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Experience of prequalification in competitions for new housing for the elderly

Abstract

This article presents results from a study of prequalification in architectural competitions for senior citizen housing. The aim is to develop knowledge of how the organizer appoints candidates to restricted competitions. Prequalification is a selection procedure used early in the competition process to identify suitable candidates for the following design phase. Three to four teams have in this study been invited to develop design proposals. The overall research question is to understand how organizers select design teams for competitions aimed at developing innovative design solutions on housing for elderly persons in an aging society.

The methodology includes an inventory of competitions, case studies, document review and interviews with key persons. Three municipal competitions have been examined. In these competitions 10 informants have reported their experiences of prequalification. They responded to an interview guide with questions on the background of the competition, development of the invitation, and the need for information about the candidates, assessment process and experience from the selection of design teams.

The invitation emerges during negotiation at the organizing body, which includes discussion with the Swedish Association of Architects and the Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology, who provide economical support for the competitions. General conditions, submission requirements and criteria for the evaluation of applications are parts of an established practice. The assessment procedure has two distinct stages. First the selection committee checks whether applications meet the specific “must requirements” in the invitation. Thereafter follows an evaluative assessment of the candidate’s professional profile. Reference projects are important in this final stage. From the study nine general conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence on the competition by the arranger, the Swedish Association of Architects and the Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology, starting with the decision to organize a competition and ending with how the selection committees experienced the prequalification.

Key words: prequalification, invitation, selection, architectural competition, organizer.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article studies prequalification of architectural firms in restricted competitions aimed at architectural designs that promote a sensation of health care, caring and security in everyday living. The discussion centers around three architectural competitions in Sweden carried out within the framework of the government's program *Growing Older Living Well* (*Bo bra på äldre dar*). The program is administered by The Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology, SIAT, and includes 50 million SEK in support for municipal architectural competitions, studies to identify needs and physical and regional planning for an aging society (www.hi.se/sv/se/Arbetsomraden/projekt/bobrappaaldredar).

The article present results from an evaluation of competitions supported by the governmental program. Three restricted architectural competitions have been organized by support of the program *Growing Older Living Well*. The motive for selection these cases is the objective to support housing for senior citizen by architectural competitions.

Prequalification is a selection procedure in restricted competitions. There are a limited number of participants in these competitions. The organizer begins the selection by issuing an invitation to the trade giving an overall presentation of the competition task, the criteria upon which the choice of candidates will be based and the documents the applicants are required to send in. Architectural firms wishing to participate in the competition submit their applications. A group of persons examines the applications on behalf of the organizer and selects appropriate competition teams. This is a brief description of prequalification for a competition arranged by public organizers.

Research area

The academic research on architectural competitions covers two types of studies: research on competitions from an *architectural historical perspective* (Waern, 1996; Tostrup, 1999; Sauge, 2003; Rustad, 2009; Bloxham Zettersten, 2000; Hagelqvist, 2010), and analyses of *contemporary competitions* (Blomberg 1995; Östman, 2005; Svensson, 2008; Volker, 2010; Katsakou, 2011; Andersson, 2011). One reason why contemporary competitions need to be studied is that project competitions are regulated in Europe (Directive 2004/18/EG). In Sweden this directive has been incorporated into the Public Procurement Act, LOU. As a result of the regulation, competitions have become both (a) a method to bring forth good solutions to design problems and (b) a tool for public negotiations of architectural services. This double role is very apparent in the competitions studied.

Prequalification lays the foundation for future assignments for competing teams. Despite the importance of the selection procedures in negotiating future architectural services, there are surprisingly few studies about how candidates are selected in restricted competitions. We found only a handful of studies about prequalification in architectural competitions Sweden, Holland and Denmark.

Magnus Rönn (2011, 2012) studied prequalification of architectural firms/teams in ten competitions held by municipal or government organizers. The results are based on the study of competition documents and interviews with the organizer. The competitions generated a total of 375 applications. 11 % of the architectural firms proceeded to the design phase of the competitions. Excellent references were required as well as an appropriate professional profile to be "shortlisted". The invitation's requirement for a completed reference project, relevant to the competition goal, means that young architects and newly established firms have difficul-

ties asserting themselves in the competition. This aspect makes prequalification stand out as a conservative force in the competition process.

Leentje Volker (2010) studied how public promoters in Holland contract architectural services using architectural competitions. There is a sort of dissatisfaction among architects towards the bureaucratic and expensive application requirements from municipal/public clients (Kroese, Meijer & Visscher, 2009; Volker, 2010). Volker and Lauche (2008) note that the evaluation of architects for competitions and the judging of competition proposals resemble each other, even though the criteria differ. The selection is based on a combination of experience, reputation, references and architectonic qualities.

Kristian Kreiner and Merete Gorm reviewed prequalification in Denmark in 2008 and 2009. Mapping from 2008 gives an account of the promoters' perspective. The Danish study differs from our study on two important points. Kreiner and Gorm seek knowledge using questionnaires for public and private promoters. We accumulate data on prequalification using a combination of document examination and interviews with public organizers. The other difference is the organizer. Respondents in the Danish study are both public and private firms. We have studied three competitions arranged by municipal actors who have received economic support from The Swedish Institute of Assisted Technology, SIAT. They are public organizers who, as opposed to private promoters, must use a firm/team in accordance with the Public Procurement Act. The common factor is that we both studied contemporary competitions from the standpoint of the organizer's choice of architectural firms.

Aim and research questions

The *invitation, applications and selection of candidates* are the central points of interest for this study. The purpose is to describe and analyze prequalification in the competition process which received economic support from The SIAT through the program *Growing Older Living Well*. This is also the motive for the selection of competitions in Burlöv, Gävle and Linköping as case studies. The key players in the competition are the organizers, jury members, selected design teams and end-users (care-giving staff, the elderly and their relatives). The Swedish Association of Architects, SA and The SIAT are also key players in the study.

The aim is to develop knowledge about the choice of architectural firms for competitions and the key players role in prequalification with the support of the following questions:

- *Why were three restricted architectural competitions arranged?*
- *How was the invitation, application requirements and criteria for evaluating the applications described?*
- *How well did the architectural firms fulfill the organizer's need for information in the prequalification?*
- *How was the evaluation of the candidates organized and carried out?*
- *Which actors had an active role in prequalification?*
- *What experience was gained by the organizers from the choice of architectural firms/teams for the competitions?*

Theory and method

The investigative method includes case studies, document review and interviews. The collection and processing of data has been done as follows:

- *Case studies:* Three restricted architectural competitions financially support by the program *Growing Older Living Well* has been examined and evaluated. Two were organized

by municipalities: Linköping municipality and Burlöv municipality. One competition was organized by AB Gavlegårdarna, a company owned by the municipality. By questioning the organizers we gained access to the invitation, applications from chosen candidates and internal competition documents from the evaluation process such as protocol, decision-making reference material and minutes of meetings.

- *Document review:* The competition documents describe the formal “outside” aspects of prequalification and have been used in three ways. First; as a source of knowledge about the choice of candidates for the competitions. Second; for identifying the organizer’s informants who evaluated the applications. Third: to form the material for an interview guide with questions about the competition process to clarify the informal “inside” of prequalification. Through “careful reading” of the documents we have obtained a picture of the process from the invitation to the final choice of candidates.
- *Interviews:* Information about how the organizer experiences prequalification of candidates is conveyed by the persons who participated in selecting and judging the applications. The interviews are based on an interview guide with open questions that take up the background of the competitions, the competition form, the invitation, the judging process and the experiences of the judges from prequalification. The informants wrote their answers directly on the interview guide. The answers reflect personal experiences and give in-depth information about selecting applicants from the organizer’s point of view.

Informants

Totally 10 informants from the competition organizer gave an account of their experience from qualification in the interview guide. The reply rate is good. 10 out of 12 persons who participated in the selection of candidates for the competition answered the questions in the interview guide. The informants are a very qualified group of reviewers. Their professional profiles are as follows:

- *Gender:* 6 women and 4 men.
- *Age:* 7 out of 10 informants were over 50.
- *Professional experience:* 8 out of 10 informants had at least 20 years’ experience. Of these, 5 had more than 31 years’ experience.
- *Professional background:* 4 informants are architects, 2 are town planners. 3 have social welfare as their professional field and 1 stated “other” as background.
- *Work tasks:* 6 informants work with building design and town planning. Here there were architects and town planners. 3 informants work with negotiating and are qualified in purchasing. 2 of the informants work with health care and care giving including planning and negotiating social welfare services. One is specialized in building.

There is an equal gender distribution among the informants. A majority are over 50 years old. Most have at least 20 years of professional experience. Architects make up the largest single group. An almost equally large group works with social welfare. In short, a survey shows that experienced persons were used by the organizer to evaluate the applications and point out suitable candidates for the competitions. Their professional merits are of an interdisciplinary nature with an emphasis on architecture, community/public building and health care and care giving for the elderly.

2. CASE STUDIES

The organizer briefly describes the competition task in the invitation, the general conditions and the documents to be included in the application, how the candidates will be evaluated and

who will judge/review the applications. Based on this information architectural firms decide if they will apply for prequalification.

Case 1: Senior housing in Gävle

AB Gävlegårdarna sent out an invitation for prequalification in 2011 (Advertisement Prequalification Project Competition). According to the invitation the competition has two aims. On the one hand, the organizer wants to receive design proposals for attractive and suitable housing for senior citizens. On the other, negotiate architectural services for the assignment. Four architectural firms were chosen for the restricted competition. The winner will be able to design the buildings if the organizer carries out the project.

There is a short description of the competition task in the invitation. The competition area is 13 000 square meters and includes attached houses from the 1960s. The buildings have technical defects and accessibility problems. The organizer wants to refurbish the area and supplement the attached-house area with new housing to enable the elderly to remain living there. The need for new housing is somewhat unclear in the invitation. According to the competition program the area should be supplemented with at least 50 apartments (AB Gävlegårdarna, 2011-10-10).

The general conditions in the invitation to prequalification are:

- *Competition form:* Project competition.
- *Number of invitations:* four companies (architectural firms/competition teams).
- *Remuneration:* 150 000 SEK per participant after submission of approved proposal. The winner will receive an additional 50 000 SEK, in total 650 000 SEK.
- *Language:* The application should be in Swedish, which is also the language of the project assignment.

The “must-have” list in the invitation is:

- *Register:* The application must include a listing of the submitted material.
- *Company information:* Name, organization number, postal address, telephone number, e-mail address and Webb address.
- *Taxes:* Affidavit stating that all taxes and fees have been paid. This affidavit may not be more than 3 months old.
- *Economy:* Affidavit from a business and credit report company with information about key economic figures and risks. This affidavit may not be more than three months old.
- *Reference project:* Review of three reference projects the applicant considers relevant to the competition task, at least one of which has been completed.
- *References:* Contact information including name, address, telephone number, e-mail to the reference persons for each project.
- *Curriculum vitae:* A CV for each of the key persons and their role in the reference projects.
- *Project organization:* Statement of the project organization for eventual continued assignment. The team should have experience and knowledge about Swedish norms and demands.

Candidates with applications that fulfill the “must” requirements will be evaluated in a second phase according to the following criteria:

- Architectonic design capacity with regard to the design of buildings in the existing environment, adaptation of green areas, re-building, new building and accessibility.

- Housing design for seniors and knowledge of their needs including prerequisites as well as personnel and technical support.
- Competence in project organization and experience of planning and projecting.

According to the invitation the organizer has appointed a selection committee of three persons to judge the professional merits of the candidates. The committee is made up of a technical director, a draft architect and an outside consulting architect. The committee chose the following four architectural firms/teams to participate in the competition out of 36 applicants: 1) Basark AB, 2) Nyréns Arkitektkontor, 3) RB Rahel Belatchew Arkitektur AB & Uribo AB and 4) White Arkitekter AB (AB Gavlegårdarna, 2011-09-19).

Case 2: Housing for health care and assisted living in Linköping Municipality

In 2011 the municipality of Linköping issued an invitation to prequalification through the local authority for care of the elderly (äldrenämnden) and the built environment (samhällsbyggnadsnämnden) (Linköping municipality, 2011-08-21). According to the invitation there were two purposes for the competition. First, the organizer wanted proposals for assisted living with various constellations. Then, the municipality wanted to negotiate architectural services. Four teams should be chosen for the project competition. The winner was promised the assignment provided it was carried through by the municipality.

The background to the competition is that the town districts are in shortage of housing for senior citizens in an area where the aged population is increasing. Through the competition the municipality hopes to increase their possibilities to remain in the area. The competition assignment included some 40 new assisted living apartments with common areas. The competition assignment also included adapting the outdoor areas to suit the needs of the elderly.

The general conditions for prequalification stated in the invitation are:

- *Competition form:* Project competition.
- *Number of invitations:* Four firms (architectural firms/teams).
- *Remuneration:* 200 000 SEK per participant after submission of an approved proposal, in total 800 000 SEK.
- *Language:* The competition and project language is Swedish. Applications should be submitted in Swedish with the exception of documents such as publications, articles, jury statements etc., which may be in Norwegian, Danish or English.

The “must-haves” in the invitation are:

- *Listing:* The application should contain a register listing the material submitted.
- *Company information:* Name, registration number, address, telephone, e-mail and Webb address to the firms in the competition team.
- *Company structure:* Affidavit stating the company forms of the competing firms.
- *Economy:* Affidavit from a legal credit survey company containing information about the key economic figures and risks for the competing company. This document cannot be more than three months old.
- *Reference projects:* An account of four reference projects, which the contestant considers relevant to the goal of the competition. Pure marketing information may not be submitted.
- *Reference persons:* Contact information including name, address, telephone, e-mail for the reference persons for each reference project.
- *Curriculum Vitae:* Statement with CVs for key persons, their roles in the reference project and eventual further assignment.

- *Project organization:* Description of project organization for eventual further assignment. The team should have experience and knowledge of Swedish norms and regulations. The applicant should also describe how the demand for capacity and availability will be met if the project in Linköping is awarded.
- *Quality and environment:* Description of quality and environmental management assurance system for the firms involved in the application.

Candidates with applications that meet the “must-have” requirements will be evaluated in the second phase by collective judgment according to the following criteria:

- Relevant competence in design and functionality.
- Competence from other related assignments.
- Candidates who, on the whole, give a wide and varied illustration of the competition goal.

According to the invitation a selection committee, a group of experts at the organizing body, will appoint the candidates for the competition. Of these, two are architects employed by the municipality and two persons have experience in health care and care giving. The selection committee chose four firms/teams for the competition out of 33 applicants: 1) Fojab Arkitekter AB & JJW Arkitekter, 2) MAF Stockholm AB & Argark AB, 3) Marge Arkitekter AB & Land Arkitektur AB and 4) Semrén + Månsson AB & Rubow Arkitekter (Linköping municipality, 2011-11-01).

Case 3: Senior housing in Burlöv

In 2011 Burlöv municipality organized a restricted competition in cooperation with the landowner, Kronetorps Park AB (Burlöv municipality, 2011-09-26). This competition also had two purposes. In part the organizer wanted to receive suggestions for new housing and environments with especially high quality including activities for the elderly. In part they wished to negotiate architectural services for designing 100 apartments and drawing up a detail plan for development in the area.

Kronetorp is the municipality’s largest remaining land resource and is in a strategic area between Malmö and Lund with direct train connections to Copenhagen. Burlöv municipality has plans to transform Kronetorp into an age-integrated town district for 60,000 inhabitants with work places as well as cultural and recreational activities.

The general requirements in the invitation for prequalification are:

- *Competition form:* Project competition.
- *Number of invited participants:* Three firms/teams will be invited to compete.
- *Remuneration:* 300 000 SEK after submission of approved proposal, in total 900 000 SEK.
- *Language:* Swedish is the language for the competition and project assignment. The application must be made in Swedish. The accompanying documents such as publications, articles and jury statements may be in another language.

The requirements in the invitation are:

- *Listing:* The application should have a list of the material submitted.
- *Company information:* Name, organization number, address, telephone and Webb address to the applicants.
- *Company form:* Affidavit stating the firms’ structure.
- *CV:* A CV for each key person in the competition project must be provided.

- *Project organization:* Statement of the project organization with an eventual continuation of the assignment including the key persons and their work contribution in percent. The team should have experience and knowledge of Swedish norms and demands.
- *Reference project:* At most five relevant reference projects of which at least two must be implemented. The material in the application may include printed plans, illustrations, publications and charts.
- *Reference persons:* Statement of reference persons for the reference projects including name, address, telephone and e-mail.

Candidates with applications that fulfill the requirements will be evaluated in a second phase through a collective judgment using the following criteria:

- Architectonic ability.
- Capacity for innovative thinking.
- High level of competence in environmental design.
- Competence with regard to the needs of the elderly.
- Experience and resources.

According to the invitation the organizer has appointed a selection committee of five professional persons to choose the candidates for the competition. Two persons in the committee represent the land owners. Three persons represent the municipality: the head of the welfare office and two representatives from the town planning office. The selection committee pointed out three architectural firms/teams to participate in the competition out of 51 applicants: 1) Johan Celsing Arkitektkontor, 2) Tema landskapsarkitekter and Chroma Arkitekter AB and 3) White Arkitekter AB (Burlöv municipality 2011-12-06).

3. RESULTS

The three architectural competitions generated a total of 120 applications (33, 36 and 51 applications). 11 of the 120 competition teams (9%) were invited to competitions. 91 % of the candidates were eliminated through prequalification. The majority of applications (51) were for housing for the elderly in Burlöv municipality. This was the competition that offered the highest remuneration: 300 000 SEK per competing team. The first prize gave the winner both the detail planning and building project assignment. The competition's ability to attract applications from architectural firms was largely due to the economic conditions the organizer offered in the invitation.

1. Competition form

The organizers selected 3-4 architectural firms/teams for the restricted competitions. No one chose to organize an open architectural competition. The decision to organize a competition was motivated by the economic support received from The SIAT. "We received money from SIAT on condition that a genuine architectural competition is organized" is an enlightening reply. But why was just a restricted architectural competition organized? The answer given by the organizer for choosing this competition form concerned limited planning resources, experience from other competitions, steering and negotiating architectural services for continuing the assignment.

The organizers, who motivated this choice of competition form by good experience, the desire for simplicity and negotiating regulations, reply:

We have tried this form earlier and it worked well. An open competition entails more work for the organizer, and a rather large number of less interesting design proposals, which nevertheless demand a certain amount of attention. (Internal reviewer)

Architectural competitions provide the prerequisites to develop good solutions for complex problems. The SIAT laid the foundation for the competition by partially financing pre-studies and the architectural competition. Project competition was chosen as the competition form since it meets the negotiating demands specified in the Public Procurement Act. Prequalification was chosen to ensure the quality level of the applications and to facilitate the subsequent work of the jury and their selection process. (Internal reviewer)

It is politically desirable to develop the quality and design of health care and assisted-living housing for the future... The choice of competition form was made because it was deemed impossible to have an open competition because of the hard work it would entail. (Internal reviewer)

The organizer who refers to steering replies:

With a restricted competition the process is familiar, it is more transparent and it is known that all the teams involved can carry out the project. This is not necessarily the case with an open competition. (External consultant)

2. Invitation

The organizer's invitation to prequalification is extended early on in the competition process. The general conditions, application requirements and criteria for judging the candidates' professional merits as expressed in the invitation are part of the normal praxis and have a regulatory function. The demands communicate a feeling of security in an uncertain search for innovative solutions, but have a conservative influence, which limits renewal in the competition system. The demands favor Swedish architectural firms/teams with good reputations and who can present a portfolio with implemented projects relevant to the competition task. Foreign firms, new companies and young architects are unfairly treated. Thus it is not surprising that the organizer chose to invite 11 well-known architectural firms/teams to the competition. Even though in two of the competitions there are constellations that include Danish architectural firms (JJW and Rubow Arkitekter) among the invited teams, Swedish dominance stands out in the architectural competitions examined in this study.

According to the informants the invitation was drawn up in consultation with The SA and The SIAT. The competition language, economic remuneration and number of participating teams were decided upon in consultation with The SA. That the competition and project assignment language was Swedish was motivated by practical arguments. Informative replies to the question about how the *general conditions* in the organizer's invitation were drawn up are:

The SA was... involved in determining the remuneration and competition language. That the competition language became Swedish was natural since the competition is comparatively small and it could hardly be expected to draw interest from, for example, the continent. (Internal reviewer)

The prize sum was set in consultation with The SA... My personal opinion is that the sum should be fair and dimensioned in a reasonable degree to correspond to the work input and at the same time be a certain incentive for the competition. (Internal reviewer)

Swedish seemed to be the only alternative since the understanding of the proposal is essential for the competition result. The project is based on a process of dialogue... That makes the Swedish language an important factor. Swedish norms and demands are prerequisites that must be met in this type of housing. The economic remuneration was discussed back and forth with The SA. (External consultant)

The officials involved made a common appraisal in consultation with representatives from The SA... The contribution received from The SIAT also influenced the level of the prize sum. The choice of competition language, Swedish, was made for practical reasons, to facilitate managing the competition. (Internal reviewer)

The organizer was extremely short on questions about how the *application demands* and *evaluation criteria* were determined. Few think about the accuracy of the demands and how to attract highly qualified teams in the field of care for the elderly. The organizer refers instead to the praxis, negotiating regulations and consultation with The SA. The forms of the competitions seem more of a driving force than the competition assignment and the focus on architecture for care and security for elderly in every day living.

In addition to the formal requirements, it is a matter of “finding” firms that have the best and most relevant experience for the project highlighted in the competition. The invitation was drawn up with the aid of the (organizer’s) technical department in consultation with The SA and The SIAT. (Internal reviewer)

The project manager... presented a suggestion based on good examples, which we read and commented upon. The SA was very helpful. (Internal reviewer)

The invitation was formulated together by the municipal welfare department and the technical and town building office. (It) was drawn up from guidelines and our experience of working with data from inquiries and negotiations of procurement. (Internal reviewer)

3. Need for information

The invitation gave the organizers access to a large number of informative applications from architectural firms. The informants were satisfied with the contents of the applications and did not need any further information. Not even in the final selection, when only the favorites remained, were other promoters asked for their experiences. Only one informant asked for a clarification: that the work input for key persons presented in the project organization is described in a clearer way. Otherwise the organizer felt well-informed about the candidates’ professional merits for the competition task.

We judged the material we received to be adequate and could make our choice without any further information. (Internal reviewer)

The information about the candidates’ references was very clear in the applications. (External consultant)

The information was extensive. A lot of work to go through it... No references were sought since the firms that continued were well-known. (Internal reviewer)

The information in the applications generates architectural critique judgments, which are used to motivate the choice of firms/teams for the competition. Three typical motives are:

Relevant and well realized reference project, often small-scaled. Good knowledge and sound experience of housing for the elderly. The project organization is well thought through with both specialized and broad competence. (AB Gavlegårdarna 2011-09-19)

The firm's reference project reflects a high architectonic level with the capacity to create buildings with a strong character... The team proposed to work with "our project" is also the one who worked on the reference project. The firm is experienced in reconstruction and additions in environments for the elderly and has been nominated/won several prizes such as EU's Mies van der Rohe prize, Kasper Salin prize, Lund's Municipal Building prize and Swedish Concrete Association's architecture prize...(Burlöv municipality 2011-12-06)

Good reference objects with special, different design with for example living areas without corridors. The project reflects good adaptation of buildings to a difficult terrain. New thinking in design for groups of elderly in nursing homes. (Linköping municipality 2011-11-01)

4. Judging process

Candidates are selected using a judging process that has two distinct stages. The selection begins with a formal control of the applications followed by an evaluation of the professional merits for the task. Applications that are incomplete or arrive too late are eliminated in the first control. The second phase in the appraisal process is described by the informants as a successive elimination of candidates through comparison, evaluation and ranking. Only candidates that receive active support continue to the final judging. Then the reviewers must choose among the favorites. One informant describes the process as a critical evaluation of the candidates based on the criteria in the invitation:

The "must-haves"... were gone over by the competition official and me. Two were submitted too late. Each reviewer went around in a large room where the proposals were laid out on a table. Each one read and went through the "piles" individually. You had 10 "post-it" stickers and a list of the judging criteria, which were to be placed on the proposals you liked the best. The ones, which did not receive any stickers were put aside. On the next occasion everyone was given three A-4 pages with criteria to be filled in. The proposals, which did not receive any stickers were removed. After the last round eight proposals remained which we went through and motivated together. (Internal reviewer)

One reviewer described the selection as a tournament with elimination:

(Selection) may be described as a tournament with three steps and a semifinal in the end. In the first step the applications, which were not relevant to the task were eliminated. Each one individually suggested which ones should continue. In the cases where we differed the firms were allowed to continue. In the second step we went deeper into the applications, studied the relevance of the given reference objects and the architectonic expression they represented. From that step we arrived at a semifinal round where we carefully examined the proposed project organization, CVs for the key persons and read more about the firm's philosophy etc. In the end we assured ourselves that the formal criteria were met. We were incredibly in agreement about our final selection. (External consultant)

A formal description of the selection looks like this:

The process is, briefly, that an official responsible for negotiating examines the applications in question for "must-haves" and formalities. A report is then made to the selection committee. The selection committee then reads through all the applications and makes, in-

dividually, a preliminary selection. Thereafter the selection committee compares these suggestions and formulates motives for the selection. The selection committee's suggestion for a decision is then taken up in the respective professional boards/committees for a political decision. After the decision is made all applicants are informed about the conclusion and the motives. (External consultant)

One informant highlighted the advantages of having several fields of competence represented when judging the candidates for competitions aimed at new housing for the elderly:

We were pleased that we were from such varied professions representing different interests on the jury. This made the dialogue and review so much broader! At the same time we were very surprised at how similar our choices were and how easy it was to finally agree even though we were very careful about going around and judging individually! I think that apart from the criteria, we have followed a sort of "gut feeling" about which firm really thinks it would be interesting to take on the challenge and at the same time have the competence and experience we feel is needed. (Internal reviewer)

The judges need to meet three or four times to reach a decision about which candidates should be invited to the competition. Applications that are incomplete or late are eliminated immediately in the first control of the "must-haves". Appraisal of candidates is a combination of individual judgment and collective comparison. The competition team with good merits is seen as "very interesting" and will be chosen for the final judging. The choice is motivated with architectural critique comments. The architectonic qualities of the reference project will be highlighted together with professional merits and the way in which the applicant brought know-how together in their project organization. The written motivation in the protocol is used to explain and legitimize the decision. The final choice is marked by consensus. "Wide agreement in the group" is a typical answer from informants to the question of how the competition team was chosen.

5. Participation in the competition process

In all three cases the organizers used an expert model for evaluating the applications. A group of experts in architecture, negotiating procurements and health care and care for the elderly chose the team for the competitions. These selection committees have interdisciplinary competence. There were no participants who represented the elderly or their relatives in the selection. Politicians and representatives from senior organizations were also missing. On the other hand the invitation to prequalification in Burlöv municipality and Linköping municipality states that the jury would be appointed according to a model including laymen in architecture. In Gävle municipality, the inhabitants in the area and representatives for seniors had two places on the jury. In preparatory studies to the competition relatives and seniors were also represented in the focus groups. Consequently, expert models are clearly limited to prequalification.

It is apparent from the description that the competition proceedings shift in nature between the time when the invitation is extended to architectural firms and when the jury points out a winner. Experts steer prequalification. The influence of laymen is seen when jury members are appointed. That is a decision based on a more democratic model, which gives the competition wider political ties among the involved community. In this model, there is room for more interests in the competition. The jury's task is to judge the design proposals for the competition task and identify a winner. But there are not only locally elected laymen on the jury. In these cases, it was further expanded to include two experts on architecture appointed by The SA and The SIAT. The elderly who should move into the new housing and their relatives do not

have the same influence in the competitions and must trust the experts, elected jury members and representatives appointed by the senior organizations.

6. Experience of prequalification

The organizers describe positive experiences from prequalification. No one complains about the administrative work, the high costs, the bureaucracy or complicated regulations. On the contrary. The selection of candidates is described as an exciting task and educational experience. The 120 applications are considered a sign of the wide interest from the trade for the competitions. “We received more applications than we hoped for”, replied an informant. The organizers’ selection committees are also pleasantly surprised over the quality of the applications. Some reviewers highlighted the organizers’ need for housing for the elderly as an explanation to the attractiveness of the invitation to prequalification:

There was an unexpectedly wide interest... The great interest was probably due to the fact that this is a “hot” area. (Internal reviewer)

The interest was great considering the background for the project. Get the feeling that public clients who wish to build housing for the elderly are interesting clients for architects and that you can see an increase in the number of assignments in the future. Probably the role of The SIAT and the governmental program plays a part, which gives greater exposure for the competition results than normal. (Internal reviewer)

The number of applications surprised me! And also the level of the layout from a few of the applications. Prequalification is really a competition within a competition! (External consultant)

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Our intention has been to understand how prequalification is seen from an organizer’s point of view and describe the role of the actors. We have done this by examine of documents and seeking the organizers’ personal experience from choosing teams.

The selection of design teams in these restricted competitions follows a general pattern and the objective for the task – housing for senior citizen – has only influence how the selection committees have been composed. Invitation, application and selection are organized in the same way as in other restricted competitions. The findings in the study on prequalification can for this reason considered being valid in the contemporary Swedish competition culture. The conclusion has an interest beyond competitions with the objective to find design supporting health care, caring and security in everyday living.

The answer to the research question in the study may be summarized in six paragraphs and ten conclusions:

- *Competition:* The organizer pointed out three reasons for the decision to call for a competition: economic support from The SIAT, good experiences of competitions and the need for housing. The motives support each other. The organizer also uses the competition to negotiate architectural services for the continued assignment. The choice of competition form – a restricted project competition – is motivated by control and limited resources. A restricted competition does not demand as much work as an open competition and gives the organizer greater possibilities for control. *A first conclusion* is that the organizer in the study prefers a competition form that gives them influence from the beginning of the process through the demands in the invitation and the choice of the competition team. The *second*

conclusion is that the support from the government through The SIAT has been a trigger factor. The three municipalities that received support had already identified a need for housing for the elderly and began planning when they received information about the possibility of seeking economic support for competitions.

- *Invitation:* The requirements in the invitation to prequalification are a combination of the law and professional praxis. *This is a third conclusion.* The “must have” demands are referring to specific rules in the Public Procurement Act. They provide a sense of security and control for the organizer. The evaluation criteria in the invitation are based in a design experiences from judging architecture. The invitations were all drawn up in cooperation with The SA and The SIAT. The invitation gives the impression of “collaboration”. Advice from The SA has been particularly important for decisions about the economic remuneration for the architects, the number of teams that should be invited, and including the requirement for Swedish as the competition language. The language requirement favors Swedish architectural firms. 9 out of 11 invited teams were made up of only Swedish architectural firms. Two teams are part of a Danish firm with established contacts among Swedish architectural firms. The demand for relevant reference projects in the invitation, of which some should be implemented, favors well-known firms with good reputations in the trade. New firms do not have a chance. The organizer’s way of inviting firms to competitions is a detriment to renewal in the competition system and new thinking when identifying appropriate candidates for competition tasks. *A fourth conclusion* is therefore that the potential for competitions as experimental arenas is not fully utilized in prequalification. This shortcoming can be corrected later in the process in connection with the development of the competition program and the design of proposals for solutions.
- *Need for information:* The organizer was able to choose candidates for the competition with support of an informative decision-making base. The firms replied to the invitation to prequalification with applications that gave a good enough picture of their professional merits for the competition task. The reviewers are satisfied with the applications. No one asked for additional information before the choice was to be made. *A fifth conclusion* is that the organizers need for information and a feeling of security was fulfilled. The invitation to prequalification resulted in applications from competent competition teams with informative presentations.
- *Judging process:* The organizer’s choice of candidates is made according to a judging process, which has two typical phases. The first phase is a control of the applications for the “must-haves” stated in the invitation followed by a second evaluation, which focuses on the firm’s professional merits. The evaluation is made by successive eliminations. Only teams that are liked will be left for the final judging. *A sixth conclusion* is that the judging goes from “hard” control of the “must-haves” to an evaluating trial of the merits supported by “soft” criteria that give the organizers more negotiating room for choosing competition teams. The reviewers generally need three to four meetings to identify the appropriate candidates. The final choice is marked by consensus. The decision is based on comparisons, evaluations and ranking. *A seventh conclusion* is that organizers used three different selection methods. The first method is based on identifying the differences in quality among the applications as a basis for ranking. The teams are divided into groups according to how interesting their professional merits appear to the organizer. The second method concerns the subjective moment where attractive candidates are pointed out. Some competition teams are found to be more exciting than others. The reviewers’ individual opinions surprisingly often coincide, which creates a feeling of security about this subjective choice. The third method is a search for a rational basis for the choice. Reviewers for the organizer set up ta-

bles and score candidates. The firms/teams receiving the most points are invited to participate in the competition. The method is marketed as an objective judging of professional merits for architectural assignments.

- *Participation in competition procedures:* There is an expert model behind the choice of a competition team. A group of experts in architecture, town planning, negotiation procurements and health care and care for the elderly, have evaluated, ranked and chosen candidates for the competition. There were no representatives in these selection committees from the elderly, their relatives, politicians or senior citizen organizations. A *eighth conclusion* would thus be that prequalification is an enterprise steered by experts with no input from laymen. In that early phase of the competition procedure the influence was very unevenly divided among the actors. Politicians, the elderly, relatives and senior citizen organizations did not have any role in prequalification. The influence of laymen only becomes apparent in the later stages of the competition process; during the program work, when the competition goal is defined and by representation on the jury when the design proposal is judged.
- *Experience from selection by prequalification:* The informants relate only positive experiences from selecting candidates for the competition. It was challenging, exciting and educational to review the applications in the search for appropriate competition teams. The number of applications pleasantly surprised the selection committees. Altogether 120 candidates wanted to be qualified. A *ninth conclusion* is that there has been widespread interest in the competitions among architectural firms. It was very hard to get a place in the competition. Only 11 out of 120 applicants (9%) were invited. From the architects' standpoint, restricted competitions represent an insecure road to new future assignments. When considering the organizer's positive experience of prequalification it is surprising that so few architectural competitions are carried out. To compete on housing for the elderly seems like a one-off event, a work method for negotiating architectural services, which is only used as an exception. The low rate of competitions is in strong contrast to the reviewers' personal good experiences from prequalification. Also, surprisingly few municipalities have been in contact with The Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology and sought information about funds available for architectural competitions. Only six municipalities applied for economic support. *Conclusion number ten* is therefore that municipalities showed a weak interest in arranging competitions related to housing for the elderly. This in turn could be because promoters with high architectonic ambitions do not find housing for the elderly to be an attractive assignment. The architecture is considered ordinary. Another explanation is that the Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology has too narrow timeframes; only municipalities that had already prepared plans sought economic support for the architectural competition. The timeframes for the government's program *Growing Older Living Well* has not been coordinated with the municipal planning processes.

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Informants

Interviewed persons:

Anonymous informant, procurement

Anonymous informant, architect

Anonymous informant, health care management

Bengt Anefall, architect,

Elin Byström, urban planner,

Bo Bäckström, technical management,

Claes Larsson, architect

Gertrud Richter, planning management

Mona Svensson, city architect

