

Gozo: the end angered crib

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WHILE becoming politically more adventurous, with the Green Party emerging as a small third hill between the

two mountains dominating the Gozitan political landscape, patronage networks and traditional values remain as strong as ever in this bastion of traditionalism. Pope Benedict XVI would

feel very much at home in an island which resists divorce and same sex marriages, even if there is a greater openness towards secular values among those under 34 years of age. But while Gozo remains

a crib of traditional values, Gozitans are now yearning for the pristine environment of yesterday. Significantly, a majority of Gozitans have lost their awe for mega development

projects, which promised a trickle down effect benefiting the various strata of Gozitan society.

Back in the 1990s, when the boom was in full swing, Gozitans expressed little sympathy for Maltese environmentalists who were derided for wanting to maintain Gozo as a "presepu" (crib).

Nowadays Gozitans seem to have rediscovered a love for the land which seemed all but lost amid the building and touristic boom in the 1990s. Significantly, the Gozitan green renaissance comes at a

time of economic crisis where employment emerges as the greatest concern for Gozitans. Still, despite the primacy of bread and butter issues and the hunger for jobs, Gozitans

do not perceive mega development projects as a panacea for the prevailing economic ills. Projects in Ramla l-Hamra, Ta'Cenc and Hondoq ir-Rummien are all rejected by a majority of Gozitan respondents.

This scepticism could be a response to the transformation of a number of main hotels in to blocks of apartments during the past few years.

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Political shifts on the three hills

How Gozitan PN voters in 2003 would vote now:

AD	58.5
MLP	5.1
PN again	15.3
Don't know	11.9
No reply	4.2

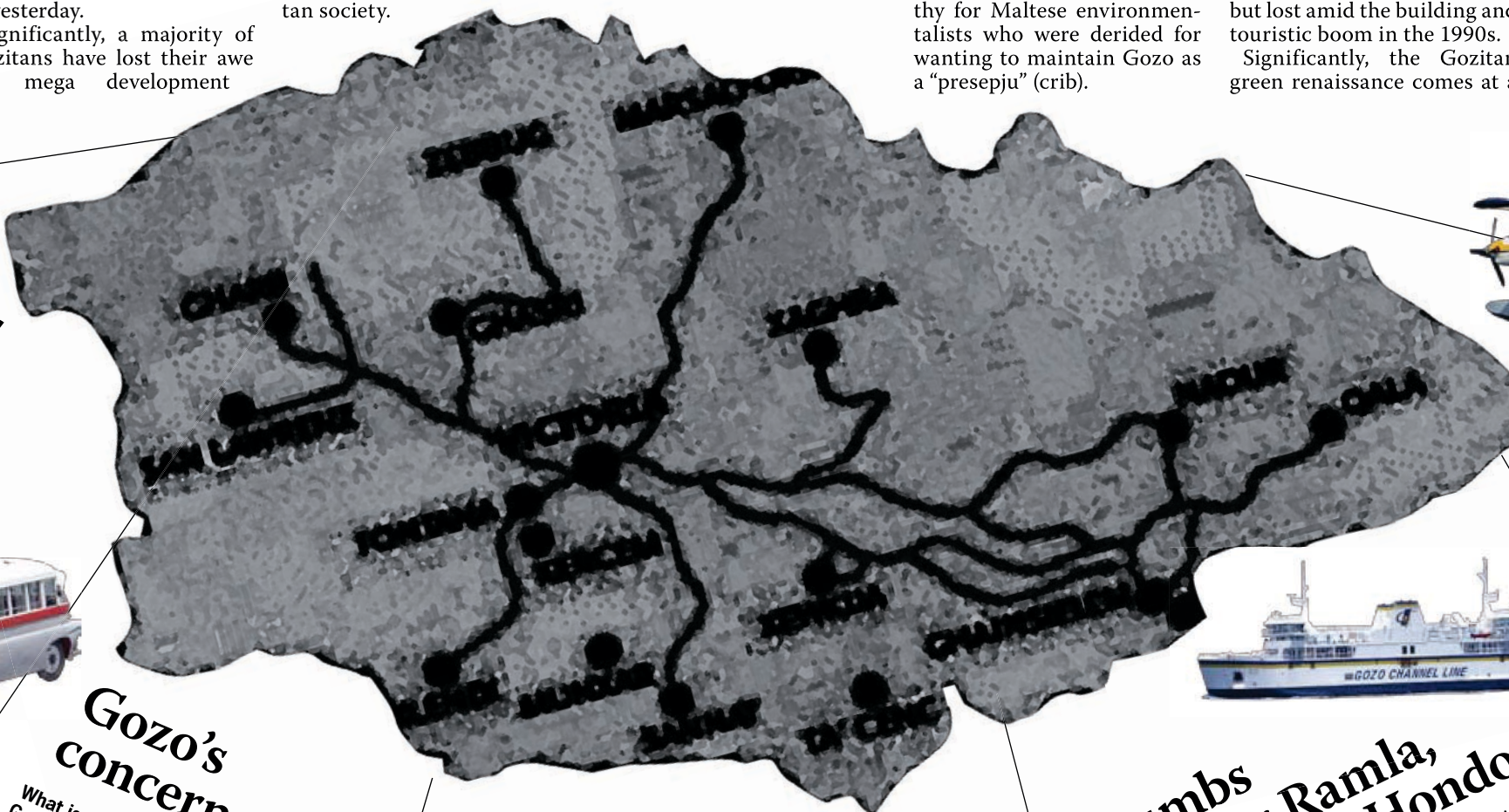
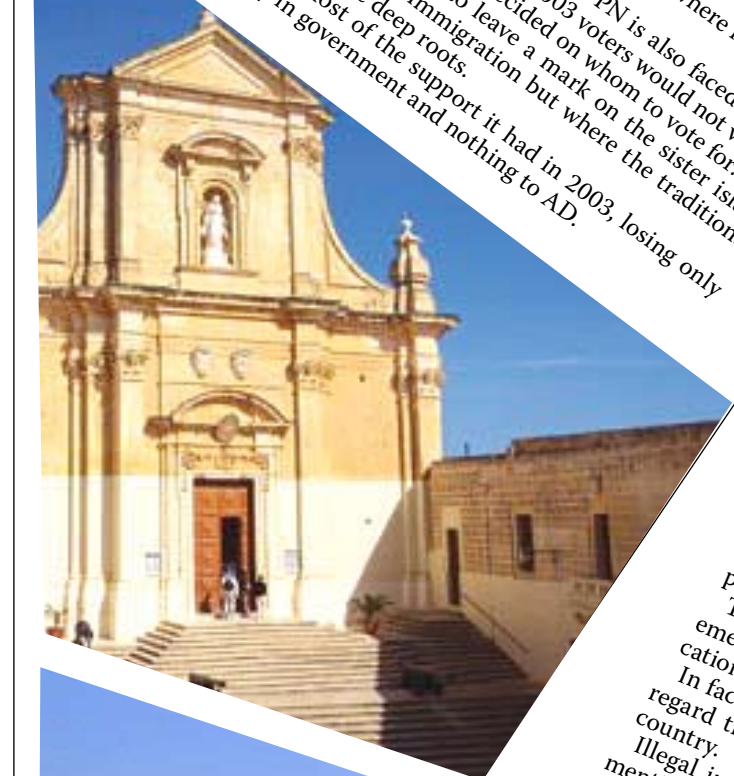
How Gozitan MLP voters in 2003 would vote now:

AD	84.2
PN	1.8
MLP again	12.3
Don't know	1.8
No reply	0

How Gozitan AD voters in 2003 would vote now:

PN	27
MLP	71.9
AD again	1.1
Don't know	0
No reply	0

The MaltaToday survey reveals that the tectonic plates of Gozitan politics are less stable than ever. Both Labour and AD are making inroads in an island where the Nationalist Party always commanded a strong lead. Back in 2003 the PN scored nearly 60 per cent in Gozo, with Labour trailing at 41 per cent. AD, which scored 0.4 per cent in 2003, has now emerged as a respectable force draining 5.1 per cent of the PN's support in 2003 and scoring four per cent. The survey shows that AD's near miss in last March's local elections, where it garnered 10 per cent of the vote, reflects a regional trend. Yet apart from losing support to the opposition parties, the PN is also faced by a disgruntled electorate to the extent to the PN's support in 2003, losing only 1.8 per cent. Labour manages to retain most of the support it had in 2003, losing only two per cent to the party in government and nothing to AD.



Gozo's concerns

What is the greatest problem facing Gozo?

Employment	32.7%
State of the roads	9.7
Transport from Malta and Gozo	9.7
Environment	6.3
Cost of living	6.3
Tourism	3.7
Public transport	3

What is the greatest problem facing Malta?

Cost of living	19.7%
Employment	15
Illegal immigration	5.7
Deficit	4.7
Environment	3.7
Utility bills	2.7
Property prices	2
Partisan politics	2

Employment tops the list of Gozitan respondents' concerns, reflecting statistics showing unemployment on the rise in Gozo. Official statistics show that December 2003 to December 2006. Not surprisingly, transport problems top the list of concerns in a small island in a small archipelago. Ten per cent regard the state of Gozo's roads and transport public transport system as Gozo's top problem. The environment is the only quality of life issue which emerges as a top concern of Gozitan respondents – an indication that Gozitan concerns are mainly material. In fact, like Maltese respondents in other surveys, Gozitans regard the cost of living as the greatest problem facing the country. Illegal immigration, which does not directly affect Gozo, is mentioned as the country's greatest problem by six per cent of Gozitan respondents.

Small island networks

Do you trust Minister Giovanna Debono?

Yes	53.9
No	22.6
Not so much	16.5
Don't know	5.7
No reply	1.3

How widespread is corruption in Gozo?

Very widespread	39.3
There is some corruption	45.7
There is no corruption	10
Don't know	5

How widespread is corruption in the whole country?

	Gozitans	All Maltese
Very widespread	58.7	63.3
There is some corruption	28.7	26.7
There is no corruption	7.6	0.7
Don't know	5	9.3

Have you ever received a favour in exchange of your vote?

Yes	Gozitans 11.7	All Maltese 2.7
No	85.7	96.7
No Reply	2.7	0.7



Thumbs down for Ramla, Ta'Cenc and Hondoq

Do you agree with the development proposed at Hondoq ir-Rummien?

Yes	PN 46.8	MLP 21	All 34.9
No	37.7	71	49
Don't know	15.9	8	16.1

Do you agree with MEPAs decision to grant a permit for 23 villas at Ulysses lodge?

Yes	PN 33.8	MLP 12.9	All 17.1
No	50.6	75.8	63.4
Don't know	15.6	11.3	19.5

Do you agree with development proposed at Ta'Cenc?

Yes	PN 29.9	MLP 11.3	All 20.9
No	42.9	67.7	51.9
Don't know	27.2	21	27.3

Should spring hunting be allowed?

Yes	Gozitans 41.8	Maltese 36.7
No	42.8	46.2
Don't know	15.5	17.1



Conservative bulwark

Do you agree with the introduction of divorce?

Yes	All Gozitans 27	Gozitans under 34 36.2	All Maltese 49.6
No	71.9	62.1	50.4
Don't know	1.1	1.7	

Do you agree with same sex marriages?

Yes	All Gozitans 9.4	Gozitans under 34 31.6	All Maltese 29.2
No	87.6	77.2	68.1
Don't know	3.0	3.5	2.7

While a MaltaToday survey in February showed Malta as a whole evenly split on the divorce issue, only 27 per cent of Gozitans agree with the introduction of divorce. While 29 per cent of the Maltese agree with the introduction of divorce, which are having a greater impact on Malta. This is a clear indication that a majority of Gozitans are cut off from the continental secular values, which are having a greater impact on Malta. Politically, Gozitan moral conservatism could be a big obstacle for the introduction of same sex unions. It could also favour the PN as it tries to project itself as the party the custodian of traditional values. Yet Gozo is not immune to the winds of change. Among under 34-year-olds, the percentage of respondents favouring the introduction of divorce rises to 36.2. Support for same sex marriages among this category rises to 32 per cent.

