SPATIAL PLANNING GOVERNANCE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

REPORT OF CONFERENCE HELD ON THE

22ND MAY 2023

AT THE

VALLETTA DESIGN CLUSTER

VALLETTA, MALTA

Prepared by

The Malta Chamber of Planners

Thanks to: Building & Construction Authority, Malta Tourism Authority.

Introduction

The European Council of Spatial Planners - Conseil Européen des Urbanistes (ECTP-CEU) is the European umbrella for most of the planning institutions and associations across Europe. Founded in 1985, ECTP-CEU brings together professional spatial planning associations and institutes from 46 European countries.

The ECTP-CEU has since 1997 been organising two General Assemblies each year. One in Spring and another in Autumn. This year's Spring General Assembly was held in Malta between the 21st and 22nd May 2023.

As part of the General Assembly the host country organises a conference on a specific theme. The conference which was organised together with the Malta Chamber of Planners and the Department of Spatial Planning & Infrastructure (University of Malta) was entitled – SPATIAL PLANNING GOVERNANCE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

For the conference a keynote speaker was invited. This was Ms. Natasha Day who is the Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration in the Government of Jersey, Channel Islands. Her presentation was entitled - **Planning for Resilience, A Jersey Perspective**. Following the keynote speech two panel sessions were held on the subject of Governance and Immigration. The conference was opened by Mr. Bjorn Bonello, President of the Malta Chamber of Planners, who thanked the ECTP-CEU, and particularly its President Prof. Janet Askew, for accepting Malta's application to host the GA. He further thanked the Voluntary Organisation Projects Scheme for providing the funds to be able to organise this event as well as the Ministry for Public Works and Planning, the Building and Construction Authority and the Malta Tourism Authority for their assistance and support.

Hon. Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi, Minister of Public Works and Planning, opened the conference. Managing land use to accommodate various demands is the main challenge to our country. Increased economic activity and the high population density increases pressure on land and demand for space to accommodate economic growth as well as housing is unprecedented. Immigration and tourism also exert significant demands on land requirements and infrastructure. The Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development is currently under review. The signs of the times are highlighting the need for an informed, reflective and structured discussion that analyses the results achieved in recent years as well as to identify the best possible options for urban planning in the future. This definitely enhances the value of planners' input to achieve a structured and objective oriented national debate. An active participation in the planning process by all involved is necessary. The planning process must be implemented in the light of economic, social and environmental requirements and realities of the country. The process towards decarbonisation features strongly in this approach and we must always bear in mind the energy efficiency of buildings and the impacts of transportation. The country must ensure affordable housing as well as sustain the growth in home ownership. Long standing procedures relating to the planning process are being reviewed. Areas that require holistic regeneration are to be identified. Urban planning can provide the tools to revitalise such areas and maximise potential whilst respecting their heritage and community.

Planners must have a key role in these processes and this must reflect in the ongoing discussion with the Chamber towards the recognition of this profession.

Prof. Janet Askew, President of the ECTP-CEU, remarked that the ECTP-CEU brings together a diversity of countries across Europe. The ECTP-CEU have been discussing various systems of governance across Europe. Reforms in the governance of planning is on the agenda across Europe, legal and regulatory reform. Planners are being invited in the European Council to bring forward proposals towards improved planning approaches. Planners can address today's problems through good planning and this means sustainability, climate change and social justice. Conserving history and culture in Malta is of utmost importance. Sometimes the failure of planners to convince politicians, business and local communities that planning is a desirable and necessary function in the public interest has not led to the desired outcomes. The public has not engaged favourably with planning and politicians have misunderstood the long term benefits and achievements that proper planning can bring about. By sharing knowledge amongst the members of the ECTP common problems and issues are brought to light. Planning is a distinct discipline requiring distinct skills and training. Good planning requires good quality research and sound evidence that solutions would work. Mutual recognition is being sought so planners can work across Europe. The ECTP and its members abode by a Code of Conduct which requires acting objectively and without corruption. A good planner is an ethical planner and is trusted by the community. The ECTP Charter lays done the principles of planning at all levels and is accompanied by the Charter of Participatory Democracy which means involving communities right at the start of the planning process and through all stages of the planning evolution.

Hon. Stanley Zammit, Shadow Spokesperson for Planning, Construction, Research and Innovation, started by reminding participants that in 1568 in Valletta a regulatory planning framework was enacted reflecting the political philosophy of the rulers reflecting aspects relating to social and administrative issues as well as economic, urban design and aesthetic of the time. In 1963 government set up a Commission with the task of preparing a master plan regulating development and issuing development permits. In 1992 the setting up of the Planning Authority was the start of a new era for planning in Malta. Transparency and accountability in plan preparation and development decisions now taken in a holistic and comprehensive manner were the key achievements. Trained planners within the Authority were key players in this process. The planning evolution has been gradually slowed down in the last decade. The reluctance to review plans is a clear example. The ad hoc approach by ignoring policies and not considering the impacts decisions will have on the wellbeing of the public is certainly not conducive to proper planning. Sustainable development relies on innovative and meaningful spatial planning requiring a set of interdisciplinary skills. Planners should be recognised through a warrant since they have these skills. Planning Authority should shift from development control to forward planning. AI could assist spatial planners in acquiring data and converting it to actionable information. Planners should also understand stakeholders' needs.

Bjorn Bonello, President of the Chamber of Planners, started by saying that planning is not only the book but one has to go round the places, see how they work, the activity undertaken, their resilience and absorb the life of that particular community thus getting a sense of place.

Gathering data is important and the starting point of data. Working in silos where data is not shared is a critical problem in Malta and Gozo. Investing in forward planning as was in the past is part of the way forward towards good planning. Good governance can harness proper planning for the common good. As a planner we have the interest to safeguard all living things. Planners have a much wider loyalty and responsibility than other professions and this is the general community. Planning is not against development but is for sustainable development. Although some policies may need reviewing the weakness in achieving proper planning lies in the interpreters of the policies and mainly those who are deciding on developments. Recent court decisions overturning planning decisions are the result of the persistence of NGOs who with limited resources struggle to make right what the institutions, which supposedly should safeguard such rights, are not doing. We know what we should do and have the courage to persevere.

Dr. Kevin Gatt, Head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, started by saying that the conference is testimony of the close relationship between the Department and one of the country's most important stakeholders that shapes our built environment. One of the key success factors of a robust spatial planning governance framework is the capacity to deliver spatial planning. Planning is the genesis of all forms of development. The more we invest in the capacity required for spatial planning the more likely is our development to be robust, resilient and sustainable. The Department has trained a number of Planning Authority official to become spatial planners. The Department has designed a learning pathway that reflected the disciplines that spatial planning requires. The Department will be offering a bachelor's Degree in Spatial Planning on a full time basis as from this October. A series of 13 radio programmes were produced discussing the role of the planners beyond building construction. Planners skills and competencies are not only required within the Planning Authority but also within other public and private entities. It is high time that planning does not remain just a discipline but becomes a recognised profession where warranted planners will undertake specific tasks where to show their responsibilities and for which they will be accountable. The Department will offer the Chamber its full support whilst appeal to the authorities to make spatial planning a recognised profession. Governance is a relationship between government and society and involves the mediation of behaviours through a variety of instruments. Spatial planning is political in nature. Whilst political interests are short term in nature sustainable development is both inter and intra generational. Governance is understanding stakeholders interests as part of decision making.

Keynote speech

Ms. Natasha Day, Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration in the Government of Jersey, Channel Islands, presented her keynote speech - Planning for Resilience: A Jersey Perspective. Islands are under pressure and planners and decision makers feel the strains, in trying to protect what is so special and unique about such places. The effects of development and change are so much more visible in islands; especially where the competition for space is high, and where the needs of our past, present, and future so easily find themselves in conflict. In islands, we must deal with our problems in the face of what is an inherent and widely accepted degree of fragility. Our biodiversity, our resilience to the effects of climate change; our need to keep a steady balance in our populations; both in

number and demography…. to appropriately manage our natural resources and ensure that we have the infrastructure needed to serve our communities and economies ... it's all very much a challenge.

The question raised is - **"Where competition for space is high, and where the needs of our past, present and future so easily find themselves in conflict – which is especially the case in islands - does our resilience simply lie in good spatial planning governance?" i.e., is it all down to our spatial plans and our approach to making decisions, or does it need to go beyond that?**

We have signed multilateral environmental agreements, become party to treaties; we have legally bound ourselves to act and deliver change at a global level, though our actions at a local level. We can make the best plans in the world to deal with this, but they hold little value if the conditions aren't right for their effective implementation.
The planning profession undoubtedly plays a crucial role in this; we help to see and quantify our problems and our future needs; we work hard to find the solutions, and both advocate and mediate towards sustainable change. But we aren't successful if we try to do this in isolation.

Jersey is a small Island, situated just 22 kilometres off the north coast of France. At a size of just 120 square kilometres, the Island holds a population of around 103,000 people. This places Jersey as the 14th most densely populated place in the world. Jersey faces great challenges in managing its population – and not just the size of it, but also the age profile, where an ageing population is coupled with a birth rate which is amongst the lowest in Europe. This manifests as a need to bring more people into the island to contribute to the Island's workforce, and there we find ourselves trapped in a need for population growth to avoid economic decline. Around 50% of our land remains in active agricultural use, and our planning system now offers **very** strong protection for both our countryside and the undeveloped parts of our coastline, which together makes up about 80% of the island's total land area.

Good spatial governance, in terms of how we allocate and use our finite land, stems from how we *value* our existing land uses…and this means:
1. Seeing the need to appropriately balance uses between those which hold economic value, and those which hold intrinsic value to our identity and sense of place; and,
2. Where the *value* created by our unique heritage and culture is treated as a critical component to the overall success of our economies…
3. And lastly, we must work hard to help people understand the consequences of eroding this value.

Spatial planning can only help manage the pressures of new development, but it can't itself make the pressures go away. In Jersey, this means our land-use plan directs most of our development needs toward areas that make-up only 20% of the island's total land mass – what we simply call our built-up areas. Our spatial strategy prioritises growth within that 20% of land, towards the areas that are considered most sustainable for growth – and we call this our settlement hierarchy.

Jersey absolutely needs to break its dependency on the private car. Behaviours are starting to change. Planners in Jersey know we can't withstand more growth without fundamentally changing our parameters for planning. We must either accept the increasing density or allow the further development of our precious coast and countryside… and this is a REALLY tough choice.

When developing the Bridging Island Plan, we had to make that difficult choice, and we decided that it needed to be a bit of both, but in well-controlled manner.

Land reclamation itself is challenging to achieve without creating harm, if it is planned well, it can help act as a much-needed pressure release valve – space for both additional development AND open space to support our built-up areas. Jersey has a history of land reclamation in St Helier, where most of our waterfront area is on reclaimed land. This is required as a need to better manage our coastal flood risk and the dual role this can play in helping the island to deal with its volumes of inert waste arising from construction activity
The pressures for more housing require managing densities with more rigorous standards for design and placemaking; developer contributions for infrastructure; new open space and public realm improvements.

It is a legal requirement for there to be a land use plan in place and this MUST be reviewed at least every 10 years…. In the case of the bridging island plan, it is only three! The law also sets **strict** procedures for developing an Island Plan. Requiring engagement with the community throughout and it must be subjected to an examination in public, undertaken by independent planning inspectors, who are sourced off-island.

A good plan is only as good as it's effective implementation… there are three critical success factors for the effective implementation of a plan:
1. The right resources.
2. The right decision-making frameworks; and,
3. The right levels of participation and community involvement.

Whether a professional planner, or a politician involved with decisions, skills and understanding are needed to effectively implement a plan; and it is helpful for this to be supported by scrutiny and accountability into how decisions are made.

The community in Jersey has a strong voice in planning. They are a part of developing a plan; their views have a strong influence in the outcome of applications; and they also have third-party rights of appeal…. this equally needs to be well managed, for risk of NIMBYISM over-powering the genuine needs of an entire community…

Future Jersey, our long-term vision, aspires for Jersey to become *"An Island loved for its beautiful coast and countryside, rich heritage, diverse wildlife and clean air, land and water. An Island where a sense of community really matters - a safe place to grow up and enjoy life. An Island that offers everyone the opportunity to contribute to, and share in, the success of a strong, sustainable economy." ….. and yes, it's very utopian!*

The important part is that this vision is attached to what we call the Jersey Performance Framework, where we are monitoring our progress across dozens of social, environmental, and economic indicators. It's a bit like a Jersey-specific version of the Sustainable Development Goals.
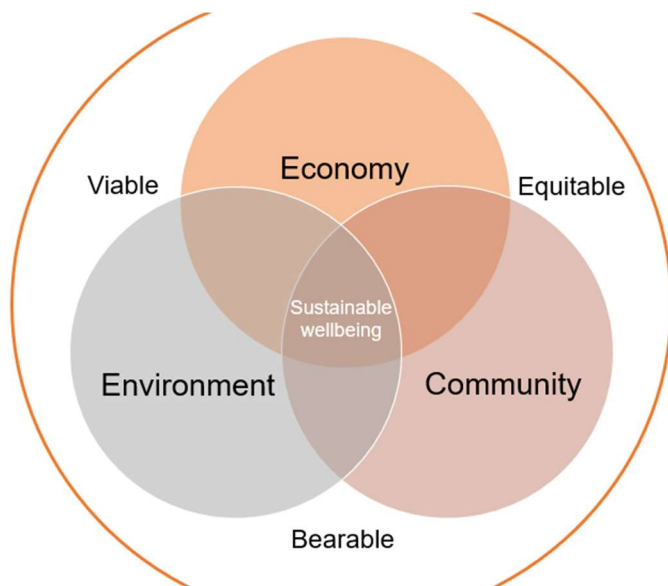
The sustainable wellbeing of our islands, of our nations, must be at the heart of **all** that we do. We must find – and respect – the balance. This balance, which is demonstrated in the sustainability Venn diagram… where no one pillar gets more over another, and where there is a focus, across the system to achieve a future that is viable, equitable and bearable.

Therefore, the answer to the initial question posed is **NO** since it lies in **good spatial governance AND the alignment of the wider system towards an agreed long-term, sustainable vision for the future.**

Discussion panels

Two discussion panels followed the keynote speech. The themes of these panels were **GOVERNANCE** and **IMMIGRATON**.

The first panel on **GOVERNANCE** moderated by Dr. Kevin Gatt consisted of Astrid Vella, Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar ; Prof. Alex Torpiano, Din l-Art Ħelwa ; Adriano Bisello, (Eurac Research - ASSURB) ; Dr. Marthese Portelli, Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Gatt started by saying that Governance is where states serve the citizens and how to do that. Stakeholder interests are varied. Robust governance needs to reconcile the various and contrasting interests. Governance is structured around 10 parameters – Political will and vision, sustainable development, rule of law, transparency, accountability, participation, communication, coherency, inclusion and capacity.

Prof. Alex Torpiano indicated two important aspects of governance. The involvement of the community in planning decisions is the first. This necessitates an education of the community

since these not always are aware of what the proposals imply. They do not understand what the link is between what is being proposed and the higher economic issues that are implied. More planning advocacy, i.e. getting the community to understand what is being proposed, is needed. Who decides whether the community will benefit from a decision? What happens after the termination of applications? We need a system of reviewing planning decisions and policies to see how these have impacted the community and whether the objectives set are actually being achieved. Planning Authority should audit its own decisions. Politicians are also part of the community and should be part of this too. Recent courts decisions on planning applications have upheld policies which previously were ignored. A balance between economic growth and environmental protection can only be achieved by setting priorities that will serve the community and ensuring that community engagement is genuine and an integral part of the balance that is sought. Communities are to be involved before and during the preparation of any plan or policy and not only asked for comments after. Education and the involvement of children through workshops must become a priority in the plan making process. The community is to be involved in deciding what the objectives of that community are when preparing plans. Intrinsic value goes beyond environmental and economic value and is what the community understands is of value to them not only in the present but also for the future.

Prof. Adriano Bisello started by saying that what one has to consider in such small places like Malta, where the land resource is limited, is multi-functional transformation. Discuss with the community how to define shared values. What are the priorities for the local community? The elements needed for proper public consultation are – Co-creation, Co-design, Co-implementation and Co-evaluation. Planners should be the orchestrators of the changes in making spaces multi-functional and identifying with the community the intrinsic value of such spaces. Prof. Bisello mentioned that his university is working with the University of Malta on the rehabilitation of public spaces by bringing together two contrasting philosophies – the smart city approach and the nature based solutions. Local communities are involved at the start of the Project to acquire their perceived value of the space and the outcomes they expect. This is also important for the politician to communicate what is the added value of a Project to the community. Simple tools are needed to communicate the efforts made. Political will to act is often sparked by actions that politicians consider as positive moves towards their re-election. It often boils down to how much technical persons and professionals succeed in convincing politicians to take up sustainable actions. The silos syndrome where departments work in isolation is not conducive to an integrated approach to achieve results that benefit the community. Some also lack proper skills to engage communities and to deal with the digital world. It is therefore not only political willingness but a mix of political and technical factors that need to be achieved.

Dr. Marthese Portelli stated that the Chamber of Commerce is duty bound to represent all businesses irrespective of size. Their policy is based on five pillars – economic growth and resilience, human capital, digitalisation, environmental sustainability and governance. There has been a change in mentality when it comes to construction and development. We have to stop saying that construction is the best industry for our country. We have to look at value added. Construction regurgitates its own money. We should look at other sectors which create

added value. We need to start distinguishing between developers and investors who are applying the pillars stated above and the others that are not. The Chamber will keep advocating positive discrimination towards those that are doing things in the right way. We do not need more strategies and visions but actual implementation which reflects the common good and benefits the whole. Long term planning requires thinking beyond the five year legislature period. The Planning Authority has to go back to its original roots i.e. to plan and not to only give out development permits. One should consider segregating the planning from the permitting role. Retaining and conserving our identity must be at the helm of any planning strategy. Coherence within the same political parties is also needed. Political will is the crucial factor. Updating and approval of the Spatial Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED) took years to finalise and yet many of its policies left a lot of room for interpretation. Despite the plan having expired the revision exercise promised years ago has not been concluded. The officers at the Planning Authority are placed in a jeopardised position due to lack of clarity and vagueness marred by numerous conflicting policies. Lack of consistency in decision taking creates mistrust in the institution. Good governance should also be practised by the professionals to ensure an ethical working procedure. Let us put forward those points on which we are all in agreement.

Ms. Astrid Vella, expressed her opinion that the country has not progressed much in terms of transparency and public consultation. The colonial rule over hundreds of years has left the general public in a passive mindset. Despite the Aarhus Convention and the right to environmental information the public was still being denied access to its own files let alone files on neighbouring developments. The e-apps system has nonetheless improved the public access to information, yet over the last years things have stagnated. In 2008 FAA organised a course together with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority on public participation. The upgrading of public awareness and the knowledge of planning issues needs an overdrive. The revival of such a course was not taken up by MEPA and there is no attempt on the part of the authorities to take this issue in hand. It was promised that there would be a citizens' advisor at Planning Authority to assist the general public in planning issues but this has never been delivered. So these people seek NGOs, all volunteers, to intercede in their name. Public consultation is simply one of ticking boxes. Years ago Planning Authority planners stated that they do not involve the public since they are 'idiots' and do not understand. How can they understand if the opportunity to educate them has been denied? Decisions ignore the valid objections made by the public when based on policies. Some documents which the public have a right to see are not even being uploaded on eapps. Major projects are decided despite not having all documentation and are voted on with flawed documentation. NGOs should be assisted to operate in a more professional levels and move to another level having proper staff to deal with the numerous requests they are receiving. Civil society had a greater role in the past. The size of EPCs down to three from five members needs to be addressed. Carrying capacity and social studies are to be part of the planning and development process. Politicians saying to NGOs that should they object to decisions taken they should go to appeal, places immense pressure particularly financially and on its human resources.

The second panel on **IMMIGRATION** moderated by Prof. Daniela Debono consisted of Ms. Sandra Gauci, ADPD ; Patricia Graham ; Christian Inkum Okyere, YMCA Malta; Bjorn Bonello,

Chamber of Planners.

Prof. Daniela Debono in her introduction stated that unlike Malta a number of overseas universities have carried out numerous studies between different social scientists, architects, geographers, on the contribution of different migrant groups to social planning and spatial planning. The rise in the population in Malta and Gozo over the last 10 years is mainly attributed to the influx of immigrants leading to over population and a higher density, especially in specific areas making these unliveable, together with at times a hostile climate against non-Maltese. The latter are often at the mercy of their employers and given poor working conditions. Maltese residents deserve to live in towns and villages that allow them to meet, to exchange and encourage them to bring out their full potential as active members of communities. The African migrants constitute a small percentage of the one-fifth of the non-Maltese population. Studies have been carried out to identify where specific non-Maltese nationalities have settled. It is not only spatial planning initiatives that are lacking but proper systems in other areas to ensure that the basic needs of such persons can be achieved. The locality of Hamrun particularly has changed its urban physiognomy with a number of ethnic related shops replacing previous local shops. It is also a locality where some migrants prefer to live since they feel safe and accepted.

Ms. Sandra Gauci, highlighted the different ghettos being created in Qawra as a result of the different ethnic groups living in this locality. The lack of knowledge of the English language sometimes makes these groups feel lost therefore they stick to who they know and create their own services, e.g. mini-markets, businesses, since they feel marginalised. They try to create their own space and therefore they do not mix with the locals. Their living conditions do not encourage them to participate with regards to what is happening in their locality. This needs time which unfortunately they do not have due to their work conditions which more often than not are exploitative. She added that beaches seem to be the best places where different ethnicities can interact since such places are free considering the financial situation of such persons. If people are pushed to remain together they will not grow not only socially but even financially and mentally. She ended by saying that in the school where she teaches there are over 50 different nationalities. Their improved quality if life is something they look forward to. Lack of open spaces for them to recreate is also a problem.

Mr. Christian Inkum, acknowledged that planners want to create a more inclusive society with spaces that welcome everybody. Without inclusion spaces mean nothing. The definition of migrant has also been linked to those arriving by boat along an approved route. In countries affected by war travelling through airports is not possible so people escaping seek alternative routes. A migrant is a resource for the country but it all depends on how you use that resource. In other countries migrants are contributing to the society in different professions. Planning for inclusivity requires making spaces more inclusive where people with different backgrounds can interact. The accommodation of migrants in specific localities like St. Paul's Bay or Marsa is creating a non-conscious segregation. These places become ghettos of such communities since they are the places where Maltese do not want to stay. The congregating of such communities in the long term will increase further segregation and they will not be encouraged to learn the Maltese culture.

Ms. Patricia Graham's experience with working with migrants found that when such communities feel threatened they naturally stick together. By building their own communities they are alienating themselves. We see a high number of people sharing an apartment with vary poor living conditions. Whilst years ago there may have been a vision nonetheless there was no plan. Indian nationals come here on the promise of having a definite contract which does not materialise on their arrival after paying the agency a fortune. On arrival they are told there is no work and they have to wait for a month whilst still having to pay rent, food, etc. This sparks anger. The vision has not materialised since there has been no system in place to deal with such a situation. We have to take stock of what we've got and clean it up before the islands can take more in. Then plan it in a form that we can cope with. Respect amongst different peoples is the secret.

Mr. Bjorn Bonello stated that St. Paul's Bay's population is 54% made up of migrant population. Lack of integration leads to tensions. Planning has an important role since it seeks to create a sense of space where people meet each other. An initiative in Reġjun Tramuntana was to have a waste collection scheme in different languages after collection of data on which nationalities were predominant. This changed the attitudes of the nationalities as a result of reading notices in their own language. When people are given the opportunity they come forward and contribute. The main worry results from the greed to exploit migrant communities by making then live in substandard conditions. This is modern slavery which exploits vulnerable persons - Human trafficking. Renting by bed not by apartment as is done in various localities has become the norm hence the poor living conditions. Property owners gain a lucrative monthly rent in this way thus depriving local young couples the opportunity to rent since they cannot afford to match such high amounts. This gentrification is creating tension and as a result of this such communities are perceived by locals as the enemy. In Reġjun Tramuntana outdoor gyms are places where different ethnic communities congregate and interact. Through cultural activities and festivals different nationalities are exposed to each other. Small interventions that build credibility. E.g. Dog parks where people can interact. More exposure and awareness results in better acceptance amongst different communities.

Concluding points and reflections

The following are the salient points that emerge from the presentations and discussions:
   a) The recognition of the planning profession will undoubtedly improve spatial planning and create more credibility in the discipline through regulation of the profession and ethical code of conduct. Planners at European level are being invited to make proposals towards new planning approaches that serve communities better.
   b) The community should be encouraged to participate and contribute during all levels of spatial planning and policy making. Involvement should be from the start and not at the end of the process. Public is to feel that they are empowered to contribute to change to improve the quality of their living environment.
   c) Planning procedures that do not lead to the betterment of communities need to be immediately reviewed.

d) Good planning requires good quality research and sound evidence to ensure that the plan adequately addresses the issues identified and provides solutions that work.

e) Transparency and accountability need to be given more importance in plan making and policy formulation.

f) The Planning Authority needs to reinstate its forward planning functions and strengthen them rather than concentrate only on development control.

g) Decisions taken by Boards should be the result of proper and appropriate interpretation of policies within the overall spirit of the plan to ensure that the common good is achieved. Discretion used, however, must still be within the scope of achieving a better living environment for the local community.

h) More investment is required in building capacities in spatial planning and relevant skills and this is to be coupled with recognition of the discipline as a profession.

i) Good spatial governance is achieved by the need to appropriately balance uses between those which hold economic value, and those which hold intrinsic value to our identity and sense of place, by the *value* created by our unique heritage and culture as a critical component to the overall success of our economies and by informing people to understand the consequences of eroding this value.

j) There are three success factors in the effective implementation of a plan – The right resources, the right decision-making frameworks and the right levels of participation and community involvement.

k) Good governance is structured around 10 parameters – Political will and vision, sustainable development, rule of law, transparency, accountability, participation, communication, coherency, inclusion and capacity.

l) Involvement of the community in planning processes and decisions requires education and information initiatives, through specific courses, to build a capacity within communities to be able to constructively participate in such processes. The involvement of children should be explored further. The elements needed for proper public consultation are – Co-creation, Co-design, Co-implementation and Co-evaluation.

m) A balance between economic growth and environmental protection can only be achieved by setting priorities that will serve the community and ensuring that community engagement is genuine and an integral part of the balance that is sought.

n) Where land resources are Limited, planning should ensure the multi-functional use of spaces.

o) The silos syndrome is not conducive to achieving an integrated approach to achieve results that benefit the community.

p) Developers who take on the common good need to be distinguished from those that don't and positively awarded for their approach in seeking to do things in the right way.

q) Retaining and conserving our identity must be at the helm of any planning strategy. Coherence within the same political parties is also needed. Political will is the crucial factor.

r) The public should be able to have access to environmental information as required by the Aarhus Convention.

s) NGOs should be assisted in having adequate resources to be able to make representations on development applications, plans and policies as well as appeal decisions taken not in the interest of the community.

t) The demographic increase in the population of the Maltese Islands as a result of immigration needs more study to determine the impacts such changes are creating on the spatial and social fabric of the islands. Higher densities in specific localities result in greater tensions between different nationalities.

u) Migrant communities feel threatened and vulnerable in the face of their employers and this fear leads to further segregation and lesser integration with the local community.

v) Authorities are to look closely at the living conditions of such ethnic communities where in some cases a high number of persons are living in the same apartment where they pay rent for using a bed.

w) Specific spaces are to be identified where ethnic communities and local can meet and integrate e.g. sport pitches, beaches and outdoor gyms.

x) Specific localities are being targeted to accommodate specific ethnicities and this creates further ghettos and a distancing from possible integration and increased awareness of the local culture.

y) Government is to have a plan to tackle such an issue considering that such ethnic communities are important to the growth of specific economic sectors particularly the construction industry and the hospitality and medical sector.

z) Ethnic communities can feel respected and welcomed if they are approached and involved in the planning and decisions taken within their locality. Cultural activities with the participation of different ethnicities are to be encouraged since this strengthens integration and acceptance as well as increase esteem of such vulnerable communities.