

Valletta's changing skyline

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It is heartening to hear Austin's Gatt reaffirming, at a seminar in Valletta, what I have been on about for years: Valletta's skyline is being ruined. There is a big problem with traffic congestion. There is a lack of enforcement. Some shops do as they please with public space.

Valletta's residents have been forgotten when projects are proposed and realised. Malta is a signatory to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and, as such, must adhere to the convention. The city's skyline has to be protected if we want to maintain World Heritage status.

In spite of my repeated warnings, authorities have built many extra floors, put in brick intermediate floors in all our historic buildings, granted permits for swimming pools on roofs, violated the rules of World Heritage buffer zones, allowed new 'unhistoric' colours and materials to be used on façades and shop fronts...

Slowly, Valletta has been transformed. It is ridiculous to argue that we should allow recessed floors because they are not visible. Photomontages are presented to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority show a view from beneath the building. There are very few instances where these 'recessed' extra floors are not visible in Valletta.

Of course architects will argue in favour of changes, new buildings, new heights, new elements. The rules of UNESCO are very clear and we are not abiding by them.