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# **The role of public libraries in urban development and culture-led regeneration**

**Casper Hvenegaard Rasmussen, Henrik Jochumsen and Dorte Skot-Hansen**

**European public libraries today and in an historical context  
Oslo, 9-10 December 2010**

# Agenda

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1. The main-project: Point of departure and research-questions.
2. The paper: Focus, research-questions, approach and key-concepts.
3. The relationship between the public library and urban-development – some examples.
4. How does this relationship challenge the design, the concept and the mission of the public library? – Some preliminary assumptions.

# The role of public libraries in urban development and culture-led regeneration



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## The main-project

### The title is ...

- Public Libraries in Urban Development – Creativity, Innovation and Experience.

### The aim is ...

- To analyze and discuss the library's future role on the basis of international, Nordic and Danish best practice examples.



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## The main-project

### The project is conducted at

- The Centre for Cultural Policy Studies at The Royal Danish School of Library and Information Science from 2010-11

### The project is funded by

- The Realdania Fund.

Center for *Kulturpolitiske* Studier



**Realdania**

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## The main-projects three dimensions: Place, space and relations

### Place

- How can the library serve as a catalyst for change and urban development?

### Space

- How can libraries enhance the creative and innovative city as a space for experiences and new meetings?

### Relations

- How can the library contribute to synergy, connections and transformations through new creative partnerships?

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## The focus of the paper: Place

- Today's cities are in a situation of *growing global competition* and they are to a higher and higher degree planned and designed to attract tourists, inhabitants and businesses.
- A “*cultural turn*” is happening in the cities where there is a growing trend of re-branding and refurbishing cities through culture in an attempt to revitalize economies.
- At the same time new strategies for *culture-led regeneration* are introduced into urban planning.

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## Research-questions

- What is the role of the library in these models and strategies for urban and cultural planning.
- What is the role of public libraries in different strategies of culture-led regeneration?
- How do these tendencies challenge the design, the concept and the mission of the public library?

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## Empirical approach

- Studies of libraries in the Nordic countries, Netherlands, England and USA.

## Theoretical approach

- Sociology of late-modernity, theories of urban planning and development, creativity and innovation

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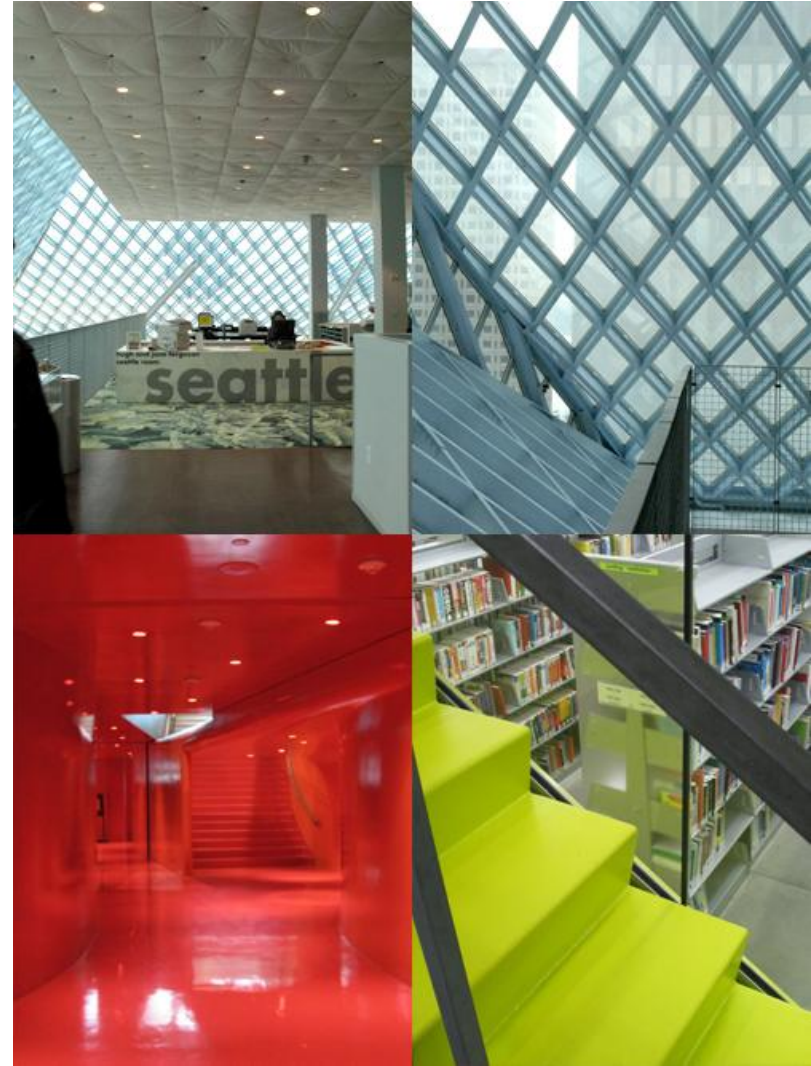


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## Key-concepts

With point of departure in in our theoretical and empirical studies we categorize the role of the library as:

- Cultural icon and flagship
- A placemaker and supporter of urban identity
- A part of a community vitalization



# Public libraries as icons



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## Characteristics of icons:

- Different and unique
- Famous
- Symbolic and aesthetic quality
- Part of urban brandisme



New Guggenheim in Bilbao,  
Frank Gehry, 1997

# Public libraries as icons



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- **Characteristics of icons:**
- Different and unique
- Famous
- Symbolic and aesthetic quality
- Part of urban brandisme



Seattle Central Library  
Rem Koolhaas, 2004

# Public libraries as placemakers



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## Characteristics of placemakers:

- Active part of urban planning trying to attract people
- Revitalisation of city centres
- Revitalisation of former industrial areas
- Developing new parts of the city



The Opera in Oslo  
Snøhetta, 2008

# Public libraries as placemakers



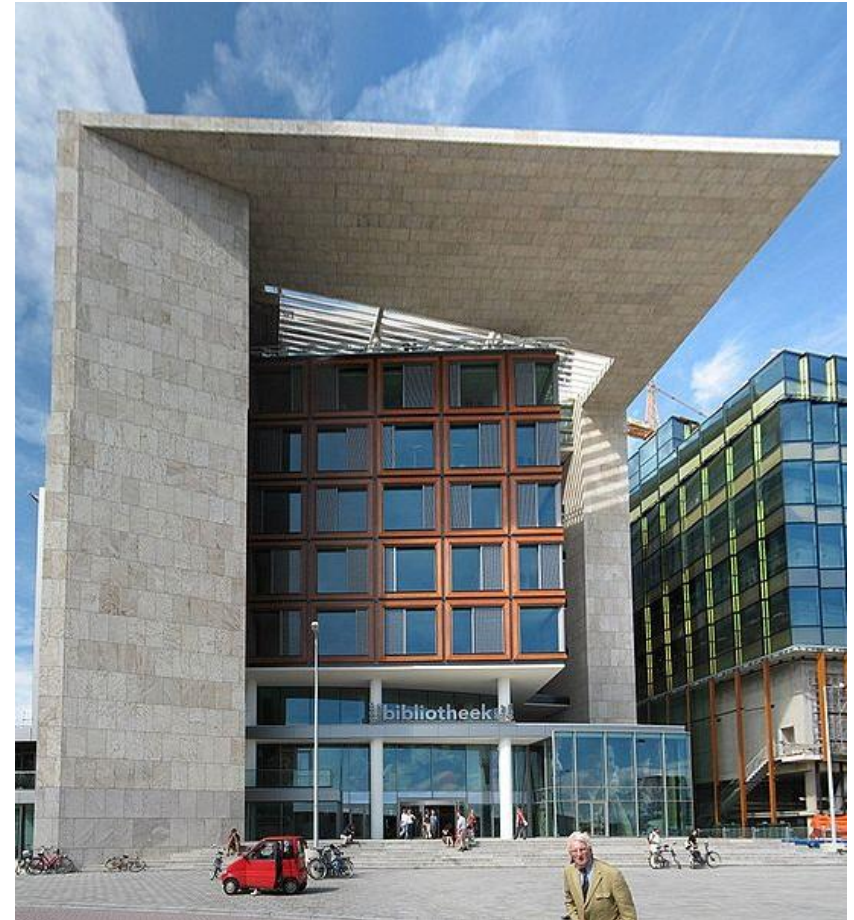
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Revitalisation of city centers



Salt Lake City Main Library  
Moshe Safdi, 2003

Revitalisation of former industrial areas



Oppenbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam  
Jo Cohens, 2007



- **Characteristics of community vitalization**
- Boosting local identity and cohesion
- Addressing social and economic challenges
- Initiating local innovation, creativity and co-operation



The Garage, Malmö, 2008

# Public libraries as community vitalization



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## ▪ Characteristics of community vitalization

- Boosting local identity and cohesion
- Addressing social and economic challenges
- Initiating local innovation, creativity and co-operation



Crisp Street 2004



Whitechapel 2005

Idea Stores, London

# Closing remarks



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How do the described tendencies challenge the design, the concept and the mission of the public library?

**The degree of reinventing the public library, when it is:**

- an icon
- a placemaker
- a part of community vitalization

