



PASCAL International Observatory

Briefing Paper 10

Developing holistic and integrated learning cities: Health and EcCoWell

Peter Kearns, *Board Member, Pascal International Observatory*

Executive Summary

PASCAL developed the EcCoWell concept in 2012 as an approach to holistic and integrated development in learning cities. Whilst the concept integrates environment, health and well-being, economy, and community with lifelong learning, the core of EcCoWell development up to now has focussed on the integration of health, learning, and environment with community building. The cities of Cork and Taipei have been leaders in applying EcCoWell concepts in their development.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with their plea for integrated development of the Goals, and the recent UNESCO Third International Conference on Learning cities held in Cork in September this year have given a new significance to the EcCoWell concept.

The Cork Call for Action included a concept of Green Healthy Learning Cities (reflecting the EcCoWell core strands) as a basis for learning city development that was inclusive and equitable, and which fostered entrepreneurship and decent work.

Concepts such as EcCoWell need to be adapted to changing conditions. A review has been undertaken for the PASCAL Board; the report of the review, *Rethinking EcCoWell*, is available on the PASCAL web site, and recommends implementing an extended concept of EcCoWell as a suitable entry point for implementing the UN SDGs on an evolutionary basis. The rationale is given in the *Rethinking EcCoWell* report.

The issues

Silo developments in cities across a spectrum of dimensions such as environment, health, economic development, community building and learning remain common in cities everywhere. The emergence of the United Nations SDGs, accompanied by the call for a holistic and integrated approach to implementation of the SDGs, has enhanced the need for a holistic approach to city and smaller communities' development that can also accommodate progressing these goals in such communities.

The addition of new areas to EcCoWell 2 (entrepreneurship, happiness, implementing the UN SDGs in cities) raises further questions about how these objectives can be progressed in a developed framework. As these objectives involve significant cultural change, more comprehensive approaches to learning city development will be required, involving schools as well as post-secondary institutions and partners.

Learning city initiatives have largely been developed for urban areas up to now. However, the UN SDGs need to be implemented in rural areas as well, if this agenda is to be achieved. Innovative concepts, such as entrepreneurial learning city regions, are emerging as ways to connect development in rural areas adjacent to cities. The UNESCO *Cork Call to Action* recognised the need for "extending the scope and benefits to cities' "surrounding areas" (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) 2017:2). However, ways need to be found to extend learning community ideas into towns and villages in rural areas. Considerable innovation, including innovative forms of partnership will be required.

Some implications of recent work

Recent work with implications for health and EcCoWell include the following:

- ① The *Rethinking EcCoWell* review of EcCoWell experience;
- ① The *Cork Call to Action* on learning city development;
- ① Research undertaken on implementing the UN SDGs; and
- ① A book entitled recently published, *Entrepreneurial Learning City Regions* (James, Preece, & Valdes-Cotera 2017)
- ① The [Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods](#) (SHLC), funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council under the [Global Challenges Research Fund](#) and based at the University of Glasgow.

The *Rethinking EcCoWell* report provides an expanded analysis of the EcCoWell experience and its lessons. One insight involves localising the idea into Learning Neighbourhoods with valuable pilot projects in Cork and Taipei reported.

The *Cork Call to Action* on learning cities included a useful Guide to Action with examples from the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities of initiatives taken by cities such as fostering green healthy learning environments, and achieving equity and inclusion. These are useful in showing a range of implementation options in different contexts.

The arrival of the UN SDGs has stimulated a body of research on how best to implement the SDGs. Several of the most useful studies are discussed in the *Rethinking EcCoWell* report (pp. 9-10), including a report from the International Council for Science. This research points to the large number of linkages and interactions between each of the 17 SDGs, and the overall complexity of these relationships. These features make the case for a suitable entry point to implement the SDGs in cities and smaller communities that simplifies the process, and which can be well communicated to communities.

The EcCoWell core of environment, health, and learning provides such an entry point which is replicated in the UNESCO Green, Healthy, Learning Cities trio of strands from the *Cork Call to Action*. This also makes a case for collaboration between PASCAL and UIL in implementing post-Cork learning cities.

The recent book *Enterprising Learning City Regions* provides another recent development that has implications for implementing EcCoWell 2. The learning city region concept is discussed above. There is a need to find good ways to connect urban and adjacent rural areas for learning city and region development, including the use of digital technologies, the roles of universities and colleges, and collaborative governance arrangements.

Health and learning

It is evident that World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Healthy Cities initiative and Learning Cities developments share much in common. This common interest can be progressed in cities where Healthy Cities and Learning Cities both exist with collaborative arrangements, as is the case in Cork with its EcCoWell development.

These common interests include the social determinants which influence both health and learning outcomes. WHO has done a good deal of work on the social determinants of health which is also relevant to progressing education and learning outcomes in cities.

WHO in 2011 defined a Healthy City in the following terms.

A Healthy City is one that is continually creating and 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 developing to their maximum potential. (WHO 2011).

This could be a definition of a Learning City. It illustrates the close connections between health and learning. Effective Healthy Cities, such as Cork, which are committed to EcCoWell objectives address the social determinants of health and educational participation, and achievement. In the case of Cork, data from its 'City Profile' is used in identifying districts where social disadvantage affects health and education outcomes. Strategies such as Health Promoting Schools can be useful.

Where Healthy City and Learning City initiatives exist in a city, a range of joint projects can be undertaken to progress health and learning objectives at the same time. In many cities, such collaboration can be given a structure where health and learning objectives exist in strategic planning for the city. Typical examples of joint projects include addressing mental health in youth, health and learning objectives in active ageing, health, learning and gender equity, health and learning objectives in age-friendly cities, and using the internet for health and learning information.

Implications for policy and practice

These developments have a range of implications for EcCoWell policy and practice. These are reflected in the conclusions and recommendations for EcCoWell 2 set out in the Rethinking EcCoWell report. They include the following.

- 🕒 EcCoWell 2 can serve to implement the concept of a learning city as set out in the Cork Call to Action.

- ⌚ EcCoWell 2 can serve as a convenient entry point for implementation of the UN SDGs on an evolutionary basis from the EcCoWell core of health, environment, and learning.
- ⌚ The EcCoWell 2 model can be implemented in rural as well as urban areas in communities of any size, including villages and towns.
- ⌚ Innovations in learning neighbourhoods should continue and be extended within the EcCoWell 2 concept.
- ⌚ Experience in fostering entrepreneurship in EcCoWell communities should be promoted at the school level.
- ⌚ Happiness objectives should be built into EcCoWell 2 objectives and strategies at all stages of the life cycle.
- ⌚ PASCAL and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning should share experiences in implementing EcCoWell 2 and the *Cork Call to Action*.

Recommended action

- ⌚ EcCoWell 2 should be implemented as proposed in the *Rethinking EcCoWell* report with collaboration with the UIL where this is feasible
- ⌚ The policy implications listed above should be considered in implementation.
- ⌚ A report on implementation should be prepared for the 15th PASCAL International Conference in Suwon in 30-31 August 2018.

Key Sources

James, J., Preece, J., & Valdes-Cotera, R. (Eds.) (2017). *Entrepreneurial Learning City Regions*. Cham: Springer

Kearns, P. (2012). *Living and Learning in Sustainable Opportunity Cities*. Accessed 29 November 2017 from <http://pobs.cc/15i2u>.

Kearns, P. (2017). *Rethinking EcCoWell in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals*. Forthcoming on <http://pie.pascalobservatory.org>.

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2017) *Cork Call to Action*. Accessed 5 November 2017 from https://d14ujlzb3m57xe.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/cork-call-to-action_final-draft.pdf.

United Nations. (2015). *Sustainable development goals*. Accessed 29 November 2017 from <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

World Health Organisation. (2011). *Healthy Cities: Health promotion glossary*. <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HPR%20Glossary%201998.pdf> Accessed 29 November 2011.

World Health Organisation. (2008). *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health*. Geneva: WHO.

The PASCAL International Observatory can help promote and validate innovative solutions. Experts in our Learning Cities Network can:

- ⌚ Address university leaders at the Vice-Chancellor level, city leaders including mayors, the administrators who do things, and policy-makers at regional and national level.

- ⌚ *Reach the development and philanthropic sectors by producing a stand-alone report and an active web site.*
- ⌚ *Inform and engage local business leaders who can help define educational and skill needs and promote entrepreneurship especially among young people.*
- ⌚ *Identify research priorities for foundations and national research councils.*

Contact us through our website <http://pascalobservatory.org>