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Architectural Competitions

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In memory of our friend, the lecturer, scientist and president

Lena Villner

Lena passed away on Saturday 19 September 2009 after a short illness. Lena was a university lecturer of architectural history at the KTH School of Architecture and took an active interest in several areas, including teaching, research, administration and public activities. In 1997, Lena defended her dissertation about Tempelman, which was as interesting as it was liberating in its ease of reading. In 2005, her academic career brought her to the position of director of graduate studies. In 2008, she became a reader in architectural history. We will remember Lena in particular for her strong commitment to the journal on Nordic architectural research, *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning*, and for her hard work for the association. Lena was a knowledgeable and highly respected member of the supervisory board, and in the period 2002-2004, she served as president of the association *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning*. Lena will be sadly missed by us all.

Vännen, läraren, forskaren och presidenten

Lena Villner

*Lena lämnade oss lördagen den 19 september 2009 efter en kortare tids sjukdom. Lena var universitetslärare i arkitekturhistoria vid KTHs Arkitekturskola och aktiv inom flera områden: utbildning, forskning, administration och utåtriktad verksamhet. 1997 disputerade Lena på en intressant och befriande läst avhandling om Tempelman. Hennes akademiska karriär fortsätt 2005 med uppdrag som studierektor för forskarutbildningen. 2008 blev hon docent i arkitekturhistoria. Vi minns särskilt Lenas starka engagemang för tidskriften *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning* och hennes arbete i föreningen. Lena var en kunnig och respekterad medlem av styrelsen och under perioden 2002-2004 var hon president i föreningen *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning*. Det är med stor sorg och saknad som vi minns Lena.*

Architectural Competition

Editors' notes

Introduction

This issue of the *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research* is the outcome of the Nordic Symposium on Architectural Competitions which was held in Stockholm, 16-18 October, 2008. We are pleased for the opportunity to present a cross-section of the papers in this journal. The hope is that the articles will inspire critical reflections, initiate new research projects, and contribute to establishing long-term accumulation of scientific knowledge and networking about architectural competitions. Research on architectural competition is a rather new field of study which raises many important questions both for practicing architects, architectural associations and academia looking for a deeper theoretical and methodological knowledge on competition. So far, there are only few post-graduate and PhD theses in Europe focusing on competitions in architecture and urban design. There are few conferences held on competitions mainly directed to exhibit competition projects and catalogues.

The Nordic Symposium on Architectural Competition was organized by the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Royal Institute of Technology in close cooperation with the Nordic Association of Architecture Research. It was aimed to invite the peer-reviewed research papers to be discussed thoroughly at the workshops and later on for publishing the book of proceedings. The symposium in Stockholm was probably the first scientific conference on architectural competitions in the Nordic countries and perhaps in the rest of Europe. We tried to verify this claim afterwards by checking the English language registers, the relevant data bases, and the Internet. We were surprised to finding out that there were not any scientific conferences in this field, especially with regard to architectural competitions as a profession-based institution that has been in practice for over 100 years in Europe.

The idea for a conference on architecture and urban design competitions grew out of a major research programme at the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm when in 2004 one of the PhD research projects on architectural competition received a grant. This became a strong reason for us to meet colleagues from the Nordic countries as well as other parts of the world to exchange information and share experiences.

The purpose of the symposium was to critically review, clarify, and discuss architectural competitions from different viewpoints. Both practitioners and researchers were invited to join the symposium.

The invitation outlined four themes that established the framework of the symposium:

- *Architectural History Theme*: Background, establishment, demands, use and the development of roles of the architectural competition for the building sector.
- *Architectural Judgment Theme*: Organization, judging, ranking and selecting an entry; how the jurors select or appoint a winner and how they justify/motivate their choice.
- *Professional Theme*: The importance of architectural competition for developing best practice, professional skills, designing new ideas, and as a way to purchase architects services.
- *Political Power and Urban Design Theme*: Architectural competition as political issue in design of public buildings, public spaces, and town planning. Competition as a way to express power, making decision for the future built environments.

In 2007, an organization committee at the School of Architecture and the Built Environment was organized responsible for planning the symposium consisted of Dr. Magnus Rönn, Dr. Reza Kazemian and PhD-student Jonas E Andersson. A scientific committee of experienced researchers and experts from different Nordic countries was appointed to review the submitted papers. The organization of symposium was followed a quite classical academic model. The symposium was made up of invited key-note speakers, parallel workshops, panel discussions, and one-day excursion. Two of the four key-note speakers were researchers in the field of architectural competition and the others were one practicing architect and one town planner. The key-note speakers were selected in a way to cover the themes of the symposium from their own expertise and experience. The persons were:

- Architect Tom Danielsen, partner in C.F. Møller, Århus
- Associate professor, H  l  ne Lipstadt, researcher/ former lecturer at MIT, Massachusetts
- Architect Mikael Sundman, Helsinki City planning Department, Helsinki
- Professor Elisabeth Tostrup, the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Oslo

The symposium has brought together several interesting topics submitted by PhD students and senior researchers from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, England, Spain, Switzerland, Greece and the USA. About 50 persons attended the symposium. The papers were discussed in three parallel workshops during two days by the following workshop leaders: Dr. Reza Kazemian, PhD-student Stina Hagelqvist, and Dr. Inga Britt Werner. One of the workshops was specified to papers written in the Nordic languages.

Each participant with papers was given 40 minutes time for presentation and critique. Two participants in each workshop were appointed as opponents by the organization committee. This was done to enable the opponents to read the papers beforehand and prepare questions so they could contribute to a qualified discussion in the respective workshops. The papers were also available to other participants (with password) on the symposium's homepage.

The participants have been given the opportunity to revise their texts twice before publication, partly after comments from the opponents and partly after final review by the symposium's scientific committee.

The symposium continued with panel discussions chaired by Professor Rolf Johansson. Each workshop leader reported about the content and procedures of the workshop. Then the key-note speakers concluded their impressions of the symposium and then after the public had the opportunity to ask questions.

The symposium closed with a half day excursion to the (Asplund) City Library in Stockholm which was the object of a two-stage international architectural competition. The City Library extension project attracted a lot of attention. It was an open competition at the first stage which became an invited competition at the second stage. The first stage resulted in 1,170 proposals which made this one of the biggest competitions ever. Six proposals were chosen for the second stage. Ms. Katarina

Nilsson, the competition secretary from the Swedish Architects, was functioned as the secretary of the jury committee. During the study visit she provided information about the judgment process and how the jury went about choosing the first prize winner. The jury's choice has been the object of much debate in Sweden. In October 2009, the arranger (Stockholm City) announced that the winning entry was not to be carried out because of financial reason.

Some overlapping perspectives

We have noticed that there are (at least) four distinct perspectives in architectural competitions which are described in varying degrees in selected papers in this issue of the journal. We have chosen to present eleven papers; seven papers by senior researchers and four papers by PhD students. The papers are dealing with different aspects of the architectural competition. The competitions context can be summarized as follows:

Research

Firstly, we see a growing interest in architectural competition as a new research field at universities and colleges. The symposium in Stockholm can be seen as an expression of academic interest in the field. We are observing a growing number of PhD dissertations that are directed towards architectural competition issues. Through the symposium we have been able to identify about 10 ongoing PhD projects in Europe, from the newly started to almost final phases. These PhD projects vary in content and themes; from architectural history to contemporary and actual issues. Competition in architecture and urban design is turning into a scientific field of its own. There is therefore a need for a research network, a group of researchers who have architectural and urban design competitions as their common research ground at universities and colleges.

Market

Secondly, we assert a growing interest for using competition as a tool for negotiating architectural procurement. This is the market dimension of the competition that is connected to the changes in regulations at a European level. The EU directive on project competitions (directive 2004/18/EC), provides common procurement regulations and laws in the member states. It has led to competitions being used as a means for public assigners to purchase services. The effect of this directive is that it is no longer possible to control the participation in competitions by limiting them geographically. The basic principle is that competitions should be open for everyone within the EU. Competitions by invitation are made available through prequalification. The regulations enable architectural competition to serve as a tool that can be used in several ways; partly for providing and visualizing background material for decision-making, partly to encourage innovative solutions to design problems and partly as a method for selecting architects for public building procurements. The post-industrial picture of architectural competitions is marked by a market-oriented perspective that pays tribute to competition in the development of architecture and urban design.

Politics

Thirdly, there is a political interest in architectural competitions that coincides with deregulation and global competition. The conclusions available from the European Council, "on architecture: culture's contribution to sustainable development" (2008/C 319/05), can be seen as an expression of this politically oriented interest. The Resolution has contributed to national policy documents by many member states.¹

Design and architecture policy documents appeared in the Nordic countries as a new political field during the 1990s. These architectural policy programmes were drawn up by the government officials sometimes together with representatives from the architectural associations. The programmes are known in Sweden as, *Forms for the future* (1997), in Finland as, *Finland's Architectural Policy* (1998), in Norway as, *Surroundings as Culture: Action Programme for Aesthetics in Public Environment* (1992) and *Aesthetics in Government Building and Constructions* (1997) and *Architecture. Now* (2009), in Denmark as, *Danish Architecture Policy* (1994), *Architecture 1996* and *A Nation of Architecture Denmark* (2007). In these policy documents the architectural competition is seen as a tool for the design quality improvement of architecture and town planning. The Nordic governments encourage public promoters to arrange competitions on a larger scale. A similar development with government-based architectural policy programmes is found elsewhere in Europe, among them in the Netherlands a series of policy documents appeared such as, *Space for Architecture* (1991),

Architecture of Space (1996), *Constructing the Netherlands* (2001) and *Action Programme Space and Culture* (2005). In Ireland we have, *Action on Architecture* (2002), in Scotland, *Building our Legacy: Statement on Scotland's architecture policy* (2007), in Germany, *Building Culture in Germany* (2001) and in Austria, *The Austrian Report on Building Culture* (2006). In addition to these national programmes, cities, municipalities and large property companies have developed their own programmes for quality assurance in architecture and urban design.

Profession

Fourthly, architectural competitions are in architects' own interest. The need for modern competition system arose in Europe at the end of the 1800s when architects began to organize themselves to better protect their own common interests. The industrialized societies generated new tasks through competitions in order to find out solutions for new challenges. One of the first tasks of the architect associations was to establish new rules for architectural competitions and have them be accepted internally among their own members and externally by competition sponsors and other potential clients. Competition regulations were established in the Nordic countries at the beginning of the 1900s and today the architect associations have the responsibility to organise and administer competitions. Such is the case at least in the Nordic countries. The influence from the architect associations is expressed in the competition regulations which are generally accepted by the building sector, their own competition committees and the competition secretary who chooses members of the competition jury. The architect associations vividly reflect their interests in their requirement that the competition programme must be approved by the associations. The Nordic architect associations usually appoint two persons as their representatives at the jury committees. The associations vend their competition services to the clients, from the programme brief to the administration of the competition procedures. The architect associations advertise the results of the competitions in their own publications and websites. In this sense the competition contributes to professional knowledge.

Here, we wish to thank the key-note speakers for their interesting lectures; the workshop leaders, the Swedish competition secretary for her stimulating presentation of the jury work during the competition of the City Library extension project, the members of the scientific committee who reviewed the papers, and all the participants for their valuable contributions.

We also would like to express our gratitude for the all supports we received to plan and organize the symposium. We received financial support from the following companies and research councils: ARQ; Foundation for Architecture Research, Estrid Ericssons Foundation, F-foundation, SWECO Architects, The Swedish Fortifications Agency, The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (FORMAS) and finally The School of Architecture and the Built Environment at KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

Stockholm, August 2009

Jonas E. Andersson

Reza Kazemian

Magnus Rönn

NOTES

¹ For more information see European Forum for Architectural Policies, www.architecture-forum.net and www.sadas-pea.gr/EFAPhistory.pdf.