

Editorial:

The Loss of Gozo's Distinctiveness

The speed with which the construction industry is growing in Gozo, and the effect of this on the character and culture of Gozo are often the subject of conversation when discussing the future of Gozo. Economic development often leads to cultural changes, which sometimes strongly impinge of the character of the country in which they occur. Undoubtedly, such effects are happening in Gozo, and many observers argue that as a result, Gozo is losing its character, which has often been associated with the island's charm.

Twenty five years ago, the University Gozo Campus published a book entitled, *A Focus on Gozo*, which contained a selection of papers mostly dealing with the history and the culture of the island. Although the book was not essentially a historical account, some of its chapters trace the island's development from prehistory, medieval time, the rule of the Knights of Malta and British Gozo, with the last chapter focussing on the development options for Gozo.

In the introduction to the book, its two editors, Rev. Dr Joseph Farrugia and the present author,

argue that such is Gozo's small size that one can mistakenly assume that the personality and character of the island are of little significance, and need not be studied and understood. However the contents of the book show otherwise. Had the book been published in 2023, a chapter on the speed with which the island's culture has changed as a result of current construction turmoil would have probably been included to illustrate how economic development can rapidly seriously threaten the character of an island, and as a result its culture.

As the editors of the book stated, Gozo, until then – that is until 1997 – possessed a character which was distinctly perceptible and intrinsically its own. It appears, however, and sadly so, that the current rapid construction development is increasingly turning Gozo into the image of mainland Malta, with the smaller island losing its distinctiveness – and therefore its charm.

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