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Cultural Organization

UNESCO Institute
for Lifelong Learning

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Building Learning Cities as a Strategy for Promoting Lifelong Learning

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Preamble

- The discourse of ‘lifelong learning’ as a ‘master concept for educational policies’ has been widely accepted;
- Some pragmatic approaches have been adopted;
- An example of these approaches is the building of a learning region/area;
- The concept of a learning region/area can apply at all levels of local government, the main focus tends to be on cities;

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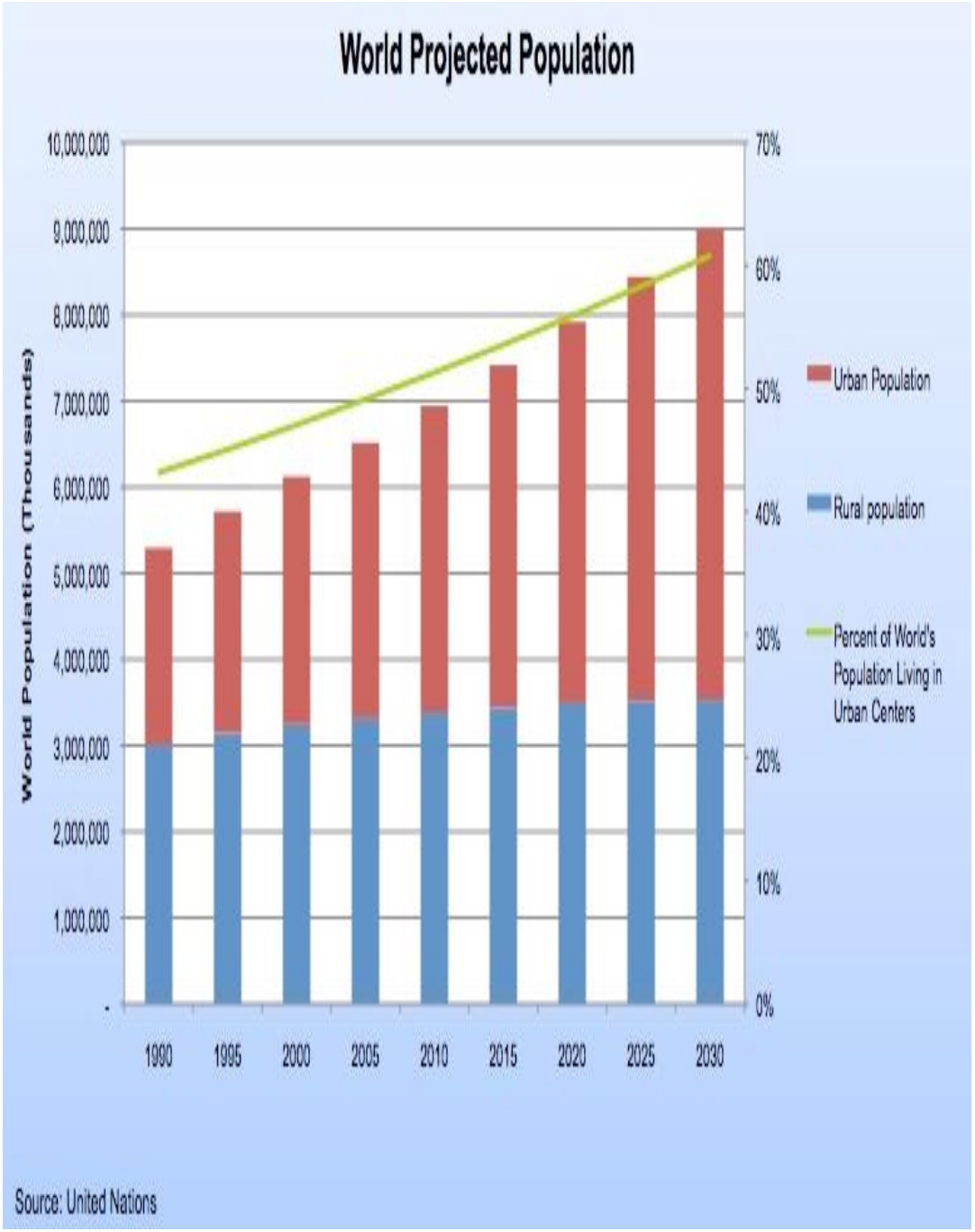
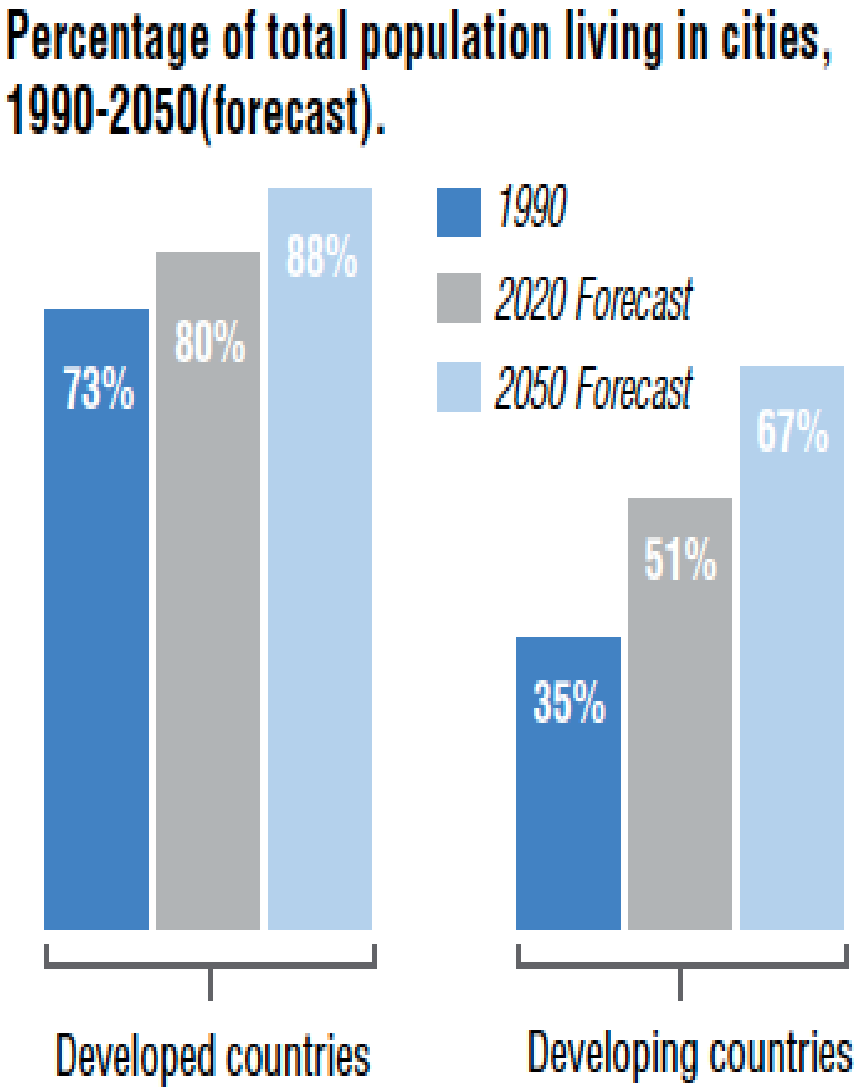
Why cities?

- Cities offer a more favourable setting to solve social and environmental problems;
- Cities generate jobs and income;
- Cities could deliver education, health care and other services more efficiently;
- Cities present opportunities for social mobilisation and women's empowerment;



- In 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lived in towns and cities.
- Nearly all the population increases will be in urban areas in the developing countries.



- Urban population is going to jump from 3.4 billion in 2009 to almost 5 billion in 2030;
- Urban population growth will mostly concentrates in Africa and Asia.

- In the building of the learning society, the national government has a major role in setting the agenda and the vision.
- However, a nation is after all a sum of all its communities. A learning nation can only be built community by community.

Why learning?

- Cities with better-educated individuals have stronger economies;
- In term of social inclusion or exclusion and learning, lower educational levels are associated, with unemployment;
- Learning is critically important in a city's efforts to attract and retain skilled and diverse workers;
- Learning is crucial to improve the quality of life.
- Cities in a globalised world cannot afford not to become learning cities (Longworth, 2010).

The evolving concept of learning cities

- In 1973, OECD initiative to create the ‘Educating Cities’: seven cities participated in this initiative.

Edmonton, Canada

Edinburgh, Scotland

Pittsburgh, USA

Adelaide, Australia

Kakegawa, Japan

Gothenburg, Sweden

Vienna, Austria

- The concept was further developed at the First International Congress on Educating Cities organised by the Barcelona City Council in 1990.
- The report of this congress considered education in its broadest sense, beyond the school system, and identified some of the principles that should be adopted by the educating city:
  - a need for integrated planning;
  - a relationship between education and cultural development;
  - the need to deal with inequality and demands for education throughout life.

- In 1993 OECD published a report City Strategies for Lifelong Learning, which defines *a 'Learning City' is a city in which communities attempt to learn to learn collectively as a means of changing their own futures.*

- In 1996, three rather synchronised international efforts highlighted the importance of learning for the society of the future:

  - UNESCO: *Learning: The treasure within*
  - OECD: *Lifelong Learning for All*
  - The European Union proclaimed 1996 as the "European Year of Lifelong Learning"

- The European Union (EU) undertook concrete actions and in particular, implemented the European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI) and the programme “Towards a European Learning Society” (TELS) .

- ***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.***

(ELLI definition, quoted from Longworth, 1999).

Learning cities in action

- **United Kingdom:** In 1996, Liverpool declared itself to be a ‘City of Learning’ and the UK Learning Cities Network (LCN) was established. Now, LCN has 80 member cities and regions.
- **Germany:** the national programme ‘Learning Regions - Providing Support for Networks’ was launched in 2001, which supported some 70 regions.
- **Greece:** the Polisnet Programme: Cities of Learning, Development and Culture.

- **Canada:** In 2003, Victoria set a goal of being a “leading learning community” by 2020. Vancouver aims to be a Learning City. St. John’s and Edmonton have made efforts to become learning communities.
- **Australia:** Every state now has its own government inspired and funded learning cities association. In Victoria, for example, all municipalities of more than 5,000 people are expected to belong to this and to pursue learning city policies.

- **Japan:** In as early as 1979, the city of Kakegawa was declared the first Lifelong Learning City in Japan. Since then, the Japanese lifelong learning city project has been implemented as part of the policy for promoting lifelong learning by city/town/community units.

- **South Korea:** The *Lifelong Education Law* was enacted in 1999, which states that “government can designate and support selected municipalities, districts, and counties as lifelong learning cities”. In 2001, the first 3 cities were selected and announced as ‘Lifelong Learning Cities’. Up to 2008, a total of 76 local governments were designated as ‘Lifelong Learning Cities’.

강원
Gangwon
서울
Seoul
인천
Incheon
경기
Gyeonggi
충북
Chungbuk
충남
Chungnam
대전
Daejeon
경북
Gyeongbuk
대구
Daegu
전북
Jeonbuk
울산
Ulsan
경남
Gyeongnam
광주
Gwangju
부산
Busan
전남
Jeonnam
제주
Jeju

- **South Africa:** In 2001, the Western Cape, one of the nine provinces in South Africa, started the ‘Learning Cape’ framework as one of the four key pillars for economic and social development.

- **China:** During 2002-2005, the city of Beijing participated in the EU funded PALLACE project. Since the national government has strived to build a learning society, many cities and communities have been mobilised to build learning cities and communities. By 2009, there were more than 200 cities in China that had set up their goals for constructing learning cities.

- Since the 1st Congress held in Barcelona in 1990, eleven International Congresses of Educating Cities have been held.
- By 26 November 2010, the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC) has a membership of 422 cities in 36 countries.

International Association of **Educating Cities**
Association Internationale des **Villes Éducatrices**
Asociación Internacional de **Ciudades Educadoras**

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09/11/2010

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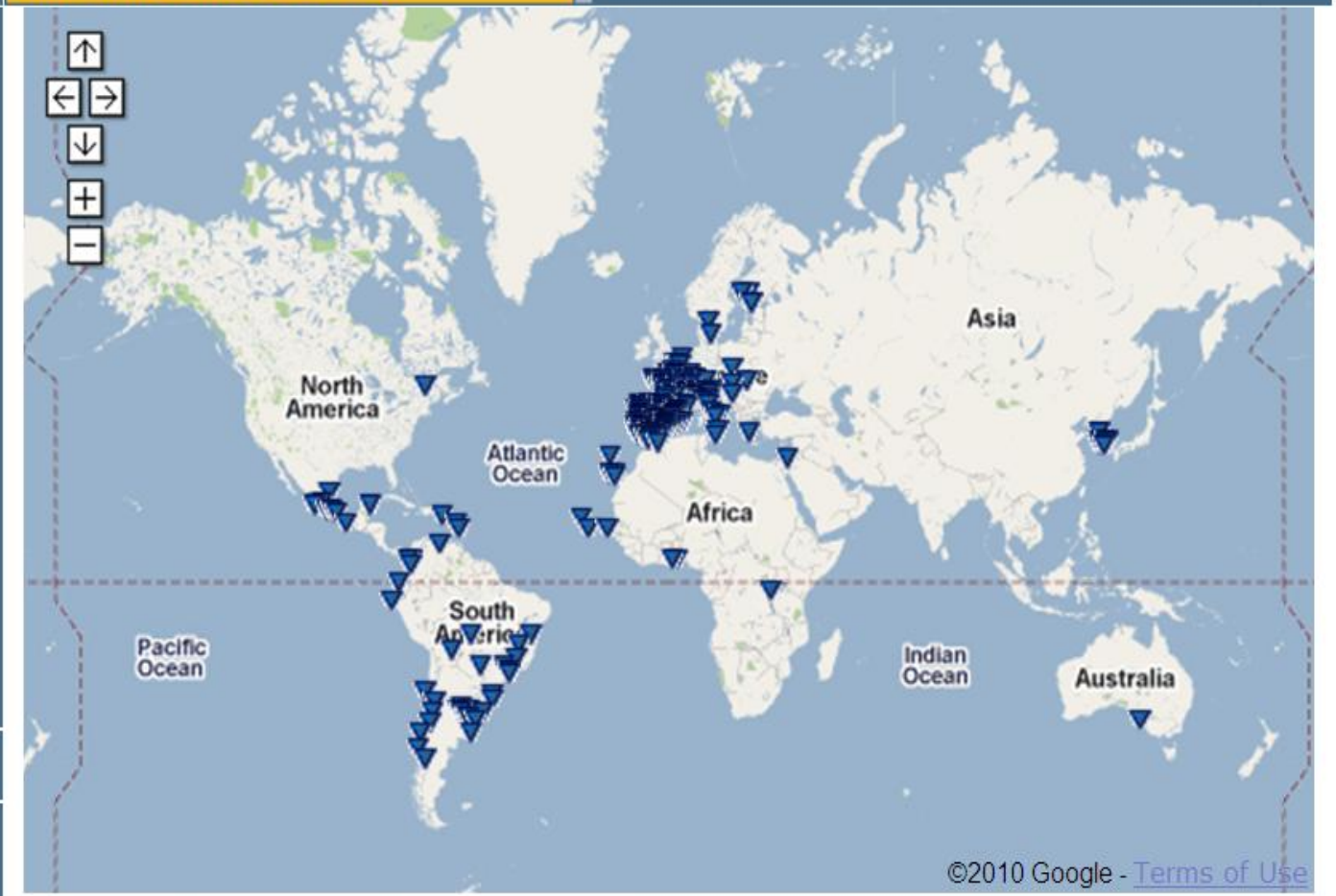


Africa | America | Asia-Pacific | **Europe**

Internet

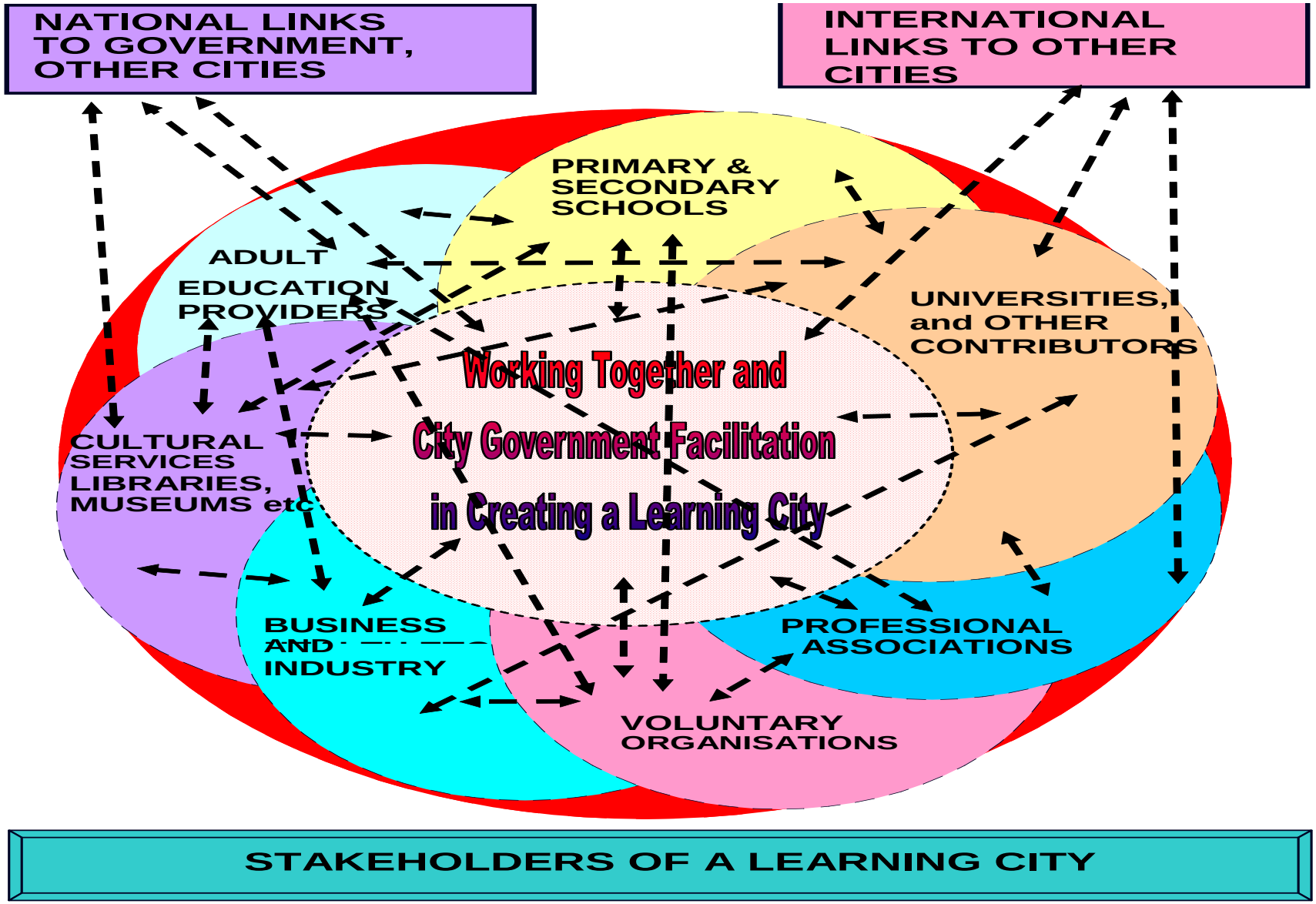
- There are more than 1000 cities in the world have already become or are building Learning/Educating cities.
- This clearly shows that the building of Learning/Educating Cities has become a considerable world-wide phenomenon.

How to build learning cities?

- ***Political will and commitment***

  The first sentence of **the Charter for Learning Cities** created by the ELLI in 1998 is: ***We recognise the crucial importance of learning as the major driving force for the future prosperity, stability and well-being of our citizens*.**

➢ *Partnership and networking*



➢ *Assessment of learning needs*

The Charter of Educating Cities urges that in order to undertake appropriate action, the persons responsible for municipal policy must obtain accurate information on the situation and needs of the inhabitants.

➢ *Increasing learning opportunities*

- In a learning city, a variety of learning opportunities must be made available where, when, how and from whom the learner wants it with the learner's consent.
- In the building of learning cities in South Korea, the expansion of educational programme provision in diverse aspects by lifespan stages tops the list of policy options.

Vancouver Learning City

Lifelong Learning Framework

Early Childhood

Promote the importance of prenatal care and education

Emphasize parental involvement in early learning

Focus on providing the best possible conditions for early learning—a nurturing, secure and stimulating environment

Connect families to community services—e.g., healthy beginnings, story times, etc.

Focus on early literacy, creativity, inquiry and physical activity

Identify and address barriers to learning—e.g., parental capacities, learning disabilities, etc.

Childhood and Early Adolescence

Emphasize parental involvement in learning

Connect children to community services—e.g., community centres, libraries, etc.

Cultivate a joy of learning and a sense of inquiry

Encourage involvement in arts, cultural, recreation and sports activities

Develop strong analytical and technological skills

Focus on literacy and numeracy

Foster civic engagement and social responsibility

Identify and address barriers to learning—e.g., learning disabilities

Later Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Cultivate a lifelong learning perspective

Emphasize individual responsibility for learning

Develop strong analytical and technological skills

Focus on applied studies and career readiness

Foster civic engagement and social responsibility

Increase rates of secondary school graduation

Develop seamless transitions between secondary and post-secondary systems

Expand capacity for post-secondary education and training, including apprenticeship programs

Increase post-secondary completion rates

Identify and address barriers to learning

Adulthood

Cultivate a lifelong learning perspective

Enhance adult literacy and numeracy

Foster civic engagement and volunteerism

Provide a range of adult and continuing education programs

Workforce

Encourage employers to create a culture which embraces lifelong learning

Encourage employers to facilitate learning while on the job—e.g., job coaching

Facilitate re-entry into the workforce for displaced and older workers

Increase collaboration between business, labour and education around training

Identify and address barriers to learning

Later Life

Cultivate a lifelong learning perspective

Enhance senior literacy and numeracy

Foster civic engagement and volunteerism

Promote inter-generational linkages and mentoring opportunities

Provide learning opportunities in comfortable, non-threatening settings—e.g., libraries, seniors centres, etc.

Identify and address barriers to learning—e.g., ageism, transportation, etc.

Source: Lifelong Learning Strategy for the City of Vancouver

➢ *All stakeholders as learning organisations*

- All institutions and workplaces, including the local authority itself, to become learning organisations with continuous improvement programmes for all employees and high quality benchmarked standards.

➢ *Promoting wealth creation & employability*

- Social harmony and economic prosperity are key overarching goals for building a learning city.
- The Charter for Learning Cities calls for promoting wealth creation through entrepreneur development and assistance for public and private sector organisations to become learning organisations.

➢ *Involving universities*

- To carry out commissioned research activities;
- To participate in fruitful partnership with other stakeholders;
- To encourage students and staff to volunteer their skills, creativity and knowledge; and
- To make university facilities available for learning city activities and events.

➢ *Celebrating and rewarding learning*

- Learning festivals as a way of broadcasting the message of learning to a large number of its citizens.
- In South Africa, held every year, the Learning Cape Festival (LCF) highlights and profiles education, training and development activities in the Western Cape through debates, events and workshops.

LEARNING CAPE FESTIVAL 2004

Meet

Linda Moeti

Employment: Machinist
Student: Quality Control

"Encouraging a culture of Lifelong Learning preparing the Western Cape for economic growth and a better life for all."

life can be different

LEARNING CAPE FESTIVAL 2004

"Encouraging a culture of Lifelong Learning preparing the Western Cape for economic growth and a better life for all."

life can be different

The Sapporo Learning Festival

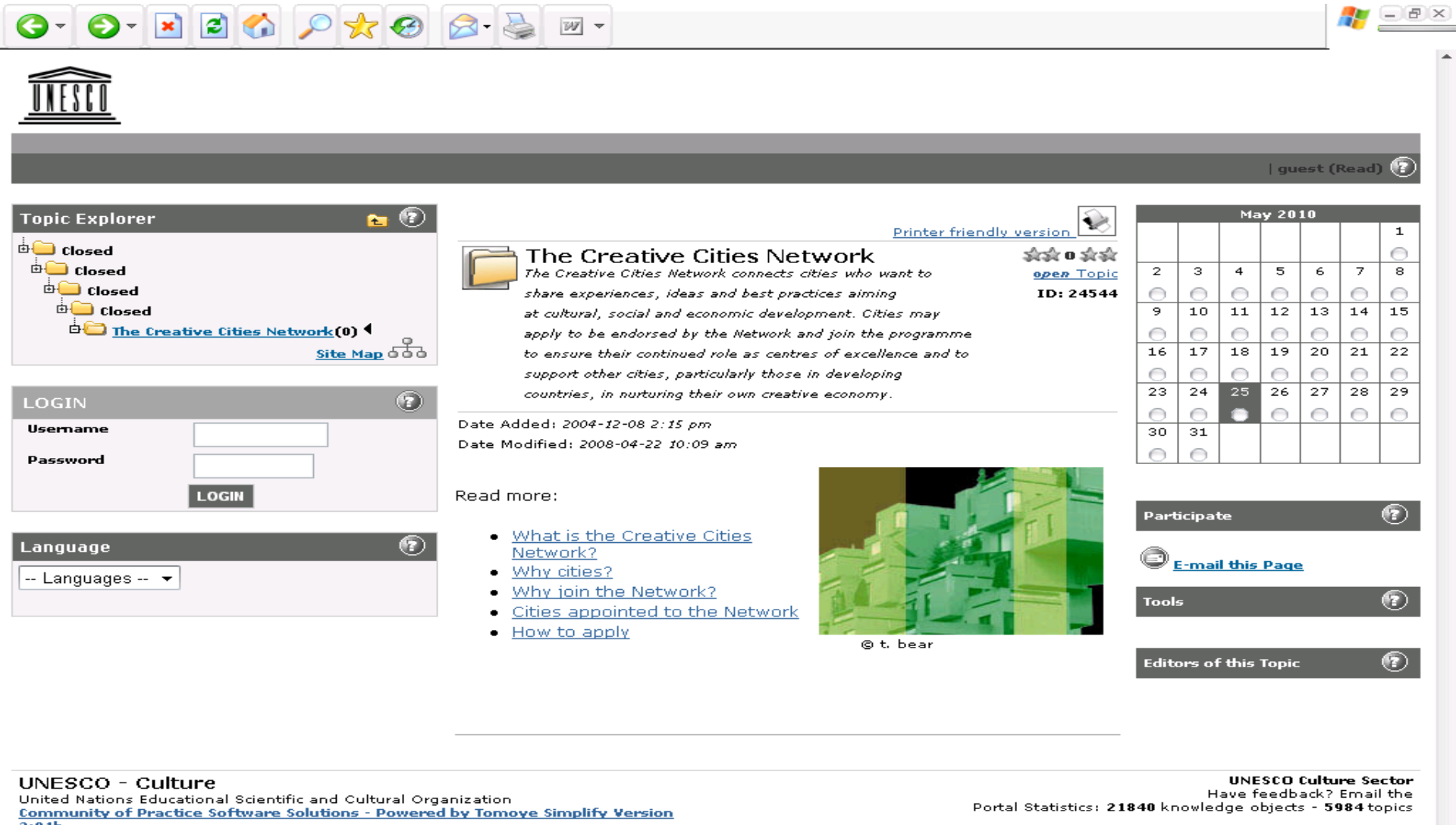
Challenges

- Lack of clear and genuine political will, motivation and intention;
- Frequent political changes as well as changes of personnel and re-bordering of cities/regions;
- Some local authorities may have limited potential to coordinate various stakeholders; and
- Cities are bounded entities, and by definition borders and boundaries have the potential to be inclusive as well as excluding.

Concluding remarks

- To realise lifelong learning for all relies not only on macro-level actions of the national government, but also the more micro-level activities of cities;
- Building learning cities has been proven to be a pragmatic approach to promote lifelong learning;
- The practice has been spreading to the developing countries;
- As the urban population in Africa and Asia is increasing rapidly, it is time for us now to anticipate meeting the learning needs of citizens;

- UNESCO/UIL needs to facilitate networking so as to serve the creation of learning cities in the developing countries.



Many thanks!

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