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Building Inclusive and Sustainable Learning Cities

PASCAL International Exchanges - A Review

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Cities across the world exist in an environment of escalating change and growing complexity. At times governments seem powerless to respond adequately to the myriad of challenges they face. This has been termed by Anthony Giddens a *Runaway World*. Socio-economic shifts, in some cases with a weakening of traditional social bonds in a more individualistic society, have accompanied mounting inequality and exclusion of disadvantage groups.

CHALLENGES
Distributed governance and self-regulation
The death of the traditional community family, the re-emergence of the local community and the global digital communities

In this context, PASCAL International Observatory inaugurated in January 2011 a project titled PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) to provide exchanges of information and experience between cities across the world using the potential of the internet to facilitate low cost exchanges relevant to building inclusive and sustainable learning cities.

At present, ten cities are participating in PIE across five continents so that PIE is being developed as a fully international dialogue. The participating cities are: Glasgow, Bari, Kaunas, Cork, Bielefeld, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Hong Kong, Hume, and Vancouver.
Other cities are expected to join shortly, including Pecs (Hungary) and Dundee (Scotland). The membership of PIE involving cities in both developed and developing countries is at the same time both strength and a challenge for PIE.
The PIE approach involves each city preparing a short stimulus paper of two or three pages, providing an overview of key themes and issues in the development of the city, with a set of questions to stimulate an international dialogue. The stimulus papers are posted on the PIE web space to foster discussion on the themes and issues identified. Supporting papers are also posted.

PIE is still at an early stage of development and issues in fostering an international dialogue in an online environment are being addressed. Nevertheless, there are already insights from the PIE experience that could have value for cities and communities around the world.

CHALLENGES
The roles of PIE – exchange, quality issues, network, promotion
The future funding of the PIE network

Growth, Diversity and Exclusion

Many of the cities participating in PIE have been faced with major problems arising from a rapid growth of population and with a more diverse population

as a result of migration, or the movement of people from rural areas to the city seeking employment. This has typically resulted in the exclusion of significant numbers of people who lack the education and skills required for employment in available jobs. Responding to growth, diversity and exclusion is a challenge for most of these cities.

The issues are most clearly seen in Dar es Salaam and Hong Kong where migration into the city from surrounding areas has challenged city administrations. In Dar es Salaam for example, the city grew from around 500,000 in 1885 to 1.4 million a century later in 1985, and an estimated 3-4 million at present. Many newcomers from the villages are largely illiterate, semi-skilled or completely unskilled and engulfed in poverty.

Hong Kong faces a similar problem with migration of large numbers of poorly educated people from mainland China, lacking skills to achieve employability in the rapidly changing Hong Kong economy.

CHALLENGES
Massive urbanization and lack of education and jobs – and learning cities
The role of large scale learning technologies
Traditional illiteracy and technology fluency

Cities in western countries such as Hume (Melbourne) and Vancouver also face issues arising from growing diversity and exclusion of disadvantaged groups. Migration from a wide range of countries around the world has created consequent issues concerned with assimilation, disadvantage and cohesion that need to be confronted.

Responses are still under development in most participating cities. Dakar has responded by emphasizing the value of non-formal education, often based on traditional cultural roles, and the important role of civil society organizations where informal learning occurs naturally.

In some local districts of Hong Kong, district councils have implemented poverty alleviation programs assisted, as in Dakar, by civil society organizations. The value of local neighborhood initiatives has also been recognized in a number of cities in developed countries. In Cork, for example, ten community education networks have been established in the disadvantaged areas of the city while Vancouver has adopted a strategy targeted on the groups most difficult to reach such as immigrants, aboriginals, youth, and seniors with a lively approach to gain interest that is discussed below.

CHALLENGES
Distributed governance and self-regulation in local communities – changed roles of authorities
Learning cities and local communities

The Hume Global Learning Village, as the initiative matures, appears to be working towards a three hub strategy with *local neighborhood projects* supported by resources in these hubs. Hume is also addressing diversity issues with a major intercultural heritage project being conducted from 2001-2013.

While all participating cities are wrestling with growth, diversity and exclusion, several lines of policy responses appear to be emerging from the PIE dialogue. These include the *value of local neighborhood initiatives that involve partnerships, including local government and civil society, network building in these districts, and strategies that recognize the cultural heritage of newcomers while also working to build cohesive, intercultural cities.* Planning for diversity advantage is still an ongoing agenda in most PIE cities. This is an area where PIE exchanges of ideas and experience will continue to have considerable value for participants.

CHALLENGES
Distributed governance and self-regulation in local communities – changed roles of authorities
Learning cities and local communities

Building Community Understanding and Support

Despite the efforts of organizations such as UNESCO, OECD, the European Commission and the World Bank, the imperatives for lifelong learning in a world of constant change and exclusion are still not well understood in most communities participating in the PIE dialogue, especially among those who are most disadvantaged.

Strategies to build understanding and support throughout the community that are central to the long-term sustainability of lifelong learning initiatives and which are central to learning city initiatives are not always evident to communities themselves.

Nonetheless the development of initiatives that can broadly be understood as being within the learning city field has been an area of considerable interest and development in participating cities with the implementation of strategies such as conducting learning festivals, membership recruitment, and a diversity of publications.

Cork provides a good example of innovative uses of a learning festival strategy which has been conducted since 2004. The Cork *Learning Festival* is said to be unique in Europe, the only event of this kind directed at learning which caters for people of all ages in the life cycle. With its motto *Investigate, Participate, Celebrate* the Festival has promoted integration and inclusiveness and has served as a catalyst in developing new relationships between participating organizations. Like Vancouver, much use has been made of the fun side of learning so that a friendly welcoming ethos is created for reluctant learners.

CHALLENGES
Leaving the traditional understanding and paradigms of "education" – the value of non-formal learning communities based on innovative approaches and based on the citizens' talents and interests
A flexible approach to the objectives of learning – anti-PISA

The Festival has grown from an event over two days with 65 activities in 2004 to a weeklong event with 325 different activities in 2010. This growth includes the "snowball effect" of a strategy such as this with its impact on participating organizations in building up support for learning throughout life in the community.

Vancouver also illustrates a lively approach to building interest and support for learning in the community. This partnership approach blends curiosity with popular culture in an appealing approach that reaches into every dimension of life in Vancouver. Innovations such as *Curious City Game Show* demonstrates this unconventional approach to attracting community interest which, like Cork, provides a friendly, non-obtrusive gateway to learning.

The Hume Global Learning Village has experimented with a number of strategies to secure community interest and support. The role of the purpose built Global Learning Centre in Broadmeadows is central to projecting the image of learning in the community, while publications such as the attractive magazine *Imagine, Explore, Discover* (now up to Volume 24 by Winter 2011) convey community stories and images of learning in many contexts. Hume City Council consults widely in the planning for each three-year learning strategy for the Village. Organizations, families, and individuals are

encouraged to become members of the Village, with membership now totaling some 800. Civil society is being mobilized through participation in a wide range of Village projects so that a broad spectrum of community support is being built up progressively. As in Cork, this community learning initiative is serving to build up relationships and social capital between participating organizations.

Altogether, much is being done is this area and a pool of good ideas now exists in PIE documentation.

Creativity and Innovation

Fostering creativity and innovation are key tools by which learning cities adapt to change and meet the challenges confronting cities under 21st Century conditions. *A key objective of PIE is to serve as a catalyst for new ideas that challenge traditional ways made obsolete by change*.

While creativity and innovation are usually seen as desirable, various barriers to new ideas exist in cities. These include segmented policy making with vested interests protecting the home turf, low levels of trust in partnership arrangements, and insufficient understanding of the consequences of policies considered, or not considered. The history of lifelong learning in some countries illustrates the strengths of vested interests and barriers to opening the opportunities about life for all in non-traditional ways.

Despite such barriers, the PIE stimulus papers illustrate a broad spectrum of social innovations with community and learning benefits. A good example is provided by the innovative partnership approach adopted by the city of Bari in southern Italy in combating crime. This approach led to the establishment of an Agency to coordinate a community wide campaign against organized crime with a broad spectrum of partners from other stakeholder organizations. The work of formal partners in this consortium is supported by various community initiatives. An interesting example is provided by *Radiokreactive*, a web-radio run by students from schools in the city, which seeks to support a culture of safe living and social integration. Twenty schools in Bari participate, with a further dozen in the surrounding region.

Other examples of innovation are found throughout the stimulus papers. Vancouver innovations in gaining community interest and support, including their learning as fun and neighborhood approach, are mentioned above. A further example of innovation in building up broad community support and partnership for city development is provided by Bielefeld in Germany where an initiative was taken to develop a so-called *Bielefeld-Pakt* on the basis of a broad, strategic approach to key issues and objectives, initially in the field of education, climate protection, and the economy.

The existence of the *Pakt* has encouraged a broad approach to education, including the role of non-formal learning in lifelong strategies. This evolving sense of broad community support for strategic objectives in education has encouraged stakeholders, such as business, to support agreed education

objectives. A feature of education development in Bielefeld is the growing role of foundations, often established by *local business leaders*, in fostering education and social projects. The Biefelder Bürgerstiftung established in 2002 has supported a number of learning and social projects, and networks with other trusts and organizations in these activities. Another trust supports schools developing their own learning projects.

A further example of business activity to engender lifelong learning is provided in nearby Gutersloh where a local business leader established the Bertelsmann Stiftung to sponsor learning and social initiatives. This foundation in 2010 funded the development of the European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI) project which applied indicators in assessing the state of lifelong learning across European countries, initially developed by the Canadian Council on Learning as a Composite Learning Index. Bielefeld participated in the ELLI project.

The Hume Global Learning Village has been sustained since 2003 by a series of innovations which have progressed the objectives of the Village and demonstrated the benefits to the community. One of particular interest has been the establishment of an *IdeasLAB* in the Hume Global Learning Centre, supported by a range of partners, including the Victorian Government, Hume City Council and a number of leading international companies in the information technology field. The *LAB* serves to foster innovation and applications of ICT in education and training.

Kaunas has advanced its development as a sustainable learning city with its vision of building an innovative community, able to confront creatively the challenges it faces. A conceptual foundation has been built up to support a broad concept of sustainability across a range of sectors. As in the other examples given above, partnership has underpinned and sustained progress. A current collaborative effort involved an informal network addressing the question of revitalizing the centre of the Old Town of Kaunas.

The examples given above show cities building up partnerships of stakeholders to progress a shared vision of the city, and in this way providing a platform for innovation with broad benefits for the city. This process builds social capital and trust in the city, as well as economic benefits, and may be oriented to progressing lifelong learning and building human capital, as in the example provided by Bielefeld. Much social innovation is the result of an incremental, cumulative process in which a long-term vision provides a framework for new ideas that emerge from interaction between partners. The PIE stimulus papers illustrate a good deal about social innovation in cities with lessons that can be built upon and taken further.

CHALLENGES

Horizontal sector partnerships vs. vertical partnerships with citizens

A considerable lack of understanding of the practical implementation of creativity and innovation – hugh potentials not likely to be unfold

Changing Roles of Cultural Institutions

The role of cultural institutions as arenas for lifelong learning and inclusion is one of the core themes of PIE. This interest has been furthered by papers delivered at the PASCAL June 2010 Östersund conference, and by PIE papers on policies adopted in Glasgow, and some passing references in other cities.

Papers from the PASCAL Östersund conference have been published by Jamtli under the title *Heritage, Regional Development and Social Cohesion*. These

papers range across changing roles of heritage institutions, assessing heritage outcomes, harnessing heritage resources in regional development, and a broad spectrum of issues that have emerged from diversity, and multiple heritage issues in countries such as South Africa and Canada.

The important shifts in the roles of museums are taken up by O'Neill and Sani in the Östersund papers, and then elaborated in the Glasgow stimulus paper and PIE blog discussion. These papers show how museums in Glasgow have responded to social change in a more diversified society by shifts from an elitist, to welfare, to a social justice model of operation with cultural policies as agents for social change. These shifts have enhanced the value of cultural institutions as arenas for lifelong learning, and for progressing social justice objectives.

Libraries have continued to have a major role as places for lifelong learning as, for example, in the role of the library in the Hume Global Learning Village. Comments from Bielefeld illustrate the value of cultural activities as re-entry gateways to learning and enhancing self esteem for disengaged young people.

EXAMPLE
Boston Museum of Science fostering the famous global Computer Clubhouse Network for disadvantaged youth - www.computerclubhouse.org

Building a Learning Culture

Building a learning culture in a country is a long-term undertaking with multiple strategies contributing in their cumulative effects to this objective. This may be observed in strategies adopted in PIE cities discussed above and in initiatives to build community understanding and support, as in strategies adopted in Cork, Vancouver, and Hume.

Partnership is also a key driver of cultural change with relationships developed over time as, for example, in the role of the Cork *Learning Festival* in building relationships with a large number of community organizations particularly significant.

CHALLENGES
Horizontal sector partnerships vs. vertical partnerships with citizens

The strategic approach adopted by the Hume Global Learning Village since 2004, with three successive three-year strategies and with a long-term strategic plan to the year 2030, illustrates the time dimension involved. The experience of Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark, with a series of incremental steps from the establishment of folk high schools in the 19th Century, illustrates the time involved in building a learning culture.

At present, all participating countries are confronted by the challenge of a "two-culture" phenomenon of learners and non-learners. Various examples of interesting innovations to engage the interest and motivation on non-learners are given in the stimulus papers, such as the lively "fun led" strategies adopted by Vancouver.

CHALLENGES
The inclusion of the digital generations? Basic learning paradigms undergoing changes...
Which are the resources of digital youth in learning communities, and how are they unfold?

Much remains to be done, and some relevant subjects have not yet figured in the PIE dialogue. These include the role of early childhood learning, the school role, and innovative uses of information technology and media. Exchanges between participating cities on these subjects will add to the

insights gained to date on strategies to build a learning culture in cities, and achieve long-term sustainability of learning city initiatives.

An Evolving Dialogue

The PIE dialogue is evolving as key themes are identified in the stimulus papers and blog discussion that should be focused as PIE priorities. This has led to a restructuring of the PIE web space which was initially structured on the basis of the city overview stimulus papers.

With this evolving identification of key themes, the following have been identified for a *more focused PIE dialogue*:

Responding to social change
Mobilizing civic society to build inclusive successful cities
Cultural policy and cultural institutions as arenas for lifelong learning
Preserving the environment
ICT and media as vehicles for an inclusive learning society

CHALLENGES
Obstacles to and innovations in global dialogues
Understanding how to practice creativity and innovation in learning communities
Horizontal vs. vertical partnering in learning communities
The inclusion and mobilization of digital youth in learning communities

Briefing papers are being prepared to inaugurate a dialogue in each of these areas.

The discussion of social change and learning cities has the benefit of a questionnaire prepared by Norman Longworth which probes views across PIE countries as a platform to structure a dialogue in this crucial area.

North/South Dialogue

A distinctive feature of the PIE dialogue is that it contains cities in developed and developing countries. While most experience with learning city strategies has been obtained in Europe, North America and Australia, the presence of cities such as Dar es Salaam and Dakar in the PIE dialogue *challenges participating cities to re-examine the relevance of past approaches*.

Dar es Salaam's participation has been facilitated by an excellent stimulus paper which encouraged a lively dialogue with a broad range of issues taken up. A particular interest in this dialogue has been the potential of linking schemes that involve institutions, such as schools, in Dar es Salaam and similar institutions in developed countries. Experience in past linking programs such as PALLAC has been useful, and it hoped that these issues can also be taken up in subsequent debates with the *BigTent* of which PASCAL is a part. This brings together many organizations concerned with north-south co-operation in community-university engagement. Similarly PIE seeks to achieve this in its domains of interest.

This discussion is at an early stage, but there are prospects for ideas that could benefit the Dar es Salaam community.

General Comments

PIE is still at an early stage of development. However, a number of significant insights are already evident from the stimulus papers and blog comments. Central to these is the value of comprehensive frameworks for partnership building and strategic socioeconomic development, and as a stimulus to innovation in cities.

While such a framework may be provided by a *Learning City* initiative, as in Hume, Kaunas and Vancouver, the experience of Bielefeld with its *Bielefeld-Pakt* illustrates a somewhat different approach to providing an agreed framework for strategic development focused on three key areas. The Bielefeld model has the benefit of providing clear, agreed directions to encourage support by business, so that a significant feature of this approach is the role of foundations in supporting education and social projects.

Cork demonstrates a different approach again to building social capital relationships with the evolving role of the annual *Learning Festival* in nurturing partnerships among a large number of organizations.

Each of these approaches is building social and human capital in communities and working towards empowering communities to take responsibility for their own development and future. This is a journey as yet not complete and a number of important issues remain to be taken up in future PIE dialogues.

Closely related to the role of building frameworks for partnership and collaboration is the effect of such frameworks on the capacity and motivation of cities for innovation in responding to the many challenges they face. The example of Bari in its approach to combating crime illustrates the value of such partnerships in stimulating innovation while the other examples we have cited suggest a pattern on ongoing innovation as partnerships mature and strengthen. The experience of the Hume Global Learning Village since 2003 provides a good example. Much, of course, depends on the strength and quality of partnerships and the outcomes for the building of social capital, and new perspectives and ideas.

In addition to the value of PIE as a source of ideas and stimulus to innovation in a world of ever increasing complexity, lies the significance of PIE in *fostering cultural relations between participating cities* in a diverse range of contexts. Intercultural exchanges between cities across the world can have considerable value as a learning strategy in fostering an understanding of, and sympathy for, other people in a world of ever increasing connections.

CHALLENGES
The role of "model cities and communities" and the exploitation of these models

Discovering others and learning to live together, as one of the UNESCO Delors Report *Four Pillars of Education* remains a necessary strategic objective for education systems everywhere, and an essential pillar of lifelong learning strategies in the global environment we inhabit. We take the view that the PIE exchanges should continue to evolve so that they contribute to cultural competence and global citizenship as a necessary attribute of 21st century cities. The work of PIE is being embedded and linked more widely in PASCAL and will be informed by and will inform a number of PASCAL's other work. These include Learning City/Region projects such as EUROlocal and R3L+ with which strong links are being established.

Overall, a promising start has been made in the PIE dialogue with a set of quality city with its focus on five important themes in the development of inclusive, sustainable cities should add value to the PIE dialogue. In a world of rampant globalization and escalating change, much is to be gained by sharing ideas and experience by cities across the world. Learning cities are by their nature creative cities with collaboration and partnership a powerful stimulus to ongoing creativity and innovation. The potent combination of an interactive global and local citizenship should take the PIE dialogue far, with benefits for all partners.