

## 'We do not need a second silent city'

Valletta is gradually being transformed from a bustling capital into a soulless monument frequented only by those persons who have no choice but to enter Valletta, the Chamber of Commerce said.

In a statement, it said that although a few years ago, the government embarked on a commendable strategy to embellish and upgrade Valletta, the process was not being efficiently managed.

A study conducted in January by the Chamber's Valletta Business Community Committee showed a significant loss of business during the Christmas period.

"However, it is known that that this loss is constant and not merely linked to the festive season, nor to the international recession.

"It is simply caused by the continuous elimination of parking spaces in Valletta.

"The business community has seen a continual reduction of parking spaces and an increase in restrictions, the introduction of the CVA, the Park and Ride, residents parking and parking spaces allotted for the exclusive use of ministers and members of Parliament, not to mention the continuous increase in reserved parking places.

"This is clearly detrimental to business in Valletta. The reformed public transport system will ameliorate matters as will the installation of lifts from the Valletta waterfront and the expansion of the Park and Ride facility.

"However, we fear that by the time these new resources are available, severe and irreversible damage will have been done," it said.


The chamber said that if the government wanted Valletta to survive as a living monument, it needed to come up with some urgent, practical solutions that made running a business more attractive.

"The Valletta Business Community Committee is willing to offer its experience and expertise to government and wishes to be consulted on all issues that are of direct interest to the business community.

"Whilst other convenient destinations are being developed, Valletta is becoming increasingly problematic.

"This will result in more and more businesses leaving Valletta and shops closing down. The lack of activity will result in Valletta losing its vibrancy. We already have one Silent City, we do not need another one," it said.

## Comments


Denis A. Darmanin(1 week ago) 

Valletta is quiet after 7.00pm only because shops close and office and retail staff have gone to their cozy homes and Valletta residents struggle to take their parking spaces. However, considering all difficulties involved, which public museum, library or other important cultural or whatever venue, remains open late in Valletta? These also attract people, especially tourists, those who work normal hours and students. Theatres do well.

New restaurants and wine bars have opened in Valletta and are having reasonable success, but you can hardly find a place to have a coffee and a snack after 7.00pm.

Finally, can any business person who regularly moans about this 'crisis', tell me if anyone was ever capable of bringing the night life, bars, dance halls, etc, back to Valletta? That is called 'trend' and 'migration of business'.

Valletta was once bursting with night life, bars, etc. In the 70s we use to drink in groups standing on the opposite pavement of any of the many bars, which was usually congested with clients. Now they're barren or have changed genre because the business has moved to Paceville and Bugibba. The same applies to small business and shops; just walk down St. Paul Street!

Raymond Sammut(1 week, 1 day ago) 


Valletta has been raped and vandalized for far too long. Valletta is an ancient and historical city as much as Mdina is, and it belongs to all Maltese and to all the people of the world because it is World-listed Heritage. It's a place of history, architecture and religion. If more and more businesses are leaving Valletta, then that's a good thing and it's about time. The Chamber of Commerce have sucked Valletta of its natural and historical beauty well and truly by now, and the Chamber should be made to pay reparation. The Chamber never factored into their accounting statements the cost incurred by the Maltese government to repair the damage they have perpetrated over the years by attracting so much motor-vehicle traffic into the ancient city. The Chamber, for example, should be paying --at least in part-- for fixing the facade of the Castile palace; costly works that are being carried out presently. Instead, the cost is being shouldered wholly by the Maltese tax-payer, and this amounts to theft from every Maltese man and woman on the island. The Chamber of Commerce ought to be ashamed of themselves for the way they keep carrying on about this issue.

A. E. Abela(1 week, 1 day ago) 


Everyone seems to have point of views of what should and shouldn't be done to invigorate the city of Valletta. I personally look at this glorious city from a perspective that of a parent towards his child. For me Valletta has been destined to undergo one siege after the other, even before it was built. May it be military, cultural, structural, historical, political or religious; the on going assaults seem to be relentless. Although battles have been lost, Valletta has, and will always win the war. Half a century is not such a long time in the life span of such an architectural masterpiece which had its halcyon days and all the invaders are doomed to perish in shame. The city remains standing bearing the scars as proof of all the attacks it endured.

Simon Camilleri(1 week, 1 day ago) 


yes and by sheer coincidence there is a large commercial development a few hundred metres away across the harbour which did quite well out of this.....and the same is going to happen to the shops in Bisazza Street, once all the parking in the area is removed.

Deirdre gant(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Visit this beautiful town every time I am in Malta but in the evening it is dead. Such a jewel in Malta's crown should be enjoyed and celebrated.

Michael Neville Cassar(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Every move and every obstacle have been created to make Valletta a dead city. Now with the Monti vendors transferred in a limbo place (park and ride); If Valletta is to be given business life the Sunday Monty should be placed on the St Elmo granaries clearing the granary Stones as they done on Castile granaries in front of the old Vernon club.

reno calleja(1 week, 1 day ago) 

One of the most effective ways to revive Valletta and make it again a busling centre, is to allow shops to open at night.

This was one of the proposals I had made when I was Minister of Toursm back in the beginning of the 80's, when, already, there werre signs that Valletta was loosing its appeal as business centre.

. My idea was opposed by trade unionists because they claimed that shop owners and business establishments will exploit their workers by making them work longer hours.

This was, off course, a stupid argument.

You do not shoot the barman because some people occasionaly get drunk. Enforce the law. But my suggestion was killed before I made it public.

Witness Barcellona. It is a viibrant city because restaruants, shops and business outlets are open up to 4 am. in the morning.

The success enjoyed by Notte Bianca, wine festvials and other acitvities organised in Valletta in the evenings, proves my point

I aquilina(1 week ago)


Mr Calleja.. cities die first and foremost because they lose out on residents, especially if the commerce referred to here by the Chamber are shops and not just bars.

Secondly, Valletta retains both the residential and commercial zones (MEPA plan). These have to be respected. Thirdly, Notte Bianca attracts massive crowds as much as Isle of MTV because the entertainment is free. The idea of increasing small hotels as well as St. Elmo's development is def the way forward, we need tourists to stay inside the city and not just visit it.

Steve Sant(1 week, 1 day ago) 

I am in full agreement, that is the whole idea. Valletta to become the next silent city, its been on the cards for a while now, and where a few people connected to the Gov't

seem to like the idea, a city for the few tourists and residents, its no good for business or the Island. The reason being is that the "Capital city" will shift to a different location, leaving Valletta empty and lost. It seems to be a short term plan, that will leave long term repercussions. An empty heritage city.

Zillah Bugeja(1 week, 1 day ago) 

I am a regular visitor to Valletta and regularly use the Park and Ride facility. The only time I have a problem is mornings during the week because the Park and Ride fills up by approximately 9am.

So many people I know have simply no need or desire to go there. It's only court that obliges them to visit. This fact needs to be acknowledged.

Like all others on the island, the Valletta shop and café owners have to come up with their own creative ideas to draw in customers and to beat the competition. In Marsascala yesterday one bar was giving out free hot dogs!

It's a question of improving the everyday service/offering while also coming up with one-off events. The strategy can be very simple once you survey people and see what their problems are with the city at the different times of the day and the week, as well as the seasons.

We need a vision. Do we expect governments to supply this for us? I have a hundred ideas to offer and am sure that other people do too. But the willingness has to be there from the business community and their employees.

C Cassar(1 week, 1 day ago) 

We are starting to frequent Valletta more and more since pedestrianisation and limiting entry of cars was implemented. Valletta needs a complete car ban and full pedestrianisation. That will attract many more people, provide a more relaxing environment, encourage more tourists to visit and boost business. There is nothing at all not to like about that scenario.

The only people to whine are those that are too lazy to use the park & ride and to stingy to pay a couple of euros for all day parking at that location. Other European cities charge up to €20 for the same facility and that doesn't include transport.

Less car parking in the centre of Valletta and much more pedestrian only zones - that's exactly what is needed to boost visitors and business.

MBorg(1 week, 1 day ago)

Do you have something against cars ? Are you the same C.Cassar who was happy with the traffic arrangements in Bisazza Street ? The same C. Cassar who wanted to ban all traffic in Tower Road from the Preluna to Spinola Bay. ?

I wonder if you have used the new traffic deviation plan and if you still think that Bisazza Street which is one of the main roads in Sliema should remain closed to traffic.

The Chamber of Commerce is right Valletta is turning into a silent city. You must be the only person in Malta who is frequenting Valletta more and more since the CVA and park and ride started. I ,and many others like me ,only go to Valletta when I can't do otherwise.

C Cassar(1 week, 1 day ago)

With the closure of Bisazza street and the diversion around Tigne, there has been much less traffic since many have used alternative routes. So, the scheme has been a great success and should become a permanent feature of the area (and yes, tower road in parallel should also be closed permanently to all traffic and fully pedestrianised).

Once the eyesore of a car park at Sliema ferry is cleared for a landscaped and gardened area (as planned), the area will be a huge improvement for residents, businesses and visitors. Plenty of underground/Public car parks in the vicinity just within 5 mins walk.

Alexander Pace Gouder.(1 week, 1 day ago)

Now it is too late. This has been coming up for quite a while now. The Chamber of Commerce should have held firm on the Valletta Piano Project. We have to wait and see but Parking in Valletta will probably get worse. No chance to park a car so no shopping. (Now wait and see the confusion in Valletta and near the enclosure near the Triton Fountain during the Carnival Festivities. ) The road by the Phoenicia Hotel will probably be closed and most of the street in Floriana. Whilst still in time have the authorities taken the necessary safety measures for people entering Valletta.

I fenech(1 week, 1 day ago)

Kif tista il-belt Valletta tieghu r-ruh bil-frakas li qed isir ibda bid-dahla tal-belt bla bieb u in-nofs teatru li joghob biss lil-Renzo Piano bil-barka ta' GonziPN u parliament ghal-55 ruh li hadu Euro 500 kull wiehed mit-2008 f'daqqa ta ghajn u gejjin lura f'sentejn ghax poggewhom il-bank u interessi ghaddejjin. Renzo biss mar tajjeb.

Edgar Azzopardi(1 week, 1 day ago)

How right the Chamber are. But why do they speak up now. Where were they when Austin Gatt decided matters as if the City was his, and his alone?

There are so many parking spaces for residents, that it is a joke. Not only do residents not pay to enter VLT but occupy white boxes as well. Someone has to decide what they want to do with Valletta. If they want a vibrant busy city they have to appease the needs of the business community and remove all reserved parking and leave it as first come first served- even at a price. Residents know that they live in a commercial centre and that has pros and cons which they have to live with,.


The business community is living with a situation which appeases ONLY the residents- and this is going to be at the detriment of their investment and employees. After all where in Malta do residents have reserved parking? Why should VLT residents be privileged.? Things will be worse, when the park n ride will be against payment.

Decisions are being made by those who have no idea what business is, or do not care.

S Jacobsen(1 week, 1 day ago)


Having worked in Valletta for the past 16 years, never has the parking situation been as bad as it has been during the last 6 months! With the introduction of the CVA a few years back, the situation had improved somewhat, however it has can now take up to 50 minutes to find a "legal" parking space! Hundreds of spaces have been removed from Palace Square, City Gate, and the ditch. The Yellow Garage has also been closed and nothing has been done to replace these spaces! Worse still all the Parliamentarians reserved spaces on Palace square have now moved to the

surrounding streets thus reducing the parking for commoners like me further! Given the opportunity I would gladly move my office out of Valletta to somewhere which is easily accessible and which provides parking facilities.

walter camilleri(1 week, 1 day ago) 

There is no doubt about it, Valletta is being slowly stifled - with no accessibility, shops close, businesses move out, and shoppers go where it is more convenient. Perhaps it is a little bit early to say it, and I pray that with an architect of Piano's stature it will not be so, but I fear that a towering Parliament building just inside the gate, it will further damage our city with a gloomy entrance through a gloomy slit in the bastion.

Let's face it, there is no town that I have visited in Italy, France or England that does not have car parking facilities reasonably and conveniently close to the centre. Those that sit on top of a hill have underground facilities or a convenient open space with lifts or escalators taking one close to the centre. In Malta, we are wasting Valletta's underground spaces by preserving them for the rats, making special places for deserving (!! ) politicians, and killing off the remaining above ground areas by making them inaccessible to ordinary human beings..

Joe Borg(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Sorry Chamber it's too late to complain!

Wait till the new project is completed, even the lower part of Republic Street will be deserted.

One should TRY to visit Valletta in the evening, you will drive all around Valletta and not find a single LEGAL parking slot, whilst most of the Valletta Resident's parking is empty. Why, because Valletta residents park in the white boxes on purpose to block all parking.


It is not the CVA that is the problem, as after 6pm parking in Valletta is FREE.

Even at present the SILENT city of Mdina is more noisy than Valletta

Carmel Cilia(1 week, 1 day ago) 

"The reformed public transport system will ameliorate matters" I really have my doubts about this. May I remind the business chamber that as things stand today a person who says from Zabbar works at say Msida he has to take a bus on both the out and return journey to Valletta first. Whilst there and I am speaking from personal experience this chap would be tempted if he needs to buy something to have a look at the shops in Valletta. With the new direct system from place to place many a passenger will never set foot at Valletta.

I hope things would prove me wrong but I really have my doubts. We would just have to wait and see.


Astrid Vella(1 week, 1 day ago) 

PART 2


The situation stands to get even worse once Parliament is operating - state visits which require the area around the Parliament to be blocked off - will paralyze the

commercial hub of Valletta. This would have been avoided had the Parliament been placed at the Mediterranean Conference Centre or the Auberge de Baviere as the experience of the CHOGM Commonwealth Summit showed us.


Such a move would have satisfied the legal prescription of Malta's Structure Plan which states that Parliament and the Ministries are to be accommodated in the palaces and auberges of Valletta.

F J Scicluna(1 week, 1 day ago) 


Mr.Victor P Borg , seems to make an appearance once evry blue moon preaching his epistles.Seems he is on the island which he forgets for years, and now insists that Gozo stays a permanent presejju, and in ths stone age.

C. Farrugia(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Has the Valletta business community thought of the fact that a large number of shopping centres have opened around Malta which take away would be purchasers from Valletta. Up to 20 years ago Valletta had a near monopoly on shopping centres now with the advent of shopping centres in Mosta, Birkirkara, Hamrun, Paola and most of all the Sliema area with the Plaza, The Point and Bay Street. Something has to give the number of shoppers remains the same -- the shops have increased.

Charles Zammit(1 week, 1 day ago) 

The reformed public transport system will ameliorate matters. This assertion is highly debatable. Has the business community forgotten that the park and ride will also operate at a charge. Would it make sense to incur a charge for parking and another charge for using the shuttle bus to Valletta when one could get his needs elsewhere without incurring the said charges?

Astrid Vella(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Where were the Chamber of Commerce,GRTU and the Republic Street Retailers Assoc. when we were saying that it's a good idea to regenerate Valletta,but AFTER viable transport alternatives are in place.At that time they were all falling over themselves to praise the wonderful Piano Project,but now reality bites.

This project was tackled in such haste that they hadn't even planned the re-routing of traffic after the Pope Pius bridge road is demolished.Traffic coming in through St. Mark's lane will not only cause huge tailbacks,but was intended to turn UP Old Bakery Street until we pointed out the insanity of such a manoevre.


Now the Castille roundabout will be re-opened to traffic going down towards the Royal Opera House site,which will bring traffic back into Valletta's pedestrian and residential areas,not to mention the effect on performances at our 'open air performance space'.

Victor P Borg,your comments are always very valid but we have to recognize the fact that Valletta will die without its shops and weaning the Maltese off their cars has to be a gradual process.Malta Enterprise's announcement of more retail centres at St Elmo,Ospizio and elsewhere is just another nail in Valletta's coffin.

J.Tonna(1 week, 1 day ago) 

First of all, Mdina is no longer the Silent City it used to be, some 50 years ago. It is all day long and part of the night bustling with visitors, be they tourists or restaurant clients. Apart from the number of residents.

Secondly, are these business people offering some incentives to their clients? Also do they come with projects to attract more people to Valletta? Valletta needs people not cars, as they are suggesting.


joe mifsud(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Since the British navy left Malta valletta died and if we want Valletta to splendor again ,together with the harbour area ,get the navy back simple.

Jonathan Micallef(1 week, 1 day ago)

Only one problem there is almost no Royal Navy left!!!!!!

I do personally agree with the Chamber of Commerce, I only ever frequent Valletta these days when I am forced to. I find it much more convenient to shop elsewhere

A Camilleri(1 week, 1 day ago) 

With no chance of parking within the city, I for one, have hardly been to VALletta since the introduction of CVA. The few times when I did was when I couldn't do otherwise and definately not for shopping. I'll do my shopping wherever its convenient to park. If my memory serves me well, the business community had supported CVA when it was introduced.

smifsud(1 week, 1 day ago) 

has anyone ever thought of building a multilevel parking lot close to Valletta so people can go and park and walk to valletta ....also the bus terminal is the lifeline to Valletta and now they are moving that aswell ...these are bad decisions in my opinion ,....it was not broken so why fix it ???....GONZI!!!!

M Bugeja(1 week, 1 day ago)

There already is a multilevel parking lot close to Valletta, which, whilst a horribly insulting eyesore, serves its purpose well. As for the bus terminus, instead of walking 100m, patrons now get to walk 200m. Big deal. Exercise will do us good anyway. No, it was not "broken" as you so eloquently put it, but to insult the main gate of a capital city in that manner is far worse.

Let's forget for a moment that we're about to destroy the gate of the most fortified city in Europe.

At least some good will come out of this. The CoC has a point though, Valletta, which should be our pride and joy is gradually becoming a city we sometimes visit just because we absolutely have to and cannot do otherwise.

smifsud (1 week, 1 day ago)

@M Bugeja.....you make good points and i agree with you ...we love our Valletta and we must always try to fight for it afterall we all have been so much joy from our beloved Valletta ...the best city in the world ....

Victor Paul Borg(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Now it has become typical of these business cabals everywhere in the Maltese Islands. Instead of being progressive, they cling to the mentality of the 19th century. In Gozo, where I live, they want new hotels and airport and golf courses and now a tunnel, and in Valletta they want to maintain cars in the city which destroy the fabric (by pollution) and character of the old city, which is one of the architectural jewels of the world.

The interest of the country is in fact in having most of Valletta - if not all - a pedestrian-only zone (the government needs to follow the example of the old part of Amsterdam). This will increase the attractiveness of Valletta, in the process boosting tourism and also boosting business for the businesses that can see new opportunities. As for the businesses that remain stuck in the last century, let them disappear into the dustbin of history - which is where they belong.

To the government: the aim should be to turn Valletta into a virtual car-free zone!

[www.victorborg.com](http://www.victorborg.com)

Paul Borg(1 week, 1 day ago)

Typical comment of a Gozitan. Probably you park in your driveway and also probably you are a cry baby when business is bad in Gozo. Speaking of 19th Century.....have a look at your Island, those who have destroyed Gozo, seem to want to keep doing so , but not others !!! You stay there, I'll stick to Valletta and it's progress. Some Bloggers keep forgetting that there are people still living in Valletta, not just sheep.


P. Montebello(1 week, 1 day ago)

Mr Victor Paul Borg, how many times have you come into Valletta during the past 6 years?

Valletta Business Commitee: I believe that one of your members is the Valletta Alive Foundation. When the CVA was being introduced, I had a discussion with one of your leading members. I remember the exact place, St John Street corner with St Paul Street. I had clearly told him that they were working towards the destruction of business in Valletta. One can also see the many letters that I sent to the Times, and published, in which I had always pleaded for the way to be reversed.

Alas, now, you have woken up to the fact that business in Valletta is rapidly dying. The lift has been promised for the past 5 years. The next step to continue on your destructive way was to take the Sunday market out of Valletta.

I am NOT happy to say I told you so.

K.M. Fiorentino(1 week, 1 day ago) 

I expect more intelligent comments from the Chamber of Commerce. Yes, the Govt. should continue to eliminate parking spaces and roads and give more spaces and paved areas to the people just like any other european city centre or better centro storico. Why should our capital city, a world heritage site, be sacrificed to a few businessmen or rather mercenaries?

Let the people move, walk or use the public buses for God's sake and appreciate and be proud of the works that are being done in our unique capital city!!

C Gatt(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Valletta should not be a monument, but I'm afraid it will be choked. Once the new Parliament is built at the entrance to Valletta, it will officially become a bureaucratic city, a place of work not leisure. The entrance of Valletta will be marked by the symbols of power and legislation Parliament, the office of the Prime minister, The central bank and the stock exchange. The spine of Valletta will be signposted by parliament, the law courts and the President's palace. It will become, like the City of London a dead city after 5.

All the beautiful space will be occupied by no-go areas, our Auberges , parliament, the palazzos, mere offices closed to the public, rather than spaces to enjoy a city rich in history and culture.

There is no master plan and the cracks are already showing. The sad thing was people were warned!

Paul Borg ( from Mandragg )(1 week, 1 day ago) 

@ Mr. A Zahra. The rest of the Island ( except you ) agrees totally with the Chamber of commerce. Just because you never leave home does not mean everyone is confined to do the same. I am a Valletta resident, and my business is also in Valletta. Valletta residents need businesses to employ more Citizens. We have become imprisoned in our City.

The next nail in the coffin is the removal of the only access road from castille place 'Pope Pius street' into the City. The MCC should embark on a mision to find out the role of the Valletta Local Council in all this, probably they are accomplices to the matter.

joe vella(1 week, 1 day ago) 

let me add on to g pisani's comments

VBCC are spot on re the parking problem but even if the parking spaces that have been taken were to be returned, it still does not solve the problem- there are simply not enough parking facilities outside of valletta- the first thing that comes to your mind when deciding to go to the city is - let's see whether we can find a place to park!! but as business people they should also realise that ours is a saturated market and with all the shopping malls, individual outlets etc opening up in the 'new' areas eg tigne, ta xbiex,

plus always improving amenities in the towns and villages, business is now no longer concentrated in the traditional areas

they should think new strategy, valletta is bound to move towards being more of a recreational/cultural centre and the shopping days seem to be counted

it is better for these people to think ahead and look towards new opportunities, whining will not solve problems

E Aquilina(1 week, 1 day ago)

We seem to be missing the point here. Whilst agreeing with J. Vella's on the spreading of commerce and shopping areas across the island or should we say islands, Valletta remains a unique location, inasmuch as Bath in the UK is unique. There is no place in

Malta quite like Valletta. Traditional cafeterias rub shoulders with high street franchise and Italian fashion shops. Eateries of quality at affordable prices abound, The elegance of the piazzas and open places simply don't quite exist elsewhere and are a great way to relax in. Perhaps it is not for everyday visiting by busy Maltese families, and that is why it's quiet after 5 p.m., but surely if we cater for good quality transport, and improve on the parking situation, Valletta remains 'the' place to be in. As with Bath, it's not only a city of heritage, but can also be a city of commercial activity.

A. Zahra(1 week, 1 day ago) 

I am afraid that the Chamber of Commerce is not in step with the rest of the country. Does it want to return to the dirt, pollution and traffic which engulfed Valletta up to a few years ago?

Ramon Casha(1 week, 1 day ago)

Valletta is as clean and as lively as a cemetery.

There was a time when Valletta became a ghost town every day at 7pm, then there was some effort to bring life into Valletta and for a while it worked. Recently I visited Valletta at about 5.20pm and it was almost empty.

G.Pisani(1 week, 1 day ago) 

Why go to Valletta or Sliema when in near by villages parking is free and easy + prices would be cheaper.

R Borg(1 week, 1 day ago)

So very true.

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