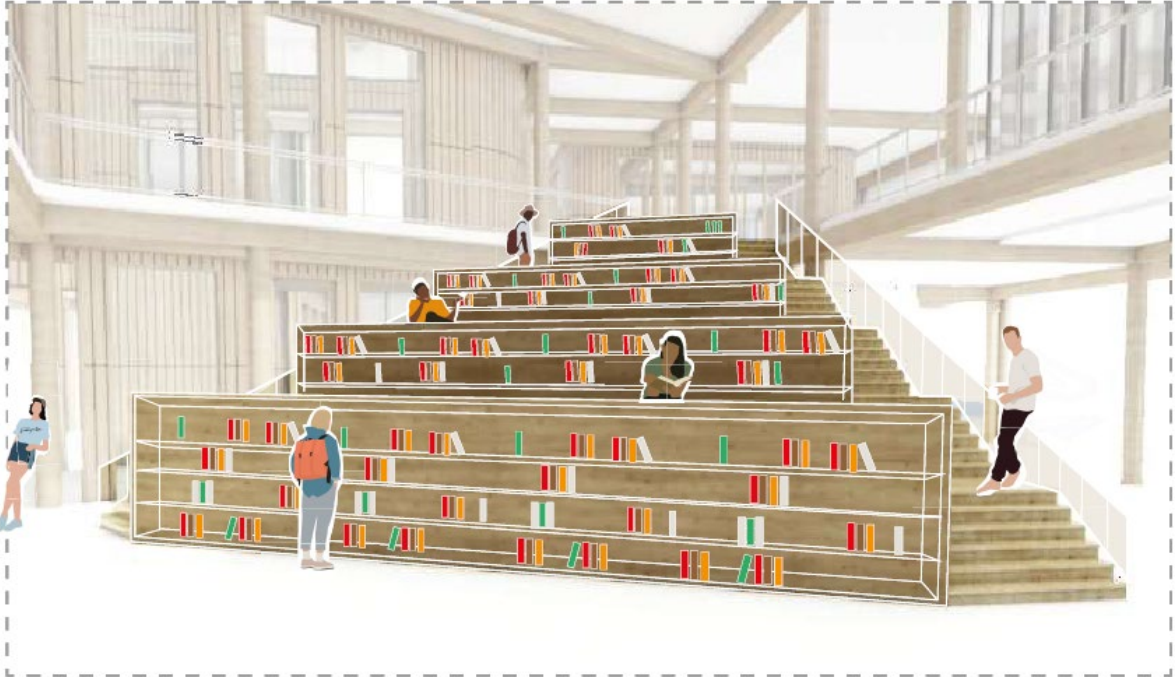


Reflection paper Thesis

Studio: Complex projects Graduation studio



Thesis Topic: The mother library, creating a library that helps children find joy in reading in a digitally focused world.

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1. Project Description

The mother library is a children's library located in the heart of the city of Berlin. The project to create a children's library for the city of Berlin started with the problem of reading levels declining, especially in the face of the growing digital age. This is a big concern for education and child development. The impact of this is very clearly visible in Germany, where statistics from German newspapers reveal that 1 in 4 children does not attain the required reading ability levels (Local, 2023). This alarming fact highlights a significant problem, reflecting both an educational and societal challenge, and is directly connected with children reading fewer books. (D.Ferguson, 2020) The decline in children's engagement with reading, especially in the face of the growing digital age, is a big concern for education and child development. The impact of this is very clearly visible in Germany, where statistics from German newspapers reveal that 1 in 4 children does not attain the required reading ability levels (Local, 2023). This alarming fact highlights a significant problem, reflecting both an educational and societal challenge, and is directly connected with children reading fewer books. (D.Ferguson, 2020)

The loss of reading pleasure is seen as one of the most important causes of the decline in reading skills (Van Der Horst & Moerland, 2024). In an era where students prefer to spend time on their mobile phones, reading a book is no longer self-evident for them (Van Der Horst & Moerland, 2024). The lure of fast entertainment options, competing with the slower pace of reading, affects children's reading pleasure, particularly those with shorter attention spans, due to social media. But social media is not the only problem. Compulsory literature in schools and how schools approach reading does not suit 21st-century children. For a long time, the standardization of education made it possible to lift whole generations away from analphabetism and, indirectly poverty, but things have changed over time (bosch, 2021, p. 22). In the same years that reading has become more mandatory in schools, reading enjoyment among children has also declined. The compulsory reading of books and new technologies together seem to be the main cause of the fact that children read less for pleasure and why their reading level seems to decline.

To solve this problem the mother library will be the birthplace for the reading pleasure of the children of Berlin. Being a place for the diversity of children of Berlin but also a library that connects children with other libraries around the city. Giving them their first experience with the loaning of a book and helping them to explore the world of books further. To achieve this the library is placed in a location that is well accessible with public transport to reach most children. The library is divided into different areas focusing on different age groups and their preferences. The heart of the building brings all these age groups together in a green oasis, forming a peaceful place connected to nature. Bringing these elements together, focused on design principles from the research, creates a library focused on the diversity and similarities of children.

2. Relationship between research and design

The research has resulted in design principles that should ensure that the conclusion of the research is guaranteed in the designed library.

To ensure that children start reading for pleasure, it is essential to create an experience around reading and libraries that is positive and fits the individual child's preferences. How to do that? To fit every child's needs is looking at children from a wider perspective. In some areas, children can be viewed in groups and space can be adjusted accordingly. In many cases, children also have individual preferences. Space must match the diversity of the individual. The possibility of making their own choices and using their preferences is an important element of creating an experience where people feel free to do what they want. The desire to read increases when you read books that you like, in a space where you feel comfortable. Architecture can be used to ensure and stimulate this freedom and choice. The design principles offer the Mother Library the certainty to become a place that reflects this choice, freedom, and person-oriented space that will ensure that a love for books is reborn in Berlin.

The design principles are organized into three subjects, Site, client, and program. The principles for the site are Accessibility, Connection to the site, and a Child-friendly environment. This principles are Defined in the building by:

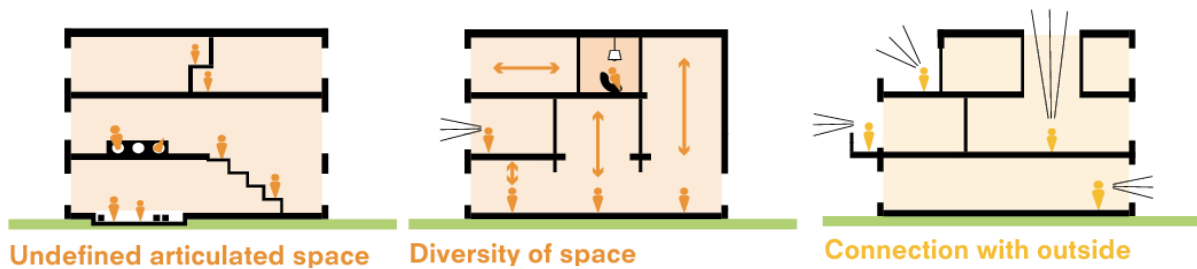
- Choosing a location that is located next to multiple mobility nodes, like the metro and bus.
- Child-friendly environment is accomplished by Finding a location close to multiple primary schools and next to a park, but is also improved by creating safer outdoor space in the core of the building.
- Connection with the site is achieved on a building level by taking elements of the site into the architecture of the building and holding on to the heights and widths surrounding buildings.



For the program, the design principles are Connection with the outside, undefined articulated space, and diversity of space.

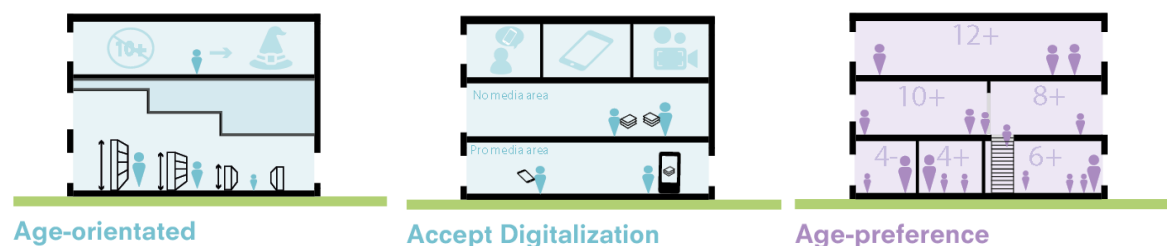
- Connection with the outside is been integrated into the building by creating green within. The most important element for this is the atrium in the heart of the building which has a direct connection to all the parts of the building. Secondly, there are two gardens organized on the outside of the building, which create a connection between inside and outside.

- Diversity of space, placed more in an interior level of the building. There are places so-called islands throughout the building that create a diversity of space to sit or read within these islands and give spatial choice.
- Undefined articulated space is an element creating space between the interior and architecture. For example, stairs through the building which leave space for other leisure activities, which we call undefined space. The articulated space is mostly to be found in the curves of the building, to stimulate senses.



For Clients, the design principles are: Age- preference, Accept digitalization, and Age orientated.

- Age preference, is a principle focused on the islands where every island is focused on the personal preferences connection to an age group.
- Age-oriented, Makes shore that the island is only focused on this age group, but doesn't force children to go to that island, but leaves children free to find their place where they find that they belong.
- Accept digitalization. The resource is about distancing children from digitalization so they find their place in other things like reading books. But what also came to light is that forcing children to not use their phones works counterproductive. So in the library, there are designated media tables, focused on media, and next to that is the island focused on books and nice reading spaces.



By creating space for the different design principles to develop in the building, the connection between the resource and design is being tackled in both location, architecture, shape, and the interior of the building.

3. The relationship between the graduation topic and studio topic

The topic of the studio is bodies and buildings. Which provides a reference to the physical building and what the building embraces. In this resource, the Mother Library is the physical element that embraces the idea of creating a new way of how we deal with the needs of children and how to use this to help society. In this case, helping society by increasing the habit of reading to improve literacy. A building and the purpose within can be separated from each

other, but the purpose of the studio is to create a perfect body for the purpose within. The graduation topic focuses on children and how space can be designed to help them to read more. Body and building come together by creating space focused on the needs of children. In this way, the graduation topic and studio topic embrace each other.

4. Research method and approach chosen by the student about the graduation studio

To investigate the impact of architectural design on children's reading habits in the digital age, the study used a multifaceted research approach. Based on analysis of site, client, and program. Research was conducted for each chapter based on analysis and literature, which are different per chapter.

- Client: In this chapter the main source is literature. Furthermore, knowledge has also been gained through a visit to the city of Berlin. The chapter focuses partly on the client, but mainly on the users of the building.
- Program: In this chapter the main method of research is analyses of existing libraries and schools. Literature is used as additional substantiation.
- Site: In this chapter the main method of research is analyzed, in the form of maps at different scales, examining the city, neighborhood, and the chosen location.

Each chapter has its conclusion with design principles, from these conclusions and design principles an overall conclusion has emerged with the design principles and constraints for the building. These design principles are per subject used in the building whereas multiple design principles merge in the design.

5. Relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional, and scientific relevance

The decline in reading for pleasure is causing reading levels to decline considerably, which is a global issue. Through this research, light will be shed on this problem and part of the problem will be solved with the use of architecture. In addition, this study offers valuable insights into designing spaces for youth, an aspect that is often neglected in architectural design. By addressing this societal problem through research, we can pave the way for child-centric design in the future.

From a broader perspective, proper analysis and study of what population groups require could ensure that more social problems can be solved. By designing space more personally, people will appreciate the space more, hopefully also for a longer term of time so spaces will stay in use. Which creates more sustainable buildings.

6. Ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered during graduation

The ethical issue that I have encountered and also a question that tutors have asked me was: Is this building only for children and does that mean that it is only for teenagers under 18?

Many buildings are focused on having a certain target user, but that does not mean secluding other people who feel the need to use the building. The Children's Library will have furniture and books focused on the target group, Which are children, teenagers, and parents. If older People, for example, a person of age 21 like to read the same books or feel that they fit in the same place then that is free for them to decide. This subject connects to the design principle of age-orientated, which is about creating space to suggest to a certain age group but does not force a space only specifically to this age group. Leaving it open to our perspective. We know where we belong or where we feel most at our place.