

6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNESCO HISTORIC CITIES

UNESCO HISTORIC CITIES, SUSTAINABILITY AND HISTORIC CITIES; CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

4TH — 6TH APRIL 2025, AULA MAGNA, VALLETTA CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

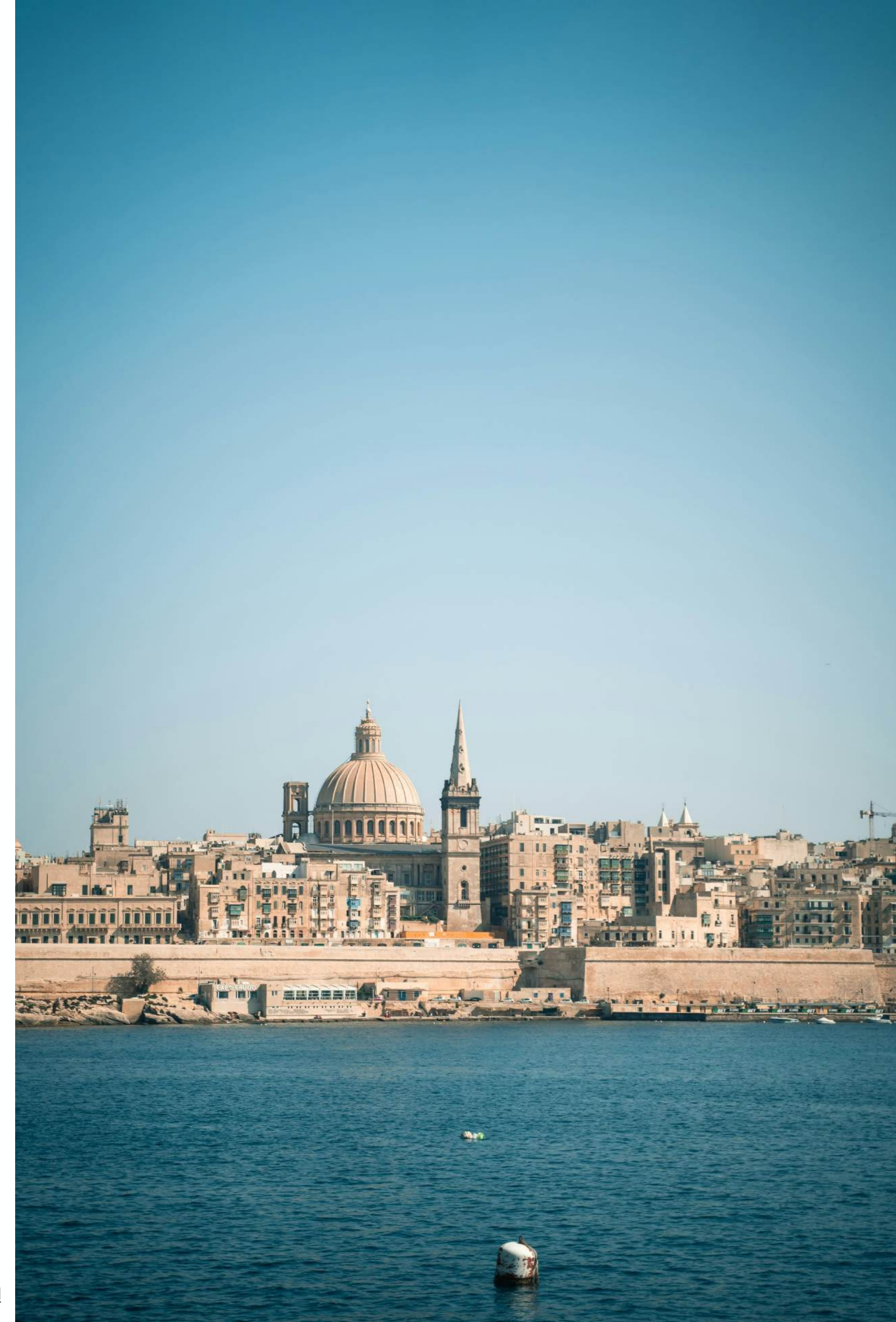
CAN WORLD HERITAGE CITIES ALSO BE TRULY LIVEABLE?

UNDERSTANDING KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIO-SPATIAL CHALLENGES WITHIN UNESCO HISTORIC CITIES

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FRAMING THE QUESTION

- **WORLD HERITAGE CITIES ARE GLOBALLY RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CULTURAL VALUE, YET LOCALLY, THEY STRUGGLE TO SUSTAIN LIVEABLE CONDITIONS FOR RESIDENTS**
- **CENTRAL TENSION: HOW DO WE PRESERVE THE PAST WHILE ENABLING A QUALITY PRESENT AND RESILIENT FUTURE?**
- **SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE: BALANCING HERITAGE PRESERVATION WITH SOCIO-SPATIAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**



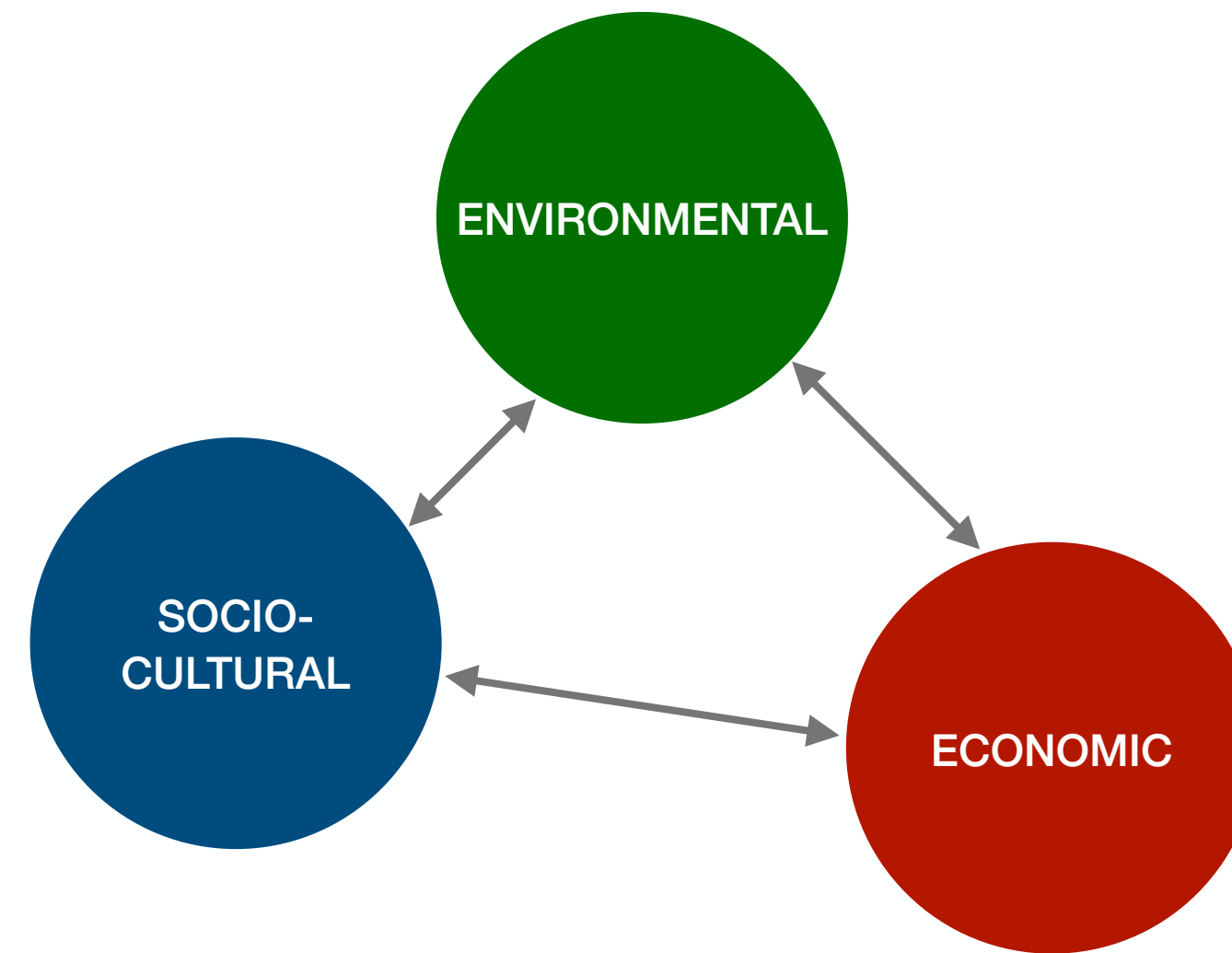
DEFINITIONS MATTER

- **LIVEABILITY** REFERS TO IMMEDIATE, TANGIBLE URBAN CONDITIONS: ACCESSIBILITY, SAFETY, COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC AMENITIES
- **SUSTAINABILITY** ADDRESSES LONG-TERM ECOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL VIABILITY
- THOUGH COMPLEMENTARY, THEY DIFFER IN SCOPE AND TEMPORAL FOCUS
- LIVEABILITY OFTEN UNDERSTOOD USING STANDARDISED SOCIO-ECONOMIC METRICS, OVERLOOKING ON-THE-GROUND EXPERIENCES (SENSE OF PLACE)
- A LIVEABLE CITY MAY NOT ALWAYS BE SUSTAINABLE, AND VICE VERSA...
THE GOAL OF EFFECTIVE PLANNING IS TO INTEGRATE BOTH



LIVEABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY IN WORLD HERITAGE CITIES

- BUILT HERITAGE INTERSECTS WITH ALL THREE PILLARS – **ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY**
- ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS REDUCES DEMOLITION WASTE, CONSERVES EMBODIED ENERGY
- INTEGRATES CONTEMPORARY NEEDS INTO HISTORIC FABRICS, MAINTAINING ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL INTEGRITY
- PROMOTES CULTURAL CONTINUITY WHILE REDUCING PRESSURE FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT



REFRAMING HERITAGE AS A CATALYST FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION

- HERITAGE CAN SHAPE INCLUSIVE REGENERATION, STIMULATE THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND ANCHOR COMMUNITY IDENTITY
- SHIFT FROM PRESERVATION-AS-FREEZE TO HERITAGE-AS-PROCESS
- UNESCO: HERITAGE SHOULD SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, NOT JUST COMMEMORATE THE PAST
- HERITAGE IS INCREASINGLY USED TO BRAND CITIES, ATTRACT INVESTMENT BUT ALSO TENDS TO DE-PROBLEMATISE [OR CELEBRATE] CONSEQUENCES SUCH AS GENTRIFICATION

CLIMATE VULNERABILITIES OF HISTORIC CITIES

- MANY HERITAGE CITIES ARE ILL-EQUIPPED TO MANAGE CLIMATE RISKS LIKE FLOODING
- **TENSIONS**, SUCH AS MAINTAINING HISTORIC SKYLINES VS. INTEGRATING GREEN TECHNOLOGIES
- A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND ADEQUATE CITY-WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE



OVER-DEPENDENCE ON TOURISM

- WORLD HERITAGE DESIGNATION OFTEN LEADS TO **TOURISM-DRIVEN ECONOMIES**
- COVID-19 REVEALED VULNERABILITY IN MONO-ECONOMIES
- **DIVERSIFICATION** IS CRUCIAL: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, KNOWLEDGE ECONOMIES, CULTURAL PRODUCTION



[TIMESOFMALTA.COM](https://www.timesofmalta.com)



PHOTO BY [STÖTZER BALÁZS](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AT RISK

- HERITAGE-LED RENEWAL OFTEN INCREASES **SOCIO-SPATIAL INEQUALITY**
- GENTRIFICATION, INFLATED RENTS, LOSS OF AMENITY...
- IN WORLD HERITAGE CITIES, A TENDENCY TO FIND RESIDENT POPULATION DECLINE, DISPLACEMENT AND TENSION BETWEEN TOURIST ACTIVITY AND DAILY LIFE ... OFTEN THIS IS FACILITATED BY **PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORKS** THEMSELVES



PHOTO BY REUBEN FARRUGIA ON UNSPLASH

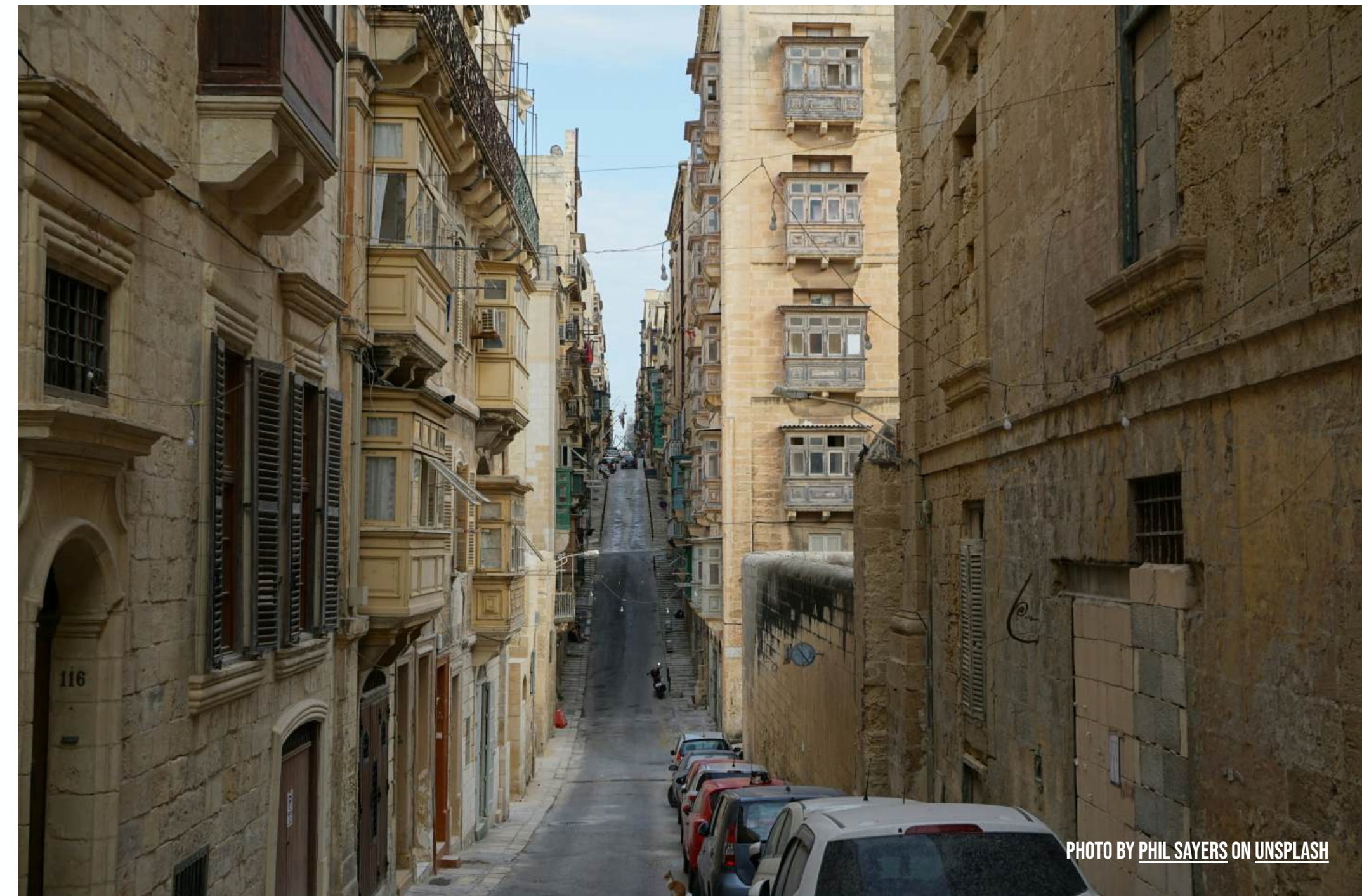


PHOTO BY PHIL SAYERS ON UNSPLASH

THE COMMODIFICATION OF HERITAGE

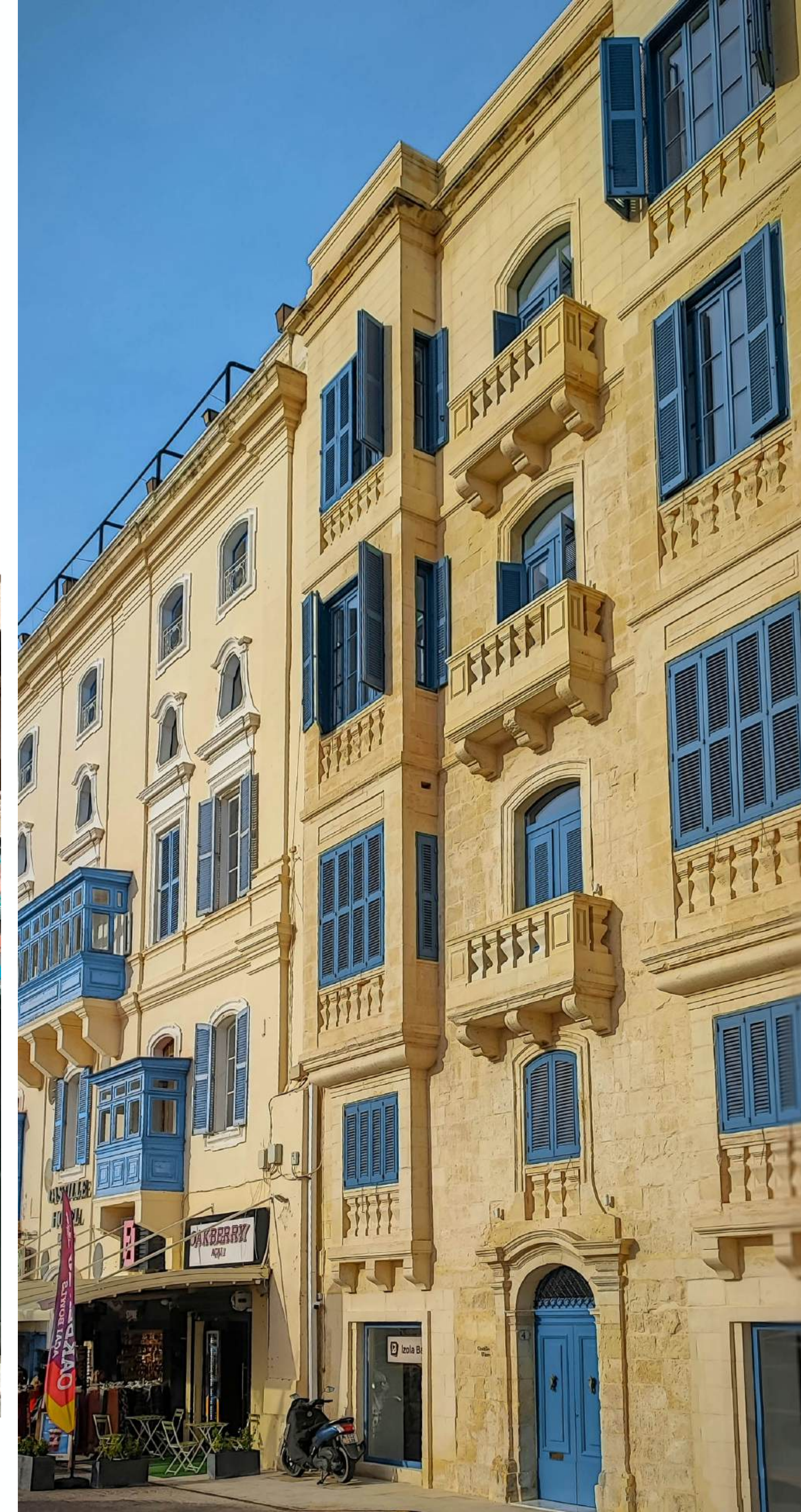
- PROLIFERATION OF **BOUTIQUE TOURISM ACCOMMODATION**
- **EROSION** OF COMMUNITY NETWORKS AND **DISPLACEMENT** OF TRADITIONAL RESIDENTS AND LAND USES
- THE BENEFITS OF CULTURE-BASED REGENERATION ARE **DISPROPORTIONATELY ENJOYED** BY SPECIFIC POPULATION SEGMENTS

Valletta Residents Revival · 6 h · 🌐

And another one bites the dust.... After 53 yrs the owner has informed me that he has recently sold the property. Another bar or restaurant coming up? Soon, there will be little else and Valletta will simply be a tourist trap and entertainment precinct.



PHOTO BY SIMON FEVERY ON UNSPLASH



OVERTOURISM & TOURISTIFICATION

- FROM A FORM OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE TO ONE OF SPATIAL COLONISATION
- SHORT-TERM RENTALS, OVERCROWDING, COMMERCIAL DOMINANCE
- CITIES BECOME CONSUMABLE BACKDROPS RATHER THAN PLACES TO LIVE

COMPARATIVE CASES / LISBON

- STATE-ENABLED GENTRIFICATION AND SHORT-TERM RENTAL EXPANSION
- AN UNEVEN GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISTIFICATION

PHOTO BY FILIPA FERNANDES AT [CHAT.AMERICANANTHRO.ORG](https://chat.americananthro.org)

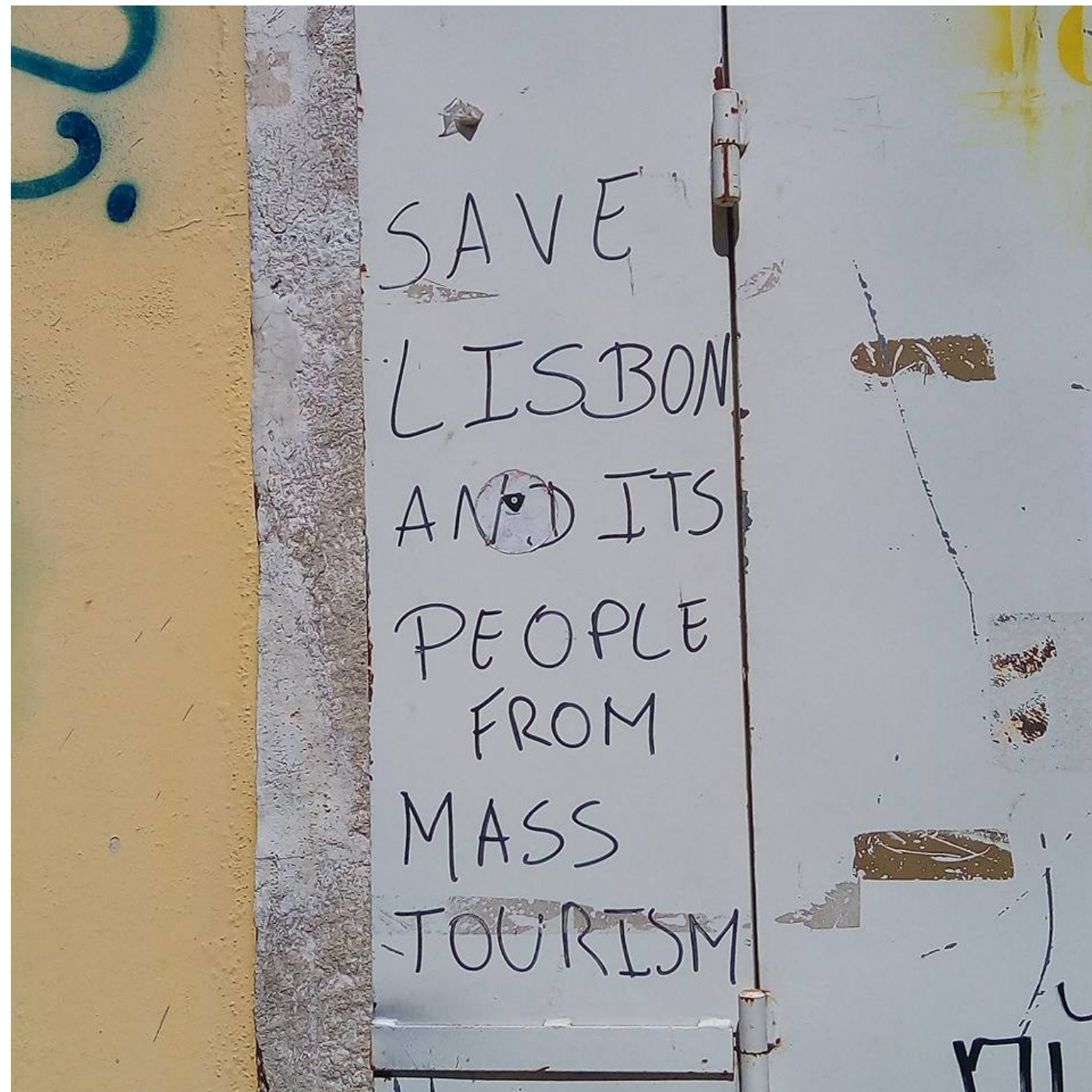


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COMPARATIVE CASES / VALPARAÍSO

- HERITAGE DESIGNATION EXACERBATED FRAGMENTATION
- DISPLACEMENT OF RESIDENTS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS

PHOTO BY [OLIVIER CHATEL](#) ON UNSPLASH



PHOTO BY [CHALO GALLARDO](#) ON UNSPLASH



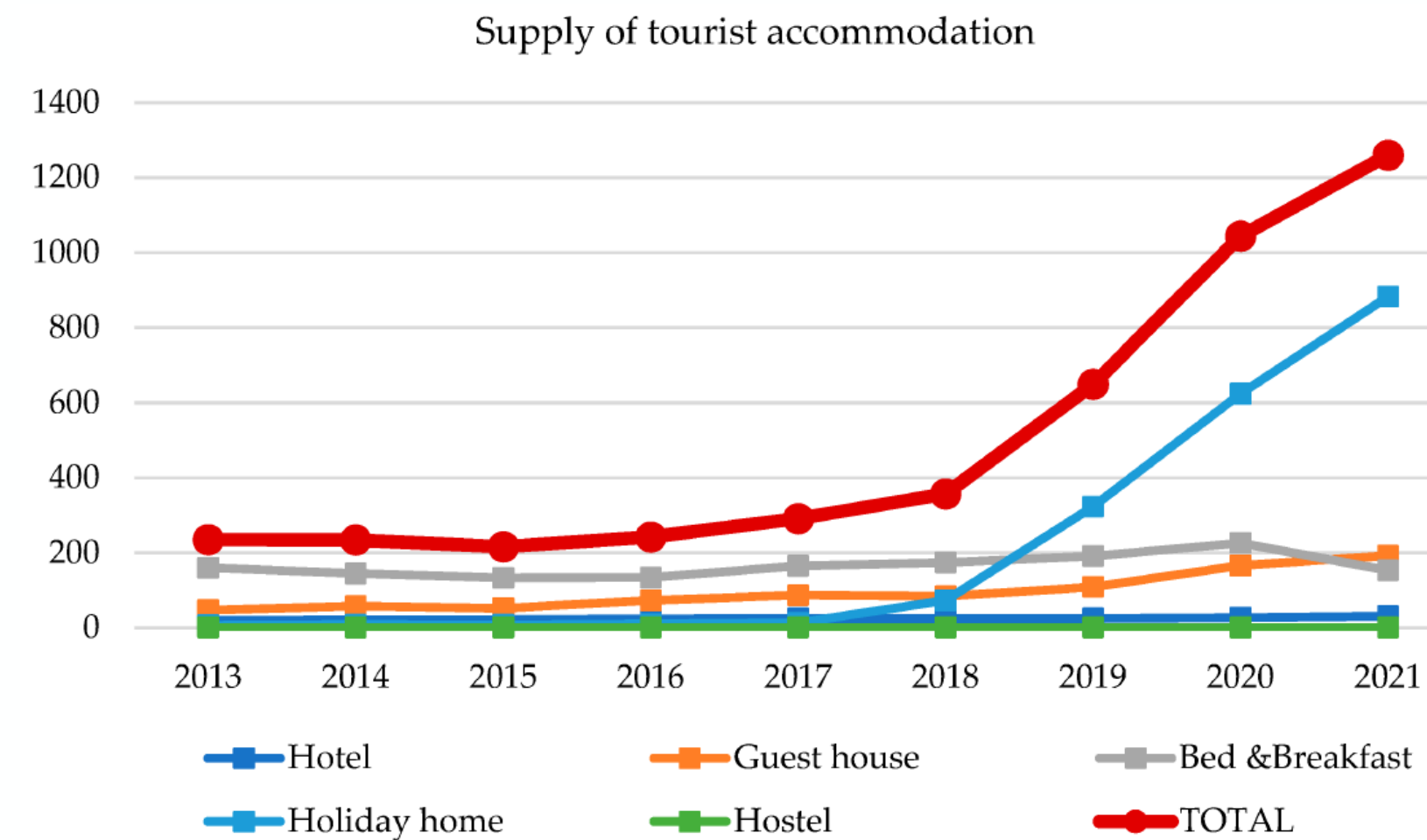
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COMPARATIVE CASES / CAGLIARI

PHOTO AND GRAPH BY FRANCESCA LECCIS



- **WATERFRONT BEAUTIFICATION DISPLACED LOCAL USE**



PHOTO BY MARCO BIANCHETTI ON UNSPLASH

ADESSO BASTA! ASSEMBLEA CITTADINA | CASTELLO | MARINA | | STAMPACE | VILLANOVA |

PROPRIO TU
CHE AMI IL CENTRO STORICO
ED È PER QUESTO CHE HAI SCELTO DI VIVERCI
NON MERITI PUNIZIONI MA UN PREMIO!
PROPRIO TU CHE SEI STANCO DEL DEGRADO
E DELLE INUTILI PROMESSE

VIENI!
INSIEME DISCUTEREMO
di sicurezza, parcheggi e viabilità, rumore,
ZTL, pulizia strade, ascensori...

12 novembre 2022
Ore 16:00-18:00
Scuola Secondaria di I grado Via Piceno
Ingresso da Via Marche

COMPARATIVE CASES / VENICE, BARCELONA

- **VENICE:** OVER 20M TOURISTS/YEAR – ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL BURDEN
- **BARCELONA:** A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL STANCE TOWARDS TOURISM



PHOTO BY CLAUDIO SCHWARZ ON UNSPLASH



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[HTTPS://WWW.EURONEWS.COM/TRAVEL/2024/07/08/FAKE-SIGNS-AND-HUNGER-STRIKES-WHATS-BEHIND-EUROPE'S-BACKLASH-AGAINST-OVERTOURISM](https://www.euronews.com/travel/2024/07/08/fake-signs-and-hunger-strikes-whats-behind-europes-backlash-against-overtourism)



PHOTO BY CLAUDIO SCHWARZ ON UNSPLASH

COMPARATIVE CASES / PALMA DE MAJORCA

- RELIANCE ON TOURISM AS A SOURCE OF INCOME
- LUXURY BOUTIQUE HOTELS IN AREAS OF HIGH HISTORICAL VALUE, RADICALLY TRANSFORMING EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS

IMAGE BY JESÚS M. GONZÁLEZ-PÉREZ AND MARGARITA NOVO-MALVÁREZ



[HTTPS://WWW.EXPRESS.CO.UK/NEWS/WORLD/1908470/MAJORCA-OVERTOURISM-PROTESTS-WARNING](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1908470/MAJORCA-OVERTOURISM-PROTESTS-WARNING)



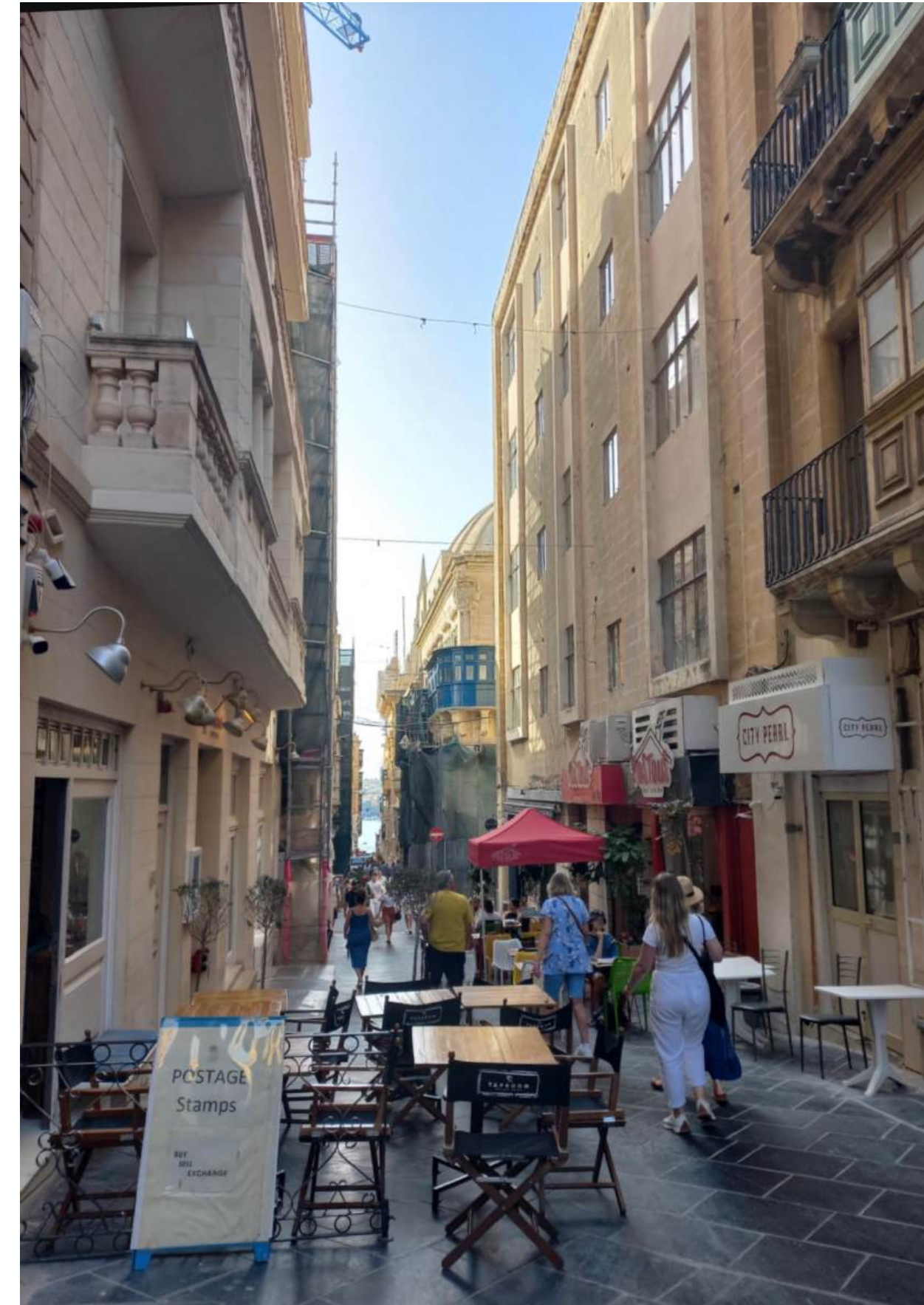
VALLETTA – A CITY UNDER PRESSURE

- **EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE (2018) CATALYSED RAPID INVESTMENT**
- **REGENERATION INITIATIVES PRIORITISED ECONOMIC RETURN**
- **RISE IN BOUTIQUE HOTELS, NIGHTLIFE VENUES, OUTDOOR CATERING AREAS**
- **DECLINE IN RESIDENT SERVICES AND LIVEABILITY**



VALLETTA – A CITY UNDER PRESSURE

PHOTOS BY ANTOINE ZAMMIT

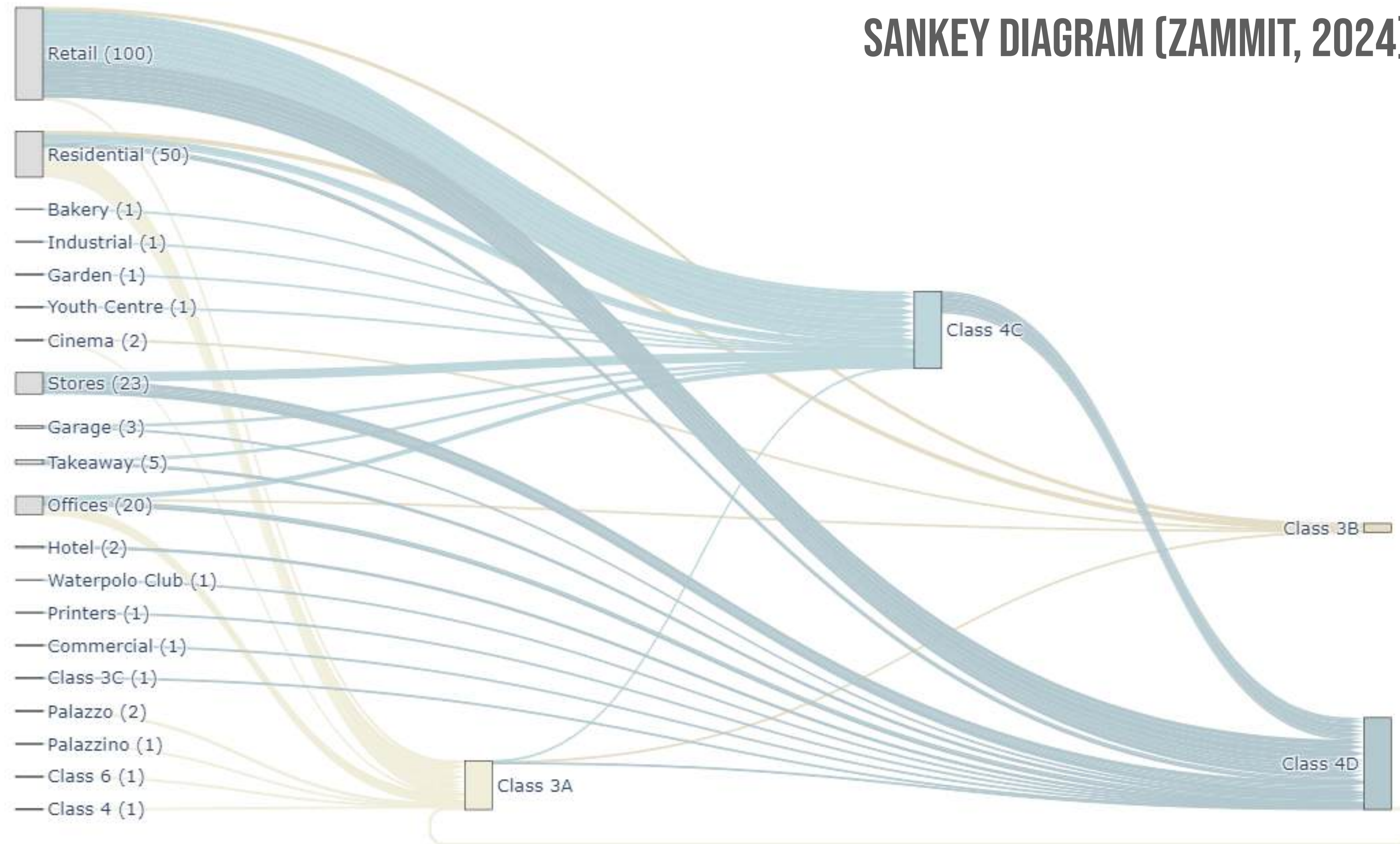


OUTDOOR CATERING AREAS ALONG MERCHANTS STREET, ST JOHN'S STREET, STRAIT STREET AND OLD THEATRE STREET

PLANNING POLICY GAPS

- VALLETTA STRATEGY (2016) AND LAND USE PERMITS FACILITATED COMMERCIALISATION
- LACK OF HOLISTIC VISION PRIORITISING LIVEABILITY
- POLICIES HAVE STRUGGLED TO REGULATE CONFLICTING LAND USES

CHANGE IN BUILDING CLASSIFICATION SANKEY DIAGRAM (ZAMMIT, 2024)



SPATIAL JUSTICE & THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

- INSPIRED BY LEFEBVRE, HARVEY, SOJA
- URBAN SPACE SHOULD REFLECT THE NEEDS OF INHABITANTS, NOT JUST VISITORS OR INVESTORS
- PROTEST AND GRASSROOTS ACTION AS SIGNS OF RECLAIMING URBAN EQUITY

GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

- URBAN GOVERNANCE MUST BE **COLLABORATIVE AND TRANSPARENT**
- LIVEABILITY IN WORLD HERITAGE CITIES IS ABOUT **CREATING A CITY WHERE PEOPLE CAN THRIVE**
- A BALANCE BETWEEN BUILT HERITAGE, SOCIAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
- WELL-INTEGRATED URBAN DESIGN POLICIES, WORKING WITH HERITAGE OBJECTIVES, CAN FOSTER INCLUSIVITY AND SUPPORT A MORE EQUITABLE URBAN FABRIC



'Pavements for citizens': The sticker rebellion battling restaurant encroachment

Tired of tables and chairs in their way, residents have a new way of venting their anger

National Valletta Demonstration

9 April 2024 | Claudia Calleja | 65

1 min read



SOME POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- CAP SHORT-TERM RENTALS AND INCENTIVISE LONG-TERM HOUSING
- INVEST IN LIVEABILITY-ENHANCING INFRASTRUCTURE
- MONITOR AND REGULATE TOURISM GROWTH
- DEVELOP RESIDENT-FOCUSED PLANNING STRATEGIES

[HTTPS://STOCK.ADOBE.COM/SEARCH?
K=%22STRAIT+STREET%22&UTM_SOURCE=CHATGPT.COM&ASSET_ID=165985132](https://stock.adobe.com/search?K=%22STRAIT+STREET%22&utm_source=chatgpt.com&asset_id=165985132)



PHOTO CREDIT: DARREN AGIUS
[HTTPS://WWW.VCA.GOV.MT/EN/BLOG/URBAN-GREENING-IN-VALLETTA/](https://www.vca.gov.mt/en/blog/urban-greening-in-valletta/)

UNESCO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TOOLKIT

- **GUIDE 6: INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND INVESTMENT**
- **ENCOURAGE LAND USE DECISIONS, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS THAT RESPECT OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE**
- **POLICIES MUST BRIDGE TOURISM WITH DAILY URBAN NEEDS**

PHOTO BY RED SHUHEART ON UNSPLASH



PHOTO BY RIALDA MAVRIC ON UNSPLASH



RETHINKING WORLD HERITAGE CITIES

- HERITAGE, LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE
- INTEGRATED URBAN PLANNING IS CRUCIAL, AS WELL AS CONSTANT MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES
- COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE // BUT REAL PARTICIPATION REQUIRES REDISTRIBUTING POWER

RETHINKING WORLD HERITAGE CITIES – FINAL MESSAGES

LET US MOVE FROM **PASSIVE PRESERVATION** TO **ACTIVE CO-CREATION** WHERE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING IS AT THE HEART OF WORLD HERITAGE CITIES' SPATIAL STRATEGIES.

LET US REIMAGINE PRESERVATION AS A **DYNAMIC, INCLUSIVE PROCESS.**



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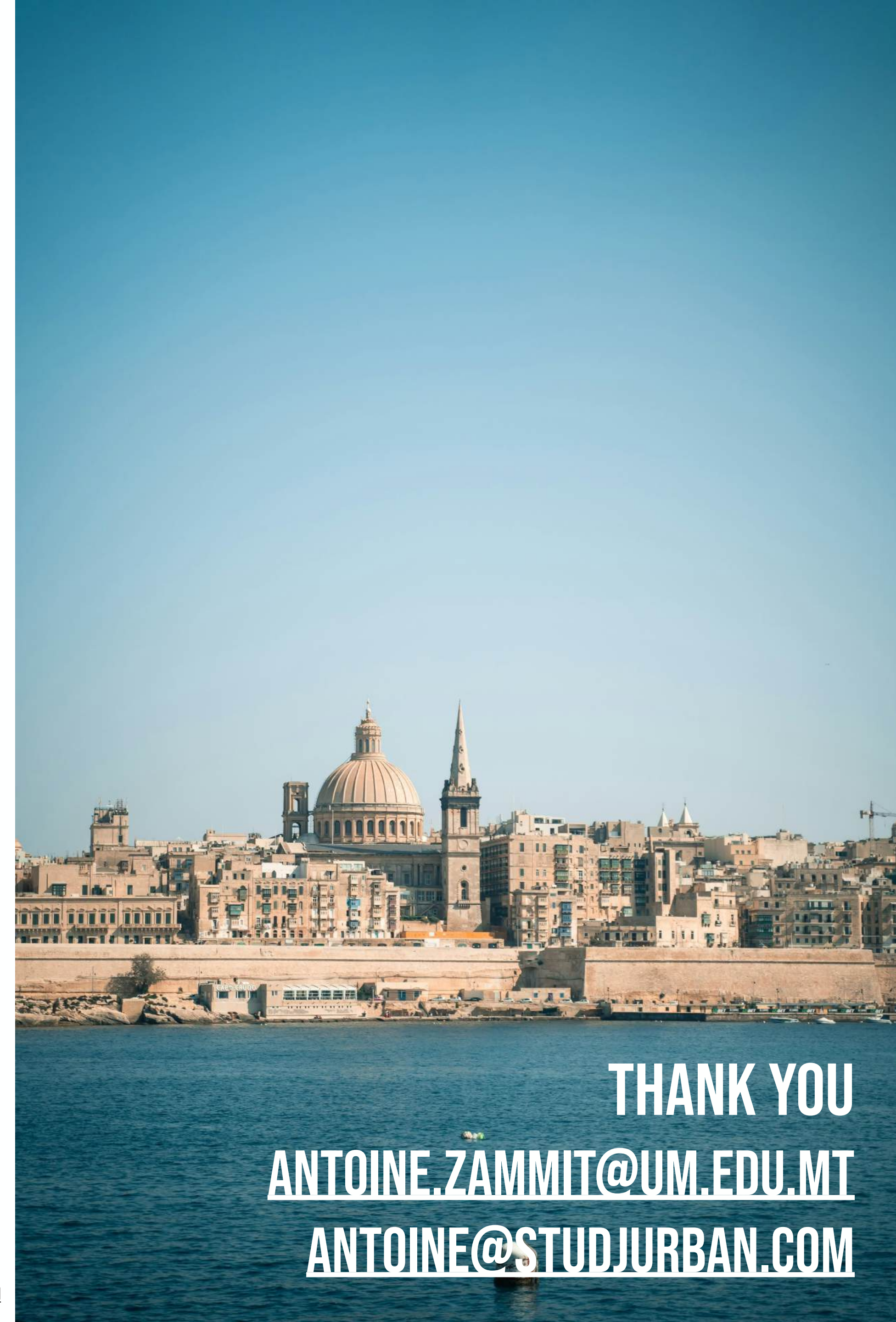
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PHOTO BY [LUDOVICA DRI](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)



THANK YOU
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