BETWEEN CITIES AND THE RURAL: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

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Villa Africa
Boutique Hotel
Equestria, Pretoria
South Africa

THE 14TH INTERNATIONAL PASCAL OBSERVATORY CONFERENCE
"TRENDS2017"

BELGIUM CAMPUS iTversity
It's the way we're wired

PASCAL International observatory

CENLED Centre for Local Economic Development

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE

Trends 2017: Between Cities and the Rural:
The Role of Universities in Developing our Societies

Compiled by Michael Joris

The International Pascal Observatory Conference took place in Pretoria, South Africa. It was excellently organised by the Belgium Campus ITVersity and University of Johannesburg's Centre for Local Economic Development. The venue and the African spring weather were delightful. It was high time PASCAL returned to Africa. This was only the second PASCAL conference that was organised in Africa, the first being the 9th international pascal conference in Gabarone, Botswana in 2010.

Questions for the Future

It is important to be in Africa, this is a continent which is experiencing many changes. The whole world is experiencing change, but in Africa the transformation patterns are really embedded in the flow of an accelerating flow of change.

This was made abundantly clear by Enrico Jacobs, the vice-chancellor of the Belgium Campus. The subject of the conference was a complex one, looking at development trends in cities and rural areas, their relation, and the key question: which role can the university play. The aim was not to come up with all the correct answers, because first there is to need to take stock of what is happening.

If anything, good questions are needed, and the belief that the world is not such a bad place after all, as he quoted Kant: "Optimism is a moral duty."

The target questions of the conference were the following five:
1. What is the role of the university in a transitional world, in times of accelerated change?
2. How can the university contribute to the development of the (innovation) ecosystem for the development of the region (urban and rural)?
3. How can the university learn, understand, interact and collaborate with the other partners in the quadruple helix: government-industry-community-university?
4. How can a university use a 'Lekgotla' model, to ensure continuous and active dialogue with the stakeholders, especially to create a meaningful and relevant curriculum (content and delivery)?

5. What are the shifts needed to transform the system as such?

Keynote Speeches
In the first keynote, Dr Peter Kearns, Director of Global Learning Services, founder and co-director of the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE), looked into these matters, and he pointed to central need to try and achieve authentic happiness, on the level of the individual and as a community. His speech was called **"How do we progress towards a just, human-centred sustainable world?"**

Peter Kearns saw the conference taking place at a critical time with starkly competing visions of the future, and he argued for steps to be taken in moving towards a just, human-centred sustainable world. Nowadays, data is drawn on to compare progress in cities around the world towards sustainable development, and to suggest priorities in different contexts. The situation of learning city initiatives in Africa was taken as an example of barriers to be addressed. He went on to discuss the key roles of universities and local government along with the need for connecting learning in urban and rural contexts in more holistic and integrated strategies. He further made a number of suggestions for desirable action in Africa for progressing in good directions, to name just one, within the quadruple helix for innovation, the university must connect with the other actors of the quadruple helix, and in doing so the university should enter partnerships with non-traditional partners.

The second keynote was delivered by Professor Michael Osborne, Director of Research and Chair of Adult and Lifelong Learning, School of Education University of Glasgow, UK, with the title: "**Sustainable, healthy learning cities and neighbourhoods**".

Urbanisation can help drive sustainable development. However, within cities, poverty and inequalities are at their most acute, and in lower- and middle-income countries, rapid growth due to rural-urban migration poses challenges of global proportions. Global urban policies for developing countries tend to operate at a very general level; research and understanding of urbanisation are fragmented and mainly focused on the conditions and life in slum areas. We know very little about the social, economic and physical structures of fast growing cities in developing countries and how they are changing, especially at neighbourhood level. Apart from slums, there are many different types of urban neighbourhoods emerging in fast growing cities. Some are successful and sustainable, which offers inspiration for slum dwellers. One approach to the dualities of urbanisation recognises the complex inter-relationships between sustainable cities, education and health, at the level of the urban neighbourhood. Sustainable cities depend on a population with the resilience and resources that health brings, and on relevant learning. Michael Osborne further explored this in the context of emerging work in the UK, China, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Africa.

Paper Presentations
Of all the paper proposals that had been sent in, twenty-three were presented, divided into three strands:

A. The role of nation state versus global economic power, in Africa and in the world
B. Cities could be like new countries, with "glocal" power
C. Rethinking the role of the universities

Panel Discussions
The audience got together in four plenary meetings, to watch and participate in lively panel discussions.

Panel discussion 1:
The need for greater co-ordinated collaboration between universities, government and business

Panel discussion 2:
The need for building knowledge societies to positively impact on regions

Panel discussion 3:
The decline of rural cities, the need to reverse the brain drain and create new sustainable development

Panel discussion 4:
Shifting economies and the need for new skills

Final Conclusions – Papers
In the three strands the rapporteurs distilled a number of remarkable conclusions.

STRAND A - The role of nation state versus global economic power, in Africa and in the world.

The concept of and the role of the nation state is changing rapidly all over the world, and we see that new economic powers are emerging in the form of growing large cities, industrial corporations and suchlike. This offers challenges and opportunities. Rapporteur **Denise Kearns** distilled the following themes, subjects and impacts from the papers in strand A.

1. *Themes*
   The themes that were discussed included:
   innovation,
   poverty and saving,
   the importance of communication, the creation of good communication platforms and the need to develop a number of instruments that improve communication,
   enterprise development, with a specific focus on LED (Local Economy Development), while targeting PPP-approaches (People-Planet-Profit),
   human rights,
   politics, and university leadership.

2. *Subjects*
   These themes were further refined in a number of subjects that were presented in the sessions:
   Local 'fight back',
   the role of art and culture,
   the importance of the mining industry in Southern Africa, past and present,

the development of the retail industry,
the role of the non-profit organisations,
aspects of rural life and agriculture,
institutionalisation,
the role of SMMES (Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises),
the still developing LEDAs (Local Economic Development Agencies),
and also there were a number of presentations that included 'trauma' as a factor in the flow of transition and change.

3. *Impacts*
   Finally, there were the various forms of impact that were debated:
   the need for better and open communication, and how poor communication has a severe impact on positive development,
   the acceleration of enterprise development,
   the extraordinary fact that many people express willingness to 'Give Back' to the community, as good citizens,
   the various forms of partnerships,
   the desire to overcome authoritarianism and misinformation,
   and last, but certainly not least there was the cry for good governance.

STRAND B – Cities could be like new countries, with glocal power

Michael Joris as rapporteur recapped the proceedings in strand B, which was a rather eclectic group of papers. The main focus of the presentations was on the question what should be done to enable people to make a life and to make a living in various locations or places. The places that were illustrated ranged from the highly urbanised Harlem, New York to the rural cities and townships in Kwazulu Natal. Also, the role of education was a constant point of discussion in the sessions. Four subjects were commonly found in almost all the presentations:
- People and places - the creation of platforms where people can meet and develop,
- City and Development,
- Tools and Support,
- Role of the University.

1. *People and Places*
   People define places, and place defines people. We saw that a place can empower people, and it should do so.

   The first thing is to define the rules of engagement. People as individuals, in organisations, or as members of a community should try and connect to the other, and first and foremost try to be a good and active neighbour.

   In doing so people are given the opportunity to establish a positive identity for themselves and define positive aspirations. This creates ownership and equity.
   We were shown examples of how such empowered people create not just a community space for themselves, but also safe spaces for others, because it has

become a space for giving too. This is important, because a safe space can help people change their mentality and mindsets.

2. *City and Development*
   There is the rural drift that seems to push people to the city. Cities seem to have more prestige than rural places, even if one has to live in a shack. That is one of the reasons why people pack up and go live in urban areas, and they expect to find jobs, services and social standing. The drift away from the rural areas causes nefarious side effects, such as brain drain, the loss of adult and male role models for the youngsters, even child labour. Further, we see that this causes identity crisis, and there are superiority - inferiority issues.

   We saw a good number of case studies how this rural drift may be countered. From local economic development and asset based development we see that people are trying to help each other to recognise the assets that are present in their communities This empowers the people and sets them free to start making use of the assets and develop them.

3. *Tools and Support*
   In trying to improve life and professional situation, there is a very big need to have access to a supportive framework that enables the people to improve their condition. It is quite clear that people need tools and methods to improve their communication. In the first place, they often need a platform to meet one another, and where they learn to speak each other's language. Sometimes guidance is required to figure out what the opportunities in their communities are, and what the existing assets are. Once they start up activities, they need continuous follow-up and support.

   The support needs range from assistance in defining strategies and the actual implementation of the various steps that need to be taken, to the more technical matters, such as writing a business plan or bookkeeping.

4. *Role of the University*
   Often, it is the university working with the people which brings in the global or universal element in the local development. Universities have locations in townships too.

   Universities should enter all kinds of partnerships, even with non-traditional partners, such as e.g. sangomas, traditional healer, with whom the can work to strengthen a community.

   Universities should pay special attention to both community learning and lifelong learning. They need to provide methods and tools to unlock existing resources and help the people to access them.

   Within the innovation quadruple helix universities have to play their part together with government, community and industry, showing and teaching leadership and

entrepreneurialism. This will help the people develop a growth mindset and change their mentality in a positive way.

STRAND C - Rethinking the role of the universities
As can be seen from the two previous strands there was a very substantial ongoing debate on the role of university as an institution of learning and development.

Especially the universities in Africa need to take a hard look upon themselves. International university rankings do not prove to be beneficial for the development of the institution in Africa, also because many institutions are in a state of transition. Sometimes the government urges the universities to make sure they get ranked in these international rankings, but it is a difficult task. It was felt that it is not really beneficial to try to follow and emulate the models offered by these international ranking systems, since they often completely disregard the African situation. Trying to find an own identity as an institution of higher learning, research and development is a challenge. Creating a meaningful and valid curriculum, and trying to decolonise the institution as such is high on the agenda.

Enrico Jacobs reported on a number of key messages that have come out of the presentation of the papers and the ensuing discussions.

1. *Challenges*
   There are a number of concrete challenges for the universities; to begin with, there is the high unemployment rate in the country, and that include the university graduates. Apparently, there are many graduates who hold a degree in a discipline that is not really needed for the labour market.

   Secondly, there are incubators, but their success rate is discouraging. Many start-ups fail, and already in an early stage. This has to do with a lack of strategic insights and development, and the lack of (technical) support and guidance. A specific issue that was reported is that even if there are business or action plans, the implementation itself seems to be problematic. This was later repeated in the panel discussions, implementation is a challenge, even with good strategies, methodologies, instruments and action plans.

   Next, there is the problem of domestic braindrain. Graduates do not return to their home region, they move to the cities as a of course, which proves to be rather disruptive for their - often rural - home towns.

2. *Role, outcomes, focus and working*
   The next set of questions that cropped up discussed the organisational and operational models used in (higher) education. Higher education comes in a variety of forms, there are the various types of universities (highly research based, of technology, of applied sciences, comprehensive, university colleges, etc.).

   Further, there are the TVET Colleges, and then there are Civil Society Organisations, which also organise teaching and learning.

There is an urgent need to create meaningful and relevant curriculum, both as far as content is concerned, and delivery.

3. *General feel*
There was a consensus that there are problems with the monitoring and evaluation in and of universities, and this is a matter that needs urgent attention.

There were discussions about the accountability, and the funding of the university, but at the same time there is also the matter of academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Communication is also a bit of a challenge, especially the communication with non-traditional partners and the members of specific stakeholder groups.

4. *Curriculum alignment*
In many discussions there was agreement that there is a need to develop a meaningful and relevant curriculum, aligned with the real needs of industry and society. There must be more interest for profession-based approaches, to build new content and develop a variety of modern modes of delivery.

Specific skills must be developed, which up to now have been rather neglected, though they are really required in society and industry. These are social skills, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning, requiring cross-discipline approaches, and finally, there is the need for skills that will allow graduates to work in a globalised context when they later start working in a professional context.

5. *Research alignment*
Research too must be aligned to real needs, and it is important that universities take into account what the impact is of the results of that research. They also must plan then to proceed and develop products for the people and communities to use.

6. *Role*
As stated above, there is a variety of institutions and organisations that organise higher education, and we need to define the various different roles and approaches for university type education, TVET-Community based education and training, and entrepreneurial Centres of Excellence.

7. *Conclusion*
Taking into account the following elements:
    •Identity and citizenship
    •Meta-Learning: reflect and adapt
    •The needs: parties around the table on equal footing
    •Lifelong Learning
the need was identified that the university definitely has to evolve.

Government, society and industry, and academic managers must think how they can ensure that the current university will evolve into an entrepreneurial and engaged

organisation, whose aim it is to strive for authentic happiness of the people and their communities.

Final Word and introduction to the 15ᵗʰ PASCAL INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATORY CONFERENCE
Professor Josef Konvitz, PASCAL Chair, concluded the Pretoria Conference with a speech with the core message that we all have to be optimist about the future. For that he referred to past events and authors that need to be reread now. We can learn about the future from that past. The interpretation of a passing present will change when we get hindsight to explore the deeper and richer values that present themselves in the analysis.

He further announced the venue and topic for the next PASCAL OBSERVATORY conference.

HOST CITY AND COUNTRY:
CITY OF SUWON, PART OF METROPOLITAN SEOUL, KOREA.
Dates: 30-31 August 2018. Co-organiser: is the Gyeonggi Do Provincial Institute of Lifelong Learning (GILL).

Main theme:
LEARNING CITIES, LEARNING SOCIETIES:
CONNECTING RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE TO MEET LOCAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Subthemes (under discussion) include:
• Sustaining Learning City Networks;
• Building Collective Intelligence: Big data? Public Participation?
• Lifelong Learning as the Key to Solve Community and Regional Problems; and
• Learning in later Life - the Search for Practical and Politically Attractive Answers.

CLOSE OF THE 14TH PASCAL OBSERVATORY "TRENDS2017" CONFERENCE, VOTE OF SUPPORT AND THANKS
Dr Marius Venter, Director: PASCAL Observatory, Africa, and Director of the Centre for Local Economic Development (CENLED), University of Johannesburg proceeded with the official closure of the conference.

PASCAL 2017 Pretoria Statement – 19 October 2017

This statement has been derived from discussions at the 14th PASCAL Observatory conference in Pretoria, hosted by the Belgium Campus iTversity and the University of Johannesburg. The conference considered future trends regarding the role of universities in developing our societies.

- Cities/regions should demand from universities, graduates who can contribute to local and global challenges, particularly those expressed in the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Lifelong learning underpins all of the SDGs. This includes entrepreneurship skills, which is more than simply creating new jobs: it has a social dimension: it means taking responsibility.

- Happiness and well-being should be objectives of development with strategies adopted that bring meaning and purpose into people's lives through activities such as volunteering, and empowering individuals and communities.

- The enhancement of cultural relations between cities is a path to a sustainable world.

- Universities have a duty to lead the fight against the deliberate propagation of ignorance, and promote in the curricula the learning of how to read and interpret new media sources.

- Leaders of change are the minority in both universities and their stakeholder organisations. Working collectively these leaders can convince others in their organisations of the merits of partnership.

- PASCAL, working with UNESCO, can support cities aspiring to become learning cities, offering systematic means to benchmark current performance and support its enhancement.

- PASCAL will support UNESCO in the implementation of the *Cork Call for Action* to create green, healthy learning cities, enhance inclusion and equity, and provide decent work.

- Through systematic needs assessment of communities, businesses, universities and local/regional government, PASCAL can provide guidance and facilitate collaboration and partnership.

- PASCAL can strengthen local sustainability and vitality by supporting the development of local enterprises.

- PASCAL's Learning City Network must be sustained in order provide a platform for inter-cultural, inter-disciplinary and international exchange between cities.

- PASCAL in its observatory role, in co-operation with its subscribers, can collect and analysis cases of good practice between universities and cities/regions.

- PASCAL will assess its progress in meeting the above goals in 2018 at the 15th conference in Suwon, Korea