WISSEN BAUEN 2025

THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OF THE STATE AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY HAMBURG

WISSEN
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Introduction

The innovative and resilient library

The digital transformation of scientific processes raises the need for new spaces and facilities for research, teaching and studying. This is as much true for scientific processes on a university level as it is for activities outside the university scope. The State and University Library Hamburg (Stabi) fulfills multiple tasks, as it is the central university library, the state library and the public academic library for the city of Hamburg. Therefore, its aim is to offer innovative spaces for the multiple scientific facets. Furthermore, the Stabi is deeply embedded within the cultural and social fabric of the city and its metropolitan region, due to the array of services, events and spaces for communication and education it offers.

Against this backdrop, and with its current precarious building conditions in mind, the library – in accordance with the local authorities - set up a spatial development project in order to draw up a new concept for its future building complex. The participatory framework, inspired by the principles of Open Social Innovation was not chosen by chance: The heterogeneous group of users and stakeholders with their different requirements and demands as well as the libraries array of tasks posed the need for an open dialog as the premise for its spatial reorientation. Therefore, the main aim of the project was to consult different groups of interest to avoid non-user-oriented planning and to present itself as an open and social space.

This booklet is a summary of the extensive project report, documenting the project's working process. It clearly goes to show, that the participatory approach was harshly challenged by social restrictions imposed during the Pandemic. This meant that people were harder to reach, and reliable methods had to be adapted for virtual environments. However, these challenges were overcome by lots of creativity, resulting in the implementation of experimental and innovative solutions. Furthermore, the Pandemic and its challenges have confirmed the relevance of libraries as spaces for interaction, communication and the dissemination of information, all the more reaffirming the need for the library's spatial reorientation.

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Project Design

Open Social Innovation

In addition to the initiation and closing sections, the project was divided into three different stages, which merged into each other time and content wise.
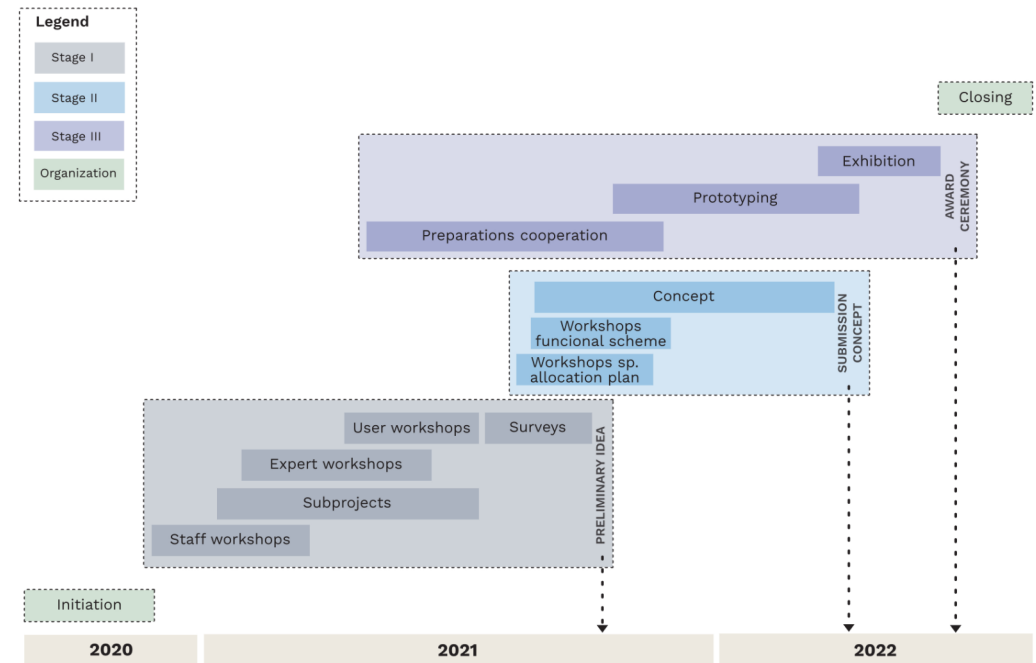
The initiation phase lasted from August until November 2020. It included the compilation of the project team as well as the definition of first work packages. Furthermore, during an internal Kick-Off-Event at the beginning of November, the project was presented to the staff.

This was followed by the first stage, which aimed at establishing a preliminary idea for the future library. Therefore, from November 2020 onwards, several online workshops were conducted with different stakeholder groups. The qualitative results were later on verified during summer/autumn 2021 via two quantitative online surveys.

With this preliminary idea in mind, the main aim during the second stage from June 2021 until April 2022 was the elaboration of a space allocation plan as well as a functional scheme. Employees from all the library's departments were involved in the creation of these documents during two rounds of different thematic online workshops. The result of this stage was the formulation of a new concept for the future library, combining the space allocation plan and the functional scheme with best practice as well as design ideas and including two additional technical documents (IT and logistics).

While the team was finalizing the new concept, students from Hamburg, Weimar and Dresden developed architectural designs during their winter semester (October 2021 until April 2022). The best designs were later selected for an on-site exhibition during spring 2022. This marked the third stage of the project.

The project's closing phase started in Mai 2022. It included the organization of a final conference as well as the documentation of process. Finally, the project was successfully completed at the end of September 2022.

Legend

Stage I
Stage II
Stage III
Organization

Closing

Exhibition
Prototyping
Preparations cooperation
AWARD CEREMONY

Concept
Workshops funcional scheme
Workshops sp. allocation plan
SUBMISSION CONCEPT

User workshops · Surveys
Expert workshops
Subprojects
Staff workshops
PRELIMINARY IDEA

Initiation

| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |

Stakeholder

Interdisciplinary perspectives

A variety of stakeholders were considered for the project. Their involvement varied throughout the process.

The project team was composed of permanent employees as well as temporary student workers, which all contributed their unique expertise and perspective. This diverse arrangement was a conscious decision to ensure the integration of outside perspectives into the library's redevelopment plans.

Additionally, four thematic subprojects were put together, following popular relational spatial theories: Infrastructure, people, context and knowledge. Their aim was the thematic contextualization of preliminary project results and generating further ideas. To focus on more practical aspects, such as sustainable work environments, the outlines of an IT concept as well as the project's public relations, furthermore three practical subprojects were installed.

The library's director as well as the head of each main department were installed as the project's managing entity. Throughout the process, the project team present interim results to this managing group and received ongoing feedback.

Furthermore, everyone involved within the process is considered a stakeholder. This includes all employees who participated in the staff workshops during the first stage, as well as the thematic workshops resulting in a new spatial allocation plan and the functional scheme during the second stage. It also includes all participants of the so-called expert workshops, the user workshops, as well as everyone who contributed their opinion in the online surveys and feedback questionnaires. Finally, the students, the professors and their staff who supported the project during the third stage can also be considered an important pillar within the project.

This goes to show that a range of stakeholders was involved during the project, which was one of the main aims from the beginning in order to include as many perspectives and ideas as possible.
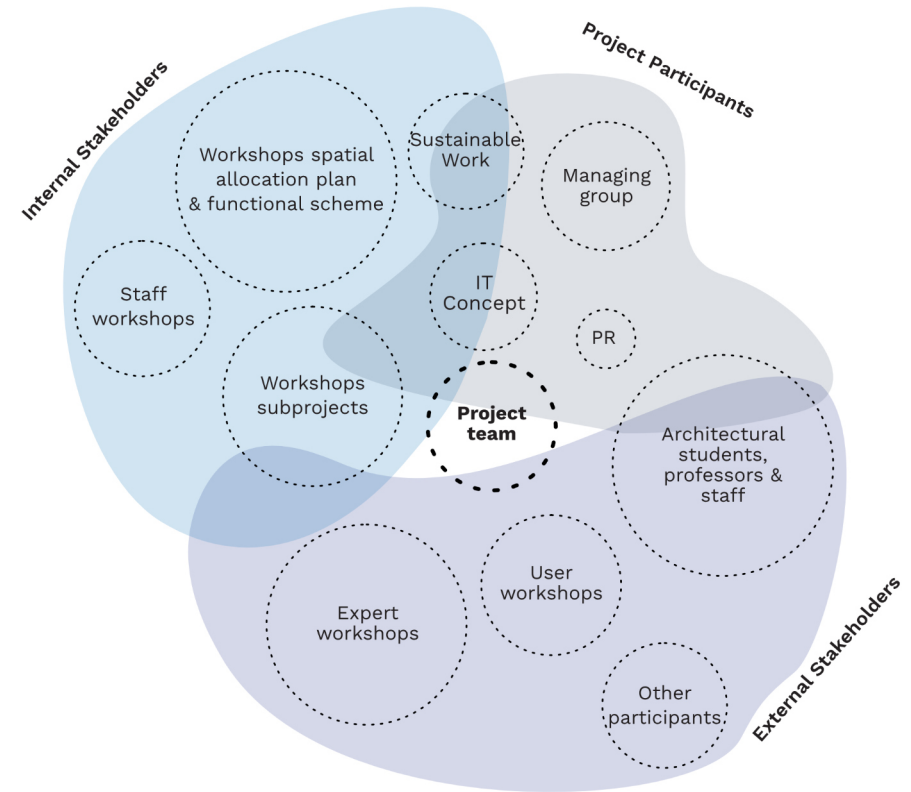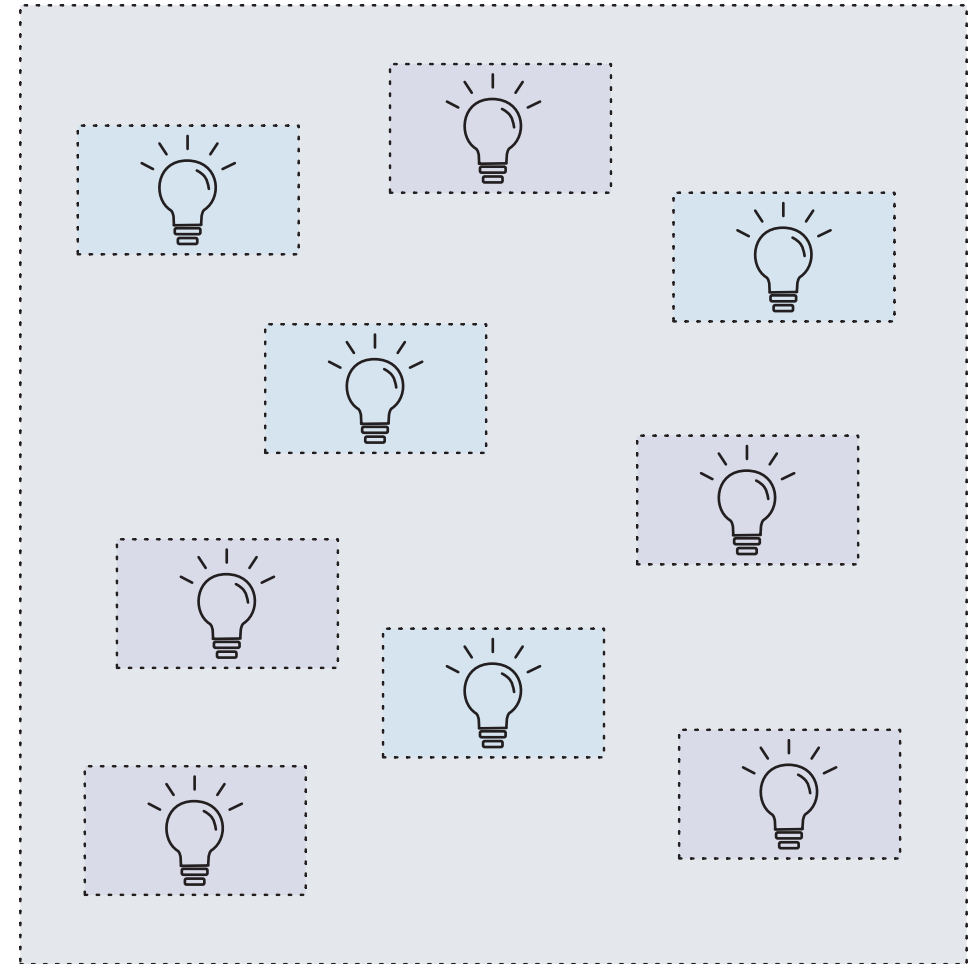
Stage I

Preliminary idea

The main aim of the project was to ensure the participation of the different stakeholder groups. As a result, a variety of individual as well as collective preferences, needs and behaviors was thought to be registered in order to eventually shape the sequent planning and construction processes – indicating the project's consideration of social sustainability principles. Therefore, three main stakeholder groups were defined at the beginning of the project: Employees and users of the library as well as different expert groups. Subsequently several online workshops were planned.

All of the workshops were set up in a similar manner: They started with an introduction into the project and the workshop format, following an interactive and communicative part making use of different methods and tools, and ended with a wrap up. This caused a balance between informative and interactive elements, creating a common understanding while simultaneously fostering active engagement, creativity and appreciation. Subsequently, several feedback loops were installed to verify and amplify these first qualitative ideas. This is where the different subprojects as well as the managing group came into play. All in all during the first stage a total of 25 workshops with the engagement of more than 100 people were conducted.

The first stage ended with two online surveys, verifying the qualitative findings using quantitative methods. Starting with an open dialog before putting the emerging ideas to the test was a conscious decision. This approach ensured that the stakeholders themselves could provide the ideas and topics put up for discussion instead of solely giving their opinion on already set up concepts. Ultimately, stage one ended with the formulation of first ideas for the future library.

Stage II

Concept

The main aim of the second stage was to compile a space allocation plan, including a functional scheme.

The planning process for the subsequent thematic workshops including employees from all the library's departments started in June 2021. This engagement assured the consideration of the library's specific functional necessities within the overall concept. Therefore, firstly the project team put together a list with nine main topics before assigning a maximum of seven internal experts from the corresponding departments to each theme.

The first round of workshops aimed at compiling the spatial allocation plan. In these online workshops the participants worked in previously prepared digital working spaces, which were set up to facilitate the brainstorming of precise rooms and spaces as well as their specific spatial requirements. These findings were later merged into a separate tabular listing, serving as the baseline for the spatial allocation plan. The final result comprised 350 rooms on a total of 22,000 m² floor space.

During a second round of workshops, the interrelations between rooms and spaces were being discussed, resulting in a preliminary functional scheme. This plan proposed a division of the future library into four internal and eight public sectors. During the second stage, a total of 18 online workshops with the engagement of around 40 employees were conducted.

At the same time, two additional technical documents were put together: The IT concept and the logistics concept. In order to create one single cohesive vision, which would combine all of these documents and contextualize them with best practice ideas, the project team formulated an overall concept, describing the future library as an Urban Knowledge Hub.

In spring 2022 this concept was handed over to the local authorities in charge and publicly released in an original and a short version on the project's website.

Öffentlich

Intern
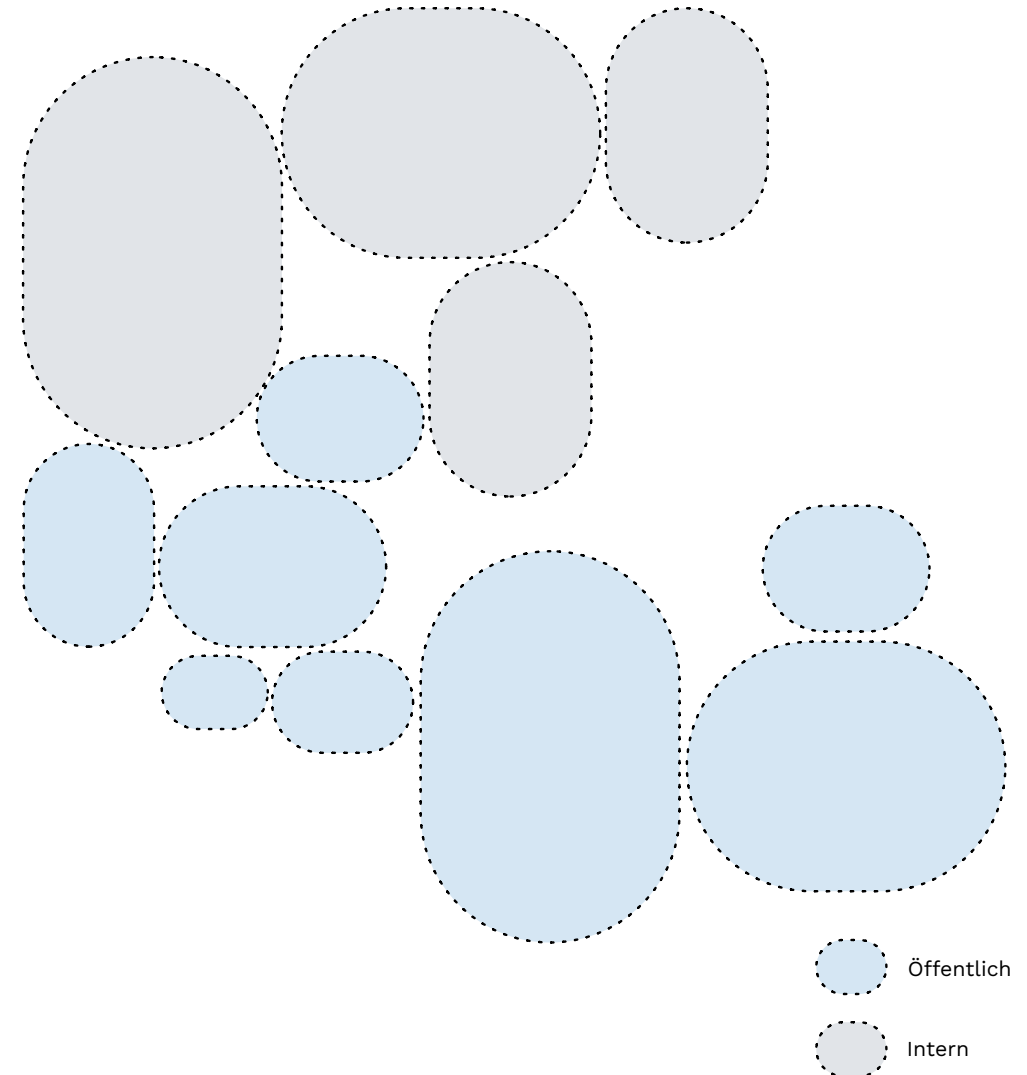
Stage III

Prototypes

The third and last stage was focusing on creating prototypes based upon the space allocation plan.

The idea of creating architectural designs as prototypes for the future library had been part of the initial project plan. Throughout the process, additional to the original cooperation with professor Gesine Weinmiller from Hamburg's HafenCity University (HCU) two further partners were introduced: Professor Ivan Reimann from the Technical University in Dresden and professor Jörg Springer from the Bauhaus-University in Weimar.

A joint virtual introductory meeting took place in October 2021 including all students, staff and the project team. Throughout the following five months, around 50 students developed their visions for the future library, either alone or in pairs. They were guided in several individual and joint critiques where they could pose questions not only to their professors but also to the members of the project team.

In order to reassure the participatory element of this stage, the 15 best designs were displayed at the library from May until July 2022 and visitors were asked to vote for their favorite idea. A total of 200 people voted and in July 2022 awards for the three best ideas were given out. Phillip Bieronski from the Bauhaus-University in Weimar came in third, Hanna Tschierse and Thomas Jankowski from the HCU came in second and the winners were Mahmoud Ghazala Einieh and Ina Lafrentz also from the HCU.

The overall response to the prototyping process was very positive. On the one hand side, it served the purpose of a feasibility study for the project team, to see if and how the spatial allocation plan could be realized. It also introduced a more practical element to the rather theoretical project design. The students on the other hand benefited from the realistic design task as well as a very invested project team.
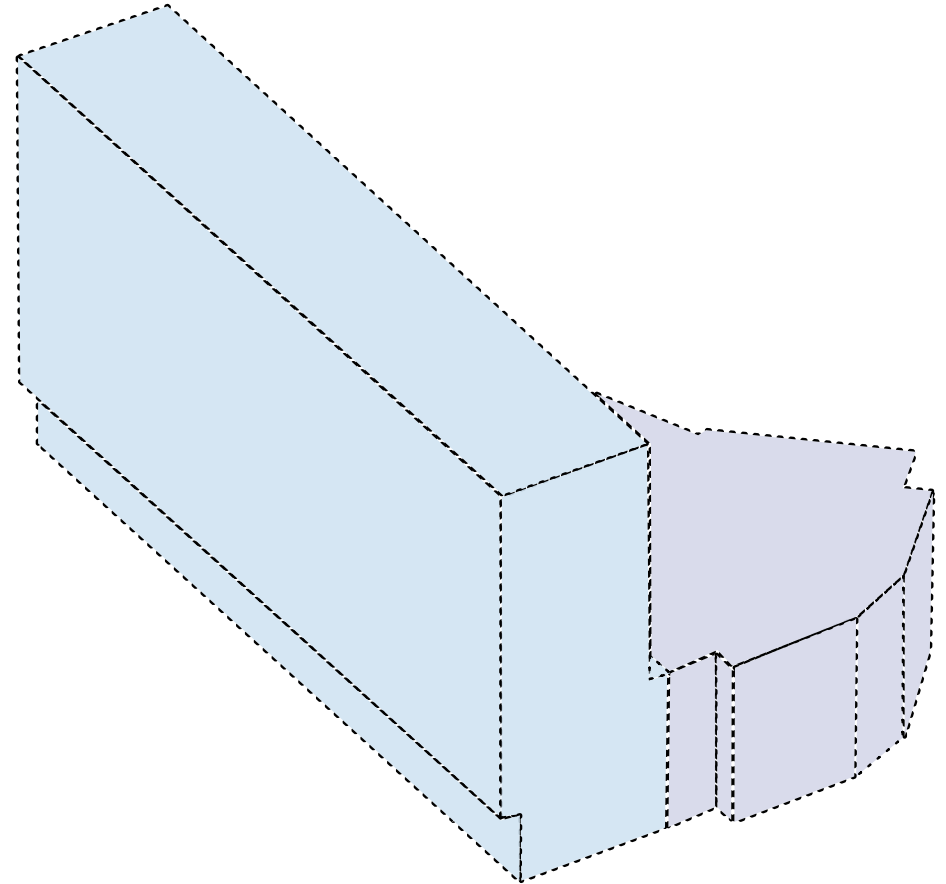
Conclusion

Challenges und potentials

Next to discussing ideas and milestones with different stakeholder groups, workshops within the project team served the purpose of yet another feedback mechanism. They focused mainly on evaluating the level of progress and the teamwork along the process. Furthermore, an overall evaluation took place at the end of the project.

The project was divided into several stages and placed the engagement of different stakeholder groups at its core. Social restrictions due to the Covid pandemic put this approach and the project team to the test, since they were left with very limited possibilities of reaching out to and interacting with people. Despite this mayor challenge, the overall virtual collaboration both with internal and external stakeholders can be considered a success. Unfortunately, the expected degree of engagement was not met, due to the online setting on the one hand side and a lack in public outreach as a result of capacity problems within the PR section on the other side. However, building on the principles of Open Social Innovation, the project's aim was not to reach a result that represented everyone but rather to start a dialog.

Another challenge was making the project's results compatible with the emerging in-house strategic redevelopment process. In hindsight, the project was able to stimulate this process while simultaneously seeking inspiration from it. Furthermore, capacity problems within the project team arose during the second stage, caused by unexpected internal restructuring processes and the ongoing stringent conditions due to the pandemic. Since the work package relied on the expertise of all project members, the deadline for finishing and delivering the final concept had to be pushed back a couple of weeks.

Overall, the project profited from a combination of initial structuring as well as some degree of flexibility, facilitating an ongoing process of evaluation and adjustment. Another stepping-stone in the project's success was the productive teamwork. Work packages were divided, executed and documented in a transparent manner, to ensure that all processes were compatible and coordinated. Furthermore, the array of expertise and diverse perspectives contributed to the successful outcome. The implementation of an interdisciplinary team within complex projects can only be recommended.
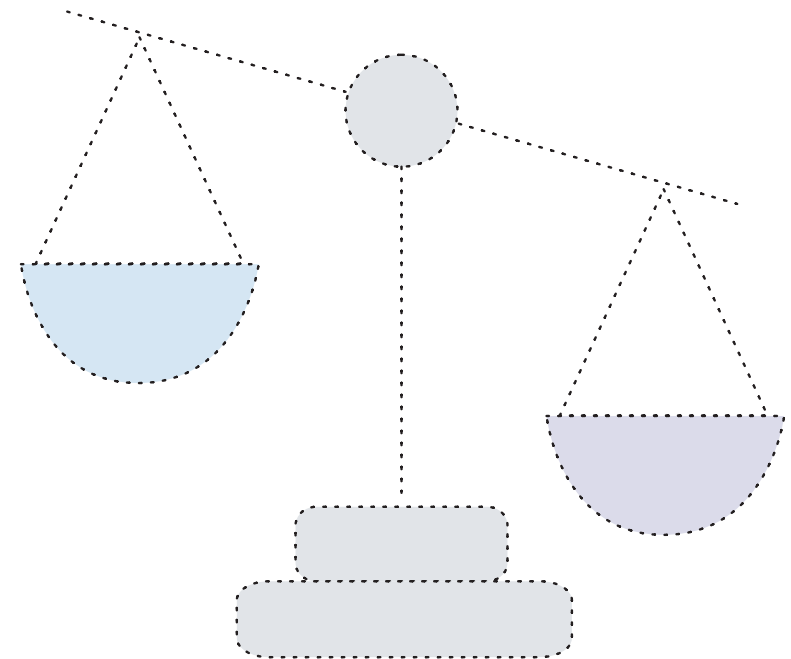
Outlook

Paving the way towards the Urban Knowledge Hub

As one can guess from the project's title, the next steps in the implementation process will not happen immediately. Since *Wissen Bauen 2025* can be considered a preliminary project, there are some steps to take before any further planning or re-modeling can be done.

Simultaneously to this documentation process, the library is reviewing its current building complex. At the same time, the local authorities are revising the overall concept. Additionally, an official feasibility study based upon the library's new concept is planned for 2023 in order to play out different redevelopment options. This will influence the decision-making process on whether and how the new concept will be implemented.

Furthermore, as a direct project outcome, the library is planning to collaborate with other European partners in order to apply for EU funding for a joint project. The aim of this project will be to further disseminate the concept of Urban Knowledge Hubs as added value for knowledge societies and its citizens as well as evaluating their scientific, architectural and social impacts.
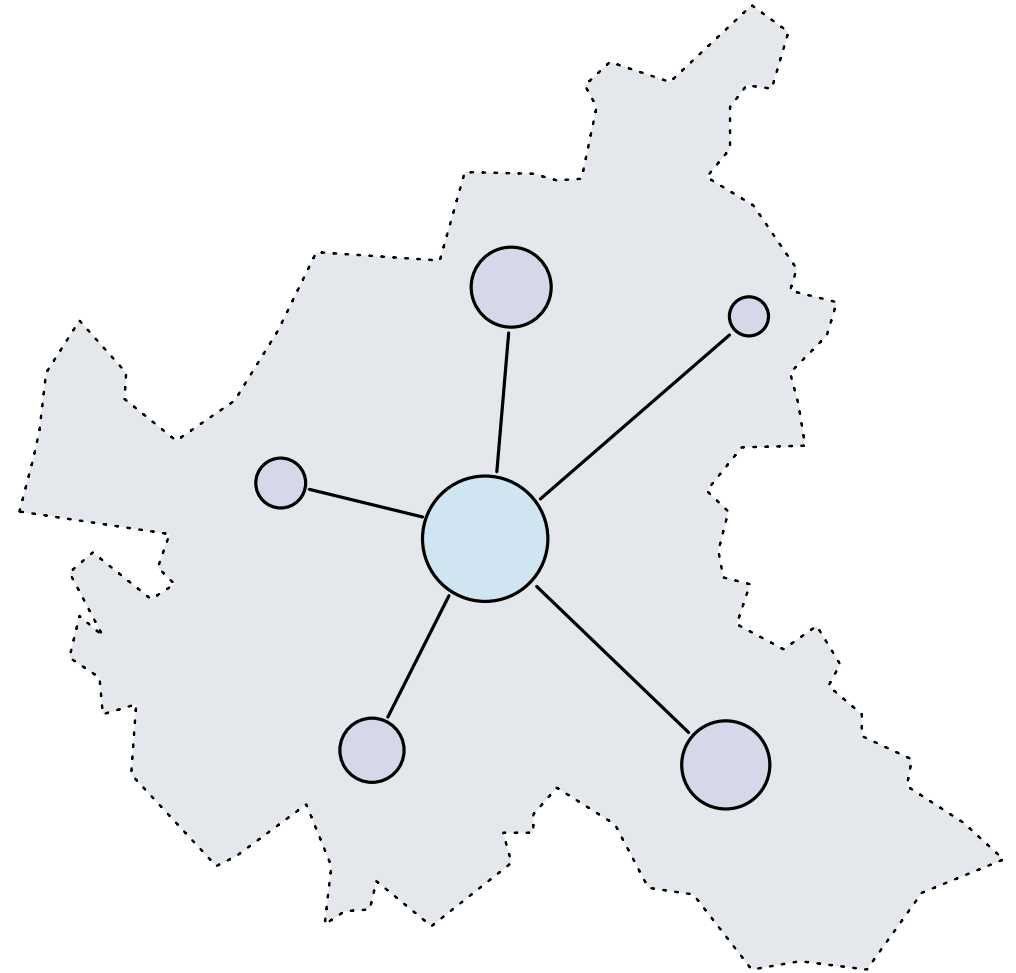
For more information on the project see

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