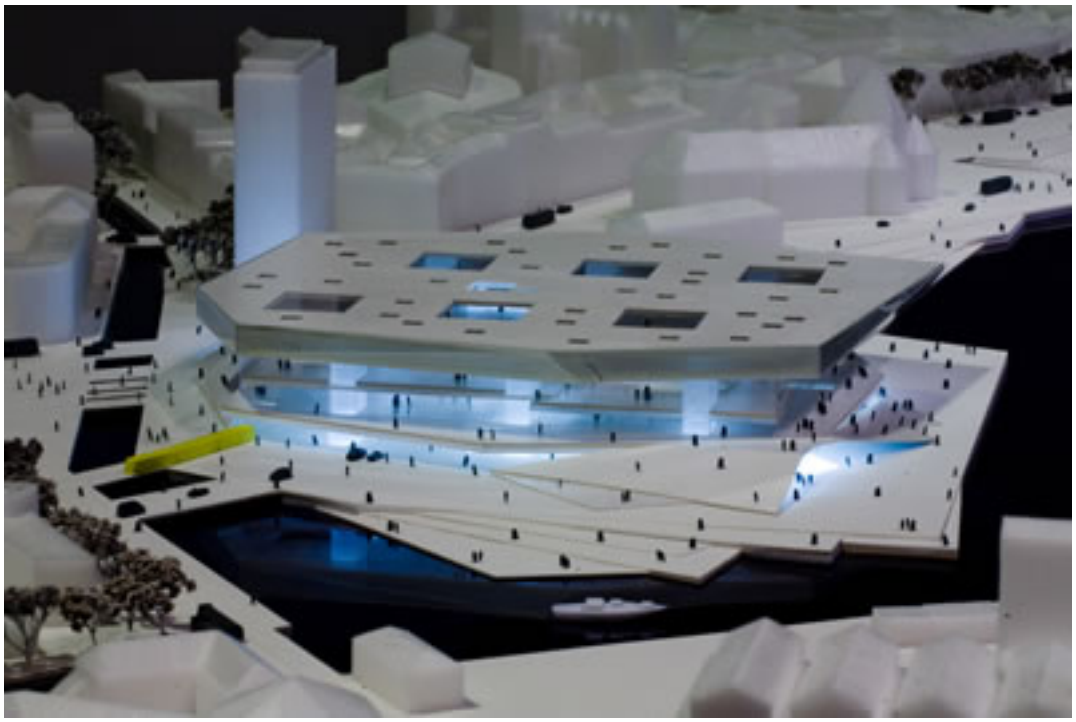
Featured this month on Archinnovations for their landmark project "The Royal Library", schmidt hammer lassen architects (SHL Architects) are also in the news for winning an international competition to design "Urban Mediaspace", the largest public library in Scandinavia. The € 228 million (US$ 325 million) scheme, located in Aarhus, Denmark, will become a new visual and cultural focal point for the city whilst pioneering the next generation of library design.

SHL Architects was announced the winner on Tuesday (4th March) after an extensive consultation process with the Municipality of Aarhus; the other practices involved in the competition were a partnership between the Dutch firm Mecanoo and GPP Architects from Denmark and A-Team - a collaboration between two Danish companies, AART and Arkitema.

SHL Architects' innovative, 30.000 m2 scheme reassesses traditional concepts of library design. Instead of a building focused around books, "Urban Mediaspace" is a hub of social interaction, incorporating interior and exterior recreational spaces for studying, socialising, and relaxing. The building will also have the capacity to host multi-media and cultural events.



“Urban Mediaspace” is part of a wider plan to regenerate the old cargo docks on the harbour front, connecting it to the old city centre. The competition jury described SHL Architects’ design as “a beautiful and highly-functional city harbour space, reflecting a deep understanding of the challenges faced when designing a public library. The new areas will offer flexible and exciting spaces with many possibilities for socialising and contemplation,”

The building’s distinctive heptagonal-shape design will be a landmark in Aarhus. The library’s offices will have impressive panoramic views over the harbour with steps leading out on to the

waterfront. SHL Architects' design connects the library to the Aarhus River by creating an external recreational area that will run along the south side of the "Urban Mediaspace". The building's glazed façade will create light, well-ventilated interior spaces whilst also making the inside of the library visible to passersby, inviting the community inside.

SHL Architects has established itself as a leader in the design of libraries through their consistently innovative buildings that reflect the practice's track record of delivering versatile and democratic designs. SHL Architects' UK-based library projects include, Aberdeen University Library and the Library Learning Centre in Sheffield – a two and a half storey library complex which will provide exceptional facilities for teaching and learning.

Partner of SHL Architects Kim Holst Jensen said:
"We are delighted to have won such a prestigious and culturally important project. At SHL Architects we believe that library design is about more than just books. Libraries revolve around people and should provide flexible spaces for social interaction as well as studying. "Urban Mediaspace" further establishes the practice as leaders of this democratic, social kind of library design."