



**Speech by Perit Andre Pizzuto,
President of the Kamra tal-Periti,
on the occasion of the
Premju Emanuele Luigi Galizia 2024
Awards Ceremony**

26/10/2024

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, distinguished guests, colleagues, friends.

I thank you once again for your presence this evening. Over the past four days, the Kamra tal-Periti organised a celebration of the profession. A celebration we like to call Premju Emanuele Luigi Galizia.

I must thank all our sponsors, the Embassies of Türkiye, France and Switzerland for their support, and SHARE architects for assisting us with identifying such an esteemed jury.

It has been an event in which we gave a platform, or rather a podium, microphone and a clicker, to twenty architecture firms and public entities. During the public presentations held in a different part of this building, periti were able to display their skills in concept development, in research, technique, public engagement, their ability to carry forward projects with a commitment and passion that has left those present at the presentations in awe.

As happened in previous editions, these presentation sessions managed to transmit the sense of magic that high quality architecture brings with it to those in the audience.

During one of the presentations, Anthony Bonnici spoke about how good architecture is about transforming the metaphysical into the physical. That transformation, in my view, is the magic and the power of architecture. It is what keeps us hooked and passionate, despite all the difficulties we experience through the various phases of a project.

The difficulties are arguably far more accentuated in Malta, than in other countries.

With one of the highest population densities in the world, it is perhaps inevitable that the theme of over-development remains one of the primary concerns of the general public.

The projects presented over the past days demonstrated that the profession is not only sensitive to this theme, but has actively pursued solutions to address this problem. Many, if not all, of these proposed solutions were drawn up by architecture firms at their own initiative, succeeding to varying degrees in capturing public opinion's attention.

These initiatives demonstrate that the profession, not only has the necessary competences, but is eager to effect positive change in public space.

Last Wednesday, the President of the Republic spoke of the importance of safeguarding the quality of public space, and the impact this has on mental health.

During Thursday's lecture, David Macullo who unfortunately had to leave due to an urgent meeting, spoke extensively about his design philosophy centred on human psychology and well-being. During a conversation some of us were having with him at the end of the evening we discussed the intensity of Malta's public space. Many, including some of the finalists, spoke about the sense of claustrophobia that prevails among Maltese residents.

The quality of public space has been under attack for years now. It is an attack in which the public administration is the main responsible party. It is guilty by omission by failing miserably

to design and manage public space effectively. It is also guilty by design, as it continues to perpetuate policies of private speculation on public land with little to no control.

What good does having a building designed by Renzo Piano, if we are unable to control base instincts of the uncouth and uncultured in suppressing the enjoyment of this building by those who understand and respect the magic of architecture.

Government has a responsibility to recognise the impact this is having on our well-being and take real action to address it. Public relations schemes, such as the one recently announced by Infrastructure Malta, will produce no concrete results other than to waste more public funds in short-term projects that will leave no tangible community benefits in the long-term.

We have only to look at the predictable debacle of Project Green's green walls for evidence of the incompetence of certain CEOs of public entities.

Government is also responsible for ensuring that it appoints competent professionals to head public entities, and not politically loyal and obedient servants.

The Council of the Kamra tal-Periti earlier this year demonstrated in concrete ways how public funds can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve sustainable outcomes. Outcomes that address the need to modernise our infrastructure but also uphold public wellbeing.

In a first in its history, the Kamra tal-Periti published a conceptual proposal on how to regenerate the core of Msida, and convert it into an urban park. Infrastructural needs were reorganised and consolidated using planning and engineering solutions that produce a far more agreeable outcome.

The Council chose, like many of today's finalists, to put words into action and turn an idea into a tangible project. The response of the public to this proposal was overwhelming. That of Infrastructure Malta, far less so. It seems intent on proceeding irrespective of what public opinion wants. The end-result will be a flyover over which a dissatisfied public will drive with regret over the poor decision-making, and with bitter resentment for what could have been. Government is still in time to change course. I urge it to do so. It is never too late to do what is right.

Quality in public space is for those who cannot afford to buy land in the countryside to have picnics and fit plastic slides for the children to play out. Quality in public space is for those who do not drive and those who understand they need to set an example for others on promoting a

modal shift. Quality in public space is for those who wish to enjoy their seas and beaches because they do not own a boat that can take them to Sicily or Sardegna over the weekend. Quality in public space is for those parents who think it is not healthy for their children to spend their free time scrolling through Shorts on YouTube all day. Quality of public space is for those who are exhausted and stressed out after a long week at work and want to sleep on the grass within walking distance from their homes.

I must stress, however, that not all is bleak. I wish to end my message with optimism. I am in a privileged position to see change on its way ahead of many in this room. As I meet with various Ministers and senior public officials, many of whom are here this evening, to advocate for our profession and our industry, I am no longer met with hostility and scepticism. The formation of the National Building Council with the Malta Development Association and the setting up of the *Assoċjazzjoni Bennejja u Kuntratturi* earlier this year, has led to greater coordination and compromise within the industry which I firmly believe will result in higher standards and the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy in a shorter span of time. The meetings being held on an almost daily basis will eventually bear fruit, and I hope you will begin to experience them soon.

We are hopeful that in the upcoming budget, the Government will announce some of the proposals we have put forward to place our profession on a better footing, and begin to restore the reputation of our industry.

I am also optimistic because of what I have witnessed in the past four days. A profession that is mature, highly-qualified and eager to uphold the public good.

I feel privileged and humbled to be representing you, and hope that I can continue to meet your expectations to provide you with a working environment, an industry, and a regulatory framework that is most conducive for you to be able to express your full potential.

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