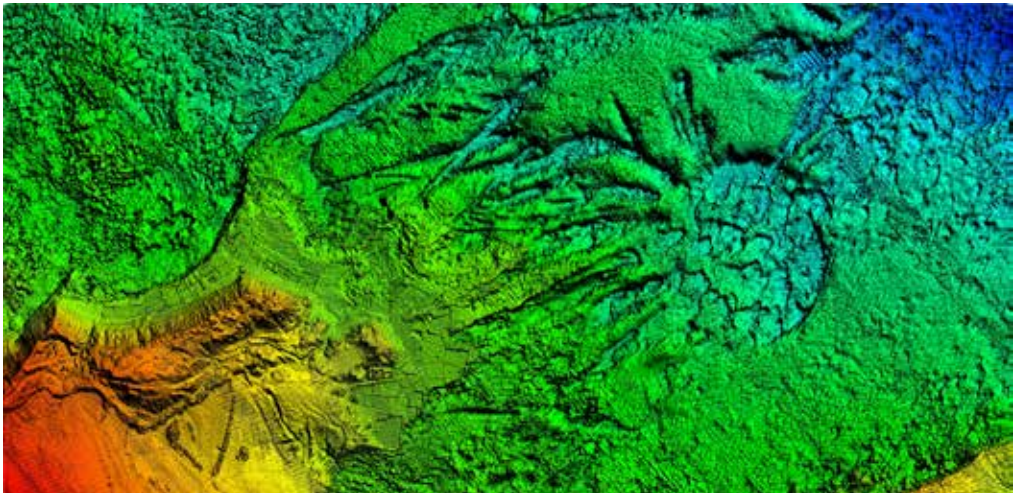
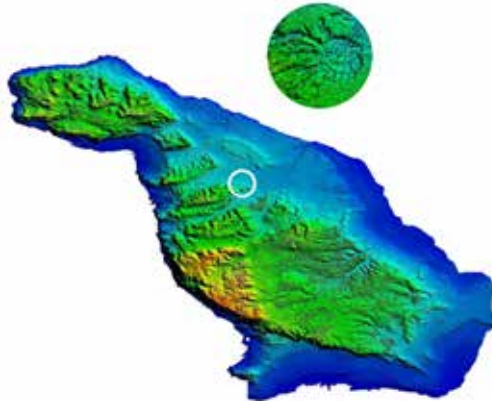


# ***l-Ghariebel***

*Discovered by Saviour Formosa on  
01 May 2014*

*UTM 33N (ED50) (445925.754, 3980766.794, -12.547m),  
35° 58' 09.2645" N, 14° 24' 01.0390" E*



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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Andrew Agius** has recently graduated with a B.Sc. (Hons) in Earth Systems from the Institute of Earth Systems at University of Malta, where he was introduced to the field of GIS. His dissertation, titled 'Improving boundary conditions of a numerical weather prediction model for the Maltese Islands', served as a precursor for this study. Andrew has subsequently started reading for an MSc in GIS through the iGEON programme, with Lund University and the University of Twente.

*Affiliation: Environmental Management and Planning Division, Institute of Earth Systems, University of Malta*

*Email: agius88@gmail.com*

**John Agius** is a social scientist. His expertise is in Risk and Disaster Management with a principal focus on Civil and Critical Infrastructure Protection. He holds a M.Sc. in Risk, Crisis & Disaster Management from the University of Leicester in England, a degree in IT, a Diploma in Law and Administration and a Diploma in Journalism & Professional Writing. He is the Director (CIP) heading the Critical Infrastructure Protection Directorate (CIPD) in Malta having a coordinating role of all emergency and disaster management on a national level. Mr. Agius coordinated the National Risk Assessment (NRA) for Malta (May-Dec 2015). His 30+ years of professional experience included Management, the Police, Law, Security, Planning and Environmental enforcement, Telecommunications, Civil Protection and Critical Infrastructure Protection.

*Affiliation: CIP Directorate, Malta*

*Email: info@johnagius.com*

**Francesca Azzopardi** was awarded a degree in Architecture and Civil Engineering, specialising in structural engineering, from the University of Malta in 2012, and obtained her warrant to practise as a Perit in 2014. She worked with a local contractor as a project manager on various large scale residential, commercial and industrial national and EU-funded projects. She currently works with the Malta Planning Authority on the processing and presentation of major EU-funded project applications, including the rehabilitation of historical buildings, road works, educational institutions and communal facility infrastructure. She has completed a masters degree in Construction Project Management at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. Her current research interests

include risk management, design management, project incentive controls and contractual arrangements.

*Affiliation: Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland.*

*Email: f.azzopardi@rgu.ac.uk*

**Joel Azzopardi** is full-time resident academic at the University of Malta (Faculty of ICT). He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Physics, and Computer Science & AI in 2004, and later obtained his Ph.D. in Intelligent Computer Systems in 2012. Between 2004 and 2013, Joel was a member of the Physical Oceanography Unit (PO-Unit) at the University of Malta (first as a Project Assistant and then as academic staff), and was involved in a number of national as well as European research projects in which the PO-Unit was a partner. Most notably he was involved in the MyOcean and MyOcean 2 projects where he was responsible for the development of downstream services that provide an added value to scientific data for national end-users (such as the Armed Forces of Malta, Transport Malta and also the general public), as well as the Calypso project where he developed the Calypso Data Interfaces. From October 2013 onwards, Joel has been a member of the Department of Intelligent Computer Systems (ICS) within the University of Malta where apart from teaching, he works on research mainly related to the processing of unstructured and semi-structured text - such as knowledge discovery, text mining, text categorisation, and information retrieval - as well as user modelling and adaptive hypertext.

*Affiliation: Intelligent Computer Systems, Faculty of Information & Communication Technology, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: joel.azzopardi@um.edu.mt*

**Renald Blundell** Ph.D. (Edinburgh), from Malta is a senior lecturer at the University of Malta and also a visiting associate professor at PanAmerican University in Nevis, West Indies. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Padova, Italy and the University of Edinburgh, UK. He developed a number of teaching programmes in a variety of areas including: biochemistry, forensic medicine, biotechnology, microbiology and food safety management. He has over 22 years of experience at university academic level. He was also involved in a number of other teaching programs at the higher education level in other countries including Tunisia, Oman, Egypt and Spain. His major areas of research and expertise are in Biochemistry, Biotechnology, Molecular and Cellular Genetics, Cloning, DNA Technologies, Forensic Sciences, epigenetics, stem cells and natural and herbal medicine.

*Affiliation: Department of Physiology and Biochemistry, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: renald.blundell@um.edu.mt*



**Marc Bonazountas** is a Civil Engineer. His expertise is in the entire broad spectrum of environmental sciences & engineering and in supporting peripheral domains of GIS, Infosociety and space technologies. Prof. Bonazountas has authored 600+ publications, proceedings and white papers, and is on the editorial board of several scientific journals & organizations. Tenured Professor, NTUA 1990+, School of Civil Engineering, Department of Water Resources & Environment; Member of the Scientific Management Committee of the European Environment Agency (EEA, 2007-2010); Chairman of the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee of the European Council of Civil Engineers (ECCE, 2007-2010). He was with Arthur D. Little Inc, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA (1976-87); with Rhein-Main-Donau AG, Germany (1972-73). He has managed 60+ major EC/RTD projects, has lead and guided 150+ major state-of-technology projects, has supervised 40+ major academic research projects.

*Affiliation: Epsilon International SA, Greece*

*Email: bonazountas@epsilon.gr*

**Alannah Bonnici** obtained her Master's degree in Earth Systems Science from the University of Malta (Malta) in 2016. The research involved optimization of the Weather Research and Forecasting model's schemes and equations to accurately represent deep convective events that lead to floods in the Central Mediterranean Region. Ms Allanah Bonnici had previously obtained her Bachelor's degree in Physics and Geophysics from the University of Victoria (BC, Canada) in 2011..

*Affiliation: Environmental Management and Planning Division, Institute of Earth Systems, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: allanah.bonnici@gmail.com*

**Brian Borg** graduated in Computing and Information Systems from the University of London and also obtained a Masters Degree from the University of London in GISc. During his studies, Brian Borg has obtained two awards for outstanding achievement. Brian has a wide and diverse extensive experience in the GIS Software engineering field and GIS integration with ERPs, SCADA, CRM, etc. His experience ranges over 20 years and progressed from smaller-scale companies to his current role as Executive Director – Strategic Information within the Water Services Corporation. He managed teams leading Transformational Projects using technology to change the way organisations operate their business processes, considering the 4 change dimensions (people and culture, organization, process and technology). He has played the advisor role for ICT and GIS Strategies in various entities and he believes that people are the most important component to achieve any organisational goal or project success. Brian is a very good strategist, strong and creative thinker and brings the level of excitement needed to work

positively. Team motivation is another area where he excels to get the most of the teams under his supervision. He continuously comes out with new ideas and new projects on a constant basis..

*Affiliation: Water Services Corporation, Malta*

*Email: borgb05@gmail.com*

**Michelle Borg** Responsible for developing the strategic policy framework on coastal and marine spatial planning since 1993, with over twenty years experience in main streaming coastal management, environmental and climate change matters in land use planning through policy development, plan making, project implementation and environmental assessment. Represented Malta in the EU ICZM Expert Group (2002 – 2011) and UNFCCC Climate Negotiations (2007-2010), currently representing Malta in the EU Expert Group on Maritime Spatial Planning. From 2011-2014 held a co-ordinating role for plan making and policy development at Ministry level including the preparation of the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development, the National Waste Management Strategy and the National Aquaculture Strategy. An Assistant Lecturer on coastal management from 1997-2008 and guiding dissertation students reading for an undergraduate in Geography and post-graduate in Islands and Small States, currently a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta.

*Affiliation: Planning Authority, Malta.*

*Email: michelle.borg@pa.org.mt*

**Dr George Buhagiar** graduated as an architect and civil engineer from the University of Malta in 1989. He completed a Masters Degree in Regional and Resources Planning, from the University of Otago, New Zealand, in 1995. He completed his Doctorate at the University of Lincoln, New Zealand in 2004, with Malta-based research on institutional capacity building for integrated environmental management in small-scale governance political systems. He worked with the Works Division as a design architect and project manager from 1989 onwards. Since 1996, he has worked more as a planner, being assigned projects including: the rehabilitation of the Maghtab landfill, planning and coordination of a programme of embellishment projects in tourist areas in the South, in the North Harbours, and a national parks strategy in 1997 after which he was responsible for master plans for national and regional parks. He headed, and was behind the setting up of the PARK Department, under the then Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs in 2004. He returned to the Works Division in 2005 where he also set up the Valley Management Unit and then worked on planning and coordination of the National Flood Relief Project, an EU-Funded (2007-2013) project. He presently heads the Strategy and Planning Services Unit of the Works and Infrastructure Department, Ministry for Transport and

Infrastructure and is working on other national EU Funded (2014-2020) projects. He is concurrently planning and coordinating the establishment of an enterprise-level GIS within the WID-MTI.

*Affiliation: Works and Infrastructure Department, MTI, Malta*

*Email: george.buhagiar@gov.mt*

**Vincent Cassar** a Perit, ia a graduate in Architecture and Civil Engineering from the University of Malta, joined the Public Service in 1973 as a Junior Architect and Civil Engineer with the then Public Works Department and was assigned to the Schools and Hospitals Section. Since then he has worked within other sections of the Public Works organization and was responsible for various projects including those for housing, healthcare and hospitals, and other major projects of a civil engineering nature such as roads and marine works. He was involved in environmentally related projects such as those for the formulation of the Sewerage Master Plan and the works related to it, the collection, separation and treatment of solid wastes and the treatment of liquid wastes.

With the reorganisation of the Public Works in 1992 into the Works Division made up of a number of Departments, Perit Cassar was appointed as the first Director General, a position he actively occupied up till 2003.

Following the Malta General Elections in April 2003 he was appointed Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for Youth and the Arts. With a change in premiership in February 2004 and the establishment of the Ministry for Urban Development and Roads, responsible for urban development and land transport issues, he assumed the responsibility for that Ministry as its Permanent Secretary. Perit Cassar retired from Government service in June 2008 and was subsequently engaged in his own private practice as a Perit and freelance consultant. Since 2013 he has served the role of MEPA Chairman and Planning Board Chairman since 2016. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Civil Engineers (FICE) and a Fellow of the Institute of Health Estate Engineering Management (FIHEEM), a past President of the Rotary Club La Valette, ex-Chief Scout of the Scout Association of Malta and past President of the Kamra tal-Periti and its National Delegate to the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), the European Council of Civil Engineers (ECCE) and the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) the latter of which he is currently its President.

*Affiliation: Planning Authority, Malta.*

*Email: vincent.cassar@pa.org.mt*

**Valerian Croitorescu** is an Associate Professor of Automotive Engineering within Faculty of Transport, University Politehnica of Bucharest, Romania. His main fields of interest are power train and alternative power train (hybrid, electric) design and development, vehicle dynamics, modelling and simulation of engineering systems, real-time simulation,

automotive driving behavior and driving simulation. He is also Founder and Executive Director of the Scientific Research and Continuous Training Center for Sustainable Automotive Technologies (SRCTCSAT), from the University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest. He is strong involved in international cooperation activities and his academic records include numerous awards and certifications.

*Affiliation: Scientific Research and Continuous Training Center for Sustainable Automotive Technologies, University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest*

*Email: valerian.croitorescu@upb.ro*

**Alexiei Dingli** is an Associate Professor of Artificial Intelligence within the Faculty of ICT, University of Valletta, Malta. His work abroad was rated World Class by a panel of international experts. His recent work in Mobile Technology and Smart Cities (2011) was also awarded a first prize by the European Space Agency and an e-Excellence Gold Seal at the prestigious CeBit Conference in Germany. He published several posters, papers, book chapters and a book in the area. He also worked as a Senior Manager in a large government corporation. During the past years, he pursued an MBA with the Grenoble Business School in France specialising on Technology Management. He has been Mayor of Valletta for the past five years where he was instrumental in the bid of Valletta to become the European Capital of Culture in 2018.

*Affiliation: Department of Intelligent Computer Systems, Faculty of Information & Communication Technology, University of Malta*

*Email: alexiei.dingli@um.edu.mt*

**Steve Fenech** read for a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminology at the University of Malta. He pursued his studies in understanding the applications of GIS and further analysed the phenomena of both unauthorised graffiti and street art under the supervision of Prof. Saviour Formosa. His study shed light on different aspects related to the subject matter which took a pragmatic approach to quantitatively unravel any social, spatial and other relationships that pertain to these forms of art. Soon after completing his programme, Steve commenced his Master's programme in business information systems management at Middlesex University. He had the opportunity to explore in more detail the application of different information systems (IS) in the criminal justice system, especially in domains related to e-commerce. Whilst also understanding more the dynamic and complex nature of information systems in different environments, from both a managerial and legal standpoint, the author had in-depth exposure to subject areas related to knowledge management, project management and the application of IS in different business contexts. The author decided to focus his studies on forecasting and statistics within supply chain management. The aim of his final study was to formulate two different calculations, that

take into consideration a number of variables, with the intent to create optimum stock levels within a company based on limited data. Following the completion of his degree, Steve wishes to pursue his academic studies in areas related to information systems, systems management and data analysis within the criminal justice system.

*Affiliation: Department of Criminology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: steve.fenech@hotmail.co.uk*

**James Foden** is a warranted engineer by profession with a reputable track record in programme management, manufacturing new technology and facility development, strategy and product validation. His education includes a first degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Malta, an M.Phil. in Materials and an Engineering Doctorate in High Performance Applications in Aerospace & Related Technologies, both conducted with Rolls-Royce plc. and the University of Birmingham, UK. James has a wealth of experience in aviation through eight years with Rolls-Royce Manufacturing Technology and Combustion and Casings (C&C) divisions. There, he developed his career from a contracted research engineer in 2004 focusing on technology strategy, through to Advanced and Principal Engineer positions, as well as R&D Group Leader up to 2010. In 2011 he also held a New Product Introduction Manager role for Rolls-Royce Combustion and Casings.

James Foden has also published number of articles and conference papers on advanced manufacturing, technology foresight, technology management and Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs). His experience in academia was also furthered through work with the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, as well as the University of Malta.

In 2013, James Foden was appointed R&I Deputy Director with the Malta Council for Science and Technology, later to hold an Acting Director position for Programmes, Policy, Strategy and Projects. In 2015 he was appointed Director of the R&I Programmes Unit, being his current role. He is also a national delegate for European Space Agency and a Council member for Eurisy.

*Affiliation: Malta Council for Science and Technology, Malta*

*Email: james.foden@gov.mt*

**Saviour Formosa** has a PhD in spatio-temporal environmental criminology (University of Huddersfield 2007), having acquired an MSc in GIS (University of Huddersfield 2000) and a BA (Hons) in Sociology (University of Malta, 1994). He is an Associate Professor and Head of Department within the Department of Criminology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta. His main area of research is in spatio-temporal analysis of crime and its social and physical relationships using spatial information systems. His main expertise

lies in the implementation of cross-thematic approaches and uses of the data cycle and management with emphasis in the thematic and spatial data structures, visualisation and socio-technic approaches to crime analysis. He has led projects on Aarhus, INSPIRE, ERDF, ISEC, ESPON and serves as contact point for various international fora. Dr. Formosa is a member of the European Society of Criminology, the founder of Malta Criminology Association and the Malta Association of Geographical Information, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a Member of the Applied Criminology Centre at the University of Huddersfield. He has developed the [www.crimemalta.com](http://www.crimemalta.com) website which covers ongoing crime-related and spatial statistics in Malta.

*Affiliation: Department of Criminology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, Malta.*

*Email: [saviour.formosa@um.edu.mt](mailto:saviour.formosa@um.edu.mt)*

**Charles Galdies** is a lecturer with the Division of Environmental Management and Planning within the Institute of Earth Systems. He has received his Ph.D. in Remote Sensing and GIS from Durham University (UK) in 2005. He studied ways to improve small-scale weather and ocean forecasting in the central Mediterranean region using novel remote sensing observations of the ocean and atmosphere. Dr Galdies previously served as Chief Meteorological Officer of the Malta Meteorological Office from 2007 to 2011, and Deputy Executive Director of the International Ocean Institute Headquarters. He is the Permanent Representative of the Government of Malta with the World Meteorological Organisation.

*Affiliation: Environmental Management and planning Division, Institute of Earth Systems, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: [charles.galdies@um.edu.mt](mailto:charles.galdies@um.edu.mt)*

**Timmy Gambin** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Malta, from where he obtained a B.A. in History. Following his undergraduate studies, Dr Gambin went on to attain an M.A. in Maritime Archaeology and History at the University of Bristol in the UK where he continued his postgraduate studies by reading for a doctorate in Maritime Archaeology. Since 2001, he had been a visiting lecturer at the department and took up the post of Senior Lecturer in Maritime Archaeology in the spring of 2012. Over the past years, he has been involved in numerous collaborative research projects. The PaleoMed Project with the CNRS (Aix en Provence) is aimed at the reconstruction of ancient coastal landscapes and environments of the Maltese Islands. The multidisciplinary approach sees archaeologists working together with geomorphologists and palynologists. The Ancient Cisterns Project with CalPoly (USA) explores underground

water management systems through the use of small remote operated vehicles armed with a variety of sensors. Dr Gambin also directed numerous offshore underwater surveys in various parts of the Mediterranean including Spain, Italy and Croatia.

*Affiliation: Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Malta.*

*Email: timmy.gambin@um.edu.mt*

**Maria Gove** has over 18 years experience in GIS. She graduated from Birkbeck College, University of London in 2010 with a M.Sc. in Geographical Information Systems and Sciences. In 2011, Maria joined the Authority for Transport as a GIS Manager responsible for all the GIS Initiatives. Previously she worked both in the private and public sector in leading national projects and development teams mainly in Cadastre as GIS Manager. Maria has multi disciplinary experience in various leading GIS technologies: ESRI, Mapinfo and Opensource solutions

*Affiliation: Authority for Transport, Malta*

*Email: maria.gove@transport.gov.mt*

**Stephen Grixti** received his Electrical Engineering degree from the University of Malta in 2010 and continued with an M.Sc. in Aerospace Vehicle Design at Cranfield University. In 2011, he started off freelancing as an IT engineer, supporting a number of companies in Malta and also temporarily abroad. Beginning of 2013 he was one of the first Maltese to follow a traineeship within ESTEC, the state-of-the-art research centre of the European Space Agency (ESA). Working within the Flight Software Systems section, his work contributed towards testing new software architectures for ESA spacecraft. In 2015 Stephen joined the team at the Malta Council for Science and Technology and since then has been the main technical responsible on Space and related technologies. His tasks include stakeholder engagement and analysis of local interest within the field of space and related technologies, through active liaison with public, research and private entities. Stephen is also a delegate on a number of fora and committees within the sector at a national, EU and space agency level. He is also a national delegate for the ESA, supporting the associated national strategy with ESA.

*Affiliation: Space and Related Technologies Executive, Research and Innovations Programmes Unit, Malta Council for Science and Technology*

*Email: stephen.a.grixti@gov.mt*

**Ashley Hili** is a Senior Information Resources Officer in a National regulatory agency responsible for environment protection and development planning. She graduated with a Higher Certificate in Land Administration (Planning) in 1998 and subsequently with a Diploma in Planning in 2000, both from the University of Malta. She then graduated

from the Manchester Metropolitan University with an M.Sc. in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Science in 2006. Ashley has worked for the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) for the past 17 years, currently as a professional GIS expert, where she has contributed to diverse projects mainly in the field of spatial research, data management and project coordination/leadership.

*Affiliation: Planning Authority, Malta*

*Email: ashley.hili@mepa.org.mt*

**Omar Hili** is an ICT officer (ICT System operations) with the Malta and Planning Authority (MEPA). Omar has been employed with the authority for over six (6) years during which his main I.C.T roles are Firewall and Network Security and Network infrastructure administration. Omar carries certifications in both his primary roles, a Checkpoint firewall certification and Cisco (CCNA) certifications together with more than 15 years of experience in I.T. Omar has also an M.Sc. in Applied Geographical Information Systems (GIS), in conjunctions to I.T. Such M.Sc applied to his I.T skill has allowed him to work on the ERDF156 project in the installation and implementation of the Shared Environment Information Systems (S.E.I.S), Omar has also contributed in research and implementations of remote sensing devices, analysis using lidar and ortho-photographic imagery and also various other GIS related projects within the Environmental and Planning section of the authority, he has also successfully implements two Geoportals for internal and external use. Omar is also currently involved in the Planning Authorities change over to a standardized SDI platform using ESRI GI platforms and administering Arcgis Servers and Geo-spatial Databases including webservices.

*Affiliation: Planning Authority, Malta*

*Email: Omar.hili@mepa.org.mt*

**George Karagiannis** is a civil engineer. He holds an Advanced Master in Disaster Risk Management (Ecole Internationale des Sciences de Traitement de l'Information, Cergy-Pontoise, 2008) and a Ph.D. in Environmental Science and Engineering (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Saint, 2011). His expertise lies in Disaster Risk Management, Model-based risk analysis and Industrial emergency plan.

*Affiliation: Epsilon International SA, Greece*

*Email: rtd-projects@epsilon.gr*

**Elena Krikigianni** graduated is an urban planner and regional development engineer who graduated at University of Thessaly (UTH, MEng, 2013). She holds a MSc in Geoinformatics - Applied Geography and Spatial Planning, Department of Geography, Harokopio University of Athens (MSc, 2016). Her expertise lies in risks geomatics, in



web-geoinformatics applications, and in Multi-hazard analysis.

*Affiliation: Epsilon International SA, Greece*

*Email: ec-projects@epsilon.gr*

**Frans Mallia** is an architect and an Assistant Director at the Planning Authority having held highly sensitive and core reforms within planning. He is currently leading another vital role for the Authority, that pertaining to the acquisition and monitoring of national, EU and international projects.

*Affiliation: Planning Authority, Malta*

*Email: frans.mallia@pa.org.mt*

**Neil Mallia** is a current student at the University of Malta reading for a Master's Degree in Applied Oceanography. Mr Mallia graduated at the University of Malta in 2015, under the supervision of Dr Charles Galdies, with a Bachelor's Degree in Earth Systems Science. Mr Mallia's interests include the study of weather and climate, the associated regional and national effects on society and the economy, as well as palaeoclimatology and palaeoceanography.

*Affiliation: Environmental Management and Planning Division, Institute of Earth Systems, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: nmallia48@gmail.com*

**Maria Refalo** is graduated in the Geographic field, shares interest in physical geography with respect to geospatial reference. Graduated in 2012 from the University of Malta with a B.A. Honours Degree in Geography after a three year intensive course which included both human and physical exploration of the Maltese geographical islands. Her undergraduate honours thesis entitled, "Distribution of marine algae along the coastline of the Maltese islands in relation to environmental factors", scrutinised the development and actuality importance of algae species around the coast of the two main islands of Malta and Gozo, whilst observing the environmental effects incurred to their natural habitat. As a student worker, she was given an experience in the Forward Planning Division for Gozo by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) back in 2012. Maria also undergone a Post Graduate Certificate in Education course and graduated again from the University of Malta in 2013 as a Geography Teacher. Throughout the latter course, she taught Geography in Maria Regina College Girls Secondary and in Saint Theresa College Boys Secondary, where she experienced teaching Geography to secondary education students. However, she was always inclined to the world of Geographical Information System (GIS) which made her decide to opt for a career in the GIS field, where Maria is now back at the Planning Authority focusing on a GIS working job She is currently in her

final year, reading a Masters in GIS through the Manchester Metropolitan University. Her thesis is investigating the surface water flooding and social vulnerability in Malta, looking into the National Flood Relief Project and its outcomes.

*Affiliations: Planning Authority, Malta*

*Email: maria.refalo@pa.org.mt*

**Chiara Scicluna** from Malta is currently a fourth year medical student enrolled at the University of Malta Medical School.

*Affiliations: University of Malta, Malta.*

*Email: chiara.scicluna.13@um.edu.mt*

**Ines Munoz Sanchez** graduated in Environmental Sciences by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain. She studied her Masters in Environmental Sciences at the University of Wageningen, Netherlands with a specialization in Environmental politics. She has international working experience including consultancy projects in Uzbekistan and Uganda regarding water management. Actually she is part of the Environmental Engineering Sector of ambiente s.c., and where she coordinates international projects funded by the World Bank and European Commission.

*Affiliations: Ambiente sc., Italy*

*Email: isanchez@ambientesc.it*

**Michael Schembri** obtained a B.A Hons. degree in Geography from the University of Malta in 2008 and an M.Sc in Geographic Information Science from the University of London in 2010. In 2010, he joined the Water Unit within the Malta Resources Authority as a Project Officer and in subsequent years joined the Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister. In his role as a Policy Officer, he provides support to the Water Policy Unit in the development and implementation of the National Water Management Plan and WFD Process, including the development and reporting of Malta's 2nd River Basin Management Plan and implementation of the Floods Directive, and coordinates Malta's groundwater quantitative and qualitative monitoring network. He also supports the Water Policy Unit in the application development process and implementation of a number of EU Funded Projects, including projects funded through LIFE, the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund. Furthermore within the Common Implementation Strategy of the Water Framework Directive, he fulfils the role of the national representative on the Strategic Coordination Group and participated in the formulation of the EU Reference document on Good Practices on Leakage Management.

*Affiliations: Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit, Water Services Corporation, Malta*

*Email: michael.schembri@gov.mt*

**Elaine Sciberras** holds a Doctorate (2001) and Masters (1998) in Geographical Information Systems and Remote Sensing from the University of Cambridge, U.K and a B.Sc. in Biology and Chemistry from the University of Malta (1995). She has worked for several years in the private sector with informatics and GIS companies. Her roles included business development, project management, mapping and remote sensing technical tasks. She has lectured on environmental applications of remote sensing and GIS at the University of Malta. She has also worked as an FP7 evaluator with the European Commission's Research Executive Agency. She has been working at the Planning Authority (previously MEPA) since 2007. She was involved in various processes of MEPA's ERDF156 project including preparation of the funding application, drafting of tenders, forming part of the tender evaluation committees and the steering evaluation committee. She was also the Project Leader for part of the duration of the ERDF156 project implementation. She forms part of the European Commission's Copernicus Committee, the Copernicus Network Relay and the GEO European High Level Working Group. She is involved in remote sensing analyses of high resolution satellite imagery, drafting of tenders for the Planning Authority's forthcoming ERDF Sintegram project and is the Project Leader for one of the Planning Authority's forthcoming ESF projects.

*Affiliations: Planning Authority, Malta*

*Email: elaine.sciberras@pa.org.mt*

**Francesca Tamburini** is an Environmental engineer with extensive experience in atmospheric emissions, water resource management, waste management, contaminated soils, environmental law, urban planning and analysis of environmental data.

She is part of the Environmental Engineering Sector of ambiente s.c. where she designs and supervises water and air quality monitoring plans, Environmental Impact Assessments and feasibility studies for public administrations and private companies inside and outside of Italy

She is also the project manager of the company's main infrastructure projects and interfaces directly with major clients such as Italferr, Anas, Governmental offices of Tuscan region...etc.

*Affiliations: Ambiente sc, Italy*

*Email: ftamburini@ambientesc.it*

**Chrysovalantis Tsiakos** is an urban planner and regional development engineer who graduated at University of Thessaly (UTH, MEng, 2015). He holds a MSc in Geoinformatics - Applied Geography and Spatial Planning, Department of Geography, Harokopio University of Athens (MSc, 2016). His expertise lies in marine geomatics, in web-geoinformatics applications, and in Spatial Data Infrastructure.

*Affiliations: Epsilon International SA, Greece*

*Email: rtd-geo@epsilon.gr*

**Clayton Xuereb** obtained his degree with honours in Criminology from the University of Malta in 2008. He worked as an Asylum Determination Officer within the Office of the Refugee Commissioner for four years before deciding to pursue his education further by reading for a Masters degree in Criminology. He focused his research on the immigration phenomenon; particularly the dynamic activities of migrants in the town of Marsa from a socio-temporal aspect. He was awarded his Masters degree with distinction from the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Wellbeing in 2015. The commitment he showed during his studies earned him an Outstanding Masters Award and a valued place on the Dean's List. Presently, he holds the position of Executive Secretary at Ta' Xbiex Local Council where he foresees the financial and administrative running of the council amongst other versatile duties.

*Affiliations: Department of Criminology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, Malta*

*Email: xuereb.clayton@gmail.com*

**Adriana Zammit** holds received a Bachelor of Architecture and Civil Engineering, from the University of Malta, in 2010 and in 2015 she received a Master of Science in Sustainable Infrastructure from the same University. Her research interests focus on sustainable development, public policy, governance and planning with particular emphasis on underground development. She has been a warranted Perit (under the Periti Act, 1996) since 2012 and has been working with the Planning Authority since 2010. She currently works on the co-ordination of large-scale projects and developments of national interest. Some of the projects, that she has worked on relate amongst others to transport infrastructure, landfills and waste facilities, water treatment and polishing plants, the National Flood Relief Project, schools and restoration projects in the Maltese Islands.

*Affiliations: Planning Authority.*

*Email: adrianazammit@gmail.com*

Silvan Zammit has been involved in the statistical sphere for more than 18 years, of which 14 spent at the National Statistics Office (NSO). He joined the NSO as a Statistician and is now Director of the Data Capability Directorate, covering methodology, quality, data management and information technology. Graduated in 2002 from the University of Malta with a B.Sc. Honours Degree in Mathematics, Statistics and Operations Research, Silvan built his career in a variety of roles in this area, and this interest led him to pursue his post graduate studies in Actuarial Techniques to broaden his perspective and study uncertainty and risk from a practical perspective. He has been representing the NSO in various European and international events for more than ten years, particularly on methodology, quality, data confidentiality and population censuses. Appointed as deputy Census Officer in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, where he was responsible for all census activities, from its coordination to the publication of results, he was also directly involved in the 2005 round, and acted as a national coordinator on matters like training, statistical disclosure control and data management. Silvan is an Assistant Visiting Lecturer at the University of Malta, where he teaches Official and Business Statistics in a number of faculties. He is also engaged in a number of projects with international organisations where he acts as a census expert and provides technical assistance on demographical and methodological issues. His experience in delivering lectures and training courses to others, as well as serving as an expert in thematic fora in foreign countries, has given him the chance to effectively deal with persons and their demands and to apply statistical theory into practice to enhance statistical literacy.

*Affiliations: National Statistics Office*

*Email: maria.refalo@pa.org.mt*



## PROLOGUE

# Maltese Steps Towards Integrative Data A Lifetime Target

Vincent Cassar

Understanding how urban ecologies operate and how one can relate to the changes required for social change entails a deep understanding of the structures that make up that society. This scenario is evident when one tries to understand how policy makers present their studies for decision-takers to act upon. In an ideal world the decision taker would have acquired knowledge of what planning entails, the situation at hand, the acquisition of a mental image of the area under study and would theoretically be able to decide on an outcome as based on such knowledge. Reality shows otherwise, since this process entails the full knowledge of how the data process is handled, how that data delivers meaningful information, which results in knowledge and eventually an informed decision is taken. However, the entire enterprise is based on access to information or the lack of same, to acquisition of information on the urban/rural structures and the environment in its wider aspects. Dealing with advocacy groups, non-governmental organisations and interested parties requires that the planner has a solid understanding of the physical, natural and social parameters that society is permeated with. A planner debating a decision on how to mitigate on urban sprawl would be required to understand how such urban ecologies morph from small hamlets to town and cities and eventually to metropolis, in addition to an understanding of the interactivities that occur between the players as based on the sociological pillars: politics, religion, education, family and economy. Each part plays a crucial role in its attempts to sway a decision one way or another. Without basic information across the fields planners may find barriers being set up that may thwart informed decision-making.

With the advent of a plethora of technologies and information systems, such knowledge can be readily placed on the planner's desk. Technologies vary from digital replicas of analogue files and documents, to OCRing (extraction of text from scans) documents that allow searchable options, to real-time data capture and finally to dissemination to the interested and general public. The process enables the lessening of pressure on the planner

in terms of potential accusations of withholding of information to the potential for the NGOs and interested parties to be equipped with the same information which would enable them to reach informed opinions and to debate change.

### **The Maltese Scenario**

The case employed within the Maltese Islands was aimed at reaching these goals where the planning process would be enhanced by the digitalisation of the entire planning process and the subsequent structuring of information and eventual dissemination. This keynote is aimed at helping planners understand the processes required to virtualise cities and the steps Malta took to create data layers that help this process. It concentrates on the unique situation where the legislative and operational tools available to planners were taken up through to the conceptualisation of a function that integrates baseline and thematic datasets for effective future analytical processes. The process is ultimately aimed at acquiring knowledge leading to the implementation of a smart cities approach where the data on every item and the relative flows are monitored in real time and where scenarios can be built to reflect the outcome resultant from every variable tweaking. As an example, understanding the effects of a new tall building would entail the insertion of a dxm model in a city model, the pooling in of spatial layers from transport, utilities, infrastructure as well as social information, with the resultant output where the different datasets are integrated in a model-based system and the scenarios tested as based on infrastructure load, increase in traffic, a growing elderly component and a myriad number of different variables. Though the latter can reach unsustainable proportions for the model, the choice of variables would be based on the knowledge gained from the expertise on the ground and other planners' knowledge-base.

In Malta, this process entailed the foresight requirement to enable smart-cities implementation, bearing on the virtualization of the planning process, the vision of a paperless system, the creation of a physical ICT (Information and Communications Technology) structure, funding options and methodological approaches to virtualization. The ICT structure is essential for valorisation of the smart-city approach due to its capabilities in integrating disparate datasets, a realistic gather-once / use-many functionality and ready take-up by the planning discipline as governed by the need to base all development on the use of a basemap as its core, working from a centralised approach to governance but a bottom-up approach to creation and use.



The Malta experience depicts a scenario where data is held by the legally designated data-creation bodies, where data is made accessible through a web-service model that point the dataset toward a common-core server.

### **Limitations experienced in striving to achieve the goals**

The concept of place is a not an easy one to understand. People struggle to visualise the ambience of a city when described by another person: they have to conjure their vision of what that street could look like, how it is structured, the dimensions and scale, the spirit of the place, a distinction atmosphere better termed *genius loci*. This, whilst at the same time trying to listen to the thematic aspects being described by the other person. Imagine an architect trying to describe how a new development would look like once completed. The planner rarely visits the area and might recall what it looked like some time back or if ever, thus communication at the stage is hindered by background noise. The Malta process sought to integrate various technologies to enable both parties and even more such as third interested parties to visualise the area through technologies. The integration of spatial systems through to a 3D model has helped the process greatly. The model was based on a Lidar scan of the island, averaging a point density of 4.3 pts/m<sup>2</sup>, with a classification of ground and nonground, which resulted in a DSM (digital surface model – includes terrain and buildings) and DTM (digital terrain model – no buildings) of the islands.

This process is still hindered by various factors; the lack of an integrated information structure across all government entities, lack of protocols requiring standardisation as well retention of analogue systems only (paper-based) and the silo-effect mentality where data acquired by one entity is seen as the domain of that same entity and thus required protection and guardianship. This is currently being mitigated through a process driven by myself and Professor Saviour Formosa from the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, which process was initiated in 1995 and required a mentality shift prior to its implementational triggering – I can personally state that this has been one hard struggle and that only driven personalities and sheer perseverance made this happen.

Back to the theme, Malta is driving its efforts to digitalise these processes and has been successful in its initial phase to digitalise the planning stream through internal investment whilst also accessing external funding to implement various tools and data capture. This it did through the knowledge that online maps, GPS (global positioning system) devices and smart technology have now been around since the late-1990s such that the university generation and the subsequent generation, have been exposed to virtual tools to a level that has been unprecedented some years ago. The older generations may need further aid

to reach this level through training programmes as a clear understanding of the spatial-awareness is required. In order to employ this process, Malta took up this process through a project aimed at creating a series of technologies and protocols aimed at generating a virtuality of the island. This process to move from analogue to digital systems entailed scanning, the digitalization of the application process, the submission of digital plans, a GIS-based (geographical information system) planning process and acquisition of technologies that enable data capture, input, analysis and output. One such project entailed the creation of Malta in 3d using Lidar (Light detection and ranging) technology and the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) project entitled “Developing National Environmental Monitoring Infrastructure and Capacity”.

The steps that MEPA/PA took to understand spaces include various iterations of its legislative tools, as regulated by the Development Planning Act (DPA) of 1992 and the Environment Planning Act (EPA) of 2001, which were replaced by the Environment and Development Planning Act (EDPA) of 2010 and the new Act that set up the Planning Authority in 2016 (Act VII of 2016 Development Planning Act, 2016). In addition to these main tools, MEPA is governed by a series of subsidiary legislation that regulate planning and sustainability as well as the public participation process. In fact, the uniqueness of the amalgamation of the planning authority and the environment entity created the scenario that other legislative tools were integrated within the parameters of the governance such that the planning side now has a series of protocols for the data cycle that will be retained in place once the two entities part ways. Thus, in conjunction with the EDPA and its subsidiary legislation, a series of other tools were integrated, such that planners now have a plethora of objectives to follow in order to ensure that the data cycle is tackled in its entire process. These tools relate to access to standardised processes for information-creation which is being tackled from various legislative loci such as the Data Protection Act, the Århus Convention, the Freedom of Information Act and the INSPIRE Directive, in addition to other guidance documents that are targeted to enable the smooth and free flow of effective information. MEPA through its Information Resources and Technology Unit (IRU) has created a series of protocols that ensure further governance through metadata structures, lineages, adherence to the European Environment Agency priority dataflows and its own ISO standardisation.

These tools enabled MEPA to create a process that focused on its core function as a creator and user of spatial data. The organisation uses geodata in almost all of its business processes and has invested heavily in spatial resources and capacity. Users have multiple-level requirements, such as those who need to create data within a defined application process, others who carry out spatial analysis and data creation and editing processes

as well as casual users such as the general public who require view and occasionally download services. Thus MEPA sought to create systems that provided a system that ensures a “capture once use many times” policy, employs a data owner/custodian mind set, implements data and quality standards, introduces metadata and discovery tools as well as disseminates data to the general public in a mixed charging mode: free for environmental related datasets and chargeable for other datasets as per time taken to run such queries.

The method employed in the effort to integrate the different functions across the planning and technological fields is that termed the W6H, a concept that was taken up through another discipline; criminology, which through its spatio-temporal concepts and requirements to convert thematic data into a spatial format, initiated a process to convert analogue data into digital forms. The ability of employing spatial data to form an analysis based on a what, why, who, when, where, why not and how phenomena (W6H) outlined by CMAP has helped spatial planning tremendously. GIS analysts seek to investigate each of the W6H pivots to identify patterns to reach conclusions on whether correlations exist or not. The six pivots (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How and Why Not) concept was employed as a basis for integration whilst the effort is currently being upgraded to encompass all spatial data creators and users entities that have a role in the foresight activities of the Maltese Islands. The main trust of this model is to ensure that all the process involved in the identification of activities relating of GIS analysis as integrated with other thematic data, are understood.

GIS has enabled information to be mapped over time. This means that statistics, such as those related to crime levels, could be understood in spatial contexts. As indicated in the W6H structure any data that has a link to a geocoded system can be analysed. In this way GIS has brought to the fore situations where previously non-spatial data (attributes) can now be linked to a spatial dataset and that same data would be integrated into a new GIS layer. Such a structure enables the evolution of thematic data to geographical data (locational data based on points on the earth) to a spatial construct (relationship between entities based on the earth) and across a temporal dimension. MEPA's role in this process was to create the base data to enable this foresight process.

The Strategy employed entailed a series of procedures were introduced and which served as guidelines for the whole data management process. It aimed to identify sources of redundancy and multiplicity, and enhanced a streamlined dataflow methodology leading to a one-stop-datashop environment. Whilst the strategy covered the main data management issues, it delved into ancillary services such as data creation methodologies, GIS services and research & information practices. On a logistical side it also outlined

document management, data acquisition process inclusive of scanning and digitising, as well as dissemination processes inclusive of pricing policy, archival services and dissemination processes.

The data management cycle investigated the processes required from design, data gathering, input, analysis and output as well as data dissemination procedures. A generic data model was identified for thematic data models that were implemented for the different processes. In addition, metadata and lineage system procedures and templates were drafted. This entailed the implementation of a document management solution in line with strategy that established guidelines for the setting up of a repository system that aids data management control and maintenance. This was reviewed in line with the electronic-applications process, a service contract and other projects. The process was followed up by a document digitisation and uploading activity. Parallel activities entailed a process implemented to review the spatial data structures and layers within MEPA. The process aimed to source all data layers and developed common storage locations. It identified the available resources and GIS skills as well as bringing forward the need to follow strict metadata and lineage procedures.

The final aspect employed a data dissemination policy in order to streamline its services towards a harmonised approach. It reviewed issues such as pricing policy, publication options, marketing of data services, and dissemination through webservers. The outputs emanating from the integration of various technologies, proprietary and open-source that integrated the spatial layers and disseminated such through a dedicated mapserver.

The output system showed that the limitations experienced through the use of tools that are not universal to all browsers, point to the need to create a system based on web map services that follow the INSPIRE dissemination rules, with the relevant security system put in place to ensure system integrity.

The method identified issues that related directly to operational and implementation operands inclusive of budgeting, resource requirements, capacity, tendering and post-project maintenance. Malta partook to these activities through various means: in-house business plans, national and international legislation transposition, acquisition of funding and capacity building exercises. The crux of such projects lies with the eventual management and retention of the knowledge gained and its extension to other entities; a process that would ensure knowledge gain across the nation. The initial costs were significant, running close to EUR5million, with maintenance envisaged at EUR50,000 plus retraining activities, which costings are mitigated through reduction of expert time on recreation or redundancy elimination.

The next phase that attempts to integrate the planning data with all other governmental entities' data within a central core has been initiated and is planned to take up the PA process and expand it to all entities enabling instant access as well as enabling societal benefits such as post-disaster management. The project entitled SIntegraM: Spatial Integration for the Maltese Islands: Developing Integrated National Spatial Information Capacity is aimed at satisfying three aspects: building the necessary infrastructure, enhancing the human capacity and ensuring a legislative and mentality shift in ensuring the free exchange of data and established dissemination protocols.

The outcomes from the infrastructure aspect include the development of a new Basemap for the Maltese Islands, the alignment of all spatial data in a common projection, the creation of an online dissemination and analysis spatial information system, the setting up of necessary infrastructure to enable the entire data cycle (design-input-analysis-output-reporting) and the development of the necessary infrastructure to future preparedness. The outputs from the new project will enhance the outcomes from a project funded by ERDF that enabled MEPA to create an entire nation point cloud, rendered full public access to the information and enabled 3D views to all. The move towards a smart city approach will employ these datasets, integrate them within new infrastructure and allow immersive interaction within the new datasets, literally ensuring that planners are able to view the effects of their decisions in realistic scenarios.

The second aspect will strive to building human capacity in the spatial themes across all governmental entities, whilst the third aspect will ensure adherence to the INSPIRE Directive and relevant legislation as well as the creation of a series of protocols that enable the free exchange of data and knowledge across the entities.

In conclusion, the creation of a spatial information system for the Maltese Islands was simply the first step at attempting to understand how to create systems for employment by planners in a realistic and achievable scenario. The project was successful in its attempt to bridge the gap between analogue information and spatial planning information that depends heavily on locational data. Through an analysis of the legislative tools and the implementation processes undertaken to initiate the process that will eventually lead to a smart city data construct, the results show that the base-data steps taken will ensure the eventual integration of baseline and thematic datasets for effective future analytical processes. The Malta case study was only made possible through the intervention of various initiatives as delineated by the different Directives and conventions as well as national legislation. As both planning and environmental data were readily available, these processes were easier to employ and the resultant project outputs showed that it was possible

to create new tools and systems that planners could use in their day-to-day professional activities and knowledge development. The next step, that of integrative processes across all government entities aim to further widen this knowledge which will result in new data integration such as geological, underground infrastructure, street furniture, watersheds, road networks and hundreds of other currently stand-alone datasets.

Interestingly, the process is not without its successes and lesser achievements. The impact of such an activity in the Maltese state is not insignificant, with the resultant pressures effecting directly and indirectly the modus operandi of the entities that partook to the activity. Training, realignment of job descriptions, new staff intake, re-training and capital expenditure were experienced. The drive enacted by the entity running the process resulted in a cascading effect on other entities that might not have been ready for such a change and in turn bottleneaking occurred that might slow down the expansion of the process across other entities, leading to slower uptake of the national process. This said, the fact that the activity was successful in the driving agency and that the impacts have already been experienced have enabled the laying of the foundation-stone for information integration leading to smarter environments.

*Working towards a common goal for integrative information management*