

**EcCoWell**

**LIVING AND LEARNING IN SUSTAINABLE  
OPPORTUNITY CITIES**

*A Clarifying Working Paper  
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**PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE)**

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## FOREWORD

This paper has been prepared to promote discussion of ways in which a number of ideals directed at better life in cities can be integrated in more holistic and connected strategies so that there are value added outcomes in terms of the quality of life and the sustainability of cities.

The focus of the paper is on a seeming convergence of the ideals and objectives built into the concepts of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities, and Green Cities. The paper asserts that there is a common interest in actively fostering a convergence of these aspirations through the emergence of a new generation of Learning Cities with clear health and environmental objectives and strategies.

I have called these cities EcCoWell cities, cities that aim for integrated development across the landscape of ecology, culture, community, well-being, and lifelong learning objectives and strategies.

This paper is a light sketch of terrain to be covered in building humane, inclusive, and sustainable EcCoWell cities. The paper has been called a Clarifying Working Paper to signify this status.

The paper is supported by a short Discussion Paper which includes a set of ten questions to encourage discussion of the key themes of the paper. It is hoped that these questions will be widely discussed in the cities participating in the PASCAL International Exchanges project, and in other cities and organisations with an interest in these important subjects.

The paper builds on the experience of the ten cities participating in the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE), the lessons of a number of lifelong learning projects funded by the European Union, and the extensive knowledge base on Healthy Cities and Green Cities. The growing knowledge across these sectors points to areas where common interests exist, and where value added outcomes could be achieved through more integrated and holistic policies and strategies.

I am most grateful for the comments made on earlier drafts of this paper by my PASCAL colleagues, and others with an interest in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and building humane cities that foster quality of life and well-being for residents.

Comments on the questions included in the Discussion Paper may either be posted on the PIE web site ([www.pie.pascalobservatory.org](http://www.pie.pascalobservatory.org)) or sent to me as co-ordinator of the PASCAL International Exchanges ([p.kearns@netspeed.com.au](mailto:p.kearns@netspeed.com.au)).

Cities around the world are confronted by a spectrum of unprecedented challenges in a context which has been seen as “a runaway world”, where traditional responses are no longer adequate. Successful Healthy Cities and Green Cities are by their nature Learning Cities in which strategies to build a rich web of connections between necessary sectoral ideals and objectives will benefit all residents in creating cities that are humane, inclusive, and sustainable.

Peter Kearns

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## **I. INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE**

Cities around the world are confronted by a spectrum of major challenges in an era of large scale migration, escalating urbanisation, and growing diversity in their populations. Global warming and environmental issues, poverty and growing gaps between rich and poor in many cities, often accompanied by demographic change and ageing populations, add to the smorgasbord of challenges which often seem beyond the capacity of city administrations to address.

The impact of a globalised world, sometimes seen as a “runaway world” with a global order “emerging in an anarchic, haphazard fashion, carried along by a mixture of influences (Giddens 1999:19) adds to the sense of turbulence in a world out of control.

This is a context calling for well-considered comprehensive responses, equal to the magnitude of the challenges. Yet the scene across the globe is also one of segmented responses, with development all too often driven by the narrow lens of single-minded goals. In many cities various ideas, good in themselves, are often applied but not connected in holistic responses with a unifying vision that builds synergies and value-added outcomes, and which contribute to a spirit and identity relevant to the challenges of a globalised 21<sup>st</sup> century environment

The landscape of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities, Green Cities, Creative Cities and Resilient Cities illustrates this world of partial and fragmented responses, yet the reality is that there is a much that could be connected across this plethora of ideas to build creative and sustainable cities responsive to the spectrum of challenges confronting them.

I have used the term EcCoWell Cities to describe this New Age City and discuss in this paper aspects of the effort needed to develop such cities. I suggest there is a convergence of related concepts whose commonality is starting to be recognised. In a sense, there is a new generation of Learning Cities that reach out and connect up to address environment, health, cultural and well-being issues while continuing to address the lifelong learning, social justice, equity and community building initiatives that have been the traditional territory of Learning Cities.

How to build the dynamic synergies that will drive this convergence of related ideas will require considerable innovation, creativity, and good will. The present paper is a light sketch of some of the terrain to be covered.

I turn initially to the common ground that exists between the Learning City, Healthy City, Green City and Cultured City to identify some of the comprehensive areas to drive this process of building dynamic synergies.

## **II. THE CONVERGING STRANDS**

### **Learning Cities**

The Learning City idea emerged from the work of OECD on lifelong learning in drawing attention to opportunities to progress all forms of learning in many contexts through partnership and building a shared vision.

This concept evolved through early manifestations as Educating Cities with a 1992 report by OECD on *City Strategies for Lifelong Learning*, prepared for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Educating Cities in Gothenburg, drawing attention to the potential of the city as a framework for fostering lifelong learning in many contexts (OECD 1992).

The role of the European Union in supporting lifelong learning as an organising principle for all forms of education has been important in driving the evolution of the idea of the city (or town/region/community) as a framework for lifelong learning for all. Various projects funded by the European Commission have contributed much in showing the range of strategies that can be applied in building innovative Learning Cities. Information and lessons derived from this experience may now be accessed through the EUROLocal web site ([www.eurolocal.org](http://www.eurolocal.org)).

A good statement of the aspirations and ideals that underpin the concept of a Learning City exists in a definition by Norman Longworth (1999: 112):

*A learning community is a city, town or region that goes beyond its statutory duty to provide education and training for those who require it and instead creates a vibrant participative, culturally aware, and economically buoyant human environment through the provision, justification and active promotion of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all its citizens.*

While this definition draws attention to much that is central to the Learning City idea, a further statement by Longworth (1999: 109) adds additional key dimensions to this concept:

*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.*

Taken together, these statements point to the entwined individual and community development objectives of Learning Cities, the equity and social justice thrusts in the concern for “all its citizens”, and the aspirations to build communities that foster person development, social cohesion and economic prosperity. The key role of a local government council in building a framework for partnership is recognised.

The Learning City concept has evolved in new contexts as challenges have been encountered as, for example, in the development of learning community initiatives in East Asian countries such as China, South Korea, and Chinese Taipei.<sup>1</sup> Experience has shown that the core ideas in the Learning City concept are sufficiently flexible to accommodate these applications in a wide range of international contexts while at the same time evolving international experience adds to the richness encapsulated in this concept.

In order to share ideas and experience across national boundaries, the PASCAL International Observatory in January 2011 inaugurated the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) to test online exchanges as a vehicle for international dialogue on good ideas. Ten cities across five continents are currently participating in this project with further cities expected to join shortly.<sup>2</sup>

Information on PIE, including the methodology adopted and the experience of participating cities may be obtained from the PIE web site ([www.pie.pascalobservatory.org](http://www.pie.pascalobservatory.org)). After an initial stage of development based on stimulus papers posted by participating cities, PIE has now progressed to a second stage based on a number of Major Themes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A paper for the May 2010 International Forum on Lifelong Learning in Shanghai drew on a 2009 survey conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Education to estimate that there were by the end of 2009 114 national experimental or pilot learning communities organised in 30 provinces, autonomous regions or municipalities under the direct jurisdiction of the central government while the number of pilot learning communities organised by provincial authorities exceeded 4,000 (Hao Keming 2011: 64).

<sup>2</sup> The cities are Glasgow, Kaunas, Bielefeld, Bari, Cork, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Hong Kong, Hume Global Learning Village (Melbourne), Vancouver.

<sup>3</sup> These are: Cultural Policy; Responding to Social Change; Preserving the Environment; ICT and Media; Mobilising Civil Society; Healthy Cities.

The inclusion of Preserving the Environment and Healthy Cities as PIE major themes illustrates ways in which the Learning City concept can reach out to address major issues in the development of cities. At the same time, developments of these sectors stands to be enriched by exchanges of experience between cities on heritage and cultural aspects of development, learning strategies and community building, and strategies to address equity and social justice issues so as to build inclusive, cohesive cities. The Learning City concept offers a fundamentally humanistic vision of future life in cities that can also support strategies to address key issues in a range of sectors contributing to sustainability.

## Healthy Cities

It has become evident that Learning Cities and Healthy Cities share a good deal in common, and that community learning strategies can contribute much to Healthy City objectives. This convergence of interests has become more apparent with the strong interest of Healthy City initiatives in the social determinants of health following the work of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. This provides a common platform of interest in addressing equity and social justice issues, with the experience of Learning City initiatives in these areas a resource that can be drawn on with benefits for health objectives.

The Healthy City movement emerged from the work of the WHO, and has been progressed by a number of regional networks that link cities committed to Healthy City principles. In the Asian region, for example, an Alliance of Healthy Cities now links a large number of cities in the Asian region, including some Australian cities.

WHO has defined a Healthy City in the following manner:

*A Healthy City is one that is continuously creating or improving their physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing their maximum potential.*

(WHO 2011)

This could be a definition of a Learning City with considerable commonality with the definition of a Learning City given by Longworth cited above. Both concepts draw on and develop a range of community resources, develop people to their maximum potential, and foster partnership in these endeavours.

Key common interests that Learning Cities and Healthy Cities share were articulated in the Final Report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (WHO 2005). The social determinants of health have been defined in the following terms:

*The socio-economic conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities and jurisdictions as a whole. These determinants also establish the extent to which a person possesses the physical, social, and personal resources to identify and achieve personal aspirations, satisfy needs and cope well with the environment.*

(Raphael 2004)

Follow up on the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in countries such as the UK has identified areas where action is likely to be the most effective in reducing health inequalities. These have included areas such as early childhood development and education, social protection, and sustainable development which are typically the heartland of Learning City initiatives (Campbell ed. 2010).

## *Healthy Cities Principles and Values*

A useful statement of Healthy City Principles and Values may be found in the 2009 *Zagreb Declaration on Healthy Cities*. These are shown below.

- **Equity:** addressing inequality in health, and paying attention to the needs of those who are vulnerable and socially disadvantaged, inequity is inequality in health that is unfair and unjust and avoidable causes of ill health. The right to health applies to all regardless of sex, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, disability or socioeconomic circumstance.
- **Participation and empowerment:** ensuring the individual and collective right of people to participate in decision making that affects their health, health care and well-being. Providing access to opportunities and skills development together with positive thinking to empower citizens to become self-sufficient.
- **Working in partnership:** building effective multisectoral strategic partnerships to implement integrated approaches and achieve sustainable improvement in health.
- **Solidarity and friendship:** working in the spirit of peace, friendship and solidarity through networking and respect and appreciation of the social and cultural diversity of the cities of the Healthy Cities movement.
- **Sustainable development:** the necessity of working to ensure that economic development – and all the supportive infrastructure needs is environmentally and socially sustainable.

(WHO Europe 2009)

It is evident that much of this statement could apply equally to Learning Cities with the thrusts of these initiatives towards equity, participation, empowerment, and partnership providing a framework to progress the objectives of healthy cities.

Health is one of the foundations for well-being. We comment on this attribute below.

## **Green Cities**

Like Healthy Cities, there has been considerable promotion and development of the concept of Green Cities. The European Union now has an annual Green Capital award, organisations such as the Green Growth Leaders exist to foster green growth, and OECD has developed guidelines for green growth.

The European Green Capital award of the EU illustrates the growing significance given to the environmental challenges confronting cities, and the key role of local government authorities in improving and sustaining the environment. This award is intended to showcase good practice role models so as to disseminate ideas about best practice.

Since the award commenced in 2010, the following cities have won the award: Stockholm (2010), Hamburg (2011), Vitoria-Gasteig (2012), Nantes (2013). As with other green initiatives, the awards link respect for the environment, quality of life and economic growth.

The idea that Green growth is about more than the environment or ecology was also supported by the Green Growth Leaders in a study of the socio-economic benefits of green development in Copenhagen:

*Green must, therefore, be seen in a broader perspective than strictly environmental. It is also about improving quality of life and creating jobs and business opportunities throughout the entire economy – not just in the clean-tech sector.*

(Green Growth Leaders 2011: 5)

OECD has added to these evolving perspectives on Green growth with its release of the *OECD Green Growth Strategy: A lens for examining growth* (OECD 2011). This strategy was seen as providing a framework for Green growth, including addressing seeming conflicts of economic and environmental objectives:

*A green growth strategy is centred on mutually reinforcing aspects of economic and environmental policy. It takes into account the full value of natural capital as a factor of production and its role in growth. It focuses on cost-effective ways of attenuating environmental pressures to effect a transition towards new patterns of growth that will avoid crossing critical, local, regional and global environmental thresholds.*

(OECD 2011: 10)

The OECD Green Growth Strategy attempts to bring together economic, environmental, social, technological and developmental aspects into a comprehensive framework, pointing the way to link Green growth to the other domains of socio-economic development.

Similarly, the Zero-draft of the Outcome Document for the UN Rio10+20 Conference to be held in Rio in June 2012 recognises the need for the integration of economic development and environmental sustainability in balancing the three pillars of sustainable development seen as economic, social, and environmental sustainability (United Nations 2012).

This recognition of the case for an integrated and holistic approach to developing sustainable cities supports the thesis of this paper.

The key role of local government authorities in the development of a framework for sustainable development has emerged from the work of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, an international organisation with over 1200 members across towns and cities around the world. The work of ICLEI promotes key aspects of sustainability in “Urban Resilience and Adaptation” and adds to good practice models that are emerging from leading Green Cities such as Copenhagen, Stockholm and Hamburg.<sup>4</sup>

The growing literature on Green Cities points to the need for strategies to progress holistic approaches to urban development that link environmental, health, learning, community building and economic aspects of development. We discuss below some ways in which an EcCoWell approach can respond to this need.

## **Community and Cultural Dimensions**

Large scale migration and rampant urbanisation in many parts of the world has focussed attention on the role of culture in building community, a sense of identity, and social cohesion in many rapidly growing cities.

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<sup>4</sup> The in-depth profile of Copenhagen as a Green City prepared by the Green Growth Leaders provides a good example of the socio-economic benefits from well managed green growth (Green Growth Leaders 2011).



These influences were noted in the report of the 2010 PASCAL conference at Östersund in the following terms (Kearns 2011:11).

*Cultural and heritage issues are increasingly significant in a world of mass migration and rampant urbanisation leading to increased diversity in many communities. In this context, intercultural understanding, tolerance, and cultural competence are necessary attributes of sustainable and cohesive learning communities in building a sense of community and shared identity.*

In this context, heritage often assumes importance in carrying over traditional habits and a sense of identity into urban settings. For example, in many African growth cities, the African traditional philosophical heritage of learning as a collective endeavour is a potential resource that can be adapted in urban contexts.

Similarly, in a number of East Asian countries, Chinese traditional philosophies provide a cultural underpinning to family and community bonding, and in supporting social cohesion in cities. This resource can be drawn on in learning city development and in supporting initiatives across sectors such as environment, health and public safety.

I have followed the PASCAL Östersund report and the Commonwealth Foundation in adopting the broad concept of culture from the 1982 *Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies*:

*In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.*

(Commonwealth Foundation 2008: 12)

While heritage can be a resource to build community and identity in urban contexts, there may also be issues to be navigated in addressing the question of whose heritage in diverse multi-cultural cities, as the experience of South Africa illustrates (Hamilton, Harris & Hartang 2011). Achieving diversity advantage in diverse intercultural cities will often be a core challenge for Learning Cities.

In this context, the role of cultural institutions and civic spaces (see below) will often be important in building a democratic sense of identity and belonging, especially in cities that have undergone major changes. O'Neill demonstrates how museums in Glasgow have progressed through elitist, welfare and social justice stages in their development (O'Neill 2011). Sani illustrate the changing roles of museums in "the learning age" (Sani 2011) while other examples show museums working across national boundaries in fostering broad humanistic objectives (Fujs 2011).

The impact of globalism "with the effect of homogenizing cultures, transforming a variety of cultures into a single culture of consumerism" (Bell & de-Shalit 2011:5), has heightened a reaction from many who wish to maintain and nurture their own cultures, values, and customs which they see as central to their identity, as well as articulating a moral and aesthetic case for diversity (Bell & de Shalit 2011:5-6). These issues bring into play the question of what kind of city is best able to progress and sustain the aspirations and ideals that underpin the concepts of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities, and Green Cities. This question is discussed later in this paper.

The importance of harnessing heritage and culture in building cohesive communities and sustainable cities is one of the early insights from the PASCAL PIE project. The key role of culture also illustrates the critical importance of values in furthering these objectives and underpinning the development of sustainable cities.

## **From Health and Learning to Well-being**

The conjuncture of Learning City and Healthy City objectives and strategies provides a platform to progress the well-being and quality of life of the whole community.

John Field in a paper on *Well-being and Happiness* prepared for the UK Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning asserted that “the evidence that learning promotes well-being is overwhelming. This has huge implications in a society that is experiencing unprecedented levels of stress, mental illness and anxiety about the future – combined with the adoption of public policies that require individuals to take responsibility for planning against future risk” (Field 2009: 5).

Ways in which education and learning have a measurable impact on well-being in all stages of life involve both collective and individual effects (Field 2009:7).

*Learning encourages social interaction and increases self-esteem and feelings of competency. Behaviours directed by personal goals to achieve something new has been shown to increase reported life satisfaction.*

(New Economic Foundation 2009:46)

Recent research on healthy older adults has confirmed that mental and physical health are strongly correlated with social engagement, and that withdrawal and social isolation are signs of depression or some other illness (Cohen 2005: 125-126). There is irony in the fact that modern technologies while offering so many opportunities for enhancement of life also bring new illnesses and new forms of alienation among citizens.

The growing knowledge base on well-being points to the value of a convergence of Learning City and Healthy City strategies so that lifelong learning, social interaction, and community engagement, and a strategic approach to addressing the social determinants of health will, in their combined effect, promote well-being in cities. The Healthy City is a Learning City.

The convergence of these ideas leads to a concept of well-being along the lines defined by the UK Office of Science:

*A dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to the community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society.*

(Government Office of Science 2008: 10)

Other research on the wider benefits of learning from psychological, health and family life perspectives points to the transforming and sustaining effects of learning across a range of sectors (Schuller et. al. 2004):

*Learning and its benefits are therefore dynamic in a sense that benefits gained in one domain, such as health, impact on functioning in other domains, such as family and community.*

(Bynner & Hammond 2004: 161)

The increased interest in well-being has been accompanied by useful research on experienced well-being (Kahneman 2011), and the development of indicators on well-being by OECD under its *Your Better Life* initiative to guide progress in enhancing well-being (OECD 2011c).<sup>5</sup>

A particular stimulus has been given to current efforts to develop better measures of well-being by the 2009 report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress established at the request of the French President. There has been active follow up on the report by organisations such as OECD (OECD 2011e) to these proposals for the development of better measures of people's well-being and societal progress. Progress in measurement is likely to enhance the policy significance of the concept of well-being.

This growing knowledge base makes a compelling case for a coordinated approach to learning, equity, health and environmental objectives in cities so that synergies and value-added outcomes are achieved. Healthy Cities and Green Cities are each, in their development, Learning Cities.

### **Economic Aspects**

This paper is outlining a case for what I am calling EcCoWell Cities: cities that build on the international experience of the learning city movement while also reaching out to promote the aspirations and objectives of Healthy Cities and Green Cities as sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cities that promote community, a shared identity, and the well-being of all citizens.

In doing this, these cities will foster social capital, while the core objective of building a learning culture with learning opportunities for all throughout life will add to the stock of human capital in these cities and its utilisation in innovative ways.

The process of building social and human capital will provide a foundation for the economic success of these cities in an ever changing world.

The fundamental equity and social justice objectives that the Learning City approach brings, with opportunities for all throughout life, provides a platform to enlarge the stock of human capital in cities while skill objectives that are often built into Learning City initiatives enable goals such as enhancing the capability of the workforce to acquire and utilise key competencies to be strengthened. The ever-growing influence of ICT and media enable innovative approaches to be adopted in the workforce.

Contemporary approaches to skill strategies, as in the OECD Skills Strategy currently in its final stage of development, recognize the need for whole-of-life perspectives in a framework that combines short-term and longer-term objectives, a co-ordinated whole-of-government approach, and with an important role for the social partners (OECD 2011d). This approach fits well with the case for sustainable EcCoWell cities set out in this paper.

The pace of change in contemporary society means that lifelong learning perspectives are crucial in maintaining the skill levels of the workforce and its capacity to adapt to change. Ensuring that these objectives are achieved will require broad partnerships involving all stakeholders. Learning City frameworks can provide a foundation for such alliances to foster innovation and skill while also building up a learning culture in the workforce.

The heritage and cultural sensitivity of EcCoWell cities can also bring economic benefits in a globalised world of mass migration and ever expanding diasporas scattered around the world. The Economist in a briefing on Migration and Business pointed out that mass migration in the

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<sup>5</sup> The OECD Better Life index has been applied in Member countries with country reports available on the OECD web site (OECD 2011c)

Internet age is changing the way people do business (The Economist 19 November 2011: 59-61) with ethnic ties serving as an entrepreneurial springboard.”

In a world with some 215 million first-generation migrants, 40% more than in 1990, diaspora networks are increasingly important in global business activity (The Economist:59) While the significance of Chinese and Indian diasporas is now well known, the potential exists for EcCoWell cities everywhere to take advantage of this phenomenon through an integrated mix of cultural, learning, and economic policies. Identity matters in the globalised society.

### **Beyond Silo Policy and Development**

In this era of complexity, an escalating pace of change and transformation, silo policy and development belongs to the past. Sectoral ideas, while good in themselves, need to be connected in broad holistic strategies that re-enforce and strengthen the objectives of sectoral initiatives.

This reality has been recognised by international agencies such as the European Commission and OECD, and is reflected in the work of these organisations on multilevel governance (EC 2001) and leveraged government (OECD 2011e). Concepts such as the Big Society and Good Society bring in the important dimension of mobilizing civil society in strategies that have active community engagement and support.

The search for new approaches has been enhanced by a crisis in economic development and enhanced inequality, with a decline in trust in government and traditional approaches. As OECD has observed in its recent Forum Newsletter:

*The impact of the most significant economic crisis in our lifetime has led to a general loss of confidence in the ability of policymakers to rise to current challenges. Key stakeholders are calling for a new policy agenda, and new economic and social models that focus not only on growth but openness, fairness and inclusion. There is a general call for a fairer, more equal society with transparency and accountability...*  
(OECD 2012)

In this context, there is a compelling case to connect initiatives such as Learning Cities, Healthy Cities, and Green Cities in holistic strategies that address a range of sectoral objectives in cities that are inclusive, sustainable, and fundamentally democratic, and which foster the well-being of all. Silos have no place in the ever more connected cyber world we inhabit.

## **III. TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE EcCoWell CITIES**

### **Place Making**

The strands of contemporary EcCoWell Cities discussed above need to be brought together in strategies that foster dynamic synergies with value-added outcomes. An important framework for this creative process exists in the concept of place making (or place shaping). Approaching urban development in this way involved a shift of gears described by Landry as a shift from “urban engineering to creative city making” (Landry 2008:xxii)..

Creative place making involves bringing all stakeholders into partnership arrangements that are given coherence and direction by a shared vision. While these partnerships should address the various dimensions of EcCoWell discussed above, all development will be underpinned by strategies to foster lifelong learning opportunities for all and building a sense of community and identity.

The dual character of place making has been defined in the following terms.

*Placemaking is both an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a neighbourhood, city or region. It has the potential to be one of the most transformative ideas of this century. (Metropolitan Planning Council of Chicago)*

Lifelong learning and community building strategies are needed to underpin successful place making, while the visionary nature of place making accords well with the concept of a Learning City.

The founder of New York's Project for Public Spaces, Fred Kent, believes that successful places have four key attributes<sup>6</sup>:

- *they are accessible;*
- *people are engaged in activities;*
- *the space is comfortable and has a good image;*
- *they are sociable and somewhere people can meet.*

These attributes respond to the assertion by Brooks, Glaeser and others that man is essentially a social animal so that the well-being of city populations is best advanced when people are actively engaged in sociable activities (Brooks 2011 : 319; Glaeser 2011: 269). Good Learning City initiatives are directed to this objective with learning strategies instruments for community engagement and empowerment. Health and environment objectives can be progressed in these ways.

Key aspects of place making are well exemplified by consideration of the role of civic spaces in building community and a sense of identity in an urban environment.

Civic spaces have, often in the past, reflect authoritarian values and perspectives, democratisation of cities requires different values and perspectives that are reflected in civic spaces. This is well expressed in the Project for Public Spaces:

*Civic spaces are an extension of the community. When they work well, they serve as a stage for our public lives. If they function in their true civic role, they can be the settings where celebrations are held, where social and economic exchanges take place, where friends run into each other, where cultures mix. They are the "front porches" of our public institutions – post offices, court houses, federal office buildings – where we can interact with each other and with government. Where cities and neighbourhoods have thriving civic spaces, residents have a strong sense of community, conversely where such spaces are lacking, people may feel less connected to each other. Great civic spaces are really great public places.*

(Project for Public Spaces 2011)

We have seen that cultural institutions such as museums, libraries and art galleries, can have a role in conveying this sense of community as, for example, in the social justice approach adopted by museums in Glasgow.

The process of engaging with place in a city provides a context for learning throughout life and for the development of non-cognitive abilities. The attributes of place (its history, culture, natural and social environment) can play a significant role in enhancing the learning process through providing a real world context that fosters on-going learning and development.

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<sup>6</sup> Cited by the Metropolitan Redevelopment Society Western Australia (<http://.....>)

Creative place making involves enhancing the ethos and identity of a place in an interactive process involving the community in building a shared vision and agreed strategies to progress the vision. The local government role is central in this process.

## **The Individual and Society**

The challenges posed by Learning City, Healthy City and Green City objectives draw attention to broad trends in society that make these ideals both harder to achieve, and more socially imperative.

Brooks in *The Social Animal* observed that:

*for a generation, no matter who was in power, the prevailing winds have been blowing in the direction of autonomy, individualism, and personal freedom, not in the direction of society, social obligations and communal bonds.*

(Brooks 2011: 315)

He further cites the philosopher Phillip Blond who argues that the individualistic revolution did not end up creating loose, free societies:

*They produce atomised societies in which the state grows in an attempt to fill the gaps created by social disintegration.*

(Brooks 2011: 318)

This perspective is powerfully put by Blond:

*Look at the society we have become. We are a bi-polar nation, a bureaucratic centralised state that promotes over an increasingly fragmented, disempowered and isolated citizenry.*

(Brooks 2011: 318)

This perceived social disintegration has attracted much discussion following the 2011 UK riots, including considerable exchange on the PASCAL PIE website. In this context, there is a powerful argument that Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities share a common interest in reversing these trends and as collaborating as partners in strengthening social bonds and fostering an ethos and culture of social responsibility and citizenship. The idea of EcCoWell has been brought forward as a vehicle to build such collaboration towards a shared vision of a sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> Century City.

This common interest extends to the kind of democratic society existing in cities that has the capacity, and will, to address the learning, community, health, environment, and well-being issues discussed in this paper.

As Giddens has observed:

*The democratisation of democracy also depends upon the fostering of a strong civic culture. Markets cannot produce such a culture .....Civil society is the arena in which democratic attitudes, including tolerance, have to be developed. The civic sphere can be fostered by government, but is in turn its cultural base.*

Giddens 1999:77-78)

There is, I believe, a common interest across Learning City, Healthy City, and Green City initiatives in building a strong civic culture and sense of social responsibility in cities. They should be active partners in this endeavour.

In progressing in this way from a stripped down society to a densely connected society in which strong bonds exist linking the family to neighbourhood and neighbourhood to city, the learning community, health and environment aspirations discussed in this paper have a context for common action and success.

### **The Path towards Sustainable Development in EcCoWell Cities**

Peter Hall in his monumental *Cities in Civilization* asserts that in attempting to understand why certain cities have experienced periods of great achievement, we should “seek to enter the essence of each place at the time of its belle époque to understand the precise conjuncture of forces that caused it to burst forth as it did” (Hall 1998: 21).

I have taken the position in this paper that cities around the world are confronted by a seeming convergence of forces that underpin key learning, health, environment and cultural objectives. This provides an opportunity to seize this “conjuncture of forces” to develop in a coordinated comprehensive way through partnerships and a shared vision, cities that are sustainable, humane, and that foster learning and well-being for all. I have termed such cities EcCoWell cities. While there is now a significant knowledge base on Learning Cities and Healthy Cities, and a growing base on Green Cities, the path to sustainable EcCoWell Cities is likely to involve a reframing, new paradigms, and a “process of dynamic synergy” (Hall 1998: 18).

*The key is the ability to transfer ideas from one circuit into another – for which, there must be many such circuits.*

(Hall 1998:19)

This process of linking networks in a “process of dynamic synergy” will require frameworks to enable this to happen, a requirement that is becoming increasingly important with the growth of cities in size and diversity. The role of local government councils in this process will be central.

An effective Learning City initiative can provide a moral and ethical framework for stimulating learning throughout life, and building citizenship and a shared sense of identity and community that reaches out to others as well as addressing local concerns through city-based initiatives.. This provides a necessary foundation for addressing issues such as preserving the environment, eradicating poverty, and enhancing health and well-being that are both local and global in their ramifications.

There are layers of connections in cities that can be built on in fostering this process of dynamic synergy, as Landry notes.

*There are layers upon layers of urban interconnections – personal, political and economic- often based on historic migratory patterns such as the bamboo network of expatriate Chinese, who from Vancouver to Sydney are part of China-based trading system.*

(Landry 2008:22)

The experience of rapid growth African cities, such as Dar es Salaam, points to the significance of understanding these layers of urban/rural interconnections as a foundation in the path towards sustainable EcCoWell cities.

With growing diversity in many cities with increased migration, both from rural areas and internationally, responding to diversity is a key challenge on the path to sustainability. This has been termed by Wood and Landry the central dilemma of the age.

*Dealing with and valuing diversity and the desire for distinctiveness is the central dilemma of an age.*

(Wood and Landry 2008:23)

While dealing with diversity will be a challenge for many cities, on the other hand planning for diversity advantage can be a source of cultural riches and creativity that adds to the ethos and spirit of the city (Wood & Landry 2008:10-13)

Achieving diversity advantage in an intercultural city, can often be a matter of the so called “Medici effect”, the convergence of ideas and concepts across related areas of city development which provides opportunities to establish a process of dynamic synergy that will lead to value added outcomes across these sectors., as happened in the burst of creativity in fifteenth century Florence under its Medici rulers (Johansson 2004:2-3).

The concepts of Learning City, Healthy City, and Green City have much in common so that connecting up these concepts, and their linked strategies, will provide opportunities to progress these objectives in humane, sustainable cities. The interaction of ideas at the intersections of these concepts will provide opportunities for breakthrough insights in harnessing the “Medici effect”

The aspirations of Green Cities and Healthy Cities need the humanism that underpins the Learning city concept if they are to flourish and to be sustained in the long term. The Learning City concept will be revitalised through the contemporary relevance of the Green City and Healthy City objectives. There is in this situation a convergence of interest as well as a convergence of common concerns and objectives.

These aspirations will all benefit from the active promotion of a broad concept of lifelong learning for all. Over time, this will contribute to building a learning culture in cities that is receptive to new ideas (Kearns & Papadopoulos 2000).

While the concept of lifelong learning has sometimes been narrowed to a focus on skill and economic development objectives, there is much merit in the assertion by Duke that there is most benefit in widening the scope of lifelong learning “to address the social, civic and sustainable ecological needs of complex ageing societies” (Duke 2011:5). Active partnership in implementing such a concept of lifelong learning will benefit all the aspirations discussed in this paper.

As Edward Glaeser has wisely observed:

*We build civilization and culture together, constantly learning from one another and from the past.*

(Glaeser 2011:269)

A successful Learning City initiative provides an overarching framework and stimulus to harness this process of on-going learning and partnership so as to further share aspirations and contribute to revitalising civilization and culture. This requires a certain boldness of vision, understanding of the past and present, and goodwill in reaching out to others (Ferguson 2011:324-325).

Both the Healthy City and Green City aspirations need the work of successful Learning City initiatives in progressing equity and social justice, opening opportunities for learning and personal development throughout life, and building community and a civic sense of common



interest. Fostering these aspirations will build a platform for furthering health, well-being, environment, and economic objectives.

While historically trade has been the vehicle to spread and deepen civilizations, modern technologies provide an opportunity to foster the interplay of ideas and cultures everywhere in the global marketplace of ideas.

How best to foster this convergence of common interests will require considerable discussion, innovation, and much creativity and good will. Four approaches appear possible:

1. Learning Cities that broaden to progress Healthy City and Green City objectives.
2. Healthy City and Green City initiatives that apply Learning City objectives and strategies.
3. Networks that link Learning City, Healthy City, and Green City initiatives in a particular region, or internationally.
4. New initiatives that adopt the EcCoWell approach from the beginning.

Much would be gained from a mix of these approaches that fostered a rich milieu of innovative ideas and sharing of experience. Such an approach would be most productive if supported by relevant organisations and agencies such as PASCAL, UNESCO, WHO, UNEP, and Green Growth Leaders.

The context discussed in this paper calls for deepened partnerships that explore areas of common interest, mutual aspirations, and strategies that progress all aspirations in value-added ways. This approach goes in the direction of “the deepening recognition of the value and necessity of partnership, pluralism, and the interplay of many perspectives.” (Tarnas 1991:443)

While this paper has had a focus on Learning Cities, Healthy Cities, and Green City initiatives, other relevant networks exist in cities that are relevant to the idea of a good city discussed in this paper. Networking the networks in cities, regionally, and internationally is a key challenge and opportunity. The overarching nature of the Learning City concept affords a key framework in this imperative process of building humane and sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century cities.

Living, learning and growing in sustainable EcCoWell cities provides an opportunity to build a creative synthesis of the ideals and values that have motivated initiatives across education and learning, health, culture, and environment sectors in urban contexts, and to reassert the historic role of cities as the cradles of civilization and culture.

The time for segmented responses is surely past and the path towards sustainable development in 21<sup>st</sup> Century EcCoWell Cities will be one of high interest with many opportunities for creative ideas and innovations.

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