

Why Malta's National Water Plan Requires an Analytical Policy Framework

by

Lee Roberts, Marco Cremona &
Gordon Knox

FACTORS DETERMINING MALTA'S WATER STATUS

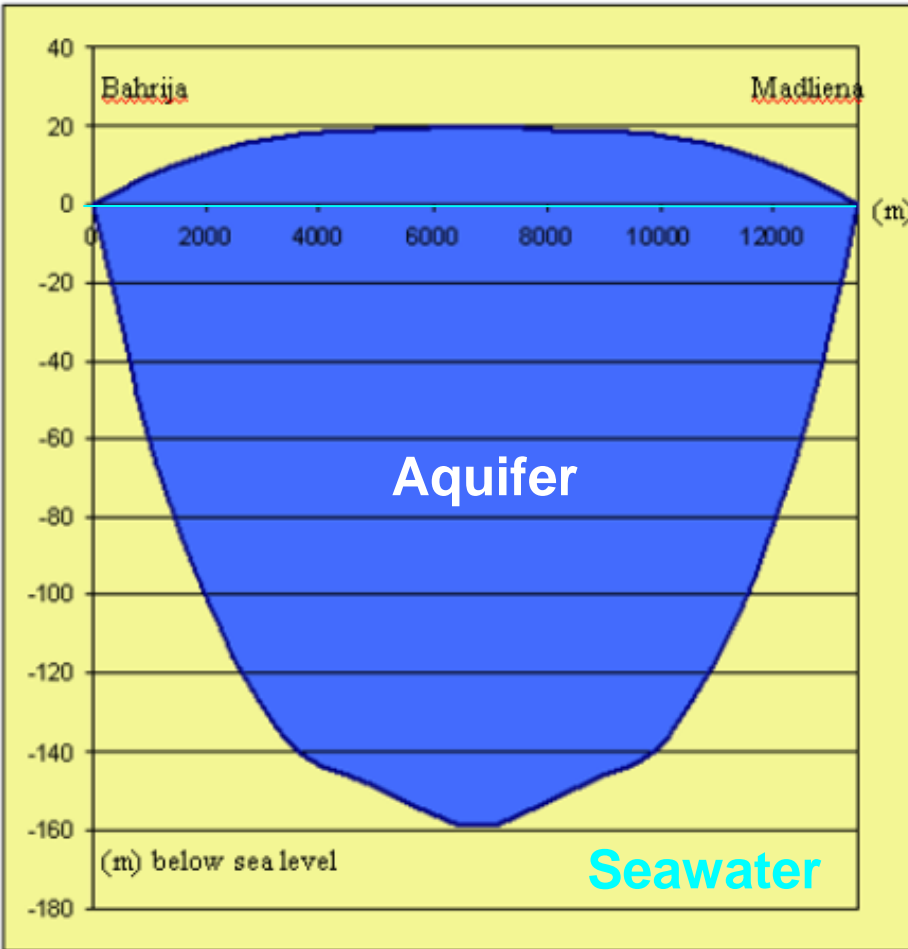
- Very limited natural water resources
 - Over-extracted aquifers
 - Limited rainfall capture
 - Limited water recycling
- High population density
- One of the most water-stressed countries

CONDITION OF AQUIFERS

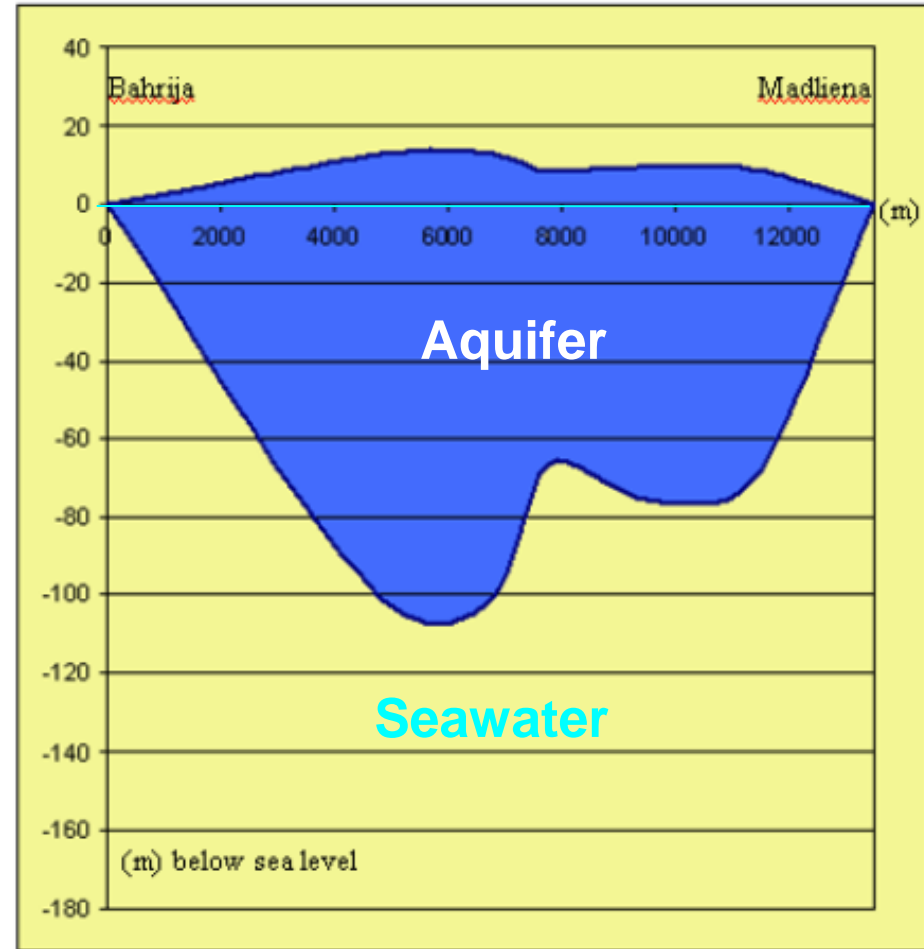
Data on aquifers inadequate and unreliable

- Volumes dropping (rate/severity unclear)
- Salinity increasing (rate unknown)
- Nitrate contamination (rate unknown)
- Other pollutants (figures are suspect)
- Extraction exceeding recharge
- Not possible to accurately forecast tipping point

Blue Water MSLA Shrinkage



No extraction



2004

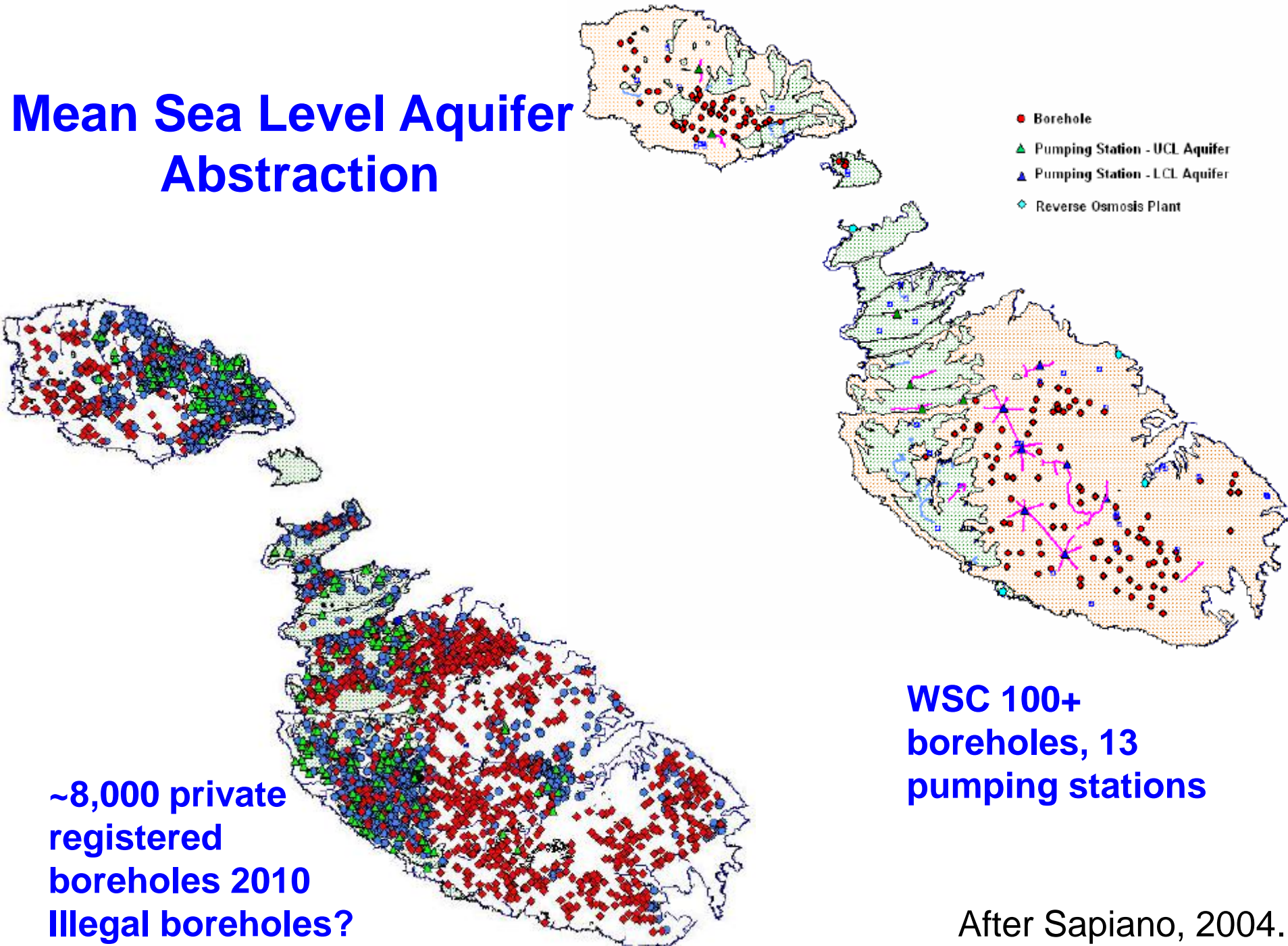
MAIN IMPLICATIONS

- ❖ Heavy Reliance on RO water (usually considered a fall-back option)
 - High financial and carbon costs
 - Vulnerable to shocks
 - High class water used for second class needs
- ❖ Heavy Reliance on Virtual Water Imports
 - Ten times Malta's domestic consumption
 - Vulnerable to global increased water costs

POLICY FAILURES I

- Failure to control borehole extraction
- Failure to enforce cistern policies
- Failure to define economic status and value of water
- Policy goals too abstract: lack tangible indicators to measure progress
- Weak cross-sectoral links (esp water supply and agriculture)

Mean Sea Level Aquifer Abstraction



~8,000 private registered boreholes 2010
Illegal boreholes?

WSC 100+
boreholes, 13
pumping stations

After Sapiano, 2004.

POLICY FAILURES II

- Reliance on consultations and opinions rather than rigorous analysis
- Chronic risk avoidance creates dysfunctional entitlements
- Long delays in producing pledged Plan
- Failure to take a national approach
- Little improvement in poor data quality
- Interventions as one-off initiatives

IMPERATIVES FOR IMPROVING WATER POLICY

- Take a national approach: a bipartisan agreement with opposition parties
- Educate the public prior to consultation
- Replace abstract/generalised goals with measurable targets
- Create a Policy Framework (based on economic and social analysis) as foundation for Policy, Plan, Budget, and Implementation



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2 Dec. 2011

Photos: G J Knox

23 Feb. 2016