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**LibrarIN [101061516]: Value Co-creation and Social Innovation  
for a new Generation of European Libraries**



**D3.5 Social entrepreneurship, public-private networks &  
social innovation v2.0**

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**Document description**

This document is organized in two parts. First, it reviews the academic and non-academic literature relating public libraries and social innovations, which we define as innovations involving a network of partners in its making (input) and generating interaction networks among individuals as outcome. Public libraries' core missions have changed through time, from the curation of books to the building of communities. In this sense, they stand as potential social innovators.

The second part illustrates a series of case studies carried out across Europe so as to investigate the hypothesis of public libraries as social innovators.



## Disclaimer

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## Executive Summary

This report is organized in two parts. First, it reviews the existing academic and non-academic literature about public libraries involvement into public-private networks aiming to foster social innovations and social entrepreneurship. The purpose of the report is to establish a series of criteria to be used in selecting empirical cases to investigate later-on.

The document reports that public libraries' core missions have changed through time, from the curation of books to the building of communities. Not all libraries can be called community builders, but overall there seems to be a general tendency in which traditional operations of preservation and circulation of collections are progressively replaced by new operations aiming at connecting people and at generating social interactions.

The old and the new missions are actually more related than one may think at first, because they are both part of the knowledge creation process. For its part, the curatorial library plays a supportive role in this process by providing the agents with an access to codified knowledge. In comparison, a community builder is a more central player, because it fosters the exchange of potentially informal knowledge. In this sense, it can be the initiator of a knowledge creation cycle.

Public libraries should thus be thought as agents specialized in innovations that change the interaction patterns within the society. As a side outcome, this literature review clarifies the concept of social innovation. It encompasses innovations that modify interaction patterns among individuals, be they located within a company, a neighborhood or a larger area. Interaction can be the method used to innovate and it is also the result of the innovation. Our take is that pursuing inclusion or aiming at improving people's well-being shall not be used as the only defining criterion.

Defined as such, social innovations seem of primary importance for democratic societies, because there are social and technological forces that produce social disintegration. For instance, the development of suburban life, or the promotion of tailor-made experiences, like the one provided by online recommender systems, are reducing occasions to build shared experiences with others – which reduces the communication channels between people. Community building libraries appear as a potential answer to this phenomenon.

Many surveys identify a disaffection of the general public for libraries, but their role as prime social innovators makes them essential for social cohesion. The empirical case studies will certainly illustrate this point. From all that has been said, the selected cases shall involve:

- Innovations that generate discussion networks among individuals. These networks may be largely invisible at first sight, and their study will require further investigations, like the conduct of interviews.



- In this sense, researchers should be attentive to the “outcome network”: how many actors have been reached out? Is the network ephemeral or self-sustained? what is the long term effect of such network on the actors involved?
- The public libraries can be the initiator or a supportive agent. Further, the input network might involve a variety of public and private actors.

In a second part, the report summarizes a series of 11 in-depth case studies carried out across Europe to investigate the hypothesis of public libraries as social innovators. All of these cases mobilize a set of semi-structured interviews with actors of the innovations, selected according to their importance and/or representativeness. Finally, section 4 provides with first elements of conclusion. In particular, it appears that public libraries are not only favoring the transmission of codified knowledge through the circulation of books, but they also improve social cohesion and they permit the transmission of know-how.



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## List of Terms and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
<b>KISS</b>	Knowledge Intensive Social Services
<b>MPLS</b>	Medellín Public Library System
<b>NGO(s)</b>	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
<b>NSIS</b>	National Social Innovation Systems
<b>PSINSIs</b>	Public Service Innovation Networks for Social Innovations
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>UCL</b>	Urban Libraries Council
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization





## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose and Scope

Public libraries are ubiquitous organizations: the European Union alone counts as much as 65,000 of them (Quick et al., 2013, p. 13). Yet, behind this apparent success, they are facing many challenges. Among these, Smith (2019) identifies a general distrust for Government agencies, the decline in people's "attention span" (p. 244) due to the pervasive use of smartphones, the "decline in reading" (p. 244) and severe budget cuts. Further, the available data regarding the use of libraries reveal dramatic figures. For instance, Weaver and Appleton (2020) report that "between 2010 and 2016, the number of UK public libraries decreased by 14%, the number of library visits by 15% and the number of active borrowers by 23.5%" (p. xxi).

In this context, many question the usefulness of public libraries. Palfrey (2015) illustrates this point, by recalling typical conversations in which his interlocutors declare that "we don't really need li-braries so much now that we have Google" (p. 22). But, what are we talking about when we evoke libraries? To some authors, these organizations are mere codex curators (see for instance Gaines, 1985b) while for others, libraries are builders of conversational networks within the society (Lankes et al., 2007). This duality can be touched on by the reading of a recent report ordered by the French Government to assess the means, the needs and the realizations of public libraries throughout the country (Orsenna and Corbin 2018). On one hand, the authors adopt a lyric stance, stating that "libraries are these porous places where multiple networks of actors and projects weave, where tears are healing, where we recover strengths to address the future, where territories are livening and re-livening" (p. 9-10). But, later on, they adopt a technical approach, more in line with the curatorial perspective, stating that a library "owns a collection and [...] sets an annual acquisition budget", that it has a "qualified personnel" and that it occupies at least 25m<sup>2</sup> (p. 35). Both types of libraries certainly coexist, and those in difficulty might be primarily the curatorial ones.

In a sense, this report contributes to the debate regarding the usefulness of public libraries. The line of argument stemming from our literature review is that libraries are more needed than ever, because some actually stand as prime social innovators. By doing so, we revisit the definition of a social innovation as an innovation that creates or modifies interaction patterns within the society. We advocate that these new patterns can produce serendipitous discoveries, and that they can foster social cohesion, at an age in which some authors identify a tendency towards social disintegration (Oldenburg and Brisset, 1982; Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017).



## 1.2 Approach for Work Package and Relation to other Work Packages and Deliverables

In accordance with the multi-agents framework developed in the Work package 2, we focus our attention on the competences used by libraries in their social innovation activities. In this respect, we distinguish between two competence sets of libraries: technical ones, in terms of books curation, and relational ones, when they act as community builders. We also find that users' preferences are increasingly driving/ initiating libraries' innovation activities and that their competencies are increasingly mobilized, as they become co-creators of libraries' services.

Aside from specifying the competence sets, the value added of this work package to the overall framework is to enlarge the focal of the main multi-agent framework by bringing in the concept of network. Indeed, we define social innovations as innovations involving networks of partners in their making (input network) and which produce interaction networks (outcome).

## 1.3 Methodology and Structure of the Deliverable

This document is organized as follows. Section 2 develops a traditional literature re-view so as to stimulate serendipitous discoveries. Key books and papers were identified on Google Scholar and Web of Science based on their citation counts. Then, we navigate through the literature via a snowball search into the reference lists of the various documents, and also by linking our readings with our area of expertise: economics and management of innovation in services and through services. The literature review provides with a series of criteria to select cases of social innovations involving public libraries: these innovations should be based on a network of partners, and/or generate such networks. The section 3 presents summaries of 11 in-depth case studies identified across Europe according to these criteria. All of these case studies mobilize a set of semi-structured interviews with actors of the innovations, selected according to their importance and/or representativity. Finally, section 4 provides with first elements of conclusion.



## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Public libraries: from books curators to community builders

The traditional view about a library's activities stresses on its curatorial mission. A first example is provided by the Cambridge Dictionary, which states that a library is "a building, room, or organization that has a collection of books, documents, music or sometimes things such as tools or artworks, for people to borrow, usually without payment".<sup>1</sup> In another entry, it defines a public library as "a building where people can read or borrow books without having to pay".<sup>2</sup> These definitions emphasize on the collections: a library's role is to take care of these and to ensure their free circulation within the society. Note that the fact that every citizen can access to books without payment does not entail that the library's role is to serve everyone. For instance, Gaines (1985a) – director of the Cleveland Public Library at the time – is a tenant of an elitist view. To him, "the guts of the library are in the integrity of its collections, the care with which it assembles and buys materials over a long period of time, materials that often the average member of the public is unaware of or indifferent to. The point of all our work is that when essential information is needed, it is there, and that is in the care of a curatorial staff" (p. 53). As such, in the curatorial perspective, a public library might serve an elite minority, but not the whole community in which it is located. But a more universal view is also possible. For instance, Richter and Haley (1984) emphasize on the term "public reading". This expression, widely adopted in the French speaking world between the two World Wars, evokes an educational mission of libraries: to promote the activity of reading within the general public. In this perspective, libraries' acquisitions should respond to the tastes and needs of the commoners so as to stimulate their interest.

The universalist curatorial perspective is consistent with the 1949 and 1972 versions of the UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto, which underlines libraries' roles of conservation, diffusion and as a "living force for popular education" (UNESCO, 1949; UNESCO, 1972). In 1994, the same manifesto adopted a more inclusive stance by highlighting the need to provide accessible resources and specific services to "linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison" (UNESCO, 1994). Interestingly, serving prisons and hospitals require the library to be active in bringing its collections to the population, instead than being a static access point to bookshelves. To this respect, the core missions of the library now exceed the work of a curator - hence the need for a renewed definition. The 2022 version of the manifesto even declares that "libraries are creators of community, proactively

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/library> (last access; Oct. 7th 2023).

<sup>2</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/public-library> (last access: Oct. 7th 2023).



reaching out to new audiences and using effective listening to support the design of services that meet local needs and contribute to improving quality of life" (UNESCO, 2022). In this last definition, collections are only implicit and the library appears as a central social service for its community.

The shift towards community building has emerged in early 2000s. For instance, Muddiman et al. (2000) question the equality of access to public libraries in the UK, in particular due to recurrent shifts in policy orientations of public libraries with, in background, a tension between serving the "vocal 'traditional' library users and trying to establish services for 'new' communities" (p. 15). Besides, the authors highlight that some marginalized groups, in particular those without a stable address, had no access to library services. Among their recommendations to librarians, they insist on the necessity to engage into "real and continuing consultation with socially excluded communities, groups and individuals" (p. 61). To put it another way, the authors recommend to adopt co-creation methods - that is collaboration, listening and discussions with end-users, here marginalized groups, in the design phase of new library services (Vargo et al. 2008). De Moor and van den Assen (2013) summarize this new logic as follows: "libraries should move from 'service design for patrons' to 'service design by communities'" (p. 1).

Many co-creation examples are provided by UCL (2005) in the case of the Chicago Public Library and of its branches. For instance, Rose Powers, one of the branches directors, is said to routinely search to identify and contact local communities leaders, so as to gain a better understanding of their needs. This search strategy brings her to participate to community projects - sometimes even not directly related to librarianship, like helping to revive a chamber of commerce - which ultimately drag community attention to the library. This helps to expand the number and the variety of stakeholders, so as to elaborate new library initiatives, like new outreach programs or the sharing of teaching staffs. By doing so, the library can (re)create social cohesion.

Community building is therefore related to co-creation, which supposes an exchange of information. Lankes et al. (2007) develop this idea further by stating that the main role of libraries is to "facilitate conversation" (p. 18). Indeed, one can consider that books or any other types of artifacts provided by libraries are the results of conversations and, "while one cannot converse with a book, that book certainly can be a starting point for many conversations within the reader and within a larger community" (p. 18). Further, noting that "knowledge is created through conversation" (p. 17), one can summarize the core mission of libraries by saying that they "improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities" (Lankes 2011, p. 31). As such, these authors ground librarianship into conversation and knowledge creation theories.



The end-objective of community-building is knowledge creation. Going back to the initiatives reported by UCL (2005) in Chicago, it is clear that they involve a sustained dialogue with the community. The individuals involved certainly gained access to new knowledge, either from discussions with librarians or from the discussions with other stakeholders. This conception of a knowledge creating library is influential in the academic literature, as many authors adopted it. For instance, Heseltine (2020) declares that "libraries [...] are in the business of knowledge, learning, creativity, and imagination" (p. 5). In the same vein, for Bieraugel and Neill (2017), "libraries should look beyond the role of storing and serving up existing knowledge and examine the academic library as a place of discovery and development" (p. 36).

The relationship between conversation and knowledge creation has been theorized by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995 and 2019) in the form of a spiral in four phases: socialization, externalization, combination and internalization. In the socialization phase, a person acquires tacit knowledge or know-how from working, observing and/or through discussions with someone else. This tacit knowledge is then made more explicit by the individual during the externalization - this time, through discussion with a small team of close co-workers. During combination, the explicit knowledge is combined with other bits of explicit knowledge, typically steaming from more distant working groups. It is in this third phase that knowledge produces new working prototypes, and thus potential innovations. Then comes a fourth phase of internalization, where the individual acquires a new know-how from the three previous phases. This new tacit knowledge can then fuel another cycle of knowledge creation and innovation.

The spiral of knowledge highlights an important point regarding libraries: by nature, books record explicit or codified knowledge, while the process of knowledge creation is initiated by a transfer of tacit knowledge, which often occurs through discussion. In this view, the curatorial library can only play the role of supportive agent in the knowledge creation process, while the community building library becomes an essential participant, because it facilitates - or even permits - the initial transfer of tacit knowledge. Interestingly, it appears that books and other artifacts traditionally provided by libraries are now subordinated to the connecting activities, which gained in importance.

In a sense, the library promoted by Gaines (1985a) was a provider of codified knowledge for the few users who were engaged into the combining phase of the knowledge creation process, while the one promoted by Lankes et al. (2007) and by Lankes (2011) is a facilitator in the socialization phase of that process. The community building library also democratizes knowledge creation by permitting everyone to participate to the, potentially society-wide, discussion.



## 2.2 Innovation trajectories in public libraries

The changing definition is the reflect of profound organizational changes experienced by libraries.

The very first public libraries, in the second half of the 19th Century, were mostly book-centered and were not meant to be user-friendly. For instance, in the United States, Pungitore (1995) indicates that in the 1850s, "the stacks of shelving containing the books were closed to the public; users had to know exactly what they wanted so that they could ask the library employees to retrieve specific items" (p. 5), and the collections excluded fictions and novels. In the same vein, the first public libraries in France were "forbidding the lending of books" (Richter and Haley, 1984, p. 51). It is later, during the Great Depression, that American public libraries became "a People's University" (Pungitore, 1995, p. 50), as they enlarged their collections to popular novels, and were massively used by unemployed people for education and leisure.

Pateman (2020) proposes a history of the evolution of Public Libraries in the United Kingdom in three phases - which differ in terms of libraries' objectives, how they use their floor space, and in terms of performance indicators (Table 1). The three phases are : the "traditional library" (1850-1970), the "community-led library" (1970-2000) and the "needs-based library" (from 2000 to nowadays). To the author, the process is necessarily sequential: one library has to start as a traditional one, and it has to become community-led before being needs-based. The sequential view is debatable, but in any case, different types of libraries can coexist in the same country.

**Table 1: The stages of evolution of public libraries, adapted from Pateman (2020)**

	Traditional library (1850-1970)	Community-led library (1970-2000)	Needs-based library (2000-present)
Objective	- Control of the working class. - Serving the elite and the middle class.	- Reaching new audiences (i.e. outreach programs) - Supporting the marginalized	- Building a community - Community-led partnerships
Floor space	Dedicated to collections.	- 2/3 collections - 1/3 services	- 1/3 collections - 1/3 services - 1/3 partnerships
Performance	Breadth and depth of collections, regardless of the community needs.	Breadth and depth of services.	Breadth and depth of community development activities.



The evolution process described in Table 1 is consistent with the already mentioned progressive servitization of libraries' activities: the floor space is less and less dedicated to collections. Another major trend is the use of a co-creation logic: in the "community-led" model, the library generates initiatives to reach out new - and usually impoverished - users, while in the needs-based model, the users are the initiators of projects and they are standing as equal partners with the library. This dual change towards servitization and co-creation, and its implications in terms of innovation activities, can be conceptualized with the help of the definition of a service.

For Gadrey (1992), "a service activity is an operation, aiming to transform a medium C, owned or used by a consumer (client, or user) B, performed by a provider A mandated by B, and often in relation with him, but without resulting into the production of a good susceptible to circulate independently from the medium C" (p. 17). Such operation mobilizes a set of capabilities from the provider (Gallouj and Weinstein, 1997) and often also from the client himself (Djellal and Gallouj, 2008). In this respect, Gadrey (1999) distinguishes between "technical" and "human" (i.e. relational) capabilities (p. 15) and two modes of activation of the service: a client may want to be served, or to serve himself. Crossing the types of capabilities with these types of requests allows Gadrey to identify three service logic (Figure 1). There is, at first, the "logic of provision" in which the client rents the use of a material artifact maintained by the provider. This applies well to the activities of the curatorial library. In this case, interactivity is low and the provider uses mainly technical capabilities. In the "human representation" logic, the provider uses a set of human and technical capabilities in a low interactivity context. An example is the display of a live performance for the benefit of the user. Thirdly, Gadrey (1999) identifies a logic of "intervention", where the provider mainly mobilizes a set of human capabilities in a high interactivity context. This case suits well to the community-builder library, which interacts with its readers and, more generally, with the community in which it is located in order to generate discussions and knowledge.

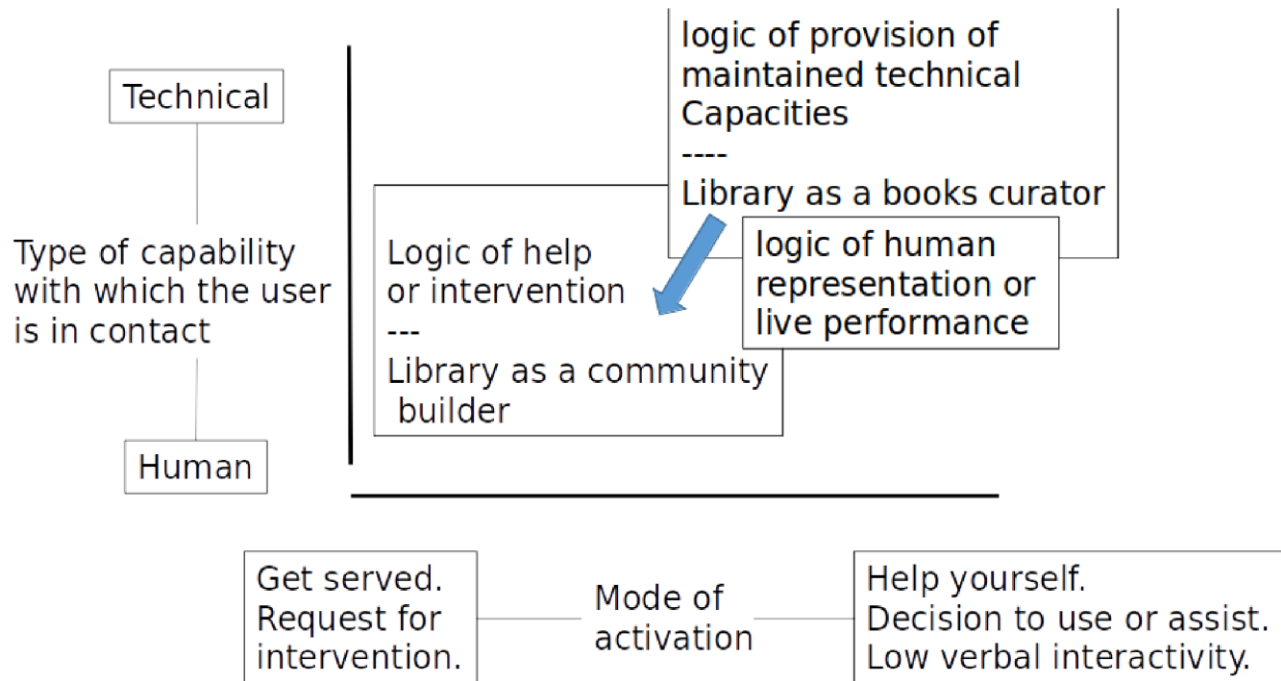


Figure 1: The different service logic and the libraries, adapted from Gadrey (1999, p. 15).

The two service logics applicable to libraries (i.e. provision and intervention) suggest two directions, or trajectories, of innovation (Nelson and Winter, 1982): one improving a library's technological capabilities to preserve and circulate its collections, and another, more relational and methodological, that increases the scale and depth of the discussion and knowledge exchange within the society. Table 2 summarizes these two innovation trajectories in terms of capabilities, types of operations and nature of the service medium in Gadrey's sense (see above). We present them in details in the following sub-sections.

Table 2: The two innovation trajectories in public libraries

	Book curator	Community builder
<b>Capabilities of the librarian</b>	Technical	Relational
<b>Operations</b>	- Conservation - Provision	- Conversation - Connection
<b>Nature of the service medium</b>	Books (material)	- Individuals - Knowledge
<b>Innovation trajectory</b>	Science and technology based	Methodological and relational





### 2.2.1 The science and technology trajectory

This innovation trajectory improves, in a technical sense, libraries' capabilities to fulfill their missions of conservation and circulation of collections. The traditional view about service organizations is that, when it comes to technological innovations, they are "supplier dominated" (Pavitt 1984): the technology is not developed in-house, but provided by a supplier, with a strong orientation towards process innovation and the lowering of operation costs.

The literature abounds of examples related to the digitization of library services, which often carry a supplier-dominated view. For instance, Cervone (2008) uses a questionnaire to test the influence of professional advise networks on librarians' receptivity to innovation. This topic itself suggests that innovation is emanating from other organizations and then adopted by libraries - which therefore stand as supplier dominated. In this study, the surveyed population is selected from the members of the Consortium of Academic Librarians in Illinois, and the receptivity to innovation is measured by a set of 9 attitudinal variables ranging from individual risk tacking to views related to organizational flexibility. These indicators are not related to technology adoption per se, but the authors specifically invoke the digitization of resources to motivate their investigations. To this respect, they mention that "Traditionally, the university library has held the role of caretaker of scholarly information on behalf of the academic community. However, as electronic modes of information delivery have begun to overtake traditional print-based formats, the scholarly information environment has been changing rapidly" (p. 72). The curatorial perspective is transparent here. Another supplier-dominated view can be found in Khan et al. (2022), who build and administrate a questionnaire among academic libraries in Nanjing, China, so as to "assess the library personnel's willingness to adopt internet of things services" (p. 1977).

The supplier-dominated attitude might be explained by the fact that most libraries are now focusing on a relational trajectory - therefore delegating technological improvements to suppliers. Indeed, at an earlier period, curatorial libraries were able to produce in-house technological innovations - therefore behaving as "science-based" organizations (Pavitt 1984). In this respect, Malinconico (1997) reports many instances in which libraries developed technological solutions in the fields of computing and telecommunication. As such, the author recalls that, in the 1930s, the New Jersey Public Library developed its own machine "to mechanise the processing of circulation cards" (p. 48), and that a former director of the National Library of Medicine in the U.S. was instrumental in the birth of a punched card machine. In the field of telecommunication, he highlights that Guy Sylvestre, "the National Librarian of Canada [...] appointed a task group on computer communications protocols for bibliographic data interchange" (p. 52). This effort can certainly be considered as a work of technological R&D performed by libraries.



## 2.2.2 The methodological and relational trajectory

This innovation trajectory is dominant among community-building libraries. It aims at finding new ways to deepen and to enlarge the scope of the discussion within the society. Here, discussion refers to ideas generation and to their sharing. More specifically, Nicholson (2019) identifies 5 types of innovation in libraries that satisfy this general objective: "participation innovations", "making and creating innovations", "learning innovations", "outreach innovations", and "partnership innovations".

(i) Participation innovations are initiatives that help libraries to get involved into the current cultural trends regarding media use and production, like promoting open data or the gamification users' experience. For example, Nicholson (2019 p. 334) reports the launch of the "Minecraft Gaming Day" in the North Melbourne Library, in which users had to build a virtual library in the Minecraft video game.

(ii) The learning innovations (Nicholson, 2019) encompass libraries' initiatives to promote lifelong learning. In this context, Nicholson (2015) mentions "a large reading and writing club programme" run by the Copenhagen Main Library (p. 27), and the project of a "guided reading club" potentially ran in partnership with "the psychiatric department of a local hospital" (p. 27).

(iii) The outreach innovations aim to expand the user base. Examples are the opening of "pop-up libraries" (Nicholson, 2019, p. 341) or the delivery of library services through bikes. Some initiatives require partnerships. For instance, the Grand Rapid Public Library is proactively searching for partners to organize any type of events that can, even indirectly, promote "the cause of literacy, books, information or the library as a community institution" (Warner, 2013).

(iv) The "partnership innovations" (Nicholson, 2019) are meant to expand the range of services provided by the library through partnerships with other, often governmental, organizations. In this perspective, the library becomes a "community center" (UCL, 2005 p. 3). An example is the setting up of a fair grouping many social services for the homeless in the Salt Lake City Public Library (Torres 2015).

(v) The "making and creating" innovations aim at changing "the role of public library, from being a content provider that encourages consumption, to a content producer that fosters creation" (Nicholson, 2019 p. 336). This type of innovations is more documented than the others in the literature. Innovations belonging to this category range from dedicating floor space to fablabs, to a complete re-thinking of the design of library's spaces. On this respect, Bieraugel and Neill (2017) propose to test how different spaces of a university library correlate with specific learning behaviors among their users. They proceed by distributing questionnaires in the library, asking a series of questions to which



users have to respond using a Likert scale. The questions are then grouped into 7 learning behaviors: "explore", "exploit", "observe", "question", "experiment", "network", and "reflect" (p. 42). Mean results obtained by the authors for the various space types in the surveyed library are reproduced in Table 3. This Table reveals that Makerspace is the most effective location for most learning behaviors, except for exploitation - in which computer lab has the highest score of all locations - and the reflection, where the atrium scores best.

**Table 3: Ability of libraries spaces to support learning behaviors, extract from Bieraugel and Neill (2017, p. 42)**

Mean Values								
Means	Communal Tables	Quiet Study	Computer Lab	Fishbowls	Atrium	Greenspace	Makerspace	Student Union
Explore	4.84	4.73	5.12	5.58	5.01	4.97	6.31	4.17
Exploit	5.00	5.55	5.94	5.52	4.80	4.06	5.45	4.91
Observe	4.51	3.83	4.22	5.30	5.08	5.92	6.20	5.16
Question	5.00	4.29	4.90	5.68	5.45	5.17	6.38	4.23
Experiment	3.92	2.98	4.29	4.98	3.85	3.89	6.47	3.38
Network	5.02	4.10	4.01	5.37	4.22	5.52	6.34	5.91
Reflect	3.83	5.62	5.96	5.25	6.26	6.05	5.33	4.03

Bieraugel and Neill (2017) explore only one university library in the United States. Hence, replication studies are needed, both in this country and abroad and for a variety of library types. Besides, one may ask about the direction of causality: are spaces promoting behaviors, or attracting people who already possess these attitudes? Also, are the high scores of the makerspace due to this type of rooms in general or to some specificities of the one under study?

Despite its limitations, this study raises up the question of the influence of the design of physical spaces on users' behaviors. Marino and Lapintie (2015) also tackle this issue by dressing up a typology of users of three public libraries located in the Center of the city of Helsinki - therefore in quite similar locations. The main difference resides in the organization of the floor spaces: a first library, referred to as "library 10" (p. 121) is mainly made up of "large group tables but not confined spaces, except for one meeting room of around 12 persons" (p. 121). The second one, called "Meeting Point" is made of meeting rooms with movable walls, and equipped with workstations. Finally, there is the university library, in which some equipment are reserved for students and researchers. The authors proceed through observations and interviews. By doing so, they produce a list of \$5\$ users profiles, distributed in a non-uniform manner between the three libraries, which suggests that space and furniture arrangements are more or less appealing depending on the user type. Users' categories are the followings:

- "The scholar", is typically a researcher seeking a "peaceful environment and easy access to information resources".



- “The artist” is a young and educated person “employed in the fields of art and culture”, often a freelancer, he is looking for a free office space.
- “The walker” is a worker who stop by the library at the middle of a commuting journey to sit and do some office work (consulting e-mails etc.).
- “The starter” is a young teleworker, often an entrepreneur. According to the authors, “the library can act as an incubator for them”.
- “The fugitive” is someone who escape from his office “to get work done”.

Marino and Lapintie (2015)'s work highlights the many creative uses of public libraries, especially as incubators for start-ups. Interestingly, the interviews reveal that the way people are using the floor spaces differ markedly from what their designers envisioned. For instance, some spaces of the university library were designed to appeal researchers, while in fact they mostly attract teleworkers. Regarding researchers, they seem to work in more or less random locations within the library.

In our view, the delimitation between these five types of innovations is porous. For instance, UCL (2005) reports a case in which a branch of the Chicago Public Library partners with "the local hospitals to use the library to educate people and provide health screening" (p. 25). Such initiative is, at the same time, a partnership, a learning and an outreach innovation. For this reason, we prefer to use the encompassing label of "methodological and relational innovation". Most of these initiatives can be labelled as social innovations, which thus stand as the main innovation trajectory of community building libraries.

### 2.3 Social innovation: definition and parallel with libraries' activities

There are many definitions of social innovations (Dacin et al., 2010), which Cloutier (2003) classifies in three categories. There is, first, the definitions "centered on the individuals" (p. 3). Under this lens, social innovations aim at "creating new social structures" (p. 3) through cooperation and co-creation. For the author, the novelty to qualify a social innovation as such shall not be absolute. Rather, there is novelty when there is a "discontinuity" (p. 8) with past practices used in a specific setting to address a certain problem - novelty is thus, above all, contextual.

Secondly, Cloutier (2003) distinguishes "the social innovations oriented towards a milieu" (p. 13). Most of these social innovations adopt a territorial perspective and they modify "social relations" (p. 13). From the point of view of consumer theory, Gershuny (1982) states that a social innovation consists in "changes in the modes of provision for households needs" (p. 496). The starting point of Gershuny is the assumption that households have various needs which are met through their demand and use of goods and services. In the author's view, new goods or services that respond to needs previously met



by other means are social innovations. They relate to the "milieu" category because they necessarily change the interaction patterns within the society: using a car instead than a taxi, or asking a librarian instead than a town hall for some public services, all change the way people interact, and therefore the social structure. As such, these new goods and services can be labeled as social innovations.

Thirdly, Cloutier (2003) identifies contributions stressing that "new ways to organize work" are "social innovations within companies" (p. 21). Note that these new working methods do not necessarily aim at improving workers' life.

Our take from this typology is that social innovations are innovations that modify interaction patterns among individuals, be they located within a company, a neighborhood or a larger area - like a country, in the case of a culture change. Interaction can be the method used to innovate - for instance through the use of a co-creation logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004 and Vargo et al., 2008) - and it is also the result of the innovation. We note that pursuing inclusion or aiming at improving people's well-being is absent from the analysis here.

Interestingly, the more recent definitions focus on the existence of an inclusive or "good" objective as a decisive criterion for social innovations.<sup>3</sup> By doing so, they move away from the interactive perspective, at the risk of facing a problem of circularity by defining "social innovations" as innovations which are "social". An illustration of the circularity issue can be found in Mulgan (2012), who defines social innovations as "innovations that are social in both their ends and their means" (p. 35). Further, for Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) such innovations involve "the (re)introduction of social justice into production and allocation systems" (p. 2037), with no discussion about the meaning of "social" in this specific context.

Hayek (1993) deploras the many uses of this word. To him, the misuse of a word voids it from its meaning and, when employed as an adjective, it also confuses the speakers about the meaning of the noun being qualified - which is especially true about the word social. Hayek proposes to stick to the etymology of the word: it comes from the Latin "societas, derived from socius, the personally known companion" (p. 155). In this sense, the interactive dimension identified by Cloutier (2003) seems the fairest: a social innovation should create or modify interaction patterns, permitting unknown individuals to get to know each other. Interactions can happen in the making of the innovation, or as a

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<sup>3</sup>As an illustration of this state of affairs, we can refer to Dacin et al. (2010), who list no less than 37 definitions of social entrepreneurship. The vast majority of those refer to social innovation and define it in a circular manner by employing the word "social".



result of it. An inclusive dimension is still possible, but should not be decisive to classify an innovation as social.

From this discussion, we can think of the community-building library as a social innovation in itself, since its stated objective is to foster conversation, and in particular to involve those with a weak acquaintance network. Apart from its conversational mission, the library becomes socially innovative when it introduces a discontinuity – i.e. a drastic change – in the interaction pattern within a given milieu. As such, most of the innovations that belong to the methodological and relational trajectory can be qualified as social.

In the following two sections, we distinguish the interaction/network as an input/process involved into the making of a library innovation or as a result of it.

## 2.4 Social innovations and libraries: network as a process

As noted, social innovation research has departed from the study of interactive solutions. In parallel, it developed a tendency to emphasize on the figure of the social entrepreneur, that Mulgan et al. (2007) characterize as "heroic, energetic and impatient individuals" (p. 13). Desmarchelier et al. (2020a) oppose to this individualistic view the fact that social innovations can also be the product of large networks of actors. In particular, they highlight the connecting role of a new type of actors, the "knowledge intensive social services" (KISS). These are "the equivalent to knowledge intensive business services in nonprofit activities" with some notable differences, namely they "pursue an explicit social mission" and they "act as connectors", linking their clients with other actors of the social economy (Desmarchelier, 2023 p. 52).

The large innovation networks that emerge from KISS activities have been labelled as "public service innovation networks for social innovations" (PSINSIs) by Desmarchelier et al. (2020) and even as national social innovation systems (NSIS) in Desmarchelier et al. (2022). Such networks differ from more traditional and technological innovation networks by the centrality of public and private services. But a paradox emerges here: while the community-building libraries should stand among the key actors in these networks, they are absent from the data provided by Desmarchelier et al. (2020a and 2022). This might be due to several factors. Firstly, the authors do not depart significantly from the circular definition of a social innovation from Mulgan (2012). Therefore, the projects covered in the authors' data-sets are not necessarily aiming at changing the social structure. In fact, the networks reported by Desmarchelier et al. do record interactions among organizations but not among individuals. Secondly, community-building libraries are certainly more present at the local level, while NSIS are of national scope.



Yet, the idea of PSINSIs is appealing, because it suggests that social innovations could be stimulated by the presence and interactions of a specific set of institutions. In this context, can we identify public libraries and projects initiated by them in such networks? Are community-building libraries acting as KISS actors - that is, do they help social entrepreneurs by connecting them to other actors?

## 2.5 Social innovations and libraries: network as a result

The community-building library aims at generating "conversation networks" and, through them, to take an active role in the knowledge creation process (Lankes et al., 2007). Such a connection between knowledge and social interactions is investigated by Carley (1986). In particular, she declares that "the development of the social world involves tacit consensus among the individuals in the society over perceived regularities; in this way, social knowledge as shared cognitive structure is also a by-product of human interaction. Social knowledge affects future interaction/communication [...]. As individuals' knowledge bases co-evolve, their propensity to interact changes, social knowledge evolves, and social structures change" (p. 382). What is being suggested here is a virtuous circle: social interactions nurture social knowledge, which in return create improved conditions for future social interactions and so on.

This view echoes Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)'s spiral of knowledge, in particular in that the spiral highlights a co-evolution between an epistemological dimension (i.e. the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge) and an ontological dimension, since the various stages of the knowledge spiral involve an increasing number of individuals (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2019). We note that, in Nonaka and Takeuchi's theory, knowledge creation is initiated by a meeting of individuals (network as a process). If the end-product of this process is a social innovation (network as a product), then further novelties in terms of interactions are possible, which could trigger the spiral of knowledge once again. This remark highlights the intimate relationship between social innovations and knowledge creation, as well as the intertwining of the networks involved into the innovation process and those resulting from this process.

The idea that interaction is a prerequisite for knowledge creation is shared by authors from other disciplines. As such, from a political science perspective, Pariser (2011) underlines that shared/social knowledge is a necessary condition for nurturing the debate of ideas in a well-functioning democracy, in particular because such debate requires "citizen to see things from one another's point of view". From this assumption, Pariser (2011) and Sunstein (2017) shed a pessimistic outlook at recent evolutions of the Internet, notably the ubiquity of recommender systems, in that they would lock-up internet users into "information bubbles" and therefore diminish the base of shared knowledge within the society. Indeed, recommender systems provide individuals with tailor-made experiences, that Sunstein labels as "the daily me", in lieu of the public - or shared - opinion (Tarde 1901) - which could



thus disappear. In a sense, recommender systems are the opposite of social innovation, as they reduce opportunities for interaction.

In this context, an essential role of the community-building libraries could be to counter-balance the disintegrating force of the online recommender systems. Their ability to create acquaintances and shared knowledge, even with the less connected ones - for instance the newly arrived migrants - is evident in Wessendorf (2022). The author conceptualizes public libraries as "physical arrival infrastructures" (p. 182), because - in addition to providing a variety of public services, resources and information - they stand as places where "serendipitous encounters can happen" (p. 180). As an illustration, she recalls, about a public library in East London in which, "Pre COVID-19, twice a week a group of about 15 women used to gather their weekly crochet group on a large table by the front window, most of them with a migrant background. During the many times I attended the group, women regularly came into the library to ask members of the group about crochet, which sometimes led to conversations about how to find resources. One of those resources is English classes that take place several times a week at the back of the library" (p. 182).

The risk of social disintegration was already foreseen by Oldenburg and Brissett (1982), but in the context of the development of the suburbs, which reduce people's life to a diptych home-office in which social interactions are governed by specific/well-defined roles and status. To the authors, individuals rather need alternative places, labeled as "third places", where they can exercise "pure sociability" (p. 270), that is where they can participate to informal discussions with other people from a variety of backgrounds, and without the boundaries conferred by social status. The benefits of getting involved in a third place are numerous: it exposes individuals to "diversity and novelty" (p. 273), the author puts forth that confronting one's ideas to the judgment of others is beneficial for mental health, and that it gives access to "collective wisdom" (p. 281).

To summarize, third places create informal and temporary discussion networks. Despite their instantaneousness, such networks provide individuals with significant benefits. Public libraries can be described as third places (see for instance, Orsenna and Corbin, 2018) and, as such, if we are interested into the networks they produce, we should certainly pay attention to the passing experiences that they permit instead than searching for institutionalized/stable networks. This suggests that network as a process are certainly more permanent than the networks as a product. To put it another way, the networks produced by social innovations are certainly most often invisible due to their spontaneousness. The crochet group described in Wessendorf (2022) can illustrate this point: it consists into a permanent (process) network of around 15 women, which produces many temporaries (product) networks through serendipitous encounters with passers-by.





## 2.6 Conclusions of the literature review

Social innovations may involve a network of actors in their process. But it seems that their most distinctive feature is that their outcome is a flow of new social interactions. By doing so, social innovations fuel the cohesion of the society. In this perspective, a typical social innovation is the third place, as it routinely produces a renewed sociability. As such, the shift of libraries' core missions from the curation of material artifacts to the building of communities makes these organizations prime social innovators. We could even say that social innovations are now libraries' natural innovation trajectory.

To some authors, social ties are getting increasingly distended in western societies, due - among other factors - to suburban developments (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982), and to the pervasiveness of online recommender systems (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017). Hence, third places, and therefore also public libraries, are of considerable importance to ensure societal resilience. Further, this paper suggests that social cohesion could nurture the knowledge creation process. In this perspective, social disintegration might even reduce the performance of the national innovation systems. This, undoubtedly, speaks up for public libraries. Thus, we argue that their usefulness exceeds the need to nurture a literate society.

This new role advocates for a change in the metrics used to assess for libraries' performance. In particular, we should consider how and to what extent public libraries contribute to social cohesion and innovativeness in their surrounding environment, rather than just focusing on numbers of borrowed books. Also, the fact that several types of libraries coexist calls for the establishment of typologies of libraries, so as to monitor their demographics and performances more finely. This should constitute an interesting avenue for a multi-disciplinary research agenda.

The main objective of this literature review is to establish a series of criteria to select relevant social innovation cases in a public library context. From all that has been said, the selected cases shall involve:

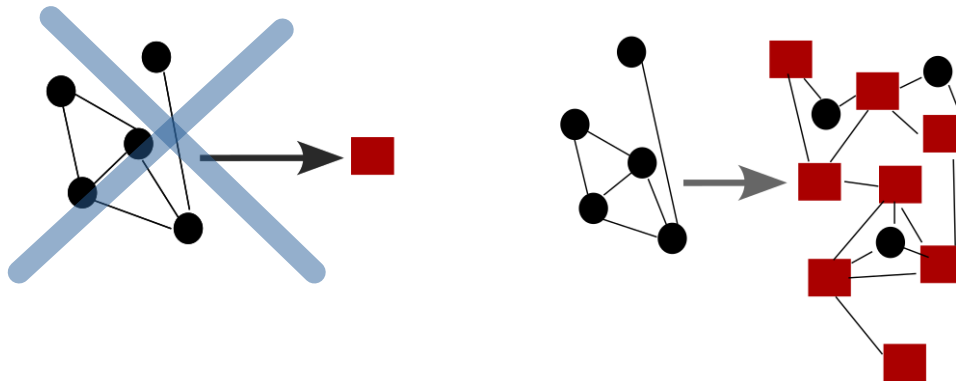
- Innovations that generate discussion networks among individuals. These networks may be largely invisible at first sight, and their study will require further investigations, like the conduct of interviews.
- In this sense, researchers should be attentive to the "outcome network": how many actors have been reached out? Is the network ephemeral or self-sustained? what is the long term effect of such network on the actors involved?
- The public libraries can be the initiator or a supportive agent. Further, the input network might involve a variety of public and private actors.

### 3 Case studies summaries

The literature review has documented the fact that the mission of public libraries has changed: once codex curators, they now are standing as community builders. This new activity directly counters the forces at play towards social disintegration – in particular the pervasive individualism fueled by online recommender systems. In this context, Task 3.2 aims at documenting the specific role of public libraries in creating social and economic networks through social innovations. If so, public libraries could be viewed as actors of the national (social) innovation systems.

#### 3.1 Methodology

We define social innovations as innovations produced by a network of actors (input networks) and which create networks among individuals (outcome networks). Public libraries can be the initiator or a supportive agent of social innovation projects. In that sense, we are interested in innovations and innovation networks that create (possibly self-sustained) communities instead than innovations that serve users in isolation (see Figure 2). Note that networks of users and of providers can be intertwined.



**Figure 2: Social innovations do not propose a good or a service to a single individual (left). Rather, they aim at generating interactions among users (right)**

Given the exploratory nature of the subject, the preferred methodology is to conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, who can be initiators and providers of the innovation and/or the users. In particular, the interviews should aim to uncover the characteristics of both the input and the output networks, focusing on the set of questions detailed in Table 4.



**Table 4: Questions to be answered regarding the input and the output networks.**

Input network	Output/outcome network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the organizations involved?</li> <li>• How to classify these organizations? (manufacturing firm, market service, public service, third sector agent, citizen)</li> <li>• Is it a long lasting partnership?</li> <li>• Is the library involved with some of these actors in other social innovation projects?</li> <li>• What is the specific role of the library? Is it the initiator of the project?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people have been reached out? (an order of magnitude is enough)</li> <li>• Is the user base growing, constant or in decline?</li> <li>• Are the users interacting? Do they engage in other manifestations/activities, for instance have some users set up regular meetings, discussion groups or associations?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of the social innovation project on its users (social inclusion, competences, personal and economic lives)?</li> </ul>

To be considered as relevant, the cases should respect two criteria: (i) they should cover an innovation that involve a public library – i.e. the library can be either the initiator or a supportive agent, and (ii) the innovations should be produced by a network of partners (input network) and/or ambition to generate networks of users (output network). In total, 11 cases across Europe (and Colombia) have been identified and investigated. Distribution of cases across countries is provided in Table 5.

**Table 5: Summary of the cases per partner**

Partner	Expected Nb. of cases	Actual Nb. of cases	Investigated Library	Name of the case study	Country
LC	1	1	– Museum of Humour and Satire of Gabrovo	– Humour House Library	Bulgaria
LIBER	1	1	– MuntPunt Library and Community Centre, Brussels	– Leesclubbing, the Netherlands and Belgium	Belgium
UAH	2	2	– Biblioteca de Acogida in the Public Library of Purchena – Medellín Public Library	– Host Library – Makerspaces, a space for citizen collaboration	Spain Colombia



Partner	Expected Nb. of cases	Actual Nb. of cases	Investigated Library	Name of the case study	Country
RUC	1	1	– The Human Library	– The Human Library	Denmark
ULille	2	2	– North Departmental Library and its partner rural libraries – Vélizy municipal Library	– Library at Home  – The Repair Café	France
VTT	1.5	2	– Vantaa City Library – Helsinki Central Library Oodi	– Likustartti at Vantaa City Library – Children’s Section at Oodi	Finland
AIT	2	2	– Vienna Libraries – The C3 Living Library	– Storytelling cafes at the Vienna Libraries – Living Books at the C3 Library	Austria

The list presented in Table 5 involves makerspaces, fablabs, and living labs. Arguably, these cases could fit into the deliverables for Task 3.3 on living labs. This reflects the proximity of these forms of innovation with our connectionist definition of a social innovation. Nonetheless, the two workpackages investigate different fablabs and they mobilize a different set of theoretical tools and concepts, as here we are primarily investigating the creation of social networks.

The sections that follow present a summary of each cases, which are still under investigation. Each summary is structured the same way: (i) it presents the case in a nutshell, (ii) it assesses the degree of novelty of the innovation, (iii) it identifies the input and/ or output networks involved, and (iv) it provides first elements of conclusion.

### 3.2 Humour House Library

**Author:** Francesco Molinari (LC)

The Museum of Humor and Satire, also known as the House of Humor and Satire, is a unique cultural institution located in Gabrovo, Bulgaria. It was established on April 1, 1972, fittingly on April Fool's Day, and is dedicated to the art of humour and satire. The Museum was founded on the site of an old leather factory and is a successor to the local folklore humour and carnival traditions of Gabrovo, often



referred to as the Bulgarian capital of humour. The Museum area spans 6,000 square meters and includes 8 exhibition halls. It showcases a wide range of humorous and satirical art, including cartoons, photographs, paintings, sculptures, and verbal humour.

The Museum of Humor and Satire also has a Library. This is part of the Museum's broader mission to collect, preserve, and promote humorous and satirical works from around the world. The Library serves as an informational centre, providing resources for researchers, artists, and anyone interested in the study of humour and satire. It houses a specialist collection of around 30,000 titles and 1,000 volumes of periodicals in 35 languages. It is primarily a reference library, meaning that its materials are generally available for use on-site rather than for borrowing. This allows visitors to access a wide range of resources while ensuring that its unique and valuable collections remain available to all.

In figures, the 'Humour of the Peoples Fund' includes 147 220 museum valuables and 38 174 art works (by 9050 authors from 173 countries) in the field of painting, sculpture, caricature, graphics, photography and posters.

**Method:** We conducted semi-structured interviews with the former Museum director, the current head of projects, and the director of a related network of municipalities. We agreed on a draft version of the case study report, which was finally reviewed and approved by the head of projects.

**Characterization of the innovation:** Since its establishment, more than 50 years ago, the Museum has attracted visitors from all over the world, contributing to its reputation as a regional cultural hub, through its various activities, exhibitions, and events. The Museum's international biennials, exhibitions, and educational programs have collectively engaged thousands of visitors annually. The Library is structured to serve as a hub for cultural and educational events, including regular meetings, discussion groups, and workshops. These activities foster a sense of community among visitors and encourage the exchange of ideas related to humour and satire. Such activities are engaging a significant share of the population of the Gabrovo City (approx. 48,000 inhabitants) and Province (approx. 96,000).

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** The Museum and its library are routinely involved in social innovation projects with various societal actors. Project examples include: Summer in Humor, The Address of Satire Project, Satirical News Shows, Social Media Memes, Educational Workshops, Community Engagement Programs and the delivery of Digital Innovation resources. Actor and network examples include: the City Hall of Gabrovo, creative people and artists, scholars and researchers in the field of humour, satire and culture in general, and others.



**Conclusion:** There are two kinds of partnership worth mentioning: (i) stable input output networks promoted and animated by the Museum and Library in execution of their institutional role; (ii) ad hoc and temporary partnerships activated for the sake of execution of specific projects funded by third parties (donors, granting bodies and agencies etc.). What is noteworthy is the consistency across time – more than 50 years – and obviously all the political and management changes occurred since its foundation, of the high-level vision and mission of the Museum and of the supportive role played by the Library in this framework. This consistency is also gaining momentum within the most recent funded project the Museum and Library have been involved in, which is exploring the power of visuals to mobilise people and communities towards more sustainable behaviours.

### 3.3 Leesclubbing, The Netherlands and Belgium

**Author:** Barbara van der Vaart (LIBER)

In 2021, the MuntPunt Library and Community Centre in Brussels launched the 'Leesclubbing' initiative, which inspired various libraries in Flanders to follow suit. Probiblio, the provincial support institution for public libraries in the Netherlands, adopted the concept and introduced it to libraries across North and South Holland.

Targeted at people in their 20s and 30s, the initiative aims to promote reading and social connections through reading clubs. The concept is simple: one person gathers a small group, and the library takes care of the rest. They provide the books, along with a card game of discussion questions, all packaged attractively in Leesclubbing bags for all participants, complete with a bookmark and a treat, such as cookies or chocolates, to enjoy during the book club meeting.

Leesclubbing initially offered five themed book packages: 'Things Could Be Worse' (thrillers and dark stories), 'The Book Binge' (books that read like binge-worthy Netflix series), 'Matters That Matter' (books tackling current social issues), 'The Greatest Book You've Never Read' (classics), and 'The Chosen Few' (literary "top picks"). As the project has now been running for over three years, the book categories have evolved over time.

Participants select a category and order a book package, which costs €15 and can be picked up at the library. Only the person collecting the package needs to be a library member, not the other book club participants. Once the group is formed and books are distributed, a meeting date is set for about eight weeks later, giving everyone time to read the book. The package includes a card game with discussion



prompts to guide the conversation during the book club meeting. Afterward, the Leesclubbing package is returned to the library.

### **Method:**

Semi-structured interviews conducted with the following persons:

- The program advisor at ProBiblio, The Netherlands
- A collection specialist at De Boekenberg municipal library, Spijkenisse, The Netherlands
- An educational officer and a reading coach at Brugge Municipal Library, Belgium
- A project officer at De Krook municipal library, Gent, Belgium
- A programme officer at Bibliotheek Zuid-Hollandse Delta, Helevoetsluis, the Netherlands

### **Characterization of the innovation:**

This initiative is specifically aimed at young people to encourage the reading of books and support the forming of social networks among young adults in their 20s and 30s. As formulated by ProBiblio: *"LEESCLUBBING connects with the experiences of people in their twenties and thirties. With fresh design, appealing texts and a format that makes it as easy as possible for readers in the busy phase of their lives: a good book, a social moment with friends and a good conversation all in one."*

### **Characterizing the input and output networks:**

While MuntPunt and Probiblio were involved in the initial ideation process, the libraries that adopted the concept have the flexibility to tailor the initiative to suit their local audiences. In some cases, they have adjusted the format and book selections based on feedback from participating readers. The output network consists of groups of readers. Some groups already know each other, while others are newly formed, sometimes with the support of the library. The duration of these groups varies—some meet only a few times, while others have been holding regular meetings for years. Although the initiative was originally targeted at young adults, it has since attracted participants of all ages, including mixed-age groups.

### **Conclusion:**

Leesclubbing has been successful in several areas: (i) it has been running since 2021 in Flanders and the Netherlands across multiple libraries, and (ii) it has created small, lasting networks of people who regularly come together, promoting reading not only among young adults but across all age groups. The initiative has strengthened social connections in various age categories, with some Leesclubbing groups meeting consistently for several years. However, the initiative has not been equally successful in all libraries; in some cases, it has been replaced by alternative reading club formats.



### 3.4 Host Library

**Authors:** Fabio Moscoso Durán , Manolo Sola (UAH)

The Biblioteca de Acogida project, First Prize Social Library 2017." convened by the Social Library Foundation of Barcelona, being the first Andalusian library to achieve it. It also obtained the CCB Seal of the Library Cooperation Council of the Institute of the Ministry of Culture of Spain developed by the Public Library of Purchena has become a space of peace and a meeting point for young immigrants. Local youth at risk of social exclusion.

The Purchena Public Library launched this project in 2015 in collaboration with other public entities and associations in the town. At first, young migrants and later those welcomed in the juvenile centers had to go either to the public school or to the secondary school of this town. Young people were supposed to receive formal education in juvenile centers. However, outside the formal educational environments of the school, institute and juvenile centers, the contact of children and young people with the locality and people of the municipality was null.

**Method:** We conducted semi-directive interviews with 2 directors of The Purchena Public Library participating in the project. To measure the impacts of the Network, the Innovation and Business Sustainability Route (RISE) was taken as a basis, making adjustments to the model for the development of the case study.

**Characterization of the innovation:** As in the beginning, the spontaneous mobility of young migrants to the Purchena Library gave rise to the conception of the project, and the subsequent collaboration of the entities such as the Centers for Minors of the locality: Valle del Almanzora, La Casa and Virgen del Carmen, Illipula and Iif Youth Associations, Gremio Luna Cultural Association, the CEIP San Ginés and IES Entresierras, the innovation network arose spontaneously. According to Desmarchelier et al (2020), spontaneous or emerging public service innovation networks for social innovation arise in a self-organized way due to the convergence of the activities of agents facing a given problem, in a given context (a district, a city, a region, etc.). Again, while in theory spontaneous emergence can involve any agent, spontaneous (self-organised) networks more often involve citizens (rather than the government). (pp. 19).

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** the interviews with the different actors define that the Reception Library project at its inception arose as a spontaneous initiative between the library and the City Council of Purchena, which was joined by other organizations in the municipality such as public education centers, youth centers and cultural associations. which, due to the nature of the project and





the target population, generated quick and easy synergies between the actors. Purchena's library functions as the systems integrator is a key entity or actor that has the central responsibility for bringing together different components or systems so that they work in a coherent manner. For this reason, the network has a System Integrator who is integrated and leads the activities of the network.

**Conclusion:** Bibliotheca de Acogida project has generated a spontaneous network of social innovation of public policy with the aim of improving the problems related to the migration of young people who have been arriving in the town during the last decade. The network, made up mainly of public entities, third sector entities and volunteers, interact dynamically to favour the target group: young migrants. However, the project has brought with it parallel projects that have benefited young people in the town of Purchena, which has favoured the integration processes of migrants with the locals. The innovation processes developed with these parallel projects arise from open innovation processes between the actors and interest groups that are part of the network. The funding for the project comes from the Purchena City Council, although each member of the network benefits from its own individual funding. To analyze the Network, the Innovation and Business Sustainability Route (RISE) was used, which made it possible to quantitatively identify several aspects relevant to the evolution and results of the network.

### 3.5 Makerspaces, a space for citizen collaboration

**Authors:** Natalia Andrea Espejo Pérez, Cristian Camilo Giraldo Galeano, Andrés Mauricio Cataño Muñoz, Adriana Londoño Rentería, Carlos Andrés Guzmán Jaramillo (UAH)

The action of the Medellín Public Library System (MPLS) and the Makerspace project on issues of innovation in public libraries has served as an instrument of social, educational and cultural intervention that has transformed the social fabric of communities especially exposed to the economic and social crisis of the nineties, when drug trafficking, in a boom era, represented a risk to the social development of the city. In this context, the Makerspace project has become a catalyst for social innovation projects in Medellín and its metropolitan area, allowing the community not only to access knowledge in an easy and creative way, but also to be a catalyst for social, cultural and economic interactions, promoting the processes of community identity and territorial development.

**Method:** We conducted semi-directive interviews with 5 directors of the MPLS and officers participating in the project and with a project manager. 2. To measure the impacts of the Network, the Innovation and Business Sustainability Route (RISE) was taken as a basis, making adjustments to the model for the development of the case study.



**Characterization of the innovation:** The Makerspace project is developed through a Network model of planned innovation. This type of network is an organizational structure that brings together various actors, such as government institutions, companies, universities, NGOs, and other agents, to collaborate strategically in the development and implementation of innovations. Unlike spontaneous or informal innovation networks, planned innovation networks are designed for a specific purpose and are guided by clear objectives, structured governance, and coordination mechanisms. (Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P., 2008).

The Makerspace Network is developed with the following characteristics of a planned network: a. Strategic Coordination: The network operates under conscious and deliberate planning that guides collaboration towards common goals. From the Medellín Public Library System, all projects are coordinated, including the Makerspace, following the guidelines of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** The MAKERSPACE Innovation Network functions as a "Top-down" innovation network that is characterized by initiatives and changes driven from the highest levels of the organization, such as senior management or central institutions, to the lower levels. This type of network is contrasted with "bottom-up" innovation, where ideas and changes emerge from the lower levels of the organization and rise to the upper levels. (Fullan, M. 2001). In practical terms, the development of the projects including the MAKERSPACE emerges from a public policy strategy that has permeated the MPLS and the strategy of the libraries that in an integrated way have developed several innovative projects that come from initiatives by the MPLS Directorate and the Secretariat of Citizen Culture.

**Conclusion:** As a planned network derived from the MPLS, the Makerspaces project has developed a planned, constant and structured contact that has allowed the network to be in full growth and evolution, constantly generating new initiatives and ideas around the project and generating value for the citizens of the city of Medellín. Contact with citizens is continuous, efficient and allows important synergies to be generated by the different interest groups that actively participate in the Network.

### 3.6 The Human Library

**Authors:** Lars Fuglsang, Anne Vorre Hansen (RUC)

The Human Library is a non-profit organization, established in Denmark in 2000. The Human Library applies the vocabulary of libraries, by naming people human books and readers respectively, and by using concepts such as librarians and loans. Accordingly, you can borrow human books which are living



persons bringing their personal story and experience into the conversation. As a reader, you can ask all the questions you normally find taboo or hard to raise. Before borrowing a book, participants are presented with the rules for readers by a librarian, who is also responsible for keeping time. In its essence, the Human Library facilitates open and honest conversations between people, who might not otherwise have a platform to meet. The overall objective of the organization is to counter stigmatization and prejudice of marginalized people and hence empower both people subject to stigma and help people to unjudge someone.

**Method:** The case study is conducted as qualitative research, based on three main methods: four in-depth interviews with six informants, participant observation at two events and document studies. The data set was analyzed using a thematic analytical strategy.

**Characterization of the innovation:** The human library started as an experimental event at The Roskilde Festival in Denmark, and the experimental approach is still part of the organization's functioning. Collaboration with public libraries has been, and still is, central as they are main platform for hosting readings. The organization has continued to optimize, refine and develop the concept exploring new formats e.g., podcasts, TV documentary and eventually developing the software that enabled their online book shelf. The ongoing development of the concept has from the beginning been an open process, where partners, users and volunteers partake – both nationally and internationally.

Also, the development has led to new contexts for use, as the Human Library are partnering with different educational actors to make the books available to students from different programs. To exemplify, Yale University's school of nursing has introduced the digital book shelf as part of some mandatory learning exercises, University of Nebraska-Lincoln has integrated the online service into a course curriculum, and in Denmark the University College Copenhagen offers in-person trainings and online library cards to forthcoming social workers.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** The Human Library depends on collaboration with a wide network of diverse actors. A network of volunteers: book, librarians and others who support realizing the events. A network of organizations hosting the events: public libraries, universities and companies. And a network of users/readers, that is, citizens, students and employees. Some collaboration is formalized in partnership agreements, other partnerships are more informal and ad hoc and some are centered around single events. The network around the Human Library also plays a central role in starting new collaborations. A public manager in Denmark tells, how it was employees who argued that the Human Library could support developing their local library. As such it was a bottom-up process leading to the introduction of Human Library events. From UK a public manager



presents a top-down story; a creative director proposed the Human Library as partner, since it would tap into the future strategy of the library.

Besides the network of the Human Library, the organization is also central in creating and enabling new networks to arise. It can be argued that the user/reader base in itself can be understood as a network of recipients who have experienced a certain personal encounter, which have sparked new understandings of marginalized.

**Concluding remarks:** The Human Library adds to both social and public value by giving marginalized a voice in society and breaking down barriers of prejudice among citizens. In this manner public value is to be understood both in the sense of what the public values (at least as a western ideal); inclusion, equality and diversity, and in the sense of what adds value to the public sphere; that is the long-term impact of broadened understanding and empathy (public employee to citizen, employee to employee and person to person).

In a social change perspective, the Human Library seems to trigger change in regards to system expansion while holding potential to cause system transformation. The former due to the way the organization's activities pushes the practices of their collaborators forward, e.g., diversity culture in private sector companies, accessibility at libraries and new forms of education at educational institutions. The transformative potential lies in the broader mobilizing movement of the organization itself coupled with changes at micro-level, how people engage with each other, leading to changes at a macro-level, how society is organized.

### 3.7 Library at Home

**Authors:** Benoît Desmarchelier, Faïz Gallouj (ULille)

Concerned about the growing isolation of the elderly during the lock-downs decided as part of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, the Conseil général du Nord (the local parliament, later named CGN), the Conférence des financeurs de la prévention de perte d'autonomie (a council of funding bodies, later named CFPPA) and the médiathèque départementale du Nord (later named Departmental Library), decided to set up a system for carrying cultural products to the isolated elderlies in partnership with the rural libraries in France's North Department.

Presently, The project reaches around 920 people. Indeed, the Departmental Library estimates that around 10 isolated persons are being served per library, and there are 92 libraries participating to the project as of 2024.



**Method:** We conducted semi-directive interviews with 3 directors of municipal libraries participating in the project and with a project manager from the Departmental Library.

**Characterization of the innovation:** The project exhibits two noteworthy features compared with a conventional delivery system: firstly, a specific collection has been set up, and secondly, the project aims to reach isolated people, who are by definition difficult to identify and to convince. This latter characteristic prompted the Departmental Library to suggest municipal libraries to team-up with institutional partners so as to identify isolated individuals and to carry out the portage.

Identifying isolated individuals is not an easy task, as it cannot be based solely on making contact with institutional partners. Each isolated person requires the librarian to mobilize specific interpersonal skills, in particular he/she has to identify people who can play a role of intermediation. The librarian also needs to put in place appropriate solutions to carry the cultural media, since not all isolated persons are willing to let the librarian go directly to their homes. As such, the Library at Home project stands as an ad hoc/non-standardized innovation, with a tailor-made service for each isolated user.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** The input network presents the originality of having been proposed as top-down by the initiating governmental agencies. But in fact, the input network also presents some bottom-up features, because the libraries are not following the official recommendations when selecting the actors to team-up with for identifying the isolated individuals. Thus, instead than approaching institutional actors from the social economy, librarians often interact informally with neighbours and mobilize relational skills such as listening and empathy so as to identify weak signals revealing isolation.

It can be noted that the carrying system was initially designed to serve isolated people. But in fact, it appears to benefit firstly to individuals that are active in the library's immediate environment but who are at the same time presenting a risk of falling into isolation, for instance due to age and/ or illness.

Interestingly, beneficiaries seem to prefer books selected by readers committees, or those suggested by the librarian than those emanating from the dedicated collection set in place by the Departmental library.

**Conclusion:** The output network is mingled with the input one for several reasons: (i) isolated are indirectly engaged in a dialogue with the libraries' reading committees, and (ii) they are reached out via the establishment of new connections with intermediary actors – often living in the neighbourhood.



These new connections with intermediary actors are a result of the Library at Home initiative, and they are also necessary to deliver the service. In sum, the frontier between input and output networks is porous.

### 3.8 The Repair Café

**Authors:** Benoît Desmarchelier, Faïz Gallouj, Isabelle Liotard (ULille)

In 2016, the director of the municipal library of the city of Vélizy, France, decides to set up a repair café within the library. This decision is inspired by her training in the management of third places, and by discussions with library users, who are also active members of Sunlab – the fablab of the city of Viroflay, itself member of Hatlab, a larger association of fablabs. Once per month, this repair café is the occasion for citizens and library users to repair small electric appliances, to share and learn repairing skills and knowledge, as well as to know each others by sharing a coffee and a piece of cake. It is a replicative innovation : for a day, a fablab is transposed into the library. This requires spatial adjustments, as well as the acquisition and maintenance of tools and a stock of consumables (e.g. tin). This innovation relies on a network of repairers and a network of fablabs. Also, it generates a variety of networks : ephemeral ones – i.e. the discussions taking place among users and repairers, but also more permanent ones, since the success of the repair café motivated the organizers to set up a fablab within the city – the Izylab in 2019. Currently, this offshoot provides most of the repairers to the repair café. Interestingly, the output network became permanent and then part of the input network.

**Method:** In the case of the Repair Café of the Vélizy municipal library, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the following persons:

- The current director of the library (referred to as Mrs. A thereafter).
- A librarian who assisted the former director in setting-up the repair café, and who currently runs it (referred to as Mr. B).
- The former library director, who created the repair café (referred to as Mrs. C).

**Characterization of the innovation:** Fablabs and repair cafés are not novelties. However, operating such a workshop into a library is not a common thing. It, indeed, requires to modify the way the space is organized, librarians need to welcome new types of visitors – who are not necessarily readers – and they have to acquire, store and maintain a collection of tools and consumable materials.



Using the well-known Schumpeterian typology of innovations, we can argue that the Repair Café represents a new type of service in the context of the library, as well as a new method of production, since the library is teaming-up with fablabs and is partly reorganising the occupation of floor spaces.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** The ideation process involved a network of actors: the Vélizy municipal library through its director and other librarians, but also readers who were members of the Sunlab, itself part of the Hatlab, an association of fablabs in the region. All these actors and their relationships form in some way the input network of the Repair Café.

The output network is made of ephemeral discussions happening between users and the volunteer repairers during the Repair Café events in the library, but it also consists into a more permanent and expanding network of Izylab members. Interestingly, the EasyLab is part of a larger network of fablabs that initially provided volunteers to the Repair Café. Further, the Izylab now provides 95% of the volunteers into the Repair Café according to Mr B. Thus, the input and the output networks are intertwined.

**Conclusion:** The Repair Café is a success in several aspects: (i) it lasts since 2016, (ii) it has created an offspring organisation – the Izylab, and (iii) it is embedded into a larger network of fablabs. This success exemplifies the artificial distinction between input and output networks. Indeed, the Café relies on a network of fablabs, but it also expands it through the Izylab; and this latter organization became an input for the Café.

The fact that the café is embedded into a larger network poses the question of the delimitation of this network. Indeed, if Izylab has an increasing population of users, are they part of the Repair Café larger network?

Further, the interviews revealed a shift in the behaviour of both the librarians and the users. These shifts correspond to the passage of a “logic of provision” (Gadrey, 1999) in which users serve themselves and do not interact, to a logic of “intervention”, where users ask for a specific help in their own projects. The service provider – here the librarian – is not requested primarily for his technical skills in books provision and collection maintenance, but for its empathy, listening and capability to liaise users.

### 3.9 Likustartti at Vantaa City Library

**Authors:** Tiina Tuominen, Kirsi Hyytinen, Paul Windrum (VTT)



**Lukustartti** (i.e. “Kick-off for literacy”) is a year-long service delivery and development project which aims to foster collaboration between Vantaa City Library and Maternity and Child Health Clinics at the Wellbeing Services County of Vantaa-Kerava to address early literacy needs in multilingual families with babies. During 2024, the project enables organizing story hours for multilingual families in several different locations across Vantaa City, training health and library professionals about early literacy in multilingual families and establishing the ground for future collaboration between the two organisations.

**Method:** The case study draws on six interviews and documentation about Lukustartti project and the two participating organisations. The interviews were carried out with library managers, library personnel, and a manager from the Maternity and child health clinics. Thematic empirical analysis was carried out to address the key questions in T<sub>3.2</sub>.

**Characterisation of the innovation:** Before Lukustartti, different organisations had already offered services that provide opportunities for networking and story hours for multilingual families. However, Lukustartti offered deeper insights into family literacy and the benefits and practice of reading aloud for infants, as well as into the importance of reading in the family’s own mother tongue to support language development.

From the perspective of the participating organisations, the innovation entails combining the two organisations’ resources and skills in a novel way to address a common concern. Whereas Vantaa City Library has a long history of collaborating with schools and kindergartens, collaboration with Maternity and child health clinics is a novel opening. For the library, this represents new type of outreach activity with a possibility to reach new user segments, as nearly all families with babies visit Maternity and child health clinics regularly. For Maternity and child health clinics, the innovation entails possibilities to strengthen and extend the organisation’s competencies in multilingual early literacy.

**Characterisation of the input and output networks:** Lukustartti was driven by Vantaa City Library, which also acquired funding for the project activities. The collaboration between the two organisations evolved during the project: first, the intention was to organise story hours within Maternity and child health clinics. However, after experimenting with the spaces and with how to best reach the multilingual families, the partners decided to hold majority of the story hours in open meeting spaces for families. These spaces were hosted by either Vantaa City or an NGO called Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. At the time of the study, the Lukustartti project is still on-going, but both parties consider the collaboration useful and intend to continue it in the future.





The output networks primarily consist of the multilingual baby families visiting story hours, as well as the employee holding the story hours. According to the interviews, the service targeted and resulted in three types of direct consequences for families, in addition to improving literacy-related skills. First, it strengthened the relations between children and parents. Second, it facilitated interactions between families and helped them to become more integrated to the local communities. Third, it helped the families to get to know the Finnish society, thus improving their societal relations. It is not known whether the families continued interacting with one another outside the story hours. However, since the story hours were held in open meeting spaces, it is possible and likely that these conversations helped the families to know one another and sparked novel interactions between those visiting the meeting spaces regularly.

**Conclusion:** While the Lukustartti project is still on-going, the current findings give reason to assume that the project is successful in terms of supporting the local multilingual families that joined the project activities. The project activities generated both direct benefits via warm and insightful interactions among the participants of the output network, and indirect benefits via improved skills and via opening up possibilities for further cross-sectoral collaboration within the input network stakeholders.

The findings also include some relevant notions about the enablers and barriers of such collaboration. It seems that the common intentions and values of the two participating organizations were pivotal in facilitating the collaboration. However, differences in the two organization's everyday practices complicated the collaboration. These differences included different ways of interacting with families and organizing spaces. These findings suggest that the introduction of such new interaction methods might require more time to integrate the methods seamlessly to the on-going resources and competences of the participating organizations, and to ensure the engagement of all staff members to the activity.

Furthermore, the informant had varying opinions about the problems and benefits of project-based services. The obvious downside was that it is challenging to continue these activities after the project has ended and the project worker moved to other tasks. On the other hand, Vantaa City Library had a history of organizing several parallel and subsequent projects for addressing the needs of multilingual citizens. Project-based funding was the only way to acquire resources for organizing such services. The informants estimated that these projects enabled experimentation and searching for the right way to address the specific concerns of the local communities. In this way, the projects cumulated expertise



to the library and helped it to respond to opportunities and changing needs of the citizens rapidly and efficiently.

### 3.10 Children's Section at Oodi

**Authors:** Tiina Tuominen, Kirsi Hyytinen, Paul Windrum (VTT)

The Children's section at Helsinki Central Library Oodi represents a novel type of concept, consisting of careful spatial design and various types of activities that encourages families to spend time in a new way in the premises of a public library. The basic idea is to make a library an enticing place for families to visit and socialise, while also supporting the transition of libraries from a book depository towards a common living room. The section for families was already introduced to Oodi's original concept initiated in the beginning of 2010s and launched at the opening of the library in 2018, and carefully revised based on user feedback in 2022-2023, with minor adjustment conducted along the way based on everyday observations and interactions between users and personnel. At the time of the study, it was a popular space for families to visit, encouraging them to interact both in organised activities and via spending time in the common areas with other families.

**Method:** This study is based on interviews with three managers and three employees of Oodi, as well as one external partner. In addition, observations were conducted in Children's section and in an event targeting families with babies. Information gained from the library websites, user surveys conducted by Oodi personnel, news, and other relevant documentation supported the analysis.

**Characterization of the innovation:** The children's section and concept at Oodi Helsinki Central Library is a combination of spatial solutions, functionalities and events that aim to entice families from different backgrounds to spend time at Oodi in order to foster social inclusion and interaction within and between families. A key indicator of success of the area is that it is a popular area which invites families to visit and stay at the library. Due to the multidimensionality of the concept of Children's section, as well as the blurred boundaries between this concept and the rest of the offering at Oodi, it is difficult to characterise it as an innovation. Any single aspect or dimension of the concept has already been tried out elsewhere, but the uniqueness of the concept derives from careful combination and elaboration of the elements—including spatial design, events, and materials—that generate value for the users and make the Children's section popular.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** The input networks involved the library as the central actor, but collaboration between different stakeholders was crucial and visible part of the development process. The development of Children's section has included several phases so far. The



original design of the concept was created along the planning, construction and opening of Oodi in 2018. In this initial stage, co-creative methods were broadly used to engage 3000 different stakeholders, including citizens, in designing the library. A work group that included library staff across Helsinki coordinated the development of concepts for children and families, interacting with the architect that was responsible for the spatial design. After establishing and implementing the initial concept for the Childrens' section, it was improved along the way as the library staff gained experiences on user needs and behaviours in the space. A third step was a development effort that started with inquiries about users' ideas and feedback in 2022 and 2023. Based on the insights gained, the library staff reorganised the space to spread the activities evenly across the space, and considered means to improve/increase events organised in these spaces.

The output network includes families—both parents and children—and the staff of Oodi, Playground Loru and other partners who provide services for families. Playground Loru played an important role in organising activities and events for families in the section during daytime, while the library staff curated the collections and premises, responded to users' everyday inquiries, and organised activities and events in evenings and weekends. According to the interviews and user survey materials, the users have been content with the Children's section. Several thousand visitors visit Oodi every day, and Children's area is popular. The families gained three key benefits from Children's section. First, it provided an opportunity to create meaningful social relations. The section was a popular meeting space where families interacted with one another, strengthening the existing friendships, and meeting new people. Some networks between users were regular, whereas others included individual encounters between families visiting the space and events. Second, the informants repeatedly raised the value of a large, open and safe public space at the city centre: families could spend an entire day at library without paying for anything. This was enabled by careful design of the space, including sanitary spaces, pram parks, and rules allowing own lunches and ordinary noises from children's play. Third, the events, books and other materials at the Children's area supported the visiting families in topical issues, such as nursing, and supported language development and early literacy skills of children.

**Conclusion:** The Children's section is an insightful case of a social innovation, where both the input and output networks involve intensive interactions between many types of actors. It exemplifies how a library can act as a platform for various types of activities and functions. This is shown in the input network where library hosts activities of different partners, such as Playground Loru, to broaden the possibilities for value creation within library. The platform role is also shown in the output network, as the library space facilitates the creation of different types of connections between citizens via both organised events and free use of library spaces.



The case also shows how various means of interacting with and engaging users in the concept development can be used to improve library services. In addition to formal co-creation methods, it should be noted that everyday interactions with users were crucial sources of insights. This observation highlights the need to engage frontline library staff in the development activities. Oodi has a flat organisational structure that stresses the autonomy and proactivity of individuals and teams, making it possible to react quickly to emerging problems and opportunities.

### 3.11 Storytelling cafés at the Vienna Libraries

**Author:** Doris Schartinger (AIT)

In storytelling cafes people narrate their own life stories in a group without being evaluated, without discussions or obligation to reason what they have told. Storytelling cafes are a theory-based and thought through method with quality criteria under scrutiny; they want to contribute to mental and social health of a society. They are organised around everyday locations of people so that they are familiar and known to be trusted (Dressel et al. 2023).

**Method:** For the present study we collected data face-to face and in oral form from different sources. In interviews and meetings data on more strategic issues were collected, while on-site visits of events (participant observation) provided us with information on who visits the library events and their reasons and types of benefits behind.

**Characterization of the innovation:** Storytelling cafes have been developed since the 1980ies, hence are not a recent concept. They have been implemented in various organisational settings (fugitive shelters, women centers, retired homes, museums, neighbourhood centers etc), as a service storytelling cafes are thus not new to the world. However, they were new to the Vienna libraries and have particular organisational innovation aspects there.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** In the service delivery process, two organisers are involved – one representative of the library and one external expert. The particular expert and moderator of the storytelling cafes was a deliberate choice. He is the motor and figure head of overlapping initiatives and networks in the area (input networks). Affiliated to several organisations, networks and part of projects, people are attracted who would not come to the library on their own but come through him. The initiating person in the Vienna libraries was personally motivated and knew storytelling cafes from a VET training and another location. As employee of the Vienna libraries being responsible for the library section on non-fiction, natural and technical science books, she was also professionally motivated to increase service offerings for an adult audience to the library.



**Conclusion:** The number of attendees has been steadily growing over the time of implementation of the storytelling cafes. The group is principally open, the format is designed for 15 people. Growth is hence a success as well as a risk - there is a natural limit because the format does not tolerate too extensive a group size when stories are emotional and intimate. As the format enjoys growing popularity, 20 people or even more attend. Out of these, there crystallised a core of people who attend regularly (output network).

### 3.12 Living books at the C3 library

**Author:** Dana Wasserbacher (AIT)

This case is about a participatory event format titled 'Living Library' at the C3 library in Vienna. The C3 living library was first introduced in 2016 and has been held annually since then (except in 2020 due to the Covid-19 crisis). The event offers young people the possibility to choose a topic from a catalogue of 'living books', i.e. experts on the topic, and to have a half-an-hour conversation with them. The objective of the C3 living library is to provide young people the opportunity to articulate their demands, questions, and ideas and to reflect on them in dialogue at eye level, thereby gaining information and skills, as well as further developing citizenship.

**Method:** The case study builds on different forms of data, coming from nine different empirical observations: from meetings, on-site exchange, participant observations, and interviews. Furthermore, archival material such as annual reports, newspaper archives, and blog posts was included.

What is novel in this service in the C3 library is how they use the living book concept and first, combine the concept with their particular topics, and second, in a very complex service design procedure explicitly connect the topics to the targeted user groups of the C3 library, which are very young researchers (15+) and here particularly pupils from different societal groups in Vienna and in Austria in general.

**Characterization of the innovation:** The C3 living Library event does not take place in isolation. It is rooted in the C3 library's strong commitment to its target group of young people (aged 15 and over), is strongly linked to its thematic focus on global, sustainable development and builds on existing networks and the actors of the C3 community. In addition, the C3 living library takes full advantage of the location of the C3 library. The service itself encompasses much more than the mere one-day event. It includes co-creation activities at the event, but also shares co-design elements with other services throughout the preparation phase. At the young research workshops, the C3 library team engages in



conversations with the participants to find out what current topics and future developments interest them. This information serves as input for shaping the topics and identifying living books for the next event. The service design involves many iterations and coordination with different stakeholders throughout the process thereby tailoring the service to the needs of the participants.

**Characterizing the input and output networks:** Institutionally, the C3 library is embedded in a multifaceted organisational network, indirectly including federal agencies, universities, NPOs and the church. The C3 library is operated by ÖFSE, Baobab and Frauen\*solidarität and hosts a cooperation with two further organisations dedicated to development policy, namely the Paolo Freire Center for transdisciplinary development research and dialogical education and the Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik. This embedding fosters particular strategic topics and addresses a particular group youth from diverse backgrounds.

The mode of network formation in the case of C3 living library events is a rather planned respectively orchestrated endeavour by a team of actors of the core network of the three carrier organisations supported by the scientific advisory board. Together they choose a topic of interest and consider, approach, and invite the relevant experts and participants for the C3 living library event. The C3 library takes on the role of a caretaker, integrating various stakeholders from surrounding networks, such as the C3 community networks or the broader public.

The C3 community networks comprise stakeholders and partners of the C3 library that stem from previous collaborations, from the pool of C3 service users, or the larger network of organisations associated to the three C3 carrier organisations. The key segment of the broader public for the C3 living library events are schools.

Impacts of the C3 living library service are not measured in detail. The number of participants is counted and for some activities and events feedback forms are issued to the participants. The C3 library staff engages in feedback discussions with participants and aims at more structured feedback discussions with the scientific advisory board.

**Conclusion:** While the Living Library concept itself is not particularly innovative, the C3 Library has effectively adapted it to align with its broader themes and the specific needs of its target audience, fostering network and community building. This focused approach creates public value that is highly visible to the target group, though its engagement with the broader public remains limited. Nevertheless, the C3 living library event significantly contributes to a vibrant and thriving library community.



## 4 Preliminary elements of conclusion

The cases investigated in this report demonstrate the role of public libraries as social innovators. The usual risk of selection bias is counterbalanced by the diversity of countries, and by the diversity of the libraries being investigated (from those of rural villages to those of capital cities) - which provides a tangible indication that social innovation is a common activity of public libraries across all Europe, rather than an occasional initiative of big city libraries.

Apart from providing a fresh view of public libraries as innovative agents, the cases present two distinctive features:

- Many social innovation examples found in the management literature focus on the “social” – i.e. moral - aspect of the innovation under investigation, with few effort devoted to characterizing the innovation per se (Ayob et al., 2016). At the opposite, the cases developed in this report systematically try to qualify and categorize the innovation in question using well established typologies and methods (e.g. product/process innovation, exploration of a new “market” of users, the use of co-creation methods and of design thinking). In this sense, we provide arguments for crossing the artificial boundary found in the academic literature between social and for-profit innovations.
- The second originality is the emphasis on the networking dimension of social innovations, which echoes the general mission of public libraries as community builders (Lankes et al., 2007). Indeed, each case tries to map the input and output networks created by the public library. In this perspective, an interesting observation is that libraries do not only reduce social exclusion/ nurture social cohesion (see for instance the Host library, the Likustartti or the Story telling café cases), but also, they help to convey knowledge. It can be the codified knowledge about literacy that is traditionally associated with libraries (see for instance the Leesclubbing or the Library at Home cases). In this context, books are used as the main medium of exchange and discussion. But it is apparent from our cases that libraries are also facilitating the transmission of know-how, and therefore tacit forms of knowledge (e.g. the Repair Café or the Living Library cases). Here, books become secondary, and the knowledge exchange takes place through practice and discussion.

The next version of this report will present all 11 cases in details. Accordingly with our first elements of conclusion, the final report will integrate the cases into a general framework that should cross the boundaries between typologies traditionally employed in business (and technological) innovations and those established for social innovations. By doing so, we will provide new insights on the importance of social innovations in their capacity to redefine economic and social relations. All in all,



public libraries might stand out as a more central piece of the national innovation systems than expected.





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