



L-Università ta' Malta
Islands & Small States Institute

The Islands and Small States Institute:

From a Programme to a Centre of Excellence

**30th Anniversary
Commemorative Publication**

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Foreword

Professor Alfred J. Vella

Rector, University of Malta



Thirty years ago, Professor Salvino Busuttil, who was Director of the Foundation for International Studies (FIS) and Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, who was the University Rector, asked Lino Briguglio whether he was interested in setting up a programme on islands and small states at the FIS, which was an arm of the University of Malta and occupied the building which now houses the Valletta Campus. Briguglio had already acquired a reputation as an expert on small island states, and in all probability, he was invited to set up the programme because of his expertise and his international contacts with experts on matters relating to island and small states. Briguglio accepted ... and the Islands and Small States Programme was born. The Programme was so successful that within a few years it was upgraded into an Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI), thereby enabling it to also offer academic courses at the University of Malta.

During its thirty years of existence, this University entity was instrumental in producing an innumerable number of studies on

islands and small states, some of which are internationally considered as seminal work, organised various international conferences and workshops, collaborated closely with many international organisations, and ran various academic programmes.

The impact of the ISSI on the small island state literature is immense, and there is hardly any publication on small states that does not cite work produced by members of the Institute, thereby substantially adding to the research output of the University of Malta. One of the most famous research work of the Institute was the development of the Vulnerability Index, which indicates that small island states tend to be highly exposed to external shocks due to their heavy reliance on exports (as a result of their small domestic markets) and on imports (as a result of their limited natural resources endowments). The Institute, through research conducted by Professor Briguglio and his colleagues, tried to answer the question as to why, in spite of their economic vulnerability, many small island states succeed economically. Their answer was that many small states assign major importance to policies that enable them to withstand their economic vulnerability by building economic resilience. The so-called Vulnerability and Resilience Framework was born ... a concept that was referred to by many international organisations, particularly the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in their studies and policy reports relating to small states, to argue that these states need to be supported to enable them to strengthen their economic governance for resilience-building purposes.

I am pleased that the University of Malta has the ISSI, as one of its entities, and I am confident that the Institute will continue enhancing the reputation of our University locally and internationally.

Professor Godfrey Baldacchino

Pro-Rector and Chairperson of the ISSI Board (Rector's Delegate)



Readers may wish to download and peruse a recent conference paper on the theme 'On China's Island Degree Course Setting and Talent Cultivation', by Dr Yuncheng Deng. <https://download.atlantis-press.com/article/125916285.pdf>.

Dr Deng joins a growing list of scholars and policy makers who have become convinced of the need to appreciate the geographical condition of being an island when discussing and planning a whole raft of policies: transportation, import and export trade, migration and environmental protection, to name the most salient. In his paper, Dr Deng singles out the three universities in the world which have a committed academic programme in island studies: the University of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, UK; the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada, and the University of Malta, in Malta, through its Islands and Small States Institute.

Of these three, the the Islands and Small States Institute is the oldest, and the only one that offers a doctoral programme. (Dr Deng is arguing that China should also recognise its many islands and come up with its own island studies programme). On a parallel note, the world has been obliged to take note of small states, thanks to the sheer weight of numbers in the United Nations General Assembly. Starting with

1962 – the year of independence of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Western Samoa (now Samoa) – a wave of decolonisation has ushered in a category of 'small island developing states' (SIDS) which has secured international recognition. Smallness, like islandness, has a significant effect on what can and does happen in sovereign states: the absence of economies of scale, a tendency towards oligopoly and monopoly, a widespread resort to flexible specialisation, the comprehensive delivery of health services, and a hyper-personalisation of politics, to name a few. Once again, the the Islands and Small States Institute has been recognised and acknowledged internationally as a key academic source of expertise in this area.

Malta is both a small state and an archipelago: islandness and smallness, and their manifold consequences and tendencies are a feature of daily life. The Islands and Small States Institute has, for the past 30 years, consistently delivered education, training, consultancy and outreach services based on a critical understanding of this geo-political predicament. It has done so smartly by tapping different resources, including various subject experts scattered in various units at the University of Malta. Public officers, civil society activists and mid-career professionals from various fields of service, and from both Malta and Gozo, have followed ISSI programmes over the years, enabling them to understand better what living in/on a small island or state is about; how other islands and small states cope and exploit the happenstance of small size and islandness; and how best to integrate this new paradigm, this way of seeing the world, effectively in their work and in other endeavours. The ISSI has also pioneered island and

small state initiatives in other contexts, ranging from the development of the economic vulnerability and resilience indices for SIDS; to its designation by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a collaborating centre on health systems and policies in small states.

I have professionally followed a rather similar epistemological journey, so I am doubly delighted to congratulate Professor Lino Briguglio, the ISSI Board and its staff – those there now, and those who contributed over the previous three decades – for reaching this milestone.

The Board has, over recent years, taken measures to enhance the attractiveness and appeal of its Master's programmes to local and international students; while the modularisation of specific study units should also encourage followership by mature students who may not be interested, or have the time, to undergo a complete graduate programme of studies. I look forward to an even larger student body at ISSI. I am also confident that, in the next few years, a new generation of scholars will be available to lead the into interesting and exciting new initiatives, in Gozo, in Malta and abroad; and that it will continue to strengthen ISSI's reputation as the natural 'go to' unit for island and small state studies and expertise.

The world has been obliged to take note of small states, thanks to the sheer weight of numbers in the United Nations General Assembly. Starting with 1962 – the year of independence of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Western Samoa (now Samoa) – a wave of decolonisation has ushered in a category of 'small island developing states' (SIDS) which has secured international recognition. (Godfrey Baldacchino)



The Islands and Small States Institute: Thirty years on

Professor Lino Briguglio

Director, Islands and Small States Institute



Introduction

The Islands and Small States Institute promotes research and training on economic, social, cultural, ecological and geographical aspects of islands and small states. Based at the University of Malta, the Institute evolved from the Islands and Small States Programme which was set up in 1989 at the Foundation for International Studies, Valletta. In 1993, the Programme was restructured as an Institute with the principal aim of enabling it to offer academic programmes of study. The Institute moved its offices from Valletta to the Msida Campus in 2007.

Today, the Institute offers a suite of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes of study, undertakes and publishes research on issues relating to islands and small states, and collaborates with many international and local organisations on these issues.

In this write-up, I briefly describe my involvement in the Institute and the contribution that the Institute has made to the teaching and research on islands and small states.



The entrance gate of the Valletta Campus, where the Foundation for International Studies was located and where the Institute was born. The lintel bears a Greek inscription meaning learning is the gateway to distinction.

Early Beginnings

In 1985, I, together with Professor John Kaminarides, a visiting Rhodes scholar, hailing from the USA, with Cypriot roots, organised an international conference on the economic development of small states. The conference was attended by a large number of foreign scholars and representatives of international organisations, including the World Bank, UNCTAD and the Commonwealth Secretariat. One of the speakers presented a graph showing a scatter diagram with GDP per capita linked to country size, from which the trend line was derived indicating that small states tended, on average, to have a higher GDP per capita than larger states. The main message of the speaker was that small states do not seem to fare badly internationally, and therefore, he argued, we should not worry too much about the economic development of these states. The fitted line was heavily influenced by China, India, Indonesia the Philippines and other large states with a very low GDP per capita at that time, and by small countries such as Luxembourg, Malta and Iceland, very small states with a relatively high GDP per capita.

This set me thinking. Did it follow that Malta, which then had a GDP per capita of about US\$4,000, was 13 times economically stronger than India, which at the time had a GDP per capita of only US\$300? The answer was, to my mind, obviously not. It was true that Malta generated more income per capita than India, but Malta was very economically vulnerable because its existence depended very highly on demand from abroad, and most of its physical resources – including oil, wood, textiles and metal – had to be imported from elsewhere.

This is how the idea of economic vulnerability of small states originated in my mind, and this led me to try and construct the so-called Economic Vulnerability Index. The index showed that small states tended to be highly exposed to external shocks due to their very high dependence on international trade. I argued that small states that wanted to develop economically had no option but to depend highly on exports (including tourism), due to their small domestic market (and hence very limited local consumer demand), and on imports due to their limited natural resource endowment.



Poster of the 1985 International Conference held in Malta.



Professor Salvino Busuttil and Professor Peter Serracino Inglott.

I wrote and published a few papers on this issue, some of which reached an international readership. I believe that this attracted the attention of Professor Salvino Busuttil, then Director of the Foundation for International Studies (FIS) of the University of Malta (UM), located in Valletta, who showed great interest in this matter. In 1989, Professor Busuttil, together with Professor Peter Serracino Inglott, then Rector of the University of Malta, suggested that I set up a programme on Islands and Small States at the FIS, located in the building which is now the UM Valletta Campus.

I was given an office at the FIS, as well as secretarial assistance (Mrs Maryrose Vella) to help me set up and run the Programme. A number of international conferences and workshops were successfully organised and a large number of international contacts were established and nurtured during the initial years of the Programme's existence. In 1993, the programme was upgraded to an Institute, thereby enabling it to also offer academic programmes of study leading to the award of degrees at and by the University of Malta.

The Influence of the Institute in the International Arena

The Economic Vulnerability Index

In June 1990, Malta's Ambassador to the UN (Dr Alex Borg Olivier) intervening during the meeting of Government Experts of Island Developing Countries and Donor Countries and Organisations, and referring to my work on the vulnerability index, stated that such an index would be "important because it reiterates that the per capita GDP of island developing countries is not by itself an adequate measurement of the level of development of island developing countries as it does not reflect the structural and institutional weaknesses and the several handicaps facing Island Developing Countries." Subsequently, UNCTAD engaged me to prepare a paper on the construction of a vulnerability index which was one of the main documents discussed during a meeting of a Group of Experts on Island Developing Countries, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 14-15 July 1992.

In 1992, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, also referred to as the Rio Conference), titled Agenda 21, referred to the special characteristics of small island states in its paragraph 17.



Front cover of Agenda 21.

Subsequently, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) – a coalition of small island and low-lying coastal developing states – which was set up during the Rio Conference, successfully lobbied the United Nations to hold its own ‘mini-Rio’ event: the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which was held in Barbados in 1994. As Director of the Islands and Small States Institute, I was invited to participate at this landmark conference and named as a member of the group of eminent persons for that conference. During the event, the Vulnerability Index featured prominently in the discussions, and there were frequent references to the quality work produced by the University of Malta on this subject. The outcome document of the Barbados global conference, called the Barbados Programme of Action, contained two paragraphs (Paragraphs 113 and 114) referring to the Vulnerability Index. The reason why so much importance was assigned to the Vulnerability Index was mainly that small island states were mostly middle-income countries, a situation which weakened their calls for sustainable development support from the donor community. Arguments calling for support on vulnerability resulting in high exposure to external shocks strengthened the hand of small island states in the negotiation process.



The UN publicity picture relating to the 1994 Barbados Global Conference.

In 1996, the Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations called on "the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to accord priority to the development of the index" and as a result I was engaged, again as Director of the Islands and Small States Institute, to propose methods as to how the Economic Vulnerability Index could be computed. A meeting of a group of experts was held in New York in December 1997, concluding that "Judging from the results of a number of studies using a diversity of approaches as a group, small Island Developing States are more vulnerable than other groups of developing countries." (A/53/65 - E/1998/5).

The Vulnerability and Resilience Framework

In 2000, in the face of clear evidence that a number of small states were developing successfully, the Institute started to develop what is known as the Economic Resilience Index, referring to policy measures that enable countries to withstand the negative effects of external shocks. The work on the resilience index was supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, which also funded the publication of four books on this subject and the organisation of three international conferences, all held in Malta. This led to the development of the so-called Vulnerability and Resilience Framework (V&R Framework), which was used to explain why small states, which are highly exposed to external shocks, manage to be successful economically if they adopt measures (including good governance) that enable them to withstand, recover from or counteract such shocks.

The V&R Framework was also referred to in a 2010 report of the UN Secretary-General, (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/65/115) on

the occasion of the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Economic vulnerability and economic resilience featured in the two global conferences on the Sustainable Development of SIDS, that followed the 1994 Barbados conference: these were respectively held in Mauritius in 2005 and Samoa in 2014. In both conferences, I represented the Institute and considerable reference was made to the excellent research work forthcoming from the University of Malta, which indeed is the oldest university among the world's small island states.

The posters used to publicise the 2005 Mauritius and the 2014 Samoa Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS.



Collaboration with International Organisations

The Institute established various connections with International Organisations during its 30 years in operation, notably with the United Nations and its agencies (including UNEP, UNCTAD, UNESCO and UNDP) which had a SIDS unit or division as part of the organisation and have extended their support for the sustainable development of these states. The Institute also collaborated with the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat in the interest of small states. The regional organisations with which the Institute collaborated included the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Indian Ocean Commission and the Pacific Island Forum, all of which dedicate most of their work to the advancement of small states and territories in their respective region. The Institute also worked closely with the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS), particularly in the run-up to the 1994 Barbados Conference and the 2005 Mauritius Conference, as well as with the International Small Islands Studies Association (ISISA).



An ISSI training workshop in progress, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat.



The closing plenary session of the conference (left to right):
Dr Serge Allegrezza, Prof. Lino Briguglio and Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino.

The head table during one of the sessions of the conference on competitiveness strategies in the EU small states, held in Luxembourg in 2016, in collaboration with the government of Luxembourg.



Participants at an international conference organised in by the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the ISSI in November 2011.

Academic and Research Endeavour

Academic courses

The Institute offers four programmes of study, one of which leads to the PhD degree. Two of these lead to a Master of Arts (MA) level qualification: one in Islands and Small States Studies which is mostly taught; and the other in Research on Islands and Small States, which is mainly online and via distance learning. A fourth course leads to the Diploma in Lace Studies, which is offered at the University of Malta's Gozo Campus.



MA(ISSS) students who graduated in 2009, with Professor Lino Briguglio.

Research

The Institute has been very active in research work, most of which has found its way to publication, locally or abroad. Between 2000 and 2008, the Institute published books in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, all focussing on issues relating to small states. The Institute was also instrumental in editing books published by Routledge on various matters relating to small states.



Books published by the ISSI in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat.



Books published by Routledge, with some chapters authored by Maltese academics.

Research carried out by the Institute led to the publication of two seminal papers, one published in 1995 in the prestigious journal *World Development* titled “Small Island Developing States and the Economic Vulnerability”; and another published in *Oxford Development Studies* titled “Economic vulnerability and resilience: concepts and measurements.” With over 1,000 citations, the *World Development* paper is one of the most cited for a University of Malta publication. The Institute also carried considerable research on climate change and was instrumental in the publishing of a special Issue of the *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management* (Vol. 10, issue 2), focussing on climate change in small island developing states. Another area of research in which the Institute excelled relates to health issues in small states. A major publication in this regard is “Resilience and 21st Century Public Health” in the *European Journal of Public Health*, (Vol 27 Issue 5).

Since 2018, the Institute is the proud administrative home of Small States and Territories (ISSN: 2616-8006), a peer reviewed, open access, on-line journal, published biannually, with Professor Godfrey Baldacchino as its Executive Editor. The Institute also publishes Occasional Papers on Islands and Small States, first issued in 1994. Earlier, the Institute was involved in the editing of other journals, including *INSULA: The International Journal of Island Affairs*, in collaboration with UNESCO, which dealt mostly with social, cultural and historical issues relating to small islands.



In its research endeavour, the Islands and Small States Institute has collaborated with many universities, mostly located in other islands and small states, including the University of Prince Edward Island (Canada), the University of the West Indies, the University of Mauritius, the University of the South Pacific (with its main campus in the Fiji Islands), and the University of the Sunshine Coast and Queensland University of Technology (both in Australia). The Institute also represented the UM at the inaugural meeting of RETI, the Network of Island Universities, held in Corsica, France, in 2010.



In its research endeavour, the Islands and Small States Institute has collaborated with many universities, mostly located in other islands and small states. Pictures shows a meeting of academics from small islands states, held in the US Virgin Islands in 2004 .

Research Platforms

The Institute has three research platforms. One of these focuses on health issues in small states, and is coordinated by Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat. As a result of this initiative, and due to the notable track record of the Institute relating to top-level policy research on health in small states, the Institute was designated in 2017 as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and policies in Small States.



The three research platforms of the ISSI.

Another research platform focuses on climate change in islands and small states, coordinated by Dr Stefano Moncada. It smoothens and brokers collaboration between UM entities and individual UM academics interested in climate change issues and to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to climate change at the University of Malta and elsewhere.

The third research platform relates to island tourism, with the objective of promoting research and teaching initiatives relating to island tourism at UM and elsewhere. It is coordinated by Dr Marie Avellino, who is the Director of UM's Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture (ITTC).

Two main strands of research on small states

One of the main areas of the research work undertaken by the Institute is to answer the question as to why small states succeed economically, in spite of the constraints faced by these states in view of their small economic size.

There are two main explanatory strands in this regard. One strand is based on the argument that there are many advantages of being a small island state: such as a higher degree of social cohesion in the face of adversity, more flexibility in decision making, governance facilitated due to the possibility that the government would have a "helicopter" view of what's going on, and an innate tendency for entrepreneurship. This stance is represented by Professor Godfrey Baldacchino, a researcher of international repute in island and small state studies, who argues that these tendencies are not essentially policy induced, but triggered spontaneously among various actors in such small jurisdictions. Professor Baldacchino associates the economic success of many small island states with the resourcefulness, flexibility, street wisdom and 'economies of scope' practised by islanders and small state citizens.

Another strand, which is often associated with the present author, is that there are major disadvantages associated with and inherent to small country size, notably a limited ability to benefit from economies of scale. Given that small states have no option but to rely on international trade due to their very small domestic markets and limited natural resource endowments, they are highly exposed to economic shocks, and therefore to economic vulnerability. This is exacerbated by a relatively high dependence on a very narrow range of exports (such as tourism, finance, bananas, phosphate, sugar, pineapples or tobacco) and an equally high dependence on strategic imports such as food, fuel and industrial supplies. According to this strand of research, many small states succeed economically in spite of



Small island states are often associated with pristine beaches, however, in reality these states face a multitude of economic, social and environmental problems. Many however succeed economically as a result of the resourcefulness of the islanders.

their small economic size, with the success being attributed mainly to policy measures aimed at withstanding or recovering from such shocks. It is argued that small states that do not adopt such policy measures often end up as failed or almost failed states.

This summary of the two stances would seem to indicate that the difference between the two is that the first assumes that islanders and small state citizens are innately resourceful, and that their success is due to an inherent socio-cultural and political 'ecology', activated automatically among individuals, households and organisations; whereas the second stance assigns more importance to policy measures, suggesting that actions conducive to economic resilience need to be developed within a policy framework. It needs to be said

here that the first stance does not exclude the benefits of good governance and associated policy measures, and the second does not exclude the possibility that there is an innate resourcefulness in the citizens of islands and small states. The main difference would seem to be one of emphasis, with the first focussing more on the character of citizens 'on the ground' and the second emphasising the need for appropriate policy measures by the relevant authorities.

Conclusion

In its thirty years of existence, the Islands and Small States Institute has made important contributions to the teaching and research on island and small state issues, and has made its voice heard in international fora on the sustainable development of these states and territories. It has helped to enhance the body of research of the University of Malta, and placed the University as one of a few 'world class' teaching and research institutions of matters relating to islands and small states; and indeed, the University of Malta is the only university in the world offering doctoral degrees in this subject. The Institute remains well-positioned to continue playing an important role locally and internationally in this regard.



Meeting of the Board of the ISSI in May 2019. From left to right: Dr Mario T. Vassallo, Mr Robert Tabone, Professor Lino Briguglio (Director), Professor Godfrey Baldacchino (Chairperson), Dr Stefano Moncada, Dr Charles Youssif, Professor Roderick Pace. Missing from the picture (inset): Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, Professor Saviour Formosa and Mr Raphael Axiak.

I wish to acknowledge and salute all members of the current and past Boards as well as the current and past administrative staff of the Institute for their contribution to its success throughout the years. I have no doubt that the Institute will continue developing and intensify its teaching and research endeavours, under the wise direction of Professor Godfrey Baldacchino, who chairs the Board of the Institute, with the energetic drive of Dr Stefano Moncada, who coordinates the post-graduate courses of the Institute, with the guidance of the other members of the Board of the Institute, and with the support and assistance of its administrative staff and research officers.

The Climate Change Platform (CCP)

Stefano Moncada

Focal Point of the CCP



The CCP is a collaborative project between the Islands and Small States Institute, the Institute for Sustainable Development and Climate Change and the Institute for European Studies at the University of Malta. Its main objectives are (a) to facilitate collaboration between UM entities and individual UM academics, and students, interested in climate change issues and (b) to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to climate change at the University of Malta and elsewhere.

Dr Stefano Moncada, the focal point person of the Climate Change Platform.

The Platform provides various facilities to encourage such collaboration and promotion of research, including (a) periodical issue of reports and press releases that provide a summary of climate change related activities by University entities; (b) information about research and teaching activities, as well as participation in climate-change related conferences by UM entities and individual academics and (c) promotion and showcasing of research conducted by UM entities and individual academics. The outcomes of these initiatives are available on the website of the Institute and on the UM's Newspoint portal.

The CCP is guided and overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by Professor Simone Borg, with Professor Maria Attard as vice-chair, and Dr Stefano Moncada as the CCP focal point. The other members of the Committee are Professor Lino Briguglio, Dr Charles Galdies, Professor Paul J. Pace and Dr Ing. Charles Yousif.



Professor Simone Borg and Professor Maria Attard, respectively Chair and Vice-chair of the Climate Change Platform.

Since 2016, when the CCP was established, it has organised various research seminars on themes relating to climate change. The aim of these research seminars was twofold: to present state of the art research developed by members of the University of Malta, and to identify gaps where further research is needed to support policy.

In Autumn 2016, the CCP organised two such seminars, one on “Climate Change Mitigation and the Co-benefits of the Low Carbon Economy in Malta” and the other on “Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction: Trends and Economic Challenges in Malta”.

Two other research seminars were organised in 2017. This time the themes were “Managing Extreme Events: Health System Preparedness for Climate Change” organised in April 2017, and the other on “Mitigation and Trade Patterns”.

All seminars were well attended, and the publicity in the run up of the event positively spilled over the visiting of the ISSI website and its social media by new members of the public. Professor Maria Attard, Director of the Institute of Sustainable Development and Climate Change and Vice Chair, referring to the seminars organised by the CCP, stated that such research initiatives are of major importance, producing evidence-based knowledge and aiming to support decision making more effectively.

The CCP has also been active internationally. It has cooperated with the University of Mauritius on research relating to the application of the Vulnerability and Resilience Framework in the SIDS of the Indian Ocean. Further cooperation also occurred with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), focusing on joint supervision of doctoral students conducting research in the area of public health, food security and climate change adaptation in the Pacific island of Kiribati.



Research Seminar on 'Managing Extreme Events: Health System Preparedness for Climate Change'.



Dr Moncada delivering his research findings on climate change impacts and coping strategies in vulnerable coastal communities of Mauritius.



The visual representation of pollution, a common sight within the mind of the public sphere when addressing climate change.

Through an initiative taken by Dr Stefano Moncada, the CCP has co-hosted a special session on ‘Adaptation and Development in Small Island Developing States’, at the 2018 Adaptation Futures conference held in Cape Town (South Africa) from 18 to 21 June 2018. The Adaptation Futures conference is held every two years, with the support of the United Nations, and gathers thousands of scholars, practitioners and policy makers, to focus on solutions and on active dialogues to promote climate change adaptation at all levels. A total of five presentations were delivered by PhD students and researchers, all addressing the possible opportunities, and the specific challenges faced by small island developing states when implementing climate change adaptation.

In March 2019, the CCP promoted the release of a statement of ‘scientists and scholars concerning the student-driven protests for more climate protection’ (#Scientists4Future), and coordinated the collection of signatures of academics and researchers in Malta, amounting to more than 70 in total.

The CCP will continue to support all academics and students at the UM and elsewhere, with the aim of offering further tools, and create more opportunities, to expand knowledge and research in the multidisciplinary area of climate change.

The Small States Health Platform (SSHP)

Natasha Azzopardi Muscat

Coordinator of the Small States Health Platform and Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre within the ISSI



Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat.

The SSHP within the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) aims to promote research on health systems in small states and to provide a depository for such research. The implementation of the WHO's flagship policy document 'Health 2020' requires a multi-sectoral interdisciplinary approach and for this purpose the SSHP undertakes, with the objective of focusing on research, initiatives related to policy capacity and governance of health systems in small states.

Through this initiative the ISSI seeks to bring together the academic experience of researchers on health systems in small states and encourage a multi-disciplinary approach to such research. In addition, the SSHP organises activities relating to such research. The Platform also supports the ISSI in its role as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States..



Professor Alfred Vella, Rector of the University of Malta, being presented with the letter setting up the WHO Collaborating Centre at the ISSI, by Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, in the presence of the Minister for Health, Hon. Chris Fearne.

The ISSI as a WHO Collaborating Centre

In June 2017, the Islands and Small States Institute was designated as the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Health and Policies Systems and Policies in Small States. The Institute has been assigned this role, during the 4th High-level Meeting of Small Countries, held on 26–27 June 2017. The WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Ministry of Health of Malta jointly organised the Meeting under the framework of the WHO Small Countries Initiative. Due to its notable track record of top-level policy research on resilience, economy, environment and health in small states, the Institute will work with the World Health Organization as a centre of excellence and will explicitly develop frameworks and policies for strengthening resilience in small state health systems.

Activities relating to Health Issues

Islands and Small States Institute



WHO Collaborating Centre for
Health Systems and Policies in Small States

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The placard in front of the ISSI offices, indicating that the Institute was designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre.



Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, Professor Lino Briguglio and Professor Roderick Pace during the workshop on 'European integration, Small States and Access to Medicines'.

The Institute's role includes co-organising capacity-building events on health system leadership and governance in the specific contexts of small states. It will support the area of health information and evidence generation in small states and develop appropriate performance assessment mechanisms for small health systems. WHO collaborating centres are institutions such as research institutes, parts of universities, or academies that are designated by the WHO Director-General to carry out activities in support of the Organisation's programmes. Currently there are over 700 WHO collaborating centres in 80 countries.

The SSHP also coordinates a Health Research Group under the direction of Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, with the objective of focusing on research initiatives related to policy capacity and governance of health systems in small states and to strengthen the capacity of the Institute as a WHO Collaborating Centre. The group seeks to bring together the academic experience from islands and small states work in economics, international relations and environmental management, applying this to the discipline of health systems research.

The SSHP organised various activities since its establishment in 2016. The Platform was involved in the organisation of a workshop on "European integration, Small States and Access to Medicines" on 27 January 2017, under the auspices of the Institute for European Studies and in collaboration with the Department of Health Services Management. The workshop was organised within the framework of the EU project "SMSHealth.eu - European Integration, Small States and Health" co-funded by the European Union. The project consortium was composed of partners with a small state and health systems expertise from Malta, Estonia, Slovenia, Iceland and The Netherlands.



Participants attending the workshop 'Building resilience to improve health and well-being in Malta' being addressed by Professor Erio Ziglio, who is internationally renowned on matters relating to public health. He served as scientist with the World Health Organization for many years.

Other activities organised with the involvement of the SSHP included a workshop to discuss "Cancer Policy in Small States", held on 9th January 2018 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as well as a workshop on "Rare Diseases in Small States" held on 30th May 2018 in Reykjavik, Iceland. Both were organised within the framework of the EU project 'SMSHealth.eu - European Integration, Small States and Health', which is technically coordinated by the University of Malta.



Professor Albreht speaking during the workshop on 'Cancer Policy in Small States'. Professor Albreht is Head of the Centre for Health Care, National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia.



The leading protagonists, including Professor Roderick Pace and Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat (front row centre and right) at the concluding conference of the EU ERASMUS+ project 'SMSHealth.eu - European Integration, Small States and Health'.



Experts who attended the workshop on rare diseases in small states, held in Iceland.



The front page of the programme for the sixth high-level meeting of the small countries, held in the Republic of San Marino between 31 March and 2 April 2019.

As part of WHO's ongoing support to small countries in building their health systems, a capacity-building event entitled "Strengthening governance in small-state health systems: the role of clinical and public health leaders" was organised in Valletta, Malta, on 10 May 2019 in collaboration with the Ministry for Health of Malta. The aim was to enhance the capacity of those attending to advocate for and contribute to strengthening health-system governance. The participants in the event explored the main challenges projected for the next ten years and the role that clinical and health leaders in small countries could play in dealing with these challenges, and examined the data resulting from a survey carried out on health-system performance in Malta. They also identified ways of strengthening leadership and governance in line with WHO principles on achieving health equality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. The participants included representatives of the WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States, the Mater Dei Hospital and the Ministry for Health of Malta, as well as the WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Policy, Governance and Leadership (Catholic University of Rome, Italy). The SSHP was also instrumental in developing a toolkit for the development and implementation of epidemiological surveys in small populations. The publication was co-authored by Dr. Sarah Cuschieri, Professor Neville Calleja and Professor Julian Mamo as part of the work of the WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States.

The World Health Organization organises an annual high level meeting in Small Countries, and members of the SSHP, particularly Dr Azzopardi Muscat, play an active role in these international meetings. The 2018 high level meeting was held in Iceland on 25 to 27 June, 2018. Dr Azzopardi Muscat was invited to represent the WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States hosted at the Islands and Small States Institute. During the session on Building Resilience, she presented research that she carried out with Bernardette Demicoli and Professor Lino Briguglio on strengthening health system resilience in small states using Malta as a case study. At the 2019 high level meeting, held in San Marino in late March and early April titled "Equity and sustainable development – keeping people at the centre" Dr Azzopardi Muscat spoke on the theme "Addressing 21st-century health workforce challenges in small countries".

The Island Tourism Platform

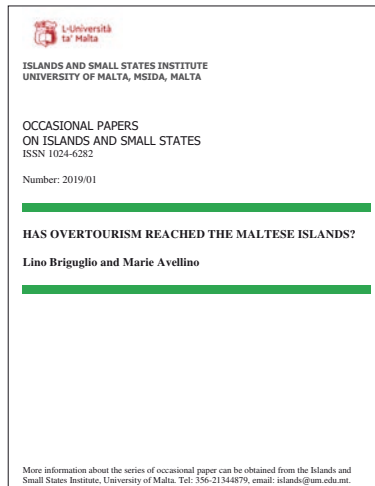
Dr Marie Avellino

Director, Institute of Tourism Travel and Culture and Chairperson of the ITP



The Island Tourism Platform (ITP), set up in 2017, is a collaborative project between the Islands and Small States Institute and the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture (ITTC). Its main objectives are (a) to facilitate collaboration between University of Malta entities and individual academics interested in island tourism issues and (b) to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to island tourism at the University of Malta and elsewhere.

Dr Marie Avellino, Director of the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture, and chair of the Island Tourism Platform.



Cover of the paper authored by Professor Lino Briguglio and Dr Marie Avellino on overtourism in Malta which has provoked considerable discussion in the Maltese press and social media.

The ITP is administered and guided by a Steering Committee composed of Dr Marie Avellino (Director of the ITTC and Chairperson of the ITP), Professor Lino Briguglio (Director of the ISSI and vice-chair of the ITP), Professor Carmel Cassar (ITTC), Dr Marie Louise Mangion (Department of Public Policy), Professor Andrew Jones (ITTC) and Mr Julian Zarb (tourism consultant).

The ITP in collaboration with the ITTC, organised three seminars so far. One of these was on tourism carrying capacity, intended to offer a contribution, on behalf of the University of Malta, to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) 2017 celebrations for the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development'. The seminar was jointly organised by the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) and the Institute for Tourism Travel and Culture (ITTC) on 6th December 2017, chaired by Professor Andrew Jones. A presentation relating to tourism carrying capacity was delivered by Mr Julian Zarb. The panel of speakers consisted of Dr Marie Louise Mangion, Professor Lino Briguglio, Mr Leslie Vella (Deputy Chief Executive Malta Tourism Authority) and Mr Adrian Attard (Malta Hotel and Restaurants Association). A common theme touched upon by the speakers was that tourism in small islands is mostly promoted as a source of income and employment, often neglecting the negative impacts on the resident community and on the environment. It was emphasised that sustainable tourism involves taking account of the economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism. This seminar led to a collaborative research between Dr Marie Avellino and Professor Lino Briguglio who later wrote and published a paper on overtourism.



Mr Leslie Vella, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Malta Tourism Authority, addressing the participants at the seminar on 'The Impacts of Tourism on the Maltese Island Culture'.

Another seminar with the theme 'The Impacts of Tourism on the Maltese Island Culture', held on 6th June, 2018, discussed the cultural heritage of Malta. The seminar was chaired by Professor Lino Briguglio, and the panel consisted of Mr Karsten Xuereb (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Malta), Professor George Cassar, Dr Marie Avellino, and Mr Leslie Vella (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Malta Tourism Authority). The seminar presentations and discussion dealt mainly with the cultural interaction between the visitors and the host communities on the Maltese Islands. A common theme that emerged was that many islands have interesting cultural heritage, which could serve as a tourist attraction. However, tourism can usher in major social and political changes in the host country, often due to the fact that the visitors may have mores and preferences which differ from those traditionally held by the host community.

A third seminar, organised by the Institute of Tourism, Travel and Culture in collaboration with the ITP, was on the theme 'Maximising whilst sustaining Cultural Resources: Island Tourism and Beyond' and held on 5th December 2018. The seminar served to showcase the work which has been carried out by three researchers at ITTC. The underpinning theme is that of islands as repositories of diverse resources and the case studies will present examples of how these assets can be maximised for the tourism industry whilst also embracing sustainable principles. Ms Pauline Sultana spoke about Comino's natural and cultural heritage, Mr Stefano Crisafulli spoke about redevelopment and re-functionalisation process in Malta and Mr Marco Prospero spoke about community, hotel and urban gardens in the historical centres of the Italian Peninsula.



Some of the students that took part in the 6th Gozo Tourism Summer School.

The ITP also cooperates with other organisations in research and dissemination of knowledge. In this regard the ITP collaborates on an ongoing basis with the Observatory on Tourism in the European Islands (OTIE), mostly in the organisation of a tourism summer-school, held at the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), in Qala, Gozo, in July and August of each year. The OTIE was founded in Palermo in February

2007, where the Head Office is located. It is a non-profit association, constituted by public institutions, Universities, Research Centres and other international organisations of 7 EU countries (Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Greece, Malta and Cyprus).



Tourism is a major source of income and employment for many small islands, particularly those located in the Tropical zone. Picture shows the major attraction of such islands, namely the pristine sandy beaches with crystal clear water. The ISSI has contributed considerably to the study on island tourism.

Testimonials

Former External Examiners

Professor Satish Chand

Professor of Finance in the School of Business at the University of New South Wales and Former External Examiner for the MA (ISSS)



Congratulations to the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) for having reached adulthood; that is, its 30th anniversary. My association with the ISSI commenced in 2004 with an invitation from Professor Lino Briguglio, a longstanding leader of academic scholarship on small states, to give a paper on the developmental challenges faced by small open economies of the Commonwealth. Since then, I have watched in awe the outputs from the ISSI in the form of publications and graduates. As someone who has contributed to some of these publications and having served as an external reviewer of the academic programme, I remain convinced of the need for the ISSI and the value it brings to policy making in small island developing states.

Professor Wayne Hunte

Former Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) of the University of the West Indies and Former External Examiner for the MA (ISSS)



My first working experience with Professor Lino Briguglio, and indeed with the University of Malta, was in the development of a truly exciting initiative, the University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS). UCSIS was created in January 2005 through a Memorandum of Understanding between five founding institutions: the University of Malta, the University of Mauritius, the University of the South Pacific, the University of the Virgin Islands and the University of the West Indies. The main aim of the Consortium was to strengthen the capacity of Small Island States to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals and then, post-2015, the Sustainable Development Goals. Through our UCSIS interactions emerged a mutual professional respect that led to Professor Briguglio inviting me to serve as External Examiner in 2010 and 2011 for the Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies offered by the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta. I thoroughly enjoyed the required tasks which included examining research dissertations, participating in Viva Voce Examinations, reviewing written examination scripts and reviewing Policies and Procedures that guide the Master's programme.

I wish to close by quoting the final paragraph of my 2011 External Examiners Report. ‘This is an excellent Master’s programme which is quite unique globally. The administration of the programme is excellent and the training it provides through its courses are clearly relevant to persons who will become practitioners in the development of small states. The research conducted within the programme is current and topical, and has considerable potential for guiding policy formation that is relevant, not only to Malta, but to small island states in developing regions throughout the world.’ It has indeed been an honour to work with the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta, and with Professor Briguglio. I congratulate them on thirty years of continuous excellence and impact.

Dr Robert Read

University of Lancaster and Former External Examiner for the MA(ISSS)



I would, first of all, like to congratulate the Islands and Small States Institutes on reaching its 30th anniversary. In this time, the Institute has been at the forefront of raising global awareness of economic, political, social and environmental problems and challenges facing many islands and small states, not least the impacts of accelerating climate change. The Institute has also played an important role in ensuring that these challenges are recognised by many leading global institutions – notably the United Nations, The World Bank and The Commonwealth – which now have specific divisions dealing with islands and small states. The Islands and Small States Institute has achieved this by providing very strong support for interaction, learning and sharing best practice between academics, practitioners and policy-makers through its organisation and hosting of numerous general and specific international conferences and training events. Many of these meetings have generated important policy outcomes as well as being responsible for some of the most frequently cited academic research papers in the discipline. In my nearly 25 years of involvement with the Institute, I have attended many of its conferences and made many new friends as well as contributing as best I could. I wish the Institute all the best for the future.

Former Students

Caroline Camilleri Rolls

Former MA student (Intake 2004-2006)

After spending five years at the University of Malta Gozo Campus to get a BA degree in Economics and Sociology, the prospect of spending another three years to follow a course leading to the Master’s degree wasn’t high on my priority list at the time. As a mother of two boys, an eight-year-old and a two-year-old, and holding a full-time job as a kindergarten assistant, the time did not seem right.

I enjoyed the five years I had spent doing the BA degree. Going back to school as a mature student after a break of eight years was quite daunting at first but after a while we broke off into groups and really started to enjoy



ourselves. Once it was over it seemed as though something was missing from my life but I was not convinced that I needed to go down a further road to study further, however, I was extremely tempted by the Master's of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies which was being offered by the Islands and Small States Institute the following year. It was as I was still in this state of indecision when Prof Lino Briguglio gave me a call to encourage me to join the course. Although still somewhat unsure if I wanted to further my studies, I applied for the course and never looked back. It turned out that it was the best decision of my life to take up his invitation. Once I started attending the very interesting lectures I was hooked!

Three short years later I graduated – where did the time go? Professor Briguglio was my tutor for my dissertation which was entitled 'An Economic Evaluation of Ramla Bay'. It was a pleasure working with such a mentor. All in all, it was a wonderful experience and I was so glad I took up the challenge. I was able to apply for the position of teacher in a primary school, which I never dreamed of getting before I did my MA degree, and which I am still happily employed doing today. I will be forever grateful to the Islands and Small States Institute and in particular to Professor Briguglio's insight for encouraging me to continue with my studies.

Anne Rasmussen

Student (Intake 2018-2019, MA in Research on Islands and Small States Studies)



I have had the privilege to study in the University of Malta undertaking a Master's programme offered by the Islands and Small States Institute. My area of research related to climate change finance.

I enjoyed the face-to-face taught subjects forming part of the programme, although some of the subjects were new to me. All the subject taught touched upon different issues relating to Small Island Developing States. The research component of the programme was challenging as I had to complete my dissertation in ten months, but it all paid off in the end.

It has been a marvellous journey and experience. In Malta, I was exposed to an environment that is very different from Samoa, where I reside. I made new friends, established contacts with our course lecturers, participated in networks focusing on small island states and met new people from different walks of life.

I wish to thank the Islands and Small States Institute for offering such a valid and interesting course. This Master's programme has opened my eyes to a lot of issues pertaining to small islands states and will continue to help me in my career going forward.

Noemi Said

Former MA(ISSI) student (Intake 2015-2017)



I have been interested in environmental studies since my childhood, and after completing my Bachelor's degree in Geography I decided to join the Master's degree in Islands and Small States Studies offered by the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI), at the University Gozo Campus. Apart from the environmental aspect of the course, I also enjoyed immensely the economics related lectures, even though it was a whole new topic for me. The course tackled current issues related to the Maltese islands and other islands around the world and this has helped immensely in my profession. I am a Geography teacher, in a secondary state school, and this course has enabled me to better understand the special characteristics of small island states, knowledge that I pass on my students.

I also decided to write a dissertation on the environmental aspects of tourism, focusing on Mediterranean islands, and drawing on the information I received during the course lectures on the environment and on economics. My dissertation was also based on the perceptions of persons involved in the tourism trade, government officials and environmental NGOs operating in the islands covered in the study. I am gratified to have received a good grade for this dissertation. Throughout the two years of the course I always found support from both lecturers and the Islands and Small States Institute. I am proud to have finished my Master's degree in a subject which is of major relevance to the Maltese Islands. If I could go back in time I would definitely do it again. I am also very thankful to the Islands and Small States Institute for offering such an interesting and stimulating programme of studies.

Dr Carmen Saliba

Former PhD student at the ISSI

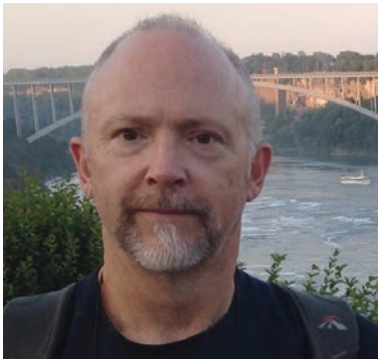


Upon completing my Master's in Economics and International Relations offered by the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI), I applied and was accepted to follow the PhD programme offered by the same Institute over the period of 2007 – 2012. My research focused on monetary policy, comparing its effects on the economies of small states with those of larger states. The ISSI Institute is very welcoming to its students and enabled me to enhance my knowledge and perceptions through reading, extensive research and an exchange with top academics of repute. I became familiar with the characteristics of small states, and why some succeed economically while others do not. In my PhD thesis I applied monetary policy variables to assess this matter. I am particularly grateful to Professor Lino Briguglio's invaluable, excellent supervision and wealth of knowledge in this area of study. My academic achievements improved my ability to view things from different angles and enabled me to think critically and assume that there are always two sides to an argument. In particular, in writing my PhD thesis I improved my ability to solve complex problems and sharpened my decision making skills.

During the period during which I was following the PhD programme, I also attended international workshops and conferences relating to small states issues, convened by the Islands and Small States Institute, some of which were organised in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Upon completing my studies, and drawing on the experience I gained in writing my thesis, I authored and co-authored a number of economic papers. I have also continued to specialise in the area of international corporate banking with a Maltese bank. The Institute therefore provided me with indispensable skills and knowledge needed for my career.

Robert Scott

Former MA(ISSS) student (Intake 2000-2002)



I was one of the students who followed the first course leading to a Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies in 2000. My interest in island studies started during a student exchange stint in Tahiti when I was 16 which eventually developed into a full-blown passion for islands! On meeting Lino Briguglio at an islands conference in Japan, I committed to joining the MA course offered by the Islands and Small States Institute, 'downed tools' and left Japan in 2000 where I was resident during that year.

The programme was conducted on a part-time basis and this allowed studying at a relaxed pace, and importantly for me, in the English language. The multi and cross-disciplinary approach enabled me to adopt a holistic overview of islands and to preserve a big picture perspective throughout.

Angela Scerri Cassar

Former Diploma in Lace Studies student (Intake 2005-2007)



As soon as I finished my studies at the University of Malta in 1996 from where I graduated in B.Sc.(Hons) Communication Therapy, I started attending the Lace Programme at the Gozo Campus of the University of Malta. Coming from a family of dressmakers, I always desired to learn lacemaking. Later, I followed the Diploma Course in Lace Studies (2005-2007) offered by the Islands and Small States Institute with Dr Consiglia Azzopardi, a well-known expert in lace-making, coordinating the course. During my studies, the staff of ISSI were very supportive and were always ready to help when a problem arose.

The course covered various interesting topics including history of different types of lace, history of art and lace design. We also studied topics associated with small business management. Having gained good practical and academic knowledge about lace, I am now able to identify more easily handmade lace from machine-made lace and to admire the laces used during religious activities. During my travel I also like to visit lace museums to enhance my knowledge about the techniques used for different types of lace.

Alison Vella

Former MA(ISSS) student (Intake 2000-2002)



Viewing Islands as entities with unique challenges has brought a very interesting dimension to my understanding of 'climate change' in the context of economics. The MA degree programme in Islands and Small States Studies added a strong element of economics to the purely geographical background of my first degree, a novelty at the time (2001/2002).

For the first time, I was presented with the idea of economic tools being put to work in protection of the environment, a concept that stuck with me through the years. Having been taught by local experts was an asset, as they themselves together with their expertise served as a bridge between theoretical and practical content, often drawing examples from their own professional experience. International mindedness was the foundation of this course, linking it to worldwide examples and highlighting common issues of vulnerability of island states and the interconnectedness between the economic, natural and social environment. Having spent most of my career as a Geography teacher, previously in Malta and now in Vienna teaching also Environmental Systems and Societies, and Individuals and Societies, my MA has proved to be an asset in providing me with the interdisciplinary tools needed when working in an international environment, which requires a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability.

I would recommend this programme of studies to those whose view of the world allows them to see the global extent of the issues we are facing in the 21st century and recognise the importance of solutions on a global rather than on a national scale. Small island states might have to form a united front in view of their increasing vulnerability to the effects of climate change, ocean acidification as well as the greater disparities in wealth which they will have to face and to which they least contributed. At this point in time, where tipping points are on the horizon, such a programme of studies offers a high degree of relevance to the current state of affairs. The vulnerability of island and small states might open the door to bigger questions where they could serve as living laboratories to what is to come in the so-called anthropocene.

Administrators

Dr Consiglia Azzopardi

Coordinator of the Diploma course in Lace Studies offered by the ISSI



The course leading to the Diploma in Lace Studies, evolved from the Lace-making Programme, which started in 1997 at the University of Malta Gozo Centre (now the Gozo Campus). On the initiative of Hon. Anton Tabone, then Minister of Gozo, and because there was an ever-increasing interest in the Lace-making Programme, it was decided that a Diploma in Lace Studies would be offered under the auspices of the Islands and Small States Institute following a suggestion by Professor Lino Briguglio, the Director of ISSI who was also, at that time, the Director of the University's Gozo Centre.

By that time, I had published two studies on lace, namely "Gozo Lace Introduction" and "Gozo Lace, Selection of Bobbin Lace Patterns by Diacono". As a result of the commencement of the Diploma in Lace Studies, I was encouraged to start reading for the M. Phil degree at the University of Malta, in which I graduated in 2002. My thesis was on the subject of "Maltese lace during the Time of the Order of St John". I then continued my studies by following a PhD programme which I completed successfully in 2013. My thesis was on the theme "Maltese Lace of the 19th and 20th centuries".

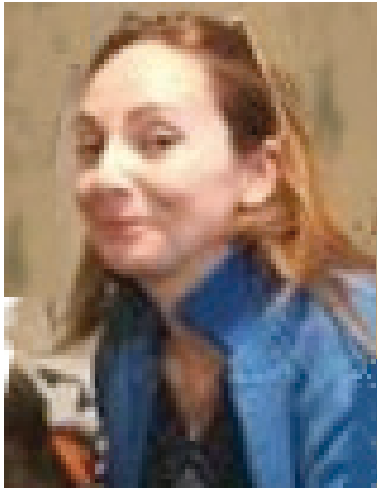
The Diploma in Lace Studies covers a wide array of subjects, including Lace Design, Costumes and Vestments, Restoration and Conservation of Textiles and History of European and Maltese Lace (of which I am the lecturer). Students also follow study units relating to business, including Accounting for Small Business, Economics and Marketing, studies that are useful for students who wish to open a small business. Students also learn how to evaluate their lace work, and to distinguish hand-made lace from machine-made reproductions, which are found abundantly on the market in these days. In addition, students study the characteristics of the lace worked in the small islands of the Mediterranean such as Tenerife Lace, lace of Lefkara in Cyprus, the lace worked in the Greek islands (very similar to Maltese), Sicilian lace and the sumptuous needle lace of Venice. Students are also offered practical sessions on bobbin and needle laces, which I conduct.

Two programmes were offered so far. The first group of 14 students graduated in 2001. The second is currently in progress, with five students. As coordinator of these courses, I always found the support I needed from the Islands and Small States Institute, particularly with regard to administrative requirements, scheduling of lectures and matters relating to the examinations. I wish to thank Professor Briguglio, Director of the Institute, for the constant encouragement and guidance I receive from him.

The studies about Maltese lace covered in the course leading to the Diploma in Lace Studies will be documented in my new book "History and Mystery - Four Centuries of Bizzilla" to be published in the near future.

Romina Carabott

Former clerk and administrator at the ISSI



I started working as a clerk with the Islands and Small States Institute in July of 2007, when I was 18. It was my first full-time job. The office was at the Foundation for International Studies in Valletta. If I were to describe my feelings working at the ISSI for almost 22 years I would say “a wonderful experience”. My work gave me a lot of satisfaction, and I related very well with my Director Professor Lino Briguglio and my colleagues Ms Maryrose Vella, Ms Isabelle Pisani and Ms Noemi Tari-Keresztes. Such good relationships enabled me to give my best to the Institute and to enjoy my work.

I cherish a lot of memories, especially the excitement in preparing for and helping in the organisation of the training workshops for government officials hailing from small states from all over the World, mostly from the Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and Africa. We used to organise two such workshops each year in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat. As a result, I met a great number of people from the Commonwealth countries, including top civil servants, and occasionally government ministers.

My job also included helping in the organisation of different University courses, including a Master’s course in Islands and Small States Studies and a course leading to the Diploma in Lace Studies, both offered at the Msida Campus and at the Gozo Campus. This was a fruitful experience and I learned how to deal with the University administration and how to relate with the students. This also involved working closely with staff at the Gozo Campus, in particular Mr Joseph Calleja and Mr Marvin Grech.

One of the events that led to some upheaval was the move of our offices from Valletta to the Msida Campus, in 2007. Apart from the difficulties in moving all the files, we needed to adjust to the new space arrangement, put in place new furniture, and get accustomed to the University environment. We soon settled in the new place, however we missed working with many of our colleagues at the FIS. We also missed the free access we had to the Aula Magna of the FIS.

Professor Lino Briguglio, being the very dedicated Director of the Institute, was always ready to extend his guidance when I needed it. He managed to keep the Institute going over all these years, spreading its reputation internationally, and making the University of Malta known in many small states and islands all over the world.

Isabelle Pisani

Former Administrator of the ISSI



During my years as Administrator with the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI), I performed administrative duties and helped organise Commonwealth Secretariat Conferences, public lectures and workshops. Working at the Institute has allowed me to meet with a large amount of students and with fellow professionals from various Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This enabled me to acquire a better understanding of the issues encountered by SIDS with regard to the economic, social, governance and environmental aspects.

The Institute under the able direction of Professor Lino Briguglio, has instilled in me a sense of responsibility towards sustainable development and helped me acquire a better understanding of Malta's role in establishing a standard for other states to follow in areas within the banking and financial sectors. I will always think fondly of my stay at the ISSI and the friends I made both within the institute and from other countries will remain with me forever. I sincerely wish that the Institute will continue to flourish.

Maryrose Vella

Former Administrator of the ISSI



In 1987, I started working at the Mediterranean Institute within the Foundation for International Studies (FIS) of the University of Malta. I was assisting different coordinators from different disciplines whose aim was to promote research on various issues relating to the Mediterranean including underwater archaeology, social and cultural matters and environmental concerns.

In 1989, Professor Lino Briguglio introduced a programme on islands and small states studies at the FIS. The aim of this programme was to promote research and a holistic understanding of islands and small states - their economic situations, cultures and environmental issues. Professor Salvino Busuttil, who was the Director of the FIS at that time, asked me to be Professor Briguglio's assistant and I accepted. Professor Briguglio's aim was to go further than the Mediterranean and so we did not include this programme within the Mediterranean Institute. After a few years, the programme was upgraded into an Institute. The Institute's aim was to try to bring together academics from different disciplines and from different countries through conferences, seminars and networking with centres and institutes overseas.

We started by trying to attract external funding for specific research projects, including joint ones. We collaborated with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank, UNESCO and other international organisations. I built a huge database of academics, institutes and organisations from all over the world., and used this database to publicise the Institute's activities, by mailing and faxing material initially, and later via email. During the events which we

organised, I took care of all the logistics in connection with conferences, and workshops, assisted by other employees at the FIS. These were enjoyable but very demanding tasks for me.

One of my jobs was to collect the papers presented during the conference and workshops so as to compile the proceedings which were sometimes published in book form. I also often did the typesetting and proofreading of journals and books which we published. I was also involved in various funded projects, including one on sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean awarded to the Institute and funded by the EU. We also received funding from the Commonwealth Secretariat for organising training workshops, attended by participants from small states from all over the world.

We eventually organised a Master's degree in Islands and Small States Studies at the University of Malta, which involved considerable administrative work. The ISSI was the first academic centre in the world offering post-graduate courses on islands and small states, and enjoys an international reputation as a centre of excellence on this subject. In carrying out these tasks, I learned new skills, which served me well for my career. In addition, I enjoyed meeting and socialising with people from different parts of the world who participated in our activities. Many who visited the Institute were very surprised to see that all the work came out of just two small rooms with a staff of three persons. Although the job was challenging, as it involved a multitude of tasks and considerable work, I never regretted joining the ISSI as an administrator, and I am very proud to have contributed to the success of the Institute.

International Collaborators

H.E. Jagdish Koonjul

Ambassador of Mauritius to the United Nations and former Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)



On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the ISSI of the University of Malta, I am pleased to offer my warm greetings and congratulations to all those who have been working relentlessly to make the ISSI a centre of excellence for studies relating to Islands and Small States. My own association with ISSI dates back to 2004 when, as Chairman of AOSIS, I met with Professor Lino Briguglio and discussed issues of vulnerabilities of small island states. He suggested that resilience as a call for good governance was the answer for such vulnerability. I immediately agreed and in the negotiations leading to the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA), we successfully argued the desirability of creating a Resilience Index to assist SIDS and Small States in monitoring government action relating to governance. With the support of the Commonwealth, ISSI produced within three years such a tool which provides useful guidance to policy makers. It has been a pleasure for me to be associated with ISSI and especially with Professor Briguglio and wish them both many more years of continued success.

Dr Caroline Morris

Director, Centre for Small States, Queen Mary University of London



As a new entrant to the world of small states studies, I was delighted with the welcome I received from Professor Lino Briguglio and the Islands and Small State Institute when establishing the Centre for Small States (CSS) at Queen Mary University of London, in 2015. Since that initial contact, the staff of ISSI and CSS have participated in conferences hosted at each others' universities and worked together to publish and disseminate new knowledge on small states and islands to an interdisciplinary audience. The CSS has benefited significantly from the insights and experience of ISSI, especially through Professor Briguglio and Dr Moncada. We wish the ISSI well on its 30th anniversary and may there be many more years of success.

Professor Sanjeev Sobhee

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academia) of the University of Mauritius



The University of Mauritius, through the Department of Economics and Statistics, cooperates with the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta on various matters. Both universities are located in small island states, and this led to a number of joint projects relating to such states. The two university entities cooperated in an Erasmus+ funded mobility arrangement that allowed academics from our university to visit and teach in Malta and Maltese academics to do the same at our university. We have together also developed very interesting ideas in the area of climate change applying the Vulnerability and Resilience Framework, originally developed by the ISSI, to climate change in small island developing states. The University of Mauritius has also engaged the Director of the Institute, Professor Lino Briguglio, to act as external examiner for the course leading to the Master's degree in Economics.

We are happy with such collaboration and we look forward to further cooperation across our universities.

Francesco Zambon

Coordinator, Investment for Health and Development in Healthy Settings, World Health Organization (WHO)



I truly feel honoured collaborating with the Island and Small State Institute in Malta. The Institute is known globally for its contribution in understanding challenges, but also opportunities, that are common to small states. The range of topic research and studies on policy implementation of the Institute is remarkable, to say the least. Some of the works produced by the Institute, under the leadership of Professor Lino Briguglio, remain true shining gems in the field: the “Vulnerability Index”, for instance, raised a world-wide interest and led many quantitative studies on economic vulnerability of small states. The Institute also contributed to shed light on the multi-faceted topic of resilience, at all its levels (individual, community and system) and in all its complexity. This was particularly important with the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, where resilience is a cornerstone in many of the Goals.

Further impetus was given to the Institute by Dr Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, one of the most authoritative voices in public health in Europe, thanks to her high level of expertise in public health and her exceptional ability to bridge the gap between policy and research. Many are the professionals from the University of Malta collaborating with the Institute, and all outstanding with no exception.

I really think that WHO is lucky to have the Island and Small State Institute as a WHO Collaborating Centre. The ISSI’s 30 years of experience in working with small countries and its wealth of knowledge and practical know-how is now made available to all the 11 countries part of the WHO Small Countries Initiative, which aims at supporting Member States with less than 2 million people in implementing WHO policies.

I would like to congratulate the Institute for its 30th Anniversary and I am confident that there will be many more decades of successful work to celebrate.

During its thirty years of existence, the Islands and Small States Institute was instrumental in producing an innumerable number of studies on islands and small states, some of which are internationally considered as seminal work, organised various international conferences and workshops, collaborated closely with many international organisations, and ran various academic programmes. The impact of the ISSI on the small island state literature is immense, and there is hardly any publication on small states that does not cite work produced by members of the Institute, thereby substantially adding to the research output of the University of Malta.

I am pleased that the University of Malta has the ISSI, as one of its entities, and I am confident that the Institute will continue enhancing the reputation of our University locally and internationally.

Professor Alfred J. Vella
Rector, University of Malta

