

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Professor Norman Longworth

Pascal Associate

UILL Consultant



In the 1990s, a motor manufacturer displayed the following on the wall of all its offices and plants *'Learning is the most natural human condition.'* It was there to suggest to all its employees that continuous learning is the only way for a company, a community, an individual to cope with a world of rapid change.

The same is true of cities. This discussion document explains why every city must become a viable, vibrant and vigorous *'learning city'* in order to progress economically, socially and environmentally. Cities are the powerhouses of the future. John Eger, adviser to two US Presidents, wrote *'we are witnessing a rebirth of an age-old concept of the "city-state" or more precisely, the "region-state." These new quasi-governmental entities, like the ancient city-states of Athens, Sparta and Rome, have the power -- some would call it innate sovereignty -- to control their future in this new world order....'*

Cities are also complex organisms. They can make a real qualitative difference to their own destinies and, more recently because of the effects of climate change, to that of our only planetary habitat. But to do that they have to understand that *'learning'* is a key dynamic pervading every aspect of city development. A sustainable transformation of institutions, organisations, activities and ultimately of citizens is a necessary response to the urgent challenges affecting cities, nations and the planet in the 21st century. 1

Dimension 1 – Changing Responsibilities

Changing Issues in a Modern City



Dimension 1 highlights change. These some of the issues which did not exercise the minds of city administrators less than 70 years ago. The increasingly rapid pace of change, the rise of the welfare state, globalisation, the movement of populations, the increasing fragility of global ecosystems, climate change, the need for lifelong learning for all, and much more, have increased the complexity of the civic scene beyond recognition.

City leaders are now responsible for finding solutions to issues that affect the whole planet as well as the day to day concerns of services, citizens and institutions within the city. Such complexity is compounded by the fluctuating unknowns of global finance, skills needs, terrorist activity, political instability and the response to growing world poverty.

Continuing Professional Development in city administrations used to be a necessity for a few technicians, managers and leaders. The development of local authorities into learning organisations means that it is now embedded into the continuous learning of *all* employees in many cities, just as it is many large companies as a component of quality.

Most of these topics are now included in many city policies, strategies and plans and therefore can be included in a measuring and monitoring system to verify their effectiveness. Whether or not it gives itself the title of 'learning city', learning for all is undoubtedly a major component in a city's development.

City Focuses

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Creative cities, | Resilient cities | Transition towns | Green cities |
| Healthy cities | Heritage cities | Cities of Opportunity, | Cool Cities, |
| Future Cities | Energy Cities | Sustainable cities | Sport cities |
| Culture Cities | Educating Cities | Adaptive cities | Telecities |
| Sanctuary cities | Social cities | Social Economy cities | Smart cities |
| Carnival Cities | Blue Zone Cities | Anti-poverty cities | Base Cities |
| Etc | etc | etc | etc |

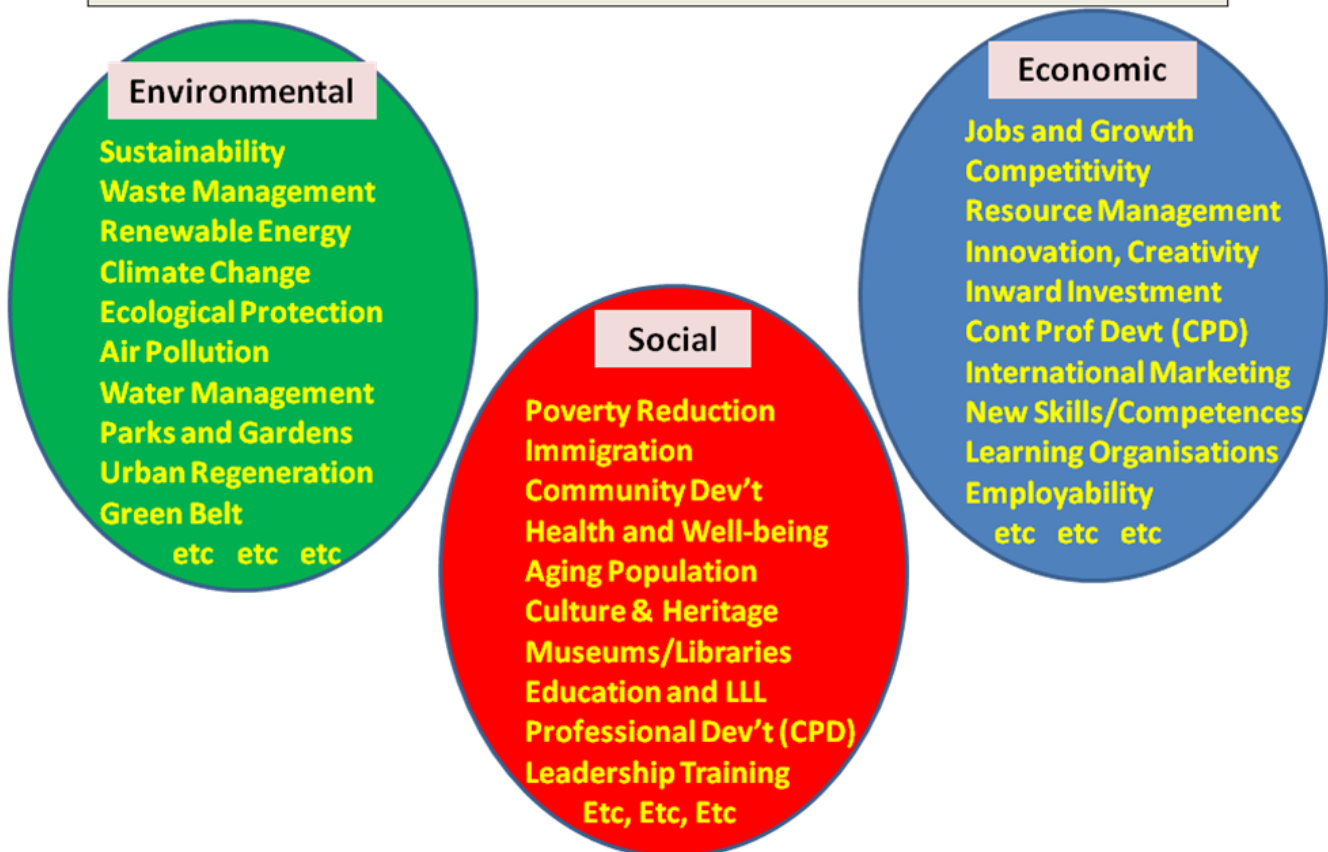
Source: Internet

Some cities are responding to the challenges by selecting and addressing an issue that seems to them to be of major importance. A simple trawl of the internet will find references to creative cities, resilient cities, transition towns, green cities, healthy cities, smart cities, slow cities, liveable cities, cities of opportunity, cities for poverty reduction and sustainable development, Cool Cities, Sustainable cities , Educating Cities, Energy Cities, Future Cities, Culture Cities, adaptive cities, sanctuary cities, heritage cities, sport cities and more than 20 more. Each of them belong to intra-continental or global networks and each of them have developed strategies and plans to develop further within the sectors they have chosen to represent. Such a plethora of city types suggests an approach by individuals and/or pressure groups which may have influenced city leaders to focus on one or other particular aspect of development. This is no bad thing, but it has also served to fragment the field somewhat, since it is desirable that all cities will eventually need to address all these topics in order to become a true city of sustainable opportunities – a learning city.

What unites all of them is the incidence and primacy of ‘learning’ in their journey to success. This is why we use that term as an umbrella for all and why we suggest that a true learning city will, in the fullness of time, incorporate all these descriptors and more. It is also why we believe that the process of becoming a learning city is a long one, taking many years of development, and therefore, unfortunately, often at the mercy of opportunist politicians or parties with limited vision or a personal agenda.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 2 – Three Major Focuses



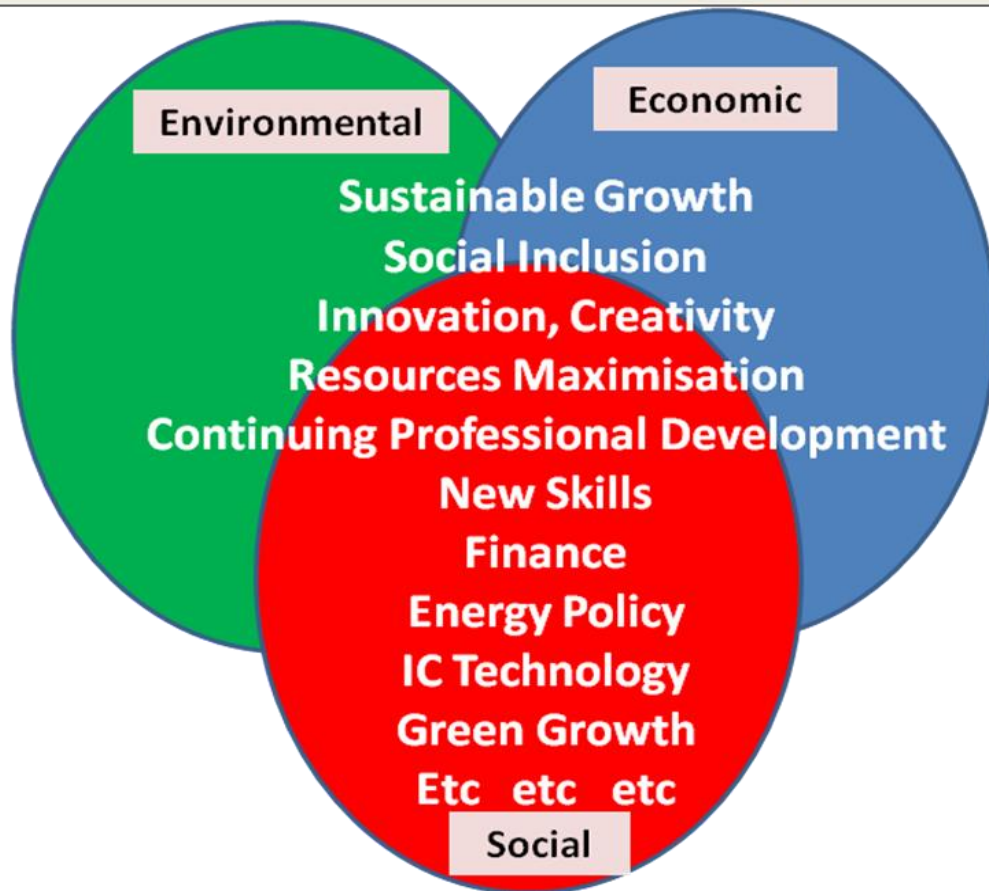
In general city activities are encapsulated within three major focuses

- the **Economic**, in which the city's future is tied to continuous growth, and/or change, in order to create wealth and provide a constant supply of employment opportunities for citizens
- the **Environmental**, which requires growth and everything else that happens within the city to be sustainable and which addresses planetary, as well as local, concerns in the interests of developing a clean environment
- and the **Social**, which deals with the physical and mental development and welfare of people and organisations, and the change issues that affect modern cities in constant transition

All of the topics shown in this diagram, and more, are the traditional concerns of developed world cities for which policies and strategies, some of them more effective than others, exist. Many of them are the normal business of every city, learning or not. Many are issues that impinge greatly on the city's social, economic and environmental future, and it is from these a city can develop indicators that will help the city measure its commitment and responsiveness to renewal so that it can meet the future with confidence. But of course, in many cities, some topics are the object of greater focus than others. Particularly in times of austerity those in the blue circle tend to take precedence.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 2 - Interactions



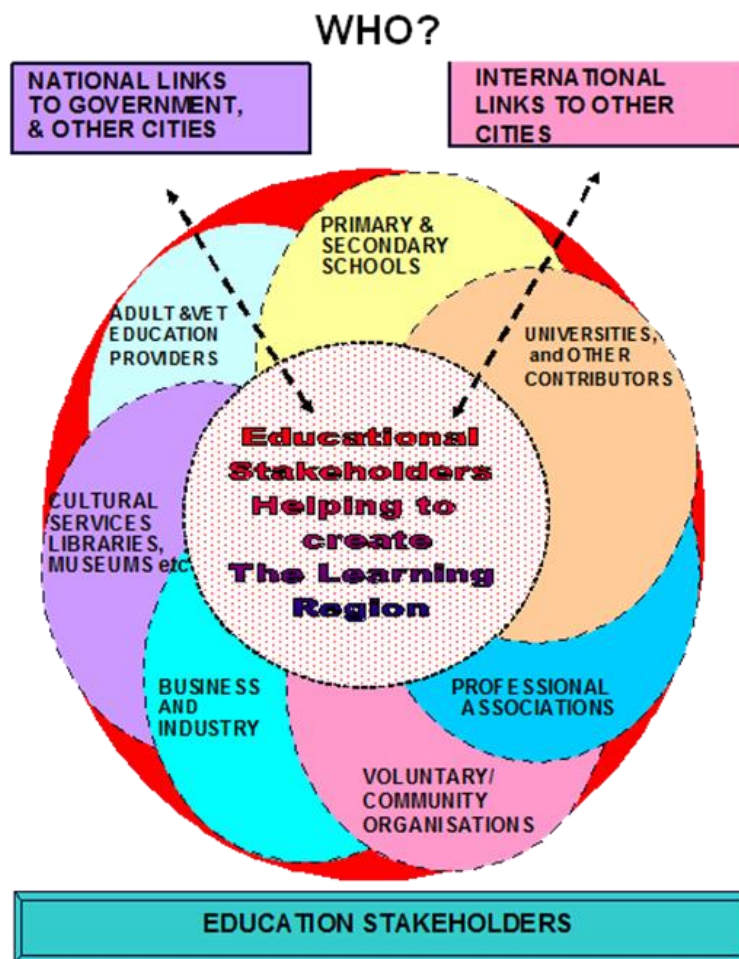
But of course it is not quite so simple as that. Many of the issues transcend the simple boundaries of the separated model. Learning City management is now a holistic business.

Growth for example, while ostensibly an economic requirement, takes on an environmental mantle with the requirement for it to be sustainable or related to green development, and a social one when it is linked to the need for a skilled and well-educated population using the technology of the day. Thus the creation of a city's economic development strategy will include experts from all three areas, and the educational requirement for technologists, managers, accountants, business leaders, social scientists and, above all, politicians who will take the final decision, might better favour a broad knowledge of all the parameters involved rather than narrow specialist expertise.

Similarly the maximisation of resources is economic when applied to industrial policy, environmental in energy and urban development and predominantly social when intellectual, human, cultural and community capital is being mobilised. Everything shown on this slide is inter-related, interactive, inter-connected, and the awareness of these inter-relationships, and the development of strategies to deal with them, is one indicator of a learning city.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 3 - Mobilising Stakeholders



The third dimension of a Learning City includes the extent to which schools, higher and further education, business and industry, community centres, the local authority etc become active stakeholders in learning city development. This is important because these are precisely the organisations which will benefit from the creation of a learning city, though those benefits will not accrue without effort on their part.

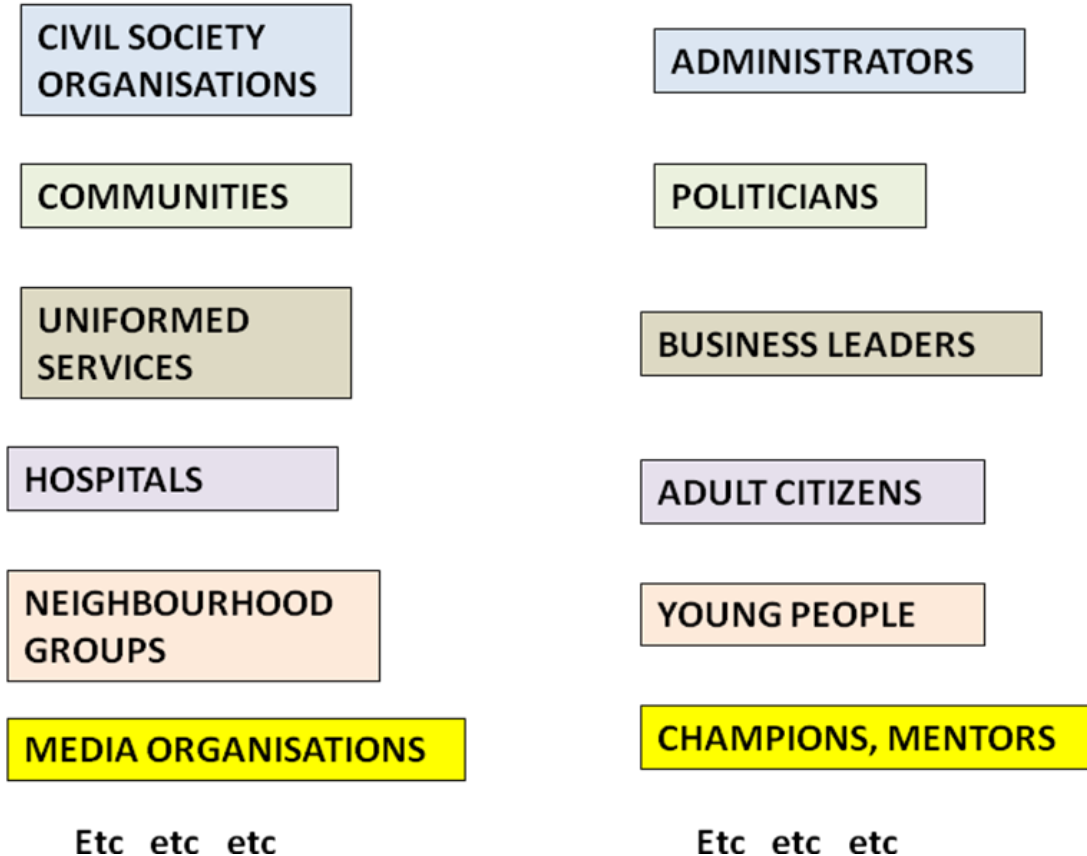
This diagram shows the major educational stakeholders in a learning city. The contribution they can make are many and various, each stakeholder having the possibility of making an inventory of those contributions – from staff, students, managers and administrators alike. The Limerick Declaration, referenced at the end of this presentation, lists a number of potential contributions that schools, industry, universities and the local authority can make to the building of a learning city, though the impetus should ideally come from people in the institutions themselves. They would become *learning organisations* frequently measuring their own development performance and also including their contribution to the outside world in the city. In 2004 the European Commission’s R3L project created ‘Stakeholder Audits’, tools to enable schools, local authorities, universities, adult education and SMEs to learn how to become learning organisations in a learning city. They are available, with many other tools, from <http://eurolocal.info>

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 3 - Mobilising Stakeholders

WHO2?

PEOPLE



But of course educational organisations are not the only stakeholders in a city's future. Many others have their own part to play. And not only organisations. People from all walks of life can, and often do, make their own contribution to learning city development. This diagram shows a few examples of both, some of them contributors to and others receivers of the available goodwill.

The key drivers are effective communication and mobilisation – communication to motivate organisations, communities and citizens to understand what, why and how they can contribute, mobilisation to make it happen. This may require a formal system, as in Brisbane (volunteering Queensland), to connect talents, skills, experiences and knowledge with the opportunities to make use of them. Or it can be a much more ad hoc process relying on word of mouth.

Media organisations are particularly interesting in this scenario. They wield considerable influence on the minds and actions of people, and can play an important part in creating a positive image of a city that people and organisations want to support.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

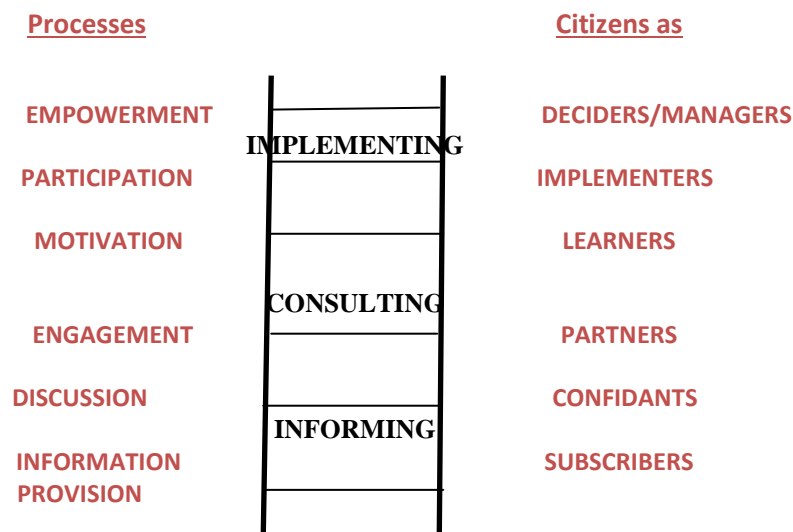
Dimension 3- Mobilising Stakeholders

What? How?

- PARTICIPATION – Commitment and Contribution**
- CONSULTATION – Discussion and Empowerment**
- PARTNERSHIPS – Sharing and Working Together**
- ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP – Mobilisation and Contribution**
- LEARNING ORGANISATIONS – Management and Innovation**
- COMMUNICATION – Information and Encouragement**
- CELEBRATION – Recreation and Publicity**
- CURRICULUM – Topics and Learning Material dev't**
- EDUCATION/TRAINING – Courses and Seminars**

These are the ways by which stakeholders can make their own positive mark on the city's future. Each component on the list can give rise to a set of indicators describing what and how organisations and people can contribute. Consultation for example can take place at several levels as shown in the diagram below

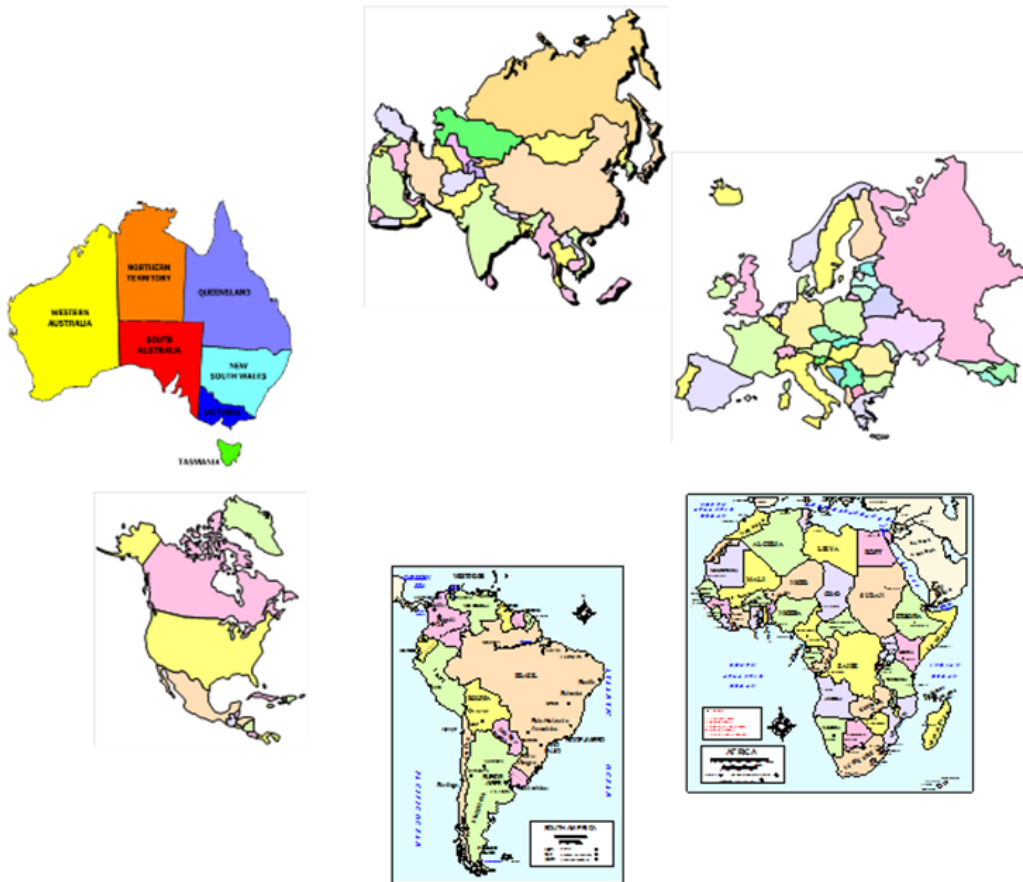
The Consultation Ladder



Equally, partnerships can be between a variety of stakeholders and cover a variety of topics. Those which benefit both partners and involve a large number of people in cooperative activities are the most valuable. Engaged people become people committed to the development of a city's future.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 4 – Geo-Political-Cultural Considerations

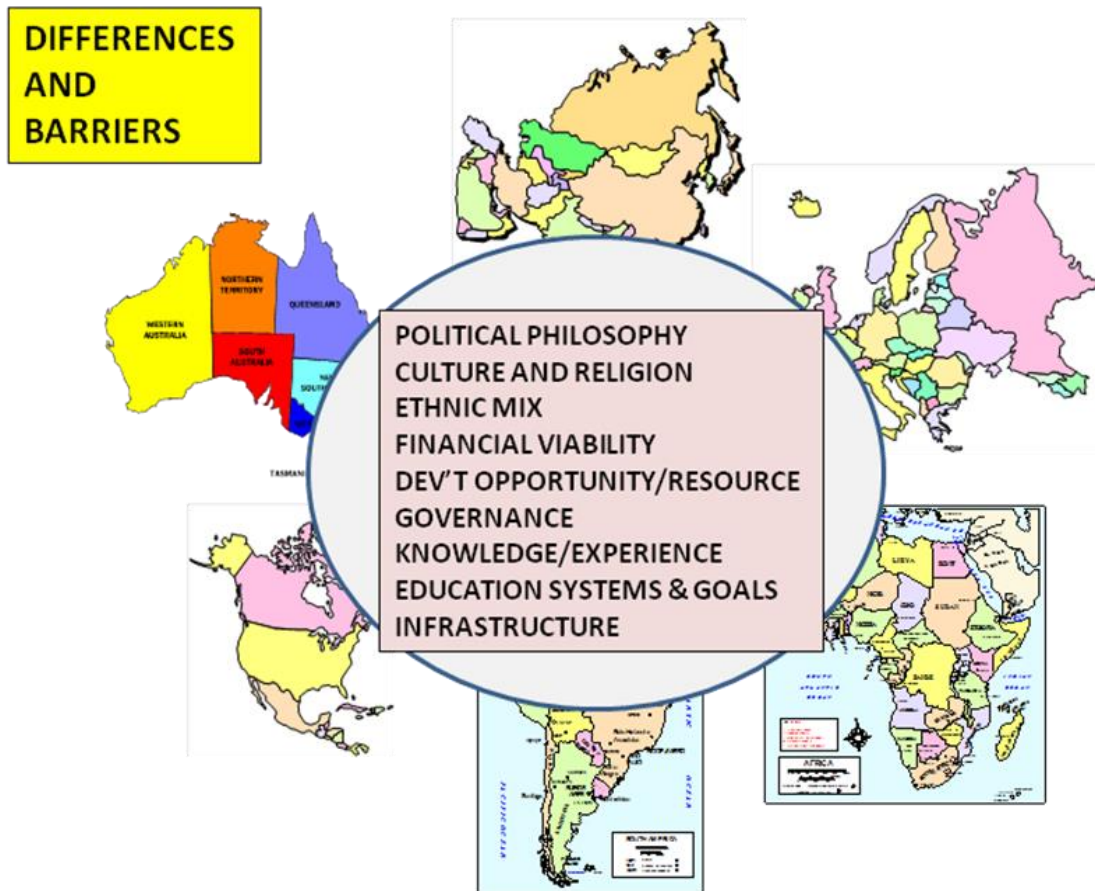


The third major dimension of a Learning City refers to the different geo-political and cultural global circumstances. Cities in Asia, Africa, South America, North America, Australasia and Europe will have contrasting perceptions, methodologies, cultures, religions and priorities and these must be taken into account when developing indices for the UNESCO International Platform for Learning Cities. In the past, perceptions of learning city development have tended to be Eurocentric, reflecting the efforts put in by the European Commission to extend lifelong learning concepts into cities and regions.

More recently the centre of gravity has moved to Asia, particularly China and South Korea, where there is an expanded vision of the scope and range of learning city activity. The PASCAL International Exchanges programme is extending the concept to other continents and countries. The following pages pursue these themes.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 4 – Geo-Political-Cultural Considerations



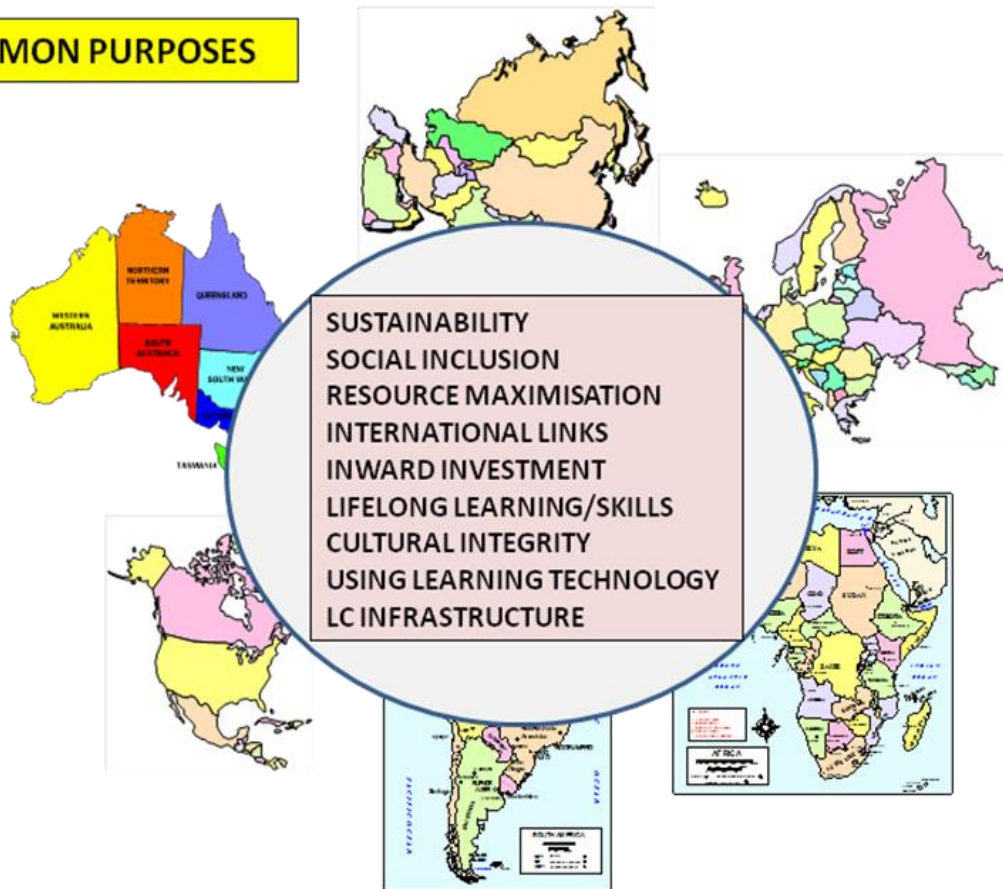
Some of those differences are described on this diagram. Cities in different continents have different characteristics and concerns. Some are more authoritarian than others, others are more sophisticated and experienced. Some have more endemic problems such as poverty, rapid population influx and primitive urban development, many are financially strapped, yet others employ their own, different, systems of governance, education and development. The developed world model of a learning city does not fit in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa, South America and the poorer countries of Asia. All of this affects the indices to be developed. The list on this diagram shows a number of major differences between cities in different continents and illustrates the need for flexibility in devising indices.

It may also define one of the roles of the International Platform for Learning Cities, in which cities in the richer countries become mentors for cities in the poorer ones, exchanging ideas, expertise, opportunities and finance. The diagram on page 13 elaborates on this.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 4 – Geo-Political-Cultural Considerations

COMMON PURPOSES



Yet there are some learning city indices that are common to all, no matter which continent or city. These are based upon the need to build an effective communication infrastructure that will attract investment, maximise existing resources, address poverty issues and emphasise learning as a means of solving all of these questions. They will also want to use the technology which speeds up the learning process. The list on this diagram contains a selection of the main items of learning city development that all members of the GLCN may want to adopt.

Sustainability because it affects the city, the nation and the planet.

Social Inclusion because it reduces poverty and increases employability

Resource maximisation because all cities have underused resources

International links because they can be the key to greater understanding and progress

Inward investment because that is the way a city can increase its wealth

Lifelong Learning/Skills because it is the way to empower people for and throughout life

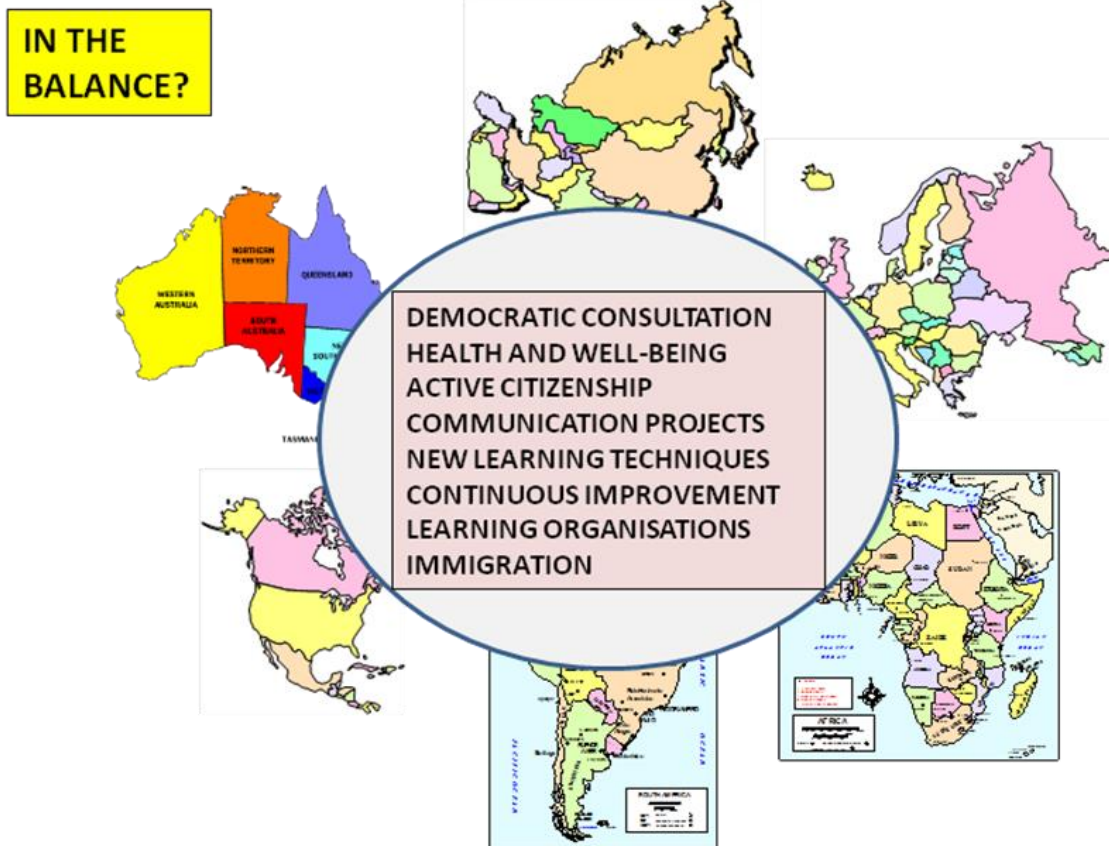
Cultural integrity because culture is embedded into the beliefs and actions of most cities

Learning Technology because it speeds up the process of learning city development

Infrastructure because it provides a central channel for uniting learning city activities

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 4 – Geo-Political-Cultural Considerations



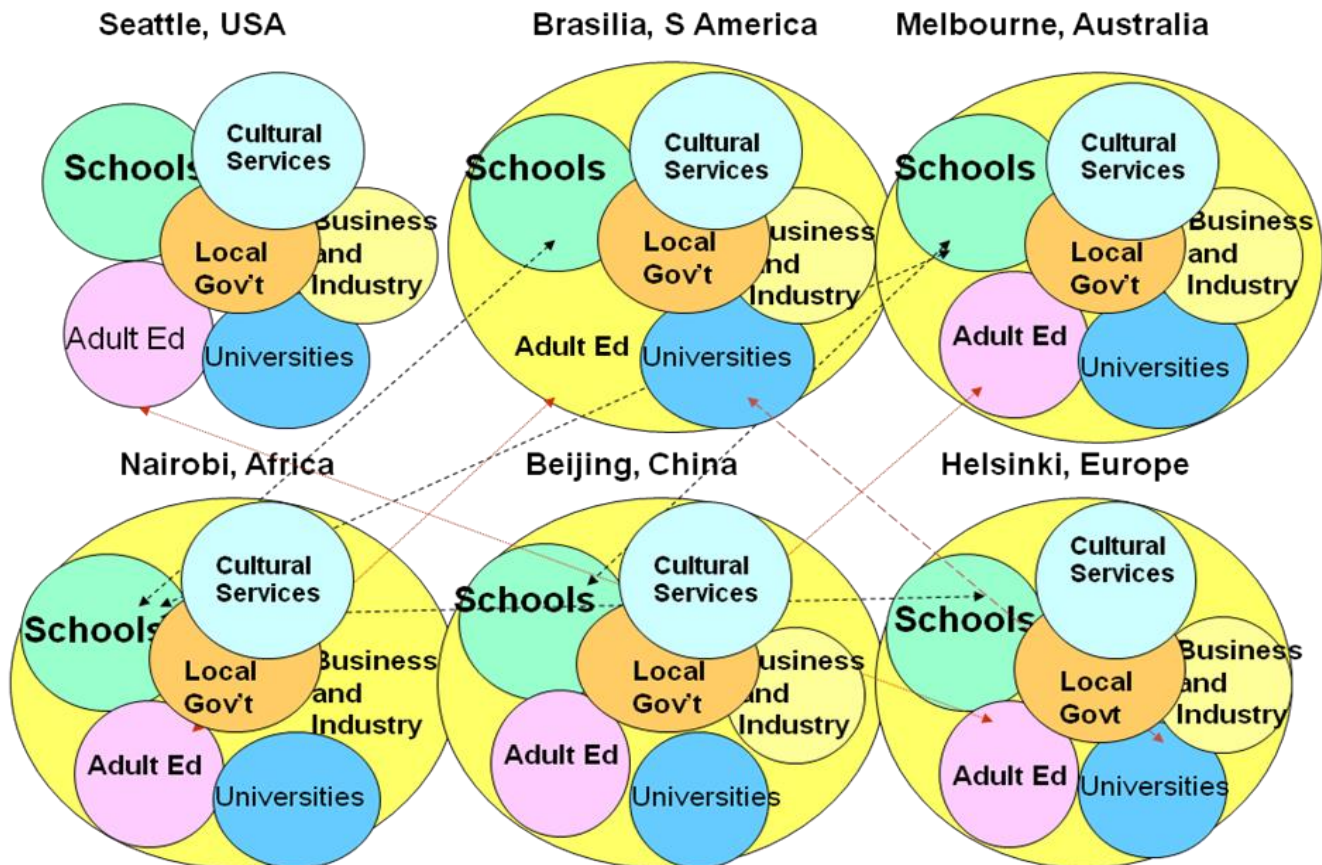
In addition there are others which, while they may not be at the forefront of the list of priorities for learning city development in some countries, are desirable as learning city attributes which the GLCN may want to foster. They include

- the mobilisation of the talents, skills, experience and knowledge of citizens for the general good in active citizenship and volunteering projects,
- the transformation of the city administration and its public and private organisations into learning organisations with, among other things, continuing professional development targets,
- a concentration on improving the health and well-being of citizens and
- the adoption of techniques and philosophies of lifelong learning which give ownership to the learners themselves.

Many cities in the developed world have already included most of these among their developmental indices. However, as has been said, the process of learning city development cannot be achieved in a short period of time and cities new to the concept will need to introduce new dimensions when they feel that they are able to accommodate them.

Dimension 5 - Purpose

Linking 21st Century Learning Cities



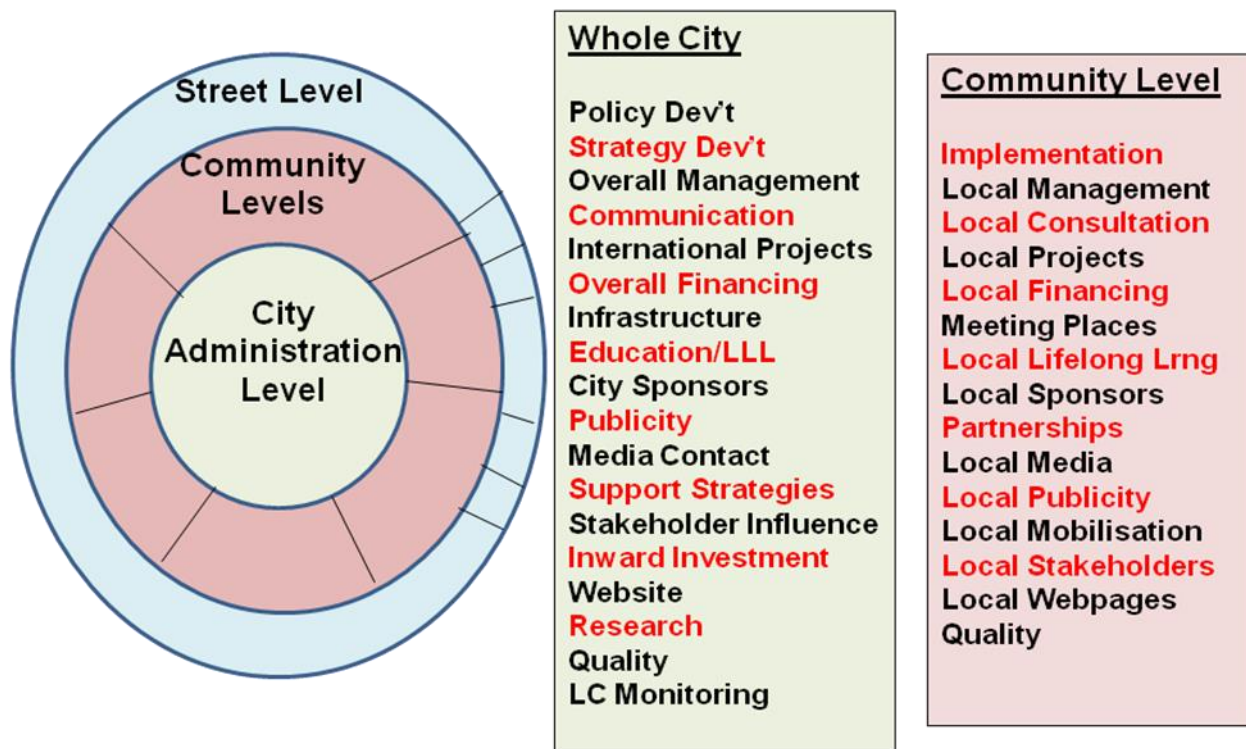
Finally in this section on geo-political-cultural aspects comes the possibility of linking stakeholders in Learning Cities globally in what might be called 'city-rings', which may, or not, be from every continent. The city names on this diagram are taken at random. Although there is one which would seem to benefit the most economically from such a grouping, in fact, every city would gain culturally, socially, and educationally. Links might be

- School to school to open up the minds and understanding of young people
- University to University in joint research and teaching to help communities grow
- College to College to allow adults of all ages to make contact with each other
- Business to business to develop trade and commerce
- Hospital to hospital to exchange knowledge, techniques and people
- City Administration to City Administration to exchange knowledge on governance
- Person to person to break down the stereotypes and build an awareness of other cultures, creeds and customs

Partnerships can be bi-lateral or multilateral. They can lead to trade links, expertise and/or people exchanges, joint research and development projects, educational programmes at all levels and promote greater understanding, new ideas, tolerance and peace. The European Commission's PALLACE project, which in 2005 linked learning cities in 4 continents, provides a useful model for activity in this area.

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 6 – Learning City Devolution



Dimension 6 concerns the way in which the city organises its learning city activity and devolves responsibilities to administrative districts, communities and even down to street level. The latter has been implemented in very few places but the reach of many budding Asian cities, especially in China and South Korea, extends the operational capability downwards to the community level and eventually to street. In some mega-cities this is an obvious necessity since a top-down administration of the learning city would be impracticable. An administrative district in Beijing for example contains almost a million people and can, in its own right, fulfil the responsibilities of a city authority.

Cities and sub-districts have different but over-lapping roles as the diagram above shows. The City Administration is responsible for policies and strategies and providing the means - finance, sponsorship, website, support, overall management. It will act as an enabling authority for international projects, lifelong learning, stakeholder involvement and media support as well as defining quality guidelines and carrying out research and monitoring tasks.

At Community or neighbourhood level the focus is much more on local capability, providing the meeting places and enthusing people and organisation to contribute their talents, skills and experience in the service of the learning community. Such divisions of responsibility differ from city to city.

Dimension 7 – Learning City Criteria

Three Key rationales for Creating a Learning City

The following are 3 key rationales for the creation of a learning city based upon many of the issues described in previous pages. They mirror the three city focuses of Economic, Social and Environmental.

1. Individual Fulfilment and Social Inclusion

A Learning City will devise strategies that provide citizens with the tools and competences to become adaptable and flexible, versatile and entrepreneurial while, at the same time, making provisions for the mentally, physically and financially disadvantaged

2. Employability and Economic Prosperity

A Learning City will maximise its own human, intellectual, cultural, geographical, community and industrial potential, and devise innovative plans to increase the employability of its citizens through training, re-training and lifelong learning

3. Sustainable Development

A Learning City will respect the environmental changes that are taking place world-wide and ensure that development does not permanently deplete the earth's resources. It will also respect the citizens' needs for clean, pollution-free open spaces to live, play and work.

Dimension 7 – Learning City Criteria

Six Key Building Blocks of a Learning City

1. The development of a dynamic, open and inclusive lifelong learning culture

This would entail innovative strategies that embed lifelong learning for all as an active, creative, exciting journey into the future involving learners in new experiences and developing positive values and attitudes. All learning providers would be part of this

2. The city and its stakeholder organisations as customer-oriented learning organisations

This would mean transforming the city administration and stakeholder organisations in industry, schools, universities, adult and VET education, cultural services, hospitals etc to become learning organisations sensitive to change, and open to new ideas and methods

3. Active participation. Contributing skills, talents, ideas, experience and knowledge

This means developing strategies that will transform the city into a hive of activity involving citizens in a large variety of supportive and interactive programmes that contribute to its growth

Dimension 7 – Learning City Criteria

Six Key Building Blocks of a Learning City (contd)

4. The imagination with which learning city vision and values, and the opportunities surrounding them, are creatively communicated to its leaders, administrators, stakeholder organisations, customers and citizens, and the ways in which they are inspired to respond.

This will entail using all the media at the city's disposal to communicate the Learning City internally to its leaders, citizens, stakeholders and externally to observers and potential inward investors

5. Enhanced Learning through local, national and international partnerships

This will increase ideas, resources, motivation and understanding through partnerships and cooperation between each stakeholder in the city

6. Greater creativity, innovation, imagination, vision and cultural values

This will promote creative thinking in all sections of the city so that it benefits the city's future development and create a city culture that will inculcate a sense of pride in citizens.

Dimension 7 – Learning City Criteria

Three Key Prerequisites of a Learning City

1. Political Will and Commitment

The enthusiastic backing of city leaders and the provision of resources to establish the learning city as a constructive way of creating a positive, stable and prosperous future

2. Good Governance and enlightened policies and strategies

The design, development and delivery of creative learning strategies and policies that will pervade every aspect of city life

3. Sustainable Optimisation of All Resources and Potentials

The identification and activation of human, intellectual, cultural, community, mineral, geographical, financial and natural resources available to the city

Individual Fulfilment and Social Inclusion

Sustainable Development

Employability and Economic Prosperity

Development of a dynamic,
open lifelong learning culture

City and Stakeholders as
Learning Organisations

Active participation. Donating
talents, skills, experience etc

Quality Information, support
and active communication

Enhanced learning through
international partnerships

Innovation, creativity, vision,
imagination, cultural values

Political Will and Commitment

Governance and Enlightened Policies and Strategies

Sustainable Optimisation of All Resources and Potentials

LEARNING CITY DIMENSIONS

Dimension 5 - Developing INDICES

Charters and Sources of Information

ELLI Learning Cities Charter -

IAEC Charter for Educating Cities

Limerick Declaration

EUROlocal Storehouse

Stakeholder Audits (INDICATORS)

The TELS Learning City Audit

OECD Learning Cities Project

LILARA Project Indices

Cities of Opportunity

PIE PASCAL International Exchanges

Others

<http://eurolocal.info/resource/elli-charter-learning-cities>

http://www.bcn.es/edcities/aice/estatiques/angles/sec_charter.html

<http://eurolocal.info/resource/limerick-declaration-blueprint-learning-regions>

<http://eurolocal.info>

<http://eurolocal.info/resource/stakeholder-audit-tools-city-and-regional-authorities-developing-learning-cities-and-region>

<http://eurolocal.info/resource/oecd-charter-learning-regions>

<http://eurolocal.info/resource/lilara-learning-needs-audit-tool-learning-city-administration-employees>

<http://www.pwc.com/us/en/cities-of-opportunity>

<http://pascalobservatory.org/projects/current/pie>

Other Sources of Information

'Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities – Lifelong Learning and Local Government' N Longworth, (Taylor & Francis, UK)

'Making Knowledge Work – Sustaining Learning Communities and Regions' C Duke, L Doyle, B Wilson (eds), (NIACE, UK)

'Perspectives on Learning Cities and Regions' – N Longworth and M Osborne (eds) (NIACE, UK)

'Creating Learning Communities' - R Miller (ed) (Foundation for Education Renewal, USA)

'The School, the Community and Lifelong Learning' - J Chapman and D Aspin (Cassell, Australia)

Advantages of joining the UNESCO Global Learning Cities Network

- 1. The opportunity to exchange ideas, knowledge, experience and practice with other cities around the world in the fellowship of the network**
- 2. Access to UNESCO experts and expertise, libraries, etc**
- 3. The opportunity to bid for the kitemark standard of 'UNESCO Global Learning City' with all that means for**
 - **Inward investment**
 - **Prestige and recognition**
 - **Growth and prosperity**
 - **Tourism**
- 4. The opportunity to kick-start initiatives that will greatly improve city performance**
- 5. Access to measuring and monitoring indices that will set the city on the path to sustainable growth and social improvement**
- 6. The opportunity to update knowledge and practice at UNESCO Learning City seminars and Conferences around the world**
- 7. Access to sources of learning city tools, learning materials and other resources that will assist learning city development**
- 8. A common purpose with other world cities in every continent.**
- 9. The opportunity to make a contribution to the sustainability of both your city and our planet.**