

Paola, Malta

A new type of prison visit

Corradino is a good example of how EU-supported networking actions can have a positive effect as a driving force to foster integrated planning. Starting from the initial plan to redevelop an old prison building into a museum and tourism facilities, participation in the REPAIR network of the URBACT II programme presented the opportunity to develop a Local Action Plan producing a substantial integrated vision for the city, comprising a whole set of projects of a multi-sectoral nature, creating a wide partnership including private and public actors and diversifying sources of funding, including the ESF as well as the ERDF. The LAP (Local Action Plan) has become a substantial strategic document shaping the functional and social development of the prison.

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The initial goal of this project was the redevelopment of an old prison building into a cultural and sports facility. This first objective, promoted by a private actor, the Hibernians Sport Association, has become the trigger for wide strategic planning action promoted by a partnership lead by the Local Council of Paola. The Paola Action Plan aims to integrate the regeneration of the city along several axes, comprising the creation of a green path linking heritage sites, mobility reorganisation, restoration of the old fortifications, training for employment of the disadvantaged, renewable energy sources, etc.

The URBACT REPAIR network's methodology for urban regeneration suggested five 'pillars' along which the local partnership has designed its actions: sustainable urban conservation, transit oriented development, sustainable communities, good design, and energy efficiency. The plan extends until 2015, and its main objective is to enhance the potential of Paola as a heritage site in an area designated mainly as a residential and transit site next to Valletta's Grand Harbour. The implementation of actions is mainly at initial stage but many of the operations have been granted funding, with a significant contribution of EU structural funds.

Among the projects are the recovery of the old prison funded by the ERDF under Priority 2 (promoting sustainable tourism), the realisation of green spaces and the restoration of the military fortifications (both supported by INTERREG IV) and a social programme for the training and professional reintegration of prisoners on parole from the local correctional facility, funded by the ESF. This case is a good example of how EU-supported networking actions can have a positive effect by empowering the local administration, increasing its strategic capacity, fostering integrated planning and supporting the creation of effective territorial partnerships.

Corradino Prison redevelopment, Paola

A new type of prison visit

Malta is one of the most densely populated states on the globe. Despite its reputation as a small archipelago in the southern Mediterranean Sea mostly relying on tourism, it is an almost fully urbanised territory of only 316 km². It has great potential in terms of historical heritage but the land is over-exploited and several environmental factors are in a critical state. Such a context challenges national planners to find the right balance between investment in tourism and urban development and the preservation of environmental and cultural resources, which in some parts of the island appear to be seriously compromised. In this context, the Local Action Plan for Paola, building on the URBACT approach and the specific methodology developed by the REPAIR network, is an innovative experience that fosters the local administration's and civil society's capacity to design an integrated vision for the city, combining different projects and funding sources and enriching local planning knowledge with experiences from other EU countries.

The whole territory of Malta is subject to one structural plan administered at national level, which was designed more than 20 years ago. The territory is divided into five districts, of which Paola, together with another 14 Local Councils, is part of the South Harbour district, while the nearby Corradino area is part of the Grand Harbour Local Plan, creating a complication in planning a strategic intervention that integrates the two parts. Local Plans are issued by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA). Given the smallness of the state, national-local coordination is very direct, with planning done centrally and local administrations that historically have been weak, but are growing in terms of autonomy and strategic agency. Visiting Malta, the number of building sites involving operations co-financed by the ERDF – which represent the majority of visible public structural interventions – is immediately evident. The use of European Structural funds is strongly state-directed by the Prime Minister's Office, which is also the managing authority of the regional operational programme.

Paola – a rich architectural heritage at risk

Paola, with about 8 000 residents, is one of the municipalities forming the Valletta conurbation in the area of the Grand Harbour. Paola is predominantly residential, and is served by two arterial roads that link central to south-eastern Malta. Smaller towns and villages such as Tarxien and St Lucija are nearby. Situated next to the historic citadel of Valletta, it is a busy transit area and a node for public transport, characterised by congestion and scarce public space. Paola has a regular urban fabric, being designed as a Baroque suburb settled in the late 17th century, composed mostly of typical local limestone buildings, which are particularly affected by environmental conditions and pollution.

The architectural heritage of the area is diverse, combining styles from different epochs, mainly Baroque, colonial Victorian and the local vernacular extending from the 18th century to the early 20th century. The built fabric of the Paola and Corradino area in terms of heritage preservation is currently considered 'at risk' as a result of the current state of urban and industrial impact, with a 'risk factor' of level 3. A full analysis using ICOMOS parameters for heritage risk assessment indicates that the area is affected mainly by insufficient conservation standards, maintenance deficiency and significantly damaged through risks from social and collective behaviour. The bomb damage of WWII and emergency restoration of the buildings over the decades has compromised the heritage values of the site.

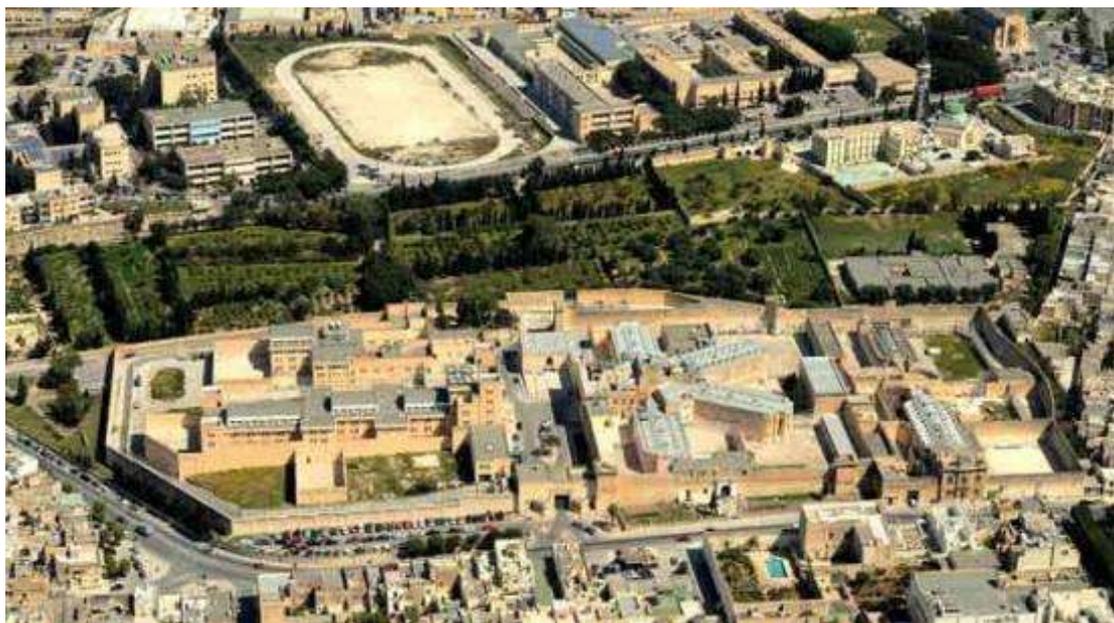
The area of Paola is rich in tangible built heritage, which goes back as far as the

Neolithic and Paleo-Christian periods. The main archaeological site is the Hypogeum, an enormous subterranean structure excavated in around 2 500 B.C., using cyclopean rigging to lift huge blocks of coralline limestone. Perhaps originally a sanctuary, it became a necropolis in prehistoric times. The Hypogeum consists of halls, chambers and passages hewn out of the living rock and covering some 500 sq. m. On the Kordin Heights immediately above the Grand Harbour, three temples once stood. The first has disappeared under an industrial estate whilst what scant remains there are of the second are in a restricted area. Only Kordin III survives, despite suffering a direct bomb hit in World War II, and is in ruinous condition.

A stunning military heritage

The military architectural heritage is also of World Heritage importance. The Cottonera and Corradino fortifications have been added to UNESCO's Tentative list and have been scheduled by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority as part of an Area of High Landscape Value. The Cottonera Lines are a massive line of fortifications surrounding the Three Cities of Vittoriosa, Senglea, and Cospicua. They were designed by Italian engineer Antonio Maurizio Valperga in the 17th century, and named after Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner. These fortifications are arranged in the form of a girdle and make up part of a unique ensemble not only for their sheer scale and concentration (totalling some 25 km in length) but also because they document the development of the art and science of gunpowder fortifications through nearly four centuries of history. They range from the *fronte bastionato* of the 16th century, through the *opere coronate all'olandese* of the late 17th century, on to the French systems established by Vauban and his followers in the 18th century, the emergence of the polygonal style and the influences of the writings of Montalambert, on to the imposition of iron-fronted defences and eventually to the concrete emplacements of the Second World War.

Scattered around the whole span of the harbour fortifications are gun emplacements of all ages and shapes. The Corradino Lines were a reaction to the deficiencies in the Cottonera Lines which were highlighted during the French period. The Maltese garrison used Corradino Heights as a vantage point. The project was amplified with the proposal of a new fortified town. This idea was retracted by the Governor when the Admiralty took over the whole area and designed a naval prison and ancillary grounds.



In the upper part of Paola resides the Malta Correctional Facility, which is the only active prison in Malta, and is an important element of Paola's urban and social landscape. The adjacent district of Corradino extends from the top of the hill, dominated by the old disused prison (Corradino Military Barracks), towards the harbour, encircled by the old 'lines' (fortifications). This area sloping down towards the harbour is fragmented, with largely disused industrial sites, as well as a number of sport facilities run by AS Hibernians, one of the Malta's main football teams.

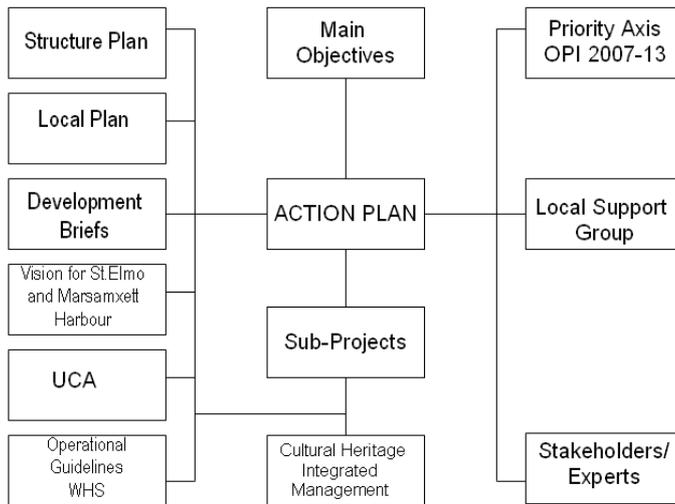
This is the private organisation which initiated the project to renovate the disused Corradino prison. It acquired the site on a 49-year lease from the government, and has developed the project of reusing the area as a centre for cultural and sport activities. Its idea was to redevelop the old prison into a museum as the main element of the cultural and sport centre including a hostel, a café and a sport convention centre. A.S. Hibernians first applied to the ERDF via the grant scheme for Tourism Projects by Enterprises in October 2009, but was not successful. In the second phase, the municipality was involved and the private consultancy firm Heritage Enterprise Ltd was commissioned to design the project. This gave the possibility to apply again in October 2010 and to be selected for funding.

Local Action Plan

In 2009 the Municipality of Paola joined the URBACT II thematic network REPAIR, which is dedicated to the regeneration of old military buildings. This prompted the formation of a Local Support Group, creating a partnership of local and national stakeholders interested in promoting a strategic vision for an area-based intervention. Within REPAIR, the group exchanged knowledge on the theme of the sustainable redevelopment of disused military structures, and developed a Local Action Plan integrating the project for the Corradino Prison together with a range of multisector projects. The partnership included Paola Local Council, AS Hibernians, the Malta Chamber of Planners and the newly founded Paola Heritage Foundation created by the Local Council.

The coordination of the Local Support Group was awarded to the private consultancy firm Heritage Enterprise Ltd, which was already responsible for Hibernians' concept for the redevelopment of the old prison, and has been the pivotal actor which together with the Local Council constitutes the 'local action team', the managing team to develop the initiative in practice. This firm provided the necessary expertise on the preservation of built heritage and compliance with World Heritage guidelines, and is also responsible for the project's integrated approach, combining a deep knowledge of the local planning context with a skilled capacity to identify innovative policies and opportunities for sustainable urban development provided by European programming. The director of Heritage Enterprise, Malcolm Borg, previously worked for almost 10 years for the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, which supplied the necessary knowledge to implant the vision of Paola's Local Action Plan into the existing strategic tools and projects developed by the national authorities, and to steadily involve the MEPA in steering the formation of the plan.

At national level a stream of initiatives and projects have been launched for the Paola core and the Corradino areas in recent years: a maritime techno-park, the redevelopment of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) complex, the redevelopment of the Corradino Industrial Park and the redesigning of Paola Square as part of the new transport reform and terminal. There are other projects which are addressing regeneration, namely new forms of mobility, the restoration of the fortifications and a number of initiatives launched by the Local Council and the various agencies and volunteer groups responsible for cultural and heritage aspects in the area. As the Paola Action Plan says, its purpose is 'to integrate these various initiatives and to launch regeneration with a holistic approach



so as to create multi-speed projects, which will affect the core areas of the Action Plan. The node interventions are intended to target specific areas which are considered vulnerable with the idea of promoting various sectors. The stepped approach being proposed will streamline the spin-off effect from the hub and will make regeneration projects targeting the localities

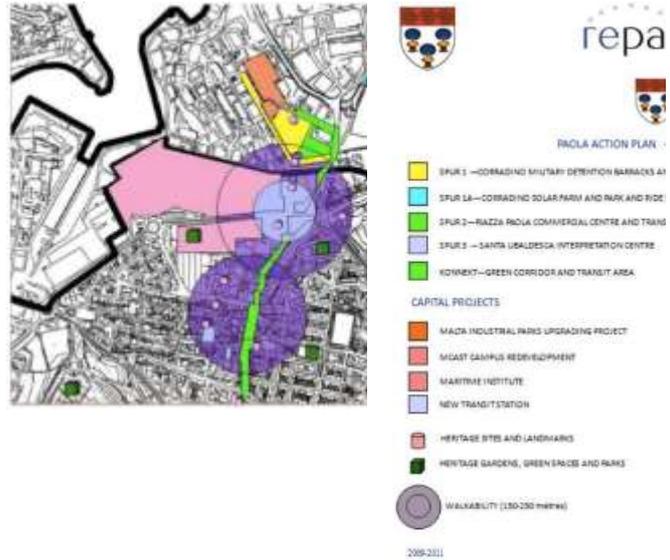
more sustainable in the long term. For this reason the principles and objectives of this Action Plan will refer to the Priority Axis developed in the Operational Programme 2007-2013’.

In particular the focus of the planning exercise has been on how to conjugate the structural upgrading of the locality known as a main transit area, which leads to adopting a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) approach, with the aim of valorising the historical heritage resources of the city, increasing a potential tourist economy that has not yet been fully recognised. A first baseline study was produced, to provide a character appraisal of the territory and identify elements to valorise. A consistent comparison with experiences of similar operations in other European cities has been developed through participation in URBACT, which resulted in a number of twinnings and involvement in focus groups, enriching the capacity of the local administration to manage a strategic vision of broader scope. This also led to a diversified series of funding opportunities that have been tapped for the realisation of the planned actions.

The LAP focuses on a certain number of nodes, defined by the acronym SPUR (Sustainable Plans for Urban Regeneration):

- SPUR 1: Corradino Detention Barracks – interpretation centre and heritage trail
- SPUR 1b: Solar power farm – alternative energy source for locals
- SPUR 2: Paola square upgrade – new market and transit station
- SPUR 3: Saint Ubaldesca and surrounding area – sustainable tourism initiative
- KONNECT: a green corridor for pedestrians connecting the major heritage sites of Paola

Around those main nodes, a range of cross-sectoral projects are designed and have been submitted for funding.



Corradino barracks

The Corradino Military Detention Barracks are a unique example of 19th century military detention architecture, the only known example created during this period still in existence on Malta. It was the first regulated prison in the modern prison regulatory system, built on Corradino Heights between the early 1830s and late 1940s based on Georgian and Victorian principles. Richard Lankesheer started works by excavating the site and later William Land Arrowsmith completed the project in line with guidelines from 'panopticon' model prisons such as Millbank and Pentonville in London. The building ceased its correctional use in the 1960s and since then has been used as a warehouse in connection with port activities. As a result of the growth of Paola and the Kordin area, many of the buildings which were once part of the overall complex have been destroyed. However, the main buildings preserve their original shape and owing to their solid construction the architects have been able to reconstitute the original conditions without significant alterations.

The conservation management plan includes the restoration and rehabilitation of three cell blocks, with the adaptive reuse of the East Block as a museum and the South Block as a hostel to be opened by late 2012. The East Block has been restored respecting all the original details, including some of the cell furniture and original colours. The fidelity of the restoration has already been exploited through its use as a film location. For the 'interpretation centre', the project aims to install a set of audiovisual devices and displays accompanying the visitors into the spaces refurbished in the original shape, providing historical information about the prison and the military life of Malta, enriching the experience of the visit. The other block, which was more heavily damaged by demolition, is destined to become a hostel, integrating the sport activities promoted by Hibernians. As the project manager explains: 'The key aspirations of the regeneration project are private sector involvement and investment in socio-economic regeneration, creating a distinct niche market through the services offered, in synergy with the Maltese International Convention Centre, thus maximising return on investment to make the project sustainable in the long term. The project is expected to catalyse neighbourhood empowerment as a means of instilling a sense of belonging and civic pride incorporating heritage as part of the regeneration process.'

In the LAP, the investment in the prison building is coupled with the creation of a solar farm. SPUR 1b takes place on a plot of land that although not directly adjoining is part of the same area, is assigned to Hibernians by the same 49-year emphyteutic lease (a lease which obliges the lessee to improve the property), and is ideally suited for such a use. In addition to that, the project designers are considering creating a solar farm on the roof of a car park, which would further add to the mobility of this area interested in sport and cultural facilities. This project is nevertheless in an earlier stage of development and has not been granted funds so far.

Integrated projects

The second node (SPUR 2) of the plan is the regeneration of Paola Square as the core of a general upgrade of the mobility of the city, promoting the Transit Oriented Development of the area. The government is coordinating a series of concession-based partnership regeneration projects extending along the Cottonera waterfront aimed at the restoration, rehabilitation and development of major heritage assets in mixed-use facilities. These are based on a long-term management plan and will see the regeneration of the whole of the waterfront together with the reconnection and embellishment of the promenade into a major social venue and space. The Paola Local Council has targeted main nodes along Paola and Corradino for upgrades to extend the effects of regeneration from the maritime area to the core of the town. Other important and significant developments include various projects promoting modal split and alternative transport modes, namely the development of the Controlled Vehicular Access (congestion charge) scheme and the introduction of electric taxis and sea ferries. The action plan promotes these activities and sets out new approaches to further spur the Transit Oriented Development principle as a strategic priority which has been developed by the central government.

SPUR 3 concerns the upgrading of the surroundings of the Saint Ubaldesca Church. The Local Council project consists of securing the area around the church, extending the paved area and redeveloping it with soft landscaping, redevelop parking, traffic management and accessibility amenities, new services and surfacing. In the process WWII shelters were discovered adjacent to the site. This increases the importance of the area and the heritage value of the site not only at a contextual level but also for the valorisation and marketing of Paola's multi-layered history. The air-raid shelters are now under a custodianship deed under the management of the Paola Heritage Foundation.

Finally, the main integrating element of the plan is the Konnect project, which is a green corridor connecting the different heritage locations and providing an ideal spine for the interventions developed by the Paola Local Council.

Among the connected projects envisaged by the LAP, two have been granted funding under INTERREG IV, that is the creation of gardens (€215 000) and the recovery of the Kordin Fortifications (€152 000). Those projects will be implemented in synergy with a social inclusion project funded via the ESF which involves the correctional facility in Paola, which represents an important element of the social landscape of the city. The project will train and reintegrate prisoners on parole, by enabling them to learn gardening and stone restoration skills on the building sites of the projects.

In 2011, as part of the development of the LAP, a survey using participative methods was organised so as to better understand the perceptions and aspirations of Paola's population as regards the plans for the area. A civic consultation took place in the main square of Paola, under a tent displaying different design options, and was aimed at vast range of city-users including residents, shop owners and commuters.

A greater capacity to manage

The MultiSpeed projects are at very different stages of implementation but in general they are at an early stage of development. With the closure of the URBACT experience, the Action Plan for Paola was delivered by the end of 2011, providing an important tool for strategic visioning and territorial partnership building. The EU networking action significantly improved the capacity of the local administration of Paola (the council has four employees in total to manage all its mansions) to produce development visions, to integrate existing and planned interventions and to integrate national and EU policies for the holistic development of its territory. The realisation of the majority of the projects is definitely dependent on EU structural funds – almost all operations have been granted or are applying for EU support – and clearly the knowledge exchange operation improved the capacity of local stakeholders to identify and access suitable funds for the planned operations.

This also created the opportunity, through the creation of the Local Support Group, to embed a solid partnership among actors, both from the private and the public sectors, interested in sustainable development initiatives. This guarantees the recognition of the actions undertaken since the end of the REPAIR activities. Still, the role and capacity of the Local Council appears limited, and the success of the proposed ideas depends on solutions designed at national level, i.e. the effectiveness of mobility solutions given the city's nodal position in Malta's transit system. However, the project so far has been successful in mobilising territorial actors and in introducing a certain level of participatory practices that are not common in this context. The Corradino prison redevelopment is innovative in designing an effective multi-stakeholder private-public partnership, which although strongly promoted and executed via private means maintains a public-led approach. The project is not only based on the museum function in synergy with sport activities, alternative energy provision and a strong attention to mobility, but also provides services for the community.

April 2012

AEIDL has been contracted by the European Commission in 2012 in order to provide 50 examples of good practice in urban development supported by the European Regional Development Fund during the 2007-2013 programming period (contract reference 2011.CE.16.0.AT.035). The views expressed by AEIDL remain informal and should not under any circumstance be regarded as the official position of the European Commission.