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IS THERE AN «IMPURE» USE OF THE COMPETITION FOR AN URBANISTIC PROJECT OF ARCHITECTURE? TWO CONTEMPORARY, POLITICAL CASES IN COPENHAGEN

GERD BLOXHAM ZETTERSTEN, MAJA SANDBERG

Abstract

The overall aim of this study is to understand some of the issues raised by competitions for urbanistic projects in engagement with the political process. While accounting for an investigation of two contemporary, large-scale competition cases in Copenhagen—for an urban residential project and a harbour-side office-and-cultural building—the chosen viewpoint is that of the future user, the public. The two examples of competitions have been selected because they differ greatly; however, both have misfired, in that the first project has been called off and the second strongly delayed. Even when one client is municipal with a declared political agenda, and the other private, yet directly linked to the cultural politics of the government and the socioeconomic aims of the municipality's politicians, a question of an «impure» use of the competition concept in both cases has appeared justified.

Consequently, one line of inquiry has been to explore what the objectives for the two competitions may have been, by comparing the form of the competitions, as represented, with a hypothetical agenda. The two cases appear to illustrate the problem in complementary ways: the first, the political/manipulative use of the architectural competition as a political tool, in a political show; the second, a make-believe use of the label or concept of competition, but in reality in a non-transparent selection procedure for professional competence.

The method employed is an «explicative» mode-of-approach, and it is partly abductive in character. As there is some shortage of relevant theorization, the paper is structured as a triangulation of angles of questioning. Therefore it concludes, following an overview of the two case processes and an analysis of competition form with regard to client-architect collaboration, with a proposed analogy of a micro/macro model. Here competition procedures within public architecture and urban planning are compared to democratic praxis in its societal dimension.

Key words:

Public architecture, Architectural competition, Interview competition, Political agenda, Client-architect collaboration, Democratic praxis

Introduction

From the perspective of the public, and the public media, serious questions may result from what is being understood as apparent misuse or even malpractice in relation to costly public undertakings such as a competition for a public project conducted within the political sphere. In a Nordic country, feelings run strong against what is seen as undemocratic behaviour by involved parties in a procedure that will have consequences for the public interest. In a complex context of diverging interests of actors and groups, or alternatively, of suspected concealment of real agenda, the questions may loom large: What is the real-life objective of the use of a competition? Or putting it differently, when reality does not seem to agree with the ideal representation, may there be an «impure» use of the competition concept in a particular case? Can it be true that the political odds of the competition situation are of overwhelming importance to the outcome, as often claimed (Sagalyn 2006)? On a principal level questions such as these have triggered the present study. On the level of the competition—and in an extension, the competition scenario—seen as a «social technology» (Kreiner 2010), the question of communication between involved parties is becoming increasingly relevant.

Two possible case stories have been selected, as they have given grounds for correlative questioning. They concern two very different contemporary, large-scale projects in Copenhagen which have both met with considerable protest actions: One, a municipal residential development project (called off); the other, a private harbour-side «cultural» complex of office space, originally for the client (a function now cancelled) as well as for client-related building sector firms, for DAC [The Danish Architectural Center] facilities and also about 30 larger apartments (the project delayed but on-going).¹

Mode-of-approach

...for the competition cannot be separated from the beliefs that have been invested in it. Hélène Lipstadt (2006, 10)

Research on present-day competitions of public and urbanistic interest in engagement with the political process is a growing field, but is still scant, as regards relevant theorization. The field of the architectural competition itself may have remained an autonomous precinct, as Hélène Lipstadt has shown using a Bourdieuan argumentation (Lipstadt 2009). But that field's unavoidable interaction with the political sphere in the public project has not been sufficiently illuminated as yet to form basis for mapping and hence theorization. Such research has also been claimed to be potentially problematic in that much evidence is anecdotal in character, and that conclusions may at times be derived by insecure inference, bordering on the speculative.²

- 1 The entire facts research regarding the case histories was carried out by Maja Sandberg, as two out of five case studies, for her MA-thesis: *Arkitekturens vilkår i dag. En diskussion af de tendenser og vilkår, der styrer bygge- og beslutningsprocessen i nye arkitekturprojekter i København* [The conditions of present-day architecture. A discussion of the tendencies and conditions that affect the building and decision processes in new architectural projects in Copenhagen], Copenhagen University, December 2009. A number of revisions and elaborations have been undertaken in regard to the present paper as written in May 2010, also reflecting the then current status of the projects described. As of June 2011, one significant change in the Bryghusgrunden project is that the client Realdania has withdrawn the planned use of own office space in the new building; that space will now be let to business firms.
- 2 For various assumptions, cf. both essays and commentaries in transcripts of panel discussions in Malmberg (ed.) 2006. See also the following discussion.

However, in this paper three research contributions in particular will form a frame of reference. The main contribution which is one of great merit towards the formulation of diverse lines of questioning and research was the co-sponsored conference on «The Politics of Design: competitions for public projects» held at the Princeton School of Architecture in November 2005 (Malmberg (ed.) 2006). Its papers and commentaries from various sides turned out to be significant, precisely because the conference brought together a group of experienced practitioners from different walks, meaning here policymakers, developers, designers, planners and researchers, representing differing viewpoints within the wider context of the public project. In this cross-layering of individual commentaries, a clear picture emerged of the many issues and themes involved and the sometimes opposing modes of approach in handling them. This in itself would make for a socio-political or even ethnographic study. At the same time, the offerings of insight concerned with the politics of the public competition situation, and as presented in the conference proceedings, constitute a manner of documentation. For the purposes of this paper they might be likened to a sounding-board.

The method employed in the following review of implications of the two case stories is an «explicative» mode-of-approach. The argumentation, leaning on sparse or indirect, but accountable, information as presented to the public, and attempting to respond to and explain an apparently surprising set of evidence — a problem— is partly abductive in character; but it also pursues a deductive course of reasoning, dependent on hypotheses. For this reason the presentation is structured as a triangulation of angles of questioning (cf. Johansson 2000 and 2002). We suggest that these angles of questioning also may be regarded as one hypothesis, evolving by stages to find its tentative conclusion in a final analogy.

This device divides the paper into three distinct parts, with shifts in perspective. After an initial overview and discussion of the two case processes, where the first case is shown to point towards the open use of the competition as part of a political strategy, in contrast to the second case where such use appears concealed, an analysis of a specific problem follows in the second part. It analyses the so-called «interview competition» form used in the second of the two cases, leading on to a review of client-architect collaboration. This is where another contribution to the research field, Jack A Nasar's investigation of a possible democratic praxis in the carrying-out of public competitions, is used as a relevant angle of questioning (Nasar 1999). Nasar's research venture has been labelled «instrumentalist rather than critical» (Lipstadt 2006, 24); however, it constitutes a boost in an attempt at a constructive analysis.

In the final part the shift in perspective is provided here by the Danish researcher Karina Sehested as representing one international research group on governance and newer network democracy (Sehested 2002 and

Bogason et al. (eds.) 2004). This is where an analogy is proposed of a micro/macro model, comparing the competition set-up of the second case with a form of network governance. Hereby the analogy suggests as one possible reading a macro-scale scenario, in which a competition procedure was used as a kind of outer wrapping – an empty shell – for a political network activity promoting an agenda which was in all probability predetermined as regards outcome.

Overview

The two case processes in their political dimension. A discussion

Public architecture can be understood as a reflection of a culture's view of itself. It's a means of demonstrating what a community sees as important, of projecting a sense of its values to itself, and to the outside world. [...] A competitive process is a means of drawing public attention to a project. It is a way to trigger a debate about the characteristics of a significant project and to make clear the criteria by which a decision was made. [...]

Competitions are regarded within the architectural world almost as motherhood and apple pie issues, concepts that nobody could reasonably question, presented as good deeds in an unkind world. They are understood as an expression of disinterested commitment to quality.
Deyan Sudjic (2006, 55)

As regards the actual competitions in the two case processes it should be made clear from the start that they differed entirely in respect of their adherence to established norms and rules in Denmark at that time. The first one, a two-phase competition, was conducted in cooperation with the Danish Architects' Association which also appointed the architect members of the jury.³ The second, so called «interview competition», was privately arranged, entirely detached from the Danish Architects' Association, from which the client was not obligated to seek advice or cooperation, on the grounds that the competition concerned a new building project. This principle in Denmark applies to both public and private agents.⁴ Generally, rules in Denmark and Norway have recently been loosened up in relation to the habitual competition systems in Sweden and Finland.

Therefore, we open with the assumption that in a traditional Danish perspective both competition scenarios, or (putting it more precisely) selection processes as regards project and architect, respectively, in the two cases may be claimed to have passed off in a highly untraditional way; in the following, we shall briefly outline the main points of the political evolution of each case. For a chronological outline of each case, please see the attached Timeline: *The Phases of the Project*.

3 Architect members of the jury appointed by the Danish Architects' Association for the Kløvermarken competition were: Arkitekt SAR/MSA Mats Olsson (leader of the jury/formand for dommerkomiteen), Landskabsarkitekt MDL MAA Torben Schønherr, Arkitekt MNAL Robert Greenwood, Professor arkitekt MAA Jens Kvorning»: <http://www.arkitektforeningen.dk/kloevermarkskvartret>, visited on 1 December 2011.

4 In a telephone inquiry on 30.11.2011 by Maja Sandberg to Bent Kolding, Architect MAA and Competition Adviser for The Danish Architects' Association, Kolding stated: «The Brewery Site project has not been arranged in cooperation with the Danish Architects' Association. Realea (subsidiary of the Realdania Foundation) was not obligated to arrange competitions regarding new construction in cooperation with the Danish Architects' Association.» In another inquiry on 5.12.2011 Kolding confirmed the general principle of the free choice and self-dependence of agents in the case of new construction.

In the municipal Kløvermarken cheap housing prestige project there was originally no thought at all of a competition. The first architectural proposal that was adopted by the Municipality for implementation was a product of an apparently impromptu consensus of two actors. They were: On the one side of the arena, Copenhagen's Social Democrat lord mayor Ritt Bjerregaard, acting on a decisive electoral promise called «5x5x5» [5000 dwellings at a rent of 5000DKK in 5 years], and being herself the prime prompter of the project together with members of supporting left-wing parties; on the other side, BIG [Bjarke Ingels Group] Architects who put forward a project solution ostensibly on their own initiative as a gift at her election. The competition measure was openly used as a secondary solution, and only at a later stage, namely after massive public protest. It was called for by the close colleague of Bjerregaard in the Municipality administration, Klaus Bondam [the leader of the Technical and Environmental Committee, and himself a member of the Social Liberal party], who together with Bjerregaard had been an eager initiator of the entire political prestige venture, but who now attempted to disassociate himself politically from it. The democratically uncensored project agreement with BIG Architects was now recognized as a highly problematic, too unorthodox, undertaking. In fact it stood in direct conflict with the norms of a Nordic country, and certainly with the custom in Denmark, where the habitual procedure regarding a major public project is an open ideas competition followed by extensive public debate.

The competition task was for an urban development. An open prequalification phase with 50 entries was followed by a «restricted ideas competition» for eight teams. BIG participated with a 2nd, modified, attempt at a solution, but theirs was not the winning project. Instead the selected proposal, «The Green River», by Vandkunsten Architects and KLAR, extended the original development site past its given borderline closer to a problematic oil storage area [Prøvestenen], which soon meant that it was proposed—in an internal note from the Technical and Environmental Administration—for the site to be examined for security. This in its turn gave one of the original political supporting parties in the City Council of the whole scheme, SF [The Socialist People's Party], the opportunity to actually pull out, thereby losing majority support in the council for the whole venture. At an earlier point SF had also questioned the size of BIG's proposed housing scheme, causing it to be reduced by 1/3 [from 3000 to 2000 units]. The action of pulling-out was carried through in spite of the fact that the security test was found to negate the risk,⁵ approving the project for implementation after «some changes» to the foundation site estimated at 12 million DKK and aiming to secure the area further. But SF now claimed, additionally, that both financing and infrastructure were in question—in total, «the sum of uncertainties is constant». By then, the various preparatory measures including the competition had cost 9 million DKK, of which the Municipality paid out well over 7 million. In the face of continued public protest a coalition grouping from both right-

5 The security test was undertaken by the engineering firm COWI.

and leftwing parties voted shortly afterwards to shelve this political urbanization project for good, allowing the proposed site, *Kløvermarken*, to continue in its former function as one large recreational sports area.

Even from this brief overview, suggesting politically strategic manoeuvring, it seems arguable that in the *Kløvermarken* case an established form of architectural competition was used as an instrument for a political/rhetorical purpose, and NOT in order to seek out the best urban development/design project. For a client to use the competition for openly political motivations may be regarded as misuse of the competition seen as a solution-seeking public undertaking. «The competition can be a way to create a sense of event around the building» (Sudjic 2006, 61) is a related example of a misguided motivation.

When it comes to the cultural complex-cum-private offices case on *Bryghusgrunden* or the Brewery Site, drafting a similar overview, it will seem reasonable to claim that the label or, at best, the concept only of a competition was used, as considered in the traditional democratic Danish perspective. However, from this same Danish perspective, we offer the hypothesis that this concept has been used almost deceptively, easing the process in the public view, to conceal a different type of closed network campaign on the part of the private client and those working in a tacit understanding or even in liaison with the client. In the public view, a whole set of rules and norms were being bent to accommodate the project, which included by-passing current planning regulations in the proposed use of the building site.

To both the general public and the inhabitants of the *Bryghusgrunden* locality it has been a problem from the start that the proposed multifunctional building, of non-proportional dimensions in its relation to the older built context, is offered as a «cultural» complex which will—in part—be open to the public. In this respect the building breaks with and departs from the current District Plan and its regulations concerning allocated uses of this centrally placed, historical area. The fact, too, is that only about 25% of the building is projected to be occupied by the DAC facilities, and within that space only part—exhibition rooms, auditoria, conference rooms, a children’s room with the latest technology—will be open to the public, together with a café/ restaurant and possibly a microbrewery, a so-called «brewpub», and a bookshop. It should be added here that DAC itself, though described by Realdania as «a self-owning institution», is «based on a partnership between» Realdania and three ministries; here the two sides, the private foundation and the state ministries, each own 50%.⁶

These circumstances have led to the formation of a militant protest group, *Bryghusgruppen*, which has raised a number of official complaints. *Bryghusgruppen* in its turn is supported by the Inner City Local

6 Cf. Fonden Realdania: *Bryghusgrunden*. Prækvalifikation og udvælgelse af arkitekt. 31. Marts 2006, p. 15; as regards the percentage, information from Ingeborg Hau, DAC, on 12.4.2010.

Committee [*Indre By Lokaludvalg*] which functions as a connecting link between the politicians in the City Council and the inhabitants of the inner city of Copenhagen. There is, however, some compromising overlap as regards persons between these two bodies.

In the brief overview of the traditional politics factor as involving the Municipality in its relation to the powerful private client, the «strategic» foundation Realdania, with a stated philanthropic mission in regard to both Danish architecture and building enterprise,⁷ it seems relevant that the same leftwing rule of the city of Copenhagen was in office as in the *Kløvermarken* case throughout both planning and projecting periods. At the same time this is a period in which the government has remained neo-liberal/conservative and always in opposition to the leftwing Municipality rule, often attempting to block Municipality strategies and measures. One example might be mentioned, precisely from the *Kløvermarken* case story, which is the initial battle between the State Administration for Greater Copenhagen—a sub-branch of the Ministry of the Interior—and the Municipality about the Fund for Cheap Housing, which the Municipality had instituted as the formal client of the *Kløvermarken* housing project. The battle concerned the right in law to transfer the site from the Municipality to the client by sale and at what cost, and also the degree of close collaboration between these two bodies, something that is not allowed in law.⁸

However, what one might surmise is that the two sides, rightwing government/state administration and leftwing Municipality rule, inter-lock in diverse ways when it comes to rhetorical posturing in its relation to political agenda. The Realdania foundation operates within this spectrum as a third party financing power or free agent with strong nation-building interests that no one is likely to oppose for fear of withdrawn financial support.

The particular constellation of political forces and actors appears relevant in a discussion of power elitist networking for two reasons. The first reason, immediately relating to the Brewery Site, is that both the aforementioned District Plan of the site area [no. 236, Christians Brygge, of February 1994] and the Municipal Plan [2005] must be revised to accommodate the project. One will be replaced by a new District Plan [no. 437, made public in 2009], the other will receive a Municipal Plan Addition [no. 23, also of 2009], both after hearings in the City Council. It seems remarkable that the Municipality initiated the preparation for a new district plan and an addition to the Municipal Plan *before* Realdania invited architect firms to apply for prequalification for the subsequent «interview competition».⁹ This is further complicated by the fact that in the Copenhagen 2009 Budget Agreement the parties involved stated that they agree to vote *for* Realdania's project, meaning to say, before the public

7 Quoted from Realdania's main home page: «Realdania is a strategic foundation created with the objective of initiating and supporting projects that improve the built environment. Our mission is to improve quality of life for the common good through the built environment». Cf. Realdania 2010 (internet reference). Realdania was established in late 2000 following a merger between two large financial institutions. Cf. Therkelsen 2008, p. 30.

8 Cf. Maja Sandberg's data collation and analysis in *Brainstorm*, 25.3.2010. «Kommunen afviser, at Statsforvaltningen Hovedstaden kan gå ind i en dybtgående undersøgelse af kommunens ressourceanvendelse i forbindelse med projektet, fordi man mener, at det ligger uden for Statsforvaltningens tilsynsopgave. Ritt Bjerregaard bakkes op af politiløg Gunnar Gjelstrup fra Roskilde Universitetscenter, som udtaler, at en kommune har en frihed til at bruge penge til mange ting og at det altid vil være genstand for fortolkning. Han vurderer, at det rejser spørgsmål om, hvad tilsynet lægger til grund for sine beslutninger. Cf. Politiken 2007a (internet reference). Socialdemokraternes repræsentant i Borgerrepræsentationen, Anne Vang, sætter også spørgsmålstegn ved Statsforvaltningens motiver til at føre tilsyn. Anne Vang beskylder altså regeringen for at føre partipolitik med statsforvaltningen som instrument. Statsforvaltningen afviser, at dette skulle være tilfældet.» Cf. Politiken 2007b (internet reference).

9 Quoted from Realdania's prequalification program: Det er derfor en forudsætning for realisering af det planlagte byggeri på Bryghusgrunden at der via kommuneplantillæg m.v. skabes reviderede planmæssige forudsætninger. Denne proces igangsættes primo 2006 [...] Lokalplanproceduren iværksættes i samarbejde med Københavns Kommune. Cf. Realdania 2006, p. 21.

hearings have even been initiated. One may be led to think that the outcome was predetermined.¹⁰

The second reason is that the Municipality's often stated, recent ambition, which in this respect coincides with that of the neo-liberal/conservative national government, has become one of putting Copenhagen on the map architecturally. Meanwhile *The Government* has signed itself as the author of «Danish Architectural Policy 2007» – in fact developed over time since the mid-1990s—in the publication *A Nation of Architecture Denmark: Settings for Life and Growth* (Ministry of Culture 2007). One result of this new and in effect shared ambition has been the urban planning concept of the so called Metropole Zone of Copenhagen, inside which the Brewery site is located: The architect selected to assist as the Municipality's sparring partner in the master planning in the introductory phase was the same one who won the *Bryghusgrunden* «interview competition», Rem Koolhaas of OMA; regarding the Metropole Zone planning, Ellen van Loon who is partner at OMA, also participated.

Specific analysis: The client-architect relation and the public view.

The so called «interview competition»

As regards what was labelled in Danish an «interviewkonkurrence» [interview competition] we offer as a hypothesis that the designation was used in the *Bryghusgrunden* case as a rhetorical embellishment in an attempt to secure public recognition via the established term «competition», and thereby acceptance of the project to follow. The truth as manifested on one level of analysis, was that a selection procedure in combination with forms for collaboration lasting the entirety of the projecting process—which were new in 2006 to Danish practice—were in fact purposefully being introduced to Denmark by the client Realdania, as according to their «The program for the prequalification and selection of an architect firm» document of 31 March 2006 (Realdania 2006). Here it is claimed to be the fourth and final step of «the building mission»; it is a demand on their part that the building project will match Realdania's ambition to show new approaches—also within the development of processes and organization in building enterprise [«vise veje frem—også inden for procesudvikling og organisering i byggeriet» (Realdania 2006, p.6 and 12)]. And under the heading of «Interview-competition» Realdania writes on their internet press release page:

An important part of the process is the identification, through an interview-based competition, of a highly qualified architect of international stature who can actively engage in the development of the building on the Brewery Site. This is, in Danish terms, an untraditional approach. According to Flemming Borreskov [CEO of the Realdania Foundation]: «We are first of all looking to select an architect and not a project, thus there is not [sic] mention of a traditional architecture competition.

10 Cf. Maja Sandberg's data collation and analysis in *Brainstorm*, 25.3.2010. «I budgetforliget for Københavns Kommune indgået mellem Socialdemokraterne, De Konservative, Venstre og Dansk Folkeparti indførte man: «Parterne er enige om at stemme for Bryghusgrund-projektet». Cf. Københavns Kommune 2008a, p. 27. Formuleringen blev altså indført før den ifølge Planloven obligatoriske offentlige høring var iværksat (primo nov. 2008 til medio jan. 2009). Den usædvanlige formulering fik modstanderne af Bryghus-projektet til at kalde dialogen mellem Realea og kommunen for en skueproces. Da Borgerrepræsentationen skal tage stilling til lokalplan «Bryghusgrunden» med henblik på offentlig høring, ønsker Det Radikale Venstre, SF og Enhedslisten, hvad angår budgetforligets formulering, at føre til protokol at de naturligvis vil tage de indkomne høringssvar til efterretning. Cf. Københavns Kommune 2008b. Selv frikender Teknik- og Miljøforvaltningen og Økonomiforvaltningen formuleringen, fordi de anser den som en legitim politisk tilkendegivelse, naturligvis med forbehold for planprocessen og den endelige vedtagelse» Cf. Københavns Kommune 2009.

The advantage of this is the active role that the architect can come to play, in collaboration with us and the other consultants, in programming the overall project, where there still are a number of open-ended questions.»¹¹

In their program document Realdania proceed to make it clear where the impulse for the new method-of-approach is derived from. The new selection procedure Realdania claims to have imported from the US:

Inspired by the organization of the process in major, complex American building projects, the selection of architect, engineer and contractor is meant to be undertaken against the background of an open and fair dialogue-based selection procedure at an early point in the sequence, so that the parties involved can contribute to the qualifying work on the project before it is finally turned into a brief. The selection procedure which is based on prequalification and invitation should—according to American experience—strengthen both the process and the final result, just as this initiative will introduce a new procedure for selection of collaborating partners in the Danish building sector. (Realdania 2006, p.12; our translation)

But the trouble from the Danish viewpoint, then, is that the innovative «open and fair dialogue-based selection procedure» as recently introduced in present-day US praxis was NOT, apparently, used. According to Kristian Kreiner, one researcher who has investigated the dialogue-based architectural competition form, it is «characterized by an extensive interaction and communication between all parties involved» (Kreiner 2010).¹² Instead the selection procedure which was launched by Realdania and then copied in the media as an «interview competition»,¹³ is in reality identical—as far as can be detected—to the so called «Competitive Interview» (cf. British RIBA Competitions Guidelines).¹⁴ As far as can be seen, too, this term or concept is mentioned nowhere in the Danish case. In the *Bryghusgrunden* case, what took place was evidently a series of prequalified job interviews, of which three were of pre-invited international architects of renown and three were chosen on the basis of the prequalification element of the procedure.

This two-part procedure, prequalification and selection, thus turns out to bear close resemblance to what in the US is commonly practiced as Request for Qualifications [RFQ] with a subsequent Request for Proposals [RFP].¹⁵ However, in these forms, described as «open calls» the actual interview competition element is lacking. As an illustration, one description of this procedure is here fetched from a so called NAATAP Guide, where NAATAP stands for The Native American and Alaskan Technical Assistance Project, based in Washington D.C. (Cf. The Native American and Alaskan Technical Assistance Project /NAATAP 2010).

11 <http://www.realdania.dk/Presse/Nyheder/2006/Brewery+Site+31-03-06.aspx>

12 Cf. e.g. the Princeton conference proceedings, Malmberg (ed.) 2006, where various combinations of open competition and interview process is described in various places, but in particular by Lipstadt (p. 9), Sudjic, calling it a «Hybrid Solution» (p. 63), and Stan Allen (p.79).

13 The term «interviewkonkurrence» [interview competition] is used by Realdania in their annual magazine. Cf. Realdania 2007, p. 23 and in their press release 2008 under «Fakta». Cf. Realdania 2008 (internet reference). The term is also used by the Bryghusprojektet [Brewery Site project] on their main home page under press releases. Cf. Bryghusprojektet 2010 (internet reference) and Bryghusprojektet 2006 (internet reference). The editor-in-chief of the architectural journal, *Arkitekten*, Birgitte Kleis, introduces the term to the architectural community in connection with the announcement of Rem Koolhaas as winner. Cf. Kleis 2006, p. 16.

14 RIBA defines the term «competitive interview» in this way: «*Competitive Interview: Used to identify the right designer, at an early stage of project development. Only a broad brief is required, with a commitment to appoint the winner. Designers submit examples of previous work and relevant experience from which a shortlist is selected for interview.*» Cf. RIBA 2010 (internet reference).

15 This information was first given to Gerd Bloxham Zettersten in an interview with John G. Ellis, AIA, RIBA, Principal, Director of Urban Design, Daniel Solomon Design Partners, San Francisco, on 5.4.2010. The RFO or the RFP are also described in e.g. Lipstadt 2006, 9, but here as «open calls that lead to the designating of a short list of invited competitors».

The first step in hiring an architect and/or engineering firm for your project is determining your project needs and scope of work. By establishing your needs up front and publishing them with your RFQ and/or RFP you will allow architects to submit proposals and qualifications that speak directly to your needs. This in turn would allow you to determine the best candidate for the project. An important part of the RFQ/RFP process is developing a rating system that will allow you to rank the architects and develop a short list of qualified firms to interview. Also critical to the RFQ/RFP process is the establishment of an «consultant selection committee» and the development of overall evaluation criteria. [...]

Request for Qualifications – This is typically the first step of the selection process and is used when the owner has not defined the scope of work for their project. The RFQ requests information about architectural firms and the teams that they will provide to complete the design and engineering tasks. It will typically ask for firm information, project team members, project experience and any other unique qualifications that the firm may have that would be reason to select them for the project. The RFQ traditionally will not ask for a fee for the project. After the qualifications have been received by the owner, reviewed and ranked, the owner is then ready to go to the next step and publish an RFP, which will summarize the scope of work and request a fee proposal. As noted above, an RFQ could be incorporated into the RFP in the interest of expediting the overall process.

Request for Proposals – After a short list of qualified architectural firms has been selected, the RFP process will allow the firms to provide a detailed project approach and fee proposal for the project. The RFP will provide the architectural firms with a detailed scope of work for the project, including relevant terms and conditions. This process allows the architect to provide a fee based on concrete project information with a full understanding of the project complexities and scope. In smaller projects, where the project does not have a difficult scope, it is possible to skip the RFQ and issue an RFP directly in order to streamline the process. In such a case, the RFP should be published as widely as possible in order to maximize the number of quality responses.

A selection committee should draft the RFQ and RFP, participate in dissemination of the RFQ and RFP, collect references for applicants, evaluate qualifications, interview candidates and rank the firms for selection. [...]

From the perspective of the Danish public and the practicing architects the problem of this privately arranged, so called competition turned out to be twofold: (a) a non-neutral «evaluation committee» [«bedømmelseskomite»]: in fact a group of eight people who were either client

representatives (3) or biased consultants (3), two of whom were top architectural/planning civil servants in the Municipality, as well as representatives (2) of institutions more or less directly related to the client Realdania,¹⁶ and (b) no record, no written evaluation or other documentary material whatsoever resulting from the interview and evaluation procedure, at least as available to the public.¹⁷ In a more normal, or habitual, situation, the Danish Architects' Association would have appointed one third of the jury according to competition rules. The arrangement in 2006 was entirely sealed and lacking in all transparency, in spite of Realdania's original, multiple declarations to the contrary.¹⁸

When involved, the Danish Architects' Association has subsequently begun to accept competitions that are not based on anonymity. The new competition rules from 2007 open up for dialogue between participants and assessors concerning the final building program and project design.¹⁹

«Impure» use of the architectural competition concept?

Even when one client is municipal with a declared political agenda, and the other private, yet at the same time directly linked to the cultural politics of the government and the socioeconomic aims of the municipality's politicians, a question of an «impure» use of the competition appears justified in both cases. Even in the preceding brief overview of the case stories in their political dimension we have seen that inside each overall scenario the means employed to attain a political end have been highly problematic, something which has been recognized by the public, the media and residents of the localities. Their well-organized protests have in both cases affected the subsequent use of the competition results: In the *Kløvermarken* case the project was called off, and in the *Bryghusgrunden* case, it has been seriously delayed.

When questioning the use of the competition as «impure» one must obviously stress the difference between a competition concept and an—apparent—competition procedure. But, in accordance with the foregoing analysis of the case stories in their overruling political dimension, we must conclude that

(a) in the *Kløvermarken* case, an established form of architectural competition procedure, following the competition rules, was used as an instrument for a political/rhetorical purpose, and not primarily in order to seek out the best urban development/design project;

and, altogether differently,

- 16 The composition of the group, according to Maja Sandberg, Brainstorm, 25.3.2010.
- adm. direktør i Realdania Flemming Borreskov, næstformand i DAC's bestyrelse;
 - direktør i Realdania Hans Peter Svendler (med i Bygningsarvs* bestyrelse);
 - adm. direktør i Realea A/S Peter Cederfeld (med i Bygningsarvs* bestyrelse);
 - planchef i Københavns Kommune Holger Bisgaard;
 - stadsarkitekt i Københavns Kommune Jan Christiansen;
 - tidligere stadsbyggnadsdirektør i Malmø Mats Olsson;
 - adm. direktør i DAC Kent Martinussen:
 - rektor for Kunstakademiets Arkitektskole Sven Felding (med i Bygningsarvs* bestyrelse).
- * Bygningsarv er et rådgivnings- og videncenter med kompetencer inden for bygningsarv og kulturmiljøer. Dansk Bygningsarv A/S er ejet af Bygningsarvsfonden. Fonden blev stiftet af Realdania i 2009.

- 17 Statement in telephone inquiry by Maja Sandberg to Peter Fangel Poulsen, Head Project Manager of the Realdania subsidiary Realea, on 25.3.2010.

- 18 Cf. e.g. Realdania 2006, p. 23: «Der lægges vægt [...] på en fair og transparent udvælgelsesprocedure.» [Stress is being laid on a fair and transparent selection procedure.]

- 19 In the newer Danish Architects' Association's 2007 regulations for competition forms there is both an «Indbudt etapekonkurrence med dialog» [an invited two-phase competition with dialogue] and a «Programdialogkonkurrence» [a program dialogue competition] which opens up for an early collaboration on the program between the client and the invited firms. There is also a so called «Mini competition» and an «Interactive competition».

(b) in the *Bryghusgrunden* case, the label or the concept only of a competition was used for what turns out to be a fairly commonplace US job employment procedure within urban design and architecture.

One principal aspect, then, of the «impure» use of the architectural competition, whether pursuing ideas or concepts or specific architectonic solutions to a set task, is the nature of the envisaged competition result when it strays from the general aim for an ideal, innovative proposal.

Indeed, we are given to understand by well-established, professionally active American architects, that architectural competitions are used in the US today only in certain spheres, often by municipalities, and often where the publicity aspect is of paramount importance. Hélène Lipstadt described the method-of-approach already in 1989 and seems to have foretold with considerable accuracy the Realdania Brewery Site «interview-based competition» scenario of 2006:

[...]an increase in the use of competitions [...]for the financing/development and the design of enormously valuable urban sides («developer/architect» competitions). In the private sector, the process is popular with some real estate developers, who employ it for buildings on sites that are of similar urban and public significance but are privately owned. As a rule, these competitions are judged solely by the public or private client-owners, giving them the satisfaction of control over architect selection but denying architects the impartiality and expertise of professional jurors. (Lipstadt 1989, p.109)

In an attempt at an illustrative comparison between the Realdania «interview-based competition» and the «model» competition suitable for a «new democratic architecture» as proposed in 1999 by Jack L. Nasar, regarding the different phases or elements of an «ideal» competition procedure, we select his proposal provisionally as a benchmark.²⁰ Nasar's model is mainly founded on a single case study, the Wexner Visual Arts Center competition in 1982-83, where the experts misjudged the public response to the architectural design. Even if Nasar can be criticised for far-reaching conclusions from this one competition and its resulting building in respect of its users, his model may be applied here as a viable hypothesis. It is based on the assumption that competitions should be more successfully democratic in nature, to ensure the completion of a building that is successful to both design profession «outsiders» through artistic statement, and to «insiders» in the user context, responding to functional needs (Nasar 1999, 67f).

20 Nasar 1999; see in particular Part III: Prescriptions.

From such a viewpoint which agrees quite well with a democratic Nordic perspective, one might indeed define the concept of «impurity», when it comes to the projecting of a public building generally, as *non-inclusive of public users* when the process is in fact sealed off from public inspec-

tion or any form of public participation. This is true also in the case of the project for a privately owned building that is offered up by the owner as «public» at least in some of its functions. This definition is one that fits the Realdania Brewery Site venture. Further, the building project was not covered by the EU invitation to tender directive.

So, summing up on a sensible note, it appears clear that the *Bryghusgrunden* competition procedure, being directly influenced from the US, reflects the far greater pragmatism of the Anglo-American competition culture than that of the Nordic countries. There the commission itself has for decades been the one truly significant element in the competition process.

Democratic praxis?

Therefore, as regards the Realdania *Bryghusgrunden* competition, it should be noted first that another basic assumption that Nasar makes is that the client for a complex project—having had control returned to him/them through the process—should be in close communication with prospective designers, who should have been researched in advance by the client in the case of the invited competition (Nasar 1999, 156). This one aspect of pre-competition client-designer communication appears to have been fully resolved in the *Bryghusgrunden* process, granted the fact that the prequalified interview had indeed been researched in advance of the resulting invitation actually to «compete», by definition. Client-architect collaboration in the subsequent project work, which Nasar favours, has also been an aim openly stated by Realdania, but certainly, too, on the client's terms.²¹ Nasar's ideal, on the other hand, has been for the client-architect team to be able to get at «the whole picture» of the project in this way, and not just aesthetic signature design, which Nasar finds is commonly the result of the classic architectural competition procedure and its intended use.

Nasar's model, then, prescribes in-depth research and running evaluations, including Prejury evaluation (ch. 8) for the three parts of the process: I-Programming; II-Management of the jury process; and following construction, III-Postoccupancy evaluation in its relation to predesign research. Nasar claims that the actual selection of the jury, however, is what determines the project outcome—the very building. Stress, then, is laid on unbiased jury evaluations by diverse specialists, and on open proceedings with a formal record: «To make the results accountable to the public, the client should make all jury discussion open and available to the public» (Nasar 1999, 156). These requirements have hardly been met in the *Bryghusgrunden* process, in spite of substantial programming which the jury evaluation of the interviewed architects and of the real-life potential of their offices could well have responded to in an open record. One main hindrance, of course, is that visualizations of actual project solutions had not been required by Realdania, on the contrary, as

21 Cf. Realdania 2006, p 23f: «Selection of architect», and «Prequalification», pt. 1, p.25. In particular, Realdania here states (p. 23): «I overvejelserne om, hvordan procesforløbet og valg af rådgivere – herunder arkitekt – kan tilrettelægges optimalt, er det fundet vigtigt at sikre, at løsninger og idéer ikke fastlåser projektet på et for tidligt stade, idet det kan afstedkomme, at bygherrens interesser ikke tilgodeses i optimalt omfang, og at projektet ikke får den ønskede kvalitet ».

according to their program document; yet that element was indeed present in the interview process, according to a statement by an architect from a participating pre-qualified Danish architectural office.²²

In sum, looking at Nasar's definition of an approach driven by democratic values, one may check the Realdania project and «competition» procedure against an outline of differences between formalistic and democratic design which he uses in the course of his argumentation (Nasar 1999, table 9.1., 165). The choice of the world-renowned architect Rem Koolhaas of OMA who was pre-invited and then selected by Realdania is a highly likely choice, due to OMA's speciality in urbanistic interventions in combination with challenging architectonic strategies, around the world. If one supplements the designation «formalistic» with «(exclusive) signature design» and «democratic» with «public-inclusive», one finds that

- A. where formalistic/signature design is: *authoritarian*, the public-inclusive design project is: *democratic*, while Realdania's Brewery site design project appears to be *make-believe democratic*;
- B. where formalistic/signature design is: *top-down*, the public-inclusive project is: *bottom-up*, while Realdania's Brewery site project turns out to be *top-down*;
- C. where formalistic/signature design is: *exclusive*, the public-inclusive project is: *inclusive*, while Realdania's Brewery site design project appears to be *make-believe inclusive* while in fact formulated by a biased elite (the client together with advisers);
- D. where formalistic/signature design is characterized by: *decisions coming from the designer*, the public-inclusive design project is characterized by *user-and-client involvement*, while Realdania's Brewery site design project is characterized by *client+designer+consultants' decisions*;
- E. where formalistic/signature design is: *monumental*, the public-inclusive project is: *human-oriented*, while Realdania's Brewery site design project appears both *monumental* AND *make-believe public-spirited*.

In this analysis it appears to be what we have termed the *make-believe* element that would establish Realdania's use of the competition concept and procedure as «impure». In the more traditional analysis, unconcerned with political planning, the designation «impure» might be used as denoting lack of fairness within the procedure itself—and not least, in relation to the participating competitors, the designers who will hardly

22 Statement by Eva Hviid-Nielsen of 3XN, Copenhagen, in conversation with Gerd Bloxham Zettersten on 24.3.2010. The office had among other things presented a film visualization.

have been subject to a fair evaluation. However, no doubt they will have been well aware that this was the name of the game.

Concluding discussion

Design competitions are commissioned for many reasons, almost none of which have to do with design and all of which have to do with political motivations. A political agenda always presides over the important but ancillary search for new design possibilities, innovative solutions, or a compelling architectural or urban vision.

Lynne B. Sagalyn (2006, 29)

Competition procedures vs. societal dimension

The field of the architectural competition itself may well have remained an autonomous precinct, as H  l  ne Lipstadt has shown using her Bourdieuan argumentation, but the political odds of the competition situation, viewed as a stage-set, may, as we have seen, be of overwhelming importance to the outcome. The two case studies reviewed here support this claim. Present-day politicians have extended their politics from urban planning into the central architectural domain, now also infiltrating the architects' own professional skills of evaluating architectonics. The political project may start as a rhetorical vision but will most certainly end openly as an economic issue whilst tackling public resistance against location, function and aesthetics.

However, this course will hardly apply to the ideological aim of a competent and powerful private foundation that has made it a mission to improve the urban built environment on its own terms. To achieve their aim, the Realdania Foundation has specialized as a professional client in architectural and urban projects. Furthermore, the findings of the review of the *Bryghusgrunden* project seem to indicate that the foundation operates in close proximity to political policy networks which would indubitably strengthen their case in signature and complex urban projects.

The Realdania Foundation activity obviously differs from the commonplace political phenomenon of rhetorical posturing in its relation to political agenda. It is when extending interest in a societal dimension that more relevant concepts may be identified, such as *discourse coalition* and *policy network*. And it is in new research on democratic governance, such as that undertaken by the scholarly Demo-Net group of Denmark, the Netherlands and the United States, that one may find significant perspectives on newer, opposing forms for democratic behaviour in representative versus extra-formal democracy, as reflected both in theory and in practice.²³ Concepts such as *top-down* and *bottom-up* are current in the research field of government/governance studies. In the review of the present case studies as examples of political/urban will expressed by opposing factions, Karina Sehested's case analysis of a long drawn-

²³ In particular, we here refer to the book, *Tampering with Tradition. The Unrealized Authority of Democratic Agency*, an anthology of eleven essays accounting for separate research studies, and edited by Peter Bogason, Sandra Kensen and Hugh Miller, in 2004.

out civic struggle about a projected city mall in the small historical town of Helsingør has given cause for instructive comparisons.²⁴ The story illustrates, in particular, the gradual emergence of the *policy network* understood as clusters of inter-dependent actors, within a fragmented but vital *network democracy* in which proponents and opponents of projects will succeed or fail in relation to their affiliations and ability to consolidate with local government and local practice.

In conclusion, then, it is with reference to the emergence of contemporary governance forms that a parallel, present-day evolution suggests itself inside the two spheres: competition procedures within public architecture and urban planning as compared to large-scale democratic praxis in its societal dimension. Such a finding also appears to be supported by a present-day discussion within sociology that upholds an interactive relation between agents on a micro level and social structures on a macro level. This parallel may be viewed as an analogy of a micro/macro model:

(a) the classic architectural competition carried out via rules and evaluated by a jury of neutral participants as compared to—in its relation to—a selection procedure via interviews without formal record, assisted by a group of non-neutral advisers as partaking in a policy network;

AND

(b) hierarchical/vertical, representative democracy with its stated formal rules and allocative character as compared to—in its relation to—the new extra-formal, integrative democracy, manifested through horizontally structured urban governance, where both forms operate through policy networks but of very different composition.

Whether this analogy has any real bearing on the understanding of an «impure» use of the architectural competition may be discussed further in the light of a new, widened sociological discourse.

24 Sehested 2004: This essay presents a comprehensive account of the detailed case study published in Sehested 2002.



1. *The Kløvermarken* location with the winning project by Vandkunsten



The Kløvermarken Project by BIG [Bjarke Ingels Group]



2. *Bryghusgrunden/The Brewery Site*:
The location for the winning project by
Rem Koolhaas and OMA.



The winning *Bryghusgrunden/The
Brewery Site Project* by Rem Koolhaas
and OMA.

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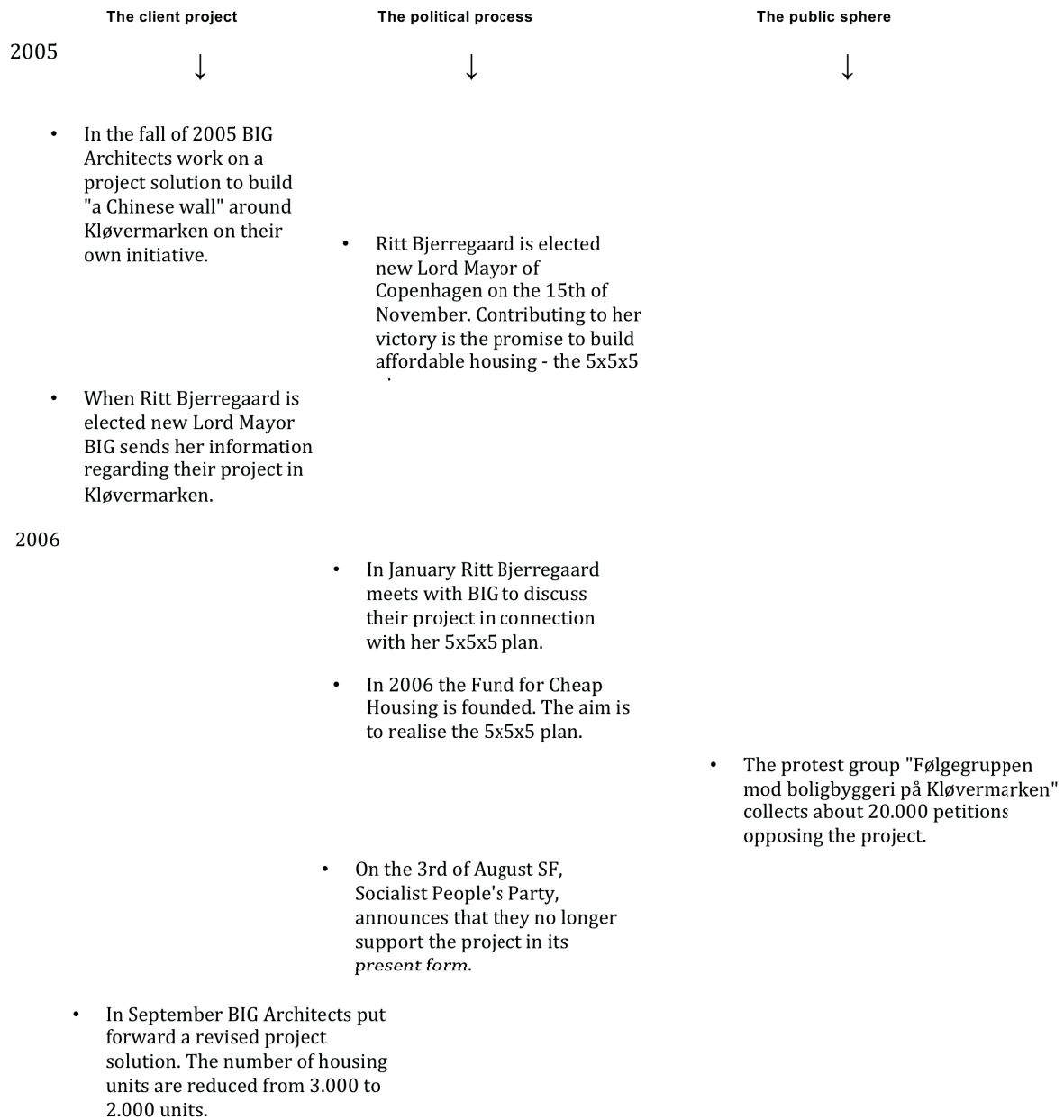
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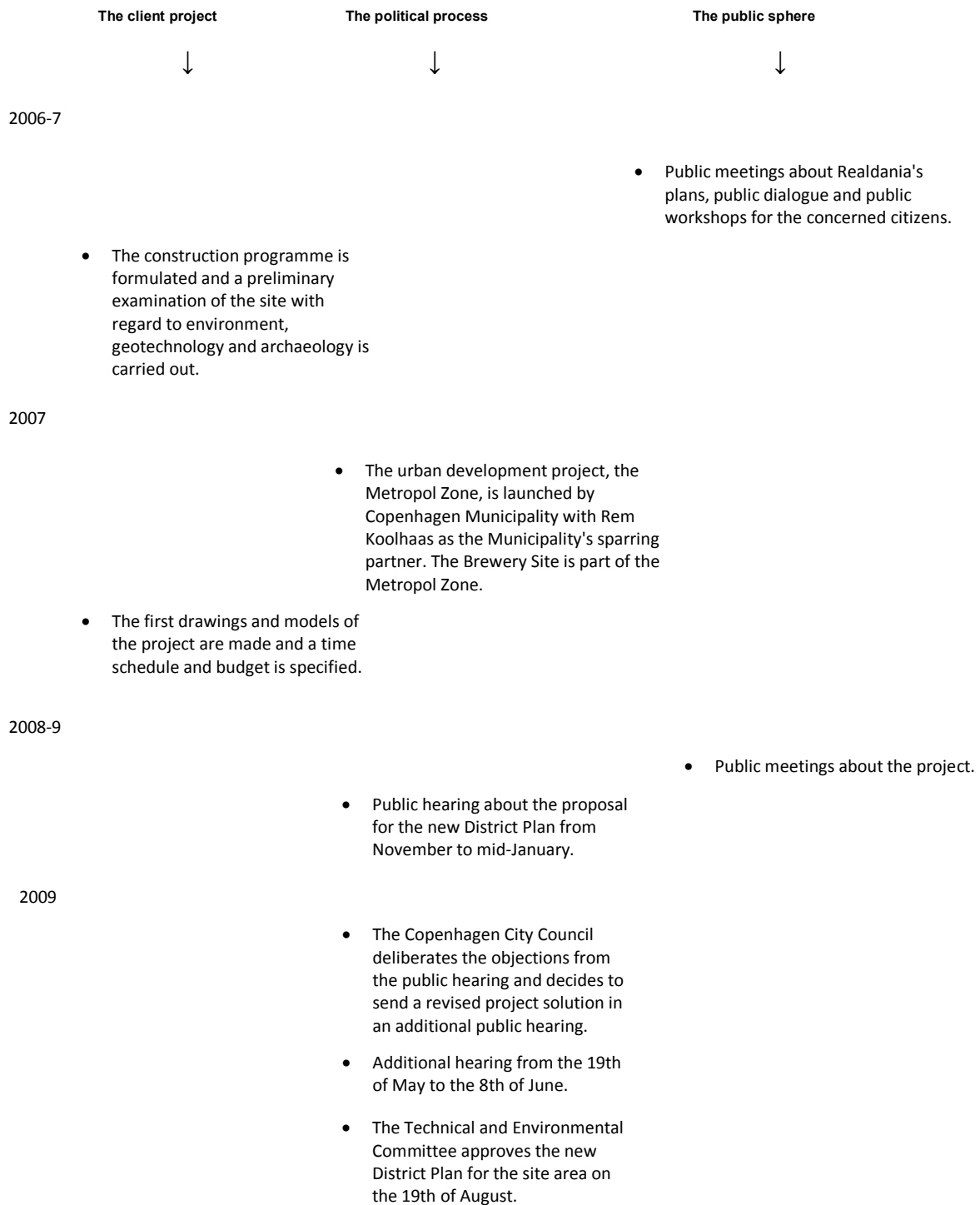
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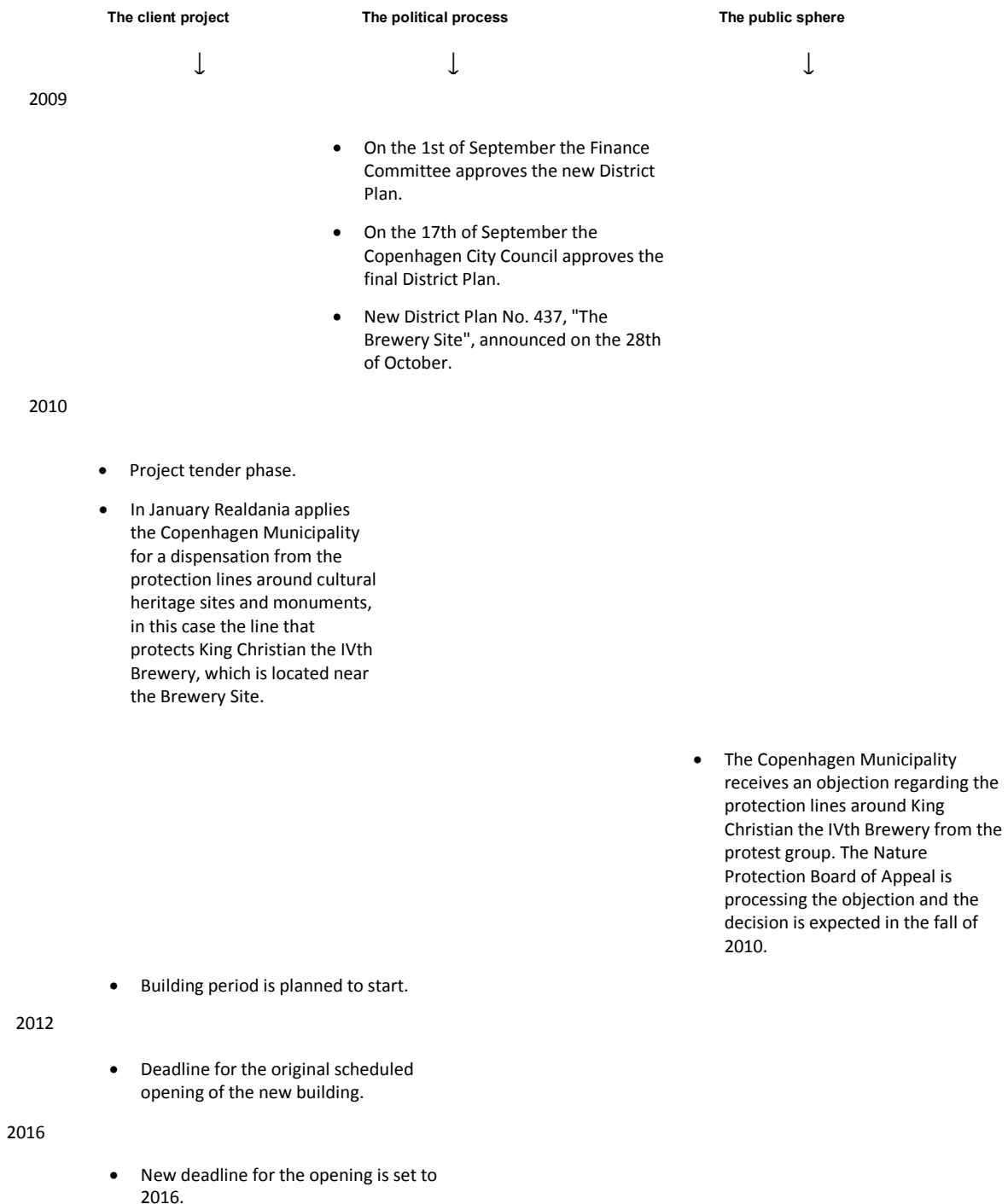
APPENDIX I: The phases of the project: *Kløvermarken*

APPENDIX II: The phases of the project: *Bryghusgrunden/The Brewery Site*

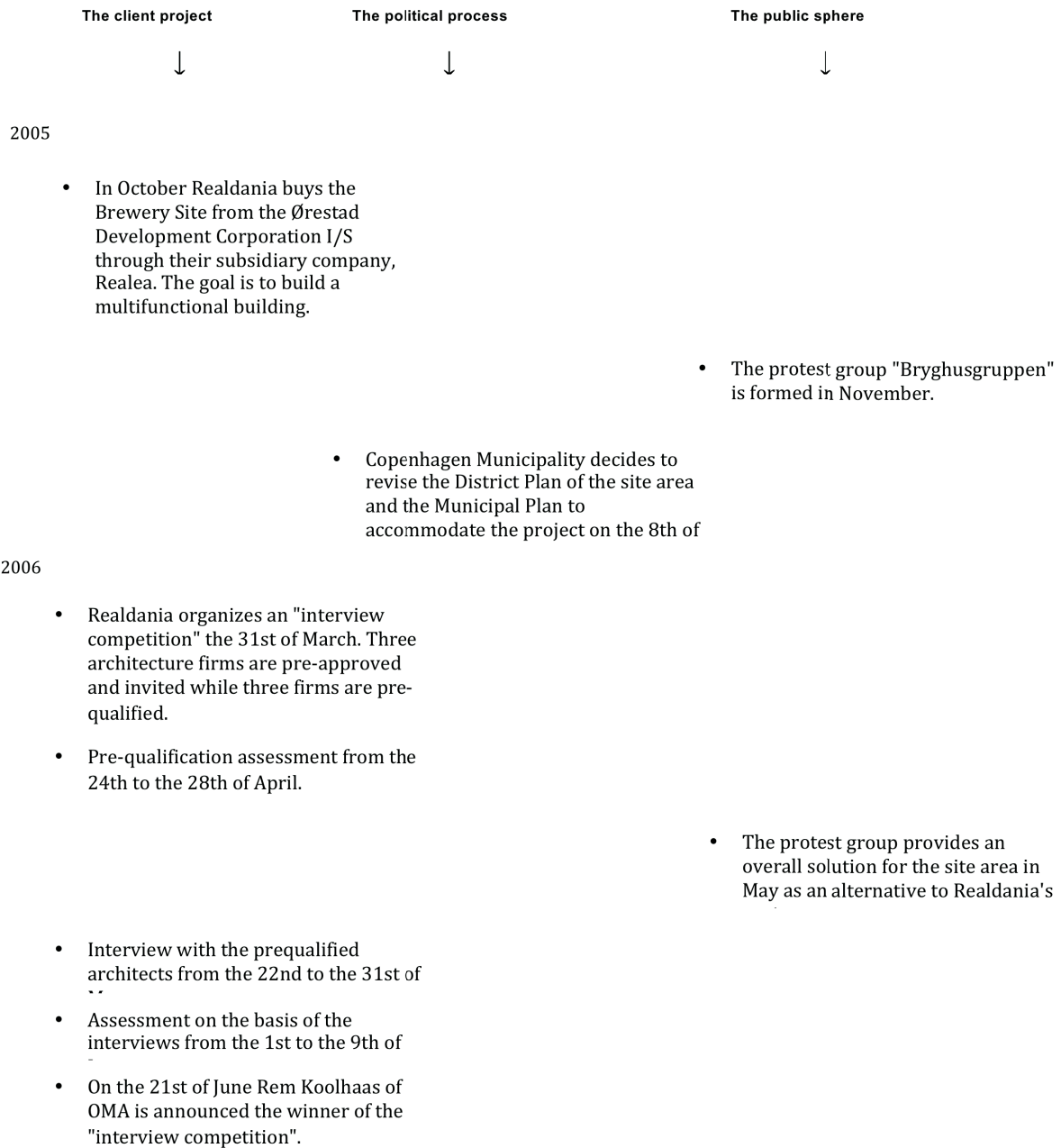
Appendix I: The phases of the project: *Kløvermarken*







Appendix II: The phases of the project: *Bryghusgrunden/* The Brewery Site



The client project	The political process	The public sphere
↓	↓	↓
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the 18th of September the Copenhagen City Council settles the 2009 budget agreement for the City of Copenhagen. SF, having approved the units revision, decides to vote for affordable housing in Kløvermarken thereby securing majority for the project On the 5th of October the Copenhagen City Council decides to work for cheap housing in Copenhagen and that Kløvermarken form part of the cheap housing project. 	
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In January The State Administration for Greater Copenhagen decides that the basis for the 5x5x5 is in conflict with existing laws. Bjerregaard then shelves the cooperation with the Fund for Cheap Housing and her 5x5x5 plan. However Bjerregaard still pursues her plan for housing in Kløvermarken. On the 13th of June the Copenhagen City Council decides to set the public hearing in motion, but Venstre (The Liberal Party of Denmark) withdraw from the project, unconvinced that the number of sports pitches can be retained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The protest group still argues against the project despite the revision.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In an interview with the newspaper Politiken Klaus Bondam, leader in charge of the Technical and Environmental Committee, no longer supports BIG's project solution. Instead Bondam wishes an "open competition" for Kløvermarken as a more democratic process. 	

	The client project	The political process	The public sphere
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In October the Copenhagen City Council decides to arrange a "restricted ideas competition". 		
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the 19th of June the proposal, "the Green River" by Vandkunsten Architects is announced the winner of the "restricted ideas competition". 		
2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In September SF questions the extended development site due to a problematic oil storage area, Prøvestenen. SF wishes to await a security test. In February the security test was found to negate the risk and approve the project for implementation if a number of changes to the area in the amount of 12M Danish kroner is made. On the 25th of February SF definitively pulls out in spite of the positive conclusions of the security test, because they claim no longer to believe in the project. In March a coalition grouping from both right- and leftwing parties voted to shelve the project for good, allowing the proposed site, Kløvermarken, to continue in its former function as one large recreational sports area. 	

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