

CHAPTER 20

Urban Ecology and the effects of Migration in Marsa

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Introduction

The topic of migration has always generated opposing views. Discussions on online social networks are characterised by hatred, xenophobic and labelling observations while others promote cultural diversity and integration. In the last ten years, Malta had to deal with the influx of several migrants. This is possibly the result of a considerable amount of people living in African countries experiencing uncertainty, high crime, poverty and unemployment rates and who are seeking a better future (LeMay, 2007). Studies have shown that migration is partly responsible for poverty and other economic and social deficiencies, although this hypothesis has not always been confirmed (Tienda & Liang, 1994). Several countries are re-assessing their social and economic policies to combat economic pressure, crime and other problems which are possibly being exacerbated by such a phenomenon (Parsons & Smeeding, 2006).

This continuous debate about the effects of migration inspired the researcher to identify related issues requiring further research. The idea behind this study emerged from a combination of the researcher's competencies and background. Having read for a Bachelor degree in Criminology, together with over three years of experience in the migration sector motivated the researcher to study a topic that embraced both subjects. The researcher has been residing in the southern part of Malta for all of his life. Marsa lies on the main route that connects the southern to the northern part of Malta and during frequent stops on the way to work, due to the daily traffic congestion the researcher observed the dynamic activities in Marsa to be different to those of other towns.

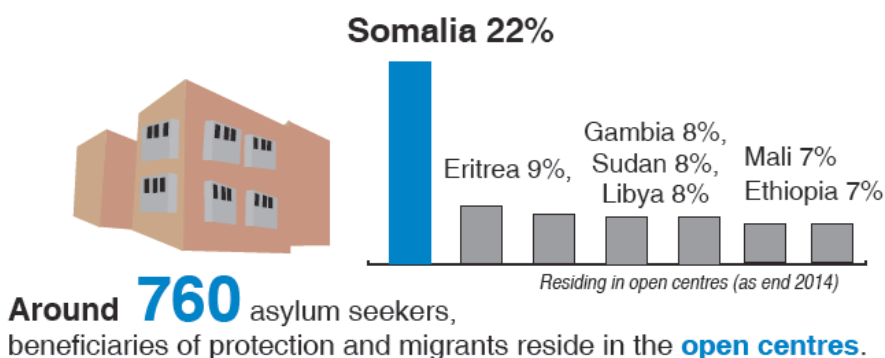
Space was observed to be utilised by locals as well as migrants, a possibly new scenario for this town. This led the researcher to review literature about both the domiciliation of migrants in Malta and the situation in Marsa.

Domiciliation of migrants in Malta

Malta applies the detention policy to migrants who enter the country without the permission of the migration authorities and who are apprehended before they lodge their application for asylum (Jesuit Refugee Services, 2010). Once they leave detention, migrants are given the opportunity of residing within a Refugee Camp (Agier, 2002), locally known as an Open Centre since their lack of resources makes it difficult for them to settle in alternative housing.

These centres were initially created to provide humanitarian protection and to supply basic needs to people escaping from civil war, inhuman or degrading treatment, or persecution (Cameron, 2010). These are administered by the Agency for the Welfare and Integration of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) and include the Hal Far tent village, the Hal Far Open Centre, Dar il-Liedna, Dar is-Sliem and Marsa Open Centre (Cassar, 2013). As can be seen in figure 1, more than 700 asylum seekers, mainly from Sub-Saharan African countries were residing in these centres by the end of 2014.

Figure 1: Open centres in Malta. Reprinted from UNHCR launches Malta Fact Sheet – Asylum Trends 2014



Source: (UNHCR Malta, 2015, Retrieved May 27, 2015, from <http://www.unhcr.org/mt/component/content/article/35-slideshow-news/790-unhcr-launches-malta-fact-sheet-asylum-trends-2014->)

Moreover, the sites chosen induce suspicion of premeditated isolation as they were established to provide refuge during times of national emergency however, when this situation was over, no other solution was provided (Agier, 2002). Even though Census data did not specify and include the various nationalities of migrants who live in private

houses, as can be seen in Figure 2, Cassar (2013) noted that after that they leave the Open Centres, migrants in Malta have opted to live in four different localities; Bugibba, Gzira, Msida and Marsa.

Figure 2: Malta: Popular settlement locations for migrants. Reprinted from *Researching Migration and Asylum in Malta*



Source: (A Guide (p. 44), by C. M. Cassar, 2013, Malta: PCFMalta)



Theoretical issues

Marsa

The name Marsa means port. In fact, other towns in Malta such as Marsaxlokk, Marsamxett, Marsascala and Marsalforn in Gozo are all ports or part of one (Guillaumier, 2002). Marsa is an industrial area that is also a harbour to different types of boats (Azzopardi, Formosa, Scicluna & Willis, 2013) even though many areas are inhabited. This town can be found on the eastern side of Malta (Marsa Local Council, n.d.) as shown in Figure 3.1. The coal energy power station in Marsa used to contribute to the highly polluted air. In Marsa, there is also a primary school. The residents live in a typical Maltese village context, including houses, various maisonettes and apartments (Azzopardi, Formosa, Scicluna & Willis, 2013). Marsa also provides recreation for many Maltese through its sports facilities including the golf course, horse racing and the diverse athletic amenities located in this area.

Situation in Marsa

According to the NSO (2014), Census data for 2011 showed that the population in Marsa was that of 4,788 residents. Compared to Census data collected in the previous years, there is a clear picture showing that the population in Marsa is decreasing. The level of education in Marsa is low, and most residents are from a low working class background (Azzopardi, Formosa, Scicluna & Willis, 2013). Caruana (2007) argued that even though the level of education in Marsa had improved, many young people chose not to further their studies. She also noted that many inhabitants did not have jobs that required higher education. According to the 2011 Census data (NSO, 2014), Marsa also had the highest rate of illiteracy in the Maltese Islands with more than 700 people, constituting 16.3 per cent of all residents aged 10 years and over.

The family structures in Marsa are not always traditional since there are various single parents and dysfunctional families contributing to economic hardship. The unconventional family structure might create social disorder in Marsa (Azzopardi, Formosa, Scicluna & Willis, 2013). Caruana (2007) argued that this town was an “unattractive place and a secluded one” (p. 82) and sometimes it is even avoided by certain migrants who “preferred to avoid living in the Marsa region” (p. 82) as they want to steer away from the boat people (Zammit, 2012, p. 63). Caruana’s (2007) aforementioned unflattering descriptive words relate to Marsa’s “location, chaotic environment” (p. 82) and “mentality of people towards this town and its inhabitants” (p. 82).

Recently, Marsa has also suffered a major setback as the governments reduced its budget by 20,000 Euro and the council members by two due to the decrease in voting residents. According to the mayor, the government was not taking into consideration the residents of the Open Centre. The government’s decision was based upon statistics that showed that the number of residents in Marsa was decreasing (“Mayor’s anger over,” 2015). He had earlier complained about this evolving situation in Marsa. He noted that migrants were often engaging in rowdy and unorthodox behaviour that included public urination (Pisani, 2009). International newspapers also reported that the recent influx in this town induced fear in the residents who are reluctant to allow their children to use public spaces (Colin & Squires, 2013).

The mayor attributed this as a consequence of the activities in the proximity of the Open Centre, which he indicated as being particularly susceptible to crime and was negatively affecting the residents (Pisani, 2009). Furthermore, the media’s portrayal of migrants’ behaviour has also fuelled gossip about Marsa’s security situation, inducing the emerging concept of Social Disorganisation.

The residents also attributed urban decay in Marsa to the presence of migrants who they blame for the reduction in their properties' value and an increase in pollution (Colin & Squires, 2013). Mr. Debono also noted that certain zones in Marsa are desolate lacking police presence and that crime related areas ought to be secured through the installation of cameras (Pisani, 2009).

Marsa is now primarily associated with migration and it has been described by state officials as a no-go area and a Ghetto. The mayor spoke about the "invasion" of migrants who introduced "cultures and practices that are very different to our own" (Colin & Squires, 2013, para. 23). Mr. Debono also suggested that this was leading to segregation as he deemed that after the inception of the Open Centre, the Maltese were reluctant to visit this town (Pisani, 2009).

Social disorganization

Shaw and Mckay (1942) assumed human ecological concepts to study the relationship between juvenile delinquency and their urban surroundings, through which they developed the Social Disorganisation theory. This theory stands on three main pillars: Physical, Economical and Population statuses. Sampson and Raudenbush's (1999) definition of this term is that of "behaviour usually involving strangers and considered threatening, such as verbal harassment on the street, open solicitation for prostitution, public intoxication, and rowdy groups of young males in public" (pp. 603-604). Shaw and Mckay (1942) mapped the addresses of delinquents in Chicago and analysed them with census and spatial data. Through their research, they found that notwithstanding population turnover, high rates of crime were persistent in certain areas, independent from the resident ethnic group. Burgess' concentric zone model was then employed and they found that crime figures were higher in the transitional zone and gradually fading when moving outwards from the inner city centre to the suburbs.

This idea led them to retract the notion that crime could be explained through individual traits and they focused on spatial data in combination with the characteristics of social disorganisation and weak social control as "delinquency has its roots in the dynamic life of the community" (p. 435).

Urban decay

Burgess (1925) proposed that the suburbs were mainly inhabited by the affluent. This was confirmed later in the 1950's and 1960's, when cities in the United States changed their formats as a new process of "suburbanization" had started (Giddens & Sutton, 2009, p. 217). The growth rate of the suburban areas was five times as much as that of the inner

city areas (Giddens & Sutton, 2009, p. 217) and it “involved the migration of populations” (Karp, Stone, & Yoels, 1991, p. 231). Most of the “whites” left since they did not want their children to integrate with other races, especially in school (Giddens & Sutton, 2009, p. 217). Boger and Wegner (1996) blamed the post-war policy makers, arguing that their decisions influenced the shifting of “housing, transportation, defense” (p. 85) to the outer layers of the city. Blackman (1995) added that inner cities can be “unfriendly” (p. 228) due to pollution that can either be noise or environmental and this affects “urban life” (p. 228) negatively. The most prominent centres for shopping and dining used to be located in the city centre, but these were relocated to the suburbs (Karp, Stone, & Yoels, 1991) and “green field sites” (Blackman, 1995, p. 228).

This shift led to “inner-city decay” (Kneese & Schultze, 1975, p. 7) also referred to as physical disorder through “deterioration of urban landscapes, for example, graffiti on buildings, abandoned cars, broken windows, and garbage in the streets” (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999, pp. 603-604). Inner cities were inhabited by “an increased concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population” (Sampson & Wilson, 1995, p. 42). Suburbs in the US were still predominantly inhabited by white people however, their numbers were decreasing since many people coming from ethnic minorities moved in (Giddens & Sutton, 2009, p. 217). In fact, Waldinger (1989, p. 225) confirmed that new migrants do not always opt to reside in “traditional, immigrant neighbourhoods” (p. 225). There were cases when they decided to settle in areas that were predominantly inhabited by “white, middle-class population” (p. 225).

Segregation

Massey (1990) explained that there is a correlation between racial segregation and high poverty levels. Massey performed various simulations using data obtained from various US cities. The results showed that a minor increase in poverty rates in racially segregated cities resulted in a “rise in the concentration of poverty” (p. 329). These increases in poverty are also related to other social problems such as urban deterioration, poor education and dependency on social benefits that, in turn, lead to higher crime rates.

Segregation through housing practises is called Racial Steering and this prevents racial diversity within neighbourhoods (Polikoff, 1986, p. 44). According to Hanson, Hawley and Taylor (2011), landlords are more likely to let their properties to white people than to African Americans. They use subtle discrimination by means of more positive language; they answer quickly and their emails are longer when answering queries by white people than those by blacks. This has also been confirmed at a local level through a qualitative research by Fsadni and Pisani (2012). Property owners in Malta have called migrants

names and refused to rent out their properties when their clients were of African or Arabic origin. Others who managed to rent properties argued that they were forced to pay high deposits and utility bills without being shown the actual invoices.

Massey (1990) argued that during the 1970's, in the US, black poverty became more consistent and geographically concentrated in American cities. Some proposed that this was a consequence of the welfare system, industry, new family structures and the exit of the middle class from inner-city neighbourhoods. The researcher did not exclude these factors however, he contended that the key aspect for the creation of the underclass and the concentration of poverty in the 1970's was racial segregation.

Methodology

Aim of research

The aim of this research is to study the effects of migration on the urban ecology in Marsa. This was conducted by investigating the migrants' spatio-temporal dynamic activities. The study seeks to shed light on the real situation in Marsa as the media's depiction is not based upon any research, and it is purely judgemental and characterised by racist and stigmatising comments. The researcher, both through literature and firsthand knowledge acquired from residing close to this context, noted that there was a gap in the literature pertaining to the socio-spatial aspect of Marsa. Local literature on the Geo-spatial composition of migrant activity is non-existent. All the data collected was analysed and structured into urban, social and criminological perspectives. Three objectives are derived from this aim, and these are listed in the following part.

Objectives

- The first objective was to investigate the urban situation in Marsa through an environmental criminological and social approach. This was conducted to shed light on the effects of migrant activity and urban decay through the collection of GI data and elite interviews.
- The second objective was to study the level of disorganisation in Marsa. The aim was to understand whether migrants contribute to crime and disorder in this town by analysing the results of some key interviews, geo-referencing and by direct observation of migrant activities and interaction.
- The third objective was to verify whether migrants were being segregated. This step was considered essential to the study to verify whether the residents and official policy coerce migrants to occupy a certain space, through geo-referencing, observations and exclusive interviews.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to investigate the effects of the migrants' dynamic activities upon the urban and social component of this town from social, spatial and temporal points of views. Criminological, sociological and urban concepts pertaining to the Chicago School were used to formulate these questions mainly based on the Broken Windows Theory, Social Disorganisation Theory, Opportunity Theory and other concepts related to racism, prejudice and segregation. Literature shows that these concepts may be intertwined, however, the following three separate research questions were formulated in an attempt to cover the whole socio-spatial temporal effects of migration in Marsa;

- Are there areas in Marsa characterised by urban decay?
- Are there areas in Marsa which are socially disorganised?
- Is there migrant segregation in Marsa?

Research design

In this study, time and space are central components so an approach that included both aspects pertaining to the dynamic daily activities of migrants in Marsa and their impact on its urban ecology was sought. The research questions in this study were countered through the adoption of a time geographic approach utilising multiple data collection methods; Geo-spatial data collection , Interviews and Observations that allowed data triangulation to minimise gaps produced by single methodological tools. "In practice, triangulation as a strategy provides a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied" (Mathison, 1988, as cited in Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991, p. 98).

Analysis and presentation of results

The multi-approach adopted within this study generated a considerable amount of information and data triangulation was possible. Data triangulation "gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation" (Altrichter, 2008, p. 147) and improves credibility and minimises "distortion in findings" (Viney & Nagy, 2012, p. 58). Two different techniques were used to analyse the elicited findings: Thematic and Spatial analysis. The elicited findings were presented in different forms, mainly by highlighting the hotspots and through choropleth maps based on the Chicago urban ecologist Burgess' (1925) concentric ring model.

Variables For Analysis

When conducting research in social science the researcher's goal is to find data in line with the laws of research in general. The results of such studies have to support or refute past theories (Questia, n.d.). The link between an independent and a dependent variable

is referred to as the hypothesis. Forming a hypothesis is considered to be one of the most dynamic aspects of social science research. Typical hypotheses are created through the researcher's intuition who identifies a possible relationship between a dependent and an independent variable (Cross & Belli, 2004). The hypothesis and the methods used for the research are thus based on past theories.

- Hypothesis 1: Migration has affected the urban ecology in Marsa.
- Null Hypothesis: Migration did not affect the urban ecology in Marsa.

The results obtained from research can support or refute a hypothesis, but they will not prove it since hypotheses and theories are different in both their features and their purposes (Keeley, 2010).

Results

General Overview

In Marsa, the urban densities vary and concentrate around a limited number of streets. The Open Centre was the most important factor for the inception of migration in Marsa and it was situated in the loop of Burgess' (1925) concentric ring model as can be seen in Figure 3.

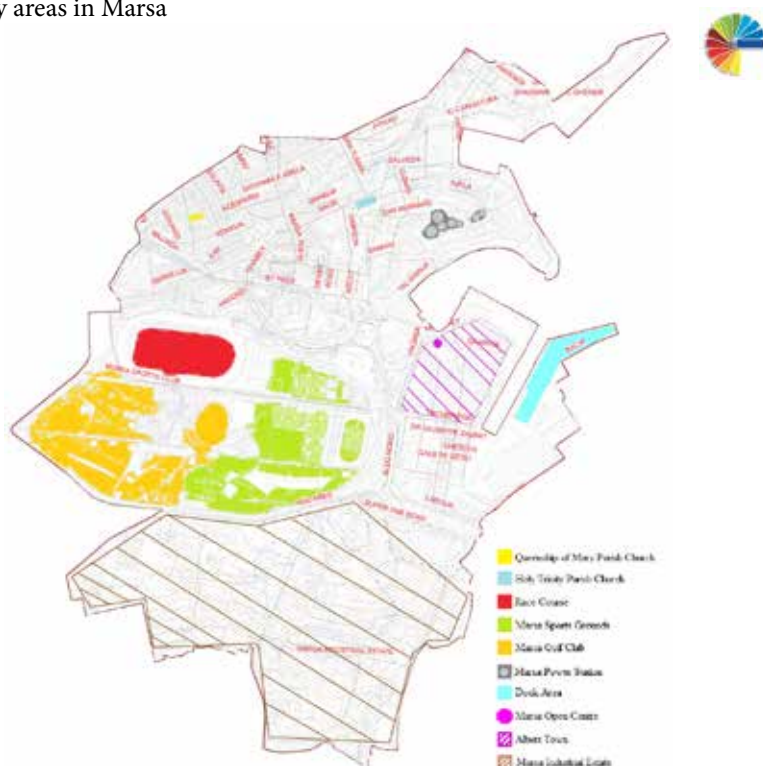
Figure 3: Open centre 100 metre buffers



Source: (Adapted from Crime Maps, In Crime Malta, 2015, Retrieved April 10, 2015, from <http://crimemalta.com/map.htm>. Copyright 2015 by Formosa. Adapted with permission).

Figure 4 depicts the key areas in Marsa pertaining to the study. In this chapter, frequent reference to these landmarks will be made in conjunction with the surrounding areas. The areas depicted as Albert town, the Dock area and the Industrial estate have unofficial boundaries and their setting was based on the researcher's observations. Moreover, in this chapter, street names are referred to in Maltese as this was the only available data.

Figure 4: Key areas in Marsa

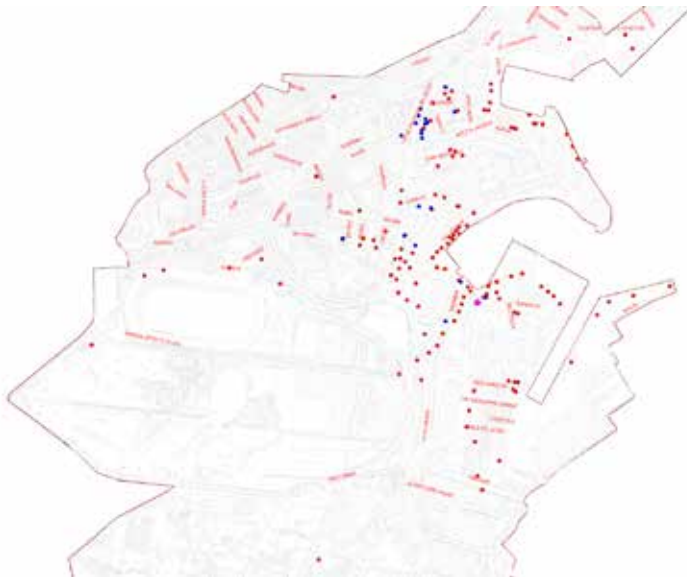


Source: (Adapted from Crime Maps, In Crime Malta, 2015, Retrieved April 10, 2015, from <http://crimemalta.com/map.htm>. Copyright 2015 by Formosa. Adapted with permission).

The two mapped vector layers collected in the morning and night sessions can be seen in Figure 5. The points amassed during the mornings are depicted in red while those collected at night are in blue. From the initial maps it is immediately evident that there is a concentration of points in certain areas of Marsa, mainly next to the Open Centre and in Triq is-Salib tal-Marsa (Marsa Cross Street), situated opposite to the Holy Trinity Church. This suggests that the spatio-temporal activities of migrants were found to take place within the first 700 metres from the Open Centre, mainly in the third concentric ring.

This space is characterised by various dilapidated and old buildings, uncontrolled rubbish and some graffiti. Crime related to vandalism was prevalent in the suburbs of this town even though statistics in the third concentric ring suggest that this might also be a hotspot.

Figure 5: The two vector layers; morning (red points) and night (blue points). Compiled using MapInfo (2012)



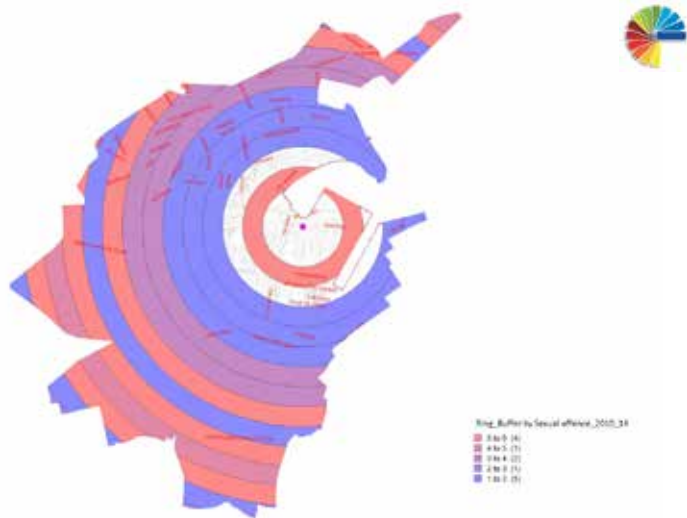
Social disorganization

During the observations and GI data collection period, it was noted that in Marsa there are various old buildings and no new development areas. The main types of residences are townhouses and old apartments that are mainly two stories high. In the Queenship of Mary's area, there is also a government housing estate that appears rundown. Most of the shops in Marsa are old and many require refurbishment and could use a coating of fresh paint. Another emerging fact was that such concentrations of deterioration do not exist in the suburban areas of the town. This is visible in Figure 5.13 in which a choropleth map with 100 metre concentric rings shows that the most deteriorated zones are found between 200 and 400 metres and from 500 to 700 metres from the Open Centre. It is also noted that even though they vary in density, all concentric rings up to 700 metres describe areas of deterioration. Figure 6 also shows that after the seventh concentric ring there is an urban improvement as the suburbs are depicted in lighter colours.

Figure 6: Deterioration point count by ring buffer. Compiled using MapInfo (2012)



Figure 7: Sexual offences in Marsa from 2010 to 2014 by ring buffer.



Source: (Adapted from Crime Maps, In Crime Malta, 2015, Retrieved April 10, 2015, from <http://crimemalta.com/map.htm>. Copyright 2015 by Formosa. Adapted with permission).

Charted crime statistics pertaining to sexual offences (Crime Malta, 2015) were studied since prostitution falls under this sub-category. Figure 7 shows that in the past five years, the area covering 200 to 300 metres away from the Open Centre was one of the most frequently affected by sexual offences. This area corresponds to the concentric ring with the highest migrant activity.

Crime data pertaining to drug abuse (Crime Malta, 2015) was studied. As shown in Table 1, statistics revealed that over a five year period, the highest percentage of drug abuse was found to be 700 to 900 metres away from the Open Centre which also constitute the median figure.

Table 1. Drug offence statistics in Marsa

Concentric Ring	Drugs 2010-2014	Mean percentage	Median	Drugs 2014	Mean percentage	Median
1	1	0.4	0.4	0	0.0	0.0
2	2	0.8	1.3	1	2.6	2.6
3	14	5.9	7.1	9	23.1	25.6
4	1	0.4	7.5	1	2.6	28.2
5	0	0.0	7.5	0	0.0	28.2
6	3	1.3	8.8	1	2.6	30.8
7	60	25.1	33.9	3	7.7	38.5
8	66	27.6	61.5	7	17.9	56.4
9	4	1.7	63.2	0	0.0	56.4
10	39	16.3	79.5	6	15.4	71.8
11	6	2.5	82.0	1	2.6	74.4
12	9	3.8	85.8	2	5.1	79.5
13	8	3.3	89.1	1	2.6	82.1
14	10	4.2	93.3	5	12.8	94.9
15	7	2.9	96.2	0	0.0	94.9
16	9	3.8	100.0	2	5.1	100.0
Totals	239	100		39	100	

Note. The data was adapted from Crime Malta (2015)

Similar statistics in 2014 describe a comparable median figure, however, a high concentration of drug abuse can be seen in the area covering 200 to 300 metres away from the Open Centre, suggesting an overall shift of drug-related crime to the third concentric ring.

Throughout the research, it was also noted that numerous migrants loiter for jobs next to a particular roundabout near the Open Centre as can be seen in hot spots in Figure 8. The majority of the migrants were West African together with some East Africans, mainly Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian. Cars or vans were seen stopping and jobs were being offered. The type of vans and cars observed suggested that the majority of the migrants were taken for construction work, perhaps for gypsum decoration or to building sites. Some migrants appeared to be discussing payment terms while others seemed familiar with the people they were meeting. Many of the migrants were not residents in Marsa as they were seen descending from buses at the stop in the main road and walking to the roundabout next to the Open Centre.

Figure 8. Migrant job waiting hot spots and NNH (red) and 2NNH (green) poverty hot spots. Compiled using MapInfo (2012)



Source: (Formosa, 2007 Adapted with permission).

Prostitution or gang brawls, uncontrolled exploitation of migrants through illegal work and poor conditions, possibly unlicensed and uncontrolled bars, together with uncontrolled alcohol consumption in the streets, confirm that the area covering 700

metres from the Open Centre in Marsa is characterised by social disorganisation. Even though crime related to bodily harm, drugs and general crime is more prevalent in the suburbs, statistics pertaining to the third concentric zone show that this is a potential hot spot. This buffer also corresponds to the concentric ring with the highest migrant activity and is also in the proximity to the main liquor serving shops. These are The Tavern and The Tiger Bar which both seem to be run by migrants and cater for people of African descent. The elite interviewees blame these bars as the main reason Marsa is regarded as an “African area” since they do not pay licence and they do not pay taxes and the area in which they are situated is filthy.

Segregation

During the day, the space occupied by the Maltese and the migrants overlap. This changes completely at night, as hardly any Maltese visit the Open Centre area. Similar observations were noted in the zone next to the small park in Triq is-Salib tal-Marsa where there are migrant shops and many migrants meet for recreational purposes. The locals used to frequent this location when the local shops were open. It was observed that as the hours passed by, the locals’ presence diminished and it was only after sunrise that they returned to this zone.

The locals also avoid this space which is utilised by the most unsettled and disadvantaged sub-Saharan migrants especially at night. This might be due to the ageing local population and the average lack of education, coupled with possible cultural conflict and racism. The residents are also fearful of migrants and they are leaving this town since they are not willing to open up to them.

The elite interviewees noted that the majority of migrants in Marsa are of Muslim faith and only a few Christians that are mainly from Eritrea, Gambia and West Africa. Migrants in Marsa are detached from the community as they are hindered from developing any ties due to current policy. Moreover, the elite interviewees suggest that the situation in Marsa may degenerate if the stakeholders do not counteract the challenges brought forward by this phenomenon.

Discussion

One could observe that like various other towns and cities, processes of industrialisation and urbanisation have moulded Marsa (Giddens & Sutton, 2009) creating a rust-belt community (Formosa, 2007). The centrality and the multi-purpose role of Marsa cause several flows of people to dynamically interfere with the daily social activities of the locals. On top of that, the Open Centre’s residents change from time to time. New jobless

migrants coming from several sub-Saharan countries arrive to replace existing migrants who are not allowed to dwell in the centre for more than one year. This turned Marsa into a transitional area (Burgess, 1925). This may also have implications for the community since the migrants who have lived at the Open Centre for some time gain integration tools such as language and ethics while the new ones are still to start the integration process. This population turnover might also impact the community due to the characteristic of an ongoing flow of uneducated people. Poverty, population turnover and ethnic heterogeneity (Shaw & McKay's, 1942) and residential instability (Stowell, 2007) have been associated with Social disorganisation.

The data forthcoming from the research describes that apart from the influx of uneducated migrants, the town is also losing residents, mainly the younger generation. This was also confirmed when the local council was penalized with a budget reduction and the number of local council members reduced from seven to five reflecting the diminishing number of the "attached" residents (Wilson and Kelling, 1982, p. 3) in the locality. A reduction in attached residents has also been linked to urban deterioration that is then intrinsically related to the formation of breeding grounds for prostitution, drug trafficking and drunkards creating slums (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). This research produced similar results, as in Marsa, crime related to drugs and bodily harm is present both in the outskirts and in the third concentric ring. The findings elicited from this study are in line with Wilson and Kelling's (1982) literature as they remarked that the only people who find it difficult to leave their disrupted neighbourhoods are the old, poor and those who suffer from racial discrimination. They added that these zones have a high possibility of becoming slums since they experience social disorder and crime.

Even though ethnic areas are difficult to define (Logan & Zhang, 2004), throughout the years the area in the vicinity of the Open Centre has been described as a Ghetto and no-go area. Perhaps the most suitable social construct related to its' characteristics can be achieved through a combination of literature pertaining to Burgess (1925), Wilson and Kelling (1982) and Shaw and McKay (1942) as a transitional multi-ethnic slum.

The findings of this study suggest that Marsa has developed as a job seeking centre for migrants during the morning. The lack of control concerning the employment of migrants has changed the town into an unofficial Migrants' ETC where they wait for potential employers to offer them dead-end, tiring and unguaranteed jobs. A globalist interpretation to this can also be provided by the Dual Labour Market Theory (Piore, 1979). Its adoption to the local context explains why migrants are pulled to certain areas in Marsa as they are given the possibility to work in jobs that are ignored by the locals. This leads to the development of new social networks between the most disadvantaged of migrants and those who are ready to exploit them.

The socio-spatial usage of the area within 700 metres off the Open Centre is predominantly characterised by the dynamic activities of migrants. The Maltese avoid this space and this suggests dynamic social segregation. Even though from a western perspective, the zone surrounding the Open Centre demonstrates common traits of a transitional multi-ethnic slum, yet this spatio-temporal study suggests that it may provide a very important role. Migrants living in other towns take advantage of its central location to visit this area as it may be considered their unofficial capital city in Malta since it caters to all their needs. This social space has become a job-seeking, recreational and shopping area dedicated to migrants with minimal interference from the locals.

Conclusion

Despite the negative connotations associated with this region, little has been done to alleviate the problem. A joint effort by all the stakeholders, especially those who are directly involved in policy making, is urgently required as the deficiencies in the infrastructure and social networks affecting migrants and the residents are aggravating the polarisation between both communities. An alternative solution to the Open Centre has to be found, despite the fact that order and control within have been achieved, the previous disorganisation found inside has shifted to the surrounding areas and is making it difficult for both the residents and the migrants to achieve a successful integration. Loitering for both prostitution and jobs has to be controlled and street drinking needs to be terminated to restore order and reduce the residents' fear, which could encourage them to stay in their natal town. Capable guardians have to increase as both the environment and the lack of police presence are leading particular areas in Marsa to become zones that provide opportunities for criminal acts.

Education is another key issue that needs to be addressed as the percentage of illiteracy is high and may be linked to the lack of will for integration. The necessity to bring about a general improvement in the urban environment in Marsa was raised and can be achieved through investment by both the public and private sectors as otherwise demand for property in this locality will continue to decrease, giving rise to clusters of the most disadvantaged and poor people. Even though similar research in other towns has not been conducted, and the general feeling is that the situation is slightly better, however, the ailing situation in Marsa could spread to other locations if policies fail to address these deficiencies.

This study identified the migrants' spatio-temporal activities that were analysed in relation to the urban ecology in Marsa. The findings of this study suggest that migrants are utilising Marsa for different purposes and their activities have impacted this town

directly and indirectly, both socially and urbanely. Migrants have been segregated from the local community through institutional racism practises while the spaces they frequent are avoided by the locals. The socio-spatial composition of a particular 100-meter tract in the proximity of the Open Centre may be providing opportunities for crime. A literature-based definition of the area surrounding the Open Centre can be that of a transitional multi-ethnic slum, but this could also be their unofficial capital city. This topic needs to be continually revisited as it is a rapidly evolving situation that impacts social and urban systems.

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