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SPEAKER

## Competitions serve a larger purpose in architectural knowledge.

### Abstract

The Beaux-Arts programme was structured around a series of anonymous competitions that culminated in the grand prix de 'l'Académie Royale', more well known as the 'Grand Prix de Rome', for its winner was awarded a scholarship and a place at the French Academy in Rome. During the stay in Rome, the 'pensionnaire' would be expected to regularly send his work in progress back to Paris. Contestants for the Prix were assigned a theme from the literature of Classical Antiquity; their individual identities were kept secret to avoid any suspicion of favour.

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These competitions ensured that the fundamental hierarchy of the members of the academia (the teachers and juries: who defined what good art and architecture was) and those that would ascend to it (the students: who were prized and hence were the good artists and architects) and perpetuated a secular way to ascend to stardom.

The use of competitions in the traditional 'studio' class is still a current practice in universities. The class is provided with a 'live' project or a model case study problem, a site and a context, a fixed timetable, and each student is expected to research in architecture in order to present (using predetermined models and mediums) his final conclusions (statements). Each personal architectural research is in fact subjected to an 'informal' (unstated) merit competition (were the teachers take the part of clients, sponsors and juries), to a peer evaluation, in order to prove its author's right to, step by step, become a graduated architect. The research is validated by the competition and assures the originality of the research, its significance and rigour.

There are of course mixed feelings towards competitions by different parts - architects; clients; juries or sponsors - and in face of personal past experience. Yet, it is undeniable the role and value of competitions in the process of generating a qualitative built environment. In general, competitions can bring out the best in people and are a way to achieve excellence in design. It can be stated that a large majority of competitions is experienced daily either as users or as passers-by since most public buildings in Europe are subjected to competitions procedures.

Therefore, along their professional practice, licenced architects outside the academia and in praxis, seem to continue a personal architectural research within professional architectural competitions. There are evidences that, besides the investment in deliberate or improvised practice's business strategies, architects use competitions as fundamental research opportunities.

So I intend to put forward that competitions served once (and still do) as a specific way of peer evaluating the architectural research in academia. Architectural competitions are in fact a time and a space were academia and praxis connect and may, to certain extent, constitute prove of Schon's research-in-action and Till's evidence of "architecture [as] a form of knowledge that can [, is] and should be developed through research".

Keywords: Architectural competitions, architectural research, studio, architectural education, architectural praxis

## Introduction

Since 1648, with the birth of the 'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts' (1648-1968) in Paris, the education of an artist, and later of an architect, "has relied on the transmission of symbolic capital by masters and pupils" (Stevens, 1998, p.168) under an organized system of implicit professional knowledge, with a continuous use of competitions (Kostof, 1995, 2000; Malacrida, 2010; Cuff, 1992).

This paper will not focus upon the studio as a model of professional education in which students undertake a design project under the supervision of a master designer (Lackney, 1999; Schön, 2003), nor shall we dispute or argument in the nature and scope of research done in schools of architecture by teachers and students, but rather we will focus in competitions as a model of producing and assessing the existence of architectural research by architects.

This paper will evidence links between the education of an architect at the 'École des Beaux-Arts' in Paris, its production of knowledge and the phenomenon of architectural competitions. We will use a broad approach to examining the research problem using a mixed methodology and case studies. First we will describe the education model used by Beaux-Arts and its use of competitions. Then we will examine competitions as tools for research. Lastly we will argument the relevance of competitions procedures as a way to research in practice and present some similarities.

The use of competitions in the traditional 'studio' class is still a current practice in universities. The class is provided with a 'live' project or a model case study problem, a site and a context, a fixed timetable, and each student is expected to research in architecture through design in order to present (using predetermined models and mediums) his final conclusions (statements). Each personal architectural research is in fact subjected to an 'informal' (unstated) merit competition (were the teachers take the part of clients, sponsors and juries), to a peer evaluation, in order to prove its author's right to, step by step, become a graduated architect. The research is validated by the competition and assures the originality of the research, its significance and rigour.

Professional architectural competitions exist for at least 2,500 years and "have been employed to choose on architect or one design among many, to distinguish excellence in appearance and in function, to award commissions, and to educate young architects. (...) Competitions are battlegrounds of opposing and antagonistic

solutions, giant architecture class-rooms with invisible boundaries and, often, open enrolments. They provide the forum for struggles for one's personal best, team efforts forged in camaraderie, debilitating taxes on body and pocket, and, for the happy few, joyous public triumph. Competition encourages those who only observe, including the public, to applaud or admonish architects as if designers were contending in a public tournament." (Lipstadt, 1989, p.9)

We will conclude and clarify the views on architectural competitions as research opportunities and will sustain a useful insight of this valuable phenomenon as testimony of architectural research and the need introduce a new vision on its qualities.

## Theoretical frame of reference

### The Academia or the teaching of architecture

According to Kostoff, "the history of the Royal Building Administration in France [l'Administration des Bâtiments Royaux] (...) influenced the organization of the modern architectural office. (...) Furthermore, the curriculum of the 'l'Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture' (1648) and its successor, the 'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts'<sup>2</sup> (1671), was the basis for the method of instruction used in architectural schools until the advent of the Bauhaus in the twentieth century." (Kostof, 2000, p.161) Yet, although the Bauhaus School challenged the Beaus-Arts traditions the basic form of studio-based learning model still continues today at the majority of architectural schools (Lackney, 1999). In fact as Thomas Fisher observes, "Professional architectural education has remained fairly stable for more than a century. Despite changes in ideology, as a Classical education gave way to a Modernist and the a Postmodernist one, the design-oriented, studio-based pedagogy has remained largely unchanged." (Fisher, 2004, cited by Stover, 2004)

Malacrida (2010) references the importance of the Beaux-Arts in relation to the ambiguous status of the profession, between art and science, and as "the guardian of the French classical tradition and of the 'grand gout' [good taste]" (Benévolo, 1976, p.38 cited in Malacrida, 2010, p.25). It provided the "educational functions and gave status" (Pevsner, 2002, p.329 cited in Malacrida, 2010, p.25) through the classical arts and the study of ancient masters. In addition, the importance and influence of this

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<sup>2</sup> The school offered instruction in the classical disciplines of 'beaux-arts' - drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture (until 1968), and engraving - to students selected by competitive examination admission.

syllabus, in Europe and in the world, is also due to the large number of foreign American architects that attended the school during the XIXth century: “The École des Beaux-Arts served as a model for those Americans who sought to improve the practice of architecture through better education. Its influence became particularly strong in America at the end of the nineteenth century when architects, like many other professionals, felt the need to set higher and more uniform standards for themselves. The École, as it was called, possessed what these concerned people wanted to create in America: a well-organized curriculum, a rational design theory, and government patronage.” (Kostof, 1995, p.209)

The École des Beaux-Arts was divided into two sections (architecture, painting and sculpture) and students were gathered in studios (atelier) under the leadership of a ‘patron’ (master or teacher) (Malacrida, 2010, p.49) forming a sort of communal ‘family’. According to Lackney, a “design problem [was] assigned to the student early in the term and carefully developed under close tutelage. It began as an esquisse, or sketch problem, and ended en charrette. Charrette, French for “cart,” refers to the carts in which the finished drawings were placed at the deadline hour for transport to the “master” for critique. The Beaux Arts teaching systems relied heavily on brilliant teachers and learning-by-doing.” (Lackney, 1999) Students engaged in private, parallel pursuits of the common design task at hands (Schön, 2003) led by the practicing architect who guides them “into the mysteries of design (...) and provides a living example of what it means to be a designer.” (Cuff, 1992, p.121)



FIG 1 and 2 : Atelier Pascal and Presentation photo

The programme was structured around a series of specific anonymous competitions and each student progressed from entry examination until the diploma by winning competitions. These competitions and exams were part of the French academia tradition (Malacrida, 2010, p.60). To enrol to the school, proposers would take up to two years in preparation and would be subjected to rigorous oral and written exams,

including nude drawing. "Competition was intense and the end results were beautifully drawn projects in traditional styles which were often defensible only on grounds of "good taste" and intuition. The style was mostly neoclassical and the favourite building type was the monument." (Lackney, 1999)

These competitions ensured that the fundamental hierarchy of the members of the academia (the teachers and juries: who defined what good art and architecture was) and those that would ascend to it (the students: who were prized and hence were the good artists and architects). "Projects were judged by a jury of professors and guest architects, usually without the students present. The jurors used the same criteria by which the students designed - "good taste." (Most schools still use some type of "jury" or review system today.)" (Lackney, 1999) The master's role is double: one of teaching but also, one of learning<sup>3</sup>. (Jorge Spencer, recalling Heidegger, 1964 in Spencer et al., 2014, p.120)

This syllabus of competition culminated in the grand prix de 'l'Académie Royale', more well known as the 'Grand Prix de Rome'. "In reality, the architectural course of the school and the competition were always intertwined and complementary in the search and statement of grandiosity and sumptuousity." (Malacrida, 2010, p.60). "For the diploma, they were required to win more competitions, complete a thesis project, and gain a year's work experience. Culmination of the process for a select few was the annual Grand Prix de Rome competition, open only to French citizens. The winners were sent to the French Academy in Rome for four years of study and were guaranteed an official government position when they returned."(Kostof, 1995, pp.210, 211)

According to Malacrida, "as a pedagogic instrument the Prize would reveal the distinction of grade that accompanied the identification of the [artistic or architectonic] geniality" (Malacrida, 2010, p.60) and, by building a monument the victorious contestant would perpetuated its importance within the city structure. Ultimately, these actions perpetuated a secular way to ascend to stardom (Deamer, 2013; Lo Ricco and Micheli, 2003; Tenreiro, 2010), validated the competence and academic research produced by the student and would permit him to join the professional class.

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<sup>3</sup> "Teaching is more harder than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learnt. Indeed, the proper teacher lets nothing else be learned that - learning (...) The teacher is ahead of its apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they - he has to learn to let them learn." (Heidegger, M. (1993) Basic writings: from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964). Rev. and expanded ed. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco. p.380)



FIG 2 – Critique to competitions. Atelier populaire, ex-École des Beaux-Arts (1968)

As Garry Stevens states “the field’s reproduction system gradually became embedded in national higher education systems” (Stevens, 1998, p.168) and he explains “the basic idea is that architecture reproduces itself through a formal system of education that is properly located in universities. The state credentials graduates in the field of architecture, formally certifying them as competent, relying on professional proxis [most often chambers of architects] to monitor the quality of educational programs. Apart from teaching, the academics also produce research or scholarship, which informs their teaching and increases the knowledge base of the profession.” (Stevens, 1998, p.169)



FIG. 3, 5 and 6 – Students discussing and Presentations

## What can be architectural research

Architecture as a research topic, in a “systematic inquiry directed towards the creation of knowledge” (James Snyder, cited by Groat and Wang, 2013, p.8), outside the confines of a specific building is somehow a recent topic. Groat and Wang (2013) state the relationship between design and research as being “nuanced, complementary and robust” (Groat and Wang, 2013, p.21), and, although arguing the different nature of them, they agree that neither are opposites nor equivalent domains of activity. Citing Solomon, Groat and Wang (2013) state that the research studio as a replacement for independent design thesis encompasses “both qualitative and quantitative methods, yielding both objective truths and personal fictions” (Groat and Wang, 2013, p.22) linking architectural research while at school to a hybrid research paradigm.

What is architectural research has divided designers (praxis) and scholars (academia) for quite a long time: each consider the similarities and differences between research and design and each following paths most often venturing opposite grounds. Academia tends to “diminish the value of design by arguing, counterproductively, that design is something it is not, indeed should not aspire to become: research.” (Wortham Powers, cited by Groat and Wang, 2013, p.23) On the other hand Praxis potential of innovation and integration outsmarts and expands research by means of an interdisciplinary body of knowledge.

Each one (research/design) tends to exist autonomously and architectural design has seldom been defined in the past, but, when defined is often referenced in connection to studio-design activities. Alexandre Alves Costa says “Architecture is not teachable, we learn it by doing. No one teaches codified languages but the instruments for the design exercise are learnt at school, and drawing is a privilege instrument for the description, interpretation e construction of the transforming proposal.” (Costa, 2014,

p.27)

Till (2011, 2005) presents three myths for architectural research: (1) architecture as being a different research altogether, self-referential and autonomous, linked to geniality; (2) architecture as being dependable of other for its own authority and reference; and lastly, (3) the building as a statement of research. This third definition has some bearings to our own discussion, and its critique lies in the fact that is “not necessarily” research. Thus it does not regards, nor dismiss, the existence of research in the process that leads to the building, in good or bad architecture, and in the knowledge provided by the communication (intelligibility) of the building.

## Competitions

Competitions, in particular international competitions (previously discussed in Guilherme and Rocha, 2013; Larson, 1994, p.474), test architect’s capacities (Lipstadt, 1989; Santos Fialho, 2007; Tostrup, 1999, 2010; Strong, 1996, 1976) beyond controlled systems of social relations, comfort zones, age, gender or even expertizes, in a fast sublimation process (Gil, 2008; Ramos, 2009), as well as induce a recognition and publicity that surpasses the investments in time, energy and financial resources, forcing a (re)interpretation of the role of the architect (Nasar, 2006; Hill, 2006, 2003).



FIG.7 e 8 - Álvaro Siza, Boa Nova Tea House | Leça da Palmeira | 1958/1963 and Ocean Swimming Pool | Leça da Palmeira | 1961/1966

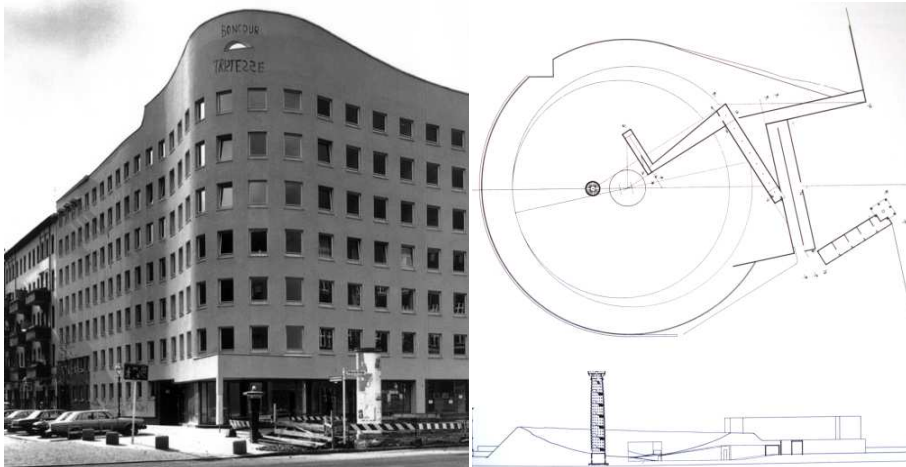


FIG 4 and 10 - Álvaro Siza, Schlesisches Tor Urban Redevelopment | Berlin | Germany| 1st prize| 1980-84, 1986-88; and Siza, Memorial to the Victims of the Third Reich at Prinz Albrecht Palais | Berlin | competition | 1983

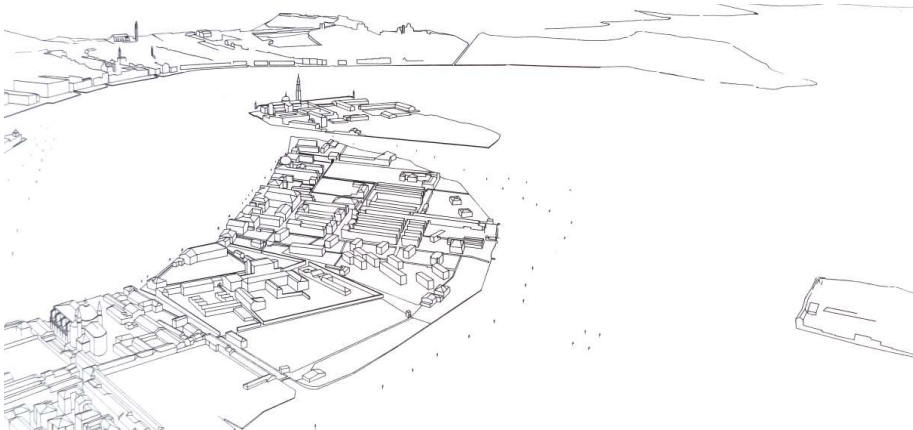


FIG 5 - Siza, Campo di Marte | Guidecca | Venice | Italy | 1st Prize | 1983

There are of course mixed feelings towards competitions by different parts - architects; clients; juries or sponsors - and in face of personal past experience. Yet, it is undeniable the role and value of competitions in the process of generating a qualitative built environment. In general, competitions (Collyer, 2004; Lipstadt, 1989,

2010; Nasar, 2006; Spreiregen, 1979; Strong, 1976, 1996; Tostrup, 1999, 2010) can bring out the best in people and are a way to achieve excellence in design. They are not only intended to explore and select the best idea for resolving a design problem, but also to select the one who is going to do it. It can be stated that a large majority of competitions is experienced daily either as users or as passers-by since most prestigious public buildings in Europe are subjected to well publicized competitions procedures.

“Even in closed competitions the contestants know that they will be judged against one another and who the others are. It is true that when an architectural firm, its whole body of work and its management are considered, not much in this pattern differs from the usual assignment of architectural commissions to noted architects, except that the competitors submit their work to a jury whose composition is known. However, when designs only are judged, the jurors' evaluation is supposed to rest on the project at hand, in either open or closed competitions. This trait of competitions harks back to the essence of architectural work.” (Larson, 1994, p.474)

The architects and teams expertise is judged in equal terms, based on prefigured drawings, plans and models. The competition material constitute but the end of research. Schön (2003, p.81), quoting Quist, references “drawing and talking [as being] parallel ways of designing and together make up what [he] calls the «language of designing»”. Architecture knowledge is therefore a product of a ‘reflection-in-action’. This ‘knowing’ is composed by a systematic knowledge of architecture, although highly professionalized due to its specialized field of expertise, firmly bounded, scientific and standardized corpus (Schön, 2003, p.23) although increasingly entangled within a broad spectrum of other competences. Boundaries among disciplines and practices of architectures are continually shifting (Hill, 2003, 2006) and, even between architects clearly identified with the same school (like Souto de Moura is identified with the Oporto School), there are many variations (either subtle or fundamental) in the exercise of the profession. This vastitude of professional practices makes possible to identify among them specific occasions where research occurs.

Looking at Tostrup's (2010) research on competitions we can relate to her division of drawing as visual rhetoric, which, in complement with other means of communicating the idea (verbal rhetoric), tend to shape the argumentation of the reflective action. These argumentation dimensions - verbal and non-verbal - are closely connected and constitute the main focus of competitions' communications strategies. Visual argumentation closely resembles drawing research so in focus in the studio.

Competitions do pose a question or a problem to be answered in a predetermined

way: a democratic form of enquiry. The 'brief' represents the design question posed to those willing to compete and the equal conditions for building. Several authors (Strong, 1996, 1976; Collyer, 2004) state the importance of the brief in the process, as a testimony of the needs to be answered.

The equal conditions (time, formats, question research) provided to all competitors assures the equity of opportunities. Only the most fitted will survive and provide for the immense resources allocated in competitions: human labour, time, competences, stamina, expertizes, costs, energy and materials. There is no way to guarantee the so much wanted success.

The use of a predefined language of presentation defined by the brief, reduces the possible rhetoric arguments, vastly enlarged by the possibilities of the new digital media, and permits the focus upon the idea and its reasoning. The scarcity of means of presentation and the lack of authorship presence in the jury (since the competitions usually has to speak autonomously) emphasises the importance of architectural culture and discourse.

The jury is often composed by those professionals that are most valued by the profession, the society and by the client. They are expected to be able to decide taking into consideration a comparative evaluation of all proposals against the question initially posed and in the best interests of the client. They are expected to guarantee the ethical finding of the 'truth' based upon those competitors' researches in front of them.

## The different types of competitions

Competitions based in design evaluation are crucial to professional identity, and reinforce the architect's role in society. "As Helene Lipstadt observes, the myth and the hopes surrounding the architectural competition remind one of the carnivalesque rituals, in which hierarchies were symbolically inversed but not denied, putting women, the poor, the wretched, for one day on top.<sup>18</sup> An obscure assistant professor, an unknown draftsman, a beginning architect can beat the elite professional and the student can come ahead of her teacher." (Larson, 1994, p.475)

There are two main types of competitions: ideas competitions and open/closed project competitions. Early in 1970 UIA and UNESCO agreed in a draft model for international competitions which stated "international competitions may be either 'project' or 'ideas' competitions or in certain circumstances a combination of both. The aim of a 'project' competition is to find the best solution for an actual building project and to appoint its author to carry out the commission. Competitions of 'ideas'

are set as an exercise to elucidate certain aspects of architectural and planning problem. The winner of such a competition is not commissioned to carry out the project, and hence students of architecture may participate at the discretion of the promoter.”(Regulations for international competitions in architecture and town planning issued by UIA cited by Strong, 1976, p.142) These are still the core definitions of all national and international competitions and have been carved into most of European laws.

The mere existence of an idea competition where both – students and licenced architects - are allowed to compete in equal terms provides us with possible link between the academia and the praxis in competitions. In an ideas competition there are no boundaries and architects are faced with the need to research and students the need to be fully aware of their metier: research and practice tend to meet. Also the distinction between the ‘actual building project’, where praxis is expected not to spend so much time in an ‘exercise to elucidate certain aspects of architectural and planning problem’ makes us understand the different aim of the promoter. The former (open or closed competition) is expected to be produced with tested and known knowledge, while the latter (ideas competitions) is expected to be producing new knowledge. As the stated fact of being able to mix both systems clarify these two types of dealing with knowledge are not closed or final, opportunities of research and to ‘exercise’ may occur, even in those presumed close subjects.

Some authors (Carrero, 2012; Wynne, 1981; Strong, 1976; Collyer, 2004) confirm that ideas competitions are often done with the intention explore or surpass the equilibrium of standard solutions, models, to provide alternative solutions, and usual proceedings that are not believed to be successful.

Garry Stevens introduces the two main categories of competitions’ strategies that drive architects for success. “those who have made it, the dominant fraction or established avant-garde, and those who have not, the subordinate fraction of newcomers” (Stevens, 1998, p.99) stating that the Beaux-Arts competitions were competitions for consecration, mainly using conservative and not subversive tactics. “The first [conservative] employed by those who already dominated the field [architecture]. They operated essentially defensive strategies designed to keep them there. These tend to be strategies of silence, not so much of defending their orthodoxy as holding it forth as self-evident. (...) newcomers or those already engaged in competition for consecration have two options before them. They can either produce buildings (or drawings or competitions entries or exhibitions or treatises) that affirm the values and capital of the dominant members, and thus join them, or they can adopt the far riskier strategy of creating a new aesthetic, a new

form of symbolic capital, and thus challenge the establishment.” (Stevens, 1998, pp.99, 100)

Clients tend to favour limited competitions (to proven firms or signature architects with a stronger social/professional status that get the big and expensive projects) while young and untried architects favour open competitions (with stronger design concept questions and reduced participation costs). Larson (1994) suggests that competitions mirror the markets polarities, although anonymous competitions appear to contradict established hierarchies of prestige on which professionals fund their expertise. Competitors usually prefer to maintain a safe distance from clients and not reduce creativity ‘freedom’ over budgetary matters.

Architects, as Philip Plowright states, consider “the cost and issues around the open idea competition in architecture through an understanding of disciplinary syntax and priorities” (Plowright, 2014) but still decide, as Jeremy Till advocates, “to prostrate themselves on the altar of potential fame” (Hopkirk, 2013). Other authors are not so critic to competitions. Open or closed competitions, despite frequently ending in a commission, and not free of high risks, disappointment and speculation, still permit a high degree of architectural research (as discussed previously taking Souto de Moura work in consideration at Guilherme and Rocha, 2013; Clement, 1999). Angelillo confirms that “small works, installations and interiors, furniture design thus become experimental laboratories for the study of structure and space.” (Angelillo, 1996, p.21) In fact ideas competitions, although hypothetical focused on formal representation (intellectual) or prioritizing the human experience (phenomenological) raise issues that are only driven by research and not commission (profit) oriented. More than getting the prize – and thus the opportunity to build – architects are interested in testing the discourse in architecture (Larson, 1994; Plowright, 2014) and testing its boundaries and relations (Hill, 2003, 2006).

## Discussion

### The practice or Competition as a means to an end

Le Corbusier taught us that “the work of an architect is never lost; the work done in each project has something of use for the next” (referenced by Utzon, 1984) and competitions, as any other way of exercising and learning the ways of an architect, constitute an opportunity larger than the winning prize. In fact even a lost competition may be an opportunity of testing and developing specific aspects of architects’ work. To some authors, competitions are the “only moment in which the architect can freely develop new skills, knowledge and ideas to move forward, until it

becomes a field of investigation” (González and Fernández, 2012, p.40) or that “may provide a firm [or an architect] with the opportunity to think about ideas it would otherwise not explore on a day-to-day basis” (Collyer, 2004, p.13). So these discursive events<sup>4</sup> occur to a “small percentage [who] mirrors the lopsided bifurcation of architecture between a minority of firms known for design excellence and the majority, oriented to more mundane forms of service.” (Larson, 1994, p.470)

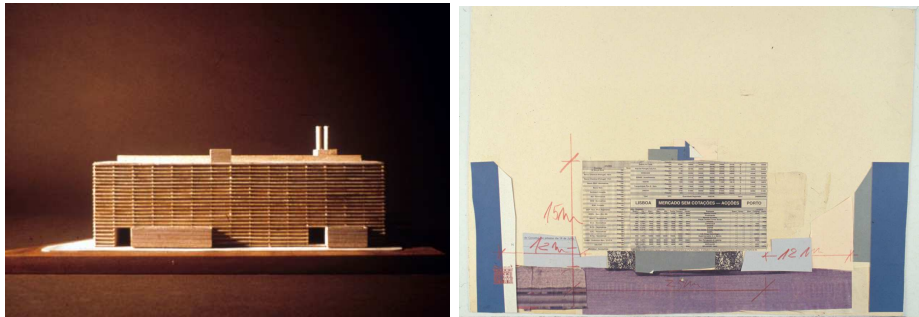


FIG 6 and 13 - Souto de Moura | Salzburg Hotel | | Salzburg | Austria | 1987/89; and The Bank | 1993

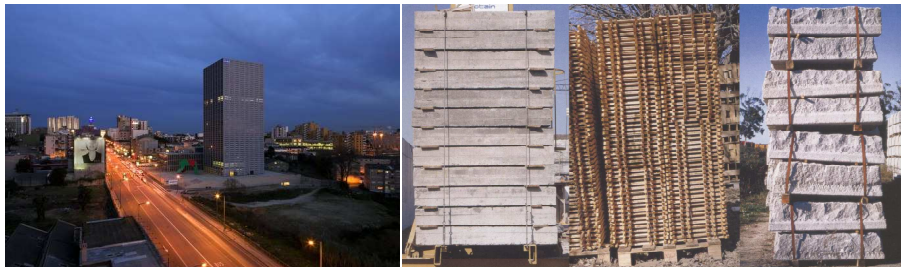


FIG 7 and 15 - Souto de Moura, The Burgo tower | 1991/95 Phase 1; 2003/04 Phase 2; 2007 Construction; and Design references from stacks of linear materials used for composition of facade

Trends and ‘hot’ cultural interests (contrary to what is referenced by Plowright, 2014) are fiercely experimented in the quest for new untested knowledge, subjected to personal restraints of syntax, discourse and method. As seen in examples from Portuguese architects (previously discussed at Guilherme, 2014) there is a true nature,

<sup>4</sup> In discursive events architects accumulate what Peierls Bordieu calls symbolic capital, which is the right to speak with authority in a delimited field

strongly linked to an (strong) ethical architect, forcing him to be true and in sync to his own authentic professional ethos. As any other researcher, architects pursue their own answer to the question posed by the competition. As any other research it is the evaluation of the correctness of the route (method) taken that permits to arrive to one possible correct answer. As any research the answer is never final but just an addition to known knowledge, a contribution to the current known 'truth'.

It is undeniable that architects expect in competitions to arrive to an unquestionable notoriety and, and as in art, as Vera Borges confirms, "the artistic value and originality are subjectively evaluated; So prizes, rankings (...) are used to make comparisons and endless competitions in the hierarchy of talents." (Borges, 2014, p.76) But in fact it is most often the juries (the 'priests' according to Stevens, 1998), as the dominants in the process (critics, editors, academicians or recognized professionals), embedded in the system and already recognized by the system, providing its equilibrium, that control the consecration of the competitors. That is why so many times consecrated architects do not participate in open blind competitions – because they cannot guarantee their status – and rather prefer to be part of those who are directly chosen and be part of the so called 'Bibao effect' (Rybczynski, 2002; Lo Ricco and Micheli, 2003). Only recently due to this world economic change are we seeing unparalleled submission of competitions by so many well-known architects side by side with young newcomers, all in quest for a commission. That is also why so little time a newcomer really gets a larger competition.

### **Does competition equals research?**

Following Groat and Wang (2013) opening chapter's title, we have sustained that competitions do equal research. During competitions licenced architects experience beyond their current praxis and venture in architectural research.

Larson agrees: "The institutionalization of selection by contest in both architectural education and practice fosters a marked enjoyment of contests and a spirit of emulation in the profession. Architects enjoy the stimulus of a ready-made problem, the discovery of others' ideas and the critique they receive." (Larson, 1994, p.476)

But more important than the competition result is the competition as a motivation for research and as the time and space for doing a research while in practice. As Till (Till, 2005) mentions the process is a major activity in considering building as research. Most researchers on competitions (Spreiregen, Strong, Nasar, Collyer, Lipstadt, Rönn, Kreiner, amongst many) sustains (empirically) that architects choose

to do competitions because of the opportunity to think, discuss, research and produce new knowledge. Most enquiries to architects (we have previously presented the 'pros and cons' of competitions in Guilherme, 2014) show that it is an intentional and conscious reason. First and primarily to better themselves and their offices (by training themselves and the team, by discussing new subjects, by discovering and testing new solutions) and secondly as a romanticized 'gift' to public discussion (most often criticized as wasteful, uncommercial and a reflection of the "vampiric intentions on the profession" (Plowright, 2014) by the promoters supported by the professional chambers).

The education of an architect, based upon the memories and influences of the Beaux-Arts paradigm, is filled with "hotly disputed, carefully tended, and romanticized" (Cuff, 1992, p.56) visions of the clients, the building, the office and of the architect himself. Howard Roark in 'The Fountainhead' is the epitome of the solitary, uncompromised mythical architect who decides to go glamorously against the world for his masterpiece. In competitions that are more research oriented (mostly in ideas competitions but not exclusively) the end product is most often the fruit of a research activity and of an immense creativity, most similar to what is asked a student to produce. "Taking creative work for its own reward emphasizes the status of architecture as an art. Art and aesthetics, in our society, are constructed as essentially non-utilitarian: Businessmen and professionals do not give their work away for nothing; but artists can be expected to."(Larson, 1994, p.476)



FIG 8 and 17 - Jury evaluation at Évora architectural department and Public presentation of work at the Museum at Aldeia da Luz

In universities evaluation grades represent the position of the work amongst the studio co-workers and fellow students. For the Grand Prix of Rome one student would be selected amongst all others by a competition jury. In a contemporary competition a

jury selects the best proposal to be prized the most wanted prize: a commission and the possibility to build.

Quoting Souto de Moura “drawing is a research” (Souto de Moura, 2008) and quoting Álvaro Siza, Souto de Moura recalls “drawing is researching for lucidity.” (idibem) The practice - or the office (Yaneva, 2005; Cuff, 1992; Kostof, 2000) - is the lab where the research process occurs, and where the praxis meets the academia.



FIG 9 - Hands of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies Van Der Rohe and Alvar Aalto. Post card made by Souto de Moura, FAUP, 2011.

“This milieu is not a static, predetermined social scene; rather the architects in a firm together create the setting for their actions. The setting is dynamic, shifting slightly as the firm grows, adds and loses members, gains new clients, and the broader context evolves with subtle changes in the economy, the building industry, or the available technology. ... The milieu of each firm is unique and in flux, but underlying their uniqueness, firms share certain structural characteristics. The first is an office’s heritage, which involves the origins and founders of a firm, often recollected in legends analogous to creation myths. Other characteristics include office members’ use of language, their power structure, and their prevailing practices and values.”

(Cuff, 1992, p.157)

Therefore, along their professional practice, licenced architects outside the academia and in architectural praxis, seem to continue a personal architectural research within professional architectural competitions. There are evidences that, besides the investment in deliberate or improvised practice's business strategies, architects use competitions as fundamental research opportunities (Guilherme and Rocha, 2013). Taking the matrix of the primary differences between design, research proposed by Groat and Wang (2013, pp.26, 27) we present competitions as a possibility of architectural research.

Facets of difference	Design	Research	Competition
Contribution	Proposal for artefact (from small-scale to large-scale interventions)	Knowledge and/or application that is generalized (in diverse epistemological terms)	Possible answer or solution to the brief questions
Dominant process	Generative	Analytical & systematic	Analytical, experimental
Temporal focus	Future	Past and/or Present	Future
Impetus	Problem (contingency)	Question (generalization)	Problem and/or question (brief) (contingency or generalization)
Evaluation	Client & society	Researchers & scientific community	Jury, peers, client, society
User	Client	Society	Promoter and society
Access	Private	Public but peer evaluated	Public (democratic) and private
Communication	Mostly visual (image)	Verbal and Objective	(verbal and visual)
Validation		Inward process of validation	
Dissemination	Magazines, less rigorous	SCOPUS, OICOS,...	es, exhibitions, books

TABLE 1 - Matrix of the primary differences between design, research and competitions (adaptation of Groat and Wang, 2013, p.26)

Apparently the differences between design and research according to Groat and Wang are quite obvious. The different nature of aim, contribution and time: design is more related to the client and to future needs; research is more open to society and

knowledge, dealing to the already known (past and present) time. The former responds to contingency, the later generalizes. Design also seems to be more related to the user, and research seems to be independent of the user (the user is part of the observed action and part of the problem being studied, but is not part of the investigation process) yet dependable of the observed phenomenon.

Facets of difference	Design	Research	Competition
Models of reconstructed logic	Systematic design process	Scientific model	Analysis, research, synthesis, design, evaluation process
Multiple logics	Abductive <sup>5</sup> , inductive <sup>6</sup> and deductive <sup>7</sup>	Abductive (research design / hypothesis formation), inductive and deductive	Abductive (research / hypothesis), inductive and deductive
Logics in use	Generator / conjecture model, problem/ solution	Multiple sequences of logics, dependent on research questions and purposes	Generator / Conjecture model, problem/ solution, multiple sequences of logics, dependent on proposed actions
Scope	Macro/micro and mid-level In applied /clinical setting	Big / medium / small theory	Variable size theory
Social context	Situated practice	Situated research	Situated practice and research

TABLE 2 - Matrix of comparable and shared qualities of design, research and competition (adaptation of Groat and Wang, 2013, p.27)

According to Sequeira (2011) the intelligibility (communication) of the researcher's approach is completely different from the designers, and I would add, from the competitor. Although contemporary culture has (mis)led society to a depreciation of rhetoric (mainly due to politics) it is not linked to any lack of objectiveness, but rather the way of persuasive argumenting the 'truth' ('ethos', 'pathos' and 'logos') and the discourse.

<sup>5</sup> WHAT (thing) + HOW (working principle) = leads do VALUE (aspired) (Groat and Wang, 2013, p.35)

<sup>6</sup> WHAT + ??? leads to RESULT (Groat and Wang, 2013, p.34)

<sup>7</sup> WHAT + HOW leads to ??? (Groat and Wang, 2013, p.34)

Competitions seem to be more inconspicuous of the client's influence and therefore relate more to research. The distance between the designer and the client/user, who tends to appear at the briefing (stating the nature and the objectives of the research) and at the end of the process (either in the judgement or in the final use evaluation by the user), is much larger than in the real life client-design oriented practice.

Evaluation both in research and competitions is done by an external group of evaluators who maintain the distance from the authors and its autonomy. In this sense juries may act as master researchers to whom a series of experiments is presented to see which one(s) provide the best solution for the problem or the question posed by the brief.

Competitions differ from scientific research because of its democratic system of opportunities in which anyone could contribute to knowledge, not only the proven enlightened ones (PhD scholars). Research in architecture is therefore not dependable upon professional status of the author but on the merit of the proposal, as if, like Barthes (1977) proposal the author is not only in the project (in the writer) but in the ability of the jury/client to read it and interpret it. The rigorous dissemination process Till (2005) speaks addressing the academia is in fact closed in between scholars, not open to public scrutiny as competitions are.

Shared qualities are easier to grasp and competitions seem to group most of both design and research similarities, as reaching out for both worlds.

## Conclusions

This article puts forward that competitions served once (and still do) as a specific way of peer evaluating the architectural research in academia. Architectural competitions are in fact a time and a space where academia and praxis connect and may, to certain extent, constitute proof of Schon's (Schön, 2003) research-in-action and Till's (Till, 2005, 2011, 2012) evidence of "architecture [as] a form of knowledge that can [, is] and should be developed through research".

Garry Stevens states two prime functions for current universities: "[one] of 'reproduction' (of the profession) and [one] of 'production' (of intellectual discourse)". (Stevens, 1998, p.173) These two complementary views of the actions of architecture tend to neglect the user (in connection to the way user is part of architecture and concerns the meaning of architecture, taking into consideration Hill, 2003) and to substitute the user by the pretence autonomy of the patron (teacher or instructor) or the jury. The instructor follows a critique strategy (using Lackney's phases:

desk critic, pin-up, interim or midterm and final critic) miming the (knowledgeable or sophisticated) user needs which conveys to the student behaviours of continuous change (Lackney, 1999) until final review (final critic) is done, usually by a larger jury. Juries “provide contexts for listening to heroes and assimilating values as well as for learning to design. (...) It offers a model of professional behaviour, implying that full-fledged architects hold positions that can be challenged only by other full-fledged architects (other jurors) and not by the public, other professional, or clients.” (Cuff, 1992, p.124) The École des Beaux-Arts provided the same educational prime functions as current universities but through a competitions procedure.

This competition procedure is much favored by professionals mainly by its symbolic (social, cultural and professional) capital (Stevens, 1998) as it reflects an opportunity to prove one’s abilities and ascend to those whose dominancy in profession is unquestioned. The main architectural universities (academia) function is to produce professional architects (Stevens, 1995), and to do so it has to reproduce the ways of an architect, and the consecrated privileges of the class. The parallel discussion at universities is the production of knowledge and ways to relate with the profession (praxis). Competitions provide a place and a time when both worlds unite, were the student is expected to learn an important lesson on the status of the architect and learning at the same time, and were the professional reunites, once again, his practice with research.

The similarity between research and competitions and the way they were, and still are used, in the education of an architect proves competitions can be evidences of research out of school, in praxis. Competitions should be valued and recognized as a link between academia and the praxis.

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