

# NORDISK ARKITEKTURFORSKNING

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## Architectural Competitions

# **NORDISK ARKITEKTURFORSKNING**

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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.*

# Speaking of Architecture

## A study of the jury's assessment in an invited competition

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### **Abstract:**

This paper reflects the way architecture is treated in a professional context. The point of departure is a case study of the jury assessment in an architectural competition. This practical aspect of evaluation as part of the design process is analyzed in the context of a survey of competitions in the Nordic countries.

In the architecture profession, discussing and assessing architecture is a means of gathering knowledge as well as a way of evaluating architectural projects. Since evaluation is a part of the professional practice, these discussions become influenced by a set of assumptions, implicit criteria and tacit knowledge that is sometimes hard to penetrate.

In a competition jury, a discussion of architecture is held between architects and laymen of architecture, with the aim of reaching a common decision. It is an evaluation of architecture in an early phase of the design process,

which also makes it a part of this process. The architects must explain their views and mediate qualities of the entries that can be hard to see for a layman of architecture.

The presentation of the jury's process reveals different strategies of evaluation in an illustrative way. The jury's evaluative discussions are further related to theoretical models of qualitative evaluation of architecture and architectural judgement. Awareness of the different strategies and the possibilities of combining and explaining these is one way of directing competition juries towards an efficient assessment process.

### **Keywords:**

Evaluation, decision-making theory, design practice, quality assessment, architectural competitions, case studies

## INTRODUCTION

*Whereas drawing is a code over which architects hold a large measure of control, their command of language will always be disputed by every other language user.* (Forty, 2000, s. 14)

During the spring of 2006 an architectural competition concerning a new school building was held in the small town of Hagfors, Sweden. I had the opportunity to follow and observe the jury's work with the assessment of the competition. This article is a descriptive analysis of the competition's assessment process, the pre-qualification and the jury's assessment of the entries. The point of departure is questions concerning the jury members' ideas of quality: Which are the main problems? What questions about issues appear in the discussions? Which are the underlying strategies? How does the jury reach a decision?

The jury's evaluation is a creative process that evolves as the members gradually increase their understanding of the entries through their continued internal discussions. This study illustrates this as well as how the preconditions in the program, the competitor's interpretation of the demands in the programme and the jury's interpretation of the entries affect the assessment.

Four central findings concerning the process are traced. Firstly, the study shows how *public opinion* influenced the jury's work. The competition project appeared to be controversial and caused a public debate, which put pressure upon the jury. Secondly, *two separate strategies of decision-making* appeared through the jury process. The strategies originated from the jury members' different ways of regarding the process. Thirdly, the study shows *how the evaluation-criteria are used* as a means to compare the entries. Fourthly, the study illustrates how the assessment process led to a *positioning* between architects and laymen of architecture. This is due to differences in the jury members' knowledge and experience as well as their different responsibilities and interests in the competition.

The focus of the study has been the jury's assessment of the competition entries and the discussions that finally led to a decision. The overall purpose has been to investigate how a jury decides on a winner and to get a picture of the assessment process and its strategies. Related aims have been to study the profes-

sional discussion of architecture and the jury members' various professional backgrounds and spheres of interest. Which problems are a jury facing? What questions arise during the assessment? What are the underlying strategies of decision-making? How does a jury reach a decision? What is the role of the architect on the jury?

The work has been carried out as a case study of the competition's assessment process. By studying a competition as a case, the unique process is captured as well as the complexity of the case itself. The focus is on particularisation instead of generalisation. The aim is to find out as much as possible about the case to get a complete picture of it and its context. (Stake, 1995)

The empirical material consists of observations and documentation of the jury's meetings. The documentation has been made through notes, which appeared viable considering the character and extent of the meetings<sup>1</sup>. During the observations I was part of the group without participating in their discussions. The group consisted of nine persons several of which did not know each other before. My influence on the process was diminished because of the dynamics that appears in a group of persons with a common task. The jury did not have access to my notes.

My presence at the jury meetings was an exception that needed some ethical considerations. The jury process in architectural competitions is always conducted behind closed doors. Only jury members, the competition secretary and possibly experts may take part in the jury meetings and only the members shall appoint the winner. (*PM Juryarbete/bedömning*, 2003) The jury did not take any formal notes during the meetings, which caused some considerations in the use of quotes<sup>2</sup>. I chose not to use the jury members or the competitors' names in the description. I have also selected quotations that were representative rather than those that reflected individual points of view.

## ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS

*Competitions encourage those who only observe, including the public, to applaud or admonish architects as if designers were contending in a public tournament.* (Lipstadt, 1989, s.9)

Critique, comparison and concurrence are fundamental concepts within the architectural competition system. The jury's assessment in an architectural competition includes a quality assessment of the architecture on the basis of the drawings, perspectives, photomontages, texts and illustrations of the entries. The jury must interpret these architectural representations to form an opinion of the entries' contents.

As in most professional areas, an internal discourse exists within the architecture profession. (Lundequist, 2002) The habit of using the evaluative discussion to develop knowledge leads to an internal mode of speaking about architecture. Implicit meaning and tacit knowledge influence the architectural discourse, which further obscures a layman's understanding of the professional discussion about architecture.

This makes the jury situation interesting: because a competition jury consists of both architects and laymen of architecture, the discussion must be held on a different level. The demand for consensus in the final decision forces the discussion to be understandable even for persons who are not familiar with architect's discourse. This makes the jury's discussion a forum for a concentrated and pedagogical discussion about architecture in a professional context.

The interest, and importance, of competitions among architects is reflected in the large number of entries that usually are handed in to open competitions. The illusion of competition under the same conditions becomes an encouragement for young architects and a stimulation for the more experienced. '... it embodies the fundamental conditions of the profession intrinsic in the competitive mentality that permeates professional life.' (Tostrup, 1999; 21) The design of competition entries is regarded as a unique way of experimentation and creativity within the field of architecture.

Architectural competitions are considered to lead to better results owing to the thorough evaluation of the design at an early stage in the process. (Kazemian *et al.*, 2007) Wærn (1996) argues that the high status of the architectural competition can be traced to the use of the concept *competition*, which stands for something noble and fair.

The reasons for a builder to arrange a competition can be many. Lipstadt (1989) identifies four reasons:

1. To choose an architect or a design.
2. To distinguish excellence in appearance and in function.
3. To award commissions.
4. To educate young architects.

When the question was put to a number of experienced jury members in the Nordic countries, five more reasons to arrange competitions emerged:

5. To cast new light on a problem.
  6. To market a project.
  7. To increase the quality of the project through the jury assessment.
  8. To run architecture politics.
  9. To coordinate different fields of interest.
- (Kazemian *et al.*, 2007)

In the studied competition, the main aim of the municipality of Hagfors was to select a suitable architect for the assignment and to market the project and the arranger in a positive context.

The competition was an *invited project competition* in accordance with the Swedish Law on Public Procurement (LOU, *Lagen om offentlig upphandling*, 1997) and the EU directive for the award of public contracts (*Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament ...*, 2004).

The purpose of a project competition is to get a proposal for implementation, and to assign the winning architect for the project. The alternative is an *ideas competition*, where the first prize is the prize sum without any promise of a further assignment. (*Regler för svenska tävlingar inom arkitekternas...*, 1998)

An *invited competition* has only a limited number of competitors. The selection of competitors gives the arranger a certain amount of control over the competition. The alternative is *open competitions*, where anyone can send in an entry. An important difference is the smaller amount of entries in an invited competition, which affects the jury's work. All the competitors in an invited competition get some financial compensation for their work, which makes it possible to increase the demands and the complexity of the competition task. (Kazemian *et al.*, 2005)

Since this competition was held as a public procurement process in accordance with the



LOU, the selection of competitors was made through a *prequalification*. This is a regulated form of selection, where the arranger invites everyone who is interested to send in a notification. The selection of competitors is then based on these notifications.

Two coherent demands are put on the jury in an architectural competition: one winner shall be appointed, and the decision shall be made in consensus. In that sense, the jury process is a regulated sequence of work with a well-defined goal.

It is usually the arranger of the competition that appoints the jury members. When the Swedish Association of Architects (SAA) is engaged as a consultant, the organization appoints at least two of the jury architects. (The Swedish Association of Architects, 1998) According to the EU directive, at least one third of the jury members in an architectural competition must be architects or have equivalent qualifications. (*Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament...*, 2004) The other members of the jury are usually representatives from the arranger and the users. It is especially important that the arrangers are represented on the jury, since they have control over the implementation process. (Kazemian et al., 2007)

In the interviews referred to above with experienced jury members in the Nordic countries, the characteristics of a good jury member were defined as: (a) Skill within his or her field of competence, (b) Social competence, (c) Orientation towards a solution and (d) Pedagogical and communicative skills. The success factor within the assessment process depends on the competence of the jury members and the good functioning of the group. (Kazemian et al., 2007).

The architect in a competition jury is both a temporary member of the jury group and also a permanent member of the architecture profession. This makes the role of the jury architect rather ambivalent. The following four roles of a jury architect can be presumed:

- **Expert on architecture.** An architect as an expert is able to interpret the design ideas as well as the functional, economical, planning and construction qualities of the entries.
- **Representative and advisor to the arranger.**
- **Educator.** The architect as interpreter and

mediator of the entries becomes a link between the designers of the entries and the other jury members.

- **Colleague.** The architect on the jury has the same professional identity as the competitors.

These roles represent different spheres of interest that the architects on the jury hover over during the assessment process.

The observed jury followed the directives on the jury's work in architectural competitions that is usually handed out by the architects' organisation to all jury members by the competition secretary. The document contains advice to the jury and a systematic model of the assessment process. This model contains four steps: learning > evaluation > comparison > decision. (*Pm, juryarbete/bedömning*, 2003) This can be compared to Bazerman's (2006) model of a rational process of decision-making. Rationality refers to a process that efficiently leads to the best result. The model consists of six steps:

1. Define the problem.
2. Identify criteria.
3. Weigh the criteria.
4. Create alternatives.
5. Grade every alternative with respect to every criterion.
6. Make the ultimate decision.

Translated to a jury's work in an architectural competition, the points 1, 2 and 3 are the writing of the programme. Point 4 is the design, handing in and approval of the competition entries. The assessment lies in points 5 and 6. The key to the assessment process, according to Bazerman, lies in the identification and weighing of the criteria.

Bazerman stresses that this model is an ideal situation that diverges from an actual situation. In a decision making process there is a number of simplifications that are necessary for practical reasons. It is impossible to get a correct picture of the consequences of every alternative in real situations of choice. Instead, the decision makers search for a solution that is acceptable or reasonable on a certain level. The alternative that is good enough is chosen instead of the one that is indisputably the best. (Bazerman, 2006) This over-valuation of the known qualities is used to create a dominance structure in order to convince the decision makers that the best decision has been made. (Montgomery et al., 1990)

To discuss and evaluate architecture, as references or as examples, is part of the architect's professional knowledge. By the critique that is included in architectural education, at the architect's offices, in the written architectural criticism and as self-critique during the design process, knowledge is mediated and created within the profession. (Lundequist, 2002) Thereby, architecture criticism becomes an important part of the jury's evaluative discussions as well as their final report.

Criticism is based on ideas of quality and can be expressed in many ways depending on the object or the function. Attoe (1978) identifies three basic groups of architecture criticism:

1. Normative criticism, based on doctrines and rules. A normative critic often compares the criticized object to models.
2. Interpretive criticism is based on the object itself and suggests how to understand it.
3. Descriptive criticism depicts or describes the object and its context.

Architecture criticism is a strategy for assessment that permits an overall picture. It can complement or oppose the rational decision making strategy and the weighing of criteria. But it is important that the assessing group is conscious of which model to use. One of the jury's assignments is to define the problem and the relation to the real situation. Instead of excluding alternatives, the strategy of architecture critique includes evaluation of every entry as well as comparison between the different entries to identify a winning entry.

#### **CASE description:**

Hagfors is an industrial small town in the middle of Sweden. The background for the investigated project was a need to unite four schools into one. The project was also meant to market the town through architecture. In brief, the competition about 'an educational and cultural centre' was organized like this:

1. PREQUALIFICATION
  - Advertisement.
  - Selection of competitors.
2. INVITATION TO OFFICES
  - Four selected offices were invited to compete.
3. COMPOSITION OF COMPETITION ENTRIES
  - The offices design and hand in their entries.
4. JURY WORK
5. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WINNER

The following analysis report concerns point number 4, the jury assessment.

#### **THE COMPETITION PROGRAMME**

Since the design of entries in an architectural competition lacks all dialogue between the architect and the builder, the competition programme becomes essential. It is a contract between the jury and the competitors. (*PM, juryarbete/bedömning*, 2003) In the programme the preconditions of the competition and the task are formulated. The programme is a starting point for the competitors design process as well as for the jury's assessment. Here follows a description of the programme of the competition studied.

The competition project emerged because of a decreasing number of pupils in the schools in Hagfors. Uniting four schools into one large educational centre would minimize the operational costs.

By procuring the architects through a competition, the arrangers hoped to get some positive marketing. '...the aim is to get a centre for education with such qualities in the physical environment as well as in the activities that it can motivate people to remain or move to Hagfors.' (Nordberg, 2005; p.13)

The object to be rebuilt was an existing upper secondary school called "Älvstrandsgymnasiet". It was built in 1974 in a central part of Hagfors, by the shore of a stream, Uvån. The building contained the municipality's library, a swimming hall and sports facilities.

The existing building would be rebuilt and extended into an educational and cultural centre containing:

- compulsory school,
- special school,
- upper secondary school,
- adult education,
- learning centre,
- music school,
- youth recreation centre,
- municipal library.

The programme also includes plans for a future 'Growth- and innovation centre'. This innovation centre is thought of as a link between the existing steel industry and the upper secondary school in Hagfors. The evaluation criteria stated in the programme are:

- The functional, pedagogical and architectonical qualities within the proposed building and its outer environment.
- The possibilities of development of the entries.
- The possibilities of implementation/ economical realism of the entries. (Nordberg, 2005)

These are general and comprehensive criteria; all except for the pedagogical qualities can be regarded as fundamental criteria in competitions. The use of fundamental criteria indicates what the arrangers want but aims to give the competitors a scope for their creativity. (Svensson, 2006)

The pedagogical visions of the project are described as 'Pedagogy in change'. The plans for the pedagogical activity are made from a ten-year's perspective. The activities are expected to 'go from a traditional education, which often is oriented towards function, toward a more flexible learning, that is oriented towards process and where a vision of wholeness, multidisciplinary and comprehensive learning is in focus.' (Nordberg 2005, s.15)

The description is brief, bearing in mind that the pedagogical qualities of the building are one of the assessment criteria. This imprecise description of learning raises questions about demands of knowledge that are reasonable to put on the architects.

## THE JURY PROCESS

The jury needed three meetings in order to appoint a winner. The jury met in the town hall in Hagfors. The jury consisted of the following nine representatives<sup>3</sup>.

- Two architects, appointed by the Swedish Association of Architects.
- Three local politicians: the chairpersons of the municipal executive committee, and the committee for children and education and one opposition politician.
- Two representatives of the users: one from the teachers union and one professor in pedagogy.
- Two directors from the municipality: the director of schools and the director of technical matters.

The competition secretary from the Swedish Association of Architects also participated in the meetings.

## THE FIRST MEETING

The 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2006 was the last day to hand in the competition entries. A local debate concerning the school project had started in Hagfors. Letters to the editor with headings like *The Concept Large-School Fills me with Anguish*<sup>4</sup> and *Let the People of Hagfors Vote about the Large-School*<sup>5</sup> were published in the local paper. A petition with demands for a referendum on the project had also been started. (Sjöström, 2006) The opponents of the project were critical of the closure of three schools. Four local politicians had answered with a debate article headlined *The New Centre of Education Shows a Wiser Hagfors*. The article focused on the visions of the future school in Hagfors and the aims to create better education and thereby bring more optimism into the community of Hagfors. (Dahlqvist et al., 2006)

The politicians on the jury expressed their worry about public opinion. It was important to them that the competition could gain approval among the inhabitants of Hagfors. Otherwise it could be difficult for the politicians to support the winning entry.

The chairman of the jury referred to the importance of the programme: 'This is what we are committed to: a school that fits all ages. It must be the interaction within the building that leads to the fulfilment of the curriculum...' (comment, jury member, 6 march 2006)

The competition secretary proposed a public exhibition of the entries. The representatives of the arranger were all sceptical about an exhibition and the jury decided to wait. The competition secretary warned that this could look like they were hushing something up. He reminded the jury not to comment in public about the process.

Then the jury's review of the entries began. At first they made an individual survey of the entries. After a while spontaneous discussions came up between some of the persons present; the comments were clearly evaluative. Other jury members did not participate in the discussions and remained silent.

After the individual survey, the two architects on the jury went through and explained the entries to the others. The following aspects were discussed:

- The planning and the inner organization of the rooms,

- The outer organization of the entries. The movements of the children and the possibilities to play. Safety matters related to the nearby stream and the traffic.
- The emplacement and design of the innovation centre.
- Entries, logistics and loading of transports.
- The day and night time activities within the building.
- Design.
- Pedagogical methods; how traditional or innovative the entries seemed.
- Availability.
- Understanding of the entries. All the entries were regarded as unclear in showing what was old and what was new.

After this survey, two of the politicians and one of the municipal directors expressed their disappointment. The entries did not correspond to their expectations. The chairman suggested that the jury think about the criteria. He asked them to write a checklist as a basis for the assessment starting with the following criteria:

**The building:**

- Three schools together, with clear transitions
- The safety of the younger children + play environment
- Everyone must be able to meet in learning

**Way of working:**

- Education with many variations
- Learning with many variations
- Cooperation between subjects/ comprehensive
- Environment for reflection
- Facilitate entrepreneurship
- Acceptance for innovations
- Counselling
- Access for transportation - buses

**Centre of innovation:**

**Entries:**

- Common
- Access to the library
- Especially sport and swimming

The chairman then advised the jury members to go through the criteria systematically. The competition secretary suggested that they should add *ability for development* to the list. One of the jury members suggested *attractiveness, adjustment to the place and the sense of the place*. One of the architects wanted to add *generality, changeability and ability to inter-change/ divide into stages* to the list of criteria.

A comparison to the programme shows that the jury now substantially expanded the first assessment criteria 'Functional, pedagogical and architectural qualities within the building and the environment' (Nordberg, 2005)

**THE SECOND MEETING**

During the week that passed between the first and the second assessment meeting, the debate in Hagfors continued. An information meeting was to be held on the 11th of April. The arrangers wished to present a winning entry by then. An exhibition of the entries was discussed again. The politicians were still worried about public outcry if all the entries were showed; they would only like to show the winning entry.

The chairman of the jury suggested that this time the jury should start by eliminating two of the entries and work with two finalists. He had two suggestions for finalists which he would not reveal. Some of the jury members agreed, but the architects stressed the importance of keeping all the entries in the assessment.

One of the entries, here called Entry 1, did not fulfil one of the central programme demands. The designer placed one part of the school in a separate building, despite the wish in the programme to place three schools within one building. The chairman wanted to eliminate this entry. One of the architects meant that it was important to let all the entries remain in the assessment until the presentation of the problem was clear. The competition secretary meant that it was too early to rule out any entry. The chairman wanted to hurry up the process by starting to eliminate entries in this phase. A survey of all four entries was made, which can be summarized like this:

**Entry 1:**

-This is the entry that differs from the programme demands and is therefore discussed briefly.

-The energy solution is not good

-One of the architects stated that the architecture is well designed. He considered it as positive that the designers had reacted to the programme and regarded this as a development.

**Entry 2:**

-These designers had decided to tear down much of the old building, which was considered as worrying. It would be hard to explain to the

inhabitants of Hagfors why it should be demolished.

-The jury liked the emplacement of the innovation centre.

-The entrance was good and visible.

-The younger children's schoolyard was not considered as well designed. It was too small and too close to the stream.

-The jury liked this design of the library.

-One of the architects meant that this design was not thought through enough

-The proposal was joined to the existing building. Jury members described it as a dense and confusing building. It looked rational and clear, the designers seemed to have tried to get rid of the corridors.

-The design of the upper secondary school was diffusely presented.

-The jury did not like the inner organization.

-The special school was well designed.

-This designer had worked to a great extent on the connection to the town compared with the other competitors.

-This entry seemed to have the best pedagogical design.

-An expensive project

-It was considered as having good chances to develop

### Entry 3:

-In this entry, the innovation centre lies outside the building, which was not considered good.

-The special school was placed on the outskirts of the school. Those on the jury with experience of special schools had different opinions about this emplacement.

-The entrances were good, the main entrance was grand and its emplacement was good.

-The access for the transportation of goods and people was not very good.

-The inner planning of the building was linear and traditional with corridors.

-The exterior had a brutal expression. 'The structure is too brusque' (comment, jury member, 13 march 2006)

-The new, additional part of the building was considered good; the old parts were mostly intact.

-There was a lack of flexibility within the solution. 'Smart solutions but the ground floor is not very stimulating. It does not look like an exciting environment.' (Comment, jury architect, 13 march 2006)

-A well functioning library

-The facilities for the younger children looked too much like nooks.

-The safety of the younger children in the out-



Entry 1

door environment was partly problematic. They were placed far from the traffic but too near the stream.

-The proposal was considered as possible to develop.

-Finally, one jury member wondered whether this should be ruled out, but it was not.

### Entry 4:

-The innovation centre was hidden within the building in this design.

-The designers had thought of the entrances.

-This was the only designer that considered the energy solution.

-The architects had illustrated the seasonal changes. The presentation focused on the activities within the building.

-The design concept of this entry was a large extension at right angles from the existing building. The architects on the jury were negative towards this, while many of the laymen were positive. 'The problem is the direction; they split the existing building apart.' (comment, jury architect, 13 march 2006) 'I am no architect, but it becomes stimulating inside ... I think it is exciting' (comment, jury member, 13 march 2006), 'The other entries have more structure, this is more like something strange has been laid down' (comment, jury architect, 13 march 2006)

Entry 2





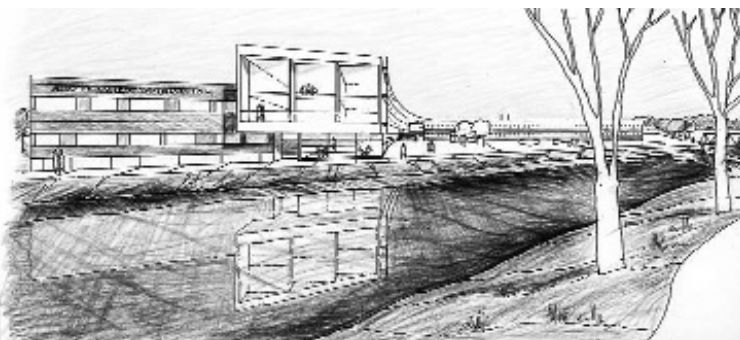
Entry 3

- These designers seemed to have understood the programme best.
- The library was considered to be well solved; the facilities for the younger children were placed adjacent to the library.
- The inner environment was not considered good, the design was unfinished.
- The entry was designed as a traditional school building with respect to the movement within the building.
- The entry had the best outdoor environment. They seemed to have worked more than the others with the outdoor design.

In this last survey of the four entries, a clear difference in preferences appeared between the architects and the rest of the jury. This became clear in the discussions concerning entry 4. The architects disliked this entry while most of the laymen favoured it. '[the extension] is considered a burden by our friends the architects, I regard it as an accent (comment, jury member, 13 march 2006)

The chairman asked all the jury members to rank the entries from 1 (favourite) to 4 (least suitable winner). The division became evident when the architects and one layman voted totally differently from the others and from each other as well. This transfer from qualities into numbers did not make the jury's ranking of the entries more clear.

Entry 4



A survey of this assessment not only showed that the jury members had different preferences among the entries. It also revealed the jury members' different approaches to the assessment process. While the majority of the laymen wanted to eliminate entries, the architects wanted to keep them all in the assessment. Two different models appear: one rational and efficient assessment strategy that comprises ranking, grading and a gradual elimination of entries. The other strategy can be seen as the architect's usual way to assess architecture through architecture critique.

### THE THIRD MEETING

Now time started to run out; this was the last meeting. Eight days later the arranger wanted to present a winning entry at the public information meeting.

Now, an economical calculation was made of the entries. The differences between the assessed building costs of the four entries were considerable in relation to the arranger's budget. The calculations were rather uncertain due to the early stage of the process, the uncertainties of the local area programme and the unclarity within the entries. A new criterion appeared: *the level of bargaining*: the buildings' possibilities to minimize the areas, and thereby reduce the costs.

Now two of the entries were eliminated. Entry 1 was excluded because it deviated from the programme. The architects claimed that this entry had good possibilities for bargaining and the best architectonic solution. The rest of the jury were not convinced, and finally they all agreed to exclude it. Entry 2 was criticised for its shortcomings in the planning and the organisation of the rooms. Even this entry was eliminated after a short discussion.

The assessed costs of the two remaining entries were not significantly different, though the difference in the price per square meter was visible. In the following, thorough discussion about these two entries, the following points came up:

### ENTRY 3:

-This entry had the *lowest total assessed costs*, but the price per square meter was calculated as higher than Entry 4.

-*The planning*: The new addition seemed to go well together with the existing building. The

opinions about the planning differed between the two jury architects.

- The project seemed to have a great overall potential. This way to handle the task was considered as the easiest to control.
- The jury did not really like the design of this entry. Many thought it was brutal. One of the architects described it as having a strong identity. The other meant that it was not very 'Hagfors-like' but more international in expression.
- This designer was considered as a potentially good partner for the municipality.
- The entrances were considered superior in their design and emplacement.
- The level of bargaining was judged as good in this entry. The areas could easily be reduced.
- The pedagogical methodology within this entry did not appear as innovative; 'creative learning is not a major theme' (comment, jury architect, 3 April 2006)

#### **ENTRY 4:**

- The basic idea of this entry was a large extension. There was a problem with overshadowing the swimming hall. One of the architects meant that the overall idea was pretentious. Two of the laymen liked it. 'An exclamation point, it will be noticed and become heard of.' (comment, jury member, 3 April 2006)
- This entry was a bit more expensive, but had lower costs per square meter than Entry 3.
- The planning of the new parts differed from the existing building. One of the architects said there seemed to be something logistically wrong with the building.
- The entrance appeared anonymous.
- The possibilities for minimizing the areas were considered to be small.
- The designer did not appear to use the potential of the entry. It seemed impossible to develop since it was only based on one idea. 'What I see is not good architectural quality' (Comment, jury architect, 3 April 2006)
- The architects expressed that the building did not seem 'Hagfors-like'. In contrast, one of the laymen meant that this was a good object in Hagfors.
- The pedagogical thinking in this entry was considered as somewhat innovative.
- The outdoor environment was well designed.

None of the two remaining entries seemed to be an obvious winner. The architects argued that Entry 3 had the best architectural solution; the laymen thought that Entry 4 would attract more attention. Once again, the criteria were

brought up. Five criteria were identified as the most important:

1. A changeable pedagogy.
2. The younger children's environment.
3. Identity, separation between the grades.
4. The money; the level of bargaining.
5. The architects must be a good partner to cooperate with.

A survey of the entries considering these criteria followed. The jury stated that Entry 4 possibly had a better pedagogical methodology, without any major differences. Considering criteria 2 and 3 there were no strong arguments in favour of any of the entries. Concerning criterion 4, Entry 3 appeared to have more possibilities for bargaining, and its building costs could therefore be reduced. The architects of Entry 3 seemed to have interpreted the programme better and thereby composed a more complete design than the architects of Entry 4. This was interpreted as an indication that the architects of Entry 3 were a better partner to cooperate with.

Criteria 4 and 5 now became critical for the jury's decision. Thus, Entry 3 suddenly appeared as the winner. The jury could finally decide to appoint Entry 3 as the winner of the competition.

#### **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

The examined assessment of a new educational centre in Hagfors is an illustrative example of the jury's work in an architectural competition. The jury's assessment process is an important part of the architectural competition, and also an enlightening forum to discuss architectural quality. The jury consists of experts and laymen of architecture with a common target of deciding on a winner. The need for all the members to agree makes the final discussion careful and critical, in order to reach a common understanding of the entries.

In the quality assessment of the entries a disparity appeared between the different jury members due to their various views, interests and responsibilities. A positioning emerged between the architects and the laymen; it arose out of different preferences in taste, but also from different strategies for assessment. After a pressured process the jury finally agreed on a winner. The discussions illustrate some realizations of the process as well as the professional discussion of architecture. The most

important findings of the case study can be concluded as:

1.

**The public opinion did influence the assessment process.**

One of the aims of the competition in Hagfors was to market the project and the town. But early in the process a local debate about the project emerged. The decision to unite four schools into one was controversial and caused a local debate. This criticism did influence the jury, and especially the politicians, to find a winner that would be supported by the inhabitants of Hagfors.

This aspect of the assessment reveals the double structure of the competition that has an open outside and a closed inside. The openness is apparent in the publicity that usually surrounds a competition. The announcement of the competition, the marketing, the presentation of the winner, attracts attention to the competition project.

Meanwhile, the competition has a closed inside. The jury work must be conducted in private; only the jury members shall decide on a winner. This way, the open outside communicates with the enclosed inside, while the closed inside creates excitement and generates more interest in the competition.

2.

**The jury process was influenced by two different strategies for decision.**

The jury in Hagfors consisted of experienced decision-makers from different professional areas. Most of them were used to a rational decision process, with identification of criteria and a gradual exclusion of alternatives. The jury architects probably also had experience from traditional decision-making, but in the assessment of the architecture they endeavoured to use architecture critique as a strategy. This means evaluation and comparison of the entries as starting points in order to get a more complex picture of the task.

The two different strategies became apparent when those who advocated a rational decision strategy wanted to eliminate two entries immediately. To identify two finalists was regarded as a way to reach a decision as fast as possible. The architects wanted instead to keep all the entries in the assessment for as long as possible and use them as clues to the

solution to the problem in the competition. Entries can be excluded after they are carefully examined and compared.

I did not become aware of the use of different strategies during the process, but afterwards while analysing the empirical data. All the jury members worked according to their habits and the time pressure reinforced a kind of 'narrow-mindedness' among those present. The parallel assessment and decision strategies were combined in the final meeting and led to a common decision.

3.

**The assessment criteria were used as a means of finding differences between the entries.**

In the competition programme, the assessment criteria were general ones in order to give the competitors creative freedom. It also would help the jury to handle any unexpected answer to the task. In the assessment of the entries the jury expanded the criteria throughout the whole process. The precision of the criteria was used as a strategy to find differences among the entries. Thus the criteria emerged and were re-shaped when the assessing jury met the entries. The work with the criteria can be seen as a strategy to separate the entries and to identify their different qualities. The expansion of criteria emerges from the understanding of the entries and can be seen as one of the surprising and creative moments in the assessment process.

4.

**The jury process meant a positioning between architects and laymen of architecture.**

The discussions of the competition jury concerned available facts, interpretations of the entries as well as personal experiences and preferences. The different backgrounds of the jury members and their various interests and responsibilities lead to different points of departure in the assessment process. The most noticeable positioning within the jury appeared between the architects and the laymen on the jury.

This positioning became clear in the jury members' different views of Entry 1. Since it did not follow the preconditions of the programme, most of the laymen became hesitant. The representatives of the arranger were responsible for the correctness of the procedure, and a winner that breaks the fundamental precon-



ditions in the programme can lead to complaints. The architects interpreted the deviation as creative and critical thinking from the architects. They also appreciated the esthetical qualities of this entry. Even though it remained in the assessment, the discussions were brief and more polarised than in the assessment of the other entries.

This competition was special in as far as the chairman of the jury was a representative of the users, not of the arranger or the architects. This indicated a wish from the arranger to

focus on the activities within the building, the learning. The case study shows that a complex assessment process and the jury members' different points of view, spheres of interest and experiences should result in a decision of consensus. The fact that they found a winning entry that stood the test of assessment meant that a certainty about the advantages of this entry was created. Unanimity in the choice of a winner eliminates doubts and reinforces the picture of a well-grounded decision by the jury.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Altogether the meetings lasted about forty hours and included a discussion among at least nine persons.

<sup>2</sup> The competition secretary recommended that the jury not make any notes during the assessment process. This was a strategy to make it easier for the jury members to change their opinions during the process.

<sup>3</sup> The jury consisted from the beginning of seven persons, but one opposition politician and one represen-

tative from the teachers union was added to the group. Since the competitors are supposed to be represented by one third of the jury it was decided that the technical director in the municipality of Hagfors would count as one of those together with the two architects.

<sup>4</sup> Translated from Swedish

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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