

Community Involvement and the Revitalization of Birgu

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EUTO Study Visit Sustainable tourism development: 'Attractions and events as catalysts for regeneration and social change'

21-28th September 2008, Nottingham and London.

Introduction

In this paper, I will focus on the role played by the community and the Local Council in Birgu, Malta in the regeneration of the locality. When the funds allocated by central government did not facilitate the rehabilitation of the area, the community had to come up with alternative plans to transform the locale in which they live primarily for the benefit of the inhabitants. The concomitant effect was that this started attracting visitors. The success of this plan however depended on the successful consultation between community members and its leaders at all stages of any project taken on board.

The data for this presentation derived from an ethnographic study of Cottonera area in the last four years, interviews with community leaders, as well as the perusal of reports, newspaper articles and statistics relating to this topic.

Tourism in Malta

The Maltese Islands depend on tourism since the islands do not have any mineral resources to boast of. Tourism is a key sector of the Maltese economy, contributing to around 24 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, as well as being a net generator of one third of the country's workforce (Strategic Planning & Research Division, Malta Tourism Authority, 2005, p. 13). The bulk of the tourists who visited the Maltese Islands between the 1960s to late 1980s were brought over by a handful of tour operators, who promoted it as a sun, sea and sand destination.

The Maltese tourism authorities decided to diversify both the product and the geographical markets following the down turn in tourism in the 1980s. Eventually the geographically centred approach was replaced by a segment centred marketing approach in the 21st century (Strategic Planning & Research Division, Malta Tourism Authority, 2005, p. 15). Studies conducted using this methodology demonstrate that the majority of the tourists visit the Maltese Islands mainly for its history, culture, traditions and archaeological sites among both Leisure as well as Culture

and Heritage segments (Strategic Planning & Research Division, 2005, p. 24). At the same time, Malta's history and culture were mentioned as the primary motivating factors among 16.4 per cent of all tourists who visited Malta in 2004 (please refer to Table 1), the second most important niche market after the leisure one. Other reasons included the weather and the hospitality of its people.

The bulk of the Leisure and History & Culture tourist segments tend to be package tourists (Strategic Planning & Research Division, 2005, p. 7) and visited Malta during the shoulder (March to June, and October) and summer months (please refer to Table 1). For these two most popular niche markets, the length of stay tended to be around 10 nights. These tourists made use of all types of accommodation, although 4 star hotels and self-catering accommodation tended to be more popular. They were also the main net generators of income, although the fact that there was a heavy dependence on tour operator packaging here meant that two thirds of this expenditure was spent prior to departure, with only one third being incurred on top of the package price (Strategic Planning & Research Division, 2005, p. 26).

Table 1 - Volume Estimates for Main Segments of Tourism in the Maltese Islands in 2004

Segment	Percentage Of Tourism	Season	Length Of stay	Accommodation	Expenditure
Leisure	53.7%	Shoulder Summer	9.7 nights	4 star hotels Self-catering	56% of total
History & Culture	16.4%	Shoulder Summer	9.7 nights	4 star hotels Self-catering	Lm74.6 million circa 18%
Conference & Incentive Travel	5.2%	Shoulder Winter	3.5 nights	5 star hotels	6% of total
English Language Learning	4.9%	Summer Shoulder	18.6 nights	Host families Self-catering	9% of total
Diving	4.7%	Summer Shoulder	10 nights	Apart hotel	6% of total
Gozo	5%	Summer Shoulder	5 nights	5 + 4 star hotels Self-catering	4% of total

Source: adaptation of data found in Strategic Planning & Research Division, Malta Tourism Authority (2005). Only the main niche markets are mentioned here.

Tourism and the Cottonera Area

Birgu or Vittoriosa is one of the Three Cities within the Cottonera area, together with Bormla and Isla. The Cottonera area is a densely populated residential and industrial expanse harbouring

dockyards and other maritime related activities (Development Brief, 1997, p. 4). It was a British military base until 1979. It was around this time when the dockyard and shipbuilding industries in the locality started losing their strategic importance in the local economy, with the concomitant effect on the people who lived within the surrounding communities, a good number of which were employed in these industries. Nowadays Cottonera is an urban area associated with social deprivation, crime, high unemployment and dependence on social benefits (see Cutajar & Vella, 2008). The area is known as Cottonera because it is encircled by two networks of fortifications known as the Margherita and Cottonera lines built during the reign of the Knights of St. John to protect these cities after incursions from the Ottoman Empire like the one that took place in 1565 (known as the Great Siege).

Birgu was the place where the Order of St. John established its base in 1530 when the islands King Charles V of Spain acceded the islands to them. Birgu, or Borgo, means a village in the suburb of Fort St. Angele (or Castrum Maris as it was known then). The fort provided convenient protection to the Order's naval fleet (www.birgu.gov.mt). During their stay in Birgu, the Order built Baroque auberges to house its eight Langues in the area now known as Il Collachio, as well as other buildings to cater for the administration of their fleet (Development Brief, 1997, p. 8). Although in 1571 the Order transferred its seat of power to the newly built Valletta, the naval base and arsenal remained situated in the Three Cities. The Inquisition was another major ecclesiastical power that set up its abode in Birgu and remained there for around 200 years (www.birgu.gov.mt).

The British who took over Malta in 1800 retained this maritime base. The buildings built by the Order were modified to serve the functions of the yard. The British built Dock No. 1 in the mid-19th century, a naval bakery and a visualizing yard to feed the British fleet based in the Mediterranean, and modern docks in French Creek to cater for the shipbuilding and ship repair industry (Development Brief, 1997, p. 8). The headquarters of the Mediterranean fleet was instituted in HMS St. Angelo during the rule of the British (1800-1964) (www.birgu.gov.mt).

During World War II the Three Cities suffered intensive bombing when enemy planes attacked the ships in the Grand Harbour. A number of residents from Cottonera sought shelter from the bombs in safer areas in the Maltese Islands. Canon Caruana, one of the key contacts interviewed for the purposes of this research, noted that the inhabitants of Birgu believe that a third of the buildings were destroyed under enemy fire. Some of these refugees never returned after the war.

The post-war era saw massive reconstruction programmes in the area. A number of social housing projects built in the area there were not in keeping with the historic characteristics of the area. Although the new housing developments that took place between 1948 and 1957 attracted a number of people, albeit from a different socio-economic group than the ones that left, the Three Cities have continued to suffer from a decline in population (Development Brief, 1997, p. 9). Most of the historic buildings found in the area were and are still in a general state of abandonment and neglect. Damage caused by the war, time and erosion, has been sometimes augmented by insensitive interventions.

In spite of this population reversal, the Cottonera area is relatively speaking one of the areas with a high residential density coupled with a lack of open spaces. Sub-standard housing found in the area tended to attract socially deprived groups since such accommodation is cheaper to rent. Squatting of old dilapidated buildings, some of historic interest is not infrequent in some areas (Cutajar & Vella, 2008). This area also suffers from drug related crime. In an area where school absenteeism is high, the population tends to have low educational attainment. This might explain the high level of unemployment found in the area, and the lack of choice where work opportunities was concerned (Cutajar, 2008).

The residents of Three Cities have sought to improve their standard of living and enhance their everyday quality of their life in different manners, with different success rates. Birgu seems to be doing better in relation to the other Three Cities. Canon Caruana notes that this success is due to a number of factors, namely the civic pride the people have in their locality. Civic pride, according to the archpriest of St. Lawrence Parish Church, is linked with the locality's historical roots. This was in abeyance after the war due to the reasons mentioned above. The media industry was also blamed for the dissemination of social prejudices and misconceptions about the Cottonera area among the Maltese general public.

As Canon Caruana stated,

Pride civiku dejjem kien hemm... Jien il-Kunsill Lokali nemmen li serva hafna, hafna, biex sahhaha. ... Imma jien nahseb li l-Kunsill Lokali affirmah u poggieh quddiem nett... . Kien hemm affarijiet accidentali... Per eżempju, il-Birgu storikament u geografikament dejjem kellu mportanza kbira, hafna, hafna. ... M'hemm l-ebda mertu tieghu dan. Imma l-mertu tal-lum, nahseb jien, li wara hafna zmien traskurat, illum gie utilizzat u apprezzat. ... Imbagħad ukoll fuq livell nazzjonali kien hemm certu zviluppi. ... Kien hemm il-qawmien biex jiehdu hsieb il-monumenti nazzjonali. Insemmi l-Maritime Museum, il-Palazz ta' l-Inkwizitur. Li gew restawrati b'mod tajjeb hafna. Li gew utilizzati b'mod tajjeb hafna kemm turistiku... . Il-Waterfront ukoll ta certu stima lil post. Anke jekk m'ghinx hafna fejn ghandu x'jaqsam ma' xogholijiet Ta' Caraffa stores per eżempju, kif gew rrestawrati. Il-Forti Sant' Anglu fuq, kif il-kavallieri kienu ppreservawh, rrestawrawh, ghalkemm isfel

ghadu disgrace. Bil-mod, il-mod nahseb li kien hemm hafna affarijiet li ghenu biex ikomplu jkabbru din is-civic pride. Haga tkompli ma' l-ohra¹.

This lengthy quote encapsulates the main elements involved in the regeneration of Birgu: namely the rehabilitation work started by the central government in the late 1980s added to the Cottonera Development Project which began bore fruit in the early years of the new millennium. Both projects helped to give status to the locality. This motivated the community to take an interest in their historical heritage and search for the funds needed to rehabilitate it. These together with the organisation of cultural events helped establish Birgu as a cultural centre.

Birgu has been successful in establishing itself as a tourist destination as well as a cultural centre, thanks to the efforts of these three agents working to attain different goals. The rest of the paper will focus on the development projects conducted by private entities and those initiated by the local community to try and understand how the renaissance of this fortified city emerged.

The Regeneration of Birgu and Private Enterprises

The regeneration of the Cottonera Waterfront had been ear marked by the Grand Harbour Local Plan (1997) and Structure Plan (1992) (cited in Development Plan, 1997) for a number of years before anything was done about it. The intention was to use private capital to develop the area between the promontory of Fort St. Angelo and il-Ponta ta' L-Isla (Development Plan, 1997, p. 4), an area of approximately 2.5 kilometres to promote tourist, residential and other community related uses in the area. The Cottonera Waterfront Group Ltd. was entrusted by the local authorities with the Cottonera Waterfront Project.

The Cottonera project involved the setting up of an up-market yacht marina with 247 berths. This opened its doors in the second week of August 2003 (Vella, 2003). Other projects included the rehabilitation and restoration of various historic buildings on the Birgu side which were in public ownership. The regeneration of Birgu took place first incidentally. The state authorities immediately leased over these historical buildings. The regeneration of Bormla however depended on the release of Dock No. 1 by the Malta Drydocks to the consortium, something which to date has not taken place, while the Senglea waterfront proved a challenge since the land was in private ownership. Development projects assigned to Bormla and Birgu had to be put on the back burner until the land and buildings were turned over to the consortium.

The Cottonera Waterfront Group Ltd. consisted of the renovation of XV-XVI historical buildings such as Scamp Palace, now the Casino di Venezia, which opened its doors in the first week of August 2001 (Gatt, 2001). The rehabilitated Caraffa Palace, a few meters away from the Casino, was used to set up exhibitions, including the one on Caravaggio. Other restored buildings were turned into good quality catering establishments. Some buildings were however pulled down to make way for the building of St. Angelo Mansions, a block of over a hundred luxury apartments and retail outlets, which in no way blends in with the rest of their surroundings. Some of the tunnelled complexes near the building were turned into an underground car park instead of the theme park promised by the Development Plan.

The stated intention behind this private investment was to “help regenerate the area and create new opportunities to both the local community and the national economy at large” (Cottonera Waterfront Regeneration Project, n.d.). The consortia promised the communities within the vicinity that the establishment of businesses within the area would generate a number of employment opportunities for the people within the locality. Mr. Boxall, the mayor of Birgu, was one of the mayors who had backed this project on the basis of this promise (Vella, 2003). Unfortunately, as time went by, the promise of job creation never coalesced, as the archpriest of Birgu, Canon Caruana pointed out.

Reactions from the community towards this project were mixed. The archpriest believed that the Waterfront, as it is known among the residents, has attracted tourists and visitors to Birgu, and this interest by outsiders has helped the people of the locality to start appreciating what they have. These visitors however create traffic congestion and impact negatively on the limited parking space available. The fact that the consortium restricted vehicular access to this zone was also criticised since it limited the residents’ accessibility to the area, especially those with mobility problems.

Local individuals running retail and catering establishments felt that these commercial outlets had shouldered in on their business. When these comments were discussed with the mayor, he pointed out that the type of clients who frequented locally run establishments run, were not of the same type as those that frequented the Waterfront. Other residents believed that the Cottonera Waterfront Project had inspired some Birgu residents to open wine bars and restaurants themselves. Others state that the success of the cultural events acted as catalysts for this onslaught of wine bars in the locality.

Mr. Boxall in fact was worried about the increase in the number of wine bars in the medieval part of the city because he felt that they did not fit in with their surroundings. At the same time, clients who frequent these wine bars proved to be a nuisance for the people living in the vicinity because of the noise they made. The increasing number of wine bars in the area were turning Birgu into “Citta Kurun” (a drunkard in Maltese folklore), not Citta Vittoriosa (the Victorious City), the mayor quipped.

Other community leaders believed that the cultural events they organised attracted visitors in the first place. These and the catering establishments on the Waterfront benefitted hugely from these events, even though they did not contribute in any way in its organisation. They were also critical of tour operators who according to one informant charged tourists €15 when the entrance fee for the musical soiree at Fort Saint Angelo only cost €2 per head. The archpriest also pointed out that since the people who ran the Waterfront outlets were not Birgu residents, they did not feel obliged to plough back any of their intake back into the locality. The band club leaders were angry at the fact that business enterprises run by outsiders rarely gave donations or sponsored spaces on the magazines band clubs printed to augment their intake. They felt that if it had not been because of their pride in their locality, they would not put so much time and effort in these events when other people were benefitting and not reciprocating. This was an example where the trade offs were not equitably distributed among stakeholders, resulting in resentment and anger among some community members.

When this issue was raised with the mayor, he retorted that he could not force these entrepreneurs to hand over a percentage of their intake, a practice which according to him is common in other localities.

The community and the regeneration of Birgu

The residents of Birgu and their mayor do not believe that the Cottonera Waterfront project brought about the rehabilitation of Birgu. The representatives of the two local band clubs, Prince of Wales Own and Banda Vittoriosana, San Lawrenz, maintained that the setting up of the Local Councils in 1994 helped attain this. These and other participants in this study felt that the mayor, Mr. Boxall, had spear headed these changes. As Mr. Lorry Farrugia, the president of the last band club mentioned above stated, *“hawn is-Sindku tah spinta kbira. Allura sar attrattiv biex tigi tghix il-Birgu. U l-propjeta telghet mas-sema”* (the Mayor has

helped change Birgu. It is now fashionably attractive to live in Birgu. This fact has however had an impact on housing prices which have sky rocketed).

The mayor insisted that the first step in the rehabilitation of Birgu took place in 1995 with the Clean up Birgu campaign. The parents of six year olds in the community were encouraged to allow their children to participate in such an endeavour. The objective behind this campaign was twofold: to clean the community and at the same time promote civic education among some of its residents, something which was lacking within the community according to the archpriest. Birgu residents felt that this campaign was successful, and so did the residents of the neighbouring localities who admired this achievement from afar. Another project initiated by the Birgu Local Council consisted of the 'greening' of the locality, and even for this the Local Council had the full collaboration of the community.

The renovation and rehabilitation of historical buildings in Birgu however necessitated enormous funds that were not forthcoming from a central government challenged by soaring inflation. The Local Council found an alternative source. It became affiliated in a number of Maltese and European associations. These provided the Local Council with the skills and contacts to attract the necessary funds and/or expertise needed for such an endeavour (please refer to Table 2). The Birgu Local Council has worked in close collaboration with Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna. Together they were successful in applying for and getting Interreg IIIc funds to rehabilitate a World War II shelter. This was turned into the Malta at War Museum (please refer to Table 2). Membership in these associations proved crucial in obtaining the necessary funds and expertise to rehabilitate and renovate Il Collachio and Il Mandraggio, two historic areas in Birgu. The Rotary Club La Valette, Malta provided the funds needed for the rehabilitation of the Santa Margherita Lines, one of the lines of fortification surrounding Birgu.

Participation in these associations helped train council members in sustainable development methodology which promotes constant consultation with the community. Sustainable tourism aims at improving the quality of the natural environment as well as the living standards of the local community while taking into consideration environmental and social costs, maintain Shaw & Williams (2000). This objective was attained, according to the mayor, when the Birgu was certified as City of Quality, an award which helped establish this Council's credibility in heritage management.

Table 2 - Birgu Local Council's Membership of International Associations

International Associations
Walled Towns Friendship Circle

Objective
Sustainable development of walled cities and fortified

	<p>historic towns. Funds: EU Commission DGXXIII.</p>
Futourism	<p>Integration of local heritage and culture in tourism. Recognition and marketing of Maltese local cultural identity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchange of experiences and working methodologies between 5 European partners. - Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna leader of this mini project. - Malta at War Museum one of the sites forming part of a heritage trail financed by Futourism project. <p>Funds: INTERREG IIIc + national funds</p>
Alliance of European Cultural Cities	<p>Transformation of heritage into a source of sustainable development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launched Qualcities approach. - Qualcities gives training and skill management to council teams to promote tourism in their community. - Approach insists on an integrated approach of management and local development. - Qualcities is a European label that shows and promotes efforts made by communities that have passed quality audits carried out by independent professionals. - Birgu city certified as City of Quality on the 23rd of October 2007.
Mediterranean Cooperation for On-Shore Accessibility and Sustainability Themes: Network for Managing urban coastal areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects utilizing funds from this network were carried out with the help of Sir Temi Zammit Foundation. - This network enables Local Councils to embellish coastal environment through environmental improvement, aesthetic embellishment, the enhancement of accessibility, while increasing awareness in environmental management and sustainable development among the community. - Birgu Local Council received €52,000 for the embellishment and upgrading of Il-Mandraggio May 2007- July 2008. - Based on Archimed Programme (Interreg IIIB Community Initiative).

Sources: links found on www.birgu.gov.mt

As Mayor Boxall pointed out, the cleaning and rehabilitation campaigns facilitated his bid to promote Birgu as a cultural destination. As he underlined, *“Il-Birgu beghtu, beghtu sewwa. Irreklamajtu kemm flaht. U jekk tirreklama trid tkun cert x’qed tirreklama, eh”* (I have done my utmost to advertise the locality. When you are promoting a place, you need to be sure of its calibre, okay). The mayor, together with members of the Local Council’s administrative staff and representatives from Fondazzjoni Sir Temi Zammit (Sir Temi Zammit Foundation represents the University of Malta, and assists its members to achieve European funding) have promoted this locality by attending and presenting papers in conferences abroad.

Members of the Local Council also made full use of the contacts they had within the political, social, and cultural field to attract cultural events to the community. As a representative of one of the local band clubs pointed out, when the mayor *“jara xaqq t’opportunita, jiblagħha, ma*

jagħti cans lil ħadd" (sees the opportunity of attracting cultural events to the community, he jumps at it before others pitch in). The Local Council has managed for the last years to promote Birgu through Birgu by Candlelight, an event promoted by the Malta Tourism Authority. It also used its contacts to invite the organisers of the International Choir Festival Competition to hold its opening session in the locality's parish church.

As the representative of the Prince Own Band Club pointed out, they had to work hard in the late 1990s to establish themselves as a cultural centre. Once its reputation was established, offers started coming in from organisers to hold cultural events in this historic city. The local press has latched on to the idea that this city is the producer or backdrop of cultural events of a certain calibre, and are in constant contact with the Local Council to find out what is going on. The archpriest in fact quipped that the press are ready to promote such events, but find it more difficult to investigate issues of a more serious nature such as the lack of housing in Birgu when asked to carry out such an assignment.

Such events help enhance the experiences of both visitors and locals alike. The archpriest maintained that some of these cultural events also helped educate the local residents who tend to attend these cultural events in their numbers out of civic pride and because they feel honoured by the presence of some of the distinguished visitors that attend. The voluntary groups and associations involved in its organisation used cultural events to generate funds needed for the running of their organisation. Participation in these cultural events helped them acquire technical skills with regards to the designing of props, as well as their assembling and dismantling. The Local Council marketed this team among other organisers of cultural events. This was another source of funding for the voluntary organisation they participated in. The funds and skills elicited from this participation were often used to set up better and/or innovative cultural attractions the next year in their locality. As one of the respondents pointed out, in Birgu, *"hawn organizazzjoni kbira. ... Dejjem hawn xi attivita għaddejja. Sirna ngħixu bl-attivita. ... Huwa mertu tal-Kunsill. Dahhal lilna fija"* (things are well organized. There is always some activity or other going on. We are making a living out of these activities. This is thanks to the Local Council that has involved us in these activities).

Some of the innovative ideas derived from the local mayor. These ideas were discussed with the representatives of the voluntary associations within the locality, and together they came up with suggestions on how to implement them. Representatives of these organisations in fact underlined that they held frequent meetings with the local council since they were often roped in

to help out in their implementation and preparation. Other ideas derived from other members of the community.

St. Angelo by Candlelight was a cultural event organized by one of the band clubs within the locale. This band club sought the Grand Master's permission to hold this musical soiree in Fort St. Angelo. Other events such as the two feasts celebrated within the community and the events that take place during Holy Week, necessitate the help of a number of volunteers. As the local archpriest pointed out, the Birgu community leaders believe that the community has plenty to offer where the manual and also mental skills were involved. Canon Carauna added that as citizens, it was their duty and privilege to participate in the running of the community, and that it was the community leaders' duty to facilitate such participation.

The mayor added that the successful implementation of cultural events depended on the co-operation and collaboration of the community. Using the cultural event Birgu by Candlelight as an example, he stated that, *"in-nies kollha tal-Birgu jippartecipaw. Jippartecipaw bis-shih. Jitfghu d-dawl. Jixxelghu x-xemghat fit-triq. Jifthu l-bibien"* (all the Birgu residents participate wholeheartedly in such events. They turn off their lights. They also put candles in the streets. They open their doors to visitors). An ex-minister of tourism praised this

"pro-active support that we receive from the residents of Birgu. Apart from accepting to use candlelight in their own homes, most of them welcome visitors and are more than proud to showcase their abodes as part of the living heritage of the city. This is a level of co-operation that would be very difficult to achieve in other localities. Your own involvement makes Birgu by Candlelight a far more authentic, unique and enjoyable experience" (Zammit Dimech, 2007).

The ex-Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr. Zammit Dimech (2007) noted that the strategy to promote Malta as an events-oriented country adopted by the Malta Tourism Authority in the last four years, has helped to offer more value added to its people and to visitors alike. Such events serve to promote local and international artistic talent. In the case of Birgu by Candlelight, this event helps to highlight a community's collective memory through re-enactment and street theatre. This event offers music, dance, vocal and instrumental music concerts that take place in Birgu's two churches and in the streets. Guided tours of Birgu promote its military past and enable visitors to chance encounters with its ethereal inhabitants.

The restoration and renovation of historic buildings, the presence of successful leisure facilities as well as constant cultural events has rendered Birgu an attractive locality to live in. A number of foreign and Maltese professionals have in fact set up residence in the area. This demand for

housing in a small fortified town has pushed the prices of property up. The mayor boasted that *“lin-nies tal-Birgu għamiltom sinjuri mingħajr ma jafu”* (I have made the residents of Birgu rich even though they are not aware of this). The negative repercussions of this are that young couples from Birgu cannot afford to buy or rent accommodation there. Newly married couples are moving out of the locality in search for more affordable and/or more modern housing elsewhere, and this has had a concomitant effect on the aging of the population in the locality. The community's success in ameliorating the quality of life of its inhabitants has borne bitter fruit as well.

As one can note, the promotion of Birgu as a cultural centre depended on the input of the different groups within the locality, who in one way or the other had something to offer. As both the archpriest and mayor pointed out, community leaders who were in constant consultation with the general public, took the needs of the community into consideration, and through constant consultation sought to bring about change with the help of those living within the locality. The collaboration of all these social groups and individuals was necessary for the promotion of the community's well-being, the archpriest believed. Whether these efforts bear long-term results, as in the generation of full-time employment within the locality, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

This is an interesting example of the role played by a local community in the promotion of a destination as a tourist attraction. Sustainable development in this locality has led to an increase in the quality of life of both residents and tourists. Community involvement and control over development has affected the distribution of payoffs and tradeoffs associated with increased tourism.

Attempts to attract cultural tourism to this locality involved the participation of a complex network of public and private interests. As this paper demonstrates, social relations are constituted in and constitute particular places, and this affects how effective they are. Birgu community leaders believe in involving ad hoc groups in decision-making, regulation and implementation of projects or services. Commitment in public consultation and participation has led to ownership over decisions and plans. When the local community internalised the long-term feasibility of a project, they became its promoters, regulators and leaders. Shared decision-making helped generate a sense of civic pride, and enabled the community become aware of not

only what they could achieve out of a project, but also what they could contribute towards its attainment.

The involvement of different social groups was essential when different categories of users used the same space and when the space was utilized for different activities. Consultation led to ownership and control over the way tourism development was managed, which had positive political and economic repercussions. The economic repercussions were discussed above. The political ones were evident in the trust and respect for the participants had for each others contribution in this development.

Although the objective of sustainable development was attained where cultural heritage was concerned, the ramifications for the less economically endowed members of the population were not always positive. When Birgu became established as a cultural centre, some of the inhabitants who were financially challenged found it too expensive to live in. Another negative side effect was traffic congestion and lack of parking space which in the future might impact negatively on the historic buildings in the vicinity and could lead to clashes with neighbouring communities. On the whole though, the majority of the residents of Birgu felt proud about what they have achieved through collective effort.

Footnotes.

1. Civic pride has always been present among the community. I believe that the Local Council has served to strengthen this pride. Incidental events also happened to bring it about. For example, Birgu's strategic position helped give it prominence in history. The community is not responsible for this. They are however responsible for the way it is being used nowadays, the way it is being appreciated after years of abandonment and neglect. This followed incidentally from a period when historical monuments and buildings were being rehabilitated. There was a national awareness about these monuments. I can speak about the rehabilitation of the Maritime Museum, the Inquisitor's Palace. They were restored in a skilled way. They were also used to promote tourism. The Waterfront also helped to give status to the place. Even though it did not generate employment. The Caraffa stores were also restored. The upper part of Fort Saint Angelo was restored and rehabilitated by the Order of St. John, although the lower part is still a disgrace. I think there were a number of things that helped augment this civic pride. They were all inextricably linked.

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