

The City Gate spectacle

Michael Briguglio

Judging by the massive feedback by civil society on Renzo Piano's plans for City Gate, it is evident that Maltese society is reflexive and not simply made up of passive yes men and women.

Indeed, a spectacle has been created, with environmentalists pitted against each other, traditionalists yearning for a golden age that might have never existed, cultural elites and self-appointed spokesmen of "the people" (whatever this means) attempting to maintain their status in the field, while postmodernists rub their hands with joy as they see all that was solid becoming fragmented. Realists say that Mr Piano was ultimately conditioned by the government's brief and budget and partisans support or oppose the project for partisan reasons! Others might not be interested at all in the project and many, after all, like or dislike all or parts of it depending on their taste.

Professional expertise is a must in the case of such projects and Mr Piano is definitely a world leader in this regard. Yet, experts themselves know that there is no royal road of truth on such matters. On Bondiplus, Mr Piano himself said that hearing the voices coming from society is a prerequisite of the type of intelligence that he favours.

It is natural to expect different and contrasting opinions and tastes. Any decision taken would have had supporters and opponents, at least on particular aspects. If anything, the present government should be applauded for having the courage to take a decision after 60 years of waiting.

My opinion of Mr Piano's plans are that they should be welcome. Were I on the Mepa board, I would have voted in favour of the project, though I would surely have put forward certain critical comments.

It is true that the entrance to Valletta needs to be regenerated, not only for aesthetic reasons but also because this can create multiplier effects by generating employment and encouraging cultural activities. Tourism, culture and the arts have much to gain from this. The expenditure on the project, though hefty, should be seen as an investment and not a waste of money, as some opponents, in some cases motivated by partisan interests, are unfortunately implying.

As regards the Parliament building, I believe it would have been better to have it sited elsewhere but, at least, the fact that it will have environmentally-friendly aspects is commendable. One also hopes that, beyond the construction aspect of the building, Parliament becomes a true symbol of a plural and open democracy with a vivid civil society and not simply a bastion of power jealously kept by the two-party oligopoly. It would also be great if space is found for a public library in the building.

The open-air theatre has the potential to be used for various purposes and, in a way, it is as if Mr Piano has created an open space to compensate for the space taken up by the Parliament building. One hopes the theatre will be accessible to various forms of arts and culture and not simply restricted to the elite. As regards the roof, I honestly can't see why the rain should be seen as a reason for having it, given our climatic conditions. Sound is another issue but should we, at all times, be held hostage to certain uncontrollable festa enthusiasts, bent on forcing as many people as possible to hear their loud bangs?

It is very positive that Mr Piano used the fortification imagery to keep cars outside of Valletta. The pedestrianisation process in the capital city, which should be repeated in other towns, is conducive to the democratising of open spaces. This has significant social, environmental and economic benefits. Accessibility by pedestrians enhances social interaction, decreases pollution and improves business opportunities. A visit to cities that have taken this route gives ample evidence of this.

A city with a lack of open spaces is a city that stifles human interaction. Suffice to say that, in the course of history, various rulers tried to control open spaces to give less space for their adversaries to rebel!


Of course, the reduction of access to cars has to be coupled by a holistic traffic management plan and bold changes in Malta's public transport. The latter is the best guarantee that there will be fewer cars on the road. Besides, alternative modes of transport to Valletta and within the city itself should be encouraged.

It has taken 60 years to decide on the City Gate spectacle. Now that a decision has been taken, let us ensure that as many different voices and identities in Maltese society as possible can make use of it. A regenerated city entrance would, ultimately, be a triumph of everyday democracy.

The author is chairman of Alternattiva Demokratika - the Green party.

www.alternattiva.org.mt

Comments

George Debono(2 weeks, 1 day ago) 
j ellul

RE.....best interest.....for/Malta....is...for....decisions, once taken, to be implemented.

That's fine if the decision was the right one. But not if there was no prior consultation and if there was widespread criticism. Unfortunately the whole project was a fait-accompli long before it was made public.


My own personal objection is that an open air theatre in Valetta is an absurdity and that, no matter what has been said in its defence, Malta deserved better than this sop to the nation, especially when our politicians rewarded themselves with a spanking new parliament when there are so many other dignified architectural gems where parliament could have been sited - but I can live with this.

RE"..... (Government) reports(on which) government..... decides and acts....."

How wrong you are here !

I have been lobbying for years for better air quality, concrete action in the sphere of renewable energy. I have had to wade through countless reports all of which were not acted upon. We are still at square one and way, way behind other nations, with virtually zero renewable energy and very [polluted air in spite of all sorts of pious slogans and recommendations in one government report after the other.


G

j ellul(2 weeks, 1 day ago) 

G. Debono, you say that you have Malta's best interest at heart and I have no reason to doubt that. The best interest for Malta is for decisions, once taken, to be implemented. In taking the decision on the City Gate project, the authorities took into account current cultural facilities, attendances, the approximate costs of building and running a new national theatre and alternative options (like revamping MCC).

Government decided against building a national theatre on the opera house site and mature people, like Michael Briguglio, have accepted that decision because they understand that governments are elected by the people to decide and implement. In the past governments used to be criticised, probably with some justification, of preparing reports and doing nothing. Now that there is a government that decides and acts, we criticise anyway.

The discussion on whether Malta needs a national theatre in the context of the City Gate site is all academic because the process is now beyond reversing. If you and the petitioners and others want to lobby government for a national theatre, you are welcome to do so but please talk about other sites and not the opera house site.

George Debono(2 weeks, 2 days ago) 
Raymond Sammut

Elitist?

Elitist eh? sorry, but people who resort to insulting labels are merely demonstrating that they have run out of ideas upon which to base their case.

So, we're back to using names. This is all beside the point. It is the equivalent of calling somebody who isn't elitist a hammallu.

RE RE "minuscule..group...of....a...few....scores...of...petitioners" -

How did your elitist "few" - this "minuscule group" distinguish themselves from the rest of "scores" of petitioners ??? ---and how did they "go on to expect the government to listen to them as a distinctive group,"

Is Joseph Calleja "elitist"?

I'm sorry, but I think your way of dealing with the subject goes back to the dark 70s and 80s when inverted snobbery ruled.

Culture is for everybody and it is a tragedy that there is such an absence of awareness of culture.....the loss of Radju Bronja, Malta's only cultural program, was a tragedy for Maltese culture. It was not elitist in the least and its removal to save a few Liri was a barbaric act.

I want the best for my country and this includes culture for all and this has nothing to do with being elitist OK? .


G

Raymond Sammut(2 weeks, 1 day ago)


"It is the equivalent of calling somebody who isn't elitist a hammallu." --(George Debono)

This claim to "equivalence" is merely your own construction, which is both false and absurd. Furthermore, please try not to accuse me of having called anybody anything. It's you, Mr Debono, who is mentioning names, not me. Whoever was privy to the petition is none of my concern, and I have every right to form and express an opinion on a petition, on its authors as a group, and on its potential consequences to society, as much as anybody else.

By definition, a minuscule group of people (compared to population size) qualify themselves as elite at the moment they distinguish themselves from the rest of the population on the basis of considering themselves better in some particular attribute, such as, for example, "talent". Any other quality in the population is exclusive and has no effect. The group is elite solely as a result of their own action which is not relevant to, or contingent upon, anything or anyone else. They consequently become elitist when they expect, through some form of instrument, the decision maker to do as they request, while disregarding other people's wishes.

Raymond Sammut(2 weeks, 2 days ago) 

I agree with Michael Briguglio using the descriptive "cultural elites". When a minuscule group of a few scores of petitioners in society choose to distinguish themselves from the rest, on the basis of some criterion, and then go on to expect the government to listen to them as a distinctive group, they have obviously elevated themselves to elitist status. It is more their attitude, and all that they ignore or dismiss, rather than what they claim to be, that qualifies them to that status, which now they seem to belatedly reject. It could take them years to recover their composure, and cleanse themselves from the uncleanliness of their error.

George Debono(2 weeks, 2 days ago) 

Continues

The other bonus of cultural tourism is that it will attract up-market travellers who spend more.

Visitors to Malta have repeatedly told me how amazed they are at the vibrant cultural life here - for a start there are the concerts at Sta Caterina and the waterfront Sagrestia and then there are good concerts at the ever-amazing Manoel. With a bit of imagination and will, Malta's reputation as a cultural (over & above the fine weather, Friendliness. Etc) could become a winner...

RE ".....The demand for theatre and classical concerts in Malta is small"

It is not.


To J Martinelli

Re....dancers/had/a/dancing/area/too/small/to/do/justice/to/their/talent!

The problem is that the space has been commandeered by our politicians leaving no space for a decent theatre. So the cause was lost from the very start.

Still, there is still place and need for a theatre -and not necessarily a dedicated opera house-. Opera would still be possible albeit with reduced space for the likes of more demanding (USA - style think-big) metropolitan ballet dancers. After all, we regularly have perfectly acceptable opera performances in our teeny-weeny Manoel.

The basic issue is that an open air theatre in the middle of Valetta simply doesn't make sense.

George Debono(2 weeks, 2 days ago) 

m borg

RE ".....only 10% of those attending musical concerts are Maltese. With such a poor turnout from Maltese, how will we fill a national theatre seating say 1,300 people week after week?....."

This is the Maltese post-colonial 'think small' pessimistic attitude again.

Concerts at the Manoel and other theatres are always well-attended. AND if we did have regular music (and other) festivals it would have the additional bonus of attracting tourists. One thing you must understand is that many people are more-or-less starved of a cultural life. It's OK in Malta where Valletta is within easy reach from everywhere but quite different when you live in a big country. - I once lived in the middle of a county in England well-away from London and barely went to a concert for the whole of the 5 years I was there and nearly died of boredom. There was simply nothing going on in the town where I lived or within a radius of 40 miles. .

Continues

J Martinelli(2 weeks, 2 days ago) 

@ Astrid Vella

When and if you have an opportunity to talk to Joseph Calleja, whom I heard perform at the Met and truly admire his talent, take him aside and ask him a couple of questions:

1. Having performed at the Met (capacity 3900 patrons) ask Joseph what the size of Met's stage is?

2. I watched the Aida from the Met - live transmission and during the intermission a choreographer was interviewed. His only beef about the stage arrangements was that his dancers had a dancing area too small to do justice to their talent! You may want to remind Joseph that just the stage, prop storage area and orchestra pit are larger than the ROH site.

3. Ask him whether rebuilding ROH with a capacity of say, 600 and a half decent stage, would make it sustainable.


If he is honest with his answers he will come to the conclusion that it does not make sense to rebuild ROH, hold a few opera performances a year, only to have to beg for government financial support after year two, the novelty having worn off. These same people who are screaming so loud are the usual nar tat-tiben!

m borg(2 weeks, 2 days ago) 

Small venues are precisely that, small. The tourists who come to Malta for these musical events are a fraction of the total number of visitors. It is getting the volumes of tourists which will really create the jobs.

Mr. Debono, you say that in small venues, only 10% of those attending musical concerts are Maltese. With such a poor turnout from Maltese, how will we fill a national theatre seating say 1,300 people week after week?

If and when we build a national theatre, it will be underutilised or unused for most evenings just like MCC. The demand for theatre and classical concerts in Malta is small. It is not a national theatre that we need but renewed efforts to increase attendances.

George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

CONTINUED

2) we Maltese tend to under-rate ourselves. There is a lot of talent in Malta and we have a particularly talented reserve of musicians. This is an asset to Malta which is seriously under-exploited.

The same applies to Drama. The standard of production of many of our theatre plays is almost of West-End standard. For instance, in my opinion the production of Amadeus was better than the famous Milos Forman Film and I could quote many other example of fantastic stage productions.

Contrary to what you say - Malta has great potential and talent to make it a cultural

destination which people would flock to - if only this was exploited and our culture and impoverished musicians received more support from our government.


But all you lot - and Micheal Briguglio - want us to remain a bunch of peasants pandering to the tattooed spade and bucket brigade.

Tourists will not come simply to gawp at an " open air theatre "or "one of only twenty-seven national parliaments in the EU "

We still have a lot of growing up to do. And it's not going to happen as long as this backward mentality persists.

UFF !

G


George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
m borg

RE Tourists come to Malta to see something different

Sorry - but you are very, very wrong and - (I don't mean this as an insult but as a deduced fact) - you are seriously out of touch.


1) I am closely involved with some of the musical activities in Malta and - wait for it Mr Borg - at least 90% of the attendance at recitals and concerts in small venues are TOURISTS. There are many, many tourists whom I have got to know because they keep coming again and again because they appreciate the talent that goes into them and the beautiful settings - such as the Sta Caterina chapel in Valetta.

continues.....

m borg(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

I disagree with Astrid Vella when she says that a Maltese national theatre will attract more tourists to Malta. Tourists come to Malta to see something different. A Maltese national theatre will make no difference in their decision whether to come to Malta or go elsewhere. If they want to see theatre or classical concerts, they will go to London, Edinburgh, Berlin, Munich or to any other city.

On the other hand, tourists will want to see an open air theatre designed by Renzo Piano in the context of a World Heritage Site. They will want to see one of only twenty-seven national parliaments in the EU and walk in the urban spaces forming part of the Piano project. Valletta is already a major tourist attraction and the Piano project will make it more so.

George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
Antoine Vella

AHA ! Now I know on whose side you are !

RE "The motley anti-Piano crew"

And , now, you, like Michael Briguglio, are resorting to disparaging insults. Please don't do this - it is not the stuff of debate. Please stick to the argument without calling people names - people who resort to insults are merely demonstrating that they have run out of ideas upon which to base their case.

RE " do not even know what they want: some insist on a roof others want a square"


This is another mild insult. Not true. We all know what is right and what is wrong. The objections have been consistent - and these concerned the futility of a roofless theatre.


Re.....the only reason it is being kept as an open space is because of what it represents culturally and not because there are no nearby squares.


This doesn't make sense. A roofless absurdity is a half measure. Replacing a beautiful opera house with such a cheapo substitute and an insult to the Maltese and Maltese culture.

G


Antoine Vella(2 weeks, 2 days ago)
You evidently go through life feeling chronically insulted.

Antoine Vella(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
Astrid Vella "In spite of the good aspects of the Valletta Regeneration Plans,..."
Would you care to list them?


Joseph Cauchi(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
@ Astrid Vella, "...a foreign social scientist studying Malta told me that attitudes in Maltese society have not progressed much since the autocratic arrogance of the Knights". So, this social scientist must be quite advanced in age! JC

George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
Antoine Vella You hit the nail on the head "Your argument that Valletta needs another large open square is not supported by facts" Precisely! G .


Antoine Vella(2 weeks, 3 days ago)
George Debono If you are referring to the site of the old theatre, the only reason it is being kept as an open space is because of what it represents culturally and not because there are no nearby squares. The motley anti-Piano crew do not even know what they want: some insist on a roof others want a square, some want a fortified gate others are against Parliament. . . . the only building that would represent all your views is the Tower of Babel.

George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
Raymond Camilleri RE there can be different and perfectly valid opinions on subjective issues such as architecture, art etc.....&.....they just insult


whoever doesn't agree... typical provincial mentality from a little island stuck in the middle of the sea.... Yes quite And the point is that the majority of objections/comments were anyway of a technical nature eg: problems of entry in to Valetta, whether an open space (as opposed to a gate) was appropriate to Valetta's entrance, the legality (and wisdom) of having parliament there instead and.....MOSTLY..... about the futility of an open-air theatre when Malta already has so many marvelous settings for open air-performances. Very few were fundamentally against Piano's design (ie questions of "taste") . So really, it was much less a matter of taste - and much more a matter of function and the absence of consultation with the public. G

Antoine Vella(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 


Lawrence Fenech "Il-Fosos is a perfect example of an open space favoured by all. The only space in Valetta is to be occupied by a building that could have easily been placed in quite a few other buildings inside Valletta itself. " Granaries Square is only a 3-minute walk from Valletta so residents do not have all that far to go to find a large square. Moreover the relatively tiny city is surrounded by the sea on 3 sides so there are beautiful open views all around. Your argument that Valletta needs another large open square is not supported by facts.

Raymond Camilleri(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

The truth is that some people still do not understand that there can be different and perfectly valid opinions on subjective issues such as architecture, art etc. and that there is something called 'taste'.... insult they just insult whoever doesn't agree... typical provincial mentality from a little island stuck in the middle of the sea....

Raymond Camilleri(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

Brenda Saliba does not know what she is talking about... some people just chatter away!

Norman Lowell(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

This is the last, miserable act of Briguglio's miserable party.

Andrew Camilleri(2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Jahasra Lowell, invent something new to say.


vicky grech(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

att ms brenda saliba

His father does not enter in this matter, this boy is following the steps of his predecessor Cassola, whose futile campaign led him to null.

brenda saliba(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

Am surprised! and this boy was in the forefront of the protest against the Valletta regeneration project...chameleon! like father like son....

J Martinelli(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

Same names, same complaints!

Someone has the courage to call a spade a spade and is immediately showered with less than complimentary phrases.

The destruction of an open space? Freedom Square is a dirty car park welcoming citizens and tourists alike to Valletta having tackled the City Gate cum latrine, hopefully unscathed from pigeon droppings.

Mr. Briguglio was right calling , most naysayers 'cultural elites and self-appointed spokesmen of "the people". While everyone has the right to an opinion, no one has the right , whatever the motivation is, to hamper plans for moving forward. Most negative comments came from politically motivated individuals. While I can be similarly accused, the difference is that I trust Mr. Piano's judgment far better than some politician or NGO's rant designed solely to make noise, pose for the gallery and please the uninformed. I seriously doubt that most of the detractors of the project even know what the project looked like when finished let alone having the wherewithal to comment on architectural matters.

The main beef remains the ROH not being rebuilt. To those I would repeat that the site is by far too small to have a functional theatre with a decently sized stage.

Astrid Vella(2 weeks, 3 days ago)

Dear Mr Martinelli, it would be so refreshing if for once you could come up with reasoned arguments instead of just insults and patronising arrogance which reflects so badly on the party you seek to promote. It is no wonder that yesterday a foreign social scientist studying Malta told me that attitudes in Maltese society have not progressed much since the autocratic arrogance of the Knights.


The cherry on the cake is that after saying "let alone having the wherewithal to comment on architectural matters" you have contradicted both Joseph Calleja, our foremost theatrical expert, who said that he's sung in international theatres smaller than the ROH, and Bernard Blattner, Piano's partner who stated that a theatre with full modern facilities can be built on the site, GIVEN THE FUNDS.

Admittedly, not music to your ears!

Gerard Cassar(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

The building of Parliament must be a permanent one. The P.M. wanted built in place of the theatre. Piano reasoned that it would be a waste of space and a blasphemy to build Parliament instead of the theatre. Use the theatre space temporary for something else until something is better thought an keep it roofless to avoid waste of money. But since the P.M. wants a Parliament let's build it on freedom square and spare the theatre site for future use. Remember that Piano was not given an alternative except the Theatre. Had he been given an alternative space he would surely have made the right choice.

What happened is all the fault of the P.M. and Minister Gatt.
Is this lateral thinking?

George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

Your comments regarding "generating employment" is a cliché which is invalid. Tourists won't come to Malta to see our parliament or gate.

On the other hand, Tourism, culture and the arts would have had much to gain (your

words) and cultural activities would have been encouraged (your words) if a decent theatre - and home for our national orchestra and other productions - had been built. It is a shame that only a small fraction of the hefty expenditure (which Malta can ill-afford at present) on the project was on the theatre which was once iconic for Malta.

More investment in a theatre would not have been a waste of money, as you have implied.

The real vision you should have expressed as a person who, in a holistic manner, has the interests of his country at heart; such a vision would include one of access to culture for all our new generation - with this access starting at school which it doesn't.

I regret that this opinion piece was thoroughly disappointing. I have always had a great respect For AD - this has diminished it - I hope you will make up for it.

Marvin Mizzi(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 


The expenditure on the project, though hefty, should be seen as an investment and not a waste of money, as some opponents,
Is there any need to spend 80m or more to have a hole in the fortifications, the ruins of the Theatre worse that they are now and a Parliament when we have one and to do away with it one of the open spaces..... Is this money well invested?.....

Astrid Vella(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

I am very surprised that the leader of Alternattiva Demokratika should come up with an analysis which lacks depth, research and foresight. In endorsing a the Piano project for its employment-generating aspects, does Dr. Briguglio not realise that the jobs are only to be created for a few years, the duration of construction, whereas a fully-fledged theatre would create long-term employment for staff and performers, as well as spin-off employment in hotels and restaurants catering to cultural tourists that such a theatre would help attract to Malta?

Michael Briguglio commends the parliament on the grounds of it being environmentally-friendly, without commenting on the fact that the present siting is illegal according to the Structure Plan. Another politician who is quite happy to ignore the laws of our land?

Dr. Briguglio also refers to the 'open-air theatre' when Bernard Blattner, Renzo Piano's partner specified more than once that this is not going to be a theatre but a performance space which does not offer the possibilities of a proper theatre. As for the festa enthusiasts, Dr. Briguglio seems in denial that the only sorts of festa bangs which will not disturb performances are no bangs at all - a reality as remote as the prospect of no hunting in Malta.

Astrid Vella(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

PART 2: The statement that Piano's project will cars out of Valletta is misinformed. Far from decreasing pollution, the Traffic Impact Study shows that traffic which was previously kept on Valletta's periphery is now being brought into Valletta's


residential streets like Ordinance Street, Archbishop Street and part of South Street. Significantly, traffic is now to circulate round the Opera House site, providing further disruption during performances on a stage just feet away from the roads on either side.

However most flabbergasting of all is Michael Briguglio's assertion that the Valletta Regeneration project will be "a triumph of everyday democracy". I cannot understand how he came to this conclusion given that polls indicate that 80% of the public is opposed to this project in one way or another. A politician like him must surely be aware that Malta has signed the Aarhus Convention, undertaking to carry out public consultation specifically at an early stage in projects, before permits are submitted.

In spite of the good aspects of the Valletta Regeneration Plans, this project will tragically go down in history as the symbol of the arrogance of power that feels it can ride roughshod over the rights that the citizens of Malta won on becoming members of the EU.

Graham Crocker (2 weeks, 3 days ago)

I thought he made good observations. The ruins have been there for far too long and we cannot just leave it, because nobody agrees with each other. The other ideas (including yours) are fine, but none are better than the one Renzo Piano has proposed so I cannot see why people are getting so excited and worked up about it.

George Debono (2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
Continues


Your comments regarding "generating employment" is a cliché which is quite invalid and nonsensical. Tourists won't come to Malta to see our parliament or gate. On the other hand, Tourism, culture and the arts would have had much to gain (your words) and .

cultural activities would have been encouraged (your words) if a decent theatre - and home for our national orchestra - had been built.

It is a shame that only a small fraction of the hefty expenditure on the project was on a cheap parody of the theatre which was once iconic for Malta. More investment in a theatre would not have been a waste of money, as "opponents" (your words) have implied.

The real vision you should have expressed is one of a person who, in a holistic manner, has the interests of his country at heart; such a vision would be one of access to culture for all our new generation - with this access starting at school - which it doesn't.

I regret that this opinion piece was thoroughly disappointing. I have always had a great respect for AD - this has diminished it - I hope you will make up for it.

George Debono (2 weeks, 3 days ago) 
CONTINUED :


Please note that controversy centred almost exclusively around the open air theatre. This is was rightly found to be an absurdity by all those who know something about Culture.

The last thing we need is to spend millions on a roofless absurdity in our beautiful capital city when we have hundreds of utterly beautiful spots all over our island which have been used with great effect as venues for all kinds of events.

I have been among those who raised my voice against the insanity of the roofless theatre because I feel deeply that culture is seriously neglected in Malta.

Like many others, I feel entitled to say voice my objection by virtue of my awareness on the cultural situation in Malta and close contacts with many young talented people (of which there are many) who receive absolutely no encouragement from the Government. We must correct this neglect of culture and eradicate past mistaken attitudes which were rampant in the socialist past where culture was considered elitist and where the attitude was that the masses could be better controlled if they were kept ignorant and in the dark.

CONTINUES

George Debono(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 


I regret to that parts of this opinion piece are offensive to those who have voiced an opinion.

Most of the people who spoke up had the interests of Malta and her culture at heart and are the sort of people who are members of NGOs and who sacrifice a lot of their precious time to stand up for the interests of Malta. Also, many others who spoke up had every right to do so by virtue of their knowledge or experience through their involvement in cultural matters and and who also have Maltese culture at heart. Foremost among these (in the context of the roofless theatre) was our greatest cultural ambassador, the tenor Joseph Calleja.

It is deeply insulting to palm such people off with cheap sarcasm as "cultural elites and self-appointed spokesmen of the people (whatever this means)" and, (worse, still), implying that they were doing this out of vanity by saying that they were "attempting to maintain their status in the field" .

This is pure inverted snobbery and harks back to the dark days when culture was considered the prerogative of the "puliti" and suppressed.


CONTINUES .

Lawrence Fenech(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

Il-Fosos is a perfect example of an open space favoured by all.

The only space in Valetta is to be occupied by a building that could have easily been placed in quite a few other buildings inside Valletta itself.

The problem is someone is still scared of the result of a Referendum to hear the people's voice on the project, by people I mean the Maltese citizen who has every right to have his say and not ignored completely.

j ellul(2 weeks, 3 days ago) 

Well done, Michael. AD did not fall into the trap of those who kept harping that everybody is against the project. Politically it would have been easy for AD to jump on the band wagon and come out against the project. To Michael Briguglio's credit, he did not.
