The Architect, the Client, the Competition… And the Struggle

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

Abstract

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

This paper aims primarily at providing a first-hand account of the professionals' attitude toward competitions and thus feed the debate on the architects' motives for participating in them. Subsequently, it seeks to reflect on the way accomplishment standards of the architectural profession are defined through the process framework of architectural competitions, and through the interaction within them between professionals, or between architects and clients, as well as on the way these standards relate to distinct conceptual approaches and their radical or conventional character. To do that, emphasis is placed on the architects' attitude towards different types of competition procedures (mainly distinguishing invited from open competition procedures) throughout their professional career. Discussion is based on data collected during a set of interviews conducted by the author with representatives of five architectural firms in Switzerland.

Introduction

Architects have always been concerned with fame and glory, holding a special position in the society of their era, the spirit (*Zeitgeist*) and cultural status of which they are supposedly reflecting on the fruit of their work. Yet, like the agents of many other professions, architects too have had to struggle for to survive within contexts sometimes extremely hostile to their 'artistry'. Take for example, the architect's struggle, in numerous occasions since the antiquity, to settle in his social role as a profession apart, distinct of the various guilds operating within the building sector. It suffices to consider that still in 1792, in a particularly significant for one of the world's most powerful nations competition, the one for designing the residence of the United States' President, many of the submitted designs belonged to amateurs, and were evenly judged by a jury of amateurs (de Jong & Mattie 1994; 8). The architect's struggle to establish the profession demanded expertise and the proof for it, in order to achieve recognition within the construction sector but also in the broader

social arena. Struggle for predominance and the right to define the architectural field's standards of accomplishment, is at the center of the professionals' relation to each other, but also to agents of other, interacting with their own, social groups. Competitions in particular have often been considered as one field where architects significantly conjunct with other social groups or (in *Bourdieuian* terms) with *social fields*; be them the building users, the commissioners, the politicians, or the press. As de Jong and Mattie (1994; 8) point out, setting up competition regulations bore a significant impact on a social level regarding the esteem paid to the profession in general.

This paper aims primarily at providing a first-hand account of the professionals' attitude toward competitions and thus feed the debate on the architects' motives for participating in them. Subsequently, it seeks to reflect on the way accomplishment standards of the architectural profession are defined through the process framework of architectural competitions, and articulated through the interaction between professionals, or between architects and clients, within this particular operational framework. By examining the architectural professionals' choices within the competitions ground, it is possible to shed additional light to their claims on fame, glory and social recognition, in relation to the respective standards of these values in the particular time period. What are the architects' choices and criteria for picking into which competition procedures they will participate? What kind of conceptual strategies do they adopt for competition submissions? How do they choose to represent architectural concepts to the commissioner and the public in general? Finally, how do they perceive the system and the clients' wishes?

Discussion is based on data collected during a set of interviews conducted by the author with representatives of five architectural firms in Switzerland[1]. Firstly, the architects' views in relation to answers they furnished to the above questions will be commented on the whole. Hopefully, this presentation of their views will help cover a certain gap in the respective references, as architects are not normally the ones to talk in public for the conditions of their profession or in relation to the institution of competitions: "*architectural competitions are highly public activities and, inevitably, the results do not always please everyone, or anyone, even the promoter. In all of this, the voice of the architect has been largely silent, although, to be sure, there have been protests by the unsuccessful at the most flagrant frauds*" (1991; p.5).

I will focus especially on the architects' attitude, throughout their professional career, towards different types of competition procedures (mainly distinguishing invited from open competition procedures), in order to provide evidence for the widely commented fact that, depending on the architect's/architectural studio's status and the stage of professional evolution he/she or the team is in, a change of attitude towards open procedures is in order. Highly desirable at the beginning, open competitions are less preferred by architects when they have already established a certain reputation within the profession. I will argue that such a change of opinion may be associated with the project's *radical* or *conventional* character and the adoption by the architect, at the beginning of one's career, of a less consensual approach towards widely established architectural standards.

Switzerland has a long tradition on architectural competitions, but the principal reason for the country's offering an appropriate case study to deal with the issues mentioned above is the

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[1] The author has met with representatives of the five firms in the week 12-15 February 2013 in the firms' offices in several Swiss cities: Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich, and Basel. Every representative's opinion, communicated in the following in the form of a citation, refers to the discussions held during this time period. Some of this material has been used to confirm certain points of the arguments built in a former paper by the author, see Katsakou A. (2013), The Competition Generation. Young professionals emerging in the architectural scene of Switzerland through the process framework of housing competitions – a case study, in Rönn M., Bloxham Zettersten G., Andersson J. E. (eds.), *Architectural Competitions – Histories and Practice*, Stockholm: KTH & Rio Kulturkooperativ, pp. 36-65.

systematic and intensive application of the competitions' system during the last fifteen years, mainly for the construction of a large number of housing units, and particularly in the German-speaking part of the country. Competitions in general have been used during the same period for the reconfiguration of several Swiss cities' urban and suburban tissue. Various facets of this subject have already been discussed by the author in previous essays[2].

An additional reason for studying the Swiss framework is the fact that, in the case of Zurich, a city that may be considered as a model example for competition organizing, an important change in the competitions' background seems to be taking place during the last few years: a more or less standard number of open procedures per year (since the mid-1990s and until grossly 2010) is being replaced by invited ones, to the point that, in 2012, all housing competitions organized by the administrative services of the city were actually restricted procedures. What are the reasons for such a change and how may they be considered as significant for the future evolution of the competitions' system?

The architectural firms

The interviewed firms were in their majority founded in the last ten years; in this sense, they 'correspond' to the flourishing period of competition organizing mentioned in the introduction and therefore provide a representative set of cases regarding particularly the impact of competitions on the career of newly-established architectural studios. A second common feature of them is even more significant for the principal argument of this paper: the fact that their competition submissions have often been widely published (in the country and abroad) for their innovative character and architectural quality.

It must be immediately noted though, that as may be easily inferred, the views of the specific architectural bureaux are here cited not primarily for their value as representatives of the whole architectural profession in Switzerland. Such a case applies but to a limited degree; mostly they could be considered as representatives of what seems to be promising about the most recent production of the Swiss architectural scene. Additionally, their views are important because they are sometimes unexpected, in comparison with concepts that are considered as generally accepted within the profession, or even by the official voices of professional associations.

In total, representatives of five Swiss architectural bureaux have been interviewed which will remain in anonymity, in the following. This is done for two major reasons: firstly, for the simple fact that review of the cited points has yet to be completed by the colleagues that had the kindness to build a case offering their personal views. Secondly, because the effort for retaining only the essential traits of each firm's trajectory in relation to the questions addressed in this paper, entails already for the author a certain analytical operation which remains closer to the point of the argument and to its value in a broader context. Therefore, in the rest of the paper I will refer to these five studios as Firm A, B, C, D, and E.

Firm C was established in 1998, immediately after the graduation of the two founders from Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, where they have been awarded their diploma under the supervision of a very well-known German architect and prominent educator of the school. The first competition procedure that they have won was in 2001 for a small recreation space in another German-speaking city of the country. This first project has not been built until after ten years of the competition's completion, but thanks to some direct commissions that the firm was able to secure in its first steps, participation in other competitions has been possible. Thus, a year later (2002) the first prize in a significant competition for a museum space in Zurich brought them to the foreground of the architectural scene. In 2005, first prize in another competition for a majorly housing

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[2] See bibliographical references at the end of the paper.

development has again brought significant publicity to the firm as the out-of-the-ordinary arrangement of the facades broke up with monotonous continuities of the existing built tissue. The firm continues to grow as commissions are secured, sometimes through participation in architectural competitions, not only in Switzerland but also abroad. In a period of ten years, their studio grew into a team of 6 associates and 35 collaborators; they have taken part in about sixty competition procedures in total, winning prizes in almost half of them; two thirds of these were actually first-prize awards.

Firm B is an architectural bureau set up in 2007 in the French-speaking part of the country by three former classmates. The architects had initially chosen for the geographical emplacement of their office the German-speaking part of the country, despite the fact that they have obtained their diploma degrees from the country's French-speaking Federal Institute of Technology, having secured a commission in that area and getting in parallel started with competition designs. This last part of their initial endeavours has proven in the end more fruitful than the direct commission which was in the meantime lost; a first prize was their ample award for their early efforts in the competitions' ground in a competitive procedure that was in fact particularly significant also for the organizing city, as the housing programme the authorities were putting in place was falling behind in comparison to their German counterparts. Since their first prize in 2009, Firm B has already won several other competition prizes, and achieved second place ranking in another prestigious competition of its city for a new sports' complex. Since 2008, they have managed to double the number of their office's collaborators and entered, after certain direct commissions, the entrepreneurial world managing the construction of a project on their own.

The third office taken into consideration (E) is a female bureau, founded again by two former classmates, who have invested several years in collaborating on an occasional basis, before deciding to set up a joint practice in 2007. Both with apprenticeships to internationally well-known architectural bureaux of their home country, just as Firm B and Firm C, they first gained distinction in the competition's background, quite unusually, through an open ideas' competition organized the same year of their practice's foundation. The competition's commissioner was a newly founded association of several housing cooperatives in Switzerland which sought for innovative ideas regarding the inhabiting ways of the future in the context of the contemporary city. A project competition launched by the same cooperative in 2009 brought Firm E in the first place of the winning teams with an innovative proposal that in a way transcribed the complex structure of the surrounding urban tissue into the new building complex and each building in itself.

The fourth architectural bureau (Firm A) that concerned our enquiry is set somehow apart from the majority of architectural firms, at least in Switzerland, as it is one of the few choosing a diagrammatic representation mode in many of its designs. The two main associates founded the bureau in 2003 four years after their graduation and their apprenticeship alongside well-known masters of the Swiss architectural scene. So far, and besides several prizes won in competitions, they have yet to win a first-class award and to be actually commissioned for a building through the process of a competition; in 2012, they counted in their firm's history a total of almost sixty projects, of which half were designed for competition submissions and a sixth of them was awarded second class prizes. Their office is today made up by a team of six people.

Lastly, Firm D was established in 2006 by the merging of two separate architectural firms, and of people that have already collaborated in various projects before tracing a joint course; in fact their first-prize competition project was one designed while still separately established professionals. This particular housing project was in the end aborted because of the objections met at the level not only of the neighbourhood but also of a part of the city's organising authorities. The extensive experience of one of the partners in another European country has affected, according to his opinion, the mentality and representation modes of his design in the beginning; he had already won seven prizes (including one first prize) in competitions that he did on his own account during a period of ten years

(1998-2008). Up to 2012, the joint practice which, counts 11 members, has participated in around thirty competitions and won in total ten prizes, half of which were first-prize awards.

The competition tradition

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

Project Competition, Cooperative Housing in Zurich (2009), Jury Session

Two factors having an impact on the competition tradition of the country are underlined by all architects: firstly, the geographic part of Switzerland into which a specific competition is organized and its architectural culture; secondly, the people holding key positions in state administration services. Firm C and Firm E mention that "*the culture of competitions*" seems diminishing while distance increases from Zurich. Zurich is under common agreement the most representative

example of a successful application of the system in Switzerland. Firm D designates that a significant role in this success has been played by the former director of the City's Building Services, who actively promoted the competitions' operational framework within the context of collective housing. His retirement in 2012 is considered as, at least, a retarding factor for the organisation of competitions; for Firm D the best thing to hope for, in this situation, is that the Building Department will reboot in relation to competitions' organisation after taking some time to adapt to his departure. Firm E, in fact, refers to the former director of the Building Service of the City of Zurich as the "*mastermind*" of competitions who actually knew how to turn an "*unsexy*", "*uninteresting*" subject, such as collective housing into a field that after fifteen years still draws attention, raising discussion around the respective public building programs and their success.

An additional reason for which one may talk of different architectural cultures in the distinct geographical parts of Switzerland is the fact that the majority of interviewed architects acknowledge the superior quality of competition briefs in the German part of the country; competition objectives are often more explicitly and clearly stated than in the French-speaking part, a fact speaking of more conscientiously prepared feasibility studies. Firm A points out that between the German and the French-speaking region, differences are considerable, characteristically commenting that in the German-speaking part one struggles for the quality of the project while in the French-speaking part "*one feels struggling for architecture itself*": competitions are not that obvious a way for building, and the whole process of designing and implementing a project is often more complicated.

But how do architects choose the competitions to participate in? Firm A declares that at the beginning of their career they were interested in absolutely every subject. What was important to them was to build up a varied portfolio dealing with a wide range of building programs. This seems to be largely the case with many architectural firms. Firm E offers though an interesting interpretation of their filtering criteria when they report choosing competitions according to subject and to how interesting this last sounds in relation to what they know they can offer; admitting their strength in the conceptual part of the architectural project and on a strategic level, they leave aside projects that involve little work in this field. They declare keen on understanding the project's context, and this makes one reason for which they will normally not get involved in competitions abroad. For Firm D the cost of participating in a competition abroad is almost restrictive for Swiss bureaux, which must pay their collaborators higher than national firms, where manpower is normally cheaper. Such a process turns out as non-sustainable.

Firm C which is an architectural office with an already extensive portfolio, as well as the largest of all interviewed firms, brings up the issue of the office's resources at a given moment, that is to say of the availability of specialised colleagues within their collaborating team, for to decide whether or not to participate in a specific competition procedure. Equally, another point widely discussed in the circles of the professionals, turns up in the discussion: the people making up the competition's jury. For Firm C it is a matter of urban planning culture and of the jurors' attitude toward the city. Can the jurors really 'read' the submitted projects? Evidently they refer to an advanced degree of comprehension: will the members of the jury be able to read intentions and visualise the potential of the assessed project? The language of the brief is equally important to them as an indication of whether or not the jury will be able to fully grasp their architectural approach.

Open or invited procedures?

Switzerland's competition tradition is certainly linked to the fact that many procedures are open to all architects. Firm D underlines the difference between Holland and Switzerland regarding this point; in the first country, participation in competitions is based on professional lists and invitations while open competitions (at least since the mid-1990s) are a common phenomenon in Switzerland. They report that, while working in Holland, their principal collaborator had, along with the office he was then working for, his eyes turned toward Switzerland, in order to filter competitions in which it

was possible to participate. Firm D pleads for more open competitions and points out that the official professional organisation, the Society of Architects and Engineers (SIA) should be putting pressure to public and private clients toward that direction.

In Zurich since around 1998 and until 2010 at least 3-4 open competition procedures were organized systematically per year for the construction of new, or the reformation of existing housing estates. Different kinds of building programs were also following the rule of open competitions. Since 2010, the number of open procedures has gone diminishing, from October 2012 to August 2013, out of seven competition procedures only two were open procedures (while an equal number of competitions was referring to housing programmes). From April 2012 to December 2012, another eight competition procedures, of which half concerned housing projects, were actually selective procedures either on prequalification or on invitation.

In this background, Firm C speaks out on what seems to be a common secret of the profession: the kind of competition procedure is particularly important, when one is still at the beginning of a career. Advancing on the professional pathway normally means a larger list of works that increase the chances to be remembered in case of restricted procedures. For Firm E, it was admittedly a problem to enter "*into the pool of the people that may be asked*". The same seems to be true also for Firm B. But how does one get into the pool? Firm A's experience is related to the innovative character of their projects. Their out-of-the ordinary architectural solutions have not brought them so far a first prize, but they have secured them, relatively rapidly, a place in the list of the bureaux that are often invited in restricted procedures; this may be connected also to the fact that in many restricted procedures and according the instructions of the SIA, a proportionate number of 'young' architectural bureaux must imperatively be included in the list of invitations. In such cases, 'young' is also almost a synonym for the 'out-of-the-ordinary', therefore innovative approaches are particularly favoured. Firm B adds that often a first prize multiplies the possibilities of connecting a specific bureau with the building program corresponding to the competition that earned it this distinction, in their case, a connection with the design of collective housing. For Firm E, it is obvious that restricted procedures involve specific bureaux depending on the competition's theme. Firm E points out that invited competitions rime with an advanced level of detail in competition entries; offices have to produce even more work and present a more developed project. This kind of specialisation is for Firm A a means to save time for everyone involved in a competition procedure: the client may profit of the bureau's particular knowledge in relation to a specific type of project, while the architect does not need to bother with competitive procedures in which he would have even less chances to win judging on lack of experience.

Specialisation is of course only one important aspect of the distinct impact open and restricted procedures bear upon a firm's trajectory, and potential assessment, in the professional arena. A competition's outcome, and therefore, a firm's professional recognition within the competitions' background may significantly be altered, according to Firm A, in relation to the condition of anonymity which characterises open procedures and is, on the contrary, annulled in many cases of restricted procedures. In these instances, it is allowed to the architect to defend his conceptual choices in front of the jury, discuss with them and explain the reasons which led to these choices. Such an option is valuable, Firm A continues, in case of a feasibility study quickly made, and not taking into consideration all important data regarding the competition's context and building program. It is common that poor feasibility studies are behind impossible to solve competition briefs, which competing architectural firms are forced to affront by not respecting some part of the program. Such circumstances can only be clarified through the process of a restricted procedure with oral presentations by the participants. The same applies for Firm A, in case a conceptual choice may in reality be much more flexible than originally supposed by the jury. It is possible that a specific proposal ends up with an honourable mention instead of a winning prize, because of seemingly not respecting an, even subsidiary, parameter of the program, whereas such a detail could easily be adapted to the client's wishes following appropriate and direct discussion.

What do the clients expect? Architects' conceptual approaches and visual communication

For Firm E the first competition in which they have been distinguished (as mentioned before an ideas competition) was one where the client really sought for innovative approaches. The competition's commissioner was looking for experimental thinking, and this was what they tried to do: their playful approach, which led them to produce a whole leaflet treating the perceptual qualities of existing in the city of Zurich, dense housing estates, and was commented by Firm D, who served in this competition as part of the jury, as an outstanding architectural proposal, suited well the client's expectations. The jury and the commissioner were in this case, unanimous as to assessment of the submissions. Nevertheless, in many cases, the client's biggest apprehension about competitions is to be end up with a project he does not really approve because of some, indefinite to him, architectural standards, to which the jury (forcibly in its majority professionals of architecture) obey, due to professional solidarity.

The success of the city of Zurich and its former director of Building Services seems in fact to lie, according to Firm D, and apart from the inherent linking of competitions with the quality of the produced outcome, to a large degree exactly on the fact that he continuously advanced that no prefixed choice was to be imposed on the client. This point is particularly important; the fear of getting stuck with a project difficult to implement and/or with an architect reluctant to discuss his 'ideas', or even take any form of criticism on his project is one of the main reasons that many commissioners, mostly private, avoid architectural competitions. It makes for a point constantly in an effort to contradict by professional organisations who aspire to the organisation of more architectural competitions (see RIBA, *Open Up Your Options*, nd). Firm D additionally draws attention to the fact that in Switzerland, what is considered as extra work by the architect (as extra details that are asked for a submission in the framework of a project competition) is, in fact, another important reason for which competitions become attractive to private clients.

For Firm B every client is a different case. They do not consider themselves badly treated by their clients; their attitude remains quite a modest one regarding their work, despite their so far considerable 'success'. They declare interested in having their office running, in building. They confess having been misled, with regards to their first project, by their ignorance of the building regulation in the area. They found out in the course of the project's implementation that the beautiful finishing line of their apartment buildings was actually impossible to build according to building restrictions of height; at the same time, they realised that the materials they were proposing could never combine well together, they thus had to entirely revisit their original scheme, at least in terms of its exterior aspect. "*They assume*", they say today. The alterations was something that had to be done, the project is the best solution they could come up with. Their conceptual approach is on the whole quite distinct from that of Firm A, who speak of an "*engaged*" attitude towards architecture that they felt they had to adopt at the beginning. Their choice was to avoid being "*consensual*" with respect to established standards. They consider their radicality as "*the best thing that can happen to a client*", with respect to the project's quality; out-of-the-ordinary ideas are likely to produce the most appropriate solutions to difficult problems. They clarify that "they are not interested in utopias". Being radical just for the sake of breaking through the *status quo*, is not what really sets them working. Nowadays, they are sceptical about their conceptual approach and they consciously try to reduce its impact. Their representation images, the diagrammatic line of which seems to get attenuated, towards other more conventional representation modes is another way to moderate their projects' radical character.

The same seems to have been the case with Firm D, who offers an intermediate position-taking between the more consensual of Firm B and the more radical of Firm A. They consider radicality sometimes hides ignorance or misapprehension of the program's prerequisites, or even a kind of 'naive' attitude toward architectural composition, which privileges the aesthetic and remains attached to powerful but non-thoroughly thought concepts. Although their competition record is

nowadays quite rich with competition distinctions, they admit having been preoccupied in the past with the fact of acquiring only second prizes and never the actual commission. They then realised that they had to change course of action; their conceptual approach nowadays tends to 'dose' innovative thinking.

For all architects, representation images, as demanded in competition submissions, are a major issue with respect to the communication between architect and client. Firm E reports using three-dimensional images in panels, only when these images are an organic part of the conceptual process. But they admit images are a problem, as images are "*too easy to read*". Firm C points out that it is too difficult for the jury laymen not to be "*attached to the first image*", while for Firm B the problem is located in the fact that for a layman an image means different things that for the professional. People look at an image and believe it to the detail while professionals have developed the ability of abstraction, it is mostly the essential, an atmosphere, an intention that they will retain. It then becomes difficult to perform necessary adaptations to the competition project. Firm E report that as members of juries they found that in each single case, images were always a matter of discussion; even more so, as it is difficult for lay people to read floor plans. They report feeling as if they had to educate the jury, as if people showed fear and distance to the competitions procedure on account of lack of knowledge. They do not fail to point out that in the end everybody seemed happy with the results.

Discussion

What has been mentioned in the previous sections comes in many cases as a confirmation of views that often figure in the columns of the specialised press representing the entire profession. As noted in the introduction, these are rarely written by architects. If they are, the authors are most often those that have already won prizes and, in a way, already earned a certain 'right to their own voice'. To a degree the interviewees have been chosen on the same grounds. After all, primed architects may be considered as the ones fixing the standards of accomplishment in their field. Nevertheless, their relation to *fame* and *success* seems ambivalent. The juxtaposition of Firm A and Firm B reveals two radically different approaches to the competitions' background that, in a way, are both compensated and thus raise questions regarding what may be considered as accomplishment standards, or else 'professional success' in architecture and the way to achieve it.

According to Bourdieu, such standards are defined either by the professionals who focus on distinguishing their field's artistic values from those holding meaning for other social classes, or by professionals who consider success in the architectural field as completely relative to the significance the field's product hold within a broader background taking into consideration other social fields. Bourdieu talks of two principles of hierarchisation in continuous struggle within the artistic fields, "*the heteronomous principle, favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically [e.g. "bourgeois art") and the autonomous principle (e.g. "art for art's sake"), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise.*" (1983: 321) For a 'young' architectural bureau, winning prizes (other than the first prize) in competitions and building a reputation through participations in open procedures means that it may then be included in the pool of young bureaux invited by exception to participate in restricted procedures and therefore increase its chances of predominance. If Firm A is considered as an agent representing, within the cultural field of architecture, the *autonomous* principle of hierarchisation (because of its radical approach that has only brought so far second-class distinctions) then their change of position towards restricted procedures indicates a probable passing to the other side of the field, a side traditionally most responsive to external demands (the clients' and the economic capital's wishes), and therefore more *consensual* in its approach. At the same time, it is to wonder which position-taking is most importantly rewarded in the competitions' background: the initial radical approach of Firm A secures them a place in the list of the bureaux to

be invited in restricted procedures and therefore makes it in a way more probable for them to earn distinctions (and commissions in the future). On the other hand, Firm B has already won, five years after their founding, two first prizes but they still seem to have trouble to get invited; what is more, they get increasingly linked to the building program that earned them these prizes. Who, among the two agents of the profession is in the end more likely to set success standards, also in conjunction with the competitions' institution?

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

Another particular characteristic of the Swiss competitions' scene is also significant to depict. Based on Bourdieu's theory of social distinction and the hierarchy of social fields, Lipstadt explains that the architects' *disinterestedness* as to efforts and pains, altogether the only certainty of outcome when starting off with a competition project, manifests their faith in their field's predominant 'capital', the artistic excellence and appreciation of their work, first of all by agents of the same field (1989; 2000). Following Smith's theories for liberal markets, Gilbert and Jormakka (2005) place equal emphasis on architects' longing for public admiration; they speak of the architects' purposeful neglect to opposing conditions of the competitions' framework and relatively feeble chances of winning, due to an over-confidence in one's own good fortune and value.

In the case of a competitions' process framework where a prize means in the majority of cases a commission and a built project, things seem to change slightly. The Swiss framework bears in the end limited resemblance to a case of disinterestedness: architects have very real chances to win and build, thus a very real stress to build takes on the upper hand, in the way they position their firms toward the competition tradition. The concern to acquire built work leads, in the end, to a number of compromises: among them, it is sometimes possible to comprehend the project's radical identity which, for some agents, was the very reason for participating, indeed for designing, in the first place. The stress to build, maybe to the exception of Firm E who seem, for the moment, at ease with their cautious, more conceptual approach, is a common underlying (or even explicitly stated) point in all interviewees' offered set of thoughts.

This concern can certainly be considered as the best manifestation of the architects' constant dilemma between theorizing and practicing; between creating according to some kind of objective evaluation standards (that promote architecture as art) and according to the very specific demands

of an, often extremely ordinary, building program; between accommodating established evaluating criteria and questioning them; between promoting and managing construction, and taking exclusively pleasure in their art. Such dilemmas are often solved by a hardened attitude (an almost cannibalistic one?) towards the younger colleagues, but also through the sometimes unconscious altering of design principles and conceptual approaches.

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