

The Third PASCAL Learning Cities Workshop Report

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Cities learning together - Public administration as a domain for smart solutions hosted by PASCAL, the University of Tampere and the Finnish Association of Local Government Studies, 12-13 June 2014

The objective of the conference was to bring about an awareness of the role and needs of local communities in relation to learning, and to seek smart solutions in which cities and other public organizations can play a greater role in response to those needs. The workshop was attended by some 80 people from a number of different counties. There were 18 presentations in the workshop including the keynote presentations. The PASCAL Chair, Professor Josef Konvitz, provided a context for the workshop by situating the topic within the context of the recent worldwide economic crisis. Professor Michael Osborne, PASCAL Director for Europe, provided a further context, that of learning cities that was being promoted by PASCAL through its Learning Cities Network programme of which this workshop was the third of a series around the world.

It is obvious that cities have to meet and solve unique and rapidly changing problems. Complexity brings about uncertainty and renders the managerial landscape fuzzy. Today, we live in an open society, bound together by systems of organisations, in which the transfer of information, interaction, and various boundaries are correspondingly reflected as the trademarks of public policy and public policy implementation. Both global and local changes are extremely important in the city context.

Cities acting as learning institutions are administrative, social, political and economic units. This also means that the content of learning cities should be analysed from multidisciplinary perspectives. As Professor Timo Aarrevaara (University of Helsinki) pointed out in his keynote presentation, organizational learning and reflection are, for instance, an important prerequisite for the development of cities, but they often occur in a very traditional background. In this light, then, there is an urgent need to reassess the traditional foundations and concepts of organizational and learning theory as well as the epistemological choices made in the course of current learning and organizational research. According to the presentations in the workshop, the re-formulated contents of learning cities include, for instance, aspects of lifelong learning, intelligence and smart solutions, and technology.

Most especially intelligence and smart solutions are extremely important for learning cities. At the outset, organizational intelligence entails two interrelated, but somewhat different components. The first involves effective adaptation to an environment. An intelligent public organization is able to convert change demands into concrete

objectives which can be implemented in an appropriate way. The second component of organizational intelligence involves the elegance with which it interprets the experiences of life.

An intelligent organization – like a smart city – constructs its knowledge base through a continuous learning process, based on, *inter alia*, numerous discussions within a given organization and exchange of ideas *vis-à-vis* with other organizations. In this context, cities need smart solutions which help them to overcome professional silos and to work with other public and private organizations. Co-production can be described as a potential relationship that exists between producer and client in the production of a service. Technology provides totally new kinds of possibilities to create smart solutions in cities. Few can be successfully managed by any one city, or public organizations working alone.

In the workshop, there were several presentations on smart solutions which are based on different kinds of technologies and analytical tools, such as *Big Data*, a topic covered by Mike Osborne in the context of the University of Glasgow's newly funded [Urban Big Data Centre](#), a large scale investment of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council. An example was provided from Helsinki. In managing the streets, parks and public utility services, and repairing buildings in the city of Helsinki, [Stara](#), which provides construction and logistics services for the city, has developed telemetry for construction management. This acts as a tool for improving efficiency and reducing costs as well. Further, in Hong Kong, for example, the city administration has the tools to analyse big data across different functions (e.g. traffic, energy consumption) for better decision-making as well as to anticipate problems, resolve them proactively, and design more responsive services. According to Waltraut Ritter's ([Knowledge Dialogues](#)) presentation, differences between smart and open cities can be analysed by the way in which the role of the city administration and institutions are described, as well as the way, access, ownership, and usage of urban data is perceived. Learning and local knowledge are critical aspects in the implementation process of smart solutions.

Due to smart solutions, there is a need for a new kind of engagement between universities and cities. As Professor Romulo Pinheiro (University of Agder) argued in the workshop, historically in some areas universities have been called upon to play an active role in a city development, *inter alia* by helping to prevent a negative 'lock-in', and contributing to upgrading by helping in path extension and/or creation.

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