EcCoWell

LIVING AND LEARNING IN SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITY CITIES

Summary

A Clarifying Working Paper
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PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE)

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FOREWORD

This paper has been prepared for the PASCAL: Hong Kong conference in November 2013 to provide a short summary of the work PASCAL has undertaken under its Program of International Exchanges (PIE) to encourage more holistic and integrated approaches to building sustainable learning cities able to respond in a proactive way to the many challenges confronting cities.

This development by PASCAL has been given the name EcCoWell to signify key dimensions in such an integrated approach. The full EcCoWell paper, titled *Living and Learning in Sustainable Opportunity Cities,* may be read and downloaded on the EcCoWell section of the PIE web site (http://pie.pascalobservatory.org).

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. An EcCoWell approach may be seen as a stimulus to innovation and deeper partnerships between stakeholders in cities guided by a shared vision and ideals.

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. It is hoped the Hong Kong conference will generate insights into ways in which EcCoWell principles can be progressed.
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The PASCAL Hong Kong conference in November 2013 is focussed on the theme "*Cities Learning Together"* with a sub-theme "*Local Communities in the Sustainable and Healthy Learning City"* These themes will be examined through four strands : Environment, Health, Social, and Economic. The EcCoWell approach is relevant to each of these strands, and to the question of how integration of these strands can be achieved, both in local communities and at the level of the city overall. As the number of cities participating in the PASCAL International Exchanges has increased, further insights into these questions have become available.

The city of Cork arranged a seminar on the EcCoWell approach during the Tenth Cork Lifelong Learning Festival in March 2013 with the author of this paper participating. There will be follow up with an international seminar in late September on the subject "*Cities for the Future: Learning Global to Local"*. The Cork initiative is discussed in Part III below.

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.

<div align="right">Peter Kearns</div>

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 21st century environment
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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.

A good statement of the aspirations and ideals that underpin the concept of a Learning City exits in a definition by Norman Longworth (1999: 109):

> *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.*

This statement points to the entwined individual and community development objectives of Learning Cities, the equity and social justice thrusts in the concern for "all its human potential", and the aspirations to build communities that foster person development, social cohesion and economic prosperity.

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.[1] 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. Twenty cities across five continents are currently participating in this project with further cities expected to join shortly.[2]

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). 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 and the EcCoWell concept

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

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[1] 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 communties 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).
[2] The cities are Glasgow, Kaunas, Bielefeld, Bari, Cork, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Hong Kong, Hume Global Learning Village (Melbourne), Vancouver.

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.*
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> <div align="right">(Raphael 2004)</div>

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

The EcCoWell paper discusses Healthy City principles and values, such as equity, partnership, participation and empowerment, and sustainable development, and shows that they have much in common with the values that drive successful Learning Cities.

Green Cities

Green Cities (or Eco Cities) also share much in common with Learning Cities and also depend on community learning, partnership, and a shared vision to progress "green objectives" in a city. Eco-community projects and community gardens can be a valuable stimulus to community learning and building citizenship and a shared identity in a community.

There is also a notion that green growth is about more than environment and ecology. This is well articulated by the Green Growth Leaders in a statement about the socio-economic benefits of green development in Copenhagen.

> *Green must, therefore, been 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.*
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> <div align="right">(Green Growth Leaders 2011: 5)</div>

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.*
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> <div align="right">(OECD 2011: 10)</div>

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. A range of other statements cited in the EcCoWell paper support a broad concept of sustainability resting on the pillars of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. It will be a challenge for the PASCAL Hong Kong conference to think in these broad integrated terms.

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.

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.

The EcCoWell paper cites a number of examples where cultural issues have been central in development, and comments on the role of cultural institutions taking Glasgow as an example.

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.*

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.*

The EcCoWell paper adopts a broad concept of well being that shows the intimate connections between learning and health objectives in Learning City and Healthy City aspirations
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Economic Aspects

The EcCoWell paper explores the economic implications of development focussed around EcCoWell principles. These include building social ,human, and identity capital, and the range of benefits that flow from a learning culture that is responsive to change. These benefits will be explored in the Hong Kong conference.

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.

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

Section III of the EcCoWell paper takes up a number of aspects that bear on the implementation of EcCoWell principles. These include place making, trends in the balance of individual and social good, and the role of civil society. There is growing interest in place making around the world in a shift from urban engineering to creative place making. The convergence of learning city ideas and creative place making has much to offer. Examples are given of the work of the New York based Project for Public Spaces.

Trends towards greater autonomy, individualism, and social disintegration in a number of countries are discussed as barriers to achieving sustainable learning cities that are able to progress environment, community health, and inclusion objectives in cities that are liveable and competitive.

The paper suggests that Learning Cities, Healthy Cities, and Green Cities share a common interest in reversing such trends where they exist, and in 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, inclusive, and successful 21st century city.

This common interest extends to the kind of democratic society that exists in sustainable cities that have the capacity, vision, and will to address the learning, community, health, environment, and well-being issues discussed in the EcCoWell paper.

The Path Towards Sustainable Development in EcCoWell Cities

Implementation of EcCoWell principles is essentially an innovative learning process that depends on the goodwill, vision, and patience of the partners. Successful learning city initiatives around the world display these features coupled with appropriate leadership.

An important requirement lies in the capacity to see the layers of connections that exist in cities in this process of finding dynamic synergies, as Landry observes.

> *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 (Landry 2008:22)*

This learning process for the partners is likely to require the reframing of existing paradigms. Particular issues will rise in various contexts, for example in mega cities the size of Shanghai and Beijing with strategies that progress the desired objectives at local neighbourhood levels and at the global city level. These issues will be taken up in the PASCAL Hong Kong conference with its focus on local communities in sustainable learning cities. However, examples already exist in the PIE exchanges, such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Sydney, of cities that are addressing these issues in integrated ways at neighbourhood and city levels.

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.

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.

International exchanges can contribute much to the learning processes required to underpin implementation of EcCoWell principles. As Edward Glaeser has wisely observed:
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> *We build civilization and culture together, constantly learning from one another and from the past.* (Glaeser 2011:269)

The EcCoWell paper suggests a number of ways in which existing Learning City, Healthy City, and Green City initi8atives could progress toward being a successful EcCoWell city. Much

would be gained from case examples at the conference on strategies that open up such pathways.

The Cork Initiative

The City of Cork has explored ways in which an EcCoWell approach could be implemented in their city. This project was initiated during the Tenth Cork Lifelong Learning Festival in March this year with a seminar led by the author of this paper. An EcCoWell web site has been established for the city and the city will follow up by hosting an International Seminar in late September 2013 on the subject "Cities for the Future: Learning from the Global to the Local".

EcCoWell beyond Hong Kong

The EcCowell approach has been discussed in a number of seminars during 2013 under the PIE 2013 Events program. The PASCAL Hong Kong conference now provides an opportunity for a diverse mix of participants to develop a vision of sustainable and inclusive learning cities for the future that are able to progress learning, community, health, cultural, and economic objectives in holistic ways.

The time for segmented responses is surely past with the path towards sustainable development in 21st century EcCoWell cities one of high interest with many opportunities for creative ideas and innovations.

References
All references cited in this summary paper may be seen in the complete EcCoWell paper on the PASCAL PIE web site: www.pie.pascalobservatory.org.