

An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely a historical or planning map, with a dark, textured overlay. The grid shows a mix of residential blocks and commercial areas, with a prominent diagonal road or railway line cutting through the center. The text is overlaid in a bright yellow color.

# Architectural Competitions as Institution and Process

Editors: Jonas E. Andersson  
Gerd Bloxham Zettersten  
and Magnus Rönn



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The Royal Institute of Technology  
and Kulturlandskapet

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# Introduction

JONAS E. ANDERSSON

GERD BLOXHAM ZETTERSTEN

AND MAGNUS RÖNN

The present book revolves around four key concepts. These concepts are architectural competition, institution, process and adjustments of contemporary competition structures. They may seem randomly assembled in order to form a pertinent book title, but considered as individual entities, they may also characterise the contemporaneous status of architectural competitions in the second decade of the new millennium. For clarity's sake, what then is an architectural competition? Besides being an intentional combination of words, which etymologically suggests that architecture is not only the art of building, but in conjunction with competition also implies a mutual struggle between architects and other stakeholders to land the ideal design and constructive solution for a particular design problem, competitions in architecture are a phenomenon that is closely related to the practice of architecture, i.e. in a noble and fair spirit think outside established values and norms in order to renew spatial thinking (Cuff, 1992). The practice of architecture suggests spatial explorations of potential design solutions with the intent to define what is perceived to be the ultimate solution for a certain spatial issue that centres on human beings in close interaction with built space with the quest to define place and space for different types of usages (Lefebvre, 1985).

Looking back in history, architectural competitions can be loosely linked to the ancient Greek tradition of organising Olympic Games every fourth year as a celebration of the Greek god Zeus, father of the universe. Rooted in ancient myths, Greek poet Pindar tells us that Heracles honoured his Olympian father by constructing the very first stadium, based on a straight line of 200 herculean steps, i.e. a stadion in the ancient Greek language or approximatively 600 Greek feet according to Herodotus, thus giving the world both a new type of building for practising sporting activities and a name for a unit of length.

Banned by Emperor Theodosius I in 393 AD as being part of a pagan cult, the Olympic Games ceased to exist. The French Revolution awoke the games for a short two-year period between 1796 to 1798, in which the metric system was introduced and used for the very first time (Arvin-Bérod, 1994). Possibly due to its fundamental role in the original Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin designated architecture to be one of the five categories under the arts section when the first Games reopened in Athens in 1896. Until the end of the 1940s, the arts section of the Olympic Games (OG) turned into large art expositions in the proximity of the sports arenas, greatly appreciated by the public. However, the art category of the OG raised the collective eyebrows of the members of the International Olympic Committee (OC), since the artists in comparison with the athletes were considered to be professional rather than amateurs. In 1948, after the Games in London, the decision was taken to dismantle the arts as an Olympic category and reshape it into a parallel activity held during the Games.

Returning to competitions that occur in the field of architecture, history suggests, that prior to the 19th century, such competitions oscillated between prize competitions for small-scale artefacts and large-scale building commissions, but in any case open only for just a few craftsmen, who had gained a personal reputation. The very first recorded design competition was organised in ancient Greece in 448 BC in conjunction with the reconstruction of the ancient Acropolis in Athens that had been destroyed during the Persian wars. The monument commemorated the peace of Callias and the Greek victory over the Persians in 449 BC (Hurwit, 2000; Nasar, 1999). In a similar manner, design competitions were held during the Middle Ages, for instance, like the one in 1401, for the design of two bronze-clad doors of the baptistery that belong to the cathedral in Florence which still exist today. A second competition, which focused on the dome of the Florentine cathedral, was organised in 1418. It turned into a personal duel between two renowned craftsmen, Filippo Brunelleschi and Lorenzo Ghiberti, the winner of the previous competition in 1401. Rivalry between acknowledged architects continued to flourish. In 1665, the competition for the east façade of the Louvre in Paris, initiated by Louis XIV, set the famous Italian architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini against four French architects. Two years later, a royal letter informed Bernini that his winning proposal would not be executed, instead, the four-architect jury under Claude Perrault took over the commission and realised an emblematic example of French classicism (Chancel, 1997, p. 30-32). Another case, in which the winning proposal was left unrealised, was the



design of the Spanish Steps in Rome in 1723, where an historic controversy with the pope, led the French embassy – situated at the top of the stairs – to award the commission to the second best solution (Watkin, 1986, p. 363).

Integrated in the Beaux-Arts tradition for educating architects, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the architectural competition served not only as an instrument for boosting creativity among young students in architecture, but also for selecting the future rising stars in architecture, who were to enter the royal court or the grand salons of the aristocracy. The French Revolution propelled the architectural competition into becoming an instrument for a whole new system based on brotherhood, equality and freedom to manifest itself in architecture (Szambien, 1986); some 25 architectural competitions with 480 proposals during the last six months of The Reign of Terror were inaugurated. In the dictionary *L'Encyclopédie Méthodique*, first published in 1801, the French architectural critic and theorist Antoine Quatremère de Quincy described in conjunction to the word architectural competition that the ultimate objective for a competition was to avoid both ignorance by the client and intrigue by the competitors, so that the best design solution would prevail:

The principal motif for an architectural competition is to suppress the ignoramuses' choice of artistes for a public commission, but also to hinder the artistes' attempts to manipulate the commission at the expense of talent. (...) If the matter is merely to decide (...) which architect who is the most suited, then a competition is unnecessary. However, if the matter is to decide the best solution, then, a competition can be based on a programme for the realisation of the building. The judgment can be based on the drawings that are submitted in response to these requirements (Quatremère de Quincy, 1801, p. 38).

Through Quatremère de Quincy it is possible to address the second key concept for this book, i.e. institution. In line with the emerging French Republic that followed upon the overthrow of the autocratic power of the French Kings, Quatremère de Quincy searched for an egalitarian instrument to overcome yet another remainder from the Ancien Régime: the fawning upon new commissions in search of personal enrichment and titles.

This new instrument should be based on selective principles with the effect that the emerging institution might vouch for the overall best solution. This new institution, a public system for architectural competitions, would tame

egos and promote “both rational judgments on public buildings that are based on the design solutions that the competitors submit, and, after a fair struggle, award the winner a simple prize that is purely associated with the glory of having won the competition” (Quatremère de Quincy, 1801, p. 35-36).

Putting an overzealous revolutionary spirit aside, and given that these words were written shortly after the most violent years during the French Revolution, Quatremère was remarkably modern in his thinking, and the EU directive 92/50/EEC concerning public contracts, including design competitions, resumes this spirit (European Commission, 1992). This is also one of the aims of this anthology, namely exploring the status of the architectural competition as a modern and contemporaneous institution.

### **The architectural competition as institution**

An institution is a pursuit which has come gradually to be recognised in society through a process of institutionalisation. Institution may be understood as a system of rules that makes possible and also maintains a social order in society. Therefore, a stable function must be present that is upheld during a period of time, a system of imperative rules that the participants must follow in order to be admitted into the practice of this enterprise. John Sirjamäki (1967) notes that the concept of institution has been present within English linguistic usage since the middle of the 15th century with at least two different meanings. On the one hand, institution may denote an established practice over time. On the other, institution may embody an order of decision-making that regulates organisations and their enterprises. These two modes of understanding institution are closely connected, presupposing a structured ordering with participants who share the same world picture. The architectural competition regarded as institution and process corresponds with both of these meanings.

The modern architectural competition is an institution within architecture and urban design going back 150 years in Europe that has been recreated in new practice with the help of rules, traditions and organisations. Both organisers and competing architects and their professional organisations contribute to the preservation of the competition as institution and process. Through their organisations, architects have established their own units for competition service with staff and elected competition boards scrutinising competition briefs. As an example the Swedish Association of Architects offers competition services on its homepage. The same development may be found in Denmark, Norway and Finland.

The modern competition is at one and the same time a well-established praxis in architecture and urban design, made explicit in relation to national, European and international rules of competition. The competition has also come to be an instrument of a form of architectural politics in national governmental programmes in Europe, when aiming to create spectacular architecture. Confidence in the competition's capacity to generate good solutions to problems of construction is a distinct theme in programmes of architectural politics (EPFAP, 2014/2016). The competition rules are a codified praxis in architecture and urban design. The competition represents both a social order and contiguously a professional practice paying great attention to its effects on society. On the one hand: he or she who breaks the rules of the competition will be excluded according to the approved rules. This is a matter addressed by the organisation that monitors and supervises the competition system. On the other hand, however, things get more complicated given the organisational structure of the competition system, with different interests and actors taking part during the competition process.

In the Nordic competition culture, proposals with minor deviations from the competition brief can be presented by the client and accepted by the jury as a winning design. But what constitutes a small deviation? Behind the competition rules are notions of fair terms and an impartial assessment of competition proposals. The proposals must be made using simply a motto. The jury must not know who has made the proposals. The intention is that anonymity should result in the jury selecting the best solution to the competition task as the winner. This constitutes an institutional system in competition culture that has survived confrontation with the EU regulating procedure – characterised by competitiveness and bureaucratisation. The jury has a central role in the competition. The delegates must see to it that the rules are followed at the same time as appointing a winner. The architects on the jury also have a professional responsibility in relation both to the design teams and the organiser. As an institution the architectural competition is acted out on a global arena denoting a common core of understanding as well as distinctive national features.

### **The architectural competition as process**

The concept of process has some interrelated but differing meanings. These are often enumerated in varying order in leading dictionaries of the English language, e.g. Collins Dictionary, the Oxford English Dictionary, Random House and Webster's dictionaries. Some emphasise as their first option "a systematic

series of actions to some end”, while putting in second place “a continuing action, operation, or series of changes taking place in a definite manner” (Random House and Webster’s). While others put the notion of “change” within a series of actions or development in the primary space, while as a second meaning giving “a method of doing or producing something” followed by “a forward movement” (Collins Dictionary). In an architectural competition process the diverse meanings will all be found to be relevant in varying order, depending precisely, on the nature of the individual process.

Considering the architectural process with the competition as a built-in process, it refers to architecture as a ‘making’ discipline, and what can be more ‘making’ than the production of design proposals in a future-oriented context. Competition is ‘making’ architecture by combining know-how to produce design and organising processes with knowledge about the task and its pre-conditions. The organiser presents the competition in a brief to design teams, stating what is expected in return from them.

Competition as process also reflects Gilbert Ryle’s well-known distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that (Ryle, 1971). Here, we find two different and distinct kinds of knowledge; to know how to make design proposals is not just a question of knowing the right facts about the task, while to exercise knowing-how in design you do not have to analyse scientific data at first hand; you need a primary generator, a driving idea for the design solution (Darke, 1979). Knowing-that is a starting point for design teams in finding out how to respond. Should the brief be read as an instruction or as inspiration and a challenge? From knowing how to understanding the competition, design teams have to test possibilities in order to find a primary generator. Knowing that can finally be presented as drawings and illustrations in slides and models.

Making is a concept of high relevance in the production of knowledge by design. Industrial designers, interior designers, architects and landscape architects have making as a common task; they are responsible for designing objects, projects, and man-made environments (Dunin-Woyseth and Michl, 2001). In this context, competitions can be seen as the production of architectural knowledge about the future in the form of a development of possibilities.

### **Conferencing about architectural competitions**

This anthology includes selected and processed papers from a conference on competitions in architecture and urban design. This scientific conference with

the theme Conditions for Architect-Client Interactions in 2014, 13-14 February, was hosted by the Delft University of Technology, TU Delft. The conference was organised by Dr. Beatrice Manzoni, SDA Bocconi School of Management, and Dr. Leentje Volker, Delft University of Technology. The architect-client theme was articulated in the call for papers. The research community were invited to reflect on the following issues:

- Are competitions obstacles in establishing a relationship between a client and an architect or urban designer, or do competitions act as a catalyst and as professional laboratories?
- How can the structure and procedures contribute to client-architect interactions, and how do they push them apart?
- What do we actually know when we have selected an architectural firm during a competition?
- Can restricted competitions become an experimental arena for innovative design?

Participants who were affiliated to universities and practices in Austria, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the Netherlands and USA noticed the conference and chose to participate. The call for papers generated 24 conference papers. The conference was organised according to the scientific curriculum with keynote speakers and presentations of conference papers in parallel sessions. In order to bridge the gap between practice and theory, the conference included both academic presentations of competing in architecture and practitioners who discussed the raw reality of participating in architectural competitions. The invited key note speakers were:

Elisabeth Tostrup, Professor at Oslo School of Architecture and Design  
 Jan Benthem, Owner of Benthem Crouwel Architects  
 Kristian Kreiner, Professor at Copenhagen Business School  
 Malcolm Reading, Owner of Malcolm Reading Consultants  
 Marleen Hermans, Professor at Delft University of Technology  
 Marc Unger, Chief Procurement Officer at ProRail  
 Matteo Fugazza, President & CEO of Nexiar

The international conference in the Netherlands formed part of an ongoing scientific development of knowledge on competitions in architecture and urban

design. The conference ended with a guided architect tour of Rotterdam city, the centre for many architectural competitions over the years following the destruction of the old city during World War II.

### **Academic networking around architectural competitions**

In 2005, Princeton University, USA, invited academics to discuss competitions in architecture and urban design based on research projects. The result is presented in the report entitled *The Politics of Design: Competition for Public Projects* (Malmberg, 2006). The birth of an academic network around architectural competitions began three years later. In 2008 the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH in Stockholm, Sweden organised an international conference that was called *Architectural Competitions*. Dr. Jonas E. Andersson, Dr. Reza Kazemian and Dr. Magnus Rönn were organisers of this first international academic conference on architectural competitions.

In 2010, a second scientific conference concerning architectural competitions and related concerns was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. This conference was part of a larger conference that was called *Constructions Matter; Managing Complexities, Decisions and Actions in the Building Process*. This time, the initiative came from Professor Kristian Kreiner at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS), with several publications on the issues. Professor Joris van Wezemael of the University of Freiburg was responsible for coordinating the sub-session on architectural competitions with the main topics of the full conference.

The next international conference, *Competitions and Architectural Quality in the Planetary Age*, was held in 2012 at the University of Montréal in Canada. Professors Georges Adamczyk, Laboratoire d'étude de l'architecture potentielle (LEAP) and Jean-Pierre Chupin, Research Chair on Competitions and Contemporary Practices in Architecture, organised this third conference on architectural competitions. Overcoming the barriers of language, this conference started to interlink research traditions on architectural competitions from French-speaking countries with English-speaking countries. Yet another conference on competitions followed later the very same year. The conference *Architecture as Human Interface* took place in Helsinki in 2012. This fourth scientific conference was a co-operation between the School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH in Stockholm and the Architecture Departments at three Finnish universities: in Helsinki (ATUT), in Tampere (UTA) and the University of Oulu. In



addition, the Finnish Association of Architects participated in the organisation of the conference. Finnish scholar Leif Östman and Swedish academics Jonas E. Andersson, Magnus Rönn and PhD Student Charlotte Svensson organised the competition track. The fifth conference followed two years later at the TU Delft, the Netherlands, as stated above. Another scientific conference will follow at the Leeds Beckett University in Leeds, UK, on 27-20 October in 2016. The organisers of this sixth international conference on competitions are Dr. Maria Theodorou and Dr. Antigoni Katsakou, both active at the School of Architecture at the Leeds Beckett University. This conference will be entitled: *The Competition Mesh: Experimenting with and within Architecture Competitions*.

### **Knowledge production on architectural competitions**

Conferences represent one important aspect of knowledge production on architectural competitions both on a structural level and on a detailed level. Another, but equally important side of knowledge production on competitions is the academic production of peer-reviewed conference papers that are published in anthologies and scientific journals. Given below is an overview of publications that the conferences mentioned above have generated.

In 2010, the anthology *The Architectural Competition: Research Inquiries and Experiences* was published under the editorship of academics Jonas E. Andersson, Reza Kazemian and Magnus Rönn (Andersson, Kazemian and Rönn, 2011). This book contains 26 peer-reviewed and revised papers from the scientific conference in 2008 in Stockholm. In 2013, a second anthology was published; *Architectural Competitions - Histories and Practice*. This publication has 12 reworked papers from the conference in Helsinki in 2012 that were peer-reviewed and revised prior to publication. This book also had three editors, academics Jonas E. Andersson, Gerd Bloxham Zettersten and Magnus Rönn (Andersson, Bloxham-Zettersten and Rönn 2013). In 2015, a third publication appeared. This was a publication that was entitled *Architecture Competitions and the Production of Culture, Quality and Knowledge*. The publication includes 22 papers that were submitted to the scientific conference in Montréal in 2012, but reworked according to peer-review comments. This publication was edited by editors professors Jean-Pierre Chupin and Carmella Cucuzzella and PhD candidate Bechara Helal (Chupin, Cucuzzella and Helal, 2015).

However, the knowledge production on architectural competitions also includes special thematic issues in scientific journals. The *Nordic Journal of*

Architectural Research (NJAR) has taken an interest in architectural competitions. In 2009, the journal published a double issue on architectural competitions by publishing 11 scientific articles that were submitted for the conference in Copenhagen in 2010 (No 2/3). This issue was simply entitled *Architectural Competitions* and included contributions mainly from Europe. In 2011, the *Scandinavian Journal of Management* published three reworked papers that were submitted to the conference in Copenhagen in 2010 (Issue 1). In 2012, NJAR published yet another issue, this time entitled *Competing in Architecture* (No 1). This issue contained eight scientific articles on architectural competitions that were submitted in conjunction with the conference in Helsinki in 2012. The same year the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo published a yearbook on competitions in Norway (Berre and McGowan, 2012). In 2013, submissions for the conference in Montréal were assembled for a special issue of the French journal *d'a* (*D'architecturs, le magazine professionnel de la création architecturale*) (Adamczyk et al. 2013). In this case, nine articles explored current knowledge on architectural competitions in Europe, Canada and South America.

The Norwegian scientific journal of FORMakademisk has also paid attention to the increasing interest in architectural competitions. In December 2013, the journal published a special issue that was entitled *Architectural Competitions I – Exploring the phenomenon of competing in architecture and urban design*. This issue presented four revised and reworked papers that originally were submitted for the conference on competitions in Helsinki in 2012. In a second issue, January 2014, the journal continued with yet another issue with three other papers on architectural competitions. They had also been submitted for the conference in 2012 in Helsinki. This issue was called *Competitions II. The dynamics of competing and organizing competitions in architecture and urban design*. Three other journals, e.g. *Journal of Architectural Education* (1982-4), *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* (1990-2) and *Geographic Helvetica* (2011-2), have published special issues on architectural competitions. The common trait for these journals is that they discuss architectural competitions from an architectural history perspective.

The academic production of knowledge also includes research that has been carried out as PhD research projects. Dissertations on architectural competitions are important pieces of new knowledge that pave the way to more complex knowledge on architecture and competitions. These contributions

are determined by their point of departure, hence, they can be divided into two categories:

- Architectural competitions seen from an architectural history perspective
- Architectural competitions seen as a contemporary phenomenon

The first category that uses an *architectural history perspective* includes six dissertations, all produced in the Nordic countries; Waern, 1996; Tostrup, 1999; Sauge, 2003; Bloxham Zettersten, 2007; Rustad, 2009; Hagelqvist, 2010. The second category uses a *contemporaneous perspective* on competitions and includes 13 dissertations: Blomberg, 1995; Östman, 2005; Svensson, 2008; Fialho, 2007; Volker, 2010; Schmiedeknecht, 2010; Katsakou, 2011; Andersson, 2011; Silberberger, 2011; Cucuzzella, 2011; Ramberg, 2012; Fuchs, 2013; Jacobsen, 2014; Guilherme, 2016). This collection of dissertations can be described as mainly European with a strong predominance of dissertations from the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) and with occasional dissertations from Brazil, Canada, England, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland. Thus, these dissertations also trace the geography of architectural competitions, mainly situated in a European context.

### **An emerging research field on architectural competitions**

The listed pieces of conferences and knowledge production on architectural competitions supply some fundamental characteristics that are of general importance. Globally, they suggest the emergence and consolidation of competitions in architecture and urban design as an individual research field. The key components in this construction are:

- International conferences with key note speakers and paper presentation
- Committees of senior researchers for planning and reviewing of abstracts
- Introduction of a system for peer review of conference papers
- Publishing of anthologies and/or proceedings
- Scientific journals for putting together a body of articles
- Presentation of findings and empirical data from competitions

- Development of theories, methods and concepts for understanding competitions
- Systematic feedback – new scientific conferences with international participation

In consequence, one can assume that a research community is under construction. This community needs some gentle manoeuvring in order to constitute a special scientific field. The development so far demonstrates that there is a road map in place. Hence, the present anthology must be considered as a new contribution in order to pave the way towards the further development of architectural competitions as a particular research field.

### **Wrapping up: Adjustments in contemporary competitions**

The competition as institution and process represents a complex system for production of architectural knowledge by design in a future-oriented context. The empirical findings in the conference papers selected for this anthology bring out five aspects that describe an on-going process of adjustment that is taking place in contemporary architectural competitions in architecture and urban design. The conclusion is that these adjustments in the competition as institution and process reflect new conditions in the structure of architectural competitions that apply to both clients and to the profession of architects. The trends in this on-going adjustment process can be summarised in the following five bullet headings:

#### **1. Specialisation and the appropriation of knowledge**

Firstly, we witness a change in competitions over a period of time, where single architects are replaced by teams of enterprises within architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. This trend of team-building is matched by the fact that competition tasks impose new demands on knowledge to an ever greater degree. Specialist competence within clearly demarcated disciplines and the appropriation of research-based knowledge within a broader field is required in order to resolve competition tasks. Coordination of specialist competence in competition teams is a reaction and a consequence for consultants as well as organisers, responding to a principal trend of specialisation in architecture and urban design.

## 2. Bureaucratisation and administration

Secondly, ever more administrative routines in competitions emerge in the shape of internal procedures involving the key actors, together with demands concerning the handing in of proposals which the design teams must observe in order to be allowed to participate. This applies to demands in the invitation to pre-qualified competitions, stipulations in the competition briefs and administrative systems for the evaluation of the competition proposals. Organisers have, for example, brought in new systems for the assessment of sustainable design and green building. Documentation for applications as well as competition briefs grow in scope. This bureaucratisation of the competition also comes forth at the same time as a trend towards the quantification of architectonic qualities where the concept of good architecture is being replaced by the right quality as graded according to a predetermined scale with regards to what may be viewed as bad, good, better or best.

## 3. Juridification and procurement

Thirdly, competitions in Europe aiming at implementation have been incorporated into laws on public procurement. This is a legal regulation of the project competition affecting all EU countries, manifested as demands from the public organiser that design teams must observe so as not to risk being excluded from participation. Nowadays particular experts on procurement law scrutinise the invitation to pre-qualification and the competition brief before the competition is announced through the electronic systems for the procurement of services. For the organiser and the design teams, juridification takes the form of references to regulations in the law on public procurement in the competition documents.

## 4. Internationalisation and excluding practices

Contemporary competitions reveal two opposing tendencies: on the one hand, we witness an opening up across the globe, with foreign architects on design teams and collaboration in competitions across national boundaries. On the other hand, the exclusion of design teams in competitions, both early in the process through pre-qualification and at a late stage, through the award process. Despite these practices, applications from a considerable number of architect offices based in Europe appear in invited competitions through the general internationalisation of the profession, and strengthened by the geographical mobility

in Europe and collaboration in projects. Apart from this, geographically based exclusion in competitions is prohibited for public organisers in Europe.

#### 5. Market orientation and conflicting interests

We observe changes in competitions with a market orientation becoming ever more evident, where the public character of the competition reveals competing interests that result in a number of paradoxes, or contrary wishes among key actors which have to be reconciled. To the organisers, the competition used as a tool for marketing is often as important as the capacity to produce architectonic quality and finding creative solutions and innovative propositions in response to societal changes. The competition has also become a vehicle for rival cities to make themselves visible in the world, via spectacular architecture. In this market-oriented perspective the competition becomes an investment in the city, aiming to create an architectonic form that attracts interest, visitors and financially strong stakeholders.

The identification of these five aspects in the contemporaneous use of architectural competitions for new buildings, physical planning or other design endeavours has supplied a structure for organising the 12 papers that are selected for this anthology. 11 of the papers were submitted for the conference in 2014 at the TU Delft. These papers were submitted to a three-step peer-review process that included firstly, the editors' advice for improving the papers, secondly, peer-reviewing by two external referees, and thirdly, a final approval by the referees and the editors. The twelfth contribution has been written in the form of an essay by one of the keynote speakers for the conference. It is a revised and enhanced version of a speech given at Columbia University, New York, October 2015. This essay will open the current anthology on architectural competitions as institution and process, while subject to different adjustments.

### **Part 1. Specialisation and the appropriation of knowledge**

Kristian Kreiner opens the discussion on knowledge in architectural competitions with an essay basing it on a single case in Denmark. The aim of this particular competition was to create the world's most accessible office building. The organiser contributed to specialisation and appropriation of knowledge by organising design teams, educating them about accessibility on the basis of the principles for accessibility, equal opportunities and universal design according to



the UN convention on the rights for people with disabilities, UN CRPD. The organiser wanted to make for a better understanding of the competition task in the design teams by improving their knowledge on accessible design solutions for people with a wide range of disabilities. This specialised knowledge on designing for every potential human need was then to be absorbed or incorporated in the competition proposals.

A side effect of this education was that it created differences in the view of the competition task of the design teams versus the architect jurors. Two different images of the competition task evolved that were not integrated in a shared understanding of the aim of the competition. The design teams developed their architectonic solutions on the basis of new insight into potential disability problems. However, the architect jurors made their evaluations of the competition proposals on the basis of their professional competence, awarding the proposal that was judged to have the highest architectonic merit—not the solution with the best level of accessibility as perceived by people experiencing disabilities. One explanation for why the difference in approach could not be bridged during the competition process, brought forward by Kreiner, concerns visual capacity as the prime decision maker. There was no assessment scale which made it possible to communicate the specialised knowledge to the jury about human interaction with built space when experiencing disabilities as regards the level of accessibility knowledge of the design teams. The traditional visual manner of presenting architectural designs overlooked the need for bringing out perceptual qualities in the suggested design solutions in the competition proposals, in order to make them the object of quality assessment by jury members.

Another example illuminating an adjustment to specific client requirements in the form of appropriation of specialised knowledge is to be found in Gerd Bloxham Zettersten's case study on the competition for a new city hall in the mining town of Kiruna, in the far north of Sweden. The town's city hall has been the object of two architectural competitions during an interval of c. 55 years, in 1958 and in 2012-13. The city hall in Kiruna is a prize-winning building from the 1958 competition which was to be replaced on a new site, in a project based on the winning proposal in the competition of 2012-13, which was an invited competition with pre-qualification. The competition was arranged by the town municipality of Kiruna in cooperation with the Association of Swedish Architects. However, in the competition brief it emerged that it was the mining

company LKAB in its role of client that was responsible for the implementation of the winning proposal. The invitation to pre-qualification for the design of a new city hall resulted in 56 applications from design teams. Five of these were invited to the competition. The teams were made up of a multi-disciplinary group of participants which clearly showed a transition in competitions from individual architectural offices to design teams with an international element. This construction of teams responds to a present need to absorb and integrate specialist competence.

The key actors in the design teams consisted of well-known architectural offices in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The jury on the other hand consisted exclusively of Swedish members, something which reflected a tension in the competition between an international predisposition and local adaption. The comparative study demonstrates new conditions for the production of knowledge through design. Not only was the city hall in Kiruna the object for an architectural competition—the entire town had to be moved, if the place was to survive, as the present site is in the process of collapse due to the underlying honeycombing caused by extensive mining activity. The urban plan for the future town is the result of an international urban design competition in 2013.

Specialisation in architectural competitions is also illustrated in Antigoni Katsakou's investigation of Swiss architectural offices that have built their professional careers by virtue of competition proposals. Katsakou has interviewed 17 representatives of five architectural offices. Firm A was founded in 2003, and nine years later, in 2012, they had completed 60 projects, half of which were designed for competitions. However, none was a winning design, but several projects were awarded second prize. Firm B was set up in 2007. Their first prize was awarded in 2009. Three years later, in 2012, the office won two first prizes. Firm C was established in 1998. By 2012 the firm had taken part in 60 competitions and won first prize in 20 of these. Firm D started in 2006. Up to 2012 they had participated in 30 competitions and won five first prizes. Firm E was founded 2007 and five years later, in 2012, they had submitted 12 design proposals in competitions. In two of these competitions the firm won first prize.

On the basis of this fundamental data, Katsakou notes that specialisation towards competitions changes the architects' understanding of the competition form in a surprising way. Architectural offices which at the start of their professional careers praise the open competition and its capacity of generating radical solutions that attract attention to their authors, will by degrees be invited

to pre-qualified competitions, which makes them positive towards competition forms that limit participation to selected design teams. Therefore, the form of specialisation that favours radical proposals holds within it a conservative tendency. Success in open competitions makes the firms increasingly positive towards procedures that limit risk, affording a greater degree of prediction and economic security through an offer of re-compensation for approved proposals. Katsakou sees the firms' specialisation as a psychological journey for the architects, which in turn makes a convincing argument to strengthen the capacity of the open competition in contributing fresh thinking within architecture and urban design. Young architects and newly started offices need to be able to show off their profile and competence to potential clients.

## **Part 2. Bureaucratisation and administration**

Bureaucratisation infiltrates the competition as institution and process through external demands and internal driving forces within the building sector. From an architectural perspective, bureaucratisation manifests itself in competitions as demands concerning delivery of proposals, new forms of accounting, management routines and assessment principles in juries. The introduction of administrative routines for the management of architectural competitions and of other systems for securing desired building qualities affects the organiser as well as the jury and the competing design teams. No-one escapes.

Two such examples are the demands for certification of sustainability, i.e. green building. Two contributions focus on this specific aspect in architectural competitions. Carmella Cucuzzella takes as a starting point 15 Canadian competitions in which experts in environmental classification were involved in the assessment of the submitted proposals as jury members. According to Cucuzzella, the experts and their technically oriented systems for classification and assessment of sustainability influenced the jury's understanding of quality in the submitted competition proposals. What emerges is two very different ways of perceiving quality in architecture and urban design. One might describe them as measurable quality versus evaluated good quality. The right, measurable quality is represented in the administrative systems for environmental classification by properties that can be delimited and made measurable. Good quality is equivalent to values and experience that is possible to assess, connected with the site and its special prerequisites. The identification of good quality in the submitted competition proposals orients the assessment towards the detection

of appropriate, unclear or simply not adequate solutions of the competition proposal, however, a significant task for the jurors is to define this assessment, so that it can be shared by all the members.

Cucuzzella notes that jury assessments of competition proposals risk becoming too rigid when environmental experts are included in the jury, offering their advice on the basis of technical systems for environmental classification. Their presentation of qualities as “facts” has too great an impact on the detection of design as measurable properties versus values and experience in architecture. The outcome might turn into an instrumental jury evaluation of architecture that encourages assessments on rating scores of specific qualities rather than an overall evaluation and a qualified and comprehensive consideration of the balance between specific requirements and design solutions in order to achieve a harmonised architectonic quality. Therefore, Cucuzzella suggests that the environmental experts should be external consultants outside of the jury deliberations and that the final judgment of competition proposals should be made by the architect jurors.

Leif Östman reaches a somewhat different conclusion after his survey of the competition in 2013 for a new campus building at Aalto University on the outskirts of Helsinki. The 2013 competition for a new campus building at Aalto University was arranged as an open international competition in two stages. The jury comprised 14 competent members. The first stage resulted in 189 proposals. Six of these were selected for development in a second stage. Östman notes that the capacity of the proposals of meeting the demands for sustainability resulted in few comments from the jury in their report on the competition.

In the competition brief, sustainability demands were a central challenge for invited design teams to address. However, the particular focus on sustainability was lost during the competition process, and, in principle, it also vanished from the final jury verdict. One explanation pointed to by Östman was the absence of a distinct advocate for the sustainability perspective in the jury's assessment of the competition proposals. Once again the trick question is how to judge a system for assessment of sustainable conception, its advantage, use and capacity of contributing to architectonic quality. The architects in the jury who had a decisive say in the assessment of the competition proposals maintained their role as professional experts on architectonic quality. Vague demands and wishes in the brief for sustainable design form did not have an impact in the jury's selection of a winner. Östman's conclusion is that the sustainability demands need

to be clarified and incorporated in the assessment of competition proposals in a better way.

Östman's study ends up as an opposing recommendation to Cucuzzella's suggestion. Despite their contradictory results, both authors agree upon an inherent dilemma in competitions with articulated intentions. This may be understood as a question of how art and science may meet in a fruitful way in competition processes aiming at sustainable design – however, doing so without generating administrative control systems or checklist protocols which are bureaucratic solutions with poor relevance for an over-arching architectonic quality.

### **Part 3. Juridification and procurement**

Project competitions have been introduced into legal frameworks for public procurement in Europe. Through this framework, the architectural competition has been ranged in a legal system of prescriptions that strengthens a tendency to checklist protocols and control systems. However, the juridification of project competitions is not confined to the procurement of architect services but carries further significance for the competition as institution and process. For example, the shared set of rules and regulations of the EU procurement directive (2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC) puts forward noticeable differences in the method of procurement of public assignments in architecture and urban design in Europe (European Commission, 1992). In his contribution, Michel Geertse notes that juridification includes a meeting between two very different types of competition cultures; an administrative procurement culture and a design-oriented culture. Once again, we find a classic conflict in the view of architectural quality as measurable properties in a project versus aesthetical values and the spatial experience of architectonic conception. In the investigated competitions, the right, measurable quality appears as on the one hand must-demands and on the other, the evaluated, good quality as floating design criteria steering the jury's assessment and choice of the winning proposal.

According to Geertse, the procurement culture searches for the right quality that results in a preference on the part of public clients looking for architectural services in the Netherlands and the UK for selective tender procedures instead of procurement via competitions. In contrast to these two countries, France stands out as a country where public clients still to a large extent use competitions for the procurement of architect services for building assignments. From

Geertse's study it becomes clear that the juridification of architectural competitions strengthens the procurement experts' role and their tendency to put forward a premium on measurable demands in the selection of design teams, the formulation of demands in competition briefs and the jury's assessment of competition proposals.

Magnus Rönn brings up juridification in the selection and short listing of design teams. Rönn denominates this type of selection process as a client regime and an expression of a latent juridification process among Swedish contractors. Six invited competitions form the basis for this assumption and serve as an illuminating example in his discussion. The organisers' expectations of the architectural competition is found at the very centre of the client regime. On the one hand, the organisers aim to attract as many architect candidates as possible in order to supply a qualified selection of design teams. On the other hand, the intent is to restrict the number of participants that may comply with the regulations in the law on public procurement admission to the competition. From the perspective of the design teams, the picture is the opposite one. The more attractive the competition is, the more applications are sent to the organiser, which, in turn, automatically reduces their chance of being selected.

These two rivalling perspectives are clearly highlighted in Rönn's comparison of how the client regime functions in architectural competitions versus in competitions for land allocation agreements. The way in which the organiser picks out design teams through selection committees cannot be fully predicted in advance. But the fact of gatekeepers in the shape of selection committees applying the must-demands in the invitation is clear. However, when there is great pressure of applications, the members of the selection committees develop new internal demands on the design teams that are not evident in the invitation.

#### **Part 4. Internationalisation and excluding practices**

A majority of architectural competitions increasingly use pre-qualification procedures. The transition from open competitions to invited ones with a limited number of design teams can be seen in the exclusion of young architects and newly started firms. In addition, language demands in the organiser's invitation to competition and requests concerning documented knowledge on national building regulations have an excluding effect. In parallel, the propensity to internationalise competitions is found in competition briefs written in English, as well as internationally composed juries. There is also a

shared core of principles used in international, European and national competition rules.

In his contribution, Pedro Guilherme gives us a view on competition as an international institution and process that the Portuguese revolution of 1974 has in effect given rise to. The renewal of competition culture is in this case part of a political context which has made it possible for, in particular, two Portuguese architects to achieve international star architect status; Alvaro Siza Viera was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 1992 and Eduardo Souto de Moura in 2010. Through the 1974 revolution which opened Portugal to the world, the two star architects were given the opportunity to show themselves off in international competitions. The competition thus regained its status among these architects. Their success in international competitions also made way for younger architects.

Silvia Forlati presents a study which contains findings that are based on data supplied by architects in 25 countries. She points out that the view of the architectural competitions as "getting the job" yields a perspective on competition that is too restrictive. Competition culture is not solely concerned with assignments. In order to understand adjustment processes in architectural competitions one has to consider the competition as an international institution and process through its side effects. Forlati gives us a survey that illuminates the competition from the point of view and experience of design teams in several countries. The survey is based on response to an open call through the Wonderland network, the Austrian Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineers and through websites. The call resulted in 116 replies from architects in the 25 countries. From these replies it appears that the architects have participated in at least one competition that has had a decisive influence on their professional careers.

Forlati summarises the experience of the architects in the following rule of thumb: out of ten competition proposals, two will result in a first prize, of which one will be built. It is against this background that the competition must be seen in a wider context than merely as an instrument for procurement. For example, architects point to several positive by-products, in spite of recurrent losses, such as the fact that the competition has given them the opportunity of testing design ideas and of showing their creative ability to potential clients outside the competition framework. A majority replied that competitions stimulate their architectonic thinking. It is likely that this is one of the major

reasons why the architectural competition has such a good reputation among architects as a professional body.

Jonas E. Andersson discusses three invited architectural competitions undertaken on the basis of a government initiative in Sweden in 2010 that aimed to develop new residential housing for elderly people. Out of 120 applications, 11 design teams (9%) were selected for three competitions in Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping. This meant that 109 applications (81%) were sifted out. The governmental programme in Sweden was to be carried through during a period of two years. The background for the governmental programme was a forward looking challenge; the development of architectonic solutions to meet the needs of the welfare society in environments adapted to an aging population with functional impairments. The government programme aroused interest in several municipalities which asked, in the introductory phase, for information regarding economic support for competitions. The time scale for the government initiative became a determining reason for there were only three municipalities, Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping, organising competitions. The time frame was too narrow which limited the possibility for other municipalities to organise competitions within the time given by the government.

Few municipalities converted their interest into the setting up of architectural competitions. Andersson describes the realised architectural competitions as dependent upon key actors in order to bridge internal problems in the municipal organisation caused by the time pressure of the overall government initiative. Andersson notes that the municipalities chose to organise invited competitions with pre-qualification in response to the time pressure. The choice of competition form in the three competitions that were carried out was made by a small group of key actors inside the different municipalities. The coordinating manager intervened with the purpose of clarifying the intentions of the governmental programme and of adding knowledge to the competition processes about elderly people and their needs, through parallel investigations. This, then, is a form of internal adjustment created by the time pressure in the government assignment.

### **Part 5. Market orientation and conflicting interests**

The two final chapters in the anthology throw light on two different ways in which market orientation and rivalling interests are expressed in architectural competitions; on the one hand, as external driving forces when cities compete



with each other, through the means of competitions aiming at spectacular buildings; on the other, as internal interests opposing each other within the competition. Architecture with a market orientation as an underlying driving force figures in Justas Pipinis' study. Architectonic conception is used by the municipality of Uppsala in Sweden to attract interest, visitors and businesses to a new concert and congress hall. Pipinis' examination tests a hypothesis; to what degree the competition contains a toolbox promoting the rendering of iconic buildings characterised by exceptional architecture. According to Pipinis, architectonic iconification is a question of the planning of competitions that include implementation of design proposals and that receive their final verdict only later when the building has been taken into use, and its activities have been appreciated by the target group. The competition creates the basis for iconification through the conception of proposals, but the deciding point lies outside of the competition process.

The 2002 competition for a concert and congress hall in Uppsala is used as an example of iconification. In this competition, Henning Larsen Architects in Denmark were selected as winners. The competition tools offering themselves for iconification were: (a) an attractive competition form; (b) an inviting competition brief; (c) exciting competition proposals; (d) a competent jury assessment; (d) the implementation of the winning proposal; (e) quality activities in the building; and (f) target groups that appreciate both the architecture and the contents. It is not only the tools that are interesting, but in particular, how ably or consciously the key actors make use of the toolbox in a process of iconification that starts in the planning of the competition, continues through the implementation of winning proposals, finally to be confirmed through the administrative function.

By way of conclusion, Beatrice Mansoni, Leentje Volker and Hedley Smyth account for a series of paradoxes present internally in the competition viewed as institution and process. What emerges is a picture of a field of tensions, with key actors as carriers of rivalling interests, which may be summarised as the 'concept paradox'. It means that the competition is given several contradictory tendencies which must be balanced in the competition stages as (a) the programming of the competition task, (b) the selection of participants in the competition, (c) conception of the competition proposals and (d) the jury's selection of a winner. This balancing act within competitions results in a number of imperative deliberations which must be made by organisers, selection committees, design

teams and jury members. It is not possible to avoid the balancing action as long as there are rivalling interests inherent in the competition viewed as institution and process. In this perspective the concept paradox becomes a theoretical tool for the understanding of the competition in a market-oriented world. According to Manzoni, Volker and Smyth deeper studies of competition paradoxes may contribute knowledge and innovation to the competition in its role of institution and process.

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Institution and process are two major concepts in the understanding of the competition and how this tool for the production of architecture and urban design has developed. They represent a core of establish ideas and fundamental principles, here combined with making and acting by key players in competitions. Adjustments in contemporary competitions presented and discussed here are based on empirical findings in selected papers. Several adjustments can be found in each text. Only a few aspects have been emphasised in this introduction – many more may be found. It is our hope that the reader will find this a fruitful way of theorising competition in architecture and urban design as a growing field of research.

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# Part 1



# The Inaccessibility of Building Accessibility: Giving Visual and Material Form to Innovation

An Essay

KRISTIAN KREINER

## MUNDANITY AND EXOTICNESS

A few years back, I studied a local architectural competition in Denmark. The winning team was awarded a design-and-build contract for a small 12,600 m<sup>2</sup> of-office building with an approximately USD 24 m price tag. The building that was subsequently built had little iconic value, was located in a rather remote suburb of Copenhagen, and would receive little immediate recognition anywhere in the world of architecture.<sup>1</sup>

Such mundanity, however, was not the intention of the client or the organizers of the competition. On the contrary, it was to do more than merely meet the immediate goal of building a new office domicile for the client, the Disabled People's Organizations Denmark, and many of the member organizations. The higher purpose was to further the interests of all disabled people by altering established architectural practices. The plot was to demonstrate that, by ingenious design, accessibility for disabled users could be provided democratically and cost-efficiently. Their innovative design solutions were expected and meant to travel widely among architects, changing the ways we build worldwide. While probably succeeding in creating one of the world's most accessible office building, the competition did not fulfill its grander purpose. By

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1 The building attracted cursory attention in the Danish press because it was inaugurated by the Queen of Denmark. Recently, one of the original financial sponsors organized a comprehensive expert evaluation of the accessibility of the building and the lessons learnt, see Ryhl & Frandsen (2016). The evaluation validates my claim that the building has received little attention in the field of architecture, but adds that the building has become widely referenced and appreciated among disability professionals and in governmental circles, nationally and internationally. The evaluation concludes that, in terms of accessibility, the building is an important exemplar, even if it fails to reach the highest international standards.

and large, architectural practices appear to be untouched by this, in many ways, exemplary competition and project.<sup>2</sup>

It is not this immediate failure that motivates me in drawing attention to the competition, but its exemplary qualities. We privilege hindsight unduly when deducting the characteristics and quality of a process from its final outcome (Rosenzweig, 2014). Outcomes are, in the real world, contingent and unpredictable. What happened did not have to happen, and what did not happen might possibly have happened. Thus, the fate of a project, whether success, failure, or mundanity, is not necessarily fair or deserved. The outcome is often an arbitrary anchor for assessing the preceding efforts in lieu of studying them. I hope to show that, in the present case, the preceding process, including the architectural competition, was out of the ordinary. In my view, it was innovative and exotic – an experiment outside the conventional framework for architectural competitions and architects’ practices. In that sense, it deserves, if not to have succeeded, then at least to have garnered more attention.

By documenting the sequence of events behind an apparently ordinary architectural competition, it is my aim to learn about what architects do when they compete. To compete, however, is an adverbial verb (Goudge, 1982) in the sense that Ryle (1979) explicated: to compete requires that “something positive and concrete” is going on at the same time. In the case of architectural competitions, the architectural design work that occurs is what is positive and concrete. Studying architectural competitions means studying the architectural design work subject to competition. Thus, architectural competitions are good occasions for learning about architectural design work and the way it is qualified by competition. I will explore if and how such evaluative contexts impact the design work that architects do.

## The case for case studies

I have spent much time making detailed, extended single-case studies of, *inter alia*, organizations, projects, and staged competitions like the one discussed here. I have experienced the ethnographer’s kick of excitement when discovering the exoticness of everyday and routine activities and phenomena. There is much learning and insight to be gained from studying “real” events, people, and projects – realness implying both a highly imperfect world (in terms of, e.g.,

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2 Whether such practices may be impacted in more oblique manners in the longer run will be addressed below.



knowledge, control, attention, and discipline) and a highly situation-specific way of coping with such imperfections.

From a methodological point of view, however, case studies may be problematic (Hammersley, 2004). They focus on (and celebrate) the unique and exceptional. By implication, we risk learning from the exceptions to the rule, from what is true in particular cases but not in general. If the insights from case studies cannot be generalized, why bother?

I join forces with many others in justifying case studies as methodology (Burawoy, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Siggelkow, 2007). My argument is that case studies can be used to explore and confirm the following very important, general point: There hides a huge variability of phenomena behind the concepts and labels that we conventionally use, and with which we build our general theories. We presume that things that are labeled similarly are similar in some essential respects. If they do not share certain qualities, they would be mislabeled. Thus, we presume that events we label as competitions share a number of important features. However, many observations question the presumption that we already know what qualities are generally shared by the things we label as competitions. For example, if we presume that staged competitions are a competition for primacy, we will come to realize that this is not always the case. Sometimes all contestants are given first prize up front (Kreiner, 2012). Moreover, if we presume that the winner's prize in architectural competitions is really the envisioned design contract, we will come to realize that design contracts are sometimes given to someone else besides the competition winners (Kreiner, 2015). Presumably, a concrete competition can deviate on any definitive characteristic we could imagine, but, without knowing the exact limits, they will probably not deviate on all such characteristics at the same time.

Recognizing that a case is always a case of something larger, e.g., a more general pattern or school, the risk (and celebrated scientific convention) is to reduce the unique instantiation to its institutionalized image. We lose something important, however, if we willingly enact a scientific culture that annihilates the unique, the individual, the deviant, by reducing it to conventions, or by disqualifying it as inappropriate. Heresy is an integral, constructive part of cultural production and architectural practice, as everyone strives to be distinct among equals, to be the same and different. The notion of style has been used to highlight this constant dilemma (Kornberger et al, 2011).

Hirschman's notion of possibilism may explicate my preoccupation with case studies (Hirschman, 2013). He was driven less by a scientific goal of making

predictions about the future, about what will happen, or most likely happen. Instead, his intellectual ambition was to discover what might possibly happen, probably against all odds and commonsense, by surprise, etc. In a sense, he was searching for ways of circumventing the limits of imagination (a valid project for an intellectual), instead of studying common ways of accommodating to the postulated limits of material and economic resources, as most economists do. We should explore what the label architectural competition might possibly hide – as we do when conducting a case study.

Most likely, perhaps, the label architectural competition will be enacted as an obligating structure. Most architectural competitions are probably designed and managed in accordance with the institutionalized notions of a proper, e.g., a fair, competition (Kreiner, 2010; Kreiner, 2016). Obviously, there are many scripts and prescripts for how competitions should be organized and staged. In a few cases, however, we observe that the label is enacted more as a license to experiment with organizing and staging competitions. As long as we talk about what we are doing in a particular, legitimate manner and vocabulary, we can, under certain parameters, seemingly do pretty much what we desire to do and it will still qualify as a competition. The label lends legitimacy to the action but informs us poorly about the content and meaning of such action. The concept hides the empirical variability of action, outcomes, and experience – at least to everybody not directly involved. The “spectators” are left to reconstruct what must have happened based on the institutionalized concept of competition and the outcome. Consequently, they will most certainly miss the variability that the concept hides.

The architectural competition I will document below shows how far from commonsense and general presumptions such license may take us. The competition was consciously designed as a social experiment, and in terms of staging and organizing, it represented an unprecedented and highly ambitious form. At the same time, however, it was also a proper and legitimate instantiation of architectural competitions that stirred no controversy and disaffection.

### **The purpose of this essay**

The initial purpose of this essay is to open up the black box of architectural competitions by documenting an unconventional empirical case. The first lesson is that such a competition may take place. A second lesson is the effects that follow from changing the attention and behavior of the competitors by design,

i.e., design of the competition. All competitions are organized, staged, framed, and managed with a set of intended effects in mind (Kreiner, 2016). In this case, accessibility was the primary intended effect. It steered the participants' attention, but we need to understand how such a shift in attention had an impact on the process and the outcome of the competition.

The second purpose is to reflect on the limited immediate effects on architectural practices that this pregnant competition showed. It produced much local insight into making buildings accessible to all users, including disabled ones, but it had little spillover effect elsewhere in the world of architecture. The lessons learned did not travel far. If translation is a vehicle for ideas and innovations to travel (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996), we need to ask why the results in this case proved hard to translate and therefore never freed itself from the particular time and location of its invention.

## Characterizing the Work of Architects

Conventionally, "giving visual and material form to ideas, identities, and imaginations" is what we consider the work of architects to be.<sup>3</sup> They provide visible and material solutions to the client's needs and wants. Granted, architects create visual and material structures, like buildings and cities, as well as representations (drawings and models) of such structures. However, to see such outputs as simple expressions of prior ideas, identities, and imaginations – and as a solution to the client's needs and wants – is a theory, and neither fact nor necessity.

We may like the theory but should insist on treating it as a theory. Theories can be true or false – but here, more importantly, they can be treated as beginnings or endings. Giving visual and material form to ideas may be our (collective) theory about what architects do, and often we ignore reality in the belief that it complies with our theories about it. If treated as a beginning, however, the theory will open up issues and concerns for new and continued investigation. We might come to use our theory as a beginning in order to raise questions, if we consider the attributed functions as a task: It is the task of architects to give visual and material form to, e.g., ideas and identities. If this task is not presumed to be achieved by definition, we might become curious about the nature of such a task, how architects struggle to achieve it, and under which conditions they do so. We would soon come to a slightly different viewpoint, I posit, and develop a concern for what architects do in terms of what architects believe that buildings do. An

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3 This was the name of an international workshop at WU Vienna in May 2014.

integral part of the architect's work is to develop and apply theories about what buildings do and cannot do in response to ideas, identities, and imaginations. There is an array of ideas about how physical structures channel user behavior, user experiences, and how user needs are accommodated (Gieryn, 2002). Some such ideas are part of the architectural convention, considered legitimate insights and professional knowledge; other ideas are invented more spontaneously for some current design problem. Design entries in an architectural competition are (implicit or explicit) expressions of such theories, and the jury's evaluation implies a decoding, and acceptance or rejection, of such recognized or inferred theories.

**"We shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us."**

This widely quoted dictum by Winston Churchill anticipated, according to Gieryn (2002), the sociological preoccupation with structuration and the interplay between social structure and human agency. For my present purpose, it suffices to observe that architects shape buildings, but the ways in which they do and can do this is by "knowing" how they will afterwards shape "us": us, the users, channeling functional behavior and social interaction with the possibility of inviting misuse; us, the designers, building reputation and status; us, the investors, making profits; us, the spectators, enjoying aesthetic pleasures; and, us, the general public, perceiving these visible structures as symbols of power and wealth. It is such "knowing" that allows architects to rationalize, to explain, and to justify their designs. In a nutshell, the shaping of the building (agency) anticipates the ways in which the building subsequently shapes us (structure), which, in turn, anticipates the ways in which it will be used and misused (agency). We appreciate immediately how complex and intricate a task designing a building is, implying how far from anything rationally calculable such a task begins. As a consequence, part of the design process consists in reducing the complexity and intricacy confronted, e.g., by delineating the relevant "us" (the design constituency) and by building trust in the knowledge that links the building design to its anticipated and desired effects. Designing an office building involves designing its future users and the reality they live and act in (Kreiner & Tryggstad, 2002). Architectural design takes place in the realm of ontological politics (Mol, 1999; Sage, Dainty, & Brookes, 2013).

However, I have already indicated that Churchill's dictum may be, in Erving Goffman's (1974) terms, "true as its reads but false as it is taken." Buildings,

and the institutions that govern our architectural competitions, may or may not shape subsequent behavior much, and if they do, then often in ways that may be difficult to foresee. As illustrated above, the shaping effect hinges on the choice of enacting institutions as obligation or license. Foreshadowing the analysis of the case competition, I suggest that the conventional outcome of this (implicit) choice of enactment may not reflect preferences (including risk preferences), nor normative, coercive, or mimetic pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). It may also reflect knowledge and, especially, a lack of knowledge. If there is no knowledge about how to exploit the license option, it is foreseeable that established practices will be prolonged, the institution reinforced, and a sense of necessity turned into a logic of appropriateness (March, 1994; March & Olsen, 2006). A lack of imagination that things might be done and look differently from conventions may explain a lot more, especially in a domain where aesthetic knowledge and knowing (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007) is essential to practice.

### **THE CASE: DESIGNING THE WORLD'S MOST ACCESSIBLE OFFICE BUILDING**

In this particular competition,<sup>4</sup> the design of the building was meant to invite new users inside. Accessibility was the key concern, but it was accessibility for an extended design constituency (Staudemaier, quoted in Gieryn, 2002). Including a concern for accessibility for users with a variety of disabilities made the design problem unique. Most of the architects' theories about what buildings do were, as a consequence, not very helpful.<sup>5</sup>

The client was a small NGO named the Disabled People's Organizations Denmark, which is an umbrella organization for 32 member organizations, each representing a particular physical or mental disability. The goal of the project was to co-locate the umbrella organization and the member organizations in order to facilitate interaction and coordination – a quite conventional theory about how buildings and cohabitation affect social behavior.

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4 For general information about the competition and the client, see: <http://www.handicap.dk/handicaporganisationernes-hus/>

5 I am overstating the point. In many respects, this was also an ordinary office building with lots of well-known design requirements. It is only with respect to accessibility that the architects lacked appropriate theories about how their visible and material building designs would interact with user needs and projects.

The project, however, was conceived with a much larger objective than this mundane one. It was conceived as a showcase for the needs and interests of disabled users of buildings. It was going to demonstrate to the world that an alternative, better procedure exists for designing accessible buildings. Conventional practice prescribes a two-step procedure: First, the building is designed for ordinary users; next, special remedies (such as ramps and handicap toilets) are added to lessen its inaccessibility to disabled users. According to experience, the results are seldom good for anybody, because *architecturally*, the options are few and considered to be compromises; because *economically*, they add significant costs to the building with little benefits for the vast majority of users; and because *socially*, such special remedies grant access for disabled users at the cost of putting their disabilities on public display. The vision of the client was to avoid such a stepwise design process and to make accessibility to all users an integral part of the fundamental building design.

The organizers of the competition were looking for innovative ways of creating nothing less than the world's most accessible office building. For that to happen, they realized that they had to force the architects to abandon their current theories of what buildings do and can do in relation to the users. In short, the participants in the competition were entrusted with (and challenged by) the contrarian task of hiding the accessibility behind the design of the office building, thus avoiding giving this concern a visual, material form.

The challenge for the organizers of the competition was to make the participants accept such premises in good faith. We must realize that competitions require architects to design visual and material structures within a compressed time period. Deadlines are not necessarily conducive to the exploration of brand new design paradigms. Pragmatically, multiple concerns have to be met and compromised. The world's most accessible office building might easily end up looking not much different from existing office buildings. In the flurry of conventional design dilemmas, improved accessibility might easily be achieved by increasing of the number and quality of specialized remedies for disabled users, justifying such solutions by pointing out that there are limits to what buildings can do for disabled users.

We notice how this competition brings a fundamental tension to the foreground. On the one hand, the client insists on thinking about accessibility in a non-discriminatory way but lacks knowledge about how to hide this concern

in the visible, material form of the building. On the other hand, the architects' "knowledge" about how to give visible and material form to ideas presumes that users can walk, see, and orient themselves spatially. Architectural designs create users (Gieryn, 2002; Kreiner & Tryggestad, 2002), but, in this case, in such a way that it would alienate the focal group in this particular design constituency, i.e., the disabled users. If users were to be conceived more broadly, much of what the professional architects know would no longer count. Recall Loasby's (2000) dictum: We can only know "... by setting bounds to what we seek to know, and ignoring ... what lies beyond". By ignoring the variability in user abilities (and a host of other things), architects have built the body of knowledge that constitutes their profession. Moving the bounds of what they should be concerned about would make much of the knowledge on which they practice either invalid or irrelevant. Such a change in the fundamentals of architectural practice was explicitly envisioned by the organizers of the competition. The strategy was to create an office building that would "... spread its innovative solutions like ripples on water far out in the world. ... Through new projects and using its own thought-out solutions, this building will act as a generator for the disability cause and a universal design in the future" (quote<sup>6</sup> from the NGO's homepage). This strategy aimed to reframe, in the minds of architects, the various national and international conventions (e.g. the Danish building code and the UN convention 26 on the rights for people with disabilities, CRPD) from external constraint and peripheral concern to something essential to the architectural practice.

### The design of the competition

The task of the organizers of the competition was to prevent the architects (and the other members of the teams) from designing the world's most accessible office building based on what they already knew about affording accessibility by means of visual and material forms. An innovative design would seem to require that old theories about what buildings do and can do be discarded and substituted with new ones, in other words, alternative theories not yet formulated. The case shows, I will argue, that it takes special effort to change the knowledge and theories on which an established practice is constituted when no available substitutes exist. It also shows the potential havoc that may result when established knowledge and theories are discredited.

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6 Quotes from the homepage and the competition brief are translated by the author.

**Design element 1: Breaking relationships to break away from convention**

The competition was a design-and-build competition. After an open application round, five contracting firms, five architectural firms, and five engineering firms were invited to the pre-qualification phase. The organizers grouped them into five cross-disciplinary teams that competed to become one of the three teams in the main competition.

It is unusual and highly significant that the participants were prequalified individually for a team-based competition. This enabled the organizers of the competition to team up firms that had little prior experience in collaborating with each other. If fortunate enough to win the competition, they would enter into business relationships with partners not of their own choice.

The composition of the teams explicitly reflected the strategy of the organizers. In interviews, they explicated their rationale for this unusual procedure. Teams with prior collaboration experience would be harder to persuade to change established ways of working together. Starting from scratch would skip the unfreeze-phase of organizational development. To achieve the goal of the competition, new ways of working were deemed necessary. Forming teams with no initial social relationships among the participants made the organizers more powerful, but it also produced the risk that the members of the team would not want to work together, undermining the efficiency of the teams. The demonstrated desire and ability to work as a team became a selection criterion for the main competition.

**Design element 2: Training course – experiential learning**

What is accessibility? This is not an easy question, and the slogan for the competition, “the world’s most accessible office building”, was clearly more motivating than informative. From bitter experience, the client representatives knew a great deal about non-accessibility, but little about affording accessibility in ways other than though conventional (and undesirable) building designs. Knowing that buildings are inaccessible relative to the kind of disability of the user, they also realized the complexity of the task when representing 32 different disabilities. The complexity only grew when realizing that accommodating one type of disability might easily make things worse for another; for example, blind users may miss using obstacles cleared away for wheelchair users as waypoints.

The architects (and other members of the design teams) knew little about the problems of inaccessibility but much about the solutions to such problems –



too much, as I have already indicated. They could refer to the building code and to an established architectural practice that could be rationalized to indicate the limits to what buildings realistically can do to ease the problems of accessibility for disabled users. Such rationalizations were feared by the organizers of the competition because they would predictably reproduce building designs that were known to be ineffective. The reason the professionals knew how to make buildings accessible in the traditional manner was that they ignored all the complexities of accessibility. They apparently knew the traditional approach well because they set very narrow boundaries on what they attempted to learn about. As already mentioned, changing such boundaries was the strategy of the organizers for preventing the world's most accessible office building from becoming a rehash of the same old solutions.

To challenge the boundaries of the participants' attention, the prequalification for the main competition included an obligatory training course in accessibility for all teams. The course was designed as an experiential learning process, during which the participants were put in wheelchairs and asked to enter existing office buildings. On another occasion, they were blindfolded and asked to navigate from one office to another. By the end, the teams were required to deconstruct an architecturally renowned office building from an accessibility point of view.

The emotional reaction to the course was dramatic. Some participants expressed the feeling of having embarked on a steep learning curve – possibly an expression of the discovery of an unexpected reality hitherto professionally ignored. A glimpse of experience with inaccessibility undermined their conventional knowledge about how to design accessible buildings.

In response to this enlightening experience, some of the participants<sup>7</sup> became dedicated to an exploration of the meaning of accessibility. The professionals' focus on solutions was substituted by the amateur's focus on the problem (Kreiner, 2015). Traditional (rational) roles were reconceived, e.g., the contractor sacrificed a contractor's ordinary desire for profit by giving his share of the competition prize to the architect and the engineer, and by financing various experiments on his own account.

The selection of the three teams for participation in the main competition was based on team performance during the training course. The team's ability

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7 We focused our data collection on the team that won the competition and the design-and-build contract. According to other informants, this team was especially enthusiastic about the exploring the accessibility concern.

to collaborate and its openness to the problems and concerns of disabled users were important criteria. In a sense, their suitability for participating in the competition was measured on the willingness to leave the architect's professional zone of competence and comfort. Such willingness would make it possible for the organizers to transform the competition procedure into an exploration and learning process. Teams who openly acknowledged having something essential to learn (i.e., to be ignorant on how to design for accessibility) would supposedly be more dedicated participants in such an exploration and learning process. Such was the rationale for designing and recruiting participants for the main competition.

### **Design Element 3: Mandatory design strategy**

In addition to the ordinary functional and technical requirements, the brief also prescribed a design strategy, i.e., an explicit framing of the ways in which the building should interact with the users. This strategy redefined the way the architects should think about accessibility. It adopted two basic principles, *equality* and *universality*. These principles have a wider relevance and are discussed internationally (see e.g. <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/>).

- Equality

The equality principle determined that overall, the building must be equal for everyone. It was a way of short circuiting the practice of adding accessibility to buildings designed for ordinary users. The conventional special provisions for disabled users would perhaps gain them physical access to the building but always at the cost of temporary social exclusion and discrimination. For example, accessibility by means of a wheelchair ramp forces disabled users to take a different route than the people accompanying them. Equality meant that the building would grant access without such social costs for the disabled users.

*On principle, we have decided to work with only one solution that can be employed by everyone.*

The ideal was to build accessibility for all users, disabled and non-disabled alike, into the basic design of the building. Accessibility should be an integral part

of the design, not a special remedy added subsequently to assist a special user group.

- Universality

In general, we have prioritized low-tech solutions because they will become an integrated part of the architectural solution that won't be more expensive than other non-accessible solutions ...

This principle was adopted to address the ambition of the client to set new standards and change the practice of building design all over the world. This particular project was privileged by ample funding, but most other building projects would face severe cost constraints. If the adequate accessibility solutions added to the overall costs of the building, they might risk being eliminated for budget reasons. In order to travel long and far, the solutions would need a modest price tag. Concisely, it was pointed out that by making accessibility a fundamental aspect of the building design, subsequent add-ons of costly, architectonically superfluous, and socially demeaning special remedies and provisions for disabled users would become redundant. Thinking in terms of equality and universal design would save costs, and thereby become more attractive and translatable to new projects.

The brief defined explicitly that the architectural solutions should be no more expensive than conventional solutions. Importantly, it drew the following implication from the principle of universal design:

*We thereby support and encourage all users of the building to be self-helpers.*

The self-help user is the ultimate symbol of accessibility having become an integral part of the building design. Implicitly, it has also changed the character of accessibility. No longer is accessibility a quality of the building. The users make it accessible relative to their own projects and capabilities. The building represents physical barriers for them, but also the resources by which they will gain access. The design process became a process of experimentation and learning about the affordance that various designs would offer users with highly distinct capabilities and needs (Gibson, 1986). It resulted in new theories about how users interact with the building as an environment of potential resources for access and navigation.

To illustrate, experiments were conducted concerning the optimal color shading of doors in the hallways. To accommodate users with sight impairments, one would presume that maximum contrast (white walls and black doors) would help users identifying office entrances. However, the architects learned that a black door might be an ambiguous sign. To a sight-impaired user it may signify a closed black door or an open door to an unlit office. To reduce the risk of misreading and accidents, experiments led to safer color shadings.

In similar ways, the commonsensical accommodation of disabled users was repeatedly challenged. Originally, all the design teams assumed that circular ramps would be ideal for transportation between the floors of the building. However, a group of disabled users taught them a different lesson. Circular ramps spell exhaustion for wheelchair users and confusion for blind users, who never know what floor they have reached. Circular ramps soon disappeared from all design entries.

### **The need for updated design theories**

Conventional theories of what buildings do and can do are little concerned with the needs of disabled users. Their needs are to be accommodated subsequently in the form of special and costly remedies. The design competition challenged and sought to update such conventional wisdom. The results were often sophisticated, unobtrusive ways of making disabled users self-helpers when entering and using the office building. It took considerable insight and awareness to decode the multiple affordances that the design offered its many users. The design solutions were necessarily equivocal since they would be a resource in different ways to different types of users. Equivocality was a sign of success within the new understanding of what buildings can and should do. Ordinarily, such equivocality would suggest incoherence and inconclusive design solutions.

### **Disappointments: the inaccessibility of the notion of accessibility**

The project of building the world's most accessible office building achieved its goals in some important ways. It occasioned all these experiments with new ways of thinking about accessibility as a matter of equality and universality. To some extent, the visible and material design allowed everybody, ordinary users as well as disabled ones, to be more self-helpers, albeit in different ways and by different means.

The flipside of this success, however, was the problems that arose in relation to the unobtrusive manner in which the concerns of disabled users were catered for. The unobtrusiveness was achieved by intent and represented a measure of their success, and yet recognizing the building as accessible for disabled users relied on an insight that only a few directly involved professionals had acquired. They had experienced inaccessibility and experimented with multiple ways of helping disabled users to become self-helpers. Because they could identify with the task of making the building accessible relative to an array of disabilities, they could also better feel the general design in terms of its multiple affordances.

All others lacked this particular aesthetic knowledge (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007), however. The professional members of the jury (architects and engineers) were said to have expressed disappointment with the result. Lacking the insight of the involved designers, they judged the design in terms of the visible remedies and found few of them. Consequently, they evaluated the proposals based on aspects they were more familiar with professionally, i.e. on the quality of the aesthetic and technical solutions. Not surprisingly, they voted for a proposal with higher iconic value, but a strong representation of users on the jury managed to ensure that the most accessible design won.

Here, we may have arrived at a general paradox. As soon as the quality of something is relative to the user, we face an ambiguous reality. Because the problem cannot be configured clearly, the valuation becomes relative, contingent, and indeterminate. People with different insights and training saw the challenges differently and evaluated the accessibility of the building quite differently. The appreciation of anything, architecture as well as wine, is derived from the person's attention and acquired taste (Hennion, 2015). The reading (or feeling) of a building design will depend on, say, an acquired taste for aesthetics, a sense for what buildings are supposed to do, and a routinized or professionalized pattern of attention. The very design of the competition (with a training course and experimentation with a different design strategy) was a testimony to the fact that the existing taste for aesthetics, sense of the task, and pattern of attention did not allow the architects to appreciate the accessibility of the building. The convention of adding a few prescribed remedies was in fact a way of ignoring such concerns. However, changing the minds of a few members of the profession did not change the profession. Such tastes, insights, and attention to patterns do not travel easily. They have to be acquired and developed by the receivers, and the senders can do little other than invite the receivers to

learn. Unfortunately, the way in which architectural work is organized leaves little room for paying much attention to the unfamiliar and implicit aspects of designing buildings. In trying to reinsert the concerns of disabled user groups, the competition severed its links to conventional architectural practice. The fine balance between belonging to some collective practice and differentiating oneself to create and defend an identity (Kornberger et al., 2011) was lost, leaving the competition and the building without a noteworthy identity.

The aim of the competition was to come up with innovative solutions to the accessibility concern that would spread “like ripples on water far out in the world”. However, since the recognition of the innovativeness depended on insights that were not transportable, the ideas and solutions did not travel far. In fact, they did not even reach the jury of the competition. The project shared the fate of most ripples on water. Soon after, the ripples vanished, leaving the surface as calm as before. No revolution had hit the practice of architecture.

## DISCUSSION

I aimed to turn this architectural competition into an occasion for learning about what architects do and what competitions do to architects when they do it. The present case is potentially fertile because architects were forced to do things they would presumably always do, but, on this occasion, under unusual circumstances. As a result, they were more consciously aware of their tasks and the obstacles and difficulties in accomplishing them. Therefore, they were easier to observe and talk with about what was going on.

The dictum that architects give visual and material form to ideas proved to be true as it reads and false as it is taken. The dictum was clarified by the simple fact that accessibility was required to be achieved by unobtrusive, invisible, and implicit means, hidden in the general material form of the office building. Downplaying the physical engineering of accessibility devices forced a keener interest in the symbolic, the meaning-side, of the design. Wheelchair ramps allowed physical access but at the cost of temporary social exclusion and a public display of disability. Drive-through elevators were also walk-through elevators and saved wheelchair users from doing an awkward U-turn or backing-out maneuvering without complicating others’ use of the elevator. The latter solution was considered democratic and including, while the former was considered no solution in the first place because it stigmatizes a group of disabled users as handicapped instead of making them self-helpers.

The requirement that the variety of disabled users should be made self-helpers within a shared physical design forced meaning to be relativized, i.e., to be taken with reference to the individual user. The meaning of the physical design should be understood in terms of affordances, i.e., what it allows the individual user to do. Since individual users need to do different things to gain access, e.g., depending on the nature of their disability, the physical structures need to appear resourceful (i.e., meaningful) in a variety of manners. Following Gibson's (1986) suggestion, it seems appropriate to consider the building in terms of ecological physics (not physical physics) and to understand architects as the designers of affordances.

It is important to remember that this view of what architects do is not only relevant in the present case. It is what architects also do when disabled users are not the focus of attention. It is close to what Ewenstein and Whyte (2007:689) consider the competency of architects defined as *"feelings and embodied experiences that emerge through knowledge use."* Such feelings and embodied experiences are mobilized in the design process when the dwelling informing the imagined building is simulated, i.e., lived and made meaningful in the imagination. We simulate, mentally and in communication, the ways in which buildings shape us, how, e.g., we engage in informal interaction around the water cooler (Fayard & Weeks, 2007). Being competent at designing family homes means knowing about the lives that modern families want to live, and to be able to simulate how a particular design will afford such living. This mental simulation becomes visible on two occasions: When architects deliberate with themselves, with each other, and with the situation during the design process towards "closure" (Gieryn, 2002; Schön, 1983); and when the final, "closed" design is decoded, marketed, and justified to others – often also by others, e.g., by jury members or reviewers. The projected building is enacted in the form of a simulated lived experience on behalf of some designated design constituency.

It was perhaps the discovery of the narrow-mindedness of such mental simulations that excited the professional participants in the competition's experiential training course. When confronted with the inaccessibility of architecturally praised buildings, the window into the lived experiences of disabled users motivated the teams to develop new competencies and new ways of simulating action afforded by design. The process also showed them how difficult it is to simulate richly the lived experience of others, at least initially. It seemed that whenever the architects tried to argue the affordances of some particular design

solution, the user groups deconstructed its “logic” and devaluated its worth and attractiveness by narrating alternative simulations. The steep learning curve referred to by the participants in the competition was merely descriptive of the discovering of problems and dilemmas, while building competency in finding appropriate affordances proved exceedingly slow and frustrating, which is the norm.

It appears that “giving visual and material form to ideas, identities, and imaginations” represents an *ex post facto* rationalization in the same way that Churchill’s dictum does. It is equally true that these visual and material forms give form to ideas, identities, and imaginations. However, it would be even more true to consider the visual and material forms as inseparable from ideas, identities, and imaginations. This follows from the perspective of an ecological physics (Gibson, 1986) in which meaning is already inscribed – a meaning drawn from the active pursuit of some current task (Ingold, 2012).

The built environment creates an ecological structure that affords various users to conduct their business. Affordances are relative to the users but exist, according to Gibson, independently of the recognition of them by any user. By analogy, the various design proposals represent affordances for mentally simulating dwelling in the symbolically represented built environment. Again, such affordances are relative to the users and the different parameters they give the mental simulation. Again, also, they exist independently of the recognition of them. It is easy to illustrate the logic of this perspective on the design process and to recognize the competence as being a descriptor of a rich recognition of affordances. Take as an example the drive-through elevator. The particular design became an opportunity for the architects to simulate dwelling by accounting for the affordances to the wheelchair users. It could be narrated as a democratic, Pareto-optimal solution in the sense that it improved the resourcefulness of the wheelchair users without reducing the value for anybody else. We know how much experimentation and learning preceded the participating architects’ ability to simulate and narrate this occasion, this specific detail of the design. We also know that by pointing out and narrating the mental simulation, everybody was able to appreciate this particular meaning of the design. The problem was not understanding the point but seeing it – seeing it as an occasion for simulating uses, and recognizing its usefulness. “To think better is to see better, not to calculate better” says Weick (2002), continuing:



Learning and thinking involve seeing through pattern matching, seeing situations as examples of prototypes, observation of the outcome of mental simulation, developing and maintaining situation awareness, seeing things that other miss, assessing situations for their degree of familiarity, sensing the limitations of frameworks and redoing the frameworks (2002: S8).

We may come to consider, in this particular context, the ability to dialogue with the situation to hinge upon the ability to see the significance of various design elements, their meaning, and their resourcefulness in relation to some project or activity and therefore easily translatable into affordance. When architects recognize the affordance for simulating a dwelling, they can easily narrate, i.e., explain and justify, the design to themselves and to others. Nothing suggests that such narrations should not be immediately understandable, which does not imply, however, that the narration is believed and accepted as valid or true. Nobody will discard the plausibility of the narration that water coolers and open offices stimulate networking and knowledge sharing, but many would doubt that such effects are always the result and that other effects might not be more important. “Affordance breaks with causality in acknowledging the agency of actors,” maintain Fayard and Weeks (2007: 627). For every specific simulation of some dwellers, there is always the possibility for focusing on many other dwellers, which would lead to more or less competing simulations – until certain forms of simulation become institutionalized and therefore beyond competition. When such institutionalization has occurred, the need to narrate the design for others (communicate about the design) subsides. Every competent architect will be able immediately and intuitively to see the significance and be able to simulate the dwelling on behalf of some designated user group. Then, the designing architect may communicate through the design. The designs become self-explanatory.

Let me now reflect on the evaluative setting constituted by architectural competitions. Such competitions are also highly institutionalized, meaning that there are strong normative pressures to ensure fairness, i.e., equal conditions and just outcomes. In most competitions, also partly in this case, such concerns have led to a design that prevents any communication between the contestants and the jury other than in the form of anonymized design entries.<sup>8</sup> It is considered a virtue of the competition if the design entries are left to speak for

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8 Only once have I observed professional jury members taking part in the dialogue with the competing teams during a competition; see Kreiner (2012, 2011).

themselves, to be self-evident and self-explanatory. As long as competitions are conventional, there is a fair chance that the jury members will be able to decode the designs in terms of affordances for simulating and narrating dwelling. It may not necessarily be exactly the same simulation as the designers intended and envisioned – after all, most simulations require some form of creativity on the part of the simulator. It is easily conceivable, however, that the jury members will notice and exploit the same cues as the ones the designers would have picked for their narration.

As soon as we leave the conventional solution space, self-explanatory and self-evident designs no longer exist. This became evident when the winning design met the architects on the competition jury and communicated nothing. The jury members did not recognize the accessibility cues because they were hidden in the design. Therefore, they also did not see any affordance for simulating and narrating new ways of dwelling in the office building design. The designers could not educate them to notice the real affordances because no interaction was allowed. In this case, the user representatives, some of whom were disabled users, and some of whom had interacted with the teams during the competition, ensured the fairness of the result of the competition. They could take on the task of narrating the designs in accessibility terms and convince the professional members of the true value of each design.

There are many implicit, hidden cues that would afford a rich simulation and narration of a democratic and equal dwelling in the world's most accessible office building. As mentioned, however, these cues remain implicit and hidden to the world of architecture for two important reasons. First of all, because of their radical deviation from convention these cues will be neglected by oversight. If they should travel, a translator would have to travel along. Otherwise, when left to itself, the design would risk communicating a paradoxical and wrong message to the uninitiated world of architecture – a message of little concern for accessibility. Second, even if the principles of equality and universality should succeed to travel as ideas, the case also showed that the process of acquiring the competencies to dialogue with a radically new situation is slow and painful. There are heavy costs for the architects in terms of time and effort involved in acquiring the necessary competency. Most likely, such costs will be considered a luxury and made to weight heavier than the costs of adding a few devices for affording access to disabled users – costs that are, by the way, carried by other parties than the architects.

I come to conclude that fundamental innovation, like the one studied here, has difficult conditions in the evaluative context of architectural competitions. This follows from the fact that innovation, to be acknowledged and used to set an example for practice in the future, will have to be recognized by the jury and the rest of the world of architecture. To see the drive-through elevator as an affordance for wheelchair users requires an informed way of thinking and will, therefore, most likely pass as irrelevant and trivial. In an evaluative context where innovation is in the eye of the beholder, ingenious designs may likely lose out to conventional, more easily detectable and decodable designs. The aesthetic knowledge that sustains current practice will probably neither easily nor willingly afford fundamental changes that challenge the competence of the professionals. This explains why the world's most accessible office building speaks to them in mundane and unconvincing terms. Nothing could travel because nothing was self-explanatory – nothing new would transpire in simulated dwellings and mental experiments.

## CONCLUSION

In one respect, the rationale of the architectural competition proved tenable. The character of the built environment determines whether a person with some kind of disability is also a handicapped user needing special assistance to be socially included. Consequently, a proper design of an office building may ensure that all users, including the disabled ones, are self-helpers. An intuitive layout, signposts engaging several senses, a flow of traffic that minimizes crossings and turns, and physical structures that in themselves guide users in the right direction, such were the “solutions” (or rather, design strategies) that made the built environment resourceful, functional, and inviting. It allowed most users to be self-helpers, and the principles of equality and universal design proved their worth. Due to an ingeniously designed competition, the teams were encouraged to experiment with and explore alternative theories of what buildings can do more to prevent all users from becoming handicapped by design in their interaction with the building and its other users.

In another respect, the rationale of the architect competition proved wrong. Design solutions that would make all users self-helpers without adding costs to the client were presumed to be able to travel freely and thus change the practice of architects. Unfortunately, the success of creating the, undoubtedly, one of the most accessible office buildings in the world did not translate into successfully

changing practice. Somehow, the principles of equality and universal design were unable to travel – not even to the jury of the competition. One reason can be found in the fact that the solutions were intentionally unobtrusive and, consequently, hard to copy to other design processes. Relative to the ease of the task of just adding special remedies for the disabled, the task of making these remedies unobtrusive may be argued to be an intellectually and practically demanding task. Architects would not merely have to find highly context-specific ways of hiding the solutions; they would also have to make them symbolically visible and appreciated in direct communication. The difficulties of doing so was well illustrated in the case, since the architects had no direct communication with the jury, and therefore little incentive to select solutions that were not self-explanatory. The fact that the walls served as a guidance function, in addition to all the other functions walls normally serve, was a quality that was invisible, except to a few initiated architects with the acquired insight into the intricacies of accessibility. Because the solutions were unobtrusive, special insights and training would be required to spot them and, not least, to copy or translate them into future projects. Nothing in the circumstances of ordinary architectural work would seem to require or inspire them to acquire the appropriate insight in relation to accessibility. As illustrated, the biased judgments of the jury (biased by convention) will likely give architects the incentive to look to more ordinary solutions and strategies. They could safely ignore these ephemeral concerns and continue practicing based on conventional theories about what buildings do and can do. Had the competition produced more tangible, smart, efficient, and elegant remedies, these might more easily have been exported to other projects near and far, making the use of new devices obligatory, appropriate, or fashionable. Such additional costs, such conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1902), might even reflect positively on the architect and/or building, earning them status and identity. Thus, the design strategy of making solutions free and hidden, as an integral part of the structure, proved to be self-defeating in relation to the aim of revolutionizing the architectural practice.

Let me conclude by reflecting on one of the opening questions: Does the evaluative context of an architectural competition change what architects do? Given the discussion above, the answer seems to be both Yes and No. It is easy to see that, in many respects, architects do what architects do, irrespective of the particular context. They design buildings that they can convincingly argue will change us in the desired way. That entails work in terms of giving form to, e.g.,

ideas and identities, and in terms of simulating and narrating the dwelling that sustains such ideas and identities. Still, the context of an architectural competition has impact in multiple ways. First, competition for primacy (March, 1999) puts a special premium on developing “one’s own (authorial, authoritative) voice” (Kornberger et al., 2011: 151) at the expense of demonstrating belonging to the architectural convention and culture. The fact that, in most competitions, architectural teams work in parallel on a creative and ambiguous design task with very restricted communication and insight into what others are doing and thinking results in substantive differences and authorship in the sample of design entries that the competition jury will have to evaluate. This is the effect of the conventional competition design irrespective of the strategies that each architectural team is pursuing. The required anonymity, however, restricts the architects’ use of discursive means to ensure the intended interpretation and consumption of their entries. Thus, the jury will be left to evaluate entries on the basis of their own knowledge and experience and will, unintendedly, come to counterbalance the primacy of difference in the first phase with an emphasis on sameness in the evaluation phase. This was exemplified in the case when the jury did not recognize the implicit and hidden affordances in the design for accessibility. An evaluation based on convention reduced the innovative design to mediocrity until the user representatives intervened with more refined mental simulations.

The same mechanism of reducing the potential for innovation was visible also during the design work. All teams reduced the accessibility solutions to something conventional, like ramps, and were only challenged to become more innovative after receiving criticism from the user groups. The innovativeness of the competition was a strict result of the unusual organization of the competition – with a large amount of communication and interaction throughout the process. This unique approach, however, was a key factor in making this case unique in terms of focus, the parameters for mental simulations, and in terms of knowledge use and development. These conditions were not present in the world of architecture in general. The innovation and creativity that was won painfully in the competition was easily lost in the field of architecture. The competition for status, identity, and authority is much different in the field at large than it is within the temporally and spatially constrained architectural competition – whether designed conventionally or uniquely.

The fact that the world’s most accessible office building did not change architectural conventions should not be taken as evidence of the futility of the

effort. It might have changed such conventions under slightly different conditions. Had some world famous architect been involved, one with more discursive resources to change the reception of the design innovations, the mundane competition might have constituted the watershed it was imagined to be. It is still possible that sometime in the future, if and when the envisioned revolution to architectural practices has occurred, the historical significance of this competition will be rewritten. However, until that happens, it is still easily understandable that in the field of architecture, where ideas, identities, and imaginations are believed to be given visual and material form, the visual and material hiding of even strong ideas and identities will be construed as an absence of either.

### AFTERTHOUGHTS

The office building of the Disabled People's Organization has recently become referenced in academic and regulatory circles as an important exemplar of universal design, as also suggested by the recent post-occupancy evaluation by Ryhl & Frandsen (2016).<sup>9</sup> While architectural practices may not have changed accordingly, this observation invites, nonetheless, a final reflection. One finding of this essay was the claim that recognizing the qualities of universal and equalitarian design relies on insight, the point being that the resourcefulness of the design to the diverse groups of self-help users will not be recognized until they are intellectually understood. The ignorance of the professional members of the jury made them look in vain for solutions to the accessibility problem. To see more, and to see better, they needed better ways of thinking.

The competition and the design of the building did not, and could not have built the insights necessarily for impacting architectural practices around the world. Such changes are achieved in more oblique ways. According to Kay (2010), obliquity implies taking a step backwards in order to move ahead. The reflective efforts of the current literature on universal design may represent such a step backwards that will, eventually, enable a more nuanced assessment of the implicit qualities of building design. Only then will the intellectual and practical lessons of the competition and the building project become teachable, making it possible that the original vision of changing the practice of architecture may be achieved retrospectively.

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<sup>9</sup> Jonas E. Andersson pointed out this fact to me.

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I thank Jonas E. Andersson for drawing my attention to the extensive literature on universal design.

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## Abstract

This paper will be examining the unique situation wherein the same town organizes a major invited competition twice on an interval of c. 55 years for the same public function; in the 2<sup>nd</sup> case on the original presupposition that elements of the previous, listed and beloved, building (finished in 1962) should be reintegrated in the new design—for a new site. The reason for this extraordinary undertaking is the decision to move the entire town of Kiruna, founded only a century ago, away from its original location, an area now honeycombed by iron ore mining. The client in the 2<sup>nd</sup> competition is the perpetrator, the mining company LKAB, in collaboration with the town municipality.

Given this set of unusual preconditions, what has been of interest to explore is the handling of the precompetition stage by the municipality and the client, their organization and expectations of the competition, and the steering factors in decisions taken as to the requirements of the competition program.

Further, in the case of Kiruna, an illuminating perspective has been attempted here in a comparison with the steering conditions and expectations of the 1956-58 competition process for the original town hall, as far as these can be determined from archive material. In this way, the actual comparative analysis of the two stages in time, or 2013 versus 1958, throws light on the changing historical conditions of competitions in Sweden. In this process, references have also been made to town hall competitions of analytic relevance in the 1950s. A final illuminating point is the fact that the first Kiruna town hall competition yielded two 1<sup>st</sup> prizes, of diametrically opposed modes of form and design, responding to strongly diverging readings of preconditions and expectations on the part of the client.

**Key words:** Architectural competition prequalification, architectural competition process, city hall, city transplantation, comparative perspective, municipal stakeholder.

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# Reuse of dreams/ Changes of foci

*Expectations and steering conditions in two city hall competition processes in Kiruna, Sweden, in 2011-13 versus in 1956-58*

GERD BLOXHAM ZETTERSTEN

## Introduction

This investigation of an empirical material constitutes a delimited two-part case study, where the background historical part of 1956-58 is based mainly on available archive material, while for the contemporary, main part in 2011-13 documentation is constructed through a series of seven interviews of central actors in the competition process. The findings of the pre-competition phase described in this study will be discussed in relation to selected pre-qualification studies relevant here (in particular, Rönn 2012); meanwhile the historical competition process will be found to be reflected in concurrent norms and practice.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the exceptional conditions and aspects of the present-day Kiruna competition process will serve to highlight one form of imaginary—ideal?—newer competition process that may be reflected in democratic values and openness, dialogue and the contribution of expertise from different types of specialization. This is seen to apply also when aspects may be of a counterfactual character. In Kiruna, the municipality lacking experience in projects of public architecture, the need for input and know-how is particularly great. In this conjunction it will appear that a pre-competition investigative, open dialogue, alongside its opposite, a deferment via agents that may be likened to competition anonymity, is seen to be continued in the subsequent project design phase; but this is mainly a result of specific conditions in the contemporary Kiruna set-up of a double-headed stakeholder body.

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1 The research for this case study, which in part reflects an on-going urban development, was completed in December 2013. Now, more than two years later, a few facts referring to the implementation of the competition projects of 2011-13 have been updated. This may slightly affect the totality of the picture.

As to justification of the method employed reference is here made to an article of central importance in its entirety, "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research" (Flyvbjerg 2006); in agreement with Flyvbjerg's argumentation in favour of validity in case study research, I claim here that a well-researched case that does not support normative theory can instead serve as an exception that proves a more general rule indicative of period and a particular phase in an evolution. For the methodology of interviews as research, I refer to Steinar Kvale's massive studies of the qualitative research interview (Kvale 1997 and Kvale-Brinkmann 2009); my chosen approach has been a stratagem of general questions formulated to be used in each of the five major interviews,<sup>2</sup> combined with specific variations applying to the role in the process of the particular interviewee.

The more specific intention, then, of this paper is to create a perspective on the aim and expectations of the organizer/client in response to the steering conditions in the given situation of the two city hall competition processes, respectively, for the same municipality, half a century apart. The interchange and collaboration between implicated agents, both the selected representatives and consultants for the stakeholder bodies, and the competing architects, is here seen as part of the steering conditions. In the recent, 2<sup>nd</sup> competition process the governing exceptional precondition has been an absolute time limit for the competition with project design and building process, a fact influencing every aspect of that process.

A concluding comparative analysis of the two competition processes is strongly affected by the fact that it turns out to be hard to generalize the two processes into comparability. This is due both to the divergence of source material and documentation, respectively, but obviously even more so to a divergence in the specific given situation in 1956-58 versus 2011-13. Therefore, I have chosen to introduce the account of the two processes in combination with comments applying to each process, with an outline of actual and postulated givens; these may serve as a guide to different points of issue, or aspects of a problematic illustrated in this case study. Following this, a few concluding remarks concerning the competition scenarios will be made. However, some general observations stand out.

Considering the actual set-up determining the character of the two competitions Magnus Rönn has emphasized two present-day aspects of the difference in the conditions then and now: internationalization, and in particular, fragmentation of the organization running the competition.<sup>3</sup> Further to this

<sup>2</sup> The major interviews are marked with an asterisk in the list; cf. References.

<sup>3</sup> Rönn, M, personal communication, 19.II.2013.

claim I argue that the particular collective ethos of the specific—local/national—Kiruna process is one healing factor; furthermore, that that collective ethos can be traced back to the first competition process for a city hall in the 1950s.

## Outline of actual and postulated givens for a case analysis

### SPECIFIC GIVEN SITUATION

Main potential problem factors:

**In 1956-58:** No problem factors, really. A straightforward project in a vigorously expanding town municipality for a proper city hall to replace inadequate quarters for the growing city council and administration. Kiruna had been given city rights and status from 1948, roughly half a century after its establishment as a pioneering mining settlement. After two different sketch projects for an administration building (1946, 1954) during a 15-year period of attempts at solving the task by the consultant town architect, an invited competition is decided on by the town council in 1956, now for a city hall. The invitation to five architects is announced in early November 1957; competition deadline is 15 April 1958 and the selection of a winning proposal to be implemented is announced on 4 June. Project design and implementation were started on directly after, as the brief arctic summer period must be used. Post-competition collaboration with the architect was apparently excellent, with the Stockholm architect present in Kiruna much of the time and deeply engaged.<sup>4</sup>

**In 2011-13:** The specific background situation is described in a separate section to follow below.

#### I Vulnerability of the new city hall project:

- (a) municipal organizer and industrial client: a double-headed stakeholder body
- (b) the absolute urgency of the time factor
- (c) general exposure: arctic climate considerations for the projected building; the brevity of the yearly construction period; the stakeholder body's lack of experience in using architect services; a habitual lack of respect in the organization overall for architectural values in preference to practical issues of operations and sustainability

<sup>4</sup> Brunnström (1993), p 131f, as well as personal communication in Oct. 2013. Cf. protocols kept by the city hall building committee 1958-62.

- (d) a strived-for collective process and open dialogue between a great many interested parties potentially turning into non-productive deliberations and unhappy decisions.

## II A complex start-up for the city hall competition:

- (a) a two-part package of competitions, where the city hall competition is made to follow directly upon a competition for a new central city plan; it is only in the resolution of the first competition task that the actual site for the projected city hall gets to be known, and this date was by necessity made to lie in the start-up part of the second, city hall, competition.
- (b) the fact of the two inter-related competitions means that entrants in the prequalification could not yet know the precise site of the projected city hall, only the general area of the projected central city plan.

## STAKEHOLDER STRATEGY AND EXPECTATIONS

### In 1956-58:

An initially straightforward stakeholder strategy by the client *alias* competition organizer Kiruna town municipality. An efficient invited competition followed by implementation was clearly the aim, and the result was a successful winning proposal.

However, ambition was evidently high, when apart from two north-Sweden architects and the resident LKAB architect Hakon Ahlberg, of national renown, who were invited for the competition, the recognized Swedish modernist architect Arhur von Schmalensee was proposed by the SAA while Finland's already world famous Alvar Aalto was added to the list by the organizer. However, proposals by the first three architects were soon sorted away. But the last two invitations caused a stalemate in the jury deliberations when the competition appeared necessarily to yield two 1<sup>st</sup> prizes of diametrically opposed modes of form and conception, while a final decision had to be reached as to which proposal was to be implemented.<sup>5</sup> When Schmalensee's project was chosen as a result of a congenial analysis by the jury, the city council accepted it and never questioned the decision, as it offered the particular solution needed in Kiruna in practical and social terms.<sup>6</sup>

5 For the Aalto proposal in the Swedish context, see Rudberg (2005).

6 Brunnström (1993), p 129ff. The process of the jury evaluation was investigated through Brunnström's interview contact in 1983 with one of the jury's architect members, Jan Thurfjell. Cf. also the brief comparative analysis in architectonic and topographical terms in the section below, "The 1950s process: comments".

It is only in the matter of functions analysis and the planning of the use of space in the projected building for administrative units and city services that expectations could not keep pace with reality, neither before, nor after the competition, leading to successive revisions of space planning.

#### **In 2011-13:**

In February 2010 the town municipality had drawn up a municipal target scheme for the new city hall (“Kommunens målbild”) of requirements and values which was to serve as the central objective for the architectural competition, forming the basis of the competition task set up in the brief. A target scheme may be equaled to a strategic plan on the part of the organizer of a competition.<sup>7</sup>

In 2011 a civil law agreement was signed between the town municipality and the mining company LKAB, to the effect that LKAB undertakes to replace the present city hall from 1962, as regards (a) present-day functions of the city hall, (b) both architectural quality and the quality of ambiance in the central hall expressed in the long used concept “Kiruna’s drawing-room”, and (c) floor area—neither more, nor less.

The town municipality, however, ends up only as organizer of the competition, while LKAB takes over as the client in both the design project phase, conducting the tendering, and in the construction phase. After finished construction the town municipality will take over the building, operating it. This division implies a three-phase shift of responsibility for the project.

#### **STATUS FOR PROCESS INTERCHANGE AND COLLABORATION:**

In 1956-58, between municipal city hall building committee – competition jury – architect

In 2011-13, between (a) municipal competition organizer – industrial client; (b) between a multiple competence committee alias competition jury – organizer/client – architects; (c) municipal work groups – the competition jury; (d) the public and politicians – the competition jury.

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7 Cf. Rönn (2012) b, p. 7f.

**COMPETITION PROCESS** with regard to diverging interests and competition form:

In 1956-58: no built-in divergence in a committee process driven by a marked ethos and responsible handling resulting in an invited competition for five architects. Divergence of outlook emerged in the competition evaluation phase, with two first prizes being awarded and with one of them being recommended after intensive deliberation but congenial analysis.

In 2011-13: what might be termed a *multiple competence committee process*, in a complex situation, with a built-in divergence between different—municipal, industrial and architectural—skills and interests. These were represented within the selection committee which was also identical with the jury, active throughout the competition process. The process was prepared and directed by a consultant competition process leader and was supported by municipal work groups, staff as well as politicians, resulting in an international open prequalification and selection procedure comprising 56 entries, followed by an invited competition for five architectural teams. The organizer's intention, however, has been one for maximum openness, dialogue and multiplicity—also with reference to the public—to characterize this competition process. Equally, a marked collective ethos drives the process in the exceptional predicament of Kiruna.

### **Background for the 2011-2013 competition process<sup>8</sup>**

It is in the Swedish Lapland mining town of Kiruna, situated well above the Arctic Circle, that one finds the unique situation wherein the same town organizes a major invited competition for a city hall twice on an interval of c. 55 years, to replace the first, well-functioning and beloved building by a new one. The present extraordinary undertaking is part of a far greater venture—"the city transformation" as it is called in organizational terms—based on the decision to move the entire central area of the town of Kiruna, established only just over a century ago, away from its original location. Below it, massive iron ore mining, having moved below ground level in the 1960s, has resulted in a honey comb volume at present extending 1365m at an angle of 60 degrees beneath Kiruna, and already causing ground deformations while threatening collapse of the town site within the near future. This fact was finally established and presented by LKAB as its first prognosis to the municipality in 2004, and work on a municipal action

8 The account of the background is based on diverse published information material from the town municipality, Kiruna Kommun, and also on Brunnström (1993) as well as Kyander (2004).



plan was started immediately. That prognosis has since been revised as to even greater haste. The urgency of the undertaking is indisputable, and has led to the adoption of a municipal time plan divided into three phases over the next twenty years, where the limit of the first phase has originally been set as 2018. It is within this phase that the new city hall must be built, finished and taken over by the entire administration etc of the town municipality; the present plan [as of February 2016] for the removal is August/September 2018. The new city hall is expected to be one of the first large buildings in the new town centre, a so-called profile building and in its very essence heavily symbolic.

The client, then, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> city hall competition is the perpetrator, the national mining company LKAB, in a “collaboration project” with the town municipality which also comprises the city transformation. In view of the booming industrial market in south-east Asia and with China’s vast needs for iron the company has previously planned on further extraction and expansion. With the great fall of iron ore prices in 2015 the picture must now be described as uncertain. Permission for expansion must be given by the Swedish state which is of course another stakeholder in the extended city venture. Since LKAB provides the living for by far the largest part of the population of Kiruna and the surrounding region, the fact is that the town is subservient to the company and therefore must be “moved” or rather recreated as new in order to continue to serve the company. Therefore a municipal Vision 2099 was formed in 2004, and the decision was taken in 2011 to run a competition for the new central city plan prior to, but in direct connection with the city hall competition. Both competitions in this package were structured in the same way as an international prequalification followed by an invited competition carried out according to the same procedures;<sup>9</sup> but in the central city plan competition ten teams were invited as opposed to five in the following, city hall competition.

The competitions package was necessary as the designation of the new city hall site was obviously dependent on the outcome of the central city plan competition. At first, in January 2007, the area designated for the new central town lay to the northwest of the present town; however several objections cropped up, including further finds of iron ore. In late 2009 it was suggested that the adopted overview plan [Översiktsplan] was revised, and a new plan outlining an extension of the present town site to the east was adopted by the City Council in September 2011.

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9 LF 23.10.2013.

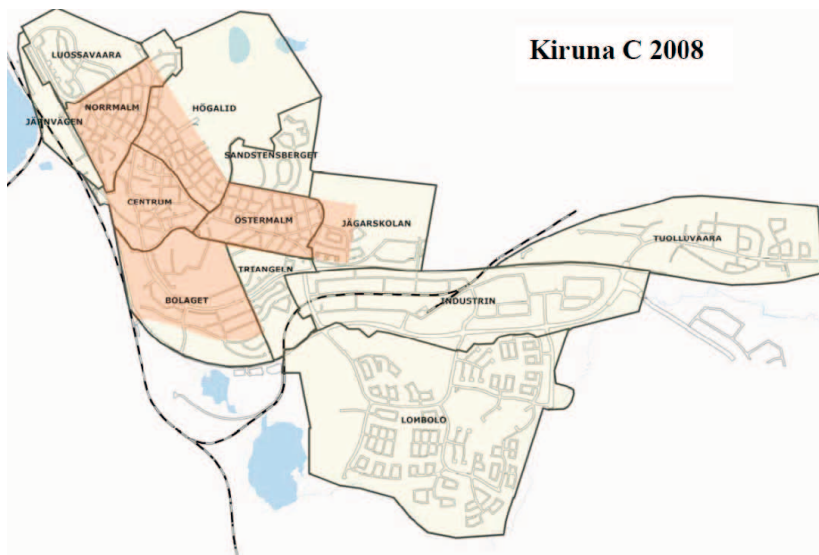


Fig. 1. Kiruna's original town plan from c. 1900 is marked as pink. A final decision in 2011 placed the town centre to the east, in the flatland just north of an industrial zone. Source: Kiruna Municipality.

However, the new site was placed in a flat part of the landscape, a fact that gave rise to the idea of conducting a competition for the central city plan.<sup>10</sup> It was at that same time, too, that the decision to run the two competitions as a package was taken, and that they should be carried through in collaboration with the Swedish Association of Architects, SAA, which also meant in accordance with the Swedish Public Procurement Act, LOU, that includes in it the EU regulation (Directive 2004/18/EC). The first competition was announced in June 2012.

The winning central city plan project, announced on 4 March 2013, “Kiruna 4-ever”,<sup>11</sup> proposed a grid plan in an extended strip of only three city blocks on either side of the main street and therefore in close contact with the surrounding landscape. It was important, according to the jury, that the plan, rather than being spread out, was clearly delimited, yet with direct access to nature. Along this strip of dense townscape were distributed important city functions, and in

<sup>10</sup> LF 23.10.2013.

<sup>11</sup> The winning team is White Architects with Ghilardi + Hellsten Architects and Spacescape; also Vectura Consulting (traffic) and Evidens BLW (economic sustainability).



Fig. 2. Kiruna competition project, 2013, with grid plan as an extended strip. The Kirunavaara mining mountain is to the far, lower left, with the deformations area in the centre. Source: White Architects. © Lantmäteriet. Medgivande R50388054 160001.

the middle of it, near the crossing of three traffic arteries, a representative city space—a triangular “square”—was also the site of the proposed new city hall, opposite a new rail station.

What is notable in this use of a compact and traditional planning solution, is the reference to the original model city plan from 1900 by a well-known Swedish city planner Per-Olov Hallman; this was a variant of a grid plan—uncommon in Sweden—which however was draped across a slope—opposite to the mining mountain Kirunavaara—and following the variations in the terrain. And it is at a high point along the edge of this plan that the first city hall—planned out in the 1950s and finished in 1962—was placed as a solitaire, facing the mining company office on the opposite side of the valley. That symbolic balance is now in the process of being disrupted.

Following the completion of the urban plan competition, the winning team White Architects with Ghilardi + Hellsten Architects reworked the central core lay-out, changing it from a strip model to a star-like form, with tips or fingers extending into the landscape; similarly the traffic arteries were redrawn, not to interfere with the representative open city space, now given a polygonal form into which the circular city hall of the winning proposal is being inserted.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cf. White Architects-Ghilardi + Hellsten Architects, *Utecklingsplan*, March 2014.



Fig. 3. The revised central plan for Kiruna. Source: White Architects, Utvecklingsplan 2014-03-17.

Finally it is relevant to note that at one remove from the main actors in the present city hall project is the Länsstyrelse [county government] for Norrbotten, involved because the first city hall had been made a listed building in 2001; the county government had stipulated that the listing could not be cancelled, but instead it was attempted to direct a selection of elements to be “secured” as public “value bearers” and reused, or reintegrated in a different function, in the new design—for a new site—without dictating the manner of reuse. However, that presupposition has proved to be unrealistic and impossible to realize; as will appear, the town municipality instead has an ambition for reuse of a different nature, of immaterial or immanent values. The single most important “reuse” concerns the quality of ambiance in the central hall of the 1962 building, expressed in the time-honoured and popular concept “Kiruna’s drawing-room”, referring to a large, open and welcoming indoor space for many different civic activities. That concept has indeed been readapted in the winning entry, while a couple of significant elements of the actual building have also been included in the new design. At the end of the research project [December 2013] a legal battle through two courts to cancel the listing of the first city hall—which must by

necessity be torn down anyway—had not been concluded. As the building could not be torn down, according to the law, without the listing having been lifted, this was feared to affect the mode of realization of the winning proposal in that the projected reuse of the city hall tower structure would have been impossible.<sup>13</sup> That legal process might well have been described as shadow fencing, in the face of an irreversible real-life development.<sup>14</sup>

## Account, further comments

### (A) THE COMPETITION PROCESS, 1956-58<sup>15</sup>

In a city council meeting on 6 April 1956 a municipal city hall investigative committee (*utredningskommitté*) is re-appointed and enlarged with four new members to the total of seven. This is done on a proposition in the matter prepared by the borough finance department (*drätselkammaren*), where the executive chairman is now also made a deputy chair member of the investigative committee. In October 1957, when the committee takes the definitive decisions regarding the organization of the competition, he will also be appointed to the five-member competition jury as a layman representative of Kiruna town municipality, together with an engineer from the municipal real-estate unit. Two other jury members were architects, and one a commissioner from the national Building Works department.<sup>16</sup> As is evident, the number of people involved in the process is quite limited.

**Precompetition process:**<sup>17</sup> The question of an administration building for the town is discussed off and on for decades. At the end of May 1954 the borough

13 ÖM, 22.10.2013. However, the listing was subsequently indeed lifted, meaning that the winning city hall design with the free-standing tower from the previous city hall can go ahead.

14 LL, 25.10.2013 stated that ironically it was the municipality itself that had initiated the listing—which is now a hindrance in the process from the point of view of the municipality—10 years earlier but that it had led to no response whatever until in 2000.

15 In addition to sources consulted and referred to below, see also Brunnström (1993); for that article a thorough investigation of material in the municipal archive and various other sources was made by Brunnström.

16 The jury members were—in the order introduced in the text above: Ragnar Malmström and Åke Forsberg as laymen, Sven Ivar Lind, who was a prominent prof. architect at the Royal Academy, architect Jan Thurfjell of Luleå (interviewed by Brunnström in 1983, cf. note 5) and Ulf H Snellman, commissioner. For example, cf. a written account of the competition process up to date prepared by the investigative committee for the city council meeting where the competition results are approved, 9 June 1958 ("Ang. Stadshus i Kiruna. Till pkt 11 å stf:s föredrag lista 9.6.58").

17 Cf. protocols kept by the investigative committee/the city hall building committee 1956-59, as well as protocols from city council meetings (*Stadsfullmäktigeprotokoll*): 1954-§189, 1956-§ 116.

finance department had discussed an architectural competition with motions for and against, but a rejection of this motion was supported by the city council chairman—who was identical with the investigative committee chair—referring to previous decisions regarding ongoing design work; this was done in spite of voices in the city council requesting both an architectural competition and an enlargement of the investigative committee. This was in reality a small group/committee of three people long given the task of examining conditions for a possible administration building. Meanwhile requirements for office and meeting space increased fast, and therefore it was the number of square meters required that was apparently a main stumbling block already early on. After the 1956 decision, the administrative units were asked to inform the committee of their needs which were discussed “several times”. There had also been discussions regarding the site, but in late October 1956 this is decided on by the city council to be that of the town office itself (*stadskontoret*). Later on, after the selection of the competition project to be implemented, it was discussed whether the construction work would permit a tearing down of that office in stages; at the same time requirements for space needed were revised together with architect Schmalensee well into the project design process. This means that expectations could not keep pace with reality. Generally, however, it becomes clear that once the public decision for an architectural competition has been taken, collaboration between all parties involved proceeds smoothly.

As already mentioned, the consultant town architect (1936-64) Bertil Höök, with his own office in the coastal town of Luleå in north-Sweden, had worked on the task of a modern city hall for Kiruna during a 15-year period. At the April 1956 city council meeting he is discharged from that task and compensated with a sum taken from the total budget of the competition to be held. On the other hand he is chosen as one of the five invited architects and submits three different competition proposals.<sup>18</sup>

Of particular note in the **competition process**<sup>19</sup> is the need on the part of the organizer for further information and know-how on the task of planning a city hall. As a not uncommon solution in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Nordic countries,<sup>20</sup> study trips to some newly built city halls in Sweden were suggested

18 Brunnström 1993; City Council protocol: 1956-§ 116.

19 Cf. in particular Investigative /City hall building committee protocols: 1956-10-12, 1957-4-5, 1957-5-6, 1957-9-10, 1957-10-21, 1958-6-3, 1958-6-4.

20 Bloxham Zettersten (2010).

and carried out in an informal way in June 1957 by the committee—which is now usually described in the protocols as “the city hall building committee”. Towns visited were Halmstad, Borås, Västerås, and Gustavsberg—all in the more densely urbanized south of Sweden—as well as the more “local”, northern coastal town of Luleå, visited in October 1957. What one is particularly seeking information on is the planning and functions aspect. As a consequence, space requirements are yet again revised and the sizes and distribution of meeting rooms and offices on the different floors for the various administrative units and city services can be resolved. This is done in anticipation of the writing of the brief, a task which is given in October 1957 to one of the architect jury members, Jan Thurfjell.

In this same phase, in the autumn of 1957, SAA and its competition board is contacted for advice on competition form and suggestions regarding the three architect members of the jury. This advice is followed.

What is especially notable in the contemporary perspective is that consultants do not appear to have been called in until in the project design phase—and then they seem usually to have been contacted by the projecting architect himself, Schmalensee.<sup>21</sup> This is with the exception of the control of the proposed budget and the quantitative analysis of the different competition entries which is carried out by two jury members and an engineer external to the city hall building committee.<sup>22</sup>

Another point to be noted here is that the competition proposals are received by April 15, but are kept unopened until the gathering of the jury on 29 April. They are then posted in the meeting room of the Kiruna fire station, but kept there under lock and key. Competition rules and anonymity are fully respected. It is not until after the announcement and approval in the city council of the winning proposal that the public is invited in to view the competition entries.<sup>23</sup>

21 This conclusion is drawn judging from the available protocols in the municipal archive.

22 Åke Forsberg assisted by Jan Thurfjell (author of the brief) and “ingeniör Erik Roshed”. Utredningskommittén, [...] 4.6.1958, p. 2.

23 The exhibition was open for one week, 5–11 June 1958, by invitation of the city hall building committee, and announced in a local newspaper [attachment to protocol of the city hall building committee meeting 4 June 1958].



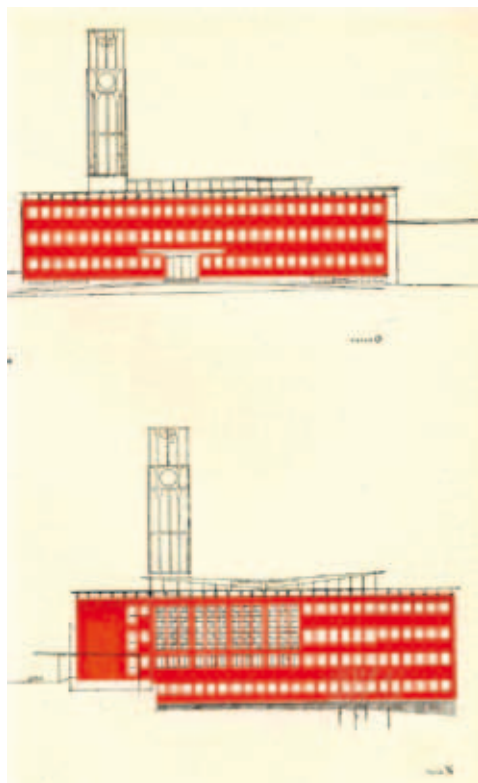
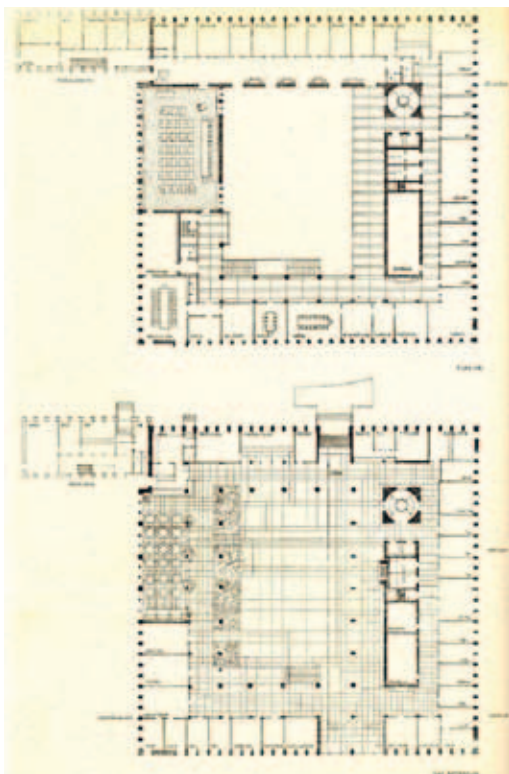


Fig. 4 and 5. Artur von Schmalensee: Competition proj. "Igloo", 1958. One of two 1st prizes; invited competition. Source: SAR:s tävlingsblad 4, 1959.

## (B) THE 1950S PROCESS: COMMENTS

As regards norms and methods-of-approach steering the competition process, these fit in well with those of the period—the 1950s. There are none of the habitual problems of ineffectual preparatory work, or an insufficient brief or poor client leadership; these phenomena as they appear in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Sweden I have previously traced and discussed (Bloxham Zettersten 2010). From the April 1956 decision onwards, things are done “right” on the part of the organizer, with the clear aim of projecting a city hall building and getting it implemented. Information is gathered, and the necessary preparatory work is carried out. A small number of people are involved in the venture from start to





finish with some of them shifting between roles, the chairmen in both the city hall building committee and the city council are competent and a driving force, collaboration is good—even praised at the end of the competition—and the process is characterized by a marked, positive ethos.

The competition brief—a central feature of the competition process—was formulated to the point and in brief and factual terms, with the accompanying documents needed.<sup>24</sup> It led to a successful proposal which was found most satisfactory by all, in all its aspects. Indeed, expectations were more than met. The project chosen for implementation was approved to be built with hardly any architectonic changes; the changes made during project design were, as already described, almost all of a functional nature and can generally be attributed to changes in space requirements and convenient access. This included a widening

<sup>24</sup> SARs tävlingsblad 4, 1959, p 143. Cf. Bloxham Zettersten (2010).

of all four sides of the building by 1,5 m.<sup>25</sup> The measure respected the preservation of a large central hall space—in a plain cubic building turned inward, away from the darkness and cold climate—to be used in the years to come for a multitude of public activities. In the fifty years of usage it has grown in significance to carry the immanent values wished for in the new city hall of the 2010s. Alvar Aalto's response to the same brief differed entirely. Together with a team of eight collaborators he produced a proposal which in its own right is generally recognized as a masterpiece in architectonic terms. In conceptual mode it was the opposite to that of Artur von Schmalensee, turning outward towards, and reflecting, the dramatic topography; here the public meeting space (a *torg*, or "square") was outdoors, but in the arctic setting this would have been inadequate.<sup>26</sup> The effective brief respecting the competition rules was a model of the period, and here proven to be clearly open to free and innovative solutions.

As regards the divided 1<sup>st</sup> prize—or rather two 1<sup>st</sup> prizes, as the prize sum was doubled—what was at issue in the Kiruna process was, as we have seen, a hard choice between operations and functions, budget and comfort versus architectonics. The outcome is to be considered in the light of the contemporary SAA competition rules which permitted only one first prize in non-ideas competitions!<sup>27</sup>

The composition of the jury according to the rules in the 1950s was expected to have a majority of professionals as against local laymen representing a position of trust who could afterwards become members of a building committee.<sup>28</sup> In Kiruna these last two had been members of the investigative committee all along—one of them being the deputy chairman—which would be only natural, particularly in this outpost town.

Finally it may be added that an increase in invited competitions had been seen from 1956, in parallel with a great increase in public building activities which were often project oriented.<sup>29</sup> Specialization had come to be regarded as a guarantee (a) for expertise in the field being grounds for choosing the invited competition, and (b) against non-professional competition proposals.<sup>30</sup>

25 The city hall building committee protocol (Stadshusbyggnadskommitténs protokoll), 1959-1-30, §21.

26 Cf. the jury's evaluation, SAR:s tävlingsblad 4, 1959, p 148ff.

27 SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 84.

28 SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 81.

29 SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 85ff;

30 SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 79. Bloxham Zettersten, G. (2010).

**(C) THE COMPETITION PROCESS, 2011-13<sup>31</sup>**

The **competition process leader** for the city hall prequalification and invited competition, a consultant from an independent firm, was called on by the municipality in preparation of this task from 2009, and engaged from the autumn of 2011, with the start of the competition project, with the effective appointment lasting a good year from mid-2012. Long before this point two other significant parties had been involved in the brainstorming and planning: (a) one experienced architect, hired as a consultant, who also became a member of the jury and who in total came to be involved in the entire city transformation and city hall project during a period of 5-6 years; and (b) the SLG (Strategiska ledningsgruppen), a strategic group of directors for different administrative units, had been considering the differing requirements for the new city hall, making a program analysis, and so they might be described as a proto-committee; their meetings had resulted in written notes/informal protocols kept by the deputy municipality leader who was also participant throughout the following process. It was the SLG who specified the commission to the process leader. Beside their own group, they also constituted six other **municipal work groups**, also described as “reference groups”, representing different municipal units and functions, staff and politicians; these groups were asked in the early phase to express their wishes and requirements as regards qualities for the new building and these results were fed into the competition brief.<sup>32</sup> Later on, for the jury assessment of the five competition proposals the SLG also wrote a statement emphasizing important points for consideration by the jury, without taking any sides concerning a particular proposal.<sup>33</sup>

The organizer's competition process leader wrote the prequalifying program invitation, upon consultation with the SAA competitions secretary, in an ideas exchange with **the LKAB process leader** for the city transformation and, in particular,

31 This account relies in particular on the interview statements by the municipality's competition process leader ÖM and the LKAB acting process leader, architect NE, while supplemented by and cross-referred to in the interviews with the LKAB process leader PL, and two jury members appointed by the municipality, consultant architect LF and municipal secretary for culture LL. The SAA competitions secretary present throughout the process has corroborated and added to this information, as has the deputy municipality leader MD and the Henning Larsen Architects partner PTJ responsible for the winning team's proposal.

32 ÖM, 22.10.2013.

33 MD, mail 2.12.2013; LF, 23.10.2013 who diverges slightly in also mentioning “preferences” on the part of the work groups.

an architect appointed by LKAB for the specific task of following the city hall project; this architect was assigned, in her role as **deputy process leader**, by LKAB to the jury, and for the post-competition project design phase she is now their process leader.

The LKAB then deputy process leader—the architect—has stated that she came to see her role in the interchange with the competition process leader during his writing of the invitation program as one of explaining the nature and detailing of demands for the projects that may be considered fair and possible in an architectural competition. This resulted in his cutting back on some demands. By taking this stand, she chose to represent architectural interests in the first place, before those of her employer, LKAB.<sup>34</sup>

Now [in December 2013]—in the post-competition project design phase—the municipality's competition process leader has switched seats, having been appointed as LKAB's consultant process leader, due to his acknowledged great competence in the areas of operations, sustainability, energy and climate which were all specified as of particular importance for the competition task.

**The jury**, alias the multiple competence committee, who were actively engaged—as has been pointed out above—throughout the process, consisted of nine people; of these, the municipality appointed six—the consultant architect engaged from the start of the entire project, three administrative leaders within the municipality, the municipal secretary for culture, and one artist—while SAA appointed two architects, and LKAB the deputy process leader/architect. In the invitation it is stated that experts “within, for example, the fields of sustainability/environment, energy, economics, geotechnique, landscape architecture, construction etc ... will be called in to assist the jury's work” (Inbjudan, p. 5).

On the part of the municipality, the steering factor for the inclusion on the jury of the secretary for culture and an artist was the specific aim of transferring to the new building, and strengthening, the positive qualities and functions characteristic of the present city hall; among these qualities were the customary exhibitions of the large municipal “art collection of a very high quality” (Inbjudan, p. 2). However, it was not until in the actual competition brief that an art museum placed inside the city hall was included as part of the competition task!

**The invitation** for an open Prequalification was announced internationally on 2 October 2012, and the last day for handing in an application/ notification of interest (Intresseanmälan) was two months later, on 3 December. Language

34 NE, 24.10.2013, referring to the competition process leader's initial “tough list of demands”.

specified for the application was Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English, while language to be used in the competition and for the project was given as Swedish only. The invitation stated the usual formal requirements (cf. Rönn 2012 b, p. 2f, 10; *Inbjudan*, p. 5f); of special note is a declaration of intent (*Programförklaring*) where the entrant was asked to explain how the team intended to work with the project in order to secure the intentions of the municipal target scheme for the new city hall, mentioned above. In other words, the project's feasibility must be demonstrated. Reference projects could be five at most, of which two must have been built and at least one of those in a cold/arctic climate, and key roles held by members of the team in those projects must be stated; client referees for the reference projects would be contacted.

56 applications were received which in the Kiruna case were read by all the members of the jury—a measure which appears to be unusual. Individual readings were followed by a group meeting for the whole jury.<sup>35</sup> The **selection process** outlined in the invitation was in three steps: (1) must requirements; (2) a ranking using points on a scale 1-5, being weighted according to a percentage system, on three counts; and (3) for the 15 entrants ranked the highest, referees were contacted on two more counts, ability to cooperate and the ability to carry through a successful project design of complex buildings of a similar character within the agreed schedule and budget; these answers also gave points. When a referee could not be reached this gave 0 points, but all reference projects did receive a referee statement from at least somebody. After individual ranking, the jury met in groups with different areas of speciality. Competence in the teams that was regarded as particularly important concerned energy in an arctic climate, architectonic and sustainable project design and experience with structures housing art.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding the requirements, a comment from the municipality's consultant architect jury member took the form of a complaint that eligibility according to merits and recognized status as successful architects was given priority by LKAB, through their company lawyers wanting a 100% guarantee that there would be no battle between the architects afterwards. Therefore they instituted "a rather tough system for the prequalification" which meant that the jury could not carry out the sorting out process the way they would have wanted.<sup>37</sup>

35 NE, 24.10.2013 and LF, 23.11.2013. Cf. Rönn 2012 b.

36 NE, 24.10.2013, in particular; LL, 24.10.2013, stating that art structures turned out to be no problem, as that was very common among the entrants.

37 LF, 23.11.2013. The LKAB company lawyers were Svartlings in Stockholm.

The brief was not handed out to the five competing teams until seven weeks after the announcement of the result of the prequalification and of their having been selected.<sup>38</sup> The late publication of the brief was due, however, as has already been pointed out, to the specific condition of the previous competition for the central city plan having first to be resolved, to indicate the actual site within it for the new city hall. The public presentation of the winning central city plan project preceded the publication of the brief by only four days, an interval that is said to have caused some hectic activity in the competition organizing group, reconfiguring the brief. This was the result of the winners having abandoned a recommendation in the central city plan brief for a particular area located not in the town centre but slightly to the side, in favour of a smaller site in a new town centre square environment. The change meant abandoning an original request for a potential city hall extension, and also for parking in the immediate neighbourhood.<sup>39</sup>

Six days later, on 14 March, a one-day **start-up meeting** in Kiruna for all the selected teams together introduced the actual competition. It comprised a series of activities: (a) The competitors were divided up into two groups that were then switched round: the first group was shown around the present city hall by the secretary for culture who was one of the jury members, while the second group received a description of the site for the new city hall from the director of the municipal unit for land development who had been a jury member in the first competition for a central city plan. After that (b) there was a closed meeting (in the city hall Council Chamber) for all the teams at one and the same time together with the jury, the SAA secretary, two city planners co-opted to the jury,<sup>40</sup> and in particular, the competition process leader who explained the brief. Afterwards the competitors could ask questions relating to the brief; other questions concerned for example the Swedish Public Procurement Act. These questions and answers were recorded, reappearing together with some adjustments to the brief, as a **PM to the competition brief**, which was sent out to the competitors on 26 March. The teams could also discuss with each other at this time. Following the closed meeting, (c) there was a site visit, when the competitors could take photos, ask questions and make comments; one such comment was that the site

38 8 March 2013 versus 18 January 2013.

39 LF, 23.10.2013 and ÖM 22.10.13; also NE 24.10.2013.

40 The city planners co-opted to the jury were one partner representative of the winning city planning team Ghilardi Hellsten, and Kiruna's city architect.

seemed too low-lying (a condition, however, that the client could not change!). (d) The group was then shown around in the topography, passing the one new Kiruna public building on the way, a school designed by one of the two SAA jury member architects.<sup>41</sup> (e) The start-up meeting was concluded on a pleasant socializing note by a trip to the nearby Jukkasjärvi Ice Hotel, where the group was shown around and then invited by Kiruna municipality to a dinner at the inn/restaurant next door. All interviewees present have attested to satisfaction with the day's arrangements.<sup>42</sup>

The reason for this—unusual—mode of social finish for all the competitors, the jury and the members of the day's meeting (that included, in particular, the two process leaders from the municipality and LKAB, respectively) was both the fact of a non-existent flights schedule to enable departures from Kiruna in the evening, and, not least, the Kiruna tradition of friendly hospitality in a harsh environment. This was when the whole group could get acquainted in a nice way; the only directive was that there could be no discussion of the competition itself between the parties.<sup>43</sup> On this note the start-up meeting dissolved, and the competitors then had until 10 June, 2 ½ months later, to submit their competition projects.

During part of **the competition period** questions could be addressed to the jury members for whom the questioners were anonymous. When the competition proposals had come in, a preliminary meeting of the jury was held, to consider whether all five proposals could be evaluated; this was confirmed, in spite of the fact that all had slight deficiencies (“nothing serious”) in the formal accounting. A large number of consultants were contacted, on several different technical aspects, and two teams of controllers checked the cost estimates, for the municipality and LKAB, respectively.<sup>44</sup> During **the jury evaluation period** the competition projects were exhibited in the large central space of the city hall, where the public could leave written comments for the jury to consider. Moreover, the jury had a meeting with the public who could ask questions and get their explanations, a process in which the administrative units also took part.<sup>45</sup> In this way, a

41 Raketskolan by Mats Jacobsson, of MAF Architects, Luleå.

42 ÖM, 22.10.2013; LF, 23.10.2013; NE, 24.10.2013; PTJ, 12.11.2013.

43 All the interviewees present were positive, when questioned on this social finish, that this measure could in no way have affected the outcome of the competition to follow.

44 ÖM, 22.10.2013; cf. the jury report, <http://www.arkitekt.se/s78914/fi6620>

45 NE, 24.10.2013



Fig. 6 (left). The new city hall, as placed in the polygonal central city “square”, and as rendered in summer-time in the winning competition project. Source: Henning Larsen Architects.

Fig. 7 (right). The new city hall in winter-time, as rendered in the winning competition project. Source: Henning Larsen Architects.

dialogue mode was established that must be seen as remarkable in the historical perspective of the previous city hall competition.

It was during the summer holiday months that **the jury’s internal evaluation** took place. They had six meetings and several (“innumerable”) group telephone meetings. During the final month of August the two co-opted city planners were called in—a request from the town municipality. This was done due to their special knowledge of the urban environment, and they could give their opinions—which the jury considered valuable—without having the right to vote.<sup>46</sup> The announcement of the winning team came on 13 September: Henning Larsen Architects together with WSP Sverige, Temagruppen Sverige and UiWe, with their proposal “Kristallen” (the Crystal).

The prequalification work had been approved by the municipal executive board, and the winning proposal was approved by the city council.<sup>47</sup> The competition would in the final instance be financed by the client LKAB where the bills would be sent by the organizer, Kiruna municipality. It should be added that during the competition evaluation period itself LKAB attempted to do no further steering.<sup>48</sup>

#### (D) THE 2010S PROCESS: COMMENTS

In the outline of actual and postulated givens which introduces the account of the 2011-13 process, the main points of issue have already been made clear. In the

<sup>46</sup> NE, 24.10.2013.

<sup>47</sup> ÖM, 22.10.2013.

<sup>48</sup> NE, 24.10.2013.



account above these issues are illustrated through the course decided on for carrying out the competition under the given circumstances. New and important ideals of contemporary openness, dialogue and “softened” procedure such as the *Start-up meeting*, demonstrated within the specific conditions of the Kiruna competition process, will also be underscored in the concluding remarks below. What follows first is further comments relating specifically to the contemporary competition problematic.

Referring here to one central problematic of the present study considering expectations and requirements versus steering conditions, it may be illustrated by the particular point already brought up in mentioning the differing demands to the invitation program of the architect acting for LKAB and the organizer’s consultant competition process leader. The latter has expressed his disappointment at the limited demands in the brief on climate, energy and environment/sustainability (“miljö”) as well as the non-qualified response regarding those same aspects in the competition proposals. Already mentioned too is the municipality’s consultant architect jury member’s complaint regarding selection requirements being too focused on the professional status of the applicants. In both cases we appear to see evidence of a clash of interest which has grown steadily more central in the present-day competition process, namely the dominance of aspects relating to operations and functions versus architectonics. Apart from demands relating to economic efficiency, always present, this phenomenon may be explained by the present-day emphasis on specialization; consultants, of course, exemplify this clash.

It should be stressed here regarding the Kiruna selection which diverges from the norm—due to LKAB’s status requirements, already mentioned, for the prequalification in order to avoid legal consequences—that this is at odds with the general finding that there is a difference in the tendering of products as opposed to services; there is rarely criticism of tendered services.<sup>49</sup> Also, regarding the differing loyalties of jury members, it may be added here that their loyalties or types of responsibility may be seen as of five different kinds; these have been studied in relation to a Finnish context by Swedish researchers.<sup>50</sup>

As already pointed to in this study, the truly outstanding feature of the Kiruna 2010s competition process has been the strived for open dialogue and collective nature of the process. This is seen exemplified in the direct contact with

49 Rönn, M, personal communication, 26.II.2013. Cf. also Rönn, M. (2012)b.

50 Kazemian, R, Rönn, M, Svensson, C. (2007), p 129-36.

the public in a shopping mall sought by some municipality officials in one of the work groups, to sound out the expectations of the public concerning the new city hall; the questions asked of individuals centered around what function and meaning the present city hall had had in his/her life and experience. The gathering of this information formed a basis for wishes and requirements to be transmitted to the consultant competition process leader in anticipation of the writing of the brief.<sup>51</sup> A different example of dialogue/interchange, was the responsible partner from the Henning Larsen Architects team holding a meeting with municipality politicians in conjunction with the start-up meeting.<sup>52</sup>

The invited competition form was chosen by necessity as being the only option open within the pressed time frame. The need to find teams from the start was also all-important and this was another factor. But all interviewees directly concerned with the competition expressed a wish that a two-stage competition had been possible, as that would have resulted in a greater freedom to elaborate ideas as well as to meet all demands that the organizer might have wanted to include in the brief.<sup>53</sup> Instead, the chosen competition form would now mean more detailed design work in the project design phase. What happened post-competition is that the client LKAB—who were part of and considered as one with the organizing set-up<sup>54</sup>—made an attempt to request a significant change in the design affecting the character of the winning proposal which had been approved by the SAA;<sup>55</sup> however, the matter was successfully solved to the satisfaction of all, and especially the municipal work group concerned, through clever re-design by the architects.<sup>56</sup>

The invited competition is necessarily preceded by a selection procedure which means a pre-competition investigative effort; in the Kiruna 1950s process

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51 LL, 24.10.2013 and telephone communication 16.12.2013. The form for the direct contact with the public was devised by the work group: they handed out a questionnaire with 15 options for replies, and additional to that it contained “free questions”.

52 PTJ, 12.11.2013.

53 In particular, as pointed out by NE, 24.10.2013 and ÖM, 22.10.2013. The range of possible demands had been specified at their introductory meeting with the SAA competitions secretary, when the competition form to be used was established.

54 ÖM; 22.10.2013.

55 LE, LL and PTJ—post-interview personal communication. Under §18 of the SAA competition rules the negotiation of such changes could potentially be handed over to the organization representing the competitors, here SAA, who have the moral duty of defending the winning proposal; MR, 15.11.2013, personal communication.

56 LL, telephone communication 16.12.2013.



Fig. 8 and 9. Kiruna city hall as built, 1958-62. Source: Left: Kiruna Municipality; Right: Norrbottens Museum, photo Jennie Sjöholm.



Fig. 10 and 11. The winning competition project for Kiruna new city hall, 2013. Source: Henning Larsen Architects.

this meant a search for information and know-how on the part of the organizer, while in the 2010s case the so called prequalification was a competition routine procedure. In Magnus Rönn's studies of the organization of the competition process from the municipal or governmental organizer's viewpoint Rönn has pointed to two fundamental principles that he has formulated in the double concept of *ex-ante* and *ex-post*.<sup>57</sup>

*Ex-ante* means that organizers try to control the competition process "ahead of time" through the competition task, the competition conditions and the choice of competing architect firms. *Ex-post* means that the competition is steered "afterwards" by the design and the jury's assessment of the competition design proposals.

In a comparison with the Kiruna 2010s competition process, such an either-or concept is hard to apply, due to a number of diverging factors in an exceptional

<sup>57</sup> Rönn, M. (2012)b, p 15f.

situation. Two main factors were the fact of the double-headed stakeholder body and of the prequalification selection committee being identical with the jury; another factor, the alternating roles of several of the people organizing, partaking in and following up on the process. What is seen is in principle a fragmentation of the competition organization, and thereby also the competition process, a general contemporary phenomenon pointed to by Rönn, as already mentioned. However, in this particular case it is contradicted, or at least countered, by the marked collective ethos of the people involved.

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some points supporting comparability:

Both competitions reviewed in this paper have been the invited form, although with a difference in the method of invitation. In the 1950s as in the 2010s the important choice of competition form facing the organizer remains basically the same: an open ideas competition with a follow-up 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, permitting in depth elaboration of the project, versus the quicker solution of the invited competition. So again, what is really seen to be at issue is the choice between architectonics being made a priority rather than operations and functions, budget and convenience. If there should in fact be a need to give priority to one or other of these options that same choice might also determine the form of the competition: new ideas versus directed, elaborated project. However, in the 1950s the competition proposal in the invited competition has also been seen as a sketch—a result of haste, not permitting penetration—to be developed in project design and tendering; this is precisely as compared to the two-stage competition! In 1960 one main advantage of the invited competition appears to have been seen as a way of guaranteeing professionalism, avoiding non-professional entries.<sup>58</sup>

Anonymity of the competition is a precondition and a basic requirement, and this is as true in the Swedish rules of today as in the 1950s.<sup>59</sup> Start-up meetings that may, in principle, potentially compromise anonymity were sometimes used also in the 1950s for the invited competition, although not in the Kiruna case. However, there is an indicative difference in the mode of start-up meeting then and now: In the 1950s it was carried out in committee meeting form which included questions and answers, all recorded in a protocol,<sup>60</sup> while in the 2010s process the

58 SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 81, as well as p 79.

59 <http://www.arkitekt.se/s12794>: SAA Competition rules, §8, and SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 77.

60 SAR:s tävlingsblad 3, 1960, p 82.

Kiruna start-up meeting included various activities—seminars, a closed meeting session, a guided tour which included the projected building site and finally a communal dinner—some of which were characterized by a form of socializing that might border, in principle, on fraternization. The indicative difference appears to confirm a softened and opened-up competition process in the present.

The same applies to the participation of the public in the competition process: As already pointed to, there appears to be a fundamental difference in attitudes that may affect anonymity also in the exhibiting of competition entries during the competition evaluation phase, and the public's contact with the jury in 2013, compared to the formal requirements for anonymity in the 1956-58 process, when entries were locked up and exhibited only after the completed evaluation.

One may conclude that a main point manifesting divergence is the opened-up process: What we see now is the larger, democratic stage-set versus the smaller organization, familiar to all the actors involved. However, in the present-day process there was indeed a wish for direct contact; as already mentioned, it was an intention on the part of the organizer to see the process characterized by dialogue and multiplicity. The notion of direct contact expresses a general wish to avoid a deferment via agents that may be likened to competition anonymity. This is seen by the culture secretary—one of the officials partaking in the shopping mall direct contact initiative—as being continued in the present project design phase when municipality officials have been prevented from direct contact with the architect team on questions of specific details pertaining to their particular administrative units, or in this case the projected art museum. It is, however, a requirement by the client LKAB that all contact is taken via the municipality's new process leader for the project design phase. Here the double-headed stakeholder body may be confirmed as being a major steering condition.

A general fear today, as expressed by Magnus Rönn, appears to be that multiplicity of agents leads to fragmentation of organization. One may speculate if fragmentation is in the final instance the effect of a general striving for accountability in our time. This is as opposed to an older, more comprehensive view of the method-of-approach and results strived for, a striving that reflected a socio-ethical attitude; nor was that so hard, with far fewer agents. Welfare state ideals and norms dictated method and course of action. In our own post-structural period studies of mechanisms of control reflect a new inquiry, and have made an impact on sociopolitical discourse.<sup>61</sup>

61 Cf. for example, Gilles Deleuze (1992), "Postscript on the Societies of Control".



Fig. 12. Kiruna towards 2033, remnants of the old town (upper left) and the new city centre area (right). Source: White Architects, developed project 2014. © Lantmäteriet. Medgivande R50388054 160001.

In a general conclusion, what one can see has changed dramatically is the form and method of the whole process—planning, competition as well as the project design phase—making it, in the best case, interactive. A key to a paradigm shift governing building control within the earlier Swedish welfare state system versus in the neoliberal audit society of today is discussed by Rolf Johansson as a shift from control by rules to control by goals;<sup>62</sup> this key might also be seen to apply to the competition process. Where competition rules were of paramount importance in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, one now finds the SAA, in a supplementary guide to a book on tendering in public processes, advocating contemporary openness and “softened” procedure, the more easily for clients to achieve the goal of successful tendering.<sup>63</sup> Equally, it might be claimed that the present-day wish for a collective, democratic process is a means to an end—but an ideal end. It appears to correspond with the well-known general paradigm

62 Johansson, R (2005), “Building Control in the Swedish Post-Welfare State”. Paper presented to the ENHR conference in Reykjavik, Iceland.

63 <http://www.arkitekt.se/s65138/f11844>.

shift between the 1950s and now from qualitative to quantitative analysis. And yet again, these aspects appear to be contradicted to some extent by the specific and, in parts, *exceptional* process conditions in Kiruna. Here the collective, democratic process is a working ideal.<sup>64</sup> Some foci have changed, dreams are reused—but in newer forms.

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64 On visions and the collective, democratic process, see also my previous studies, Bloxham Zettersten (2010) as well as (2007 and 2012).

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## Abstract

Architects have always been concerned with fame and glory, holding a special position in the society of their era. Yet, like the agents of many other professions, they too have had to struggle to survive within contexts sometimes extremely hostile to their 'artistry'. The struggle for dominance and the right to define the architectural field's standards of accomplishment is at the centre of the professionals' relation to each other, but also to agents of other social groups with which they interact. Competitions in particular have often been considered as one field where architects significantly intersect with other social groups.

This paper aims primarily at providing a first-hand account of professionals' attitude to competitions and thus adding to the debate on architects' motives for participating in competitions. By examining the architects' choices regarding competitions, it is possible to better understand their claims for professional and social recognition, e.g. how accomplishment standards of the architectural profession are defined through the interaction between professionals, or between architects and clients, and how architects choose competitions and what kinds of conceptual attitudes they adopt in them in order to prevail. The analysis is based on data collected during a set of interviews with representatives of five architectural firms in Switzerland.

**Key words:** architectural profession, struggle, competitions, position-taking, types of procedures, social fields

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# The Architect, the Client, the Competition... and the Struggle

ANTIGONI KATSAKOU

"[...] the clever cook puts unlikely things together, like duck and orange, like pineapple and ham. "It's called artistry." You know, I am an artist the way I combine my business and my pleasure..." Albert Spica (the Thief) in Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989)

## Introduction

As members of a creative profession, architects are supposed to be reproducing and interpreting in their work the spirit (*Zeitgeist*) and cultural resources of the era in which they live, and in which they claim a special position. They seek fame and glory while, like the agents of many other professions, often having to struggle for survival within contexts hostile to their 'artistry'. For example, on numerous occasions since antiquity, architects have striven to settle in their social role as a profession apart, distinct from the various guilds operating within the building sector. It suffices for one to consider that as late as 1792, in a particularly significant competition to design the residence of the President of the United States, many of the designs submitted were by amateurs and were judged by a jury of amateurs (De Jong and Mattie 1994, p.8). A century later, the efforts of the American Institute of Architects for professional reform and establishment of the first registration law for the practice of architecture in the United States were associated by Larson (1983a, p.49) with "times of general striving for status and economic position", the 1890s.

Architects' struggle to establish their profession within the construction sector and the broader social arena called for expertise and the necessary proof regarding this expertise. A struggle for dominance and the right to define the architectural field's standards of accomplishment is at the centre of the professionals' relation

to each other, but also to agents of other social groups, interacting with their own group. Competitions in particular have often been considered as one field where architects significantly interact with other social groups or, in Bourdieuan terms, with social fields; be it the building users, the commissioners, the politicians, or the press. As de Jong and Mattie (1994, p.8) point out, setting competition regulations has a significant impact on a social level regarding the esteem paid to the profession in general.

This paper aims primarily at providing a first-hand account of professionals' attitude to competitions and thus at casting additional light on architects' motives for participating in competitions. By examining the choices of architectural professionals within the field of competitions, it is possible to better understand their claims for fame, glory and social recognition. The present analysis ultimately aims to contribute to the debate on how the accomplishment standards of the architectural profession may be perceived through competitions and on potential conceptual and representational strategies associated with this end.

## The theoretical background

Till (2009, p.1) describes the struggle of architects in relation to their social role and recognition through the dependent nature of architecture as a discipline: "architecture is a dependent discipline. [...] architecture, as profession and practice, does everything to resist that very dependency." And "architecture at every stage of its existence – from design through construction to occupation – is buffeted by external forces. [...] These forces are, to a greater or lesser extent, beyond the direct control of the architect." (ibid.) The dependency of architecture on its patrons is also commented upon by other authors (Cuff, 1991; Larson, 1983).

According to Bourdieu, accomplishment standards in cultural fields are defined by:

- a. Professionals who focus on distinguishing their field's artistic values from those holding meaning for other social classes
- b. Professionals who consider success in their field as completely relative to the significance the field's product holds within a broader background that takes into consideration other social fields.

Bourdieu talks of two principles of hierarchisation in a continuous struggle within the artistic fields, "the heteronomous principle, favorable to those who dominate the

field economically and politically [e.g. “bourgeois art”) and the autonomous principle (e.g. “art for art’s sake”), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise.” (Bourdieu, 1983, p.321).

The way accomplishment standards are defined through the distinct position-takings of agents and through the transformation of these position-takings in the course of a professional career is inevitably interconnected with the way architecture responds to the social context of its time and the needs of the public. Talking of the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts competition at Ohio State University (OSU), Nasar points out that the public dislike for the competition-born building “highlights a split between [...] the high-brow artistic statement intended for the appreciation of other artists and the everyday meanings seen by the public and occupants” (1999, p.1-2). He goes on: “Architects, like other professionals, value peer evaluations with criteria removed from the interests of the client or public. [...] They give the aesthetic standards of the relatively small audience of their peers priority over popular meanings and function for the end user.” (ibid., p.2). Rybczynski is clearly opposed to the whole idea of public competitions, talking of a “wow factor”, of buildings designed almost exclusively to invite the public “to look at them”, which frequently lack any real cohesion with their context (Rybczynski, 2002, pp.3-4) and therefore distance architecture from its primary social role. “The charged atmosphere [of public competitions] promotes flamboyance rather than careful thought, and favors the glib and obvious over the subtle and nuanced. Architects have always entered competitions, but they have usually seasoned their talents first by doing commissioned work.” He believes that good architecture comes as a result of a “creative conversation” between the architect and the client, which cannot be reproduced in the process framework of the public competition.

Following Smith’s theories on liberal markets, Gilbert and Jormakka (2005) place equal emphasis on architects’ longing for public admiration; they speak of architects’ purposeful neglect of the opposing conditions of the competition framework and the relatively feeble chances of winning, due to an overconfidence in their own good fortune and value. But how should this value be understood? Is it referring to artistic excellence and can it gain recognition in the framework of competitions? Based on Bourdieu’s theory of social distinction and the hierarchy of social fields, Lipstadt explains that the architects’ disinterestedness as to efforts and pains, altogether the only certainty of outcome when starting off with a competition project, manifests their faith in their field’s

predominant 'capital', the artistic excellence and appreciation of their work, first of all by agents of the same field (1989; 2000). This is also crucial because it underlines again, like Nasar's comment above (1999), the important distinction between 'value' as understood by architects and by laymen. It is a distinction providing the architects with an excuse for not winning a competition and possibly with fresh energy to enter another and try their luck over and over again – it is not the proposal which was not worthy, but the client who was not ready for it but might perhaps be next time.

So, how do architects set out to conquer social recognition and rewards through the competition institution? What are the architects' choices and criteria for choosing which competition procedures they take part in? What kind of conceptual strategies do they adopt for competition submissions? How do they choose to represent architectural concepts to the commissioner and the public in general? How do they perceive the system and the clients' wishes?

The following presentation of architects' views will hopefully help bridge a certain visibility gap in the existing bibliography, as architects are not usually offered the chance to talk in public of the conditions in their profession or of the institution of competitions: "architectural competitions are highly public activities and, inevitably, the results do not always please everyone, or anyone, even the promoter. In all of this, the voice of the architect has been largely silent, although, to be sure, there have been protests by the unsuccessful at the most flagrant frauds" (Emmerson, 1991, p.5). The architects' attitude towards different types of competition procedures (open or invited) in the course of their professional career is also tackled. Depending on the architect's/architectural studio's status and stage of professional evolution, a change of attitude towards open procedures is often in order. Highly desirable at the beginning, open competitions are less preferred by architects when they have already established a certain reputation within the profession. Such a change of opinion may be associated with the project's radical or conventional character and the adoption by the architect, at the beginning of their career, of a less consensual approach to widely established architectural standards. This less consensual approach is probably due to the over-confidence Gilbert and Jormakka (2005) commented upon, which must be stronger during the first years of the architect's career.

## Method and particulars of the case study

The data on which the present analysis is based were collected during a set of interviews with representatives of five architectural firms in Switzerland.

Switzerland offers an appropriate case study, boasting a long tradition of systematic application of the competition system. This was particularly intensive during the period 1998-2010 and concerned the construction of a large number of housing units, especially in the German-speaking part of the country. Competitions in general were used during the same period for reconfiguration of the urban and suburban tissue of several Swiss cities. I have already examined various facets of this subject in previous essays (Katsakou 2013a; 2013b; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2011; 2010; 2008; Marchand and Katsakou, 2008).

The firms interviewed in the present study were mainly founded in the past 10-15 years and thus correspond to the 'golden' period of competitions mentioned above. They therefore provide a representative set of cases regarding particularly the impact of competitions for the career of newly-established architectural studios. Moreover, a number of their competition submissions have often been widely published, in Switzerland and abroad, and praised for their innovative character and architectural quality.

The firms were chosen on the basis of their achievements so far in the competition background, either through the number of awards won or through the publicity granted to specific competition projects of theirs. My research work in the field of Swiss architectural competitions, which dates back several years, led to their selection. The views of the professionals interviewed are significant, apart from their value as samples of Swiss architects, because they are sometimes unexpected, especially with respect to widely accepted patterns of professional attitude often voiced by the official bodies of the architectural profession. Another reason for studying the Swiss framework is the fact that, in the case of Zurich, a city that may be considered a model for competition organising, an important change in the competition background seems to be taking place, with a more or less standard number of open procedures per year since the mid-1990s until roughly 2010 now being replaced by a majority of invited procedures. In 2012, all housing competitions organised by the administrative services for Zurich were actually restricted procedures. This study examined whether such a change and its causes might be significant for the future evolution of the competition system.

I met with the representatives of the five firms during February 2013 at their offices in several Swiss cities: Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich and Basel. The interviewees' opinions communicated in the following in the form of citations refer to discussions held during this period. Some of this material is used to build on

arguments discussed in a former paper (Katsakou, 2013a). In total, seven people were interviewed; these were one or all the founders of the firm except for one case, in which the interviewee was one of the older associates of the firm and responsible for one of the larger commissions the firm had won through an architectural competition. The interviewees and the firms will remain anonymous and are therefore referred to hereafter as Firms A, B, C, D and E (Table 1). The set of interview questions proceeded from general to more specific issues, covering the firm's trajectory from its foundation to the time of the interview and relating it to competitions: was participation in competitions an obvious way of launching their firm? For what reasons? Were these reasons specific to the geographical background? In what way? The number and type of competition procedures that they have participated was investigated next, as well as the competition topics; their criteria in choosing (or not) these topics, and finally representational issues and their perception of their work and 'success' among their colleagues. This general structure was used in all cases, but was suitably adapted to the particularity of each firm's trajectory and the issues that could be inferred as concerning it most, judging by its overall line of work. The discussion during the interviews was free flowing. While efforts were made to cover the set of questions in its entirety, the order of the issues discussed was also dictated by the stream of the conversation; depending on the interviewees' responses, questions to expand or clarify views were added and preceded their order in the pre-set draft.

### **The architectural firms**

Firm A was founded in 2003 by two associates, four years after their graduation and their apprenticeship alongside well-known masters of the Swiss architectural scene. So far, apart from several prizes won in competitions, it has yet to win a first-class award and to be actually commissioned for a building through the framework of a competition. By 2012, Firm A had completed in its history a total of almost 60 projects, of which half were designed for competition submissions and a sixth of these were awarded second prizes. Their office was in 2013 made up of a team of six people. Firm A has set itself apart from the majority of architectural bureaus in Switzerland thanks to its rather unusual, diagrammatic representation mode.

Firm B is an architectural bureau set up in 2007 in the French-speaking part of the country by three former classmates. The architects had initially decided



to set up their firm in the German-speaking part of the country due to a commission they had secured in that area at the time, and despite the fact that they all obtained their diplomas from the country's French-speaking Federal Institute of Technology. Participating in competitions, something they tried right from the firm's foundation, quickly proved more fruitful than the initial direct commission, which was in the meantime lost. A first prize in a competition was their ample award for their early efforts, this time in the French-speaking region. This specific competition was particularly significant also for the organising city, Lausanne, as the housing programme the authorities were then putting in place was falling behind in comparison with that of their German-speaking counterparts. This first prize came in 2009; three years after that Firm B had already won several other competition prizes and achieved second place in another prestigious competition in the city of Lausanne for a new sports complex. By 2013, it had managed to double the number of its collaborators and, after certain direct commissions, entered the entrepreneurial world, managing the construction of a project on its own.

Firm C was established in 1998, immediately after its two founders graduated from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. The first competition procedure that it won was in 2001, for a small recreation space in another German-speaking city in the country. However, 10 years after completion of that competition Firm C's winning entry had not been built, but, thanks to some direct commissions it was able to secure in its first steps, participation in other competitions was possible. Thus, in 2002 first prize in a significant competition for a museum space in Zurich brought it to the foreground of the Swiss architectural scene. In 2005, first prize in a competition for a mixed used development again brought significant publicity to the firm, as the out-of-the-ordinary arrangement of the facades broke up the monotonous continuities of the existing built tissue. The firm continues to grow as commissions are secured, sometimes through participation in architectural competitions, not only in Switzerland but also abroad. In a period of 10 years, the studio grew into a team of 6 associates and 35 collaborators; it has taken part in about 60 competition procedures in total, winning prizes in almost half of them. Two thirds of these were actually first prizes.

Firm D was established in 2006 by the merging of two separate architectural firms that had collaborated in various projects before tracing a course as one joint firm. In fact, its first competition project to be awarded first prize was a

residential project that its members designed while still collaborating as separately established professionals. This project was in the end aborted because of the objections met at the level not only of the neighbourhood, but also of the city's organising authorities. The extensive experience of one of the partners in another European country affected, in his opinion, the mentality and design representation techniques he used at the very start of his career. He had already won seven prizes, including one first prize, in competitions that he did on his own account during a 10-year period (1998-2008). Up to 2012, the joint practice with 11 members has participated in around 30 competitions and won in total 10 prizes, half of which were first prizes.

Firm E is a bureau founded by two former classmates who had spent several years collaborating on an occasional basis before setting up a joint practice in 2007. Both completed apprenticeships with an internationally well-known architectural bureau in their home country and, just like the associates in Firms B and C, they first gained distinction in the competition arena, quite unusually through an open ideas competition organised in the same year as the practice was founded. The competition's commissioner was a newly founded association of several housing cooperatives in Switzerland which sought innovative ideas regarding the future home in the context of the contemporary metropolis. A project competition launched by the same cooperative in 2009 awarded Firm E first place for an innovative proposal that in a way transcribed the complex structure of the surrounding urban tissue into the new building complex and into each new building separately.

**Table 1. Summary of the competition history of Firms A-E**

	Foundation Year	Year of First Competition Prize	Number of Competition Entries Submitted	Number of Prizes Won	Number of First Prizes	Number of Collaborators (2013)
Firm A	2003 (GVA)	2009	30	5	-	6
Firm B	2007 (LSN)	2009	14	5	2	7
Firm C	1998 (ZH/BS)	2001	60	30	20	35
Firm D	2006 (ZH)	2005	30	10	5	11
Firm E	2007 (ZH)	2007	12	3	2	4-5

### The competition tradition in Switzerland

For architects in all the firms, competitions seem to have been the obvious path after graduation in order to get a chance of distinction and commissions. Firm B interviewees talked of a continuing competition tradition in the country, which according to Firm E respondents may also be dangerous. They claimed that what is attractive to architecture professionals, who often compete “for fun”, “because they like it this way”, makes them easy prey to the client at the same time, who secures a lot of work at little or no cost. It is important, as Firm E interviewees pointed out, that doing competitions is quite easy: many of their friends and colleagues prepare competition submissions with the minimum of technical means, using a laptop at home or at an improvised professional space, and sometimes on quite spontaneous collaborations. For Firm E, no specific plan regarding the expansion of their office has been laid out. Yet competitions have been an obvious course of action: those interviewees characteristically spoke of a very “democratic” procedure where an honest chance of distinction exists for those who are not (yet) famous; where competitions offer the possibility of advancing in one’s professional career, exclusively thanks to the quality of one’s work and, in short, competitions make it “attractive to be a good architect”. Such a perception of the competition system involves a deep faith in it, a faith that does not allow room for doubts in the assessment process for the projects. This faith may be testimony, at least in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, to the quality of the competition process framework.

Two factors with an impact on the architectural competition tradition in Switzerland were emphasised by all architects interviewed: first, the architectural culture of the distinct geographical part of Switzerland in which a competition is organised; and second, the people holding key positions in state administration services. Firm C and E interviewees mentioned that “the culture of competitions” seems to diminish with increasing distance from Zurich. Zurich was by common agreement the most representative example of successful application of the system in Switzerland. Firm D interviewees pointed out that a significant role in this success was played by the former director of the City’s Building Services, who actively promoted the operational framework of competitions within the context of collective housing. His retirement in 2012 was considered as a retarding factor, at least, for the organisation of competitions. For Firm D the best thing to hope for, in this situation, is that the Building Department will return to the organisation of competitions, after taking some time to adapt to

his departure. Firm E interviewees, in fact, referred to the former director of the Building Service of the City of Zurich as the “mastermind” of competitions, who actually knew how to turn an “unsexy”, “uninteresting” subject, such as collective housing, into a field that after 15 years still draws attention, raising discussion around the respective public building programmes and their success.

An additional reason that one could discern different architectural cultures in the distinct geographical parts of Switzerland is the fact that the majority of the architects interviewed acknowledged the superior quality of competition briefs in the German-speaking part of the country. In that area, competition objectives are often more explicitly and clearly stated than in the French-speaking part, a fact testifying to more conscientiously prepared feasibility studies. Firm A interviewees pointed out that between the German- and the French-speaking region, differences are considerable, characteristically commenting that in the German-speaking part one struggles for the quality of the project, while in the French-speaking part “one feels one is struggling for architecture itself”. Competitions are not an obvious way of building in the latter area and the whole process of designing and implementing a project is often more complicated.

### **WHICH competitions to take part in?**

When asked how the architects choose the competitions to participate in, Firm A interviewees declared that at the beginning of their career they were interested in absolutely every subject. What was important to them was to build up a varied portfolio dealing with a wide range of building programmes. This seems to be largely the case with many architectural firms. Firm E interviewees offered an interesting interpretation of their filtering criteria when they reported choosing competitions according to subject and to how intriguing the topic sounded in relation to what they know they can offer; thus while exploiting their strength in the conceptual part of the architectural project and on a strategic level, they leave aside projects that involve little work in this field. They declared themselves keen on understanding the project’s context, and cited this as one reason for normally not getting involved in competitions abroad. For Firm D, the cost of participating in a competition abroad was almost restrictive for Swiss bureaus, which must pay their collaborators more than local firms, where manpower is normally cheaper. Such a process is usually non-sustainable.

Firm C, which is an architectural office with an already extensive portfolio and was the largest of all firms interviewed, raised the issue of the office’s

resources at a given moment and interviewees reported that the availability of specialist members of their collaborating team was important in deciding whether or not to participate in a specific competition procedure. Another point widely discussed in professional circles emerged in the discussions, namely the people making up the jury. For Firm C this is a matter of urban planning culture and of the jury's attitude toward the city, i.e. whether the members of the jury can really 'read' the submitted projects. These interviewees were obviously referring to another type of communication, namely whether the members of the jury will be able to read intentions and visualise the potential of the assessed project. The language used in the brief and the way the intentions of the client are communicated was reported to be equally important to the architects, as an indication of whether or not the jury will be able to fully grasp their architectural approach.

### **Open or invited competitions?**

Switzerland's competition tradition is certainly linked to the fact that many procedures are open to all architects. Firm D interviewees underlined the difference between Holland and Switzerland regarding this point; in Holland participation in competitions is based on professional lists and invitations, while in Switzerland open competitions (at least since the mid-1990s) are common. Firm D interviewees reported that, while working in Holland, their principal collaborator, along with the office he was then working for, had their eyes turned toward Switzerland, in order to filter competitions in which it was possible to participate. Firm D interviewees called for more open competitions and pointed out that the official professional organisation, the Swiss Society of Architects and Engineers (SIA) should be putting pressure on public and private clients to move in that direction.

In Zurich from around 1998 until 2010, at least 3-4 open competition procedures were organised systematically per year for the construction of new or the reformation of existing housing estates. Different kinds of building programmes also followed the rule of open competitions. Since 2010, the number of open procedures has declined: from October 2012 to August 2013, only two of seven competition procedures were open procedures. From April 2012 to December 2012, another eight competition procedures, of which half concerned housing projects, were actually selective based either on prequalification or on invitation.

Against this background, Firm C interviewees commented on the fact that the type of competition procedure is particularly important when architects are still at the beginning of their career. Advancing on the professional pathway normally means a larger list of works that increase the chances of being remembered in restricted procedures. For Firm E, it was admittedly a problem to enter “into the pool of the people that may be asked”. The same appeared to be true for Firm B. But how does one get into the pool? Firm A’s success in this regard was related to the innovative character of its projects. Its out-of-the ordinary architectural solutions have not won a first prize so far, but have secured the firm, relatively rapidly, a place in the list of the bureaux that are often invited to participate in restricted procedures. This may be connected to the fact that in many restricted procedures and according to the instructions of the SIA, a proportionate number of ‘young’ architectural bureaux must be included in the list of invitations. In such cases, ‘young’ is almost a synonym for ‘out-of-the-ordinary’, and therefore innovative approaches are particularly favoured. Firm B interviewees added that often a first prize multiplies the possibilities of connecting a specific bureau with the building programme corresponding to the competition that earned it this distinction; in their case, a connection with the theme of collective housing was gradually established. For Firm E, it was obvious that restricted procedures involve specific bureaux depending on the competition’s theme. Firm E respondents pointed out that invited competitions are associated with an advanced level of detail in competition entries, so that offices have to produce even more work and present a more developed project. This kind of specialisation is, for Firm A, a means to save time for everyone involved in a competition procedure: the client may profit from the bureau’s particular knowledge in relation to a specific type of project, while the firm does not need to bother with competitive procedures in which it would have even less chance of winning because of lack of experience.

Specialisation is of course only one important aspect of the distinct impact open and restricted procedures have upon a firm’s trajectory and potential assessment in the professional arena. A competition’s outcome, and therefore a firm’s professional recognition, within the competition background may significantly be altered, according to Firm A, in relation to the condition of anonymity which characterises open procedures and is, on the contrary, annulled in many cases of restricted procedures. In these instances, the architects are allowed to defend their conceptual choices in front of the jury, discuss them

and explain the reasons which led to these choices. Such an option is valuable, according to Firm A, in the case of a competition organised on the basis of a feasibility study made in a hurry and not taking into consideration all the parameters regarding the context and building programme. It is quite common for poor feasibility studies to lie behind impossible-to-solve competition briefs, which competing architectural firms are eventually forced to meet by not respecting some part of the programme. Such circumstances can only be clarified through the process of a restricted procedure with oral presentations by the participants. Firm A interviewees considered that a conceptual choice may in reality be much more flexible than originally intended by the jury. It is possible for a specific proposal to end up with an honourable mention instead of a winning prize, because of seemingly not respecting some (possibly subsidiary) parameter of the programme, whereas such a detail could easily be adapted to the client's wishes following appropriate and direct discussion.

**Table 2. Summary of interviewees' views on open or invited competitions**

Open or Invited Competitions?	
Difference between the Swiss and other European traditions in competitions	Firm D
"Problem getting into the pool of people who may be asked"	Firm E
Innovative character of the project has an impact on receiving invitations	Firm A
Invited procedures synonymous with specialisation	Firms A, B, E
Anonymity may affect chances of distinction	Firm A

## HOW TO TAKE PART? Conceptual approaches and visual communication of ideas

The first competition in which Firm E was distinguished was, as mentioned, an open ideas competition, in which the client really sought experimental thinking. Firm E came up with a whole booklet listing the exceptional perceptual traits and ambiances of existing dense housing estates in the city of Zurich. Its architectural proposal was described by the jury of the competition as outstanding. Its playful approach, which was reflected in presentation of its work as a separate publication of a small and easy-to-handle format, suited the client well. The jury and the commissioning client were in this case unanimous in their assessment of the submitted proposals.

Nevertheless, the professionals interviewed here know, both as architects taking part in competitions and as members of the assessing jury, that such unanimity is often difficult to achieve. A client's greatest apprehension about competitions is ending up with a project they do not really want, due to dominance in the jury of architect members and their professional, aesthetic standards. According to Firm D, the success of the city of Zurich and of its former director of Building Services lay to a large degree exactly in the fact that the director constantly reiterated that no 'architectural' choice was to be imposed on the client. The fear of getting stuck with a project difficult to implement and/or with an architect reluctant to take on criticism of his project is one of the main reasons that many commissioning clients, mostly private, avoid architectural competitions. In contrast, professional organisations constantly aspire to the organisation of more architectural competitions (RIBA, nd; Kurz, 2008). An example helping to better understand this point can be drawn from the dialogue between architect and client reported by Cuff (1992) in order to discuss the social nature of the design development process, and, more specifically, the social art required to do so (1991, pp.188-194). The architect subtly manipulates "the client, through dialogue, into a position that is actually the architect's" (ibid., p.192).

For Firm B interviewees, every client is a different case. They do not consider themselves badly treated by their clients; their attitude remains quite a modest one regarding their work, despite their so far considerable 'success'. These interviewees are reportedly being interested in having their office running, in building. They confessed to having been misled with regard to their first project by their ignorance of the building regulations in the area. They found out in the course of the project's implementation that the beautiful finishing line of their apartment buildings was actually incompatible with building restrictions on height and at the same time they realised that the materials they were proposing could never combine well together. They thus had to entirely revisit their original scheme, at least in terms of its exterior aspect. "They assume", they say nowadays; the alterations had to be done, the built project is the best solution they could come up with.

Their conceptual approach is on the whole quite distinct from that of Firm A, whose interviewees spoke of an "engaged" attitude towards architecture that they felt they had to adopt at the beginning. Their choice was to avoid being "consensual" with respect to established standards. They considered their radical attitude as "the best thing that can happen to a client" with respect to the project's



quality, as out-of-the-ordinary ideas are likely to produce the most appropriate solutions to difficult problems. They clarified that “they are not interested in utopias”. Being radical just for the sake of breaking through the status quo is not what really engages them in work. Besides they are now quite sceptical about their conceptual approach and consciously try to reduce its impact. Their representation images, the diagrammatic line of which seems to get attenuated towards other more conventional representation modes, is another way to moderate the radical character of their projects.

Attenuation of an initial, radically innovative, conceptual approach seems to have been the case with Firm D, which represented an intermediate position-taking between the more consensual one of Firm B and the more radical one of Firm A. Nowadays, Firm D interviewees consider that a radically ‘unique’ project often hides misapprehension of the programme’s prerequisites, or even a kind of ‘naive’ attitude toward architectural composition in general, which privileges the aesthetic and remains attached to powerful, but non-thoroughly thought-out concepts. Although their competition record is nowadays quite rich, with competition distinctions, they admit having been concerned in the past about acquiring only second prizes and never the actual commission. Since then, they realised that a change in their course of action was imperative and their conceptual approach nowadays tends rather to cut back on innovative thinking.

For all architects interviewed, representation images, as demanded in competition submissions, are a major issue with respect to the communication between architect and client. Firm E interviewees reported using three-dimensional images in panels only when these images are an organic part of the conceptual process. However, those interviewees admitted that images are a problem, as they are “too easy to read”. Firm C pointed out that it is too difficult for jury laymen not to be “attached to the first image”, while for Firm B the problem lies in the fact that for a layman an image means different things than for the professional. On the one hand, laymen look at an image and take it in to the letter; it then becomes difficult to perform any necessary adaptations to the competition project in order for it to be built. Professionals, on the other hand, have developed an ability for abstraction; for them, it is mostly the atmosphere, a certain intention regarding it that has to be essentially retained.

It is thus not unusual for architects to opt for black-and-white pictorial representations of their competition projects, in order to bring forward only the essential elements of the concept and avoid the negative effects of engaging colourful

impressions (Cohn, 2013). Firm E interviewees reported that as members of juries they found that images were always a matter of extensive discussion; images become even more the object of attention as it is difficult for laymen to read floor plans. Those interviewees also reported feeling as if they had to educate the jury with respect to the benefits of a competition. People showed fear and distance to the competition procedure on account of lacking information and experience. They did not fail to point out that in the end everybody seemed happy with the results.

**Table 3. Summary of interviewees' views on how to take part in competitions**

<b>How to take part? (clients' standards, conceptual approaches and visual communication of ideas)</b>	
Some clients really seek innovation	Firm E
Clients need to be educated	Firm E
Commissioning clients need to know that they will not be forced to accept an 'architectural' solution	Firms D, E
Radical solutions are "the best thing that can happen to a client"	Firm A
Innovative conceptual approaches reconsidered to a certain point of their career	Firm A, D
Moderation balances inexperience	Firm B
"Images too easy to read"	Firm B
Attachment of the client to the first image of the project	Firms B, E

## Discussion

Many of the views reported above are not surprising and come more as a confirmation of opinions often expressed in the specialist press by architects that have already earned, probably also through competitions, a 'right to their own voice'. To a certain degree, the architects interviewed here belong in this 'established' group of professionals.

A surprising finding is the difference between Firms A and B when it comes to their approaches to the competition system, although the way in which both are compensated by the system makes 'professional success' in the field of architecture and how to achieve it, at least through competitions, seem doubtful. On the one hand, Firm A interviewees recognised that it was possible for them to start increasing the visibility of their work thanks to open competition

procedures, in which they participated in the beginning of their career. Nevertheless, they nowadays advocate more invited procedures, in order to save, as they say, energy and efforts for everybody but also because they seem to think that invited procedures, where a chance to orally present their work is often offered to architects, may help them win first prizes. Therefore, they present a kind of a hardened attitude towards younger colleagues and their future in the professional arena. Still, to obtain first prizes Firm A is not yet willing to significantly sacrifice the radical character of its conceptual approach, despite the fact that its representation techniques have become over the course of time less diagrammatic and abstract.

If Firm A is considered as an agent representing, within the cultural field of architecture, the *autonomous* principle of hierarchisation (because of its radical approach that has so far only brought second prizes), then its change of position towards restricted procedures indicates a probable 'move' to the other side of the field, a side traditionally most responsive to external demands (the clients' and the economic capital's wishes), and therefore more consensual in its approach. At the same time, one can speculate which position-taking is best rewarded in the competition background: the initial radical approach of Firm A has secured it a place in the list of firms invited to participate in restricted procedures and therefore makes it in a way more probable for it to earn distinctions (and commissions in the future). On the other hand, Firm B is less radical, willing to discuss and adapt its ideas. Five years after its founding, it has already won two first prizes and subsequent building commissions, and could be perceived as representative of the *heteronomous* principle of hierarchisation. Yet Firm B still seems to have trouble getting invited to enter competitions, particularly as it is increasingly being linked to the building programme that earned it these prizes. Which among these two agents of the profession is in the end more likely to set success standards, including in conjunction with the competition institution?

Regarding open and invited procedures, the views of the rest of the interviewed firms also varied. As the antithesis of Firm A, Firm D, which also started as a particularly radical contestant, is currently toning down the innovative character of its ideas. Firm D seems to acknowledge the fact that this innovative approach may sometimes have been a mismatch to the competition briefs it was dealing with and the actual building programmes the competitions were tackling. However, this firm is still very much 'pro' an open competition system, to

the point that has asked the official body of architects to drastically intervene in its favour. Maybe this also relates to the fact that one of the founders has participated as a member of the jury in numerous competitions; having the chance to evaluate the system through distinct role-taking must have a positive impact in an architect's further education regarding competitions and professional needs. Firm C, which is the biggest and most well-established of all, is not particularly stressed about the type of procedures. It is already at a point where it can actually carefully choose which procedures it will take part in; it has already acquired many distinctions and is often invited to participate in competitions.

Nevertheless, in the case of the Swiss framework, stress with regard to competitions and competition distinctions also comes from the fact that a first prize most frequently leads to a commission and a built project. Architects have very real chances of winning and building, and thus the desire to build may take the upper hand in the way they position their firms toward the competition tradition. The ambition to build may lead to a number of compromises: sometimes in relation to the project's radical identity which, for some agents, was the very reason for participating in the first place. The stress to build, perhaps with the exception of Firm E, which seemed to be still at ease with its cautious approach to competitions, was a common underlying (and sometimes explicitly stated) point in all interviewees' offered set of thoughts.

This concern can certainly be considered as the best manifestation of the architect's constant dilemma between theorising and practising; between creating according to some kind of objective evaluation standards (that promote architecture as art) and according to the very specific demands of an, often extremely ordinary, building programme; between accommodating established evaluating criteria and questioning them; and between promoting and managing construction and exclusively taking pleasure in mastering their art.

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# Part 2

## Abstract

There are many devices to help elucidate the various dimensions of quality of an architectural project, of which the competition is an important process. The jury deliberation is ideally meant to collectively find the project with the best overall qualities through a collective and constructive debate. How do the variety of building experts and their expert evaluations impact the outcome of the architectural competitions? What do they bring to the judgment process? This paper argues that some experts confront this construction of quality with prescriptive measures and itemized visions of the project resulting from rigid evaluation methods and tools. This study of experts and expert evaluations in the judgment process originated from a previous study, which showed how environmental certifications are shifting the way in which quality is assessed in the architectural competition today. With the growing imperatives of sustainability, environmental management tools, such as certifications, are increasingly included as strict requirements in architectural competitions. Is the growing requirement for expertise, including the prevailing environmental expertise in the competition leading to a fragmented vision of the project intentions? A critique of the expert-type situations is conducted through this wider theoretical framework, where the observed tensions are interpreted from a broader epistemological and historical perspective, using the lens of risk society. This paper concludes with a reflection on how the emergence of a risk society has changed the way humans deal with uncertainty and how this has led to a rethinking of how the built environment is judged.

**Key words:** Expert evaluation, qualitative judgment, debate, experts, expertise, risk society, architecture competitions, competition jury

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# Tensions between Expert Evaluations and Qualitative Judgment in Canadian Architectural Competitions

CARMELA CUCUZZELLA

## Introduction

How do the variety of building experts and their expert evaluations impact the outcome of the architectural competitions? What do they bring to the judgment process? This study of experts and expert evaluations in the judgment process originated from our previous study that showed that environmental certifications are shifting the way in which quality is assessed in the architectural competition today (Cucuzzella, 2013b). With the growing imperatives of sustainability, environmental management tools, such as certifications are increasingly included as strict requirements in architectural competitions. These are devices of risk management and key components of a risk society – a society that began in the early 1980's, where the main objective was potential risk reduction. This society focused on the assessment and quantification of an array of risks, each with their corresponding set of experts. Among these today, the environmental experts are prominent newcomers in the competition.

The specific focus of this paper is to understand how the various experts in an architectural competition, including environmental, are having an impact on the way the jury judges the competitor projects in order to identify the project with the best overall qualities. This paper is divided into three main parts. First, I briefly demarcate the various issues related to qualitative judgment in the architectural competition today, specifically with the growing concerns of sustainability. Second, I describe the methodology and introduce the categories of expert-types in the competition. I also present the observations in competitions based on these expert-types, specifically highlighting the tensions they introduce. Third, I place this work in the general theory of judgment where I highlight the differences between the expert evaluation and general qualitative

judgment. A critique of the expert-type situations is conducted through this wider theoretical framework, where the observed tensions are interpreted from a broader epistemological and historical perspective, using the lens of risk society. I reflect on how the emergence of a risk society has changed the way humans deal with uncertainty and how this has led to a rethinking of how the built environment is judged.

### **1. Tensions in Competition Juries**

There are many devices to help elucidate the various dimensions of quality of an architectural project, of which the competition is an important process. The jury deliberation is ideally meant to collectively find the project with the best overall qualities through a collective and constructive debate. I contend that some experts confront this construction with the prescriptive measures and restrictive visions resulting from their rigid evaluation tools. Is the growing requirement for expertise, including the prevailing environmental expertise in the competition leading to a fragmented vision of the project intentions?

In Canada, the emerging norm to address sustainability, particularly environmental sustainability is the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system. This rating system is increasingly required as part of the criteria in Canadian competitions. It was introduced in Canada in 2003, but has gathered traction in competitions, specifically since 2008. It is since 2008, that deep tensions have been particularly observed. In fact, our previous research has found that when LEED is a very strict requirement, a series of deep tensions are revealed throughout the jury deliberation:

- (1) Between jurors with diverging views of what constitutes 'uncertainty' in the proposal;
- (2) Between jurors with diverging priorities attributed to the relevance of environmental certification in a competition context;
- (3) Between jurors with diverging methods of comparison, which can span from the interpretive to the very systematic and analytic - each very different in their worldview; and
- (4) Between jurors who place diverging importance on the 'provable' environmental imperatives and the 'non-provable' experiential/aesthetic characteristics. (Cucuzzella, 2015)

I have seen in competitions that proving a building is environmentally sustainable through the acquisition of some green building certification has become a goal in itself. I have observed that these certifications actually become the main competition prize for the client in the Canadian context (Cucuzzella, 2012).

In the next part, I introduce the methodology, including the list of competitions studied. Then, through the use of exemplar cases, I introduce the categories of problematic jury situations in architecture competitions with strict environmental requirements.

## **2. Jury Situations with Mixed Expert-types**

### **Methodology**

I studied 15 Canadian competitions where the reliance of expertise was a dominating factor. Competitions with significant importance attributed to environmental requirements were prioritized in this selection, since such competitions depend heavily on a variety of expertise for final judgment. These experts may have been assigned either of two roles with regards to the jury: external roles as experts and therefore no voting power, or experts part of the jury and therefore with voting power. Of these 15 competitions, 11 demanded that LEED certification must be shown to be achievable; the others included some form of environmental sustainability as a general requirement. The typology of the competitions were: 7 libraries, 3 cultural centers, 2 science centers, 2 sports centers and 1 public space design. The competitions were launched between 2003-2014: 2003 being a key date since this is the year when LEED was introduced in the Canadian context.

I conducted a comparative discourse analysis of the competition brief, competitor textual proposals, and the jury report. I observed the jury deliberation process for some of the competitions studied. From these observations, I identified a first category of expert-types and compared the deliberations based on these. The expert-type categories were finalized at the end of the research. I also conducted a comparative analysis of the visual dimensions of the competitor panels, i.e. drawings, schemas, tables, and renderings to facilitate the relation between the arguments and statements made in the jury to competitor project characteristics.

Our results are presented in a two-fold manner. I first present a categorization of the expert-types, which is reflected through the theory of risk society. I then present some observations of competition jury deliberation situations that comprise different types of experts and expertise.

### Is Risk Society a Society of Experts?

Risk society emerged in response to the modern conditions of technology and uncertainty. It describes the way that modern society responds to risk. Giddens defines it as “a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk” (Giddens, 1991, p.3). Risk society emerged specifically with the parallel emergence of:

- (1) the growing concerns of environmental risk, as these had come to be the predominant product of industrial society; and
- (2) the renewed interest of subjective Bayesian statistical methods of risk assessment.

Obviously the question of environmental risk has been around since the emergence of the industrial revolution. However, since the 1980s, there has been much work done in the field of Bayesian statistical methods, specifically, in the discovery of the Monte Carlo methods with a rising interest for complex applications. At this important junction the hypothesis of risk society was put forth, particularly as has been theorized by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens.

How is risk defined in this context? “Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (Beck, 1992, p.21). Where society is increasingly threatened by potential risks that are a result of the modernization process. By modernization I mean the way humans increasingly seek technological mastery over nature. The prevention of these ‘manufactured’ risks through measurable, predictable means has become inadequate in a society where risks are being introduced faster than they could be understood, let alone quantified. In fact, Giddens (1991) has stated that the modern understanding of risk was supposed to help humans control their future, to normalize it. Yet according to Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) things have not turned out that way. Even if this modern understanding of risk was supposed to help humans control their future or to normalize it, attempts to control the future through these measurable methods have led to the realization that humans need different approaches for relating with uncertainty.



Figure 1. Espace pour la vie – Volet A: la Métamorphose de l'Insectarium. Kuehn Malvezzi + Pelletier de Fontany, Montréal 2014.

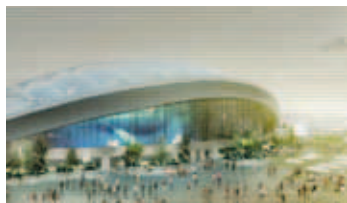


Figure 2 (left): Espace pour la vie – Volet B: le Biodôme renouvelé. AZPML + Kanva, Montréal 2014.

Figure 3 (right): Espace pour la vie – Volet C: le Pavillon de verre au Jardin botanique. Lacaton & Vassel, Montréal 2014.

A risk society is focused on identifying and controlling risks, specifically through probabilistic expert knowledge, even in a global situation where many risks cannot be predicted in a reliable manner. The incarnation of this societal condition in the western world is attested through the development of the International Standards Organization (ISO) 31000 family of standards referred to as Risk Management (International Standards Organization, 2009). In these standards, the creation of uniform risk criteria and evaluation metrics is central for risk management and reporting. The growing international power of insurance companies is another important testimony to the contemporary condition of risk society.

Risk society, with the plethora of risk experts, the need to predict risks, the unchallenged relationship to the results of these risk evaluations, and the predominance of these evaluations in assessing quality is manifest in competition processes (construction of brief, jury deliberation), sometimes at the expense of in-depth qualitative debates. This reflection on risk and expertise has served as the underlying framework for establishing the categories of expert-types for the competition jury.

### **Categorizations of Expert-types in a Competition Jury**

Who are the experts in the competition process today? Although one could consider that most of the actors engaged in a competition are experts in one way or another, in this research I propose to distinguish between technical experts, tacit experts and another category that can be referred to as the meta-experts.

What I will call the technical experts in a competition are those actors that deal with areas like energy or material efficiency, mechanical or structural feasibility, performance measures, air ventilation flows and sound control, among others.

The growing plethora today of measurement tools or software to assist in the task of quantifying these characteristics, calls for increasingly optimized performance on all these technical dimensions. Even if these experts usually have no deciding power in the jury since they are typically called in before the jury takes place, their reports have an impact on deliberation. Their 'precise' quantitative assessments come into conflict at times, with the more qualitative debate of the overall project. This situation is compounded by the fact that these technical experts are increasingly invited as jurors.

I will also identify a category of tacit experts, since we can agree that: *the client* is an expert of the requirements; *the advisor* is an expert of the competition process; *the user* or user representative can be considered an expert of the functions of the project; *the architect* of the jury is an expert in architectural quality; and *the competitors* are obviously experts in design, both process and outcome. I refer to these actors as 'tacit' since their expertise is mostly implicit, based on experience. For example, it is understood that the architect is above all, an expert in the conception and construction of projects. As part of this area of expertise, they are inherently experts in qualitatively judging the diverse dimensions of the project in its integrated whole. So even if they have a deep understanding of the construction processes of a project, inherently technical, their 'whole' project experience, which comprises the ability to capture the essence of a project, is obtained through their experience in designing projects. This ability escapes most technical experts, who focus and rationalize the project in terms of a very specific dimension, rather than in terms of the whole project. Another example of a tacit expert is the client, who will likely manage or plan the management of the project once complete. The client understands the project in a general sense and within this, has a rich understanding of the requirements.

What about the meta-expert? They are those experts whose claims remain on the most part unchallenged since they are perceived as the ultimate expert in their field at large. A meta-expert can be either a technical expert, for example, the world-renowned expert on energy assessments. In this case, the meta-expert has worked at an international level on questions related to energy efficiency and energy systems and where their work is cited worldwide. A meta-expert can also be a tacit expert. In this case, an example could be a world-renowned architect that has won competitions internationally. He is respected as a professional who inherently understands the essence of winning projects. Both

of these types of meta-experts are important to our observations, as they have demonstrated their capacity to short-circuit the debate in the jury process.

One wonders how we can maintain the balance necessary for a qualitative judgment in this 'market' of experts. Today, this is aggravated by the need to refer to environmental experts – be it a person or an environmental certification system, before a final judgment can be made. In this sense, tensions can easily abound, since architects and jurors are caught between a will to protect the planet through prescriptive rules and expectations for innovation and excellence.

### **Observations through Expert-types**

Of course, tensions and conflicts occur in many complex projects that have substantial technical requirements. Nevertheless, the fact that competitions nowadays include an evaluation of performance appears to increase the conflicts of expertise and as such, may explain why more and more, competitions are seen as exhibiting a difficult 'crab mentality' – where the actors in this process, rather than working together to collectively define the best project, seem to draw out the entire process to a halt through their competing points of view. Who are these experts, and how do they impact the jury deliberation? I provide a sample of the observations in the next section.

#### *Technical expert in the jury: The environmental expert*

A burgeoning situation in the competition today, with the imperative of sustainable development, is when an expert of a green building rating system is included in the jury rather than used only for consultation. This new situation changes the deliberation process significantly. Because they are technical experts, their voice can heavily drive the jury deliberation, leaving an imbalance in the weight given to the more qualitative arguments. These technical experts are not experts of overall architectural project quality, but rather experts of a very specific and fragmented part of the project limiting their vision of the overall project.

A library competition in a major city in Canada emphasized this conflict. In this case, even if the jury<sup>1</sup> conferred that all teams could achieve the LEED requirement, of the two last teams left competing for the winning prize, the

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1 The jury consisted of 7 members: 2 architects, 1 environmental expert/architect, 2 representatives of the client, 1 academic, 1 cultural representative.



Figure 4 (left): Réaménagement et l'agrandissement de la bibliothèque de Pierrefonds. Chevalier Morales Architectes + DMA architectes, Montréal 2013.



Figure 5 (right): Agrandissement de la bibliothèque Saul-Bellow. Chevalier Morales Architectes, Montréal 2011.

safest project regarding the ability to achieve LEED Gold rating was selected. The jury claimed that the runner up was far too risky in terms of attaining LEED, yet the team's discourse was the most encompassing regarding how they addressed sustainability. The winning project did not have any encompassing sustainability strategy, rather only an enumeration of technologies to address performance issues. This specific situation was further aggravated by the fact that for the mayor, the LEED ranking was the most important criteria of architectural quality. The technical expert in the jury biased the decision, to ensure a predictable LEED certification was secured. This has occurred in a series of the competitions studied, particularly where the LEED certification is high.

#### *Invisible technical expert in the jury: The environmental certification*

A technical expert is not the only element to agitate the qualitative debate. A rigid environmental certification requirement could also sharply sway the jury. For example, a competition for a science center in a Canadian city had a LEED Platinum certification requirement – the highest rating of LEED – and the only explicit criterion for sustainable development mentioned in the brief. The most redeeming quality for the winning project was not its symbolism, as the jury<sup>2</sup> stated. In their report, they suggested that the winning team rework the symbolism of project, specifically its iconography and materiality. The jury's comments regarding the winning project were very divided. There was much concern about the lack of overall architectural quality in the winning project, especially since the runner-up project was considered spectacular in its symbolism, but could not 'prove' to achieve the LEED certification as easily as the winner.

2 The jury consisted of 9 members: 3 architects, 1 environmental expert/architect, 3 representatives of the client, 1 set-designer, 1 academic.





Figure 6 (left). Maison de la littérature de l'institut Canadien de Québec. Chevalier Morales Architectes, Québec 2011.



Figure 7 (right): Complexe sportif Saint Laurent. Saucier + Perrotte Architectes – Hugh Condon Marier Architectes, Montréal 2010

From the media perception, the most conventional of the projects submitted to this competition won, yet it met the strictest LEED standards mainly from 'tried and true' technical solutions that were easily understandable by the jury and visible to the public (extensive green roof). The multitude of press releases and documents connected to the project emphasized the importance of the project for strengthening the city's position as a leader in sustainable development.

In this competition, the rigid environmental requirements can be considered as the invisible 'member of the jury', driving the entire deliberation process down the path of reducing the debate of architectural quality to a decision of the best project based on the highest potential to achieve the environmental certification: LEED Platinum.

#### *Tacit meta-expert in the jury: The world-renowned architect*

There is another problematic scenario that can be related to either technical or tacit experts – the meta-experts. These actors are perceived as world-renowned specialists of a profession, field of expertise, or domain. They are similar to the technical experts in a jury, specifically in the way they are seen to set an imbalance in the jury deliberation.

An example of this situation was a competition for a cultural center. Here the meta-expert was the jury president<sup>3</sup>. There were four finalists, all projects equally strong. As an observer in this competition's jury deliberation process, it could be seen that there was a deliberate swaying of the jury's perception of the four finalist projects by this meta-expert. In other words, the jury president's

3 The jury consisted of 10 members: 4 architects, 1 environmental expert/architect, 1 representative of the client, 1 artistic director dance and resident of borough, 2 cultural/political representatives, 1 municipal urban planner.

comments regarding the four finalists were intentional in that they were deliberately seeking to eliminate all finalists, except the one which the meta-expert wanted as winner. The way in which this was done was through a series of directed comments by the president followed immediately by an eliminatory vote. In this case, the meta-expert's comments directly influenced the voting and in turn, the selection of the final winner.

*Tacit meta-expert in the jury: The dominating client representative*

In a competition for a science center the jury<sup>4</sup> had 10 members, 4 of which were representatives of the client. The 4 client representatives were not users, but directors of various divisions of the client. Their working association with the winning project was direct, as they were actually all employers with significant deciding power, and this had an impact, since they had considerable pull in directing the outcome of the competition. Their presence in the jury was certainly not trivial. If they did not want to consider a project as a potential finalist, it would not be discussed further; This occurred many times, - not representative of a compelling debate. Yet, everyone else in the jury had to clearly state a case if they wanted to consider omitting a project from the selection - which is representative of a much healthier debate during jury deliberation. In this same competition, we observed that the architects, the tacit (non-meta) experts in the jury were, on the other hand, in a continual state of suspended conclusion and reflective thinking, grounding the evaluations from technical experts within their overall project experience – preferring qualitative debate rather than quick deductions. This produced a series of deep contentious situations.

In this competition, LEED Platinum certification was a very rigid requirement. There were also 3 internationally renowned environmental experts in the jury, one of which was also an architect. They were all *mega-experts*. Even with their international reputations, their viewpoints did not carry much weight when compared to the 4 client representatives who swayed many of the votes to their preferences. It was the dominating presence of the 4 client representatives that determined the finalists, and then finally the winners. This was detrimental to this competition since some projects that were considered great by the architects in the jury, could not be considered as potential winners. These overshadowing experts placed

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4 The jury consisted of 10 members: 4 client (all director positions for the client), 4 architects, one who was an international environmental expert, and 2 world-renowned environmental experts.

extensive pressure on the jury. These tacit experts were actually mega-experts in disguise and their pull on the jury was undeniable.

I conclude this paper with a reflection of these observations through the lens of the contemporary Western condition of risk society in order to contextualize their implication.

### **3. Analysis of Jury Situations through the lens of Risk Society**

How should the question of expert evaluations in competitions be studied? Several other scholars have addressed similar issues from different perspectives. Ideally, in a competition the winning selection is made through a collective deliberation process (Strong, 1996). Qualitative debate in the competition is the means to collectively construct and finally choose the best overall project (Chupin and Cucuzzella, 2011, Van Wezemael et al., 2011). However, as Nasar stated, the jury deliberation process can be very difficult (1999). Kreiner has already observed that architectural competitions are about balancing the variety of concerns in the final judgment (Kreiner, 2010). In an article published in 2009, Kazemian et al, focused their reflection on criteria and judgment processes specifically on the Finnish situation. Volker has discussed the role of expertise in decision making from a psychological perspective (2010). And Saunders has reflected on the nature of the judgment itself (2007). Our own research has shown that it is not only environmental experts that deliberately sway jury decisions (Chupin and Cucuzzella, 2011), but any of the expert-types identified can also purposefully bias jury decisions. In the book published in 2015, by Chupin, Cucuzzella, and Helal, an entire section (of 6 articles) was devoted to questions of judgment. So it is clear that the conflicts related to experts in a competition are complex. The following section presents the analysis of the judgment situations that involve these expert-types from the point of view of a risk society. We begin by distinguishing between expert evaluation and qualitative judgment.

#### **Distinguishing Expert Evaluation and Qualitative Judgment**

Without a qualitative debate during jury deliberation the final choice of the winning project is reduced to a simple vote rather than a collectively constructed judgment. What comprises pragmatic judgment? The American pragmatist James Dewey defines judgment as criticism and further states that:



Figure 8 (left): Centre de diffusion culturel / Edifice Guy-Gagnon. Architectes FABG, Québec 2011.

Figure 9 (right): Centre Culturel Notre-Dame-de-Grace. Atelier Big City, Fichten Soiferman et associés, L'OEUF, Montréal 2010.

Judgment has to evoke a clearer consciousness of constituent parts and to discover how consistently these parts are related to form a whole. Theory gives the name of analysis and synthesis to the execution of these functions. (Dewey, 1934, p.310).

Dewey, however, prefers to refer to these functions as discrimination and unification, and claims that the unifying phase (synthesis) is in fact the creative response and that without a unifying view, criticism (and therefore judgment or emergence) ends in the enumeration of details. The author of «How We Think» (1910 (ed 1933)) claims that there are three main characteristics of judgment:

- (1) a controversy, consisting of opposite claims;
- (2) a process for defining and elaborating claims and of sifting through facts;
- (3) a final decision, therefore arriving at closure.

In order to arrive at a judgment, a series of inquiries where elements such as evidential facts, principles, and tacit knowledge, may all be necessary (Dewey, 1910 (ed 1933), Lera, 1981, Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Evidential facts are a result of the evaluation of empirical data – an objective perspective. Principles provide the worldview – a normative perspective. Tacit knowledge is the knowledge acquired through experience and is considered subjective, where experience is the natural stimuli for reflective inquiry. These three can be related to what Habermas (1985) has termed the cognitive-instrumental (objective), the moral-practical (normative), and the aesthetic-expressive (subjective); all three dimensions of modern culture that have become increasingly detached as they have become increasingly expert driven (Habermas, 1985).

For Dewey (1910 (ed 1933)) reflective thinking is judgment suspended during further inquiry, where a state of doubt is maintained until some conclusion can be finally reached. A judgment therefore arises when there are different meanings, rival interpretations, points of contention regarding some matter at stake, in short, when there is doubt and controversy. Evaluation, on the other hand, is the specific analysis of constituent parts of a whole, an inevitable activity in the criticism of a whole.

Evaluation is then incomplete on its own to judge quality in an architectural project. Yet I have observed in some competition juries how evaluations by technical experts induce quick conclusions as they oversimplify the project by assuming to have enough evidence – knowing that this evidence rests on their fragmented vision of the project. In the competition cases described above, qualitative debate was avoided based on three major reasons:

- (1) a powerful and persuasive opinion by an tacit meta-expert that biases the jury and forces an early convergence to a winner;
- (2) a discursive gap amongst the jurors because the technical expert in the jury leans heavily and forcefully on measurable data from general cases rather than qualitative debate for the specific project; and
- (3) the importance of the environmental certification requirement heavily biases the jury decisions as this must be unquestionably met.

In the cases where a tacit meta-expert is the president or even simply, a member of the jury, for example a world renowned architect or a major client representative, the jury is often swayed in the direction that this expert intends – similar behavior as in the technical expert. The main difference is that in the case of tacit meta-experts, the arguments are perceived as ‘black box’ arguments since they come from extensive and exceptional experience, rather opaque for anyone but the expert himself. When we compare such arguments to those by technical experts, who provide quantified arguments, we can say that these are ‘white box’ arguments.

Going back to the cases with the tacit meta-experts, the debate quickly faded as it converged to the meta-expert’s forceful advice. This can be problematic since the fairness and democratic nature of the competition process is diluted in such an intervention. Here, the qualitative debates were cut short because of a series of forceful and strategic arguments that seemed incontestable to the other jurors.

Since the collective construction of quality was cut short, did the meta-expert confiscate the definition of quality in this competition? And if yes, then judgment in such situations, as elaborated by Dewey, may have been controlled where the controversies were evaded, the elaboration of claims and the sifting through of facts, were abandoned. Yet, we have seen some cases when a tacit meta-expert ‘confiscates’ the debate on quality yet results in great winning projects. This is not always the case however, and the outcomes are not always in favor of the meta-expert’s recommendation as was observed in these Canadian competitions.

In the case where a technical expert, such as an environmental expert, was a member of the jury, the deliberation gave priority to the arguments that could be ‘proven’, or what Habermas (1985) refers to as the cognitive-instrumental objective realm, rather than to those arguments that can be constructed through questions of the moral-practical (normative) or the aesthetic-expressive (subjective) type. Here, criticism and qualitative debate were avoided because the expert did not have ‘whole’ project experience: their expertise lied within the question of performance optimization of buildings.

The paradox is that in many cases, the technical environmental experts are also architects, who normally have ‘whole’ project experience. Yet observations in the jury have shown that, in their role as environmental experts, specifically if they are accredited experts of a certified environmentally rating system their arguments are systemically those related to the certification system. Such an expert opens up a discursive gap in the jury deliberation, leading to deadlock. This is because the project may not meet the quality ideals of an architect in the jury, yet it may meet the quality ideals of the environmental expert in the jury (Cucuzzella, 2013a).

In the case where the environmental management tool was the non-human and invisible technical expert, the main difficulty was in the double-edged situation where there is the questionable validity of such preliminary environmental claims on one end, yet there is a perceived accuracy of these results, accompanied with their strict use, on the other end. This presents a daunting inconsistent and contradictory situation for the jurors.

Furthermore, the question of the validity and reliability of these early environmental evaluations arises. Our previous studies have shown that the timing



Figure 10. Musée National des Beaux-arts du Québec. OMA / Provencher Roy et Associés, architectes, Québec 2009.



Figure 11 (left). Nouvelle bibliothèque de Saint-Laurent. Cardinal Hardy / Labonté Marcl / Éric Pelletier Architecte, Montréal 2009.



Figure 12 (right): Planétarium de Montréal. Cardin Ramirez + Aedifica, Montréal 2008.

of these environmental evaluations in the competition are counter-productive as they occur far too early in the design process (Cucuzzella, 2013). In addition, research has already begun to show that energy estimates conducted early in the design project, which often use ideal scenarios, are far from the actual energy use during post-occupancy phases, so they do not necessarily guarantee better building performance (Burnett, 2007, Newsham et al., 2009, Scofield, 2009, Carassus, 2011). Even if the timing seems paradoxical, in Canada, this is becoming the norm. Here the evaluation of quality emerges from the prescriptions of environmental certifications.

Are the environmental experts – the actors of risk society – conditioning the definition of quality today? This question actually introduces a contemporary paradox where risk society and its plethora of environmental analysis or prescriptive tools are redefining quality in a general sense, and not only for architectural projects. This represents not only a practical but epistemological problem, since more and more today, quantifiable and empirical data is actually needed, not only to design an architectural project but also to judge its quality. Can a reflection on what constitutes a risk society help in untangling the question of environmental experts and their expert evaluations in the competition?

### **Risk Society and the Conflicts among Expert-types**

Beck has stated that society's obsession with risk has deepened the reliance on experts, since they have the very precise knowledge to make the authoritative evaluations based on unambiguous and measurable criteria (1997). In this paper, I refer to these individuals as the technical experts – those experts with exclusive knowledge that is only communicable through metrics and quantified results. In a world where uncertainty or danger are governed by risk managers, it is no

surprise that there is an overcompensation of risk management experts entering the process in design competitions, where uncertainty and ambiguity are the rule rather than the exception.

According to Beck (1992) there is a contradictory existence between progress and risk – risk is increasing because of the industrialization of technology and science, rather than being abated by technology and science. There is a disjunction between cultural production and their environmental and societal repercussions (Giddens, 1991). Giddens argues that there is a need to reshape our theoretical understanding of the modern project, in large part because environmental ecological questions lie within a framework of manufactured uncertainties<sup>5</sup>. The emerging relevance of new ways of thinking of future consequences, such as the precautionary principle rests on the failure of traditional scientific approaches to deal with such uncertainty, but more importantly, on the myth of scientific progress which reduces the world to produced artefacts driven by the efficiency of technology (Larceneux and Boutelet, 2005, Latouche, 2006, Cucuzzella, 2011). However the critique of technology, expertise, and even efficiency is not new.

As far back as 1954, in his original and seminal French publication, *The Technological Society*, Ellul identified a perplexing paradox with technology while critiquing the ideology of efficiency. He claimed that technology drives intention and so individuals have become the slaves of the technologic society, where “the multiplicity of means is reduced to one: the most efficient” (Ellul, 1964, p.21). He stated that:

(...) the individual participates only to the degree that he is subordinate to the search for efficiency, to the degree that he resists all the currents today considered secondary, such as aesthetics, ethics, fantasy. Insofar as the individual represents this abstract tendency, he is permitted to participate in the technical creation, which is increasingly independent of him and increasingly linked to its own mathematical law. (Ellul, 1964, p.74)

For this author, technique is rigorously objective. He claims that all methods are rationally arrived at, are based on absolute efficiency, and this in turn has transcended

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5 The distinction between manufactured and natural risks is increasingly blurred because of the global condition of environmental impacts. WHITESIDE, K. H. 2006. *Precautionary Politics: Principle and Practice in Confronting Environmental Risk*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, STIRLING, A. 2007. *Deliberate futures: precaution and progress in social choice of sustainable technology*. *Sustainable Development*, 15, 286-295.



the individual's desire or ability to think and act outside this technological realm weakening humanity's ability for creativity and reflection. He argued that:

*Technique, in the form of psychotechnique, aspires to take over the individual, that is, to transform the qualitative into the quantitative. It knows only two possible solutions: the transformation or annihilation of the qualitative (Ellul, pp. 286-287).*

If a thought cannot be transformed into the quantitative then, is it really annihilated, as Ellul has stated? Although this may be an extreme perspective of civilization in modernity, evidence has shown that there is a definite affinity towards the quantitative over the qualitative when technical experts are members of the competition jury process.

In the same year that Ellul published *The Technological Society*, Heidegger published *The Question Concerning Technology*. Heidegger (1977 (1954)) refers to technology as both, a means to an end and as a human tool – being instrumental in the latter, and anthropological in the recent. The instrumental reveals more than it conceals. In the following quote, Heidegger (1977 (1954)) explains that technology involves securing various ends through means, but this does not necessarily indicate that we can control the ends.

*Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, “get” technology “spiritually in hand.” We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control. (Heidegger, 1977 (1954), p.5)*

This reflection was further elaborated by Hannah Arendt with regards to technological innovation in modern society in her seminal book, *The Human Condition*, published in 1958 (Arendt, 1998[1958]). She realized the weakness of human action in modern society and identified a paradox with regards to the ecology of action in modern society – a situation where, as humans become more powerful through an increase in technological progress, the ability for humans to be able to control the consequences based on technological innovations decreases. This paradox is amplified, since the process of predicting potential risks in order to reduce them is ever more prevalent in modern society yet, uncertainty is the basic condition of the outcomes of technological innovations.

This paradox identified in the 1950s is still relevant today for helping to better understand the situation of expertise in the competition. In a risk society, qualities and outcomes that cannot be measured are harshly challenged - including dimensions of aesthetics and fantasy. And this is one of the main reasons why environmental certifications for buildings have become so important because they allow for the utmost *perceived* control (as far as humanity has been able to predict to date) of potential risks in buildings. This presents an obvious problem when assessing the overall quality of architectural projects.

## Concluding Discussion

From an understanding of risk society as a society of experts to our engaging criticism of modernity through the paradoxes of conflicting technological experts, I have reflected on how deeply these issues are rooted in our contemporary western condition. The attraction of risk management tools, such as environmental certifications, is that they have predictive powers where decisions are simpler to rationalize; humans are very comfortable with this type of support for decision-making.

Furthermore, I have seen in Canadian competitions that the inclusion of an environmental expert in the jury (rather than an external expert) has become a main protagonist of the impoverishment of qualitative debate, since judgment is driven by environmental guidelines. Can the drivers for innovation lie within a prescriptive environmental methodology, especially during the early phases of conceptualization? Is the instrumentality of the environmental certification as a means towards better performance in buildings redirecting the architect's energy of fantasy or imaginary?

I am not suggesting the exclusion of the technical experts in a competition process, or the total exclusion of rigid prescriptive green building rating systems, which, in their current use, may stifle creativity in the search for innovative solutions. Rather if I am asked, as an expert on competition research, to provide a recommendation, I could formulate three. First, ironically, I would advise that the technical experts should remain external to the jury process, since their project vision is limited at best, and fragmentary at worst and could have a counter-productive impact on the way in which quality is established. Second, that the expert evaluations are included in the jury deliberation, but that final judgment is suspended until all claims from all jurors have been heard in order to avoid oversimplifying a given project. Third, that environmental management tools

such as green building rating systems are used as guidelines by competitors without having to be part of the competition process at all.

The dichotomy between performance measurements and the complexity of projects is a disciplinary problematic. This becomes quite evident in the competition and represents a point of fragility since some jury members prefer to measure quality from an objective perspective, while others will argue that the notion of architectural quality can only be debated in order to arrive at a collective construction.

Can I say that all that is left of the complexity of the project through the filter of the technical experts are the technical details? In this light, the conflict of experts may then be summed up as the contradiction between the fact that technical experts escape the complexity of design projects yet, clients require technical expert advice to counter-balance the architect's tacit knowledge. Technical experts in this sense, appear to be rather remote to the very idea of a competition as a space for qualitative debate and judgment.

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## Abstract

This paper is an explorative case study regarding the architect competition 2013 for a new campus building at the Aalto Campus outside Helsinki. The aim is to clarify how sustainability concepts are used in architect competitions, and to analyze how sustainability requirements are implemented in architect competitions. The case study includes a concept analysis, combined with analyses of current German and Swiss competition rules on sustainability. The outcome of the paper is a presentation of the jury's assessment and the articulation of quality and sustainability issues in the Jury Report. The goal is to provide a deeper understanding of how the architect competition format works in matters of sustainability. In this case the Jury Report leaves sustainability issues without mention while the main issues articulated are: architecture, functionality, the urban landscape and the development in phase 2.

**Key words:** sustainability, architect competition, jury report, concept analysis

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# Sustainability requirements in Architectural Competitions

*The Aalto campus 2015 case*

LEIF ÖSTMAN

## Research problem

The sustainability concept is big and complex according to Frey and Yaneske (2007). It has clearly got more established since the early steps in the seventies and eighties especially through United Nations initiatives, and has found its way into corporate management, into the administration of the civil society and also into the legislation regarding the built environment. Its integration into the systems of architect competitions is, however, unclear. In 1995 Lapintie, Kjellberg and Lainevuoto found that there was “almost no trace of the ecological perspective” in Finnish competitions (1995, p. 244). They stress the need to manage opportunities and risks in an open situation (Ibid., p. 257).

Architect competitions are central to the profession in Finland (Kazemian, Rönn and Svensson 2007, p. 26) which indicates that it is an important topic to study and discuss; an increased emphasis on sustainability will mean that we will have to consider the implications of this change, on the system of competition and how it is taken into consideration. The first section in the Finnish Land Use and Building Act states that it aims at “creating preconditions for a favourable living environment” and at “promoting ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable development”. It also stresses the importance of openness, expertise and information (1999). It is quite common to frame sustainability as an optimization of social, economic and ecological benefits (see for example Rogers, Jalal and Boyd 2007). This is not yet an operational definition but indicates a holistic approach. There are also approaches with distinctive indicators as a means to quantify the impact of imposed changes in the environment.

The basic aim of architect competitions is to select a winner, and there are two basic types of competitions; ideas competitions and project competitions (Kazemian, Rönn and Svensson 2005, p. 15). In a broader setting the aim is to get

a set of ideas, the best solution to the task and to find an architect for the project. In their study of competition practices in Scandinavia Kazemian et al. also found that many of their informants saw it as a procurement process (Ibid., p. 29). They also found that information and publicity is a common feature in architect competitions, though the evaluation process tend not to be open to the public. They found that the written evaluation report is important and will have an impact on the realization (Ibid., p. 20). The jury reports are published by the architects associations in the Nordic countries (Kazemian, Rönn and Svensson 2007, p. 51).

Architecture is typically judged holistically. Many aspects of a solution must be considered: functionality, structural issues, economy and of course artistic considerations. All these aspects can be weighed differently depending on the preferences of the individual. Magnus Rönn concludes the findings of his interview-based surveys about competitions, transforming these findings into a set of dilemmas. One of them being the problem of foreseeing the coming jury evaluation, another the dilemma emerging between the interests of the architects as a professional community and the interests of the client (Rönn 2009; 2007, p. 165ff). For the client it is a procurement process. The architects expect the competitions to act as an education arena for architects. Simultaneously they also act as an arena for development of new artistic codes, as a promoter of architecture as an art (Östman 2005, p. 317). In a situation with split interests it is of course important that the values can be communicated between different interest groups, and agreed on.

It appears impossible to find a simple definition for sustainability and therefore we in the sense of Wittgenstein rather have to look at how the concepts are used, and how they are used in the settings of architect competitions (Lundequist 1999, 13). Jerker Lundequist stresses the importance of concept clarification in a short booklet on architectural research, with reference to Peter Vinch and his proposals for research (Lundequist 1999), asking for clarification of the meaning of actions and concepts that constitute human praxis, in this case architectural praxis. The reasoning behind this case study would be that it is important to study competitions as it is central in the architects' profession in Finland, and sustainability is a topic that has been more and more incorporated into processes in society, and thus also into architect competition practices. The basic research question is: How are sustainability issues addressed in competitions and in their evaluation? The aim is for the case study to provide some answers on



how sustainability is described as a key concept in the competition programme, translated into design solutions and later evaluated and reported by the competition jury. The most remarkable finding in this study is that there is hardly any mention of sustainable issues in the Jury Report despite the very ambitious objective to “create the world’s best sustainable university campus” according to the Competition Programme (2012, p.6).

## Research methods

This is an exploratory case study, based on the Campus 2015 competition at the Aalto University in Finland (Aalto University 2013b) which concerns a new big campus building at the very center of the Otaniemi university campus close to Helsinki. The campus was originally designed by Alvar Aalto starting from a competition proposal in 1949. The case study is combined with interviews and a close reading of competition material. The selection of case is motivated with the national and professional interest associated with this competition. The uniqueness of this competition motivates the chosen format of a single case study, though the articulation of sustainability issues is compared with two other recent competitions with an emphasis on sustainability, Ylläs villages 2010 and Sibbesborg 2011.

The aim of this study is to analyze the use and understanding of sustainability concepts. The goal is to explore the issue of sustainability in an important competition with a strong emphasis on sustainability. Important here is theory-building (Yin 1984, p. 99ff; Groat and Wang 2001, p. 341ff) as means of clarifying concepts. The case study includes a concept analysis, combined with analyses of the current German and Swiss recommendations for evaluation of sustainability in competitions. The aim has been explanation-building (Yin 1984, p. 107), starting from theoretical propositions as a strategic means to guiding the analysis of the material (Ibid., p. 100). The original hypothesis was that evaluation reports from competitions will articulate the way in which the jury address sustainability issues and qualities. Thus the units of analysis are the statements about sustainability, with architectural quality statements seen as subunits.

The case study has been supplemented by focused interviews as a means to verifying the interpretations of the process. Six members of the jury have been interviewed; the chair and five professional jurors. One expert on sustainability has also been interviewed. The interviews are based on open questions related to the subject, exploring how the respondents see these issues, broadening the

understanding of the process and of issues with varying interpretations. The central issues to be explored are: How was the judgment constructed? Which features of the competition process were important for the outcome? As a means to optimizing the research effort I have limited the number of interviews to jurors with a central role in the jury and representing different interests. The interviews with the architects have been supplemented by interviews with other professionals involved in order to test potentially divergent professional perspectives.

The intention of this case study is to construct a valid case description, based on evidence and producing analytic conclusions. The results cannot be used to generalize about these issues, but can point out weaknesses, and make them more open to scrutiny and debate. Indirectly this case study also addresses the question how far protocols should be taken as statements about the qualities of the proposals; or is it the selection as such that constitutes the core element of the judgement together with the images presented in the drawings? The material is used to construct reasoning and the reasoning should link different aspects of thinking to the empirical material and findings.

Hélène Lipstadt asks for relational studies of the field of competitions as a means to overcoming the danger of an affirmative attitude towards the subject one is studying (2009). She relates architects' professional interest in competitions to Bourdieu's concept "illusio", implicating their blindness for the real power structures within this field of architectural practice. This will distort architect researchers' attempts to study competitions objectively. Thus, the intention is to "construct methodically the space of possible points of view on the literary (artistic) act" (Ibid., p. 193) as a matter of positions in a space of "possibles" (Ibid., p. 301). This is done by a stakeholder analysis combined with interview questions, indicating the central action space and cultural positions different agents hold or take due to their professional or given social position, and as Lipstadt sees it "induces a rupture, with intellectualism" (2010). Lipstadt's proposal, with reference to Bourdieu, is to look at the situation as a board game (Ibid.). If one looks at the jury as a board game, it poses an assumption that for example jurors hold different stakes providing more or less potential for creating a shift of the reading and evaluation of the proposals. Seeing the jury work as a board game relocates the case study to a more nuanced and interpretative stance, reducing the potential naivety hidden in a purely descriptive case study approach.

## Sustainability and competitions

It is very difficult to define or describe what would be the relevant sustainability criteria to check in a competition assessment. It was also an initial idea of this research project to try to find out, from the empirical material of the Campus 2015, how the sustainability criteria are defined or expressed. The problem is not only that there is an immense number of topics that can count as sustainability criteria, but the weight of each criterion can also vary depending on what the goals are. It is possible to claim that sustainability preferably should include a wide variety of issues, such as life cycle costs, CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions, social sustainability, nature preservation, indoor climate, energy and material efficiency, to mention a few. Looking at publications about architecture and sustainability one soon realizes that they are mostly presenting examples of built solutions, as some kind of inspirational material, including pictures of the architecture and basic descriptions of sustainable principles applied in the project. One publication of this type is *Sustainable Architecture and Urbanism* by Gauzin-Müller (2002), which also holds a more comprehensive explanation about what criteria or trends the author has detected and that have been put into practice.

There is one level of political action regarding sustainability based on governmental regulations and public initiatives. Complementary to this, there are various private initiatives towards sustainability. These are often about creating an architecture that is so to say “more sustainable” than the formal requirements. The initiator can be commercial companies, private communities or individuals. Here we sometimes also meet the traditions of utopian architecture. On a different level we find approaches spread through value principles such as high-tech and low-tech, but also setting the core standards in humanism and in social and democratic environmentalism or on commercial branding by means of certified labels (Gauzin-Müller 2002, p. 16f). We also find that some of these issues tend to be manifested in the architectural language. Foster + Partners is a well-known representative of high-tech architecture. According to their web-site they combine “advances in technology with sensitivity to culture and location” (fosterandpartners.com 2013). Gauzin-Müller (2002, p. 16) claims that Paolo Soleri is the most notable exponent of the low-tech, with his Arcosanti village. Low-tech often includes the use of the materials wood, clay and turf roofs in a European context. Thus the tendency towards low-tech also tends to show in the architecture, which can be seen as standing in contrast to futuristic high-tech sustainable architecture, but also in relation to sustainable

architecture approaches with conventional architecture and materials (Fuchs 2012).

Many ideas that have started as political movements are today part of legislation. In Finland the demand for sustainable development was added in 1990 (Lag om ändring av byggnadslagen 1990, section 1). In 1985 new regulations regarding preservation of old buildings had been introduced (Lag om ändring av byggnadslagen 1985, section 34), and in 1994 new rules for the assessment of environmental impact (Lag om förfarande vid miljökonsekvensbedömning 1994) were added, to mention a few Finnish examples. Currently we are seeing a series of legislative initiatives in all Europe regarding energy efficiency in the wake of the European Commission directive (2011). One earlier private counterpart to this development is of course the German Passivhause initiative. Currently there are also a number of semi-private initiatives aiming at providing certificates according to given standards for sustainable buildings, for example BREEAM and Green Building.

Competitions are regulated by competition rules and by the individual competition programmes, and of course by existing legislation. Currently all issues in competitions are assessed holistically by mainly professional jurors, potentially supported by analyses by external professionals or consultants. Another approach is to specify certain analyses and formats required in the competition programme, thus shifting the responsibility for the analyses to the contestants, as an addition to the scope of work included in a procurement process. This is a solution that was included in a comment by Seppo Junnila in the interviews after the Aalto Campus competition (2013). He, as a professor of Real Estate Business at Aalto University with experience of competitions and expertise in Life-cycle Technologies and Management, Sustainable Buildings and Industrial Ecology, claims that it could have been improved with requirements for energy modeling and calculations, which would also give an indication of the sustainability competence of the architects (Ibid.). Junnila, basing himself on his previous experiences in Finnish competitions and projects, claims that it is possible to address sustainability issues in competitions but they should have a different format, geared towards innovation. He sees the usefulness of a competition truly oriented towards sustainability in the replicability of the results (Junnila 2013). In this case, with its strong orientation towards a unique architecture in a unique situation, architecture will inevitably be the dominating issue (Ibid.).

A third alternative for promoting sustainability is to use checklists and professional analyses as tools to support the process. I have found models for checklists in Germany and Switzerland. The Swiss SNARC-project was established as a recommendation by the Schweizerischer Ingenieur- und Architekten-Verein (SIA) for sustainability in public constructions in Switzerland (SIA 2004). The Swiss SNARC recommendation is from 2004 (SIA 2004). The German federal SNAP-Recommendations is from 2013 (Fuchs, Hartmann, Heinrich, Wagner and Zeumer 2013). The German recommendations are based on a dissertation by Matthias Fuchs (2012). Fuchs has studied the existing tools and methods within the German competition system, analyzed and selected the most important benchmarks of criteria for sustainability, and developed a system of evaluation criteria including recommendations (Fuchs 2012, p. 22f; Fuchs et al. 2013b). He had also tested the methods in one case study. One should note that these are only recommendations (SNAP is, however, compulsory for federal projects in Germany (2012, p. 14) and that the systematic approach must be applied with flexibility, adapting it to the situation and the goals of each competition, specifying what are the intended sustainability goals and, of course, an optimization of time spent on preparations and evaluations (Fuchs 2012, p. 154ff). Fuchs concludes that a concept design phase, which is what the competitions are, must provide a comprehensive picture of the sustainability criteria but they must also remain transparent and simple, and must not promote a "Spezialistentum", i.e. avoid shifting the judgmental power to external experts (Ibid., p. 155f). Sustainability is a central issue in architecture and the production of built environment, but Fuchs says, with references to Kaltenbrunner: "sustainability is not determining an architecture style, this is always an outcome of the societal and situational context" (2012, p. 12).

The German recommendations estimate that only 1/5 of the indicators of sustainability can be determined accurately on the basis of the content of the competition proposals and their illustrations and documents (Lintz 2013; Fuchs et al. 2013). It is preferable that at least one of the jurors has an extensive knowledge of sustainability issues (Ibid., p. 148). Fuchs recommends a traditional presentation of the evaluation criteria: design, functionality, comfort, health, economy, as well as resources and energy (Ibid., p. 136). The basic evaluation is done in an initial evaluation process based on checklists, potentially by means of software, conducted by experts. The checklist and the selection of criteria should be based on the goals of the competition and the client.

The basic differentiation of sustainability is based on three sustainable aspects; economical, ecological and social dimensions (Fuchs 2012). He uses a diagram to describe the multitude of sustainability issues (according to some German public recommendations) and their tendency to overlap. The idea is that within this diagram the emphasis can be shifted according to client goals, depending on how detailed it should be (Fuchs 2012, p. 12 and 21) and expressed in a more schematic manner. Below a scheme (dashed line) indicating an emphasis on the culture of built environment, sustainability and energy.

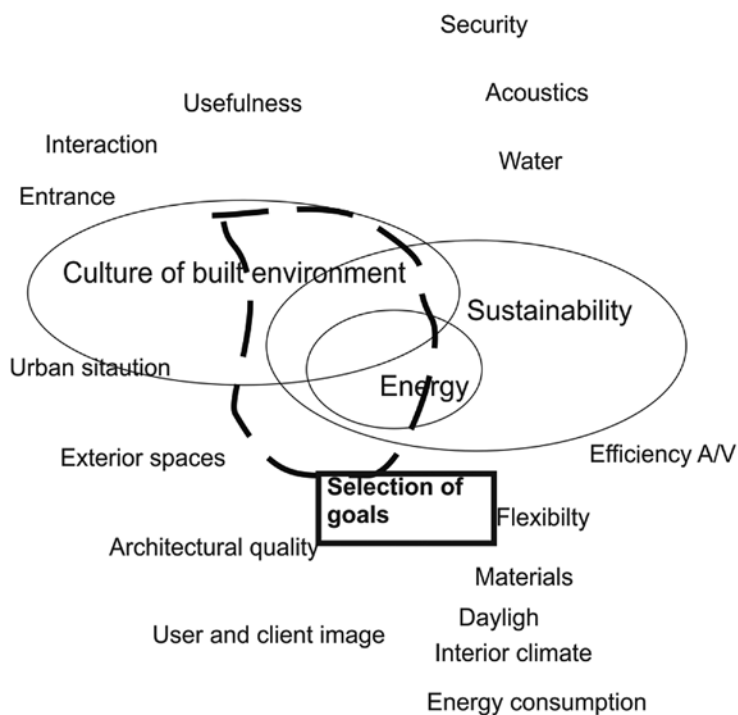


Figure 1. Distribution of sustainability values and selection of goals (simplified and translated from Fuchs (2012).

A conclusion could be that there is no simple method to assess sustainability in architectural competitions. Frey and Yaneske advocates decomposition into subtopics as a way of managing the complexity of sustainability, but prefer a

holistic approach in their book on sustainability in cities and regions (2007, p. 61ff). Fuchs' opinion is that the judgement power must remain within the jury. It seems, on the other hand, that there is a need for extended competence on sustainability in competitions, exceeding the (current) competence of architects. The amount of competence needed is of course dependent on the requirements, which must be stated in the programme.

## The competition

The competition was an open international competition with a competition programme initially prepared by the Aalto University Properties Ltd and written by a consultant and checked by the representatives of the client, The Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA) and the competition jury. The aim was to select a winning entry which will form the basis for a detailed plan for the campus area (Aalto University 2013b) and according to Finnish Competition Rules it should designate the winner as architect for the project (SAFA 2008). Due to the delicate request to add a substantial amount of floor area (48.000-52.000 m<sup>2</sup>) to the very heart of the Otaniemi campus designed by the architect Alvar Aalto, and listed by the National Board of Antiquities, combined with the branding interests of the recently constituted Aalto University, the competition must be seen as a very demanding and important competition in the Finnish architectural context. This is also the reason why professor emeritus Wilhelm Helander was invited as a juror, as a representative of the Aalto foundation (Chair 2013). The competition was a two stage competition, with the 1<sup>st</sup> phase 15 April-10 August 2012 attracting 189 proposals, from which six were selected for the second phase. Expert analyses were requested for 12 proposals (traffic, ecology, scope, and costs). Representatives of the various communities (staff, students, and faculty) at Otaniemi took part in workshops and commented on the best proposals<sup>1</sup>. The second phase took place 15 January – 15 May 2013 and the winner was presented on 27 September 2013.

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1 The University wanted to involve the staff in the process as a way of creating an open and transparent process (Chair 2013), but after consulting advice they accepted the normal procedure of SAFA competitions with very limited public access to the proposals before the jury had finished its work. Some small images of the proposals were published, but the independent jurors wanted to avoid the danger of competitors borrowing ideas. According to juror C it is possible to understand and record details within a second, which in his opinion obscures the idea of a true competition (2013).

The jury consisted of 14 jurors, chaired by the Dean of the Arts, Design and Architecture School Helena Hyvönen. Professor Trevor Harris and architect Aaro Artto were appointed as SAFA-jurors, i.e. independent jurors according to the Competition Rules (SAFA 2008). The university wanted an open process and invited representatives of the students, the staff, the faculty, the university properties and the Aalto foundation. The jury also invited experts, among others for sustainable development, traffic and costs (Aalto University 2013b, p. 6f).

The process was initiated by the Aalto University Properties Ltd, asking the architect Andrew Harrison to compile a preliminary spatial me based on the existing spaces at the current campuses. This was followed by supplementary consultant investigations and negotiations regarding parking, traffic and were achieved by committees at the university (Juror E 2013). The vision of a bike and pedestrian friendly environment came straight from the president of the university, and the details of the sustainability approach was defined through committees and workshops at the university; it was initially condensed to a 10-page programme and later on into the Design Goals in the Competition Programme, with a section dedicated to ecological sustainability (2012, section 4.7). At this stage there was no knowledge of the possibility of getting a metro station to the campus area (Juror E, 2013). Sustainability was one among the 10 objectives of the competition, being condensed to “[...] provides the potential to create the world’s best sustainable university campus” in the Competition Programme (Aalto University 2012). Seppo Junnila, Professor at Aalto University, with experience of competitions and expertise in sustainable buildings was invited as an external specialist (Aalto University 2013b). He was not involved in the writing of the programme or defining the objectives, but before the evaluation of the first phase he was asked what is possible to get from the entries with the given objectives regarding sustainability. As an answer he provided some advice to the jury (Junnila 2013). The analysis of the cost calculation consultant was also used as a measure (floor area ratios) to evaluate the energy efficiency of the proposals (Junnila 2013; Juror E 2013). In a later stage of phase 1, Junnila was asked to analyze a dozen entries selected as first class entries (Aalto University 2013b, p. 18ff). He provided a written report which he presented to the jury, answering related questions, but did not attend the jury’s evaluation meeting (Junnila 2013). Junnila as an expert on sustainability was not a juror but an external expert. There was no sustainability expert in the jury. The procedure was repeated in the second phase. According to Junnila all the first class entries



met requirements regarding optimal orientation of the building mass and the windows, and included some kind of solar panels (Ibid.). He found only a few, in the total mass of 189 proposals, that showed real competence regarding solar or energy systems. In the interview he also pointed out that it is difficult to select materials without proper knowledge of how they are produced. He took brick as an example of how wrong a simplified conclusion regarding its general sustainability can be, pointing out that it is not enough to use such simple rules of thumb in the jury's evaluation, but that in this case there was no possibility to evaluate such matters due to the lack of information (Ibid.).

The independent SAFA jurors, together with the two professors of architecture that constituted a core jury have, due to their role and position, very much judgmental power compared to the rest of the jury members. This is supported by the words of Juror B, claiming that their task is to manage the evaluation process (2013) and by Juror E and the Chair who stated that they see them as representing architectural competence (Juror E 2013). There is a majority of professionals in the jury (Aalto University 2013b, p. 7) and as it is a building for the School of Arts, Design and Architecture the users are represented by designers or architects, too (Aalto University 2012, p. 6f; Chair 2013). All in all there are only four or five of the 14 jurors who do not have a close professional relation to architectural design.

The jury was divided between two proposals, at the two final jury meetings, between entry 125 "4927700 Leap" and entry 131 "VÄRE" (Chair 2013; Juror E), the latter being finally selected as the winner. These proposals are very different as regards their architecture and the debate is said to have been very intense in the final jury meetings, described as an excellent example of professional dialogue about architecture (Chair 2013, Juror A 2013). The major distinction is that entry 125 presents a very well defined exterior whereas entry 131 is a collection of modules lacking a distinctive shape. One juror explains it: Entry 125 would do very well as an image published in a magazine but entry 131 has much more to offer on site, though it will not be very photogenic (Juror A 2013). Entry 125 is a compact body described as "An extremely well-studied and worked-out project" and "The entry is a very strong one, especially for its urban touch, the qualities of its interior spaces, and its overall feasibility" (Aalto University 2013b, p. 179). A definite disadvantage is, however, "In places, it would be difficult for some users to enjoy direct natural light or to see or sense the landscaped surroundings owing to the depth of the building" (Ibid., p. 182). According to the chair, most jurors saw the advantages of entry 125, but in the end entry 131 was selected, after voting (Ibid., p. 202). There was no debate at

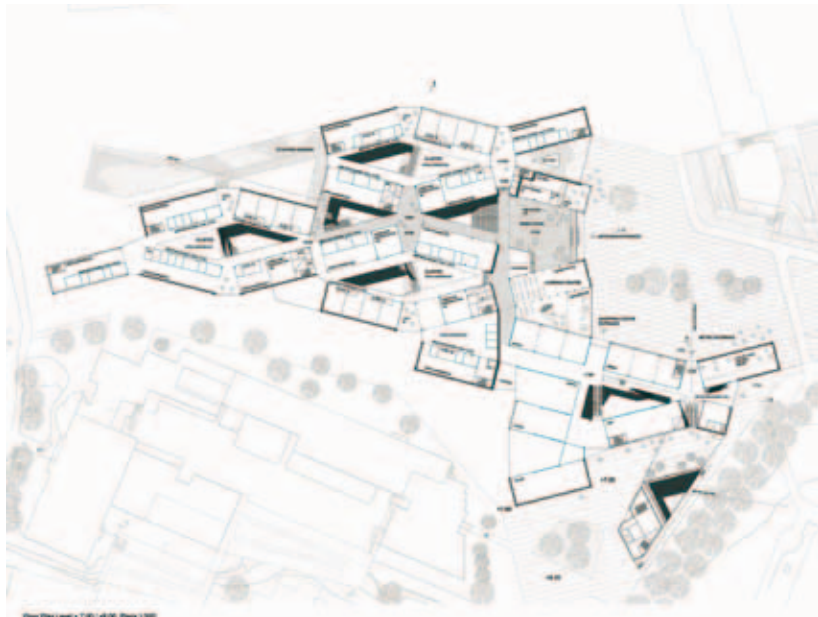


Figure 2. Entry 131 “VÄRE” plan.

all afterwards, which according to Juror E can be seen as an indication of an acceptance of the judgment (and the jurors) despite the split in the jury (2013). Still, one SAFA-juror wanted his disagreement noted in the protocol (Chair 2013).

Sustainability is addressed in the Jury Report, phase 1, with the title environmental solutions and starting with wind as “a major challenge”, stating that “creating a reasonable microclimate and pleasant conditions in outside areas” was “a high priority”, and with the need to have any energy or sustainability solution “firmly integrated with the general architectural principles” (2013b, p. 16). Most of the comments are about the need for further studies and analysis. These comments are not touched on in the (general) evaluation of phase 2 (*Ibid.*, p. 164ff).

## Concept analysis

The original idea was to establish an understanding of quality concepts by means of investigating empirical material (protocol statements) and be means of interviews. It turned out that the competition protocol almost totally lacked statements about sustainability issues. Due to the lack of sustainability statements in

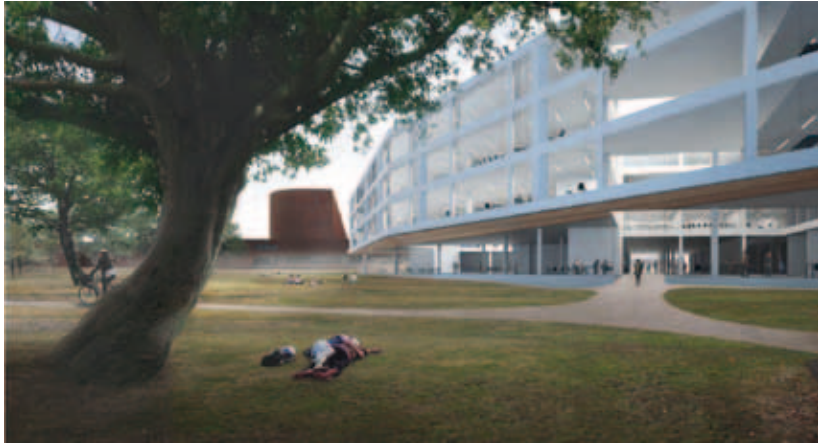


Figure 3. Entry 125 “4927700 Leap” Illustration of Leap entry with Aalto main building in the background.

the evaluation protocol it was decided to analyze statements about quality concepts and the occurrence of different types of statements as a means to getting a more detailed analysis of the evaluation and where the emphasis is placed in the evaluation protocol.

The categories for the concept analysis were selected by means of an analysis of the concepts used in the evaluation report, combined with a classification according to the objectives mentioned in the Competition Programme (Aalto University 2012) and the supplementary instructions for the second phase (Aalto University 2013). The categories were selected to show the different qualities, where each sentence is an indication of only one type of quality. Sometimes the distinction between categories is not very clear but this problem is mostly related to architectural quality, usability or organization, which are not of central concern in this analysis.

The quality statements of the six entries in the second phase have been classified in comparison to given programme evaluation requirements; see Figure 4. The categories that generated most comments are highlighted as they seem to indicate some sort of differentiation and reason why the entry has been selected for Phase 2<sup>2</sup>, i.e. entry 011 has most comments on organization and experiences, whereas entry 075 attracted comments on functionality and urban landscape and

2 There is a rather well established practice in Finland, though not documented, of selecting a variety of proposals showing the most potential and different ideas emerging from the competition as prize winning proposals.

was seen to have been developed well (2013b, p. 174f). It is important to note that some of these statements might be negative, too. The most frequent quality statements concern architecture, the urban landscape, spatial organization, respect for the existing architecture and the new unique Aalto University identity. It seems that the development of the entries during phase 2 has been an important criterion to the jury (Juror C 2013), even though it is not so clearly mentioned in the Phase 2 Competition Programme. Client interest in the form of daylight, feasibility and flexibility are issues that the jury has seen as important to address in the Jury Report (Chair 2013). Entry number 176 is evaluated as being “among the most promising proposals” but it “has lost most of its best qualities during Phase 2” and generated much less evaluative statements (Aalto University 2013b). There are also some unrelated general statements in the evaluations, which are noted as “excluded”. One typical statement is about the professionalism of the architects, an issue also mentioned by one of the interviewees as a quality indicator that surfaced in the evaluation from time to time but was found to be outside the scope of the evaluation of the entries (Juror A 2013).

It was the intention to provide every proposal with a comment in phase 1, but due to lack of time and the large number of proposals the commentary is very brief (Juror B). On the other hand this was a protocol based on thorough evaluation (Chair 2013; Juror D 2013; Juror E 2013) and thus it seems reasonable to think that it shows the evaluation of the jury. The system with parallel protocols is interesting enough; meaning the protocols of the meetings and the Jury Report, where the latter forms a kind of appendix to the protocol of the final jury meeting.

It is clear that the most sophisticated evaluation statements are devoted to architectural and organizational aspects, as well as the urban landscape, and this emphasis seems appropriate. Similarly, it seems correct to make only one or two comments on such issues as metro connection, main entrance or feasibility. It is also possible to rearrange spatial solutions and change the selection of materials or the organization of facades later on, but it is, of course, important to put forward comments where improvement is needed. It is, however, surprising that sustainability, bicycle routes and health are hardly ever mentioned, and when this aspect is commented upon on one occasion, it is only as a statement that solar panels do not fit in well with the surrounding architecture (Jury Report 2013, p. 196); in this case one comment in the Jury Report is that the texts attached to the entries presenting sustainability and ecological issues “are of a

Nr	Evaluations	sum	011	075	125	131	135	176
1	Functionality	6	1	5				
2	Architecture	29	2	3	7	5	7	5
3	Spatial	11	3	2	3	2		1
4	Organisation	23	6	1	7	4	2	3
5	Respecting existing Aalto	17	7	1	4	2	3	
6	Experiences	14	6	4	2	1	1	
7	Respecting the program	4	2		1	1		
8	Urban landscape	22	1	7	2	1	5	6
9	Greenery	3	1		1		1	
10	Study environment	5		1	1	2	1	
11	Sustainable	1					1	
12	Development in phase 2	22	1	7	1	2	9	2
13	Scale & proportions	6			2	3		1
14	Spatial program	6		4		2		
15	Interaction	8	3	1	1	3		
16	Extension potential	3	1	1	1			
17	Pedestrian and bicycle	1			1			
18	Flexibility	10	1	2	2	3	2	
19	Efficient & feasible	10	2	2	3	1	2	
20	Technically advanced	1					1	
21	Health	0						
22	Daylight	10		2	4	1	3	
23	Materiality	4		2				2
24	Location southwest	1					1	
25	Contact to metro	6	2	1	1	1		1
26	Clear main entrance	4	1		2	1		
27	Creation of central square	6	1	2	1		1	1
29	Unique Aalto identity	21	4	3	7	5	2	
Ex	Comments not matching program requirements	7	1		2			4
	Sum	261	46	51	56	40	42	26

Figure 4. Concept analysis of phase 2 Jury Report

rather general nature without being clearly communicated in the design itself" (Ibid., p. 197).

This concept analysis concentrates on the Jury Report, assuming as said before, that the protocol expresses the final evaluation due to its thorough checking. Some of the critical comments from the interviews in the earlier Sibbesborg competition were that text and images appeared disconnected from each other in the entries (Merikoski, Eräranta and Staffans 2012, 58ff). Another similar critical point was that the jurors approached the entries from different perspectives, some from the images and some from the texts, and thus also using the text in different ways. Some used the text as primary sources and indicators of solutions and the images only as support, whereas others used the images as the starting point and the text mainly as supportive of the ideas (Ibid.). There are also very few comments on sustainability in the Ylläs competition despite its devotion to a sustainable ecology for a tourist village (SAFA 2010).

## Conclusions

There appears to have been an open and productive communicative jury process allowing the voices of all jurors to be heard. It seems that there were about five architect jurors (a kind of core jury, similar to the Smedsby case study (Östman 2012)) taking part actively in the analyses and discussions, while representing the stakeholders of architecture and constituting a *de facto* majority. One conclusion from this case would be that the jury constituted a competent and heterogeneous team of professionals in the field of architecture, cultural heritage, urban planning and design, economy and user interests (Aalto University 2013b, Juror D, 2013). The evaluation ends in an ultimate debate between two architectural positions, which must be interpreted as a notion of the truly architectural nature of this competition. The client (both the University and the Aalto University Properties) wanted an open process, and as a central public body in Finnish society it should aim at transparency; this is a way of creating legitimacy and acceptance for the project (Juror E 2013). On the other hand it is, according to juror B, the task of the independent SAFA-jurors to manage the evaluation process and to write the evaluations (Juror B 2013). Here it becomes clear that these jurors did not see it as important to articulate the evaluation of sustainability, or they did not have the competence to address it. The neglect of sustainability issues in the report is questionable, especially as several jurors confirmed that they found the input by the sustainability expert helpful (Juror

A 2013; Juror C 2013). In a critical comment a non-architect juror claims that architect competitions constitute a specific form for procurement of high-rank architect services, reaching its legitimacy through the competition (Juror D), indicating that this is the main aim, and that the detailed solutions including sustainability are to be solved later by the selected architect.

There is a value in the client allowing all voices to be heard, creating legitimacy for the project. It is, however, clear that in such a situation there is an obvious imbalance in power regarding the right to judge architecture, for example between a student of architecture and a professor of architecture, regardless of the statement that this was a very egalitarian jury process (Juror A 2013, Juror C 2013). If there is no difference there is little need for [professors and] education. The board game is played with the trumps of professional competence, with the architects accepted as professionals regarding architecture, functionality and urban design, whereas the representatives of the client play the cards of economy, usability and the client brand. Traffic, cost calculation and sustainability are issues that were for the most part investigated outside the jury. This left the judgment to the architect jurors, which is in line with the SAFA Competition Rules regarding the composition of the jury panel (2008): “At least 1/3 of the judges must be professionals in a relevant field”. It is not necessary, according to this recommendation, for the specialist of sustainability to take a central position but the issue as such must be given prominence alongside the issues about the urban development, architecture, economy and functionality (Ibid.). It is important to note the difference between the democratic agenda and the role of professionals. Professionals must act according to their professional skills in support of their client’s interests. The voices of democracy cannot provide professional competence, but as representatives of other interests, they can offer support with enrichment and legitimacy.

Another consideration is whether architectural competitions are suited to address and promote innovation regarding sustainability, at all. Competitions are often marketed as tools for development, and in the SAFA history of competitions it is claimed that competitions have “made new ways of thinking possible”, as well as promoted “the birth of new perspectives on architecture” (SAFA 2009). In this particular case concerned with an architecturally very delicate site and with a jury that included several high ranking architects and professors, it seems inevitable that architectural issues will attract an overwhelming attention. Competitions and especially the jury work is often seen as a learning experience promoting a

better understanding of the situation, its problems and solutions (Rönn 2009, Östman 2012), and in this case several jurors underlined the power of the architectural dialogue during the final jury sessions, promoting the shared understanding of each entry's distinctive qualities. This explorative case study shows that it is not easy to combine the search for a unique architecture with a strong promotion of sustainability issues, and that it is important how these issues are made operational. The analysis shows that it is important to focus on the whole competition process, starting in a consistent way from client interests and goals proceeding to the systematic articulation of judgment. It seems that the objectives were too vague to support an evaluation of sustainability issues. It also seems necessary to make some sort of distinction between architectural innovations and innovations of other sorts, if one wants to be precise in the programming of a competition. My view is that we need more research on this topic as a matter of integrating architecture with the technological and social development in society.

The conclusion from the findings is that sustainability must be integrated into the architectural assessment, because the opposite indicates a reduction of architecture. Architecture is certainly about the optimization mentioned in the beginning; finding the optimal physical form with optimal economic, ecological and social benefits. It is also important to articulate and make the evaluation public, because it is supporting the legitimacy of the project and the competition, and to allow it to be open to scrutiny both from different professionals and from the public.

There seems, however, to be a dilemma regarding the tension or discrepancy between communication by means of words and by means of images. Obviously architecture is mainly judge holistically by means of images, but a reliable communication expects precise text-based statements. It appears to be important that the jury agrees on how it intends to express its evaluation; is it mainly a selection based on images and how far is it dependent on the jury report text. This is true both in explanations to the entries and to the evaluations. This dilemma can be reduced by means of clearer concepts for architectural quality and sustainability, and by means of improved methodology for competition processes and for managing sustainability issues in architectural design in general. The requirements must be selected carefully and with a sensitivity for the conceptual character of competition entries. Much of the sustainability analyses and improvements can still be implemented at a later stage, but the



selection of a winner must meet programme requirements in an operational manner.

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# Part 3

## Abstract

Most architects dislike the current architectural competition culture in the Netherlands. European tender procedures – the dominant form of architectural competitions in the Netherlands – have faced particular criticism and complaint as a result of excessive requirements, unilaterally dictated contract terms, mounting transaction costs and non-transparent assessment of the bids by lay panels that do not have sufficient expert oversight. These issues are not only a Dutch phenomenon; everywhere in Europe the formal requirements of European procurement legislation cause similar problems. Dutch architects tend not to like design competitions also because the chances of winning are slim and there are usually considerable transaction costs involved. They resent the lack of commitment surrounding most Dutch design competitions, which are so-called ‘ideas competitions’ in which architects provide design ideas without the prospect of a commission or fair remuneration. This concern is shared by architects in other countries. Yet, despite the dominant negative sentiment amongst design professionals towards these types of competition, they are booming in the Netherlands. This chapter surveys Dutch competition culture in the architectural sector in the period 2006–2013. It maps the geography of Dutch architectural competition culture and offers comparisons to practices abroad. It elaborates upon the distinctly different properties of design competitions and public procurement procedures and recent efforts to address persistent issues surrounding architectural competitions. Although design competition culture and public procurement culture are often perceived as opposite worlds, this chapter argues that these cultures in fact have a lot in common and inform each other.

**Key words:** design competitions, public procurement, transaction costs, market entry barriers, lay versus expert review

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# Recent developments in Dutch architectural competition culture

MICHEL GEERTSE

## Introduction

Unlike some of its neighbouring countries, the Netherlands does not have a strong tradition of public design competitions. Traditionally, this approach has tended to be unpopular among public clients. Persistent prejudices prevail: design competitions are expensive, consume much time and their outcomes are uncertain (Spreiregen 1979; De Haan & Haagsma 1988; Nasar 1999). The small numbers of Dutch public design competitions organised in recent years mainly serve to generate ‘out of the box’ ideas and to offer opportunities to young talent (Steunpunt database). These procedures rarely lead to commissions. For contract allocation, public clients prefer to solicit bids from a select group of preferred architects. The implementation of the European Public Procurement Directives (Directive 2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC) had a profound impact on Dutch design competition culture. Open competitions became compulsory for public contracts with a value above the European threshold values (Table 1). Confronted with this legal obligation, Dutch public clients have resorted to European tender procedures to award their contracts for design services (Steunpunt database).

**Table 1: Threshold values for design service contracts under European Public Procurement Directive 2004/18/EC. Source: Official Journal of the European Union**

EU threshold values for (design) services under Directive 2004/18/EC		
Year	State authorities	Other awarding authorities
2006-2007	€ 137,000	€ 211,000
2008-2009	€ 133,000	€ 206,000
2010-2011	€ 125,000	€ 193,000
2012-2013	€ 130,000	€ 200,000

Most architects dislike the highly formal approach of public procurement and the resulting market entry barriers, transaction costs and secondary importance attributed to architectural quality (Kempe & Thill 2008, Kroese et al. 2008, Van der Pol et al. 2009, Volker 2010, Volker & Van Meel 2011, Tromp 2015). Recent studies on Dutch tenders for architectural design services have demonstrated formidable turnover requirements surpassing average turnover in the architectural sector, excessive track record requirements, mounting transaction costs with regard to preparing bids and evaluation methods that emphasise financial and technical aspects at the expense of architectural quality (Kroese et al. 2008, Geertse et al. 2010). Critics fear that public procurement will exclude young architects and small firms (Kempe & Thill 2008, Van der Pol et al. 2009, Stegmeijer 2010), that it will obstruct innovation in the field of architecture (Stegmeijer 2010), that it will exhaust the architectural sector both creatively and financially (Schmidt 2013, BNA 2015) and that it will ultimately attenuate the architectural climate and the quality and diversity of the built environment in the Netherlands (Kempe & Thill 2008). Moreover, architects complain that in public procurement the competition process lacks some of the properties usually associated with 'classic' design competitions, such as peer review and holistic, qualitative review methods (Volker 2010). It must be pointed out that these issues are not solely a Dutch phenomenon: everywhere in Europe the formal straightjacket of EU procurement causes similar problems (Geertse et al. 2010).

Those who think that architects prefer design competitions are wrong (Pöll 2013; Kempe 2013). Architects tend not to be enthusiastic about this kind of selection procedure because the chances of winning are slim and the transaction costs involved are considerable. They resent the lack of commitment surrounding most design competitions. Clients ask a lot, but generally offer little in return. Most Dutch design competitions are so-called 'ideas competitions' in which architects are asked to enter 'free designs'. The design team does not receive any remuneration for design costs, prize money is negligible and all intellectual property rights have to be transferred. This concern is shared by architects in other countries (Geertse 2011). Yet, despite the dominant sentiments towards design competitions in the Netherlands, they are actually booming. The *Steunpunt Architectuuroordrachten & Ontwerpwedstrijden of Architectuur Lokaal* (hereafter 'Steunpunt') reported a spectacular increase (+74%) in design competitions in 2012 (Steunpunt 2013).

This chapter examines the competition culture now prevailing in the Netherlands. The first part of the chapter maps design competitions and procurement



procedures organised by public clients in the period 2006-2013 and discusses the attributes of these competitions. The methodology includes an inventory of Dutch competitions. The resulting database can be consulted online (Steunpunt database). Additional literature reviews were used to assess the attitudes of clients and architects to competition procedures in the Netherlands and to examine the nature of the relationship between public procurement culture and design competition culture. The second part of the chapter focuses on recent efforts to improve competition culture in the Netherlands. The methodology includes network actor analysis, document reviews and interviews to assess how actions by architects, clients and institutions affect Dutch architectural competition culture. This chapter argues that public procurement culture and design competition culture are growing closer together in the Netherlands, despite their distinctly different backgrounds.

## **A geography of Dutch architectural competition culture**

### *Mapping architectural competition culture*

There is no central register of architectural competitions in the Netherlands or in other European countries. *Tenders electronic daily* (TED) at [ted.europa.eu](http://ted.europa.eu), the electronic supplement to the *Official Journal of the European Union*, is a valuable resource for selection procedures listed under the European Public Procurement Directives. However, as a repository it has its shortcomings. For example, it serves as a repository only for recent procedures and does not store older contract and award notices. Queries using common procurement vocabulary (CPV) codes are the easiest way to interrogate TED, but contract notices do not always carry all the correct CPV codes. Sometimes the wrong CPV codes are used and, in the case of integrated contracts, the CPV code for design services is often missing and the project description often does not clearly state whether the (integrated) contract entails design services or not. National public procurement portals have similar disadvantages. Moreover, the infrastructure of these national portals is not always transparent. The Netherlands uses the national public procurement portal *TenderNed* at [www.tenderned.nl](http://www.tenderned.nl). The new Dutch Public Procurement Act (April 2013) compels Dutch awarding authorities to publish all their national and European contract notices on *TenderNed*. Other countries, for example the UK, do not have a central portal and are unaware of the number of national portals they actually have (Winston 2013). In the case of design competitions, registration is even more diffuse.

For the Netherlands, the online *Steunpunt* database is arguably the best available resource to map the geography of Dutch design competition culture. This organisation has collected information about all public procurement procedures for architectural commissions and all design competitions since July 2005, when the national decrees for implementation of the European Public Procurement Directives were formally adopted. *Steunpunt* not only registers notices for procedures, but also monitors the outcomes. Thus *Steunpunt* offers unique information about design competition culture in the Netherlands. However, it is important to consider the methodology used by *Steunpunt* for data gathering. First, it gathers data manually to avoid missing and wrong CPV codes and poor project descriptions. This manual work will of course result in an error margin, but this margin is not specified. Second, *Steunpunt* focuses on what it calls 'architectural commissions', which it defines as commissions or contracts including 'a full design component'. Thus an architectural commission must include the production of a design, not just the detailing or engineering of an available design. Finally, *Steunpunt* is dependent on the availability of documentation and information. Its database gives a good overview of publicly announced architectural competitions (tenders and design competitions), but this database only offers very limited registration of invited and private architectural competitions, although this invisible 'market' must constitute the majority of Dutch architectural competitions (Jonker et al. 2007, Weijzen & Berdowski 2009).

#### Public procurement procedures and design competitions

Looking at the *Steunpunt* database (Figure 1), it immediately becomes clear that the recent public architectural competition culture in the Netherlands is dominated by (European) tender procedures. Dutch public clients do not have a tradition in design competitions. They are unfamiliar with these kinds of procedures and fear legal complications and uncertain outcomes. Thus confronted with the implications of the European Public Procurement Directives, they opted for tender procedures to award their design services contracts, since they believe that this approach offers better possibilities to manage costs and risks. Moreover, most public clients are familiar with tendering. Although European procurement legislation is relatively new, the Netherlands does have a history in public procurement of construction works (Lintsen 1993).

The trends in Figure 1 needs some explaining. In 2008 the architectural sector in the Netherlands was severely hit by the economic crisis. Since the

outbreak of the crisis, employment and turnover in the sector have more than halved (Stichting Fonds Architectenbureaus 2014). The architectural sector only began to show the first signs of recovery in 2015 and this recovery is still brittle (Vroljik 2015). Despite the crisis, the number of architectural competitions increased in the period 2006-2010. This increase was primarily caused by improved compliance with the European Public Procurement Directives by public clients (Idzenga et al. 2010; Van Dieten et al. 2012). After 2010, however, increased compliance could no longer compensate for the effects of the crisis in the construction industry. In 2013, the trend was also affected by the new Public Procurement Act, which provides compulsory guidelines with regard to the proportionality (requirements, transaction costs etc) of tender procedures. In the wake of compulsory European tenders, many public clients used so-called 'national tenders'—procedures that resemble European tender procedures—for contracts with a value below the European threshold. The transaction costs of these national tenders were often far too high, considering the value of the tender contracts. Under the new Public Procurement Act, national tenders for design services have practically disappeared. Now public clients prefer invited tenders, which are not registered by Steunpunt.

Figure 1 also clearly reveals an orientation towards integrated contracting in the Netherlands in recent years. In the past, clients contracted architects and technical advisors separately to produce a design and only after the design was completed did they organise a tender procedure to select a

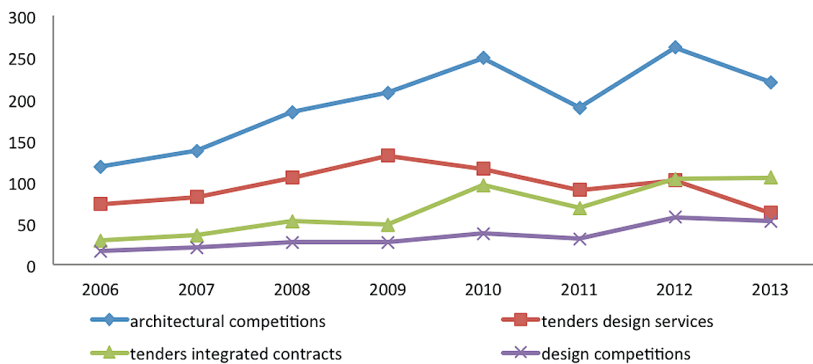


Figure 1: Types of architectural competitions in the Netherlands in the period January 2006-December 2013. Source: Steunpunt database.

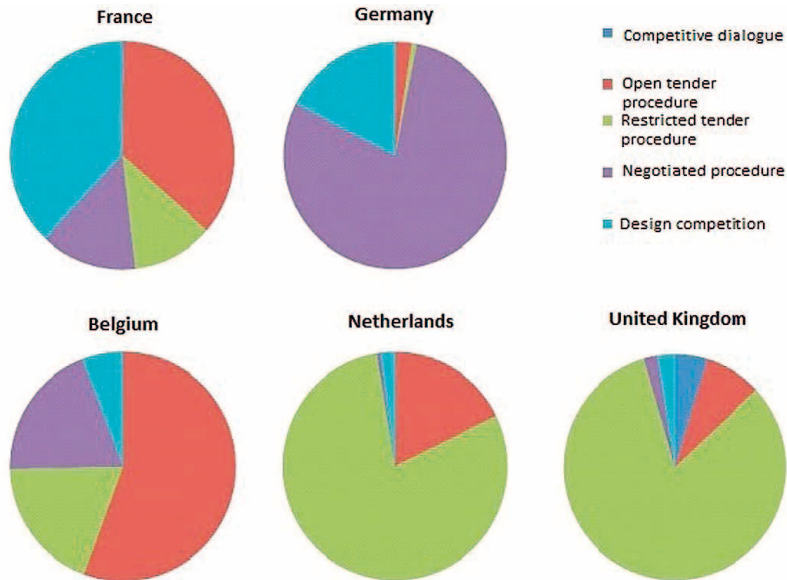


Figure 2: Types of procedures used for architectural competitions in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK in the period November 2008–November 2011, according to contract notices published in the Official Journal of the European Union with the CPV code for design services. Source: Geertse, Jansen & Talman (2012).

contractor for realisation. In the case of integrated contracting, the client offers one contract for design and building of a project. Effectively, the architect becomes a subcontractor to the builder and loses direct contact with the client (Buur 2005; Van den Berg, Bregman & Chao-Duvis 2013). Integrated contracting is official state policy and is actively promoted among public clients by state agencies and protagonists of the construction industry. The year 2010 in particular witnessed a significant upsurge in integrated contracts at the expense of traditional contracts, which still dominated at that time. By 2012 integrated contracting matched traditional contracting, while in 2013 it began to dominate. Throughout the period 2006–2013, the number of design competitions in the Netherlands steadily increased, but was much lower than the number of tender procedures. According to Cilly Jansen, director of Architectuur Lokaal, this increase can be attributed to the financial crisis. In times of uncertainty, clients seek new design solutions (Steunpunt 2013).

Dutch awarding authorities mainly use restricted tender procedures to award architectural contracts with a value above the European thresholds (Figure 2). With regard to public procurement, Dutch architectural competition culture is primarily informed by the practice in the UK (Geertse, Jansen & Talman 2012). It uses roughly the same procedures and has also borrowed the concept of integrated contracting. This architectural competition culture differs from that in other European countries. In France, for example, public clients mainly use design competitions and open tender procedures, while in Germany public clients mainly resort to negotiated procedures, followed by design competitions. It must be pointed out that these countries have national legislation with regard to public design competition culture (Loew 1998, Nasar 1999). In Belgium, the open tender procedure dominates public architectural competition culture. However, it is important to account for the fact that TED statistics provide a misleading overview of the Belgian context and in fact the share of design competitions is larger. The 'Open Calls' organised by the Flemish Chief Architect are registered as single competitions, but are actually a clustered notice of multiple design competitions (one Open Call can cover 30+ design competitions). Dutch clients generally dismiss these foreign approaches as too alien, too cumbersome and/or too expensive (Geertse, Jansen & Talman 2012).

#### A geography of clients

The *Steunpunt* database enables identification of the clients behind Dutch public procurement competitions (Figures 3 and 4). Unsurprisingly, tender procedures are predominantly organised by clients that qualify as an 'awarding authority' as defined by the European Public Procurement Directives (government agencies and institutions controlled or predominantly financed by the government). Local authorities (municipalities) organise the most tenders, followed by 'other awarding authorities'. This latter category mainly includes school boards and universities and, to a lesser extent, special services providers in the water, energy, infrastructure and postal services sectors (sectors covered by Directive 17/2004/EG). These awarding authorities include many 'incidental' public clients, e.g. a school director solicits design services for a new school building only once in his career and the same goes for an alderman who wants to commission a new town hall. These inexperienced clients often hire external advisors to organise their procurement procedures (*Steunpunt* database). These advisors have a great impact on the Dutch architectural competition culture. They are responsible

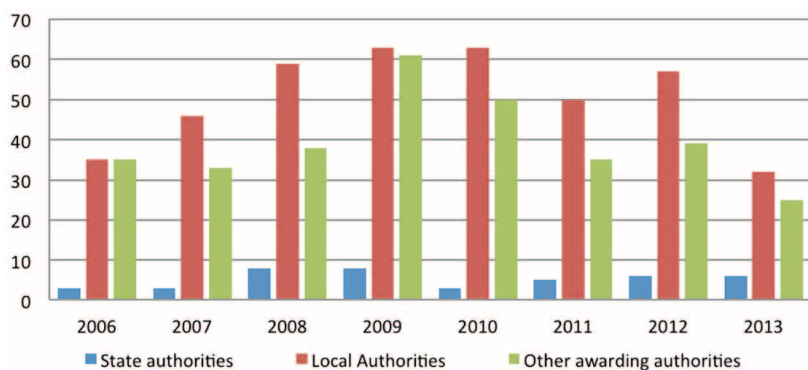


Figure 3: Types of public clients in Dutch public procurement of design services in the period January 2006-December 2013. Source: Steunpunt database.

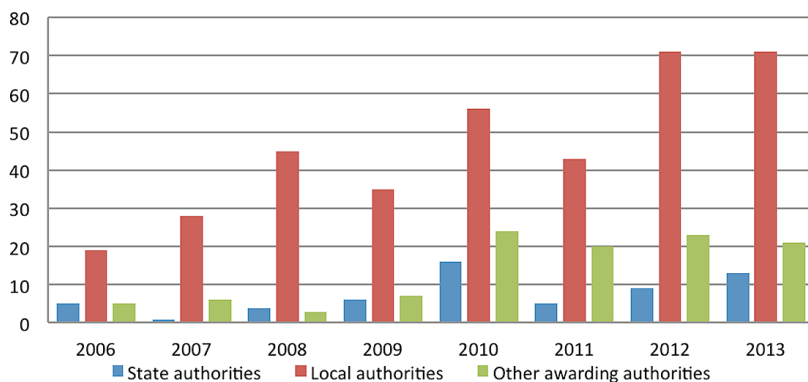


Figure 4: Types of public clients in Dutch public procurement of integrated contracts in the period January 2006-December 2013. Source: Steunpunt database.

for about 60% of the tenders for traditional contracts and 40% of the tenders for integrated contracts, although at the moment their share is decreasing under the influence of the professionalisation of governmental purchasing departments.

Design competitions are organised by different clients (Figure 5). For this kind of competition, 'other awarding authorities' are the dominant client. Here

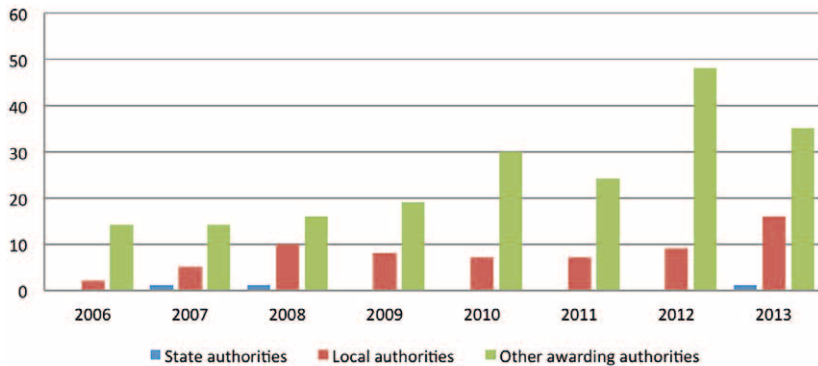


Figure 5: Types of clients behind Dutch design competitions in the period January 2006–December 2013. Source: Steunpunt Database.

‘other awarding authorities’ does not refer to schools, universities and special sector providers, but predominantly to cultural and professional institutions. Dominant cultural institutions include organisations such as EUROPAN, the Stimuleringsfonds voor Architectuur, architecture centres and the Netherlands Architecture Institute. Professional institutions include the Royal Institute of Dutch Architects and its local branches. These clients rarely call upon external advisors to organise their design competitions. Most of them use the standard brief of *KOMPAS bij Prijsvragen en Meervoudige Opdrachten* (Van Campen & Hendrikse 1997) developed by *Architectuur Lokaal*. The majority of these competitions are so-called ‘ideas competitions’, which represent only marginal financial interests, so the need for a highly formal procedure that mitigates all possible risks is generally considered negligible.

#### A geography of commissions

A closer look at the commissions tendered by public clients reveals that traditional and integrated contracts are used for all kinds of construction projects (Figures 6 and 7). Nevertheless, some preferences can be discerned. For major public buildings (town halls, museums, theatres etc.) and educational buildings, clients prefer to contract an architect first. For housing, retail, offices and infrastructural projects (bridges, railway stations, car parks, tunnels etc.), clients prefer integrated contracts. It is difficult to provide a taxonomy of commissions for Dutch design competitions. Unlike procurement procedures

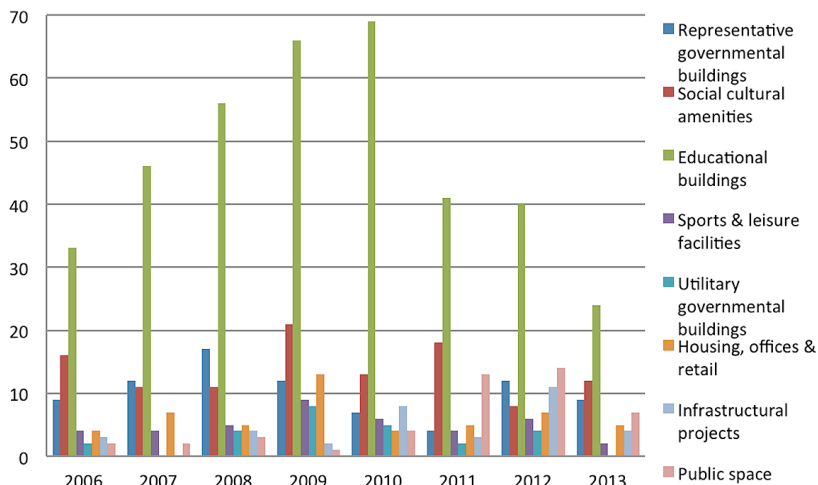


Figure 6: Taxonomy of commissions for tenders of design services in the Netherlands in the period January 2006-December 2013. Source: Steunpunt database.

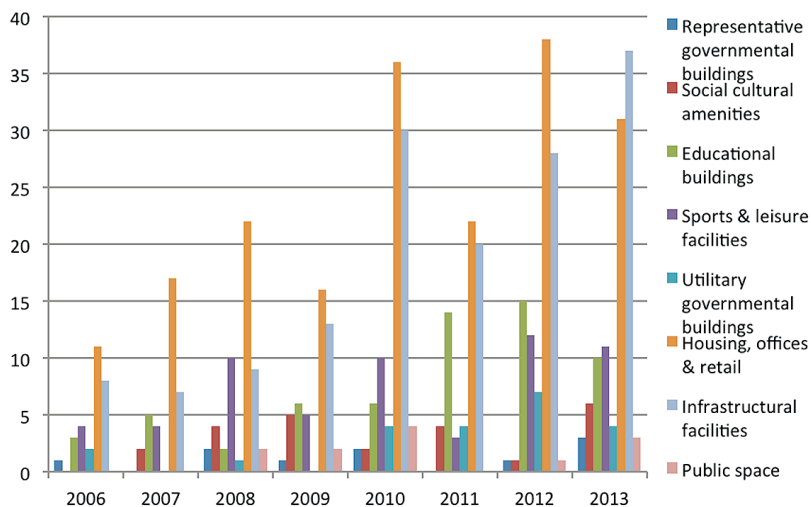


Figure 7: Taxonomy of commissions for tenders of integrated contracts in the Netherlands in the period January 2006-December 2013. Source: Steunpunt database.



in which public clients solicit specific design solutions that meet a detailed programme of requirements, many design competitions do not stipulate specific design solutions and often stimulate 'out of the box' solutions. Moreover, design competitions cover a far broader spectrum of assignments. Nevertheless, a focus on housing, public space and social and cultural amenities can be discerned among Dutch design competitions (Steunpunt database).

#### *A geography of competitors*

In recent years there has been considerable discussion among the architects that compete in Dutch tender procedures. Although some architects emphasise the benefit of European public procurement regarding the accessibility of public contracts to all eligible market operators (Van der Pol et al. 2009; Geertse, Jansen & Talman 2011), most architects dislike compulsory European public procurement (Kroese et al. 2008; Van der Pol et al. 2009; Volker 2010; Tromp 2015). They complain that European public procurement has achieved the very opposite of a level playing field. Most tender procedures assess the track record of eligible architects. As a consequence, architects fear that only settled, larger architectural firms are able to secure public contracts (Van Raaij 2010). However, Steunpunt has refuted the belief that a successful elite of large architectural firms secures an ever-growing number of public contracts. By means of annual diversity ratios (Number of architectural firms that have secured an award through public procurement / Number of public procurement procedures per year), it has demonstrated that public contracts are actually awarded to an expanding number of architectural firms (Geertse, Jansen & Talman 2010). Still, there is no denying that large architectural firms and specialist architectural firms get most tendered public contracts (Steunpunt database). The new Dutch Public Procurement Act (which came into force 1 April 2013) intended to change this situation. Accessibility to public contracts by small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is one of the spearheads of this legislation, although so far it has had little effect in raising the number of successful SMEs in public procurement (Noordink, Van Schelven & Lensink 2015). Of course, local SMEs have sufficient acquisition opportunities regarding public contracts beneath the European thresholds. The Public Procurement Act has had the effect of national tenders being avoided as public clients increasingly turn to so-called regional tenders for smaller commissions to offer opportunities for local firms and local employment (Geertse & Talman 2013). Although

the European public procurement rules aim to create an open European market and stimulate cross-border trade, the number of Dutch public contracts awarded to foreign firms is negligible (Steunpunt database). This observation is consistent with reports on cross-border procurement commissioned by the European Commission (Ramboll & HTW Chur2011).

Dutch design contests attract a different population of contestants. These design contests hold particular appeal for start-ups and SMEs and young architects that do not yet have their own practice. The diversity among winners is much greater than in (EU) procurement. Although in Dutch design contests Dutch winners dominate, these procedures produce more foreign winners than Dutch public procurement (Steunpunt database).

### **‘Communicating vessels’**

To the uninformed observer, public procurement and design competitions must represent different, rigidly separated worlds. One might say that this division reflects the duality that is inherent to the architectural profession as an applied art. Architecture is both an autonomous art and an economic service to clients (Geertse 2011). Public procurement focuses on the economic dimension of architecture, with architectural design being perceived as an economic service to be purchased. Design competitions, on the other hand, emphasise the cultural potency of architectural design and rely on design agency to produce creative and innovative solutions. However, the separation between public procurement culture and design competition culture is not as absolute as one might expect.

#### *Architectural competitions from the client’s perspective*

Despite their different backgrounds, design competition culture and public procurement culture actually have much in common. Both essentially focus on selection procedures for architecture, design competitions by selecting a plan on the basis of the best design proposal and public procurement by selecting an eligible contract partner on the basis of the best bid (Table 2). Both face similar challenges: conceiving a transparent and objective assessment method and keeping the transaction costs under control for the client and the competitors. These cultures are corresponding vessels and inform each other. To date, public procurement culture has been informed by the disadvantages of design competitions. Public clients abhor an uncertain outcome of their

selection process (Vollaard 2005; Kempe & Thill 2008; Kroese et al. 2008; Van der Pol et al. 2009; Volker 2010). Thus tender procedures are characterised by a highly formal approach, extensive requirements (turnover, experience, staff, certificates etc.), detailed contract terms, a strong focus on price and legally binding best and final offers. Public clients desire a sound product without risks and they want it as soon and as cheaply as possible. Design competitions, on the other hand, are traditionally informed by the disadvantages of public procurement culture. Design competitions are often used as a means to offer opportunities to young designers who are not able to compete in tender procedures and to explore the full potency of architectural design outside the formal straightjacket of EU procurement. These procedures often serve image reasons as well, with clients wanting to profile themselves as culturally informed enlightened commissioners. It must be pointed out, however, that there are also clients who use design contests as a relatively cheap means to solicit ‘free designs’ (Pöll 2013).

**Table 2: Principles of Dutch design contest culture and public procurement culture.**  
**Source: Based on Volker (2010: 115)**

Principles of Dutch architectural competitions	
Design contest principles	Public procurement principles
1. Plan	1. Partner
2. Assignment	2. Contract allocation
3. Artist	3. Market operator
4. Object focus	4. Process focus
5. Consultation	5. Acquisition
6. Possible design solution	6. Best and final offer
7. Design contest regulations	7. Tender procedure
8. Assessment by jury (peer review)	8. Assessment by client (review by laymen)
9. Anonymity	9. Interaction

### *Architectural competitions from the architect's perspective*

The above exchange between public procurement culture and design competition culture is as perceived from the client's perspective. Of course, selection procedures for architecture are also a concern to the contenders involved: the architects. From the architect's perspective, an interaction between public procurement culture and design competition culture can again be discerned, but the nature of this exchange is very different. In this case, public procurement perception is informed by the advantages of design competitions. Architects resent market entry barriers (excessive requirements), the strong focus on price and the absence of peer review. Similarly, their perception of design competition culture is informed by the advantages of public procurement. Most design competitions do not lead to commissions and thus it is difficult to cover the transaction costs of competition.

It must be pointed out that Dutch architects are also informed by foreign architectural competition culture (Kempe & Thill 2008; Geertse et al. 2012: 50-59). Dutch architects compete elsewhere in Europe too and thus have first-hand experience of foreign tender procedures and/or design competitions. Public procurement culture and design competition culture and the relationship between the two in other countries can differ substantially from Dutch practice. Of all the foreign examples, the Open Call by the Flemish Chief Government Architect, a restricted design competition with light prequalification on the basis of a small portfolio, has particular appeal to architects, especially the younger generation. The Flemish Open Call was popularised by the architects Andre Kempe and Oliver Thill, who published a report on the disadvantages of European public procurement practice in the Netherlands (Kempe & Thill 2008). They referred to the Flemish competition system as best practice that could be used to improve Dutch public procurement practice. In the same period, some young Dutch architects successfully entered the Flemish Open Call, confirming the idea that this design competition offered advantages compared with Dutch tender procedures (Cosijn 2009).

### **Towards a professional commissioning practice**

#### *Public debate on architectural competitions*

The shortcomings in Dutch design competition culture have initiated fierce public debates about public commissioning. In 2008/2009 these debates centred around the excessive turnover and track record requirements in public

procurement, which effectively excluded the majority of Dutch architects from public contracts. The discussions were dominated by negative sentiments, as stakeholders blamed each other (Jansen 2009). Architects blamed inexperienced clients for stipulating requirements that did not account for the particularities of the architectural sector and accused the external advisors that organise tenders for public clients of deliberately raising the requirements to expedite the selection process. Clients and their external advisors dismissed the grievances of architects, as they considered their requirements necessary and fair and wanted to contract professional service providers.

#### Efforts by Steunpunt

Obviously, something needed to be done. Thus Chief Government Architect Liesbeth van der Pol took the initiative to unite representatives of all stakeholders in one body, *Regiegroep Aanbesteden*, to produce solutions on the basis of consensus. Simultaneously, *Architectuur Lokaal* set out to raise the efficiency of Steunpunt with regard to public procurement. Subsequently, the activities of Steunpunt and Regiegroep were linked and a state subvention was secured to implement a programme to be executed by Steunpunt. Research by geographers Eva Stegmeijer, Robert Kloosterman and Tineke Lupi shows that the activities of Steunpunt have had a significant impact on Dutch commissioning practice for architectural design (Stegmeijer 2010; Stegmeijer, Kloosterman & Lupi 2012). Since June 2009, Steunpunt collects all contract notices and design competitions published on digital portals such as TED and TenderNed and publishes them on its website [www.ontwerpwedstrijden.nl](http://www.ontwerpwedstrijden.nl). It monitors these competitions from beginning to end. More importantly, it writes a letter with suggestions to improve the brief to the contact of every Dutch architectural competition. Thus Steunpunt actively contributes to eliminating legal errors and reducing disproportionate requirements, criteria and contract terms. It actively promulgates implementing practical attributes from design competition culture into public procurement, such as expert review, emphasis on quality instead of price and remuneration for design services rendered during the procedure (Geertse et al. 2010:18-19).

Steunpunt has also developed a digital tool, *KOMPAS light Architectendiensten*, that enables public clients to produce a brief for their tender procedure for architectural design services. The first version of *KOMPAS light* was published in December 2009. At the moment, the third version is available online

(Steunpunt 2013). This digital tool was well received by architects, advisors and public clients (Geertse et al. 2012: 11, 20-21, 29-33). In 2012 Steunpunt published a new instalment in the KOMPAS light family, KOMPAS light Prijsvragen, which focuses on improving design competition culture (Steunpunt 2012). Whereas the first KOMPAS light introduced attributes of design competition culture into public procurement, the second KOMPAS light introduced properties of Dutch public procurement culture and of foreign design competition culture into Dutch design competition culture. These attributes mainly regard the proportionality principle (anchored in the new Public Procurement Act) and the principle of a two-tier selection process to reduce transaction costs (based both on the proportionality principle and design competition practice abroad). In particular, the implementation of light prequalification on the basis of portfolios – a feature borrowed from the popular Flemish Open Call – was received enthusiastically by architects and clients (Geertse et al. 2012:44-49). In 2013, the municipality of The Hague organised the first design competition based on KOMPAS light Prijsvragen (Venema & Niemeijer 2014). The KOMPAS light instruments predefine the legal structure of procedures – thus promoting standardisation, which can lead to reduced transaction costs – to enable clients to focus on their ambitions, rather than becoming side-lined in legal trivialities. This campaign is further supported by collecting and disseminating best practices (Geertse et al. 2011).

#### *New procurement paradigm and new legislation*

Although Steunpunt can claim some success in improving Dutch architectural competition culture, it is by no means solely responsible for the recent changes. Purchasing professionals in the Netherlands have adopted a change of paradigm (Rietveld 2010). They realise that increased incentives to compete exclusively on price are irresponsible; value maximisation is their new creed. As long as architects stay within budget, the qualitative best bid wins. Experts are increasingly called upon for consultation with regard to the assessment of qualitative bids. So, general public procurement culture is slowly accumulating attributes of classic design contest culture. Moreover, professional organisations, especially those representing SMEs, successfully lobbied in The Hague for the new Public Procurement Act, which offers more safeguards for entrepreneurs. The new act rewarded these lobbies and introduced a whole string of rules to improve public procurement practice, such as an obligation to reduce

administrative burdens, compulsory guidelines with regard to the proportionality of procedures and the discouragement of lowest price as the sole awarding criterion (Chao-Duivis & Kluitenberg 2013). Of course, these legal changes also promise to improve selection, but it is still too early to determine the exact impact of the new public procurement legislation.

#### *Enlightened clients*

Changes have not just been introduced at the national level. Although many local authorities struggle with appropriate organisation of architectural competitions, some municipalities actually pride themselves on being enlightened commissioners. In particular, the municipality of Rotterdam is making a serious effort to institutionalise a thriving municipal architectural competition culture. After the commotion surrounding the tender procedure for design services for its new town hall (2009), the municipality radically changed tack in its architectural policy (Brouwers & Maandag 2010). Enlightened commissioning is a spearhead of this new policy, which is implemented through the Protocol Designer Selection (Vervoort 2014). Municipal architect selections must be of a high standard, simple and accessible. Rotterdam publishes notices for all its architect selections to secure accessibility. Small (<€ 30,000) and medium commissions (€ 30,000-€ 150,000) are published on the *Steunpunt* site. Large commissions (>€ 150,000) are published on TenderNed. Every category has its own proportionate requirements, a considerate and transparent assessment (including peer review) and an emphasis on architectural quality. For small commissions, Rotterdam uses its own Open Call, which is based on the well-known Flemish counterpart. Interested architects send in a small portfolio and on the basis of the portfolios received, 3-5 architects are invited to a restricted procedure in which they are asked to draft a design for a fixed remuneration and the subsequent assessment is carried out by a jury.

### **Conclusions**

Dutch architectural competition culture is not homogeneous, but combines two distinctly different cultures, public procurement culture and design competition culture, each with its own background. Public procurement culture is currently clearly dominant. Under the European Public Procurement Directives, Dutch 'awarding authorities' are obliged to publicly tender all public design contracts with a value above the European thresholds. Design services

are increasingly procured through integrated contracting. Although both traditional and integrated contracting are used by different clients for all kinds of commissions, distinct preferences can be identified. Tenders are the domain of settled architectural firms; SMEs and young architects cannot compete in these competitions because of the high market entry barriers. Design competitions are primarily organised by cultural and professional institutions and the assignments cover a wide range of subjects that often defy categorisation. Design competition culture mainly attracts young architects and small firms.

To the uninformed, public procurement culture and design competition culture represent different, strictly separated worlds. Public procurement focuses on the economic aspect of architecture, whereby architectural design essentially is a service to be purchased. Design competitions stress the cultural component of architectural design and champion agency and autonomy of design. However, these cultures are not rigidly separated, but are 'communicating vessels'. From the client's perspective, public procurement culture is informed by negative feedbacks from design competition culture and design competition culture by negative feedbacks from public procurement culture. From the architect's perspective, public procurement is informed by positive feedbacks from design competition culture and design competition culture is informed by positive feedbacks from public procurement culture.

The exchange between these two cultures has fuelled a fierce public debate about inappropriate practices in Dutch architectural competition culture. Under the influence of this debate and the associated demand for professionalisation of Dutch commissioning practice, public procurement culture and design competition culture are slowly growing towards each other. Public procurement culture appropriates attributes from design contest culture, and *vice versa*. This trend of *rapprochement* is facilitated by the actions of dedicated institutions, such as *Architectuur Lokaal* and *Steunpunt*, the successful lobby of professional organisations, especially those representing SMEs, and the exemplary commissioning practice of enlightened public commissioners such as Rotterdam Municipality.



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## Abstract

This paper discusses the client regime in competitions. I present a client regime theory based on case studies of six restricted competitions in Sweden; three architectural competitions and three developer competitions. The competition task includes both senior housing and ordinary apartments. All six competitions have been organized by the public sector.

The aim of developing the theory was to understand how organizers select design teams for restricted competitions. There are two main driving forces for clients: Attractors and Gatekeepers, which have a decisive impact on the selection of design teams for restricted competitions. Strong attractors give clients a wide range of applications to choose from by gatekeepers, who point out the participants.

The organizer initiates prequalification by inviting candidates to competitions. General information, submission requirements and criteria for the evaluation of applications provided by public clients are part of an established practice. Demands in the invitation refer to requirements in the procurement law and professional practice. Criteria for evaluations are based on professional experience and have an open character, typical of the way juries assess design proposals. This is the case for both architectural and developer competitions.

Firms and companies respond to an invitation by submitting an application. One important difference between architectural competitions and developer competitions is the number of interested candidates and design teams. The three architectural competitions generated 120 applications from architecture firms. The client invited 11 design teams (9%). The three developer competitions attracted only 21 applications from construction companies and real estate managers. 16 were invited (76%). This difference is very important and has a huge impact on the relation between attractors and gatekeepers in competitions. The selecting committees had only one meeting for choosing candidates in developer competitions. In architectural competitions the selection committees use three to four meetings for assessing applications and have to develop evaluation strategies for finding design teams suitable for the competition task.

**Key words:** Architectural competitions, developer competitions, restricted competitions, invitation, prequalification, selection, client.

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# The Architectural Competition and the Concept of ‘The Client Regime’

– from requirement in invitation to selection of design teams

MAGNUS RÖNN

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents and discusses a theory; *the client regime theory*. It is a theory for understanding prequalified competitions in architecture and urban design from the client perspective. Focus is on the very first step in the competition as a process. In the centre of the theory are issues of steering competitions in an early stage by invitation and selection of design teams. In these competitions design proposals have to be presented anonymously to the client. The jury is therefore forbidden to communicate with the invited design teams during their development of design solutions. Steering restricted competition processes must therefore either be ahead of time by invitation and selection of design teams or after choosing participants through design and jury assessment of the competition proposals.

The theory is founded on results from a research project (Rönn, 2012), which investigated prequalification in architectural competitions and developer competitions.<sup>1</sup> In both these competitions the organizer initiates the process with an invitation. Candidates reply to invitations by sending in applications. The clients' selection committees then choose design teams. If there are more applicants than places in the competition the organizer must make an evaluative selection. Some candidates have to be seen as more suitable than others. This is the basic problem, common for all competitions with a limited number of participants.

In Sweden the majority of architectural competitions and developer competitions are organised by municipalities. The town planning office is a main actor

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1 The concept “developer competitions” can also be translated as “real estate competitions”. The main competitors are companies such as builders, construction companies and real estate managers.

in architectural competitions and take part in the jury. Property departments in municipalities control developer competitions. In restricted architectural competitions the economic compensation covers development of design proposals. But it is the future assignment and implementation of the winning design that makes the competition attractive. The same goes for developer competitions. This type of competition enables developers, builders, constructors and real estate managers to procure publicly owned land. They compete with both design and financial offers. The winner gets access to the site. It is a risky investment in future profits. The realization is controlled by a land allocations agreement between the municipality and the company behind the winning design.

There is no architectural research on developer competitions in Sweden from an architectural and competition perspective. I have only found one study in Finland by Leif Östman (2012, 2014) investigating this type of competition from an architectural point of view. Government agencies, research reports and university papers that have a management, economic, legal and business perspective on land allocation dominate the literature on developer competitions, both in Sweden and abroad (Stenberg, 2006; Liske 2008; Rönn, 2012). Architecture and prequalification of design teams do not play a leading role in these investigations. Thus, my study contributes new knowledge that is important for the understanding of restricted competitions and their conditions. This theorizing of the early phase in competitions can hopefully contribute and show steering principles in action.

The academic research on architectural competitions covers 17 theses.<sup>2</sup> They can be divided into two main types: research on competitions from an architectural historical perspective and analyses of contemporary competitions. However, there are few studies about how design teams are selected. Focus is on design proposals, quality and judgment. There are a handful of research papers about prequalification for architectural competitions in Holland, Denmark and Sweden. Leentje Volker (2010) has investigated how public promoters in Holland contract architectural services using architectural competitions. There is dissatisfaction among architects towards the bureaucratic and expensive application requirements from public clients (Kroese, Meijer & Visscher, 2009; Volker,

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2 The following theses have a major part dealing with competitions: Blomberg 1995; Waern, 1996; Tostrup, 1999; Bloxham Zettersten, 2000; Sauge, 2003; Östman, 2005; Fialho, 2007; Rustad, Svensson, 2008; 2009; Hagelqvist, 2010; Volker, 2010; Schmiedeknecht 2010; Katsakou, 2011; Andersson, 2011, Silberberger, 2011; Cucuzzella 2011; Ramberg 2012; Fuchs, 2013; Jacobsen, 2014; Guilherme, 2016.



2010). Procurement regulations are criticized both by architects and clients in the public sector in Holland.

Volker and Lauche (2008) note that the assessment of architects for competitions and the judging of design proposals resemble each other, even though the criteria differ. The selection is based on a combination of experience, reputation, references and architectonic qualities. Kristian Kreiner and Merete Gorm reviewed prequalification in Denmark in 2008 and 2009. Mapping from 2008 gives an account of the promoters' perspective. Kreiner and Gorm seek knowledge using questionnaires aimed at architect offices and promoters (public and private clients).

In 2011 I have investigated prequalification of architectural firms in ten competitions held by municipal or government organizers (Rönn, 2011, 2014). The organizers' selection committees evaluated the applications from design teams using the same "soft" criteria as in judging design proposals. These are criteria with an open character that are used for identifying and assessing qualities in architecture. The main purpose is ranking. The result is in line with findings by Volker and Lauche (2008). But first the candidates have to fulfill a number of "must have" demands specified in the invitation. Otherwise applications don't move on to the next step for assessing design teams. The "soft" criteria are crucial to selection committees when making a final decision at the end of the evaluation. In a follow-up research project I examined prequalification in three architectural project competitions and three developer competitions (Rönn, 2012). The findings from these six case studies have been used for theorizing invitation, application and selection of design teams in restricted competitions. I will (re)use findings from the research project in this paper.

## **Aim, concept, model and method**

My theorizing in this article is built on case studies. I have two purposes. First, I want to present a theory on the client regime in restricted competitions. The early stage of competitions, when the client selects design teams, is in focus. Thus it is only the first phase in the competition that is discussed as the client regime in the paper—not the steering principles of the competition process as a whole. Second, I wish to test and explore the theorizing of empirical findings in architectural and developer competitions. The theory provides a fundamental model of how design teams are invited to restricted competitions in Sweden. The emphasis is on control of the competition through the invitations, which

is how the design teams meet restricted competitions, followed by reflection on the choice of design teams.

The ability to deliver good advice to the organizers determines whether the theory is useful for practice. The client has to make a number of strategic choices in the invitation depending on the objective and design task. I hope that the theory contributes to the understanding of the power play between clients and design team, lays a good foundation for advice to the organizers and can be used to find explanations of the result from prequalification. Even if the future is always unsure it is possible to predict some of the forces that restricted competitions set in motion. This is because restricted architectural competitions follow a set of regulations and established praxis. Developer competitions are organized in local traditions.

The empirical base is six prequalified competitions in Sweden, which had housing and architecture for an aging population as the competition task (see appendix). Municipalities and public developers organized these competitions. Case studies have been used as means of investigation. The research method is suitable for both theoretical development and for testing of fundamental assumptions (Stake, 1995; Johansson, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 2005). I will present a detailed description of the organizers' invitation. This gives a good picture of the fundamental conditions for architectural competitions and developer competitions. The similarities and differences in the invitations highlight areas for reflections.

### **The concept "regime"**

The concept of regime has been used by Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990) to describe a country's political, economic and social organization. This welfare regime can be seen as an overall model for different steering systems: conservation, liberal and social democrat ideas. Adrian Rip and René Kemp (1998) move the regime from the political arena to the market. They have developed a model of technological regimes which describes the socio-technological changes in the market. The regime consists in their model of performances by engineers and technicians in companies, guided from an overall strategic level to an operational level with responsibility for the actual performance. The regime conveys what is prescribed in the operations and sets a framework for what is seen as possible. David Easton (1965) understands the political regime as principles, norms and processes within a specific part of society,

applied by key players. This idea can be transferred to the concept of the client regime and its selection of design team in prequalified competitions. Here is a clear link to competitions as a political arena in Europe (Bento, 2012). Architectural competitions are included in the national architectural policy that emerged in Europe during the 1990s. The competition is also regulated in the EU by Procurement Directive (2004/18 / EC) transferred to member states' legislations. EU provides a legal framework for the procurement of architectural services for the public sector by competitions. Competitions in architecture and urban design are advertised in the electronic system for procurement in EU.

The client regime as concept can be interpreted as an architectural policy in Europe, and understood as a socio-technical-legal system for the selection of design teams in invited competitions with limited participation. Principles in a competitions context refer to the way an organizer selects design teams based on the requirements and criteria in the invitation. Norms can be seen as demands in the organizers' invitation referring to the law on public procurement. Also criteria presented in the invitation for ranking candidates represent norms, but they are a result of experience and practice. The criteria have an open character, which makes it possible for the selection committee in a second step to choose the desired design teams among the candidates who meet the "must have" requirements. That is if the organizers have managed to attract enough competent candidates. The process in the client regime starts with the choice of the competition form by the organizing body, requirements and criteria presented in the invitation, and the ranking of candidates for the election of the design team for participation in the competition. The key players in the organizing body are senior officials and the selection committee. The scope is the competition. Their space for manoeuvre is determined by the number of applications from design teams from companies in the private sector.

### **Model and fundamental functions**

The theoretical hypothesis of the client regime is that the organizer's choice of design team is a combination of attractors and gatekeepers. These are two fundamental functions in invited competitions that arouse interest from firms and design teams, or respectively, discourage potential candidates, and regulate the choice of design teams for competition tasks. Attractors are non-humans

agencies in terms of the actor-network-theory (Latour, 1990, 1999). Gatekeepers on the other hand are human agencies represented by selection committees. The condition for gatekeeping as action is specified by the organizer of a competition and presented in an invitation to potential candidates, companies in the consulting and building sector. The relationship creates a dynamic power game of functions in architectural and developer competitions as well as chance during the process. How the meeting evolves between attractors and gatekeepers as functions in a specific case determines the participating of design teams in competitions. The client regime represents a general steering by means of information about the purpose of the competition and objectives for the design task, demands and criteria in the invitations. This is a kind of strategic steering in an uncertain world toward an unknown future in order to solve wicked design problems. The following graphic model summarizes fundamental ideas in the concept of client regime:

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$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Potential} \\
 \text{Design Teams} \\
 + \\
 \text{Attractors} \times \text{Gatekeepers} = \text{Invited Design Teams} \\
 + \\
 \text{Selection}
 \end{array}$$


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Figure 1: Model on the client regime theory.

Attractors and gatekeepers are at the center of the model. They are two fundamental functions in restricted competitions, each within their own context, and have a dynamic relationship to each other. Attractors arouse interest from clients and potential design teams. The client would like to know how different attractors in invitations influence the number of applications from potential design teams and how they could be constructed. The ability in an invitation to entice clients, free up capacity and resources for applications are crucial in theory and practice. Without attractive content organizers will not get an adequate number of competent participants. Typical attractors in restricted competitions can now be summarized:

**Table 1: Attractors in competitions**

Attractors Criteria for judging attraction	Architectural Competition	Developer Competition
Task: Degree of Challenge	High impact	Moderate impact
Market value & prestige in building sector	High impact	Moderate impact
Compensation: Prize sum in the competition	High impact	No impact
Compensation: Future incomes for winner	Moderate impact	High impact
Organiser: Clients reputation and ability	High impact	High impact
Jury: Degree of competence, independence	High impact	Low impact
Selection committee: Competence	Low impact	Low impact
Condition: rules, approval and experience	High impact	Low impact
Assignment to the winner: promises	High impact	High impact

The table points out some important similarities and differences in attraction in architectural and developer competitions. Common to these is the fact that design teams are attracted by professional challenge in design tasks, marketing value and prestige, client's reputation and ability to implement the winning design. Differences can be assumed in regard to compensation for delivery of design proposals, members in the jury, future income and attractors connected to the regulations of competitions.

The function of the gatekeepers is to limit participation in the competition and regulate the choice of the design teams. This function is essential to all restricted competitions performed by members in selection committees. The client provides general information in the invitation, the must-have requirements that are mandatory for the applicants and the criteria the organizer intends to use for identifying a suitable candidates for the design task. The gatekeepers represented by selections committees have chosen three to six teams for the investigated architectural and developer competitions.

The conditions presented in the invitation exemplify the qualities the client is seeking in the participants. This governance at an early stage must be balanced according to the availability of potential teams that can provide safety, professional skills and a good solution to the design problem at hand. Too strict demands may (a) discourage many firms, (b) minimize competition and (c) deter the emergence of innovative design teams.

Gatekeepers in the competitions provide control for clients. Selection committees review the applications and rank candidates. This is done by taking into consideration (a) requested documentation, (b) reference projects and their relevance, (c) information from the reference persons, d) the competence and professional composition of the team, (e) the creative abilities of the candidates and, (f) resources for carrying out the competition task.

The client regime is part of a wider competition process. For this reason I have constructed a general model on competitions in architecture and urban design as a research field. The context for the client regime can be described like this:

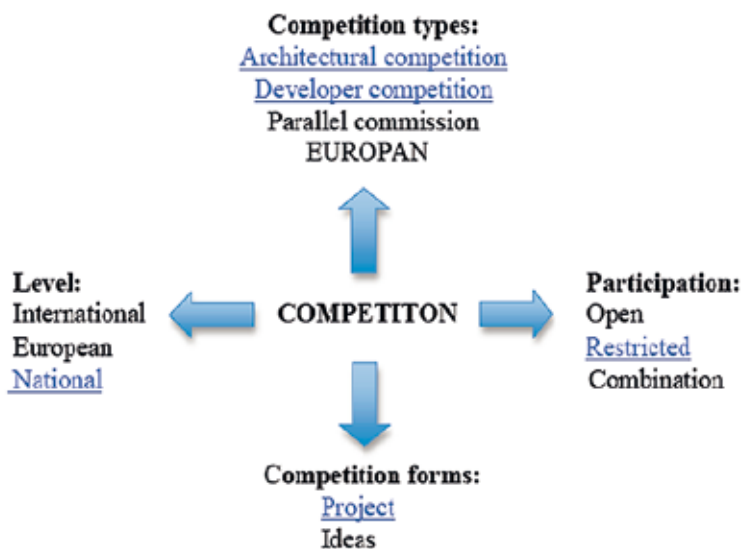


Figure 2. General model of competition as a research field in Sweden

The empirical data in the study comes from competitions marked in blue in the general competition model depicted in Figure 1. The six case studies in Gävle, Linköping, Burlöv, Danderyd, Nacka and Trelleborg are all organized as restricted competitions on a national level. Furthermore, they are project competitions oriented towards implementation. A typical feature of national competitions in Sweden is a language demand in the invitation. The brief is written in Swedish and the design proposals have to be presented in Swedish. There is

sometimes also a demand in the invitation for knowledge in the Swedish building codes. It is a type of regulation, which attracts Swedish design teams and limit competition from abroad. Gatekeepers will check the applications based on the demands in the invitations. The outcome can at least in part be predicted by the client regime theory.

## 2. CASE STUDIES

Here is a short description of the six competitions as cases.<sup>3</sup> The description is based on the organizers' invitation and includes key information from each competition about the design task and general conditions, objectives, requirements and criteria for selection. This is the information in the invitation used by companies and design teams to decide if they will form a design team and apply for prequalification. Attractors and gatekeepers are embedded in the invitation by the organizers.

### Case 1: Senior housing in Gävle

AB Gavlegårdarna is a public developer. The company sent out an invitation for prequalification in 2011 (Advertisement, Pre-qualification for Project Competition). The competition has two aims. First, the organizer wants to receive design proposals for attractive and suitable housing for senior citizens. Second, to negotiate architectural services for the assignment. Four firms are going to be chosen for the competition. The winner will design the buildings if the organizer carries out the project.

The competition area is 13 000 square meters and includes attached houses from the 1960s. The buildings have technical defects and accessibility problems. The organizer wants to refurbish the area and supplement the existing

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3 Empirical data from data from competitions were collected during 2010-2012. Internet homepages at municipalities in Sweden have been examined. The inventory resulted in a selection of prequalified competitions with housing and architecture for an ageing society as the common competition task. By questioning the organizers I obtained access to invitations, applications and documents from the selection procedure. These documents have been analyzed through close reading. Personal experiences have been collected from all individuals in the selection committees in the six competitions using an open questionnaire on the competitions background, competition form, judging process and personal experience from prequalification. The response was good. 20 of the 24 members in the selection committees answered the interview guide. Their professional merits had an interdisciplinary nature with an emphasis on architecture, planning, public procurement and care for the aging.

buildings with new housing to enable the elderly to continue living there. The need for new housing is somewhat unclear. According to the competition program the area should be supplemented with at least 50 apartments (AB Gavlegårdarna, 2011-10-10).

The general information in the invitation to prequalification is:

- Competition form: Invited project competition.
- Number of invitations: four companies (architectural firms/competition teams).
- Remuneration: 150 000 SEK per participant after submission of approved proposal. The winner will receive an additional 50 000 SEK; in total the sum expended will be 650 000 SEK.

The "must-haves" in the invitation are:

- Register: The application must include a list of the material submitted.
- Company information: Name, organization number, postal address, telephone number, e-mail address and web site.
- Taxes: Affidavit stating that all taxes and fees have been paid. This affidavit may not be more than 3 months old.
- Financial status and economic issues: Affidavit from a business and credit report company with information about key economic figures and risks. This affidavit may not be more than three months old.
- Reference project: Review of three reference projects the applicant considers relevant to the competition task, at least one of which has been completed.
- References: Contact information including name, address, telephone number, e-mail to the reference persons for each project.
- Curriculum vitae: A CV for each of the key persons and their role in the reference projects.
- Project organization: Statement of the project organization for eventual continued assignment. The team should have experience and knowledge about Swedish norms/demands.
- Language: The application should be in Swedish, which is also the language of the project assignment.





Figure 3. Winning design in competition at Gävle. Winner: Nyrén Arkitektkontor.

Applicants that fulfill the requirements will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Architectonic design capacity with regard to the design of buildings in the existing environment, adaptation of green areas, re-building, new building and accessibility.
- Housing design for seniors and knowledge of their needs including prerequisites as well as personnel and technical support.
- Competence in project organization and experience from planning and projecting.

According to the invitation the organizer has appointed a selection committee of three persons to judge the professional merits of the candidates. The committee is made up of a technical director, an architect from the municipality and an outside consulting architect. Out of 36 applicants, the committee chose the following four architectural firms/teams to participate in the competition (AB Gavlegårdarna, 2011-09-19):

- Basark; a design team from one architect office in Sweden.
- Nyréns Arkitektkontor; a design team from one architect office in Sweden.
- Rahel Belatchew Arkitektur & Uribo; a design team from two architect offices in Sweden.<sup>4</sup>
- White Arkitekter; a design team from one major architect firm in Sweden.

4 Uribo can no longer be found as an architect office.

### Case 2: Housing for assisted living in Linköping

In 2011 the municipality of Linköping issued an invitation to prequalification through the local authority for care of the elderly and the built environment (Linköping municipality, 2011-08-21). The competition had two purposes. First, the organizer wants proposals for assisted living with various constellations. Second, the municipality is going to negotiate architectural services. Four teams will be chosen for the competition. The winner is promised the assignment provided it is carried through.

The background to the competition is that the town districts are in shortage of housing for senior citizens in an area where the aged population is increasing. The municipality hopes that the competition will increase the possibilities of the senior citizen to remain in the area. The competition assignment included some 40 new assisted living apartments with common areas. The competition assignment also included adapting the outdoor areas to suit the needs of the elderly.

The general information for prequalification stated in the invitation is:

- Competition form: Invited project competition.
- Number of invitations: Four firms (architectural firms/teams).
- Remuneration: 200 000 SEK per participant after submission of an approved proposal, in total 800 000 SEK.

The “must-haves” in the invitation are:

- Listing: The application should include a register listing the material submitted.
- Company information: Name, registration number, address, telephone, e-mail and web site of the firms in the competition team.
- Company structure: Affidavit stating the company forms of the competing firms.
- Financial status and economic issues: Affidavit from a legal credit survey company containing information about the key economic figures and risks for the competing company. This document cannot be more than three months old.



Figure 4. Winning design in competition at Linköping. Winner: Marge Arkitekter + Land Arkitektur.

- **Reference projects:** An account of four reference projects, which the contestant considers relevant to the goal of the competition. Pure marketing information may not be submitted.
- **Reference persons:** Contact information including name, address, telephone, e-mail for the reference persons for each reference project.
- **Curriculum Vitae:** Statement with CVs for key persons, their roles in the reference project and eventual further assignment.
- **Project organization:** Description of project organization for eventual further assignment. The team should have experience and knowledge of Swedish norms and regulations. The applicant should also describe how they will meet the demand for capacity and availability if awarded the project in Linköping.
- **Quality and environment:** Description of quality and environmental management assurance system for the firms involved in the application.
- **Language:** The competition and project language is Swedish. Applications should be submitted in Swedish with the exception of documents such as publications, articles, jury statements etc., which may also be in Norwegian, Danish or English.

Applicants that meet the requirements will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Relevant competence in design and functionality.
- Competence from other related assignments.
- Candidates presenting a wide and varied illustration of the competition goal.

According to the invitation the selection committee, a group of experts from the organizing body, will appoint the candidates for the competition. Two of these are architects employed by the municipality and two are persons with experience in health care and care giving. The selection committee chose four firms/teams for the competition out of 33 applicants. Two of the invited teams included architects from Denmark (Linköping municipality, 2011-11-01). The following design teams were chosen for the competition:

- Fojab Arkitekter & JJW Arkitekter; a design team from two architect firms, one Swedish office and one Danish office (JJW).
- MAF Stockholm & Argark; a design team from two Swedish architect firms.
- Marge Arkitekter & Land Arkitektur; a design team from two Swedish firms, one architect office and one landscape architect office.
- Semrén + Månsson & Rubow Arkitekter; a design team from two architect firms, one Swedish office and one Danish office.

### **Case 3: Senior housing in Burlöv**

In 2011 Burlöv municipality organized a restricted competition in cooperation with a private developer, the landowner; Kronetorps Park AB (Burlöv municipality, 2011-09-26). This competition also had two purposes. First, the organizer wants to receive suggestions for new housing and environments with an especially high quality including activities for the elderly. Second, the organizer wishes to negotiate architectural services for designing 100 apartments and drawing up a detail plan for development in the area.

Kronetorp is the municipality's largest remaining land resource located in a strategic area between Malmö and Lund with direct train connections to Copenhagen. Burlöv municipality has plans to transform Kronetorp into an age-integrated town district for 60,000 inhabitants with work places and cultural and recreational activities.

The general information in the invitation for prequalification is:

- Competition form: Invited project competition.
- Number of invited participants: Three firms/teams will be invited to compete.

- Remuneration: 300 000 SEK after submission of approved proposal; in total 900 000 SEK.

The “must-haves” in the invitation are:

- Listing: The application should include a list of the material submitted.
- Company information: Name, organization number, address, telephone and applicant's web site.
- Company form: Affidavit stating the firms' structure.
- Curriculum Vitae: A CV for each key person in the competition project must be provided.
- Project organization: Statement of the project organization with an eventual continuation of the assignment including the key persons and their work contribution in percent. The team should have experience and knowledge of Swedish norms and demands.
- Reference project: At most five relevant reference projects of which at least two must be implemented. The material in the application may include printed plans, illustrations, publications and charts.
- Reference persons: Statement of reference persons for the reference projects including name, address, telephone and e-mail.
- Language: Swedish is the language for the competition and project assignment. The application must be made in Swedish. The accompanying documents such as publications, articles and jury statements may be in another language.

Applicants meeting the requirements will be judged according to the following criteria:

- Architectonic ability.
- Capacity for innovative thinking.
- High level of competence in environmental design.
- Competence with regard to the needs of the elderly.
- Experience and resources.

According to the invitation the organizer has appointed a selection committee of five professional persons to choose the candidates for the competition. Two



Figure 5. Winning design in competition at Burlöv. Winner: Johan Celsing Arkitektkontor.

persons in the committee represent the developer who also was the landowner. Three persons represent the municipality: the head of the welfare office and two representatives from the town planning office. The selection committee pointed out three architectural firms/teams to participate in the competition out of 51 applicants (Burlöv municipality 2011-12-06):

- Johan Celsing Arkitektkontor; a design team from one Swedish architect office.
- Tema landskapsarkitekter & Chroma Arkitekter; a design team from two firms, one landscape architect office and architect office.
- White Arkitekter; a design team from one major architect firm in Sweden.

#### Case 4: Senior housing in Danderyd

Danderyd municipality issued an invitation in 2011 for a developer competition for senior housing. Interested companies were invited to consult the municipality's homepage for further information. The municipality also sent out a special circular to 15 construction companies and real estate managers in Greater Stockholm. According to the invitation 3-6 constructors would be invited to participate in a developer competition.

The municipality has two main goals for the competition. First, the municipality will sell the site to the winner. Second, the municipality wants to receive suggestions for ca. 35 senior apartments suitable for the elderly in a building designed with 2-4 stories ([www.danderyd.se](http://www.danderyd.se)). 50 % of the apartments should have a quiet side facing the common courtyard to minimize noise coming from traffic in the area. The municipality will set up a land allocation agreement for realizing the winning proposal with an option for the winner



Figure 6. Winning design in competition at Danderyd. Winner: Strabag projektutveckling + Turako Fastighetsutveckling + Conara. Illustrations: Total Arkitektur och Urbanism.

to directly negotiate the purchase of the property. (Land allocation agreement, KS 2010/03 00).

The general information in the invitation is:

- **Competition form:** Invited developer competition followed by land allocation agreement.
- **Number invited:** 3-6 building contractors or real estate managers.
- **Remuneration:** The competition is held at the expense of the participants. The winner is offered the chance to purchase the property with the building permissions.

The “must-haves” in the invitation are:

- **Company presentation:** Presentation of the company and its experience in building senior housing.
- **Building program:** Presentation of a general program for housing design and equipment to facilitate use by the elderly. Principal/standard design solutions should be included.
- **Quality of life:** Presentation of program with activities which create a rich social life on the property. Principal/standard solutions should be provided.
- **Design ideas:** Sketches presenting the design ideas for the housing and the plot.
- **Reference project:** Summary of references for similar projects by the team that have been carried through by the company at hand.

- **Economic value:** An indication of the value of the site and building permission.
- **Language:** Not specified in the invitation.

The invitation does not specify any criteria for evaluating the applications. According to the development manager for the municipality the intention was to use the same criteria for choosing the candidates and the judging of design proposals in the competition. From this statement the evaluation criteria for selecting candidates may be described as follows:

- **Interior design:** The apartment layouts and common areas may bring an additional value for a maximum of 10 % of the property value. The added value is in relation to the other applications.
- **Architectural Design:** The reference project's architectural design may generate an added value of 10 % of the property value. The added value is for design as compared with the other reference projects.
- **Environmental goals:** The architectural design of the reference project, environmental program and heating can bring an additional value of maximum 15 %. The added value is accorded to low energy homes and solutions that have a passive construction.

A selection committee of three persons will evaluate the companies' applications. The development manager reviews the companies regarding agreements and technology, the city architect judges the design references and a representative from the social services should examine the documents describing the housing. The invitation generated six applications; all of them met the application requirements and proceeded to the competition (Report 2011-05-19). The following six design teams from companies were invited to the developer competition by the organizer:

- Bonum Seniorboende; a design team from one major developer.
- NCC Construction; a design team from one major constructor.
- RCC Stockholm; a design team from one regional constructor.
- Senorgården; a design team from one developer.
- Skanska; a design team from one major constructor.



- Strabag Projektutveckling + Turako Fastighetsutveckling + Conara; a design team from one major international constructor with a Swedish branch, in cooperation with two small Swedish developers.

### **Case 5: Rental apartments in Nacka**

In 2010 Nacka municipality invited companies to participate in a prequalification competition for housing development (Report 2010-03-09). According to the invitation five design teams with constructors or real estate managers and architects would be asked to participate. The purpose is to designate a builder to construct apartment houses that have their own long term management. The new housing should serve as a model and favour an economic, social and environmentally sustainable construction (Invitation, 2010-03-16).

The area is deemed suitable for a block of 30-50 apartments. At the same time as the competition is being prepared urban planning work begins to make the site accessible for housing purposes. The municipality intends to conclude a land allocation agreement with the winner. The property will be awarded with leasehold. Detail planning of the new property usage will be made in cooperation with the winner.

The general information in the invitation is:

- Competition form: Invited developer competition regulated by LOU, chap. 14, (project competition) followed by land allocation agreement with the winner.
- Number invited: 3-5 design teams (contractors, builder or real estate managers in cooperation with architectural firms).
- Remuneration: The design teams participate at their own expense. The winning company (main applicant) will be granted land allocation for constructing the housing with leasehold for the site. The agreement will be concluded when the detail plan is established.

The “must-haves” in the invitation are:

- List: The application must contain a list of all the enclosed material.
- Company information: Name, registration number of the company, address,

telephone, e-mail, Webb address and affidavits for the company's structure should be included for each company on the team.

- **Economy:** Affidavit describing the company structure and its financial status. The applicant must be a registered company which has never been the object of bankruptcy or insolvency (LOU, 10 chap., §2). The applicant must have a minimum rating of 3 on the UC (Business and Credit Information) credit scale. The certificate may not be more than three months old. The municipality has the right to obtain additional rating certificates to control the information. Foreign companies shall present the equivalent information.
- **New companies:** Newly started companies shall submit a certificate from a bank or verify their economic situation by other means (LOU, 11 chapter, § 7). Guarantee from main owner behind the company is accepted.
- **Taxes:** Completed form from the Swedish Tax Authority not older than three months.
- **Reference project:** 3-5 reference projects, demonstrating the applicant's ability and ambitions to produce climate-smart buildings with low energy use and good adaptation to the site.
- **Company strategy and management:** Planned management organization for the coming rental apartments including reference objects for the property management.
- **Project organization:** Organization for the design proposals. CVs for the key persons who will participate in the competition and their respective roles. Key persons should be experienced in Swedish norms and regulations.
- **Quality assurance and environmental management:** Applicants' system for managing quality and environmental objectives.
- **Rental levels and directions:** Statement of the rental levels for the reference object and the direction and ambitions for rental levels in the design proposals in the competition.
- **Language:** Competition and project language is Swedish. Applications must be in Swedish. Appendices such as publications, articles and jury statements may be in English.



Figure 7. Winning design in competition at Nacka. Winner: Wallenstam + Semrén & Månsson

The company's application will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- *Housing management*: Experience in long-term facility management, preferably for rental housing.
- *References*: Relevant reference objects, preferably rental properties, rental blocks in hilly terrain and energy-efficient housing.
- *Financial status and facility organization*: Economic standpoint, project organization, future property management and rental levels for the competition project.

The committee that made the choice in Nacka consisted of three persons; the municipality's technical and property director, the city architect and the head of the environmental office. The municipality received seven applications. After examining the applications, the following teams were invited for the competition (Protocol 2010-05-20):

- Botrygg Gruppen + Erséus Arkitekter; a design team from two Swedish firms, one developer in cooperation with one architect office.
- Bygg Vesta Bo + White Arkitekter/ Johan Kirsh; a design team from three Swedish firms, one developer in cooperation with a major architect office and a small architect office.
- Peab Bostad + Engstrand och Speek; a design team from two Swedish firms, one constructor and one architect office.

- Stockholms kooperativa Bostadsförening/kooperativa hyresgästförening + Kjellander och Sjöberg Arkitekter; a design team from two Swedish firms, one regional developer and one architect's office.
- Wallenstam + Semrén & Månsson; a design team from two Swedish firms, one developer and one architect office.

### Case 6: Housing block in Trelleborg

In 2011 Trelleborg municipality invited companies to prequalification for a developer to design housing with space on the ground floor for commercial activities (Invitation, Trelleborg municipality). The competition was marketed both on the municipality's home page and through direct contact with 24 companies. The municipality had two purposes behind the developer competition. First, to invite five teams of constructors and architectural firms to take part in the competition. Second, the municipality would sign a land allocation agreement with the company behind the winning proposal for continued planning, design and implementation.

According to the invitation, the municipality is seeking a design team with a strong interest in taking on the future of the city centre. The development should have innovative architecture, communicate the quality demand on urban design and be environmentally sustainable. The price of the land has been set at 2 000 SEK per m<sup>2</sup>. The cost for development of the site is entirely the responsibility of the developer behind the winning design proposal.

The general information in the invitation is:

- Competition form: Invited developer competition followed by land allocation agreement and sale of land.
- Number of invitations: 5 design teams of construction companies and architectural firms.
- Remuneration: 50 000 SEK for each proposal submitted; in total 300 000 SEK as prize money. The winner is offered to buy the property at a price that has been fixed in advance.

The "must-haves" in the invitation are:

- Listing: The application must include a list of the contents of the application



Figure 8. Winning design in the competition at Trelleborg. Winner: Riksbyggen + Arkitektlaget Skåne.

- **Company information:** Description of the construction company with contact information for representatives.
- **Collaborators:** Information about the collaborating architectural firms and the responsible architects.
- **Reference project:** List of references from 2 projects with similar competition tasks carried out by the construction company and architectural firm applying. Time, extent and role of the applicant in the reference project should be described.
- **Economy:** Credit rating from the central credit authority should be provided. It may not be more than three months old.
- **Taxes:** The tax authority form showing paid taxes. This document may not be more than three months old.
- **Language:** Applications and competition proposals are to be in Swedish.

Applications that fulfil the requirements will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Professional merits:** Competence, experience and design teams' references.
- **Long-term facility qualities:** Organizational and economic capacities as well as stability of the constructor/developer.
- **Urban design ability and creativity:** Ability to solve complex real estate and urban assignments requiring creative solutions in all phases: from sketch to implementation of architecture and urban design projects.

The jury made the selection in this case. Four persons from the competition jury evaluated the application proposals and pointed out the design teams for the developer competition. The invitation resulted in eight applications from construction companies in cooperation with architecture firms (Protocol 2012-02-27). The following five competition teams were invited to participate in the competitions:

- JM/ Seniorgården + Plan och byggnadskonst i Lund; a design team from two Swedish firms, one constructor and one architect office.
- Peab Sverige + Grotmij; a design team from two Swedish firms, one constructor and one major architect and engineering office.
- Riksbyggen + Arkitektlaget Skåne; a design team from two Swedish firms, one developer and one architect office.
- TrelleborgsHem + White Arkitekter; a design team from two Swedish firms, one public developer and one major architect office.
- Veidekke Bostad + Metro Arkitekter; a design team from two Swedish firms, one constructor and one major architect and engineering office.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The client regime has an organizing body in municipalities with conflicting interests, expressed in architectural competitions and developer competitions. In architectural competitions the town planning office plays a leading role. This can be seen in Burlöv and Linköping. In Danderyd and Nacka the developer competitions are organized by the propriety departments who manage exploitation of sites and represent the owner of land in negotiations with the company behind the winning design proposal. One conclusion is that the growth of developer competitions reflects a displacement of the public clients' power from the town planning office to the property department. Correspondingly, the interest in competitions is shifted from architecture to the price of the land, building costs and real estate management. There is a much stronger commercial context in developer competitions. The power shift is evident in the invitation to the restricted competitions. The client regime in developer competition seems to be more orientated to financial and economical issues in the invitation.

The client regime plays with two different methods of assembling design teams. The architectural competitions in Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping are directed towards architect offices and landscape architects firms. The developer

competition is directed towards constructors, builders and real estate managers who are the main applicants and make the agreements with municipalities on implementing the winning design. This is also the case even if developers cooperate with architects. In Danderyd only real estate managers were invited to the competition. Here architects are invisible in the applications. In this sense, developer competitions can be seen as a competition form that transfers influence from the architects to the developers and constructors by principles, norms and processes within the organizing body.

The client regime produces a different relation between attractor and gatekeepers. Many competitors wished to participate in Gävle, Linköping and Burlöv. The invitation attracted 120 design teams. Of them 11 (9 %) proceeded to the competition (see appendix, table 1). The conclusion is that architectural competitions have sufficiently strong attractors. Only teams with excellent applications will be chosen because of the tough competition for participating. Gatekeepers thus acquire a steering function in the final choice of design team. The numerous applications from architectural firms generate an evaluation procedure with several meetings of the selection committees. They made a qualitative selection of participants where the "soft" criteria in the invitation play a significant role in the final ranking of design teams.

The conditions for participating in developer competitions in Danderyd, Nacka and Trelleborg varied greatly compared to architectural competitions. The invitation only attracted 21 applications. 16 (76%) were invited to the competitions (see appendix, table 5). Few potential teams and candidates found the conditions attractive enough to invest their resources on drawing up applications. For the client this is a failure. The relationship between attracts and gatekeeping therefore becomes weaker and does not create a need for thoughtful strategies for judging the applications. Selection committees need only meet once. Gatekeeping becomes too simple. Selection committees had to approve a large number of applications that meet the "hard" must-haves in the invitation. There was no need for ranking design teams. For the same reason the "soft" criteria for evaluation don't play the same decisive role in developer competitions as in architectural competition.

### **General information in invitations**

The client regime includes different purposes, profits and benefits for teams in architectural and developer competitions. The information in the invitation

follows a uniform pattern in Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping (see appendix, table 2). This is because the competition is regulated by national competition rules and controlled by The Swedish Association of Architects. The purpose for organizers is both to get good proposals for new housing and an architect for the continued assignment. The winner is promised the assignment as long as the competition is not cancelled. The cash prize money varies from 650 000 SEK to 900 000 SEK. Compensation for the team varies from 150 000 SEK to 300 000 SEK. The payment for the architectural work is in accordance with recommendations from the association of architects. Both the higher price and the more extensive competition assignment in Burlöv act as attractors raising greater interest in the competition from potential candidates in the field of architecture.

The client regime regulations for developer competitions differ. The same degree of uniformity is not found in the invitation to the developer competitions in Danderyd, Nacka and Trelleborg. The competition assignments are directed towards design, construction and management of the housing. The common purpose is that the competition should result in a land allocation agreement (see appendix, table 6). This is the common norm in developer competitions. The agreement will give the winner the sole right to negotiate with the municipality on the realization of its proposal for new housing. Danderyd and Trelleborg intend to sell the land to the winner while Nacka will grant the land for leasehold. Trelleborg set the market price for the land in advance so teams could focus on competing for quality instead of the price of land. Danderyd will sell land to whoever makes the best offer. The competition is at the cost of the participants in Danderyd and Nacka. Developers see participation as a highly uncertain and risky investment in the future. The municipality of Trelleborg is trying to attract more candidates through economic compensation for the development of a design proposal. The prize amount is SEK 300 000 in the invitation. The competing teams will get 50 000 SEK each for their entries. The compensation is very low compared to the assignment and has not resulted in increased interest in the competition.

### **Must-haves in invitations**

The client regime has a tradition in construction invitations. There are several departments involved in producing invitations for public clients, both in architectural competitions and developer competitions. The conclusion is that the "must-haves" in invitations express a common point of view among organizers



and represent a regime supported by conditions based on the law for public procurement and professional practices. Applicants must fulfill these conditions to take part in competitions. Selection committees are satisfied with the content of the applications and consider the choice of teams to be based on sufficiently sound background material.

The "must have" demands in the invitation to competitions in Burlöv, Gävle och Linköping is typical for restricted architectural competitions (see appendix, table 3). The "must-haves" are not negotiable but "hard" conditions. The application must contain all of the required documents. Teams not meeting the requirements will be eliminated. A closer look will reveal that different requirements in the invitation have different emphases. Some convey information about the firm in the application. Documents/illustrations of the reference project, reference persons, competence and project organization for the assignment are needed. There are also requirements giving the organizer the right to disqualify firms with tax debts and weak economies. Reference projects, participants' CVs and composition of the persons in the project organization are data the selection committees weight heavily when evaluating applications.

Two important conditions for gatekeepers in architectural competitions should be commented upon. The first is the requirement for relevant and implemented reference projects. This is a condition that limits renewal in competitions. Young architects and recently started firms cannot meet that requirement. The architectural competitions in Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping favored established firms. This is the general problem with restricted architectural competitions. But difficulties for young architects to participate in competitions will go unnoticed as long as invitations attract a lot of applications from established and competent teams with excellent reference. The second condition is the requirement for Swedish as the language for competitions marketed in European databases. Of course, the work is much easier if everyone speaks Swedish but this condition limits applications from foreign companies. In spite of the requirement two teams competing in Linköping had Danish architect firms as partners. Foreign firms with Swedish contacts have certain possibilities for meeting the language requirement.

The "must-have" requirements for developer competitions in the municipalities of Danderyd, Nacka and Trelleborg have the same "hard" core as in architectural competitions (see appendix table 7). The difference lies mainly in the greater variation of conditions, which can be explained partly by the

fact that there are no national competition rules for developer competitions. Recurring requirements are that applications contain information about the firm, reference projects, reference persons, and document competence and data about the planned project organization. The municipalities of Nacka and Trelleborg also require Swedish as the competition language, which excludes European companies. Moreover, developer competitions also lack the international prestige and status of architectural competitions. Another limiting requirement for developer competitions is that the application must include a tender for the land, future rent levels and management of housing. Only a handful of large firms consider these conditions in the invitation attractive.

The relation between attractors and gatekeepers remains problematic for developer competitions. Conditions in the invitation discourage small local and regional constructors. Mainly large or national developers and real estate managers submit applications. An explanation for this weak interest must be sought outside the competition. Better knowledge of potential candidates in the building sector is needed. The case studies in Danderyd, Nacka and Trelleborg only show that the competition form attracted few candidates, but it says very little about the causes. Since the organizers do not have access to a wide choice of applicants the qualitative evaluation of candidates is weak. The way in which the "must-have" requirements are formulated lead to economic aspects that become more important than the teams' competence and the architectonic quality of the reference project. The competition in Danderyd is an example for this displacement of interest. One of the invited companies in this case is Strabag projektutveckling. The developer is part of an international construction company active in Europe. The goal for Strabag projektutveckling is to "increase turnover from 2 billion to 6 billion (SEK) in Scandinavia" (Application 2011-05-13). A determining factor in this case is that the company offered a price for the purchase of land that was much higher than the competitors'. This developer competition turned out to be more of a price competition.

### **Evaluation criteria in invitations**

The client regime represents a tradition in using criteria for ranking applications. The same type of criteria is used for evaluating design teams for architectural competitions and developer competitions. The criteria reflect praxis based on experience from competitions (see appendix, table 4 and table 8). This conclusion is true for both competition types. The intention is to identify good

qualities, rank applications and point out suitable teams for the competition assignment. Since the criteria are formulated ahead of time they have an open character which gives the selection committee a great deal of leeway. The criteria are used in the final selection of candidates for participating in the competition.

The criteria in the invitation for applications in the Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping competitions are expressed in a very general way (see appendix, table 4). The invitation from Linköpings municipality presents general criteria found in many restricted competitions. The "soft" nature lies in the flexibility and direction of holistic assessments. The focus is on architectonic quality, creative ability, competence and resources of the design team. Burlöv and Gävle even add knowledge of housing for the elderly. A common denominator for the architectural competitions is that the criteria are a part of the evaluative choice of candidates. Only 11 out of 120 teams could participate in the architectural competitions. The fundamental principle is comparison, evaluation and ranking of teams according to preferences, interpretation of references and searching for rational reasons that legitimize the choice.

The invitations to the developer competitions in Nacka and Trelleborg present the same type of "soft" criteria for evaluating the applications (see appendix, table 8). The choice of team is based on judging their creative abilities, references, experience and competence. In Nacka the invitation is completed with additional criteria on energy-efficient housing, long-term facility management, rent level, economic and project organization. Trelleborg requires additional criteria such as economic and organizational capacity and developer stability. The competition in Danderyd differs by using numerical values. Selection committees seek measurable grounds for the subjective choice of teams. That is a normal reaction when negotiating goods and services. The difference with architectural competitions doesn't lie with the criteria but rather with the competition task. That is why criteria in the developer competitions refer to design, construction and management. But since the competitions attract so few applicants the selection committees didn't need to develop assessment strategies to evaluate teams using the criteria.

In summary, the client regime theory is usable for analyzing architectural competitions and contributes to the explanation of how public organizers appoint design teams. Since these competitions have regulations and follow established praxis it is possible to steer the competition through invitation. I have

not been able to demonstrate the theory in developer competitions. The idea of attractors and gatekeepers as two fundamental functions need further investigation. The empirical data in the case studies cannot explain the limited number of applications. Knowledge must be sought outside the organizing body in the market context. What is seen as attractors in the architectural competition and developer competition depends on the competition form, and the impact on design teams differs. Continued research is needed to develop and apply the client regime theory to this invited form of competition.

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## Appendix: Tables

**Table 1: Applicants, participants and winners in the architectural competitions**

Restricted architectural competition	Number of applicants	Invited Candidates	Winning teams
<i>2011, Competition in Gävle</i>	36	4 (11%)	Nyrén Arkitektkontor
<i>2011, Competition in Linköping</i>	33	4 (12%)	Marge Arkitekter & Land Arkitektur
<i>2011, Competition Burlöv</i>	51	3 (6%)	Johan Celsing Arkitektkontor
Total:	120	11 (9%)	

**Table 2: General information in invitations to architectural competitions**

Aspects	Gävle	Linköping	Burlöv
<i>Competitions form</i>	Restricted project competition	Restricted project competition	Restricted project competition
<i>Number invited teams</i>	4 architect offices/ design teams	4 architect offices/ design teams	3 architect offices/ design teams
<i>Compensation</i>	150 000 SEK per applicant + 50 000 SEK to winner. In total 650 000 SEK.	200 000 SEK per applicant. In total 800 000 SEK.	300 000 SEK per applicant. In total 900 000 SEK.

**Table 3: Must-haves in invitations to architectural competitions**

Specific demands	Gävle	Linköping	Burlöv
<i>List of enclosed material</i>	A list of submitted material	A list of submitted material	A list of submitted material
<i>Company Information</i>	Name, organization no, phone no, addresses (postal, e-mail, web site)	Name, organization no, phone no, addresses (postal, e-mail, web site)	Name, organization no, phone no, addresses (postal, e-mail, web site)
<i>Company structure</i>	No specific demand	Affidavit stating company form	Affidavit stating the firms' structure
<i>Taxes</i>	Affidavit stating that all taxes and fees are paid	No specific demand (control by the organizer)	No specific demand (control by the organizer)
<i>Financial status and economic issues</i>	Affidavit reports on economics and risks. Not older than 3 month	Affidavit reports on economics and risks. Not older than 3 month	No specific demand (control by the organiser)
<i>Reference project</i>	3 relevant reference projects, at least one has to be completed	4 reference projects, relevant to the goal of the competition	5 relevant reference projects, at least two have to be completed
<i>Reference person</i>	Contact information; name, phone, addresses to each reference	Contact information; name, phone, addresses to each reference	Contact information; name, phone, addresses to each reference

<i>Curriculum vita</i>	CV for key persons in the team and their role in reference projects	CV for key persons in the team, their role in reference projects and eventual assignment	CV for key persons in the competition project
<i>Project organization</i>	Presentation of the team for eventual assignment and their about Swedish norms/demands	Presentation of the team for eventual assignment and their about Swedish norms/demands + availability in place	Presentation of the team at present, for eventual assignment and their about Swedish norms/demands
<i>Quality and environment</i>	No specific demand	Assurance system for quality and environment	No specific demands
<i>Language</i>	Swedish as application and competition language	Swedish as application and competition language	Swedish as application and competition language

**Table 4: Evaluation criteria in invitations the architectural competitions**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Gävle</b>	<b>Linköping</b>	<b>Burlöv</b>
<i>Architectural quality and design capacity</i>	Architectonic design capacity with regard to the existing environment, adaptation of green areas, re-building, new building and accessibility	Relevant competence in design and functionality	Architectonic ability Capacity for innovative thinking
<i>Housing design</i>	Housing for senior citizen and their needs	No specific criteria	Competence in needs of elderly
<i>Competence, experience and resources</i>	Competence in the design team, experience of planning and projecting	Competence from other related assignments	Experience and resources
<i>Other criteria</i>	No specific criteria	Capable teams in relation to the competition goal	High level of competence in environmental design

**Table 5: Applicants, participants and winners in the developer competitions**

Restricted developer competition	Number of applicants	Invited Candidates	Winning teams
<i>2011, Competition in Danderyd</i>	6	6 (100%)	Strabag Projektutveckling
<i>2012, Competition in Nacka</i>	7	5 (71%)	Wallenstam + Semrén & Månsson
<i>2012, Competition in Trelleborg</i>	8	5 (63%)	Riksbyggen & Arkitektlaget Skåne
Total:	21	16 (76%)	

**Table 6: General information in invitations to developer competitions**

Aspects	Danderyd	Nacka	Trelleborg
<i>Competitions form</i>	Restricted developer competition + land allocation agreement.	Restricted developer competition + land allocation agreement.	Restricted developer competition + land allocation agreement.
<i>Number invited teams</i>	3-6 building constructors. (No architects firms)	3-5 design teams. (constructors + architects firms)	3-5 design teams. (constructors + architects firms)
<i>Compensation</i>	No compensation for the design proposals. The winner is offered to buy the site.	No compensation for the design proposals. The winner is offered to leasehold the site.	50 000 SEK per invited team. The winner is offered the property at a fixed price.

**Table 7: Must-haves in invitations to developer competitions**

Specific demands	Danderyd	Nacka	Trelleborg
<i>List of enclosed material</i>	No demand.	A list of documents in the application.	A list of documents in the application.
<i>Company presentation/ Information</i>	Presentation of the company (applicant) and its experience.	Presentation of companies in the design team.	Presentation of constructor including contact information.
<i>Design ideas and building program</i>	Design ideas, general program for housing, principal standard solution and equipment for elderly.	No demand in the invitation.	No demand in the invitation.
<i>Quality of life</i>	General program for activities/social life.	No demand.	No demand.



<i>Company strategy and Collaboration</i>	No demand.	Presentation of property management + references	Presentation of collaborating companies + responsible architects.
<i>Reference project</i>	Similar implemented projects by the design team (housing for senior citizens)	3-5 implemented projects demonstrating the applicant's ability	2 similar implemented projects by the applicant + the role of the design team in these.
<i>Project organization</i>	No demand in the invitation	Organization for the design team + CV for key persons and role.	Professional merits for members of the design teams.
<i>Financial status and economic issues</i>	An indication of the value of site and its building permits from the constructors.	Ambitions for rental. Document showing the financial status. Minimum rating 3 at the credit scale.	Document showing credit rating for invited form credit authority.
<i>Taxes</i>	No demand. (The organizer conduct tax control)	Show paid taxes by document from Tax authority.	Show paid taxes by document from Tax authority.
<i>Language</i>	No specification.	Swedish as application and competition language.	Swedish as application and competition language.

**Table 8: Evaluation criteria in invitations in the developer competitions**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Danderyd</b>	<b>Nacka</b>	<b>Trelleborg</b>
<i>Design</i>	Interior design and architectural design may bring 10% + 10% added value.	Design references (preferably rental houses at complicated sites)	Ability to solve assignment and find creative solutions in all phases from design to implementation.
<i>Professional merits</i>	No specific evaluation criterion.	No specific evaluation criterion.	1) Competence, 2) Experience, 3) References
<i>Environmental goals</i>	Environmental design and construction + program for heating can bring 15% added value.	Energy-efficient housing.	No specific evaluation criterion.
<i>Housing management and economic standpoint</i>	No specific evaluation criterion.	Long-term facility management, rental level, economic and project organization.	Economic and organizational capacity + the developers stability.



# Part 4

## Abstract

Architects have long competed among themselves in design competitions to choose a design or designer for an architectonic solution to a particular problem. This historical review examines the reasons why Portuguese architects decide to participate in international design competitions and the links between some major political, economic and sociological events that show why competitions are so appealing and important.

The work of Álvaro Siza Vieira, who first opened the door to competitions after the 1974 Portuguese Revolution, and Eduardo Souto de Moura, as he followed the Oporto School master with renewed strength and research vigour, is charted. The process of gaining entry to the European Union then provided the opportunity to develop and confirm other architects in Portugal, like João Luis Carrilho da Graça and Gonçalo Byrne, whose competences and aesthetics gradually became internationally known and recognised. Competitions were used as an opportunity to do more complex work, different programmes, scales and research strategies. By the turn of the millennium, the fall of the initial golden European years turned international design competition into the prime opportunity for recognition and confirmation for a second generation of architects and offices like ARX, and gradually became the most used strategy for young architects like Tiago Mota Saraiva, TERNULLO-MELO Architects and many others.

Design competitions provide an opportunity for getting worthy commissions with tangible benefits, despite the time, human and technical resources involved in competitions, and also relevant intangible gains for architects. The recognition and confirmation of high status, with prizes among architects in peer design evaluation, has proven to be of the utmost importance in Portugal.

From the early tentative, explorative years of Álvaro Siza Vieira's first competitions in the 1970s to the current mass participation by young Portuguese architects in international design competitions, there is a long, cumulative effort of competence and visibility that gives competitions an important symbolic, unquestioned value. Design competitions are excellent research opportunities and provide an historical background for understanding and documenting Portuguese architecture.

**Key words:** International architectural competitions, Portugal, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Álvaro Siza Vieira, architectural research, decision making

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# The relevance of international design competitions for Portuguese architecture

PEDRO GUILHERME

## INTRODUCTION

Architects have long competed among themselves in design competitions that choose the design or the designer for an architectonic solution to a particular problem. They do so because they believe competitions are worthwhile, despite all their negative aspects. Immense resources are allocated to competitions in terms of human labour, time, competences, stamina, expertise, costs, energy and materials and there is no guarantee of success. Yet architects continue to enter competitions. However, in light of the increasing number of architects competing and the perils of architectural competitions, architects are now asking themselves, more often than before, a fundamental question: “Should we compete?”

A literature review on the pros and cons of competitions reveals some relevant authors, e.g. Paul Spreiregen (1979), Judith Strong (1996), Jack Nasar (2006) and G. Stanley Collyer (2004), who give some insights on the positive and negative aspects of competitions.

The positive aspects (presented in Appendix 01) can be grouped into three major categories:

- Discovery and presentation of (new/old) talent
- Production of quality architecture and new solutions
- Providing attention, marketing or publicising architecture (and the architect).

The potentially negative aspects (presented in Appendix 02) can also be grouped into three major categories:

- Competition structure and procedures
- Jury assessments, representativeness, autonomy, impartiality, ethics and credibility
- Extensive allocation of human resources, time, creativity and financial resources to competitions by everyone, particularly architects.

A recent edition of *Wonderland – Platform for European Architecture* (Austria) confirms that “Taking part in a competition is about testing one’s abilities outside a predefined setting of personal connections, nationality, office size, or gender. It is about experimenting and developing a personal vision much more directly than in the usual architect-client relationship. And winning a competition is much more than just getting a job! It is about the possibility of growing big in a day, of shortcutting years of slow growth, or of jumping scale in the size of projects the practice deals with, of getting a footing in a different national context, of specializing. And finally it is about publicity and recognition in and beyond the professional context – from colleagues to the general public. However, competitions also mean making an investment of valuable resources – time, energy and money – with an uncertain outcome. Is the prize worth the effort?” (Forlati et al., 2012, p.271) According to a *Wonderland* survey, 83% of respondents view competitions as a way to develop architectural thinking in practice; 84% view them as a necessity for clients who want new ideas; 50% use models to test ideas; 74% have collaborators specialising in competitions in the office; 71% are not primarily interested in the prize money when choosing a competition; and 76% see the relationship between work required and compensation as problematic.

Another survey in New York (Van Alen Institute, 2015) provided some interesting key findings from the anonymous responses:

- Designers enter competitions so they can work more creatively than they would be able to in everyday practice, and explore new topics, ideas, collaborations and skill sets outside typical constraints. Respondents indicated that the top three reasons for entering competitions are: 1) the opportunity to experiment (57.0% of survey entrants); 2) an interesting issue (54.9%); and 3) an opportunity to gain publicity (39.0%).
- The lack of compensation for time and resources spent is a primary limitation to designers participating in competitions. Respondents indicated that the top three limitations to participating in competitions are: 1) lack of compensation for time/resources spent (78.6%); 2) low

probability of winning (29.4%); and 3) no or low chance of implementation (28.6%).

- Respondents indicated a desire for more feedback (48%). This is especially crucial among students: 65% said it would make entering competitions more appealing. Students were also particularly interested in collaborating with people outside the design fields.

All these positive and negative aspects influence architects' commitment to participating in competitions (either open or by invitation, although the latter have additional implications because of the potential trans-border nature). This commitment is important to the proficiency put into the action of producing an entry and of communicating it. The commitment reflects the architect's use of competences (including their own or that of the team, level of competence (Mills, Platts, Bourne and Richards, 2002; Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986) and abilities, which are of the utmost importance to their potential success in competition.

Moreover, the decision on participating in a competition also depends on a series of political, sociological and professional events (such as prizes and visibilities, connections, either present or desired, or work load), not entirely dependent on the architect (Glendinning, 2010; Lo Ricco and Micheli, 2003; Stevens, 1998) that influence the decision to enter a competition. For example, being in the initial years of their profession, with less work load and thus more time to compete, and the desire to gain a reputation make young architects more available to compete. The more experienced (so-called 'starchitect' or star architect) or habitual winner of design competitions may select competitions because of their glamour, symbolic gain or in order to maintain acquired status.

## **METHODS AND OBJECTIVES**

This paper is based on a literature review of relevant architecture studies on competitions and competence, using a selection of entries by Portuguese architects in international competitions and interviews with the authors to identify the values pursued when entering international competitions. This reflection elaborates upon the relevance of competitions within a national and international context. It provides some links between the works of these architects and the social, political and economic situation in Portugal and in the world, to provide a complex (possibly rhizomatic) understanding of the reasons why

Portuguese architects compete, their aims, objectives, needs and strategies, and what motivates and induces them to participate in this endeavour.

The focus here is on the architects, rather than the competitions, and the two Portuguese Pritzker Prize winners – Álvaro Siza Vieira in 1992 and Eduardo Souto de Moura in 2010 – are used as cases to examine the main points that drove these two architects to participate in so many competitions from 1987 onwards. The analysis of these two early Portuguese architects is complemented with a discussion on others in later generations, in order to extend the data collected and provide a diachronic view of international competitions by Portuguese architects.

## Portugal, the past five decades

The participation by Portuguese architects in international competitions and its social, political and professional implications can be exemplified using archetypal examples of four generations. These to some degree follow Douglas Coupland's (2009a; b) "X", "Y", "Z" and "A" generations, although here they are adapted to national specific chronology and economics in order to explain more precisely why Portuguese architects choose to compete and thus open the door to internationalisation of their work.

In this approach it is important to discuss those aspects most connected with the making of the architect, their reputation and the market for the architect. Vera Borges<sup>1</sup> speaks of at least three current professional phases for Portuguese architects (Borges, 2014, p.78-79), each with meaningful differences:

- Young architects, with up to 10 years of professional practice. Their works are still "innocent" and dedication, resilience, compromise and personal effort characterise their work, mostly done at home or in precarious (or shared) offices. Experiences, even failed ones, are accounted for. Most may already have international experience (either through Erasmus or in a practical training period). The interest is in serving the client.

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<sup>1</sup> Vera Borges has a PhD in Sociology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and FCSH-Universidade Nova de Lisboa, directed by Pierre-Michel Menger (Centre de Sociologie du Travail et des Arts) and Luís V. Baptista and a Master's degree in Communication, Culture and Technologies of Information, ISCTE. Under the direction of Manuel Villaverde Cabral, Borges has developed the study 'Architects Profession' at the Institute of Social Sciences (University of Lisbon), with a postdoctoral research project on the careers of artists and their labour markets (2005-2013). Main areas of interest: professions, organisations and artistic labour markets. CV available at <http://dinamiacet.iscte-iul.pt/?pessoa=vera-borges>.



- Architects with more than 10 years of practice who want to venture their offices abroad, and they are pivots with market capacities, activity concentration, specialisations and scale.
- Architects who illustrate the profession's glamour and who occupy positions of power or hierarchy, accumulate opportunities (like most relevant public work) and are or are becoming internationally recognised. Most internationally acclaimed and prized Portuguese architects and the star architects may be included in this group.

The present analysis focuses on Álvaro Siza Vieira<sup>2</sup> (b. 1933, graduated in 1955) and Eduardo Souto de Moura<sup>3</sup> (b. 1952, graduated in 1980), due to the fact that

2 Álvaro Siza Vieira (b. June 25, 1933, Matosinhos) graduated in architecture from the University of Oporto in 1955 (1949–1955). His first project was built in 1954 and between 1955 and 1958 he collaborated with the Portuguese architect Fernando Távora. Having worked without interruption for six decades, Álvaro Siza Vieira's career has seen him gain international recognition and prestige. With a host of influential and impressive projects, his broad repertoire ranges from public housing, private dwellings and schools to urban design and rehabilitation, museums, furniture and product design. Foremost among his works are the Bonjour Tristesse Apartment Building in Berlin, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago de Compostela, the Serralves Museum in Oporto and the Iberê Camargo Foundation in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Álvaro Siza Vieira and his work have been distinguished with several prizes, including the Mies van der Rohe European Architecture Award in 1988, the prestigious Pritzker Prize in 1992, the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects (2009), the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement of the 13th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2012), as well as several honoris causa doctorates from leading universities in Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Portugal and Brazil, among others. Álvaro Siza Vieira is also committed to teaching, working as a professor at Oporto's School of Architecture since 1976, having participated at numerous conferences and seminars worldwide, and accepting positions as a visiting professor at Lausanne's EPF, the University of Pennsylvania, Los Andes University of Bogotá and the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University.

3 Eduardo Souto de Moura (b. 1952, Oporto) graduated in architecture from the Oporto Fine Arts School (FAUP) in 1980. In 1974, he collaborated with Noé Dinis' architectural practice, and from 1974 to 1979 he worked with the seminal architect Álvaro Siza Vieira. From 1981 to 1991, he was assistant professor at his alma mater and later began working as a professor at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Oporto. Eduardo Souto de Moura has been visiting professor at several architecture schools, such as Paris-Belleville, Harvard, Dublin, ETH Zurich and Lausanne, and has taken part in various seminars and conferences in Portugal and abroad. He established his own firm in 1980, whose work has been featured in various publications and exhibitions. Nominated seven times for the Mies van der Rohe European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture, his work has won several prizes, such as the SECIL Architecture Prize – for Casa da Artes in 1992, Braga Municipal Stadium in 2004 and Casa das Histórias Paula Rego Museum in

they are well known internationally and have been awarded the Pritzker Prize (Guilherme and Rocha, 2013; Guilherme, 2014, 2013). They represent, respectively, the “X” and “Y” generations, and are representatives of a generation marked by the 1974 Portuguese revolution. The analysis is extended to include Gonçalo Byrne, João Luis Carrilho da Graça and ARX, due to the fact that they took advantage of Portugal’s 1986 entry into the EU to go abroad. It also includes some international competitors from other offices who have competed more enthusiastically since 2000, such as ATELIERMOB (Tiago Mota Saraiva) and TERNULLOMELO Architects, who represent a younger architect’s perspective or different approaches to competitions, usually exemplified as part of the “Z” (or “A”) generation.

## Up to the 1960s

The First National Congress of Architecture in 1948 concluded “that Architecture should be expressed in an international language (in accordance with CIAM), rejecting the standards of architectural regionalism” (Costa, 1997, p.9) that sustained the authoritarian regime in its essence and splendour. Since the 1930s, Portuguese architects<sup>4</sup> have had contacts with RIA<sup>5</sup>, UIA<sup>6</sup> and CIAM<sup>7</sup> and there are records of trips<sup>8</sup> to France, England, the Nordic Countries, Russia and USA by some Portuguese architects. So although the country was quite closed to the outside, the community of Portuguese architects was quite open to foreign influences.

In 1957 Fernando Távora (one of Álvaro Siza Vieira’s teachers and initial influences) sounded the alarm: “This was a generation of architects aware of the need of a new social and historical approach, interested in developing their own specific process with different co-ordinates, not those hitherto imposed on them but in harmony

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2010. In 2011, Eduardo Souto de Moura was distinguished with the prestigious Pritzker Prize and in 2013 received the Wolf Prize.

4 Pardal Monteiro knew and was a friend of Pierre Vago (1910-2002) and is known to have participated in several trips with Vago, including to the USSR in 1932. He also participated in several travel meetings by the L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui, by the RIA, CIAM and at the meeting it was decided the foundation of UIA (in September 1946 in London at the RIBA).

5 Reunions Internationales d’Architecture (RIA).

6 International Union of Architects (UIA).

7 Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) from 1949 to 1956.

8 In 1963 Anahory made a study trip to the Scandinavian Countries. There are records of frequent architectural trips by Fernando Távora (later also with Álvaro Siza Vieira and Alexandre Alves Costa) to Spain, Greece.

with the concerns of other architects and in other European countries.” (Costa, 1997, p.11). Álvaro Siza Vieira says about his teachers: “Those young Masters, trained in the spirit of the CIAM and also in an emerging critical sensitivity, provided us with both open information and with a rediscovery of our country’s complex cultural roots. They broke down the divisions between teacher and pupil, they helped us to get beyond what was keeping us apart from Europe – even in relation to Architecture.” (Siza and Angelillo, 1997, p.31) In 1962 the Portuguese magazine *Arquitectura*<sup>9</sup> published the first works by Álvaro Siza Vieira<sup>10</sup>, described as an upcoming talent. He was considered unorthodox – “seeking individuality, seeking fantasy, seeking originality” (Costa, 1997, p.13) and, as his career progressed, he was taken in and supported by his peers. It would be in fact Fernando Távora, who would offer Álvaro Siza Vieira his first two works (Esposito and Leoni, 2003, p.9): the Quinta da Conceição pools, Matosinhos, 1958-1965; and the Boa Nova tea House at Leça da Palmeira, 1958-1963.

John Donat (1964), following an indication by Pancho Guedes<sup>11</sup>, published in *World Architecture* One projects by Fernando Távora and Álvaro Siza Vieira. This is the first known publication of Álvaro Siza Vieira’s work and perhaps fundamental for his international visibility.

He was further exported (or branded) internationally mainly by the hand of Portuguese architect Nuno Portas in 1967 (Tarragona, SP) and 1968 (Vitoria, SP) in the Spanish Small Congresses (Correia, 2009, 2010, 2012) (where he met Oriol Bohigas (SP), Aldo Rossi (IT), Peter Eisenman (UK) and Vitorio Gregotti (IT) among others). “It was at that time that contacts with architects in Spain were developed, and through them contacts with others. In the small meetings in Barcelona, a place where ideas which were coming from inside and outside the Iberian Peninsula were debated, I met Oriol Bohigas for the first time; already a remarkable figure in architectural culture, he was an acknowledged catalyst for the energies of both our countries and their various regions.” (Siza and Angelillo, 1997, pp.31–32). Álvaro Siza Vieira was further published in the Spanish magazine *Hogar y Arquitectura* in 1967 by Nuno Portas and Pedro Vieira de Almeida.

Up to the first competitions by Álvaro Siza Vieira (1978), there are no relevant records of participation of Portuguese architects in international competitions.

9 Edited by Nuno Portas, Vassalo Rosa and Pedro Vieira de Almeida.

10 In an article “Three works by Álvaro Siza Vieira”.

11 Described by Peter Cook as “the joker in the pack” in (Pancho Guedes in Conference at the Art Net, 1976).

However, there are several records (Borges, 2010; Furtado and Castelo, 2004; Pedrosa, 2004, 2012; Silva and Furtado, 2012) of work done abroad in Brazil and Belgium by Pedro Cid<sup>12</sup>, Eduardo Anahory<sup>13</sup> and relevant national architectural participation in some World Exhibitions that provided knowledge and proximity to Europe and international architecture.

In 1960, Portugal jointly funded the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)<sup>14</sup> favouring trade agreements with the European Economic Community (EEC), which Portugal was unwilling to enter at that time, and the rest of the world. Yet, due to this opening, between 1967 and 1978 Portugal shifted its foreign (commercial) relations from the foreign provinces and the Atlantic market towards the European Market. By 1972 Portugal had in fact changed from a mainly poor agricultural economy to an industrial modern country awakening to events happening outside its borders in Europe. This opening would be the prelude to a major political change.

### After 1974

The introduction of a democratic system in Portugal after the April 25th Revolution favoured the development of the country and a rapid opening to the outside. The return of emigrants from abroad (those from the colonial war and those who had fled fascism) and the appeal of a new urban culture forced rural migration to the cities, a fast and contradictory change in Portuguese society and urban sprawl. The country was avid for change, architects were asked to respond to new needs and there were opportunities for inducing political change through architecture.

The SAAL<sup>15</sup> programme was a “methodical, patient, rational and dialectic” (Costa, 1997, p.27) experience of local initiatives that was put into practice to improve the quality of living conditions: rent racketing, illegal housing, overcrowding and the lack of sanitary facilities. The SAAL project followed some

12 Portuguese Pavilion in Brussels (1959) by Pedro Cid (1925-1983).

13 Eduardo Anahory (1917-1985) was also a correspondent for some international magazines like *Domus* (Milan); *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (between 1959-1963) and *Connaissance des Arts* (Paris); *DBZ-Deutsche Bauzeitschrift e MD-Moebel Interior Design* (Stuttgart); *Bauen + Wohnen*, 6 (Munich); 33 *Architekten-Einffamilienhauser* (Zurich).

14 The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was founded in 1961 by Austria (AU), Denmark (DK), Norway (NO), Portugal (PT), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH) and the United Kingdom (GB), to promote closer economic cooperation and free trade in Europe.

15 Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local (SAAL) - Local Ambulatory Support Service.

international initiatives, in particular the Berlin Housing Estates of the 1920s by Bruno Taut (Onkel Tom's Hutte) and some of Alvar Aalto housing (Sunilla and Paimio housing). São Vitor zone (SAAL, Oporto, 1974-77) and Quinta da Malagueira (Évora, 1977) were some of the projects that provided Álvaro Siza Vieira with the international label of being a social architect. As Bernard Huet states "Of all the architects from Oporto, Siza was without doubt the most accessible, the most theoretically prepared to integrate the new participatory data in his own method." (Costa, 1997, p.27)

Álvaro Siza Vieira started the first international work only after 1978 and took part in international competitions on a regular basis afterwards. Brigitte Fleck states that at that time (late 1970s), Álvaro Siza Vieira "who literally had nothing to do in Portugal" (Smith, 2006, p.54) was invited to some competitions in Berlin, Madrid and Salzburg, on a series he would afterwards (after 1990) designate as the "cycle of monotony".

The International Architectural Exhibition in Berlin (International Bauausstellung – IBA, 1979-87) was one of the most important events of the 1980s and a large laboratory of careful urban renewal and housing design in West Berlin. The renewal strategy was based on several international competitions, each for reconstructing different parts of the city, from the "international expo" approach to the ambitious attempt to repair the city. IBA was very appealing for most architects and Álvaro Siza Vieira, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, Mario Botta, Peter Cook, John Hejduk, Aldo Rossi, Frei Otto, Arata Isozaki, James Stirling and many others contributed to a vivid and experimental, rather plural, architecture contrasting with the more traditional urban planning (Rob Krier and Léon Krier). IBA was divided into the IBA Neubau (new buildings) across Tegel, Prager Platz, southern Tiergarten and southern Friedrichstadt, under Josef Paul Kleihues, and IBA Altbau (renewal of existing blocks) in Kreuzberg, under Hardt-Walther Hämer.

Álvaro Siza Vieira entered his first competition at IBA Altbau, to design the polemic Gorlitzer Swimming Pool in 1979, on a vacant urban lot in Kreuzberg. As Brigitte Fleck (2006, p.54) points out, following the publication of his two open-air swimming pools<sup>16</sup> in Portugal in international magazines, Álvaro Siza Vieira embodied the "Portuguese experiment [in public participation]"<sup>17</sup> and international enlightenment for a country under profound social, political and

16 Swimming Pool in Quinta da Conceição Park in Matosinhos (1961-65) and Ocean Swimming Pool on the Avenida Marginal in Leça da Palmeira (1961-66).

17 Of the participation of citizens – residents and families – during project design phase.

territorial change, that triggered curiosity and outside interest. Yet in this competition Álvaro Siza Vieira faced intense opposition from the public, due to the dome over the central swimming pool<sup>18</sup> over a parallelepiped square building (80 m x 80 m) that resembled (too much) a mosque. He was still to survive the first round, due to one member of the jury, but in the end was only awarded a special prize.

Six months later, he was invited to a new competition in Frankelufer, again because of his expertise in citizen participation. Yet the supposed participatory process that Álvaro Siza Vieira would provide (in line with his experience in Portugal) and that the competition could foster was in fact “only an instrument for pacification in order to achieve an easy compromise” (Smith, 2006, p.55) and soon his proposal was rejected and put aside.

By that time Eduardo Souto de Moura<sup>19</sup>, who had begun studying as an art student at the School of Fine Arts in Oporto, entered the FAUP in 1970 but would only graduate in 1980 (because of the 1974 revolutionary period). He worked with Noé Dinis and Fernando Távora at SAAL (making Souto de Moura part of a generation of architects that felt the relevance of the political and social change in Portugal) and, during his early years (1974-1979), also worked with Álvaro Siza Vieira. “It was then that Souto de Moura spent some time in my studio, collaborating on SAAL project at São Vitor and others. I quickly understood with a treacherous dismay and greater joy, that I would not have him as collaborator for very long.” (Siza and Angelillo, 1997, p.67). Álvaro Siza Vieira became Eduardo Souto de Moura’s important influence, along with Rossi and Aalto. He participated in some of Álvaro Siza Vieira’s competitions (Fraenkelufer Housing and the Swimming Pool Gorlitzer Bad) and continued doing so afterwards in other joint competitions.

### **Urban Redevelopment in Berlin, Memorial in Berlin and Compo di Marte in Venice**

Eduardo Souto de Moura’s first individual international competition was the imaginary House for Karl Friedrich Schinkel (Japan, 1979) to be located near

18 Álvaro Siza Vieira would use the same idea of a hierarchical monumental space for the swimming in the Sports Center Llobregat in Barcelona (2005) with skylights reassembling some of Istanbul’s most well-known Turkish hamami stone ceilings with diffuse lighting. This project in Barcelona could also be seen as research put into practice more than 35 years after a different, but linked, competition project.

19 Eduardo Souto de Moura was born in Oporto in 1952, and is 10 years younger than Álvaro Siza Vieira.



Figure 1. Álvaro Siza Vieira competitions on Boa Nova Tea House, Leça da Palmeira 1958/1963, Ocean Swimming Pool, Leça da Palmeira 1961/1966, Schlesisches Tor Urban Redevelopment, Berlin 1980-84, 1986-88 (1st prize), Memorial to the Victims of the Third Reich at Prinz Albrecht Palais in Berlin, competition, 1983 and Siza, Campo di Marte, Guidecca in Venice, 1983 (1st Prize)

the Boa Nova Tea House. He proposed the construction of an abstraction of a ruin of classical nature, reassembling one of Piranesi's ruins, in contrast to the absent figurative illusion of Schinkel. In an interview in 1994, Eduardo Souto de Moura said:

Schinkel is a person I was interested in and who seemed to be one of the keys to the Modern Movement. I've always considered the Modern Movement to be a continuity of Classicism, regardless of what I've had to say against it. (...) And then, of course, there was Mies and so on... (...)

I really wanted to take part in this competition, building the Neo-Classical house within the Leça refinery. On his travels, Schinkel showed a certain interest in industrial materials. He was, like all gifted architects, finely attuned to both the past and the future, and the future at that time was industry, the myth of the machine. I wanted to create a counterpoint between the classical style and an industrial landscape, which are not as different as they may appear.

It was one of my favourite projects: there were no pre-requisites for the design and the way it turned out was the way I had proposed. The House embodied innocence: there was a waterfall, a river, a few fountains. These are there not as decorations, but out of my interpretation of Schinkel. (Moura and Pais, 1994, p.31)

This first competition was indeed very important to Eduardo Souto de Moura, and happened much earlier in his career than with Álvaro Siza Vieira. It was an ideas competition and was almost simultaneous with Álvaro Siza Vieira's first IBA "Altabau" competitions. The participation in previous competitions with Álvaro Siza Vieira provided Eduardo Souto de Moura with the interest, the competence and the will to enrol in other competitions. The choice of Schinkel's competition can be understood as an opportunity for him to research design.

Eduardo Souto de Moura clearly demonstrated that a competition can be the place and the time for reflecting on the conditions of the project. His own views about Schinkel, his ideas about the modern condition of classicism and history are reflected in this design. He would further explore the idea of columns (pillars) in the covered City Market at Braga (1980-1984).

## The EEC

In 1986, Portugal left EFTA to join the EEC, as a full state member of an organisation that later became the European Union (EU). In the previous convergence



and following years, Portugal's economy progressed considerably as a result of EEC/EU structural and cohesion funds and Portuguese companies' easier access to foreign markets. The country developed and the golden years of construction provided opportunities for Portuguese architects to mature and develop.

During the 1980s, Álvaro Siza Vieira started 41 projects in Portugal and 22 international projects, half of which were international competitions, but only four of these international projects were built.

During the 1980s new themes were addressed by Álvaro Siza Vieira, as if he had lost his first stereotype as a sort of community architect. He was called to compete for cultural buildings, urban spaces and restorations, master plans and public buildings. His competitions started to experiment with other hypotheses of impact over the city. These new themes would involve urban area restorations (Giudecca, Venice, Italy, 1985; Project for Siena, Sienna, Italy, 1988) and public buildings (Bibliothèque de France, Paris, France, 1989; Cultural Centre in Madrid, Spain, 1989-90).

In 1989-90, Álvaro Siza Vieira won the competition for a Cultural Centre in Madrid, but in a second phase the organisers changed the shape of the site and specified a different arrangement of spaces, leading Álvaro Siza Vieira to present a radical different solution. Álvaro Siza Vieira was invited to share the commission with a Spanish architect and declined, although not because of the outside architect: "At times the guilt is attributed to foreign architects that worked with me, to whom on the contrary I owe much that I have learned, and unforgettable support and patience in the long process of a project, and for the translation of what was not understood immediately, as I desired or needed." (Siza, 1989, p.11). The project was never built.

Álvaro Siza Vieira's growing status as an architect and his firm belief in principles provide another clue to his limits in taking competitions to the building phase. Álvaro Siza Vieira embodied the true nature of the ethical architect, in the sense of being true to his own authentic professional ethos. Far from being just the *prima donna* type of author, Álvaro Siza Vieira was in fact protecting his demission of authorship and the importance of the first sketch. The first sketch (*esquisse*), most often made at the site, transforms itself in an autonomous part of the project. It is the author's conscious will written in the form of a sketch. This "disappearance of the author", as Kenneth Frampton describes it so well (Frampton, 1989, p.186) and the importance of the first sketch collide with any imposition over the competition. This was not acceptable in Álvaro Siza Vieira's eyes.

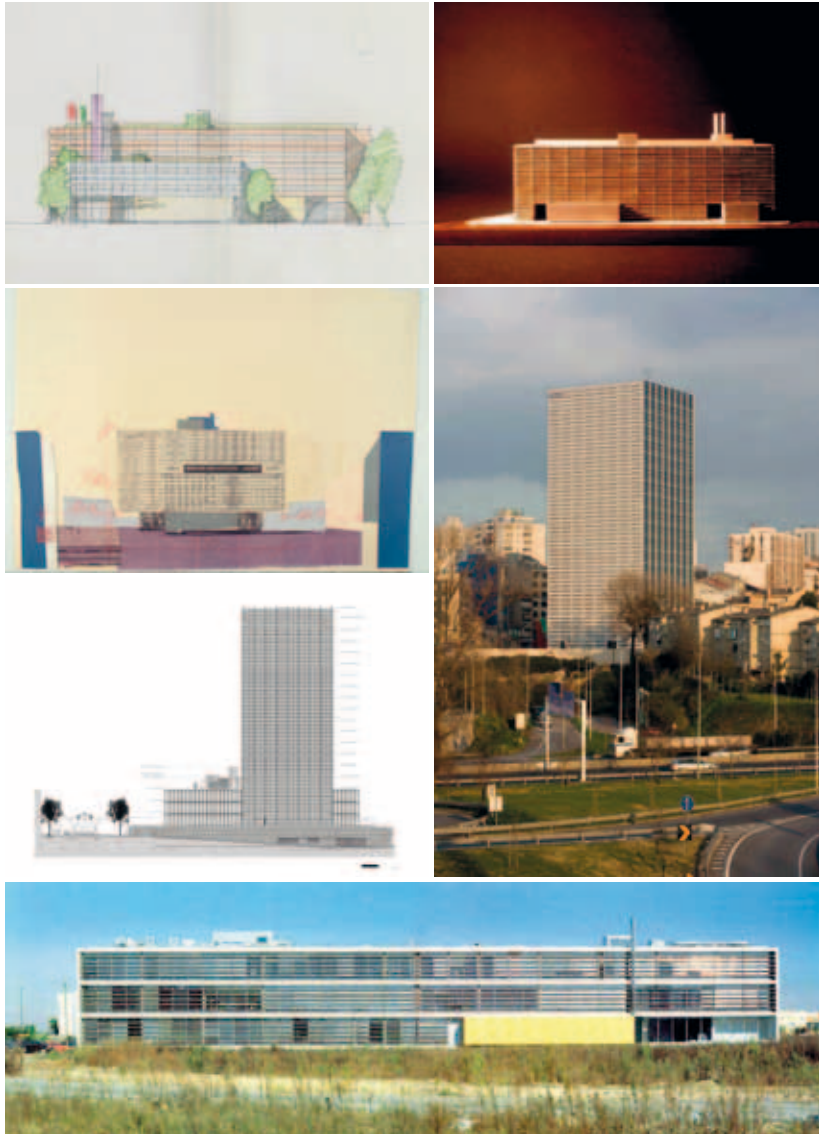


Figure 2. Eduardo Souto de Moura competitions on Salzburg Hotel 1987-1988, The ideal Olivetti Bank 1993, The Burgo Tower, Oporto, 1991/95 Phase 1; 2003/04 Phase 2; 2007 Construction and Department of Geosciences Aveiro University, 1990-1994

During the 1980s, Eduardo Souto de Moura only entered two international competitions and three in Portugal. In 1987 he submitted an entry to the competition for the Hotel in Salzburg, just one year after entering the competition for the Extension to Winkler Casino and Restaurant, Salzburg (design, 1986). Curiously, he also continued participating in some of Álvaro Siza Vieira's competitions: Urban Park in Salemi, Italy, 1986; and in the 1992 Seville Exhibition ideas competition, Spain, 1986. Eduardo Souto de Moura was by that time researching and questioning the Portuguese house and the dwelling and he did that in Portugal.

Eduardo Souto de Moura's initial competitions during this period were again extremely connected to ongoing research (Guilherme and Rocha, 2013) which started in Salzburg (Salzburg Hotel, 1987/89) and continued in the Ideal Olivetti Bank (1993). Some of these experiences, dealing with the deception of height and stories (Guilherme and Rocha, 2013, p.175), were afterwards used in some Portuguese projects like the Geoscience Department (Aveiro University, 1990-1994) and The Burgo Tower (Oporto, 1991/95 Phase 1; 2003/04 Phase 2; 2007 Construction).

In 1992, the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) between the EU and the five EFTA States was signed in Oporto, Portugal and entered into force in 1994. On 26 March 1995, Portugal started to implement Schengen Area rules, eliminating border controls with other Schengen members, while simultaneously strengthening border controls with non-member states. In 1999, it was one of the founding countries of the Euro and the Eurozone.

The 1990s was the decade for the confirmation of the Portuguese star architect – Álvaro Siza Vieira – with internationalisation of the myth by means of the Pritzker Prize (1992). Álvaro Siza Vieira was the first Portuguese star architect. This proved to be quite important for competition calls, as he was by then a world figure. His work could not only transform and give credit to an intention of project, but also could assure competence (Guilherme, 2013) and an aesthetic (Guilherme, 2014) that could actually make a difference.

Lo Ricco and Micheli (2003), describing the condition of the “star architect”, state:

Architectonic star system architectonic: is a system of global production, based upon the launch of characters belonging to the architectural world as a genuine star, through effective disclosure systems. Of elitist and oligarchic scope, the star

system is comparable to the architectural star system cinematic, musical and artistic,

Superstars are not born: they're made! Few make it, but once you enter this sphere of the divine, the reputation is assured. All efforts made are rewarded with fame. To be archistar, not only you need to be ingenious and professional architects, find a wealthy and powerful patron that finances projects without intrusion of any kind, but you need a careful additional work image, leading the architect to be recognizable to eyes of the general public, also composed of people who are not concerned with contemporary architecture. (Lo Ricco and Micheli, 2003, p.1)

In art, as Vera Borges<sup>20</sup> confirms, “the artistic value and originality are subjectively evaluated; So prizes, rankings (...) are used to make comparisons and endless competitions in the hierarchy of talents.” (Borges, 2014, p.76). She also states that “(...) prizes are attributed as the result of small cumulative successes: to receive the Pritzker prize, the Architectural Nobel, as it is designated, can tell us that the individual has earned the attention of a larger circle of individuals and that it was consensually considered as the having most talent. (...) The originality, the creativity, the pleasure to do a creative activity, the tenacity and resilience help to justify the persistence (...) in the artistic market and the tension that resides in the binomium profession / vocation” (Borges, 2014, p.76). In architecture the tectonic construction differs from traditional arts and provides the additional symbolic layer linked to the existent (in connection to the genius loci) and produced (built) space.

In addition to the Pritzker prize, two events produced a sudden change, not only in Portugal but in the world, in the way architects and competitions are viewed: in Portugal the Expo98 reconstruction of a part of Lisbon and its ability to produce a new image of the city (Lynch, 1960); and in Spain the Bilbao effect.

The Bilbao effect was a term popularised by Witold Rybczynski in 2002 in an article of the same name expressing the ability of a building designed by a prominent architect to induce changes in the city and turn into a landmark of global importance and attractivity. As the author says, after Bilbao Guggenheim by Frank Gehry (opened in 1997), select competitions were “(...) the preferred way for choosing the architects of high-profile buildings, resembles[ing] a beauty pageant.

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20 Citing Rosen, Sherwin (1981), “the economics of superstars”. *American Economic Review*, 71, pp 845-858 and Menger, P. -M. (2012), “Talent and inequalities: what do we learn from the study of artistic occupations?”, em Vera Borges e Pedro Costa, *Criatividade e Instituições. Os Novos Desafios aos Artistas e Profissionais da Cultura*, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, pp. 49-75.).

With great fanfare a list of invited architects is announced. Their proposals are often exhibited, and sometimes the architects themselves give public presentations. The ranks of the competitors are winnowed. The anticipation is an important part of the publicity surrounding the proposed new building.” (Rybczynski, 2002). By the clients (cities, big firms, cultural agents), architects were expected to perform loudly: “Where Gehry billows, Libeskind zigs and zags. (...) [or] Calatrava’s stylishly engineered structures (...)”. In Rybczynski’s opinion:

I have no objection to architects’ duking it out, and I think it’s great that architecture is attracting so much attention. But I am sceptical that designing in the full glare of public competitions encourages architects to produce better buildings. The charged atmosphere promotes flamboyance rather than careful thought, and favours the glib and obvious over the subtle and nuanced. Architects have always entered competitions, but they have usually seasoned their talents first by doing commissioned work. Libeskind, Nouvel, Koolhaas, and other young architects of today have built their reputations almost entirely by participating in competitions; a friend of mine calls them “competition show dogs.” And show dogs are rarefied creatures often refined and styled to the point of caricature. (Rybczynski, 2002)

The visibility of the Bilbao effect in fact shadowed similar previous occasions, well described by Gabriella Lo Ricco and Silvia Michael, where architects had been called to brand a building or a company. One could mention the Le Courbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright or Philip Johnson authorship strategies, or Peter Eisenman’s frequent appearances in the city’s football shirt, or even the Vitra architectural park in Weim am Rhein, after 1981, with buildings by Siza (1991, Production Hall), Zaha Hadid (1993), Tadao Ando (1993), Frank Gehry (1989, 2003/1989), Nicholas Grimshaw (1981/1986), Buckminster Fuller (1975/2000), Jean Pruvé (1953/2003), SANNA (2012), Herzong & de Meuron (2010) and Renzo Piano (2013). To build for Vitra was to be acknowledged as an author.

Álvaro Siza Vieira, although gaining visibility with prizes and competitions, would remain far from what is considered a star architect. In fact, during the 1990s, Álvaro Siza Vieira did 57 national projects and 31 international projects, while Eduardo Souto de Moura only did four national competitions and three international competitions. This shows that by then, the Pritzker Prize had earned Álvaro Siza Vieira a national and international visibility that would render

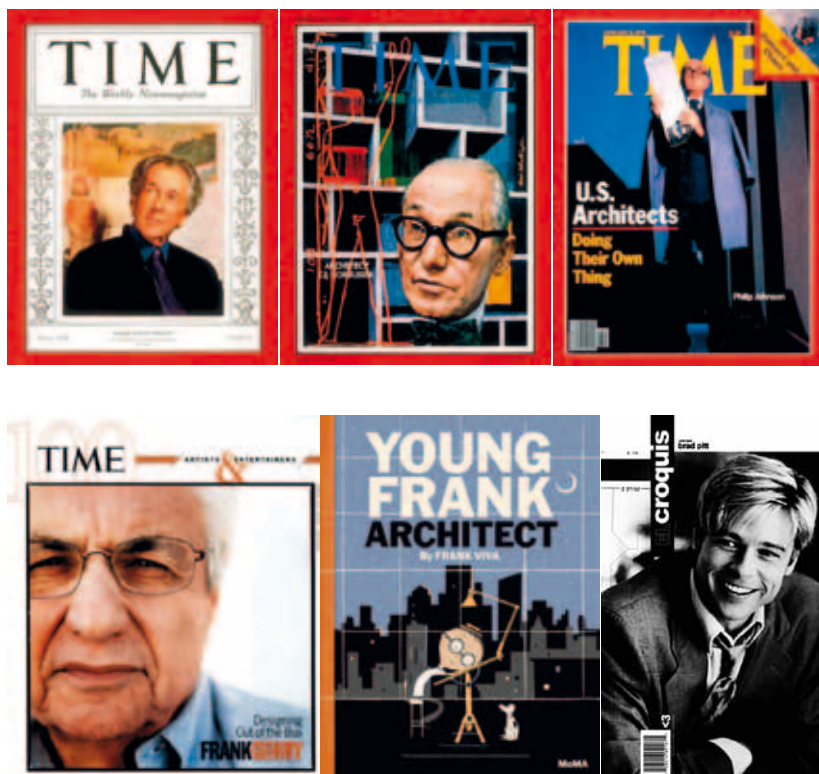


Figure 3. Magazine covers with architects in the star system, Frank Lloyd Wright, Jan. 17, 1938, Le Corbusier, May 5, 1961, Philip Johnson, Jan. 8, 1979, Frank Gehry, commemorative issue, Young Frank, The Museum of Modern Art and Brad Pitt in fake El Croquis, Provocative number!

him more opportunities and invitations for competitions. The Pritzker importance is confirmed by Lo Ricco and Micheli:

This is the case of Tadao Ando and Álvaro Siza Vieira: when we analyse the location of the projects after the Pritzker prize, we can notice a notable increase in commissions outside their original countries, mainly in the United States. (Lo Ricco and Micheli, 2003, p.147)



Figure 4. Covers of the Spanish El Croquis magazine featuring Álvaro Siza Vieira in No 68/69 (1994), No 95 (1999), No 140 (2008) and No 169/169 (2013)

And by Álvaro Siza Vieira himself:

For my part, coming from foreign lands, it seems strange that it is interesting to so few, the enchantments of the thousand greys of stucco, or of darkened brick, or of great windowless walls, or of heavy wooden window frames, or the invariable rhythms of windows that only break, exploding in the folding of street corners or where something exterior to architecture happens. Patience!

It is possible that cities invite foreign architects expecting them to do the opposite of what is normally done there, exercising the conflictual and fecund crossing of cultures that the world of works entail. It would be wonderful to achieve the syntheses that are guessed at or supposed; to universalize the surprise of lights given to the Mediterranean sun. But, naturally, such cannot be achieved merely by drawings, drawings can only act within the world they are transforming. (Siza, 1989, p.11)

This confirmation of Álvaro Siza Vieira as the main Portuguese international architect is well demonstrated by the magazines that continue to show his work around the world.

As architectural competences and professional work increase, competitions seem to be seen as an extra research opportunity. When considering the tangible questions (financial, time, etc.) and the intangible (fame, success), there is potentially a rather personal decision either to enter or not to enter a competition, despite its pros and cons. This call to compete by Álvaro Siza Vieira or Eduardo



Souto de Moura seems to be an understanding of a globalised world and a need to go further away from Portuguese borders.

Portuguese architectural offices prospered during the economic boom and the development of the country. The need for new equipment that would provide the convergence for Portugal to European standards led to the development of a large number of architects and their offices<sup>21</sup>. Sporadically these major offices would make an incursion onto foreign soil, in particular in competitions.

## The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

As mentioned, in the post-war era before 2000 Portugal gradually integrated with the rest of Europe, and the milestones in this process came during periods when Portugal was one of the fastest-growing countries in the world. Income per capita doubled in the decade after 1960, when Portugal joined the EFTA. The years after joining the European Community in 1986 were likewise marked by great progress. Yet the advent of European monetary union marked the beginning of Portugal's prolonged slump.

Several economists, including Ricardo Reis (2013), explain the evolution from 1974 through the following phases: a Boom until 2001; a puzzling slump from 2001 to 2008; and the present crisis from 2008 onward. These economic phases can be partly explained by the fact that up to the mid-1990s, Portugal's net foreign debt was close to zero but has since grown to more than 100% of GDP, due to a steady rate of international borrowing to sustain steady growth in consumption and its funding. The shift to non-tradables (mainly service providers) with the decline for decades of manufacturing and the change in Portuguese society from an agricultural and industrial economy to an economy of service providers was another important factor.

These major economic changes shattered the construction activity in Portugal and induced an increase in export of architectural and engineering services to Europe, Mediterranean countries and Portuguese speaking countries. Most of the Portuguese offices that had been working in Portugal after entry to the EU started to develop some openness to the outside. Competitions provided, again, a means to achieve this end.

As Cabral and Borges (2006, 2007) mention in their study about the Portuguese architects, there is a need for inside affirmation and peer recognition and

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21 Most Portuguese offices have 1-4 architects, a medium size office has 5-10 architects and a larger office more than 10 architects.



there are a limited cluster of award-winning architects in Portugal whose status is recognised and who are given access to higher social positions and to quality brands. The successful career is recognised as one important aspect of the Portuguese architects:

However, the survey also reveals that nearly half of the respondents, in particular older and male architects, have had “successful careers”. They form the groups of innovators and of conservatives, whose main distinguishing dimension is the former’s positive orientation to change and the negative orientation of the latter. Where could this orientation towards change lead? In his recent work on new architectural activities and practices in Europe, the sociologist Michel Bonetti, professor at the Paris-La Villette School of Architecture, lists four main domains: innovation in the objects being made; organizational innovation in the conception processes; innovations in the urban development processes; and innovation in the conception techniques that use high technology (Chaidon & Evette, coord., 2004). (Cabral and Borges, 2007)

One example is Gonalo Byrne<sup>22</sup> (b. 1941, graduated in Lisbon 1968), who is actually older than Eduardo Souto de Moura. He is considered, with Fernando Távora and Álvaro Siza Vieira, one of the masters of Portuguese architecture and enjoys international prestige among the most selected circles of European architecture (academic media, in prizes, as a member of juries in international competitions). He was very close to Nuno Portas in the 1970s and also worked at SAAL. His work is very personal, he is very reclusive and is committed to smaller and subtler works. The Port of Lisbon’s Sea Traffic Coordination and Control Center (1997/2001) gave him important international visibility in *Wallpaper* magazine. He had a regular competition strategy in Portugal between 1977 and 1995 and then he started competing abroad: from

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22 Gonalo Byrne (b. Alcobaa 1941) is a Portuguese architect based in Lisbon and has been awarded with many national and international prizes. He has a diversified body of work, in terms of scale, theme and programme. The more relevant examples are the recent interventions in the Monastery of Alcobaa and its surrounding areas, the building for the Headquarters of the Government of the Province of Vlaams-Brabant in Leuven, Belgium, the Marine Traffic Control Tower for the Port of Lisbon Authority, the “Império” Quarter in the Chiado area of Lisbon, the Faro Theatre in the Algarve, and the National Museum Machado de Castro, in Coimbra, this latter project currently under construction. He has carried out several Detailed Plans in for several cities in Portugal.

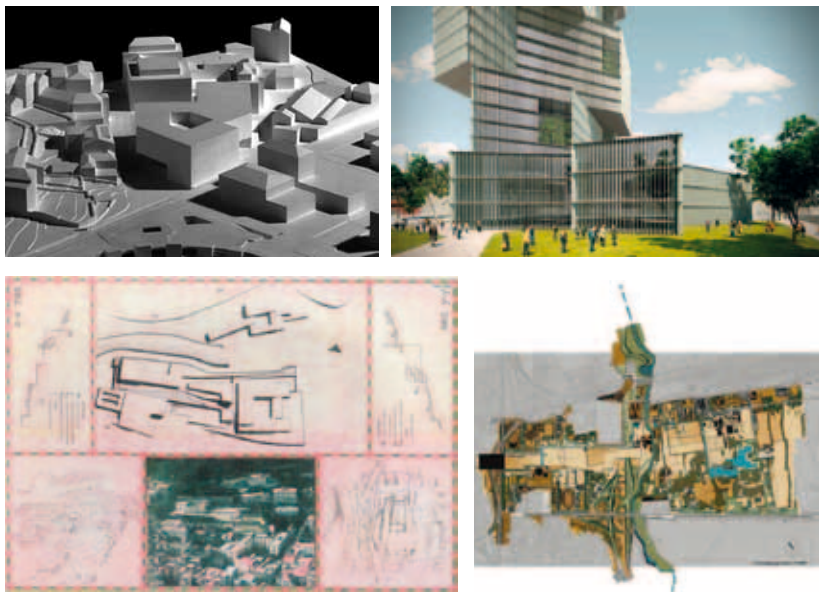


Figure 5. Gonçalo Byrne competitions, Palazzo del Cinema di Locarno, 2012, Concorso per la Nuova sede della Provincia di Bergamo, Finalist 2009, Edifici-mondo: Concorso Per Il Recupero Del Centro Antico, 1997/1998 and Concorso Internazionale “Milano Parco Forlanini”, 2002 (1st Prize 2002)



Figure 6. João Luís Carrilho da Graça competitions, Theatre and auditorium Poitiers, France, International competition, 2004-2008 (1st prize), and New theatre of Sénart, Sénart, France, International competition, restricted, 2009 (2st prize)

1996 to 2000 he entered six national and only two international competitions; and from 2000 to 2007 he entered seven national and 10 international competitions. His competitions in Portugal were mostly connected to the universities and he gained some status in dealing with complex programmes. There was a clear change in his work after Portugal's entry to the EU and a new view of the potential market competitions could provide abroad.

João Luis Carrilho da Graça<sup>23</sup> (b. 1952, graduated in 1977) is another good example of the change from mostly Portuguese competitions before 2000 (18 national competitions and only three foreign competitions) to mostly international competitions after 2000 (16 national competitions and 15 international competitions) until 2010. This change was needed to maintain the office and provide the necessary commissions.

Both of these offices (Gonçalo Byrne and João Luis Carrilho da Graça) based in Lisbon acquired a strong international reputation. Yet, this reputation, not supported by the aura of the Oporto School, did not grant them the same openings as Álvaro Siza Vieira and Eduardo Souto de Moura, but, by their work in Portugal: international events like the Lisbon 94 European City of Culture, the Expo98, and some national International Competitions like that for The Cultural Center in Lisbon.

The work of both Álvaro Siza Vieira and Eduardo Souto de Moura was (as representatives of the Oporto School) first branded as Portuguese architecture primarily by the Italian and later by the French architectural magazines.

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23 João Luís Carrilho da Graça (b. 1952, Portalegre) graduated in architecture from the Lisbon Fine Arts School (ESBAL) in 1977. In the same year, he began working (first built project in 1982.), as well as lecturing at the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University of Lisbon between 1977 and 1992. He has taught at the Autónoma University since 2001, at the University of Évora since 2005 and was an invited professor at the Navarra University Architecture School in 2007 and 2010. Carrilho da Graça has given lectures at seminars and conferences at several international universities and received prestigious distinctions, such as the honoris causa doctorate from the Lisbon Technical University in 2013; the Medal from Académie d'Architecture Française in 2012, the title "Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres" by the French Republic in 2010; the Pessoa Prize in 2008 and the Order for Merit of the Portuguese Republic in 1999. His work has also garnered important awards and prizes, such as the AIT award 2012 for the Carpinteira Pedestrian Bridge; the Sacra Frate-Sole 2012 for Portalegre's Santo António Church; the Piranesi Prix de Rome 2010 for the São Jorge Castle Archaeological Museum; the Valmor Prize in 2008 for the Lisbon Music School; in 1998 for the Expo '98 Knowledge of the Seas Pavilion (also FAD Award in 1999) and the SECIL Prize in 1994 for Lisbon's Communication and Media Studies School. Further information can be found in <http://jlcg.pt/>.

This Italian-French influence was contrary to the German or Anglo-Saxon influence, which was thought to be more in tune with the Lisbon School. The Lisbon School, on the contrary, never formally existed, but consisted of several larger offices like that of Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Nuno Portas, Luis Figueiredo or Manuel Vicente, where research on architecture and typologies was developed. Examples of the Anglo-Saxon connection are Raúl Hestenes Ferreira (b. 1931, graduated in Lisbon in 1961, Master's in 1963 under Louis Kahn) and Tomás Taveira (b. 1938, graduated in Lisbon in, post-graduate at MIT). Clearly these two clusters were firmly rooted in the two main architectural schools<sup>24</sup>. Since 1986 new universities<sup>25</sup> have appeared (both public and private) and disrupted the concept of the two schools in Portugal.

ARX Portugal<sup>26</sup> (funded in 1991), a younger office run by Nuno Mateus (b. 1961, graduated in 1984) and José Mateus (b. 1987, graduated in 1986), started entering competitions early after graduation with some research projects on deconstructivism, but has recently restated its interest in competitions. In a recent interview (*Concursos arrasam com ateliers de arquitectura*, 2013), Nuno Mateus confirmed that competitions are one of the best ways to get an architectural procurement, mostly with interesting programmes, larger project dimensions and most interesting buildings (such as listed buildings). He confirms having made 4-6 competition entries per year in Portugal and abroad. For him “a competition is a very interesting proceeding since it puts our ideas and capacities [competences] against our colleagues, and, through that, we can assess our [own] competence.” (*Concursos arrasam com ateliers de arquitectura*, 2013). To José Mateus, competition success is never guaranteed and a competition means that the cost of initial studies (that would normally represent one-third of project fees) is not paid and it requires more than 1000 work hours (the competition for *Parque Mayer*, in Lisbon, took 1700 hours

24 The Lisbon Fine Arts School (ESBAL) later the Faculty of Architecture at the (Technical) University of Lisbon (FAUL) and Faculty of Architecture at the University of Oporto (FAUP).

25 The Lusíada University was founded in 1986.

26 In 1991, Nuno Mateus with José Paulo Mateus, founded ‘ARX Portugal Arquitectos’. The office work is widespread, from private to public commissions in Portugal and abroad, as well as several international competitions. Some of its major projects are built and a few are currently under construction. ARX’s work has obtained several prizes and mentions such as the International Architecture Awards The Chicago Athenaeum, USA (Ílhavo Library), International Association of the Art Critics, Prize in Architecture 2003 (Maritime Museum), and Nominations for the Sécil and Mies Van der Rohe Prize, 2002 (Maritime Museum). Further information can be found in <http://www.arx.pt/en/competition>.



Figure 7. ARX competitions, Hotel in Dubai 2007, Gijón Museum in Spain 2010, UNICAMP, International competition for the Exploratory Science Museum in Brasil 2009 and Helsinki Library in Finland 2012.

and the office was awarded second place). An entry costs between €20 000 and 30 000 to produce. ARX's view is that despite being the most ideally democratic procurement method, competition contributes to the generalised impoverishment of architects and is one of the most important causes for the profession's fragility.

Another young architect, Tiago Mota Saraiva<sup>27</sup> (b. 1976, graduated in 2000, Erasmus student in Madrid, worked in Rome in 2001 and 2002) participated in

<sup>27</sup> Tiago Mota was associate to the EXTRASTUDIO – arquitetura, design e urbanismo Lda between 2003 and 2005. In 2005 he founded ATELIERMOB – Arquitetura, Design e Urbanismo in Lisbon. ATELIERMOB is a multidisciplinary platform for the development of ideas, research and projects in the areas of architecture, design and urbanism. The company was a result of several works carried out by its founding partners. ATELIERMOB has been working on projects of different typologies and scales, for public and private entities. In parallel, it has been developing research work to support the project-oriented practice, an architecture blog, design, urban planning and participation in several national and international competitions. Currently, ATELIERMOB has two partners – Andreia Salavessa and Tiago Mota Saraiva – and a team of skilled professionals associated, when possible, with other entities and technicians in order to enrich and broaden the spectrum of its multidisciplinary services. Referenced in several national and international publications, ATELIERMOB has held conferences in Lisbon, Oporto, Coimbra, Barcelona, Montpellier, Toronto, Vaduz and Cluj-Napoca, and achieved awards and honorable competition classifications. Further information can be found in <http://www.ateliermob.com>, <http://europaconcorsi.com>, AND <http://issuu.com/ateliermob>.



Figure 8. ATELIERMOB competitions on Paris New Courthouse, honourable mention, and Stockholm's public library.

nine international competitions from 2005 to 2012. His office – ATELIERMOB – is a multidisciplinary platform for the development of ideas, research and projects in the areas of architecture, design and urbanism. It lists more than 175 projects and more than 30 competitions (21 national and nine international competitions, eight competition entries have been awarded prizes) and it is possible to observe that competitions have been a part of the office's strategy for marketing, innovation and research.

Confirming this tendency, Pedro Melo<sup>28</sup> from TERNULLOMELO Architects, another young office, states that competitions are without any doubt expensive (more than €10 000) and take a lot of time: "On average we work for a month with 2-3 full-time people for small competitions." (*Concursos arrasam com ateliers de arquitectura*, 2013). Although with no assured income and no guarantee of implementation, Melo and colleagues continue to believe in the importance of this process and continue doing 2-3 competitions per year, mostly internationally, in Italy, where the probability of success is better. Pedro Melo also states that: "we will continue participating in competitions because we believe that with a good jury, a condition not always present, this is the best formula to guarantee the implementation of better designs and an more informed choice of what is to be built, avoiding the repetition by the same architects." (*Concursos arrasam com ateliers de arquitectura*, 2013). Also "these are always growth proceedings for the office: it permits access to programmes that would otherwise be outside of reach, to experiment with new strategies. Usually we feel a change, if we want, a 'jump' in our production after each competition in which we take part. Maybe that is what motivates us." (*Concursos arrasam com ateliers de arquitectura*, 2013)

28 TERNULLOMELO ARCHITECTS is a Lisbon-based architectural firm founded in 2006 by Chiara Ternullo and Pedro Teixeira de Melo. Further information can be found in <http://www.ternulloomelo.com/>.





Figure 9. TERNULLOMELO Architects competitions on Padiglione Italia Expo 2015, Concorso Internazionale di progettazione per la “progettazione del Padiglione Italia”, Milan, Italy, Costeras Marceddi, Riqualificazione di 8 borgate marine della Sardegna - Marceddi, Italy, (1st Prize), Aragonese Castle Cathedral, Ischia, Italy, (3rd Prize) and Boutillière, Riqualificazione e restauro con eventuale cambio di destinazione d'uso dell'area denominata “Boutillière” in comune di Cogne, Cogne, Italy

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides a glimpse into a current trend in the work of professional architects, the design competition, that needs to be comprehended and analysed further. Design competitions seem to provide Portuguese architects with an extraordinary means to advance Portuguese architecture and increase awareness of it, both nationally and internationally. In this article, the history of participation in competitions by Portuguese architects was categorised into generations, in order to illustrate the link between relevant historic Portuguese events and the will to compete for each archetypal generation.

Most of the information presented shows that Portuguese architects only started to look to competitions outside national borders when it was politically possible (after 1974/1976) and then only after the internationalisation of Álvaro Siza Vieira (mainly branded by Nuno Portas after 1968 and because of Siza's

success in the IBA 'Altbau' competitions in Berlin during the late 1970s). There was an initial competition period where Siza proved his expertise internationally with social housing and developed his personal architectural grammar, method and language. He reached a certain point in his career when he was generally known and his competences (and poetry) were internationally praised by all, and he was granted the Pritzker Prize. This brought even more visibility to him and he gained new projects, and new competences were recognised in a twist of fortune. Competitions were no longer obligatory, since his name was sufficiently well known. Only some invited competitions were still appealing or those introducing new programmes.

Álvaro Siza Vieira's national and international ascension made possible the dissemination of the Oporto School and Eduardo Souto de Moura followed the lead of his master. Early in his career, Souto de Moura took a serious interest in competing internationally and he progressed steadily until he became 'well known, but he used these opportunities as an experimental platform for ideas and concepts, and by doing so he explored competences and designs not current to his professional practice. These experiments provided him with future competences, design strategies and aesthetics that he used in other projects.

Thus for Portuguese architects international competitions mostly followed what could be described as the Siza effect<sup>29</sup>, which could be described as an appealing status of visibility, attention, recognition and glamour that Álvaro Siza Vieira acquired in his years of practice, by his own merit and international recognition, which has assured him special attention and veneration. This image and peer recognition is deeply rooted in the formation of the architect, and within Portuguese architecture, thus contributing to a growing will and need of younger architects to compete. As wide recognition is difficult to gain in Portugal it is mostly sought internationally, mainly through international competitions.

By 1992, the boom in Portugal was encouraging other architects to meet the foreign call for success and national recognition. Byrne and Carrilho are examples of Portuguese architects who ventured abroad to gain new projects, new challenges and new possibilities of fame at that time. The national experience provided them with the competences to achieve good scores in competitions and eventually they ventured abroad. The road opened by Álvaro Siza Vieira would be extended to everyone, not only Siza's followers.

29 Out of the Bilbao effect (Rybczynski, 2002).



With the national economic downfall, going abroad was no longer just an opportunity but a necessity. The open market made competitions available everywhere and offices saw a way out of the crisis. ARX and young architects like Tiago Mota Saraiva or Nuno Melo are no longer competing abroad because of what they can then do in Portugal; rather, they are competing abroad because that is the market for them and competitions provide the best way to reach that market.

There seem to be three generations (Table 1): an early post-1974 X generation (Álvaro Siza Vieira, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Gonçalo Byrne and João Luís Carrilho da Graça) opening up to the outside; a following Y generation (ARX) using that initial trust; and a newer A generation (ATELIERMOB and TERNULLOMELO Architects) pursuing competitions as a means to an end (notoriety, fame and success). These generations reflect the three main economic trends after 1974: the boom to an European continental market (up to 1986) and then to the Eurozone (after 1986/2002), the economic stall after 2000 and the present crisis, and appear to reflect different pattern of motives why architects choose to compete.

**Table 1 – Comparative analysis of different generations of Portuguese architects**

Architect	Year of birth	Graduation	University	First Project	First Competition	Generation	Boom (1974-2000)	Slump (2001-2008) + Crisis
Álvaro Siza Vieira	1933	1955	FAUP	1954	1979	X	26 INT	4 INT
Gonçalo Byrne	1941	1968	FAUTL	1972	1977	X	6 PT+2 INT	7 PT + 10 INT
Eduardo Souto de Moura	1952	1980	FAUP	1977	1979	X	8 PT + 6 INT	18 PT + 20 INT
ARX	1960	1990	FAUTL	-	2007	Y	-	-
Tiago Mota Saraiva	-	1999	FAUL	2000	-	Z	-	21PT + 9 INT
Nuno Mello	-	-	-	2006	2006	Z	-	-

All Portuguese architects “take pride in being an architect” and take “material and symbolic well-being<sup>30</sup> as a main dimension of their identity” (Cabral and Borges, 2007, p.21). This symbolic gratification makes up the sociological challenge that must

30 Indeed, 57% of respondents rejected the idea that the “architect as an author is outdated” and only 19% agreed with it (Cabral and Borges, 2006, 2007).

be resolved by competitions. Competitions prove themselves the fittest and the most competent of all – *“The weak die out and the strong will survive, and will live on forever”* from The Diary of Anne Frank.

International competitions provide the legitimacy for competence and Portuguese architects know that! Of all aspects listed earlier, Portuguese architects seem to select just a few and follow individual and market options. It appears that the selection of competitions follows a pattern of proximity to the career opportunities, competences and expertise already acquired. Past experiences as collaborators or as international students (Erasmus) and proficiency in computer images seem to be relevant for the participation by avid Portuguese young architects in international competitions. It also seems most probable that the rate of entry to competitions is connected to market needs, although there are opportunities for research and visibility that are explored sporadically or continuously by some specific architects.

It is also quite probable that competitions are in fact an opportunity, maybe the only current opportunity, for younger generations of Portuguese architects to reach some visibility, even at high financial and time costs. Even if they do not win, there is always an opportunity to develop and appear in public scrutiny. The globalisation provided by the internet and the quick spread of information provides an additional opportunity for visibility and publicity for younger generations of architects.

From the early tentative, explorative years of Álvaro Siza Vieira's first competitions to the current mass participation by Portuguese architects in foreign competitions, there is a long, cumulative effort of competence and visibility that gives international competitions a symbolic, unquestioned national value.

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## Appendix 01

Positive aspects of competitions			
Paul Spreiregen (Spreiregen, 1979)	Judith Strong (Strong, 1996)	Jack Nasar (Nasar, 2006)	G. Stanley Collyer (Collyer and Berk, 2004)
New talent is revealed (p.219)	Competitions provide equitable distribution of design commissions	Competition architecture is highly public	Competitions provide valuable commissions and permit to go after larger projects (p.8)
Old, established talent is stimulated (p.219)	Competitions permit a better distribution of public funds	In general, competition can bring out the best in people	Competitions provide training for becoming a better architect (p.8)
A public "dialogue with design" is stimulated (p.219)	Competition provides space and a forum for public participation in the shaping of the built environment	Competitions produce (p.25)	International competitions permit a rapid entry into the international market (p.8)
The design professionals are stimulated by the results (p.219)	Competitions contribute to an overall improvement of the quality of what is built	A valid means for securing work and doing a good building (p.25)	Competitions overcome the limits of cross border service (p.9)
New or unfamiliar concepts can be explored (p.219)	Competitions produce better buildings	Competitions produce new solutions (p.25)	Competitions are a vehicle for creation of major civic buildings and public spaces (p.10)
The best abilities of the design professionals are brought to bear on a particular problem (p.219)	Accountability	Competitions generate publicity (p.25)	Competitions foster "Excellence in Architecture" (p.11)
Competitions can boost morale in an office (p.219)	Access to opportunities		Competitions run on a non-regional basis according to EU rules seem to be relatively transparent and appropriate for entering (p.12)
New design forms can result (p.219)	The quality of architecture		Competitions may be exercises to gain experience in an area of expertise (p.13)
Competitions maintain an attention to design, all other components being kept in perspective (p.219)			Competitions may be an excellent opportunity to discuss ideas that could not be explored on a day-to-day basis (p.13)
Competitions reveal, at any time, the profession's ability to deal with a specific problem (p.219)			Competitions can boost morale and creativity (p.13)
Competitions bring a wide point of view to focus on a particular problem (p.219)			Competition may not be the only method of career advancement for an architect, but no award in profession (...) quite matches the stamp of approval conferred by winning a major design competition (p.21)
Competitions free the designer from normal and possibly unnecessary constraints (p.219)			
Accepted norms are tested as well as challenged (p.219)			

## Appendix 02

Negative aspects of competitions			
Paul Spreiregen (Spreiregen, 1979)	Judith Strong (Strong, 1996)	Jack Nasar (Nasar, 2006)	G. Stanley Collyer (2004)
The costs of the competition to the client (p.221)	Competitions are not the only way to achieve the competition's positive aspects	Relation between low success rates and effort (p.27)	There are less and less open competitions for younger architects (p.11)
The time required to hold a competition (p.221)	Competitions saddle the promoter with a young and inexperienced design teams	Design juries are not unbiased (p.27 and p.154)	Perils may be: financing, site ownership, jury composition, anonymity, governance stability, compensation and fees, style (imposition and openness), reputation (p.12-13)
The possibility of selecting an excessively costly winning solution (p.221)	Competitions cause controversy	Competitions do not always meet the client's needs (p.27)	Open competitions are not appealing to well established firms (p.15)
The elimination of the programme development phase of architectural services, in which a programme of needs is developed (p.221)	Competitions consume an inordinate amount of time, money and energy	Competitions may not get the best solution (p.27)	Demands from the clients (in brief) made to the architects can only be considered blatant exploitation (p.15)
The absence of a dialogue between client and architect in the preliminary design phase (p.221)	Competitions can foist an architect on an unwilling promoter	Competitions lose dialogue with client (p.27)	The lack of anonymity is a concession to clients and an additional burden to designers in terms of effort and financial resources (p.16)
The unsuitability of competitions for very complex buildings (p.221)	The competition system comes between the architect and the client	Competitions exploit architects (p.28)	Competitions may end up not being realised (p.17)
The possibility of selecting an insufficiently experienced architect (p.221)	The competitions system in a terminal muddle	Competitions result in unbuilt projects (p.28)	Briefs may end up by not being used to evaluate competitions (p.17)
The possibility of an impractical selection by the jury (p.221)		The user has little opportunities to influence the brief and design decisions and their needs are seldom known, represented or emphasised	Changes in regimes may change the course of a competition (p.17)
Including appropriate security requirements or restricted areas of the building (p.221)		Findings suggest that competitions may not yield masterpieces (p.46)	
The method and sequence of public financing – budgeting, appropriation, funding, staging et cetera – make competitions difficult for a public agency to entertain, let alone manage (p.221)		Judgement of design is prejudiced by each one's experiences and, apparently, relates to an inversed pattern of architects and non-architects (p.57)	
The lack of information available to potential sponsors regarding managing competitions (p.221)		Designers lack popular taste (p.57) and the public maintains a preference for "popular" over "high" styles (p.57)	
The realities and pressures of the patronage system of selecting architects (p.221)		Competitions tend to care about the "aesthetic statement" over the comprehensive meanings (p.67)	
The notion that competitions are "a lot of trouble" (p.221)		Designers tend to act as artists (p.70)	
The notion that "good design" is expensive (p.221)		Competitions lack monitoring (p.157)	
Overly elaborate drawings and design representations seem to be required (p.221)		The selection of the winner is not the end of the process (p.157)	
The cost of a competition to the design professionals (p.221)			
Competitions may or may not interest enough designers, or the right designers (p.221)			

## Abstract

From the point of view of architectural practices, competitions have been recognised as a highly ineffectual form of procurement because of the amount of working hours invested and the unpredictability of the outcome. However, a much broader spectrum of interests and concerns might instead constitute the reason why architecture practices invest so much in competitions.

The paper analyses 116 stories about ‘the competition that changed your life’, a survey developed in 2009 by the Wonderland platform for European architecture in collaboration with the Vienna- based practice SHARE Architects.

The survey confirmed that considering winning as the only positive outcome of a competition makes little sense in relation to the considerable amount of resources invested. On the other hand, the survey responses documented a range of possible approaches and ways in which competitions can be tackled and can change the life of an architecture practice. Therefore the stories provided a more detailed understanding of the broader spectrum of interests and concerns that can justify the investment made in this field by many practices.

The analysis in this paper was structured according to two broad categories: **‘About winning’** looked at what in the practice’s approach contributes to success and which direct benefits could be harvested; and **‘beyond winning’**, which focused on the side-effects of competitions in order to understand what might be gained beyond being commissioned for the project in question.

By using competitions as exceptional opportunities to find out what they really want, to test radical design approaches and as ‘switches’ for experimentation, practices can maximise their return on investment, at least in terms of creative and organisational capital. In this perspective, winning is actually a positive side-effect, while it is the experimentation and learning process that represents the main core benefit.

**Key words:** Evaluation, decision-making theory, design practice, quality assessment, architectural competitions, case studies

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# About and beyond winning competitions

– Strategic considerations for architectural practices

SILVIA FORLATI

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Research question

The total amount of work produced by participating architects for most architectural design competitions represents a ‘generous wasting of ideas and excessive meeting of efforts’ (Gausa, 2003), ‘wasteful procedure’ (Kreiner, 2010), a ‘suffering process where everyone suffers and only few can be happy’ (Dobberstein, 2011) and a ‘needless multiplication of efforts’ (Gilbert and Jormakka, 2011, ). Yet, competitions also represent a fair system of procurement based on the quality of the submitted ideas. They can provide unique opportunities to start a practice, to access new markets and propel a practice to fame.

As suggested by the chairman of the competitions’ work group for the Architects Council of Europe, Georg Pendl (2011), the truth is possibly somewhere in between, as competitions represent simultaneously ‘wonderful chances of success and abuse’. This ambiguity is relevant for all the parties involved. Organisations and bodies overseeing the profession (such as professional chambers), involved in the running of competitions, need to make sure that the system remains fair and as effective as possible. In their turn, architects need to enter the process with open eyes, fully aware of both the high potential and high risks that investing in competitions involves, taking care not to fall into futile self-abuse.

It is therefore important to gather information about the investment required and the risks and paradoxes of the competition process. Experience of the practices involved in competitions represents an important source of information on whether there are recognisable patterns in the way competitions serve the development of architecture practices and how architects can effectively use competitions.

### Methodological approach

The paper is based on a survey developed by the Wonderland platform for European architecture in collaboration with the Vienna-based practice SHARE Architects, to which I belong. Wonderland is a platform for young European practices aimed at fostering exchange of ideas and know-how through collective projects and research.

The survey, about **'the competition that changed your life'**, was an open call and was published through the Wonderland network itself, the Austrian Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineers and competitions listings websites, such as [www.competition-online.de](http://www.competition-online.de). By filling in the questionnaire and sharing their story, interested practices were given the possibility of taking part in 'Deadline Today', an exhibition and symposium about architectural design competitions that took place in Vienna Architekturzentrum in June 2009.

The survey investigated both what was achieved by the teams thanks to competitions and the specifics of the 'life-changing' competition. The practices were asked to submit a descriptive text and to answer a series of approximately 40 questions about i) the amount of time and resources invested in competitions and ii) the role played for their practice by the specific competition and competitions in general. All 116 submissions received by practices from 25 countries were included in the exhibition and in the analysis.

There was no financial reward for the time invested in the submission, yet there was a potential for media attention. Considering the modality of the call and the fact that their designs were recognised as award winning, the practices were assumed to be design-oriented European small to medium practices, open to an international perspective, interested in cultural capital and with relevant experience of taking part in architectural competitions. A minority of the practices were well-known practices at least in the national context of reference, but no 'star architect' took part. The respondents included two teams from outside Europe doing projects in Europe and one European team doing projects outside Europe. One specific practice was directly contacted because of its outstanding achievement (it won an architectural competition against 1556 competitors). The competitions included privately organised calls, international competitions, European competition and architectural design contests according to EU requirements.

The common denominator among the practices was the fact that they had experienced at least one competition that significantly contributed to their career.

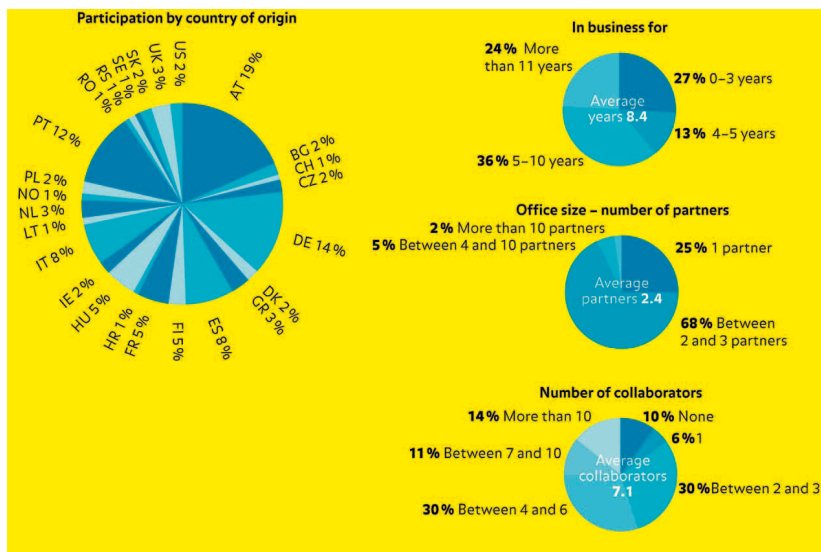


Figure 1. Overview of the 116 practices that took part in the survey on which this paper is based. Source: Forlati and SHARE Architects (2011, p.287).

The average age of the practices was below 9 years. In terms of size, both the average size and the majority of the practices were below 10 people (including collaborators). In terms of European average size, they were nonetheless relatively large practices, as only approximately 6% of the architecture practices in Europe are above 5 people (Mizra and Nacey 2012). Part of the survey was published in the *Wonderland Manual for Emerging Architects*, in the chapter ‘Making competitions’ (Forlati et al., 2011).

This paper presents a cross-analysis of the qualitative aspects that emerged out of the descriptive text response, with the focus on pinpointing common denominators in terms of strategic approaches and achievements. The analysis of the approaches and achievements was structured into two broad categories:

- **‘About winning’**, which looked at how competitions can work as unique opportunities for practices to get started or upgraded, and what in the practice’s approach contributes to success

- **‘Beyond winning’**, which focused on the side-effects of competitions, in order to understand what might be gained beyond getting the commission.

In the analysis, possible empirical answers were sought to two research questions: Are there recognisable patterns in the way competitions serve the development of architecture practices? and How can architects effectively use competitions? The relevance of these answers is clearly limited to the specific profile of the practices surveyed, and the aim was to document a range of differing approaches within the sample, not provide a universal recipe.

## 2. ABOUT WINNING

### Average investment in competitions

According to the survey, competitions represented a relevant investment for all responding practices, with an average of 3.4 competitions and 2000 working hours per year (corresponding to the annual work time of one full-time collaborator). On average, each competition involved 568 working hours from a team of more than three people within the practice. The remaining hours were invested by consultants and sometimes by partner offices. Once the competition was won, the average fee received for the resulting commission was just above € 300 000.

The average ratio between submissions and realised projects showed how difficult it is to reach realisation. On the basis of the overall experience of the survey participants, the following data emerged: out of 100 entries, 37 received an award of some kind, 17 won a first prize and of these first prizes only eight were eventually built. The resulting average rule of thumb is thus: **Out of 10 competitions, two result in a first prize and one gets built.**

In terms of direct return, the practices surveyed indicated on average that 19% of the buildings they realised were commissioned thanks to competitions and 39% of the practices indicated that competitions were the most important source of new commissions.

### Competitions as exceptional turning points

Considering the investment quantified above, competitions viewed in terms of one-to-one results represent an extremely time-intensive way of procurement for a practice. Alternatives such public relations and networking could perhaps be much more effective.

However, the responses revealed how competitions represented determining turning points for a relevant number of submitting practices, in at least three ways: by enabling them to start a new practice; by providing access to a different market segment; and/ or to a different geographical context.

In all, 27% of the practices surveyed declared in fact that the competition ‘that changed their life’ was the reason to start their practice. Two different basic patterns emerged from the stories.

- The competition was an effort carried out while working for another office and took place during holidays or after hours (Pattern A)
- The success happened out of a consistent focus on producing competition entries in order to start a new architecture practice (Pattern B).

These two different patterns correspond to two equally different approaches to success. In the first case there is an obvious sense of having been lucky and a loose approach to winning. The focus is on the challenge, on the ‘playfulness’, on passion, and winning is experienced as a surprise. For the second type of pattern there is instead a strong sense that the effort required is demanding to an extreme, almost ‘heroic’. The extreme of this ‘heroic’ phase concerns both the financial conditions of the practice and the psychological conditions. In this phase there is no secured income and the team has to deal with constant self-doubt and the highest uncertainty over a longer period of time (from one year to 15 in the case of a Finnish team). Awards other than the first prize might offer short-term help, but only winning means surviving.

This need to win is possibly an important specific factor. While the role of luck in winning architectural competitions has been considered as determining, as it is not possible to foresee how literally the brief will be interpreted by the jury (Kreiner, 2010, p.103), the responses within Pattern B indicated that victory resulted out of a consistent effort, possibly indicating that a learning phase can bring fruits.

Another interesting factor emerged from the responses in Pattern B. The key competition was described by many of these teams as the last try or last ‘gamble’ (Austrian practice), an all-or-nothing situation where the future existence of the practice would be decided. Similarly to the descriptions of ‘after-hours’ competition work, freedom of thinking, doing the project out based on one’s own interpretation, ‘basic instinct’ (Austrian practice), and not explicit strategic

considerations, drive the team. All this suggests that a deeper reach into creativity connected to the extreme conditions described above may pay off.

Competitions could act as turning points also for established practices, not only for start-ups. By offering the opportunity to acquire projects on a different scale, of a specific typology or in a different country, competitions could change and upgrade the profile of some practices significantly.

In the case of projects on a larger scale (and consequently scale of remuneration), the upgrade had an internal dimension, for example increasing the stability of the office as larger projects guarantee a longer-term income or improve the way in which the collaborators are contracted and paid. It also had an external dimension, in that the increased professionalism changed the positioning of the firm towards the outside. A further benefit was the rise in self-trust, as a project, once successfully concluded, could provide the confidence 'to plan any project of any size', as stated by an Austrian practice that won and realised a prestigious commission in Germany, its largest project to date at that time.

Successfully competing and then realising a project of a certain type also brings the possibility to access restricted competitions for similar projects. However, this can be a mixed blessing, driving unplanned specialisation of the practice, as experienced by a German practice that won two competitions for school buildings and 'since that time (...) we were always invited for school competitions and we are doing more or less nothing else than school buildings'.

In all these cases, successful competitions provided unique, if costly, opportunities for the submitting teams that were otherwise not available. In this perspective, the relevance of competitions is the opportunity they offer to get a practice started, to jump up the scale of commission or to set up in a different country. Yet this opportunity strongly depends on the type (open/restricted) and 'density' of competition available, and this varies from one context to the next. It is possible to successfully use competitions as a strategy to set up or upscale a practice, but it is a risky endeavour with no guarantee of success.

### **Competitions as a discipline within the discipline**

The stories collected focused on the 'one' competition. However, the data provided by the practices showed that, at least for some practices, competitions represent a consistent and continuous effort, and not a one-off event, providing more than success. Thus 39% of the practices stated that they lived off competitions and 3% that they depended on competitions in some way. Most of

**Table 1. Competitions as turning points. Basic patterns.**

PATTERN A	<b>Competitions as activity on the side</b>
	<p>‘(We were) just a bunch of friends starting from a blank: no PR network, no money, hardly spare time being busy doing something else to learn a living. (...) A competition is for us more a way to challenge ourselves and keep learning than craving for the first place.’ (Italian practice).</p> <p>‘At the time one of us was still a student, the other had just finished. We did the competition only to enjoy (Spanish practice).</p>
	<b>Loose approach to winning, a matter of good luck</b>
	<p>‘In architecture sometimes things happen just like in ‘wonderland’ (Spanish practice).</p>
PATTERN B	<b>Competition as a strategy to start a practice</b>
	<p>I opened my own office (...) with no contracts at hand. The first year was actually pretty tough and I was always short of money. Working at home from my laptop I tried to participate in as many competitions as possible. In retrospective I would call this year ‘the heroic phase’. (Austrian practice)</p> <p>Our office started within 12 square metres and two laptops. (...) Most of our contributions were (..) prizes and honourable mentions. The big dream of feeding ourselves by creating good architecture and contributing something to our cultural life came closer, but our architectural ego increased much faster than our financial size. (German practice which invested two years before winning the competition that changed their life)</p>
	<b>Approach to winning: out of a major effort</b>
	<p>Three times they have been left with empty pockets. ... today, looking back they'd admit it was a bit <b>foolish and careless</b>. Had they not won this time, they'd probably have gone hungry, down to the last cent and distressed by the broken dream of setting up office together. (Austrian practice)</p> <p><b>There is a limit in everyone's self-confidence</b> and in the mid-80s we too started to doubt that it was going to work. (...) we decided that this will be the last one if nothing comes out of it (Finnish team, working part-time for 15 years)</p>

the practices (85%) indicated that they had a specific set-up for competitions, including specialist collaborators both within and outside the office. This information corroborates the idea of competitions introducing specialisation within the discipline. This is after all nothing new: competition specialists have existed in history, for example in Victorian England (Gilbert and Jormakka 2011, p.283) and well-known offices also have strong connections with competition successes. What might be new, however, is the increasing professionalism and level of the submissions, exacerbated by a shrinking demand for professional services and consequently elevated level of competition participation within architectural practices.

The survey responses also suggest that this specialisation works in different dimensions, and that practices might consciously or unconsciously develop (and combine) different kinds of specialist competition skills. One dimension is the specialisation in terms of building typology, a trend that is particularly relevant in contexts where competitive public procurement procedures select the participants on the basis of restrictive criteria such as having already realised a building with a similar programme or with similar building costs. In Germany, for example, only practices that have realised three schools in the previous five years can take part in schools competitions, forcing a kind of 'typological' specialisation for competition participants that excludes young teams from accessing the market, or particular segments of it (Gies, 2011).

Yet, the practices surveyed also described how winning was supported by a mix of both design-based and non-design-based strategic skills. In this perspective, success in competitions becomes not only a matter of luck, but also the result of a learning and testing process, where competition failures become valuable lessons in mastering a very complex task that requires 'exercise and learning'.

Jury decisions are partly driven by chance and juries might or might not select projects that do not literally 'respect' the brief, but move beyond it in some ways. The stories show the co-existence of at least two interesting possible approaches to deal with this paradox. One approach is about conscious strategic decisions about how far to go. In order to do this it is important to 'decode' the information. In this case an important part of the skills is about reading the brief and transforming this reading in a strategic positioning towards the brief, consciously managed. An important part of this 'decoding' is about judging the judges, as the composition of the jury 'is an important indicator of how to set up your strategic planning' (Austrian practice).



Yet for a number of other practices the decision about how far to go is about 'doing what you believe in' (Austrian practice), and not the result of an explicit strategy elaborated out of the brief or the jury composition. These two approaches are reflected in the different criteria the practices indicated that they applied in selecting a competition: for most a challenging theme is very important, while the jury is important for approximately 25% of practices surveyed.

In terms of results, both approaches might pay off, sometimes to an extreme. At least six competitions out of the 116 surveyed were successful even if (or perhaps because) the submission moved beyond the brief in a very explicit way. The teams that went for the 'do what you believe in' approach did not appear to be consciously choosing between two possible alternatives, but rather to have determined in advance a position from which they operate. Their spectrum of aims was therefore broad and more about defining a creative personal stance and approach than about winning. They win nonetheless, possibly because of this.

Learning to 'read the green' (as suggested by Austrian practice) also means moving beyond design and learning to grasp the complex interplay of the different factors (brief requirements, regulations, jury approach, interests and decision making power of relevant stakeholders), either explicitly or implicitly, instinctively or through rationalised analysis. It also means using experience and exercise to build up skills and set-ups that work in the long run, moving beyond the perspective of one individual competition.

The relevance of a long-term approach in the way competitions are developed in a practice is also what emerges from the experience of possibly the most successful competition practice that participated in the survey. The practice in question won (among other competitions) the largest architectural competition in history in terms of number of participants at the time of the survey (1557 entries from 82 countries). The scale of the project was such that it propelled the practice from a three-people enterprise to leading a team of 117 people with 12 consultants at the height of the project. To explain its success, that practice referred to its 'Five-Second Rule' to competition entries:

*an idea needs to be read from a distance of five metres within five seconds*

The test is run using consultants that are involved from the beginning. After the design work, the practice focuses on preparing and planning the process

carefully, using spreadsheets, brief analysis, deliverables, design time, design freeze, sheet layout, production, red-marking, report production, sign-off dates and, finally, shipping dates.

The tools and procedures developed by this practice explicitly highlight the importance of communication that works in the specific set-up of a jury session. The ‘Five-Second Rule’ is in fact about being able to catch the attention and interest of a jury with no time or energy for an in-depth analysis, but it has also a reflexive effect, as it implies that the idea underlining the submission is so clear that it can easily be communicated in its essence. The effectiveness of this clarity is relevant for stakeholders other than the professional jury. These stakeholders might be part of the jury themselves, or in a position to influence the success of the project. (The practice in question noted that thanks to its ‘kind of simplicity’, people in general and the most powerful stakeholder – not an architect but for example the president of the country running the competition – could understand the concept very quickly).

**Table 2. Strategic approaches behind competition entries**

<b>Strategic competition selection</b>
‘You need to produce at high level, it makes sense to select, as it is worth presenting fewer projects, but presenting them very, as participants are becoming increasingly belligerent, prepared to do anything to win.’ (Spanish team)
<b>‘Doing what you believe in’, creative positioning of the practice through innovative submissions.</b>
While founding our office we decided NOT to participate in competitions (... yet) the competition was special because it provided a platform to show our approach (...). After winning (...) our approach brought us several projects. (Dutch practice)
Architects should not only try to answer but also to question in creative ways. (German practice)
Dammit, let’s make a statement, no overreacting conservators’ bullshit.. we don’t make a winning entry, we make the project we want to experience here when hanging around (...) (Polish team)
<b>Learn to ‘read the green’: decoding of the brief, strategic interpretation of the requirements, understanding of the jury (‘judging the judges).</b>
‘...a question of exercise and thinking. It is like playing the piano: you cannot play the piano concerto only by thinking of playing it. Through exercise you learn to ‘read the green’ as golfers would put it.’ (Austrian practice)

**Competitions as collaborative efforts**

Collaborations with consultants and other architects contributed to the success of a number of the projects submitted by respondents. Competitions mostly resulted out of collaboration with consultants from other fields (61%) and/or other architects (29%).

While the main workload remained with the submitting practice, collaborations helped in a variety of ways. Young practices could compensate for their lack of experience and raise their credibility by referring to experienced consultants. Multidisciplinary teamwork resulted in innovative winning approaches. Joining up with other architects was also successful: it helped meet selection criteria in restricted competitions, but could also raise the level of design by joining forces.

**Table 3: Why collaborate?3. Beyond winning**

Why collaborate?
‘Interdisciplinary thinking produces innovation. Today it is a habit for us to enter competitions in dialogue with artists, landscape architects, musicians, social workers, etc.’ (German practice)
We linked with another practice to enter the competition, wanting an Irish winner for it’ (Irish Practice)

**Specific risks of competition-based commissions**

One important piece of empirical evidence emerging from comparative analysis of the stories is that successful submissions are the beginning and not the end of a process, and that this process is rarely easy and unproblematic. Many practices reported experiencing substantial difficulties in moving from a successful submission to a realisation. Only some of the difficulties were comparable to those in ‘normal’ direct commissions, while others were specifically linked to the competition setting.

The responses suggested that in competitions, clients might feel less committed than in a direct commission both towards the predefined requirements and to the resulting project. The experiences reported included cases where the clients felt free to strongly rework the brief after the project was selected, to contract other architects or to let the project die. As suggested by one of the

practices, in competitions it is only after the competition is decided that 'the client starts to think seriously about his requirements.' (Austrian practice). This delayed definition results in a substantial additional workload for the architect, and possibly in relevant differences between the winning competition design and the realised project that in the end invalidate the work of the jury.

As clients delegate part of their decision making power to experts, the final selection might be something that the client does not agree with or cannot live with for a variety of reasons (including not trusting the team, but liking the idea) and ultimately has little chance of getting properly realised, if at all. This pattern is evident in cases where 'losing' entries were later realised, but by other architects, and in cases where the winning entry in the competition was put aside in favour of a new, directly commissioned project.

Thus projects do not get built in the way foreseen in the competition phase and at times they do not get built at all. The data presented earlier in this analysis provide insights into the 'mortality rate' of successful submissions. In the overall experience of the practices surveyed, only 47% of the winning projects since the inception of the practices have been built. Of the 100 projects awarded a first prize in the survey, 39 were realised, 33 were under construction, nine were in contract negotiation, 11 were on hold, eight were cancelled and 11 did not involve realisation. While there are no data to compare the 'mortality' rate for competition entries to that for direct commissions, it is clear that a 'dead' competition project involves much more work than a 'normal' project, both in terms of the total work done by all the participants and the work done by the winning practice to get to successful submission.

The analysis leads to two important reflections. First, research on the effectiveness of architecture competitions should include the subsequent implementation phase, looking for specific patterns of failure, such as those suggested above, and their relevance. Second, in view of the risks of winning submissions remaining unrealised, the value of competitions for practices in terms of 'getting the job' appear to be relevant only where no other options are available (for example for beginners as a unique access opportunity), but competitions are otherwise a highly ineffective way of procurement.

**Table 4: : Risks of competition-based commissions**

<b>Additional workload due to subsequent changes in the original brief</b>
<p>'The commission went through several difficult circumstances, difficult to explain. We designed two complete executive projects, the second finally was built 6 years after the competition' (Spanish practice).</p> <p>'11 years have passed, and we are not?now? working on a third scheme based on a new transportation plan' (Greek team)</p>
<b>Lack of financial backing for the project</b>
<p>The commission is ours if they manage to raise the money' (Slovak practice with a project in Norway)</p>
<b>Project cancellation because of changed circumstances</b>
<p>'There was a political shift in leadership and the project was cancelled because the new administration preferred not to adorn itself with borrowed plumes... The empty lot was turned into a parking lot – for several million euros.' (Austrian practice, whose project for a transfusion centre was cancelled after construction began)</p> <p>'I was wondering why the fuck they established a jury with a Pritzker Prize winner, if they preferred a post-modern Disneyland'. (German practice)</p>
<b>Relevant stakeholders do not stand by the competition results</b>
<p>As it was an idea competition, we didn't expect any direct commission, but we were sure about the possibility of being invited in case of a project competition for the new train station. (Then) the architect Rafael Moneo was directly contracted (...) (Austrian practice that won an ideas award in Spain).</p> <p>We were informed that the project was very well received (...) yet we were only awarded the second prize. (After four years) we encountered to our surprise (...) a flashy rendering and a model (...) Beyond the non-descript Eastern European developer attitude, the project resembled in its massing and urban gestures quite closely our original scheme' (Greek team in a invited competition for a private developer).</p>

### Positive side- effects

As already emphasised, looking at competitions in terms of 'getting the job' might be a much too limited perspective. The patterns analysed in the previous sections of this paper already introduce the idea that competitions bring more than just a job, as they strongly affect the way a practice operates, positions and

reflects on itself beyond being commissioned an additional project. To understand the possible return on the considerable investment of competitions, it is therefore important to understand and possibly factor in 'positive side-effects'.

Some side-effects are relevant by-products of competitions, as confirmed by the experience of several practices that even 'lost' competitions could positively influence their development. In these cases the competitions, even when lost, created the opportunity for the practice to show its abilities to potential clients or in general, and thanks to this acknowledgement new projects could be gained. Winning a competition was indicated as a key event that led to changes in the way the office was organised and run. As discussed before, self-trust and increased acknowledgement, as well as the network of consultants used in the competition phase, constituted further resources for the practices beyond the competition in itself.

But is this enough? Asked about the benefit they saw in doing competitions, only 15% of responding practices fully agreed that competitions represent a good opportunity for getting new commissions, while most practices (59%) indicated that competitions stimulate architectural thinking.

This perspective also emerges out of some of the responses: Competitions were described as exceptional opportunities to test a radical design approach, to find out what one really wants and 'switches' for experimentation. In this approach, winning is actually a positive side-effect, while the experimentation and learning process represent the main core benefit.

In this, competitions seem to work differently from usual projects. While this difference is not explicitly discussed in the survey responses, it is possible to assume that the critical and experimental intensity relate to the need to take responsibility for the project, as difficult or contrasting requirements cannot be neutralised by talking to the client (see also Kreiner, 2010b), the presence of a deadline and possibly the spirit and ambition of the task in itself.

What are referred to here as 'side-effects' potentially constitute relevant interests and concerns for making competition entries, beyond the 'getting-the-job' logic. In this perspective, consistently investing in competitions is rewarded with creative and organisational capital for the practice, and not necessarily with the return linked to winning and getting the commission for the follow-up project.

**Table 5: Positive side-effects of competition entries**

<b>Raised organisational capital of the practice</b>
‘Moving from working for free all the time to getting paid to be working like hell’ (Austrian practice) ‘The project has shaped the way in which we approach and run projects now and in the future’ (Irish practice)
<b>Raised cultural capital - external dimension:</b>
‘Even if I did not win, the work was very much appreciated. This competition gave me the possibility to have other work (...) and to open my office. (Portuguese practice)
<b>Raised cultural capital – internal dimension:</b>
‘We have completely embraced the fact that every commission might become a competition at any point (and vice versa) and we appreciate it, as <b>it keeps us innovative and self-critical.</b> ’ (French practice working in Asia)  ‘A lot of architect friends did competitions to try to get work, but to me <b>competitions were opportunities for experiment (...) a sort of frame in which to test ideas.</b> (Portuguese practice)  We use them as a raw material for research; they become <b>switches</b> that turn on speculations and open up possibilities when other means of theoretical and archival research have come to a dead end.’ (Greek practice that used competitions as part of a PhD by architectural design)

### 3. OPEN QUESTIONS

The strategic considerations developed on the basis of the present analysis primarily apply to not fully established practices similar to those ones responding to the survey, with an interest in a design-based profile.

The relevance of the conclusions might also vary with the different contexts and competition cultures that are present in Europe. Notwithstanding the shared regulatory framework for public procurement procedures of most European countries, there are huge variations in the number and kind of procedures available for different types of practices in different countries. Particularly relevant for small emerging practices are open procedures without pre-qualification requirements.

To fully understand the relevance and potential of competitions and their effectiveness, alternative strategies of procurement such as PR work should be analysed, even if these strategies are less appealing and attractive to architects.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

- Competitions offer unique opportunities for practices at different stages of their development, but these opportunities come at the cost of considerable investment of resources and risks. Cases where the first try is the first win are possible, but totally unpredictable. Usually a successful competition is part of a series of several submissions made by the practice, suggesting the need to develop a consistent line of work in this field in order to achieve a result.
- Competition results are unpredictable, but it is possible to develop and/or train strategic skills in selecting the competition to enter, design development and in terms of operational and communication approaches (such as the 'Five-Second Rule' proposed by one practice) that might raise the chances of success.
- While it is not possible to directly steer and maximize the winning of competitions, it is possible to maximize the side-effects for every competition entered and transform them into capital of some sort for the practice. These side-effects include: developing new/experimental approaches, establishing collaborative exchange networks both within and beyond the profession, developing organizational set-ups and ways of working for producing interesting ideas. All these resources can be used to inform the way the practice works, both for normal commissions and for competitions.
- In terms of design content, the strategy of prioritising interpretations that move beyond the expectations of the client, instead of mere brief implementation, pinpoints the potential of developing personal standpoints and an agenda that can then inform submissions and other projects. Competitions can thus become a test or 'switch' for experimentation that moves beyond the submission. By doing so, the practice can broaden the spectrum of interests and concerns beyond the submission, and gain even when the competition is lost.

Specific risks highlighted in the present analysis concern recurrent failures in the implementation phase that make the investment in competitions in terms of getting the job—particularly ineffective. As the saying goes, no risk no fun...



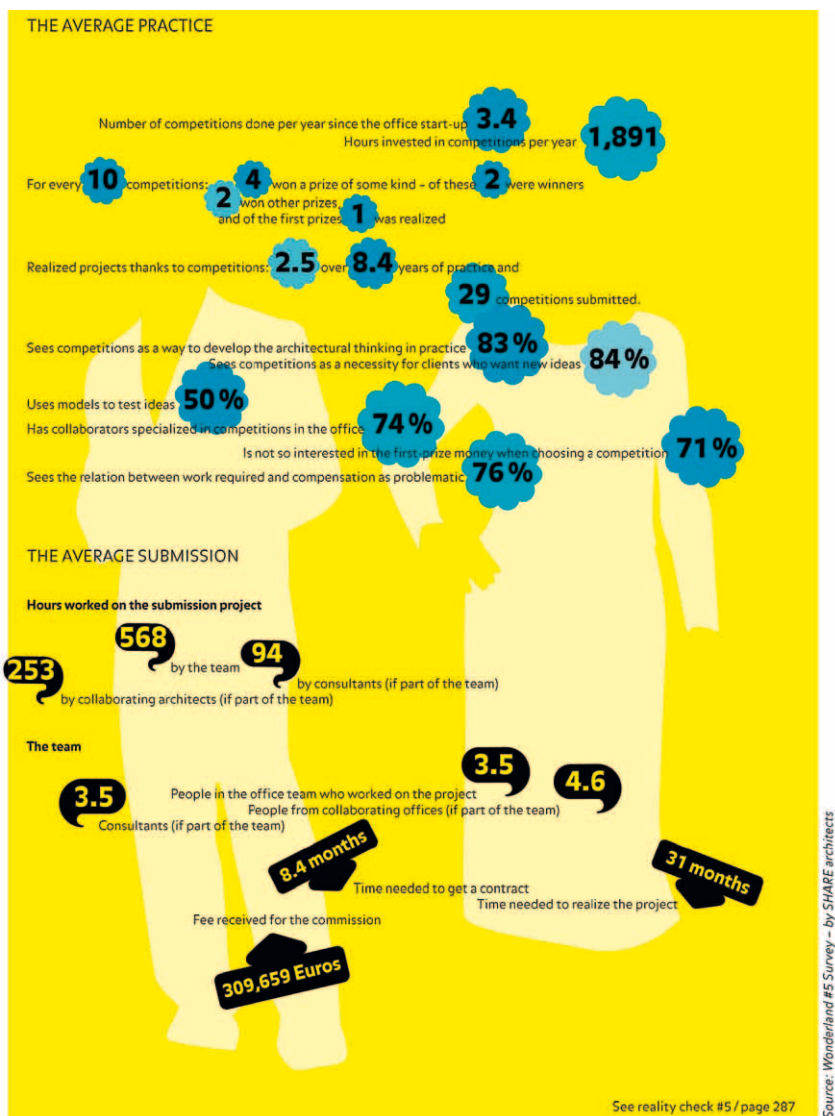


Figure 2: The average practice submission; Wonderland Survey #5. Source: Forlati and SHARE Architects (2011, p.287).

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## Abstract

In 2010, the Swedish government launched the two-year government programme Growing Old, Living Well, GOLW, a 50 million SEK investment in an exploration of various types of residential housing for the emerging ageing society. The Swedish government regarded architectural competitions as a suitable instrument for Swedish municipalities to innovate architecture and the built environment for the senior part of the population. The supervision for the full project was entrusted to the Swedish Institute for Assistive Technology, SIAT (Hjälpmiddelsinstitutet). Eighteen out of 290 Swedish municipalities demonstrated a slight to moderate interest in joining the programme, but in the end of the project, merely three municipalities succeeded in holding their own individual competition.

The study is a parallel case study on three municipal organisers' considerations, motivations and preparations for organising invited architectural competitions with a pre-qualification procedure. The research material consists of written documentation, questionnaires and interviews. A total of 42 respondents participated, all actors in the municipal processes of realising either a pilot study in view of a subsequent architectural competition, or just preparing for an architectural competition. The collected research material was submitted to a close reading analysis, which allowed reconstruction of events inside the municipal organisations preceding the decision to prepare for a competition.

The study sheds light on how the idea of an architectural competition is merged with municipal aspirations of being innovative or future-minded. The study lends support to an overall conclusion that the ideal time frame for organising and holding municipal competitions is about 21 months. This timeline allows necessary programming documentation, adequate design proposals and a structured jury assessment process to be prepared. A more compressed time line would generate problems in preparing programming documentation that would be reflected in the proposals submitted by participating architects in response to the competition brief. This imbalance would also affect the subsequent jury assessment process.

**Key words:** Architectural competitions, competition programmes, organisational process, municipal stakeholders, housing for older persons.

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# Responsiveness to competitions in architecture: Rationality, opportunism or Swedish whim?

JONAS E. ANDERSSON

## Introduction

During the first decade of the new millennium, innovation has become a central concept in several fields of interest, not to mention the one of policies and politics (Perren and Sapsed, 2013). In the British parliamentary debate, usage of the word innovation displayed a tenfold increase in the period of 1960 to 2000, and it is likely that the same tendency applies in other political assemblies of other nations. Despite the frequent use, the word remains semantically vague and dependent upon a context or certain discourse (ibid.). Innovation tends to assume its individual meaning in each user's personal imaginary world (ibid.). The implication of the word oscillates between two scenarios, either as a type of innovation that will generate a step-by-step change of existing frameworks, or as radical process, which implies an eradication of existing beliefs and systems in order to achieve renewal (OECD, 2005, Swedberg, 2008). The dual understanding of innovation can easily be paired with the idea of the architectural competition, not to mention that the event finds its roots in the French Revolution and the need for re-inventing new social values and civil institutions (Chupin, 2011, Szambien, 1986).

The subordinate unit of the phrase 'architectural competitions' suggests a primary focus on the built environment. However, competing in architecture is not all about conceptualising new architectural space. Architectural competitions are also an arena for an intellectual process of verbalising un-verbalised and obscure mental images. Architectural competitions can be seen as discursive events (Andersson, 2011a, Andersson, 2011b, Larson, 1994, Volker, 2010b, Volker and Lauche, 2008). Ultimately, they aim at harmonising hopes and visions of improved architectural quality held by the organising stakeholder and conveyed in the competition programme with the conceptualised design proposals that

teams of competing architects have elaborate in response to the programme (Tostrup, 1999, Volker, 2010c). In that sense, the competition programme has an essential role in bridging the gap between various actors involved in competitions. Through the process of organising architectural competitions, public institutions may influence the development of new architecture (Andersson, 2012, Patterson, 2012). The innovation potential could be attributed to the content and structure of the competition brief, but also to the interpretative process of the brief, which takes place among the participating architects during the design process.

With a cycle of 30 to 40 years, public Swedish representatives have organised architectural competitions on national level in order to define the spatial perimeters of municipal care and caring for dependent and frail older people (Andersson, 2011a). These competitions have been closely linked to subsequent reforms of the Swedish social legislation. The latest investment in new competitions in this particular field of architectural competitions, was the two-year government programme *Growing old, living well*, GOLW, that the Swedish government launched in 2010 (Regeringskansliet, 2010).<sup>1</sup> The programme forwarded the architectural competition as an especially important instrument for innovating forms of housing for this group of people (ibid.). The Swedish Institute for Assistive Technology, SIAT, was entrusted with supervision of the full project. This meant that the institute distributed the SEK 50 million allocations into various architectural competitions, pilot studies in view of a subsequent competition or other projects that targeted the matter of appropriate housing for senior citizens.

## Aims and purposes

The present study examined the implementation of architectural competitions sponsored by the GOLW programme. The SIAT management of the programme had some relevance for the municipal inclination to organise architectural competitions. After an application procedure, three Swedish municipalities effectuated their own exploration of architecture for the ageing population by use of architectural competitions. This study comprises a multiple case study evaluating municipal readiness to engage in national investment in innovating housing forms for the senior part of the population through the use

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of architectural competitions. The aim was to explore the underlying dynamics in the municipal response by studying the administrative, intra-personal and organisational processes that took place inside the three municipalities. The analysis focused on the first step in the customary eight step procedure behind an architectural competition (Rönn, 2011, Volker, 2010a). The research objectives were as follows:

- Establish a timeline for the organisational procedure of a municipal competition;
- Find the igniting flame of the municipal process that resulted in a competition;
- Elucidate the motives for the application for funding of a municipal competition;
- Identify the rationale for the particular organisational form of the competition;
- Retrace the wording of the competition programme along with additional documents;
- Analyse the timeline implications for the realisation of a municipal competition.

### **Background: Stakeholders, interests and decisions**

Theories on the human learning process describe an iterative cognitive exchange between explicit knowing in practice and acquired tacit knowledge (Kreiner, 2011, Lipstadt, 2011, Schön, 1988). This exchange between experience-based and theoretical knowing constitutes a gap-closing procedure that results in sense-making (Kreiner, 2011, Lipstadt, 2011, Schön, 1988). In analogy with human learning, it could be said that the process of bridging the gaps between different foci of interests and stakeholders depends upon the organisational form of an architectural competition. For instance, in open competitions, in which the anonymity of the participating architects is maintained until the announcement of the winner, the competition programme becomes the main instrument for harmonising the organisers' expectations and key interests with the imaginative powers of the participating teams of architects. In a similar way, the open competition operates from the need of attracting architects, so that a sufficiently large sample of design proposals can be assembled. Thereby, a valid jury assessment can be performed of the proposal that constitutes the best

response to the competition programme (Stang Våland, 2010). This assessment is based on mostly qualitative evaluations of the programme's design criteria rather than a rational list of mandatory requirements (Svensson, 2008). The winning proposal often has a pop-up quality that gradually takes form during the jury deliberations (Rönn, 2008).

A study on gap-closing procedures in relation to an invited architectural competition, which included an open-dialogue phase around the submitted proposals as a preparation for the second competition phase, suggested that this process was susceptible to a personal bias. A balanced critical approach was difficult to maintain, since personal inclinations of the invited teams of architects and the members of the competition jury played an essential role (Kreiner, 2011). This resulted in a certain level of distortion of the original architectural designs in the revised proposals, since the architects' reflective conversation with the design task and the site became clouded (*ibid.*). In this case, the superiority of the competition programme as the main channel for communicating the organisers' concerns to the competing architects was compromised by the removal of the competing teams' anonymity and the discussion with the jury on the design task. In contrast to open competitions and invited competitions with open-dialogue and no anonymity, invited competitions with maintained anonymity suggest a distinct type of process-related gap-closing that is controlled by the organisers (Rönn, 2011, Volker, 2010a), see Figure 1.

The gap-closing procedure of invited competitions with anonymous submissions suggests that the organisers not fully entrust the competitions programme to be the sole instrument of conveying the organisers' wishes to the participating teams of architects. Invited competitions include at least eight steps that aim at increasing the organisers' control over the competition and its outcome. The organisers can control the processual steps directly or by proxy (Rönn, 2011, Volker, 2010a).

The present study is centred on the first and very initial step in the process of organising an invited competition with anonymous submissions. It was assumed that municipal organisers' interest in organising an architectural competition can be found in these formative moments of a competition, and the potential outcome of the competition (Patterson, 2012). In this particular case, the responsiveness was triggered by a national investment of 50 million SEK and the possibility of requiring means for local development. In turn, the gap-closing procedure of a municipal organiser was assumed to be conditioned



The organisers' side	The participating architects' side
a. Preparation for an architectural competition	
b. Formulation of a competition brief (by proxy or writing process)	
c. Open invitation to architects (by proxy or open call)	C. Submission of an application with a design catalogue and curriculum vitae
d. Selection of architect teams (by proxy, or evaluation process)	D. Anticipation
e. Confirmation and sending out of competition programme	E. Analysis of the competition brief with supplementary questions to the competition secretary.
f. Answers to the competition programme (competition secretary or proxy)	F. Definition of generator images for the design process that ends with assembling the competition proposal
g. Jury assessment process	G. Anticipation
h. Designation of winner	H. Euphoria among winning design teams and other awarded proposals, and disappointment among other participating design teams

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Figure 1. The eight organisational steps involved in an invited competition.

by the municipalities' capacity to supply comprehensive and detailed physical planning and thereby focusing the competition on an existing site (Boverkett, 2012). Given the consultation process approach of the Swedish planning and

building act, PBL, new residential care homes run the risk of being subjected to a time-consuming process during which concerns from several actors have to be analyzed.

## Methodology

This study used research material that was assembled in order to evaluate the success of the GOLW programme and its potential to boost innovation with regard to housing for elderly people in the Swedish population (Andersson and Rönn, 2014). The evaluation study was conducted as a multiple case study with triangulating research methods (Johansson, 2000, Yin, 1994). The study began with key word searches using the Google Search Engine ([www.google.se](http://www.google.se)) that targeted open data bases on the Internet. The key word searches continued with searches in restricted data-bases of the organising municipalities and the professional organisation for Swedish architects, the Swedish Association of Architects, SAA ([www.arkitekt.se](http://www.arkitekt.se)). These searches helped to define the perimeters of the cases and identify the potential key actors, who took part in the realisation of the three competitions. They also allowed information obtained later via questionnaires and interviews to be confirmed or refuted. Despite high expectations, the programme resulted in just three competitions in the municipalities of Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping.

## Respondents

The competition documentation for these three competitions along with contacts with the municipal organisers and the SAA, defined the exact number of respondents in each case. These respondents had been involved in the three municipal competitions, either actively in the entire process, or partly, e.g. in the initial programming phase or the closing assessment phase. An all-inclusive approach was implemented, and the 66 individuals who were involved in the three competitions were contacted. A clear majority were women, which was somewhat surprising. However, age, gender and active professional years were not included in the present analysis. Generally, the respondents were affiliated with different municipal administrations, but a few were specially assigned experts. Most respondents were architects by training, some thirty persons. Other respondents represented a spectrum of care professions, but also various experts in building-related matters, real estate or active representatives of local political parties. The average response rate was 64 per cent, see Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristics of respondents, methods used and response rate.**

Respondents in the three architectural competitions							
(p= full number of potential respondents)	Methods						Response rate
	women	men	total	inter-view <sup>1</sup>	Ques-tion-naire <sup>1</sup>	total	%
Burlöv Architectural Competition, <sup>2</sup> p = 16	8	4	12	11	2	13	80%
Gävle Architectural Competition, <sup>2</sup> p = 27	10	3	13	9	8	17	55%
Linköping Architectural Competition, <sup>3</sup> p = 19	9	4	13	9	5	14	73%
SAA, p = 2	1	1	2	3	1	4	.
SIAT, p = 2	2	0	2	3	5	8	.
Total p = 66 p	30	12	42	29	21	56	64%

NOTES: 1) The questionnaires and the interviews were assembled with additional mails and phones in order to secure the correct understanding of the answers supplied. Concerning the numbers under the interview column for SIAT and SAA, these correspond to the phone calls made, while those under the questionnaire column indicates the number of emails sent to this group of informants. 2) The head architect in each participating team of architects was approached with a phone call and a subsequent mail with a questionnaire. In order to answer the questions, this person often voluntarily involved other team members in order to answer these items. 3) In the architectural competition in the municipality of Linköping, the representatives from the SAA supplied the full list of potential participants, which was checked prior to interviews or questionnaires.

### Interviews and questionnaires

The respondents were contacted by email describing the purpose of the evaluation promising the respondents full anonymity and guaranteeing that the submitted information would be handled with the strictest confidentiality, only available to the research team. The competition in Gävle was the first competition and it was used here as a pilot study for testing the effectiveness of the chosen research methods. In this case study, the emails

included a digital questionnaire with 41 open questions divided into eight themes. However, the digital questionnaires demonstrated an obvious shortcoming with this approach: the effectiveness was biased by the respondents' personal skill in handling digital documents. As a result, only respondents highly skilled in modern information technology managed to fill out the form, while respondents with lesser skills failed or submitted erroneous files. This tendency was also found in the architectural competition in the municipality of Linköping, which was the second of the three competitions.

This setback called for a quick change in research method, and the digital questionnaire was converted into an interview protocol with themes for inquiry, see Table 2. The interviews were recorded. The questionnaire was based on an existing research protocol that was used in conjunction with a previous architectural competition that was realised by a municipal stakeholder in 2006 to 2007 (Andersson, 2011c). As a result, complementary interviews were held in Gävle and Linköping. For the competition in the municipality of Burlöv, the interview protocol was the only method used. The interviews were recorded and lasted 15-30 minutes. The exact phrasing of the questions was adjusted to the respondent's use of language.

**Table 2. Overview of themes in interview protocol and digital questionnaire.**

Item	Question theme
1	The background of the idea to opt for an architectural competition (choice of site, preparation of the competition programme, user involvement and that of others municipal actors representing elderly care, and town planning.
2	The competition programme, the writing process and the programme as fundament for the participating architects' design processes and the subsequent jury assessment process.
3	The competition proposals in comparison with the envisioned space and stipulated requirements in the competition programme.
4	The architectural competition seen as before and after completion.
5	Additional questions that arose during the conversation and a closing question concerning the capacity of the architectural competition to generate innovative thinking for new housing for senior generations.

### **Analysis of research material**

The accumulated research material for the evaluation study was subjected to a close reading process (Brummett, 2010). To some extent, the research material allowed for simple statistical analyses and calculations. The 21 completely filled-out questionnaires allowed for additional analyses that pertained to discursive style and linguistic elements. The recorded interviews were partly transcribed. The complete evaluation study aimed at assessing the competitions that were realised, which meant that some research material had to be excluded (Andersson and Rönn, 2014). The study concentrated on analysis of the interviews and questionnaires since they revealed underlying driving forces and rationales behind the municipal interest in joining the GOLW initiative and organising an architectural competition. Considered as a whole, these forces and motives constituted the municipality's readiness to participate in the national programme. In this study, this dynamic between driving forces and rationale was assumed to reflect the organiser's readiness to respond to national initiatives that aim at increasing innovation by use of architectural competitions. In this paper, this readiness is termed 'responsiveness.'

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the individual processes that preceded, surrounded and ended the three municipal architectural competitions that were part of the GOLW initiative. The section is divided in three subsections. The first subsection describes the preparations of the coordinating actor, i.e. the SIAT, and its supervision of the full initiative. The second part with three subsections displays the administrative and organisational processes of the three participating municipalities that took part in the GOLW initiative. The third and final part summarises the three municipal organisational processes and presents conclusions.

### **1. The implementation of the GOLW programme by the SIAT**

The government programme opened with a press-release by the Swedish Government Offices, SGO, on the 6 July 2010 that described the government's interest in innovating housing, ordinary and special, for the senior part of the population in preparation for an increasingly larger proportion of older people, some 25 per cent by 2040 (SCB, 2015). The government programme restricted the investment in new knowledge about appropriate housing for the senior

population to a 24-month period, from 6 July 2010 to end of June 2012. After this period, the projects that were part of the GOLW project were summarized in reports with financial balances for each individual project during some six months. In the press release, the SIAT was designated as coordinator of the allocation of 50 million SEK.

### 1.1 Measures taken by the SIAT

On 15 July, the SIAT presented its own press release about the GOLW initiative and its overall intentions. Partly due to the Swedish holiday period, the SIAT engaged in few promotional activities of the project during July–October 2010. In September, the SIAT was approached by the initiators of the idea of innovating housing for the senior population by use of architectural competitions,<sup>2</sup> who during an informal meeting described how to combine experience-based practice concerning appropriate housing for older people with research-based knowledge derived from transdisciplinary research endeavours on ageing, architecture, housing preferences and eldercare. The group suggested a change in the overall timeline. The timeline did cause the SIAT problems, since it was imperative and not adjustable to the different agendas of the Swedish municipalities. In addition, it collided with the estimated time requirement for organising an architectural competition of at least 12 months (Svensson, Thornberg et al., 2006).

However, in line with previous government programmes realised by the SIAT, the institute chose to keep to the stipulated timeline instead of opening a discussion with the SGO. Instead, the SIAT adjusted the project to what could be achieved during a two-year period. Despite the government interest in innovating housing for the senior part of the Swedish population, the SIAT introduced a different orientation of the project as the main track of the initiative. Pilot studies on housing preferences were prioritized. This meant that various explorative projects were also found acceptable, such as accessibility issues in existing and ordinary housing, gender issues and interior fitting of group-living facilities for persons with dementia diagnoses (Wiklund and Melin, 2013).

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2 These persons were professors Susanne Iwarsson, Lund University, Lund, Magnus Rönn, and the author of this paper, both from the School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology, KTH, Stockholm. In addition, a project manager, Christer Neleryd, at the National Board for Health and Social Welfare joined the group for a presentation at the Ministry for Social Affairs in autumn 2009.

These projects assumed an experience-based practice approach, while methodological research projects were banned from the project. The competition track was thus reshaped into a sub-track to this new main track for the project.

### 1.2 The SIAT's readiness to engage in architectural competitions

To the extent possible, a three-member group at the SIAT tried to answer queries on the competition track. In mid-September, all 290 municipalities in Sweden were sent a letter, addressed to the head of the municipal executive board. The letter presented the GOLW initiative and the possibility of applying for funding of either local architectural competitions or pilot studies on housing preferences among older people. In November, an external consultant with architect-training was employed and given the task with systematically exploring the municipal interest in the competition track through direct telephone calls and visits to presumptive municipalities. In addition, the competition office at the SAA became involved in the project on an advisory level.

In January 2011, the SIAT presented on its website the competition track as a separate call of the GOLW initiative. In addition, the competition track was presented as a single open call in a special journal that targets Swedish municipalities and regional counties.<sup>3</sup> Both calls also promoted the funding of local pilot studies, which was the second call for this aspect of the project. The call for competitions closed on 1 March, while the call for pilot studies closed one day earlier. The process of promoting architectural competitions by the SIAT thus involved the following steps:

- Open press release about the GOLW initiative, July 2010
- Letter targeting the chair of the municipal executive committee, September 2010
- External consultant mapping municipal interest, November 2010
- Involvement of the SAA as experts on architectural competitions, November 2010
- Two calls promoting the pilot study, December and January 2011
- One call promoting the architectural competition, open for 2.5 months, January 2011
- Assessment of submitted applications with a negotiable approach in order to promote applications of interest to the SIAT, March-June 2011.

3 The journal is called *Dagens Samhälle*, or *Contemporary Society* in an English translation.

### 1.3 Municipal responsiveness to taking part in the GOLW competition track

Despite the mapping of potential municipalities and the call for architectural competitions, few municipalities expressed an interest in the architectural competition track of the GOLW initiative. At the early phase of the opening of the competition track in January 2011, some 18 municipalities expressed an interest, although very weak, in arranging architectural competitions. The interest was mainly conditioned by municipal physical planning, and the lack of available sites to exploit. By the end of the call, on 1 March, only seven municipalities had applied for funding (Andersson and Rönn, 2012, Andersson and Rönn, 2013). Despite this low response rate, two applications were rejected; one application did not mention a specific site, which the SIAT deemed contrary to the idea of the GOLW initiative, while the other one was rejected because the municipality had previously organised competitions with this particular focus and the SIAT concluded that it had the capacity to organise its own competition without funds from the GOLW allocation (Andersson and Rönn, 2013).

Thus only five applications were granted financial support. However, one of these, the municipality of Halmstad aborted its preparation for a competition, because a real estate company bought an existing municipal housing for frail older people in need of refurbishment and invited the municipality to participate in the development of new housing on the site. Another municipality, Karlskrona, proposed a type of two-step architectural competition that was not approved by the SAA (Andersson and Rönn, 2012). In the second phase of that competition, the municipality concluded that neither of the participating consortia of architects and building companies had presented solutions that met all the mandatory requirements in the competition programme, so the competition process was terminated and the jury members dismissed. However, the SIAT continued to support the Karlskrona initiative and negotiations were opened with the consortia. The proposal that was most in line with the list of requirements was finally chosen for implementation. Although no winner of the competition was announced, the SIAT chose to present the outcome as the result of an architectural competition (Wiklund and Melin, 2013).

Thus, in the end, only three municipalities organised architectural competitions, the municipalities of Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping.





Figure 1. Details of the existing residential buildings at Almvägen in Gävle (AB Gavlegårdarna and Gävle kommun, 2011, AB Gavlegårdarna, 2012).

## 2. Three architectural competitions as part of the GOLW initiative

In this section, the architectural competitions of Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping are presented, each starting with an overview of the local demographic situation. The presentation follows the chronology of the competitions: the competition in the municipality of Gävle was the first, followed by the municipality of Linköping and then the municipality of Burlöv.

### 2.1 The competition in the municipality of Gävle

The municipality of Gävle is the seventeenth largest municipal organisation in Sweden, with approximately 70 smallish communities, and 18 large conglomerations, the town of Gävle being the largest one. The town plan in the centre of the town is based on a rectilinear grid plan, but there are large lush green areas (AB Gavlegårdarna and Gävle kommun, 2011). In 2011, the population reached a total of 95,428, of which the proportion of people with foreign background was about 14.5 per cent (SCB, 2012). The demographics involve a relatively high proportion of people aged 65 years and older, about 17.8 per cent (*ibid.*). This proportion is predicted to increase to about 19.61 per cent by 2020. The average cost of municipal elderly care was approximately SEK 17,229 per inhabitant and year (AB Gavlegårdarna and Gävle kommun, 2011).<sup>4</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Discovery and reception of the GOLW initiative

The press release from the SGO concerning the GOLW initiative was spotted immediately at the Administration for Elderly Care, AEC, at the municipality

4 The national average is about SEK 16,240 (Nilsson, 2012).

of Gävle, which interpreted the initiative from an accessibility and usability perspective regarding:

- Firstly, improving poor accessibility in older people's dwellings, which had been adjusted to personal needs during the course of life, but required home adjustments to meet new needs due to emerging age-related cognitive or physical disorders so that the older person could remain in a familiar environment (often called prolonged ageing in place); or,
- secondly, making necessary adjustments to older people's dwellings in order to provide minimum working environment conditions for people employed by the municipality to provide elderly care, i.e. caring, nursing and medical care.

With this interpretation of the GOLW in mind, the AEC contacted the municipal real estate company for rental housing, AB Gavlegårdarna, ABG, which had previously organised architectural competitions. The ABG approved the idea proposed by the AEC, and searched for suitable rental housing with dominantly older people and in need of maintenance actions. It suggested 32 rental flats in one-storey terraced houses at Almvägen, built during the 1960s with state subsidies as a type of special housing for older people within the ordinary residential stock of flats, the so-called pensioners' housing.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that the majority of the older residents at Almvägen were able and fit, with occasional needs for elderly care, the ABG and the AEC decided to focus on this type of housing. In addition, they assumed that older people, who resided in a nearby area with individual and privately owned houses, would be interested in moving to the terraced houses their need for elderly care increased due to age-related problems. In order to involve the tenants in the project, ABG decided to also opt for a pilot study so that the residents' ideas for refurbishing the houses could be explored. An officer trained in architecture and working at the AEC in a fixed-term project, played a key role in this negotiation, and later became coordinator of the pilot study and secretary for the competition. As counterpart, the ABG appointed an experienced officer. These key individuals worked in tandem to promote the cause at the two administrations.

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5 The pensioners' housing initiative was introduced in 1938 as an alternative to special housing for frail older persons in old people's homes. This housing allowed a continued independent living outside the less appreciated old people's home.

### **2.1.2 Formulation of an application to the SIAT**

Integrating the ABG policy of user involvement in refurbishment projects, the AEC designed a pilot study with several interactive meetings between the residents, municipal officers and representatives of the ABG as well as national organisations supporting older people's rights. The pilot study was intended to precede the architectural competition and supply input for the competition programme. The application for funding for a pilot study on the particular site of the terraced houses at Almvägen was submitted to the SIAT on 25 February 2011. The application lacked the necessary formal support from the AEC.

By the same date, the ABG submitted a separate application concerning an architectural competition that would focus on defining the necessary refurbishment of the terraced houses. The application for an AEC-steered pilot study and an ABG-run architectural competition was linked together. In addition, the head of the pilot study was secretary of the architectural competition. The aim of the competition was to investigate alternative solutions for increasing the level of accessibility and usability in the existing terraced houses. In contrast to the tenants, the ABG did not exclude demolition proposals. Similarly, to the application for funding of a pilot study, the application lacked the necessary formal decision by the board of the ABG.

### **2.1.3 The SIAT's assessment of the application**

The SIAT assessed the application regarding a pilot study for about two months. Given the inconsistencies with the formal approval of both applications, the SIAT contacted the AEC and the ABG with a recommendation to revise the applications. In addition, SIAT's external expert visited the site and opened a discussion about the pilot study and the architectural competition with both applicants. The AEC delivered the formal decision from its board of the AEC on 27 April, while a revised application for an architectural competition was sent on 6 May.

The ABG continued to prepare for the architectural competition, including the pilot study. Within the ABG, a special task force was formed to prepare the two projects. On 15 June, despite lack of a formal decision on the applications from the SIAT, professional journals published an invitation by the ABG for interested architects to participate in an architectural competition focusing on the terraced houses at Almvägen. The very same day, the SIAT took the formal decision to grant funding for the competition and the pilot study.

### 2.1.4 The municipality's responsiveness to organise an architectural competition

Through its administration for elderly care, the AEC, and the municipal real estate company for rental housing, ABG, the municipality of Gävle described an immediate and sensitive readiness to respond to the government GOLW initiative. This responsiveness can be summarized as follows:

- Immediate response to press release by the SGO
- Aligning a pilot study on housing preferences among older people and potential needs of home-based elderly care and home adjustments with the GOLW initiative
- Aligning the GOLW with an architectural competition on increased accessibility and usability within an existing residential housing block with rental flats
- Immediate revisions of two submitted applications for funding from the GOLW initiative based on SIAT recommendations, i.e. the application for a pilot study and an architectural competition, 4-month application procedure
- Implementing a 6-month pilot study on older people and their housing preferences
- Implementing a 10.5-month invited architectural competition with a pre-qualification procedure, of which 2.1 months were allocated to preparing the competition documentation
- Compiling the results from the pilot study and the competition in a final report, a 1.3-month work task.

Thus, the GOLW initiative took 21.8 months to realise all in all.

### 2.2 The municipality of Linköping

The municipality of Linköping is the fifth largest municipality in Sweden with about 18 larger conglomerations, among which Linköping is the largest. The town has a rectilinear grid plan that includes both a university and a military airbase. In 2011, the population was 147,334, the proportion of people with a foreign background was about 17.6 per cent, and the proportion of people aged 65 years and older was around 15.7 per cent (SCB, 2012). In the statistics, this latter figure was predicted to remain stable at 16.7 per cent by 2020 (ibid.). However, the municipality foresaw an 8 per cent population increase yearly, due to the

steady influx of younger people attracted by the local university and work opportunities in local industries or at the military airbase. The average cost of municipal elderly care was approximately SEK 13,310 per inhabitant and year (Linköpings Kommun, 2006, Linköpings kommun, 2009).<sup>6</sup>



Figure 2. Details from the competition programme (Linköpings Kommun, 2011), and exterior views of the surrounding built environment, a suburb from the 1950s (Marge Arkitekter AB and Land Arkitekter AB, 2012).

### 2.2.1 Discovery and reception of the GOLW initiative

The municipality of Linköping has a long history of being an exemplary model when it comes to organising elderly care and supplying appropriate housing for the older generations (Caldenby, 1982, Hultin, 1979, Höjer, Smedmark et al., 1982, Sundberg and Wahlstein, 1979, Wahlstein, 1979, Walter, 1979). On a regular basis, the matter of appropriate housing for older people, mainly dependent and frail, is scrutinized by two municipal administrations and a special committee as to relevance for the older population (Linköpings Kommun, 2007). Consequently, the press release from the SGO was immediately spotted by three municipal officers, two at the Administration for Elderly Care, AEC, and one at the Administration for Town Planning, ATP, as well as by some politicians, members of the special Municipal Committee for the Elderly, MCE. The two officers in the AEC and the officer in the ATP were the key individuals in aligning different interests, i.e. caregiving with physical planning and promoting the idea of a competition.

The municipality has 64 residential care homes, operated by eight care entrepreneurs under four-year contracts that are renewed in a public tendering procedure in which the applicants' competence, performance and quality are assessed. In the municipality, residential care homes are mainly lacking in suburban areas built in the period of 1950 to 1970. The municipality had the

6 The national average is about SEK 16,240 (Nilsson, 2012).

experience that new residential care homes in such areas could be subjected to a long planning process due to “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) effect. The administrations of AEC and the ATP and politicians saw an opportunity to combine the local on-going process of building or refurbishing residential care homes in the inner city area or in the suburbs from the 1950s and 1960s with the national investment in innovating housing for the senior population.

### **2.2.2 Formulation of an application to the SIAT**

Based on a municipal survey of needs from 2009, the municipality of Linköping dismissed the need for a pilot study and opted for an application for funds to organise an architectural competition on special housing for frail older people in need of regular care-giving. The application became a municipal matter that was co-jointly prepared by the AEC and the ATP.

On 28 February 2011, the municipality submitted an application to the SIAT that mentioned three possible locations for a new residential care home in suburban areas. It also contained a preliminary draft of a competition programme and a list of requirements for the future residential care home. In order to minimize the possible consequences of a long planning process, a strategy for consultation with local people was also set up.

### **2.2.3 The SIAT's assessment of the application**

The SIAT found the application well prepared, and with little to object. Without any special consideration, the SIAT accepted the application. The decision was communicated to the municipality by 19 April, 2011. The well prepared application in combination with the readily stated acceptance of the application allowed the municipality of Linköping to refine the competition documentation even further during a four-month period. Following the SIAT decision, the matter of organising the architectural competition fell to the MCE and the administrations of AEC and ATP.

The different competition sites were visited and evaluated by the politicians and officers. The preparation included a consultation process in which the local administrations participated as well as the SAA and the SIAT. The final choice of site was the remains of the original pine forest that once covered the suburban environment from the 1950s. The general idea was that this site would challenge the competing architects, since accessibility and usability were targeted directly. However, despite the careful preparation, the final competition documentation

contained little information about the elderly residents' possible plethora of cognitive or functional problems due to the frail ageing process.

#### **2.2.4 The municipality's responsiveness to organise an architectural competition**

Through its existing perspicuous focus on ageing and caregiving, the municipality of Linköping prepared an immediate and rational response to the government GOLW initiative. This responsiveness can be summarized as follows:

- Immediate response to the press release by the SGO
- Adjusting an existing survey of housing preferences among senior citizens with the GOLW initiative, and thereby ruling out the need for a pilot study
- Orientating the GOLW initiative towards an application for an architectural competition that would focus on a new residential care home in a suburban area from the 1950s to 1970s; an 8-month preparation
- Re-using and updating existing documents for a public tendering process of care and caring services to create a competition programme, a 1.3-month consultation process
- Holding a 11.2-month invited architectural competition with pre-qualification
- Compiling the results from the competition in a final report, a 1.1-month task.

Thus, the GOLW initiative took 21.6 months to complete.

### **2.3 The municipality of Burlöv**

The municipality of Burlöv represents a mostly rural context, with two larger urban conglomerations. However, the municipality is under constant pressure from the expanding urban regions of nearby Lund and Malmö, where higher education and work opportunities can be found. The conglomerations within the municipality represent two opposite ethnical and socio-economical contexts, one being wealthier and ethnically more coherent than the other. In December 2011, the population reached 16,783 (SCB, 2012). There was a high percentage of people with foreign background, about 16.3 per cent, and a similar proportion of people aged 65 years and older, 16.45 per cent, which is projected to remain stable until 2020 (Nilsson, 2012). The average cost of

municipal elderly care was approximately SEK 12,909 per inhabitants and year (*ibid.*).<sup>7</sup>



Figure 3. Exterior view and aerial view of the competition site in the municipality of Burlöv (Burlöv kommun, 2011).

### 2.3.1 Discovery and reception of the GOLW initiative

In Burlöv, the igniting flame behind the idea of organising an architectural competition can be directly linked to the mail that the SIAT composed and distributed to the chairs of the 290 municipal executive committees in Sweden. In September 2010, the chair presented the GOLW initiative during a session to the other committee members. The committee mainly noticed the possibility of funding pilot studies on older people's expectations on appropriate housing for later stages in life. At the meeting, the committee also discussed the outcome of an inspirational seminar on the municipal expansion with a new station for commuter train to the larger urban areas of Lund, Malmö and the Danish capital of Copenhagen. This might have influenced a broader understanding of the GOLW initiative, in the sense that the discussion focused on an architectural competition about a comprehensive physical plan for the municipality in a long-term perspective.

In the end, the executive committee placed a request to the Social Welfare Committee, SWC, to formulate an application to the SIAT concerning the funding of a pilot study. In addition, the committee commissioned the municipal town architect to develop an application for an architectural competition on a comprehensive level to the SIAT. The SWC appointed the head of the Social Welfare Administration, SWA, to head the preparations for an application to the SIAT. A steering group was formed that also included the head of the

<sup>7</sup> The national average is about SEK 16,240 (Nilsson, 2012).



Administration for Physical Planning, APP, and the municipal town architect. The pilot study was combined with an employment of a project manager for about eight months, to prepare the requirements for the architectural competition. The head of the SWA, the coordinator of the pilot study and the town architect at the APP became key individuals in promoting the idea of a pilot study and organisation of a competition.

### **2.3.2 Formulation of an application to the SIAT**

The municipality of Burlöv applied for funding for both an architectural competition and a pilot study on housing preferences among senior local inhabitants. The pilot study was loosely associated with the idea of organising an architectural competition on a comprehensive planning level. The study targeted people aged 40-65 years and their expectations on housing for later stages in life. The study intended to use interviews, questionnaires, and seminars in order to accumulate this information.

On 1 March, the application for organising an architectural competition was submitted. The competition was concentrated around open farm land that surrounded an existing manor with a garden folly from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The folly included large trees and plants of botanical interest. There were farm buildings in close proximity. The municipality envisioned an architectural competition active on an urban level in order to promote an overall solution for the municipal expansion of new housing, which, over time, would connect the existing conglomerations.

### **2.3.3 The SIAT's assessment of the application**

The application was submitted to the SIAT on 25 February 2011. Some two months later, the SIAT approved the application for funding of a pilot study on housing preferences without any objections. However, the SIAT found the application for an architectural competition controversial, since there was an obvious conflict between the detailed focus of the GOLW initiative and the municipal scope of the competition. The assessment generated several discussions with the coordinator, and it was decided to meet with the applicant.

In May 2011, the special consultant at the SIAT met with representatives of the municipality. This resulted in a revised application that circled a smaller area around the manor estate as the competition site. The estate had recently been purchased by new owners, who intended to abandon the agricultural use

of the estate. They were approached and they agreed to be part of the project. A revised application along these lines was submitted to the SIAT, which approved the application on 11 July 2011.

### **2.3.4 The municipality's responsiveness to organise an architectural competition**

The municipality of Burlöv showed an eager, but mainly self-motivated, readiness to participate in the government GOLW initiative, since its goals could be harmonised with clearly local interests that were important issues for ongoing municipal physical planning. However, in relation to the timeline the initiative threatened to jeopardize the municipal expectations. The hesitation by the SIAT and the delayed approval of the application also contributed to this time shortage. In an attempt to override this limitation, the town architect at the APP and the head of the SWA were designated key players and commissioned to produce both the documentation for the competition and the pilot study. The SAA was consulted, but there was a small margin for reflections, since the writing of the competition programme coincided with the pre-qualification process. This municipal responsiveness can be summarized as follows:

- High-level interest generated by the SIAT letter to the executive committee, September 2010
- Aligning a pilot study on housing preferences in the community with the GOLW initiative; February 2011
- Adjusting an architectural competition on a comprehensive level with the GOLW initiative, March 2011
- Revising the application for an architectural competition according to the recommendations of the SIAT, May 2011
- Completing a 7-month pilot study on older people and housing preferences
- Preparing competition documentation during a 1.8-month period
- Holding a 9.5-month invited architectural competition with pre-qualification
- Compiling the results from the competition and the study in a final report, a 1.1-month task.

Thus, the GOLW initiative took 21.1 months to complete.

### 3. Findings

In the municipalities of Gävle and Linköping, the local response to the government programme could be labelled immediate once, the SGO press release was spotted. The response of the municipality of Burlöv proved the efficiency of the SIAT approach to the head of the municipal executive committees around Sweden, however, there was a 2.5-month delay in responding to the national investment in renewing housing for the senior group of the population. The results give little support to the claim that previous experience in organising architectural competitions was a decisive asset for the three architectural competitions that were funded by the GOLW project. The longest time taken to hold a competition was found in the municipality of Gävle, where the municipal real estate company with previous experience of different competitions, prepared the competition. The shortest period between the idea for a local architectural competition and the jury's announcement of a winning team of architects was in the municipality of Burlöv, which had no prior knowledge of architectural competitions.

Among three municipal organisers, the municipality of Linköping appeared the most competent, since it reused but also updated existing competition documentation and other relevant documents. There, explorative pilot study was deemed unnecessary since attitudes to housing among older people had already been mapped. The average time taken from the igniting flame behind the idea of initiating a pilot study or realising an architectural competition to completion was 21.5 months. Based on the different characteristics of the three municipal stakeholders, along with the awkward inclination of the SIAT to implement the GOLW initiative, the following six conclusions can be drawn:

1. The municipal responsiveness to national investment in innovating architecture by use of architectural competitions depends upon a small group of 2-3 perspicuous public officers who initiate transdisciplinary work that transcends the boundaries of different structures for organising Swedish municipalities administratively.
2. The municipal responsiveness depends on potential added value that local investment in the project might generate. These values could be related to profiling the municipality as an exemplary model on a national level, or solving interior problems in local physical planning.

3. A type of gap-closing procedure occurred in all the three cases, even in that of the SIAT: a small group of people, 2-3 persons, either a coordinating manager of the full GOLW initiative trying to implement the envisioned government ambitions or individuals in different municipal administrations within each municipality harmonising differing foci of interest in an application for a pilot study or an architectural competition.
4. Previous experience of organising an architectural competition is not necessarily an asset in organising a municipal architectural competition. Rather, a combination of previous knowledge and consultations involving different players and stakeholders is important, so that essential requirements can be merged into a focused design task and well-formulated competition programme.
5. A pilot study on housing preferences among target individuals to prepare for architectural competitions could be of relevance for substantiating assumptions about key issues integrated later as part of the innovative potential of the local architectural competition.
6. As regards the GOLW initiative, the coordinating manager should seek to improve municipal responsiveness to organising architectural competitions. In that regard, measures other than press releases, letter to key players and mapping should be contemplated since, as demonstrated in this study, such measures had a limited effect.

These conclusions also suggest a possible obstacle to subsequent implementation of the winning proposal in similar architectural competitions. A fair question is whether the winning proposal actually promotes innovative architectural designs or housing solutions for senior citizens in the local population, or just confirms existing beliefs about appropriate housing for this group. This question applies in particular to the competition in the municipality of Gävle: There, even demolition of the existing terraced houses for older people could be considered, although the older person's emotional bonding with a dwelling, environment or site has been forwarded as essential for a harmonious ageing process (Milligan, 2009, Rowles, 2000).

In a similar way, the competition in the municipality of Linköping raised some concerns about the innovative potential, since the competition documentation was based on existing requirements for housing for frail older people. In

comparison with these two competitions, the architectural competition with its parallel pilot study in the municipality of Burlöv suggested innovative potential, since the dual applications for a pilot study and a competition were rooted in contemporaneous deliberations about the appropriate expansion of the local urban conglomerations and housing preferences of the local population that remained mostly unexplored until the municipality seized the opportunity to be part of the GOLW initiative.

## Discussion

All three projects that were funded by the GOLW initiative were dependent on the two-year timeline for the government programme, see Figure 2. This also applied to the coordinator of the project, the SIAT, not to mention the individual organisers of pilot studies or architectural competitions. As a consequence, the early stage of the government initiative involved gap-closing processes, by the coordinating manager of the SIAT and by the individual organisers.

Essential for the four gap-closing processes was the strategic work of a small group of people, 2-3 key players in different functions and mandates, but also in various municipal administrations. These key players acted either as gate keepers or promoters to realise local intentions behind the pilot study or the architectural competition. These gap-closing processes can be summarized as follows:

*Gap-closing processes by the SIAT, involving 2-4 individuals*

- Integrating and harmonising the GOLW initiative with other similar SIAT activities
- Open letters to head of municipal executive committees about the initiative
- Mapping of municipal interests and readiness to respond to the national call for organising architectural competitions or pilot studies
- Calls for architectural competitions (1 call) and calls for pilot study (2 calls)
- Negotiations with applicants about feasible solutions for controversial proposals
- Assessment of submitted proposals.

**Table 3. Overview of the GOLW initiative, its implementation by the SIAT and its implementation in three different municipalities.**



### Gap-closing processes by the applicants/ organisers involving 2-10 individuals

- Anchoring the GOLW initiative inside the municipal organisational structure and install inter-administrational work
- Decision on the orientation of an application to the SIAT, competition or pilot study
- Formulation of an application to the SIAT
- Revision of an application in accordance with the SIAT demands
- Holding an architectural competition, pilot study or both.

Through their competence and perspicacity, the key players disarmed potential conflicts by negotiating solutions or producing necessary documentation. Unforeseen events or unexpected actors were potential obstructions to being part of the GOLW initiative. A concrete example of when the gate keeping failed is the municipality of Halmstad. Here, the intervention of a private real estate company managed to attract local politicians' interest in investing funding in an existing slightly derelict old people's home. In that sense, similar to the competition itself, the preparations for an architectural competition, but not for the pilot study, manifested "a structured relational configuration of objective relations between and among positions and position-takings" (Lipstadt, 2011). This may be viewed as a gap-closing procedure, in which the ultimate aim was to harmonise the municipal organiser's foci of interest with a national investment in preparing for a demographically older society (European Commission, 2008, Kreiner, 2011).

### **Rationality, opportunism, or a pure whim**

The particular gap-closing procedures displayed by the three cases, or four cases if that of the coordinating SIAT is included, might be biased by the Swedish context and its predilection for consultation processes in order to achieve a harmonious consensus. However, the results of the present analysis demonstrated that municipal organisers' main motives for organising an architectural competition in conjunction with a national investment in innovation represented three inclinations.

First, the motives were rational and rooted in an actual concern and problem, like the competition in the municipality of Gävle. There, experience-based practice of elderly care in existing housing raised a need for increased accessibility in the home environment to improve the working environment for care staff.

Second, there was an opportunistic element to organising a competition, with the municipality seizing the opportunity for national support for solving a recurrent local problem. This was evident in the municipality of Linköping, where the recurring NIMBY attitude to new residential care homes was the pivot reason for organising a competition.

Third, there was what can be described as a whim of a small municipality, e.g. the case of the municipality of Burlöv. This whim channelled the best intentions into an ambitious project that to some extent touched a level of innovative thinking for a rural municipality crushed between two expanding municipalities:

- Discovery and reception of the national initiative among local inhabitants housing preferences
- Investigation of feasible and possible design solutions according to local housing preferences;
- Comprehensive physical study of potential land for expansion of new housing areas.

### **Innovation or direct gains**

The study examined the dynamics in three municipal processes that aimed at closing gaps so that unity behind an application for funding a pilot study or an architectural competition could be achieved. The three cases suggest that such applications need between 5-8 months of deliberations inside the municipal organisation. Another 16 months are required to fulfil the stipulated requirements and hold an invited architectural competition. In addition, the results suggest that the consultation procedure which is characteristic of Swedish civil administration, is essential, since its intent is to harmonise differing interests and perspectives in order to attain a level of consensus.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the timeline for an invited architectural competition with a municipal organiser is about 21 months. The cases suggest that this length of time depends on some previous knowledge of architectural competitions, either as actual cases like in Gävle and Linköping, or as professional knowledge like in the municipality of Burlöv. Pilot studies on housing preferences, which could have a potential for generating new knowledge and innovation, might be of value for a subsequent architectural competition. However, the cases of Gävle and Burlöv suggested that these studies may run in a parallel track to the architectural competition.



The designated use of the architectural competition was as an instrument for creating innovation in housing for older people. None of the three municipalities picked up on that aspect, but went for a more utilitarian approach of how the government funding could be merged with local interests. In that sense, none of the municipalities harboured an ideological motivation for organising either an architectural competition or a pilot study on housing preferences among older people. In conclusion, public organisers' motives for exploring development of appropriate housing for senior citizens must be considered as mitigated and highly dependent on local access to sites for development. Another motive is the expected outcome of the competition in terms of direct use for the municipality and the possible added value that the municipality might enjoy on a national level.

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# Part 5

## Abstract

This study theorises intentionality in iconic architecture and examines the competition system as a toolbox for iconification.

Iconicity is regarded here as a status that may be bestowed upon a building through an intentional multilateral process of iconification. Schematically, such a process is advanced by clients' iconic intentions, architects' conspicuous designs, builders' negotiation of material constraints and users' symbolic actions soliciting public recognition for the icon to be. I argue that iconicity is not binary, but gradational and performative, continuously gaining and losing in strength as the members of the public are mobilised to take part in iconification or disengage from it.

This conceptualisation is induced through a case study of how iconic ambitions were expressed and enacted in the context of an architectural competition that led to the construction of Uppsala Concert and Congress Hall (UKK) in Uppsala, Sweden. In order to track variability of iconicity over time and identify the multiplicity of participating actors, the case study also covers the competition's pre-history and after-play all the way to the actual usage of the building and the first evaluations of its success. The case study data are considered in relation to conceptualisations of iconicity by authors like Jencks and Lipstadt, along with works by Bourdieu and Durkheim, leading to a rejection of Lipstadt's suggestion that icons "just happen".

Conclusions from the study are that iconicity in architecture is typically intentional and that its fundamentals are likely to be laid out in the course of competition. This insight affords a perspective on the competition as a toolbox for iconification and allows identification of particular features in the structure of the competition, as well as in its *modus operandi* that can be manipulated at will to enable or disable iconic status.

**Key words:** Iconic architecture, iconicity, iconification, architectural competition, performativity

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# Iconic on Purpose

## – A draft for performative iconification theory

JUSTAS PIPINIS

### **A brief roadmap for this essay**

This study was triggered by Lipstadt's (2007:13) argument that iconic works just "happen", as opposed to canons that are "made". Building her argument on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital, Lipstadt suggests that "disdain for iconic buildings is inculcated in architectural education along with ... a respect for canonic buildings" and maintains that the architect profession abhors the "obviousness [which is] the least common denominator of iconicity in architecture" (2007:16). Now, if that were true, where would iconic buildings come from? Can architects be blind to the "obviousness" of their designs? The aim of the present study is not to prove Lipstadt wrong, since her interest was perhaps more in the professional aesthetic disposition than in the genesis of iconic architecture. However, the lack of intentionality she alleges is used here as a springboard for an analysis of how architectural icons come into being through architectural competitions.

I claim that there are unambiguous instances of intentional iconification and that the competition may provide a handy toolbox to that end. In fact it is even being promoted as such by the Swedish Association of Architects. Moreover, it appears that issues of architectural design and especially assessments of its visual aesthetic tend to undeservingly eclipse a number of other, perhaps less tangible, but nonetheless important aspects of icon creation. The present analysis is structured as an iconification theory, inductively built through a loosely applied grounded theory on a case study of Uppsala Concert and Congress Hall (Uppsala Konsert & Kongress, UKK) and through close reading of texts on architectural quality, architectural competition and iconic architecture.

## Outlining iconicity and its driving forces

So what is iconic architecture? The type of buildings I had in mind when launching this study were “the obvious ones” – Sydney Opera House, the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Harpa in Reykjavik, Selfridges in Birmingham. Prior to my academic interest in them, I referred to this kind of architecture as cool buildings, landmark buildings or signature buildings, each term highlighting a common characteristic, but also oversimplifying the phenomenon as such. Lipstadt (2007), like Jencks (2005), uses the term “iconic building”. In Ancient Greek, *eikōn* means “likeness, image, portrait”. While icon in semiotics still describes “a sign that carries resemblance to its referent”, its range of colloquial<sup>3</sup> meanings is much wider – a legend, a role model, a superstar, the best example of something, an important and enduring symbol, an object of great attention and devotion, a religious painting, a pictogram in computer interface. I list these “iconic” connotations here since they offer a more nuanced image of the architecture dealt with in the present analysis.

Although often associated with the contemporary, iconic architecture is not a new phenomenon. Jencks (2005) traces its origins to the old custom of highlighting power and importance within and among societies through impressive constructions – be it local churches and town halls, royal palaces or ancient wonders of the world. Contemporary icons like The Eiffel Tower or The Gherkin in London merely continue that tradition. Clearly, to stand out and impress the world, one needs to break from the “normal”. The Bourdieusque aesthetic disposition – investment in ability to discern and appreciate the finer points of the tradition – could certainly stand in the way for such breaks, but does not have to. On the contrary, in order to break the norm with style and sensibility, one needs to know it really well. So, *pace* Lipstadt, at least for some architects their aesthetic disposition seems to serve not as conservative shackles, but rather as a springboard for innovation.

Jencks (2005) attributes contemporary interest in iconic architecture to two driving forces – the Bilbao effect<sup>3</sup>-inspired economic interest and the crisis of the monument. According to him, the void left by weakened ideological movements

1 Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com> Accessed December 4, 2013.

2 <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/icon>; <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=icon>; <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/icon> Accessed December 4, 2013.

3 The story of the iconic Guggenheim Museum changing the economy of Spanish Bilbao is narrated and analysed in many sources, among them Jencks (2005) and Plaza (2006, 2007).

that previously caused people to build monuments to deities, great ideas or community leaders is now being filled with iconic buildings as monuments for those who have power today, the economic power. This is typically corporations and institutions willing to manifest their authority and importance through fancy headquarters or public facilities reflecting their identity, values and image, as well as their budget. Iconic architecture is thus an expression not only of the architect's experience, taste and creativity, but also of the client's values, visions and financial abilities.

### Why icons?

When buying into Jencks' argument, it seems appropriate to stop for a second and consider whether iconic architecture deserves any further academic attention. There is no evidence that the Bilbao effect could be easily replicated. Plaza (2007) notes that "[d]espite attempts to emulate the Bilbao effect elsewhere in the world, very few new museums or galleries outside capital cities have succeeded in getting so many visitors" (Plaza, 2007:464) and even warns against such attempts: "although the final outcome in the case of Bilbao is positive, the GMB should not be employed as the means to legitimize the instrumentalization of signature architecture" (Plaza, 2007:464). Moreover, there does not seem to be any good reason to add academic lustre to the monumental self-commemoration of those with economic power. Finally, if centuries of trial and error went into rendition of architectural canons, what good could come from a study of occasional blatant breaks from these?

Nevertheless, buildings referred to as iconic are not met by silence and indifference (they would not qualify as iconic if they were), so on some level they do matter. It is not within the scope of this paper to explore in depth where, how and why. Yet, to suggest one possible line of reasoning, the religious connotations of the icon can be considered against the background of Durkheim's (1915) conception of religion as societal self-worship. Perhaps iconic architecture could be analysed in the same light. Indeed, is it high finance we think of in the first place when encountering new architectural icons, or is it society's creative ability, technological advancements and visionary projections of the future? Don't we also occasionally indulge in the thought of ourselves as members of the profession, city, nation or – at least – species that could accomplish that? And whether we find that particular projection appealing or appalling, we know it as being man-made, reminding at least some of us of our future as being negotiable. From such a perspective, the architectural icon could be seen not only

as a geographical, but also as a temporal and ideological landmark showing the way into the future, embodying new ideals and new visions of the possible. It is from this perspective that iconicity is deserving of academic attention – in how our ideas of the future, and consequently also particular segments of our actual material future, are articulated through iconic architecture.

## Introduction of the case study

In order to trace the making of an icon, an *instrumental case study* (Johansson, 2000:67-8) was conducted. The choice of the case was strategic, trying to identify a “typical” (ibid.) or “paradigmatic” (Flyvbjerg, 2006:230) case that could be reasonably representative of iconification in a competition setting. As the intention was primarily to identify instances in a fairly standardised competition procedure where decisions that can affect the iconicity of the outcome are made, there was no necessity to conduct a multi-case study. While variations between competitions following the same standard cannot be ruled out – and could possibly render visible additional irregular decision situations – there is no reason to believe that a multi-case study would capture the full range of all possible variations either. Based on the results, I feel confident that the case study conducted here, while not necessarily exhaustive, provides sufficient coverage of the most common instances of iconification-related decision making in the current competition system.

In order to identify a proper case, I first reviewed Swedish architectural competitions held in accordance with Swedish Association of Architects’ (SAA) standards, looking for newly constructed culture buildings over the last 10 years<sup>4</sup>. The aim was to find a newly built icon candidate and explore how it came about, paying special attention to any signs of iconic intentions and factors that may have promoted or inhibited an iconic outcome. I assumed that culture buildings would be particularly promising, since it should lie in their nature (or, possibly, in the ripples from Bilbao) to signal creativity in order to attract culturally interested visitors. The time limit was based on the assumption that information on recent competitions would be richer and easier accessible.

Out of four projects that fitted the selection criteria (six competitions for new culture buildings were held since 2000 in accordance with SAA standards, but two of the winning proposals were never erected), Uppsala Concert and Congress Hall (Uppsala Konsert & Kongress, UKK) drew my attention with its

4 Swedish Association of Architects homepage <http://www.arkitekt.se>

distinct façade and multiple awards, suggesting iconic potential. Closer scrutiny indicated the organisers' iconic ambitions and a high-profile foreign architect firm winning the competition provided further assurance that there were good grounds for examining the UKK case for instances of iconification.

Uppsala is the fourth largest Swedish city, with a population of 200 000 located some 70 km north of the capital, Stockholm. A total of 40 000 students study in the universities and colleges located in the city, among them Uppsala University, the oldest university in Scandinavia. The city has a rich cultural life, not least numerous choirs, but had been lacking a suitable concert venue.

In February 2002, the City of Uppsala announced a competition to "design a building of high architectural quality offering the best thinkable facilities for concerts and other musical events as well as for congresses and conferences" (*Tävlingsprogrammet*, 2002:3, author's translation from Swedish), also described as "a character building for the new Uppsala" (*ibid.*). The task was complicated by the necessity to also take a stance on preservation (with or without incorporation into the new building) or demolition of some existing buildings of significant cultural historical value, but in poor condition at that time. The competition programme, laid out in 20 pages, did not offer an exhaustive list of criteria, but rather open-ended descriptions of city visions and issues of particular concern. While submissions in Swedish and English were welcomed, competition materials were only released in Swedish.

The jury consisted of seven politicians reflecting the power balance in Uppsala City Council, two senior city officials and two architects delegated by SAA. The prize pot amounted to SEK 1 million (around €120 000) and 135 submissions were received. The jury was unable to reach a unanimous vote and eventually selected a proposal by Henning Larsen Tegnstue A/S (Denmark) as a winner, with two politicians in a separate assessment endorsing a runner-up.

The project itself was controversial, its origins dating as far back as 1910, with several failed realisation attempts along the way. Various controversies continued to surround the project in the City Council, public debates and the courts of law before, during and even after the competition in 2002. Many of these controversies are discussed in depth in Bloxham Zettersten (2007). However, social democrats and their allies remained in power in the City Council from the announcement of the competition until the launch of the building project, which may have served as a stabilising factor facilitating realisation of Henning Larsen's winning design with some budget and functionality-driven amendments.

UKK was eventually opened to the public in 2007. Initially critical public opinion has changed over time since then, with approval ratings picking up from 37% to 57% during 2006-2009 (Karlsson & Zere, 2011). The building has received several architectural awards and nominations, e.g. nomination for Sweden's most prestigious architectural prize Kasper Salinpriset 2007, the Gold Medal at Bienal Miami+Beach in 2007 and the Stora Samhällsbygggarpriset in 2008, to mention a few.

In the following sections of this paper selected stages of the project are described, considering how choices made by participating actors may have had explicit or implicit influence on the iconicity of the outcome. Some choices that were not made – as possibly missed opportunities – are also considered, further exploring the room of possibilities for intentional creation of an iconic building. Methodically, the approach may be regarded as loosely applied grounded theory (Flick, 2009), where theory is induced from the case data without any *a priori* codes imposed upon it.

### **Launching iconification: The client's iconic aspirations**

The City of Uppsala did not mention iconicity even once in its competition programme (Tävlingsprogrammet, 2002), but visionary descriptions of “a character building for the future-oriented Uppsala” (ibid.:3), “a character building of significant importance” (ibid.:16) and “a building powerful enough to bridge the historical borders in the city fabric” (ibid.:3) along with a readiness to make space for it through demolition of valuable historical buildings indicated quite clearly that something of iconic proportions was being envisioned.

It is interesting to consider why if it wanted an icon, Uppsala City Council did not spell this out. A direct request for an iconic building might more easily catch an eye of an architect interested in drawing one, and discourage those inhibited by aesthetic disposition. Perhaps iconic terminology is not sufficiently established, or even carries controversial connotations of “celebrity architecture”, “pop culture” or too drastic interventions in the urban space, making it more difficult to agree upon by the political decision-making body. Further research into the terminology and negotiations of meanings employed in the chain of translations<sup>5</sup> regarding client intention → competition programme → architectural drawing → jury assessment might help facilitate more efficient client-architect communication and (iconic) expectation management.

<sup>5</sup> The term is borrowed from Actor-Network Theory (ANT, see Latour, 2005).

Since the competition programme did not provide an exhaustive list of criteria, but rather communicated through visions and points of concern, I found it useful to attempt a textual analysis of these descriptions, trying to assess the client's priorities and iconicity's place in their hierarchy. As a tool for this analysis, I used categories of quality criteria from Rönn (2010). Through attribution of each programme statement resembling a criterion to one of these categories and counting them, the following picture appeared:

**Table 1: Categorisation of criterion-like statements in the competition programme for UKK**

Ensemble (entirety/wholeness) and concept [EC]:	9	(3 iconicity related)
Context and environment [CE]:	5	
Effectiveness and functionality [EF]:	10	
Entrance solution [ES]:	7	
Economy and technical solutions [ET]:	1	
Development potential [DP]:	0	

Iconic aspirations were thus prompted in three out of 32 criterion-like statements of the competition programme, all of them in a concept category. Unsurprisingly, functionality and concept were among the most elaborated categories while, more surprisingly, economic and developmental aspects were hardly touched upon at all. In this context it is interesting to reiterate that the winning design eventually had to be reworked to fit the budgetary limits, which may have affected the iconicity of the outcome. While Bloxham Zettersten (2007:24) notes that “changes in the design ... are made for economic reasons, but ... in continuous close collaboration with [Henning Larsen Architects] on the basis of the ... program concept in combination with the architects’ vision”, better communication of budgetary limits in the programme might possibly have attracted iconic submissions that would have required less compromise in their realisation. The extent to which there may have been a political interest in being vague on budgetary issues in the early stages of the project lay outside of the scope of this study.

The client decided to adopt the SAA competition standard and SAA initially recommended a two-step open competition format, suggesting that the fate of historical buildings be resolved in the first step, which would have allowed the jury to focus solely on the new building in the second step (Offer, 2001). In the SAA view, open competition was bound to attract wide media coverage, while

the nature of the task itself posed virtually no risk of the competition being overlooked by established architects. SAA expected most submissions to be from Sweden and other Nordic countries, in total amounting to at least 100-150. If non-Nordic architects were to be attracted, SAA recommended using English along with Swedish as official languages.

The City of Uppsala, after further discussions, settled for an open one-step competition accepting submissions in Swedish and English, yet providing only Swedish competition materials. The acceptance of established standards, the choice of an open competition and the openness to submissions in English indicates that the City was interested in publicity and attention from a wider circle of established architects, which is consistent with its iconic aspirations. However, it is odd that competition materials were not provided in English when trying to attract non-Nordic architects.

The response was within the prediction made by SAA: 134 submissions (plus one that missed the deadline and was rejected), of which 80 (59%) were Swedish, 26 (19%) other Nordic and 29 (22%) from eight other countries, including one non-European country, Argentina. The effect of the language barrier is impossible to assess without further research, but it is worth mentioning that some of the participating non-Nordic architectural firms had Swedish-sounding names among listed representatives.

The composition of the jury may be interpreted as another significant message from the client. The UKK jury consisted of 11 jurors and was chaired by the head of the city government. Six jurors (plus the chair) represented all major political parties in the City Council. Two senior city officials, architects by profession, were also on board. Finally, in accordance with the standard, SAA delegated two independent architects – one Swedish, with previous experience of concert hall design, and one foreign, from a highly reputed firm with several iconic projects in its portfolio. A full political rainbow headed by the City's most powerful politicians, accompanied by executives in charge, may be seen as signifying the seriousness of the client's intentions. Four architects covering local, national and international perspectives and with specific experience in both concert halls and quality issues in architecture signified an ability to evaluate incoming submissions on a high professional level. The composition of the jury thus added to the competition prestige and to the probability of the winning design actually being realised.

While the main prize – and the honour – was the assignment itself, the prize pot also sent a message about the status of the competition. The City of Uppsala



chose to follow the SAA recommendation when announcing a prize pot of SEK 1 000 000 (some €120 000), where the first prize would not be below SEK 300 000 and the smallest award would not be below SEK 50 000.

To sum up, through the choice of standard, form, language, criteria, jury and prize pot, competition communication was consistent with a desire to erect an iconic building. More explicit iconic aspirations among the criteria and the availability of a competition programme in English might have strengthened that message further. The composition of the jury from an iconification perspective was impeccable.

### **Identifying iconic potential: The jury's multilayered role**

Significant buildings are expected to last centuries rather than decades. Ideologies, power relations, fashions, tastes and norms will change many times, changing the conditions for something to be called iconic. Jencks (2005) claims that in order to remain iconic over time, a building needs an "enigmatic signifier" – some connotative rather than denotative design quality that enables it to be re-interpreted as time goes by, maintaining its relevance even when the contexts and attributed meanings are changing.

Let's keep this notion in mind when considering how the jury applied the rather open-ended criteria and contributed to the iconicity of the outcome. For that purpose, the same type of textual analysis as used earlier for analysis of the criteria themselves was also applied to the jury statement (Juryutlåtande, 2002), but in this case also keeping track of how jury comments were related to the criterion-like statements in the competition programme and noting which new criteria were introduced by the jury itself. This approach did not reveal the dynamics or causality in the jury's work, but considering the simplicity of the method, it produced fairly interesting results that in a larger study could help to formulate a relevant hypothesis and questions for follow-up interviews. For the purposes of this study, more help was provided by the "whats" that this method highlights than by "whys" which it does not.

A summary of the analysis is provided in Table 2, the first column in which lists the competition programme as a reference point followed by the best submissions selected by the jury (1-4 places and unranked honourable mentions marked "H"). The title row indicates the quality evaluation categories taken from Rönn (2010), divided into positive and negative appraisals relative to the respective category. The J-column is for the criteria added by the jury on its own.

The SUM columns sum up the total number of positive or negative appraisals. The \*-column specifies the number of iconicity-related comments within the SUM. The Tot-column subtracts the sum of negative comments from the sum of the positive comments.

**Table 2: Interpretive categorisation of the jury’s appraisal of selected proposals for UKK, based on quality evaluation categories from Rönn (2010)**

	Positive comments									Negative comments									Tot
	EC	CE	EF	ES	ET	DP	J	SUM	*	EC	CE	EF	ES	ET	DP	J	SUM	*	
Competition programme	9	4	10	7	1	0													
Design proposals																			
1 Uppsala Kristallen	10	6	8	3			1	8	36	6			-1				-1	35	
2 MONO	4	4	3					1	12	3	-1		-3			-1	-5	7	
3 Röda Mattan	4	5	3	2					14	2	-1						-1	13	
4 Ytor av ljus	3	1		1			2		7	1	-1	-1	-1	-1		-1	-5	2	
H i flöde			3	1	1			1	6			-1	-1	-2			-4	2	
H MAY	2	1	2				2		7			-1	-1	-2			-4	-1	
H Basfol & flöjt	3	1	2	2				3	11		-1	-1					-2	-1	
H Rymd	1	2	1	1				1	6		-2	-2				-1	-5	1	
H NUAGES	3				1			3	7				-1			-1	-2	5	
H 23005	1	3	1						5				-1				-1	4	
H NYMÅNE	1								1				-1				-1	0	
H HEARTBEAT		1		1			1		3			-1	-1	-1			-3	0	
Total	32	27	21	12	0	1	22			12	-6	-7	-11	-6	0	-1	-3	-2	

The jury statement is the jury’s primary tool to justify its verdict in the eyes of interested parties, including the public, so it is not surprising that most comments were made about the winning submission and the runner-ups. Considering the jury’s inability to reach a unanimous decision, it also makes sense that the first runner-up received relatively many negative comments, as supporters of the winner may have had to strongly justify why the runner-up was only the second best proposal.

Curiously, the only column with values in exactly the same order as the final ranking of the best submissions was the iconicity column (Table 2). Since the categorisation method used here is unavoidably subjective and superficial, no

definite conclusions can be drawn based on its outcome. However, it helps to identify possible tendencies that may be used for the formulation of a hypothesis to be verified by other methods. In this particular case, the outcome was consistent with the suggestion that the jury was looking for an iconic design. The overall largest number of positive comments in the concept category and negative comments in the functionality column suggests that the jury relied on the appeal of the concepts for selection of the most interesting solutions, while using functional shortcomings to narrow down the list. Since iconicity is a conceptual matter, it makes sense that iconic designs drew the attention of the jury, but were then assessed on their functional merits.

Had the jury been averse to iconic architecture, iconic criteria would most likely have appeared in the negative half of the table, as design being “too obvious”, too bold or creating too dramatic contrast to the surrounding environment etc. In fact, two negative iconicity points were the opposite, with the submissions criticised for insufficient iconicity. “May” was described as “too quiet and powerless”, while “Röda mattan” “might be perceived as too dated”. Positive iconicity points were awarded to comments like “monumental”, “simple cubistic sculptural form”, “unique character claiming its place along with other landmarks” etc.

Notably, some iconicity-related comments ended up in the J-column, indicating that the jury was promoting iconicity without this having explicit support in the competition programme. It was also only the jury that highlighted and evaluated the building’s potential as an attraction for tourists and other visitors, while the competition programme dealt exclusively with the services to the City’s inhabitants. It was only the jury that discussed “news value and artistic quality” or approvingly referred to Centre Pompidou or fashion design as possible sources of inspiration for certain submissions. The jury also paid attention to the light, views and usage of materials that were not mentioned in the competition programme.

Without access to the actual discussions that took place among the jurors, it is impossible to know which juror contributed what to the discussion, criteria and evaluation. Previous competition research indicates that the jury often chooses to re-interpret the criteria based on the submissions received. Textual analysis confirmed that this was the case also for the UKK competition. It can be argued that the presence of the client’s top decision makers in the jury must be an important factor to allow such a *modus operandi*. It can also be expected that independent jury members would come with relevant additional experiences and

perspectives not covered by the programme. Scruton (2007:126) notes that “most users of a building are not clients of the architect; they are passers-by, the residents, the neighbours: those whose horizon is invaded and whose sense of home is affected by this new intrusion”. Public sector projects offer a direct objection to Scruton – all the users of the buildings mentioned by him are the members of the public, which in this case is also the client, represented by its elected politicians. The wide political spectrum represented in the jury may thus combine aesthetic disposition and the lack of it, facilitating selection of design whose expression best resonates with the widest circle of the public.

However, it is interesting to note that political jurors voted on the actual project in the City Council along their respective party line. Thus some of the jurors who voted in favour of the winning project in the competition voted against it being realised in the City Council. This suggests that contrary to popular expectation, a jury representing a wide political spectrum is not necessarily a guarantee for realisation of controversial projects in the case of a change of power, its actual role boiling down to mediation of tastes.

The competition system thus provides a special mechanism to close the gap between a Bourdieusque taste for freedom and a taste for necessity<sup>6</sup> and potentially strengthens the iconicity of its outcome – through the jury. However, this mechanism needs to be appropriately assembled and fine-tuned for the task.

### **Shaping iconic forms: Negotiation of the constraints**

Four months after the jury's decision, in October 2002, the City Council decided to start planning for construction and incorporated a subsidiary for that purpose. An intense public debate followed the decision – representatives of local academia and business endorsed the project, while a number of other stakeholders fiercely opposed it. Advantages of the world-class venue for music and conventions were weighed against the loss of historical buildings in the area, other priorities in public spending, the questionable economic feasibility of the project, insufficient involvement of the citizens in decision making and also the extravagance of the building design itself. The project was at the centre of public attention, engaging and stirring feelings. It was not an ordinary building from the very outset.

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6 Conceptualised by Bourdieu (2010 [1984]), *taste for necessity* refers to the tendency of unprivileged classes to perceive their lack of options as their own free choice, while *taste for freedom* refers to holders of an *aesthetic disposition*, the refined taste for less obvious finer points developed by the privileged classes just because they have the means and freedom to do so.



Figure 1. The Uppsala Crystal was selected as the winning proposal by the jury. Illustration by Henning Larsen Architects

Eventually, with 49 votes to 32, the City Council approved the construction in spring 2004. According to Bengtsson (2012), the decision was contested in court only two weeks later, but unsuccessfully. The same source indicates that the project was revised in order to secure the City Council's approval, for example, the number of seats was decreased from 1350 to 1150 and less expensive aluminium surface coating was substituted for titanium.

The cornerstone was laid in April 2005 and the building was opened in September 2007. According to the Final Report (Slutrapport, 2008), the construction cost reached SEK 580 million. The wording in the report is somewhat confusing, as it both admits budget overruns due to the changes in the project and in market prices, and claims budget cuts in construction and future exploitation (e.g. due to changed air conditioning system) as well as improved future revenue potential (e.g. from additional conference facilities). The report maintains that

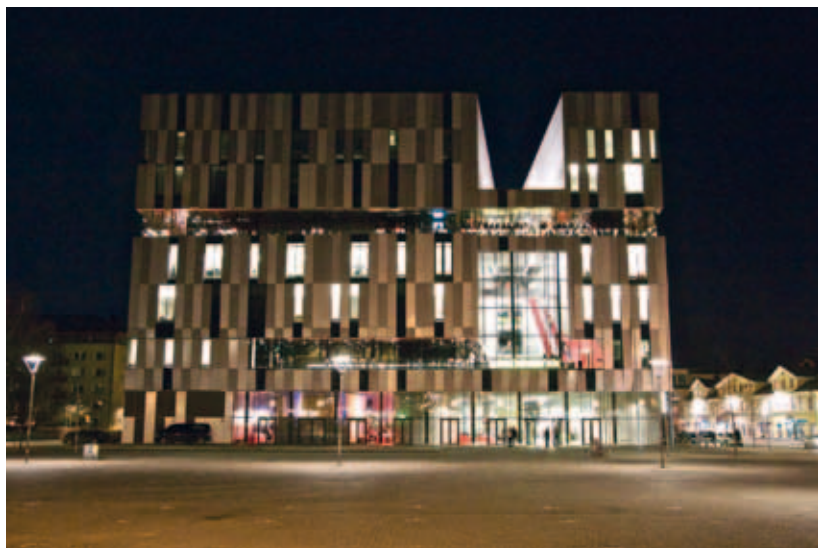


Figure 2. Uppsala Concert & Congress Hall today, from the same side as fig 1. Photo: Justas Pipinis.

the overall budget was met and gives no indication that iconic ambitions might have been sacrificed in the course of the project. On the contrary, “construction of a monumental building with special designs” (ibid.:5) is offered as an explanation for the “price-wise negative effect on the project” (ibid.:5) which appears to stand in an odd contradiction to the conclusion that the budget was met.

The figures 1 and 2 show the design that won the competition and the building that was actually erected, so readers can make their own assessment of iconicity in each case and of the effect of the construction phase on the iconification process.

### **Realising iconic potential: Users consecrate the icon**

Is it ever possible for a building to be known by every living human being? Hardly. And even buildings “known by everybody” are likely to be regarded differently by different people. A provincial town hall may appear iconic to citizens who never leave the town, but quite ordinary in the eyes of those who have seen a dozen town halls. Thus iconicity is inescapably constrained – or even defined – by the actual circle of individuals who are aware of the building and acknowledge it as iconic.

Interestingly, on my earlier visits to Uppsala, I completely missed UKK despite it being just a few blocks away from the train station at which I arrived. Nothing in the city prompted me to look for it – not even the tourist postcards or the billboards advertising cultural events. Thus I was quite surprised when some time later (yet before this study), a friend interested in architecture and photography suggested going to Uppsala specifically to see and photograph the UKK.

While working on this essay I visited Uppsala again. This time I was able to catch a glimpse of UKK's façade when walking uphill from the train station (a view that might have been blocked by other construction work at the time of my earlier visit). Later, I could see it from one of the main streets, discreetly peeking out from behind other buildings. It also rises distinctly above the city skyline when viewed from the top of Uppsala Castle hill. Its modern finish contrasts with the style of surrounding historical buildings, but unless seen in its totality, from the angle that makes its distinctive intersections clearly visible, or in particularly favourable sunlight, it is not an obvious eye-magnet. From a less favourable angle and in less flattering light, it can even appear as a grey industrial box misplaced in the centre of the city, which may explain why locals occasionally liken it to a nuclear power plant ("Forsmark 4" according to Bengtsson, 2012). Apart from dominating its immediate vicinity and the distant skyline from one particular viewpoint, its presence in the cityscape is rather low-key. This is not a criticism in any normative way – the Eiffel Tower is not visible from everywhere in Paris either, and I am not suggesting that it should be – I am simply trying to convey my phenomenological considerations of its "obviousness" as an icon.

More surprisingly, at the time of the original research project in 2013, the building was not very visible on the Internet either – none of the UKK, Uppsala City, Uppsala Tourist Board or Henning Larsen Architects websites featured the building upfront. It could be found by purposeful search, but did not jump out in the manner of the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House or Globe Arena on their respective sites. However, when preparing this version of the paper in 2015 and revisiting these sites, I found at least the UKK website featuring the building in all of its iconic glory as part of the welcoming loop of images.

Back in 2013, I called up Magnus Bäckström, the Director of UKK, to find out about his role in the iconification of the building. He assured me that the building itself was the main reason why he accepted the position of Director and moved to Uppsala when the City Council decided to initiate planning for





Figure 3-4. UKK from the street side. A glimpse of UKK from one of the major streets. Photo: Justas Pipinis.

construction of the winning proposal. While not having been engaged in the competition itself, Bäckström was instrumental in supervision of construction and was in charge of filling the building with activities. In our conversation he was very surprised that the building could be perceived as low-key. In his view, UKK was already a well-established venue not only locally and nationally, but also internationally. In his opinion the building was always present in UKK communication and marketing, and also reflected in its logotype.

The UKK logo, as it turned out, was indeed derived from the geometry of the building, but – in my view – to a point of non-resemblance. Its presentation tracing the metamorphosis involved was present on the design company's website in 2013, but no longer in 2015. According to the Director, such a design concept was a conscious choice, as too obvious replication of the building's silhouette in the logo would not have reflected the high creativity levels of UKK activities. In its printed communication UKK followed the same principle – it was primarily in its “tonality and color scheme” that traces of UKK's “unique and bold architecture”



were to be recognised. This reasoning is a striking example of aesthetic disposition where fine-tuned codes for the initiated are valued more than wide public accessibility. Yet it was unexpected to encounter it not on the architectural side, but on the users' side.

I can sympathise with the Director's view that activities in the building should not be over-shadowed by the building itself. However, from an iconification point of view, the possibility of such a trade-off seems very far-fetched. If its architectural fame were to bring more visitors to the building, this would hardly hurt its musical events and congresses; on the contrary – there should be plenty of synergy between the various sources of relevance for the building and its activities. Subduing the building's role in communication or wrapping it in codes could arguably stimulate iconification in smaller cultivated circles, but most likely at the cost of iconification among a wider public.

My main argument here is that iconification does not stop with the design – what users do with the building is also part of iconification. If iconicity is to be measured by the number of people recognising a building as an icon, the wider its reach and the more symbolism it can be charged with, the more iconic it will be.

### **Celebration of the icon: What's the public view?**

So how iconic is the Concert & Congress Hall in Uppsala? The final answer lies with each and every beholder – iconification is never final, but is constantly being performed and reassessed. Any time this question is raised, a dedicated survey would have to be designed to try and measure it. Below I merely consider the question against the background of the initial discussion of iconicity and some evaluations found in secondary sources.

The UKK silhouette does have iconic quality in a pictogram sense – its geometric shape could be reduced to a pictogram maintaining recognition, even if it might not be as distinct as Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin or Herzog & de Meuron's Bird's Nest in Beijing.

The name under which this design was submitted to the competition – “The Uppsala Crystal” – suggests one meaning for its form – “a reference to the non-organic nature of a crystal” in a building that in the twilight “turns itself into a crystal or a prism with multiple intersections” (Bengtsson, 2012:20). However, its design does not restrict the imagination to a gem – it can just as well be seen to resemble the earlier mentioned power plant. I associated its asymmetrically turned volumes with the Rubik Cube, while vertically mirrored carve-outs anchor it in



Figure 5. UKK from the square side. Photo: Justas Pipinis.

the ground as much as in the sky – earthly congresses and heavenly music, perhaps? Although not very extravagant, in my view its architectural design leaves enough room for imagination to pass the enigmatic signifier test.

UKK also conveys a number of meanings – some of them relate to the silhouette of the building, others originate from activities taking place inside, yet others from the interaction with its environment or the public debate surrounding its construction. Associations with the concerts and congresses are obvious for musicians, concertgoers, congress organisers and others who are aware of its name and the type of activities to which the building is dedicated. However, the building is also symbolic of rejuvenation and invigoration in eastern parts of Uppsala. The HUI Research Report (Karlsson & Zere, 2011) even titles one chapter “UKK – a symbol for the new Uppsala”, claiming that “several interlocutors in deep interviews have said that UKK has become a kind of symbol for the emerging new dynamic Uppsala” (ibid.:55). The report also states that public opinion has changed in favour of UKK over time – citizens’ approval rating increased from 37% in 2006 to 57% in 2009. Bengtsson (2012:25) suggests that UKK “has the same dignity as other historical landmarks” such as Uppsala Castle, Uppsala Cathedral and Carolina Rediviva (University Library from

1819). “UKK launched this construction boom and earlier opposition to this new style and new identity of the place is now part of the history” (ibid.). It is thus reasonable to conclude that the building has been wrapped in the multi-layered symbolism characteristic of an icon.

Assessment of UKK’s iconic strength is more complicated. It is reasonable to assume that citizens of Uppsala are well aware of the building due to its fairly central location and the century-long public debate that eventually produced it. The approval ratings quoted above indicate growing positive attitudes, which might correlate with recognition as a new city landmark and also an icon – but does not necessarily translate directly into that. Hotel occupancy rates in Uppsala over the seven years following the UKK opening have increased by 30%, which is roughly on the same level as for the whole of Sweden during the period. It is nothing like the 1000% increase in Bilbao after the opening of the Guggenheim, but just as I have visited Uppsala at least once solely for UKK’s architecture, other people may have done so as well. After all, the building has received four architectural awards (including one international) and six nominations (including three international), which should have made at least some architectural connoisseurs worldwide aware of it.

It is also difficult to separate the architecture from its use. The Scottish Parliament, Guggenheim Bilbao and Uppsala Concert & Congress Hall with their contents and contexts give very different sets of reasons to be noticed, visited and discussed. According to the UKK Director, a number of international artists are particularly fond of UKK’s acoustics and occasionally may decide upon the inclusion of Sweden in their tour programmes based on the possibility to perform in UKK. Does this make UKK an acoustic icon in certain circles? That would add a whole new dimension to the understanding of architectural iconicity, since while grounded in architectural design, it is not its visual aspect that is being highlighted as basis for iconification.

To conclude, I am ready to recognise UKK – or “The Uppsala Crystal” – as a local icon in Uppsala for the time being, perhaps even as an acoustic icon if the Director’s claims are accurate. Its iconic strength may fluctuate over time, strengthening as the word reaches out to new local, national and international visitors, or weakening as newer buildings, venues and ideas recast it as yesterday’s news. The City of Uppsala, the jury, the architect and the builder have done their part; further iconification or the reverse is in the hands of users and beholders.

### **Closing remarks: Iconification theory and the architectural competition as its toolbox**

References to architectural icons often come across as conceived in binary terms – either something is an icon, or it is not. Such a decision is normally based on a visual assessment of architectural design in comparison with a recognised architectural canon or some other aesthetic norm. Then, depending on the speaker's disposition towards iconicity, it is used in either an appreciative or a pejorative sense. I believe that considerations of the UKK case allow me to propose an alternative view of architectural iconicity.

According to this iconification theory, iconicity is not reducible to the visible shapes of the building, but is rather a status that can be bestowed upon it. Architectural designs are certainly most significant for such status, but not only in a visual sense – various other aspects of the building, like acoustics in the UKK case, can also constitute or contribute to the basis of iconicity. As a special case, architecture may be iconic even without a single brick being laid – like innovative designs that for various reasons do not get erected, but nevertheless succeed in gaining iconic status, as may be witnessed by this endorsement to Sarkis (2002): “This volume explores an unbuilt yet iconic project by Le Corbusier”.

I also argue that iconicity is performative – it is not something that is done once and for all by the architect making a drawing, or even by the construction company providing a physical body to architectural idea. They both are undoubtedly part of the process, but once they are done, others take over – including the likes of the Director of UKK deciding on how and in what contexts to present the building and how and with what to fill it, including those writing the endorsements like that quoted, including the random passers-by publishing images on Instagram, including Jencks, Lipstadt and many others. Even those opposing or challenging a particular construction in court, or authors like Sklair (2011:191) who view iconic architecture primarily as a product of a “transnational capitalist class” seeking “to construct meanings and effectively represent its power in order to maximize commercial benefits for the capitalist class” can be viewed as participants of iconification, since they in fact familiarise ever wider circles with the buildings they criticise, highlighting them as important.

Iconicity thus refers both to the ability of the architecturally articulated idea to capture attention and unsettle, inspire or provoke – but also to the particular social mobilisation around it. Yet it would be a grave oversimplification to think of it in terms of architects versus audience, since architectural ideas and means

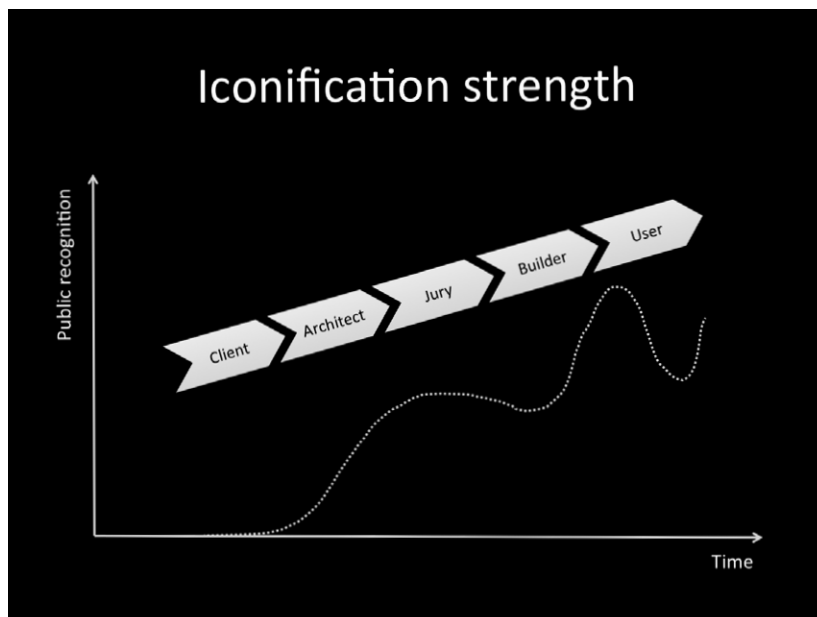


Figure 6. Schematic process of iconification.

for their realisation are never constructed in an isolated world of architecture (as one might assume following Lipstadt and Bourdieu into the latter's "fields"), but rather in our shared social world in response to various ongoing discourses and drawing on ideas and technologies developed in a variety of scientific, artistic and other professional practices. Perhaps it is this rich variety of skills, aspects and agencies necessarily involved in articulation of architecture that makes it relevant not only to professional architectural discourses, but also in a number of other contexts. In that sense, iconic architecture can rather be viewed as a bold architectural statement in a wider public debate. From this perspective, my paraphrasing of Durkheim may be more productive for the understanding of iconic architecture than Lipstadt's invocation of Bourdieu.

Although each iconification process has its own unique trajectory, it is always collective and engages fairly standardised professional roles normally engaged in architectural projects. As a general outline, it can be viewed as consisting of the client launching the process by expressing its iconic aspirations, architects articulating iconicity through their designs, builders negotiating physical and

budgetary constraints to realise those designs, users filling the buildings with symbolic meanings and finally the members of the public engaging with the building in their individual ways, with some of them expressly recognising it as an icon.

These steps are not necessarily serial or consecutive and various actors can participate in each of them. Such a process-based view echoes Cold's (1989:39) description of architectural quality as originating from interaction and thus not static. The more people recognise a building as iconic, the stronger is its iconicity. In this sense it is not binary, but rather gradational from zero – through the UKK – all the way to the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera, Guggenheim Bilbao, Moscow Kremlin, Great Chinese Wall or whatever might be the most iconic of them all for any given audience and point in time. Along the way there is plenty of room for local, regional, national, thematic and other kinds of icons, all continuously iconified by particular people engaging in iconification from time to time and respectively strengthening or weakening the building's iconicity.

In many instances participation in iconification may be mobilised intentionally by aspirations, choices and promotional activities by various actors. On the other hand, some actors might be participating unintentionally in the sense that some critics or random admirers might not have a conscious goal to strengthen iconicity, although their unintentional participation could be triggered by intentional mobilisation orchestrated by others. It is especially difficult to think of unintentional iconification in the early stages when the building is being designed and constructed. The client and the architect must be really home blind or represent a uniquely serendipitous case of lacking professionalism if they try hard to build the ordinary and nevertheless happen to produce an icon. If the true ordinary were to be iconified, it would represent a special case that perhaps would have more to do with the symbolic meanings attributed to a building by its users or beholders than with architecture (e.g. the KGB headquarters or the Swedish Million Programme residential building, 1965-1975, come to mind as candidates).

My Durkheim-inspired view of iconic architecture as a bold self-reflective statement does not actually exclude the possibility of unintentional iconification, since the condition for the possibility for iconification lies not vacuum-packed in a particular design, nor in the audience's freedom to randomly iconify just about anything, but rather in correspondence between architectural features and socially relevant statements that the particular building can be

employed to symbolise. That is also where Jenck's "enigmatic signifier" comes to play the critical role, potentially enabling a building's affordance to channel statements that were not pre-conceived in its original design. But even in this reasoning I envision some intentionality being involved, someone actively working to establish the building as symbolic of something, even if that process takes place after construction of a building that may not have had expressly iconic ambitions in its design. As I understand it, Lipstadt points to more "spontaneous" iconification without pre-meditated intention or effort, as a kind of visceral reaction to the architecture itself. My conceptualisation allows for such an unfolding of events, although I would consider it highly hypothetical and rare, if not most unlikely. Yet, if something about an "ordinary" – or "intended as ordinary" – building just happens to meet the condition above, i.e. to function as an efficient circuit to channel certain social sentiment or value, in theory that could happen.

However, I reiterate my argument that most of the actual instances of iconification are likely to be at least partially – if not completely – intentional. It would seem that the Swedish Association of Architects inherently shares my view – in an information brochure about the competition system, their response to "Why competition?" starts with a suggestion that "A builder searching for architectural quality out of the ordinary could draw advantage from an architectural competition" (Sveriges Arkitekter, 2010:4, my translation from Swedish and emphasis). Their answer to "What is an architectural competition?" starts with "Many well-known and significant architectural works in Sweden and the world have resulted from architectural competitions" (Sveriges Arkitekter, 2010:3, cf 2008:5). The competition system in Sweden is thus clearly being promoted as a vehicle for iconification.

Returning to the UKK example, it indeed appears that the City of Uppsala in cooperation with the SAA used the competition system as a well-diversified iconification toolbox where some tools were actively employed, while others were left unused. Among the most salient iconification-supporting choices, one could discern the choice of a standardised open competition format (clear rules, low entry thresholds, wider out-reach), international orientation (admission of submissions in English), well-composed jury (decision power, wide political representation and relevant professional representation including foreign "starchitect") and respectable prize pot. Among arguably under-utilised tools in the case of UKK could be mentioned the unavailability of a competition programme in English and limited budgetary information. A number of other

choices that arguably may have promoted or inhibited iconification fall outside the competition framework – actual budgetary, technological and material choices or the following programming and promotion of the building and its activities.

While neither covering the whole process nor being able to provide any guarantees, architectural competitions geared towards iconification can nevertheless bring together aspirations, ideas, resources, technologies and abilities to push further the boundaries of the possible and advance the public debate about futures we may be willing and able to create. On purpose.

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## Abstract

Despite being one of the most important means to obtain commissions, to explore in design terms and to develop design quality, architectural competitions are an extremely controversial procedure, in both research and in practice. Competitions present contradictory features and competing demands. Nevertheless, they are increasingly used within the European procurement law, to the point that exploring and understanding these debated elements is essential to improve their effectiveness.

In this paper we use a paradox lens to reveal managerial insights from competitions. A paradox is a set of contradictory elements that are logical when considered separately but become illogical when considered together. We identify four paradoxes and propose accompanying managerial implications for architects, clients and their juries with regard to each competition phase: programming, shortlisting and selecting, designing a proposal, making a decision.

We suggest that embracing and managing paradoxes means dealing with the open yet prescriptive character of the brief in the programming phase, ensuring an open competition while shortlisting and selecting the relevant competitors, confirming the brief but also instructing the client on the better options in the design phase, and balancing emotions and rational thinking in the jury decision-making process.

With regard to each paradox we provide examples from international competitions held in The Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and UK.

**Key words:** Paradoxes, competition stages, procurement system, competition tradition, managerial implications, architects, clients, juries.

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# Embracing paradoxes to manage architectural competitions

BEATRICE MANZONI, LEENTJE VOLKER AND HEDLEY SMYTH

## Introduction

Architectural competitions have traditionally been a vehicle for the creation of major civic buildings and public spaces, such as government buildings, performing art centres, educational facilities, public libraries, museums and housing (Rönn, Kazemian, & Andersson, 2010; Strong, 1996). They have multiple goals (Larson, 1994; Spreiregen, 1979): disclose new talent, challenge ‘conventional wisdom’, create a dialogue on design, enlarge support, increase competition, select an architect, educate students, gain insight in competences, contribute to the cultural dimension of the built environment and expand the boundaries of design. Yet, competitions cost money, take more time and their designs rarely get built (Spreiregen, 1979; Sudjic, 2005). Despite this, competitions are common practice and well spread in Europe, as the existence of existing studies from different countries show, such as the ones on the UK (Strong, 1976), Sweden (Rönn, 2013), Italy (Manzoni, 2014), the Netherlands (Geertse, 2014; Volker, 2010), Greece (Kouzelis, 2010) and Germany (Schmiedeknecht, 2013).

From a legal point of view, competitions are incorporated in the European procurement regulations for architectural services. This mandatory element in the procurement of buildings and infrastructure has also resulted in competitions having a new lease of life (Sudjic, 2005) to the point that architectural competitions are currently debated as standard procedure for architectural projects, especially for significant public ones. Even though recent architectural projects procured through design contests have proven to be ‘quality based’ and ‘fully project orientated’ (Pendl, 2012), traditional competitions tend not to be the preferred route in current practice.

However, exploring and understanding the debates around competitions remains essential to improve the effectiveness of this competitive procedure for both the client and the architect. Given this, we aim at understanding the paradoxical features that are embedded within the present European architectural competition system and the managerial challenges they determine for the actors involved. We mainly provide a theoretical contribution, critically examining and interpreting the current competition system in light of paradox studies.

The chapter is organised as follows. First we introduce the current procurement system and competition tradition as the roots of current architectural competitions. Then we review paradox studies as a theoretical framework to interpret and analyse competitions. Finally, we discuss paradoxes of competitions and managerial implications for architects, clients and juries, also bringing into the discussion some exemplary cases of European competitions.

### **Different systems beyond architectural competitions**

Architectural competitions today are the result of diverse roots: the competition tradition versus the tendering for works and services, and the search for a design partner, which flow into the procurement principles (Strong, 1996). Procurement regulations are directed at safeguarding business connections between government and market parties (Arrowsmith, 2005). The principles for awarding contracts are stated in article 2 of Directive 2004/18/EC as “Contracting authorities shall treat economic operators equally and non-discriminatory and shall act in a transparent way” (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2004). Architectural services, engineering services, urban planning and landscape engineering services all belong to category number 12 or Common Procurement Category reference 867 of the Directive 2004/18/EC.

Every European public commissioning client is obliged to hold a European tender procedure for services above certain threshold amounts. Until the end of 2015, these amounts were € 134.000 for services for central government authorities, and € 207.000 for services for other government bodies such as provinces, municipalities and other public institutions. Below these thresholds the principles of the European Treaty (equal treatment, transparency, proportionality, mutual recognition and confidentiality) will have to be taken into consideration.

In regular situations authorities can choose between an open and a restricted procedure. In the open form, professionals from all countries can participate

without restriction. When restricted, competitions can be geographically restricted or by invitation, in the sense that contracting authorities decide to invite and remunerate a limited number of practices or to restrict participation to professionals having a certain expertise or experience which has to be clearly declared. The negotiated procedure and the competitive dialogue are two other options, which are only allowed in specific circumstances (e.g. projects of exceptional complexity). Articles 66 through 74 enable the organisation of a design contest for the award of a service contract, such as the services of an architect. Design contests can be organised as part of a procedure leading to the award of a public service contract, or as contests with prizes and/or payments to participants (article 67). This article has been included in the regulations on request of the architectural community and show interesting similarities with the regulations as set by professional associations (UIA, 2008). Just as with open and restricted tenders, the contracting authority also has to lay down clear and non-discriminatory selection criteria if participation is restricted to a limited number of participants. In any event, the number of candidates invited to participate shall be sufficient to ensure genuine competition (article 72). Contrary to the other procedures, the jury of a competition has to be composed exclusively of people who are independent of participants in the contest (article 73). Where a particular professional qualification is required from participants in a contest, at least a third of the members of the jury shall have that or an equivalent qualification. Article 74 describes the decisions of the jury.

The main differences between a design contest and the open or restricted procedure are the anonymous examination of plans and the autonomy of the jury panel. Organizing a design contest can be considered as conferring a favour upon the field of architecture. Acknowledged experts examine design proposals, but because of anonymity there is no real dialogue with the jury. The open and restricted procedures seem to require less formality than the design contest.

However, neither of these formats – design contests and tenders – is ideal in absolute terms. It is a matter of project characteristics (Volker, 2010) and individual choices (Danielsen, 2010). In general, open procedures and open design contests are recommended for stimulating young architects and giving access to all potentially interested practices. Meanwhile, restricted ones are suggested when there are specific project requirements and interaction between the architect and the client is needed. Design contests, notwithstanding their format, are

preferred for exploring concepts and possibilities, and tender procedures for limiting resources investment.

### **Paradox studies as a theoretical framework**

A paradox is defined as “a thing that combines contradictory features or qualities” (Oxford English Dictionary). In the academic literature, it is a set of contradictory yet interrelated elements, logical in isolation but irrational when juxtaposed (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). In general, architecture faces a broad paradox between long-term sustainability and short-term business performance (Aho, 2013). Architects have to earn money through commissions, while winning awards to build up a particular design reputation (Brown et al., 2010; Manzoni, 2014). They have responsibilities towards the profession, the client, the staff and the own firm; they see their profession as both a vocation and a job and wear the hats of artist and consultant (Gotsi et al., 2010). Furthermore, they are caught between preserving creative freedom and novelty, while controlling and ruling creative processes (DeFillippi, Grabher, & Jones, 2007). Finally, they struggle between the ambition for creative exploration and the need for commercial exploitation (Duffy & Rabeneck, 2013).

Clients – and juries representing them in competitions – also look for design excellence to make a stand in society. At the same time they are interested in keeping the investment they make under control. They search for a design project, which entirely meets their own idea of the project, while also pursuing a design partner able to suggest to them solutions that they did not think about before (Volker, 2012). Having to contend with extremes typically drives actors towards making a choice between two opposites. Because tensions are interrelated and persist over time, however, a choice between extremes does not ensure sustainability in the long term. This reveals a synergic potential, which is also what distinguishes paradox from other apparently similar concepts, such as that of dilemma (see Smith & Lewis (2011) for a detailed comparative review). Resolving a dilemma means weighing pros and cons and choosing the option where pros prevail over cons. Dilemmas can prove to be paradoxical, however, when tensions can be more usefully approached from a both/and perspective rather than an either/or perspective (Quinn, 1988).

We believe this is the case in competition dilemmas (Rönn, 2009). Anonymity versus architect–client communication is evidently an illustration for competing choices. In this situation an either/or approach is possible, but under

anonymity no direct interaction is possible; while if communication is chosen, there is no competition based on anonymous product quality in its traditional meaning. Instead, if we look at this dilemma as a paradox, a balancing act between the two choices could lead to anonymous submissions with briefing sessions that allow for a dialogue, ending up in, for example, competitions based on competitive dialogue. This combination has recently been recognized in diverse countries as an improved competition formula (Kreiner, Jacobsen, & Jensen, 2011).

Approaching tensions as being paradoxical implies accepting and fostering the coexistence of competing extremes (Quinn, 1988). This helps in capturing and explaining the complexity of reality, sustaining long-term performance, enabling learning and creativity, and fostering flexibility and resilience (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Because tensions foster creativity and complex insights, paradoxes can also be something exceptionally positive. They trigger change, acting as brainteasers and challenging common logic and thinking (Handy, 1994).

In the following section we use existing literature to explore the current architectural competitions' system with a paradox lens to reveal the tensions. Then we bring to the fore several managerial challenges that result from the system's controversies, leading to implications for architects and juries in dealing with the different phases of the competition process.

### **Managerial implications based on paradoxes in architectural competitions**

This section presents inherent paradoxes of architectural competitions, as encountered in each competition phase of programming, selecting and shortlisting, designing the proposals, and jury decision-making. Furthermore, we present managerial implications for the actors involved, architects and clients and/or the juries that represent them, as summarised in Table 1.

#### **Programming: prescribing AND allowing for interpretation**

Each competition begins with the definition of the project that entails writing the brief, deciding the process' schedule, goals and requirements, selecting the jury, allocating the budget and prizes and setting up the logistics. Afterwards the client or commissioning body publicises it, and in some cases, alerts or invites qualified architectural firms. The brief ideally includes the purpose of the competition, the nature of the design problem, a site description and the expectations in terms of architectural, urban or landscape expression, a description

**Table 1. Paradoxical characteristics and managerial implications**

Competition phase	Paradoxical characteristics	Managerial implications for the architect	Managerial implications for the client/jury
Program-ming	Writing a brief which is pre-scriptive and open to interpretations	Reading the brief with conflicting demands in mind, listening to the client's wishes but also teaching the client in a sensitive matter.	Enabling the submission of controversial entries by involving experts in setting the rules of the game and coordinating the process carefully.
Selecting and short-listing	Ensuring an open competition among relevant players and preselecting relevant competitors	Deliberately targeting the competition in relation to the current and future portfolio.	Ensuring comparability and diversity among entries in relation to the original aim of the competition.
Designing the proposals	Conforming to brief and instructing the client	Balancing possibilities and constraints within the same proposal, and reconstructing client–architect interaction within the competition team.	Including a dialogue in competitions and/or answering effectively to Q&A sessions.
Jury decision making	Balancing emotions and rationality	Offering a rigorous submission that is also triggering emotions and debate.	Composing a jury that mirrors the composition of the criteria required, including the relevant stakeholders to embrace multiple views on the project.

of the functions and activities required as well as technical, environmental and architectural requirements to be met (UIA, 2008, Art. 9). When inadequate, it is a prominent cause of failed competitions or abandoned projects (Andersson, 2010; Svensson, 2010).



### Paradoxical characteristics

The brief nourishes architectural teamwork and equips the jury with arguments for assessing entries (Andersson, 2010). The brief has to be prescriptive, but also leave space for freedom of interpretation for the competitors to operate. This reveals a paradox between ‘precision’ and ‘latitude’ (Rönn, 2009). On the one hand, “the more clearly the stakeholders can define their positions, the better equipped designers are to understand the motivations that are at work and to present solutions that work” (Malmberg, 2006, p. 4). On the other hand, the freedom of interpretation should be as wide as possible, being competitions exploration-oriented by nature (UIA, 2008). Thus, a competition brief reads as both ‘instruction’ and ‘inspiration’ (Kreiner, 2006) and should be both unambiguous and non-constraining.

An example of such a brief can be found in the instructions for the Deventer City Hall competition in The Netherlands, where the client was asking for a sketch design and a scale model (Volker, 2010). The municipality provided an ‘empty’ scale model for the architects to fit their design proposal in. The competition brief included a global programme of requirements in square meters but also a description of the future activities to be accommodated. Submitters were free to fill in these functions at their own discretion. Furthermore, optional features were given such as preserving the façade of the old theatre. Figure 1 shows two of the final submissions: the first deciding to demolish the façade, the second remaining it.

### Managerial implications

For architectural firms competing for work in competitions, the paradox above implies cultivating a paradoxical vision of the brief, reading it with conflicting



Figure 1: Two of the final submissions for the Deventer City Hall competition (The Netherlands): on the left the winning design of Neutelings Riedijk, on the right another submission from Kraaijvanger Urbis.

demands in mind and avoiding trying to simplify its complexity. It is also important to express that the clients' requirements are heard. Yet, this does not exclude architecture facilitating the client to further learn what they actually want (the question behind the question) by balancing design elements that are traditional and others that are innovative and cutting edge. One of the main reasons to contract an architect should also be to offer solutions that the client did not imagine. This requires sensitive communication techniques in transferring the proposal towards the client.

In the preparation of the competitions, the client needs to design "the rules of the game" and define the level of playing field. This requires involving domain specific experts in advantage (Volker, 2010) since they are able to judge whether particular competitions elements will either attract or discourage particular firms to join. These experts are also able to review the programme of requirements. Especially in competitions, all stakeholders should agree on the programme because it provides the grounds for the winning design and this sets the boundaries of the competition. In the end a jury decision has to deal with contrasting entries in order to select a winner, enabling a combination of adherence and non-adherence to brief requirements in the same proposal, when a contrasting design solution seems preferable (Jones & Livne-Tarandach, 2008).

### **Selecting and shortlisting: ensuring an open competition AND preselecting relevant competitors**

Unlike open competitions, where participation is open to anyone interested and there is no shortlist before design submission, all restricted competitions require the submission of application documents in order to be selected to present a design proposal. Most of the time, these documents include data about the company's financial status and organization, CVs for the key persons and reference projects. The degree of requirements sets the character and range of a competition. If a competition for example aims at young professionals, a minimum requirement is a professional licence or enrolment in an educational programme such as the ideas competition for the new Bouwkunde Building in Delft (Volker, 2010). This will probably result in an enormous amount of submissions in various ranges of qualities. The more open the competition is, the more entries a client/jury has to evaluate with a lot of risks in terms of process reliability and decision quality. On the contrary, if a client of a new Olympic



Figure 2: The historic Gunnar Asplund's iconic public library in Stockholm on the left and on the right side an image of the winning project for its extension. Architect: Heike Hanada. Source: Internet, wikipedia.org

stadium requires experience with at least two similar buildings, this would apply to only for a few firms internationally.

The competition for the extension of the Stockholm City Library in Sweden exemplifies a case in which no preselection caused difficulties in assessing entries and really comparing competitors: at the first stage the jury assessed 1,170 entries, as a result of about 6,000 architects registering for participation from 120 countries. This vast number of entries 'was paradoxically counterproductive for a vivid debate' (Wærn, 2010, p. 603) because, in such a context, competing architects express an extremely wide range of approaches, making a qualified critique impossible and leaving everyone dissatisfied. The German architect Heike Hanada won the competition (see Figure 2).

#### *Paradoxical characteristics*

Selecting competitors based on the characteristics above is coherent with the literature regarding selective searching for professional service firms. This suggests that private and public clients make evaluations based on competence and perceived experience, chemistry and client orientation (Day & Barksdale, 1992), as well as past reputation, experience with the provider and personal contacts (Dawes, Dowling, & Patterson, 1992; West, 1997). Yet, architectural competition scholars and the Architect Council of Europe question these criteria because they limit access to competitions. Also, they state that clients should choose based on architectural performance only, for example by using for evidence of recognised achievement in architecture and conceptual ability in architectural

design, experience in buildings of similar complexity if not the same type, understanding of the built context and spatial quality.

This entails a paradox between allowing for an open and democratic competition among all potentially interested professionals and ensuring a competition among relevant and comparable competitors only. On the one hand, prequalification criteria are often too many and too restrictive to ensure a democratic access to competitions (Volker & van Meel, 2011). If these criteria had been adopted in the past, many buildings commissioned to unknown architects wouldn't have existed today. On the other hand, an open access to competitions prevents the entrants from competing with relevant and similar competitors and the jury from choosing among a reasonable and comparable number of entries. Too many entries jeopardize the fairness and reliability of the judging process.

#### *Managerial implications*

In order to cope with this paradox, architects should deliberately target different competitions for different goals. They should enter open competitions to explore much more freely in design terms and to build a portfolio that gives them access in a future to restricted contexts; they should enter restricted contests aligned with their project portfolio in order to win and get a contract assigned to their company.

Clients and juries also need to ensure the comparability between the entries by having a limited number of similar competitors, as well as a wide range of competitors for choosing better design quality. Within the given rules, they have to be able to pursue what they originally had in mind. This sometimes requires creativity, pragmatism and political intervention (Volker, 2010). The process would also benefit from a strong project team that manages the competition from beginning to end based on expertise, experience and consultation.

#### **Designing of proposals: conforming to the brief AND instructing the client in a shadow dance**

This phase entails the conceptualization and development of the competition assignment. Competing teams decode and translate the brief into a proposal (Stang Våland, 2009), dealing with unclear substantial aims, complicated briefs, unrealistic project budgets, too many or too elaborate documents required for submission, an almost non-existent honorarium paid for competing, little or

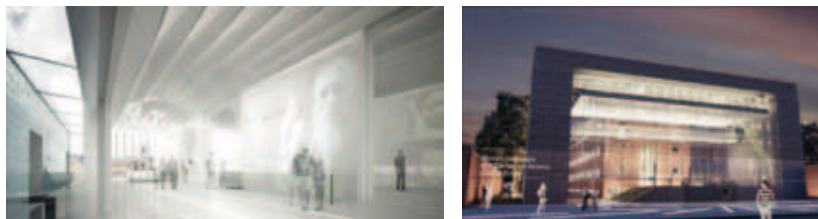


Figure 3: On the left an image from the winning project by SCAPE, and on the right an image from the submission by Mario Bellini Architects. Source: Internet, [www.archdaily.com](http://www.archdaily.com) (left) and [www.bellini.it](http://www.bellini.it) (right).

no interaction with the client during the process and probable delay during the process (Volker & van Meel, 2011).

The competition for the National Museum of Italian Hebraism and Shoah in Ferrara (Italy) is an example of how architects need to make several elements coexist into a design proposal. With regard to the original stonewalls, the brief asked to preserve them but allowed for demolition. Each firm competing therefore had to interpret this instruction and use it as a source of inspiration. For example, Mario Bellini Architects, one of the competing firms, decided to only demolish one out of four stonewalls and building the new building on the footprint of the old one, as shown in Figure 3.

#### Paradoxical characteristics

Every design proposal acts as a 'letter of intent' but also as 'educational development' (Rönn, 2009), being an answer to a client's question, but shedding light on the competition program. Meeting the brief is not always the optimal answer. It can happen that the winning entry is less compliant with the brief than were others. At the same time, ignoring the brief in favour of educating the client can counterproductive.

In addition to that, competing is 'shadow dancing' with an absent partner, who is the client and/or the jury (Kreiner, 2007). This entails a paradox between 'anonymity' and 'direct communication' (Rönn, 2009). Anonymity is the best way to select a design, but dialogues at different stages of the process are useful to clarify the brief, build a relationship and facilitate the jury's assessment (Kreiner et al., 2011), yet in public design contests dialogues are not allowed to protect anonymity.

### Managerial implications

Architects need to balance possibilities and constraints of the brief in the same proposal, purposefully improvising, while being pragmatic in dealing with clients' requirements and being authentic. Moreover, they need to seek and reconstruct client–architect interaction by replacing the absent dialogue with the client. This can be done, for example, by broader conversation within the office to simulate the possible concerns of the client, making the most out of written Q&A sessions with the client (and actually submit questions), and reading the answers provided to the other participants carefully (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; Manzoni & Volker, 2013).

Juries need to create the conditions for a client–architect interaction, by either including a dialogue in current procedures (Danielsen, 2010; Kreiner et al., 2011) or arranging for debate among the jury members. Answering the Q&A sessions in a matter that resets the boundaries of the competition, while maintaining an equal level of playing field is something which requires a certain consistency among client organisations and a strong coordination of the information stream provided to the participants (Volker, 2010).

### Jury decision making: balancing emotions AND rationality

During jury decision making, the jury appointed by the client has to compare and assess entries based on the criteria stated in the brief and choose a winner. This phase has particularly attracted the interest of scholars if we look at the amount of research published (see examples of Alexander, Witzling, & Casper, 1987; Chupin, 2011; Kazemian & Rönn, 2009; Silverberger, 2010; Stang Våland, 2009; Svensson, 2010). In each of these studies the balance between emotions and rational behaviour is key to a professionally organised competition.

This was for example not the case with the jury decision-making process in the competition for the New Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh (Scotland, see Figure 4): jurors chose the Spanish EMBT (Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue), despite its score according to the agreed scoring system. By reading the inquiry, which was published at the end of the project, we discover that Miralles' practice was assessed as 44th on the basis of the adequacy of the practice's resources and his extensive teaching commitments. Hence, he failed in providing the required level of cover in relation to Professional Indemnity Insurance. Yet Miralles impressed the jurors as "an inspirational architect of



Figure 4: Two images from the Parliament as it looks like now, as a result of EMBT's project. Source: Internet, wikipedia.org

stature". Emotions prevailed over rationality, taking advantage also of a non-systematic use a shared evaluation system in assessing entries.

#### Paradoxical characteristics

The composition of the jury, as well as the process of assessing and awarding the entries, presents paradoxical features. The jury has to represent the often conflicting diversity of interests and issues in the creation and use of the future building (Banerjee & Loukaitou-Sideris, 1990), aiming at being at the same time the expression of a 'professional' and a 'community' taste (Rönn, 2009) and being responsible to several stakeholders, such as clients, future users, critics and other architects (Kazemian & Rönn, 2009; Svensson, 2010). A jury has to choose an entry, which is relevant both to the client and to the profession, satisfying the call for both 'security' and 'innovation' that means well-proven construction, efficiency and durability, but also a longing for something new (Rönn, 2009).

Moreover, jurors need precise evaluation criteria set on advance in the competition brief to ensure fairness in decision making, but at the same time they ask for flexibility in assessing the entries, because entries can reveal new unplanned insights into the competition's problems. Rigid criteria do not allow for unexpected design concepts, while flexibility does not offer elements on which jurors can anchor their comparison of the entries (Rönn, 2009).

Finally, the awarding process is the result of a paradoxical sense-making process, which involves emotional affective responses to design proposals as well as rational criteria privileging design technicalities (Kreiner, 2006; Van Wezemaal, 2011; Volker, 2010). Privileging rationality points towards fault-free

design solutions, which fulfil all the brief requirements. Privileging emotions may favour submissions presenting unplanned insights and solutions mobilising unforeseen criteria.

### Managerial implications

Research shows that some kind of discussion among the jury members about the submission, whether it is positive or negative, increases the changes of selection (Volker, 2010). Architects should therefore offer a submission, which is at the same time rigorous in meeting the brief requirements, and triggers an emotion that catches the attention of the jury as well. The way architects can do this is by working carefully on the boards and communicating the design including eye-catching details and images from intermediate design phases to give evidence of the complexity of thoughts behind the submission. Models can evoke and respond to both cognitive and emotional human experiences (Boland et al., 2008) and BIM increasingly offers an additional means for effective design communication. Moreover, relying on the support the communication office and/or the model shop – if present – is also effective because architects' professional language and approach to developing a design concept can be difficult for outsiders to decipher (Stang Våland, 2010).

On the client side, jury panels should mirror the composition of the participants required: if a particular professional qualification is required from participants in a contest, at least a third of the members of the jury shall have that qualification or an equivalent qualification (EU Directive, Art. 73). The minimum they should include is authorized clients' representatives and experts in specific domains that relate to the assignment (Volker, 2010), when not even potential users (Nasar, 1999).

### Conclusions

Despite the worldwide downturn in real estate construction, competitions remain an important tradition in architectural design. Their potential for exploration in design terms creates unique solutions to complex problems in the built environment, fosters architectural debate and keeps attracting professionals and academics. Yet competitions present contradictory features and competing demands that ask for continuous study. In this chapter we suggest that the competition system would possibly benefit from a paradoxical mind-set, accepting the coexistence of contradictory tensions and approaching what is



traditionally recognized as a trade off/dilemma as a paradox. Hence, paradox theory opens up an interesting perspective to enable change and innovation in the competition tradition.

This chapter has provided some means to resolve the social space of decision making in the way that design attempts to resolve the physical space of existence. We suggest that management approaches aiming at improving the system and its procedures should go in the direction of understanding how to help actors accept and resolve the interwoven contradiction between the extremes. For architects this often implies submitting balanced but controversial proposals that trigger the appropriate kind of emotion in satisfying the clients' needs. It also involves deliberately targeting the competition in relation to the current as well as the future portfolio of the firm. For clients this comprises interweaving both boundaries and solution space in the assignment and the competition rules. Furthermore, the composition and supervision of the jury panel is essential in bringing competitions successfully to an end.

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The competition as institution and process represents a complex system for production of architectural knowledge by design in a future-oriented context. The present book revolves around four key concepts: architectural competition, institution, process and adjustments of contemporary competition structures. They may seem randomly assembled in order to form a pertinent book title, but considered as individual entities, they may also characterise the contemporaneous status of architectural competitions in the second decade of the new millennium. The empirical findings accounted for here bring out five aspects that describe an on-going process of adjustments that is taking place in contemporary architectural competitions in architecture and urban design. The conclusion is that these adjustments in the competition as institution and process reflect new conditions in the structure of architectural competitions that apply to both clients and architects as a profession.

The modern competition is at one and the same time a well-established praxis in architecture and urban design, made explicit in relation to national, European and international rules of competition. The competition has also come to be an instrument of an architectural politics nature in national governmental programmes in Europe, when aiming to create architectural attractions. The modern architectural competition is an institution within architecture and urban design going back one hundred and fifty years in Europe that has been recreated in new practice with the help of rules, traditions and organisations. Both organisers and competing architects and their professional organisations contribute to the preservation of the competition as institution and process. This anthology includes selected and processed papers from a conference on competitions in architecture and urban design at the TU Delft in 2014.

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