The act of being a Librarian

A study into how the position of the public library in the social infrastructure affects librarians and their practices

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Abstract

Public libraries in the Netherlands have become increasingly more socially involved. Several scholars, like Klinenberg (2018), consider it part of the *social infrastructure.* In this research, the affect of the role of the library in the social infrastructure on librarians' practices has been investigated. The ideas of several Practice Theory scholars was used to analyze what a practice entails and how it is defined in this research: routinized activities within a certain context, consisting of the interconnected elements: knowledge, meaning and objects.

This research was executed by performing participant observation at four case studies, followed by a focus group in which the observations were discussed. All participants were librarians with an interest and knowledge of the new role of the library. Four affecting variables were investigated, as they would be very influential on the practices of library workers in the social infrastructure: space, staff composition, community demand and finance.

It was found that the daily practices of the participating library workers were affected by their position within the social infrastructure in various ways. The observations showed that interaction between the visitors and librarians were a key part of their work, resulting in not only information practices, but a growing number of social - and care practices as well. This was led by an increasing focus on community demand driven activities, which they described as a newer concept in their field of work. This made the job of librarians more fluid, requiring a certain form of adaptability. This coincides with the concept of *Librarizing*, described by Rivano Eckerdal (2018).

These forms of librarizing often created increased tension between the participants and their superiors, both from within the library as from the local governments. This usually came down to disagreements over budget distributions, as well as the meaning of library practices, as this was often where those distributions were based on. In order to create a healthy and future-proof library, the participants felt that the public library should increase their focus on the social and care practices and reach a wider consensus over what the role of the library for the community should be.

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1. Introduction

An article in one of the Netherlands largest newspapers, the Volkskrant, paid attention to the public library recently, and not without reason. The article was titled *"Let's go the library and not just to read"* [Hup naar de bieb en niet alleen om te lezen] (Putnam, 2021). This article is a sign of a trend that has been going on in the field of public libraries in the Netherlands and several other Western countries. In many people's minds, the library is still a place of borrowing books, gathering knowledge and being silent. In reality, the library is evolving into a new form, a more culturally and socially engaged library, partially due to various technological advances, like E-books and the internet. When the internet became common, people were not reliant on the library to gather specific knowledge about a subject. Later on, E-books became popular, resulting in a lesser interest in, and need for, renting fiction books. Even the renting of DVD's and CDs became obsolete due to the recent rise of streaming services like Netflix and Disney+ (Koninklijke Bibliotheken, 2017). Yet it is not only the technological advancements that form the basis of this change of pace in the library field, there has been a cultural shift as well. Libraries try to be more embedded within society. In 2015 the newly introduced Dutch law surrounding libraries even states 'organizing encounter' as one of the core functions of the public library (Rijksoverheid, 2015). One library organization describes *social cohesion, participation and being a part of society* as a foundation on which libraries should be built (Bibliotheek Bollenstreek, n.d.).

In the past, the public library almost exclusively focused on increasing people's *human capital*. Human capital is described as the way people invest in themselves, like learning a new language or studying (Schultz, 1961). And while libraries are still keen on helping people to learn new things about the world, much information can now be found on a smartphone. Consequently, libraries are moving towards not only focusing on increasing human capital, but rather *social capital*. Social capital is about the structure of relations between people, the strengths of social connections (Vårheim, 2009). The library can therefore now be seen as a vital part of our '*social infrastructure*', as a place that is designed to help increase the social capital of its visitors. Klinenberg (2018) states social infrastructure can be seen as a broad concept:

> *"Public institutions, such as libraries, schools, playgrounds, parks, athletic fields, and swimming pools, are vital parts of the social infrastructure. So too are sidewalks, courtyards, community gardens, and other spaces that invite people into the public realm. Community organizations, including churches and civic associations, act as social infrastructures when they have an established physical space where people can assemble, as do regularly scheduled markets for food, furniture, clothing, art, and other consumer goods. Commercial establishments can also be important parts of the social infrastructure." (Klinenberg, 2018, p.17)*

Currently, these changes are being investigated thoroughly, and within the scientific community it is generally accepted that the public library is going through changes to take its place within the social infrastructure as a place of encounter, care and personal growth (Latham & Layton, 2019). Simone (2004) proposes the idea that social infrastructure differs from 'regular' infrastructure, in the sense that people can also be a part of the social infrastructure. For example, the people that work for the

public library, without them, the library could not fulfil its function within this social infrastructure. They are the ones that help libraries become part of the social infrastructure. Rivano Eckerdal (2018) goes even further in stating that the library is a place that is continually changing, proposing the idea of *to librarize* as a verb, because the library and librarians are always moving and changing to be valuable to its community. The library is no longer about the building itself, or the books in the collection, but the activities and practices of the people in it.

Thus, scientific research has already pointed out that the public library is moving towards becoming an essential part of the social infrastructure. This thesis investigates the role of the librarian within this changing environment of the social infrastructure, by examining their daily practices at work.

1.1 Societal relevance

Public libraries have been a very important part of our spatial life, they could be described as a 'semi-public' space (Askarizad & Safari, 2020): they are not as open as a park or a public square; they are often closed after 17:00 and you cannot eat or drink alcohol in the library, for example. But it still tries to be as open to the public as possible. Especially in the sense that the library can be a place of encounter, part of the social infrastructure. Several recent changes, both economic and cultural, mean that they tend to focus more on that role in society.

A study into the library workers could showcase the importance of libraries as part of the social infrastructure. As Rivano Eckerdal (2018) states, because of neoliberal tendencies in many parts of the Western world, various public institutions and community centers, like the Dutch *buurthuizen* (community centers, lit. neighborhood houses), have been dismantled or forced to work under volunteering due to budget cuts. Libraries are still seen as attractive cultural hubs and information centers in most cities. However, this New Public Management, as Rivano Eckerdal calls it, also impacts libraries. Where most larger libraries have been spared this fate of being disassembled, many smaller libraries have been closed, even though they were critical to the communities they resided in. A Dutch newspaper found out that between 2012 and 2017, over 300 libraries were forced to close their doors due to budget cuts (RTL, 2017). In addition, the fact that many other facilities were closed made that the library now carries extra weight on its shoulders, despite statistics show, in the Netherlands they are largely run by volunteers (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek [CBS], 2021). This research could show the importance of the library as a social infrastructure and places of gathering to counter these neoliberal approaches.

As the previous paragraphs show, the public library is largely made by its people, both the visitors as the librarians. Seale and Mirza (2020) state that neoliberal approaches and austerity in many places in the Western world impacts library workers to great effect. It forces them to take on a role of care and (social) maintenance. A study into the changing role of librarians and how they try to help build this social infrastructure from the bottom-up might be useful for current librarians, learning more about how their colleagues deal with their changing field. Furthermore, this research may be helpful in changing education for library workers. Currently in the Netherlands, there is no official library education, only a secondary specialization for people who would like to learn more about being a librarian, focusing largely on gathering and distributing information (GO Opleidingen, n.d.). The social aspect of librarianship, however, is much less emphasized in this education. More knowledge about the daily practices of library workers, focusing on their role in the social infrastructure, might also help improve educations. Take for example OnderwijsNext's *Community Librarian* education, which is a

one-year specialization that focuses on reschooling 'classic' librarians into community workers (Cubiss, 2020). Just like physical infrastructure, social infrastructure needs to be created, reworked and maintained (Klinenberg, 2018). The relevance in this research lies in how library workers focus on creating and maintaining this social infrastructure within the environment of the public library. It shows the importance of being aware of this change within the library field and where both challenges and opportunities lie.

1.2 Scientific relevance

Libraries have gained a lot of attention within the scientific community in the last few years, mainly due to their shift into a more active participant of the social infrastructure. Even though the library was already a place of encounter before, Rivano Eckerdal (2018) states that the neoliberal shift away from the welfare state made this function more prominent. In the scientific community, it is largely agreed upon that the public library is part of the social infrastructure (Latham & Layton, 2019), but there is still debate on how exactly it should fit this new role. Much research has been done into the digitalization of the library, because how can a library still be an information center if information is always at hand? Take for example Coombs (2007), who says the information distributing part of the library should be done with a website alone, a website where the user can also generate content, through blogs or wiki articles. This then leaves more room for the library building itself to do work within the community. Or Latham & Layton (2019), who start their paper by describing the library as a place to rent books, but then in the end encourage geographers to investigate how the library functions in their communities. This is also where Klinenberg (2018), comes in, who sees the library as part of the social infrastructure, recognizing it as a physical place where people can gather and meet new people. Schloffel-Armstrong (2021) also acknowledges this trend and emphasizes that libraries can be a very interesting site within the geographical systems of a city, due to their multi-functional character.

Something that is rarely investigated however, is the role of the library workers in regard to this transition. How can the people support the role of the library in the social infrastructure, how have their practices changed? Pinfield (2001) already wrote about the changing role and practices of librarians, but again from the perspective of the digital library, not from the perspective of the 'social' library. More recent studies, like Cherinet (2018) and Ahmed, JianMing & Rafi (2019) also show that librarian research is mostly about how they should cope with the digital era where information is always around the corner. Even though this is an important part of the library worker of today, their responsibility to the community gets emphasized much less in research. It is not like there is no research done at all regarding this topic, see for example Seale and Mirza (2020) or Melik and Merry (2021). It is however not the main focus of many library studies, who favor focusing on the digitalization of the public library. This is why this thesis mostly focuses on the practices in their new role as *community librarian.*

This role has been analyzed with the use of *practice theory*. Practice theory is a range of theories that set the human practices as the foundation of social life (Schatzki, 2018). If Simone (2004) says that people can be a part of the social infrastructure and Eckerdal (2018) even speaks of *librarizing*, an analysis of the daily, routinized practices of librarians seems like a logical next step. It is the doings and sayings of the library workers that make the library take its position within the social infrastructure.

The value of this thesis does not lie in augmenting practice theory or library studies alone, it is positioned at the intersection of both fields of study.

1.3 Research objective and research questions

As described in the introduction, the library as part of the social infrastructure is already clear and thoroughly researched. In this thesis, the focus will therefore lie on the daily, routinized practices of library workers, how they change and which problems they encounter because of this change. As Rivano Eckerdal (2018) said, the library is a place that is in a state of constant change, a verb, rather than a noun. Especially now that some libraries are forced to take over many functions previously taken care of by other institutions. This can make it hard for library workers to keep up with the changing role of the library in our society, mainly the prominent role it takes up in the social infrastructure, the change from a place of gathering knowledge and increasing human capital to a place of encounter, care and helping the community in different ways. In order to find an answer to these, the following research question has been constructed:

How does the position of the public library in the social infrastructure affect the routinized practices of library workers?

In order to answer this research question, four sub-questions have been constructed. Each of these focusses on a variable that affects the practices that library workers perform. These four variables will be explained extensively in the next chapter.

- How does Space influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?
- How does Staff composition influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?
- How does Community demand influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?
- How does Finance influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?

Answering these questions will help answer the main research question, since it is these variables that largely impact the practices of library workers and their ability to position themselves within the social infrastructure. This research has been conducted by doing participant observation in four different public library locations. During these, a library worker was shadowed and (informally) interviewed to get a grasp of what kind of practices they perform and how they experience it. All of these library workers are familiar with the position of the library within the social infrastructure, since they all follow an education on *community* librarianship. After these observations, the most important findings have been collected and presented in the form of a focus group with the participant**s**, to compare and discuss the different findings. Th**ese** method**s** will be elaborated on in chapter three.

In this research, the choice is made to only investigate public libraries and its library workers. This is because they form an important node in the social infrastructure, as is also explained by Klinenberg (2018). There are of course also other forms of libraries, the academic library or the Little Free Library initiative for example. Regarding the last one, librarians' practices are not really researchable in this

initiative, since the people who (usually voluntarily) maintain these tiny bookshelves are no official librarians and there is hardly any interaction between them and the visitors. Academic libraries on the other hand do have a physical building and offer library services, just like public libraries. However, they often have a very specific target audience: students, scholars, lecturers and researchers, and a larger focus on independent information distribution. Their influence on the social infrastructure as a whole might therefore be less impactful. This does not mean that these two types of libraries are uninteresting from a social infrastructural perspective, they can still function as a place of encounter in a way, but this research will concern itself only with public libraries. Moreover, even within public libraries there are many different forms. The central library in a large city has a different dynamic than a small, local library, or another branch within the same large city. They offer different library services and take another position within the social infrastructure, which goes on to show the uniqueness of every public library and the difficulties librarians face in how to offer these services suitably.

1.4 Reading guide

This thesis report consists of 6 chapters in total, this introduction being the first one. In this thesis, there is a process of zooming in, to observe specific cases and details, and then zooming out again to a broader perspective, in which the previous chapter forms the basis on which the next is build. This process is visually shown in figure 1.1. This introduction started out with introducing the general topic, as well as the relevance on why research into the practices of librarians is important, both from a scientific and a societal standpoint.
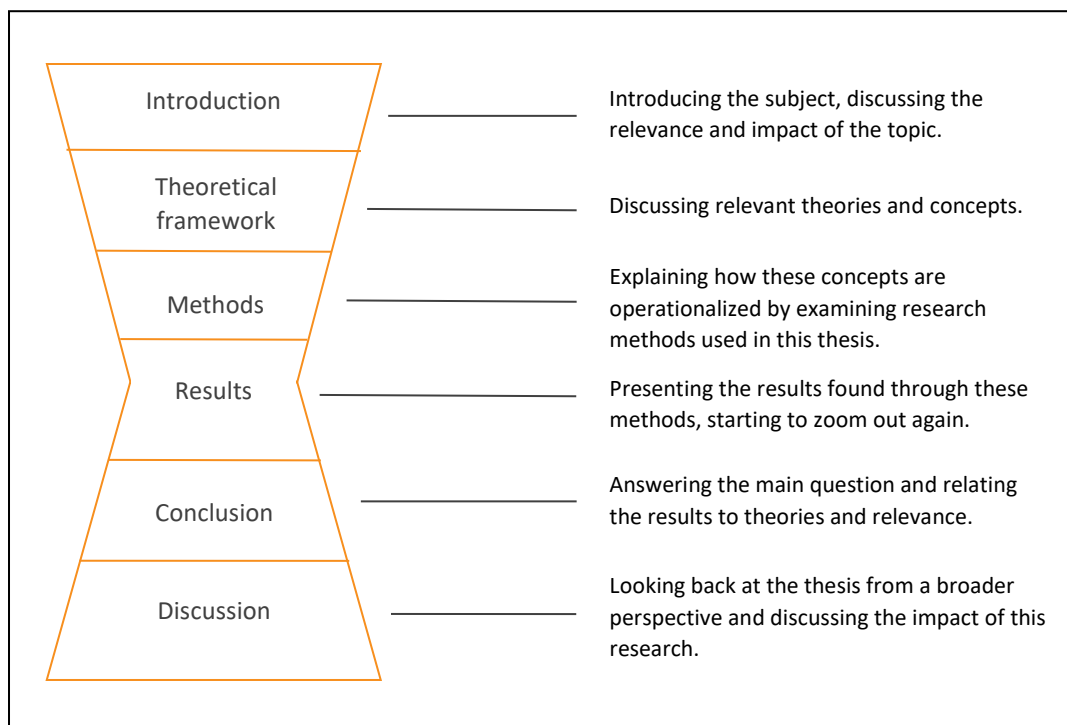
After this general introduction, the report starts to zoom in, from a broader perspective into specific, scientific theories deemed relevant for this topic. This is the second chapter: the theoretical framework, which will explore the main concepts of the research questions. It starts with an exploration of social infrastructure, mainly using notions from Klinenberg (2018). After that, several practice theorists are discussed, in order to form an own interpretation of how to utilize practice theory in this research. Thirdly, the chapter goes on by diving deeper into the four aforementioned variables and their effect on library practices. Finally, the theoretical framework ends with a visual representation showing the relations between the different aspects of this research, the conceptual model.

Chapter three zooms further in and discusses how the aforementioned theories and concepts are being investigated by explaining the methods that have been used in this specific research. It starts off by describing the process of participant selection, using OnderwijsNext in the role of gatekeeper. After this, the methods are discussed: how participant observation and informal interviews play a role in gathering data in this research. It examines both the pros and cons for this research. After this the role of the focus groups are discussed: interpreting the results of the observations together with the participants.

The fourth chapter is the most zoomed in of this research, by describing the results of the research. In this chapter, the four sub-questions are analyzed one by one. This shows how the participants reacted to the different variables and how they saw them as influencing on their practices and the position of the library within the social infrastructure. There is some connecting with the grander theories and relevance, but it is largely about the data in itself.

The fifth chapter is the conclusion, from which we start to zoom out again. It first combines the answers of the four sub-questions and then forms an answer on the main research question, showed earlier in this introduction. The difference with the fourth chapter lies in the emphasis on theory and relevance, which is much more emphasized in this chapter. To form an adequate answer on the research question, the results of chapter four and the theories from chapter two will be combined.

The final chapter is the discussion. In this chapter we are fully zoomed out to discuss the broader impacts and context of this research. It consists of four parts: the external effects and choices made that impacted the research, policy recommendations based on this research, interesting findings that could spark future research questions and lastly it discusses how the findings of this research relate to the scientific and social relevance mentioned in 1.1 and 1.2.

Introduction	Introducing the subject, discussing the relevance and impact of the topic.
Theoretical framework	Discussing relevant theories and concepts.
Methods	Explaining how these concepts are operationalized by examining research methods used in this thesis.
Results	Presenting the results found through these methods, starting to zoom out again.
Conclusion	Answering the main question and relating the results to theories and relevance.
Discussion	Looking back at the thesis from a broader perspective and discussing the impact of this research.

Figure 1.1: The process of zooming and out in this research

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the concepts from the research question will be explained. It starts with the meaning of social infrastructure and the impact of it on libraries. Secondly, several Practice theorists will be discussed in order to form a personal definition on how practice theory has been used in this research. After this, the four variables that affect public library practices will be discussed, they form the basis of the sub-questions shown earlier. The chapter ends with a visual representation of all these aspects in the form of a conceptual model.

2.1 Social infrastructure

2.1.1 Infrastructural turn

Everyone is familiar with physical infrastructure, the vast network of the roads we drive on, the rivers that move our ships and goods and the cell phone towers that make our telecommunication possible. In the last few years, the interest in infrastructure has increased in human geography research. Amin (2014) speaks of an *infrastructural turn*. With this, he tries to explain how several social patterns can be seen as an infrastructure, or part of an infrastructure, similar to physical infrastructure. They are often made up of both visible and invisible parts, both social and material. Alam and Houston (2020) use this infrastructural format to show care networks. They state that care is built on a network of responsibilities. They explain that in these infrastructural approaches it is important to look at the background and structure of phenomena that support them. In this research, social infrastructure will be placed central.

Social infrastructure is, just like physical infrastructure, a network which is necessary for our society to function. The term was popularized by Klinenberg (2018), who describes it as: *"the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact"* (p. 11). He states that in order to form meaningful connections within a community, one needs these connections, and the infrastructure that makes these connections possible. According to him, social infrastructure is underappreciated, even though it plays a critical role in our society. He calls infrastructure invisible and embedded; it is only there to help move another concept about. A train cannot ride without train tracks (which is where the word infrastructure originated from), and the network of train tracks are nothing without the train.

In his book, he also mentions Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (1995), who expresses how Western societies have gone more individualistic. Klinenberg shows this with an example of how it is only when there is an important sporting event or a family movie night that the entire household is together, not watching their own devices. Putnam is most notably known for his work with *social capital*, which is a concept commonly used to determine the strengths of social ties within one's network, and how one can *bond* within groups (creating strong ties), or *bridge* to other social groups/networks (using weak ties). Social infrastructure is similar, yet different; more about the building blocks on which social capital can be formed and expanded.

An important node in the social infrastructure, according to Klinenberg (2018), are *third places*. These are places between work and home, a peculiar place to meet new people. Traditionally, bars, shops or bowling alleys, like in Putnam's example, are thought of as third places. Klinenberg gives a special spot among these more traditional third places to the library. He states that, unlike many traditional third places, the library is not a commercial organization. A public library, he says, is open to the public, tries to appeal to a wide audience and does not try to sell anything, unlike a Starbucks, a fancy restaurant or rowdy bar. Or as Smith (2012) states: *"the only thing left on the high street that doesn't want either your soul or your wallet".* This does however not mean that libraries run on air; money is still an essential variable, as will explained later in this chapter.

It is however wise to note that places can overlap in infrastructure. Even though the social infrastructural role of the library is central in this research, the library also has a very important position in the information infrastructure. This ties more closely with the original role of the library, to increase human capital rather than social capital. As Mattern (2014) states, it is a place where the information and social infrastructure overlap. Just the library takes a bigger role in the social infrastructure, does not mean that its part in the information infrastructure should be neglected. The two often even go hand in hand. Many activities in the library promote social connections and personal growth at the same time, like the makerspace initiatives later in this chapter. Or as Melik (2020) describes the *Guest at the table* initiative, where often someone talks about their hobby or experience, but it is framed as a conversation between everyone instead of a lecture. At the table, rather than in a classroom. This example shows how the public library can combine the different forms of infrastructure, not solely focusing on one in particular. The next paragraph goes deeper into this fluid nature of the library, focusing on librarians.

2.1.2 The librarian in the social infrastructure

Klinenberg (2018) envisions that a great deal of how libraries fit in the social infrastructure comes through the freedom libraries enjoy. Even though the infrastructure itself consists of the physical environment, the librarians are at the center of it: *"The library staff has more autonomy to develop new programming than I'd expected from an established public institution. Managers, it seems, assume the best of their librarians, and their information specialists too"* (p. 56). This autonomy makes that the library can adapt to the community demand. This ties in with the ideas of Barniskis (2016), who also sees the library as an important node in social networks, and describes the concept of *diving in*. This means that for librarians, it could be scary to try and fit their new role, they need to dive into it and take risks. Especially when they want to be assertive and anticipate on what the community needs, which she fittingly compares to the more traditional librarian's job: developing their book collection. In expanding their book collection, librarians need not only think of the bestseller, but it is also their responsibility to introduce the public to books they might not know yet. This new role within the social infrastructure is what creates a '*culture of trying things out*' (p. 119), where librarians are freer to emphasize the practices they find important.

This potential to adapt to different circumstances is also the strength that the already mentioned Rivano Eckerdal (2018) meant, when she proposed to think of the library as a verb, *to librarize*. She claims that the library is constantly reshaping itself to the community it is in, following the wishes of the society around it. She then proceeds to explain how she sees the library as an assemblage, as described by Deleuze and Guattari's Assemblage Theory, meaning the library could be viewed from its relationships to other institutions. It, however, also ties in very well with another relational theory: the aforementioned Practice Theory. Seeing the library as a verb, means that the essence of the library

lies in its activities and practices, or as Eckerdal herself states: *"It means that the librarian's identity is understood as an ongoing enactment or as a doing of the library"* (p. 13). This relates to Van Melik and Merry (2021) as well, who, in a similar fashion, are not only talking about the library as part of the social infrastructure, but also describe it as a verb: *infrastructuring*. This is to emphasize the process that libraries are currently going through in order to become a vital part of this infrastructure and to combine this process with the everchanging nature of the library and the concept of librarizing. In conclusion, the process of becoming part of the social infrastructure is made up of all the different practices by library workers, creating a space of encounter for its visitors.

2.1.3 Makerspace practices

These practices could take many forms, for example in the ways of creating a makerspace. The fundamental idea of a makerspace is creating a place in a community where knowledge, tools and ideas could be shared. According to Barniskis (2016), libraries are a very good place for makerspace practices. This goes along with the idea of social infrastructure(ing), in that the library should be more than a place to rent books, but a place for the community to learn, meet and grow. Barniskis (2016) gives the example in which a library gives the community access to high-speed internet for those who need it, but they do not help people navigate the web. This is where a makerspace practice could be valuable, in both giving the tools to browse (the computers) and help people who struggle online with courses on how to use those tools (which many libraries now give courses in). Similarly, these makerspace practices could have different goals. Knitting clubs in libraries are not uncommon, and besides learning people new patterns, visitors could make contact with other people, in an attempt to reduce loneliness, combining the social and information infrastructure, as explained in 2.1.1. This specific case was also investigated by Robinson (2020). She found that knitting groups in London and Berlin libraries made that people from various backgrounds had gotten to know each other better. She calls this *"everyday multiculturalism"* (p. 3) and emphasizes the importance of the library as a safe space in which people can become acquainted with new people. Another way to describe this is the aforementioned *bridging* form of social capital: using weak ties to get in contact with someone from another social group. This therefore also shows with how social infrastructure can be seen as the foundation on which social capital can be build, by giving the opportunity to form weak ties (perhaps even stronger ties) with others.

This sum of practices makes that the library does not sit still. Unlike physical infrastructure, like an electrical grid, it is moving, it is both part of the infrastructure, but also shaping the infrastructure itself: librari*zing* creates infrastructur*ing*. It is precisely these makerspace practices that shape the library and its place within the social infrastructure. The next paragraph will go deeper into practice theory, and how these practices make up the way in which library workers shape the social infrastructure while being a part of it.

2.2 Practice theory

In this research, the practices of library workers play an important role and will be analyzed with practice theory. This section serves the purpose of exploring what practice theory is and how different practice theorists view practices. It starts with a general analysis of five different theorists and their view on what a practice looks like. Their views on what practices are, will be deconstructed in order

to understand what elements makes up a practice. The second part of this section is used to put all these theories together and relate them to how they would work in a library setting. This is to form an own interpretation of practices which is the one used in this research.

2.2.1 Decomposition of practices

Practice theory encompasses a wide range of theories and philosophies, all related to seeing *the social* as a combination of different practices, performed by human actors. Yet, what exactly is a practice? It is widely regarded within the scientific community that the idea of a theory of practices started in the late 1970s with the researchers Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens (Spaargaren, 2016). Bourdieu sets the *habitus* central in his theory of practice. Habitus could be seen as a certain way of life, both the range of practices one performs and the context around it. In order to gain capital in a specific field (whether it be economic, cultural or social capital), people develop certain habitas within that field, their 'usual' way of perceiving, thinking and then doing (Bourdieu, 1977). Even though he prefers the word *action* instead of practice, Giddens is seen as the other founding father of practice theory. Both Giddens and Bourdieu see the social as being made up of both material and symbolical practices. But the latter sets the term of *structuration* central in his theories. He states that the social structure is devised of strings of practices by certain agents within a structure. Yet it is also these strings of actions (or practices) that create the structure in which they are performed. This continuity of practices is what causes a sense of reflexivity, people are able to reflect on their actions (Giddens, 1984). In Bourdieu's work, being able to reflect is possible, but not essential and much more unlikely than according to Giddens.

There are several practice theorists who build on the foundations that Bourdieu and Giddens laid down, in order to develop their own ideas of what a practice exactly is and how we should analyze it. These are the so-called second-generation practice theorists, after the original ideas of Bourdieu and Giddens (Schatzki, 2018). One of these is Elizabeth Shove. In a book she wrote with Pantzar and Watson (2012), Shove claims practices are a constant interplay between three elements: *Competences*, *Material* and *Meaning*. These three concepts then form the heart of the practice. Competences are described as one's know-how, background knowledge and understandings. Materials are non-human objects: tools, hardware, but also the body in itself, which only becomes a living being through our practices. The body is, however, essential for many practices. Yet Shove sees it as subordinate to the practice in itself. Lastly there is meaning, a term they use to *"represent the social and symbolic significance of participation at any one moment."* (Shove et al., 2012, p. 24). The meaning goes into why someone performs the practice, the ideas behind it and how it is perceived. Why someone chooses to perform a practice is therefore closely related to the context of the practice (which is also important to other theorists, as explained later). Then because of the recurrent performances of these three elements (called practices-as-performance), practices become visible as one concept, creating '*practices-as-entities'* (p. 15). They acknowledge this decomposition of practices in (only) three elements might be simplistic, but this makes it more fitting for analyzing empirical cases, especially on the changing of social practices. One of the examples they give in their book is showering. It is a daily practice that is done by many people (routinized, as other practice theorists would say). One obviously needs a shower, soap and towel, the materials of the practice. Furthermore, they need the knowledge on how to wash themselves, what products to use and perhaps how to clean the shower afterwards. Finally, there is the meaning of the practice, what does it mean to take a shower. This can be for relaxation, escapism from the world, or simply cleaning oneself. Not taking a shower can also have consequences in the context, people at work might treat you differently when you are not clean. All these interplays between the different elements makes up the practice as a whole.

Theodore Schatzki (2002) goes a different route than Shove, substituting the simplicity of three elements for a more elaborate approach. He describes practices as *"temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings, linked by practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure, and general understandings"* (p. 87). With this he first tries to say that practices are more than just something one does physically, it is also about the sayings and meanings (just like Shove emphasized), he explains them as *"organized nexuses of actions"* (p. 77). Yet unlike Shove, he clearly puts more weight to the context, seen in what he calls *rules* and both *general* and *practical understandings* (the know-how) of a practice. Finally, with teleoaffective structures, he means that practices themselves have a certain structure, which eventually results in an end goal. A practice always ends somewhere in order for a new practice to begin. These contexts that Schatzki talks about, have three different aspects. First, they should surround that of which it is the context. Secondly it has determination, it is able to have a significant impact on whatever is inside it. Lastly, it has its own composition. In this research the library as part of the social infrastructure could be seen as the context in which the changing practices take place. It surrounds the libraries and librarians, as they are part of the infrastructure. It has determination in enforcing them to change their practices, compared to how librarians performed their work previously. Finally, it has its own composition, the network of places and people that make up the social infrastructure, which is constantly recreated and reformed by the practices of library workers (infrastructuring/librarizing).

The final practice theorist that will be discussed in this paragraph is Andreas Reckwitz. He describes practices as: "*a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge"* (2002, p. 249). To Reckwitz, these routinized activities are vital. This distinguishes practices from just any action or activity, it is part of one's daily life and therefore part of their social identity. He then mentions different elements that a practice consists of. Just like the previous theorists, he first emphasizes bodily and mental activities. Performing a practice starts with actually doing the activity, but it is more than just that, he also mentions 'things'. Unlike Shove and Schatzki, he sees the human body as something separate (hence the earlier mention of bodily activities), but still finds objects and their use essential in practices, one cannot cook without pans or ingredients for example. However, one can also not cook without a recipe, at least not very well. This is what he means with know-how and background knowledge. While doing a practice, someone needs to understand what the practice is (so, for example, knowing what cooking means) and how to perform it. Then there is motivation, as Reckwitz (2016) puts it: *"Motivation is where affects come into play; there must be some affective incentive to participate in the practice. This can be a positive desire, a defensive incentive to avoid displeasure, or a combination of the two"* (p. 127). There must be a reason to perform the practice (in the case of cooking it can be both for the pleasure of tasty food or avoiding the displeasure of hunger). Finally, there is states of emotion. Later, Reckwitz (2016) also calls this *affectivity*, to reflect how, during practices, people can get affected by their surroundings, and how their emotions might affect the practice.

2.2.2 Practices in the library

In this research, elements of the previously mentioned practice theorists will be used to analyze what practices consist of, and how they change in the work field of library workers. We therefore need to explain how practices are regarded in this research.

First of all, in this research practices will be regarded as routinized activities, as described by Reckwitz, Bourdieu and Giddens. In this research library workers will be investigated, meaning they perform these practices on a daily basis in their jobs and are able to reflect on their doings. These could also be more traditional practices, like ordering bookshelves, shaping the collection or encouraging young people to read more. Certainly, some librarians will face new and difficult challenges, due to the changing nature of the library, meaning their new practices are currently in the process of being (or becoming) routinized. Some of these are still connected to the original library practices. Organizing language courses for immigrants can serve as a social activity, to reduce loneliness and get them involved in the community. Yet at the same time it is about learning to read while using texts, something libraries have been doing for a long time. The changing nature of the library is what makes the routinization of their practices so interesting.

Next there is context. All the theorists emphasize the importance of the context in which a practice takes place. This is not literally the physical context of the library itself (which is more of an object), but rather a more metaphysical context. In this research, social infrastructure is seen as the most dominant context. The changes in library practices directly impact the social infrastructure and vice versa. Context of course goes further than just social infrastructure, the position of the library within the library network of that region, or the community it serves can both also be seen as a context. Yet the social infrastructure is the most dominant one in this research. Contexts are however always found outside of the practice itself and the person performing the practice (but they can influence each other).

This then closely relates to the first element that a practice consists of: meaning. One that gets mentioned multiple times in different formats. Shove calls it meaning, Reckwitz talks about emotion and motivation, Schatzki discusses teleoaffective structures and Bourdieu mentions symbolical practices. In essence, this is about how and why exactly someone performs the practice within a certain environment (which is why it is closely tied to the context in which the practice is performed). This therefore includes the (teleoaffective) structural buildup of the practice, the motivation and emotion behind the practice and how it is perceived by both others and the one performing the practice. This ties in with the notion of emotional labor in public libraries, as explained by Rodger and Erickson (2021). They also emphasize the impact of emotion and interaction on practices and wellbeing of library workers, especially the ones that often get in contact with visitors.

Then there is objects. Just like in other cultural theories, like Actor-network theory, objects play an important role in practice theory, which all the theorists agree on. In the library this could range from books to computers, shelves and even the library building itself. Reckwitz has a special place among these objects for the human body. In this research however, a hierarchal order of objects is not suited, since the body is usually not more important to the practices of library workers than other objects. When research goes into the practice of Nordic walking for example, the body might be more significant to the practice, since it's a bodily workout. This does however not mean that the body should be disregarded. Certainly, the human body is necessary in the practices of library workers and can be of great impact on what kind of practices they are able to perform, but it should not be elevated into a higher position than other objects. Objects in this case, should not be seen as just the objects guiding the practice. It also incorporates surroundings (the library space) or the absence of certain materials that can impact practices.

Finally, there is knowledge and know-how. Shove mentions this under the concept competence, with which she means knowing how to perform a certain practice (like the recipe example mentioned before). Yet Schatzki and Reckwitz take it further, also putting emphasis on the knowledge of the practice as itself, general understandings of what the practice is withing the aforementioned context.

The knowledge element therefore includes both knowledge about the practice and the know-how necessary to perform it. Of course, these elements all interconnect, one cannot have extensive knowledge about a practice without knowing the context or meaning behind it. In the case of library workers knowledge could be found in their ability to archive and provide information, even though their actual performed practices might be different due to the position of the library in the social infrastructure.

Practices in this research will therefore be defined as: *routinized activities within a certain context, consisting of the interconnected elements: knowledge, meaning and objects.* This then comes down to dividing practices into five aspects: routinization, context, knowledge, meaning and objects, with final three as elements that compose the practice as an entity. This may seem like the previously mentioned definition by Shove, yet it is also based the other, more elaborate theorists as well as giving more attention to the context and routinization. It combines the overall common essence of the discussed theorists into one, manageable definition. Having practices themselves be composed of "only" three main elements makes analyzing empirical cases easier and better to grasp, without the theory being too simplified (Shove et al., 2012).

2.3 Affecting variables

So far, the different elements that make up practices are discussed, as well as the social infrastructure in which these practices change. In the last part of the theoretical framework, the elements that cause these practices to change will be examined. The independent variables, so to say. In this research, four different variables are researched, as they were expected to have a large impact on the practices of library workers in the social infrastructure. Those four are: space, staff assembly, community demand and finance. These variables can have an impact on one or multiple elements of the practices, as will be described in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1 Space

Huysmans and Palliser (2017) describe how the use of space is crucial for a librarian. Even if someone has various ideas for activities, they need to be held in a certain place, usually the library itself. A place is needed where the community feels safe and secure, while still maintaining the identity of the library. This is also explained by Montgomery and Miller (2011) who see the library as a third place, like Klinenberg (2018) discussed earlier. They also emphasize the importance of the library itself. A library needs to make choices in what kind of activities they offer, a music class for children does not go well with students trying to study for exams in the same room. Montgomery and Miller (2011) found that several libraries tried several ways to increase the space for their users, since the activities differed so vastly. This might however prove difficult, if the library tries to perform different functions at the same time. Eckerdal (2018) describes the library as an evermoving assemblage and also sees the physical space of the library as an important node within these networks of assemblages. This goes beyond just the walls though, also incorporating the furniture and objects, she says. Libraries can be very creative in their use of interior design, trying to combine different uses. A shelf can be used to store books, but also as a way to 'shield' a certain corner of the library for more privacy in certain activities. Yet libraries often struggle with fitting the combining uses in their limited space of the library building. This could form small, yet significant problems. Such as the example given by Barniskis (2016), where

a library wants to have an activity of woodworking, but some library workers are worried about the carpet that lays on the floor. Yet, the carpet also forms a sort of sound-absorbing barrier and can therefore be very beneficial when the library is used for study purposes.

Similarly, different locations could be seen as a part of space. Due to budget cuts, decisions can be made to close smaller libraries. This is not uncommon in the Netherlands, for example in Amsterdam, where the municipality recently planned to close four smaller neighborhood libraries in favor of the larger central library. This caused great unrest in the community, leading to a petition which was signed more than 3000 times (Knegt & Herter, 2020). These changes could make that there is less total space for libraries to perform their activities, or that less mobile people are no longer able to visit a library nearby. Therefore, the availability of different libraries could be seen as the availability of total 'library space' in which the library can perform their practices. When smaller libraries are forced to close down, other libraries might get busier, or they need to hold a certain activity that was previously held in another library. Therefore both the space in the library itself, as the total 'library space' in a region contribute to the practices performed by library workers.

The impact of space on practices will be largely on the object of the practice, as the example of the bookshelf used as an inner wall showed. The library itself is an object too, as well as everything inside. Yet the impact of space goes further than just the object of the practice. It could play an important role in the social infrastructure (and therefore the context of the practice) as it is also physical infrastructure, a place of gathering. It could even be seen as a literal context for library practices, even though some practices of a community librarian could also extend outside of the standard library space.

2.3.2 Staff composition

Another important variable in the practices of library workers, is the library staff itself. In this research, participants have been gathered by contacting library workers who followed a course on how to become a *Community Librarian* (as will be explained in chapter 3). This shows how there is apparently a need for knowledge among library staff. As Huysmans and Palliser (2017) explain, librarians are traditionally inclined to give help in the form of information tools, handing books or websites, rather than be a service provider. This problem is also addresses by Koh and Abbas (2015), who describe how there can be a certain lack of competence and knowledge amongst librarians in how to be part of the social infrastructure. Van Melik (2020) on the other hand, states that for many libraries, it is the staff that is the basis for new ideas, their input forms new activities. Therefore, the changing practices of librarians partially comes from the knowledge, experience and ideas and inspirations from the library workers. Eckerdal (2019) discusses the conversations among library workers, how their roles should be performed and how they change. Many librarians notice their own work field changing and they react on it, perhaps even anticipate on it by changing what the library has to offer. On the other hand, a library could also still very well function in a more traditional way. Focusing on books and providing information, if that is the staff's specialization and they want to offer that service specifically. Problems could arise however, when within a library, a progressive part of the library workers clashes with more conservative staff members; one trying to reshape the library along the lines of the aforementioned trend, while the other feel that that is not the role of the library (maybe wanting to leave that to professional social workers and community centers instead). In either of those cases, the abilities, knowledge and input from the staff is important in the (re)shaping of their practices.

The impact of staff composition can be on multiple elements of the practice. The librarian is the focus of this research, and the staff will therefore be interwoven with almost all aspects of the practices. The case for knowledge has already been made, which is the reason for educations like the aforementioned OnderwijsNext's 'Community librarian'. Secondly, there is the meaning of the practice. As the example above shows, the meaning of a certain practice can vary between different library workers. Different librarians within the same library can give a contrasting meaning to the same practice (like homework assistance or lunch lectures). Differences within the staff composition could then change the way practices are performed. Thirdly, there is the context of the social infrastructure, which relates to the meaning of the practice. In the above example, certain librarians gave a reluctant meaning to the practices that reinforce the position of the library within the social infrastructure, while others encouraged it.

2.3.3 Community Demand

The third variable is the demand from the community on what the library should mean to them. Huysmans and Palliser (2017) express the importance of checking in with the community on what their needs are, a librarian should check their surroundings and listen to those needs, they say. Van Melik (2020) nuances that a little, stating that it is more than just listening to their needs. A librarian should be aware of the needs, even if they are not explicitly expressed, but rather implied. She gives the example of an activity called *Gast aan Tafel* (Guest at the Table), where lectures are given, and discussions are held surrounding a specific topic. The main goal is not providing information however, but to encourage social interaction between the participants, who are mostly single elderly. This activity was not presented as a way to increase social interaction, as some of these visitors might not feel comfortable showing their vulnerability or loneliness. This shows how the library can play a vital role in the social infrastructure, if they listen to the wishes of the community they are trying to serve.

Boughey and Cooper (2010) also state the importance of staying in touch with the community, as well as asking them for feedback, for example in the use of a yearly survey. However, they also mention some problems with these kinds of surveys. First of all, they usually ask about the existing activities and how visitors perceived them, barely focusing on the possibilities and what the rest of the community might wish for. This is the crucial question in community demand, who are the people the library should serve? Where these surveys only ask feedback from the visitors, libraries focus more and more on expanding their reach and attracting new people. This is where the makerspace initiatives mentioned earlier come into play. Van Melik (2020) also gives examples on how to the library could get outside their own comfort zone, such as giving rap courses for children, knitting workshops, or computer programming lessons. These makerspace initiatives as described in 2.1.3, are a way of getting people who are not regular visitors, comfortable using the library, broadening the audience. This then begs the question who the community of the library actually is? This goes further than just the people that have a membership's pass, but is also a question that is difficult to answer for many librarians.

2.3.4 Finance

Finally, there is the case of finance. Libraries can have various creative ideas, but unfortunately not all of them can come to fruition. Becker (2011) and Montgomery & Miller (2011) showed a decade ago already that large budget cuts and financial restraints impact the daily practices of library workers. Pautz and Poulter (2014) investigate this in the United Kingdom and even speak of an "*age of*

austerity" (p. 1). They used a survey amongst librarians to find out that almost all of their participants saw the public library as a social hub or meeting place (97%) and a safe place for vulnerable people (95%). Yet at the same time, the funds did not reflect these views and forces libraries to gain additional income from other sources (like sponsors, fines or printing and copying fees). They recommend libraries to try and maintain their identity and use their strengths and local community to help generate more income. They state that the library is a well recognized institution with an often centrally located building, which can be used in their advantage in cooperation with other institutions looking for a place and local businesses for sponsorships. This can be seen in large scale initiatives in which cultural institutions like the library, music school and community center share one location. This does however put the quote by Smith (2012) at the beginning of the chapter in a different light (the library as *"the only thing left on the high street that doesn't want either your soul or your wallet"*), since libraries are now sometimes forced to rely on the wallet of their visitors*.* Forkert (2016) also emphasizes the impact of neo-liberal austerity in the United Kingdom on public libraries, and even calls for anti-austerity creativity, as a way of protesting against the status quo of underfunded public libraries. This age of austerity ties in with what Eckerdal's (2018) New Public Management, by which she means that public libraries are expected to show their social worth in measurable numbers. The reason for this being that funding is often based on numbers, even though some social benefits of the public library are difficult to express in numbers.

2.4 Conceptual framework

Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework of this research, presenting the concepts from this chapter in a visual way. The outer layer is the social infrastructure, the context of the practices. As described by Schatzki (2002), this surrounds the practice, has significant impact on everything in it and it has its own consistency and agency. This does however not mean it is a fixed border, as described in paragraph 2.1, the social infrastructure is flexible, loose and could be considered as infrastructu*ring*, in line with the changing nature of the library. Inside of it are the routinized practices of library workers, consisting of the three interconnected elements: knowledge, objects and meaning (as illustrated in paragraph 2.2). Finally, there are the four variables that influence these routinized practices: space, staff composition, community demand and finance. These are also within the grasp of the context of the social infrastructure, since they are also being affected by this phenomenon. For example, community demand might differ, due to other available resources within the existing social infrastructure, like a community center or art house. Or how certain expectations are put on library workers (the meaning of the library), as they are considered part of the social infrastructure (the context of the practice), but the staff does not always posses the necessary skills to fulfill these requests (the knowledge of the practice).

 It should however be noted that a conceptual framework is always a simplification of reality, merely including the concepts deemed explicitly relevant for this research. In actuality these concepts are all intertwined and influence each other. The social infrastructure for example, influences which and how practices are performed. Yet the routinization of practices is what makes the social infrastructure fluid, as a form of infrastructuring. This conceptual framework shows the general and largest influences for simplicity's sake, but cannot possibly show all of them, neither can it show all influential variables on library practices, as it would make the model too complicated. Choices need to be made and these choices are explained throughout this chapter.
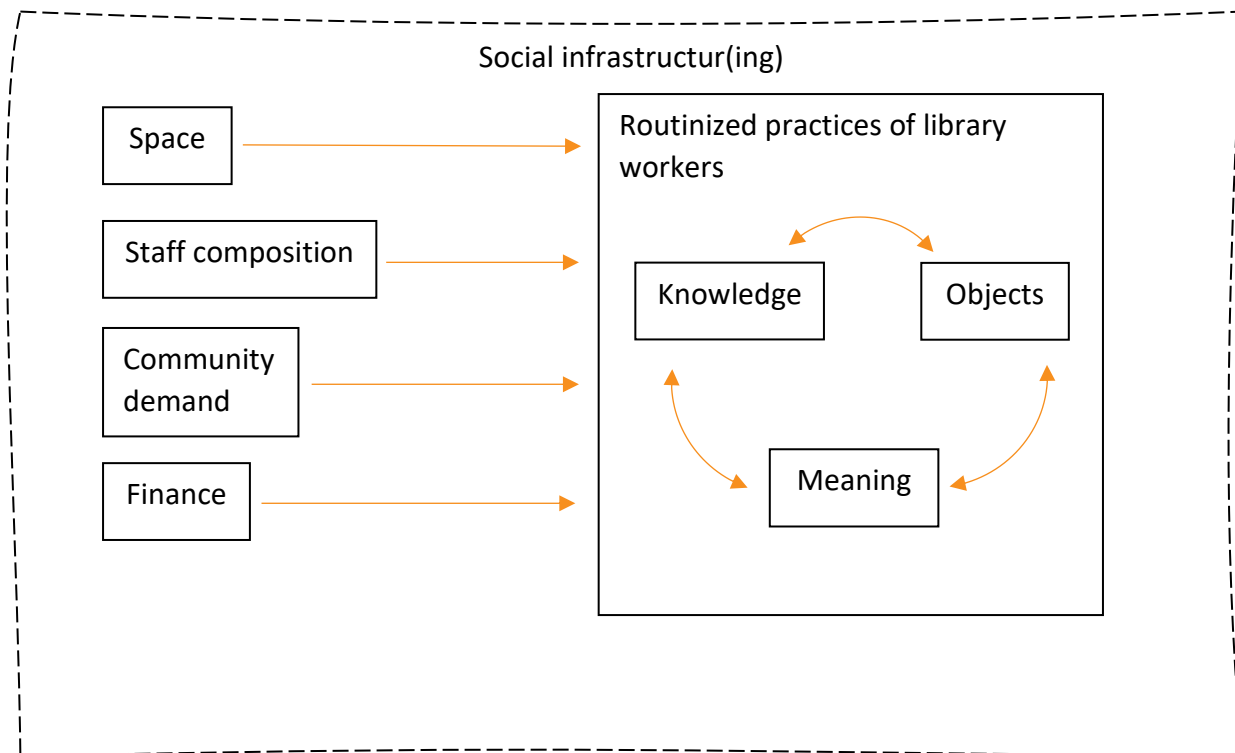
Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework, showing the four variables in relation to the practice

3. Methods

To gather data for this research, two main methods have been used. First, participant observation was carried out in several libraries, which was then followed up by a focus group. The participant observation served as a guide for the focus groups. In the participants observations library workers have been followed for a day, observing their library practices.

3.1 Participant selection

The gathering of participants has been made possible by OnderwijsNext. OnderwijsNext is an organization that teaches courses for library workers on how to make the transition to a 'community librarian'. They state their goal for librarians is based on the ideas by 'librarian innovator' David Lankes: *"to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities"* (Cubiss, 2020). During their one-year education, the students learn about the different roles of the library, hear several guest lectures and have to execute an end project. This end project revolves around forming a small community focusing on a theme they found to be relevant in their communities through research.

In the fall of 2021, a new group of librarians started the course. They have been asked to participate in this research. The advantage of gathering participants through this organization is that the librarians who follow the course have already acknowledged their position within the social infrastructure and are actively trying to improve it. Another advantage is that by gathering them through a third party, is that certain biases might be minimized. OnderwijsNext is an organization where people from the entirety of the Netherlands can follow a course, especially because the course was given partially online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be discussed later in this chapter. This means that librarians from both bigger or smaller libraries, urban or rural and from various backgrounds can be in the course. This might help give a broader perspective to studying the practices of librarians. There are however also disadvantages of using OnderwijsNext as a gatekeeper. The place of the library within the social infrastructure is important to most libraries in the Netherlands, the government currently sees creating encounter as one of the five core tasks of libraries (Rijksoverheid, 2015), yet not all librarians may like this transition. The ones that prefer to focus on the more traditional book-side of the library may not follow a course on how to become a community librarian. Similarly, the ones that follow this course are actively altering their practices and might be aware of this trend during this research and alter their behavior accordingly, skewing the results. Nevertheless, the value of using library workers who are already familiar with the concepts is considered to be very high for this research. This is especially the case when it comes to finding the meaning of practices. The meaning of these practices can vary greatly between library workers who are and who are not interested in the position of the library within the social infrastructure. The goal, however, is not to make an assessment of all library workers in the Netherlands, but rather to focus on these specific cases, in order to observe the practices that differ from their traditional information focused tasks.

In this research, OnderwijsNext's class of 2021 (who started the course in September) has been approached and asked for their cooperation in this research. From this class, 7 students in total, 5 people were willing to participate in the research, all of which identify as women. This resulted in four main participants for the observations (one only attended the focus group) displayed in table 3.1. This may seem like a small sample, but Schatzki (2018) states that practice theory research is often better suited for small-scale research, since the practices become to intricate and interwoven if too many

different practices need to be observed. Also, the research goes further than just the library workers themselves. These four participants can be seen as representatives for the four different libraries, seeing those more as case studies. The focus may be on the practices of these library workers, but they should be seen in the broader context of the libraries in which they are performed. This is why, besides the methods described in the next two paragraphs, the library institutions themselves have been investigated through desk research, analyzing reports and annual figures and conversations with colleagues and managers. This was especially useful in finding the role of finance as an affecting variable, which was a subject that was difficult to discuss with the librarians themselves during participant observations. The library cases investigated in this research are two libraries in large cities in the Netherlands, one in a smaller town (but still in the same conurbation of the Randstad) and one in a small city in a more rural area.

The data was collected between January and March 2022.

Participant number	Library location	Participated in…	Extra remarks
Participant 1	Works in a library organization in a large town in the Randstad, but only in small branches	Both the participant observation and the focus group	
Participant 2	Works in a library organization in a small town outside of the Randstad	The participant observation only	
Participant 3	Same organization as participant 1, but other branches	Both the participant observation and the focus group	Switched libraries between the observation and focus group.
Participant 4	Works in a library organization in a small town in the Randstad	The participant observation only	Is responsible for programming in their library
Participant 5	Same organization as participant 2, but other branches.	The focus group only	Has a supervisor position in their library

Table 3.1: Participants of this research and their backgrounds.

3.2 Gathering data: participant observation

Laurier (2010), who wrote a chapter about participant observation in the book *Key methods in geography*, says participant observation may seem like the easiest form of geographical method. It is, however, more strenuous than it seems to be at first glance. As Laurier describes, participant observation is not so much about seeing what is happening, observing, as it is about giving commentary to the phenomena that one is observing. In the moment itself it is about keeping one's eyes and ears open, but once the participant observation is over, it is the commentary that is the goal of what should be produced. He uses the example of a sports commentator for this:

"If we think about sports commentators for a moment, as against social and cultural commentators, we can see that they are seldom the ones playing the game: they are sitting to one side observing it. Some sports commentators provide exasperatingly bad and irrelevant commentary because they have never played the game they are commenting on. One ingredient of a decent sports commentator is that he or she should be, or have been, even a bad or half-hearted player to offer any kind of insight into the game" (p. 120).

This shows the importance of participating as a researcher yourself, especially when the research subject is the actions and practices of your participants. This type of method is very fitting for investigating the affecting variables of space and staff composition, the objects, and to a lesser extent the knowledge of practices (e.g., the practical skills of the librarian). It is however less useful in finding the answer to the meaning of the practice or the community demand or finance variables. This is why the participant observation consists of two elements. First is the actual observation, focusing on the aforementioned space, staff composition, objects and knowledge. Secondly are informal interviews or 'small talk'. These are conversations during the day of observation, held with the library workers. These are meant to find an answer to the questions of community demand and meaning of their practices.

Gill, Barbour and Dean (2014) mention a specific type of participant observation called 'shadowing', they describe it as *"a kind of one-on-one ethnography, shadowing provides a window into the everyday interactions and practices"* (p. 70). Shadowing is a sub-method of participant observation. In this method it is important to follow the participant as a shadow, seeing what they see and doing what they do. This makes it a great way of investigating practices, since the researcher is performing the activities themselves. They propose four recommendations in order to get the most out of the shadowing method. First of all, one should be prepared beforehand, knowing the terrain and people that will be shadowed. In this research the participants have been met beforehand and the situation at their libraries are discussed. Fore example where in the transition they put themselves and how other library workers react to the transition. This was done during one of their online study meetings. The goals of the research were explained so they could ask questions and state their willingness to participate in this research. Gill, Barbour and Dean then describe some basic tools that need to be present for the shadowing method, like a notebook and/or a recording device, both of which have been used in this research. Thirdly, they emphasize how leaving the organization where one is shadowing is also important moment, realizing that the shadowing is temporary, calling it a *"snapshot moment"* (p. 84). In this research the participant observation only takes a day. It is, however, impossible to participate in the 'everyday practices of library workers', since the changing nature of the library means that these practices could change by day. Nevertheless, the choice is made to include a day of observation for every 'community librarian' student. The choice to favor this over multiple observations at a single library was done partially due to time constraints, and partially to broaden the field and spark interesting debate in the focus group with all library workers who participated in the research. Finally, Gill, Barbour and Dean (2014) encourage that the researcher stays in contact with the participants of the research and asks them for reflection. In this research the shadowees were asked to think about the experience and participate in a focus group, which will be discussed below. This gave them time to think about their ways and discuss them with their peers.

Johnson (2014) discusses the ethics of shadowing research. He mentions several points a researcher needs to address during their participant observation. First of all, there is informed consent. The

problems arose for him when he was doing shadowing research at meetings, finding it difficult to ask every present member for consent. In this research all library workers who were shadowed filled in a consent form, which can be found in appendix A, other library workers have been informed about the research, and if their opinions were used in the results section of this thesis, they have also filled in a consent form. Another statement Johnson makes is discussing boundaries with the one that is being shadowed. This includes ranges of anonymity and how to deal with discomfort of the participants. In this research the participants have been treated with anonymity (meaning the name of the participant is kept secret, the name of the library is mentioned) and there was no discomfort between the shadowee and the researcher. Finally, Jonson mentions how a researcher should always be honest about their research beforehand and discuss it extensively. In this research all participants were present at an online lecture by OnderwijsNext, where the researcher explained the research and gave the participants both the opportunity to ask questions at the spot, as well as contact information to ask any follow-up questions they could have thought of later. The researcher therefore assumes to have handled accurately and ethically in regard to the identity and opinions of the participants.

Unlike an actual shadow, the researcher is able to talk and communicate with the participants. During the fieldwork, conversations between the shadowee and the researcher are inevitable and very informative, as noted earlier. These are however not like regular interviews. Boeije, Tobi and Scheepers (2016) describe them as 'informal interviews', and they are very common in participant observation research. They state that during these interviews, participants are not always informed about the fact that they are interviewed, and that mainly for this reason recording and transcribing is not always common. Other guidelines for interviews are still applied though, such as the use of a topic list. In this research a general topic list is used for the conversations held with the library workers, which can be found in appendix B. This topic list was used to steer the conversations during the day in the way of the research question, but it should not be seen as a single interview. These topics were addressed during various small talks during the day, and the answers were listed in a notebook. This means there are no actual recordings of these talks, since the talks are spontaneous. Therefore, the use of quotes might be more difficult, since they need to be written down during the conversation, which takes time. Nevertheless, these informal interviews can be very informative on how they feel about the position of the library in the social infrastructure, the meaning and knowledge of their practices and the community demand and financial situation. This is why they are still invaluable to finding the answers to these sub-questions.

3.3 Gathering data: focus groups

As Cameron (2005) explains in her paper about how to implement focus groups into research, focus groups are an excellent tool for sparking debate among participants. They can discuss events, with which they all have experience, in real time with their peers. This makes interaction the key element of this method. She states that focus groups can be a useful tool in bringing together similar people with different views. Because this research is about how the librarians feel their practices have changed, they can all have different experiences. Talking with other library workers might then be useful in seeing their own struggles through a different lens. Especially in combining the four different sub-questions, who are mostly addressed in the participant observation, and solving the issues that arose during these observations and interviews.

As Gill et al. (2008) emphasize, focus groups are best used to *"to clarify, extend, qualify or challenge data collected through other methods"* (p. 293), which is also how they are used in this research. In this focus group, the main points were the encountered problems by library workers and how these relate to the position of the library in the social infrastructure. Therefore, the discussed topics were mostly based on the findings of the participant observations. Several differences and similarities

between the libraries were discussed, as well as the chances and difficulties they encountered in their changing practices. No specific script was followed during this focus group, since the main goal is to encourage interaction between the participants. Yet a small topic list was used to make sure all the findings from the participant observation were included. This can be found in Appendix C.

Kitzinger (1994) states that the difference between an interview and a focus group lies in the interaction within the group. In an interview, the questions from the researcher are central. During a focus group the interaction between the different participant should be central the driver of discussion. The job of the researcher is to steer the group back on track once they drift off. This makes it effective in finding the common problems and possible solutions. It does have a downside, in the sense that it is often difficult to find new information in focus groups, since one cannot dive deep into a topic one on one. Furthermore, the debate amongst participants may be a little stiff at first if people do not know each other very well. These are all valid concerns, yet in this research it is believed that these disadvantages are minimized: all members knew each other already through their study and the focus group was used to interpret and do an in-depth analysis of the observation/interview data.

3.4 Analyzing data

Boeije, Tobi and Scheepers (2016) describe how in participant observation research, the analyzing of the data actually already partially happens during the collecting of data. The observations made during the days spend at the libraries were after all based on the (sub)questions of the research, who are immediately (subconsciously) analyzed. Of course, this data still needs to be analyzed afterwards as well. This has been done by using codes, as is common in analyzing qualitative data. The focus group has been transcribed and quotes from it been linked to codes using Atlas TI. The same goes for the informal interviews described earlier. Observations cannot really be put into words, but the descriptive of the observations are put in words, and also coded. These codes can be found in Appendix D and are based on the theories of practice and social infrastructure as described in chapter 2, as well as new findings from the observation period. These codes are then analyzed in the next chapter in order to form a full fleshed answer on the research question in chapter 5.

An important aspect of this analysis is finding the connections between nodes, how different aspects impact each other. This is where the focus group shines as a way to compare different views. Since in the focus group, the focal point will be the encountered problems by librarians and how these relate to the position of the library in the social infrastructure. This can then be linked with the findings of the participant observation. Say for example that a librarian mentions they want to organize a course on Dutch language for refugees, but they do not have the room for it in their building. Their role as a community librarian (the meaning of the practice) does not connect with the physical part of their position in the social infrastructure (the building), which in this case is also the object element of the practice. These interplays between forms of practice, components of practice, the context and the affecting variables forms the basis of the analysis in this research.

3.5 The impact of COVID-19

As a human geography research between 2020 and 2022, it is near impossible to not be hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Netherlands, the impact of the pandemic on libraries is also seen. During various lockdowns, the role of the library has been shown. During the first lockdown in the Netherlands, the library was not allowed to open, in order to limit human interaction. This decision was made November 2020 (Rijksoverheid, 2020). This immediately sparked reaction from many big library organizations. They stated that the library has a much broader function than just borrowing

books. This quickly reached politicians in The Hague and the decision was made to open libraries for very specific groups who had no other place to go. Yet the importance of the public library as part of the social infrastructure of many people was seen in the decision to open the library as one of the first places at the end of the lockdown. It was however only a place to pick up your books, visitors had to make an appointment and had to come alone (Bibliotheekinzicht, 2021b). Some libraries created creative solutions in the meantime, such as Rozet. They made a website where members could pick a genre and age group, and library workers would select a few books in their interest to send them home (Rozet, 2021). During a later lockdown, January 2021, the decision was made to open the library completely without appointment and people could stay as long as they want. Only activities and events were not yet allowed (Rijksoverheid, 2022). This does however show the meaning of the library and how politicians and library organizations value the library over time. They form a sort of care workers, different from direct medical care in a pandemic, but nevertheless significant in a society of curfew and lockdowns. Seale and Mirza (2020) also mention this view of the library worker as an essential worker, a worker of care. They specifically mention the academic librarian, but this can also be applied to the public librarian. This transition neatly shows the meaning of the practices of library workers during the pandemic, becoming more important the longer the pandemic takes.

These COVID-19 measures also had an impact on this research. The largest one is that during the participant observation, activities in the library were only allowed sparsely and in small groups. This means that certain activities that normally would strengthen the relationship with the community and the position in the social infrastructure could not be observed. It, however, also had some advantages. The informal interviews during the participant observations got more important than the actual performing of the practices. Yet there was also more time to go deeper into these conversations and discuss them more extensively. In these times of global pandemic, it is important to see the opportunities, rather than the disadvantages. Therefore, the participant observation still played a big role in this research, but the COVID-19 situation made that some practices were discussed, rather than performed. Nevertheless, the researcher believes it was still possible to paint an accurate picture of the librarians' practices and their ideas of the role that the library takes in the social infrastructure.

4. Results

In this chapter the results of the participant observations and focus group will be discussed. To start the chapter, library practices themselves will be analyzed: what kind of practices were found during the participant observations? This is important, as the rest of the chapter goes into how the four affecting variables impact the library practices. To understand this, a clear picture on which kind of practices a librarian performs is vital. These will be broken down in three different categories, with matching examples.

Next, the role of the four affecting variables will be broken down, and thus answering the sub-questions of this research, before answering the main research question in the next chapter. In the current chapter, the findings will be presented and interpreted. The ties with the concepts from the theoretical framework will be explained but kept brief. In the next chapter the results will be related the theoretical framework more extensively, in order to answer the research question adequately.

4.1 Library practices

Before analyzing how the different variables affect the practices of library workers, first a description of library practices will be given. A definition of how practices are seen in this research has been given in chapter 2.2, this paragraph goes on to show what kind of practices library workers perform. During the shadowing observations, many different practices have been observed. These practices can roughly be arranged into three categories: social practices, care practices and information practices. The last one is mostly the original library practices, focusing on books, computers and information distribution. This is still a large part of the practices of library workers. Almost all participants spend large parts of their days filing books, or helping people borrowing books, sometimes even recommend certain titles. This is by no means a bad phenomenon. The library is still a place with many books which is a great attraction for a lot of people. These practices are usually not the ones that establish and strengthen the library's position in the social infrastructure, but they are often related to the other kinds of practices.

The second type of practices that were observed are the social practices. These can of course help the position of the library in the social infrastructure. They can range from small to big. For some participants, it was that they always greeted visitors when they came in, while their colleagues did not. Participant 2 had to refill the coffee machine and participant 1 rearranged the tables in the library. This was all done to make the library a place in which people feel welcome and to incite social interaction between visitors. Some activities are also meant to put the library on the map as a space of encounter. Participant 3 spoke of an activity called "Football in the library" which served the purpose of attracting young boys to the library, in order to show them that the library is more than just books. There were penalty shootouts in the parking lot and a football quiz and FIFA video-game tournament inside. Participant 4 pitched an idea to her coworkers about an activity in which people could bring their old clothes and exchange them with other people. This was both to promote

sustainability, as well as to introduce people to the library that would not come for books alone and have them meet other people.

The final type of library practices could be described as care practices. The participants all saw it as the job of the librarian to help people wherever they could. This was also clearly visible during the participant observations. Participant 1 helped a family navigate the children's computer, so the daughter could play a game. Participant 2 was helping an elder woman who had difficulty figuring out how to use the computer to fill in an online form. She also spoke about the important role the library had during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were apparently many people who came to the library, seeking help with their vaccination or test registration on their smartphones, which relates to the research by the Seale and Mirza (2020), discussed in chapter 2, who also discussed the important role of the library in the pandemic, only in academic, rather than public libraries.

Most of the librarians' practices were to be categorized in these three types. Though this does not mean that there can be no overlap. Hosting workshop about how to file income taxes for example, can be a combination of all three practices. It learns people a valuable new skill and increases their knowledge about a specific subject, visitors can broaden their social network and find people in similar situations, and thirdly, it also helps those people who have trouble finding their way in society on their own. These practice categories are therefore only to show the different types of practices that library workers face.

4.2 How does Space influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?

It was found that space influenced the practices of the library workers in various ways. Most notably, in the interior of the library and where they hosted their activities. Interestingly, almost all cases had some sort of central table near the entrance of the library, as a way to create a welcoming feel as a place of gathering and encounter. These central tables were used by many visitors for various different uses. One library did not have a central table, but multiple smaller tables instead. Due to COVID-19 measures, these were 1,5 meters apart and therefore did not really invite social interaction. The participant explicitly stated her dissent with the interior of this library:

> *Look at this, the first thing you see is a giant stack of bookshelves! Not welcoming at all. And then we're supposed to be a social, welfare library... (participant 4, translated)*

One of the libraries is in the midst of restyling the building to fit the needs of the community more. They plan on building a reading café in order to incite social interaction among people. The current table, however, was already heavily used by visitors. One elderly woman came by every day for the 'puzzle boot' and happily made contact with other visitors. This table was conveniently next to the coffee machine, where one could get a free cup of coffee or tea, in order to be more inviting and create a sense of coziness and homeness.

In another library, the main table was used for social activities more than for 'traditional' library activities, even though this could create some clashes. A man was working on his laptop but moved to

a different spot in the library when a group of elderly women had a cup of coffee and discussed their just finished activity. In two of the four cases there were specific 'silence rooms', designed for people who would like to work in silence, in order for the rest of the library to keep functioning socially without the need to keep quiet or bother others. These silent rooms were very popular, as one participant explained:

> *One time during exam week, there were so many highschoolers that wanted to use the silence rooms, that fights broke out. Nothing physical fortunately, but still, it shows the importance. Somebody left their bag in the room while they were gone, like a towel on a beach chair. Yeah, then other kids came complaining, you have to find some way to deal with that as a librarian. (participant 2, translated)*

This nicely shows the duality of the library space. On the one hand library workers try to design the place in order to facilitate social interaction, yet on the other hand there is still a lot of demand for places to work silently, especially by those that do not have such a place at home. This was also noticeable in how they offered internet use. In most of the libraries it was free to use the Wi-Fi, even for non-members. This serves multiple goals. Firstly, this can be seen in a way of helping people expand their human capital, making online information as accessible as possible. Secondly however, it also helps people find the library, meet other people and even ask help if necessary. This can also be accomplished by using modern tools, especially for children. Three of the four libraries had a very popular *touch table* (a bulky tablet built into a table), to invite children to learn about various subjects (mostly related to language). It was so popular, that several children from different families played with it together. A similar trend was seen in another library, where they purposefully placed a gaming console next to the books for 8- to 14-year-olds, hoping it would inspire them to pick one up. Even if they choose not to, one of the participants noted that it is okay if they don't always read a book, the important part is to get them into the library space in order to make them familiar with the place if they ever do find the need for it.

Another similarity between the library spaces was the flexible interior design. Almost all of them had most of their space taken up by bookshelves, yet in three of the four locations they were purposefully wheeled, in order to move them to the need of the librarian. This was especially useful in the case of finding room for activities. Of the four libraries, only one had a dedicated place for larger activities, a so called 'people's university' for which the library was responsible. This place was used for courses, readings or meet-ups, which is perhaps why they did not find the need for wheeled shelves. Even though, the librarian specifically complained about them, as shown in the first quote in this chapter. In the other three cases, the library was part of a multi-company cultural center. This meant that they sometimes could lean on other (usually welfare) institutions and use their rooms, but these collaborations were often difficult due to communication problems and sometimes even financial issues:

> *If we want to have an activity for a larger group, we need to rent the theater next door, but there is often no budget, so we're forced to hold the activity here in the library. Need to move some shelves, set some chair and we'll get by. But there was this one time when a LOT of people showed up unexpectedly, that was way too crowded. (participant 2, translated)*

The opportunity for more interaction with other institutions was there, especially because in two of the libraries there was only a glass wall separating the library form its neighbors (both welfare institutions) and in another it was even a shared space, with people from both the library and the welfare institutions mingling. The participants all saw this lack of collaboration as a missed opportunity in helping the community, they saw working together, especially when being in such a close proximity, as a privilege that was not build upon enough. The problem in their eyes was mostly from higher up in the hierarchy of the library, the absence of willingness from directors or the need for the library to stand on its own. Even without cooperation however, the layout of these buildings, with multiple institutions near each other, might make it easier for visitors in need to get assigned to the right place. In one library there was a man who needed help filling in a form for his unemployment benefit and he was sent to the library for help. Participant 3 felt a little awkward and said she felt she was not qualified for this specific task, but was able to quickly help him find a place in the same building where they could help him.

> *Maybe that's also part of our new social role, be some sort of conduit. The library is quite approachable, we can help people in need get somewhere where they could get help. (participant 3, translated)*

The role of wheeled bookshelves was discussed already, but they had a whole other function as well. Besides keeping books in an orderly manner: they were used to mark certain areas for privacy. The shelves in most libraries were far from full, but they were still used for shielding the visitors from unwanted eyes. It created a more close and cozy feeling, rather than a vast and vulnerable open space. Participant 2 talked about the redesign of their library and how she wanted to have a special corner for youth. She discussed this during a brainstorming session with the teens and got them some fries and snacks. They came with the demand for a more secluded space, less visible from the rest of the library visitors. The need for this was nicely shown when during the observation, two young teenage girls were performing TikTok dances on a quiet afternoon. They would merely whisper to each other and hide behind the shelves, hoping they would not be seen, perhaps because they felt awkward or did not think the librarians would appreciate them practicing their dance in the library.

Concluding, the impact of the library space on the daily practices can be seen mostly on the impact on how they approach the organization of activities. All participants saw the importance of community building activities in the future of librarianship. It proved difficult however to combine these activities with more traditional library uses like reading and learning. Even the combination of two different activities could sometimes be problematic. For example, when in one library the arts and crafts for elderly people had to be right next to the weekly reading to children, but none of them could move to the other table, since there was already a computer course going who could not be disturbed. Extra room to better manage these activities might be a solution, especially since one participant mentioned that there were (mostly older) colleagues who struggled with managing these activities. This was also discussed in the focus group, where participant 5 stated they found it difficult to manage their colleagues who struggled with this spatial duality of the library. Since this problem mostly arose with older coworkers, they hoped it would be a problem that would solve itself eventually, once they would go into retirement. On the other hand, they also saw the history of the library as waves of change and were certain that more changes would follow in the coming years, maybe asking for even more uses for the limited library space. This final point relates to the theory of Rivano Eckerdal (2018), discussed in the theoretical framework. Her ideas of an everchanging library, as a verb that needs work constantly to keep up, coincides with how the participants experienced their libraries' situations. This

paragraph shows how library space is mostly influential as the object of the practice, yet also relates to both skills (how to manage several activities at the same time), and meaning and context (is the purpose of the library to be a conduit to other institutions).

4.3 How does Staff composition influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?

All participants followed OnderwijsNext's education on how the become a community librarian, as explained in paragraph 3.1. In all four of those cases, they chose this because of intrinsic motivation, not because they were told to do it from their respective library institutions. Three of them were aided in their decision to follow the education by their respective libraries, while one participant had a manager who was not yet convinced about the necessity of it for their library. The participant however explained that she saw it as the only way the library could keep existing as an independent institution. The manager agreed that it is not a totally new concept for her:

*That social library role is something we've been working on for a few years now,
it's not like we're an old-fashioned library. It is just that whole 'community
building' that's new to us. (manager participant 2, translated)*

This also showed how the participants viewed the role of the library and specifically how they envisioned community building. In their eyes, community building is about listening to the needs of the people and building small-scale, self-sustaining communities, with the library in a more supportive role (the next paragraph goes deeper into how they do this). This notion came forth from their common education, in which they learned how to find, build and listen to communities. They all claimed to have learned many skills during their education, the main one being a new way of thinking. One participant however, noted that this way of thinking was something she subconsciously already did, and that the community librarian education expanded her skills in that regard. Other participants hinted towards this, but still found the education very useful. At the same time however, they claimed that all of them struggle with colleagues who do not posses this way of thinking. One participant said she constantly has to remind people that listening to the community is the way forward for the library:

*Every day, I'm constantly reminding people how important it is to listen to
community, rather than imposing your own ideas of what is right onto them. They
just don't see it the same, or they don't want to see it. (participant 4, translated)*

An interesting thing to note, is that they all mostly struggled with people above them in the hierarchy. Participant 2 said that she regretted that the programmer of their library did not realize that it is important to listen to the community, that they imposed their own ideas on what the library should do and stand for, rather than find a way to tune into the communities they are trying to serve. Another participant however, who was responsible for the programming in her respective library, said the problem was management and marketing. How they did not listen to her ideas and skills she acquired during her education, but rather do their own thing.

Marketing doesn't understand how important listening to the community is, they don't even listen to me! They put 'sustainability' on the poster, even though my research into the community shows that it's exactly that kind of wording scares people away! I told them this, but they did it anyway. (participant 4, translated)

Most of the time however, the disagreement was with management, where participant 2 explained how she had to convince the manager that the community library education was useful for their library by inviting her for one of the online classes, after which she had a change of heart. Two participants explained how they talked to their managers in order to show them the importance of library as part of the social infrastructure. They stated that managers are often aware of this situation, but they do not know how to convert it to practical library activities. This caused a lot of frustration amongst the entire staff, not only the participants that were shadowed. There was confusion on how the library should handle certain problems, and what their role should be in them. This confusion from the managers drippled down unto the staff, as participant 3 explained. This was also where participant 4 saw another value of the community library education: getting a 'title' as community librarian, using that to justify making certain decisions and convincing the management team. Another participant had a similar experience, stating that the education gave her more confidence, as it also delved into leadership and how to take initiative in creating communities.

Another important finding regarding staff composition, was the role of more experienced library workers compared to newer employees. One older colleague of a participant explained how she found that many of her colleagues were forced to leave, because their skills were no longer required. Her interest in computer skills was her savior, as she stated herself, since the skills she had in filing books were irrelevant with computers managing the catalogue. In another library, the team that was responsible for programming activities, of which the participant was the executive, was made up almost entirely of relatively new employees (working there for less than a year), but they still valued their more experienced co-worker greatly. The participant noted that she thought that this newer personnel was necessary in order to make a change in the library:

The change needs to be library wide. (…) You'd hope that there'd be a different mindset and we start recruiting along that mindset, but it doesn't work that way. You need to find people that look differently and change from within. Most people do not have the ambition to archive. (participant 4, translated)

During the focus group, participant 5, one of the more experienced librarians who followed the community librarian education, explained how she sometimes asks herself if it would not be better to change the older library workers with young and fresh co-workers, to which participant 2 replied by stating that it is not about age, but about vision on how the library should function in the social infrastructure. Interestingly, this final take is also what Barniskis (2016), discussed in the theoretical framework, found out in her research, where she explains how she found age was not a contributing factor in innovative library practices. Apart from this take from participant 2 though, many participants found that their elderly coworkers did not posses the same drive to innovate the library. However, they often described this to being used to, and having experience in a certain way of working in the library, rather than age alone.

Participant 3 explained how the 'traditional' librarians that were not laid off, usually ended up in the managerial positions. She expressed her dislike of this dynamic, since it made the transition into community librarian a lot harder for her. The managers did not understand her viewpoints, since they were not educated as such. This was later confirmed in a conversation with her manager, who admitted to being a 'real' librarian, traditionally focusing on sorting books alphabetically. All participants explained that there sometimes are colleagues that experience struggle in their work, mainly on how to run an activity or in their perception on what the role of a librarian is. An experienced library worker said she has been seeing this process of change for a long time now:

> *There are many branches that experience change, but I think there are little for which it was so explicit and game changing as for the library. (colleague participant 2, translated)*

All participants therefore saw the value of their community librarian education and tried to foretell the skills and knowledge they gained to other staff members. This was sometimes quite easy, if they possessed the same vision of the library as social infrastructure, but there were also still colleagues who found it difficult to understand how they see the work with communities, tying back to how participant 4 claimed she needed to explain the 'new' role of the library to other library workers on a daily basis.

Conclusively, this shows how the staff composition impacts the practices of library workers in various ways. It seems to be difficult to gain a cohesive idea of what the role of the library in the social infrastructure should be and, in the extension, how library workers should handle. This disagreement makes the daily practices of library workers difficult, since they often feel like they have to work against their superiors, rather than with them. These disputes make that the library is made up of a lot of people with various skills and experiences, which can be a great asset. On the other hand, it makes some library workers feel insecure about their own abilities and some are even forced to leave because their skills are not sufficient in the current library. The experienced library workers that are still present speak of a constant change in the role of the library, which fits in with the concept of *librarizing* by Rivano Eckerdal (2018), described in 2.1.2, as it symbolizes a constant change and the need to work on the library to keep it prevalent.

The staff composition mostly impacts the knowledge of the practices, where the participants constantly tried to expand the knowledge they gained through their education amongst their colleagues. Some were unfortunately described as hard-headed and stuck in their ways, which led to frustration among the participants. It is however not a stretch to assume that the same frustration exists on the other side as well, managers that need to follow strict budgets and do not have the financial freedom to experiment with building communities, rather focusing on what has been proven to work, at least in their vision. The staff composition therefore also impacts the meaning of the practice, what value the library workers give to their work and the library as a whole. These last two points will be explored further in the next two paragraphs.

4.4 How does Community demand influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?

The first important task, before finding out how the community demand influences the practices of library workers, is defining what exactly *the community* is. The participants had different ideas, mainly due to their community librarian education. During their education, they learned how to recognize and set up small-scale, self-sustaining communities. This meant they often defined 'communities' as a group of people with a common interest, usually tied to a social or educational goal the library stands for. This could range from an interest in environmentalism and recycling to a knitting club sharing patterns. As part of their training program, all participants had to find or create such a community within their respective cities and try and bring them to the library. The main goal here was for the community to take form with the help of the library, but they had to become self sustaining, with the library only acting in a supportive role (like providing the space and maybe materials). This approach felt a little awkward and confusing to some participants in the beginning of their education, but after a while they all saw it as the way forward for the library, a sustainable way for the library to stay relevant in a world with increasingly easier access to information. This may be the reason for the confusion and disagreement amongst staff members described earlier, some of their colleagues look at the library in a different light. With this definition of what a community is to the library, the influence of the community demand on the practices of library workers is considerable. During their education, they learned that one of the main purposes of a community librarian should be to analyze what communities are out there that could benefit from help from the library. The main skill for librarians to learn in their eyes, was therefore to pay attention to what happens in the wider community.

> *Programming is currently a one-way street: "We find this is good for you, so we'll organize it for you", instead of asking the communities for their preference. Librarians are your antennas on the floor. Some time ago, there were a lot of questions and book requests about high sensitivity, that's a sign! That should be the purpose of a community librarian, recognizing and anticipating instead of putting it on the idea pile. (part 2, translated)*

The main problem they found with this approach, is that sometimes the people willing to form a community are hard to find and difficult to recognize. Almost all the participants found it strenuous to realize their education's final project, which was to create a community around a topic they researched and found to be important in their city. They found their attempts to reach these people often stranded, as one person explained about a Facebook group they started to make communication between the library and the audience more convenient:

> *We tried to start a Facebook, and in the beginning, it was quite lively. But after a while it just, kind of stranded. We were still posting, but we hoped it would be interactive and people would post themselves too. It also didn't help that it had to be a closed group, so that was a little extra step for people to join. (part 1, translated)*

Many participants found difficulty in this reaching out to newer audiences and keeping them engaged. This brings us by the next definition of community: the general population living in the region. This can also be seen as the library audience, because when asked on what people the library should focus, they all answered that the library is for everyone. *The* community, rather than *a* community. This was less confusing in Dutch, since they mainly used the English term referencing the small-scale communities they were to form, and the Dutch words of *maatschappij*, *samenleving* or *lokale gemeenschap* (which can be translated as society or local community) to reference the wider community. Many however also noted that some people require more help from the library than others. Often this included people with some sort of societal disadvantages, like people who do not speak the language very well or elderly who have trouble with digitalization. Both of these examples came from a situation during the participant observation.

[about a woman who was unable to renew a book on her special library card]

Did you see what I did there? I put it on my personal card before putting it on hers again, so the system thinks it's lent out to someone else first, instead of renewed. She was here last week too, borrowing this same book. I'm just glad she at least tries to read books in Dutch. I don't want to discourage her on a technicality like this, then you have to be creative sometimes. (participant 3, translated)

In this specific case someone, who stated she had trouble speaking Dutch, was happy she could come to the library to expand on her Dutch by borrowing books. The participant knew the woman had a special library card, given to her by the local government. With this she could lend books for free, but only for limited time, without the option for renewing. This way the participant had to take some extra care and cheat the system a little bit, in order to help this woman in her pursuit towards learning Dutch. A similar scenario was seen in one of the aforementioned silence rooms, where someone studied Dutch with a language coach. It seemed like the tolerant and accessible atmosphere of the library made them feel more at ease to learn about the Dutch language, since they met there every week. In another example, an elderly woman came asking for help with copying and scanning a form. She called in advance to make sure there was someone to help. Participant 2 appreciated that, stating that it was often difficult to help people like her that need some extra time, because there are so many others that come asking questions as well.

The Friday evening is often a quiet one, now we have time to help. It feels weird though, they just spurt out all their personal information, passwords and everything! They trust the library to do the right thing. (participant 2, translated)

The participants found that these people deserved some extra attention, and therefore did not mind that they had to take some time to help them. It does raise the question about the changing practices of librarians again. In the Netherlands, there are so called IDO points (*informatiepunt digitale overheid)*, which are places one can get help with digital government services. These are often located in the local library. This is an easily accessible location for a lot of people, and it does fit in the care practices of librarians, but the aforementioned example shows that the library and its workers are not always well equipped to handle these situations. Usually, there is a government official present on a set day, trained to help people with these problems, but often people come in on other days as well,

sometimes leaving the attending librarians in awkward situations. The next example shows this as well, since, interestingly, in another library, someone came asking for help with filling in an unemployment form, as explained in paragraph 4.1. Participant 3 however, said she did not have the knowledge to help him and did not feel comfortable with so much personal information being shared with her, unlike participant 2, although she did help him find the people that could help him with his form. This raises the question how far the library should go in handling those situations and if they are getting increasingly more often asked to take over the tasks that are usually reserved for the officials at the city hall. When asked if it was purely the lack of knowledge of how to fill in such a form that she could not help him, or also the fact that it took a lot of time, the participant said it was just the lack knowledge and her inexperience working with such personal information that stopped her.

There are colleagues that think like that though, saying things like "Yeah I would like to help them, but I have to do my job, I don't have time right now." Then I think: "But this is your job! These PEOPLE are your job!". If someone needs your help, you just make time, people always come first. Other tasks can wait.
(participant 3, translated)

Participant 3 explained that she really wanted to help those people, even felt bad that she couldn't, but she felt like she did not posses the skills to do so. This shows that the function of librarian is getting more versatile, for example due to those IDO points. Even if they do help, participant 2 explained that the place that was reserved for more private conversations did not have great Wi-Fi, making it unsuitable for digital help. She also proclaimed having difficulties with more technical questions, but since often the questions people had were quite simple to her (scanning a form or sending an email) she did not mind it that much.

Another important finding regarding community demand was that all participants made a great deal of trying to reach out to new audiences, in order to serve the wider community as efficiently as possible and to reach those people with some societal disadvantages. This shows how the librarians felt about the care practices described in paragraph 4.1. They wanted to help people, also the ones that are currently not using library offered services. In their eyes, the library could be of benefit to everyone, whether that be through books, workshops or just expanding one's social circle and getting out of the house.

This desire to reach new audiences sometimes requires entirely new skills:

Oh, we need a new poster, but I've never done that. [X] always did that, but she's gone now. You know what, I'll ask [Y], it's her job right? (colleague of participant 4, translated)

In another library there was a similar commotion regarding a poster that was put up on the window facing the market, in order to make the library more visible. Participant 1 had to find the right power tools and ladder to hang up the poster, something she admitted she had never done before.

Reaching out to new people also often happened in a word-of-mouth setting during the day, by inspiring visitors to join in activities or by asking visitors to bring people they know.

During the story time activity, I tell the kids to inspire their friends to come as well. I now often see the same faces as the last time, plus a few new ones. For me that's also a sign that I'm doing something right, both in reading and in promoting. (participant 3, translated)

Participant 1 also explained how she experienced difficulty trying to set up a Facebook group to reach out to new people and keep them updated on specific library activities. She found that it was very one sided, where she posted content, hoping for a reaction, but was often left without response. She also claimed that it was very hard to find new people to join the group, as it was mostly people that already visit the library that become part of the group, and there was no clear consensus on whom to focus. This vagueness in audience meant that it was difficult to reach out to specific people.

As this paragraph has explained, the community demand has a large influence on the practices of library workers. The participants often tried to tailor their activities to the needs of what was asked, and they found listening to where these needs lie one of the most valuable skills a librarian could have. Even though there were different interpretations of what 'serving the community' means, all participants believed that the role of the library should be based around helping people. The focus group showed that the participants all found that the library ideally should be a place where people can form their own activities, as would be expected from their education. They mentioned the system they used in the Dutch town of Tilburg, which they all visited as an excursion for their education, was very interesting and favorable to them.

There, you can just knock on the door of the library and ask for a room to host your activity. Instead of renting it out for money, they just say: "You can use our patio, but the activity needs to be useful to society and open for others." That way people pay by benefitting society instead of with money. And you can fill up your programming agenda with minimal work. (participant 3, translated)

This then puts the responsibility for organizing the social activities at those small-scale communities, giving the librarians more time to focus on helping those who need them most, with for example the basic-skills (reading and speaking Dutch or browsing the internet). The practices of library workers would then resolve around care practices more than social practices, even thought the library would still be an important node in the social infrastructure.

The influence of community demand on the practices of library workers therefore mostly affects the meaning and context of the practice, what does it mean to be a librarian and what is the overarching goal of the practice. As one participant explained, the library is way more visitor-oriented these days than it was two decades ago, when it was almost entirely about book supply. This is however not solely important to the meaning of the practice, since the participants also claimed it asked for both certain specific skills and knowledge, the community librarian education for example helped them take more leadership and take initiative, as well as space, as the example about the Tilburg library showed. It is therefore a variable that mostly influences the meaning of library practices, but takes effect on the other components of practices as well. During the focus group, several problems with listening to the

community in a library context came up, usually tied to the lack of resources and staffing. This will also be discussed in the next paragraph.

4.5 How does Finance influence the practice of library workers within the social infrastructure?

As mentioned in paragraph 3.1, there are questions that participant observation cannot tackle very well without the aid from other ways of data gathering. One of these in this research is the variable of finance. Therefore, in order to answer the question regarding finance, some other methods had to be analyzed in order to support the observations and interviews. This incudes year reports, statistics and (news) articles. First, a short introduction will depict the general picture of the state of financial situation of Dutch libraries. Then, the situation in the four cases will be analyzed, by using data from the interviews, focus group and year reports that have been gathered.

Paragraphs 2.3.1 and 2.3.4 already focused on neo-liberal austerity and cutback on fundings on libraries. The same situation has been going on in the Netherlands, as stated by Debeij (2015). He explains that since the economical crisis of 2008, libraries have been at the end of many budget cuts, even though the general consensus among politicians is that the library has to fulfill a broader role as part of the social infrastructure. More recently, statistics from the Association of Public Libraries in the Netherlands show that in 2020 and 2021, 41% of their members face budget cuts, with a decrease of more than 10% on average (Vereniging Openbare Bibliotheken, 2019). This has a lot of impact, since 85% of the library income comes from government funding, according to Bibliotheekinzicht (2021), the research department of the Dutch Royal Library. They also emphasize the downfall in financial aspect since (roughly) 2011, due to the economical crisis. That these financial restraints have great impact on the practices of librarians is also shown in their research. They state that 41% of the libraries decided to offer activities that did not directly relate to reading only if there was extra budget available. This means they often had to cut down on those activities that strengthen the position of the library in social infrastructure. Therefore, even if the library is willing to host activities that help strengthen the social infrastructure, they might not always be able to. This forces librarians to be creative in organizing their activities, in order to reduce financial costs, which obviously impacts the practices of the library workers vastly.

The participants were all familiar and acknowledge the austerity and cutback on funding from the government. They stated that it greatly impacted their work, especially in the area of competent and skilled coworkers. As explained earlier, libraries in the Netherlands make great use of volunteers. One of the more experienced coworkers of a participant mentioned her disdain for these practices. Even though libraries in the Netherlands always made use of volunteers, she claimed that this austerity principle caused a rise in library volunteers, while she favored more skilled coworkers instead:

> *Volunteers cost a lot of money as well, you have to train them, and they don't have always have accurate knowledge. You're better of with more skilled and actually paid coworkers instead. Probably even saves money. (colleague of participant 4, translated)*

In her eyes, the volunteers were not equipped to handle certain practices that the job of librarian require. Most visitors also do not see the difference between a paid library worker and a volunteer, sometimes leading to awkward interactions where the volunteer is approached, but not able to help. Volunteers therefore sometimes get the 'easy' jobs, as in one library, where a volunteer was tasked with clearing up the books that were handed in, while the librarian was available for visitors. This dynamic worked pretty well, but can become tiring for volunteers, as one participant claimed it could be boring:

> *Locate the handed in books or checking reservations is the easy part, the*
> *interaction with people is what makes it interesting. (participant 3, translated)*

This does not mean that volunteers are not interested in, or equipped for handling situations that are sometimes asked of librarians, almost all participants started out as volunteers, but it does mean that volunteers often do not get proper training or education to accommodate the community serving position that the library takes in the social infrastructure. That is, until they actually get a job as a librarian, as the participants showed. However, it also does not mean that all library workers get this education, or are even interested in accessing those skills. Because the education for community librarian that the participants followed is post-hbo (higher education), they are often placed in higher salary scale. As the manager of one participant explained, this can create problems:

> *Money will play a role here, we're not the same as the libraries in the Randstad. I*
> *do not have the money for two or three full-time community librarians. Getting*
> *that knowledge is very valuable though. (manager of participant 2, translated)*

She saw the value of the community librarian education, but since there was no budget for more community librarians, she relied on the participants that did follow the education to share the knowledge with their colleagues, adding another practice to the library worker's responsibilities. This issue was also discussed during the focus group, as participant 3 explained that the fact that there were so many tasks for the librarian was what made it difficult to perform practices that fit with the community librarian, to be that important node in the social infrastructure. She gave an example in which she asked colleagues to encourage visiting children to come to her activity. After a few days, there were no new registrations, until she was extra one day and found two children who would really like to join.

> *Then it hit me. I was an extra that day and therefore way more available on the*
> *floor than usual. The other days, they were there with one, maybe two people,*
> *then they're just busy all the time, asking kids if they want to join **my** activity*
> *wasn't their priority. (participant 3, translated)*

This availability on the floor was seen as crucial in the new role of the community librarian to them. They stated that it was the only way to truly listen to what the community needs. One participant stated that the perfect world would be one where every library had at least one community librarian, who could largely focus on helping people find the library and accommodate the needs of these people. The focus group discussed how they would like to see it, mostly agreeing on the fact that these

community librarians could work on the floor part-time, and part-time behind the scenes as a connecter in the community. This did raise the problem that this would be too much for some librarians, meaning that they could take more than could handle. They all recognized that it would be expensive to hire and educate new people, but that it would greatly benefit the current library workers and might even be necessary, depending on how one visions the size of the role the library should play in the social infrastructure. Participant 2 stated that ideally, every library should have one, educated community librarian, focusing on the connection with the people. This would mean that they would take on more care and social practices, rather than information practices. She stated that if that was not possible with the current budgets, maybe they need to be raised or revalued, since the librarians take on so many extra responsibilities.

That last point is directly related to the next topic that was often associated with the financial situation of the library, where the money comes from. In most cases this meant the local government, often municipalities. As explained in 6.2, staff composition could greatly influence the practices of library workers, because they have different ideas of what the library should be like. The same could be said for the interaction between library workers (especially managerial staff) and government. The participants explained that the government funding is often insufficient to finance the practice the librarians want to organize. Participant 4 talked about sometimes needing to convince the responsible alderman.

> *You almost need to have a sales-pitch ready, to convince the government of the value and uses we have, they can only spend money once. We bring so much that they often do not see. (participant 4, translated)*

Participant 2 complained about how everything needs to be accounted for. After helping one elderly woman with her papers, she had spent several minutes to fill in an online questionnaire to proof how long and with what she helped her, in order to receive funding for these tasks. Another participant explained the difference between '*going*' and '*growing*' activities. In her eyes, activities like language courses, digital support and reading to children are *going* activities, they go on no matter what and there is almost always demand for it. It is more passive and comes from the library itself or government policy. The *growing* activities on the other hand, are the ones where you reach out to new people, the ones that stand out amongst the rest, yet also the ones that have the least amount of funding, due to their experimental nature. Makerspace practices, explained in 2.1.3, could be seen as these kinds of growing activities.

> *Growing activities are more interactive, demand-driven instead of the classic, top-down thinking. You need to think BIG, because that's how you attract new people. Your biggest ambition is hidden behind the smallest budgets. Unbelievable! (participant 4, translated)*

This forces the library to work with creative third ways to find funding. One of the libraries states in their four-year-plan that they want to focus more on finding money in external ways, because they acknowledge the decline in government funding (Bibliotheek Rotterdam, 2020). The manager of another library explained that they have been trying to increase their income from third parties. This could range from local businesses that sponsored an activity to a situation where the library paid for a guest speaker and another organization for the room and some tea or coffee. She proclaimed

however that the results of these collaborations were often disappointing, not leading to longs standing partnerships. During the focus group, this point was also discussed, emphasizing the creativity librarians sometimes need. They saw the solutions mostly in cooperation with other institutions, as explained in 6.1, to reduce costs and broaden the libraries network, even though they admitted that a lot of work would be needed to keep up those partnerships. They stated that this could be another task for the community librarian, expanding the library's network and keeping contact with other institutions to serve the community as (cost)efficiently as possible.

There was some discussion on a participation fee for activities. On the one hand, they said they felt cheap to not ask for a fee, since people can be ungrateful if there is no need to pay (they might behave inattentively or not show up at all), but on the other hand, they found that the library should be a place of encounter for everyone, not just those who can afford it. A fee could discourage some people from visiting an activity that might be very useful for them. Especially because they found that vulnerable people with some distance from society are exactly the ones that the library should strive to help. This debate was also ongoing during one of the participant observations, where, during a meeting, they discussed how the upcoming library law commissions all libraries in the Netherlands to make activities for minors (below 18 years old) completely cost free. Some welcomed this idea, but there were also some doubts:

Finally. Hopefully this means we do not see the same faces every time at every activity. (participant 4)

But is this also if we have some VR-experience workshop for kids or something? Because then we better start asking for some more funds, or the quality of our activities will rapidly decline. (colleague of participant 4, translated)

Furthermore, the participants complained about how the government sometimes gives funding, without the library's exactly knowing what to do with it. Participant 3 stated that the policies were clear, but how to translate those to active, library practices was not.

It feels very restricted to just come up with something, I find that difficult. I don't know what I am and am not allowed to do. (colleague of participant 4, translated)

The fact that the library gets more responsibilities as an institution also does not help, according to the participants. These responsibilities range from setting up digital help courses to instigating debate and encounter. These nation-wide mission statements often need to be tailored locally. This can be seen in one of the multi-year policy plans, where the five core tasks of the library are discussed, but they chose to prioritize three, due to financial reasons. One of them is called *Encourage encounter and debate*, which is also partly why the participant followed the community librarian education. Even though they state they want to focus more on this role, it still only takes a shared third/fourth place in priority, behind *Offer possibilities for development and education* and *Encourage reading* (Bibliotheek Bollenstreek, 2020). Especially this last point upset the participant, who felt that the local community would benefit more if a larger budget was given to the first two missions statements, seeing a more involved role of the library in the social infrastructure with these tasks. She saw books more as a valuable tool to support this role. For example, there were talks about a chess tournament,

trying to find interaction between people with different backgrounds, but a common interest in chess. This could then be accompanied by biographies of famous chess players, books about strategies or even a book about Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*, but the books are not the main focus in her eyes, neither is reading the main goal. Another example in which the locally adapted policies became apparent was when comparing one big municipality to several smaller ones. In one library, located in a major Dutch city, the participant found it difficult to adapt to the community demand.

All libraries in the city need to be uniform here. I can't organize an activity specifically for this neighborhood, because then the others need to have the same kind of activity (participant 1, translated)

During the focus group, participant 3, who recently transferred to a library in a smaller town, stated that she now felt much freer, because all communication lines were much shorter. She had an easier time adjusting to the needs of the community and enjoyed more financial freedom to experiment. Participant 2 had other experiences. Instead of multiple library buildings in one city, her library organization had buildings in five different municipalities, meaning five different local governments to work with. She stated that the different budgets and different demands from all government officials often made adjusting to local needs difficult and cooperation with the local governments tiring. Her manager agreed with this statement, but expanded on it by explaining that even subsidy from the national government comes from various sources and organizations.

Yeah, all those cash flows make it difficult to see the big picture sometimes. Or even worse, sometimes local governments say things like: "Oh you get money from the national government? Good, then we can scrap € 30.000 from your budget." Then you have to defend your position, it's a danger you need to be aware of at all times. (manager of participant 2, translated)

Flexibility is therefore not only asked for in the practices of library workers, but also in managing the finances of these practices. One of the libraries specifically stated in their multi-year policy plan to be more flexible and anticipate on changes in their financial spending (Bibliotheek Rotterdam, 2020). This relates to the concept of *librarizing* explained in the theoretical framework, the constant changing of the library and need to adapt to changing circumstances.

Concluding, this paragraph showed how the limited financial resources the library has access to, impacts the practices of library workers. Often, they need to improvise or adapt their ideas, because of a lacking budget. They also emphasized that the austerity meant less skilled people on the floor and less budget available for educating people about how the library should perform in the social infrastructure. All of the participants found that the public library deserved more money, especially from governments, but also saw chances in collaboration with other institutions. Both in order to reduce overall cost and reach a larger audience in the meantime. Because financial situation has such an overarching influence, it impacts all facets of the librarian's practices. To start with meaning, especially the meaning of the library. According to the participants, many government officials have specific (maybe outdated) ideas about their funding, a sales-pitch type of persuasion might sometimes be necessary in order to convince an alderman. Yet, finance also covers object, since many of the

fundings often go to books while community building activities are a lower priority. One participant explained how they had a beautiful second floor above the library, which had been used for activities in the past, but is currently rented by another welfare organization, because the library was no longer able, or willing, to pay the rent. Finally, it also influences knowledge. Due to budget reasons, many libraries cannot afford multiple full-time (community) librarians. All participants agreed during the focus group that more people on the floor, with the right skills and knowledge, could deal with problems more effectively when facing questions by visitors and make the library a more welcoming and accommodating space.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter showed how the four affecting variables that have been researched in this thesis influence the daily routinized practices of library workers. All of the variables affect the practices of librarians in their own way, even though some overlap could be seen. The participant observations showed how the practices of library work constantly need to shift and adapt under new circumstances, and how their ideas of what it means to be a librarian constantly change. They situations that they encounter and experiences that they learn from them can vary from day to day, asking for a high level of adaptability.

Interestingly, it was found that the four variables all impact a certain specific element of library practices. Space mostly influenced the object, staff composition the knowledge and community demand the meaning of the practice. Only the variable of finance seemed to have its impact evenly distributed across the different elements of the practice. The limited budget affected the choices that the participants had in their practices and could sometimes even lead to arguments about the importance of the library. The next chapter goes deeper into these findings and answering the main research question of this thesis.

5. Conclusion

In this research, the practices of library workers have been investigated, specifically in relation to the position of the library in the social infrastructure. This resulted in the following research question:

How does the position of the public library in the social infrastructure affect the routinized practices of library workers?

In order to answer this question, the concepts that are mentioned, especially the social infrastructure and routinized practices, were analyzed in a theoretical framework and visually shown in a conceptual framework in chapter 2. Chapter 2.3 also examines the four affecting variables that have been investigated in this research, as they are believed to greatly influence the practices of librarians and their role in the social infrastructure and also form the basis of the four sub-questions in this research. These are space, staff composition, community demand and finance.

As a way to answer the main question, participant observations were performed at several libraries as well as a focus group, with students of the OnderwijsNext education program. Four librarians were shadowed for a day after which the participants were invited to discuss the findings in a focus group. This produced the results presented in chapter 4, in which the four sub-questions of this research are answered.

This chapter forms an answer on the main research question presented above. It does so by discussing how practices are defined in this research (as described in 2.2.2) and how these different concepts of practices are influenced by the responsibilities that are put on the library as part of the social infrastructure.

The first part of answering the research question is finding out what the role of the library within the social infrastructure exactly is. Chapter 2.1 discussed several authors regarding social infrastructure, with Klinenberg (2018) being the main one. The participants all regarded the position of the library as a vital node in the social infrastructure. They saw several goals for the library. Firstly, it should be a place of encounter, just like Klinenberg views it. To invite people to find others with which they share interest (through activities for example). Usually this involved learning a new skill or expanding knowledge as well. This could range from learning how to cook a meal to attending a book lecture by an author. Secondly, it should help people expand and learn the so called 'basic skills', like reading and browsing the internet. This does not in itself help the position of the library as part of the social infrastructure, but it does fit in with the care and information practices of the library. It could also be seen as a social practice in a certain way, as it helps vulnerable people meet others once they found their way to the library. This ties in with the third goal of the library, being a conduit to other institutions. The social infrastructure is a vast network of which the library can be part. Transportation is the main goal of an infrastructure, in this case it is both social interactions that can be guided, as well as people. In working with other institutions, the library, as an accessible and well-known staple in many towns, could form a conduit to help people find other (welfare) organizations who maybe

take a less prominent spot in the social infrastructure. This is why the participants saw great use in building close ties with other cultural or welfare institutions, to be better connected with them and invite them into the social infrastructure.

To examine how these different objectives of the library impact the daily practices of library worker, the concept of *practice* needs to be explored. In chapter 2.2.2, a definition of how practices are used in this research is explored, using theories from Shove et al. (2012), Schatzki (2018) and Reckwitz (2002) amongst others. This let to practices being defined as: routinized activities within a certain context, consisting of the interconnected elements: knowledge, meaning and object.

To start with the first notion, it seemed that getting to the stage of routinization was difficult for many library workers. The fact that the library constantly changed, meant that the daily practices of library workers also changed. This ties in with the concept of *librarizing*, by Rivano Eckerdal (2018). During the focus group, participant 5 explained it as a wave-like motion of change. This was also established by the more experienced coworkers of the participants, who confirmed the ever-changing nature of the library. They realized that this trend is not one with a definitive ending, from a book-focused to a welfare-focused library for example. The library was described as sitting between the government and the people, constantly changing, both due the demand of the community (bottom-up) and from governments (top-down). The flexibility that is needed as a librarian was emphasized multiple times and part of the reason that the participants followed the community librarian education. Some of these practices are in the process of becoming routinized by certain librarians. During the focus group, the participants explained how some library workers struggle with certain newer care- and social practices (like organizing an activity, creating a welcoming space or helping people who come search for specific assistance). This routinization can therefore be seen as a process, in which some people are further in developing and mastering certain practices than others. The difficulties lie in the versatility that is needed to be a librarian and the fact that there currently is no education that adequately prepares librarians for what to encounter (which, admittedly, is very hard given the fact that every library has different needs) as explained in chapter 1. The impact of the position of the library in the social infrastructure on the routinization specifically is therefore mostly found in the fact that it asks libraries to be adaptable and that it often makes the 'daily jobs' of library workers very different from each other. Getting to a state of routinization is then very difficult for certain practices, especially since all participants worked in multiple library branches, who all ask for a different skillset. This is what Rivano Eckerdal (2018) meant by librarizing, it is not just a set state of being a librarian, but an act that needs constant performing and adapting to the context.

Secondly, the context in which the practice is performed is already discussed in chapter 2.2.2 and is regarded to be the social infrastructure in this research. The results presented in chapter 4 seem to confirm the expectations from the theory. The participants saw the social infrastructure as the context in which the library behaved and in which their practices should be placed. Even though most of them did not know the term in itself, their descriptions aligned with how social infrastructure is defined in 2.1. Similarly to the theory, they explained the role of the library (and the librarian) within this infrastructure to impact the structure itself. This relates to the concept of *infrastructuring* described in 2.1. Van Melik and Merry (2021) use this term to describe the process of the changing library, taking inspiration from Rivano Eckerdal's librarizing, and the continuous influence it has on the social infrastructure. The participants explained how they experienced the role of the library change and felt more responsibilities come towards the library, especially in becoming more demand-driven and be a fundamental part of societal care. They explained how they felt the context changed the library, but at the same time, the people in the library changed the context as well. The participants in this research were all very committed to the library as social infrastructure. This was the reason that they

joined the library, not just for books and information, but to help people and to create a safe space of encounter and development. This then influenced other staff and how the library presents itself. This change subsequently affects the social infrastructure as well, by making the library a strong foundation on which the social interaction can be build. This is where the notion of the library as a conduit also comes back. The library actively changes the social infrastructure by being a familiar, central focal point in many communities for (local) governments, organizations and inhabitants from where people with needs can be redirected to other institutions.

Interestingly, when comparing the four affecting variables examined in this research (space, staff, community demand and finance) with the final three elements that make up a practice (object, knowledge and meaning), each of the variables mostly influences a specific element. Chapter 4 already touched upon this lightly. First, the variable of space was mostly of impact on the object of the practice (the first element). All libraries were finding creative ways to work with the limited space they had. This could range from moving bookshelves to make room for an activity or shield a certain corner, to working with other organizations in order to gain more space for activities. These extra rooms were often necessary in order to perform library practices adequately, since the various library uses sometimes resulted in clashes. On the one hand, many people use the library as a quiet and relaxing environment to study, work of read. On the other hand, as part of the social infrastructure, the library wants to generate social interaction. This interaction often goes hand in hand with some noise and bustling, as the participants explained. It was for these reasons that library workers often needed to come up with creative solutions or, as the focus group showed, asked for more room. Often the interior of the libraries tried to accomplish this duality by zoning the library for different uses, but this is very dependent on the librarians and the library building itself.

The staff composition on the other hand, mostly influenced the knowledge of practices (the second element). As stated in the introduction, there is no official librarian education anymore in the Netherlands, and the tracks that do handle libraries often emphasize on information distribution, and way less on the societal role of the library (apart from OnderwijsNext's community librarian education, which is an education to retrain already existing librarians). This, combined with older staff members who are often more conservative in their ways, makes that library workers have various backgrounds, experience and skills from their different educations. On the one hand, this can greatly benefit the multifunctional nature of the library, but on the other hand it frequently leaves library workers unexperienced in certain situations. This then creates tension between staff members, because they feel unable to provide certain requests and are inadequately trained. The participants of this research felt this put them in a position to convince people in the library to change and sometimes even take on a teaching role in that regard, as they were often one of the few that did follow a modern library education.

Thirdly, the community demand mostly influences the meaning of the practice (the third element of the practice). The education all participants shared made clear that the library should be a place where people could build small-scale communities, with the library in a supporting role. This point of view was also something that came up during the focus group, since the participants agreed that it was an excellent solution to relieve library workers of some of the workload of creating activities for the community. This demand-driven way of library practicing of course greatly affects the meaning of practice: what does it mean to be a librarian? The experienced library workers explained that this change has been going on for several years already and has not yet reached an ending stadium. The library takes a more active role in supporting the needs of the community as a whole as well, not just small-scale communities. They explained that the library is more demand driven now, instead of supply driven like it was in the past. They concentrated on this by trying everything to attract new

people to the library. Not just from a commercial standpoint, but because they felt that the library should be available and accessible to everyone. In order to fit the library to the needs of the people, attracting as a many as possible sometimes seemed a priority. During the focus group, the participants did agree on the fact that some people might need the library more than others and that those people should be prioritized, which is why many libraries often concern themselves with language courses for immigrants, computers for people who do not own one themselves or lunch meetings to reduce loneliness amongst the elderly. The demand-driven function of the library in the social infrastructure therefore mostly exerts influence on the meaning of the practice.

The austerity described by Pautz and Poulter (2014) and Forkert (2016) in chapter 2.3.4 is something the participants also experienced to great effect. However, unlike the other affecting variables, the final variable, finance, does not tie to a specific element of the practice, it instead trickles down onto all three elements. Firstly, finance is often the reason that libraries experience difficulties in their spacing and objects of practices, for example not enough room to host activities or no adequate material. This lack of space is what asks librarians to be creative in their problem-solving skills, as well as searching other institutions to work with, as was also prescribed by Pautz and Poulter (2014). Secondly, it influences the knowledge of the practice. As a manager of one of the participants argued, she did not have the budget for multiple full-time community librarians and relied on the participant to share her knowledge with coworkers. During the focus group, the participants agreed that, for the library to serve as a well-rounded node in the social infrastructure, more community librarians were necessary. Ideally if those could focus on their community binding tasks, instead of being on the floor shelving books. Unfortunately, they also recognized that this was often wishful thinking because of the lack of budget. Or, and this ties in with the next element, the lack of willingness to spend the budget on these kinds of practices. One participant explained that their biggest ambitions, such as creating makerspace activities, are usually bound to the smallest budgets. This also came forward during the focus group, in which they claimed to sometimes even needing a sales-pitch to convince local governments or their managers of the importance of performing those practices. At the same time, the same could be said about librarians themselves. Various participants complained about the low salary that a librarian gets, even though the number of responsibilities they get continues to grow. There is even a certain level of higher education required to follow OnderwijsNext's education, which would place them in a higher salary scale, which management says they cannot afford. There was therefore often disagreement over the meaning of the library practices, which resulted in the budget distributions with which the participants disagreed.

To illustrate this finding, the conceptual framework from 2.4 has been reworked to show the impact of each variable on the specific element of the practice. This is shown in figure 5.1. Unlike the previous conceptual framework, this one shows the largest impact that the four affecting variables have on their respective element of the practice, rather than the practice as a whole. Their role within the social infrastructure has not been changed, as the participants all regarded it as the context of the practice.
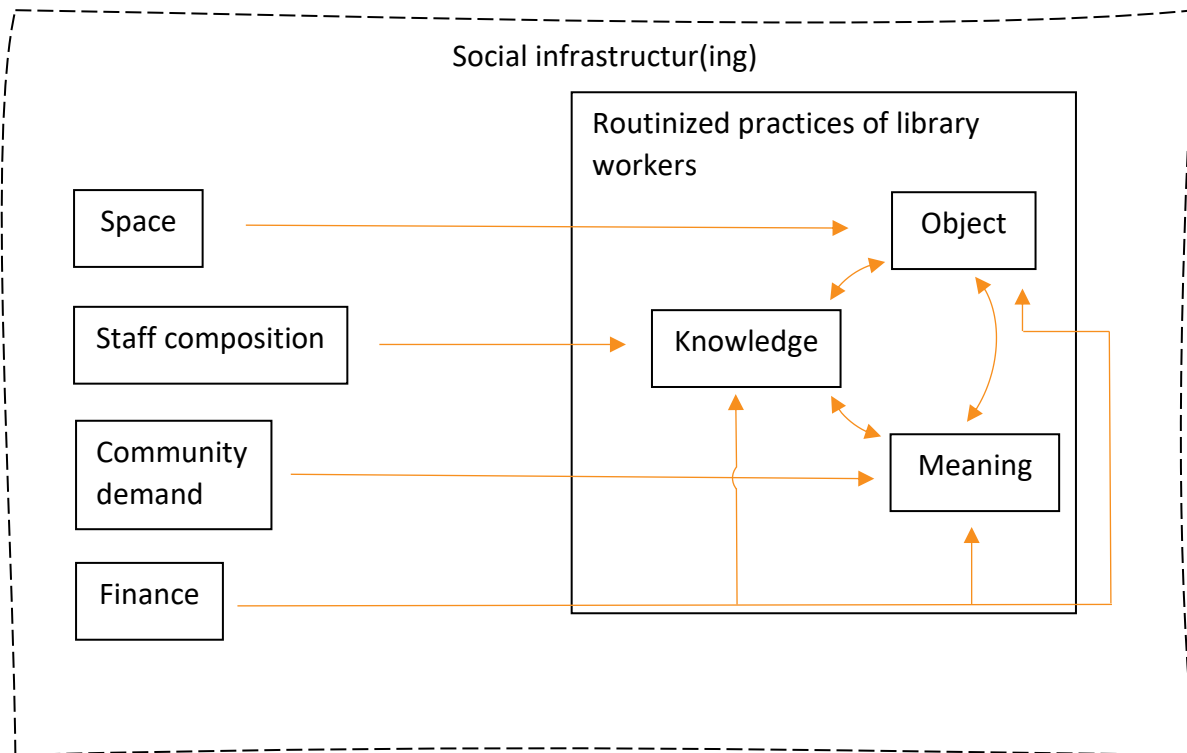
Figure 5.1: Reworked conceptual framework

However, tying the affecting variables to one specific element of the practice is of course very black and white; the reality is more nuanced. Even though Figure 5.1 shows the most important impacts, every variable has multiple effects on all elements of the practice. For example, even though the paragraph above claimed the staff composition mostly influenced the knowledge of the practice, which is true, it is hardly the only effect. It also impacts the meaning of the practice: there were various disagreements amongst the staff members on how the library should be run and where the priorities should lie regarding the role in the social infrastructure. All elements of the practices are connected to each other, the context and the routinization of the practices, as is also shown in the conceptual framework. This makes analyzing the librarian's practices so interesting. Due to the constant changing of their role (librarizing) within an everchanging social infrastructure (infrastructuring), flexibility and adaptability is needed. The routinized practices of librarian's daily work are never the same, their role in society asks them to be fluid. This of course creates clashes and insecurities in library workers. This is why it is important to help librarians to find their way in this context by making clear how the library and its librarians should behave in the social infrastructure and by educating librarians about this position. The participants all found more assertiveness and leadership after completing their education, which helped them perform the practices that were needed to maintain the library as an institution in the social infrastructure more confidently. A clearer consensus on the role of the library can also help librarians find their way in the social infrastructure and perform their daily practices, closing the gap between policies and clear tasks. All in all, it can be stated that the important role of library in the social infrastructure makes library workers' practices more difficult, but also more meaningful and beneficial to society.

6. Discussion

To end this thesis report, the conclusions formed in the previous chapter will be discussed. This chapter consists of four parts. The first being an evaluation of the research progress, which choices have been made and how they affect the results. Secondly, several policy recommendations will be given regarding library practices in the social infrastructure. This will be done based on the four variables: space, staff composition, community demand and finance. Thirdly, the results and conclusions from this research spark new ideas for future research. These include research into library education, inter-organizational collaborations, the library of care and the role of academic libraries in the social infrastructure. Finally, in 6.4 the results of the research and its implications will be interpreted and tied to the social and scientific relevance mentioned in 1.1 and 1.2.

6.1 Research limitations

One of the biggest influences in this research has already been touched upon in chapter 3.5, the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic meant that the libraries in which the fieldwork was performed, did not function in the way that they would want them to at the time. Fortunately, most lockdown restrictions had ended by the time the participant observations were conducted. This meant that the library could somewhat resume its position in the social infrastructure as a place of encounter. Nevertheless, larger scale activities were still discouraged, and people were still hesitant to attend activities with larger groups. On the other hand, the library could almost be seen as a day trip, as one participant explained, because people were finally allowed to leave their houses. Less active projects in the library did not mean less interesting research into changing library practices though. As explained in chapter 3.4, this enticed more interesting conversations between the researcher and participant, which lightly shifted the research from a distinct observation of their practices to a larger focus on their intentions, opinions and the meaning of library practices. The pandemic therefore did not exacerbate the research, as much as it changed approach and angle it had to take.

Another possible limitation of this research is the small sample and used methods. The intention of this research was never to relate these findings to all libraries in the Netherlands, as it has been explained multiple times in this research that every library is unique. This thesis places itself on the cross section between practice theory and library research and mostly serves to explore how library practices behave in the context of the social infrastructure. In this research, a deliberate choice is made to find participants at the hand of OnderwijsNext's community librarian education. On the one hand, this did make sure that the participants were aware of the changes in their practices and specifically reacted on it, making the results interesting in the context of social infrastructure. On the other hand, it excluded libraries that are not actively pursuing this role on their own and thereby decreases the participant pool significantly. This thesis should therefore not be seen as an analysis of all Dutch library workers, but as a starting point in finding out how the practices of library workers keep changing with their role in the social infrastructure and society as a whole. The insights of this thesis can therefore serve their goal as steppingstones into other research into library practices, which will be discussed in section 6.3.

At the same time, the choice to do participant observation can also form colored results. Because of the close interaction between the participant and researcher, sayings may be interpreted in a certain way or specific observations might seem more important. It is difficult to be completely independent when doing qualitative research, there will always be a form of researcher bias. However, because this research is about the practices of library workers, it was found important to experience those practices as a researcher firsthand, rather than just hear about them. Because the observations were held in one day, and the library practices can vary vastly, it was impossible to observe every single library service, even though all three of the found library practices (care, social and information practices) have been observed, a more extensive investigation might uncover more practice types. At the same time, because the library workers were observed by the researcher, they might act differently than when they are not shadowed. All were told to approach their jobs as if there was no researcher shadowing them, but of course it is understandable that a participant behaves differently when they are being watched. The researcher tried to mitigate this bias by also asking questions of different coworkers who weren't shadowed as well. As stated before however, the goal of the research is not to relate this research to all libraries in the Netherlands, as every library is unique, neither is it possible to completely disregard the role of the researcher as an impact to the results. Nevertheless, it is believed that the researcher did everything within the scope of this research to minimalize their bias and produce satisfactory results.

6.2 Policy recommendations

A number of policy recommendations have been found relevant after concluding this research. These can range from policies within the respective libraries, (local) governments or even into the perception of people and how they view the library. These will be discussed on the basis of the four affecting variables of this research.

Starting with space, the participants came with several recommendations of their own. The main problem was that they often had not enough room to host the various uses for the library. Their practices could sometimes get in each others way. The participants explained that they often try to accommodate the practice as efficiently as possible, for example by dividing the library in zones, but commotion was always possible. This is not always problematic, with the library also being a place of encounter and social interaction but can be undesirable during some activities. One of the mentioned possibilities is working with other organizations to share rooms. Participant 1 explained that that is something that they used to do in their library and found it to be a pleasing solution. Of course, this would require work from both the library and other organizations, preferably in or near the same building, as the library often has a central, prominent place in many towns. Another solution might be the opposite of finding more space inside, which is finding ways to expand the library services outside of the library building. The disadvantage of this approach is that one loses the attractiveness of a well-known library building. As participant 3 proclaimed however, maybe it is not necessary to get the people to the library, if you can get the library to them. Especially social and care library practices could be performed outside of the library, maybe in community centers or even on the street. This would relieve some of the pressure on the current library buildings, without the need to renovate or make connections with organizations in the same building

After space, there is staff. There were two main problems found regarding staff composition. One of those is a lack of certain knowledge and skills. Due to the changing nature of their job, it is difficult to

keep up with all the skills that are sometimes required from a librarian in the social infrastructure. This might be dependent on the financial possibilities, but the recommendation for this is more training. This way librarians could all specialize in several practices, for example how to handle questions regarding digitalization, instead of referring people to other institutions or the IDO point. A second recommendation regarding this point is that there is need for more official training and education for librarians. Currently, the only option for librarians to retrain themselves is via OnderwijsNext. All participants were enthusiastic about the education, but more different educations or training courses could benefit the overall skill and knowledge of the library staff, so librarians can handle upcoming tasks more adequately.

The second problem regarding staff is the lack of consensus among staff members about librarian practices and their meaning. This lack of consensus about the role of the library and librarians isa broader problem, also relating to how both governments and the community view the role of the library. Here the recommendation is that these three groups form a common consent on the role of the library and the meaning of library practices. These three groups being the library staff, the community that they serve and the (local) government. The participants all found it tiring when they had certain ideas about how the position of the library, but their colleagues were not supportive of their proposals, often creating confusion withing libraries. Another recommendation would be for the communities that the libraries try to serve, there needs to be transparency in what they expect the library to do for them. However, the community is not one organized entity, so the responsibility therefore lies with the libraries, to make clear what services they offer, through marketing and reaching out to their audience, but also in listening to what the community's needs are and acting on those needs, instead of assumptions and one's own values. Finally, there are the governments, both on a local and national scale. The trend seems to be to place more and more responsibilities on the library. These responsibilities include managing books, taking care of digitalization, creating a sense of social cohesion and forming a place of encounter. The recommendation to the local governments is that they, in consultation with their libraries, who also represent their communities per the last recommendation, create a clear and comprehensible consensus over the role of the library in their respective municipalities, obviously within the national laws and guidelines for libraries in the Netherlands.

Finally, regarding finance, the recommendations can be short, but perhaps difficult to implement. The recommendations for libraries to try and start forming meaningful collaborations with other institutions in order to reduce cost for their services (think for example about a sponsoring from a local business in order to host a makerspace activity). This is easier said than done, as this research has also shown, but it would be in the greater interest of the library to not be so dependent on government fundings alone. Regarding the recommendations for the government parallel the last recommendation in the sense that the important part is finding out what they desire from the library as an organization. The participants explained that there currently is not enough budget available to serve the community adequately. One way to expand on that is by analyzing the role of the library and library practices and fund the library from the relevant budget, for example not only from the culture budget, the care budget, since care practices are an important part of library practices now.

These policy recommendations cannot solve all the problems that the participants encountered in their daily practices, but they can make library practices easier to perform as well as helping the respective libraries strengthen their place in the social infrastructure and serving their communities.

6.3 Future research

There are several findings in this thesis that can be used as a basis for further scientific research. First of all, there is education. In this research, a specific group of librarians who followed a specific education has been shadowed. The reasons for why they all followed this education varied, but a common one was the lack of another library education focusing on the societal side of being a librarian. They also mentioned the fact that there is no real library education anymore of any kind. Future research could look into why certain library educations have been discontinued or what kind of education library workers would like to see. The participants of this research already found their education to prepare them on how to handle their role in the social infrastructure, but perhaps other librarians have different needs that are not yet being cultivated.

The next point that could use some further research is the collaboration with other institutions. All participants explained that they felt that the library could do more with their fellow welfare and cultural organizations. Often, the library shared a building with either cultural or welfare organizations, but the participants exclaimed that setting up collaborations was difficult. A study into the relationship between the library and other institutions with similar goals can be an interesting addition on this thesis. The participants claimed that the library is a very well known, approachable institution, but they can not always offer the right tools for someone that needs help. This is where working with welfare organizations can be beneficial, especially if there are already existing ties. On the other hand, the library is also a cultural institution, organizing readings, workshops or art exhibits. One participant explained how they sometimes work with the local theatre in the same building. For some reason it seemed like working with these cultural institutions seemed easier, as if the library had already found their connections with these organizations. Perhaps this is because the library as a place of care is a newer concept, not yet rooted in the minds of people who work with or at the library.

That relates to the next interesting issue regarding further research, the library of care. The first point about education already showed how there is no classic librarian education anymore in the Netherlands. The result of this was that all participants (and many of their newer colleagues) had another background before they came to the library. Care practices was found to be one of the practice types performed by librarians, and interestingly, for three of the four participants, their background was a job relating to (health)care. They also mentioned several of their newer coworkers came from care work. This would tie in with the work of Seale and Mirza (2020), who wrote an article about the healthcare role of the academic library in the COVID-19 pandemic and distributing independent, accurate information. It is however also important from the perspective of the public library, as this closely relates to how the participants in this research saw the societal role of the library, as a place to grow as a person. This could range from learning new skills, finding information, enjoying pastime or finding help. Especially the last point here could use more research, how the library is not only a cultural, but also welfare organization. How has it come to be one, what care tasks should be given to the library, what is the impact of the librarian's own values and how does it impact their practices?

As stated in the previous paragraph, the research of Seale and Mirza (2020) concerns itself with the role of academic libraries. In this research, a deliberate choice is made to only investigate public libraries. In the Netherlands, these often have a very different function. The openness of the public library makes it more suitable for a prominent spot in the social infrastructure as a whole. The academic library mainly focusses on people associated with universities first, with dedicated places to study and has a high standard regarding independent information distribution. This does not mean

however, that the topics of this research could not be investigated in an academic library context. The library is often a central hub on a university campus, a place where students and staff from all faculties come together. In this sense, it can also form a central node in the social infrastructure of a university. This is also shown in certain activities that they organize, such as the university library of Leiden which features a photo exhibition (Universiteit Leiden, n.d.) or the academic library of Utrecht in which you can follow workshops in computer programming (Universiteit Utrecht, n.d.). Still, both of these libraries mainly focus on places to study for exams and creating easy access to (academic) information, which could make them an interesting case for future research.

6.4 Research implications

In the introduction, two different types of relevance regarding this research have been stated. In this section, the results of this research will be explored with regard to the implications to these two notions. To start with the scientific relevance. The introduction states that this thesis lies on the crossroads between library studies and practice theory. In this regard, it is believed that this research forms an adequate addition to both of these topics. It has been said that the combination of these two fields of study has rarely been made, even though it is a very important connection. This research takes an interesting approach by closely investigating four cases of library workers who are working on their position in the social infrastructure. This way it can form a useful addition to the scientific field, by diving deep into the experiences of these instigators in their respective libraries. It tries to paint a picture of how these progressive librarians pay attention to their role in the social infrastructure and adapt to it. Furthermore, the inclusion of practice theory in empirical research by combining several key theorists of their fields can help future researchers in how to use practice theory in their research effectively. It shows how practices can be analyzed using ideas from several different theorists, as explained in chapter 2.2. Most of all however, it is the combination of these two that makes this research unique. The ever-changing nature of the library and librarian's work coincides with practice theory very well. Analyzing real life scenarios using social theories is exactly where combining spatial and social science can give extra insights. Because of its unique position on the crossroad of these different studies, this thesis shows interesting findings in combining geographical or library concepts like librarizing (Rivano Eckerdal, 2018) and social infrastructuring (Van Melik & Merry, 2021) in relation to practices. It shows how practices are the basis of the two aforementioned concepts, who represent ongoing processes, since it is those practices, performed by people, which support those bigger processes. In order to understand how the dynamic process of social infrastructuring unfolds, the underlying, constantly changing practices that support these developments need to be examined. That is what this thesis showed, albeit in a small and humble way, expanding on the aforementioned concepts by showing the importance of investigating the librarians' practices in relation to their position in the social infrastructure.

Regarding the social impact, the first chapter mainly spoke about the lack of education for library workers. This problem was mentioned many times by the participants. They all felt the need to search for a broader education, to shape their library to what they found was needed, which is how they found their current education. They stated multiple times that they felt that it was the only way forward for the library. This research shows that if one of the elements of a practice changes, the meaning of the library, the others need to change as well (the objects and knowledge). The objects formed a difficult obstacle, since it often concerned more library space and materials, which caused problems regarding finance and budget. Regarding the knowledge of the practice, all library workers

were very enthusiastic about their education. This research shows that there should be more incentive for people to educate about the role of the library in the social infrastructure, as described in the recommendations. The participants were all tasked with sharing their ideas and skills with heir coworkers, because there are not enough library educations for every librarian to follow. The relevance of this thesis lies in raising awareness for the changes in the library landscape and how librarians need to deal with those, as well as showing what it is that librarians struggle with in regard to their role in the social infrastructure. However, it goes deeper than just funding more library education programs. Something that has not been mentioned in the introduction, but was found along the way, is the need for a clear consensus on what the goals and tasks for a public library should be. What kind of practices should be their focus; who decides this, the community, librarians or government? In that sense, the element of meaning might be the part of the practice that requires the most attention right now. This thesis showed how diverse and exceptional library practices can be and how important it is to keep asking ourselves the question what it means to be a librarian, how to best serve the community and facilitate their needs.

7. Bibliography

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APPENDIX A: Consent form (Dutch)

Informatie en consent formulier

Voor deze masterscriptie worden de dagelijkse bezigheden van bibliotheekmedewerkers onderzocht. Er wordt gekeken hoe deze veranderen en welke plek ze innemen in de sociale infrastructuur. Voor het verzamelen van data wordt gebruik gemaakt van participant observatie (schaduwen) en een groepsgesprek (focus groep). De gegevens worden anoniem verwerkt, namen van de medewerkers zijn alleen bekend bij de onderzoeker: dhr. M. M. Hazeleger. Voor vragen is deze te bereiken op OnderzoekCommunityLibrarian@gmail.com, of op 06-******76. De respondent heeft te allen tijde de mogelijkheid te stoppen met het onderzoek zonder daarvoor een reden op te geven, mochten zij dat willen. Evenals het intrekken van gegevens nadat de data verzameld, maar nog niet gepubliceerd is.

Bij deze geeft de ondergetekende toestemming voor het verzamelen en verwerken van (zowel audio als visuele) gegevens tijdens de observatie en tijdens het groepsgesprek. Deze data wordt anoniem verslagen en gearchiveerd en mogelijk gepubliceerd.

Handtekening onderzoeker   Handtekening participant

_____   _____

APPENDIX B: Topic list informal interviews

AFFECTING VARIABLES

- **Space** *(Object)*
  - How does the library cope with different activities in the same space?
  - Are there any small libraries in the area who are/were forced to be closed?
    - If so, how has it affected the practices here?
    - If not, is it a danger they take into account?

- **Staff composition** *(Knowledge, Meaning)*
  - Why did they enroll in the Community Librarian course?
  - How do they feel it adds to their skills as a librarian?
  - Where do they get the ideas for new activities from?
  - Why did they want to become a librarian?
    - Is this motivation still the same?
  - Are there struggles within the staff on the role of the library in the social infrastructure?

- **Community demand** *(Meaning)*
  - How do they communicate with the community?
  - Do they try to reach out to newer audiences within the community?

- **Finance** *(Object, Knowledge)*
  - Are activities that strengthen the social infrastructure prioritized or not?
  - Did they have to cancel certain ideas because of finance?
    - Did they change original ideas in order to reduce cost?

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- How do the library workers try to enforce the position of the library within the social infrastructure?
- What position do they find the library should take within the social infrastructure?

PRACTICES

- How have practices changed in their eyes in the last few years?
- What kind of problems do they encounter in their practices?

- **Coping with space**
  - Activities in the same space, how to deal with disturbance/privacy?
  - Other spaces for activities within the same building, or other?

- **Working with other institutions**
  - Both for finance and community
  - What problems do arise? Why is communication poorly?

- **Reaching out to the community**
  - Challenges and opportunities
  - Why reach out, to whom?

- **Books or people first?**
  - Meaning of the library and practices
    - Position within the social infrastructure
    - Practice changes
  - Disagreements among staff
    - Why is that?
    - How to tackle problems?

- **Finance, cost and value**
  - Where should priorities lie?
  - More openness
    - In financial situation of the library
    - Between management and staff

APPENDIX D: Code tree

1 Affecting variables
- **1.1 Space**
  - 1.1.1 Different locations
  - 1.1.2 Space within a library
    - 1.1.2.1 Where to host activities
    - 1.1.2.2 Setup of the library
- **1.2 Staff composition**
  - 1.2.1 Staff knowledge/experience
    - 1.2.1.1 Impact of the community library course
    - 1.2.1.2 Sharing the knowledge of the community library course amongst staff
  - 1.2.2 Different views within the staff
- **1.3 Community demand**
  - 1.3.1 Definition of community
    - 1.3.1.1 library audience
  - 1.3.2 Reaching out to new communities
  - 1.3.3 Ways of listening to communities
    - 1.3.3.1 Working with other institutions
- **1.4 Finance**
  - 1.4.1 Subsidy
    - 1.4.1.1 From whom?
  - 1.4.2 Other ways of income gathering
    - 1.4.2.1 Working with other institutions to reduce cost
  - 1.4.3 Costs that obstruct community building
    - 1.4.3.1 Solutions

2 Social infrastructure
- **2.1 Practices to strengthen position in the infrastructure**
  - 2.1.1 Activities
  - 2.1.2 Daily work
- **2.2 Interaction between people**

3 Practices
3.1 Routinization
  - 3.1.1 Coping with changing practices
- **3.2 Context**
  - 3.2.1 Place within social infrastructure
- **3.3 Knowledge**
  - 3.3.1 Skills
  - 3.3.2 Know-how
- **3.4 Meaning**
  - 3.4.1 Meaning of practices
    - 3.4.1.1 Emotion
  - 3.4.2 Meaning of the library
- **3.5 Objects**
  - 3.5.1 Use of objects
  - 3.5.2 Human body