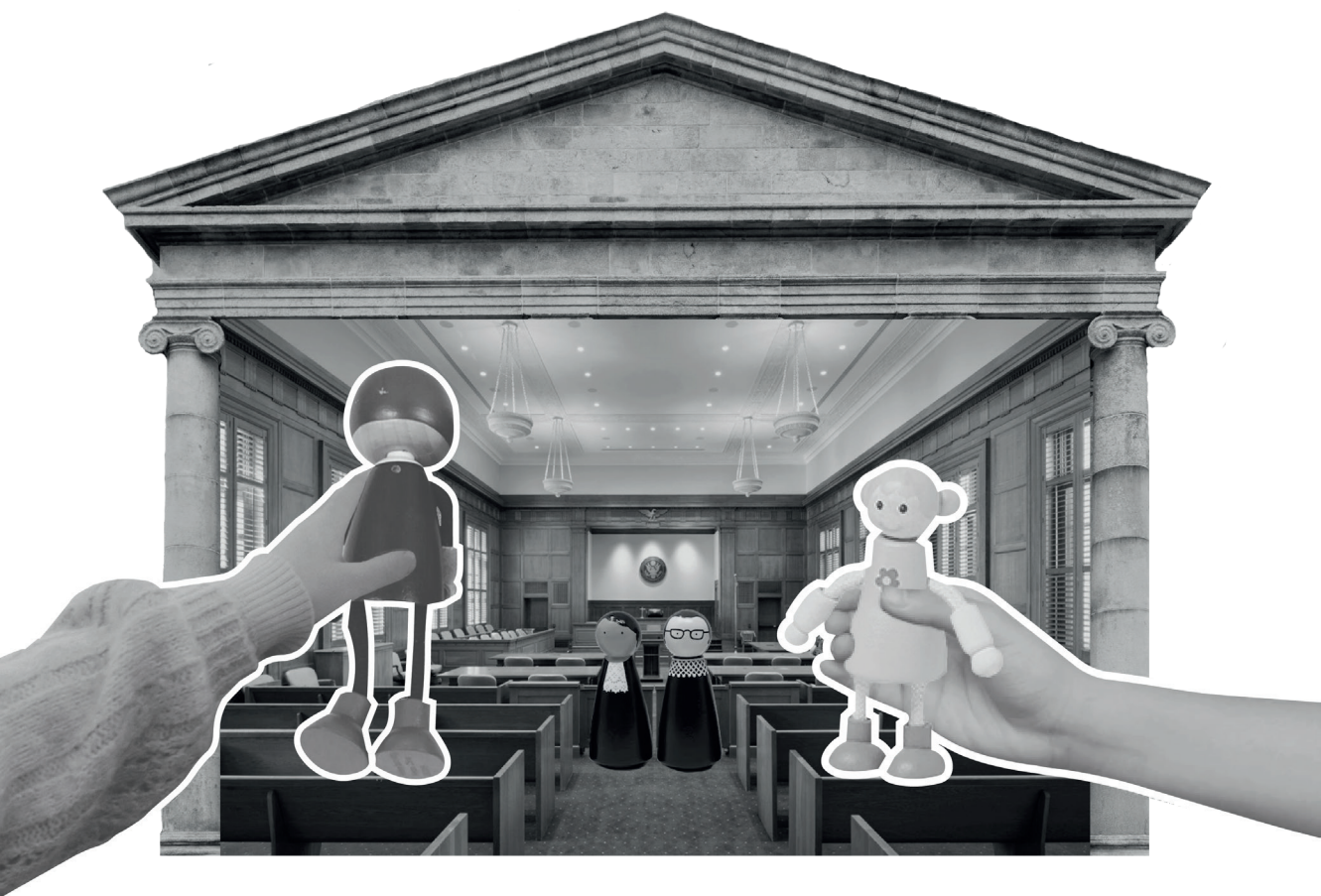


THE JUGENDGERICHT

The House for Youth Justice
REFLECTION PAPER



1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.1 Product

The studio Complex Project, enables the student to design a public building from one of the nine given options, including a lens. The product that I will deliver will be a “courthouse” with the incorporated lens of “digitalization”. The courthouse will become “The one of Berlin Juvenile Courthouse” located on the Mittelweg 30 in Neukölln.

The Juvenile Courthouse a.k.a. the Jugendgericht is not a courthouse solely based on strict laws and enforcement. There is a balance in “fun” and “rules”. Hence, the courthouse will take a different approach in rehabilitating children back into society. Similarly, to how the German government enforces laws in which the education of child criminals are above punishing them. After all children are our future.

So what is it that this courthouse will deliver to its target group? First of all, who is this target group? The target group of the courthouse are child suspects and victims. Within the program of the courthouse this educational aspect will come more forward. Next to the courthouse there will be a “probationary” housing in which children that are between education and punishment will reside during their trial period. With the additional program of juvenile assistance services all users of the courthouse and housing will be helped to cope with trauma, behaviour problems, and/or family issues.

The building will adapt to the lens of a child. But also take on an epistemological role, by portraying knowledge and accessibility of justice. Making up for the neglect of child criminality and access of justice to juveniles. Due to the newer generations using digital devices the courthouse will opt for a digital approach: A digital library in the center of the building. Within the digital library children can enhance their knowledge on procedures during trials, their punishments, and therapies making themselves more familiar with the process.

1.2 Process

The goal of the project is a building that fits within the Berlin context and reflects its lens. Based off of research on the needs and demands of Berlin, it was concluded to design a “Juvenile Courthouse” a.k.a “The Jugendgericht”. However, this poses

different problems as the main target group of the courthouse is entirely different from the other courthouses in Berlin, or Germany as a whole. Hence, the following research question was made:

How will the architectural typology of a courthouse that is programmed only for juveniles in Germany differ from a general courthouse?

To answer the research question, an analysis is conducted on various youth courthouses in the U.S.A, as well as general courthouses to compare them. Hereof, an estimation could be made for a specialized courthouse in Berlin, Germany. Besides, the reference analysis showed that in some cases juvenile courtrooms appeared slightly smaller to make it more intimate. Additionally, the lay-out varies per courtroom, the public area becomes smaller and the placement of tables changes. A descriptive analysis was also done to understand what child-friendly courthouses would demand. This article considered safety, sensitivity and accessibility of the building. Which will also be translated into the Jugendgericht

Similarly to a child-friendly courthouse, the location is also assessed based on certain criteria that will benefit the users the most during their visit. The location of the building is at a pre-existing youth center as this function will already be included in the plot.

1.3 Choice of Method

The techniques and methods that will be utilized during the research and design, are articles on juvenile criminality, courthouse design, and design methods for a courthouse aimed for children. However, due to a lack of information similar child oriented buildings will be observed. Additionally, a reference study is conducted to create a catalogue on the dimensions and programs within a youth courthouse. For the design a 3x3 massing study was also conducted per different criteria (client, site, program)

2. REFLECTION

2.1 What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The relation between my graduation project, studio topic and my master track is that they are related to the Architectural field. Besides, the Jugendgericht, is the building typology that is investigated and eventually designed towards the end of the Msc4. Architecturally what the building wants to achieve is child-friendliness, not in the sense that a courthouse loses its authority and strictness, but that it reduces the angst and stress it can give to its younger users. A child usually does not commit a crime because he is inherently bad, that’s why education program will have a strong presence in the building. Many aspects should be considered in the design, such as flows. What groups are there? Can they meet? How to separate them? This aspect took me many weeks to incorporate properly in the building as I saw importance in separating suspects and victims to lower stress-levels and influences prior to the trial. Another aspect was the size of the rooms, and ceiling heights, natural light and building orientation. Children get “lost” in big and high spaces, as they are rather small they feel quicker intimidated. But, the building should also have easy way-finding, hence avoiding difficult corridors. Nonetheless, children are not the only users in this building, there are also the employees, which also need to be separated from the public. The building has a clear private back and public front.

The studio project is also further developed due to the additional lens, digitalization, that is included in its design phase. This lens is not necessarily needed to give an answer to the research question. The lens primarily focuses on how digitalization will impact future public buildings, e.g. paperless courthouse with a digital library accessible for the users. For a courthouse in typical it was quite difficult as it is quite a traditional typology where human connect is necessary especially for children. Hence, I really struggled with finding an appropriate program to create data awareness and use the data center for. However, the articles on the lack of access on justice for children made me realize that this is something missing and could be compensated through the Juvenile Courthouse. In addition, courthouses store a lot of paper documents and law books change often, as a result the courthouse

will be paperless as well.

2.2 How did your research influence your design/ recommendations and how did the design/ recommendations influence your design?

The research influenced the design in understanding how courthouses can differ from each other based on their user group. Besides, understanding the concept of child-friendly design opens other possibilities for the juvenile courthouse. However, it can also cause you to deviate from what a courthouse initially is, so finding the middle-ground can be challenging.

As stated in the first chapter the research is focused on a young demographic that is either involved in crime or a victim of crime. Initially, the research focused on the young criminals, however further in the research I realized that children are also victims of crime and should be incorporated in the building. Learning that both groups suffer I decided to treat them equally but separate them as they both influence each other often bad then good.

As criminals were also the main user in the first stages of the project, a probation program was introduced, however this then was removed as this appeared as a too harsh treatment. Later on, due to recommendations of tutors the concept of Halfway House was introduced, and translated in the probationary housing which allows restricted freedom for children that are in-between. These children are thus on trial and need monitoring. However they are free to leave the building. Hence, it will be a separate building from the courthouse that is only open during working hours. Yet, one might ask does this need to be near the courthouse? Of course, this makes the transportation from juvenile on probation to the court easier and vice versa, but also allows proper monitoring. Besides, it creates awareness amongst their peers, which gives them indirect knowledge about justice during their court visit. Since, the probation juveniles are ‘visible’ to the public, their residence will face private gardens in the building block to give them back privacy, but also to show this segregation between the “free” people and themselves. Which should also be translated to the facade, which I had quite a quick idea on what to do. Nevertheless, after the facade of the courthouse was developed this initial idea went through the roof. The courthouse has a facade

that translated the private and public spaces to the outside with the usage of slats and the distances between them, and a concrete plinth which emits a “strong and powerful” presence. In the sense that it shows its power of being a courthouse. So a recommendation was made to perhaps incorporate this same idea to the probationary housing. Thus the plinth (semi-public) will also be concrete and more closed off, since its visible from the street and privacy is a key factor in the design. With the top levels having a facade of perforated steel that vary in size, creating a sheer effect.

2.3 How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

The approach on the research was rather rough as I stumbled upon lack of information. Even after consulting youth courthouses in Netherlands I was still not granted rights to view their floorplans which made the case study lacking. Case studies I was able to find were hard to read or missed a program description for certain spaces. This caused me discontent and a certain lack of motivation in the beginning. I had to resort to websites that describe courthouses and their general spaces and find articles on child-friendly design, which was also quite limiting. But I also realized that the whole point of the assignment was to create something new, “The One of Berlin”, thus I had to be creative in what to incorporate into the program while still respecting the rules of a courthouse. As the building should not lose its essence or core. The game changer for this building would be the large incorporation of the juvenile assistance program which was already on the plot, but incorporated into the courthouse. Another game changer is the probationary housing. Both building really try to incorporate this education aspect while still keeping the fun of learning through workshops or the public square which enables interaction with peers which could influence juveniles to create friendships and good connections. And the other game changer is the digital library for access and knowledge on justice.

2.4 How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects? The project has academic and societal value in the

sense that it targets a group that neither has their own courthouse in the Netherlands nor in Germany unlike the U.S.A. It is quite valuable to learn how a similar building can be adapted in a different country with different laws and government.

As stated before, this courthouse has a very important social standing as it helps in reducing criminality and increases safety for the public. This is achieved by the education program but also the building adapting to the needs of its smaller users rather than adults. Rehabilitation back into society has priority over punishment. Additionally, the impact this public building has on the public is of importance. As it is a courthouse, it is not really a public public building. It is not a space where people would stay for fun, in general courthouses the public can attend court session if interested, but this is not the case for a juvenile courthouse due to privacy reasons. Thus, the only public in this public building are the children and their parents that visit the building for a certain amount of time and then leave. However, since safe access to the building is important, the courthouse is oriented towards the nearby park. The park is also a space that reduces stress levels on the way to the courthouse. Similarly, to how hospitals incorporate greenery of green views this courthouse applies the same method.

2.5 How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

As the project is a courthouse bound by law and government it is quite hard transfer the program results to different countries. Nonetheless, it is not impossible as within the EU systems tend to be similar. For example, if the juvenile courthouse proves to be efficient it can also be implemented in the Netherlands.

But, the building does require a certain site for it to function properly. The location is of utmost importance for the user as they require tranquillity and safety while reaching their destination. Thus, other site qualities could pose a problem. However, if the project would be transferred to a site with the demanded qualities and more it would not pose a threat to the functionality of the public building.

In terms of involved these remain rather identical. Yet, dependent on which city, province, country the courthouse is established they can differ.

