Learning cities as healthy green cities: Building sustainable opportunity cities

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*This paper discusses a new generation of learning cities we have called EcCoWell cities (**Ec**onomy, **Co**mmunity, **Well**-being). The paper was prepared for the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) and is based on international experiences with PIE and developments in some cities. The paper argues for more holistic and integrated development so that initiatives such as Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities are more connected with value-added outcomes. This is particularly important with the surge of international interest in environment and Green City development so that the need exists to redefine what lifelong learning and learning city strategies can contribute. The paper draws out the implications for adult education in the Australian context. We hope it will generate discussion.*

Introduction

The UN Rio+20 Summit held in June 2012 reminds us of the critical importance of addressing the great environmental issues to ensure the future of Planet Earth. At the same time, escalating urbanisation around the world points to the challenge of building cities that are just and inclusive, and where opportunities are available for all throughout life, and where the well-being of all is an aspiration that is actively addressed in city development.

This challenge is widely recognised. The World Bank in its ECO2 Cities initiative has observed that '[u]rbanisation in developing countries is a defining feature of the 21st century' (World Bank 2011). Cities almost everywhere face the triple challenges of urbanisation, sustainability and social justice.

The challenge of these big issues for city development clearly requires new paradigms to guide development, and innovative forms of partnership where all stakeholders are united for joint action for mutual benefit. However, the scene around the world continues to be characterised by segmented silo development, with few signs of integrated connected strategies that bring all stakeholders together in partnerships, including non-traditional partnerships, to achieve value added outcomes and benefits for all.

In this context, this paper comments on the roles of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities, and asserts that much could be achieved by addressing the big issues confronting towns and cities through a convergence of these concepts to support a more holistic and integrated development in what I have called Sustainable Opportunity Cities. While there is much discussion of town planning, environmental, and architectural features of cities of the future, there is far less discussion of social aspects. This imbalance needs to be redressed with a coherent social vision of future cities in which lifelong learning, and social justice and inclusion, are foundations.

This paper draws on international developments I have directed as Intellectual Director of the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE), a project of the PASCAL International Observatory involving online exchanges of information and experience between twelve cities located across five continents around the world. This initiative is discussed below.

In connecting the role of Learning Towns and Cities with key environmental and well-being issues in towns and cities, I am aware of the need to revitalise the notion of learning communities and cities in Australia by showing their relevance to priority issues that attract community and political attention. The reality that a Learning City is an overarching concept that can be applied in addressing such key issues as preserving the environment, fostering well-being for all, and ensuring public safety has not been sufficiently realised, and is reflected in the poor level of funding for these initiatives by governments in Australia.

In framing this perspective in the paper, I give some background on the landscape of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities pointing to some of the things they hold in common which could be used in building connections and synergies. I suggest that this process of building Sustainable Opportunity Cities should be seen as a creative process where new ideas and innovative strategies are required, but where the rewards can be substantial in addressing the big issues confronting cities I have mentioned, and building a just, humane society.

I should clarify up front what I mean by Sustainable Opportunity Cities. By Sustainability I mean the well known pillars of environmental, social and economic sustainability. By Opportunity I refer to the things that Learning City initiatives have traditionally been directed at: lifelong learning, building partnership, community and citizenship, and fostering enterprise. Expressed another way,

I am talking of building social, human and identity capital in cohesive, inclusive and sustainable cities.

I comment below on a few related features of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green Cities, and then discuss some possible paths towards Sustainable Opportunity Cities in Australia. Some implications for the role of adult education are suggested.

Learning cities

The Learning City idea emerged from the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on lifelong learning in drawing attention to opportunities to progress all forms of learning in many contexts through partnership and building a shared vision.

This concept evolved through early manifestations as Educating Cities with a 1992 report by the OECD on *City strategies for lifelong learning*, prepared for the Second Congress of Educating Cities in Gothenburg, drawing attention to the potential of the city as a framework for fostering lifelong learning in many contexts (OECD 1992).

The role of the European Union in supporting lifelong learning as an organising principle for all forms of education has been important in driving the evolution of the idea of the city (or town/region/community) as a framework for lifelong learning for all. Various projects funded by the European Commission have contributed much in showing the range of strategies that can be applied in building innovative Learning Cities. Information and lessons derived from this experience may now be accessed through the EURO Local website: www.eurolocal.org.

A good statement of the aspirations and ideals that underpin the concept of a Learning City exists in a definition by Longworth (1999: 112):

> A learning community is a city, town or region that goes beyond its statutory duty to provide education and training for those who require it and instead creates a vibrant participative, culturally aware, and economically buoyant human environment through the provision, justification and active promotion of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all its citizens.

While this definition draws attention to much that is central to the Learning City idea, a further statement by Longworth (1999: 109) adds additional key dimensions to this concept:

> A learning community is a city, town or region which mobilises all its resources in every sector to develop and enrich all its human potential for the fostering of personal growth, the maintenance of social cohesion, and the creation of prosperity.

Taken together, these statements point to the entwined individual and community development objectives of Learning Cities, the equity and social justice thrusts in the concern for "all its citizens", and the aspirations to build communities that foster personal development, social cohesion and economic prosperity. The key role of a local government council in building a framework for partnership is widely recognised.

The Learning City concept has evolved in new contexts as challenges have been encountered as, for example, in the development of learning community initiatives in East Asian countries such as China, South Korea, and Chinese Taipei.[5] Experience has shown that the core ideas in the

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5   A paper for the May 2010 International Forum on Lifelong Learning in Shanghai drew on a 2009 survey conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Education to estimate that there were, by the end of 2009, 114 national experimental or pilot learning communities organised in 30 provinces, autonomous regions or municipalities under the direct jurisdiction of the central government while the number of pilot learning communities organised by provincial authorities exceeded 4,000 (Hao Keming 2011: 64).

Learning City concept are sufficiently flexible to accommodate these applications in a wide range of international contexts while at the same time evolving international experience adds to the richness encapsulated in this concept.

To enable comparison of the Learning City concept with the principles I give below for Healthy Cities and Eco Cities, I sum up my concept of a Learning City as a city giving expression to the following principles.

Principles for Sustainable Learning Cities:
- Develop a shared vision
- Build partnership
- Address social justice and equity
- Involve the community actively
- Progress learning in many contexts and forms
- Make development strategic
- Address the big issues confronting cities.

PASCAL International Exchanges

In order to share ideas and experience across national boundaries, the PASCAL International Observatory in January 2011 inaugurated the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) to test online exchanges as a vehicle for international dialogue on good ideas. Twelve cities across five continents are currently participating in this project: Glasgow, Kaunas, Bielefeld, Bari, Cork, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, Kampala, Beijing, Hong Kong, Hume Global Learning Village (Melbourne) and Vancouver. Further cities expected to join shortly.

Information on PIE, including the methodology adopted and the experience of participating cities, may be obtained from the PIE web site: www.pie.pascalobservatory.org. After an initial stage of development based on stimulus papers posted by participating cities, PIE has now progressed to a second stage based on six major

themes: Cultural Policy; Responding to Social Change; Preserving the Environment; ICT and Media; Mobilising Civil Society; Healthy Cities.

The inclusion of Preserving the Environment and Healthy Cities as PIE major themes illustrates ways in which the Learning City concept can reach out to address major issues in the development of cities. At the same time, developments of these sectors stands to be enriched by exchanges of experience between cities on heritage and cultural aspects of development, learning strategies and community building, and strategies to address equity and social justice issues so as to build inclusive, cohesive cities. The Learning City concept offers a fundamentally humanistic vision of future life in cities that can also support strategies to address key issues in a range of sectors contributing to sustainability.

Examples may be found among the cities participating in PIE of approaches to fostering lifelong learning in a wide range of contexts. For example, the Hume Global Learning Village is an initiative of Hume City Council in a district of Melbourne with considerable disadvantage, great diversity with migrants from many parts of the world, but with a council committed to ideas of social justice and opportunities for all. The success of this initiative since 2004 shows the importance of values in driving partnership action, the key role of a local government council, and the pay off from careful strategic action guided by a shared vision of the future and strategies to involve and inform the community.

On the other hand, the Beijing Learning City initiative shows what can be achieved with leadership and careful planning in a city with a population of over 20 million. The Beijing initiative with an active Leadership Group reaches down into all 16 Administrative Districts so that the whole city is connected through a series of learning networks across the city. All downtown areas in the city have a community education network base led by community colleges and adult education centres.

The Beijing stimulus paper for PIE reported that 80 percent of sub-districts have established community education centres or learning centres. More than 1,000 full-time and part-time teachers have joined in this city-wide effort assisting communities in developing community education activities. This is an incredible effort that demonstrates what can be achieved with vision, leadership and concerted action.

Other stimulus papers on the PIE website illustrate important themes in city development. The Glasgow paper is interesting in illustrating how museums in Glasgow have adopted a social justice approach to their work, and so make important connections between cultural policy and social objectives in city development. The Bari paper shows how a city can adopt a broad partnership approach in combating crime and promoting public safety.The three African papers (Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Dakar) demonstrate massive problems arising from rapid urban growth with the Dakar paper showing the importance of harnessing traditional African ways of learning in fostering lifelong learning in Africa. Altogether, there is much to be gained from a careful reading of the PIE stimulus papers.

Healthy cities

It has become evident that Learning Cities and Healthy Cities share a good deal in common, and that community learning strategies can contribute much to Healthy City objectives. This convergence of interests has become more apparent with the strong interest of Healthy City initiatives in the social determinants of health following the work of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. This provides a common platform of interest in addressing equity and social justice issues, with the experience of Learning City initiatives in these areas a resource that can be drawn on with benefits for health objectives.

The Healthy City movement emerged from the work of the WHO, and has been progressed by a number of regional networks that link cities committed to Healthy City principles. In the Asian region, for example, an Alliance of Healthy Cities now links a large number of cities in the Asian region, including some Australian cities.

WHO (2011) has defined a Healthy City in the following manner:

> A Healthy City is one that is continuously creating or improving their physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing their maximum potential.

This could be a definition of a Learning City, with considerable commonality with the definition of a Learning City given by Longworth cited above. Both concepts draw on and develop a range of community resources, develop people to their maximum potential, and foster partnerships in these endeavours.

Key common interests that Learning Cities and Healthy Cities share were articulated in the Final Report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (WHO 2008). The social determinants of health have been defined as the:

> … socio-economic conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities and jurisdictions as a whole. These determinants also establish the extent to which a person possesses the physical, social, and personal resources to identify and achieve personal aspirations, satisfy needs and cope well with the environment. (Raphael 2004)

Follow up on the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in countries such as the UK has identified areas where action is likely to be the most effective in reducing health inequalities. These have included areas such as early childhood development and education, social protection, and sustainable development which are typically the heartland of Learning City initiatives (Campbell 2010).

Healthy cities principles and values

A useful statement of Healthy City principles and values may be found in the 2009 *Zagreb Declaration on Healthy Cities*. These are shown below (WHO 2009):

- **Equity:** addressing inequality in health, and paying attention to the needs of those who are vulnerable and socially disadvantaged. Inequity is inequality in health that is unfair and unjust and avoidable causes of ill health. The right to health applies to all regardless of sex, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, age, disability or socioeconomic circumstance.
- **Participation and empowerment:** ensuring the individual and collective right of people to participate in decision making that affects their health, health care and well-being. Providing access to opportunities and skills development together with positive thinking to empower citizens to become self-sufficient.
- **Working in partnership:** building effective multi-sectoral strategic partnerships to implement integrated approaches and achieve sustainable improvement in health.
- **Solidarity and friendship:** working in the spirit of peace, friendship and solidarity through networking and respect and appreciation of the social and cultural diversity of the cities of the Healthy Cities movement.
- **Sustainable development:** the necessity of working to ensure that economic development, and all the supportive infrastructure needs, is environmentally and socially sustainable.

It is evident that much of this statement could apply equally to Learning Cities with the thrusts of these initiatives towards equity, participation, empowerment and partnership providing a framework to progress the objectives of healthy cities.

Health is one of the foundations for well-being. In thinking about the well-being of individuals and communities, we are inevitably drawn to thinking about learning, self-esteem, and the confidence that an

educated person able to continue learning and developing throughout life acquires. Learning to be is surely a pillar of well-being.

Green cities and Eco cities

Like Healthy Cities, there has been considerable promotion of the concepts of Green Cities and Eco Cities. With the Rio+20 Summit drawing attention to the need to find innovative ways to address the environmental challenges to the planet we inhabit, the potential of the city as an arena for progress is attracting growing interest—and, rightly so.

This interest is reflected in studies and initiatives such as the European Union's Green Capitals awards, the Eco2 program of the World Bank, the Citystate concept developed by Sustainability, the Sustainable Cities Collective, and the EcCoWell concept I developed for PASCAL. If we look across these competing yet complementary visions, we will find a number of common themes that are relevant to the development of towns and cities in Australia.

The Eco2 program of the World Bank was launched as an integral part of the Bank's Urban and Local Government Strategy. The core idea is stated in the following terms (World Bank 2011: 2):

> … an Eco2 city builds on the synergy and interdependence of ecological and economic sustainability, and their fundamental ability to reinforce each other in the urban context.

This idea has been taken up by other agencies such as the OECD in its Green Growth Strategy that is discussed below.

The World Bank in its Eco2 program identified four principles for the development of Eco Cities. These are:

1. **A city based approach**—enables local governments to lead a development process that takes into account their specific circumstances, including their local ecology.

2. **An expanded platform for collaborative design and decision making**—accomplishes sustained synergy by coordinating and aligning the actions of key stakeholders.

3. **A one system approach**—enables cities to realise the benefits of integration by planning, designing, and managing the whole urban system.

4. **An investment framework that values sustainability and resiliency**—incorporates and accounts for lifestyle analysis, the value of all capital assets (manufactured, natural).

As I have noted with Healthy City principles, these principles could apply to good Learning City development, and could largely apply to Healthy Cities.

The European Green Capital award of the EU illustrates the growing significance given to the environmental challenges confronting cities in Europe, and the key role of local government authorities in improving and sustaining the environment. This award is intended to showcase good practice models so as to disseminate ideas about best practice.

Since the award commenced in 2010, the following cities have won the award: Stockholm (2010), Hamburg (2011), Vitoria-Gasteig (2012) and Nantes (2013). As with other green initiatives, the wards link respect for the environment, quality of life and economic growth.

The idea that Green growth is about more than the environment or ecology was also supported by the Green Growth Leaders (2011: 5) in a study of the socio-economic benefits of green development in Copenhagen:

> Green must, therefore, been seen in a broader perspective than strictly environmental. It is also about improving quality of life and creating jobs and business opportunities throughout the entire economy—not just in the clean-tech sector.

The OECD has added to these evolving perspectives on Green growth with its release of the *OECD Green growth strategy: A lens for examining growth* (OECD 2011a). This strategy was seen as providing a framework for Green growth, including addressing seeming conflicts of economic and environmental objectives (OECD 2011a: 10):

> A green growth strategy is centred on mutually reinforcing aspects of economic and environmental policy. It takes into account the full value of natural capital as a factor of production and its role in growth. It focuses on cost-effective ways of attenuating environmental pressures to effect a transition towards new patterns of growth that will avoid crossing critical, local, regional and global environmental thresholds.

The OECD Green Growth Strategy attempts to bring together economic, environmental, social, technological and developmental aspects into a comprehensive framework, pointing the way to link Green growth to the other domains of socio-economic development.

Similarly, the Zero-draft of the Outcome Document for the UN Rio10+20 Conference ecognises the need for the integration of economic development and environmental sustainability in balancing the three pillars of sustainable development seen as economic, social, and environmental sustainability (United Nations 2012). This recognition of the case for an integrated and holistic approach to developing sustainable cities is in accord with the thesis of this paper.

The key role of local government authorities in the development of a framework for sustainable development has emerged from the work of ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, an international organisation with over 1200 members across towns and cities around the world. The work of ICLEI promotes key aspects of sustainability in 'Urban resilience and adaptation' and adds to good practice models that are emerging from leading Green Cities such as Copenhagen, Stockholm and Hamburg. (The in-depth profile of Copenhagen as a Green City prepared by the Green Growth Leaders (2011) provides

a good example of the socio-economic benefits from well-managed green growth.)

The growing literature on Green Cities and Eco Cities points to the need for strategies to progress holistic approaches to urban development that link environmental, health, learning, community building and economic aspects of development, and which accord with the principles for Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Eco Cities I have mentioned. I turn now to the critical question of how we build pathways towards Sustainable Opportunity Cities that accord with these principles and which add value beyond these separate aspirations.

While I have drawn substantially in this paper on the EcCoWell paper I wrote for PASCAL on Sustainable Opportunity Cities, I have omitted parts of that paper which add to the full case for Sustainable Opportunity cities. The omitted parts relate to wellbeing, community and cultural aspects, economic aspects, place making, and balancing individual and community interests. These parts of the case may be read in the EcCoWell paper online: http://pie.pascalobservatory.org.

The path towards Sustainable Opportunity Cities

I have taken the position in this paper that cities around the world are confronted by a seeming convergence of forces that underpin key learning, health, environment and cultural objectives. This provides an opportunity to seize this 'conjuncture of forces' to develop in a coordinated comprehensive way through partnerships and a shared vision, cities that are sustainable, humane, and foster learning and well-being for all. I have termed such cities Sustainable Opportunity Cities (EcCoWell)—cities that combine the benefits of Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green/Eco Cities.

While there is now a significant knowledge base on Learning Cities and Healthy Cities, and a growing base on Green Cities, the path

to Sustainable Opportunity Cities is likely to involve a reframing of our ideas about city development, involving new paradigms, and a 'process of dynamic synergy' (Hall 1998: 18): 'The key is the ability to transfer ideas from one circuit into another—for which, there must be many such circuits' (Hall 1998:19).

This process of linking networks in a 'process of dynamic synergy' will require frameworks to enable this to happen, a requirement that is becoming increasingly important with the growth of cities in size and diversity. The role of local government councils in this process will be central.

An effective Learning City initiative can provide a moral and ethical framework for stimulating learning throughout life, and building citizenship and a shared sense of identity and community that reaches out to others as well as addressing local concerns through city-based initiatives.. This provides a necessary foundation for addressing issues such as preserving the environment, eradicating poverty, and enhancing health and well-being that are both local and global in their ramifications.

There are layers of connections in cities that can be built on in fostering this process of dynamic synergy, as Landry (2008: 22) notes:

> There are layers upon layers of urban interconnections—personal, political and economic- often based on historic migratory patterns such as the bamboo network of expatriate Chinese, who from Vancouver to Sydney are part of China-based trading system.

The experience of rapid growth African cities, such as Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Addis Ababa, points to the significance of understanding these layers of urban/rural interconnections as a foundation in the path towards sustainable EcCoWell cities.

With growing diversity in many cities through increased migration, both from rural areas and internationally, responding to diversity is a key challenge on the path to sustainability. This has been termed by Wood and Landry (2008: 23) as the central dilemma of the age: 'Dealing with and valuing diversity and the desire for distinctiveness is the central dilemma of an age'.

While dealing with diversity will be a challenge for many cities, on the other hand planning for diversity advantage can be a source of cultural riches and creativity that adds to the ethos and spirit of a city (Wood & Landry 2008: 10–13).

Achieving diversity advantage in an intercultural city can often be a matter of the so called 'Medici effect', the convergence of ideas and concepts across related areas of city development which provides opportunities to establish a process of dynamic synergy that will lead to value added outcomes across these sectors, as happened in the burst of creativity in fifteenth century Florence under its Medici rulers (Johansson 2004: 2–3).

The concepts of Learning City, Healthy City and Green City have much in common so that connecting up these concepts, and their linked strategies, will provide opportunities to progress these objectives in humane, sustainable cities. The interaction of ideas at the intersections of these concepts will provide opportunities for breakthrough insights in harnessing the 'Medici effect'.

There are surely opportunities in connecting up our learning, community, health, well-being and environmental aspirations to make this process creative. As the World Bank in its Eco2 City initiative reminds us, we should think strategically in terms of a one-system approach that connects individual initiatives.

The aspirations of Green Cities and Healthy Cities need the humanism that underpins the Learning City concept if they are to

flourish and to be sustained in the long term. The Learning City concept will be revitalised through the contemporary relevance of the Green City and Healthy City objectives. There is in this situation a convergence of interest, as well as a convergence of common concerns and objectives.

These aspirations will all benefit from the active promotion of a broad concept of lifelong learning for all. Over time, this will contribute to building a learning culture in cities that is receptive to new ideas (Kearns & Papadopoulos 2000). And, perhaps a Learning Society (Kearns: 2006).

While the concept of lifelong learning has sometimes been narrowed to a focus on skill and economic development objectives, there is much merit in the assertion by Duke that there is most benefit in widening the scope of lifelong learning 'to address the social, civic and sustainable ecological needs of complex ageing societies' (Duke 2011: 5). Active partnership in implementing such a concept of lifelong learning will benefit all the aspirations discussed in this paper. As Glaeser (2011: 269) has wisely observed: 'We build civilization and culture together, constantly learning from one another and from the past'.

A successful Learning City initiative provides an overarching framework and stimulus to harness this process of on-going learning and partnership so as to further share aspirations and contribute to revitalising civilization and culture. This requires a certain boldness of vision, understanding of the past and present, and goodwill in reaching out to others (Ferguson 2011: 324–325).

Both the Healthy City and Green City aspirations need the work of successful Learning City initiatives in progressing equity and social justice, opening opportunities for learning and personal development throughout life, and building community and a civic sense of

common interest. Fostering these aspirations will build a platform for furthering health, well-being, environment and economic objectives.

While historically trade has been the vehicle to spread and deepen civilizations, modern technologies provide an opportunity to foster the interplay of ideas and cultures everywhere in the global marketplace of ideas.

What are the implications for adult education in Australia?

I turn now to the question of the implications of the ideas discussed in this paper for the role of adult education in Australia—and for the opportunities now emerging for those labouring in the vineyard in building learning communities with little support and recognition from governments.

In the EcCoWell working paper, four ways to progress a convergence of Learning City, Healthy City and Green City aspirations were identified. These were:

1. Learning Cities that broaden to progress Healthy City and Green City objectives.
2. Healthy City and Green City initiatives that apply Learning City objectives and strategies.
3. Networks that link Learning City, Healthy City and Green City initiatives in a particular region, or internationally.
4. New initiatives that adopt the EcCoWell approach from the beginning.

Each one of these approaches involves extending partnerships and building a shared vision of the future. It is surely time to assert the adult education role, in a framework of lifelong learning and community building, as a key player and partner in approaches to sustainability in towns and cities. The learning city idea is an

overarching concept that can reach out to support a range of pillars of sustainable humane cities.

The examples I have cited from the PASCAL International Exchanges illustrate different approaches. The Beijing Learning City, for example, demonstrates a comprehensive reaching down approach, reaching down to all Administrative Districts and sub-districts. Good practice is recognised and rewarded. The Hume Global Learning Village illustrates a more evolutionary approach which commenced as a Learning City initiative in a district with considerable disadvantage, but which is now considering how health and environment objectives can be linked to the on-going Learning City initiative. Both developments have an active Leadership Group, the strong support of the City government/council, and build on research in striving for continuous improvement.

The EcCoWell paper makes the suggestion that much would be gained from a mix of these approaches that fostered a rich milieu of innovative ideas and sharing of experience. Such an approach would be most productive if supported by relevant organisations and agencies such as PASCAL, UNESCO, WHO, UNEP and Green Growth Leaders.

There are various portents that the Learning City is an idea whose time has come in a context of growing concern with urbanisation, sustainability and poverty/exclusion issues. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg is currently undertaking planning for a Global Learning City Network to be launched in late 2013 with PASCAL contributing to this development. A special issue of the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* with a focus on Learning

Cities around the world is planned for July 2013[6]. Both these developments are raising a raft of questions, including assessment of progress.

The context discussed in this paper calls for deepened partnerships that explore areas of common interest, mutual aspirations and strategies that progress all aspirations in value-added ways. This approach goes in the direction of 'the deepening recognition of the value and necessity of partnership, pluralism, and the interplay of many perspectives' (Tarnas 1991: 443).

The fundamental common interest that all stakeholders in Australian towns and cities have in promoting just, sustainable futures points to the need for a mutual commitment to action to ensure a sustainable future. This idea has been given shape by the German Government's Advisory Council on Global Change as a Social Contract for Sustainability—a commitment by all sectors of society to joint action in the Great Transformation to a sustainable society (German Advisory Council on Global Change 2011). Is this an idea with implications for Australia?

While this paper has had a focus on Learning Cities, Healthy Cities and Green City initiatives, other relevant networks exist in cities that are relevant to the idea of a good city discussed in this paper. Networking the networks in cities, regionally and internationally is a key challenge and opportunity. There are opportunities in this situation to revitalise the concept of learning communities, and the role of adult education in Australian society.

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6   The *IJLE* issue will include a chapter on the interesting work done by the former Canadian Council on Learning in developing and implementing over five years a Composite Learning Index based on the four pillars identified by the UNESCO Delors Commission (Learning to Know, Do, Learning to Live with Others, Learning to Be). The Canadian CLI Index has been applied in Europe in a study sponsored by the Bertelsmann Foundation (ELLI 2010).

Living, learning and growing in Sustainable Opportunity Cities provides an opportunity to build a creative synthesis of the ideals and values that have motivated initiatives across education and learning, health, culture and environment sectors in urban contexts, and to reassert the historic role of cities as the cradles of civilization and culture.

The time for segmented responses is surely past and the path towards sustainable development in humane twenty-first century cities will be one of high interest with many opportunities for creative ideas and innovations.

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