

OPEN ACCESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS – OUTCOMES OF THE 2nd LEARNING CITY FESTIVAL 2018, PÉCS, HUNGARY

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INTRODUCTION

“Away with all masters!” – exclaimed Friedrich Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 2013:1) at the end of the 19th century. Indeed, social inclusion, development and easier access is an ongoing effort not only to create responsive, accessible, and culturally diverse universities but also to generate more inclusive, flourishing learning environments. Therefore, all bottom-up initiatives are a must, particularly in regions in which growth is an engine of both formal and non-formal learning stakeholders, as in the case of Pécs, Hungary.

This paper proposes to disseminate the outcomes of the 2nd Learning City Festival 2018 in Pécs, Hungary, while addressing prospective opportunities for further inclusion practices.

FLOURISH FOR GROWTH – HOW TO GENERATE MORE INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The University of Pécs (UP) celebrated its 650th anniversary in 2017. The city of Pécs applied for the Learning City Award that has indicated the community and urban development that aims to raise a multinational settlement, which hosts many denominations, as an attractive place for learning. The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) is an international network that provides inspiration and know-how to members, and shares good practice.

Learning cities at all stages of development derive a great deal of benefit from sharing ideas with other cities, as solutions that a learning city seeks to develop may already exist in other cities. The network supports the Seventeen SDGs, in particular SDG 4 (“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”) and SDG 11 (“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”).

UNESCO GNLC supports and enhances the practice of lifelong learning in world cities by encouraging political dialogue between members and encouraging contemporary learning. It builds relationships, develops capacities, promotes partnerships and develops tools that encourage and recognize the potential of developing learning cities.

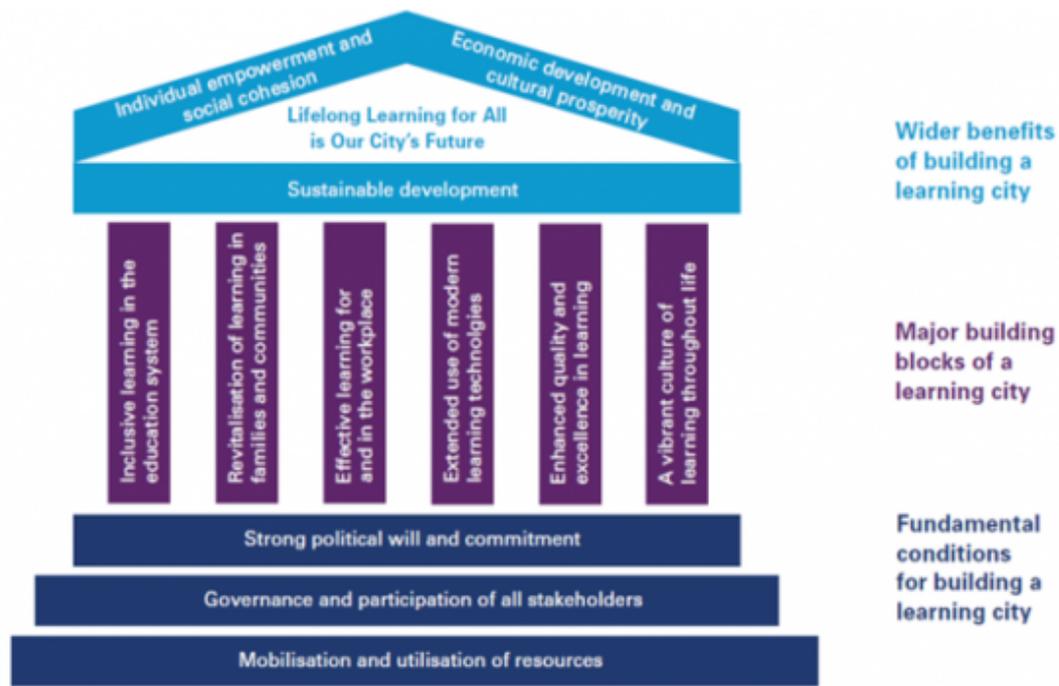


Figure 1: The framework of the key features of Learning Cities

Source: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2015:11)

Pécs received the news in January 2017 that it was awarded the prize, and has been dedicated since to the wider benefits of building a learning city (see Figure 1. above), including both individual empowerment and social cohesion.

The history, culture and international manifestations of Pécs indicate that the settlement is a learning city. Consequently, it can strongly build on the Healthy Cities Network, while also joining the Creative Cities Initiative. Pécs hosted the well-renowned Europa Cantat in 2015 and was a proud European Capital of Culture 2010.

In cooperation with the City and the University, the Pécs Learning City-Region Forum initiative, which is also a model for partnership-based learning innovation, can likewise be a good example. A learning city opens up and develops in a cultural, educational, artistic and scientific relationship. In addition, it combines learning with active cultural, educational, artistic, economic and social actors in partnership with active citizenship, voluntary activities and, finally, environmental awareness, the creative economy and the development of "Smart City" innovations. This initiative specifically contributes to the development of the city and its area and to the successful implementation of the City's Green Capital Award.

HOW TO EMBRACE CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ULLL? – METHODS, CONCEPTS, INNOVATIONS FROM HUNGARY

Social inclusion, development and broadening access is an ongoing effort by which national and international strategies can strengthen all of the Seventeen SDGs promoted by UNESCO, not only focusing on SDG 4 ("Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all") or SDG 11 ("Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable") in order to have flexible pathways connecting HE to the demands of the job market while involving adult learners (Royo, Uras, Daale, 2017).

Regarding a strong commitment for inclusion and culturally diverse learning environments, internationally speaking the strategic Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme was launched in 2013 by the Hungarian Government as part of the government policy called "Eastern and Southern Opening". The core mission of the program is to increase the number of foreign students in Hungary and to encourage Hungarian higher education institutions to attract foreign students. Currently 48 sending partners, ranging from Columbia through the Philippines and South Korea, are engaged in the programme.

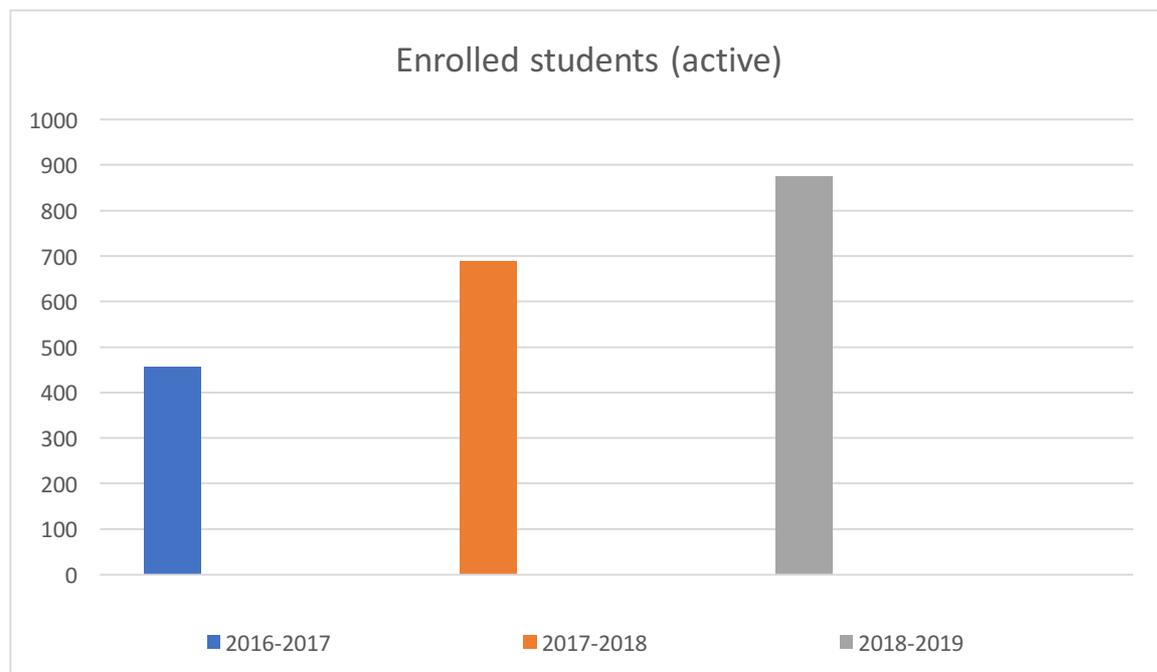


Figure 2: Number of enrolled active students in the Stipendium Hungaricum programme

Source: University of Pécs, Centre for Internationalization and Connections, 2018

At the national level, the University of Pécs has been participating in the Modern Cities Programme since 2016. The goal of the development programme until 2020 is that UP will reconceptualise its strengths and reinforce its presence in the Hungarian and international academic scene.

Stipulated in the Hungarian Government decree no. 1035/2016. (II.9.), the Modern Cities Programme provided a budget of 24 billion forints for the UP, the purpose of which is to enhance the competitiveness of the university, to provide infrastructure for increasing the number of students, to improve the quality of education and to increase the means by which inclusion can be an asset for the large number of foreign students enrolled. Thanks to the architectural plans, Pécs will be enriched with contemporary buildings integrated into the natural and architectural environment, while contributing to the improvement of the urban environment of the campus by their innovative solutions. The development will add to the university as a place for community learning as well, since university buildings will not only serve university citizens but the whole region can benefit from them.



Figure 3: Faculties of UP and their development within the Modern Cities Programme

Source: University of Pécs, 2018

Having a strong mission to promote inclusive education methods, Pécs has joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities network. From 2017 the City annually organizes a ‘Learning Festival’ in cooperation with the Learning Region of Pécs, founded in the framework of the Pécs Festival Days to open public places (squares, halls, coffee shops) for community learning.

In association with the Municipality of Pécs, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the PASCAL International Observatory, the University of Pécs and its innovative Learning City-Region Forum organised a Learning Festival for the second time in 2018. A three-day programme invited stakeholders from the field of culture, education, art, as well as economic and social actors in partnership to promote active citizenship, voluntary activities and, finally, environmentally conscious behaviour. The agenda was also designed to address notions of sustainability and intergenerational dialogue, while sharing methods of experimental and community learning in the European Cultural Capital 2010 city of Pécs, in south Hungary.

The themes and programme offerings of the 1st Pécs Learning Festival were mainly made by the volunteer offerings of the Pécs organizations, companies and institutions, where every participant participated at his own discretion. The programme included creative shows, presentations, small and large group presentations, skill-developing games, competitions, music performances, fashion shows, concerts, dance houses and special learning forms, all of which helped to make it a colourful and enjoyable experience.

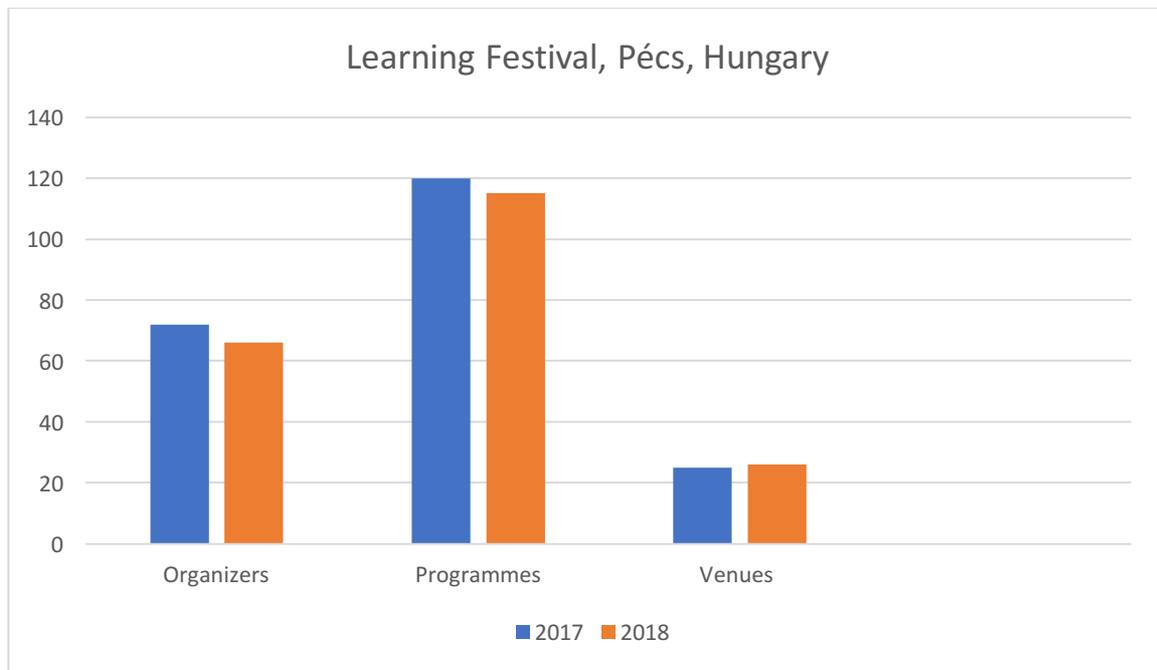


Figure 4: Comparison of the 1st and 2nd Learning Festival, Pécs, Hungary

Source: House of Civic Communities, Pécs (2018)

In 2018, following very positive feedback from the citizens of Pécs, many organizations and institutions gathered to create a Learning Festival in which learning was the discovery, joy, cognition, and curiosity (see Figure 4 above). Thanks to the success of the interactive learning programmes of the first event, the City of Pécs took over the UNESCO Global Learning City Award in 2017, with the City's leadership committed to organizing a festival each year.

The initiative was supported by educational, scientific, cultural, artistic, economic, sports, nature conservation organizations, and institutions committed to the development of the University of Pécs and the development of individual and community skills and learning. The second Pécs Learning Festival took place on 21-22 September 2018 and was built around three themes: Sustainable Environment; the Cultural Heritage of Pécs; and Intergenerational Learning. The main venues of the festival were Széchenyi Square, Szent István Square, the House of Civic Communities and its courtyard, Kossuth Square and Káptalan Street.

In all, 27 sites were attended by 115 non-governmental organizations, institutions and various stakeholders, including companies. Programmes and events included a retro book fair; design for children; education experiences; "Gloves for pleasure"; Haunipedia; Roman fashion show; "Build a learning path! Everyday HEAT training"; and a Teddy Bear Hospital;

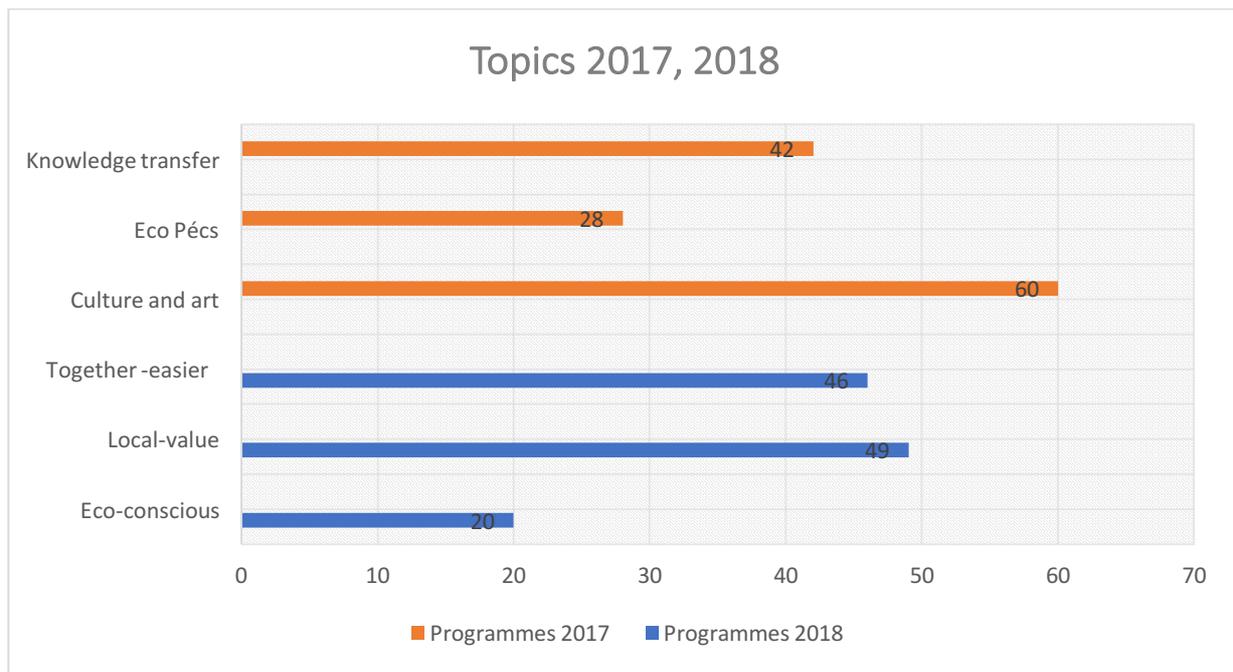


Figure 5: Thematized topics and allocated number of programmes, 2017, 2018

Source: House of Civic Communities, Pécs (2018)

As indicated above, in 2017 NGOs and civic communities along with the UP and other stakeholders participated, providing 60 programmes and events related to art and culture. The second most popular topic was related to the concept of knowledge transfer, and the Learning City festival included 20 eco-related programmes. Most programmes in 2018 (49), following the bottom-up concept, were generated in the field of local-value, whereas 46 programmes were targeting the concept of communities. Eco-consciousness seems to be a topic yet to be fully discovered having 20 programmes registered.

An international conference 'Learning Cities and Culture Working Together' also created a framework for debate on the impacts of heritage, values and culture in learning cities and regions, on smart and learning cities, on technological innovations and system developments, and on the role of learning cities in promoting intergenerational collaborations in communities. This was organized in the House of Civic Communities under the patronage of UNESCO GNLC on 20 September 2018. During this conference, distinguished policy makers, researchers and academic staff together with practitioners used their presentations to analyse essential aspects and trends of individual, collective or organisational learning within cities and regions referring to structures, methodologies and practices.

As a contributing partner to the festival, and also having a strong vision for social inclusion, including facilitating Roma students to pursue university studies and inviting culturally diverse students to BA and MA programmes, the University of Pécs has resolved to make further efforts for involving intragenerational dialogues (e.g. Senior Academy involving 700 participants in geronto-educational learning activities) and to further analyse essential aspects and trends of individual, collective or organisational learning within cities and regions referring to structures, and methodologies.

PROJECT WORK OF HUNGARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL MA STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

As part of an assignment, students of the MA in Human Resource Counseling and

Andragogy from the Faculty of Humanities, UP, visited both the Learning City conference and festival. All together 25 Hungarian and 27 international students participated in the control group in which the outcome of the project works was discussed, and which also encouraged methodology ideas from students. Suggested observation points included the following:

- 1) What type of adult education methodology could you see at the festival regarding:
 - experimental learning?
 - formal learning?
 - non-formal learning?

- 2) How would you rate the following?
(1 – worst, 5- best)
 - culture of peace
 - intergenerational dialogue
 - learning exchange
 - how public spaces provided access to learning

Having collected the observations in a focus group interview session, the most voted for was culture of peace (45%), followed by the importance of public spaces opened for learning (38%).

Hereunder some of the responses are quoted out of the 20 interviews: “There are no doubts that Pecs is a city of learning, with its great famous University. It is worth noting the number of students, various faculties, and an excellent teaching staff. In turn, the region and its circumferences represent an important historical heritage that so skilfully fits into the modern city...” – claimed in an interview Yana, a Russian second year student of Human Resource Counseling studying with the Stipendium Hungaricum programme. Visiting the conference and the festival, she exclaimed that the variety of curricula, various grants and scholarships, and exchange programmes provide an opportunity to study in the city. “I am amazed at the availability of education and training for all residents, regardless of their age, in formal, informal and informal conditions. So many platforms for the constant exchange of knowledge and ideas, where people live, work and study.”

Juan, from South Africa, added: “The idea of having a learning festival outside was fitting for all activities and this was my favourite part of the experience. In addition to this, some activities (especially the cognitive ones) were executed well for young pupils as it created a learning environment without participants being aware that they were learning - this makes it simultaneously fun and educational. Also, CPR training is a very useful skill to have and I liked this project the most...”

TO GENERATE MORE INCLUSIVE, FLOURISHING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE UNIVERSITIES

Edit and Eszter, Hungarian students participating in the correspondence MA course in Human Resource Counselling, thus themselves adult learners who are also already active members of the job market in Hungary, have developed a project: “*Let your child be a member of the consciously developing generation*”. The programme is a promotion of the

University of Pécs and the creation of the “UP generation”. The authors have added as many target groups as possible from parents to children, from kindergarten to college. Having designed a ‘learning route’ in the city of Pécs, three main stations were designed where stamps are given to participants if the station was completed. Considering the importance of the open access ethos of the UP, the authors targeted the young generation by having the project aligned to the “y” generation interests, for example adding virtual experience with VR glasses to watch a 3D short film on faculties and university life. A map and a gift bag packed with University of Pécs “party” sunglasses, free admission for one of the lectures at the Janus University Theatre, free of charge Dance Association performances, have also been designed to facilitate future students to become a member of the UP generation from kindergarten to university. Subsequently, the project is a good example of how experimental learning could embrace ideas that are already disseminated and discussed as an optional method of recruitment and community learning with the representatives of UP for the next year.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Guiding Document* of UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (UNESCO, 2015) argues that adult learners and citizens who acquire new skills and attitudes in a wide range of contexts are significantly better equipped to adapt to changes in their own environments.

Lifelong learning and the learning society therefore have a vital role to play in empowering citizens and effecting a transition to sustainable societies. The UNESCO Global Learning City Award 2017 (Valdes-Cotera, Longworth, Lunardon, Wang, Crowe, 2015) was awarded to sixteen cities ranging from N’Zérékoré (Guinea) and Okayama City (Japan), and including Pécs.

In order to build holistic and integrative strategic plans, Pécs had to commence negotiations well in advance. Building on the experience and knowledge gained through international partnerships, the city not only collaborated with the University of Pécs but with twelve other organizations to establish a Learning City Consortium in 2010 (Valdes-Cotera, Longworth, Lunardon, Wang, Crowe, 2015:97). Participating organizations included local businesses and institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Pécs Regional Training Centre and Baranya County Council, the Regional Development Agency.

Following the accomplishment of the consortium, the Learning City-Region Forum was generated including civil society organizations, NGOs and private institutions, offering them a space in which they can exchange and cooperate on learning initiatives in Pécs. In order to create responsive, accessible, and culturally diverse universities but also to generate more inclusive, flourishing learning environments, the lessons must be learnt. According to the UN Habitat latest *World Cities Report*, by 2016, approx. 54.5 per cent of the world’s population lived in urban settlements (Valdes-Cotera, Longworth, Lunardon, Wang, Crowe, 2015:5). As cities expand rapidly, by 2030, one in three people will live in a city with at least half a million inhabitants. Notably, 95 per cent of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in developing countries (UN Habitat, 2016). Sustainability, solidarity, thorough understanding and rigid implementation of the 17 SDG’s may allow urban and rural citizens worldwide to master themselves to unlock their very potential for growth and reciprocity for a better future through education.

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