult to speak of a 'typical' historic city. There are variations in size, geography, street layouts, urban morphology, mix of uses, heritage value, nature of historic area boundary, extent and visibility of modern interventions, level of integration with adjoining urban areas and presence or otherwise of waterfronts. Having said that, Valletta possesses some features that are mostly absent from other historic areas. Valletta has a formal layout with straight roads extending from one end to the other. It is not easy to get lost, something that was noted in one of the interviews. Its streetscapes are mostly consistent and have very few interventions that are stylistically different. It has well defined boundaries with extensive fortifications and shoreline. It is surrounded by the sea on three sides and is closely associated with the maritime activity of a sea port. I would argue that there are

sufficient commonalities to allow for generalisations to be made about historic cities from the Valletta case study. Moreover, generalisations are also derived from specific characteristics that are common between the case study Valletta and other historic areas. For example, it is possible to draw conclusions on how historic landmarks impinge on the tourist experience and these conclusions would be applicable to historic areas that have historic landmarks. Similarly, conclusions derived for Valletta in relation to the fortifications and the city's distinct boundaries are also applicable to other historic towns that have fortifications.

17.3 Research questions revisited

It is useful to refer back to the three research questions of this thesis as stated in Chapter 1 namely:

- What are the physical, social, cultural and psychological aspects that influence experiences of urban spaces?
- Within urban spaces, what is the nature of the interactions of the individual with the surroundings, with other people and with self?
- To what extent does heritage impinge on the sense of place of an urban space?

The following reflections provide some insights for possible replies to these questions.

No two tourist experiences are ever the same. There are countless factors that make each experience of a historic area unique. Even if each experience is unique, there are elements that are common to the experiences of some, or even most, tourists. The purpose of this research was to identify these commonalities, particularly those that will result in a positive experience. The following highlights some factors that emerged from this research.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the commonplace and mundane in the urban landscape are important components of the tourist experience of historic areas. Tourists may visit some key sites of symbolic value, but most of the experience is about moving through unfamiliar areas thus involving exploration and discovery. Visual interest is not limited to the everyday elements but it often

also refers to the overall context of the streetscape. The totality of the historic streetscape is more likely to engage the tourist's interest than the intrinsic visual qualities of individual buildings. The exception to this is where the visual element combines with the meaning of a building or site, in which case the building and its associated meaning become very relevant to the tourist experience. Whereas historic buildings and features provide added visual interest, the fact that they are historic and that they have meaning greatly enhances the experience of the tourist.

The tourist experience involves walking around and exploring streets and piazzas. In a historic area, it is inevitable that exploration will result in discovery of elements and features which are new to the tourist, like for example an interesting doorway or an architectural feature on the façade of a building. When something new or different is discovered, inevitably there is surprise, even if limited. In some instances, the surprise will be more significant and this will give rise to a more intense and enjoyable experience. Surprise impinges on the tourist experience more than is generally acknowledged in tourism literature.

In the case of Valletta, stepped streets add a further dimension to the activity of walking, in that walking up or down stepped streets is a different experience to walking on level or slightly sloping ground. It involves greater exertion and in a sense also greater interactivity between the tourist and the steps as one has to watch where to place the foot. In walking up and down the steps, the tourist is watching one's step and concurrently looking at the surroundings. Even if the exertion is greater, the increased interactivity enhances the experience and makes it more enjoyable. Academic literature suggests that there are two different forms of walking namely 'purposive' and 'discursive' (Matos Wunderlich, 2008:128). This research suggests that there may be a third form of walking, 'interactive walking', one that actively engages the walker because of the nature of the terrain.

The tourist's interaction with the surroundings is not simply a sensory appreciation of what is being visited. It is a complex process where various factors come into play. In the first instance, prior to 'seeing' something of interest there is a build-up in that the tourist walks around and explores. This brings with it instances of 'discovery' and others of surprise. Movement in

whatever shape or form (be it a fountain in the square, ships in the harbour, or even people walking down a pedestrian street) provides added interest and something upon which people will focus their attention. This adds to the experience and, depending on the context, can make the tourist experience more relaxing.

The visual and sensory gathering of information about the surroundings is a vital part of the tourist experience. In a Mediterranean context, light and colour have a significant impact on the experience of someone coming from a non-Mediterranean environment. In this research, this observation is particularly relevant to the views of the Grand Harbour, where the contrast of the blue seas and the yellow stone emerges strongly because of the quality of the light. Open views over attractive landscapes or seascapes are sought by tourists and contribute to their positive experience. This is the case in Valletta, with the Upper Barrakka being the most important location from where tourists can have good views over the Grand Harbour. Outward harbour views were not the only type of views mentioned by interviewees. They also referred to views along steeply sloping streets and commented on how this gave a unique perspective of the city.

Meaning is a primary motivation in a person's life so its relevance to the tourism experience should not be underestimated. Interaction of the tourist with self/meaning signifies that experiencing a place involves an intellectual and emotive process influenced by a diversity of factors. The background of the tourist is a main influence. Tourists in a historic area are likely to compare the place being visited with their home town and with other places that were visited. The experience is more emotive when a site being visited reminds the tourist of a loved one or to a past personal event. This research suggests that issues relating to the tourist's self and identity have a significant role in tourist motivation and behaviour and hence also on the tourist's experience. Identity-related motivations are central to all tourist experiences as they provide an understanding why individuals engage in tourism. The role of tourist self and identity is significantly greater than what most tourism practitioners, and possibly some academic literature, would care to acknowledge.

The meaning of buildings, spaces and artefacts are subjective and can be read and interpreted differently by different people in accordance to their background and culture. Different typologies of tourists can be identified ranging from those who are motivated by fun and enjoyment without reference to meaning, to those whose primary motivation is the search for meaning. The search for meaning is not necessarily about authenticity as often the tourist's quest for experience is determined by whether the place is distinctive and different from what is familiar.

History enables the tourist to visualize the past, something that tourists find enjoyable. The tourist experience also involves narratives about the place and this is another way how the tourist can derive meaning from the experience. Moreover just as story-telling in books, theatre and films is entertaining, the story-telling resulting from a place's narrative is enjoyed and appreciated by tourists. 'Interacting with self' is something that most people would have difficulty to do for any length of time when in their daily routine. Visiting a place away from home gives the tourist the time and opportunity to do this. It is about being in an environment where the person can be at peace with self, without any pressures; seeing hearing, smelling and generally enjoying the surroundings. An apt description of this is 'being there'.

The presence of people makes streets and piazzas more interesting and enjoyable. Urban spaces are social spaces in that when two people are together in the same space there is a form of social contact, even if there is no verbal exchange. The people element in the tourist experience goes beyond just the presence of people in urban spaces. Tourism activity is also a means for seeking a sense of belonging and hence a means to satisfy the need for association. Some interviewees expressed the desire to get to know or in some way be involved in the lives of local residents. Some features were found to be interesting by interviewees, not because of their intrinsic visual interest, but because they were perceived to be a reflection of local people's lives. The tourist's need for association explains in part the relatively high number of repeat visitors to Malta.

Beyond considering specific aspects that influence the experience of urban spaces, there is also the combination of aspects, or what this thesis terms as 'layers of experience', that contribute to create an overall positive experience. A

tourism area can be experienced in different ways by different people provided that the area offers opportunities for different 'layers of experience'. In an urban historic context, the accommodation of a range of experiences within the same place is essential, not least because the tourism activity is integral to city life and not divorced from it. This research suggests that urban areas and spaces that offer 'layers of experience' are more likely to be enjoyable. 'Layers of experience' signifies that the area has many different aspects that could engage the tourist. The model speaks about the tourist's interactions with three different elements namely with self/meaning, with other people and with the surroundings. These interactions are distinct and yet inseparable. For example, a tourist interaction with people in an urban space is not just about the people but is likely to involve also interaction of the tourist with the historic context. Another example is the tourist's interaction with the narrative of the site. This is not just about meaning but also about the physical aspects of the site. The term 'character' to describe an urban space or area suggests a situation where interactions with different elements come into play. Even if there were differences in emphasis, for many interviewees, 'character' was about interaction with meaning (resulting from the history of the place) and with surroundings (resulting from the numerous visually interesting features and buildings).

In the introduction to this thesis I referred to learning as a journey and that this research is another stage of my learning about tourism and about urban spaces. At the start of this research I had certain ideas about the tourist experience. These resulted largely from my work in tourism consultancy. Following this research, these ideas and impressions have been altered or even changed completely. Drawing from the observations made above, the following are a few examples where my ideas about tourist experience have changed as a result of this research. With my background as an architect and urban planner, I used to think that the visual aspect was predominant in the tourist experience and that tourists actively sought visually pleasing streetscapes or even aesthetically pleasing facades of individual buildings. Putting it in the context of the form-activity-meaning model, my thinking was that 'form' was predominant. Now that the research is complete, I would argue that all three elements are essential but for most tourists the 'meaning' aspect would be predominant, even if the meaning aspect will manifest itself in different ways. Another interesting finding was that relating to stepped streets. I used to consider Valletta's stepped streets

as just another feature like any other for tourists to note. I was surprised to discover in this research the extent to which stepped streets featured in the experience of many tourists. Several interviewees commented on how these impacted positively on their experience. Prior to this research, my thinking was that the meaning aspect of tourist experience referred almost exclusively to the narrative and that the relevance of history was to create the story telling that is entertaining and fun for tourists. Today I acknowledge the importance of narrative but I also understand that the meaning element has far wider implications, as discussed earlier in this chapter and in other chapters. Prior to this research, I was not aware that people's need for affiliation could be relevant to the tourism experience. Now I realise that many use the tourism experience to satisfy the need for association or affiliation. Tourist need for affiliation was considered and discussed in sections 3.3, 12.3 and 16.5.

17.4 Suggestions for further research

The point of departure of this research was the form-activity-meaning model often referred to in urban design literature. The model provides an understanding as to how urban spaces are experienced by persons who are familiar with the space. This research examined to what extent the model is applicable to tourist experience. In doing so a variant to the model was developed namely the tourist interaction model. Future research could develop in different directions. It would be useful, for example, to use other historic towns as case studies to examine whether the tourist interaction model is sufficient to describe the tourist experience. It would be interesting to apply the model, say, to a historic town that is not yet a popular destination or to a town that is not historic. In each case, the research would establish the applicability of the model for diverse contexts and circumstances. Section 16.8.5 discusses the possibility of using the tourist interactions model as a management and planning tool. Research work could also explore the potential for the model as such a tool.

This research suggests that there are a number of factors that will determine the nature of the tourism or leisure experience. Such factors include the individual's background (s16.2 and s16.7.2) and also the familiarity of the individual with the area being visited (s16.8.3). Further research could be carried out to understand

better the role of these and other factors on the tourism experience. With reference to familiarity with the area, it was argued that the distinction between residents and tourists has become increasingly blurred (s16.3). In the discussion of the tourist experience, differences were noted between the experience of first time tourists (i.e. people who are with totally unfamiliar with Valletta) and repeat visitors (i.e. people who have been previously to Valletta and who therefore are familiar at least with some locations in Valletta). For residents, there is a distinction between those who grew up in the area and those who moved into the area in recent years. These different subgroups have different levels of familiarity with the area potentially giving rise to different tourism /leisure experiences. These considerations could be the subject of further research on how people experience places.

Other findings of this thesis provide useful pointers for further research. The concept of 'interactive walking' has been suggested whereby the individual is concurrently doing two things namely watching one's step and looking at the surroundings (s16.1.2). It has been suggested that an element of interactivity in walking enhances the experience. Further research would be useful to investigate this and also consider the nature of walking and interactivity in different contexts like for example walking on rough terrain in open countryside. Another interesting finding of this thesis is the role of surprise in the tourist experience (s16.1.4). It would be interesting to explore through further research the role played by surprise in the tourist experience and the dynamics of it. A key finding of this research is the importance of having 'layers of experience' for an urban area to provide enjoyable experiences for tourists (s16.4). A further research possibility is to develop a better understanding of the concept of 'layers of experience' and also to explore the possibility of using this concept as a planning and management tool for tourism product development. It was noted how a tourist's experience of one site in a historic area could impinge on the same tourist's experience of another site in the same area (s16.1.2). This point also emerges in the discussion on layers of experience (s16.4) where it is argued that layers of experience allow the tourist to change from one tourism activity to another thus avoiding fatigue in one activity. There is scope for research on the potential interdependency of experiences of different sites within the same destination.

Chapter 15 considers the role of information at the tourism destination. It was argued that information at the tourism destination has received little attention from researchers in tourism literature (Ortega and Rodríguez, 2007:147). This area of study could be the subject of research, with a focus on the role of information on the tourist experience. Such a study could be extended to consider the role of mediators in the experience (Jennings and Weiler, 2006:75). Another area that received little attention in tourism literature is the role of open views in the tourist experience. Although there is research about visual landscape, this is not considered with reference to experience. This is another area where research would be useful.

17.5 Policy implications

In terms of policy, this research is most relevant for tourism product development. The following are some considerations that need to be made when considering how a historic area can be enhanced for purposes of tourism. These considerations are inspired by the findings of this research. In the first instance, care should be taken not to over-sanitise the historic area or to make it too 'touristy'. This research suggests that many tourists seek elements that reflect local life. Hence as far as is practicable, features that reflect local life should be retained, even if they may be considered unsightly. For the same reason, having a thriving resident community is important. Developing a historic area as a tourism attraction may also entail taking initiatives to safeguard against a decline of the resident community.

The research also demonstrates the importance of having pedestrian-friendly urban spaces within historic area. A good illustration of this is the pedestrianisation of Pjazza San Gorg that the research suggests became one of the more popular tourist locations in Valletta following pedestrianisation. Pedestrianised streets and piazzas are more comfortable and relaxing, feel safer and better enable the tourist to appreciate the historic surroundings. Subject to other constraints (like accessibility and parking), urban spaces within historic areas should be pedestrianised to enhance the area's attractiveness for tourism purposes. An urban space can be made more interesting and/or relaxing for tourists by introducing movement. This is normally achieved by having a water

fountain but other ways of doing this could also be explored, like for example kinetic art.

This research suggests that the two most popular sites with tourists are Pjazza San Gorg and Upper Barrakka (Sections 14.4 and 14.5) and that the main reason for their popularity is because the tourist experience involves interactions with self/meaning, others and with surroundings. The different interactions come together to create an enjoyable experience. This suggests that places that provide opportunities for the tourist to interact with all three elements are the most likely to be enjoyable for tourists. This should be a consideration that urban designers dealing with spaces in tourism destinations will need to take into account.

Difference in levels in a historic area provides opportunities in terms of tourism product. Vantage points on high ground could be created from where tourists can enjoy scenic outward views. There may also be the possibility to create vantage points for 'inward' views along streets which are steeply sloping. Difference in levels also provides opportunities to make walks in a historic area more interesting. Where there are steep roads, careful design of steps could create a suitable context for 'interactive' walking.

A notable aspect of Valletta is its uniqueness. As discussed in Section 14.3, this is central to the experience of most tourists, especially first-time visitors. On the other hand in Section 16.6, it was noted that cities often adopt similar approaches resulting in a loss of distinctiveness (Maitland and Newman, 2008:225). In terms of policy implications, this suggests that cities should actively identify means for enhancing their uniqueness if they want to become more competitive in tourism. A possible approach is to identify a theme with which the city could be associated and which would enhance its distinctiveness. The city could then refurbish and invest in those sites and features which are supportive of that theme.

One aspect that emerged strongly from the research was the role of the tourist background in the experience. This suggests that when promoting a visitor attraction, one needs to understand who the target audience is. There may be

situations where the history and narrative offered by the attraction would suggest that it is more likely to be interesting to a particular nationality or interest group.

At the start of this research I had certain thoughts and ideas on Valletta as a tourism product and on the tourist experience it offers. Now following this research those thoughts and ideas have been developed. More crucially it has increased my awareness of certain aspects of the tourist experience. This confirms how important it is to carry out research and analysis on a tourism product before taking investment decisions on product development. Decisions should not be based on preconceived ideas on what the tourism experience is about but on a fuller understanding.

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APPENDIX A - Selected quotations from interviews

Interview 01 – Rebecca and friends (two couples)

Q01.1: Rebecca, showing a photo of a balcony with flags after Valletta FC won the league: “We liked this balcony with these flags. We like the fun and the passion that these people have for the football. There were many balconies which were decorated in this manner It made the place colourful and fun It makes you wonder why it was there.”

Q01.2: Rebecca, sitting at an outside restaurant table in a side street: “ We were having a glass of wine al fresco. We cannot do that much at home. It was nice to just to be able to sit down, and have a drink, and watch the people go by and have a taste of the local food. Just lovely. We liked being able to sit outside in the warm weather. It is also about the people around.”

Q01.3: “We chose this photo for the architecture – the old buildings, the old balconies and the character of the place. We have not seen such balconies elsewhere – it is new to us. What’s makes it interesting to us is the fact that it is old and also the features.”

Q01.4: Rebecca, upon being asked why she preferred Valletta to Sliema: “Because its old. There’s so much history here. It’s amazing – you have all these old buildings.”

Q01.5: “We are interested in the history of Malta – the war years, and prior to that the Knights of St John. We have a guide book and read about the history.”

Q01.6: Rebecca and friends: “Then there are the very steep hills, the steps, the narrow streets. That’s quite memorable (laughter)..... and very taxing. (more laughter) and there’s the heat as well. We liked it anyway, we enjoyed it. It’s unusual because there are so many hills (*speaker’s emphasis*) . Some have steps on them – we are not used to that.”

Q01.7: “We like to go up and about to see the locals, how they lived. Not just the tourist areas. To see how they live, to see the houses. To see different cultures.”

Interview 02 - Tanya and Bruno

Q02.1: Bruno: “I think it was nice all around. All sides of the whole city is good to see, the good with the bad. Not only the tourist attractions but also the side streets.”

Q02.2: Tanya: “It is special for us – steps take you up ; as you move up the steps you see the sky; your view changes. It is more interesting and there is more variation. Many people are going up and down over many decades. Stairs become worn; they change shape; they are very old and it can be dangerous, but it is special. I did not see this in other places, you have to see where you put your step; you have to be more careful, but it adds character.”

Q02.3: Tanya referring to a photo of trees on bastions, taken from Upper Barrakka: “It is the combination of colours; the yellow stone and the green (trees). The brightness is important for me. Where we live all is green or blue – blue being the sky, green being the mountains, the fields, the forest. Here it is different and we like it because it is different. It is Mediterranean. When we arrived here I smelled the smell of the sea. It was my first impression. We smell the salt of the sea in the air and it is something that we like.”

Q02.4: Tanya, referring to photo down Merchants Street with blue sea visible in the distance: “It is very interesting to see the small streets between the houses and you see the sea. It is impressive because it is so small you see the other side. I like it. Bruno: “Another impressive thing is the contrast between the grey buildings and the blue sea visible in the distance.”

Q02.5: Tanya: It is interesting to see where the normal people live. There was a playground (King George V Gardens at Floriana) for children. This was very interesting. They do something for the children. They have a place to be. It is a playground today in a place that is very old. A modern place in the fortification. A place which has a long history (and is still being used today as a playground). Bruno: “The long history of this isle is very important. We Swiss we have no history. We had a guide book, and having the information about the history helped us to appreciate more.

We were in Rhodes. Many, many things are similar. The history is everywhere, also in buildings from World War II which are interesting.”

Q02.6: Bruno: “Many houses are old and are for sale, and this was interesting that so many houses are for sale. Maybe they are too expensive to renovate. We think it is bad for the city but it is normal. It is the same in Switzerland when they have a lot of flats which are too expensive. People like new flats and not old houses; they move out of the old parts of the city. It is also happening in Switzerland.”

Interview 03 - Colin and Rosalind

Q03.1: Colin, referring to St. Georges Square and the Grandmasters Palace: “Visually attractive and also quite emotive because of what was on the wall. There were a few plaques there (on the facade) from several war leaders and such like. My father was based here in the war. He came with us 25 years ago (to visit), so it held special memories.”

Q03.2: Colin: “We also take photographs with people as subjects. If someone is cleaning something or sweeping up, it adds something. It’s not just the architecture.”

Q03.3: Colin, referring to the setting sun over Marsamxett Harbour: “The view is across the harbour from the hotel – flats, buildings, a church. We see it every day having breakfast. We notice the skyline which is very nice. There’s nothing that actually stands out. It’s a view that we like. The word I used the other day when the sun was setting was that it looked biblical. We are interested in that kind of thing. There are different shades of colour, the sea looks different it’s a combination of colours. It reminds us of ancient times. It’s a great feeling. It is a spiritual feeling.”

Q03.4: Colin, upon being asked what he liked about karozzini: “I think it is the novelty, their originality, and it’s a nice way of seeing the City but it is also quite nostalgic to see such an old means of transport which is still used today. I know you have rickshaws in India, and all this but it’s got an attraction cause its got movement.”

Q03.5: Rosalind: “I just think they are very quaint; small and narrow. Some had flowers in the middle and were really nice. The stonework was also nice.”

Q03.6: Colin: “There were some celebrations going on of Valletta FC, so we took some photos of the celebrations. It was obviously an excitable time for a lot of people. We wanted to capture that.”

Q03.7: Colin, referring to the Royal Airforce memorial in Floriana: “The first thing that attracted us was the eagle itself. We had never seen it before. It was very imposing. It struck you as being very imposing ... *.(struggles to find the word)* ...magnificent. I think it is solid bronze. We were impressed by it visually as well as its meaning. We were reading about the people in the Royal Airforce, talking about people in flight so it has a meaning as well as the visual attraction. It is high up, so you cannot see it closely but it is still impressive.”

Q03.8: Colin, upon being asked which was the most memorable photo: “I think number one is probably the Grand Harbour. We took the photo from Upper Barakka gardens. We took it because it is very panoramic. It is a great focal point to see the bastions which are very impressive. It is a view we will remember for sure. We talked about it for several minutes before we actually took the photograph, and we found the exact place to take it. What we did is we took a photograph of Fort St Angelo, which is the most impressive.” (Ref. Photo UBG8-int03-1)

Interview 04 - Ian and Christine

Q04.1: Ian: “There was no particular place that stood out; the experience was good across the board. What stood out was the character of the place and the features: every corner you went round you saw something different.”

Q04.2: Christine: "For me the most memorable thing is the people. The friendliness of the people. Everywhere people were helpful, friendly and kind. We went to a restaurant where the food was excellent, the staff was lovely and the food was very reasonably priced."

Interview 05 - Dave and Angie

Q05.1: Dave: "I can't think of anything better than, in the afternoon, sitting at the bar with an absolutely beautiful view; and we found one, and we sat there and the views were just panoramic and beautiful. And we sat there and had a drink and it was just relaxing."

Q05.2: Angie: "We like walking, seeing the sights, and we wanted to see the history of Malta."

Q05.3: Angie: "I was emailing to my mother saying that its absolutely beautiful, and that is what we do remember of it. It is a beautiful island and there is a lot of history here. Valletta is a beautiful city."

Q05.4: Angie: "I think what we will remember being in Valletta is the very old and very steep streets, that are very, very narrow and the way they go up. That stuck in our minds. I know it sounds silly, but today we saw some parked cars and they were literally like that (indicates by hand car on a steep slope). We were wondering how they manoeuvre that. So, it is very strange how everything is so narrow ."

Q05.5: Angie: "The architecture is absolutely beautiful. We also noticed a large number of churches they say that there are 365 churches in Malta I love anything like that. That's another thing about Valletta, all the churches. We don't have anything like it. I am fascinated by the inside of any cathedral or church. I am Roman Catholic so I will definitely walk into any Catholic church that I can. I just love to look at the architecture, the windows, I just find it very fascinating. Also looking from the outside, the architecture; I love it; and the dome sticks out. So really that's it – the architecture, the narrow streets, and the sleepy city at night time."

Q05.6: Angie: "We have never been to Malta before but we were told that Malta is very English in a lot of ways, like driving on the same side of the road and all the signs are English; everybody seems to speak English."

Q05.7: David, upon being asked what he liked most about Valletta: "The harbour cruise because it gives you such a beautiful view of Valletta from the outside. It is wonderful. From the boat you get a much clearer perspective of Valletta, rather than walking down little streets. You get a wider view. To look at some ports from far away gives you a better view; also a view of the skyline; and the way the whole place is built out of the sea."

Interview 06 - Petra and Barth

Q06.1: Petra: "We have been in St Georges Square . It is very nice to sit there, we ate a snack there. It was very nice because everybody was talking and sitting on the benches. The architecture was very nice as well, a place to rest in the city. The benches are in a new architectural style, but they are well integrated with the rest of the square."

Q06.2: Barth: "Valletta is an old city, and we in Belgium have very old cities as well like Bruges. If you compare this with Bruges, here there is something different that we don't have, like the Cathedral and the Grand Master's Palace – things we don't have. If we wanted just to see old buildings, we can see plenty of old buildings in Belgium."

Q06.3: Barth : "We walked all the way down to St Elmo. We had a map on which some points of interest were marked, like Manoel Theatre. First we decided to take the map of Valletta horizontally, we walked Republic Street to St Elmo, then we walked all the way down to the Lower Barakka gardens, based on the map we had. If we had had a different map with other points of interest, we would have taken a different route. It is good that you can have a map. We got it from the tourist office, and I also had a book in which there was a walk around Valletta and we followed the book a little bit."

Q06.4: Barth: "If Valletta did not have all this history it would not be interesting at all. It would just be a city in the Mediterranean with good weather. We would not be here I guess."

Q06.5: Petra: "Valletta is a nice little city with a lot of history and that is what we came here to see, and we were very astonished about the beauty of it. We did not know what to expect, we knew it was nice but we did not expect that wow factor."

Q06.6: Barth: "Another thing which astonishes me about Valletta is the way it is built. It is built in an easy pattern, a chess board pattern like Manhattan. I have taken some good pictures of places where you can see a long way ahead, especially when there are no people around. You can see the structure of the city, which was nice. In Europe, where we come from, it is all circular. In many old cities there is the small centre, and then everybody builds around, and you never have this structure that you have in Manhattan. It's the first time I've seen it in Europe I think."

Q06.7: Barth, referring to the Armoury: Barth: "I have never seen such a big collection of guns and weapons. I think it is very special, I have never seen this anywhere." Petra: "The link to the history is very good to see in the museum. As far as we know, Malta was important to the Knights of St John, so that is what you can see very well, and you learn things about it too while you are there."

Q06.8: Petra: "When you are walking in Valletta you should look up. In Republic Street, you have the shops on the first floor, but when you look up at the upper floors it is more beautiful."

Q06.9: Petra: "You feel safe, that's important as well. The people that are walking around you don't give you the feeling that you have to keep your bag close to you. The people that you see are not people that you would turn away from." Barth: "The guys that are standing at restaurants don't try to lure you inside, as they do in some countries. They might ask you if you would like something to eat but if you don't react they just let you go, in other places they would follow you around with a menu card and you feel harassed."

Q06.10: Petra: "There is also the City entrance which at the moment is a complete disaster, but when it is ready I think will be very beautiful. I don't know what it looked like before they started. It must be fascinating when you enter the city."

Interview 07 - John and Jill

Q07.1: Jill: "The most interesting parts when you walk down are the streets on the side. It depends on what you are looking for, but for me investigating the little side streets is the most interesting part and where they lead to. A lot of people go down Republic Street, and they don't go into Merchants Street, and they miss that. To go down towards St Elmo, the architecture is beautiful too. When we go to Valletta we like to explore."

Q07.2 : Jill: "There are some buildings which look official but are old, they have high doorways, and you are not sure whether you are allowed to go in and have a look around. You want to investigate what it is. Unless there is a sign saying that you are welcome to go in, you are not sure whether you can look around. It is a little off putting. We want to investigate the little old places which are different and not an ordinary bar that anyone can sit in. It is the things that are particular to Malta and we do not have at home that are so interesting."

Q07.3: John, referring to Upper Barrakka Gardens: "We go to the railing, and we sit there, and we also noticed how many different cats there were (*laughter*). When we are on holiday we have time to relax and watch people, animals, things we don't have time to do when we are at home."

Q07.4: Jill, referring to Pjazza Regina: "We watch people go by which is fascinating because you have the mixture of the tourists and the business people. Sometimes there is a musician, or sometimes someone with an accordion, it adds to the ambience. That was interesting. It has a nice feel with the trees, the shade. It's different. We also watch the waiters carrying the trays... how do they carry that thing?"

Q07.5: John: "Also you do not know where the public toilets are in Valletta. Another thing which is not signposted well is the Sliema Ferry. It would be nice and there would be many more people using it if there was a notice saying how to get there because it is a nice thing to do. The tourist

office as well is not very easy to find because it is not well signposted. We think it would be good to have a map as you enter Valletta to show exactly where things like the Malta Experience are.”

Q07.6: Jill: “It is interesting to see the buildings, the balconies, the way they are constructed. It is so different from anywhere else. The balconies struck us most. The structures upstairs more than the ground level structures. Downstairs there are the shops which are lovely to go in and see. I don’t know whether people are allowed to go and see above the old bars.”

Q07.7: Jill: “I would like to say that some pavements and stairs are so slippery. That could be dangerous. The steep steps in particular. ... The old ones are shiny from use. Elderly people would find them difficult to use. We try to avoid some of the old ones. Going up is fine, going down it the difficulty. Maybe railing should be put in at some places.”

Q07.8: Jill: “When you get to the top of Republic Street and look down on the pedestrian street it’s good, that is a positive thing because you know that you can walk there without any problems, without any cars.”

Q07.9: Jill: “When we come to Malta, visiting Valletta topmost priority. Cause the others (*other localities*) when you see them it is just for the sites. The people have always been wonderful. The people haven’t changed in their attitude towards the English.”

Q07.10: John: “I tell her where I will be and leave her to go shopping. Valletta is easy and safe to walk on your own. It is different in London.”

Q07.11: Jill: “The other thing is, I am a bit worried about what they are doing in the main entrance. But I will understand what’s happening when it’s done. I would love to see the old theatre which was bombed rebuilt. I would like to see it rebuilt like a miniature Coventry gardens. It should remain so that further generations will learn from the stupidity of what happened in the War.”

Q07.12: Jill: “When we go into Valletta we always sit at a cafe on Pjazza Regina. We sit at the front and we always see somebody that we know.²³ The square there is lovely too.”

Interview 08 - Gert and Mieke

Q08.1: Mieke: “We like the corner niches and also the tablets on walls with religious names ... near their doors it means a lot to the people.....it’s there. I like them because the people like them. It is not because I am religious.”

Q08.2: Mieke, referring to Pjazza Regina: “It makes you comfortable; I don’t like the hard music in the evening but when it is quiet with all those people sitting there, yeah, it’s a nice place.” Gert: “And it makes you feel at home because it is very relaxed and the chat.”

Q08.3: Gert, upon being asked if there anything that he disliked: “Backdated painting. Poor maintenance of the buildings. Beautiful woodwork but with old worn out paint. Mainly in the inner streets. It affects the total atmosphere. It makes it less ... interesting isn’t the right word nice to look at. People should be aware of the fact that they live in a very special environment and they should make sure that it is kept up to date and well preserved.”

Q08.4 Gert: “ In the streets there is a lot of yellow stone used for the houses, and then you have the green or red arches with windows, most of it is yellow stone, old or less old, and then suddenly in between the old you see the street decorations for the feast.”

Q08.5: Mieke: “I also like very much the churches with the domes. I like the big round form, and you see it from far, and you know that it is an interesting place.” Gert: “It is also a part of the total architecture and environment of the street. It is not like in many western European cities, you have an open square like in Milan with the duomo, and it is completely open and there is nothing next to it. Here the cathedral is part of the street façade. That is very different from what you see in a lot of other cities. If you look from afar or from a different height, you see the dome and the tower, but when you are in the street , in Valletta, it is part of the street.”

²³ Jill and John are regular visitors to Malta. They also have a few friends resident in Malta.

Q08.6: Gert: "Also, it's totally different from what we are used to in Holland." Mieke: "Yes, we never hang the washing out." (Laughter) Gert: "Also there are lots of little things you can see in the houses. In Holland, except for the old houses in Amsterdam, everything is straight lines, effective and built quickly. Here you see the opposite of what we are used to. Modern architecture is very dull. Here there is always something to look at."

Q08.7: Gert: "If we make a comparison with a holiday in New York. Here in Valletta you can be in a relaxed mode, but in New York there is always rush and pressure for people to move on to the next place. There is hardly a moment of relaxation, but here there is hardly a moment of pressure."

Q08.8: Mieke: "Another thing that is special is the big difference in the levels of the streets. I always look in the small streets, and what there is behind. That's what I like."

Q08.9: Mieke, upon being asked on a photo she took of Valletta's shoreline, which included some old rooms and the Siege Bell Monument : "The composition of the total photo..... all the things together the sea, the harbour, the old stones."

Q08.10: Mieke: "I also like those streets, with the wash hanging out, and the people are living there. It is also very beautiful, all those people together, and those balconies."

Q08.11: Mieke, referring to a photo of the fortifications facing onto Marsamxett Harbour: "I took this photo from the Great Siege Road It's the hugeness of the wall itself, the enormous walls; the massiveness. We walked down the road to make beautiful picture of the walls (*fortifications*) because sometimes you don't have a good place to stand to take a good picture of the fortifications. Gert: "In the Great Siege Road you can actually walk on the lower level and see the wall (*fortifications*) properly, while in other parts you walk on top but you do not get a good place to see how big it really is." Mieke: "So you must find the right spot (*for the photo*) to be able to appreciate its size."

Q08.12: Mieke: "Another thing I found interesting was that a lot of streets were decorated for the feast. We found it interesting because it means something, and there were so many streets involved, so it must mean a lot to the Maltese people."

Q08.13: Mieke, referring to a photo of a statue of small altar boy ²⁴ on Merchants Street and laughing : "This is typical. It is a little bit funny. It is typical of all those religious things they show."

Q08.14: Mieke: "I like Republic Street, with all the people walking there, but it is not my favourite street with all those shops. I would rather look around it. We are not very interested in shopping."

Q08.15: Mieke, referring to a photo she took: "Do you know where it is?" (*The photo is of the top of Carmelite Dome, over the buildings. Using a strong zoom, she picked the most unlikely place from where to take the photo; from the inner courtyard of the Grandmasters Palace. It is taken through the gateway of the palace. Reference: Photo PSG10-08-05a and Photo PSG11-08-05b*)

Interview 09 - Pamela and Norbert

Q09.1: Pamela: "I grew up in Florida, in the Orlando area, which pre- Disney was a very nice large town but not really a city yet; shopping in the downtown, a couple of small malls, place where you went to eat, you walked around. Then Disney came, and it exploded and it is a disaster of traffic and noise and scatter; and I really like a place where I can walk around and get what I need, go from here and go from there, and sit on the street and drink coffee and have a bite to eat, be more relaxed."

Q09.2 Pamela, referring to the fortifications: "They are very powerful. The thought of being on the outside, wanting to conquer and looking up those steep walls which are insurmountable. When you are inside and looking out, you can see incredible distances, and you have a feeling of safety."

²⁴ The statue is put out in the doorway of a charitable organisation. Its unintended humour is because it is life like and also out of the norm.

Q09.3: Norbert, upon being asked on importance of the view of the sea: “Incredibly it belongs to the whole ambience of the city. That is what is different from any other old city. You have old cities like Naples and others but none have the sea so much part of the ambience.” Pamela (referring to views over the Grand Harbour): “Also the sea is very much part of the history. It helps you imagine what was going on so; ... this force was coming from here, the defenders moved over there to defend themselves, and so on ; It’s crucial to its history and to the pleasure of the day. You can picture the story of the place.”

Q09.4: Pamela, upon being asked about the narrow streets: “Part of that comes back to the architecture and the type of structures that are there, but it also has a very cosy feeling, a feeling of longevity – you can picture families over hundreds of years, children playing, the neighbours calling down from the windows to the people in the streets, it is a very friendly relaxed place. Many people seem at home there.”

Q09.5: Norbert: “For me I also like the streets which remind me of the streets of Southern France, also of Spain, very close together. I like the balconies. For me the other thing is that in every old house you can study four or five hundred years of history on that house; this is who built it , this is who lived in it, and that’s just awesome, that’s incredible. In the Biblioteca there are the books from the Knights of St John which is just awesome. For me it is the history which strikes me most.”

Q09.6: Norbert: “I think you have to make some effort to restore what you have and not slip into what is cheaper, because that will destroy the ambience. You can go to 500 little towns across the Mediterranean where you can see a couple of old buildings. If Valletta doesn’t maintain itself as a historical reference point, there is no reason why you should come to Valletta and not to any other town.”

Q09.7: Pamela: “Because of the steep streets with the stairs, you know you are not going to have any motor vehicle traffic, so it’s a pedestrian area, a safer place for children, it is more of a neighborhood, everyone is on foot, bumping into the neighbours and its cosier. It’s an architecture which creates an environment where the people can have a pleasant life, and not just be drowning in the exhaust fumes and the noise of traffic rushing back and forth.”

Q09.8: Norbert: “ What I like about the city is that you can see the sea almost from every street. You can look down from some places and you see the sea. It’s incredible.”

Interview 10 - Anthony

Q10.1: “I remember coming here about 15 years ago and my wife slipped on the steps going down and she grazed her leg. The women looked out of the windows and they started sending baskets down with cotton wool and plasters. Then the kids came down and my wife gave them some sweets (*laughter*). I like the Maltese people, they are very nice people.”

Q10.2: “I have seen films about the siege in Malta, I’ve seen real movies about it. It’s nice that when you are standing on the walls and looking over the harbour; it’s nice to see what it must have been like sinking the ships in the harbour. I have seen the old films and they come to mind when I am sitting there.”

Q10.3: Anthony, upon being asked the one thing that you would look most forward to on his next visit to Valletta: “ Just walking around in general. I used to love walking all around the steps, now I cannot so much but my wife would walk around all day. She loves walking. We used to like to explore Valletta.”

Q10.4: “I still notice in the old houses the women put the baskets down for the bread. I find that very interesting, it is about communication.”

Q10.5: “The bar at the Malta Experience is my favourite place. It is that you can look over the bastion wall to the harbour and you can see the big ships.”

Q10.6: The city was safe then and it feels even safer now. My wife can walk about and not be harassed in any way. I find the older Maltese people much better than the younger Maltese people because they remember the British during the war.

Q10.7: “I like the atmosphere in the market and the different nationalities, the variety of things that you can buy there.”

Interview 11 - Tom and Barbara

Q11.1: Tom: "What I liked about changing of the guards was the whole environment where it was taken place and the fact that their uniforms were so white. I saw the changing of the guards in London and here I saw the way that they actually came out, marched and came to attention, everything was there and it was so precise and done with military precision."

Q11.2: Tom: "The other thing which struck me in that square was the music with the fountain. The water came up as if it was actually dancing to the music. The only other time that we saw that was in Tunisia two years ago. It was also very impressive because the young children were enjoying it and trying to dance with the water as well."

Q11.3: Tom: "When we were going into Valletta we went through what looked like a miniature of the Arc de Triomphe and we joked that the French wouldn't like hearing that very much..... Although it provided some humour, it was a nice structure going into the city, very pleasing to the eye and it was kind of welcoming. It gives the feeling that you are close to the city and it introduces Valletta." ²⁵

Q11.4: Barbara, upon being asked what is most memorable for her about Valletta : "The architecture, and the height of the buildings. I don't know what era it is, The narrow street, cobbled streets. I have no history of it. It seemed to me like an ancient city. I liked both the visual aspect and the fact that it is historical." Tom : "I would fully concur with Barbara. Both of us had the same feeling about the architecture and about the history. The whole island is enveloped in history. We don't know the full history of Malta. Coming here was a spur of the moment decision because we wanted to go somewhere different. We were definitely very impressed with it."

Q11.5: Barbara: "Steps in the streets made the experience more interesting although it was tiring. We liked it."

Q11.6: Tom: "In Valletta when you look at the design of the architecture, I don't know when these buildings were built, but it took incredible craftsmanship and I presume that most of it would have been done by hand. When you look at some of the modern buildings you can actually see some cement is missing, and you draw a comparison between modern workmanship and the workmanship of this particular era. The same thing can be seen in Dublin. When you look at parts of Georgian Dublin you can see the craftsmanship in the plasterwork, and you don't see the same any more."

Q11.7: Tom: "Secondary streets are more interesting than the main roads. What made it interesting was the whole ambience that was actually there."

Q11.8: Tom: "One of the things that actually struck us even in Valletta was the friendliness of the people. When we went in the shops they were all very friendly and very helpful. We did not find exactly what we wanted. Even though we did not buy, they did not seem annoyed or upset because we did not buy. They were still very nice."

Q11.9: Tom, upon being asked whether he was aware there was so much history in Valletta before visiting: "Not really. We had a small pamphlet and it itemised certain areas to look for. We started walking down Republic Street and we started seeing different buildings, and then we moved around and we had lunch in St George's Square."

Q11.10 Barbara: "There was a whole ambience about it, and that is why I took some photographs." Tom: "It is very hard to capture all that and when you go back home and show your photographs you cannot show exactly how it is because when you are there you can actually feel the moment, but when you are removed from it and are showing strangers, they cannot feel it. But its nice to bring some memories and when we look back we will remember."

²⁵ *Portes des Bombes is a monumental double archway on the road leading to Valletta. It is clearly visible to anyone going to Valletta by car or bus.*

Interview 12 - Keith and Jane

Q12.1: Jane: "We also took a photograph of two police officers on horseback. They were at the top of Republic Street as soon as we got off the bus. They were standing still, and people could take photos with them. We enjoyed that very much, because we like horses, but also because they were so perfectly groomed. The regalia that they had on was in perfect condition. The policemen were so friendly too, they invited us to stand near them for a photo. It was unbelievable."

Q12.2: Keith: "We walked all over, in the end we ran out of time. The size of Valletta was amazing to us. We went to Valletta by bus, we walked down all the way to the Oliver Reed pub, we went down to the bastion walls, where there is the Malta Experience. We had lunch there, we went down to the water and we took the ferry across to Sliema."

Q12.3: Keith: "We just walked around. We had a map where places were, but not how to get to them. We like to wander around and explore."

Q12.4: Keith: "We went to find the place where Oliver Reed died. We took photos inside and outside.²⁶ We wanted to find the pub where he actually passed away. We sat in the square, and there were many people, we eventually found it after asking quite a few times. My wife likes Oliver Reed and has seen a lot of his films. It was fascinating just how small it was inside as well, it only holds about 24 people. Somebody had told us about it and we wanted to find it."

Interview 13 - Sean and Barbara

Q13.1: Sean, upon being asked what is it he looks forward to when visiting Valletta : "I think it is everything everything about Valletta – It is a beautiful capital. The Maltese have got a fantastic approach to visitors especially British. They love the British. It's like coming home. This is my second home."

Q13.2: Sean: " The beauty of Valletta is that it is a modern city, but if you take the modernization out of it, you have got hundreds of years of history and experience. You have the modern with the old. It is a working capital, and the combination of modern and history makes it more interesting to us as visitors, because I always tell people who are coming to Malta that they've got to get to Valletta; they got to experience the hustle and bustle , but also get off the main street and get to the small streets, get to the little cafes, to the little bistros and to the churches. See Valletta. Experience it."

Q13.3: Barbara: "It is clean." Sean: "Valletta is fantastic. It is a lovely city, and it has a lot of history; a large history to it. When I first came here 14 years ago I went around Fort St Elmo and that was fantastic. If you are into history; if you are into medieval history, Malta is a fantastic place to come to."

Q13.4: Sean, upon being asked which photos they will remember most: "Of St. Johns. We both have portraits of each other outside and also inside St John's. It's a beautiful cathedral. If you are not a Catholic it is well worth a visit because there is so much history about it. You can spend a whole day in there and not realize how much it goes back. It is a beautiful Cathedral, it is all the churches in Valletta are beautiful."

Q13.5: Barbara: "Valletta is unique." Sean: "It is marvelous, and modern although it has history." Barbara: "Yes. It has history and it has panache." Sean: "I think it is beautiful. It has got a modern area, but it is also historic. When you go off the main street and go into the quaint little streets, all the streets look the same, but they are not. You can walk down one street, and find yourself in a totally different area."

Q13.6: Sean: "The inside of St John's Cathedral is beautiful, absolutely gorgeous. It shows the Maltese idea of religion. The Maltese are almost addicted to their religion. They believe in their churches and I do believe St John's Cathedral is a prime example of the Maltese addiction to their Churches. St Paul's Shipwreck (Church) is also absolutely beautiful. I am a Roman Catholic and I am English. I try to explain it to people that I know back in England and they didn't understand how the churches over here are special.... special to the people."

Q13.7: Sean: "The people are so very friendly. They are not stuck up and they want visitors to go round and experience their churches. That's why I think Valletta and the whole islands of Malta, Gozo

²⁶ Oliver Reed died in a pub on Archbishop Street on 2 May 1999. He died from a sudden heart attack during a break from filming *Gladiator*. He was 61 years old.

and Comino are beautiful. In a way, the churches are a reflection of the people, and we also like them for that reason. It's fantastic because I am a practicing Catholic, and I go to church as well, and every time I went to Church in Malta I have never been shunned, and I have always been encouraged. Maltese people are fantastic."

Q13.8: Sean: "We went to the Upper Barakka gardens. The view of the Grand Harbour is spectacular. When I have friends who come to Malta I recommend that they go there. My friend came here just last month. They stayed in Sliema and went to Valletta and they have the bug; they have the Maltese bug now, so I expect they will be coming back again."

Interview 14 – Susan

Q14.1: "When I walked through the gates of Valletta, I saw the people and the historic buildings, it reminded me of Chester where I worked myself, and I loved it immediately."

Q14.2: "I saw barristers outside the court, which interested me because that was my job. I went inside the court, and I saw if I could have a look around. I talked to magistrates, and they showed me around the magistrates' court, and they told me that there was a crown court trial for a murder, which was unusual for Malta. I went to the court and I saw the trial. Of course it was in Maltese, but I could understand the body language."

Q14.3: Susan, upon being asked whether there was anything about Valletta that she liked better: "Everything, I love it. It's everything. It is a wonderful city. For me it has everything."

Q14.4: "I also like visiting all the churches, my favourite is St Francis down a side street. Every time I came to Valletta I used to see St Paul's and St Francis. St Paul's Shipwreck is a wonderful church. It got feeling. It is so spiritual. I love it." (JE: What is it that makes it feel spiritual?) "I think the fact that people go in there and share their prayers. The church has absorbed that, and there is a wonderful statue of Christ there as well." (JE: "Is that an experience which you cherish?") "Yes, and I had that feeling in Assisi as well. The building absorbs the feeling. It's like Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam, and ... it absorbs the evil. You go in and you feel (the evil feeling). I think the churches are special. The churches from the inside, and St John's with the Caravaggio. St Catherine's is very special to me. It is a beautiful little church and the way they are developing it and restoring it. It is wonderful."

Q14.5: "I first visited a few years ago and it was my first visit, and I immediately fell in love with Valletta and Malta....." Upon being asked what was it that made her fall in love with Valletta, Susan says; "Because it was familiar, being a Roman city like where I worked in Chester, and the people were warm and kind. I just loved the ambience. Being familiar I felt at home. As you go through the Gate (*and looking down Republic Street*) , you see as a sea of people."

Q14.6: "Another time I went to the Upper Barakka Gardens, the ones with the guns, and that was beautiful. Essentially what I liked most was the view of the sea which is wonderful,.... and seeing the yachts in the harbour particularly Abramovic's boat, which he never uses apparently" (*laughter*).

Interview 15 – Donny and Joanne

Q15.1: Donny, referring to a photo of a memorial in the Upper Barakka Gardens: "It struck me. The flowers were so bright and it just took me by surprise. I felt drawn and stopped to look at the statues there."

Q15.2: Donny, referring to a photo of a tunnel entrance leading to the War Rooms : "It was a view that I imagine many soldiers have seen. It was out of the way, and we learnt during the tour of the War Rooms the reason why it was hard to find – so the Germans couldn't. It was a very interesting tour, there were a lot of things we didn't know that we learnt. The photo is taken before the tour, we didn't really know where the tunnel would lead to. We walked all the way down all the stairs to find this sort of tunnel , which was strange."

Q15.3: Donny: "We like the history of the place." Joanne: "You could tell from walking around that it has so much history." Donny: "It still has its walls around it and stuff like that." Joanne: "And how

it has also been kept exactly as it was, and has not been modernized at all. Like you are taken back in time.” Donny: “Everywhere was beautiful, and it is hard to find a problem with it, everywhere meaning the buildings, the streets, the views.”

Q15.4: Donny: “Another photo is of a typical house, We like it because it reflects the local character. You can see which is done in the local stone and the windows which are so nice.”

Q15.6: Joanne, referring to a photo taken at Barrakka Gardens. “I like it because of the way the view out is framed in the arch. I like the composition of the photo.” (*Reference: Photo UBG12-15-08*)

Q15.7: Donny, referring to Royal Airforce Memorial in Floriana: “The interest was cause it was a phoenix and what it means. Phoenix means rebirth. Maybe Malta went through something which made it feel that it was going through a rebirth probably after the war. Joanne: There could be different meanings why it was there. The phoenix means rebirth, and you start to think what it meant. Donny: We took photos of it and also of the writing but it is in Latin. I will get it translated when I get home.”

Q15.8: Donny referring to a group of photos of wall graffiti²⁷ (photos Oth21-int 15-05a, Oth22-int15-05b and Oth23-int15-05c): “Here’s another photo. It jumps out as you see it. There are messages, maybe you may not know what they mean 100 per cent but they may have different meanings. We found it interesting. We would like to read it. The line (*from the graffiti*) ‘you can never arrest an idea’ is just great. Not everyone has a platform to speak from. Maybe the person who put that there spoke out that way.”

Interview 16 - Pavlo

Q16.1: Referring to Valletta: “I think that it is a singular experience, and one of the most unique experiences, the fortifications and the whole city inside the fortifications.”

Q16.2: Referring to Valletta: “It is very old. The streets are narrow, and it is not a flat city. There are a lot of steps and it is very nice. I really like it. I am interested in medieval places..... I took photos of the fortifications, the Siege Bell, and the view of the Grand Harbour from the Siege Bell. The Siege Bell is not really old. I found the fortifications to be more impressive. They are impressive because they are in good condition. I expected something in not so good condition. I cannot really say why history makes my visit more interesting but I am interested in the Crusades and the heritage.”

Interview 17 - Roberta

Q17.1: “I pictured a lot of doors because they are so impressive – they are massive, good wood and the handle is an angel: for me its really special to see something like that.It brings memories maybe because we had a big massive wooden door at home and I always looked after it. I don’t know why I love doors.”

Q17.2: Referring to many historic buildings in Valletta that are not in use: “It is something about mystery; maybe I feel like I miss something because it is closed to the public and I can’t go inside. I would like to, it makes me so curious. What is inside?”

Q17.3: Roberta, referring to Pjazza Regina: “I sat with friends; very attractive; I imagine we could sit there for 2 or 3 hours, if we had the time, enjoying the weather, and there was the big library, we went to have a peep inside. Its not just a normal square, you are surrounded by this massive building, and you feel so alive, enjoying the drink, having a social time. Its all this open public space which is very inviting to sit in; good conversation; it makes you feel good.”

Q17.4: “I like tours; it’s really hard for me to read sign after sign after sign. I enjoy it much more when someone comes and explain to me. It is not because I can’t understand them myself, but there is a

²⁷ Donny and Joanne lost their way in the Lascaris War Rooms area. By chance they came across large wall graffiti under road archways/bridge.

limit to how much information you get from reading. The same applies for the city. I went for a walk around the city. If I had more time I would have taken a walk tour. I felt I saw just one per cent of the city because you don't really get to know it if you don't have information. You don't go to a museum, you just walk around the streets. It's great but it feels like I want more; I want to come back and have time in the city."

Q17.5: "There was a piano, it said, "play me, I'm yours" on the piano which I thought was very generous. I know this will make people smile, and it's very nice of you to do so. It's a nice photo to take back home, you playing a funny piano in this gorgeous garden. You're going to show it to a friend and say look at that, it is so funny. We were around it for at least 5 minutes, smiling, taking photos, making jokes about it; playing a little bit. It gives you a reason to smile."

Q17.6: "I like old buildings and the older the better. This is a different kind of old. There are historic houses when you can imagine where someone lived, died, loved, had children, and then you see this massive building where you can imagine the knights coming in with all the weapons, the horses, I like to imagine, and it's a real story, when you know it's a real story you like it better. It is not artificial; it feels real, authentic; it is very attractive I think."

Q17.7: "Next one it is of this street. I love all the stairs; all the narrow streets going up, going down. The street gives a romantic feeling like something from the past. I was walking by myself because I like it but if my boyfriend was here we would be walking together, I'm thinking of bringing him over here imagining how romantic it will be."

Q17.8: Roberta, referring to Republic Street: "Another photo I took is of the main shopping street So then I find this high street and I said wow that's very London-like, that's nice, suddenly there are lots of people in the street. The rest of Valletta was quite empty, but the shopping street was very full so I took a photo also of my favourite shop from London, just to show to my friends. "

Interview 18 - Maryline

Q18.1: Upon being asked what she liked about Upper Barrakka Gardens: "Being there. We were sitting down enjoying the garden."

Q18.2: "In pedestrian areas like Republic Street, it is much more enjoyable."

Q18.3: "The place that I remember most is St John's Cathedral, both outside and inside. About the outside, I liked the light, the colours of the Cathedral and the simplicity of the building, and then the surprise when you go inside. Inside it is richly decorated, so there is a contrast with the simplicity of the outside. Outside I liked the natural light, and even inside the cathedral the light was lovely. It is a fascinating and a personal experience. It is a spiritual experience outside and a cultural experience inside. Both are complimentary to each other. There is a lot of art, and also real life. It is an experience of the Christian culture along the years, to today."

Q18.4: "We liked the main street – Republic street, What we noticed was that there is the modern as well as a lot of history and culture."

Q18.5, upon being asked if there is anything she does not like; "What I did not like about Valletta is the same as I do not like in other places like too much noise. I like the people but the organisation is not quite good in Valletta like in London. There is a lot of traffic and pollution."

Interview 19 - Tony and Meiner

Q19.1: Tony: "There are all sorts of things to see and do, we could have gone into the armoury. We preferred the commotion in the street market, and the buzz of the people."

Q19.2: Tony, upon being asked what was it he liked about Republic Street: "It was a bit of everything – it is obviously a very old street which has been modernized, and it is very cosmopolitan. There are all sorts of little shops selling all sorts of things. There is a large mix of people, as well. You can hear Italian, French, Spaniards, English people talking."

Q19.3: Tony: "What I did like reading was the plaques on the walls of the palace relating to King George awarding the George Cross to the island. We stood and looked at the guards as well. I was a soldier myself, so it is a part of my past." Meiner: "That was of a lot of interest to us."

Interview 20 - Peter

Q20.1: "Valletta is a small town, I like the fact that it is small, and also the harbour is very interesting. I like the fact that it is small because I don't see these kind of small towns where I live. Valletta looks like a citadel, a fortified town."

Q20.2: "The streets and the buildings are very interesting. I do not see this kind of historic buildings where I come from."

Q20.3: "I read about the history, I hear about it and also it is what I see. There are many different cultures in the history of Valletta, you see the different times from long ago to today - the Knights and the British."

Q20.4: "What I enjoy most is walking around on my own and looking around. It is important to me to see what I can find on my own. When I look at buildings, I notice the small details like the windows, which are not high, the doors, doorknobs and so on."

Q20.5: "Inside Valletta I like the churches. It is interesting to see how many people go to church and are religious. There is also a lot of devotion towards Holy Mary. In Germany there is also devotion towards Holy Mary, but here there are many churches (dedicated to her). I am not religious myself."

Q20.6: Peter, upon being asked whether he saw any change from previous visits: "Yes, I looked for the main gate and it was not there! I used to like the main gate as it was."

Q20.7: "And also the harbour is very interesting. The thing that I like most about the harbour is the view. Valletta looks like a citadel, a fortified town."

Interview 21 - Elisabeth and Michael

Q21.1: Elisabeth: "The harbour is a wonderful sight. It was very impressive because as we were standing on the Upper Barrakka gardens. I heard one of the guides mention about the harbour being like a hand. I found that very interesting because then I could see the thumb and I could see a map really."

Q21.2: Elisabeth: "What I like most in Upper Barrakka is the history. You read about the harbour and you see places for outlooks from where the defender can see enemy boats when they come in. The outlooks are strategically located to see for miles across the harbour. I can appreciate that you can see the three cities on the other side of the harbour. I enjoy that aspect."

Q21.3: Michael: "We enjoyed very much the artillery, the firing of the cannon (at Upper Barrakka). We enjoyed the military aspect, the precision, the uniforms." Elisabeth: "I liked the guardsman who fired the cannon. He came round and he was giving people leaflets, and he answered any questions that people asked. We didn't ask him any questions but I did hear people asking, and he was happy to answer their questions. We liked the fact that he was interacting with people around us."

Q21.4: Elisabeth: "I was born in 1943 so I was only a child when the war happened. I think it's a wonderful thing the tradition that Malta's people have of re enacting many of the happenings that occurred during the war, so that it is never forgotten. I enjoyed that. It is the memory of the place."

Q21.5 Michael: "Being in the building trade, I was very impressed with the battlements, and the buildings and the reinforcements (meaning fortifications) in my opinion are fantastic."

Q21.6: Upon being asked as to what particular feature brings out the character, Elisabeth replies: "Its where you look down the streets and you see the wooden balconies. I take pictures of those to show my friends at home. I think the way that they lasted all these years is unique to Malta. I haven't seen it in any other country. The timber balcony is something that I remember very readily."

Q21.7: Elisabeth: "Well, to us, Malta is full of tradition, and part of that tradition was the buses. I know sometimes they broke down, but it was part of the tradition, and personally, I feel that some of the tradition is being lost because of modern things that are being introduced. I know you have to progress; I realise that; but to us Malta is based on tradition and that is one of the reasons why I enjoy coming and why I enjoy going to Valletta, to re-read the tradition and some of it is being lost, in a way, because of the modernization. I have heard people in the hotel say the same thing. I know time can't stand still, but there's so much tradition in Malta. It is one of the things that draws me here."

Q21.8: Elisabeth: "We don't have such hilly streets where we live; and although we are getting on in years, we did manage to go up and down some of the streets. The steeper streets that have all the steps made me think of the elderly people who are still fit to walk about those streets. It's wonderful, in a way."

Q21.9: Michael: "The crime rate here is very low compared to back home. You can sit down on the pavement and have a coffee, a beer or a sandwich in safety. Elisabeth: Yes definitely safety is important. We have been to a number of countries, and Malta is one of the few countries where I can travel around on a bus on my own and not be worried, and not be frightened that I'm going to get lost. I always know that I can approach any anybody, any Maltese citizen and ask them for help, and I know very well that they will be courteous, they will be kind and more often than not they will be able to answer my query. Here and Gozo are the two islands where I will get on a bus on my own."

Q21.10: Elisabeth: "One of the things which I found disappointing this time is the lack of gates. To me when you get off the bus and you walk to Republic Street, that used to be the beginning and its very disappointing that the gates aren't there and because of the structure work which is going on there.²⁸ I am very doubtful that the gates will be returned. The gates need to come back. The gate welcomes you to Valletta as it did on the other times when we came to Malta."

Q21.11: Michael: "The monuments to people who lost their lives in the last World War and the first World War, this is very commendable. I am referring to the bell monument and the monuments dedicated to the people who lost their lives."

Q21.12: Elisabeth: "We very much enjoyed walking around Valletta, and we enjoyed going in the various gardens and what we found very good was the information which was in various places. I think that's very appreciative."

Q21.13: Elisabeth: "We enjoyed very much St John's Cathedral. That was a wonderful experience to go inside and to see the painting of the beheading of St John. It was a very moving experience. We enjoyed that a lot."

Interview 22 - Amanda and Scott

Q22.1: "We also liked the churches – they are very intricate, full of paintings, and things like that ... they're lovely. We are Church of England, and here they are mostly Catholic – they are very ornate."

Q22.2 Amanda: "It was very busy. There were many people. There were some who were dressed up (*probably referring to reenactments*). There is also a strong English connection and that is something that we like. We find it comfortable here. In some other places that we went we did not feel so comfortable because it was not as easy to communicate with the people as it is here."

Q22.3: "We were very high up, and there was a ship visiting in the harbour. It was about March time, we enjoyed seeing the activity in the harbour."

Q22.4: Amanda, referring to Upper Barakka: "What we remember most about the gardens is the greenery, the peace, and the views because they were high up and they were lovely."

²⁸The City Gate project did not provide for the construction of a gate but simply left a gap in the bastions wall as an entrance to the City. The City Gate project was ongoing during the interviews. The previous sixties gate had been demolished and the new entrance to the city, or gap in the bastions, had not yet taken shape.

Interview 23 - Byril and Murray

Q23.1: “We just enjoy all of it, just taking it in as it is different to where we come from.”

Q23.2: Byril, upon being asked if there is anything they dislike: “Just all the building work. It’s a shame but they have to do it don’t they? To repair it. It will be nice once it’s finished.”

Q23.3: Byril: “Look at the old buildings, and how long they have lasted. I know some have been rebuilt, but some are original and very old. It amazes me how they built them. I try to imagine how they were built. What impressed me most is the different style to England.”

Q23.4: Byril: “We never get enough of looking at the buildings. They are fascinating, they are made of sandstone. I never tire at looking at them. Every time I go I see something different. They are not boring. Every street is slightly different. We also like the balconies overlooking the streets.”

Q23.5: Byril: “The procession in the church²⁹ was interesting because it is the way the people lived their lives I guess. I suppose It is so much different to our church. The people seem to take their faith a lot more seriously than we do in England. There is more ceremony which we found interesting.”

Q23.6: Byril: “We like mostly the friendliness and helpfulness of the people.”

Q23.7: Byril: “What I will remember most are the views from the Upper Barrakka gardens, where the guns are, they are stunning. We went yesterday and the views are fantastic. We like the view of the harbour, because the buildings are so old, and we like seeing the boats coming and going in the Grand Harbour.”

Q23.8: Murray “We just like wandering around, the narrow streets as well as where the shops are, and exploring.”

Q23.9: Byril: “We had lunch yesterday overlooking the harbour and the views were stunning. Looking at the old buildings. We could see the three cities from there.”

Interview 24 – Sue and Ken

Q24.1: Ken: “Architecturally I like to see the buildings. There is good architecture. I like both old buildings and the modern ones. My background is in construction, so it is something that I look for. I sometimes wonder how they got the domes so round, and how did they get the big stones up. The shape of the building, the way it is built, the material are all things I look out for. I think, in Valletta, of how the buildings were constructed and how old they are when there was no machinery or anything to aid the builders. I think they are marvelous to look at. You look at the past and think how they did things.”

Q24.2: Sue: “Even though we have seen it all, it is nice to see it again. There is always something different to see. There are so many lovely little churches that we like to go in and have a look at. There are so many areas of interest that you don’t necessarily go to the same location each time. We might vary it and see what there is around. We like to explore and a lot of the time we see something new. And that makes it interesting.”

Q24.3: Sue: “The square outside the Palace is very nice as well. There is always some kind of entertainment going on there. They have music there sometimes, there were dancers performing there. The fact that there is something happening there makes the experience more interesting, and unusual and provides variety.”

Q24.4: Sue: “We liked the history. In the Cathedral, that is beautiful. The things in there, the tombs, and the knights, it was fascinating. In the Cathedral it is not just the aesthetics but also the history of the place. To me it is just history in general. It is just that we are interested about the story behind the buildings.”

Q24.5: Ken: “We walked around quite a lot. There is one area. It’s where Oliver Reed died.³⁰ It is the story behind it. We actually went to look for the pub. I drank in the pub.” Sue: “It’s a man thing” (laughter).

²⁹ The ‘procession’ in St. Pauls Shipwreck Church was probably a religious ceremony, which included ‘dignitaries’ (academics wearing togas). It was part of the graduation ceremonies held in the Church and in the nearby Old University building.

Q24.6: Sue: “We enjoyed going up to the Saluting Battery and watching the noonday gun and the Grand Harbour. I like the location, I like the ceremony and the re enactment of the shooting of the guns. This weekend we went to watch the yacht race (the Middle Sea Race started from the Grand Harbour when the interviewees happened to be in Valletta) just because it was something different, something unusual. We saw the start of the yacht race. It was a spectacular sight.”

Interview 25 – Eric

Q25.1: “ The architecture. Definitely the architecture. It is appealing because I have read about Malta, before I came, it involved me into it, and about the grandmasters, and it enthralls me to think about these great men who lived there. It is the history behind these buildings that really interests me. Both architecture and history are equally important.”

Q25.2: “I also like the bastions and the curtains (i.e bastion walls) and the way they were done. Today there would be tall cranes and JCB’s and it just makes me wonder how it all got done.”

Q25.3: Referring to the Grand Harbour: “To think about all the ships that there were at the time of the grandmasters, the mind boggles.”

Q25.4: “I don’t like all the car parking down the side of the streets, but then again we live in a modern era and this will happen. The cars parked in the streets are not compatible with the architecture of the place. But like all other cities, there is little you can do about it.”

Q25.5: “I just fell in love with Valletta, I think it is marvelous I really it do. I liked it immediately the first time I came, and when I come to Malta I make it a point to visit Valletta. I knew when I first got here last October, having breakfast and I went out across the promenade and I just knew that Malta was for me. It is very much orientated towards the English. If you look today across the promenade, there is the Maltese flag, the European flag, then there is the Union Jack. The French and the Italian, and the German flag are all down at the other end.” (*laughter*)

Interview 26 – Alison and Nick

Q26.1: Alison, referring to Pjazza San Gorg : “We went there last night, and it was illuminated and there was classical music playing, and the fountain going in time to the music. Lovely atmosphere. I like the architecture, the style of the buildings, the large big open square in front of the Grandmasters Palace I think it (the square) is very calm and the people are very pleasant. I think the people are very friendly and it feels very safe. It is clean, attractive, and also historic.” Nick: “ These (elements) come together, both in the daytime and in the evening after dark. It is equally appealing.”

Q26.2: Alison, referring to the side streets: “They are quite fascinating, you don’t quite know what’s round the corner. They have all the steps, and you can get to the top of one, and go forward or from side to side. You don’t quite know where you’re going to end up, but it’s quite easy to find your way around. It is quite enchanting really. You can explore. And yet there are plenty of sign posts and plenty of people to help; if you do want to get to a definite place.”

Q26.3: Alison: “I think another important thing is that when we first arrived I was quite concerned how dilapidated some of the buildings looked especially the wooden frames, but then after you’ve been a few days, you get a feel for it, and you grow to absolutely like that side of it.” Nick: “It is a part of the charm.” Alison: “Yes, and it doesn’t matter. Its different to how things are back home but that doesn’t mean it’s wrong, it’s appealing, and I think because there is regeneration going on all the time, it fits in well.”

Q26.4: Alison: “We went on a harbour cruise this morning. It is lovely to look back onto Valletta. The colour of the stone is remarkable. The sun was shining on it, and is all very eclectic really, the different heights. It is all very historic. The new buildings blend in well with the old. It is very

³⁰ Refer to footnote 4 above..

traditional. It is so different to what we are used to back home. The colour of the buildings with the sun shining on them against the backdrop of the blue sea is very attractive. There is a lot of light so the colours come out more vibrant. When you see it from the sea, it is very grand, it has a commanding position.”

Q26.5: It's a positive aspect of Valletta's streets. Especially when you are walking down not up (laughter). However it is not too steep anywhere, and it makes it more interesting to walk than being on a flat level.

Q26.6: Nick: “When you compare it to a city like New York which is totally different, on a grid system and flat, Valletta has got so much more character. You can imagine that it looked like that two hundred years ago, it still has enough history there. But its character is not just about its history; it is also about the present.”

Q26.7: Alison, upon being asked whether there is anything she did not like about Valletta: “No, it is very clean. My mum's been several times, and she said the area they are developing as you walk up from the bus station (*referring to the redevelopment of City Gate*) she would like to see it as it used to be, but I'm sure that once it has been regenerated it will be just as grand. I feel a little disappointed that I did not see it, and there is all the scaffolding, but that is a question of being here at the wrong time. We are keen to see it when it is finished. We would like to come back when it is finished.”

Interview 27 - Thomas

Q27.1: “When you get on the side streets you see the almost neglected old buildings with the plaster falling off and the woodwork paint peeling – that would cause some people to think they don't like it, but to my mind that's the natural Valletta – that's how it is. That's the real Valletta I remember and picture. I had the same feeling when many years ago we went to Venice – I had this picture in mind of this beautiful city, wonderful squares and when I got there it was all falling down and decrepit. it was a large disappointment but when I went back the second that was what I was expecting, and I fell in love with it. That to me that's the same with Valletta. Initially our first reaction when we saw some of the side streets was, good heavens where have we come here; it was all decrepit and falling down but when we've been and had a look, we realized that's the Maltese way, you see it as it is. Going back home, I wouldn't say to somebody go to Malta to see a pristine place, you go to see it how it is and that's its charm and I'm happy with that.”

Q27.2: “It was so unexpected. We could hear the piano, we thought it was coming from a bar or restaurant but yet there it was in the middle of a crowd of people round – some children banging at it. Some of the tourists were proper pianists and by the end of it we were all clapping - it was a nice surprise we actually sat in a restaurant watching the tourists watching the people playing.”

Q27.3 “I keep mentioning this contrast – you see it all the time in the harbour – you see these super yachts and amongst them are these real Maltese buildings with their little balconies, and shutters.”

Q27.4: “The first memory I have will be of the main tourist area of Republic Street which was in stark contrast to the old style building and architecture, obviously it has been redeveloped and spruced up for the tourist. So that was a surprise. When you get into the side streets, you see the old buildings, and then you see the new areas, with the new walkways which have been developed. I've seen this contrast before in Spain where the old villages have been refurbished and spruced up, so you tend to lose the identity of the real proper style of the village and I notice that here in Valletta you have the touristy bits which are very nice, but we found it more interesting to go through the little side roads and see the close buildings with closed balconies and that sort of thing.”

Q27.5: Thomas: “One thing I did not come to terms with is the different styles of architecture, influenced obviously by the different people who populated Malta over the centuries. Obviously their influence can be seen in the architecture, and I find it confusing which is which in terms of the baroque style, the Maltese style, Italian and French.”

Q27.6: “We went to the open market. It was a Sunday. We were a bit disappointed because it was sort of a touristy market. I understand that during the week they have a village type market. We were hoping that the local market would be more local and crafts oriented.”

Interview 28 – Harry

Q28.1: “It’s just the ambience of the place. I’m at an age when I can remember the war and everything that happened during the War. Not that I was here at the time. It’s just that you start thinking. When you go there things start going through your mind and you start thinking about what did happen sixty years ago. It just draws me. I also like that it’s been redone – its so nicely laid out – it’s just being able to look over the whole of the Grand Harbour it has an attraction for me it might be a personal thing but quite a lot of visitors go there.”

Q28.2: “It’s the ambience of the place – following people around, you know, Merchants Street and Republic Street, and all the rest, having a walk around, seeing what’s happened since the last time we were here. As a capital, I love it, it’s a lovely city. What stands out is the hustle and bustle. When you go in there there’s this hustle and bustle.”

Q28.3: Harry, referring to Merchants Str following pedestrianisation: “Its a lot better being able to walk along without running the risk of being knocked over by a car. Its certainly more pleasant.”

Interview 29 - Lisa and Greg

Q29.1: Lisa: “There’s no part of Valletta that we don’t like. It’s a very special place and I hope it never changes. I was looking in the shops and I saw a book of photographs called Vanishing Valletta and I thought no it musn’t – we don’t want it vanished. Its all very quirky, steps and corners and doors. It was a lovely book, It was the fact that he called it Vanishing Valletta, and I thought, no, it musn’t vanish.”

Q29.2: Greg: “You get a different view wherever you are, and even on the other side looking towards Valletta.” Lisa: “It is the place as a whole that the appeal is, it’s not just one area.” Greg: “When you walk different streets, you’ve always got a view of something – the sea, the harbour or a little street – its lovely”.

Q29.3 Lisa: “I think standing in the Upper Barrakka Gardens overlooking the harbour is what I remember most. As soon as we get into Valletta that’s where we make a beeline for.” Greg: “Its all very nice especially looking over the view of Vittoriosa all around that area, watching the liners coming in and out. It’s a nice place to sit in the quiet. Lots of locals seem to go there as well, its not just the tourists.”

Q29.4: Greg, referring to Pjazza San Gorg: “They’ve recently paved all the square, put a fountain in which children enjoy running in and out. Notte Bianca night they made a kind of show around it – girls dancing in and out. Every hour the fountain played music and up it goes.”

Q29.5: Lisa: “Once you’ve seen the fountain (referring to Tritons Fountain which is just outside City Gate) the next thing you look forward to is the gate – it wasn’t there! If we’re meeting friends we usually say we’ll see you at the gate – it’s gone! Greg: Another area that I’d like to see finished is the theatre inside on the right hand side where the gate is. It doesn’t show you what it will be like when it is finished. I’ve seen nothing. What its going to be like? You’ve got to guess. Is it going to look the same, different? Are they keeping the same stone? I hope they do. Are they keeping the same architecture? We just don’t know, you can’t see, they boarded it up. There are no pictures.”

Interview 30 - Ann and Frank

Q30.1: “We like the noonday salute as well. Whenever we are in Valletta we try to go to the Upper Barakka gardens for the noonday salute. Frank: We go there mostly for my benefit. I am a veteran, I was with the Armed Forces, and I appreciate the ceremony that goes on. Ann: It also means a lot to me as well because when my grandfather was a Royal Marine, he spent some of his time in Malta about a hundred and ten years ago, about 1902 to 1904. He was on ships. So the noonday salute reminds me of my grandfather. He came to Malta once or twice on different ships.”

Q30.2: Ann, comparing with the daily market: “The Sunday market has a different feel about it; it is much bigger. It is a local market, not a market for the tourists which was very good. It is for locals and not something touristic. The market sold their things, their vegetables, their clothes. It is nice when you go somewhere, to find out how the local people live there; how they live their lives.”

Q30.3: Ann: “It is a lovely city, just to go browse, to walk, try these streets, try going round the next corner, you can go off the main route. I like exploring the side streets.”

Q30.4: Frank: “I like the grid system of the streets, it is very easy to get from one place to another. If you have a map and you know where you are, you can easily find your way. There are no twists and turns where you can get lost. That makes our visit easier and more enjoyable.”

Q30.5: Ann, referring to Casa Rocca Piccolo a historic house museum on Republic Street: “I like the atmosphere there, I like seeing the portraits and imagining the life of the people who lived there. I would recommend to anybody to go to see it because it is so charming.”

Q30.6: Ann: “Something else that will forever remain in my mind are the caves where the people sheltered during the war. These are in Vittoriosa.³¹ The horrible conditions that the people had to live in were terrible. Also the devastation they faced when they came out of there, and their house was gone.”

Q30.7: Ann, upon being asked if, apart from the market, there was anything else in Valletta which showed her how the people lived: “The churches. I suppose there are people who live in Valletta, but you don’t really see their houses. It is more commerce. I think you would have to get into the back streets before you can see any homes.”

Q30.8: Ann: “We also walked along the walls. The fortifications, the walls, are so thick along Hastings Gardens, and Upper Barrakka and Lower Barrakka. We like the views. We like the open views of the Harbour from Barrakka, and the view on the other side from Hastings.”

Interview 31 - Sandra and Mike

Q31.1: Sandra, referring to Palace guards in Pjazza San Gorg: “It just intrigued me. I was curious and a bit surprised to see it in the middle of the square. You know I did not expect to see it. As soon as we walked round into the square, I said it straight away It’s like Buckingham Palace (*talking in a laughing tone*) before we had actually seen the guards doing their steps.”

Q31.2: Sandra: “But I think the whole square was really good because people were just sitting taking it all in, and watching people walking past. It was nice that square.”

Q31.3: Sandra, referring to Upper Barrakka Gardens: “We thought they were really nice. The presentation, the colours, the flower beds and the trees, and the approach to the area where they fire the cannons. We actually went down and they did a talk and a tour. I found that interesting. They told us a little bit about the history, why they were dressed in that type of uniform, and about firing at twelve o’clock. They said ‘take no notice of the church bells cause they’re wrong and we’re right’. The guns are more accurate than the church bells. (*Laughter*) The approach to that area is so nice, the garden is neat, and there are the beautiful statues all round. And also buildings. I think they are impressive.”

Q31.4: Sandra, referring to the views from the Upper Barrakka Gardens: “..... there was this huge tanker. We were curious as to what was in it. There were the tug boats bringing it in, and we watched it until it came all the way in, and then they turned it to get it up to where the harbour is. We watched it for ten to fifteen minutes because we found it interesting.” Mike: “Well, it’s something that we don’t see at home.”

Q31.5: Sandra, referring to stone reliefs on a memorial at the Upper Barrakka Gardens: “I took this photo because it got the ships going through. We were interested because it was very good how they

³¹ The caves or wartime shelters referred to are in Vittoriosa which is on the other side of the Grand Harbour. Although comment does not refer to Valletta it is being included anyway, because (i) the wartime conditions of these two localities were very similar. Both had shelters dug out of rock and both were subject to significant destruction (ii) comment provides useful insight on the tourist experience of wartime shelters.

did it. The ships are embedded in it, not just the personage. We admired the design and the workmanship that went into many of these statues.”

Q31.6: Sandra: “I did take photos of side streets. I just like to see how the people live, not just the touristy parts. This is why we went round all of them. We look for just the ordinary people, the way of life just as we would have at home. it is the way the ordinary people live, then you have all these grand buildings.”

Q31.7: Sandra, referring to one of the more important British buildings in Valletta: “Then there was the big building at the back, the Main Guard.: We were probably drawn to that because of the fact that it was British. Different tourists would look at it in a different light to us.”

Interview 32 - Julia

Q32.1: “There were children playing around the water, and the fountains dancing when the music comes on. It was quite nice and attractive.”

Q32.2: “When I came at Christmas, there were quite a few musicians. I thought that was lovely, there was a band with the uniforms on, and there was also some folk dancing. I liked the activity in the city. It was of interest to me.”

Q32.3: “Valletta is quite nice. I don’t think I expected it to be what it was. I expected it to be more blasé, I thought it would be a lot better than it was, and more flamboyant. I thought it would be more Italian-type. The architecture and the buildings are beautiful, however I thought it would be bigger and more grand. In that sense it was a bit of a disappointment. I think its just the sound of Valletta, like some people like the sound of London. People say oh, Valletta like oh, London. Being the capital makes you expect a lot.”

Q32.4: “Its very busy. I didn’t expect it to be quite so busy. When I came at Christmas, there were quite a few musicians. I thought that was lovely, there was a band with the uniforms on, and there was also some folk dancing. I liked the activity in the city. It was of interest to me.”

APPENDIX B - Information on interviews and on coding of transcripts

Total Interview time											
Inter- view No	Place and date	Inter- viewees	First time visito rs	Inter view with phot os	Min + sec	Minutes fraction	Nodes	Referenc es	Nodes per min. of intervie w	Pages of tran- script without notes	Pages of tran- script including notes
01	GHE 9may12	Rebecca & friends	Yes	Yes	20.40	20.66	21	27	1.3	3	5.5
02	GHE 14may12	Tanya, Bruno	Yes	Yes	32.11	32.18	27	35	1.1	3	4.5
03	GHE 16may12	Colin and Rosalind	No	Yes	19.51	19.85	32	38	1.9	3.5	5.5
04	GHE 18may12	Ian and Christine	Yes	No	19.49	19.81	23	26	1.3	3.5	5
05	GHE 18may12	Dave and Angie	yes	No	14.58	14.97	21	28	1.9	3	4.5
06	GHE 24may12	Petra, Barth	Yes	No	27.07	27.12	36	48	1.8	3.5	5.5
07	SNT 30may12	John and Jill	No	No	61.08	61.13	48	70	1.1	5.5	8.5
08	GHE 4jun12	Gert and Mieke	Yes	Yes	27.28	27.47	32	52	1.9	3.5	7.5
09	GHE 4jun12	Pamela, Norbert	No	No	20.22	20.36	26	35	1.7	3.5	4.5
10	SNT 13jun12	Anthony	No	No	11.36	11.6	23	24	1.9	2	3.5
11	SNT 13jun12	Tom and Barbara	Yes	No	23.20	23.33	26	34	1.4	3.5	5.5
12	SNT 25jun12	Keith and Jane	Yes	No	10.12	10.20	17	18	1.8	2	2.5
13	SNT 2jul12	Sean and Barbara	No	No	13.52	13.87	26	32	2.4	2.5	5
14	SNT 2jul12	Susan	No	No	10.42	10.70	25	31	3.0	3	3.5
15	SNT 9jul12	Donny, Joanne	Yes	Yes	16.14	16.23	22	28	1.7	3	5.5
16	CVL 11jul12	Pavlo	Yes	no	6.26	6.43	9	9	1.4	1	1.5
17	CVL 17jul12	Roberta	Yes	yes	11.40	11.67	31	37	3.2	3.5	4.5
18	CVL 9jul12	Maryline	Yes	no	12.00	12.00	19	21	1.7	1.5	2

Total Interview time

Inter- view No	Place and date	Inter- viewees	First time visito rs	Inter view with phot os	Min + sec	Minutes fraction	Nodes	Referenc es	Nodes per min. of intervie w	Pages of tran- script without notes	Pages of tran- script including notes
19	SNT 23jul12	Tony and Meiner	No	no	12.33	12.55	18	18	1.5	2	3
20	CVL 30jul12	Peter	No	no	12.00	12.00	15	19	1.6	1.5	2
21	PRE 15oct12	Elisabeth Michael	No	no	26.45	26.75	36	47	1.8	4.5	7.5
22	PRE 16oct 12	Amanda and Scott	No	no	13.40	13.67	15	16	1.2	2	3.5
23	PRE 22oct 12	Byril and Murray	No	no	12.27	12.45	30	34	2.7	3	4
24	PRE 22oct 12	Sue and Ken	No	no	10.30	10.5	21	23	2.2	2.5	3
25	PRE 29oct 12	Eric	No	no	10.55	10.92	17	19	1.8	2.5	4
26	PRE 29oct 12	Alison and Nick	No	no	8.55	8.92	28	34	3.8	3	5
27	PRE 26nov12	Thomas	Yes	no	20.26	20.45	27	38	1.8	4	5.5
28	PRE 5nov12	Harry	No	no	9.35	9.58	19	23	2.4	2	2.5
29	PRE 5nov12	Lisa and Greg	No	no	11.21	11.35	26	32	2.6	3	5
30	PRE 12nov12	Ann and Frank	No	no	13.40	13.67	28	33	2.8	3	3.5
31	PRE 19May13	Sandra and Mike	Yes	yes	28.55	28.98	34	47	1.6	5.5	8
32	PRE 20May13	Julia	No	yes	9.35	9.58	19	21	2.1	2	3
					554.13	560.95		997	1.8	94.5	144

Average $560.95 / 32 = 17.52$ minutes

Appendix C: Analysis of interviews

Themes, nodes and sub-nodes

During the analysis eight overriding themes have emerged – the nodes are categorised in one of these themes. The first column of the table below gives the number of references per theme that have resulted from the analysis. The references were extracted from the interview transcripts using NVivo10. The second column below gives the number of references that have been processed for each theme.

	Themes	No of references	No. of references processed
1	Physical features	190	152
2	Locations	171	151
3	Perceptions and sensory	53	40
4	Activities	124	116
5	Emotive	248	223
6	People	59	59
7	Services	52	43
8	General comments	101	79
		998	863

The following tables give a list of nodes and sub-nodes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews (first column) – one table for each of the eight themes. For each node and sub-node, the number of references that have resulted are given in the third column, with the second column giving the number of sources (i.e. interviews) from which these references have emerged. The fourth column gives the number of references that have been processed for each node or sub-node.

Theme - 1 Physical features

Nodes and sub-nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
Bastions	10	11	9
Buildings	1	1	1
• central courtyard, space within building	1	1	1
• dilapidated buildings	6	6	6
• facades - stonework, arch. detail, balconies,	18	28	25
• history of a building	5	6	6
• local character of buildings	3	3	3
• old buildings, historic buildings	9	15	14
• restoration of buildings, regeneration	4	4	3
buses	6	6	0
churches	9	12	12
cleanliness	8	9	9
gardens, greenery	5	5	5
graffiti	2	4	0

karozzini	4	4	0
landmark	3	3	3
• Carmelite Church	1	1	1
sea, relationship of land and sea	4	4	4
size of city	4	4	0
skyline	2	2	0
streets	11	14	12
• character, uniqueness, authenticity	6	8	7
• continuity of streetscape	1	2	2
• piazza	1	1	1
• reconciling the new with the old	7	7	6
• sea visible in the distance, seeing a long way	4	4	4
• shops on facades	4	4	0
• stepped streets, steep slopes	14	16	16
• street furniture	1	1	0
• street layout	2	2	2
underground spaces	1	1	0
yachts, boats in harbour	1	1	0
		190	152

Theme – 2 Locations

Nodes and sub-nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
City Gate project including City Gate, new parliament building and old opera house site	9	11	11
Fort St. Elmo	4	4	4
Lower Valletta, area near St. Elmo	7	9	9
Merchants Street	4	5	5
Pjazza Regina	7	12	12
Pjazza San Gorg	10	11	11
• architecture on Pjazza San Gorg	3	3	3
• guards at Palace entrance, changing of guards	6	6	6
• plaques on Palace wall	3	4	4
• water fountain	6	6	6
Republic Street	8	12	12
Royal Airforce Memorial	3	6	6
Siege Bell Memorial	2	2	2
St Johns Cathedral	8	9	0
Tritons fountain	4	4	4
Upper Barrakka Gardens	14	19	18
• views from Upper Barrakka gardens	13	14	12
OTHER locations	0	0	0
• Auberge de Castille	1	1	0
• Casa Rocca Piccola	1	1	0
• Church of St. Pauls Shipwreck	1	1	0
• Church of Sta. Caterina d' Italia	1	1	0
• Court Building	1	1	0

• Great Siege Road	2	2	2
• Hastings Garden	1	1	0
• Lower Barrakka	2	2	2
• Malta Experience	4	8	8
• Mediterranean Conf. C., Sacra Infermeria	2	2	2
• Museum of Archaeology	2	2	2
• 'Oliver Reed' pub	2	2	2
• Portes de Bombes	1	1	0
• Valletta waterfront	1	1	0
• Visit to palace, Armoury	5	6	6
• War Rooms	2	2	2
		171	151

Theme - 3 Perceptions + sensory

Node and sub-node	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
capital city	3	3	0
Contrasts	5	7	7
light and colours	8	15	14
movement, motion	7	10	10
music, pleasant noises, external	7	9	9
peace and quiet	1	1	0
Smell	1	2	0
weather, heat, breezes	5	6	0
		53	40

Theme - 4 Activities

Nodes and sub-nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
events, reenactments, special events	10	11	10
• musical concerts	4	5	4
harbour cruise, ferry across harbour	8	8	8
• views of Valletta, inward	6	6	6
• water taxi	1	1	1
learning new things	2	2	2
museums, going to	1	1	1
people watching	3	5	5
photos, taking of	10	15	14
Shopping	6	6	6
• open air market	6	6	6
sitting at a cafe or restaurant	11	16	16
Sitting out in a piazza or garden	1	1	0
talking with friends	1	1	0
views of harbours, outward	13	22	22
walking, wandering around	16	18	15
		124	116

Theme – 5 Emotive

Nodes and sub-nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
aesthetics, beauty, visually interesting	14	24	22
• beauty inside of churches	9	12	11
authenticity	1	1	0
background of respondent	11	12	12
• close relative	2	2	2
• comparison to home, home town, home country	17	29	26
• comparison to other places	18	31	31
• renewing past memories of Valletta	2	2	2
• the British connection	7	7	7
being there, relaxed mode, just taking it in	9	12	12
culture	2	3	0
emotional attachment, 'maltese bug'	6	8	8
expectations of respondent	3	3	0
exploration, discovery, curiosity, surprise	16	21	20
feeling at home	1	1	0
Fun	1	1	0
history	15	26	25
• visualising the past	13	15	14
humour	10	12	12
intimate space, small	1	1	0
memorial, remembering the fallen	5	6	6
Nostalgia	1	1	0
romantic feel	1	1	0
safety matters	6	7	7

• unsafe location	1	1	0
• watching one's step	2	2	0
sense of achievement	1	1	0
spiritual feeling	4	4	4
welcome feature	2	2	2
		248	223

Theme – 6 People

Nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
friendliness, interacting with local people	13	17	17
local people, local lives	12	23	23
people in urban spaces	14	19	19
		59	59

Theme – 7 Services

Nodes and sub-nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
bus service	6	7	0
electric taxis in pedestrian areas	1	1	0
public conveniences	1	1	0
Tourist use of information	14	20	20
• finding one's way	10	13	13
• information in museums, visitor attractions	3	3	3
• information on construction projects	4	7	7
		52	43

Theme – 8 General comments

Nodes and sub-nodes	Sources	References	Processed Ref.
change, dealing with change	3	3	0
dislikes, suggestions	0	0	0
• building works	3	3	3
• closed shops	1	1	1
• derelict buildings, poor maintenance of buildings	5	5	5
• information. tourist unable to get info	2	2	2
• karozzini people's dishonesty	1	1	1
• lack of cleanliness	1	1	1
• loud music	1	1	1
• Lack of seating	1	1	1
• incompatible new structure	2	2	2
• no access to Fort St Elmo	1	1	1
• no gate at City Gate	1	1	1
• noise	1	1	1
• old buses being replaced	2	2	2
• open market too touristy	1	1	1
• parked cars in the City	1	1	1
• relocation of Sunday market	1	1	1
• slippery steps, pavements	1	1	1
• specific building or structure	1	1	1
• too crowded	1	1	1
• traffic and pollution	1	1	1
• treatment of karozzini horses	1	1	1

evenings in Valletta	2	2	0
• Notte Bianca	1	2	0
• quiet evenings in Valletta	4	5	0
generic comment about experience	0	0	0
• different locations different views	5	5	5
• experiencing Valletta in its totality	11	13	13
• unique experience	3	4	4
Malta other locations	7	9	0
no dislikes	15	15	14
• justifying the negatives	9	11	11
• reason for no dislikes	2	2	2
		101	79

even Ken Ury **Barthel's** greatest
 natural concern
 sailing, wandering, **scout**
 finally offering witnesses of **crashes** or other **disturbances**

Edward Rieu in
historians, among **visiting** **ministers**
the **most** **important**
literary **Barthel** **Quakers** **after**
history of **a** **half** **century**

St. John Campbell
 sailing **convention**
moderation, **discovery**, **critically**, **surprised**, **finding** **the** **unexplored**
where, **most** **interest**, **specific**, **months**
history
characters
words, **something** **different**
Chase **need** **job**

Barth **meeting** **in** **Virginia**
 recorded by **Wiggins** in **his** **early** **series** **of** **papers** **on** **settlement**
consider **the** **most**

John **Dunlop**

[illegible]

[Ch1tema1\Interviews\01 interview GHE 9may12 with NOTES> - § 2 references coded \[0.40% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.18% Coverage

Then there are the **very steep hills**, the steps, the narrow streets. That's quite memorable ... (laughter) ... and very taxing. (more laughter)

JE: So you remember the steep hills because they tired you.

Yes. And the heat as well.

JE: Was it something that you liked or that you disliked?

Oh no (with emphasis), we liked it anyway, we enjoyed it.

Photo 01-3: Shows photo of a stepped street in Valletta.

It is interesting how the steepness of the roads could be viewed both positively and negatively. For some visitors as in this case, they found the steps enjoyable even if it was hard work. In other instances, especially for persons with some mobility problems, steep hills were a discomfort and in some cases routes were chosen to keep steep hills to a minimum.

The positivity of replies (in this and in other interviews) could also be either to 'please' the interviewer by giving the answers they think he would expect or to justify to themselves the expense of the visit. There was no indication in this interview, or in any other interview, that this was the case, so it is reasonable for me to assume the general positivity and feedback on Valletta is a true reflection of their participants thoughts and feelings.

Reference 2 - 0.23% Coverage

10.50 JE: Before you mentioned that the streets were unusual. Why unusual?

Because there are **so many hills** (speaker's emphasis). Some have steps on them – we are not used to that. Obviously we have steep hills in Edinburgh but we stay away from them. We knew before we came here that it was hilly and we had to be prepared to walk a lot.

It is interesting how the respondents considered the stepped street as 'unusual'

[Ch1tema1\Interviews\02 interview GHE 14may12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.23% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.23% Coverage

25.10 JE: Previously, you showed me a photo of the stepped street. What is it that you liked about it?
It is special for us – **steps take you up**; as you move up the steps you see the sky; your view changes. It is more interesting and there is more variation. Many people are going up and down over many decades. Stairs become worn; they change shape; they are very old and it can be dangerous, but it is special. I did not see this in other places, you have to see where you put your step; you have to be more careful, but it adds character.

Photo 02-5: Shows photo of hardstone steps taken up the stairs at a low angle. Probably, steps leading to St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral.

[Ch1tema1\Interviews\05 interview GHE 18may12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.18% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.18% Coverage

Angie: I think what we will remember being in Valletta is the very old and **very steep streets**, that are very, very narrow and the way they go up. That stuck in our minds. I know it sounds silly, but today we saw some parked cars and they were literally like that (indicates by hand car on a steep slope). We were wondering how they manoeuvre that. So, it is very strange how everything is so narrow.

The steepness of the slopes, coupled with the narrowness of some Valletta streets, intrigued the interviewees.

[Ch1tema1\Interviews\07 interview SNT 30may12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.08% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.08% Coverage

40.30 Jill: I would like to say that some pavements and stairs are so slippery. That could be dangerous. The **steep steps** in particular. ... The old ones are shiny from use. Elderly people would find them difficult to use. We try to avoid some of the old ones. Going up is fine, going down it the difficulty. Maybe railing should be put in at some places.

[Ch1tema1\Interviews\08 interview GHE 4jun12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.26% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.26% Coverage

- 4.40 Mike: Another thing that is special is the big difference in the levels of the streets. I always look in the small streets, and what there is behind. That's what I like.

The comment 'what there is behind' suggests that Mike likes to explore and derives satisfaction from satisfying her curiosity

[chtema's\Interviews\09 interview_GHE 6 Jun12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.38% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.38% Coverage

- 4.12 Because of the steep streets with the stairs, you know you are not going to have any motor vehicle traffic, so it's a pedestrian area, a safer place for children. It is more of a neighborhood, everyone is on foot, bumping into the neighbours and it's cosier.

JE: So, you put a lot of emphasis on the aspect of people. It's an architecture which creates an environment where the people can have a pleasant life, and not just be drowning in the exhaust fumes and the noise of traffic rushing back and forth.

[chtema's\Interviews\11 interview_SNT 13 Jun12 TWO with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.72% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.72% Coverage

- Barbara: No it made the experience more interesting although it was tiring. We liked it.

Even if more tiring, the respondents liked walking down steps.

[chtema's\Interviews\16 interview_CVL 11 Jul12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[3.12% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 3.12% Coverage

- It is very old. The streets are narrow, and it is not a flat city. There are a lot of steps and it is very nice. I really like it. I am interested in Medieval places.

Interview mentions several features which he found interesting including the narrow width of the streets and the hilliness. The thing that struck him most however was the history.

[chtema's\Interviews\17 interview_CVL 17 Jul12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.67% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.67% Coverage

- 2.05 Next one it is of this street. I love all the stairs, all the narrow streets going up, going down. The street gives a romantic feeling like something from the past. I was walking by myself because I like it but if my boyfriend was here we would be walking together, I'm thinking of bringing him over here imagining how romantic it will be.

JE: So you like the romantic atmosphere of the city
Yes, very romantic.

The photo is of a road next to a building referred to as Bicerija. The building is an old building located at the lower end of Valletta. It was built originally as a slaughter house but then eventually it fell into disuse. At the moment it is semi-derelict. Opposite Bicerija are old houses (in use) typical of Valletta.

Respondent senses a romantic feeling in the street and would very much wish to walk the same streets with her boyfriend.

[chtema's\Interviews\19 interview_PRE 15 Oct12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.11% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.11% Coverage

- 13.00 JE: Did you like walking the inner streets of Valletta? What did you like about them?
Elisabeth: We don't have such hilly streets where we live, and although we are getting on in years, we did manage to go up and down some of the streets. The steeper streets that have all the steps made me think of the elderly people who are still fit to walk about those streets. It's wonderful, in a way.

Upon being asked about inner streets, the first thing that came to mind to the interviewee was the hilliness. Clearly, the extent to which hilliness is noted is dependent on the person's age and fitness.

Elisabeth expresses satisfaction that, in spite of their age, they still managed to walk some of the hilly streets. They had a sense of achievement.

[chtema's\Interviews\19 interview_PRE 16 Oct12 with NOTES> - § 1 reference coded \[0.42% Coverage\]](#)

Reference 1 - 0.42% Coverage

- I liked it to be hilly, but not when we were walking it. (Laughter)

The difference in levels in Valletta was noted by the interviewees. For them being 'hilly' was an interesting feature of Valletta, even if walking up the steps might not be so enjoyable.

APPENDIX E – Photos

PSG Piazza San Gorg



PSG1



PSG2



PSG3



PSG4



PSG5-int03-02



PSG6-int03-03



PSG7-int08-06b



PSG8



PSG9-int08-06a



PSG10-int08-05a



PSG11-int08-05b

UBG Upper Barrakka Garden



UBG1



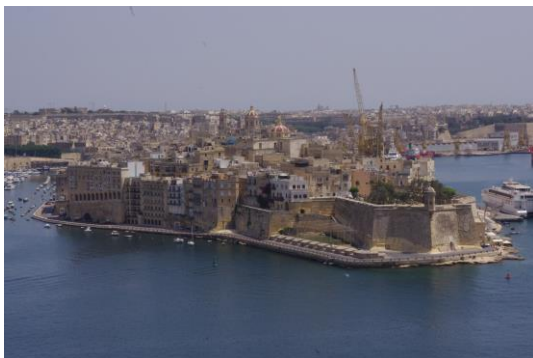
UBG2



UBG3



UBG4



UBG5



UBG6



UBG7



UBG8-int03-01



UBG9



UBG10



UBG11



UBG12-int15-08

MST Merchants Street



MST1



MST2



MST3



MST4-int08-13



MST5-int02-01

LBG Lower Barrakka



LBG 1

OAM Open Air Market



OAM1

PRG Pjazza Regina



PRG 1 – int 08-04



PRG 2

RAM Royal Air force Memorial



RAM 1



RAM 2

RST Republic Street



RST 1



RST 2

SBM Siege Bell Memorial



SBM1 - Siege Bell Memorial



SBM3



SBM3 – Int03-7

SJC St John's Cathedral



SJC 1



SJC 2

SPC St. Paul's Cathedral



SPC 1



SPC 2

VGT Victoria Gate



VGT1



VGT2



VGT3



VGT4

Other Valletta photos

The following are photos not linked with a specific location



Oth 01-int01-01



Oth 02-int01-02



Oth 03-int01-03



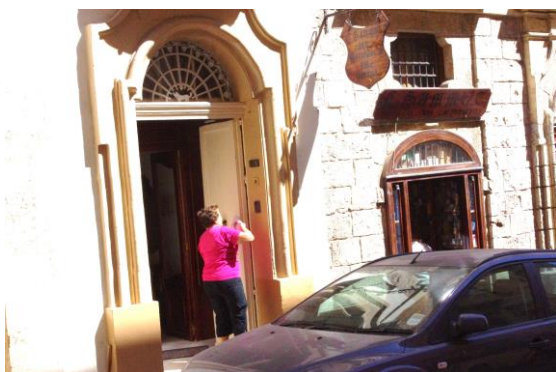
Oth 04-int 02-4



Oth 05- int 02-05



Oth 06 – int 03-04



Oth 07 – int 03-05



Oth 08 – int 03-08



Oth 09 – int 08-01



Oth 10 – int 08-02



Oth 11 – int 08-03



Oth 13 – int 08-09



Oth 14 – int 08-10



Oth 15 – int 08-08



Oth 12 – int 08-07



Oth16 – int 08-11



Oth 17 – int 08-12



Oth 18 – int 15-01



Oth 19 – int 15-02



Oth 20 – int15-03



Oth 21 – int 15-05a



Oth 22 – int15-05b



Oth 23 – int15-05c



Oth 24



Oth 25



Oth 26



Oth 27



Oth 28



Oth 29



Oth 30



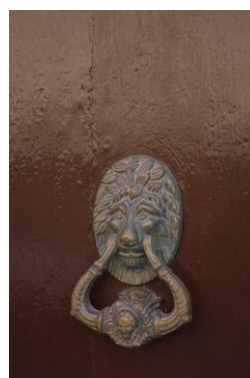
Oth 31



Oth 32



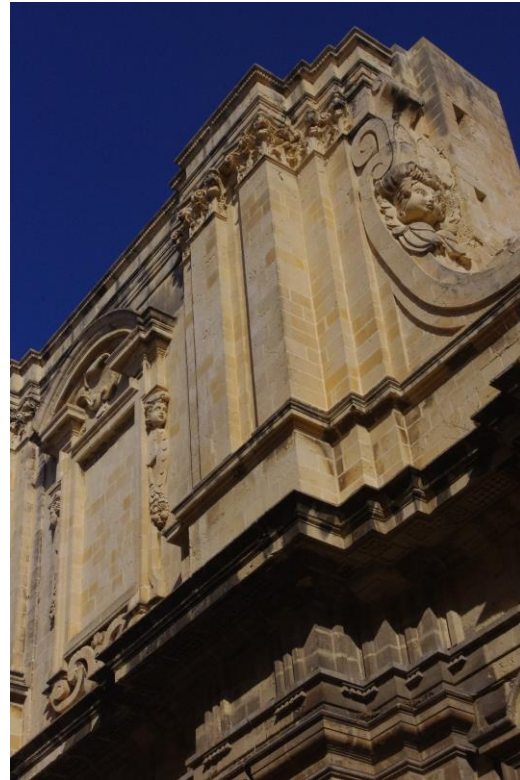
Oth 33



Oth 34



Oth 35



Oth 36



Oth 37



Oth 38