RE-ENVISION THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEARCHING FOR THE NEW LIBRARY IDENTITY

A handbook to design the Public Library building of today and tomorrow. By Dorine Vos / TU Delft / Mentor: dr. Olindo Caso

SOCIAL & CUL TURAL VALUE.

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"The collective idea of the public library does not correspond any longer to the way public libraries are used, designed, built and managed."

When people think of the public library, they mostly imagine a silent place full of books; a place open to anyone who wants to access information without being disturbed. This collective idea of the public library does not correspond any longer to the way public libraries are used, designed, built and managed. In the recent years many new ways of transferring knowledge have arisen, mostly due to the impetuous development of ICT. This has put the original function of the public library in a new daylight. Since the public library is an open institution for everyone, it is directly influenced by the society we live in. This society is subjected to a lot of change today. With the end of the industrial revolution we are developing into a *knowledge society* where people have to learn throughout their whole lives. At the same time a *creative economy* is evolving where creativity is steadily gaining weight as a production factor. Also, the welfare is constantly subjected to change. Due to cuts by the governments the focus point of investment is shifting all the time, which affects governmental institutions and results in a *changing welfare*. Finally, we can observe a movement in the demographic structure influenced by *global connections*. A structure, where it becomes common that different groups of people live next to each other. Subjected to a continuous integration of new cultures, in which exchanges happen in real time.

This research focuses on the *social and cultural value* the public library has today and the way it can respond to the changing society we live in. If we look at the recent library developments we see a missing link between the actual library values and the library design. Architects have more or less re-invented the library at any new assignment. But, what is the contemporary *identity* of the public library, and what aspects have to be taken into consideration in order to design the library of our time? In order to redefine the 'architype' of the public library, the sociological research of the library identity will be combined with an architectural analysis focusing on the architecture of the public library building.

With assistance of existing trends in the field of library development and an architectural analysis of the modern contemporary library, the aim is to define a new identity of the public library. This can contribute as a guidebook for architects to design the public library today and in the future.

"... what is the contemporary identity of the public library, and what aspects have to be taken into consideration in order to design the library of our time?"

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