PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE)

PIE Discussion Paper 2
Making Learning City Development Creative and Innovative

Peter Kearns – 25 Mar 2011

There is wide recognition that successful 21st Century cities need to be creative and innovative in responding to the spectrum of challenges confronting them, including the pace and uncertainty of change.

There are also grounds for taking the view that a learning city and a creative city share common characteristics, so that committed learning cities should give close consideration to the extent to which policies and strategies to foster creativity and a capacity for innovation have been integrated in the strategic development of the city.

This means having regard to questions such as the following.

- What makes a city fertile for social innovation?
- What role should the arts and cultural institutions play in building a culture in a city that encourages and supports creativity in all sectors of city life?
- What conditions favour, or impair, collaborative creativity?

Creativity and Innovation

Charles Landry in his book *The Creative City* distinguishes creativity and innovation in city life:

- Creativity involves divergent or generative thinking but innovation demands a convergent, critical, and analytical approach;
- Innovation and creativity should be context driven;

- Creativity and innovation seamlessly interweave, the first generating ideas which, if many may prove impractical, at least provide a basis with which to work;

- Creativity is the precondition from which innovations develop.

Landry 2000, p15

This view suggests that creativity is important in the ideas phase of an innovation, while other skills and attributes are necessary in carrying through successful innovations. There is considerable evidence that we need a broader concept of creativity than the traditional notion. This idea was well put in a British Council report on *Creative Cities: Breakthrough Cities* (Kahn et al, p9)

> *"This broader idea of creativity is more social, cumulative and collaborative than the traditional idea that creativity comes from a spark of individual genius."*

This broader concept of creativity is evident in the pattern of development of successful Learning Cities such as the Hume Global Learning Village. It is also evident in the ways centres of innovation such as Silicon Valley have generated creative ideas through such a social, cumulative, and collaborative process open to new ideas and a willingness to innovate.

The Medici Effect

A key requirement is building cities that are open to new ideas with a culture that favours and supports challenging traditional wisdom. Frans Johansson termed this attribute "the Medici effect" recalling the creativity of 15th century Florence where the Medici rulers of the city encouraged creative people across Italy and elsewhere to share life and ideas in Florence so that the whole city became a zone of encounter (Johansson 2004).

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This view that breakthrough insights often occur *"at the intersection of ideas, concepts and cultures"* (Johansson, p16) is very relevant to building cities that are creative and innovative.

This means:

- taking advantage of diversity as a source of new ideas (diversity advantage);
- actively fostering intercultural understanding so that citizens can learn from other sources;
- connecting schools to cultural institutions in ways that broaden perspectives and cultural understanding;
- use international links, including sister city schools and programs such as PIE as a source of new ideas;
- use Learning Festivals to broaden community understanding of emerging concepts, industries, and opportunities;
- design city development so that "zones of encounter" play an on-going role as a source of new ideas.

Localism and Social Innovation

John Tibbitt in a PASCAL Policy Challenge Paper on *Localism, Place-Making and Social Innovation* takes up important aspects of the contemporary context in many communities with growing pressures in some countries for local innovation solutions. In countries such as the UK, the search for innovation is impinging on the role of local government requiring new mindsets and strategies at a time of resource restraint.

In this paper Tibbitt recognises the importance of place as a source of community assets and community capacity. In his analysis of conditions that favour social innovation, he identifies three conditions:

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- opportunity for change;
- motivation for change;
- resources to enable change.

This, of course, has significant implications for the role and modus operandi of local government, including a role for local government agencies in working with social entrepreneurs and community groups to develop an enterprising approach to emerging sources of finance for public services (Tibbitt, p5)

The implications of these shifts in the role and relationships of local government agencies has significant implications for strategies to build sustainable Learning Cities and merits close attention in the PIE dialogue.

Innovation in PIE Cities

The PIE stimulus papers provide a spectrum of examples of cities being innovative. These include the following.

- Bari developing a whole-of-community response to combating crime and enhancing public safety.
- Vancouver developing innovative ways of harnessing curiosity in engaging disengaged people.
- Cork adopting innovative ways of using a Learning Festival to engage disengaged people and to progress a learning culture.
- Glasgow innovating in the role of museums as vehicles to promote lifelong learning and to progress social agendas.
- Hume innovating in the use of an Ideas Lab to foster innovative uses of ICT in education.

In each case a framework exists to bring partners together to find new ways to address issues and progress objectives.

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Linking Cultural, Social, Educational & Economic Development

A key area in which cities need to be creative is in finding good ways to link cultural, social, educational, and economic strands of development in integrated strategies so that synergies are achieved between these domains of development.

While some promising initiatives have been reported, this is an area for further development. Useful initiatives include:

- developing the social and tourism roles of cultural institutions, as in Glasgow, so that these institutions serve as vehicles to progress social and economic agendas;
- strengthening the development of key generic competences (problem solving, learning to learn etc) through the work of schools, cultural institutions etc so that these competences underpin the skill requirements of the information and creative economy, as well as serving as essential life and community building skills;
- long term strategic planning for learning city initiatives linked to city planning for a similar period, as in the Hume Global Learning Village 2030 strategy, so that opportunities for synergistic development become evident;
- giving teeth to twinning arrangements so that links become a source of new ideas that challenge traditional practices;
- promoting intercultural understanding across all sectors so that citizens are prepared for life and work in a globalised world;
- designing zones of encounter in the city as learning spaces so that there is an on-going intermingling of cultures and ideas;
- using Learning Festivals as forums and vehicles to spread new ideas and experience across all domains of development;
- using technology as a source of new ideas;
- cultivating creativity in many forms and contexts, e.g. schools, arts, community action.

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Initiatives such as these will contribute over time to building a learning culture in a city that is open to new ideas and experience, and which supports enterprise, creativity, and innovation.

Kaunas provides an example of a city with a broad conceptual framework for lifelong learning drawing on principles enunciated by Becker directed at the following : 1. the stability and vitality of the system; 2. environmental sustainability; 3 economic sustainability; social sustainability; cultural sustainability; educational sustainability; international issues of sustainability.

Learning to Be and Creative Individuals

The 1996 UNESCO Delors Commission on Education for the 21st Century identified Learning to Be as one of the Four Pillars of Education.

> *"At its very first meeting the Commission firmly restated the fundamental principle that education must contribute to the all round development of each individual mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic sense, personal responsibility, and spiritual values."*
>
> Delors Report, p94

This aspiration should underpin our endeavours to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all, and points to the centrality of broad rounded development across the domains identified in the Delors Report

Some Learning Cities have seized on theories of multiple intelligences to guide broad all round development of individuals. The Birmingham Grid for Learning, for example, applies a multiple intelligences approach to the Grid for secondary students. Students can access the Grid and undertake a test to identify the strongest elements of their intelligences and areas for development.

Are there connections between broad all round personal development and creativity. The psychologist Abraham Maslow thought so.

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> *"The concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualising fully human person seem to be coming closer together and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing."*

Creativity should be brought into any approach to progress the learning to be objective in Learning Cities. Questions to do with heritage and identity provide many opportunities to address this objective in creative ways.

As the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi observed:

> "*Creativity is a central source of meaning in our lives.*"

We might add that it is a central source of identity in a city.

Contemporary brain research is providing insights into neuroplasticity in the brain's capacity to change as a result of experience, including that it is possible to open up parts of the brain related to leadership traits, and aspects that are relevant to managing innovation and change (Doidge 2008).

Research is showing that it is possible to maintain an active brain throughout life so that we need to be innovative in reframing the ageing process and working towards a new paradigm for ageing (Cohen 2005, pxxiii). This is an important frontier for policies for lifelong learning and community building.

Bring multiple intelligences to bear on the development and sustainability of cities opens up new vistas for developing creative and innovative cities, including using the human resources of cities throughout life with active ageing a normal feature of creative Learning Cities.

Seeing Relationships and Conceptual Blending

Building creative and innovative Learning Cities depends fundamentally on relationships, and the capacity to see relationships.

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"The most creative among us see relationships the rest of us never notice"

<div align="right">Daniel Pink, 2005</div>

Creativity generally involves crossing the boundaries of domains

<div align="right">Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1996</div>

This capacity to see relationships and cross borders is an important aspect of building creative Learning Cities. It will lead on occasions to unusual (non-traditional) partnerships as Henrik Zipsane observed in a paper prepared for the PASCAL Ostersund conference.[1]

This capacity of boundary crossing will often lead to blended solutions. In building creative Learning Cities, we should foster this capacity for conceptual blending.

Forging cross-over concepts can be useful. For example, the concept of the Hume Global Learning Village blends ideas that relate to personal relationships, identity and community building, lifelong learning, and the global context of the community. This amalgam serves as a constant reminder of interactions that need to be progressed

Building the Learning City as a Creative Environment

Learning cities should be developed so as to provide creative environments. As Csikszentmihalyi observed: it is easier to enhance creativity by changing conditions in the environment than by trying to make people think more creatively.

There are many opportunities to promote creative environments in cities committed to lifelong learning and partnership

These include:

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[1] Papers from the PASCAL Ostersund Conference will be published later in 2011. Enquiries may be directed to the author of this paper..

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- enhancing the role of the arts and cultural institutions linked to social agendas;

- actively building international links as a source of new ideas;

- designing zones of encounter to bring cultures and ideas into a creative interaction;

- celebrating creatively in the work of the city in many forms eg in city design and architecture, the work of schools;

- fostering unusual partnerships;

- ensure that creative opportunities are available fore all throughout life eg the role of the arts in active ageing strategies;

- encourage intergenerational learning.

What Can PIE do to Enhance Creativity and Innovation in Participating Cities?

Creativity and innovation are complex subjects so that this paper has been selective in discussing a few aspects that appear most relevant to planning and implementing Learning City initiatives. Important aspects such as the work of schools and staff organisation and development in firms have not been discussed.

However, PASCAL would welcome advice on ways in which PIE can be developed to support participating cities in enhancing their creativity and capacity for innovation.

For Discussion

1. Do you agree that learning cities and creative cities share much in common? If so,
   what are these? In what ways can Learning Cities be made more creative?

2. In what ways is creativity necessary for successful social innovation?

3. What do you see as the hallmarks of a creative city?

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4. What steps could your city take now to progress this objective?

5. What images and concepts would you like to see applied to progress your city towards your vision to be achieved in say 2030?

6. Give a brief portrait of your city as you would like it to be by 2030.

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