

Baie du Cap Part IV:
When IRS MonRoze imposes its plan on the people who live there

The *Integrated Resort Scheme* (IRS) called MonRoze in Baie du Cap is typical of one aspect of the Government's *Smart Cities* strategy. It is a long-term real estate conspiracy between the State and the land owners out for a quite buck. This is identical to most of the other sugar estate money-making land deals. This particular IRS scheme applied for its Environment Impact Assessment, a permit that has had its credibility somewhat shaken recently, as long ago as 2009. What the State does is it arranges tax concessions for some so-called "developer" to come up with a loony idea, like cutting a village in two (see photo), or like gradually taking over the sea-front at Baie du Cap, and then this is imposed on the people. Or, in Cap Tamarin, we see first an Eco-Bridge Festival, with the Minister sitting there in the Press Conference alongside the so-called developers, announcing an art and ecology festival, which is no more than a very thin smoke-screen. Then the wetlands by the river are filled with concrete, and an IRS gets turned into a *Smart City*. A smart city means, inter alia, that the rich do not pay the taxes at all that the rest of the people pay when selling land or buying fittings for a house. And then IRS's and smart cities mean colonial settlers moving in and then living in those ghost-like habitations called "gated communities". The promoters of this strategy do not even bother to go on-and-on about the "smartness" of the cities involving technological gadgets, but present them simply as brash rich peoples' ghettos.



What kind of a democracy is it that allows this to happen? Who is it who decides? Who decides that it is fair game to gradually chase people off the land in the interior – making way for hunting-grounds in the mountains for millionaires – or hound people off the sea-front – so that millionaires can have their “pieds dans l’eau”? Who in Government decides behind the backs of the people who to give permits to so they can convert agricultural land into residential or commercial land? This land is not bare land. It is the land that the people of Mauritius over generations and generations have cleared and developed with their own hands. Just sold to the highest bidder from abroad.

And when will all this stop?

What kind of development is it that turns all of us dignified people of Mauritius, and in particular of a village like Baie du Cap, into a class of servants for the rich? Why should we be condemned for eternity to work as other peoples’ maids, cooks, gardeners, musicians, drivers, boatmen, child-minders? We are not calling for these people who come into IRS projects to become our cooks, gardeners, musicians, drivers, boatmen, child-minders, no, not that. We want proper work for everyone. That’s simple We want work, for a start, in the production of worthwhile, useful things like food – planting, animal raising, and fishing, all linked to production plants for food preservation (canning, frozen, freeze-dried, or further developed into, say, curries, vindays, *ladob*, and sold to a niche market) – for people here to eat and people in the Region to eat. This is work we know how to do. This is the work we need to see created. And this is urgent.

How childish do the “developers” in the Baie du Cap MonRoze project think people are, when they try to dupe them with so little as a filling station, or an ATM machine. The people of Baie du Cap must, as a right, like everybody else, get the roads, the drains, the safety from falling rocks, the social centres and children’s playgrounds they need and want – not to mention a bank and petrol station – and this not in exchange for giving up the sea-front, nor in exchange for allowing a hotel, 74 lots of villas and apartments and a shopping mall, all to come and invade their fishing village, turning it into a plaything for the rich, while making land-fall gains for the sugar estate bosses and their families. The people of Baie du Cap who live on State Land leases should be protected, instead of having their road access cut off by this kind of project.

It is time for people to put into question this IRS and Smart Cities Strategy. And to reject it. And to force Government to force the sugar estates and other capitalists to diversify agriculture, develop fishing, set up food preservation plants, thus creating work at all sorts of levels and ensuring food security. Instead of pouring billions of rupees into hideous real estate speculation, these same billions must go into this kind of integrated development of production and creation of proper jobs.

Lindsey Collen
for LALIT