

The best of both worlds?

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Chapter 3 The Best of Both Worlds? Client Decision Making in Architect Selection Processes

Leentje Volker

Introduction

Architect selection processes are interesting phenomena. As pointed out by Strong (1996) the potentially conflicting issues in design competitions originate from the diverse roots of the phenomenon: the design competition, the tendering for works and services, and the search for a design partner. A design competition is organized at a very early stage of a construction project as a first connection between acquiring suitable accommodation and hiring a designer to create a representation of the building. Although the service delivered by the architect cannot be directly related to the actual product delivery and use of the building, they are connected in the minds of the decision makers. Among these deliberations decision makers also have to comply with (inter)national rules and regulations, such a European procurement law, government policy and sustainability issues. Hence, selecting the right architect requires different kinds of decision strategies and domain specific skills of decision makers among commissioning bodies (Volker, 2012). In this chapter design competitions are considered selection processes of clients for an architect who offers design solutions for their accommodation problem. Hence, since the study focuses on European public clients in particular, EU procurement law applies to these selection processes. This leads to two worlds of justification: the

professional world and the civic world. In this chapter I will identify different decision strategies on dealing with these potentially conflicting rationales and propose elements for the design of a tender process which takes these processes into account.

The underlying logic of EU procurement law is that an open procurement market and free movement of goods and services in the European Union would ultimately benefit all citizens. Public procurement regulations aim at safeguarding business connections between government and market parties to create ‘best value for taxpayers’ money’. The sums of money involved in procurement are substantial: In an evaluation the EU reports over 150.000 invitations to tender in 2009 in conformity with EU Directives by 35.000 authorities with a total value of €420 billion per year, driving down costs by around 4-5% and generating savings of approximately EUR 20 billion (Internal Market and Services Directorate General of the European Commission, 2011). In the case of design competitions under EU procurement law, the client organisation is considered a contracting authority, announcing to award a contract to an architectural firm as a provider of design services. They are represented by employees or other actors that actually make the decisions and judge the quality of the design proposals during the tendering process.

The client organisation plays a crucial part in preparing the legal connections between an architect and a contracting authority by designing the selection processes and implementing the relational and contractual agreements that follow (Hartmann, Davies, and Frederiksen, 2010). Decision makers involved in procuring architectural services face the need to justify what they do towards public opinion as well as the professional expectations in the architectural community that either joined the competition or debates about the outcomes. This exemplifies a clash between the ‘world of fame’, the ‘inspired world’, and the ‘civic world’ (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). In the context of this research we consider the professional world as a combination of the world of fame and the inspired world. The world of fame refers to peer discussions and professional reputation among architects. The inspired world is considered as visionary, inspirational and creative, delivering design

solutions to realise dreams and ambitions of client organisations. For architects being published in magazines and winning design prizes is essential to be acknowledged as a professional. Traditionally design competitions open up opportunities to expand their portfolio and run successful businesses (Manzoni, 2014). Since public implies democracy and open debate on preferences, this often compels client organisation to actively involve their stakeholders and architect to convince their future users of the potential value of their propositions.

Next to the professional world stand the laws and regulations of procurement safeguarding the free movement of goods and services, in other words, the procedural justice of the civic world serving the general interests. These general interest concern the quality of the built environment as defined by the users and other stakeholders. Since we all live and work in the built environment, decision makers often compromise between private and professional interests: they are, for example, as a mayor responsible for making a decision for new city hall that fits the needs of all citizens in a municipality but will also be a future user of the building himself. Public procurement regulations consider tenders as managerial processes in which a rational choice between alternatives needs to be made in a process that seems free of political context and interrelated stakeholder interests (Harrison, 1999). Prior announcement of decision criteria and decision methods would help to instantiate the EU principles of equal treatment, transparency, objectivity, and proportionality, and inform participating companies what to expect. Hence, client organisation have to announce their ambitions at the beginning of the selection process, accompanied by a description of the exact procedures that enable decision making on the best designer.

Procurement decisions for construction projects are, however, often taken from a multiple stakeholder perspective in a political environment. These decisions are further complicated by the fact that they are based on sketches, models and drawing of the proposed building - visual representations of the future product rather than the product itself. This entails that decision and justification processes are often incremental in order to create decision support (Hodgkinson and Starbuck, 2008). In many

cases, politicians, board members, citizens, government employees, professionals and other stakeholder play a role as decision maker in a complex political arena aiming at making the best decision for the project. Due to the complexity and (unforeseen) dynamics, sensemaking is essential to give meaning to the complicated decision task which entails much missing information on the actual impact of the decision (Maitlis, 2005).

The process of sensemaking involves the retrospective development of plausible meaning that rationalizes what people are doing (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). We connect sensemaking to the process by which decision makers negotiate the different economies of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) and try to conform to the expectations of a rational decision making process, which has recently gained interest (March, 2006). The majority of psychological studies have questioned the capability of humans to make rational decision and have instead emphasized the incremental and political character of decision making, and the importance of sensemaking, expertise and intuition (Beach and Connolly, 2005; Hodgkinson and Starbuck, 2008). Yet, rationality is still regarded as the “almost universal format for justification and interpretation of action and for the development of a set of procedures that are accepted as appropriate for organisations pursuing intelligence” (March, 2006, p. 202).

The aim of this chapter is to address the decision making process during the awarding decision for an architect in the context of EU procurement regulations. This decision announces the start of a collaborative process between a governmental client organisation and an architect. Especially during the procurement of architectural services for a public building the impact of these decisions is substantial and the clash of different forms of justification is inevitable. My research tries to find out where the current conflicts arise from and how actors deal with this. Our study has a similar ethnographic approach as the work of Gkeredakis, Swan, Nicolini and Scarbrough (2011), Langfeldt (2001) and Kazemian and Rönn (2009) who studied funding decisions of expert panels in different

fields. Yet, these studies did not include the rationale of the legal procurement framework and the pressure of public justification to a diversity of public stakeholders.

In this paper, first an explanation is provided on the character of making decisions about selecting architects and the literature on sensemaking. Then the research approach and set-up of a comparative study of four tender cases is described. In the results the importance of sensemaking in expert based decisions in procurement situations is highlighted. Finally, the implications for future design competitions are discussed. The chapter is therefore of interest for scholars in organisational decision making, project management and public procurement, but also for administrators, consultants and managers in the public sector.

Making decisions on architectural design

The decision to select an architect for a public building is characterized by surprise, dialogue and ambiguity (Kazemian and Rönn, 2009; Kreiner, Jacobsen, and Jensen, 2011), the allocation of large public funds (Strong, 1996), and the involvement of numerous stakeholders (Volker et al., 2008; White, 2014). Architectural design is a professional skill based on education and experience gained through practice (Mieg, 2008). Traditionally, architectural design services have been procured by design competitions in which an independent jury panel, sometimes including one or two representative of the client body, evaluates the proposals that have been submitted (Strong, 1996). Research on designers and comparable professionals has shown that experienced practitioners interpret and manage complex and demanding situations faster and more accurately by using tacit memory schemes (Rosen et al., 2008). Their domain relevant experience enables them to make intuitive decisions based on their tacit knowledge and unconscious memory. Members of the same profession share this code, and will accept peer review from within their discipline (Mieg, 2008).

Based on publications that describe the jury processes (e.g. Kazemian and Rönn, 2009; Kreiner, 2007) (Kreiner and Silberberger in this volume), it can be concluded that pattern recognition (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981) takes place. In architectural competitions judgement tasks are complex and involve moral, ethical and aesthetic dimensions. Only limited time and information is available and there is social pressure. Therefore decision makers have to respect the different views of the panel members and be aware of the setting in which they take decisions (Lamont, Mallard, and Guetzkow, 2006). Gkeredakis et al (2011) found that deliberation practices in making healthcare funding decisions constitute an assemblage of three interrelated activities: performing procedural requirements, making sense of decision cases and deliberating the merits of cases. Ranking methods have a substantial impact on the outcome of the review (Langfeldt, 2001).

In all previous research settings the actors are domain specific experts (peers and professionals) making decisions as part of routine procedures and daily work to judge proposals and distribute (public) money. However, many building projects such as the realisation of a municipal office, a new or adjustment to theatre, museum or library are one-size, unique objects realised in a temporary interdisciplinary project context. Only few of the awarding authorities can be considered professional clients managing a real estate portfolio in a certain sector, and thus expected to be experienced in architect selection processes. This implies that the governmental organisations that deal with procurement situations for new buildings often do not have a routine and lack the required domain-specific expertise. Yet, they still face similar justification issues (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006).

Sensemaking in organisations

Decision making and organisational sensemaking are closely related because “decision making stimulates the surprises and confusion that create occasions for sensemaking” (Maitlis, 2005, p. 21). The process of sensemaking involves the retrospective development of plausible meaning that

rationalizes what people are doing (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). As Weick and others such as Maitlis (2005) pointed out, sensemaking is particularly critical in dynamic and turbulent situations where the need to create and maintain coherent and common understanding is important. People then produce or reactivate accounts to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity and include these in the mental models in order to make decisions. According to my research perspective, these situations can be compared to architect selection processes organized by incidental client organisations - either due the lack of frequency or by complexity of the construction project.

Balogun, Pye and Hodgkinson (2008) conceptualise sensemaking as a social process of constructing and reconstructing meaning, which enables individuals to collectively create, maintain and interpret the world through interacting with others. The intertwined concepts of 'framing' (shaping the meaning of a subject and sharing it with others), 'sensegiving' (attempts to influence sensemaking and construction of meaning toward a preferred redefinition of social reality), 'sensereading' (perception of circumstances and aligning of interpretations), and 'sensewrighting' (inheriting, shaping and reflecting the understanding of the world) are all related to the resource, process and meaning of power effects in organisational decision making (Balogun et al., 2008). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) found that in change processes displayed a sequential and reciprocal cycle of sensemaking and sensegiving to expanding audiences, such as the CEO, top managers, organisational membership groups and other stakeholders.

According to Maitlis (2005) social processes of sensemaking among large groups of diverse organisational stakeholders are relatively under-researched compared to the cognitive aspects of sensemaking or social processes in crisis situations and extreme conditions. Hence I take up the call of Balogun, Pye and Hodgkinson (2008) for more research from the perspective of naturalistic decision making, which focuses on making sense of deciding and shown a situation in which "the whole spectrum of calculability situations located between a 'purely objective' calculability and a 'purely subjective' judgement" (Cabantous, Gond, and Johnson-Cramer, 2010, p. 1556) is applied. This also

makes it possible to contribute to the theoretical embedding of the naturalistic decision making tradition in existing cognitive, social and organisational theory, as advocated by Beach & Connolly (2005) and to complement existing views on how rationality unfolds in organisations.

In this context I am especially interested in the different kinds of sensemaking processes in high-stake situations. Architect selections can be considered as high-stake environments because of their political sensitivity, the large sums of public money spent and the high impact of the built environment of the citizens' wellbeing. Building projects have a high political impact outside the usual domain of politicians and civil servants. They are also rare events for most of the decision makers - situations in which sensemaking could lead to organisational learning (Christianson et al., 2009). The research illustrates the complexity of multi-way sensemaking processes between employees and other lower stakeholder groups, middle managers, top managers and politicians.

Research design and methods

To study how processes unfold over time, longitudinal data collection from multiple data sources is desirable (Langley et al., 2013). Four rich and exemplary case studies of public authorities selecting architects for their future housing solutions are used. In each case, project teams were appointed by the client organisation to organise the tender competitions, consisting of employees of both the purchasing department and the real estate department, consultants and other key stakeholders such as board members or other administrators. I followed each project team for five to twelve months collecting observations, interviews, and archival data over a period of three years. This cross-case replication allows testing and deepening theoretical ideas in different settings, leading towards a theoretical model on different navigating strategies (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Langley, 1999). In the analysis the organisational world is seen as socially constructed and people as knowledgeable agents (see also Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013). By using the perspectives of official commissioners, project team members, architects, and other stakeholders in different episodes and by combining in vivo observations,

memories, interpretations, and artefacts, we (my research colleagues and I) intend to construct the micro-processes of interaction and interpretation from different perspectives.

Although freedom of information and transparency of public governance would imply otherwise, gaining access to tender situations proved to be very difficult. Tender situations can be sensitive and delicate and scouting tenders before their official announcement to investigate the processes leading up to a tender was virtually impossible. Because this research aimed at developing theory instead of testing it, theoretical sampling is appropriate. In this situation cases were selected because of opportunities for unusual research access and revelatory situations.

First three instrumental cases were investigated conforming to the rules of a restricted tendering procedure: a School, a City Hall, and a Provincial Government Office. Additionally one case about an ideas competition for a new Faculty Building of a university was investigated. In almost all cases international architects were involved as participants, despite the fact that all clients were Dutch. Table 2 shows the representative of the commissioning client body and the other actors involved in the decision process. In all cases architects were somehow involved in the selection process; sometimes as part of the jury (City Hall, Faculty Building), in other cases as consultant (School, Provincial Office). The cases show the process of architect selection from a psychological perspective in their full complexity including the interrelations of all phases, actors and characteristics but differed in the scope of the brief, the type of tender, the actors that were involved, and the characteristics of the selection process (see Table 1). We characterize the three tender cases as pragmatic, democratic, and political in terms of their potential fit of the aims with the participation strategy and design of the tender procedure. The case of the Faculty Building is labelled as competition.

Table 1 Overview of the case characteristics

Case	Commissioning client body	Actors involved in decision making	Artefacts for selection	Case data
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Pragmatic: School with Sports facility	School board and municipal department of sports, representing Municipal department of education	Members of School board, employees of the municipal dep. of Sports and dep. of Education, representatives of the local community	Portfolio, reference projects, CV leading architect, presentation of design vision	14 hrs non participatory observation; 8 semi-structured interviews; 8 documents
Democratic: City Hall with Library	Board of Mayor and Alderman with library representatives, representatives of City council	Representatives of all political parties, advised by citizens, experts and user groups	Reference projects, profile of leading architect, sketch design, scale model, presentations	7 hrs non participatory observation, 9 semi-structured interviews; 6 documents
Political: Provincial Government Office	Provincial Executives and Queen's commissioner, representatives of Provincial Council	Members of the executive board, head of the departments of provincial organisation	Concept design and presentation	53 hrs non participatory observations; informal conversations; 15 documents
Competition: Faculty Building	Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, representatives of University Board	Chief Government Architect, two internal architecture professors, two international architecture professors, MSc student, Director of the Architecture Museum	Design sketches on one or two A1 format posters	32 weeks of participatory observation including jury meeting; 6 semi-structured interviews; 5 official documents & numerous informal documents

All tender cases included the restricted procedure with economically most advantageous tender criteria. This is the second most popular EU procedure after the open procure, and costs much more time and expenditure than other kinds of procedures due to the high value and complexity of the contracts. A restricted tender procedure is similar to a two-stage design competition and consists of three phases: 1) a selection phase in which the potential candidates are screened and selected based on a first announcement of the problem, 2) a tender phase in which the architects interpret the problem

and prepare proposals to show their vision on the contract task, and 3) an award phase in which the most suitable candidate for the job is selected after a process of organisational decision making.

In the period of 2006-2008 a variety of different forms of data for each case to allow were collected for triangulation between self-report, observed behaviour and official justifications (see Table 1). The observations were based on field notes taken during the decision process throughout the selection process, so before, during and after the final decision making of the jury. In the Pragmatic, Political and Competition case I got involved before the announcement of the competition, which allowed me to observe the decisions made to prepare the documents as well as the implementation of them, both at the level of the project team as the steering board. In the democratic case I became involved just after the first round of selection, enabling observations after the selection phase only. In all cases I attended most of the official meetings in which the jury panel discussed the alternatives. In the political and competition case I was also involved as a participant in the preparations of the final tender process. Sometimes these meetings took place in a regular meeting room, sometimes they were on the location of the client (e.g. a class room, theatre or city hall), always enabling me to note down all sayings of the decision makers from a close distance. In order to gain an overall overview of the case and collect different perspective on the processes, retrospective semi-structured interviews were conducted with key decision makers and members of the project team after the tender decision had been officially published (see Table 1). Together with the official and preparatory documents as gathered during the selection process, this improved the understanding of multiple perspectives on the processes.

The data were initially analysed as separate case identities first, and then systematically compared on appearing constructs collaboratively as a research team in Atlas.ti, a software package to support qualitative coding. Throughout data analysis and reporting we were frequently going back and forth between the interpretation, original data and theoretical insights. In all phases of the decision process we realised that making a decision on the right architect requires a continuous consideration of

demand (the programme of requirements for the project) and supply (the offered design solutions). We also saw that it is required that an initial decision needs be checked against the expectations among the members of the jury committee in order to be officially announced and supported by the community and the other participants in the competition. We therefore distinguished between making sense of the decision task, the phases of a decision making process and justifying the decision. These processes are iterative and thus continue throughout the case. At the same time, decision makers have to acknowledge that it is hard to draw up a decision process without knowing the decision task, and a justification is more complicated – or impossible - without a clear decision task and decision process. The differences between logics of justification between the professional and the civic world were visible in conflicts in the system rationale (perspective on the tender), process approach (the actual managerial decisions) and decision outcome (the selected architect). During further analysis the way in which the actors dealt with these conflicting logics as sensemaking processes was theorized. As a means of confirmative validation, a workshop with eight domain experts was conducted with experience as clients, jury members and submitting architects as well as expertise in procurement law (see also Volker, 2010). The findings with respect to the different worlds of justification are integrated in the description of how actors dealt with the frictions in adopting a sensemaking approach. First an overview of the processes is given, then the specific sensemaking processes are expounded.

Results on client sensemaking processes

From the perspective of the client, the tender processes were high stake situations of organisational decision making for those involved. They also experienced the clash of different economies of worth: The functional requirements for the building from the inspirational world met in Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) terms questions of the right procedure from the civic world and matters of reputation from the professional world. Although the tendering law was intended to promote market principles in the realm of public spending, it manifested itself mainly as procedures;

the market perspective of value maximization had been transformed into a set of rules for decision makers acting on behalf of the public instead of individual self-interest.

Despite the clashes of rationalities, decision makers apparently found a way to deal with this interplay of logics. I theorize this as sensemaking and distinguish several forms of sensemaking based on a combination of the concepts by Balogun et al. (2008), the elements of effective investment decisions of Butler, Davies, Pike and Sharp (1993), the matching concept of heuristics and image theory, and the different decision rationalities as described by Simon (1997), Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), and Miller and Wilson (2006). These sensemaking activities are labelled as:

1) *Reading the decision task* - What are the aims and opportunities of the selection process?

The sensemaking process of reading the decision task is based on the concepts of sensereading and framing as described by Balogun et al. (2008) and Beach and Connolly (2005). It deals with the translation of the aims of the client into a tender procedure for the selection of an architect (Jones and Livne-Tarandach, 2008), which requires colloquial and informal communication (Gkeredakis et al., 2011). The development of a tender brief (e.g. we want an iconic building that integrated in the surrounding urban structure) and the analysis of the project environment (e.g. who will be the main users?) are important parts of this sensemaking process.

2) *Writing the decision process* – How is the decision process ‘designed’ in order to meet the demands of the procedural and the professional world?

This process is based on the concepts of sensewrighting, sensegiving and framing as described by Balogun et al. (2008), Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) and Beach and Connolly (2005). This process entails the writing (shaping) of the selection process of an architect by the client during a project. Upfront, decisions need to be made about when and how decisions are taken and which kind of information is required to do so in a transparent and objective manner. The level of expertise of

the decision makers appeared to be an important factor of influence in the decision process. An example of an element in the writing process is the composition of the jury.

3) *Justifying a decision against different economies of worth* - How is the decision justified against different economies during jury board meetings and after the decision had been taken?

This third sensemaking process was needed to feed the rhetoric of justification (Cabantous and Gond, 2011). It deals with the explicit justification of the decision at the end of the process against the different economies of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) that are present during selection process for an architect. The representative of a client has to justify their final decision to their own organisation, to the public, to society, and to the architects that joined the tender. These multiple responsibilities are described by Thompson (1980) as the many hands that make it difficult to identify one single person responsible for a tender decision.

These three sensemaking processes are strongly interrelated but also follow a certain sequential order. Table 2 shows the most essential findings of the phenomena as found in the cases. In the next section the concepts are explained from the literature and the empirical results of the four case studies.

Table 2 Overview of findings per case in relation to sensemaking processes

Case characteristics/ Sensemaking process	Pragmatic	Democratic	Political	Competition
Reading the decision task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searching for a project partner with relevant experience - Click with architect is most important - Award decision based on presentation of architect, no plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searching for a plan of a secured partner - Click with design proposal is most important - Domain specific experts involved in advisory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searching for budget secure alternative - Political support more important than building itself - Awarding decision based on building specifications and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Searching for inspiration - Design quality can be recognized by experts based on a visual representation - Anonymous designs

	required	committee	scale model	
Writing the decision process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jury panel in selection and awarding with similar parties - Decision authorities differed per phase - Domain specific experts in jury panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low profile selection decision, award decision fully democratic - Stakeholder groups involved in advisory role - Scale model required in award phase - Extended interaction with designer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project team, steering committee and jury panel strongly interwoven - Stakeholders not actively involved - Expert only involved as 'educating' advisor <p>→ <i>Cancellation of decision process after selection phase</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultation with support of expert panel - Authority of jury panel of domain specific experts - Participation options limited to participation in competition, not in assessment
Justifying the decision against different economies of worth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivation of decision in matrix scheme with criteria - Open to questions - Legal non compliance term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press release with jury statement - Official letter with short motivation - Open to questions - Legal non compliance term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal minimum left after exclusion grounds so not application of selection criteria - Open to questions - Motivation in matrix scheme with criteria and short motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jury report for architectural community - Active PR policy for 'outside' - Not open to questions, jury members restrict to jury report

** Because the case was cancelled after the selection phase, final decision making based on design quality did not take place*

Reading the decision task

In all cases the tender enabled clients to reach multiple aims that were often more strategic in nature than awarding a contract would imply. This multitude of aims was usually reflected in the arguments that were used to justify the decision for a winning architect but not always made explicit in the tender design. At the same time it was found that the intertwining traditions make the need for

reading the decision task more urgent. It was found that the most important dilemma which clients faced in the reading process was a distinction between the search for ‘a click with the design’ as suggested by the tradition of design competitions and ‘a click with the architect’ as a partner delivering services as suggested by the tender principles. In the democratic case and the competition case, decisions were framed as a search for a design. The design clearly acted as a boundary object in decision making (Bresnen, 2010), which was not the case in the pragmatic case. In this case the most dominant frame was “*the search for the right partner*” capable of designing the future building and “*realizing their dream*”. This was also reflected in the criteria that this client applied during the decision process. The perception of circumstances and development of the decision frame can therefore be considered as essential part of the sensereading process.

For the client, the selection of an architect constituted an interactive search for a person or group who could visualize and implement their needs and ambitions best. The decision making process starts when representatives of the organisation articulated a housing problem or the political wish for a representational building. The information on which the project definitions are usually based often become obsolete by the time a judgement had to be made. This makes the identification of decision criteria and allocation of weights to the criteria more complex than presumed in logic of the procurement law. John, one of the architects in the democratic case, characterized this process in a retrospective interview as follows:

Well, the city council needed a new City Hall. This means the council needs to develop a feel for what they want. And eventually with that feeling they fell for the winning party. Subsequently they have to substantiate that. [...] So in the end you'll see that the winning submission only has positive features. We have been involved in so many tender processes; we know both sides of the story.

The logic of procurement entails that the brief describes the aims of the project in the official announcement. If the brief is to support the decision process, its level of detail should be aligned with the aim of the tender and the proposed procedure. Since a sketch design is made at a later stage in a

building project, it requires a different kind of tender brief with more detailed functional, financial and contextual information than a tender brief for a visionary proposal for a potential design project, which should first meet the political and social aims in order to make a decision about the design strategy.

However, the problem with announcing requirements in the brief is that over time a client's requirements may change. This happened in the competition case. The competition brief was set up several months after a fire had destroyed the previous faculty building. During the duration of the competition project the faculty had found shelter in an old office building. By the time the jury judged the anonymous entries to decide about the winner – the best solution to their housing problem – this temporary accommodation had received a warm welcome by the employees, the executive board members, and the architectural community. The jury decided to award two of the six prizes to entries that proposed to transform the temporary housing into a permanent one. The change in context also altered the scope and the brief of the project. Reading the decision task can therefore be considered as an ongoing activity that requires attention throughout the tender process. However, the logic and routines of tender procedures do not allow for such adjustments during the process.

Uncertainties related to having no influence or control on the decision alternatives as they were being developed by submitting architects. According to the law, the only opportunities a client has for controlling the quality of the service lie before announcing the tender and during the evaluation of the alternatives. In the cases studies it was found that the selection process was a result of the decision makers' interaction with the alternatives once they were confronted with them and began to make sense of the proposed designs. This interaction between the decision makers and the design alternatives has a firm place in the competition tradition (Kazemian and Rönn, 2009). Procurement law, however, assumes that the procedure and criteria can and must be designed up front, which in our sample clients found almost impossible to do. Instead, the process showed similarities with the unfolding iterative cycle of Gkeredakis et al (2011): performing procedural requirements (mainly before and after jury deliberation), making sense of cases (in different rounds and by different

stakeholder groups), and deliberating funding merits (re-interpreting an offer, articulating, sharing and debating arguments in order to formulate a rational decision). This implies that tender processes should provide room for such iterative processes.

Writing the decision process

Regarding the writing of the decision process, it was found that on a general level the findings of the execution phase resemble the six stages of the selection process described by Kazemian and Rönn (2009): submission check, determination of order of work, choice and preliminary judgements, presentation of interesting contributions, ranking, and decision making with architectural criticism. Being involved as participatory observer in the competition case, it was possible to influence the structure of this jury meeting and validate this structure by explicitly designing the jury evaluation process. Based on these experiences and the observations in the pragmatic and political case, it became clear that in every phase of the decision process, a group of decision makers went through their own writing process of sensemaking. During the different phases of the decision process the jury members were affected by external influences, such as opinions of other members of a group, changes in the context such as time pressure, or personal factors, such as moods and emotions. Consequently, decision making was a dynamic, incremental and cyclic process based on several kinds of value judgements.

It was usually during the judgement phase that decision makers started with the development of a frame of reference based on the aim of the assessment and the documents to be assessed. This implies that preparations for an assessment frame can be made, but the definite assessment frame cannot be developed in the absence of the actual submissions. In this sense, assessment could be compared to the process of qualitative data analysis: the structure of analysis arises from the data. This is contrary to most quantitative research that typically consists of testing assumptions that already guided the process of collecting data. Procurement law assumes a quantitative process, while our

findings suggest a qualitative process. In all cases the decision criteria were somehow used to build a frame of reference between the stakeholders.

In all cases members of a jury panel reached a consensus by several rounds of ranking, discussion and/or voting, similar to what Langfeldt (2001) describes in her work on grants assessments. The consensus proved not to be the same as an average of opinion but rather the result of a negotiation process, which is in line with the results of Kazemian and Rönn (2009) on jury processes in design competitions. Decision makers needed time to interpret the criteria, the assignment and the brief that was mostly built by others not belonging to the jury panel. The observations confirm that experts were better at seeing significance of information, identifying important cues for risks, estimating consequences and judging autonomously (Hutton and Klein, 1999). Experts also felt the need to discuss and harmonize their preferences with other members of the group, which contributes to legitimization of the decision to the participants and society. Further analysis of the democratic case showed that the experts addressed more aspects of design quality than the user groups and citizens (Volker et al., 2008).

The more expertise is available, the more strategic a decision process can be. In the pragmatic case Ewan, an urban planner by background, used strategic voting to combat the logic of the tender in the first round of selections: *“What I did then was, for the submissions that positively surprised me and which I thought should have an important role in this selection, I strongly favoured them by giving them high grades, because I anticipated that with the other [civic world] jury members subtle judgements would get lost”*. This practice of strategic voting was noticed by Margareth, one of other panel members who was less experienced in these kinds of decision processes: *“I filled out the form in all honesty. But I saw that the urban planner was much more crafty. He used more extreme marks and thereby heavily influenced the score. I only saw through this in the third round and thought ‘If I really want to rule out a certain proposal because I think that will be a difficult person to work with, I also need to give extreme marks’”*. The results of the case studies confirm the trend that jury panels do not

only consist of architectural professionals but often also include numerous stakeholders with different backgrounds. On a holistic level most of the decision makers in the cases appeared reasonably capable of making decisions, even if they felt insecure about their decision tasks. They just followed their intuition, which can be considered as an appropriate strategy for ill-defined decisions in situations with a lack of information (Dane and Pratt, 2007). This was also mentioned by Bill, project leader of the democratic case, during a reflecting interview: *“I think it is really clever of the award committee how they balanced all preferences. Although a pharmacist [members of the City council are usually part time involved in politics and part time occupied by another profession] is not an urban planner, it did turn out well”*.

Expertise is however also often limited to domains. A building project in a public context comprises of several domains, which means a plethora of areas of expertise. Consequently it can be concluded that during architect selections decision makers need to be selected based on their competences, or being educated in performing their tasks. Especially in the critical feedback and learning curve of jury members and the issue of building trust, the concept of expert team (Salas, Burke, and Stagl, 2004) has a lot to offer in the context of design tenders.

Justifying against different economies of worth

It was found that in order to make a decision, one does not only have to accurately analyse the complexity of the situation (judgement and computation), but also steer a course through the political reality of persuading others of the inspiration idea (negotiation) (Butler et al., 1993). In justifying a decision a decision maker is simultaneously confronted with the legal structure of the decision procedure and the iterative psychological organisational decision process.

The clash between different forms of value and different expectations about what constitutes a justified process was apparent not only to us during the analysis but also articulated by participants in the cases, such as Dick, a participating architect in the democratic case:

“Oh god, [there are] too many parties [involved]. It is all pseudo-democracy. You can see that the fear to be seen as undemocratic has increased, which has led to a kind of extremely transparent democratic processes [with the influence of many stakeholders]”.

When comparing the two perspectives of the competition tradition and procurement law, it was found that they had very different rationales regarding the system rationale, the process approach, and the decision outcome. According to procurement law the main aim of procuring a service is the allocation of a contract, which binds two legal entities for the establishment of a project. Architects are regarded as entrepreneurs rather than artists and it is the client who determines value maximization. The underlying reason for the frustration with current practice that many actors in our sample voiced, seems to stem not so much from a clash between the two selection methods per se, but from the different notions of worth and justification at the interface between the inspired, public opinion, industrial, market and civil worlds.

The dissatisfaction in the architect community appeared to stem from a clash with the competition tradition they were accustomed to. Competitions constitute an established form of peer review consistent with the inspired world of Boltanski & Thévenot (2006). In the competition tradition the architect is considered to be an artist, to be judged anonymously by domain experts based on an artefact, the representation of the future building. The logic of competitions typically aims to avoid being swayed by public opinion and is not overly concerned with the rules and procedures of the civic world, as experts are expected to represent professional judgement. The competition tradition is based on the concept that submitting architects know enough about a competition if they know who is in the jury; knowing the jury members enables them to estimate if the jury's artistic judgement would be aligned with their own artistic strivings. In the competition tradition, it constitutes no problem that

worth evolves gradually in the sensemaking and comparing between the alternatives. The focus has traditionally been on the object with limited emphasis on the provision of a service and the allocation of a job. In our sample, this was apparent in the comments of Paul, an architect in the competition jury panel: *“There are two ways of getting selected: based on the product, then you are taken hostage as architect but also protected by the promise of your design; or being selected as architect to make a building based on the trust of the client”*.

The level of expertise and role of the decision maker play an important part in the justification of the decision because it makes it possible to abandon from the context and scrutinize authoritative evidence, as also found by Gkeredakis et al. (2011) and Lamont, Mallard and Guetzkow (2006). The question, however, remains who should be considered an expert and how to deploy panel members for decision making. Furthermore, expertise is not always linked to power in public management.

Conclusion

This study addressed how clients negotiate different logics of justification and how they make sense of their task in selecting an architect for the design of a public building. Four cases of procuring architectural services as an example of high-stake public strategic decisions were investigated and labelled as sensemaking dealing with different rationales. The analysis showed how these decisions involve the professional world, fostered by the inspired world and fame of architecture, and the civic world of procurement procedures and safeguarding common goods as addressed by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006).

Despite the differences between the four cases, the analysis reveals systematic similarities in the way decision makers and stakeholders try to establish a shared meaning about the party to award a contract to and gain the best of both worlds. Considering the mixture of aims, the involvement of multiple stakeholders and the political context, it is obvious that the relatively rational and static

principles of procurement law clash with the professional world of architecture competitions. It was found that the assessment and justification frame of the decision developed during the process: in all cases architectural design played an important role as artefact in the decision process, and decision makers developed their own understanding about their needs and wishes for the future building in interaction with the design. However, this type of iterative process is at conflict with the legal requirement of making decision criteria transparent up front. Jurors drew on arguments, perspectives and values of the jurors as they fitted their intuitive judgement.

The implication of these findings is that decision makers in public organisations should draw on a combination of the competition tradition and the tender principles in their decision and justification process. The actors in the cases showed that dealing with these decision logics is possible, but requires guts, creativity, perseverance and political sensitivity. In order to make decisions about any kind of partner selection in the public domain, some kind of system is needed. Yet, one could wonder if procurement – a large scale political system – provides the best system for appropriate and responsible decisions in the sensitive and complex public domain. Compared to the artistic design tradition the legal procedures follow a rationalistic and quantitative approach, which is still seen as preferable from a societal perspective (Cabantous et al., 2010; Sinclair and Ashkanasy, 2005). A rationalistic decision motivation appears to fulfil the legal requirements of the civic world, but fails to include the process of collective sensemaking that client representatives undergo to reach their decision and that helps them to build support among the stakeholders in their inspired world.

The clash of different logics of justification also implies that different forms of expertise matter. While architects are trained to create an attractive and responsible built environment for the generations to come, representatives of public organisations need to spend public money wisely and negotiate concerns of different stakeholders. The advance of procurement law has also resulted in expert power moving from architects to lawyers. It may be questionable if the attention to procedural justice actually helps to ensure the quality of the built environment within the budgetary constraints.

Implications

Implications of these findings relate to specific elements of the design of the selection procedure, either in case of a design competition or a design tender.

First of all, the assessment criteria should allow for addressing the characteristics of the architect as a person, the proposed design, as well as the firm that they represent. Although the competition traditions still tends to focus on the proposed design, the current position of the architect in the construction process inclines to include much more responsibilities than visualising the potential building (Bos-de Vos, Volker, and Wamelink, 2014). This should be realised by decision makers before the selection procedure is initiated and not considered as result of the sensemaking process during the tender.

Secondly, the role of expertise should be acknowledged in the whole process. It is advisable to involve domain specific experts in the process of decision making because their specific knowledge on architecture, sustainability, urban planning, indoor climate or other issues related to design quality increases the chances of including these issues in the assessment criteria. Furthermore, they are better at controlling product emotions and using intuition than novices (Rosen et al., 2008). During a procedure a holistic judgement of an expert committee incorporates potentially conflicting judgements. Creating room and flexibility in the decision making process for discussion and negotiation among the decision makers will also improve decision quality. Unfortunately in the current procurement climate it is often hard for competition organisers to convince purchase officers and legal departments of this necessity.

Regarding justification of the decision it is recommendable to motivate a decision and communicate this towards the specific stakeholder groups, while using the media that belong to the different worlds of worth. Argumentation that fits the language of a particular group, tends to support

the acceptance a particular decision. This not only requires administrators and project managers to adjust the tone of their message, but also challenges domain specific experts to explain their reasoning to others. The traditional jury report might thus not always be the only way of communicating the outcomes of a design competition.

Finally, ensuring that client ambitions are heard is something that should be taken into account during a design related selection process. If external experts are involved, they should be familiarized with the ambitions from a client perspective. Aligning the frame of references of the actors during preparation of the tender process will benefit the odds of reaching a decision at the end of the process that fits the ambitions and aims of the client organisation. In this context it is advisable to organise a pilot session with all committee members to align each other's decision frames and mental models (Chupin, 2011). Conversely, including a personal explanation by the architect (by means of a presentation or dialogue) will improve the clients' understanding of the proposal that is offered. Although this might go in to the tradition of blind jury assessments, one could think of selecting three to five of the best designs and having them presented in front of the deciding committee members of the client organisation. Doesn't that sound like the best of both worlds?

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on the organisational decision making processes of public clients while procuring architectural services for construction projects. The blend of (universally valid) procurement regulations and (generally accepted but highly situation) professional values in architecture creates a situation in which different rationales often clash with the organizational sensemaking process that decision makers experience. Based on interviews, observations and document analysis from four cases studies, it was found that the client representatives dealt with these conflicting logics through several kinds of sensemaking processes: reading the decision task, writing the decision process, and justifying the decision process against different economies of worth. These iterative sensemaking processes require domain specific expertise and the use of intuition. Implications of these findings relate to awareness and explicit use of these elements in the design of a tender process.

Keywords: architectural services, organisational decision making, public commissioning, procurement, sensemaking.