

# **Creative economy initiatives, the right to the city and social inclusion: the case of the Mário de Andrade Public Library in São Paulo's city center**

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Libraries are no longer seen as a mere collection of books, but increasingly understood as spaces of public dialogue that can foster inclusion. Libraries embrace aspects of the creative economy by promoting new platforms of knowledge and broadening its audience. Although recognized as a phenomenon, the question whether and how libraries address issues of social inclusion has hardly been studied, and even less in Southern cities. Combining theories of the right to the city with the notions of creative economy, this paper analyzes how the recent revitalization process of the Mario de Andrade Public Library in São Paulo (Brazil) enhances social inclusion and addresses issues of the right to the city. The case of the Mario de Andrade Public Library is of specific interest because it is the second largest library in Latin America, located in a city that suffers evident inequality, in a city center that suffered steep degradation. The modernization of the library included explicit attempts to improve urban space, and embraced aspects of a creative economy institution, such as hosting traditional and cultural expressions, performing arts, audio-visuals and creative services. Using a mixed methods approach, this paper analyzes the ideas proposed by the organization in order to identify its goals to enhance social inclusion. Moreover, it explores users' experiences within the library concerning their perceptions on social inclusion, while mapping their socioeconomic backgrounds. The users of the Mario de Andrade Public Library perceived that their inclusion was not restricted by their social economic status. Instead, they manifested that the library allowed them to enjoy the facilities of a public urban space, without having further expenses. The paper concludes that the Mario de Andrade Public Library has conceived a new library model based on the ideas of democratization of knowledge and the promotion of social inclusion and the right to the city. Thus, by encouraging social inclusion and the promotion of the right to the city, there is evidence for policymakers to foster creative economy initiatives within public urban spaces in order to tackle social inequalities.

**Key words:** creative economy, social inclusion, right to the city, urban public space, public library, São Paulo, Brazil.