Competition Culture in Europe: Voices

Project Compass CIC

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CONTENTS

15

Design Developer Competition
A study on innovation, architecture and
affordable housing, Stockholm

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1. Introduction

In Sweden, Design-Developer (DD) competitions are used by municipalities to transfer publicly-owned land to developers, contractors and public housing companies. The procedures have no national guidelines, but are regulated locally by the municipalities through three methods: politically through land allocation policies; professionally through competition; and administratively through contracts with the winners. The DD-competition evolved after the building sector deregulation in the 1980s.[1]

The organisers begin the process by publishing a brief, multi-disciplinary developer-led design teams produce solutions, the jury ranks proposals and appoints a winner, then the

competition awards implementation through the developer and a land allocation agreement. Competitors risk uncertainty in competing at their own expense.[2] The larger the number of competent design-teams that participate, the greater the access to good competition solutions for the task.

In this case the organisers' two primary concerns were architecture and affordable rental housing, which establishes a key relationship between rent and income levels within the target group – young people in Stockholm.[3]

This competition had typical qualification conditions, but invited fresh thinking to respond to and solve the competition task, in particular *"smart and innovative solutions"* and *"new thinking for area efficiency"*.[4] Innovation and new thinking can in DD competitions appear in four delimiting stages.[5]

- Planning and programming of the competition.

- Design and submission of the competition proposals.

- Examination and assessment of competition proposals.

- Implementation of competition proposals, continuity of design team.

In the initial planning and programming stage, the foundation for new thinking comes through the choice of the jury, the

competition form, and the requirements in the brief. In the second stage, the responsibility for innovation transfers to the design-teams. In the third stage the jury are accountable for judging the competition proposals, finding new thinking, identifying the existence of innovative solutions, and appointing the overall best design proposal. In the fourth stage, the responsibility transfers to the winner to deliver the implementation of the new thinking and innovation.[6]

This case study examines the competition's capability to produce good solutions to the competition task.[7] There are two central competition goals, area efficiency in cheap apartments, and the development of innovative solutions. The case study used collected competition data analysed through archives, competition documents, key player statements and a student analysis.[8]

2. Case Description

The competition brief was eight pages long, containing a description of the competition task, the planning conditions, submission requirements, judging criteria, and a list of the jury-members[9]. The dwellings are to be rented, and the land is to be leased to the winner. The rent bands were prescribed by the city, but detailed information about affordable rent levels for young citizens in Stockholm was lacking.

Jury Members and Design Criteria
The Jury in the DD competition

consists of four officials from the Development Administration and the City Planning Office, with professional competency in the areas of architecture, planning and construction. The design proposals were to be judged on a basis of the design criteria and qualification requirements, vis:

- Architecture and design.

- Innovation and new thinking for area efficiency.

- Adaptation to given preconditions.

- Average rent in SEK per m^2 living space per year.

One criterion is quantifiable – rent as SEK per m^2 living space per year. The other three criteria are qualitative, with jury members identifying values, innovation and qualities which support the brief criteria. Critical to success was how well the criteria were understood by key actors and how well suited they were to the task.

Qualification Requirements
The qualification requirements are a combination of procurement regulations, professional references and the city's experience with developers. The binding requirements are as follows:

- Leading officials may not be guilty of economic crimes/tax evasion.

- The developer (builder) has the financial stability and sustainability
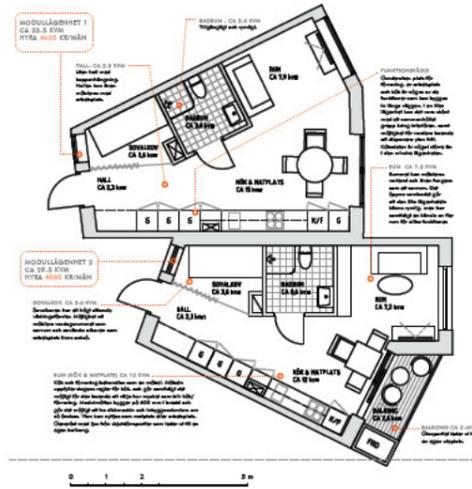
"This case study examines the competition's capability to produce good solutions to the competition task1. There are two central competition goals, area efficiency in cheap apartments, and the development of innovative solutions"

to see the project through.

- The developer (builder) must demonstrate completed and well-executed projects of equal scope to the competition.

- A company track record gained from having previous experience working with the city.

The Jury Assessment

The organizer received 15 proposals from multidisciplinary design teams in Stockholm. The proposals show a broad spectrum in rent levels, from 1,490 SEK per m² to 2,550 SEK per m². Corresponding 2015 market rents in Stockholm were 1,704 SEK per m² (SCB).[10]

Winning Proposal

According to the jury few submissions showed innovation that could inspire continued development of cheap housing. The winning design by Origo Arkitekter and Familjebostäder (a publicly-owned housing company) was, however, accredited with a number of general qualities that enabled the jury to appraise the solution as innovative and exemplary (figure 15.1-15.3).[11]

It has 3 to 5 levels of wedge-shaped modules placed within a concrete frame, a sedum roof and energy consumption meeting the criteria for low-energy buildings.

The winning proposal had 9 apartments of 29m² each having a monthly rent of 4,080 SEK and 21 apartments of 33.5m² with a monthly rent of 4,630 SEK. The average rent is 1,659 SEK per m² living area per year. The larger of these apartments have spaces designated for sleeping of 3.6m² (within an alcove off the main area), and 7.9m² for living, accessing a kitchen of 15m².

Second Place

Utopia Arkitekter and Järntorget's proposal had 14 "friend-sharing apartments" with 54 residential rooms. There are 12 apartments of 112m², 2 have 5 rooms and a kitchen, and 2 apartments of 99 m² have 4 rooms and a kitchen (figure 15.4-15.6). The average rent is 1,599 SEK per m² living area per year and 60 SEK less than the winner. The larger of these apartments have well-proportioned individual bedrooms of 9.1m² and a living/kitchen area of 39m². But as the living space is shared between residents, in this case the rent is only 3,728 SEK per month for tenants (figure 15.7).

Implementation

The execution of the winning design is regulated in a land allocation agreement between the Development Administration in Stockholm and Familjebostäder, the winner.[12] In this agreement there is no requirement to retain the design team.

3. Conclusions and Discussion

The jury-members in the Stockholm competition assume that the design

figure 15.4

Typical apartment
floor plans from
the Järntorget and
Utopia Arkitekter, 2nd
placed proposal

teams' visualizations convey a reliable image of the dwellings.[13] The visual communication is, however, determined by two different interests.[14] This is partly about the design teams wanting to present the proposals to the jury as being as appealing as possible, which is a *"presentation interest"*. Partly there is a need for the jury to be able to see, identify, and understand the qualities of the projects, which is an *"audience interest"*.

The *presentation interest* projects the design team's desire to (a) showcase their professional competence to the jury and convey knowledge about their own solution, (b) capture and keep the audience's interest, as well as (c) make the jury experience the visualisation as reliable representations of architectural qualities, with a photographic accuracy which conveys a seductive illusion of reality.

Through the competition, the organizer in Stockholm has gained access to information-rich documentation including the form of 15 configured proposals for new dwellings. All the proposals met the submission demands, none were rejected and, therefore, all can be assumed to have been presented well enough for the jury to select a first prize winner. One proposal has to be appointed as the winner, even when it is difficult to identify qualities and legitimise statements about architectural values. Any suggestion of arbitrariness can be minimised if the jury describes and presents clear reasons for the choice of winner, how the proposals have been valued and the qualities found in the winning proposal.

figure 15.7

Rendering of the
living space within
the Järntorget and
Utopia Arkitekter, 2nd
placed proposal

Findings

This investigation of the Stockholm competition reaches ten general conclusions:

1. Judging Criteria

The competition brief contains four judging criteria which can be divided into two groups: *hard criteria (quantifiable, rent levels)* and *soft criteria (qualitative, aesthetic and design considerations)*. Criteria have to be interpreted in their context which demands a careful examination of the proposals and good judgment from the members of the jury. The problem here is that there is no systematic comparison of the projects to show how the criteria were applied, making the ranking by the jury unclear and unnecessarily subjective in the jury report.

2. Focus

The jury divided the design submissions into two categories: conventional separate apartments and collective dwellings. The jury effectively continued to develop the brief after submissions to enable them to easily distinguish differences between the proposals. In the winning design, drawings and illustrations show a conventional lifestyle presented as a small area-effective 'home'. The runner up proposes an innovative cooperative or collective lifestyle for young people.

3. Evaluation

The impression is that the jury has not judged and ranked the proposals based on individual qualities defined in the brief, but seen them as representative of different design principles. This has clearly influenced how merits and flaws are evaluated. Sorting the proposals into two main categories necessarily leads to the exclusion of one 'type' as potential winner.

3. Affordable Rent Levels

As a key criterion the competition brief set no base rent levels as a starting point for the competition evaluation and projects consequently were only compared to each other. It is therefore difficult to tell if the competition resulted in *"cheap and area efficient housing that young people can afford to ask for"* (competition brief, s 2).

Rent levels varied from 1,490 SEK to 2,550 SEK m^2 living area per year. Corresponding rents for new developments in Stockholm are 1,704 SEK m^2 living area per year according to Statistics Sweden (SCB). Only 4 of 15 design teams present proposals with a lower rent, of which two advanced to the final evaluation, one presenting a traditional apartment type and one presenting collective living.

5. Marketing

In marketing the competition the Stockholm Development Administration actively sought contractors and real estate developers off their register, but not so for architectural offices.[15] To receive information regarding land allocation competitions, architects' offices and developers' agents that are not registered in the city's market register have to conduct their own searches to obtain notices of an opportunity.

6. Costs and Rewards

The competition brief offered no compensation for the development of an approved competition project, and no prize money. It is left to the consultant, building, and development companies to carry these costs themselves. Architects do this through lowering their fees and aking on unpaid work. Unpaid work in competitions can both be seen as an investment in future commissions, and as practice R&D.

The lack of prize money puts considerable divisive pressure on the design team. Only the developer in the winning design team is partner to an agreement with the city. In DD competitions any further project commissions for the architects are based on the developer's verbal promise.[16]

7. Teamwork

In the Stockholm competition the teams formed on the basis of previous collaborations. The initiative to create teams comes from both developers and architects, yet the developers see themselves as more knowledgeable and therefore more vital members of the team.

8. Learning

Both architects and developers find the requirements described in competition briefs that include a range of issues that are subject to interpretation to be normal. These may include for example low rent, the quality of the interior and relationship to the site and urban context. The presentation of the competition documents (brief, proposals and jury report) and transparency of the process should make it possible to critique the process while minimising the risk for arbitrariness.

9. Innovation

There is a judged approach to the concept of innovation and new thinking by both the jury and design teams. The jury states that they searched for new thinking which *"can inspire the continued development of cheap dwellings"*. Seen as a tool for political housing and professional laboratory, the competition offers an opportunity for new thinking. The regulation of the rent in the land allocation agreement stands out as an innovation that has not been used before by the organizer. The Development Administration however is uneasy directing costs this way and because of developer resistance will not use this tool for rent control in the future, unless there is clear political demand.[17]

10. Competition Experiences and Competition Perception

Surprisingly despite all this the Stockholm competition is considered positively amongst the teams. Half of the developers' agents see the benefits of competition as a tool for engaging in the politics of housing. Design, building,

and land allocation becomes transparent in publicly organized competitions. The competition briefs, competition proposals and jury reports give the possibility of insight into the choice of winner. Contractors and developers are also stimulated to develop proposals that aim to lower living costs, and to gain access to buildable land, developers still chose to participate in the Stockholm competition despite the high cost.

Architects see competition culture as something that is generally good, promoting debate on quality in architecture and urban design. They view the competition as a creative professional challenge and a part of their professional traditions. The architectural competition is a celebrated event within the profession where ongoing and completed competitions provide a rich resource for both students and architects.

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2   Kreiner, K., 2007. Strategic Choices in Unknowable Worlds. Copenhagen: Center for Management Studies of the Building Process

3   Robinson, M., Scobie, G. M., & Hallinan, B. Affordability of housing: Concepts, Measurement and Evidence. Wellington: New Zealand Treasury. 2006

4   Competition brief (tävlingsprogram 2014-06-18). Development administration (Exploateringskontoret), p. 1 & p. 6. Stockholm city. Stockholm City, website

5   Rönn, M., 2014. Restricted developer competitions - three cases in Sweden, Forskningspublikationer 2014:1, KTH.

6   Property Management, No 4. Forlati, S., Isopp, A, Piber, A. (Eds) 2012. Wonderland Manual for Emerging Architects. Vienna, New York: Springer

7   Schön, D., 1983. The reflective Practitioner, USA: Basic Books.;
        Groat, L. and Wang, D., 2002. Architectural research methods, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.;
        Johansson, R., 2007. On Case Study Methodology. Open House International, No 3.

8   Collected data consists of the competition documents, the competition proposals, and the replies to a questionnaire answered by jury-members and design-teams. The research was coordinated with an educational programme. In a course, a group of students in year 4-5 at KTH/School of Architecture examined, evaluated, and ranked the competition proposals and produced analytical jury reports. The archives and competition documents were studied, statements taken from 32 key players (organisers, jury members, architects, developers and their agents.

9   Competition brief (tävlingsprogram 2014-06-18). Development administration

(Exploateringskontoret), Stockholm city. Stockholm City, website

10   Rent level in Stockholm 2015, at SCB 2017-03-06: www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START__BO__BO0404__BO0404A/HyresrattByggghLgh/?rxid=a6ced5c4-ce5c-40d7-b4ae-681c9899e183 (accessed 26-04-2018)

11   Jury report (Juryutlåtande), December 2014. Development administration (Exploateringskontoret), Stockholm city. Pp. 8-9

12   Land allocation agreement (Markanvisningsavtal) 2015 between Stockholm city Development Department and Familjebostäder.

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17   Author's personal communication. E-post, communication with Development Administration, Stockholm city, 2017-03-05

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        Johansson, R., 2007. On Case Study Methodology. Open House International, No 3.

PROJECT DATA

Name	MIDSOMMARKRANSEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Location	Midsommarkransen, Stockholm
Country	SWEDEN
Year	2014

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Type	Affordable housing for rent by young people
Size	Site area: 1,010 m^2 (estimated) with 30 apartments in the winning proposal
Budget Cost	A rent control target for young renters was the objective, with no overall construction cost defined

COMPETITION DESCRIPTION

Client	The City of Stockholm
Programmer/Agent	The Development Department, Stockholm City
Public / Private	Public
Procedure	Open design developer competition (sometimes known as design, build and finance)
Procedure Reference	Directive 2004/18/EC. Article 28 & 30
Stages	1 (with negotiation on completion)
Project Intention	An intention to build
Conditions Applied	The City of Stockholm

COMPETITION FACTS

Timescale	Open call: June 2014 Final Assessment: December 2014
Submission Required	13 x A3 page submission
Announcement	December 2014
Number of Entries	15

ASSESSMENT & SELECTION

Jury Numbers	4
Jury Composition	Two jurors from the City's Development Department and two from their Planning Department
Number Shortlisted	No shortlist
Winner	Familjebostäder the developers (a publicly-owned company), with Origo architects
Runners Up	Järntorget's with Utopia Arkitekter
Prizes & Awards	None
Conclusion of Process	Access to acquire a land lease on market terms
Project Completion	Under construction, 3 years after the competition

FURTHER INFORMATION

Origo architects: www.origoark.se
Utopia Arkitekter: www.utopia.se
Familjebostäder: www.familjebostader.com
Vinnarhuset öppnar för fler små bostäder'. Dagens Nyheter 7 February 2015. www.dn.se/arkiv/stockholm/vinnarhuset-oppnar-for-fler-sma-bostader (accessed 26-04-2018)
Following the competition win the plans of the winning proposal have apparently been modified. For example, inset balconies have been deleted and the number of dwellings raised to 33