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**Library on Monday - Museum on Saturday?
The proposed Renzo Piano plans for the Valletta City Gate Project**

The Malta Library and Information Association (MaLIA) has noted with pleasure Renzo Piano's views as quoted in The Times of Malta (22 June 2009) that:

"The building will not only house Parliament but a public library too, as suggested by a group that joined the fray ..."

and

"I want people to enjoy going there. We want to put on the ground floor of the Parliament a function that is public. ... I think we have to put there a dignified, noble activity. We are thinking about a library..."

A few days later, on The Sunday Times of Malta (28 June 2009) and the official government website, MaLIA and the public reads with surprise that:

"The transparent ground floor of the building [Parliament] will host a state-of-the-art interactive Museum of Maltese History and Political Development".

In these circumstances, it is only natural that MaLIA asks some pertinent questions: What's happening here? Why has a Public Library on Monday been transformed to a Museum by Saturday? Why this sudden change of plans? Who is behind this change when Renzo Piano himself expressed clearly his intentions for a Public Library?

MaLIA still feels that the city gate area is the ideal location for the island's main Public lending Library which is presently located in Floriana - a place considered out of the way by many including MaLIA. Most public libraries in European cities can be found in prominent, central and easily accessible locations.

MaLIA's short report proposing a public library in this location can be downloaded from its homepage at www.malia-malta.org. Considerable public support for this idea has been gathered through an i-petition and a Facebook group and details have been presented to the Prime Minister in March this year.

If there is not enough space in the allocated site for both a public library and a museum, MaLIA feels that a state-of-the-art public library service should take precedence over a museum in this location. Surveys have shown that all sections of the public, from school children to old-age pensioners, would prefer a centrally located public lending library. Such a public library would be of greater benefit than a museum.

Moreover, most of the Palace, which currently houses the parliament, is going to be changed into museum spaces. Why not find a space for a museum of Maltese history and political development within the Palace?

If Renzo Piano himself is in favour of a public library in this important location, should not the general public including the “*group that joined the fray*” who have proposed and promoted this idea, expect to see a public library as suggested originally?

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