

Valletta and the Ditch - strategies for an urban void

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Introduction to Malta-
Contemporary Maltese Planning and Architecture

A Short Introduction to Malta¹

The Republic of Malta, or the Maltese Islands, is a group of five islands in the Mediterranean Sea.

Three of them, namely Gozo, Malta and Comino are inhabited. The Capital is Valletta, situated in a natural harbour, called Grand Harbour.



1.1

Introduction to Malta

Geographical position:

The Maltese Islands are situated 93 kilometres south from Sicily and about 288 km north from Tunisia. The climate is temperate Mediterranean, which means Malta has very dry and sunny summers (generally, the island is rainless between the months of May and September), and mild, but rainy winters.

Average temperatures:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg.high C°	21°	15°	15°	16°	18°	22°	30°	30°	28°	24°	19°	16°
Avg.low C°	9°	9°	10°	12°	15°	19°	22°	22°	20°	18°	14°	11°

1.2

The island became important for warfare and trade throughout the course of history due to its central and thus strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea.

Malta is today one of the most densely populated nations in the world. Just above 400.000 inhabitants live on an area of total 316km². Each year, there are approximately 1.1 million tourists visiting the country.² In the world, Malta rates as the 7th densest populated nation, with 1 271 inhabitants per square kilometre (compare to the Netherlands: 392 inhabitants/km²).³



Malta's position in the Mediterranean Sea



1.3
Satellite picture



Manoel Island

Ta' Xbiex

Sliema

Msida

Floriana

Valletta

Hamrun

Marsa

Senglea

Kordin

Birgu

Kalkara

History

Malta can look back on an eventful history, dating to 3000 years before Christ, when the ancient megalithic temples found on the islands were built. In 800 BC, the Phoenicians arrived at the island and stayed for 600 years, until the Romans captured it in 208 BC. The Arabs invaded the islands in 870. The archipelago then fell into the hands of the Sicilian Normans, and, after the Angevine, Hohenstaufen and Aragonese subsequently ruled, the king of Spain left the island to the Order of St. John for a rent of two Maltese Falcons a year in 1530.

Malta became the outpost of Christianity against the Muslims (mainly Turks) in the Mediterranean for nearly 270 years, but was stormed by the French under Napoleon on his way to his Egyptian invasion. The French were unpopular rulers in Malta- the Maltese rebelled against them after 2 years, and with the help of the British navy, Malta became a protectorate of the British Empire, which it joined in 1814. The country was a major army base of the British throughout the Second World War. However, Malta was granted independence in 1964, became a republic within the Commonwealth in 1974, and turned politically neutral in 1980.

Malta joined the European Union in May 2004.

Politics

Since the republic's independence, the country was either governed by the Labour or the Nationalist's party (Christian democratic). Each election has very close results for each of the two parties, approximately reaching the 50% rate. A one or two seat majority in Parliament has been the norm in Malta since 1971⁴. This has created a political stalemate for many years. The two leading parties fear political decisions that would lead to a loss of votes. The abolishment of the hunting of migrating birds is one of the crucial topics that show that dynamic. Although there is a lot of pressure from groups within and even from the EU, spring hunting for birds is still allowed, in a restricted manner, since politicians fear to lose their votes if they abolish it completely. In order to "play safe" (not losing voters), many decisions are delayed for many years.

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Urban Sprawl

Until the beginning of the last century, settlements in Malta were, except for fortified cities, all inland, especially because of seaborne dangers.⁵ There was a mentality of perceiving the countryside, the “open land” as “uncivilized”. Residence in the village centre conferred prestige, for built-up landscape was associated with ‘civilization’.¹

The walled cities, where the knights, and later the English, resided, promised work and safety for the population. This changed as Malta lost its impact as a strategic military base and was transformed into a country with civilised society.

Today, most of the main island of Malta can be described as a suburban area, except for the regions around the great harbour, which have been urbanised. Gozo morphology and society are far more rural.⁶

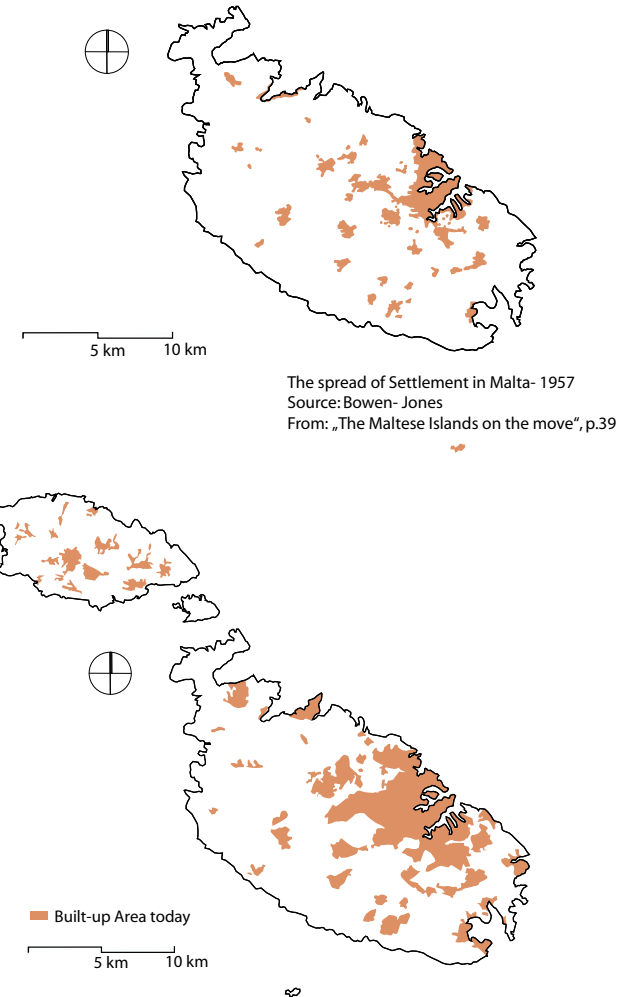
Development of Urban Sprawl

In the post-independence area (after 1964), the government sought to establish social balance. Social housing was an issue which both political parties, Labour Party

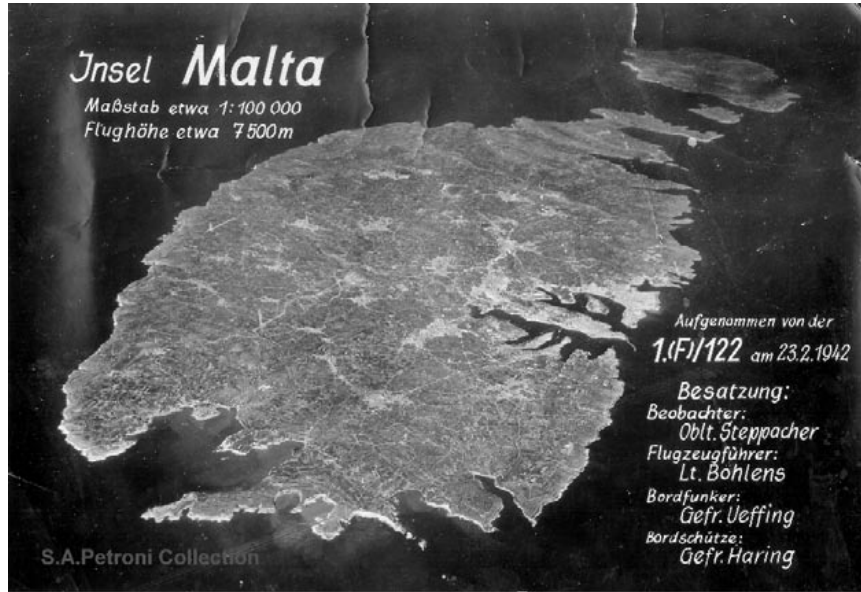
and Nationalists, sustained. Thus, the Labour government assigned certain areas for affordable housing around the island in the 1970s until the middle of the eighties, which emptied the city cores instantly.⁷

The election of the Nationalist Party in 1980 brought about the principles of the free market.⁸ In this time, building contractors gained economical and political power. Many historical buildings were destroyed to replace them with multi-storied hotels or apartments of low design quality, to make fast money with the increasing tourist boom. The island changed its face for the tourists, coming to Malta because of the sun and the sea. Some locals seemed more interesting in making a quick profit by creating as much accommodation as possible, instead of protecting the built heritage of their former occupants.

Unfavourable rent laws enhanced the vacancy of houses of 20 per cent in 1984- this number even increased to 23 per cent in 1995.⁹ The rent law, formally enacted in the years when the Labour party governed the country, denied the landlord the right to evict a local tenant, even upon termination of the lease. So many tenants still hold old lease contracts which are not profitable for the owner of the building.¹⁰ Thus, investors rather sold single family houses instead of rentable apartment blocks, or decided to leave their tenements unoccupied.



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Only in 1988 did the Maltese enacted building permits and a first definition of development areas to counter the expansion of urban zones which had risen to drastic levels. In 1990, a Structure Plan for the island was ratified by the parliament.

This is how the built up area on the island rose from 4.5 per cent to 18 per cent of the total area from the mid- 1960 ties onwards- the average built-up area in Europe is 8 per cent.

This development didn't only consume the farm-land, but also left wounds in the landscape. Malta's natural limestone, the most common building material, had to be quarried, and mostly illegal dumpsites for building debris spoiled the island.¹¹

The Making of a Nation and its Cultural Heritage vs. “Amoral Familiarism”

After years of littering the island with buildings and infrastructure, the political awareness and sense of responsibility was recently increasing for the Islands- Malta is about to find a sustainable way for its future.

There is no clear concept for heritage and patrimony for many citizens of the Maltese islands. For centuries, the islands were governed by foreign nations, so heritage is considered to *“having to do with the others, the Knights, the British, il-Gvern (government), even the tourists”*.

In the years following the independence of Malta, there was a lack of planning and a laissez-faire attitude to development.¹² Many of the illegal buildings, like the boat houses along the coast, originate from this time, but it was also then that old military facilities of the former British Commonwealth were informally occupied. Although many of these premises are rent out by the government, some of them were simply “taken over” by squatters, and used for farming, parking cars or for illegal dumps.

In either case, it is quite difficult to expel those people from their “borrowed land” as they develop the feeling that it belongs to them, or even earn their living by running small businesses on them.

Jeremy Boissevain, Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology of Amsterdam University, and studying Maltese society for the past 40 years, finds the attitude of “amoral familiarism” responsible for it.

*“People adorn their house and take care of it but show a complete disregard for the outdoors. Public space is viewed as no-man’s land,”*¹¹ he says in an interview in 2001.

In another source, he states that it is the *“(…) family-first attitude”* that *“(…) also leads to the indiscriminate dumping of rubbish in public places and to the illegal construction of buildings with total disregard of laws and regulations established to protect the quality of life of others and/or the nation’s environment.”*¹¹

In general the approach of tolerating the squatters saves the expenses the public authorities would face maintaining them- the informal use changes the originally military heritage into spaces of opportunities in a civil society.

I Interview with Jeremy Boissevain for maltatoday, 8th April 2001, <http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/2001/0408/people.html>

II p11, The Maltese Island on the move- A mosaic of contributions marking Malta’s Entry into the 21st Century”, published by the Central Office of Statistics Malta (2003)- chapter: „Changing Maltese Landscape: From Utilitarian Space to Heritage?”, Jeremy Boissevain.

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One can sense an awakening sense of nationhood and pride of the country, also influenced by foreign tourists with a larger ecological awareness¹³ and the joining of the EU- Union, that imposes protective measures for fauna and flora upon the Maltese law. This attitude was previously systematically avoided by the actual elected party. Also, new ENGOs,(=environmental non governmental groups), heritage groups and the green party of Malta (Alternattiva Demokratika, Din l'Art Helwa, Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, Birdlife Malta... to name a few) challenge the power of big investors, that still try to spoil the remaining countryside with over-dimensioned projects and start to bring these politically tolerated projects to a halt, which is a very recent development in Maltese politics.

*"Tourism growth is one of the greatest success stories of our times, but, in recent years, there have been increasing warning signs, the over-saturation and deterioration of some destinations, the over-whelming of some cultures, bottlenecks in transport facilities, and a growing resentment by residents in some destinations"*¹¹¹

III p.187,"In the national interest"- Towards a sustainable tourism industry in Malta", John Pollacco (2003), ISBN: 99932-0276-2,Fundazzjoni Tumas Fenech ghall- edukazzjoni fil Gurnalismu"- quoting Antoni Enriques Savignac, then Secretary-General of the WTO, from a foreword to the "Earth Summit"- the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) on 14.June 1992, where Agenda 21 was adopted by 182 governments."Agenda 21 does address the value of sustainability in broad aspects, at all levels (local/national/regional/global), in most economic, social and environmental areas (...)" (John Pollacco,p.174, lbdn.)

PETITION REGARDING THE LOSS OF QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE MALTESE

We, the Maltese and Gozitan Citizens and Residents of this country, protest about:

The unrestrained building taking place in Malta that politicians, with lack of vision and total short-sightedness are considering progress. This is resulting in villages being ruined by the construction of ugly buildings in their cores, with an upheaval for the inhabitants and pressure on the infrastructure. The quality of our lives is deteriorating, to the point that in every area of Malta houses architectural and historic value are constantly being demolished. New apartment blocks are being built without considering the need for light and air or density of population, while commercial developments are destroying the peace of residential areas. Overnight, people find themselves living in a building site and having to spend a long time living with unacceptable levels of noise and dust, as well as damage to their homes, danger to their health and sometimes even to their lives. This is contributing to many health problems, including the highest rate of asthma among children in Mediterranean countries.

The proposition that land of ecological and archaeological value is to be used for the development of golf courses and other construction for the benefit of the few and a loss for the whole country. More virgin land is now earmarked for development, further reducing what little countryside we have. Public access to the

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countryside and foreshore is being blocked. This not only ruins our landscapes and enjoyment thereof but threatens rare species of flora and fauna (biodiversity) and destroys our natural resources.

The pollution of the sea and uncontrolled spread of fish farms that are having negative effects on the sea-life as well as impact on our precious water resources; reduction of the recreational value of the beaches and all this with bad effects on tourism.

Tourism, the mainstay of the economy, is suffering during the general degradation of our surroundings, so much that job losses in this sector as well as closure of related establishments are on the increase. For this reason, we are demanding:

There should not even be a consideration of construction outside the Development Zones. Other developments should be subject to a serious study on the sustainable construction needs of the nation. Village and town cores which reflect our cultural heritage and way of life should be protected from development and rehabilitated. Gradual dismantling of outdated rent laws has to commence.

MEPA (the Maltese planning authority, note of author) and its personnel should REALLY be autonomous and accountable. MEPA regulations should be reviewed to give the citizen his full rights of information, representation and protection. A law on total transparency in the finances of political parties and limits to the amount of

donations that one can make to the same parties should be passed.

The necessary investment should be made to ensure enforcement of all laws regarding development and the environment. There should also be an annual report on such law enforcement.

It should be recognised that the environment is a national problem/issue and does not belong to partisan politics. All political parties should unite on the environmental front and take widespread positive steps to the benefit of the public in general.

It is a fact that difficult decisions need to be taken and that these result in a loss of votes for any governing party. Therefore, we ask that the environment is removed from the political scene and is treated as a national subject.

Such a mature decision can only foster trust in the political class and will be a huge step forward in the quality of life and the local political scene.

BICREF, BirdLife Malta, Din l-Art Helwa, Flimkien ghal-Abmbjent Ahjar, Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, Friends of the Earth, Gaia Foundation, Graffitti, Insalvaw il-Wied ta' Kalkara, Island Sanctuary Association, Kumitat ghall-Harsien Rurali ta' Ghajn Tuffieha, Malta Geographical Society, MOAM, NatureTrust, Qui si- San Residents' Association, Ramblers Association, Save Wied Garnaw Action Group, The Archaeological Society

Leaflet of several Maltese NGOs against the deterioration of the island (from the website of Flimkien ghal-Abmbjent Ahja, <http://www.ambjentahjar.org//library/RallyPetition.pdf>. The petition started last year- signatures are still collected (25th March 2007)

How much green space can we spare from the islands' development?

Appreciation of rural and urban recreational areas

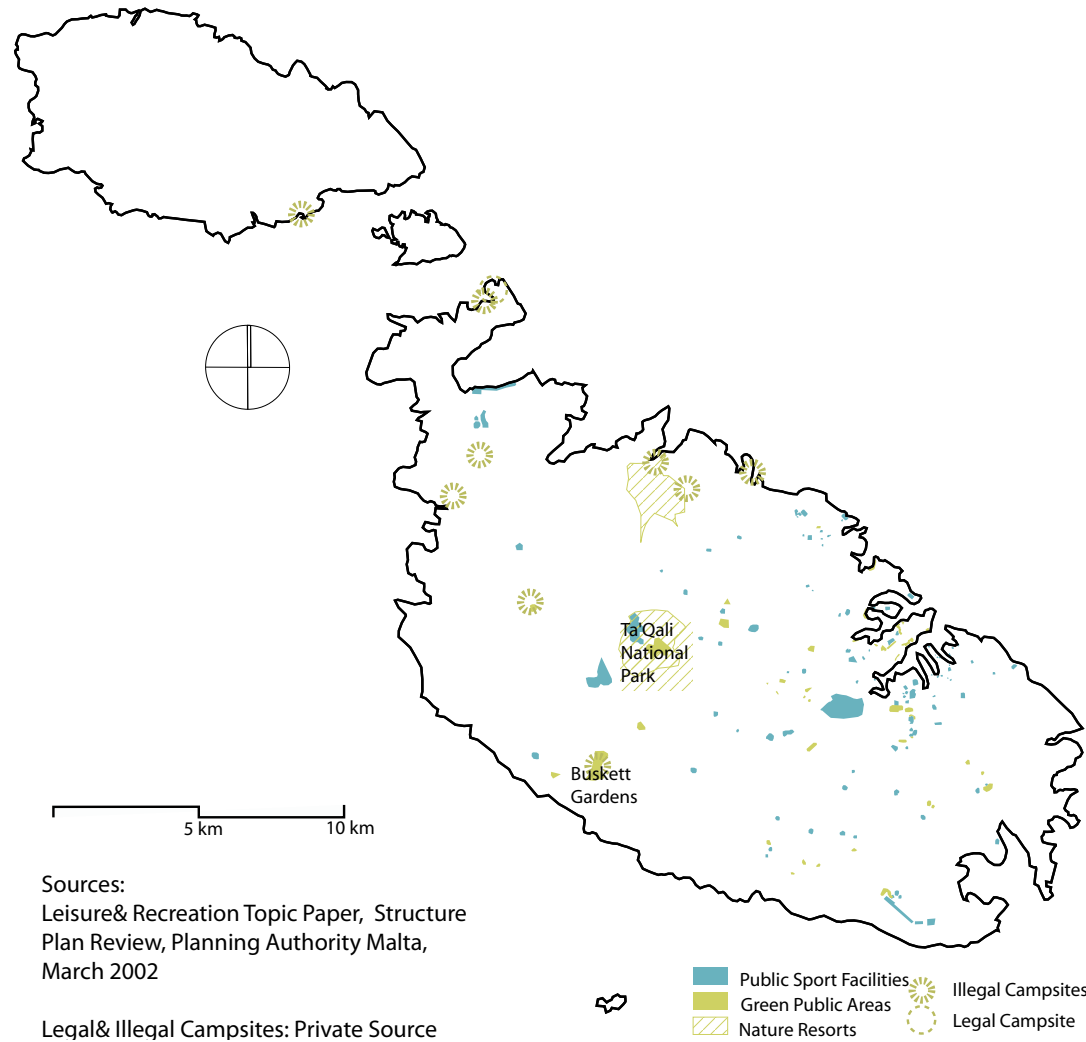
The islands' surfaces desiccates completely during the summer month- the beautiful, green meadows, covered with blossoms of Maltese springtime turn into a brown, dry surface of the island in the rainless months of April to September.

In the heat of summertime, people long for shadow and green.

"No one in Ireland could understand why I wanted to have a photo of myself on a green meadow. I just asked them "Do you know Maltese summer? Everything is dry and dead. Grass in July?! It was incredible." (Annie, Maltese student of architecture, from Paola, when telling me about her experiences on her summer internship in Northern Ireland)

Maltese Countryside

The open farmland of Malta, traditionally associated with a lack of civilization, is increasingly sought out by campers, hikers, bird watchers- tourists and locals alike.¹⁴ The consciousness that Maltese landscape has a unique



Sources:
Leisure & Recreation Topic Paper, Structure Plan Review, Planning Authority Malta, March 2002

Legal & Illegal Campsites: Private Source

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value and beauty in its traditional form of terraced farming, which should be preserved, is one the rise.

However, these traditional terraced fields, which require intensive labour, are increasingly abandoned by the younger generation finding better paying jobs in the tourist industry.¹⁵ On the other hand, people long for a contrast to their highly urbanised residential areas. Consequentially, certain areas on the island are becoming known as good spots for illegal camping which brings along problems of waste management and the intrusion of cars. Unfortunately, the Maltese tend to avoid walking and are very proud of their fashionable all-terrain vehicles.¹⁶

(Private e-mail to the Author:)

Hello Naughty!!

So you are into camping these days...can be kind'a hard in malta to do it officially! But as you are well aware, we maltese always manage to get by all the legal bullshit and do what we want!

Anyway when it comes to camping, there are a number of options:

1) Use the official campsite (at Ahrax - furthur up from ghadira bay) ... but this is expensive and not so adventurous.

2) Find a nice roundabout and make it yours (you will spend half the night there and the other half in prison)

3) Use one of the places the scouts have ...

*a) White Rocks (Just opposite the splash & fun park)
b) Golden Bay (next to hotel - not a nice place)
c) Ta' Saliba Crossroads (this is a cool place close to Bingemma - quite nice but very popular with scouts so it is hard to find it empty!)*

4) Other places ...

*a) Mgarr Gozo (just below Fort Chanbery)
b) Mgarr Malta (there is an abandoned field next to castello zammitello)
c) Buskett (next to buskett roadhouse)
d) Ghadira (furthur up from the green huts) - this is the actual camping place like you are imagining it...where you pitch the tent under a nice tree in an area away from civilisation!
e) Ahrax (opposite the official campsite!) - another great coming place ... if you check our website, there are some pics of this place taken in Sept 2005 I think.
f) Kennedy grove (good in an emergency but too visible by others...you cannot really shag in such a campsite!)*

Well, apart from the camping places, the main parks which are always open and available to the public are:

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a) *The famous ta qali!!*

b) *Buskett*

c) *Mizieb ridge (there is a small - very small - forest here!)*

d) *Ahrax ridge*

In the south, I doubt there is anything (but even I do not really know this area too well) ... You do find some green areas but they are not the type of place to have a crowd of people having BBQ with little children running around like a swarm of bees!!)

The government responded by initiating an afforestation and park development program in 2005, to foster the planting of trees on various selected sites of the island. Some of these sites are already, or soon-to-be publicly accessible areas of recreation. The traditional farming method protected the shallow Maltese soil from being carried away by the strong winds from the sea. Trees, which could anchor the soil, are scarce on the island.¹⁷

Individuals can sponsor the young trees (at LM 6), while the government will take further care of them in their assigned areas.¹⁸

By developing these new landscape parks, conflicts between the bird hunters which traditionally occupying the landscape, and the new trendsetters, enjoying the countryside in sportive activities, could be avoided.

Parks:

Recreational parks in the urban area of Malta are small and of high maintainance. Many of them are gardens with foot- paths and flower beds in the baroque- style. However, they are not a place where people would go on a picnic, or to play a spontaneous match of football with friends.

In Malta, 2.4m² of open space within the urban areas per inhabitant is average.¹⁹

Some few public parks at the edge of the development zones are ample enough that people can picnic, and be used for outdoor activity. These provided legal areas are normally overcrowded in their peak time (Sunday mornings and afternoons).

Such parks are primarily reached by car or bus. It is the meadow, the green surrounding, that attracts parents to bring their kids there for them to play ball, ride the bike, etc– generally, there is no such spacious environment in the urban areas that would allow these leisure activities.

The amount of space that the parents use for parking, however, is unproportionally high in relation to the open, green space they are longing for.

The officially assigned areas for these activities are Ta'Qali in the center of the Island- thus the area is called "National Park" and is a former landing strip of aircrafts in the second world war- Buskett Gardens



1.5

Ta'Qali at Sunday Morning



1.6

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1.7



1.8

around the “Verdala palace”) and “Kennedy Grove” in the North of the Country.

Ta’Qali is favoured for Sunday picnicking- it has abundant parking space and the meadow, the base for the picnic blanket, is very close to it.

Buskett Gardens is the only forest on the island- a 350ha area²⁰, where the knights of St. John planted trees in 1565 to feed their hunting pastime. The knights found the island bare of trees when they arrived in 1530²¹.

Another, but rather small area on the island where trees are planted, is the “Kennedy Grove” near St. Pauls Bay.



1.9



1.10

No walk in the park for Maltese who need exercise

The Health Promotion Department has called upon the authorities to create open and pedestrianised areas after the Eurobarometer survey established that the Maltese are the most physically inactive of EU citizens.

On average, Maltese people devote just 29.8 minutes a day to vigorous physical activity, one hour less than the EU average, according to a Eurobarometer survey published over the weekend.

The Maltese also trail at the bottom where moderate exercise is concerned, while many say they never bother to work out.

A third of all Maltese respondents failed to even go for a 10-minute walk in the last seven days. Maria Ellul, HPD principal scientific officer, blames the authorities for clogging the island with construction and vehicles.

"Three quarters of the island is built up and you can't do physical activity when there are cars and cranes all around you. Not everybody can afford to go to the gym, so we really need to create open spaces convenient for everybody, now more than ever," she told The Times.

In fact, Malta has the highest number of respondents who believe the area they live in does not offer any opportunities to be physically active. Just 17 per cent "strongly agree" that the area they live in offers such opportunities (EU average 35 per cent) while 29 per cent say they "agree".

Likewise, the number of Maltese people who agree that local sport clubs and other local providers offer opportunities to be physically active is below the EU average. The EU report emphasises the need for the government, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority and the Malta

Transport Authority to pool their resources to come out with initiatives which will reap health benefits in the long run, she said.

While the Maltese were falling over each other in the limited open spaces available, citizens from the rest of Europe have the luxury of pedestrianised areas and large parks. Still, Ms Ellul insists that despite the small size of the island, it is still possible to build around four parks where people could walk or jog, or at least take in some fresh air.

"The government needs to provide people with easy and healthy choices. Just look at the way the Dubai authorities managed to build an oasis from a desert."

With fine weather most of the year, a better and more efficient public transport system would do wonders to encourage people to walk more.

"Just take a look at the success of the Park and Ride scheme. In just a week, people seem to have no problem walking from the Valletta bus terminus to the other end of the city," Ms Ellul said.

Ms Ellul said the Eurobarometer findings tally with the surveys carried out by the HPD. Though the Maltese were the most informed and receptive of the foods and trends which reap health benefits, it does not lead to behavioural change, she said.

The department could not work in isolation and healthy food needed to come at a reasonable price especially since food cost was one of the determinants of obesity.

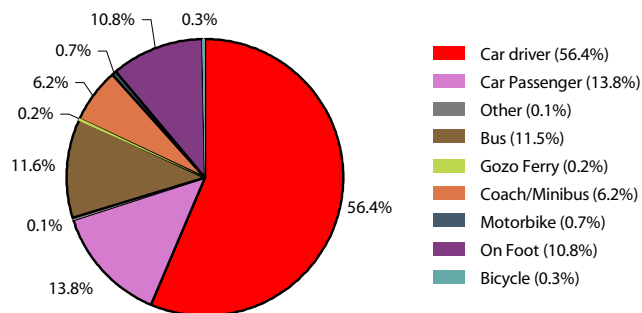
Ms Ellul finds the high rate of Maltese dieters as no surprise, considering the rate of overweight people and those that suffer from diabetes and high cholesterol.

Source from "The Times of Malta", article "No walk in the park for maltese who need exercise", November 14th,2006

Quote from "The Times of Malta", article "No walk in the park for maltese who need exercise", November 14th,2006

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“Maltese people do not like walking”- Traffic and Transportation



transport for all purposes 1998
Transport topic paper, December 2003, p22

Transport and urban planning

“Several interviewers remarked that Maltese people, particularly men, do not like walking!”^{IV}

Malta is a society that chooses to use the car out of the attitude that it will make them more independent from public transport or others. Its availability, flexibility and comfort, and a general “car culture” that embraces the car is apparent. Driving a car gives a feeling of being in control, which again adds to a personal feeling of security.²²

Public transport is perceived as insufficient- especially during summertime, many buses along the main traffic routes are constantly crammed with tourists.²³ The buses, of which many don’t meet the requirements of our time, have the reputation of not being reliable and punctual. At many bus stops, no time tables are available. Also, the organisation of the bus routes (starting from Valletta to all parts of the country, with few cross connections between these routes) is not optimised to today’s needs.

IV „Transport Study for Valletta and Floriana-Planning Authority Malta”, Colin Buchanan and Partners, Project No.1551, February 1994, APP1: 3 -11

In the mind of population, the private car seems to be anchored as the only effective mean of transport that they favour for transport.²⁴

Malta’s land-use policy of the late 1980ties and 1990ties worsened the traffic situation by assigning residential and employment areas.²⁵ Hence traffic congests every morning and evening, when commuters come or go to work- most of them by car.²⁶

Car ownership is very high. On this tiny island, the total amount of vehicles on the road was 246 825 in 2000, and increases about 7000 new cars each year.²⁷ The lowest density of cars per household can be found in Walled Cities of the Grand Harbour Area, with an average of 1.16 cars per household.²⁸

Especially Valletta, the capital, and as such, an office town, and its neighboring municipality of Floriana, are concerned of this development. Valletta, built as a fortified city in the middle of the 16th century by the knights of St. John cannot physically cope with anymore on-street parking²⁹. Still, there is a huge demand for parking space from Maltese citizens, although car parks like the Nelson car park in Valletta are only reasonably successful, by showing a maximum occupancy rate of 80%.

Maltese politics were avoiding the consequences of this development. Until recently, no charges were occurring for on-street parkers in the capital. Many

drivers still prefer to hunt a free on-street parking space to the car park.³⁰

Also Malta had to discover that building of park houses increases problem of congestion- because people count on finding parking spaces and choose to use the car instead of other alternatives.³¹ This development was thoroughly described by Hermann

Knoflacher, an Austrian traffic planner- a bigger amount of parking spaces automatically creates more motorised traffic.

The alternative is a consequent traffic planning in favour of pedestrians and cyclists.³²

During my stay in Malta, I perceived that the island and its infrastructure were very much fitted to the need of cars. Pedestrian connections are disgracefully neglected. Cyclists are non- existing due to the risky and fast driving style of the Maltese and the complete absence of cycling lanes, although the topography and the climate favours cycling for most of the year.³³

“The need to restrict cars in certain areas was strongly felt by those responding to the survey. Pedestrianisation of town centres and village cores, as well as shopping streets was met with a high level of agreement, as was the concept of traffic- free rural areas. The statement “There is need for improved accessibility for push-chairs and wheelchairs, even at the expense of car space” generated particularly high levels of support. Many respondents also stated they would make more

use of public transport, were the service to be improved. For most respondents car-parks should not be more than 10 minutes walking distance from the center.”^{VI}

VI Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands, Executive Summary, public attitude survey, September 2000, from the homepage of MEPA Malta, http://www.mepa.org.mt/index.htm?eu_int_affairs/eu_funding/mainpage.htm&1,Pas_E_Sum-pdf

Cars and private space

Young grown-ups in Malta would rather opt for a car than an apartment to achieve independence from their parents. Cars are a major status symbol, and represent a certain personal, private freedom, which allows escaping from parents' vigilant eyes. Children normally start to move out of their parents' house when marrying and founding a family, even if they visit university. Although superficial, many parents of the now 20ties+ generation still abide by the Catholic Church – pre-marital sex is a definite no-no and parents wouldn't want their offspring to bring their partners to their house overnight.

As a result, certain parking spaces around the island are a prime venue for young couples, staying in the car while watching the sunset... or themselves, when the sun disappears behind the horizon and the night sets in. In my opinion, the car turns into a room with

Contemporary Maltese Planning and Architecture

the perfect view and real privacy that is not available in the dense urban areas of their homes.

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Malta - History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana

Historical Background

At 1523, the hospitaller Order of St. John, emerging in the course of the crusades to the Holy Land, had to leave their base on Rhodes, battered by the troops of Sultan Suleiman. Already in this year, they were offered the Maltese Islands by the Spanish crown. When arriving to Malta in October 1530, the Hospitallers found a fairly defended group of islands, whose fortified towns could not withstand the new technological revolution of gunpowder cannons and artillery. Accepting Malta as their new stronghold, it was clear that the poverty-stricken island, frequently suffering from corsair raids, needed improvement of their fortifications.¹

The Knights took up residence in Fort St. Angelo, whose origins lie back in times of the Arabs and its adjacent town Birgu, guarding the entrance to the Grand Harbour, one of the two natural harbours of the island. As a seafaring order, their main interest in Malta was securing the Grand Harbour as a strategic focal point of the island, neglecting the overall protection of its hinterland. Military engineers proposed the building of a fortress on the elevated peninsula Sciberras, facing Fort St. Angelo, however, the order was at that time still drawn to recapturing the island of Rhodes, besides facing the problem of being short of supply.²

A Turkish invasion was already anticipated in 1565, and besieged the Grand Harbour from May to September. The Turks took advantage of the higher

grounds that overlooked the knights' defences by setting up powerful batteries.

After the Great Siege in 1565, the fortresses of the island in ruins- it was evident that the Order needed outside help to erect new fortification against another menacing attack from the Turks the following year.

By this time, the Order could count upon donations from the kings of Europe that acknowledged the strategic position of the knights, putting a hold to Suleiman's "infidel" fleets.

The need for fortifications brought about the planning of a walled city on the higher grounds of the Sciberras peninsula.³

2.1
A First Projection of a new fortified city in the Grand Harbour, 1572



History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana

Glossary of Terms used in Military Architecture¹

BASTION, Bastione, Beluardo- I., a work projecting outwards from the main walls of a defensive enceinte, designed to enable the garrison to see and defend the adjacent perimeter together with the area in front of the ramparts. In its embryonic form, the bastion can be found in both cylindrical and polygonal form. The polygonal form was perfected by the Italian engineers of the late 15th century and early 16th century into a pentagonal work composed of two faces, two flanks, and a gorge.

BATTERY, a platform, usually protected by a parapet, for cannons and mortars; orillon battery, a battery placed in the flank of a bastion and sheltered by the orillon; coastal battery, a work, sometimes fortified against direct assault, designed to engage enemy ships close to the shore.

CASEMATE, cassamatta- I., a vaulted chamber built in the thickness of the ramparts and used as a barrack or gun position (firing through embrasures)

CAVALIER, a raised earth platform, built on a bastion or curtain wall, designed to mount artillery and to command the surrounding ground.

COVERED WAY, COVERTWAY, chemin couvert- F.m strada coperta -I., a path on top of the counterscarp, protected by a parapet formed from the crest of the glacis.

COUNTERGUARD, large outerworks, open at the gorge, designed to protect the faces of bastions and ravelins

COUNTERSCARP, contrascarpa- I., the outer wall of the ditch facing the ramparts.

CURTAIN, cortina- I., the main wall of a defensive work, usually the length of a rampart between two bastions.

DEAD GROUND, an area of ground in the vicinity of a fortified work not covered by the defenders' guns and thus creating a vulnerable spot in the defences.

DEMI-BASTION, a half-bastion with one face and one or two flanks

DITCH, fossa- I., fosse- F., a dry trench outside a fortified work, usually rock- hewn, to obstruct direct assault on the main walls.

ENCEINTE, the fortified perimeter of a defensive work, and the area enclosed by it.

¹ "Fortresses of the Knights", by Stephen C. Spiteri, Book Distributors Limited, Hamrun, Malta, 2001, p. 360 ff.

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana

FRONT OF FORTIFICATION, the distance between the salient points of two adjacent bastions.

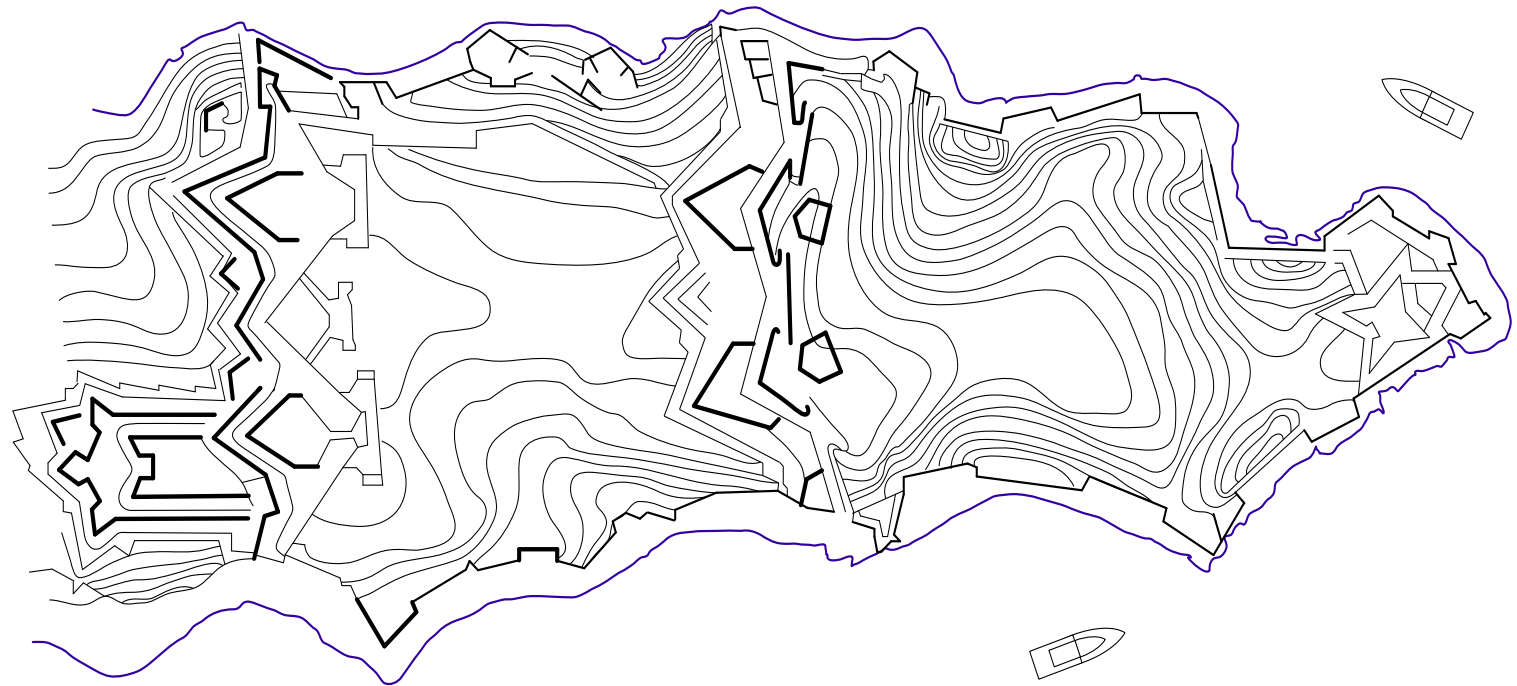
FORTRESS, a fortified city or town, or other major defensive work

GLACIS, *spalto-l.*, the sloping ground in front of a fortress spanning from the top of the parapet of the covertway down until it reaches the open country, cleared of all obstacles to bring an advancing enemy into the line of fire

RAMPART, a thick wall of earth or masonry forming the main defence of a fortress, usually reinforced from the rear with *terreplein*.

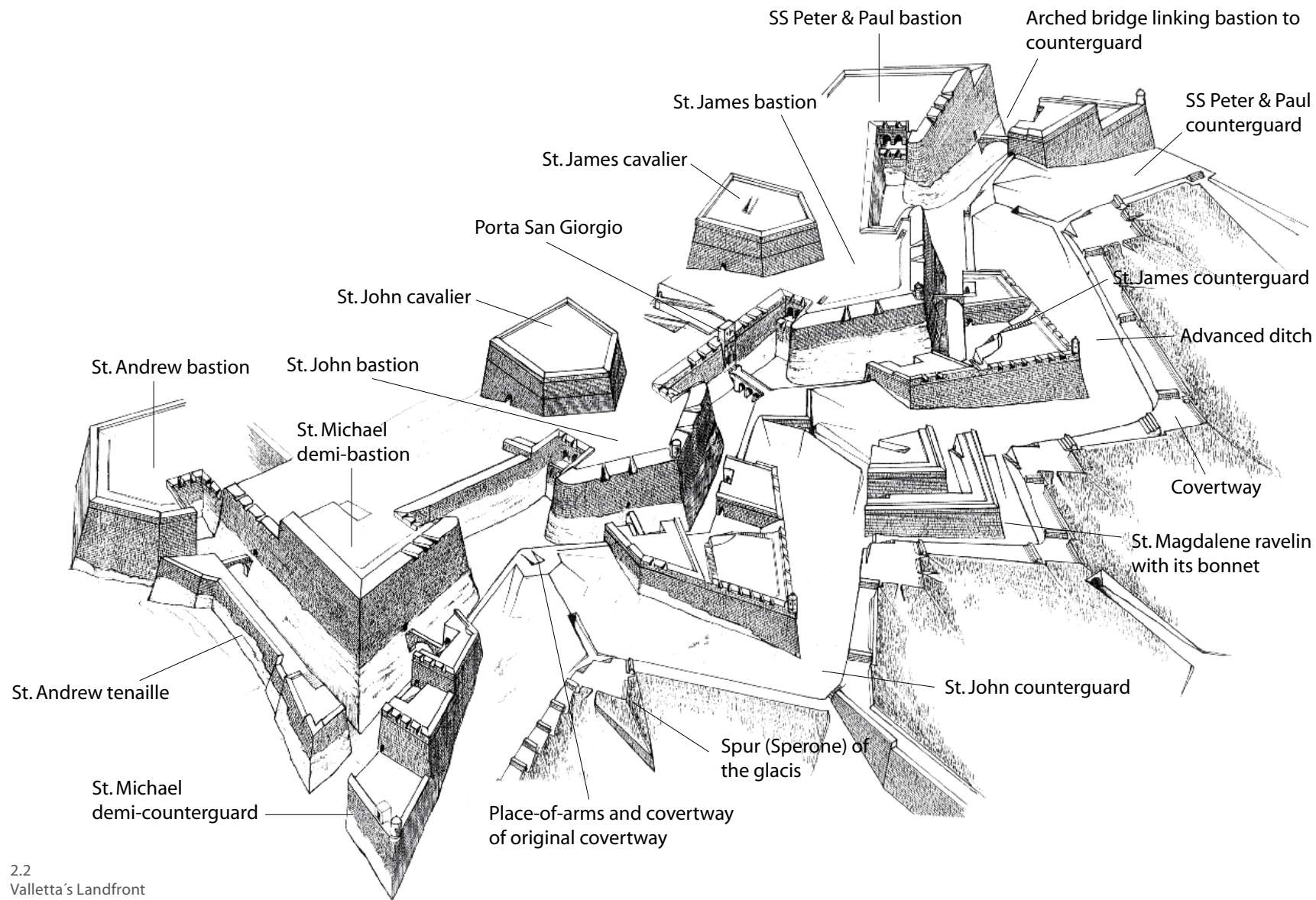
RAVELIN, a triangular outerwork placed in front of a curtain to defend it

TERRAPLEIN, the packing of earth forming the body of a rampart; the gently-sloping ground behind a parapet, formed from packed earth.



Fortifications in relation with the landscape of Sciberras peninsula

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana



The building of the new city

Warfare started to change after Charles VIII, King of France, attacked Naples in 1495, using bronzen cannons and iron balls instead of the formerly used stone balls. Along with the development of gunpowder, the trajectory of the missiles became straighter, which rose the penetrating power of the missile.⁴

The Italians were the first to modify their fortification system according to these innovations. Also, the tactic of the defenders changed to a more "offensive" style.

Francesco Laparelli, the military engineer of Pope Pius IV, came to Malta in December 1565, only a few months after the turks abandoned the siege. He designed a new fortified city on the high grounds of the Sciberras peninsula between the two natural harbours: Valletta.

The landfront⁵

For my project, I was mainly interested in the landfront of the fortified city of Valletta, and the defence strategy of that time that required this architectural design, as my planning area is located there.

The ideal fortress

In the baroque age, the ideal fortress was constructed upon an interior polygon that was modified according to the local landscapes.

The aim was to cover each point of the enceinte at least from two positions.

At that time, the fire range of light muskets was 200m; the artillery's fire range was 400m.

Thus, the front of fortification did not exceed 250 to 300m.

The artillery of the defenders was based on the bastions, and in the casemates, the space between the bastion flank and the curtain walls that connected the bastions.

The artillery's range also decided the form of the bastions- the faces of the bastions are based on the ranges of the defenders' artillery in the casemate of the neighbouring bastion.

The curtain walls were the most vulnerable part of the defence- thus they did not exceed the double range of a handgun, triggered from on of the two casemates at each side.

The rampart walls for the fortifications were constructed out of two skins of solid stone, with an infill of earth, mixed with rockclippings called terraplein to absorb the blast of horizontal missiles, if they weren't reflected by

the scarped walls of the bastions. Bastions and curtain walls were to be set as low as possible in comparison to the glacis beyond the ditch, so they weren't too exposed to the besiegers, yet high enough to see all the surrounding grounds to provide an "aggressive and offensive form"^{III} for the enemy to be impeded in all his actions already beyond the far side of the ditch.

The ditches' counterscarp was in a parallel line to the faces of the main enceinte in a distance of 30 to 30 meters.

The defenders' tactic

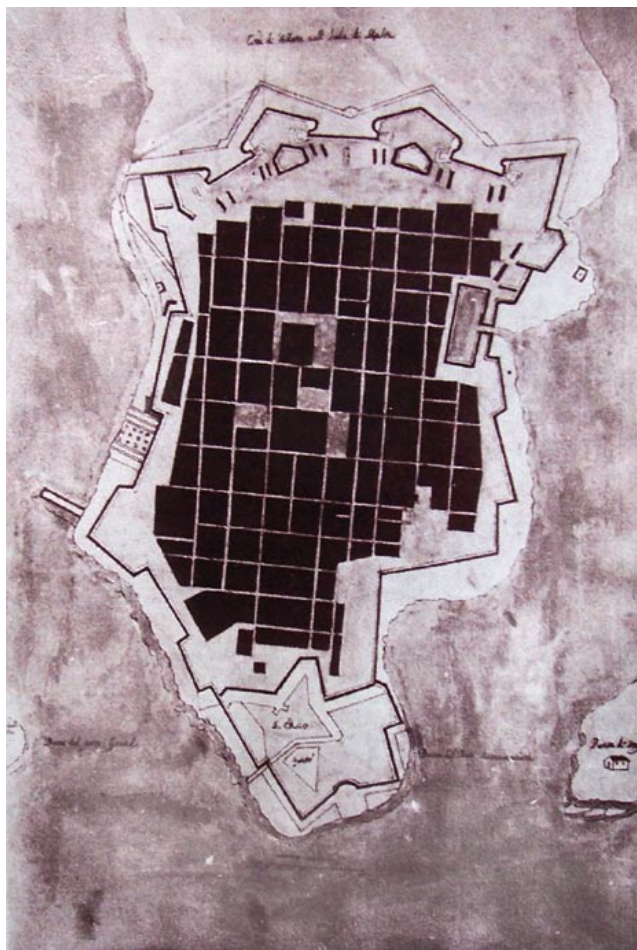
On the far side of the ditch, the glacis was kept clear of all cover, so that the enemy could be detected easily and raked with gunfire, or had to use the tiring method of "mining and sapping"^{III}. From the top of the glacis, the covert way was cut out, hidden by a parapet to protect the troupes, so that defense units could move outside the main enceinte to attack the enemy ("aggressive defense"^{IV}).⁶

In case of a fast withdraw, two retreat paths led into the main enceinte, lying open to the eyes of the defenders:

One pathway, carved into the rock of the counterscarp led to the ditch, from where the troops con-

II p93, „A City by an order“, Roger de Giorgio
III p104, „Military Architecture“, Quentin Hughes
IV p.28, „A City by an Order“, Roger de Giorgio

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana



2.3
Early Plan of Valletta, just few squares were spared

tinued to the save side of the enceinte through sallyports. By another access, the soldiers could reach sallyports in the same height as the covert way by flying bridges over the ditch, which linked to the case-mate and further up to the rampart of the bastion.⁷

Once those entries were blocked or destroyed (the bridges could be destroyed by the defenders own artillery), the aggressor still needed to overcome the obstacle of the ditch.

The characteristics of Valletta's land front

Laparelli planned four bastions on the land front, which were cut out from the living rock, and several cavaliers, of which two were built- one at each side of the main gate. Some parts of the enceinte, where the terrain sloped away, had to be built up by masonry.⁸

In his notes, he explains that he "*prefers a dry moat (...) to a wet ditch*" as "*water in the ditches make prisoners of the defending garrison. A dry ditch calls for a large fortress and a numerous garrison*"^{VI}.

All the stones for the fortifications were quarried from the ditch. In 1568, the ditch was six canes deep (approx. 12,6 meters), and almost completed apart from some levelling work. The width of the ditch varied from seven canes (approx. 14,7m) in front of the salient angles of the bastions to 12 canes (approx. 25

meters) in front of the curtain walls. (1 cane= \sim 2.095 meters)

"The whole of the counterscarp could be viewed from the high flanks of the bastions. It was well supplied with places of arms, and those at either end, near the bastions of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Michael, could accommodate 200 arquebusiers (...)"^V

A safe bulwark

The city of Valletta was planned as a fortified town- thus its functionality in war times was the most important design parameter. It should provide enough space for the people of the island seeking protection in case of an intrusion. Squares and places of this town were designed as emplacements rather than public areas.

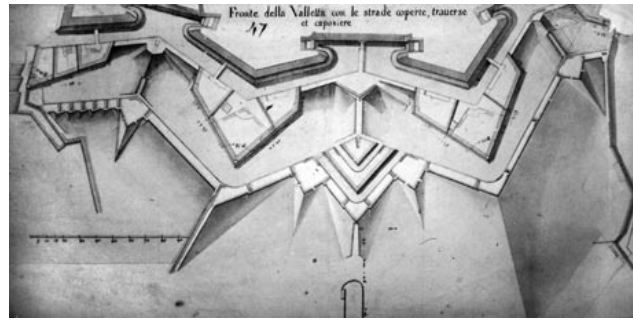
The grid pattern of the city, which nowadays is a common source of complaint of Valletta's inhabitants due to its steep streets, permitted to move artillery very quickly across the city. As Roger de Giorgio describes it in his book "City by an Order", "*the defensive aspect of the new town was obviously programmed to take precedence over its use as a centre of habitation which would have required different kinds of buildings and public services to be provided during the initial phase of work.*"^{VI}

V p.66, „The Fortification of Malta by the Order of St. John 1530-1798“ 2e, Alison Hoppen

VI p.93, „A City by an order“, Roger de Giorgio

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana

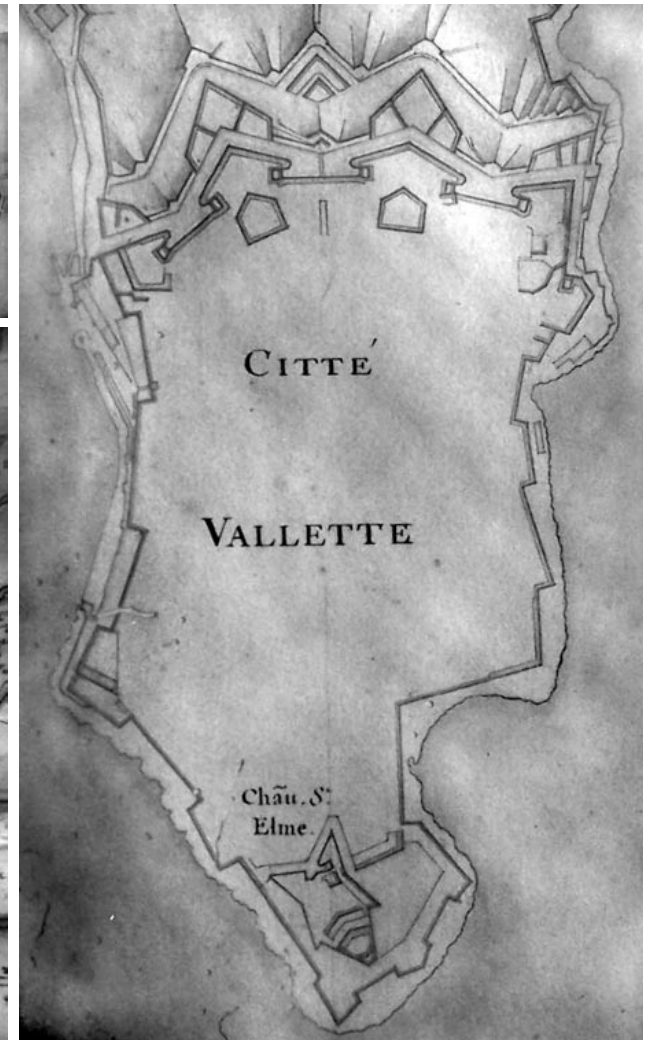
2.4
Valletta Landfront



2.5
Early Drawing of Valletta



2.6
Valletta's Fortification



Modifications of the fortifications

Soon after the fortifications were more or less completed (in 1573), critical voices were heard among the knights.

The northern flank of the bastions, St. Michaels and St. Johns bastions lay too open from the unprotected harbour of Marsamxett and would be too exposed to the enemies' field of fire, if soldiers were trying to reach the covert way over the flying bridges or by wooden ladders through the ditch. A sortie de force could not be assembled, as no area along the covert way was provided for it. The ground under St. Michaels and SS. Peter and Paul sloped away so steeply that some areas could not be viewed from the ramparts.⁹

An anonymous author recommends in 1574 to increase the height of the walls and the width of the ditch up to 22 meters. Even the orillions should be enlarged by fourteen to sixteen meters, still allowing a good overview of the area. In addition, the existing cavaliers should be raised by four meters in height and up to fourteen meters at the back.¹⁰

These measures should ensure that the town wouldn't only be able to resist an enemy but also to act offensively to prevent any attack.

In 1630, new rumours spread of another Turkish attack to threaten the island. It was the motive to review the bastions and their weaknesses.¹¹

At that time, the bastions were completed 60 years before, and viewed in the light of recent developments in the fortification technology. Valletta lacked outworks, and, as with many enceintes dating back in the Italian era of fortification design throughout Europe, the bastions were considered too small to fight any rearguard action.¹²

After an enquiry of the Order to borrow a military engineer, the pope agreed to send Pietro Paolo Floriani to Malta, who arrived at the island in September 1635.

He proposed a new enceinte- Floriana- but was opposed in his ideas several times. His scheme was intensely criticized; many estimated it as being too expensive and too time-consuming in the light of the threatening attack. Although work on the new fortification started immediately, many knights within the order objected it and enquired other professional engineers and non- experts for their advice.

A Frenchman in the retinue of Frederick of Hesse-Darmstadt, named Jardin, who came to Malta as a visitor in 1637, proposed a new scheme on the 29th of May 1638. It was approved by the council of the knights, and an emissary was sent to tour the

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana

continent to seek experts' opinions, who estimated Floriani's proposals as too disproportionate for the Order's financial resources-however, they supported the idea to improve the old front with outworks. One

of the Inquisitors in Malta at that time, Barberini, was irritated about Jardin entering papal sphere of influence by criticizing Floriani, and affected a visit of one of the pope's engineers- Vincenzo Maculano da Firenzuola- to the island in March 1636.

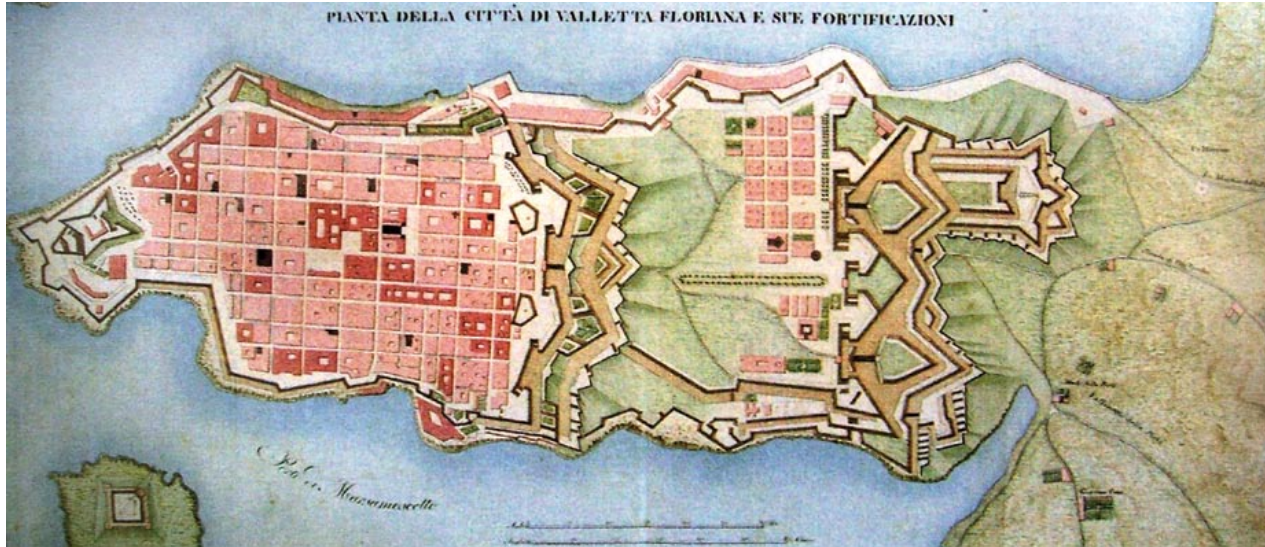
Firenzuola, who had to leave Malta after 3 months, proposed an addition of three ravelins for Vallettas land front, apparently favouring to place them in front of the curtain walls. However, the local engineer, Marquis of St. Angelo reviewed the design. It is not clear who is responsible for the actual design of Vallettas outworks, that included 2 counterguards, 2 semi- counterguards, and a ravelin to cover the city gate of Valletta, Porta Reale, together with new places of arms along the covert way. They were completed 5 years after the council approved Firenzuolas original plan.

Although Firenzuola suggested to demolish the half-built enceinte of Floriana, the new fortifications were only slightly adapted from their original plan. French military engineers, that visited Malta in 1645, suggested further alterations of Vallettas Landfront by adding orillion batteries, and to finish the construction of the Floriana lines, which were already too advanced to change their design.¹³



2.7
The harbour fortifications in the mid- 17th century after Oliver Dapper, 1668

History of the fortifications of Valletta and Floriana



2.8
Nicola del Giudice, Map of the city of Valletta- Floriana, approx. 1730, private collection

Throughout the next century, the Floriana lines were constantly reviewed and their design adapted to the landscape. They were still incomplete when the French, under Napoleon, attacked and captured Malta in 1798.¹⁴



2.9
Plan of the city of Valletta/Floriana, drawing from the 2nd half of the XVIII century, Torino

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In between two cities-
The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

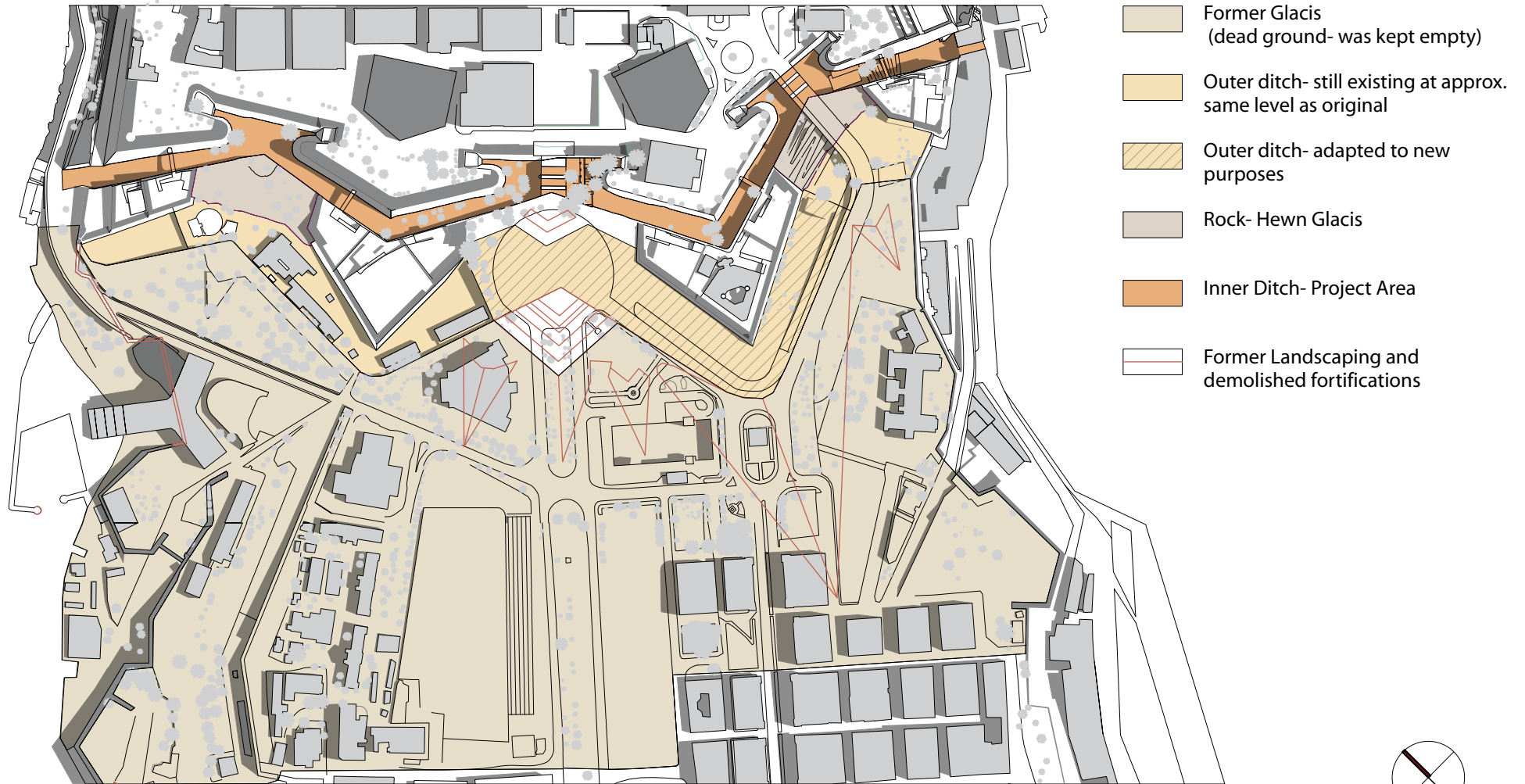


"If Valletta is so over-developed as to require pruning; Floriana is, through historic accident, a city in embryo. If the thoroughfares of Valletta cannot be satisfactorily adapted to motor traffic; those of Floriana call only for intelligent amelioration. If Valletta has too few squares; much of Floriana is a vast open space. The two cities are clearly complementary and it is desirable that those who appraise our proposals for either should bear constantly in mind that they are based upon a recognition of their mutual inter-dependence."¹

Already in 1945, in their "Report to accompany the Outline Plan for the Region of Valletta and the Three Cities", a plan for the reconstruction of the air raided cities after WW II, A. Harrison and R. Hubbard emphasised that the cities are mutually dependent on each other.

¹ p. 78 "Valletta- A Report to accompany the Outline Plan for the Region of Valletta and the Three Cities. Prepared for the Government of Malta by Austen St. B. Harrison and R. Pearce S. Hubbard", Valletta, Government of Malta 1945

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Former ditches and glacis

Source: Map of Valletta 1898, from the Map Division, Folder 20B /Hotels,Belt is- Sebh, Malta "A Plan of the City of Malta", Date: 1800, in Feet, by J. Stockdale, Piccadilly, http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/malta/valletta/maps/stockdale_1800_valletta_b.jpg



In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

The consumption of former military provisions

The two cities on the peninsula should be considered as an entity for planning tasks- the reason that in the wake of the industrial revolution, however, the space in front of Valletta's city gate was used for supplying the towns of Valletta and Floriana with infrastructure for transportation.

The glacis has a scattered layout, it was the area that contains all the amendments for Valletta's and Floriana's inadequacy to adopt the city for new means of traffic, and thus, to the scale of cars, which is clearly differing the scale of Valletta with its narrow streets. In the thirties, a car bridge was added on top of the covert way of the outer ditch, crossing over to Castille Place. St. Magdelines' ravelin which protected the King's Gate (the access from the land front to the city), gave way to a tram station, which later was converted to an earlier version of today's bus terminal. In the mid nineties, the M.C.P. car park followed and created a crater in front of Valletta city gate- a void right next to the axis' which, according to Renzo Piano's Proposal for a master plan of Valletta, should be the "backbone" of the urban area.

So both, Valletta and Floriana, are already invaded- by the traffic, and the wish of the motorist to access the goal of the travel as close as possible. The land front of Valletta, which in the past saved the city from a major attack, were partly destroyed (St. Magdelines' Ravelin) or tunnelled (train station), adapted to the needs of a civil, motorised society. The wake of industrialisation and the believe in technology superseded

the need of fortifications- airborne attacks could reach their target in spite of any obstacle a land front demonstrated to ground troupes. Now, the massive and high fortification secured a strip of land in their shadow- a linear space, hewn in the bedrock, where civilians could hide and troupes could ambush during WW II. The former trap of aggressors, which meant to expose and limit the chances to escape, was in times of an airborne war like WW II a close refuge for the cities inhabitants. Today, it could be a green refuge to hide from everyday's business in a recreational area.

Ditched

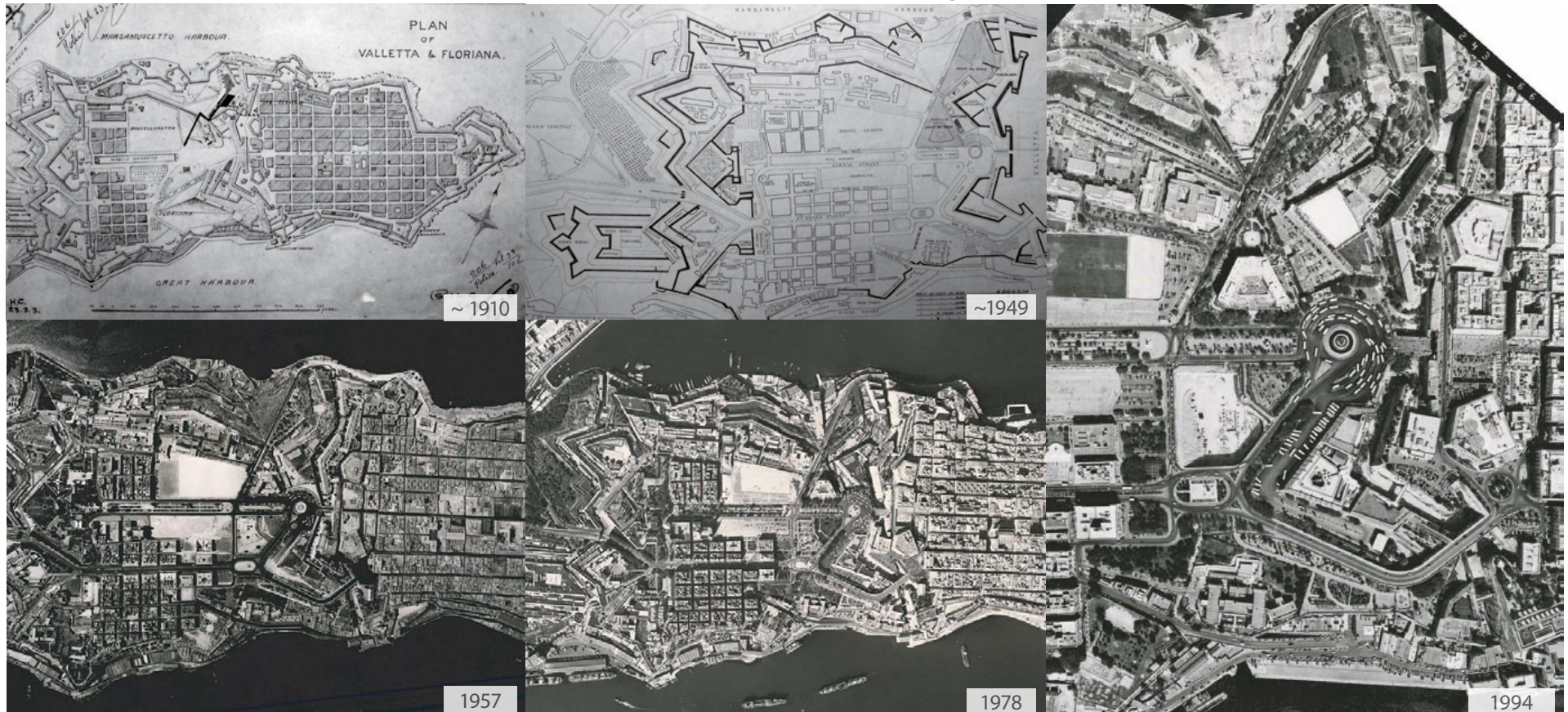
Even today, in times of peace, the Main Ditch of Valletta could be apprehended independently from any development the cities of Valletta and Floriana experience. While the plot of land, which was formerly the glacis, is torn in pieces for future amendments to keep Valletta and Floriana in its position as an office capital, the ditch could just shelter whatever the upper level of Valletta and Floriana cannot contain. If the infrastructure sprawls into the outer ditch to gain again more space for even more cars and more infrastructure to sustain the comfort or torture of daily travel, the inner ditch could be kept save from these trespassings

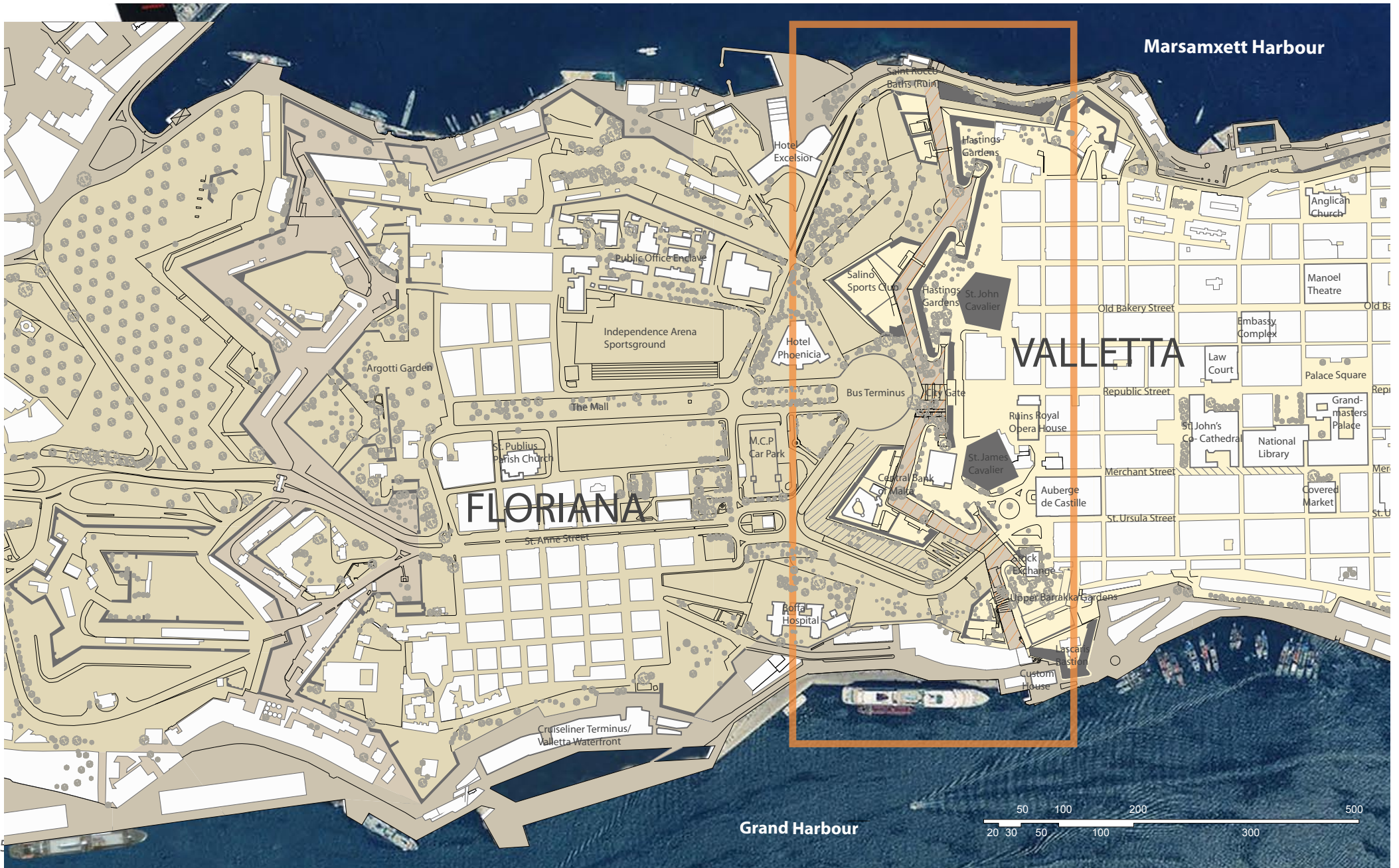
3.2	3.3	3.4
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In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



The Development of the Glacis over the last two centuries





Marsamxett Harbour

VALLETTA

FLORIANA

Grand Harbour



Saint Roccos Baths (Ruins)

Hotel Excelsior

Hastings Gardens

Anglican Church

Public Office Enclave

Salino Sports Club

Hastings Gardens

St. John Cavalier

Old Bakery Street

Manoel Theatre

Independence Arena Sportsground

Hotel Phoenixia

Argotti Garden

Embassy Complex

Old Ba

The Mall

Bus Terminus

Bate

Republic Street

Palace Square

St. Publius Parish Church

M.C.P. Car Park

Ruins Royal Opera House

St. John's Co-Cathedral

National Library

Grandmasters Palace

St. James Cavalier

Central Bank of Malta

Auberge de Castille

Merchant Street

Covered Market

St. Anne Street

St. Ursula Street

Rofia Hospital

Stock Exchange

Upper Barrakka Gardens

Lascaris Bastion

Custom House

Cruiseliners Terminus/ Valletta Waterfront



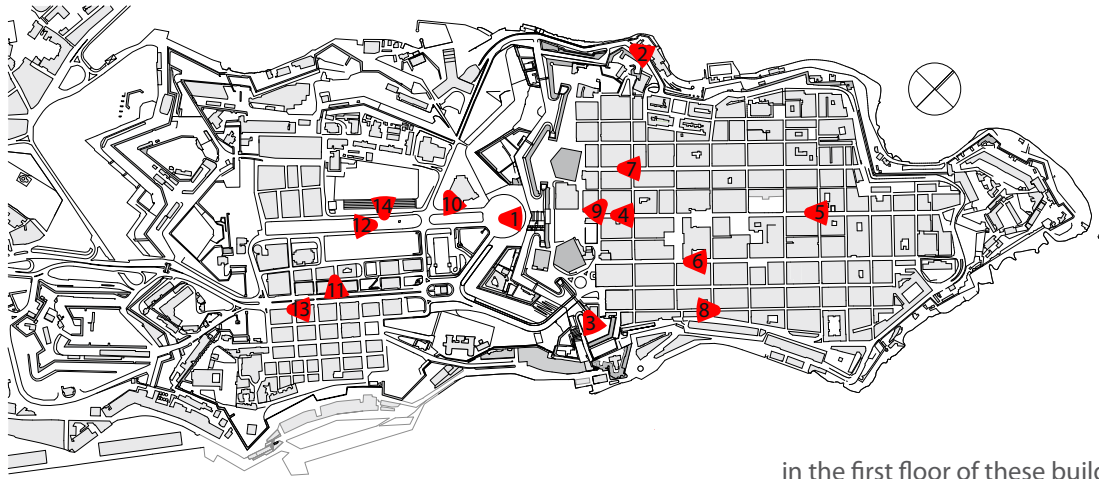
Urbanity in the two Cities

Valletta's and Floriana's Morphology

Street structure

Valletta and Floriana were constructed along the “spine” which is Valletta’s Republic Street. In former times, the axis’s layout pursued in Floriana’s “Mall”, leading to Argotti Gardens. However, the central commercial “high street” of Floriana nowadays is St. Anne’s street, aligned with arcades and retail outlets. It is the “bottleneck” of the Peninsula, all the cars coming or leaving Valletta pass through here. Lately, this street gained importance for pedestrians, as the park- and-ride at horns ditch- just outside Floriana – was started up. Commuters to Valletta often walk to the city instead of using the provided minibuses.

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Valletta

Valletta's Republic Street, functioning as a high street, is a very vivid main „backbone“ of the city. It offers a variety of retail outlets, from the traditional kiosk to high-street fashion shops, local shops, traditional silver filigree, jewellery and Malta lace. Offices of both, public and private services can be found mostly

in the first floor of these buildings. The administrative and commercial centre of the city reaches from Republic Street to the parallel merchant street, and from the City Gate along the street down to Grand Master's palace.

Valletta is very densely built up due to its history as a fortified town. It is known for its steep streets, which are a common source of complaint for inhabitants and commuters alike.

Locals tend to meet in two squares in the city, in front of the Law Court Building, or the National Library.

The colourful life of Valletta during daytime can be observed here, when Maltese and tourists of all ages walk along this street in an aimless “passegiata”². Some green as a recompensation to the lacking open space can be found in the gardens of the city, which are Upper Barrakka, Lower Barrakka and Hastings Garden, established on the bastions when their military importance became obsolete.

The area in the lower part of the city, when Republic street start to slope down to Fort. St. Elmo, is mostly residential, as well as some of the parallel streets to Republic Street, such as Old Bakery Street, St. Pauls Street and St. Ursula street. Many times, the housing stock is in bad condition. Various urban renovation programs were thus initiated.³

The population counted 6315 inhabitants in November 2005.⁴



3.10 Valletta at dawn



3.11 View of Valletta - Side of Marsamxett Harbour



3.12 View of Valletta - Side of Marsamxett Harbour

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



3.13: View1 - City Gate Valletta- View from the bus terminal heading to Valletta



3.14: View 2 - Ferry Harbour Marsamxett



3.15: View3 - Upper-Barrakka Garden



3.16

View 4 - Upper Part of Republic Street



3.17

View 5 - Lower Part of Republic Street



3.18

View 6 - Merchant Street-Morning Streetmarket



3.19

View 7 - Old Bakery Street



3.20

View 8 - St. Ursula Street

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



3.21
View 9 - View over the Ruin of the Royal Opera House- Freedom Square

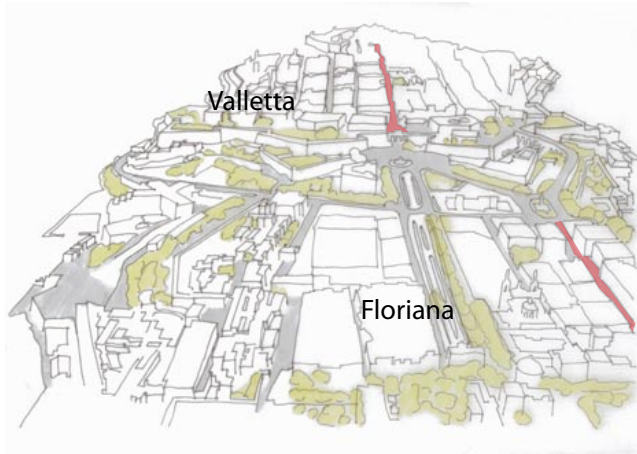


3.22
View 10 - View from Phoenicia Hotel over former "Main Axis" of the two towns- reaching from the city gate to M.C.P carpark



3.23: View 11 - St. Anne's Street- Floriana:
The "bottleneck" of the peninsula

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Floriana:

Floriana acts as the suburb of Valletta, confined of the landfront of Valletta and the Floriana Lines, and area for those who in former times couldn't afford to live in Valletta.⁵ Lately, it developed a double role as residential and important office town in the past years, which might originate in the creation of a Public Office Enclave in the former barracks of the English army.



3.24: View 13 - "The Mall", former main axis of Floriana



3.25: View13 - Arcades along St. Anne's Street, Floriana

Contrary to Valletta, Floriana's open spaces seem too unrestricted to create any public activity. The open space in front of Floriana's parish church, Publius square, and the sports ground on the former parade ground of the English army result in an area which dissolves the perception of a continuous axis through both towns.

Most pedestrian activity along the former axis of the two towns currently ends at Valletta's gate and the bus station.

Its current population reaches 2864 inhabitants.⁶



3.26: View14 - Independence Arena Sportsground Floriana

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



3.27: Sunday Hawker Market at the Outer Ditch of Valletta



3.28: Sunday Hawker Market at the Outer Ditch of Valletta



3.29: Sunday Hawker Market at the Outer Ditch of Valletta

Character of the streetscape

The streetscape of the two towns is characterized by building of approximately 5 storeys, built in the local globigerina limestone, and the characteristic Maltese timber balconies.

Street markets

During the weekdays, a hawkers market is located in Merchant Street during the morning hours. At Sundays, Vallettas' Sunday market attracts locals and tourists alike to the outer ditch of Valletta, in front of St. James counterguard, where buses park during weekdays.

Transportation

Valletta can be accessed from the side of Floriana by two bridges: by the car bridge or via the main bridge that is leading the bus passengers into town via the city gate.

From the two harbors, the necessity of fast, vertical connections to both cities is apparent, as the heights of Sciberras peninsula are 50m above sea level. The steep streets of the city are a common source of complaint for the cities dweller.

Structural additions throughout the centuries:

The order's period (1530- 1798)

Valletta, the bulwark, developed into a bustling city during the times of the knights. The agrarian society of Malta changed drastically by the arrival of the knights of St. John. The Hospitallers' representation on the island turned it to a centre of European center of political power against the muslim countries within the Mediterranean. They created a cosmopolitan atmosphere and introduced the country to more creative activities e.g. by building the Manoel Theatre.

People from the harbour towns were tradesmen- they spoke the lingua franca of the Mediterranean, Tuscan, which is now known as Italian, with foreigners, and Maltese, the language of the island.⁷

The new capital attracted so many new inhabitants that Grandmaster Nicholas Cottoner allowed no newcomers to the city in 1666.

With the fall of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, new invasions were not likely to occur anymore. The city was enriched with baroque palaces and churches at the end of the 17th and throughout the 18th century. This is how one of the bastions could be transformed into the beautiful garden in Valletta: Upper Barrakka,

originally a private garden for Italian knights, became public in 1824.

Some plots that originally were thought to be kept empty were filled with housing. This is how the three "ghettos" (for lower classes) of the city originated: Manderaggio, Camerata, and Due Balli.⁹

Social structure at early modern middle age in Valletta

The splendid buildings of Valletta were occupied by wealthy Maltese and knights, workers lived wherever space was available. The ground floor of these buildings contained a stable, stores and a workshop, accessible from the street, sometime with a display that extended into the street.

Mostly though, several families shared a building in order to pay the rent. The common peasant lived in a town house, commonly consisting of some rooms at ground floor level. Poor artisans lived in one- room cellars. The street door of the room was access for fresh air and light. The mezzanine- floor, situated above these cellars and used for flats was equally badly aerated.

Leading a family life in such circumstances was difficult- thus most of the socialization process took not place in the family, but at public levels.¹⁰

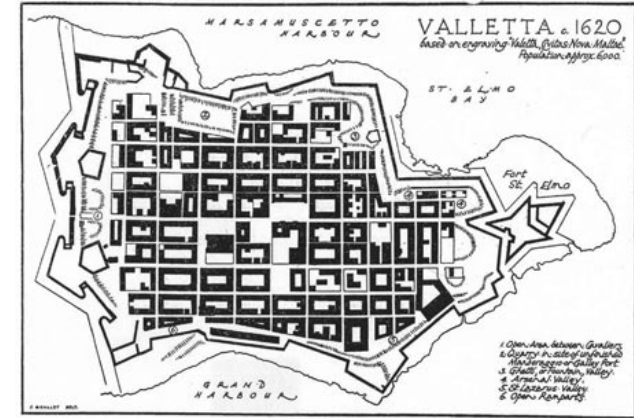
In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

The English period (1814- 1974)

During the English period, Valletta was an important hub in the Mediterranean for the Commonwealth's navy. In Victorian times (between 1840- 1870), some editions in the neoclassical style were added to the sober restrained Baroque of the times of the knights, such as St. Paul's Anglican Church, the Covered Market, the Royal Opera House and the Camarata, a housing project. The former artillery platforms of St. Johns and St. Michaels were changed into a public garden- Hastings Garden.¹¹ The English occupants also added a new part of Valletta's fortification: Lascaris bastion.

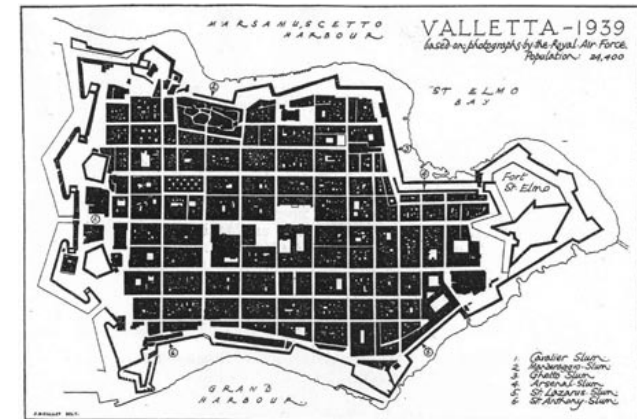
Radical Changes: World War II

In World War, up to 85% of the dwellings were blitzed- thus several structural changes within the town of Valletta's structure could be implemented. Two British planners, A. Harrison and R. Hubbart, undertook an outline plan for the city of Valletta and Floriana, recommending several changes to the city's structure. They proposed the clearance of several "slum areas" of Valletta, which were replaced by new modern blocks.¹² Some of their proposals like the social housing near city gate and the new city gate were undertaken. The Royal Opera house, bombed during the war, was subject for several architectural competitions, but was never "rebuilt" in any form. For a long time it was used as a parking place, currently it is used as an open air stage.



3.30
Density of Valletta, 1620

3.31
Density of Valletta, 1939



The Grand Harbour Local Plan

In 1990, a Structure Plan for the Maltese island created the outline for Area Policies, that were approved in 2002. The Structure Plan addressed the issues of the islands' rapid development, introducing policies for the future.

Valletta and Floriana are concerned in the "Grand Harbour local plan", together with the municipalities of Marsa, Kordin, and the planning area "Three cities".

Regarding the issues of Valletta and Floriana, the Planning authority developed the following strategies and goals for the future development, which will be further discussed in this work.

Strategy for Valletta:

- to strengthen the role of the City as a national capital
- to encourage economic regeneration
- to seek environmental improvement.

These goals are to be reached by:

- Maintaining and improving access to the City, but seeking to minimise growth in peak hour traffic flow;
- Encouragement of residential use
- Enlivening Valletta in the evening
- Strengthening Valletta's role as a primary town centre;
- Optimising the tourism potential
- Improve facilities for pedestrians
- Conservation and restoration of the positive fea-

- tures of Valletta's townscape, and
- Seeking appropriate community facilities.

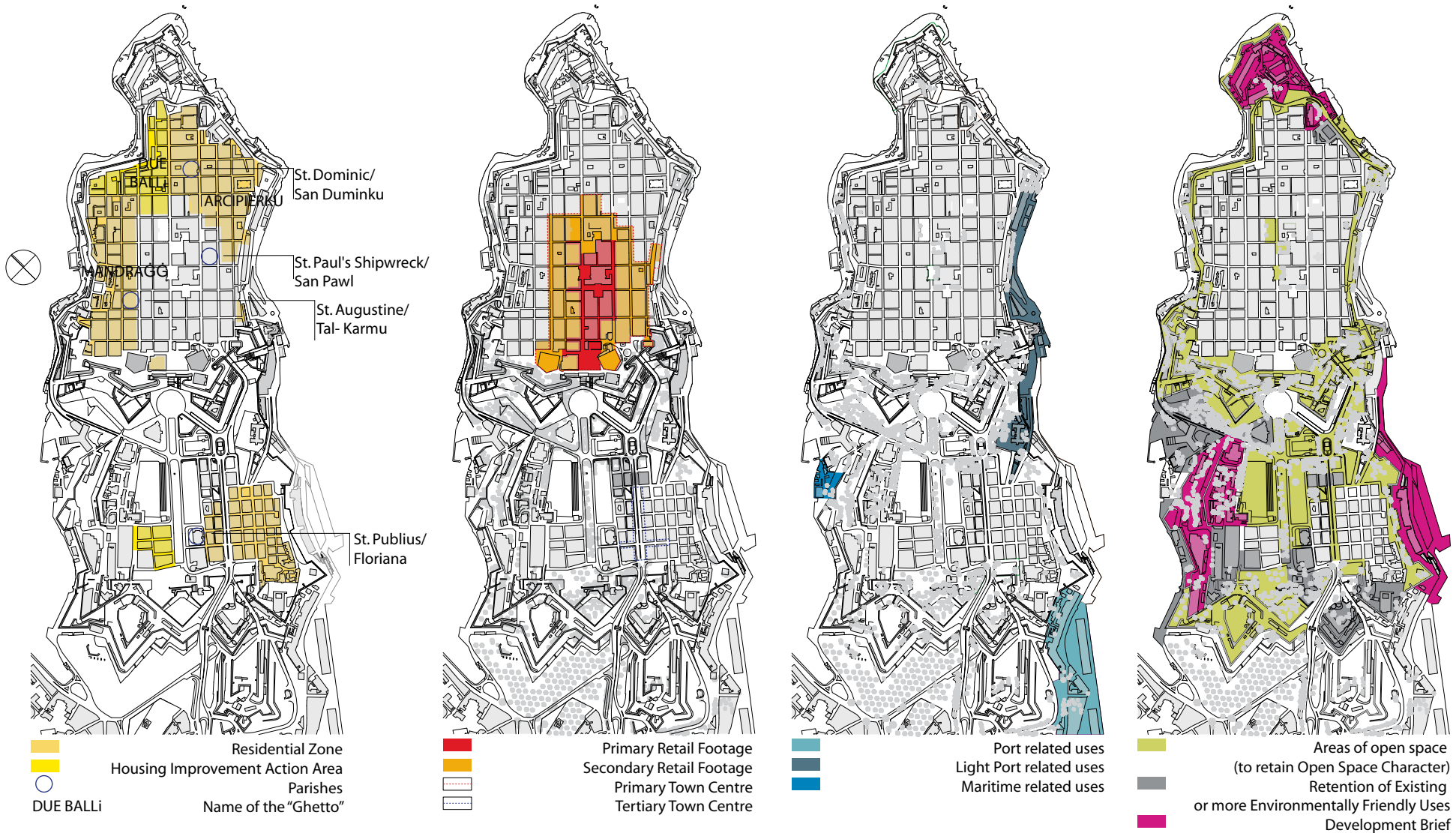
Floriana's strategies are:

- to maintain the residential role of the town
- to keep and enhance the open space provision
- to reduce the severance of the community because of traffic
- to keep transport options open for both long and shorter term consideration; and
- to strengthen the town's commercial and touristic opportunities

Here the approach was sought by:

- maintaining a balance of residential to commercial uses
- improving the environment, especially along the main traffic routes
- increase the tourism potential
- safeguarding and improving access to public open space
- keeping the quiet 'feel' of Floriana away from St. Anne Street, and ensuring the overall character of the area is maintained
- increasing access to the shoreline and ensuring the bastions are presented and displayed more effectively
- reservation of a site for a 'Park and Ride' Project
- An indication of requirements relating to large development projects and the successful integration with the rest of Floriana
- Seeking a strengthened commercial role compatible with the other aims of the Plan

(Excerpts from: Grand Harbour Local Plan- Area Policy: p.5, 6, 7 for Valletta, p. 40, 41 for Floriana)



Source: Grand Harbour Local Plan, Planning Authority, Malta, 2002
 Area Policy Maps
 Valletta Inset Map (Figure 7), Floriana Inset Map (Figure 10)



3.32

Valletta/ Floriana today - A Multifunctional City

Valletta is still seen as the “city built for gentlemen by gentlemen”.

With all its grandness that Valletta’s history oozes, it is difficult to draw another development of this town than in terms of restoration of old buildings.

Because of its architectural heritage, Valletta became a World heritage site of the UNESCO in 1980.¹³

It stayed in the mind of the Maltese that moved to the suburbs as a historic, elite place. It isn’t considered like a good place for residential living anymore, but kept its urban function limited to that of a cultural, administrative city.

The Renovation process - Upgrading of a town

In 1987, the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee VRC was established to bring the development of dilapidation to a halt. The city was starting to become rehabilitated. Many squares, buildings, and churches were restored. Until now, over 50 projects of major restoration and conservation projects were undertaken by the Valletta Rehabilitation Project.

It seems that the governments’ outline in their area policy to promote Valletta as a cultural city is yielding the first flow of remigration to the city by some

major projects of reprogramming in already existing buildings:

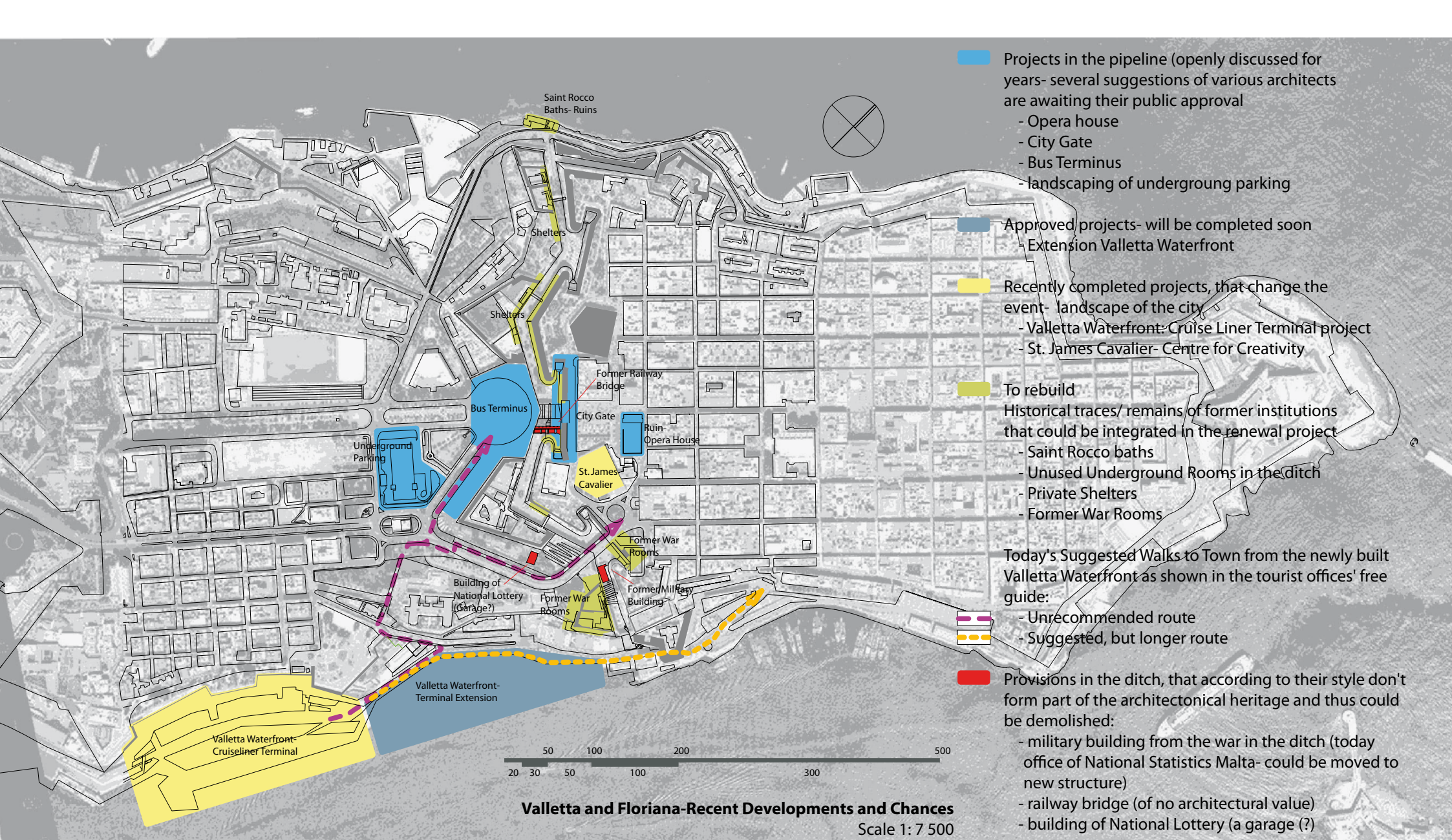
-“St. James Cavalier” one of the two Cavaliers at Valletta’s landfront, was converted into a centre of art and creativity, and provides a gallery, program cinema, workshops and annual residences for young artists.

-The new cruiseline harbour “Valletta Waterfront” (effectively at Floriana’s waterfront) with its retail centre and restaurants offers a new alternative to the crowded nightlife area in St, Julians/ Paceville and welcomes visitors to the island with a grand scenery. The old structure of the baroque Pinto Wharf (built in the second half of the 18th century¹⁴) was “refilled” with a new programme, suiting the changing economy of Malta and is a great success (opened 2005).

To underline the cities’ profile as a cultural town, the Embassy Complex, a “fun- fashion- film complex”, containing several retail floors of international and local brand names, as well as a six- screen multiplex (St. Lucia Street), was built in the city centre on 11 floors.¹⁵

Valletta stayed a pearl on the island that should be protected and saved. Inadequacy of its streets and the before mentioned rent laws probably saved large parts of it from destruction in the wake of the free market.

This development was brought about by the downsides of the cities’ urban fabric.



Projects in the pipeline (openly discussed for years- several suggestions of various architects are awaiting their public approval)

- Opera house
- City Gate
- Bus Terminus
- landscaping of underground parking

Approved projects- will be completed soon

- Extension Valletta Waterfront

Recently completed projects, that change the event- landscape of the city

- Valletta Waterfront- Cruise Liner Terminal project
- St. James Cavalier- Centre for Creativity

To rebuild
Historical traces/ remains of former institutions that could be integrated in the renewal project

- Saint Rocco baths
- Unused Underground Rooms in the ditch
- Private Shelters
- Former War Rooms

Today's Suggested Walks to Town from the newly built Valletta Waterfront as shown in the tourist offices' free guide:

- Unrecommended route
- Suggested, but longer route

Provisions in the ditch, that according to their style don't form part of the architectural heritage and thus could be demolished:

- military building from the war in the ditch (today office of National Statistics Malta- could be moved to new structure)
- railway bridge (of no architectural value)
- building of National Lottery (a garage ?)

Valletta and Floriana-Recent Developments and Chances
Scale 1: 7 500

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

Inadequate Office accommodation

For business purposes, it seems to be a necessity to establish an address in Valletta as it is the capital. However, office accommodation in the city is often inadequate, both for state and business offices.

Derelict Housing/ Stigma of the town

The housing stock in the city is run-down, and is difficult to adapt to modern sanitary needs, which was a reason for the loss of population in the 70ties and 80ties, when Valletta didn't have any housing policy.¹⁶

Many of the blitzed areas of the war, former slums, were used for the development of social housing.

Those who stayed couldn't afford to move into the expanding new suburban areas and nowadays still live in substandard housing, which, because of Malta's strict rent legislation is not be renovated, as the landlords wouldn't earn enough to do so. The law doesn't allow the landlords to change their rents on their property to realistical market values until the tenants change.¹⁷

Thus, especially the lower part of Valletta- an area of social and cheap housing is stigmatised. The local population is aging: 35% of Vallettas population is older than 60.

Parking Facilities/ Traffic

Both cities have to suffer from a daily congestion of the commuters' traffic every morning, passing through the peninsulas "bottleneck" at St. Anne's Street in Floriana, and from on- street parking .15000 vehicles invade the town every morning to park on one of the legal parking spaces in Valletta. Parking in Valletta is restricted for the holders of a the V- card at a price of 20 LM, whose amount is not limited¹⁸. Moving to Valletta is considered unattractive due to the lack of parking places.¹⁹

The bus terminus in front of the city gate is "potentially dangerous"²⁰ in its outdated organisation of the departure platforms, which can only be reached by crossing the buses tracks. A proposal of Malta's most reputed architect Richard England is awaiting its approval, but is heavily discussed.²¹

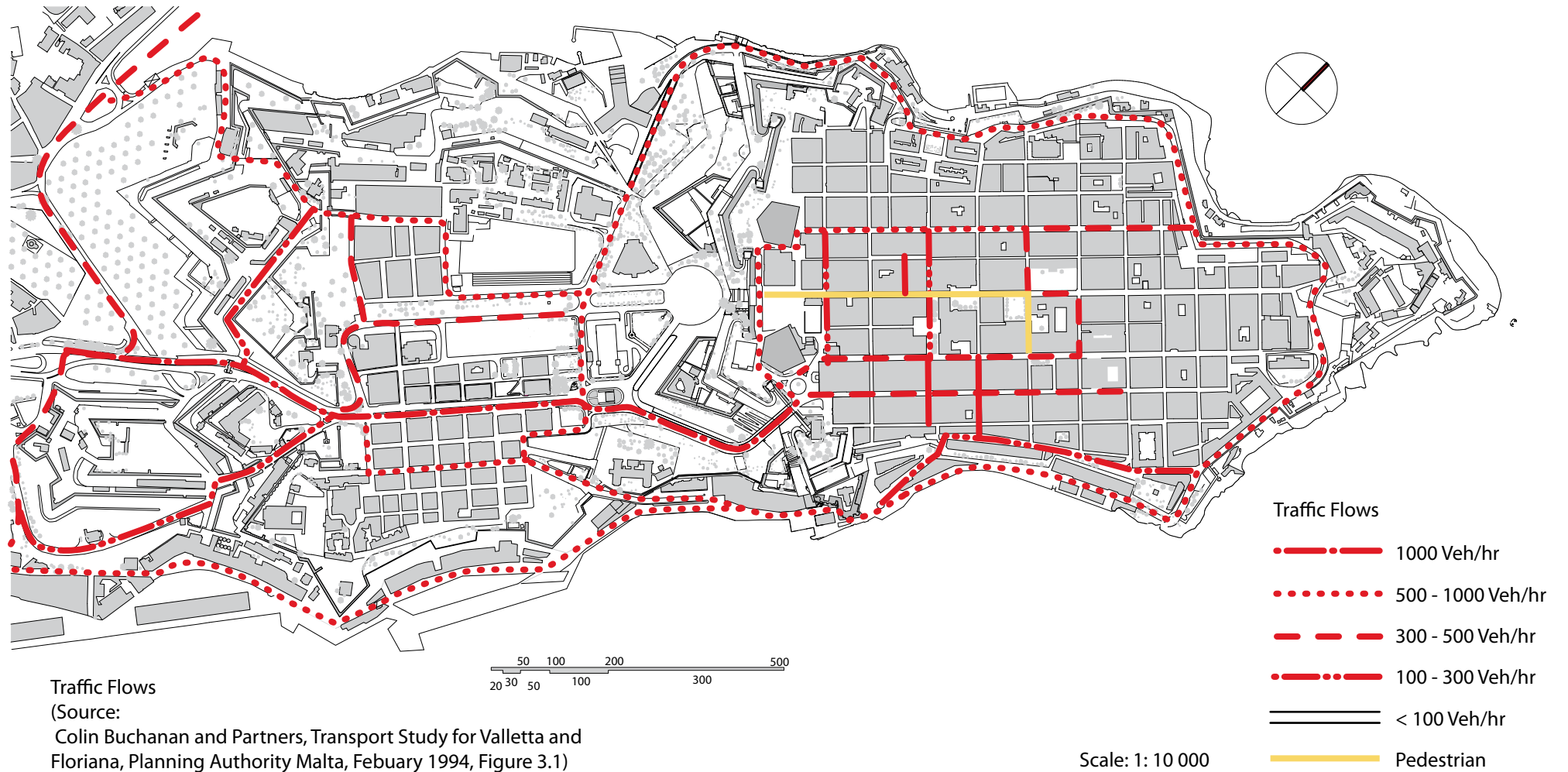
The actually existing ferry service, reintroduced in 1989, is stopping its service at fairly rough sea. Better boats and another breakwater would allow the ferry to work on a more regular basis.²²

The "Connection project" was aiming to reduce the vehicular traffic by excavating a sea level tunnel from Marsamxett harbour to the grand harbour, in order to introduce a fast ferry connection, not only from Sliema to Valletta, but further to the Three Cities. Currently this project is shelved as historic sites could be destroyed.²³



3.33
Lack of parking provisions in Valletta

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Traffic Flows

(Source:

Colin Buchanan and Partners, Transport Study for Valletta and Floriana, Planning Authority Malta, February 1994, Figure 3.1)

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



3.34: Rocky Beach underneath Lower Barrakka



3.35: Social Housing in Valletta



3.36: Quiet Nightlife at Upper Barrakka

An alternative to the quite expensive project to connect the two harbours of the peninsula, was sought by using the main ditch.²⁴

Gardens and Recreational Areas

Floriana has an array of gardens on its periphery, relatively poorly known.²⁵

In Valletta, there are three public gardens that are widely accepted and used: Hastings Garden, Upper Barrakka and Lower Barrakka. However, certain green areas are very secluded or impossible to reach, such as the Counterguard of SS Peter and Paul, or St. Michaels Demi- Counterguard.

There are some boathouses in former shelters near Marsamxett harbour. A rocky beach with individual boat houses exists just underneath Lower Barrakka. The Salino Sports Club runs one of the most beautiful football grounds on St. Johns counterguard.

Compared with Sliema, which underwent a renovation of its promenade, Valletta is lacking any place for a relaxing evening walk, for the famous maltese “passegiata” along the coast. This would also create new life quality for the inhabitants of the town, as this promenade could even be used for jogging or skat-

ing. The request for open, public opportunities to do sports was discussed some time ago in Malta, following an EU- survey that Malta won as the country with the laziest people in Europe because of the lack of opportunities to do so.²⁶ A promenade would greatly be appreciated by those who seek a regular opportunity to exercise.

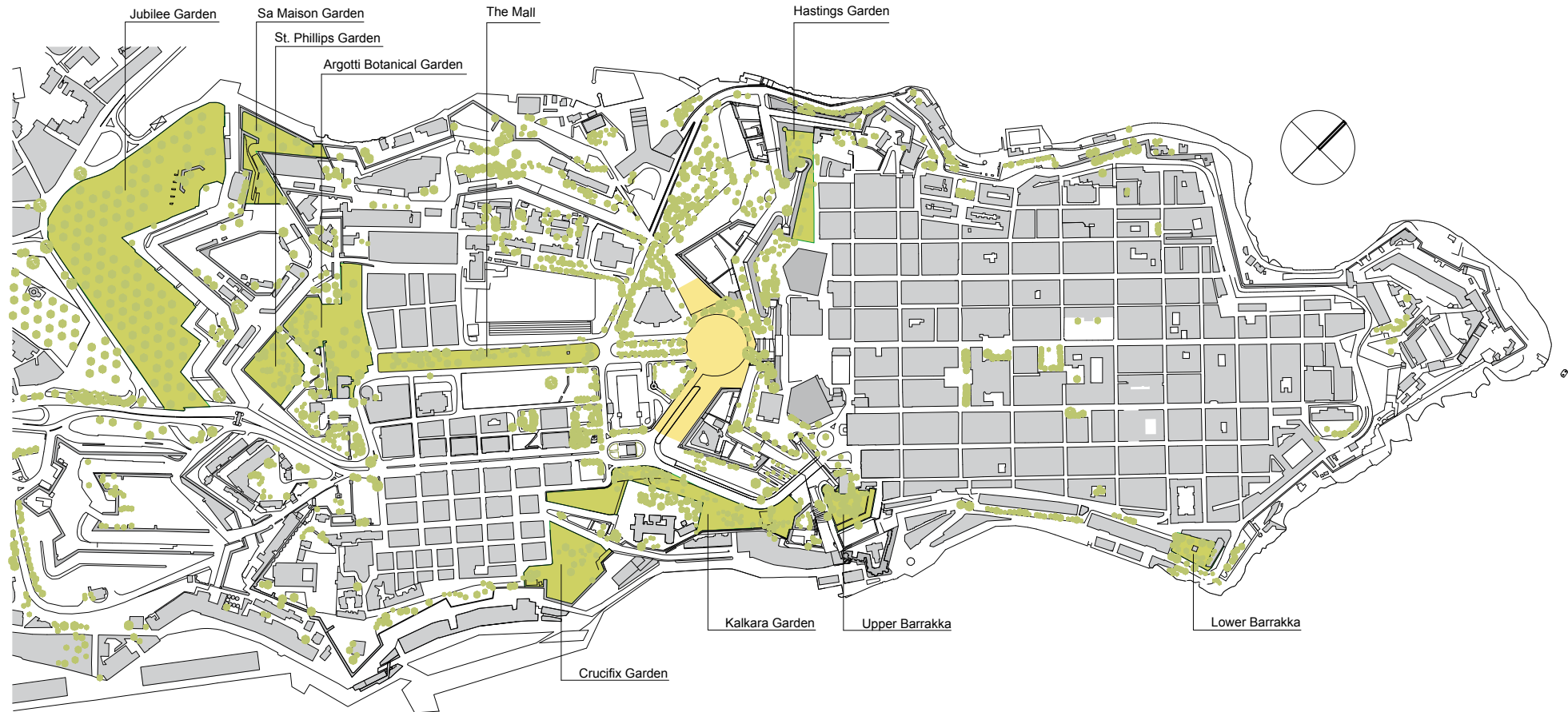
Night Life

Valletta has a daytime population of estimated 40.000 people, counting together the inhabitants of the city and its commuters and users.

In the evening hours, the place turns very calm, if just the regular 8000 inhabitants remain. At daytime, about 40.000 daily users come to the city.²⁷

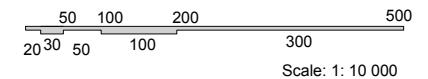
There is more activity at night time in Valletta than a decade ago, with wine bars opening in the last years. Still, another target group that those that the nightlife centre of Malta, Paceville, caters for, could be attracted foran alternative night life, using the old caverns and caves the city has to offer.

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Garden Location Map in Valletta and Floriana Source:
 "Landscape Architectural Conceptual Proposals for Valletta and Floriana", p. 96,
 Buhmann, Beck, Koh, Haase (Editor), ISBN:99932-7-088-1
 Source: Location of proposed Bus Terminus, according to Valletta/Floriana
 Transport Study, Colin, Buchanan and Partners, Planning Authority Malta,
 Febuary 1994- Figure 12.1 Summary of Proposals

Public Garden
 area of bus station proposal



In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

Access to Town

Connections across the island:

In former times, getting around the Sceberras peninsula was faster by boat in absence of any other quicker mean of transport.

Thus Valletta had several activity nodes along its coast, like at ferry berthing facilities at Marsamxett and Grand Harbour. In absence of any traffic alternatives at that time, the steep streets of Valletta leading to the centre were not considered to be an obstacle. This changed as soon as cars could access Valletta, former commercial activities along these two nodes were thereby disappearing.²⁸

To render traffic connections of public transport comfortable, they have to be adapted to today's claim of comfort.

Access Floriana/ Valletta:

Valletta can be accessed from the side of Floriana by two bridges: by the car bridge or via the main bridge that is leading the bus passengers into town via the city gate.

The fly bridges, that connect the outworks to the bastions, are until now not in use for pedestrian movement.

3.37
Tourist Map of Valletta obtained from
Tourist Information in Valletta

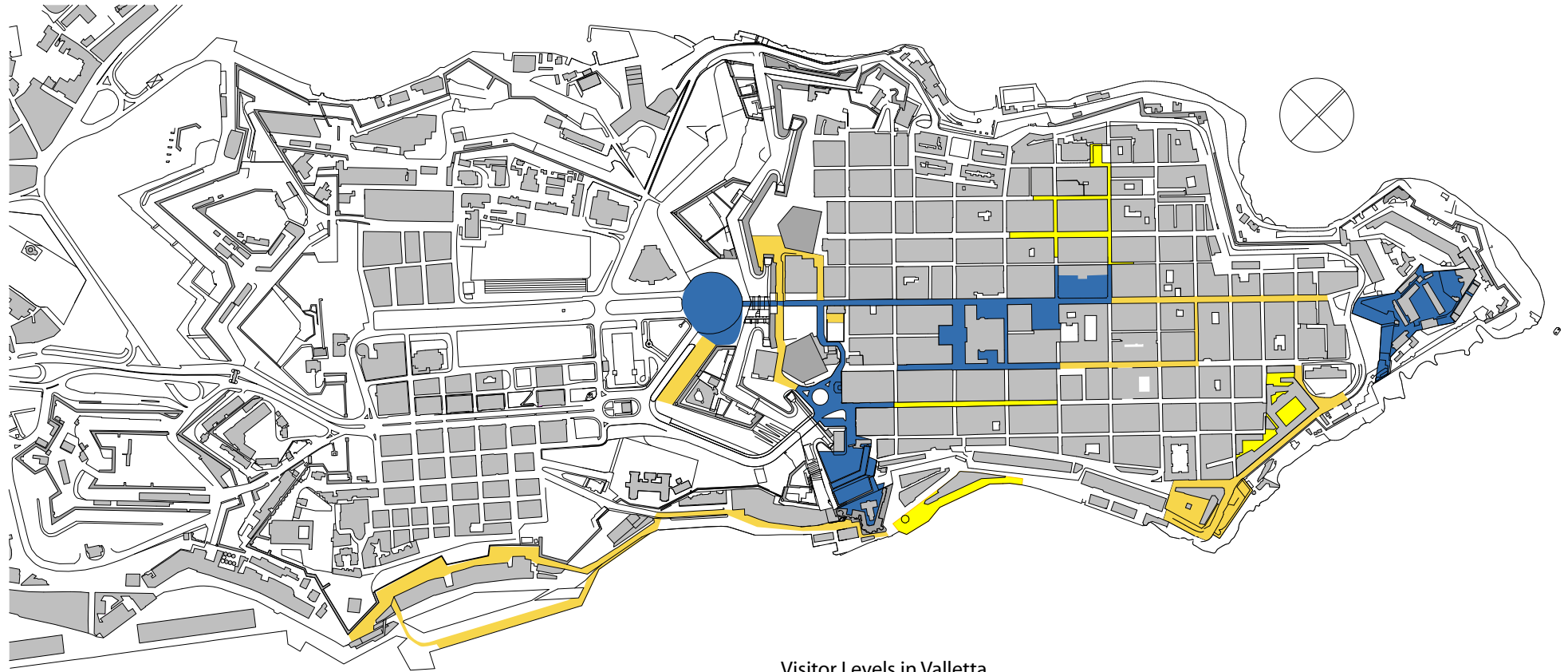


- 1 La Entrada a la ciudad
- 2 El Caballero de Santiago
- 3 El Caballero de San Juan
- 4 Albergue de Castilla, León y Portugal
- 5 Albergue de Italia
- 6 Albergue de Provenza
- 7 Albergue de Aragón
- 8 Los jardines de la "Barrakka" superior
- 9 Los jardines de la "Barrakka" inferior
- 10 La Co-Catedral de San Juan
- 11 La iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Porto Salvo
- 12 La iglesia del Naufragio de San Pablo
- 13 La Iglesia de los jesuitas/La Antigua Universidad
- 14 Nuestra Señora de las Victorias
- 15 La iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Monte Carmelo
- 16 El Palacio de los Grandes Maestres
- 17 El Centro De Conferencias / La Sagrada Enfermería
- 18 La "Castellania"
- 19 El Teatro Manoel
- 20 La Biblioteca Nacional
- 21 El Almirantazgo
- 22 "Palazzo Parisio"
- 23 El Museo de la guerra en el Fuerte San Telmo
- 24 La Campana de la Conmemoración (de la Segunda Guerra Mundial)
- 25 La iglesia de Santa Catarina de Italia
- 26 Calle de los Comerciantes (Merchants Street)
- 27 "Palazzo di Città" / El Registro Civil Público
- 28 La "Cappellaneria"
- 29 La Iglesia de Santiago
- 30 Calle de la República
- 31 El Teatro Real de Ópera
- 32 "Palazzo Ferreria"
- 33 La Iglesia de Santa Bárbara
- 34 La Plaza del Gran Sitio
- 35 "Auberge de Auvergne" / Los Tribunales
- 36 La Plaza de la República
- 37 La estación de autobuses / La fuente del Tritón
- 38 La Iglesia anglicana
- 39 Los Bastiones de San Andrés
- 40 Los jardines de Hastings
- 41 La Iglesia escocesa de San Andrés

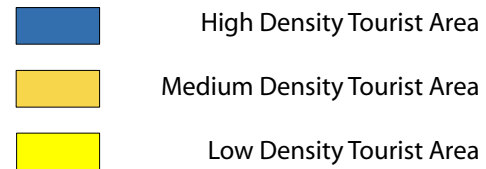
No se olvide de hacer una visita a nuestra
TIENDA "DUTY-FREE"
(LIBRE DE IMPUESTOS)
en el amarradero antes de que usted salga



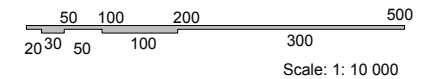
In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Visitor Levels in Valletta



Source: "The Significance of Valletta as a Tourism Product: Findings of a Tourist Survey"- Malta Tourist Authority, Research and Information Division, April 2001
"Landscape Architectural Conceptual Proposals for Valletta and Floriana", p. 18, Buhmann, Beck, Koh, Haase (Editor), ISBN:99932-7-088-1



In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

Access from the ditch to town:

The main ditch, until now used as a parking area, has little connections to both cities. Improving this situation could bring the ditch closer to town, but also closer to the sea.

Access from the waterfront to town:

For the new cruiseliner terminal, a connection soon has to be established. If the cities of Valletta and Floriana want to profit from the arriving passengers (2000- 7000 on a day)^{29,30}, a fast connection has to be established. Most cruiseliners arrive in the morning and stay for half a day. Surveys describe that 50% of the passenger take excursions to see the island for some hours, 25% stay onboard and 25% discover the island on their own. The connections to town should be attracting the passengers from afar, luring them to go to "uptown".³¹

Vallettas advantages

Beauty and genius loci

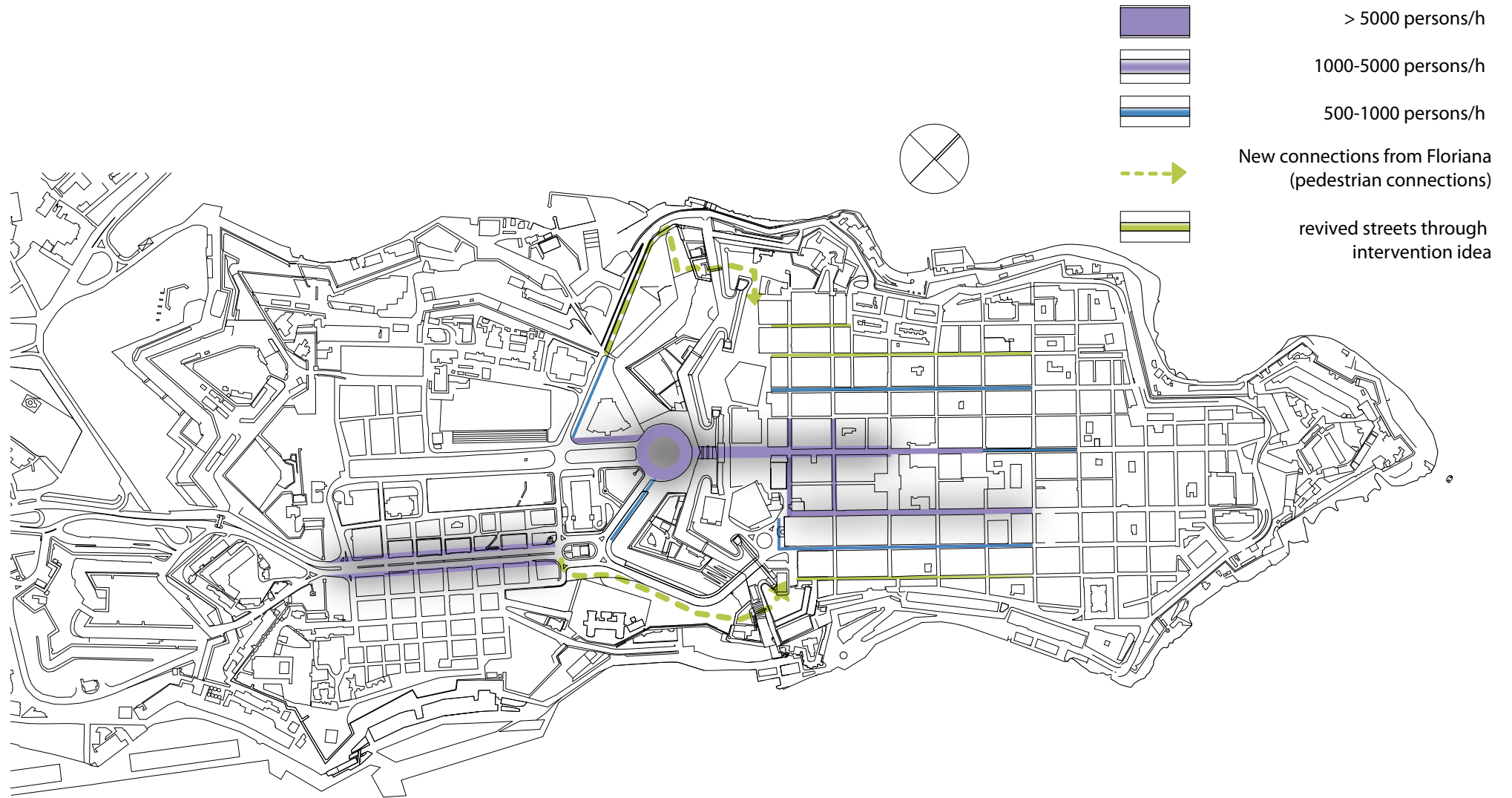
"In the 1960s, a heavy mass of buildings, streets and entire new areas began to rise up into the skyline of Malta. By the 1980s many people were looking at old houses and streetscapes with changed eyes. Increasingly, they appreciated the history being bulldozed away in a heap of dust before them. Today, nostalgic "past and present" photos in books and newspapers are ever more popular, often comparing familiar streets and landscapes with the way they looked only a few decades ago."

(Petra Bianchi, in "The shrinking hearts of towns and villages" The Times of Malta, Online edition, Wednesday 4th March 2005)

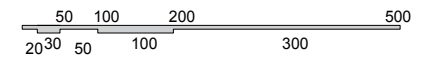
In Malta, much of the historic valuable heritage was destroyed; the land exploited for private gain while at the same time a whole young nation was losing its built history. The more rare the built heritage gets among the quickly produced housing stock gets, the more sought after it will be.

Vallettas bad reputation in the past 30 years partly saved it from destruction as it happened to the town across Marsamxett harbour, Sliema. However, there was a politic of bulldozing former "slum areas" just to create new slums in the newly built housing blocks, instead of reorganising the alterations to small units.³²

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana



Pedestrian Flows (Source: Colin Buchanan and Partners, Transport Study for Valletta and Floriana, Planning Authority Malta, February 1994, Figure 2.2)



Scale: 1:10 000

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

A small island, as packed with history as Malta, which is essentially becoming part of the nations' self-perception, has limited means to sustain and maintain their historic heritage.

Social changes

Valletta has obvious charm and a certain "genius loci", and attracts young professionals and affluent "double income, no kids" couples that prefer living in compact residences and apartments.³³

The market for single households is increasing- Malta's society changes from a very family- based system to a society that includes more singles, educated people marrying at a later time in their life and separated people (there is no divorce in Malta- remarrying is forbidden, but the percentage of separations is increasing), that all rely on a network of friends- Valletta can offer an urban surrounding to live "in the public" instead of "in the family" which corresponds to this lifestyle.

Less Cars than the rest of Malta

Car ownership is comprehensively low in Valletta and Floriana (1,16 cars per household in the Grand Harbour area)³⁴ as the city is the central node of public transport in the country, and is considered one of the poorer parts of Malta.

The high rate of motorised traffic has led to serious implications of human health in some urbanized areas of Malta by transit traffic, noise and pollution.³⁵ Valletta stayed relatively unaffected of transit traffic compared with other areas on the island with a high density in its urban structure.

Is sleeping beauty finally awakening?

In the course of joining the European Union, more foreigners will come to Malta for work and living, only staying for a year or two. The splendid view over Grand Harbour appeals to foreigners because of its specific identity.³⁶

“Nowadays Valletta also has many ‘artist’ foreign residents, making it feel more like a cosmopolitan European capital city. As a halfie (half Maltese, half Welsh) I used to live in Old bakery Street with another half Maltese, half British artist flatmate. Our fellow non- native city dwellers included artists, restorers, musicians, filmmakers, and architects, all drawn by the inspirational and special surroundings, from home countries as far as ranging as Canada, Serbia, China and The Netherlands”¹¹

Also young, artistic locals started to move back to Valletta.

It is the generation that never got to know how Valletta was “before” - before the war, before the opera house at the entrance of town was in ruins. They find their roots in the splendour of Valletta’s baroque townscape and its surrounding rather than in the tourist centres and suburban settings prevalent in many areas of the island where they grew up.

II Capital conversations, „Tajjeb Ghax Tajjeb, Tajjeb Ghax tal- Belt“, Sarah Puntan- Galea, in „Valletta- a city for all“, Issue 2, April 06

“The musician Andrew Alamango (from the maltese jazz- folk group etnika, note of author), 34, sighs.(...) Then he starts laughing. Because life just returned to Valletta: In the last four or five years, many people were moving back to the capital, especially the younger generation, like him. The real estate prices are on the rise, and more and more restaurants are not only open during lunchtime, but also in the evening”¹¹

Valletta is not only an office town- it is also a city that can offer an urban lifestyle. people. It is the most bustling, active urban space which exists on the island already during daytime. It is an international trend that the population of the cities was declining when suburbia was born. But experiences from areas of Paris show that previously depopulated areas in the centre experienced a gain of population moving back to the centre in later years with population growth.³⁷

3.38

III Schmelting. Translation of german text: „Der Musiker Andrew Alamango, 34, seufzt. (...) Dann lacht er. Weil das Leben doch gerade zurückkehrt nach Valletta: In den letzten vier, fünf Jahren seien viele Menschen wieder in die Hauptstadt gezogen, vor allem junge, so wie er. Die Immobilienpreise steigen stetig, immer mehr Restaurants sind nicht nur mittags geöffnet sondern auch abends.“



Already twice, in 2004 and 2005, the Etno- Folk group "Etnika" chose to perform their legendary concerts in the ditch of Valletta. "Etnika" is not only about music, it's about creating a countries' local sound, and thus national pride

In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

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In between two cities- The Main Ditch of Valletta and Floriana

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16	p.3, Borg Olivier	3.3	1897 –Map from Works Division, Map Division, Folder 49B	
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22	Bühler, Karpanti	3.6	1949 - Map from Works Division, Map Division, Folder	
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24	Conversation with Malcolm Borg	3.7 - 3.9	1994 - aerial Mapping Unit MEPA (Malta Environment &	
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31	Architect David Drago, partner of AP (Architecture	3.27 - 3.29		Photos by Richard Bonnici
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The ditch- a resource
for more life quality¹

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

The old fortifications, a symbol of Maltese identity, do impressively protect the two fortified towns of Valletta and Floriana. For a long time, they were a massive statement of power for possible intruders, and demonstrated clearly Malta's former military impact. The fortifications were built by excavating and adding structure by using the natural stone of the country. This creates a very specific landscape/ skyline, basically reduced to the soft warm yellowish colour of the natural stone and the deep blue of the sky and the sea.

The main ditch of the fortifications builds a natural barrier between the two towns, just connected by a bridge. As an advent of the improvements of Valletta's reputation, the huge walls and bastions became illuminated. The ditch, a strip of land on a lower level, rests in its shadows.

Far away, yet close enough

It's not a place to stumble on- it is a forgotten strip of land that offers a specific atmosphere. This place is not presented and exposed to the visitor like so many others in this town.

In the ditch, the surrounding is reduced to a corridor of approximately 30m in width, and at most 150 m in one direction. The noises of the bustling town are dimmed, although we are very close to one of the busiest spots of town - the city gate and the bus station. The city is right above - approximately 15m above our heads.

Trees and shadow cool down the hot air of Maltese summer. The reduced feeling of the place- a corridor, hewn out of the natural stone- some trees- is relaxing to the eye.

The appeal of this place is austere.

The ditch could feel like a temporary refuge, another layer in town, a temporary exit. The place you go to for taking a deep breath on a busy day.

Until now, it is used as a parking space for the commuters coming to the town.

The concept of a ditch:

-an incision (restriction) that defines the inside and the outside

-a border: the ditch is separating the street from the individual plot in many cultures. A little bridge indicates where the ditch can be crossed and opens a path to the other side.

In fortifications:

a confinement for the intruder, wishing to get "to the other side". The way it changes direction in obtuse angles limits the horizon. The next corner can bring the unforeseen. One is exposed to the attacks from above.

- a serious obstacle for anyone who wants to enter the town. Its walls are too steep to climb on them easily, thus an obstacle in the vertical direction. Horizontally, it incises the natural terrain, hidden away within the walls of the town. ¹

Elements of the Ditch in Valletta's Landfront:

Access to town- Revamped:

Bridges:

Main Bridges:

The main bridges to Valletta across the ditch are:

The car bridge:

Although it features a sidewalk, it's uncomfortable to access the town via the car bridge, as no shade is provided and pedestrians feel relatively exposed on it.

The pedestrian bridge to the city gate:

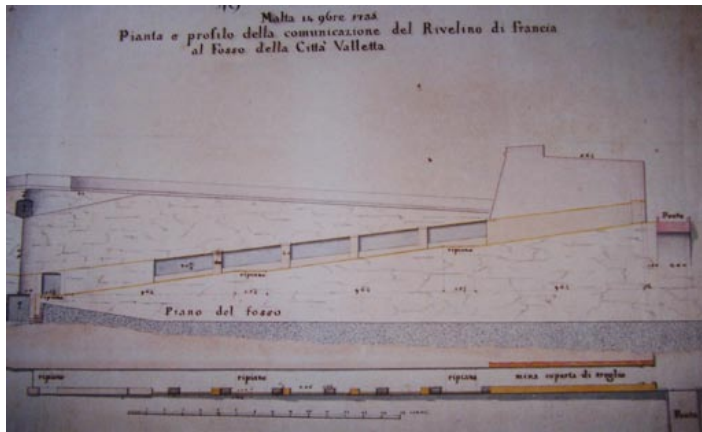
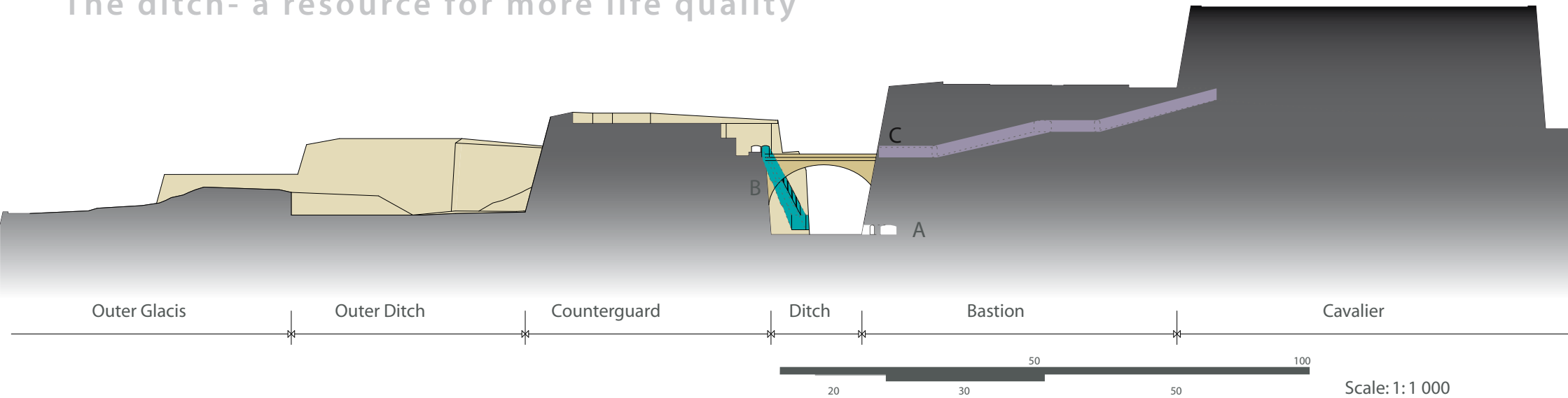
It is considered to be too wide for a bridge to emphasise the transgression over an actual boundary represented by the ditch.

The fly bridges:

The fly bridges connect the outer outworks of Valletta with the town centre via a tunnel. Although these connections were used especially in wartime, most of them are blocked up for the moment.



The ditch- a resource for more life quality



4.7
"Malta 1496re 1735-
Pianta e profilo della comunicazione del Rivelino di Francia al
Fosso della Città Valletta"

Passage in the rock to the bastions and outworks:

Connections from ditch to counterguards:

Antique plans from 1736 show "piñata e profilo della comunicazione del Rivelino di Francia al Fosso della Città Valletta"- communication tunnels from the outworks to the ditch.

These historic features are today blocked-up, although they originally were constructed in a way that possible intruders to the ditch from the outworks could be spotted – thus they were arcaded. Their renovation and reopening them would make the outworks and the ditch more accessible.

→ measures: renovate and reopen communication tunnels

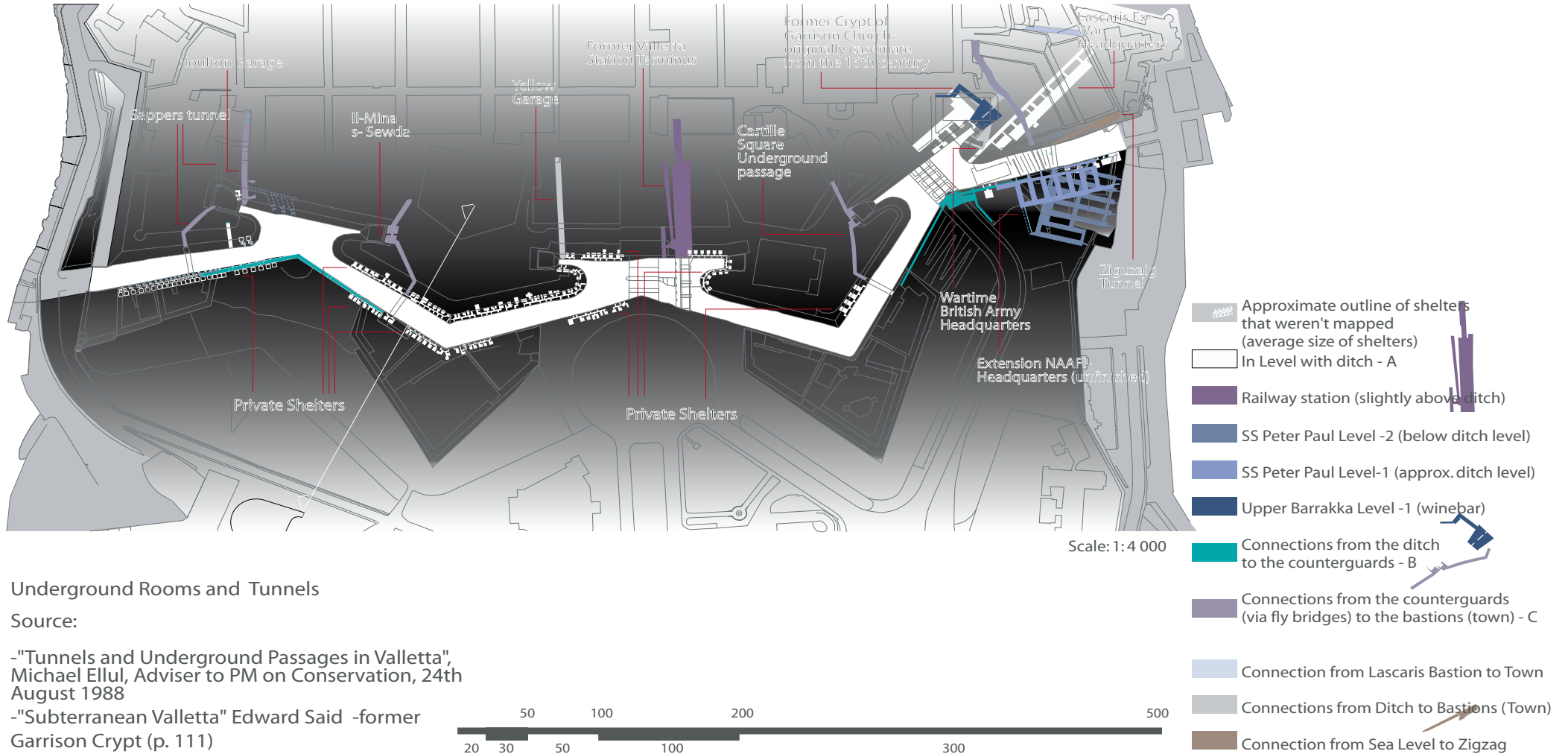
Connections from bastions to the counterguards via fly bridges:

There are connections from the counterguards to the bastions. They lead from the bastion to the casemate and further down to a fly bridge. The door that would open to the fly bridge, however, is mostly blocked up.

All four casemates are occupied for the moment. Two of them were turned into a canteen or restaurant, the others are illegitimately used by two farmers, breeding chicken and fish.

→ measures: create elevator and staircase to the surface of the bastions in an underground room so already existing businesses wouldn't be disturbed and long walk through dark tunnels would be avoided (give elevators and staircase a "public feel")

The ditch - a resource for more life quality



Underground Rooms and Tunnels

Source:

- "Tunnels and Underground Passages in Valletta", Michael Ellul, Adviser to PM on Conservation, 24th August 1988

- "Subterranean Valletta" Edward Said -former Garrison Crypt (p. 111)





4.8



4.9



4.10



4.11



4.12 The owner of the shelter even marked the year of its excavation

Excursus: Malta at wartime

Mussolini declared war to Britain on the 10th June 1941. Soon it was obvious that Malta would be one of his first targets.

However, Malta was not ready for the war. There was a lack of air shelters, which was tried to be compensated by a program to encourage the digging of shelters in 1940.²

In the course of the war the increased bombing convinced people that the only safe shelters were those hewn into the rock. So the Public Work Department and special Department of Shelter Construction undertook the excavation of public air raid shelters in prominent places that would be reachable for everybody in the city. For those who wished to have a bit more privacy, there was the possibility to apply, against payment, for excavating their private shelters in form of tiny cubicles, which had to be interconnected with the main shelters. ³Some families had to live in these shelters for longer than previously intended if their home was destroyed during the war.

At the end of war, the government retained the right to take over even the private shelters, although there was the wish of the population to use "their shelters" on public land for private purposes.⁴ Some of the shelters are officially occupied by permit of the commissioner of land, and are used as stores or boathouses for the rent of 1 LM per year. The concession is "granted by encroachment terms", that means that the lodger can be evicted within 24 hours without naming of reasons⁵

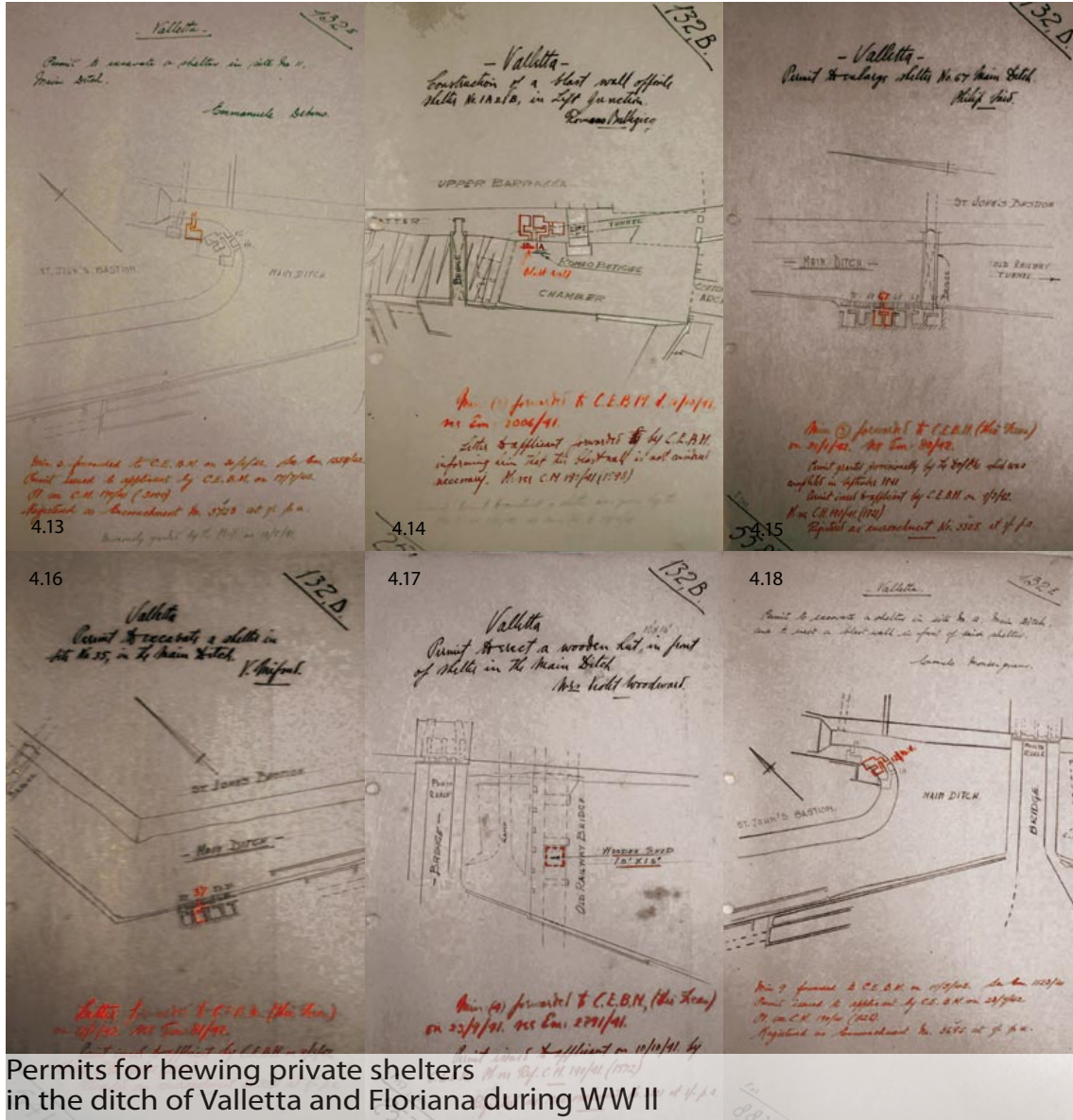
Today, the official policy is to block up the doors of the shelters along the ditch, because that were partly used for drug consumption, dump site or even as a kennel for fighting dogs.⁶

The access of the private shelters don't lead directly to the cubicle- a bend in the corridor protected against the blast of explosions. Thus, these shelters weren't provided with any direct sunlight.

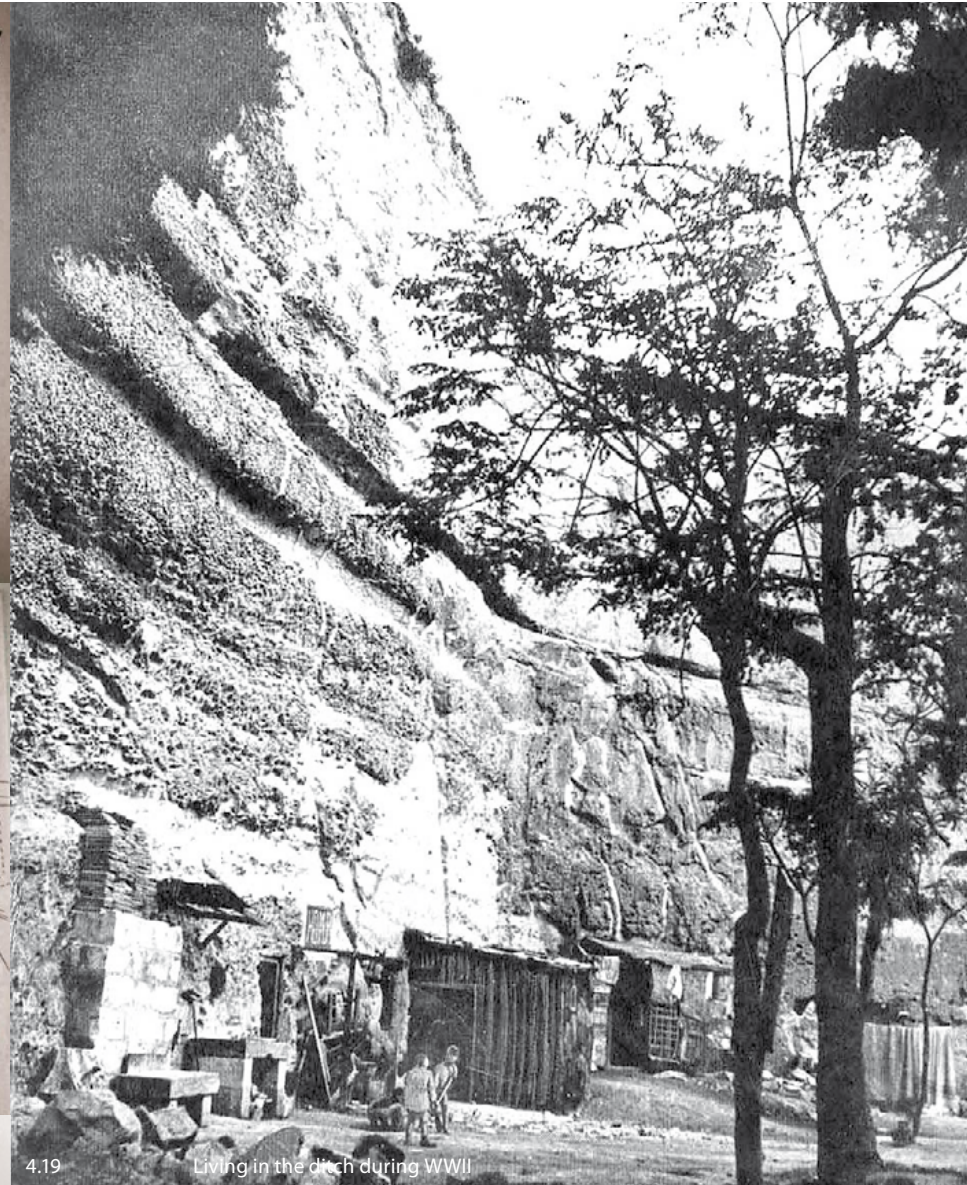
Many of them have interesting features, like little altars hewn in the rock. The structure of the sculptured rock has a certain appeal as it was hand- cut.



The ditch - a resource for more life quality



Permits for hewing private shelters in the ditch of Valletta and Floriana during WW II



Living in the ditch during WWII

War Rooms:

Lascaris war rooms:

Just before the war, a tunnel was dug by the British to link the main ditch below St. Peters Bastion to Lascaris Bastion to house the Headquarters of the Royal Navy. Here, each of the necessary services had their own operation room, with one principal War room where the enemy's movements were monitored.⁷ Today, these rooms are a tourist attraction- actually the only one that is featuring the Second World War, where Malta became the besieged and battered arena for one of the most decisive struggles of World War II.

Rooms underneath Upper Barrakka/ NATO Operations complex :

With the outbreak of the war, operational services of

the army were allocated in already existing rooms. One was a former casemate of SS. Peter and Paul bastion, that was converted into a crypt of the Garrison Church (housing the Malta Stock Exchange- Borzatta- Malta today). It was converted into a wine bar a couple of year ago. Other rooms can be accessed either via the fly bridge of SS. Peter and Paul counterguard or its connection to St. Ursula Street from the city's level via a communication tunnel just underneath Upper Barrakka. From this tunnel, another access to the Main ditch forks down at about mid level of this connection. Along this tunnel, former operation rooms of the NATO, including an abandoned boardroom with a map of the Mediterrenan for Strategic decision and several offices can be found. Right next to its access from the main ditch, bigger rooms of a considerable size, that would allow the conversion into a venue, can be found. According to recent investigations, the rooms were presumably in operation until 1979, right until the departure of the British forces.⁹



4.20, 4.21
Lascaris War Rooms



4.22
Former NATO- Complex

4.20 Underneath SS. Peter& Paul Counterguard

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



4.23, 424, 4.25

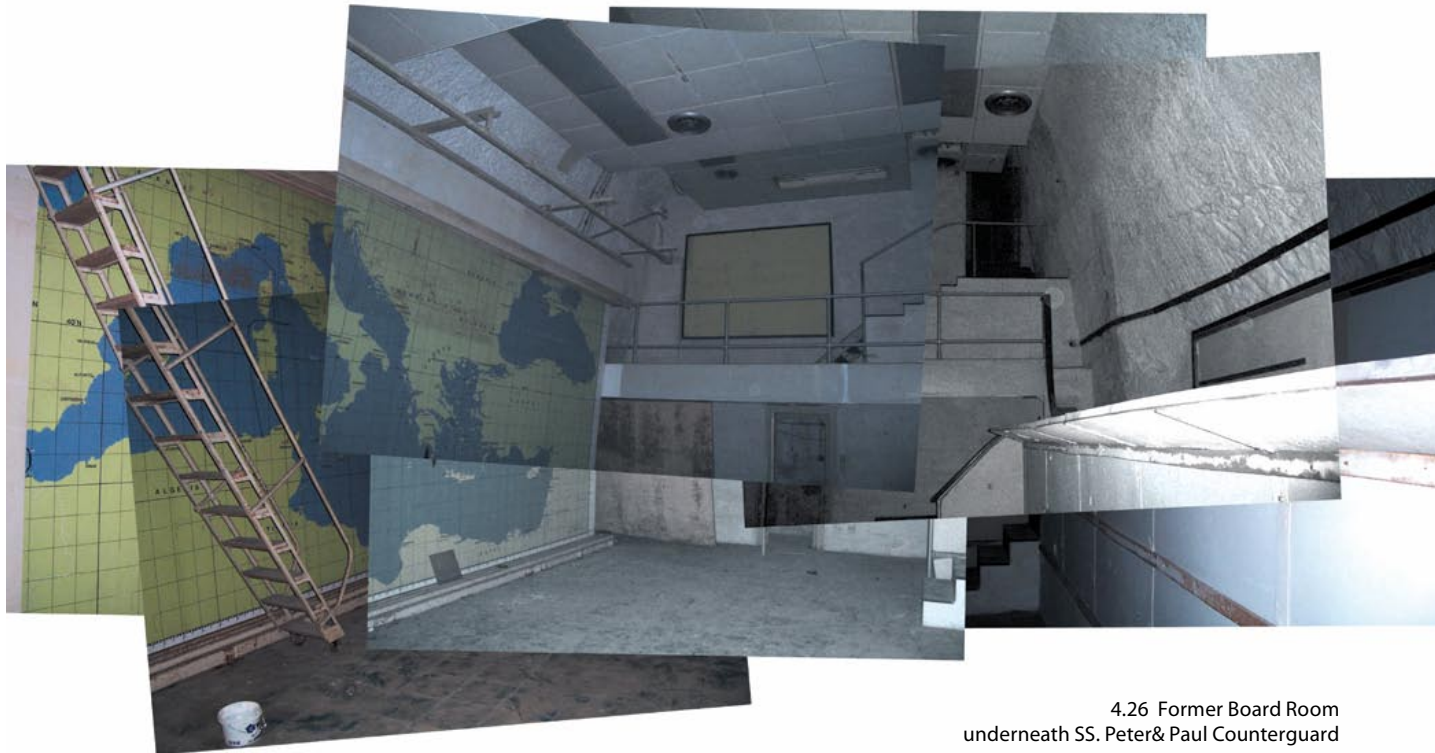
Rooms Underneath SSPeter and Paul Counterguards

Rooms underneath SS. Peter and Paul Counterguard:

In the worst period of the war, when surrender was likely to occur, the British started to excavate a array of rooms underneath SS Peter and Paul Counterguard.⁸ The complex consists of chambers, that are cut orthogonally on two floors, whereas the first floor seems to be relatively finished, the second, lower floor, which contains a bigger "hall" show more remains of the excavations process. Tracks and trolleys, as well as rubble that was already demolished, but not transported outside, can be found in it.

The complex is locked up and remained in the same state ever since, which creates the experience of a time capsule.

The whole complex has little openings to Lascaris Ditch and is accessible via the Main Ditch over a short flight of steps as well as from the outer ditch via long stairs.



4.26 Former Board Room underneath SS. Peter& Paul Counterguard

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



4.27 The former train station as a shelter during WW II



4.28 The former train station today

4.31

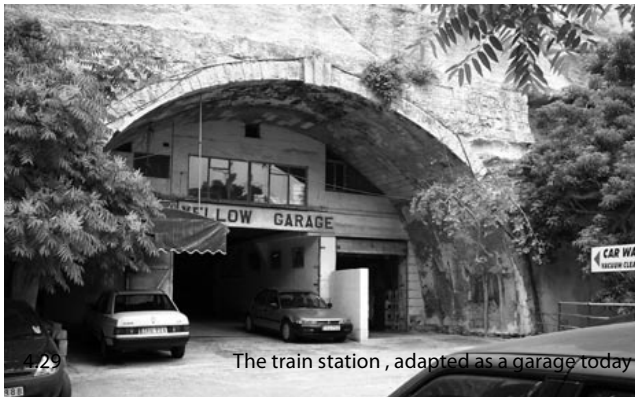
The former elevator, connecting the Harbour and Upper Barrakka



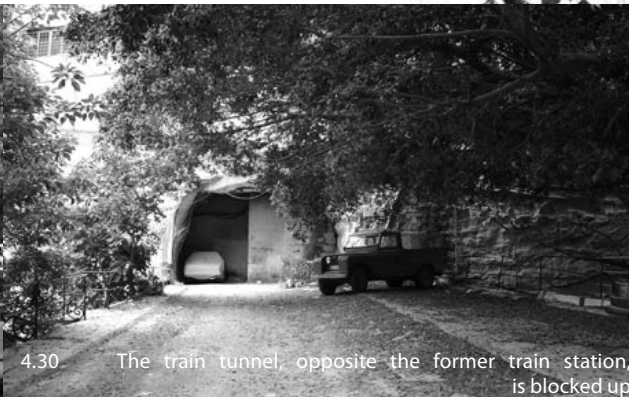
The train station and its bridges:

Between 1883 and 1931 Malta had his own railway from Valletta to Floriana. As the trains of this era had difficulties in climbing gradients, the station was cut out of the rock underneath the former opera house. In World War II, it was one of the biggest shelters of the town, for up to 5000 inhabitants¹⁰.

Today, it is used as a garage.¹¹



4.29 The train station, adapted as a garage today



4.30 The train tunnel, opposite the former train station, is blocked up

Žigužajk/ Zigzag:

The Zigzag was built as a pedestrian link between the Grand Harbour Waterfront and the train station in Lascaris Ditch. ¹²First plans of it date back to 1900.¹³

The area of the zigzag is used as parking space. An elevator, which was located next to it, that granted fast access to the city until the 70ties, was dismantled.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



4.32

The ruins of Saint Rocco Baths at the northern end of the main ditch

Facilities nearby the ditch:

The bus terminus:

Today's bus station of Malta dates back to the early 50ties, when Malta was in the phase of reconstruction after the Second World War. Its central element is a huge fountain (Triton Fountain) in the middle of the square. However, it is considered to have operational inefficiencies.¹⁴ It is considered as the by far most difficult area for pedestrians in Valletta and Floriana.¹⁵

In its peaks, the bus terminus experiences a departure rate of over 50 buses in a 15 minutes period. On average, there are about 2200 bus departures every day.¹⁶ The bus terminus houses several kiosks offering everything from Maltese Bread, cheesecakes, date slices, cakes, pastries, sweets, drinks, milk and cheese, fruit, cigarettes, newspapers, Telecards, and Lottery tickets.

Saint Rocco baths

Saint Rocco baths are dating back to the mid- 19th century¹⁷. It was a public bath in times when private bathrooms were not existing and offered washing facilities in cubicles as well as a plunge in the sea. Today, it is a ruin.

The extension of the cruise liner terminal:

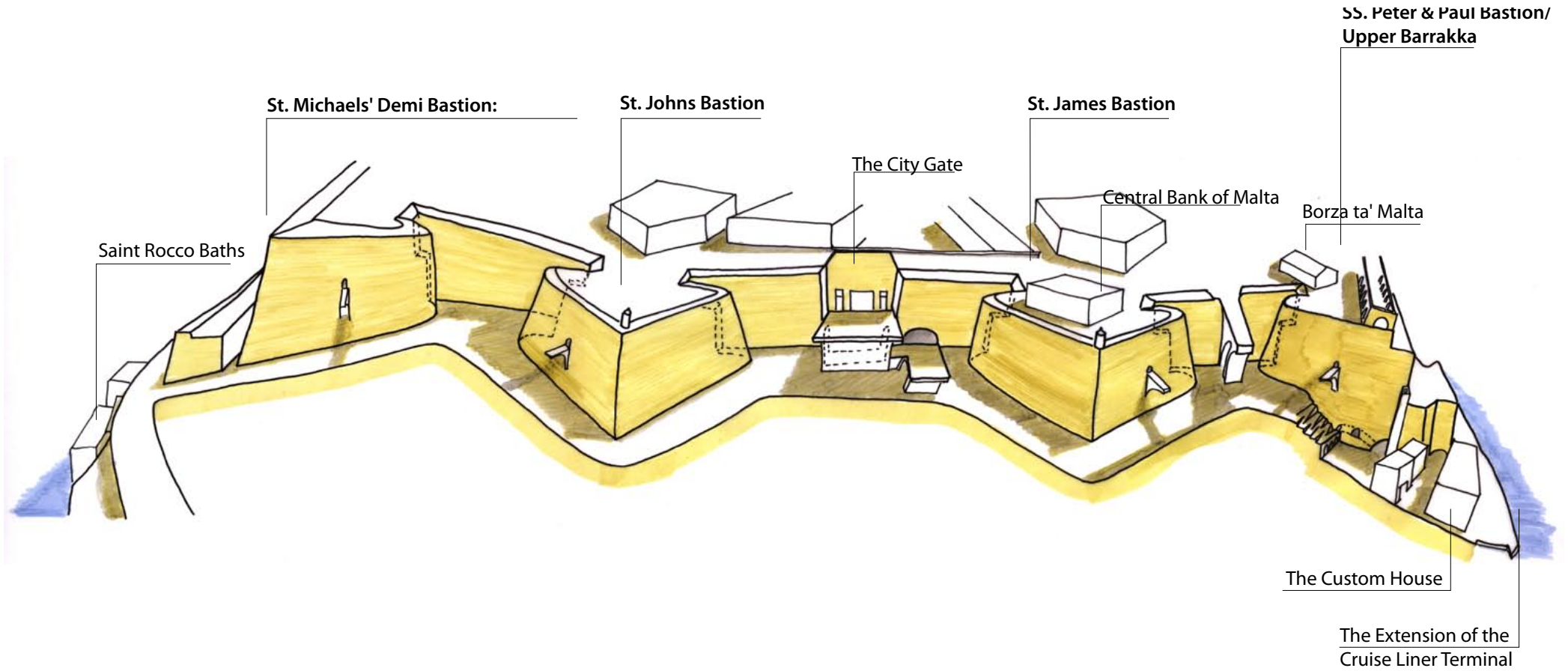
The berthing area of the cruise liner terminal is going to get extended to beyond Custom's House so it would be able to host 400m- long vessels.¹⁸

The custom house

The city gate

Vallettas city gate was built in 1964. Mainly, the reason for it was the great influx of people moving in and out of Valletta on a regular basis. Also, the bridge was widened at that time, to ease transport to the city.¹⁹ Underneath the columns of the city gate, hawkers sell puppies (that can be inspected looking in a large cardboard box until they are sold), jewellery, an African shoeblack started to run his little business there. The atmosphere of the city changes as soon as one passes the opera house. These businesses, which are

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



Section of the Main Ditch, facing Valletta

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

considered to be a bit “shady”, disappear in Republic Street. They are mainly concentrated underneath the roof the city gate offers.

Hotel Phoenicia:

It was built in the area of the outer Glacis. The plot of land that belongs to it (the park behind the hotel) and the hotel got a lease for this land 150 years ago²⁰. It was built in 1939 by Lord Gerald Strickland, a former prime minister of Malta, and his wife Lady Margaret Strickland. They intended the place to be a meeting point for European dignitaries and stars.²¹

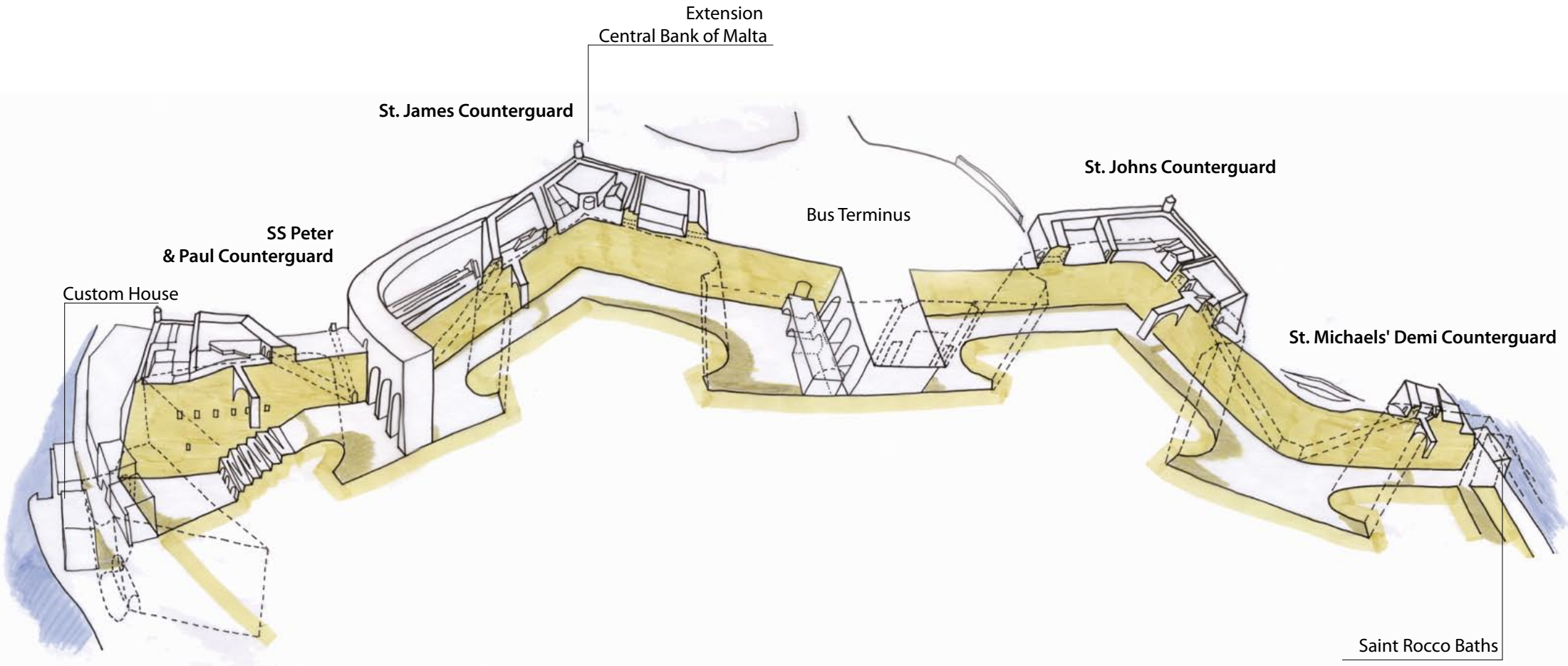
Borża ta’ Malta:

The Maltese Stock Exchange took up residence in the former garrison church from the 19th century, that was just converted some years ago.

The Central Bank of Malta:

The Central Bank of Malta has its seat in the Vernon Building which was built by the British. An extension to the Bank was built by Richard England in the 80ties on St. James Counterguard.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

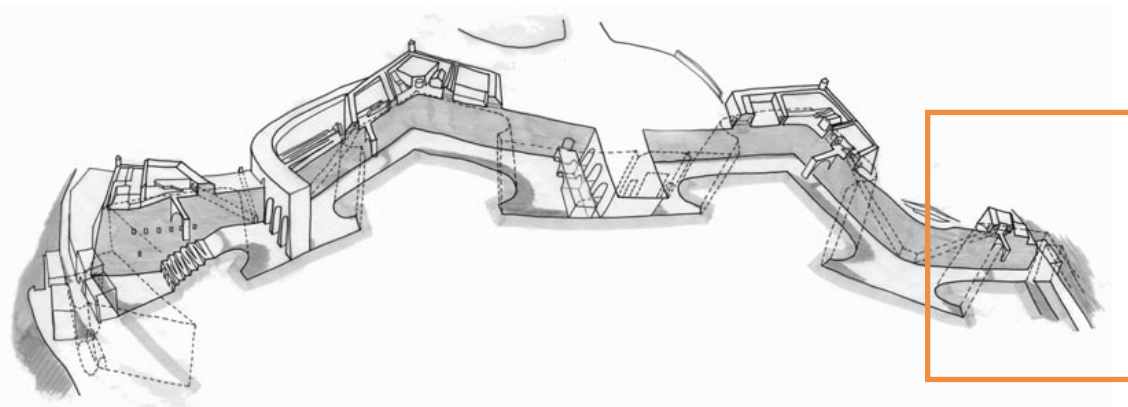


Section of the Main Ditch, facing Floriana

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



4.33 St Michael's Demi- Counterguard



The Outworks:

St. Michaels' Demi- Counterguard:

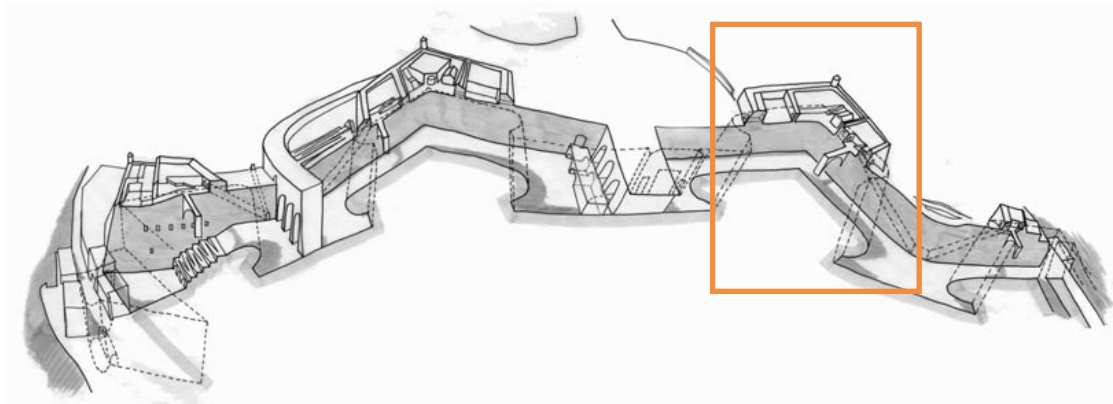
Occupied by a farmer (growing tomatoes and vine) → il-
legitimate use.
No "official" path to the counter guard (flybridge is
blocked)
No access from Floriana- the grounds of Hotel Phoenicia
are in the way
→ measures: create public access

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



4.34

Footballground on St. John's Counterguard



St. John's Counterguard:

occupied by the Salino Sports Club

→ legitimate use

Access to Bus station

Restricted access to club members

Blocked passageway to St. Michaels Demi-Counterguard

→ measures: create public passageway.

Create connection to the ditch.

Keep ownership of Salino Sports Club

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



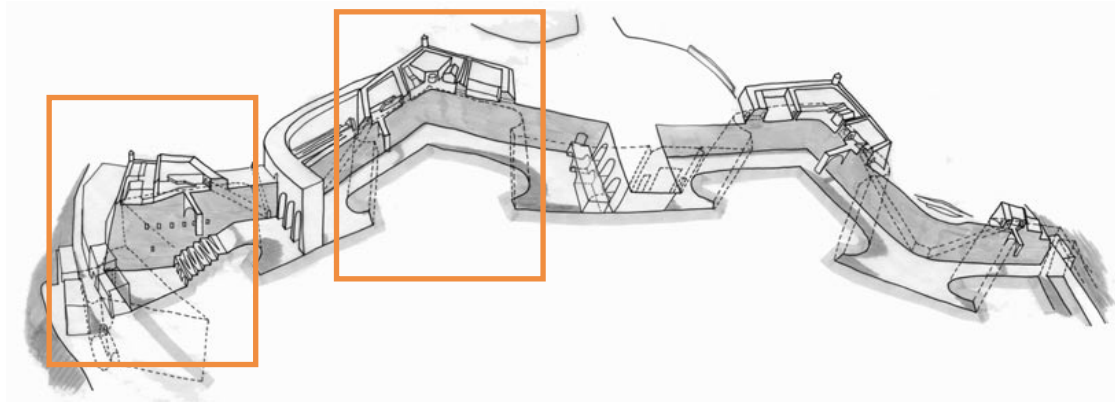
SS Peter and Paul Counterguard

not occupied
No direct access from Valletta or Floriana (detour over ramp from car bridge)
No access from outer ditch
Access from main ditch during opening hours of Lascaris war rooms
No actual gardens
Signs of neglectance (syringes found in locked rooms of bastion)

4.35 Lascaris Ditch, the Žigužajk/ Zigzag and SS Peter& Paul Counterguard. In a distance, cruiseliner ships berth at the new cruiseliner harbour

→measures: create better access from Valletta and Floriana.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



St. James Counterguard

occupied by the extension of the Central Bank (Vernon building)

Access to Bus station in opening hours (Monday to Friday morning)

Access from outer ditch

Passageway to SS. Peter and Paul Counterguard open in opening hours

Gardens on Counterguard for internal use only

→measures: create connection to the ditch.



4.36 St. James Counterguard, viewed from its fly bridge, connecting the counter-guard with the bastion. The fly bridge was renovated and is used as an access for the National Bank's Garage underneath St. James Bastion

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

The Bastions:

St. Michaels' Demi- Bastion

In former times, Windmills were located at St. Michaels Bastion- thus the name of the street, leading to it- Windmill Street.

St. Johns Bastion

St. Michael's Demi Bastion and St. John's Bastion provide a garden today, called Hastings Garden.

St. James Bastion:

The Vernon- Institute was built here- now Central Bank of Malta

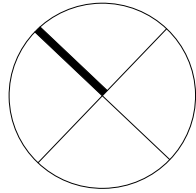
SS. Peter and Paul Bastion:

It was turned into the most famous garden of Malta, the Upper Barrakka

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Overview Ditch

Scale 1: 1000



4.40 View 4

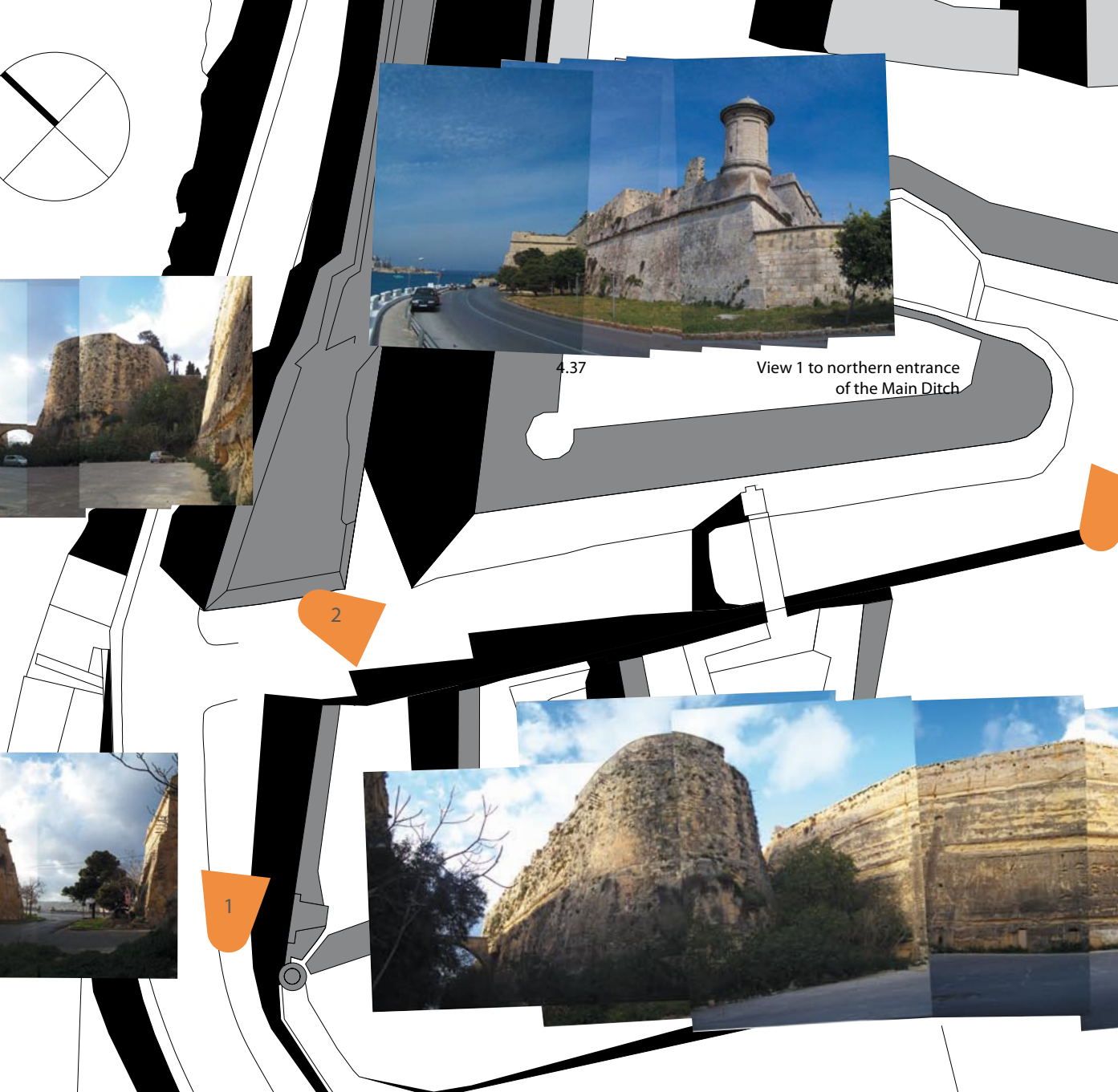


4.37

View 1 to northern entrance of the Main Ditch



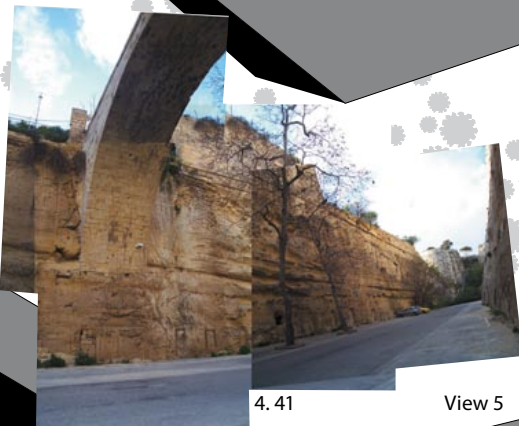
4.38 View 2. The doors of the shelters of WW2 are blocked up
100





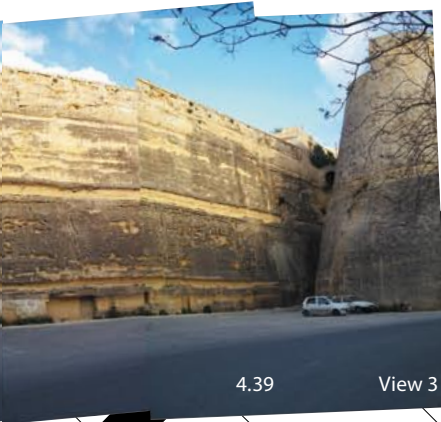
4.42

View 6



4.41

View 5



4.39

View 3



4.43
View 7

Overview Ditch

Scale 1: 1000



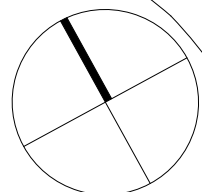
4.44 View 7

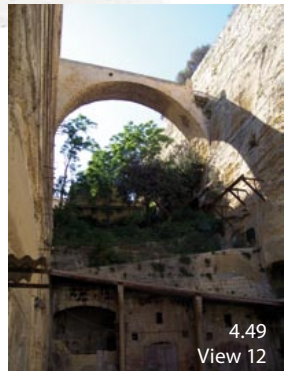
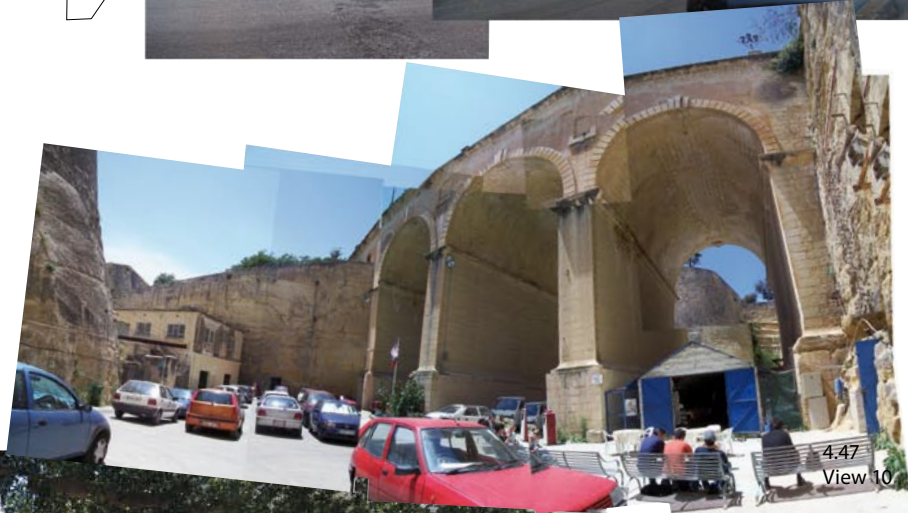
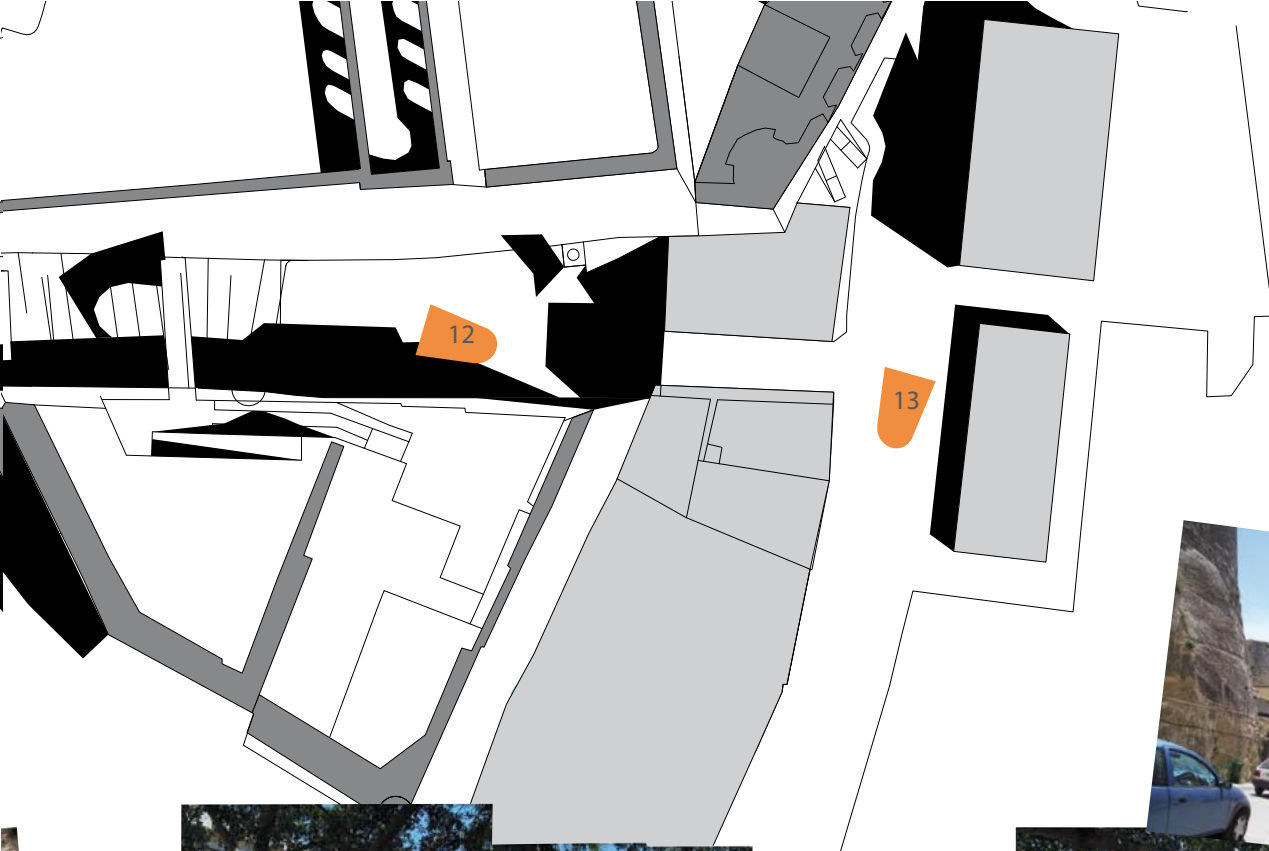


4.46 View 9

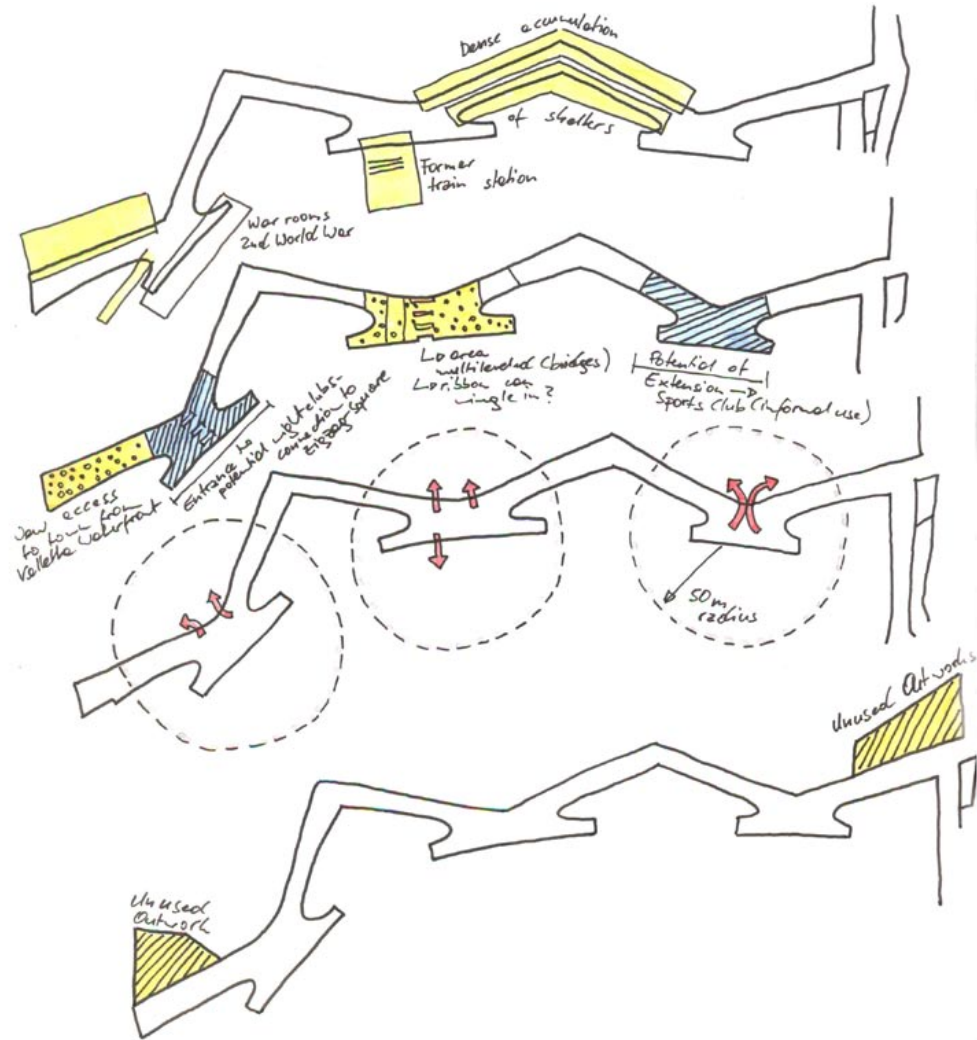


4.45 View 8





The ditch- a resource for more life quality



The design proposal:

The ditch can add a value to the whole area of the former glacis, and to the town of Valletta, which could sustain itself independently.

The ditch today:

Today, the ditch is one essential parking space for the office Towns of Valletta and Floriana. By car, it can only be accessed from the Great Siege road. Access to "Uptown" exists via a very dirty and revolting staircase next to the former train station, or via the tunnel to Lascaris Bastion and a further flight of stairs that arrives just behind Upper Barrakka gardens.

Programming the ditch:

The ditch should become a green recreational area, with the aim to add more leisure space to the dense city.

The design for the ditch should attract people to explore it, so it can become an urban place. The ditch should offer connections to the bastions which are being neglected (which are St. Michaels, both of tourists and locals alike. The interest for the fortifications could grow by adding other facilities. The ditch should offer a connection between the two harbours. The shelters and cavities of the ditch should be

used. Added structure should set a framework to the already existing underground to obtain their best exploitation without destroying the overall atmosphere of the ditch and the grandness of the fortifications.

The design:

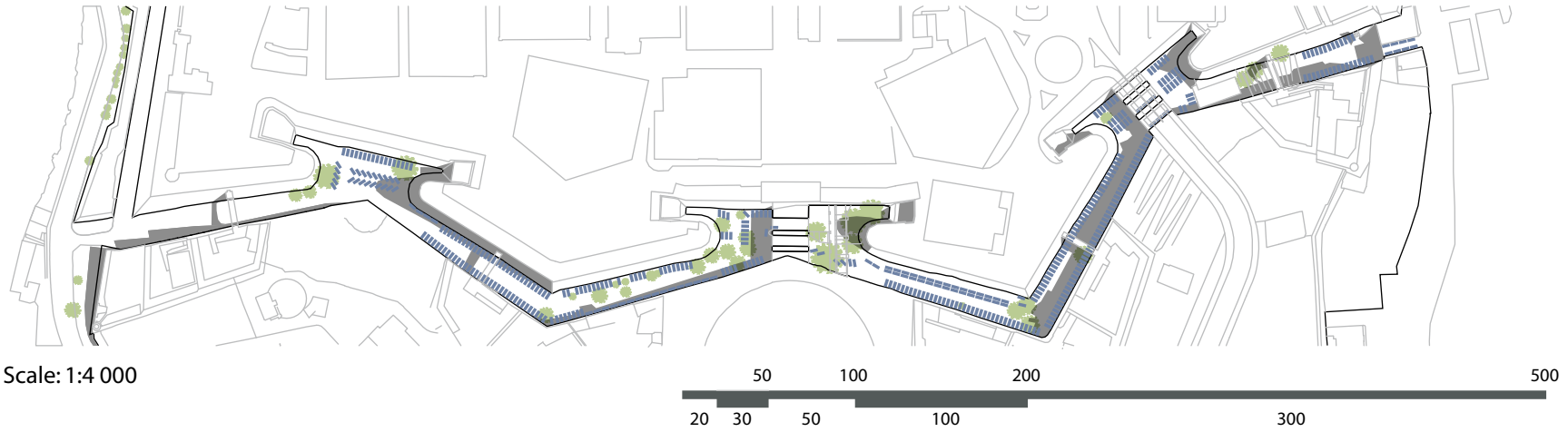
A green rolling ribbon that emphasises the crossing transitional movement of the ditch across the peninsula.

At node points between the ditch and the upper level- the main bridges- the ribbon approaches to the upper level, but still keeping a distance of about 5m altitude to enter into the visual field of those crossing the bridges. Thus, the ditch is no longer a void that is far below, but approaches and seduces to follow the movement into the lower parts of the ditch.

It offers an alternative to the heat of town in summertime by a green surrounding.

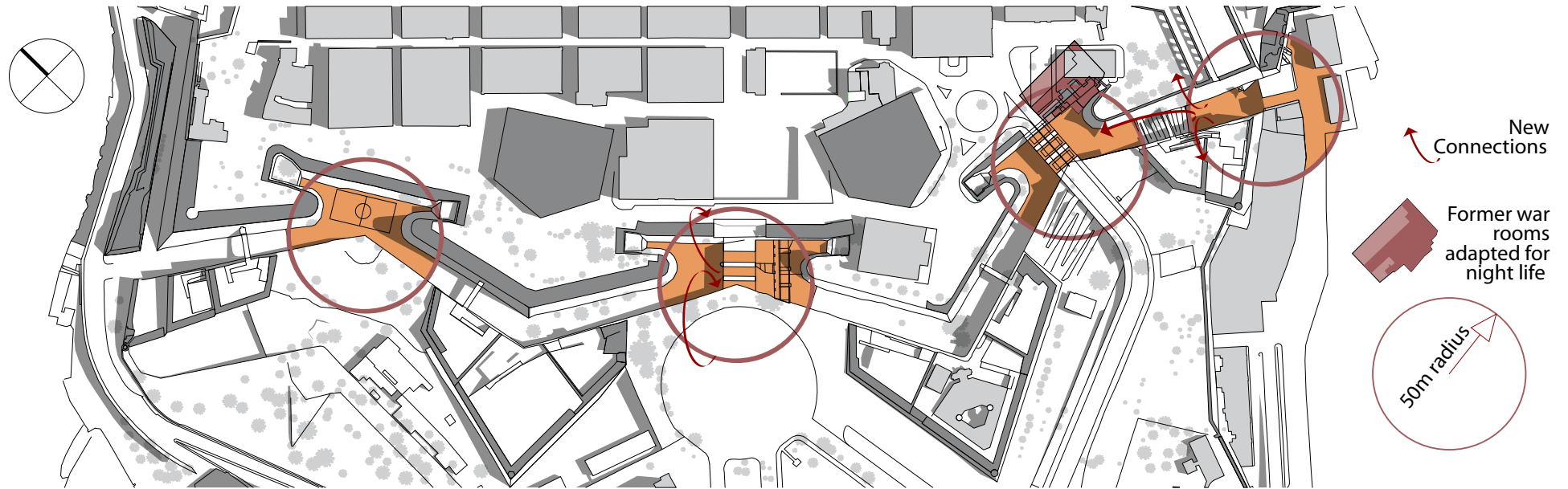
The ribbon has cuts in a regular pattern that are torn apart at the bridges, to enwind the existing structure without losing its respectful distance.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



Today's situation in the ditch that contains 416 parking lots (+38 at lascaris ditch)

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



The ditches' "squares and strategies how to integrate them to urban living



The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Why green?

The ribbon is in its form and it gesture an element on its own in the fortifications that give the impression that they were built to last forever. Trees and natural cover can cool down the ditch, creating an enjoyable microclimate in Malta's hot summers.

Why transitional?

Already, certain green spaces align the ditch that is still difficult to access. By emphasising the transitional element of the ditch, the visitor of the ditch starts to explore various areas by being led on to the next peak and secret corner in one of the enchanted bastions.

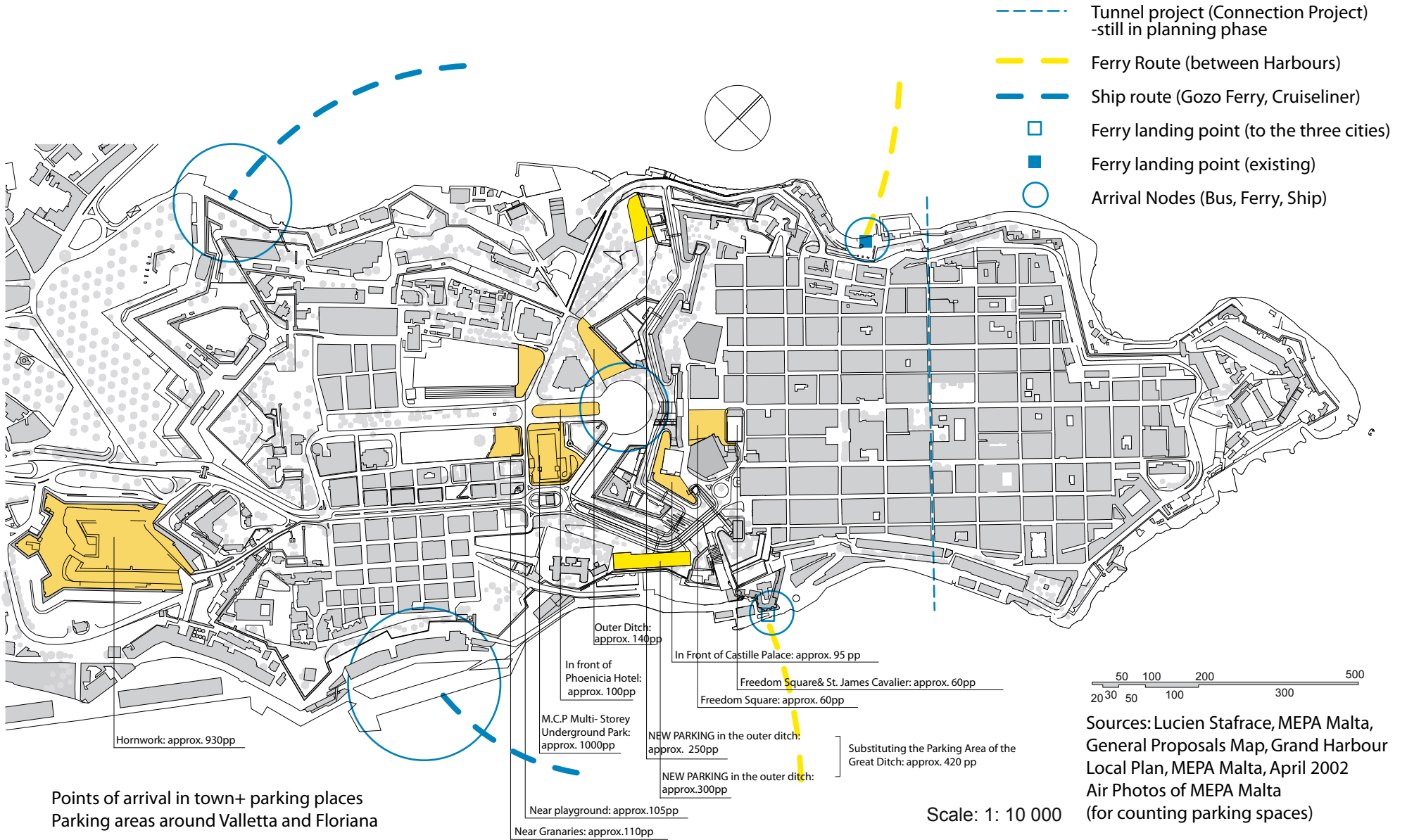
What happens to the parking?

I suggest underground parking underneath Kalkara garden (next to the car bridge/ SS Peter&Paul counterguard), using the outer ditch to access from the roundabout at the end of St. Anne's street) and in the outer ditch near St. Michaels Demi-Counterguard. Each underground parking can contain up to 300 cars and substitutes the former parking in the ditch. Furthermore, new access to the bastions are granted by installing two elevators in the two counterguards which are connected with the underground parking as well as with the inner ditch. For each intervention, I also suggest a footpath, to offer new possibilities to access the town of Valletta.



4.51

The parking in the ditch



Points of arrival in town+ parking places
Parking areas around Valletta and Floriana

Sources: Lucien Stafrace, MEPA Malta, General Proposals Map, Grand Harbour Local Plan, MEPA Malta, April 2002
Air Photos of MEPA Malta
(for counting parking spaces)

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Which elements of the ditch will be integrated in this proposal?

For the accessibility of the ditch, I propose to restore the passages of the knights that are hewn in the stone. For adding a feeling of security, I propose to enlarge the tunnels leading from the fly bridge into town, and add staircases and elevators from above. All used tunnels at Valletta's side could be provided with an elevator, leading to the gardens on the bastions.



4.52

Ziguzag in Lascaris Ditch

Ziguzag and Saint Rocco Bath

At both sides of the ditch, there is a sudden change of level. At one end, that change of level was bridged by the "ziguzag", a foot connection from the harbour to the newly built train station in the ditch of Valletta. On the side of I will leave the "ziguzag" as remain of its time, and use the arcades, bearing the first slope ramp as doorways to escalators (which expresses the movement of the ribbon), that lead to the upper level of the ditch. This creates a new access from the waterfront to the town, introducing the ditch and its secret passageways of the knights to the visitors. On the other side, the side of Marsamxett Harbour, the

ditch is limited by the great siege road, which has a supporting wall towards the sea. Directly on the shore is a former public bath, that offered washing facilities and a café at the seaside to the inhabitants of Valletta, built by the British in the middle of the 19th century. I suggest to rebuild either as a café or even again as a bathhouse with a public spa or a sauna. To extend the movement of the ribbon until the shore of the sea, I suggest a pier out of the same material as an end-note., as the ribbon is interrupted by the street. Both "ends of the ribbon" should arrive at a future promenade that encircles the outer shores of Valletta.

The shelters:

The private shelters of the Second World War, whose structure reminds of cells in a row, will be adapted

and connected in order to allow sunlight entering the rooms. Furthermore, they are adapted to today's requirements of construction science by added insulation. Their use in the future is dependent on the wishes and acceptance of the users of the ditch (see urban concept.)

Rooms underneath SS. Peter and Paul Counter-guard:

These rooms will be made accessible via a staircase and an elevator, which connects the underground parking of Kalkara gardens as well as the SSPeter and Paul counterguard, to provide connection to town.

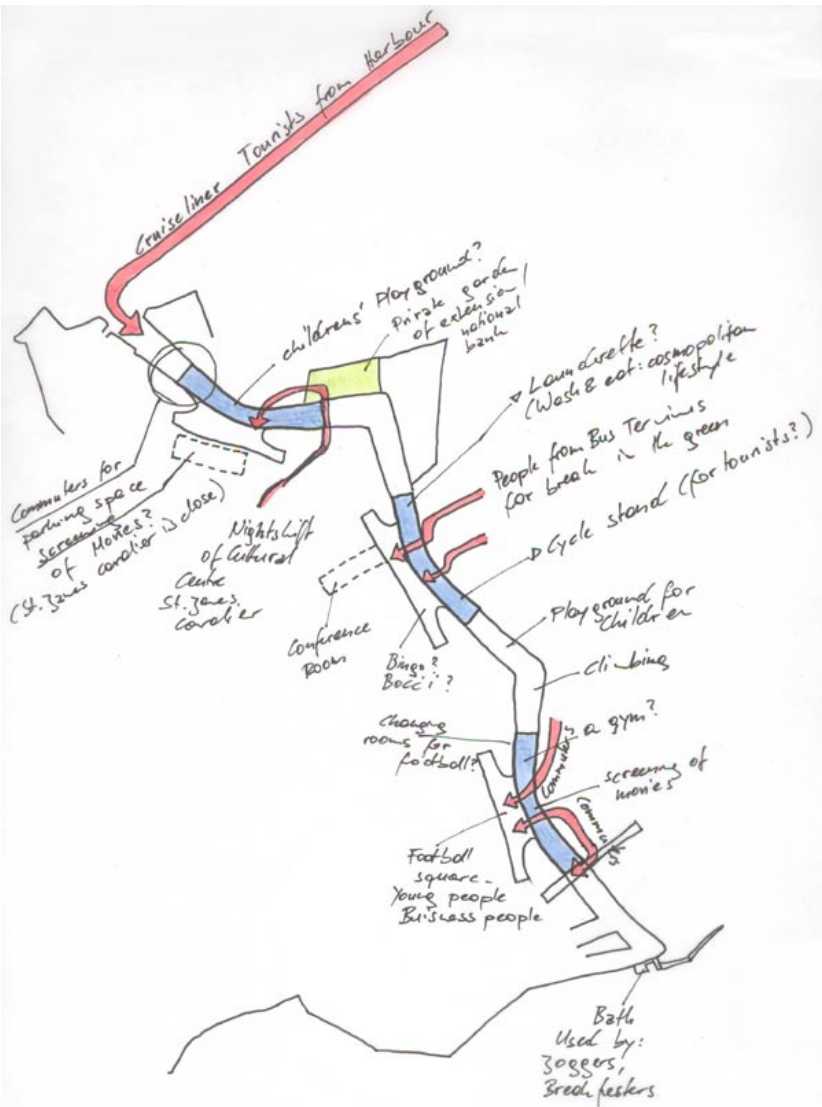
Thereby, the rooms can be acquired for events and parties, which could be organised in quite an improvised manner to find out how they would be accepted as a regular venue. However, the specific atmosphere of the place as a time capsule should be preserved and protected as a remain of the Second World War.

By creating a controlled and safe access, the consciousness of people about the existence of the place can be raised.

Does the ribbon contain anything?

The ribbon can be bend and pulled apart to open its cuts like any tissue would do. It provides facilities for the city user which are lacking in the city of Valletta.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



The Urban concept

To create a concept for the ditch, I characterized various city users for Valletta and Floriana, allowing them to adapt my design to their needs in my mind.

As city users, I identified:

Spontaneous travellers/ Cheap travellers:

Recently, the government of Malta abolished the high taxes it charged on incoming and outgoing flights. Malta was never a cheap destination and thus spared from backpackers.

However, the first low- budget carriers landed on Malta, who lost more than 45.000 British tourists (their main clients) to cheaper destinations like Greece and Turkey.²²

The low fares of the island will attract a new segment of tourists, that didn't take Malta in consideration before: Spontaneous travellers, that don't know about the island and just book a flight to get away.

Also, the number of travellers from ferries will increase.

Until now, the city of Valletta is not catered for this segment of travellers- hotels in Valletta are rare, no youth hostel exists in Malta.

- Youth hostel
- Culture for city breakers
- Nightlife
- sport facilities (gym)

- washing facilities (laundrette)
- urban runway
- urban barbeque
- catering (food)

Maltese Family with kids:

On Sundays, Maltese Family with kids are looking for greenery and open space, also for picnicking, or for letting the children run on a nearby meadow while staying on the parking close to it to discuss with other parents (Ta'Qali is one of these places).

If an area of open space and sport facilities would be introduced to Valletta, or close to Valletta, it is possible that families could also go to town for their Sunday break, to have a good combination of window shopping and outdoor facilities so their kids would be busy.

- close parking
- greenery, open space
- sport facilities
- picnicking
- urban barbeque
- catering (food)

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

	Cheap Traveller	Family/Kids	Teens/Tweens	New Urban	Cruiseline Passengers	Whitecollar/ Bluecollar	Residents
Biking Lane (rent)			without rent				
Jogging							
open-air cinema		weekend					
gym/fitness							
sauna			maybe tweens				
BBQ		Sunday					
children's playground							
access to town/parking	if renting car	very important					
promenade	watching	evenings					
creative festival							
part-time atelier (festival)							
accommodation (youth hostel/ students hostel)							
internet café							
laundrette (washing service)							
nightlife/clubs							
confectionary							
Bocci							
Climbing							
conference room							
breakfast café							
access to town St. Michaels'						rather no	
access to town St. PP						definitely	to Floriana
access to town main bridge							
heritage (war rooms)							
heritage (bastions)							
Picnic		Sundays					
playfield (various ballgames)							
part-time bar (shelter)							



maybe
yes

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Teens and Twens :

Teens favour places that they can easily reach by bus, and a surrounding providing services without the need for them to spend money,

- picnicking
- urban barbeque

They also favour relatively crowded places to observe what's going on and show off their style. Valletta is very popular for them with its parks and the fountain of the bus station.

- meeting people
- urban runway

Tweens enjoy the atmosphere of the Fortifications and can be viewed lying in the sun in one of the merlon of the fortifications that provide relative privacy and a breathtaking view. Picnicking is gaining popularity.

If they decide to live in Valletta, they would use services like a launderette.

- urban runway
- picnicking
- washing facilities (launderette)
- sport facilities (gym)
- catering (food)

New Urban:

Young "arty" people move back to Valletta, as it is providing more services. They look for a public way to socialize, come back to town to live in a surrounding with history, enjoying the arts.

These are young people, also foreigners or foreign students, who prefer the busy urban surrounding to the suburban family setting, which is dependent on a care.

As quite everywhere in Malta, the city doesn't provide enough surroundings for physical activity. Also, although the nightlife in Valletta is about to grow, there are still few places where to go to. Cultural outdoor events would be favoured by them.

- atmosphere,
- culture
- nightlife,
- greenery,
- sport facilities (gym)
- washing facilities (launderette)
- catering (food)

Cruise line Passengers:

25% try to find their way around on their own
The average cruise liner tourist is between 50 to 79 years old.²³

The public- private partnership VISET, which is running the cruise liner harbour, is currently trying to

find a way how to bring the passengers to Valletta in the fastest way. One possibility would be to implement access to town via the great ditch. Also, the aim for the excursions to town is to give a quick overview about Malta's history and culture.

- access to town from harbour
- history
- culture
- greenery (for older people, the maltese heat in summertime can be very tiring)

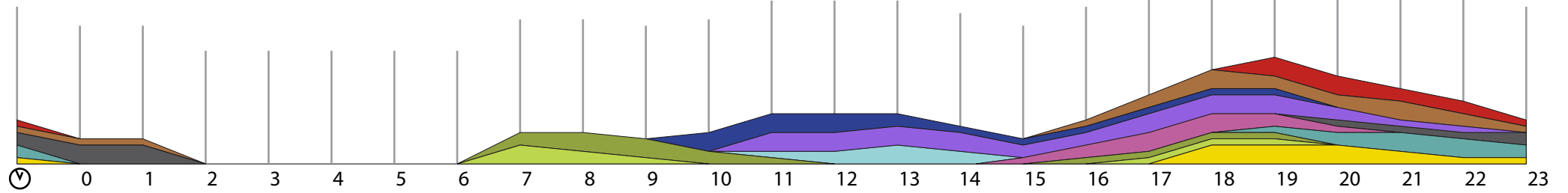
White-collar/ Blue-collar Workers- commuters from other cities:

Most workers from other communities come to Valletta by car, many also by bus. Those by car require sufficient parking facilities, but would also use central sport facilities that are not sufficiently available around the island for jogging before or after work. By adding two new underground parkings, and reopening of the old access points via the fly bridges to Valletta, activity would be distributed more evenly in the streets of town, generating more walk- in customers along now quiet streets.

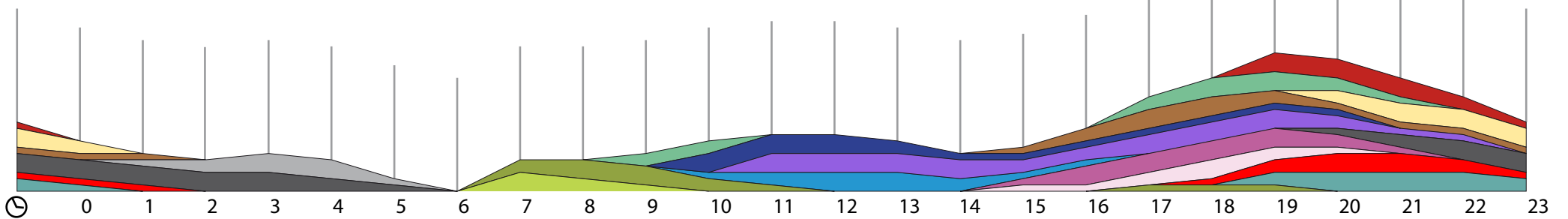
The new park- and ride system at Hornworks (just outside Floriana) is a great success. Commuters parking there increasingly start to walk the distance from the park- and ride-facility to Valletta town centre. At certain points, the pedestrian connections are not well designed. This can change with the introduction

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

During the week



Weekend



- After work beer
- Jogging (residents, commuters)
- Jogging (tourists)
- Passeggiata
- BBQ
- Children/Playground (commuters)
- Children/Playground (residents)
- Nightlife (going out)
- Nightlife (club)
- Tourists Sightseeing
- People looking for Accomodation
- Picnic
- Lunchtime (Commuter)
- Laundrette
- Open air cinema
- Football and Gaming
- Gym

Possible Activities throughout the day in the ditch

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

of new footpaths, that later lead comfortably up to the fly bridges.

A redesign of these paths could increase commuters, leaving their car further outside Valletta.

The main bridge, connecting the city gate with the bus stop, would become less busy and more a place where people can actually coincidentally meet and stay on the bridge for a chat- which is not easy for now due to the passing crowds.

→access from Hornworks to town, access from other points of Valletta than main bridge to town,

→ parking facilities

→ sport facilities

→sport facilities (gym)

→ greenery

→ nightlife

→ urban runway

→ urban barbeque

→ greenery

Residents

The ditch could become another urban playground for them, if it is connected with a new pathway around town for the “passegiata”. Furthermore, the green areas could improve their general life quality, as it offers a new playground for their children.

The service of a launderette could be quite welcome of some of the poorer residents of Valletta.

→ nightlife

→ sport facilities (gym)

→ washing facilities (launderette)

Diversifying the functions of a city:

Adding to the already existing spaces in the ditch, the ribbon can house the spaces to complete the spatial qualities it had to offer.

Spontaneous acquirement:

The surface of the ribbon and the "streetscape" of the ditch, means, the outdoor spaces of it, can be spontaneously acquired.

Ballgames/ Theatre/ Cinema

At the "square" in front of the Curtain wall between St. Michael's Demi-Bastion and St. Johns Bastion, the ribbon will change into a small "theatre", landscaped in a way that the meadow will form a stepped hill so it offers a good place for sitting down and watch people playing ballgames on the flat area. Also, it creates a setting for future outdoor screening of movies, or pieces of theatre.

Outdoor activities:

A **bike rental** could be initiated, which would contribute to the transitional character of the space. **Climbing** is a new trend in Malta- here is could be set in an urban surrounding, very close to the offices in town. **Boċċi**- the Maltese version of Bocchia- is very common in Malta. To **picnic**, close to the bus station,

just in the right distance to the job, could become popular. **Barbequing** on the beach is very popular in Malta- here this "tradition" could be initiated in another surrounding.

Organised acquirement:

The shelters form a very specific structure, by aligning an array of cubicles next to each other, with each of them featuring a direct access to the outdoor. Already in war times, the cubicles described a retreat when attacks arrived. The social space where people met and chatted was the outside.

For using these existing spaces, I propose two strategies, which could be implemented at the same time, until the right mix of services, which should create a certain "feel" of urbanity, becomes apparent:

The youth hostel/ the student's home:

Malta has no youth hostel. These rooms could be rented out to the cheap travellers, which will increasingly make it to Malta in summertime.

Those travellers will enjoy the cities' provision of restaurants and bars, and will not need the provision of a restaurant in the youth hotel. Also, it should be looked into providing self- catering elements in the rooms

At winter, foreign and local students alike could use this structure. Language travels form a very strong

part of the Maltese Tourist segments. Facilities that these institutions require (like kitchens, a launderette, an internet café, a lobby) could be housed in the new spaces that the ribbon creates, also being accessible for other user groups. The Spa/ Public Bath at St. Rocco could provide another element of the hostel. The guest could choose which services to receive in its package, which would lead to less organisational costs that could be expressed by lower prices.

The start- up center:

While travelling in Germany, I came upon a concept of introducing and fostering the creative industries in abandoned houses by the project of "Unperfekthaus".

The "Unperfekthaus" in Essen can be understood as a start- up centre for artists. The project is located in a former monastery, means that there is a number of cubicles that can be rented for starting up any kind of project, whether it is financially viable or not.

It works like a museum where artists and their art are displayed at the same time. In the ground floor, a cosy café attracts people for the first view. By paying a small fee of 5,50 € one has access to the upper floors, that contain the cubicles, where artists work, and can be watched in the process of creation.

Performance space is provided with a stage, a big kitchen attracts hobby gourmets, a yoga room, rental space and rooms are provided for offering courses.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Regular guests are welcome. They foster art and creativity by paying the fee, which makes the centre financially viable.

The project's initiators state that in this way they want to avoid the usual way of young creatives to apply for substitutions at official institutions, which often means that young artists have to endear with the responsible. By offering just space that is missing to perform creative work or trying out new ideas at a low fare, and inviting the public to discuss and participate in the evolution of it, the place can sustain itself, but also offers the change to try new things, that could eventually lead to a livelihood for the artists.

This is the kind of input that Valletta needs for establishing itself as "the" creative city on the island. Valletta would regain its reputation as a creative city with young creatives, putting themselves on display for the public.

The whole ditch of Valletta and Floriana could be adapted to this system. Combined with the structure of the youth hostel, it can be financially viable and create a great cultural output which would attract locals and tourists alike.

Creative Festivals:

For starting a new season, or for continuously staying in the mind of the users of the city, I propose to initiate low- cost festivals that use the abandoned under-

ground rooms and the open air facilities. It could feature young bands in the war rooms at ditch level near Upper Barrakka, place a clubbing in the rooms underneath SS. Peter and Pauls Counterguard, display art work in the confined space of the ditch (the yellowish walls and the reduced surrounding remind of the "white cube" which is suggested to be the best surrounding for contemporary art by many artists), screen a selection of videos from Maltese to Maltese on the curtain wall between St. Michaels Demi- Bastion and St. Johns Bastion.

Parking Spaces and easy access is provided. Noise pollution is irrelevant in an area where the neighbourhood mainly consists of offices, and, the noise pollution, produced in the ditch, could be dimmed by screens placed over the ditch.

Garden connection

Independently from the beforementioned strategies, my projects suggests the connection of already existing, beautiful green areas of the city with a superb view- the Counterguards of SSPeter and Paul, and St. Michael- which are lacking definition for the moment. By inserting infrastructure such as the elevator, and connect them to a network of paths between Valletta and Floriana, which is directly connected to the transitional element of a green space, these two counterguards could become mystical gardens, a place of retreat, busy enough to stay cared for as an important element of the urban setting.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality



Existing sidewalks and pedestrian paths along the shore of Valletta- the author recommends an upgrade to a promenade by narrowing the road and also adding a bicycle lane/ pedestrian lane.
Sources/sidewalks: Airphotos of Valletta/ Mepa 2004, Plan of Valletta

- Intended Extension for a promenade
- Existing pathways
- The Ribbon- connecting the two sides of the harbour

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Endnotes

1

The Ditch- A resource of more life quality?

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- Works Department, Belt is-Sebħ, Floriana, Map Division, Folder 132, A4 files- exchange of letter between the then Governor of Malta, Trefford Smith and Dom Mintoff.
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6503371.stm>- by Brandy Yanchyk, BBC News Malta-article on BBC NEWS webpage, published 2007/03/30
- Presentation of Valletta Waterfront Project, at Corinthia Hotel Balzan, April 2005, Architect David Drago, partner of AP (Architecture Project)
- "The Malta Railway" (Revised Edition), Joseph Bonnici, Michael Cassar, Malta 1992
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- "Transport Study for Valletta and Floriana" ,Colin Buchanan and Partners, for the Planning Authority Malta, Bristol UK 1994
- <http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/2002/0303/l3.html>, 9th April 2007, "City Gate Mystery", Marika Azzopardi, Maltatoday.com
- "Tunnels and underground passages in Valletta", Report of Michael Ellul as, Advisor to PM on Conservation, Malta, 24th August 1988- in courtesy VRP
- Works Division, Belt-is-Sebħ, Floriana, Map Division "Hotels&Casinos Maltese": Folder 20B

Conversation with Stephen Spiteri, April 2006

- 2 p.88,ff.Jellison, Charles A.: Besieged. The World War II Ordeal of Malta, 1940-1942, University Press of New England 1984
- 3 P. 113, ff,,Edward Said,
- 4 Smith, Mintoff.
- 5 132 G, A4 Files, Belt is- Sebħ - concessions for shelters
- 6 Conversation with Stephen C. Spiteri, in April 2006
- 7 p3,f. Ellul
- 8 p.120, Said
- 9 p.120, Said
- 10 p.114, Said
- 11 p11,ff.Bonnici, Cassar
- 12 p. 104, Said
- 13 Folder 41, Belt is- Sebħ
- 14 5-1,Colin, Buchanan and Partners
- 15 5.4, lbdn.
- 16 5.1, Colin Buchanan and Partners
- 17 Plan of ,J1 Nr. 60, National Archirves of Malta, Santo Spirito, Rabat
- 18 The Sunday Times „Valletta Waterfront to be extended“, Steve Mallia, April 16,2006
- 19 Azzopardi
- 20 Folder 20 B, Belt is- Sebħ
- 21 http://w2.vu.edu.au/malta/newsletter/consular_v5i26SepOct2003.htm, homepage of the Maltese consul general in Melbourne, 9th April 2007
- 22 Yanchyk, 2007/03/30
- 23 Drago

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- 4.19 p.81, „The Epic of Malta“,by Captain Lewis Ritchie c.v.o. („Bartimeus“)(text),Malta Government (Lieutenant-Colonel A.V. Agius, M.C., Trade Commissioner), F. Weston, Esq.(historical& general advise) Pictures: Photochrom Co. Ltd. London. Made and printed in Gt Britain by Odhams (Watford) Ltd., Watford
- 4.20- 4.26 authors own
- 4.27 p.88, „The Epic of Malta“,by Captain Lewis Ritchie c.v.o. („Bartimeus“)(text),Malta Government (Lieutenant-Coonel A.V. Agius, M.C., Trade Commissioner), F. Weston, Esq.(historical& general advise) Pictures: Photochrom Co. Ltd. London. Made and printed in Gt. Britain by Odhams (Watford) Ltd., Watford
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- 4.31 From Bonnici, Joseph, 1943- Tifkira tal-Kungress Ewkaristiku Internazzjonali, Malta, 1913 Joseph Bonnici, Michael Cassar.-[Valletta: l-awturi], 1988 394.5 I.Cassar, Michael, 1949- II.

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

Title©Joseph Bonnici, Michael Cassar, 1988

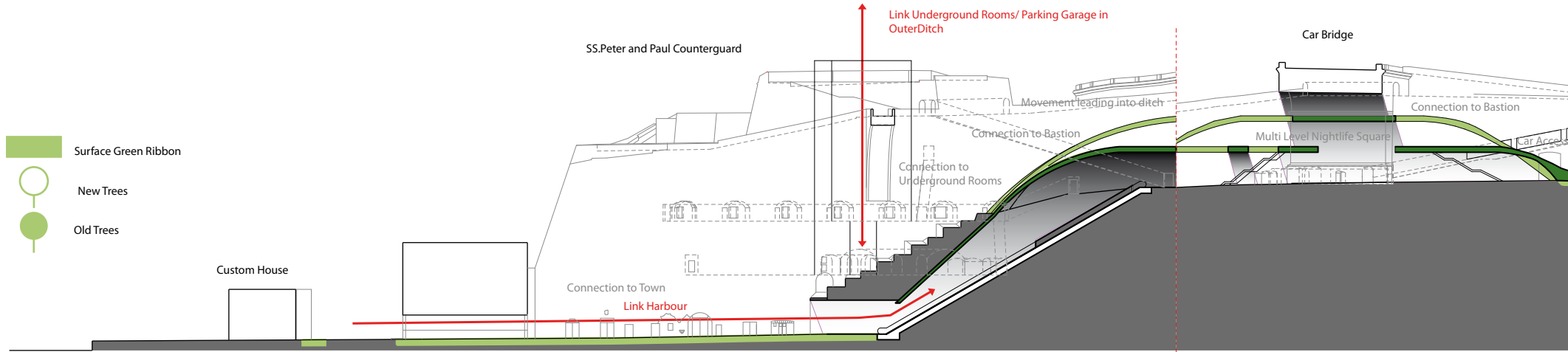
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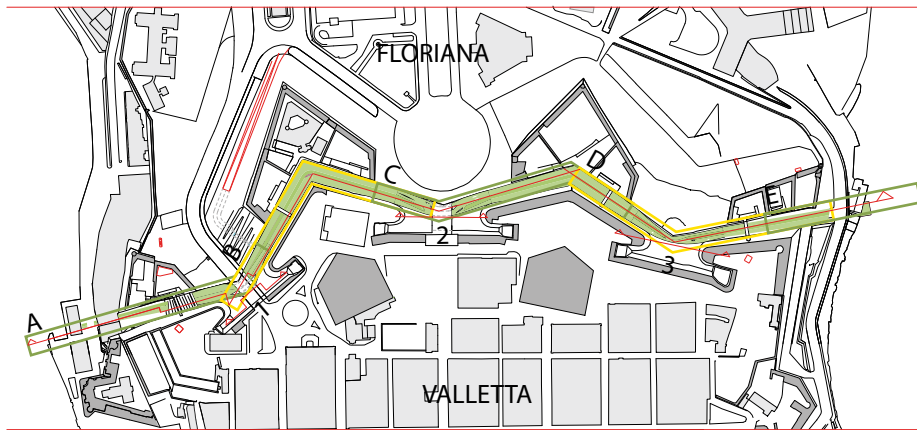
4.53 Architectural model of the project

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

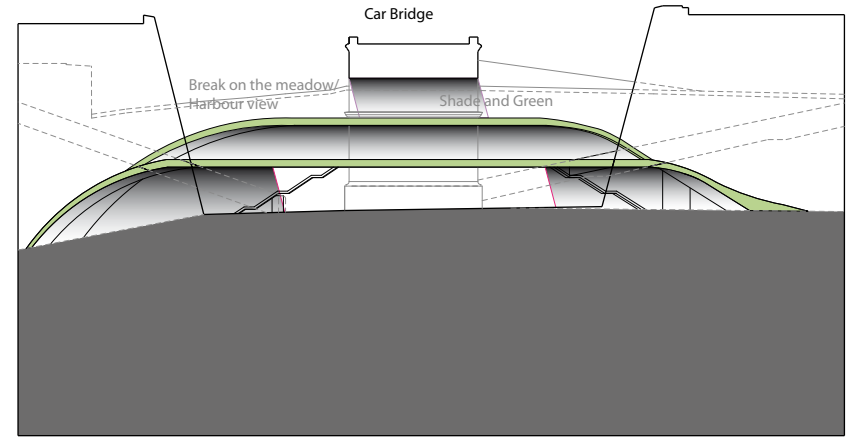
The ditch - a resource for more life quality



Section A, scale 1:1000



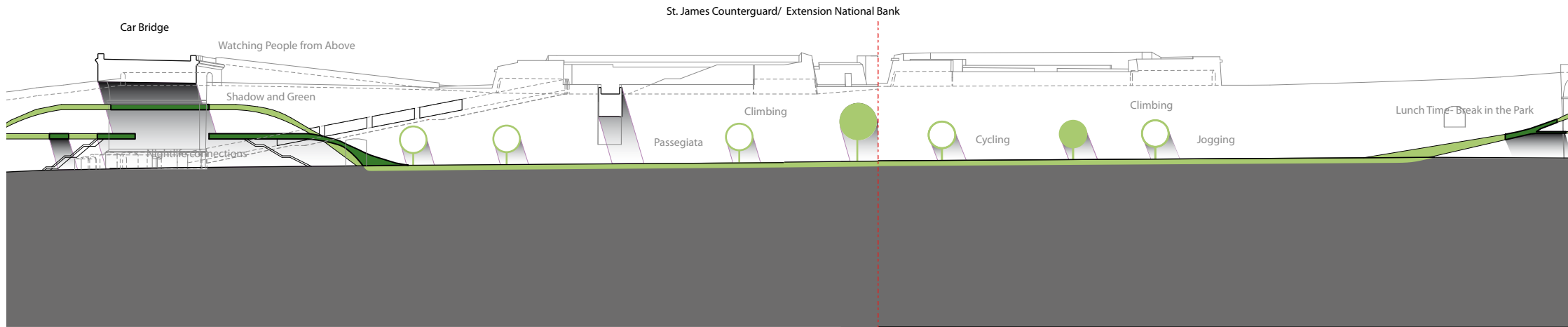
Overview 1:8000



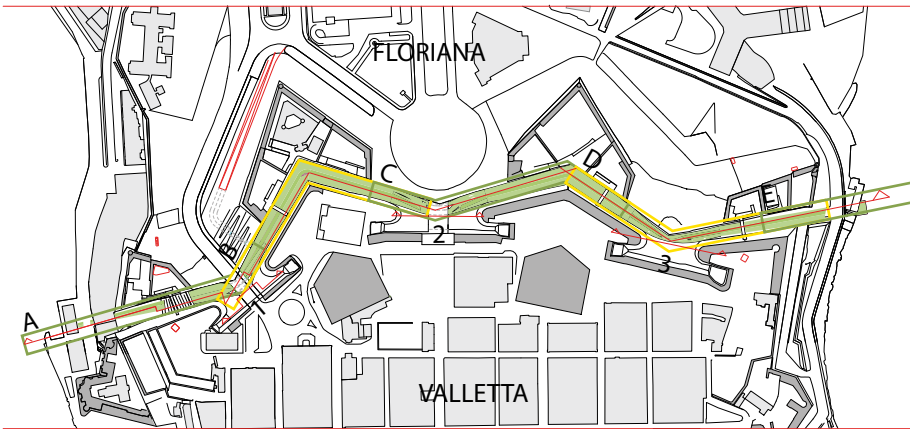
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Nightlife Square

The ditch- a resource for more life quality

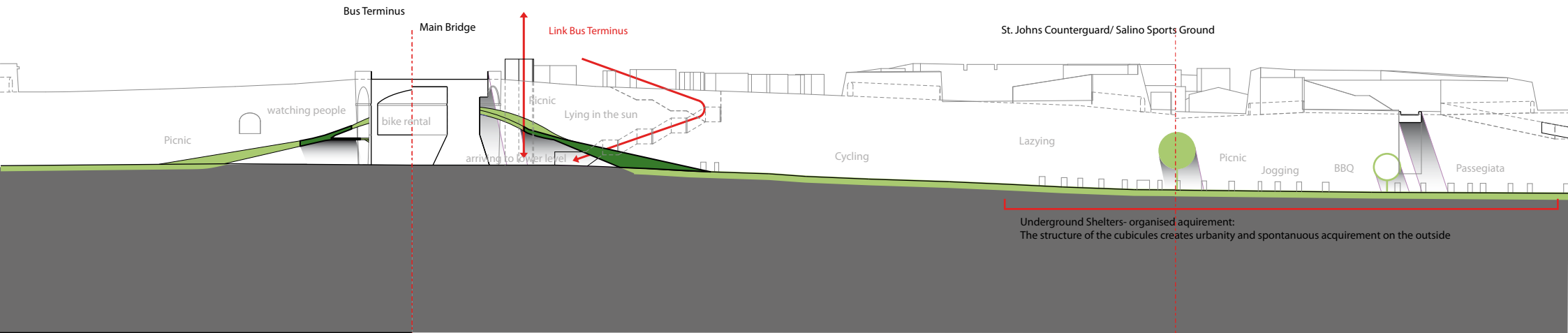


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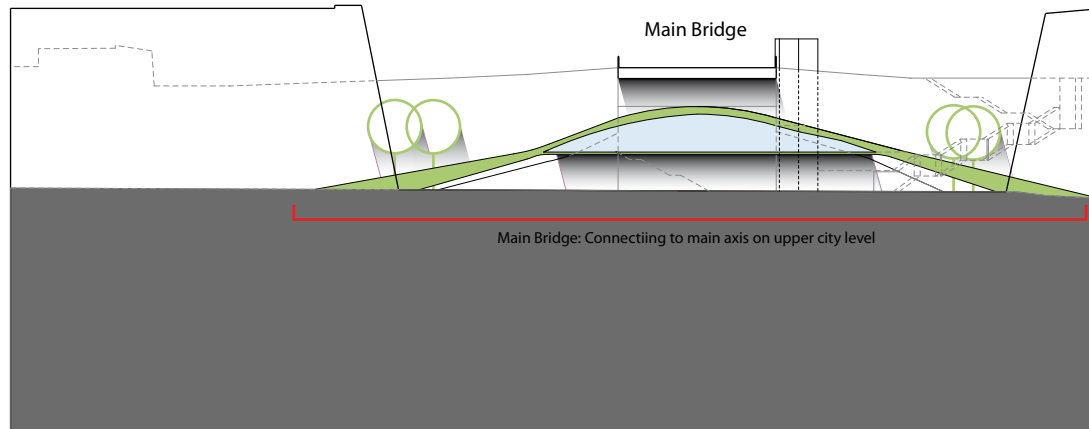


Overview 1:8000

The ditch - a resource for more life quality



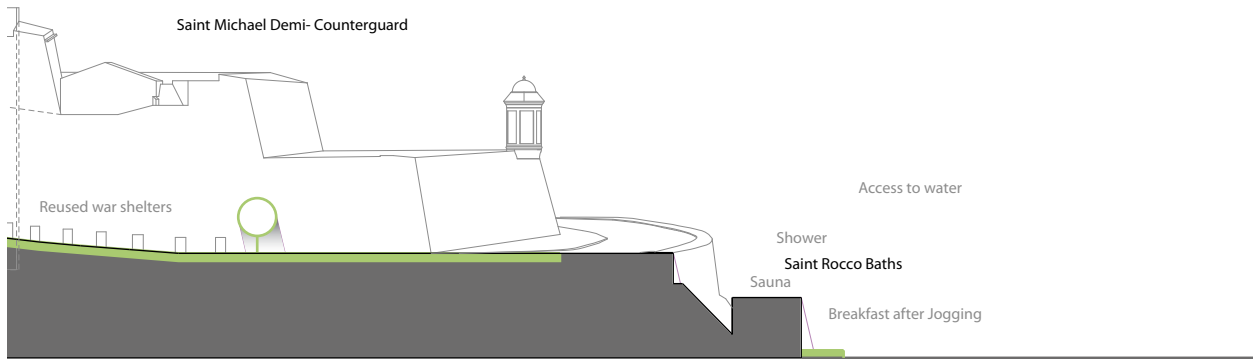
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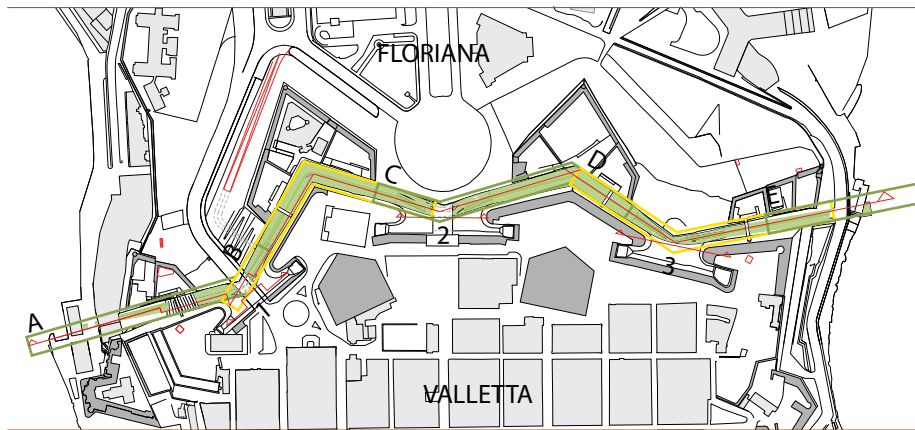
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Connection Square

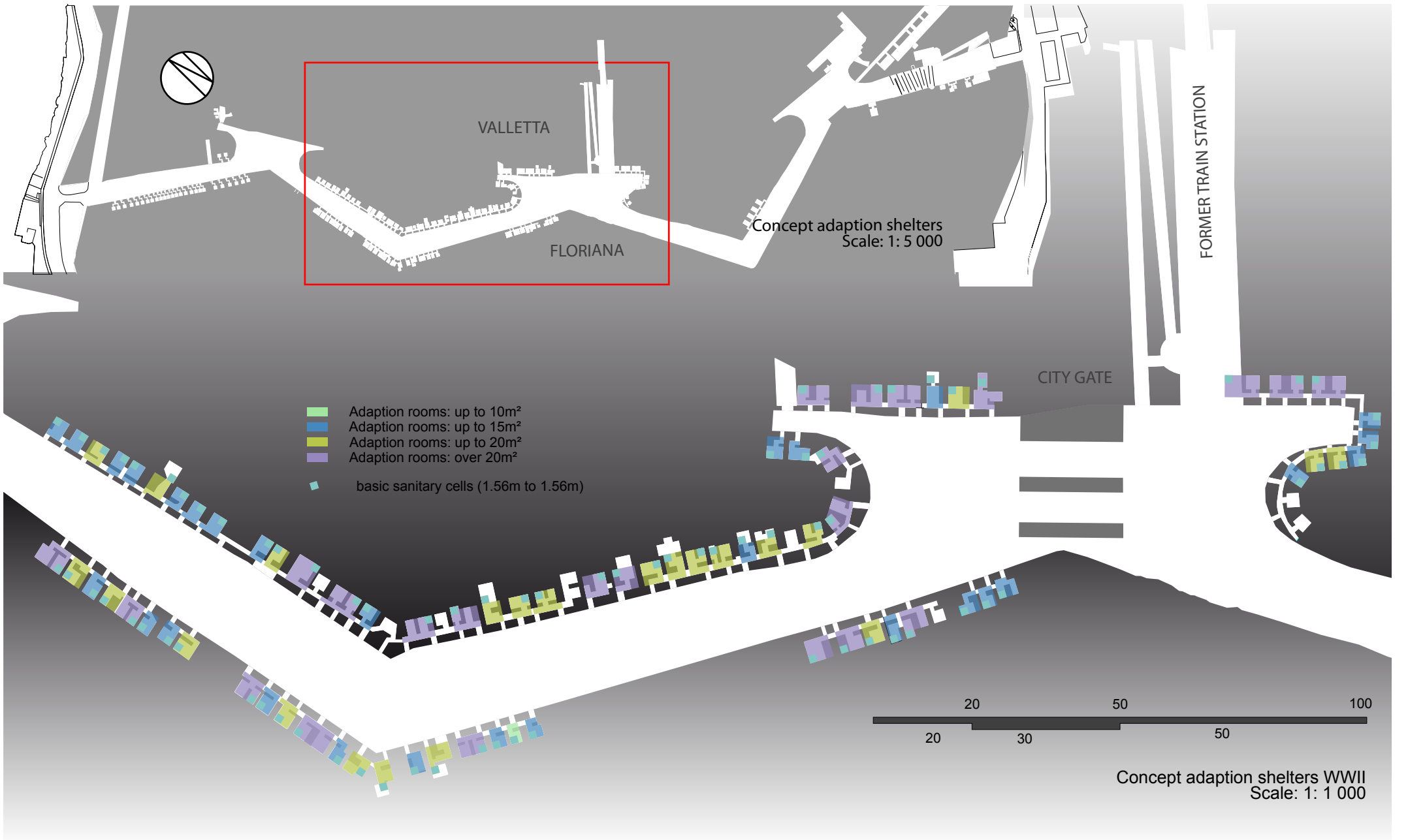
The ditch- a resource for more life quality

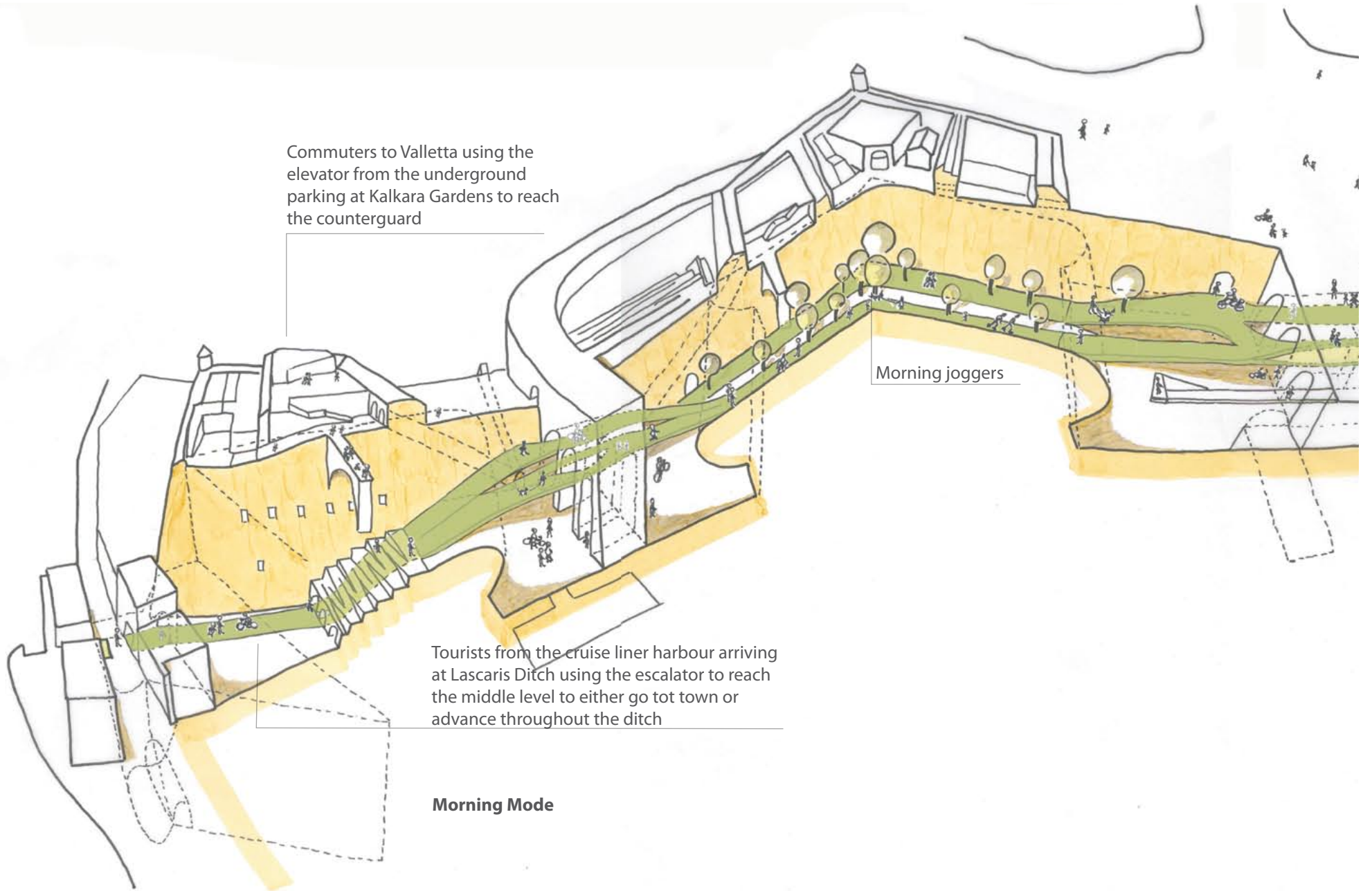


Section E, 1:1000



Overview 1:8000



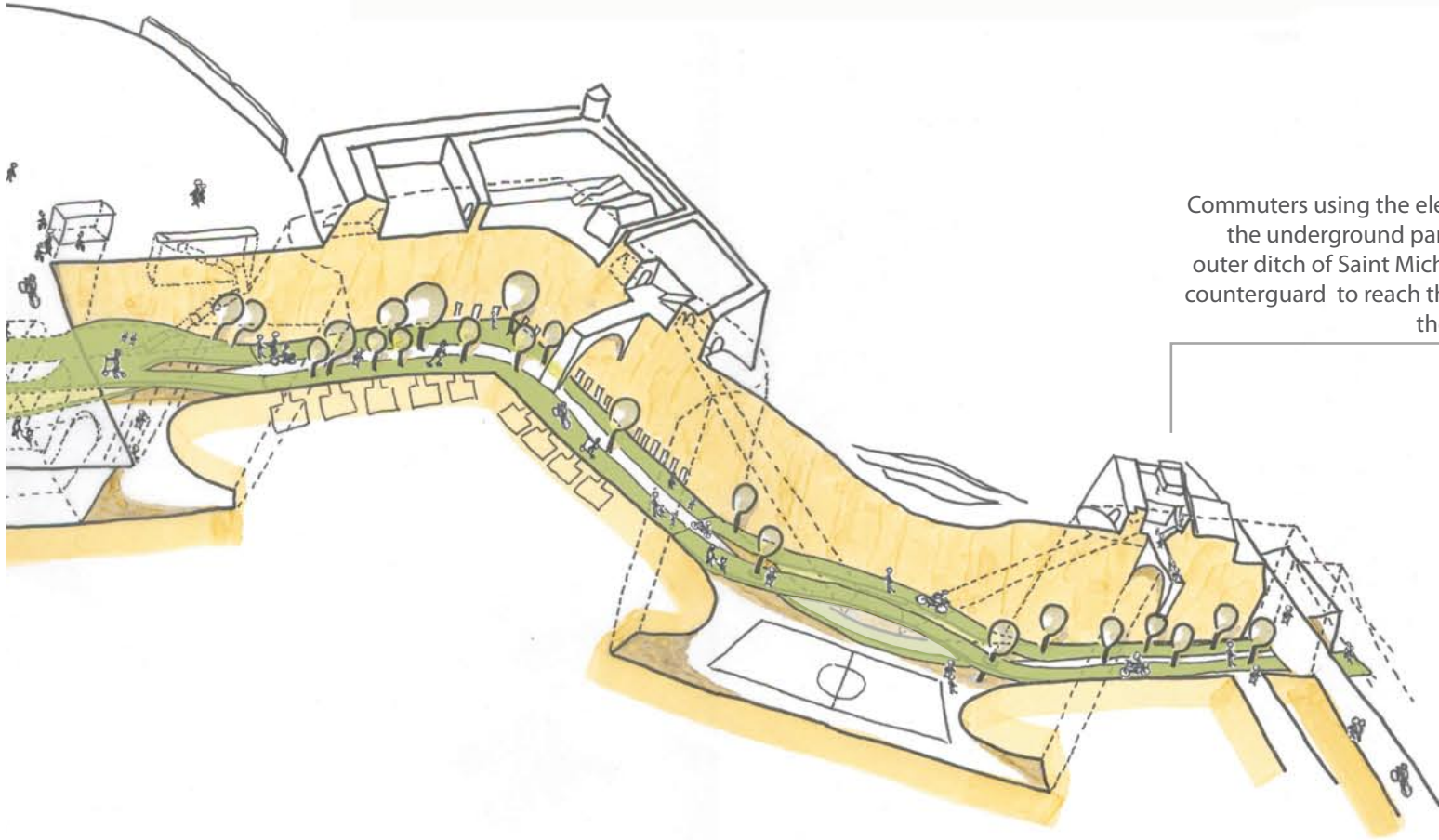


Commuters to Valletta using the elevator from the underground parking at Kalkara Gardens to reach the counterguard

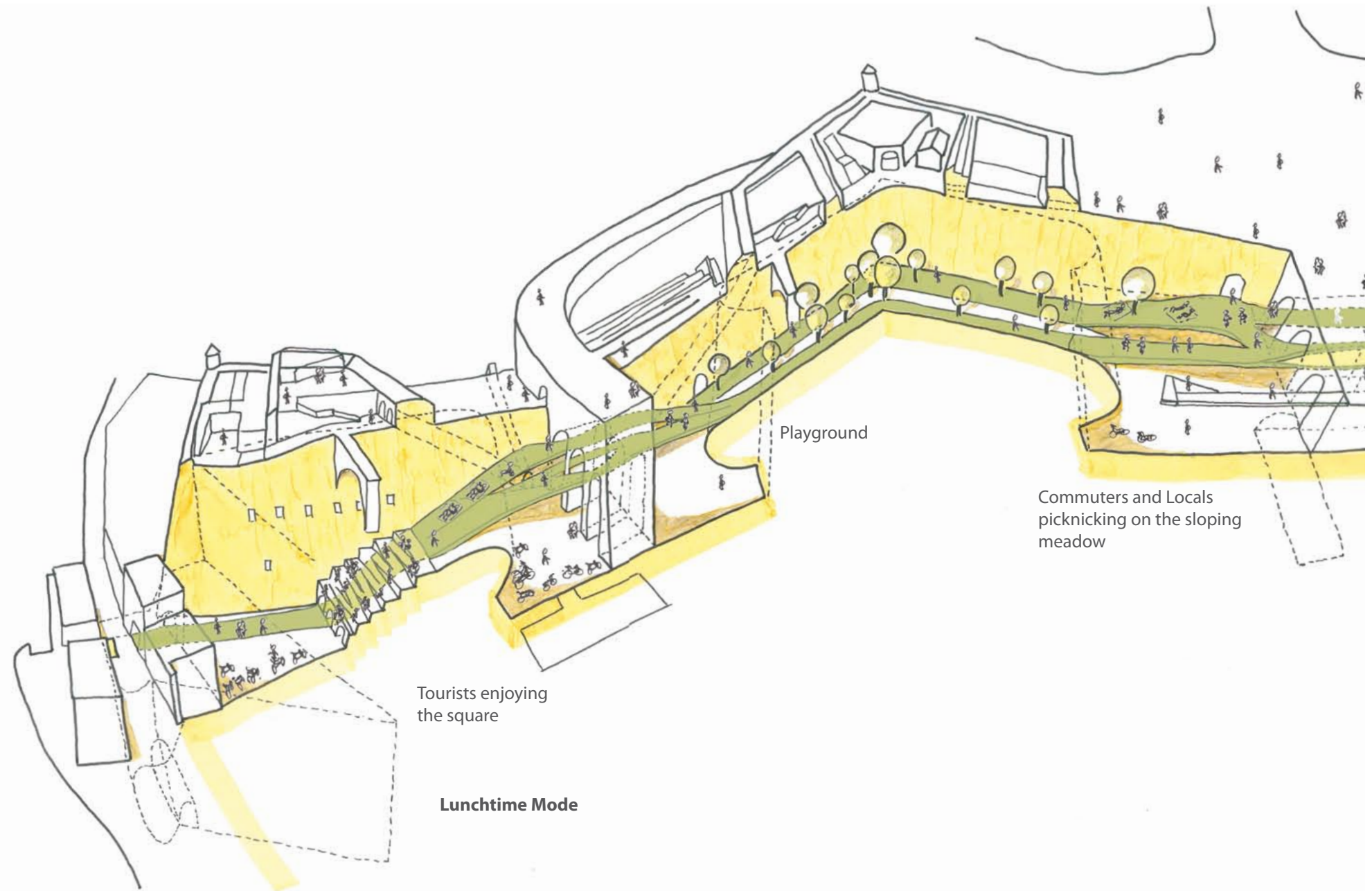
Morning joggers

Tourists from the cruise liner harbour arriving at Lascaris Ditch using the escalator to reach the middle level to either go tot town or advance throughout the ditch

Morning Mode



Commuters using the elevator from the underground parking in the outer ditch of Saint Michaels Demi-counter guard to reach the town via the fly bridge

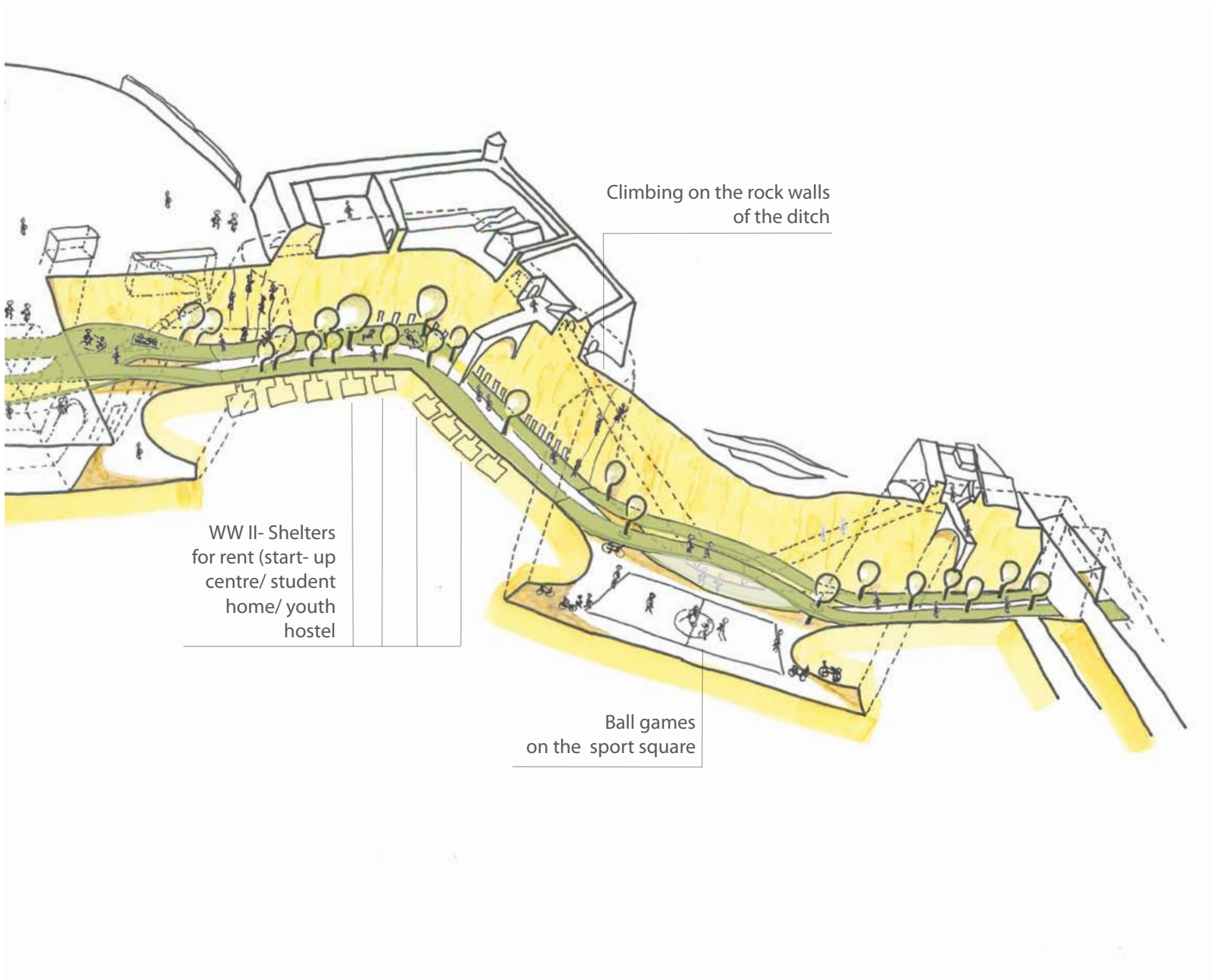


Playground

Commuters and Locals
picknicking on the sloping
meadow

Tourists enjoying
the square

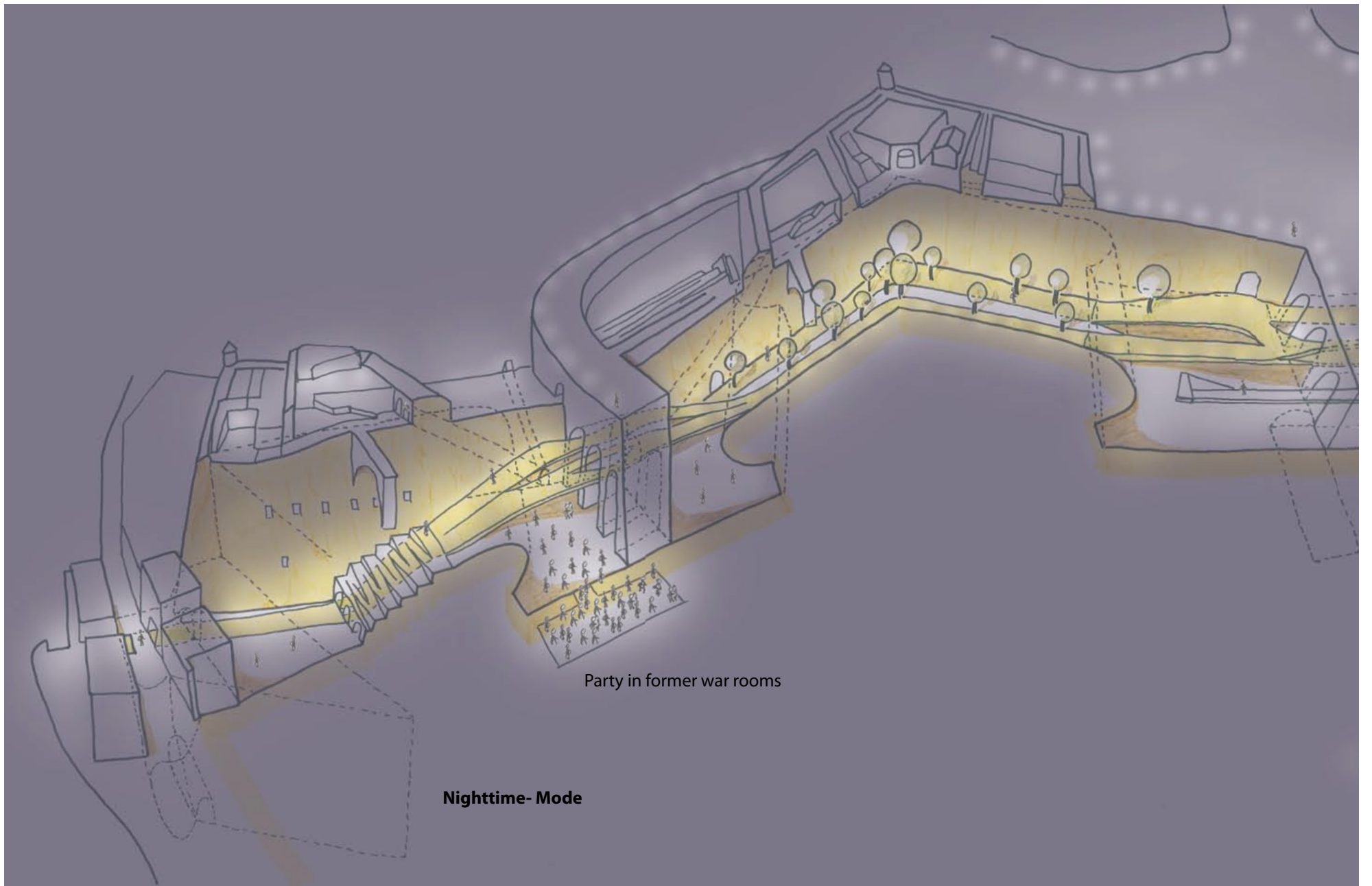
Lunchtime Mode



Climbing on the rock walls of the ditch

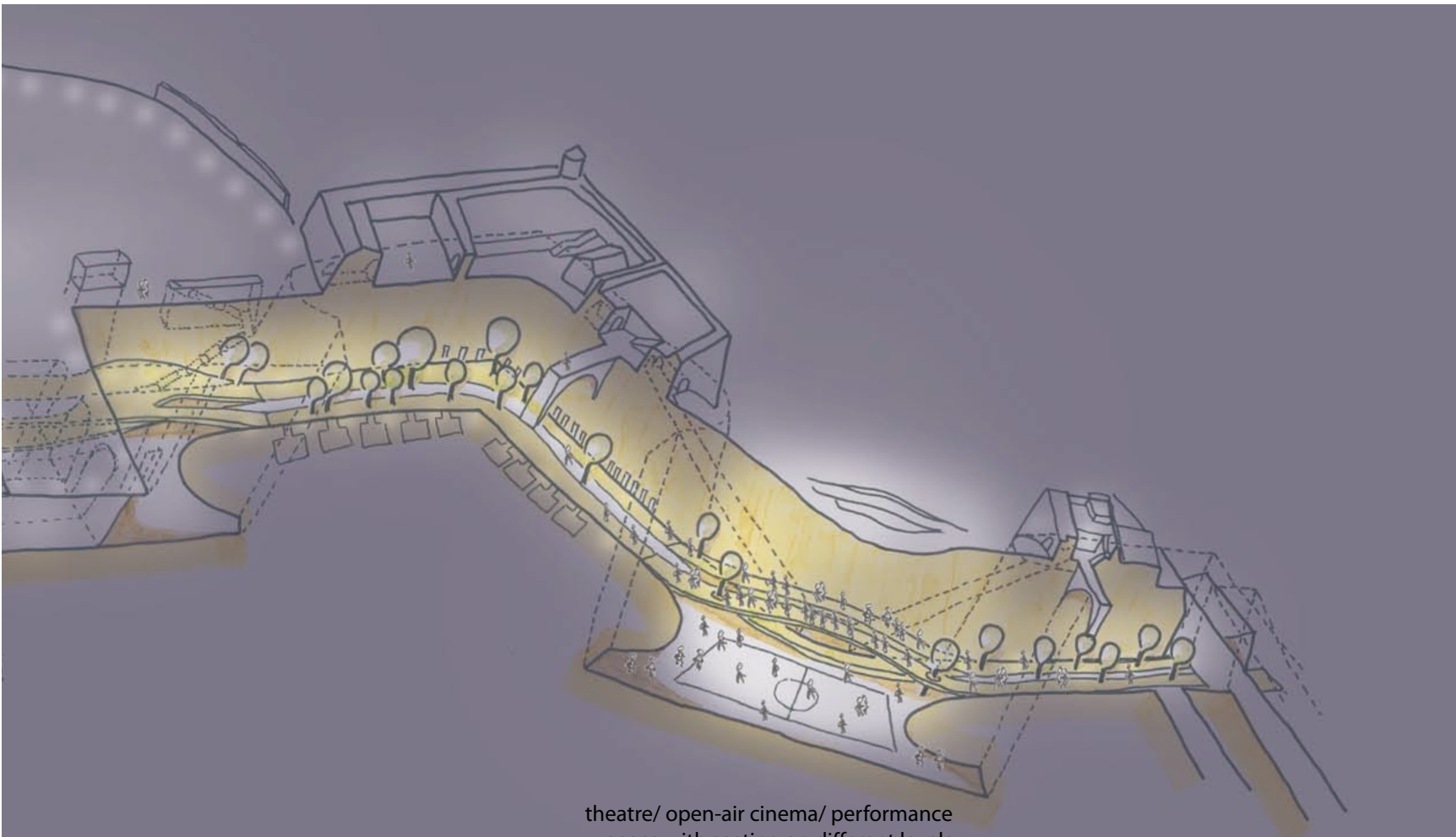
WW II- Shelters for rent (start-up centre/ student home/ youth hostel)

Ball games on the sport square

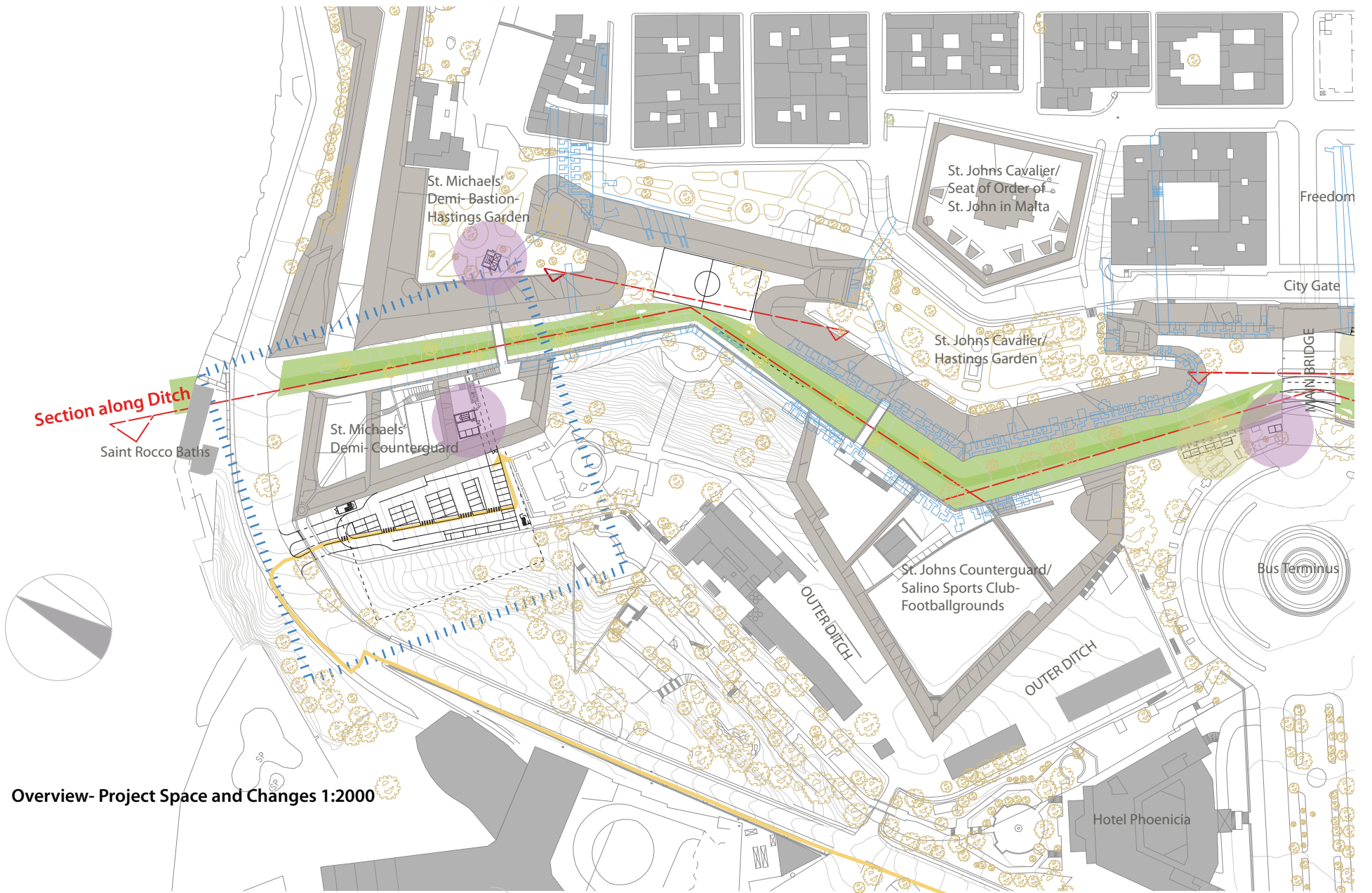


Party in former war rooms

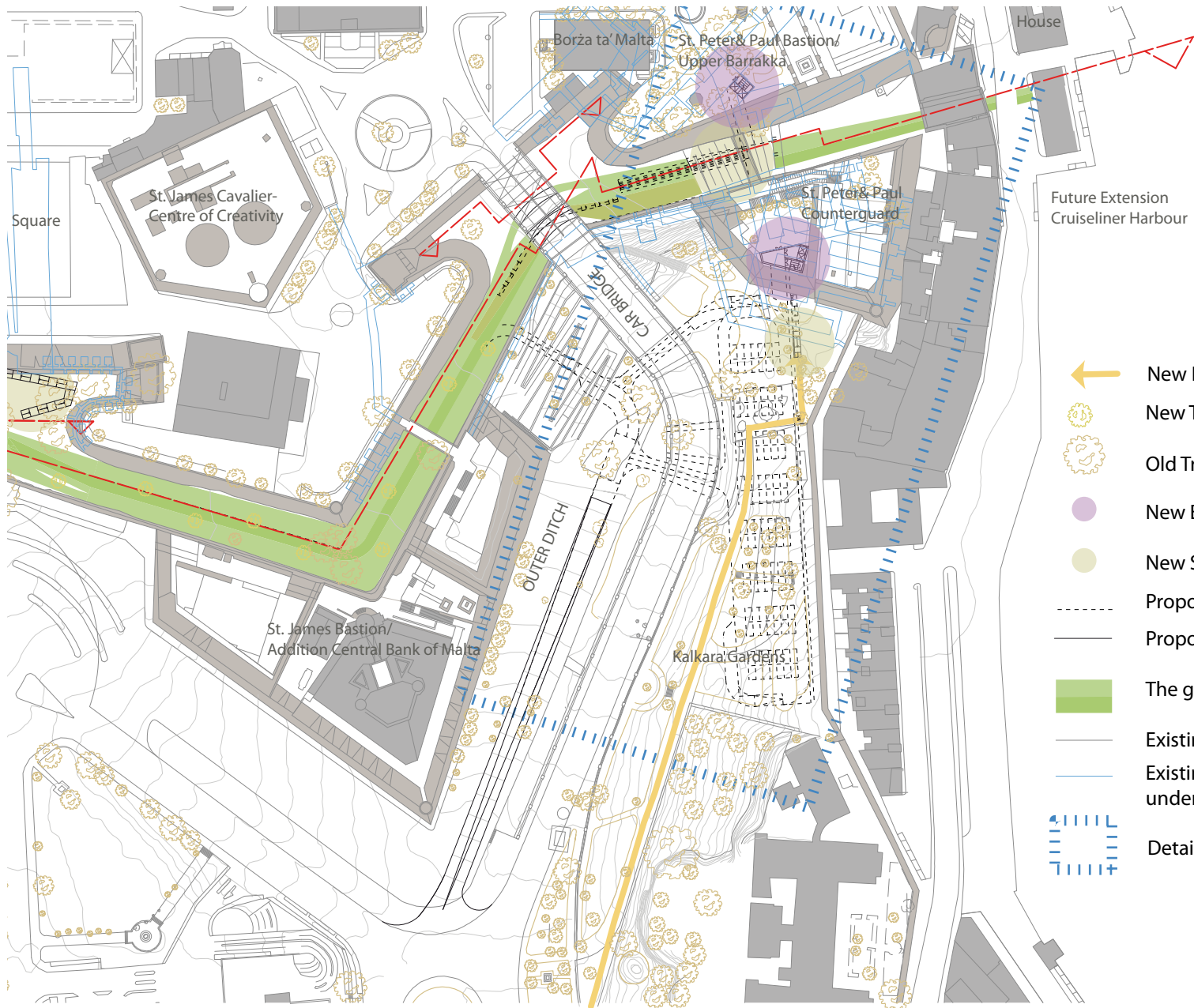
Nighttime- Mode














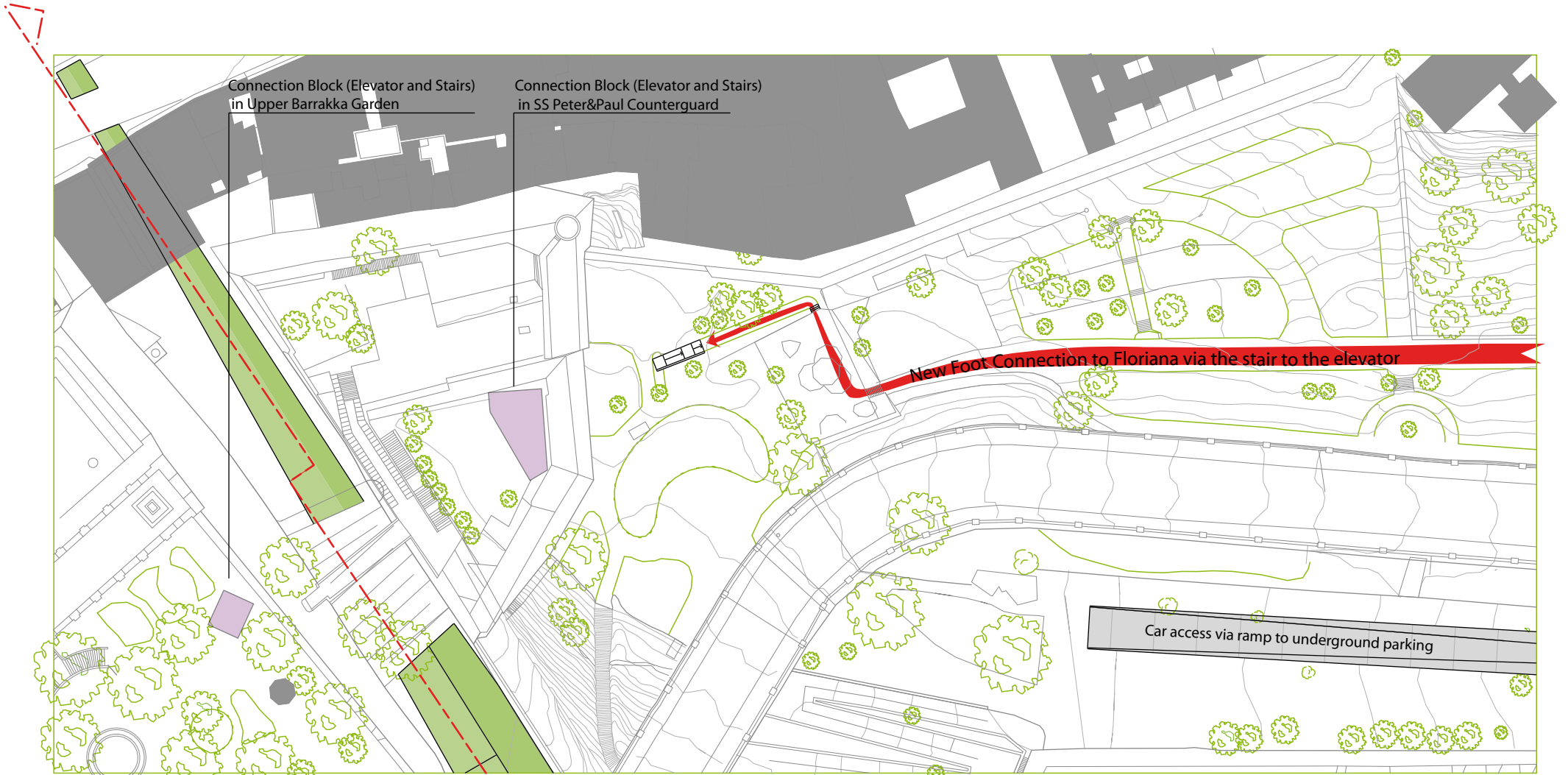
theatre/ open-air cinema/ performance
space with seating on different levels



Overview- Project Space and Changes 1:2000

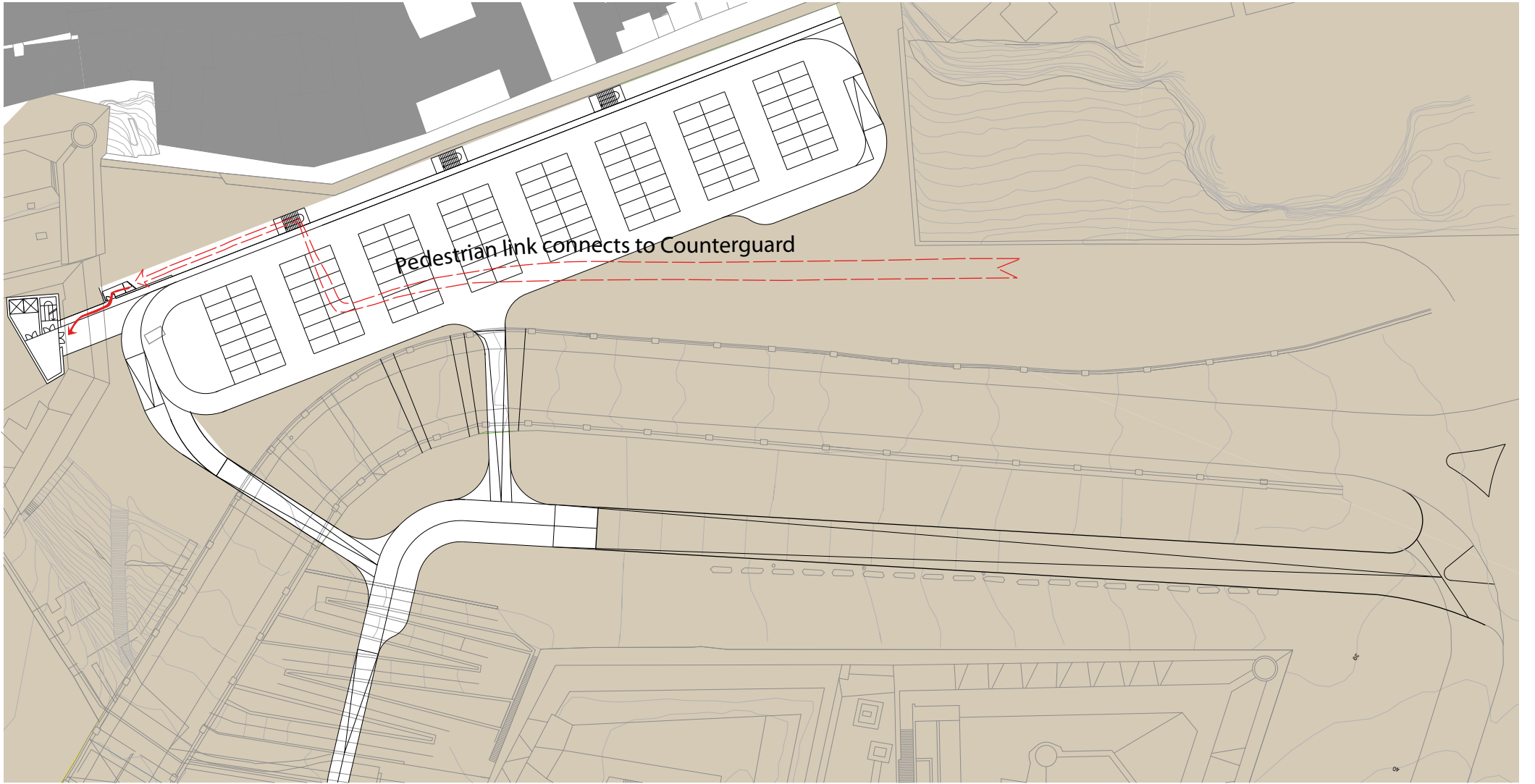


-  New Pedestrian Connections to Valletta
-  New Trees
-  Old Trees
-  New Elevators
-  New Stairs and Escalators
-  Proposed design- underground
-  Proposed design
-  The green ribbon in the ditch
-  Existing structure
-  Existing structure- underground rooms
-  Detail Plans



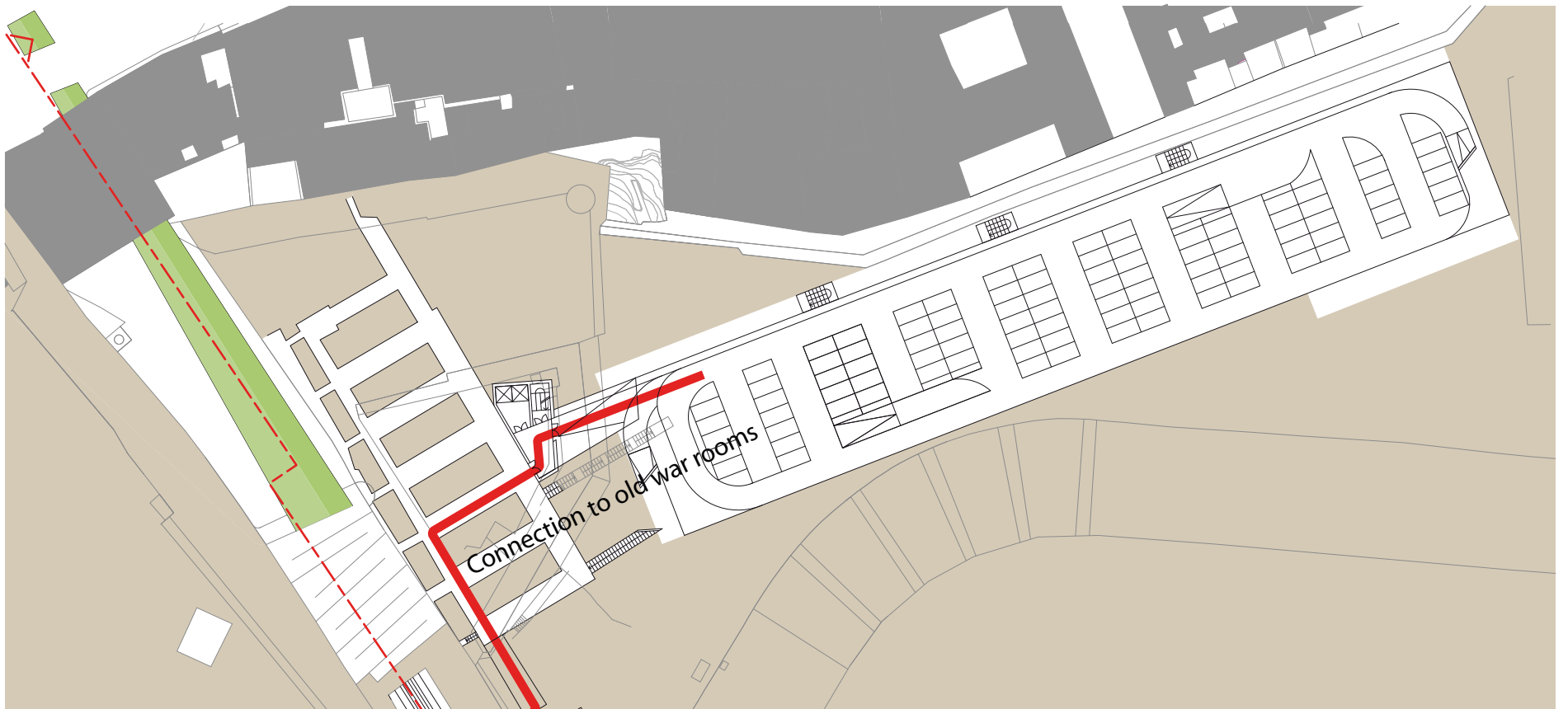
Top View Parking Garage Kalkara Gardens

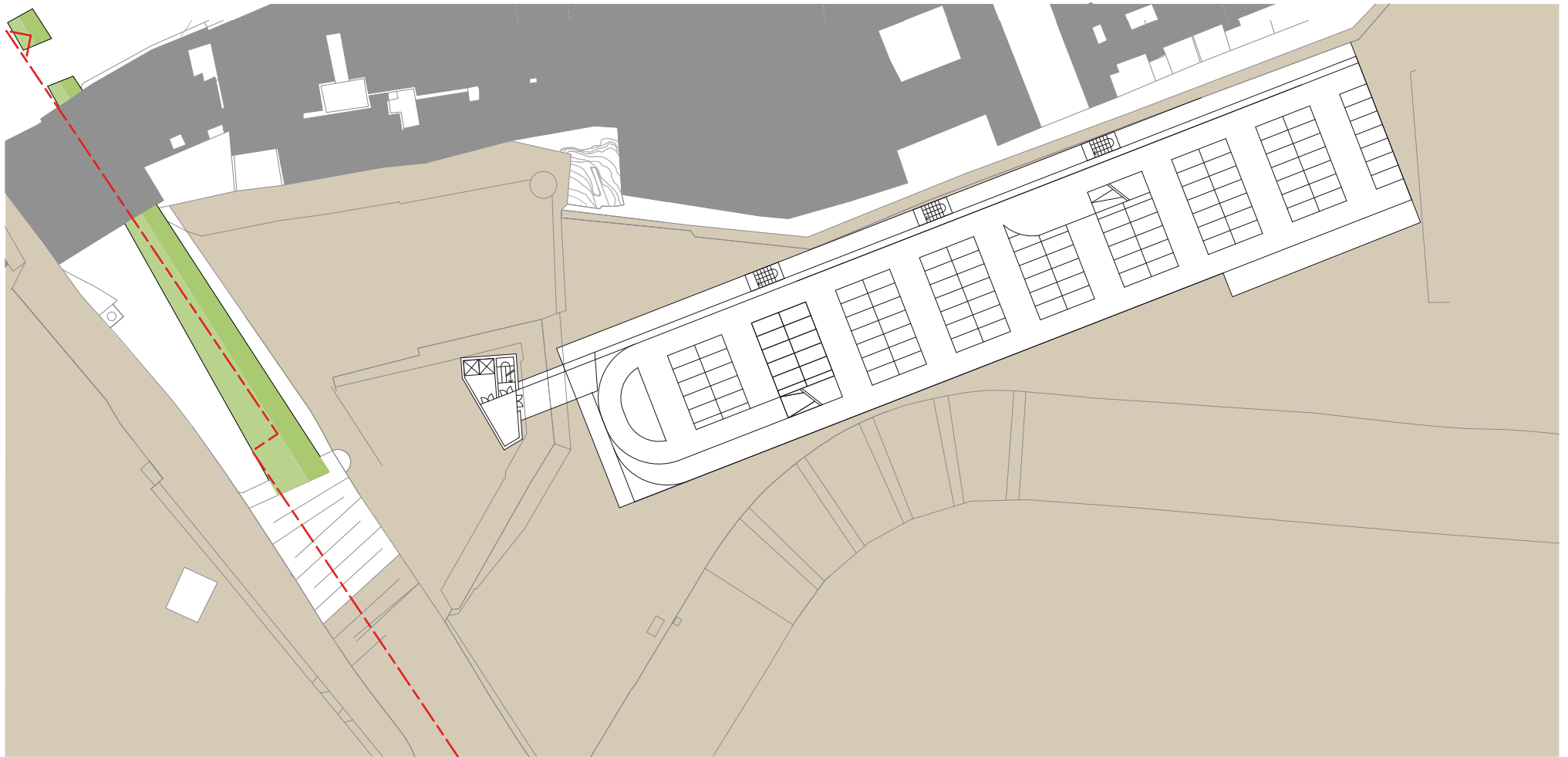
Scale 1:1000



Level 0 Parking Garage (27.30 above Sea Level)

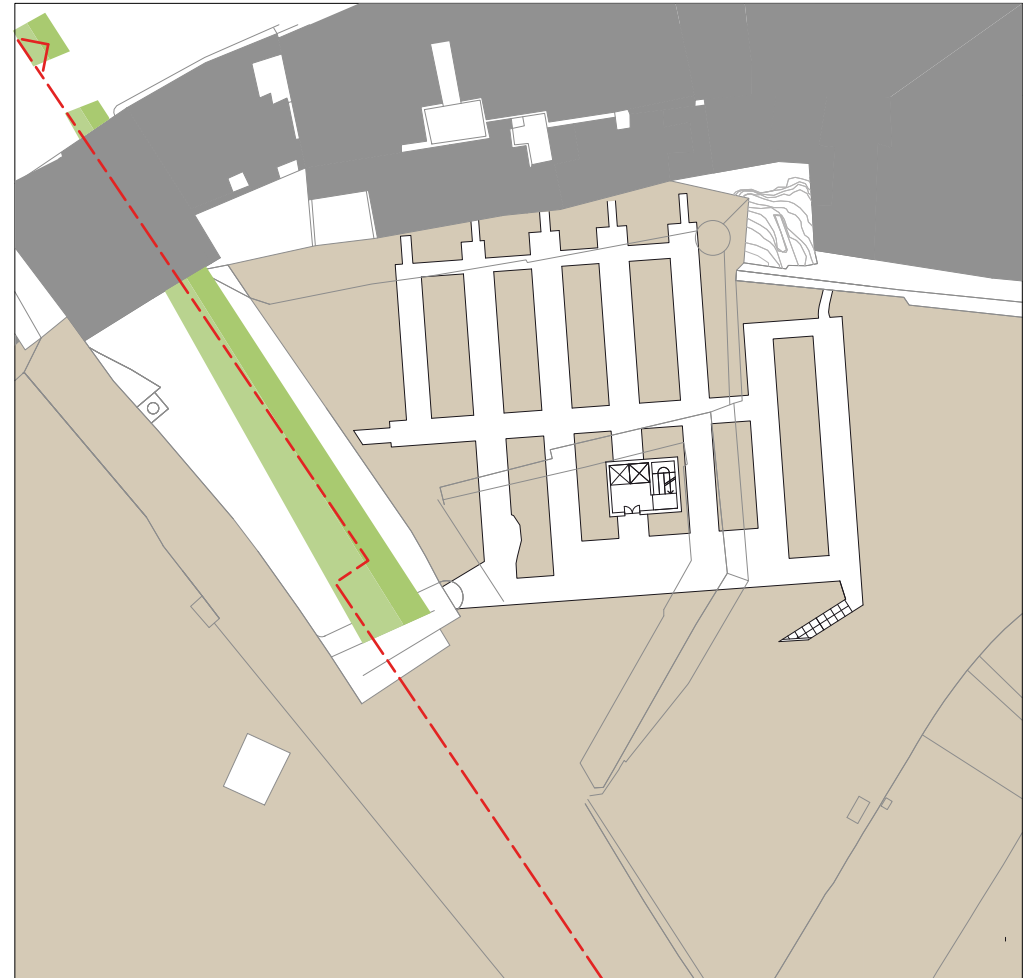
Scale 1:1000





Level -2 (20.40m above Sea Level) Parking Garage Kalkara Gardens

Scale 1:1000



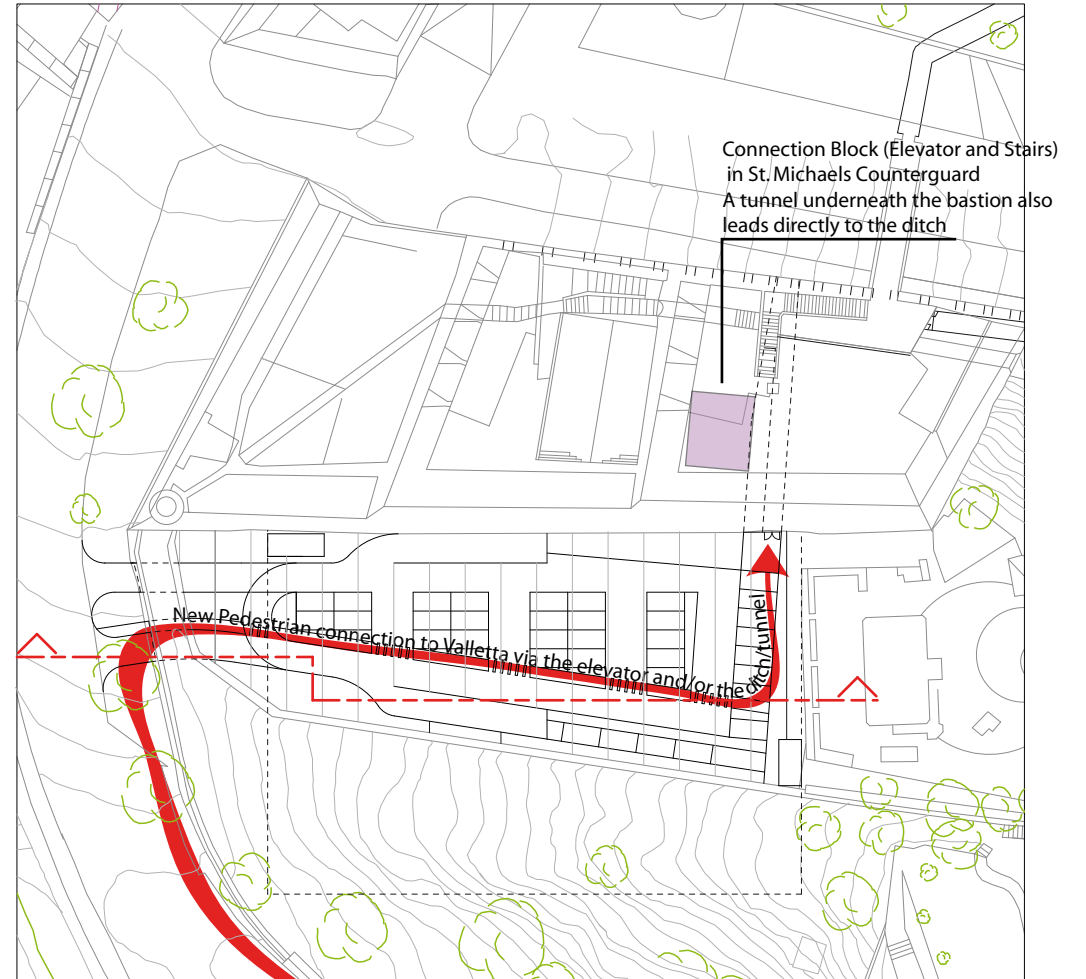
Level -3, (+13.45 above sea level) Connecting former War Rooms through Parking Garage with Kalkara Gardens

Scale 1:1000



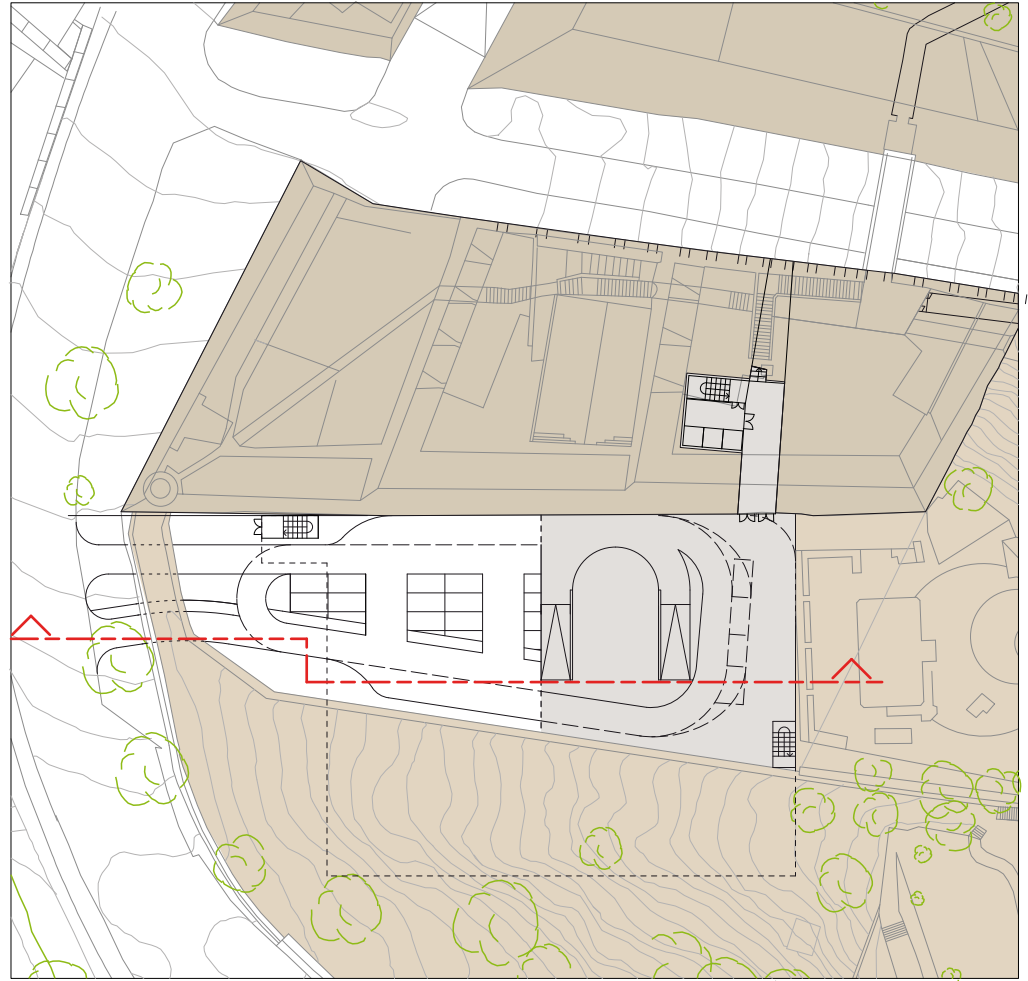
Level -4, (+3.63 above sea level) Harbour Access via escalator to the ditch and via elevator to Barrakka Gardens

Scale 1:1000



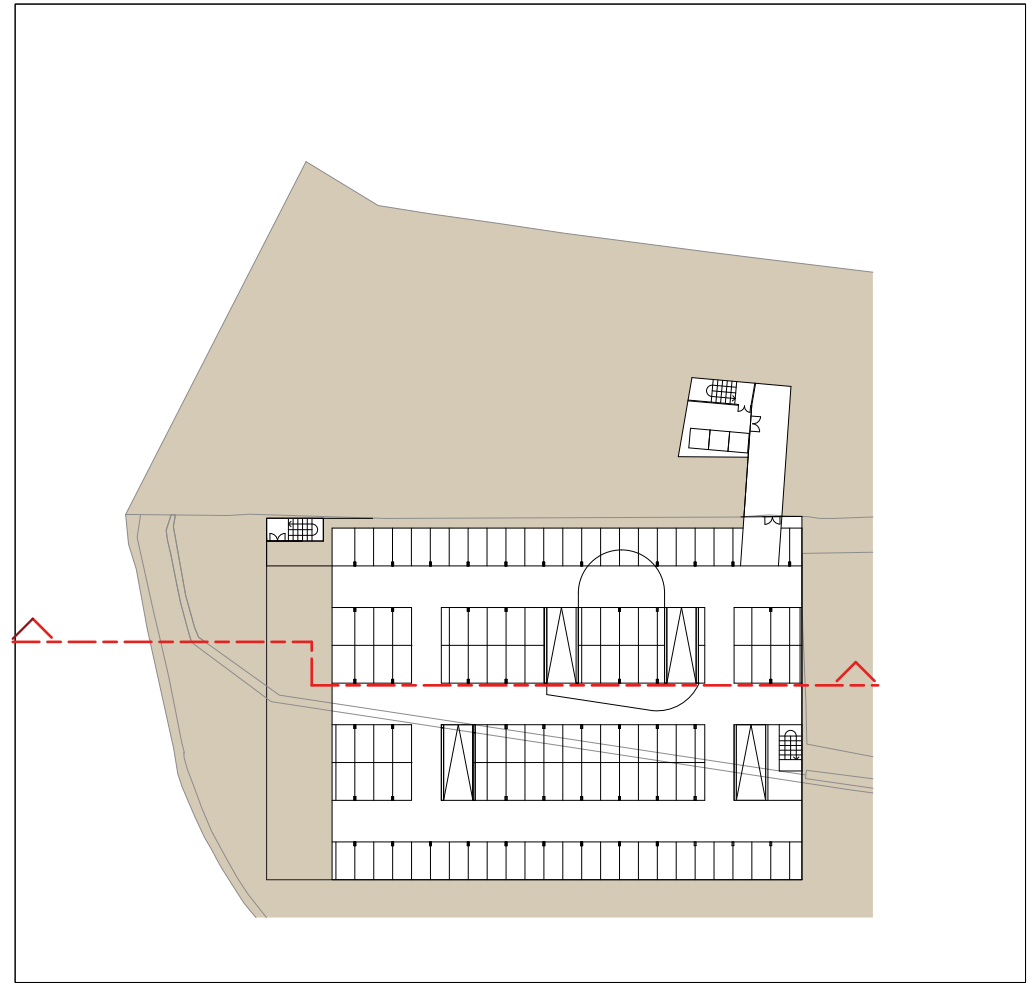
Top Level Parking Garage Outer Ditch St. Michael's Demi- Counterguard

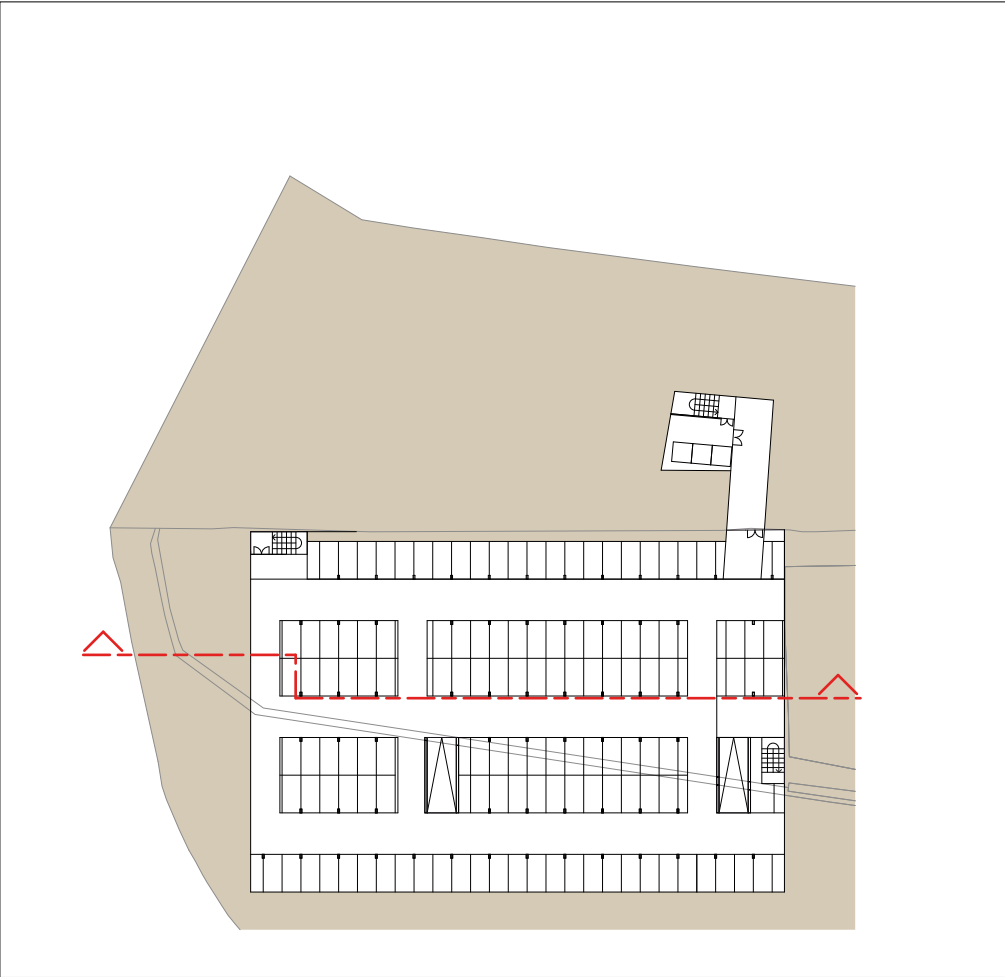
Scale 1:1000



Level -1 Layer 18.64 Parking Garage Outer Ditch St. Michael's Demi- counterguard

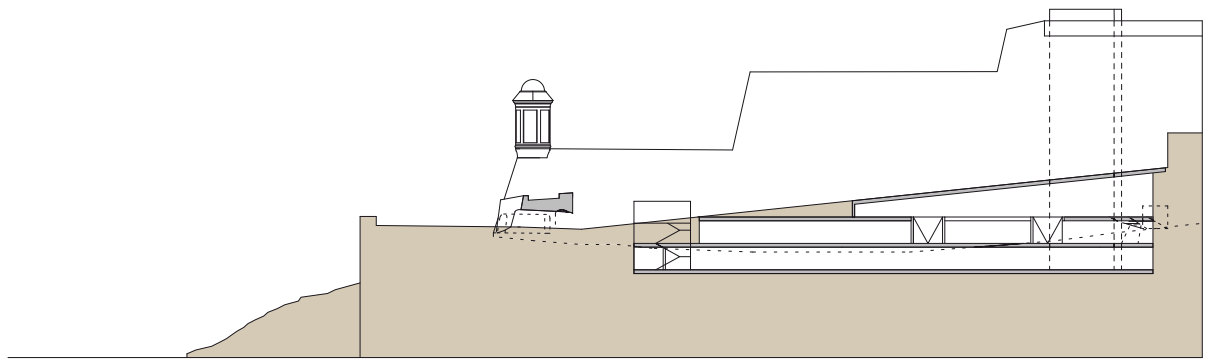
Scale 1:1000





Level -3 (11.64 m above sea level) Parking Garage Outer Ditch St. Michaels Demi- Counterguard

Scale 1:1000





Nightlife Ribbon (SS Peter and Paul Counter guard)



Sports Square- Area close to Salino Sports Club- can be acquired for ballgames



Ribbon at "Connection Square

