



Anglu Xuereb

Let's re-expose St Magdalen Ravelin

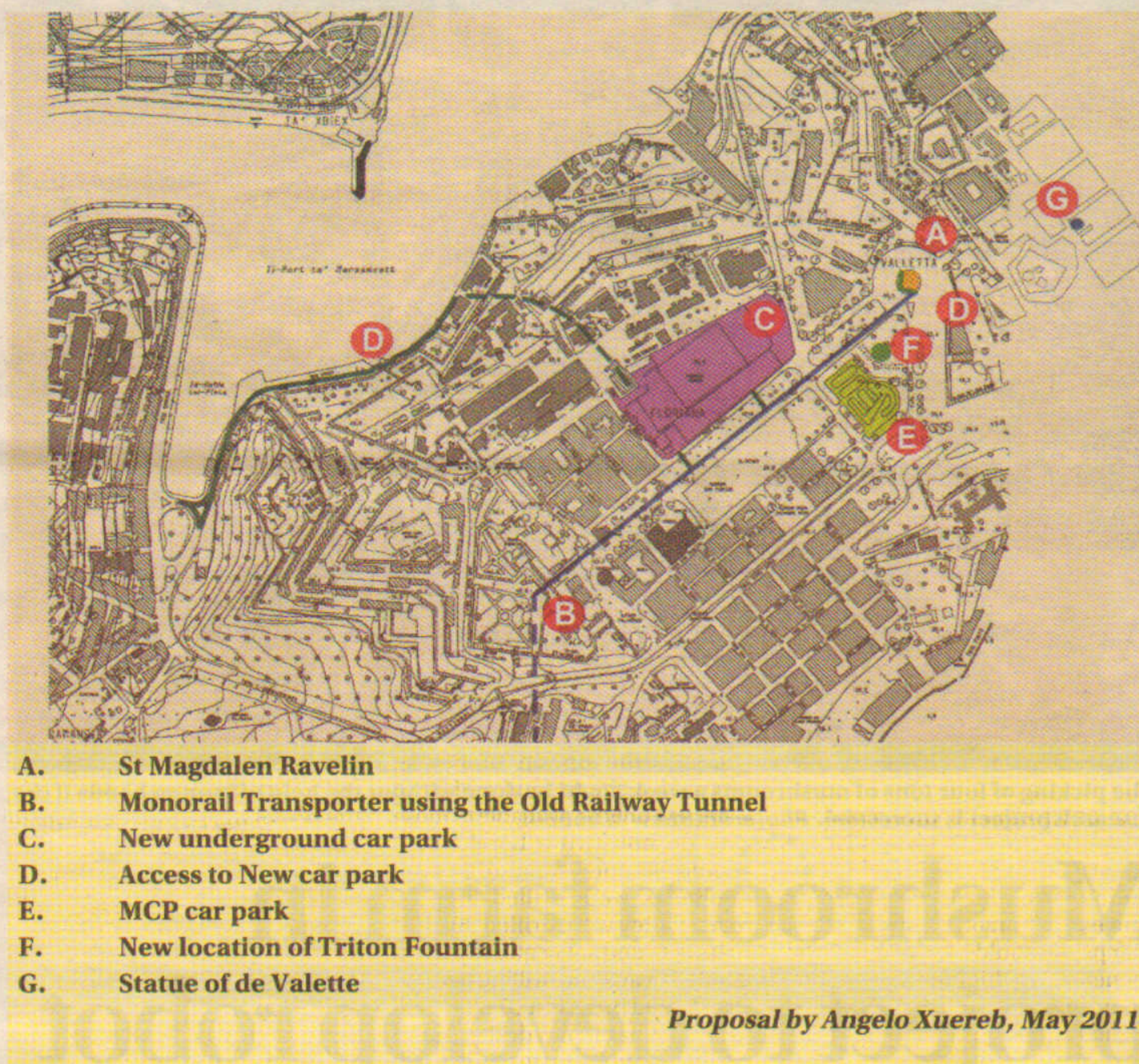
The announcement that the government will be relocating the Triton Fountain as part of the Valletta entrance project is commendable. The architecture and sculpture of the Triton Fountain does not blend with the new holistic design approach of the new City Gate and therefore relocating it was inevitable. The fountain's base was constructed in large precast blocks of local hard stone and mosaic, hence if handled with care, it can be easily shifted.

I have written several articles concerning our world renowned city of Valletta, including a master plan dating back to October 29, 1989 and another recent master plan inclusive of tackling the shortage of parking spaces and other transportation measures much needed for the city. I have always emphasised the importance of having the proposed large area pedestrianised as open space in front of Valletta's main entrance. In my article of August 21, 2009, apart from favouring the shifting of the Triton Fountain to an appropriate location in the adjacent public garden, opposite the Phoenicia Hotel, I also proposed the re-excitation and restoration of the historic St Magdalen Ravelin to its former state. These are at present buried just a feet below the proposed open space, beneath the Triton Fountain.

This is an opportune time for our government to incorporate St Magdalen Ravelin in the landscaping of the new entrance to our capital city. As an experienced building and restoration contractor, I am confident that such works can be easily carried out on time within the planned works project. Most of the works required mainly involve the excavation of loose material and re-installing the demolished walls, which most probably were dumped by hand in the same ditch while the area was being levelled after World War I. For practical reasons, it may make sense to excavate only the inner small moat, in order to allow the present proposed public transport to function as being planned.

I am certain that Renzo Piano and his professional architectural team can come up with an outstanding integration of St Magdalen Ravelin that would make present and future generations proud of our renaissance capital city. Mr Piano's main reason to shift the Triton Fountain is to expose the magnificent fortifications. Therefore why not also include the restoration of this Ravelin which forms a major part of Valletta's fortifications?

I also feel confident that after further consideration of the proposed plans, it will make more sense to have the proposed 55 car spaces next to the Phoenicia Hotel, located in a covered part of the MCP car park or another new underground car park. If these are intended to be reserved for members of Parliament, then the underground car



- A. St Magdalen Ravelin
- B. Monorail Transporter using the Old Railway Tunnel
- C. New underground car park
- D. Access to New car park
- E. MCP car park
- F. New location of Triton Fountain
- G. Statue of de Valette

Proposal by Angelo Xuereb, May 2011



park is only 100 metres away and protected from the elements.

In my article of 2009, I also proposed, and still encourage, that the government constructs a large multilevel underground car park for about 3,000 cars in the existing Floriana sports ground. Once completed, the existing sports facilities can be replaced on top of the car park while the first underground level can also be allocated for indoor sports. We have to keep in mind that unlike many other localities, Valletta and Floriana residents do not have such facilities. All other levels will be allocated to car parking which can also have a direct access for the north of Malta, from Sa Mai-

son at sea level, therefore heavily reducing the traffic congestion in Floriana area. Such a project could be financed by the private sector under a BOT (Built Operate and Transfer) or PPP (Public Private Partnership) basis.

This proposed car park, together with the MCP car park and Park and Ride car park, could be connected with an underground automated monorail system using the existing old railway tunnel, stopping at the restored St Magdalen Ravelin on a 24/7 basis. External escalators can take the commuters to the open public space, outside City Gate.

And finally, for the umpteenth time, I also beg the government to

erect a well-deserved life-size statue of Grand Master Jean de Valette. The monument can be placed in the proposed new open space behind the existing Opera House ruins, facing Our Lady of Victory Church, where over 440 years ago, Jean de Valette laid the commemorative foundation stone to the *nouveau* capital city bearing his name - Valletta. It is shameful that for generations, we omitted to give credit to he who built our precious city. If de Valette had lost the great battle during the Great Siege of 1565 against the Ottoman Empire, it would have changed Malta's culture and landscape. So let us give the man the memorial which he so deserves.

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