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ABSTRACT
Since the beginning of the 21$^{\text{sth}}$ century, the societal role of public libraries has changed considerably. Becoming an open and welcoming house for all citizens, the once so recognizable place packed with books had to make room for new functions and activities, such as learning, working, meeting, playing and relaxing. Given the divers nature of these functions as well as the various profiles of library users (i.e. differences in background, beliefs, needs and preferences), the designer's task became very complex. Thus, the starting point of my PhD was to know *if* and *how* designers of public libraries succeed in their rather challenging (re)design assignment, and in what way they involve library users to guarantee a (more) user-fit design.

To fine-tune this initial problem statement, I started with a literature study, and a first, explorative field study involving Flemish public library experts and directors. Both research methods emphasized not only the importance and need of a (more) user-fit design, but also the encountered difficulties and challenges throughout the associated design process. As such, obtaining knowledge on the user's spatial needs and preferences is for instance not self-evident. Many designers are (still) convinced that they can make the best design-decisions instead of the users themselves. Consequently, an due to additional imposed agendas, power structures, practical constraints, established ways of working and quality assurance, they restrict their efforts to a minimum and do not always use the obtained knowledge in a proper or genuine way. A related but more fundamental challenge is therefore to change the mindset of designers. This implies for instance that designers should no longer consider themselves as the only spatial experts.

Based on these preliminary findings, I want to look and experiment with alternative methods and techniques to improve a more user-fit design method for public libraries. At this conference, I would like (i) to share and discuss my findings and (ii) receive feedback and additional inspiration for involving in particular citizens who are spatially illiterate.