

Maltese village cores

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THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MALTESE VILLAGE CORE [pic] Name:

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Since Malta is quite populated some villages are close to each other, like the three villages of Attard, Balzan and Lija, and one might think that they are actually one village, while others are more isolated with surrounding rural areas. Villages vary from old and modern but they all have distinct features and characteristics and they are mainly built around the village core. In this project, the various characteristics of a typical Maltese village core are discussed followed by a detailed example of the old village of Attard. A typical Maltese village core

A typical Maltese village core usually has several characteristics which can be seen in most of the older villages, which are much more common than the more modern ones. The parish church The main focal point of any old village is the parish church which is mainly of the baroque style and occupies a central position. It is a grand style and the village church contrasts strikingly with the flat roof tops of the nearby houses and other buildings. Attard Parish Church The majority of the Maltese people are Roman Catholic and the church has always played an important role in the villagers' lives.

In olden times when villagers worked in the nearby fields they would return home when the church clock struck 6 tolls of the ' Ave Maria'. Nowadays

after mass many people gather in the church parvis to talk about daily events. This is a typical scene in any village and shows the social aspect of the Maltese people. The village core comes to life during the feast of the patron saint. During this time the streets are decorated with flags, banners, garlands, flowers, multi-coloured lights and statues on wooden pedestals. There are kiosks selling traditional food, nougat and candy floss.

Brass bands entertain the crowds, together with fireworks in the main square. The procession with the saint's statue passes through the narrow streets of the village core. The narrow streets Another particular feature of the old part of a village is the narrow, winding streets which normally lead to the church. These are usually quite narrow as cars and buses did not exist in the time in which they were built. It is said that the streets were winding as a way of defense against enemy attacks. Most streets in the village core have alleys. A narrow street in Attard

In these streets one can usually find several niches dedicated to saints. They were a form of beautiful and artistic decoration and showed the devotion which the Maltese had towards their religion. They also served as a point of easy reference to find a particular place in times when people were highly illiterate and could not read street names. An example of a niche in |
ebbu[The main buildings The buildings in the old village core are usually farmhouses or houses of character with a central courtyard, outer staircases and rubble-walled rooms.

Many of these are being renovated by expert architects to restore their natural beauty. Since they are built after the baroque or neolithic style these

buildings are quite big with large doors and windows. A particular feature is the different door knobs which one can find at every door. Another reason for such large houses was that noble people used to live in the village core. Also, most extended families used to live in one house. In the village core one can also find various shops, like the grocer, butcher, baker and vegetable vendor. The most important buildings are also found in every typical village.

These may include the local council, the police station, the parish priest's office, the parish hall, the cemetery, the school and the band and political clubs. Another characteristic feature is the village bar where men usually meet to have tea, eat 'pastizzi' or 'ġob bi-ejt', gossip or watch a football match. Other characteristics In the village core one can usually find several decorations including statues, fountains, street lamps and benches. Local activities are normally held in the village square. These are either held by the church or local council as an occasion for villagers to meet and have some fun.

Bazaars and car washes are often held as fund raising activities. In recent years some villages are becoming more innovative and organize unique activities, such as a chocolate or strawberry fair, to attract outsiders and tourists. How is the village core being protected nowadays? As the name implies the village core is the most important part of any society. All of the important buildings can be found there and it is also the place where the majority of people meet and socialise. Therefore it goes without saying that the village core must be an attractive and safe place to attend.

Local councils have the duty of ensuring a clean, safe environment and fight against vandalism to preserve the beauty of the village. A short interview with a representative of the Attard Local Council was held regarding the protection of the village. Interview: ? The village core is an important part of the village. Does this make it a main target for vandals? Yes, unfortunately, our village core has suffered from a lot of acts of vandalism. For example, the garden of Thomas Dingli, which can be found in the village square, has been vandalised several times. What does the council do to try and protect the village core from these acts of vandalism? Recently, we have asked the local police and wardens to increase their patrols, and to keep better watch over certain places especially the gardens and street decorations. We also do our best to repair any damage done as quickly as possible. ? Is the village core protected in any other way not related to vandalism? Yes, the village core is a very important part of the village because most people often gather here.

We are doing our best to keep the village core as Bring-In Sites - Attard Village Core clean as possible. For example, we have set up Bring-In Sites in the village core, so that people will recycle more for a cleaner environment, and at the same time avoid throwing away their litter outside. The Bulky Refuse removal truck comes around the village every day so that bulky items such as fridges do not end up thrown away in one of the gardens. Unfortunately, this has happened in the past.

Street sweepers are also employed so that the environment is as clean as possible. ? What about traffic? The streets in the village core are quite narrow. Are there any special rules which help to avoid pollution and damage

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to streets and buildings? Yes, like you said the streets are quite narrow and this makes it hard for large trucks to pass. They could easily hit the buildings and cause damage, plus they cause congestion of traffic. Signs are put up so that heavy vehicles cannot pass through the village core unless they need to render a service to a particular street.

The village core must not be used as a by-pass. This has also reduced the amount of pollution and hence we have a cleaner environment. An example of a Maltese village core – Attard The old village core of Attard is made up of the Church Square and several streets and alleys. These are Qormi Road, |
ebbu[Road, Valletta Road, Main Street, Church Street, Small Square Street, St. Dominic's Street, St. Mary's Street, and Thomas Dingli Street. The village core is the oldest part of Attard. It dates back to 3, 000 years B. C.

The Parish church dedicated to The Assumption was built between 1613 and 1616. It was designed by the architect Thomas Dingli. Adjacent to the church is the Parish Hall where social functions take place. Attard Parish Church The architect Thomas Dingli is still remembered in Attard, and in 1998 a new village square was built and named after him. In the square one can find a small garden used as a relaxation area. There is also a monument which mentions the names of all the residents of Attard who died during World War II. Thomas Dingli Square

The Local Council is also found in the village core. It is in the same building as the local Police Station. On its wall, there is a mail box which dates back to the time of Queen Victoria. It is the only mail box remaining in Malta from the time of Queen Victoria. Attard Police Station Attard Local Council In front

of the parish church one can find the parish priest's office, where people go to get information relating to births and marriages, or talk to the parish priest. Nearby is the Stella Levantina Band Club.

Club members and musicians meet here throughout the year either to practice the band's music in preparation for the village feast and other occasions, or else simply to talk with each other. As the feast starts approaching, the club becomes more crowded. The parish priest's office In St. Dominic's Street, there is a museum about the train's history. In olden times the train used to pass from Attard on its way to Mdina. Recently, the Council has decorated all the streets in the village core with decorative street lanterns. Conclusion The village core is a very important part of every village because it is the centre of all activity.

It is vital for the local community and something which cannot be removed or easily changed, in fact certain old buildings cannot be modernized and have to keep their characteristics. This is ruled by the MEPA. As one can see from the characteristics mentioned in this project, living in the village core can be a different experience from living on the outskirts. Some people, especially the new generation, would prefer somewhere quieter and more modern buildings. In the future, every local council in the Maltese Islands should continue working on improving the situation of their village's core.

Most localities are already protecting the core, but there can always be more room for improvement. For example, cameras can be installed near places in the village core which suffer from vandalism frequently. References: Alfie Guillaumier (2002): Bliet u Irjula Maltin. Malta: Klabb Kotba Maltin

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