



**UNIVERSITY VALUES FOR TODAY:
CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES
Pécs, 30-31 August 2017**

**UNESCO Global Learning City Initiative and
the Contribution of Higher Education**

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Balázs Németh
Associate Professor
University of Pécs, Hungary

This World café Table will provide a platform to discuss UNESCO's Global Learning City initiative and the roles and impact of higher education in developing learning cities, regions and learning communities in the context of perspectives and challenges for **University Values for today in Central Europe and beyond.**

Although the theoretical frames of learning cities and regions is routed back to the 1970s discourse on the renewal of regional economic structures, but a more learning-focused development of urban communities has been demonstrated by UNESCO only for a decade and can be directly connected to UN's Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, UNESCO and its Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) established a movement of *Global Learning City Initiative* in 2013 when preparing for the so-called Post-2015 period.

In order to influence the worldwide process of learning cities and regions, international groups of universities, like PASCAL Observatory, GUNI Network and EUCEN have also indicated that learning cities and regions are relevant frames to include and make use of universities' social engagement and networking in local and regional dimensions for effective knowledge transfer, skills development with special focuses on equity, inclusion and collaborative approaches so as to raise more learning with better performance. Accordingly, the table host will give a short introduction to the theme of the Table, and suggest some potential dimensions for the discussion around which higher education institutions (HEIs) may recognise a specific roles and relations. These dimensions are:

- Learning cities and regions – Perspectives and challenges for university based knowledge transfers;
- University lifelong learning in the frames of learning cities and regions;
- Changing values and roles of higher education institutions in learning cities, regions;
- Choices and limitations for collaborative actions for universities in learning city-region networking;
- Balancing the economic with social: university-based social engagement and economic development;
- Combining quality education (SDG – Goal4) and sustainable cities and communities (SDG – Goal11) through HEIs' engagement and innovations

The above dimensions will be related to the main UIL descriptors of a learning city:

- promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- re-vitalise learning in families and communities;
- facilitate learning for and in the workplace;
- extend the use of modern learning technologies;
- enhance quality and excellence in learning; and
- foster a culture of learning throughout life.

In so doing it will create and reinforce individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development. (Source: Key Features of Learning Cities - Introductory Note, UIL 2013. p. 2.)



REPORT

Table Rapporteur and host:

Dr. Balázs Németh, Associate Professor, University of Pécs

Associates:

Professor Heribert Hinzen, Chief adviser and former director, DVV International

Professor Arne Carlsen, Director, Unesco Lifelong Learning

Brief summary for tabling the MCO 2017 conference World Café session

This World café Table provides a special platform to discuss UNESCO's Global Learning City initiative and the roles and impact of higher education in developing learning cities, regions and learning communities in the context of perspectives and challenges for University Values for today in Central Europe and beyond.

Background: Although the theoretical frames of learning cities and regions is routed back to the 1970s discourse on the renewal of regional economic structures, but a more learning-focused development of urban communities has been demonstrated by UNESCO only for a decade and can be directly connected to UN's Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, UNESCO and its Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) established a movement of Global Learning City Initiative in 2013 when preparing for the so-called Post-2015 period.

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Report upon table activities:

Accordingly, the table hosts gave a short introduction to the theme of the rotating Table-sessions, and suggested some potential dimensions for the discussion around which higher education institutions (HEIs) may recognise a specific roles and relations. Dimensions having been referred to during the Table-discussion were the followings:

- Learning cities and regions – Perspectives and challenges for university based knowledge transfers;
- University lifelong learning in the frames of learning cities and regions;
- Changing values and roles of higher education institutions in learning cities, regions;
- Choices and limitations for collaborative actions for universities in learning city-region networking;
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The above dimensions were related to the main UIL descriptors of a learning city. Participants of the three 20 min. discourse became very much interested in the issues around social dimension of higher education trying to influence both participation and performance in learning regardless of age, social background of learners.

The following reflections were provided through active participation and discourse:

- Delegate from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM): learning city-region models may support better knowledge transfer through inter-generational collaborations; the model of learning cities can better support the role and opportunities of non-formal learning;

- Chinese delegate indicated the knowledge-transfer potential of learning cities and referred to its potential as a market tool for quality education;
- A colleague from Ukraine reflected to the potentials of active citizenship through the development of learning cities through participation of higher education institutions. Also, she called for the important role of universities in fighting back social, mental and health challenges indicated in modern, urban-centred constructions, both in economic and in social formations, collaborations and actions;
- The delegate from Kazakhstan pointed out the roles of higher education in the development of public health and environmental protection through specific education-related actions and programmes;
- The colleague from the Czech Republic raised the issue and challenges of partnership building in regional and local contexts as matters for universities to help proper actions and interventions to be made;
- A colleague from Ukraine indicated the potential for universities using learning city-region structures in order to step forward in scientific developments be turned into effective responses to social and environmental challenges;
- Hinzen reflected to the Chinese colleague by using the example of Simio as a model of local centre of learning and collaborative action. Also, he connected the Learning City as a potential tool of adult and lifelong learning to effective community development;
- Carlsen raised the problem of policy-orientations needed to be successful in forming and developing learning cities and regions and took this focus to emerging roles and responsibilities of HEIs be met with local and regional development models represented by stakeholder groups and councils.

Throughout the whole table activity, social responsibility of higher education got a significant reflection in identity. Accordingly, community and growth perspectives were related to current international agendas and goals of the international community and of the European Union, like SDGs and EU 2020. Indeed, the global learning city development and relevant aspirations of UNESCO can be further investigated in its recent Cork Call upon global learning cities from 20. September 2017.