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ABSTRACT: There are few topics more geographical than migration; it involves movement through space and over time, whilst influencing the social, economic and environmental landscape on both a small-scale and global scale. As contemporary scholarship moves to concerns about migrants themselves rather than impacts on the communities in which they settle (Innes, 2008), our study builds on this through investigating the reasons for this phenomenon. Over the last fifteen years international migrant numbers have risen rapidly (United Nations, 2015), particularly true in the case of Malta with migrants forming 3% of the total population; 40% of these that are British expatriates. In light of this, our investigation focusing on a case study of expatriates seeks to understand the factors that influence migration decisions, and the reasons why expatriates choose to stay in Malta. The research focused on a qualitative methodological approach of semi-structured interviews/questionnaires, a focus group and in-depth conversations. Through the hourglass notion of research (Donnelly and Trochim, 2006) such data collection revealed family ties, warm weather and the relaxed lifestyle to be among the predominant factors in expatriate's movements. Tangible factors such as driving on the same side of the road, whilst influential, were found to not be the deciding factors in migration movements.

INTRODUCTION

The research was undertaken on the Maltese islands of Malta and Gozo in January 2017. This poster displays a summary of the research, and findings about why expatriates reside and remain in Malta.

Main Aim: To understand the factors that influence migration decisions and the reasons why expatriates choose to stay in their destination country.

Research question 1: To what extent are expatriates in Malta connected to the indigenous population

Research question 2: What specific factors influence the sense of belonging for expatriates in Malta

Research question 3: Are the tangible similarities in Maltese culture (such as: English speaking) pull factors for expatriates moving to Malta

METHODOLOGY



Data Collection Methods

1. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires
2. Focus group
3. In-depth interviews



Figure 3. The reasons respondents from our study have for leaving Malta and what they would change about the country.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: Respondents felt that they were connected, mostly due to interaction at bars, and other social venues.

Research question 2: Respondent involvement in social activities such as the British Resident's Library increase feelings of belonging.

Research question 3: Tangible similarities such as speaking English were pull factors, but some tangible similarities were more influential than others. For example, language similarities were more influential than driving on the same side of the road, or using the same plug socket.

Factors that influence decisions to migrate to Malta are not the same as those that influence decisions to stay – the less significant tangible pull factors become more significant as reasons to stay in Malta

Main Aim: The predominant reasons for moving to and remaining in Malta were found to be the weather, cost of living, relaxed lifestyle and common language.

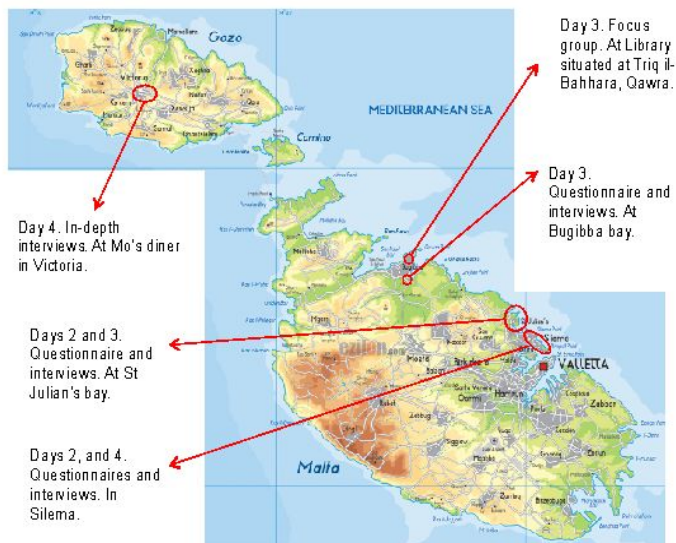


Figure 1. A map to illustrate what day, what stage of data collection, and what location we got our respondents from.

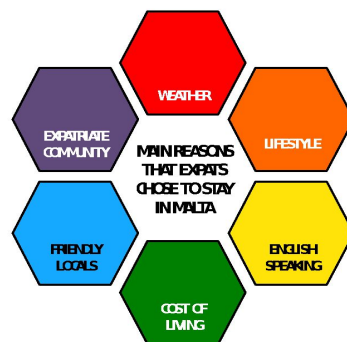


Figure 2. Semi-structured interview and questionnaire data illustrating the main reasons the respondents from our study chose to remain in Malta.

WHY?

Migration is a global phenomenon with social economic and environmental implications.

Most literature does not focus on the experience of expatriates themselves (Warnes, 1998), thus we are building upon other scholarship such as Vukovic (2013), who examined the influence of 'tangible similarities' between Maltese and English culture amongst expatriates.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

To further our research, we would analyse the indigenous populations perception of expatriates in Malta and compare these perceptions with claims from expatriates that they have integrated efficiently.

There has been significant change in Malta since its inclusion in the EU, through their political standpoint and changing surrounding environment. The recent result of the UK leaving the EU will undoubtedly affect expatriate decisions when choosing a destination country due to the high levels of uncertainty surrounding this area. This field would require future research and time to see the impacts.

This study should function as an eye-opener, as the aforementioned sense of belonging and subsequent increase in population contributes significantly to the social, environmental and economic pressures on the destination country.

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