

Personal reflection statement

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Research Plan

The institution of a library in Sweden now more than ever serves a great purpose of being one of the last traditionally public and inclusive spaces. The research done both on Asplund's ways of design and the precedents of the modern public library has shown that the role of a library has changed throughout time and is still changing. There are however certain aspects, which we can derive from Asplund's and in our case Scharoun's position about the role of a library.

The library of Gunnar Asplund sits firmly in its context. It has been carefully tilted and adjusted to react to the local landscape. Similarly, as in the Woodland Crematorium, the relationship between the surroundings and the building becomes more important than the building itself. In the case of the crematorium, the architect is putting more emphasis on the landscape, whereas the Stockholm library becomes a dominant in its composition within the surroundings and acknowledges its formality and even monumentality. This leads me to the question of how we position ourselves within this very defined space and implement the landscape into our design.

Spatially the library, similarly, to the courthouse or woodland Chapel is a rearrangement of known simple typologies to establish new relationships between them. In the case of the library, its rotunda is reminiscent of the British Museum's reading room, which many libraries have taken inspiration from, but is rearranged in a way so it creates a poche – a set of new spaces between the main and the surrounding reading rooms. Similarly, but on a smaller scale in the Woodland Crematorium and the Woodland Chapel, Asplund works with simple architectural elements such as a colonnade, a courtyard, and a dome and arranges them in a way, which creates a sequence of spaces with specific atmospheres. I think the expansion of Stockholm's library should not merely mimic the form of the building but rather, respond to it. By taking Asplund's way of simple typology rearrangement we could establish new and modern spaces, which could serve a library reactive to today's problems.

An upcoming aspect throughout our whole research was the tension between the private and the collective.

The Berlin Library responds to this problem through an open space which accompanies a landscape of different platforms, creating more and fewer individual places to work. I do however think it doesn't fully explore this tension between what's common and what's individual. An interesting take on this notion can be seen in the Luis Kahn Library in New Hampshire. Kahn designed a scheme of two intertwined spaces—one for working together and the other for individual work—distinguishing them with varying ceiling heights. This spatial arrangement allows the spaces to have different atmospheres, but still be read as one.

Those aspects are important for me to derive from in my upcoming library design. I think, that by learning from Asplund's way of situating a building within a landscape, I wish to design a building, which corresponds to the prominent surroundings of Stockholm's library. What should be a priority park, or the building?

The investigation of Asplund's work has been very helpful in understanding the sequences of spaces which arise from typological rearrangements. I believe this method is something I can take further in my design, to achieve contrasts and a structured flow of experiences within my building.

Regarding the tension between the common and the individual, I believe a library should be somewhere on the line between the formal and the informal, a place where the collective meets the private and order meets disorder. How could such space be organised or maybe disorganised? How do the books fit into this and what is our position within them? In Stockholm's library, you feel almost like in a fortress where each book has its place and there is constant surveillance concerning how you use the books. Should a modern library be more lenient in terms of spatial organization, allowing the users to feel more comfortable in its space? I believe it's important to position a modern public library somewhere on the line between those aspects. On the line between the collective and the individual. On the line between a defined and undefined space. Between a clear purpose and a space which doesn't tell you what you should do in it.