Placing the public library – a comparative analysis of political perceptions

Evjen, Sunniva

Publication date:
2012

Document version
Early version, also known as pre-print

Placing the public library – a comparative analysis of political perceptions

Sunniva Evjen

Ph.D. thesis from Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark

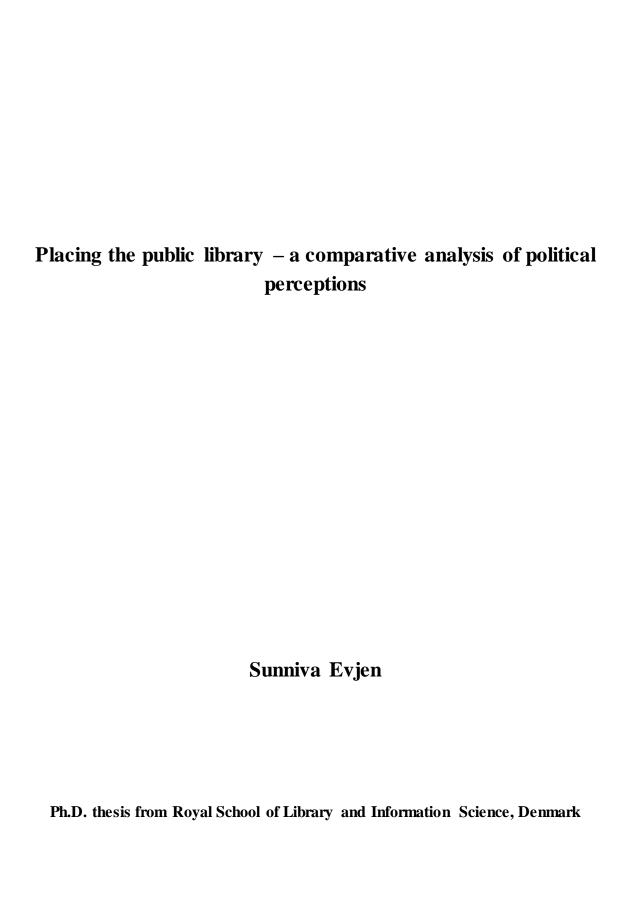# Placing the public library – a comparative analysis of political perceptions

Sunniva Evjen
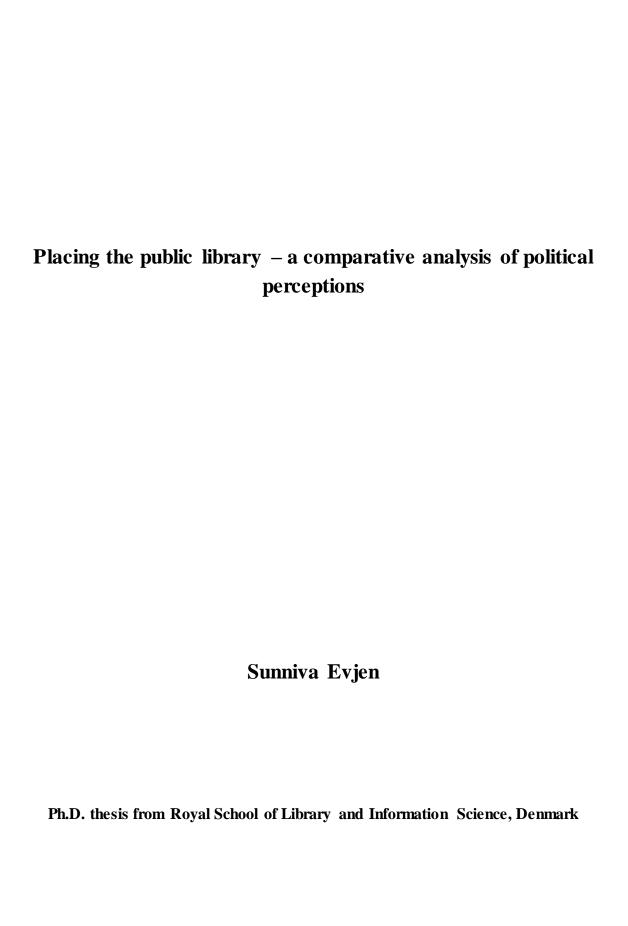
Ph.D. thesis from Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark

Hvor går veien videre? En komparativ analyse av folkebibliotekperspektiver

Sunniva Evjen

i

Acknowledgements

These are both the first words, and the final ones – and it feels strange to write them. This thesis is the result of four years filled with inspiration, revaluation, procrastination, frustration and contemplation. And – the occasional revelation! Four years ago, when I became a PhD candidate, I also joined the PLACE project. Since 2007, PLACE has aimed at exploring the public library's role in our multicultural and digital society. I think I can safely say that my colleagues have greatly increased our knowledge about public library use and the public library's potential. Their thorough research and numerous publications have gained much attention, and I am proud of having been part of this project. In your hands, you are now holding my contribution.

The PhD process is a lonely one, but I have of course not been alone. And the one person whom I give most of the thanks – and some of the blame for convincing me to apply – is my supervisor Professor Ragnar Audunson. Fascinatingly knowledgeable, ever patient, helpful; and optimistic his office door is always open (although he might not actually be present, but that's another story). I am positive you would not be reading this if it was not for him.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to:

My Danish supervisor Carl Gustav Johannsen, who has offered sound and poignant advice in his calm and encouraging manner.

My project group, PLACE, counting a number of accomplished people from HiOA and other institutions – truly a fine environment to be in, and a source of support and guidance: Svanhild, Andreas, Erling and all the rest of you.

My informants in Oslo, Aarhus, and Birmingham for enthusiastic participation. And also the people I have met during this process: library staff and project managers who have shared their knowledge with me. The people at Loughborough University, students and staff: Thanks for experiences, insights and friendship.

My colleagues at ABL/HiOA. Especially my office neighbours, the ladies who luncheon at AFI: Grete, Anne, Marit Kristine, Lis and Åse Kristine. Thanks for sound advice, general understanding, and life-saving laughs. Grete, I dedicate the entire format to you!

My friends, my family – thank you all. For keeping me afloat all the times I have nearly drowned (quite a few, to be honest). It is you who have kept me real, kept me good, kept me calm. You who have reminded me that there is more to life than PhD dissertations, and that nothing usually is as bad as it seems. I'm sure none of you never cared a bit about my thesis, but you do care about me – and in my book, that's all that matters. And now you can finally read and find out what it is I have been stressing over the past years.

My general lifesavers: Caffeine. Carbs. Music. PhD Comics. Sarcasm. Workouts.

And so, contrary to all form and PhD etiquette, if such a thing exists – I also thank myself: For being dim-witted enough to start, and for being persevering enough to finish. If it hadn't been for me, you would not be reading this. It's true. *Write the thesis **you** want to read*, someone told me four years ago. And I think I have, all things considered.

Sunniva Evjen.
Oslo 1. mai 2012

v

Summary

This thesis explores politicians' perceptions of the public library and public library development. While many call for a redefined vision for public libraries, eye-catching libraries are built in major cities around the world. What library visions are expressed through such projects? I attempt to discern how local politicians view the role of the public library, and how do they want to develop it in their local context, using concepts from institutional theory in the analysis. The research questions include issues concerning norms politicians connect with public libraries compared with those expressed by the professional field, library legitimization, as well as plans and visions for the future library. I have addressed these questions through a comparative case study done in three cities; Oslo, Aarhus, and Birmingham, and taken a qualitative approach, using interviews with local politicians and document analysis of local and national policy documents. One important premise for this study has been to find cases where there are on-going developments; in the shape of main library construction.

The findings show that politicians have extensive knowledge about the norms and values found on the professional library field. They share much of the same views regarding library roles and missions, as well as core values such as equal access to knowledge and culture – expressed for instance through a free service. When the informants legitimize public libraries in general, they primarily connect them with citizens' democratic rights and the country's democratic practice. Legitimizing the local projects is done using a slightly different argumentation: These are connected to city development and a desire to make visible the city's knowledge and culture profile.

The perceptions expressed through this study show that the local politicians through their work with library issues – and the projects in particular – have acquired knowledge about and understanding of the public library institution. There are shared perceptions in the three cases, however the biggest difference is found in the extent to which the library service is subjected to political planning – both locally and nationally. I find it likely that a stronger degree of formal

institutionalisation will render the public library service more resilient when faced with external pressure, in the form of technological or economic challenges.

Resymé

I denne avhandlingen utforsker jeg politiske perspektiver på folkebibliotek og folkebibliotekutvikling. I en tid der mange etterlyser en ny visjon for folkebiblioteket bygges det iøynefallende bibliotek over hele verden. Hvilken visjon ligger til grunn for disse prosjektene? Jeg prøver å avdekke holdninger til og forståelse av folkebiblioteket generelt og det lokale tilbudet spesielt. Datamaterialet analyseres ved hjelp av institusjonell teori og konsepter som behandler normative og legitimerende aspekter ved organisasjoner. Sentrale spørsmål kretser rundt hvilke normer politikere legger til grunn for bibliotekinstitusjonen sammenliknet med normgrunnlaget som fins på det profesjonelle feltet, hvordan folkebibliotek legitimeres, samt hvilke planer og visjoner som fins for virksomheten. Ved hjelp av et komparativt case-studium i tre byer; Oslo, Aarhus og Birmingham har jeg nærmet meg disse spørsmålene, og har intervjuet lokalpolitikere, samt analysert folkepolitiske dokumenter av lokal og nasjonal art. Et viktig premiss for studien har vært å se på konkrete tilfeller av bibliotekplanlegging, og i alle disse byene bygges eller planlegges nye hovedbibliotek.

Resultatene fra studien viser at politikerne i utstrakt grad kjenner til det normgrunnlaget som fins på det profesjonelle feltet. De deler i stor grad synet på bibliotekets roller og oppgaver, og stiller seg bak kjerneverdier som lik tilgang til kunnskap og kultur uttrykt gjennom gratisprinsippet. Når bibliotekvirksomheten legitimeres på et overordnet nivå knyttes den primært til innbyggernes demokratiske rettigheter, og en del av den demokratiske praksis. Det argumenteres noe annerledes for de lokale bibliotekprosjektene. Disse knyttes til byutvikling og et ønske om å vektlegge byens satsing på kunnskap og kultur.

Folkebibliotekperspektivene som kommer til uttrykk i denne studien viser at de lokale politikerne både har tilegnet seg kunnskap om og forståelse av institusjonen. Den største forskjellen mellom casene fins i graden av politisk formalisering som ligger til grunn for bibliotektjenesten, i form av for eksempel strategisk planlegging – lokalt og nasjonalt. Jeg anser det som sannsynlig at jo sterkere grad av formell institusjonalisering, jo mer motstandsdyktig vil folkebiblioteket være i møte med ytre press, i form av teknologiske eller økonomiske utfordringer.

Table of Content

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness
Charles Dickens (*A Tale of Two Cities*)

1   Introduction

The public library is an institution with a long history and a widespread network: there are service points all over the world, and these units are connected by a common objective: to organize, spread and make available knowledge and culture. This objective is executed through common tasks and services; and also by extensive cooperation. The public library's role has been, since the outset, to be a place of learning, education, and culture. And although the objective is the same, the society in which libraries operate is distinctly different, so are the challenges.

Audunson (2001) points at two increasingly prominent factors: The first is the decaying idea of a common canon – a result of our postmodern and multicultural society, and growing market liberalism: The professional authority of librarians is questioned: Why should they decide what constitutes quality? Our society is becoming less homogenous, so why should western culture dominate the collections? And why not let the customer decide? Such questions are challenging both the expertise of the librarians and the enlightenment ideal, which has been central to public library operation since its outset. D`Angelo, (2006) warns that the original mission of public libraries, *to sustain and promote democracy through civic education*, is in decline because of the rise in consumerism and the craving for entertainment over education.

The other factor Audunson mentions, is technology, which have brought developments not only to the way in which content is made available (internet, computers, e-books, smart phones, music players etc.), but also – consequently – in our media habits. Information in our hyper digital lives is always just a click away. And although they evolve and adapt to the changes, public libraries

are still first and foremost connected with printed books – and the question arises: Is it time to rethink the public library idea?

Another issue is public spending. Since the 1980s, due to liberalization, and periods of recession, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of physical library units. Oslo, to take an example, had in 1988 one central library, sixteen branch libraries, eight service points and two book buses. Due to council reforms, three branch libraries, both buses and all eight service points have been closed during the late 80s and 1990s. The remaining branch libraries and the central library have experienced budget cuts, causing reduced opening hours and media budgets (Oslo Kommune Byrådet, 2005). And this is not a peculiarity of Norwegian library development; similar tendencies have been seen in the rest of Europe and North America. Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2006) note that changes in culture policy have led to increased competition, where libraries are not only contending with other actors on the culture field, but with all items on council budgets. The current financial crisis has made this issue more current, as it has caused severe cuts in the public sector, affecting public libraries as well as other public institutions.

All these factors represent changing conditions for the public library sector, giving increased societal complexity, opportunities, as well as challenges. Since the 1990s people have questioned the need for physical collections – and by extension, physical library space (Johnson, 1998). As a response to this, many, both inside and outside the library community have called for a new vision for public libraries. In what direction should they be going, and what kind of library institution do we need – and want – in the coming years? Greenhalgh & Worpole (1995), Leadbeater (2003) have pointed to the multitude of tasks, services and operation areas as a problem for public libraries, as a problem, because their focus seems unclear, both to the organization itself, not to mention to the outside.

It seems a paradox that today, in many of the world's major cities, new libraries are being built – and not just buildings, but often striking constructions with landmark potential. These investments counter all the grim prophecies made on behalf of the institution. They also suggest that behind them we can find both vision and strategy. In this thesis, I address this particular incongruity, by turning to those holding the overall responsibility for local library development –

the politicians. This thesis is devoted to the question: How do local politicians view the role of the public library, and how do they want to develop it in their local context?

1.1 Motivation

The reason for studying this particular area is twofold. First, there is a practical angle, meaning knowledge-building in terms of an increased understanding of conflict areas, institutional responsibilities and tasks. The public library was formed in a different society than ours, and today it comes across as a complex institution with many different roles tied to different political areas: culture, education, economy, and integration. Studying the perspectives of those in charge of local library development will give insight into what direction they want it to take. Although there are several examples of researchers studying politicians' views of public libraries (Aabø, 2005a; R. Audunson, 2005; Gazo, 2010; Smith & Usherwood, 2004; Usherwood, 1993), I have found none looking at cases where new libraries are being planned and built – which adds a dimension of current value.

The other angle is theoretical. This dissertation seeks to investigate central stakeholders understanding of a political institution (the public library) and the institutionalized images held by a these stakeholders. Applying institutional theory on this problem area will help illuminate to which extent the norms and values of the public library field are shared by those in charge of local-policy making and relate it to the compound pressure. Also, this theoretical basis enabling an analysis of how politicians legitimize the public library service, and how the cases, given their different circumstances might share common traits. There are a few studies which – successfully – use institutional theory to investigate processes or changes on the public library field or within specific organizations, and even fewer using it to shed light over politicians' views. This study, then, will add to a little explored research area using a new angle.

Particular attention is given to the topic of library roles, perhaps especially the library's social role, and how this is viewed by the informants on a general and local level. The Norwegian

PLACE[1] project (2007), to which this thesis belongs, seeks to investigate the public library's potential as a social arena and a community meeting place. Looking to Norwegian public library policy, it is worth mentioning that in the 1999/2000 Public Library Report to the Storting (Kulturdepartementet, 1999) the word *møtestad* (meeting place) was barely mentioned. Ten years later, the Ministry of Culture presented a new report (Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, 2009), where this particular aspect of libraries had been given notably more attention than earlier, with a separate chapter. A greater political focus on the social aspects of libraries can thus be expected now as opposed to 20 years ago. Oldenburg (1999) and Putnam (2001; 2004) are among those who have called attention to the importance of broad community interaction. Studies done by the PLACE group suggest that community involvement is an important variable explaining public library use (Aabø, Audunson, & Vårheim, 2010).

1.2 Objective

The objective of this dissertation is to increase the understanding of politicians' perspectives on the role and development of public libraries in an urban context. It poses questions regarding the legitimization of the institution, which political perspectives there are when it comes to change and development, and more specifically: what they want with the library service in the city they administer/which political and societal goals they have for the library service in the city they administer.

The research is based on three case cities: Oslo, Aarhus, and Birmingham. All are in the process of planning/building a new main library, which presupposes ready perspectives on the part of local legislators – not only on the public library institution today, but also a vision of its future role. I base my study on in-depth interviews with local politicians – the main component of the data material – as well as national and local policy documents.

The case cities are situated in Norway, Denmark and the UK. There are many similarities between the three both in terms of public libraries, and more general societal traits. However, the

---

[1] PLACE (Public Libraries as Arena for Citizenship) is a Norwegian Research Council funded project

differences are also present, especially when it comes to facets like demography, history, and politics. The differences are in part the motive for choosing these specific cases, as the comparison will enable me to see if field-specific traits transcend the context of each case.

Even though public library services vary in extent and service-level, they share certain inalienable traits. As a result, it is possible to talk about a **public library field** not only in terms of national systems, but also as one international domain, consisting of organizations and stakeholders working directly or indirectly with library issues – this of course includes local politicians working directly with public library issues. The existence of such a field makes not only possible a set of universal values, the creation of international organizations and cooperating bodies – it also facilitates common developments. Trends and innovations travel internationally, thus making the similarities between national public library services more visible than the differences.

The bond between Scandinavian and Anglo-American libraries is strong – most importantly because the Nordic Public library model[2] originally was based on Anglo-American ideas. Elements such as open shelves, a user-oriented attitude, and a professionalization of the field were some of the components. Before England or any of the Nordic countries could offer an education for librarians, people went to the US to study, and naturally brought new impulses home with them. Since then, both the UK and the US have been an inspiration for the Nordic countries in developing public library services – and vice versa. Formal cooperation, such as the Anglo-Scandinavian Public Libraries Conference, has served as a source of knowledge exchange and inspiration. While social, demographic and political circumstances surely has affected each countries public library service over time, these three countries still appear in relative proximity when ranking national library services (European Library Statistics, 2004).

The public library field is subjected to both national and local governing. The intersection between the professional library field and local government can make visible conflicting interests, which may be the reflection of different norms values. Professional values and norms could be challenged, and there might be external pressures seeking change (in addition to what

---

[2] The Public Library Model is further discussed in 4.3.2

the field itself might want or are assessing). The process of planning and developing a new main library could bring forward the differences between the field professionals and the local politicians. The politicians could be inspired by the library field, or, they could be more affected by general trends in society, and be more inclined to let such images colour their view of what kind of library they want for their cities.

I have collected data with a desire to discover how the public library is perceived by politicians, and this prompted an approach in which different aspects of organizational upkeep and development are addressed. Institutional theory provides this basis, and by eclectically picking out central concepts, certain research questions emerged:

Which norms and values do politicians connect with the public library? Do they correspond with those found in the professional field? And which restrictions do politicians see for public libraries? The normative focus in some areas of institutionalism has been helpful in order to determine what I sometimes refer to as *the appropriate library*.

Legitimization is another aspect that provides a different take on political perceptions. How are public libraries legitimized, or more specifically: how are the public library projects in question legitimized? What can this tell us about the public library's place in a city?

Furthermore I look into how ideas travel within a field, and how they affect the perceptions of those belonging to it. Are general societal trends most prominent, or do specific public library field trends seem more influential? Institutional theory concerns itself with organizational processes; like how they maintain stability, but also how they change, develop, and resemble one another.

The process of institutionalization is in itself relevant. By looking at how the public library field has become institutionalized over the years, it is possible to detect how political motivation has changed over time. It is also relevant to pose the question of whether or not current trends and current perceptions are suggesting that the foundation of public libraries is dissolving, by way of

a deinstitutionalization. Or if the opposite is the case – if the efforts involved in building these new libraries indeed revitalizes the foundation on which the public library field rests.

These three cases will of course not provide a basis for generalizations, but through them, I mean to discern how local politicians view the role of the public library, and how they want to develop it in their local context. Turning to Yin (2009) and the concept of analytical generalization, I is possible that the findings from this study may be applicable for similar cases, and can give insight into the attitudes of an important group of stakeholders who are involved in shaping the public library institution of tomorrow.

1.3 Research questions

The following problem statement is the overall focus of this research project:
What public library perceptions are found among politicians in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham, what visions of the future library do they reflect?

To further specify, I have added four research questions, through which I intend to provide insight into the different aspects of these *perceptions*:

- To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?

In chapter 3, I try to show how public libraries became institutionalized as a field, and how this in turn led to the growth of field-specific norms and values. Within institutional theory, norms are rule-like strongly influencing individual behaviour. I use this concept to analyse to what extent the informants' library norms are in sync with those on the professional field, which restrictions they might set for library operations, and how this in turn might affect the library strategy.

- How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?

Legitimacy (6.5.1) is a central concept within institutional theory, and is in this context relevant when analysing how politicians perceive libraries. There are three main components: The first deals with how the library is legitimized through formal channels (legislation, plans), the second about how the library is legitimized by the informants as expressed through interviews, and thirdly: what kind of legitimacy can be traced? Legitimacy is also relevant when trying to discern which argumentation (4.2) that might be used when explaining and justifying library policy.

- How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?

One of the main ideas behind this multiple case study is to compare the cases. Since the public library field has an international propagation, I will use concepts such as isomorphy, recipes and myths to look into how similarities may have occurred despite the different case contexts. However, it could be argued that there is a fundamental difference between Scandinavia and the UK, to the extent which we can start discussing whether or not they represent different library models. Library models will be further explained in section 4.3.

- To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

The concept of deinstitutionalization is relevant when studying institutions put under pressure, and is further addressed in 6.6. However, in this case, it serves as a starting point for discussing the direction in which the libraries in each case might be headed, based on which pressures the institution is facing and an evaluation of its resilience towards it.

1.4 Library and Information Science Research

As this thesis studies public library perceptions, it is a part of the library and information science (LIS) research field. LIS research, however, is lacking in strong identity; a clear focus; or a common set of concepts, as opposed to traditional academic disciplines. As Hansson (2004) observes, there are two main reasons why no one has ever been able to clearly point out this identity. First: *the lack of ability to define a proper object of study within the discipline; and the subsequent lack of ability to formulate a method by which this object best can be studied* (p. 106). Day (1996) stresses that this is precisely what makes LIS a post-modern discipline, with a "variable and mobile "object" of study" (p. 320). Though a meta-analysis of the LIS research field, Åström (2006) finds it has a vague identity and diverse self-understanding, which he ascribes to a wide spectre of attitudes towards the hows, whys, and wherefores among the researchers. Nolin & Åstrøm (2009) believes this intrinsic weakness in turn can be a strength, if it is translated into a strategic resource.

LIS is often characterized as a multi or interdisciplinary subject, and it encompasses a number of different perspectives on a wide variety of research topics. Libraries and society, knowledge organization and retrieval, information behaviour are some of the important areas within LIS research. I place this project within the research area **Libraries and society,** the macro-structural component of LIS, which addresses libraries' societal role (Torstensson, 2001b). Issues of libraries in connection with democracy, equal right to information, social equality, and freedom of speech are examples of topics discussed under this "umbrella".

Järvelin & Vakkari (1993; 1996) have attempted to classify LIS research through extensive studies of what the research subjects within the LIS community (esp. in Scandinavia) are. Defining LIS research required a separation from other research fields, and had them give the following definition:

> *We conceive of LIS as a discipline that views information processes from an information seeking perspective. This does not mean that the research exclusively focuses on information seeking, but this perspective essentially structures the discipline. The objective of the investigation is the information seeking of individuals and groups, the factors that generate this activity, as well as various arrangements and conditions that support the information seeking and provide access to information (for example, LIS units).*

Järvelin & Vakkari then came up with a scheme, which divided LIS research into main and sub categories. However, the main separation within the LIS field is drawn between research that is institution-oriented, directed towards libraries or similar facilities – like research on library history or library organization – and research that is institution independent, for instance research on information seeking behaviour or information management.

Using Järvelin & Vakkari's distinction, research on public library policy and planning, or even, as is the case with the project in hand, perceptions of the public library, is most certainly institution-bound. My research objects are perceptions of the public library institution and the roles it plays – here in an urban context.

1.5 Delimitations and definitions

The focus in this project is perceptions of the physical library and its particular role. I explore the images of different library aspects, but all of them are connected to activities in the building and in the organization. Nonetheless, I will touch upon technological developments at times, but then in connection with how digital media, e.g. the e-book, might affect the physical library space, challenges for the public library institution on a general level, and service provision in public libraries.

This is a study focusing on the public library, and the **public library field**. The term field refers to an "organizational field" as it is used by institutional theorists; differentiated, interdependent organizations constituting a recognized area of institutional life (DiMaggio & Powell 1983 p. 143), or as Scott (2001 p. 137) notes: *a set of diverse organizations engaged in a similar function*. According to DiMaggio (p. 267) one aspect is field boundaries. Where do these boundaries go, and how do they affect organizational behaviour when it comes to models for emulation, information-gathering or inspiration? Another aspect deals with the agencies not directly involved in an industry, but still constraining or influencing a sector or a field, like government agencies or trade unions. For the public library sector, this includes national library associations,

government agencies dealing with public library matters, and professional organizations, such as the Librarians' Union of Norway, or the British CILIP[3]. Even local politicians – like the informants in this study – are part of the public library field, as they are dealing with library matters directly. Any such field, whether it is professional, technical or other, is also dependent on recognition and acceptance from the surroundings. The public library field exists in part because of national, formal legitimization, but is also dependent on local will: Its continued growth depends on local politicians' willingness to strategic planning and funding. If the library is neglected by its owners, it is likely that its users will do the same. Intersecting, but not matching in full is the **professional library field**, consisting more narrowly of librarians, library professionals and the organizations they themselves have formed, and in addition, the values and norms existing in their professional practice. The professional field is surely part of the public library field, while many of those in the public library field are not professionals, and consequently not members. Since there are different stakeholders on the public library field, conflicts of interest may occur between (especially) those standing on different sides in a matter – like librarians and local politicians.

Theoretically, this thesis has an institutional focus. It observes **institutionalization** as a social process, in which common perceptions, norms, values, and conduct are manifested in taken-for-granted rules and opinions – and often also formally, by law. The public library has over time been institutionalized, and is consequently attributed with such norms, values and rules – not only by library professionals, but also other actors. Institutional theory provides concepts like norms, and legitimacy which is used in the analysis to make clear the informants perceptions, and is helpful when discerning change processes, for instance in relation to organizational development or decline.

In addition to explaining what this study includes, I want to make a short mention of what it leaves out. For one, this is not a study of the actual library projects, although they are important components. Neither is this a study of the political processes leading up to the current state of affairs. This thesis is a multiple case-study, as described by Yin (2006) using a qualitative methodology, to discern perspectives of and attitudes to public libraries and their development in

---

[3] Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

three different contexts – where new main libraries are central. When I discuss the implications these attitudes may have on the public library service, I refer only to that of the city in question. In the problem statement, I institute a search for perspectives held by politicians towards public libraries and their development. By *perspective* I refer to the mental view on a subject, and the interrelation between this subject and its part ("Perspective," [2008]). As I use the term here, *perspective* include both a persons' attitude – the way you think and feel about someone or something – as well as his or hers understanding of that same phenomenon; understanding comprising your belief about something based on what you have heard, read, etc. Your perspective on something is a result of your attitude towards and understanding of that same matter, the overall manner in which you look at something. In other words, the politicians' perspectives of the public library are summed up by *what they know* and *what they feel* about the institution, and what direction they want it to take. It captures both their actual knowledge, and their cognitive, subjective view.

Because of its qualitative nature, I do not attempt to make statistical generalizations regarding politicians' attitudes to libraries. I have made a selection of informants, and they have given statements as representatives of their local party groups and their cities. Thus, I cannot comment on public library developments in other cities, or indeed in the three countries – that requires quite a different study. Yin (2009) distinguishes statistical generalization from analytical generalization, the latter entails that results are transferrable to other cases or populations, even though there is no statistical representativeness involved. With that distinction in mind, the perspectives being presented in this study could very well provide a basis for pointing at possible general tendencies, both at a national and international level.

1.6 Thesis structure

This dissertation is divided into nine mains chapters. This section closes the first, introductory chapter, where the objective and motivation is sought explained. Chapter two is devoted to the research design and methodology of this thesis. In addition to describing the process of collecting and analysing the data material, I account for and reflect on the choices made along the way.

Chapter three gives an account of research relevant to this project, and is included to place this project in a LIS research context. It is divided into two sections, one where I present LIS research where institutional theory is applied, the other with studies giving insight into perspectives on the public library from the non-professional field, especially important is research concerning politicians' views.

Chapter four serves describes the growth of the modern public library in Scandinavia and in England – from its beginning up till today. It focuses on the institutionalization of the public library field, emphasizing on the original mission and legitimization, the growth of common values and norms over time, and different levels of formalization and cooperation. In closing, it describes today's commonly accepted values and norms (translated into the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto), and also public library discourses – in order to give a more thorough understanding of the professional field's view of practice. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background for and a manner in which to address the first research question *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?* This chapter describes to a large extent how professional field norms developed and became what they are today. Since I am interested in discerning which norms, values politicians connect with public libraries, I find it is fruitful to look at the larger context: how the public library institution over time has developed, how it is a product of the society in which it exists, and influenced by the people who decide which direction it should take.

In order to address the question: *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?,* chapter five gives further details on the interplay between public library roles and politics. It gives an account of the different public library profiles (4.1), and how depending on argumentation they are used to legitimize culture policy in different ways (4.2). Because of the Nordic/British perspective, the next section touches upon **library models**, and whether or not is it conducive to talk about a Nordic library model. And if so, can we talk about other library models as well? This is relevant

for the third research question: *How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?*

Chapter six offers an introduction to the theoretical foundation of this thesis. I give a general account of institutional theory, and go on to explain and discuss the concepts central to this thesis, including **norms and values**, **legitimization**, **deinstitutionalization,** and **myths and recipes**. The chapter is concluded by a further elaboration of all four research questions, and some tentative hypotheses.

Chapter seven introduces to the three cases used to explore political perceptions of the public library, Oslo, Aarhus, and Birmingham. Each country and city is presented through facts and figures, and the chapter includes a description of each city and its library service, and project. Each section ends with some insights from the local library community.

Chapter eight is devoted to discerning **public library perceptions**, based on the data material. The chapter includes both a presentation of the findings from the study, and the analysis. It is divided into three main parts:

- The opening section, 8.1, is called *Public library perceptions: Policy and plans*, and is intended as a presentation of legislation and politically produced policy documents in a national and local context, included comments from the informants. The intention is twofold: For one: legislation and strategy plans provide us with the foundation of the library service in each case. This foundation needs to be shown in order to put the interview data from each case into a context. How the library service is legitimized on a national level, through legislation and policy plans is likely to affect the manner in which libraries are perceived locally. The other reason is to give a base of comparison between the cases. Are the norms and values the same at the national and local level? To which extent can the differences between the cases be related to legislation and policy documents in each case? The analysis seeks to provide an understanding how policy documents **legitimize** public libraries on a national and local level.
- The second, 8.2 called *Public library perceptions: The general* is a presentation of the informants' attitude towards and understanding of the public library in general. It gives a

14

broad picture; starting with presenting the informants' personal library experience and their sources of inspiration. It continues with perspectives on its role and operation, and ends with views on the challenges the public library service currently faces. The analysis addresses aspects such as the informants' **library norms** and uses **logic of appropriateness** to discern their image of "the appropriate library". Also, here **legitimization** is a central concept, and is used to

- The third, 8.3, I have titled *Public library perceptions: The specific*. This section presents the interview data regarding the informants' attitude towards and understanding of the library service today and the projects in their respective cities. The analysis aims at identifying project **legitimization** (including which types of instrumentality is used to justify the projects), and the **myths** and **organizational recipes**, which makes organizations resemble one another.

The ninth and final chapter is an attempt at making some conclusions regarding the problem statement and the research questions. I address the research questions one by one, and use the foregoing data presentation and analysis to summarize and conclude. Since there are four research questions aimed to specify one problem statement, I find it necessary to crystallize each research question in closing, as they appear in a broader discussion in the preceding sections.

2 Research design and methodology

This project is based on a multiple case study where I have interviewed central politicians, and studied written documentation. Through the material I seek to provide an analysis where political attitudes are linked to the library development in three chosen cities. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design of this project, the choices made and which implications they bring this study, as well as the process itself. The chapters following provide a backdrop for the data analysis (8) by way of elaborating on history, central concepts, previous research, and the actual cases.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, local politicians working with library issues are a part of the wider **public library field**. Librarians also belong to a narrower, self-constituting **professional field**. Library professional will have their own set of norms and values, developed over time, spread and maintained by training, networking and common work ethics. Their motivation is likely to differ from for example politicians, who play a different role on the public library field. Addressing the history of the public library institution (3) is one component of this study. The rationale for reviewing the history of public librarianship is to show how the character of the public library has progressed with society; and to identify basic norms and values that have developed and become institutionalized over time. In other words – they have become universally accepted. Other traits are products of regional differences, for example between the Scandinavian countries or the UK, or between Norway, Denmark and the UK. These historically institutionalized norms and values constitute a background for analysing political perceptions in the three cases. I add another dimension by showing how public library discourses have developed in section 3.4. These discourses are the result of development on the professional field,

ideological and societal changes, and displays part of prevailing professional norms at different points in recent history.

Another part of the analysis base is discerning the **role** of the public library, as perceived by the informants, and of course the written policy documents. LIS researchers have discerned different aspects of the public library (4.1), a classification useful when attempting to discern both priorities and understanding of the public library. This is closely connected to how the institution is legitimized, which I attempt to construe by use of **legitimization** as a concept from institutional theory (6, 6.5.1) as well as argumentation and type of instrumentality, as described in section 4.2.

This study can be placed in a wider context of public library research – more specifically described in chapter 5 – where the three main stakeholder groups (ref Audunson) provides different access points: The users and the general public, the professional field/librarians, and the politicians and bureaucrats. I have taken a (social) constructivist approach to knowledge and knowledge-building. One key assumption made by those adopting this view, is that individual understanding is a result of the environment one reside in, and is developed through social processes in which meaning is found. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. Since the objective of this study is to investigate three cases of political perspectives on public libraries, it operates within the boundaries of the social constructivism – deriving meaning through context.

The reason for applying institutional theory to the research design is based on a the desire to investigate how values and norms connected to an institution and its field shape the perceptions of different stakeholders – and potentially create discrepancies and conflict should these stakeholders claim different viewpoints. The research questions are based on concepts such as norms, legitimacy, isomorphism and deinstitutionalization, and consequently they provide a vital part of the analysis in chapter 8.

2.1   What is knowledge and how do we know what we know?

Social epistemology seeks the social forces and influences behind knowledge production. The first use of the phrase is believed to be in the writings of library scientist, Jesse Shera, who in turn credits his associate Margaret Egan. "[S]ocial epistemology," says Shera "is the study of knowledge in society…. The focus of this discipline should be upon the production, flow, integration, and consumption of all forms of communicated thought throughout the entire social fabric"". (Shera, 1970 p. 86) While there might be little clear consensus among "followers" on what constitutes "social" and how the term "epistemology" should be defined, they can agree on how social epistemology is different from the classical epistemological approach: Rather than looking for scientifically proven truths, they want to establish what is believed – in other words – the socially institutionalized knowledge.

The objective of this project is to discern the perceptions towards the public library held by a group of politicians – the informants – who, by virtue of their role, can decide or influence the manner in which library policy is shaped. The knowledge produced through the collection of data and subsequent analysis is the result of social processes: For one, the informants' perceptions, the ideas, beliefs are the combined result of background, education, experience and social environment, be it personal or professional. The interview data are the result of the interaction between informant and interviewer, and the analysis is the outcome of my influence, my perceptions on the data material – so perhaps it is more appropriate referring to it as "data production" rather than "data collection".

2.1.1   Social constructionism

Social constructionism is perhaps most closely linked with Berger & Luckmann and their *Social Construction of Reality* (1971). Their purpose, as the title suggests, was to do a sociological analysis of the reality of everyday life. Their main thesis is that knowledge – of all kinds – is constructed through social interactions. The manners in which people interact are based upon common perceptions, which again will be reinforced as people come together. Eventually, all kinds of repeated behaviours, or mental representations, will result in common concepts – and shared knowledge.

Berger & Luckmann's argument is that all human activity is repeatable, and thus subject to habitualisation – which is the origin of any form of institutionalization. Any habitual action will be embedded in the routine of the actor and by that become part of his or her knowledge – even if there will be an element of routine and taken-for-grantedness involved. Habitualization also entails a narrowness of choice, which "opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation" (p. 71). Institutionalization is vital for constructing any type of lasting social group according to Berger & Luckmann. (1971). They defined it as "a reciprocal typification of habitualized action by types or actors" (p. 72). These habitualized actions are always common and available to all members of a group, and the institution itself will establish which actions should be performed by which actor. As they comment: *The knowledge of the criminal differs from the knowledge of the criminologist* (p. 15). Similarly, the knowledge of a librarian will differ from the knowledge of a politician – their roles are different, the institutions they belong to have different expectations of them. That does of course not mean that there is no common ground.

This view of knowledge is then context specific, which of course poses a challenge when the *common perceptions* no longer are *common*. Differences in cultural background, religion or social status are factors that could segment social groups due to lack of shared typifications and institutionalized patterns.

However, there are other factors than culture or ethnicity that form the basis of different perceptions. For instance, different professional groups might very well have very different understandings of things. What is a public library and why do we fund it? The answer to this question will obviously vary according to who you ask. Librarians have their view of the public library which they have constructed through training, work life, experience, and their cooperation with colleagues. A different group of people, for instance bureaucrats or politicians will have different views – views they have constructed through the course of their background and daily work life. It is when these different views collide that conflicts arise.

Taking a social-constructivist stance, does not entail a rejection of facts or objects. I do not regard social constructionism as a general metaphysic or a general theory of knowledge – neither do I reject rationality as a concept. In this thesis, it is the idea that **beliefs** are socially created that

forms a basis for theory, methodology and analysis. The empirical data I have collected is the result of conversations with people whose opinions I have been trying to capture. I consider their perceptions and beliefs as social constructions – the sum of their previous and current work and personal experiences. The knowledge I am trying to establish with this piece of research is also a construction, my interpretation of the material at hand. However, the interpretation is based on theories and methodology recognized in the research community, thus the end result is knowledge – "justified true belief". As far as theory goes, Berger & Luckmann's work of social constructionism has served as an inspiration and a foundation for institutionalism, and there are traces of their ideas in the different 'versions' of institutional theory existing today.

2.2 Case study research design

A case study is, according to Yin *an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*. A case study provides the researcher with an opportunity to investigate a given situation without aiming – or even trying to – control it. Yin (2009) stresses that it is an advantage to use the case study method when (p. 13) *A how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control*. This means that when I want to study politicians' attitudes towards public libraries in general and urban library projects in particular, the context and the phenomenon are inseparable. The choice of focusing on specific library projects was based on the assumption that political visions for the future urban library will be clearer when the informants can base it on their own experience and environment, and not only on libraries in general.

What constitutes a case? It can be anything from a person to a country's economy (Yin 2009). Whatever your case may be, the key is to draw the boundaries for the issue in question, as the "beginning" and "end" of a case is equally difficult to distinguish. For this study, the cases are three cities with in which public library developments are taking place. There are several reasons for picking these three cases. For one, the analytic benefits are important. The conclusions drawn from two – or three cases – will carry more weight than those from a single study. Now, the cases

can be chosen because of similarity or contrast, both reasons will make for a "stronger theoretical replication – again vastly strengthening your finding compared to those from a single case alone (Yin 2009, Eilbert & Lafronza, 2005; Hanna, 2005). For this study, I am interested to investigate to what extent the context of each case affects the perspectives given by the informants. The three cases are described in detail in chapter 7.

My interest in the urban public library is closely connected to the library situation in Oslo. Naturally, the process surrounding the development of a new main library led to the choice of Oslo as the first case. As Yin points out; (p. 61) when a second case is added to the design, the possibility of *direct replication* opens. That means a base of comparison which in turn might benefit the analysis. Whether the results from the two cases are similar or not, the effect is stronger than it would be with only one case. I added Aarhus, Denmark, both because of the similarities and the differences. Norway and Denmark share historic and linguistic roots. They are similar in terms of demographics, political systems, welfare models and public sectors. The public library systems are similar. Aarhus, like Oslo, has been planning a new main library, and now the building process has started. This, I believe, will to some extent provide a basis for direct replication between the two cases. However, the contrasts are present, and with them also the possibility of theoretical replication, when one predicts contrasting results for anticipatable reasons (ibid p. 52) The third case, Birmingham, England was added even more specifically because of its potential regarding theoretical replication, since England, although with some similarities differs clearly from Norway and Denmark, both in general areas, and when it comes to public libraries. I refer to chapter 7 for in depth descriptions.

While case study research in-depth knowledge of a given case, it will not enable statistical generalization, only analytical. Even if quantitative methods are used, the population can never be representative for anything but the case in question. Analytical generalization can be made when the results from one study is considered applicable for similar situations (Yin, 2009). This generalization requires an analysis of differences and similarities between situations, and is based on theoretical analysis and inductive argumentation. To quote Usherwood (1993): *...the results of this study will be illuminative rather than representative* (p. 9). The objective of this study is to explore three different cases, and based on that attempt, arrive at some tentative conclusions.

The cases in this project are in some ways more different than they are alike, and unsuitable for analytical generalization on several areas. However – when it comes to the informants perceptions of the library projects, I find there is potential for analytical generalization. …

The boundaries for these cases are somewhat tricky to draw. Nevertheless, it is an important element of case study design. I have asked myself: Will I study the actual libraries? Will I study the political process leading up to the current plans for the libraries? Or will I focus on the prevailing attitudes among local politicians? It is this last issue I have decided upon, however, getting the focus right is still not an easy task. I want to include document analysis in my study, in order to place politicians' views into a larger context. Then a new issue arises: How far back is it necessary, interesting, not to mention feasible to go? When did the development start for each case? The political process in Aarhus started in 2001, and developed gradually until the construction start in 2011. Birmingham's political administration changed in 2004, and some years later so did the library location. But there have been no major delays in the development other than that. For Oslo, the process had been going on for years, and the planned location for the library has changed several times. The decision to use the site at Bjørvika was made in 2008. Consequently, I have decided to focus on the projects and locations as they appear now, and not go back and look at previous plans where that is applicable. Also, because my main data source are interviews with committee members, most of whom are not familiar with previous projects.

2.3 Qualitative Research

Already in the title I announce this project to be a qualitative one, and the reason for taking that direction is first and foremost the objective of this study: I want to study the public library owners' – the politicians' – attitudes towards and understanding of the institution, their opinions of and visions for it. I also wanted to narrow it down to a specific context, namely the process in which a new library is planned and built. These are the kind of data that would be difficult to derive with a quantitative approach, where the objective generally is to test a hypothesis. Qualitative research aims at describing the nature of a phenomenon, not deciding whether or not it is universal. However, while this is an exploratory, qualitative case study, it does not limit its

relevance to the cases alone. Analytical generalization can be done when developed theories are applied on empirical data to compare the result, and then to which extent the results could illuminate the outcome of similar cases (Yin, 2009).

2.3.1 Mixed methods research

Applying mixed methods in the research naturally adds to the workload for the researcher. However, it does give the researcher much more complex empirical data, enabling him or her to address issues of a more intricate nature. Research designs applying mixed methods are very flexible, and can, if used sensibly, give a more holistic picture of a situation. Mixed method research does not in any way need to be tied to a case study; often times the case study can be part of a mixed method design. For my purpose, it seemed almost inevitable, since I am trying to draw a broad picture of three different public library settings. Interviews alone, would limit the study. A sole document analysis would have been insufficient to measure how politicians view public libraries – party programs and political plans would not suffice to address the problem at hand.

How can interviews help to address the topic at hand? (Silverman, 2007). This question is a simple one, and indeed not my own, but it needs to be asked. My point of origin was to establish how the library is perceived by its owners; those who decide and set the terms on which any public institution has to base its existence upon. It is my key interests to identify legislators' view on the public library. And, as Kvale (1996) asks: *If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them?* In his book *Inter Views*; he refers to interviews as the interchanging of views, conversations between two parties interested in the same subject matter. While I see Kvale's point, I tried not to participate in this conversation too much, and rather let the informants talk quite freely, mostly interjecting to clarify or ask for specifications.

2.3.1.1 Application

I address the research questions through document analysis and interview both – but I consider the interviews my primary data source, especially regarding some questions. The first:

- To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (UNESCO manifesto)?

I find that the interview data here is central. Although written, formal policy documents can provide important insight – especially party programs – it is the informants' insights I seek; their understanding and their attitudes.

- How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?

To adequately address this research question, it is precisely the triangulation I described that is needed. Policy documents can show where the city wants its library to go strategically, and the interview data can complement these formal data sets, by providing individual, in-depth statements from the politicians.

- How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?

Again, the primary data source is the interviews. The written documentation is also applied, but as it varies from case to case, and since my study object are the politicians' perspectives, I use the interview data as the main basis for this comparison.

- To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

This final question can, in my opinion, be discussed thoroughly only when the other research questions have been addressed. Both the interviews and the documents are important data sources. Together they are the source of discussing indications as to the overall direction

2.4 The process

In the following section, I will describe the selection process, the data collection process – with a primary focus on the interviews – and which considerations I need to take as a result.

2.4.1 Selection

In order to say something about the context in which the different public libraries are, I found it essential to include document analysis in my triangulation. Since public libraries are run by local government, but governed by nation-wide laws and regulations, thus a national responsibility too, I will include policy documents from both sources in my analysis. However, I will limit my scope to the aspects dealing with the role of and vision for public libraries.

In chapter 7, I present all the background information, including demographic data and of each country and city, details about the library structure and projects. What I find particularly relevant includes social and economic data, like population rate, unemployment rate, also local government details, in order to put each case into a local context. Also relevant, I find is information about the library service in each case: allocations, lending and visits numbers. I also present views on the library projects given by the library managers in each city, both based on articles or other written material by their own hand, or as in some cases, interviews and informal conversations.

Norway

- Public Library Act ([Folkebibliotekloven], 1985)
- Report to the Storting no. 24: *Libraries – Knowledge commons, Meeting Place and Cultural Arenas in a Digital Age* (Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, 2009)

Oslo

- Public library report: *Deichmanske bibliotek i det 21.århundre* Byrådsmelding 2005 (Oslo Kommune Byrådet, 2005)
- Discussion of the public library report: Behandling av bystyremelding *Deichmanske bibliotek i det 21. århundre* (Kultur- og utdanningskomiteen, 2005)

- Strategy plan for the culture and sports service: Strategisk plan 2007-2011 (Kultur- og idrettsetaten, 2007)

- Party programs for the period 2011-2015

England

- Public Library Act 1964 ("Public Library and Museums Act," 1964)

- Policy program: Framework for the future 2003 (Department for Culture, 2003)

Birmingham

- Big City Plan (City Centre Development, 2010)

Denmark

- Public Library Act 2000 (LOV Nr. 30 Af 17/05/2000, 2000)

Aarhus

- Policy for Citizens' Services and Libraries 2011-2014 (Aarhus Kommune, 2010)

- Party programs from Kommunalvalget 2009 (where applicable)

The informants were selected partly based on prequalification, and partly on recommendations from local stakeholders. The initial plan was to interview quite comprehensively all the members of the committee in each city dealing with library issues – usually a standing culture committee or similar. My idea was that a broad range of interviews would give me an equally broad idea of the political sentiment towards the library in each case. I also planned to consult people from the library sector on who it would be advisable to interview. In Aarhus and Birmingham I also decided to add to my understanding of the projects by talking to project managers and/or librarians.

Naturally, there are differences in administration and organization in each case. In Oslo, the culture committee is quite big, with 11 members, including chairman and deputy chairman. There are members from all seven parties represented in the city council, and the committee has a representative distribution. In Aarhus, the Cultural Committee consists of seven members, from five parties, distributed representatively. In Birmingham, the area of Leisure, Sport and Culture has its own responsible Cabinet Member. In addition, there is an Overview and Scrutiny

committee, consisting of five councillors not in the Executive, which role it is to hold Cabinet members accountable for decision and policy making and policy. These politicians have been and are involved in the projects to a varying degree. Some have been working with library or cultural issues – including the library projects – for years, while others have less experience. The extents to which the political committees are involved in the actual projects vary. Their most decisive role as far as the projects are concerned is of course when deciding upon the realization of the new libraries – making them politically possible. The more detailed project work, for instance with regards to content, and planning and implementation is done by project groups, consisting of librarians and other professional staff. The politicians are, however, going on study trips nationally and internationally, to familiarize themselves with other library projects.

Due to practical reasons it was difficult to collect data one case at a time. I started with Oslo, then went to Aarhus to do a round of interview, did the rest in Oslo, went to England to interview Birmingham politicians, and finished with an interview in Aarhus early 2011. I was advised by people in the library management to talk to specific people in the local government, and this was more efficient, although still not uncomplicated. Busy schedules did not allow time for this type of activity, but in the end I had managed to at least talk to people from the most important party groups in each city.

When recruiting informants in other countries than your own, the challenge is bigger. Not only are there barriers of distance and logistics, but also there is the disadvantage of coming from an unknown or little known institution, and your request is only one of many. I chose to both contact the potential informants directly, as well as using acquaintances in the library community to better my chances of securing sufficient interviews. This proved especially challenging in England. Eventually, I managed to talk to representatives from all parties, but could not get an interview with the Council Leader, who's also very much involved in the library project. As others have noted (Allen, Wilson, & Audunson, 1999; Fox, 2005; Pearce, 2003) getting potential informants to participate is a big challenge, whether it is to fill out a form or give an in-depth interview. There are many factors which can explain this, but busy schedules, a challenging time (financial crisis and budget cuts), or little knowledge on the matter. One of the head librarians in Birmingham explained that they too had difficulties gaining access to their council members, and

that the amount of contact between politicians and professionals varied greatly depending on the person elected. And as Fox point out (2005, p. 22):

> *…under the Cabinet system in local government, one council member may be responsible for managing a huge portfolio, of which libraries are only a very minor component. In some cases, this may raise questions about how much time and attention can be devoted to library matters.*

Before each interview I sent out a memo explaining what type of research I was doing, the course of the interview, and gave the informant some broad headlines of what the interview would contain. I chose not to send out the interview guide, because I wanted a fresh view from the informants – but I did not want to "surprise" them either. The degree in which they had prepared themselves varied, of course. All the interviews were taped, with the informants' consent, and later transcribed by me. Confidentiality is always an issue, and it was offered the informants from the start. Although in small committees, when party affiliation is given, it is possible to trace the politicians participating in this study. However, this is a study where the informants participate by virtue of being politicians, and they will conceivably make public their opinions on this subject at any given time. Neither is this – at least not in a very obvious sense – a delicate matter, although there have been a lot of debate about especially the locations and the realizations of these library plans. I offered the informants anonymity, and explained how the interview data would be kept and destructed once the project came to an end. None objected to the manner in this was handled. Below is a table presenting the informants, and I have included their roles, their party affiliation, as well as fictitious names. The alias given to the informants are based on their city affiliation, with the first letter corresponding to that of their hometown – in order to make it easier to understand where they come from throughout the analysis[4].

Name	Role	City	Party[5]
Oswald	Councillor	Oslo	Høyre (H): *Conservative Party*
Olivia	CM (Council member)	Oslo	Fremskrittspartiet: FrP

---

[4] The abbreviation used in the text appears in parenthesis.
[5] Political orientation indicated in bold italics

			Liberalistic popular
Oscar	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV)** *Socialist*
Olav	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Venstre (VN):** *Liberalistic*
Omer	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Arbeiderpartiet (DNA)** *Social-democratic*
Ophelia	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Høyre (H)** *Conservative*
Oliver	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Kristelig folkeparti (KrF):** *Christian Democratic*
Orson	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Arbeiderpartiet (DNA)** *Social-democratic*
Aron	**CM**	**Aarhus**	**Venstre (VDK):** *Liberalistic*
Alex	**Alderman**	**Aarhus**	**Det Konservative Folkeparti (K)** *Conservative*
Albert	**CM**	**Aarhus**	**Socialdemokraterne (S):** *Social-democratic*
Bernard	**Cllr**	**Birmingham**	**Conservative**
Barry	**Cabinet Member**	**Birmingham**	**Liberal Democrats (LD)** *Social liberal*
Baird	**Cllr**	**Birmingham**	**Liberal Democrats (LD)** *Social liberal*
Bob	**Cllr**	**Birmingham**	**Labour (L)**

2.4.2   Considerations

In retrospect there are of course aspects I could have handled differently. For instance with regards to data collection, I could have use e-mail or telephone, although I suspect it would not necessarily be easier to recruit. An e-mail is easily ignored, and a telephone interview has to be scheduled the same way a face-to-face-interview.

Another issue has been recruitment and number of respondents. How many interview subjects are enough? In a qualitative study, this is of course a matter of debate. Since there is not aim of generating significant result in the statistical sense, there is no requirement of minimum sample size. Some (ref) say that you have filled you quota when new informants do not offer any new information and repeats what others have said before them. I am very aware that the number of

informants varies from each case, but I still think that there is ample material to interpret, and there is still enough empirical data for valid conclusions to be made. A higher number would have been preferable, but for practical reasons this was not possible. Consequently, there are aspects this study might miss. The main weak point of a small sample is that the range of perceptions becomes narrower; a larger sample would certainly add to the data material. Since I was unable to talk to more of the committee members in Aarhus and Birmingham, I have no way of knowing whether or not there are central perceptions missing from those cases.

However, when I compare the cases, I believe to have captured most of the central perceptions, since the views expressed by the Oslo informants (the largest sample) are not very different from those recorded in Aarhus and Birmingham. As an extension of this, there is a clear limitation to the *political perceptions* I refer to in the title – I have been given insight into some, but perhaps not the full range. As stated before, there are differences in committee size and political organization in the three cities.

Early on I chose to talk to politicians directly involved with cultural issues in the local governments. In retrospect, I realize it could have added to my data if I had talked to politicians involved with city planning, education or other related policy areas. One of the topics I address in the interviews is precisely the relation between the library policy and city planning, and by and large there is broad agreement that indeed there is a strong connection between these two policy areas.

I did not ask the members to reflect upon their role in relation to the library. In retrospect, this could have added a valuable aspect. The informants stressed - to a large degree - that it was not "their place" to decide on details and content. They considered that the librarians, as specialists and professionals, should be in charge of that. Some mentioned their role as elected members as responsible for more overall policy guidelines, presented in policy documents. Neither did I ask them specifically to reflect on the role of the librarian, although many did. While my exploration is of politicians' library perceptions, not about the professional role of librarians, I could have added to the material with more probing concerning this topic.

As far as the document analysis is concerned, there are clearly aspects in need of consideration. Especially, I would like to point to the varying extent of written policy documents. While the Oslo case provided ample documentation as far as party programs were concerned, this was partly available in Aarhus and not in Birmingham. When contacted, those who did not have a specific program, or did not mention public libraries in it, referred me to the national party programs instead. These would also provide a sound basis in my opinion – but none mentioned public libraries. The absence of such policy guidelines is in itself a finding; however it does not necessarily mean anything other than different traditions for written documentation. Regardless of the cause, however, I do realize that this shortcoming give an uneven basis for each case. At the same time, I find it gives each case a distinct profile and contributes to the analysis of the library's place in the politicians' mind-set.

I mentioned the potential for analytical generalization (1.5, 2.3), and I have no doubt that although limited, the result from this study might have relevance beyond these three cases. However, one aspect that might restrict this analytical generalization is the very reason they were interesting to me in the first place: the library projects. The influence of these projects on the politicians has potentially been substantial, and that should be considered when looking at political perspectives in cities without similar plans.

2.5 Analysis Strategy

The analysis strategy I have made themes, categories, and keywords, grouping statements ad trying to find connections and patterns in the material at hand. I have done this, both quite old-fashioned with a pen and bits of paper, but I have also utilized a more sophisticated tool, Nvivo, a program designed for organizing qualitative data. In addition to assigning nodes, keywords, it is also possible to relate them to one another. Analysing qualitative data is a process in which you as a researcher read your material closely, to find patterns, to find relations between concepts and ideas. Nvivo has been a helpful tool in the structuring process.

As already stated, it is institutional theory which forms the basis of my analysis. In the previous chapter, I outlined the main concepts on which I will focus on when I look at the empirical data. I

have taken each concept and operationalized it to apply to the topic at hand, and referring to the research questions as they are connected to each concept. How can I find traces of deinstitutionalization in the data material? In what ways do politicians legitimize the library and the library projects they are responsible for? To what extent do field-specific norms and values correspond with those expressed by the informants?

2.5.1 Norms, values, rules

To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?

Chapter 3 is intended as brief description of what cause the institutionalization of public libraries, as well as an historical outlook on the normative basis of the institution. In section 3.3, I use the UNESCO manifesto to describe generally agreed upon missions for the public library today, originating from the professional field. Behind these missions lie a set of overriding values; freedom, development and prosperity. The public library discourses in 3.5 are included to give a broader understanding of how libraries are changing and evolving through the development and debates on the professional field.

In section 4.2, I tried to show the consistency between field norms and political instrumentality by connecting the manifesto and Vestheim's figure (2009) showing a model of the instrumentality behind culture policy, and the argumentation supporting it. The connection between them is quite clear, which might be related to the fact that public libraries have a wide spectre of roles, for example how it is expressed by Andersson & Skot-Hansen (1994) and Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen & Skot-Hansen, ([2010]). The exception might be the aspect of economy, which is given little emphasize by the library community, but might be a much more important impetus for politicians. However, a term like inspiration can easily be associated with innovation and creation, which in turn are important factors in any economic respect. And while promoting education certainly is important for the individual, it is also of societal interest that people improve their situation and contribute to society as employers or employees – and the library is clearly a facilitator for education, regardless of the argument behind it.

And, as I also tried showing in 4.2 – there is a connection between the values, norms and missions on the public library field – exemplified by those taken from the UNESCO public library Manifesto (1994)

Norms, values, and rules are addressed on a theoretical level in chapter 6.4. The field specific norms and values- which have developed over decades and decades are addressed in chapter 3.3. To elicit which norms and values that the informants connect with the institution, On the one hand, I have concentrated on topics where my informants express opinions that concern these public library basic values:

- Freedom of speech/expression
- Democratic right to information and education
- Right to access culture
- Principle of free use/access

Research done by D'Elia (D'Elia, 1993; D'Elia & Rodger, 1994), Audunson (1999, 2001), Usherwood (1993), and Hedemark (2009) suggest that perceptions held by law-makers, councillors, media or the general public will at least to some extent vary from what librarians themselves believe. The library discourses identified by Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen (further described in section 3.4) help add to this framework of norms and perceptions from the professional community. The final aspect that makes up this framework is Anderson & Skot-Hansen's (1994) public library profiles: The information centre, the knowledge centre, the social centre, and the culture centre. When discussing the role of the public library in society, these profiles will help discern where the politicians place the public library today. Combined, these perspectives will be very useful when addressing the first research question:

2.5.2 Legitimization

What legitimizes public libraries? Legitimacy and institutionalization are concepts closely linked (Jepperson, 1991). Meyer & Scott understand legitimacy as *the degree of cultural support for an organization – the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provides explanations for its existence* (1991 p. 201). Although historically it has shifted, the main legitimization general education has been relatively stable since the time around WWII. However many question the vision for public libraries, what aspects of it are important – and why do we

continue to fund it over city budgets? Institutional theory provides three main types of legitimacy pragmatic, moral and cognitive (Suchman, 1995), each providing a different access point to the concept, and is incorporated in the analysis strategy:

- the library is legitimized through formal channels (legislation, plans)
- the library is legitimized by the informants
- what kind of legitimacy can be traced, using these channels (moral, cognitive, pragmatic)

I have tried to discern how my informants legitimize the public library in their city by asking questions regarding

- Their political goal/visions public libraries
- Why they want to build a new library
- Why it is a public task to fund it

To further explore the manner in which public libraries are legitimized, I use Vestheim's work on political argumentation and instrumentality (see section 4.2) to try and explain how public library policy is justified and explained.

I have formulated a research question which distinctly addresses the issue of legitimization, and as an extension of that: which argumentation is used, and to further explore the possibility of different library models:

How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?

2.5.3   Trends and myths

How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?

Trends and myths are described more closely in 6.5.2, and deals with how organizations often are similar, regardless of geography and field. This is because "recipes" emerge and travel between organizational entities, making them more and more alike. Using this perspective, I would like to try and find in which areas the informants are in accordance with one another – which "library recipes" have they adopted, and what seem to be the prevailing idea for library development in each case?

While field external or internal trend might prove to be influential for these cases, it might be that the differences are of such a fundamental nature that it is meaningful to talk of different library models (4.3), closely tied to each country's socio-economic profile. This resulted in the research question:

2.5.4 Deinstitutionalisation

The phenomenon *deinstitutionalization* (further described in section 6.6) is usually a result of environmental changes – more often than not the cause will be external. Oliver (1992) highlights three main sources of pressure working against institutionalization; functional (f.i. technological developments); political (f.i. change in government, legislation); or social

- Legislation
- Technology
- Demography
- Economy
- Government

Based on the material at hand, I will try and discern to what extent the perspectives and plans for the libraries might indicate a confirmation of the public library and it norms and values, or if in fact it is relevant to discuss deinstitutionalization. As worded in the fourth research question:

To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

2.6 Summing up

In this chapter I have laid out the research strategy, described the research design, and argued for the choices I have made – with the clear realization that other options would have been possible. I have tried to account for the process of collecting data, and also the analysis process, taking into account the theoretical approach and how I have applied it to the material. In the next chapter, I give an account of public library history. I do this as the first step in building the analysis

framework of which the institutionalization of public library norms and values is a central component. Institutionalization happens only with time, and it is this gradual development that has helped build the institution we know today. Also, the next chapter introduces some of the universal library values and norms this development has resulted in, and section 3.4 goes into further detail on how the professional field has developed different library discourses as a result of internal debate and evolvement as well as shifts in the external environment.

[T]he Present is the living sum-total of the whole Past.
Thomas Carlyle (*Characteristics*)

3   On the Public Library – then and now

As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis deals with current political views. Still, I see the need for a brief glance at the past. Since the public library is a political creation, it is relevant to observe what the creators were motivated by, and to look at the changes and development the institution has undergone, especially in the 20th century. This chapter is intended both as an historical introduction to the topic, and an overview of how the public library field became institutionalized[6]. Also, it is relevant for the analysis of the data material, as norms, values and legitimization are created and shaped over time. Since the development of British and Nordic public libraries is closely linked to that in North America, I also include the USA in this account. In addition, I present what we now consider being central public library values and principles, and point at cooperation that has developed internationally in order to show what the public library field constitutes today. The chapter ends with a different, and more recent historic look at public library development, namely through library discourses in the professional field, as Jochumsen &Hvenegaard Rasmussen have observed (2006)

3.1   The Anglo-American Way

The public library is, contrary to other types of libraries, a relatively recent invention – a child of modernity so to speak. It refers to the *new* tradition of libraries; open to the entire public, and not reserved for a select few. From the start, there was a political motivation and instrumentality behind them, in terms of a desire to educate the masses, retain social control, promote integration, and disseminate national culture and tradition – to name some. The phrase *modern public library*

---

[6] A term described in further detail in section 6.1.

implies that there was a distinct separate predecessor. This is not actually the case. However, we can find pre-modern ancestors in reading societies and private libraries from 1700s. The early public library services was low-scale, did not follow any kind of standardization, thus varying greatly in quality and extensiveness. In the following I will give a brief account of the developments in England and USA, which were if not parallel, than at least quite similar both in timing and style, and how the field gradually became institutionalized. The main focus is on England, but since the inspiration so clearly comes from the USA, some aspects of the growth there is also included.

Boston public library is considered the first in the United States, and it was there the first policy initiatives were made. In 1852, public library employees asked the city council for tax financing of the library, arguing its important educational role, and describing it as the *crowning glory of our system of City schools*. The main objective with this establishment was to integrate the US immigrants – who at this point in history were many – to American society and familiarize them with language and culture, as well as being an educational institution for the common man (Jones, 1999). Harris & Gerard (M. H. Harris & Spiegler, 1974) observe that there was also a clear authoritarian trend behind the early establishment of public libraries in the US, in which social control was an important motivation for the creators.

In 1876, the American Library Association was formed, making it the oldest library association in the world. Behind it was a group of zealous library promoters, who in the first resolution declared that it was the aim of the ALA to enable librarians *to do their present work more easily and at less expense* ((ALA), [200?]). This mission statement shows how the scientific management trend that controlled trade and industry at that time also influenced how library operations were made increasingly efficient and standardized – for instance through the development of the DDC-system.

By the turn of the 19th century, the USA was the world leading in public library development. The "American Way" for libraries included making material public by way of **common availability**, through open shelves, study spaces, and even children's services, to name some

examples. These ideas travelled overseas, mainly brought by students or interns who got their training in the US and returned with revolutionary ideas of public librarianship.

In the UK, the first libraries open to the learned public – not synonymous to the actual public – in the 17th century[7]. But it was the library act of 1850 that marked the change, according to Black (1996); it was at that time public libraries truly earned their name. This is the period from which it makes sense to see a starting point for an institution built mainly on ideals from the period of Enlightenment, that knowledge and education should not remain for a select few but ideally be obtainable for everyone (Uzgalis, 2007), current goals from political authorities, and the needs and wants of the population. Prior to the 1850 Act, access to books for the "common public" was very limited. There were libraries, or book collections, open to workers, but these – although perhaps free – cannot be termed public, as they required some sort of attachment to an organization. Libraries were no novelty, but providing the common man with reading material for learning had never been perceived as a public task. What created this change?

Black (1996) states that municipal public libraries were, by their "owners", intended to be one (of several) means to help secure social stability, or, "civilization" as some put it. He quotes the Oxford Dictionary from 1893, which defines making civil as "ensuring a "well-ordered, orderly, well-governed society…"". The upper classes wanted to influence how workers spent their leisure time, and a public library service was one of several strategies to make sure workers' spent their free time well, instead of loitering or drinking. One reason was naturally economical – to sustain and increase productivity – but there was a general sentiment that libraries would also benefit the workers themselves, by providing an educational and cultural pastime (Lerner, 2009). Hence, libraries were not solely a means of knowledge dissemination and the answer to demands of education; they were also indirectly promoting economic progress; not to mention clearly intended as control instruments – through a public, free service the authorities could regulate what kind of reading material library patrons could access. Especially was this the case during wartime. Black (2000) explains how British public libraries during WWI served as information points, providing necessary information to the public, as well as anti-German propaganda.

---

[7] Like Chethams p.l., claiming to be the oldest in the English speaking world Chetham's Library. (2010). Welcome to Chetham's Library. Retrieved January 14, 2010, from http://www.chethams.org.uk/index.htm

Overseas, American libraries had an even stronger role as government tools for disseminating propaganda. The neutral and bias-free library we idealize today was not a result of war, but rather an outcome of peace.

The 1850 act was quite limited, both in terms of extensiveness – it only applied to boroughs with more than 10,000 inhabitants – and financing. Both the penny rate and the requirement of a two third consent of local rate payers hampered the development of public libraries. Nonetheless, by 1900 close to 300 units were established all over Britain. Several amendments were made to the 1850 act, but it was not until 1919 that the limitations present in the 1850 act were removed, and the extensiveness originally intended could be realized. The tradition for philanthropy in Britain's public library service certainly contributed to this growth. Most known for this is American Andrew Carnegie, who contributed to the establishment of more than 380 libraries in the UK only. Private donations to libraries were at one point quite widespread, both in the UK, the US. Today the amount of philanthropy, private donations and such is close to non-existing is still quite common in the US. Carnegie and Rockefeller are two well-known names, whom without, the British and American library network would perhaps not be as widespread as it is today – and their benevolence is still very visible through library buildings in the English-speaking world.

However substantial progress made at the turn of the century, it was not until after 1945 that public libraries really started to gain ground in the western world in general. As Europe shook the destruction and despair of WWII, there was a strong political focus on education, welfare progress, and nationalism – to stem any influence from the Soviet Union. In England, the period 1965-1975 is called *the golden decade* [for public libraries].

The library network did not only grow in terms of service points, but also in terms of provisions and cooperation. Notably, McColvin (1953) brings up the inter-lending of books. He states: *This interlibrary lending system has gone far towards giving truth to the boast that there is available "any book for any man anywhere"* (p. 524). He also mentions library services for prisons and hospitals, which he notes *have been given much attention in recent years*. This shows how library services became increasingly taken for granted, and with that, considered a citizen's right. Another debated issue is the cooperation between school libraries and children's departments in

public libraries, as an extension of *how far the public library should engage in extension work* (526). As he sums up the public library service in Britain, McColvin notes that there were then ten schools of librarianship, and also salaries are regulated by nationally negotiated scales.

The Library Association was formed in 1877 and received its Royal Charter, which permitted it to award professional (Chartered) status to members, in 1898. In 1963, it became a registered charity in 1963 and was awarded a supplemental Royal Charter in 1986. Its aim was then to *represent and act as the professional body for persons working in or interested in library and information services*. Those professionals who did not belong to the public library sector, but worked with scientific and technological research saw the need for a more specialized body to meet their needs, as the LA was mainly "for" public libraries and professionals. Thus, in 1958, the Institute of Information Scientists were formed, to *promote and maintain high standards in scientific and technical information work and to establish qualifications for those engaged in the profession*. ((CILIP), [2010]). In 2002, these two professional groups merged, and became the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, or CILIP, for short.

As economic crisis hit, and market power became a much stronger political influence in the eighties, deregulation of state power was a trend all over Europe. As a result, expenditure on public service went down, and with it, the expansion of public library services. Of course, recessions are followed by periods of growth, but in England there has since then not been growth in public service expenditure, other than keeping up with inflation (Moore, 2004).

One important legislation effort came in the 1970 with the Public Lending Right Act of 1979, which ended the serious dispute between writers and authorities on compensation. Modifications has been done since then, but in 2010 the DCMS announced that *total funding for the Public Lending Right (PLR) will be reduced over the Spending Review period, this will be limited to 15 per cent in real terms and the fund will continue to be ring fenced*. The announcement also included that *due to the financial climate at this time the extension of PLR to audio books and e-books will not proceed at this time*.

In 2002, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) were established, and the cooperation between these three sectors made a model other countries followed. This did not last, in 2011, the responsibilities of the Council are to be transferred to the Arts Council England, after 2010's Spending Review. This is not the only government body being affected, *a number of our public bodies are set to be merged, abolished or streamlined* (Department for Culture, 2010).

All these, any numerous other developments contributed to the public library service in Britain as we now know. From a modest start, today's public libraries are regulated through different types of legislation, and the professional organizations are working for the continued development of librarianship. Recent developments, such as the MLA disorganization are part of a trend where the more narrow government bodies of the past are replaced with larger organizations with a wider responsibility. Whether or not this benefits or impedes the public library sector remains to be seen, but it does suggest that the process of institutionalization, which has been going on from 1850 has some to a final stop.

What we can make of the public library development in the USA and Britain is that the motivation was double – and almost paradoxical. On the one hand, idealists wanted public enlightenment for people's personal growth and because knowledge was a necessity in a democratic society. On the other hand, there were also elements of control connected to the library service – politicians and civil servants alike were aware that the library could be used as a tool to control the masses. *Librarians are cheaper than police*, a conservative politician declared after the first library act had been passed in the UK (Greenhalgh, Worpole, & Landry, 1995).

The public enlightenment ideal, however, was probably the strongest influence, on both sides of the Atlantic. *The history of the public library movement is a history of nineteenth-century political and ethical philosophy drawn from the tradition of Enlightenment* (Greenhalgh, et al., 1995). This included peoples' right to better themselves; and reduced inequality and social conflict, Greenhalgh, Worpole & Landry state. This ideal was, however, criticized strongly in the 1960s and 70s, and considered elitist and backwards. In the post-modern, western society the idea of using public libraries for social control or to make the masses civil seemed foreign. Instead, librarians focused on user needs and demands, and their role as educators was gradually

replaces by that of a guide, an intermediary and a service provider. Today, we find this trend particularly in innovations like the UK Idea Stores.

3.2   Denmark, Norway and the public library

In this part, I will show how the public library service developed in Scandinavia, mainly Denmark and Norway, and how the Anglo-American movement served as an inspiration – in short: how the public library field gradually became institutionalized. Although separate movements gave the development here distinctive features in each country, the overall impression is one of simultaneousness and common progress.

In Scandinavia, the forerunner of the public library was the private lending libraries, or reading societies, which became increasingly popular in the 18th century. These constellations were mainly for the city bourgeoisie. But clergymen and teachers occasionally took it upon themselves to subject farmers to book-learning.

But reading societies did not suffice – and the change came with American inspiration and local executors. At the turn of the 19th century the development of the public library service in Scandinavia was of such a bold nature that researchers (Byberg & Frisvold, 2001) have described it as a library revolution. At the head of this transformation was library nestor, Haakon Nyhuus- He trained as a librarian in Chicago and returned to Oslo with ideas and perspectives quite radical for his day: open shelves, better access for the public, more branch libraries and introduction of the DDC system (Ringdal, 1985; Vestheim, 1997). One important factor for the political interest in public libraries was the widespread Norwegian nationalism at this point in time. While American authorities wanted to integrate immigrants, the Norwegian government, wanting independence from Sweden, sought out manners in which to spread national pride and values. Having a public library network would clearly be helpful in order to spread knowledge and culture. As Nordic library development really started to unfold, in this period, Norway was a leading nation within public library development, and served as an inspiration for its Scandinavian neighbours, much owing to Nyhuus and his contemporaries.

In Denmark, as in Norway, and Sweden, Danish libraries and book collections in the 19th century were few and randomly established, usually owing to solicitous clergymen or teachers. Emerek quotes library historian Hvenegaard Lassen, who concludes that the Anglo-Saxon influences brought to Denmark by Danish library pioneers did set a new scene for a more professionalized, systemized and purposeful public library. This influence also served as a counterbalance to the widespread Grundtvigian[8] idea of oral learning being preferable to book learning. Emerek does not, however, find the Anglo-American and English influences sufficient to explain the development of the Scandinavian public libraries. The difference between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian library tradition comes across in several manners. For one, the more instrumental view of libraries is evident in the North American tradition, while the Danish tradition is rooted in stabile, continental ideas of education and enlightenment, according to Emerek (2001, p. 93). The instrumental rationality of American libraries in those early days shone through in Library Association's motto *the best books for the highest amount of readers for the lowest possible cost**. It reflects a rational, almost scientific management-like attitude, which at the time encompassed practical result, like standardization of classification and cataloguing – ex DDC – which was also widely adopted by Scandinavian librarians with a US-education.

In Scandinavia, library legislation came subsequently. Denmark was the first country to formalize national responsibility; its library act was passed in 1923, and the other countries followed. Norway, which had with the 1902 library reform been something of a role model when it came to library development, did not pass a library act till 1935. This act came at a crucial time, the recession made libraries country wide vulnerable to cuts. The preamble in the 1935 Act stated that libraries should (my translation): *work for enlightenment of the people by lending books*. In 1971 the same preamble had been adjusted to *The public libraries' task is to promote education and other cultural activity by placing books and other relevant material at the free disposal of everyone inhabiting the country*. As Vestheim points out, it was not just the wording that differed quite observably from the previous preamble. The content gave public libraries a much broader activity field, the media was no longer limited to books, and the target group "specified to "all

---

[8] Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig was a Danish priest, writer, philosopher, poet and politician. He was the founder of the informal college education "folkehøgskole" based on a principal of oral communication and equal interaction between student and teacher. The idea of book learning was thus considered of less value than that of oral delivery and recipication.

inhabiting the country". Moreover, the principle of free use was established in this article, which clearly marked the formalization of a long-time practice. The library act of 1971, gave a considerable boost to the public library sector (Frisvold, 1998), and it also marked a new era for Norwegian public libraries. The existence of Norwegian libraries have, since the turn of the 19th century, been an institution balancing between enlightenment based on a set of established, national values, both with the goal of stemming social rebellion and unrest, as well as the opposite, as a liberating factor originating in political movements (especially the Labour organizations, farmers' associations and so forth) (Greve, 1997). The current library act is from 1985.

The Norwegian Library Association was established in 1913, at a time when the Norwegian public library sector was in rapid development. This was – and still is – *a non-profit, independent organization aiming to promote and develop library and information services* (NBF). Statens bibliotektilsyn – was established in 1949. A separate directorate for library matters, it was in practice a continuation of the former library division in the Church ministry, another step in the direction of strengthening the field. In 1969, Riksbibliotektjenesten was formed. While Statens bibliotektilsyn was an agency mostly dealing with public library matters, special libraries and libraries in colleges, universities or had not had the same organizational "back-up". Riksbibliotektjenesten then became the second of two halves, forming an organizational basis for all types of libraries, and it is fair to say that at this point in time, the Norwegian public library service was fully consolidated, with government bodies, librarianship training program, independent interest organizations. In 1999, (Kulturdepartementet, 1999) a report to the Storting suggested a new type of organization of the library, archive and museum sectors. This resulted in the ABM/ALM development organization in 2003. Inspiration came from the UK, where the same process already was in motion. Seven years later, however, the Norwegian ALM was "deconstructed" (Kulturdepartementet, 2010), and the different responsibility fields were divided between different actors. Currently, the National Library of Norway is the responsible body for public libraries.

The Danish Library association was formed in 1905, and has since then been trying to promote libraries' interests on the political arena. In 1918 the country founded its first librarianship

program, a college-level education which later became the current university level Royal School of Library and Information Science, governed by a separate Act[9]. The Danish library act of 1964 was important for the development of a broader material selection, introducing audio-visual content (Dyrbye p. 238). This act also served as a source of inspiration for the Norwegian library act of 1971, in which the *gratisprinsippet (free of charge*-principle *)[10]* was thoroughly established, applying to all material types.

As for Britain, the development of Scandinavian public libraries really shot ahead after WWII, as a part of the developing welfare states. In Scandinavia, the welfare state was a major political goal, and the public libraries became part of this development, which in turn led to their growth, both in numbers and in budgets. Up until this point the library's role had been clearly defined, but as countries began a quite intensive industrialization, the idea of recreational reading became much more accepted in this period, as people had much more leisure time, and needed diversions. Dyrbye (2008) examines how the relations between the British and Danish public library movements developed and grew closer after WWII. It was after this point that the two countries became "cultural allies". There was a common interest in the "modern" concept of culture, in which book provision alone was insufficient. British and Danish librarians looked to each other for inspiration, in areas such as mobile libraries, outreach work, and media selection.

Swedish library historian Magnus Torstensson has looked at why the public library service was founded in the first place. On the one hand, *macro-structural aspects* facilitated their creation and growth: Societies' structures were changing; industrialization created a new, more demanding working class, urbanization and new social problems; political ideals stemming from the era of Enlightenment gave a new sense of common rights to education. The idea of common suffrage was no longer unheard of. Also, authorities wanted to control these potentially rioting masses and education and learning was a less obtrusive way of doing that than using force. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the *individual actors*, operating on the micro level with their own agendas. As Torstensson points out (2001a), it is very challenging to offer an analysis in which

---

[9] http://www.iva.dk/media/196153/lov_uk.pdf
[10] *Free of charge*-principle, meaning that there is no membership fee or charges for borrowing library material.

these two aspects are assessed respectively for their impact on public library development: to which extent has it been a process dependent on individuals or structures?

Emerek (2001) addresses a similar issue, namely *how* it was possible for the library pioneers to get the support they needed for their project. There are the historical context, the societal conditions at the time, which includes industrialism, urbanization, and the growth of both state government and the working class. They are a part of the explanation of the institutionalization of the public library as well as written culture, and also the professionalization of library work; that is the dissemination of knowledge necessary to sustain a stable, modern society (p.89). The time was also a factor determining which traditions that influenced this modern institution. On the one hand, the ideas originating reason and self-determination from Enlightenment, was vital. Contrary to the multitude of fractions in the USA, the European countries were much more homogenous – especially in Scandinavia – which was reflected in how libraries operated for a long period. On the other hand, the Anglo-American influence of efficiency and rational operation. Emerek concludes by pointing to the legitimacy among the population, which

Throughout the 20th century, as public libraries have developed in these countries, certain common traits have manifested themselves; Public libraries are intended for the **general public**, as an institution providing both **knowledge/enlightenment**, as well as **leisure pursuits**. People should have **easy access**, and librarians should **actively promote and impart** the content of the collections. Last, but not least, public libraries are **free of charge**. The same way that the formal consolidation of the field has taken time, so has the development of these notions.

As the previous account has shown – there has been an affinity between public libraries in the Nordic countries/Scandinavia, Britain and the USA since the outset. Informal Nordic interaction on the public library field has been going on since the likes of Haakon Nyhuus (ref) and Andreas Schack Steenberg lived and worked. Because of few language barriers and similar development processes – not to mention cultural and historical ties – Nordic cooperation has been widespread in many fields. Today we can see it manifested for instance in The Nordic Council – which is devoted to cultural cooperation, among other things. Conferences focusing on Nordic cooperation are held, and of course topic oriented conference with participants from the Nordic, European and

international library community. Nordic cooperation has also manifested itself in a journal. The Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly (SPLQ) dates back to 1968, and its explicit aim is to: *introduce current tendencies and strategies in Scandinavian libraries to the English-speaking world and create a forum for interesting and constructive dialogue* ((SPQL)). The journal is a product of public library authority collaboration in the Nordic countries. A formalized cooperation between the Scandinavian countries and the UK was made through The Anglo-Scandinavian Public Library Conference. Initiators were British Lionel Roy McColvin and Swedish Bengt Hjelmquist, and the conference was held every third year, starting 1953 (Wedgeworth, c.1993). It ended it 2003 due to lack of financial backing. However a similar conference has been established

3.3 Public library values and mission

Audunson points out (2005), public library values have developed through an historical process. Despite the fact that differences in opinion and ideology have settled, and conflicts have risen within and outside the sector, the main role of the library, he states, have been to make available knowledge and culture to the public. He claims that libraries contribute to prevent knowledge from being a product sold on a market – which it de facto is, through different media types. UNESCO's (1994) public library manifesto lists three basic human and societal values at the core of the public library mission:

- Freedom
- Prosperity
- Development

As the previous two sections showed – this was not always the political motive: Authorities using libraries for social control or disseminating wartime propaganda are also a part of the institution's political history. But today, these values are constitutive for the type of society we strive after, and in that sense axiomatic: they are generally accepted and taken for granted. In order to translate these values into norms and actions, people need to be informed and able to act their part as citizens in democratic societies. *Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to*

knowledge, thought, culture and information, the manifesto states, and goes on to emphasize the public library's role as local promoters of education, culture and information. One of the best known characteristics of the public library today is that the access comes free of charge. This is closely linked to the idea of equal access to information. The manifesto supports this, along with the idea of national library networks – access for all is not only about costs, but also about physical accessibility.

The points listed in the mission statement conceptualize the public library's activity range, and are also translatable to delimited policy areas. For example: Within an area such as **educational policy** are not only children and young people essential groups, but even adults and seniors for the purpose of lifelong learning. Here, the following points carry relevance:

- supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
- scientific achievements and innovations;
- creating and strengthening reading habits in children at an early age;
- stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
- facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills;
- supporting and participating in literacy activities and programs for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary

Then there are social policies promoting **integration and cross-cultural understanding**, where interpersonal communication is an overriding element. Can public libraries foster this type of activity and dialogue? Being an accessible and undemanding place, the public library at least has the potential of being an arena promoting such policy goals. The manifesto lists the following key missions:

- promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts,
- fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;
- supporting the oral tradition;

The public library has from the beginning been essential in **cultural policy**; by distributing and promoting cultural expression, earlier mainly through literary sources, but today using a range of media and forms of expression. The manifesto lists the following key missions:

- providing opportunities for personal creative development;

- providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;

Another aspect of the library mission is entertain an **information agency capacity**, where local and central government and organizations can supply their material, and citizens can get their information needs met. UNESCO:

- ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
- providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;

These missions I find closely connected to the **public library roles** I describe in section 4.1, and section 4.2, where the topic turns to **culture and library policy**, I will refer to these points more specifically to underline the different argumentations and motivations behind political action. This will in turn enable me to analyse the data material within a framework where the interrelation between professional field norms and missions and political argumentation forms the basis, thus enabling me to do a more thorough discussion of *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?*

3.4 Public library discourses – then and now

As this chapter comes to an end, I would like to present a slightly different way of describing the development and changing conceptions of public libraries, adding to the notion of professional field norms. Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2006) have analysed the shifting ideas of Danish public libraries since the 1960s (Denmark), at which time the public library field was consolidated. They note that during the 60s, younger generations of librarians contributed to several important debates, creating three main discourses. The two predominating discourses concerned library provision and material; one *modern enlightenment discourse*, which revitalized pragmatic understanding of libraries', and their traditional societal role. The other, a *cultural promoter discourse*, was more future-oriented, and a advocated a more "mobile" library content, where the agents were positive to other media types in libraries, and tied them less to books alone. None of these discourses were much concerned with users, and both were "quality-oriented", in a normative sense. The third discourse dealt with a content expansion of what

constituted *quality*, which in turn led to the introduction of a *diversity discourse*. This latter
discourse continued into the next decade, where the focus on users and user needs increased.
In the 1970s the user focus got a very ideological flavour and ended up creating a very political
socialist discourse in the 1970s, which was based on the idea that public libraries are institutions
with the ability of making people aware of their situation as members of a society (p. 135) –
through all types of media.

The 1980s brought both economic crisis and expansion, and the period was marked by growth in
market liberalism and consumerism. Lyotard's thesis of *the collapse of the Grand Narratives* is
interesting in this respect; if we no longer believe in Grand Narratives as explanations for
institutional action – like for instance general education as a raison d'être for public libraries –
then we move down to micro level justification, where the individual is the centre. And, during
this decade, a *user oriented discourse* developed, and for the first time the library users are
considered as precisely that, individuals – not objects to be enlightened. For the first time the
field introduces market surveys among users, and public libraries as being perceived increasingly
as service institutions. Because of this, the long-lived quality debate lost much of its relevance in
the 1990s, when the focus shifted to what is still debated today, namely *what is the public
library's identity now?* The user-orientation becomes part of the public library field's "taken for
grantedness". What is under discussion and debate in this period is more on the spectre of
functions the library can have, and the array of meaning we can attribute libraries, forming a
discourse Jochumsen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen call the *"spacious" discourse*. From the 2000s
there is trace of yet something new, *the dynamically focused and experience-oriented discourse*,
which has a renewed focus on the physical and virtual space libraries provide, the experience
libraries provide. In combination with a consciousness of not only what libraries do but also why
they do it, Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen find that this discourse labels the library as
much more purposeful and value-oriented than it has been for decades, and makes the library a
place that wants to convey something to its users.

As this summary shows, the library, and the manner in which we discuss libraries, is ever
changing – in an interaction with how society is developing. Politics too will change, as will
political motivation. What it is important to note though, is that whenever motivation changes, in

this case for public libraries, this could also indicate a shift in how that institution legitimizes itself; how it wants to be perceived; or what its responsibilities should be.

Moving over to the present day focus, Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2006 p. 198) identifies five major trends for "tomorrows" public library:

- Architectonic signal effect
- Focus on pervasive computing
- Focus on the library visit as an experience
- Public libraries as high-tech knowledge and learning centres
- Public libraries as meeting place – third places[11]

These trends originated in the USA – it seems like US libraries are still a source of inspiration like they were 100 years ago – and international tendencies in cities where there have been put considerable efforts into new libraries – best known is perhaps Seattle public library with its striking exterior and innovative service.

I have included this section, not only to show how the debate and development on the professional field vary with time and societal changes, but also to further set the scene necessary to address the research question: *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?* While the UNESCO manifesto constitutes a central backdrop, Jochumsen & Hvenegaard-Rasmussen's analysis adds to the knowledge of how the professional field deliberate their own institution, its role and purpose – then and now.

3.5 Summing up

All in all, it is fair to say the institutionalization of the public library field was completed – both in Britain and Scandinavia – in the 1960s and 70s. By then, the most important amendments had been made to library laws, the service was perhaps at its most extensive (the 80s and 90s gave way to rationalization and subsequently, cuts and closures). The developments, stemming mainly

---

[11] *Third place*, from Ray Oldenburg's *The great good place* (1999), where the third place is your primary hang-out spot outside your home and workplace.

from inspiration gathered in the USA, happened during the same periods, and with quite a few common traits. However, the library service each country was a result of both external and internal influences, and undoubtedly were the early pioneers of great importance.

One result of this growth has been – for one – an extensive network of libraries all over the world, with national and international organizations and cooperation. Another effect has been the development of field-specific values and norms, as mentioned in section 3.3. Together these aspects have contributed to the institutionalization of a professional field, which exists independent of country borders. Values and norms translate to different context, and this makes possible the comparison I do between the cases.

As section 4.4 shows, the public library field is characterized by an ever adapting focus depending on political and social current which is reflected in the professional discourses. One of today's trends suggests an increased focus on the building and the possibilities it gives the community in which it resides.

The objective of this chapter was to show how, but most importantly why, the modern public library originated and developed – how it became institutionalized. The interplay of individual protagonists, cultural, and structural circumstances affected how this movement went from a small-scale initiative to a universal service. The Anglo-American library ideas combined idealistic motives of general education with a wish to control the masses. Using education and culture as tools to integrate the growing numbers of immigrants was less obtrusive than using force, and the American developed increasingly efficient tools within the public library system. The library growth in Scandinavia was heavily influenced by Anglo-American ideas and practices, but also by the national grass root movements working to improve conditions for the general public. On the part of Norway, nationalism was a major contributing factor as to why Norwegian public library grew in number and gained ground all over the country. Throughout this time there are specific examples of how library ideas is found in one country and translated to another context – for instance in the Norwegian and Danish legislation, or in the library authority organization ABM/ALM.

In the next chapter, I go on to look at the interplaying roles public libraries have. I do this to make the connection between public library operations and political priorities and argumentation, which is addressed in section 4.2.

4 On roles, models, and policy

The objective of the previous chapter was to show how the public library institution have developed, and gradually become a taken-for-granted part of our society, with a set of field-specific values and norms. In this second background chapter, I will go into some of central aspects of today's public library, relevant to the topic at hand. For one, I will look at different roles of today's public libraries: Andersson & Skot-Hansen (1994) analysed how the public library is integrated in social, cultural, educational, and business and industry-related processes in local communities. To help distinguish the library's mode, they created an analysis model based on different profiles the library takes on. The model can also be regarded as a tool for prioritization at the local level. In 2010, the work of Andersson & Skot-Hansen was given new attention, as library authorities in Denmark made efforts to map out the road ahead for Danish public libraries through the report *A new model for the public library in the knowledge and experience society* (Jochumsen, et al., [2010]).

Public library policy, although an appendix to other policy areas, is usually a result of local government culture policy. In section two, I account for different approaches to cultural policy and four main categories of argumentation central to the legitimization of cultural policy, as observed by Vestheim (2009). In section three, I look at public library models, in relation to political models, and address the question: Is it reasonable to talk of a Nordic public library model?

4.1 Public library roles

As a result of society's growing complexity, the public library service has continuously evolved in terms of service provision and content. On a contextual level, the nature of its operation can be divided into categories of operation. Andersson & Skot-Hansen (1994) have identified the four main domains on which public libraries operate within, resulting in four intertwining profiles:

- The culture centre; where the library offers a framework for cultural experiences and activities.

- The knowledge centre; where the library offers a framework for knowledge and learning, both as a facilitator and an active disseminator

- The information centre; where the library offers a framework of information provision to citizens, through reference services, public information, and tourist information – to name a few.

- The social centre; where the library provides a framework for everyday social life – as a place to be, as an outreach service, a community meeting place.

These four profiles cover the activity field of the modern public library, and are all part of its agenda and purpose. They are clearly connected to the missions listed in the UNESCO public library manifesto (3.3) and have a universal applicability. However, the continued call for a renewed library vision and strategic planning, made Danish researchers rethink these profiles: *Over the past 10-15 years the societal context and thereby the libraries' societal legitimacy has changed* (Jochumsen, et al., [2010] p. 1). The authors believe that these changes in require a new library model, where the main goals should be experience; involvement; empowerment and innovation. These for objectives, the authors find supports both individual (two former) and societal (the two latter). Public libraries are used by individuals, and contribute to individual lives, but they also have a role to play in the macro-structure of things. Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen, & Skot-Hansen exemplify by showing how libraries can contribute to Danish globalization strategies for instance by inspiring innovation and creativity.

In the report, the new model is described in four applications of 'spaces', namely:
- The inspiration space

- The learning space
- The meeting space
- The performative space

What sets this model apart from the previous one is mainly its focus on participation and experience, which seems to be in line with some of the library trends listed in the previous chapter (3.4). Public libraries are much more than earlier competing for the users' attention, which naturally affects how it presents itself and its provisions.

4.2 Public library policy

In the previous chapter (3), we looked at the growth of the public library sector; the institutionalization of a professional field. Being a political construct, the public library has, in that same period, been subjected to shifting interests and ideologies – as shown in section 3.4 this also applies to the professional library community, where different discourses have developed with time. In this section, political legitimization of public libraries is addressed, drawing on Vestheim (1997; 2009). He has studied this policy area and how the cultural policy over the years has changed priorities based on different sets of legitimization. Public libraries are usually part of a city's cultural policy strategy. Thus, it makes sense to look into the motives behind cultural policies, the discourses, the rationales / rational basis, the legitimization which is used to explain why it is important to spend public money on culture – in this case libraries. Also, I want to draw a line back to the public library values and missions found in the UNESCO manifesto (1994). Public library policy is both a national and a local responsibility. While public library acts and regulations lay the foundation, it is the responsibility of each municipality/city/local government to execute the library service in accordance with national guidelines and local needs and wants. Over the years there has been a growing tendency of less government control and added local responsibility – with the consequence of added local costs in many sectors – libraries included. But a different matter is the basis of the library policy – have that changed?

Geir Vestheim (1997) analysed Norwegian public library policy from the 1930 up till the 1990s. He describes how legitimization of public libraries has varied in this period. Historically, the idea

of general education as it was shaped for public libraries in Norway from the 30s to the 60s gave legitimacy to the general welfare policy; at the same time as the idea itself was a result of the welfare state. It is fair to think that the idea of general education in relation to public libraries was strong both among the population and the politicians. In this period, unification was a clear ideal, as opposed to the postmodern embracement of individuality. The latter, as mentioned in section 3.6 – "the collapse of the Grand Narratives" – suggests that we currently do concern ourselves less with the institutionalized higher purpose and more with individuals' personal gain. Combining theory from Habermas and Bourdieu, Vestheim directs attention to how the library can belong both to the *life world* and the *system world*. Habermas' life world is a place of informal, culturally-grounded understandings and mutual accommodations, and in that sense, the library is a place where tradition, enlightenment and education is a natural part, and has value as a place where understanding, in the greater sense, can be created. The system world, on the other hand, offers a more rationalized and common-sense approach to library services, where society's increasing focus on specialization and knowledge has made the library more a tool people use for more specific and instrumental purposes. And he poses the question: in which world is the public library's political foundation? Is it in the life-world; with its cultural and normative tradition, passed down linguistically – or should it be the system-world; with its technological, and political-bureaucratic system (ibid p 445)? Should the public library focus on imparting scientific knowledge, or should it, more philosophically, impart science and research's break with the unknown, at the same time as it sticks to an understandable life wisdom, connected to the life-world? Vestheim's fourth dilemma is whether or not the public library should represent holism and totality, or specialization and differentiation. Finally he asks if public libraries should – like they have in the past – tell the grand narratives, and carry society's common projects, or should it be a place for the "little stories", and accommodate individuals with special services.

These questions are closely linked to the two types of rationality Vestheim describes, namely the instrumental rationality on the one hand, and the value-oriented on the other. Both types of rationality have always been present in public library politics/policies, however as Vestheim points out (ibid 445), public library policy (in Norway) has gradually become more and more instrumentally oriented knowledge comprehension, and that it seeks legitimacy through focus on individual wants, as opposed to collective needs, like earlier. When politicians rationalize

spending on public libraries using instrumental reasons alone, does that mean that the value of this institution no longer carries any importance? Emerek (2001) comments that although this *tension field* has been there since the beginning, it appears more apparent at present, given society's changing demands.

A few years back, Vestheim looks at culture policy argumentation from a slightly reviewed angle. He argues (2009) that there are no non-instrumental culture policy, only different instrumental motives behind it (p. 56). As soon as any area of society is politicized, the activities and their results become instrumental – they are there for a different purpose than the activity itself. According to Vestheim (2009), there are four main argumentations in favour of public culture funding, and consequently four different types of instrumentality[12] (p. 57).

Type of argumentation	Argument target group	Type of instrumentality
Support the "good" art, based on its intrinsic value	Individual as a private person	Aesthetic and enlightening instrumentality
Support arts and culture to create economic development	Individual as economic being	Economic instrumentality
Support arts and culture to create social development and integration	Individual as social being	Social instrumentality
Support arts and culture to contribute to enlightenment and community involvement	Individual as citizen	Political mobilizing instrumentality

The *aesthetic argument* is used in favour of publicly funded culture in a value-oriented sense where the arts have intrinsic value, quality is measured and this should be reflected in where the state funds go. Schwartz (2000) calls this the *perfectionist argument*, as it implies there is a good

---

[12] The table content is translated by me

way of doing things, and it is a public task to spread the gospel to as many as possible – *living a good life requires the capacity for aesthetic appreciation* (p. 17).

Economic instrumentality is used to argue that arts and culture is important to increase social and economic development. Not only as an industry in itself, but also indirectly, through providing inspiration and creativity to all areas in society. Critics claim this is a very difficult aspect to measure empirically, nonetheless has this been an argument favouring public libraries since the outset, like briefly described in section 3.1.

The social impact of culture and the arts is a hot topic, especially related to integration in the western countries, in England especially with New Labour. This has certainly coloured the library discourse. Both in England and Scandinavia, libraries' potential as social facilitators have been subjected to both research and strategic planning (for example through government reports). The last argumentation is shown in what can be called a political mobilizing instrumentality, where the public funds are given to raise people's involvement in society through arts and culture. The individual is regarded first as a citizen, in the political sense of the word. Traditionally this type of argumentation has been important in the Nordic countries, rooted in the 1900th popular movements promoting national culture and later in the labour movements. The influence they had on democracy building was important, both in the way they used culture and cultural activities in their work, and their focus on general education.

This table provides a fundamental division of different ways to perceive culture politics and how it is – or has been – justified. The two latter types of instrumentality, I find is not as easily separated as Vestheim here does. Can it not be argued that supporting arts and culture to contribute to community involvement also is a type of social instrumentality? Labelling it as just political mobilizing somewhat limits the community involvement-aspect of – for instance – public libraries. Creating local meeting places where people get involved is certainly a part of the social development in a community. But one does of course not exclude the other, and although I believe the two last factors are closely connected, I find this figure is relevant for the coming analysis of how politicians argue for their support to public libraries. Of course, it carries particular relevance for the research question: *How are public libraries in general and the*

projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used? The topic of legitimization will be addressed further as a concept within institutional theory in section 6.5.1.

Looking at public library funding in a historical perspective, both the political and social argumentation have been vital. The original political motivation behind public libraries was to increase social control and work towards enlightenment of the common people; in the US this included integrating the wave of immigrants. Returning to the UNESCO manifesto in section 3.3, it seems clear that this library mission still carries relevance. That the library should promote awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts and foster inter-cultural dialogue are highly relevant for integration in Europe today. In the first research question (1.3), I ask: *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?* Comparing the voice of the professional field – here represented by a widely accepted statement – with the opinion of politicians' it is possible to point out where discord might be found among these two central groups on the public library field.

At the turn of the 19th century the Scandinavian grass root movements favoured public libraries as a means of political mobilization through education. And education is still at the core of public library activity, although less intended as a means of political mobilization alone, but more as an individual human right and an element in the modern welfare state. This includes not only children and young people, but the entire population. This is also evident in the UNESCO manifesto, through items like:

- supporting and participating in literacy activities and programs for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary;
- supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;

However, the manifesto gives special attention to the younger age groups, and cooperation between schools and libraries are one of the areas where library policy (usually administered by culture committees and such) interplay with educational policy.

- creating and strengthening reading habits in children at an early age;

Thus, legitimizing culture – or public library – policy through economic argumentation is arguably a more recent tendency. Aesthetic instrumentality has also been a major factor, seeing as the library traditionally has been a place promoting quality literature. What constitutes quality will always be subjected to debate, but as Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen pointed out (2006); it was not until the 1980s that a library discourse where users were not subjected to enlightenment arose, coinciding with a growing demand orientation. Political promotion of library initiatives using an economic argumentation have not been customary, although it was in the outset, as mentioned in 3.1. Indirectly, improved production was a clear motivation for many of the upper class library supporters in, for instance in the industrialized England (3.1). Over the years it has not been very evident – at least not directly – but perhaps economic incentive has become a more important argument in favour of libraries in recent years, especially after the 1990s and the growth of the so-called culture economy. At least among politicians, if not librarians – there are no evident links between the UNESCO missions and the instrumentality found in Vestheim's schema. However, there are some points which nonetheless support private enterprise and development

- scientific achievements and innovations;
- ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
- providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;

This last point exemplifies what is the case with all: the intrinsic complexity we can find at the basis of most library activity; they can rarely be confined to one single motivation, and usually have more than one singular effect:

4.3 Public library models

Researchers and politicians share a fondness for theories and models. We use them to simplify the reality of life, and they provide a necessary framework in which to study or describe are main features and overall structures in a society. And although we can never actually make these abstractions fit – this is indeed why we call them models and theories – they do help us to distinguish; to paint a broader picture; see the overall lines; and perhaps attempt to say something

reasonable about a phenomenon – in short: they make manageable the complexities of life. Having emphasized the similarities and common traits on the public library field in chapter 3, I go on to address a topic highly relevant for the third research question: *How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?*

There is no doubt that circumstances in countries or regions can generate different strategies and methods for certain fields. Socio-economic models are commonly used to discuss different approaches to economic and social politics, and I briefly present the Nordic model as an example. However: Is it relevant to talk about a Nordic library model? Are there structural traits suggesting that this is the case? Should the answer be affirmative, it might accentuate the distinctiveness of Nordic public libraries from public libraries elsewhere. Then what about an Anglo-American public library model – could that be a relevant concept? For the purpose of this thesis, discussing the existence of such models can be relevant for explaining not only disparateness between the library services or systems in the three cases I have selected, but more profoundly they can help illuminate differences in the perspectives the informants have on public libraries; the manner in which they understand them, and the attitudes they carry towards them.

4.3.1   The Nordic model

Andersson et al (2007) conclude that a Nordic model does exist, referring to the social and economic system predominant in the Nordic countries. When the authors exclude Norway and Iceland from this, it is because of their non-membership in the European Union. However, for this purpose I will defy this distinction and think Norway as so similar to the other countries that it makes sense to relate to the same model. What is so special about this "Nordic model", then? Moene is one of several researchers who have been occupied with the "Nordic model" and what makes the economic and social politics of the Nordic area different and / or successful in comparison to other regions. He points at the fact that this model relies on institutions designed to depend and enhance one another. According to Ryner (2007), there are several definitional features most researchers would agree on (based on the work of Esping-Andersen (1990, 1996, 1999). Anderson et al (2007, p. 15) provide a simplified version, where three points are emphasized, based on statistical data, but as the authors note, no structural traits alone make up

the concept of a Nordic model. There are *intangible and systematic features*, they add, related to *a combination of collective risk sharing and openness to globalization* (p14).

- a comprehensive welfare state with an emphasis on transfers to households and publicly provided social services financed by taxes, which are high notably for wage income and consumption

- substantial public and/or private spending on investment in human capital, including child care and education as well as research and development (R&D); and

- a set of labour market institutions that include strong labour unions and employer associations, significant elements of wage coordination, relatively generous unemployment benefits and a prominent role for active labour market policies.

-

The assumption that a Nordic model exists, de facto suggests that there are other models featuring different characteristics. If we take a step back and look at socio-economic models, Esping-Andersen depicted three welfare state models (1990) (he later added a fourth one); the Liberal, the Corporatist-Statist, and the Social Democratic. As far as the Nordic model goes, it would be an example of the Social Democratic. Germany and the Netherlands are often referred to in relation to the Corporatist-Statist model, while the United States serves as a classic example of the Liberal model. Esping-Andersen (1990) has linked Great Britain to the Liberal model, although not as closely as the United States:

> *Middle-class welfare states, be they social democratic (as in Scandinavia) or corporatist (as in Germany), forge middle-class loyalties. In contrast, the liberal, residualist welfare states found in the United States, Canada and, increasingly, Britain, depend on the loyalties of a numerically weak, and often politically residual, social stratum. In this sense, the class coalitions in which the three welfare-state regime-types were founded, explain not only their past evolution but also their future prospects.*

Although a Nordic Model concerning socio-economics could be part of a development of a Nordic/Scandinavian public library model, it will not suffice. The addition of a so-called *Nordic Cultural Model* (Duelund, 2003) might further support such a notion. *The Nordic Cultural model* is based on a research project where the cultural policies in the Nordic countries are described

and analysed. Because of the similarities in cultural policy in these countries, and indeed many other common traits, the concept of the Nordic Cultural Model is an accepted and established idea. It is based on five main objectives and motivations (Duelund p. 489): The *enlightenment* perspective, the element of *liberty*, the *egalitarian* element, the *social welfare* aim, and the *national* aim. Even though European cultural policy are becoming increasingly harmonized, through a variety of cooperation, agreements – and most of all the EU, Mitchell (2003) still believes it is relevant to talk of a type of Nordic model, because the Nordic countries continue to provide *a block of countries that emit their policy ideas to neighbouring countries and international cultural policy agencies* (p. 467). Although not quite as radical as before, the Nordic countries are still advocating the states' responsibility to promote culture to everyone, and have a liberal take on new impulses from immigrants and refugees. Mitchell notes that although the Nordic countries have been successful in criticizing and contributing to solve difficult international issues in social, economic and cultural development, the ability to raise new issues is somewhat lacking.

4.3.2   The Nordic public library model

Does it make sense to talk about a Nordic public library model, then? Torstensson (1993) posed this question, looking at the development of Nordic public libraries, which despite its Anglo-American inspiration has quite distinctive features, as mentioned in section 3.2. Historically, researchers have pointed to the bottom-up growth; in Scandinavian countries grass root counter movements' (labour, temperance, informal college) struggle were connected to the development of public libraries (Hansson, 2010). As time passed, and public libraries became institutionalized, other distinct Scandinavian features crystallized; like universality, the free-of-charge-principle, the amount of public spending – to name a few. In short, they were features linking the library institution and activities closely to the (Nordic) welfare state. The Nordic-Baltic library research community has drawn up a report where this topic is discussed, and suggested as an interesting research topic, especially in comparison with research on Baltic library undertakings (Audunson et al, 2000).

It is reasonable – at least up to a point – to discuss different countries' socio-economic politics and organization in terms of models. It seems equally plausible to think that these general traits is

reflected in different government organizations, policy-making, and public bodies; public libraries included. Looking at public spending on libraries, there is a distinct difference between the Nordic countries (of course with variations) and for instance The Netherlands and the UK, countries well-known for their public libraries. The issue have been addressed by the public library sector (Larsen et al., 2010; Torstensson, 1993), and the sentiment seem to be that it is in fact – at least to some extent – relevant to talk about a Nordic public library model.

Now, I have given a lot of attention to this potential Nordic model does of course not rule out other models, quite the contrary. Could there, for instance be found an Anglo-American public library model? Historically, there are good arguments to support such a notion. What about a continental model? Without thorough studies it is impossible to give any proper answer to those questions. Assuming that we can talk of two more or less distinct models – is there still reason to use cases from Norway, Denmark and Britain in a comparative analysis? I believe it is. First of all because of the public library field itself – it is constituted by a range of common values and norms, neither of which are country-specific. Over the years, there has been wide cooperation between these countries, especially after WWII, which helps ensure that library professionals keep abreast of respective developments. Secondly, because of the common factor: the library projects. Even if political administrations and systems are different, there are still politicians in each case working with library issues, and keeping up to date on library policy in general – but especially on the projects. The third reason why the case comparison makes sense – despite different circumstances – is the fact that I am primarily looking at people's perspectives – contrary to popular belief, politicians are still people–: their attitudes to and understandings of an institution which – although existing in very different places – are very recognizable, all over the world.

I have to take into account that the social-democratic welfare tradition of the Nordic countries, presents different premises for Oslo and Aarhus than the more British, more liberal tradition gives Birmingham. Also, as Mitchell (2003) mentions, there are also the ideology behind the Nordic welfare state countries, which – although related with British development – goes further, and are less progressive than Britain became under the Thatcher regime and Blair's "third way". This brings up an interesting question, namely to which extent the different political and social-

economic conditions affect the attitudes towards the same institution and how it should be developed.

4.4 Summing up

In this chapter I have looked at aspects of the public library from a conceptual angle: One, a library model based on operation and vision, which is helpful in terms of marking out a course a head: where should the priorities lay, and why. As the topic turns to political legitimization, I seek to establish the connection between the library's field of operation and how policy guidelines are formulated, and how political argumentation can emphasize certain aspects based on ideological and pragmatic argumentation. This will later be used in the data analysis, especially with regard to the research question: *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?*

Two; political and social-economic conditions have shaped the Nordic model. It is presented as a backdrop for the question: *How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?* The reason for doing this is to show the interplay between societal conditions and institutions. The Nordic public library sector developed with a lot of support from grass root movements, giving it a distinct bottom-up profile – in contrast to the bottom-down development more visible in the USA and England.

Besides providing a background information and making a foundation for the ensuing analysis, I have in the two foregoing sought to explain the nature of the public library, how and why it has evolved, and how the field perceives itself through common principles. The library roles are included to show how they reflect different political priorities – at the same time as political, social and economic conditions in its turn can shape library models, like arguably is the case in the Nordic countries.

5 Previous research

In the following chapter I intend to place this thesis in the LIS landscape, by presenting:

- Library and information science (LIS) research done with an institutional theory perspective
- A selection of studies exploring perspectives on the public library
-

Using institutional theory in a LIS context is not very common, but in recent Scandinavian LIS research, there are examples of researchers employing this theoretical perspective on library specific problem statements. The application of institutionalism in LIS concerns aspects like organizational change (R. Audunson, 1996b), identity (Hansson, 2010), as well as pressures and legitimacy (Kann-Christensen & Pors, 2004).

Since this study concerns itself with stakeholders' view on the **public library institution**, I will also present research addressing this particular area. The most directly relevant research is naturally that which is done on politicians' attitudes in one way or another. However, considering the view of the onlooker and participant – although I refer to the politicians as "owners" they are certainly part of the non-professional field – I decided to also include some relevant research done on public opinion – media and the general public, to try and explain how the public library field is perceived from "the outside".

5.1 Institutional theory and perspectives on the public library place

The choice to use institutional theory in this project is based on the assumption that the central concepts I mentioned in the previous chapter can shed light on attitudes to library developments

and how library development in its turn affect the library field. While institutional theory has been widely used within organizational research, for instance to show how to show how change processes can affect organizations and stakeholders, it is not commonly used within LIS. However, in recent years Scandinavian researchers have addressed different organizational issues applying institutional theory.

Audunson (1996b) was one of the first using this perspective on the LIS field in his study of change processes in three public library organizations. The ideological identity of public libraries is strong, Audunson argues, and although this supports a strong institutional identity, it can also be an obstacle for change. Three public library organizations, all going through organizational change, were Audunson's study objects. He wanted to investigate what happened when the professional field norms of the library professionals were challenged and possibly threatened. He concluded that environmental turbulence made it more difficult to "protect" field norms and standards. In Oslo, where there was the least amount of conflict and upheaval, it seemed that the internal standards of the library professionals had a better chance of influencing the structural changes, while in Gothenburg the dramatic reorganization seemed to have triggered even more change – weakening the influence of the library professional field norms.

Kann-Christensen & Pors (2004) explored the political legitimacy of public libraries in relation to change processes in the public library sector, namely project culture, technological changes, and the changes in users information-seeking behaviour. Applying institutional theory as a theoretical approach for the discussion, they focused on the cross-pressure libraries are exposed to. The findings included that Danish project culture shows signs of new public management orientation, where libraries individually apply for funds – as opposed to general allocations from the government. This approach increases competition, and also rewards those libraries willing to change, develop, and be "measured"... *it could be said that libraries experience an institutionalized pressure from the politicians*; the authors note (p. 335). As far as Internet access in libraries is concerned, there are signs of a different type of cross pressure and value conflicts. The library professional community's emphasis on free access to information comes to be questioned when encountering user groups changed behaviour – and subsequent debate on censorship or restricting access to certain types of material, like pornographic sites. Changes in

information seeking behaviour mostly concerns interlibrary lending, which has increased dramatically after www.bibliotek.dk was introduced. The last two cases put new pressure on professional norms and values. Legitimacy may also be challenge when new services are introduced, or is given favour over traditional services.

Kann-Christensen took a similar approach when she explored the organizational changes in two Danish libraries (2009). She analysed the need for change, using to sets of "logics", one based on the principles of librarianship, and one based on the principles of New Public Management. She found diverging attitudes depending on management level in both case libraries (Aarhus and Tårnby). The management experienced a more levelled structure, while the librarians perceived it as more hierarchical. The librarians represented a logic where contact communication with library patrons, and dissemination of knowledge and culture as vital. On the one hand, librarians are not opposed to efficiency strategies; on the other they oppose them very much when such strategies constrain their influence or professionalism. There is a cross-pressure between these two logics. Kann-Christensen's thesis tells about how the field actors perceive their range of action, and how two sets of logics (library professional and NPM) affect the conceptions of organizational change of the involved parties. She finds that the management is more affected by NPM-logics than the librarians. However, librarians' traditional identity is changing, and so the informants are not opposed NPM-logics in general. It is when they see it can restrict how they as professional perform their duties or when they are deprived influence over strategic decision-making that they object.

Hansson has used institutional theoretical approaches in several aspects of his research. The formation of joint-use libraries (2006) in Härnösand and Visby, Sweden, challenged institutionalized ideas of what libraries should be, both internally and externally. The institutional perspective provides a background for describing how the traditional library identity is being challenged by the more complex joint-use libraries, and the different ideological and normative roles of university and public libraries. He implies that in order to uphold this logic of appropriateness to the outside world, there is a need to define and make distinct the traditional activities of the public library. In Sweden, Hansson says, there is a new inclination for libraries to

identify with "the knowledge society", and so public libraries, which in their nature are more political institutions, will be more inclined to adopt the norms and values of academic libraries. Another Swedish example of institutional theory applied in LIS research was Zetterlund's (2004) case study of evaluation practices in the Swedish library service. Zetterlund identifies three main strategies, which she labels participatory evaluation, rational-managerial evaluation and pragmatic-political evaluation. The institutionalized norms and rules, she notes, are expressed in different ways through the evaluation practice, and that the evaluation practice in itself produces and reproduces "the legitimacy of institutional identity".

Drammensbiblioteket – users and non-users images of the public library, in an institutional perspective (Evjen 2007). Through interviews with users and non-users of the public library in Drammen, Norway, about to undergo a major change in locality and institutional composition, this MA project concluded that users and non-users alike had a quite complex view of the library, as a place serving many purposes, and with a variety of both high and low brow culture. The non-users, being more negative to the public library to begin with, seemed to view the old and the new library quite differently. However, the development did not seem to breech with their library's logic of appropriateness – most of the changes were welcome, and described as an improvement of current conditions. I concluded that this perhaps is related to the fact the changes happened within an acceptable context – a centrally located university college, two knowledge-generating institutions co-existing. The data from this study was later analysed in comparison with a similar study done in Oslo as a preparation for the Nye Deichman planning process. The images of the informants – users and non-users – suggested a great deal of perceived complexity (Evjen & Audunson, 2009).

5.2 Summing up

These studies show how institutional theory is applicable to LIS research in a variety of ways. Bur common for them all is how they make challenges and pressures more visible through this perspective. The **external pressures** from politicians as Kann-Christensen & Pors describes (2004), is of course an aspect of this research project. The informants I interview have not

necessarily internalized the **norms and values** of the public library field, and are likely to be influenced by other factors, or be more inclined to turn elsewhere for inspiration when it comes to library development. As Audunson found, organizational change might challenge library norms – but in this case, conflicting norms on the part of the politicians could also constitute a potential threat to the professional field institutionalized foundation. **Legitimacy** too, is a relevant concept mentioned by Zetterlund (2004), and Kann-Christensen & Pors (2004). The internal evaluation processes both produce and reproduce legitimacy, Zetterlund find, while Kann-Christensen & Pors state that factors like changes in services might affect the perceived legitimacy of the library if they are perceived to be irrelevant for the library or are introduced at the expense of other, perhaps more traditional provisions.

This is in some ways a continuation of the MA project, where investigated perspectives were those of the users and non-users. In this dissertation I look at politicians' understanding of the library, and how their view of the library's norms corresponds with those held by the professional field. What is considered appropriate by the professional community might disagree with the opinion of the owners. Likewise, field-specific norms and values are potentially not shared by the "outside". As Kann-Christensen observes (2009), library management might not even be on the same page as librarians when it comes to which logic they use as far as change is concern. I consider it likely to find this discrepancy in this material, when I view informants' statements in light of institutionalized library norms and values.

5.3 Public library perspectives

This part, I will present research giving insight into external perspectives on public libraries – as opposed to perspectives on how the library field views itself, like Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen explores (2006). It is organized in two sections, each providing different perspective on how the public library is perceived.

- The first is media and the general public– which are the predominant **public library discourses** outside the professional field? How are libraries debated by "outsiders"?

- The second is research done specifically on stakeholders' **perceptions** as they are presented through research. Usherwood, Usherwood & Smith (2003; 2004; 1993, 2003), Audunson (2005; 2001), and Gazo (2010) are among those who specifically has investigated this area. I have divided this in two parts; one presented selected research on the general public's view of libraries, and the last specifically with politicians' images.

As Audunson (2001) notes, there are three main groups of stakeholders in the public library sector. These are the owners (politicians), the professionals (librarians) and the public (users and non-users). So when researchers investigate library images and perceptions, these are the groups they mostly focus on. Below, I present research giving insight precisely into the perceptions held by the public and by politicians. This is not meant to be a complete overview, but a selection of studies giving insight into how public libraries are regarded by the "outside world".

5.3.1 Library images and perceptions: The public

Many libraries carry out user surveys to evaluate how patrons assess provisions at their local library, as an addition to ordinary library statistics. User evaluations of public services and institutions, often results in high scores to public libraries. But researchers have devoted more attention in recent years to more detailed investigations of how the library is used and how it is discussed and debated – not only by users but by the general public.

Through a US national survey, D'Elia (1993) identified ten roles that a public library can serve (p. 5):

- A community activities centre,
- A centre for information about the community,
- An educational support centre for students of all ages,
- A learning centre for adult independent learners,
- A recreational reading centre of popular materials and bestsellers,
- A discovery and learning centre for preschool children,
- An information centre for community businesses,
- A general information centre for residents,
- A research centre for scholars and researchers, and

- A comfortable, quiet place where residents can go to read, to think, or to work

The results show that these roles were ranked quite differently, but both opinion makers and general users score "an educational support centre for students of all ages" as very important – 88 % in both groups. The second most favoured role – "a discovery and learning centre for preschool children" ranked 83 and 81 % respectively. Lowest ranked among the user respondents were (a general information centre" 48 %" and "community activity centre" (41 %). For the opinion leaders, the lowest ranking was also "general information centre" (38 %) and "a comfortable place to read, think or work" (38 %). As D'Elia notes, the results indicates that in the broad general public, the public library's primary role is related to knowledge and learning, while the recreational and informational day-to-day needs are considered less important. Although this survey was conducted in the United States some 20 years ago, it is not unlikely that my interviewees will have a similar view of public library roles today. Both research and politics suggest wider perspectives on libraries.

Buildings, books and bytes (Estabrook, 1997) was published by the Benton Foundation, and is a report from an American study of library leaders and users' attitudes towards public libraries and how it should face the "digital future". There was, the report showed, discordance between the views and expectations of the library leaders and the public. While the library leaders thought libraries and librarians had an important role to play as far as technological progress was concerned, the general public did not share this view – although giving very favourable assessments of the library institution in general.

Edwards & Hall's (1996) surveyed adults in Sydney, Australia in order to determine their perceptions of the benefits and negative benefits associated with public library use. In the qualitative stage of the investigation, positive and negative consequences were elicited for sixteen library activities. The findings showed that most respondents perceived that they would receive positive consequences if they were to engage in the activities. Results also suggest that there is a limited set of salient consequences for each activity, and some consequences are common across a number of activities. They also distributed a mail questionnaire to quantify perceptions of the "goodness" of the consequences and the likelihood of their occurring. Generally, the results

confirmed the qualitative findings and showed that most consequences were perceived to be positive and likely to occur.

Aabø used a more untraditional way of analysing public library perceptions. In her dissertation (2005b), she used contingent valuation method[13] aimed at assessing the value of public library presence in society, both as expressed from users and non-users. Of the many interesting results f from Aabø's research, one particular aspect is relevant in this context (ibid); namely how an estimated 94 % of her respondents perceive they as citizens have a right to have a public library in their community – even if they do not use it, they want it there.

Not quite as positive are the views of deprived and working class citizens in Britain, as pointed out by Muddiman (2000). He claims that these groups are not necessarily taken into account in many of the user and non-user studies done. His claim is that it is a minority of these groups who value and use the library services in their community, He quotes Roach & Morrison (1998), who state: *The exclusion of black people within society at large has probably impacted on their use of the library which is seen as another institution which is excluding them*. Through a number of qualitative interviews, Harris (1998) found that his informants had difficulties describing what community and social roles the library might have, which he related to their lack of ability to conceptualize.

With their book *Gør biblioteket en forskel[14]* (2000), Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen described both public library use and perceptions through interviews with users and non-users of Danish public libraries, trying to discern the role public libraries play in people's everyday life, and what library images people carry with them. Using Bourdieu they divide people into different lifestyles and consider how that affects their library perceptions. The authors conclude that there are different aspects that legitimize the library; like increasing people's quality of life, or strengthening democracy. In short: It is considered as a part of the Danish welfare system and a support in people's lives. They asked the informants to compare the library to a car, and divide

---

[13] CVM "is used to estimate economic values for all kinds of ecosystem and environmental services. It can be used to estimate values for both usage and non-usage. It is the most widely used method for estimating non-use values". (http://www.ecosystemvaluation.org/contingent_valuation.htm)
[14] Trans.: *Does the library make a difference?*

the answers into two categories. Informants either compare it with a family car, or with a bus (p. 27-28). These answers point in the direction that there are a common and unassuming quality to public libraries. Especially the bus comparison indicated that people really perceive libraries as a common good – in contrast to other institutions, like museums and culture houses which are compared with expensive motorcars.

My own Master thesis (2007) is described in more detail (5.1), and addresses users and non-users perceptions of the library transitions in the Norwegian town Drammen.

Hedemark (2009) studied the nature of library debates in Swedish media from the 70s up to present time. Her findings suggests that there are aspects of libraries, which in the library field itself might be central, that never makes it to mass media attention or discussion. Long-going discourses, such as the book discourse and the information mediation discourse only familiarize the public with certain aspects of the public library. Hedemark's conclusion tells something about how "the outside world" perceives libraries. While librarians are well aware of the different roles and doings of libraries, politicians, although working directly with library issues, are – unless they are frequent library users themselves – likely to share the more general view of the library portrayed in the media, then that of library professionals, more complex and multi-faceted. As Hedemark points out, this lacking image might in time damage the library's legitimacy.

5.3.2   Library images and perceptions: The politicians

Professor Bob Usherwood notes in Public Library Politics (1993) that *there have been a number of academic and other studies […] that have examined the views and roles of elected members […] but none to date has concentrated on the perceptions of those members responsible for public libraries*. His extensive study of British council members aimed at explaining organizational behaviour through the study of their perceptions of the library service, and the values they connected with it. He found that the way politicians – as people do – *make sense of the world* in different manners (p. 209). *Members of the Conservative party tended to be pragmatic in their approach, while Labour members were motivated by issues of social justice and the Democrats by community welfare* (p. 209). Usherwood observes that it would seem as if public library perceptions vary with party affiliation. Also, he found that the informants thought

politics mattered less in the library committees than in other policy areas, like schools or social services. And although their own regard for libraries were high, they expressed uncertainty whether this was the case for politicians working with other issues. The views of the politicians are different from the general professional community's, *as it should be,* he notes – since policy execution and management experience different kind of pressures and operate according to different principles.

Linley and Usherwood (1998) published a report referred to as a social audit of public libraries in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Somerset County. In this study, the researchers compare different stakeholders' attitudes towards the public library; elected members, library staff, as well as library users and non-users. By social audit, Usherwood & Linley refer to the manner in which public policy affect people (ibid p 9). In Newcastle, for instance, the library is seen – by users, non-users and politicians alike – as having symbolic value, and being a local landmark. In addition, many stressed its future potential in many areas, not merely culture and education, although today they did not think of it as contributing much to other council department. In Somerset, politicians thought of the library as an important local issue. Recent media talk of closing the library had created quite an uproar, and one elected member said he had never in his time as a counsellor experienced such a public outcry (ibid 78-81).

Usherwood later headed an IFLA project which investigated the attitudes of governments to public libraries. The project, entitled "Public Library Politics – An International Perspective" sought to bring forth governmental attitudes from different countries relating to public libraries and their value *for individuals and groups in society, their contribution to the democratic process, economic development and political priorities* (Smith & Usherwood 2003). The project was never completed, but brought about results from several participating countries, including Australia. A survey of locally and state elected members showed that there is generally a lot of support of libraries, and consensus that it is an essential public good., and the three most important function are ranked *inform and entertain*, *equity of access*, and a *safe community centre* (p.3). However, there were concerns of the future, and those were mainly connected to funding – or lack thereof.

Eliciting the public library perspectives of national politicians has also been done, as Usherwood (2003) notes, Pearce (2003) conducted a study of All Party Group members' opinions on libraries, where "elusive" is used to described said opinions. Together with Usherwood's own studies of civil servants and … the results give insight into major factors influencing the politicians' view of libraries. What these British studies show is that different factors are at play. For one, party affiliation and ideology were by the respondents themselves given as influencing factors, although some of the Conservatives in the AP-G study were unable to provide insight into their party's library policy priorities. Media and public opinion also seems to be important influencing factors, although as one Labour politician reported: *I don't think libraries get very much coverage in the media* (p. 84). The UK respondents gave the impression of being satisfied with the development in governmental interest in libraries recent years (p. 85), although there were some variation between local and central government.

A more specific study of politicians and professionals attitudes towards commercialized models of service provisions in public libraries was done by Fox (2005). She found that there was no overall consensus about commercialized library service models among neither professionals nor politicians. Not even party affiliation was a clear deciding factor – in favour of commercialization, or against it (p. 99), but Labour-controlled councils were generally more cautious of commercialization than those under non-Labour authority.

Audunson has studied Norwegian politicians' attitudes towards public libraries in two stages. The first was done through a country-wide survey of local government representatives, librarians and library-users (2001). It revealed that there generally was a high degree of consensus regarding which services that should be prioritized. The three most "valued" service (based on a list of ten) were offering services to pupils and students within the traditional education system; offering services to people involved in lifelong learning; and impart quality and entertaining reading material to people in the community. The ranking is somewhat different according to which group you ask. The librarians rank lifelong learning over assisting those in the regular education system, and the public rank leisure reading over lifelong learning services. The respondents were also asked pick one alternative answer explaining why scarce public funding should be allocated public libraries. While the public were divided between *useful problem-solver* (29 %), and

disseminator of our common culture and heritage" (28 %), a more unison 43 % of the politicians believed its role as a disseminator of our common culture and heritage, while the majority of librarians (39 %) chose *promoter of democracy and equality*. It is perhaps not surprising that the users, the general public are more concerned with the practical utility than politicians and librarians. The high percentage of politicians who ranked the *common culture and heritage*-role highest, could suggest a more traditional view of what a library is. Party affiliation or ideology shone through most clearly when the respondents were asked what they thought should be the main material selection criteria: quality or demand – or both. 55 % of the SV/Socialist Left politicians answered quality, while 71 % of FrP politicians replied demand – none opted for quality assessment.

The second stage of the project was a series of qualitative interviews with central government politicians (2005). The results gave insight into Norwegian politicians' thoughts on public libraries, both on a general and a more detailed level. The survey showed that the majority of local politicians gave the library's task of promoting literature and cultural heritage as the number one reason for funding this public service (43 %). One fifth stated that the library's role in relation to democracy and social equality was their main funding reason. It also became clear that the library's educational role was thought important. The library's role as a meeting place, however, was not high on anyone's list. For the government politicians, both the library's role in promoting literature and cultural heritage, and education was the most important.

The in-depth interviews (2005) showed that – five – were members of the committee for cultural matters in the Storting, but Audunson also interviewed one member in the committee for education and research, in addition to the Minister of Culture, three high-ranking bureaucrats and one a trustee in the Norwegian Library Association. As in the survey, the politicians (from all parties) put the library's role 'in promoting the literary and cultural heritage' at the top when it came to the most important task. Those politicians not using that phrase exactly, referred to promoting reading and the book as the main purpose. Audunson found that only one out of seven politicians saw the library in relation to digital developments and information technology. When it came to introducing fees in the public library context, all informants disagreed. Audunson concludes that there are agreement between politicians when it comes to the public library as an

essential public good, and their contribution in promoting political goals – especially in relation to education, integration and freedom of information. The public library is connected first and foremost to education, promoting reading and the literary and cultural canon. The politicians do not however, see the library as a prerequisite in a democratic society, although the bureaucrats suggest it is.

Another contribution to the IFLA project came from the Netherlands, through an examination of Dutch politicians and policy-makers (Stadsmonitor Vlissingen, 2003). Interviews with 37 politicians and 37 policy-making officials were done at a national, regional and local level. The study shows that the civil servant ranked the cultural and information function highest. The same did the politicians, but they appeared to value libraries' social function as the third most important library function by a much higher number than the civil servants. The results also indicated that a clear majority of the respondents saw library policy as less important than other policy fields, within national regional and local politics. The interviews modified this impression somewhat – library work in itself, they considered important, but in comparison library policy fell through.

More recent, Gazo (2010) analysed how city councillors in Quebec viewed the mission of public libraries. Gazo conducted a multiple case study, in which she interviewed 12 city councillors representing the library in their municipality. Based on population size and public library allocation, she constructed a model of six combinations including two random cases. The interview data was subjected to discourse analysis. Because of the library situation in Quebec and the age of the respondents, few had personal experience as users. She notes that (p. 57) the respondents, at least partly, have built their understanding of the public library mission from the responsibilities as city councillors. She observes no homogenous view among the informants regarding mission, and relates this precisely to their different point of origin. Gazo describes the city councillors' images of the library as "passive", by which she means that they are aware of a place and a collection, but not the library professionals, or what skills this occupational group has. Also, there is a contradiction, she says, between the library discourse offered by the informants, and the actual state of public libraries in Quebec – for instance when it comes to activities and events: The politicians are not familiar with the extent of public library operation.

Gazo states: …*the respondents' knowledge relative to the library is limited. It is no surprise of course, but the study shows what elements the library has to highlight to persuade the city councillors* [when it comes to financing] (p. 60). As far as roles go, Gazo's respondents rank education as the primary, then socialization and information searching. They seem to entertain the notion of what traditionally have been the tasks of public libraries, ignoring *the impact of the Information society* (p. 61), she observes. Another finding is that the library building seems to be important to the city councillors – as ten libraries of the twelve have been involved in construction or extension projects.

5.4 Summing up

In this chapter, I have addressed research giving insight into **how the public library is perceived externally** (by the non-professional environment). These different perspectives on provide a sound basis on which to make few hypotheses regarding the results of this study.

Some of these studies have in common that they give an overall impression that the people not only have a positive outlook on libraries (Edwards & Hall, 1996; Estabrook, 1997), but also as Aabø (2005) and Jochumsen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2000) found, believe it to be a democratic right. This suggests a high degree of **legitimacy** in the general public. Legitimacy is something I focus on in the analysis, both as a concept in institutional theory, and in terms of political argumentation and instrumentality. Qualitative studies show that non-users tend to be less approving or interested in library services than users (Evjen, 2007; Muddiman, 2000). Muddiman's findings suggest that marginalized groups not necessarily use the library, or even consider it to be a place for them. Of course – that those who are unfamiliar with an institution find it less advantageous does not become a problem until there are large groups who might find it irrelevant – especially if it is because of distrust or racism. But the research on the non-users is still limited, and the heterogeneity of this group makes it difficult to draw any one conclusion. In big cities with a high degree of ethnic minorities, the library could potentially play a role in term of inclusion and social cohesion, which is a topic I will return to in the analysis.

When it comes to **the role and operations** of libraries, D'Elia's findings indicates that the library's role with regards to knowledge and learning was considered the most important, while Audunson found that this varied according to stakeholder group; from practical problem-solving (public/users), disseminator of common culture and heritage (politicians) and a promoter of democracy (librarians). Although D'Elia's study is almost 20 years old, it interesting in terms of which library profile the non-professional environment favour, and why. Hedemark's recent discourse analysis suggests that the many aspects of the libraries known in the professional field never reach public/media attention. It is to be expected then, that politicians commonly have a more narrow view of an institution than those who are professionally involved in it. However, considering the projects and project plans, this might not apply the cases in this project.

As far as **images and norms** are concerned, Usherwood's work (1993) suggests that differences might be related to party affiliation or ideology, which is also shown – at least regarding some issues – in Audunson's study from 2001. Gazo's (2010) findings are relevant; as I believe there is reason to believe that the general culture politician will have a "passive" image of the library. She also emphasizes that the informants' background and experience with the public library would affect their general opinion of it – she does not focus on party affiliation. However this might be different in the empirical context I operate within – the informants in these cases are involved with prestigious library projects, which perhaps force them to claim a more active attitude. Also, I find that Hedemark's (2009) findings to some extent mirror Gazo's results. The observation that the "external" library debate was characterized by "limited" library discourses clearly indicates a more limited view of libraries outside the professional community.

Audunson (2001) found that librarians, politicians and people in general have similar library perceptions, but that politicians tended to rank "disseminator of our common culture and heritage" as the primary reason for allocating public funds to libraries, and thus connected it less with promoting democracy, as a greater number of the librarians did. Both, however, are traditionally perhaps the most important reasons for funding libraries, one perhaps more politically oriented than the other. This is confirmed in his qualitative study (2005) where respondents associate the library with education, reading and Norwegian literary tradition. The general public is more "pragmatically" oriented, and cares more about solving daily problems,

85

attending to information needs, or simply getting the material they are interested in. As Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen find, their informants compares the public library to a family car or a bus – which also shows this everyday life quality the library seem to be associated with, but also that it is an institution meant for everyone. Usherwood (1993) comments that library professionals and politicians never have the same motivations, or experience the same types of pressure, and consequently their perceptions are likely to differ. This is surely an appropriate remark, but it is noteworthy that politicians working with library issues are lacking in knowledge of the content in libraries.

However, I believe the informants in this study, might differ somewhat in terms of library perceptions, and reduce the otherwise notable difference between stakeholders observed in other studies. The politicians' interviewed for this project have an added motivation and incentive for increasing their a) knowledge of libraries (and by extent, librarians), and b) of library users; they are working on developing a new main library which is a major lift not only for the library service, but also a considerable investment for each city. Even though a majority of the respondents in Gazo's study had experience with construction or extension projects, these are on a municipality level – not a focus of the entire city.

While it seems the values connected to the public library are similar for politicians and the professional field – connecting the library to the right to improve one's situation, equal access to information, culture and knowledge and so on – might it be the case that the norms - the opinion of **how** things should be carried out – are different?

6 Theory

In the following chapter I will further present and discuss the theoretical approach I have taken, mainly focusing on the concepts central to the analysis. The problem statement reads: *What public library perceptions are found among politicians in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham, what visions of the future library do they reflect?* As mentioned earlier, I address this problem statement by doing a qualitative case study in which institutional theory forms the foundation for the analytical approach. Institutionalism is no uniform theory, rather a range of approaches emphasizing different aspects of **institutionalization** and **institutionalized fields**.

Several researchers has studied the library as a social field (Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2006; Vestheim, 1997) drawing particularly on Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory. Others have turned to institutional theory when trying to explore organizational change or development in libraries (R. Audunson, 1996a, Nilsen 2007; Hansson, 2010; Kann-Christensen, 2009). When I now look at the public library sector as an institutionalized field, it is because I wish to draw attention to what happens when the field-specific values, norms and perceptions of public libraries meet the visions and attitudes from the political field. Institutional theory is an approach used to understand and explain the causes of institutionalization and related processes, especially related to change. In this case there is change in the sense that each city – and by extension the politicians – is investing heavily in huge library projects. How does this change the politicians' perspectives? There is arguably also a sense of change on the public library field as a whole, which is related to technological developments, economic challenges, and globalization as mentioned introductorily.

I will for one look at how the *norms* and *values* [15] of the public library field are understood from a political perspective, and as a continuation of that; where do these perceptions come from? Are the field specific norms and values of public libraries comprehended and accepted by the informants? Or are there different sets of values and norms at play? Another aspect is to examine how the informants as owners *legitimize* the library projects as opposed to how they justify libraries in general. I use concepts like *isomorphy* and *recipes* to establish to which extent the cases resemble one another, and see where the library perceptions come from. And finally: To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential *deinstitutionalization* of the public library institution?

I will give a brief account of researches that have made contributions to public library research in areas relating to this topic, images of the public library. I have divided them into categories, each reflecting a different approach: how the library is used, how the library is discussed, and how the library is perceived. I also relate the project to research done using institutional theory.
As theorists goes, I turn to Selznick, Powell & DiMaggio, Meyer & Rowan, March & Olsen …
This means I will go into several approaches/directions. Institutional theory is by no means uniform, and so I have selected components I see relevant for this research project. I will explain this in more detail as I go along, but important concepts include **norms and values**, **legitimacy**, **deinstitutionalization**, and **myths and organizational recipes**.

6.1 Institutional theory

In this, and the following sections, I will describe briefly neoinstiutionalism, account for the concepts central to this thesis and how they can give insight in the problem statement. Neoinstitutionalism, new institutionalism, or new institutional theory – these are all names describing the same development in organizational theory. As Hall & Taylor (1996) note, it began as a reaction to the behaviourist school of thought, which had a dominating role in the 60s and 70s, and build on social constructivist ideas, especially perhaps The Social Construction of

---

[15] Terms in italics to be defined

Reality by Berger & Luckmann (1971). Although neoinstiutionalism gradually took different directions, the common basis is to – in some form – elucidate the role that institutions play in the determination of social and political outcomes (p. 936).

Tolber & Zucker distinguished three sequential processes of institutionalization; habitualization, objectification and sedimentation (1999). The first, habitualization is the initial process, in which solutions to problems are set up and formalized. Developing public libraries as open and accessible units was such a process – originating in different political wants or needs – such as integration, social control, the need for a higher education level in the general public. Objectification is the second process, vital to the continuation towards an institutionalized status. It involves, Tolbert & Zucker note *some degree of social consensus among organizational decision-makers concerning the value of a structure, and the increasing adaptation by organizations on the basis of that consensus*. Throughout the 20th century this happened by way of gradual formal institutionalization (legal acts, the establishment of government agencies and educational bodies) and an increasing network of library units used by an increasing number of people. The final process on the way towards full institutionalization is sedimentation, which premise basically on the longevity of a structure. It has two dimensions: one that the given structures are widespread among relevant actors. The other is a time dimension – again meaning that the structures need to have been present for a long period of time. Institutionalized acts are *exterior* and *objective*, Zucker upholds, because institutionalization is both a process and a property variable – a process in the sense that actors transmit what is socially defined as real, at the same time as any act can be described as a taken-for-granted part of the social reality in which it is executed. It is fair to say, considering the history and relative longevity of the public library institution, that the sedimentation has occurred. The question, however, is if a reversal of this social process, if the norms and values connected with certain operations or activities are dissolved or changed, if the formal structures are amended or altered; will the result be deinstitutionalization?

What characterizes the public library institution? First, the public library field is governed by **formal structures** – acts, regulations, organizations. These have developed over time, throughout the world. But there are other, more **informal structures** – important nonetheless: expectations,

norms and values regulating public librarianship, both field-internal and external. The latter implies that while the field itself (i.e. librarians and library professionals) might regard their institution in one way, external environments may have different understanding. The level of understanding influences the library's **legitimacy,** the extent to which the surroundings perceive it as appropriate and beneficial. Should sense of appropriateness decrease, it will influence legitimacy negatively – and could in time lead to **deinstitutionalization**, the opposite process of institutionalization where informal and formal structures weaken or dissolve.

Three main institutionalist approaches have been identified (P. J. DiMaggio, 1998; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Peters, 2005), although some claim there are several more (Nielsen, 2001). The first, and least relevant here, rational-action institutionalism or rational choice institutionalism originated in rational choice theory, and is referred to accordingly. Within this approach, institutions are perceived as primarily formal structures or systems of rules that actors follow strategically to attain the preference(s) they might have. The second originated in sociology, DiMaggio (1998) labels it social-constructivist, Hall & Taylor sociological institutionalism, defines institutions broader than formal rules and systems, and include cognitive scripts and moral templates, placing "institutions" and "culture" alongside each other. The third, historical institutionalism sees the institutional organization as the driving factor when it comes to affecting collective behaviour or action – rather than personal interest or socially constructed culture. Historic intuitionalists see institutions as the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms embedded in the organizational structure (Hall & Taylor p. 938). Three central questions within this approach are: how do actors behave, what do institutions do, and why do institutions persist over time? (p. 939).

Because of the multifaceted nature of neoinstiutionalism, I have merely emphasized on certain aspects that help analyse the problem at hand. Although I lean on the social-constructivist approach in some respects, this is a direction that does not take into account how rules and norms influence behaviour – which is something that the new institutionalism in political science does, especially scholars like March and Olsen, whose work I lean on. My concern is the perceptions and images of the public library, and in this context this include institutionalized perceptions, norms and values attributed to it, legitimacy connected with it. I do not, for example, focus on

organizational change per se, as the "change process" in each case is not the principal concern, merely one premise on which the case selection was based. Neither is rational action a concern in the sense of economic gain. The point is – the actions taken by individuals are not results of wanting to maximize profit or their own benefit, but a result of the norms and values embedded in the environment to which they belong. In this thesis, this aspect will in part shed light over the freedom of action the politicians give the library service, and the degree to which they want to lay guidelines or constraint can tell us something about what library service they want.

6.2 Values

Selznick (1957) refers to institutionalization as the process in which organizations, designed to perform specific jobs, become infused with value. This occurs for example when it becomes evident that a certain organization has its own manner of decision-making, certain standards of conduct, or a particular form of involvement in terms of clients or goals. Institutions have distinctive features, which make them stand out. They are products of social structures, needs and processes, and functions more as organisms – ever developing (p. 19). Other common traits are an emphasis on the relationship between institutions and their environment. Being social systems, they are both an influence on and influenced by the environment in which they exist. Also, for both types, culture plays a role with regards to how organizations function and develop (Powell & DiMaggio 1991 p. 12), and the institutionalization process is considered a constraint to organizational rationality.

An important aspect of Selznick's perspective on institutions is the time perspective. Institutions are built over time, and institutionalization is a lengthy process. To institutionalize, as he sees it, means to add values which goes beyond the original intention of, for instance an organization. Eventually, these values will even overshadow the organization's original goal, adding a sense of "higher purpose". For the individuals linked to the institution, this entails a sense of meaning and importance, and institutional leadership involves protecting this institutional integrity. I will return to the issue of values in section 6.2.

The moral legitimization[16] of an institution is perhaps what really makes visible its values. As institutionalization takes time, thus the development of field-specific values and norms. The gradual process brings stability – if a field does not survive, neither does its values. For the public library sector, there is a set of values upon which there is a sense of general agreement. UNESCO has formulated them more eloquently as a "Public Library Manifesto", as described in section 3.3. From that, we can read values such as "promoting democracy", "fostering dialogue", "disseminating information, knowledge and culture", "securing quality". And perhaps most important, that the public library is there, operating for the sake of all inhabitants. Superficially you can look at the public library as a place to borrow books and other media, use computers or other facilities on hand. However, the activities are rooted in higher political goals.

The values of democracy and freedom is perhaps best expressed in the norm saying *the public library shall in principle be free of charge* (UNESCO, 1994). Public library services are commonly free, and this has become a taken-for-granted practice in many countries. Even though there have been debates regarding this principle for the last 30 years, and some countries, like the Netherlands, have introduced membership fees – it is still widely acknowledged and accepted. Values on the field of librarianship include democratic development, freedom to access information and knowledge, and a common right to access cultural expression. Preserving a nation's culture and increasing people's level of knowledge are other important values we use when we on a meta-level explain the purpose of public libraries.

6.3 Field

Fields refer to situations where organized groups of actors gather and frame their actions vis-à-vis one another (Fligstein, 2001 p. 108).

Old institutionalism is primarily concerned with how values and formal or informal rules steer organizations and the people connected to them. The process of institutionalization happens when organizations become *infused with value*, to quote Selznick (1957 p. 17). Newcomers will over time be socialized into the institutional values, thus taking part of the applied norms and rules,

---

[16] Further explained in section 6.5.1

causing a sense of commitment (Paul J. DiMaggio & Powell, 1991 p. 14-15) going far beyond a monthly pay check. In new institutionalism, the perspective is wider, perceiving institutions more as *macro level abstractions*, shared *typifications* independent of any particular entity (Powell & DiMaggio), or rationalized and impersonal prescriptions (Meyer & Rowan, 1991). According to Fligstein, the conception of action within this theoretical framework *suggest that their institutions provide collective meanings by which the structuring of the field occurs (2001 p. 110).*

But where do these organizational fields come from? According to DiMaggio (1991 p. 267) this question has not been addressed much, despite the fact that it is important when institutional theory deals with organizational change. One aspect is field boundaries – where do these boundaries go, and how do they affect organizational behaviour when it comes to models for emulation, information-gathering or inspiration. Another aspect deals with the agencies not directly involved in an industry, but still constraining or influencing a sector or a field, like government agencies or trade unions. A major part of chapter 3 was spent showing how the public library field was established and became institutionalized, and today it consists not only of those working or going there, but also politicians, organizations, individuals in communities or in the media involved in public library issues. Within this construct, there are of course the more narrow professional field, consisting of those working in public library organizations, often with a degree in librarianship or similar.

The field concept is relevant for this project mainly because the library projects – seemingly a "library issue" – the public library field and the professional field intersect with not only the field of cultural policy-making (this, perhaps, is the most poignant), but also with other fields, such as city-development and planning, education, integration, as well as business and economy. This means that the norms of the professional field might be conflicting with the interests of actors in other fields – politicians included.

6.4 Norms and appropriateness

March & Olsen claim institutions are rule governed, and that they *have a repertoire of procedures, and they use rules to select among them* (March & Olsen, 1989 p. 21-22). This idea of institution-specific norms is a way of explaining institutionalized behaviour that rational choice theory, for instance, cannot. March & Olsen developed this concept into what we can call an institutional logic, best described perhaps in the **logic of appropriateness**: *human action as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behaviour, organized into institutions. Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate* (2004). It presupposes that actors, instead of acting according to their own benefit – how will I get the most out of this? – will pose questions like *Who am I*? *What type of situation is this?* and *What should I do*? As Peters notes (2005), an institution's macro-structural constraints will always be linked to the individual actors within an institution, but it is perhaps the normative approach focus on this most clearly.

Applicable as it is for many different roles, the most extreme examples they mention are police officers or fire-fighters who put the logic of the institution (serve and protect) ahead of their own comfort and safety (to a certain extent). In the library there are rarely matters of life and death at hand, but nonetheless is it possible to identify an institutional logic of what constitutes good librarianship. After 9-11, when the Patriot Act was signed into law, it gave the government authorization to request and obtain circulation records when they saw fit. This of course violated the professional ethics of US librarians, who to a large extent protested and responded by civil disobedience. Here, the professional ethics had a stronger impact than national law. It is possible to identify logic of appropriateness among users as well. How do you behave inside a library? For many patrons, keeping their voices down while in the library is such a rule, even though most librarians no longer demand silence in the library.

While logic of appropriateness is a useful tool to analyse individual behaviour, to me it is equally applicable when trying to elicit how organizations are perceived. In this case: How do values and norms decide the public library's appropriateness?

6.5   Legitimacy, Myths, and Influence

6.5.1   Legitimacy

The existence of **norms** is a prerequisite of legitimacy, another central concept within institutional theory. The concept itself can be traced back to Weber, who called authority legitimate power. This statement Scott (1987) later used to draw a line from Weber to a more "institutional" view of authority, where social norms within a certain framework – for example an organization – define what is right and appropriate. Legitimacy is described both as a side-effect of institutionalization, and a contributing factor (Jepperson, 1991 p. 159), some even characterize legitimization and institutionalization as synonyms. In a more specifically organizational perspective, Meyer & Scott understand legitimacy as *the degree of cultural support for an organization – the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provides explanations for its existence* (1983 p 201). This way of looking at legitimacy focuses more on the explanation why they are there, not so much if they are desired – the cognitive over the evaluative (Suchman 1995). Institutions seek legitimacy not only from within, but also from its surroundings – their institutional environments, so to speak. A broad definition of legitimacy is a *generalized perception or assumption that the actions of any entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms values, beliefs, and definitions* (Suchman, 1995 p. 574). This expansive take on legitimacy is also my take on it, an interpretation that includes both the cognitive and evaluative aspects.

According to Suchman (1995) this broad definition has several implications. For example that legitimacy relies on a certain time frame, a historical development, which in turn makes it able to survive any unfortunate occurrences that might shake its foundation. Legitimacy is a social construction, an objective perception, however it need to be created subjectively. As Schumann points out, an organization might go against a person's individual values or opinions, but still retain legitimacy due to public approval. At the same time, organizational policies may diverge from common societal norms, but the organization retains legitimacy because its practices are not known. Legitimacy also serves as the primary reason behind the isomorphy organizations often go through or are subjected to (Paul J. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1991) – a term I will explore further in chapter 6.5.2.

Suchman separates two main forms of legitimacy; strategic and institutional. The former view legitimacy as an operational resource (Suchman 1995, 576) which organizations themselves extract from the environment in which they exist, and use it to attain whatever goals and objectives they might have.

Institutional legitimacy, on the other hand is, described by scholars (Meyer & Rowan, DiMaggio & Powell), as a set of constitutive beliefs (Suchman 1995). An institution cannot extract legitimacy from its surroundings, it is created in a process where cultural definitions determine how it is built, run, and by that how it is perceived and evaluated (p. 576). The degree of legitimacy will vary according to how worthy, meaningful, or trustworthy the public find it. In many ways legitimacy and institutionalization, as described earlier, are two names on practically the same concept. In Norway, for instance, most public institutions have a high degree of legitimacy. Most people trust the police to keep "law and order" and to treat people fairly, we trust the school system, the courts, and we trust our public libraries. In countries troubled by corruption, the same amount of trust is not bestowed upon public organs or organizations. For example, people might respect or fear police officers, not because they are upholding society's rules of conduct, but because they are corrupt and serve themselves rather than the law.

Legitimization is also closely linked to the role of mass media. People will usually base their perceptions on their own observations, experiences and opinions, but oftentimes it is through media imageries a given factuality is conveyed. Even though we certainly do not buy into everything we read in papers, online, or see on the evening news, media coverage is a primary source of information concerning current events and the workings of society: Information is something that is usually channelled to us. Therefore it is neither necessarily, nor likely, that we base our opinions on experience alone.

The public library has long benefited from a good reputation and is generally an institution we can ascribe a high degree of legitimacy. However, because of society's changing needs and people's altered information behaviour the library is too changing. The question is whether or not this will in time affect its legitimacy. As many people connect the library primarily with book loan, they are likely to think it less important as book loans are down and e-books are becoming

the new format to watch. Economy is another issue. In economic downturns public spending on "extras" such as library might be considered less legitimate than usual. Is public library services a luxury or a necessity? Legitimacy could also be affected in a positive way, with the construction of a new library building. Whether it will be lasting or not remains to be seen.

Also, the institutional perspective on legitimacy put emphasis on the structures of fields and sectors, rather than the individual organization, as the case is with legitimacy depicted in a strategic tradition. Schumann (1995) identifies three categories of (strategic) legitimacy:

Pragmatic legitimacy has its foundation in a utility perspective, i.e. legitimacy increases proportionally with perceived societal value or utility. Naturally, it is from the institutions most immediate audience that pragmatic legitimacy is sought and found, however many institutions have a high degree of pragmatic legitimacy in a broader societal context, especially when it comes to public institutions. Looking at the public library, its pragmatic legitimacy could for instance be connected with the question *what is the most practical way of making reading material and information available to the general public?* Being a widespread and well-used institution, it has a very practical role in the daily lives of many – for instance as a lending station and problem solver. However, the pragmatic legitimacy of public libraries might decrease due to technological developments and changed media habits. Technology has certainly already changed library use, most people will sooner sit at home and Google their queries, rather than visit a library.

Moral legitimacy has quite a different basis than pragmatic. As the term implies, there is a normative base, founded on a socially constructed value system which suggest whether a certain activity is proper or "good". Naturally, this perspective on legitimacy does not necessarily exclude some degree of self-interest, but primarily it has a much wider scope. Is moral legitimacy relevant for public libraries? Clearly so: Public library use has been and is still connected with time well spent, quality, education and knowledge. From the beginning one of the key missions of the PL was to promote cultural heritage and people's general education, in other words it had a clear moral legitimacy. Also, it was also an instrument to create social order, and prevent loitering and social decay among the working classes. As far as content goes, library material was

and is by many expected to keep a certain standard and quality. The librarian's role as an "educator", however, was more evident some decades ago, like Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen describes (2006). Thus, the moral legitimacy of libraries was challenged when the use-oriented discourse became prevailing in the 1980s (as described in section 3.4). However, the quality debate continues on the public library field.

Cognitive legitimacy is based on either comprehensibility or taken-for-grantedness. Comprehensibility warrants accordance between both the larger cognitive belief systems and the experienced reality of an audience daily life. As far as taken-for-grantedness goes, it is on our built-in images of an institution we base our sense of legitimacy, and the idea that the way things are done is the most appropriate. In other words, it is our cognitive structure that decides whether or not we find an organization or an activity (etc.) legitimate. This is a very powerful form of legitimacy, and it takes time to build. In Scandinavia, many will argue that the welfare state has this taken-for-granted quality – although there are those opposed to it. People expect social security; they expect health care, as well as a functioning school system, and geriatric care. In the public library system, the principle of free lending has a similar status – in countries where public libraries are free of charge, as a statutory provision, this feature is taken for granted.

Depending on perspective, all three types of legitimacy are relevant for public libraries. Their perceived utility, in a purely practical sense, might be most important for the users – regardless of purpose. It is doubtful whether someone would go to the library merely because they think highly of it, or because they take it for granted. In daily life, pragmatic legitimacy is the basis. The moral legitimacy, one can imagine, might be of greater applicability when it comes to the professional field – for a public librarian the societal value of his or her work is most likely of greater motivation than the personal utility each patron experiences when visiting the library. The public library is for many a taken-for-granted privilege of the public service system. Massive public protests are often a result if branches are faced with closure, and one can only assume that this is because people experience the library as an institution they expect to have access to – thus demonstrating an institution that has gained a high degree of cognitive legitimacy.

As Vestheim's model in chapter 4.2 shows, there are different ways of legitimizing cultural policy. When addressing the research question *How do the informants in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham legitimize public libraries in general and the library projects in particular?*, I intend to use this classification when analysing the manner in which public libraries are justified and explained. The manner in which this is done is linked to which roles or aspects of the library one promotes. Library roles are as complex and intertwining as the public library itself. Neither are they static, as Jochumsen, et al ([2010]) note, and thus, the object of constant revision. Awareness on library roles are perhaps more present with library stakeholders when they are planning a new one. As a result I am interested in the extent they are concerned with and aware of the different library roles, and how they perceive their importance.

6.5.2 Myths, standards and isomorphism

As previously mentioned, Berger & Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1971) described how the social processes within a certain field in time will create norms and conceptions shared by the actors within this sphere. As the title suggest – the reality in which each and every one of us exist within is a product of social processes. The term myths are often used to describe such norms and perceptions. Being social constructions, they are not objective truths, rather commonly agreed-upon notions of how things are and ought to be.

Meyer & Rowan (1991) proposed that organizations creates narratives, myths, about their actions so that they would *correspond with socially prescribed dictates* about what such an organizations would do. DiMaggio & Powell (1983) took this idea a step further, looking into why organizations often appear very similar. Their argument is that this similarity is not a result of competition or efficiency requirements, but rather of the institutional quest for legitimacy – which they mainly get from their surroundings. DiMaggio & Powell's theory is that institutions are independent variables, and that actions are taken based on cognitive and cultural rationalization. They coined the term *isomorphism*, which describes how in different areas there can arise similarities between institutions, whether it applies to work processes or organizational form. *Isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble*

other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Paul J. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 46).

They suggested three different takes on isomorphism: The *mimetic* kind occurs when one institution imitates another (preferably a successful one). It originates, they propose, from insecurity and the assumption that in uncertain times, organizations will look to what is working for others and try to mimic that as best they can. *Coercive* isomorphism happens through external pressure and influence, both from society in general and its expectations, and the institutional surroundings. The latter links coercive isomorphism to the resource dependence model; the constraints organizations face are given by those who in one or several ways provide them with resources (Mizruchi & Fein, 1999). The last isomorphic mechanism is *normative*, and takes place where individuals within an institution have the same background (for instance the same professional background, which often is the case). Concurrent values will to a large extent determine how they develop professional practice develop, and these values and ideas will spread not just through training, but later on through associations or other professional bodies.

Røvik (2007) also address organizational change and trends. He distinguishes between short-lived or lasting operation or organization specific "recipes", and globally institutionalized megastandards and superstandards. He refers to local, short-lived recipes as ephemeras, such as regulations. Local recipes can also be of a much more lasting nature, such as military ranks. Within the public library field, one example of a lasting recipe is the free-of-charge principle, or Dewey's Decimal Classification. The megastandards, as Røvik calls them, are of a general character and have been incorporated in a broad range of organizations. An example of a megastandard is bureaucracy, which grew out of organizational needs after the industrial revolution, and has continued as a standard way of implementing goals in any type of organization. Superstandards are *new* recipes that travel fast, in space and time – often are their nature quite volatile. They are quickly introduced in a variety of fields. New Public Management is such a recipe, and has provided administration tools and mechanism, such as MBO[17], and other elements previously pertaining to the private sector.

---

[17] Management by Objective

One trend that arguably is an example of a superstandard we find in *The Experience Economy* (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). It describes a new trend in (western) economy, namely how we increasingly focus on experiences either as a commodity in itself, or as a part of services, goods or even trademarks. Having coffee is not just about buying a cup of joe anymore – it is marketed as an experience. A fusion of corporate business and culture, this new "economy" has gained ground as consumers – again in the western world – have enough money to spend, free time and an increasing appetite for events, be it sports, arts, or culture. *In Denmark the culture and experience economy in 2001 generated added value of almost 10 billion dollars, or approximately 5.3% of total GDP*, estimates the Danish report Denmark in the Culture and Experience Economy (2003). Skot-Hansen (2007) addressed the concept of culture and experience economy in a Danish context, relating it to the public sector and to libraries in particular. One of the challenges for libraries is that they compete for the patrons' attention with an array of other actors, trying to fill information, knowledge and culture needs and wants. Offering simple services is no longer enough for the sophisticated user – now libraries have to offer an experience as well. Danish researchers (Rasmussen, Jochumsen, & Skot-Hansen, 2011) have explored recent library development, and point to a clear trend of libraries being part of strategic city development. This is hard to measure in terms of earnings or investments, but especially new library buildings are certainly a factor when making cities more visible or contributing to creating a certain image.

The public sector in Scandinavia is traditionally very strong, and is one of the aspects of the welfare society that has caused researchers to "Nordic model", as mentioned in 4.3.1. The cooperation with the corporate sector has not been very prominent and local or national governments have traditionally catered for the needs of the inhabitants – schools, senior services, health care and so on. Of course, there have been private actors, but by and large, the public and private sector has been operating on their separate fields.

However, the times they might be changing. Private care, hospitals, schools are becoming increasingly common. Libraries are still a public undertaking, for sure, but the question of private sponsoring or "gifts" is a more current one than 20 years ago. In Sweden, the trend seems to be that there is increasing interest from the corporate sector to invest in culture and cultural activities

– much in line with what the culture and experience economy-trend. The Swedish Ministry of Culture also supported such endeavours in a letter to the Swedish Arts Council (Sveriges kulturdepartement, 2010). This trend is investigated in a Swedish BA thesis (Björnestam & Olsson, 2010) keeping a public library focus. 290 libraries participated in the study, which showed that only 16 were sponsored or used fundraising as a means of income. The numbers are low, no doubt, but the attitudes expressed by those involved were positive. Björnestam & Olsson suggest that one reason for the low numbers might be that libraries do not have the knowhow to actively fundraise or handle potential sponsors.

Applying concepts such as myths and isomorphy to the material will help discern the nature of the public library images held by the informants. To what extent are the informants' perceptions results of myths? To which extent are the organization specific recipes accepted? I also want to look at which trends seem to affect the informants' perceptions: is it field specific trends that seem to have gained ground, or are external trends – like the culture and experience economy – affecting how the politicians want to develop public libraries? In the institutional surroundings, the proximity of the operation specific recipes is of course much closer to the public library field. However – the myth-like quality of superstandards can perhaps be just as influential, despite their relative distance. By posing the research question: *How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?* I intend to discuss isomorphy and myths as possible factors explaining the similarities of the projects – despite the different contexts.

6.6 Deinstitutionalization

Deinstitutionalization – *the process by which institutions weaken and disappear* (Scott, 2001) – is the short and sweet way of explaining the deinstitutionalization phenomenon. Oliver (1992) defines it as *the process by which the legitimacy of an established or institutionalized practice erodes or discontinues* (p. 564). I find the latter best describing the term as I use it. Now, it should be noted that this "erosion process" does not necessarily means that institutions are disappearing altogether. Placed in a broader context, the practices, values or beliefs that are

weakened in such a process will most likely not just evaporate, but be gradually be replaced by "something else". Since this research project gives a snapshot of current perceptions and a current situation, not a longitudinal study of a process, it is not possible to use deinstitutionalization as a measurement tool. However it is a relevant concept when it comes to describing tendencies in the data material, which could give way for fruitful discussions regarding possible directions the public library might take.

Institutionalization is, as I have noted earlier, connected with development over time and the building of norms, values and practices. Dacin et al (2002) notes that while there have been many studies of institutional construction and on convergent processes (p. 48), deinstitutionalization has not been subjected to the same amount of attention. However deinstitutionalization should not be overlooked, it can shed light over new aspects of organizational or institutional change. *Deinstitutionalization describes the conditions under which institutional pressures for conformity and shared interpretations of institutional rules and expectations fail in their predicted effects on organizations*, Oliver observes.

So what will cause deinstitutionalization? Earlier −6.1− I referred to Tolbert & Zucker's (1999) description of the processes leading to institutionalization. They stress that the reversal of institutionalization is likely a cause of environmental changes which in turn will permit actors with conflicting interests to oppose it in one way or other. In her article Oliver (1992) points out three main sources challenging institutions in this respect.

The first is the functional pressures, (either technical or functional), that destabilizes how a certain institutionalized practice or activity is perceived. A relevant example for most sectors is how digitization and IT technology has changed conditions dramatically. For the library community, IT has led to the demise of the card catalogue and many of the manual procedures. Consequently, there has been a huge growth in online resources, online searching, digital library solutions, and use of lending machines to name a few. The technological developments we have been witnessing have had a dual effect on libraries. For one, some services and procedures have become outdated. Earlier, if you did not have an encyclopaedia in your home, you would have to visit a library to access one. Now, you can find information online, using you own computer. The

other factor is that the core competence and knowledge librarians possess have become relevant for other professions as well, especially IT professionals – which poses a challenge. When the perceived utility of a certain instrumental activity shifts, change is pending. Functional pressures can very well also be the result of changes in the environment, for instance increased competition in the private sector, or of a more internal nature, if an organization changes its goals. Oliver explains that organizations might well decide to uphold practices in the anticipation that they will acquire *a variety of specific benefits that are instrumental to success, including legitimacy and prestige*.

Political pressures can also cause deinstitutionalization. They can come from within or they can be a result of the political environment in which the institution belongs. If an increasing number of members – especially in management – are critical about the current situation or the way things are done; or wants the organization to adopt new strategies or practices, these could be internal destabilizing factors. They can, as Oliver says *erode political agreement on the values or validity of an institutionalized practice*. This is quite visible within the health sector, where the focus in increasingly put on administration and efficiency than on norms and values traditionally connected with the health care sector.

Social pressures are, contrary to technical or political pressures, always occurring independent of internal affairs or institutional environments. Social fragmentation and historical discontinuity are typical sources of deinstitutionalization, for example through mergers, increased workforce diversity or high turnover. Legislative changes, societal values or expectations are examples of external social pressures, which often will necessitate institutional changes. The current financial crisis is too an example of social pressure. It affects the entire society, and forces change. In Britain, the public sector cuts leave libraries facing closures, redundancies and severely limited budgets (see also 7.3).

The concept/phenomenon of deinstitutionalization is interesting to see in connection with the public library, mainly because of two factors: One, to highlight the pressures it is subjected to, most importantly perhaps the approach of the e-book, which puts the book lending in a new predicament that it might not survive… The other, because it might render visible that the

rumours of its demise have been greatly exaggerated, and perhaps public libraries are in a process where their position is being reinvented, their norms reconfirmed – or to reverse the original term: **Reinstitutionalized**.

As I outlined in chapter 4, library legislation in Scandinavia and England reinforced the practices of public libraries and gave the developed practices authority, thereby serving as a means of institutionalization. However, the legislative changes brought by have in some – perhaps no more than small – ways reversed this process. Just a few examples: In England there used to be regulations stating the distance between library service points, which in turn meant every there should be a service point within walking distance for most of the population. This regulation is no longer. DiMaggio and Powell identify state and societal forces as pivotal when it comes to institutional changes. There is a regulation in the Norwegian public library act, stating that library managers should have formal librarianship training. Libraries can apply for exemption to this provision, and it seems that municipalities/cities do this to an increasing extent. The Danish library act, although firmly establishing the free-of-charge-principle, now opens for paid library services, either for especially costly individual requests or for information services offered on the private market. Still – libraries remain free of charge, and such examples remain at few and far between. Nonetheless, these are tendencies that could gradually change establish practices, norms and values, and thereby – in the long term – result in gradual deinstitutionalization.

On the other hand, it could be argued that major efforts to enhance the positions of public libraries would have a counter-effect: Initiatives resulting in an enhanced focus, a renewed sense of purpose, a reinforcement of the public library mission, perhaps to the extent where a term like **re-institutionalization** would be appropriate: In short, a reconsolidation.

Since this is a research project, not an exercise in fortune-telling, the material at hand provides does not provide a basis for evaluating how political attitudes may or may not affect the library long-term. However, I still find deinstitutionalization being a relevant concept when discussing the extent to which the perceptions found in this study can dictate the direction the public library service might be headed.

6.7 Summing up

In this chapter, I have explained the theoretical choices I have made, and given an overview of institutional theory. Also, I have explained the concepts central to this project; norms, legitimacy, myth and recipes, and deinstitutionalization are relevant for analysing the data material. I would like to end this chapter with a summary, or even more a brief account of the central concepts application to the analysis, and how I intend to use them when addressing the research questions.

- To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?

In order to shed light over this particular question I have turned to March & Olsen (1989, 1994, 2004). They emphasize how norms regulate institutions and institutional actors. Their theory of appropriateness suggest that people in different settings will ask themselves what is expected of them and then act according to institutionalized norms and values. It applies to those belonging to an institution, but as institutions rely so heavily on their surroundings, it will to some extent apply to other stakeholders as well. Both the public and the politicians will have their set of applied norms related to the library. The norms and rules help maintain the stability and identity of the institution. Should an important group of stakeholders choose to promote different values and norms, it will affect the institution. Any logic of appropriateness will influence behaviour and actions. But I believe it can be applied to institutional entities as well: What constitutes the "appropriate" library? Where do the boundaries for public libraries go – according to the "owners"?

- How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?

The perceptions the informants have of the public library will, in my view, be closely connected to the extent to which they legitimize it, and which type of legitimacy this is. As mentioned in 6.5.1, legitimacy is closely related to institutionalization. The public library is undoubtedly an institution that the public have much faith in, thus it has a high degree of legitimacy, of a

cognitive, moral, and pragmatic kind. However, as society's needs are changing, the inertia in the public library institution could affect this view. Politicians might find that the library is less of a necessity than it used to be if they perceive it as not up-to-date or lagging behind the technological developments. Building a new library might affect legitimization either way: Will an impressive, eye-catching building increase the library's legitimacy? Or will it be perceived as a waste of public money, thus reducing it prior status? The renewed focus on the library's content and tasks is another aspect that can affect legitimization – in either direction. Where do politicians position themselves when confronted with these million dollar investments? If we consider the different types of legitimacy, which are politicians expressing when they describe libraries?

The type of argumentation used can, in my view, be helpful when discussing the above-mentioned points. Vestheim's (Vestheim, 2009) figure of instrumentality paired with argumentation (4.2) provides a fruitful basis for discussing not only how public libraries or the individual projects are justified, but also how this may affect the legitimization in general. If politicians for instance explain the need for libraries using an economic argumentation (libraries are important because they indirectly support economic growth), it points in the direction of pragmatic legitimacy; perceived utility to attain a goal.

- How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?

As presented in 6.5.2, organizational recipes and standards travelling through space and time (Røvik, 2007) offers one explanation to how organizations come to resemble one another, despite distance in miles and mission. Different types of isomorphy (Paul J. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) are other concepts relevant for explaining the "alikeness" that often arise between organizations – generally, but also in separate fields. In the context of library development is this aspect one that might affect those involved. Are the trends on the public library field important, or are external trends affecting how the politicians want to develop public libraries? Are the projects more alike than they are different – and if so why?

The international trend of constructing statement library buildings – briefly mentioned introductory, can alone be argued as an example of mimetic isomorphism; not mainly as a library trend, but as a big city buzz. By extension, perhaps also a result of the so-called experience economy, in which branding not only products or organizations, but also entire cities.

As presented in section 4.3, the idea of socio-economic models is well-known, and could possibly provide a foundation for other models – in this respect a public library model. Now, the question is: are there indications that the legitimization and instrumentality expressed through the data material of such a profound nature that it points in the direction of different public library models?

- To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

While it can easily be argued that the public library institution indeed constitutes a field in its own right, there is no doubt that many of the tasks and services offered are closely linked to other fields, for instance education. In my view, it seems like new library developments and new library tasks links the public library field closer to others – which of course might instigate both a higher degree of legitimacy, but perhaps also – to some extent – deinstitutionalization. In her article on deinstitutionalization, Oliver (1992) makes the following observation: "In the absence of attention to the conditions under which shared normative understandings and institutionalized acceptance of organizational actions begin to atrophy or fragment, the institutional literature has overlooked the potentially significant role of deinstitutionalization in explaining organizational behaviour and change" (p. 564). Her take on deinstitutionalization leads me to think that this dissertation can be a contribution to research on deinstitutionalization as far as the public library field goes. Pressures in the form of changed tasks, unit removal, economic difficulties, and increased local autonomy are some aspects that could create lasting change in the field. Through the material and empirical data I will go on to analyse, I want to look into how the concept of deinstitutionalization can be relevant for what is currently happening in Oslo, Aarhus, and Birmingham. Because even though the on-going developments will lead to increased use, more

attention, perhaps a higher degree of legitimacy on some levels – will not all the alterations and new ways of doing things, new ideals change the libraries quite dramatically? And a final question: Could major public library initiatives, despite financial and professional investments, possibly represent a deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

7   The Cases

Having presented previous research and my own theoretical standpoint, it is time to present the three cases. In chapter 3 I gave a short overview of how public libraries developed in the Western world, or more specifically in England and Scandinavia. In this chapter, I would like to acquaint you with the current context of public libraries in Britain, Denmark and Norway. That includes a brief account of external conditions such as socio-economy and demography – relevant in order to understand the circumstances in which public libraries operate under, how the national library systems are organized, which legislations and official recommendations there are. Also, each individual project including background and time frame will be presented. Lastly, I will convey perspectives on the projects from the library community in each city, in order to show representatives from the professional fields understanding of the project and current state of affairs.

7.1   Oslo – Nye Deichman

7.1.1   Norway

With a 5 million population, Norway is a small country, and its population density makes it one of the most spacious in the world. However, there are areas more sparsely populated than others, the highest density can be found in the central eastern areas, especially surrounding the capital Oslo, which is steadily expanding. Traditionally, Norway has been a very homogeneous nation, but today, especially in the larger cities, diversity has grown. The majority of immigrants are European, and those with a non-western background are usually asylum seekers from Asia and

Africa. Currently (2011) there are about 600,000 residents who are either immigrants (500,000) or their descendants – which equals about 12 % of the population (Statistics Norway, 2011a).

Norway is one of the few western countries remaining outside the EU, but still enjoys extended cooperation and trade through the European Economic Area[18] and Schengen. Oil, gas, fish are among the important exports industries. Estimated GDP in 2011 was about 53,400 US dollars, which ranks it fourth among the world's countries (International Monetary Fund, 2012)[19].

Gaining formal independence from Sweden in 1905, Norway is a young nation. It is a parliamentary democracy under constitutional monarchy, and for the past century Norway has been governed by majority and minority governments, often times by a coalition of different parties. In the post-war period, the political majority was held by the Labour party which put a lot of effort into rebuilding the country. Norway enjoyed a broad political stability which contributed to developing a welfare state, of which the public library was one component. The current government is a social-democratic coalition between Arbeiderpartiet (Labour), Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Socialist Left), and Senterpartiet (liberal, agrarian), headed by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. At the state level, it is the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for public libraries. Naturally, libraries are also affected by other ministries, like the Ministry of Education and Research, but the public libraries are mainly connected to the Ministry of Culture. Until recently, the development of libraries, museums and archives were organized in one Governmental Service body (the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority) which was founded in 2003. However, in 2010 the Ministry of Culture reorganized this sector, transferring the library responsibilities to existing service bodies. Public library development is now the responsibility of The National Library of Norway.

Today, there are 841 public library access points, included mobile libraries, throughout the 434 municipalities in Norway (ABM 2007). Statistic Norway reported in 2008 that approximately half of the population uses public library services, annually counting almost five visits per capita. Non-western minorities generally use public libraries more than ethnic Norwegians (Vaage,

---

[18] The EEA was established in 1994, letting Liechtenstein and Norway participate in EU's inner market.
[19] The GDP figures I give are based on PPP – Purchasing power parity, according IMF's World Economic Outlook

2009). Loan figures have stayed quite stable the last decade, with a slight decrease in book loans and a slight increase in other media types (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2010). In recent years, however, Norwegian public libraries have been faced with the same declining local economy – in an otherwise prosperous country – and the number of branches has been reduced. 140 million total media budget (2010), which means that spending per inhabitant amounts to slightly less than 5.1 dollars per person. It should be noted that this amount does not include material libraries get from The State Purchasing Programme for Contemporary Norwegian Fiction and Non-Fiction[20].

7.1.2   Oslo and its Public library service

Oslo is Norway's capital and largest city. In 2011, the population surpassed 600,000 (kompetanseetaten, 2011; Statistics Norway, 2011b) distributed on 15 administrative areas (Oslo Kommune 2009). Most recent figures show that 28 % of the population has immigrant background, 20 % is non-western. Due to unevenly distribution of residence, some areas have a clear multicultural profile, while others remain quite homogenous.

Politically, Oslo has a parliamentary system of government, and since the 2003 election, the majority of the City Council has been held by a non-socialist coalition. Today, the coalition consists of Høyre (Conservative), Venstre (Liberal) and Kristelig Folkeparti (Christian Democratic). The City Council has five standing committees or departments with different responsibilities such as The Department of Urban Development, or the Department for Senior and Social Affairs. Each department has responsibility for several agencies and municipal undertakings. 15 District Councils with 15 District Administrations (Office of the Governing Mayor, 2011). The public library services resides in the Agency of Cultural Affairs, which belongs to the Department of Cultural Affairs and Education

Serving as the political and commercial centre of Norway, Oslo is an important hub of trade, shipping and commerce. The Globalization and World Cities Research Network ranks Oslo as a

---

[20] The Norwegian Arts Council has since 1965 had this program to support contemporary fiction, and it now includes fiction and non-fiction, for children and adults as well as a number of translated titles, distributed to all public libraries.

global city, and a Beta World City[21]. In general, Oslo is considered to be one of the most expensive cities in the world (The City Mayors Foundation, 2008, 2009, 2011), mentioned often together with Tokyo, Zurich, London, and New York. However expensive it may be, the influx to Oslo has increased steadily. As a result, there is great demand for housing and housing developments and prices are high. One of the most recent city development projects downtown is Bjørvika, a harbour area where the new opera house was constructed and opened in 2008. The opera house has been a success, not only artistically, but architecturally, and also as a city hotspot– currently the most visited attraction in Oslo. The area is being further developed, both as a commercial district – made visible through the Barcode… and as a residential area. Last, but not least, it is also being developed into a culture hub, with the Opera House, the new Munch Museum and Nye Oslo Library – Deichmanske.

The library came about because of a book donation to the city from Carl Deichman in 1780. Along with other donations, this formed the basis of Deichmanske library, which opened in 1785. The 19th century was a difficult time for the library, and it had to change location several times. With Haakon Nyhuus' leadership, however, things changed, and Oslo was in the early 20th century a leading actor on the public library field. The main library has inhabited the same premises since the early 1930s, and the building has for a long time been considered inefficient and impractical for both visitors and employees.

The public library service is fronted by the main library building in the city centre, Oslo Public Library, an additional 16 branch libraries around the city. Also, the Deichmanske provides library services to two prisons and a hospital. The number of loans exceeds 2.5 million each year, and the library calculates that there are about 8000 visitors every day and around 2.4 million visits each year (Deichmanske bibliotek, 2012). The current media budget (2010) is approximately 1.5 million dollars.

---

[21] The GaWC Research Network ranks global cities in terms of their level of accountancy, advertising, banking/finance, and law. The cities are divided in three levels and several sub-categories: Alpha, Beta and Gamma. Beta level cities are "important world cities that are instrumental in linking their region or state into the world economy" Globalization and World Cities Research Network, G. (2010). The World According to GaWK 2010. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010t.html.

7.1.3   The project – Nye Deichman

A new main library building has been desired by the library community in Oslo for decades. Several projects have been initiated, with suggested sites like a closed-down shopping mall not far from Bjørvika, and a closed-down train station in the western downtown – however none of them realized. The process leading up to the current project has in other words been carried up a long and winding road.

The present project, Nye Deichman is the result of a political process that started in 2005. But it was not until 2008 that the idea of locating it in Bjørvika was launched. The Oslo City Council considered in 2009 the proposition of moving Deichmanske bibliotek and the Munch Museum to Bjørvika. In addition to mentioning the practical limitations the building offers, it states clearly that fire safety regulations requires the management to close off part of the building to the public, to limit the number of people that can visit it at the same time.

The same fall, a dual architecture/architectural competition was organized for both the Munch and Deichman projects. The winner of the library competition was announced in March 2009; the "Diagonale" contribution by Lund Hagem Arkitekter AS and Atelier Oslo. The design suggested a 19,000 square meter building with a diagonal street ensuring the visibility of the Opera House from the library. Due to major road constructions in Bjørvika, and the co-construction of the new Munch museum, the building outset Nye Deichman is scheduled to begin in 2014, with completion in 2017 at the earliest. The recent development, however, is that Lambda/Munch project has been rejected by a majority of the city council. The plans for Deichman/Diagonale proceeds as planned.

7.1.4   Perspectives from the library community

In the Norwegian library debate, the role and future of the public library is one of the main topics. Perhaps because new libraries are planned or being built, but also as a result of technological discussions, economic challenges in some municipalities, which seemingly have led to a general self-scrutiny. Although new libraries show a willingness to invest in knowledge and culture, some worry that the library's core is threatened, by for instance an increased focus on computer games, and "new" media instead of the traditional printed book.

Manager of Deichmanske Oslo Library, Liv Sæteren, gives her view of the challenges public libraries face (Sæteren, 2011). She believes that libraries need to find their place somewhere in between the technocrats who believe solely in digital services, and those who wants a clear focus on printed books. The multidimensional library is a challenge, she stresses, and it is hard to present a clear profile with such a wide range of tasks and services. But in her view, the role is still quite clear, the library is a facilitator, and the librarians are intermediates. She writes: *The main mission and function of public libraries is in my view to facilitate meetings between people and content. By content, I mean thoughts, knowledge, facts, dreams, and reflections which have been created and published* (p.37).

In a different article, she describes her perspective on Nye Deichman Library. She points out that it is indeed the core provisions that are the content of the library, as well as the qualifications of the staff. The paper books defenders fear the growth in electronics reading material will change the library – for the worse. Sæteren denies having rejected book shelves, as the Norwegian newspaper Morgenbladet has accused her of doing (Gundersen, 2010), but she believes the library should be decorated to support or fit different situations according to the activities and user needs the future library is supposed to accommodate – reflecting flexibility, in other words. However far as electronic books and material goes. *We want to separate ourselves from the standard term "books and other media", because this wording maintains a conception that the library first and foremost deals with books – with a vague sort of appendage* writes Sæteren, her point being that the library's is task to visualize the knowledge and information sources to the users, using all formats suited to this purpose. Her statement shows progressiveness, perhaps to an extent not shared by outsiders – users or politicians.

In the same article, Sæteren reminds those who calls for librarian warfare on behalf of libraries, that most library managers are restrained by political and administrative control, and that the "battles" should be fought within organizational lines. She still thinks library managers should partake actively in library development, but within the proper channels. The guerrilla war she leaves to interests organizations, like The Norwegian Library Association.

7.2 Aarhus – Urban Mediaspace

7.2.1 Denmark

While Denmark is the smallest of the Scandinavian countries, it is more populous than Norway, with approximately a 5.5 million population. Immigrants from non-western countries and their descendants make out a total of 6.4 % of the total population, immigrants and descendants in total is 9.2 % (Danmark i tal, 2010). The capital of Copenhagen inhabits almost 2 million people, and is the biggest city in the Nordic region. Denmark produces oil, natural gas, wind- and bio-energy, but with limited natural resources, the country's most important industries are based on human resources. Denmark's GDP 37,700 US dollars and counting PPP, ranked by IMF as 19 (2012).

Like Norway, it is a constitutional democracy, and currently the government coalition consists of the Socialdemocraterne (Labour), Radikale Venstre (Liberal) and the Socialistisk Folkeparti (Socialist), headed by prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt. At the national level it is the Ministry of Culture which is the overall coordinating executive power for policy initiation, planning and implementation regarding, creative arts museums, libraries, archives, film, theatre etc. The final legislative and budgetary powers rest with the Parliament, and a special parliamentary Committee of Culture[22] deals with cultural policy issues (The Danish Arts Agency, 2011). The Danish Agency for Libraries and Media is currently serving as the expert body, be it public or academic. This is a relatively new agency, and came to be after a merger between Danish National Library Authority and The Danish Agency for Media (Danish Agency for Libraries and Media 2009). The agency is an administrative body, and their main focus areas are: The agency seek to support the libraries' mission to promote knowledge, education and research, including reading and learning, research, special measures focusing on children and technical tools and infrastructure that enhances the supply of information in libraries.

Danish public libraries (including all service points) count 482 (Danmarks statistik, 2010). Also there are seven so-called central libraries, which with government allocations take care of public libraries material needs through interlibrary lending, in addition to advisory and development work. In 2007, Denmark executed a local government reform, reducing the number of

---

[22] Folketingets Kulturudvalg

municipalities from almost 300 to 98 (Niegaard, 2011). As a local government responsibility, this also affected public libraries. Almost 100 units were closed down, and most municipalities restructured their library organization (p. 343). Service points have been added since then, where users can pick up or hand in material, for instance at posts offices or other community locations. In addition, a new trend is to keep libraries open, unstaffed and self-serviced. Since 2004, around 80 such libraries have been opened all over Denmark, usually offering a staffed service 20 % of the time (Johannsen, 2012)

Recent statistics show that there is a slight increase in library visits and a much larger increase in online library usage, lending, longer opening hours and more events and activities (Styrelsen for Bibliotek og Medier, 2010). The total number of visits is a little over 35 million per year (2010), and the average Dane borrows 8 books (or other) per year. The collected media budget of Danish libraries amounts to approximately 62 million dollars (Danmarks statistik, 2010), which means that Denmark spends in total over 10.5 dollars per inhabitant on media in public libraries . Together with Finland, Denmark is the leading country in the world as far as budget and lending per capita.

7.2.2 Aarhus and its public library service

Aarhus is the second largest city in Denmark, and is situated in the East Jutland region. Currently, the population counts about 311000 (Aarhus Kommune, 2011). In 2008, the number of immigrants was about 30000, of which 20000 had a non-western background. Counting descendants, the percentage of people with a non-western background in Aarhus is about 10 %. Aarhus is the only city in Denmark led by a magistrate board[23] consisting of the mayor and five chief municipal executives. After the 2009 election there is a socialist majority in the city council.

The river Aarhus runs through the city and into the Kattegat. The harbour area has been an important industrial point in the city, and is one of the 100 biggest container ports in the world. The region is largely agricultural, but the inner city area is also known for computer and technology-focused business and industry. The city is currently planning developments around the river mouth, which is intended to make this area a vibrant, central focal point for the city's

---

[23] Magistratstyre

residents and visitors. The Urban Media Space (see next section) is the main project, and includes traffic reorganization, parking spaces, opening the last part of the river, creating urban spaces, not to mention the new Multimedia space – the new central library building. The entire project is estimated at 1.9 billion Danish kroner.

The public library service in Aarhus dates back to 1905. Today it service consists of the main library and 18 branch libraries, which combined had 1.6 million visits in 2010 (Borgerservice og Biblioteker, 2010). In 2005, Aarhus public library service underwent a major reorganization, as the Digital Library (Netbibliotekerne) was introduced, aimed at increasing users' accessibility to online resources. In Aarhus the City Council's current Library plan (Aarhus Kommune, 2010) is a joined plan with Citizens' Services, and it outlines goals for the Library Service, Citizens' Services as well as the new Urban Mediaspace. The annual media budget amounts to 2.6 million dollars (Danmarks statistik).

In November 2011, city budget cuts were reported to also affect library's opening hours, but an increasing number of units are to be made available to those holding a library card, but without the professional staff available (Søvang, 2011).

7.2.3   The project – Urban Media Space Aarhus

The current library building is from 1934. It was, naturally, built in a different media and library "climate" than what we have today, and in Aarhus it is pronounced "under-dimensioned" for the library's current activity level (Hapel & Ostergard, 2007 p. 5).

The decision to build a new main library was taken in 2001, and was based on the need for premises suited to meet the media needs of tomorrow; a need for more and better suited space, both with regards to people and collection (Hapel & Ostergard, 2007). The project, Urban Media Space, is due finished in 2014 and is estimated to cost about 200 million pounds, and is designed by the architectural firm schmidt hammer lassen. Architect Kristine Jensen has designed the waterfront spaces. The project vision is *to build the library of the future and turn the inner harbour area of Aarhus into a vivid and active urban space* (Aarhus Kommune, [2010]). The Mediaspace is going to be the home of both the new public library, as well as the main Citizen Services centre. The multifunctional building will house both cultural, educational and

information related needs – as the … states: *this is where you will borrow books, watch films, listen to talks, collect your new passport – or simply drink coffee in the café and enjoy the view of the harbour.*

Project manager Marie Østergård tells about a process characterized by political consensus, which gives the project a solid foundation. Many ask about the name, Urban Media Space, but this is the project's name, not the name of the finished building: *After it's finished it will get a new name*, she explains. The city has also tried to involve Aarhus inhabitants in the process, to increase the sense of ownership, and gives extensive information online.[24]

7.2.4   Perspectives from the library community

Østergård emphasizes the importance of including the professional staff and their point of view in the process. *It is important that their expertise shines through*, she says, and explains how this has been facilitated through close cooperation between librarians, architects and other involved parties. The project's set of core values – a set of norms and values forming a basis for the concept and design – is prepared in cooperation between librarians, local governments' employees, politicians and other interested parties. The result was seven points, formally adopted by the City Council in 2006 (Aarhus kommune):

- The citizen as key factor
- Lifelong learning and community
- Diversity, cooperation and network
- Culture and experiences
- Bridging citizens, technology and knowledge
- Flexible and professional organisation
- Sustainable icon for Aarhus

Responding recently to the concept of Mediaspace, Rolf Hapel, director of Aarhus's public libraries, said: *The library has never been just about books*. (Grewal, 2009). In an interview with Danish *Perspektiv* magazine, he says: *We want to create a place that is more about gathering people than gathering books* (Hermann, 2011).

---

[24] http://www.urbanmediaspace.dk/

7.3 Birmingham – The New Central Library

7.3.1 England

England is part of the United Kingdom, and more than 50 million people inhabits the country, giving it one of the highest population densities in Europe (Mason, 2008). England, as part of the United Kingdom with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, is like Norway and Denmark a constitutional democracy. The executive and legislative powers rest with the UK government and Parliament in London, the latter consisting of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. There are a number of political parties in England, but the two main parties in government have for decades been the Conservative Party (Tory) and the Labour party. In the last election, The Liberal Democrats – a social liberal party – came into national power in a coalition government with the Conservative Party, thus breaking the "two-party system". England is the most diverse country in the United Kingdom, and the most populous; the population is currently estimated to over 50 million. More than 10 % of the population belongs to another ethnicity than British (National Statistic 2005).

England's economy is one of the largest in the world, with a GDP of 36,000 (International Monetary Fund, 2012). Undoubtedly the recession has hit Britain hard, much harder than Norway, or even Denmark. Towards the end of 2010, the Government's Spending Review was presented, and the severe cuts in public sector spending will affect the country in years to come. The current unemployment rate is 8.4 %, which is the highest since 1996 (Flanders, 2012). One of the political responses to the financial conundrum is the *Big Society Plan* (2010), which *aims to create a climate that empowers local people and communities, building a big society that will "take power away from politicians and give it to people" (The British Prime Minister's Office, 2010).* One of the implications of this plan is increased use of volunteers – intended to strengthen the civil society and maintain services that local governments cannot fund. Libraries run by volunteers has been one controversial consequence of budget cuts and the Big City agenda, for instance in Surrey. Recently a High Court ruling declared this practice unlawful in a ruling against Surrey County Council which "failed to have due regard to equality issues" when it decided to remove trained librarians from 10 out of 52 libraries in order to save money but prevent closures (Lakhani, 2012).

It is the Department for Culture Media and Sports (DCMS) that holds governmental policy responsibility for English public libraries, at a regional level; it is the 149 library authorities throughout the country which deliver individual services. However, like in Norway and Finland, it is the individual municipality that governs its own public library services. The DCMS works with the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), and the Advisory Council on Libraries for independent counsel. It is the local governments who funds public libraries, central government core funding is paid through local settlements, and administered by the Department for Communities and Local Government – they are, however, not ear-marked.

Currently, there are about 4,500 public access points available, and they are used by approximately 60 % of the population (IFLA, 2010). In 2009, 325 million visits were counted, which gives an average of 5.3 visits per capita (LISU, 2010), while library websites visits were 64 million. Total media expenditure in UK libraries amount to approximately 206.4 million dollars, which again gives an average media expenditure per capita of about 3.1 US dollars. Because of the current crisis, 260 libraries have been closed or are under direct threat of being closed, and CILIP predicts that another 600 library units are threatened by the same (Community Libraries Panel of CILIP, 2012).

English libraries provide free basic services, but charge for reservations, and the borrowing of audio-visual resources, thus providing a (usually) small extra income. Through the People's Network, public libraries offer Internet access to *the widest possible cross-selection of the UK population* (Brophy, 2002 p. 1). It was established in 2001, encompasses now public libraries all over the UK. Aside from this technological success, English public libraries have experienced the biggest fall in library lending in Europe, which Goulding (2006) and Moore (2004) ascribe to the cuts in public spending on libraries (numbers from United Kingdom) (Huysmans & Hillebrink, 2008).

7.3.2 Birmingham and its Public library service

Birmingham is the second largest city in England, and is situated in the West-Midlands. The city is densely populated with its 1.04 million residents, and is also well-known for its multi-ethnic

profile. The unemployment is 12.8 % above the country average of 7.7 % ((ONS), 2010), although with the current economic climate, the numbers might have increased.

The city is one the second largest economy in UK, and is ranked as a beta- city by the Globalization and World Cities Network (2010). It is most known for its manufacture and engineering industries, however today the service sector also constitutes a major employment factor – and Birmingham has become quite a shopping mecca. Currently, the City Council is controlled by a Conservative-Lib-Dem coalition headed by Mike Whitby, after the election in 2004. This ended a 20 year-long Labour administration.

The public library service in Birmingham consists of the Central Library, 48 community libraries and a mobile library service operating six days a week. 500,000 people have library membership of which 220,000 are active users (Birmingham City Council, [20XX]). Although library membership and most services are free, some charges apply for certain services such as loans of music, DVDs or talking books. The charges are subject to concessions, and also interlibrary loans outside council borders are subjected to a small fee.

It is involved in extensive cooperation, both with state/local agencies and different organizations. Birmingham is a remarkably "young" compared to other major UK cities. 22 % of the population is under the age of 15, making children and youths a larger group than the pensioners. This makes it especially important to focus on the young users, both children and teenagers and students. Centre for the Child is one of the largest children's libraries in Europe, and have a variety of materials in over 50 languages. The centre offers schools visits and a wide variety of activities for children of all ages (Janet Brisland)

The current central library building is from the 1970s, and is also the home of the city's archives. According to Library director Brian Gambles, the library was "full" in 1998, and 12 years later, space continues to be a major issue.

7.3.3 The project

As this dissertation is slowly being constructed, so is the New Central Library in downtown Birmingham. And, as the quote from Brian Gambles, Assistant Director of Culture tells, the

ambitions are high. The process leading up to the current building has not been without discord – although the main conflict has been financing and location. The previous administration wanted to develop a new area, to expand the city centre, and wanted to use the library as a generator in this expansion. The library is now instead being built in an area laden with traffic, which in turn will be transformed to a pedestrian-friendly environment, in close proximity to the Repertory theatre, making it a cultural hub on Centenary Square (City Centre Development, 2010). The completion of the on-going library construction is 2013, and it is due to open primo September that year. The design is by Francine Houben from the Dutch architect company Mecanoo (Birmingham City Council, [2010]). It is described by the city council as the flagship project of the Big City Plan (City Centre Development, 2010). Councillor Mike Whitby has described as *a key hub for the region and, with its many partners, will place Birmingham firmly on the world stage as a major cultural destination* (BBC News, 2012), Council Among the amenities is an outdoor amphitheatre, a Shakespeare room, a recording studio and free access to the National Film Archives. It is estimated at £189 million, which makes it one of the most ambitious library projects in Europe.

7.3.4 Perspectives from the library community

> *We aim to create a library like no other. Integrated with Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the Library of Birmingham will be a unique centre for learning, information and culture. An enduring beacon for Birmingham, it will raise the city's international profile and deliver excellence to local communities. Accessible and welcoming to all, it will reach out to the most disadvantaged citizens. It will be a universal meeting place, a hub for the region, an engine for the knowledge economy. Through written, printed, audio, visual and interactive resources and technologies, the Library of Birmingham will link the people of Birmingham to the world. It will bring the world to Birmingham (Gambles, 2009)*

Library director Brian Gambles describes the current project as both a library and a city development project, where the trade and industry city of Birmingham is trying to repositions itself and find its place in the knowledge economy – be a place where people want to come and stay. *I think we need to move on from roads to retail. And the next image of Birmingham is about culture.* He describes the new library as a place where things are happening all the time, and a destination that is owned by the community. He adds that there should be active community

involvement. Not only should people come as visitors, but they should be participants. Co-creation is one important concept, where the users are participants, rather than recipients of content. Gambles says:

> *I think the idea of people co-producing services, working with us, using our resources, using our staff, working with our staff, bringing in the neighbours. It's very pertinent for the library service and it is this idea of the library service as a community asset.*

As far as the network of community libraries go, he expects that there will be to some extent a benefit of the investment, especially through resource sharing and online services. Gambles finds the politicians remain adamant about keeping the library structure as it is, despite budget challenges. However, he fears that a consequence of that might be that the branch libraries are drained of resources or kept open for very limited amounts of time. His view is that libraries are hugely important still, especially considering integration. The language is one thing, but also the fact that libraries are found out in the communities where people live and offer the same services to everyone. The challenge, he believes, is to get the message across, to both politicians and the public about what the library is, and how it is relevant.

8 Public library perceptions: Presentation and analysis

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the empirical data. I have organized this section thematically, but the themes are directly linked to the research questions. This chapter contains three main sections:

The first part is focused on policy: legislation, as well as national and local political strategy, in order to explain the manner in which the public library is formally institutionalized at present. I also include statements from the informants regarding their parties' take on public library policy. This section is particularly relevant for the second research question, where legitimization is a central issue: *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?*

The second part deals with the perspectives the informants have of the public library in general – which areas that are important, which roles they find most relevant, and aspects related to the operation; including funding. The opening sections present findings related to their personal use and experience. Then it continues with perspectives on the role and operation of public libraries, including future challenges. The analysis of this data I first and foremost concerned with library specific values which over time have manifested themselves in **norms** regarding what the library should be (free, accessible, quality-oriented), and what it should do (disseminate knowledge, culture, promote reading, be a community hub). The following research question provides an entry point: *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?* Closely connected to this normative perspective is the library's **appropriateness**, as conceived

by the informants, and its **legitimacy**. *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?* This is another one of the research questions I apply to the material in section 8.2. While this also is a topic analysed in section 8.1, connecting it mainly to written policy documents, this section adds more of the informants' perspectives, thus giving a more thorough analysis of the legitimization concept.

The third part is devoted to topics related to the specific cases and public library present and future; how the library service is perceived in each city – this includes the library service today, the library structure, perspectives on the projects and the future. The analysis deals with how the projects more specifically are legitimized, the second part of this research question: *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?* In addition, the analysis takes into consideration the differences and similarities of each case, in order to answer: *How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?*

The fourth research question; *to what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?*
applies to all three sections, and is discussed in connection with policy and plans, library roles, operations and the projects. The imageries shown in section 1 will be used here in order when discussing the concept of deinstitutionalization and how the attitudes of the informants reflect: a reinforced library institution or an institution undergoing drastic changes?

Below I include a table listing the informants, giving their surrogate name and party affiliation, ordered by city:

Name	Role	City	Party[25]
Oswald	**Councillor**	**Oslo**	**Høyre (H):** *Conservative Party*
Olivia	**CM (Council member)**	**Oslo**	**Fremskrittspartiet: FrP** *Liberalistic popular*
Oscar	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV)** *Socialist*
Olav	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Venstre (VN):** *Liberalistic*
Omer	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Arbeiderpartiet (DNA)** *Social-democratic*
Ophelia	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Høyre (H)** *Conservative*
Oliver	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Kristelig folkeparti (KrF):** *Christian Democratic*
Orson	**CM**	**Oslo**	**Arbeiderpartiet (DNA)** *Social-democratic*
Aron	**CM**	**Aarhus**	**Venstre (VDK):** *Liberalistic*
Alex	**Alderman**	**Aarhus**	**Det Konservative Folkeparti (K)** *Conservative*
Albert	**CM**	**Aarhus**	**Socialdemokraterne (S):** *Social-democratic*
Bernard	**Cllr**	**Birmingham**	**Conservative**
Barry	**Cabinet Member**	**Birmingham**	**Liberal Democrats (LD)** *Social liberal*
Baird	**Cllr**	**Birmingham**	**Liberal Democrats (LD)** *Social liberal*
Bob	**Cllr**	**Birmingham**	**Labour (L)**

---

[25] Political orientation indicated in bold italics

8.1 Public library perceptions: Policy and plans

While public libraries generally are the responsibility of local government, national legislation regulates the activity. As shown in chapter 3, England was the first country with legal regulation of libraries in 1850. However England's current act has not been rewritten since 1964 (later amended). Norway and Denmark developed public library acts in the first part of the 20th century, and have updated their legislation on several occasions. In addition to legislation, there are also national policy documents dictating the framework and direction for the libraries in each country. In this section, I will address public library policies, based on legislation (national) and local plans for library operations. As opposed to institutional libraries, private or public, public libraries have always been political institutions, used by authorities to achieve political goals. In other words, public libraries have a political capacity, manifested in goals and priorities – different types of instrumentality, as described by Vestheim: social, aesthetic and enlightening, political or economic. Historically, this resulted in objectives such as help creating social stability, decreasing illiteracy, or disseminating national cultural heritage. While the different types of instrumentality are stable, the goals changes with time. For instance, today few politicians will think that public libraries are important for creating social stability. Likewise can illiteracy still be an issue, but today so uncommon that a more updated version would be to encourage reading and enhancing reading skills among children or adults. The political goals of public libraries have been worded in Oslo, Aarhus, and Birmingham alike.

8.1.1 Norway

The Norwegian Public library Act from 1985 states that all municipalities have to offer their inhabitants a public library service. It also has a statutory provision, which says that all counties have to have a county library. County libraries are regional units taking care of interlibrary lending, in addition to organizing lectures and seminars, and providing public libraries and local government with guidance and counselling. All library services are free of charge. The preamble states that their mission is to *promote education knowledge, learning and other cultural activities through dissemination of information and by making available suitable material for everyone inhabiting the country* ([Folkebibliotekloven], 1985*)*. What constitutes suitable material is not specified, and is by that left for each library to decide. Most libraries do offer a range of audio-

visual material to their patrons. There are no reservations in the Norwegian public library act regarding the principle of free lending.

- *Each library should, in their material put emphasis on quality, comprehensiveness and relevance.*

- *The operation should be outreaching, and the activities should be made known to the public. The public libraries are part of a national library system.*

According to Langeland (2009), the act gives less specific instructions about the library cooperation in Norway than in the other Nordic countries, which of course gives room for more variation and less obligation.

The Ministry of Culture launched in 2009 the latest Report to the Storting on Libraries (2008-2009), which encompassed all types of libraries, although many claimed public libraries were given a lot more attention than other library types. In a submission given by the Norwegian Library Association (NLA), the report is thus nicknamed the *Public Library Report (Bibliotekarforbundet, 2009) p. 2).* The English summary of the Report states: *The core values and legitimacy of libraries are built on the idea that knowledge and education should be accessible by all, regardless of social, economic, and geographic barriers* (Norwegian Ministry of Culture, 2008-2009 p.8). It continues to list that the overriding objective of cultural policy (in Norway) is to ensure that all have access to art and cultural experiences and opportunities to express themselves through art and culture, independent of geography or economic and social divisions (p. 9).

The main points of the report are regarding strategies for robust and adaptable library services:

- Libraries in the digital age
- Collaboration
- Libraries as meeting places and arenas of learning and culture

The report seems to seek legitimacy for libraries through several types of argumentation, but it seems that the *social* and *political mobilizing* type of argumentation is most strongly present, as far as public libraries are concerned. The frequent mentioning of *barriers*, regarding money, background or other factors, is related to how the library can contribute to neutralizing them. The report also suggests that the Public Library Act needs revision[26]. For one, the report suggest to harmonize legislation on the library field as a while, in terms of formal qualifications for chief librarians, and it is recommended to remove the statutory requirement of a county library in each county. The reason is to *increase flexibility and encourage collaboration on resources and expertise* (p. 10).

While the suggested amendments certainly could help make libraries more flexible, they could also be labelled as deinstitutionalizing, since they are modifications of earlier demands, thus lessening the professional leverage on the field. One could, however, take the opposite stand, arguing that this not deinstitutionalizing, but rather a reinforcement of the library service's resilience. Making the library service more flexible and adaptable will render it better fitted to meet current and future demands.

As mentioned in section 1.1, the library as a social arena has been given particular attention in this report, emphasizing a political awareness of this particular aspect of (public) libraries. This report devotes considerably more space to this topic than the library report from 1999. This clearly indicates that the public library is assigned a considerable amount of democratic value. There is not really any sign of an economic type of argumentation – and neither does the aesthetic/enlightenment argumentation shine through in any particular manner. Although there is no novelty in the argument that public libraries can contribute to social development and integration, the increased attention it has got in recent years is. Why the public library's political and social role is accentuated in this report could be related to several factors: For one, the growing focus in the library community regarding this aspect of the operation. Reports, like this one, are not a product of political interests alone; they are based at least in part on stakeholders' statements. Another factor could be political ideology: Is the current social-democratic majority more inclined to use social and political mobilizing argumentation that non-social democratic

---

[26] This an ongoing process (2012)

parties would? One explanation might be the increased focus on culture centres, multi-faceted places where culture and social interaction is closely linked, in which libraries often are incorporated. Another might be found in the field-internal myth that insists on libraries' social importance, and that this myth has been accepted by library owners as well.

Of course this trend, whatever its origin, could be argued as confirming one of the original idea behind public libraries. By promoting this aspect, politicians again legitimize public libraries through a sort of social instrumentality, much more distinct than earlier.

8.1.1.1   Oslo

The most recent strategy document for the public library service in Oslo is from 2005, and entitled Deichman library in the 21st century[27]. It refers to the previous library report to the Storting, from 1999, and names the main areas of commitment in the coming years – one being the planning of a new main library, at which time was still intended for the Vestbanen site, close to the city hall. As far as media types were concerned, the report suggested a reduction of newspapers from abroad and from other regions of the country. It also suggested a reduction in the film selection, with a clear focus on classic and educational material – not commercially available items. The report stirred the library community, who thought the city councillor at that time wanted to control the library service in detail.

Because of the level of reaction, the report was rewritten and discussed in the Culture Committee, and the City Council then passed it unanimously, without the controversial restrictions on media selections. Eight main points:

- Deichmanske library should be a focal meeting place for knowledge and culture
- Structurally, the library service encompass main library, community libraries and local libraries
- There should be a community library in each district (15). These can vary in size and service provision according to the location and tasks.
- Four community libraries will be allocated additional resources and are responsible for local library operation.

---

[27] I should emphasize that *strategy document* here refers to political documents, not those of the Oslo library service – which of course have their own service and strategy plans.

- The local library units will be more simply equipped than the community libraries. They can be modelled differently and have other cooperation… according to which local areas they are serving. The city council is asked to prepare a model for local libraries and suggested locations.

- The public library must be equipped to face the information society and to be an arena for integration in the multi-cultural city.

- The efforts to increase efficiency continue, which means to prioritize for instance self-service.

- Lending newspapers, magazines, music, and films continue. The library makes its own selection.

The report states that its basis is in the preamble from the public library act, and also central management/administration documents for Oslo city council. In addition, central political regulations for the Education Service[28], including school plans and strategies.

The central area for the library *is to lend out books and stimulate to reading* (p. 5). The report adds: *However, in order to fulfil its objective to promote enlightenment, education and other cultural activity, the library will supplement its central area with efforts which directly or indirectly will stimulate reading knowledge exchange, learning, and culture*.

Despite the changing conditions regarding the new main library plans, there is no new library report for Oslo to this day. The lack of a long-term strategy document may be interpreted as a sign of the library's invisibility in Oslo. The plan documents for Diagonale in Bjørvika are present, of course, but an updated library strategy is missing. The basis document for this plan is the previous report to the Storting, which means that the government policy guidelines have been updated, while the city of Oslo's has not. Consequently, the (written) political strategy for the public library service in Oslo is not concurrent with government guidelines. The ambitious plans for Nye Deichman are of course a different matter, but these are project plans, not local government plans for the entire service.

---

[28] Utdanningsetaten

As far as the local party programs are concerned, they mention the public library service to a varying degree. The parties heading the current administration, Høyre, Venstre, and KrF all have different approaches to this policy are. While Oslo Høyre *will [...] make its libraries better arenas for developing culture and knowledge and build a new Munch Museum in Bjørvika* (Oslo Høyre, 2011 p. 9), KrF's program does not contain any guidelines on library policy. Venstre is more verbose; the party specifically states an aim of completion of the New Deichman in 2015 and that this should be *the greatest library in the world* (Oslo Venstre, 2011 p. 20). Venstre is also promoting libraries role in integration, and want to establish two more community library units, and several service points throughout the city.

The opposition seems especially concerned with library services in the local communities, and one party mention the new main library building. SV specifically mentions longer opening hours and mentions that *Their role in the development of new communications and culture services will be strengthened* (Oslo SV, 2011). This is however the only time the library is mentioned in the program, and there is no reference to the new library in Bjørvika. According to Oscar, this does not reflect a lack of interest in or support of libraries: *Well, it is SV which is the library party, isn't it? We are, you know* [laughs]. *There are many active politicians in this party who has a very positive view of and experience with the library [...] now; the library community here in Oslo is clearly inspired by the move down to Bjørvika. So for SV, this is an important issue, and realizing this project is the single most important cultural issue the coming years[1]*. He supports the current trend of making libraries meeting places with a lot of activity, making it a meeting place. *For a long time the library have seemed to be at a standstill, a place where people either studies or drop by to borrow a book[2]*. The latest Library report (Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, 2009) was a product of the current Arbeiderparti-Sosialistisk Venstreparti-Senterparti[29] government coalition, and has been criticized of being partial to public libraries, paying less attention, for instance, to the role of academic libraries. So the SV nationally has a part in this report. And what Oscar says about the active library arena, stressing the meeting place aspects and the activity is in line with the vision in this report.

---

[29] Previously: Farmer's Party

Oslo Arbeiderparti *wants to improve the community library service. All boroughs should have a modern community library/branch library providing all citizens with access to literature, Internet, music, multimedia, and different types of cultural activities regardless of income. The local library is an important arena for learning, reading skills, social mobility, and finally for democracy and co-determination* (Oslo Arbeiderparti, 2011 p.31). Omer describes Arbeiderpartiet's take on library policy: *Well, we've been concerned with… there are two things. When we're negotiating the budget, we have for example been concerned with increasing accessibility, by increasing opening hours, for instance, keeping the libraries open in evening and weekends. We have also wanted libraries to have better financial conditions, so they can offer good quality material to their patrons. We see the library as a knowledge disseminator in many different contexts. […] We believe Oslo has been … what should I say? […] I would go so far as to say that we've been like a developing country when it comes to libraries[3]*. Rødt[30] (2011) is the only party explicitly expressing their support to a new main library in Bjørvika, but until that is finished, the main library needs more resources, for example to improve fire protection. Also, the party states that they want to reinforce the library service in Oslo, reopening the closed access points increasing allocations.

The public library policy of Oslo Fremskrittsparti (FrP) is summarized in four points, and aims to:

- *keep the Deichman Library as Oslo's central library*
- *invite new owners to get involved in library activities*
- *introduce a borrowing fee*
- *cover the costs for students to borrow books through school budgets*

(Oslo Progress Party, 2011 p. 10). FrP stands out with a library policy going in a new direction of market liberalization with new owners and borrowing fees.

Most noteworthy about the political parties' local library policy is its relative modest role. In a city where the decision has been made to invest in a new main library building, there is scarcely any mention of Deichman in connection to Bjørvika. Neither are there any other indications that this development is a central issue to any of the parties, with the exception of Venstre, which

---

[30] Rødt (Red Party) is a far-left party, currently with two representatives in the City Council

indicates quite optimistic goals for the new library. Høyre, who has been working actively in favour of the Bjørvika plans, only briefly mentions the library service, while the Munch museum plans are described in much more detail. When discussing the public library's position in party policies, some of informants stressed that they were expressing their own view, rather than that of the party. They were not saying that there were conflicting views necessarily, but some informants made a point of talking on behalf of their party, like Olivia from FrP presented the local party program, which she referred to throughout the interview, thus making it clear that the opinions she shared with me was also representative of her party.

One aspect found in several programs, is the focus on the library branches. Again, Venstre is the most specific, stating where and how many, while others are more general, mainly stating they want to strengthen the current services and the Venstre informant indicates during the interview that he pictures additional branches in the coming years.

The party programs are showing a varying degree of focus. Not only in terms of which aspects being highlighted, but perhaps even more the extent to which libraries are mentioned. All the party programs have some mention of public libraries, but only two mentions the Bjørvika project, and very few describe any clear library vision per se. For some parties, it is restricted to a brief mention (Høyre), while others (Venstre) devote more space to describe their policy lines. The Oslo informants, however, maintain that their parties do possess a great deal of vision concerning libraries, perhaps most pronounced with the informants from SV and V. And indeed the visions conveyed show awareness of a complex institution with a broad range of tasks, in terms of learning, cultural promotion and being social spaces. The FrP informant, Olivia, highlights the library's preservation task, keeping and making available older and less accessible material.

The outdated strategic plan implies that the library focus in Oslo is lacking. This is on the one hand surprising, seeing as there are concrete plans for a new building, a prestigious project that will colour the city's library service in the coming years. On the other hand – there have been several plans in the past which resulted in nothing – and perhaps the lacking implementation is not a result of changing political leadership, but the absence of an overall strategy exceeding

party politics. The 2005-document describes the library operations and services, but says little about the city's vision for the library. It also suggest among Oslo politicians, legitimacy concerning libraries is primarily of a pragmatic kind – and neither moral or cognitive in its nature.

The non-socialist City Council is not very familiar with the current government's Library report, but the informants representing the Oslo coalition all agree that the focus on the meeting place aspect is interesting and timely. Generally, the opposition is unimpressed by the 2009 report, as they find it lacking in vision. Olav says it is *chemically cleansed for any visionary ideas with regards to the library's role[4]*. Olive, from FrP, explains that she is not all that familiar with the report, but has brought her party's program, and reads the points concerning libraries. FrP is the only party wanting to introduce a membership fee, and cover school children's literary needs through the school budgets, instead of the library's. FrP stands out with their cost-cutting ideas. In a broader political view, it reflects their general policy lines on public spending and they are in that sense not surprising. But they are controversial in the sense that they stand very far apart from all the other parties, especially concerning this free-of-charge-principle, which was addressed in section 8.2.4.3

8.1.2 Denmark

The Norwegian and Danish preambles are quite similar; and indeed – the Norwegian act is based on the previous Danish one. The current Danish library act (LOV Nr. 30 Af 17/05/2000, 2000), however, quite explicitly formulates the material that should be made available:

The objective of the public libraries is to promote information, education and cultural activity by making available books, periodicals, talking books and other suitable material, such as recorded music and electronic information resources, including Internet and multimedia.

- *The public libraries must endeavour to make available videos.*

- *The public libraries promote municipal and government information and information about society in general.*

The first of the two added items tell us that videos are not among mandatory materials, but it is encouraged to include them in the collections. The second indicates that the public library's role in disseminating information to the public. In addition to providing services for children and adults, the act instruct municipalities to also offer library services to those who themselves cannot come to the library, an outreach program so to speak. As far as content specifications goes, the Danish, like the Norwegian act, mentions *quality, comprehensiveness and topicality* as selection criteria, but adds that *criteria alone must be the decisive factors and not any religious, moral or political views which might be expressed in the material*. It also requires cooperation between public and school libraries.

Concerning payment for services (which will later be discussed in 8.2.4.3), the Danish act does clearly state that there should be no cost for the library user. However, in section 20 and 29, there is exceptions from this provision; the library may charge users for *special services* or material where access is restricted and there is an agreement between library and supplier. The municipality may also sell knowledge services accumulated in the library.

The specific character of the Danish preamble formally institutionalizes the widespread library practice of offering a wide variety of media types. The specification regarding *municipal and governmental information* also highlights the comprehensiveness of the library's scope and extent as it appears in this Act.

On request from the Ministry of Culture, the Danish Agency for Libraries and Media published the report *The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society* (2010), which draws up new roles of public libraries. Although this document is not a product of a political process, it is worth noting in the sense that it addresses the current role of public libraries in Denmark and is aimed at developing the institution of public libraries. It draws on a previous report, *Future Library Services to Children* (2008), but with a broader focus on user groups. It takes into account *societal needs and new opportunities* (p. 2), the municipal reform of 2007, and as the title reveals; the partly a cohesive digital library and partly local physical library of the knowledge society. The new model of the library the committee has drawn up, lists the library's functions as an inspiration space, a learning space, a meeting space and a performative space (as mentioned in section 4.1). The report especially highlights how the interplay between these functions might

prove particularly fruitful, for instance (p. 8) when crossing experience and learning. Five main recommendations are given (p. 9):

1. Open libraries
2. Inspiration and learning
3. The Danish Digital Library
4. Partnerships
5. Professional development

The recent report on libraries in the knowledge society appears forward-looking with its focus on the balance between physical and digital public library services, and what kind of space the library needs to be. Emphasizing different aspects, it seems that several types of argumentation lay behind it. For one, it states that the promotion of culture and enlightenment is important, for instance through inspiration and partnerships with other cultural institutions, which suggest an **aesthetic and enlightening argumentation**. At the same time it mentions value-creating knowledge, which indicates an **economic argumentation**. This is further strengthened through the request for partnerships outside the public and civic, but also in business life. However, this is also used as an argument. The **social argumentation** is also found, in several of the above-mentioned points: the library serves a social purpose, and that is one reason for why extended opening hours are wanted. Also, partnerships can create a more vibrant environment, making it a more sociable place. Less visible perhaps is the political-mobilizing argumentation, but the focus on lifelong learning and providing all citizens with access to culture and knowledge can certainly be interpreted in that direction. This report, then, uses the whole range of argumentation for the existence and further development of public libraries – and returning to section 3.4, and Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen's library discourses; this seems to be a clear example of what *the dynamically focused and experience-oriented discourse* can result in. Of course, this a document made by library professionals, but since policy documents often are heavily influenced by the professional community it affects, presumably this will influence library policy in Denmark in the coming years.

From a theoretical perspective, the Danish library act is also an example of how the scope of libraries is made wide, thus further institutionalizing it on the one hand, with the broad – but specific – preamble. At the same time, it opens for fewer constraints – for instance by making

exceptions in the free use provision. It is a mark of something new in public library operation; stepping into a market where services are sold, not merely given. The Library Act and this recent report have both a pragmatic approach to the public library service; hence **pragmatic legitimacy** is a concept close at hand. At the same time they both express **cognitive legitimacy**, in the sense that they are updated and reaffirming of those missions and tasks the public libraries has had since long.

8.1.2.1 *Aarhus*

Aarhus libraries and citizen services are currently operating under the policy guidelines outlined in *Policy for Citizens' Services and Libraries 2011-2014*. The policy plan (strategic document?) is divided into five main sections:

- Synergy and Structure
- Inspiration and learning
- Media and Media Dissemination
- Developing Citizens' Services
- Prepare for the Urban Mediaspace

The first point, or goal, deals with synergy and structure. The City Council stresses the importance of the widespread physical access point throughout the city, and the closeness this gives the citizens to the institutions. There is no mention of expanding the structure, but that *the existing physical structure provides a good starting point for maintaining and developing Citizens' Services and Libraries as a pivotal culture-bearing institution in the 21st century* (p. 8). An important part of supporting synergy and structure is to make the libraries into community centres, *an essential ambition*, as it is worded in the Library plan. This means that libraries will serves as hubs of knowledge, inspiration, learning, culture, and experiences – all over the city. The strategy for accomplishing this is extensive cooperation with different actors, such as archives and museums, but also other public and private organizations. The central idea is that all activities are anchored locally, based on local demands.

The second goal for Aarhus libraries and Citizens' Services is to be a source of inspiration and learning, with lifelong learning as the main keyword, this including citizens of all ages. Since the library is an informal learning arena, it has the potential of reaching even those who might feel

that the regular education system represent a barrier to them. Being a learning arena requires not only a wide range of materials, but also inviting premises so that visitors will want to spend time there.

According to the library plan, the libraries in Aarhus should offer not only *traditional media*, but also new types – or *Internet Media*, as the plan states, which is in accordance with the national legislation (see previous section). Making Citizens' Services the one-stop shop for the public sector is Aarhus municipality's way of response to the demographic changes and increased complexity in the years to come. Although this does not involve the library service directly, it is connected due to the Multimedia Space, and the shared organization. The preparatory construction work commences in 2011, and the construction process lasts till 2015, when the opening is scheduled. In other words, the current library plan does not "cover" that time. However, preparing for the Urban Mediaspace is mentioned in the plan as a main point. It is described as *Aarhus' new democratic meeting place inviting and opening up to the city as well as the world* (Aarhus Kommune, 2010).

From Aarhus, the views expressed by the informants are quite similar; they connect democratic values to the library service. Also, the branch libraries' role as hubs in the local communities and the further development of this aspect is particularly stressed by Albert. Aron from the Liberals in Aarhus is on the same track, and emphasizes the importance of a widespread library network, community libraries, so that this quality really can have an impact where people live: …*So, that's been important while I've been involved [in local cultural politics], that we can maintain as many libraries as possible because many places they are the local culture centres. And according to our policy lines, we're going to have more [library units]*[5]. Alex, representing the Christian Democrats, explains that his political take on libraries is that they should be open, democratic spaces: *where you, regardless of origin or status can access knowledge, you can read, learn, get information about society and … well, anything really, and of course immerse yourself in texts, literature. To me it is a true privilege for a nation [to have a public library service], a society that depends on knowledge – which is the most important raw material in a country like Denmark*[6].

As far as party politics goes, the official program of Radikale Venstre's proclaims that the party will observe the development of the Urban Mediaspace closely, and is open to public library reform and innovation in the modern society (2009 p. 10).

De Konservative describes the public library as a substantial part of the democratic heritage (Århus Konservative Vælgerforening, 2009), and that they want to keep community libraries as important cultural transmitters. Their main focus is to increase cooperation between public libraries, school libraries and perhaps also local centres and archives (p. 24-25).

The policy plan states very clearly that Aarhus has an ambition of becoming a European Capital of Culture in 2017, and the Urban Media space is a step on the way towards fulfilling that goal. The core values of the project are the citizen as starting point, lifelong learning and community, diversity, and culture and experiences. Looking back at traditional library values, certainly knowledge and culture are among them. However, actively using expressions like: *the citizen as starting point*, *community diversity*, and *experiences* have a flavour of something more recent. The fact that the new library is so closely associated with "experience" is interesting on two main levels. For one, it says something about the arena Aarhus municipality wants to create. This library is not simply a library; it will also give visitors an "experience" of some sort. As mentioned earlier, there has been a focus on the role of the experience economy in Denmark for some time. Also, it goes to show that the culture and experience economy perhaps can be one myths or recipe used in the library sector at present. As mentioned in chapter 6.5.2 , Meyer & Rowan (1991) explain that such narratives, or myths, are created by the organizations themselves. There is no dictate saying that libraries need to offer their patrons an experience. But since organizations are adaptable and always struggling to survive, the actions, and perhaps especially the way they adapt and change, will *correspond with socially prescribed dictates*. As culture fuses with corporate life and create this "Experience Economy", it is perhaps not so strange that new library projects are becoming more in tune with this manner of thinking. Many of the politicians in all three cities have told about study tours to new libraries around the world, and most claim to have gained new insight into all the things a library can be and the experiences they now offer people – as a contrast to how they used to perceive libraries.

It seems the coordination and interaction efforts made between the library service and the citizen services are very much in line with the paragraph specifically encouraging municipal and government information. As the Danish library act is more specific, it gives clearer guidelines to the municipalities as to which direction the library service the government intends it to go.

8.1.3   The United Kingdom

The UK got its first Library Act as early as 1850, however limited, but it was not until the Public Libraries Act in 1919 that real developments were made, permitting counties to become library authorities, as well as letting library authorities to raise more funds for the service (Moore, 2004). The prevailing Library Act is the Public Libraries and Museums Act from 1964. When it was introduced it provided the public library sector with a strong foundation to help build the modern public library service in the country (Moore, 2004). It requires local authorities to:
Provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof. The 1964 Act also puts the overriding responsibility of supervision and promotion on the Secretary of State[31].

The UK has in recent years got two reports on public libraries from a national level, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Reports from 2000 and 2005. I 1999 the Culture Media and Sport Committee published *Libraries for All*, which was a policy guidance for local authorities. *Framework for the future* (Department for Culture, 2003) was the DCMS ten-year plan for modernizing the public library service, naming areas to prioritize, and consequently attempting establish a common understanding of role and purpose for public library services in England (Goulding, 2006 p. 337). Among them are:

2008 the Secretary of State launched the Library Service Modernization Review. According to the DCMS it will:
Review and define the Government's vision for a modern, world-class public library service. This Review sits in the context of [Framework for the Future](), the first ever national libraries strategy for the improvement and modernization of England's public library services which the

---

[31] Amended in 1997 to Welsh and Scottish ministers of Culture etc.

department published in 2003. Framework described three areas of activity which should be at the heart of libraries' modern mission:

- *Books, reading & learning*
- *Digital citizenship*
- *Community & civic values*

There was a mixed reception for the *Framework*, Goulding notes, while some did not find it forward-looking enough, others welcomed a clearer focus on three well-established – and internationally agreed upon – core areas.

In answer to the recession and subsequent budget cuts, current Minister of culture Ed Vaizey launched an expert support program which will work around ten library authorities to begin with, in order to secure *a place for public libraries at the heart of the Big Society (Department for Culture Media and Sports, 2010).* Among the suggestions from the minister was *shared services, merging functions, staffing across authorities, support from volunteers or the use of other community buildings.*

Although recognizing this as a sign of political interest in and focus on public libraries, Goulding (2006) detects both a positive and a negative tendency in the previous reports. English authorities have for some years had a focus on the social role public libraries can play, more popularly referred to as their capacity within "community building". The lack of updated legislation makes any government effort weighty.

In recent years, it seems like the **social argumentation** for public libraries have become more evident – and there are indications that the trend may even have started in the UK, with inventions such as Idea Stores. It is certainly traceable in the Framework, as is the **aesthetic and enlightening argumentation**. The focus on building community and civic values indicates a political mobilizing argumentation as well, while any economic argumentation is less evident.

The changing conditions in the UK, both the change in administration and the economic crisis are likely to cause major changes for the public library service. The increased focus on mergers, new alliances, and use of volunteers are designed to create a sustainable future, but might also be elements of long-term deinstitutionalization of UK public libraries. A decrease of professionally run library units, for example, may at least in part change the norm and value system that librarians have developed through training and professional cooperation. Introducing "foreign" elements might be helpful in sustaining a service or producing new ideas, but the professional field will be weakened – if not the entire library service.

8.1.3.1   Birmingham

Birmingham City Council has a planning framework for the Library and Archive Service for 2010 to 2011. It is made by the Environment and Culture Directorate, which bases it on five *strategic outcomes* including economic success, health, safety and high quality big city life, as well as people actively partaking in the community (2010). The service delivery plan outlines the extent of the service, a list of partnerships, and includes a section where the *profile of the main customers* is described.

Evidently, no long term strategy is related to this document. However, Birmingham does have *The Big City Plan* (2010), which is a master plan aimed at revitalizing and expanding the city centre in the course of the next 20 years. Because of renewed challenges in the shape of globalization, increased competition together with economic, social and environmental pressure, the plan describes, the motivation for this strategy is found in the need to strengthen and sustain the economy in order to secure future success. The city centre plays an important role here, and the plan describes this area as *a source of creativity, culture and consumption* (p 8). This of course includes the library, which is situated in one of the seven quarters the plan. The Big City Plan outlines six main objectives intended to transform the city centre, making it a:

- Liveable city
- Connected city
- Authentic city
- Knowledge city
- Creative city

146

- Smart city

The new main library, situated in the Westside district is of course part of this major Birmingham transformation, which is claimed to be number one in Britain as far as comprehensiveness and ambition goes. The new library is described as *underpinning the wider regeneration of the city's 'westside'.* And that it is intended to *further strengthen the city as a hub for major civic and culture activities* (p. 16).

None of the Birmingham or UK party programs had any explicit mention of public library policy. Asking the informants about their party's take on public library policy returned varying responses. Bernard starts off by saying that he was speaking on his own behalf, and not necessarily that of the Conservative Party. However, he does refer to it as *our policy*, when he explains that *at the moment, thank goodness, our policy on public libraries is we need public libraries. We want to make the new central library the centre of provision…*

The Labour party, represented by Bob, former Councillor for sports and leisure, exhibits more awareness and explain that it is Labour view that libraries have an essential place in communities, that they are focal points, meeting places and even identity building for the environment in which they operate: *local library should provide services and facilities that reflect the local community, and so be a hub in the community. I think they are very important with access to knowledge, information and for learning.*

Barry describes the Liberal Democrats take on public library policy as follows: *I haven't got a clue! I don't know! Do we have policies when it comes to public libraries? Well… we should. I've got my view and priorities, my point of view.*

As mentioned, neither the Liberal Democrats Party manifesto (2010) or any of the other party programs mentions public libraries – so if Barry does not know his party's stand it is because officially, they have taken none. As a councillor, his job is to work with library matters, but this work will not be based on a set of superior guidelines. A lack of policy guidelines could make him and his fellow party members more susceptible to input from the professional community. As Usherwood (1993) notes, the decision-making process locally is not necessarily a result of

party politics or a preconceive vision, it could also be a result of cooperation with the library professionals, or indeed administrative staff in the city council.

As mentioned in connection with Oslo's long-term library strategy, the absence of it can be interpreted as a lack of vision or simply a lack of interest – the latter does seem somewhat unlikely as the investment in a new main library sets a standard for the city's library profile. It raises a question as to the perceived political importance of the library service as a whole – not just the main library which obviously brings both attention and prestige and gives both the service and the city a general lift.

While the overall library policy of the UK might lack (at least the evident) **economic argumentation,** it is all the more visible in Birmingham through the Big City Plan. This is of course not a library strategy document per se, but is still includes the new Central Library as an important component.

The lack of a political strategy document mapping out a library vision for the city is perhaps just as revealing as an existing one. Like the Oslo case, it does indicate a lack of focus – however the major difference is that Birmingham has landed on a project not merely a new library, but *the biggest public library in British and European history* (Tivnan, 2011).

8.1.4 Summing up

Looking at these three cases with a bird's eye perspective, there are some elements that clearly separate the cases and others that show similarities.

Common for Norway, Denmark, and England is the lack of national allocations directed at the library service particularly, as it has been in the past (Goulding, 2006). As Goulding observes *the local nature of public library services can be characterized as a tension between the discourses of 'centralized-decentralization' on the one hand and 'new localism' on the other* (p. 23). Earlier, the degree of national control on local execution – not only concerning public libraries services but other services as well – probably worked in favour of a strong institutionalization on the field. There has been a long-term trend of leaving more and more responsibility to local authorities, and this might be a step in the opposite direction. Giving way for flexibility and adaptation, however,

might also be how the public library service can adjust and make itself more relevant than what would be possible under centralized control with less flexibility. The extent of local self-determination will reflect itself in variation not only when it comes to economy and budgets, but also concerning priority and planning. From the first public library acts were established, financing has been an important issue, and throughout the Nordic countries there were provisions on that topic. These governmental allocations to libraries were abandoned in Denmark and Norway at the same time (1984 and 1986 respectively). After this, the local councils decided library allocations themselves, which of course could work either way for the local library service, depending on the current political administration. There are of course still given state funding through government bodies, but not towards general operation – mainly for projects or other initiatives.

The situation today gives reason to say that public libraries are (formally, but perhaps also informally) more strongly institutionalized in Norway and Denmark than in England. As shown in the introductory chapters, the development of public libraries began earlier in the UK than in the Scandinavian countries. England got its first library act as early as 1850, although this was of a very limited scale. Nevertheless, the Nordic countries have since long surpassed England, both in terms of updated legislation, not to mention spending per capita. I mentioned in chapter 7, the numbers for each country (approximate figures):

Country	Media expenditure, in total	Media expenditure, per capita
Norway	24,000,000 USD	5.2 USD
Denmark	62,000,000 USD	10.5 USD
UK	206,000,000 USD	3.1 USD

While the library tradition is long and solid in all three countries – in England that is perhaps just as important as updated legislation as the legal tradition there is not constitutional as in Scandinavia – formally, the position of English public libraries appears weaker than in Scandinavia. The question remains: Would a new preamble for instance influence in a positive or a negative manner, considering the economic situation and considerations?

The current-most government developed library reports and plans are however not that different when it comes to priority areas. They take into account digital development, the library as a community builder/social arena, and emphasize the learning and knowledge elements of public libraries, for all age groups, but perhaps especially for children, young people and immigrants. This shows that the library community's *dynamically focused and experience-oriented discourse* has made the transition from the professional community over to the political environment – at least to some extent. Like Hedemark (2009) found, this is often not the case with library discourses, most stay within the professional community and never reach the attention of the general public through media. In my opinion, new library projects are potential triggering factors for this transition, as they force a focus on both mission and operations.

These priorities are also reflected in the manner in which each city administers its library service. Aarhus stands out as the city where strategic library planning have come the farthest. The *2011-2014 Library Plan* outlines the direction in which the library and citizens' services are going. Long-term strategic documents/plans for the library services in Oslo and Birmingham have not been produced. The most current document outlining Oslo's library policy is from 2005, at which point the current Bjørvika project plans had not yet been made – although there were plans of a new main library building. This document describes operations and services, rather than providing vision. It is mainly focused on administrative traits of the library service, like content or service points. It is not a document signalling any political strategy for the Oslo library service. Today, there are of course project plans published, and these indicate what the city wants with the new *main* library. But the overall strategy and vision for the library service as a whole is still missing. This, I consider a sign of the library service relatively weak position in Oslo. The lack of formal strategy indicates a weaker institutionalization of the city's library service, and a more vulnerable position.

In Birmingham, the service delivery plan is a hands-on document without any strategic ambition. There has not been made any future strategy for the library service, however the Council's Big City Plan sketches out the city's strategic ambition for the next 20 years. This is a plan the (main) library is an important part of, being situated in one of the downtown areas included in the plan. The available documentation indicates that although lacking in strategic planning for the library

service, Birmingham shares with Aarhus a long-term city development focus, in which the library development is incorporated. The fact that Oslo has not made similar plans might be related to the still early stage of the process. Still – the absence of separate long-term strategies for libraries tells a tale of possible disregard and lack of urgency. Over time, this lack of attention from the administrative bodies in Oslo and Birmingham could leave the library service less resilient to outside pressure, and could also be a negative factor for the how the library service' is perceived from the outside.

What the focus on city development also suggests, is an intrinsic economic instrumentality in Aarhus and Birmingham. On Aarhus' part, this somewhat reflects the *Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society*-report in part, where development and innovation is one of the elements. Although it is not novel using economic instrumentality to promote a public library service – in the late 19th century it was important for controlling workers and thus increasing productivity 3.1 – the manner in which it seems to be used now is new. The idea that the presence of a strong library service will promote innovation or improve a city's image, making it a more interesting spot for investment has maybe been had before, but it has really not been formulated or promoted as it is now.

I would like to add that although this project is concerned with politicians' library perceptions; as far as policy development is concerned the role of government officials or local bureaucrats could also influence greatly. Hence, the degree to which policy guidelines and political strategy plans are initiated and implemented could also reflect the position of public libraries within this group.

The overall impression is that the public library's position in party politics is not very strong. This could be a result of the public library's problem of being a "secondary institution", to which I will return in 8.2.5 – that it is not perceived as a "primary" institution, for neither education (like schools) or culture (like theatres or museums), and thus easier to ignore politically. During the interviews, the informants still give the impression of taking great interest in the subject matter, which they probably do. At the same time, the nature of the interview situation and the data production of which I am part, could of course affect their statements in the sense that they come across as more obliging than they would if I was not an LIS PhD, but had a more neutral

151

background. Some informants stressed that they were speaking for themselves, not necessarily the party. But despite any discrepancies between the individual party member and the official party program, it is likely that there are links, at least regarding the bigger lines.

8.2 Public library perceptions: The general

Normative institutional theory puts emphasis on the rule-like norms organizations develop over time. These norms originate in values specific for that entity, and contribute to stability and longevity. But the external environment also connects values and norms to institutions, and they are not necessarily concurrent. This section is especially connected to the first of the four research questions: *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?* I will take a closer look at how the informants perceive the public library normatively, which roles, tasks and boundaries they see, and through their statements try and discern which norms and values this reflects. For example: How has their own library experience coloured their view of what a library should be and contain? Do the informants' attitudes towards the library structure say something about the norms for what a library should be?

While the relevance of this section might be easiest to relate to the first research question, there is no doubt that there are points to be made with regards to the other three, especially perhaps the second: *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?*

8.2.1 Public library experience

Practically all the informants report having a personal relationship with the public library; meaning they have used it, some still use it; most have used it actively in their childhood, and used the institutional library when they went to university, and now they have observed their own children become library users. Oswald in Oslo says growing up in a small town; the library was present all through his childhood and adolescence: *The public library was one of the most important cultural institutions, as well as an important meeting place. This was before the era of*

shopping centres, and I've noticed they somehow... have taken over as local meeting points. But in my childhood, the library was important and interesting, there you met people and of course borrowed books. You borrowed more books than you could read [...].[7] Very few are active library users today, explaining it generally with time or economy – they are now able to buy what books they want to read. Albert is one of those who still uses the library in his leisure time, and explains that to him it has always been a place of knowledge, and a place he have become inspired. Now, he borrows less, but uses *it more as a community centre*[8].

Olav express an eager interested in libraries, and visits them whenever he travels other cities: *I have to visit the public library no matter where I go, if it's the Canary Islands or Nice, or... I always use holidays and travels to stop by a library; I find it interesting to see how they do things other places*[9]. But when it comes to libraries in general, most of the informants only talk about study visits they have done, for instance to London (the Idea Store in White Chapel), Amsterdam, and Rotterdam. These trips seem to have been inspiring, because there is repeated mention of how they triggered new perspectives on libraries, both in terms of architecture and operation. University libraries are also mentioned by a few of the younger respondents, as an important place for them. Olive from, is currently doing her M.A., and uses the University library in Oslo every day.

In Aarhus, the informants admit having broadened their "library perspective" after working politically with the institution. Aron says: *I perceive it less as just a book-lending agency, and more as a cultural citizen centre, or with the potential of becoming a citizen centre. I see it more as a cultural establishment now than I did earlier, when I was merely a place to borrow books and things, in a more narrow sense. So yes, my view has been broadened some*[10]. From Birmingham, Barry gives a similar statement. He says that his cooperation with the library management has changed his outlook on public libraries in general and convinced him that the new central library is needed – and that a library is much more than *a place to get books*.

The idea of creating citizen centres is quite clear with the informants from Aarhus, I note, and attribute this to the manner in which the library service is organized, together with the Citizens' Services. Adding this feature to (some of the) libraries can be perceived as a way of increasing

the library's pragmatic legitimacy – as it will be more of an everyday problem-solver – among politicians and users alike. Audunson's survey (2001) showed that users ranked the library's role as a practical problem solver highest. If this is a general sentiment among Aarhus patrons, this can contribute to a reinforcement of the library's pragmatic legitimacy.

Usherwood (1993) found that many of his respondents knew the library first hand, as users. And likewise, practically all the informants in this study have user experience. They have used the library actively in their childhood, and for the most part have fond memories of that, like Oswald. However, for most this personal use experience is not from the present tense. Few describe themselves as active library patrons today, but some are and some use it primarily with their children or grandchildren. Most describe themselves as readers, but that they have too many books at home, prefer to buy their reading material, or simply that they have too little time to visit the library.

Their *current* first-hand knowledge about libraries comes from their role as politicians. Several explain that their image of libraries have changed while working with library issues. This of course because they have seen more libraries, both in their local area, other counties, as well as abroad – while on study trips with this specific purpose. And as Usherwood (1993) also found, it seems that the cooperation with the professional community is important. Several of the informants in all three cities claim to have learned more about libraries because they are in more frequent contact with professionals, especially the management. This applies particularly to the committee leaders and the informants who have worked the longest in the cultural committee. So one assumption is that when it comes to political library strategy, a forceful library management working tightly with the city councils might be just as important as the political administration – the former usually stays longer and can work more long-term as far as strategy goes. A politician might come in power without any background from culture policy, and end up being influenced by the professional community. Like Barry – who says it was through conversations with the library director, he has come to realize that the vision of libraries is *much wider than just a place to get books*. In Oslo, Ophelia, one of the newest members of the committee, was very clear about having limited knowledge due to her recent joining. This exemplify how cooperation between different groups (here: the owners and the professionals) can widen the scope and create

understanding – and vice versa. Perhaps is it the politicians who adopt myths and recipes from the library community?

It is not surprising, of course, that the informants report of a broadened view of the library, more insight, or new ideas. As politicians in cities where they are planning new library investments, they are perhaps more than most cultural politicians involved in a process where they have to look closer at an institution they know mostly from their childhood – with some exceptions. They have been abroad looking at library projects, been shown local endeavours, met with librarians and project leaders.

8.2.2   Public library inspiration

As mentioned, in the introduction, there is somewhat a trend where major library buildings are built, with impressive architecture and innovative services.
Several of the informants have explained that through their work on the culture committee (or similar) they have gained new insight in what libraries can be and the work that goes on there. As the plans for new libraries progressed, most have visited several other library projects (completed and planned) domestically and internationally. In the previous section,

The branch specialization mentioned in the previous section by Oliver is a notion based on the idea that libraries can be access point in several senses: *You find information, culture, and knowledge, but you can also use it as a gateway to other sources or other institutions.* His inspiration comes from a visit to White Chapel's Idea Store in London, where, he sees how interest in a topic can generate more interest in other topics, guided by the library, but perhaps not facilitated by it.

While Olivia from the FrP emphasize the use of membership fee, which she saw in Amsterdam and Rotterdam libraries, but expresses a general admiration for how the Dutch library service was organized, and how the central libraries in Rotterdam and Amsterdam appeared and was run. In her view, the Amsterdam library should be used as a template for New Deichman in Oslo. Oscar from the Socialist Left talks about the use of libraries as an instrument in city development in London's Eastern boroughs, where strategic location has been one of the key elements: *…and*

they [idea stores] are a source of inspiration, you know, when it comes to the planning in Groruddalen[32] and also for Deichman, the new central library[11].

Albert tells of inspiration from a – for him – unlikely source: American libraries: *My expectations of American libraries were not high, but this library in Queens actually inspired me. It was partly educating people, partly offering insight into their own culture, and partly arranging cultural events for children as well as adults – of all ages. It was truly a citizens' centre. And that's where I think the future lays[12].* A similar view is expressed by Bob, however he got his main inspiration from Singapore after a committee visit, where he found they were very innovative not only in their service spectre, but also with regards to how they attracted people to come to the library. Generally, I get the impression that each informant has taken notice of different details or aspects of the libraries they have visited. There is no "we should make our library like the one in Seattle", but more genuine fascination of how things can be done – perhaps especially when it comes to bringing people in and making them want to stay. What is clear is that all aspects of inspiration have no singular source, but are found in libraries on different continents. Making study trips to innovative libraries are one way of creating a shared view of what innovative services should be, and it becomes self-reinforcing when politicians, projects staff and librarians travel to similar projects. I would say that this is in part creating a myth, a recipe for how things are done, showing others what works. In a conversation with library director Brian Gambles, he said: *Your reaction to all of them is quite similar, actually: "I like that bit... and I wonder why on earth they did that. That's very strange, or that feels all wrong". I don't want to lift the whole thing and put it down here. But just borrow a little, some of the experience.*

So there will always be part of the trend, some of the recipe that is borrowed, because for most projects, it is important with the local connection and at least some distinctive features. In the library community, like in other practice fields, there will always be developments in the forefront, to which others will be looking and be inspired by. But as Mr Gambles here said, there will usually just be elements that are "copied". Perhaps the myths are not the specifics of each project, but the fact that they are built in the same manner: Eye-catching, million dollar architectonic marvels, not only thought of as libraries, but as a mark of the image the city wants?

---

[32] Borough on the eastern outskirts of Oslo

Big cities investing in arts and culture by constructing major building seems to be an international trend, like some have pointed at (Rasmussen, et al., 2011), and it is tempting to link this to city development trends rather than library trends.

It seems like the visits to a large extent have been to the same library projects. This is likely to create a similar image on the public library field of what a major innovative library project should be; thus establishing a **myth** of what constitutes an innovative landmark library. Adopting such myths, or elements of them, then creates a type of mimetic isomorphy. It is perhaps not that the times are so uncertain as such, but making such heavily investments is perhaps easier knowing that inspiration comes from projects that have worked well for other cities.

8.2.3   Public library roles

The different roles of public libraries is a topic of particular interest when we discuss what kind of libraries we want in the future, and which strategies to take moving towards that goal. Four major roles are often brought forward, dealing each with knowledge; culture, information; and the social aspects (Andersson & Skot-Hansen 1994). These roles are of course not mutually exclusive. It is not only accepted, but indeed expected, that public libraries offer variety and are different things to different people. Thus, accepting the library as a multifaceted place is easy enough. It is more of a challenge to express which part that carries more weight – what is the core of the library service, in the opinion of the owners? In this section, I present the main findings related to the public library profiles; the knowledge space, the culture space, the social space and the information space.

8.2.3.1   The Knowledge space

Knowledge and learning is – although worded in different ways – the role most frequently brought up as the library's most central in all case cities. The informants seem to acknowledge the public library's multiple roles. They all talk about culture, about knowledge, about technology, about conservation, about the meeting place. *The library has an array of functions in society* Oscar says: *It is wrong to regard it as a place for just reading[13].* But it is the notion of libraries as places for learning that seems to be at the public library core: This is apparent among

the informants in all three cities, and is seemingly not connected to party affiliation or ideological stand.

I'll be careful not to emphasize one aspect over another, but clearly it is an arena for knowledge and experience. I'd stress that the most, that in principle everyone has the same democratic right to access a knowledge source – and the library is their access point[14]. Olav says. He finds it difficult to choose one aspect over another, but puts the most emphasis on the library as a learning and knowledge centre, and adds the experience as equally important. *It should be an arena where you can tap into practically all sorts of knowledge, the common (allmenn) knowledge, and the specialized knowledge when you are looking for something in particular. But it should come across as an experience*. He stresses that he means nothing like a show or a happening, but what is related to culture, a meeting with an author for example. ... *the experience is the cultural bit, the learning and knowledge is the more factual bit.[15]*

Olav and Oscar here talks about the general role of the library as a knowledge centre. Other informants are more specific. Especially in Birmingham, the informants portray a clear focus on literacy. They express concern over the fact that illiteracy is a problem still, even in mandatory school societies like the British. Since those adults struggling with reading and writing have left the school system, the aspect of lifelong learning in libraries becomes potentially more important. Barry believes the public libraries most important role is supporting the fight against illiteracy: *especially when you consider that we have a very large population, inner city with English as a second language. So it's a way of teaching them English. Say, you know, between us **here**, the public take for granted the fact that we can read and write quite adequately. We're quite fortunate. But there are people out there who can't ...*

Yet another aspect of the knowledge and learning-related role is the concept *of general education and enlightenment*. In Norwegian the term is *dannelse*, much the same as the German *bildung*. Its meaning includes a person's knowledge of general subjects, especially culture and arts, but also although good upbringing and awareness of what is considered proper and good. Traditionally promoting general education was among the main missions of the public library, but as society

has changed, this term is decreasingly used in connection to the public library. Especially Oswald and Alex are supporters of the library's role in general education.

If I have to give priority, I'll have to say that to me learning continues to be the most important thing about the library. General education. The fact that you, once you go inside, can experience lifelong learning, you have access to learning your entire life. But having said that, I think the library should contain other things as well, because learning, education, these thing need a frame, it takes motivation to let yourself be educated no matter age[16]. (Alex)

After emphasizing the role as a knowledge centre, several informants continue to link it to the fact that it is free for everyone to use, and that these two aspects together are the most important things about the public library service. Bob in Birmingham and Alex in Aarhus both use strong wording when they explain their view. They find that free access to information and knowledge is a direct reflection on a society, and the democracy institution. *I don't think you get free library services in countries that like to restrict information. And that are not open, free and democratic in the way that Britain and other western countries are,* Bob says.

The statements, and even most of the interviews, point very much in the same direction, that the library first and foremost is a place for knowledge and learning – on different levels, for different groups. Yes, it is a social place, and yes there should be room for a range of cultural expression. But the core is knowledge and education – in the wide sense of the word. General education is mentioned by several, surprising perhaps as this is a concept connected to the very origin of libraries, when the policy makers had a much more top-down approach to people. Promoting literacy is another aspect, emphasized in Birmingham more than in Oslo and Aarhus, which probably is related to local socio-demographic issues. These results are much in line with what Audunson (2001; 2005) found, that is the role as a knowledge disseminator and a place for general education which is ranked highest.

The fact that several informants connect this knowledge role with the well-established norm of a free public library service tells us something about the values they relate to the institution. Equality and freedom are two such values, which are reflected in norms telling us what libraries

should be and do: be open to all, and give free access to a common knowledge base. While Usherwood (1993) observed that there tended to be different priorities according to party affiliation, this topic did not show any tendencies of that nature among the informants in this study. Quite the contrary – from the socialist left to the conservative right there was a sort of general consensus on the core mission of libraries.

8.2.3.2   *The Social space*

While the knowledge space most often is brought up as the most important role of the library, the *social library*, or the library as a *meeting place* is frequently referred to as an increasingly important capacity for the public library. So is the case for the informants. Several bring it up on their own initiative, especially when talking about inspirational library projects elsewhere. Others, like Barry say they have only become familiar with this aspect of the library since familiarizing themselves with it as politicians. They use terms like community centre, community hub, meeting place, civic centre to describe the "social" library.

The Norwegian library report, as mentioned in 8.1.1, devotes a great deal of space to the potential meeting place public libraries offers. And although the non-socialist respondents are generally sceptical or unfamiliar with the report, they do give this initiative some credit. Only one informant, Olivia from the Norwegian FrP, first expresses disbelief in the idea that the library should be a place for social interaction and community building. There are other arenas where people can fill such needs, she says, and exemplifies with Litteraturhuset[33] in Oslo, a place she finds much more suitable. On reference to the Library report, (Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, 2009) where the library as a meeting place was given considerable space, she explains she has not read it, but that she is not opposed to developing this aspect further – *if it encourage people to seek knowledge*, as she says.

She is not the only one who talks about the library's social function as a result of or an access point to the library's content. Oliver (Chr.-Dem) says the social arena the library can offer must

---

[33] Litteraturhuset (The House of Literature) is a privately funded center that aims to communicate and promote interest in literature and reading, as well as freedom of speech issues. Arranges lectures, debates, workshops and so on. It is inspired by a German movement.

be seen in direct connection to why we want people to come to the library. He expresses some concern that it can become a "shelter". *I'm thinking that first and foremost it must be a meeting place with a purpose. That is has an objective, driven towards a result. You can't demand that everyone who comes should have a specific agenda, but the libraries should have an agenda for how they meet people.*[17]

Other informants, who also rank the knowledge role highest, see the social aspect of libraries more in connection with the cultural output in libraries. Again others see the library as a meeting place simply as a consequence of it being a place in the community where people come for different reasons. Albert tells about a committee trip to a library in Queens, New York, where he *almost had an epiphany* as to which role the library can play socially and culturally: *My expectations of American libraries were not high, but I was amazingly inspired by seeing this library where people in part became educated, in part given insight in their own culture, and also had an array of cultural activities both for children and adults. It was a true citizen centre.*[18] He believes this social role of libraries is becoming increasingly important, and that in a few decades the roles might be ranked differently. He is not alone in this reasoning. Informants from Birmingham and Oslo (socialist) are expressing similar sentiments, also when it comes to their own "awareness" of the library having a social role in the community – this is something they have learned while working on library issues, especially the individual building projects. The social dimension of libraries is often a dimension of educational or culture-related activities. But especially the Aarhus informants, point at another aspect, namely the library's role as a civic space. Their comments suggest that they there try to operationalize it, with the cooperation between the Citizens Services and the public libraries. The shared administration between Libraries and Citizens Services is also a clear signal of further promoting this aspect of the library.

Alex states that the social library already is a big part of the libraries' agenda in Aarhus, and that this is in partly the reason why they wish to develop libraries into citizens' centres, where the library functions are the core, but with the added value of for example – like the Citizens Services. His colleague agrees: *From being "merely" a knowledge centre, it is also now a citizen*

centre. This angle is becoming increasingly strong. Of course it should be a knowledge centre at the core, but it needs to be more than that[19]. (Albert).

In other words, the Aarhus informants are strong supporters of expanding the library into a citizen centre – it is after all part of their strategy plan – and they find it adds to the library's knowledge capacity. As Albert implies here the *knowledge centre* is not sufficient. Now, creating this focal point for citizen's services could on one hand strengthen the library's role and give it a more immediate place in people's conscience. On the other hand, one can argue that any such expansion will water down the library's core services. However in this case, it seems rather that the Citizens Services is a logical and also relevant part of the library – an extension, rather than an addition. Having a one-stop-shop for most types of information and services will probably make sense to the general public, too, hence making it a legitimate move – regardless of the strategy or motives behind it. As mentioned in 7.2.2 patrons both know about and use the new "facility" (Danielsen & Eckeroth, 2010), which shows that it carries legitimacy – not only with the owners, but also the users. Another, more pragmatic aspect is the cost savings for the city. If the success continues with the Multimedia Space, creating libraries with this type of service could very well become an example others will follow even outside Denmark.

Another aspect of the Civic space is the free exchange of opinions. Libraries are perhaps not well-known as arenas for debate, but according to the informants in Aarhus, the library is sometimes used for this purpose, and they find it a natural spot for such endeavours. Using the library for this type of venture library has been discussed in Norway after Litteraturhuset was opened in 2007. All the Oslo informants uses this as an example of a successful arena for public debate, and a few mentions that this is a capacity the library could – or should – assume. Others, like Olav, says that in a smaller city the library could be a natural arena for debate, but that in Oslo there is room for both: *In principle the same debates could have been held in the library, on the other hand it is not the library's task to be such an extensive arena for discussion as Litteraturhuset[20].* Olivia, on the other hand, believes the library could be a better place, because Litteraturhuset has much more narrow user groups than the library, where the threshold is lower and less of a barrier to enter.

As I note in section 1.1, the library's meeting place role or potential has been given increased attention from national authorities, judging by documents such as *Framework for the Future*, St.melding 23, (and reports written on government request such as Bibliotekreform 2014 and Folkebibliotek i Vidensamfunnet.) This indicates that this part of public library operations are gradually becoming institutionalized and perceived as a natural consequence of the changes the library space have undergone – from being a silent studying area to facilitating different user groups' needs in different life cycles.

The social aspect of the library's mission shows tendencies of a more ideological dissent among the informants. Those representing the non-socialist parties in Oslo are more explicitly goal oriented, or concerned about whether the nature of this social space can in some way dissolve knowledge acquirement, that it is oriented towards a knowledge-oriented purpose for the individual. It seems that the meeting place-aspect in their view should be having a purpose beyond the social value. The informants from the socialist parties, and non-socialist parties in Aarhus and Birmingham are also aware and in favour of libraries playing a role as a community centre, but tend to emphasize this as a good in itself, seemingly a stronger element of social instrumentality, where cultural activities are used as a means of creating social development and integration.

In Audunson's study (2001; 2005) the meeting place role of public libraries was ranked lowest by the respondents, politicians included. Now, although the nature of this research is different, there is reason to believe that an increased awareness in general might have contributed to a shift. It is perhaps not ranked highest, but it is repeatedly mentioned as important, and with the potential of becoming even more so in years to come.

8.2.3.3   The Culture space

Even though the majority of the informants emphasize that the library most important role is as a knowledge institution, they still talk of it as a *culture institution*. Oswald, the city councillor of culture and education in Oslo stresses this point, using the term in terms of fine arts and high culture, and the library as a promoter of general education. He ties this closely to literature: *Some of us can find real meaning through literature, and love literature for itself. Because people need*

something to live for, not just something to live off, you know. It is both a knowledge institution and a cultural institution[21]. He continues by saying that the public library is the one cultural institution that is used the most, and the sum of all those three factors, makes it the most important cultural institution we have. And while he ranked the knowledge role as most important, his number one task is related to fiction: *The public library's most important task is to disseminate literature, I think - if I have to choose. But there aren't really contradictions in that statement and in having all the other things we have talked about[22]* (knowledge, social hub, synergies). Oswald says he has a basic disagreement with the current Minister of Culture who tends to perceive culture as an instrument for different political goals, reflecting a view on culture he does not share.

Fellow party member Ophelia expresses concern about high culture versus entertainment in libraries. She believes the library is a place where quality should be a primary concern when selecting material. Entertainment is, she muses, not the library's task to provide. This view is also shared by other informants, like Olivia and Alex.

Several informants, especially in Oslo, also refer to the library as the most important cultural institution – mainly because it is the one used by the highest number of people. When I ask them to compare it to other culture institutions, like theatres or museums, almost everyone immediately reply that the difference between the library and other arenas – except the cost – is the fact that libraries requires a much higher degree of effort on the part of the visitors. Ophelia says: *In the library, you're not a passive recipient of culture. [There] you are active, you go seeking it out, and while you're there you take action, whether it is related to knowledge or culture.[23]* Other aspects they mention are the diversity of services, which makes libraries interesting to the entire population, while other institutions often have a more narrow audience.

It is clear that even though the informants may range the knowledge aspect of the public library highest, they also clearly consider the library as a culture centre. Employing the argumentation is that cultural initiatives should be backed with public funds; this suggests an aesthetic instrumentality, a view I have not found with any of the other informants, but Oswald. He is

promoting is the aesthetic value of libraries, which implies a value-based culture view - that culture and arts of good quality are valuable in their own right.

Almost all the informants support libraries displaying other cultural expressions than literature, or using other expressions to impart it to an audience / at least up to a point. The exception is Olivia who thinks libraries should not be culture centres, since they in her view are information points. She exercise a much more restricted norm set for public libraries than any of the other informants, and express less interest in developing it further. The ideological platform of her party, which is based on a desire to reduce public sector in order to benefit private business initiatives, is of course an important factor.

8.2.3.4 *The Information space*

Few respondents rank the library's information capacity first. Olivia from the FrP, however, does see this as the most important role for public libraries, helping people with their day-to-day information needs.

However, many mention information provision as an extension of the knowledge space, and the two terms "knowledge" and "information" often occur in pairs. While knowledge frequently is used in connection with learning – and vice versa, information is talked of as a response to practical needs people might have and come to the library to solve. Or here, both connected to democracy:

I think they are very important with regards to access to knowledge, and information, I think they say something about the whole institution of democracy. Karl Marx wrote Das Capital sitting in a British library! And he commented that he found it remarkable that the British capitalist system provided all of this data that was allowing him to deconstruct what was going on. And that's about being open, being democratic and providing information in an unrestricted way. (Bob)

In Aarhus, and among the Aarhus informants, the information aspect is perhaps more related to the library than in Oslo or Birmingham, due to the co-location of some libraries and citizens service centres, which is due to be expanded with the new Multimedia Space.

Traditionally, this role as an everyday problem-solver, a place you turn to for answers to immediate questions, have been an important one. As technology and Internet have made all sorts of information more ready available to many, perhaps the role as an Information Centre has been overshadowed by the more complex knowledge role. Integrating Citizen's Services with libraries in Aarhus might have a reversing effect on this trend; direct information services to the city's population in libraries add to their role as information disseminators. Arguing in favour of the public library as an information space might be the closest we come the pragmatic legitimacy, as Suchmann describes it (1995).

8.2.3.5   *Summing up*

In these sections, I have presented views on the public library roles. That includes priorities, thoughts on how they complement each other, and which ones are most relevant. There seem to be a broad awareness of the different roles of libraries, to the extent that observing the different library roles an organizational recipe seems legitimate. It is not only accepted but expected that public libraries are places of culture, knowledge and learning, information and offering a social space. This is also to some extent established formally, through legislation or policy documents.

The knowledge space public libraries provide is emphasized by informants in all three cities. Its importance in this respect is tied both to aspects such as general education and the citizens' rights. The strong knowledge focus could be a result of several factors. For one, public libraries have since their origin been intended as learning spaces, so this alone is nothing new. Another reason might be the general raised attention regarding the "knowledge society" in which we live.

The library's social space has gained a lot of attention in recent years, both within the professional community, but also among politicians and other stakeholders. The informants seem to share this awareness and interest, but there is a difference in how they describe and argue in favour of it. The informants from the non-socialist parties in Oslo are keen to tie the social aspect to knowledge related activities, expressing some concern that the library will become just a hang-out, when there should be purpose behind the action there. The representatives of the socialist parties seem to have a different take, and applying Vestheim's model of instrumentality, what I can describe as a social instrumentality, where the social interaction in the library is a good in

itself, because it contributes to social development, perhaps especially integration is mentioned by several.

The library as a culture space was generally well-established among the informants, and although several believed "knowledge" to be its most important agenda, several held the library as the most important cultural institution, especially in Oslo. However, the role of culture was most often described as an activity field, a means to an end – knowledge, literacy – except by Oswald, who insisted on the intrinsic value of culture. Applying this aesthetic instrumentality made him stand out

The library as an information space is mentioned especially only by one informant, Olivia from the FrP, but information was mentioned in the context of knowledge by quite a few informants. The fact that Olivia emphasized this role, suggest a perceived pragmatic legitimacy on her part, which means the utility aspect is the most important. She was also the informants least interested in "expanding" the library's operation radius, worried that it might affect competition on the private market.

8.2.4   Public library operation

In the following section, I present results touching upon the topic of library operations. Section 8.2.3 dealt with library roles, where the result showed how the informants talked about public libraries on a conceptual/ superior level. This section, on the other hand, shows what the informants said about actual tasks and services – in other words the more concrete aspects of the library. Thematically, this part is organized in four sections, where the first deals with prioritized task and services. The second is related to the increasingly complex society and media reality, which in turn have led to an expansion of services. For instance, I asked informants the question "where do the boundaries go for what a library can do?" The topic of the third section is the "free of charge-principle" and its relevance today. Lastly, the focus moves over to funding, financing and philanthropy. There is a growing trend of privatization and private cooperation in many sectors, not to mention the cultural. Are politicians open for more private cooperation to ease the budget pressure, and if they are – which consequences could that have for the library? Together

with the previous section on library roles, this will help paint a clearer picture of political perceptions of the public library.

8.2.4.1 *Library tasks*

Books are mentioned by informants in all three cases. Some stress that book provision always has been the core service in libraries, and will continue to be so – if not they will not be libraries. As Barry says: *Its core has to be a library of books. If not, it's not a library. It goes back to ancient Greece. It's the meaning of what a library is. Books, isn't it? So, yeah its heart is literacy, so books. Otherwise, it's not a library. It's a school. Or an education centre. Without the books, it would just be another Internet café.* He connects the books to literacy and reading, which the Birmingham informants, seems to stress the most. They also talk of lifelong learning and adult illiteracy, which they perceive is a problem in their city. Using libraries as tools in the battle against adult illiteracy is something they all find especially important.

As mentioned in The Culture space, Oswald believes that disseminating literature (fiction) is the most important task for public libraries – however he does not see it contradictory to other tasks. Others are less specific, talking about the library's material in general, and are more content-minded than focusing on the book as a specific media. Oscar from SV stands out, instantly picking access to newspapers as his number one service – and this is because he himself appreciates this particular service. Aron looks into the future when he gives his prediction on which tasks and services that will be more important in the years to come: *I still believe it is the physical issuing of books that is most important. I believe this will change, though, and I think we should help it change. Because we're about to break up the physical in our world… So we have to actually follow the digital development for one. But I also think giving it more… enlarge the content of human cultural exchange, since it [the library] is a free zone, a citizen centre.*[24]

To provide services to children and young people is mentioned by a couple of informants in Oslo, although several informants from Aarhus and Birmingham as well talk about the importance of libraries in the lives of children and youth. On the subject of children and youth, the proximity of the library is another subject, one that there is some discord regarding in Oslo. While some representatives, like Orson, underline the importance of branch libraries in this respect, Oliver is

concerned about the quality of services, thus wanting the library users to rely more on public transport.

By and large, the informants are reluctant to pick only one task or only one service, especially after looking at the alternatives. Some also offer their opinion on what is not important, like media types or genres that are more entertaining than educational. As mentioned, Olivia, do not see the library as a culture centre at all, she wants to restrict the media types on offer, and she doubts whether public libraries can have leading role within ICT services.

Judging from the library tasks mentioned and discussed, the informants reaffirm the impression from section 8.2.3, where they convey a mainly traditional view of the library service. That being said, there is a tendency, especially from the Oslo and Aarhus interviews, that they give consent to the idea that the content is key, and the media type is secondary. Like Omer: *Well, yes, it is books. Book provision. And what comes as an extension of that; PCs, Internet, the electronic. But it's still knowledge that's the basis. That's the most important thing in a library*[25]. Fellow party member Orson adds*: You can have many different access points to texts depending on persons. And a modern computer game is definitely a story. […] I do believe though that a library primarily deals in books. […] Other media clearly has its place in the library […] but I regard text as the central thing in the library, it seems unnatural to make something else the focus, or juxtapose something with texts. I find that unnatural*[26]*. (Orson)*

What also seems clear is that there is interplay between role and content, where the library as a knowledge institution stages knowledge production, so to speak, by providing books, but also other media types. Quality is a factor – to a certain extent. Some, like Olivia, uphold quite strict quality control where "entertainment" should be given little consequence, while others again believe this is matter that should be dealt with by the professionals.

8.2.4.2   *Limitations and boundaries*

While on the subject of tasks and services, the question of restrictions followed. The informants vary in their view of where the public library's "boundaries" should go, but most are reluctant to say anything definite. What is clear, in all three cases, is that most of the informants specifically

state that as far as content is concerned, the librarians should be in control. Their role as politicians does not entail making decisions that should be made by professionals. For one, they do not consider it to be part of their job, and some add that it would be impossible to maintain such levels of control considering the work load they have. The informants are also quite clear about their trust in the librarians. Oswald is most explicit:

The division between field and politics is quite distinct, in my opinion. Politicians shouldn't interfere with how the library content is developed. Our job is to give a framework, and I can have an opinion about how knowledge is imparted, and that the service include broad user groups […] but to organize the content? With all due respect: That's not politics. Thankfully, I should say. We should keep our hands off.[27]

Most have very liberal take on library provisions and activities, some see more distinct limitations. But by and large, most express their support of different endeavours in libraries, as long as they are connected to learning or a way of disseminating textual content. Because books, as many say, should still be the focal point, even though the media selection is changing (increasing).

The exception is Olivia, from the FrP in Oslo, who states that she does think the city council to some extent should be able to restrict public library endeavours: *It is after all our common resources they [the libraries] are administering. We shouldn't forget that. That makes it a political question. I heard of this one library where they had prayer mats for lending; here, in Norway! I don't know what the deal was with that, but in such cases we should be able to put a stop to it*[28]. Earlier in the interview Olivia also expressed her opposition regarding popular films, foreign newspapers, and computer games in public libraries. In short, she explains the FrP is not in favour of libraries competing with profit-making actors in providing entertainment. She draws a clear line between activities and material directly related to books and learning, and everything else, whether it is entertainment (films), extras (foreign newspapers) or equipment not related with reading, like here she tells about the prayer mats. She does not see that the library should be an arena for controversy and debate; she prefers it as a neutral scene where everyone can feel welcome.

170

These sentiments expressed by the FrP's representative are the sole exemption – among all informants. Olav in Oslo, for instance, is very open to untraditional developments in the library, whether it is about presentation (*how about, for instance, a miniature literature festival?)* or content *Computer games […] music, concerts... In Oslo, we have Litteraturhuset so the library does not necessarily have to take on all that; it could be on a smaller scale, depending on the needs of the community. I see no limitations, as long as the content is related to knowledge or culture, the activities should in principle not be limited.*[29] When presented with the controversy in Copenhagen where the library manager wanted to create more space for other content then books, most informants were slightly amused. Few declared they would react in the same way, quite the contrary; they expressed a clear willingness to let libraries evolve in this direction. Like Bob: *I think all of these things have a part to play in libraries, it's simply a question about getting the balance right*. In Aarhus, the informants express that they already have moved in the direction of putting other media types on the same footing as the book, and that this is their way of looking ahead. No one seems to identify with the Danish politician who wanted to change the library act to protect the books.

A related issue to "limitations" is the level of controversy that can be allowed in public libraries. Where to the boundaries go in allowing content and debate? Bob told that when he was the cabinet member for culture, people would write to him personally to get certain books off the shelf. He expressed concern about this topic, as it is related to freedom of speech and freedom of access to information. He said: *…of course the public library service in Birmingham still restricts access to certain websites. And I guess you have to take a balanced position here about restricting access to information, but I think the case has to be made each and every time if you are to restrict access to information, because I think the preferred position would be if you allow people to access knowledge and information and whatever is out there, really.* Others bring forward the library's role in making available content that might be perceived inaccessible – like economics, subject many people avoid, or other more controversial topics dealing with religion or politics. Oliver suggests that the library could be a place where important speeches could be televised, and put into context by an expert panel. He said that because of the library's neutrality, no one will blame the institution for the opinions held by others, and that for this reason it could

171

provide a well-suited arena. Alex is a strong believer in the library as a fortress for freedom of speech and expression: *It is important; I believe that libraries are aware of their role in this and are not subdued by those finding it politically incorrect to provide access to certain types of material or information. Freedom of speech is universal, and the libraries should keep the banner high for this right[30].*

It seems that the informants to a very little extent wish to set limit or draw boundaries for the library. Still, they do have opinions regarding what tasks are most important. And it seems the book is still vital, but perhaps not the Holy Grail one might have thought. Especially the informants from Aarhus seem to be quite progressive in terms of means of dissemination, or indeed activities or services provided. Although the book-debate in question was a Danish one, it seems to be an exception rather than a rule, especially considering the nature of the Danish library act, which is the only one specifying Internet access, music and videos in its preamble. In England, as stated in 7.3.1, there is an extra fee for borrowing such materials, and although it is a small one it does put more of a restriction on the actual accessibility.

The FrP puts, as Olivia says and which is also stated in their action program for Oslo… a greater degree of restriction on public libraries. Both in terms of content – they do not want libraries to be a competition for private actors – and in terms of services. Olivia also believes in a greater degree of political control over library provisions. All these factors make the party stand out, not only from the other Oslo informants, but also the entire group.

Leaving the organization and running of things to library professionals say something about a division of labour which is favourable for libraries, and naturally give them autonomy. Of course, it can also express a level of disinterest, although this was not the impression the informants gave out. However, the amusement they expressed when hearing about the Copenhagen-case signals perhaps that library issues are of less importance than perhaps other policy areas. One could speculate if the comic value had been as high had the topic been related to details in the school system or in the health care sector.

That does not mean, of course, that the informants have no opinions about where the boundaries go, but that they by and large have quite a broad view of what a library is and can be. Several also

mention that they have come to see libraries in a new way since working with the project plans, and I believe this might also be a reason for their open-mindedness.

8.2.4.3 *Perspectives on a free service: "Payment for use? That would kill the library idea"*

As mentioned in 8.2.3, several of the informants talks about how the role as a free, accessible knowledge institution is the library's most important role. When answering the question "Why is it a public task to fund libraries?" several informants used the argument that the library provides access to knowledge and culture, and the intrinsic democratic value is the main reason for public funding. Olav: *It will always be a central task (to fund libraries). Especially with regards to knowledge, our entire democracy is built on our common right to access knowledge and that everyone has the right to - as far as possible - access it for free. And that should be the library's task to facilitate.*[31]

However, some are no strangers to fees, or payments in some form. In general libraries do charge for replacing cards, late returns, faxing or copying. In Britain it is common to charge adults an extra fee for borrowing audio books, music, and films, and also a fee if you want to make reservations. In other countries, like The Netherlands, public libraries charge a membership fee which varies according to the services you want. Olive, who defended the principle of free services, does not see any problem with charging for what she calls extra services: *as long as the basic service is free*. She is in favour of introducing library fees, and says that since the library is about books, users should be charged for extra services like audio books and films. She explains that she and her party are inspired by the Netherlands, where they charge everyone, but differently according to what you borrow. Olivia: *In our party program, it says that school children's need for borrowing books is covered in the school budgets. So we want to introduce lending fees, and let the future library have solid capital based on its own income.*[32]

Even though there are fees in Norway and Denmark, it seems like the general mood among my informants is that payment for services or a general membership fee is if not unheard of, so at least out of the question at present time and in the foreseeable future. However some are not opposed to fees on special services, although none seem to believe in the Dutch model as much as Olivia. Alex, for instance, cannot completely rule out new types of charges: *I can see that [...]*

perhaps some of the library services came with a charge, perhaps the use of costly databases, or something. Personally, I have no objections to that. I can't really see it happening, though, in the current political climate, but I could live with it[33].

The free public library service has been debated for a long time, especially since the 1980s as market liberalism grew. Introducing payment, however, seems to represent a considerable barrier, although some "extra" services have been subjected to fees for some time. The informants in these three cases express the general sentiment that the general use of libraries should continue to be free of charge. Even in financially pressured England, the informants seem to firmly believe in this principle. The exception is the Norwegian FrP, who in their action program explicitly states that fees should be introduced. The view of the FrP stands out in Oslo, and the party's approach to library policy is very different from the other parties'. The general impression from the Oslo informants is that free services should be kept and protected.

The Danish public library act give allowance to charge for special services "which go beyond use on the premises, loan of material and general advice" (ref), or if there are special agreements between suppliers and libraries that in turn will affect the end user. To which extent Danish Libraries employ this option I am not sure, but given the legislation, they have the possibility. This possibility could at least have to consequences. For one, it could have a very pragmatic value for libraries wanting to offer their users specific services, but have been unable to because of costs. The other – a more long-term aspect – is that this liberalization in time could make it easier to introduce more payment in libraries, thus shaking one the core principle of a free service.

As this section shows, the idea that public libraries should be free of charge is not only something the politicians find reasonable, it seems they also connect it closely with the idea of democracy and citizens right to information. As Bob says, restricting that right would be a step in the opposite direction. Also, the aspect of *tradition* is mentioned. And a certain "it's always been like that"-attitude. There is a taken-for-granted-ness about this aspect of the library, perhaps as strong as can be seen when the topic is the book's place: Libraries are places for books – that is just the way it is. So it is fair to say that free lending is encompassed in the **logic of appropriateness** the informants associate with public libraries. Most of the informants find it *appropriate* that library

services are free. We can also ascertain that the free library service is closely connected with the *legitimacy* of the institution. Hence, this operation specific recipe is accepted and taken for granted outside the professional field. This goes to show that even among liberal politicians who generally favour market liberalization or an increased privatization, payment for library services runs counter to what the informants think the public library should be. Behind these responses, there is a political mobilizing instrumentality, which is interesting because the political agreement is broad.

8.2.4.4 *Financing – sponsorship – philanthropy*

Historically, private interests have played an important part in building and diffusion of public libraries. Philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie, have certainly made an imprint on the modern day public library movement – visible even to this day. Private donations, either in the form of book/private libraries or funds are not unheard of, even in Scandinavia. Today, however, this is not very common. The question of inviting sponsors or commercial interests in a public library is interesting, because it touches the independent core, which requires public financing. But what if the funds come without conditions? Or will private interests pandering make the library guilty by association?

In Birmingham there is a clear support of sponsoring, among the informants from all three parties, in fact it is welcomed. However, in the current financial climate, fewer companies are interested in such ventures. Barry supports it warmly saying he finds the concept unproblematic. In addition: *I think we are going to have to increasingly do that. I don't think you can do things like naming writes (?), or… Americans do that a great deal, where they will have libraries that are associated with companies. As long as it doesn't have any impact on their stock, I don't have a problem with that. If companies want to be associated with a positive community asset, I don't have a problem with that. And with the current financial situation, were going to have to increasingly have to do that.*

In Oslo, the respondents indicated that there was no need for the library to dissociate itself from commercial actors, in the sense that there could be a bookstore or a coffee shop on library premises. But there was a consensus regarding sponsoring being a different issue. No one were

absolutely against it, most had quite a few reservations. The exception was the member of the FrP, who condoned sponsoring in general. The Socialist Left Party member Oscar expressed concern saying: *I think we should take care not to commercialize the libraries. You have values there, don't you? The bottom line is they are there to preserve our cultural heritage, be our common memory, to stimulate the love of reading – independent of economy. I'm afraid that a commercialization might create a shift there. That does not mean we should refuse sponsoring or philanthropy in cultural life, we have that today, and it could probably be more cooperation with corporate interests. But then it would have to be private actors going into a collaboration based on the conditions and values that exist in libraries. I'm sure many would be interested in that, people who see the value of building a knowledge-based Norway, to use a bit of a cliché.[34]* Oscar describes the concern that private or corporate actors might interfere with the content of the library, and thus the values. But it is interesting that the party representative from the most "leftist" party still is positive to some degree of sponsoring, given the right circumstances. There are no clear guidelines on this issue in Norwegian legislation, although the individual municipality might have worded something of their own. So saying, this is not an institutionalized practice, but a possible direction.

In Denmark, there are examples of more active private investments, like Hjørring library which is located in and financed by a shopping centre. A good solution, Albert believes, since the funds came without dictates of how and what. The limitation has a more visible character: *Some commercial partnerships are positive if the library keeps its integrity. But of course, there are examples of the opposite; we saw that in the United States. In one library, we came into a room that was named "The US Mail Room, or something like that. So the sponsor was visible as you entered. I don't like that.[35]*

What Albert here says is a paradox, because on the one hand he clearly favours library sponsoring. But on the other hand he does not want the advertisement that might go with it. So even in the mind of a liberal politician, the image of the library is still a non-commercialized zone, even if it is fully financed by private interests. His colleague from The Liberal Party is more positive, and explains he thinks sponsoring can be positive, and that the potential is hampered by *a major impassiveness in the social democratic mind-set regarding ownership.*

176

Unlike Albert, he sees no reason not to give credit to the giver, either: *I'll gladly call the reading room Gyldendal's Study Hall, or something.*[36]

When it comes to sponsored content, and sponsorship on the whole, the picture seems quite nuanced, and few informants seem to oppose it with any strong conviction. Although quite a few, especially representatives of the political left are sceptical and wary of such a development, none of the informants completely rejects it, as stated in the previous section. In the pilot I conducted, my impression was that to introduce private sponsorship or commercial interests would be a public library *faux pas*, however, after the interviews in all three cases I stand modified. In Birmingham the informants welcome such endeavours, in fact Barry specifically states that the council is looking for sponsorship and philanthropy, the last regrettably rare in Britain as opposed to the United States. *It is not uncommon for museums*, he says, exemplifying with galleries named after the source of donation, *so why shouldn't libraries?* It is likely that this matter is decided more by political stand than necessarily country origin. The Liberal Danish representative's statement is in complete line with what Birmingham's Lib-Dem Barry expresses: This is also a distinct difference between how the Birmingham informants perceived it – the content should still be controlled by the library, but the giver should certainly get credit in the form of a visible sign in some form. The big difference between Aarhus and Birmingham is that it is the administration's policy to look for both private sponsorship and philanthropy. Barry compares it with how museums have a long tradition for getting private donations, and public libraries should go in the same direction.

Letting philanthropy and sponsoring be a more common part of the public library modus operandi might very well be the way of the future – as it already has been a way of the past. Pragmatically, it will enable libraries to renew content or premises. Of course it would create a divide between those with beneficiaries, and those less fortunate. Users will favour any upgrade that makes their library better, and are less concerned with the source of the funds or what that might entail for the library. Indeed, private donations have historically been the birth of many public library units, and better conditions might at the local level increase the legitimacy among the users. However, for those not benefiting from such goodwill, the opposite effect may occur. Since the public library very much is associated with sameness and equality, it would perhaps for

the public, the users, decrease their belief in the institution and subsequently the legitimacy. There would probably also be differences between the three cases. As the Birmingham informants report, this is not alien, and due to a different tradition, a different view of public / private separation, more sponsoring or philanthropy would perhaps not have any profound impact as to how the library is perceived. In Oslo and Aarhus, it is likely that it will cause more stir – more among the library professionals, perhaps, than in the community as such.

Incorporating the corporate – or indeed private – world into that of public libraries will probably not endanger the institution. But inviting corporate or private interests into a public sphere will create a shift in current norms and *state of affairs* which in time might cause deinstitutionalization.

From what I can see, there seem to be a lot more support for private and corporate cooperation/sponsoring in Birmingham than in Aarhus and Oslo. The reason for that is probably not found merely in the public library field, but can be related to the different models these countries belong to. The public sector in Scandinavia is traditionally a lot stronger and more "protected" than in the rest of Europe, and although there have been donations given to libraries in the early days of operations, there has been few and far between those in present time. However, the times they might be changing. As Björnestam & Olsson (Björnestam & Olsson, 2010) show, although there is little of it still, the Swedish government encourages it, and Swedish libraries are positive.

If there is to be more of this in Scandinavia, it will force politicians and librarians to actively seek it and lay guidelines for how it should be done. But the trend is visible in the region, for instance through the Swedish Ministry of Culture's stand. In my view that in itself is quite a potent signal of inviting market forces in. But is it a new trend? Not really. Ever since the 1980s, the climate in the entire western world has warmed to market involvement, privatization, commercialization, and public/private cooperation. It is rather a continuation of a trend, involving an institution which so far has been a clear public undertaking without visible traces of market forces or private interests. Is this then, just yet an example of an organizational *myth* taken not from the public library field, but from business/public administration?

8.2.5   The public library challenge

Asking about the perceived challenges for public libraries – in general – gave different responses. Clearly, the Birmingham informants were very conscious about the budget deficits, both locally and nationally, which they labelled the biggest challenge for the entire British public sector, libraries included. Closures have already been done, and the increase of volunteers in the sector has been a source of both interest and grievance. Thus, mere survival is actually a challenge. As mentioned in 7.3.4, library director Brian Gambles predicts that Birmingham politicians will not close down community libraries, as this is very unpopular with the constituents – especially if it is a consequence of the massive spending on the main library in the city centre. The downside, he explains, is of course that while the community libraries might stay open, they will in fact be drained of resources. Indeed, none of the informants from Birmingham suggested closures in any of the interviews, although they were very aware of ways to cut costs, including replacing professional staff with unskilled labour.

While the economic climate offers challenges for most libraries, there are other issues; issues more universal than budget cuts, as Bernard stated: *The biggest challenge, I think, is convincing politicians that libraries are important.* He goes on to relate it to funding – if politicians generally are little concerned with libraries, it will be even easier to cut funding when times are tough. But relevance was emphasized by several respondents, when asked about the biggest challenge for public libraries. Most were talking about relevance perceived by the public, not themselves as politicians. If people do not perceive libraries as relevant, they will not use them, was the general opinion. Bob said: *The challenge is creating and embedding a narrative which is moving the library away from the notion which is still very much stuck in a lot of peoples' minds that libraries are repositories for books and lending those books. And actually in most of our libraries, the number of books being borrowed has gone down every year for twenty years. And it doesn't matter. Cause the visiting numbers in many cases tends to go up.*

What he is talking about is people's image of the public library – the patrons and the non-patrons, not just the politicians. He observes that the use is changing, but believes that for many the library is an unchanged institution, thus they perceive it less relevant. Those who go to the

library, as Bob said, use it differently than before; going there without borrowing books, but using other services. Barry has similar reflections: *I think the biggest challenge for libraries today is to position themselves as relevant for 21st century life. And that's something they have to do, like anything else as things change, libraries have to evolve, as I've said earlier, they cannot remain the a 19th century model, they have to be relevant to survive into the future.* He adds that he does think the opportunity is there, and that he is convinced of their relevance. Then he goes on to say that the institution needs a new vision – that will help with the library's "image problem": *Because a lot of people think that libraries are just there to borrow books. And they don't see the bigger picture.*

It is not just the Birmingham informants who are stating "relevance" as the public library's biggest challenge. In Oslo too, this is mentioned by several, and they connect it to how the library is perceived by the users and to what extent it manages to "compete with other comparable information providers, social arenas and so on. They talk about development, both technologically, but also in the physical library units. The fact that the conditions are quite poor in the current main library is something all the Oslo informants are aware of, and some says that the library is very much in the forefront – despite such difficulties. Also, that the Oslo library service would have been even better all over with a new main building. Oswald is interested in reaching more people: *If you say that 50 % of a population uses the library, then there has to be an equally big portion not using it. I'm interested in those people. What will it take to make them library users? So, reaching more people, that's a challenge[37].*

While development of the library service is part of increasing and showing the library service' relevance, it may also cause new challenges. Baird in Birmingham comments that as libraries increase their activity field they may find themselves in competition with other actors: *As the shape of the library, and the use of the library is changing dramatically, and becoming this focus for meeting place and social interaction, et cetera, it's up against a number of venues or facilities of a similar nature that does exactly the same thing […].* The library is not necessarily doing itself any favours by expanding it operation, he notes, by going from being a place of books to attempting to be *all things to all people.* Still, he returns to the library's role as a knowledge space: *it still needs to hang on to this… that it is a place where you go and acquire knowledge,*

and those other facilities don't do that. Pubs don't do that, well not that sort of knowledge anyway. Baird talk about the dilemma of many libraries, trying to keep the service provision as comprehensive as possible, at the same time as it needs to be recognizable as a library and not spread itself too thin. It seems that the message Baird tries to convey is that libraries not necessarily should do everything, but be good at what they do – and then make sure this expertise is transmitted to their surroundings. Something similar was mentioned by Orson in the discussion about why the Deichman process has taken so long and been postponed so many times (8.3.2), that the library has the disadvantage of not being the primary service provider of education or culture. And that makes it easier to overlook or downscale it when priorities are made.

Library challenges can hardly be discussed without the mention of technological developments. For this purpose, the topic emerged as a physical versus digital library challenged. While some showed little concern for this matter or simply did not mention it – this was some of the older informants – others were very aware of the potential difficulties and changes they in time might give. Ophelia mentioned keeping up with the developments as especially challenging. And she did not limit that to issues concerning for instance e-books or media types, but also preservation: *Libraries should not only carry what's here right now, they're history, and they are supposed to carry our common frames of reference. So preserving all this, and disseminating it later on – I guess that is the biggest challenge*[38]. Oliver too believes the technological changes offer the biggest challenge for libraries: *Making sure libraries are not outdated even though the media type changes [..] and all the developments could potentially make some people – quite unfairly if they don't know the library – believe it to be outdated. And if this perception prevents them from using the library, then it is a problem*[39]. Olav and Oscar, as a continuation of that points out that the idea of being accessible to all – or as many as possible – that is the biggest challenge. Technology, he says, is one side of that. Albert offered a more philosophical view of the intersection between technological developments and acquiring knowledge: *It's quite a challenge to exist in a society which is so digitized and to offer quick services. Offering a service that actually requires tranquillity and immersion*[40].

Basically, we can say there libraries are facing both internal and external challenges. Internal challenges include conditions such as location, reputation/image/representation, budget cuts,

organizational difficulties, while external challenges can be factors like social conditions and economy, technology, and globalization. As the interviews showed, technological challenged was mentioned more in Oslo and Aarhus than in Birmingham. It is hard to say why, but one explanation might be that the economic problems in England necessitates a different focus on the part of the politicians; less *how can we better libraries*, and more *how can we keep them*. It is easier, of course, to justify investments in library development when the economy is good. The Danish and Norwegian informants are less concerned with economy – although resources are limited there to, neither country has been hit as hard as England by the crisis – than their colleagues in Birmingham. In addition, the public sector in Scandinavia is both stronger and more "protected". If we look at the so-called Nordic model (Anderson, et al., 2007; Ryner, 2007; Torstensson, 1993) it is the welfare system that is the most important component setting it aside from other "models", and makes the Nordic countries stand out in Europe. If we link public libraries to the welfare state – which is a plausible thing to do seeing as it was developed alongside other welfare rights and systems, such as extended public education, public student financing, the national health service, (the list goes on) – public libraries in Scandinavia have a much stronger position both when it comes to financing and legislation than they do in England. The severity of the situation for public libraries – as the entire public sector in England faces retrenchment measures – is clearly perceptible in the statements from the Birmingham informants. This kind of insecurity, and the inevitable budget cuts, will in all likelihood affect the position of public libraries in Britain.

While economy surely is important for the upkeep and development of libraries, staying relevant and being perceived as relevant is another vital component. The fact that the Birmingham respondents so clearly focus on economy and perception reflects the situation the city – and the country – is currently in. The struggle for scarce resources applies to all public services, but libraries might be especially vulnerable since it is not a service with immediate … like schools or geriatric care. When Bernard says that the biggest challenge is to convince politicians that libraries are important, I believe we can turn that statement and say that it is an equally big challenge for politicians to convince their electorate that it is wise to invest in libraries while recession looms.

Relevance is connected with several factors: One is being in the forefront of technological development. Others include having updated facilities and a wide range of materials. And while such factors affect the library's relevance – and in turn its legitimacy – they do not matter if the continual challenge of representing the library service is not met. Thus, staying relevant also involves communication, so that people know what libraries can offer. As the result of Evjen (2007) showed, not surprisingly, non-users and users perceived the library differently, non-users being more negative and perceiving the library less relevant than the users. With a new library brings increased media coverage, as well as novelty which will make people go who normally would not. A new library probably generates more activity, has new services or events that will attract users, so one way of facing this challenge is by doing what has already been decided and started in Birmingham and Aarhus – namely building a new library. A double cause-and-effect which up to a point will pull in the direction of representing the library as it is now, thus changing the manner in which some people perceive it.

When discussing these challenges, *legitimacy* immediately springs to mind. The fact that relevance is so often mentioned and so closely connected to how the library is perceived, leads me to believe that pragmatic legitimacy is a highly important factor when politicians prioritize. This is most clearly put to the test in economically challenging times. While the public library might very well have a high degree of moral legitimacy, this is less tangible and arguably harder to use as an argument for maintaining the library service at the current level. However, as Mr Gambles said, shutting down community branches is a very unpopular decision among the constituents, because they believe they are entitled to it as citizens – and indeed they are. Hence, the library's cognitive legitimacy must also be quite high. What might threaten the perceived pragmatic and cognitive legitimacy is a scaled down service, in terms of both staff and content. If the service itself does not meet the expectations of the patrons, they will find it irrelevant and stop using it. If people stop using libraries, city councils will have less – the reciprocal influence. This is a predicament and says something about the intertwinement of politics, public opinion, and professional standards and content.

Labelling all these perceived challenges as deinstitutionalizing, deinstitutionalization being – *the process by which institutions weaken and disappear* (Scott, 2001) – is enticing, and perhaps quite

183

accurate. As Olivier argues, this process comes about by way of three main sources, according to Oliver (Oliver, 1992, 1997); functional, political, and social pressures. Economic challenges for libraries can be perceived as both political and social pressures, they are in this respect closely connected. Socially, the economy is a general problem, affecting – in Britain – most people one way or another. Politicians are forced to prioritize in this climate, and

Creating a vision, not lagging behind; finding the balance in the digital world is much higher on the agenda in Oslo and Aarhus, based on the informants' statements. At the same time as the issue of being visible, and being perceived important and useful is the same – whether the initial challenge is related to economy or technology. Technological pressures on libraries are strong. Technology will not only increase "competition", it has also changed the manner in which libraries have been operating. And although librarians are apt to change and development, they have not been able to fully convey this to the general public or the politicians – or so it would seem when conferring with the informants.

I am trying to distinguish challenges that might constitute deinstitutionalizing factors for public libraries, by analysing political perspectives on the institution. Determining whether or not these factors will cause deinstitutionalization is quite another exercise, and not within the scope of this thesis. However, there is no doubt that severe external pressures we see now could cause lasting changes in library services which in time could affect the institution's legitimacy, and in time cause deinstitutionalization. The financial situation is much worse in the UK than in Norway and Denmark, consequently the library services appear much more protected and resilient at this point.

8.2.6 Summing up

In this section I have presented the informants' images of the public library in general, with an emphasis on its role, its operation, including the *free of charge principle* and their view of private cooperation or sponsorship.

It seems like the informants' library perspectives are shaped by three main factors: Their personal use, their current cooperation with the library management, and their trips abroad to study other library projects. Some have not used the library personally for a long time, while others are still

active users. The cooperation with the professional field – represented by especially the library management in each city – seems to be a vital source of information and inspiration, and several informants report a widened perspective of public libraries through their work with library issues and interaction with library professionals. Visiting library projects abroad has also broadened their view of what libraries are and can be.

It appears that it is the library as a knowledge disseminator, an educational actor that to the informants is overall the most important role public libraries play. A few also emphasize the social role of libraries, and that this will become increasingly more important in the coming years. Also, several informants talk about the library as a culture space – although does not seem to be the primary role in any of the cases. Since the public library in all three cases is part of the *cultural policy* area, it suggests that there could be a discrepancy between its perceived position and its actual placement in the local administration. Perhaps would it be more appropriate to associate public libraries with education? The close association with culture policy has a long tradition, and being an important disseminator of cultural expressions in the form of literature, music and films, the public library has a natural place within the area of culture policy. However, if the perceived utility of public libraries is now closer connected with learning and education, than perhaps an overall change is required. Returning to the first research question, *To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?*, I believe the informants' views in this respect is closely associated with those expressed through the UNESCO manifesto (1994), where the library's role regarding knowledge, learning and literacy for people of all ages is evident.

As far as library services go, the one thing that is mentioned the most is not surprisingly book provision. Some add that they actually mean the provision of material, not solely paper books, but every other media type as well. E-books seem to have gained little real validity among the politicians I interviewed. Some agreed that in time they will perhaps in many ways change the library from its current state. Most, however, did not really see this happening; for one because of people's reading preferences, and also because of the amount of time they believed it would take. Especially in Oslo, the informants seemed quite unaffected by the e-book debate, and this is

probably related to the slow impact of the e-book market in Norway. The clear focus on books as a material indicates a certain divide between the professional field – at least parts of it – and the non-professionals. While the professional library community to a large extent try to focus more on content and less on form, it seems like this mind-set is still not completely accepted among the informants. Although they are mostly positive to the so-called new media, I sense quite a lot of hesitation, especially from the older informants. The younger informants are more inclined to embrace the content-over-form manner of thinking.

The free-of-charge principle, protecting users' right to borrow material without cost, was defended strongly of all the informants, with one exception, the representative of the Norwegian FrP. There is a general consensus among the informants that library services should be free, and continue to be so in the future. "Special" services can be subjected to charge, some add, but the basic service should be free. The taken-for-grantedness surrounding this aspect of libraries is in other words clear. As I see it, the value given to this principle also relates to the instrumentality connected with public libraries and their societal value. Vestheim's (2009) political-mobilizing instrumentality (4.2) I find is associated with this principle, as it is perceived as essential to a democratic society and the citizens' right to access information and knowledge. Also, regarding legitimization, I find this principle adds to the cognitive legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), it seems embedded in the overall perception of what a library should be.

Private sponsorship and cooperation have become a more current topic for libraries in the last decades and even more so at present, according to the Birmingham informants at least. There were few strong objections to this, and several informants encouraged it, especially in Birmingham, but also in Aarhus and Oslo. The positive attitude in Birmingham can probably be related both to the country's financial situation, but also to tradition and history. Philanthropy was important in the early days of public libraries, but has become less so over the years. Of course there is the possibility that public libraries might not be desirable subjects for potential sponsors or philanthropists, which could also tell us something about their status or image.

While Usherwood (1993), and to some degree Audunson (2005; 1988; 2001), found that party affiliation was a variable affecting library perceptions, I find that this topic gave few clear

distinctions among the parties. The exception being, as mentioned, the FrP's representative. To the extent that any of the Oslo parties can be accused of championing any clear strategies as far as library policy is concerned, the PP is quite clear on their desire to introduce membership fees based on the Dutch model. Of course, there might be other points revealing a stronger ideological separation between the parties.

Gazo (2010) and Hedemark (2009) both found that local politicians' images of libraries and the external library discourse were somewhat lacking in that they did not include aspects of libraries that the sector itself is concerned with. The statements from these informants tell me that although their backgrounds are very different and their involvement with libraries the same, they are still well-informed and well aware of different library roles and functions. I ascribe this partly to the work they have done in the planning process, both in terms of project visits and cooperation with the librarians. As mentioned in section 8.1.4, current strategy plans both on a local and national level bare the mark of current library discourses having made their way into the political field. This is of course because politicians invite professionals to participate in commenting on national reports. But, although professional and political cooperation is vital at the local level at any time – and even more visible – library projects like the ones in question encourage a stronger bond between the politicians and the local library community.

The challenges the informants observe for public libraries are both internal and external. The most often mentioned challenge deals with how the library is represented – or how it represents itself. Quite a few of the informants fear that if people do not see the library's relevance they will stop using it – or new users will not come to the library. If the institution fails to communicate its content and opportunities outwards, it presents a conundrum similar to the proverbial tree in the forest: if no one is around to find out, does it really exist? Proving relevance is closely connected to maintaining and increasing the institution's' legitimacy in a time where competition for the public's attention is intense. Perhaps the informants in these three cases are especially aware of this challenge since they themselves admit having increased their library perspective through their political work, especially concerning the projects, and are aware of a disparity in what the library contains and offers and the extent to which this comes across to the public.

8.3   Public library perceptions: The specific

Whereas the previous chapter dealt with public library imagery and the attitudes towards and understanding of the public library in general – this chapter moves to the specifics: to the library projects in each case. In the following three sections I present the informants impressions regarding the current library situation in their cities, their view of the plans and process, and also their visions for the final result. I present results showing how the library service is perceived, and why the informants believe the building projects are necessary. In the last section, 8.2.5, the informants give their thoughts on the challenges that lay ahead for the public library institution. In the previous chapter, the concept of legitimization was used to show how the public library – on a general level – was justified and explained. In this chapter, it is used to show how the projects are perceived and why they were accepted. As described in chapter 6.5.1, legitimacy as a concept is applied in this analysis to discern how the owners – the politicians – justify and explain the public library institution in general, and more specifically the projects they themselves are involved in. What type of instrumentality are the projects based on? The different types of legitimization (moral, cognitive, pragmatic) will in this context say something about the public library's position within the informants' attitude towards them. In other words the second research question comes into light: *How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?* The general legitimization was a topic in the previous section. In the following, the intention is to find to which extent the project legitimization is resembling, or different.

The topic of deinstitutionalization is also relevant in this chapter, both when the discussion revolves around the new library projects, and when talking about the future; the challenges and the vision. *To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?*

Thirdly, the research question is central: *How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?* It is in this section that the perspectives on

each case is presented, and it is by analysing those data I can point with any certainty to why these similarities and differences have come to be.

8.3.1   The Urban Mediaspace in Aarhus

As mentioned in section 7.2, the city of Aarhus made the decision to build a new main library in 2001. While the condition of the current building is not as poor as in Oslo or Birmingham, the need for new grounds is clear, according to my informants. Aron describes it as follows: *It is dull. Grey and old-fashioned. As far as the building is concerned, at least. It's been outrun by time. The rooms are not flexible enough; you can't really make the most of it. But it's very accessible – the location is very good! But it doesn't convey an open and welcoming impression*[41]. Aron is in line with the other informants. Alex says that they want the library to be a meeting place, a place for gatherings. And the library as it is today cannot offer this sort of location for its users. He also point to the staff's working conditions, which are not nearly good enough in his opinion. Albert touches upon the same as Aron, the flexibility, and adds that in order to keep up with progress, they need a new library, modernization is not sufficient. He also believes that Aarhus, as a city that wants to be connected with knowledge, vision, and drive needs a library they can be proud of: *For many years, it [the library] has been an icon for knowledge, acquiring knowledge. And this, to me, is a very good way of branding a city*[42].

In an interview with the project manager, she describes the consensus behind the Urban Mediaspace project: *this is very important for the security of the project. The planning has lasted through several elections, and it would have been impossible without broad political support. And that's a very positive thing. Also, Aarhus city council has for years backed the initiative, which makes our job a lot easier*[43]. Clearly this is an accurate assumption of the project manager – political disagreement has sent many a project into oblivion. Alex is also quite clear about the broad agreement, and explains that any sceptics have become convinced about the project once they realized which opportunities that lay in this library: *...the daily activities, the knowledge space you get to experience once you come inside. I merely note the full backing of 31 council members*[44].

Besides the pragmatic causality of an unfit current building, the informants were especially concerned with how the building can help bring the library into a new era, where you hang on to what its current "nature", but acknowledge that a library is a lot more than it used to be. Aron describes it as a beacon for the city: *The library will be situated exactly at the river mouth. So in that manner this library will quite distinctively radiate what Aarhus is today; a knowledge city, a creative city. So that is quite a nice picture, put together*[45].

The location is important, both symbolically and economically. The project vision is *to build the library of the future and turn the inner harbour area of Aarhus into a vivid and active urban space* (Aarhus Kommune, [2010]). With this harbour development, a new space is created in direct proximity to the current city centre, and the area is intended to be an area filled with different cultural activities. Moving a library into a new area like this is not novel, and the success depends both on planning and implementation. The challenge, of course, is to have people go there and make it come alive. As part of the project, a large outdoor space – along the waterfront – intended for different recreational activities, like fairs and concerts – or just for people to use as they wish.

Politically, the intention is clearly a push-pull-effect. The new library will attract new and existing users will, and those needing to visit the Citizens' Service centre will need to go there. The Aarhus informants do not hesitate to call this a city development project. Albert says: *This is part of a desire to open Aarhus to the seafront. We, the people from Aarhus, have lost sight of the harbour, metaphorically speaking, and this will bring it back. And given the opportunity to develop the area all the way down to the seafront ...*[46]

The question of accessibility and structure is always important in larger urban areas, because library use is different from community libraries and the central unit. When financial and professional efforts are put into the creation of a new main building, it is a natural concern that less attention will be given to the community libraries despite their important role in the areas they serve. In Aarhus, politicians seem quite determined to maintain the structure as it is, and aware of how community libraries matter to the public. Albert says he is very conscious of how this is a potential problem, but believes that the new main library will give the community libraries a lift rather than sap the vitality away from them. As he states, there is general agreement

to keep up current structures and *not starve the community libraries* as he puts it. Neither are there plans or wishes of consolidations or mergers. As he sees it, the intention is that the branch libraries are going to be meeting places*, and: if there is only one, downtown, it will be very difficult to meet. So to me it is important to keep the community libraries[47]*. He explains that the city also has started a process expanding opening hours with self-service, so that the people of Aarhus can access their local libraries after hours – as a contribution to the city's library provision. Alex admits the financial burden might prove too big, since the project is to build and maintain a new main library at the same time as the other 18 units are updated and can answer to the demands of the current times: *And it is for the majority to decide if this is the best policy[48]*. In the project documentation, there are many great visions for the new Urban Mediaspace. Alex, however, has a slightly different take on it: *I have many visions for it, but one is definitely that it is a place used much like today, that it is a common, integrated part of Aarhus daily life.* He also wants it to be a place for special occasions, that there are spaces focusing on different aspects of knowledge, culture and the local community. But perhaps most of all that it is part of the everyday cycle.

The current main library in Aarhus – despite its lack of flexibility – seems to be in better condition than the two others. The fact that the city still has pushed forward the Urban Mediaspace project, suggest that the political and professional organization and management have managed to communicate and work together. Broad political agreement would probably not have come without cooperation with the library service itself. In addition, it gives the project broad legitimization. Alex mentions the everyday use of the library; he wants it to be a part of people's ordinary lives. This is an interesting comment, because it transmits a view of what the library should be a taken for granted part of the lives of people in Aarhus – a sort of institutionalization, one might say. It reflects the manner in which informants in Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen's study (2000) compared public libraries with family cars of buses. The everyday life-association this brings contrasts the stylishness such signal buildings often are associated with, and remove the awe or solemnity some might ascribe to grandiose main library. However, if Alex' attitude is a general sentiment, it will certainly make easier a transition from "just" a library to a establishing it as a citizen centre – the latter requiring a taken-for-grantedness if it is going to succeed and last.

The Aarhus informants seem unanimous about support for the current structure, also because it increases the network of citizen centres. Alex explains: *I hope that we can lift our local communities with these citizen centres. It is very important to me that the Multimedia space does not knock dead the smaller libraries. It is of course a concern that this will be so costly that we'll have to close some of them[49]*. The Aarhus informants express no wish to close any branches down; they agree that it is important with the local access points. Alex does not want to make future guarantees, but as he says, there are no plans of any reductions. Albert connects the community libraries to the idea of libraries as social spaces (8.2.3.2) – and says: *…If the libraries are going to be meeting places, it is important that there is more than one library. Otherwise, it would be hard for people to meet there. So it is vital that we keep the community branches[50]*.

The Aarhus consensus might be related to the extended effects a library might give. Something that begins with a large public investment – hard to swallow for some, undoubtedly – can in time be part of a larger project of improving an image, drawing corporate interest and attention to an area. Using the library as a beacon to market the city adds a culture/experience economy innuendo to the project, as well as an economic instrumentality. Aarhus city council is not solely concerned with presenting a new library to its citizens, they are very much aware of the city development that follows. There is an intangible aspect of the culture economy – how can the effect of a new library be measured in terms of economic development? However, the indirect effect could be potential corporate investments and business ventures, wanting a share in the image Aarhus exhibits. City development is a concern for both the private and public sector, and the economic instrumentality which is found behind these investments does of course not rule out other types of argumentation: the social, political and aesthetic. Knowledge and culture are concepts we want to associate ourselves with. Cities do not want to rely on industry alone; they want to reinvent themselves as creative cities, culture cities, and knowledge cities. The manner in which the informants speak of the project and what it represents gives it a more economic instrumentality than the informants use about the general library service. Perhaps this is also a reason why there can be such broad political agreement behind this investment – it is intended to give the city more than "just" a library. In that sense, the investment is not only a cultural one, but an investment in the city's future – which includes business and industry. In my view it is

becoming increasingly difficult – and perhaps also unnecessary – to completely separate public investments in culture, for instance through a major library project, from private and commercial interests.

Going from many smaller to fewer larger units, consolidating, centralizing, merging… all are tendencies at this time, and after the local government reform of 2007 (7.2.1), Denmark and Danish public libraries has experienced this development. While closing down branches is controversial and unpopular in local communities, it is hard to maintain an equally high standard when there are large numbers of smaller units: This is the dilemma: is it better to offer services of a general high standard in an environment farther away from home, or is location and proximity more important? It seems that, for now at least, the city of Aarhus will not explore the possibility of consolidation through mergers in the public library sector. As mentioned in section 7.2, due to council retrenchment measures, some libraries will need to reduce opening times with trained staff, and resort to self-service for its patrons. This has been a trend in Denmark especially during the past two years (Johannsen, 2012).

The general agreement that seem to prevail among the Aarhus informants includes the library structure. Alex, however, emphasize that it is the current policy, and this could change in time. The citizen centres in Aarhus are likely to make (those) units stronger. In addition, some of the branches are self-serviced, so these community libraries have different "levels" of service/provision. Accessibility in the form of opening hours is important when it comes to library use and regard, and is mentioned by almost all of the informants in this study as an area of improvement. This is of course a development designed to meet user needs and may be considered a result of another field-external trend, namely a "customer focus", which we have seen growing since the 1990s.

The social aspect, the community centre library, and the citizen centre library are also mentioned by several when talking about the future library, particularly by the Aarhus informants. This is very much in accordance with national library policy in Denmark and something that shines through in the strategy plan Aarhus has worded (8.1.2.1). This again reflects the discourse from

the professional field, suggesting close ties between the city council, the cultural committee and the library management.

8.3.2   The New Deichman in Oslo

I think Deichman today – the main library – is a sad sight[51]. (Orson)

Deichman library in Oslo has inhabited the same premises since the 1930s. The quote above sums up what the Oslo informants – quite unanimously – have to say about the current building. Ophelia compares it with the University library (new in 1999), which in her view is an example of a place that users want to spend time – as opposed to the central public library: *It's run-down. A lot of quiet people wearing comfortable shoes[52]*. Some of the informants, although pointing out the unsuitability of the building, are keen to emphasize that the work done in Oslo's libraries is of high quality done by skilled professionals. They are held back by unfit premises, is the message they want to transmit. Informants belonging to the opposition parties add that another thing holding the library service in Oslo back is the long-term lack of council funding, which has drained the service. Omer even goes as far as saying that the conditions in Oslo are shameful for a country like Norway.

The general census among the city's politicians is that a new library has been needed for decades. Olav even says that the building was outdated and insufficient even when it was first opened. As for explaining why it has taken so long to plan and build a new one, is described as a complex matter, and the answers differ from informant to informant. Political disagreement, both regarding location and the different project that have been on the table over the years, lack of financing – and lack of will are all mentioned. Orson says that there has been agreement that it is needed for a long time, the problem is prioritized. He thinks the library is perceived as significant, but still secondary institution: *It is important for learning, but schools are more important. Then you prefer to concentrate resources into the schools[53]*. Also, he thinks the past monumental plans for the library has been a disadvantage for the library; it would have been easier to execute something less grandiose. Apart from the building technical conditions, quite a few informants also talks about how Oslo residents deserve a better library and an improved service.

Since the planned building start of Nye Deichman is not until 2014, the project naturally is at a conceptual level at present. Still, the library has been discussed and debated, especially in connection to the neighbouring Munch project, which recently was rejected by the City Council. The Diagonale design has created little uproar. Orson says: *Contrary to the Munch museum [Lambda, not the current], it will be a credit to Oslo[54]*. So while the non-socialist informants promote how the entirety of Bjørvika – with the Opera House, the New Munch Museum and the New Deichman library – will be a great improvement, the socialist informants are quite articulate about their reservations against the same plans. While there is consensus about the new library in Bjørvika as suggested, there is disagreement regarding the planned start date. The informants from the socialist parties would rather see the library prioritized. They fear of course that the Munch prioritization could potentially jeopardize the library plans. This is no longer a problem as the Munch project is cancelled. Oscar says: *I would say that Deichman is the single most important construction project in Oslo – far more important than building a new Munch museum[55]*. Councillor Oswald does not share this concern. He and other majority party informants expressed confidence about New Deichman in Bjørvika: *We will have that as soon as it is possible to build[56]*.

The members of the opposition are more sceptical. Not of the library itself, but of the time frame and prioritizing. Orson thinks it has been far too easy for the current administration to push the development of the Munch Museum at the expense of the library. Oscar from the Socialist Left states he thinks the order should be opposite. Orson from the Norwegian Labour party adds that he thinks the political administrations over the years have overlooked the library because it is a "secondary" institution, compared to "primary" institutions, he explains, like hospitals or schools. The multiplicity of library tasks and provisions might be its great advantage, but it is also a disadvantage - the product is too complex. On the same note, Oliver states: *The advantage in a big city like Oslo is also a disadvantage for the library, in the competition with all other venues, meeting places, cultural and educational happenings[57]*. He believes this is less of a problem in a smaller town where the "competition" is less. Oswald, who politically is in favour of the Munch museum being built first still calls the central library the most important cultural institution.

Talking to members of the opposition, the picture is drawn differently, and they express certainty that the library will be built according to plan. Several respondents admit that public libraries merely become a balancing item, and are "easy to ignore" relates both to the impairment of the library's relative position, but also its "invisibility" in competition with other actors on the culture and knowledge field.

The fact that the library is planned situated in Bjørvika, next to the new opera house and as mentioned, the Munch Museum, it seems to be part of a bigger project, developing a new area and focusing on Oslo as a culture capital. But not all see it like this. Oswald says: *My position regarding art and culture is that it is valuable in itself, there doesn't need to be any other justification. Library policy is culture policy, simple as that. Any positive consequences are just a bonus. We are not going to spend more than a million kroner on a new library in Bjørvika because we are concerned with Bjørvika. Bjørvika is an important place. But we do not build a library for Bjørvika; we build a library for literature. And for the* library itself. *If it leads to city development and more employment, well, great! But as a conservative culture politician, it is my belief that culture is valuable in itself*[58]. Fellow party member Ophelia are of a completely different opinion: *Of course it concerns city development. We should always think city development. Anything else would be a waste of money*[59].Oscar from the Sosialistisk Venstreparti agrees with Ophelia, saying that the library community has given a prognosis where they estimate double visiting numbers, and that the location in Bjørvika is a major factor. To him, the project is city development, and as he adds: *There is no contradiction in saying that there is a component of city development here. Both because it is an advantage for the library to in the close proximity of Oslo Central station, and also it is an enormous advantage for Bjørvika to have a library that brings two million visitors to the area. It is a major contribution to that area. So culture and business are connected. The same goes for city development. The fact that we are investing quite heavily in culture in Bjørvika, I think that will generate business, it will generate jobs*[60].

A couple of the Oslo informants express concern that the main library might be an investment that in time will affect the branch libraries negatively. Others, like Omer, think that the new main library will somehow push them forward, be a locomotive of sorts and raising the general standard instead of being a resource drain.

In Oslo, like in Aarhus, there is support for keeping the number of community libraries. *Smaller libraries – I might have more faith in those, you know smaller libraries in the communities*[61] (Olive). Some suggest, like Olav, suggests increasing the number of branches. And mention that there are prospects of some new branches in Oslo. Ophelia and Oliver two of the youngest non-socialist representatives are more inclined to review the current structure, both to make it more cost efficient, and as a way of creating bigger, more resourceful units. Ophelia says:

For instance you can imagine Majorstuen[34] *- is it necessary to have a branch there when it is so close to the subway and there'll only be three stops to the new main library? I'm not saying we should close Majorstuen community library, but I am in favour of a continued debate about this. Nothing should be sacred*[62].

Oliver also talks about how it could be interesting to specialise the branches through themes. As a continuation of this, he is in favour of thematically structuring the community libraries in Oslo. He mentions The Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology, The Botanical Garden or the theatres in Oslo's downtown as possible partners for the community libraries in those areas. He believes this way the libraries will specialize more, thereby being more relevant - not everything to everyone all the time, but offering in-depth materials to those who require it.

As far as future visions go, they reflect that the current premises are in a poor state, because first and foremost the responses indicate that ownership and pride is something the future library should evoke in people. Omer hopes for: *A library the citizens can be proud of*[63]. This vision includes a library which is in frequent use, an inviting meeting place, both in the city centre, with the main library, but also a network of community libraries. Oscar describes the public library (in general) as a place going from an introvert state to an extrovert: *It's moving, going somewhere.* A few also mention that the flexibility of the new building is important, since user need might change in the coming years. Oliver from the Christian Democrats says: *I believe we have a wonderful opportunity to make a library that really stands out internationally, and the ambition is nothing less than creating the best library in the world*. He adds, with Norwegian modesty: *If Norway can't do it, than who can?*[64]

---

[34] Down-town area in Oslo's west side

197

The comments on the current libraries show broad awareness of how new libraries are needed, which is mostly ascribed to poor conditions, and lack of space. The informants are very negative regarding the building as it is now. Ophelia's comment even shows traces of contempt for the library and those working there – she is one of the newest members on the committee, and her lack of familiarity with the institution might explain this attitude. Perhaps it could be that the current state of the library building actually reduces the library's legitimacy – that the lack of attention – hurts the library service on other levels than just the operational? All the projects have taken time, but the process in Oslo – which has advanced the least – is the last chapter in a lengthy debate of the where and how to place a new main library building. When Orson describes the library as a *secondary institution,* he may capturing the essence somehow of the not only the new Deichman building, but the problem of the public library institution, in the sense that its advantage of being multifaceted and broad consequently becomes a challenge when it comes to claiming position. However, the libraries in Aarhus and Birmingham are equally multifaceted, and those projects have been realized in a much shorter time span.

As mentioned in section 7.1.3 is New Deichman in Bjørvika the last of several alternatives from previous rounds of planning. There is a general agreement that Bjørvika is a terrific spot for the library, especially because of the proximity to the Central Station. While all say that the move will be a positive thing for the library, a couple of the informants add that the library too will enrich the area, drawing a much broader crowd than perhaps any other institution could. Olav takes in part credit for the entire project, as it was the Venstre's proposal and the Venstre's pressure that initiated it in the first place.

Oswald exemplifies the difference between the main library (as it will be) and a community library by comparing it to weekend and weekdays. That the main library perhaps will draw people to special events, but that the everyday use, like borrowing a Hamsun book, is something a library patron will do close to where he or she lives. This is clearly different from how Alex in Aarhus wants the Mediaspace to be used (8.3.2), namely as a part of the residents' everyday life. While Oswald mentions the special occasions, Alex is more concerned with the everyday use of the main library (not just the branches). Alex' attitude reflects perhaps more a more pragmatic approach, and by that exemplifies pragmatic legitimacy. Oswald, on the other hand, point at the

"uniqueness" of the central library. As described in section 8.2.3, Oswald stands out among the informants as the only one arguing support of libraries through an aesthetic argumentation, which can be interpreted as a support of high quality arts and culture because of the intrinsic value found there. *Library policy is culture policy*, he says and continues: *Anything beyond that is just a positive supplement*. This way of legitimizing library policy – or indeed culture policy – is in my view closer linked to **moral legitimacy**; which is a result of the degree to which an institutions' activity field is considered proper and "good". This aesthetic argumentation might be seen as less instrumental than others, but behind it is still a political will of promoting quality literature, for example, and by consequence it manifests a political goal.

The comparison with the planned Munch museum is interesting, because it says something about the position of the different cultural institutions in a city. Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2000) asked a number of respondents to compare different institutions to motor vehicles. The museums – especially the art museums was by most described as exclusive bands, while the public library commonly was compared to inexpensive ones, or even to buses . Amusing perhaps, but also quite illuminating. The luxury cars are expensive – very nice, but certainly not for everybody. Regular car brands, or buses, on the other hand, are much closer to what we can think of as a collective good – everybody is free, and there is plenty of room. Of course, not everyone will associate themselves with a bus, but most people have used it, depend on it and believe it necessary. Not to mention the fact that the public library often is the one cultural institution that is used the most. But the political prestige of a Munch museum will probably reach far beyond that of a new main library. This is the only aspect that really draws a clear division between the opposition and the majority party informants; and thus between the socialist and non-socialist parties. This is the only aspect that draws this clear division between the party groups, and it does suggest that the socialist parties seem to favour low-threshold services over the "fine arts", here represented by a public library and an art museum.

Oswald's strong position against naming Nye Deichman a city development project is interesting, because he insist on separating himself from an instrumental view of culture, and also instrumental argumentations for having cultural institutions. By doing this he assigns a certain value to the library, which has to do with how he perceives culture, as mentioned in 8.2.3. To

him, it is the intrinsic value of art and culture that is important, not what added value they can bring to other areas. By doing this he separates the library from this economic instrumentality several of the other informants seem to embrace. His stand distinguishes him from almost all the other informants, in Oslo, and the other cases. The general sentiment seems to be that there is a push-pull effect between library and culture policy and city development, not only in Oslo, but in Aarhus and Birmingham as well. His legitimization of the library is thus of a more *moral* kind, that that we find with others. Culture – and with culture comes libraries – is a "good" thing, thus libraries are good. He calls himself a conservative cultural politician, and by saying that he position himself opposite those who supports libraries as a tool for community building, city development, integration even. Although he does not deny that these are consequences of library activities, they are to him of secondary – but welcome – importance. These different views instances show how a factor like definition and perception of culture affect the legitimization of cultural endeavours.

Contrary to Oswald, the other politicians in Oslo use the city development-card as part of the legitimization of the library project (and by that, libraries in general). Ophelia probably takes it farthest by saying it would be a waste of money if it was not. This pragmatic legitimacy is much more visible among the majority. Pragmatic legitimacy (6.5.1) is connected with the self-interest of the most immediate audiences of an organization – in this case the politicians. They want to "sell the idea" of a big library investment, and they do that by – for one – present it as something more than a library project. It is a way of saying: Yes, we need a new library and this way we can combine it with other interests, like developing Bjørvika, drawing more attention to the area, bring in more people, in turn creating new jobs – etc. Pragmatic legitimacy involves looking at the practical consequences of an activity or endeavour. Suchman calls this exchange legitimacy, if we look at it in its simplest form: *A policy is supported if its audience perceives it as beneficial* (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975).

The manner in which the informants talk about the New Deichman project shows traces of all the four types of argumentation Vestheim (2009) describes. Thus, it seems like there is social, aesthetic, political and economic instrumentality behind it. Most prominent, however, is the economic instrumentality. This means that the library development is intended not only as an

enhancement of the library service, but also to promote economic prosperity indirectly by making the Bjørvika area more dynamic, people-friendly and inviting. On the one hand this is surprising; libraries are not usually seen in connection with economic growth. However, the so-called culture and experience economy links cultural life and institutions to city development and rejuvenation.

The informants' musings about New Deichman in Bjørvika, the Urban Mediaspace in Aarhus and the new Central Library in Birmingham further add to my interpretation; that the city development aspect is a major influence when it comes to how these projects came to be realized (like in Oslo), but even more so regarding how the projects are legitimized. Economic growth is not something that usually springs to mind when thinking about public libraries. But my interpretation of the informants' statements is that the library is part of a bigger puzzle, which involves issues like branding an area, branding a city, which surely has an economic angle. As any other political area, this is complex, but that there is a relation between major cultural investment today and possible economic prospects – in the long run – difficult to overlook. I will not go as far as saying this is the most important motivation, but it is clearly visible. Briefly mentioned in section 6.5.2 was the work by Danish researchers Hvenegaard Rasmussen, Jochumsen & Skot-Hansen (2011), who precisely point to this tendency, and mentions Aarhus and Oslo in particular.

The specialization mentioned particularly by Oliver is another example of these external trends reaching into the public library sphere. The idea is interesting, since he describes it as a way of specializing the library in its community context, however it might not favour the community as such, since the nature of public libraries, although with local variation, are to be general knowledge institutions, with something for everyone. This type of specialization would certainly challenge common norms of what public library content should be. It is, for this purpose, an example of a politician not sharing the general norm basis of the professional community. From an organizational perspective it would probably be efficient resource sharing, and perhaps give the users a better end service, but the change would be profound and perhaps problematic.

Of course the informants also explain the initiative as am investment that will improve the city both socially and culturally, however they seem to be very aware that the community libraries are

just as important when it comes to people's daily use of libraries. The Oslo informants are by and large very positive to the plans for Bjørvika – both the current administration and the opposition. They are content with the plans, and seem to think that if they are realized, Oslo will have a library that stands out internationally, which the city and the country *deserves*, as several say, a library we can be proud of. Olav claims it will be the most up-to-date library in the world, and Oscar notes that it is the most important culture initiative for Oslo residents.

8.3.3 The New Central Library in Birmingham

In Birmingham, (see section 7.3), the need for new premises is palpable, due to the concrete cancer and crammed storage facilities for both the library and the city archives. The city has got a substantial collection of photographs, old valuable books and other material that needs proper preservation conditions. In addition, the internal infrastructure is poor, and renovations are required. According to library manager Brian Gambles, these are issues that could be repaired but it would be costly and perhaps not worth it in the long run. The informants are very aware of the problems with the current building, both inside the building and the façade. As Bob says: *the current building is no longer fit for purpose*. The informants welcome the new library – both as an improvement of the library facilities, and as an investment in Birmingham's' future.

It should have been a city development project. It is a library project. (Bob)

This opening quote tells us that there are traces of disagreement among the previous and current administration. As described in section 7.3, the previous plans initiated by the Labour majority were rejected when the Conservative/Lib-Dem coalition came into power in 2004. Bob (Labour) supported the plans of building the library in the city's central eastside, and now he expresses disappointment over the choice of location done by the Conservatives and Lib-Dems. In his view, it would have been much more forward-looking to place the library in an area that would expand the current down-town, and bring new life to the area, a vision he claims the Conservatives never understood, and merely saw as moving it out of and away from the city centre: *Rather ironically they have now accepted that principle in a strategy document they have cooked up, called the Big City plan, which is too late for the library.* The choice of the current location he finds short-sighted, as it development-wise is completed, and as a result: *has not levered in any private sector investments.* On the bright side, he notes, it has resulted in a close cooperation with the

Repertoire Theatre, which consequently has been enhanced. Also, he grants, another big improvement is the coming redevelopment of Centenary Square, which will render it pedestrian friendly. This redevelopment is something Barry also talks about with much excitement, as the area in his opinion currently is disastrous for pedestrians. He talks little of the Labour disagreement regarding the location, he is new to this policy area, and came in after everything was decided and is very happy with the plans as they appear now.

Although the informants in Birmingham have different perspectives of the process and the plans, they are all in favour of a new library as such. Barry admits being very sceptical as he entered into the role as Councillor, he was not sure whether such an investment was the best thing for the city at that time. Now, however, he supports the project and speaks plainly about the value it will add to down-town Birmingham. He credits this especially to the library director, and how he has introduced him to the library service in general and the project in particular. He points out two main aspects he is especially proud of. One is the ability the library will provide to show people the extensive collections of photography: *We want to get those photographs out… old and modern, and get them displayed across the city. So that we become a hub of photography.* The other is the city's rare collections of Shakespearian manuscripts that currently are inaccessible because of the conditions in the main library and city archives. In the new library this will get a pronounced placement at the top of the building, in a room especially designed for this purpose*: So the new library will also be a showcase for the city's hidden treasures.* In fact, all the informants are very aware of the values the central library and city archives harbour at present, which are hidden from spectators because of the buildings condition. The role of the new library as a display for these valuable pieces, both the photograph collection and the Shakespeare manuscripts seems to matter greatly.

In addition to the display function, the Birmingham informants express interest in the activity inside. It is especially the "life" in the library they have talk of. When Barry muses over what he wants the New Central Library to be in ten years' time, he says: *It's a library, yes, but equally – a civic centre.* Bernard, Baird and Bob are too talking in similar terms, saying that they think the meeting place offered in the new library will become increasingly important in the coming years, likewise its role as a public activity arena.

203

Flexible is a keyword the informants use to describe the New Central Library. Maintaining and organic organization, and a flexible concept and design are among the aspects mentioned as central in order to facilitate continued use and growth, especially in this new location. Baird says: *It's to be organic as well. If you have a facility and you prescribe to people what they can do with it, society moves on, develops and changes, and pretty soon they may not have need for that, and so it'll fall back on the wayside. So I think any facility has to have a flexibility built in, and concept and design, so that it can move and change, and then libraries seizes to be libraries as they were 20-30 years ago, and it becomes a place for people to use in whatever need they have at the time.*

The Big Society plans of the current UK government could have a spillover effect on the library service, as described in section 7.3. While the informants are generally positive to volunteering, they do not believe in running libraries with volunteers. Bob says: *if libraries are wholly run by volunteers, you in some way devalue the service itself. And I think that if we go down that route, what we will see is a decline in library services across the country. Because I don't believe it can be sustained by volunteers.* However, cost cuts must be done and Barry ponders if all the library units need trained librarians: *the model we could do is where you have your specialized staff in a hub, and then a whole group of libraries have a much cheaper staff on and off. And effective security.* He explains that they have to do something to keep the libraries, since they do not want to shut down any units. Bernard also mentions the high wages experienced professionals receive, and suggest that hiring younger, untrained staff could be one way of cutting costs.

The new Central Library is a part of a bigger project of reinventing Birmingham as a metropolitan cultural hub. Politicians want to renew the city's image to the outside world, from a trade and industry city, to a cultural metropolis where people not only want to come, but also live and work and invest. That the Birmingham informants are emphasizing the new library's showcase function is perhaps also a part of this development. The fact that these extensive collections are so rare, and probably will catalyse both a lot of attention and a lot of visitors, will most likely also be part of shifting the general perception of Birmingham, and give it a stronger link to art and culture. The fact that culture is put in direct relation to economy – or the knowledge economy – confirms the trend of making culture and experience the centre of a city's

image, as described in *The Experience Economy* (1999). By doing this, it puts cultural investment into a strategic system where the goal is to sell. As Bob says, the current location has so far not created the investment interest they had hoped for – however that might also be related to the economy. On the other hand, the cooperation with the theatre he considers positive, along with the rest of the informants, and the synergy between the two units might in time produce the investments. In the opening quote by Bob there is a slight suggestion of "just", when he says it is not a city development project but a library project. He implies that a library project in itself is beneficial, but it used to have the potential of being a lot more – in this case rejuvenating an area and enlarging the city centre. The idea that a new library can be used as a generator of business seems to echo through all the three cases. The library in itself will stay a public domain, but the repercussions of a construction like this can certainly be great for business and commerce. People's interest in and usage of cultural events and experiences are ever increasing. Moreover, putting up a library in a traditional business area could both add flavour and make it more people-friendly.

The idea that libraries are, in one way or another, instrumental is reflected in the statements made by most of the informants. Even those who support the institution the most, and those who see little connection between libraries and other policy areas than culture still see libraries as *useful to obtain a goal* – in the sense that they are there to make better a situation. Whether it is to promote literacy, help build community, or to show-case Birmingham's Shakespearian heritage – libraries are there for a purpose, a means towards an end.

However, the observation that the informants view the library instrumentally does not mean they don't associate it with *values*. As Vestheim (2009) points out, culture policy is always instrumental, anything else would be illogical. It is the *type* of instrumentality which is interesting to look at. What is the argument for using public money on libraries? With the city development focus in mind, and using Vestheim's figure (2009), I find there is an economic instrumentality where cultural investments are done to create economic development. In Birmingham this is also closely inked – as mentioned – with the desire to rejuvenate Birmingham's image, as reflected in the Big City Plan.

The current recession has hit the UK hard, and looking at the Birmingham library investment in this context, it is important that the project is carried through keeping the legitimacy among politicians and residents. Perhaps is it this type of economic argumentation that captures the spirit of the time – which undoubtedly circles around economic issues. Had the politicians solely used an aesthetic argumentation for this library investment, it would probably have been difficult to gain any real favour for it. But as there seems to be different types of instrumentality behind it, people might find it more acceptable than they would otherwise.

The Big Society plan have already affected libraries in the UK, and created a lot of conflict between politicians and professionals. UK libraries have used volunteers for a long time, so in itself this is not novel, but one of the ideas behind the Big Society is to increase "the appetite to help" and reduce the public sector and replace some of the work by increase of volunteer labour. Replacing skilled professionals with volunteers indicate a devaluating attitude towards both the library service and the professional field. This seems not to be present in Birmingham. However, a couple of the informants are suggesting reducing the number of trained staff, and instead hiring younger or untrained workers – in order to cut costs. If such measures are an acceptable part of what constitutes *the appropriate library* for the politicians, it clearly conflicts with the appropriateness as seen by library professionals, and suggests that the legitimacy of this group is not solid enough in a situation where economy is an issue. In other words, there is a conflicting view on the importance of professionals in libraries. There are of course other aspects related to this: The reduction of trained staff could entail poorer library services for citizens which over time could jeopardize the legitimacy of the entire service. Also, over time, this could be a factor leading to deinstitutionalization of the UK library service.

The role of the library management seems to be important in Birmingham. The Lib-Dem councillor admits his reluctance towards the project, but explains that through cooperation and conversations with the library management – especially the library director – his conviction changed. As I was unable to interview the City Council leader – who has been a driving force for the current project – it is difficult to conclude on the role of the library management as far as the development of this project is concerned, but it is likely that it has been important. While the

206

norms and values of the professional community might not have transcended to the city council, the importance of a new library building has gained acceptance.

8.3.4   Summing up

The projects seem all to have been realized as a combination of untenable facilities and a desire to revitalize the city further. Especially in Aarhus and Oslo is this apparent, since the constructions are being – or going to be – done in areas under development. This suggests a clear presence of economic instrumentality in all the projects, which shows a difference in how the local library service is legitimized – here the projects in particular – and the public libraries at the national level, as described in section 8.1. The location in Oslo and especially in Aarhus is therefore emphasized as important. In Oslo, informants believe both the area and the library will benefit from the placing. In Aarhus, it is even described as a beacon, because of location and symbolic value – what it represents and how it will reflect upon the city. In Birmingham, there have been a change of building site, and there is a division between the current majority party representatives (Conservatives and LD) on the potential of city development with regards to the location. However, there is general agreement that the new library will benefit the area and the city as well, because of what it contains and displays – and as in Aarhus how it will reflect upon Birmingham, a city currently involved in a long-term rejuvenation process. The manner in which the projects are described by the informants, it seems like tendencies from the culture and experience economy – whether it is or is not a superstandard – has made its way into all three projects.

There is one informant refusing to look at his city library project as a venture in city development, and that is Oswald from Oslo. He explains it with his perspective on culture and culture policy, which represents an aesthetic and enlightening instrumentality. The other informants, even fellow Conservative party member Ophelia seem to employ different types of argumentation – including, but not restricted to the economical – when they discuss the library projects. This is also an observation done among the informants in the other cities.
The Aarhus project appears unified. The fact that there is broad party-political agreement regarding the Urban Mediaspace is a clear advantage, and the consensus adds to the project not only security, but also it legitimizes it further. In the past, one of the main problems preventing a

new main library in Oslo has been disagreement on what constituted the best solution – not disagreement on a new main library. The same happened in Birmingham, when the power shifted in the city council from Labour to Conservative and LD majority in 2003. With the political change followed a change in location of the planned library.

Even though the common factor in this thesis is the new main library, the cities' overall library structure is interesting from an organizational perspective, as all access points are part of the same service. The trend of creating larger units, fewer, bigger focal points can be seen in most sectors, both public and private: consolidating companies, consolidating organizations, consolidating municipalities. In the recent Library report, Norwegian libraries are encouraged both to a stronger degree of cooperation and if necessary concentrating resources in fewer, stronger units. A municipal reform in Denmark (7.2.1) set off a series of library closures, reducing the number of units quite drastically. The current economic climate in the UK has already caused a number of libraries to close, and many more are imminent. The dilemma of keeping a broad library service and providing ample, modern facilities and provisions is not only seen in outside urban areas. Thus, it would not be surprising if there was a political desire to also change the library structure.

As Brian Gambles mentions 7.3.4; maintaining a certain number of library units when the resources to run them are scarce might not in the end be the best policy, for neither the library service nor its users. This prioritization is interesting; especially since consolidation happens with such regularity and is so common within public administration. We could make the assumption that the network of branches, the extensiveness of the library service is more important to the informants than maintaining the quality of service? Another explanation could be that it is politically unwise to remove a public service entirely from a constituency? Most likely it is a combination of factors. As mentioned in 0, the volunteer libraries seen in the UK since 2010 did not seem appealing to the informants – however the attitude of the Birmingham informants suggests that instead of cutting the number of libraries, there might be staff reductions – or cuts in trained staff. While neither option is desired, from an institutional perspective; a reduction in the number of employees from the professional field combined with cuts in media budgets could jeopardize the legitimacy of the library institution more than reducing the number of units. If the

community libraries provide people with a lower quality service, it could affect both their attitude towards the library, and in turn their use of it. These suggestions from the informants also indicate that they do not necessarily link professional libraries with library professionals. What is certain is that the community library network seems to hold a strong position in Birmingham, stronger perhaps than among the informants in Oslo. Although the informants are quite united on the upkeep of the current structure, the younger non-socialist representatives show a clear willingness to review the current system, and are no strangers to a possible down-scaling. This is more in line with field-external trends, consolidation through mergers. Olivia, from the FrP seems to prefer smaller units in the community, as she believes it is better and more purposeful that libraries are situated in areas where people live.

Another factor saying something about the informants' library norms is that their reluctance to reduce the number of branches is connected to the community value libraries have. This is perhaps a more profound aspect of the informants' library perspective, and it seems to be common in all three cases. I believe it might be related to several factors. For one, that it is formally institutionalized in the library acts – people have the right to access library services and libraries, and they have had this right for a long time. Another factor is, as Albert points out, the idea that libraries have a social role in the community – and that requires their actual presence there.

In the first section of chapter 8, I introduced the public library policy strategy for each case. Chapter 3.4 presents public library discourses as discussed by Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen. The *dynamically focused and experience-oriented discourse* shows a library service more purposeful and value-oriented than in a long time – perhaps because of the continued search for a new identity? It makes the library a place that wants to convey something to its users, according to the authors.

As discussed in section 8.2.3, the informants seem to have incorporated a broad view of the public library service. When the discussion moves "down" a level and we talk about the projects in which they are involved, the informants portray differing degree of the professional norms and values, but there is awareness of why continued efforts are relevant. Especially in Aarhus

perhaps, where the foundation has been laid most thoroughly, but in the other cases too. The challenges Birmingham faces with regards to budget cuts has left the politicians in a difficult situation, where and exists to a varying degree, but it should be pointed out that these library projects by force of being initiated (and in time, completed) do position the library service more clearly in each city. Several informants the challenge of accurate representation when they talked about library challenges in section 8.2.5; and projects are likely to give more people a clearer image of a future-oriented library service.

9 In conclusion

Through the preceding data presentation and analysis, I have attempted to extract from the material factors that affect the informants' library norms, how the library service and projects are legitimized, how myths and standards seem to have affected the politicians' attitudes as well as the projects as they appear now. Also, I have tried to look at how all these factors could be relevant for the library service in the years to come; are their signs that prevailing norms and values are being strengthened, or are there factors that suggest potential deinstitutionalization? Summing up, I will go through research questions I posed at the beginning:

- To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?

- How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?

- How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?

- To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

The purpose of these research questions has been to address the following problem statement:
What public library perceptions are found among politicians in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham, what visions of the future library do they reflect?
Perceptions is a combination of attitudes of and understanding towards the public library found primarily through interviews with locally elected politicians, but also through written policy documentation. Using concepts from institutional theory, I have focused on discerning norms,

legitimization, the presence of myths and recipes, and factors that could potentially cause deinstitutionalization.

The library projects in themselves are similar, in several ways. In each case they consist of large library buildings designed to "influence" the city and its urban landscape. The study tours the politicians and projects groups have taken have gone to many of the same places, ensuring similar influences internationally, and the existing myths related to state of the art library buildings.

The public library service is given no major place in party politics. This becomes clear when reading the manifestos/programs, which to a varying – but by and large little – degree addresses the topic of public library politics. Now, not all parties in all cities have these local political programs, but in Oslo, where all parties do have them, there is remarkable little attention given to this policy area. It certainly then seems appropriate when several informants describe the library's greatest challenge as visibility and relevance – not only to the general public, but to them as politicians.

The public library is legitimized in different ways, depending on which level you refer to. When talking about the public library service in general (nation-wide?) there seems to be a cognitive legitimacy at play, meaning that there is a taken for grantedness about how they describe and, and also the fact that it is described as an obvious part of a democratic society. This contrasts the manner in which the informants talk about the library projects locally. Then there is a much more pragmatic point of view, and even traces of an economic instrumentality – that the new libraries in fact is a part of a desire of making the respective city more attractive, be it for newcomers or business and industry.

Still, the cases appear different in a number of respects. One clear separation is related to the countries' socio-economic starting point, and for me tempting to ascribe to different socio-economic models (4.3). England has a very different demography than Norway and Denmark, and thus other challenges and priorities. Also, the country has been hit hard by the financial crisis, which affects all policy areas, including their library policy.

Legal basis and the formal institutionalization is another factor that sets the cases apart. England's current library act is from 1964, and although there have been other political initiatives, like the Framework for the Future; the totality gives the impression of a weaker institutionalized public library. This gives reason to think that the position of the public library (in general) is weaker in England than in Norway and Denmark, especially when faced with changing external conditions (economy, technology).

The library policy in each city adds to this impression. While Aarhus – as the only case – exhibits a unified strategic library policy plan, in which the new library is an important component, Oslo has not composed anything similar since 2005. Consequently, the plans for New Deichman are not a part of a long-term strategy, which implies a lack of library strategy. In Birmingham, there is a long-term strategic plan for the entire city (Big City), in which the new main library is integrated. However, this is an urban regeneration project, and contains no strategic measures for public library policy.

In his study, Usherwood (1993) asked his informants what was the single most important influencing factor when deciding about library matters. The answers varied with party affiliation, the Conservatives for instance, tended to answer 'money'. I have interviewed representatives from different parties, expecting them to be somewhat collared by their ideological stance. The only time I saw clear division between parties or party groups was about the prioritization of a new Munch museum over a new main library in Bjørvika, Oslo. The minority socialist parties believed that the order should be different – the library first – the museum second.

Introductorily, I mentioned the paradox of how major library projects are initiated in a time where many calls for a new public library vision, as they find it lacking now. However – now I

find that this is perhaps not a paradox after all, since the library projects seem to have a large component of city development, not only ideas on future-oriented library operations. In Aarhus, there seem to be a vision for the library service as well as the Multimedia Space, but in Birmingham, the vision seems to be more of the New Central Library – a downtown focal point – not the library service as a whole.

9.1 Values, norms, and "the appropriate library"

To what extent are the norms and values conveyed in the informants' notions of the public library similar to those we find in the professional field (like the UNESCO Manifesto)?

The values and norms the informants ascribe to the public library reflect at least to some extent those you can find expressed for instance in UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO, 1994). The informants seemed to recognize by and large the multiple roles a public library can and should take on, but when asked about the most important role of the library, the overall response in all three cases was that concerning knowledge and learning. That is a little bit of a paradox, seeing that public libraries are the responsibility of the cultural committee – or similar – in all three cases, and all the informants can be labelled *cultural politicians*. Despite of this, throughout the interviews, several keep referring to the public library as a cultural institution, not a knowledge institution. It would seem that it would be worthwhile to discuss whether or not public libraries should be the responsibility of the educational policy field, like it is in Finland. Why the informants express this type of understanding of the public library is probably related to a number of causes. Their private use of the library seems to be less influential than their experience as politicians, according to their own reports. Cooperation and communication with the library administration in their respective cities seems especially important for some, while others tell of renewed understanding of the library role as a result of study trips in connection with the projects. Those politicians who have been committee members or councillors with cultural policy responsibility for a longer period of time, quite naturally express a keener awareness than those new to this role.

Logic of appropriateness (March & Olsen, 1989) is a concept I have applied throughout the analysis when trying to discern what constitutes *the appropriate library*? Which values and norms do the informants connect with the public library institution?

The role of the public library has from the origin been connected with enlightenment, education, social development and culture dissemination. The circumstances are different now, but the role and mission of libraries are still recognizable in this respect. When asked to name the most important role of public libraries, it was primarily the library's role as a knowledge disseminator, an educational institution that was stressed. However, some also emphasized the social role and the library as a cultural arena. This reflects both the overall library focus found in strategy plans and reports on a national level, as well as the trend on the public library field in general. It seems likely that the library discourses from the professional field at least to some extent has made their way into politics, for example represented by the *dynamically focused and experience-oriented discourse* (3.4), focused on the physical space libraries provide, and the content it wants to pass on to its users. My assumption is that this has happened with the library projects as the primary generator.

The education focus reflects the general focus on knowledge and learning. Administratively, the public library remains a cultural political issue, which can be argued as a paradox. No one is denying that the library is an important cultural arena, but if its educational value is rated higher perhaps there should be a debate regarding a closer integration with the educational policy area. Overall, the informants report having gained a wider perspective of what a public library is and can be since they started working with library issues in the city council. Those informants having been in the cultural committee the longest and those few who use the library in their private lives convey a more faceted view of the institution. And – just as naturally – those new to the area, and with mainly childhood experiences to lean against are less inclined to do the same. The familiarity with the professional field increases of course with time. However, it seems like especially in Birmingham and Aarhus that the library and project administration have particularly close connection with the responsible politicians. This is likely an important source of influence, like Barry reported in section 8.2.1

Another main component touches a string in the core value system of public libraries, namely that it should be free. Not charging users is not in itself a value, but it is a norm that reflects values concerning free access to information and right to knowledge. This links the library directly to how our democracies have developed. Different as the countries may be, the general sentiment indicated quite clearly that the no charge-policy will continue in the foreseeable future. Several informants, both on the political left and right spoke clearly in favour of it, and express strong sentiments concerning a potential fee-based service in terms of it not being part of *the appropriate library*. The only party promoting a fee-based public library service is FrP – the right-wing liberal-conservative FrP in Oslo. Payment for services causes little excitement among the informants. Having users pay for "extras" is one thing, quite another to charge general fees to become a library card holder/member. Some informants go as far as saying that such kinds of payments would be the demise of public libraries all together. And this general negative attitude towards payment applies is repeated by all the informants, with one exception, the FrP representative in Oslo.

This attitude describes the free-of-charge principle as deeply institutionalized also among external actors on the public library field. Applying March & Olsen's logic of appropriateness, the question "can a public library charge citizens for membership?" the answer will most likely be no. In my view this attitude is surely related to the fact that the library act says it should be free, but I think equally important is the taken-for-grandness this aspect of the library have gained over the years. None of the informants referred to any library act when they talked about it; instead they seemed to connect it primarily with democracy, having a free public library service. Bob from Birmingham thought it would be giving a very wrong signal to go in the opposite direction and introduce a membership fee or similar, and the same signals were given in Oslo, and as the quote above represents, Aarhus. Only one of the informants were opposed to this principle, and based this opinion on the idea that libraries to a larger extent should be self-funding, and the assumption that people now do not have the same need for free public libraries as they did when they first originated.

However, when it comes to sponsoring, philanthropy and cooperation with business and commerce the sentiment is not quite as unanimous, and there seemed to be more nuances and

216

considerations. Allowing sponsorship on this neutral arena would be a major shift in the current state of affairs. On the other hand, libraries were in the beginning often built because of individual donations. But this institution has – at least in Europe – moved further and further away from private interests. The question is if this is about to change. In Birmingham, these kinds of ventures are welcomed, desired even. As the statements in 8.2.4.4 show, there are few reservations regarding any type of outside "investments". In Norway and Denmark, on the other hand, the situation is different. Some of the liberal parties welcome the idea. Others are more hesitant, especially informants representing the social-democratic/labour parties, who at least do not want any "visible" sponsorship – but very few were strongly opposed to it on a general basis. In my view, this is partly linked to the different traditions and policy models England, Denmark and Norway belong to. Norway and Denmark have both an extensive public sector, where market forces are kept out. And partly, it is related to external circumstances, in this case the global financial crisis that has hit England quite hard, much harder than the Nordic countries for one. The incentive to wish for – or seek, even – private means/support/something in naturally stronger when there simply is no public means to be found, and originates thus from a quite pragmatic approach to "survive". However, returning to section 6.5.2, I mention a Swedish study concerning sponsorship and private funding in Swedish libraries – and while the authors note that this is still uncommon, there seems to be a desire for it, especially on the part of the government (Björnestam & Olsson, 2010).

Another aspect of *the appropriate library* is how it operates, and how it through tasks and services meets *expectations*. No patron or politician will mind – or perhaps even notice – all the things being done inside a library, but they will notice any breeches of expectancy. And one main expectation is that it is a place for books. Thus, for many of the informants, the printed book and the library are still very much related to an extent that assertions such as *the library is a knowledge centre* expresses a genuine sentiment, but with a reservation of knowledge being a result of books being present.

I note that although the informants are quite open to new media, indeed most believe they are important and belong in a library, most are still adamant about the central role of the printed book. But what is most interesting is perhaps not their opinions about the library operations per

se, but their clear separation between their job – to draw the outline for the current and future library – and the librarians – to decide content and what they find appropriate based on their professional point of view. As long as the activities are based in learning and culture, it seems that among the informants there is generally a positive attitude to both new and untraditional initiatives, cooperation and activities.

9.2 How is the public library legitimized?

How are public libraries in general and the projects in particular legitimized by the politicians; and which argumentation is used?

Legitimacy is a central component of this study, and as described in chapter 6.5.1, it takes several forms. The basic, however, is common: justification of an entity, both cognitive and assessing. Legitimacy says something about how an organization is perceived by onlookers – in this case it says something about how politicians – the owners – perceive the public library. For the public library institution, legitimacy is vital. As Suchman (1995) says, a high degree of legitimacy will make an organization both more stable and more apprehensible in the public eye. It will also create *persistence* (p 574), since it is more probable that resources keep being transferred to an organization that has a justifiable objective, acts in accordance with what is appropriate, and appears valuable and useful. Single observers might disagree; it is the overall support from a group that gives legitimacy.

We know that people in general attribute the public library a high degree of legitimacy; even if they do not use it themselves they are willing to pay for it (Aabø 2006). In user polls, the library generally scores highly. But we know less about the politicians, the "owners". Since the three cases I have looked at, are similar because the all revolve around a new library initiative, it is interesting, from an institutionalist perspective, to see how

1)   the library is legitimized through formal channels (legislation, plans)

2)   the library is legitimized by the informants

3)   what kind of legitimacy can be traced, using these channels (moral, cognitive, pragmatic)

As section 8.1 shows, the formal institutionalization of the public library service has a long tradition, thus expressing a strong overall legitimacy in all three cases. There are, of course, differences which briefly can be described in terms of resilience; the extent to which legislation and strategy plans gives the public library a strong foundation at the same time as it is adapted to current conditions and needs. Denmark has an updated legislation in which the preamble factor in new media and changed user patterns. Aarhus has a strategic library plan which maps out the road ahead and gives a vision both for the new Mediaspace, and for the general library service. In Oslo, and Birmingham, there exist no such political plans, resulting in an impression of a weaker and less resilient service. However, the Norwegian library legislation is currently being revised, which – together with the current most library report – implies that the overall position of public libraries in Norway is strong. The UK public library preamble has not been updated for decades, and although there were several government initiatives and reports in the early 2000s, combined with financial difficulties and a reduced public sector – the public library's position appears less solid here than in Norway and Denmark. Birmingham has no apparent political strategy for the library service, but does use the new Central Library as a beacon in their long-term re-development plan.

The interviews suggest that when the informants rationalize the library projects, there are intrinsic differences. I relate these differences to several factors: personal experience; party politics or political ideology; political experience with the public library field and cooperation with the professional field. In addition, societal conditions are likely to influence the informants' perspectives.

Moral legitimacy happens through an evaluation of how proper or appropriate an activity or an organization is, not if it is beneficial for the audience doing the evaluation. The public library is typically an institution connected with "good" and "proper", a valued institution so to speak. Aesthetic argument / instrumentality can be traced to those who talk of enlightenment/bildung, and the intrinsic value of culture. So it seems that the aesthetic instrumentality mostly is reserved for the overriding library politics, at least in documentation and plans. None but one of the informants are talking of culture in terms of aesthetic value, the other types of instrumentality are more evident. But moral legitimacy can also be found with those who evaluate the library as

good, especially can we see this when they talk about democratic rights and access to information and education. Now, this can also be perceived as pragmatic in some ways, but not completely as they connect it more to the right than the goal itself.

It seems like pragmatic legitimacy is the most widespread kind among the informants in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham when discussing the actual projects – not the library service in general. Perhaps not surprising, considering that it is their task to determine how functional their services are in the best interest of the electorate. On the local level, more tangible argumentation is used. The projects are justified with on the one hand, very pragmatic needs: The central library buildings in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham all are ill-fitted for purpose. But the main drive behind the projects seems to be of a more economic or social nature. With few exceptions, the informants describe the library projects as being part of a larger development agenda: in new areas in Aarhus and Oslo the libraries bring something other than just business activity, they bring all kinds of people and – following – street life. In Birmingham, the new Central Library is a cultural investment, a part of the process to transform the downtown areas to a *world class city centre*. The prestigiousness of the projects does suggest that the economic aspect must have great relevance, both in terms of intangible future figures, but most importantly perhaps being a part of a bigger development project: the city itself.

Cognitive legitimacy is perhaps the one form most difficult to distinguish, because it contains no elements of pragmatic interest or assessment. Cognitive legitimacy implies an element of taken-for-grantedness, which means that the audience finds it an essential or inevitable part of their reality: it is difficult for the audience to think that something should be done differently. For instance, the majority of the informants favour introducing new media into the libraries. But the printed book is still very much present in their image of what books and libraries are about, so the "dilemma" of e-books in libraries seems to be considered somewhat hypothetical. Printed books in libraries are something they take for granted, not necessarily because they value printed books over electronic, but because that is just the way it is. The library itself may be subjected to this kind of legitimacy, depending on who you ask. A person can be a non-user, but still think that libraries are an inevitable part of the society, like taxes, 12 year obligatory education, or state

funded hospitals. Libraries are still legitimized, both on a cognitive and evaluative level – as a place people go to gain knowledge, and in turn better themselves or their situation.

With regards to instrumentality and political argumentation, there are certainly traces of different types. When the topic is the role of public libraries in general and why or why funding should be a public task, several informants stress the library's democratic function, i.e. that it is an institution existing mainly to promote a functioning democratic society where everyone can access information and knowledge: the public library is a democratizing tool. In many ways a **political mobilizing** type of instrumentality.

Although it is not mentioned in direct connection with the library projects, the social effects of having a library service is also an aspect worth mentioning. The awareness of the public library's social role, as a community meeting place and as an arena for integration seems to be rising; it is noticeable in recent government reports – and it is present in many of the statements regarding the public library's role, both on a general level and with reference to the specific projects. As mentioned in the previous section 8.1, the *dynamically focused and experience-oriented discourse* seems at least to some extent to have transcended from the professional field to the public library field in general, thus affecting the institutions' legitimacy in a positive manner. Perhaps particularly the integration aspect many of the informants seem to linger on. From the outset, public libraries were intended to have a certain socializing effect, in combination of course with culture and learning. Now it seems that this idea, the library's social arena is making its way back, although not as a means of social control, but as a place of possibility for the entire population.

Paradoxically enough, it is not necessarily so that these big investment further institutionalizes the public library, at least not if that argument is based on the assumption that libraries first and foremost are institutions we associate with aesthetic, social, and politically mobilizing instrumentality. Admitting that economic factors can be just as relevant is perhaps not a struggle politically (in some circles yes), but in the professional community this will be much more provocative. Vestheim's argument (2009) is that in a political context, public allocations to

cultural purposes will always have an instrumental rationalization, that there should be a positive end result for the citizens of some kind.

9.3 Common features, myths and models

How do the cases resemble one another, and to which extent do they translate into different library models?

The trends and myths in the library field are to a large extent the same trends and myths as in other field and in society in general: A clear technological focus, branding and marketing, the culture and experience economy, NPM in organizations – to name a few.

The projects themselves are in a way a part of a larger trend in the public library field, where several big cities around the world have invested heavily in library projects, drawing attentions both for façade and content. I believe many of the statements, and the manner in which the projects appear and are presented gives reason to say that cultural investments like this to an increasing degree is tied to not only city development – as in developing the inner life of a city – but developing it economically, bettering its image, making it more enticing for both tourists and investors. Libraries are less "just libraries" and more part of a larger picture (culture and experience economy). As mentioned in sections 8.2 and 9.2, there is a latent economic instrumentality found here, which in turn gives reason to discuss how the effects of for example the experience economy comes into play. In this sense, the cases resemble one another.

I briefly mentioned in section 8.2.3 the paradox that the informants' consider the knowledge role of the public library to be more important than the cultural profile – when it is politically defined as a cultural institution. And it is of course this intersection between the knowledge role and the cultural role that makes up both the strength and the weakness of the public library's position: its broad appeal and potential far-reaching effect, on the other hand, its many contenders and lack of "a clear profile". When discussing the biggest challenges the public library is faced with, answers like profiling, proving relevance, making itself visible suggest that politicians too struggle with

"placing" the public library. I find it is something of a paradox, then, that the projects at the same time are included in an overall strategy aimed at profiling the cities.

The informants seem to have concurrent opinions on library structure, too. While consolidation and merging of units have been an organizational trend for years, the general impression in all three cases is that the upkeep of the current library structure is desired. Only in Oslo, two of the youngest and least experienced politicians expressed interest in exploring community library consolidation through mergers. The focus on maintaining – or even increasing – the number of library units seems to be connected both to the role the community libraries play; as local meeting places, as well as a taken-for-grantedness – the library service is and should be comprehensive, not just in provision, but also in service points. Even in Birmingham, where the financial situation is tough, the informants were opposed to closures. While that is a positive thing for library service and patrons, the consequences of combined budget cuts and a stable number of units could be deterioration in service provision, staff cut back, reduced opening hours – factors that in time could affect the institutional legitimacy.

What sets the cases apart most clearly is in my view the resilience embedded in the general library service, its position both nationally and locally. Although there is no doubt that these project lifts the library service in general – added attention and presumably increased status and visit numbers following the library openings – there are clear indications of how the current position of the library service is and have been. Looking at factors like library expenditure per capita, Denmark is in a different league than both Norway and the UK and has the highest spending on libraries in the world. When it comes to legislation, there are much more common ground between Norway and Denmark. Norwegian public library act is modelled after the Danish, and is currently being revised. In addition, the political systems are much more alike, which makes the comparison "easier" when it comes to public library organization. Denmark has a powerful government body responsible for service development. In Norway, libraries are less prosperous, and the recent changes in responsible governmental bodies are too recent to assess in any proper manner. As a "library country" Norway's position is the weakest in Scandinavia.

The difference between the UK and the Scandinavian countries, suggest that when discerning public library models; theirs are not the same. Although the point of origin was similar, the distinct profile of the Nordic welfare state has also affected the public library sector. Few would suggest that the Norway, Denmark and the UK belong to the same sort of socio-economic model. However, the manner in which the politicians understand the library service, the attitudes they have towards it, and the challenges they identify suggest that the common ground on the international public library field is substantial. This can in part be explained with a common tradition and history, which has resulted in operational recipes reflecting a common norm basis, like the free-of-charge principle. The projects too seem to be partly inspired by library myths of what constitutes a future-oriented library, indicating the presence of mimetic isomorphy. These myths seem to be inspired by superstandards like the culture and experience economy. As far as I see it, these case similarities are rather the result of the activities on the *international public library field*, not that the cases belong to the same public library model.

9.4 Confirmation of public library norms

To what extent can the attitudes to and understanding of the public library – as expressed in each case – be interpreted as a confirmation of the established norms on the field, or as a potential deinstitutionalization of the public library institution?

If institutionalization is the process which gives organizations legitimacy, then deinstitutionalization has the opposite effect – to put it simply. Just like legitimacy is created through a number of factors, deinstitutionalization is a process arising from a number of causes. It is a phenomenon worth studying, because it will enable us to say something about when institutions are most likely to resist pressures causing deinstitutionalization. Also, studying deinstitutionalizations helps us learn when conformity pressures, like trends and myths, fail to take effect on institutions. How and why habits and customs change, and how the general agreement on procedures and activities turns into discord. I find deinstitutionalization to be a particularly relevant concept to use when studying public libraries, since the challenges for this

institution are caused by very different processes and pressures. But how far-reaching are these challenges? To which extent can we say they are pulling in the direction of deinstitutionalization? This dissertation deals with political perceptions found in three cities, in three city councils. Common for the cases is a political agreement to build new central libraries, which in itself suggests both political interest and belief in the library institution. But the visions and attitudes of politicians are not necessarily in accordance with field-professional values and norms. Neither is it certain that the politicians want the same thing with the libraries as the professional community. Thus, it is relevant to look at the motives for and attitudes to libraries in general and their individual projects. If we do this, we can say something about the library's status in a city. In what direction is it going? What challenges are there? How stable is it? Are values under pressure?

Looking at each specific case, the library's position seems strongest in Aarhus. This is due to a combination of factors: For one, Denmark has the newest and most updated library legislation, which consolidates its position formally. Also, more hands-on, Denmark's library spending is generally high all over the country, and higher than the other Scandinavian countries'. As far as Aarhus is concerned – as with the other cities – the project is of course in itself a vote of confidence to the library's continued importance, and will be used to represent an image of Aarhus as a city of knowledge and innovation. A third key factor is the broad consensus about the project and the strategic political planning for the entire library service. This builds a stronger and more secure foundation locally, in addition to adding vision not only for one building, but for the while organization and its operation. Another factor in the Aarhus case is the co-organization of the Library Service and Citizen Services. An expansion of the public library's area of operation could conflict with its normative foundation – assigning tasks that are not in accordance with *the appropriate library* – and in turn affect its perceived legitimacy, both internally and externally. However in this case, it is my belief that it will add to the library's role as an information space, and will not exceed what would normally be considered a library's area of operation. This service coordination has a potential to increase the library's pragmatic legitimacy, and in time also its cognitive legitimacy, because a broader area of use will make it a more important part of everyday life – like Alex mentioned as a main vision for the new library. To me it seems like the library perceptions in Aarhus, at least to some degree, are characterized by recognition of the

norms and values on the library field, combined with a clear intention to use it in a broader political perspective, especially concerning the development of the city itself. There are few, if any, indications that the library perceptions found in Aarhus could potentially contribute to a deinstitutionalization of the library service – quite the contrary.

In Oslo, where the new library exists only on a conceptual level, the informants' library perceptions seem more dispersed. While Norway's public library legislation is similar to the Danish, it has not been amended for 27 years, which makes it outdated in comparison. Recent government reports indicate that there is political will – at least to some extent – to make new efforts to coordinate and revitalize the public library sector, but aside from the phasing out ABM and leaving the responsibility of public library development to the National Library, there are few sign of any overall efforts on the public library field. Locally, Oslo lacks consistency when it comes to library policy. It becomes evident not only through the process of building a new main library – which has been actuated, changed, postponed, aborted and revitalized several times during the last decades – but also through the lack of a consistent library policy. The last strategic document produced by the City Council expired in 2005. This suggests that not only focus is missing, but also political (and possibly bureaucratic) prioritization. Through the interviews, my impression is that the New Deichman is generally wanted, and that the politicians for the most part confirm a set of library norms and values in line with what exists on the professional library field. But the perceptions expressed will not alone drive this project forward, and the lack of an overall library strategy – a vision that exceeds one new building – is a challenge for the entire library service in Oslo. Of course, this might change if the New Deichman project is followed through. Should we see a New Deichman in Bjørvika in 2017, then the effects is likely to be revitalizing for the library service – especially in Oslo – but conceivably also in Norway. The political attention will increase, naturally, and there is no reason to think that New Deichman will experience a similar popularity as the Opera House in Bjørvika. Should this project not be completed, it would clearly weaken Deichman's position in Oslo politically. However, it would probably take a more permanent weakening of the library's position – through lack of political attention, allocation and strategy – before it would make sense to talk about any deinstitutionalizing effect.

The Birmingham case is the one perhaps most threatened by what Oliver refers to as social pressures (1992), through the economic crisis, and the subsequent downsizing of the public sector. Also the lack of overall political library strategy creates an unsteady foundation for the library service when external pressures are looming. Britain's library legislation is grounding the library service, like it does in the other countries, but because of the lacking updates it gives little protection of the content and standard in libraries. Some of the statements from the Birmingham informants suggest that library units override professional standards if they are forced to reduce costs further. Although socio-economic circumstances are different, the general impression is still that the library service has a weaker position in England than Denmark and Norway, both at the national and the local level. The UK Public Library Act instructs local authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" service, but it is less than specific as to what this entails. The act in itself does not cause deinstitutionalization, but its lack of specifics could provide little protection against erosion. The current government initiated support program for libraries (8.1.3) could arguably work either way for English public libraries: if it does manage to increase sustainability and promote best practice, the libraries could very well reposition themselves as vital knowledge organizations. However, if the use of non-professional staff and external cooperation and partnerships start affecting the core values and norms both within the professional field and the public library field, then the service might start eroding from within. Not only because of an almost fifty year-old library act, but because of the continued pressure to cut cost, and the willingness to replace trained professionals with volunteers. It does not touch the libraries, or even the extensiveness of the service in terms of service points, but should this become regular, it could potentially drain them of skill and professionalism, which has taken decades to build.

9.5 Further reflections

The objective of this research project was to discern political perspectives of the public library, based on interview data collected in three European cities where new central libraries are being planned and built. I posed four research questions, to address the overriding problem statement:

What public library perceptions are found among politicians in Oslo, Aarhus and Birmingham, what visions of the future library do they reflect?

Through this process, new issues and new questions started to crystallize; questions that require further research. There are three main aspects I would like to see further explored. The first deals with the stakeholder groups connected to library development, while the second concerns the projects themselves.

In terms of stakeholder groups, I have become increasingly aware of the interplay between politicians and the library community, and how that affects library development. This study's chief concern is political attitudes, and while that adds an important piece to the library development puzzle, we need more components to show how library development occurs. During this whole process, I have become increasingly aware of the different relations between politicians and professionals. It is not politicians who "make up" legislation. Policies usually are developed in cooperation with the practice field; strong library legislation and clear political vision suggest close connection between politicians, bureaucrats and library professionals. The relationship between politicians and library professionals and its effect on library services is one worth further study.

And as a continuation: I mentioned in chapter 3, how concurrent societal factors and the impact of library pioneers have been vital for the development and growth of public libraries. Through this study I have become aware of the something similar: Political, economic and social factors can push in one direction, but the impact of influential individuals should not be overlooked – they can have the same driving effect as the pioneers of the early 20th century. For instance: In Aarhus, the library manager is well known both in Denmark and abroad, and has been a visible actor and debater on the international public library field. To which extent has his position and voice influenced the Aarhus politicians? Investigations regarding the effect of library leadership on strategic planning – locally or nationally – might be limited. Nevertheless it would be both useful and enlightening to take a closer look at the library service dependence on individuals and which consequences that might have in terms of resilience, legitimacy and position.

Comparing the findings in this study, with similar research I find that the informants convey both interest and knowledge about public libraries. This is in one way surprising, as some of the previous research done on politicians attitudes towards public libraries suggests that stakeholders outside the professional field have a limited view of public libraries. However, the three cases I have selected have in common ambitious library projects, which have directed political attention to libraries and library policy. Attention is a scarce resource; thus it would provide an interesting angle comparing cases where library projects have been initiated or recently completed with cases lacking this variable. My hypothesis is that awareness is much higher when politicians are, or recently have been, involved in specific projects.

The second aspect deals with project development: Through these three cases, we have become familiar with projects at different stages. One is nearly finished, one is mid-way, and one is at the planning stage. While the projects have provided an important variable in this study, they have not been the study object. Focusing solely on project development would be a contribution of insight into this complex process. Doing in-depth studies of the processes leading up to completion or cancellation would help answer the question: What makes or breaks a library project?

These impressive, expensive projects are made with very high ambitions. And there is no doubt that once they finish, the initial effect will be great both for the library and for the city. Following a project over time, exploring the actual impact such library rejuvenation could have on a city, would offer new insights into the continued cooperation between the professional and the political community. Is it possible to maintain a library that continues to attract visitors and serve as a public space, at the same time as it contributes to making the city centre more appealing to business and commerce – the long-term effects of the culture and experience economy?

The third aspect that needs further study is the idea of public library models. While I certainly have touched upon it in this dissertation, it is too extensive a subject to address just in part. It demands of course, a broader perspective and a more extensive study of the library service in all the Nordic countries –an extensive research cooperation, a common project perhaps, like the study on the Nordic Cultural Model (Duelund, 2003). Examining if a Scandinavian or Nordic

public library model exists would also be relevant to look at from an international perspective: If there is a Nordic model that would signal the existence of other library models too.

References

(ALA), A. L. A. ([200?]). History: Founding of the American Library Association.

(CILIP), C. I. o. L. a. I. P. ([2010], 09/08/2010). How CILIP was formed. Retrieved April 7, 2001, from http://www.cilip.org.uk/about-us/history/unification/Pages/default.aspx#library

(ONS), O. f. N. S. (2010). Labour Market Profile Birmingham. Retrieved July 19, 2011, from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431965/report.aspx#tabrespop

(SPQL), S. P. L. Q. About SPLQ. Retrieved December 8, 2011, from http://www.splq.info/about/index.htm

Lov om folkebibliotek. (1985).

Aabø, S. (2005a). *The value of public libraries*.

Aabø, S. (2005b). *The value of public libraries : a methodological discussion and empirical study applying the contingent valuation method*. [Oslo]: Faculty of Arts Unipub.

Aabø, S. (2006). *Evaluation of libraries : experiences from applying a method for non-market valuation development in economics*.

Aabø, S., Audunson, R. A., & Vårheim, A. (2010). How do public libraries function as meeting places? *Library & Information Science Research, 32*(1), 16-26.

Aarhus Kommune. (2010). *Policy for Citizens' Services and Libraries 2011-2014*. Retrieved from http://www.aarhus.dk/~/media/Dokumenter/Borgmesterens-Afdeling/Byraadsservice/Politikker-og-planer/Bibliotekspolitik/1558-Politik-for-

Borgerservice-og-Biblioteker-DK.ashx.

Aarhus Kommune. (2011). Hele befolkningen i Århus kommune 1. januar 2011. *Statistiske informationer* Retrieved July 20, 2011, from
http://www.aarhus.dk/~/media/Dokumenter/Borgmesterens-Afdeling/Statistik-og-Ledelsesinformation/Befolkning/Hele-befolkningen/Hele-befolkningen-i-Aarhus-Kommune-1--januar-2011.ashx

Aarhus kommune. ([2006]). Core Values. Retrieved January 22, 2012, from
http://www.urbanmediaspace.dk/en/mediaspace/core-values

Aarhus Kommune. ([2010]). Vision for the Project. Retrieved 17.01, 2012, from
http://www.urbanmediaspace.dk/en/project/vision-project

Allen, D. K., Wilson, T. D., & Audunson, R. (1999). *Exploring the contexts of information behaviour : proceedings of the Second international conference on research in information needs, seeking and use in different contexts, 13-15 August 1998, Sheffield, UK.* London: Taylor Graham.

Anderson, T. M., Holmström, B., Honkapohja, S., Korkman, S., Söderström, H. T., & Vartiainen, J. (2007). *The Nordic Model : Embracing globalization and sharing risks.* Helsinki: The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy (ETLA).

Andersson, M., & Skot-Hansen, D. (1994). *Det lokale bibliotek: afvikling eller udvikling.* København: Udviklingscenteret for folkeoplysning og voksenundervisning.

Audunson et al. (2000). Nordic baltic research platform on public library research: Public libraries and the welfare state

Audunson, R. (1996a). *Change processes in public libraries : a comparative project within an institutionalist perspective.* [Oslo]: Høgskolen i Oslo.

Audunson, R. (1996b). *Change processes in public libraries : a comparative project within an institutionalist perspective.* Oslo: Høgskolen i Oslo.

Audunson, R. (2005). How do Politicians and Central Decision-Makers View Public Libraries? The Case of Norway. *IFLA Journal, 31*(2), 9.

Audunson, R., & Benjaminsen, K. (1988). *Folkebiblioteket som informasjonsressurs for kommunepolitikere og kommuneadministratorer.* Oslo: Statens bibliotekhøgskole.

Audunson, R., & Lund, N. W. (2001). *Det Siviliserte informasjonssamfunn : folkebibliotekenes rolle ved inngangen til en digital tid.* Bergen: Fagbokforl.

Audunson, R. A. (2001). Folkebibliotekenes rolle i en digital framtid: Publikums, politikernes og bibliotekarenes bilder. In R. A. Audunson & N. W. Lund (Eds.), *Det siviliserte informasjonssamfunn* (pp. 206-225). Oslo: Fagbokforlaget.

Audunson, R. A. (2005, 29. juli 2005). Hva skal samfunnet med bibliotekene? *Morgenbladet*.

BBC News. (2012). Birmingham library's opening date announced. *BBC*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-17445120

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1971). *The social construction of reality: a treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bibliotekarforbundet. (2009). *St.meld.23 (2008-2009) Bibliotek – innspill fra Bibliotekarforbundet*. Oslo: Bibliotekarforbundet.

Birmingham City Council. ([20XX]). Facts about Birmingham Library Service. Retrieved 20.07, 2011

Birmingham City Council. ([2010]). Rewriting the Book: The Library of Birmingham. Birmingham: Birmingham City Council.

Björnestam, K., & Olsson, A. (2010). *Bibliotek och sponsring – en studie om sponsring vid sju bibliotek*. University of Borås, Borås.

Black, A. (1996). *A new history of the English public library : social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*. London: Leicester University Press.

Black, A. (2000). *The public library in Britain, 1914-2000*. London: British Library.

Borgerservice og Biblioteker, A. k. (2010). *Årsberetning - Annual Report 2010*. Aarhus

Brophy, P. (2002). *The People's Network: A turning point for public libraries*. London: Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

Byberg, L., & Frisvold, Ø. (2001). Hvorfor folkebibliotek? Et tilbakeblikk på bibliotek og politisk legitimering ved tre hundreårsskifter. In R. A. Audunson & N. W. Lund (Eds.), *Det siviliserte informasjonssamfunn: folkebibliotekenes rolle ved inngangen til en digital tid*. Oslo: Fagbokforlaget.

Chetham's Library. (2010). Welcome to Chetham's Library. Retrieved January 14, 2010, from http://www.chethams.org.uk/index.htm

City Centre Development. (2010). *Birmingham Big City Plan*. Birmingham: Birmingham City Council.

Community Libraries Panel of CILIP. (2012). *A CILIP statement on the position of the public library service in England*: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.

D'Elia, G. (1993). *The Roles of the Public Library in Society: The Results of a National Survey. Final Report [and] Appendix*.

D'Elia, G., & Rodger, E. J. (1994). The roles of the public library in the community: The results of a Gallup poll of community opinion leaders. *Public Libraries,, 35*, 94–101.

D`Angelo, E. (2006). *Barbarians at the gates of the public library: how postmodern consumer capitalism threatens democracy, civil education and the public good*. Duluth, Minn.: Library Juice Press.

Dacin, T. M., Goodstein, J., & Scott, W. R. (2002). Institutional Theory and Institutional Change: Introduction to the Special Research Forum. *The Academy of Management Journal, 45*(1), 43-56.

Danielsen, L. H., & Eckeroth, L. (2010). Århus bygger bro mellom borgerservice og biblioteker. *Danske kommuner*. Retrieved from http://www.danskekommuner.dk/PageFiles/146829/Layoutet%20artikel%20-%20no.%2026%20side%2030-31.pdf

Danish Agency for Libraries and Media. (2008). *Future library service to children: English abstract*. København: Danish Agency for Libraries and Media.

Danish Agency for Libraries and Media. (2010). *The Public Libraries in the Knowledge Society*. København: Danish Agency for Libraries and Media.

Danmarks statistik. (2010). Hovedtendenser i udviklingen - folkebiblioteksstatistikken 2010. Retrieved Decembet 1, 2010, from http://www.statistikbanken.dk/18

Day, R. (1996). LIS, method, and postmodern science. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, 37*(4), 317-324.

Deichmanske bibliotek. (2012). Deichman i tall. Retrieved March 25, 2012, from http://www.deichmanske-bibliotek.oslo.kommune.no/om_oss/statistikk/

Department for Culture, M. a. S. (2003). *Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade*.

Department for Culture, M. a. S. (2010). Review of Arm's Length Bodies. Retrieved July 26, 2011, from http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/news_stories/7280.aspx

Department for Culture Media and Sports. (2010). Culture Minister launches support programme for libraries. Retrieved August 22, 2011, from http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/media_releases/7216.aspx

DiMaggio, P. J. (1991). Constructing an Organizational Filed as a Professional Project: U.S. Art Museums, 1920-1940. In P. J. DiMaggio & W. W. Powell (Eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (pp. 267-292). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DiMaggio, P. J. (1998). The new institutionalisms: Avenues of collaboration. *Journal of Institutional and theoretical economics, 154*(4), 9.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited : institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American sociology review, 48*, 147-160.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1991). *The New institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Duelund, P. (Ed.). (2003). *The Nordic Cultural Model: Nordic cultural policy in transition*. Copenhagen: Nordic Cultural Institute.

Dyrbye, M. (2008). Anglo-Danish library connections in the post-war era: An illustration of cultural aspects of the transition from warfare to welfare societies in the years 1945 to 1964. *Library History, 24*(3), 9.

Edwards, S., & Hall, A. (1996). Public Perceptions of Library Use:. *Public Library Quarterly, 15*(3), 23-47.

Emerek, L. (2001). At skrive bibliotekshistorie: Om grundlæggelsen af det moderne folkebibliotek i Danmark. In R. A. Audunson & N. W. Lund (Eds.), *Det siviliserte informasjonssamfunn : Folkebibliotekenes rolle ved inngangen til en digital tid*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1996). *Welfare states in transition: national adaptions in global economies*. London: Sage.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social foundations of postindustrial economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Estabrook, L. (1997). The Benton Report: A response. *Library Trends, 46*(1), 10.

European Library Statistics. (2004). Does Finland have the best public libraries? Can we identify the top ten countries? *LIBECON,* (6). Retrieved from http://www.libecon.org/newsletters/6/libecon_newsletter6.pdf

Evjen, S. (2007). *Bilder av biblioteket: en kvalitativ undersøkelse av Drammensbibliotekets brukere og ikke-brukere.* Høgskolen i Oslo, Oslo.

Evjen, S., & Audunson, R. (2009). The complex library: Do the public's attitudes represent a barrier to institutional change in public libraries? . *New Library World, 110*(3-4), 14.

Flanders, S. (2012, January 18). UK unemployment increases by 118,000 to 2.69m. *bbc.co.uk*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-16608394

Fligstein, N. (2001). Social Skill and the Theory of Fields. *Sociological Theory, 19*(2), 20.

Fox, H. (2005). *An investigation into political and professional attitudes regarding commercialised models of service provision in public libraries* University of Sheffield, Sheffield.

Frisvold, Ø. (1998). Betyr folkebibliotek fortsatt folkeopplysning? *Norsk tidsskrift for bibliotekforskning, 4*(11). Retrieved from http://home.hio.no/~oivind/folkeopp.2.html

Gambles, B. (2009). Aiming high The library of Birmingham 2013. *Open Access 52*(2), 1-2.

Gazo, D. (2010). City councillors and the mission of public libraries. *New Library World, 112*(1/2).

Globalization and World Cities Research Network, G. (2010). The World According to GaWK 2010. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2010t.html

Goulding, A. (2006). Public Libraries in England: A valuable public service or a service in distress? *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 38*(1), 3-5.

Government. (2003). *Denmark in the Culture and Experience Economy: 5 new steps ; the Danish growth strategy*. [København]: Government.

Government. (2010). *Building the Big Society*. Retrieved from http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/building-big-society_0.pdf.

Greenhalgh, L., Worpole, K., & Landry, C. (1995). *Libraries in a world of cultural change*. London: UCL Press.

Greve, A. (1997). Community and place (pp. S. 7-22). [Tromsø]: Det humanistiske fakultet, Universitetet i Tromsø.

Grewal, S. (2009). Navigating a world beyond books. *thestar.com*. Retrieved from
http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/723508--navigating-a-world-beyond-books

Gundersen, H. (2010, October 23). I fremtiden blir det hæla i taket. *Morgen bladet,* p. 3.

Hall, P. A., & Taylor, R. C. R. (1996). Political science and the three new institutionalisms.
Political Studies, XLIV, 936-957.

Hansson, J. (2004). Hermeneutics as a bridge. *Journal of Documentation, 61*(1), 102-113.

Hansson, J. (2006). Just Collaboration or Really Something Else? *Library Trends, 54*(4), 19.

Hansson, J. (2010). *Libraries and identity: the role of institutional self image and identity in the
emergence of new types of libraries*. Oxford: Chandos.

Hapel, R., & Ostergard, M. (2007). Mediapace: knowledge, pulse and roots. Aarhus: The
Municipality of Aarhus.

Harris, K. (1998). *Community perceptions of the benefits of public libraries*. London: Community
Development Foundation.

Harris, M. H., & Spiegler, G. (1974). Everett, Ticknor and the Common Man; the fear of social
instability as the motivation for the founding of the Boston Public Library. *Libri*.
doi:http://www.reference-global.com/doi/abs/10.1515/libr.1974.24.4.249

Hedemark, Å. (2009). *Det förestellda folkbiblioteket - En diskursanalytisk studie av
biblioteksdebatter i svenska medier 1970-2006*. Uppsala Universitet, Uppsala.

Hermann, H. (2011). Gang i byggeriet af Urban Mediaspace. *Perspektiv*. Retrieved from
http://perspektiv.bf.dk/da/nyheder_bpr/2011/byggeriafurbanmediaspaceaarhus

Huysmans, F., & Hillebrink, C. (2008). *The future of the Dutch public library: ten years on*. the
Hague: The Netherlands Institute of Social Research

Hvenegaard Rasmussen, C., Skot-Hansen, D., & Jochumsen, H. (2011). Byer i forandring -
oplevelse, kreativitet og innovation. *Søndag Aften*.

IFLA. (2010). United Kingdom. *IFLA world report* Retrieved January 25, 2012, from
http://www.ifla-world-report.org/cgi-bin/static.ifla_wr.cgi

International Monetary Fund. (2012). *World Economic Outlook Database*. Washington D.C.:
International Monetary Fund (IMD).

Jepperson, R. L. (1991). Institutions, institutional effects, and institutionalism. In W. W. Powell
& P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The New institutionalsim in organizational analysis* (pp. 143-
163). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jochumsen, H., & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, C. (2000). *Gør biblioteket en forskel?* København: Danmarks Biblioteksforening.

Jochumsen, H., & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, C. (2006). *Folkebiblioteket under forandring : modernitet, felt og diskurs*. København: Danmarks Biblioteksforening.

Jochumsen, H., Hvenegaard Rasmussen, C., & Danmarks Biblioteksforening. (2000). *Gør biblioteket en forskel?* København: Danmarks Biblioteksforening.

Jochumsen, H., Hvenegaard Rasmussen, C., & Skot-Hansen, D. ([2010]). *A new model for the public library in the knowledge and experience society*: Centre for Cultural Policy Studies Royal School of Library and Information Science.

Johannsen, C. G. (2012). *Åbne biblioteker - et kortlægningsprojekt*. København: Det Informationsvidenskabelige Akademi.

Johnson, D. (1998). Why Do We Need Libraries When We Have the Internet? Real questions, good answers. *Knowledge Quest, 2*(2).

Jones, P. A. (1999). *Libraries, Immigrants, and the American Experience*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Kann-Christensen, N. (2009). *Forestillinger om forandringer organisatoriske forandringer i to danske folkebiblioteker*. København: Danmarks Biblioteksskole.

Kann-Christensen, N., & Pors, N. O. (2004). The legitimacy of public libraries: cross-pressures and change-processes. *New Library World, 105*(1204/1205), 6.

kompetanseetaten, U.-o. (2011). Oslos folkemengde har passert 605 000. Retrieved July 19, 2011, from http://www.utviklings-og-kompetanseetaten.oslo.kommune.no/oslostatistikken/befolkning/article194196-41860.html

Kultur- og idrettsetaten. (2007). *Strategisk plan 2007-2011*. Oslo: Oslo Kommune.

Kultur- og kirkedepartementet. (2009). *Bibliotek: kunnskapsallmenning, møtestad og kulturarena i ei digital tid* (Vol. nr. 23 (2008-2009)). [Oslo]: [Regjeringen].

Kultur- og utdanningskomiteen. (2005). *Behandling av bystyremelding Deichmanske bibliotek i det 21. århundre*. Oslo: Oslo Kommune.

Kulturdepartementet. (1999). *Kjelder til kunnskap og oppleving: om arkiv, bibliotek og museum i ei IKT-tid og om bygningsmessige rammevilkår på kulturområdet* (Vol. nr 22 (1999-2000)). Oslo: Departementenes servicesenter, Informasjonsforvaltning.

Kulturdepartementet. (2010). *Omorganisering av ABM-utvikling*. Retrieved from http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/13297240/PDFS/STM200920100020000DDDPDFS.pdf .

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews : An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE

Lakhani, N. (2012, March 3). 'Big Society' libraries under threat as High Court rules council's volunteer scheme is unlawful. *The Independent*. Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/big-society-libraries-under-threat-as-high-court-rules-councils-volunteer-scheme-is-unlawful-7615162.html

Langeland, A. (2009). *biblioteklover og annen statlig bibliotekpolitikk i Norden*. Oslo: ABM-media.

Larsen, J. H., Hansson, M., Indergaard, L. H., Knudsen, T., Thorhauge, J., & Wigell-Ryynänen, B. (2010). *Nordic Public Libraries 2.0*. Aarhus.

Lerner, F. A. (2009). *The story of libraries : from the invention of writing to the computer age* (2. ed. ed.). New York: Continuum.

LISU. (2010). Libraries, Archives, Museums and Publishing Online Statistics Tables. In LISU (Ed.) (August 2010 ed.). Loughborough.

Lov om Biblioteksvirksomhed (2000).

March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1989). *Rediscovering institutions: the organizational basis of politics*. New York: Free Press.

March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1994). *Institutional perspectives on political institutions*. Oslo: ARENA.

March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (2004). The logic of appropriateness. *ARENA Working Papers 9*(9), 1-28.

Mason, C. (2008). England 'most crowded in Europe' *BBC*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/ukfs_news/hi/newsid_7610000/newsid_7618900/7618994.stm

McColvin, L. R. (1953). English Public Libraries. *Library Trends, 4*(Spring), 522-.

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1991). Institutional Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. In P. J. P. DiMaggio, W.W. (Ed.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (pp. 41-63). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Mitchell, R. (2003). Nordic and European cultral policies. In P. Duelund (Ed.), *The Nordic cultural model: Nordic cultural policy in transition*. Copenhagen: Nordic Cultural Institute.

Mizruchi, M. S., & Fein, L. C. (1999). The Social Construction of Organizational KNowledge: A Study of the Uses of Coercive, Mimetic and Normative Isomorphism. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*(4), 653-683.

Moore, N. (2004). Public Library Trends. *Cultural Trends, 13*(49), 27-57.

Muddiman, D. (2000). Images of exclusion: user and community perceptions of the public library. In D. Muddiman (Ed.), *Open to All? : the Public Library and Social Exclusion* (pp. 179-188).

Niegaard, H. (2011). The future of public libraries and their service: A Danish perspective. In D. Baker & W. Evans (Eds.), *Libraries and Society: Role, responsibility and future in an age of change* (pp. 341-361). Oxford: Chandos.

Nielsen, K. (2001). Institutionalist approaches in the social sciences: typology, dialogue , and future challenges. *Journal of economic issue, XXXV*(2), 10.

Nolin, J., & Åström, F. (2009). Turning weakness into strength: strategies for future LIS. *Journal of Documentation, 66*(1), 20.

Norwegian Ministry of Culture. (2008-2009). *Libraries: Knowledge Commons, Meeting Place and Cultural Arena in a Digital Age Summary in English*. Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Culture.

Office of the Governing Mayor. (2011, May 30). Organization Chart. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from http://www.oslo.kommune.no/getfile.php/oslo%20kommune%20(OSLO)/Internett%20(OSLO)/Dokumenter/Organisasjonskart/Orgkart2010engelsk.pdf

Oliver, C. (1992). The Antecedents of Deinstitutionalization. *Organization Studies, 13*(4), 563-588.

Oliver, C. (1997). Sustainable Competitive Advantage: Combining Institutional and Resource-Based Views. *Strategiv Management Journal, 18*(9), 697-713.

Oslo Arbeiderparti. (2011). *En samlet by: Oslo Arbeiderpartis kommuneprogram for 2011-2015*. Oslo.

Oslo Høyre. (2011). *Oslo Høyre's Manifesto 2011-2015*. Oslo: Høyre.

Oslo Kommune Byrådet. (2005). *Deichmanske bibliotek inn i det 21. århundre*. Retrieved from http://www.bibforb.no/bibforb/filer/Sak_48_05.pdf.

Oslo Progress Party. (2011). *Oslo FRP Policy*. Oslo: The Progress Party.

Oslo SV. (2011). *I dine sko: Oslo SVs program 2011-2015*. Oslo: Senterpartiet.

Oslo Venstre. (2011). *bystyreprogram for Oslo Venstre*. Oslo: Venstre.

Pearce, S. (2003). *How do National Politicians View the Role and Value of the Public Library*

Service? , University of Sheffield.

Perspective. ([2008]). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

Peters, B. G. (2005). *Institutional theory in political science : the "new institutionalism"* (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2011). *The experience economy*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.

PLACE. (2007, December 20). PLACE: Public Libraries – Arenas for Citizenship. Retrieved October 23, 2009, from http://www.hio.no/content/view/full/62215

Public Library and Museums Act. (1964). from http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75

Radikale Venstre. (2009). Kommunalpolitisk politik 2010-14. Retrieved April 5, 2012, from http://radikaleaarhus.dk/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/kommunalpolitisk-program-kv2009.pdf

Rasmussen, C. H., Jochumsen, H., & Skot-Hansen, D. (2011). *Biblioteket i byudviklingen - oplevelse, kreativitet og innovation*: Danmarks biblioteksforening

Det Informasjonsvidenskabelige Akademi.

Ringdal, N. J. (1985). *By, bok og borger: Deichmanske bibliotek gjennom 200 år*. Oslo: Aschehoug.

Ryner, M. J. (2007). The Nordic Model: Does It Exist? Can It Survive? *New Political Economy,, 12*(1).

Rødt. (2011). 6. Kultur, idrett og fritid. *Rødt Oslos program* Retrieved February 2, 2012, from http://rødt.no/oslo/politikk/r%C3%B8dt-oslos-program/#07

Røvik, K. A. (2007). *Trender og translasjoner: ideer som former det 21. århundrets organisasjon*. Oslo: Universitetsforl.

Scott, W. R. (1987). The Adolescence of Institutional Theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 32*(4), 493-511.

Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and organizations*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Scott, W. R., & Meyer, J. W. (1991). The organization of societal sectors: propositions and early evidence. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Shera, J. (1970). *Sociological Foundations of Librarianship*. New York: Asia Publishing House.

Silverman, D. (2007). *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Qualitative Research* Los Angeles: SAGE.

Skot-Hansen, D. (2007). *Byen som scene: kultur- og byplanlægning i oplevelsessamfundet*. Frederiksberg: Bibliotekarforbundet.

Smith, K., & Usherwood, B. (2003). Public Library Politics: An International Perspective. *Aplis, 16*(2), 4.

Smith, K., & Usherwood, B. (2004). *The Political Perception of the Public Library : An Australian View*. Paper presented at the ALIA 2004. Retrieved from http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2004/pdfs/smith.k.paper.pdf

Stadsmonitor Vlissingen. (2003). *Political perceptions of public libraries in the Netherlands*.

Statistics Norway. (2011a). Innvandring og innvandrere. Retrieved 21.07, 2011, from http://www.ssb.no/emner/00/00/10/innvandring/

Statistics Norway. (2011b, May 19). Med raske skritt mot 5 millionar - Befolkningsstatistikk. Folkemengd 1. april 2011 og endringane i 1. kvartal 2011. Retrieved July 19, 2011, from http://www.ssb.no/folkendrkv/

Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2010). *Kulturstatistikk 2010*. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.

Styrelsen for Bibliotek og Medier. (2010). Hovedtendenser i udviklingen - folkebibliotekstatistik 2010. Retrieved January 21, 2012, from http://www.bibliotekogmedier.dk/?id=3741

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches. *Academy, 20*(3), 39.

Sveriges kulturdepartement. (2010). *Regleringsbrev för budgetaret 2011 avseende Statens kulturråd*. Stockholm.

Sæteren, L. (2011). Nye utfordringer for bibliotekene *Fagbladet*(8), 2.

Søvang, C. (2011, 8. november). Bibliotekerne skruer op for selvbetjening. *Jyllandsposten*. Retrieved from http://jp.dk/aarhus/kultur/article2600433.ece

The British Prime Minister's Office. (2010). Government launches Big Society program. 2012, from http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/big-society/

The City Mayors Foundation. (2008). Europe is home to the most expensive cities in the world. *City Maoyrs Economics*. Retrieved from http://www.citymayors.com/economics/expensive_cities_eiu.html

The City Mayors Foundation. (2009). The most expensive and richest cities in the world. *City Mayor Economics*. Retrieved from http://www.citymayors.com/economics/expensive_cities1.html

The City Mayors Foundation. (2011). Currency movements main factor in deciding ranking of most expensive cities in the world. *City Mayor Economics*. Retrieved from http://www.citymayors.com/features/cost_survey.html

The Danish Arts Agency. (2011, October 14). About the Danish Cultural Policy System. Retrieved January 21, 2012, from http://www.kunst.dk/english/cultural-policy/culturalpolicysystem/

Tivnan, T. (2011). Future Library. *The Bookseller*,

Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. (1999). The institutionalization of institutional theory. In S. R. Clegg & C. Hardy (Eds.), *Studying Organization*. London: SAGE.

Torstensson, M. (1993). Is there a Nordic Public Library Model? *Libraries and Culture, 28*(1).

Torstensson, M. (2001a). Att analysera folkbiblioteksutvecklingen - exempelet Sverige och några jamförelser med USA. In N. W. Lund & R. A. Audunson (Eds.), *Det siviliserte informasjonssamfunn : Folkebibliotekenes rolle ved inngangen til en digital tid*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Torstensson, M. (2001b). *Libraries and society – the macrostructural aspect of library and information studies*. Paper presented at the British-Nordic Conference on Library and Information Studies. Retrieved from http://www2.hb.se/luvitbhs/UCAAHMT.htm

UNESCO. (1994). UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. Retrieved January 28, 2011, from http://www.unesco.org/webworld/libraries/manifestos/libraman.html

Usherwood, B. (1993). *Public Library Politics - The role of the elected member*. London: Library Association Publishing.

Usherwood, B. (2003). Influencing the politicians. *Public Library Journal, 18*(4), 83-85.

Uzgalis, W. (Ed.) (2007) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University.

Vaage, O. F. (2009). *Kultur- og mediebruk blant personer med innvandrerbakgrunn*. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.

Vestheim, G. (1997). *Fornuft, kultur og velferd : ein historisk-sosiologisk studie av norsk folkebibliotekpolitikk / elektronisk ressurs*. Oslo: Samlaget.

Vestheim, G. (2009). All kulturpolitikk er instrumentell. In S. Beckamn & S. Månsson (Eds.), *KulturSverige. Problemanalys och statistic* (pp. 56-63). Linköpings universitet: SweCult, .

Wedgeworth, R. (Ed.) (c.1993) (Third ed. ed.). American Library Association.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research : design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Zetterlund, A. (2004). *Att utvärdera i praktiken: en retrospektiv fallstudie av tre program för lokal folkbiblioteksutveckling*. University College of Borås, Gothenburg.

Århus Konservative Vælgerforening. (2009). *Valgprogram for Kommunalvalg 2009*. Aarhus.

Åström, F. (2006). *The social and intellectual development of Library and information science*. University of Umeå, Umeå.

Oral sources

Personal communication

Janet Brisland, Development Manager on the Library of Birmingham, Birmingham December 14th 2010

Linda Butler, Head of library and archive services, Birmingham December 14th 2010

Fay Davis, Birmingham December 14th 2010

Brian Gambles, Assistant Director of Culture for Birmingham City Council, November 6th 2010 Birmingham

Rolf Hapel Aarhus May 30th 2010

Carol Rogers, Birmingham December 14th 2010

Geoff Mills, Head of central library services, Birmingham December 14th 2010

Marie Østergård, Project manager, Aarhus, June 1st 2010

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide – Oslo

Appendix 2: Interview guide – Aarhus

Appendix 3: Interview guide – Birmingham

Appendix 4: Original quotes

Appendix 1: Interview guide – Oslo

Intervjuguide - Oslo

Bakgrunn:

- Utdannelse
- Yrkesbakgrunn
- Partitilhørighet

Forhold til bibliotek – personlig

- Oppvekst, student, voksen (be vedkommende om å si noe om egen bruk, tidligere og i dag)

Forhold til bibliotek – politiker

- Kan du beskrive din egen / partiets folkebibliotekpolitikk
  Visjoner, prioriteringsområder…

- Hvor henter du din kunnskap om folkebiblioteket fra? (media, bibliotekmiljøet, egen erfaring, andres erfaring…)

- Gjennom å jobbe med bibliotekspørsmål, har du endret oppfatning om hva folkebibliotek er? På hvilken måte? (som politiker)

- Folkebiblioteket kan sies å ha ulike roller. Hvilke rolle synes du som politiker er den viktigste? (presentere disse rollene etter hvert)

1. Værested (hva legger du i det?)
2. Lærested
3. Kultursted
4. Informasjonssted

Biblioteket – ideologi, normer, verdier

- Hvilke tilbud synes du bør være i bibliotek i dag – og hvorfor:

  Mange bibliotek har nye, kanskje noe mer utradisjonelle tilbud. Hvordan stiller du deg til f eks:

  1. Spill – konsoll, dataspill etc
  2. Kurs – for eksempel ulike datakurs,
  3. Debatter – politiske spm, samfunnsspm, litterære...
  4. Foredrag – pop.vit, samfunnsspørsmål...
  5. Kulturarrangement – utstillinger,
  6. Utenlandske aviser (primærmålgruppe: innvandrere/asylsøkere)
  7. Møtested for frivillige organisasjoner
  8. Hvor går grensen? (fiskestangeks.)? kommersielle interesser

- I dag er bibliotektilbudet gratis. Hvorfor er det en offentlig oppgave å forsyne innbyggerne med litteratur/kultur?
  - Er gratisprinsippet en dimensjon som rettferdiggjør bibliotekene – altså – må bruken være gratis for at det skal være et poeng å drive dem?
    1. Betalingstjenester / betaling for ekstra tjenester
    2. Gratis kun for barn og unge
    3. etc

- I Danmark, i fjor, gikk debatten hardt for seg da biblioteksjefen i København annonserte at hun ville fjerne bøker til fordel for annet, mer utradisjonelt innhold. Politikerne reagerte svært negativt på dette. Hvordan ville din reaksjon vært i en tilsvarende situasjon?

- Folkebiblioteket er en arena der et spekter av stemmer skal få plass. Samtidig hersker det en viss "konfliktskyhet" i forhold til kontroversielle tema (ref. Telemarkuts.). Andre arenaer er kjent for å åpne for provokasjon (utstillinger, bøker, teaterstykker---). Hvilken rolle bør biblioteket innta i forhold til slike kontroverser?

Fremtidsbiblioteket – hva er det?

- Hvilke hovedutfordringer ser du for folkebiblioteket i dag?
- Sommeren 2009 startet Per Kristian Bjørkeng en debatt om fremtidsbiblioteket, der han hevder e-boka vil være det medium som forandrer biblioteks rolle fullstendig. På slutten av artikkelen sier han:

Bibliotekene kommer til å få en viktigere rolle enn i dag. Ikke som støvete, stille steder, men som levende torg der kulturinteresserte mennesker møtes. Men det er tvilsomt om du kommer til å gå dit for å få tak i bøker.

Så sier han ikke så mye mer. Jeg har lyst til å be deg fortsette/svare på dette resonnementet. Hva tror du om fremtidsbiblioteket?

-Oppfølging: Hvor viktig tror du det blir med digitale bibliotektilbud kontra tilbudene du finner i fysiske bibliotek?

Tror du folkebiblioteket – endret rolle eller ei – vil bli mer eller mindre viktig i framtida?

- Library Fair – markedet rår
- Uten en tråd
- Åndenes bibliotekhus

Bibliotekstedet

- I Bibliotekmeldinga fokuseres det mye på biblioteket som møteplass. Synes du det er en riktig prioritering? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
- Hva gjør biblioteket annerledes enn en annen kulturarena (f eks Litteraturhuset, Munch-museet el operaen)/Det er mange møteplasser i Oslo. Parker, torg, cafeer, kulturarenaer (f eks Litteraturhuset, Munch-museet el operaen), skoler… etc. Hva gjør biblioteket annerledes. Hva er felles for ulike typer møteplasser?

Biblioteksituasjonen i Oslo

- Hvordan vil du beskrive Deichmanske bibliotek, slik du ser det i dag?
- Beskriv Deichmanske bibliotek slik det fremstår om ti år? Visjoner…
- Hvorfor trenger Oslo nytt hovedbibliotek?
  - o Hva tror du denne betydelige satsingen skyldes?
- Hvilke tanker har du rundt bibliotekstrukturen her i byen i fremtiden?
  - o Si noe om hvorfor/hvordan hovedbiblioteket skiller seg fra filialene (Oslo). Hvilke oppgaver har hovedbiblioteket, hvilke oppgaver har filialene?
- Hva betyr beliggenheten?

> (Bjørvika fremfor for eksempel Vestbanen)
>
> Oppfølging: hva kan det gjøre med bydelene at tunge kulturarenaer konsentreres i bjørvika og oslo sentrum?

- Det nye biblioteket skal bygges i et samfunn langt mindre homogent enn for 80 år siden (bygging av Deichman på Hammersborg plass) – hvordan virker det inn på planleggingen? (integrering)
- Biblioteket og læring/skole. Hvilke visjoner har du/ditt parti på området?

- Hvilke politikkområder er biblioteket først og fremst knyttet til?

1. kultur
2. kunnskap/utdanning
3. integrering
4. byutvikling
5. næringsliv
6. oppvekst
7. sosial/omsorg

Bibliotekpolitikk – nasjonalt og lokalt

- I Norge hører folkebibliotekene under Kulturdep. På kommunenivå, som her i Oslo, behandles biblioteksaker i kultur- og utdanningskomiteen. I enkelte land hører folkebibliotek til dep.skole/undervisning/kunnskap. Dette gjør folkebiblioteket først og fremst til en kulturarena, kan man påstå, selv om biblioteket like mye er et sted for læring og kunnskap. Hvilke politikkområder er folkebiblioteket først og fremst knytta til.
  - Sektorsamarbeidet
  - Folkebiblioteket er så komplekst at har påvirkning/blir påvirket av andre sektorer
- Politikk og folkebibliotek i forhold til saker som

-Et inkluderende samfunn? Kan det i realiteten være en arena for integrering (på et nivå)?

-Et demokratisk samfunn?

-Et samfunn som er godt å leve i (building community?

IFLA:/ Overordnet politiske områder, for eksempel i forhold til dannelse, integrering, demokrati, bygge gode lokalsamfunn

Viktigste oppdrag? Probes:

Fremmer demokrati og likhet

Formidler av felleskultur – dannelse

Bidra til å gi folk en meningsfylt fritid

Sosial møteplass i kommunen

Viktigste tjenester? Probes:

Redskap i livslang læring

Tjenester til elever/studenter i det regulære skoleverket

Formidle litteratur til barn

Næringslivsinformasjon

Formidle god fritidslesing

Formidle samfunnsinformasjon

Være lokalt kultursenter

Bidra til lik tilgang til IKT

Tjenester tilpasset fremmedspråklige

Tjenester for eldre/syke

Arrangementer, sosialt…

Appendix 2: Interview guide – Aarhus

Bakgrunn:

- Utdannelse
- Yrkesbakgrunn
- Partitilhørighet

Forhold til bibliotek – personlig

- Oppvekst, student, voksen (beskrive egen bruk, tidligere og i dag)

Forhold til bibliotek – politiker

- Kan du beskrive din egen / partiets folkebibliotekpolitikk
      Visjoner, prioriteringsområder…

- Hvor henter du din kunnskap om folkebiblioteket fra? (media, bibliotekmiljøet, egen erfaring, andres erfaring…)

- Gjennom å jobbe med bibliotekspørsmål, har du endret oppfatning om hva folkebibliotek er? På hvilken måte? (som politiker)

- Folkebiblioteket kan sies å ha ulike roller. Hvilke rolle synes du som politiker er den viktigste? (presentere disse rollene etter hvert)

5. Værested (hva legger du i det?)
6. Lærested
7. Kultursted
8. Informasjonssted

Biblioteket – ideologi, normer, verdier

- Hvilke tilbud synes du bør være i bibliotek i dag – og hvorfor:

Mange bibliotek har nye, kanskje noe mer utradisjonelle tilbud. Hvordan stiller du deg til f eks:

9. Spill – konsoll, dataspill etc
10. Kurs – for eksempel ulike datakurs,
11. Debatter – politiske spm, samfunnsspm, litterære...
12. Foredrag – pop.vit, samfunnsspørsmål...
13. Kulturarrangement – utstillinger,
14. Utenlandske aviser (primærmålgruppe: innvandrere/asylsøkere)
15. Møtested for frivillige organisasjoner
16. Hvor går grensen? (fiskestangeks.)? kommersielle interesser

- I dag er bibliotektilbudet gratis. Hvorfor er det en offentlig oppgave å forsyne innbyggerne med litteratur/kultur?
  - Er gratisprinsippet en dimensjon som rettferdiggjør bibliotekene – altså – må bruken være gratis for at det skal være et poeng å drive dem?

    4. Betalingstjenester / betaling for ekstra tjenester
    5. Gratis kun for barn og unge
    6. etc

- I Danmark, i fjor, gikk debatten hardt for seg da biblioteksjefen i København annonserte at hun ville fjerne bøker til fordel for annet, mer utradisjonelt innhold. Politikerne reagerte svært negativt på dette. Hvordan ville din reaksjon vært i en tilsvarende situasjon?

- Folkebiblioteket er en arena der et spekter av stemmer skal få plass. Samtidig hersker det en viss "konfliktskyhet" i forhold til kontroversielle tema (ref. Telemarkuts.). Andre arenaer er kjent for å åpne for provokasjon (utstillinger, bøker, teaterstykker---). Hvilken rolle bør biblioteket innta i forhold til slike kontroverser?
- Kommersielle interesser, brukerbetaling?

Fremtidsbiblioteket – hva er det?

- Hvilke hovedutfordringer ser du for folkebiblioteket i dag?
- Sommeren 2009 startet Per Kristian Bjørkeng en debatt om fremtidsbiblioteket, der han hevder e-boka vil være det medium som forandrer biblioteks rolle fullstendig. På slutten av artikkelen sier han:

Bibliotekene kommer til å få en viktigere rolle enn i dag. Ikke som støvete, stille steder, men som levende torg der kulturinteresserte mennesker møtes. Men det er tvilsomt om du kommer til å gå dit for å få tak i bøker.

Så sier han ikke så mye mer. Jeg har lyst til å be deg fortsette/svare på dette resonnementet. Hva tror du om fremtidsbiblioteket?

-Oppfølging: Hvor viktig tror du det blir med digitale bibliotektilbud kontra tilbudene du finner i fysiske bibliotek?

Tror du folkebiblioteket – endret rolle eller ei – vil bli mer eller mindre viktig i framtida?

- Library Fair – markedet rår
- Uten en tråd
- Åndenes bibliotekhus

Bibliotekstedet

- I Bibliotekmeldinga fokuseres det mye på biblioteket som møteplass. Synes du det er en riktig prioritering? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
- Hva gjør biblioteket annerledes enn en annen kulturarena (f eks Litteraturhuset, Munch-museet el operaen)/Det er mange møteplasser i en by. Parker, torg, cafeer, kulturarenaer, skoler… etc. Hva gjør biblioteket annerledes. Hva er felles for ulike typer møteplasser?

Biblioteksituasjonen i Århus

- Hvordan vil du beskrive Århus bibliotek, slik du ser det i dag?
- Hvorfor trenger Århus nytt hovedbibliotek?
    - Hva tror du denne betydelige satsingen skyldes?
    - Hvorfor velger dere navnet Multimediehus framfor bibliotek
- Beskriv Århus bibliotek slik det fremstår om ti år? Visjoner…
- Hvilke tanker har du rundt bibliotekstrukturen her i byen i fremtiden?
    - Si noe om hvorfor/hvordan hovedbiblioteket skiller seg fra filialene. Hvilke oppgaver har hovedbiblioteket, hvilke oppgaver har filialene?
- Hva betyr beliggenheten?

    Oppfølging: hva kan det gjøre med bydelene at tunge kulturarenaer konsentreres i Bjørvika og Oslo sentrum?
- Det nye biblioteket skal bygges i et samfunn langt mindre homogent enn for 80 år siden – hvordan virker det inn på planleggingen? (integrering)

257

- Biblioteket og læring/skole. Hvilke visjoner har du/ditt parti på området?

- Hvilke politikkområder er biblioteket først og fremst knyttet til?

8. kultur
9. kunnskap/utdanning
10. integrering
11. byutvikling
12. næringsliv
13. oppvekst
14. sosial/omsorg

Bibliotekpolitikk – nasjonalt og lokalt

- I Norge hører folkebibliotekene under Kulturdep. På kommunenivå, som her i Oslo, behandles biblioteksaker i kultur- og utdanningskomiteen. I enkelte land hører folkebibliotek til dep.skole/undervisning/kunnskap. Dette gjør folkebiblioteket først og fremst til en kulturarena, kan man påstå, selv om biblioteket like mye er et sted for læring og kunnskap. Hvilke politikkområder er folkebiblioteket først og fremst knytta til.
  o Sektorsamarbeidet
  o Folkebiblioteket er så komplekst at har påvirkning/blir påvirket av andre sektorer
- Politikk og folkebibliotek i forhold til saker som

-Et inkluderende samfunn? Kan det i realiteten være en arena for integrering (på et nivå)?

-Et demokratisk samfunn?

-Et samfunn som er godt å leve i (building community?

IFLA:/ Overordnet politiske områder, for eksempel i forhold til dannelse, integrering, demokrati, bygge gode lokalsamfunn

Viktigste oppdrag? Probe:

Fremmer demokrati og likhet

Formidler av felleskultur – dannelse

Bidra til å gi folk en meningsfylt fritid

Sosial møteplass i kommunen

Viktigste tjenester? Probe:

Redskap i livslang læring

Tjenester til elever/studenter i det regulære skoleverket

Formidle litteratur til barn

Næringslivsinformasjon

Formidle god fritidslesing

Formidle samfunnsinformasjon

Være lokalt kultursenter

Bidra til lik tilgang til IKT

Tjenester tilpasset fremmedspråklige

Tjenester for eldre/syke

Arrangementer, sosialt…

Appendix 3: Interview guide – Birmingham

Interview guide - Birmingham

Introduction

Could you tell me briefly about your background - education, work - how did you get into politics?

Personal relationship to public libraries

Probes: What is your personal experience with the public library? Did you use it as a child, growing up - how? And do you use it today?

Political "relationship" to public libraries

What is your / your parties areas of priority when it comes to public libraries?

By working with public library issues, has your view of what a public library is or can be changed?

Where do you get you information about libraries (media, library management/staff etc)

What is the most important role public libraries play in communities today?

Probes: Knowledge/learnig, culture, social place, information

The public library: norms, values, ideology

Modern public libraries are introducing new services and facilities for its patrons (i e computer games, book clubs, film screenings...). Are there boundaries for what a public library should take upon itself to offer?

There has been an increasing focus on the public library's social functions, i e. it being a meeting place, a social hub in the community. Do you think libraries should move in this direction? why /

why not?

In Denmark, there was a major debate regarding how public libraries use the space they have. The library director of Copenhagen pl wanted to remove a great deal of books to make room for computer games, films, activities and events. The politicians were outraged, and wanted if necessary, to protect the books status in libraries by law. What is your reaction, and how do you see the issue of books versus other media?

Should the library be a place for controversy or be as neutral as possible? (Describe the Telemark exhibition and ask for a comment)

Commercial interests - philanthropy – payment for services

Why is it a public task to fund libraries, access to knowledge and culture? (Why not?)

Public library future:

What is your view on e-books in libraries (could it change the physical space? How?)

Digital services versus services in the physical library

What do you see as the biggest challenges for public libraries right now?

Do you think the library will be more or less important in the future years?

The Birmingham project

Why a new library in Birmingham?

Can you describe Birmingham's main library as you see it today

Can you describe how you would like it to be in ten years' time?

It is situated in an area... How will the location affect the library - or vice versa?

What about the branch libraries - how will they stand up to such a big investment?

Can you describe the cooperation between Birmingham library and the schools in the city?

This is a library project - would you also describe it as a city development project?

Library politics:

Should the public library aim at being associated with political areas outside culture and education?

      If so, which areas are the most relevant?

What is the most important service or facility in a public library?

What would you say is the most important thing that public libraries contribute to society?

Appendix 4: Original quotes

[1] Oscar: Sv er jo liksom bibliotekpartiet [ler]. Ja. Ja, vi er det vet du. Vi er veldig opptatt av bibliotek. Jeg tror veldig mange aktive… ja, det er mitt inntrykk generelt, veldig mange aktive politikere er også i mitt parti, har et veldig positivt forhold til og positive erfaringer med biblioteket.

[…] miljøet er veldig prega av de mulighetene en flytting ned til Bjørvika gir. Så for oss er dette viktig og jeg vil jo si at biblioteket er absolutt den viktigste enkeltsaken innenfor kulturområdet de nærmeste årene, det å realisere et nytt bibliotek.

[2] Oscar: en opplevelse av at biblioteket sto litt stille. Litt sånn hysj-hysj. Her skal du nesten gå i tøfler, og det har etter min mening biblioteket vært altfor mye preget av. Den der… her har det nesten bare vært rom for de som sitter og.. eller de som bare går kjapt inn og ut og låner en bok. Eller de som sitter og studerer for seg selv.

[3] Omer: Altså, vi har jo vært opptatt av at vi vil ha, altså … både når det gjelder… Det er to type ting, en er jo at vi har vært opptatt av å satse på biblioteket, det vil si at ved budsjettforhandlinger så har vi for eksempel vært opptatt av at… å øke tilgjengeligheten, for eksempel ved å utvide åpningstidene, da med åpningstider som er litt utradisjonelle, altså ikke ni til fire, men med lengre åpningstider på ettermiddager og i helgene. Det er på en måte vi har vært veldig opptatt av. Så har vi vært opptatt av at bibliotekene skal ha god økonomi og gode bøker. Vi oppfatter også biblioteket som en kunnskapsformidler i veldig mange sammenhenger. […]gså er det selvfølgelig at vi mener at Oslo har vært …tja, hva skal man si, vi mener at Oslo har vært ganske dårlig på … jeg vil gå så langt som å si at vi har vært et u-land i forhold til å ha et moderne folkebibliotek.

[4] Olav: Og bibliotekmeldinga som kom fra departementet i fjor var jo nærmest kjemisk reint for nytenkning på dette området.

⁵ Aron: Så det har vært viktig den tiden jeg har vært med, at vi greier å bevare så mange bibliotek som mulig. Fordi de er de lokale kulturhus mange steder. Og den politikken vi har så skal det bli enda mer.

⁶ Alex: …det viktige med bibliotekene er at det er et åpent demokratisk rom hvor alle har adgang, uansett hvor man kommer fra og hvem man er, har adgang til å få viten, lesing og læring, og få informasjon om samfunnet og informasjon om, ja all mulig nødvendig informasjon, og selvfølgelig også dette med å kunne fordype seg i tekster og litteratur. Jeg synes det er et riktig godt og sterk privilegium for en nasjon, et samfunn som er avhengig av viten – som er det viktigste råstoff for et land som Danmark.

⁷ Oswald: på et lite sted der du ikke kunne velge å vrake, sånn som du kan i vår by, så var det biblioteket var og er biblioteket kjempeviktig. Dette var jo før kjøpesentrenes tid, som jeg har lagt merke til er sånn … de har overtatt som møteplass. Men sånn sett har jeg vokst opp med at biblioteket var et .. viktig sted og et interessant sted, hvor du traff folk og hvor du selvfølgelig lånte med deg bøker hjem. Mye mer enn det fikk lest.

⁸ Albert: Mer som et forsamlingshus.

⁹ Olav: Men jeg drar nå innom alle bibliotek på steder jeg besøker, enten det er på Gran Canaria eller Nice, eller… Jeg bruker alltid reiser og ferier til å stikke innom bibliotek, det er interessant å se om de gjør andre ting andre steder.

¹⁰ Aron: Jeg tror jeg ser det mer som… ja, ikke bare et utlånssted, men mer som et kulturelt medborgersenter, eller mulighet for å bli medborgersenter. Jeg ser det mer som en kulturell virksomhet enn tidligere da jeg så det som et sted man kunne låne bøker og ting, i den snevrere forstand. Så det er blitt litt bredere.

[11] Oscar: Ja, Idea Stores. Og som jo egentlig er en inspirasjonskilde for også tenkningen rundt i Groruddalen og på Deichman.

[12] Albert: Men jeg ble fantastisk inspirert av å se et bibliotek i Queens hvor man dels utdannet folk, dels tilbød innsikt også i deres egen kultur, og dels var der en haug av kulturelle arrangementer, både for barn, helt små barn, og også til voksne. Og det var et ekte medborgerhus. Og det tror jeg faktisk også er framtiden

[13]

[14] Nei, jeg vil være veldig forsiktig med å si at noe er viktigere enn noe annet, men det er klart at det er en arena for kunnskap og opplevelse, det er vel det jeg vil legge størst vekt på. Og kunnskap er det alle skal ha den samme demokratiske rett i prinsippet til å kunne gå til en kunnskapskilde og bruke biblioteket til det.

[15] så skal det være en arena der du kan hente nær sagt alle typer kunnskap, den allmenne kunnskap og den sære kunnskap i den grad du er på jakt etter et spesielt emne. Så skal det være opplevelse, og i det legger jeg kulturaspektet. Det at du opplever… altså opplevelse er ikke i denne.. må ikke misforstås som happening eller show eller noenting sånn. Men opplevelse kan være det å møte den bestemte boka, eller den bestemte forfatteren, eller det diktet eller hva det nå måtte være du møter på biblioteket. Men så kan det knyttes til andre ting – det kan knyttes til at du møter forfatteren in person eller andre opplevelser, men opplevelsen er den kulturelle biten i dette, kunnskapen er den litt mer sånn faktaorienterte delen.

[16] Hvis jeg skal prioritere så vil jeg si at for meg er læring stadig viktigst. Dannelsesbegrepet. Det at man har en livslang læring når man kommer inn og blir dannet og har adgang til læring. Men ellers så synes jeg at biblioteket skal få romme de øvrige ting også, fordi selve læringen og dannelsen krever en ramme, krever en motivasjon til det å la seg utdanne, det å la seg etterutdanne.

---

[17] Oliver: …men det må jo først og fremst være en møteplass som har en hensikt, tenker jeg. At det er hensiktsdrevet. Formålsorientert. I hvert fall skal biblioteket være det. Om alle som kommer dit --- du kan jo ikke kreve at alle har en agenda for å komme dit, men biblioteket bør ha en agenda med hvordan de møter folk.

[18] Albert: mine forventninger til amerikanske bibliotek var ikke spesielt høye. Men jeg ble fantastisk inspirert av å se et bibliotek i Queens hvor man dels utdannet folk, dels tilbød innsikt også i deres egen kultur, og dels var der en haug av kulturelle arrangementer, både for barn, helt små barn, og også til voksne. Og det var et ekte medborgerhus.

[19] Fra å være et kunnskapssenter, kun det, til å være medborgersenter. Den vinkelen er blitt sterkere og sterkere. Selvfølgelig skal folkebiblioteket også være et kjernested for kunnskap. Men det meget gjerne være mer enn det.

[20] Olav: Det er klart at Litteraturhuset har skapt en ny arena for ting, i prinsippet kunne det like godt ha forgått i bibliotekenes regi, på den annen side er det ikke bibliotekenes oppgave nødvendigvis å drive en så omfattende debattarena som Litteraturhuset. Men de kan drive en mer avgrensa debattarena, og dette vil være forskjellig ut fra kommunenes ulike behov. Oslo er i en stilling, men det blir noe helt annet i en liten landskommune der biblioteket muligens må ta oppgavene til Litteraturhuset, fordi det ikke er noen andre som gjør det, for å si det sånn.

[21] Oswald: Og noen av oss er glad i litteraturen som litteratur, fordi mennesker må ha noe å leve for, ikke bare noe å leve av. Og noen av oss kan finne noe å leve for i gjennom litteraturen. Så det er på en måte både en kunnskapsinstitusjon og en kulturinstitusjon

[22] Så hvis jeg skal si det viktigste, så må det være det utgangspunktet. Litteraturens egenverdi. Folkebibliotekets oppgave er å formidle litteratur, mener jeg. Til flest mulig mennesker. Mener jeg. Hvis jeg må velge. Men det er på en måte ikke noen motsetning mellom å ha det som utgangspunkt og å ha alt det andres vi snakket om, da.

[23] Ophelia: … en annen ting er jo det at når man er på biblioteket er man ingen passiv mottaker av kultur. Det er man jo på et teater eller en konsert, eller. På biblioteket er man aktiv, man oppsøker det aktivt og gjør noe aktivt mens man er der, som handler om kunnskap, kultur eller dannelse.

---

²⁴ Aron: Ja, men jeg tror i dag, stadig vekk, at det er det fysiske utlånsstedet som er det viktigste. Men jeg tror det vil flytte seg. Og jeg tror vi skal hjelpe det med å flytte seg. Fordi, vi er i gang med å oppløse fysikken i våres verden. Så vi blir nødt til, dels rent faktuelt å følge den digitale utviklingen, men jeg tror også det med å gi det mer… forstørre innholdet av menneskelig, kulturell utvieksling, siden det også er et frirom, et medborgerrom.

²⁵ Omer: Ja, det er jo boken. Ja. Bokutlån. Og da det som følger av boken. Pc, Internett, det elektroniske. Men det er jo på en måte selve kunnskapen som er det grunnleggende. Det er det jeg synes er det viktigste i et bibliotek.

²⁶ Orson: … jeg mener at også andre typer kulturmedier har definitivt sin plass i biblioteket. Det mener jeg definitivt. Og jeg har ikke vært uenig med de som har sagt at biblioteket skal være bøker og ikke noe mer. Men jeg oppfatter teksten som det sentrale ved biblioteket, da. Og det er unaturlig å gjøre noe annet til sentrum, eller likestille det med teksten. Det synes jeg er unaturlig.

²⁷ Oswald: Det går et nokså skarpt skille mellom politikk og fag etter min oppfatning. Politikere bør ikke blande seg inn i hvordan innholdet i biblioteket utformes. Det er vår oppgave å sørge for at det er noen rammer på plass, så får jeg vel ha noen oppfatninger om formidling, at man skal nå brede grupper. […] Men hvordan innholdet organiseres – driftes – hva som skal stilles ut hvor er jo med respekt å melde ikke politikk. Du kan virkelig ikke slå opp i høyres eller Arbeiderpartiets program for å finne svar på hvordan et bibliotek skal være. Heldigvis, vil jeg si. Vi må holde fingrene av fatet.

²⁸ Olivia: De forvalter fellesskapets midler. Må ikke glemme det. Så da blir det jo et politisk spørsmål. Og, mens jeg husker det, så var det jo et bibliotek som drev og lånte ut bønnetepper! Ja, det var her i Norge. Jeg vet ikke hva det va,r det kanskje sette foten ned.

²⁹ Olav: …mini-litteraturfestival hvor man også inkluderer musikk, det er det fullt mulig å gjøre uten at det behøver å være noen stor affære…

Nei, jeg vet ikke om det går noen grense. Man skal selvfølgelig være obs på sin hovedfunksjon, og hvis den er å bidra til kunnskap og kultur eller opplevelse, så er det for så vidt i prinsippet ingen grense på hvilke aktiviteter som kan bidra til det.

³⁰ Alex: derfor synes jeg det er viktig at biblioteket er bevisst rundt sin rolle og lærer seg kue(?) av debatter om ytringsfrihet, og lærer seg kue av at det kan være noen som synes det er politisk

ukorrekt å bringe forskjellige artikler, eller viderefermidle forskjellig informasjon. Der synes jeg biblioteket spiller en viktig rolle i at de holder fast i at ytringsfriheten er gjeldende og den er universell. Og jeg mener ikke at man skal ta sånne politiske hensyn i denne sammenhengen, da mener jeg at man skal holde fanen høyt i forhold til ytringsfriheten.

[31] Olav: Jo, det vil alltid være en sentral oppgave. For kunnskap spesielt, men også for så vidt på kulturdelen. På kunnskap spesielt så er det … så bygger hele demokratiet på at alle har samme tilgang til kunnskap og at alle har samme mulighet til å få så mye av den som praktisk mulig gratis. Og det skal være bibliotekets oppgave.

[32] Olivia: Jeg mener at ..jo her står det [leser]. At elevers behov for lån av bøker dekkes over skolebudsjettet. Så her er det jo allerede på en måte ivaretatt. [Leser høyt]: innføre utlånsgebyr og la fremtidsbiblioteket være basert på en solid grunnkapital i bibliotekets egne inntekter.

[33] Alex: Det er jeg ganske avslappet til – det kunne jeg saktens forestille meg. At kanskje noen av tjenestene i bibliotekhverdagen var betalingstjenester, at noen søkemaskiner, eller noen adganger kostet et beløp hvis det var særlig kostbare databaser eller annet. Det har jeg personlig ikke noe i mot. Jeg har vanskelig for å se det realiserbart i det nåværende politiske klima, men jeg kunne godt levd med det.

[34] Oscar: Jeg tror vi skal være veldig forsiktige med å kommersialisere bibliotekene. For her har man liksom en verdi.. altså i bånn så ligger jo dette med biblioteket, dette med å ivareta kulturarven, være vår felles hukommelse, stimulere til leselyst, helt uavhengig av økonomi, altså hvor det kommer fra. Så er jeg jo redd for at en kommersialisering vil kunne rokke ved noe av det. Men det betyr ikke at man skal avvise sponsing innen kulturlivet, det har vi jo i dag, og det vil sikkert kunne være eksempler på et sterkere samarbeid med private. Men da ser jeg for meg at det må være private virksomheter som går inn i et samarbeid med biblioteket på de premissene og verdiene som ligger der. Og det er sikkert mange som er interessert i det også der, folk som ser verdien av å bygge kunnskapsnorge, da, for å bruke en floskel.

---

[35] Albert: …noen kommersielle partnerskap er fine, hvis man bevarer sin integritet intakt…så er det fint. Men hvis vi skal til å se og det så vi også eksempler på i USA, at når vi kom inn i en stue [i et av bibliotekene] så heter den "US Mail-stuen" eller … den samlingen er sponset av en eller annen person eller et eller annet firma. Når du kommer inn i rommet. Det synes jeg ikke noe om.

[36] Aron: å er det en stor lukkethet i den sosialdemokratiske tankegangen om at eierskap, så derfor kan vi ikke bruke sponsorering. Det kan jeg ikke… hvis sponsorer kan bidra med inntekter som kan gjøre biblioteket til et mer interessant sted å være… Så come on. For min skyld må lesesalen gjerne hete Gyldendal leserom eller et eller annet.

[37] Oswald: Og det er vel en tommelfingerregel at femti % bruker folkebiblioteket. Også er det vel femti % som ikke bruker det. Jeg er veldig interessert i de som ikke bruker det. Hva skal til for å få de til å bruke det? Det er jo nå flere.

[38] Ophelia: Og bibliotekene skal jo ikke bare ha det som er her og nå, de er jo også historiefortellere, de har det som er våre felles referanserammer. Skal ta vare på alt dette og formidle det videre også senere. Så hovedutfordringen er vel hvordan de skal gjøre det.

[39] Oliver: Og det å sørge for at biblioteket ikke blir utdatert selv om meieformen.. ja ikke fullt ut er erstattet eller utdatert, men det er så mange andre lignende konkurrerende ting som jeg tror i noen grad dels folk ikke tror de får på biblioteket, som de faktisk får der, og kanskje fins det også eksempler på ting man regner med man ville fått på bibliotek som man ikke får. Sånn at det å tilpasse biblioteket til både å være den gamle papirbaserte institusjonen, og det å være en sånn multimedierelevant institusjon i multimediesammenheng, det …

[40] Albert: Det er en stor utfordring å være i et samfunn som er så digitalisert og så tilby en tjeneste hurtig, kan man si. Altså å tilby en tjeneste og en ting som krever ro og fordypning.

---

[41] Aron: Kjedelig. Grått og gammeldags. I sin bygningsdel, i hvert fall. Det er klart at det har tiden løpt fra. Altfor lav fleksibilitet i rommene, altfor vanskelig å utnytte . Tilgjengelig… det ligger jo fysisk godt plassert! Men det formidler ikke et – og det har meget med historien å gjøre – åpent og velkomment uttrykk.

[42] Albert: Fordi det [biblioteket] har gjennom veldig mange år vært et ikon for at her kan man få kunnskap og det tror jeg er en god måte å brande en by på.

[43] Marie: Det er stor politisk enighet her i Århus, noe som er svært viktig for tryggheten i prosjektet. Planleggingen har vart over flere valg, og det kan ikke fungere uten bred politisk støtte. Så det har vært veldig bra. Det er en klar politisk satsing på bibliotek her i Århus, også fra tidligere, noe som gjør arbeidet vårt mye lettere.

[44] Hva det er for en hverdag, hva det er for et vidensrom man opplever når man trer inn i døren i det nye multimediehuset. Og derfor vil jeg konstantere at det er 31 byrådsmedlemmers oppbacking av multimediehuset.

[45] Aron: Så biblioteket kommer jo til å ligge akkurat hvor byens våg er… Århus og det betyr ved åens munning. Og derfor så får jo dette bibliotek, som jo på ganske, ganske fornemt vis utstråle det som Århus er i dag, nemlig en kunnskapsby og en kreativ by. Så det blir et fint samlet bilde.

[46] Albert: Det er en del av det at Århus gjerne vil åpne seg ut mot havet. Havnen har blitt pakket litt vekk fra oss i bevisstheten, århusianerne, fra havet. Og i og med at vi fikk muligheten til å byutvikle helt ned mot havnen…

[47] Albert: ganske bred politisk enighet om at … og det er jeg jo glad for at man ikke skal sulte ut filialene. […]Fordi hvis det også skal være væresteder, hvis det også skal være møtesteder, så

skal de jo ikke kun ligge ett sted. [Ler] Da blir det vanskelig å møtes. Så derfor er det sentralt at vi har filialer rundt omkring.

[48] Alex: det må jo så byrådsflertallet så vurdere om de synes er riktig.

[49] Alex: Ja, jeg håper jo at vi kan løfte våre lokale områder, blant annet med disse medborgersentrene. Det er veldig viktig for meg at det nye Multimediehuset ikke slår de små i hjel. Det er selvfølgelig en bekymring man kan ha, at det blir så dyrt at vi blir nødt til å lukke noen av de andre.

[50] Albert: Fordi hvis det også skal være væresteder, hvis det også skal være møtesteder, så skal de jo ikke kun ligge ett sted. [ler]. Da blir det vanskelig å møtes. Så derfor er det sentralt at vi har filialer rundt omkring.

[51] Orson: Jeg synes jo Deichman, hovedbiblioteket i dag er et litt trist skue.

[52] Ophelia: …Som er forfallent. Masse stille mennesker i fotformsko.

[53] Orson: Vi sier at biblioteket er viktig fordi det er en kunnskapsinstitusjon. Men viktigere som kunnskapsinstitusjon er jo skolene, for eksempel. Så man vil heller bruke penger på skolene enn på bibliotekene.

[54] Orson: I motsetning til det Munch-museet, så er det jo ingen tvil om at dette er en pryd for byen.

273

[55] Oscar: Jeg vil si at Deichman er det viktigste bygge-prosjektet i Oslo. Det er langt viktigere enn å bygge et nytt Munch-museum.

[56] Oswald: Det skal vi få så fort det er mulig å få opp.

[57] Oliver: Og det er en større utfordring, ikke sant, fordi vi er også en by, selv om ve er mange innbyggere, hvis du fordeler det på femten bydeler og strekker det ut, så begynner det etter hvert å bli litt mindre lokalsamfunn og det å da være bibliotek som i den sammenheng også hevder seg, fordi nærheten til andre som konkurrerer sterkt med biblioteket.

[58] Oswald: Jeg mener at litteraturen – mitt utgangspunkt som kulturpolitiker er at kunsten har en verdi i seg selv og ikke trenger noen begrunnelse utover seg selv. Altså litteraturen har en verdi i seg selv og litteraturen har på en måte en uendelig verdi. Og trenger ingen begrunnelse utover dt, trenger ikke å fylle noen… det er fint hvis kunsten kan bidra til by--- (utvikling). Vi skal bygge nytt bibliotek, da vil noen si "å så fint, da bidrar det til byutvikling i bjørvika". Men det er ikke derfor vi bygger biblioteket. Vi bygger biblioteket fordi vi trenger et fantastisk hus til å formidle litteratur i landets hovedstad. Så hvis jeg skal si det viktigste, så må det være det utgangspunktet. Litteraturens egenverdi.

[59] Ophelia: Altså, det handler jo også om byutvikling. Man må alltid tenke byutvikling. Noe annet ville vært bortkasta penger.

[60] Oscar: Men så brukes jo dette, og da er det jo ingen motsetning i å tenke at dette er en viss byutvikling – både fordi det er til gunst for biblioteket å komme på det som er Norges største knutepunkt. Nærmest. Oslo S. I nærheten. Og at det også vil være en enorm verdi for området – å få inn et bibliotek med to millioner besøkende i året. Det vil jo være et kjempebidrag for hele det området. Så kultur og næring henger litt sammen. Og byutvikling. Jeg tror det vil generere andre næringer det at vi tenker såpass tungt kulturelt i Bjørvika vil generere andre arbeidsplasser også i området.

[61] Olivia: mindre bibliotek, som jeg kanskje egentlig har mer tro på, altså sånn små bibliotek som ligger litt rundt omkring

[62] Ophelia: Man kan for eksempel tenke seg sånn som Majorstua – er det nødvendig med en filial der når det ligger like ved banen og det bare er tre stopp ned til hovedbiblioteket. Jeg sier ikke at vi skal legge ned Majorstua filial, jeg sier bare at det alltid bør være debatt om dette. Det er ingenting som bør være hellig.

[63] Ja da håper jeg at jeg får se et topp moderne bibliotek i byen som byens borgere kan være stolte av

[64] Oliver: Jeg tror vi har fantastiske muligheter til å lage et bibliotek som stikker seg ut i internasjonal sammenheng, da, ambisjonene er jo intet mindre enn å lage verdens beste bibliotek. Og det er bra, det synes jeg er riktig. Hvis ikke Norge skulle kunne gjøre det, hvem skulle da gjøre det.