



**A Library for Exchange**  
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Interiors Buildings Cities  
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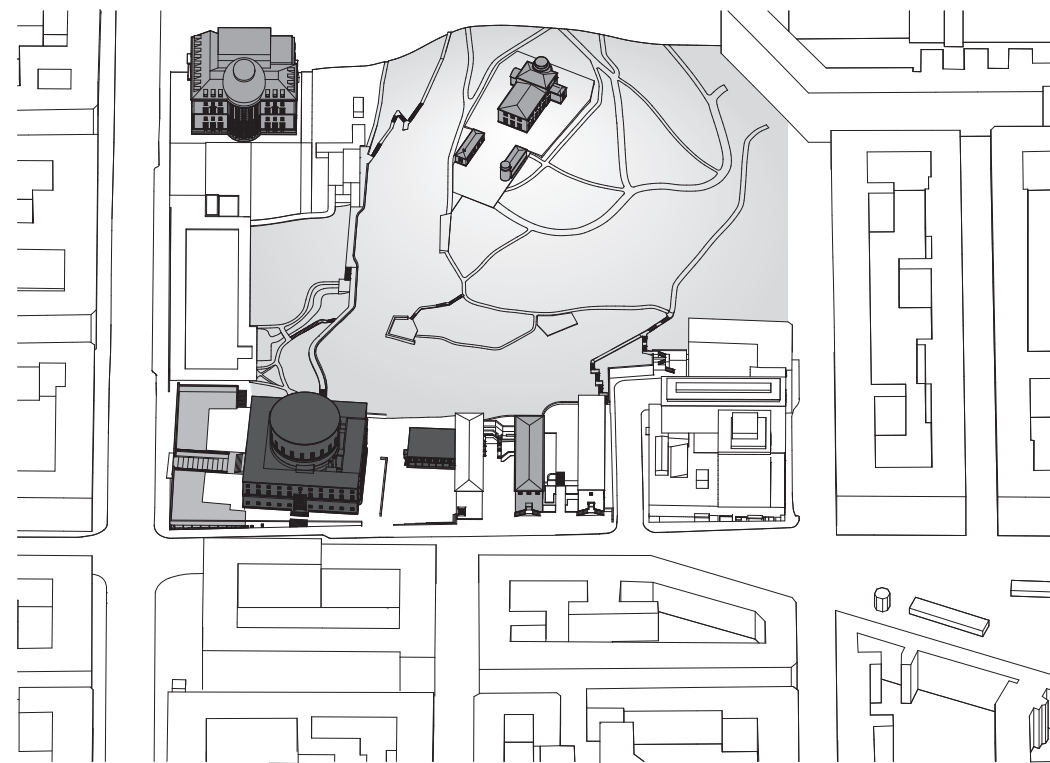


## Situating the Library

The protagonist of this year's graduation studio is the Stockholm City Library. It was designed by famous Scandinavian architect Erik Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940) and opened in the spring of 1928. It is a modernist building located in Vasastaden, a very diverse neighbourhood on the Northern Island of Sweden's capital Stockholm. It's situated along the Sveavägen, a central north-south axis. The southern end of Sveavägen is marked by the Kulturhuset – 'house of Culture' – designed by Peter Celsing (1920-1974) and housing the Stockholm City Theatre and the City Arts Centre.

The Library sits at the corner of the Observatorielunden, a park on a ridge created by the last glaciation around 10 000 years ago. On top of the ridge sits the Observatory built in 1753 for astronomical research. Various educational buildings are situated around the park: the school for economics the observatory museum, and the kulturskolan. The main public educational asset of the park is the Library. The Library holds about 400 000 books.

The City Library is both a neighbourhood library and an (inter)national library. A third of visitors live in the Norrmalm neighbourhood. About 40% of visitors come travelling from other parts of the city and the rest more than 25% come from other parts of the region, the country and the world. Those who visit the International Library, currently a separate building as an annex to the first lamella building, have often travelled further.



Educational Masterplan of the Observatorielunden.



Archival photograph of the Asplundhuset.



Map of Stockholm showing the plot highlighted and the Sveavägen as a north-south axis.

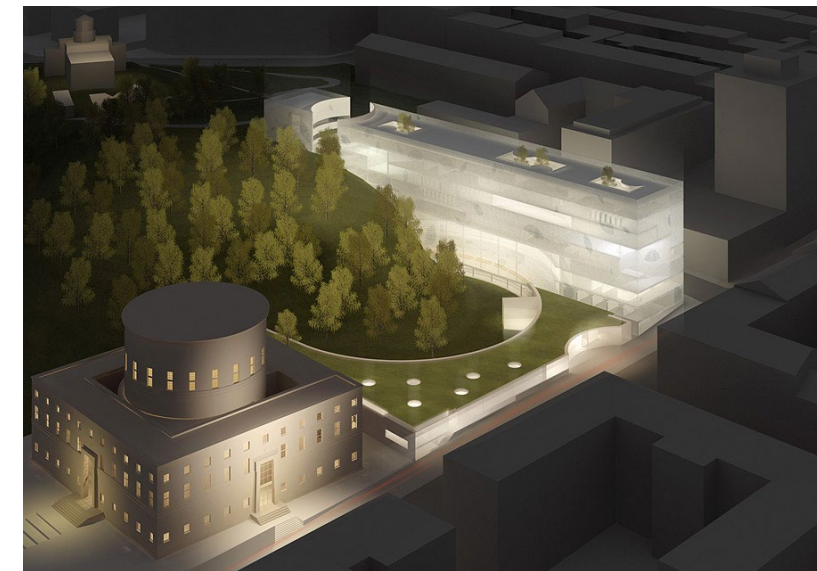


# The Assignment

The graduation studio, organised by the group Interiors Buildings Cities, started on the premise of two failed competitions (page to the right) that were written out for the Stockholm City library. The first one in 2006 asked for a massive increase in floor area, adding 17 000 m<sup>2</sup> to the already existing 7000 m<sup>2</sup> of the Library. The 2014 brief was more restrained and asked to work within the existing fabric, while modernising the current library. Our task in the studio was to position myself while keeping the briefs in mind, but also taking into account that the briefs were already 18 or 10 years old by the time we are working on the project. The initial design brief is shown below. The area of intervention, provided by the 2006 competition brief, is shown on the right.



Area of intervention from the 2006 competition brief.



<b>Stockholm City Library</b>		<small>2023-24 MSc3 ARSA100 Brief 03</small>
<p><b>Developing a Library</b></p> <p>This brief introduces the project you will each focus on for the remainder of the academic year. It asks you to individually consider how you can develop and transform the Stockholm City Library, by Erik Gunnar Asplund, into a contemporary public library, serving the needs of a diverse, Twenty-First Century society, almost 100 years after its inauguration. As you already know, this question is a complex and disputed one, an elaboration of an ongoing critique that began almost as the building opened and has evolved significantly in the last 20 years. Already in 1931, while it was still new, the building was considered too small. It was extended by Asplund himself, in a manner which counterpointed the architectural concerns of both the original interior and exterior, reflecting his reinvention of himself as a modernist architect in the short, intervening period. Significant areas of the library have changed their function since then. Smaller physical adjustments undertaken by his son have densified the existing structure and changed how both the public and staff used it, while further adjustments in the 1970s sought to make it more accessible.</p> <p><b>Competitions</b></p> <p>In 2006, a major international competition was announced, with the intention of reinventing the library through a significant new addition which, alongside the existing building, would have delivered a net usable floor area of 24,000m<sup>2</sup>. This project, which</p>	<p>attracted enormous interest from the architectural profession, was abandoned in 2009 due to public and political disquiet. In 2012, a brief focused on care for the existing building was produced, detailing its heritage concerns. This was followed in 2014 by another brief, which sought to both re-establish the questions of the failed 2006 contest, while critiquing some of its assumptions and, simultaneously, acknowledging the much-reduced circumstances in which the project would now take place. In seeking to deliver a version of the original aspiration within a total floor area of approximately 15,000m<sup>2</sup>, which the combination of the existing library and bazaar offers, this brief asked a more open question than its predecessor. Instead of listing prescribed areas, as required in 2006, it challenged the architect to consider how they might make best use of the original building, in order to accommodate as much of those original intentions as possible, but in a more flexible manner, while also proposing that various elements could be reduced or removed. In doing so, it emphasised issues of diversity, questioned the necessity to accommodate large areas for new media, proposed a shift in the provision of study spaces to smaller group and individual work environments, and opened up the possibility for overlapping uses, in time as well as space.</p>	
<p>Caruso St John, the British practice that was awarded the project, reinforces this negotiative position in their response to the task: "In a completely new building it is possible to devise a functional programme that, in the abstract, prescribes sizes and adjacencies and to ask the design team to meet these requirements. In an existing building the development of the brief goes hand-in-hand with the spatial opportunities and connections that are possible. And in the case of a listed building this process is even more intimate, where the aspirations for improvement and change must be reconciled with the quality of the existing architecture."</p> <p>In 2019, Caruso St John's project was halted. Now, close to 20 years after the original competition, it is your turn to devise an appropriate response to the Stockholm City Library and to consider how it might best serve the needs of today, and into the future.</p> <p><b>Requirements</b></p> <p>Working up to the P2 examination and following careful interrogation of both the 2006 and 2014 briefs, you will each develop an individual attitude to the library, which you will test through the development of both an architectural strategy and an accompanying programmatic brief. In communicating your intentions, you will need to engage not only your knowledge of this library but also the wider research you have been conducting as individuals and a group in relation to the public library as a type, in order to address the larger questions facing it. Amongst many, the following issues are of particular concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>What are the responsibilities and expectations of a contemporary public library now?</b> How are these situated in relation to the particular concerns of Swedish society, within its capital city, and how might the redeveloped library acknowledge and engage the already established network and infrastructure of libraries in Stockholm?</li> <li>- <b>Who is the library for?</b> How does it serve the needs and aspirations of a complex and highly diverse contemporary society, which includes a shifting demographic and many for whom Sweden has become their home, but is not their place of birth and for whom Swedish is not a native language?</li> <li>- <b>What is an appropriate response to the existing building?</b> Should one create a more or less autonomous building, as the 2006 competition suggested, allowing the monumental status of Asplund's library to be reinforced; should one work within that monumental building, densifying and optimising it, as was suggested in 2014; or is there a possibility somewhere in between, where the existing library might be extended or added to in a more limited way?</li> </ul> <p>Taking the intellectual premise of the 2014 brief as our collective starting point, you will each, individually, establish your response</p>	<p>to these questions and those that ensue from them. You will then go through a process of testing and critiquing the original terms and scale of the 2006 brief in order to consolidate your attitude and conclusions in response to your premise for what the resulting library might be. The outcome, as a functional brief, will depend on your concerns and how you conceive these being translated into built form and space.</p> <p>We should also remember that the questions asked of the original brief by its successor in 2014, are now themselves a decade old. Since then the world has changed fundamentally in many ways: it has become far more cognisant of the planet-wide environmental crisis that we collectively face, and the need for both wider society, and for architects and architecture in particular, to respond to it proactively and effectively; mass migration, often as a direct result of environmental change, has become a major social and political question and a driver for change; we have been through a global pandemic, one of the effects of which has been to transform the way many people approach their working environment and their public lives; both the outcomes and aftermath of colonialism and the priorities that underpin traditional social hierarchies have been fundamentally called into question; there is an ever wider understanding that learning and education is a life-long activity; there is far more scepticism about the concerns of neoliberalism in response to these and other questions. How can your own reflections on the role of this library, in this city, and in relation to the contemporary culture it fosters, incorporate such questions?</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>By P2, you will be able to evidence and represent your concerns and conclusion through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>A statement of your attitude to the role of the library</b>, its situation in society and the city, the qualities and character of the existing monumental building and the ways in which you propose to transform it, in order to address the questions and issues you have raised.</li> <li>- <b>An architectural proposition in relation to the existing library</b>, defining whether you intend to densify it, extend it, or see it as part of an ensemble, with a new building or buildings. This needs to be presented within either or both the site model (1:500), physical building model (1:100) or the digital model, each of which you are already preparing as a studio.</li> <li>- <b>A series of clear diagrams</b>, expressed in plan, section and three dimensions, which describe how this proposition works, in response to the brief, the site and the existing building. Ideally the graphical language of these diagrams should correlate with those used in the analysis of existing library precedents to allow for comparison.</li> <li>- <b>A consolidated room or area programme</b>, as a spreadsheet but also graphically represented and compared with the 2006 brief, translated through the aforementioned diagrams into the architectural proposal, in strategic terms.</li> </ul>	

Brief received by the course coordinator Sam De Vocht.



2007 winning competition proposal  
Heike Hanada



2015 winning competition proposal  
Caruso St John Architects



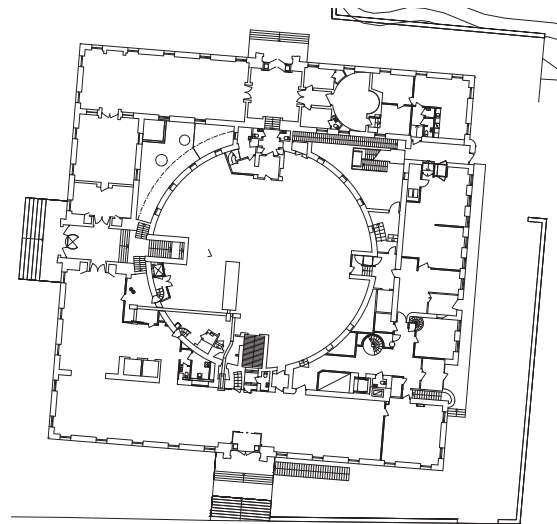
## Looking carefully at Asplundhuset

The project was initiated by looking carefully at the existing Library designed by Asplund: the Asplundhus. As seen on the image on the right by David Grandorge, the building is a very geometrical building out of plaster, seemingly built on top of a horizontal plinth. This image shows the main entrance as envisioned by Asplund, approaching the building from the East side.

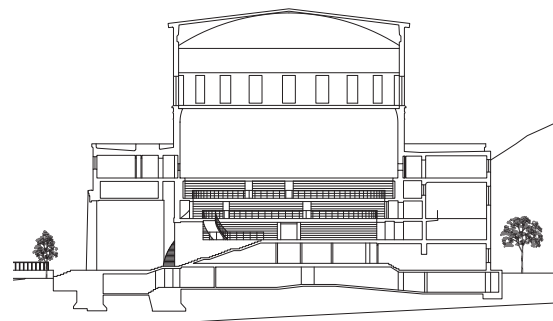
At the start of the project's research phase, we collectively made a 1:25 model of seven important rooms within the Library. We had to decide ourselves the scale and scope of the model. It brought us together as a group, which made the year much more pleasant since we became a tight-knit group. It was also an intense project that taught me more about managing a group of people and making a collective effort democratically. What is interesting about working in a group of students is that by design, there is no hierarchy. This can also be challenging, as no one has the right to make final decisions on his/her own. When working with people you don't know, it was interesting to see the different skills of people and the way they behave in a group. This sharpened some of my soft skills. Working on a model in such a large group also has some more complex parts. Such as that, not everyone has the same feeling of responsibility, so of course, some people do more and some do less. It is important not to get demotivated by the people who are less motivated to work but

to find motivation in the ones who do feel the same eagerness.

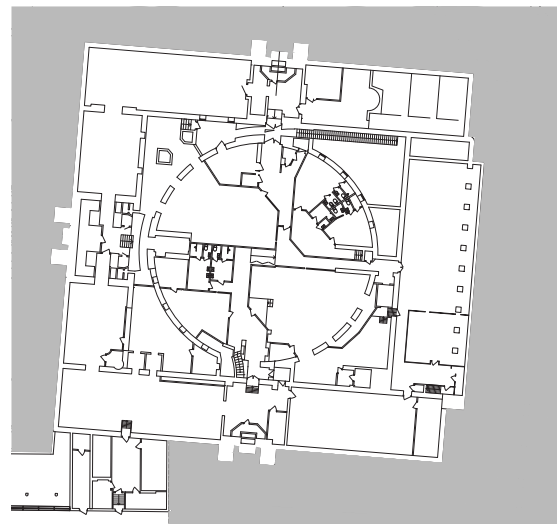
Making the 1:25 model made us understand how the fabric of the existing Library worked, and also the spatiality and furnishing of it. Even though, at various times, it felt somehow useless to put so much effort and time into the model. For example, making the roughly estimated 20,000 books was a tedious task. But in the end, it was beneficial to always have the model close by and be able to keep on looking at it throughout the course of the year. It was also fun to see how strangers kept walking into our studio space to be impressed by the 1:25 model.



Existing plan of the ground floor.



Existing section of the Asplundhuset.



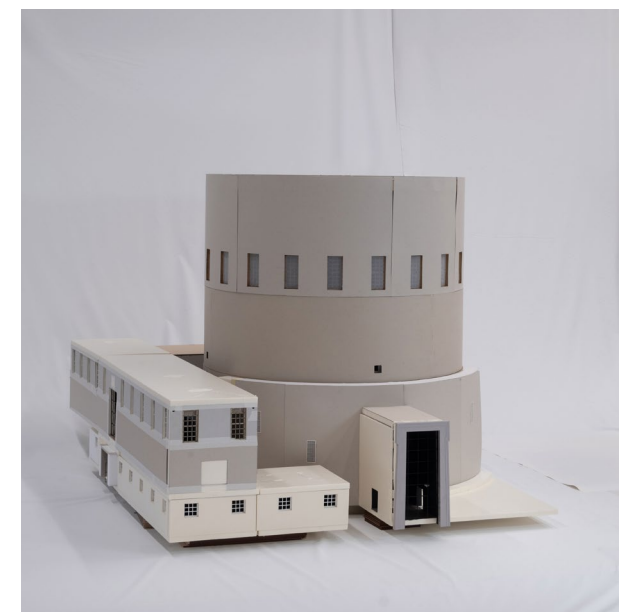
Existing plan of the basement floor.



2015 photograph by David Grandorge.

*Robbrecht en Daem architecten worked intensively on Van de Velde's masterpiece from 2006 onwards. They managed to understand and internalize his design attitude. They mastered spatial composition, proportionality, light incidence, the relation between mass and openness, detailing, materialization and circulation patterns to such an extent that they were able to accurately continue van de Velde's design idiom. They did so not only for the restoration of the Boekentoren but also for the new additions to the complex, as if they had learned the trade at the master's drawing board.*

- Excerpt from the book 'As Found In'.



Photograph of the 1:25 model of main Library rooms.





Poché staircase, archival photograph



Poché staircase, 2023 photograph



Children's Library, model photograph



Children's Library, 2023 photograph



Newspaper reading room, archival photograph



Newspaper reading room, 2023 photograph

Many of the spaces are not anymore in tact, or functionally the same as Asplund designed them almost a century ago. The poche staircase used to lead up to a public educational floor, but is now closed of as the top floor situates staff only. The newspaper reading room is replaced by a 'mixed media' room, cluttering the space. The Children's Room, designed as a small school within the Library, complete with separate entrance, lost it's educational function. The Children's Storytelling room is still largely showing it's glorious past.



Children's Reading room, archival photograph



Children's Library, archival photograph



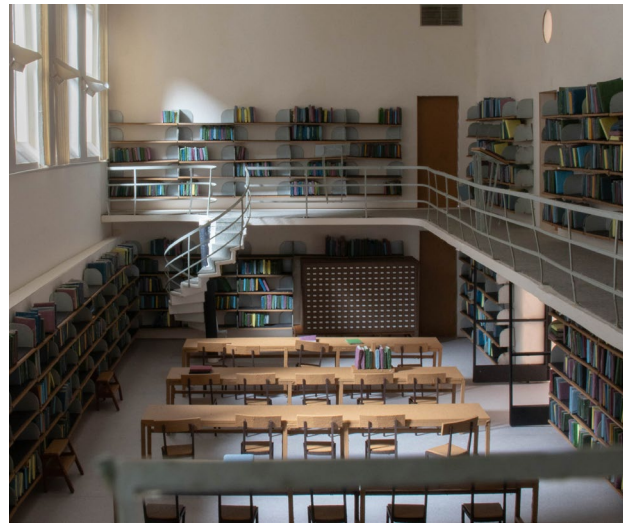
Children's Storytelling room, model photograph



Children's Storytelling room, 2023 photograph



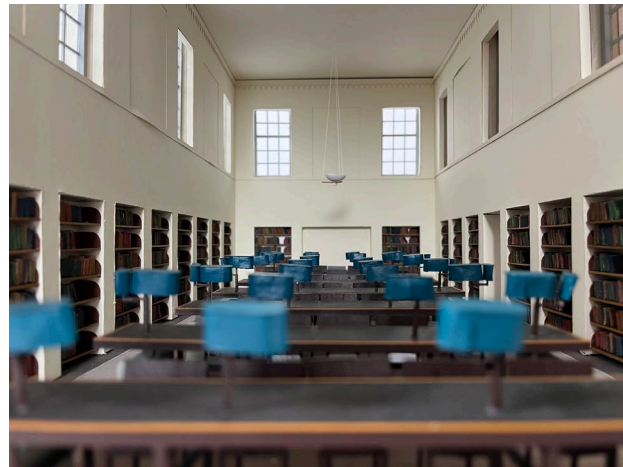
The perimeter halls still function well as study spaces. They provide open stacks and largely have the same furniture as a century ago. On the right, we can see the Rotunda, also still largely the same. As one goes down in the section, the basement is a collection of clutter collected over a decade of use. As one can note from these study, the library is very monotonous in its function, providing reading, studying space and open stacks. Educational functions and public programme like a newspaper reading room have been lost.



West perimeter hall, model photograph



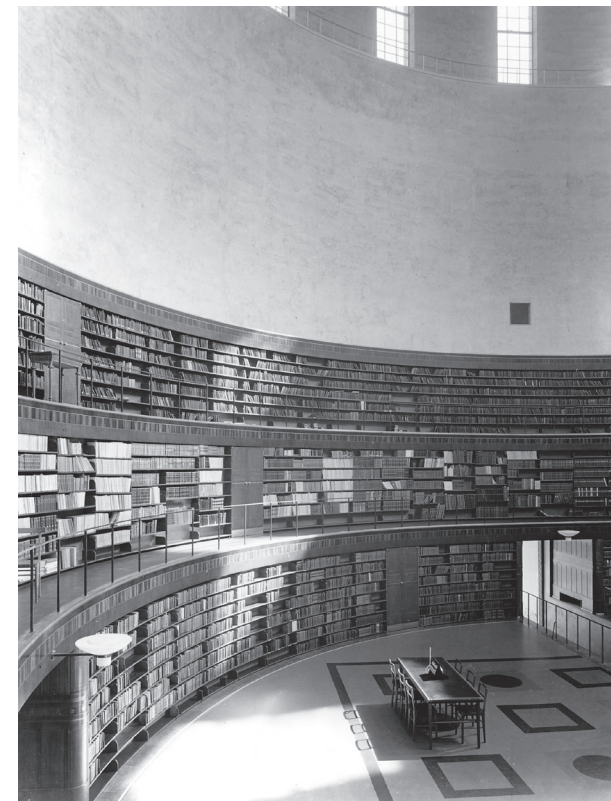
West perimeter hall, 2023 photograph



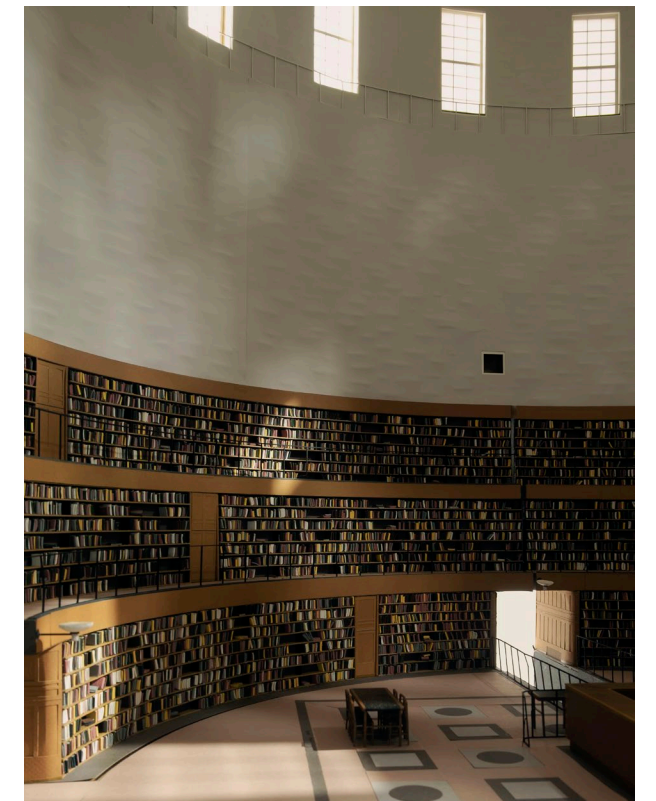
South perimeter hall, model photograph



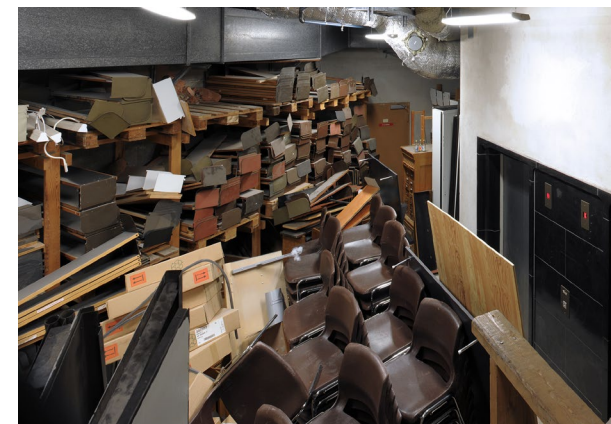
South perimeter hall, 2023 photograph



Rotunda, archival photograph



Rotunda, model photograph



Basement photographs by David Grandorge. 2015.



## Asplund's Precedents

While one crucial research aspect of the Graduation Project was the typology of the library, another essential aspect was the architecture of Asplund. I enjoyed this architectural context for the project, as it gives a lot of historical and architectural context to work with. We analysed various projects by Asplund, again, collectively: Villa Snellman, the Woodland Chapel, Lister County Courthouse, the Skandia Cinema, the Stockholm Exhibition, the Bredenberg Department Store, the Gothenburg Law Court Annex and the Woodland Crematorium. This gave an insight into how Asplund's architecture worked and which architectural tools he used to design various types of buildings. We analysed the Gothenburg Law Court Annex with the same people as mentioned before. This was explicitly interesting since it is also an extension of an existing semi-public building. Just like our assignment for the extension of the existing Asplund building. What I found very useful about this assignment was that we got to understand Asplund's architecture, which helped read the architecture of the Stockholm City Library more in-depth. This was very important as the existing Asplund building on the site is of particular monumental architectural value, which is very significant for its location. Our role was to take a position relating to this.

An important inspiration throughout the project was the Stockholm Exhibition of 1934, designed by Asplund. The festiveness and outward-looking publicness was an inspiration for the project.



Entrance Pavilion, Stockholm Exhibition, E.G. Asplund

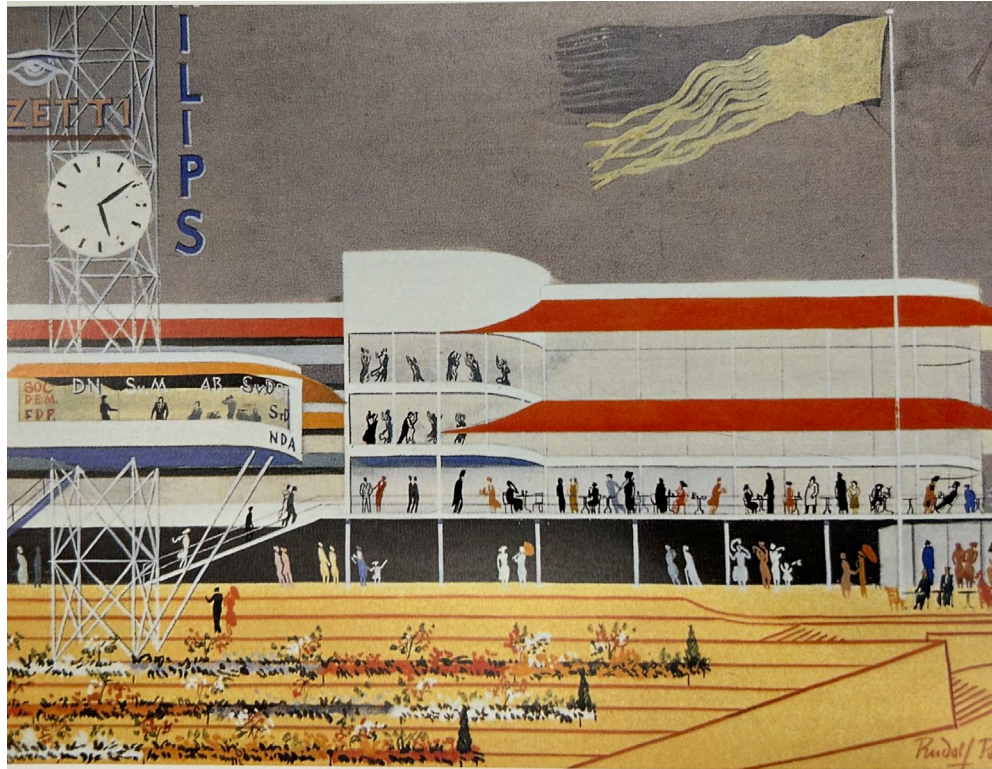


Painting by Asplund, ArkDes



Painting by Asplund, ArkDes





Paradise Restaurant by E.G. Asplund. 1928.



Paradise Restaurant by E.G. Asplund. 1928.

We can see how these pavilions designed for the Stockholm Exhibition of 1934 by Asplund are similar to the Bazaar of the Library. They are a place for public life.



Kulturhuset, Stockholm by Peter Celsing



Gothenburg Courthouse Annex by E.G. Asplund.

For the facade facing the square, I looked at the Kulturhuset and the Courthouse Annex by Asplund. You see people moving behind the windows. It makes the building transparent and visually accessible. It also shows the public life behind the facades.



The Gothenburg Law Court Annex is interesting as it's an extension designed by Asplund. We tried to understand how Asplund reacts to an existing building.

Gothenburg is the second city of Sweden and was founded by king Gustav Adolf II in 1621. Gothenburg is situated on the eastern bank of the Göta river and faces the North Sea. In the heart of the city, on the Stora Torget (Swedish for "the big square"), later known as Gustaf Adolfs Square, we find the Law Court Annex by Asplund. The Law Court Annex is, as the name implies, an extension of the city's Courthouse designed by Nicodemus Tessin the Elder and completed in 1672. This Courthouse underwent a series of modifications with its latest change being the extension designed by the Swedish architect Erik Gunnar Asplund.

Tessin's Courthouse was originally a multifunctional complex, serving as a Courthouse, administrative center, and a meeting place for businessmen. It marked the entry to Gustaf Adolfs Square from the port via Stora Hamnkanalen, featuring distinctive facades with pedimented entrances. Over time, modifications by architects like Carl Wilhelm Carlberg transformed the Courthouse into a U-shaped building, making the entrance facing the square the primary facade. H.J. Strömberg later added a western wing, converting the building into a square block with an open courtyard. Adjacent to the north wing, the Governor's House was added, initially serving as an office and residence for the chief magistrate but later used by court functionaries. Fires resulted in changes to this building.

As the city grew in the 19th century, the administrative demands increased, revealing that the Governor's House had space issues and was in poor condition. In response, an architectural competition was held to replace it.

In 1913, Erik Gunnar Asplund won this competition with a National Romantic design that unified the Courthouse and Governor's House. He removed the entrance facing Gustaf Adolfs square and created a new entrance on the southern facade, introducing a symmetrical design. Asplund also proposed covering the Courthouse's courtyard with a glass roof, creating a new interior space.

In 1914, the Lindberg Foundation initiated the redesign of Gustaf Adolfs square, envisioning it as the centerpiece for the city's 1921 jubilee celebrations. Asplund's design, inspired by urban theorist Camillo Sitte, aimed to create a unified central space for celebrations. The 1923 Jubilee Exhibition influenced Asplund's subsequent designs. Gustaf Adolfs square became the city's forum, and Asplund sought to reintroduce monumentality into the square's design.

The Courthouse extension proposal in 1925 echoed the elements of Tessin's Courthouse but wasn't approved by the city council committees.

Asplund mainly focused on the interior of the extension, for which he took a modern approach. The courtyard linked old and new together and he maintained the traditional character of the eastern facade. By 1935, the committee approved some elements of the design, but not the facade. So Asplund and his assistants continued to study on facade designs. Eventually, the latest facade design of 1936, the facade with the shifted axis for the windows, got approved by the committee and was built.

Many elements of his first design of the Gustaf Adolfs square carried over into a later design of Asplund. The statue was again not centered on the square and there is still a map in the pavement, but now smaller. The grid of the streets is not broken anymore as the buildings on the north and west of the square are no longer

connected. The design of the square was never realised, but it contributed to some design changes for the Courthouse extension. The main change is that he turned his back on the idea of a single facade for the Courthouse and the extension.

It was not only the design of the Law Courts, but also the Courthouse that went through many changes over the years. The first design had two facades accentuated by pediments over giant order pilasters, but both had distinctive design expressions, making the east facade slightly more important. From 1817 the facade aligned to Stora Hamnkanalen changed into a clear secondary facade as some monumental elements like the segmental arch and stairs were removed. Whereas the east facade entrance acquired a more pronounced character. In Asplund his first designs of the extension of the Courthouse, he proposed to make the east facade the secondary facade, completely changing the monumentality of the Courthouse. As this was too radical and not what the city council wanted, he didn't go through with that idea and kept the entrance to the Courthouse untouched.

Many studies have been made to come to the final composition of the facade. From a functionalist building to a building with more classical elements. It's interesting to see balconies in these sketches, as they give the facade a more residential character. The many sketches also show how Asplund was trying to find a balance between the old of the Courthouse and the new of the extension. Both facades had to have their own identity but also belong together.

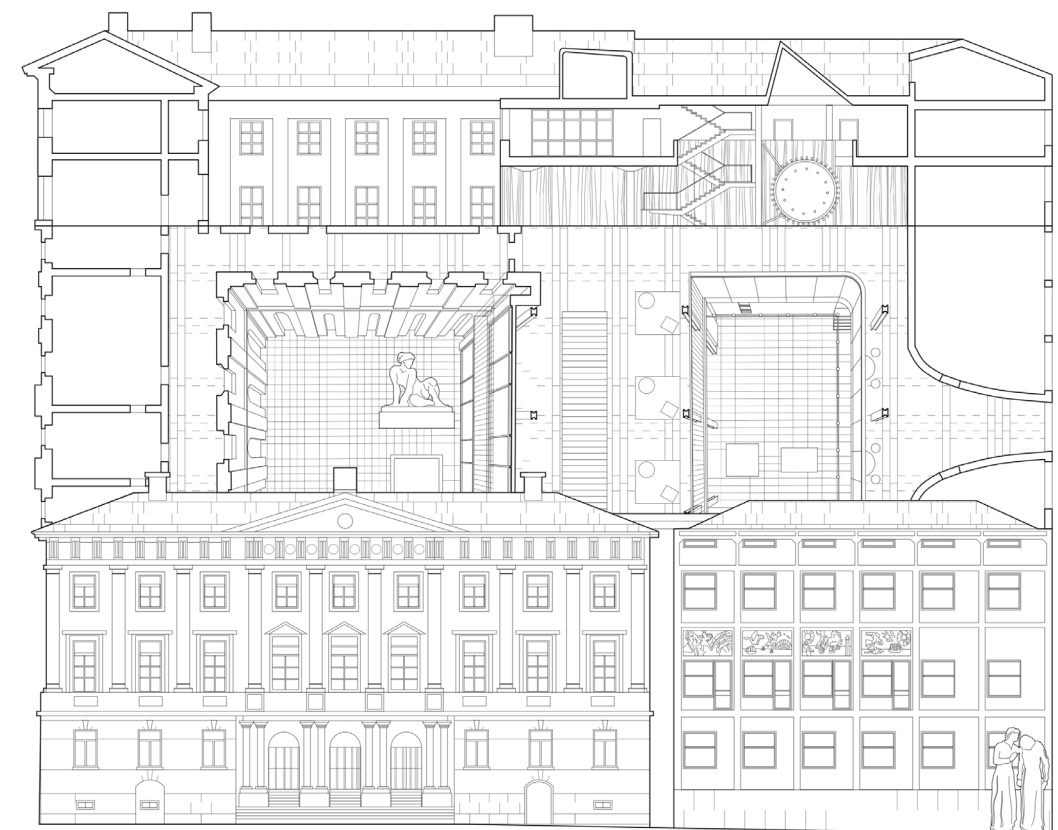
When Asplund changed from the idea of making a unified structure, he started using elements of the Courthouse in the facade of the extension. The vertical division in the facade is copied: the base has the same height, the attic windows fit within the height of the frieze of the Courthouse and the roofs have the same height. In a later design, Asplund made a shorter version of the Courthouse, because the city council kept disapproving his facade designs. By 1935, Asplund had taken a more modern approach for the facade. He still took inspiration from the Courthouse. The horizontal and vertical division of the Courthouse facade continues in the extension, but without the prominent classical ornaments. There is still a reference to the pilasters, as the vertical lines in the facade have a base and a capital, but they are more abstract.

The striking aspect of this view, in terms of its visual composition, is the element of the staircase that is carelessly breaking the rhythm of the columns. The loose furnishings and decorations have been omitted in the sketch, in order to draw attention to the architectural shell.

In the 1930s, the Stockholm Exhibition exhibited new ways of Scandinavian living. For many Swedes, this exhibition was their first encounter with modernism and functionalism. Also the idea of the domestic public interior became more important in this time. This domesticity is visible in these sketches: carpets, loosely placed tables and (comfortable) chairs, plants and an overdimensioned clock, all executed in wooden materials. This contrasts with the nature of the Law Court: people go to what is usually a tense situation. While waiting for this, they spend their time in this space that resembles a living room.



Gardner, G. (2023). Photograph of the facade facing the square. garethgardner.com.



Analytical drawing of the Gothenburg Law Court Annex by Andrea Beznitchi, Kelly Gums, Dominika Kubicka & Renzo Westerbeek.

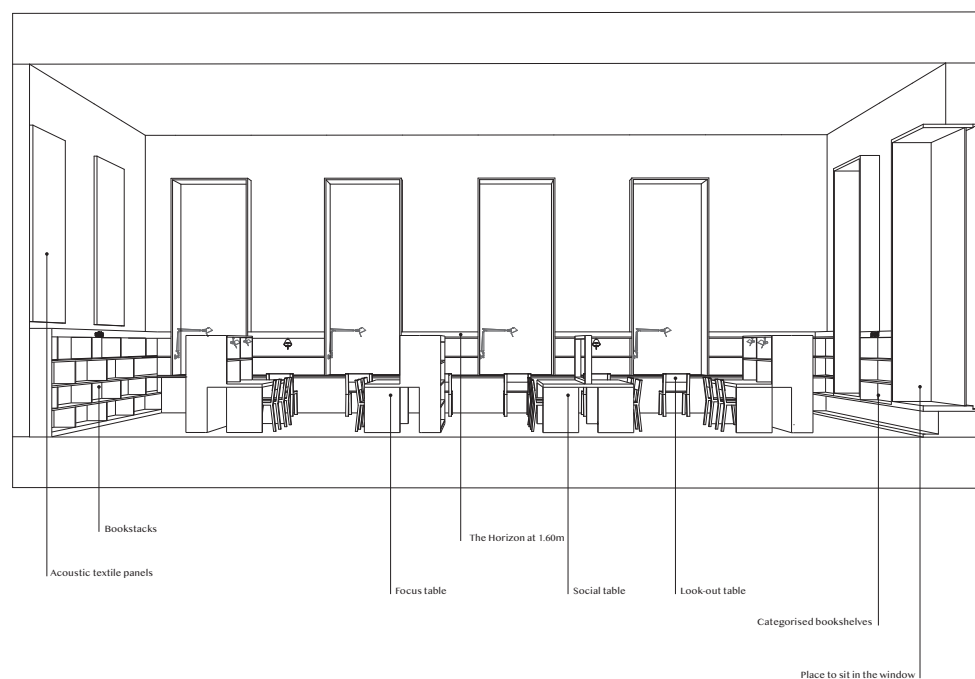
## A Room for a Library

After the very collective research of the course, we went into designing a Room for a Library. What I enjoyed about this exercise was that it was scaleless and also contextless. Anything was possible, and it was an architectural assignment about bookshelf dimensions, materials, window sizes, and human dimensions. In the process, I debated making a classroom for sharing knowledge and language learning or a reading room. Looking back, I should have made a classroom since the sharing of knowledge played an important role in the concept of my design.

Creating the room and thinking about architecture on such a small model-making scale was an exciting and helpful assignment. I would've wanted to make more rooms like these throughout the course, but making them is time-consuming. Even though the concept of the room itself, a reading room with various types of study/reading spaces, was not something that came back again into the design of the library extension, some concepts did come back,

like the vertical tall windows that let in much daylight deep into the room, and the idea of the inhabited plinth, which different people use in their unique way. This plinth was a theme that kept coming back in various stages of the design and is very typical for both the Room, the Asplund Library, and the designed extension.

The Room's essence lies in its architectural duality, embodying both the expansive anonymity of a public interior and the intimacy of the workspace. The Room encompasses both the feeling of a sizable, public Room, where one can have an overview and get a feeling for the size of the room, perceiving the horizon of the lining. The windows frame the city and the relationship between the room and its context: day, light, busy, quiet, sunny, and rainy. If this is too distracting, the user can choose a different desk, with or without other people. The view gets blocked off when the user sits down, and the workspace becomes distraction-free.



Model photographs



Model photographs

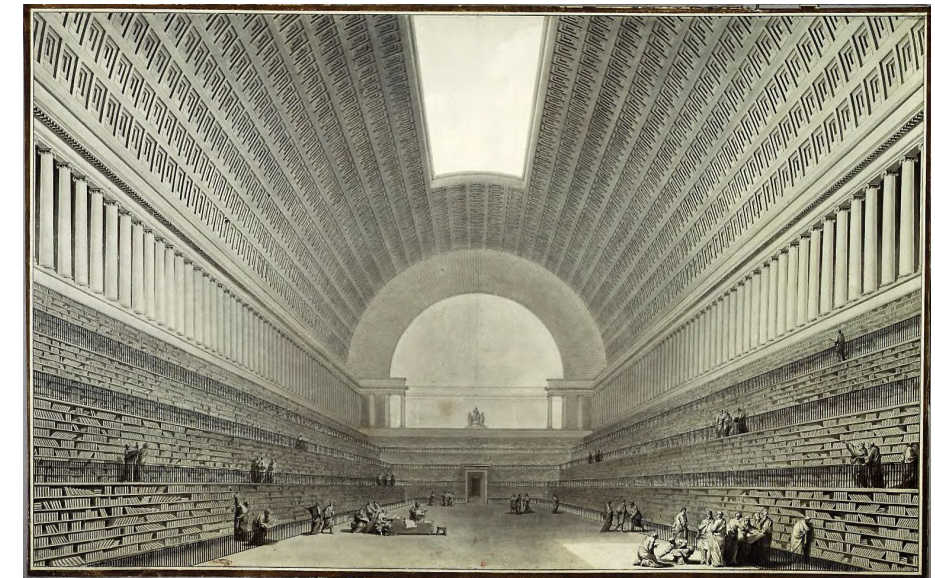


## The Modern Library

What is a Library in the 21st century? That's one of the main questions that started the project at the beginning of the year. We tried to answer this question in different ways by researching various modern libraries and by having a debate on the role of libraries in society. Collectively, we analysed different libraries around the world: the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Viipuri Library, the National and University Library, the Beinecke Library New Haven, the Berlin Statsbibliothek, the British Library, the Exeter Library and the Seattle Public Library. We analysed the buildings in small groups and presented the results to each other. This gave exciting insights into how these libraries worked, both in programme and spatially, by redrawing the plans and sections of these libraries. By doing the research in groups and presenting to each other, much research on various buildings could be done in little time. Andrea Beznitchi, Dominika Kubicka, Kelly Gumbs, and I analysed the British Library in London. By Colin St John Wilson. Spatially interesting about this library is how the larger reading rooms are flooded with (indirect) daylight. In volume, it reacts to its direct neighbours, a residential block on one side and St Pancras Station on the other. In terms of programme, it's not very contemporary in its diversity. It's mostly tailored to storing books and making them accessible to the public. Other libraries we analysed that have influenced my design specifically are the section and outdoor square of the Beinecke Library and the Exeter Library in developing the design for my P1 Room for a Library, with its library-tailored furniture. We also did site visits to het Predrikheren Klooster by Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten (KSA) and the LocHal in Tilburg, where the LocHal in Tilburg contains very little books and is more a "living room for the city" in contrast to the more classical interpretation of the library typology by KSA. It was beneficial to visit different libraries during the project, to get a feeling for them spatially and in terms of programme. I personally also tried to visit libraries in the places I went to outside of university, from small neighbourhood libraries to more extensive city libraries. I went to the Centrale OBA in Amsterdam by Jo Coenen, het Forum in Groningen, OPEN in Delft, the Royal Library in Stockholm, and the library in the Hasanpasa Gasworks in Istanbul. What I enjoy about working on a public building is that you can go and visit them everywhere, in different scales and with various approaches. And in general, you're not only the designer of a public building, but most probably also have some experience as a user.



Photo montage of the Rotunda by Andreas Gursky, 1999.

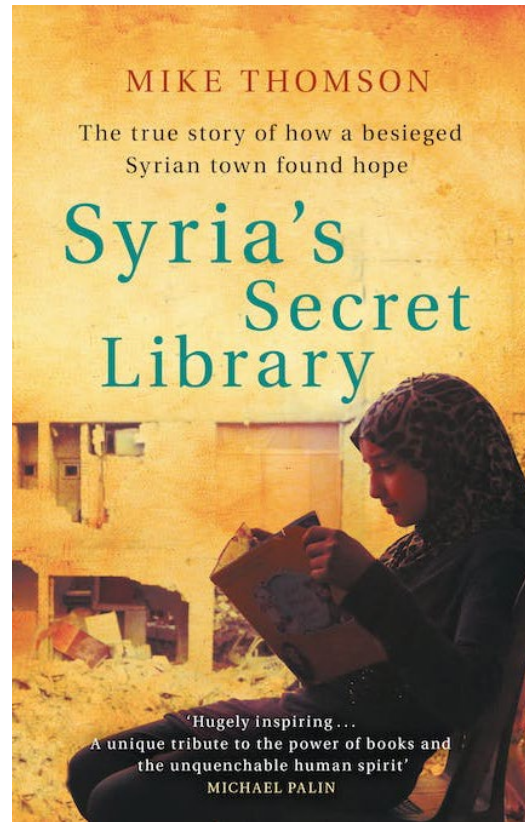


Drawing of the Bibliotheque National by Etienne-Louis Boullée. 1785-1788.

*"There are certain types of building over which there hovers an aura of myth. The most transcendent of all, the cathedral, is grounded in the sacred so that both form and pattern of use are fused in the language of ritual. But there is one type of building which is profane yet in fulfilling its proper role touches the hem of the sacred: the great library. [...] [the Library] protects the freedom and diversity of the human spirit in a way that borders on the sacred."*

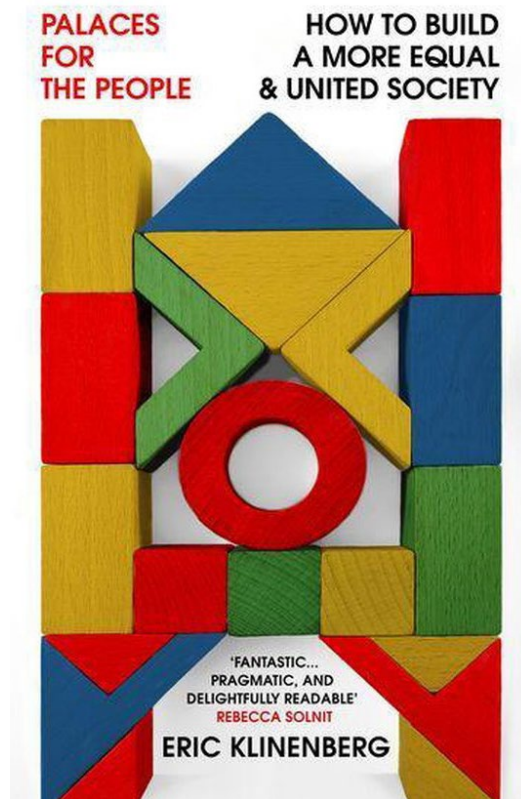
- The Design and Construction of The British Library by Colin St John Wilson





Thomson, M. (2019). *Syria's secret Library: Reading and Redemption in a Town Under Siege*. PublicAffairs.

The book *Syria's Secret Library* by BBC journalist Mike Thomson is a fascinating story I read about a secret library the inhabitants of Daraaya built during the Syrian civil war. The library provided social infrastructure for the inhabitants of Daraaya, which was dangerously under siege. The book explains the war and sketches the importance of a library as a safehouse for books, their knowledge and the people in the town. It describes the way a book, even in a war, gave citizens space to think about life and escape daily reality.



Klinenberg, E. (2018). *Palaces for the People. How to build a more equal & united society*. Vintage.

I started reading the book *Palaces for the People* by Eric Klinenberg after we had to listen to an interview with the author for the debate with Amy Thomas. I find it a very valuable source for what a library must be for the future. He talks about how social infrastructure (eg. Libraries) create a better and more sustainable society. Klinenberg sketches how people's lives can be improved in a variety of different ways because of social infrastructure. Eric Klinenberg emphasises the role of libraries as crucial components of social infrastructure. He argues that libraries are not just places to store books but are also vital community spaces that foster social connections and civic engagement. He argues that a healthy community is held together by shared spaces.



A woman is reading an Arabic, historical text while drinking something from a thermos bottle she brought herself. The amount of stuff she has with her makes you wonder how long she's been in the public library for. The public library, for a moment, becomes her home. The student on the other side is reading something in a physical book, while being blocked out from his environment due to his headphones. It's this border between public and domestic that inspired me to create the Room.

To conclude the findings of the research on the modern library, the following main principles were established, on which the design was further based.

**A place to share knowledge**

The Library should be a place where one not only acquire knowledge for him/her/themselves, but also share it with people from other walks of life. A place where knowledge is transferred freely and where opinions can be formed. This is, according to the 2006 brief, also the basis for a free democracy.

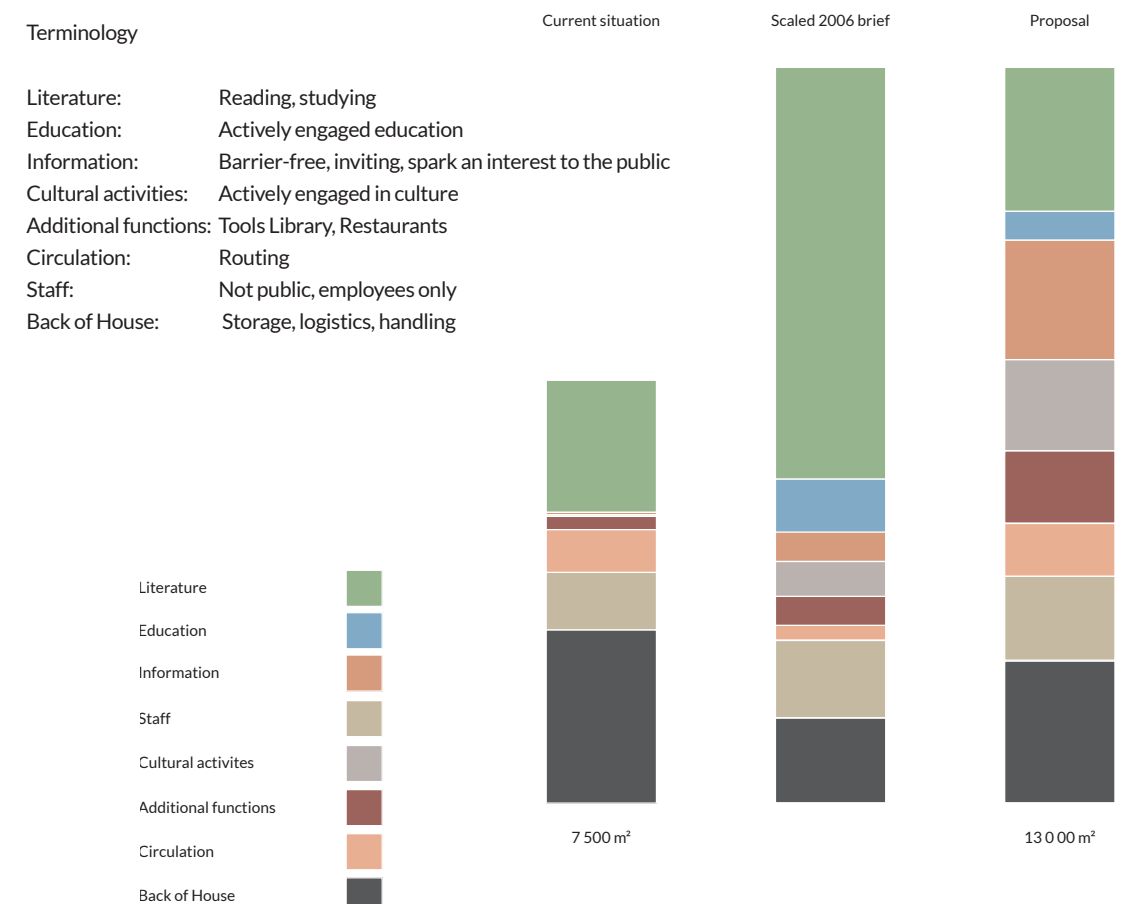
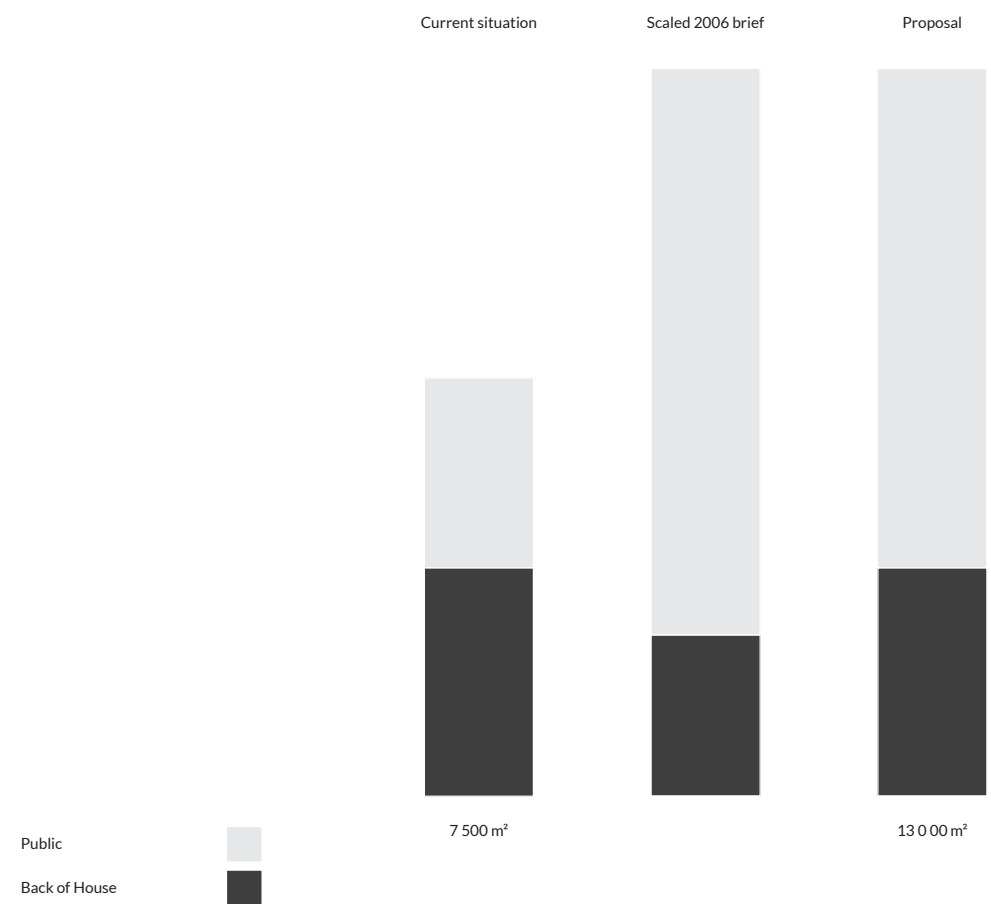
**A place for social interaction**

The Library, as social infrastructure, should be an inviting place where people can meet others from different cultures, languages, places and social backgrounds.

**A place for life long learning**

The Library should empower the citizen to learn, no matter what age or background. It should promote the status of literature and an interest in education, research and cultural activities. Its a place where one can go without the need of belonging to an educational institution. It's an educational institution for everyone.

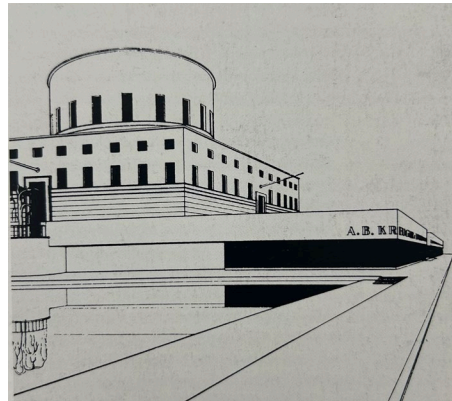
The programme, as seen in the graphs on the right page, is increased and diversified, taking into account the different briefs and research on what a modern library is. It also aims to open up the library more to the public. As you can see in the graph below, the current fabric contains more back of house and staff rooms than it contains public space. This is changed in the proposal, open it up again to the public.



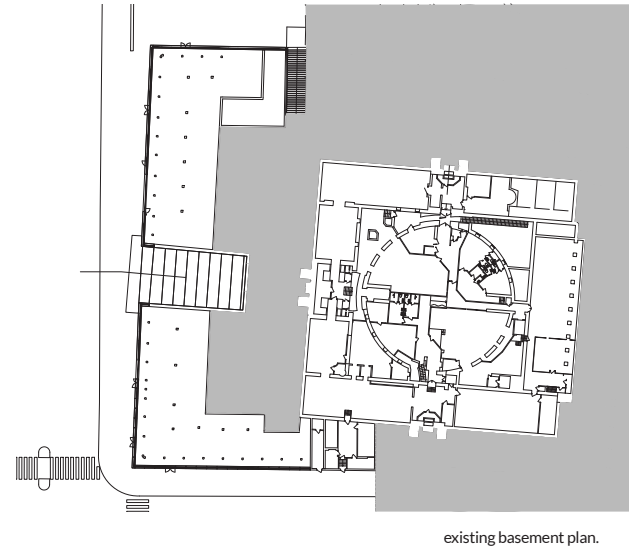


## The Bazaar: a mediator between city and library

The Bazaar is the public plinth on which the Library sits. What can be noted from the archival photos of the Bazaar (around 1930), is that the bazaar was a mediator between city and library, mostly facing the city. Light elements were used to construct the bazaar. Other light elements are canopy's and rolling marquees. The scaffolding used to hold up the marquees seems to be temporary. The Bazaar in the current plan is not part of the Library's interior, as seen on the basement plan on the right. It functions as a separate building, currently housing Scandinavia's favourite McDonald's and a supermarket.



Drawing of the bazaar by Asplund.



existing basement plan.



Archival photograph around 1930 of the ensemble bazaar / pavilion / Asplundhuset.



Existing plan of the basement floor.

2015 photograph by David Grandorge.



Archival photograph around 1930 of what is currently McDonald's, colourised by AI Photoshop 2024.

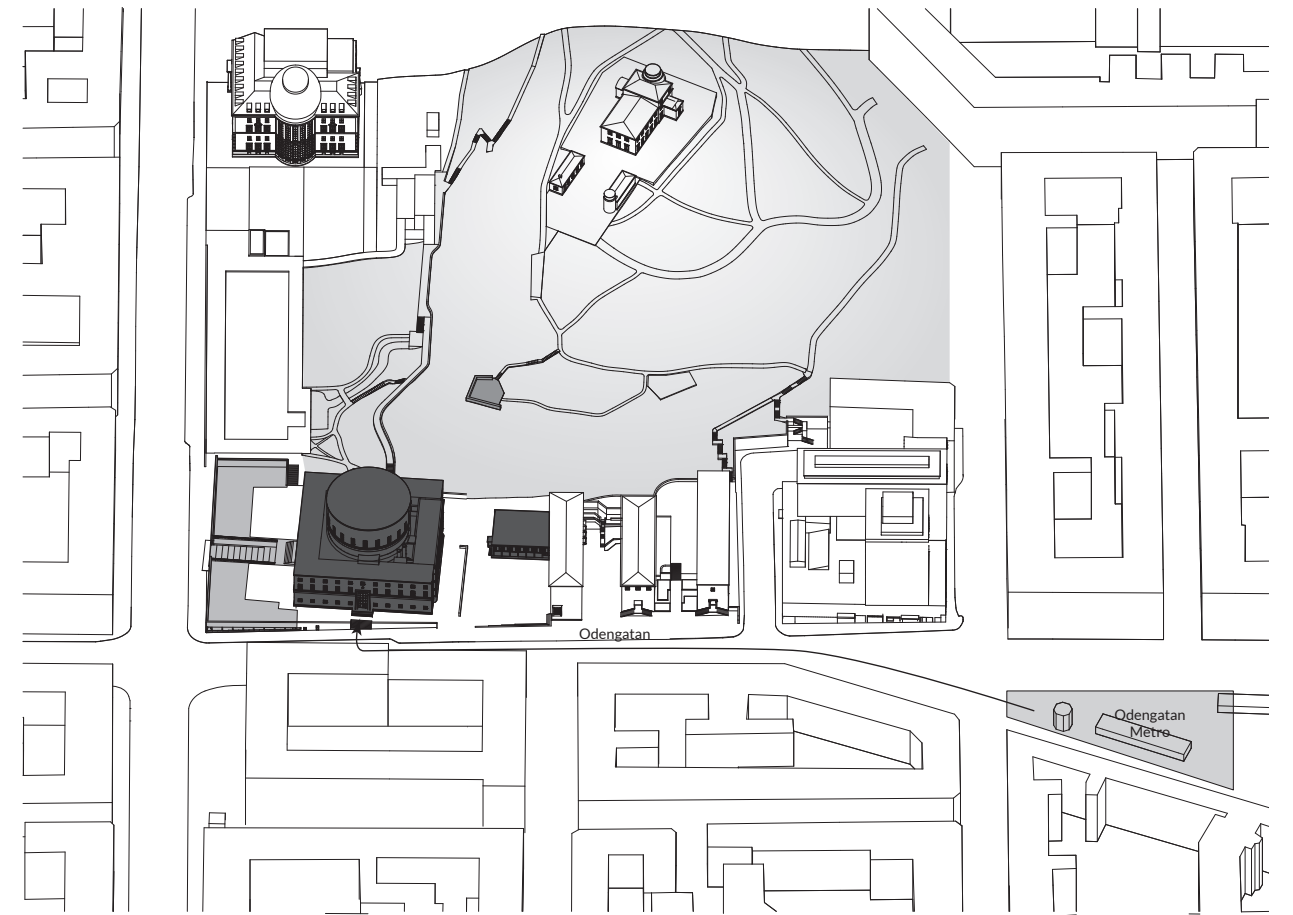


Looking at the West side of the building, we can see how this public life used to exist, as seen on the archival photograph on the right where the daily flower market shows the public life on the Spelbomskantorget. The painting by Henriksson shows how the flower market has been on that place since before the Library was built. Currently, the West side of the building is a parking lot and service entrance to the Library. The flower market still exists, but in very small form.

This side of the building has become more important in recent years, as the metrostation opened in 1952 was expanded by the construction of a regional train station in 2017. People coming from further away to the Library approach the building from the West side, as seen in the diagram on the page to the right.



Photograph by David Grandorge. 2015.



Showing the new relationship with the metro.



Odentorget in Stockholm by Harry Henriksson, 1907.



Archival photograph of Odentorget. 1928.



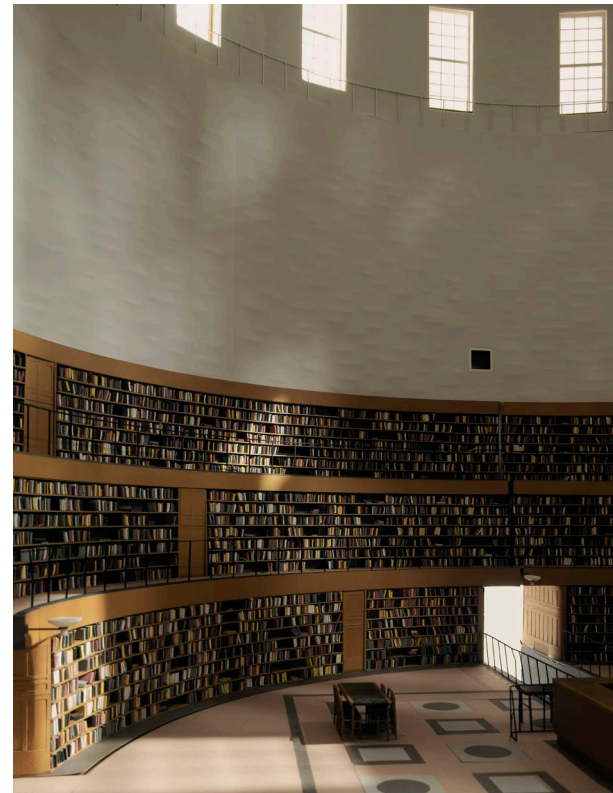
# The inhabited plinth

While starting the design for the Stockholm City Library, Asplund visited America. Here he saw how the bookshelves within libraries were open to the public. For the Stockholm City Library, he designed the Rotunda with the first open stack system of Scandinavia. People could go up the Rotunda's shelves and interact themselves with the knowledge in the books. The lending was done in the centre of the Rotunda.

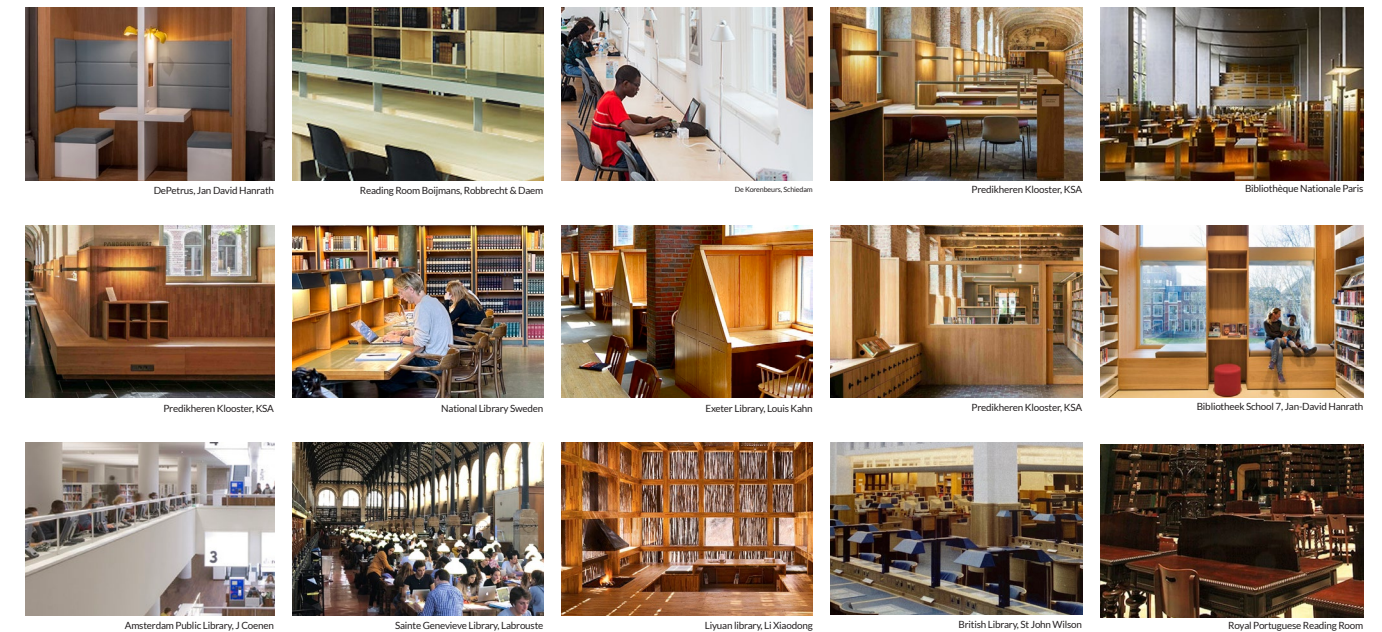
The Rotunda shows a metaphor that is widely used in the architecture of Asplund: the duality between sky and earth. The lending stacks can be seen as the earth which one inhabits. The bumped texture in the wall are the clouds in the sky, day-lit by vertical windows in the upper part of the Rotunda.

As a Library is a third place which one inhabits a space temporarily while studying, reading or other, the project aims to extend this idea of the inhabited plinth. A public route is created throughout the building, from the Bazaar on the East side of the building to the West side of the building. To make this a public and accessible route, the parking lot on the West side is lowered and becomes a public square.

The Bazaar is connected to the interior of the Library and allows for this public route. The ground floor basement is reorganised, creating space for an exhibition space. While visiting the circular exhibition space, one can interact and be inspired by knowledge, without necessarily having to read a book.



Photograph of the 1:25 model of the Rotunda.



Study of places of temporary inhabitation within different Libraries around the world.

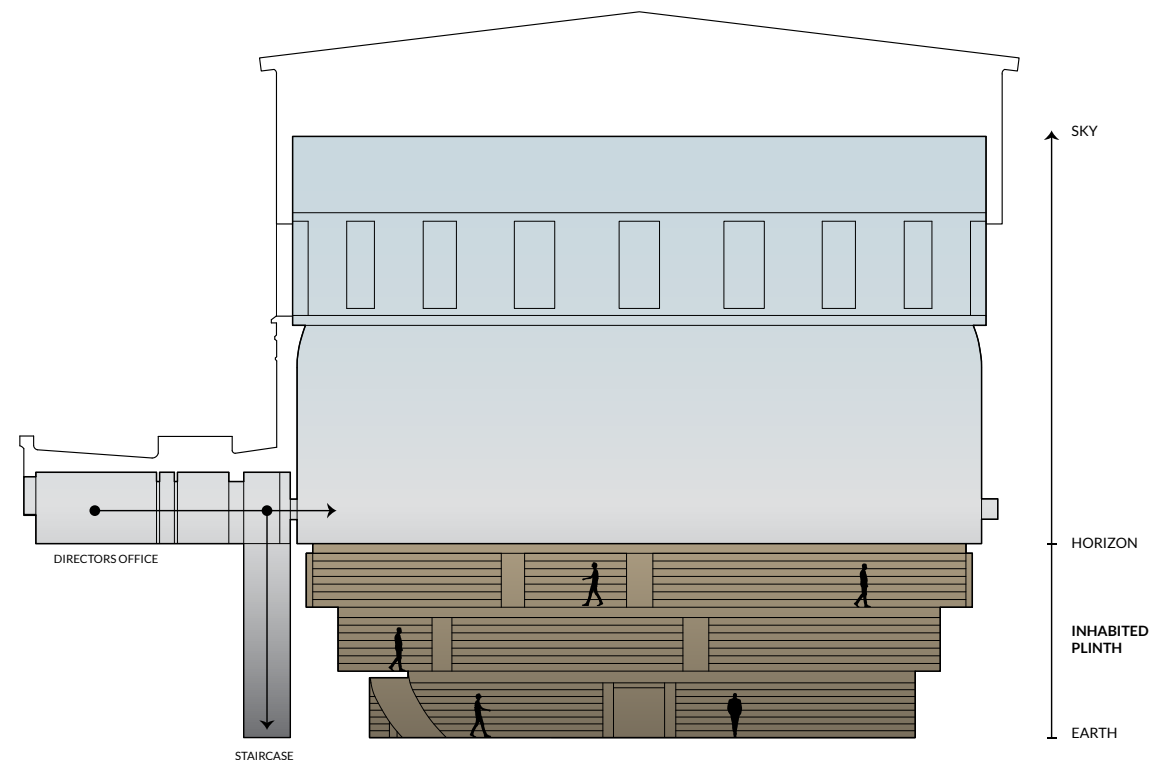
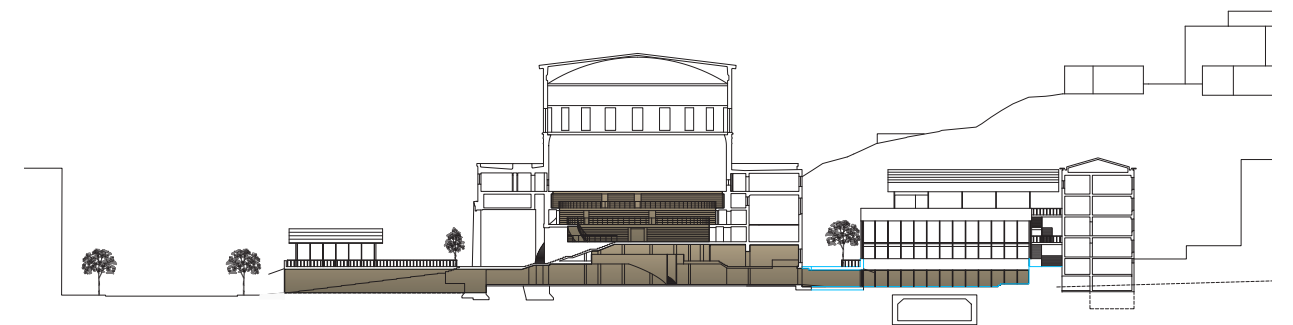
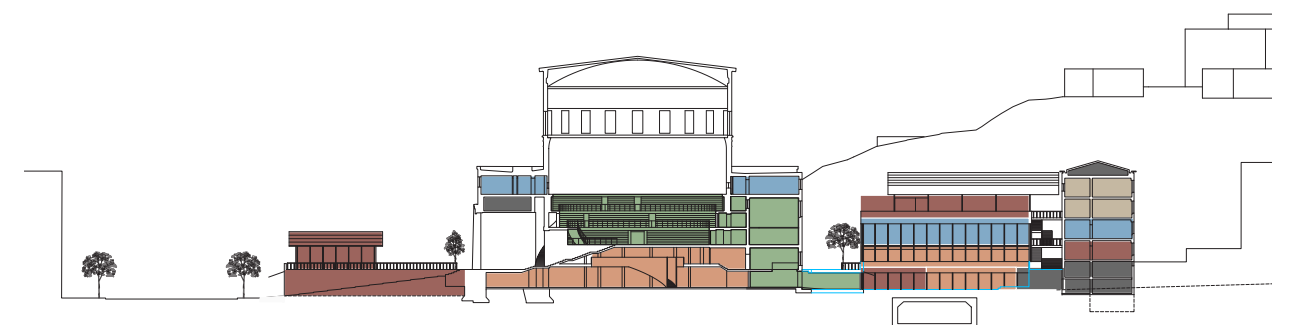


Diagram showing the duality between sky and earth.



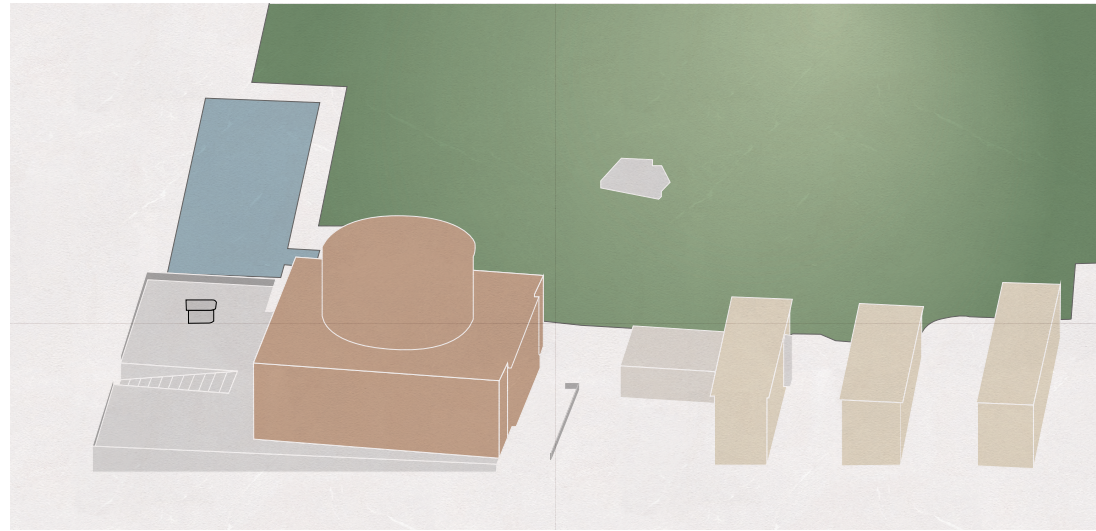
Extending the inhabited plinth throughout the plan.



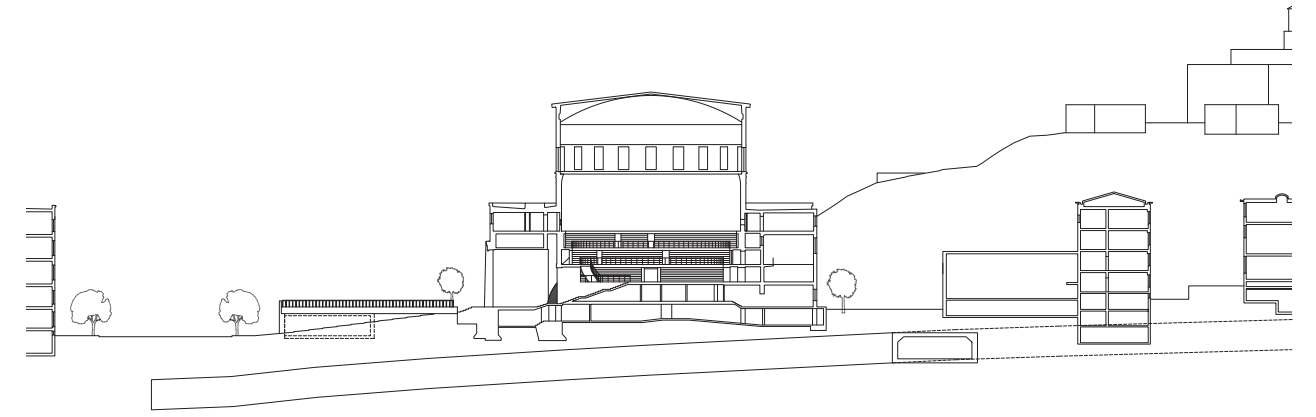
- Literature
- Education/discussion
- Information
- Staff
- Additional functions
- Back of House

The building works as a city of interiors with different functions.

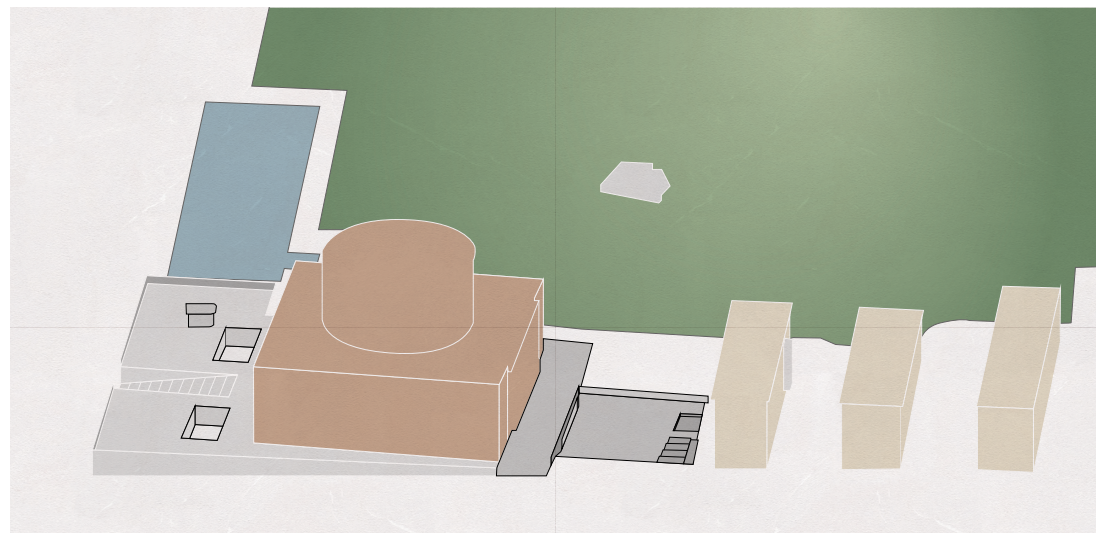




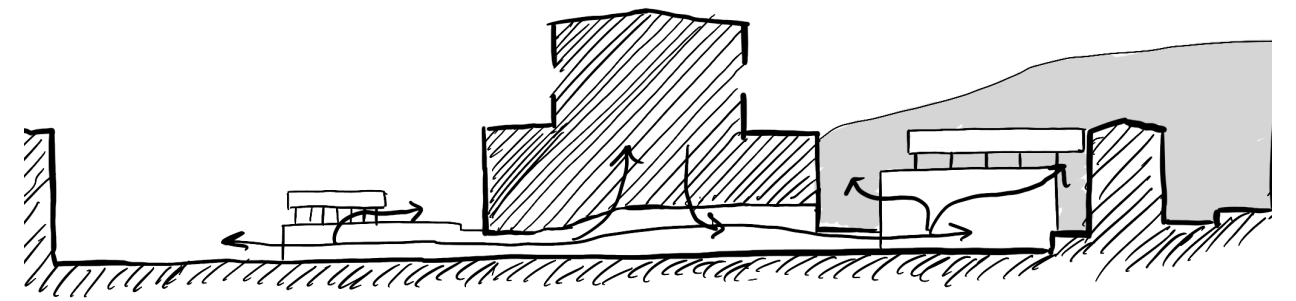
Current ensemble.



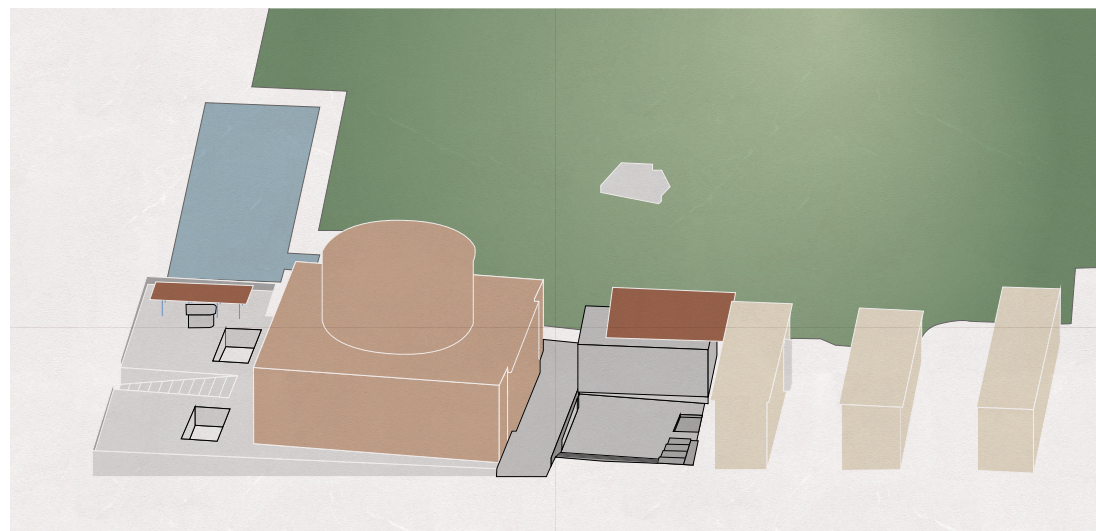
Current section.



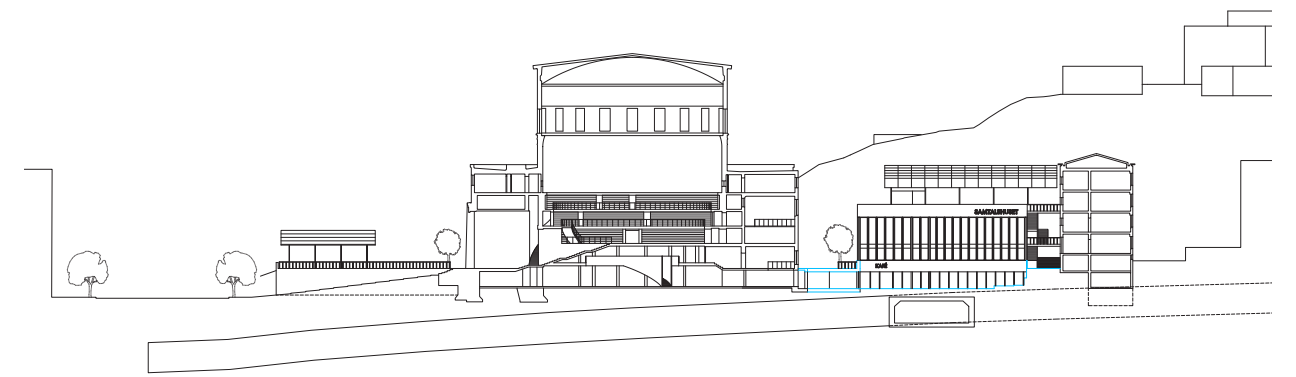
Lowering the parking lot, creating Spelbomskantorget with a new entrance to the Library. Behind this entrance sits the demolished International Library.



Sketch of how the building gets a public route from east to west on the Sveavagen level.

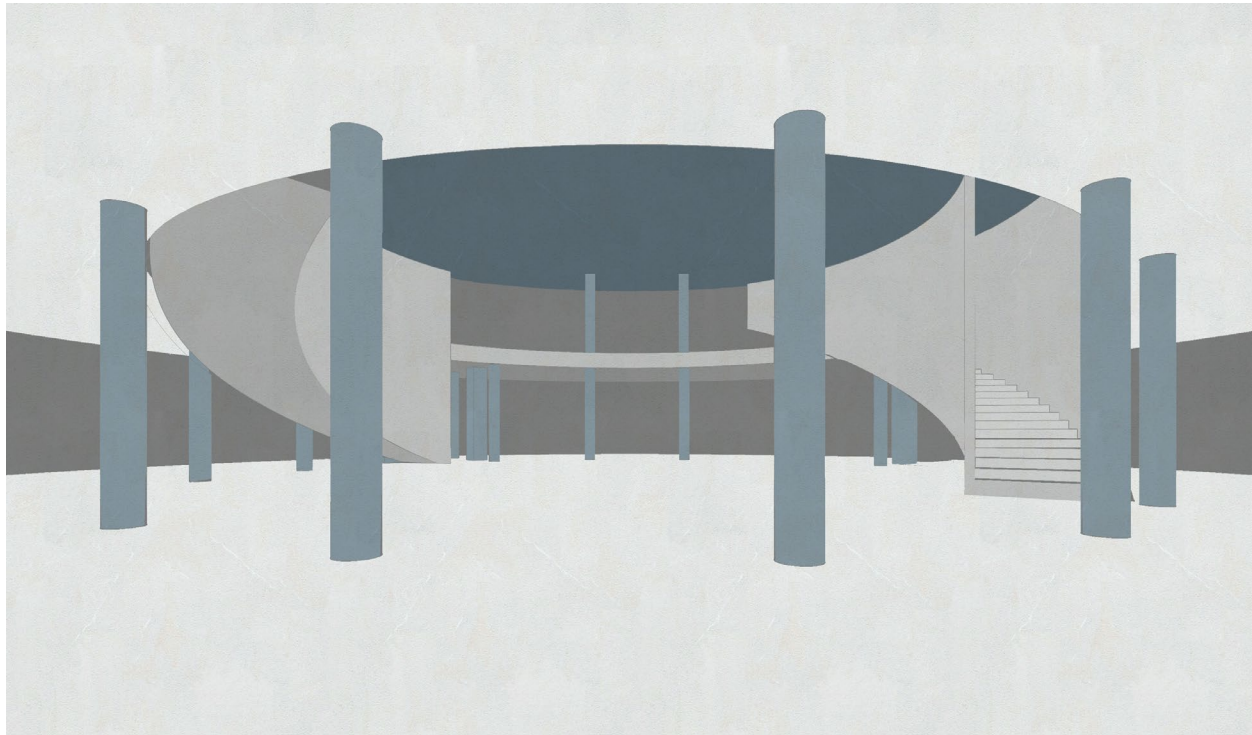


The Samtalshus, a house for conversation, is inserted on the square, sitting between the Asplundhus and the first lamella building. The volume is a mediator between square, hill, Asplundhus and first lamella.

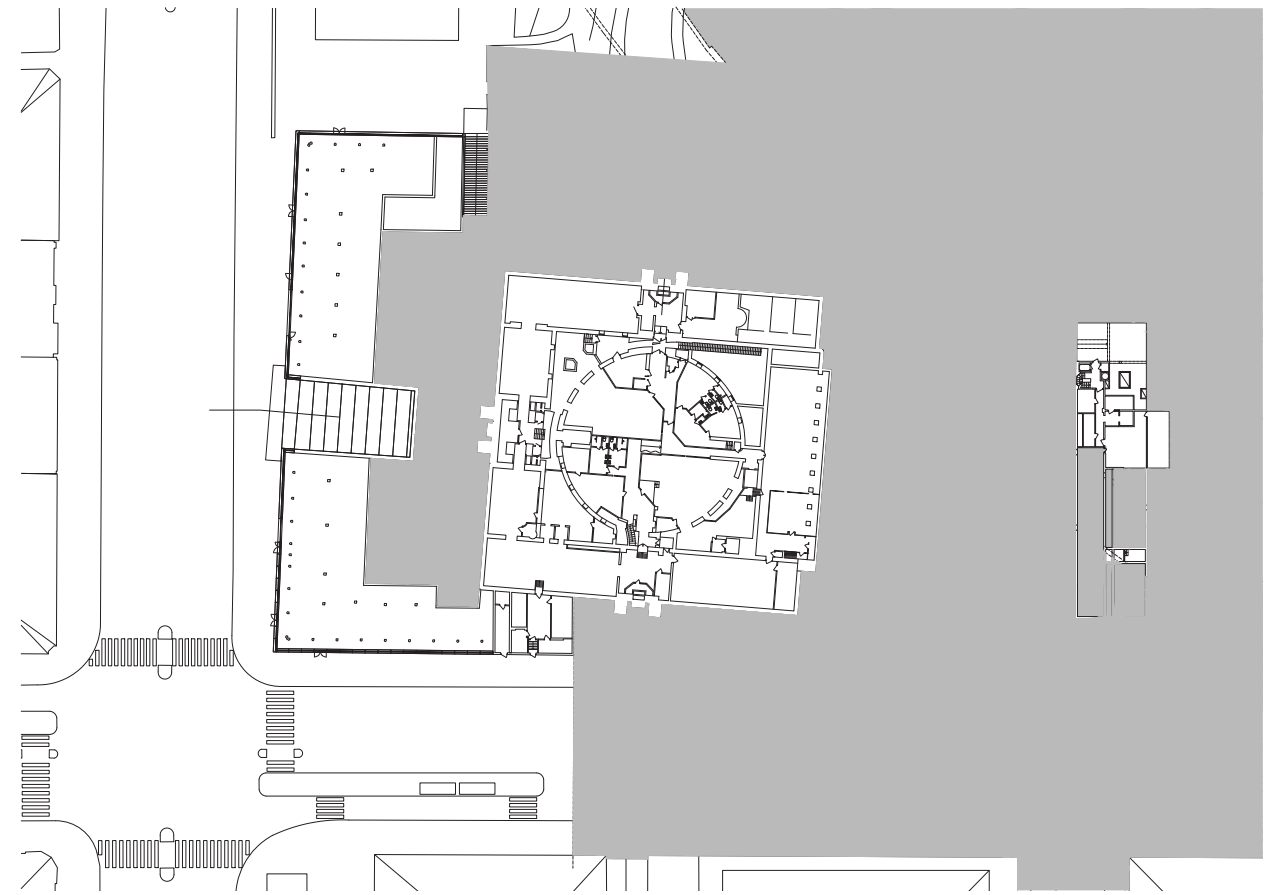


Proposed section.





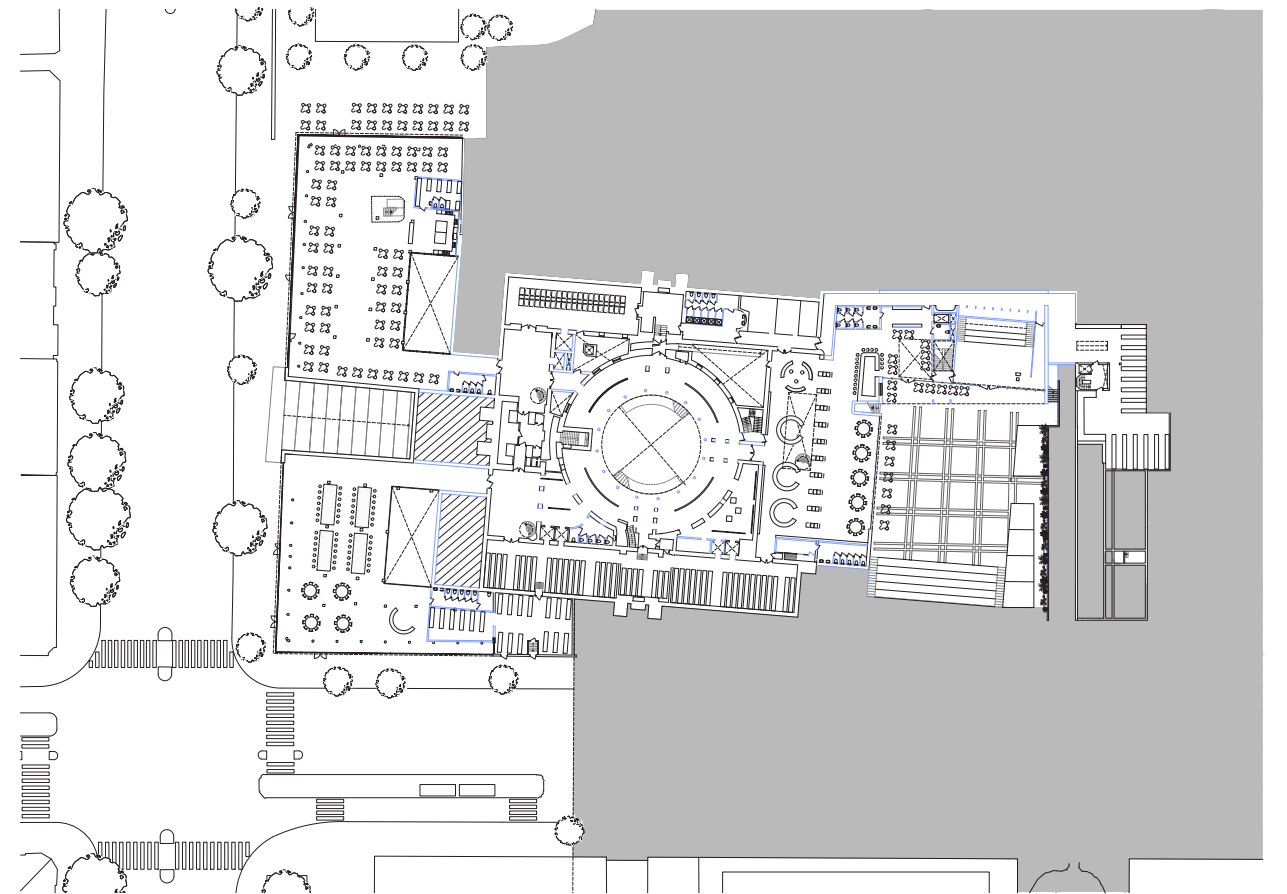
Nexus Exhibition space underneath the Rotunda.



Current floor plan at Sveavagen level.



New International Library in the added Bazaar and renovated West side of the building.



Proposed floor plan at Sveavagen level.



## A House for Conversation

The project aims to reintegrate the Library into the urban fabric and the city life of Stockholm. It does this by bringing the Bazaar into the building, creating a public, inviting route on the level of Svaevägen Street, and connecting this central city axis to a lowered square that finishes the route throughout the building. While following this public route, the visitor can go up to more focused areas within the library and discover its beautifully kept reading room and Rotunda centrepiece.

The public route going from west to east through the building, starts with the lowered Odentorget, allowing a place for public events during the endless summer nights in Sweden when sunset is after 22:00, but the twilight goes on even longer. To create the extension of square meters that the project asks for, a new Samtalshuset building is placed on the new Odentorget. Contrasting to the quote by Coling St John Wilson below, the Samtalshuset functions as a tempietto between the two relatively insignificant and closed facades of the Asplundhuset and the first lamella building,

Spelbomskan 16. This tempietto is a 'billboard facade' and becomes a showcase for public interior life in the library. The building is a pavilion, completing the series of plinths and pavilions as conceived by Asplund. As a transparent mediator between Asplundhuset, lamella building, hill and square, the building takes inspiration from the Stockholm Exhibition by Asplund and specifically the Paradiset Restaurant. These buildings were transparent and festive additions to the city's life. The free-standing roof structure on the building underlines this pavilion-like typology. It acts as an observation deck, allowing visitors to interact in a different way with the Hill and the urban landscape. It's sloped so that the visitor of the square can look underneath, framing the hill behind the building and allowing for light to enter the square. The building acts as a decor for what's happening both from its interior and the exterior. The aim is to create a library that not only allows for the individual consumption of knowledge but also facilitates the exchange of knowledge between the inhabitants and visitors of Stockholm.

*"For a library is not called upon to advertise the occasion that will draw a crowd of spectators to appointed times of performance. A comparison between the 'billboard' facade of the Paris Opéra inviting a huge audience and the single door leading into the walled courtyard of Labrouste's Bibliothèque Nationale makes the point."*

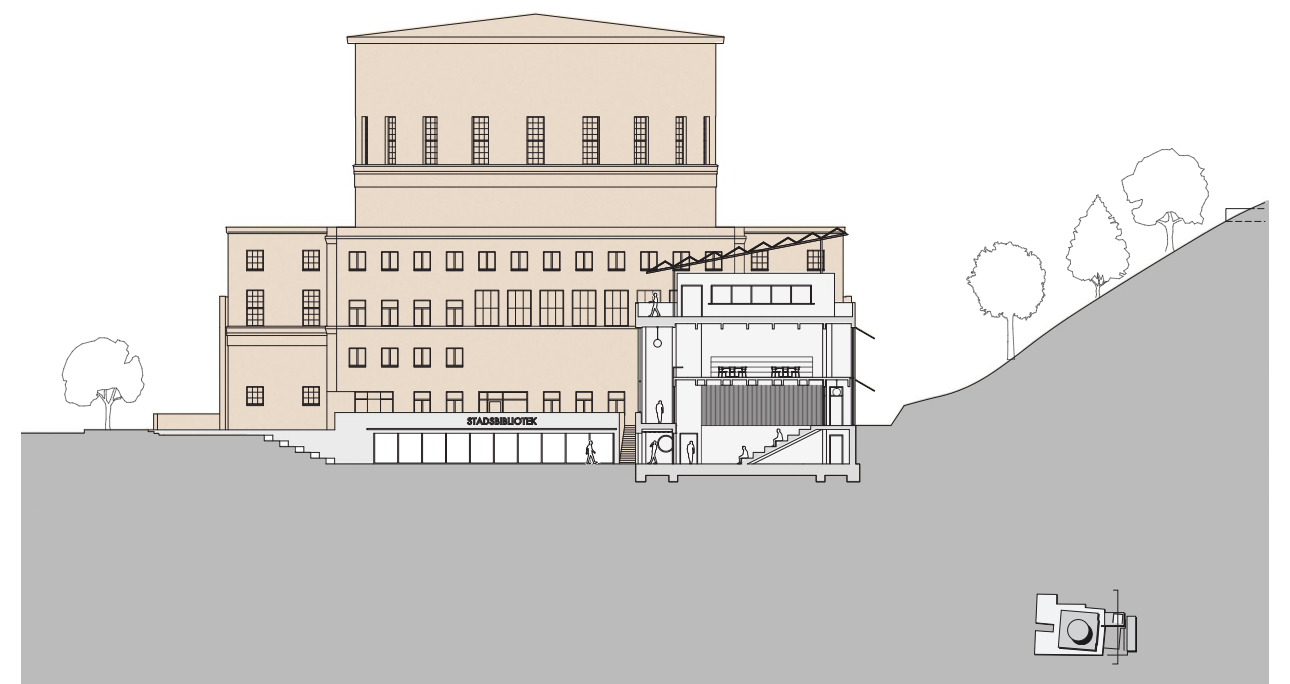
– The Design and Construction of The British Library by Colin St John Wilson



Model photograph of the new Spelbomskantorget.



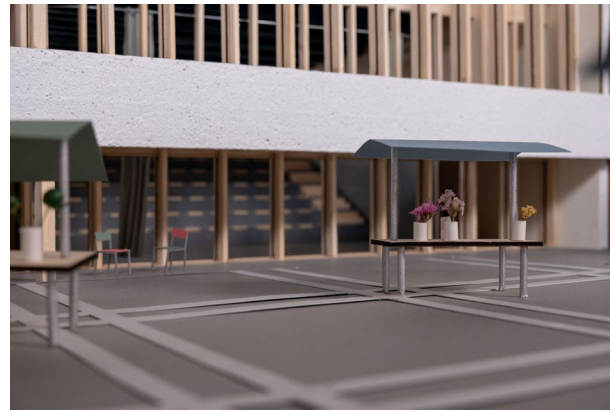
Overview of the intervention on the West side of the building.



Section CC facing the Asplundhuset.



The new square allows for city public life to happen. It's a blank canvas on which many different events can take place, both outdoors and sheltered by the building. The facade of the ground floor of the Samtalshus stands follows the line of the bazaar, while the facade follows the urban structure it stands within. This discrepancy opens up a niche underneath, marking the entrance of the cafe. The Samtalshus is a decor to the square, where events can take place like a flower market, book readings, poetry readings and night time film screenings. The International Library is situated on the square with a transparent facade acting as a new entrance to Asplund's building.







Close up of the facade.



Interior view of the conversation hall.



Interior view of the conversation hall.

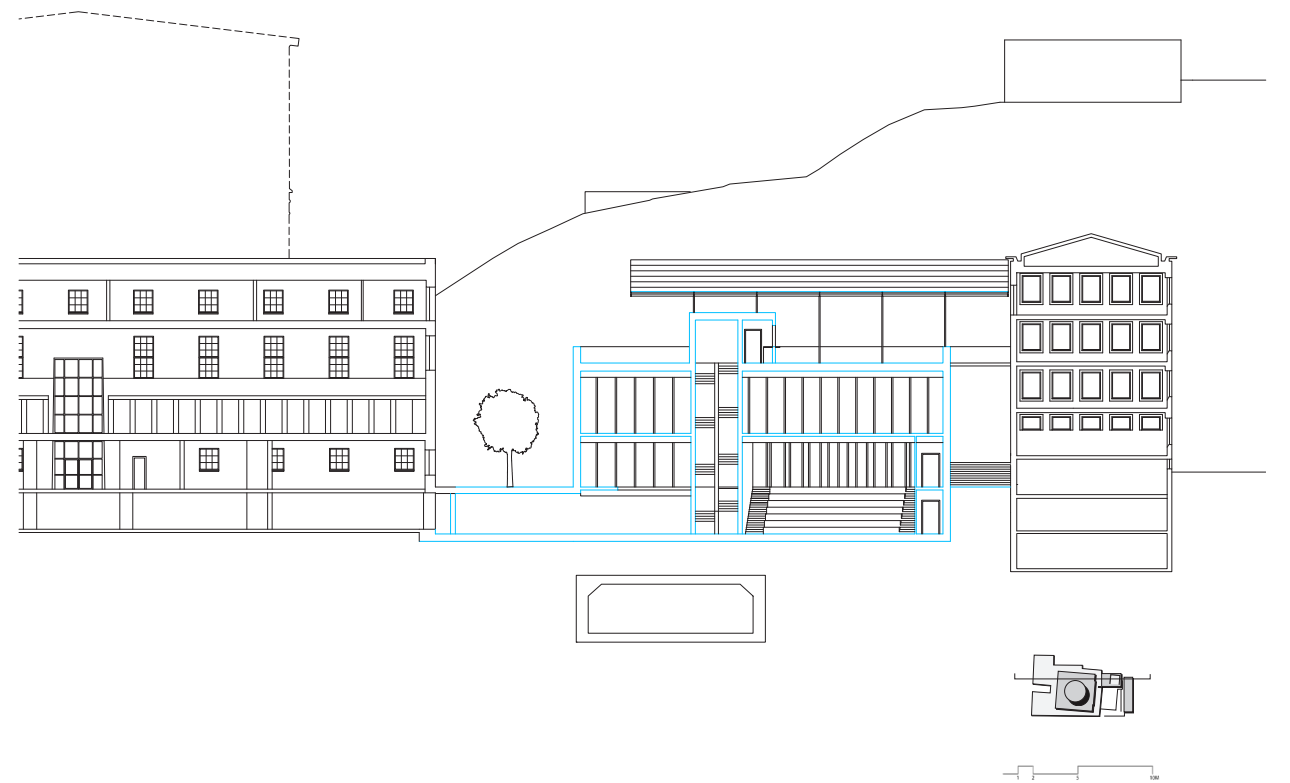
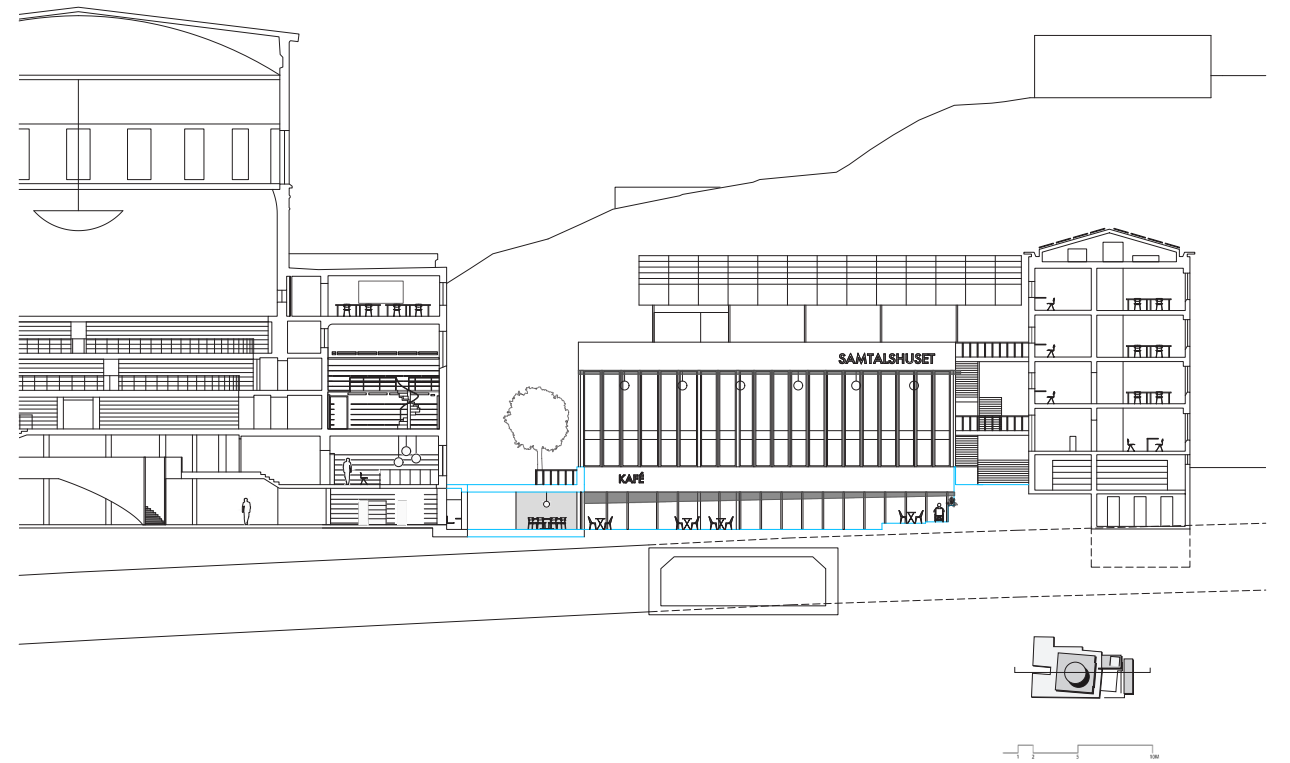


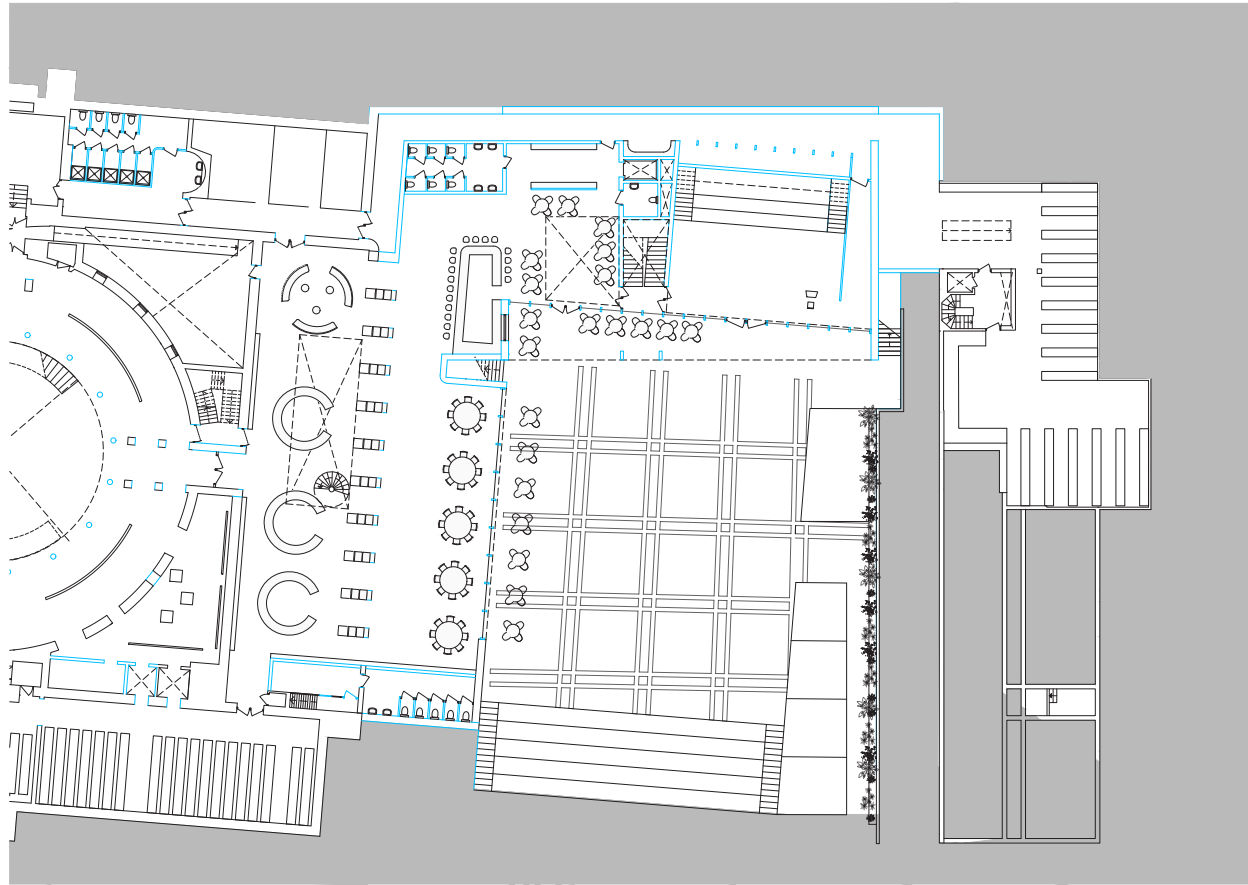
View from the first lamella building towards the Asplundhuset.



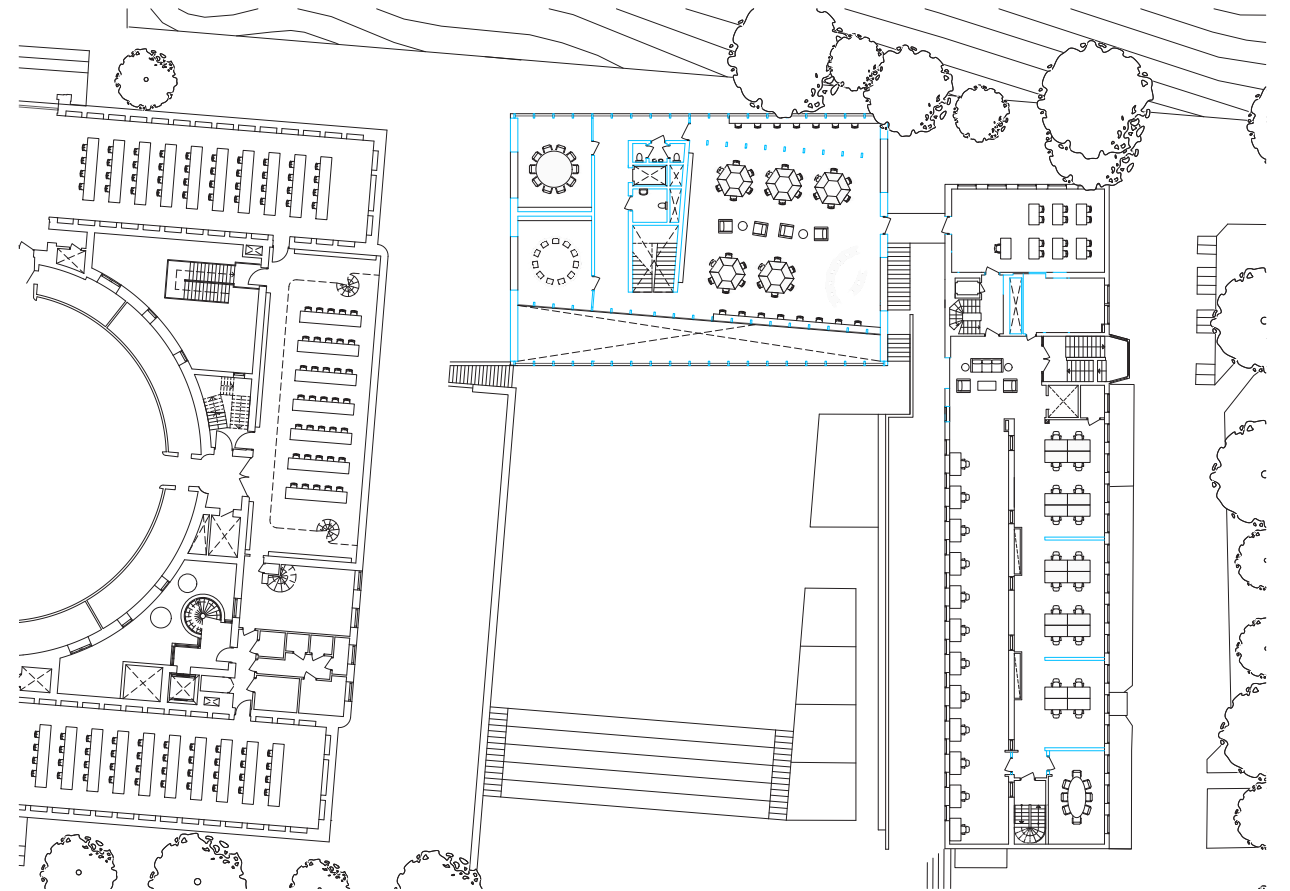
Room for conversation on the top floor of the Samtalshuset.



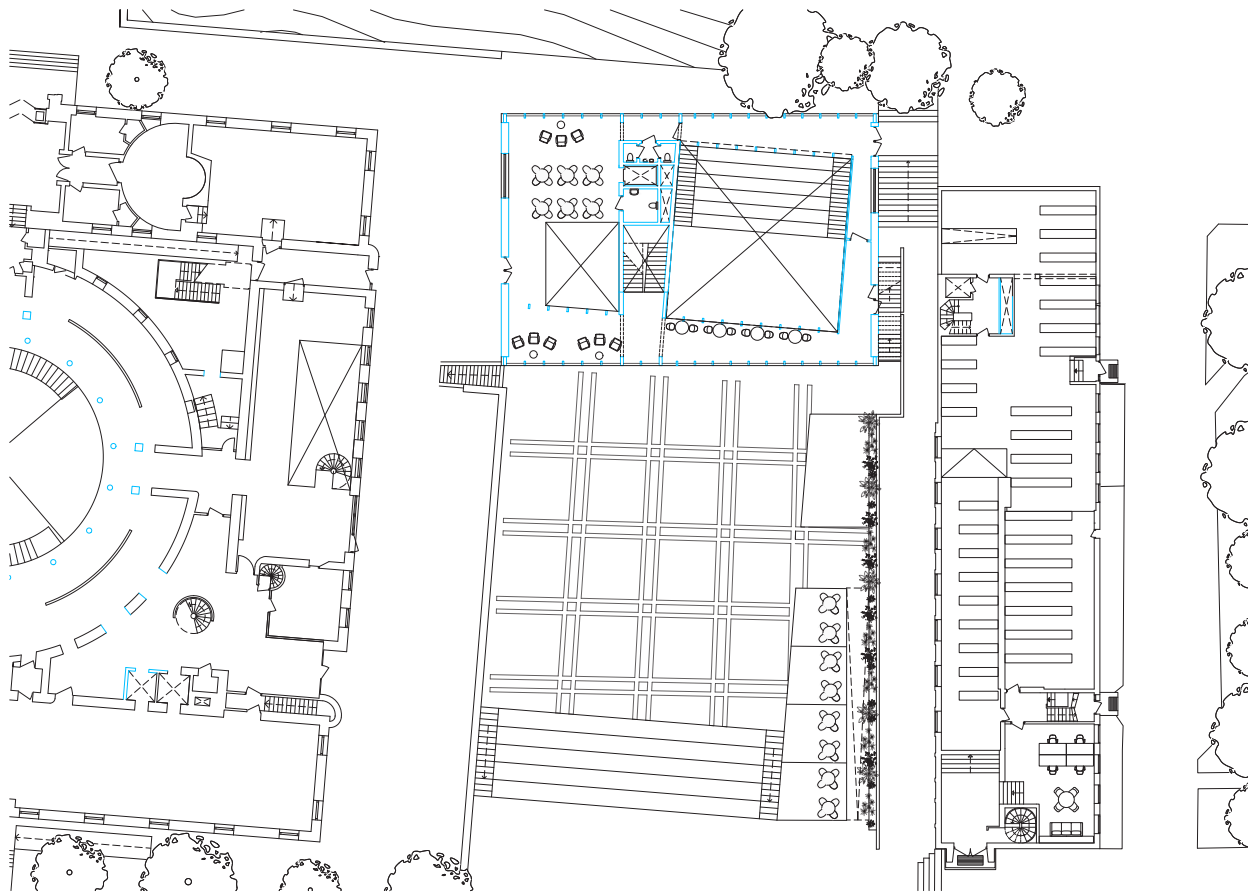




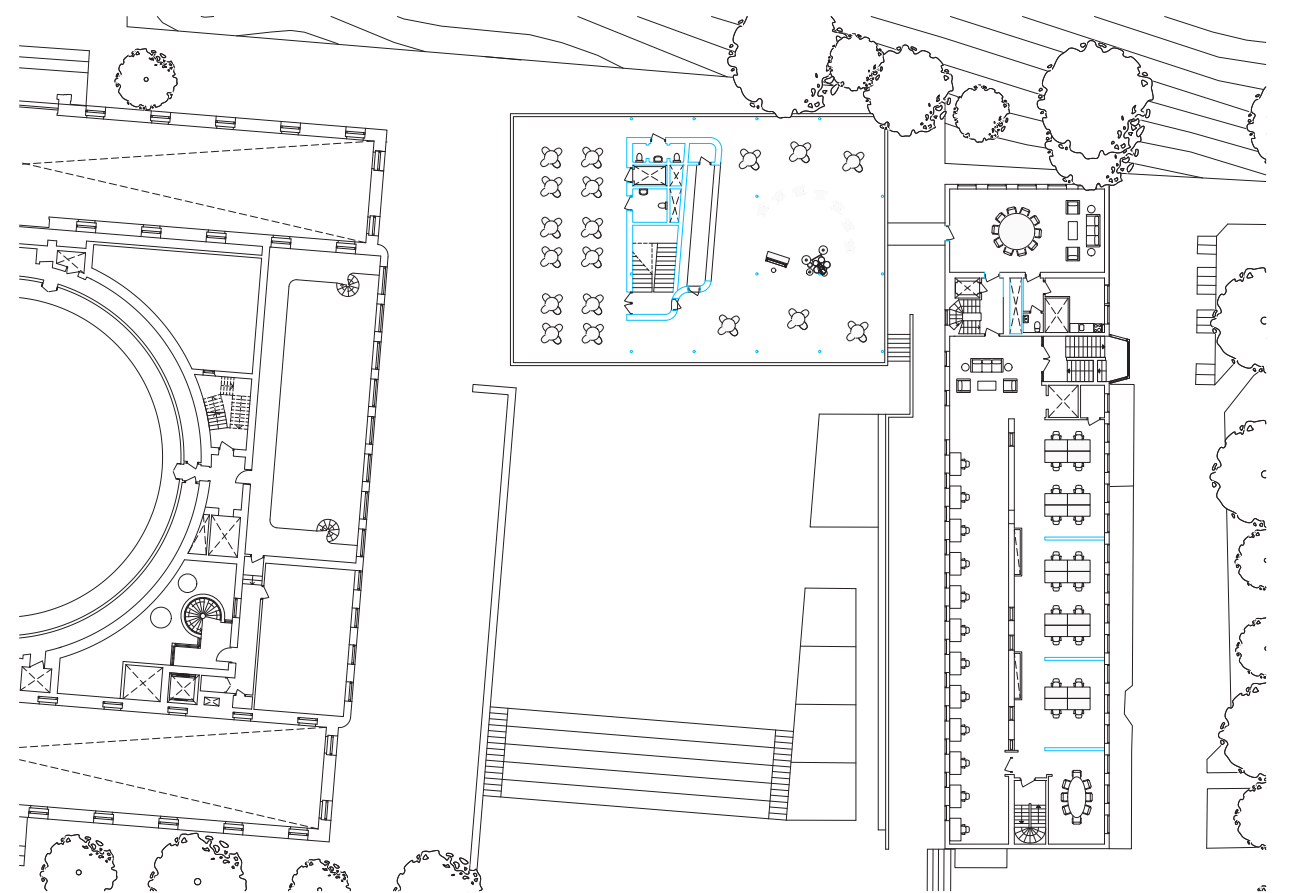
Floor plan on Sveavagen level.



Floor plan on Odengatan level +1.

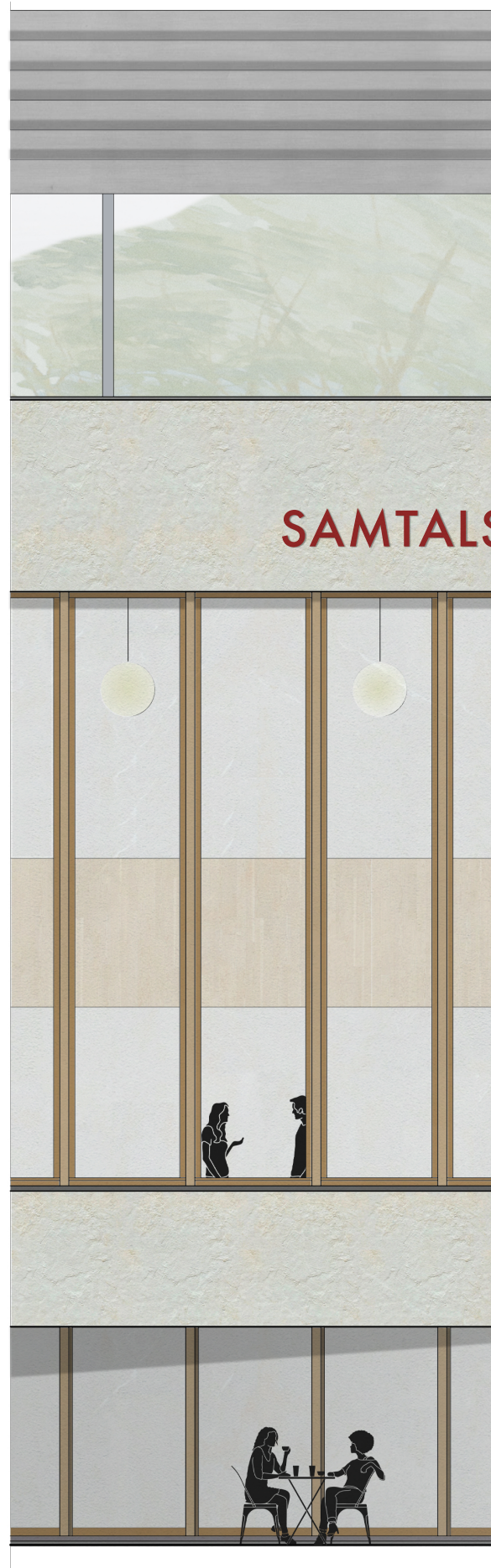


Floor plan on Odengatan level.

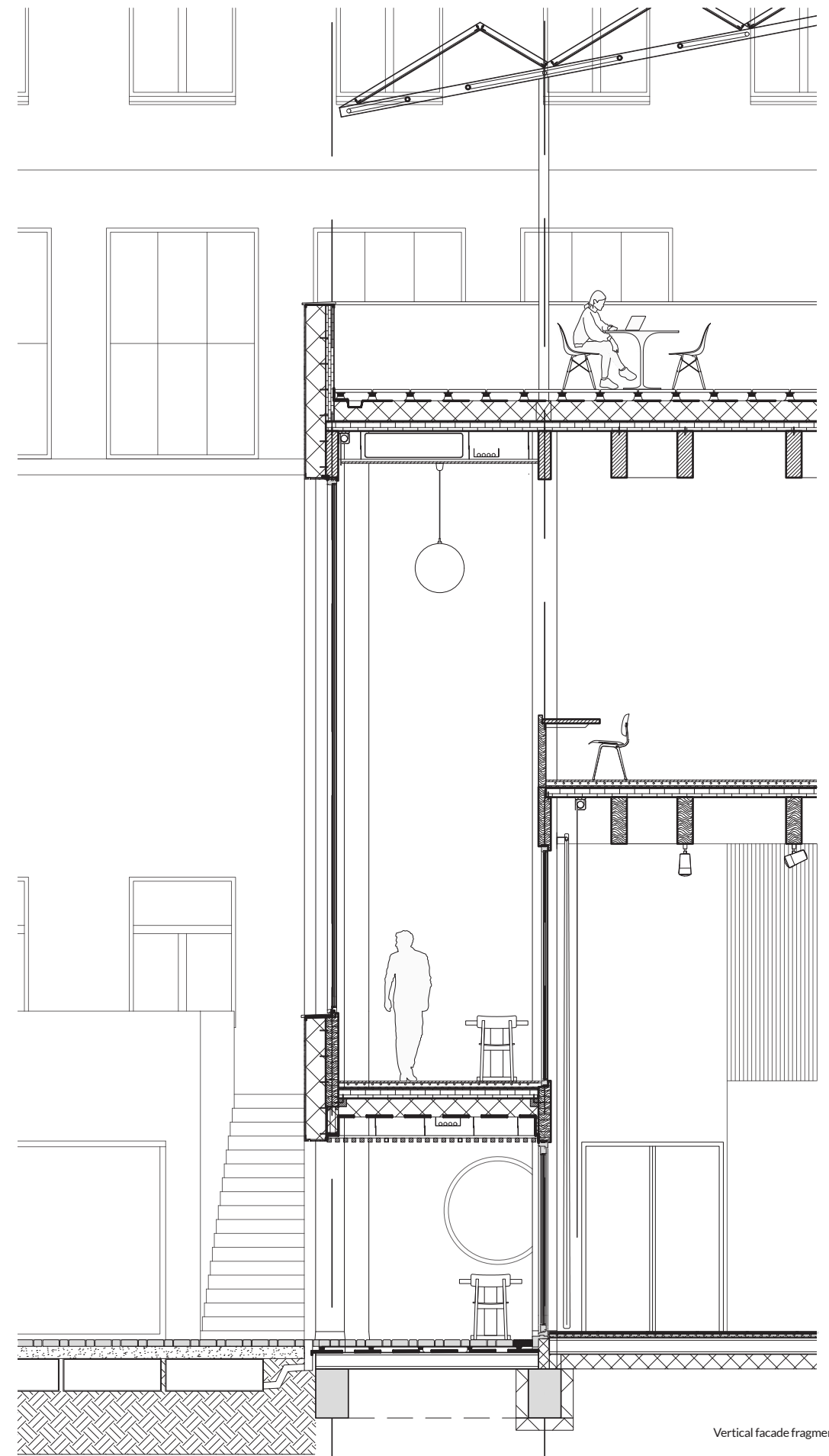


Floor plan on Odengatan level +2.



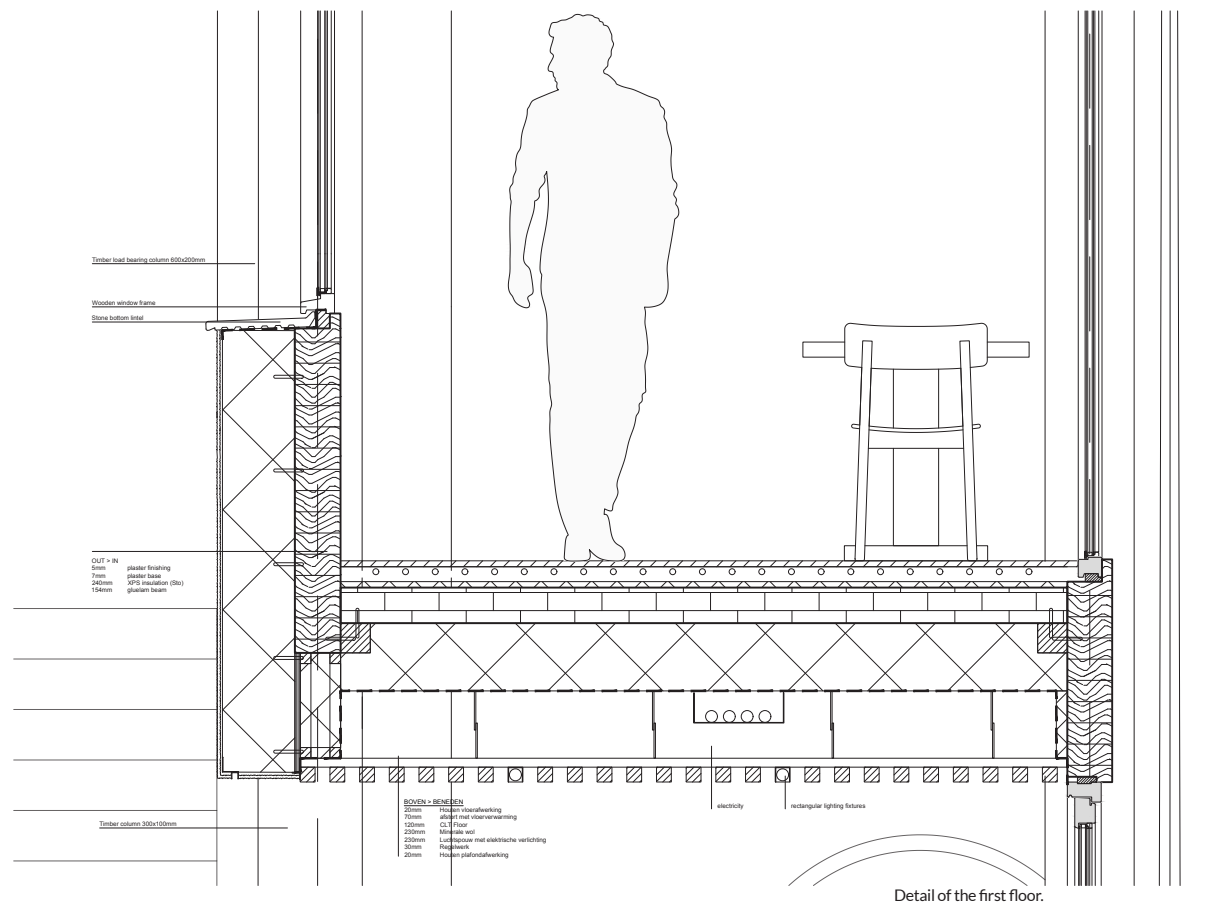


Vertical facade fragment in elevation.

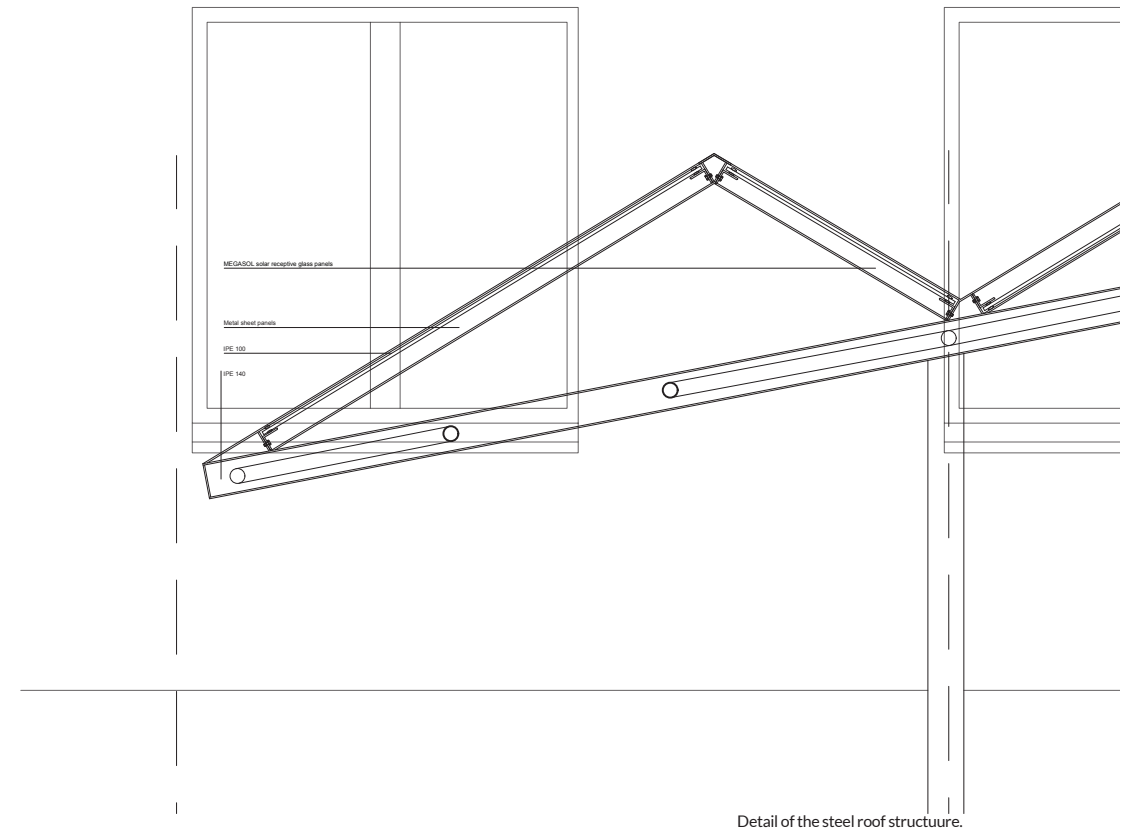


Vertical facade fragment in section.

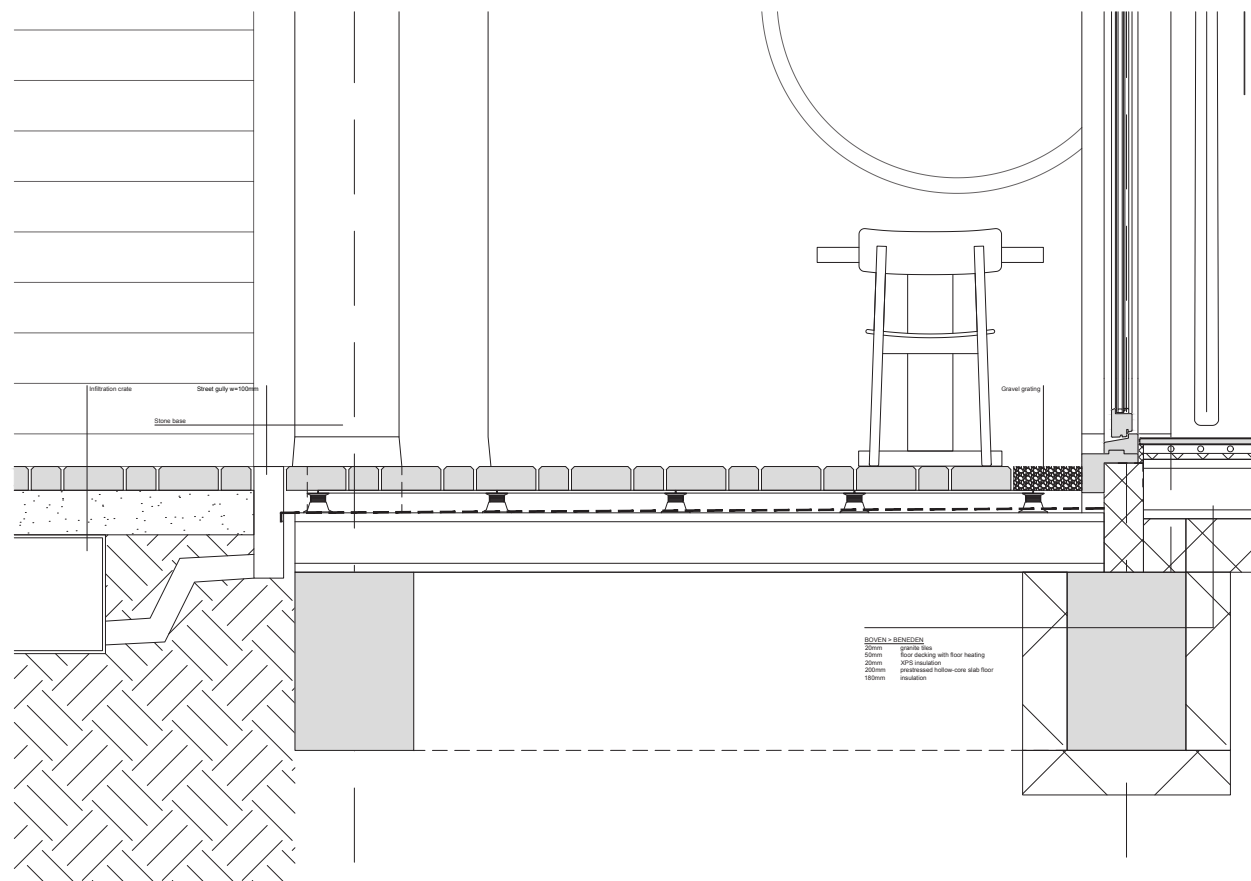
Renzo Westerbeek



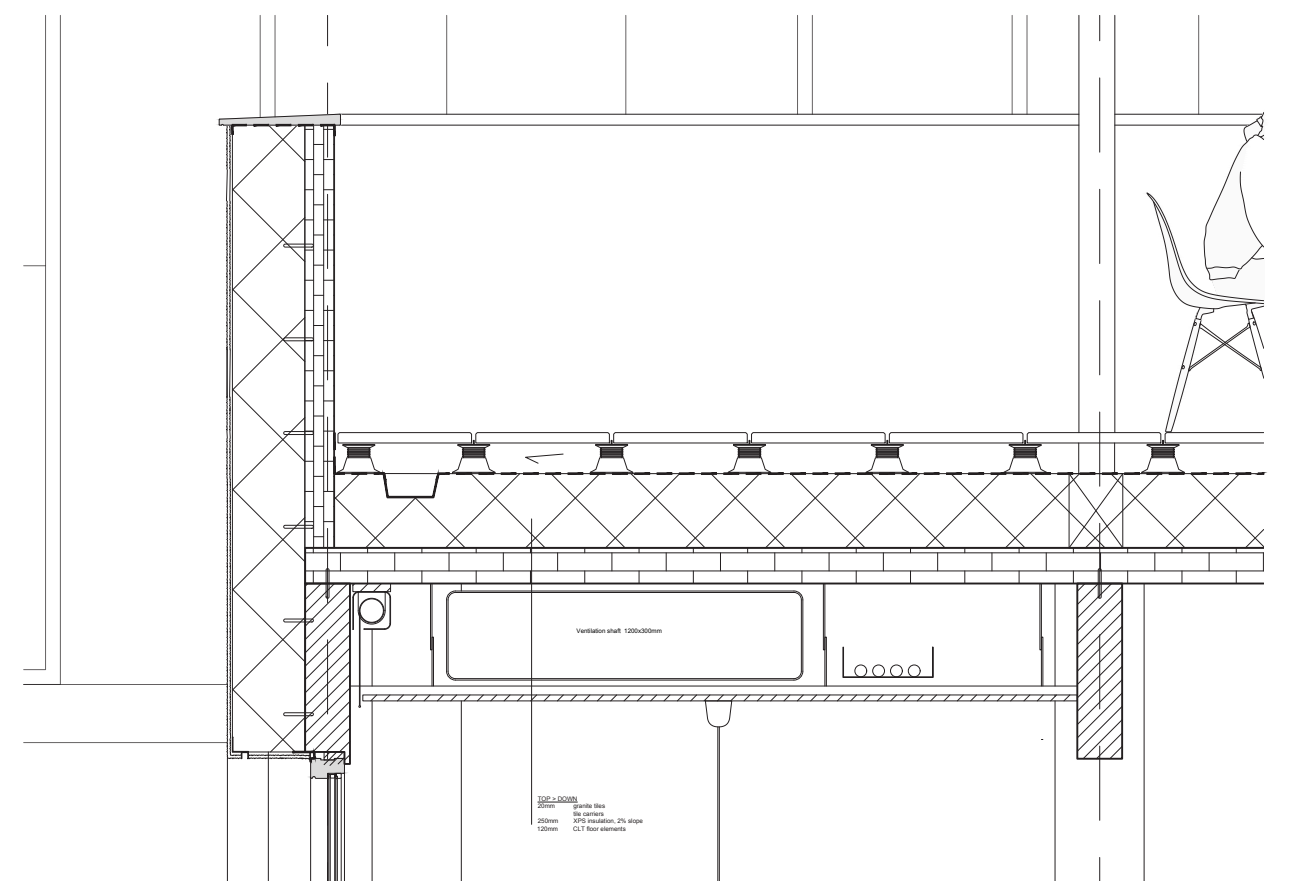
Detail of the first floor.



Detail of the steel roof structure.

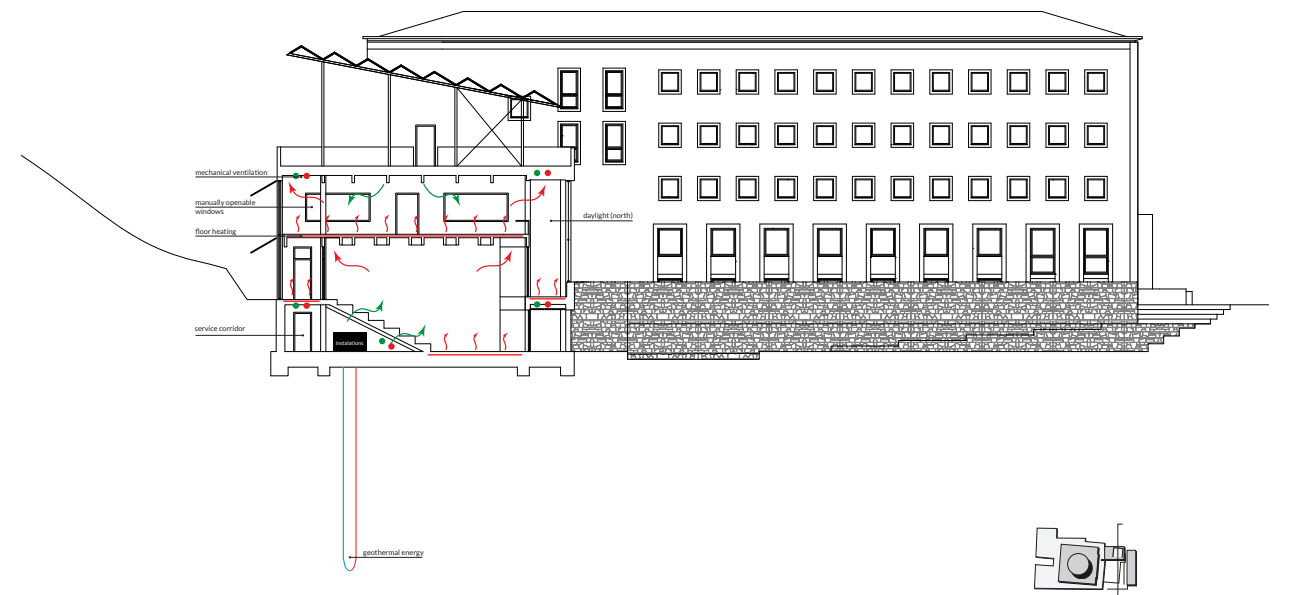
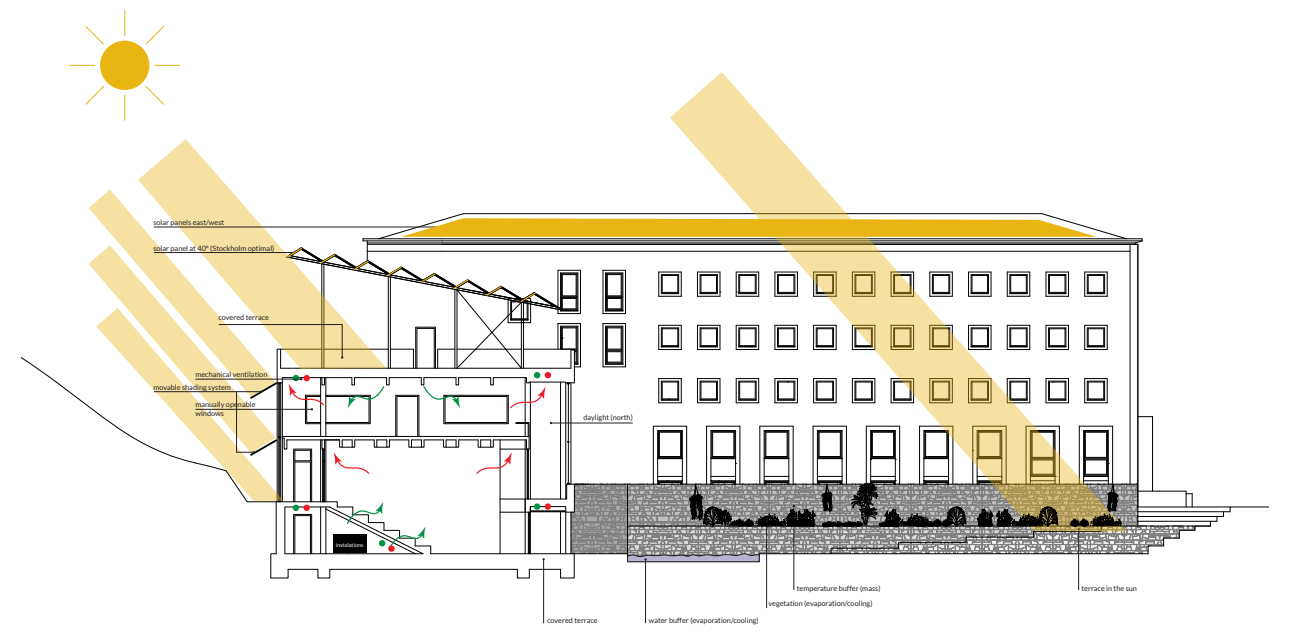
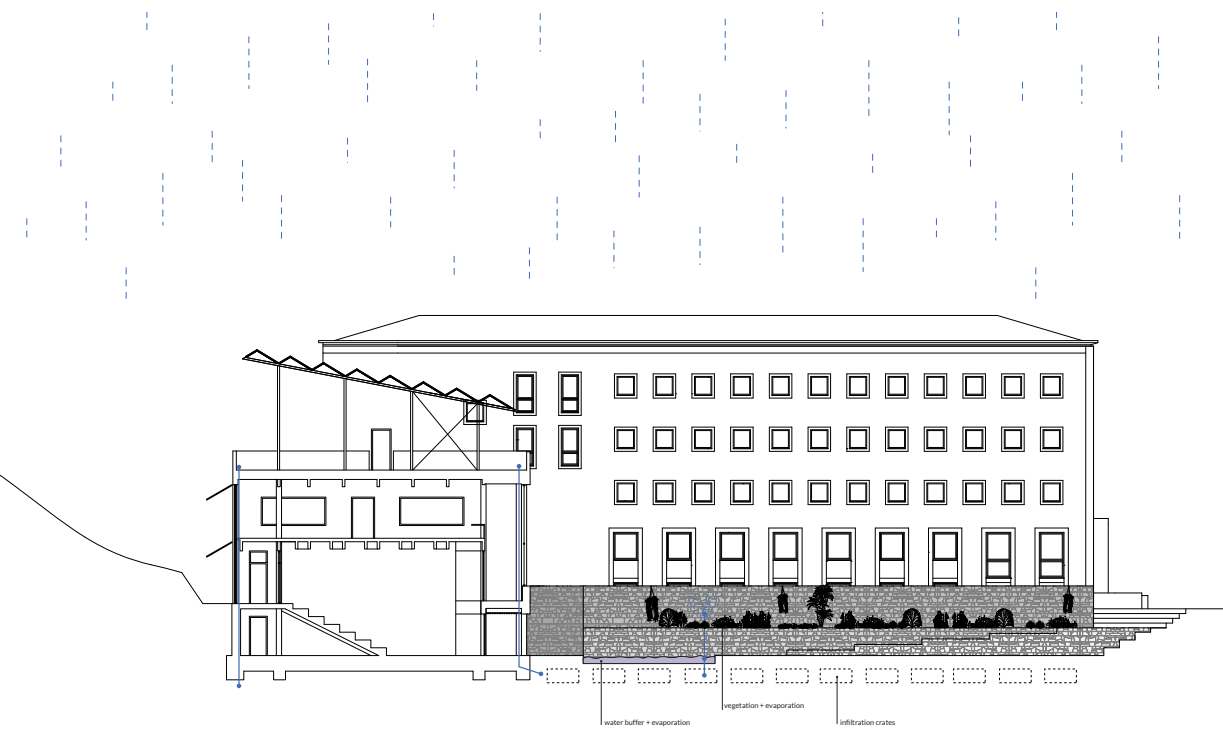


Detail of the foundation.



Detail of the building's roof.







View of the Samtalshus from the terraces.



Photograph of the 1:33 model.

To conclude this project book, I would like to thank some people. Thank you Sereh, Susanne, Elina, Daniel, Mark, Sam and all the students of the MSc3|4 Palace 2023-24 for the unforgettable graduation year. It was so interesting to get all different perspectives on this assignment and be tutored by all of you very intelligent people. I really liked that we got tutorial from all of you, since you all bring different insights and skills to the table. I would like to thank Susanne especially as my main mentor and your support during the last very intense weeks of the semester.

I feel like I learned a lot, both about architecture but also about what kind of architect I would like to be after this academic period ends. I enjoyed working together with everyone during this year. I'm also very thankful for being able to be the student assistant of the course and being trusted with organising certain things within my own course. Working together both on a staff level and a student level was sometimes difficult but also very educative.





**Interiors  
Buildings  
Cities**