



REPAIR Good Practice Example: Paola, Malta, former prison of Corradino





Recent history of conversion of the historic prisons, due to specificity of spatial structure, originally serving for secure detention, often limits new uses for old prisons to hotels and museums, limiting the impact on the regeneration of the surrounding urban area.

In Corradino's case, these functions are determined by the needs of the organisation to complement the neighbouring building that houses a huge sports arena. The Action Plan creates green corridors through the Paola town square and a kilometre of pedestrian connections linking the Prison to the town centre and to other architectural landmarks. The centre of Paola is transformed into a hub feeding 23 bus routes. A "park and ride" facility and a pedestrian bridge are being contemplated.

What makes the Corradino project innovative and integrative is how its new role in the larger area is being determined, conceiving future

interaction with other elements of the holistic district vision, and planning appropriate development of infrastructure to serve the whole neighbourhood.

The CORRADINO Military Detention Barracks (Prison) has been in the last 30 years encroached on by the expanding industrial zone of the Marsa and Corradino. The Prison, itself a scheduled Grade 1 asset is close to the Corradino Lines - a part of the Harbour Fortifications on Malta's Tentative List for World Heritage, and Kordin III - a Temple Site designated on a World Heritage List. In the rehabilitation and regeneration of the area which includes the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology Campus, the Prison will be a point of reference for sports, recreation, tourism and education.

The building of the Civil Prisons started in the 1842. The construction plans of the prisons were designed by an English draughtsman Mr. W. Lamb Arrowsmith. Jeremy Bentham, an English criminologist started the idea that criminal people are to be kept for correction instead for punishment only. He adopted the panoptical view in building the Main Central Hall. The idea was that from a hall designed on a half-circle basis one can see everything that is happening in every division just with an eye glance. A similar prison that was designed on a panoptical scale is located in Pentonville, U.K

The buildings of the former Military Prison (1865) are currently managed through the granting of a lease of 49 years to A.S. Hibernians Ltd. who promotes sports activities and exchanges.

There has also been a close consultation with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority as part of the restoration and redevelopment application, to consider sustainable conservation in the light of the existing land-use policy for the area.

In the development of the project the Paola Local Council has come forward to support the development of this vision and there is further support from The Paola Heritage Foundation, The Malta Industrial Parks and The Malta Tourism Authority.

The Conservation Management Plan includes a restoration and rehabilitation of 3 Cell Blocks with adaptive reuse of the East Block as a Museum and the South Block as a Hostel to be opened by late 2012. The project needs the support of the Local Council and the possibility of developing transport and pedestrian links to and from the town centre. These links will be vital for the tourism offer of diverse heritage assets in the area of Paola and Corradino.

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 maximizing 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.

Corradino's planned uses are more mainstream than the Firenze experience: involving the introduction of a museum and a hostel. This is however not a result of simply following trends or copying quick and easy solutions developed elsewhere. These functions are determined by

the needs of the Hibernians organisation, the company that leases the building. The organisation requires just such facilities in their complex to enhance the offer of the international sports exchanges, and so complement the neighbouring building that houses a huge sports arena.

The Action Plan creates green corridors through the Paola Town Square and previews a kilometre of pedestrian connections linking the Prison to the town centre, Hal Saflieni and Kordin III World Heritage Sites and to other architectural landmarks. The centre of Paola is transformed into a hub feeding 23 bus routes. A "park and ride" facility and a pedestrian bridge together with the new campus development are being contemplated. What makes the Corradino project innovative and integrative is how its new role in the larger area is being determined, conceiving future interaction with other elements of the holistic district vision, and planning appropriate development of infrastructure to serve the whole neighbourhood.

Using the prisons as drivers for regeneration is a characteristic objective of Corradino, along with the endeavour to integrate new uses into the life of the neighbourhoods and their communities. In this way the value of the interventions are extended and enhanced by firmly determining the future of the regenerated prisons within a vision of wider area rehabilitation, while at the same time establishing connections to other key city locations.

In creating a living urban environment in a former prison, as the REPAIR prisons demonstrate, 3 notions are essential: transforming a formerly secluded, closed space to interact with the urban pattern and life of the neighbourhood; creating a productive mix of functions; and achieving a balance and interplay between those who traverse the site or purposefully visit it and people who come to live there.

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