

URBAN DESIGN COMPETITION AS A TOOL FOR PLANNING THE FUTURE OF CITIES - CASE STUDIES IN POLAND

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Abstract

The compact city paradigm is very often described as compact (dense), mixed use settlements. Masterplans for crucial areas in cities play a major role for future development of cities. The most strategic and important sites are often a subject of urban design competitions – calls for proposals for future development ideas. Some of the competition entries are only a subject for a brainstorming discussion about the future of the cities or its parts. Some of winning entries become basis for real masterplans which are implemented later. In this article several case studies of competitions and its results have been presented. Also, a methodology classification has been proposed. Also a classification has been proposed. Three case studies of urban design competitions has been discussed: Wygoda settlement' in Białystok, Gizynek settlement in Stargard Szczeciński and city centre of Goleniów.

The findings of the research on this case study help us understand whether competitions might be used as a tool for future city 'modeling'. The author is a researcher and also an architect and urban designer, as well as the author of many competition entries.

Introduction

Throughout history, urban design competition has been recognised as an efficient and leading assessment system to promote, assure, lead and appreciate spatial qualities in cities. Urban design competition is considered as one of the most prevalent means in the creative processes of major public and private urban developments (Kazemian, 2010, p. 571). Competitions have long been used as a method of seeking out the best designs (Chupin, 2011, p.174). Competitions generate exceptional designs, that are also exceptionally representational or meaningful as a product of early Italian Renaissance (Lipstadt, 2009, p.13).

In the field of architecture and urban design judging is usually a disciplinary tradition - most of jury members are practicing architects, urban designers, art critics and sometimes also clients or stakeholders representatives or future users or managers of designed buildings or areas.

Judging competitions is not an easy task (Chupin, 2011, p.175) if we consider that some of the criteria refer to aesthetics of a featured site or building (which might be liked or not) and some refer to other aspects, such as functionality, cost effectiveness, energy efficiency and other. Although competition judgment is commonly spread in everyday practice, judgment has been little theorized (Chupin, 2011, p.173)

Chupin defines an architectural competition as a means through which competitors submit design proposals or ideas to design problems in an effort to receive some kind of prize, whether it is an award or implementation of the project represented by the winning proposal (Chupin, 2011, p.174).

In the field of architecture and urban design we may define three types of competitions: architectural competition, urban design competition and urban-architectural design competition. The author believes that this definition comprises all types of competitions. What differs is the subject of a competition: it is either a design of a building (architectural scale) or a design of an area (urban design scale). It is common that urban-architectural competitions are announced. In some cases the architecture of designed buildings depends on urban design e.g.: train/bus interchange station depends on the urban layout of the site (the location of its entrances depend on the site). And on the other hand, an initial idea for an urban design of a site has an impact on the buildings.

As Wezemaal et al. write about observation of urban competition juries some of the most relevant evaluation and assessment criteria are not given by the jury in advance but emerge during the decision making process as a result of interaction (Wezeamel et al., 2011, p.172). The competition process should be seen as a democratic opportunity through the infusion of a rich set of alternatives to a given problem by a public, as well as through a judgment process (Chupin, 2011, p.174). The thesis that competition judgment is a process becomes a fact in some cases. Sometimes competition results may be surprising to outsiders or even, at the end, for the jury or client/ stakeholder who initiated the competition procedure. In some cases the winning proposals do not necessarily meet all initial criteria.

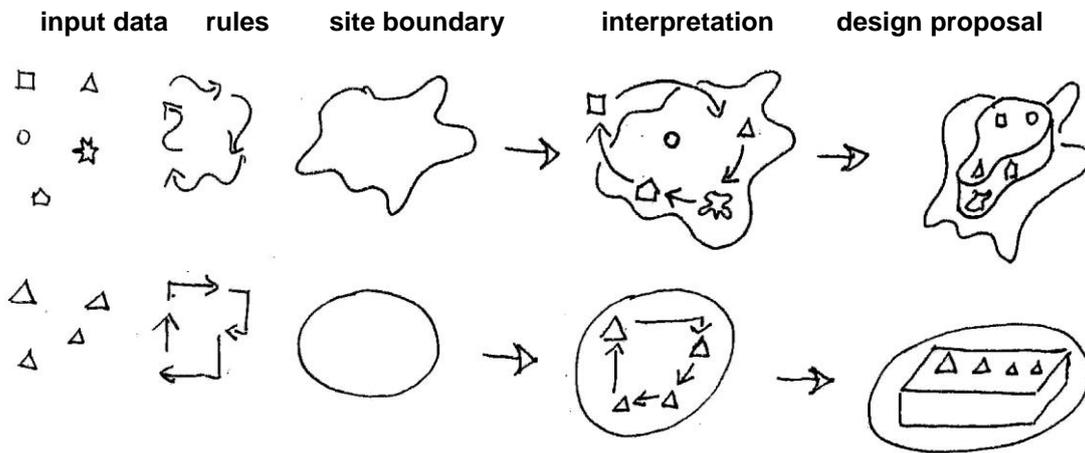
There are several types of urban design competitions: usually competition design rules describe what kind of competition we are dealing with. The author suggests a division into two types of competitions: competitions for ideas - very often international and open and competitions for design (in the article referred to as "for precise design"). The properties and characteristics of both competition types are presented in Table 1. Similarities and differences between conceptual design competition and precise design competition are also presented as diagram (Figure 1).

The most important determinants of a competition's possible success are: the amount of data in competition materials, expectations about the effect of the competition and finally competition type (open/ closed/one stage/ two stages etc.). The more detailed data regarding the site, such as: information about the site, research on close neighbourhood, professional information about the site e.g. questioners concerning the inhabitants' expectations about the site etc., the more precise the competition submissions should be. Also, the proposed design should better respond to the local needs.

Table 1. Characteristics and types of competitions

<i>Competition type</i>	For ideas/ conceptual	For precise design
<i>Input data</i>	Basic information	Precise information
<i>Competition type</i>	open	Open/limited/closed
<i>Participants</i>	Anyone or All professionals (architects, urban designers, planners)	Limited number of professionals or professional office which meet precise criteria
<i>No. of submissions from one participant</i>	unlimited	Limited (usually only one submission)
<i>Competition entry drawing scale</i>	Not very precise - scale may vary depending on the proposal	Very precise - all drawings must be submitted in a scale or the entry will be disqualified
<i>Site boundary</i>	Not very precise	Very precise
<i>Competition rules</i>	Not very precise	Very precise
<i>Budget for implementation</i>	Not revealed	Very precise
<i>Target to achieve</i>	Not precise	Very precise
<i>No. of stages</i>	Usually 1 stage	1 stage or 2 stages
<i>Design proposal</i>	Design proposal or design framework/ design principles visualized as a design proposal	Precise detailed design proposal
<i>Effect</i>	Public discussion/ further development of the concept	Further formal legal design (getting implementation)

Figure 1. Diagram showing similarities and differences between conceptual design competition (above) and precise design competition (beneath)



Source: Tomasz Bradecki

The advantages of conceptual competitions are usually simple rules and a small amount of input data about the site and also a variety of possible solutions presented in the entries. The disadvantage is the fact that usually the competition organiser does not get a final, precise solution or an answer that would show a way to solve a particular problem. Some of the

solutions proposed in open competitions may appear as perfect but they cannot be implemented in reality nor in near future. Very often the organiser reveals the competition results and these results become either a subject of public discussion on the future of the site, or a subject of a further, more detailed masterplan of the site which incorporates most of the conclusions from the competition results.

The advantages of competitions for a precise design are: precision and accuracy of the submitted designs. In many cases if a submission does not meet the criteria set in the competition rules - it is simply not being judged. In many cases the winning proposals are implemented later on: the winning team is committed to design a final, multidisciplinary, detailed project and gets either a planning approval or a building permit. In that case the authors become responsible for their design until it is finished (approved or built).

The time of transformation which happens nowadays in Poland provides an opportunity for implementing big investments, including large-scale master plans in some areas which might be a subject of urban design competitions. Especially, if the perspectives of EU funding call for seeking innovative solutions, including the ways of transmitting historic and cultural heritage in architecture and landscaping forms (Stangel, 2014, p.205). Although such potential urban design competitions in Poland do not occur very often. In many cases there are no competitions at all. As an example, in 2014 there were 401 tenders or competition announcements set by the state authorities, but only 13 were competitions and the rest were tenders with the price for design as the main and/or the only criterion (Lorbecki, 2015, p.68). At the same time (2014) there were 3706 calls for architectural designs out of which only 52 were competitions.

Kazemian states that urban design belongs to an extremely complex and responsive decision-making process, often in ill-defined, ill-structured, unstable and uncertain situations. (Kazemian, 2010 p.569) and so in many cases in Poland it leads to resignation of the winning entry: very often there is no 1st prize. If we consider that urban design projects are complex undertakings which require several stages and adjustments of preparation before they ever get implemented (Stangel 2014, p.), we should also keep in mind that some of the urban designs proposed in competitions are adjusted several times and often do not get implemented at all or are implemented only partially.

Competition case studies

The author presents a few urban design competition case studies which have been recently committed in Poland. The choice of the case studies was personal: all the competitions represent different types of competitions and the author participated in all of them. Also, the author is an active urban designer and architect and has observed most of competitions having been organised in recent years in Poland.

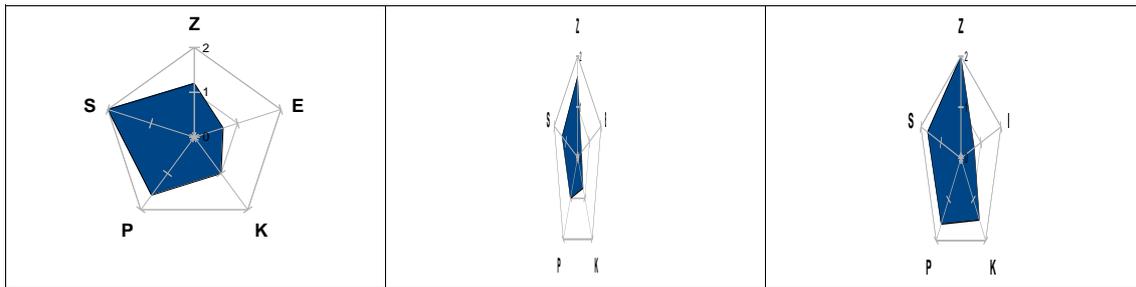
The case study of urban design competition for ca. 100 ha site called Gizynek in Stargard Szczeciński shows that planning the future for the city may start at the competition stage. The competition has been launched in 2014. Lorbecki states that this competition is an example of good practice (Lorbecki, 2015, p.), since the initial idea as well as the competition rules were very open for future ideas. Even though there was an existing spatial development plan for

Stargard and main framework proposed for the site - all participant were allowed to propose their own vision for entire site which would change the spatial development plan. In this case 1st prize has been granted to proposal which actually needed a change in spatial development plan For the purpose of a competition results' analysis author discussed the winning proposals and used a comparative method which could help in quantitative and qualitative judgment.

Proposed method bases on quantitative analysis of design proposal based on five fields strictly connected with compact city paradigm: built environment (land development), ecology, diversification of the functional structure , spatial composition and transport solutions. All the categories (Z - development, S - structure, P - space, K - communication, E - ecology) are related with land development and they are mainly based on land use specification, which shows the share, in percentage terms, of particular structures - development, communication, greenery - in the developed land. However, due to the role of each structure, they have been put in various categories. Each category uses the following grades: 0 - not present/negative grade, 1 - moderately present, 2 - present in a distinctive way. The method based on network diagram, which illustrates predominance of selected criteria: development, structure, space, communication and ecology. The most optimal diagram would be a full diagram, i.e. one that would complete the whole network up to the maximum values. However, achievement of certain optimum values might contradict others, e.g. high amount of biologically active space and high intensity and compactness of development. (Bradecki, 2014). The competition results has been interpreted and compared by the author using the parametric evaluation method. Results presented in Table 1 represent graphic and parametric evaluation realized by the author. The method is time-consuming, and some of the parameters are interpretation of competition entry data, which is a weakness of the method. Its strenght is the possibility of parametric comparison of competition entries.

Table 1 Example of parametric evaluation of functional and spatial structure diversification for a given area - visualized on a network diagram: example categories (Z - development, S - structure, P - space, K - transport solutions, E - ecology). Different competition entries for competition in Giżynek

Ist Prize	II nd Prize	Authors' competition entry
		



Source: www.ronet.pl (4), 1st prize: Michał Stangel, Marta Ulfik, Filip Piaścik www.ronet.pl (5), 11nd prize: Maciej Hawrylak (www. szczecin.sarp.org.pl), Tomasz Bradecki, Paweł Gembalczyk , Barbara Uherek-Bradecka, Barbara Czuba www.ronet.pl (7)

Another case study is the conceptual urban design competition for over 100 ha site called settlement Wygoda in Białystok. The competition was announced in 2015. The organizer suggested that all possibilities are acceptable (including changes to the local development plan) as long as main goals were achieved on site. The competition entries were different and represented different approaches for all important areas of the site (see table 2). The competition finally led to open public discussion for site development.

Table 2. Different competition entries for settlement Wygoda in Białystok

quivalent prize	quivalent prize	Honorable mention
		

Source: Kaja Chrosczilewska, Marcin Dzieńsiak, Urszula Cryer i Philipp Feldschmidt - ronet (1), Marcin Szewczyk, Konrad Onderko, Paweł Wręczycki ronet (2), Tomasz Bradecki, Paweł Gembalczyk, Kuba Wręczycki ronet (3)

In that case also a similar comparative method has been applied to verify the winning entries. Although the method seems to be promising and can show the potential of every design proposal, still it showed its weakness: in two case studies the 1st prize were not represented by the optimal or potentially better diagram in relation to other prized entries. The possible reason for its weakness is probably fact that both judgement process and design cannot be reflected by numbers and scales.

The case study of masterplan for Goleniów show slightly different approach. In that case an urban design competition has been launched in October 2009 by the local authority to get proposals for 'the heart of the city'.

The competition was semi conceptual/semi precise. The effect of the competition was a detailed masterplan for the site. After revealing the results of the competition authors of the winning entry (Bradecki, Stangel, Uherek-Bradecka) were committed to design a refined masterplan

which included guidelines from public consultation and local authorities guidelines. Some of the ideas suggested in competition entry were kept and some were changed. Lessons from final masterplan for Goleniów designed winning team (Bradecki, Stangel) showed that although initial idea was good, still details and some solutions must be changed (see Figure 2). During the work on the masterplan authors proposed three different variants of the final layout and finally only one has been chosen. This process was similar to two stage competition type, but the difference was that there was no competing team in second stage. As far as author knows no further effect of the competitions result have been noticed. A tender contract for local development plan of Goleniow city centre have been announced, but there were no information whether the masterplan guidelines will be incorporated into final plan.

Figure 2. Initial competition design for Goleniów (left) and final proposal designed in second stage (right)



Source: Michał Stangel, Tomasz Bradecki

Conclusion

Planning for the future of the cities may be advised by urban design competitions. Every single competition should be fit to the site and situation. The more data can be prepared to set the competition guidelines the better result we can get. On the basis of his Polish experience the author suggests that in most cases two-stage competitions can give better results than one-stage competitions. In some cases, a broader view of the city and a proper long-term strategy may be more important for the cities' future than realizing a single target (building or public space) which does not fit enough. The perspective of realizing a proper public space may be a good reason for several different approaches. In such cases public consultations before and after a competition are obligatory, as long as realistic 'on site' experience is concerned. There are no statistics that would prove the thesis. However, in many cases proper organisation of the competition can do much more than a series of various steps: competition, consultation, after competition design and/or other. Since a design competition and competition judgment are a process, the author believes that two-stage competitions offer the best opportunity for the right judgment and choice for the jury, and allow the designers to adopt a multi-aspect, multi-step approach to designing. Thus, this kind of procedure allows competition organisers to achieve better effects and we may assume that the future of the site benefits from it as well.

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