

PAPER

Libraries and NGOs together for commons

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Introduction

Strong global changes, the development of technology and changes in communication, the dominance of capitalism against human rights, the digital divide, the growing difference between the rich and the poor, the destabilization of peace in the world and climate change put libraries in a position where they have to expand their traditional tasks in accordance with the needs of the community. The latest version of *IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022* states that public libraries are obliged to *provide access to all people to all types of community information and opportunities for community organizing, while recognizing the library's role at the center of the social fabric* (IFLA, 2022). This role speaks of the social role of the library, the library as the "third room" and "living room of the community". In addition to determining the basic activities, the library is also defined as a leader of changes on a social and personal level, as an institution that advocates freedom of information and provides access to everyone. Precisely because of the previously mentioned role, the concept of *commons* quite naturally enters into library spaces and services.

Theoretical framework

Commons are most often defined on the basis of three interdependent, constitutive elements - a resource, a community that uses it and management rules. A resource can represent a non-material or a material object that a certain group produces and/or uses. A group of producers and/or users (these two groups do not necessarily coincide) forms a community gathered around a resource, while their joint decision-making establishes rules how to use that resource. Hess (2011) write that when we talk about *commons*, *the resource can be small and serve a tiny group (the family refrigerator), it can be community-level (sidewalks, playgrounds, libraries, and so on), or it can extend to international and global levels (deep seas, the atmosphere, the Internet, and*

scientific knowledge). *The commons can be well bounded (a community park or library); transboundary (the Danube River, migrating wildlife, the Internet); or without clear boundaries (knowledge, the ozone layer)*. If we combine the previous two explanations of the commons, we can conclude that libraries are natural and ideal places for the development and creation of commons in the community. Libraries have a resource - recorded knowledge in material and digital form, space, users and potential users in the community, and established rules on how to store, manage and make available resources, in this case - commons. Recently, libraries are increasingly leaving their basic library frameworks and introducing services that are based on fulfilling their role, to be agents of social change in society in the context of green and digital transition. Civil society, non - government organizations, are the natural partners of libraries in creating commons because they best understand the needs of citizens and in cooperation with libraries, individuals and groups can fight for their needs and social justice (Edwards, 2013). The role of libraries and non-governmental organizations in today's society is to use joint forces to dispose of common resources in order to create fertile ground for the creation of commons and a fairer society.

Research questions

1. What do librarians and members of non-governmental organizations consider to be commons?
2. What is the role of libraries and non-governmental organizations in supporting the creation of the commons?
3. What knowledge and skills do librarians and members of non-governmental organizations think can be used to create a commons?
4. What activities and programs do librarians and members of non-governmental organizations consider as commons?
5. Do libraries and non-governmental organizations cooperate following the rules of the commons?
6. What activities and programs could libraries and non-governmental organizations create together in the context of commons?

Methodology

Aim of this paper is to determine whether selected libraries from this study and non-governmental organizations from Croatia know the concept of commons and what are their possibilities in the field of commons independently and/or collaboratively.

To understand concepts, opinions or experiences about commons we will use qualitative methodology. The study will be conducted via semi-structured interviews with three selected librarians from public libraries and with three selected members of non-governmental organizations who have prior experience with the commons.

Libraries and non-governmental organizations which will be included:

1. Public library Bjelovar
2. Public library Vlado Gotovac Sisak
3. Public library Prelog
4. Non-government organization Eko-Zadar
5. Non-government organization KAoperativa
6. Non-government organization Teatro VeRRdi

The reason why these libraries were chosen lies in the activities, programs and services they carry out in the context of commons.

Research Results

The research results will show whether librarians and members of non-governmental organizations know the concept of the commons and what, in their opinion, is their role in these processes. Furthermore, the results will show what skills and knowledge they possess in order to be the initiators of the creation of common goods and what activities and programs they could implement. Also, the results will show whether there is cooperation between libraries and the non-governmental sector and what are the possibilities for future connections.

Discussion

The discussion will bring similarities and differences in the perception of the commons among librarians and members of the non-governmental sector. Also, the discussion will bring mapped opportunities and possibilities regarding existing resources of libraries and non-governmental organizations for the creation of commons through activities and programs.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this paper will refer to the review of the current situation in six selected libraries and non-governmental organizations in the area of commons in Croatia. Based on the results (due to the small sample, the results cannot be generalized, but they will serve as examples of good practice), will also make recommendations on how to create the environment necessary for the creation of a commons between libraries and non-governmental organizations, as well as questions for further research in this area.

Subsections

Introduction

Library as a center of the social fabric

Whats is commons?

Commons projects in libraries and non-government organizations

Public libraries and non-government organizations in Croatia- possibility of commons

Conclusion

REFERENCES

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