

**PIE FUTURES**  
**-Towards a Vision for Learning Cities 2020**

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This paper has been prepared to encourage discussion of future directions for the PASCAL International Exchanges project of PASCAL beyond the PASCAL International Conference in Hong Kong in November 2013. A set of eight possible objectives for the future are discussed in the paper. 2013 has been envisaged as a year of reflection for PIE with as number of PIE 2013 Events held in cities involved in PIE, leading up to the Hong Kong conference which will consider the subject *Cities learning together : Local communities in the sustainable and healthy learning city*. This subject reflects the PIE experience during 2011-2013, and provides an appropriate platform for reflection and discussion on the future of PIE, and on sustainable learning cities in general. As a long term vision and perspectives are essential, this paper is seen as an initial step towards a vision for learning cities 2020.

PIE was inaugurated in January 2011 by PASCAL to provide for low-cost online exchanges of information and experience between cities around the world. While PIE grew out of evolving ideas about learning communities and cities, participation did not require that a city had been formally declared to be a learning city, although a number do share this aspiration.

PIE was experimental in testing how the Internet could be used to build exchanges of ideas and experience without the costs of traditional visits by teams of experts, as in the PURE project for example. Key features of the PIE experience during 2011-2013 have included a growing diversity in participation, conceptual development of the learning city idea, and shifts in the context of PIE. These features are relevant to consideration of future directions for PIE.

There is no cost for participation in PIE. A short stimulus paper on the city is provided with a set of questions to foster online discussion. All papers may be read on the PIE web site <http://pie.pascalobservatory.org>

## Growing diversity

PIE was initiated in 2011 with papers on a number of European cities, coupled with an Australian and Canadian city. These were the traditional homes of the learning city concept, and the initial round of PIE stimulus papers reflected traditional ideas about learning cities in promoting learning in all forms and many contexts, addressing disadvantage, and building community. The initial impact of diversity arose when stimulus papers were prepared for a number of African cities demonstrating problems in city development and social justice of a far greater magnitude than anything emerging from the traditional home of the learning city idea.

The major impact of diversity then came in 2012 and 2013 when stimulus papers were prepared for a number of East Asian cities in China, the Republic of Korea, and Japan. These were papers for Beijing, Shanghai, Jida, Gwang Myeong, Seoul, joining the earlier 2011 paper for Hong Kong.

East Asia is undoubtedly the contemporary centre of creative learning city development, a reality recognised in the development of the International Platform for Learning Cities proposed by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) to be launched in Beijing in October 2013. Learning city development in China, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan (China) is intimately connected to the needs and outcomes of rapid socio-economic development in these countries/territories, while the more complex situation in Japan, with shifts in policy for lifelong learning, is well brought out in the PIE paper by Atsushi Makino.

The introduction of East Asian learning cities into PIE exchanges in 2012 and 2013 has introduced a number of significant themes into the PIE exchanges, including the following.

- ⌚ Developing learning city initiatives in mega cities the size of Shanghai and Beijing.
- ⌚ Developing sustainable local communities in large cities.
- ⌚ The enhanced significance of social objectives in sustaining rapid economic development.
- ⌚ The cultural issues raised by globalisation and rapid urbanisation.

Some of these themes and issues have been brought into the PASCAL Hong Kong conference : local communities in cities, sustainability, directions for learning cities, and the fundamental role and value of cities learning together as in the PIE project and the International Platform for Learning Cities. A key insight lies in the recognition that the learning city strategy can be applied successfully in mega cities as large as

Shanghai and Beijing. How such strategies can be applied in smaller cities in the West and sustained is an issue for the Hong Kong conference.

While learning cities in East Asia have contributed much, there have also been valuable insights from cities in Europe and Australia involved in PIE. These have included the following.

- ⌚ Cork and Limerick have demonstrated the value of Lifelong Learning Festivals in opening up pathways to building sustainable learning cities, including the EcCoWell initiative in Cork while Limerick is responding to the challenge of extending its learning city initiative across the whole county following the merging of Limerick City and County Councils.
- ⌚ Bielefeld has shown how a learning assessment of a whole city can be undertaken using methodology developed initially in Canada for its Composite Learning Index and then applied in Europe with ELLI as a basis for follow up projects addressing disadvantage.
- ⌚ Glasgow has shown how cultural institutions can have an important social role and serve as a vehicle for promoting social justice in a city.
- ⌚ Hume has demonstrated how a sustained response to disadvantage can be undertaken over a decade fuelled by social justice principles and with the active support of a local government council.
- ⌚ Bari has illustrated broad partnership action in a city in addressing crime and fostering safety.
- ⌚ Sydney has shown how local communities can be vitalised through its Urban Villages initiative connected to strategic directions for the city as a whole.
- ⌚ New York illustrates how local neighbourhoods in big cities can be strengthened through place making ideas, the role of civil society organisations, entrepreneurial initiatives by individuals, and action to preserve and enhance the heritage of neighbourhoods, with the cumulative impact of these influences over time shaping the ethos, spirit, and culture of neighbourhoods.

These examples, when coupled with the insights from the East Asian experience, reflect the rich pool of ideas and experience that is now available through PIE, and which can be built on in the next stage of PIE experience.

It is well known that diversity can be a source of creativity in communities and organisations (Landry 2008; Hall 1998; Johansson 2004) so that the challenge exists to develop post-Hong Kong arrangements in ways that enhance the creative pay-off from diverse cities learning together. Diversity can also be a creative influence within cities as the urbanist Jane Jacobs reminds us.

*My observations and conclusions thus far sum up to this : In our American cities, we need all kinds of diversity, intricately mingled in mutual support. We need this so city life can work decently and constructively, and so the people of cities can sustain (and further develop) their society and civilization (Jacobs, 1992, p242)*

In addition to the practical advantages of a creative approach to diversity, there is also a moral case for recognising and harnessing diversity as Bell and de\_Shalit assert.

*Partly, it is a moral case for diversity- different kinds of cities add to the possibilities of forms of social and political life. (Bell & de\_Shalit 2011,p6)*

## **Conceptual development**

Ideas about learning cities have evolved during 2011-2013 in line with growing diversity in participation in PIE, and shifts in the context of PIE.

Central to this development has been the EcCoWell project of PIE which has advocated more integrated and holistic approaches to learning cities which bring together the aspirations and objectives of Healthy Cities, Green Cities, Cultured Cities, Creative Cities, and Learning Cities. These ideas are set out in the EcCoWell paper on the PIE web site (<http://pie.pascalobservatory.org>) .

The emergence of the EcCoWell idea is timely with the on-going impact of globalisation and rampant urbanisation, and the enhanced significance of environment and health issues in the continued expansion of cities in the current global economic context. Both environment and health will figure in the strands of the Hong Kong conference, while the social and economic strands of the conference will take up the complex question of how sustainable successful cities can balance and progress social, economic, environmental, and health objectives simultaneously.

While the conceptual work on EcCoWell opens up these questions, there are practical issues as to how an EcCoWell approach might be implemented. These questions have been taken up by Cork which mounted an EcCoWell seminar during its Tenth Lifelong

Learning Festival in March 2013 with the author of this paper as lead speaker. Cork will follow up by convening an International Seminar in September 2013 to address the subject *Cities for the Future: Learning from the Global to the Local*.

Consideration of issues thrown up by the initial phase of PIE development has been progressed by a series of meetings during 2013 under the PIE 2013 Events program. This has involved meetings in Cork, Limerick, Glasgow (Strathclyde and Glasgow Universities), Dumfries, and Hume. A further meeting is set for Shanghai on 15 November prior to the Hong Kong conference.

### **Shifts in the context of PIE**

A number of developments since January 2011 have produced, in their cumulative impact, shifts in the context of PIE that will need to be taken into account in consideration of future directions for PIE beyond the Hong Kong conference. While these include various socio-economic and political developments, they also include:

- ⌚ development by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning of the International Platform for Learning Cities to be launched at a conference in Beijing in October 2013;
- ⌚ recognition that Learning Cities and Educating Cities share much in common although they have developed as separate networks;
- ⌚ an enhanced recognition of sustainability issues with the growth of various initiatives to progress development in sustainable ways.
- ⌚ an enhanced recognition that current approaches to health systems are not sustainable in the long term.

The International Platform for Learning Cities proposed by UIL will give a boost to the development of learning cities around the world. This initiative is being accompanied by the development of an assessment tool called Key Features of Learning Cities which will enable there to be a better assessment of progress in building successful learning cities. Progress in assessment is perhaps the big achievement of recent years with the pioneering work undertaken by the Canadian Council on Learning with its Composite Learning Index taken across to Europe with the ELLI project (European Lifelong Learning Indicators), and then applied in individual communities such as Bielefeld.

While Learning Cities and Educating Cities had a common origin in the work of OECD on city strategies for lifelong learning (Hirsch 1992), they have gone separate ways since the nineteen nineties with a large network of Educating Cities now existing with a secretariat in Barcelona. Their common interests have been highlighted this year with a forthcoming special issue of the UNESCO International Review of Education

which will include papers on both Learning Cities and Educating Cities (Osborne, Kearns, Yang ed). This points to the potential of enhanced collaboration between networks of Learning Cities and Educating Cities.

Sustainability is now widely seen as central to achieving successful twenty first century cities. This concept has been brought into PASCAL EcCoWell development, and it will be an important theme in the Hong Kong conference.

There is also growing recognition that current approaches to health systems will not be sustainable in the long term with demographic change and rising costs, so that a search for new approaches has gained momentum (World Economic Forum & McKinsey & Company 2013, Australian Business Council 2013). This theme has also been built into the Hong Kong conference.

### **Cities learning together**

The experience of PIE during 2011-2013 points to the value of cities learning together through an instrument such as PIE. This value has been enhanced over these years as PIE has grown and become more diverse in participation, and as local events built into the PIE 2013 Events have been added. The initiative taken by Cork with its EcCoWell activity suggests the potential of various mixes of local and systemic action under the PIE project.

PIE has tested the value of learning across frontiers (Kearns & Schofield 1997) as a means of gaining fresh insights into local conditions and the complex challenges confronting cities. PIE itself has been a learning journey with the mix that emerged in 2013 of online PIE postings, PIE local events, and a culminating conference that provides a platform to a further stage of development the richest outcome to date of the PIE experience.

While we have concluded that in a global world with exponential change and rampant urbanisation, there is much value in cities learning together, we also believe that the PIE methodology has the potential for further refinement, and we look to the Hong Kong conference and discussions in PIE cities during the remaining months of 2013 to chart the shape and dynamics of Future PIE.

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### **A new agenda for PIE**

The PASCAL Hong Kong conference may be regarded as the conclusion of the initial stage of PIE development over 2011-2013, and the launching pad for a new stage from 2014 onwards.

Insights emerging from the initial stage of PIE development in relation to the Hong Kong agenda have been summarised in a companion paper written for the conference titled *Cities Learning Together : the PIE experience*. This shows that PIE has been useful in bringing innovative approaches to learning city development to notice, and in laying a foundation of ideas and strategies that could be built on in the development of successful 21<sup>st</sup> century cities. How best to do this, is the challenge for Hong Kong.

As a basis for discussion in Hong Kong, and among cities involved in PIE in the months leading up to the conference, the following objectives are suggested for a possible post-Hong Kong PIE agenda.

1. Implementing EcCoWell principles
2. Building LoGoCo cities
3. Extending PIE to new regions
4. Strategies for least developed countries
5. Fostering regional collaboration
6. Sharing ideas and experience more widely
7. Growing learning cities to regions
8. Reviewing progress.

Comment follows on these options.

#### **1. Implementing EcCoWell principles**

Conceptual work undertaken by PASCAL during 2012-2013 on EcCoWell, with follow up work undertaken by Cork, provides a good basis for innovations in the

implementation of more holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable city development. A network of cities collaborating in these areas could achieve much.

## **2. Building Lo Go Co cities**

One of the main insights emerging from PIE in 2012-2013 is the need to build both local and global perspectives into sustainable city development. This is shown in strategies adopted by cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Sydney. The Cork International Seminar in September 2013 was scheduled to discuss this subject as *Cities for the Future : Learning from Global to the local. The inclusion of the local community theme in the Hong Kong conference should provide a good basis for significant development in 2014 onwards*

## **3. Extending PIE to new regions**

Pie has had most development in Europe, East Asia, and Africa. However, there has been little learning city development in areas such as South Asia where major problems exist resulting from rapid urban growth. PIE provides a vehicle to test innovative approaches. Extending PIE to new regions should be a priority.

## **4. Strategies for least developed countries**

Recent PIE development has been in major cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul, and Sydney. However, significant problems exist in towns and cities in the least developed countries where community learning strategies could make a contribution. This is an area for significant innovation in adapting insights gained from European, Australian, and East Asian initiatives to meeting needs in least developed countries. A Learning Towns network within PIE is one option while a mentoring strategy might be adopted.

## **5. Fostering regional collaboration**

PIE stimulus papers from African cities show that while significant problems exist in these cities resulting from rapid unplanned urban growth, there has been little development of the learning city approach in sub-Saharan Africa. The potential for regional collaboration would seem to be significant if ways can be found to organise and fund such collaboration. Building regional collaboration in Africa could provide a model for other regions.

## **6. Sharing ideas and experience**

With the development of the International Platform for Learning Cities in 2013, several networks of Learning Cities/Educating Cities will exist : the UIL Platform, Educating Cities, and PIE. Much could be gained from a systematic sharing of ideas



and experience. Relations to date have been ad hoc, a case for more systematic exchanges exists.

### **7. Growing learning cities into regions**

The rapid growth of cities with mass migration from rural areas has often been a barrier to sustained development of such rural areas and towns. Current developments in Limerick provide an example of this need with the merging of Limerick City and County Councils, while the PIE stimulus papers on African cities demonstrate the need. Other cities interested in the need might join Limerick in exploring innovative ways to progress this requirement.

### **8. Reviewing progress**

2013 has been a big year for learning city development with the UNESCO and PASCAL initiatives. The need to develop links between the International Platform for Learning Cities, the Educating City network, and PIE so as to share ideas and experience has been identified above, along with various objectives for the future of PIE. In this context, much could be gained by reviewing progress in say three years time. This might be undertaken, for example, through a joint PASCAL, Educating Cities, and UNESCO conference, perhaps in 2016. If this idea receives general support, it would be useful if a city offered to host this conference to enable ample time for careful preparation, preferably in a region yet to have a PASCAL conference.

### **Towards a vision for Learning Cities 2020**

This paper has been prepared to distill key insights from the PIE experience over 2011-2013, and to inaugurate a dialogue on key objectives for PIE futures beyond 2013. While the paper mainly draws on PIE city stimulus papers, it needs to be borne in mind that other resources exist on the PIE web site relevant to Learning Cities 2020, particularly PIE Themes and the EcCoWell initiative of PASCAL. Exchanges on key themes such as Mobilising Civil Society, ICT and Media, Cultural Policy, and Preserving the Environment are surely relevant to any vision for Learning Cities 2020, and need to be considered, while the launch of the International Platform for Learning Cities is a major influence and achievement.

Coming PIE Events 2013 also provide opportunities to develop ideas on Learning Cities 2020 in innovative directions with the Cork International Seminar on 26-27 September directly relevant with its subject *Cities for the Future : Learning from the Global to the Local. This will be followed by the Shanghai seminar on 15 November, prior to the Hong Kong conference.*

While the list of possible objectives for PIE Futures beyond 2013 are directed at policy and strategy options, it also needs to be borne in mind that the learning city aspiration is at root a moral idea that takes forward us to our vision for the future of Planet Earth and its inhabitants, and back to the aspirations of the great UNESCO Faure and Delors reports. PIE has been experimental from its inception, where will this experiment take us now?

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