

## **Living and learning in EcCoWell cities: Discussion paper**

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*These notes and questions have been prepared to promote discussion of the ideas set out in the Clarifying paper, 'Living and learning in EcCoWell cities' to be found on the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) website. This Discussion Paper sets ten questions for discussion. We are hoping to encourage discussions of these issues around the world.*

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These notes and questions have been prepared to promote discussion of the ideas set out in the Clarifying paper, 'Living and learning in EcCoWell cities'. The Clarifying paper was prepared to provide a possible framework for further exchanges between cities participating in the PASCAL International Exchanges (PIE) that go in the direction of broader, more holistic and integrated strategies. (The Clarifying paper and information on PIE is available on the website <[www.pie.pascalobservatory.org](http://www.pie.pascalobservatory.org)>).

It is hoped that arrangements will be made for cross-sectoral discussion of the ideas in the Clarifying paper so as to identify areas of common interest and ways in which these shared interests can be strengthened. Feedback from these discussions to PIE will have considerable value for all the cities participating in PIE, and will enable an expanded draft of the Clarifying paper to be prepared to include practical ways of working towards holistic strategies that advance learning, community, health and well-being, environmental and cultural objectives in participating cities in cost-effective ways that add value.

It would be particularly useful if the following questions could be discussed by mixed groups that bring together people with experience across education/learning, health, environment, community building and cultural sectors.

A. The convergence and common interest themes (pp. 4–12)

The central thesis of the Clarifying Paper is that Learning City, Healthy City and Green City initiatives share certain common interests, so that these aspirations will be progressed best in cities if holistic integrated strategies are adopted that recognise, and build on, areas of common interest.

For example, Learning City initiatives commonly aim to provide learning opportunities for all sections of the community, and so further equity, social justice and community objectives. An empowered and enlightened citizenry will have an enhanced understanding of environmental issues, while the equity strategies of Learning Cities will facilitate progress in addressing the social determinants of health.

**Question 1:** What links and connections may be identified between learning, community, health and well-being, and environmental objectives in your city? To what extent have these connections been forged in policies? What more could be done?

**Question 2:** What are the main barriers to more holistic and integrated strategies? How could these be addressed?

B. Advancing well-being in the city (pp. 10–11)

The paper asserts that learning, health, community building and cultural policies can each contribute to the well-being of citizens and their families. This impact can be enhanced if policies and strategies are co-ordinated. Central aspects include:

- learning encourages social interaction and increases self-esteem and feelings of competency;
- benefits from learning in one domain such as health and environment impact on functioning in domains such as family and community;
- as better measures of well-being are becoming available, the policy significance of well-being has increased; and
- there has been a growing concern in some countries at mental health problems and increased alienation of sections of the population, including many young people.

**Question 3:** To what extent are sectoral policies that enhance well-being co-ordinated in a strategic approach to promoting well-being in your city? What more could be done?

**Question 4:** In what ways are mental health problems and growing social alienation of some groups being addressed? What more could be done?

C. Enhancing place-making (pp. 12–13)

The Clarifying paper suggests that the concept of place-making can provide an important framework for bringing stakeholders into partnership arrangements to advance a shared vision. The active involvement of the community is central to this concept. The community role of civic spaces is a key aspect of creative place-making.

**Question 5:** In what ways could place-making in your city be enhanced as a democratic process contributing to empowering the community, strengthening citizenship and a sense of identity in the city, and contributing to the aspirations and ideals discussed in this paper?

D. Community and cultural policies (pp. 8–9)

Heritage and cultural policies can be important in building community, a sense of identity and belonging, and adding to social cohesion in cities—as well as enhancing the quality of life and well-being of residents. These dimensions of good cities are especially important in cities that have experienced rapid growth, large-scale migration, and considerable poverty and inequality.

**Question 6:** What role do community and cultural policies play in the development of your city? In what ways could their impact be enhanced?

E. Preserving the environment (pp. 7–8)

Many cities have adopted policies to preserve and enhance the environment, and a number of leading Green Cities have emerged. The success of Green City strategies depends on community understanding and support for the policies adopted so that there are important educational and learning dimensions. Innovative eco-community projects provide examples of community-led initiatives. Community understanding of complex issues, such as global warming, presents challenges where education and learning strategies can make a contribution.

**Question 7:** In what ways do Green City objectives connect with Learning City and Healthy City aspirations and strategies? How could these connections be strengthened?

F. Towards Sustainable Development in EcCoWell Cities (pp. 15–17)

The Clarifying paper asserts that ways need to be found to progress beyond silo development in cities so that holistic and integrated

across sectors leads to a shared vision, community support, and value-added outcomes in building humane sustainable cities.

This will require arrangements that transfer ideas from one circuit to another and which recognise the layers upon layers of urban interconnections. The growing diversity in many cities is a particular issue to be addressed.

**Question 8:** What steps could be taken in your city to strengthen sectoral understanding, co-operation and policy integration?

**Question 9:** In what ways could all sectors collaborate and contribute in addressing the question of growing diversity in many cities, and in progressing towards a shared identity with social inclusion in a sustainable city?

**Question 10:** Overall, what do you regard as the single most important initiative that needs to be taken in building humane, inclusive and sustainable cities?

### **About the author**

***Peter Kearns** is Intellectual Director of the PASCAL International Exchanges, a project of the PASCAL International Observatory. He has had careers as a teacher, Australian public servant, and consultant. He served as a member of the Australian Delegation to OECD in Paris and was Director of Global Learning Services from 1996 to 2011. His interests include lifelong learning, building inclusive learning communities, and international and comparative education.*

### **Contact details**

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