

**Cultural Policies and Activities
for Sustainable Learning Cities, Communities, and Regions**

Rev. 15/12

**A Rolling Workshop
Ostersund, Glasgow, Catania, Pecs
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This paper has been prepared to provide some background and short overviews of selected issues with a set of questions for discussion at the Rolling Workshops which will be held in the period February to May 2015 in Ostersund, Glasgow, Catania, and Pecs to discuss how cultural policies and activities can be developed so as to contribute to sustaining learning cities and regions.

This “rolling workshop” is a collaborative activity of the Harnessing Cultural Policies Network set up under the PASCAL Learning Cities 2020 Networks program. This program has been implemented by the PASCAL International Observatory to examine key issues in building sustainable learning cities for the future.

The title of the paper refers to “Learning Cities, Communities, and Regions” to provide for necessary flexibility in the approach of each workshop. While some workshops may prefer to discuss the issues in a city context, the option exists for a workshop to adopt a learning community or region approach.

The program builds on insights gained from the PASCAL International Exchanges program (PIE) which operated from 2011 to 2013. Stimulus papers on 22 cities around the world may still be read on the [PIE website](#).

Issues relating to the role of cultural policies in building sustainable learning cities have been grouped in the following three clusters:

- I. Cultural diversity, social cohesion, and governance.
- II. Culture and sustainability.
- III. Learning cities and cultural policies.

BACKGROUND

Cultural policies in sustainable learning cities

While the concept of learning cities has received considerable attention in the past year, with a major UNESCO conference in Beijing leading to the Beijing Declaration on Learning Cities and a companion Key Features document, cultural policies have generally not been seen as central to the concept of sustainability in learning cities. Rather, the focus has been on building a learning culture in order to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In this context, the Rolling Workshops will take up the question of the place that cultural policies and activities should have in building sustainable learning in the current environment confronting and challenging all cities.

The context to be addressed

The current context of cities is marked by the on-going impact of globalisation, rampant urbanisation, and on-going technological innovation. Other major changes include the growth of a more individualistic consumer society (Ferguson 2011; Gore 2013) This has led to a world marked by mass migration, increased diversity in cities, the on-going impact of scientific and technological innovation, and the decline of traditional civic and community values and institutions in many places. As Nobel Prize winner Gore observes in his recent book on the future: “never have we experienced so many revolutionary changes unfolding simultaneously and converging with one another” (Gore 2013,pxv). This world of unpredictable radical change and convergence puts a premium on learning in communities everywhere, and raises the question of the role of cultural policies and institutions in this context.

The concept of culture

The PASCAL Ostersund Conference in 2010 noted the broad concept of culture adopted by the 1982 Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies.

In its widest sense, culture may be 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.

Kearns, Kling, & Wistman (ed) 2011,p11.

As Kearns noted in the Introduction to the Ostersund Conference report, culture seen in this broad way is critically important for social and economic development in communities and nations in the context marked by mass migration leading to increased diversity in many communities. The new world of the 21st century calls for the development of intercultural understanding, tolerance, and cultural competence as necessary features of sustainable

cities. Policies to both harness diversity advantage (Wood and Landry 2008) while also building and preserving social cohesion need to be addressed by cities and other communities. Some options for progressing these objectives are discussed below.

Agenda 21 for culture

A useful approach to these issues has been taken by the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) in its Agenda 21 for Culture. This 2004 policy statement sets out principles, undertakings, and recommendations to local, state, and national governments. The principles recognise the centrality of cultural diversity, citing the work of UNESCO in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

A source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary to humanity as biodiversity is for nature.

UNESCO 2004, Article 1.

The principles in Agenda 21 for Culture further include the following proposition relating to cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, testifies to human creativity and forms the bedrock underlying the identity of peoples

ICLG 2004, p20.

The views set out in the PASCAL Ostersund Report and the ICLG Agenda for Culture provide a useful background for the Rolling Workshops in addressing the implications of these views in elaborating the role of cultural policies in building sustainable learning cities. Key issues for discussion are set out below.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

I Cultural diversity, social cohesion, and governance

One of the key issues in addressing the role of culture in building sustainable learning cities for the future is to address tensions that exists between cultural diversity and achieving social cohesion and direction in sustainable cities. As cities become increasingly diverse, this issue moves centre stage.

The case for recognition of cultural diversity is set out in the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and UCLG Agenda 21 for culture, as discussed above. The UNESCO Declaration notes that culture is at the heart of contemporary debates about

identity, social cohesion, and the development of a knowledge based economy (UNESCO 2001, p1).

The Declaration further affirms that respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and co-operation in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security (UNESCO 2001, Article 1).

While this view is compelling in principle, the question for learning cities is what can be done in practical ways to build sustainable learning cities that recognise and value cultural diversity while also achieving social cohesion, a common citizenship, and a clear sense of direction.

As a basis for discussion in the workshops, the following approaches could be considered.

1. The key roles of museums, libraries, and schools

The role of museums and libraries in preserving and interpreting a living heritage is a key role for these institutions. This question was taken up in the PASCAL Ostersund Conference in balancing Heritage, Regional Development, and Social Cohesion (Kearns, Kling, & Wistman 2011). While the important role of schools is also commonly recognised, the issues discussed at Ostersund merit further examination having regard to such developments as innovations in modern information and learning technologies and international progress in understanding the role and features of learning cities.

2. From cultural diversity to cultural pluralism

The UNESCO Declaration recognises that in increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction between diverse groups in progressing from the realities and tensions of cultural diversity to stable societies built around cultural pluralism. Examples of the role of museums as places for international dialogue illustrate the contribution that museums can make in responding to growing diversity (Bodo, Gibbs, & Sani ed 2009). Similar studies are needed to illustrate good practice examples in the work of libraries and schools. The question for the Rolling Workshops is what learning city concepts and strategies can contribute to enhancing the role and impact of these institutions in this process.

3. A neighbourhood approach with the city seen as a beehive

There is a view that diversity is best addressed at a local neighbourhood level where cultural learning can occur driven by the roles of institutions such as schools, libraries, community colleges, and museums.. The idea of a city as a collection of neighbourhoods has been taken up by a few cities with examples provided in the PIE stimulus papers by New York and Sydney (Kearns 2012, Read 2013).

While this is an attractive perspective which can be seen as promoting democratic values, active citizenship, and learning opportunities throughout life when well implemented, the question arises as to how a city as a collection of neighbourhoods can achieve social cohesion and direction in a world of constant change.

One response to this question was developed by Hollis in his book on cities was to adopt the metaphor of the city as a beehive to reflect human society in an urban environment (Hollis 2013,p27). The beehive metaphor reflects the view that a complex sustainable city should be built from the bottom up rather than top down, with the energy and vitality of local streets and neighbourhoods driving this process. Such an approach could also be seen as driving the creation of a culture-rich city if cultural policies are integrated with neighbourhood development supported by policies in such areas as place making.

4. The creative city approach

The beehive metaphor points to the value of a local neighbourhood approach as one with the potential to enhance the creativity of a city.

The interaction of diverse elements in a city has been termed by Johansson “the Medici effect” to reflect the influences that drove creativity in the fifteenth century city of Florence under its Medici rulers. Johansson’s thesis that breakthrough insights commonly occur at the intersection of ideas, concepts, and cultures makes a case for harnessing diversity in communities as a source of creative outcomes. Much can be achieved in local neighbourhoods through learning community frameworks while modern information technologies extend the reach of communities anywhere around the globe so as to enhance the potential for “the Medici effect”. Cultural outcomes stand to benefit from active policies directed at “the Medici effect”

Effective cultural policies and institutions bring an essential quality to building creative cities: imagination. Imaginative reconstruction of the past provides a platform for building an imaginative vision of the future.

5. Balancing top down and bottom up

The case set out above for a neighbourhood approach in learning cities raises the question as to whether there are ways of balancing the advantages of top down and bottom up approaches.

A good example of strategies that do this is provided by Chinese learning cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. The overview stimulus papers for these cities in the PASCAL PIE collection show that learning city planning and development occurs at three levels in these cities : the city overall, the administrative district (there are usually 16 to 18 administrative districts in these cities), and at the local neighbourhood level (Huang

2013; Yuan 2012). This tripartite division of roles enables the things that are best done at each level to occur there.

A point of interest is that this tripartite approach corresponds to the ideas of the American urbanist Jane Jacobs who identifies the same three levels of the neighbourhood, the district or sub-city, and the city overall (Jacobs 1992,p117-140). Jacobs regards these roles as complementary with the district, for example, mediating between the neighbourhood and the city. The question arises in situations where the district level does not exist of how to connect neighbourhoods to the governance and strategic directions of the city. Jacobs also suggests that much is to be gained by overlapping and interweaving neighbourhoods (Jacobs, p130).

6. Culture and sustainability

The second set of issues raised for the workshops relate to cultural policies and sustainability, The question of sustainable development in cities has received considerable attention in recent years including the approach built around the three pillars of economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental balance endorsed by the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit of 1992. The omission of culture from these pillars has attracted considerable attention from bodies such as UNESCO and the United Cities and Local Governments organisation. UCLG has argued that culture should be recognised as the fourth pillar of sustainable development (UCLG 2010).

The question for the Rolling Workshops is how cultural policies might interact with economic, social inclusion, and environment policies, in the context of learning city development, so as to enhance the sustainability of cities.

7. Learning cities and cultural policies

The concept of learning cities has been given a boost by the UNESCO Conference on Learning Cities held in Beijing in October 2013 which led to the Beijing Declaration on Learning Cities and the companion Key Features of Learning Cities. These documents define the most developed model of a learning city in international discourse. While culture features in this model, there is a question as to whether the key relationships between culture and sustainability are sufficiently taken into account in the UNESCO model.

The Beijing Declaration and Key Features may be read on the web site of the UNESCO [Institute for Lifelong Learning](#). Attachment 1 of this paper provides a brief overview and raises the question whether the key role of cultural policies in contributing to sustainability is sufficiently taken into account.

The Beijing documents provide a significant contribution to the great challenge of building sustainable learning cities in a range of contexts. However, the value lies in the detail and the practical ways in which policies for this purpose are implemented in different contexts. The attached note suggests that there would be value in rethinking the role of culture in building learning cities, especially the key relationship between culture and sustainability, having regard to the issues raised in this paper. Context matters, and building an archive of practical policies in a range of contexts would contribute significantly to harmonising strategies to build culture rich sustainable learning cities.

Outcomes of the Rolling Workshops

This paper has raised a number of important issues relating to the role of cultural policies in building sustainable learning cities. While each workshop has been requested to prepare a short report, perhaps about two pages, to pass on to the other participating workshops so that participants in the workshops can share views and experience, and react to the ideas raised in each of the workshops, it is recognised that there are limits as to how far a coherent policy can emerge from this context of short workshops.

For this reason, the Rolling Workshops may be regarded as the first step in the work of the Harnessing Cultural Policies Network of PASCAL in examining these issues, leading to a paper for the 2-5 June 2016 PASCAL International Conference to be hosted by the University of Glasgow.

It will be for each workshop, and each participant in the Cultural Policies Network, to decide how best to follow up on the workshop in contributing to the final report of the Network for the 2016 PASCAL International Conference. For example, practical examples might be sought of good practice ways in which cultural policies can be advanced in the context of building sustainable learning cities that are responsive to 21st century conditions. This will involve a shift in the work of the Network from the perspectives of individual cultural institutions to a strategic view of the role of cultural policies and institutions in building sustainable learning cities for the future. The work of bodies such as the UCLG Agenda 21 on culture will be useful in gaining such broader perspectives, while consideration should also be given to the cultural policies of cities such as Pecs, Catania, Glasgow, and Ostersund. Overall, the Rolling Workshops should be seen as a step towards such broader and more strategic perspectives.

For discussion

The questions that follow have been prepared for discussion in the workshops. As indicated above, each workshop may respond to these questions from the perspectives of communities, regions, or cities.

1. What do you see as the role of museums and libraries in small regional towns and cities in contributing to building sustainable learning communities and regions?
2. In what ways can cultural policies and institutions contribute to the sustainability and creativity of cities in adapting to rapidly changing conditions?
3. What steps should a city take to merit being designated “a city of culture”?
4. How can local neighbourhoods in cities or regions be made more vibrant and culturally rich as building blocks of a city or region of culture”?
5. In what ways can diversity and social cohesion be balanced in learning cities so as to both enrich the culture of the city and contribute to the coherence and sustainability of the city?

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