

MEET ME AT THE HILL



Reflection

Pien van der Linde

4827643

MSc3/4 Interiors Buildings Cities 2023-2024

1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A), and your master program (MSc AUBS)?

In the Architecture track, we develop innovative building projects that use design as a means to deal with the technical, social, and spatial challenges encountered in the built environment. The design for the Stockholm City Library tackles all three of these issues. The technical challenges present themselves as we are making a design for a building from 1928 and designing in a relatively cold climate. The social challenges occur when thinking about the role of the (contemporary) library. Spatial challenges follow from building next to the existing library, including the Observatory Hill.

Furthermore, The Chair of Interiors Buildings Cities concerns itself with the idea that architecture can help to construct the kind of society we wish to live in, which I believe is one of the most important recurring themes of our master's program. As the library should reflect this society, including its equality and multiculturalism, this graduation project gives an example of the contemporary library as a public space, accessible to all, with an important function in keeping literature alive, but also in providing one access to something that they might not have at home: this "something" could be books, but this "something" could also be other goods or maybe even companionship, quietness, or a warm place to pass the time.

2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

The analysis of prior briefs that have been launched for the expansion of the Stockholm City Library, as well as visiting the Stockholm Library, have led me to choose to design an extension building outside of the existing library. I believe the original Asplund building, including its books, plays an important role in the education of literature. Research on the history of the library has led me to think about the role of adult education in my design, as the spaces that were once meant for this purpose are now used as offices. This has led me to connect my building to the Asplund building as well as the first annex, to be able to move offices to the first annex, freeing up space in the Asplund building. Furthermore, my design was influenced by the field visits we had to the libraries in Mechelen and Tilburg, as these libraries inspired me when thinking of the role of a contemporary library. Following my design, I researched ways to build onto (and into) the hill next to the library.

3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

It was encouraging to have different design briefs throughout the year, as these stimulated me to work in ways I might otherwise not have. For example, thinking about the design for a room for a library first, rather than diving into a design for the Stockholm City Library immediately. Another example is the model we made for a fragment of our building, stimulating to work on different scales at the same time.

4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

When it comes to societal value, the project is highly relevant as there is currently a question of what to do with the Stockholm City Library. Next to that, the debate about the role of the library is highly relevant nowadays, as we are experiencing a shift from written literature to different forms of media. Therefore, this project is not only relevant for the Stockholm City Library, but for libraries around the world.

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

As the situation of the Stockholm City Library is highly specific, the design is adjusted to this specific context. However, the matter of what an extension building can add to an existing library is applicable to other libraries.

6. Additional question: Which key challenges did you face when developing the building shape?

When developing the building shape, these were some of the key challenges that I discussed with my tutors, eventually leading to my final design.

As I was building on the slope of the Observatory Hill, the first main challenge I was facing was the placement of the floors. As I wanted to sustainably build on the slope of the hill, I looked into ways to minimize the material that had to be removed, while keeping the profile of the building as close to the slope as possible.

The second challenge was the placement of roofs, maintaining the view from the different floors and allowing access to several terraces.

Third, was the placement of the voids. An important design aspect of the building was the floors looking out over one another, making the building feel like one whole. At first, the voids were placed in the front of the building, and the floors further to the back. During the design process, this has been adjusted to allow visitors to sit directly next to the front façade, ensuring daylight and views over Stockholm.

The last key challenge was the circulation. Eventually, the floors have been adjusted, to be able to have one vertical circulation point, giving access to all different floors and the roof terrace.

7. Additional question: Which aspects of the design could be further developed in the next stage of the project?

The design is mainly focused on the new extension building in between the Asplund library and the first annex. As mentioned before, the extension building connects these two existing buildings, allowing offices to be moved from the top floor of the Asplund library to the first annex, freeing up space for adult education, where this top floor was originally used for. In the project's next stage, the plans for these offices in the first annex building could be further developed, as well as the circulation within the Asplund building, when the top floors would be used for adult education again. Furthermore, I would like to further develop the interior qualities of the extension building.