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Editorial: Gozo Festivals

What is the use of festivals? Now that the festa season is upon us, for the next three months we will witness celebrations in different towns and villages in Malta and Gozo where a lot of people congregate to an accompaniment of noise and merry making.

This year a special festival, "Gozo 1234" was organised for the first week in May, perhaps an early yearning for the summer festival season. It was advertised as a special event "no less than 99 things to see and do". Thousands of compatriots crossed over from Malta to make this a resounding success.

In addition we find individual local councils vying with each other to organise a 'lejla sajfija' or other open-air celebrations to cheer up the local congregation and attract others from surrounding villages and from further corners of the islands.

Why do we need so many festivals? There is no doubt that such attractions help to inject cash into the local economy. There is also no doubt that such activities help to increase the sum total of human involvement and hopefully satisfaction and even happiness with their lives, their neighbours and those who run the government, national or local. As such they serve a very useful purpose, oiling the works of social life.

It is worth bearing in mind, however, that such open-air activities do not come without a cost. Invariably there is a considerable intrusion and interference with the normal way of life which could be of great significance to many individuals.

There are those who are not keen on milling masses or noise gatherings. There are those who fear the forthcoming festa celebrations with their infernal fireworks. There are the sick and the very young who would rather not be subjected to these. In particular there is no reason why any open-air celebration should continue beyond the 11pm limit, which should be strictly adhered to.

Reflections of a Lecturer at the University of Malta Gozo Centre*

NADIA FARRUGIA

Introduction

I have been engaged as a lecturer in Economics at the University of Malta Gozo Centre for the past two years. As I will show in this brief write-up, the Centre is a great place for students and lecturers alike.

Location

The Centre is housed in a building in Xewkija. Most lecture rooms are reached from corridors which overlook a relatively large internal courtyard. This courtyard is really beautiful, with well kept colourful plants and wooden benches. The place is full of light and is very welcoming.

The Ferry Crossing

As a lecturer at the University Gozo Centre, I cross over to Gozo very frequently. This has its pluses and minuses. Lectures are usually held on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. When I have lectures in Gozo, I generally try to take the 3.45 p.m. ferry on Friday. During the winter months the weather is often windy and cloudy, which means that I have to stay inside the ferry during the channel crossing and in inclement weather this is not always a nice experience. However, when the weather is fine, I stay on the deck and admire the breathtaking sea views. Unfortunately nice weather often means long car queues at Ċirkewwa, and I usually have to be there at around 2.30 p.m., thus spending an hour or so in the queue.

Good Organisation

The Centre is very well organised and efficiently run, even when it comes to details. For example, as soon as a lecturer or a student enters the main door on a Friday evening or a Saturday morning, he/she is greeted by a board with a printed list of all the lecture themes, the name of the lecturers and the room numbers. No time is therefore lost wandering around looking for the lecture venue.

When a lecturer enters the lecture rooms, he or she finds all the student chairs neatly organised in place and the students' attendance lists on the lecturer's desk.

With the introduction of new ferries, crossing over to Gozo has become less time-consuming for lecturers.

* This article appeared in the commemorative booklet *The University Gozo Centre: Fifteen Years On,* published by the University Gozo Centre on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of its establishement.

What struck me when I started lecturing at the Gozo Centre is that the white boards are always wiped clean and board markers in different colours are made available near the board. So a lecturer need not remember to bring markers with him or her or to wipe the board before the start of the lecture. If equipment is needed, such as a computer projector or a video player, all one has to do is advise the Gozo Centre Office beforehand, and this is invariably prepared for the lecturer. All rooms are connected to the internet, so there is access to web resources during class.

Another example of good organisation relates to the manner in which lecturers are advised of their time table. At the beginning of the semester, the administration of the Gozo Centre sends a schedule to all lecturers, with lecture dates and times. The lecturer is asked to confirm whether he/she will be available on the dates assigned. A few days before the lecture is due, the lecturers are reminded of the arrangement and asked as to whether they wish to have a hotel booked for Friday night.

Paradoxically, even though most lecturers have to travel from Malta, lectures are very rarely missed, even when the Ferry service is suspended. In such cases, arrangements are made to have the lectures postponed. In certain instances, when the lecturer finds it difficult to cross over to Gozo, video-conference facilities are utilised.

The Gozo Centre has a small library which is also very well organised. It permits students to borrow textbooks or to browse through the shelves. The book collection is not large but it contains up-to-date titles related to the courses offered in Gozo. The library assistants interact with the lecturers to order recent publications, where funds permit.

Another sign of good administration relates to the upkeep of the premises. They are well maintained, and kept really clean. The rooms and facilities are very well signposted.

The Students

The students at the Gozo Centre are different from the ones I usually teach at the Malta campus, in

Some of the University of Malta lecturers who offer their services at the University Gozo Centre.

Gozitan students just after the conferment of the Diploma in Commerce in November 2004.

more ways than one. For a start they are part-time students, meaning that they work during the days and very often come to the Gozo Centre straight from work. They also tend to be older than the full-time students who attend the University in Malta, with many of them being married and with families to look after. In fact, I am younger than many of the students I teach at the Centre.

But it is not age that really characterises the Gozitan students. It is their motivation and drive for learning and knowledge. They are very eager to learn, and very interested in the subjects taught. They really appreciate the value of knowledge, the importance of life-long learning in today's competitive world and the benefits one reaps from acquiring new skills. These students dedicate most of their weekends to attending lectures and spend a considerable proportion of their free time during the week to study and prepare assignments. They are generally very cooperative students and are very much aware of and grateful for being given the opportunity to follow University courses in Gozo.

Weekend Lectures

The success of the University Gozo Centre experiment is of course mainly due to the work and creativity of its director and the administrators of the Centre.

Another reason is that lectures are organised during the weekends. Had it not been so, very few lecturers would have been willing to offer their services in Gozo. This "weekend University" arrangement does not disrupt the weekly lecturing routine of visiting lecturers from Malta. It would be difficult for most lecturers to travel to Gozo and back on a weekday evening, given that a normal working day ends late afternoon or early evening.

When the lecture is over on Friday evenings, lecturers usually stay overnight at a hotel booked for them by the administration of the Centre, to enable them to continue with their lectures on Saturday morning.

A Lovely Experience

Even though crossing to Gozo repeatedly and very frequently has its downsides, overall lecturing in Gozo is a lovely experience. It provides the right combination for every lecturer: excellent administrative facilities, well-organised premises, attentive and motivated students and nice colleagues, with whom I often share dinner on Friday nights.

Nadia Farrugia is a lecturer at the Department of Economics.

Climate Change Impacts - The Gozitan Case-Study

SAVIOUR FORMOSA AND ANN MARIE BARTOLO

Introduction

The global warming debate, at strategic, administrative and technical levels would seem to spell doom and gloom with varying approaches being posited on the utility of prediction methodologies and implementation strategies, a scenario which the Maltese Islands have not been left out of. This situation has now gone beyond mere debates on whether climate change is a reality or not, as both political and scientific arenas have agreed to review the situation and come up with viable strategies for studies. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report published its review of the impacts of climate change whilst more recent conferences are debating issues to tackle the repercussions as well as operands to tackle the change.

The Debate

There are various facets to the debate, from journalistic interpretations that verge on the sensational to hard-science analysis which result in a spectrum of prediction scenarios. However, there is consensus that change is and will continue to happen. These include a temperature increase of 1.2^0C by 2100, reduced ability of oceans and rainforests to absorb emissions, collapsing ice sheets, high levels of atmospheric water vapour, discharge of ice from major ice sheets and a measurable sea-level rise. Whilst all these have hit the headlines, none other than the last seems to have reached myth status. This is due to the fact that most cities are either located on the coast or on riverbanks, rendering them highly vulnerable to even small increases in sea-level rise.

Such figures vary from IPCC statements that sea level rise will reach 50cm to extreme figures of 13m published in the EEA's State of the Environment Report (EAA, 2005). Each is based on scientific studies with their own scenarios using a multitude of complex models. It is not easy to understand the situation considering the vast gaps between such figures. Whilst a 50cm rise can be handled through technology and natural protection mitigation measures, a 13m rise requires the migration of populations from low grounds to higher areas as well as having an impact on the economic fabric of a country.

Malta has been at the fore-front in addressing this issue through its commitment within the framework

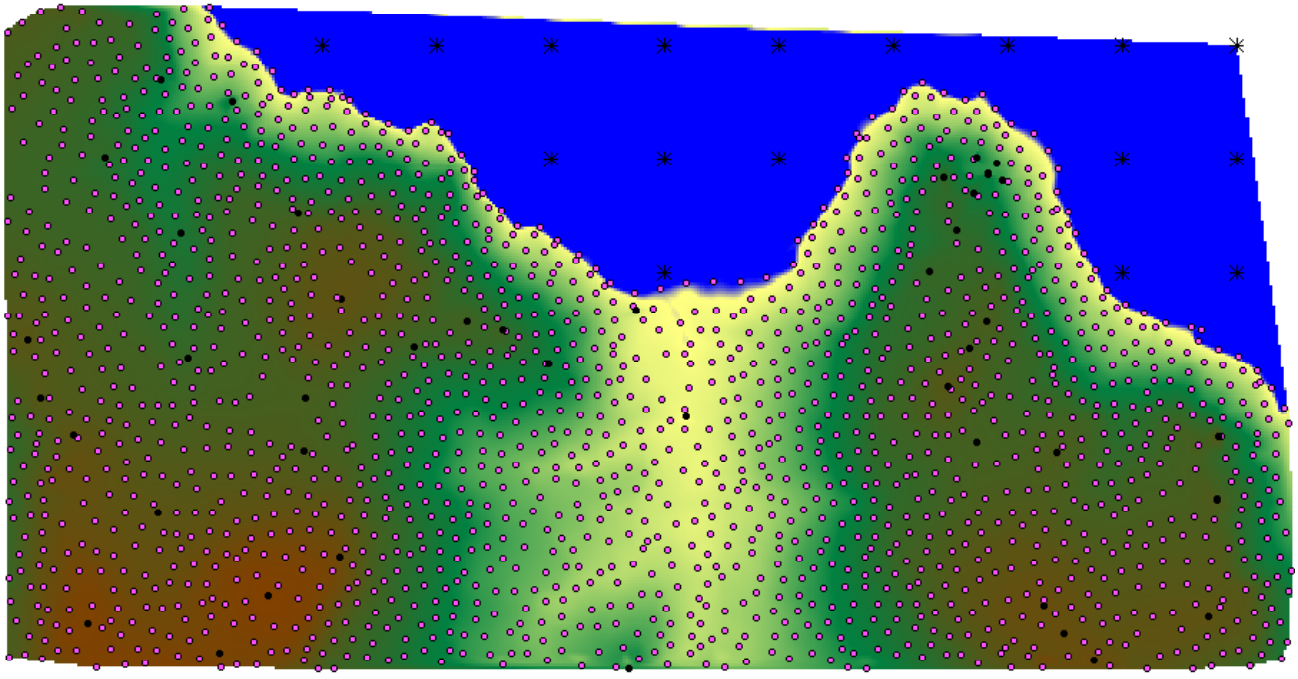


Figure 1: Current Ramla l-Ħamra topography.

of the EU Expert Group on Integrated Coastal Zone Management. These include the sustainability indicators as developed by the Working Group on Indicators and Data (WG-ID) to help assess the status of the European coasts in accordance with the EU ICZM Recommendation (2002/413/EC).

It is to be noted that as in any scientific study, there are limiting factors associated with lack of reliable data or absence of a long time series data. To be able to predict climate change impacts, one requires data that has been systematically collected over a long period of time, and in some instances this is missing. One parameter is the length of dynamic coastline where geomorphological data can enable a better understanding of the rate of coastal erosion along our coast. The more vulnerable a coastline is to erosion, the more the impact from potential sea level rise.

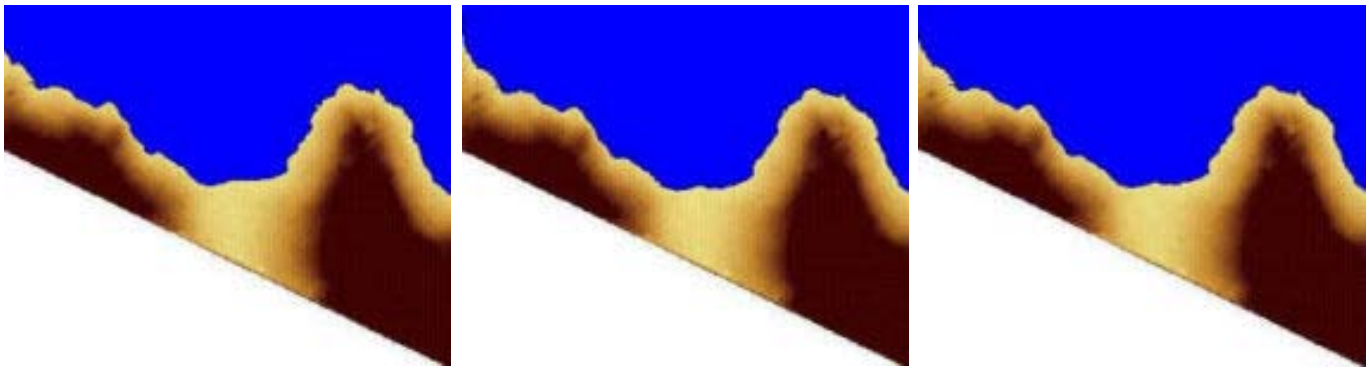
The Ramla l-Ħamra Case Study

If we apply such predictions to the Gozitan scenario using only topography as a parameter, the different sea-level rise increments will result in drastic changes as depicted in Figures 1 to 4.

Figure 1 depicts the current Ramla l-Ħamra topography, which image shows the height points as delineated by the Land survey Unit and Mapping Unit at MEPA. Rendering the points into a 3D model serves to identify the topography which is discernable from the different colour outputs where beige signifies very low lying (near to 0m – current sea-level) with increasing grades from green to brown the higher the topographical increment.

Most of the activities of this bay lie along the low-lying coast, mainly utilised for agriculture, as well as leisure and recreation. However it is not a doom and gloom situation and caution is called for when interpreting available information. Figures 2a-e show a number of scenarios relating to the vulnerability of our coastal areas to sea-level rise.

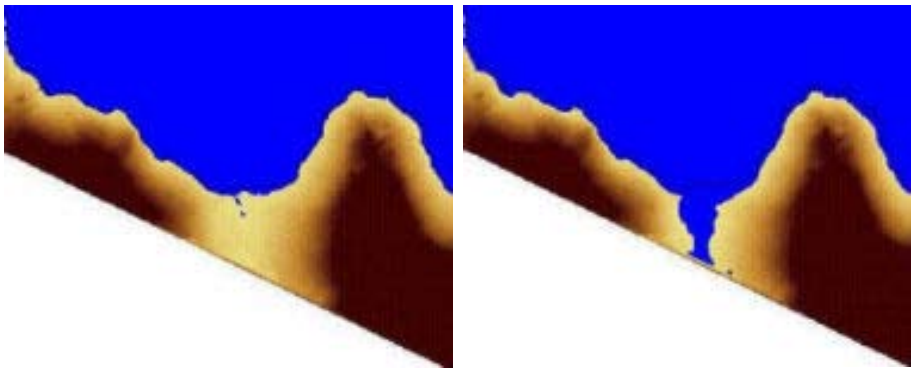
A review of Figure 2 immediately leads to an observation that there is a drastic change in Ramla l-Ħamra's formation as the sea-level gradually rises from its present position to a mid-way approach of 6m. Different measurements were taken in order to understand what the resultant predicted changes would result in. These measurements are 0m, 1m, 6m and 13m. Whilst there are small discernable differences between the current 0m and 1m, mainly that the sandy beach will experience a coastline loss, the 2m rise shows a clear incursion over the sand and in the valley outfall. The 6m image shows a drastic change in the topography and the definite reshaping



(a) Current Sea-Level 0m

(b) Sea-Level Change 0.5m

(c) Sea-Level Change 1m



(d) Sea-Level Change 2m

(e) Sea-Level Change 6m

Figure 2: Predicted Ramla l-Ħamra topography

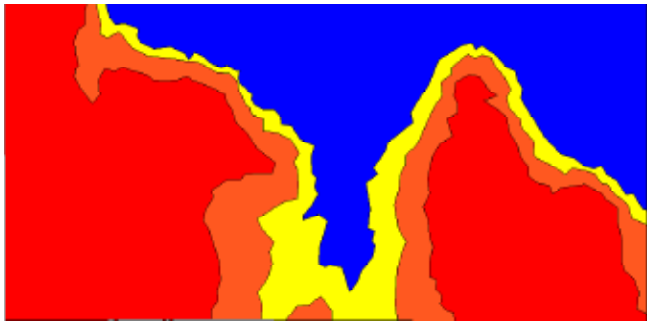


Figure 3: Predicted Ramla l-Ħamra topography at 6m: polygonal analysis

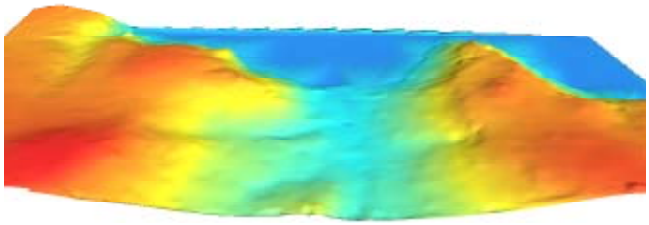


Figure 4: Ramla l-Ħamra topography at 13m: 3D Predicted Model analysis

of the landscape with the resultant repercussions.

This includes the elimination of all the leisure and recreation together with agricultural activities as well as biodiversity loss.

The process employed to deliver this output required access to basic statistical and highly-specific spatial tools as well as height measurements of the Ramla Bay's landform. Once this data was provided it was plotted into a spatial mapinfo format and analysed using different methodologies: point-entity analysis (each point was divided into several different categories marked by the assigned colours), TIN rendering interpolation analysis and 3D interpolation. These processes of thematic and spatial mapping lead to the identification of the area or points which could potentially possibly be submerged by the sea-level rise. The outputs in Figure 3 show one such potential as based on a 6m rise, where each layered polygon was colour coded in order to symbolise the specific height category (blue being the new sea-level).

The final analysis based on the EEA 13m sea-level rise is depicted in Figure 4, which shows a 3D render of the Ramla l-Ħamra area which indicates a total realignment of the area: a redefined landscape, a new coast and a deep underwater valley extended well into the landmass.

Conclusion

Studies such as the one conducted for Dwejra need to be reviewed in conjunction with other parameters such as the frequency and scale of marine storms, and the extent of erosion. Knowledge about these factors can further shed light on the identification of coastal areas at risk from climate change.

Such specialist research on the impact of sea-level rise can help us to better predict its economic, social and environmental repercussions, particularly with regard to potentially vulnerable locations.

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An Anti-Conformist Proposal Regarding the Fortification of Gozo

GODWIN VELLA

Effective control of Gozo was critical for the defence of the Order's hub in the Grand Harbour area and, whenever opportune, leading military engineers were assigned the job to evaluate the prevailing situation and come up with cost-efficient proposals on how to enhance the sister island's fortifications. Antonio Maurizio Valperga, the then chief military engineer of the Duke of Savoy, had his turn in 1670 (Mahoney, 1996: 326). During his hectic stay he produced the first master plan for the defence of Malta, particularly the Grand Harbour Area. This envisaged the creation of a ring of fortifications around Valletta, securing all the approaches to the fortress and its harbours (Spiteri, 2001: 55).

As regards Gozo, Valperga was asked to re-examine the Castello issue in view of its dual role as refuge for the local population and as a valuable link to Christian Europe during times of distress. Influenced by the happenings at Candia,[1] Valperga discarded the long agreed plan to abandon and demolish the Castello / Rabat settlement and construct a new spacious fortress town at Għajn Damma as championed by Giovanni Rinaldini in 1599[2] and by Giovanni de Medici in 1640. Conversely, he advocated that the Order retains and stiffens these centrally located and long established settlements.

To this effect, Valperga visited Gozo on 20 April 1670 (Hoppen, 1979: 205). He authored an accurate plan of the Castello and of Rabat's historic core and fitted around them a fairly impressive network of defences reminiscent of the much more extensive Cottonera lines. A brief, but well structured, accompanying report was also compiled by 23 May 1670.

The Order's Council endorsed Valperga's grand scheme, which however it never implemented because of commitment to more pressing fortification projects, particularly the Cottonera lines. Likewise, the plan to fortify Marsalforn was shelved while the Castello underwent a series of repairs (Hoppen, 1979: 118).

What follows is an overview of said proposal, as well as a free translation of the accompanying report.[3] This is followed by a highlight of the main changes in the urban fabric of the Castello and Rabat's historic core since 1670.

An Overview of Valperga's Proposal

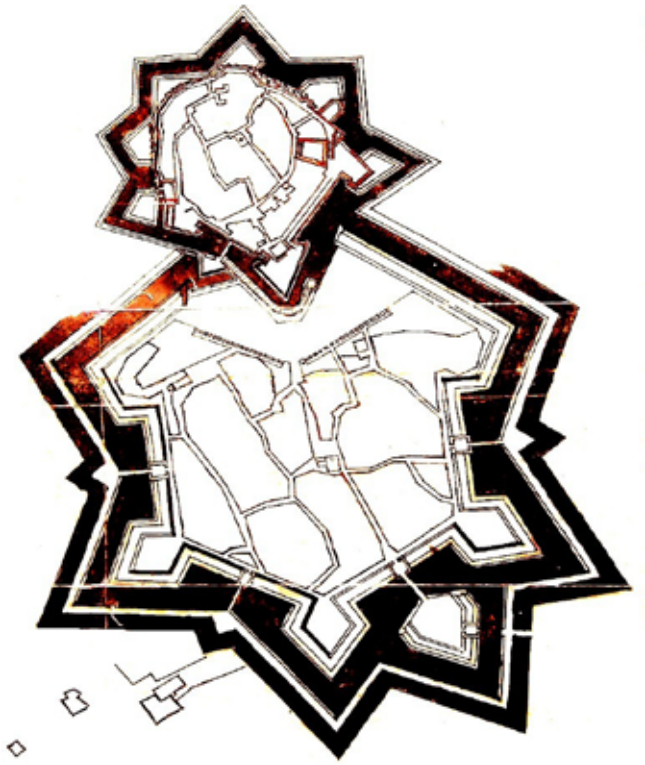
Valperga's refortification scheme entailed the construction of a screening outwork along the Castello's northwest precipitous cliff, the redesign of St. Martin's and St. John's demi-bastions and of the northeast battery into three capacious bastions, and the extension of the underlying ditch all along its circumference. Likewise, Rabat was to be encircled by an imposing enceinte. A pointed three-bastioned land front was to shield the southern flank and occupy the entire span from the upper sections of present day Palm Street to Dawwara Street respectively, while each of the resultant curtain walls heading northwards and meeting up the ditch of the Castello along the southwest (ravelin area) and southeast flanks (place of arms on covert way area) were to be reinforced by a strategically positioned demi-bastion.

The new fortress town of Rabat was to be serviced by a total of four gates, namely two along the south front and one on each flank. Rabat's main entrance was to shift from Porta Reale[4] to the south end of Charity Street, while traffic in and out of the said gate was to be channelled through a generously proportioned ravelin that was in turn to spill over the footprint of present day Sacred Heart Seminary complex.[5]

Though encapsulated by a common line of fortifications, the strip of land between the Castello

[1] The siege of Candia (modern Heraklion, Crete) lasted from 1648 to 1669. The Ottoman forces besieged the Venetian-ruled maritime city of Candia after conquering the remaining footprint of Crete.
[2] A summary of Rinaldini's reports is published in *The Gozo Observer No. 15*, pp 5-10.
[3] National Library of Malta, Archives of the Order, Vol. 6554, Fols. 310-313 (report) and Fol. 327 (plan).
[4] Present day Republic Street crossroads
[5] Rabat's first windmill was constructed on this site in the 1680's (Attard Tabone, 1996: 152-171) . Its milling stones were removed from the Seminary complex in January 1881 (Zammit, J. Diario Vol. I, fol. 177 [Unpublished Author's Collection])

and Rabat's historic core was to remain devoid of buildings, while access to and from the Castello was to retain the existing arrangement except for the re-routing of the approaching passageway's lowermost section.



Valperga's refortification proposal.

Translation of Accompanying Report

In fulfilment of Your Eminence's reverend commands, having completed the design of the Gozo Castle and of the adjacent suburb of Rabat it seemed appropriate to me to include a few notes on the considerations that fashioned my conclusions. Conscious of the complexity of the art of war, my sincere judgments are hereby presented with great admiration to the grandeur of Your Eminence and of the Order.

A general discussion on the vital need to secure Gozo is deemed superfluous. Your Eminence manifests keen interest and shared with me a host of valid and sound views that need no further elaboration, while various other connoisseurs wrote extensively on the subject. I will limit myself to highlight the main reasons why Gozo must be safeguarded and fortified, namely the protection of its inhabitants from Turkish assaults, the use of Gozo as a communication bridge with Sicily and beyond as attested during the siege of Malta,[6] and the safe storage of supplementary weapons that would save the hurdle to ship them over from distant Trapani, Augusta and Syracuse[7] and successively filter them through as required. Although lacking a proper harbour, any relieving force in transit to mainland Malta can land safely in Gozo's fertile bays and inlets, and take the opportunity to restore its strengths before pursuing its intent with major vigour. Due to the islands' close proximity to each other, a landing in Gozo is effectively setting foot on mainland Malta.

As per Your Eminence's instructions, I was allowed to consult various proposals regarding Gozo's fortification, whereby it has been suggested to abandon and knock down both Rabat and the Castello in view of two elevated sites in their immediate vicinity.[8] Said threatening posts lie at a distance of 190 and 500 canne[9] respectively and are not to be feared. The latter is relatively distant, while the breaching of the Castello from the nearer location is no straight forward task since the besieging cannon shots will most probably fall short from retaining a horizontal trajectory and will therefore lose much of their shattering affectivity. Should the enemy resolve to mine and blow up the sheer-cut cliffs along the northern half, the resultant soaring scar will still be impregnable.[10] The claim that the Castello and Rabat cannot be fortified successfully due to the aforementioned lofty posts and that the most proficient solution is to erect a new and expensive fortress at Marsalforn is hereby challenged, even though the latter is a very suitable site and abounds in fresh water supplies.

Unlike the Castello and Rabat, Marsalforn occupies a peripheral location whereby during the eventuality of a quick retreat several defenceless peasants risk remaining locked outside its walls alongside the merciless aggressors, while the daily trip to and from their farms and fields will consume more time.[11] Moreover, the poor islanders will be constrained to abandon their houses and build new ones within the new fortress, whereas the Order needs to invest heavily in the construction of

[6] During the Great Siege of 1565, Gozo served as a staging post along the line of communication with Sicily, facilitating the risky crossings to and from Malta (Spiteri, 2005: 424)
[7] Trapani sits on the Sicilian northwest coast, while Augusta and Syracuse lie along its south-southeast side.
[8] Valperga must be referring to the neighbourhood of the Franciscan Friary and to Ta' Gelmus Hill respectively.
[9] A canna (Maltese qasba) is equivalent to eight spans (Maltese xiber) or 243.84cm (Aquilina, 1990: 1136)
[10] Ironically, following the Order's successful assault on a Turkish convoy en route from Alexandria to Constantinople and the capture of part of the sultan's harem in 1644, the Castello was mined as to have it blown-up should Gozo fall under enemy control (Vella, 2007: 54-9)
[11] A detailed census of Gozo of 1667 shows that some 43% of Gozo's total population inhabited the Castello/Rabat settlement and its immediate environs whereas the island's hilly countryside was peopled by an even scatter of 20 small or medium sized hamlets (Bezzina, 1989: 112-116)

a new fortification network and subsequently double the existing garrison complement.[12] Besides, the issue of direct sea accessibility will still remain partially unresolved since Marsalforn Bay accommodates small vessels only.

Marsalforn's fresh water springs flow from the promontory's sloping flanks and their eventual incorporation within the line of defence necessitates the realignment of proposed fortifications to the cliff's foot. Evidently, this will inflate by a wide margin the capital outlay, while the resultant works will be dwarfed by nearby vantage points that fall cosily within musket range, rather than canon-shot breadth as in the case of the Castello. With the proposed refortification of Rabat and of the Castello both the islanders and their livestock can seek shelter therein while the Castello can assume the role of a citadel[13] capable to endure a long-lasting siege.

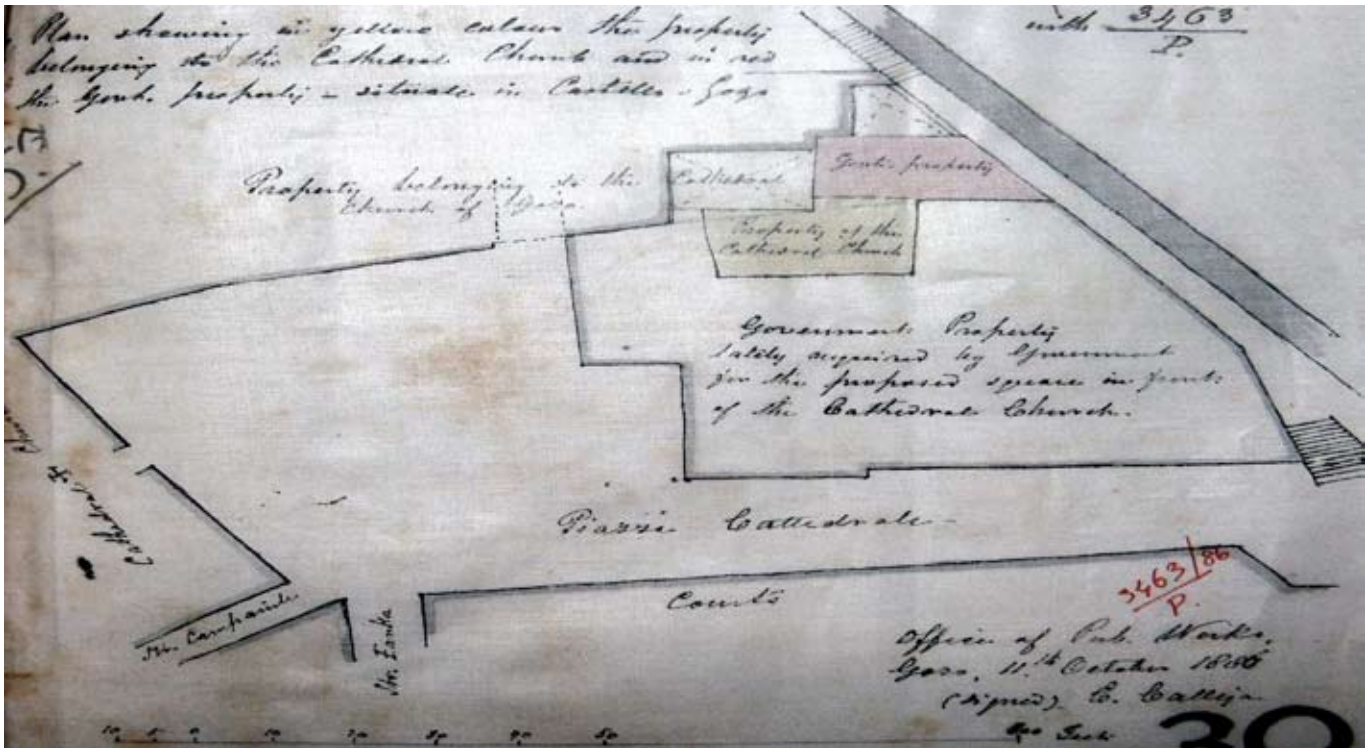
The main reason why Gozo's fortified town should not be relocated to Marsalforn emerges from the same necessity to render the island secure. As in Candia, the defenders risk becoming cornered on a small promontory that can be reinforced only with great difficulty and via a small inlet, while the greater part of Gozo will automatically be surrendered to the enemy. Your Eminency is therefore humbly advised to abort the idea of erecting a new fortress town at Marsalforn and to enhance the existing defences of the Castello and adjoining Rabat as per attached design and accompanying expenditure projections.[14] By so doing, both the local population and the Order stand to reap great benefits.

Malta, 23 May 1670
Your Humble and Devout Servant
Antonio Mauritio Valperga

A Valuable Urban Survey

Valperga's plan is the earliest recorded survey of the Rabat settlement (Camilleri, 1996: 107-120). The level of accuracy is noteworthy and enables us to identify the major changes that were enacted during the past three centuries.

Starting off with the Gran Castello, the most conspicuous alteration is present day Cathedral Square, whereby the then block of houses facing the matrix church and abutting onto the curtain wall was pulled down in 1886. In 1956, Cathedral Square was lowered by several metres in connection with the curtain-breach project (Vella, 2008: 62-9). Of particular significance are the indented recesses along the northeast and southeast walls of the matrix church. These seem to echo the side



1886 plan of demolished buildings in Cathedral Square

12 In 1704 the Castello's garrison complement consisted of a sergeant and nine soldiers (National Library of Malta, Library Manuscript 142, Fol.172)
13 The term citadel means a fortress built to protect a town.
14 Quoted expenditure projections are missing.

chapels erected at the turn of the sixteenth century inside the said matrix by the upper crust of Gozitan society for burial purposes.[15] The medieval matrix compound was severely damaged by an earthquake in January 1693 and was successively rebuilt between 1697 and 1711 on an exquisite plan by the Maltese architect Lorenzo Gafa (Bezzina, 1985: 41).

1937 Aerial view of Rabat's historic core: St George's dome and western aisles were still under construction. St Joseph's dome and belfry are also visible.

The encircling pathway running along and on top of the enceinte was also subjected to modifications since Valperga's drawing. The steep flight of steps linking St. Michael's bastion to the underlying sally ports at the back of Casa Bondi lies partially buried under the bastion's present pavement, whereas the northeast end of Bieb l-Imdina Street was absorbed by the transformation of the former barracks into a detention facility during the mid 19th century. Likewise, the short ramp dividing St. Martin's cavalier from the adjacent University store[16] was eliminated during the latter's reconstruction in 1776.

Turning our attention to the heart of Rabat's historic core, the propagation of St. George's parish compound is strikingly evident. In 1670, its footprint was very much similar to that described by Mgr Pietro Dusina in 1575, namely a modest cubic construction and an adjoining sacristy (Fiorini & Aquilina, 2001: 140). Present day Mgr Giuseppi Farrugia Street intersected Charity Street and extended westwards to reach St. George's Street, while the then parochial edifice stood freestanding on the imprint of the present nave. Soon after Valperga's visit, the fate of St. George's compound changed drastically. Between 1672 and 1678, its old and unpretentious construction was replaced by a monumental baroque temple, featuring for the first time in Gozo the latin-cross plan and a lofty dome.[17] The side aisles were added between 1935 and 1937.

A further notable modification since the late 17th century is St. George's Square. In 1955, the same destructive inspiration that breached the Castello's main front during the successive year wiped off a substantial chunk of buildings to enlarge the then charming petite square at the heart of Rabat's maze of winding streets (Gauci, 1993: 154). St. Joseph's 18th century church was also demolished in the process.[18]

Except for a few trimmings along the western flank, Valperga's fortification scheme was intended to defend the entire extent of the contemporaneous Rabat settlement core. As a matter of fact, practically all extant buildings aligning the respective urban spaces immediately beyond the footprint of Valperga's plan are datable to the successive centuries, particularly the second half of the nineteenth when Rabat experienced an urban-sprawl wave.

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Godwin Vella is Senior Curator Ethnography and Acting Manager Gozo Area Office within Heritage Malta.

[15] In his 1575 report Mgr Pietro Duzzina lists three private chapels inside the matrix church. These belonged to the Castella, Navarra and Mompalau families respectively (Fiorini, 2006: xlviii - 1)

[16] Present day Heritage Malta's Gozo Area Office.

[17] The dome and the façade were damaged during the aforementioned earthquake of 1693. Its façade was rebuilt in 1818 on a design by Can. Salvatore Bondi, while the quadripartite vaulted roof and the dome were reconstructed by 1939.

[18] St. Joseph's church was built in 1730 on the site of two smaller chapels.

Training Workshop for Chambers of Commerce on Small Islands

CAROLINE CAMILLERI ROLLS

Introduction

INSULEUR, the Network of the Island Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union in collaboration with the Gozo Business Chamber and the Islands and Small States Institute organised the 1st Executive Training Programme which was held at the University Gozo Centre on the 12th and 13th June 2008. INSULEUR is a non-profit association which operates at the European level to enhance economic and social development of the EU islands through close cooperation of island Chamber of Commerce and industry.

The Programme aimed to promote the sustainable development of European island regions. The themes of the workshop included "Management of Sustainable Development with Special Reference to Islands", "Economic Vulnerability and Resilience with Reference to Islands", "Sustainable Tourism and Islands", "Environment and Islands: with Emphasis to Climate Change" and "Energy and Islands: Alternative Energy Resources".

The objective of the Executive Training Programme was to help participants to familiarise themselves with issues of insular development and to offer them the necessary instruments to support their organisations to achieve a double mission: (a) to take an active part in the European Union and National Policy Plans for the development of the insular areas of the European Union and; (b) to contribute to the development of the insular regions under their jurisdiction.

The Workshop was inaugurated by the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo who welcomed all the participants whilst expressing her appreciation of the endeavours of the organisers as well as for the confidence shown in the island of Gozo by the Board of Directors of INSULEUR. Minister Debono described briefly some of the unique characteristics and the charms of the island of Gozo and how Government has continuously been addressing Gozo's regional needs.

Introductory speeches were delivered by Mr George Assonitis, from the Technical Committee of INSULEUR, Professor Lino Briguglio, Director of the Islands and

The opening session of the INSULEUR Training Workshop.

Small States Institute and Mr Joe Grech, President of the Gozo Business Chamber.

Mr Joe Grech said that Island regions do appreciate and welcome the fact that the European Regional Development Fund – Cohesion Fund 2007–2013 is meant to cover and offset the structural handicaps which are accelerating the under-performance of the Islands' economy.

He proposed that the network of Chambers of Commerce in small EU islands should create a vision, a strategic plan whereby contacts will be established with each and every EU structure so that, instead of derogations and temporary measures, the EU Commission will provide permanent solutions that address the Islands' permanent structural handicaps.

The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, delivering her speech. Also present are (left to right) Mr Joe Grech, Professor Lino Briguglio and Mr George Assonitis.

Sustainable Development

The focus of the training workshop was sustainable development. In his presentation of the subject, Professor Briguglio said that the ultimate aim of sustainable development is to improve the quality of life of the current generation without compromising that of future generations.

He emphasised that sustainable development cannot be compatible with economic stagnation and retardation – the word "development" itself suggests improvements, including material ones. Thus while environmental and social concerns should feature prominently in sustainable development goals, economic development should be given due importance. This holistic approach requires a long-term view of development, rather than one based on short term economic gains.

Sustainable development assigns major importance to the integrity of nature and biodiversity, as well as to the eradication of poverty, the removal of social injustice and other factors that work against human welfare of current and future generations. He explained that small islands face particular problems in pursuing sustainable development goals due, amongst other things, to limited resources, a relatively large coastal zone and relatively high population density.

In another presentation on Climate Change, Professor Briguglio explained that small islands like Gozo will be disproportionately affected in the sense that their green house gas emissions from the island are negligible but even with half a metre sea level rise they will be extensively harmed through the loss of their beaches. This will have a very high negative repercussion on the Gozitan economy.

Mr Julian Zarb when referring to sustainable tourism explained that tourism depends heavily on the environment in the sense that coastal areas and congenial climate serve as major attractions for tourists. At the same time tourism activities have major impacts on the environment. Very often tourism structures cause irreversible damage to the coastal areas. For this reason tourism authorities need to adopt sound environmental governance if they want to derive long term benefits from tourism. Mr Zarb also referred to the social impact of tourism and the need for tourists to be sensitive to the culture of the host community.

Economic Vulnerability and Resilience

Dr Gordon Cordina explained that small islands tend to be affected to a very high degree by economic factors outside their control. This reality is also true for Gozo given that the economic development of the island depends to a very high extent on conditions in Malta and in Europe in general. For this reason small islands need to adopt sound economic governance in order to enable them to withstand the harmful effects of external shocks.

Other Presentations

Ms Nadia Farrugia, when discussing composite indices said that some realities are multi-faceted. She said that in order to take these many dimensions into account it is important to construct composite indices. In her presentation, she explained how such indices can be

Participants of the INSULEUR Training Workshop in the courtyard of the University Gozo Centre

constructed and what desirable criteria should underpin their construction.

Dr Joe Cilia referred to the various research initiatives being taken by the University of Malta including the following:

- Electric Drives (DC Motors, Induction Motors, Permanent Magnet Motors, Switched Reluctance Motors)
- Electric Boat Project
- Electric Car Project
- Battery energy storage – Motive and Standby
- Solar Grid Connected Systems
- Water Leakage Detection System
- Wind Generation Systems
- Energy Efficient Buildings

He said that the university is collaborating with other institutions of higher education including Nottingham University, Sheffield University and Valencia Polytechnic in carrying out this research.

In their presentation, Mr. Evangelos Douloufakis and Mr. George Assonitis explained some technicalities relating to the presentation and submission of a project proposal. They said that the presentation stage must be thorough and coherent with the objective of the project. It should also be carefully structured. They also discussed the desirable properties at the submission stage and based their explanation on the submission of an actual proposal entitled INNOVA.

Conclusion

The training workshop attracted representatives from different chambers of commerce in small European islands. It proved to be very successful in that it elicited considerable discussion on the themes of the presentations. It also initiated a series of INSULEUR workshops on specific themes of major interest to small islands.

Caroline Camilleri Rolls possesses a Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies and currently assists in the administration of the University Gozo Centre.

Gozo as an Ecological Island - Some Proposals

RAYMOND XERRI

A Definition of 'An Ecological Island'

The Maltese Government is committed to transform Gozo into 'an ecological island.' Is it just a fashionable buzz phrase to attract a growing environmentally conscious electorate? Is it another word to condemn Gozo as a 'presepju' (static crib) for the Maltese to enjoy during visits on weekend breaks and for Gozitans to migrate to find jobs? Is it the right way forward for a sustainable Gozo …with all the complications sustainability poses? The latter option carries a mammoth task and a monumental change! Can Gozo really be turned into such an island? How far is the government willing to enforce changes in the Gozitan traditional lifestyle to reach this goal and in reality is it too late to reverse certain decisions, change or alter physical and structural developments which would hamper the attainment of such a goal? It depends on what definition is adopted by the government as the meaning of 'an ecological island'.

A strict definition of an 'ecological island' relates to the protection of the natural micro-habitat ecosystem of an area, in our case an island, from the reintroduction of non-native species. This definition would place nature before human needs.

Another wider definition of the word, 'ecological' may include the open-ended debated word, 'sustainable development' which encompasses and brings into play the economic, environmental and social needs of present and future Gozitans. Here a delicate balance is to be sought between the needs of Gozitans today and tomorrow and the natural micro-habitat ecosystem.

A Sustainable eco-Gozo?

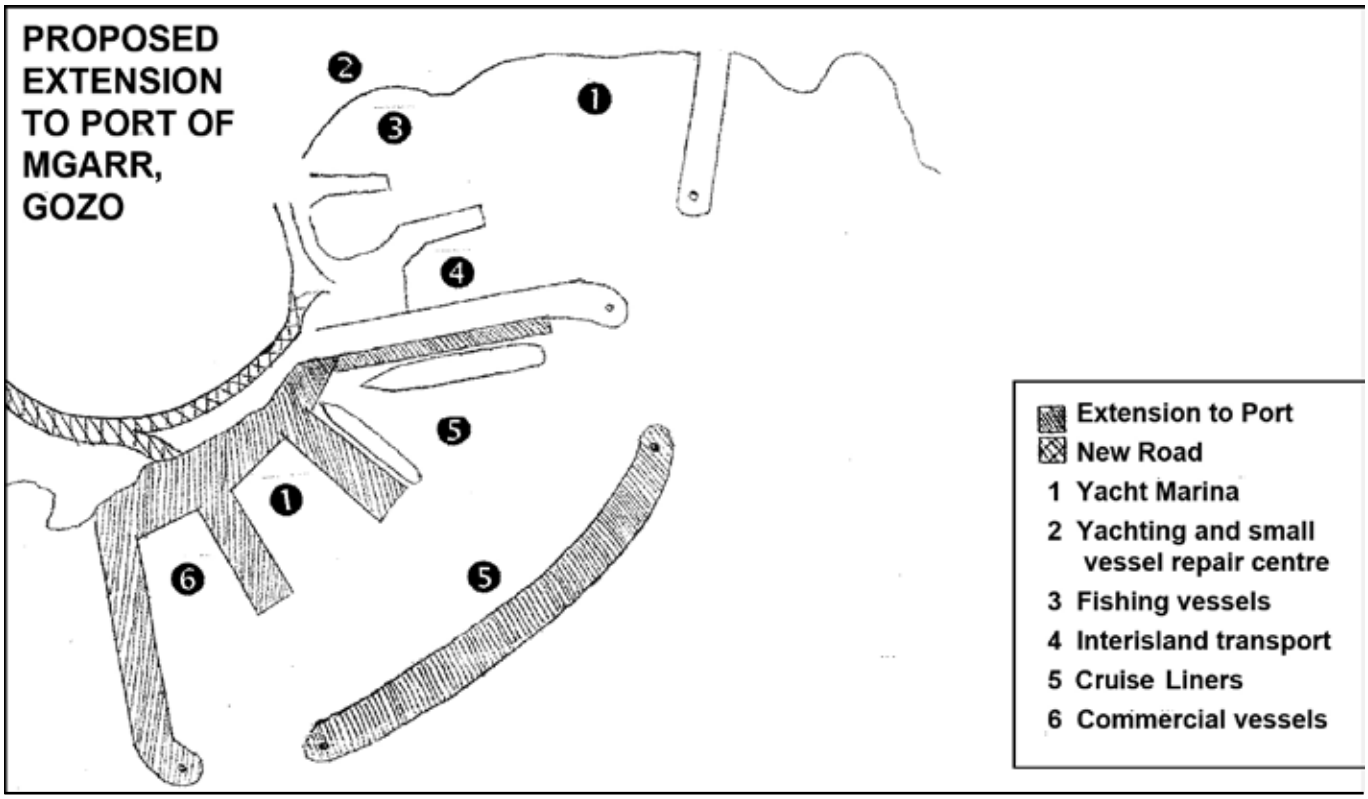
The latter definition is more acceptable to me. An eco-Gozo can be attained by means of a number of measures in the following areas:

The enhancement of Gozitan ecosystems

1. All foreign flora and tree species which are scientifically causing damage to the soil/soil moisture of Gozo should be substituted by endemic trees such as olive, citrus, palm, carob and a number of other endangered tree and plant species;
2. Each village in Gozo should have one or more public parks similar to those being pioneered at the Grunju area by the Qala Local Council and at the former Qortin landfill in Xagħra;
3. Coastal tree and plant afforestation 'defences' should be planned to halt the large quantity of top soil erosion into the coastal waters after every heavy rainfall;
4. Water encatchments in major valleys should be constructed to sustain the remaining agricultural patches around the island and the growing number of olive groves, vineyards, parks, etc.;
5. Light pollution is a major problem in Gozo and this can be reduced by using specific face-down lamps in residential areas and low-light in other selected areas so as not to negatively affect flora and fauna;
6. An island-wide programme for the reconstruction of Gozo's largest patrimony, its stone-cobbled walls, including changing limestone walls along streets where possible. These walls are the habitat of most of our fauna;
7. The Department of Agriculture in Gozo should be the catalyst in nurturing the above changes needed especially in fostering the much needed awareness of Gozitan and Maltese endangered plant species and spearheading their dissemination around the island.

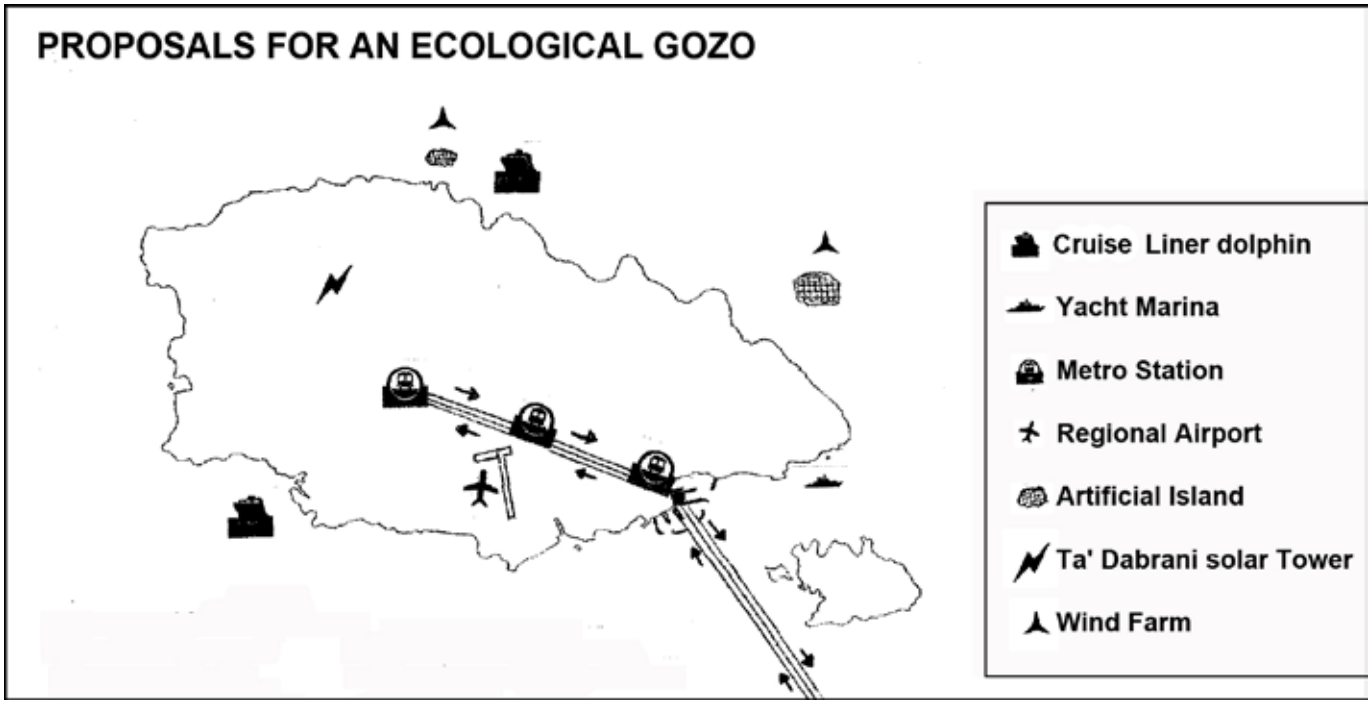
Sustainable economic growth

1. Gozo urgently needs an economic stimulus to reduce the higher unemployment levels and halt the constant need for migration to Malta and abroad. This can be achieved first and foremost through the creation of a regional airport between Xewkija and Għajnsielem and attracting regional and low cost airlines to the island;



Proposed extension to Mġarr Port, Gozo

2. Expanding the Mġarr Port facilities towards ix-Xatt l-Aħmar to provide port space with six sectors (1) for interisland transport; (2) for commercial vessels; (3) for cruise liners; (4) more yachting space; (5) yachting and small vessel repair centre and (6) local fisheries vessel space.
3. Public transport in Gozo needs a complete rethinking. Malta should start thinking of constructing a metro line connecting Victoria to Valletta (via seabed placed tunneling) extending in a number six shape to connect all important strategic points. In 15-20 minutes you could be on the other side of the country instead of today's travel time of 3 hours!
4. Gozo's energy needs can be easily satisfied if a combination of solar and wind sources are tapped. A solar power plant one-tenth the size of the solar tower system of Seville in Spain that is, utilizing an area the size of one football ground (top of Ta' Dabrani Hill) can provide clean energy for all 15,000 Gozitan households while any excess energy produced could be sold to Malta or the future European grid.
5. Artificial islands on shallow water spots along the northern Gozitan coastline (with 300-320 days of wind) can not only solve the construction dumping problem but serve as a base for wind-turbines and provide much needed clean energy;
6. The need for three cruise liner berthing facilities: one at Mġarr (cruise liner sector of port), one outside the bay of Xlendi and another at Marsalforn;
7. Besides the Mġarr Port yachting sector another port should be identified to cater for the growing demand from the yachting industry for more berthing space – the Qala Creek project is an option;
8. A need for a foreign university in Gozo (other than the University of Malta) to attract foreign students with all the multiplier effects brought about on transport, accommodation, etc.;
9. Five cluster industries should be developed in various localities in the east, centre and west of Gozo in the areas of (1) agrotourism; (2) call centres; (3) health and well-being sector; (4) precision engineering parts and repairs; (5) information technology services;
10. Gozo should have a regional government to act as a liaison between central government ministries and the cluster of local councils on a number of well-defined areas and services. Also to act as a liaison between central government ministries by means of having a Gozitan representative on all existing boards, MCESD, public corporations, etc.; and,



Proposals for an ecological Gozo

11. The sixth Euro Member of Parliament should be elected from Gozitans to represent Gozo at the European level.

Giving Gozo a facelift

1. Half of the public electricity lamp posts can be removed by the introduction of solar powered lamp-posts similar to the ones used in Switzerland and Germany, eliminating all aerial wires and at the same time Gozo will face a much lower electricity bill;
2. All newly built arterial, distribution and secondary roads should have adequate side paths with walking and cycling lanes to encourage more walking, jogging and exercise besides bike transport;
3. Main local squares and the main road of every locality should be pedestrianised, tiled, and duked with street furniture;
4. Particular attention to detail finishings and a maintenance programme for each project from a simple side path to the largest project; and,
5. A small alteration in roof areas to allow for the hiding of items such as solar heating panels, water tanks, gas tanks and others.

Government Needs to Act Fast

In order for Gozo to achieve its sustainability in all its aspects (economic, social and environmental) both the strict definition and human requirements of an ecological island, need to be taken into consideration. Vital political structures such as regional government and Gozo's one MEP still need to be established. Gozo needs representation on all political levels; local, regional, central and European to attain not only proper governance but also to achieve sustainable development.

Dr Raymond C Xerri obtained his PhD in 2002 from Victoria University in Australia. His area of research was Social and Cultural Inquiry concentration on Gozitan Identity and Migration.

Dwejra Heritage Park: A Distinctive Natural Setting in the Island of Gozo

MARIA THERESA FARRUGIA

Background

Located on the western shore of the island of Gozo, Dwejra is a site which has always been close to the heart of all environmentalists. The agglomeration of geology, geomorphology, flora, fauna, archaeology, history and ecology along this site presents an experience which is not easy to forget and contributes in making Dwejra a site of extraordinary scientific importance and heritage value.

A Geological and Ecological Haven

The most prominent geological features at Dwejra Bay include Ħaġret il-Ġeneral or, as it is popularly known, Fungus Rock, the Azure Window (Tieqa Żerqa) and the Inland Sea.

Fungus Rock is a precipitous rocky islet which stands at the mouth of the circular basin of Dwejra Bay and rises to around 50 metres above sea-level. For a long time it was thought to be the only home of the parasitic flowering plant "fungus melitensis" (Cynomorium coccineum) which was considered to be a sovereign remedy against a host of medical conditions. During the Knights' period access to the rock was strictly forbidden and the sides were scarped to render it inaccessible. Severe penalties, such as rowing on the Order's galleys, were inflicted to trespassers or others found in possession of the plant. However, during the eighteenth century and up to the 1830's the rock was connected to the mainland, leading to a revival of interest in the plant's medicinal properties.

The Azure Window is another spectacular natural landmark in Dwejra. This huge natural arch of Lower Coralline Limestone formed as a result of wave erosion is, one of the best examples of such a feature present in the Maltese Islands.

Environmental and geomorphological features at Dwejra Bay

The Azure Window at Dwejra Bay

The Inland Sea is an inland lagoon at Dwejra, which was probably created millions of years ago when a limestone cave collapsed. The shallow inland lagoon is linked to the sea via a 100 metre cave in the cliff. The sea is used by fishermen and bathers, and is also a very popular diving spot. On calm days, small fishing boats carry visitors out to sea through this cave in order to view both Fungus Rock and the Azure Window.

Dwejra also features many typical ecological systems of the Maltese Islands which support a rich biota that includes several species or subspecies that are endemic, rare or that have a restricted distribution in the Maltese Islands. Moreover, its topography and location attracts migratory birds of various species seeking a sheltered place. The cliffs provide good nesting sites for the Cory's Shearwater and the Yelkouan Shearwater as well as for Malta's National Bird – the Blue Rock Thrush.

The sea around the Dwejra area also supports a wide range of habitat types and a high biodiversity concentrated along a relatively short stretch of coastline. A number of the habitats present in this area are of high ecological value, while others are rare and/or protected. These include a large variety of assemblages of photophilic algae that require ample light for survival. In shallow waters at the head of bays and inlets, seagrass species also occur. Furthermore, a rich fish fauna occurs in the Dwejra area that includes both species of the water column (pelagic fish) as well as those that live close to the bottom (demersal fish).

All the features, habitats and the species that Dwejra supports, have throughout the years faced adverse pressures from pollution and other forms of human disturbance.

Cultural, Historical and Archeological Landmarks

The area surrounding Dwejra has truly witnessed human activity in one form or another for more than

7000 years. This has induced to the development of various cultural, historical and archeological landmarks.

Pottery shreds recovered from the Għajn Abdul site have indeed indicated the presence of the first known Neolithic culture of the Maltese islands together with evidence of activity in the Bronze Age. Moreover, the site at Ras il-Wardija, with its rock-cut rectangular chamber, cistern and reservoir has been securely dated to 300 B.C. – 200 A.D. The dating of a pair of deeply incised cart-ruts cutting across the rocky outcrop overlooking the Inland Sea is far from secure but they are evidence of great activity at a particular time. The same can be said of the salt pans, the surface quarries and a system of rock cut pans.

Contrastingly, the Dwejra coastal watch-tower was built in 1652 during the Grandmastership of Lascaris. Its building was financed by the Universita` of Gozo. It had the aim of rendering Dwejra Bay secure against an enemy landing and that of preventing unauthorized persons from landing on Fungus Rock to collect the "fungus melitensis". The tower was armed by the Order with guns and ammunition. It was occupied on and off by the military until recent times. From 1839 to 1876, it was garrisoned by the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery and then it was abandoned until the First World War when the garrison was provided from the Royal Malta Artillery and the King's Own Malta Regiment. Its last military role was played in World War II when it served as an Observation Post. In 1956 it was leased for 50 years to a private individual. Din l-Art Helwa, now holding the trusteeship of the building, took the initiative to restore the tower which by the nineties had suffered serious deterioration.

The Cost of Attractiveness

Truly, the attractiveness of Dwejra has in some ways contributed to its own degradation over the years, due to heavy human traffic, tourism activities and quarry activities. The site has also seen illegal buildings mushroom in the area together with illegal dumping and other irresponsible activities, all of which have contributed to irreparable damage to the area.

Dwejra itself is open to the public without any sort of control and management of visitors. Thousands of tourists arrive in coaches whilst locals visit Dwejra with cars which are parked in various sections of the area. Once on site, people roam the area without any proper management or supervision. This results in heavy trampling over the fossil beds and the flora and fauna of the site. The habitual picking of rare flora found on site further exacerbates the negative effects. Moreover, with no surveillance of the area in force, illegal dumping of waste was also on the increase.

In addition, heavy human activity has contributed to increased marine erosion together with damage to the marine ecology and the fossil beds. Furthermore, the quarries found near the site, emit fine particles generated by their activities which are often the cause of ecological harm to the area. These quarries are also a stark eyesore and in general have a very negative effect on the value of Dwejra.

The Dwejra LIFE Project

The Dwejra LIFE Project started in April 2004 with the aims of reversing the degradation of the area, conserving the environment, providing a better tourist product and aiding the local economy. More specifically the project aimed at developing a restoration and conservation plan and establishing a framework for environmental management. Following these objectives, it sought at strengthening the current administrative and enforcement capacities and carrying out environmental education through the creation of an eco-tourism and an environmental education site. In so doing, the project served as a demonstration for the creation of further coastal nature reserves.

The main partners in the LIFE project were Nature Trust (Malta) together with MEPA and WWF (Italy). Apart from the main partners, a number of stakeholders were involved including the Ministry for Gozo, San Lawrenz Local Council, The Tourism Authorities of Gozo and Malta, the Diving associations, the boat people, the fishermen, Din L-Art Ħelwa, the tour operators, the boat house people, the church and various other stakeholders identified in the course of the task towards the creation of a Natural Park.

This project has succeeded in establishing Malta's

first coastal nature reserve. The protected area covers around 8 km^2 of marine and terrestrial environment, which is now managed in a sustainable and controlled manner. Good working relations were developed with the local fishing industry that plays an important role in the nature reserve's management plans. New marine protection measures were adopted (such as removal of abandoned fish-traps and introduction of access rules) which have helped contribute to the return of seahorses in the area. Planning regulations were strengthened leading to regulations on illegal structures. Native plant species were also introduced to boost natural heritage resources and alien species were cleared from the site.

The logo in connection with the LIFE programme

In addition to natural heritage work, prominent investments included a new visitor centre at the historical Dwejra Tower and smaller scale measures covered improvements to an access road, plus equipment for a regulated parking area. These new visitor facilities help to manage public access within sensitive areas of the reserve and encourage more tourists to visit the site, which in turn has created more economic opportunities for local communities. An "Eco-warden" was appointed at the reserve and an environmental education programme was also launched.

Conclusion

All these positive results not only led to the upgrading and safekeeping of the area but also to further promotion. Through this promotion, Dwejra is gaining recognition on both the local and international level, whilst setting an example to other localities and natural environments.

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Maria Theresa Farrugia, B.A (Hons.) (Geography), worked as a Project Administrator for the European Destinations of Excellence: Best Emerging Rural Zone pilot project at the EU Affairs, Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate within the Ministry for Tourism and Culture. Currently she is working as an EU Fund Officer within the Programme Implementation Section at the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications.

Recent Activities at the University Gozo Centre

JOSEPH CALLEJA

Ms Kate Gonzi at the Gozo Lace Day

Ms Kate Gonzi, wife of the Prime Minister, attended the 12th edition of 'The Gozo Lace Day' organised in Gozo on 6 April by the University Gozo Centre Lace Making Programme. Ms Gonzi distributed certificates to students who completed the advanced lace-making course.

When addressing those present, Ms Gonzi said that she was impressed by the work carried out at the University Gozo Centre stating that the centre has been instrumental in reviving the craft and giving it an academic dimension.

Ms Kate Gonzi presenting a certificate to a successful participant.

The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, who was also present, said that the centre has become a hub of activity and through it hundreds of Gozitans have obtained a university degree. She said that the Diploma in Lace Studies offered at the centre is unique and she augured that more students will join the course when it will be offered again next October.

Ms Consiglia Azzopardi, Coordinator of the Lace Making Programme, talked about the social aspects of lace making and said that in Italy lace making is used for its therapeutic effect, even to reform drug addicts and prisoners. She said that it has been observed that lace making can also help to give up or reduce cigarette smoking. Ms Azzopardi stated that the Lace Making Programme is also planning to target younger persons including males and this summer a course in lace making will be offered with this specific aim.

Ms Consiglia Azzopardi showing lace exhibits to Ms Kate Gonzi and Hon. Giovanna Debono.

Professor Lino Briguglio, Director of the Gozo Centre thanked all those present and made a special mention of the Hon. Anton Tabone, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, who, when Minister for Gozo, did his utmost to establish the University Gozo Centre and always wanted to give lace making the high profile it deserves.

Second Visit by Italian H.E. Ambassador Paolo Andrea Trabalza

On 5 April the Italian Ambassador for Malta, H.E. Paolo Andrea Trabalza, paid a second visit to the University Gozo Centre where he met a number of Gozitan artists, members of Parliament, and other persons who are involved in the cultural scene.

The aim of his visit was the launching of a second competition for Gozitan artists, organised by the Embassy of Italy in Malta in order to celebrate the

8th edition of the week of the Italian Language in the World which will take place in October 2008. The theme of the competition is '*L'Italiano in Piazza*'

The Italian Ambassador H.E. Paolo Andrea Trabalza addressing the audience present

Courses

In February a set of courses offered by the Ministry for Gozo, and co-financed by the European Social Fund came to an end. In March another set of similar courses commenced. The subjects consisted of Basic English, Basic Maltese, and Basic Reading and Writing Skills. Concurrently a set of courses dealing with Organic Farming, Soil Conservation, Rabbit Production, Sheep and Goat Cheese Production, Animal Health and Welfare, New Standards and Product Quality, and Plant Health Pathology also started. All courses were attended by a very good number of Gozitans and many participants showed their interest in attending similar courses in the future.

One of the lectures of the Organic Farming course in progress.

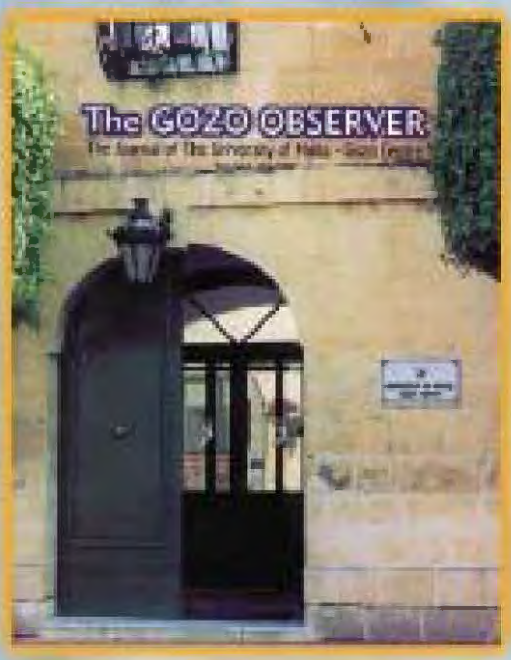
Publications

The 17th edition of the Gozo Observer was published in December 2007. It contained a selection of articles on Gozitan affairs.

In this edition Joseph Xerri presented an interesting article about Gozo as being the only electoral district to keep its identity in all government elections in the Maltese Islands. Professor Lino Briguglio wrote about the setting up of the University Gozo Centre in 1992, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of its establishment in an article entitled "From Vision to Reality". Godwin Vella described the V.I.P. Treatment and related ceremonials in the early 18th Century Gozo. "The Aspirations of Gozitan Female students attending secondary schools in Gozo" was the theme of an article by Marilyn Attard.

Maria Theresa Farrugia's article related to the village of Nadur as a Best Emerging Rural Zone for the Maltese Islands, while Caroline Camilleri Rolls gave her experience as a student at the University Gozo Centre which required juggling the role of a mother, a worker and a student.

Joseph Calleja is Administrative Officer at the University Gozo Centre.



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