



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

DINGLI 2020

Dingli Local Council

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Chapter 3

Social and Cultural Implications

Marvin Formosa

Despite the presence of post-industrial values, Malta is still characterised by a social fabric that values strong community and family ties. The nation is firmly committed towards the continuous upgrading of its social policies to ensure that whilst the priority needs of its society are met, families and individuals who are at risk-of-poverty and social exclusion are given the necessary support. In their quest to strengthen social cohesion and build a stronger community, all political parties in Malta remain committed to build on the country's social democratic values. All argue that Malta needs to provide personalised services to meet the needs of vulnerable groups by strengthening their access to the labour market, providing more affordable housing, and introducing more family-friendly measures. This commitment ensures that all elected governments offer adequate responses to new challenges and offer adequate social protection. However, Malta cannot fall in the trap of achieving its objectives in social policy in an unsustainable manner. If this occurs, any positive results from progressive social policies will have been cancelled out. It is imperative that social development only uses nature's resources at a rate at which they can be replenished naturally. It was to this end that Malta - together with another 178 Governments - signed Agenda 21 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* some two decades ago. Malta is a small, open economy, with a very high population density. The character of this country, together with its distinct geographical make-up which introduces an element of regional diversity, accentuates the problems and issues of sustainability. As this case study confirms, Maltese localities can offer a good opportunity for the achievement of a degree of sustainability that contribute towards national and international sustainable development.

A case study was conducted to evaluate of the social sustainability of Dingli. Its objectives were to evaluate Dingli's role in the processes mentioned in the previous section. Definitions of case studies vary but, in essence, all promote the notion that the researcher aims at knowing a single entity or phenomenon - that is, the case - through the collection of data through various procedures. One useful definition is to deem a case study "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1989 : 23). Due to the nature and demands of the project, the case study opted for a qualitative research design. In qualitative research designs, researchers discuss cases in their social context and develop grounded theories that emphasise tracing the process and sequence of events in specific settings. They seek to explain how people attach meanings to events and learn to see events from multiple perspectives. Qualitative researchers emphasise the importance of social context for understanding the social world and hold that the meaning of a social action or statements depends, in an important way, on the context in which it appears.

The research design of the study contained three key phases. First, evaluating background material on sustainable policy for local communities, and planning the study/report. Second, an empirical phase during which fieldwork was conducted with major stakeholders in the Dingli community. Stakeholders constitute people who will be affected by any endeavour and who can also influence it. Dingli includes five key stakeholders - namely :

- » *Dingli local council* [DLC]. Local councils form the most basic form of local government in Malta and there are no intermediate levels.

The DLC includes five members from two different political parties, the Nationalist and Labour parties.

- » *Dingli residents*. The people who live in Dingli and who may be further sub-grouped in the following sectors : children, youths, adults, older persons, disabled, men and women, and those residing at the village core versus other more rural dwellers.
- » *Business operators*. Dingli holds various business companies including groceries, greengrocers, village bars/pubs, stationeries, beauty salons, pet shops, hairdresser saloons, butchers, and haberdasheries.
- » *Farming community*. Dingli has an above average of total land declared by farmers and total agricultural land area. Dingli includes an above average of residents who work as full- and part-time farmers whose views must be heard¹.
- » *Non-governmental organisations*. NGOs are key players in any community. Dingli is no exception and whilst most residents are members in one or more, the voices and opinions of local NGOs are given special attention by the local governance.

The interviews followed a semi-structured mode, with interviewees selected through purpose sampling. In semi-structured interviews, a list of questions is kept in mind but the interviewee is given ample leeway as to the direction of the interview. Interviewees are considered to be active participants whose insights, feelings, and cooperation are essential parts of a discussion process that reveals subjective meanings. Semi-structured interviews, indeed, involve a mutual sharing of experiences. However, the interviewer's role is also paramount. Although he/she does not approach the interview session in an authoritarian mode, authority is still upheld : the interviewer's presence and form of involvement - how she or he listens, attends, encourages, interrupts, digresses, initiate topics, and terminates responses - is integral to semi-structured interviewing. In semi-structured interviews the questions and the order in which they are asked are tailored to specific people and situations, the interviewer shows interest in responses and encourages elaboration, the interviewer and interviewee jointly control the pace and direction of the interview, and the interviewer adjusts to the interviewee's norms and language usage. Purposive sampling gets all possible cases that fit particular criteria using all possible methods. It uses the judgement of the social scientist in selecting cases or it selects cases with a special purpose in mind. Purposes sampling was ideal for this study because (a) it needed unique interviewees that are especially informative, (b) it required to select members of a difficult-to-reach specialised sub-population such as farmers and representatives of non-governmental organisations, and (c), it needed to identify particular types of interviewees for in-depth investigation. The third and final stage of the methodology was a phase where the data arising from the field work were analysed and evaluated, and a report written up.

1 The 2001 Census of Agriculture (NSO, 2003) reported that Dingli has a total of 36 full-time farmers and breeders, all male except one, in the following ages 35-44 (11 males), 45-54 (29 males and one female), 55-64 (3 males), and 65+ (one male). The total number of part-time farmers and breeders stands at 314, 265 males and 49 females, in these age brackets : 29 males and 5 females under the age of 35 years, 35-44 years (51 males, 15 females), 45-54 years (101 males, 12 females), 55-64 years (36 males, 6 females), and 65+ (48 males, 11 females).

Table 1.1: Dingli's total population by census years

1901	1921	1931	1948	1957	1967	1985	1995	2005
807	1087	1,258	1869	2041	1795	2047	2725	3347

Source : NSO, (2007a) *Census of Population, 2005, Volume 1 : Population*, Malta : National Statistical Office.

Table 1.2: Dingli's total population by sex, Census years 1995 and 2005

1995			2005			Change 1995-2005		
Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
2725	1370	1355	3347	1706	1641	622	336	286

Source : NSO, (2007a) *Census of Population, 2005, Volume 1 : Population*, Malta : National Statistical Office.

Table 1.3: Dingli's total population by age and sex (2005)

Age	Total	Male	Females	Age	Total	Male	Females
0-9	427	216	211	60-69	202	107	95
10-19	532	277	255	70-79	142	58	84
20-29	463	245	218	80-89	55	27	28
30-39	522	257	265	90-99	5	3	2
40-49	506	254	252	99+	1	1	0
50-59	492	261	231	Total	3347	1706	1641
0-19	959	493	466	20-59	1983	1017	966
60+	405	196	209				

Source : NSO, (2007a) *Census of Population, 2005, Volume 1 : Population*, Malta : National Statistical Office.

Dingli : A social portrait

The 2005 National Census reports that Dingli's population increased substantially during the past century, from 907 in 1901 to 3347 in 2005 (table 1) - (NSO, 2007a). In the period 1995-2005, its population increased by 622, 336 males and 286 females (table 2). This meant that whilst the population density per kilometre in 1995 was 478, in 2005 this figure reached 591.

Dingli's population is relative middle-aged as the largest number of residents (532) is found in the 10-19 age bracket, followed by the 30-39 (522 residents) and 40-49 (506 residents) age brackets (table 4). In 2005, the mean age of the whole population was 34.9 (34.7 males and 35.1 females). However, as much as 26 percent (897 residents) are above the age of 50 (the dependency ratio in 2005 was 41.0), so that the coming two decades will witness a steep rise in the percentage of the ageing population especially if number of younger families from other villages and cities settling in Dingli continues to decline. The 2005 Census also reports that the number of residents holding Maltese and

non-Maltese citizenships is 3321 (1706 males and 1641 females) and 26 (11 males and 15 females) respectively.

In 1995, Dingli included 896 dwellings, 812 occupied and 84 unoccupied (NSO, 2007b). Ten years later, these figures reached 1198, 1033 occupied and 165 unoccupied. Occupied dwellings constituted terraced houses (557), semi-detached houses (55), fully-detached houses (29), ground-floors (143), flats/penthouses (18), maisonettes (200), farmhouses (29), suite of rooms forming part of a household unit (1), and other (1). These dwellings were owned freehold (787), with ground rent (155), rented unfurnished (48), rented furnished (6), held by emphyteusis (9), and used-free-of charge (28). Of the total number of occupied dwellings, the number of rooms by the number of persons is presented in table 4.

Table 1.4: Occupied dwellings in Dingli by number of rooms and persons (2005)

Persons	Total	Number of rooms							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total		1	8	37	106	285	286	168	80
1	101	1	7	17	26	18	21	7	-
2	202	-	1	11	32	73	58	17	5
3	266	-	-	3	30	78	63	44	30
4	326	-	-	3	10	89	107	70	23
5	106	-	-	2	6	22	28	24	16
6	24	-	-	1	1	3	9	4	4
7	6	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	1
8	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Persons	Total	Number of rooms							
		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16+
Total		30	18	6	5	1	1	-	1
1	101	-	-	1	3	1	1	-	-
2	202	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
3	266	8	7	-	2	-	1	-	-
4	326	14	7	3	-	1	-	-	-
5	106	5	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
6	24	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
7	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source : NSO, (2007b) Census of Population, 2005, Volume 2 : Dwellings, Malta : National Statistical Office.

The 2005 Educational Statistics (NSO, 2007c) reported that Dingli has one primary school which includes 17 classes containing 142 boys and 142 girls (total 284). This school houses a head, two assistant heads, five facilitators, 16 primary teachers, 5 kindergarten assistants, one supply teacher, two part-time kindergarten assistants, and one part-time instructor. In the period Sept 2004 - March 2005 Dingli's primary school held a total of 268 pupils of an age that by law were expected to attend school. There were a total of 1259 absences, 1011 authorised and 268 unauthorised. Dingli also includes a secondary school that includes 10 classes and a total of 258 boys. This school houses one principal, one assistant head, 20 secondary teachers, one primary teacher, and five facilitators. As far as older adult learners are

concerned, during the 2005/2006 academic year the University of the Third Age had only one member from Dingli, a female in the 65-69 age bracket (NSO, 2006).

A recent study commissioned by the DLC (Azzopardi Cauchi et al., 2010) shed further light on the Dingli community. The majority of residents were found to be married and four member families. As far as their educational status was concerned, it was found that 22 and 34 percent held primary and secondary educational attainment levels respectively, with another 12 percent having attended tertiary

education. Educational attainment figures included trade schools (eight percent), the Maltese Centre for Arts, Science and Technology (six percent), Opportunity Centre (one percent), Sixth Form (six percent), Higher Secondary (four percent), whilst some eight percent did not attend any school or, at least, no further than primary schooling. Eight percent of the local population is illiterate. The majority (90 and 87 percent) attended their primary and secondary schooling (respectively) in public institutions. However, some 18 percent studied abroad. The study reported that about 66 percent hold a secondary school leaving certificate, 20 and 12 percent hold passes at Ordinary and Advanced levels respectively, and some ten percent to hold tertiary qualifications. One in three residents visits a library, as well as attending educational courses organised in the locality. Another one in three residents do not own a computer at home, and of those who do, another third do not have internet access. Some 49 percent claimed that they are able to save money, with some 70 percent not satisfied with their saving patterns. Two out of every three families own a credit card, with most families earning in the region of €20,000 annually. Whilst 75 percent were satisfied of their financial status and deemed it to be on the same level as the average Dingli resident, some eight percent claimed to be unsatisfied and thought their income to be 'worse' than others. When asked whether they owned a second home 84 percent replied in the negative, 54 percent went for a holiday abroad in the last three years, and as much as 84 percent own a mobile phone.

Social cohesiveness was another point of investigation. Some 90 percent meet with their children more than once a week, grandparents and grandchildren meet at least once a week, neighbours encounter each other about once a week, and 91 percent meeting friends once a week or more. When asked to whom they turn to in case of emotional difficulties 28 percent claimed to contact their children, 25 percent mentioned their friends, and 20 percent mentioned their parents. The majority of residents, 80 percent, are not involved in volunteering activities, 55 percent claimed to never take part in cultural activities, and 70 percent never took part in sports. Whilst 78 percent claimed that they experience no noise pollution in their everyday lives, 18 percent asserted otherwise. The majority, some 62 percent, reported that Dingli had a problem of vehicle over-speeding. Although official statistics report a relatively low crime rate, residents claimed to be preoccupied about the high incidence of vandalism and thefts from vehicles. It was also reported that 70 percent have some kind of private medical insurance, and 80 and 70 percent respectively claimed not to drink alcohol or engage in smoking. However, results also reported that some 16 percent may have some problems concerning alcohol dependence. Respondents claimed that they feel relatively safe walking around Dingli after sunset. Only 41 percent felt their homes were secure when they went out, with 24 percent believing that the probability for their house to be burgled in their absence was high. Many ask neighbours to keep an eye on their residence when they are out or even hire security personnel. In fact, only 35 percent were confident that the police force was doing its job, with as much as 62 percent not having a high opinion of the role of the police force in preventing crime in Dingli. The majority of residents do not own guns (70 percent), with the remaining declaring the possession of hunting guns.

A Social Security Benefits study conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2009) found that in the 2000-2008 period, Dingli experienced a substantial decrease in the receipts of a Children's Allowance, from 473 in 2000, to 379 in 2004, to 224 in 2008. The Children's Allowance is payable to locally residing citizens of Malta who have the care of children under 16 years of age and where the household income does not exceed a stipulated amount. In the case of those families where the household annual income is €23,923 or less, the eligibility to Children's Allowance is calculated on the difference between the declared income of the family for the previous year and the established threshold of €23,923. Families who care for children under 16 years of age and whose household annual income exceeds €23,923 are entitled to a Fixed Children's Allowance of €250 per child per annum. Dingli included a total of 218 recipients for this allowance. As regards the retired population, Dingli experienced a slight increase in the 2000-2008 period of the number of persons in receipt of a Retirement Pension, from 50 in 2000, to 60 in 2004, and to 63 in 2008. The Retirement Pension is payable on reaching pension age (61 in the case of males and 60 for females), with the rates and types of categories vary according to a range of statutory conditions depending on the rate of the service pension. A higher increase was recorded with respect of pensioners in receipt of a two-thirds pension, from 91 in 2000, to 112 in 2004, and to 168 in 2008. The two-Thirds Pension is a pension related to earnings payable to persons who have retired after January 1979. This scheme provides for a pension equivalent to two-thirds of the insured person's pensionable income. The numbers of recipients of the National Minimum's Widow's Pension - payable to widows, irrespective of age, who are not gainfully occupied, or who are occupied but earning less than the national minimum wage and in receipt of a service pension - fluctuated from 33 in 2000, to 36 in 2004, and to 28 in 2008. The number of recipients of Survivors' Pension (an earnings-related pension payable to a widow/er whose husband/wife was entitled to a two-thirds pension at the time of his/her death) was as follows : 14 in 2000, 21 in 2004, and 19 in 2008. Eighteen residents were in receipt of Unemployment Benefits in 2008, down from 29 and 19 in 2004 and 2000 respectively. On the other hand, unemployment assistance was awarded to 25 recipients in 2000. Whilst Unemployment Benefit is payable to unemployed persons for a short-term period of 156 days, unemployment is a more long-term arrangement. Recipients of the National Minimum Invalidity Pensions - payable to persons deemed permanently incapable for full-time or regular part-time employment but are recipients of a service pension - also registered an increase, from 21 in 2000, to 42 in 2004, to 49 in 2008. The number of recipients of the Social Assistance for Single Unmarried Parents - given to a single parent, who does not earn more than a certain amount of income (his/her total income earned together with the Social Assistance entitlement for 2 persons should not exceed the National Minimum wage) - increased from 2 in 2000, to 7 in 2004, and 8 in 2008 (all females). The Supplementary Assistance, a top-up income given to low-income families against means testing, was also included in this study. Following national trends, Dingli held a decline of beneficiaries in the 2000-2008 period : 172 in 2000, 145 in 2004 and 130 in 2008.

The Dingli Local Council



The DLC includes five councillors. Self-government can be defined as the right and ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population. Local councils are based on the principles of subsidiarity and autonomy, in the interest of administrative efficiency as they take many roles previously under the responsibility of central government. The DLC is vested with several functions, including (i) the upkeep and maintenance of roads and pavements, (ii) collection of waste and road cleaning, (iii) seeing to the availability and maintenance of public conveniences, providing rubbish bins and skips were needed, and their proper use and maintenance, (iv) the upkeep and maintenance of public gardens, public libraries, playgrounds and sports or cultural centres, (v) providing adequate road signs, road markings, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks and parking areas, (vi) propose any changes in traffic schemes and safeguarding the well-being of children in the vicinity of schools, (vii) recommend to the competent authority in relation to planning or building schemes, and (viii), assisting citizens by providing information relating to consumer affairs, transport, tax, and social services.

Sense of place, inclusive and safe

Sense of place

Dingli boasts an extraordinary sense of place. Its peripheral and *cul-de-sac* geographical position means that whilst residents spend most of their time within the locality, few visitors actually find themselves in the village. The village's most visited spot, the Dingli Cliffs, is relatively far from the village core, and hence, even on Sundays the village remains tranquil. Residents claimed that the village presents them with a high sense of positive feeling and local distinctiveness :

Is-sabiħ ta' Ħad-Dingli hu li hafna trabbew hawn. Nafu lil xulxin sewwa hawnhekk, u barra minn hekk, inħossuna biċċa waħda ma' xulxin...Jien inħossni li nirraġuna u naħsibha mhux, kif ħa naqbad nghidlek, mhux kif irrid, imma kif jaħsbuha d-Dinglin...Meta kont naħdem ir-Rabat kont nara differenza kbira bejna u huma.

Dingli has resisted the sprawling effects of urbanisation and so that it can be easily defined as a community in locality - that is, as a geographical expression that denotes a human settlement located

To date, various projects and activities of a socio-economic or environmental nature have been promoted or undertaken by the DLC. These included the building and upgrading of *Ġnien il-Familja* and *Ġnien il-Ħaddiem* respectively, organising adult exchanges with peers from foreign countries, providing premises, donations, and a range of assistance to local non-governmental organisations, and donating books to Dingli Primary School. The DLC also takes part in visiting the sick and older persons during in the Christmas festive season, as well as providing various services such as completion of tax and V.A.T. forms, passport applications, free internet service, and flu shots to older persons. One must also not fail to mention its role in the organisation of Carnival activities, life skills sessions for teenagers and young adults, Christmas carols, children Christmas parties, pilates sessions, the care of housebound older persons and those suffering from dementia reading sessions for children, and various cultural outings during Christmas, Easter week, and summer. The DLC also committed itself to the building a new library at the primary school, implementing a pedestrian zone in Dingli's inner zone, putting together an interpretative centre at Dingli Cliffs which would serve as socio-cultural-historical information centre about the community, and the opening of shelters to the general public during *Jum Ħad-Dingli* which occurs annually. Recently, the DLC has also come up with the idea of organising *Agrofest* that would celebrate the culture, history, and traditions of the community. An extensive socio-criminal study commissioned by the DLC has also just been published.

The DLC also conducts important infrastructure building and maintenance works. It constructs traffic junctions in areas with traffic problems so that traffic flow is improved, puts up and maintains curbs for the easy and safe walking of residents, upholds and preserves roads in a good state, as well as attending to acts of vandalism.

within a fixed and bounded local territory. Residents attributed a close link between geographical location and social life, which signifies their embodiment in a set of social relationships which take place wholly, or mostly, within the locality of Dingli :

Ħad-Dingli daqsxejn maqtuħ... Mort skola hawn ħalkemm sekondarja le, ħdimt xi ftit hawn ukoll qabel ma kelli t-tfal, u anki r-ragel minn hawn ukoll. Issib tixtri kollox minn hawn, forsi jekk tkun trid xi ġlekk ikollok tmur sar-Rabat jew il-Belt, imma l-bqija moqdijin tajjeb. Aħna hawn noħorġu, kemm fis-sajf u kemm fix-xitwa.

Living in Dingli is imbued as a type of relationship - more specifically, as a sense of shared identity. Interviewees highlighted how living in Dingli provides them with a community 'feeling' or 'spirit' of the community, a sense of shared identity. They perceived and defined residents living in the community as *bil-ġhaqal* (thrifty) and *bieżlin* (hardworking), and always ready to help their fellow community members :

Ahna unique! (laughter) In-nies hawnhekk mhux halja, jaqalghu lira, jonfqu nofsha u jgemma ghlu l-bqija. U nghid jien, ghalfejn ghandek toqghod tonfoq f'hafna mbarazz... Ahna nahdmu hafna. Hafna jorqdu kmieni ghax hafna ghandhom xi ghalqa, daqsxejn patata, anki hass, dejjem tiffranka u fl-istess hin thossok tajjeb. L-arja taghmillek tajjeb.

Of course, people were aware that times were changing and that coming generations or residents who come from outside Dingli were not as firmly attached to such values or followed such norms as they. However, it remains that whilst such exceptional families were in the minority, the public exposure of Dingli was still planned and carried out by families who lived in Dingli for more than one generation.

Social inclusion

Social relationships in Dingli are intimate, enduring, and based upon a clear understanding of each individual's position in society. Personalised relationships are paramount, so that an individual's status was estimated according to who that person was rather than what that person can do. The culture of Dingli is relatively homogenous, enforced by well-recognised moral custodians, particularly the Church and the family. Kinship, indeed, seems to be one of the fundamental blocks of Dingli so that a 'community of blood' coincided with a 'community of place' to produce high levels of emotional cohesion, a greater depth of sentiment, and therefore, a more meaningful way of life :

Jien minn hawn u anki tal-mara. Fir-rahhal ghandna hafna ahwa u kuġini. F'hafna tiġijiet tiltaqa' mar-razza u r-radika! Fih vantaġġ dan ghalix meta jkollok b'zonn l-ghajnuna ssibha! Meta tiġi l-karozza bil-hsara jew il-mara jkollha b'zonn xi haġa, malajr jiġi xi hadd. Però, vera, fl-istess hin ma tista' taghmel xejn, ma jistax ikollok sigrieti hawn.

Indeed, everyday life in Dingli is highly characterised by forms of 'managed intimacy' and 'totality'. Population density engenders high levels of social visibility which fosters 'managed intimacy'. Whilst in larger social systems knowledge of each other is unavailable, in a limited terrain such knowledge is quickly acquired and rapidly altered into public consumption. This produces an atmosphere of familiarity as individuals are unable to take refuge in anonymity and due to an interdependent social network where each person figures many times over. Social visibility leads to a kind of 'totality' - that is, the resulting combination of critical mass and indivisibility constraints on one hand, and of social compactness, visibility and interconnectedness on the other. Life is therefore embodied with a dense psycho-social atmosphere where governments and the community are highly pervasive to the extent that it is virtually impossible to become socially invisible.

This is not, of course, the same as saying that Dingli was totally devoid of any large-scale, impersonal, calculative and contractual relationships, or that the situation is not changing. In the past three decades Dingli has gone through a process of de-urbanisation - namely, a steady influx of residents from both neighbouring and afar towns and cities - as part of the 'flight from cities' experience throughout the whole country. This occurred because the development of public transport and increasing car ownership meant that people did not have to live next door to their workplace. The implementation of large-scale housing schemes in Dingli was also a determining factor. Residents are aware that the younger generations and new

families do not feel as connected to Dingli as those who were born and raised in Dingli, especially now that males as young as eighteen years are old enough to own (second-hand) cars which makes it easier for them to frequent the recreational areas of Malta (especially Paceville), and are quick to label the village as 'backward' and 'boring'. In fact, a distinction was continuously made between those who were raised in Dingli and others who came to live here from other villages/cities :

Had-Dingli villaġġ b'żewġ ucuħ. Fuq naha waħda ghandek il-parti l-antika fejn in-nies huma l-parti l-kbira minn hawn, kulhadd jaf lil xulxin, u hafna ilhom jafu lil xulxin minn meta kienu żgħar, trabbew flimkien. In-naha l-oħra, tista' tgħid ta' wara l-grawnd, joqogħdu nies li ġew minn barra. Dawn, il-biċċa kbira ma jimpurtahom minn xejn li għandu x'jaqsam ma' Had-Dingli, anki għall-festa jmorru gurnata l-baħar.



One downside to high levels of community solidarity is the tendency of inhabitants who come from other villages and cities to be excluded from taking part in the planning and running of activities taking place. Many residents who were not born or raised in Dingli remarked that they found the community too tightly-knit to make any social inroads. Residents who came from Rabat recounted how the Dingli community perceived them suspiciously and rarely let their guard down. These residents pointed out that there exists a Rabat-Dingli antipathy and competition in everyday life, that precluded them from integrating themselves in the community in a meaningful manner. It was also claimed that most community members already had their own circle of friends and kin relations, so that it was difficult to make any new close acquaintances in the community. This experience was especially difficult for full-time home-makers who settled in Dingli from other cities/villages:

Mhux faċli tintegra hawn. Immur nixtri, nara hafna nies u nsellmilhom u huma qishom isellmuli u ma jsellmulix. Ma nafx. Però mbagħad tarahom jitkellmu ma' haddiehor, u jien ikolli seba' mitt sena biex inhallas u nitlaq... Naf, ikunu jafuhom hafna iżjed minni, jien mhux minn hawn, u kulma ili noqgħod hawn tmien snin.

However, it is interesting that even inhabitants who were born and raised in Dingli experienced social exclusion, emphasising how some families held a monopoly in the planning and carrying out any social activities taking place:

Jien li jdejjaqni hu li fir-rahhal huma dejjem l-istess nies li jiġu mgħajta biex jgħinu. Anki l-kappillan, hemm xi żewġ

familji, u minn mindu kont żghira, dejjem huma, dejjem huma. Ghalix? Ma nistax nifhem! Kollox f'idejhom. Jien, kieku jtuni çans, inkun nista' ngħin fil-komunità imma qatt ma kelli çans.

At the same time, one must not fail to mention that when non-governmental organisations reached out to invite people from the Dingli community to take part in running such organisations', this invitation was not taken upon. As the representative of the Dingli Swallows Club recounted,

Dan huwa klabb ġo villaġ żghir u għalhekk dejjem għandna bżonn il-voluntiera. Ahna limitati. Konna ktibna ittra lil kull min joqgħod fir-raħal, fejn fehmu l-pożizzjoni tagħna, u fejn invitajna lin-nies tar-raħal biex jgħinuna. Jistgħu jidhlu membri jew anki fil-kumitat. Minn daqs tant nies, wieħed biss kellimna. (Dingli Swallows Club representative)

One notes that finding limited opportunities to integrate oneself in traditional non-governmental organisations - such as the local football and band club - newcomers to the village tend to find more opportunities in relatively 'modern' associations such as the Girl Guides and Scouts :

Ahna għandna response li nħossu huwa tajjeb hafna għar-raħal żghir bħal Ħad-Dingli. Il-ġenituri lesti li jikkollaboraw magħna, u anki meta norganizzaw fundraising activities, ir-risposta tkun waħda li ttik kurraġġ...Għandna response tajjeb mir-raħal kollu. Ħafna ġenituri jgħibu t-tfal hawn. (Scouts leader)

Il-ġenituri jgħinu hafna, fejn jistgħu ovvjament, imma meta jkollna l-laqqgħat, speċjalment il-ġenituri tal-girl guides iż-żgħar, dawn jattendu u jaħdmu id f'id magħna... Għandna bniet mir-raħal kollu. Il-ġenituri jgħidulna li jħossuhom

komdi jibagħtu t-tfal tagħhom hawn u japprezzaw ix-xogħol tagħna fil-komunità. (Girl Guides representative(s))

Safety

Dingli is perceived as being characterised by low levels of crime, drugs and antisocial behaviour. Interviewees feel safe to walk about most parts of the village, even at night, and the only problem is the presence of stray dogs on the outskirts of the village. Two major issues that makes residents feel anxious and perturbed consisted in the over-speeding of cars - especially in Ġuze Ellul Mercer and St. Mary streets - and the lack of policing in the locality. In their own words,

Issa mhux hażin. Imma kien hawn żmien fejn it-triqat, ngħidilhom jien id-dritti, kienu jużawhom biex itellqu l-karozzi. Però anki filgħodu meta n-nies ikunu mgħaġġlin għax-xogħol jafsulha l-karozza. U anki filgħaxija, speċjalment is-Sibt, meta ż-żgħażaġh jōhorōgu. Jekk nibqgħu sejr in hekk ikollna xi diżgrazzja. Jaqbadni l-bard naħseb.

For residents, policing in Dingli is far from being visible, effective and community-friendly. The police station is closed most of the times, and when it is open, there are frequently no police personnel stationed. There are no police personnel on the beat, and many suspect that when over-speeding occurs and motorcyclists drive without helmets, police tend to 'close an eye' or 'look the other way' so that no arrests or fines are ever issued :

L-Għassa dejjem magħluqa, jew fuq l-antiporta però ma jkun hemm hadd. Darba mort nirraporta habta, għax kont hbatt, però ma kien hemm hadd. Qbadna u rranġajna bejnietna imma ma għandux ikun hekk. Għall-inqas ikollna l-hinijiet meta tiftaħ, mhux ma nafu xejn, u jekk tkun miftuħa tkun miftuħa, u jekk tkun magħluqa tkun magħluqa.

Well run

Local governance

For almost all the people interviewed, Dingli is governed by a highly effective and efficient DLC whose elected members are ever ready to put the needs of the community as their priority. As various interviewees emphasised,

Ahna għandna kunsill buli (sic), jaħdmu kollha kemm huma, speċjalment is-Sindku...Il-kunsill jgħinek, tmur hemm thossok stmat u li għandhom hin għalik...Jien kelli tappiera tagħmel l-istorbju, tant li kont qed inbati biex norqod, mort filgħodu, wara nofsinhar kienu diġà bagħtu lil xi hadd jirranġaha...Jekk għandna xi haġa tajba hawn hu li l-kunsilliera ma jimxux bil-kulur politiku. Jaħdmu għar-raħal, u int min int, x'kulur int, jaraw kif ha jgħinuk... (Various interviewees)

This is excellent news for the community as in other localities the squabbles between local councillors from different political parties have been well-documented in the local media as well as academic

studies. Special praise was awarded to the Dingli's Mayor whom the community sees offering strategic and visionary leadership. Residents recounted how despite being elected on the Labour Party ticket, the Mayor did not differentiate between Nationalist and Labour Party sympathisers, consulted with all the stakeholders in the community, and had no doubt that he put the welfare of Dingli above Labour Party interests. This emerged clear when all the councillors rallied behind the mayor when he objected the possibility of a factory being turned as a Fireworks Depot in Dingli Cliffs. Of course, it would be naive to think that the DLC operates completely devoid of problems and political manoeuvres but it remains that, relatively to other local councils, it runs smoothly and has a strong positive relationship with most of the residents.

One key issue in the local governance concerned the NIMY ('Not In My Own Backyard') attitude and mentality of many residents in the community. Although, as already highlighted, residents feel a sense of identity and place in the community, and are quick to emphasise their strong commitment to the improvement of Dingli, the sacredness of their dwelling was second to none. The NIBY attitude was evident

when interviewees tended to prioritise their personal interests over communal ones. Many residents attended DLC meetings only when they had personal interest on an item on the agenda, and were not ready to jeopardise the economic value of their dwelling. For instance, despite their concern on car over-speeding, residents did not want to have traffic humps in front of their houses. Similarly, bus stops and skips - or public washrooms for that matter - were not wanted either in front or in the vicinity of their houses :

Mhux sewwa ghax il-Pulizija ma taghmilx xogholha rridu nbatu ahna. Ghalfejn ghandu jkolli sleeping policeman quddiemi, biex il-karozza tal-linja toqghod tieqaf, taghmel l-istorbju u tifgana bl-exhaust. Kulhadd jaf min huma li jgerru...Bus stop tfottihielek dar. Nies wara l-bieb, storbju, u fix-xemx jstakennu fuq l-ghatba, ma tistax tohrog jew thalli l-bieb imbexxaq, jew anki tahsel l-ghatba. Ghal grazzja t'Alla qieghda daqsxejn 'il boghod...[Various interviewees]

This tension between what's good for the community and personal interests was present throughout many interviews, and contradicted many an interviewee's opinions. This was especially evident when residents stated the need for more public spaces for children but then were unhappy that they lived in the vicinity of public gardens, or when they praised the work of the various non-governmental organisations in the locality but then resisted that these organisations are given meeting premises in the vicinity of their households.

Civic values, responsibility and pride



Dingli residents were, by and large, extremely proud of their village, and strove for a responsible local government that safeguarded the various cultural and historical spots in the locality. Many took part in organising and/or attended *Jum Had-Dingli*. They were highly pleased that their locality included unique aspects to the Maltese Islands such as the Dingli Cliffs, *Ta' Baldu*, *is-Simblija*, and *l-Ghar il-Kbir* - even if to-date the latter three do not fall within Dingli territory (*Ta' Baldu* and *is-Simblija* lie within the confines of Rabat, and *l-Ghar il-Kbir* are situated within Siggiewi - the DLC is currently planning action so as to bring these three sites under its jurisdiction). Many voiced their apprehension that some unique features of Dingli were being left to their own devices with the consequence that were breaking down, or that the DLC was not doing enough to educate the residents on the cultural and historical character of the community :

Inhoss li l-affarijiet li ghandna ma niehdux hsiebhom sew, tant li qed jispicċaw. Kieku haddimna mohhna, ghandna biex naghmlu mużew mill-aqwa, imma mur sibhom l-affarijiet issa. Kollox tmermer...Nghidu, pereżempju, l-Għajn, ghaliex din ma taħdimx? Meta kont zgħir niftakarha taħdem u kienet ghaxxa. Haġ' oħra! In-nies jafu biha? Jafu bl-Għajn tal-Hasselein? Jekk ma niehdux hsieb dawn il-postijiet, u nuruhom lit-tfal tagħna, ha nispicċaw bhala rahal...[Various interviewees]

Many voiced their concern that the community, and to a certain extent, the DLC and Church authorities in particular, are not doing their utmost in establishing Dingli as prime heritage site on the par of other Maltese cities and villages. Here, one must underline that despite such assertions the DLC is working very hard to bring various heritage sites in Dingli under its control. Through the Mayor's hard work, the DLC has just acquired the *Għajn tal-Hasselein* and there is a pending MEPA application for its restoration, and there are also plans to restore *l-Għajn* in Triq il-Buskett. Accessing *Ta' Baldu* and *l-Għar il-Kbir* is proving to be more problematic due to the fact that these are found in private lands, with the latter also being situated outside the geographic area under the jurisdiction of DLC.

Voluntary sector

Volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life, but people also volunteer for their own skill development, to meet others, to make contacts for possible employment, to have fun, and a variety of other reasons that could be considered self-serving. The voluntary sector in Dingli is alive and kicking, with an extremely high number of non-governmental organisations per capita, especially when you consider that some only target children. Field research uncovered the following organisations :

Dingli Swallows Football Club: As in other localities, football is the most popular sport in the community. The Dingli Swallows Football Club, founded in 1948, offers an opportunity for children, teenagers and young adults (males only to-date) to practice this sport under professional guidance as way to relieve stress caused by the educational system and the negative effects of peer pressure. The Club currently plays in the Premier Division which is considered to be a great success considering the smallness of the village, and consequently, the lack of financial and human resources. The club is very popular in the community and the number of boys training with the club number as follows : under 7 (17 children), under 9 (17 children), under 11 (15 children), under 13 (20 children), under 15 (25 children), and under 17 (25 children).

External Feast Committee: This committee is responsible for the activities that take place outside the Church and in the community during the annual village feast. It is therefore responsible for the fireworks, band marches, street decorations, and logistical arrangements with the Police and DLC. The committee has eighteen members with the following roles : President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Public Relations Officer. The rest are members.

St. Mary Band Club: This club promotes the teaching of musical band instruments as well as the stimulation of a developed sense

of appreciation of the art of music. At the same time, it acts as a social centre where the members participate in cultural, educational, and social activities in a relaxed and familiar atmosphere. The club includes 43 musicians that were all the products of the Ġużè M. Spiteri School of Music which is part of the same club. Although the majority of musicians are from Dingli there are some from outside the village (from Imtarfa, Ħal Tarxien, Bahrija and Rabat). The school is directed by four qualified teachers of music (three male and a female). The band consists of the following musicians : Flute (2), Eb Clarinet (2), Bb Clarinet (13), Bb Trumpet (5), Saxophone Soprano (2), Saxophone Alto (5), Saxophone Tenor (1), Althorn (3), Euphonium (4), Trombone (2), Bass (1), and Percussion (3). The club also has a choir of eight persons, all female and above the age of 25. At the moment this school has about five students learning an instrument.



Ghaqda Talent Dingli: This association provides an opportunity for Dingli residents, of various ages and all levels of skills and experience, to take part in amateur dramatics productions. It stages a variety of performances throughout the year working alongside other non-governmental organisations and the Parish Church. This association includes approximately 80 members whose ages varies from 3 to 65 years.

Girl Guides Association: This association caters, in a holistic way, for the needs of girls and young women in Dingli. The association claims that being a member of the Girl Guides Association is exciting and a great way for girls to make friends while discovering their potential by having fun and being active. The Malta Girl Guides Association was founded in 1923 and are full members of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (W.A.G.G.S). As a Girls-Only organization, this association believes that such an environment gives the best opportunities for girls and young women to develop personally and socially. The association provides girls and young women, a non-formal educational programme where girls and young women develop leadership and life skills through self-development, challenge and adventure. Girl Guides learn by doing through their 8-point programme and following their commitment of the Promise & Laws - namely, health, mind and spirit, local and international guiding, creativity, skills, environment, culture and heritage, and service. This association includes a total of 56 members, broken down as follows : guiders (7), unite helpers (1), young leaders (2), Rangers (5), Guides (15), Brownies (20) and Dolphins (6).

Labour Party Dingli Office: This office serves as a local branch for the Labour Party. It provides members and other Dingli residents with the

opportunity to take part in social and leisure activities, and in political events that are in line with the ideology and interests of the Labour Party in Malta.

Christian Doctrine Society (M.U.S.E.U.M.): The main priority of this organisation is catechetical work. The centre is open for the catechetical formation of children and youths and occasionally adults as well. Additional activities are organised for the children to include recreational and related activities. The male branch has a total of 133 members : *sena 1* (18), *sena 2* (14), *sena 3* (26), *sena 4* (17), *sena 5* (15), *sena 6* (31), *Magħżulin* (8), *Aspiranti* (3), and *Kandidati* (1).



Nationalist Party Dingli Office: This office serves as a local branch for the Maltese Nationalist Party. It provides members and other Dingli residents with the opportunity to take part in social and leisure activities, and in political events that are in line with the ideology and interests of the Nationalist Party in Malta.

Salesian Oratory: The Salesian oratory provides an opportunity for children and teenagers to become more educated and a place to play in a secure and adult-supervised environment. The Salesian Oratory also provides the young residents of Dingli with an opportunity to gain skills for life as well as a place for Catholic Worship. In short, the Salesian Oratory is a place where young members of the community can experience love and respect from people outside their immediate family, always within a Catholic environment. The number of members fluctuates and in early 2009 the Oratory had as much as about 160 members (circa), but at the time of writing this report the number went down to 60.

Dingli Scouts: The Dingli Scout Group offers activities that compliments schooling and family outings, fulfilling needs met by neither. The activities carried out by the Dingli Scout Group helps children to develop self-knowledge the need to explore and to discover. For those children who seek achievement this organization offers a number of Challenge Awards and Activity badges which help them to bring out their talents, keep them fit in mind and encouraging them to depend on their own abilities. The number of scouts are as follows : Beavers (16 boys, 9 girls), Cubs (16 boys, 6 girls), Scouts (12 boys 15 girls), Ventures (6 boys), and Rovers (4 boys, 1 girl).



Interviews highlighted the extreme dedication the persons involved in running such organisations. They put in a considerable number of hours of work, meeting fellow organisers and client group many

Well connected

Public transport

The public transport service to Dingli has experienced substantial improvements in recent decades. Whilst in the past commuters were made to embark in Rabat and wait for another bus to take them on forward to their destination, nowadays buses leave the Dingli terminus frequently and all the way to Valletta. Moreover, there are direct transport services to Junior College, the University of Malta, and Mater Dei Hospital. Whilst in the past a trip to Valletta was unfeasible unless you could spare some two hours for transportation, trips have become shorter so that many are willing to go shopping in Rabat, Valletta, and Sliema by public transport :

Għalkemm mhux daqshekk faċli li taqbad tal-linja u tigrì biha, qegħdin hafna aħjar minn qabel. Sar-Rabat tasal malajr, u anki sal-Belt illum mhux xi haġa kbira biex tmur b'tal-linja. Ifhimni, ma tistax tkun mgħaġġel għax trid tistenna fuq l-istage u għandek kważi erbgħin minuta biex tasal il-Belt, imma jekk taħseb kmieni, worth it!

Reluctant users of public transport include employees who work on shift, and others who have more than one stop on their itinerary such as parents who, in addition to their work destination, have to drop their children at grandparents, schools and child-care centres. Whilst multi-stop journeys are - at the time of writing this report - unfeasible by public transport, those living in the Buskett area find it impossible to come to Dingli by public transport since the return leg of the trip does not go through Buskett. Families living in rural residences - sometimes some five to ten minutes away by car from the village centre - are, unfortunately, completely cut off from the public transport route, as are older persons (especially those above the age of 75) whose functional limitations mean that climbing up and down the steep bus steps is not an easy practice :

Impossibbli nuża tal-linja. Irrid inwassal it-tfal għand ommi f'Hal-Qormi, immur ix-xogħol, imbagħad nerġa'

times a week, some almost everyday, spending significant amount of personal financial resources on fuel telephone calls, and with their private lives revolving substantially around the needs and operations of their respective organisations. The relatively high number of non-governmental organisations implies that residents in Dingli have no problem in identifying and participating in leisure and cultural avenues that interests them. Indeed, many families are members in more than one non-governmental organisation, some even in various, and this reflects well on both the voluntary services and participation in the community. One expected that the combination of longer working hours, the increasing number of mothers in paid employment, rising participation of private lessons and more (sometimes bordering on the excessive) cyberspace activity on behalf of teenagers and adults alike, would result in a steep decline in participation rates in non-governmental organisations. Yet, this has occurred in Dingli only to a limited extent. Of course, the running and planning of non-government organisations - like in other localities - is not without its share of difficulties and problems. This issue will be discussed in more detail in a further section.

nghaddi għalihom, u ġieli jkollni nieqaf nixtri mill-grocer... It-trasport bla sens għalija. Nigi mill-Buskett imma mbagħad ma nistax immur lura. Nista' nimxi imma jien inkun għamilt xirja. Ikollni nigi hawn ma xi hadd bil-karozza għax jien ma nsuqx...Aħna minsijin hawn. Ili nħambaq biex forsi naraw kif karozza tal-linja, imqar darbtejn kuljum, darba filgħodu u filgħaxija, tgħaddi minn fejn noqogħdu aħna. Vera li qegħdin ftit hawn aħna, u xi ftit imwarrbin, imma xorta ċittadini bħal haddiehor...L-anzjani ma tantx jistgħu jużawha tal-linja. L-istaffa għolja wisq! Darba rajt lil wahda titla' l-istaffa fuq irkoptejha. Niżlu jgħinuha imma ngħiduha kif inhi, kedda kbira... (Various interviewees)

As children get older and get to attend the primary school in Dingli, or other schools which offer them transport, parents' use of private vehicle is reduced. However, it is equally true that as children get older they get increasingly attracted to leisure services and cultural activities, not to mention private lessons, that are only available outside the community. It is hoped that following the current reform underway in the public transport system the situation of residents in Dingli continue to improve.

Parking, walking, and cycling facilities

The relatively small number of residents in Dingli means that there are no widespread parking problems. Many own their personal garage, and if not, can find parking very close to their residence. There are no major matches played in the football ground, and the few that are scheduled, are usually non-league or junior matches which generate limited traffic. Parking is also possible when attending Sunday Mass and even when shopping in the inner zone areas. Moreover, tourist arrivals on Sundays and other public holidays do not really affect the village as these head towards Dingli Cliffs which are some way out of the village and where there are adequate parking facilities. The only exception is in the early morning, during the morning rush hour when most residents are leaving for work and/or taking children to

school, and when it is common to see double parking even despite the presence of traffic wardens.

The lack of heavy traffic makes walking and cycling around the village and its outskirts an enjoyable activity. The only problem, and a major one for sure, is that pavements are being constructed with ramps so as to accommodate the many garages found in Dingli's streets. This is very inconvenient to local residents, especially those who drive pushchairs, older persons, persons with disability, and others with functional limitations. Moreover, residents voiced their frustration at the obstacles they face :

Hawn bankini tajbin, bhal ta' [Triq] Claudette Agius, però hawn oħrajn daqsxejn perikoluži li jaqbillek iżjed timxi fit-triq. Ġieli tiltaqa' ma' granpuni fil-ħajt biex iżommu t-twieqi miftuħa li jekk tolqothom ma' moħħok iħalluk hemm tal-post. Dawn in-nies għandhom jindunaw bil-periklu ta' dawn il-granpuni. Hemm ukoll djar li għandhom tarġa fuq il-bankina. Din ukoll hija perikoluża.

It is certain that more education is needed as how the community can keep pavements easily accessible to everyone.

Communication networks

Dingli residents are well connected to communication networks. Interviewees were all aware of the central role that communication

technology is leading in contemporary lives. Business operators could not remain competitive unless they owned a mobile phone, were connected to the internet, and were ready to invest in the latest equipment. For instance, all pubs and bars own a cable license to display foreign football matches on one, or in some cases even two, television sets. Families, especially those with children and teenagers, were all connected to the internet for both educational and leisure purposes. Older persons, traditionally thought not to be at the forefront of the cyberspace revolution, are also becoming increasingly computer and internet literate - although to be fair this was more prevalent amongst older males than their female counterparts :

Domt ma kelli kuraġġ nixtri kompjuter, għax hsibt li m'inx kapaċi imma t-tifel għamilli ħafna kuraġġ u għeni nixtri kompjuter mingħand ħabib tiegħu u f'radda ta' salib kelli wiehed. Għall-bidu kienet diffiċli u t-tifel kien ġej u sejjer jgħini fil-problemi li ltaqjt magħhom imma issa sejjer tajjeb ħafna. Nikteb ittri, nikkopja diski u films għall-użu personali tiegħi, u anki għandi mailing list għall-kartolini tal-Milied.

Moreover, everybody tends to own a mobile phone so that most families now own some three to five telephone lines when one takes in consideration the landline at home. Indeed, the public and private lives of interviewees were both becoming increasingly based on novel communication networks which indicate both increasing affluence and consumerism.

Well served

Activities

Dingli is a very active locality and offers various opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, and sport activities, both for its younger and older residents. Indeed, many of the residents believe that considering Dingli's relatively small population, it includes too many organisations. The range and nature of non-governmental organisations in Dingli have been outlined in a previous section. Herein, it is opportune to mention some of the difficulties and problems surrounding the presence of a relatively high number of organisations in a small locality :

- » First, one notices a strong competition for participants, as will always be case when the supply of opportunities for activities and the pool of possible participants are high and restricted respectively. There is nothing essentially strong with a strong drive by non-governmental organisations to attract more members. Problems, however, arise when particular associations decide to open their membership boundaries and target a particular sector of society which is the only source of membership of another association.
- » Secondly, one also notices an unsociable pattern in determining the dates for fundraising activities where the strongest associations tend to show less respect to smaller organisations which may have set scheduled their activities well in advance. Many organisations showed clear disappointment that not everybody declared their activities in the DLC's Diary to the extent that this procedure was abandoned. It was impossible for the author, as well as not

being the scope of this report, to determine which organisations were more reluctant to collaborate but it was clear that a lack of partnership was rife amongst the community's associations.

- » And finally, as a direct result of the first two situational problems, it was clear that there existed a strong animosity between certain associations. Again, which organisations show strong dislike to each other is not the scope of this report, and the author believes that this information is very well known in the Dingli residents. It suffices to say that many organisations informed me that the ethos of the voluntary services in Dingli is 'min hu l-aqwa jħawwell' which can be easily translated to the English saying of 'might is right'. Without doubt this situation is a serious threat to the sustainable development of Dingli.



Lifelong learning

The locality has two schools within its locality, one primary (Ġuże Ebejer Primary School run by the government) and another secondary (Savio College, run by the Salesians). It was only the former which came up as a topic during the interviews since it is the school which caters for most of the sons and daughters of Dingli residents. The secondary school, so far, caters for students who take part in a nationwide exam for boys aged ten years. Residents whose sons and daughters attended the primary school were very pleased with its levels of instruction. Far from being a non-consequential school in a peripheral village, residents emphasised the high quality of teachers present in this school, and the professional and rigorous way in which the administration and coordinators carry on their work. Many interviewees were past pupils of this school so that they were in a position to note the improvements that occurred throughout these past two decades or so. In their opinion, the primary school is far from simply a place where pupils are simply taught the basic academic subjects but represents an avenue where holistic learning takes place successfully. As parents emphasised, pupils may borrow books from the library, engage in sports and other physical activities, given an opportunity to study subjects in the humanities such as social studies, history and geography, as well as other topics including ICT, science, personal and social development, music and drama. In one parents' own words,

L-iskola tajba hafna. L-ghalliema u s-surmast jaraw il-bżonnijiet ta' kull student minn lenti wiesgħa. Jghallmu sew ghax jghaddulhom hafna għal Junior Lyceum u għall-iskejjel tal-knisja. Hemm hafna dixxiplina wkoll li hi haga tajba hafna... Joħorġuhom hafna drabi matul is-sena, li permezz tagħhom jieħdu hafna tagħrif Prattiku u utli.



The DLC also represents a hub of social and learning activity, and coordinates classes in literacy (Maltese and English), life skills for teenagers and adults, information and communication technology, aerobics, *filigranu*, electricity (basic course), self-defence, and modern dance. It also coordinates cultural-educational activities such as the Francis Ebejer appreciation evening some years back and various cultural outings. Moreover, many associations in the locality provide free or subsidised learning opportunities. For instance, the Scouts Association and St. Mary Band Club provide members with music classes, the Girl Guides Association instruct girls in the basic personal and social skills needed in modern times, and the MUSEUM branches work hard to instil in children and adults a strong Catholic formation. The Day Car centre (more on this service below in the coming section) offers many educational services to older persons -

as well as on some occasions to the community at large - ranging from health prevention courses to cultural awareness programmes.

Social services

Dingli residents have a lot of social services to fall upon. This report has already emphasised the sterling work conducted by the DLC. Moreover, the locality boasts of a highly efficient and organised day centre open to older persons aged 60 and above, and persons with special needs irrespective of their age. It currently has approximately 65 members. The DLC provides transport for Day Centre members who have mobility problems or who live relatively far away. The day centre succeeds in preventing social isolation and the feeling of loneliness, and in reducing the social interaction difficulties which older persons tend to encounter. It also aims to motivate members by encouraging them to participate in the planning of day centre activities by enabling older persons and persons with special needs to remain as independent and socially integrated as possible whilst at the same time providing respite for their relatives and carers. The main activities that are organised in the day centre include the service of physiotherapy sessions, occupational therapy, podologist, creative, social, physical, educational activities and dancing lessons. These activities are complemented by educational talks on topics of particular relevance to older adults. Guest speakers are invited to deliver lectures about health issues, home safety, and welfare services in addition to outdoor activities which are also organised monthly. The Dingli day centre also promotes intergenerational activities by inviting younger adults and children to share experiences with older adults.

The sub-post office also drew positive comments. Many, especially residents who have family abroad and are older, are frequent users of the postal system, and pointed out that the opening hours of this service were adequate, and even complimented by a good and efficient service. Despite the relative smallness of the Dingli community, which as a consequence can only generate a small number of private services, residents claim that they are well served. Dingli includes the services of groceries, greengroceries and butchers - which provide all the everyday needs of an average household at very competitive prices - although the purchasing of fresh fish remains somewhat problematic :

Illum sirt kwaži tinqeda minn kollox hawn. Ikel, laħam, posta, ħaxix, insomma, issib kwaži kollox. Anki minn jaħdem il-madam u l-ġebel hawn. Jien rari nixtri affarijiet barra minn hawn...

The presence of stationeries, ironmongers, take-away outlets, DVD renting retailer, hairdressing salon, and haberdasheries also makes the lives of residents easier.

Interviews met three main grievances as far as social services are concerned. One complaint constituted the absence of a bank, with the nearest one being at Rabat. This was a problem especially for older people and others who do not drive :

Din li m'hawnx bank kbira! Mela l-gvern ma jafx li rridu nsarrfu ċ-ċekk u niġbdu l-flus is-sena kollha...Qabel meta kellna l-bank tagħna konna aħjar. Stajt immur meta ridt u mhux noqgħod ngħid lil binti biex teħodni magħha...Hawn anzjani li kellhom jibdeu iħallu kollox f'idejn uliedhom minħabba li ma hawnx bank. Mhux sewwa! Il-gvern għandu jsib soluzzjoni...(Various, Day Care Centre members)

Although many understand that it does not make economic sense for a bank to open a branch in Dingli - due to the fact that the local population is small and that not many residents are interested in investing money but rather to simply cash their cheques, a type of transaction from which the bank will not make very limited profit - it remains that availability of banking services is an essential component of sustainable communities. Although Dingli does have an ATM machine, older persons are reluctant to use it. This could be changed by a programme of financial literacy at the Day Care Centre sponsored by the bank whose ATM is positioned in Dingli. It is also hoped that in the coming future, the government will enter in discussion with the major banks with the possibility of subsidising a local branch for social justice reasons.

Another grievance was related to the social and personal needs of persons with disability. It was not the scope of this report to be a full-scale analysis of the needs of persons with disability living in Dingli, so that the data and ideas presented here were the result of meeting with a very limited number of persons with disability. It is clear from the interviews that Dingli is not very convenient for persons with disabilities as the locality presents them with a number of street furniture, and especially in summer, feast decorations². Persons with mobility impairment find it difficult, sometimes to get on or down from pavements, especially if cars park next to the ramps. Signs need to be put up near ramps so that cars do not obstruct them. Another problem is that barriers have been built at openings at Ġnien il-Familja in order to safeguard children from crossing the roads haphazardly. Whilst the aim is commendable what the community failed to see is that these openings were the only parts where ramps were constructed - and hence - the only points of accessibility for wheelchair bound persons. It is unfortunate to note that some pavements have building stones (knaten) which preclude persons with mobility disabilities, especially those that are wheel chair, from accessing the other side of the pavement. It is also unfortunate to note that shops are not accessible, even those which have set up recently, to the surprise of local persons with disability. In Dingli, persons with disability are in a great need for official social assistance from both central and local government sources. However, it is unfortunate to note that most of the social services run by the DLC are for able-bodied persons, and that at no instance are persons with disabilities offered empowerment courses that would lead them to improve their self-confidence, mobility training, independent living skills, and know-how in assistive apparatus. Moreover, it is certainly a good idea for the community at large to receive education - even of an information leaflet type - of the etiquette with persons with disability such as meeting a blind person, and consequently, how to enter and leave the room, dining together, and guiding him/her around. While the Dingli community has a 'heart of gold' and residents go out of their way to help persons with disability - even to the point of taking them out in their car every given Sunday - much more structures for social services are needed. The DLC must ensure that persons with disability have a smooth access as possible to physical environment, information and services whilst at the same time combating the problems of social isolation and social exclusion.

It is the opinion of the author that the absence of a ramp in most of the shops in Dingli, even new ones, does render the community inclusive.

The final main complaint, especially by young families, is that the locality offers no facilities for child care when in other localities government-run nurseries provide a service to children as young as eighteen months. Although young mothers working with either the government or public-private companies are provided with adequate maternal and parental leave, others who work with private companies do not enjoy such benefits. If they have no members from the external families (usually the maternal grandmother) who are willing to take care of their young children, at least until they enter kindergarten, they have no other option but to exit from the workforce.

Health-care services

Residents were generally disappointed with the local health services provided at the *Berga* in Ġuże Ellul Mercer Street since it was claimed that this office had decreased its services in recent years. It was also maintained that for many years the government had stopped maintaining the *Berga* to the extent that it was in a general state of disrepair and shabbiness - until the DLC stepped in and conducted the needed refurbishment works even though this was the responsibility of the central government. In the early 2000s, Dingli residents could use this office as a place for emergency treatment when they felt unwell, as well as a place where their blood pressure and samples are taken. Nowadays, it was emphasised, one could only get treatment through an appointment even if one experiences sudden ill-health :

Vera li hemm il-berga, u naf li taqdi hafna nies, imma żgur li jixirqilna ahjar. Ghandna bżonn li nkunu nafu izjed fuq is-servizzi li nistghu nircievu. Jien ili noqgħod hawn ghaxar snin u qatt ma rcevejt fuljett fuq kif nista' nuza dan il-post. Anki jekk din tkun magħluqa filghaxija, għandu jkun hemm notice board mimlija informazzjoni...Jien għandi t-tfal żgħar, jekk jaqbadhom xi haġa wara nofsinħar jew fil-weekend, fejn ha mmur? Forsi 'l quddiem ikun hawn xi care centre ġo Ħad-Dingli, forsi hdejn il-Kunsill...

The absence of medical and paramedical services (especially nursing and podiatry care) is a problem for many residents, especially older females who do not drive, who find that in the occurrence of ill-health they have no other alternative than to go to the Rabat Health Centre or visiting the offices of two private medical practitioners which are stationed close to the village centre. Residents informed me that house visits by private medical practitioners were generally avoided and practiced only as a last resort as they were considered as relatively expensive. Of course, such life patterns are largely true only to specific categories of Dingli residents - such as older and vulnerable families who are the risk-of-poverty - and should not be generalised to the whole of the Dingli community. In fact, there are many families in Dingli - especially the self-employed and professionals - who can afford to call private medical practitioners and even specialists such as paediatricians for house visits.

² 'Street furniture' means any object, movable or immovable, which is the Council's property or is under its responsibility, and which although would not substantially form part of the road, pavement, garden or other public area, would be placed in such area or fixed to it, or even placed on it, and includes dustbins, benches, poles, planters, boundary walls, walls, columns, roundabouts, central strips and traffic islands.

Environmentally sensitive

Communities need to take responsibility for the protection and rehabilitation of the physical environment. The environment is a critical component of community, and needs to be incorporated in any integrated approach to sustainable development. This applies both to the natural environment and to the built environment. Environmental issues are important in bringing a community together, as well as serving as a catalyst for community action.

Green services

The DLC provides services that aid residents respect the environment and use resources efficiently. It provides public conveniences next to its premises in the centre of Dingli. The DLC offers the service of door-to-door collection of household waste as domestic waste is collected everyday including public holidays, and a bulky refuse twice a week. Both services are offered free of charge. Skips for metal, plastics, paper, and glass are present in more than one locality. The DLC provides for the service a street cleaning service for the cleaning of public roads and public gardens. Residents felt very well-served by these services and professed to use them frequently :

Rigward l-iskart ma hawnx xi tgerger. Kuljum jiġi jiġbor, anki l-Ħdud u l-festi. Qabel ma konniex nagħtu kas, imma issa grazzi għall-Gvern u anki l-Kunsill sirna iżjed konxji tal-ambjent u meta jiġbru l-borża l-griza hafna djar johorġu wahda...Domt ftit biex drajt imma l-Kunsill bagħat fuljett jispejġa x'għandek tarmi u x'għandek titfa' fil-borża l-griza għar-riċiklaġġ. Billi jiġu jiġbru kuljum ma għandekx il-problema li l-iskart ha jakkumula f'darek...Għandna wkoll il-bring-in-sites. Jien nużahom meta nkun naħdem bix-xift u għalhekk ma nkunx nista' noħroġ l-iskart fis-sitta ta' filgħaxija. Fir-raħal qegħdin fejn il-grawnd, post ċentrali hafna, faċli tilhaqhom minn kullimkien...[Various interviewees]

Moreover, as stated in official regulations the following activities need a DLC's permit : placing a skip in public property, placing of kiddie ride machine in public property, deposit of building material in public property, deposit and use of crane and machinery, placing of tables and chairs in public property for catering services, placing of kiosk, trenching works, and entertainment.

Well designed and built

Public and green spaces

One of the main strengths of Dingli is the presence of user-friendly public and green spaces. Dingli boasts two public gardens, *Ġnien il-Ħaddiem* (which also includes a five-a-side synthetic football pitch) and *Ġnien il-Familja*. The latter, due to its more central location, has become very popular in the summer where children can be seen playing till late in the evenings. At the same time, Dingli's geographical position makes it ideal for countryside walks. Many residents claimed how living in Dingli makes it possible to enjoy weekends without leaving the village, by going for long walks and hikes near Dingli Cliffs or other neighbouring places.

Appropriate design and layout

Dingli is of an appropriate size and has an adequate level of density. Its design consists of three concentric zones : an inner business district with the shops, civic buildings, and commercial enterprises, a second outer zone consisting of the older residential area, and a third outer zone of suburban terraced houses and maisonettes. More specifically, the second outer zone includes Housing Estate 1 & 2 which was built in the 1970s and early 1980s, and whose majority of residents were born and grew up in Dingli. The third outer zone included Housing Estate 3 where the majority of residents are from cities/villages outside Dingli. However, all places are within walking distances, and the inner zone includes all the important shops such as stationeries, haberdasheries, unisex hairdressing saloons, DVD rental, groceries and greengroceries, and ironmongers. The Church is also found in the centre of the village. The majority of older people reside in the inner zone, and hence, have no problem in gaining access to these outlets or to religious functions. However, if one looks at the demographic composition of residents it follows that in about two decades or so a significant number of adult residents in the third zone will be in their later years. This calls for much preparation on behalf

of local governance, a process which may be termed as senior-smart planning.

Housing market

One key issue in sustainable development is related to whether communities offer sufficient suitable land and buildings to support the community. Unfortunately, young engaged couples wishing to set up a family in Dingli are finding it very difficult to purchase suitable housing at affordable prices and rental opportunities are almost non-existent. Young females engaged to boyfriends from Dingli or from other cities/villages are generally very keen to take up residence in Dingli. Apart from holding an emotional affinity with the locality, they prefer to set up a family in close proximity to their family of origin for child-care related reasons. However, this is becoming more difficult to accomplish. Suitable land for housing has been almost fully-developed in Dingli and local couples must compete with an increasing number of couples and young families who want to steer away from central and harbour cities due to their high levels of various types of pollution. Indeed, the search for suitable housing in Dingli has emerged as a fundamental source of anxiety for locally engaged couples :

Aħna domna hafna biex sibna post hawn Ħad-Dingli. Il-flats li bdejna naraw kienu żgħar u għoljin hafna [fil-prezz], u għalhekk iddeċidejna li naraw bnadi oħra. Konna vera mdejġin għax anki r-Rabat kienu għoljin mhux hażin. Kien żmien vera diffiċli u ta' dwejjaq, tant li kien ikollok aptit thassar tant kemm ma tarax futur. Però mbagħad konna fortunati għax sid ta' flat li konna rajna għall-bejgħ ċemplilna u qalilna li lest jinżel fil-prezz. Ġebbed minn hawn u ġebbed minn hemm xtrajnieh. Imsallbin qegħdin. Insomma, taħdem trid biex taqta' kemm tista' u timlieh biżżejjed biex tkun tista' tidhol tgħix fih.

Many parents, in fact, feel obliged to help their children in this quest by either lending them money without interest, or - if they live in a terraced house - demolish their dwelling and build some two to three new units for themselves and their children :

S'issa t-tifla mhijex gharusa imma qalet lil ommha li meta tizzewweg hawn trid tibqa'. Issa naraw ghax mhux b'xejn tixtri hawn! Jiena lest nghinha kif nista', xi haga mgemma' ghandi imma ma nahsibx li hu bizzejjed illum. Izjed nahseb inwaqqa' hawn u ntella' xi tliet flats, wiehed ghalija, iehor ghaliha, u mbigh l-iehor. Ghat-tfal taghmel kollox.

Engaged couples who fail to find affordable housing in Dingli seek other possible housing options at neighbouring cities and villages, especially Rabat and Mtarfa, although some are even constrained to venture to more distant villages/cities.

Buildings and negative environmental impacts

The relationship between the housing market and negative environmental impacts is a thorny and problematic issue in the Dingli community. As was well documented in the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment's (2009) *Pre-Budget 2009 Document*, the inconvenience and concern to neighbours, caused by the construction industry, has increased substantially since the year 2000. Up to some years ago there were still sizeable tracts of land, within development boundaries, that remained untouched by development. The development activity that took place in these areas had little or no effect on established urban areas. As the amount of land that was available for development diminished, developers turned to vacant

plots within the established areas and to the redevelopment of existing properties. Hence, the increased impact of construction activity on the quality of people's lives has become more real. As is expected, this is generating much displeasure and discontentment amongst the local community since the resulting buildings jar with the visual imagery of conjoining houses and the traditional visual characteristics that typify Dingli's inner zone, as well as due the increasing pollution as the result of cutting stone :

Din li twaqqa' u tibni fottietu r-rahal. Barra mit-trabijiet u t-trakkijiet ghaddejnin ha jgibuh ma jintgharafx. Hawn din it-triq fejn noqghod [Guzè Ellul Mercer] digà mhassra, bil-bini gidid li ma jaqbel xejn mal-oħrajn fuq kull naħa. Illum qed nimxi rasi 'l isfel, l-anqas irrid inħares lejn x'inhu jgri.

Vera morna l-baħar. It-trabijiet ghidli lili. Tnaddaf kull siegħa triq u kullhadd għandu l-asthma illum. X'ma jkollokx asthma bit-trabijiet li qed jaqilghu...Mhux talli jwaqqghu s-sabih imma talli l-bini li jitla' jibqa' shell sakemm jinbiegh u Alla jaf meta se jinbieghu kollha daqs kemm hawn flats għall-bejgh.

There is no easy solution to this dilemma. One cannot stop legal development and even residents who are personally against such expansion admit that in the future even they might convert their housing premises to their economic and personal advantage. It is still to be seen whether a solution to such dilemmas can be found either by the central or local governments, a resolution which is surely very difficult to come by.

Policy discussion

Sustainable 'social' development for communities

For social sustainability to be a real possibility in Dingli, it requires a healthy degree of intra- and inter-generational equity - that is, the recognition and acceptance of differences, and equality in access to opportunities between social groups and generations. Local policy must aim at reducing dismantling social inequalities with regard to the most disadvantaged groups, notably women, children and young, the old-old, and people with disabilities. Although there is considerable variety in the activities that constitute social interventions in sustainable development, they can be categorised into the following three groups : service development, the community centre, and social animation.

Service development

Much sustainable development activity is essentially social service development, involving the identification of social needs, and the provision of structures and services to meet them. Only so can Dingli develop but without putting the needs and aspirations of its residents at risk. The process of service development by the local authorities should involve the following steps :

- » The identification of a concern, either among service providers or in the community at large, e.g. a lack of recreational facilities for

youth, lack of emergency shelter for women in crisis, inadequate housing, loneliness among the aged, increase in vandalism, etc.

- » A detailed or systematic study of the need or problem to determine its nature and extent, through, for example, discussions with service providers, a needs survey, looking at what happens in other places, examination of relevant statistics, etc.
- » A public meeting, forum or consultation, with all the people in the community encouraged to attend or participate. The body must then decide on some course of action, e.g. establishing a committee to examine the matter further, referring the matter to an existing organisation, or establishing a new community-based agency, such as women's refuge, youth centre, etc.
- » If such a new body is to be established, the necessary formalities need to be completed, such as the drawing of a constitution, legal incorporation, possible registration as a co-operative, etc. These essentially determine the structure of the new organisation : who will be its members, how its 'office bearers' will be elected, and so on.
- » The development and on-going operation of the new body, including encouraging people to become actively involved, seeking funding (whether from government, the private sector, the membership,

the local community, or through fundraising projects), possibly employing staff, and so on. And finally,

- » An on-going monitoring and evaluation of the new body and its services, including ensuring that it remains accountable to the local community and/or its constituency.

Each of these steps is itself a complex process. Moreover, social service development does not always follow the stages outlined above, and whilst they are not unique to the development of sustainable development in local communities, they occur to some degree in other forms of community and national development projects.

The community centre

A good sustainable strategy is the presence of a community centre which must be perceived as symbolising all that is good in Dingli. It is also important that the community centre is owned by all the different members of the community - that is, people of all ages and abilities, all non-governmental organisations, and the local government too. Indeed, a major forerunner of this approach to sustainable development is the university settlement movement in the late nineteenth Century in Britain, where settlement houses were established in low income areas and supported a variety of programmes using the energy and skills of socially committed undergraduates. They served a dual purpose of not only providing social programmes for disadvantaged people, but also providing valuable experience for students who were to go on to occupy positions of leadership in the society. The community centre, then, is far from a new concept, and has always been an important component of community development. The simple idea of providing a central meeting place, with some degree of resources (staff, volunteers, funds, equipment, etc.) is still an essential ingredient of much community development work. Such a location can be used for a variety of activities - recreational, educational, political, cultural, health, advocacy - and can become the focal point of for the other kinds of community development activities.

The idea of a community centre - a relaxed informal setting serving as the focal point of neighbourhood activity - has been a more recent manifestation of local neighbourhoods, at an even more localised level. A neighbourhood house in Dingli can be used as a basis for child care, education, skills development, information and referral, group discussions, and so on. The initiative for developing a community centre or neighbourhood house can come from a number of quarters, including local government, state government, non-governmental agencies, churches, and local communities groups. Experience has shown that it so critical for the local community to be fully involved in the planning. A community centre imposed from the above, by a well-intentioned national or local government or non-government agency but without genuine community involvement, will more than likely be located in the wrong place, have an inappropriate physical design, and not meet the most important felt needs of the neighbourhood and community. In the interests of cost-cutting, or of 'trying to do something useful with the old church hall' for example, decisions can easily be made without adequate involvement, which render the resulting community centre virtually useless.

Social animation

The difficult, and sometimes disagreement, relationships enjoyed by the various non-governmental organisations in Dingli indicate strongly that sustainable development must also focus on the actual

quality of social interaction within a community, rather than directly on the provision for human services. Therefore, a social development programme might simply seek to facilitate people in the community talking to each other and interacting more in their everyday lives. Such community development is less-goal directed, at least in the initial stages, through specific service goals may subsequently develop out of that interaction. It is important that somebody from the locality takes the role of a community worker, simply trying to bring people closer together in a stronger experience of community interaction, is adopting such a role. There are many examples of such work, where what begins as simply an experience of community living can end up providing a focal point for a wide variety of human interaction, with significant political, economic, and social consequences of the quality of community life. Hence, the role of this person is more one of catalyst, simply aiming to bring people together and to help them unlock their potential for an experience of community and for action. Community work concentrates on process rather than outcome, on the assumption that if the process is sound and (and based on inclusive, non-violent and affirming principles), outcomes will be achieved based on the genuine needs and aspirations of the people concerned. Consciousness-raising activities, dialogic relationships and critically reflective practice are, without doubt, particularly important in sustainable development.

Sustainable 'cultural' development for communities

Preserving and valuing local culture

The lack of knowledge on the community's historical and social roots, as generally manifested by a large segment of the Dingli community, is a real impediment to sustainable development. This is because local cultural traditions are an important part of a sense of community, and help to provide a community with a sense of identity. It is therefore imperative for sustainable development measures to identify the important elements of the local culture, and to preserve them. These might include local history and heritage, locally based crafts, local foods or other products, and in some cases, even dialects and languages. Communities may also have particular traditions, such as local festivals or fairs, a town band, a reputation for skill in particular activities, links with a particular ethnic community, and so on.

However, external influences can effectively break down these local cultural traditions, and it often requires a deliberate community strategy if they are to be retained. As with other aspects of community development, there can be no simple recipe of how this can be achieved. The initiative must come from the community itself, and the way in which this will be done will vary from community to community, according to local conditions, culture, and economics. The community needs to identify what are the unique or significant components of its cultural heritage, and to determine which of these are worth preserving. Then a plan can be enacted as to how this might be accomplished, through, for example, activities at the local school or at the community centre, festivals, publications, making a video, etc. The most effective plan will be one which involves many members of the community, rather than just a small group or an elite force, and one which integrates the cultural traditions within the mainstream life of the community, rather than setting it apart.

Care must be taken that this form of cultural development does not create an artificial 'museum' approach to local culture, which sets the traditional culture aside from the day-to-day reality and maintains it

in a static rather than a dynamic form. For sustainable development to be effective within a wider community development context, it must not be separated in this way, but must be seen as a real part of the community. If this is achieved, the local cultural tradition can become a focal point for social interaction, community involvement and broad-based participation, and can become an important process in other aspects of sustainable development, such as economic and environmental development. At the same time, it is important to be aware that not all cultural traditions are worth preserving. For example, one would not wish to encourage a community with a tradition of racism, domestic violence, hooliganism, or alcoholism to perpetuate these with pride and to protect them on the grounds that they are important local traditions giving people a sense of identity.

While cultural diversity is important, a cultural developmental strategy must also be informed by social justice principles. This asserts the importance and universality of fundamental issues of human rights, and the importance of class, gender, and race/ethnicity, which in effect circumscribe the freedom of relatively autonomous and decentralised forms of unsustainable development. Such issues should be central to sustainable development and must not be lost in the false interests of cultural relativism and diversity. They are essential in determining which aspects of a traditional community culture should be strengthened and preserved as part of the community developmental process.

Sustainable 'political' development for communities

The need to provide Dingli residents with higher levels of social empowerment means that the distribution of power within a community must be more equitably shared. The goal is to seek to empower that community to operate more effectively within the wider arena. Just as people can be disempowered within their communities, communities can be disempowered within the broader society. Hence, the power has to include an analysis of its effect on the community itself, relative to other communities and to other institutions. Political development, therefore, seeks to enhance a community's capacity to operate in the political arena, and is aimed at increasing the power of both the community as a whole in its relation to the wider society, and also of individuals and groups within the community to contribute to processes, activities, and decisions relating to sustainable development. One can highlight three key arenas of political development strategies : consciousness-raising, organising, and social action.

Consciousness-raising

The importance of consciousness-raising in sustainable development can be emphasised in many contexts. It makes the critical link between the personal and the political, and is aimed at helping people to understand how their personal experiences are affected by larger structural factors. Without such an understanding it is hard to mobilise people for political action, or to participate meaningfully in alternative community structures. The dominant culture effectively separates the personal and the political, thereby leading to the individualising of social problems and 'blaming the victim'. From the ideal of sustainable development, the most important form of consciousness-raising is that which leads to more active participation in community processes, whether formally or informally. Sustainable development depends on active and motivated citizens, and so the important precursor to any more elaborate form of community development is to motivate people

to do something to improve things, and to see their own role in the local community as significant.

Consciousness-raising can take place in a number of ways. The group discussion is a traditional and powerful form of consciousness-raising, often in a group which had a different initial purpose. If one accepts that the personal and the political are inevitably linked, any group focusing on personal issues has become a vehicle for wider consciousness-raising. Thus, assertiveness groups, recreation groups, activity groups, educational groups and even therapy groups have the potential to develop a political dimension. Such groups start from the immediate needs of the people concerned and are likely to make the personal-political link more effectively than a group specifically formed for such a purpose. Other techniques of consciousness-raising can include drama (especially street theatre and similar community-level production), film, video, art, and literature. Creative artists have an important role in commenting on the human condition, and their work can become the focus of consciousness-raising discussions. Of course, one of the potential problems related to consciousness-raising is that it can become simply another form of domination, where an activist or community worker is responsible for 'imposing' a particular perspective or world view onto others. This is precisely the kind of intellectual domination which genuine consciousness-raising seeks to avoid.

If consciousness-raising is seen as one-way educational process, 'teaching the poor about their oppression', then it has failed in its aim, and reinforces the structures of domination and oppression. Consciousness-raising must always employ a dialogic relationship. Consciousness must not be seen as a one-way process, but as a two-way dialogue where each party shares perspectives, understandings and world views in such a way that both will learn from the process and together develop a deeper understanding. This the approach of the catalyst in sustainable development initiatives is not one of superiority, seeking to 'educate' another, but rather one of a human being seeking to engage in dialogue with another human being, where each will respect the other's wisdom, and where the goal is to develop a new understanding together which will lead to action. Although this process is extremely difficult and challenging, particularly for people and communities which have been socialised into the traditional ways of thinking about expertise, 'professionalism', and education. It requires patience, genuine humility, compassion, and a high level of personal commitment.

Organising

Another aspect of internal political development is the way in which the community organises itself in order to deal with its problems and, in the longer term, to develop alternative and autonomous structures. In order for procedures to be democratic and so that women and men of different cultural, ethnic, and class backgrounds will be able to participate equally in community decision-making, it is often necessary to redefine the traditional decision-making processes such as formal meeting procedure. This is because conventional procedures can be very alienating and excluding. In order to be more inclusive, there are alternative forms of decision-making that can be adopted, most notably consensus-oriented processes, where discussion will continue until not just a majority, but everyone is satisfied with the result. The ways to delineate the domination of particular people, for example, allowing each person the right to speak only twice in the course of a discussion, or to ensure that a lot of informal discussion has taken place before the actual decision-making meeting, so that

people have had time to consider the issues and talk it through their own way, and in their own time.

At a more formal level, there are other possibilities such as rotating the role of facilitator or chairperson, ensuring that everyone is able to come to a meeting rather than relying on elected representatives, and so on. Care in planning the timing and location of meetings, and the making of adequate transport and child care arrangements, are also critical in ensuring maximum participation. In some instances, the act of organising becomes an external matter. This occurs when the community moves for social action which involves it establishing structures which not only will enable it to operate in an inclusive, democratic manner that ensures maximum participation, but will also assist in increasing its effective power in the wider arena. Another important principle of organising for social action is discipline : people must not be allowed 'to do their own thing' but must act in accordance with the agreed plan of action. Indeed, organising for external action is essentially a practical matter of getting things done, and helping the community to get itself organised to implement effective action plans. Small, task-oriented groups or cells are usually the most effective forms of organisation (e.g., one for media relations, one for legal issues, one for publicity material, one for letter-writing and petitions, one for lobbying politicians, one for recruiting membership, and so on.

Social action

The achievement of some form of change in the external environment - such as stopping a new road, gaining representation on a particular authority, achieving better public transport etc. - is another key goal of sustainable development. This commonly involves some form of social action, and has long been seen as a critical component of sustainable development. Social action campaigns remain an important part of sustainable development, and indeed they can be seen as an expression of broadening social and political aspirations, and of social movements. Campaigns can cover a wide variety of issues, and incorporate a variety of strategies for change. To be successful, the selection and development of the campaigning strategies must arise from a careful analysis of the social, political, and cultural context, and must result from a developmental process rather than being imposed on the outside.

Recommendations (I) : Principles of sustainable development

This section outlines a number of principles of sustainable development which emerge from the interviews with the stakeholders and the policy discussion present in the previous section. They are intended as a basic set of principles that should underlie a developmental approach to all sustainable community work practice.

Integrated development. Social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, and personal development all represent essential

Sustainable 'personal' development for communities

Personal growth

Communities, including relatively traditional ones such as Dingli, are also characterised by a increasing degree of individuation. As a result it is important that, when discussing sustainable development, one does not lose sight of the importance of personal development and growth. One of the main justifications for sustainable development is that the community is a better context for personal development than the more impersonal bureaucratic structures of big government and big business. Of course, personal growth can be politically conservative as it is all too easy to move on to an essentially individual account of the social problems, with its associated 'blame the victim'. Such a response is fully consistent with the individualism and competition of capitalism, and the highly individualised society. Individualism is part of the problem, and from a sustainable perspective it is most unlikely to be an effective solution. Personal growth can also be seen as fully consistent with the untenable but popular propositions that 'you can do anything if you really want to' and 'if you want something enough and are prepared to work for it', you will achieve it'. Such articulated beliefs ignore structural realities, environmental constraints, social limits, and individual differences, which reinforce competitive and exploitative behaviour, and which leads to disappointment and self-blame when people find they have been unable to achieve their goal.

It is important to note, however, that personal growth and development are not necessarily intrinsically conservative and that it possible to embody such interest in a framework of empowerment and social justice perspective. Through these positions one can develop an approach to personal growth that is more equitable and sustainable in nature. Such an approach to personal growth and development would seek to find ways in which people's individual needs can be met through community networks, structures and interactions, rather than through professionalized and packaged services. It therefore seeks to decommodify personal growth and relocate it within human social interaction. It is still largely the case that at times of personal troubles and stress, people will still seek help from family and friends. However, the limited and fragmented social networks which are part of the *gesellschaft* society mean that people cannot always find such support. A community-based approach would aim to strengthen community interactions so that those supports are more readily available. Similarly it can be suggested that in a flourishing, healthy community people are able to grow and develop personally through their interactions with others, and the artificial environment of the personal growth industry - such as the myriad varieties of established and 'new age' therapies' becomes unnecessary.

elements of the drive towards sustainable development. A programme of sustainable development, therefore, must take all six as part of its strategy. A strategy which will focus only on one or some of these will result in uneven development.

Immediate goals and ultimate visions. Sustainable development projects must pay attention to the tension between the achievement of immediate goals and the ultimate vision of a better society. Focusing

on either one means that the others becomes forgotten, the result being either undirected pragmatism or unproductive dreaming.

Confronting structural disadvantage. Sustainable development, to be consistent with a social justice position, must take account of the structural disadvantages experienced by the people. Projects must ensure that structural disadvantages are not reproduced, and if possible, seek to confront and counter them in whatever way or ways are appropriate within the specific context.

Empowerment. Empowerment should be the aim of all sustainable development. In essence, empowerment means providing people with the resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills to increase their capacity to determine their own future, and to participate in and affect the life of their community.

Inclusiveness. Applying the principle of inclusiveness to community development requires that processes should always seek to include

rather than exclude. All people should be intrinsically valued even if they hold opposing views and be allowed a space to change their position without 'losing face'.

Community co-operation. Sustainable development should seek to challenge the dominance of the competitive ethic, and to demonstrate that it is largely based on false assumptions. Instead, it should aim at establishing alternative structures and processes premised on co-operation and consensus decision-making rather than conflict.

Community participation. Sustainable development must seek to maximise participation, with the aim being for everyone in the community to be actively involved in community processes and activities. The more that people who are active participants, the more the ideals of community ownership and inclusive process will be realised.

Recommendations (II) : Strategies of sustainable development

Inclusive and safe.

- » *Jum Had-Dingli* must serve as a symbol of community integration, with its date preferably moved to a day related to Dingli's history. *Jum Had-Dingli* must serve as a catalyst for the improvement of relations between different non-government organisations.
- » There is a need for an association which safeguards the interests of persons with disability. Despite the plethora of non-governmental organisations and DLC's sub-committees, there is not one which caters for this category of vulnerable persons. The social, personal, and educational needs of persons with disability must be actively met. It is not enough that they are simply allowed to attend the Day Care Centre but the community has the duty to provide them with more up-to-date services.
- » There is a need for vulnerable persons (e.g. persons with disability, housebound older persons, etc.) to be put into contact with a social worker, even if once a year, for both preventive and corrective issues.
- » Another needed association is one which provides a welcoming atmosphere to families settling in Dingli. The *Zaghfran* may introduce new families, even if briefly, whilst contact must be made with them so that they feel as part of the community as much as possible.
- » There is a need for the formation of Dingli Ladies Circle - or something else on similar lines - so that full-time homemakers (generally female) new to the village quickly integrate in the community by making friends and getting to know better the community.
- » Although the Day Care Centre is doing much sterling work, the community must think out of the box as how the work can be improved. For example, with respect to lifelong learning more educational emphasis is needed on 'contemporary' subjects such as financial literacy and pre-retirement courses. The DLC's decision

to utilise the Centre for a talk on household and gender issues on International Women's Day was a step in the right direction and more talks - relating to other social issues - are encouraged to follow.

- » The community must follow the example of those organisations who involve members from different ages, so to organise more intergenerational activities. More interaction is especially needed between late teenagers and young adults on one hand, and older persons on the other.
- » The DLC must devise measures that help to minimise risk factors that could increase family vulnerability such as long term illness, violence or abuse, low income, inadequate or unaffordable housing and addictions. Empowerment and leadership courses targeted to late teenagers and young adults are a step in the right direction.
- » The police station must invoke more respectability from the local community, by being staffed more generously, and by the local police personnel being more visible in aiding residents in their difficulties and maintaining Dingli as a law-abiding locality.
- » There is a need for more police- and warden-patrol to reassure residents that a preventive programme for various criminal behaviours - ranging from burglary, vehicle, thefts from cars, noise pollution, over-speeding, and vandalism - is in place.

Well-run.

- » The dates, times and agenda of DLC meetings must be better advertised amongst the community residents. The latter must be encouraged to attend the DLC meetings as much as possible rather than simply when an item on the agenda is of personal interest.
- » The DLC must promote effective public participation in decision-making relating to sustainable development (as well as all other issues). There must also be a drive to devise schemes which enable

people to acquire sustainable development skills required for effective participation.

- » Opportunities must be provided for stakeholders to be involved directly in the design, implementation and monitoring of strategies associated with sustainable development strategies, so as to ensure public ownership of the strategies, and hence, promote commitment to action.
- » There is a need for an association whose task is to unite and act as a physical bridge between non-governmental organisations. Representing their organisations, members can work together towards some common aim such as the role of NGOs in *Jum Had-Dingli*.
- » The public must be given more roles in the planning to celebrate *Jum Had-Dingli*. Councillors and non-governmental organisations may twin with residents so that this day will be less perceived as something official but as something that stems from the grass-roots.
- » It is important that the community provides opportunities for its residents, especially those who came from outside villages/cities and children not attending the local primary school, to learn more about Dingli's unique heritage.
- » The community must look for local and European Union funds to preserve Dingli's heritage - such as *L-Ghajj* and *L-Ghajj tal-Fasselin* - and making them more available to the public in a user-friendly way.
- » Art appreciation courses and lessons in local traditional crafts such as lace making, along with art and photographic exhibitions on Dingli, must be implemented on a frequent basis if the community is to assert its cultural heritage.
- » The DLC must continue its planning of *Dingli AgroFest* which would surely contribute strongly both to the local economy as well acting as a celebration of the community's culture, history, and traditions.

Well-connected.

- » The DLC must ensure closer integration of transport and land use planning to increase the use and efficiency of public transport rather than an increased reliance on cars. It is hoped that the reform of the national public transport system is a step in this direction.
- » Higher residential densities and mixed-uses of dwellings that are close to the Dingli inner zone must be promoted so as to reduce need for travel. Permits for business and shop-keeping activities must ideally only be given in Dingli's inner zone.
- » Methods must be introduced that encourage residents to reduce over-dependence on private car use and the need to travel, and to make more use of public transport. The promotion of more efficient use of parking and the introduction of maximum parking standards for new developments, especially in the inner zone areas, are to be warranted.
- » The DLC must encourage local walking routes, both as a leisure and a healthy activity, by promoting such routes through the publishing

of a booklet. The contacts already established with the Rambler's Association is a step in the right direction.

- » The DLC must encourage more cycling activity in the community, especially in the country zones. In collaboration with cyclist associations it may choose to organise safety awareness campaign for the village residents (perhaps starting at the primary school) focusing on cyclist road safety, bike check up and protective gear - and consequently, organise bicycle rides open for all age groups to cycle round different parts of Dingli and surrounding areas. During events literature hand outs and a talks about traffic awareness and safety are encouraged.

Well-served.

- » *Social services.* The purpose of sustainable development is to re-establish the community as the location of significant human experience and the meeting of human need, rather than to rely on the larger, more inhuman and less accessible structures of the welfare state. A sustainable community must include the following services :
 - » **Children:** Apart from supporting average children in the community by improving their opportunities for learning and leisure, the DLC must liaise with specialised organisations (such as Appogg) to support families, parents, and children who are experiencing socio-emotional difficulties. If possible, the services must be available in the local communities with the aim of preventing their situation from deteriorating and resulting in a crises. The DLC's sub-committee responsible for children affairs may take a leaf of what is available in other parts of Malta by coming up with a small number of trained volunteers who provide practical help to parents with children of 5 years or under. The first step, perhaps, is for the DLC to organise parental skills for the Dingli community.
 - » **Adults:** The DLC must also bear some responsibility for the quality of life of adults in the community, with the possibility that those who find themselves in personal crises are encouraged and helped to access psychological and family therapy services, and if the cases warrants, even Domestic Violence Services. It is well-known that adults are reluctant to seek help from non-family sources but the DLC must ensure that when this occurs they will be met by a valid support team that leads them to the right professional service. Support must be offered to adults as individuals, with social services contributing to their psycho-social and physical areas of development, and working towards the strengthening of the family unit and the home environment.
 - » **Older adults:** Older persons require other unique services, some of which - for example, applying for the Kartanzjan and receiving the annual flu shot - are already available to them from the offices of the DLC. More information is also warranted on how older persons can experience a more active life by providing leaflets containing information of age-interest associations such as the University of the Third Age. There is a greater need of emphasis is to be made on the services available from the central government and other public-private partnerships such as the MMDNA which enable older persons to continue living in the community. As a last resort, older persons must also be able to access

information on the steps required to apply for entry in a residential/nursing home.

- » **Persons with disability:** Such individuals required special social services, most especially, information of all services and benefits available to them and their family in Malta. This service is of utmost importance since from time to time, these services change and others are introduced. As a result the DLC, though the newly formed association for the need of persons with disability, must have up-to-date information on the health provisions, educational services, employment opportunities, day services, housing and residential services, transport and other community services, special aids and information technology services, leisure opportunities, and contact information of national organisations that provide aid and services to meet the need of persons with disabilities. It is important that shops are accessible, signs are put up next to ramps so that cars do not obstruct them, street furniture do not obstruct pavements, and if possible, an accessible platform is constructed at the right side of the Dingli Cliffs so that people with mobility disability can enjoy the scenery in the best possible manner as well. It must be noted that the ramp at the *Kappella tal-Madliena*, situated at the left side of the Dingli Cliffs, is a step in the right direction.
- » **Health services.** The DLC must take the necessary steps to ensure sustainability of the public health services provision in a situation of both higher demand as well as overall increasing health care costs, with a focus in primary health care. The DLC must support the non-governmental organisations and self-help groups to become important stakeholders in the health care schemes, including the following services: community nursing services, palliative care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychiatric care, communication therapy, dental care, and podiatry, midwifery care.
- » **Education services.** Local non-governmental organisations, together with the DLC, must recognise that education is the key ingredient in improving the quality of life.
 - » **Empowerment and Leadership courses:** In contemporary times, the key challenge addressed in community studies is to give people back their rightful place in their locality. Every person is a leader by virtue of his or her longevity as their experiences - whether extensive or short - are a treasured legacy. For communities to be sustainable this abundance of life can no longer be put at the side but agencies must create the conditions under which people around the world can learn, grow and develop their potential to the end of life. Educational courses for empowerment and leadership would challenge residents to ask and eventually answer the following questions: How do we develop the resources and leadership potential of our community? How do we turn our community from an expensive wasteland into a fertile period of growth and development?
- » **Education for sustainable development:** Following Briguglio and Pace (2004), education services for sustainable development must be at the centre of what is available in the community. Such programmes must aim to (i) foster public awareness about the advantages of sustainable development, and organize educational activities towards

this end, (ii) encourage local communities to develop ESD programmes aimed at empowering citizens to take an active role in environmental decision-making fora, (iii) promote the concept of value-based action, (iv) organise training for leaders and their members on sustainable work practices and processes, and (v), encourage the responsible management of the institution, prudent energy consumption and water usage, and sustainable waste management schemes, including recycling, and participatory skills.

- » **Older adult learning:** Older adults are generally left out in the cold, and the DLC together with appropriate agencies, must seek to redress such a lacuna. Planners must resist to deliver courses which focus on health-related issues as these are heavily over represented at the Day Care Centre and must instead plan more contemporary subjects such as financial literacy, consumer education, literacy projects, and for those who will join them in a couple of years, pre-retirement courses.

Environmentally sensitive.

- » The identification of fund research to gain a better understanding of local biodiversity, that includes as one of its objectives the establishment and funding of a national inventory and database of biodiversity, is encouraged.
- » Nature experts, if possible from the village community, must be engaged to examine and legally guard all rare and/or threatened endemic species, and other locally occurring species of international importance, and take active measures for their conservation.
- » It is crucial that all obligations under existing international environmental treaties on biodiversity are met, and that sub-committees are set up to be responsible for implementing these treaties with the necessary resources, personnel and administrative machinery.
- » Educational initiatives must be implemented so as to improve the awareness of Dingli residents of the local surrounding (sometimes unique) biodiversity such as the Blue Rock Thrush (Maltese national bird) and the flower Autumn Buttercup.
- » The DLC must protect the open countryside from uses which are harmful and more appropriately located in the urban areas. Codes of practice for good agricultural and organic practice must also be adopted.
- » The sterling work being done in encouraging and educating residents on waste prevention, minimisation, reuse and recycling must be continued through the medium of educational leaflets and on the DLC's website.
- » The present facilities for the separate collection of recyclable waste (metal, glass, and plastic) must be sustained by making sure that they are emptied regularly and by locating other possible avenues for bring-in sites

Well-designed and built.

As the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment's (2009) Pre-Budget 2009 Document rightly pointed out, the inconvenience resulting from development by the construction industry has been mitigated, to some extent, by the introduction of the Environmental Management of Construction sites in 2007. However, more needs to be done, particularly to address the concerns that demolition and excavation activities cause to third parties. The levels of concern which construction sector may cause to third parties may be very distressing. People are not only concerned about their health and safety but they are also concerned about the damages that they may sustain as a result of such works. In the circumstances, the DLC must liaise with the central government so as to ensure that

- » all construction activity and, in particular, demolition and excavation works are carried out according to good practices and in a manner which is least likely to cause damages to third parties;
 - » all construction activity is covered by an appropriate insurance policy against damages to third parties;
 - » residents, adjoining construction sites, are provided adequate advance information of what any nearby construction activity shall entail and to give them a means for redress if what is being proposed is a cause for concern.
- » The reduction and reuse of building material and proper disposal of building waste in approved sites must be strongly promoted so that new sites are not continually contaminated with building debris and other types of construction litter.
 - » Pressure must be made on the central government to impose deadlines for finishing new buildings in the community so as not to leave the empty structures in 'shell form' for more than a number of months.
 - » The contribution of tourism to the local economy must be improved but in a way that investment is channelled only towards resource-efficient segments and to less resource-costly (that is, environmentally, economically, socially) areas. This ensures that resources are allocated to their best use.
 - » The quality of service offered to tourists (even Maltese visitors) must be improved so that the Dingli's tourism product - especially around the Dingli Cliffs area - is upgraded considerably - thereby, delivering value and customer satisfaction.
 - » Tourism development must be framed in sustainable development policies that fully respect and endorse the locality's environmental capital, and must be never let to impinge on the Dingli residents' quality of life.
 - » Programmes must be implemented that exploit Dingli's unique cultural attractions and heritage sites, targeting tourists, and local Maltese from other villages and cities, as well as pupils in primary and secondary schools.
- » The built environment must be managed in a way to ensure the best possible quality of life, with minimal risks to social and psychological health, and to the fostering of cultural and social identity of the local community.
 - » The town centre must be revitalised, thus making it more viable, and improving the efficiency of its use. In this respect, the DLC's efforts to have some roads in Dingli's inner zone fully pedestrian is a step in the right direction.
 - » Considering the rising numbers and percentages of older persons that Dingli is going to experience in the coming decade or so, it is imperative that the community commences what is generally termed as senior smart planning which basically refers to a community ensuring that future cohorts of older persons live in an enabling environment. It is not the scope to flesh out a detailed senior smart planning map but it is opportune to highlight the principles that such planning must be based on :
 - » **Facilitate older persons' independence:** Planners need to be guided by the premise that quality of life in later life is highly premised on the ability to carry out life's activities within a normal community setting, to be able to make choices about these activities, and to have a degree of control over one's life
 - » **Recognise diversity of older persons:** From the outset, planning for seniors must accept that older persons are not a homogenous population and that they differ highly by age, ethnicity, gender, income, education, frailty, and so forth, each of which may be a factor in shaping their everyday geography.
 - » **Reflect the progressive ageing of older persons:** The age composition of the seniors population is not static. It is continuously changing, with current cohorts growing older and new cohorts being added. Hence, the needs of the older population need constant and rigorous review.
 - » **Respect the everyday lives of older persons:** Just like younger people, older persons experience a flow of daily life that takes place in a variety of settings and is marked by numerous interactions. They have various roles, and these roles change as do their homes, families, bodies, and communities.
 - » **Embody the integral relationship between housing, transportation, and community support:** Older persons are a diverse group and their needs in housing, transportation, and community support, will be diverse. An array of options must be provided where possible to allow them to exercise choice according to their needs, aspirations, life history and socio-economic situation.

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