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What can we learn from anthropological practice to conduct socially just participatory action research?

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential for using approaches and methods from anthropology to address inequalities and work with marginalised, voiceless groups to engage actively in decisions that affect them. We test and illustrate participatory action research (PAR) methods from anthropology that seek to understand tacit/implicit knowledge and values that may only be revealed through the study of day-to-day practices, behaviours and discourse over longer timescales. This is done through a case study of a planned development in Malta that included 170 interviews supported by situated listening and observation, observational visits over a period of time to the site and surrounding areas and public/stakeholder formal/informal meetings and workshops. Ethnographic methods helped build trust during the planning process, creating a communicative bridge for knowledge sharing. This qualitative research provided new insights based on tacit and implicit knowledge and values, highlighting specific subtleties, critical awareness, empathy and observational capacity, which are essential ingredients in socially just PAR. This included new insights into the way participation was shaped by broader socio-political contexts. By eliciting, analysing and integrating 'knowledges' in this way, action researchers can contribute to more socially equitable opportunities to participate and share power in knowledge creation.

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Introduction

Participatory action research (PAR) presents ethical challenges alongside opportunities for more socially just research processes and outcomes. Ethical challenges include personal ones, for example arising from the (often close) relationships that develop between researchers and stakeholders, combined with the positionality of researcher as stakeholder. They are also theoretical and methodological, for example posing epistemological challenges for research design and the interpretation of results. Such considerations are particularly acute for researchers who feel a duty of care or moral obligation to represent the interests of marginalised voices/interests or threatened groups within which they have developed trusting relationships (e.g. Charmaz 2020). In addition to attention to diversity and inclusivity, PAR includes a sense of shared responsibility and transformative

agency going beyond representation and stimulating active engagement in decision-making and planning (Bertrand et al. 2019; Forrest 2019). A focus on *socially just* PAR furthermore is about moral concern for fair processes and outcomes, going beyond narrow definitions of stakeholders and predefined problem framing towards adopting a more grounded and holistic perspective of lived reality (Smith 2019). Even when working at the micro-scale (the project or 'local' level), many social justice challenges and/or the desired influence also implicate or directly relate to the macro scale (Van Der Meiden, Noordegraaf, and Van Ewijk 2020). Thus both PAR and social justice aim for positive social change and challenge inequalities in political voice, human wellbeing and access to resources. Other methodological issues may include imposed budgetary and time constraints that appear inadequate but are a pragmatic response to vague Terms of Reference for projects that frequently are also politically sensitive with high economic stakes, social and environmental impacts (Vella 2018).

Methods and approaches from anthropology¹ offer an opportunity to engage deeply with cultural and political discourses, and individual, social and institutional perspectives (Herzfeld 2001). The plurality of actual experiences, impacts, needs and goals are not necessarily captured instantly or easily. Bringing to the fore lived experiences and knowledge constructs that may help reconceptualise local 'know-how', complemented by equally valid and valuable insights into 'know-why', may require trusted relationships and time. Methods from applied anthropology aid doing so, with an acute awareness of the contexts in which knowledge is generated, framed, contested and enacted, drawing attention to structural social inequalities along lines of race, socio-economic status, disability, language, gender or any other real or perceived difference that shape different values, viewpoints, experiences and civic engagement (Okely 2012a).

In this paper we explore the finer nuances of methods from anthropological practice to promote equitable access to planning and decision-making consultations, identify inequalities and enable marginalised and voiceless groups to be heard and engage in decisions that affect them as part of PAR processes. We test and illustrate action research methods from anthropology that seek to understand tacit and implicit knowledge and values that may only be revealed through the study of day-to-day practices, behaviours and discourse over long timescales. Anthropology has a long tradition of seeking to understand the human experience at these deeper, implicit and tacit levels, but these methods and approaches, while now frequently being used, have not necessarily been applied with the grounding and diligence that such an embodied practice of knowledge production demands (Okely 2012a; 2012b; 2018). We illustrate some of these differences in the framing and subtleties in the context of PAR (where ideally communities are given the opportunity and voice in influencing decision-making) with communities around a proposed urban development in Malta. The research considers the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the development but went beyond the SIA process and included additional longer-term research that included participant observation and PAR methods. The research drew on the ethnographic experience of an applied anthropologist working as the SIA practitioner, who was Maltese and, through previous and on-going work and research, familiar with the area.

Study site

Malta provides an interesting case study in which to study participation using anthropological methods, due to its colonial history and geo-political position on the fringes of both Europe and North Africa, which influence the plural and specific ways of how its inhabitants and those shaping its development view the world around them and operate within it. As Amaratunga et al. (2002, 7) observes, Malta has been called ‘the crossroads of the Mediterranean’. The various discourses that drive decisions for the island at the local, national and international levels can be traced to the archipelago’s centuries of colonising authorities, its more recent post-colonial history as an independent state and its accession to the European Union in 2004. In addition, religious discourse and its politicisation, even in today’s much more secular Maltese society, still permeates many aspects of Maltese politics, society and culture (Boissevain 2013; Mitchell 2002).

As the most densely populated country in Europe, conflicts over space are inevitable in Malta, and are amplified by the natural limitations imposed on spaces and resources in a small island state. The surface area of the Maltese archipelago, inclusive of all the islands that fall within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Malta, is only 316 km² with a resident population of over 430,000 people. This makes the population density around 1,361 people per km² (Office 2016). Landscapes that are generally associated or perceived by Maltese society as the countryside, where interaction with human activity is less apparent, become more difficult to find as development decreases or obliterates the buffer zone between neighbouring villages (Vella 2017). As a result, tensions between different viewpoints and values relating to spatial and environmental planning and management are intensified and magnified (Cassar 2010; Cassar, Conrad, and Schembri 2008; Conrad et al. 2011a: 764; Conrad 2012; Pelling and Uitto 2001; Pugh 2005a, 2013; Sheppard and Morris 2009).

These tensions are exemplified in the selected case study in which the extension of a landfill site was proposed. The development scheme built on an earlier development application to develop a controlled (engineered) landfill and ancillary facilities at Għallis, on the site of a decommissioned uncontrolled landfill that had been in operation for around 30 years. This landfill, commonly known as the Magħtab landfill, since it is situated a few hundred metres from the village of Magħtab on the north-eastern coast (and across the bay from one of the most sought after touristic areas in Malta), has been the largest waste disposal site in Malta.

The 2004 application was granted full development permission in 2006, after an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (Malta Environmental and Planning Authority (MEPA) 2006a) had been performed. In 2010, WasteServ Ltd (WSM) submitted a Project Description Statement (PDS; Bezzina and Coles 2010) that included several changes to the original application, to support its Masterplan for the development of the Magħtab Environmental Complex. Changes included extensions to the controlled/engineered landfill, the construction of a service road, and the most significant additions were the construction and establishment of two recycling plants: a pre-landfilling Mechanical Treatment Plant (MTP) and a Biological Treatment Plant (Anaerobic Digestion and Biogas). An EIA was commissioned to update the previous one to incorporate the changes to the original master plan (which already included the installation of a MTP). These extensions to the original master plan increased the tensions between the users of the

surrounding areas, especially those residing and working at Magħtab, the developer (WSM) and the national Government. In terms of stakeholder participation this case study could be described as a case of limited or passive participation and self-mobilisation, particularly by the more invested stakeholders (Aylett 2010; Cornwall 2008; Vella 2018). As the SIA consultant was a Maltese anthropologist who was simultaneously conducting research towards a PhD, the case study became part of the consultant's wider research into development conflicts and improving participatory processes in urban development planning.

Methods

A case study of a planned development in Malta is used to critically reflect on the use of ethnographic methods for socially just, participatory action research. Research was conducted in four phases (described below) over two time periods. The first time period was between January and end of June 2011, with the analysis and report writing taking place during the following months, as part of a commissioned study to be performed at a particular time to fit with the EIA process. The resulting time constraints affected sampling, seasonality and the choice of methods used. Therefore, several important stakeholder groups, such as summer residents and tourists could not be interviewed extensively and the analysis had to rely on secondary data. Such constraints are not uncommon and hence how such restrictions are handled is important to explicitly discuss and learn from.

The second time period of the research was between October 2011 and February 2012. During the project, the lead researcher held two potentially conflicting positions (although with the explicit knowledge of and approval by the employer): a PhD candidate conducting fieldwork; and an SIA consultant performing baseline studies on EIAs as a professional applied anthropologist. As a result, the lead researcher explained the double function of the research to all interviewees and obtained their informed consent.

Participant observation

Participant observation formed a fundamental part of the methodology and took place in each of the four phases described below. These observation activities ranged from open-ended 'key informant' interviews to accompanied walks and active involvement of the lead researcher, including enlisting the help of a local civic society organisation (CSO) and an environmental non-governmental organisation (eNGO). Trust was built slowly over time, through repeated engagement with individuals and groups, leading to the development of relationships that outlasted the duration of the SIA consultancy and eventually the research project. This method therefore gave the lead researcher an opportunity to broaden their 'field of vision' beyond the case study, drawing in many cases on longer-term relationships built over SIA practice in Malta for several years. It allowed the researcher to develop trust by accompanying participants and joining in with everyday tasks. One such example was learning how to throw clay and turn the potter's wheel with a key informant. Over several hours, affording patience while tentatively learning to mould clay into something intelligible, revealed new insights into a man whom the researcher had known for years. The time spent together outside formal work or

a formal interview aided a deeper appreciation about how the man understood and perceived the environment, his job role and his 'place' within Maltese society, a society that he had adopted as his own, since he was a foreigner. These would have most likely never come out from a single interview, however open-ended it might have been.

Participant observation helped elicit the 'felt' dimensions of the changing socio-physical environment, the differences between talking about a particular place and 'living' the place by being there. Scott et al. (2009) discussed the results garnered from joining different social actors in their journey through the landscape, interacting as little as possible with them but noticing how they interact with their environment and with others. Their methodology shows how 'experience shapes perception and vice versa' (Scott et al. 2009: 401). In the Maltese case study, the lead researcher met with social actors in the landscapes in question, and similar to Scott et al. tried to impinge as little as possible to what they were doing, first observing from a distance before approaching the subjects and engaging with them. The approach, however, differed from Scott et al.'s methodology in that the lead researcher actively interacted and asked questions about the participant(s)' experiences and the changing landscape.

Phase 1: Issue scoping

The scoping of issues was done via site visits and meetings with the developer and EIA co-ordination team, scoping interviews with planning officers who review EIAs (from the Malta Environment and Planning Authority; MEPA), consultants from three EIA companies and the local 'communities' (social groups affected by the project). To identify social groups and representative interviewees, an iterative approach was taken to stakeholder analysis (after Reed et al. 2009; Reed and Curzon 2015), in which a desk-based analysis was triangulated with key stakeholders during field visits, and then further discussed and refined with the EIA team.

Scoping interviews during this phase were broad-ranging. Generally, the first part of the interview followed a structured set of questions, collecting demographic data on the household or business before going to more open-ended questions, which followed an interview key or aide-memoire. Open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to open up and help the lead researcher to get a better picture of their world view. This included, for example, questions such as what their connection with the locality is, if they interact with others and if they do, how and why? More specific questions included whether they consider themselves an integral part of that locality and if so how they articulate their understanding of being part of that locality and/or a community. Many times, these conversations lead to themes of virilocality or uxurilocality and the reasons why they chose such residence, which vary depending on many different circumstances, as Boissevain had also observed in the 1960's (Boissevain 2013 [1969]: 45).

After the interviews, notes would be coded according to the main themes and questions, putting interviewees into categories and outlining overarching themes, frequently asked questions, why those questions were asked and so forth, and analysing the connections between different social actors.

Phase 2: Understanding the social context

Probing into the social context was done via 170 in-depth interviews, across four localities, using a snowball sampling technique, spread over the last two months of period one and throughout period two. A mixed-methods approach was taken. Depending on the situation and the interviewee, the interviews varied from open-ended to semi-structured and unstructured. Telephone interviews were also used in some cases with reasons varying from lack of physical access for a face-to-face interview; as an introductory informal device to gain more formal access; to follow up on interviews; and informally to extend the reach of the fieldwork to a wider audience within the social area of influence (as determined in Phase 1). The mixed-method thus combined participant observation, situated listening, site visits, walks in the field and a series of initial and follow-up face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews, including the use of visual media to help explore proposed developments with participants in greater detail.

To understand how the development scheme would interact with local people's lifestyle, work, and recreational patterns, the following factors were taken into consideration during interviews:

- What does the physical space offer to the various social groups that use it?
- What are the attitudes and values that the social groups have towards these elements through the way they interact with their physical and social environment through their lifestyles?
- What are the attitudes that people have towards the Scheme?
- How do these attitudes relate to the perceived social effects of the Scheme (how it is perceived to interact with their work, recreational patterns and lifestyle in general) and what is their response to such a project?

Our use of the term 'attitudes' went beyond the hypothetical construct or judgement of 'likes' and 'dislikes' or a 'neutral' attitude. The research into attitudes served as a gateway to uncovering underlying values and beliefs that have been (consciously or subconsciously) adopted or developed over time and also to uncover any potential ambiguities, frictions or contradictions in the voiced or observed attitudes and values. Attitudes are thus social constructs and attention was paid to cognitive (thoughts), affective (emotions) and behavioural (learned or otherwise) associations and responses.

Secondary data was also collected during this phase, including data on demographics, household types, jobs, social clubs and other variables describing how the area is used and by whom. Using these methods, the research sought to understand the context in which developments were being assessed by participants, in terms of individuals (their needs, interests, values and aspirations) and the communities to which they belong (considering assets, strengths and weaknesses of their social environment), and the temporal context (considering how the development fits within or interacts with historic and current trends in the community and locality). In this context then, perceptions were elicited about the possible positive or negative impacts of the proposed development.

Interaction with the EIA team at MEPA took the form of semi-structured and informal interviews. Employing various interviewing strategies (see Agar 1996: 139–146; May 2011: 122; Okely 2012a: 75–86), as an ethnographer, the conversations were inductive and tacit,

conducted in such a way to allow both interviewer and interviewee to participate freely. When dealing with senior management though, more formalised and structured interviews were used. Questions were open-ended and discussed the various stakeholder and official roles and experiences of planning. While themes on landscape change, perceptions of what landscape means, EIA, decision-making processes and methodologies used to collect and analyse data were tackled, the open-ended format of the interview questions gave the opportunity to the respondents to explore in further detail what they considered important to discuss.

Phase 3: Public and stakeholder participation

Phase 3 involved two townhall style public meetings at two of the localities and a focus-group with the most affected stakeholder groups. These were all organised informally, without the formal approval of the developer, since the project was of a politically and socially sensitive nature. The practical aims of the events were: (1) information and knowledge exchange; (2) to help with identifying and understanding the relationship between various issues, especially as they intersected stakeholder groups and their needs; (3) to identify solutions and alternatives that could be recommended through the SIA; and (4) to understand the dynamics of the relationships between social actors. These aims also contributed towards the exploration of a broader (academic) research agenda; particularly, how stakeholder involvement was perceived in a social and decision-making environment where stakeholder participation is scarce; and also whether stakeholder exercises would improve the SIA and EIA processes, and by proxy, the planning and decision-making processes of urban development projects in Malta and other similar contexts.

Although the selection of stakeholders for interviews was based on a systematic assessment of stakeholder interests in the area of social influence (phase 2), this in-depth, qualitative approach was necessarily selective in its reach (hence the snowball sampling). Therefore, a range of participatory methods were used to provide all the stakeholders who interacted with the SIA process with opportunities to learn and engage in deliberation about the proposed development, especially during the participatory exercises. This also provided an important opportunity to triangulate initial findings from interviews and explore certain issues in greater depth through the deliberative process. Workshops used maps as a focus for the facilitated group discussion. The workshops sought to involve participation from the full range of stakeholder groups identified in phase 1, though ultimately, this was not achieved (reasons include lack of resources and a lack of trust in both the planning process and stakeholder/public consultation and participation).

Phase 4: Data analysis and strategy implementation

Data from the previous three phases was recorded as detailed fieldnotes. These were then analysed using qualitative thematic coding techniques, allowing themes to arise from the fieldnotes, and categorizing material under themes until theoretical saturation was reached. In terms of SIA, Taylor, Bryan, and Goodrich (1995: 106–114) describe the process as a dynamic, issues-driven (or oriented), analytic induction approach. As is customary in anthropological analysis of fieldnotes, attention was paid to how participants answered

questions (including body language and intonation) and under what circumstances (including details of the location, such as whether the interview was conducted at a residence or in the field). Themes emerged inductively from the analysis of in-depth fieldnote descriptions, while critically questioning the tacit knowledge of the lead researcher as an 'insider' practitioner, which requires mental distance (Forsythe 1999: 130) and self-reflection, without falling into the counterproductive, reflexive loop of 'self-critical epistemological awareness' (Chambers 1997: 32).

Results

(Table 1) provides an overview of the various stakeholders and populations that were found within the three localities within the Magħtab case study to illustrate the variety and subtleties within so called 'stakeholder groups' compiled from interviews and conversations with participants about themselves as well as comments made about other groups of stakeholders. These together provide a rich and insightful typology and characterises affiliation with place and communities more meaningfully than commonly practised in stakeholder analysis that does not bring to the surface how different groups view themselves and others. The original Table submitted as part of the SIA also included detailed notes on specific professions and other characteristics and contextual data extending over six A3 pages but was stripped down and condensed to fit onto a double-page for this article.

Individuals may not necessarily be exclusive to one group, which was one of the reasons why social groups were termed *sociospheres* for the baseline study and SIA. For example, members of the farming community may also belong to the community of the local full-time residents; a respondent may have both his place of residence and his business at the locality, and so forth. For (Table 1) the social groups have been grouped as populations where the common denominator is temporal, i.e. how much time they spend within the case study area.

Eliciting perceived impacts and contestation of place

The methodological approach taken also helps to better understand the range of stakeholder interests and contestation of space eliciting the different perceptions and meanings of the case study area by different groups of people, whether resident or transient. Sometimes, differences were evident within the same household or the same socio-physical environment within the case study area (Figure 1 shows the case study map). These processes have different derivations; including gender, age, the past and current use(s) of the space in question, and the stakes that different individuals or groups have within the area.

This diversity of perspectives and contestation of space is reflected in the highly mixed and somewhat conflicting land uses that give a rather disorganised character to the settlement in the case study. This was not only observed through the interviews and by direct observation of the socio-physical landscape around Magħtab, but was also noted within the Central Malta Local Plan (Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) 2006b: 20), which states that:

Table 1. Description of the population's constituent stakeholder groups found within the area of influence (A of I) of the maghtab case study.

Social Group or 'Population'	Stakeholder Groups	LOCALITY		
		Maghtab Hamlet	Bahar ic-Caghaq and Salini	Qawra
The local population or 'community' ¹	Permanent residents <ul style="list-style-type: none">• long-standing permanent• more recently established permanent	Long-standing permanent residents: <p>Those who have their roots at Maghtab (the indigenous population) and those who don't. The latter are considered outsiders, even if they lived at the locality all their lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People rooted in the locality (incl. their extended families); mostly farmers with fields in the area.• Young couples, one of whom was born and raised at Maghtab. Kin ties influential and often given plot of land.• People with fields in the area, sometimes for generations but originally from another locality in this area of Malta.• People who moved here when they got married decades ago. Bought/built house and rent/bought fields in the area.• Married couples, one of whom was born at Maghtab, whose family has since moved elsewhere. Usually have fields and/or land at Maghtab and built their home there.	Long-standing permanent residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maltese people owning houses/farmhouses/summer houses that belonged to their family and have lived for a substantial number of years at the locality. In Qawra there are also apartment owners who fall into this category. This group is formed of mostly educated middle class workers or business entrepreneurs in middle management or higher. Some are also freelance workers in business or other industries.• Foreign permanent residents who might have been returning tourists for years and then decided to buy property in Qawra, where they used to rent. In Qawra and Bahar ic-Caghaq, there is a predominance of British people who fall into this category.	
		More recently established permanent residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Couples or families from other localities who decided to move to the area, usually attracted by the locale and the possibility of converting a farmhouse.• Foreigners who, like the above, decided to convert or renovate a typical farmhouse.	More recently established permanent residents: <p>Residents who either own or rent their houses or apartments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young couples with/without children, both working (post-secondary level education).• Single parents with/without their children or recently divorced individuals.• Blue-collar working class.• Foreigners (e.g. students; young well educated workers; rich businessmen; dignitaries).	

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Social Group or 'Population'	LOCALITY			
	Stakeholder Groups	Magħtab Hamlet	Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq and Salini	Qawra
The transient population or 'community' (Users who return regularly for a period of time but not permanently)	<i>The working community (Business owners, incl. recreational facilities and their employees, hotel workers, hoteliers)</i>	<p>A mixed variety of businesses, not all fully legitimate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock farms and equestrian facilities. Their employees are usually skilled labourers, both Maltese and foreign. • Industrial businesses, including a construction company and construction related small businesses, some working out of garages or other makeshift structures. • Some 'garage industries', using disused fields or farms to place trucks and busses, and car repair shops such as panel beaters, mechanics, auto body paint sprayers. Magħtab has no amenities such as grocery stores or retail. 	<p>Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq has one grocery store and two restaurants. At the periphery of the residential area there are two bars and a marine entertainment facility.</p> <p>Salini also has three restaurants and a four-star hotel, whose workers mostly live in neighbouring localities, especially Qawra and Buġibba.</p>	<p>Qawra is a predominantly touristic area. Workers include hotel managers living locally; others in management positions who don't necessarily live nearby but use the area for work and leisure (e.g. hotel gym and pool, squash, tennis, football). This contrasts with the non-management staff, who don't mix pleasure with work (but may use nearby beach).</p>
	<i>Maltese summer residents</i>	<p>During the interview period, no summer residents were encountered at Magħtab and other interviews did not yield any data on this either and conclusion drawn that none at Magħtab.</p>	<p>Summer residents (principal dwelling elsewhere in Malta). Upper Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq owners of new and old villas (incl. those at lower Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq) with a high income from tertiary-education related jobs and businesses. Interviewees in the A of I bought their property in the area mostly because it was a positive business move at the time when they bought the villa.</p>	
	<i>Foreign summer residents and other regularly returning tourists</i>	<p>Foreign summer residents or other regularly returning tourists were encountered during the fieldwork period at Magħtab, Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq and Salini. Some stay for several months at a time.</p> <p>At Magħtab there are a few foreigners who own farmhouses and return to Malta during the summer months. At Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq and Salini, the two groups are more frequent.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular summer residents. • Regular summer residents to Malta but choosing different localities each time (many from the UK; OMTs/IMTs⁵).

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Social Group or 'Population'	LOCALITY				
	Stakeholder Groups	Maghtab Hamlet	Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq and Salini	Qawra	
The visiting community	First time tourists and domestic tourism	During the interview period, no tourists were interviewed at Maghtab. Interviews with other stakeholder groups though confirmed that tourists walking in the countryside were sometimes encountered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq: A few IMTs were interviewed.● Salini: interviewees were British OMTs at hotels.● At other times of the year typical types of tourists include students from Italy and other parts of mainland Europe on English language courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● First-time tourists staying at the hotels (OMTs and IMTs).● During the summer months: some domestic 'holiday makers' on weekend breaks or vacation.³	
	Visitors to local residents	All localities hosts visitors to local residents, family members, lovers and friends who visit both the Maltese residents and the foreign ones (as tourists).			
	Visitors to the locality for leisure	Visitors to the localities for leisure, including sports and recreation activities, including bars and clubs (in the case of Qawra); restaurant goers and social club goers; people going for morning walks in the countryside (especially around Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq) or along the waterfront or the shoreline, regulars to sports facilities (including Maghtab and Qawra).	Maghtab has popular sports facility that some use almost daily (where one could easily categorise them under the 'local' group category). Other regular visitors are horse owners who keep their horses at stables around Maghtab.	The countryside around Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq is beautiful and quiet and popular with daily/week-end walkers. There are many visitors, both Maltese and foreign, especially during the summer months.	Qawra is a place of high recreational value (e.g. power walking; cycling; dog walking; swimming; frequenting bars and restaurants). Language students go to particular clubs en masse.
The FARMING POPULATION (Mostly part-time farmers, though some visit their fields daily)		AREAS SURROUNDING MAGHTAB AND SALINI AREAS WITHIN THE A of I			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Predominantly part-time farmers (most reside in neighbouring localities).● Some full-time farmers, either being residents of Maghtab or living in neighbouring villages. <p>Some farmers own their fields but most lease them from either other farmers or from the Government (some for several generations). Farmers living at Maghtab have a different relationship with the land than those who live elsewhere. They go to their fields more regularly/daily and consider their fields as an integral part of who they are.</p>		No farming found at Qawra.	

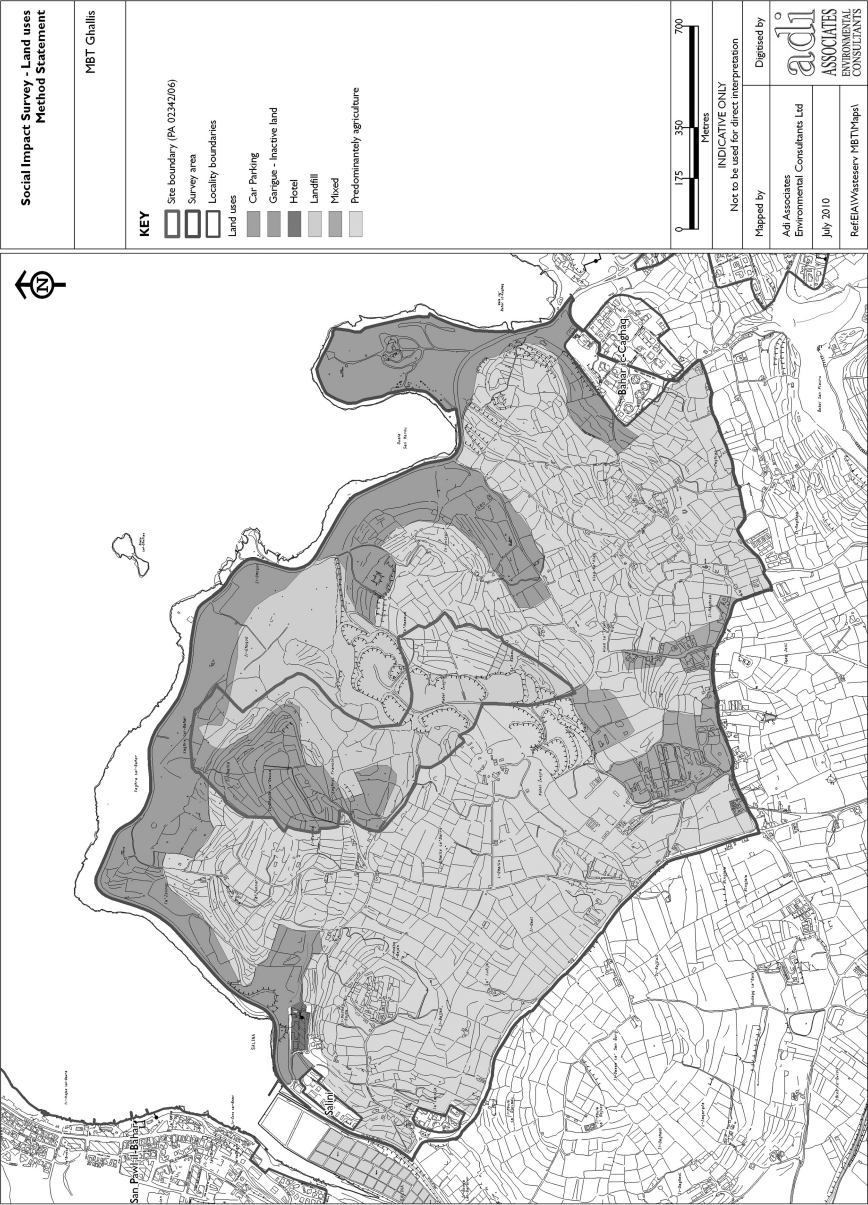


Figure 1. Land use map within the social A of I for Maghtab and the surrounding localities, provided by the EIA coordinators, ADI associates for the methods statement.

"... the area and has a number of existing different uses apart from farmhouses. These existing uses include residential units of varying types and design, batching plants, plant yards, garage industries, animal husbandry farms as well as a substantial number of disused buildings. Due to these mixed and conflicting uses and the disorganised character of this settlement, Magħtab is affected by a fall in rural quality and amenity."

The Local Plan further stated that the aim of the policy is to counter the problems mentioned above by preventing the further development of what appeared to professional planners as incompatible uses in the area. The Local Plan thus tries to reintroduce some order (preventing some uses and improving the management of the landfill operations) but does not respond to the ultimate concern of the residents which is to cease landfill/waste operations altogether in the area. Contestation of space also became clear in how the various users viewed (and perceived) each other and their claims for using the area in question. It becomes rather idiosyncratic then that the more mixed the land use of the area, the more complex the relationships and perceptions of the various users are, creating a landscape of increased tensions. Such contestations are not only found in this case study or Malta but have become common across the globe. This in turn highlights the need to give due attention and process beyond simply adhering to existing rules, regulations, legislation and local plans (because many trade-offs and conflicts are not addressed or resolved in doing so).

Societal and political change as well as how people 'feel' about development proposals are influenced by their 'attitudes', values, experiences and behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). However, rather than 'assuming' 'attitudes' based on actual 'behaviour', it is important to distinguish between these and to elicit each directly as there is not always a close or logical link between attitudes, values, behaviour and how change is experienced because factors such as convenience or societal norms/pressure may override acting according to personally held attitudes and values (e.g. Blake 1999; Flynn, Bellaby, and Ricci 2010).

Eliciting and analysing lifestyle values and activities as described by the participating stakeholders can help clarify different standpoints on proposed changes/development. (Table 2) summarises the range of concerns and how past experiences shape attitudes to future developments (e.g. the potential for foul odours from the proposed development to permeate to the surroundings based on past experience of the engineered landfill at Għallies that still produces foul odours on days when the wind prevails towards their place of residence together with their experiences of the now decommissioned original Magħtab landfill).

Impacts of the landfill operation was seen as contributing to a wide range of negative impacts, including reduced social cohesion and fragmentation of local identity; pollution of the land, water and air quality of the area; increase in rats and stray dogs (perception of lack of safety of the area); social stigmatization of Magħtab and its residents (increase in fly-tipping); more industrial uses of the area (e.g. the introduction of industrial size husbandry farms, equestrian farms and the garage industry).

It also became evident that nearly all the respondents of the study believed they had been short-changed by the system (Vella and Borg 2010) and that the many promises the Authorities and the proponent had made were rarely followed through or maintained (such as the permanent closure of the landfill site on Malta's entry into the EU in 2004, after which the site would be regenerated into a landscaped family park). As a result,

Table 2. List of identified lifestyle values and activities in case study's area of influence (aoi) and scoring system that was applied to these.

Family ties/obligations (including proximity to kin)
Ties to the land
Economically viable property or rent or family land available for construction of family home/family house available
Reduction in economic viability of their property (in general)
Different environment to where they lived
The locality is considered 'quaint'
The locality not having a 'quaint' feel to it any longer
Privacy and anonymity
Quiet/personal time
A place to relax
Locality considered a 'refuge'
The locality stopped being considered a 'refuge' over time
Lack of quiet personal time/relaxation due to increase in population/activities
A socially safe environment
The social environment became unsafe over time
A quieter social environment when compared to other similar localities
A quieter social environment but still close to urban centres
An increase in social activities compared to when they first moved
A good public
A change in type of public over time for better (✓) or for worse (✕)
Experience of development/Increase in population
Amenities such as ATMs, supermarkets, post office
Increase in traffic and circulation
Parking problems
Good public transport facilities
Proximity (and access) to heritage (archaeological sites)
Proximity to the seashore
Proximity to the countryside
Access to countryside
Quiet physical environment (void of traffic, noise etc.)
Decrease in the quiet physical environment due to increase in traffic, noise pollution etc.
Less pollution esp. air quality in comparison to other places
An increase in air pollution over time
An increase in sea pollution over time
The place is considered 'dirty'
Good views/visual space
Visual impact of development
Loss of visual space
The landfill operation: Loss in tangible/intangible heritage
The landfill operation: Bad or foul odours
The landfill operation: A decrease in bad odours after closure of Maghtab landfill
The landfill operation: A change in views (visual impact over time because of landfill growing)
The landfill operation: A marked change in the physical landscape
The landfill operation: Large rats and stray dogs
The landfill operation: A decrease in rats a number of months after the old Maghtab landfill closed down
The landfill operation: Flies and midges
The landfill operation: An increase in pollution attributed primarily to the landfill (apart from other factors)
The landfill operation: Dust pollution
The landfill operation: The perception of a decline of physical health, including skin and respiratory conditions
The landfill operation: Increase in traffic because of ancillary operations
The landfill operation: Decrease in the quiet physical environment specifically due to landfill ancillary operations (increase in traffic, noise pollution etc.)
SCORING that was used against populations and stakeholder groups within Area of Influence:
✓: Positively interacts with sociosphere/group and lifestyle
✓ ✓: Positive interaction is more prominent with sociosphere/group compared to other localities
✕: Negatively interacts with sociosphere and detracts from lifestyle
✕ ✕: Negative interaction is more prominent with sociosphere/group compared to other localities
✓ ✕: Predominantly positive interaction with sociosphere/group & lifestyle but not everybody agrees
✕ ✓: Predominantly negative interaction with sociosphere/group & lifestyle but not everybody agrees
NR: Not relevant for sociosphere, no effect on sociosphere and lifestyle of individuals
A: Group predominantly ambivalent, i.e. they are not sure whether the factor positively or negatively interacts with them
?: Either not enough data collected for a representative sample or sociosphere so a '?' is placed next to educated guess from converging data of other similar groups

distrust by local citizens had grown throughout the years that the original non-engineered landfill was in operation and increased when the Ghallies and Zwejra landfills were opened as the Government had promised that the landfill would be closed (without mentioning that others would be opened next to it).

Levels of stakeholder and public participation

The participatory process consisted of two ‘town hall’ style public meetings (held on Church premises at two of the localities within the area of influence of the proposed Scheme) and a series of individual meetings with specific stakeholder groups (e.g. Local Councils and Local Council sub- committees for localities that had such representation within the region’s Local Council; the Parishes; NGOs and other unofficial but organised (and vocal) groups).

The public meetings served to communicate the proposed project’s aims and plans, and to consult with those present on their views of the plans. Based on Reed et al.’s (2017) public and stakeholder engagement typology, these meetings were top-down consultation. They were top-down, as they were organised by the developer who was legally responsible for commissioning the EIA, and the mode of engagement was consultative as communication was at least in parts two-way (with issues and questions raised by participants passed to the EIA coordinator for later reply). There was no direct deliberation between participants and the EIA co-ordinator (and the researcher leading these meetings did not have the power to enact any recommendations). However, these meetings also served to recruit interviewees who then provided more detailed qualitative data, and the opportunity to uncover tacit knowledge, supplementing the data collected during the meetings and clarifying differences in opinion – and occasionally opposing views by different members of the same organisation.

As such, the participatory action was unofficial, involving stakeholders informally by organising meetings through local groups and NGOs, using relationships developed during earlier fieldwork. These individual meetings with key groups, were not considered as official engagement by the developer, but were rather an effort by the researcher, to pro-actively reach stakeholders, especially those likely to be the most affected by the project. The intended aim was to increase the likelihood that they engaged deeply in the research via follow-up interviews to ensure their perspectives would be noted and heard. Since these meetings were unofficial, a deliberative space was created, where stakeholders could securely vent their disappointment and thoughts of the project without fear of repercussions, creating a space for local knowledge to be part of the engagement process, even if these would not necessarily directly influence outcomes. This was therefore neither top-down (initiated by the developer) nor fully bottom-up (initiated by the community); nor could it be called participatory action research due to the lack of (direct or indirect) influence on the actual decision-making for this development proposal. Instead, this activity sat somewhere between top-down and bottom-up, matching the hybrid space that the researcher occupied in the process (similarly it tried to go beyond consultation but was not PAR). Providing such safe participatory spaces was seen as important by the lead SIA researcher in efforts to broaden inclusivity and mapping the wider range of viewpoints, visions and fears.

The researcher provided stakeholders in these informal meetings with information that he could legally (and ethically) give them, even though the developers were reticent about what information was divulged (this was essentially limited to the project description statement, which the developer is legally obliged to make public). The stakeholders then used this information as leverage to get further answers, even involving the press. Here, the researcher may have increased tensions between the stakeholders and the developer, but by involving stakeholders in this way, it provided a certain degree of balance (though very partial) of the power dynamics found within this particular context, at least, to their constitutional right to information, especially on health and safety related issues. These issues could then be discussed, and further actions taken by the stakeholders, which created a movement from 'tokenism' and 'passive participation' as part of the SIA process in its limited capacity to properly involve stakeholders equitably, to 'self-mobilisation', making the stakeholder groups agents of their own participatory engagement within the planning process.

This bottom-up stakeholder-led engagement was not part of the stakeholder participation methodology within the EIA process but a by-product of it. More precisely, it was part of the wider democratic process of which the EIA process is one constituent. In reality, the researcher was not instrumental to their civic mobilisation, but rather, a trusted broker of sorts, giving voice to some of their most pressing questions through the social study of the EIA. This role became possible because of the fieldwork and interviews that had been conducted before these meetings, which generated trust with many of the stakeholders who were present at the meetings. This created a shift in the power dynamics of that meeting where the researcher and participants were all contributing towards an equitable representation of stakeholder needs, grievances and experiences (and therefore knowledge exchange), which would then be included in the social impact study as part of the EIA report.

Discussion

The importance of context and multiple ways of connecting

The literature on public and stakeholder engagement presents a fractured and often contradictory picture. For every example of a participatory process that has led to tangible environmental and social benefits, there is an example of a process that failed to meet its goals or the expectations of those who participated, or led to unintended negative outcomes (Reed 2008). The complexity of environmental challenges in their dynamic socio-political contexts means it is hard to attribute causes to the many unintended consequences that have arisen from participatory processes in the past. This complexity arises in part from the multifaceted and often poorly understood linkages that exist between the different components of social-ecological systems and the invisible, hidden or ignored impacts of a multitude of small and large decisions taken over time. Kenter et al. (2015) also include the often unrecorded and unappreciated interactions between different actors with each other and the social and ecological contexts that they find themselves in. Most of the disciplines that have traditionally sought to understand stakeholder engagement in environmental decisions struggle to recognize or analyse the role of these underlying dynamic interactions and plural contexts. However, without

a better understanding of these deep dynamics and the contexts in which participation takes place, it becomes very difficult to explain why some processes meet the expectations of those who organise or participate in them while most produce unintended consequences and others fail. In contrast to many of the disciplines that have dominated academic discourses on stakeholder engagement in environmental decisions, anthropology, with its inter-disciplinary approach, can help provide a theoretical and methodological basis for analysing the deep dynamics of participation, and the role of context on decision-making processes. As illustrated by the methodology and case study results, this needs to go beyond interview scripts and involve ‘hand, heart, movement and the senses’ (Okely 2012a: 1). This was illustrated, for example, in invitations by stakeholders for the researcher to experience some of the participants’ facts, fears and framing of the issue under consideration on their terms, in their place and time (not that set by a project schedule or project manager). Using Charmaz’s (2020: 167) words in relation to the use of constructivist grounded theory (now frequently used in PAR), the researcher’s role here is ‘making connections between events and situations, meanings and actions, and individuals and social structures that otherwise may remain invisible’.

Reflexivity, social learning and empathy

Learning from work published by Cooke and Kothari (2001) and others it seems that practitioners of participatory methods need to become epistemologically aware and self-critical about their positionality in relation to the decision-making processes they are facilitating and the social actors (the stakeholders) that they are interacting with, and possibly identifying with. In this way it may be possible to appreciate the extent to which the practitioner influences the process and the decisions that are taken as a result of their work, and avoid de-localising or disenfranchising affected ‘communities’. Both, having potentially a large (but unintended) effect (e.g. selective use of information) or next to no impact at all (a decision was already decided) is problematic but reflects the real world context of the researcher.

The tenets of applied anthropology, which uses an increasingly varied toolkit of mixed methods to collect data, is still predicated upon a holistic approach which involves participant observation and the ethnographic method to understand local knowledge (Ervin 2005; Taylor, Bryan, and Goodrich 1995). This is central to building relationships and involving social actors, or, stakeholders and more broadly, communities and populations that are affected by proposed developments. One of the central themes in anthropological studies is to understand how power relations operate. Anthropologists have a long history of studying up, down and sideways (González and Stryker 2014) since Laura Nader’s seminal 1972 paper, ‘Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up’. By focusing their analytical gaze on urban planners, decision-makers and politicians, not just the vulnerable groups, and unpacking the various flows of power within planning processes (Brash 2011; Forester 1989) it becomes clear that powerful agents (e.g. developers, politicians and the state), together with citizen engagement can increase the value of the SIA analysis and help create more effective and socially accountable Social Impact Management Plans (SIMPs), that have the potential to reinforce the citizen-state interface. Anthropological fieldwork methods usually build relationships and the more contentious a research project is, the more transparent those methods need to be. For socially just

PAR, the researcher's role, or impact, will go beyond eliciting and recording, or representing, stakeholder views. Important elements are to have iterative processes (e.g. several encounters; building trust and relationships) and to motivate active engagement in the decision-making process(es), to create opportunities for social learning and reflexivity by participants, stakeholders and decision-makers beyond the researcher-participant interview (or whichever sampling method is chosen). The focus is on multiple and meaningful conversations during (and beyond) the project, not simply another consultation exercise.

Anthropology attempts to understand the various discourses and values that are attached to a locality, and the extent to which identity (i.e. how an individual or group identifies with that locality as a physical space within the physical environment and also as a social space and the interactions of the relationships of power within that social space) contributes to planned change (such as those brought about by planned urban change). Anthropology recognises the multiple roles that people have within their cultures, and the way that social actors can play different (and sometimes apparently contradictory) roles at different times in a decision-making process. It can also help shed light on stakeholder perceptions of their lived environment, recognising shifting, diverse and conflicting values, rather than trying to generalise, categorise or stereotype and simply repeating accepted/common ways of framing issues, stakeholder categories and perspectives (Charmaz 2020). By understanding the ways in which knowledge is culturally, socially and politically produced, continuously reformulated and used to exert power, anthropology can help explore what is considered valid knowledge to be included or left out, who is included or excluded, who is misinforming or omitting information and for what purpose. The ways in which knowledge is used then depends upon the contexts within which it is produced and how various actors in a decision-making process choose to interpret, legitimise and 'rank' knowledge.

Empathy has been identified as an important factor in developing social competence and facilitating understanding and meaningful relationships within and between different stakeholder groups (Strong, Ringer, and Taylor 2001; Steenbakkers et al. 2015). It is thus not only required by the researcher but an important ingredient for achieving socially just decisions and outcomes; as such, 'empathy' may require explicit embedding in the training of professionals and inter-professional teams (e.g. Cartabuke et al. 2019).

Micro-, meso- and macroscale linkages

Stakeholders rarely, if ever, get involved without an agenda of their own, however well-intentioned they might be. This can have either beneficial or damaging effects on the decision-making process (Conrad et al. 2011a; Dietz and Stern 2008), which is why many urban planners and decision makers remain reticent, unsure or even against involving stakeholders throughout the decision-making process, except within the confines of the legal duties/frameworks of such processes (Conrad et al. 2011a). Stakeholder and public perceptions can be fraught with biases, anecdotal evidence, false assumptions about resource interactions with the environment, and sensation (Okrent 1998). This is partly due to the use of information and its distribution among the participating social actors (Forester 1989; Healey 2006) which is a source of power in its own right, and a result of the lack of legitimisation of different types of knowledges amongst non-specialist or scientific

sources or participants (Dietz and Stern 2008; Reed et al. 2010; Whitfield, Geist, and Ioris 2011).

Commentators and theoreticians have tended to either look at the methods used in grass-roots participatory practices or higher-level engagement in the implementation of policies and governance models (Cooke and Kothari 2001). In contrast to this, Vella and Borg (2010) propose that stakeholder involvement needs to be integrated, beyond current legal consultation duties, in project-level decision-making processes of proposed development schemes, rather than just at strategic or policy-oriented levels, i.e. at large territorial long-term plans to either implement policy or to improve upon them, without properly assessing the effects that such strategies and policies will have at more localised levels (what is usually referred to as the 'meso' and the 'micro' as opposed to the 'macro').

Related to this, there is a growing appreciation of the need for more democratic decentralisation and collaborative planning, especially at regional and local levels, where existing social relations and the ability to perceive the politicised complexities in these processes could facilitate and improve public and stakeholder engagement (Healey 2006; Ioris 2012; Pares 2012; Whitfield, Geist, and Ioris 2011). Democratic decentralisation or collaborative planning are not always possible to reach or sustain and it depends greatly on the kind of democracy a country has and how that democracy is enacted both at institutional or governance level and on the ground, within civil society (Abram 2011; Faguet 2014; Faguet and Pöschl 2015).

Replacing assumptions with active engagement and critical analysis

Nonetheless integrating social, economic and environmental values into spatial, urban and environmental planning decisions requires the input of those stakeholders whose interests and values are affected by the decision options, if they are to be successfully integrated (Dietz and Stern 2008; Kunreuther 1996; Reed et al. 2010). In many instances, these interests and values are considered so obvious that agencies, guided primarily by scientific knowledge, tend to act on the behalf of what they perceive as the 'common good', without taking into consideration and analysing whether or not their assumptions and action are in accordance with the actual needs and concerns of the communities they serve (Chess, Dietz, and Shannon 1998). At the same time, critical analyses of projects that included public or stakeholder involvement have shown that despite drawing on an increasingly diverse knowledge base, there remains a predominant preference for scientific information and knowledge production. Such top-down processes and complex social relations continue to undermine attempts at stakeholder participation, collaborative planning and governance efforts, even when stakeholder involvement has become mandatory through institutionalisation, through EU directives such as the ELC (Council of Europe 2000); the WFD Directive (European Commission 2000) and the Aarhus Convention (UNECE, 1998) (Conrad 2012; Conrad et al. 2011a; Conrad, Christie, and Fazey 2011b; Vella, Reed, and Attlee 2015a). In fact, empirical examples show that public and stakeholder involvement in many planning contexts remain mostly consultative at best (Abram and Waldren 1998; Cornwall 2008; Vella and Borg 2010).

However, it is now generally understood in most pluralistic societies that using scientific knowledge alone as a benchmark for the 'common good' is no longer justifiable, as the importance of 'community' or multiple and conflicting interests are increasingly

recognised (Abram 2011; Collins and Ison 2006; Cornwall 2008; Dietz and Stern 2008; Healey 2006; Raymond et al. 2010). In some planning contexts, this has been underscored by NGOs and other organised or semi-organised groups, who get actively involved in decision-making processes, whether they are invited to participate or not, often using mass media (and increasingly social media) to exert influence over decisions and secure a place at the decision-making table (Abram 2011; Abram and Waldren 1998; Berglund 1998; Healey 2006). There are furthermore concerns to what extent such groups should or can prove their legitimacy and are able to effectively 'represent' viewpoints but neglect constituent mobilisation and inadvertently disincentivise or prevent active participation (e.g. Forrest 2019).

While such interventions do not always influence decisions (or lead to their retraction when such decisions are considered by such groups as being detrimental for society or the environment), debate is at least generated, and decisions are subjected to greater public scrutiny than would otherwise have taken place (Abram and Waldren 1998; Berglund 1998; Boissevain and Theuma 1998; Milton 1993). In fact, Grove-White (1993, 20) stated that '[A]lmost all of the most significant environmental issues, global or domestic, were crystallized first not by governments responding to or using "science", but by poorly resourced NGOs and sundry individual environmentalists.' For example, Boissevain and Theuma (1998, 96), concluded that '[in Malta], the outcomes of confrontations over actual development projects are not so much determined by rules and arguments as by tactics', by active citizens and eNGOs.

Added value of applied anthropological ethnographic methods in SIAs and other decision-making processes

Qualitative methods, especially the ethnographic process, can be effective tools to understand the impacts of proposed developments on diverse social groups. This makes it possible to draw on experiences that can span decades, even generations, where relevant integrating these with scientific knowledge (Raymond et al. 2010). The data and resulting analysis thus go beyond a convenient 'snapshot' intervention. Investing in the use of more ethnographic qualitative approaches can be justified to obtain triangulation. This is not just to validate (or cross-check) data but also to increase the understanding of how the same information (such as the project development information) can be contextually interpreted and even manipulated by different stakeholders, when there are issues of mistrust between stakeholders, decision-makers at governance level and service providers (as empirically identified during the case study, for example).

Qualitative methods (in the case of this research, including participant observation, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, situated listening, networking and focus groups), can enable the SIA practitioner to contribute in the building of relationships between the stakeholders, EIA team and developer. In this way, combining ethnographic and other qualitative methods in the analysis and enactment of participation enables the practitioner to both better understand and improve the outcomes of stakeholder participation during the EIA process (Amaratunga et al. 2002; Malina, Nørreklit, and Selto 2011; Vella and Borg 2010).

The case study has shown how even in such small geo-spatial contexts, as are found in the 'island city-state' of Malta (Mitchell 1998, 83), there can be significant differences in how actors perceive their role as members of a community. Therefore, individuals cannot be systematically categorised as members of a homogenous stakeholder group, for

example, where every individual within that group has the same goals, aims or agenda. This is especially so, when groups of active citizens join as, what may be sometimes termed a 'community of practice', fighting the 'common enemy', as proposed development projects may be collectively perceived. Even at the 'micro' level, local circumstances such as the ones described in the case study, understanding how different groups come together, how they perceive themselves within the locality (whether they form part of a broader local 'community' or a specific group with similar needs or aims, such as, for example, the 'farming community'), how they perceive the locality itself and its population as being part of a heterogeneous community with community values or not, will influence how they will interact with the engagement/participatory processes.

Conclusions

During the planning cycle of small to medium urban development projects, where stakeholder participation and involvement are limited (as is typically the case in Malta), the civic-state interface is not always strong enough to maintain healthy relationships of trust between decision-makers and end-users. Improving relationships of trust throughout the planning and decision-making process between the various stakeholders is imperative, or the planning process can suffer, causing delays that may make the proposed project economically unviable and socially or environmentally unsustainable.

Our paper addressed three aspects: (1) what certain anthropological practices can add to PAR (our main focus); (2) what anthropological research and practice can learn from PAR (especially in terms of the political context and affecting positive socially just change; our case study only afforded opportunity for sharing power in knowledge creation not actual decision-making); and (3) the importance of drawing on the expertise within both fields to improve how we conduct SIAs (and in the wider sense how we go about to inform spatial planning and resource management decisions) highlighting the need for more meaningful and extended decision-making processes.

In this paper, we have shown how the SIA practitioner may be able to improve stakeholder engagement and knowledge exchange. If the SIA practitioner uses more qualitative methods to interact more directly with stakeholders, manages power dynamics between the EIA team and stakeholders, and is adequately funded to work at appropriate spatial and temporal scales, the SIA practitioner can be in the unique position of acting as a knowledge broker between stakeholders and facilitate meaningful connections and conversations beyond the project. By eliciting, analysing and integrating 'knowledges' in this way, the SIA practitioner can contribute to a more socially equitable distribution of opportunities to participate and power-sharing in the knowledge creation, even if not necessarily in a position to influencing whose knowledge is considered during decision making processes. The paper also highlights the need for local planning authorities to impose compliance with international standards for SIA and stakeholder participation (Vanclay et al., 2015; Vella and Borg 2010; Vella, Reed, and Attlee 2015a; Vella et al. 2015b; Vella 2018), ensuring that SIA practitioners have the resources (including time) to fulfil the best practice guidelines. According to the International Association for Impact Assessments (IAIA) international SIA best practice guidelines (Vanclay et al. 2015), SIA should take place throughout the planning and decision-making processes of a development scheme, which would substantially increase the time that SIA practitioners

spend in the field, adopting mixed methods such as participant observation and building relationships with stakeholders that would improve the possibilities for more equitable, socially just stakeholder participation and decision-making.

In ethnographic fieldwork, knowledge comes through the skin and all the senses (Okely 2012a: 1). As Forsythe clarifies, ethnographic fieldwork is not a set of preformulated research instruments; it takes years of training in theory, methodology and practice (Forsythe 1999: 73, 129). It is therefore not prescriptive or easily captured in a set of chronological events and a neat set of interviews to test a hypothesis, nor is it 'mere description'; and 'just as fieldwork involves an openness to anything that may shake preconceptions, so theoretical conclusions are open to refinement ... [and] an entire paradigm is overturned' (Okely 2012a: 11).

The ethnographic methods used in the case study helped build relationships of trust during the planning process. Such methods are highly compatible with, and complement, the shorter interviews and focus groups typically used in many domains of action research. Relationships between various actors and stakeholders (including practitioners and researchers) were fostered by using in-depth, ethnographic and qualitative methods iteratively and inductively, creating a communicative bridge for information and knowledge sharing.

At the same time, the qualitative research provided new theoretical insights based on tacit and implicit knowledge and values as well as critically reflecting upon day-to-day experiences and practices. This included new understandings of the socio-political contexts that influenced stakeholder and participatory processes in the case study (something PAR explicitly focuses on), especially informal micro and meso contexts, which were influenced by broader, less obvious connections, perceptions and power dynamics between both human (e.g. different public and stakeholder interests) and non-human entities (e.g. interactions between different projects). Methods from anthropological practice provide important opportunities for reflexive action research, drawing on a deeper layer of tacit and implicit knowledge, values, experiences and reflections that may otherwise be overlooked.

Notes

1. The term *local communities* is used here not in the traditional sense of the term (for community), but is referring to those users who habitually use the area. These users form part of different sociospheres, sometimes even when placed under the same heading such as permanent residents, since, as will be explained further down in the report, their interactions can be minimal with others falling under the same within the same nomenclature.
2. OMTs = Organised Mass Tourists; IMTs = /Independent Mass Tourists
3. Data for domestic tourists was taken from previous social studies conducted by the primary author

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Notes

- i. Using the term 'anthropology' we are referring to the practices found in the multitude of branches, fields and sub-disciplines within the boundaries of a discipline that literally means 'the study of humans or humanity, from the Greek *anthropos* (human) and *logos* (study of)'. Given its vastness, we also choose not to subscribe to a designated approach (such as the three or four-field approaches practiced in Europe and the U.S.), thus encompassing all aspects of anthropological practice. At the core of this practice is a holistic approach that blurs disciplinary boundaries to study humans in relation to other humans and other aspects of human life, as part of larger, more complex systems. This holistic approach is reflected in the methods used to collect data, such as participant observation and prolonged fieldwork to understand the roles of kinship, social organisation and power dynamics, for example, in relation to environmental governance. Collaboration and co-creation of knowledge have been part of the debate and the practices of an increasing number of anthropological sub-

fields, such as applied, design, development, ecological, environmental, public and visual anthropology. While the research that this paper is based on is rooted in applied or practical anthropology, anthropological practices here are taken to include the practice of anthropology both within and outside academia.