RIGHT TO NATURE

SEMINAR REPORT

Organised by Friends of the Earth Malta & Front Ħarsien ODZ

5TH MARCH 2016

Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector Premises, Melita Street, Valletta

Who We are

The seminar was co-organised by Front Ħarsien ODZ and Friends of the Earth Malta.

Front Ħarsien ODZ

Front Ħarsien ODZ is a citizens' movement which welcomes support from all sectors of society. The aim of this Front is to safeguard ODZ sites such as the one located at Żonqor Point. The goals of this Front are purely environmental in nature. This Front is open to residents, individuals from all sections and walks of life and organisations who share our aims.

Email: **frontharsienodz@gmail.com**
Website: **https://frontharsienodz.wordpress.com**

Friends of the Earth Malta

Friends of the Earth Malta, is a Maltese non-government organisation, member of an International network of NGOs, which strive to promote sustainable development and to ensure that human activities do not harm other living creatures.

'Nature is our Right' is a Friends of the Earth project supported by the MAVA fund. The project served as inspiration for the seminar name 'Right to Nature'. The official launch of the KEEPERS exhibition was carried out on the day with a formal address by Ms Carmen Chetcuti, one of the two Maltese Keepers.

The seminar was also supported by the Schools of Sustainability project, co-financed by the Ministry for Social Dialogue and Consumer Affairs.

For more information visit: **http://natures-keepers.org**
Email: **info@foemalta.org**
Website: **http://www.foemalta.org**

Scope of the Seminar

The seminar was organised with the intention of inspiring active citizenship by starting a discussion on the main issues in the environmental sphere and extracting ways and means to tackle these issues by concerned citizens.

The seminar was attended by a varied group of people of all ages and backgrounds. The five topics chosen do not represent the entirety of the environmental dimension, however they proved to be a sound basis for healthy discussions.

We hope to be in a position to hold more seminars of the kind in the near future. Following are short summaries of the information and outcomes of each workshop.

Structure Planning vs. Spatial Planning

Paul Gauci

History

Modern planning started in the United Kingdom in 1909 as a result of the merge between the enlightenment movement and the industrial revolution. It was also fuelled by the development of scientific research and new technologies, and a steadily growing population.

In light of this philanthropists, medics and other scientists advocated for the need of spatial planning. It was decided that government should provide housing through the 1909 'Housing and Tenanting Law' to regulate the development of aristocratic land.

After the first world war, there were 4 million new dwellings. In 1932, housing was regulated in the countryside as well - the UK strived to create self-sufficient agriculture as an island.

It soon became evident that planning for development was not simply the engineers' job, but other professionals such as economists, biologists, sociologists etc, using scientific methodologies were needed.

By the 1950s, planning departments in universities were telling students to investigate social, economic and environmental aspects.

The European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter adopted in 1983 by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) stated that: "Regional/spatial planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society. It is at the same time a scientific discipline, an administrative technique and a policy developed as an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach directed towards a balanced regional development and the physical organisation of space according to an overall strategy."

In 1999, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) was signed by the ministers responsible for regional planning in the EU member states. This document was not legally binding however it influenced several countries such as Sweden, United Kingdom and Belgium to implement parts of it. Malta did not implement this document until the late 2000s.

ESVP was seen as a further opportunity for cohesion in Europe and to get different ministries and departments to work together.

In 2004, the United Kingdom took on spatial planning as the formal methodology of their planning strategy.

The greatest issue in spatial planning was to make plans easily adaptable to legislation. Plans would easily become outdated as research was lenghty and laborious.

In 1968 multi-tier planning was introduced through the military – this included a strategic plan and

a higher level, with local plans within it. Malta emulates much of the United Kingdom's system. In 1984 United kindgom regional plans adopted spatial planning: economic, transport, social and spatial plans in one single document.

In 1992 Malta adopted the United Kindgom's system however our original planning document did not change substantially. 7 regional plans were being used due to differences in characteristics of these areas.

In 2002 Malta merged its environmental and planning authority due to influences by the European union. The European Union saw this new approach as a way to achieve better integration – in Malta this served as a pooling of funding and resources for both departments' benefit.

In 2010 the United Kindgom dismantled spatial planning by only adopting local plans. In Malta there was a merge between the Environmental act and Development Planning act.
The lack of a spatial plan became pronounced which instigated the creation of the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED) in 2015. SPED refers to the social, economic and environmental pressures on development.

Threats and Weaknesses

Pure Spatial Planning is not utilized in Malta. The usual methodology includes first consulting with economic planners and developers, after which planners are asked to identify land suitable for the projects. The conversation is not horizontal.

The housing regulations in place are from the 1880s, which did not envision current realities such as high-rise buildings or the increase in population density.

Lack of proper planning results in water losses in the sea or flooding causing rainwater to enter sewage canals.

The flexibility and loopholes in our legislation provide scarce protection for our scenery especially in coastal areas which are considered as prime real estate opportunities.

The inclusion of an NGO representative on the Planning Authority and Environmental and Resource Authority boards is in itself positive however it is not a significant amount, easily overruled and could be used to silence NGOs from protesting decisions.

The planning process is moving at a slow pace that makes new legislation redundant soon after publication.

The need for all aspects of spatial planning to be considered evenly and a common vision for the country to be issued clearly is now more necessary than ever. Although it will always be a political topic the preservation of Malta's aesthetic, social and environmental identity is crucial.

Opportunities and Recommendations

Although the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development is very vague and general, it is the first step for a true guideline to Malta's development in the coming years.

Spatial planning documents can be created through discussions with non government organisations, civil society organisations, local councils, economists, developers, environmental experts, sociologists and philantropists – all aspects of the document need to be explored for a true holistic view of the future.

The seven local plans are still in use and need to be updated to fit under SPED. This is an opportunity for a holistic approach to be taken, from a horizontal perspective.

Increased resources and funding to incentive research into the topic could speed up the process of planning for Malta. In Italy, regional bottom-up strategies with linked funds are in place – this methodology should be considered for its feasibility for use in Malta.

Photography by: **Steve Bonello**

Malta Environment and Planning Authority *(MEPA)*

Bjorn Bonello

History

The setting up of MEPA in 1995 caused a large improvement in planning as it gave structure and vision, while employing competent qualified people for implementation, in a democratic and structured format.

The role of MEPA was mainly to process development applications, draft policies and planning documents, enforcement and transposition of EU directives into local legislation.

Decisions on large-scale projects were taken up by the MEPA board which was made of 15 individuals: 3 public officers, 8 independent members, chairpersons of the environment and planning council boards and 2 members representing political parties.

Smaller developments were under the responsibility of the Environment and Planning Commission (EPC) boards. EPC board A took care of ODZ development applications, mainly agricultural, and urban conservation areas. EPC board B took care of applications in urban areas, with the exclusion of urban conservation areas. Each board was made up of 4 qualified members and a chairperson. After the reform, MEPA is now split into two authorities: The Environment and Resources authority and the Planning Authority.

There will be a decision-making council formed by an executive chairperson (CEO), 2 permanent members (chairman and deputy chairman of the planning commission), 2 independent permanent members (from the non-governmental sector), 2 members representing the Malta Environmental commission (when requested by the CEO), and one observatory member (to give their contribution if necessary). The role of the council is to shape new policies and regulations and not to process applications.

The new Planning board will replace the existing board and will consist of: 3 public officers, 5 independent members (instead of 8 members), a member from the Planning Commission (Chairperson), 2 members representing both parties in Parliament, a member from the environmental sector nominated by eNGOs, member from the Malta Environment Authority, and one from the Local Councils (represented for the first time).

With regards to small applications a new planning commission will be in charge. The commission will consist of 3 qualified members and one supplementary member (part-time). The point of contention in this is that with 3 members (instead of five) a proper decision might be hard to reach – keeping in mind that several small developments might have and aggregated impact larger than one, large-scale development.

Background Information

What is the basic planning process?

The developer and their architect submit a proposal to MEPA for screening. During the screening process the Authority will give its recommendations to the architect listing in which areas the proposal is lacking with regards to policies, drawings, impact assessments et cetera.

When both parties are satisfied, the architect on behalf of the developer will submit a full application. The public will have 20 days time to object to this proposal. The planning application should be by law fixed and made visible on site, Local Council Notice Board, and MEPA website. Then there will be a formulation under the Development Planning Application Report that gives recommendations whether the application should be refused; approved; or approved with particular conditions.

The proposed application then goes to decision stage. Large projects are under the responsibility of the Planning Board and small projects are under the control of the Planning Commission. The objectors have the right to appeal to a decision. This should be done within 30 days from the decision date. The Appeals Board is independent from MEPA.

Threats and Weaknesses

The political influence in MEPA processes had and still will have too much weight on development issues. The legislation is crafted in such a way that an overarching view of planning and development in Malta was not present until SPED was created.

"Planning will always be a political issue; it is the allocation of land amongst competing uses while the paramount objective is the sustainable allocation of those uses."

SPED in itself leaves much to be desired as there are blatant loopholes allowing large-scale developments in ODZ land when these are in the 'public interest'. Definitions of several terms are not clarified and allow speculative efforts to ensue.

Low importance given to small-scale developments may overlook the impact of small buildings in ODZ land when in fact their total impact is substantial.

Due to the small size of the island and growing population and tourism, the demand for development is constant.

Opportunities

There is hope that the Planning Authority will adhere to its objective: to enhance the quality of life; safeguard the environment for future generations; to preserve, use and develop land and sea in a sustainable way; to ensure that national planning policies are clear and accessible to the general public; to deliver new plans and regulations in accordance with the needs and exigencies from time to time; to apply scientific and technical knowledge, resources and innovations for effective promotion of development planning; and to consider public values, costs, benefits and risks etc with regards proposed developments.

"There are many tools for proper planning, but it's up to the people in charge to apply those policies rightly within planning applications and processes. The text and spirit of the policies should always follow the concept of sustainability".

Photography by: **Steve Bonello**

The Relationship Between **Sustainable Agriculture** and **Rural Development** Workshop

Malcolm Borg

Background Information

There is a direct correlation between Out of Development Zones (ODZ) and agricultural land, significant parts of which are privately owned. We have around 19,000 registered farmers, circa 1,500 of whom are full-timers. There are 10,000 hectares of arable land in Malta, however each hectare is generally divided into a number of small parcels. Many holdings are smaller than 3 tumoli (1 hectare equals 9 tumoli).

It is very common for farmers to lease their land, known as 'qbiela' in Maltese. This means that as long as the farmer is working the land in the timeframe stipulated, the original owner cannot reclaim the land. This kind of land can be passed on down generations and this has resulted in fragmentation of the original land into smaller pockets - one for each family or individual heir. Malta has the highest percentage of kitchen gardens (small farms for domestic use) as a percentage of its total arable land when compared to other European countries.

There are several farmer's organizations and cooperatives, however there is lack of cooperative effort between them. Farmers' lobby is still generally weak.

Farmers can sell their produce through middle-men at the Pitkali– an 'auction house' that sells fresh produce to wholesalers or retailers. Traceabilityisstill unregulated – sometimes resulting in discarded food and/or unpaid farmers.

The Farmers' Markets allow farmers to surpass this issue, however this depends on the availability of the farmer to allow one person to attend the market twice a week (financial and time restrictions), and limited spaces are available.

There is a lack of transparency with regards to imported goods, and surveillance and testing of imports is perceived to be sub-standard due to the lack of local testing facilities and the low percentage sampled.

Despite EU obligations, grading of fresh produce (making sure that consistent size, shape and colour are present) does not occur in Malta.

Food waste in Malta accounts for a very high percentage. This food is either disposed of or sold as animal feed, and farmers suffer the loss of profits.

With regards to animal production in Malta, animal welfare standards are relatively high –for example Malta was one of the first countries to introduce new, enriched cages for chickens, and improved housing for swine, in line with new European Union regulations. These improvements were subsidized by the EU, however these came at hefty prices for livestock farmers. Regulations could bemore effectively enforced in Malta due to the small size of the sector.

Pesticide residues in fresh Maltese produce is relatively low when compared to other European countries. This could be due to the fact that some are broken down by the sun and naturally-occurring bacteria, and also that due to their high prices most farmers are very careful in their application.

One can split agriculture in Malta in two sectors:

1. Dry land which relies on rain, used mostly to grow fodder (wheat, other), onions, broad beans and some potatoes.
2. Irrigated land which is used to grow most other vegetables.
   Two types of irrigation systems are most commonly used: drip irrigation and sprinklers. The water used for agriculture comes from two sources: "perched" aquifers on blue clay stratum and "mean sea level" aquifers which are accessed through deeper boreholes.
   25 million cubic meters can be sustainably extracted per annum; agriculture extracts around 28 million according to NSO statistics. This is a rough figure since not all meters are installed at the moment.

As a result of this over-extraction, salt water is leaking into the groundwater table, which is harmful to most crops. Somefarms rely on on-site reverse osmosis plants which are energy intensive and produce brine, which risk being disposed of in ways that damage ecosystems such as disposal in valleys.

Farmers are already being constrained to use less water because of the salinity problem.

Threats

Seminar participants listed water scarcity, nitrate leaching, biodiversity loss, soil nutrient loss, soil erosion, pesticide and herbicide use, and lack of profitability as the largest threats to Maltese agriculture. One group considered Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) to be part threat, part opportunity.

Other issues mentioned were Malta's growing population and increased pressure on resources by tourism; climate change and unpredictable weather changes and higher expenses and lower profitability in alternative farming (such as organic).

Due to the narrow profit margins allowed in agriculture, and the vulnerability of the sector from outside influences, it is often more financially feasible for farmers to give up their land to developers.

The small size of farm holdings in Malta makes it harder to use mechanical equipment, and decreases cost-efficiency. At least 1.5 hectares are needed for a farmer to make a living: when this land is divided in some cases between several siblings, there is no chance of the area sustaining multiple families.

There is a high number of abandoned agricultural land (due to the factors mentioned previously), and land which has been bought or rented by persons who are not interested in farming, but rather use the land for recreational purposes such as camping, cook-outs or hunting.

Photography by: **Steve Bonello**

Agricultural land is often too expensive or hard to find for someone new to agriculture to start a business in the sector.

Imported produce, especially from supermarket chains who can afford to buy in bulk at slashed prices, poses a huge and unfair competition to local farmers who cannot match the prices without losing profit or in some cases even risking working at a loss.

There is little information and training available to educate farmers about post-harvest management and diversification, therefore most produce is sold fresh at the risk of losses due to natural factors such as the limited shelf life of the products.

Due to Malta's naturally arid landscape and increase in unstable weather such as that witnessed this year, farmers are predicting harvests much lower than average. This could serve as a warning about what to expect should climate change drastically reduce rainfall and no action is taken to create alternative sources of water for agriculture.

Animal husbandry is water intensive and creates a high amount of nitrate-rich waste, which is only now being collected and treated appropriately. High competition from imported products is also a factor that led to several farms shutting down due to financial issues. There is a need for stronger 'buy local' campaigns.

Malta is entirely a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone according to EU studies, which indicates high nitrate content in groundwater. This nitrate is due to leaching from fertilizers used in agriculture.

Maximum nitrate content for the EU is 50mg/l. In Malta, some areas have up to 500mg/l. This is an issue as despite stricter regulations, even if fertilizers stop being used completely some 40 years are needed for water to reach acceptable levels again. High nitrates are an issue since they are carcinogenic.

Opportunities and Outcomes

Food security needs to be highlighted as the main benefit of local sustainable agriculture. Local produce also presents a lower environmental footprint due to the small size of our island and the fact that most local produce is not using unnecessary packaging.

Diversity of Maltese farming enterprises could make Maltese farmers more resilient to climate change than farmers who practice mono-culture.

Knowledge sharing and promotion of good agricultural practices such as flowering borders, crop rotation, organic farming and permaculture, could increase the incidence of such practices locally. Ecosystem services provided in local agricultural land such as soil preservation and carbon sinks is viewed as strength.

Opportunities for employment through diversification, agritourism and community projects were also mentioned.

When related to ODZ land, sustainable agriculture is seen as directly linked as increased incentives for agricultural enterprises is directly correlated with the decreased risk of the land being sold to developers or speculators. The upkeep of agricultural land is also beneficial to most Maltese scenic landscapes.

Suggestions

a) Schemes put in place to incentive farmers to keep land pockets larger than a certain amount of hectares. (in South Africa, for example, policy dictates that one cannot split a farm smaller than 55 hectares)

b) Incentives for community kitchen gardens, exchange systems and urban agriculture.

c) Vineyards and Olive groves are to be encouraged, as they are green in the summer. Wine, like honey and olive oil, is a value added product, and all three are connected to Malta's history. The preservation of Malta's agricultural 'signature' is important to gastronomy, agritourism etc.

d) Create services and regulations to aid farmers to learn and implement agricultural best practices. For example there are no advisory services on water use reduction, and no incentives or quotas either.

e) Hydroponics (see below) is a soil-less system which uses 80% less water. This practice would also reduce nitrate leaching to 0% as it is a soil-free system. However these are mostly incorporated in existing greenhouses, which can have an adverse impact on the aesthetic value of ODZ land.

f) Incentives should be placed to encourage on-site reverse osmosis plants that run on renewable energy.

g) Introducing taxes or a price tag on water extraction has been in discussion for years and could be a viable incentive for reduced water consumption. One has to take into consideration the economic feasibility of any agricultural enterprise after the tax is in place to make a sound decision.

h) Integrated Pest Management (IPM) systems give preference to biological controls over pesticides to address pest issues as efficiently and with the lowest environmental impact possible. This should especially be the case in buffer zones, close to nature reserves and parks. In the EU, farmers owning such land are compensated for this decrease.

i) In Organic farming, the formation of cooperatives is imperative as farm holdings are too small and close to one another to leave adequate buffer space between them and conventional agriculture. There is a need for professional advisory services and training, perhaps through government or EU initiatives.

Water Management Workshop

Marco Cremona & Brian Restall

Background Information and History

Malta is one of the most arid countries in the world, comparable to countries such as Bahrain. In addition, population density is the 5th highest in the world; circa 1600 inhabitants per square kilometer. Around 1.5 million tourists visit the island each year, which is triple the original population.

Despite the historically dry Maltese landscapes, the presence of certain geological features (such as the Blue Clay stratum) permitted the creation of an aquifier. As a consequence of this phenomenon, we can observe the presence of spring water in several parts of the island, and the Mean Sea Level Aquifer. However the replenishment of this fresh water lens is a very long process: the infiltration of fresh water can take 30 or 40 years to reach the lens.

Until the 20th century, the demand for fresh water was satisfied by the collection and storage of rainwater and the use of spring water. From the beginning of the 20th century, bore holes and subterranean collection galleries were cut by the British in order to exploit the mean sea level aquifer. In the same time, a lot of individuals had built their own bore holes for personal consumption. Today some 8500 bore holes are registered in the country but there are probably two or three times more.

While the demand for fresh water was increasing, the Maltese state made its first investment in Reverse Osmosis (RO) Desalination plant in the early 1980s. Nowadays, Malta is recognized for having one of the most sophisticated water desalination systems.

In addition to an increase of the demand, the peak of water use in the 90s can be explained by the presence of big leaks in the infrastructure, due to a lack of investment in maintenance. Some repairs have been made, but the problem of leaks remains until this day.

After the 90s one will find a decrease of ground water pumping. This was caused mainly by the deterioration of water quality. The levels of conductivity, nitrates, chlorides and sulphates are increasing in the ground water reserves. One of the main explanations for this increase (but not the only one) is agriculture.

Fertilisers were introduced, and government incentives given for their application after the 'green revolution'; these started to leach into the lens in the 90s.

Animal manure derived from animal production in Malta is rich in nitrates. Maltese policy has addressed this by obliging farmers to invest in leak-proof storage facilities (slurry pits) and drying of manure, before application. There is also a ban for manure application between October and May to prevent leaching. Animal waste will now be collected (Wasteserv predicts up to 39,000 tonnes per annum will be treated) and used to recover energy through the production of biogas.

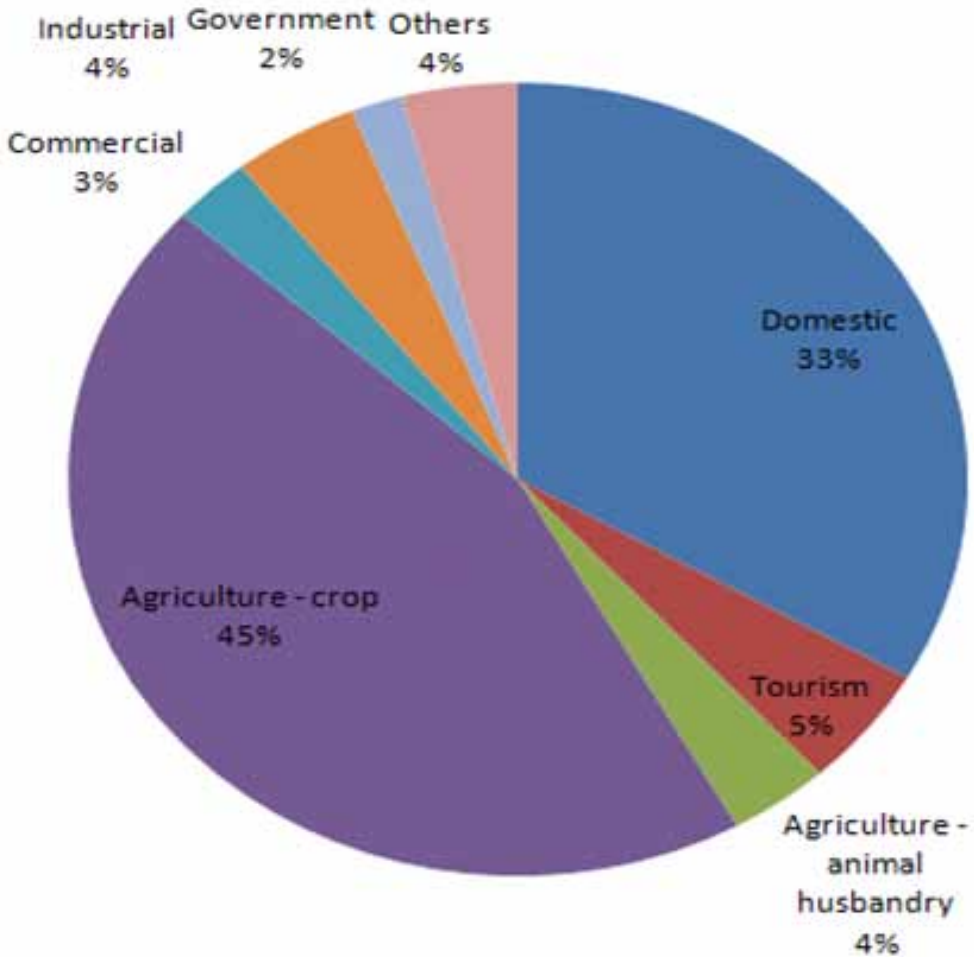
Current Water Resources & Consumption in Malta

Today, Malta's water resources are:

32% derived from the Desalination Plant
24% pumped groundwater by the Water Services Corporation
44% pumped groundwater by Private Entities.

If one assumes that there are several private boreholes which are not registered, the last figure is underestimated.

Water Consumption by Sector



Threats

When looking at data related to Water Management, one can instantly see that there is a deficiency of data. Without sufficient research and data analysis, we cannot begin to assess the issue and suggest viable outcomes. Until all boreholes are metered we can only estimate the use of water in different private sectors.

Despite water scarcity being a serious issue for an island suffering prolonged drought, there is no declaration of a crisis-management plan or concrete steps towards improving our status on the topic.

Water derived from the Reverse Osmosis requires a higher amount of energy, and thus higher financial costs, to produce.

Water use in agriculture is projected to increase over the following years, especially if the current drought persists as farmers will not be able to utilise rainwater. The deterioration of groundwater quality is already limiting farmers in this respect, and if left unaddressed this issue will certainly result in the death of the sector.

Malta imports circa 900 million cubic metres of Virtual Embedded Water – water consumed in other countries to produce products that Malta is importing from overseas. This number is around 10 times the amount of water consumed in Malta.

Due to our geographical position as an island Malta is extremely vulnerable to issues such as seismic activity, oil spills or climatic influences that could leave our water desalination plants disabled, at the cost of our nation's security.

Opportunities

Wastewater reuse could be one of the major solutions to agricultural water problems, depending if it is treated correctly, and coupled with closure of both legal and illegal boreholes.

Illegal boreholes need to be identified and closed down as soon as possible however this needs political and governmental will to occur, coupled with remote sensing and a moratorium scheme including heavy fines for infringements.

Legal boreholes should all be metred and a decent price allocated to any water use, related to the amount and intention of water use in question.

An interesting solution to replenish groundwater reserves is to invest in large-scale water catchment of rainwater (similar to the government flood-relief initiative) however this water is directed towards restocking the freshwater lens.

A holistic plan for water management is needed, and this needs to be created in line with agricultural policy, since the sector is the largest stakeholder on the issue. Working with farmers, rather than against them is necessary both to safeguard our water resources and in turn the agricultural sector.

Replacing freshwater used by agriculture with reclaimed affluent, with a target to increase this replacement by at least 50% by 2030.

Classifying water unequivocally as a 'public good' – a source to be researched and closely monitored for decisions to be taken according to the latest, accurate data.The cooperative effort between different ministries is essential as currently the issue is fragmented and responsibility is not assigned easily, leading to inefficient response to current pressures.

Photography by: **Steve Bonello**

Natura 2000, ODZ, Natural and National Parks - **Is Designation Protection?**

Monique Agius

Background Information

There were several designations of protection under the former MEPA framework, namely: special areas of conservation, Special Protection Areas, Nature Reserves, Trees with Antiquarian Importance, Bird Sanctuaries, Protected Beaches, Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance. Natura 2000 sites were introduced after Malta's accession into the European Union.

Natura 2000 is a network of sites throughout the European Union established to ensure the survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened terrestrial and marine species and habitats. This framework is mainly controlled by two legislative frameworks: The Habitats Directive (Special Areas of Conservation) and the Birds Directive (Special Protection Areas).

In Malta we have 34 terrestrial Natura 2000 sites which include minor islands, coastal cliffs, saline marsh lands, sandy beaches and dunes, areas of garigue and maquis, woodland areas, caves and other geological features and 5 marine sites.

Threats

There seems to be a disconnection between people and the environment around them. The natural environment, and its beauty, cleanliness and ecological diversity is somehow not the individual's responsibility to maintain, therefore vandalism and littering still occurs.

The curriculum does not adequately address ecological issues in Malta and educators need to be further trained to pass on this knowledge to instill a sense of pride and caring from a young age. Enforcement is lacking especially when addressing issues related to hunting and Natura 2000 sites. Those reporting feel discouraged and disempowered when no concrete action is taken against the law breakers.

Legal protection for marine sites is limited and research is limited or unavailable for use in further studies. This leaves the marine environment largely undiscovered and vulnerable to development and speculation.

Local councils suffer lack of funding and resources to take responsibility for ecologically sensitive areas in their localities.

Level 3 and Level 4 protected areas (buffer zones for ecologically sensitive areas) are now legally allowing agritourism and other small developments. The spillover effect of this development was not taken into consideration.

Natura 2000 site designation does not completely eliminate development in sites which already have been constructed prior to designation (ex.Mellieħa Holiday Centre or Kemmuna Hotel). Legislation only asks for the appropriate assessment of impacts of development on the natural habitat. This allows opportunities for speculation.

Public access is limited in several areas due to lack of planning or the presence of private or agricultural land obstructing access to coastline or scenic areas. There is a lack of awareness and information on which land is public or private, thus restricting mobility of citizens in green areas. Policies like those mentioned above are inconsistent and allow too many 'grey areas' and loopholes for speculators.

Funding is limited for management and personnel dedicated to Natura 2000 sites.

Opportunities and Suggestions

There is there need for sharing of best practices between NGOs. Due to their busy lifestyle, it is easy for activists to invest so much time and energy into their own sphere that they could minimize by sharing resources, manpower and knowledge with other NGOs.

One idea could be to develop a project between different NGOs and stakeholders to facilitate hunting infringements via mobile application. This data would be added to a database showing users where hunting activities and illegalities are being carried out. This would also give peace of mind to those who enjoy outdoor activities safely away from hunting.

Local councils should be involved in management of ecologically sensitive areas in their community, to bestow a sense of ownership and pride back to the community. This approach is very successful in other EU countries and could work locally.

A complete ban on ODZ development would have a beneficial spillover effect on areas with other specific designations.

Introducing a strict polluter pays principle and putting forward a legal framework to define 'Ecocide' would be a good deterrent for harmful activities in natural areas.

Photography by: **Steve Bonello**

The Workshop Leaders

Paul Gauci

Graduated in architecture and and civil engineering from the University of Malta, and subsequently studied and carried out research in spatial planning in Canada and the United Kingdom. He is the current head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Infrastructure at the Faculty for the Built Environment (University of Malta). He has practiced in the field of planning for the past twenty years mainly through the coordination of work on development plans and the preparation of impact statements (environmental and transport).

Bjorn Bonello

Born in st. Julian's in 1977. Enrolled as an apprentice with Planning Authority in 1995.
Won a scholarship in 1998, studied for two years at University of Central England in Birmingham, read for B.Sc. Hons. Environmental Planning. Left MEPA in 2005 to pursue work as a freelance planning consultant specialising on traffic impact reports and environmental reports and assisting clients with applications and representations. Worked closely with NGOs, Local Councils and developers to deliver sustainable development solutions, that are practical and in the interest of those using the developments. In 2010 was chosen as a member of the Environmental Planning Commission, following a call of application and interview, and together with colleagues on the board, managed to reduce backlog at record levels and decided with a level of transparency and consistency that was never witnessed before. In 2014 returned in the private sector as a freelance urban planner consultant. Lives in Siggiewi, married with two children , Beppe 11, and Nicola' 7. Has a passion for dogs and breeds beagles.

Malcolm Borg

Coming from a family of full-time farmers, Malcolm Borg is currently in charge of a vocational education agricultural Centre after 4 years of lecturing in the same Centre. He participated in various projects (currently

managing a Horizon 2020 project on water use in agriculture), has been involved in various agronomic educational efforts (such as the drafting of new courses and execution of agricultural syllabi at secondary school levels) and trained in various agricultural Institutions abroad (including the University of Arizona and Wageningen University).

Marco Cremona

Graduated as a mechanical engineer, with an M.Sc. in Hydrology and Water Studies. Recognised locally and internationally for his pioneering work in the water sector (shortlisted for the Stockholm Water Prize in 2011; entered in the National Order of Merit on Republic Day, 2014). Founded the Malta Water Association in 2011, and is an executive member of the same Association. His inventions (HOTER, GEO-INF, water self-sufficient home) have received international acclaim (finalist – CNBC Good Entrepreneur Competition for the Best Green Business Idea in Europe, 2009; finalist – Energy Globe Awards, 2015; Winner – Malta Innovation Awards 2013; Winner - CoE Excellence in Engineering Awards, 2012). Runs a water consultancy business as Sustech Consulting (founded in 2002).

Brian Restall

Brian Restall is an executive member of the Malta Water Association (MWA). MWA is a think tank of water, sustainability and legal professionals who have come together since 2011, in reaction to Malta's precarious water predicament. MWA's approach is to communicate, educate, develop knowledge, and raise public & political awareness on the sustainable use and management of Malta's limited water resources.

Monique Agius

Undergraduate student at the University of Malta, reading for an honors degree in International Relations. Served as a public relations officer with Greenhouse - Malta. Volunteered with Migrants' Solidarity Movement, Din l-Art Ħelwa, VolServ, and was involved in Front Against Censorship. Along with other activists, co-founded Front Ħarsien ODZ. Interested in learning new languages, permaculture, anthropology, and the MENA region.

Photography by: **Steve Bonello**

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Special Thanks to:

Paul Gauci - Bjorn - Bonello - Malcolm Borg - Marco Cremona
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