



Authenticity and Valorisation of Walled Towns

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europeanwalledtowns
for friendship and professional cooperation among walled towns

The Institute for Tourism,
Travel and Culture



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

The role of public spaces in historic towns

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‘Passegiare’ is a common activity amongst many.

‘Passegiata’ literally translates to ‘going for a walk’ but it has a much richer meaning and includes the idea of strolling for leisure and enjoyment.

Pavia describes his own experience of going for a 'passegiata' with a member of his family as follows:

“We walk for hours. We have no particular destination in mind and we let ourselves get lost in the city . Like two flaneurs , we wander in the labyrinth of the old fabric. As we walk through the narrow streets and plazas, the city lures us even deeper into the core held by its monumental walls, walking far beyond the typical quarter-mile threshold.”

Source: Pavia A (2018) Walking as a luxury activity. In M. Paris (ed.) Making prestigious places; how luxury influences the transformation of cities.

For centuries, it was through walking that people perceive space and understood it.

In the last century, the increased use of the automobile and mass transportation changed all that and introduced new urban forms and new ways to perceive and understand space.

Today in large parts of many cities, walking has become a marginal activity, to the extent that the design of urban space discourage walking.

“The outcome is, in the best cases, a rational yet generic and soulless built environment and a loss of spatial identity and sense of place.”

Places are more than simply geographical sites with definitive physical characteristics. There is something in 'place' that goes beyond the physical. People feel better in spaces that are felt to contain certain qualities.

The qualities of city spaces that made a welcoming walkable environment include:

- continuity of the urban fabric and street edge
- spatial enclosure
- the human scale
- architectural diversity
- landmarks
- transparency and permeability of the ground floor
- a mix of uses.



Public spaces in Barcelona

- spatial enclosure
- the human scale
- trees



A public space in Dresden

- Spatial enclosure
- Architectural diversity
- Landmarks
- Monumentality



Pedestrian streets in historic areas

- Spatial enclosure
- The human scale
- Permeability of the ground floor
- A mix of uses.
- People

Dresden, Germany



Pedestrian streets in historic areas



- Spatial enclosure
- The human scale
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- People

Bath, England

Place for rituals



Local character



People-watching



Memorials and public art



A place for entertainment



Views



Views across river, Oder, Wrocław, Poland

More views



Maritime heritage in historic areas



Nyhavn, Copenhagen, Denmark

Urban spaces overlooking rivers



Copenhagen, Denmark



Wroclaw, Poland

New in the old



Campus of University of Wroclaw, Poland

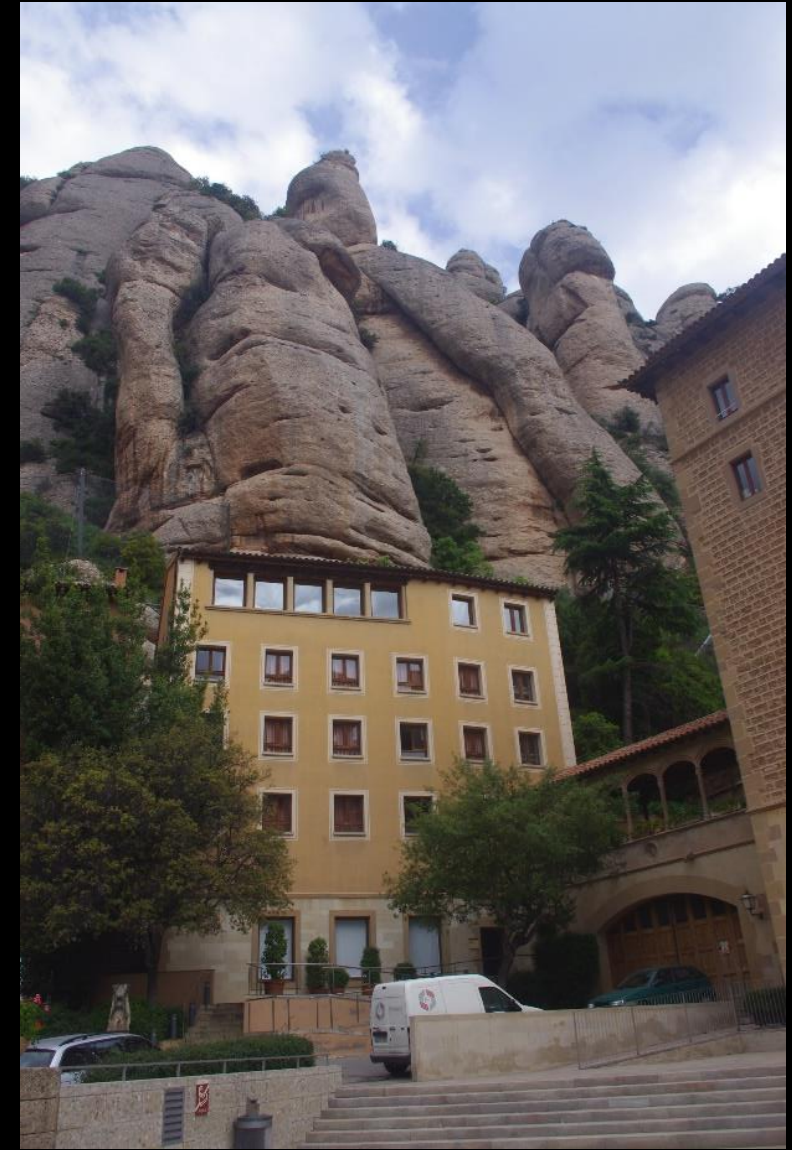
New in the old



Hass Haus on Stefanplatz, Vienna

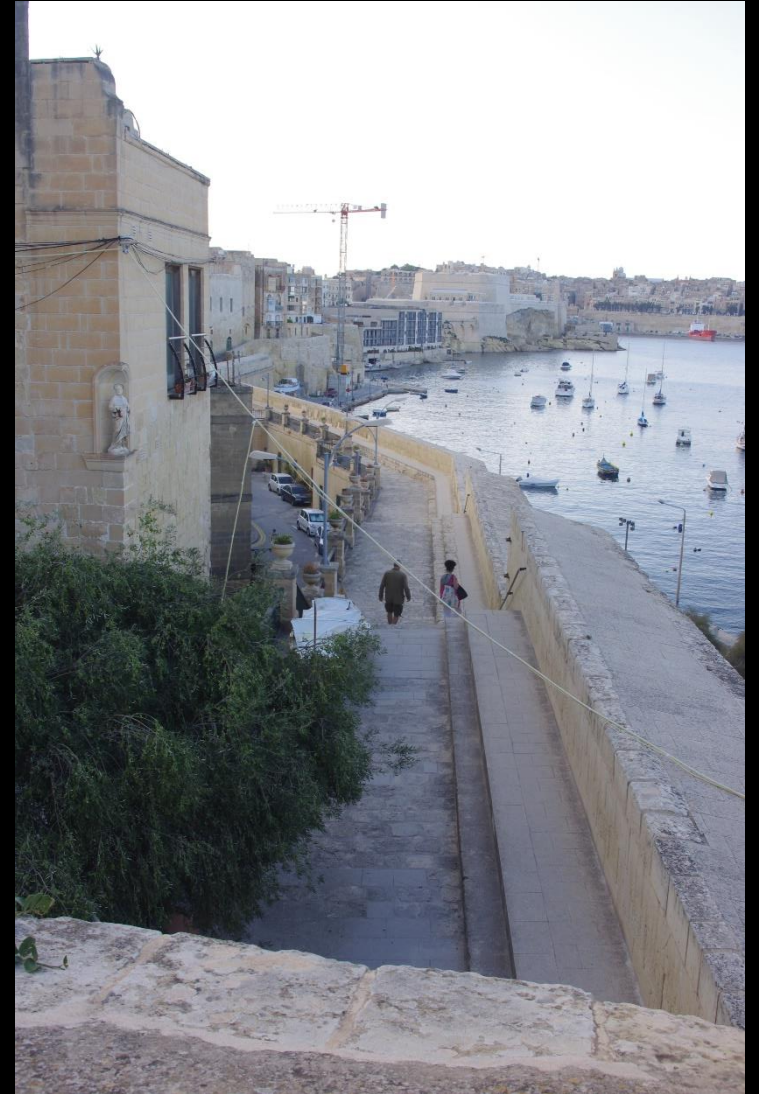


The wow factor



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 add uniqueness and legibility.
- 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.



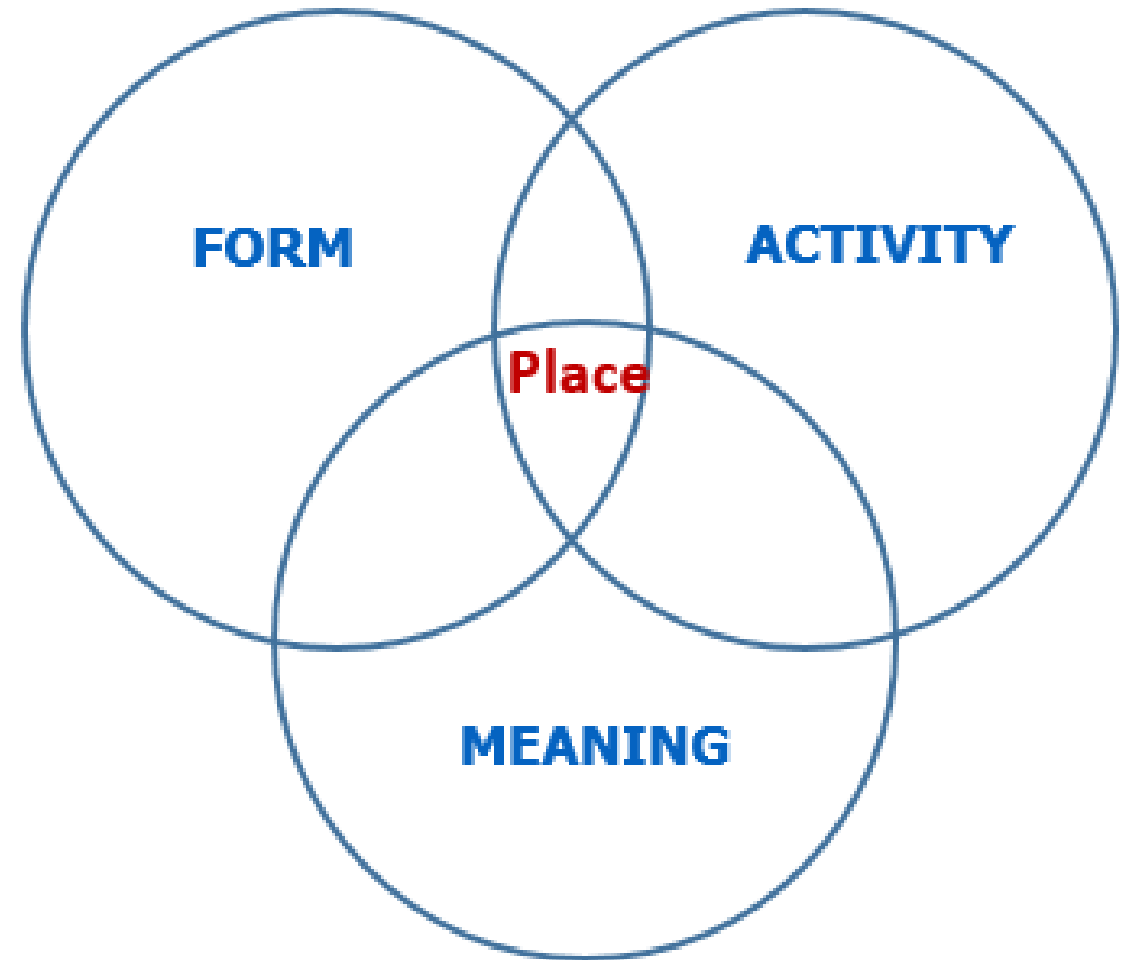
- The walkway may also offer spectacular inward views of the city itself or outward views of countryside, seascape or townscapes.
- It makes circulation easier and minimising the chances of becoming seriously lost in an unfamiliar place.



Experience of space derived from three “basic elements of the identity of places”:

These are

- Interrelated
- inseparably interwoven in our experiences of places



Valletta's past is made apparent in various ways;

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.

through the narratives which are communicated by tour guides or by means of guide books, information panels and internet.

by means of certain practices which indicate aspects of a way of life which have persisted to today. Examples include religious ceremony and the parish feast.

Piazza San Gorg

Meaning combine with form and activity to create an enjoyable experience.



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 a 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.



Activity: This results from the presence of people engaged in diverse activities: walking through the square OR relaxing on benches OR watching a feature within the square (water fountain, guards, plaques, buildings).





Form: refers primarily to building around the piazza but also refers to benches, the paving and the water fountain, landscaping, light fittings. Interaction with form primarily entails vision but it also involves other senses including hear (other people, synchronised music) and touch (sunshine on face, timber benches, water spray from fountain).



The visitor's experience of place is not limited to a single element. A combination of elements come together to give the visitor an enjoyable experience.



End of presentation