

Architectural Policies, Regulation and Jury Dilemmas in Architecture Competitions

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INTRODUCTION

This article discusses architectural competitions from a Nordic point of view. Competitions have a strong impact on architects' professional identity and self-image. Architectural offices market the winning contributions on their home pages. The competitions are used to obtain new assignments for the bureaus. The aim of this article is to describe, shed light on and get a deeper knowledge of the system of architectural competitions both as political and professional practices. Approximately 100 architectural competitions are held annually under the auspices of Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Danish architectural organizations. These organizations advertise the competitions on their home pages. There are seven major areas of competition:

1. Town planning and urban environment (18%),
2. Schools (18 %),
3. Culture and leisure (16 %),
4. Housing (13 %),
5. Health and social welfare (11 %),
6. Offices (10 %) and
7. Others (14%), which include churches, parish homes, and interior decoration.

The building sector in Finland and Denmark compete somewhat more in architecture and town planning than in Sweden and Norway.

The text is divided into three parts. The first part briefly describes the assessment work in architectural competitions and then outlines the basic regulations. The second section describes the Nordic architectural policy programme. The programme was drawn up in the 1990s in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. Denmark's architectural policy programme was revised in 2007. The third part of the paper discusses the problems arising from the competition system as seen from a jury's point of view. Competi-

tions *per se* pose dilemmas for assessing proposals, such as conflicts of interests and other dimensions which the jury must carefully weigh against each other. There is never one perfect solution to these dilemmas, only varying degrees of balance between the different parties' interests.

In this paper I will try to explain in part how fundamental quality issues are dealt with in a professional and architectural policy context. Further, I would like to increase the understanding of problems competitions pose for a jury whose task is to single out the winner with the best solution to the assignment. Considerable evaluation is involved in this process. Without sorting and ranking it is not possible to award a first prize.

The questions dealt with in this research concern competing in architecture and town planning, the jury's quality assessments of the entries and the underlying regulations. How do architectural policy programmes describe the competitions? Which competition forms are there with regard to the objectives? How do these forms influence the work of the jury? On what grounds are winners decided upon? Which requirements, goals and interests are to be weighed against each other during the judging process?

The article is based upon two recent Nordic studies carried out by the Royal Institute of Technology during 2005-2007 (Kazemian, Rönn and Svensson; 2005 and 2007). The analysis is based upon interview data, competition documentation and literature. Eighteen experienced Nordic jury members were interviewed. The interviewees represent the three important parties in competitions;

1. Organizing bodies (promoters, clients, developers); seven persons.
2. Competitors; five persons.
3. Architectural associations; six persons.

The persons interviewed were chosen for their knowledge about and experience from competitions. Together they represent first-hand experience from hundreds of competitions as competitors, architectural judges and representatives of the organizing bodies on juries. But they all represent the architecture perspective of the competitions system and its traditions. I have not interviewed any end user or professionals that don't compete.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

All interested parties in architectural competitions are represented on the jury. Members are architects and their clients. The jury's assignment is to identify the proposal which best meets the competition's objective. Judging the entries is done in various steps. Good proposals come forward. Poor so-

lutions are eliminated. These quality judgements are made keeping in mind the goals, intentions and requirements of the competition programme. The choice of winner is also influenced by “tacit knowledge” in the professional quality assessment of the proposal.

The judging work has an air of searching about it. The jury wants to find a winner. In the final round of an open competition there are a handful of entries the juries consider to be possible solutions to the problem posed. The winner will be the proposal the jury agrees upon. Consensus is a sign that the jury has found the best overall solution for the task. Unanimity in the choice of winner creates security in a competition.

The jury normally meets five times before deciding upon a winner. Between these meetings members usually gather in smaller groups to further discuss the various proposals, judge their quality and prepare for the next jury meeting. The architects on the jury must describe the projects in a comprehensible and coherent way to the organizers’ members. Afterwards ranking and sorting of the proposals can take place. Each member chooses a few favourite entries for further examination. If they find it difficult to agree during the final round they have to discuss their favourite choices again. The discussions continue until a unanimous decision is reached. Usually the jury selects one winner of the architectural competition. Jury members rarely have difficulties finding a handful of good solutions for the task in question. But choosing between the best and second best is more difficult. There are always several good ways to solve design problems in architectural and town planning projects (Rittel and Weber, 1984). A genuine uncertainty and indecision are therefore always present in architectural competitions up until the end.

COMPETITION RULES

The tradition for architectural competitions is over a hundred years old and very significant for the architectural profession. Modern competitions are a revitalized historical product of the industrial era and the rise of the middle-class. Competition rules were set up at the end of the 19th century. The need for regulations increased as architects began to organize to better protect their professional interests (Viljo, 1992; Waern, 1996). In spite of a long history there is surprisingly little research done on competitions, how juries judge the quality of entries and how they nominate winners (Nasar, 1999; Tostrup, 1999; Östman, 2005).

The basic principles for architectural competitions are the same throughout the Nordic countries, even if regulations vary somewhat. There must be a programme for the tasks with appropriate administrative provisions, technical competition data, requirements, goals and evaluation criteria. The anonymous

entries are judged by a jury representing the organizing body and the architectural community. Finnish regulations define architectural competitions as “a procedure in which the organiser of the competition asks two or more designers for an architectural plan, proposal or outline, to be submitted at the same time and following the same brief.” (Finnish Association of Architects, § 2).

Usually the jury is made up of 6-8 members. At least one-third of the members should have the same qualifications as the competitors (Directive 2004/18/EC). There should be at least two external members appointed by the architectural community. In Swedish competitions these members are appointed by the Swedish Association of Architects. This is a professional organization for architects, interior decorators, landscape architects and planners. The organizing body appoints the remaining members including a chairperson for the jury. A secretary is provided by the organizing body as well as a competition administrator, who “is responsible for all contacts with the competitors while maintaining their anonymity.” (Swedish Association of Architects 2007, § 6).

Architectural competitions serve as a foundation for decision making, initiating solutions to competition tasks and negotiating architectural services. The organizers can choose between four basic forms of competitions: project competitions, ideas competitions, open competitions and competitions on invitation. According to Swedish regulations, a project competition is appropriate when the aim is “realising the project, where the copyright holder will be appointed to carry out the winning proposal.” (Swedish Association of Architects 2007, § 2). An ideas competition is recommended when the aim is to “analyse alternative solutions to a problem without any specific intention of realising the project, nor to giving an assignment to the winner, (Swedish Association of Architects 2007, § 2). An open competition is open for all who wish to participate as opposed to a competition on invitation where there are a limited number of competitors. The advertisement announcing the competition should specify the criteria for choosing these participants.

Open competitions result in many suggestions. In Finland during 1999 and 2000 these competitions had from 30 to 300 contributions (Kazemian, Rönn and Svensson, 2007). This amount requires a quick appraisal and elimination of many contributions at the beginning of the assessment process. It is easier to administrate a competition on invitation which is only available for a limited number of participants. Usually 3 to 6 architectural bureaus/project groups partake in these competitions. According to the Law on Public Procurement, LOU 2007:91, public organizing bodies should call for at least three entries to ensure an effective competition. However, all architects should be able to partake in project competitions. This requirement is met by sending in an application together with information about the competitor’s background experience, former

projects and a financial statement from the bureau. The organizing body then chooses the final competitors among the applicants. This system is called pre-qualification and is a selection system based on the EU's procurement directive (Directive 2004/18/EC). This directive has been incorporated into the LOU which regulates the use of project competitions as a negotiating tool.

Architectural competitions need not be carried out in one stage, but may be done in two stages. The second stage is "restricted with competitors selected from the first stage." (Swedish Association of Architects 2007, § 3). This two-stage competition is useful when intermediate assessments are needed. Complicated tasks often benefit from feedback. An open general ideas competition gives the organizer a broad base for decision-making and may be followed up by a project competition on invitation with the aim of implementing the task.

The assessment of the entries in an architectural competition is carried out at meetings where "only members of the jury, the secretary to the jury and any retained experts may be present..." (Swedish Association of Architects 2007, § 10). Members must observe professional secrecy. The jury shall award, as it says in the Finnish rules, "those entries which solve the task in the best possible way, according to the criteria set out in the competitions conditions (Finnish Association of Architects 2007, § 9). A winner must also be nominated. "A shared first prize is considered to be an unfortunate solution which often negatively affects further work on the project." (Juryarbete/Bedömning undated, 3). The jury shall "recommend a proposal for execution or for further elaboration, if this is not obviously inappropriate." (Competition Rules in Sweden, § 11). There is a moral obligation implicit in the Competition Regulations to award the project assignment to the winner. In competitions arranged according to LOU the winner of a project competition will be awarded the contract. According to Danish Competition Rules, an organizer who does not carry out an architectural competition as planned within two years must pay financial compensation to the winner (Architects Association of Denmark 2007, § 4.2).

Behind the similarities in traditions there are two different models in the Nordic countries, which steer regulations: on one hand, the Danish-Norwegian model with profession-oriented competition rules. In this case the regulations are drawn up by architectural associations and only apply to architects' work. On the other hand, the Finnish-Swedish model is based on rules drawn up by trade associations. These include both architects and promoters. The Regulation Authorities in Finland and Sweden include more parties from the building sector than Denmark and Norway do. So far these differences have not had any substantial influence on competitions. The majority of competitions are organized in Denmark and Finland and each have their own model (Kazemian, Rönn, Svensson, 2007).



FIG. 1. *Framtidsformer* (Forms for the future)



FIG. 2. *Finlands Arkitekturpolitik* (Finland's Architectural Policy)

ARCHITECTURAL POLITICS

Architecture and politics have a long common history. Power has traditionally expressed itself through the construction of impressive buildings/structures that have put high demands on architectural quality. Nowadays, quality issues in architecture have developed into a specialized political area. Competitions have become an institution encouraging creativity, competitiveness and negotiation. From a cultural point of view, the Nordic countries' architectural policy programmes clearly demonstrate the political interest in using the competition system as an appealing means of influence. In a world marked by deregulation and global competitiveness, national competitions are regarded as an architectural policy tool for renewal, quality development and marketing. We acquire a national social structure based on international models.

The Swedish Cultural Report SOU 1995:84 pointed out that architecture and design are cultural expressions which are vital to people's well-being. The report suggested therefore, that the government take the initiative to formulate an architectural policy programme. A new political area was thereby created. Two years later, in 1997, the Swedish Action Programme for Architecture and Design was presented, *Framtidsformer* (Forms for the future) [fig.1]. The public sector was encouraged by the government to use competitions as a tool, in particular open competitions, to implement major municipal building tasks. The recommendations from the Ministry of Culture to state, regional and local organizations were as follows:

Public promoters should encourage competitions, especially open competitions, which have a wide range of participants. The decision

about whether or not a competition should be held and which form should be used, should be decided upon from case to case. Every competition should aim at reaching the highest level of quality possible for the end product. (*Framtidsformer* 1997, 25).

The Finnish programme, *Finland's Architectural Policy* (*Finlands Arkitekturpolitik*) is from 1998 [fig. 2]. Compared with the Swedish government's action policy programme, the Finnish description of competitions for architecture and design is more appreciative. The Ministry of Fine Arts and Education has an uncomplicated view of competitions. The following quote from *Finlands Arkitekturpolitik* (*Finland's Architectural Policy*) shows the Finnish government's positive attitude towards the competition system:

Nearly all significant buildings created in our country during the past century are the result of architectural competitions...Architectural competitions promote innovation, stimulate the building sector and renew architecture. Competitions are a complimentary form of education and open up possibilities for new planners. The large number of solutions presented for competitions make it easier for people to discuss alternate possibilities for developing the environment. Finland's successes in international architectural competitions have been an important channel for promoting Finnish know-how and culture (*Finlands Arkitekturpolitik* 1998, 24).

The following advice is given:

The Council of State encourages public administrations acting as promoters to augment their use of various task-oriented architectural and planning competitions to find planning solutions and to choose planners. (*Finlands Arkitekturpolitik* 1998, 24)

The first Norwegian architectural policy programme is from 1992. The programme is called *Omgivelser som kultur: Handlingsprogram for estetisk kvalitet i offentlig miljø* (*Surroundings as Culture: Action Programme for Aesthetics in Public Environment*) and was drawn up by a working group within the Ministry of Culture [fig 3]. The aim was to highlight aesthetic qualities for cultural policy. Architectural competitions were only briefly mentioned. There are enormous differences between this programme and the second Norwegian architectural policy programme, *Estetikk i statlige bygg og anlegg* (*Aesthetics in Government Building and Constructions*), which was drawn up in 1997 by sev-



FIG 3. *Omgivelser som kultur: Handlingssprogram for estetisk kvalitet i offentlig miljø* (Surroundings as Culture: Action Programme for Aesthetics in Public Environment)



FIG. 4. *Estetikk i statlige bygg og anlegg* (Aesthetics in Government Building and Constructions).

eral departments [fig.4]. This programme gave a more complex picture of architectural competitions. In contrast with the National Norwegian Architects Association it states that parallel commission, which allow direct communication between the organizer (client) and the competitors, is a form of competition. Call for tender competitions are also considered possible when areas and functions have already been defined.

The programme makes several references to the EU's procurement directive from 1994. Much of the text is devoted to describing legal and administrative routines. This is to help set up guidelines for public promoters. Architectural competitions are considered suitable for projects with very demanding quality requirements. In such cases half of the jury members should be architects. State promoters are encouraged to make it easier for younger architects to participate in competitions by invitation. These decisions, however, are left to the judgement of the promoters. The Norwegian government's position on competitions as a work method is described as follows:

Project competitions give promoters the best foundation for further continued planning and in principle is the preferred competition form when high aesthetic ambitions and tasks are to be fulfilled. At the same time project competitions can increase costs and time factors. For basic assignments, it is up to the promoter to make these decisions after evaluating each case (*Estetikk i statlige bygg og anlegg* 1997, 21).



FIG. 5. *Dansk Arkitekturpolitik* (Danish Architecture Policy).

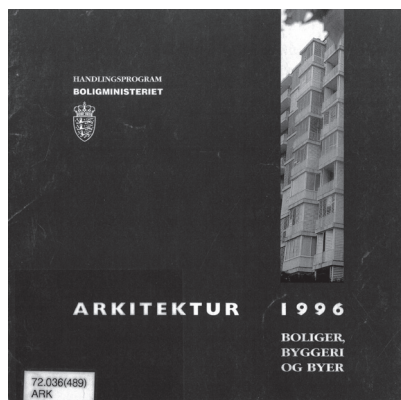


FIG. 6. *Arkitektur 1996* (Architecture 1996).

The following comments pertain to open competitions:

Where especially high levels of aesthetic quality are required, public promoters should use open project competitions to procure aesthetic advisors. When arranging open competitions for municipal building half of the jury members should have at least the same professional competence as the competitors and at least two of the jury members should be external (*Estetikk i statlige bygg og anlegg* 1997, 21-22).

Younger architects should be given the possibility to participate in competitions by invitation:

When using pre-qualifying for limited competitions, public promoters should consider the value of giving more opportunities to younger, non-established professional groups for basic assignments (*Estetikk i statlige bygg og anlegg* 1997, 22).

Danish architectural policy has been developed in three government manifests dated 1994, 1996 and 2007. The first manifest from 1994 was drawn up by the Ministries of Culture, Environment and Finance. The manifest is called *Dansk Arkitekturpolitik* (Danish Architecture Policy) [Fig 5]. The programme stressed that particular attention should be paid to architectural quality. Public promoters were encouraged to augment the use of competitions. Competitions by

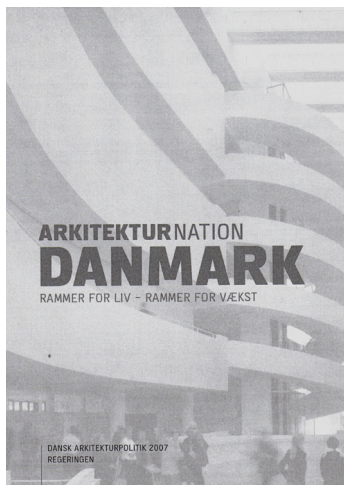


FIG. 7. *ArkitekturNation Danmark*
(A Nation of Architecture Denmark).

invitation, open ideas, and project competitions are described as methods for developing quality. The second manifest was issued by the Ministry of Housing. This program was entitled *Arkitektur 1996* (*Architecture 1996*) [fig. 6]. The Danish National Association of Architects (DAL) issued a programme called *Arkitekturpolitik* (*Architecture policy*). DAL requested publicly organized architectural competitions which they consider necessary for professional development. They would like to see the field of competition broadened to include for example technical innovations, design and functional studies.

The third governmental/state architectural policy programme was published by the Ministry of Culture in 2007 and is entitled *ArkitekturNation Danmark* (*A Nation of Architecture Denmark*) [fig. 7]. It is an extensive programme of a visionary nature. According to this programme, the success of Danish architectural bureaus may be directly attributed to winning national and international competitions. One of the goals of architectural policies is to create good conditions for continued development and renewal in architecture. Competitions are regarded as a precondition for growth and development. At the same time, two negative aspects of open competitions are brought up. On the one hand, general competitions require resources from the organizing body and the competitors. Many entries need to be assessed and only the winning proposal receives compensation. The remaining participants work gratuitously. On the other hand, promoters feel insecure in their choices because entries are submitted anonymously and communication between the organizing body and the competitors is prohibited. This criticism has resulted in the government preferring competitions by invitation which has become the main form of competition. The aim is to make it easier for newly established bureaus to participate in competitions by invitation. The following two initiatives are discussed in the programme:

Similarly to the world of sports, it is important that young and untried talents, who have not yet found their way into official rankings, are given an opportunity to practice in competitions where they can be measured against the elite and prove their value in practice. In co-

operation with the Danish Competition Agency and other relevant parties, the Danish Architecture Centre (DAC) plans to launch an information campaign and prepare a series of specific procedures and guidelines aimed at promoting a competitions environment which considers access to the market of architectural services for the growth layer...The guidelines will describe how to establish objective requirements so that these do not cut off younger firms...As a part of this effort, a Wild Card list will be produced and maintained for the advance invitation of growth layer companies. The Wild Card list will be based on objective criteria and be open for all who meet the criteria (*Arkitektturnation Danmark* 2007, 46).

The second measure to help young architects into the competition system is:

In order to promote access to the growth layer of the market for architectural services, a showcase is needed to extol the qualities of the young architectural firms. For the first time, Denmark is taking part in EUROPAN – an inter-European partnership focusing on the development and discussion of new ideas in architecture and urban design. EUROPAN addresses European architects under the age of 40 (*Arkitektturnation Danmark* 2007, 46).

It is a sign of the times that governments and ministries in the Nordic countries draw up architectural policy programmes. These programmes make up a special political area. Architecture has become part of the cultural struggle and is fought with aesthetic means. That is why the Ministry of Culture issues the programme, not the Ministry of Enterprise and Finance. The goal is to create buildings that are noteworthy and serve as models for society. Competitions are a good tool for combining an interest in design, architecture and culture with attractiveness, competitiveness and marketing.

The architectural community is the caretaker of the competition system and as such must both defend the authorities' regulations and adapt the competition forms to changes in the built environment. That is one reason why the community finds it difficult to move from open competitions to competitions by invitation. One solution is to make it easier for younger architects to participate by invitation. In that way a professional interest in the competition culture would coincide with maintaining career possibilities while encouraging new thinking in architecture and city planning.

There are several cases where young architects have used their prize money and commission from winning architectural competitions to start their own

firms and build their careers. Alvar Aalto is a very good example from the Nordic countries. Some very famous buildings are the results of competitions, for example: The White House in Washington (1792), The Eiffel Tower in Paris (1886), City Hall in Stockholm (1903), the Opera House in Sydney (1956) and the Pompidou Centre in Paris (1970). The next section will deal with some problems competitions pose, as seen from the jury's point of view.

THE DILEMMA

There is tension between rival opinions and interests in the competition system. I call these differences in goals "dilemmas" when there is no clear single solution to the problem. The jury has to weigh a number of legitimate interests against one another when looking for a winner. This is what makes the assessment work so complicated for the jury. Some of the dilemmas can be found in almost every architectural design process from development of ideas at an early stage to implementation, but they become much more clear and intensive in competitions. The jury has to deal with these difficulties in a couple of meetings and the time is limited.

The weighing of interests is done during meetings between (a) *jury members* who have different roles, interests and judging qualifications, (b) the *competition programme* which describes the assignment, conditions, requirements and goals (c) the *competitors* who present different solutions for the assignment and (d) *competition regulations* which set the general rules. From the jury's point of view, the assessment process may be seen as a series of evaluations made from the early start of the competition until the final award nomination and statement are made. The driving force behind the complexity of competitions is public building with its rival opinions, interested parties with power demands and professional philosophies. To conclude, the dilemmas presented by competitions and how they influence the outcome are discussed.

DEMOCRACY VERSUS EXPERT DECISION

The first dilemma concerns competitions seen as architectural policy. Architectural competitions have a public (open) exterior and a (closed) private interior. From a democratic point of view, it is desirable to have the entries on public view to encourage people to discuss the contributions' architectural and urban qualities. Awakening widespread public interest in architecture and municipal building among laymen through exhibitions and coverage in the daily press is viewed very positively by organizing bodies, competing architects and the architectural community.

"For larger and more important assignments a draft is exhibited before the jury begins to work. This is part of democratic openness...We believe exhibits

have many advantages. They are important for the public and important for the architectural community.” (Norwegian Competition Secretary, interview, 2005). But members of the jury should not be influenced by public opinion when assessing the quality of the entry. The jury must maintain its integrity without being influenced by outside forces and evaluate only according to competition regulations and the programme. Swedish rules for architectural competitions stipulate that only members of the jury, the secretary and the expert advisors may be present at the meeting when the winner is nominated.

The public aspect of competitions is a starting point for debate which may in the long run contribute to the development of the built environment. However, exhibiting architectural and municipal building projects does not in itself give the public any sort of direct influence on the project. Citizens of the community do not vote in architectural competitions. There are no public observers during the assessment process. The jury nominates the winner according to the competition regulations and during meetings where they are bound by professional secrecy. The democratic contribution to architectural competitions is limited to deciding that a competition should take place, what the programme should be, how the public organizing body appoints its members to the jury and how the politicians participate in the jury work.

ANONYMITY VERSUS DIRECT COMMUNICATION

The second dilemma is related to the requirement for anonymity and its associated prohibition of direct communication. “Each proposal must be presented in such a way that the author remains anonymous.” (*Competition Rules in Sweden*, § 8). The competition takes place at the beginning of the planning and building process when the idea stage is central to both the competitor and the jury’s assessment of the entry. The possibility of influencing the work is greatest at this early stage. Even so, during this conceptual phase the organizing body is not allowed to communicate with the competitors to clarify their wishes. It is the fundamental idea of the entry, the quality of the solution and the ability to find a good design which will determine the outcome of the competition – not the name of the contributor.

The final product is more important than the person. The requirement for anonymity is based on an open-minded philosophy. The best entry will win. The jury should judge the architectural firm’s concept instead of considering irrelevant matters. “Both the strength and weakness of the competition form lie in the fact that the jury’s point of departure is the programme and not a dialogue with the competitors...Part of the strength lies in the fact that there is no dialogue. That is why the programme plays such an important role in competitions. The organizing body gives the architects

an assignment to draw a house in three months and there is no discussion.” (Copenhagen City Architect, interview, 2005).

The organizing body can only indirectly influence the development of ideas through the competition programme and its description of the goals, requirements, assessment criteria, technical competition regulations and basic data about the assignment. Eventual questions about the competition programme are handled by a special official who is bound by professional secrecy. All direct communication between the organizing body and the competitors is prohibited. The end-user’s influence is limited to the programme stage which comes before the concept stage, or the project development stage which comes after the jury has chosen a winner. During the assessment end-users only can participate in sub-committees.

PROJECT VERSUS ARCHITECT

The third dilemma stems from the dual function of the competition system: to be both a *project* competition and an *architect* competition. For promoters a competition is a means of filling a multifaceted need. A project needs to be given an artistic design and a practical solution. From the architectural community’s point of view, competitions are a means of acquiring new assignments. It is a job application. Competitions are also a useful opportunity to test new design ideas. According to the persons interviewed, architecture develops through competitions. From this point of view, the competition system would appear to be an objective for architectural organizations that use it to bring attention to the role architects play in the development of society.

The work of the jury in project competitions is to find the best solution and architect to carry out a building assignment. In this way, the assessment of the competition entry becomes a part of the negotiating process. Only an ideas competition has no requirement for continued work. The basis for negotiation in a project competition is a blueprint or building description that will result in a building. The contract for this work according to LOU, chapter 4, § 9, will be awarded to the winner. If the competition results in several first prize winners, all will be invited to the negotiations. This is true regardless if the project competition was a general one or with a limited number of participants chosen by pre-qualification. In both cases the first-prize winner can count on a commission for implementing the winning entry.

“In recent years, a combination of pre-qualification and direct invitation has become popular, something which did not exist earlier...competitions have become a sort of public negotiation. Earlier, architects were not involved, but now they are. This has its pros and cons. The positive side is that the architect is the negotiator for the assignment...The negative side of

pre-qualification and direct negotiation is that it tends to eliminate younger architects and newly established firms. We always try to include one or two newer bureaus...and it is not so easy to find such suitable firms. We would like to know something about the bureau we choose and that's where the problem lies." (Stockholm City Architect, interview, 2005).

SECURITY VERSUS INNOVATION

While competitions reflect a longing for something new, promoters require well-proven construction which is useful, efficient, safe and durable. This is the root of the fourth dilemma. One way of reducing this uncertainty is to invite well-established architects with good reputations to participate in competitions. A certain amount of security is also achieved by having qualified architectural judges point out the project, which could be built with proven techniques at a reasonable cost. "Both well-known foreign architects and young Finnish architects who have done something of interest at the beginning of their careers, are now asked to participate in competitions by invitation. This new practice leads to a very interesting mix of competitors." (Architect, former General Director of National Property Board, interview, 2006).

The interviewees in the Nordic countries frequently pointed out that younger architects represent new thinking in the field of architecture. They considered therefore open competitions particularly suitable for promoters looking for new, innovative solutions to aesthetic design problems; solutions, which make architecture, stand out and be noticed. A general competition can be seen as something daring and a signal for architectural renewal.

"I really believe in the competition form. It acts as a laboratory for the community to look into the order of things and get the wider picture of an assignment." (Copenhagen City Architect, interview, 2005). New ideas lead to suggestions that are somewhat untried which is an unavoidable consequence of renewal. The unknown is both enticing and frightening. Innovative solutions hold a certain amount of risk and there is no underlying experience on which to base design and assessment. The organizer (client) must rely on the opinions of qualified architectural judges to find the solution which best fits the assignment.

PRECISION VERSUS LATITUDE

The fifth dilemma is related to the degree of steering and the need for latitude required by the jury. How detailed should the assignment be before the jury members receive the entries and begin their assessment work. "The competition programme should be formulated in such a way that there is a balance between being as clear as possible about the requirements and yet leave as much

latitude as possible for the competitors to operate and without locking them in more than necessary.” (Swedish Competition Secretary, interview, 2005). As it is a steering document for the competitors it should clearly state what the assignment is, so they know what requirements and goals their contribution should meet. A precise competition programme is of the utmost importance. Unclear descriptions result in competition entries that are difficult to interpret.

In contrast to the need for detailed specifications is the jury’s desire to have a freer hand, to take care of good competition entries and to reward developable solutions. Therefore, goals and evaluation criteria have a more open nature in a competition programme. The criteria for judging the general competition in 2005 for the open competition *Visans Hus* in the city of Västervik were described as “architectural quality, functionality, development possibility and economic feasibility”. The number of evaluation criteria reflected the promoter’s need for negotiating room. Competition entries can reveal unexpected possibilities as well as requirements in the programme that were not completely thought through. The need for using good judgement comes up when the jury examines a proposal and gets new insight into the problems of competition. There is a creative moment built into the competition system that members want to use without feeling locked in by overly detailed requirements in the competition programme.

PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS VERSES FEEDBACK

The sixth dilemma is how to foresee the potential created by the competition, what type of solution may be expected and how the suggestions may be developed for future project assignments. The organizing body should state what criteria will be used for assessing the entries. The competition should be predictable. No surprise grounds for judging should ever appear afterwards.

However, the quality judgement of the entries should lead to new insights into the task at hand. The entry should clarify the problems of the competition. “Yes, we have criteria called development ability (usefulness). It is a matter of seeing how the suggestion can be further developed and improved. It can be important, for example, to differentiate between the structural weaknesses of a contribution...and shortcomings in the dimensions of parts of the building, which can easily be corrected during the production phase”. (Architect, Building Planning Office in Helsinki, interview, 2006). Part of the jury’s assignment is to relay the experience they gained from assessing the quality of the entry to the appropriate groups in the community. In the same way, the criticism of the winning contribution expressed in the jury’s verdict is a way of transferring feedback from the assessments to the future development of the project. In choosing the winner, the jury should try to

foresee and ensure the quality of future buildings. The jury can use the criteria to explain why one entry is a better overall solution than its competitors' and how the design can be further developed to enhance the environment.

MINIMIZING FAULTS VERSUS MAXIMIZING QUALITY

The seventh dilemma is associated with the interpretation of quality. When assessing the competition entries, the jury should identify quality and at the same time see that the programme requirements are fulfilled and the regulations followed. An entry which does not adhere to the main directives cannot be a winner; only slight deviations are acceptable. The jury, therefore, must determine to what extent an entry fulfils the competition programme's specifications. However, the jury's job is not to rank the entries according to their number of shortcomings but to nominate as winner the one entry with the best overall solution to the problem.

"Architectural quality is a clear aesthetic dimension, but also an overall view...Engineers have a tendency just to see the parts, to atomize. It is the entity that is the decisive factor. Function in relation to the place and surroundings." (Promoter's representative, Copenhagen, interview, 2005). Also the former General Director of National Property Board saw differences in how quality was understood: "Is quality a technical characteristic, measurable in tables which should be ranked or a question of architectural solutions to be examined in an aesthetic context? We have architects in Finland who have fought hard against having entries quantified in technical tables and ranked according to criteria...Quality is something more than fulfilling requirements. Eventually, all parties accepted the fact that architectural solutions in competitions could not be judged by quantifiable factors alone." (Architect, former General Director of National Property Board, interview, 2006).

Architectural quality is characterized by a well-balanced entity. The jury's brief is to point out the suggestion most likely to lead to the best built environment possible. Maximizing architectural quality during the assessment process seems to be a better strategy than looking for a fault-free contribution. The entry's development potential becomes a key criterion. A good overall solution is more important than shortcomings in minor details which can be corrected at a later stage. At the same time, a faultless solution may be an important negotiating point for a public organizing body. The risks of a successful appeal which delays implementation should be minimized. From this point of view, aiming for "zero faults" could be seen as an administrative plus for promoters in the public sector. Nevertheless, according to the interviewees, the final result – a well built environment with as many positive qualities as possible – must be the goal of the assessment process.

LETTER OF INTENT VERSUS EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The eighth dilemma concerns competitions as part of a learning process. “You can learn something from every proposal!” (*Juryarbete/Bedömning*, undated, 3). In the beginning of a competition, the organizer (client) has a preliminary picture of an assignment and how it can be solved. Goals, requirements and opinions develop during the process of drawing up the competition programme. When the organizing body comes in contact with the proposals they acquire a deeper understanding of the assignment. The proposals are answers to the competition’s questions which in turn shed light on the competition programme and the way the assignment is described.

The learning experience comes both from the solutions for the assignment and the jury’s quality assessment of them. “Competitions stimulate the progress of architecture; the organizing body receives suggestions they never expected.” (Practising architect, former Head Architect at National Property Board in Norway, interview, 2005). Testing the suggestions is a learning process which gives members of the jury better insight into the problems posed by competitions. “Competitions encourage development among jury members. You learn more and are able to see projects in a somewhat new light.” (Competition Secretary in Denmark, interview, 2005).

By examining the contributions, members sort out the advantages and disadvantages of the entries. This evaluation leads to criticism, which in turn enhances the jury’s judging competence. Based on the knowledge acquired during the competition promoters may, for very good reasons, reconsider their position and let the new evidence influence their choice of winner. This knowledge can also be used by promoters to justify not implementing a proposal if they are unhappy with the competition results.

The two-stage competition will maximize the educational experience. The possibility of acquiring extra knowledge makes the two-stage competition a valuable tool in an uncertain situation. The organizing body will have a better foundation for decision-making. The intermediate assessment lets the jury apply their experience from the first round to the second stage in the competition. It’s not only the jury members and the competitors that develop their personal skills. The official accounts of the decision and the winning suggestion make the competition a part of the professional and collective learning process in society.

OBJECTIVE VERSUS PROCESS

The ninth dilemma concerns the competition entry which is the objective for the jury and at the same time the result of the competition is influenced

by how the work of the jury is organized. When the focus is on the object to be assessed it is the contribution and how the assignment is fulfilled that the jury pays attention to. Seen as a process, the organization and how the jury arrives at its choice of first-prize winner is the focal point. These are two parallel viewpoints which are present in the architectural competition and are mutually dependent on one another.

“Bureaucrats and politicians on the jury often expect to reach their decisions during meetings; a problem will be presented and they will decide on which project will win.” (Architect, former Competition Secretary in Norway, interview, 2005). The client wants the competition question to generate as many good answers as possible from the architectural community. For the jury to identify the best answer to a competition question there must be a point in the judging process when the various contributions are sorted out. The jury’s work entails controlling how the programme specifications are met, studying the contributions, accounting for and analyzing the differences, evaluating the advantages and disadvantages, ranking and, finally, selecting the winner.

The members progressively work their way towards the choice of a winner. The difficulties usually turn up towards the end of the process when the members’ personal favourites have to be ranked and sorted out. At the same time there is a demand for unanimity. One solution to this dilemma is that the jury has small models built and brought to the competition so they can see with their own eyes which of the suggestions best suits the site. The models can illustrate some qualities that were not visible earlier to the jury members. The jury can also develop additional criteria to clarify the differences between the competing entries. It is impossible to identify the best solution without emphasizing the differences between the various contributions. The object and the process are both separated and coordinated by the jury during their work of finding a competition winner.

THE PRESENT VERSUS THE FUTURE

The tenth dilemma is about future orientation and the long life-span of a building. The point of departure for a competition is the present-day situation. A piece of property should be built up. A competition is organized to find a solution for the near future. The jury must look towards and relate to a future environment as opposed to a here-and-now situation. One reason for this is that project competitions are aimed at buildings which are constructed in an urban environment where they have both a long and short term impact.

It is important to understand that a project is a long journey, and a competition comes at an early stage in the project...therefore it is important that the jury find a concept that lasts as an entity and which is strong enough to adapt to changes during the continuation of the process. The competition programme reflects today's needs but the building should stand for a hundred years. You can't build something today and be completely locked in by it. It should be possible to use it for a number of undetermined purposes in the future. (Competition Secretary for Sweden, interview, 2005).

Since the jury is focussed on the future it is natural to make strategic judgments which may sometimes be seen as wishful thinking because of inadequate assumptions about the assignment. It's not just the present-day requirements of the promoters that should be met in a competition. The jury also has to imagine how the winning contribution will be experienced by tomorrow's users of architecture and municipal building. The lengthy time-perspective in urban planning competitions creates an uncertain judging situation with new decision makers in a future planning process. The quality of the building is connected to the specific place and should be seen in the context of future situations with different degrees of steering and possibilities for promoters to adapt to the changing needs of the market. Proponents in the jury emphasize the advantages of a proposal and point out its possibilities. The doubtful see the risks and uncertainties in the solutions. It is equally difficult for both parties to judge the future.

PROFESSIONAL VERSUS COMMUNITY APPROVAL

The eleventh dilemma concerns the different interested parties in competitions. Control over the competition regulations and their content affect several parties in the building community. The architectural community strives to influence competition rules and a faith in the system among its members. Educating new architects about the competition culture is part of the community's administration of competitions as an institution. But control over competition regulations must be shared with the organizing bodies. Otherwise, promoters will choose similar forms, such as parallel assignments, instead of arranging competitions with programmes that are approved of by architectural societies. Policies and markets are a playground for the interested parties.

Sometimes private promoters organize competitions in Copenhagen which are not governed by the EU regulations. We look upon this as

an opportunity to experiment beyond the boundaries of architectural societies' regulations. This doesn't pose any problem as long as the architectural bureau agrees to experiment. (Copenhagen City Architect, interview, 2005).

The competitions I am involved with generally concern larger questions of urban building programmes and development issues in Stockholm. The predominant form of negotiation is the parallel commission. I consider this to be an investigation form that I can participate in, discuss and plan... Perhaps 90-95% of negotiations are carried out as parallel commissions. (Stockholm City Architect, interview, 2005).

The interested parties in an architectural competition are reflected in the jury's composition. In the Nordic countries, the jury is appointed by the organizing body and architectural societies. The organizing body has a strong position and can appoint the majority of jury members. The organizing body is responsible for carrying out the winning project and takes the financial risks. Consequently, it is not sufficient to anchor the competition system in the architectural policy programme or refer to the law on public procurement and the profession's innovative capacities. It's the architect's client – the promoters, property developers, entrepreneurs and town planning offices – whose interests must be met to ensure a continued positive attitude towards architectural competitions. The architectural community wants a strong competition culture. This requires cooperation among potential clients: both the public sector who are governed by architectural policy programmes and private promoters who are governed by market conditions. This is a strong reason why the system needs to be secured among organizing bodies that have courage, power, interest, goodwill and the capacity for seeing a competition through.

SUMMARY

In this paper I have tried to consider architectural competitions as an issue about architecture, policy and quality assessment. On a practical level competitions appear to be a professional undertaking, defined by competition regulations, the competition programme and competition entries. The rules are flexible and can be used for developing ideas, building assignments and town planning. Moreover, competitions are a tool for negotiating architectural assignments. On a political level, architectural competitions are about culture, competitiveness and renewal. Competitions suit the architectural policy programme that is directed towards finding market-oriented solu-

tions to architecture's fundamental quality question: what is quality? How can new and exciting solutions be found? How can architectural competitions solve society's needs and meet the demands of future environments?

The jury's task in architectural competitions is to find the best solution. The winner is nominated in a very complex assessment process that must include choice, evaluation, ranking, negotiation and consensus. The building's life span, its physical span, visibility and static position on the site must appeal to present-day interests and future strategic judgements. This is where policies, the market and professional communities meet. Since there are many good solutions for every design problem in architecture and city planning, the jury's work is characterized by genuine uncertainty, opposing wishes and conflicting ambitions which must be balanced out. Competitions involve making a series of decisions which are difficult to get an overview of; they begin when the programme for the competition assignment is drawn up and last throughout the assessment process, until the winner is finally chosen.

Although I have some critical reflections I would like to point out, in conclusion, that the competition form has many positive aspects for the building sector. It is hardly a coincidence that the buildings mentioned as good examples in architectural history books and which architects keep referring to in their rhetoric, have come about through architectural competitions. A surprising number of award-winning architectural and building projects are the result of competitions. It seems that architectural competitions are an institution that generates development and creativity. Competitions give the town planning offices and promoters the possibility of choosing an architect according to a documented decision. Thanks to competitions, architectural assignments are negotiated with quality in mind. Making a choice according to hourly wage can hardly be considered a better method. I believe the important advantages of architectural competitions are the bringing together of different interests, the system's innovative influence and the possibility of creating a foundation for qualified assessment at an early stage in the complex competition assignment.

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