

Norman Longworth on *Learning Cities*

www.longlearn.org.uk



A collection of papers for the Xploit Girona sessions, May 2011

Edited by Jan Gejel

'A Learning Community is a City, Town or Region which mobilises all its resources in every sector to develop and enrich all its human potential for the fostering of personal growth, the maintenance of social cohesion, and the creation of prosperity.'

Towards a European Learning Society (TELS)

The concept of the 'Learning City' has been with us for some time. It should not be confused with the more technologically oriented idea of the 'smart city' since, although technology has an important part to play, there are many more facets to the construction of a learning society in cities, towns and regions. The European Round Table of Industrialists, representing the 42 largest European Corporations, remarked:

'The Information Society... must be completed and matched by a Learning Society, if we do not want to fall into an over-informed world and a valueless culture based on 'zapping' and 'patchwork' superficiality.'
(ERT/CRE: Moving towards a Learning Society)

The debate has focused principally on the changes that municipalities and regions will need to make in order to improve their own learning performance. This was particularly highlighted in the study of 80 European cities and towns made by the author in the year 2000 and the 'Learning Cities Audit Tool' created to gather that information.

However what follows describes an extension of that concept to explore not only how learning communities can help each other to enrich their human potential, but also how they can contribute to the development of greater understanding between creeds, cultures, races and nations.

'Imagine, if you will, a system of linked learning cities and regions around the globe, each one using the power of modern information and communication tools to make meaningful contact with each other

- *School to school to open up the minds and understanding of young people*
- *University to University in joint research and teaching to help communities grow*
- *College to College to allow adults of all ages to make contact with each other*
- *Business to business to develop trade and commerce*

- *Hospital to hospital to exchange knowledge, techniques and people*
- *Person to person to break down the stereotypes and build an awareness of other cultures, creeds and customs*

And so on - museum to museum, library to library, administration to administration

Imagine that these links include both the developed and the developing world so that say Brisbane, Seattle, Southampton, Shanghai and Kabul, to pick 5 at random, form one Learning Cities ring among a hundred similar networks.....

Imagine that one tenth of the money used to develop military solutions to human and social problems were to be spent on people and tools to make more than 100 of these rings work effectively.....

Imagine that such links had started ten years ago..... What difference might it have made to today's world?

Isn't this one of the key challenges to us in the Learning Cities movement? Isn't this a worthy objective?'

OK - so it's a stupid, hopelessly idealistic, idea, BUT...

Imagine the advantages...

- Thousands more people and organisations contributing to the solution of social, cultural, environmental, political and economic problems
- A giant leap in mutual understanding and a transformation of mind-sets through greater communication between people and organisations
- Profitable economic, trade and technical development through contact between business and industry
- Active interaction and involvement, and a huge increase in available resource through the mobilisation of the goodwill, talents, skills, experience and creativity between cities and regions
- Fewer refugees - developing problems can be anticipated and addressed through cooperation between the cities
- It's sustainable - because it's so much more dispersed. Governments and NGOs are no longer the only initiators of aid to the underdeveloped. Action is now shared with the cities and, through them, the people.
- organisations and institutions in the city/region have a real world-class focus and raison d'être
- Again three major advantages - understanding - understanding - understanding leading to solution - solution - solution

What an opportunity to make a real difference!

Where is it happening?

We can find the beginnings of such a movement in the European Commission's Pallace project (Promoting Active Lifelong Learning in Australasia, Canada, China and Europe). This pioneering project establishes multilateral links between cities, creeds, cultures and countries to facilitate the building of a new learning and understanding world.

In its two-year time span, PALLACE will link stakeholders - schools, adult education colleges, cultural services departments, elected representatives and community builders - in

- the Adelaide and Brisbane regions of Australia
- the Auckland region of New Zealand,
- the city of Beijing in China,
- Edmonton in Canada,
- Espoo in Finland,
- Edinburgh in Scotland
- Sannois in France

The objective is to stimulate these stakeholders to develop greater knowledge, experience and practice in helping themselves and each other to understand the nature of the learning city and their own role in helping it to grow. It arises from work on learning cities, towns and regions carried out in Europe, notably the highly successful European Commission's TELS (Towards a European Learning Society) survey of Lifelong Learning practice in 80 cities, and the rapidly increasing Learning Community activity in Australia, Canada, China and New Zealand.

The interaction between these partners will be at many levels of the learning city, engaging a variety of individual stakeholder groups in collaborative pilot activities, and increasing knowledge of their roles in learning city and region development. Each partner runs a separate sub-project, as follows:

The sub-projects

- Global schools networks are not new, but the network which South Australia is putting together is the first to involve children, teachers and parents in debate about the learning city and what schools can do to help create it. There is a huge add-on value to this in that it not only creates heightened awareness of what a learning city can be but also potentially mobilises hundreds of people to contribute to it. This of course will require some creative management and the development of tools such as questionnaires to help increase understanding but its beauty is that the answers are coming from the future citizens themselves, and not being imposed upon them by others.
- Similarly the Adult Education project led by Papakura/Auckland will link students and staff in Adult Education colleges in debate about what such an institution and its people can do to help transform their own city into a learning city. Here again there is

the possibility of new resource, not only in the development of new insights among the participants, but also in the ways in which they will use those insights in a practical way. In both these projects the outcomes can be used by others to expand the number of people actively engaged in building the learning city and greatly accelerate the developmental process.

- Such an outcome is written into the Cultural Services project led by the City of Espoo, one the world's foremost learning cities. Here the objective is to engage museums, libraries and galleries in debate about their own contribution to the development of lifelong learning in the city. The result will be an attractively presented portable display which any city can use to explain what a learning city is, the place of the arts and education in it, and what the citizen can do to further it. The sub-project will also assess public response to the display, inviting the opinion of citizens and encouraging them to be specific about what their own engagement might be. Awareness, insight, mobilisation, involvement.
- A Learning City needs Leadership and that is the theme of CEFEL's project for elected representatives. CEFEL is the French national organisation for the training of councillors at town and city level. Alain Bournazel, its President, will organise links between councillors in one or two French cities and those in the involved partner cities to debate the nature of the learning city and to decide the strategies they would want to put into place to help create it. He will make use of questionnaires and the results of previous learning city surveys such as TELS, and bring the objectives and activities of the PALLACE project to their attention. We should also gain some insight into language and culture differences in this sub-project.
- Two projects address the issues of establishing learning communities within a city or region, but they very different from each other. The City of Beijing is establishing a lifelong learning centre in a suburb of a million people. It wants to explore creative and innovative ways of bringing together the different sectors - schools, adult education, business and industry, community organisations, the city and district administrations - into one huge facility that will promote and deliver lifelong learning. We can all learn from, and contribute to, this ambitious programme, which should tell us much about how people can be persuaded to become active lifelong learning citizens. We can also learn much about language and culture differences.
- The Queensland project is of a different nature. South and West of Brisbane there is being created a 'Learning Corridor' a scheme to encourage greater community involvement in Lifelong Learning and community activities. The four suburbs involved are different from each other in social composition, age, existing facilities and income, but they have the promotion and improvement of community life as a common aim. Here the two major universities, UQ and QUT, are combining (another first for PALLACE?) to help build lifelong learning structures into community life in the

corridor, in places using public/private investment companies. Many cities will be interested in the results of this.

- Finally, but definitely not lastly, a learning city will use technology creatively in many different ways. Our Albertan partner is therefore addressing the needs and contributions of the technology providers in the city - how they can improve the learning infrastructure and its performance in the schools, the colleges, business and industry and higher education. Out of this will come a seminar for technology providers in your own city.

So we have seven projects which are pushing back the frontiers of what we know about, and how we build, the learning city. The insights and perceptions to be gained from running, interacting and participating in these projects will be many and various. The value they will add will be priceless.

Professor Longworth is the author of

'Making Lifelong Learning Work - Learning Cities for a Learning Century'

'Lifelong Learning - New Vision, New Implications, New Roles'

'Lifelong Learning in Action - Transforming 21st Century Education'

'Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities - Lifelong Learning and Local Government'

LIFELONG LEARNING, THE LEARNING CITY AND THE LEARNING REGION

A Vision for the Future



Norman Longworth

A short guide to Lifelong Learning in cities, towns and regions for the impatient, the anxious, the curious and the perplexed

Lifelong Learning, the Learning City and the Learning Region - A Vision for the Future

1. Lifelong Learning is suddenly big news. Why?

One reason is that the European Commission, advised by its member states, has nailed its educational colours to the lifelong learning mast. Its memorandum published shortly into the new millennium said

'Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. The coming decade must see the implementation of this vision. All those living in Europe, without exception, should have equal opportunities to adjust to the demands of

social and economic change and to participate actively in the shaping of Europe's future.'

As a result governments in Europe have published strategies and papers as a demonstration of their commitment to transforming their systems from an Education and Training based model to one based on the need to encourage learning throughout life. And it isn't only in Europe. Momentum is building up world-wide for new, different approaches to the challenges that will inevitably arise as the knowledge society takes root, and as nations, organisations, municipalities, communities and individuals become more complex and inclusive.

Not only that, at global level the major world organisations - from UNESCO to International Corporations, the OECD, National Governments - are developing plans to introduce Lifelong Learning within their spheres of influence. And at the municipal level - forward looking local authority administrations, business organisations and institutions of all kinds are beginning to home in on the lifelong learning opportunity.

This thing is big - it's going to influence every one of us, our children and our children's' children over the next century. And we are just at the beginning of the process. It's an exciting time.

2. So Lifelong Learning is something new then?

Not at all. Plato used the phrase 'Dia Viou Paedeia' 2000 years before Christ - for him it meant the obligation of every citizen to develop his or her own potential and participate in the activities of the city. The Chinese philosopher, Kuan Tzu, in the 3rd century BC said 'When planning for a year - sow corn, when planning for a decade - plant trees, when planning for a lifetime - train and educate men'. While that may seem to be sexist, I think that he meant humankind. More recently Comenius, in the 16th century drew up a picture of the whole world as a school for mankind and floated the idea of learning as *the* most basic human instinct.

Arthur C Clarke, the famous Science Fiction writer defined the minimum survival level of the human race as 'everyone being educated to the level of semi-literacy of the average university graduate by the year 2000.' HG Wells defined the whole of human history as 'a constant race between education and catastrophe' - he thought the latter was winning - and as we look around us at some of the more horrific and horrible activities of some of our fellow creatures, who can say he was wrong.

But the difference today lies in the rapidly accelerating speed of change. No longer is a good basic education sufficient to nourish someone for life. The motive power of a knowledge society is the proliferation of new facts, new understandings, new insights and new procedures. To stay employed is to stay smart, and to stay in learning.

3. So give a few examples?

There are many indicators of change engendering a need for lifelong learning. As a race we are slowly but surely coming to terms with the fact that this planet is finite - that we cannot continue to exploit its mineral wealth, its food resources in land and sea, and change its natural life-

sustaining ecosystems without threatening our very existence. And with an expected 3 billion new members of the human race in the next 50 years, learning to adapt, and learning to live with other peoples, has got to play a large part in the future for all of us.

Another example. In what we call the developed world we have moved into an entirely different sort of employment situation. In the middle of this century we have come to expect to be employed in one job for a lifetime - that is no longer true for the vast majority of us and is becoming even less true for future generations. The workers of tomorrow will have several different jobs, several different careers - they will have to be adaptable and flexible, nationally and internationally mobile and versatile, mentally, physically and geographically - they will constantly need to be trained and retrained to a much higher level than today, dipping in and out of education as necessary to renew their store of knowledge, skills and understandings. Indeed it is estimated that at least 40% of jobs in 2010 don't yet exist.

A third indicator stems from the way in which the information, communications, news and broadcasting technologies have come together to revolutionise the way in which we receive information. The ability to receive packaged information so that we can assimilate it more easily is, at first glance, a good thing. But when the packaging is in the hands of a few powerful corporations, not all of them interested in a fair-minded and objective analysis, there is a great danger of being manipulated and brainwashed. It can happen as much in liberal democracies as in third world dictatorships, and, unless people are given the critical judgement skills to distinguish between good, bad and slanted news and information, how can they come to an informed opinion on the many great issues that will be put before them?

These are just three of the many reasons why we could call this Century, the 'Learning Century' - because, unless it becomes just that, the alternative is more and more unhappiness, social disorder, deprivation, poverty and a breakdown of civilised and democratic structures.

4. How do you persuade people to make the effort? Education isn't the most popular word in many peoples' vocabularies.

That's true and that's why this is going to take time. We need 2020 vision. Lifelong Learning has profound implications for all parts of the system - not just the education systems in the schools, colleges and universities, but also the social, political, economic and cultural systems we have built up in our societies. It could be well argued that the age of Education and Training is dead and that the future focus has to be converted into a new era of Learning in which Education has to be brought to *all* people in the way in which they receive it best. Integral to it, not separated from it. Learning has to become fun, enjoyable, a pleasurable thing to do - whether it is for work, for leisure or for life it has to become a part of our lives in much the same way as shopping or banking or playing games.

But in order for that to happen the Learning providers at all levels have to start focusing on the needs of people as learners - finding out why, when, what, where and how people prefer to learn, discovering new learning methods, identifying the basic skills which people need in order to learn

better - learning to learn, developing our potential, handling information, developing thinking skills - individually, in groups and in families - using the modern education delivery technologies and tools to provide new learning for renewed people wherever they want to receive it.

5. Are the Education Providers ready for this?

There are pockets of good practice around - some schools for example are transforming their curriculum into a skills-development activity and installing continuous education and personal skills updating programmes for their teachers so that they can respond better to their own learning needs and those of children. They are even making international links to stimulate global understanding and tolerance. Some universities are widening their intakes and modifying their courses to become responsive to the needs of a much more poly-accessible educational world from industry and the community around.

But, perhaps surprisingly, the greatest breakthroughs have come in Industry education departments, and we can all learn from this. Especially in the large international industries, there is a much greater take-up of the tools and techniques of the new technologies and a much greater democratisation of the learning process. This is because modern companies have realised that their strength and their future lies in the performance of their people, and that the development of individual skills and values is the most important thing they can do to survive in a very competitive world. Most major car manufacturers, for example, have taken a deliberate step to 'empower' their workforce, to put decision-making in the hands of those do the work. This creates a whole new set of learning and skill needs among adults, which perhaps would have been better incorporated into schoolroom practice.

However, it has to be said too, that for the majority of education providers there is still a long way to go. They are providing an industrial age education for a post-industrial, knowledge age environment. The emphasis is still on information and memorisation rather than knowledge, high-order skills, understanding and values - teaching what to think and commit to memory, rather than how to think, how to communicate and how to discriminate between good, bad and indifferent. Often this is not their fault. Government imposed curricula and examination systems emphasise such easily assessed processes regardless of the real need. Values, tolerance, skills and internationalism take a back seat to the political need to persuade parents that education is safely inflexible in their hands. In an age in which information doubles every 5 years and then feeds upon itself to produce yet more new knowledge, this is nonsense.

6. But isn't it Government which tells education organisations, particularly the schools, what to do?

Government has financial levers and uses them to get its own way. That's why there is a need for mind-set change (if the first part of the word can be located) in all parts of the system. Government has an important part to play in understanding and creating the conditions for a true Lifelong Learning Society so that both the nation and the people prosper economically and mentally.

There is a very strong correlation between the economic health of a nation and the learning health of its citizens. But it must base its actions on research and understanding of the true need for everyone, rather than ill-considered political dogma or prejudices nurtured in an elitist past. If, for example, we use a failure-oriented examination system, that is one which creates failure in some in order to celebrate success in others, we can expect to take the consequences of coping with the actions of those who fail. Sure, successful learning must be celebrated and rewarded, but let's make it possible for everybody, or as many as possible, to participate in the fun of success.

Unfortunately Governments are a little like dinosaurs. It takes a long time, years even, for the message to reach the brain and then for the brain to re-act in the most sensible way. This is why some of the more forward-thinking governments are outsourcing decision-making powers to regional and municipal authorities, where the needs of communities can also be taken into account. Some are even devolving powers to the institutions themselves, though of course they still retain curriculum and examination control, and starve the educators of the mental means to play a more creative role in line with the future needs of students.

7. So does local and regional government also have a part to play?

It certainly does, and it should be an increasingly important one in the future. Governments can pontificate, International Governmental Organisations can prescribe and Universities can produce research papers for other researchers to read, but the place where the lifelong learning revolution is going to happen is in the regions, cities, towns and villages of every nation. This is where the action takes place and where the skills, talents, knowledge and values of real people are developed. It is also why many regions, towns and cities are now moving rapidly towards becoming 'Learning Cities, Towns and Regions.'

8. Learning Cities? Learning Towns? Learning Regions?

Yes - this is the 21st century model. They are communities in which business and industry, schools, colleges, universities, professional organisations and local government cooperate closely in order to transform them into physically, economically, culturally and mentally pleasant places to live. A true Learning City might be one:

- Which pro-actively encourages everyone, without exception, to continuously develop their potential
- Which provides the necessary support services and structures to enable them to do so according to their personal learning styles - counsellors, psychologists, mentors etc;
- where learning is an enjoyable and rewarding activity and is celebrated and recognised as such frequently;
- which energises all its resources, especially its human resources, talents, skills and knowledge from all parts of the community, and makes them available to all in a spirit of active citizenship;

- which looks outwards to the rest of the world and encourages its citizens to do likewise;
- which uses modern communications technology to link people internally and externally;
- which encourages its citizens to develop personal learning plans to develop their knowledge and skills;
- which mobilises special interest groups - birdwatchers, botanists, scouts, guides, church groups and the many informal organisations in which people congregate - in the monitoring and preservation of a sustainable environment;

That's an ambitious set of tasks for a city and region. But already some dynamic cities and regions world-wide - Liverpool, Southampton and others in the UK, Espoo in Finland, Goteborg in Sweden, Adelaide and Victoria in Australia, Beijing in China - are responding to the challenge and taking the first steps towards becoming 'Cities and Regions of Learning.' It is not impossible to imagine, soon into the new millennium, a new world of linked Learning Cities in which knowledge and expertise and talent are shared with each other through electronic links between 3rd age citizens, schoolchildren in their studies, universities in their research activities, companies for trade, hospitals for medical assistance and knowledge. And that has already happened in the European Commission's PALLACE project, and the proliferating international schools and college networks.

9. Has this anything to do with the Stakeholder Society we hear so much about?

The concept of the Learning City goes further than the Stakeholder Society. Certainly there are similarities and many of the features of one are also features of the other. Empowerment of the workforce of a company for example, and the idea that citizens should play a large part in the development of their own community. The stakeholder society, quite rightly, gives rights and decision making powers to individuals. But a Learning City is also a model for genuine cooperation and partnership between dissimilar organisations for their mutual benefit. It recognises that rights entail responsibilities - the responsibility of making efforts to understand the problems of others and to help to solve them.

For example, take the Woodberry Down School/IBM Basinghall Street schools-industry twinning scheme in the late 1970s (sadly, both organisations exist no longer). The close cooperation programme between the two organisations led to the skills, knowledge and talents of more than 50 highly qualified professionals being made available to enhance the education of staff and children at the school. Since this was a two-way cooperation the educational skills and knowledge and the facilities of the school were made available to the company. Both organisations gained immeasurably from the 30 joint projects and the interaction between two dissimilar organisations. Energy flowed creatively.

This could also happen in a stakeholder society, but it might not be an essential feature of it. What both need though is inspired leadership by

example from Local and National Government, and a large programme for creating leadership skills in all sections of the community.

10. So Lifelong Learning is really about developing Learning Cities, Towns and Regions?

Not just that - that is a means to an end. Lifelong Learning is principally about people and the way in which they can develop their own human potential. In some cases people have been so scarred by their learning experiences that they have been put off it for life. It was Einstein who proposed that none of us, not even himself, ever use more than one-third of the capacity of our brains. Experimentation with brain-damaged people has shown how the deficit can be made up by other non-damaged parts of the brain. We are all capable of learning and we are all capable of enjoying learning. But many people put limitations on themselves. Good Lifelong Learning practice takes away those limitations and provides the new tools, techniques and motivations to learn.

Quite apart from the new economic necessity for everyone to learn throughout life in order to survive at something above a basic level, Lifelong Learning aims to create, or recreate, the habit and the joy of learning. The Ford Company, for example, makes available a sum of money for each employee every year to take a course in something - as long as it has nothing to do with the job or the company. Now the Ford Company isn't daft or even altruistic. It is in fact a very successful company as a result of these apparently strange practices of giving money away. It recognises that, by creating the habit of learning in all its employees it is building the foundation of its success in the marketplace. The new working practice of empowering workers means that they have to make decisions right down the line - and they have to make the right decisions. That's where the value of learning comes in.

11. Sounds like a lot of empowering everywhere. And a lot of new learners once it catches on. How are you going to satisfy all these new learners?

That's partly where the new technologies are useful. They're not very well-developed at present and resistance is high in schools, universities and elsewhere. But there is a promising future and they are becoming ever more sophisticated in what they can do to help learning. The internet is just one example of a powerful new resource for learning.

But there are other tools and techniques in the Open Learning firmament, for example using a mixture of sound, text, vision, graphics, motion picture to stimulate the take-up of ideas, imagination, facts and insights. And the use of collaborative teaching and learning techniques nationally and internationally through interaction by email. This session is a prize example of how that can be wisely used. Technology is therefore one of the keys to Lifelong Learning and the trick is to develop ever-more creative use of these links both within and between communities.

For example, the Lifelong Learning University of the future will use modern open and distance learning technologies to provide services for Continuing Education in Industry and Government Offices, support for teachers in schools, extension courses for adults wherever they may be - in the shopping centres, the pubs, the home. They will use all the media

at their disposal - television, local radio, satellite, cable, ISDN networks and the internet - to make learning the number one activity in each community. They will interact internationally to open up both learning opportunities and minds, and make research more applicable to those on whose behalf it is carried out.

Another example. Schools will make an extensive use of networks.

- Teachers will develop and teach collaboratively common curricula between schools in the community and internationally. Children will learn collaboratively with children from other cultures, regions, countries;
- Children will access databases and stimulating people to enliven and enhance their learning. For example in environmental studies;
- Children and teachers will participate in joint project work with community organisations and industry;
- Schools will build up their own geographical, historical and biological databases and share them with others;
- Language teaching will be given a new dimension through interpersonal contacts.

And they will use sophisticated open learning software to give them the skills, concepts and knowledge which allows them to cope with the more complex society they will inhabit. These are not threats to teachers - they are the tools of their future trade.

Business and Industry will profit from such networks, developing their own wealth-creating contacts between communities for the community, and receiving from the community aware, committed and open-minded employees with an in-built habit of learning.

12. So Lifelong Learning is all about technology then?

Oops no!. Sorry if you got that impression. Sure, the possibilities to use learning technologies creatively are endless, and the opportunities to liberate minds and mindsets are abundant in all parts of education and training. But technology is simply one of the tools of the new 21st century teacher. Active learning includes a variety of other tools and techniques such as quizzes and audits, surveys, studies and development exercises, brainstorming sessions, role-playing exercises, case studies and visits.

And let's not forget the importance of values and attitudes. They are as important as Lifelong Learning skills and knowledge. Ask anyone over 30 what they remember about their schooldays. Very few will mention subjects and classrooms. Most will remember the extra-curricular events, the games, the plays, the choirs, the camping holidays, the playground activities where values and attitudes were created. A love of music, consideration for others, a talent for acting - these are acquired from participation in activities rather than taught by others.

But values go further than people. There are organisational values - a company develops a set of values about the worth of its people and invests in their development accordingly; a school, college or university develops a set of values which may, or may not, go beyond its statutory responsibility to provide a basic knowledge of the standard curriculum. Each is an investment in a lifelong learning future for both the individual and the organisation. A well-governed nation promotes certain values as an investment in social cohesion and economic progress. This too is an exercise in survival in a competitive world. A Learning Community, whether it is a city, a town or a region tries to inculcate into its citizens the values of co-operation and harmonious living.

And all of this will contribute at last to the development of the potential in every one of us. This is what is meant by Lifelong Learning. But it won't happen this year or next year, or even by 2020. This is a process which will take at least 50 years and, in some countries, much longer. We have the means to make it happen. Do we have the will the vision or the bottle make the 21st Century really 'The Learning Century?'

13. So Lifelong Learning is here to stay?

You can say that again, and again, and again. The alternative doesn't really bear thinking about. Cities that do not respond to the need for educational, social, political, environmental and cultural change will be the losers in a brave new world we don't even begin to understand yet. But we cannot stop here. Such a short paper cannot begin to deal with the many aspects of Lifelong Learning affecting all our futures. Hopefully we now know why the transformation into a Learning Community has to take place. The what, the where, the when, the who and the how is another, more complex set of questions.

Learning Cities and Learning Regions - Making the World a Better Place



Norman Longworth

The TELS Project - Early Soundings

TELS (Towards a European Learning Society) was one of the first European Commission Socrates programme's supported projects in the field of learning cities and regions. Between 1999 and 2001 it studied, not in a very scientific or systematic way, the understanding of leaders in 80 European municipalities and regions about the concept of the Learning City and their preparedness for its implementation within their authority. Not surprisingly, it discovered that most of the authorities studied were unaware of the existence of the term, but could nevertheless demonstrate some movement towards developing activities that would today typify a learning city approach. More interestingly, many of them were eager to know more, simply as a result of their participation in a project that seemed to offer a glimpse of a vision they were seeking to articulate. The recorded results of TELS are gathering dust on a Brussels basement shelf, but these are some of the recommendations it made to the Commission:

1. Create a cross-sectoral Strand in the Socrates Programme to support the development of Learning Cities and Regions. Name it after a famous civic leader or the Goddess of Communities
2. Establish a programme for Cities of Learning similar to that for Cities of Culture. If necessary run a competition to decide which city it will be in each country.
4. Develop indicators which measure and monitor aspects of the growth of Learning Cities and the Learning Society, and Initiate Surveys and Studies of these in and across member states
5. Raise the awareness of Learning Community concepts in municipalities throughout Europe through high-visibility events such as the European Learning Cities week
6. Develop a 'Charter for European Learning Cities' outlining the City's responsibilities vis-à-vis its citizens as learners, and its relationship to a wider European Learning Community, which cities sign up to.
7. Create a European network of one or more university departments in each country able to specialise in Learning City Research and Development
9. Promote Europe-wide interactions and partnerships between Local Government, Industry and others for Wealth/Employment Creation and International Employability
10. Establish Links with global organisations and countries to share good practice and foster joint cultural, economic and educational development in the area of Learning Communities.

It is interesting to note how many of these comprise an outward-looking mission for cities and regions and how many have actually been implemented. Number 1 for example resulted in the R3L programme which joined more than 100 European regions in 17 lifelong learning projects to promote collaboration between them. An example of number 4 is the INDICATORS project led by Stirling University, which developed and made available 'stakeholder audits,' tools by which schools, universities, small businesses, adult education institutions and the local authorities themselves could measure their commitment to building a learning region. These are now also available through PASCAL and the resultant network of expertise centres comprises the beginning of the implementation of number 7.

Towards Wider Horizons

But the focus of this chapter is on numbers 9 and 10. It explores the rationale for some of the initiatives that link learning cities and regions globally, whether or not the European Commission has become involved. It argues that thinking globally and acting locally can bring real benefits, notwithstanding the protestations of minimalist pressure groups to restrict responsibilities to local issues. Playing a much larger part on the national and global stage can often produce medium and long term advantage. The unprecedented emotional and financial response to the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami crisis by people of all ages, incomes and political persuasions is but one demonstration of the extent to which people have

advanced in their perception of this planet as a global, more holistic, village.

There is no shortage of exhortations to take this horizon-widening step. *Lifelong Learning* delivered the following warning back in 1996, identifying the so-called global demographic time bomb as an imperative for the development of lifelong learning attitudes

If birth rates in the developed world are too low for comfort, those in the developing world are uncomfortably high. In the poorer parts of the world a massive population growth, helping to raise the present number of human beings on this very finite planet from 5 billion to 11 billion by the mid-twenty-first century, presents almost insoluble problems. These are environmental, nutritional, educational, moral and, in terms of stability, they are dangerous not just for the countries themselves but, through the overspill of instability, for the rest of the world. Many of these new inhabitants of our planet are perhaps destined to live at subsistence level and below unless massive ameliorative projects are initiated. To even begin to touch the problem, emphasis will need to be put on fundamental Lifelong Learning principles and the use of the new development and delivery technologies.

(Davies and Longworth, 1996)

Sir Christopher Ball takes up the theme in the Action Agenda for Lifelong Learning

Equity requires management. So there is a duty, alike for national and local governments, organisations and individuals, to practise affirmative action to help developing countries, deprived communities and disadvantaged people, by ensuring that they receive a disproportionate share of available resources so that the gaps do not widen into gulfs. Those who most need it should receive most help.

(Ball 1996)

Jim Botkin, in his search for a 'wisdom' society', sees a potential saviour in the effective use of modern information and communications technology

The human gap - the gap between global problems of our own making and our own ability or inability to find solutions to those problems - has widened since the time 'No Limits to Learning' was published. Nevertheless, the possibilities for corrective action are greater today than they ever have been. We have an internet and e-learning suddenly at our fingertips. In 1979, we didn't know what computers were, much less worldwide networks like the world-wide web. (Botkin, 2002)

But he offers also a caution:

We need to be cautious that technologically-mediated global learning doesn't become a new force for domination. If we can imagine a kind of global learning that respects human diversity without asserting a cultural dominance over others, then e-learning opens a flood of possibilities that we have only begun to explore. The philosophical question is: industrial technology helped create the human gap, can information technology help bridge it? (ibid)

Schools to the fore

And of course there is also plenty of activity to address these issues in local authority schools around the world. The *iEARN* network for example:

Imagine a world in which teachers and students all across the planet are able to work collaboratively on projects that make a difference in the world,.' says its publicity, 'Among the tens of thousands of schools worldwide that participate in iEARN, there is no shortage of success stories to demonstrate the power of iEARN's vision, not only to make a difference in the world, but to deepen the learning that takes place in these connected classrooms. (iEARN, 2005)

All projects in iEARN are initiated and designed by teachers and students. This provides powerful examples of how new and emerging technologies can make a difference in teaching and learning. Their projects involve a final 'product' or exhibition of the learning that has taken place as part of the collaboration. These have included magazines, creative writing anthologies, websites, letter-writing campaigns, reports to government officials, arts exhibits, workshops, performances, charity fundraising, and many more examples of youth taking action as part of what they are learning in the classroom. More than 150 interactive projects, including 'the Atlas of Diversity', 'Global teenager' and the 'One world project' enable children to develop research and critical thinking skills, experience with new technologies, cultural awareness and the habit of getting involved in community issues.

The *Global SchoolNet*, a similar international schools network funded mainly by large American corporations, has a more overt, but no less interesting, rationale. In its own words it 'partners with schools, communities and businesses to provide collaborative educational, scientific and cultural learning activities that prepare students for the workforce and help them to become literate and responsible global citizens.' Like *iEARN* it provides learning tools and materials, and training courses for teachers. It concentrates on obtaining concrete outcomes, but the model is oriented towards giving schoolchildren the skills, confidence and insights that allow them to become future leaders in industry and public service. Both originated in the USA in the 1980s and both have extended their operations to more than 40 other countries. With SchoolNet Canada, they are the largest of the many service learning networks linking schools with each other around the world.

There can be little doubt in this digital age that the internet is compressing the planet and changing radically the way that people see the wider world. Many cities are already multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual and multifaceted. The tide of history is propelling them, sometimes reluctantly, towards greater understanding of, and cooperation with, other regions and other races, religions, creeds and customs. Austria's national goals for schools includes these words, Young people have to be able to develop independent judgement and understanding of and responsibility for social relations, sensitivity to the political and philosophical views of others, and the ability to contribute to the economic and cultural life of the country, Europe and the world. Humanity, tolerance, solidarity, peace, justice and ecological awareness are values that stimulate action in our society and interact with economic issues. (Euridyce, 2002)

These fine words are echoed in other charters throughout the world. The vision that makes them a reality has yet to manifest itself on a sufficient scale. But a start has been made. Almost every South Australian school has links with schools in other countries in South East Asia, North America and Europe. It is a key part of the educational experience for their young people.

LILARA - Widening awareness

The links among the city's stakeholders extend far beyond schools. 'Seniornets', linking pensioners in New Zealand, Canada, USA and the UK, have been operating for many years. Universities have been international organisations for many years, feeding into, and from, the world-wide academic and research networks that provide their sustenance. Those that work with their local authorities to help build learning cities and regions make the fruits of that research available to its leaders and professionals. The PASCAL network of universities, cities and regions, described later, is an excellent example. Many of its members contribute directly to pushing back the frontiers of learning region knowledge and action.

The LILARA (Learning in Local and Regional Authorities) project for example is a European university-local authority project developing consultation tools to identify the learning needs of managers and professionals *vis a vis* the growth of learning cities and regions. It takes as its mantra the notion that learning regions, much like quality management, will not happen without the consent of their administrators and, eventually, the citizens themselves. It is vital therefore to research, design and deliver the learning that each one needs. Moreover, such activities encourage the delivery of the joined-up, holistic local government needed to cope with 21st century challenges. Six European nodes in Italy, Hungary, Norway, Ireland, France and the UK are collaborating in the project, and the State of Victoria in Australia has expressed strong interest in developing its own version of LILARA under the PASCAL umbrella. The results of the project will open up the world of local and regional authority education to the new influences to which modern cities and regions must respond.

The PALLACE project - linking stakeholders

This is just one example of the advantages of bringing universities on board as stakeholder contributors to the development of local and regional authorities. There are of course many more. In many ways they are evidence of a shrinking world whose stakeholders must communicate in order to survive.

The PALLACE project for example, a low-budget initiative from the European Commission, created an organisational infrastructure by which each of the seven partners would supervise a stakeholder sub-project to explore what it could do to help create a learning city. It called it a city-ring. The Finnish partner for example concentrated on cultural services and created a portable display giving information and inviting feedback about Espoo as a learning city that could be erected in libraries, museums and galleries. This raised a great deal of interest among those who saw it, not least because they were invited to offer their own opinion on the subject. The French partner created and trialled materials on learning cities for elected representatives and shared these with the city of Marion in South Australia. In the Auckland region, the Papakura Lifelong Learning

Trust addressed the opportunity to link adult education institutions and, with France, tested materials to discover their role *vis a vis* the construction of the learning city. South Australia linked its schools with those in Finland to involve children, teachers and parents internationally in focussed debate about the learning community and what schools can do to help create it.

There is an important add-on value to this concept in that it not only creates heightened awareness of what a learning city can be but also potentially mobilizes hundreds of people to contribute to it, not least those future citizens who will eventually inherit its administration. Stan Salagaras, the Australian project leader, defined the following as positive outcomes

1. It has reinforced that schools are in fact, as a result of the nature of their role, involved on an ongoing basis in the development of links with their surrounding communities to enhance learning outcomes for all - it is a fundamental component of their educative role and function.
2. It has emphasised the important role of schools in the development of learning communities and enabled individual schools to benchmark themselves with learning communities elsewhere. The very nature of a learning community means that it should be open to review and analysis.
3. It has involved a children, teachers and parents as well as tertiary education providers, business and community organisations in a debate about what schools can do to help create a learning community. There is significant add-on value to this in that it not only creates heightened awareness of what a learning community can be, but also potentially mobilises hundreds of people to contribute to it.
4. It has stimulated the documentation in the form of case studies of a diversity of learning community initiatives. Two schools, Mawson Lakes School and St Columba College, have compiled comprehensive reports on their role in the development of a learning community through the PALLACE project.
5. When combined, these case studies identify innovative and practical outcomes which can help other schools to develop curriculum and methodological practices for collaborative work in schools, another intended outcome of the PALLACE project.
6. It has created international links between schools in South Australia and Finland, which will continue to grow and develop in the future.

Such outcomes could be realised on a local basis, but Salagaras is also convinced that the international dimension, and the fact of working with other countries, provided strong motivation and increased the quality of the final results. Certainly the Chinese city of Beijing, which is developing a lifelong learning facility for 800,000 people in its Xichen district, gained much from its participation in PALLACE, as well as contributing some key ideas.

Kent - increasing fruitful links

So why should a city or region, beset as it is by local problems and answerable to local residents and ratepayers organisations become involved in international activities of this sort? Where is the benefit for its citizens? How far should it go to play its part on the larger global stage? How relevant is it to the city's mission? There are no easy answers to these questions, but where they do exist they lie in the scope of cities' vision, the extent to which they are planning for their future in a multilateral world, the depth of understanding of their leaders, and the quality of their humanity. Many cities are already multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual and multifaceted. The tide of history is propelling them, sometimes reluctantly, towards greater understanding of, and cooperation with, other regions and other races, religions, creeds and customs. There are also, as we shall see, measurable advantages.

The County of Kent in the UK has long-standing links with the French region of Nord-Pas de Calais in France. 'Transmanche', as it is called, recognises that national boundaries no longer apply to commercial activity, and that there are considerable economic benefits to be obtained from such cross-border cooperation. Other parts of Europe such as Oresund, linking South Sweden with the Copenhagen area of Denmark, and the Franco-German region around Strasbourg are additional examples. But Kent goes further than this. In 2004 it began to discuss mutual advantages in links with the Hungarian region of Bacs-Kiskun. More recently it has been working with New Kent and the State of Virginia in the USA (Kent CC, 2005a).

Not unreasonably in a country where euro-scepticism is high, Kent's European strategy takes a hard-headed approach to European cooperation. Its pivotal location within North West Europe and its role within the UK as a gateway to the Continent offer obvious advantages, but the prime rationale is 'obtaining funding, influencing policy and co-operating on common interests with other regions' in order to 'help KCC (Kent County Council) achieve its core priorities and meet Kent's needs' (Kent CC, 2005b).

Economic benefit is therefore the main rationale, but Kent believes that much can be realised economically through an increasing number of links with both traditional and new overseas partners, and not just by attracting European regional funding. The sectors identified for joint working with the French Nord-Pas de Calais region for example reflect the responsibilities of the two regions: ie transport infrastructure, economic development, training, scientific and technological research, tourism and the environment. The process starts at the political level by 'strengthening bilateral co-operation between the two Regional and General Councils, initiating regular contacts and meetings between the different political and administrative areas and establishing Joint Working Groups to maintain regular mutual exchange on key issues' (*ibid*).

The enlargement of the European Union in 2005 was seen by Kent as an opportunity. 'The County Council has recognised that the addition of more than 100 million people to the EU's market of 370 million people will result in increased business, project and other opportunities from which the people of Kent could benefit' Among the objectives of the Bacs-Kiskun link are:

- developing projects which provide clear trade and business development opportunities for Kent firms, such as joint ventures and the provision of goods and services, including technical advice and know-how;
- participating in opportunities for institution-building and know-how transfer initiatives;
- identifying opportunities for projects on best practice exchange between KCC and the Central and East European Countries in a range of different fields related to core business priorities, for example, Social Services or Environmental Management

The county intends to follow this up by exploring other opportunities in the Baltic Countries, the Czech Republic and Poland. Kent's links with the state of Virginia are similarly influenced by economic advantage, but here there is a much more wide-ranging interpretation of what that constitutes. The following activities demonstrate this

- School-to-school links
- Professional development of teachers on a study visit to Virginia
- Virginia Indians hold a Virginia Indian Festival at Gravesend, Kent
- Kent Tourism Alliance (KTA) launched its US Campaign, targeting the eastern seaboard of the US
- Joint production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* between New Kent High School in Virginia and Astor College for the Arts, Dover
- Kent features at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington in 2007.
- Centre for Innovation & Technology (CIT) in Virginia becomes a founding organisation in the Strategic Innovation Gateway Network (SIGN) covering Kent, Virginia and Hungary.

City-states and Region-states

Clearly the longer term advantages of inter-region cooperation are being addressed, much in the same way that PALLACE engaged the stakeholders of the future in debate about the city's, and their own, future. The link between the social, the environmental and the economic has always been there in local authorities. In cooperation projects such as this the solutions are becoming more internationalised. Of course Kent is not the only region to establish fruitful links with other parts of the world. The city of Southampton's cooperation project with Xideng in China is yet another example of the proliferation of global interaction between cities and regions. For all parts of local government there are opportunities and benefits.

It is perhaps a reflection of the increasing autonomy and influence of regional government. John Eger, former adviser to two US Presidents, has gone so far as to suggest that there is a return to the concept of the powerful city and region-state that existed for example in the palatinates of Northern Germany before unification, and in Athens, Sparta and Venice

in the more distant past. He bases this opinion on the increased power and influence now trickling down to local and regional government in many countries of the world allied to the enormous potential power of the new information and communications technologies for intercity, inter-institutional and interpersonal multilogue. And to a certain degree he is right. The opportunities do exist, and are being exploited by creative and innovative cities and regions. And yet the world of the early 21st century is hardly a safer or happier place in which to live. Perhaps a newer dimension is needed.

The PALLACE report anticipates this.

There is whole new dimension to the debate when we discuss the global role of cities and regions for the future. Whatever model is adopted - city-ring, city mentoring, city-twinning, city networking - an even greater challenge occurs when we can include into these networks cities and regions from the less-favoured countries of this planet, (Longworth and Allwinkle, 2005)

It suggests, and who can gainsay that this is a challenge.

EFMD - Business and Global Responsibility

The European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) adopts a similar focus in its Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, a report produced by a group of senior representatives from companies, business schools and centres for leadership learning from five continents.

The challenges facing humankind are large, undeniable and global. Economic, social, environmental inequalities abound and are increasing,' it says, 'Businesses are among the most influential institutions worldwide and have a tremendous opportunity to shape a better world for existing and future generations. The obligation of the globally responsible business is to create economic and societal progress in a globally responsible and sustainable way. (EMFD, 2005)

It continues:

The new global business context requires a definition of business that encompasses corporate aspirations, responsibilities and activities in realistic and contemporary terms that go beyond purely financially focused explanations. The purpose of the globally responsible business is to create economic and societal progress in a globally responsible and sustainable way. (*ibid*)

In its advocacy of 'the global exercise of ethical, values-based leadership in the pursuit of economic and societal progress and sustainable development', the report makes a powerful indictment of organisations that exist purely to satisfy their own narrow objectives. It suggests that, in a world beset by extremes of wealth and poverty, conflict and aggressive fundamentalism, all organisations have a new responsibility to expand their remit towards the alleviation of this situation. If they do not, then the undesirable outcomes of inaction will eventually overwhelm them.

Learning Cities and Regions - global opportunities

EFMD is of course echoing concerns that are well documented in papers, reports and recommendations from organisations of all types and all persuasions. So what is the responsibility of the city and region in this respect? And what can it contribute?

PALLACE suggests one approach.

If we now imagine a city-ring comprising six or seven cities from the developed world, for argument's sake let us say Sydney, Seattle, Southampton, Sapporo, Stuttgart and Shanghai. And we now add one or two from South America or Africa or the poverty-stricken areas of Asia, each of them linking their schools, universities, adult colleges, companies, city administrations, museums, children, parents, seniors, teachers, researchers, under the guidance of an energetic, sympathetic, persuasive and knowledgeable set of leaders. (Longworth and Allwinkle, 2005)

This is one way to start the process of alleviating global conflict, poverty and ignorance. If properly organised, it brings it much closer to the hearts, minds and capabilities of real people in real cities and regions, eventually by-passing the need for mass migrations of unfortunate refugees.

There are, perhaps surprisingly, real advantages. These are taken from *Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities*, a book which is also accompanied by learning materials adapted to each chapter (Longworth, 2006).

1. *It is a preventative measure*: the giant leap in mutual understanding and transformation of mind-set that takes place when people and organisations in cities and regions world-wide communicate with each other and learn together. Through such understanding social behaviour improves, racism and ethnic hatred diminishes and cities and regions no longer bear the costs of picking up the pieces.
2. *It makes economic sense*: the profitable economic, trade and technical development that can result through increased contact between small and large companies in different countries, leading to increased employment and greater prosperity. Here is an attractive economic justification for greater learning city/region cooperation.
3. *It is incremental*: the transformation of mind-sets, attitudes and behaviours that occurs when thousands more people and organisations are contributing to the solution of social, cultural, environmental, political and economic problems throughout the world right across the age groups. Cities and regions, as learning organisms, can learn much from each other, and jointly help each other to cope with seemingly intractable problems.
4. *It is fulfilling for thousands of people*. This amounts to a huge increase in available resource through mobilising the goodwill, talents, skills, experience and creativity between cities and regions. It is a new resource, tapping into the knowledge of individuals, and turning human ingenuity and action into social and intellectual capital to the benefit of cities and regions.
5. *It solves previously intractable problems*. All of this would potentially mean that there would be fewer refugees. Many of the developing problems can be anticipated and addressed through cooperation between cities at the moment of crisis.

6. *It is sustainable because it is so much more dispersed.* Governments and NGOs are no longer the only initiators of aid to the underdeveloped. Action is now shared with the cities and, through them, the people, who gain in understanding of the realities and problems of the modern world, and the extent to which they ameliorate the latter. Stakeholder organisations and institutions in the city/region have a real world-class focus and *raison d'être*, and a contribution to make to the construction of the learning city at home and abroad.

All of this suggests a new mission for cities and regions. No longer are they inward-looking entities with a responsibility only to provide services for their own citizens. They have a greater mission and a greater global responsibility, entirely consonant with the ideals behind the learning region concept: to open the eyes of their institutions and their citizens to the world outside, and to the contribution that they can make to improving it.

This is not hopeless, impractical, blue skies idealism. In so doing they are helping to re-create themselves into entities richer in every way, more prosperous, more resourceful, more knowledgeable, more sensitive, more participative and more creative, innovative and capable. With the application of such creativity, using the resources that are available in the community and from other organisms, this need not impinge heavily on local taxes. At the same time, it raises the city's and the region's profile in a world that needs, more than ever, the application of tolerance and respect for others.

References

Ball, C. and Stewart, D. (1995) *An Action Agenda for Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century*, Report from the First Global Conference on Lifelong Learning (ed N Longworth), European Lifelong Learning Initiative, Brussels

Botkin, J. (2002) 'Towards a Wisdom Society' [online]
http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/Is2_botkin.pdf

Commission of the European Union, (2001) 'Memorandum on Lifelong Learning for Active Citizenship in a Europe of Knowledge', DG Education and Culture, Brussels

Commission of the European Union, (2001) 'The local and Regional Dimension of Lifelong Learning: creating learning cities, towns and regions', A European Policy Paper from the TELS project (ed Longworth N), DG Education and Culture, Brussels

Eger, J.M. (1996) 'Building Smart Communities: a new framework for an American information initiative', address to the International Telecommunication Union, Rio de Janeiro, June 1996 [online]
http://www.smartcommunities.org/library_newframe.htm

European Foundation for Management Development, (2005) *Globally responsible leadership - a call for engagement*, EFMD, Brussels

Euridyce, (2002) *Citizenship education at school in Europe* published by European Unit, Avenue Louise, 240 - B-1050 Brussels/Belgium

iEARN International Education and Resource Network, (2005) found on <http://www.earn.org/projects/index.html>

Kent County Council (2005a) The Kent Virginia Project, Summary available from Principal Regeneration & Projects Officer, Strategic Planning, Kent County Council

Kent County Council (2005b) KCC European Strategy summary, available from Principal Regeneration & Projects Officer, Strategic Planning, Kent County Council

LILARA project (2006), details from University of Stirling Centre for Research into Lifelong Learning, Airthrey Castle, Stirling

Longworth, N (2001) Towards a European Learning Society (TELS), Project Report presented to the European Commission Nov 2000, also available on

Longworth, N. (2003) Lifelong Learning in Action: Transforming 21st Century Education, Kogan Page, London

Longworth, N. (2006) Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities: Lifelong Learning and Local Government, Taylor and Francis, London

Longworth, N. and Allwinkle, S. (2005) 'The PALLACE project: linking learning cities and regions in Europe, North America, Australasia and China'. Final Report to the European Commission, Napier University, Edinburgh, [online] www.pallace.net

Longworth, N. and Davies, W. K. (1996) Lifelong Learning: New Visions, New Implications, New Roles for Industry, Government, Education and the Community for the 21st Century, Kogan Page, London

Salagaras, S. (2004) 'The South Australia PALLACE Report on Schools and Learning Communities', in PALLACE report to the European Commission (Longworth and Allwinkle eds), Napier University, Edinburgh

Shi Long, (2004) Beijing Learning City, address to PALLACE Canadian conference, Edmonton 2004, in PALLACE Report to the European Commission (Longworth and Allwinkle eds), Napier University, Edinburgh

© Norman Longworth

Edited for EU Xploit by Jan Gejel 2011

Graphics by Zlatan, Sofia, Bulgaria