Public Libraries as Social Innovation Catalysts

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Public libraries in crisis: from threat to opportunity

- Public libraries urgently need to reinvent their role in society
- From “keepers of collections and buildings” to “agents of innovative community empowerment processes” (Andersen et al. 2013)
- Hubs in networks of overlapping communities of interest, practice, and collaboration
- Social innovations: new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations (Murray et al. 2010)
- How to use social innovation to scale up the community role of public libraries?
Research questions

• How to create sustainable collaborative networks of communities across organizations and sectors?
• How to embed interorganizational innovations in existing organizational practices, so that they survive beyond the project stage?
• How to grow and link communities of interest, practice, and collaboration with both place-based and virtual dimensions?
Social innovation

- Many definitions…
- Social (Stanford Social Innovation Review)
  - A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals
- Economic (e.g. Midpoint Brabant)
  - Governments, enterprises and educational institutes jointly explore new possibilities, discover markets, develop areas and facilities
- Summarizing
  - Jointly with all stakeholders find sustainable solutions for societally relevant problems
  - Create individual and societal added value
Social innovation collaboration model
Social innovation process model

Social innovation sensemaking

- Cross-sectoral social innovation = prolonged multi-stakeholder dialogue
- **Aim**: creating web of organizations *and communities* into a new governance structure that is generating innovation and producing societal learning and change
- Sensemaking: ongoing retrospective (& prospective!) development of constructing plausible images from a social context (Weick et al 2005)
- Intra- versus inter-sectoral sensemaking
A practical Social Innovation Sensemaking method

• Using Social Innovation Collaboration & Process model “lenses”

• Workshop 1: intra-sectoral sensemaking
  – Filling the “toolbox”
  – *Potential* inter-sectoral project scenarios

• Workshop 2: inter-sectoral sensemaking
  – *Feasible* inter-sectoral project scenarios
  – *Actual* project proposal outline
Intra-sectoral sensemaking: A “public library toolbox”

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<th>Roles</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Services</th>
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<td>Collectors</td>
<td>Apps</td>
<td>Bookstart</td>
<td>Warehouse for knowledge and information</td>
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<td>Information professionals</td>
<td>- Dialogue tables</td>
<td>- Reading clubs</td>
<td>- Centre of development and learning</td>
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<td>Reading consultants</td>
<td>- E-readers</td>
<td>- Lectures &amp; activities</td>
<td>- Encyclopedia of art &amp; culture</td>
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<td>Storytellers</td>
<td>- Buildings</td>
<td>- Internships</td>
<td>- Source of inspiration for reading and</td>
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<td>Media coaches</td>
<td>- Local networks, contacts</td>
<td>- Study- and workspaces</td>
<td>literature</td>
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<td>Product managers</td>
<td>- Social capital (low barrier, trustworthy,</td>
<td>- Interest-based linking</td>
<td>- Stage for encounters and debate</td>
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<td>Specialists/ advisors</td>
<td>independent, broad societal reach)</td>
<td>- Read-out sessions</td>
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<td>Intermediaries</td>
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<td>- Tempting presentations</td>
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<td>- Promotion materials</td>
<td>- Social/cultural education</td>
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<td>- Streaming of content</td>
<td>- Services for kindergarten and</td>
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<td>- Study cabins</td>
<td>- boarding school education</td>
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<td>- Social media</td>
<td>- “The building” (atmosphere)</td>
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<td>- Websites</td>
<td>- Individual advice, personal contact</td>
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<td>(telephone, building, e-mail, social</td>
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<td>- Digital databases</td>
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<td>- Expositions</td>
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<td>- E-books</td>
<td>- Online meeting place</td>
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<td>- Place to “unwind”</td>
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<td>- Facilitating schools</td>
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<td>- Open writing podiums</td>
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<td>- Access to worldwide web</td>
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<td>- Promotion of reading</td>
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<td>- Organizing</td>
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Inter-sectoral sensemaking
Case: “Kinderkennisbank”
Welkom op de Kinderkennisbank, start met de lessen door op 'start' te klikken of kies een onderwerp uit het roze menu.

IS ER EEN GOD?

http://www.kinderkennisbank.nl
Inter-sectoral sensemaking: Public libraries x universities
Inter-organizational sensemaking: Feasible inter-sectoral project scenario
B@ttleweters happening!

Source: Yvonne Kimman
Intra-sectoral sensemaking: scaling up public libraries innovation
B@ttleweters format – scaling up…
... and up
Social innovation lessons learnt

- Bring in outside stakeholders (early)
- Public libraries often better at later innovation stages (sustaining and scaling)
- Public libraries can shift their roles in the social innovation collaboration networks over time
- Their large social capital makes public libraries key social innovation catalysts
Towards a SIS methodology

- Initial validation of support for stage 1-3 social innovation process (up to prototype)
- Now working on stage 4 (sustaining)
- New domains
- Further refinement
  - Selection of participants
  - Coordination with developers
  - Legitimacy & stakeholder/community involvement
Public libraries & communities

- Public libraries
  - Bridging the institutional and community world
  - Catalyzing communities of (social) innovation addressing complex societal issues (meta-communities)
  - Librarians stewards of communities of interest, practice, and collaboration (“public sensemakers”)

- Community informatics-based research frameworks and methodologies useful
How to scale up community involvement?

Community of innovation

Communities of practice, interest, collaboration

Communities of practice, interest, collaboration

Communities of practice, interest, collaboration