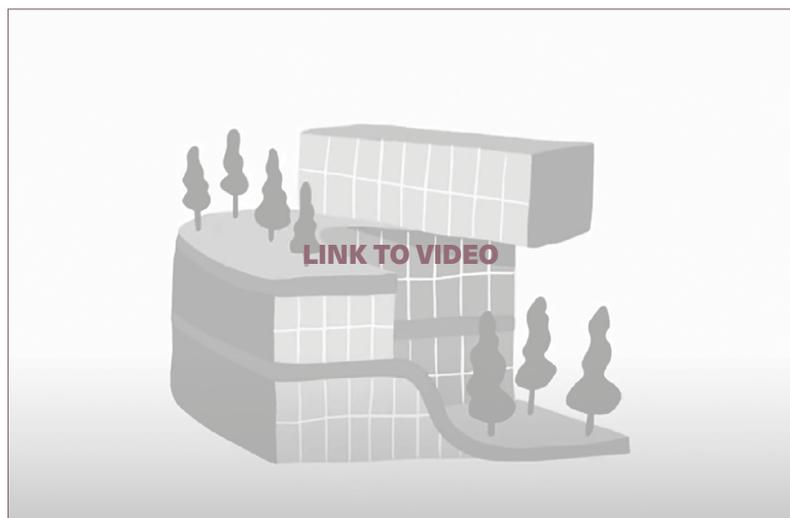


LIBRARIES

The Europe Challenge is a collaborative process with public libraries across Europe and their communities to identify and address some of Europe's pressing challenges that are relevant both for the local contexts and on a European level. The libraries are facilitated to work together in a European network, and share practices and approaches to tackle the identified local challenges.

Looking for a Challenge?



“The library is among the most critical forms of social infrastructure that we have... Everyday life in libraries is a democratic experiment, and people cram into libraries to participate in it whenever the doors are open.” — ERIC KLINENBERG, PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE, 2020

“Libraries ceased to be dusty book storage facilities a long time ago. Today they are foremost about the future.” — KNUT SKANSEN, DEICHMAN BJØRVIKA LIBRARY IN OSLO

WE ARE LIVING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

What will Europe look like after the Coronacrisis? What can culture do to deal with possible economic recession, health systems at break-point, unemployment, social tensions, the environment, new borders, new divides and more? How can we reverse the trend towards new borders? One year after the start of the global pandemic, the notion of an open, democratic and diverse Europe, in which people live together in harmony, remains a crucial cultural task.

How can we turn the challenges of today into opportunities for tomorrow? How can solutions be local and European at the same time? How can we engage citizens where they are and not where some want them to be? How can we create safe and sound public spaces? How can the shared work on big and small solutions foster a European sense of belonging, a European sentiment?

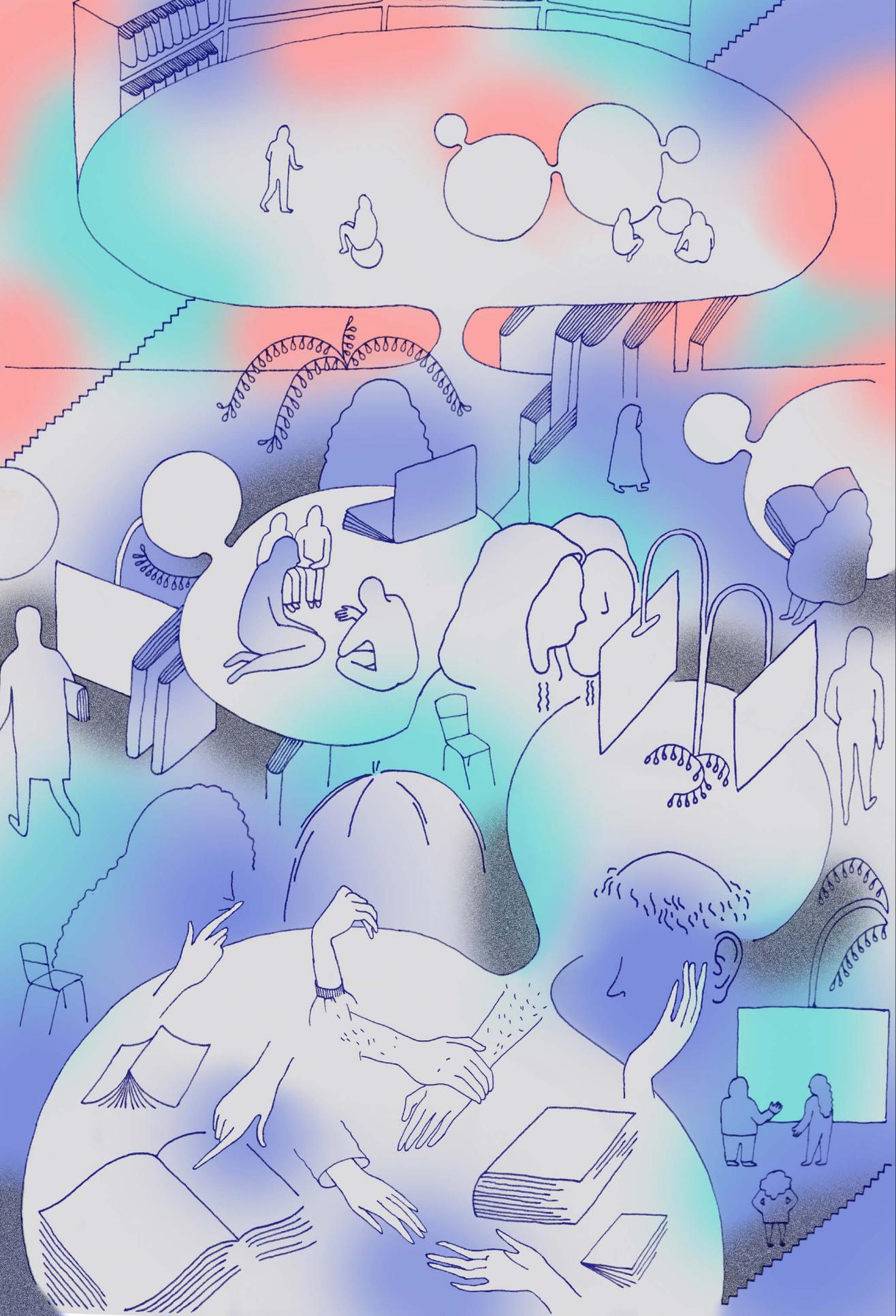
Let's go to places which already exist everywhere in Europe, places which attract millions of people every day, places which provide storage for small stories and big history, to places of community and creation. Let's go to these places to listen, to understand what the real challenges of today really are. And let's find a way of supporting those who want to work on solutions for tomorrow. These places are the libraries of Europe.

THERE ARE 65.000 PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN EUROPE

Almost every town and rural district has one or more. There are century-old ones like in Lisbon, there are shining new ones like in Aarhus, there are under-resourced ones in Romania and mobile ones close to the arctic circle. There are prestigious university libraries and small community libraries. All these different libraries are part of an existing public cultural infrastructure of knowledge, learning, community and creation. Libraries had to reinvent themselves early on in the digital revolution. Libraries still lend printed books, of course, but they have become so much more. They are flexible co-working spaces for young entrepreneurs, WiFi hotspots for travellers, club houses for interest groups, places to warm up for the poor and homeless. In some places libraries also provide public services like issuing driving licenses and residency permits. Libraries are an essential part of the social and cultural fabric of Europe. Smartly connected, libraries can be a truly social network of Europe, analog and digital, and an important component of the nascent European Public Space.

LOCAL EXPERIENCES, EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS

Local challenges are often shared challenges in a European context. With The Europe Challenge, we want to identify these shared local challenges, and courage and support shared European solutions. In doing so we hope to connect a local and a European experience. Working with public libraries across Europe – both big and small, avant-garde and traditional, capital-based and rural – we



The Europe Challenge

provide local, open and free access to the Europe Challenge via a trusted and safe public space that is serving people with different backgrounds.

MAKING IT WORK

The Europe Challenge is not a single event, it is a collaborative process with libraries across Europe which together with their communities will identify and address concrete questions/challenges that are relevant for their local context. They are facilitated to work together in a European network, and share practices and approaches to tackle issues such as literacy, digital citizenship, AI, democracy, inclusion & equal rights, and the reinforcement of our public space. An initial core group of seven libraries has started the design of a Europe-wide programme of activities that engages citizens in shaping and imagining how Europe and its public spaces should look like. The Europe Challenge will provide activities, methodological support, European connections, funding and space.

Interested in joining the Europe Challenges? Let us know at europa_challenge@culturalfoundation.eu. We are counting on you.

The Europe Challenge

Getting to Know the Sant Boi Llobregat Public Library & De Krook Ghent



The Europe Challenge is not a single event. It is a collaborative process with seven libraries across Europe which together with their communities will identify and address a concrete question/challenge that is relevant for their local context. They are facilitated to work together in a European network, and share practices and approaches to tackle the identified local challenges.

In this piece, we talk to two participating libraries: Pauline De Wolf of De Krook in Ghent (Belgium) and Maria Montia Enrich, Andreu Orte del Molino of Jordi Rubió i Balaguer Public Library in Sant Boi de Llobregat (Barcelona, Spain).

NICOLA MULLENGER, OLGA ALEXEEVA: What is the context you work in and how is Europe relevant to it?

MARIA MONTIA ENRICH, AADRE ORTE DEL MOLINO: Jordi Rubió i Balaguer is the central library of Sant Boi de Llobregat, serving the whole city of about 83.000 inhabitants. There is another library, Maria Aurèlia Capmany, which acts as a branch library in a smaller district of the city. As all public libraries in Barcelona province, we have the support of Diputació de Barcelona library's service in the context of the Barcelona Province Municipal Libraries Network (MLN). Currently, the network comprises 227 libraries and 10 library buses in 311 municipalities of the province. Users of the Municipal Libraries Network have a single library card, valid in all public libraries, a collective catalogue and access to an extensive supply of activities and services.

The almost 4000 m² of the Jordi Rubió i Balaguer library building stands out for its integration into the natural environment of the Parc de la Muntanyeta.

Because of our city characteristics, our library has two focus areas of work: health and natural environment. Sant Boi is very well-known for the quality of its mental health care services and facilities. Reflecting that in the library, since 2007 we have the Disability Information Centre. That service was organised with the support of the Social Inclusion and Equality Unit of Sant Boi de Llobregat City Council, to offer information to people with disabilities and their families, to the educational community (teachers and students), professionals, organisations, associations and to all citizens interested in this subject.

The city has an important link with the agricultural economy too, as 40% of its territory is dedicated to agriculture. In 2013, the library started a project called *De l'hort a la Biblioteca* (From the orchard to the library) with the aim to provide and spread information and resources linked with the products of the Agricultural Park, which is an important contributor to our city economy alongside with local commerce, logistics industry and small and medium size enterprises. In 2014, the project won an award for innovation in Catalan Public libraries.

The issues we are working on – environment, health, quality of life and land use – are very similar to the issues people are facing in many locations and contexts across Europe. We could greatly benefit from sharing our struggles and imagining solutions with each other. Additionally, we see a similar interest in other libraries in Europe in generating ways of working together with their communities and improving citizens' involvement in democracies.

PAULINE DE WOLF: De Krook is a collaboration between the library of Ghent, the University of Ghent and research institute imec. Together, these partners aim to create an environment where people

living and working in Ghent can experience a dynamic view on the future. Our goal is not only to inform and inspire them about future-oriented subjects, but also to engage them in moulding this future through bottom-up innovation processes, co-creation and collective tinkering with innovative solutions.

Therefore, the partners of De Krook are building theme-based clusters of activities, situated on the intersection of technology on the one hand, and societal challenges on the other. The activities within such themes are aimed at involving citizens, bringing knowledge together, and transforming this knowledge to action through rapid materialisation and collective experimentation. As such, De Krook and the experiments act as a centripetal force to discuss and shape common futures.

De Krook also has a very wide reach towards people living or working in Ghent – in 'normal' (non-COVID) times, De Krook receives 5000 – 7000 visitors each day. Besides this essential asset, the infrastructure also houses several research groups (knowledge actors) and experimental environments ranging from a public agora, a large interactive data-wall co-working spaces, creative spaces, experimental laboratories and next-generation experience spaces (and a bar!).

However, it is not easy to leverage the full potential of these assets, since these mean nothing without supporting programmes, processes and activities. Therefore, we are now defining processes to involve citizens in co-creative processes that create sustainable solutions to societal challenges, based on bottom-up ideas and involvement; and how to do this in a way that creates value for citizens. From this perspective, we think it would be very valuable to interact with libraries that experiment with similar processes and projects, hence shaping and imagining a European public space together.

NM, OA How do you see your role as a public library in facilitating community engagement in democracy and public spaces?

MM, AO The Barcelona Province Municipal Libraries Network is evolving towards a new library model that highlights the social value of public libraries within a community. The new library model embeds two challenges:

A. Libraries need to focus on both users' needs and non-user's interests. Libraries need to be flexible and adaptive depending on the community they

operate. In this library model users have room to decide about the activities and orientation of the services;

- B. Libraries are powerful actors in transforming communities. Libraries have more impact when they are centrally located in our towns and cities. They need to be a key facility on a daily basis. However, location does not mean all. Libraries need to strengthen alliances with social agents, associations and NGOs in the community. Libraries and community actors can complement each other.

The new model is transforming the role of libraries by modifying their relationship with users and their social context. That is determining the way libraries' activities are produced and the way libraries' spaces are designed. The future of our libraries is based on four areas of action: libraries are spaces for discovering, learning, creating and sharing. Every public library needs to develop its own action plan based on their local social context.

In this framework, and also building on years of experience in the development of activities linked with the environment, sustainability and our territorial needs, the Sant Boi libraries have started exploring new ways of cooperative work in the last three years. An example of this exploration is *Racons de Lectura* (Reading corners): a project carried out in 2019 by both Sant Boi libraries in collaboration with citizens and the Citizen Participation Area of the City Council. In this project, libraries provided little spaces with children's literature in the public health care units, to help children relax while they were in the paediatrics' waiting room. The success of this experience opened doors to collaborative work in the city. Also in 2019, we ran a project with UAPA (Unit of Evaluation of Administration Projects) that involved citizen participation in the search of solutions to improve air quality.

PW A very interesting link between public libraries on the one hand, and innovation & future-oriented thinking on the other, are stories. Stories have the power to introduce and explore new ideas within a recognisable context. When it comes to imagining how the future might look, how innovation, technology and other evolutions impact the way our society will evolve, stories are a very powerful tool. Fiction offers us a tangible portal to all kinds of futures, and helps us reflect on them, think about how they might and should look like, and think about how we want to contribute to shaping them.

From this perspective, there is an obvious link between the 'traditional' role of a library, and the future-oriented community engaging activities that can take place there. Making the connection

between stories and imagination on the one hand, and knowledge and research on the other, could be a very strong foundation for creating sustainable, relevant and surprising innovation.

Several De Krook partners have in-depth experience in both community-driven, citizen-centric processes, tools and methodologies such as civic crowdsourcing, generative co-creative methods, design sprints, interaction/UX design, setting up experiments, field trials, rapid prototyping, etc. These have been successfully applied in previous collaborations between the De Krook partners and is beautifully illustrated by the project Hello Jenny, an experimental smart speaker to fight social isolation amongst elderly citizens (**more information**).

NM, OA Why did you see The Europe Challenge as an interesting idea and would you like to collaborate on that (with other libraries /with other partners)?

MM, AO The Europe Challenge with Public Libraries presents an excellent opportunity to highlight the libraries as safe places/spaces where European values, e.g. community-generated content, network involving citizenship, open culture and creativity, are promoted.

Our realities are very different, but we all share the idea of maintaining and caring for public services, as a key factor to preserve equality and free access to human knowledge, experiences and ideas. It is not an easy moment, but we think that working together makes us stronger.

We strongly believe this project will also be useful for other municipalities of the Barcelona Libraries Network since there is an aim to adopt tools and knowledge from international experiences.

PW The Europe Challenge fits very well within the plans we have for 2021 and the following years, which entail the search for a (partial) redefinition of our entity as a space where public and complex societal challenges can resonate with experiment-based solutions to these challenges.

Although we have already been experimenting with co-creative processes and engaging communities, we still see the project we are starting this year as a 'lab': a lab where we ourselves experiment with methods to engage citizens in a way that creates value for them. We believe we should constantly keep evaluating and optimizing these methods, and that collaboration and exchanging experiences with other libraries can only strengthen our own processes, and those of others.

NM, OA How could the Europe Challenge look like in your dreams?

MM, AO Our aim is to evolve to the new model of public library. We envisage the library as a 'pilot ecosystem', providing the necessary resources to create new knowledge and share information.

We see the library as a facilitator for the assimilation of knowledge based on experience. A promoter of collaboration and alliances with the educational community. A supplier of social innovation resources for the development of critical thinking, research and community action.

We would like to develop the co-creation of new knowledge. To become a laboratory (BiblioLab) of creation, citizen science and social innovation to solve social challenges. To encourage new vocations. To be part of a driving force for social transformation and become an opportunity's generator space.

Additionally, we wish to promote meeting, socialisation, debate, exchange of ideas and experience spaces. To promote the participation of community stakeholders. To share resources and knowledge openly. To spread democratic values and integration, inclusion, diversity and equal rights.

Following this model, we would like to become a basic resource, for citizens and communities, in the development of solutions for the detected challenges.

PW We mainly dream of experimenting with a solution to a relevant, societal challenge that actually changes something, that solves a problem for some people. If we succeed in 'inventing' something that actually solves an existing problem, and if we manage to make that solution sustainable, we would consider it a big success.

NM, OA What are your next steps in making that happen?

MM, AO One of the first steps we are going to take is to continue our conversation with the City Council's Participation and Innovation Units. This will help us work together and ensure the city's government commitment in giving answers to citizen's concerns and in putting into practice

their proposals. We think it is important that the outputs of whichever project we develop must have a long-term impact. Political commitment is crucial to get that.

Straight after that, we will launch a campaign to engage people and communities to work together on the definition of the challenge we take on and the activities it could involve.

We would like to achieve agile dynamics and brand-new dialogs and interactions with all the actors involved.

The pandemic situation forced us to put many of the ongoing projects on hold, waiting for a better time to develop them.

Even if we, and our teams, are used to dealing with change, the future we are facing seems to include pretty disruptive facts and situations. Things will change in so many aspects, political, economic and social. Our expectations in joining this project are to get a booster to prepare the library to lodge changes and citizen's challenges, to keep doors open to collaborative work and to learn a lot from all the experiences we will share.

PW We are currently planning our first theme-based cluster of activities around the topic 'health'. We would like the starting point of this process and these activities to be crowdsourced, bottom-up problems and societal challenges. Our goal is to find relevant challenges by means of crowdsourcing campaigns.

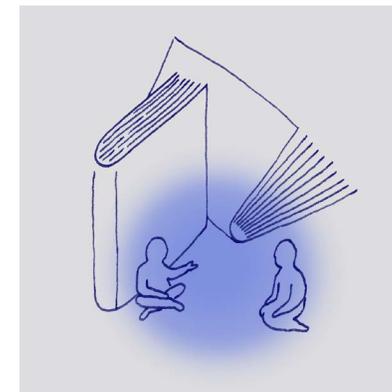
Next, we are planning a cluster of activities to co-create and experiment with solutions to one of these challenges, such as generative co-creative methods, design sprints, interaction/UX design, setting up experiments, field trials, rapid prototyping, etc.

In parallel, we plan to organise activities that focus on knowledge sharing and debate, since we are convinced that innovation and tinkering with technology should go hand in hand with looking at the bigger picture. And the bigger picture might contain some interesting ethical questions. What is the role that we want technology to play in our future? What are the 'dangers' we should be aware of? Public debate concerning such questions will become a second important goal we would like to realise.



1-2 De Krook, Ipem labo. De Krook, belevingstrap. PHOTOS Michiel Devijver.

Libraries as Forums for Democracy



- 1 Valmiera, photo courtesy of Valmiera library.
- 2 Sant Boi Library. Photo courtesy of Sant Boi library.

“Connect. Innovate. Advocate” – that is what drives everything our partner for the Europe Challenge, **Public Libraries 2030** (PL2030), does. Over the years, first as Public Libraries 2020 and now as PL2030, the organisation has been inspired by how public libraries serve their community and the impact they have. As PL2030 launches into an ambitious project imagining libraries as forums for democracy, PL2030 Director, Ilona Kish, sat down with Anthony Zacharzewski, Director-General and President of **Democratic Society** (Demsoc) – our Europe Challenge’s facilitation and design partner, for a conversation on how this can be achieved and why now is the perfect time for this.

Jumping into Demsoc's start, Anthony explains that it was set up around 15 years ago to create new opportunities for citizens to get involved with governments and for governments to talk to people in different ways and open things up. How did Anthony see this happening? By developing new approaches and rethinking what participation is. Ultimately, Anthony notes that people expected more from governments, politics and democracy than what was being delivered and there was a need to do something more personal and direct than voting every few years.

This observation is very much in line with the culture of participation, which, as Marie Østergård (PL2030 Founder and Director of Aarhus Public Libraries, Denmark) told us, is being cultivated in Aarhus. However, in order for this approach to have a sustainable character, according to Anthony, participation must be built in an inverted 'T' shape going upwards to the institutions making the big decisions and horizontally within the community. The top-down hierarchical mindset of the 1950s and before needs to evolve into something more collaborative, participative, that allows for a two-way flow of information rather than just one way.

When Demsoc started, they felt they had enough time to develop new approaches and ways of working before there were real threats to the system. That is what happened in 2016 with Brexit and the election of Trump. Anthony knew this was the moment Demsoc had been waiting for but it was like looking up from a book you are reading on a train journey and realising you have arrived at the station and scrambling to get your bag and get off.

The events of 2016 stemmed from a hollowed-out system that needed a small nudge to destroy the rules holding it together. People were willing to trust questionable visions because they had been continuously disappointed by politics and, as Anthony explains, because the prior opportunities and spaces that allowed civic groups, political parties and other actors to disseminate their messages had disappeared.

In that same breath, the media were becoming less and less accessible despite us being able to comment on pages and host our thoughts on blogs. The fragmentation of media meant it was a lot harder to get your voice out and heard unless you already had a strong voice. Added to that was the disappointment that the digital world brought about. On top of the digital inequity that emerged, this new world allowed voices to cluster, find each other and be disruptive to the system as we saw mainstream political voices be driven out of debate spaces in the 2000s and 2010s.

As Demsoc built up its portfolio of new approaches and ways of working, they encountered challenges with finding genuine long-term engagement programmes and trusted spaces. Oftentimes, governments commission organisations such as Demsoc to run participatory

budgeting programmes or citizen engagement programmes. While some may be honest and open, it is likely that the 'deliberative wave', as coined by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), will lead to fake democracy, democracy wash, and unfair or skewed processes being carried out. The question that emerges is: how can you work with a government or an institution that wants to get public voices in and still remain genuinely independent?

While digital spaces or offline spaces can answer this, the end point should be to have a network of organisations and people who can make these spaces happen and who can deliver accountability and trust. Rather than having a single action or transaction, this creates a long-term approach to participation mechanisms and structures. To build these, finding neutral, trusted and local spaces is vital. "It is a straightforward 100-percent no-brainer discussion to start thinking about libraries in this light because we know libraries from our childhood as civic hubs, as places where learning, information and different sources are brought together," says Anthony.

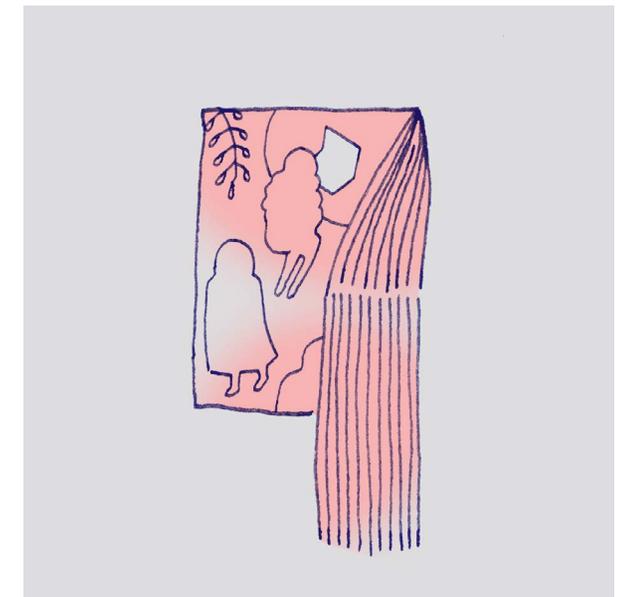
For Demsoc, the innovation seen in libraries is a critical part to the creation and maintenance of a democratic network that allows people to feel they can go to the places where they know the people and can still be connected into a national, regional, European or global conversation and decisions that are shaping their lives.

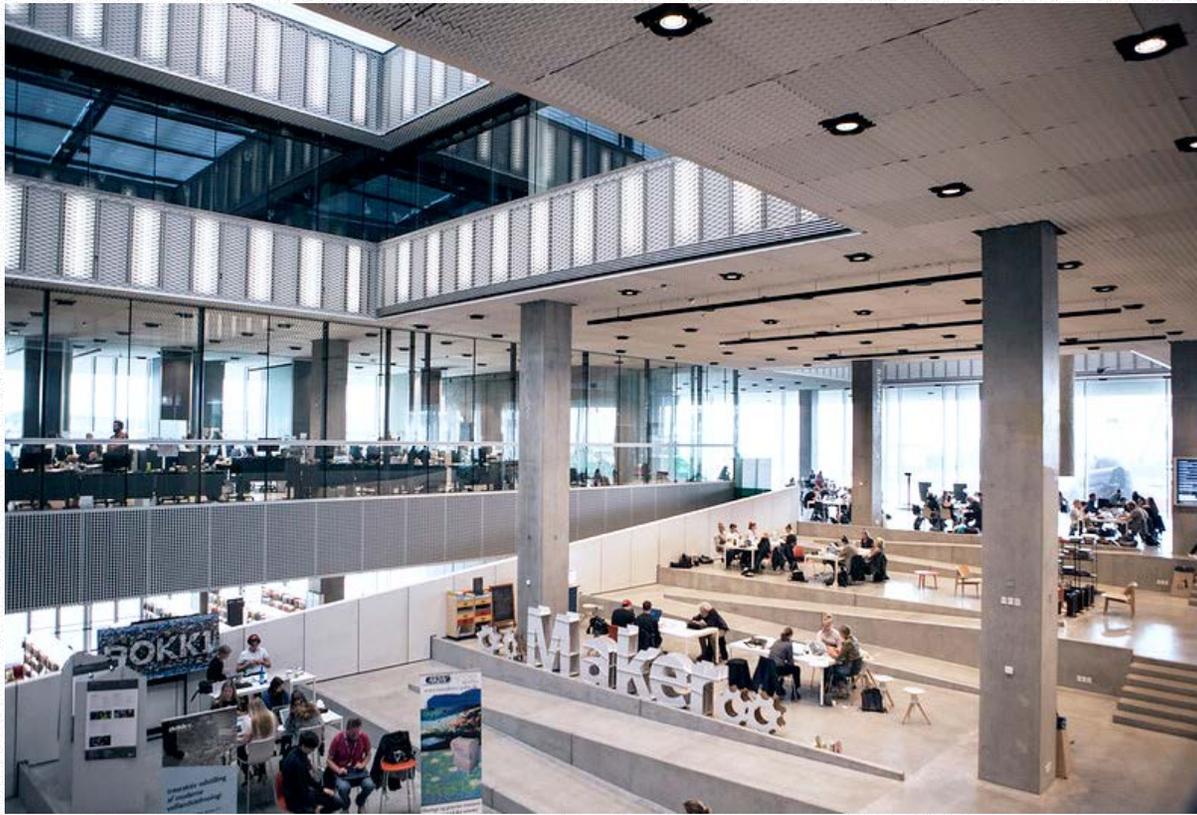
However, to start this, a narrative around the library being a neutral space needs to exist beforehand. Otherwise the risk of having the same old political arguments enter the library and hinder the possibility of moving forward and possibly cause damage to the institution. For Anthony, a significant part of this conversation needs to be around the space for the civic and what it truly means in this era. For him, "civicness is about the universality of public service; it is about bringing together people from across the spectrum and the places where they are."

Democratic processes like this that are more inclusive and open allow for conversations with people whose experiences and life may be completely different to our own and these are more easily conducted in a comfortable, neutral space. Furthermore, there is a need to feel a sense of belonging and participating in your community and Anthony notes that this is an unmet need which can be answered by libraries and a democratic network that facilitates civic conversations.

This will be a transformative experience for libraries, in which a strong partnership with local organisations that facilitate and look after civic conversations can help get started. That's where the ambitions of PL2030, Demsoc and the European Cultural Foundation's Europe Challenge with public libraries fit perfectly. It will give the partners modelling tools and ways of engaging that we can scale out and up to a wider network of libraries

working with their communities across Europe. Getting the message out quickly about these new ways to engage and new tools to this library network is how we will see things join up. We are convinced that the national, regional, European and global conversations can be real and relevant to people's local conversations in their local libraries.





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- 3 Aarhus, photo courtesy of Aarhus library
- 4 Berlin, Fresh air library at the ZLB.
PHOTO Vincent Mosch
- 5 Kranj library, PHOTO Svetlejsa Naslovna

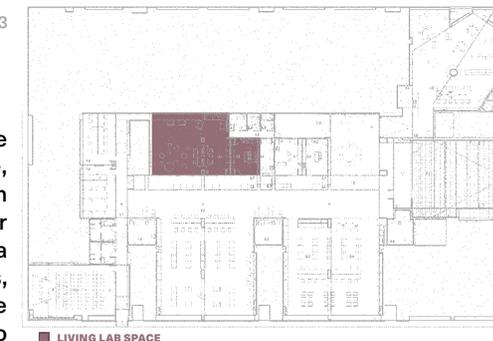
Public Libraries as Living Labs

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES 'IN THE MAKING'

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LIBRARIES AS BOUNDARY ORGANISATIONS

Only a few infrastructures, such as libraries, have survived for centuries under the same name, despite performing quite different activities in each period and the recurrent predictions of their extinction. The public library is for many people a place to read, borrow books or study; for others, it is a space to attend cultural events or to have access to maker technologies. Libraries have to deal with ambivalence: on the one hand, their social representation has remained historically stable and recognisable, and on the other hand, libraries have constantly innovated and created new services adapted to the needs of the communities they serve.

In these times of uncertainty and the current spread of disruptive technological practices, the emergence of some innovation ecosystems within libraries that place the community at the centre of co-creation processes, has transformed some public libraries into encountering spaces.

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

The global health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has only deepened the conviction that we live in increasingly changing and uncertain times. Uncertainty has also settled in libraries across Europe: many library closures have turned from temporary to permanent, it is still unclear how and when some services will be reinstated and doubts also loom as to what the public library will be like again once herd immunity is achieved. However, COVID-19 has also led to certain social consensus on libraries that were not so evident until now. One of them is the consideration of public libraries by citizens as priority proximity services. The statistical data of the digital lending service in Spanish public libraries during the first two months of hard lockdown (March and April 2020), clearly point in this direction: in just two months, nearly 800.000 digital loans were made (almost half of those made during the whole of 2019), and there was a 90% increase in users compared to the total for 2019.

But not only citizens have placed public libraries in a prominent position as a proximity agent: public authorities have also reached an explicit consensus on the consideration of public libraries as an essential service for citizens. In Spain, for example, public libraries have been one of the first public services to open their doors during the initial phases of de-escalation of the pandemic: with controlled occupancy and the establishment of security measures, libraries were reopened as key infrastructures to recover community welfare.

Even with the corona pandemic, public libraries continue to maintain their strength as key agents of community building. The public library is a flexible infrastructure that allows the coexistence of different communities of practice. Readers, students, makers, job seekers and many other find in the library four different trustworthy, safe and caring spaces to keep on growing as human beings: learning spaces to explore the world they are surrounded by; performative spaces to create things; inspiration spaces to expand their creativity; and meeting spaces to share and engage with the community.

At the same time, the library is a stable infrastructure: it is this stability that bridges the boundaries between different communities of practice and allows them to carry out common goals. Understanding public libraries as *boundary organisations* is precisely that: realising that they are both flexible and stable infrastructures, where very different social worlds intersect, where diverse interests and needs converge in a shared meeting space which is open to the whole community. When members of different communities are brought together, issues may arise, along with problems and concerns that are potentially conflicting and on which it is not always possible to reach consensus.

It is in this idea of cooperation between different communities of practice where the concept of the boundary organisation expands: in the absence of consensus, boundary organisations make collaboration possible by enrolling different actors on the basis of their convergent interests. Facing the legitimately divergent positions of the different social worlds, boundary organisations do not promote practices oriented towards imposing a certain representation or to coercing minority positions, nor to silencing non-hegemonic voices. Within boundary organisations, divergent interests coexist, dissidence inhabits the space and disagreement occurs. Indeed, it is precisely such heterogeneity that enables the emergence of collaborative practices among the communities that converge there.

LIVING LABS: SOCIO-TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURES OF INNOVATION AND CO-CREATION

Living Labs are user-centred, open innovation environments where different stakeholders participate in co-creation processes that give answers to societal challenges in real-life communities and settings. The aim of these socio-technical infrastructures is to take research out of the laboratory, put it into everyday life and involve users from the very beginning of the design process, often with a strategic approach on the potential uses of technologies. Although the first experiences on Living Labs emerged at the MIT in 2004, this conceptualisation as innovation ecosystems is inherently European and was launched under the Finnish Presidency of the European Union in 2006. During that mandate, a programme was established to implement a European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) in order to renew the Union's innovation system and ensure the development of common methodologies and tools to support, stimulate and accelerate innovation processes across Europe. Currently, ENoLL counts over more than 150 active Living Labs members worldwide (more than 440 historically recognized over 14 years).

Understanding public libraries as boundary organisations allows us to better understand the existence of a particular socio-technical infrastructure of innovation: The Library Living Lab, in the Miquel Batllori Public Library of Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona, Spain). The Library Living Lab is an open, participatory and experiential space, fully integrated into the public library, where people, technology and innovation meet and become enablers of social transformation. The aim of the Library Living Lab is to explore how, through collaborative innovation processes, technology can transform the ways in which communities experience culture and interact with them. The library thus provides the context of an encountering space where diverse communities of practice come together and innovate on the basis of living lab perspectives and methodologies.

BUILDING COMMUNITY FROM THE LIBRARY WITH LIVING LAB METHODOLOGIES

The following two projects, both carried out at the Barcelona Library Living Lab, show how different communities of users met technologies, interacted with them in certain ways and created new things together.

Brossa Inèdit (Unpublished Brossa) was a transdisciplinary project which aimed at the (re)valorisation of digital collections through the participation and contributions of the public. The

community of library users had the opportunity to choose which unpublished poems of a given digitised collection (1.120 digital visual poems of the Spanish poet Joan Brossa), would be made public for the first time. At the same time, users also had the possibility to create new narratives from the evocations generated by these poems. The project was more than just a classic action of digitising a collection with the purpose of bringing it to value and disseminate it to a wider audience. The collection was transformed, enriched and made public by the community of users who attended the installation. In the Library Living Lab, the unpublished poems were revalued thanks to a process of collective action.

3D Capitals was launched as a Citizen Science project with the aim of digitising and 3D printing on a small scale the 144 Romanesque capitals of the Sant Cugat del Vallès monastery cloister, which are a masterpiece of European medieval art. In this project, citizens did not play the role of data collectors, sample suppliers or testers on the effectiveness of a prototype: the library users who participated in this project were co-creating agents from the very beginning, from the very first phase of co-designing a prototype. *3D Capitals* was not a simple collaboration between the library and other citizen agents to carry out a digital humanities project: thanks to this project, the community re-appropriated its local cultural heritage and placed it inside and outside the library.

Rethinking the public library as a boundary organisation, allows us to understand why it is able to integrate such a socio-technical infrastructure of innovation, a Living Lab: because public libraries coexist with diversity without requiring the different communities to abandon their own original practices when meeting technologies. In these times of corona, those tensions observed in libraries mentioned at the beginning, between permanence throughout history and constant innovation, also persist: public libraries are flexible enough to integrate changes, but stable enough to be recognised as libraries, regardless of where in the world they are located. Perhaps it is precisely this tension that gives the library its character of stability. In these uncertain times, I dare only say one thing: the public library is a stable infrastructure that has always been in transformation, 'in the making'.

Some sections of this article are partial summaries of the following research paper: Hernández-Pérez, O., Vilariño, F. & Domènech, M. (2020), 'Public Libraries Engaging Communities through Technology and Innovation: Insights from the Library Living Lab', Public Library Quarterly. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1845047>



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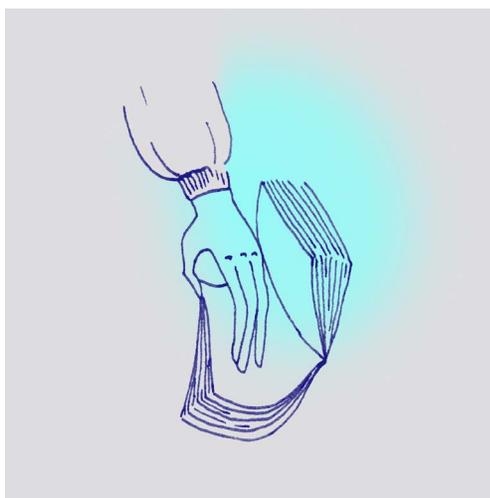


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- 1-3 The Library Living Lab is located inside the Miquel Batllori Public Library in Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona, Spain). PHOTO Adrià Goula.
- 4 Different stages of the *3D Capitals* project. Training session on photogrammetry at the Library Living Lab;
- 5 Different stages of the *3D Capitals* project. Capture session in the Monastery of Sant Cugat del Vallès;
- 6 Different stages of the *3D Capitals* project. First 3D-printed capitals exhibited at the Library Living Lab. PHOTO Library Living Lab.

Libraries and Sustainable Development Goals

Access to information can drive growth, development, and equity.



The ability to create, collect and use information has never been greater. It is access to information that can change people's lives and contribute to sustainable development. Information, and what we do with it, is essential for growth. The Nobel Prize in Economics 2018, awarded to Paul Romer and William Nordhaus, is an acknowledgment of how important this matter is to recover economies. Investment in new ideas, and the and their dissemination, is key to sustainable growth.

Unfortunately, too often, income poverty is associated with informational poverty. People need guarantees to get information for free to cope with their own challenges and risk of exclusion. Without access to information, there is no way to get involvement in Education and Knowledge.

Public libraries' very core mission is about Human and Fundamental Rights of Information and Education: they are open to all without any restriction, and therefore, are key institutions offering access to information for all. Providing free and equal access to information and knowledge is the essential mission of libraries across the globe. Libraries are deeply committed to their core role of supporting literacy, learning, and reading in our communities. Libraries are developing services embracing digital innovation and are proud to be guardians of the memory of the world.

Fortunately, libraries all over the world share common goals and are united in serving the population with great respect for human rights values. Democratic access is the gate to development, and it is known when individuals and communities use library services their lives improve and change for the better.

Libraries promote equality and fight poverty. We know that the information age and the digital era are driving inequalities. Labour markets are changing. Those who can make full use of the information are empowered. But those who cannot, are in danger of being left behind.

In an information society, there is a risk that informational poverty will be associated with a wider disadvantage. In libraries, meaningful access to information can drive growth and development locally, at the individual, household, community, country, and at the global level. It means that we can all have the physical possibility, the skills, and the attitude to find, understand and use the information to improve things, to improve our lives. For people in poverty, who face more challenges than most, it can be a way to a better life, a path to achieve sustainable development. Libraries contribute to minimising the Digital Divide.

Several years ago, **Librarians organised under the International Federation of Libraries Associations and Institutions (IFLA)** started thinking how to face and tackle global challenges and go further working together, with the global library field pursuing the same objectives, and presenting the same arguments. **The United Nations 2030 Agenda** and **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** have provided a great opportunity to do this. We live in a society that is increasingly connected. The SDGs are an affirmation because, for the first time, there is an important document, signed by all the Member States of the United Nations, which emphasises the importance of access to information. It is clearly reflected in goal 16.10, which focuses on peace, justice and solid institutions. It explicitly talks about access to information, but it is often interpreted as access to

government information. But also in about 20 other targets of the rest of the SDGs, where the importance of access to information, both the physical connection and the skills and rights to use it, is crucial. This is exactly the essential access that libraries provide every day to our communities.

By adhering to the SDGs, the 194 Member States of the United Nations promised libraries and their users to support access to information. The Member States also agreed on a continuous process of review and reporting through National Voluntary Reviews. Through the specific goals and indicators, it is possible to track progress. In this way, what was a political decision to work in a global framework towards development, is actually something that can bring at the local level a conscious reason of working on the ground and giving impact at national and global levels. A way to see who is advancing, who has not yet advanced, or who is lagging behind. This process gives libraries an opportunity to talk about what we do. To explain it in terms understood by politicians and officials. To create awareness of how important libraries are in the chain of development and, to gain support for our work.

In this context, the first step in moving towards a comprehensive and effective action by public libraries was to think strategically about the best way to empower local librarians to work on achieving SDGs ambitious targets among the full 2030 Agenda. Additionally, it was important to understand how to communicate and measure the results of this new approach. The idea was that each library should do this at the local level and report their results at the National Voluntary Review, while IFLA must be the global voice participating at **UN High-Level Political Forum** to report about the compiled results. With this purpose IFLA launched the **Library Map of the World**. Selected library performance metrics provide national level library data across all types of libraries in all regions of the world and indicators such as collection volumes, numbers of users, internet's access points and number of loans.

Moreover, we worked intensively in IFLA and launched the **International Advocacy Programme**, known by its acronym IAP. In mid-2016 we decided to work on a new ambitious and structured programme that would increase the capacity of the global library sector to promote and advocate for the general interest, with a specific focus on the SDGs.

At the kick-off of the programme, IFLA offered a 'train the trainer' workshop. We gathered a group of experienced trainers from around the world in The Hague and learned together what SDGs are, what they mean to libraries, and what the key steps are to effectively promote and defend libraries. We continue with workshops in Africa, Asia/Oceania, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and North America. Each country's national association's representative was invited to attend their regional workshop and sign a commitment to return to their country and

disseminate their learning, raise awareness of the SDGs, promote and advocate for recognition and support for libraries. Based on the SDGs, the National Library Associations guided by IFLA developed plans, held workshops and events, organized meetings, and several innovative activities.

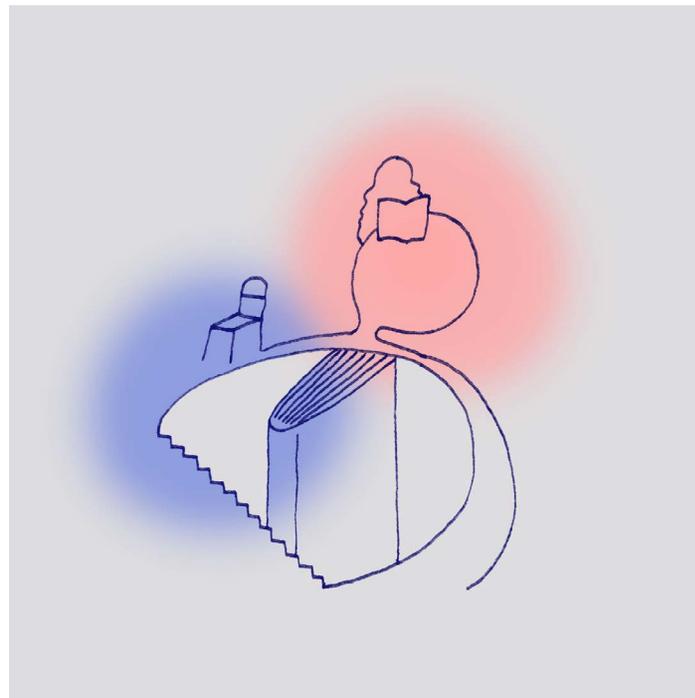
After two years of working towards SDGs and 2030 Agenda, we met at the Public Library of New York in an **IAP Global Convening**. We visited the UN and met with the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations for Public Information, together with the representation of 40 ambassadors and librarians from the countries that had the most impact on the development of the programme to accelerate the recognition that 'libraries are motors of change', engines of social change. We live a unique moment to review and celebrate the work done and to agree on future plans. These forty countries became a model to follow by others.

More than 120 countries joined the IAP and I can say that it's an excellent illustration of a united library field acting to promote change and development. A sample of what we can achieve by

working together with a strategic focus on a common goal by creating a global movement to show the role of libraries in achieving sustainable development.

With a common theme, *Every Librarian an Advocate!* thousands of librarians from 7 continents started moving forward with the same purpose, showing how far we can go in a united library field aligned to humanity's goals for progress and sustainable development. There is still a lot to do but fortunately the library movement is on.

Libraries' future will depend on the capacity to understand and focus their work to serve people's information needs. It's going to be a great future for library services if libraries maintain their capacity for action, joining a global vision on tackling global challenges and working together for the sake of humanity development. Today more than ever libraries have to diversify their offer, looking further than their collections. Libraries' commitment to informational social needs, providing training on digital skills and spaces of discussion to increase critical thinking and behaviour, are going to be essential for sustainable development.



ECHO Mobile Library – Mobile Cultural Exchanges

As part of our work in Libraries for Europe, the European Cultural Foundation funds **ECHO** – a mobile library based in Athens – which provides a space for creativity and learning for migrants and refugees. ECHO is also a grassroots project organised through a community network between Athens and eleven camps and community centres in mainland Greece.



Although ECHO is not a public library in a traditional sense, they are an excellent example of providing a safe and accessible space for learning and exchange to the most vulnerable individuals and communities housed in refugee camps in Europe. The two primary services they provide is a book exchange service for all displaced individuals and educational children's learning programming. We interviewed full-time coordinators Keira Dignan and Becka Wolfe from ECHO on what inspired them to start the mobile library.

Keira and Becka explained that once the **EU Turkey deal** was passed in 2015 refugees and migrants were no longer able to move through Greece to get to the rest of Europe. This led to many informal camps springing up in the North of Greece near the border region, including one in a disused petrol station called EKO. It was there that many solidarians came together to help people who were living at the abandoned petrol station. A group of these solidarians decided to start an educational project in the camp. Laura Samira Naude and Esther ten Zijthoff are part of the group who founded ECHO.

Their thinking behind founding ECHO was that people had many basic needs that were not being met in this informal camp, where there was also a desire and need for a shared space for people to come together and talk and share their

time. There was also a massive desire for education; they wanted to offer a means for people who had had their educational journeys interrupted through forced displacement, a way to continue their lives and use the time that they had to learn more and improve their skills.

There was also a desire for culture, literature and the arts and ways to experience the world and share art forms. ECHO's founders thought that a mobile library would be a brilliant way of facilitating access to these things to as many people as possible.

In Greece, in-person learning was stopped in March 2020, which meant that services like the library could not continue in real life, so ECHO had to halt its activities. A very strict lockdown was introduced nationally. Keira explained how ECHO adapted to the pandemic once constraints were placed upon the way their library was operating: "During this time, we offered online resources to our database of library users. We would text people in the relevant languages and inform them about what was happening and let them know they could access the resources online. We could fulfil some requests through our online library database, whereby people would text us to request a book, and we could send them the PDF of the book if we had it.

The most significant thing during the lockdown was how we acted to support a broader grassroots solidarity movement in Athens. One of those groups was the Khora Kitchen; usually, they have a restaurant space where people can come and get freshly-cooked, nutritious food for free, in a safe space. When this was forced to close, they started to cook and deliver up to 1000 meals per day.

The mobile library became a food delivery vehicle, which occasionally doubled as a library van when people saw what was inside, which was nice. We ended up reaching out to people who have never seen the library before and engaged new volunteers who were involved in preparing and distributing the food. And they would say, 'ah, so what's this? A library?'

The library has always had to be flexible to the ever-changing political and material conditions. Last year, in response to a huge number of library users without accommodation in Malakasa camp, *The Guardian* reported Keira as saying, 'we have changed our lending system to not ask for an address but to ask where the tent is.'

For ECHO, this year has been one of anxiety, as they watched their friends in the camps be locked away, even more isolated and forgotten, added to the dangers of a virus that has already killed many vulnerable people.

It has also been extremely frustrating for them as a library. Although they have adapted to COVID-19 measures to make the library an almost no-transmission zone, they have nevertheless been stopped from providing what they consider to be essential needs – safe community space, recreational and educational activity – to some of the most isolated groups of people in Europe. They hope in six months' time to be able to fully restart their activities, rebuild relationships and support their friends to read books, play games, learn languages, make friends and build new lives in Europe.

SUSTAINING SOLIDARITY

When it comes to how ECHO fuels solidarity between individuals and communities, across differences, borders and nationalities, Keira explains, "We often have many enthusiastic residents who come in and essentially help us run our library sessions every week, either on a particular day or in a specific camp. This has been great to see because we feel that you can empower those people to gain new skills and run something that benefits them and the camp's fellow residents or wherever we're working."

We at ECF believe that libraries are a shared safe public space for many communities in Europe and ECHO is an excellent example of a library learning space functioning in a challenging context.

When it comes to focusing on the now and based on EU legal changes, we asked ECHO how they see what is happening in a period of a pandemic in relation to these communities? Becka says, "At ECHO, we see that this moment is being used to further strengthen institutional powers to restrict the rights of marginalised and vulnerable communities. The pandemic has shown in sharp relief the failures of EU policymakers to support people seeking a safe and stable haven here, including the horrendous conditions on the Greek islands and the lack of long-term support for recognised refugees in Greece. The massive fire that destroyed Moria camp on Lesbos was an indictment of EU policy. Instead of rethinking the entire paradigm, it was simply reproduced a few kilometres down the road, and people continue to suffer."

