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Who – or What – "Wins" an Architectural Competition?

A Model and a Case Study

Abstract

Architectural competitions are usually seen as a game with only one winner: the architect or team whose proposal is the most convincing. That is certainly a part of the reality, but we argue here for a broader and more nuanced model. In our vision, architectural competitions are a stage upon which a myriad of actors and elements play out a scenario that involves both competition and collaboration on several levels. Depending on the results, the "winners" may be multiple and of very different natures. We call this model "total competition", and are convinced that it has some application not only to competitions, but to architecture in general. After a brief explanation of this conception of things, we will look more closely at a recent Belgian competition (for a Juvenile Detention Center at Fraipont, Belgium, 2011), in order to elucidate its functioning in light of our model. Two findings from this examination are worth underlining. We notice, first of all, a particular and somewhat surprising role played by the nature of the program or brief, where its relative openness seems to have had paradoxical results. Second, we find in the winning entry a strong interaction between different "modes of representation" that seems to have been critical to its success. We conclude with some questions about the generalisability of the model.

Keywords: architectural competitions, Belgium, representation, rhetoric, programme, youth detention centre

Introduction

This article focuses on two objects: a general model of architectural competitions, and a competition held in 2011-2012 in Belgium. The space or tension between the two may seem enormous, since a pretension of universality can hardly be justified by a relatively minor example drawn from one of Europe's smallest countries. Yet, although we can't put forward our case study as exemplary – in the end, what competition could be considered as exemplary? – it offers us a number of hints that can be linked to a more general idea on how the competitions work. One of us was able to observe directly the functioning of this competition, which is an unusual advantage for researchers (see Östman 2012 for a comparable example). These observations will allow us to address considerations on programming, on the definition of competition rules and on how best to address the public interest in the context of a competition. Instead of trying to smooth out the asperities of such a complex system of elements, our critical approach will tend to stress the conflicts and complicities between them. This relatively 'negative' view – recalling Hobbes's conception of the state of nature as a "*bellum omnium contra omnes*" – is the basis on which we sketch out our model of "total competition".

Method and materials

The case study was observed in real time by one of the co-authors, who was working at the time for the public agency in charge of the architectural competition. He was involved in the organisation of the competition, starting from the first meetings of the stakeholders, contributing to the definition of the brief, and was present for all jury meetings. The main documents for the purpose of this article were made available thanks to his participation; both co-authors have since worked together on analysis and writing.

All the competition material is thus first-hand:

1. personal notes and pictures of preliminary meetings and site visit;
2. the public procurement notice, the competition brief and its attached documents (pedagogical programme, technical requirements, plans, etc.);
3. all the 18 prequalification entries (mainly composed of a letter of motivation, a team description with portfolios and three relevant references);
4. personal notes and official report of the prequalification session of the jury, of the questions and answers session and of the final jury;
5. all the 5 competition entries, including plans, notices, pictures of the models and slideshows used for the oral presentation.

Our "total competition" model, as presented below, has been developed from work on this case study and on three others, previously presented in 2012 [1], as well as during discussions between the authors. We consider that the case-study approach will in the long term help us to critique and improve the model, while progressively leading to more incisive analytical tools to (re)apply to the case studies.

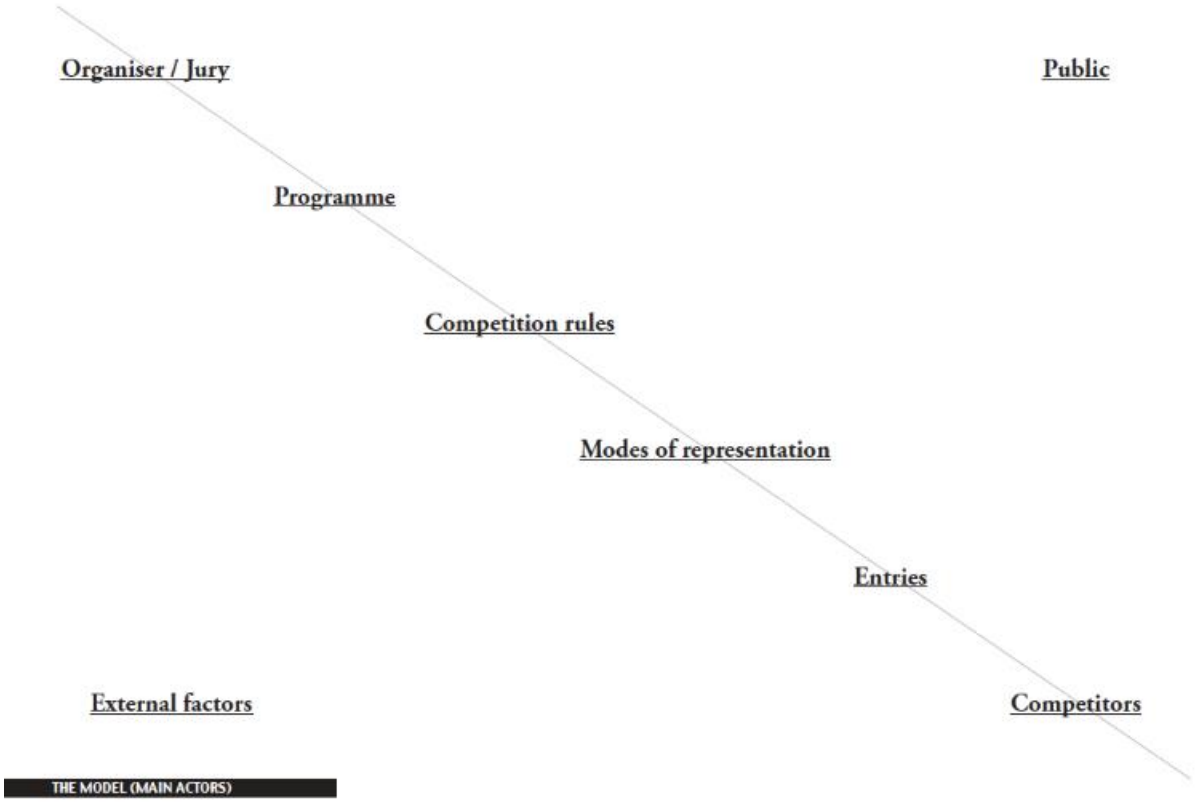

Figure 1. The main actors in field of interactions of the "Total Competition" Model

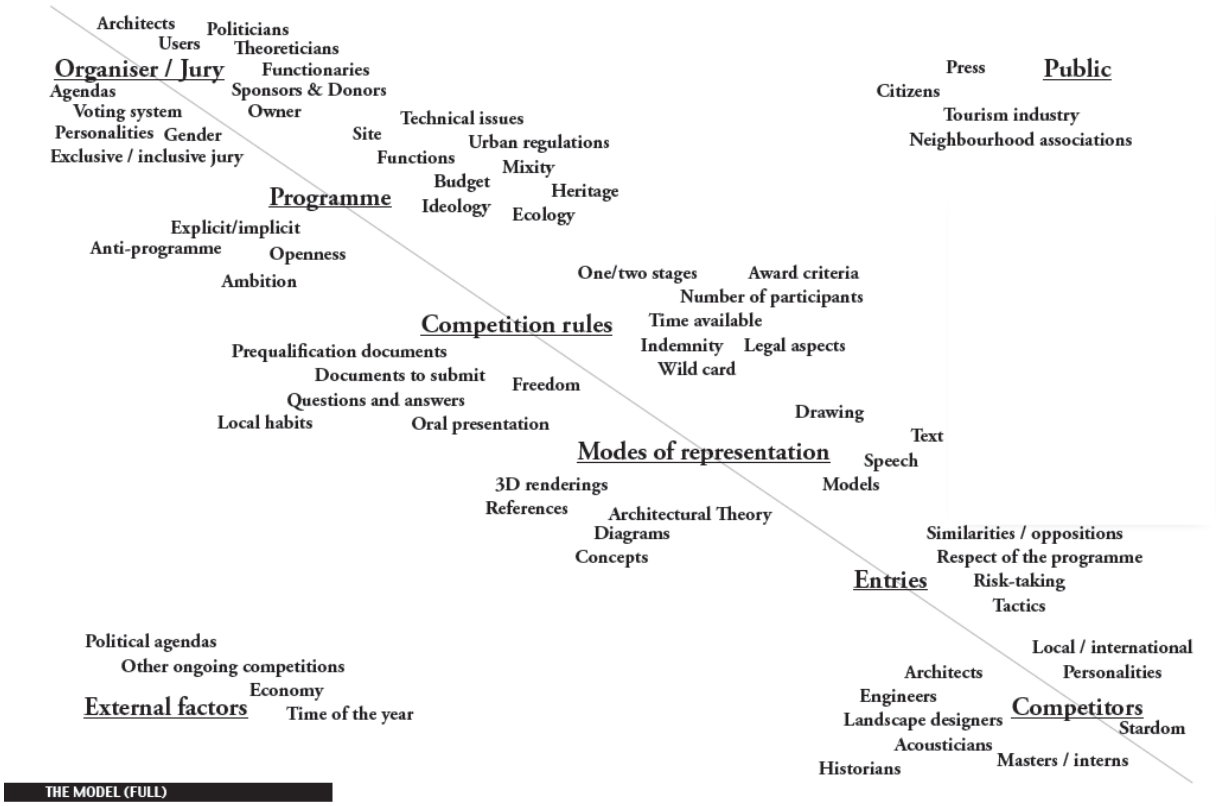

Figure 2. "Total Competition" model: Main and subsidiary actors

"Total competition"

Our model (see Figures 1 and 2) views various critical elements, both human and non-human, of a competition as distributed throughout a field of interactions. As in Bruno Latour's well-known "Actor-network" theory (Latour 2005), interactions may take place between human agents, or between humans and non-humans, or indeed even among non-humans via various forms of mediation. The specific profile of an individual competition can also be shown in its own diagram, highlighting those elements and interactions that are of particular relevance to the case at hand, as we will explain further below. We have provisionally enumerated six principal elements, as follows: the organisers/jury, the programme, the competition rules, the modes of representation, the competition entries, and the competing teams. According to our model, *each* of these may be in competition with *any* other element (e.g., programme vs. competition rules). But of course, competition may happen internally *between*, for example, jury members, modes of representation or - quite naturally - competitors.

But what is "competition"? Our introduction might lead the reader to think of the notion itself as unproblematic: competition as a zero-sum game, a bit like a jousting tournament where knights go about knocking each other off horses. One either wins, or one doesn't. We are not, however, so sure that such a conception does justice to the complexity of actual competitions. This intuition comes from our experience in participating in competitions, but also from an examination of the word itself. We were struck, upon examining the etymology of the word "competition", by its rather rich polysemy. The Latin verb *competere*, the root of the word, implies both "seeking or striving together" and "competing" in the modern sense (Partridge 1958, p489-90). And in French, for example, the equivalent word *concours* is similarly ambiguous, as it can mean at once "collaboration" and, in the more usual sense, "competition". Other researchers, like Elisabeth Tostrup (2010) have examined this etymology, but without emphasizing the ambiguity of the term. The implication

of this for our general model is that the interactions among different agents and elements could be on the order of "competition" - attempting to defeat the other - but they could also be a matter of collaboration or mutuality.

Hélène Lipstadt's recent (2009) article is worth mentioning here, because of the epistemological questions raised. In the article, Lipstadt warns researchers of the danger inherent in accepting architects' myth of disinterestedness, and proposes considering competitions as a Bourdieuian "field", where *all* actors have an interest that they are keen on defending. We would agree with this characterization, but we would "up the ante", considering first, after Latour, that the actors in question may also be non-human; and, second, that relationships between these actors, although always interested, may involve both competition and collaboration.

So the first thing to understand about our model is that we see competition as a generalised interaction among all "participants", whether human or non-human. This is not meant in as figurative a way as might first seem. Within the general aim of producing a satisfactory result, many factors may either work together or against each other, and there is no reason to limit this to humans explicitly acting. The roles of non-humans are just as important. For instance, if the programme and the competition rules are in conflict (or competition) with each other - for example, a very vague programme vs. very strict rules - the way in which competitors and/or the jury resolve this contradiction will be of crucial importance to the result.

The second implication of our model is that these interactions can be either conflictual or collaborative, or perhaps indeed a hybrid of both. A classic example of this is in the complex relationship between competitors : as suggested in our etymological excursus above, the very situation of competition leads to a certain solidarity between competitors, from beauty contests to footraces. Competitors have common interests and will often support each other in significant ways, even while hoping and striving to win.

In a specific competition, certain interactions will have a more determining influence than others (see, among others, Kreiner 2010a and 2010b; and Svensson 2012). A particularly strong jury, for instance, can countermand in its deliberations what the client or the public or even the competitors might have expected. In other cases, a particular competition entry or entries may "defeat" the rules or the programme by showing a good solution that does not conform to them. This is what gives any competition its particular "fingerprint" with respect to our general model, as we hope to show below.

Competing in Belgium

Unlike France or other more homogeneous neighbouring countries, Belgium has no uniform policy on how architectural competitions should be organized. The country is a federal state, with multiple governmental levels operating along geographical, linguistic and cultural lines. This fragmentation, with its overlapping of competences and decisional powers, results in very different policies and methods when it comes to selecting a design team for a public building or urban space.

Architectural quality is not always the primary factor taken into account when launching a public tender. There are big cultural differences from one city district or region to another, and just as surely between individual ministries. Legally, nothing requires the organization of an architectural competition : architecture can be treated just as might be any other service submitted to public tender, like cleaning, bank services or plane reservations. The public authority can limit its responsibility to asking for a bid on fees (which can simply translate into selecting who wants to be the most underpaid for their work and will likely do the worst job). Budgets allocated to cover the building costs are notably lower than in France, for instance, so there is also less money to put into competitions. This is an indirect but

inevitable consequence of political fragmentation, where the federal policy of regional redistribution allows little room for excellence. There is nonetheless a general tendency, for the last ten or twelve years, toward institutionalizing the practice of architectural competitions, at least at the regional levels of Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders. This situation isn't stable yet, but it has already yielded some positive results.
Official international competitions promoted by Unesco and cautioned by the International Union of Architects are rare. The level of publicity is usually set according to European directives, which means that most of the time architectural competitions are held on a European level. As in the Nordic countries, the participation rate from abroad, even within Europe, is usually rather low.

Among the different public authorities, the Flanders region has the most robust tradition of organising competitions, notably in the form of its so-called *Open Oproep* ("Open Call") program : all public authorities in Flanders, such as municipalities, water companies, social housing institutions, and so on, are encouraged to follow a common procedure organized by the *Bouwmeester* or "Chief Architect" of the Flemish Region Government, a specialized agency with 20 staff members who help public clients to prepare the brief and select the architects who will be invited to compete. It is by no means universally used for public buildings, as T'Jonck (2010) notes. In the terms of the European directive on public tenders, the procedure is a competition (art. 66-74 EU directive 2004/18/CE) followed by a negotiated procedure (art. 31.3 EU directive 2004/18/CE).

The situation in the other main region of Belgium, Wallonia, is more complicated, as there are still no common rules among the different local authorities for organizing architectural competitions. A public agency called the *Cellule architecture* ("Architecture Unit") of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FWB) is what most resembles the Flemish *Bouwmeester*. It is also a transversal service, with 6 staff members, available to all the public authorities of the region(s), but it doesn't yet have the status to impose its preferred procedures. This means that, in Wallonia perhaps more than in Flanders, alongside "good practices" for architectural quality there still exist other common practices which don't encourage architectural quality, whether in cultural or in professional terms. The procedure used by the *Cellule architecture*, which organised the competition under study here, is usually a negotiated procedure, limiting the competition to 5 complete design teams selected after a first stage of prequalification (art. 30.1.c EU directive 2004/18/CE).

As a third important actor of the federal state, the Brussels Region is the main authority in the capital city of Belgium. In terms of architectural competitions, Brussels is in a way stuck between Flanders and Wallonia: on the one hand, like Flanders, it recently appointed a "Chief Architect" administration, which is meant to coordinate all other public authorities within its territory and to define the procedures to follow; but on the other hand, this new institution has little authority to lead local authorities in the right direction, so that the situation in Brussels is still fragmented. Its preferred procedure is similar to the one practised by the FWB's *Cellule architecture*.

Despite a certain diversity due to the political, cultural and linguistic context, these three "Chief Architect" authorities of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels get along quite well and often exchange ideas and experiences on architectural competitions. They also discuss general and future problems, such as how to preserve architectural quality within the economic context of public-private partnerships.

A quite peculiar characteristic of competitions in Belgium is the lack of anonymity. This can be attributed to two main causes : the fact that following a rule of anonymity in such a small country is practically impossible, and the systematic preference for an oral presentation of each entry in front of the jury.

Description of a competion

Only bad descriptions require an explanation.
Bruno Latour (2005, p147)

Figure 3. Aerial view of the site at Fraipont (Google Earth)

The competition in question was about rebuilding a centre for young offenders on a large landscaped site (Figure 3) at Fraipont on the outskirts of Liège, Belgium's third most populous urban area. The institution, which can accommodate 56 inmates and 22 daily "clients" who are not housed in the institution, has been in use since 1970. It is high time to renew its infrastructure, as the original mansion and its pavilions are in very poor condition. As we are writing this article, the design and consultation process is underway. Since the content of the competition proposals was, in fact, more a master plan than a completely defined preliminary design, the process will likely continue for some time before realisation.

The programme of a youth detention centre directly expresses the relationship between society and its most maladjusted younger – and sometimes dangerous – members. It is situated by definition in a field of contradictions, between coercion and education, between institutionalisation and social reintegration. The institution is a costly enterprise, with a staff-to-inmates ratio of 3:1, and its programme is riddled with technical constraints: participants in this competition received a 120-page text detailing roles and responsibilities of the institution and its staff. Architects, asked to support this difficult project, must take account of all of these factors. As far back as the celebrated French "Agricultural Colony" at Mettray, designed by the architect G.-A. Blouet in the spirit of 19th-century social reformism[2], the attempt has been made to create "strict but homelike" conditions for juveniles in trouble, but the current state of the Fraipont site has made this progressively more difficult over the last few years. This is the situation that competitors were asked to confront.

The competition in brief

This competition was important for the Belgian authorities: it was the first recent occasion to build such an institution anew, thus bringing architecture up to the standards set by the legal framework in vigour for so-called "Public Institutions for the Protection of Youth" (*Institutions Publiques pour la Protection de la Jeunesse,* or *IPPJ*), regularly put into question since 1991[3].

The coordination and management of such centres is difficult and complex. The people involved in the institution, which in Belgium belongs among communitarian matters like culture, sports and education, are particularly committed to this cause. As part of the "back story" of the project, staff evoke increasing political pressure from the Federal Government to incarcerate young offenders in real prisons rather than in such institutions. Such a policy is popular among those advocating "zero tolerance", and would be less expensive per inmate, if only in the short term. By building this new centre, the staff wanted to manifest their position in this conflict of attributions, since Youth Policy is a communitarian subject and Public Safety (crime control) a federal one. Thus, on the client side, everyone was deeply involved in the competition and gave it all the time considered necessary.

The competition was launched on 6 July 2011 with a call for prequalification published in the Official Journal of the European Union. In legal terms it was a negotiated procedure aiming to solicit three to five complete design teams, constituted of architects, landscape designers, engineers and furniture designers. 18 design teams submitted a request for qualification. All the architectural practices leading a design team were Belgian and, more precisely, French speaking. Only some landscape designers or associated architects came from abroad.

A jury was held for both stages of the competition. It was composed of two functionary architects representing the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation as owner of the centre; two representatives of the institution, actually belonging to the same ministry; the director of the centre; two functionary architects representing the local and regional planning services; and three independent, practicing architects, one of whom was also a criminologist and an expert on adult prison living conditions. Seven members out of 10 were architects and, for the record, seven out of 10 were women.

The jury was accompanied by a technical commission composed of the administrative director of the centre (for functional questions), and two appointed architects working for the ministry. The main role of this commission was to pre-analyse the entries in order to better inform the jury during discussion.

The decisions of the jury were taken on a consensual basis after several hours of discussion, in which everyone spoke in turn. During the prequalification session of the jury, two teams were rapidly selected because of their outstanding submissions, the three remaining being selected after further discussions from a pool of seven promising submissions. In the second stage of the competition, the winning team was selected almost unanimously.

The five selected teams[4] received the competition documents on 18 January 2012, and submitted their entries by the 3rd of April, presenting them to the jury on the following 19th of April. The judging criteria were the quality of the architectural and landscape proposals (40%), followed by functional criteria such as flows and the distribution of the activities (30%), phasing and future versatility of the building project (15%) and project economy, defined as a qualitative and quantitative approach to building costs (15%).

The oral presentation, quite common in Belgium, was an important factor in the judging process. It constituted a crucial mode of representation, particularly meaningful for non-architect members of the jury, as a supplement to plans, texts and models. Although difficult to put on record and to archive, it is a fundamental element in the study of any competition where it might exist.

Figure 4. Existing dormitories, to be demolished and replaced.

Figure 5. Existing 20th-century mansion, to be preserved.

The programme

The architectural programme, in itself, is easy to summarize: all the existing constructions on the site were to be removed (Figure 4), except for an early-twentieth-century mansion (Figure 5) currently used by the administration, which was to be renovated, either partially or

completely. Apart from the generic regulations and preferences included in the brief, and some overly-detailed specifications which we will discuss further below, the programme consisted of a description of the different activities and spaces:

1. Three dorms with 12 individual bedrooms each and a living space for the 36 young offenders placed in the ”Educational section”. These inmates spend up to nine months in the institution and have access to teaching and professional workshops.
2. One dorm with 10 individual bedrooms and a living space for the “Arrivals section”. This constitutes a first punishment/treatment measure in which the offenders spend 10 days in the institution, and are not schooled but attend recreational activities and are under psycho-social supervision.
3. A common refectory for all the youths and their educators, internally partitioned section by section in order to avoid fights or other violent behaviour; plus a refectory for the other workers and, of course, the kitchens and their adjoining facilities.
4. Offices for the direction and the administration of the centre.
5. 8 classrooms for 3-4 students each (to take account of varying levels of instruction and times of arrival), some of which are equipped with computers.
6. 6 workshops: woodwork, electricity, housekeeping, painting, nature and other crafts.
7. 5 offices for the educators of the Post-Institutional Advising unit (API), who meet with the youths after they have spent a period in the centre, in order to counsel them in view of re-entering society.
8. A dozen other offices and facilities for the Psycho-Medical-Social service, partly connected to the 4 dormitory sections.
9. Sports facilities.

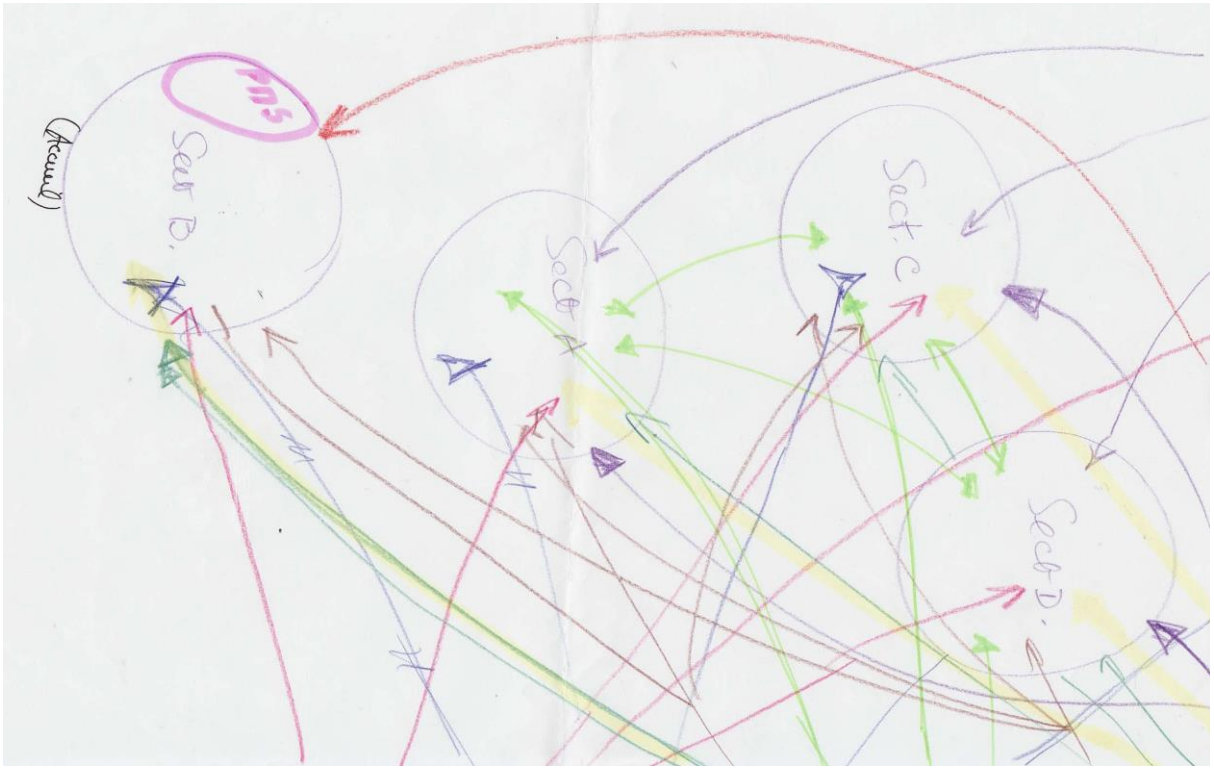

Figure 6. Client's attempt to diagram spatial interactions.

While it may be relatively straightforward to list what had to be accommodated, the spatial interactions between all these activities are not at all easy to characterize. Organizers placed great faith in competitors' ability to provide innovative answers to this puzzle, and so tried to influence them as little as possible, never showing an overt preference for a particular configuration. Following this principle, indications were given on spatial proximities, flows and identity issues of the different activities – but never saying, for instance, that a separate pavilion should be created to house any given function. Given this attitude, organizers expected to see a variety of proposals, including at least one where a single building would contain all the activities. They were thus surprised when all the proposals involved separate pavilions.

The fact that the current situation is made up of discrete pavilions probably had some influence on the way the programme was presented to the competitors, both in the brief and on site, on the day of the Q&A session. Another possibility is that the teams "self-censored" their own entries, for whatever reason. From the information we possess, we know only that one of the practices tried non-pavilion-type solutions during the design process, but they, too, set this approach aside in the end.

Too many details?

A detailed, 120-page technical appendix was furnished as part of the brief. It had already been developed two years before, by a competent architect working for the public administration. He had taken the time to interview each operating unit of the institution: director, administrative staff, gardeners, teachers, nighttime security guards, educators, psychologists, social workers, cooking staff, etc. On this basis, he had defined 38 types of spatial units, ranging from the parking lot to the classroom to the changing rooms for the sports facility; for every unit he defined specifications of the finishing materials, number of electrical sockets, heating and ventilation needs, and so forth.

In the competition milieu of this part of Belgium, such detailed specifications are unusual. First, it is rare to find a public client able to invest time and energy in this process before the launching of a competition: generally the definition of these needs is left for the implementation of the project, and made hand in hand with the design team, which is understandable. Second, the intention to leave the programme open to reinterpretation by the design teams makes a fully-detailed programme less important, although this may be debatable. Reading this particular document, one has the impression that the organiser may have put the cart before the horse: why speak of wires and numbers of telephones when the plan has yet to be defined?

The decision to include this material was made in good faith, in the interest of giving competitors full access to all information possessed at the moment of the competition. The organisers showed thereby that the competition was not frivolous but represented a serious intention to build, which is one of the most important elements that can reassure competitors, to get them personally and professionally involved in the competition. After all, competitions are also in competition against other competitions, especially in a small country where the number of potential competitors is limited. It isn't unusual for an office of as little as 10 staff to be working on three competitions at the same time, necessarily making choices about into which to put the most energy.

From the point of view of what the competition was about, taking these too-detailed specifications out of the competition documents wouldn't have reduced the useful information that competitors could employ to generate their project. But this innocent misjudgement may have caused an unintended rhetorical effect: the relatively large amount of basically superfluous information may have contributed to competitors' conformity to the idea of a rigid programme, where architecture had little to do other than to place rooms next to one another –

thus leading all five teams to design proposals that are similar to the current situation. We would affirm that, in a sense, the programme 'won' in 'competition' with the competitors and, indeed, with the clients themselves: the organisers wanted the programme to be put into question, in a kind of battle of ideas, but it wasn't.

A paradoxical brief

Looking back, the striking thing about this competition is the proliferation of paradoxical requirements that can be found in the brief, from the openness/definition of the architectural programme to the list of documents to be submitted by the participants:

1. The documents to be submitted were quite strictly defined (scales, number of boards, calculation of surface area), yet the organizers wanted the competitors to rather concentrate on the general ideas that would lead the project, emphasizing their own interpretation of the programme.
2. The programme was too detailed in the definition of spatial needs, but also very vague when it came to defining the interrelations between activities, in order to leave open the possibility to propose new spatial schemes. In the end, somehow, no design team escaped from the pavilion-type configuration that is already present on site.
3. Many antinomies can be found in the functional program itself – indeed, in the fundamental philosophy of such an institution. How to educate young people when they first must deal with their own (lack of) control of anger and violence? How to stimulate their interiority and preserve their privacy when they are to be watched over by a single guard? How to let them enjoy the beautiful natural environment (something rare in the urban conditions most of these young people come from) while preventing escapes and vandalism?
4. Finally, the site itself confronted architecture with a dilemma: asking for architectural compactness (for energy economy and functional reasons) in such a vast and varied terrain implies a very difficult choice. No one dared to propose only one or two buildings that would include all, even though the mansion itself, if one used the top floor, could contain nearly all the required programme area!

Talking to the jury

We think it important to give some attention to the oral presentation, as this is often the moment when the most contradictions appear in a competition. According to our experience, when allowed, the oral presentation is a fundamental mode of representation within a competition, often a decisive factor in the classification of the entries. Narratives, rhetorical skills and concepts can influence the jury's judgement in critical ways, especially among non-architect members.

As the jury didn't have previous access to the submitted documents, the oral presentation was the first exposure to the proposal, acting almost as a substitute for the submitted documents. Design teams had 30 minutes to present their proposal, using slideshows or pointing directly to the documents and models, then the jury could ask questions for about 30 minutes. After the oral presentations, all the documents stayed in the jury room for further analysis and discussion. The technical commissioners – the only persons having analysed the entries beforehand – could also help in pointing out relevant elements that would otherwise elude the jury's attention.

In our case study, the emphasis put by the organiser on the understanding of the pedagogical programme as a key element for winning the competition demanded *words*, not only drawings: the architects had to *speak* to the users of the institution present in the jury, showing *orally and in co-presence* that their architectural proposal best accompanied the

programme. Looking at our notes from the five presentations and the subsequent internal discussions of the jury, we can make the following observations:

1. First, all presentations described the main features of the landscape design (first) and the architecture (second), also spending some time on the phasing of the building site. The other domains, like stability, fluids, environment, furniture and design, as well as a proposal for the integration of works of art, were all considered of secondary importance, sometimes treated, sometimes not.
2. Second, unexpectedly, only two teams introduced their presentation with some theoretical considerations that led their design. A) Team 1 based this narration on a refinement of the questions posed by the pedagogical programme (relations, conflicts, structuring a complex universe). The explanation was successful and all members of the jury clearly understood the project in the light of these issues. B) From more or less the same questions, Team 2 insisted on the process that led to the distribution of activities across the site, stating that they couldn't find any typological model for such an institution, thus presenting a series of other references (schools, villages) that could be used as the starting point of the research. This took the form of a small lecture, which was appreciated only by some of the architects on the jury.
3. Team 3's presentation, although lacking in clear theoretical or ideological statements, closely explained many design features, telling them almost from a bodily point of view: the architect successfully empathised, by turns, with the young offender, the educator, the worker, the director.
4. The two other entries, those by Teams 4 and 5, were presented in a rather descriptive manner (“this in the entrance; on the right you'll find an office and the lift...”). Reasons for the actual design decisions were scarcely mentioned, but were informed mostly by pragmatic considerations on building and maintenance costs, flexibility, ecology.
5. The jury members, talking in turn, insisted very little on the aforementioned differences between the presentations, as if they hadn't affected their judgement on each entry. Discussions were mostly based on spatial organisations of activities and their functionality, rather than on the three other criteria expressed in the brief - not even the architectural *parti*.

Not playing the game

The determination of the client not to ask for a fully designed proposal can also be considered as an element that, in the end, may have had a negative impact on the competition result. This choice was imagined as making things easier for the competing architects, for the following reasons:

1. given the complexity of the programme, and compared with the time and compensation they would have available to prepare their proposals, it would have been unreasonable to ask them for so much work;
2. the complexity of the programme would also have implied a large number of 'errors', due to the fact that communication with the client is limited during the competition: better to wait for the implementation phase in order to tackle the spatial issues all at once ;
3. diverting the competition from the specific could transform the competition into one of commitment, mutual understanding and affinity between the architects and the operators, which could prove to be a positive influence on the future design process.

However, and this is the concern we want to address, the five competing teams didn't play the

game. They all (with one exception) drew all the plans and basically did all the work for a complete proposal (Figures 7-11). What lacked in the end was, unfortunately, precisely what had been asked for: to show – through the drawings and texts, but mainly at the oral presentation in front of the jury – a subtle, informed understanding of the problem at hand. As in Cato the Elder's maxim *Rem tene, verba sequentur* ("keep to the subject, the words will follow"), the stakeholders wanted to hear from the competitors what they had *understood* concerning the pedagogical programme, and how would they interpret (theoretically even more than spatially) the paradoxes that had been explicitly underlined in the brief and at the Q&A session.

Probably the five architects selected in our competition were too cautious regarding such a perspective, fearing – as can indeed happen in architectural competitions – to be judged *hors concours* or too slick. A probable explanation for this is that in Wallonia the competition system is very young. There still is little common culture around what can be done or what risks can be taken, in a climate – unfortunately – of generalised distrust. Introducing minor experimental elements in the *IPPJ* competition, for the sake of the project itself, didn't inspire the competitors to take advantage of the proffered freedom.

Figure 7. Team 1: pavilions orthogonally aligned with the existing mansion

Figure 8. Team 2: pavilions create an open space in front of the mansion

Figure 9. Team 3: pavilions modulated in shape and orientation around the mansion

Figure 10. Team 4: Pavilions on a grid aligned with the mansion

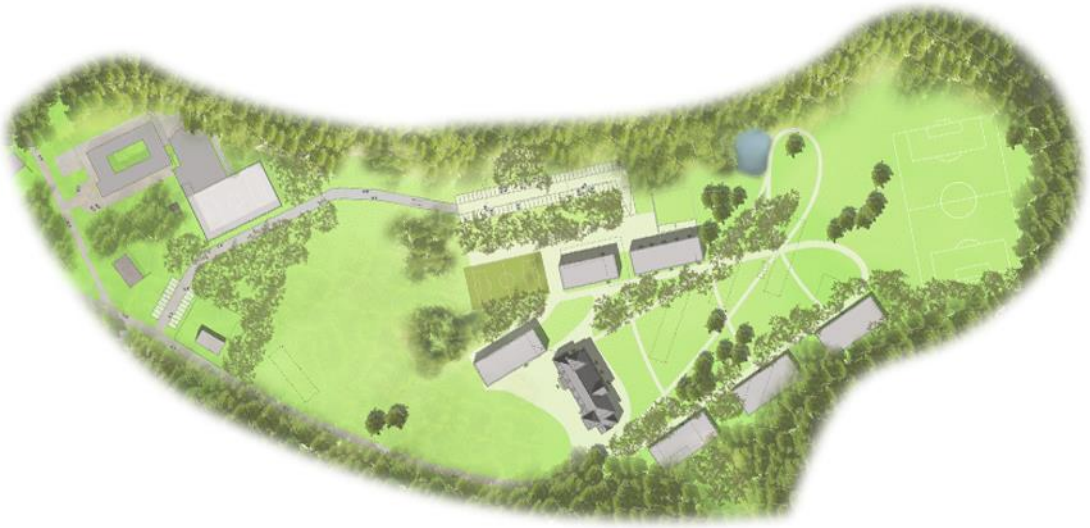

Figure 11. Team 5: Pavilions oriented toward the mansion

Results

In the final stage of the competition, the jury was presented with 5 proposals that were rather similar and, from the point of view of the organisers, equally unattractive. Was all that work worthwhile for such an impoverished result? Not that Team 3's winning entry was bad; on the contrary, it took perfect account of all explicit constraints (although this was already clear during the preliminary selection). Nor is it the case that the winning project didn't arouse the client's enthusiasm, otherwise it would not have won. What generates an uncomfortable feeling when comparing the brief to the proposals is that all the openness and freedom evoked in the programme and during the question-and-answer session doesn't appear in the different competitors' approaches. Is it just a random result — one of the many random factors that can affect the outcome of *any* competition? Or alternatively, just an artefact of the bird's-eye view one adopts when studying a competition from a distance? If two competitors out of five had entered a completely different plan, would the jury have been more comfortable in choosing the same winner? Speculating on such possibilities is one way to develop a more comprehensive view on the organisation of competitions.

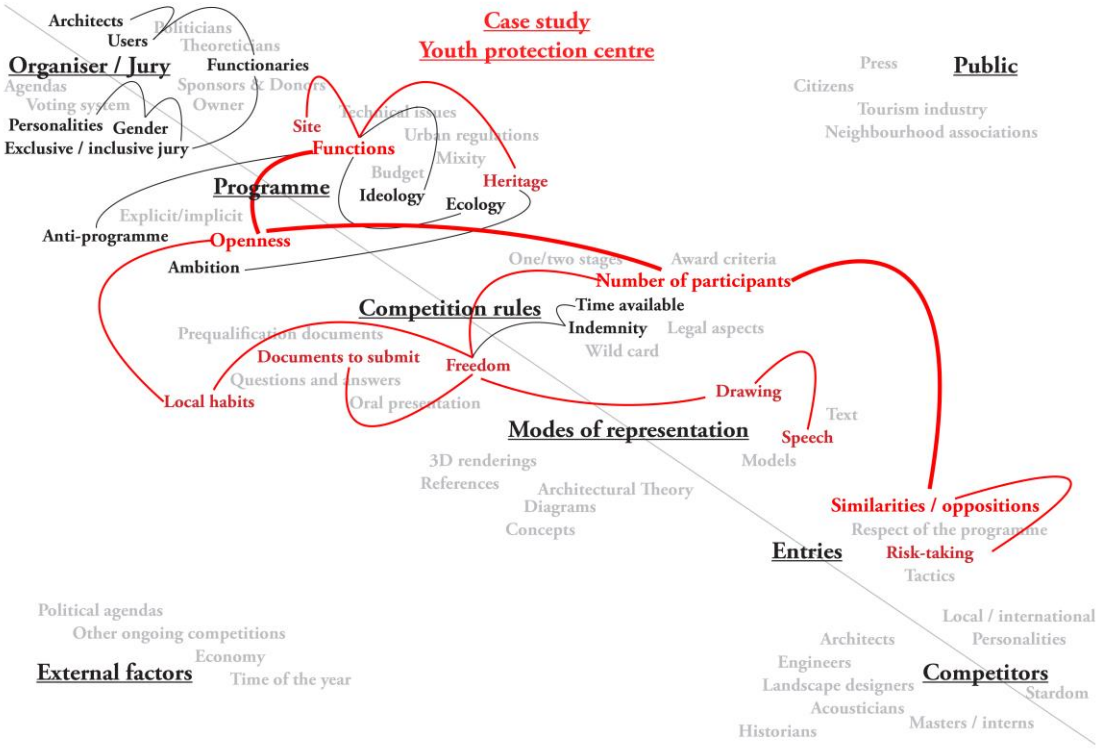

Figure 12. Principal interactions of the Fraipont case study

Who – or what – then, could be declared as having "won" the competition in our case study? If we return to our "Total Competition" model, we can begin to describe the competition's particular fingerprint (Figure 12). The main interactions, according to our analysis, can be divided into three levels of importance, which may be relations of conflict or collaboration, or a combination of both:

1. The principal interactions concern the programme (functions and openness), the competition rules (the number of participants), and the competition entries (similarities and oppositions); these are shown as thick red connecting lines
2. Secondary interactions concern, again, the programme (site, functions, heritage and openness), the rules (number of participants, freedom, documents and local habits), and the competition entries (similarities/oppositions and risk-taking); but it is also important to underline the interactions between modes of representation (drawing and speech), and two interactions between different major actors (modes of representation and competition rules, and also competition rules and the programme); these secondary interactions are shown as thin red connecting lines
3. Third-order interactions are shown as thin black connecting lines, between architects and users, users and functionaries, functionaries and the composition of the jury (gender, personalities, inclusiveness or exclusivity), and between various aspects of the programme (functions/ideology, ecology/functions, heritage/ambition)

As amply discussed above, the principal interactions we've identified for the Fraipont competition, leading to a relative homogeneity of entries, are those between the programme, the rules, and the entries. However, it is worth underlining a secondary dynamic around the modes of representation. In particular, the success of the winning team may be at least in part attributed to the tight correspondence between their oral discourse and their documents: for

each point made verbally, elements of the drawings were available to support and reinforce its pertinence. In contrast to the discourses of other teams, where there was often some distance between the two modes, this close rapport was very likely instrumental in convincing the jury.

Conclusions

In studying the case of this competition, we came across, as shown in this article, multiple contradictions inherent in the organisation itself: the programme, the competition rules, the cultural values at stake, the modes of representation, the architects' postures, and so on. More specifically, we observed that the technical specifications furnished had the effect of working against the client's wish to maintain the competition on the level of broad principles. Moreover, the client's "experimental" decision to reduce the amount of work asked of architects at the stage of the competition wasn't really understood as such by the design teams. And the current pavilion-type organisation influenced the entries, despite the client's attempts to question it during the development of the programme. In the end, of course, the institution's programme in itself already contained numerous contradictions and antinomies.

In all the competitions we have studied so far, we have found similar relations of opposition between elements that play a role in the competition field. It is not only a matter of architectural teams competing with each other, struggling with a difficult programme and trying to impress an insensitive jury. *Inside* these three main elements we found more 'competition': available time, list of documents to submit and amount of the remuneration; frustrating urban regulations versus a demand for excellence; architects' and engineers' egos; exploited interns; political will and economic recession; images and words; sketches and SketchUp; juror's personalities, sensibilities and agendas; order of presentation; time of the day; weather.

Looking more deeply into any competition should reveal that some conflicts or competitive relationships are more decisive than others. Competitions are far from being a smooth process, despite what is commonly shown in after-competition narratives. Independently of the 'good' or 'bad' result of a competition – it is not always or only a matter of value judgement – the presence of these conflicts is mutable but systematic. Generalising these conflicts in a theoretical model of the architectural competition, we would like to continue to develop an alternative point of view on architectural competitions, complementing and sometimes contradicting those already present in the growing literature. Using the model as a tool, applying it to competitions outside of Belgium, outside of Europe, should allow us to continue to test its robustness across diverse cases.

This is the first time we've attempted to use our "total competition" model in a practical application to a specific, concrete case study. We are well aware that this necessarily brief article is insufficient to convince the research community of its general applicability. The graphic language we've been developing for the diagrams is also, no doubt, to be improved. We are, however, confident that the conceptual and methodological tenets we've adopted, inspired notably by Bourdieu and Latour, will be valuable in helping to develop a global perception of competition dynamics, and, we hope, of architecture in general.

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1 David Vanderburgh and Carlo Menon, "Seeing both the finger and the moon – Belgian architectural competitions in their representational context". International Symposium *International Competitions and Architectural Quality in the Planetary Age*, Montréal 16-17 March 2012 (not yet published).

2 See for instance: http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonie_pénitentiaire_de_Mettray

3 More information on the legal framework, aims and tasks of these institutions can be found, in French, on the website www.aidealajeunesse.cfwb.be

4 Hereafter referred to as Teams 1-5, identified as follows : Team 1 (B612 Architectes); Team 2 (Baumans-Deffet); Team 3 (Delgoffe/Pigeon-Ochej); Team 4 (B.A.G.); Team 5 (ARTAU/Kempe Thill)