

# COMMENTS AND LETTERS



Bongu Chump

## Bricks of cash and foolish happiness



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The recent Eurobarometer finding that 94 per cent of Malta's residents are happy with the lives they lead is astonishing, not so much for the nation's boundless optimism as for what it reveals about those who are seemingly immune to all that is wrong with this country.

As if it were not plain enough to see for anyone who has spent at least 24 hours in Malta, traffic congestion and construction are visible everywhere you look.

Once you land, the country's small size and high population density either force you to quickly overcome your claustrophobia or else to flee on the next flight out.

If you do decide to postpone your departure, you will soon start to realise that the Maltese obsession with constructing apartment blocks and other unsightly buildings is very

much symptomatic of the urge to make more cash than one needs or to show how much one owns.

Even those trapped beneath a mountain of debt seem unable to appreciate what a catch-22 situation they find themselves in. The Maltese seem to have no doubt that the only thing as safe as houses is actually building more houses.

Construction is the country's main economic generator and developers know that. They exploit this sorry state of affairs to their full advantage and have made themselves almost indispensable. They wield excessive amounts of power through the donations they give to those who supposedly represent the people and they know full well that no one in parliament would dare to oppose them.

Money talks and no political party has the guts to stand up to those whose only interest is cramming these islands with their tacky structures, pouring concrete over every green space available and pumping dust into the air and down our throats.

Their exhaust-spewing trucks trundle through the roads at all times of day and their assorted machinery deafens every locality.

They cannot be bothered with the fabric of the typical Maltese town or village. The only fabric they care about is that of the designer-embossed clothes they can afford to wear.

They show off their flashy cars and lounge in their fully detached villas away from the hordes of apartment dwellers but it is only fair that, as patrons and philanthropists, they get to have their little bit of fun and adulation. After all, their money pays for village feasts, sports tournaments, cultural expositions and any cranky idea dreamt up by local councils in their quest to organise bizarre events. But what it really buys is acquiescence.

Even when a wife and mother is killed beneath the rubble of her

collapsed home, even when a 20-year-old is crushed to death by a building that toppled as if it were a mere house of cards, developers plough on with their odious plans and aspirations.

These megalomaniacs will not stop until they have realised their dream of transforming this country into one kitschy metropolis, very similar to the ones where they holiday and spend their ill-gotten dough.

For it is nothing but ill-gotten when the price that is being paid by the many for the avarice of the few consists of turning Malta into a place that is increasingly hard to live in; at least for those who refuse to consent to the pillage that is seemingly sanctioned by politicians and their minions.

The developers' hunger for cash cannot ever be assuaged. They churn out hundreds of bricks a day while simultaneously demolishing scores of terraced houses, town houses and old buildings they see as a mere nuisance, a cost that is factored into the exorbitant prices they charge the foolishly happy residents of Malta.

What a farce!

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