

1. Background and Rationale

The powerful influences of global commerce, urban diversity and ever more complex changing communities are compelling local and regional governments to re-assess their role, their purpose and their world view.

Topics and departments that were separate in the past are now integrated and interlinked. National, regional and local government must now be joined up to be effective. Real consultation that allows people to become co-creators as well as respondents is increasingly on the agenda as cities and regions wrestle with the burgeoning responsibilities of 21st century governance. Employability takes over from employment as a local preoccupation in those places that have recognised that modern economic development requires a nimble, flexible and versatile workforce capable of adapting to the challenges of new technologies, creative problem-solving, the ability to absorb new knowledge and an acceptance of diversity. (European Commission, 2001) Environmental imperatives and climate change merely increase the tendency to look outwards in order to address local issues. (van Beilen, van der Kamp, Zeelen, 2007) In this new regional order, social, intellectual and human capital development are now becoming as important as economic growth in the building of dynamic communities that can adapt to changing requirements while serving the needs and demands of their citizens(see figure 1 below)

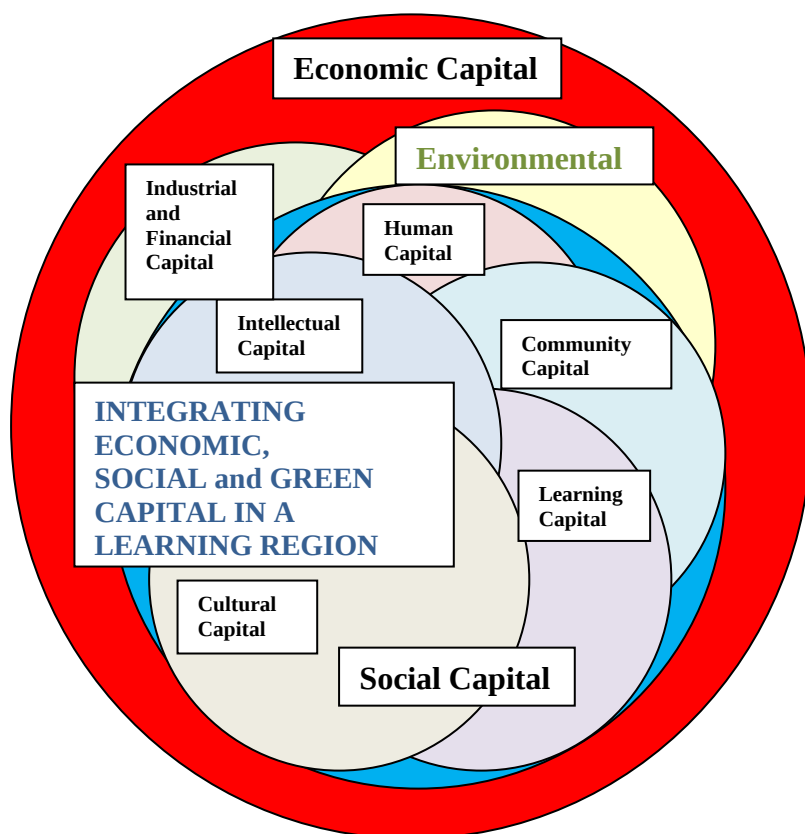


Figure 1: Capital as Resource – Combining Learning City/Region Assets

As always, education is the answer. But not education as we have known it in past centuries – selective, subject-based, accepting failure as a consequence of rewarding success, and top-down, satisfying for the few rather than the many. A knowledge society requires that skills and competences development, understanding, creativity, innovative and critical thinking must be brought into the equation and replace the tendency of public examination systems to produce programmed memorisers. (Longworth, 2006) Bottom-up Learning takes over from top-down teaching. Teachers are no longer the sage on the stage, rather the guide at the side. And learning should be lifelong for everyone. The aim is not just to *provide* learning, lifelong, for all citizens of a city, region and nation, but to actively create the culture of learning that will encourage and enable every person to participate in it continuously. Education is no longer the preserve of the education department, it pervades every sphere of local and regional government and affects the way that governance is organised and managed (Doyle, Longworth, Osborne, 2008).

Hence the terms 'Learning City', 'Learning Town', 'Learning Region' and 'Learning Community' are rapidly becoming commonplace in debate at all levels of government. In some universities too, there has been an awakening of awareness of the potential of the learning cities/regions movement to stimulate action in this field. The third mission of Universities according to the Bologna process is to contribute to the growth of the communities in which they reside. Helping them to become learning entities by providing the research, development, information and assistance that cities need in order to become learning cities is a task for which they should be well fitted within the Bologna definition.

Such partnerships between town and gown can be extremely fruitful, but they are all too rare. The LILARA project uncovered a latent demand among local authority workers for more information in some places, but its major finding was that many parts of Europe are simply not aware, neither of the challenges nor of the opportunities that exist to make them aware. Learning Cities and Regions, however urgent for 21st century economic and social survival, are not at the forefront of local and regional authority priorities (Doyle, Longworth 2007).

The total quality management movement of the 1990s was based on the premise that everyone in the organisation, from the Chief Executive to the Janitor, should be aware of the challenge of creating a quality culture. Similarly creating learning cities and regions entails the involvement of all managers, administrators, professionals and councillors. This challenges the traditional way in which local and regional authorities are administered. Changing cultures is a huge task. It entails more participation, more contribution from stakeholders, more bottom-up, informed decision-making, more local, national and global vision, more understanding, more wisdom, more knowledge and insight, to mention just a few.

2. *PENR3L - A European network for PASCAL*

The future transformation of Cities and Regions into Learning Cities and Regions is a major concern of both the European Commission and the PASCAL Observatory. Consequently, in 2006, the Commission approved a project to bring together leading European academics and practitioners in this field with a view to establishing a network of expertise that can influence the process and hasten its implementation under the aegis of PASCAL. That project is PENR3L, the PASCAL European Network for Lifelong Learning in Cities and Regions.

Its rationale is that the development of learning cities and regions will not happen unless there is a viable network of expertise centres, normally based in one or more universities in each European country, working with practitioners from local and regional government to carry out the necessary research and to push forward the learning cities and regions agenda. In this it mirrors the PASCAL world-wide objectives.

PENR3L's objective is therefore to establish a dynamic and growing working network of expertise centres and forward-looking local and regional authorities that will work together to accelerate the growth throughout Europe of learning cities and regions, ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century. In Europe it operates from the University of Glasgow and comprises universities from several countries (see section 7 below), together with regional authorities such as Kent and national authorities dealing with local government issues. It has equally knowledgeable partners in other parts of the world such as the state of Victoria, Australia, where most cities and towns are now learning communities. Its goal is to provide the knowledge and the tools that enable local and regional authorities to become dynamic learning communities, cities and regions, building up their social, intellectual and human capital to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Already its partners have produced 'Stakeholder Audits', tools to stimulate local authorities and their stakeholders in universities, small businesses, adult colleges and schools to become 'learning organisations', working together to construct learning cities (Longworth, Osborne, Sankey, 2005). Their LILARA (Learning in Local and Regional Authorities) Project audited local authorities and other stakeholders to discover the learning needs of local government employees vis-a-vis their role in progressing the process of building learning cities and regions. Web-based learning materials exist to facilitate the learning process and were used in LILARA workshops. They are now available to all online.

3. *PENR3L Project activities*

Academic and local authority delegates from more than 30 European countries participated in two stimulating and lively workshops in Barcelona and Kaunas, at which the economic, social, environmental, cultural, human and intellectual qualities of aspiring learning cities and regions were discussed and clarified. In order to tap into the collective expertise of the attendees, formal presentations were kept to a minimum. Active solution sessions in which smaller groups discussed, and created an action agenda for, specific aspects of learning city/region practice predominated. Ideas, experiences, knowledge and hopes and needs for the future were exchanged in an

atmosphere of productive multilogue. The topics discussed are shown in section 4 below and Kate Miller's summaries are shown as section 5.

The second major project activity takes place at the Limerick conference. It will present the results of these seminar/workshops to a wider audience, and launch the network to a larger membership. A PENR3L day will bring together many of the participants in the workshops to take the ideas further and, most importantly, to lay plans for a sustainable network that can ensure that local and regional governments can stay tuned to the changing vicissitudes of learning city/region development.

4. Workshops content

As we all know the scope of new activities within learning cities and regions is wide. The following themes and sub-themes give an indication of the topics that were open for discussion

Theme 1: Learning Regions, Learning Cities and Economic Development

Sub themes

1. Characteristics of Learning Regions and Cities
 - What constitutes a learning region – how is it different
 - Research, knowledge, intelligence and information
 - Sustainability
2. Learning Organisations in a Learning Region
 - Characteristics of Learning Organisations
 - Continuous learning development and support programmes for whom? Why? what? how?
 - Conditions for developing Innovation and creativity
 - Stakeholders as Learning Organisations- Stakeholder audits
3. Stakeholders and their roles
 - Who are the stakeholders
 - Stakeholder Capital in learning cities and regions
 - Partnerships and purposes – local, national, European, Global
4. Marketing and publicising Learning Cities and Regions
 - Methods and media of communication
 - Communicating internally – to organisations and people
 - Marketing the learning region to the wider world
5. Resources and Capital
 - Building capital and resource
 - Profiting from capital and resource
6. Employability, Employment, skills and learning etc
 - Discovering and satisfying learning needs in local authorities and stakeholders
 - Learning Needs – content, methods and sources of materials
 - Skills for 21st century learning cities and regions
 - Management Tools and techniques - plp's, audits, mentors, guides etc

Theme 2: Learning Regions, Learning Cities - Social and Community Development

Subthemes

1. Creating a culture of learning – why? how? – breaking down barriers.
 - Stakeholders and their roles – especially voluntary and community organisations
 - Tools and techniques in a social setting, plps, personal audits, mentors and guides
 - Coping with Diversity, multi and inter-culturalism
 - Learning Needs, content, methods and providers
2. Consultation, involvement and democracy
 - Consultation methods – from information to empowerment
 - Neighbourhood strategies
 - Improving involvement and democracy
3. Active Citizenship and volunteering
 - mobilising people and communities
 - volunteering strategies
 - Networking citizens of all ages
4. Environment, climate change and sustainable development
5. Continuous learning/development and support programmes
6. Resources and Capital - as above concentrating on social capital

Theme 3 Learning Regions, Learning Cities – Networking, intelligence and knowledge

Sub themes

- Needs and requirements of cities and regions
- What intelligence and how to communicate
- What partnerships?
- What resources for the network
- Politics and structures
- Practical steps
- Network Communication methods
- Network Sustainability

This is an eclectic and comprehensive set of sub-themes. They stimulated an animated and spirited debate among the participants.

5. Workshop results

(Kate to insert the workshop results)

6. How can PENR3L help local and regional government ?

The extent to which a city and its people learn will be a measure of their ability to meet the challenges of the 21st century in terms of prosperity, stability and the well-being of its citizens. That basic concept is emphasised in almost every report produced in the past 20 years. The present situation is patchy from country to country, city to city and region to region and is subject to the priority given to Education, and particularly Adult Education, by administrators. Those cities and regions already aspiring to improve the provision of learning and have installed new learning centres and publicity machines to encourage people to use them. Many local authority websites have a section devoted to lifelong learning. But few have understood that a learning city/region is one which involves *everyone* in the process of continuing personal development, contribution and decision-making, much in the same way that a learning organisation constantly involves its employees in quality improvement and decision-making at the appropriate point (Longworth, 2006). Provision, support and exhortation are not enough. Learning mindsets and methods also need to change. Placing learning at the forefront of a city's or region's strategies and policies can engender a qualitative progression, but it entails much more than adjusting educational opportunities. Learning should pervade every aspect of local and regional government practice using the lifelong learning tools and techniques that help to stimulate people to develop their own potential to the full. There are tools and techniques to help with this, individual personal and professional continuing development programmes to put in place and learning materials to insert into these. Already there is evidence that those cities and regions that have made such efforts prosper. The five regions studied by OECD for example – Vienne (France), Jena (Germany), Thameside (UK), Andalucia (Spain) and Oresund (Sweden/Denmark) – are flourishing (Larsen, 2001), while cities such as Espoo (Finland), Gothenburg (Sweden) Edinburgh and Glasgow (Scotland) and Curitiba (Brazil) have benefitted from consciously implementing learning city concepts. This is not to say that even these pioneers have achieved the status of learning cities and regions. There is still a long way to go and much work to be done in all European regions (European Commission, 2001).

The European Commission's policy paper on the local and regional dimension of lifelong learning puts it thus *"No city or region can afford not to be a learning city or learning region if it wishes to develop future prosperity, maintain social stability and realise the potential of its citizens."* (ibid) Local and regional government will need all the help it can get from PENR3L and PASCAL.

7. The partners?

There are 7 partners in PENR3L, each of them liaising with their own local and regional authorities and establishing databases within a European region

- University of Stirling, Scotland (Coordinator) dealing with UK, Benelux,
- University of Catania, dealing with Italy, Greece,
- University of Limerick, Ireland, dealing with Ireland and Germany
- Ecole Supérieure de Commerce, Toulouse, dealing with France, Spain and Portugal
- Akershus University College, Drammen, Norway, dealing with the Nordic countries
- University of Pecs, Hungary dealing with Romania, Bulgaria, the Balkans and Slovakia
- University of Kaunas, dealing with the Baltic States, Poland and the Czech Republic

Further Information?

The project web-site is based at www.penr3l.feek.pt.hu

For more information on PASCAL and PENR3L, please contact Professor Michael Osborne on m.osborne@educ.gla.ac.uk or Professor Norman Longworth on norman.longworth@losmasos.com

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LONGLEARN Active Learning Materials on Learning Cities and Regions from www.longlearn.org.uk/materials

LILLIPUT learning materials at www.appui.esc-toulouse.fr

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