Reflection

To study and socialize in the university library

Studio    Interiors, buildings and cities
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1. Introduction

In this report I reflect upon the result of the research and design in the graduation project. First the results from the research will be described together with it’s effects upon the design. Second, the theme of the design and its relation to the theme of the studio is explained. Finally, the relation between the design and its broader social context is clarified.

2. The relation between my research and design

The first part of the research is based upon a questionnaire, which is completed by students of the University of Amsterdam. The research concluded that students find it important to have social contact within a university library. Students want to socialize both during breaks and during study activities and experience various forms of social interaction, which vary from visual contact to a dialogue. A smaller group of students visits the library primarily to study in silence.

The second part of the research describes architectural tools, which can make social contact possible. A comparison between two university buildings shows how a relatively small scale enlarges the chance of social contact within a building. Also, the occurrence of communal activities such as lectures contributes to this. Finally, the design of the circulation space plays an important role in the social interaction that occurs within a building.

The findings of the research are reflected within the design by the central position of the corridor in the building volume and spatial characteristics of a room such as the wide dimension, the presence of daylight and furniture, which enhances social activities.

3. The relation between the theme of the studio and the theme of the graduation project

The studio is concerned with the public spaces within the city. A public space can be considered effective to the extent it enables interaction between individuals from different social groups within society. Why is this important? Drawing upon Emmanuel Kant who described that the confrontation between different opinions is necessary for people to develop one’s own opinion Maarten Hajer en Arnold Reijndorp describe in their book ‘In search of a new public domain’ that the concrete presence of other people and their cultural manifestations in the same space is important for the development of social intelligence and the ability to form an opinion.

The project strives to enable social interaction between students and other city dwellers. The position of the university library in the centre of Amsterdam enlarges the chance of interaction between students and various city dwellers. The library has a public lecture hall, which is suitable for various cultural activities;
the adjacent courtyard is open to the public during the day and a cycle route through the site enables interaction between students and other city dwellers.

4. The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The current generation of young people, who start their university studies, have to cope with the multiplicity of possibilities in the field of study and lifestyle. The student is expected to be self-aware and to set his or her own goals. It is therefore important to shape the university library as a peaceful place within the city. This allows students in the university library to feel free, as if they walk in a garden. In order to let the building function as a peaceful environment the façade is constructed of semi-transparent glass and steel in which a repetition of window openings offer views to the gardens. The openness to the gardens create a peaceful place to study and socialize.

5. Conclusion

The interviews with students revealed that students find it desirable to socialize within the university library. The design attempts to meet these requirements by placing the main corridor to place and appropriately shape. In the studio, the importance of social interaction on the scale of the city highlights. The project offers public spaces, both inside the building and outside the building. Finally the project tries to give a suitable answer to some characteristics within society since it doesn’t only function as a social place but also as a public retreat.

Literature