



# **POCKETS OF EXCHANGE**

## **A library of active participation**

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P2 Booklet

2025

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Bodies and Building Milan  
CIVIC

# LIBRARY

# Active Participation



*Collage library of active participation, own illustration*

In this research paper, the foundational framework is established for the research-by-design phase of the study, which focuses on a redesign of an existing library: the Fondazione Feltrinelli located at Porta Volta in Milan, Italy. The paper examines the relevance of this typology throughout history and the role it can play today. The “Civic” lens places a strong emphasis on the civic character of a library and how it can give back to society.

This research focuses on how a library can encourage active participation today. This involves engaging in activities and workshops, transforming the role of visitors from mere spectators to creators and performers.

The study investigates forms of active participation and how this can be stimulated through design. Existing case studies are examined to understand how this translates into practice. Additionally, literature research is conducted to lay the foundation for active participation.

In the design brief section, a design brief for the new library project located in Milan (assuming the current building was never constructed) at Porta Volta is presented. This design brief results from analyses that provide insights into urban parameters, site opportunities, potential massing, program, mix, density, client requirements, and more. The brief serves as the foundation for the final phase of this research: the research-by-design process.

Finally, requirements and ambitions can be established, forming the foundation for the research-by-design phase of the study, with recommendations made regarding requirements, program, and mass orientation.

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# CIVIC LENS

01

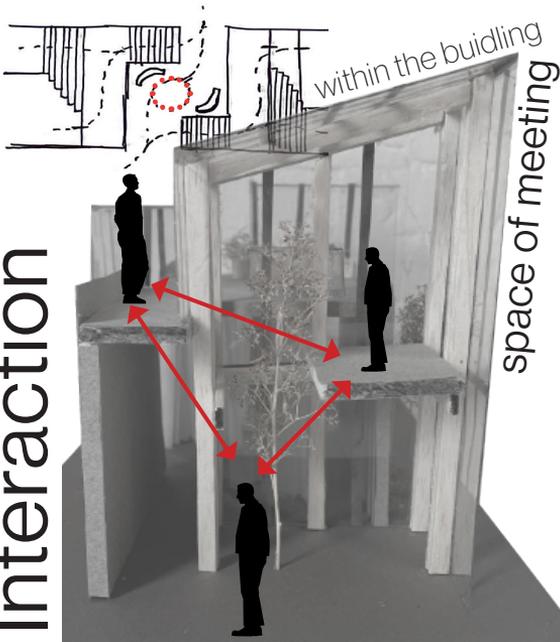


identity of



community of like minded

**CIVIC**



Collage civic meaning, own illustration

# f community



## Variety

city's identity

## Collective activities

making place into space

age of collective  
e enduring than  
person's view."  
-Peter C. Rowe



The research focuses on the civic lens, with the civic community of Milan at its core. It acknowledges that the building should give back to society. Key themes that emerge from this focus include interaction, personal interpretation, variety, community of like-minded individuals, and collectiveness. This lens will play a central role throughout the entire study, influencing decisions and directions. As such, it will recur frequently in the context of making design choices and guiding the overall approach of the research.

# INTRODUCTION

02

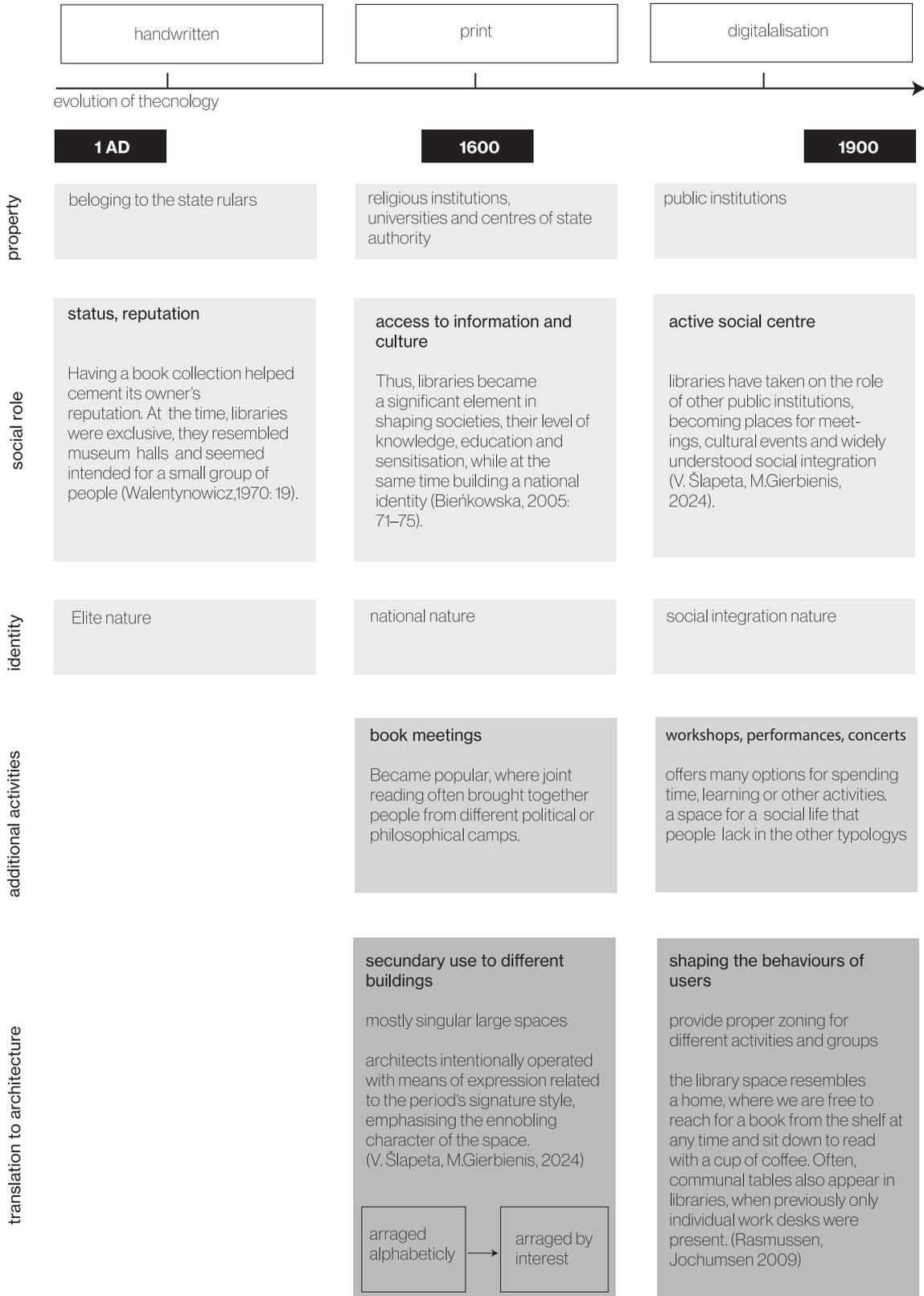


The library is a typology that has existed for centuries, but its role and character have evolved significantly over time. What began as private collections for society's elite gradually evolved into the public institutions we know today. Nowadays, the library is a place where communities come together, not just a collection of books, but an active social centre housing various facilities that go beyond knowledge exchange to foster social engagement. Libraries now host concerts, performances, and workshops.

In this context, libraries play a strong civic role. Public libraries function as community meeting places. They are described as "third places," where individuals can relax, socialize, and create new connections, supporting both individual and collective well-being (H. Jochumsen, D. Skot-Hansen, C.H. Rasmussen, 2017). Libraries help increase social capital by connecting citizens and encouraging participation in community affairs (N. Kranich, 2012). Thus, libraries are civic spaces that are assessable where diverse communities can meet, engage and participate.

In this paper a future library will be sketched that is focussed on participation of diverse communities. Where the library is aware of its contribution to civic society. This participation will help close the boundaries between different groups of the community. Main elements related to this participation are both physical and digital, where people of the community can actively get involved. These elements consist of workshops such as wood workshops, pottery, painting and other creative activities on one hand and on the other hand workshops where new digital technologies can be showcased, such as 3d printing and robotics. The library of participation can give something back to the community and enhance its civic character.

# INTRODUCTION

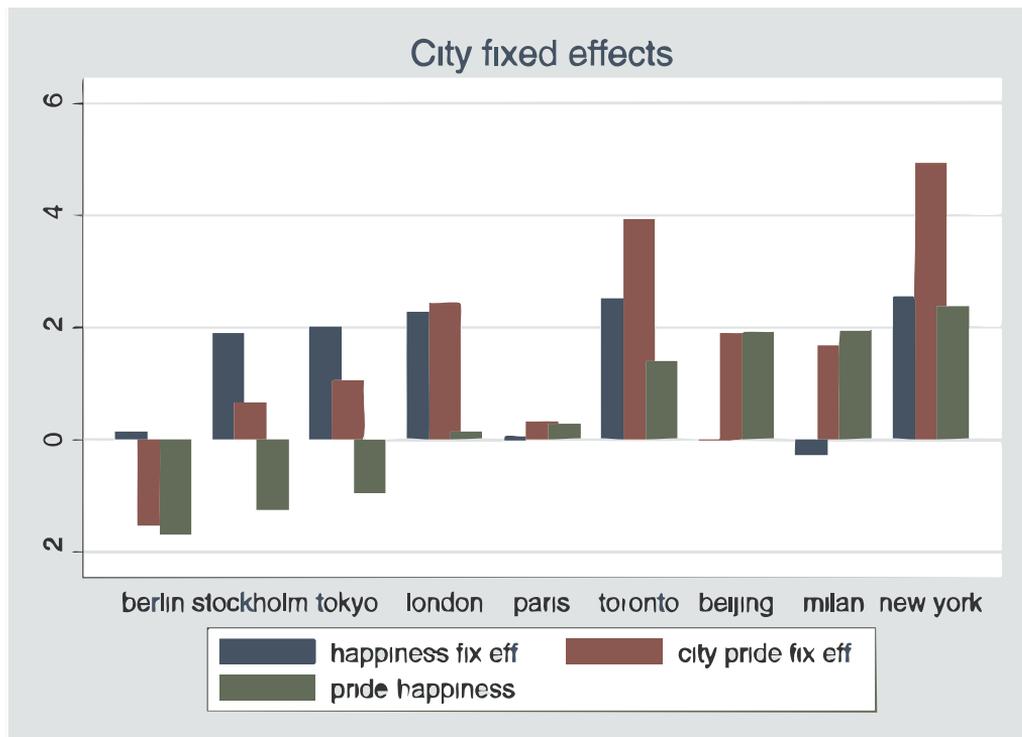


Evolution of library by technology, own illustration

## Problem statement

Currently participation could be further enhanced in Milan. Studies show that the happiness of citizens in Milan is not particularly high, as shown in figure 1. While Milan's residents take great pride in their city, data reveals that this does not directly correlate with their well-being (A. Balducci, D. Checchi, 2009). This "well-being" is closely related to the availability of places for personal relationships, local meeting spots where residents from diverse backgrounds can come together and interact. To improve well-being, community participation is crucial (A. Balducci, D. Checchi, 2009).

*Well Being, Milan, Milan shows a negative number on happiness fix. eff. (A. Balducci, D. Checchi, 2009)*





*Streetbookstore, own picture*

A key aspect of this participation is social exchange. A library is not only a space for exchanging books and knowledge but also plays a significant role in social exchange due to its civic character. The library serves as a public place where a diverse community converges in terms of age, ethnicity, values, social class, and interests. This research aims to improve participation among the various local target groups within the library.

Recent studies have analysed how small civic events such as community festivals, public meetings, recreational activities, and workshops play a crucial role in the growth of civil society and social participation in local communities (Connell, J., and S. J. Page, 2012). A library with a civic character can make a valuable contribution by offering space for these social interactions and civic events, which are essential for fostering participation. Additionally, a variety of spaces based on different interests and groups can further stimulate engagement. These

spaces can range from dedicated meeting areas to low-intended meeting spaces that create valuable interactions among people who might not actively seek out one another at first. Moreover, in response to the ongoing digitalization, hybrid participation is also an important aspect. These forms of participation operate at various levels, creating “pockets of exchange.”

## ***How can a library foster active participation?***

What types of spaces are important in the library according to the Four Space Model?

How can small civic events such as workshops and activities be integrated into a library?

What types of elements of spaces stimulate exchange?

How can low-intensity meeting spaces be created?

How can hybrid participation be integrated into a library?



*Fertinelli bookstore and cafe, own picture*

# FRAMEWORK

03



# Theoretical framework

To answer the research question: How can a library foster active civic participation? This theoretical framework is set up to provide substantiating knowledge from existing research.

## Four Space Model

This research is grounded in the Four Spaces Model developed by Danish Library and Information Science scholars Dorte Skot-Hansen, Henrik Jochumsen, and Casper Hvenegaard. This model articulates the transformation of public libraries from passive, collection-based institutions into dynamic spaces that foster experience, inspiration, and civic engagement (Laerkes, 2016). The model identifies four overlapping “spaces” that reflect the evolving functions of the public library:

- The Inspiration Space
- The Learning Space
- The Meeting Space
- The Performative Space

These spaces collectively aim to promote experience, involvement, empowerment and innovation as overarching objectives for the future of public libraries. A library of the future should foster all these aspects in a way but the main focus can differ. For this the focus particularly lies on the participation. In the 4 space model this dimension of the model is embodied by the Meeting Space. According to Laerkes (2016), “The meeting space is an open, public space and a place between work and home where citizens can meet others, both like-minded individuals and those who are different from them (Laerkes, 2016).”

These spaces collectively aim to promote experience, involvement, empowerment and innovation as overarching objectives for the future of public libraries. A library of the future should foster all these aspects in a way but the main focus can differ. For this the focus particularly lies on the participation. In the 4 space model this dimension of the model is embodied by the Meeting Space. According to Laerkes (2016), “The meeting space is an open, public space and a place between work and home where citizens can meet others, both like-minded individuals and those who are different from them (Laerkes, 2016).”

The theory is directly applicable to library settings, where social exchange occurs not just through the direct borrowing of books, but also through interactions that foster collaborative learning,

knowledge sharing, and community-building. Libraries, by their nature, create environments that facilitate these exchanges, leading to the formation of social ties and networks that can enhance civic participation.

In an increasingly fragmented society, there is a pressing need for spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can engage in dialogue, debate, and mutual challenge (Laerkes, 2016). The Meeting Space provides a framework for both intentional and incidental participation. This can occur in larger communal settings such as cafés and library halls, as well as in smaller, more intimate environments. Participation in the meeting space is not only confined in physical encounters but also in digital platforms such as chat groups, blogs and social media. These hybrid forms of engagement enhance the library’s role as a civic hub and as a facilitator of inclusive social exchange (Laerkes, 2016).

## Social exchange theory

First of all participation has a strong social nature. Therefore the social exchange theory provides crucial information. Knowledge and fostering democratic participation, is well-articulated in social exchange theories (Befu, 1977). In the article by Harumi Befu on Social Exchange Theory, the concept of social exchange is explored with a focus on the dynamics of reciprocity and interaction within social systems. Befu highlights how exchange – whether in the form of goods, services, or resources – plays a crucial role in shaping relationships and maintaining societal cohesion.

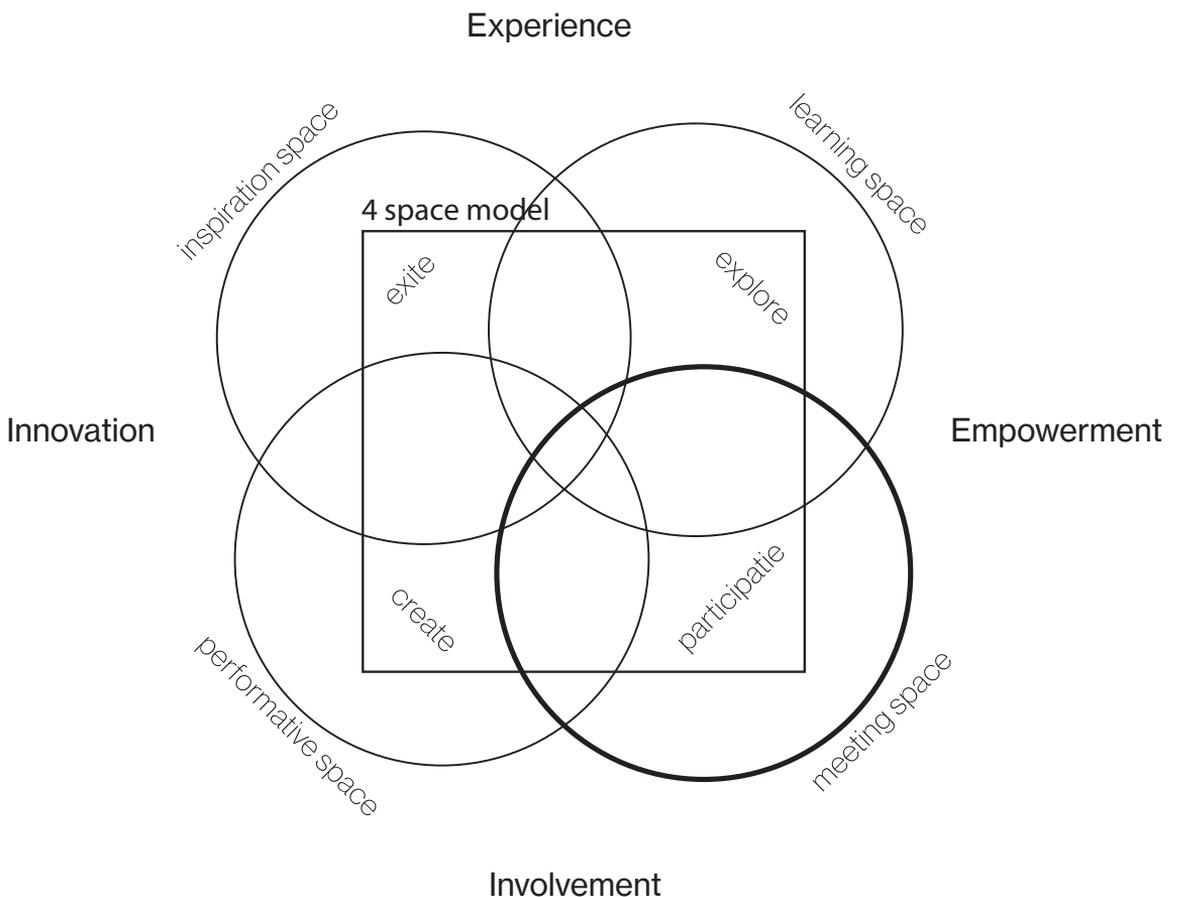
## Social capital theory

Libraries are places where citizens can be exposed to the diversity of their community regarding values, ethnicity, age, social class, interest, etc., i.e.

Exposing those who visit the library to other values than the ones they cherish. Audunson (2005) termed that low intensive meeting places. Within this research, the social capital theory, particularly the library as a generator of bridging social capital, has a central role. For this research the goal is to find a way to encourage this participation between all different target groups.

Social interaction in green environments  
 Behavioural studies have revealed that social interactions occur twice as frequently in green spaces compared to arid, vegetation-free environments (Sullivan, Kuo, & DePooter, 2004). These findings suggest that green urban spaces significantly influence social behaviour. With deliberate and strategic urban planning, and through the thoughtful integration of green areas alongside other public spaces, it is possible to cultivate the ethical and social conditions necessary for fostering civic interaction (Choy, 1986).

*Four space model library. own illustration based on the four space model of Jochumsen, H., Skot-Hansen, D., & Rasmussen, C. H.*



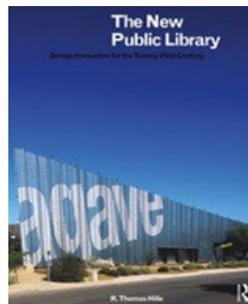
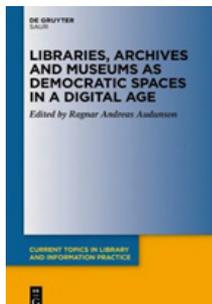
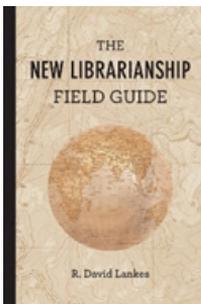
There are several books used in this research that discuss the typology of libraries over the years and how they appear in the 21st century. These books explore how these libraries promote participation, how they position themselves in today's digital age, and how this knowledge can be applied in design.

1. "New Librarianship" of David Lankes  
 An essential guide to a librarianship based not on books and artifacts but on knowledge and learning. Libraries have existed for millennia, but today the library field is searching for solid footing in an increasingly fragmented (and increasingly digital) information environment. What is librarianship when it is unmoored from cataloging, books, buildings, and committees?

2. "Libraries, Archives, and Museums as Democratic Spaces in the Digital Age" of Ragnar Audunson et al  
 Libraries, archives and museums have traditionally been a part of the public sphere's infrastructure. They have been so by providing public access to culture and knowledge, by being agents for enlightenment and by being public meeting places in their communities. Digitization and globalization poses new challenges in relation to upholding a sustainable public sphere. Can libraries, archives and museums contribute in meeting these challenges?

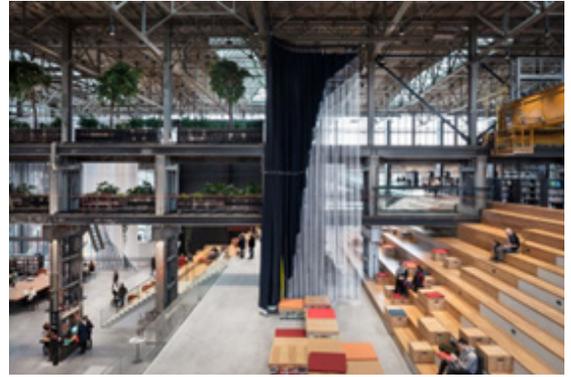
3. "The New Public Library- Design Innovation for the Twenty-First Century" By R. Thomas Hille  
 The new public library is an indept design study of an collection of recent public libraries, and historic precedents that have informed and inspired their development. The book also shows different case studies from over time and the last 30 years of the typology and design of the library.

4. "Architecture, participation and society" by Paul Lenkins and Lesly forsyth  
 How can architects best increase their engagement with building users and wider social groups, and, as a result, improve the relationship between architecture and society while providing quality buildings?



*Relating books to the topic of a library and participation*

Through three case studies, participation in architectural elements of different public libraries is examined and compared. All the case studies show a level of participation by the visitors own interpretation of the space. In porta Volta de façade design provides a perfect hight to also serve as a bench for people to sit on and participate with the building. In Rozet, Arnhem this long staircase is used by children to slide down and participate with each other. Lastly in LocHal in Tilburg these blocks are placed in the center space of the building that can be replaced and restructured by visitors of the library to actively participate.



LocHal, Tilburg, 2015



Porta Volta Fondazione Feltrinelli, Milan, 2016



Rozet, Arnhem, 2013

1. <https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/projects/327-porta-volta-fondazione-feltrinelli/>
2. [https://www.studiostaak.nl/portfolio\\_page/rozet](https://www.studiostaak.nl/portfolio_page/rozet)
3. <https://www.baunetzwissen.de/fenster-und-tueren/objekte/kultur-bildung/bibliothek-lochal-in-tilburg-7211800>

## Position

### Public library

Initially, the research will focus on a public library. Libraries vary in type, ranging from public, academic, specialist, to national libraries, as shown in Figure 4. This study will specifically target public libraries, which are open to a broad, diverse audience. Primarily, these libraries serve local residents by providing access to both physical and digital books, but they also function as social meeting points for the community.

### A library of participation

This research explores how a library can serve as a catalyst for participation. The focus is on active participation, where individuals are encouraged to engage in social interactions that bring together diverse groups within the community to share their ideas and interests. Central to this is the emphasis on meaningful encounters and active involvements, such as participating in events, activities, and workshops.

### Library in Milan, Italy

The location of this project is Milan, Italy. The city has a network of 24 public municipal libraries, strategically distributed across various districts for a widespread access. Within this network, branch libraries play a significant role. These larger facilities typically house around 30,000 volumes and offer amenities such as reading rooms and auditoriums, (Pagetti, 1973) The nature of the libraries in Milan is more historical rooted, where libraries are often located in old historic buildings. Compared to the rest of Italy, Milan offers more social functions in its libraries. But when comparing to other European countries by instance the Netherlands, the Netherlands is more anticipated on the social hub character, where the libraries in Milan are more traditional. Therefore there is a lot of potential for fostering more participation.

### Site

The site designated for the new library is currently occupied by the Biblioteca Porta Volta Fondazione Feltrinelli. This location holds significant potential not only to foster participation within the building itself but also to facilitate meaningful engagement with its surrounding urban context.

Firstly, this is the location where the old 16th-century city walls once stood – remnants of the city's only remaining fortifications since the Romans first defined Milan's boundaries. In this sense, the site can serve as a connecting element between the historic city center and the newer expansion areas, which have now become key zones for urban development in Milan.

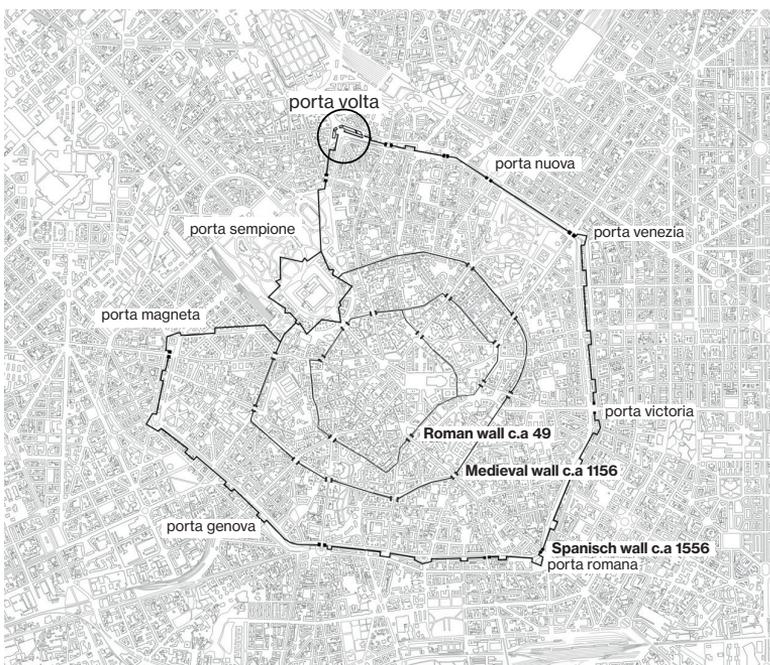
Zooming in on the plot itself, the library will be situated in a historically rich area where traces of the ancient city walls are still visible. Additionally, a portion of the site includes a protected park of monumental value. This green space has the potential to play a vital role in encouraging participation and fostering social interaction.

### Client

The current design houses functions; The library, Microsoft and the museum, where the library and the museum are institutions for the community and Microsoft a company with a more private character. These functions are separated into 3 building volumes. There is a potential for civic allegiances, in the sense of participation in a future design. Facilities can be shared instead of repeated in three different volumes. This cooperation of functions has to be further investigated in the research in ways of how much spaces and what kind of spaces are desired to be shared and public.

academic library	public library	specialist library	national library
<p>Support the educational and research needs of students, faculty, and staff at universities and colleges</p>	<p>Serve the general public by providing access to a wide range of books, magazines, audiobooks, digital resources, and more.</p>	<p>Focus on specific subjects or fields of interest, such as law, medicine, or engineering.</p>	<p>Is established by a government to collect, preserve, and provide access to the national heritage of a country, typically in the form of books, manuscripts, journals, and other cultural materials.</p>
			
<p>bibliotheque Marzarine, Paris</p>	<p>Seattle Central Library, U.S</p>	<p>British Law Library, Londen</p>	<p>National library of China</p>

*Position public library, own illustration*



*Old city walls with city gates,  
Based on the map: <https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/projects/327-porta-volta-fondazione-feltrinelli/>*

# RESEARCH METHODS

04



## Methodology

By using different methods this research will be constructed by literature review, case studies and on site mapping exchange. By doing so knowledge required to start the research by design fase will be obtained.

First, this research is based on a literature review on libraries as public buildings and participation within libraries. The starting point for this research is explored through the 4 Space Model Social exchange theory, Social capital theory and the theory about social interacion in green environments which together with the literature of the books (New Librarianship, Libraries, Archives, and Museums as Democratic Spaces in the Digital Age and 'The New Public Library-Design Innovation for the Twenty-First Century) defines the framework for the study. Following this, the concept of participation in a library is further defined. This literature research is relevant as a base for requiring the knowledge needed to design a library of participation.

Furthermore, case studies are used to compare how participation occurs and in which types of spaces and their collectiveness. The case studies selected for comparison are: Library Porta Volta (Milan) by Herzog & de Meuron, 2016; Rozet (Arnhem) by Neutelings Riedijk Architects, 2013; and LocHal (Tilburg) by Mecanoo Architects, 2019. All these case studies show a level of participation by using different architectural elements. By researching these elements, requirements can be made for the design of the library in Milan.

To investigate how participation occurs in a building, maps will be created for various case studies, including libraries as well as other social buildings where people gather and exchange ideas. The map will detail how this exchange takes place. This will take form in a social map. This type of mapping focuses on the social patterns and interactions of people in a given area. It can help to identify areas where there are high levels of social interaction, as well as areas where there are low levels of interaction. The information is typically visualized on a map and can

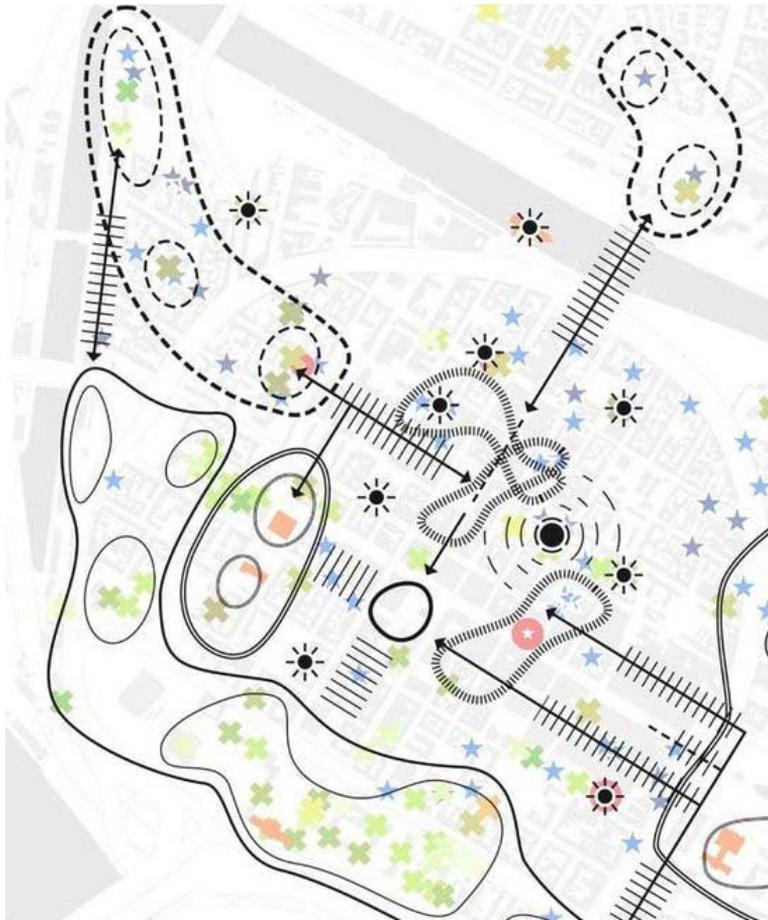
provide insight into the social dynamics. This kind of mapping will be used on top of the buildings floorplans. These maps are created by physically visiting the buildings and observing them. Different colours are used to represent collective exchanges versus personal exchanges, with the quantity of each indicated. This method allows for comparisons between these buildings and helps identify the types of spaces where this participation occurs. These spaces can then be more precisely defined in terms of area, level of participation, and value. This will likely result in a scale of different spaces with different elements that together stimulate a broad participation.

By interviewing people in the Porta Volta library direct input from the users of the library can be integrated, providing insights into the needs of different community groups.

Finally, research through design is employed to explore how these findings can be applied to the design of a new library in Milan.

### Reflection

While these research methods provide a strong foundation for the research-by-design phase, there are some constraints. Due to time limitations, the case studies are limited to just three libraries, which may not be fully representative of all libraries or public spaces worldwide. A broader range of case studies from different cultural or political contexts would enhance the research's global relevance. Additionally, the social mapping method relies on physical visits, which, while providing valuable real-time data, are limited by the researchers' ability to be present in multiple locations and may not capture the dynamic nature of social interactions over time.



*Social mapping, <https://urbandedesignlab.in/activity-mapping-in-urban-design/>*

# Relevance

## **Architecture**

This research is highly relevant for architecture as it explores how spatial design can actively facilitate social participation, engagement, and community-building within public institutions. By investigating how architectural element, such as layout, materiality, transparency, and the integration of hybrid (digital–physical) spaces, can encourage interaction and inclusivity. The study provides insights into designing libraries as dynamic, participatory environments. It contributes to the broader architectural discourse on how buildings can respond to and shape contemporary social needs, transforming passive spaces into active platforms for cultural exchange and collective learning.

## **Studio**

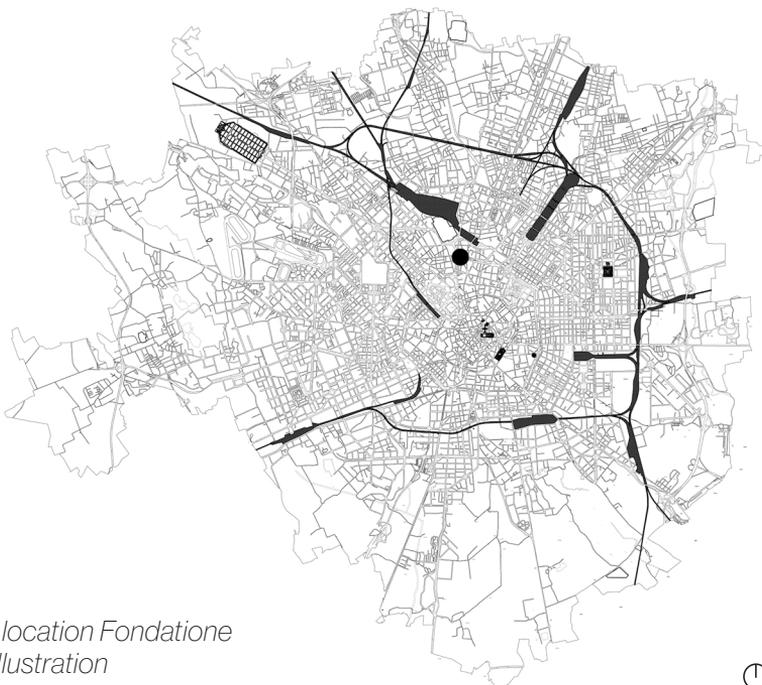
In this studio, we are focused on the lens of the civic. A library is a public building with a strong civic character. Within the concept of “civic,” community interaction and participation play a crucial role. In this way, the building can give something back to society and actively contribute to strengthening the sense of connection among local residents. This research therefore contributes to exploring the theme of the civic and understanding its value.

## **Historical**

From the ancient Library of Alexandria to Renaissance reading rooms and 20th-century public libraries, these institutions have reflected the cultural, political, and social values of their time. They have served as spaces for education, democratic access to information, and intellectual exchange. In today’s rapidly changing digital and social landscape, revisiting and reinterpreting the historical role of the library is essential. Redefining the role libraries play today as civic institutions. This research contributes to the relevance of the typology of the library today and how it can boost a cultural uplift for today’s community by active participation.



<https://www.elledecor.com/it/architettura/a21080845/fondazione-feltrinelli-milano-herzogdemeuron/>



Map milan and location Fondazione Fertinelli, own illustration

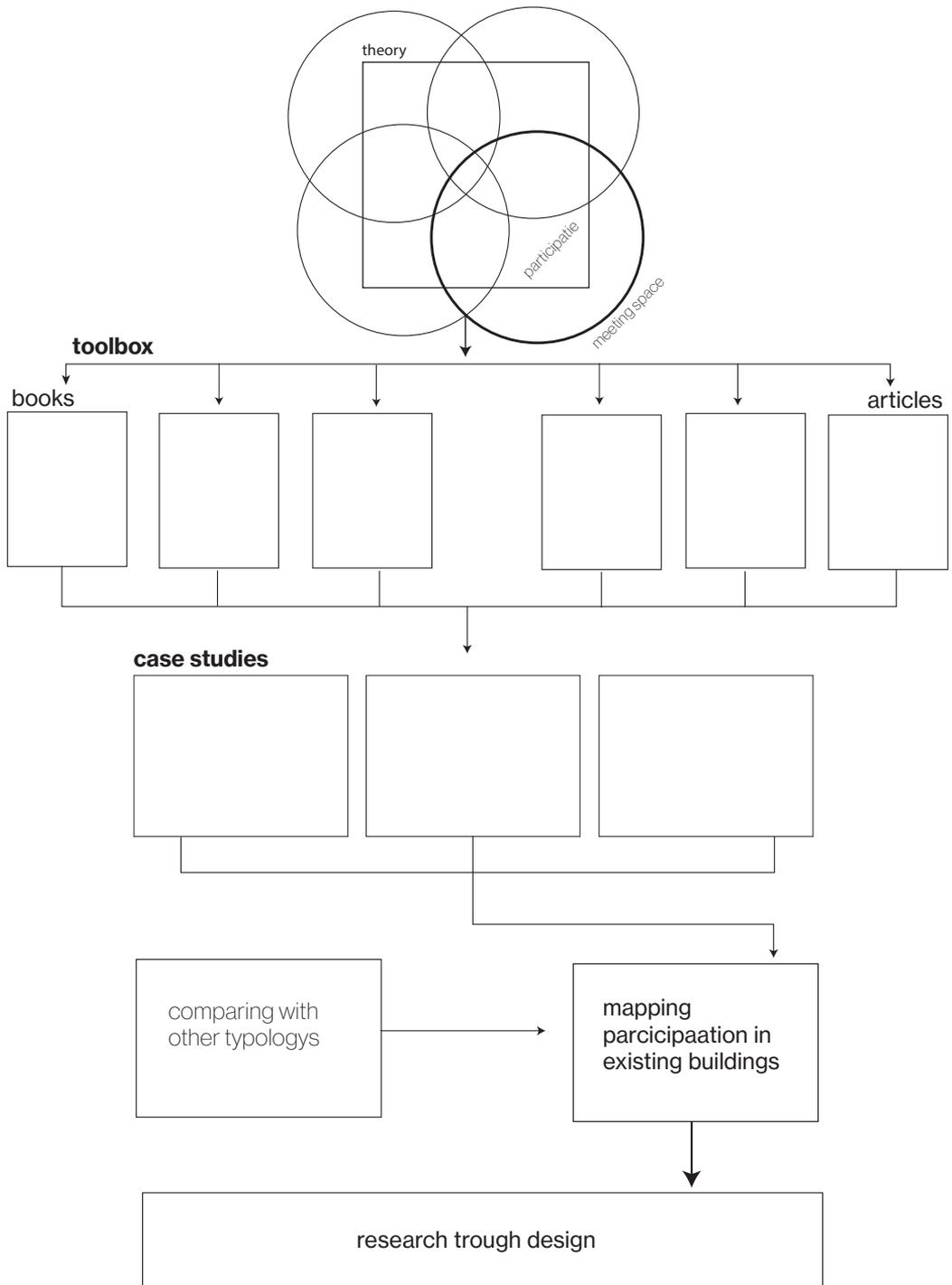


## Conclusion

### **Expected results**

It is expected that by creating a wide range of spaces in the building, varying in size and character, visitor participation can be promoted. These spaces can range from informal meeting areas to structured workshop spaces. Additionally, space can be created for citizen initiatives, designed as a multifunctional area that is flexible according to the user's needs. Small civic events can also be integrated into larger multifunctional spaces, which could potentially be divided into smaller areas. It is also expected that spaces that allow for personal interpretation will encourage visitor participation. Corners and niches can visualize the "pockets of exchange" and thereby enhance participation. The bridge to hybrid participation can be established by offering spaces for digital workshops or hybrid workshops focused on digital tools, where the library can showcase these digital techniques to make them more accessible to everyone in the community. Lastly the location of the library has a lot of potential for integrating the green environment of the park with the library to stimulate more interaction. This hypothesis will be tested through the methodology of the literature studies, cases studies, the on site mapping of interactions and by research through design of the library.

**A library of active participation of the diverse community of milan where the shift of user changes to being the creator and performer.**



*Research structure, own illustration*

# DESIGN BRIEF

05



This chapter presents a design brief for the new library project located in Milan (imagining the current building was never build) at Porta Volta, on the site currently occupied by the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. This design brief is the result of analyses that provide insights into urban parameters, site opportunities, potential massing, program, mix, density, client requirements, and more. The brief is intended to serve as the foundation for the final phase of this research: the research-by-design process.

**CLIENT**

## Client

The existing building, Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, designed by Herzog & de Meuron, was completed in 2016. For the purpose of this study, the building is considered as if it had never been built. A new design will be proposed, informed by contemporary insights and addressing current societal challenges. The focus of this new design is to create a library that fosters participation.

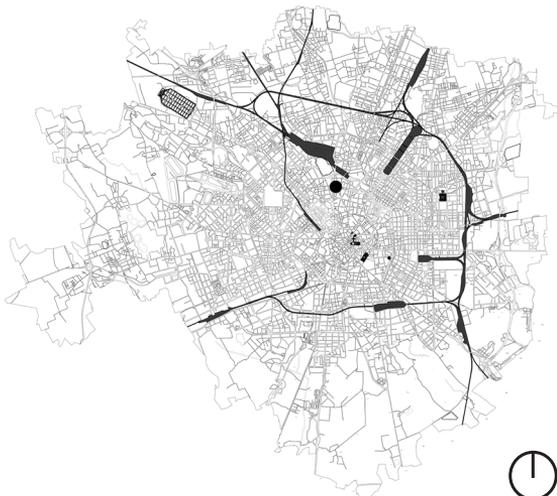
The project was initiated by the influential Italian publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, who, from an early age, began amassing documents related to the history of ideas, particularly those connected to the evolution of international labor and socialist movements. Feltrinelli firmly believed that “a country’s level of civilization depends on what people read” (Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 2024). Driven by this conviction, he sought to make his extensive collection of literature accessible to the public (Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 2024).

To realize this vision, Feltrinelli founded the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, creating a space where his collection could be preserved, read, studied, and discussed by all. However, the Fondazione was just the beginning. Feltrinelli went on to establish Italy’s largest chain of bookstores, encompassing over 100 locations. Today,

Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli not only houses one of these bookstores but also offers spaces for workshops, cultural activities, debates, and collaborative work (Sonja, 2010).

## Current Situation

For the purpose of designing the new building, it is essential to thoroughly analyze the existing structure and derive necessary insights. The current building, Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, is home to three different clients spread across three building volumes (see the diagram below). Each of these clients has distinct ambitions and requirements.



*Map milan and location Fondazione Fertinelli, own illustration*

## DESIGN BRIEF - Client

### Library

The main purpose of the library is to house the Feltrinelli collection and to serve as a venue for events and public debates. Its broader social mission is to foster research and dialogue on society's most pressing issues, improve quality of life, and encourage wider public engagement (Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 2024).

### Microsoft office

The Microsoft headquarters in the Feltrinelli complex offers a dynamic, connected environment serving both Microsoft and Unifor. Microsoft uses the space to foster innovation, collaboration, and public engagement, while Unifor hosts exhibitions showcasing its office furniture designs. Reflecting Microsoft's social mission to support technological literacy and Italy's growth, the building includes three public

floors with facilities like a video room, showroom, digital classroom, and technology center. This combination of technology, innovation, and accessibility enhances community ties and promotes positive change.

### Museum

The Museo Nazionale della Resistenza in Milan commemorates Italy's liberation and post-war history. Construction was delayed due to the discovery of old city walls at the site. A new design by Herzog & de Meuron, which integrates the ancient walls as a display element, is now under construction.



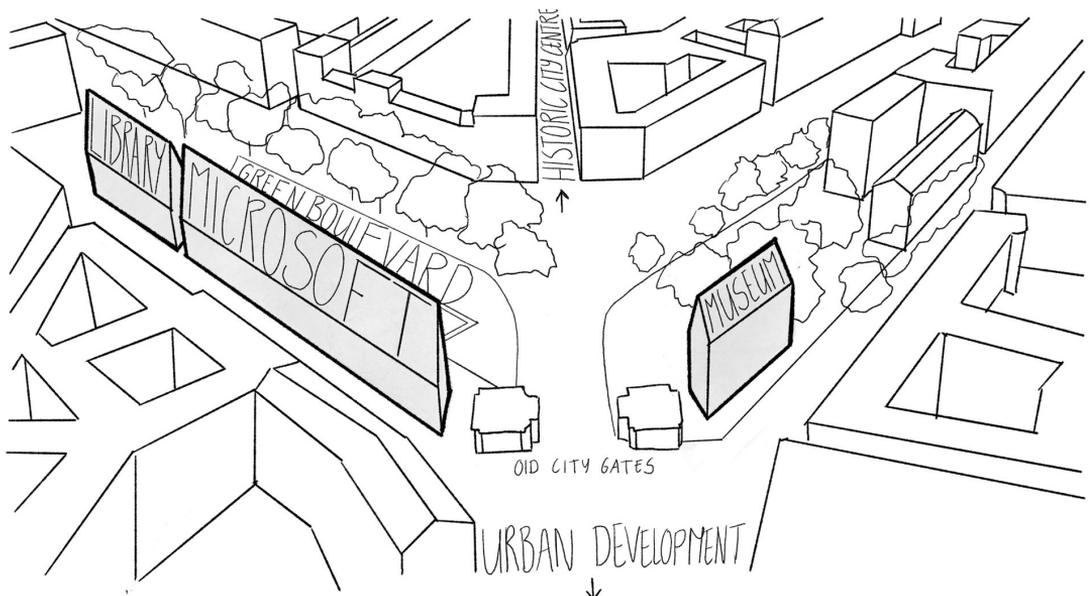
Feltrinelli foundation library



Microsoft



Museum



Current situation division clients in building volumes, own illustration

# Client

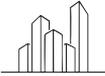
## Conclusion

Figure x serves as a summary of the current client analysis. The current design of the Fondazione Feltrinelli distinguishes between three clients, each occupying one of the building volumes and operating on a different scale. Microsoft functions globally, the museum addresses the scale of Milan as a city and its history, and the library focuses on the town scale, serving the local community.

Each client also offers a unique type of knowledge to its users. The library fosters debate on contemporary issues, the museum preserves and exhibits the past, and Microsoft provides insights into future technology and innovation, completing the circle.

In addition, each client targets a different group. The library caters to the local community, the museum appeals both to Milan residents and tourists interested in the

city's history, especially relevant given the site's remains of the old Spanish city walls, and Microsoft engages the largest audience by contributing to the global technological network.

client	scale	knowledge exchange	target group
 Microsoft	 global innovation (world)	 future technology	 everybody
 Museum	 Milan's heritage (city)	 past/history	 community and tourists
 Library	 local community (town)	 current issues	 local community

Client analyses, own illustration

## DESIGN BRIEF - Client



*Client ambitions, own illustration*

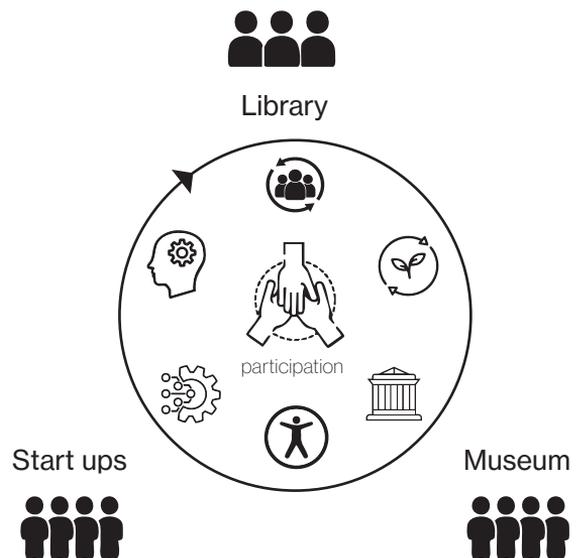
### Proposal for a New Client Relationship

Currently all the clients are separated in different volumes in the new proposal these ambitions of different clients are more connected to strengthen each other and bring together diverse target groups. Participation is central – not only from users but also between the different clients.

In this vision, Microsoft is replaced by start-ups in technology and innovation. This change preserves the library's independence from a profit-driven institution like Microsoft while fostering collaboration between the library's contemporary focus and future-oriented innovation.

This shift also enhances the civic character of the library by creating space for citizen initiatives. The focus moves from a global scale to a more national and local one, increasing the value for the local community. Local organizations are given the opportunity for entrepreneurship, which supports user empowerment.

**This creates a library that becomes a vibrant, multifunctional building, maximizing participation.**



*New vision clients*

# PROGRAM

*<https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/projects/327-porta-volta-fondazione-feltrinelli/>*



## Program

For the program, the current building is first analyzed in terms of functions and volume division. Next, three other public buildings will be examined through a benchmark focusing on the three main elements of participation: community (reflected in café and bookshelf/reading areas), empowerment (reflected in spaces for activities and multifunctional rooms), and experience (reflected in entrance and circulation areas, the 'in-between' spaces). After these analyses, the case studies will be compared with each other and with the current building. This approach allows for gathering valuable insights into what works well and what does not. The benchmark will also provide understanding of the desirable balance between the elements of participation. The outcome is a proposal for the new design of the library, the participatory library.

### Current situation

The design of the current building is divided in three volumes, representing different functions: library, museum and Microsoft offices, see figure x. Notable is their clear separation and straightforward layout. The layout of all buildings consists of multiple centralised cores that facilitate vertical movement between the floors.

#### Museum

The museum (4,215 m<sup>2</sup>) is the smallest volume and has not yet been built. The design includes functions such as a bookstore on the ground floor alongside a multifunctional space; exhibition spaces on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th floors; and accessible workspaces on the 4th floor. All technical installations are housed on the top floor.

#### Library

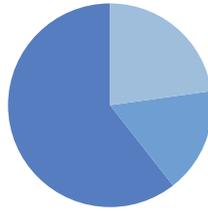
Following the museum, the library (5,850 m<sup>2</sup>) is the next smallest volume. Its main entrance is on the ground floor, alongside a bookstore and a café. The second floor contains a multifunctional space. Although designed as a public space, it is not accessible at all times, giving it a more private character. The floors above are designed as private office spaces. The top floor houses reading rooms

that are open to the public, but entry requires leaving your ID at the front desk, and visits are time-limited or require a reservation. This arrangement makes even the public reading rooms feel less accessible. Beneath the building is the archive, home to the Fertinelli collection, along with a parking garage.

#### Microsoft

Microsoft is the largest volume in the design (15,410 m<sup>2</sup>). The first two floors are open to the public and include a digital classroom, video room, training room, and technology center. The upper floors contain private office spaces. The top floor and basement level -2 house technical installations, with a parking garage on level -2 connected to the library.

# DESIGN BRIEF - Program



<b>Library</b>	23 %
	5850 m <sup>2</sup>

<b>Microsoft</b>	60,5 %
	15410 m <sup>2</sup>

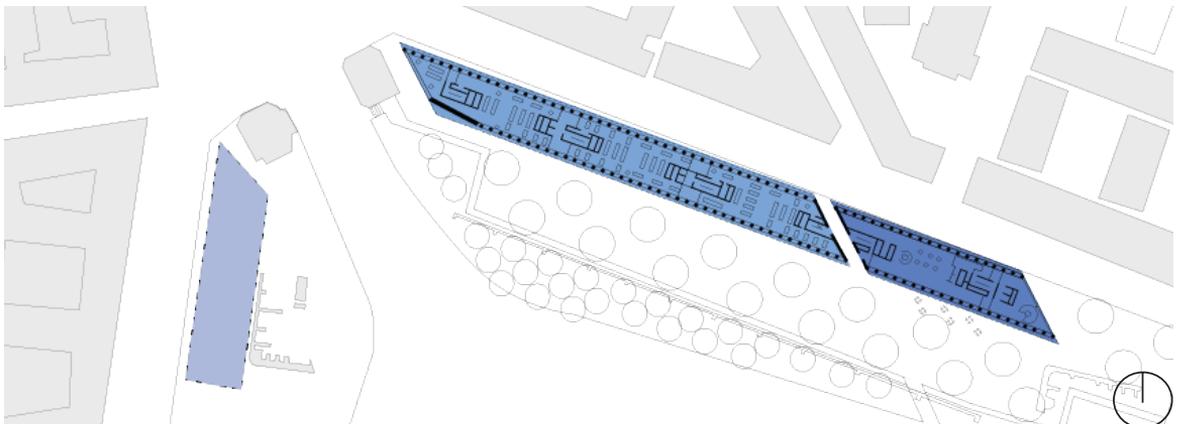
<b>Museum</b>	16,5 %
	4215 m <sup>2</sup>

reading room	450 m <sup>2</sup>
offices	1280 m <sup>2</sup>
multifunctional space	540 m <sup>2</sup>
main entrance / book store	770 m <sup>2</sup>
cores/ routing	790 m <sup>2</sup>
archive	770 m <sup>2</sup>
parking garage	1250 m <sup>2</sup>

offices	5315 m <sup>2</sup>
technology centre	1450 m <sup>2</sup>
show room	500 m <sup>2</sup>
digitalclassroom	945 m <sup>2</sup>
video room/ training room	1425 m <sup>2</sup>
cores/ routing	2155 m <sup>2</sup>
technical installations	1875 m <sup>2</sup>
parking garage	1745 m <sup>2</sup>

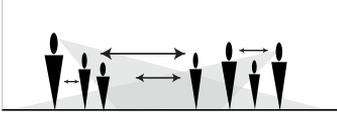
technical installations	140 m <sup>2</sup>
offices	560 m <sup>2</sup>
exhibition space	2075 m <sup>2</sup>
bookstore multi	560 m <sup>2</sup>
cores/ routing	880 m <sup>2</sup>

- Library
- Microsoft
- Museum



# Functions - current situation

## Library



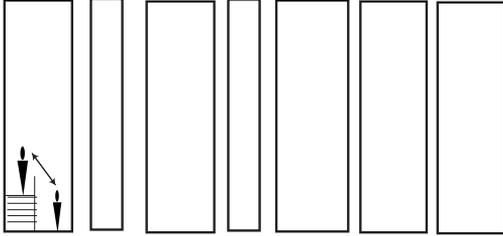
**multifunctional space**

540 m2  
create/ participate



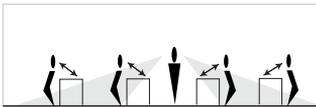
**main entrance/ book store**

770 m2  
inspire/ participate



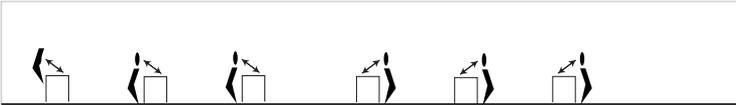
**cores/ routing**

790 m2  
meet/ participate



**reading room**

450 m2  
explore



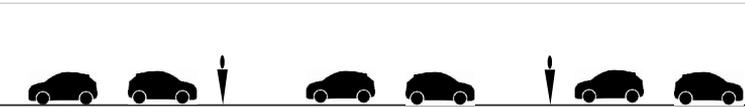
**offices**

1280 m2  
explore



**archive**

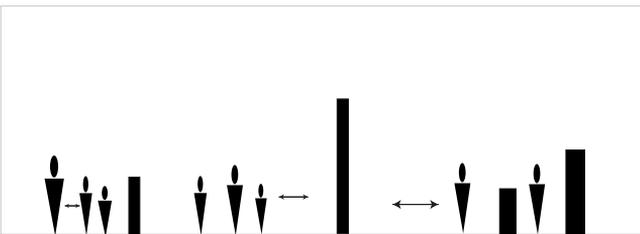
770 m2  
explore/ exite



**parking garage**

1250 m2

## Museum



**Exhibition space**

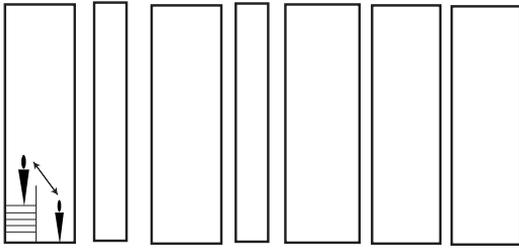
2075 m2  
meet/ participate



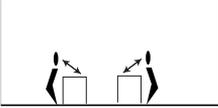
**bookstore**

560 m2  
inspire

# DESIGN BRIEF - Program



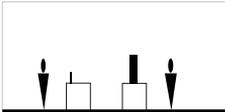
**cores/ routing**  
880 m<sup>2</sup>  
meet / participate



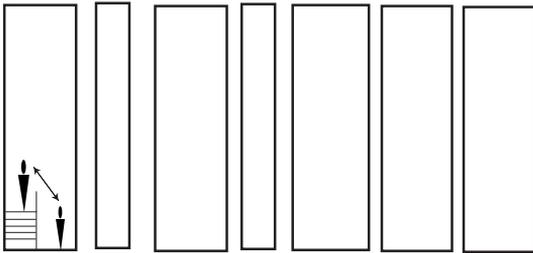
**offices**  
560 m<sup>2</sup>  
explore

## Microsoft

---



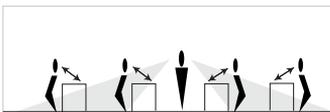
**showroom**  
500 m<sup>2</sup>  
exite



**cores/ routing**  
2155 m<sup>2</sup>  
meet



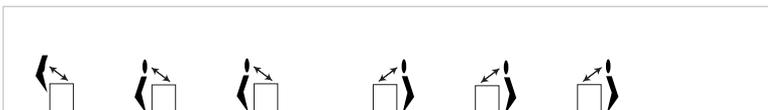
**technology centre**  
1450 m<sup>2</sup>  
create



**digital classroom**  
945 m<sup>2</sup>  
explore



**training room**  
1425 m<sup>2</sup>  
explore



**offices**  
5315 m<sup>2</sup>  
explore

## Benchmark focus

To create active participation in a library tree phenomena are very important. These phenomena are community, empowerment and experience.

For **community** it is important to create a connection among users of the library and librarians and even other institutions to enhance diversity. Moreover **sharing** is an important theme for community. Sharing through interests, resources and services. Lastly peer support is important to learn from each other and create a **collective intelligence**. Community can be stimulated in the library's architecture by creating spaces where everybody can come together and **exchange** with each other. These are the more **informal spaces designed for meeting** such as the café's and the informal book- and reading spaces, where people engage with each other.

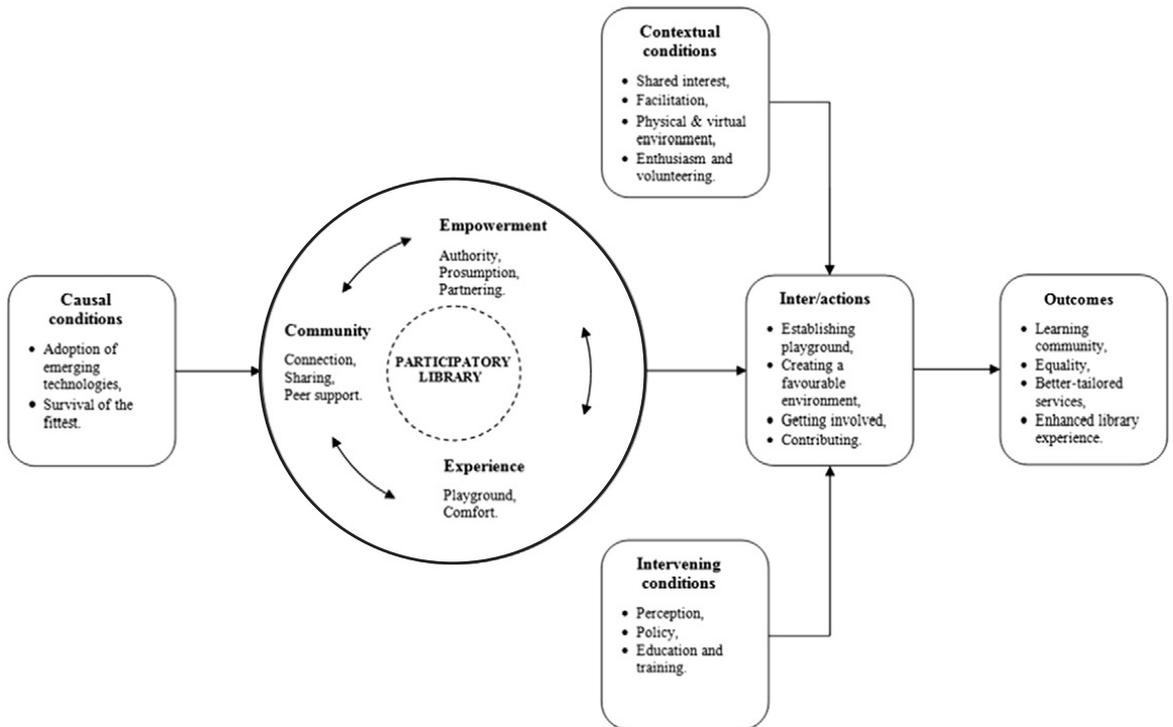
The second phenomena is **empowerment** of the user. The most basic example of empowerment in a library is an open stack service where people can find the books on their own and **share responsibility** of how the library functions. Moreover by giving the **user authority**, users can influence the activities and services of the library. Important architectural spaces in a library to enhance this empowerment are **spaces for activities and workshops** that are **flexible** to the needs of the community and users. In that way users can start their own initiatives in the library and be producer and consumer at the same time. This enhances shared responsibility and ultimately active participation.

The third phenomena is **experience**. This experience reflects on how users relate to the library in terms of seeing, doing, being and feeling. This experience translates to a well established and **facilitated playground**. This experience is first seen on the facade of the building and the **entrance** and later in the **circulation** of the building, the 'in between' spaces where people move from one place to the other. The character of these elements need to be extremely

accessible, informal, exiting and comfortable to establish more participation. These tree phenomena show interactions with each other, see the model in figure x. Community forms the foundation for empowerment: without connection, sharing, and peer support, empowerment through authority, presumption, and partnering cannot occur. For instance, physical and social-media connections are essential for members to collaborate effectively. Conversely, empowerment strengthens community by promoting connections, enhancing sharing, and deepening peer support.

Empowerment also enriches experience by offering members opportunities for active, meaningful involvement in library activities. Engaged members diversify programs and services, shaping the library environment into a vibrant, welcoming playground. This playground, in turn, fosters empowerment by providing a supportive space that encourages active participation in authority, presumption, and partnering.

Finally, experience helps build community by providing a "playground" where social activities happen. Without such a space and favorable conditions, connection, sharing, and peer support would be limited. Meanwhile, community features enhance the experience, making the playground engaging and attractive. These phenomena are thus deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing.



*Model participatory library: L.C. Nguyen / The Journal of Academic Librarianship 41 (2015) 475–487*

Elements	Important themes	Achitectural translation
<b>public</b>		
Community	collective intelligence, sharing, exchange, connection, diversity	designed meeting spaces (cafe, restaurant, informal reading spaces)
<b>Empowerment</b>	<b>own interpretation, self service, shared responsibility, collaboration.</b>	<b>(flexible) spaces for activities, multifunctional spaces</b>
Experience	informal, accessibility, comfortable, facilitated	entrance, circulation space
<b>(semi) private</b>		
Historic documentation	connection to the historic site	archive
Administration	functionality	offices, information desk, technical installations

*Relation important spaces in library, own scheme*

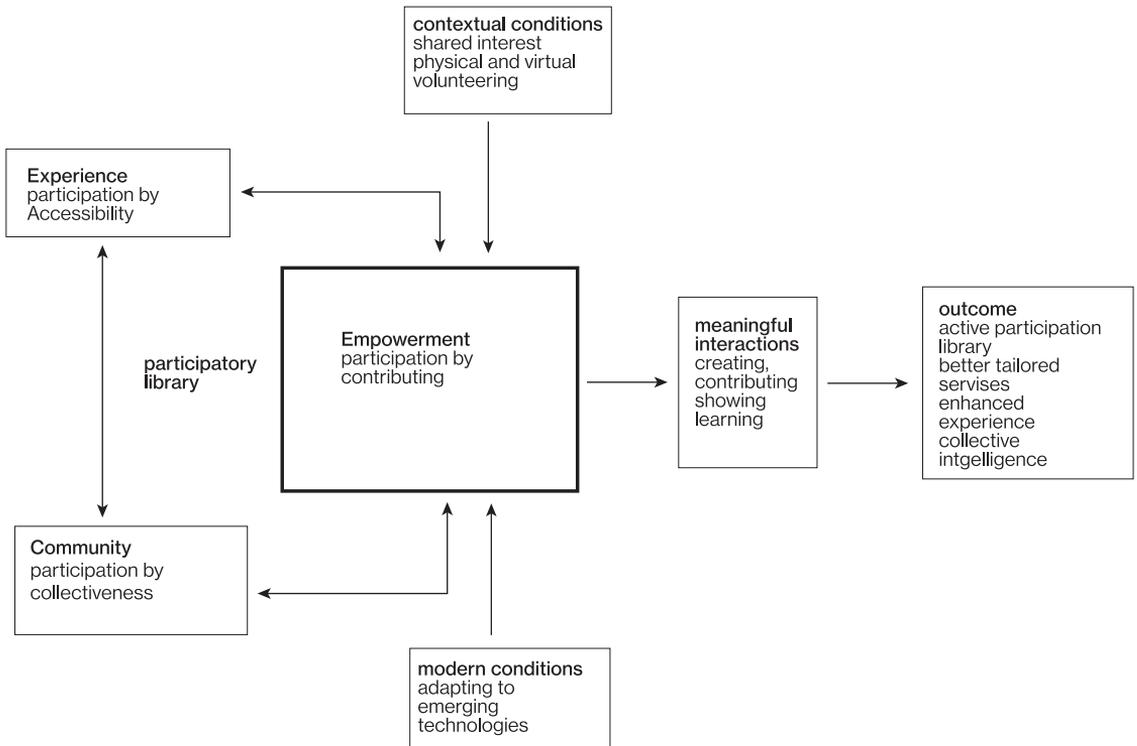
Although all the elements listed above are important for participation in a library, this study primarily focuses on empowerment. The research question specifically addresses active participation, a form of engagement where users actively take part in the library's services and contribute to shaping what the library offers. Key themes in this context are individual interpretation and shared responsibility. Architecturally, this can be expressed through flexible spaces designed for activities and multifunctional rooms. These spaces not only facilitate specific activities but also allow users to personalize and appropriate the space according to their own needs.

Currently, many libraries encourage participation by providing spaces for activities and personal interpretation, but they often lack the element of active participation where the cycle of creating and sharing is completed. This full cycle is essential for mutual learning within the community. Empowerment plays a crucial role in this process. It is valuable to understand what people are engaged in, to

gain new insights, and to learn things that one may not have initially considered.

Examples of such spaces include areas for creative activities such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts, as well as modern technology hubs like VR rooms, 3D printing labs, and technology showrooms. These features make technology more accessible to everyone in the community. To further encourage participation and deepen engagement, libraries should also provide spaces to exhibit or perform users' creations, such as galleries for visual art or robotics projects developed by library users, and performance areas where community members can share their work. This shifts the role of the user increasingly toward that of creator or co-producer alongside librarians, thus maximizing empowerment.

**Everybody with the knowledge to share could perform in the space, open to the public.**



*New model participatory library,  
own illustration*

## Benchmark Assessment - Case studies

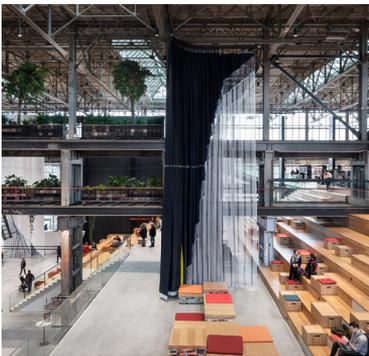
To further analyze the program, the focus shifts to three public libraries that stimulate participation by offering an informal experience, spaces for activities, and some form of shared responsibility. These case studies are examined by dividing their functions into private and public areas. The public spaces are further categorized into community, empowerment, and experience and their ratio towards each other.

The first library, Rozet, located in Arnhem, the Netherlands, places strong emphasis on experience. The design is playful and somewhat “messy,” as described by the architect. The building has a very accessible and informal appearance. Inside, numerous indoor squares encourage interaction. Additionally, Rozet offers spaces for various activities that promote user empowerment. Users can rent these spaces and engage in a wide range of creative activities.

The second building, LocHal Tilburg, provides many activity spaces such as a digital lab, future lab, game lab, and knowledge lab. The building’s experience

is exciting and accessible. Within its large circulation area, smaller subspaces can be created to further encourage interaction.

The third building, Vennessla Learning Centre in Norway, focuses heavily on community, offering abundant reading areas and bookshelves to enhance collective knowledge. These informal reading spaces create cozy niches that encourage people to share and connect.



**LocHal - Tilburg**

2015  
CIVIC  
11.200 m<sup>2</sup>



**Vennessla learning centre - Norway**

2016  
Helen & Hard  
1938 m<sup>2</sup>.



**Rozet - Arnhem**

2013  
Neutelings Riedijk Architecten  
12.000 m<sup>2</sup>

# DESIGN BRIEF - Program

## Rozet Arnhem

private

offices  
librarians

public

community

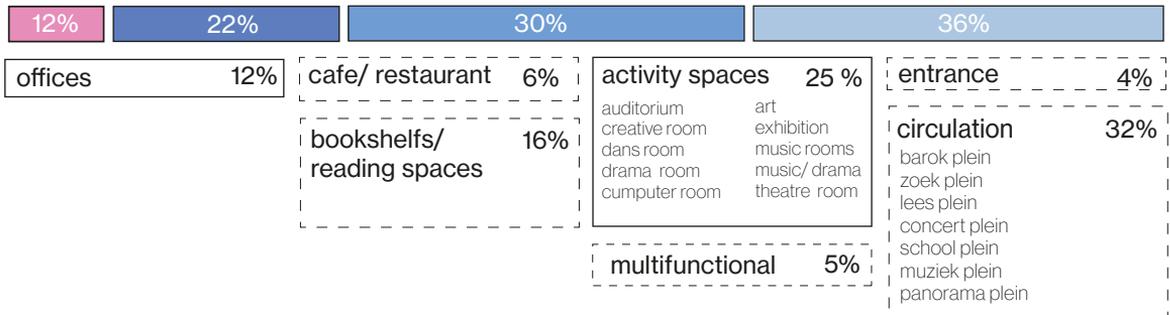
collective intelligence  
sharing, exchange  
connection (diversity)

empowerment

own interpretation,  
selfservice  
shared responsibility  
collaboration

experience

informal  
exciting  
comfortable



## Lochal Tilburg

private

offices  
30%

public

community

cafe/ restaurant  
4%

bookshelves/  
reading spaces  
11%

empowerment

activity spaces  
21%

digilab  
glazen zaal  
future lab  
game lab  
stadsbalkon

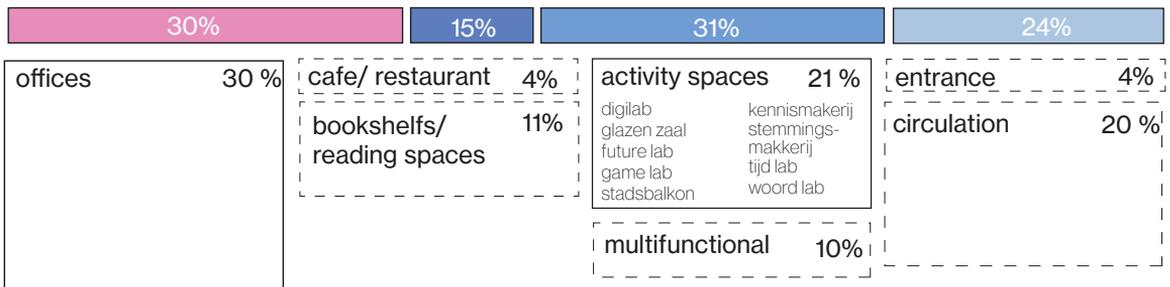
kennismakerij  
stemmings-  
makkerij  
tijd lab  
woord lab

multifunctional  
10%

experience

entrance  
4%

circulation  
20%



## Venessla learning centre, Norway

private

offices  
20%

public

community

cafe/ restaurant  
5%

bookshelves/  
reading spaces  
30%

empowerment

activity spaces  
10%

cinima  
film and music

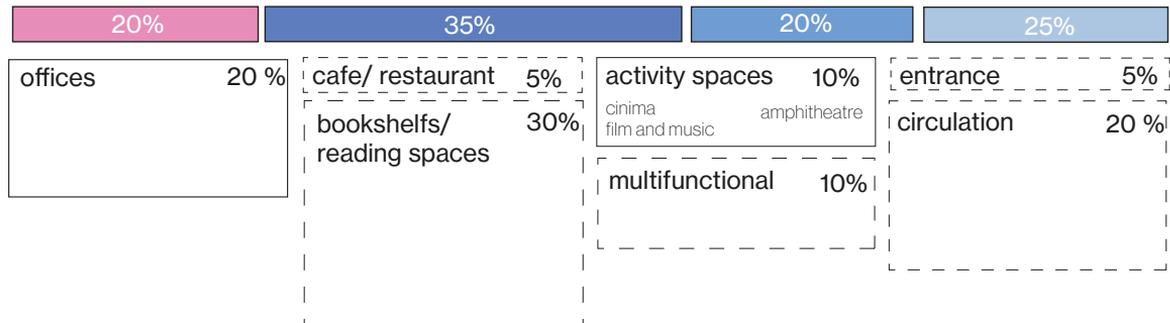
amphitheatre

multifunctional  
10%

experience

entrance  
5%

circulation  
20%



## Benchmark Assessment - Case studies

To expand the benchmark assessment, two recent case studies were selected, designed and constructed with current societal developments in technology in mind.

Forum Groningen is a community space dedicated to both personal and collective learning. The center was designed to foster social exchange and debate across various settings. The building consists of a single volume with a large central atrium that connects all its different areas. Forum Groningen offers a comprehensive range of facilities, including an exhibition hall, conference spaces, a movie theater, a library collection, and even restaurants.

The second library is conceived as a civic and cultural center, located at a corner of Florida's Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. This design aims to create a space that promotes community building, growth, and education. The project is approached as a micro-village, composed of three separate pavilions: a library, an event center, and a welcoming portico. Each pavilion serves a distinct

function, yet they are visually unified through a consistent architectural language.

Both buildings illustrate in the benchmark analysis a strong focus on empowerment. They incorporate a variety of functions that encourage initiative and entrepreneurship, supported by a broad offering of spaces suited for diverse activities.



### **Forum Groningen**

2021  
NL Architects  
17,000 m<sup>2</sup>



### **Winter Park Library & Events Center - US**

2021  
Adjaye Associates  
25,000 sqft - 100,000 sqft

## Forum Groningen

### private

offices  
librarians

### public

#### community

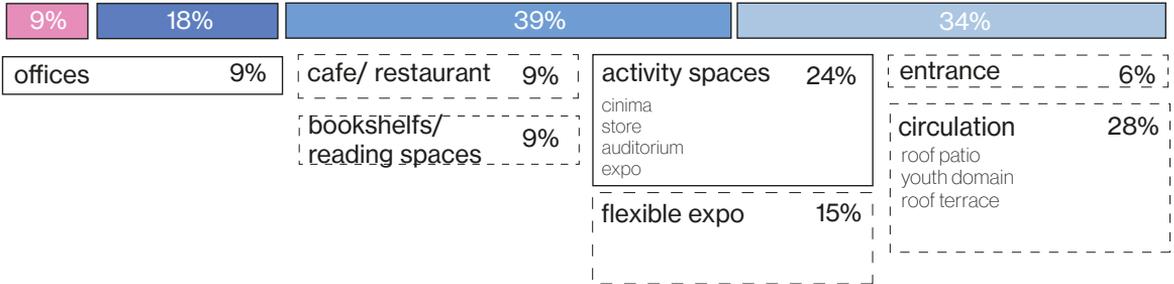
collective intelligence  
sharing, exchange  
connection (diversity)

#### empowerment

own interpretation,  
selfservice  
shared responsibility  
collaboration

#### experience

informal  
exciting  
comfortable



## Winter Park Library & Events Center

### private

offices

4 %

### public

#### community

cafe/ restaurant  
bookshelves/  
reading spaces

4%

18%

#### empowerment

activity spaces

40 %

multifunctional

10%

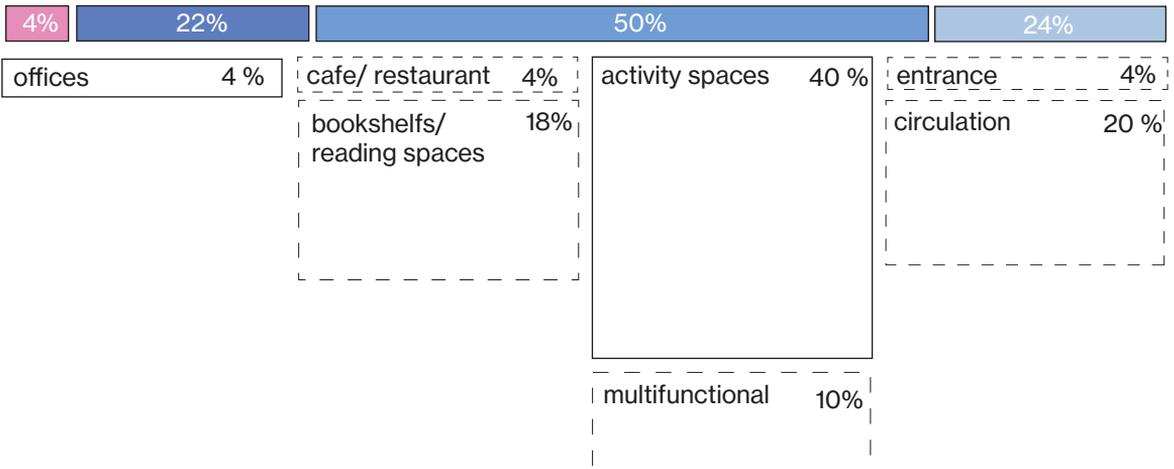
#### experience

entrance

4%

circulation

20 %



## Fondazione Feltrinelli – Current Library Assessment

The library section of Fondazione Feltrinelli currently allocates a significant portion of its square meters to private office space. Additionally, the archive is not publicly accessible, further emphasizing the building's private nature.

The elements of community and empowerment are notably underrepresented. While the building does include a large, open circulation space – which is a strength – its overall character feels closed off. The use of curtains instead of doors to divide space is a positive feature, as it softens spatial boundaries and lowers the threshold for access.

However, the current library offers only one multifunctional room and lacks dedicated spaces for creative activities.

**Fondazione Feltrinelli**  
2016  
Herzog & de Meuron  
25.475 m<sup>2</sup>



Picture fertinelli bookstore/cafe, <https://flawless.life/en/italy/milan/red-feltrinelli-gae-aulenti/>

## Fondazione Fertinelli

### private

offices  
librarians

### public

#### community

collective intelligence  
sharing, exchange  
connection (diversity)

#### empowerment

own interpretation,  
selfservice  
shared responsibility  
collaboration

#### experience

informal  
exciting  
comfortable



## Proposed Redesign – Toward a Participatory Library of active participation

In the new design, the elements of community and experience will be more balanced and emphasized. Bookshelves and reading areas will be expanded and made more accessible to a variety of target groups, including seniors, adults, teens, and children. Additional learning spaces, such as computer rooms, will be introduced to support the development of collective knowledge.

The largest share of dedicated space will go to empowerment. Numerous rooms will be created for a wide range of creative activities – such as art, music, photography, and technology. Alongside these dedicated areas, more multifunctional spaces will be incorporated to give users greater control over how they use library services.

To support creative expression, spaces will also be provided for users to exhibit work produced in the activity areas. This will make the act of showcasing and performing more accessible to amateurs and foster a culture of sharing and appreciation. The library will become a place where the community can come together to create, display, and observe.

The entrance and circulation areas will be designed to reflect openness, comfort, and excitement. The continuous circulation space will be adaptable, with the possibility of subdividing it into more intimate zones for interaction and connection.

# DESIGN BRIEF - Program

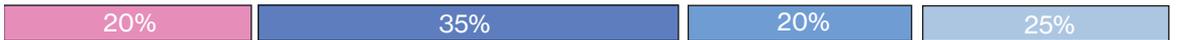
Rozet - Arnhem



LocHal - Tilburg



Venessla learning centre - Norway



Forum Groningen



Winter Park Library & Events Center - US



Average



Fondatione Fertinelli - Milan

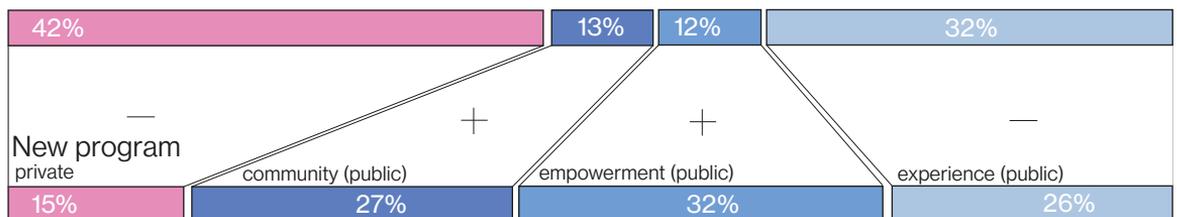
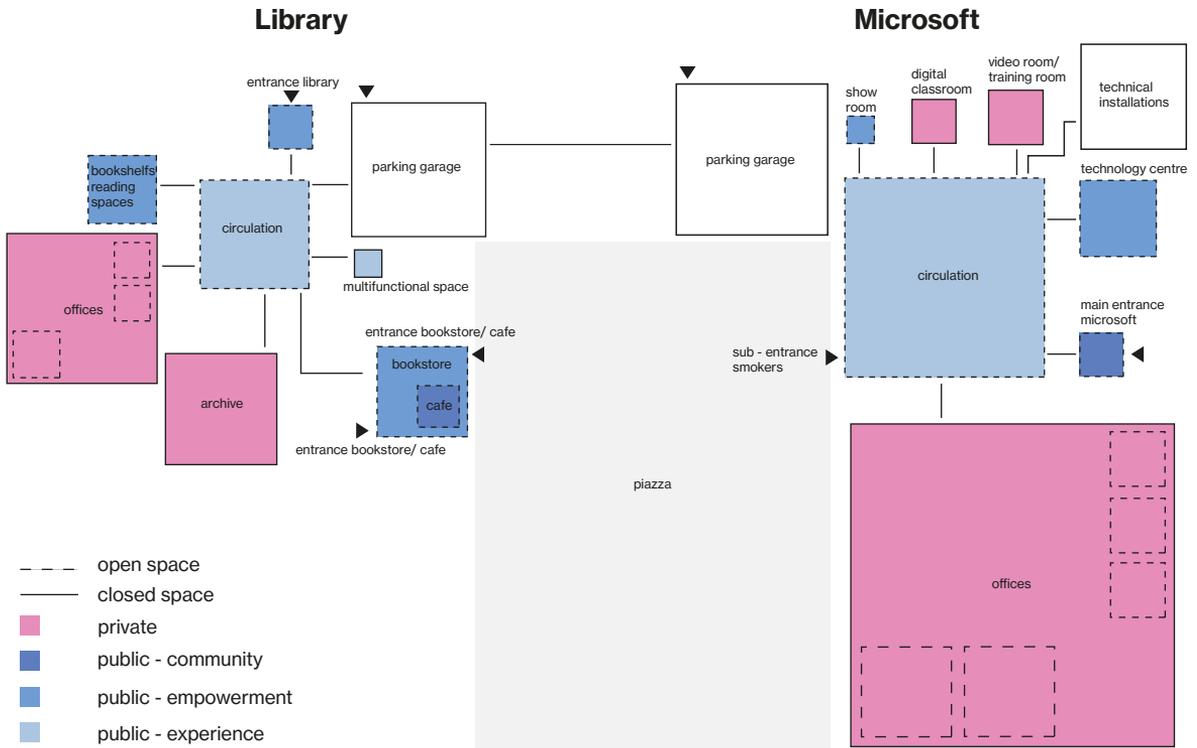


figure x, proposal program breakdown, own illustration



Biggest changes, own illustration

# Relation schemes



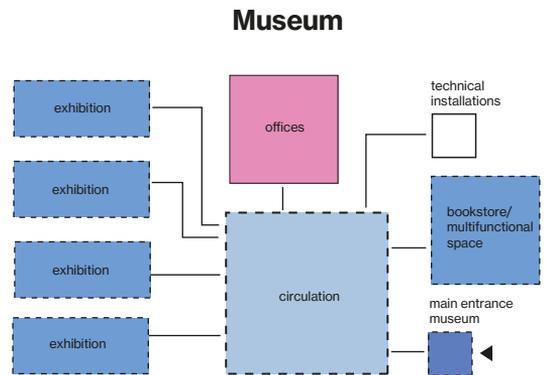
Current relation scheme Library and Microsoft, own illustration

## Current building

The three functions of the building are divided into three separate volumes. The library and Microsoft buildings are connected via the piazza and share a parking garage located beneath the piazza. Notably, both volumes contain many private functions.

Because the library and Microsoft, that share the same square, are divided into two separate volumes, certain facilities cannot be shared. There is potential for better collaboration between these two buildings to benefit from shared facilities and shared knowledge.

The third volume, the museum that is currently under construction, is more independently situated on the opposite side of the road. As a result, this building is quite separated from the rest. This volume contains more public functions, which could collaborate effectively with the library's functions.



Current relation scheme museum, own illustration

## Case studies

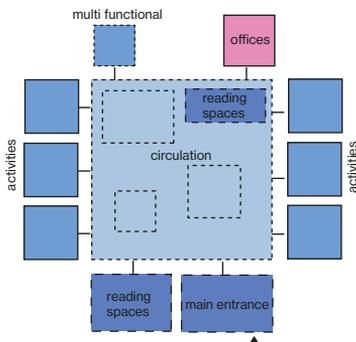
What emerges from the case studies is that the circulation space can be much more than just a means to move between rooms. At Fondazione Feltrinelli this space serves mostly as a means to get to another space. In the new proposal the circulation area is an active, lively space that can even be divided into subspaces by subtle thresholds. This circulation space is used as a connecting element between all activity spaces to encourage greater interaction and exchange. This contributes to a more open and accessible overall character for the library and will enhance the libraries experience.

spaces to further stimulate interaction. By offering a diverse range of activity and multifunctional spaces, user empowerment is encouraged. All workshop and activity rooms are connected not only to the circulation area but also to each other.

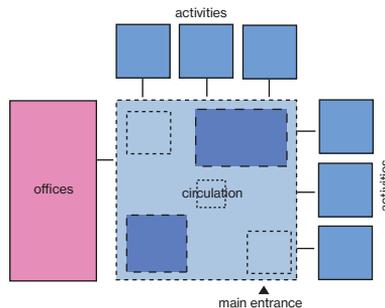
The amount of square meters allocated to office spaces will be significantly reduced to strengthen the library's public character.

Lastly there will be more designed meeting spaces, along with a public history collection of Fertinelli to enhance the libraries community aspect.

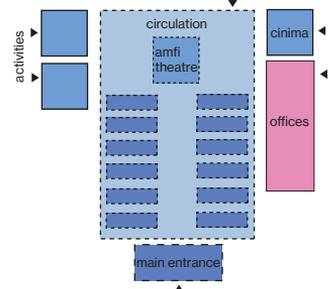
The new proposal also introduces a greater variation between open and enclosed



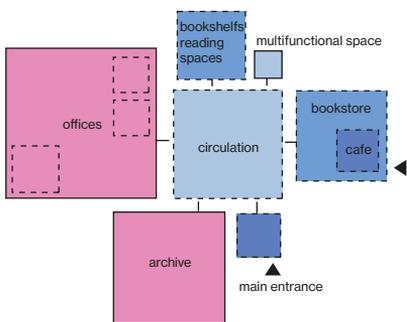
Rozet - Arnhem



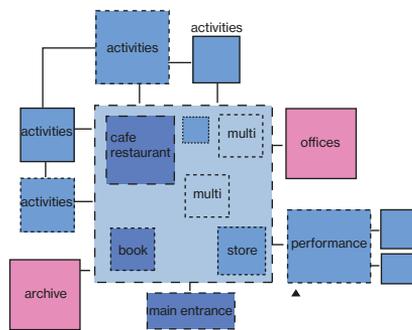
Lochal - Tilburg



Venesla learning centre - Norway



Fertinelli (library) - Milan



New proposal

- open space
- closed space
- private
- public - community
- public - empowerment
- public - experience

*Relation spaces case studies, current situation and new proposal, own illustration*

# Proposed program

15%	<b>Private spaces (3245 m2)</b>				
	offices	1350 m2	technical installations	1900 m2	
	library	575 m2			
	museum	200 m2			
	start ups	575 m2			
27%	<b>Community (5840 m2)</b>				
	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>1220 m2</b>	<b>Collective intelligence</b>	<b>3250 m2</b>	<b>Historic meaning</b>
	café/ restaurant	1100 m2	bookshells study spaces		Fertinelli history showroom
	sitting/ tables	40 m2	seniors	500 m2	collection
	kitchen	20 m2	adults	500 m2	bookstore
	toilets	20 m2	teens	500 m2	archive
	storage		children	500 m2	
		60 m2	training rooms	300m2	
	magazine room		video room	450 m2	
			digital classroom	500 m2	
32%	<b>Empowerment (6920m2)</b>				
	<b>Creating &amp; Contributing</b>	<b>2380 m2</b>	<b>Multifunctional</b>	<b>2170 m2</b>	<b>Performace</b>
	technology centre	1450 m2	(for events organised by locals)		performace hall with seating
	art room	90 m2	co- working spaces	120 m2	changing rooms
	dans studio's	75 m2	debate centre	100 m2	toilets
	theatre rehearsal	50 m2	auditorium	350 m2	decor workshop
	music studio's	90 m2	lecture halls	200 m2	costume workshop
	drama room	75 m2	multifunctional space library	700 m2	show room technology
	workshop rooms		multifunctional space museum	500 m2	exhibition space for workshops
	art	100 m2			small exhibition space museum
	music	90 m2			amphi theatre
	technology	80 m2			
	computer rooms	80 m2			
	photography room	50 m2			
	print shop (2d/3d)	50 m2			
crafts	100 m2				
26%	<b>Experience (5660 m2)</b>				
	<b>Inviting entrance</b>	<b>200 m2</b>	<b>Circulation</b>	<b>4800 m2</b>	<b>Bookstore</b>
	wardrobe	40 m2	(possibility for sub deviation)		400 m2
	desk	20 m2	-stairs	TBD	
	social lounge	200 m2	-multifunctional erea	TBD	
			-elevators	TBD	
			-hallways	TBD	
			-corridors	TBD	
			-informal reading area's	TBD	
<b>total: 21.665 m2</b>					

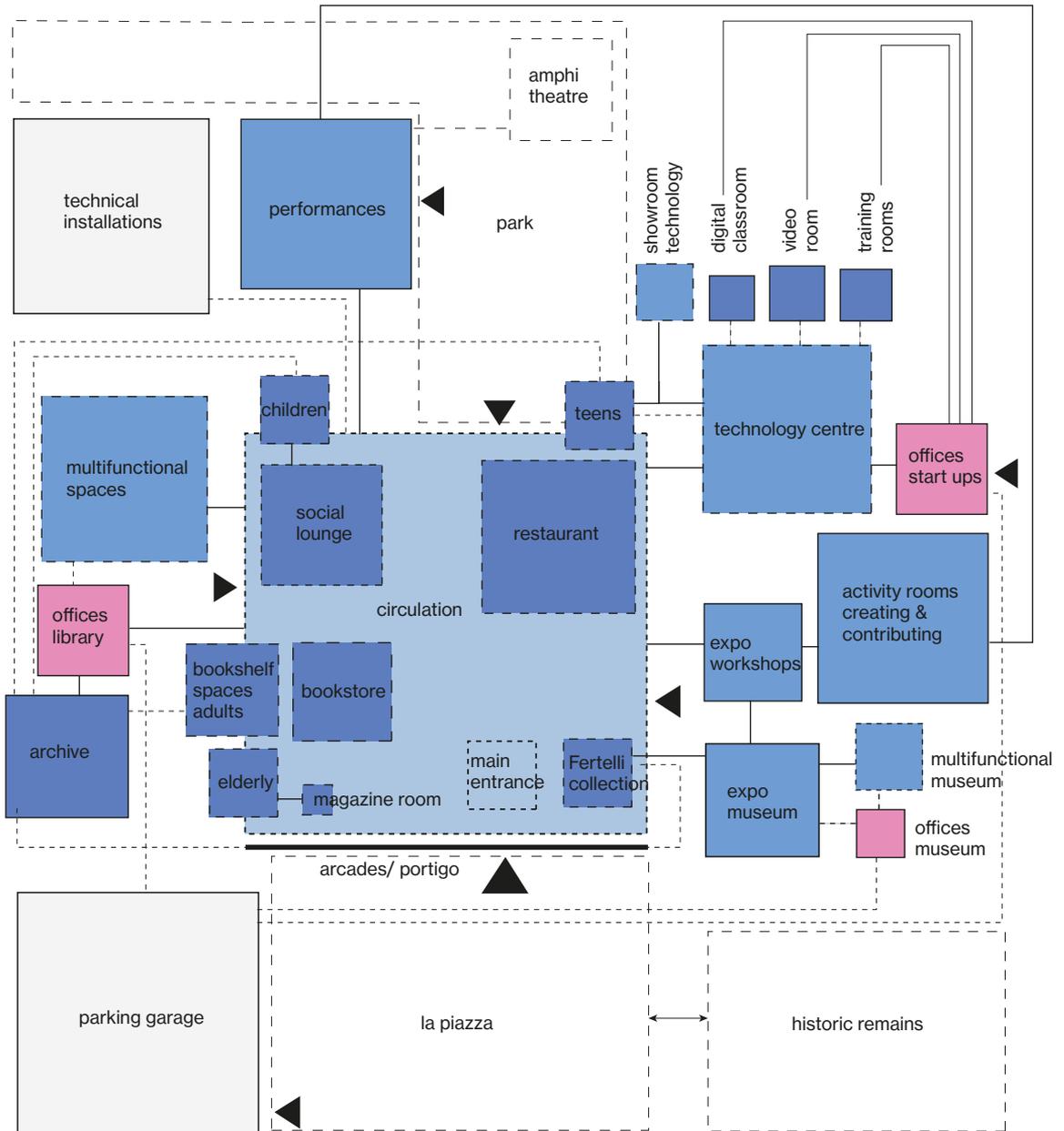
external spaces	
parking garage	200 spots
piazza	TBD
park	TBD
arcade	TBD

Proposal program breakdown, own illustration

The number of office spaces will significantly decrease. Microsoft offices will relocate to a different site, and in place of Microsoft, space will be allocated for technology startups. These startups will be integrated with public technology spaces such as technology showrooms, digital classrooms, video rooms, and training rooms. These spaces will be connected to the technology center. The offices will have a more private character.

Additionally, there will be more rooms dedicated to activities and multifunctional spaces aimed at empowering users.

The bookshelf reading areas are divided by age groups: children, teens, adults, and seniors. These areas are linked to relevant adjacent spaces for each group; for example, the magazine room is designed for the elderly, and the social lounge is connected



*Relation spaces case studies, current situation and new proposal, own illustration*

to the children's bookshelf space, allowing parents to supervise their children from the lounge and the teens section is connected to the technology centre.

An important element is also that more community spaces are integrated into the circulation areas.

- open space
- closed space
- private
- public - community
- public - empowerment
- public - experience

## Interaction in case studies

By analyzing various case studies, Interaction can be stimulated by control of sightline.

Usually in libraries there is an variation in spaces and dimensions, the scale of a space determines the type of exchange it can facilitate. This ranges from large-scale, highly collective interactions to smaller-scale, more intimate ones. Offering a variety of spaces is essential to engage a diverse audience who participate at different levels.

To appeal to this diverse group, facilitated spaces must be provided to meet their needs. However, to stimulate engagement, these spaces should also allow a degree of connection, where users can glimpse activities occurring within other spaces. This piques their curiosity and encourages active participation. Achieving this requires a mix of direct and indirect interaction, which can be supported by carefully designed sightlines that give designers control over visibility and connections between spaces.

Finally, showcasing plays an important role: by making activities visible, users are invited to join in.

### Case study examples through time

**Bibliotheca Marciana (1468)**

Interaction is facilitated through graduated connections: the central ground floor space connects to the outside via a portico; on the first floor, a balcony maintains this link; and on the second floor, only a window remains. The higher the level, the subtler the connection becomes.

**Redcliff Library (1749)**

This library uses balconies overlooking the large central space – the primary area for exchange – to manipulate sightlines and foster interaction.

**Vennesla Library and Learning Centre (2011)**

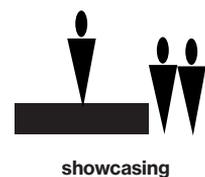
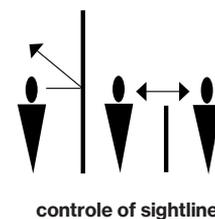
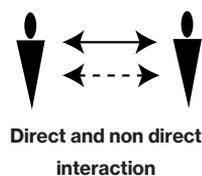
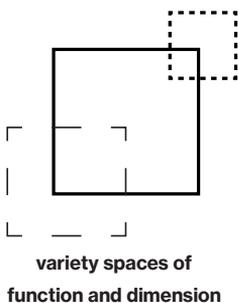
Here, dividing elements create sub-spaces where visitors can retreat for more intimate conversations while still maintaining visual connection through partial-height walls that do not reach the ceiling.

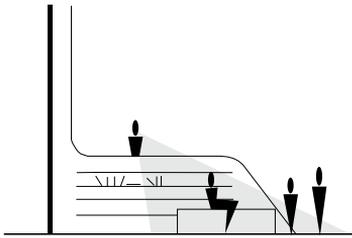
**Rolex Learning Center (2010)**

Subtle spatial divisions are created by changes in floor height – a step up or down defines new spaces while preserving visual and physical connection to the central area.

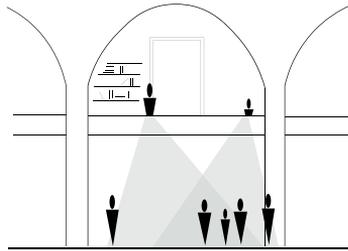
**Rozet Library (2013)**

The central staircase acts as an extension of the urban structure, connecting various levels through balconies overlooking the stairwell, enabling different degrees of interaction.

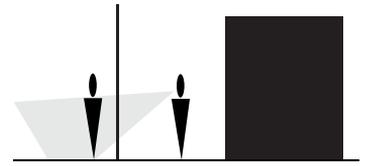




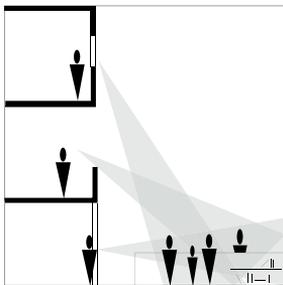
**Vennesla library & cultural centre**  
2011  
Vennesla, Norway



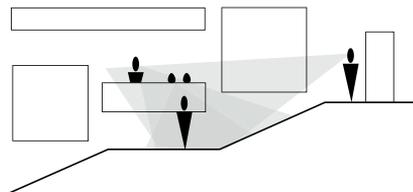
**Redcliff camera**  
1749  
Oxford



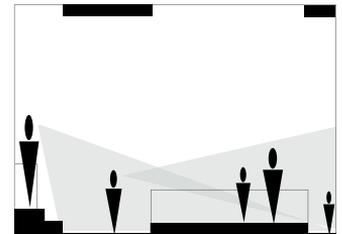
**Fondazione Fertinelli**  
2016  
Milano



**Bibliotheca Marciana**  
1468  
Venice



**Rozet**  
1013  
Arnhem



**Rolex learning centre**  
2010  
Ecublens, Zwitterland

*Analyses case studies, interaction and sightlines, own illustration*

## Culture 3.0 and the importance of active participation

In this research Pier Luigi Sacco describes how we are shifting towards a new form of culture, culture 3.0. The most important shift is the shift towards active participation.

*“By active cultural participation, we mean a situation in which individuals do not limit themselves to absorb passively the cultural stimuli, but are motivated to put their skills at work: Thus, not simply hearing music, but playing; not simply reading texts, but writing, and so on. By doing so, individuals challenge themselves to expand their capacity of expression, to re-negotiate their expectations and beliefs, to reshape their own social identity (P. L. Sacco, 2014-2020)”.*

Important links to this new active participation it stimulates innovation. By learning about the rules that generate creativity, individuals learn how innovative meanings and practices can be constructed, and how they come to challenge and de-structure previous beliefs, prejudices, and attitudes (Gruenfeld, 2010).

A second important link has to do with the politically critical notion of welfare. There is an impressive amount of evidence that cultural participation may have strong and significant effects on life expectancy (e.g. Koonlaan et al., 2000), but more recent research seems to suggest that the impact is equally strong in terms of self-reported psychological well-being (Grossi et al., 2011a,b).

Active participation can also create awareness about sustainability. By fostering social mobilization and awareness about the social consequences of individual behaviors related to environmentally critical resources. Buendia, 2010).

Furthermore active participation is linked to social cohesion. It can have effects on juvenile crime prevention and conflict resolution.

A fifth link is with new entrepreneurship models. There is a clear perception that the

cultural and creative field may be a powerful incubator of new forms of entrepreneurship (Scott, 2006; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006)

Other links are lifelong learning, soft power and local identity.

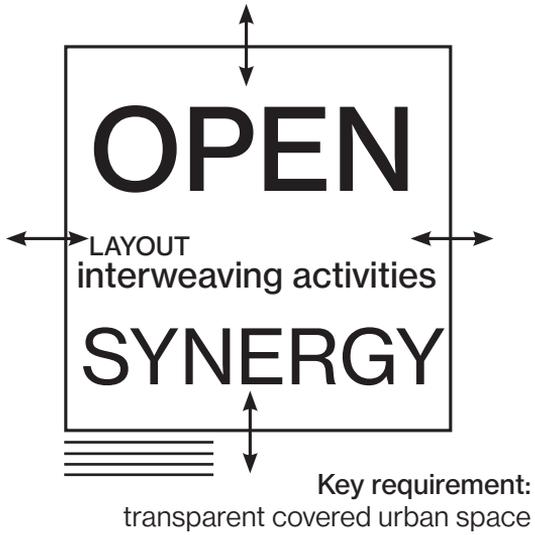
the library being a cultural institution provides the perfect place to enhance this cultural active participation. There are already a few examples of case studies that stimulate this active participation.

First of all Helmet library in Helsinki. Helmet Libraries provide you with access to plenty of music material as well as services and events that support the pursuit of music as a hobby. The libraries have music instruments that you can borrow and music and recording studios that you can book for your own use. By doing so the library stimulates engagement in creating and therefore active participating in cultural activities.

***“Oodi is one of the freest buildings in Helsinki, or even the Nordic Countries, where the visitor can do many things and take initiative in what they want to do. It is a constantly learning and developing tool for those living in or visiting Helsinki.”***

Another example is dokk1 in Aarhus, Denmark. Multihuset Dokk1 in Aarhus Dokk 1 is more than just a large building at the waterfront in the middle of Aarhus. Here you will find both the main library, citizen services and a cafe. Networks within entrepreneurship or other professions meet here.

***“we form an icon for the knowledge society, an icon that supports and stimulates creative collaboration.”***



**dokk1**  
2015  
Aarhus, Denmark  
35600 m<sup>2</sup>



**Helsinki central library Oodi**  
2018  
Helsinki, Finland  
17.000 m<sup>2</sup>



**Key requirement:**  
multi purpose building, open to all. 'a place of freedom and equity.'

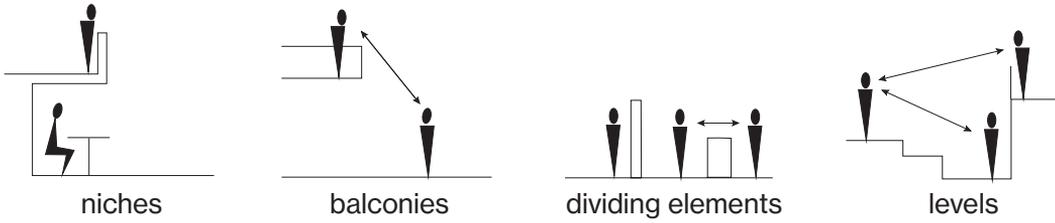
***The building should stimulate active participation inside and out.***

***The building should perform as a stage for creation and technology.***

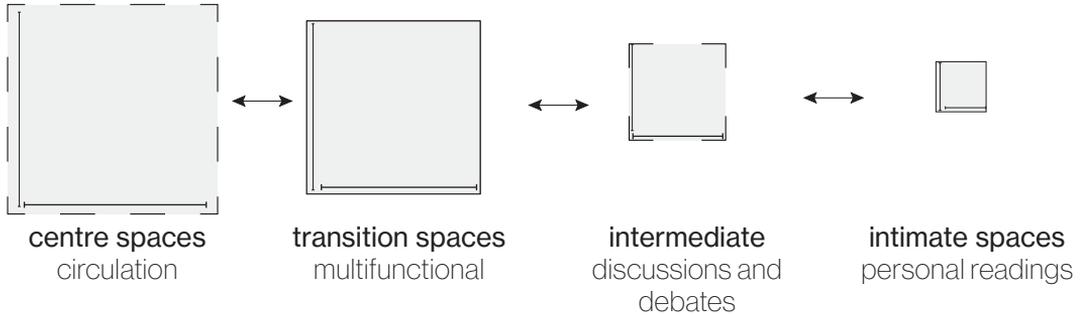


**Community**

designed meeting elements that stimulate participation

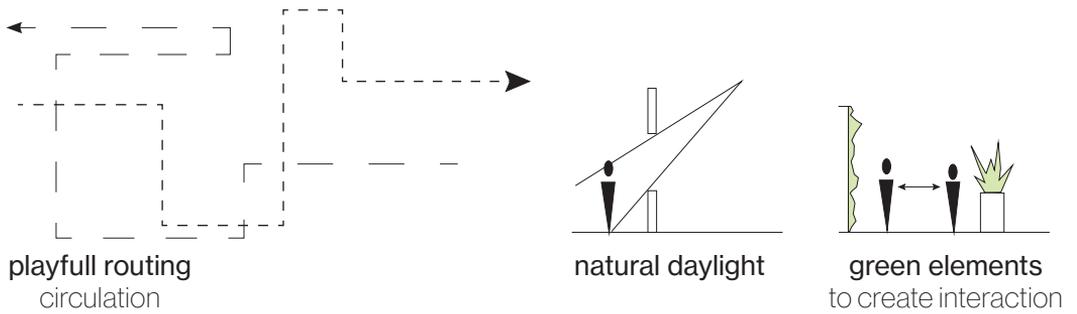


differation sizes spaces and mix open and closed spaces- pockets of exchange



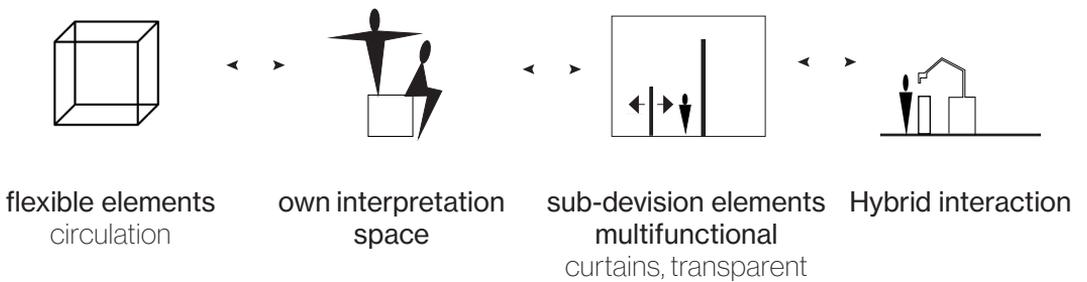
**Experience**

facilitated playground, playfull design, informal



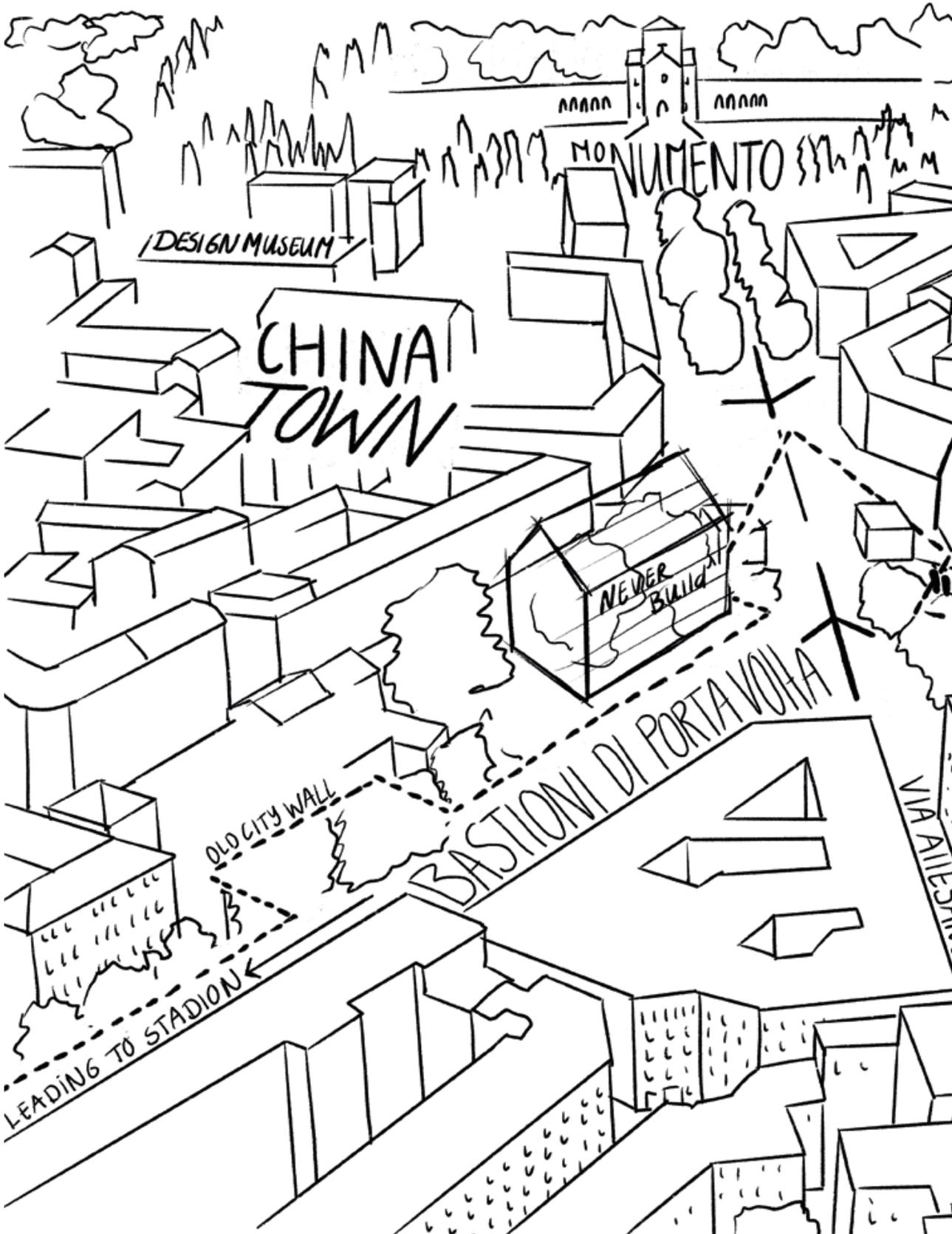
**Empowerment**

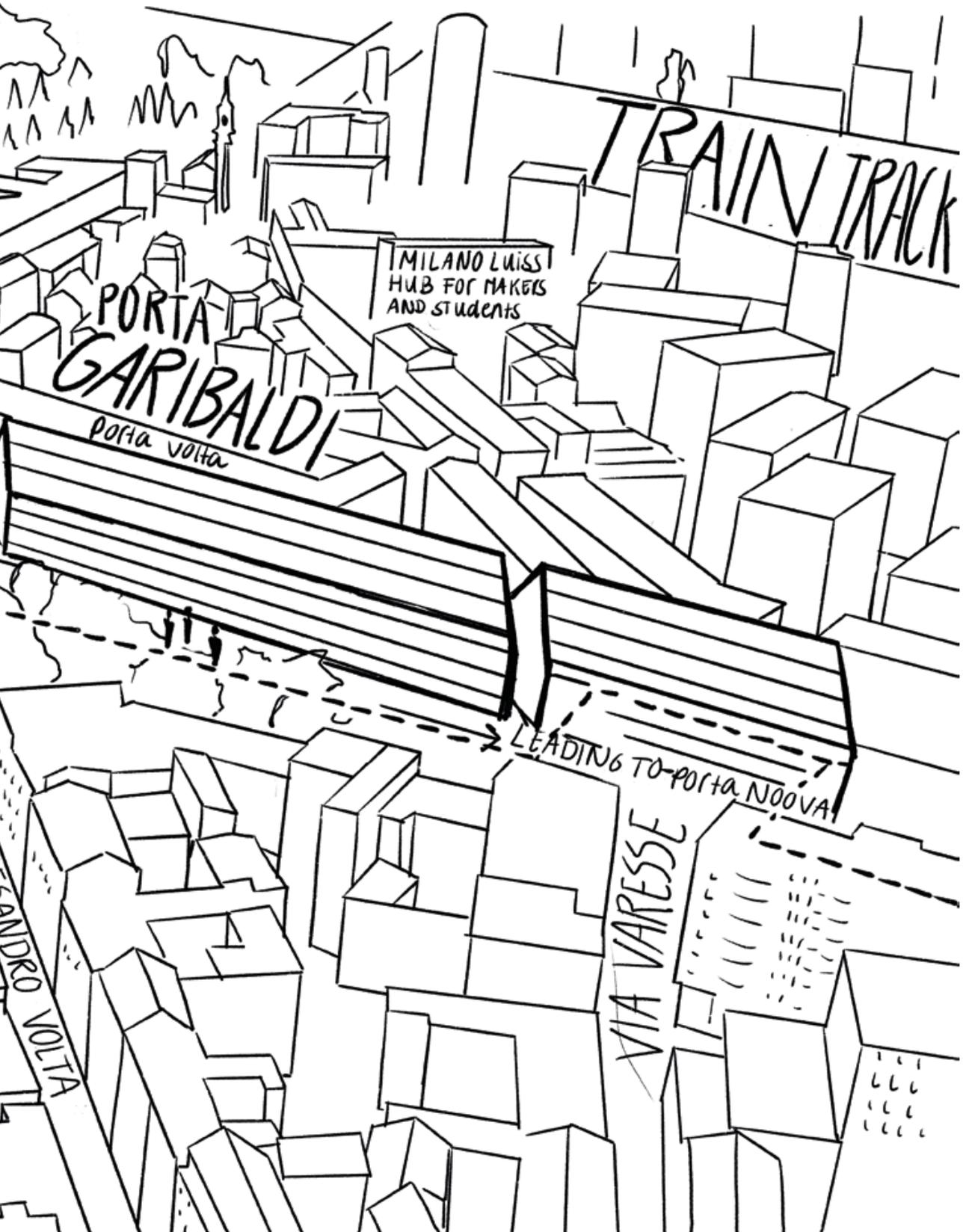
participation by own interpretation and shared responsibilities



# SITE

This section of the design brief examines existing environmental parameters that influence the design. Based on these, ambitions are established from the site perspective, which serve as a foundation for massing studies. These studies aim to both uphold the main theme of active participation and take into account the site-specific ambitions.



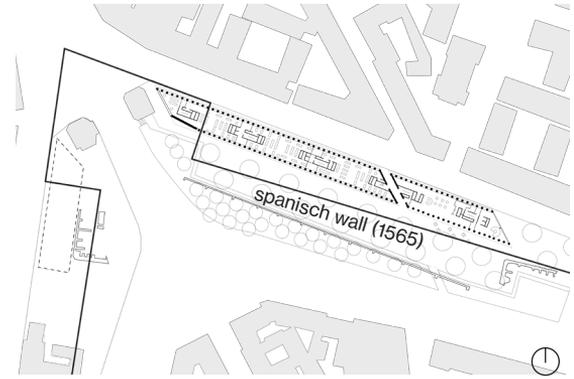


## Historic relevance

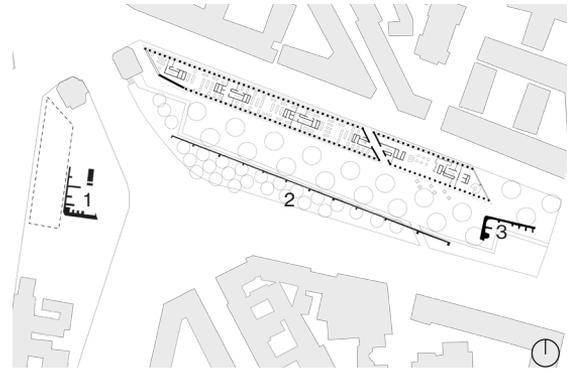
The city boasts a rich history, beginning with the expansion of the Roman historic center around 46 CE, followed by the medieval expansion around 1156, and finally, the extension during the Spanish occupation circa 1556.

Due to the location of the Feltrinelli Library next to the old city gates (Porta Volta) and on the boundary of the ancient Spanish city walls, the site holds significant historical value for the city.

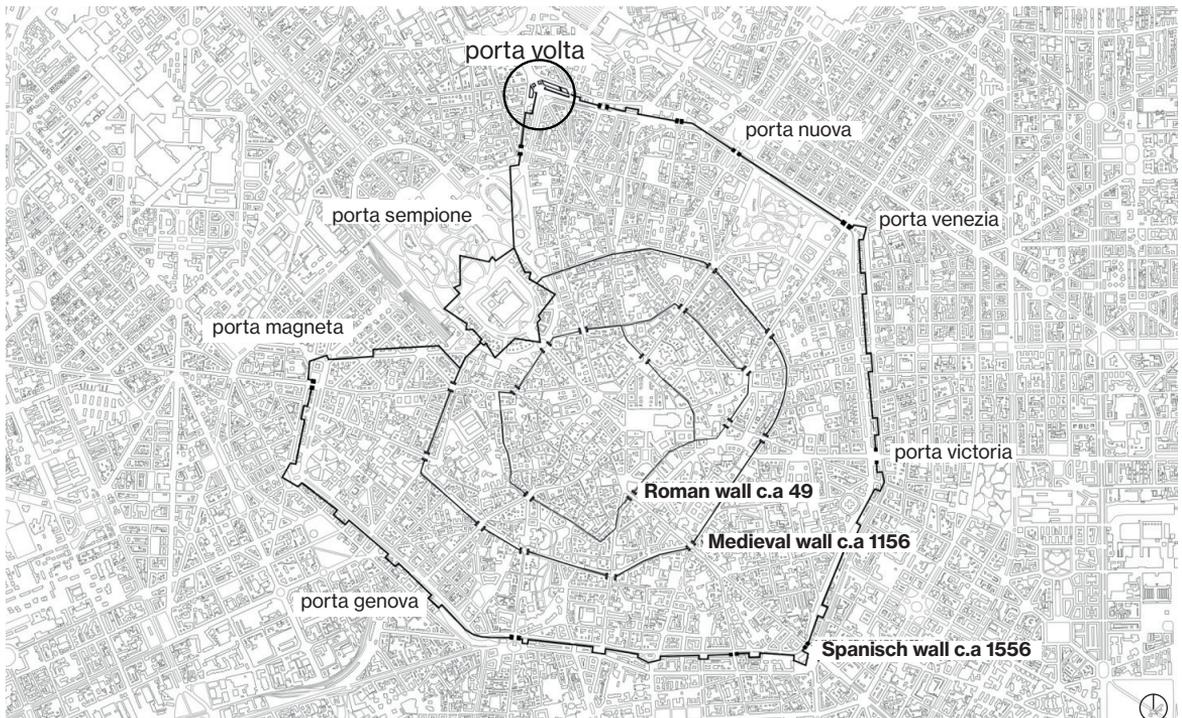
Additionally, remnants of the old Spanish city wall can still be found on this plot, as shown in Figure X.



Old city wall on plot, illustration



Remains old spanish wall on plot, own illustration



Old city walls, based on the map of: <https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/projects/327-porta-volta-fondazione-feltrinelli/>

## Connecting Area's

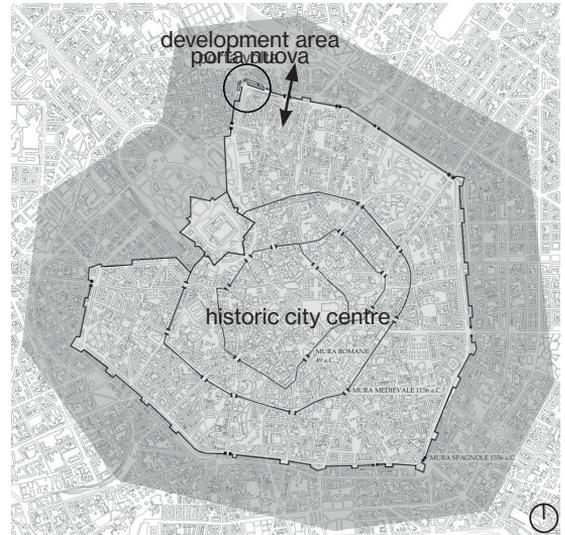
The Feltrinelli complex is part of the Porta Nuova project, one of Milan's four major urban regeneration initiatives, alongside City Life, Porta Genova, and Porta Vittoria. This ambitious renewal effort aims to connect three districts through sustainable development and innovative energy solutions. Situated near the project site, Porta Nuova offers significant opportunities for further integration.

Porta Nuova is a modern Milanese district, celebrated for landmarks such as the iconic Bosco Verticale and a contemporary park that elegantly combine innovation with urban design. The Feltrinelli complex plot functions as a transitional zone, linking the contemporary Porta Nuova district with Milan's historic city center.

Furthermore, the library's location is ideal to serve as a connecting element for various surrounding neighborhoods. In this way, the library can become a place that represents the community's diversity.

As shown in Figure X, the site is situated at a convergence of multiple axes leading to different parts of the city. The most important of these is the connection to the historic center and the Via Ceresio, which links to the development belt and culminates at the monumental memorial site, Monumento ai Caduti nei Campi di Concentramento.

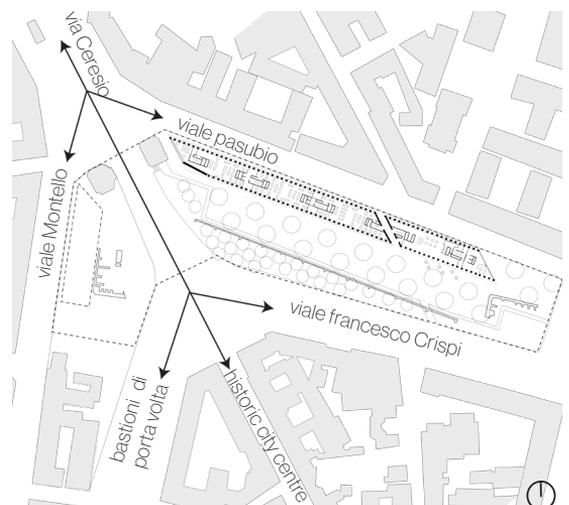
## DESIGN BRIEF - Site



*Belt of development, own illustration*



*Plot of library as connection point for different surrounding towns, own illustration*



*Axes on site, own illustration*

## Accessibility & public green

### Accessibility

Running parallel to the ancient Spanish city walls is one of Milan's main roads, the Circonvallazione Interna. As shown in Figure, accessibility train, tram & metro, this major thoroughfare runs directly in front of the library site. While this road generates considerable noise pollution, it also provides excellent accessibility by car, with convenient underground parking available beneath the building.

In addition to its vehicular accessibility, the site is exceptionally well-connected by public transport. It offers easy access to train, tram, and metro lines, making it a vital location within Milan's urban fabric. This connectivity enhances the site's potential to serve as a dynamic hub for the local community.

Figure X highlights pedestrian flow around the site. Currently, the road crossing the plot divides it into two disconnected parts, which significantly weakens pedestrian connectivity. This fragmentation hampers participation, as connectivity and accessibility are essential to fostering engagement. To address this, Figure X on the next page presents a proposal to reroute the traffic, illustrated in orange, which would allow the dashed black line currently cutting through the plot to be removed. This adjustment would create a continuous, uninterrupted site.

Such a reconfiguration would not only enhance the site's accessibility but also strengthen its role as a landmark. By breaking this axes and improving connections, the building's visibility from a distance would increase, making it a destination that draws people in and invites them to engage. This visual prominence would be instrumental in stimulating participation and creating a vibrant community hub.

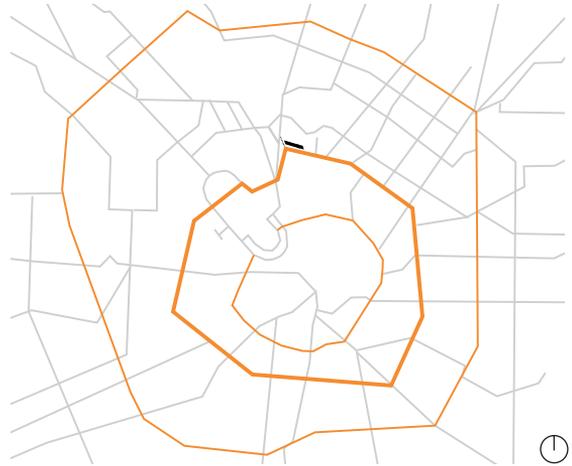
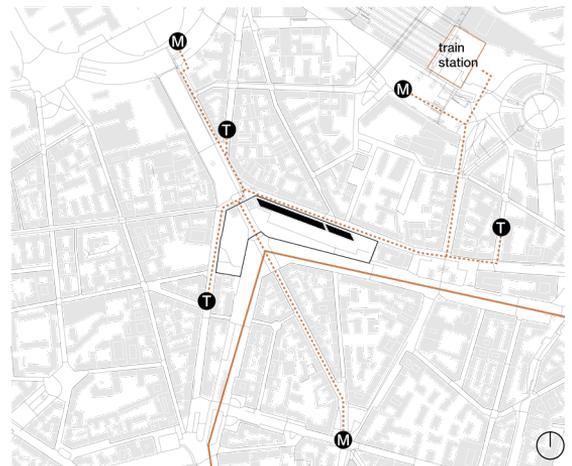
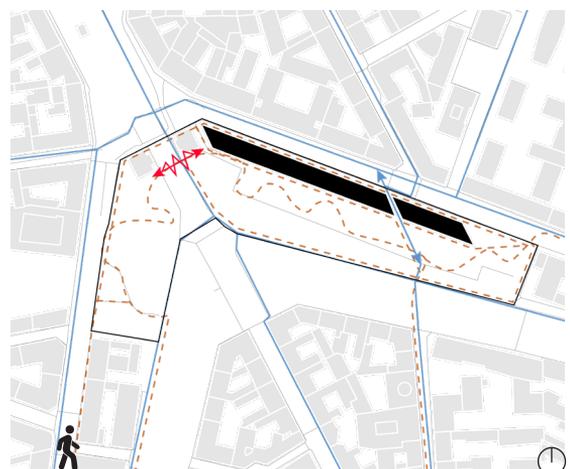


figure x, road map, own illustration



Accessibility train, tram & metro, own illustration



Accessibility pedestrian, own illustration

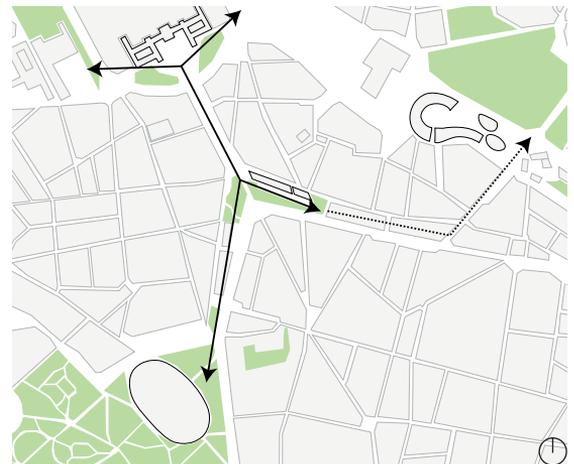
### Green structure

The city has an ambition to connect multiple parks through the creation of green boulevards. The plot of the library is part of this initiative, forming a key link between Parco Sempione, BAM (Biblioteca degli Alberi Milano), and Giardini Indro Montanelli. The library's location is therefore ideal for integrating into a green structure, where interaction with nature can also promote community participation. Research has shown that social interaction increases in green environments, underscoring the importance of these connections.

However, during the site visit, the current state of the green boulevard was disappointing. The square in front of the Feltrinelli complex feels barren, with limited engagement between the space and the surrounding greenery. The interaction with nature is minimal, falling short of the envisioned green connection. This indicates a strong potential for enhancing the integration of green spaces with both the library and the surrounding area. Moreover, the square could be reimagined to host a wider range of activities, further promoting community engagement. More on these possibilities will be discussed later in the research.



*Proposal re arranging roads on plot. own illustration*

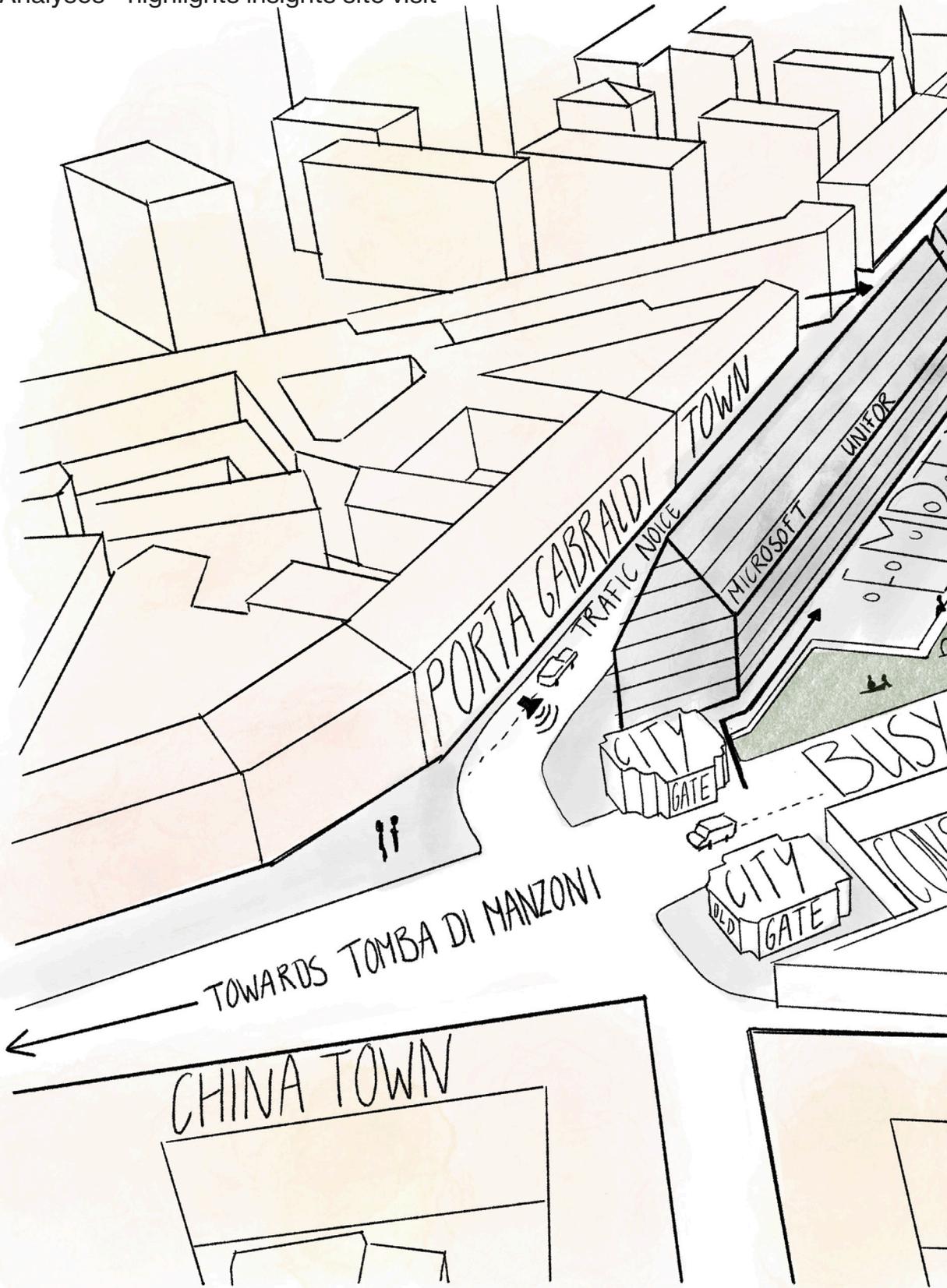


*Green structure connection, own illustration*



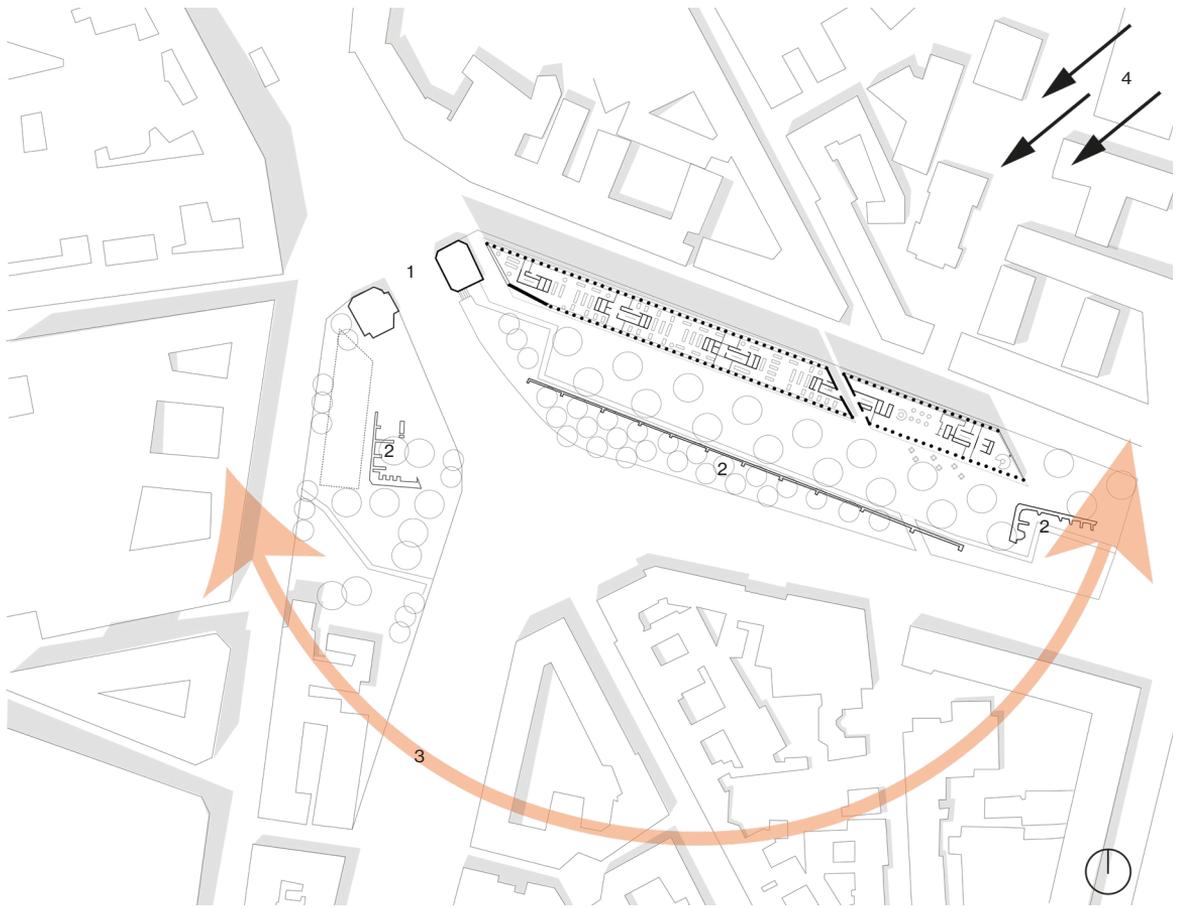
*Green on plot, own illustration*

Site Analyses - highlights insights site visit





1. Porta Volta
2. remains old city wall
3. sun path
4. wind direction



*Building on site , own illustration*

## Group's Civic Lens and the Choice of Arcades as a Civic Element

## DESIGN BRIEF - Site

As a group, we are looking at our design through a civic perspective. This means we want the building to connect well with the city and encourage people to come together. For this reason, we chose arcades (or porticos) as an important civic feature. Arcades are great because they link the building to the city around it. In Milan, arcades are very common and are a big part of the city's identity. By using arcades, we connect our design directly to Milan's character.

Besides being a connection, the arcades create a sheltered transition zone between the inside and outside of the building. This makes the building more inviting and gives something back to the city by providing a comfortable space where people can gather and feel welcome.

The arcades also spark curiosity about what's happening inside the building. Because they open up the building to the street, they encourage people to come in and take part in the activities. This makes the building feel active and alive. In this way the experience of the building will be enhanced resulting in more participation.

Furthermore, the arcades help connect the active life inside the building with the busy square outside. They create a smooth flow between these spaces, making both the building and the public area feel more linked.

In short, arcades help to fit the building into the city, invite people to participate, and strengthen the connection between inside and outside.



*Pictures of arcades in Milan, own pictures*

## La Piazza

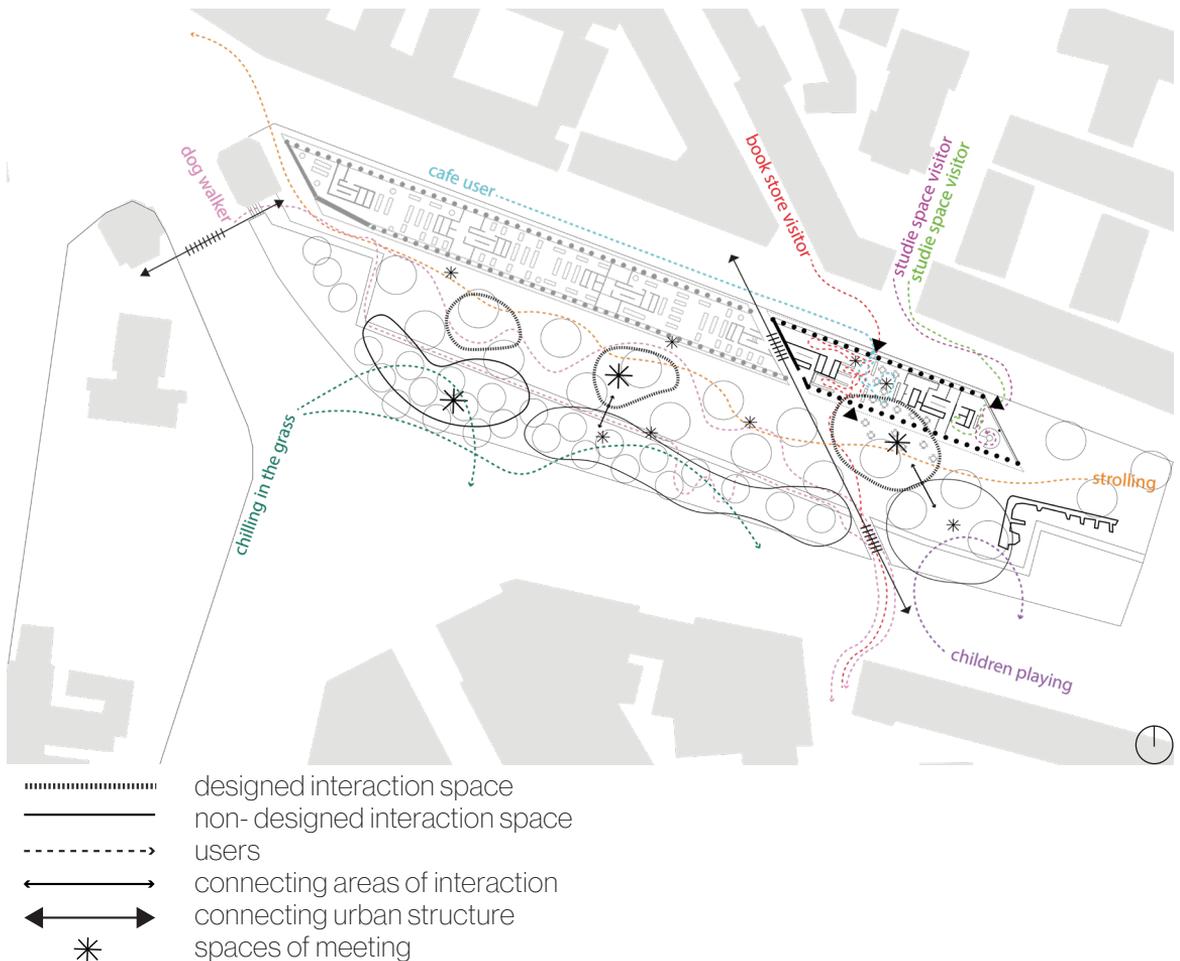
To stimulate participation inside and out, as stated in the key requirement of the building, the piazza plays a crucial role. It helps anchor the building within its urban context and offers a space where people can gather and engage in recreation.

Although the location of Fertinelli is part of the city's green structure due to its function as a green boulevard, the square itself remains empty and underutilized.

Currently, the square is used by a variety of people for different purposes – walking dogs, passing through as a shortcut, taking walks along the nearby historic site, or as a playground for children. However, this location holds much greater potential than is currently realized. By integrating

more greenery, the area could promote social interaction and become a livelier space where people slow down and enjoy meaningful encounters, rather than just rushing by.

Furthermore, the multifunctionality of a piazza is key: it can act as a transitional space between public and private realms, inviting both spontaneous gatherings and organized events. This aligns with the idea that well-designed public spaces – like those incorporating greenery or facilitating social activities – can significantly enhance social interactions, as also seen in research on green markets and neighborhood parks (Aram, F., Solgi, E., & Holden, 2019).



Current situation interaction map la piazza Fondazione Fertinelli, own illustration.



*Collage la piazza Milan vision, own illustration together with Annelot Siegers*

Milan is known for its many vibrant piazzas that serve as valuable urban sanctuaries – places to breathe and unwind. A collage of these atmospheres is shown in Figure X. This is the character that the Fertinelli square should embody in the new design.

In summary, the piazza, through its spatial openness, mixed-use design, and cultural symbolism, acts as a catalyst for participatory behavior and meaningful social interaction, encouraging people not just to pass through but to linger, engage, and connect.



*Picture of exchange structure in city close to the fertinelli library, own picture*

***The building should perform as a connecting element to the site to create engagement.***

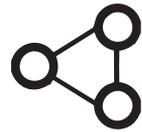
***The design should include a sheltered transition space to connect the building to the urban situation.***



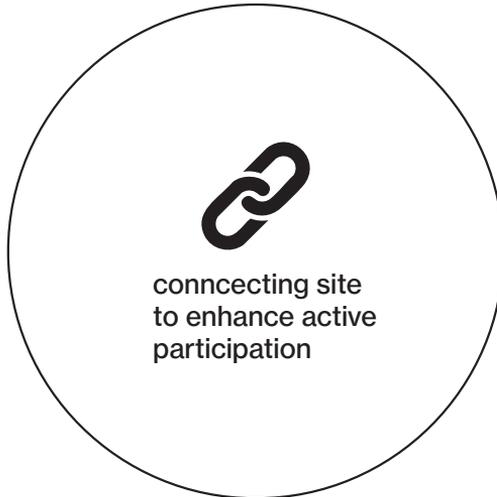
**Historic relevance**  
The design must respect and make use of the archeological findings on the site.



**Green connection**  
The site should elevate the green connection to the green boulevard to stimulate social interaction



**Connecting Area's**  
The building play a connecting role in engaging multiple different area's (different towns and historic city centre with development area).



**connecting site to enhance active participation**



**Arcades/ Portigo's**  
Arcades should be integrated to create a sheltered transitions zone between inside and outside



**Landmark**  
The building should perform as a landmark in the urban structure to enhance curiosity.

# CONCLUSION

06



## Conclusion

The main theme of the building is active participation both inside and outside. The building should function as a stage for creation and technology.

Through site analyses, several additional requirements have emerged. The building must respect the historical value of the site (the old city walls). Furthermore, it should relate to the character of its surroundings, a green boulevard. The building should serve as a connecting element for many different neighborhoods. Finally, it must provide a transitional space in the form of arcades or porticos to create a more subtle transition between indoor and outdoor areas.

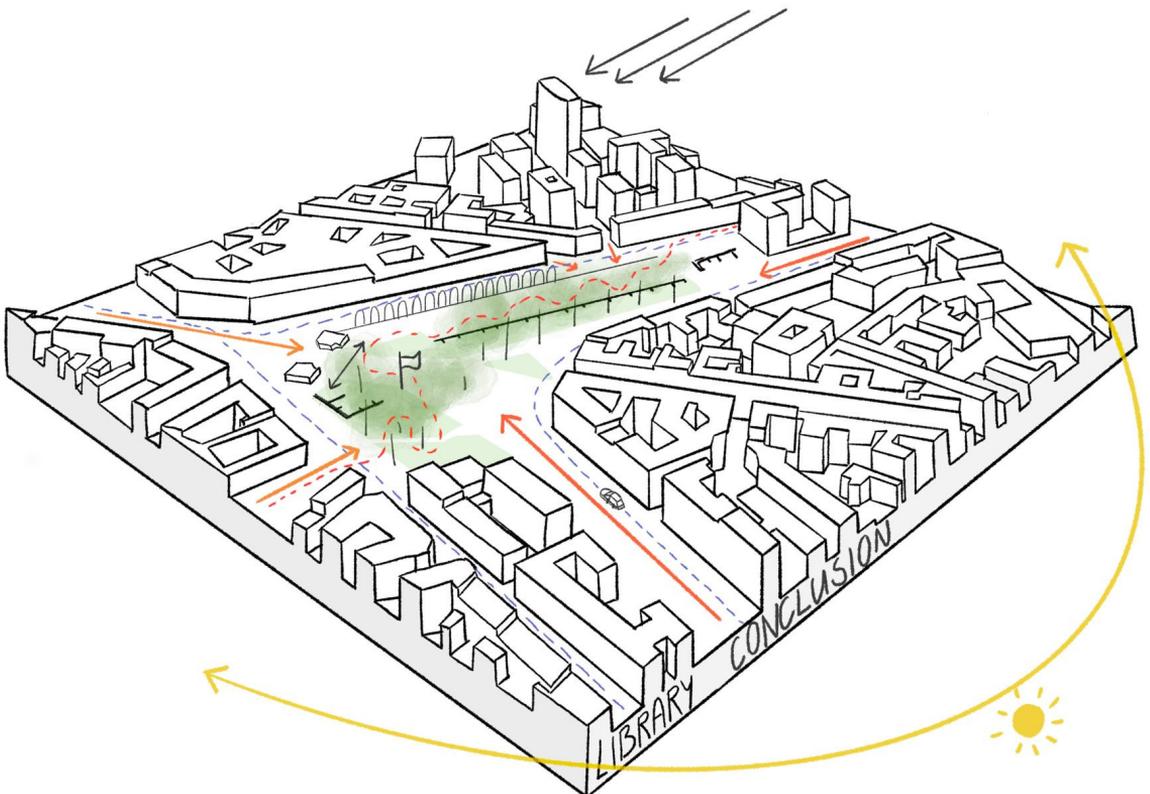
### Mass studies

In the mass studies, we examined how, based on knowledge of the site, ambitions, and the main theme of active participation, a proposal for the building's massing on this plot can be made. For example, the building can serve as a landmark for the

area, attracting people and acting as a recognizable meeting place. Additionally, the building can break the sightline axis due to its location on the plot. It is also very important that the building is oriented horizontally to ensure interaction and participation. Therefore, the building should not be higher than four stories and must have direct connections to the plot on both sides of the road. To achieve this, there is a proposal to relocate this road (see earlier in the research plan) to make the two parts of the plot more accessible. This space could become a park or accommodate the building volume.

### Next steps

In the next phase of this research, the mass studies will be explored in more detail to assess the qualities they offer. A selection will be made to further investigate the potential of specific massing proposals.

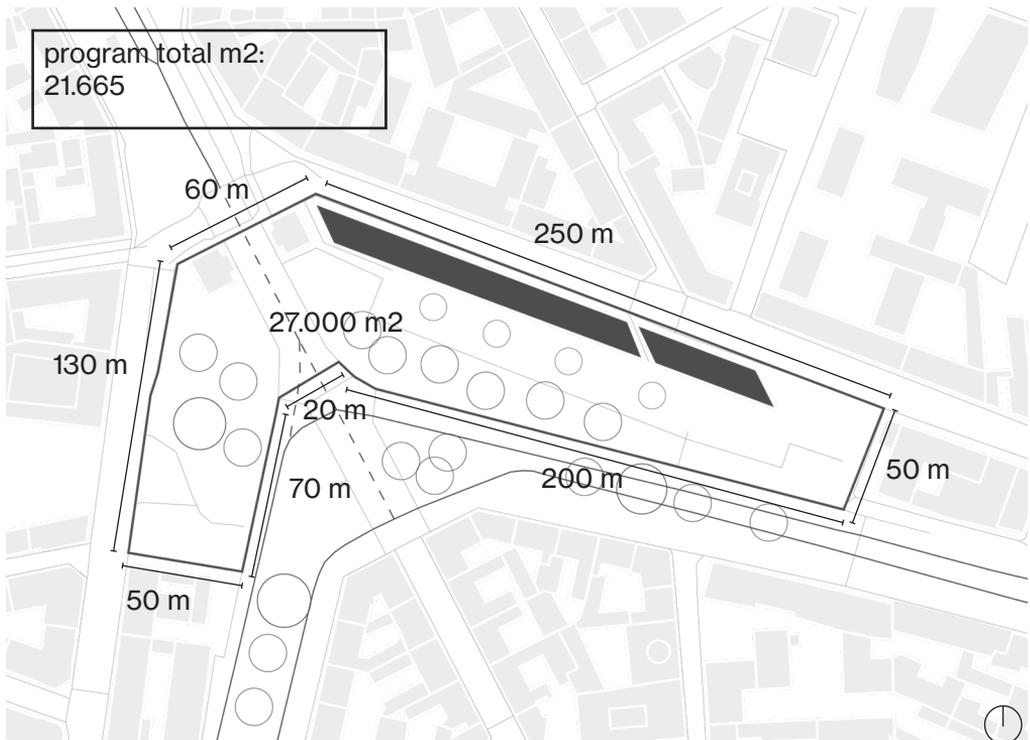


*Conclusion site analyses and ambitions, own illustration*



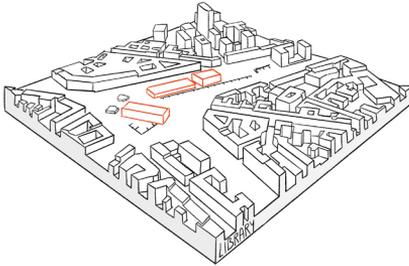
*requirements design brief, own illustration*

The requirements of this design brief are as followed: The building should foster active participation inside and out.  
To further enhance this active participation the building should perform as a stage for creation and technology. Furthermore the building should perform as a connecting element to the side to create engagement.  
Lastly the buildings design should include a sheltered transition space to connect the building to the urban situation.



*Dimensions plot for massing studies, own illustration*

# Massing studies



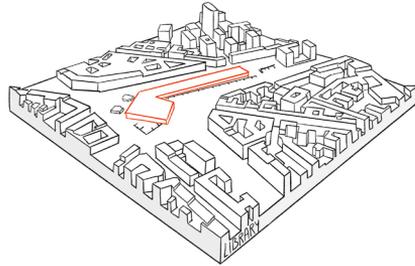
## Seperate volumes

- more seperation
- + green space in between volume

levels: 1,2,3 levels

total m2 ground: 14.442

covering plot: 54%



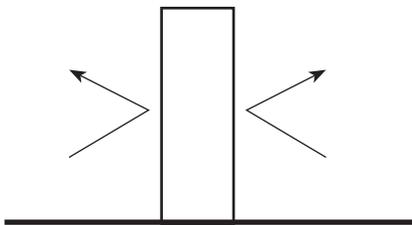
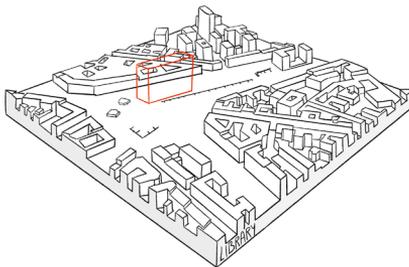
## One level building

- + more connction inside building
- + less space for green park and sqares

levels: 1

total m2 ground: 21.665

covering plot: 80%



## Tower

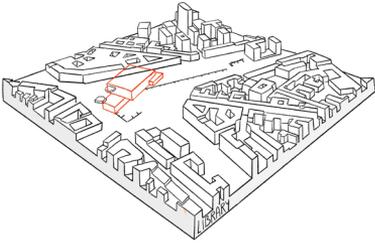
- more seperation inside building by vertical orientation
- disconnection site
- + green space around building
- + landmark

levels: 8

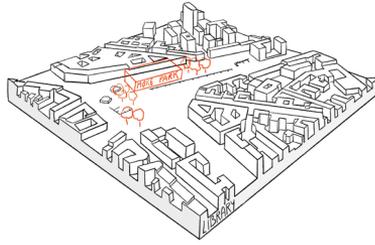
total m2 ground: 14.442

covering plot: 10%

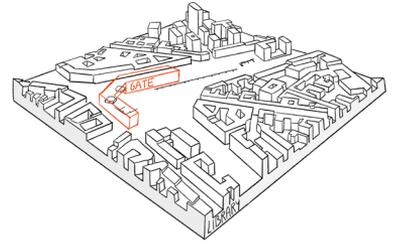
## Next steps



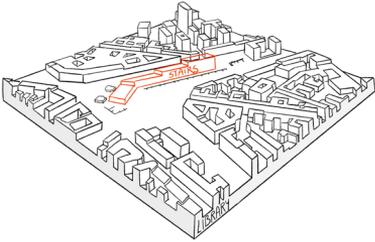
**Landmark on plot**  
breaking axes



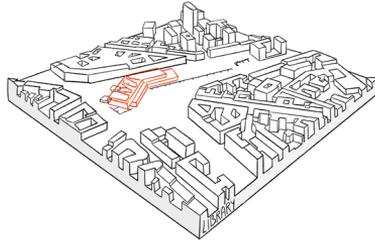
**Smaller volume**  
more space for park on all



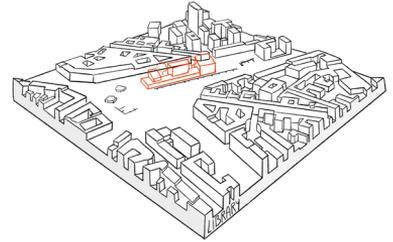
**Building as a gate**  
building crosses road



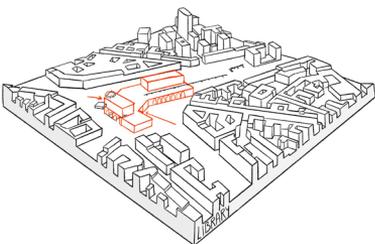
**Building as stairs**  
creates terrasses



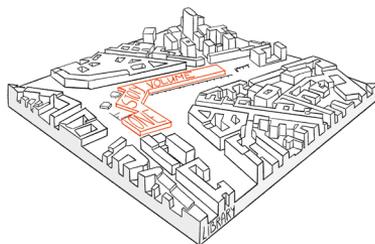
**Layered building**



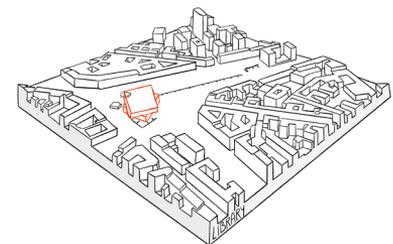
**Connected volumes**  
creates urban nisjes and  
possibilities to integrate  
park and building



**Portigo shelter ruins**  
portigo's are used to  
shelter the ruins from  
weather while still  
accessible and visible



**One story building**  
covering most of  
the plot leaving only  
space for the ruins



**Layerd landmark**  
not following the  
urban structure and  
breaking axes

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07



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