

Dorine Vos P4 4139038

Graduation Reflection: Re-envision the public library: Searching for the new library identity.

*[Aspect 2 the relationship between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS).]*

The starting point for my graduation topic was an internship I did previous to my graduation phase. During this period, I was working fulltime on a library project in the united states. Although I was very content with the process and approach of this design, many decisions were made based on old regulations in a world full of knowledge development: For example, the size of the book collections and general purpose of the library building. Even though the architecture office had contained a lot of knowledge regarding innovative library design, the client had according to me, a very conservative approach towards the function of this institution. Since the public library is a public institution it is directly affected by the influences and priority of the society its part of. The fact that the public library became once public to share all information, and improve all people in society it has in my opinion a very important function, especially for the changing welfare we are living in. By the start of the project I had clarified that there was room for innovation of this archetype, but what this could be and how it was possible to implement this possible new function was still broad. Working with a public building was something I really enjoyed in previous projects and was also now a conscious choice for my graduation phase. In this case, the target group can be any person in society, why it can be seen as society as a whole rather than a specific group of people.

*[Aspect 1: the relationship between research and design.]*

The research focused 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 development 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. The main question of the research was to search for 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. By analysing different developments in society, challenges and possibilities for the public library became clear. Next to the theoretical models I researched many already built contemporary library buildings. During my research, it became clear that designing a library building was a logical next step of the graduation process: to improve my theory of the library identity. From the beginning, I was fascinated by the public library in Stockholm, which I discovered during my studies abroad in Sweden. This library building has known many discussions last years when a competition was written for a library extension. In my opinion, this could be a very interesting design case, since it shows the old function of a 'book temple' in contrast with the new possibilities of the public library according to my research. However, this striking library design by Gunnar Asplund does not only need an extension according to the needs of our time but should also fit this famous 'world heritage' library design. During my P2 it became clear that a new location could maybe fit the research better. Although my research contained library research in the Western Society, it was according to my tutors a good idea to design in a place which I could visit as much as I wanted. Therefore, a new location was found later in Rotterdam, my current place of residence.

The outcome of the research gave new program possibilities for the public library related to context and time, but the exact location option and design was broad. By looking into the different clusters of knowledge a new approach of the public library was created: The people's houses project. In a region or bigger city several libraries where not containing each all the information but should specialize into different themes: The house of nature, athletics, the human, technology, culture, imagination and arts. According to the context each house could be positioned in a certain neighbourhood. The house of Athletics could be positioned close to sport clusters, the house of nature close to rich nature areas, the

house of technology close by to tech companies and education centres and so on. My biggest interest was the house of imagination, since in my opinion books are related very strong to my child memories and the escape into a world of fairy tales, dreams and science fiction. A context which could fit perfect into this theme was the Park in Rotterdam since it had already a 'fairylike' atmosphere by nature. The final design proposal consists of all the themes suggested in the research embedded in the specific theme of Imagination. One could ask if that is an answer to the new identity of the public library. In my opinion is it a proposal for this city and context, and can it be an inspiration of how to deal with a contemporary library building. In my view, a public library is an extension of the public space to be, read, meet and work: a place for everyone which takes into account the different needs of the society.

*[Aspect 3 Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.]*

It was kind of straight forward to dive first into the social theory of the public library and compare it to the real library architecture of today. In explore lab the way you research, work and design is very free so this made it in the beginning hard to demarcate the question and design case. Therefore, it was of great help to work together with Olindo Caso, since he is very familiar in the library research. With his help, a clear structure for the research was made and this also led to a lot of interesting new connections. It was for example a great experience to meet the Danish professors in Copenhagen to talk about library innovation.

*[Aspect 4 Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.]*

The library building is a very actual topic in the design world. However, people are doubting about the social value and function of the library there has been build many new libraries lately. This shows that there is still a social need for the program, although the actual function is a subject of discussion.

*[Aspect 5 Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered in (i) doing the research, (ii, if applicable) elaborating the design and (iii) potential applications of the results in practice.]*

A moral discussion of the public library is the way in which sense the government sees a need for this institution. Generally, it is of most importance among the lower layers of society, since a lot of knowledge can be achieved by having enough money and connections. If we look in the western society we see a changing welfare occurring were more people are designated to their own possibilities instead of walking a designed path created by the government. It is not the case that the public library gives a solution for this changing welfare but it can give a positive contribution to the changing world we live in.

07/12/17