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*FROM CITY TO LEARNING CITY – THE INVOLVEMENT OF
STAKEHOLDERS IN LUCCA AND TRIESTE*

Abstract

This paper will elaborate upon the model of the Italian Learning City of Lucca and Trieste, recently entered in the Global Network of the Learning Cities of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. In a learning city citizens and institutions must participate to achieve global goals and the mission of the SDGs 2030 Agenda and lifelong learning objectives. Regarding the construction of a learning city the UNESCO UIL has given guidelines and best practices to help this transformation, which manifest as a unique process in every city. Through the Italian policies on adult education and the local administrative decentralization has been possible the integration of the UNESCO learning city model with the experiences of Lucca and Trieste on national territory. The involvement of stakeholders is a fundamental step to transform the city, in a city that learns. The actors involved included a wide variety of subjects like civil society, schools and businesses. The question aims to answer how it is built and implemented in a learning city or smart city the stakeholders' network. The hypothesis is that through the comparison of Lucca and Trieste, the best practices produced will emerge. The data are interpreted through: main goals of the learning cities, issues in the community learning activities, barriers of collaboration of stakeholders, forms of collecting and sharing knowledge in the city. Taking into account the UNESCO UIL guidelines. Every learning city needs participation involving all stakeholders and to include all citizens facing challenges at many levels. It will therefore be essential for administrations to reduce the barriers to participation, meet the needs of its population and create learning events to share and acquire knowledge.

Keywords: adult education; university outreach; public engagement

Introduction

The debate on education and learning, their strategies and those problems that have influenced this topic, started in the last century, especially in Europe. Education is at the heart of the response to the challenges of the 21st century, such as the fight against illiteracy, as well as the importance of basic education and its link with economic development, to improve citizen's employability and reduce structural unemployment, hitting the less qualified.

Many documents have been produced in the last few decades, to make lifelong learning a reality, and two important reports commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) influenced this debate on lifelong learning and adult education. One is "Learning to be", also known as "The Faure report" (1972), where "the idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society" (Faure et al., 1972, p. 181) and "the normal culmination of the educational process is adult education"

(Faure et al., 1972). The report appealed to UNESCO Member States to re-organize their educational structures towards two trajectories where, on one side all agencies are transformed to become providers of education and on the other side, all citizens are engaged in learning and able to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the learning society (Osborne et al., 2013). The EU referred to the concept of lifelong learning for the first time in the white papers on “Growth, Competitiveness, Employment” (European Commission, Secretariat-General, 1994) and a few years later Jacques Delors, presented the report drawn up for UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the 21st century where “the Commission considers education policies as a permanent process of enrichment of knowledge, but also and above all as a privileged construction of the person and the relations between individuals, between groups, between nations.” (Delors, 1996, p. 10).

The expression lifelong learning started to be used to denote a new paradigm, a conceptual shift, which is part of a wider process of individualization that emerged at the end of the last century (Federighi, 2000), which today has become the guiding principle, a vision for participation across the learning contexts. After this breakthrough, the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning issued by the European Commission in 2020 represented the beginning of actions and strategies for education and learning, such as, promoting the renewal of the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society, and investment in human resources (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). It expanded the concept that learning and also teaching happens in formal, non-formal and informal dimensions. The main shift in this document is the introduction of bottom-up procedures and processes, based on the needs of the learners and the impulse to transform the function of the local authorities from passive implementers of national government policy into regional innovators in learning (Longworth, 2006). The city came to be considered as a hub of learning organizations, which brought on a very important modification in the adult educational field. With the strategic goal set by the Lisbon Strategy to make Europe “the world’s most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”, the Commission of the European Union (2000, para. 5), pushes the target even further. In 2011, after publication of several documents, papers and reports, the Renewed Agenda, aimed at “Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality” (EU Council, 2011, p.5), became a vital component of the European Commission’s adult learning policies with an increasing emphasis on regions as a fundamental site for that learning.

The idea of learning being place-based and focused on the region, city, town or community can be traced back to ancient Greece around 2,500 years ago, with Plato in its Republic, although it was not labeled as such until the late 20th century (Osborne et al., 2013). In the 1970s, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) funded a project to create “Educating Cities” and only afterwards, in 1992 during the Educating Cities Conference in Gothenburg the two concepts of cities and lifelong learning were again combined together. The paper was an attempt to discover a strategy to create at a city level an urban culture of lifelong learning (Hirsch, 1992). Today a new

UNESCO report, “Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education” takes stock of the current situation and lays the foundations for a new social contract for education where the importance of networks comes back predominantly (UNESCO, 2021).

What is a learning city?

Around 3.5 billion people live in cities, a number that is projected to increase to 5 billion by 2030 (UIL, n.d.). Cities around the world face acute challenges in managing rapid urbanization with mass migration from rural areas, responding to human rights problems and growing inequality. In many cities these factors are accompanied by social fragmentation and the loss of shared community identity and vision. All of these issues have a severe impact on ensuring quality education for all. Therefore, lifelong learning and adult educators have a vital role to play in empowering citizens and effecting a transition to sustainable societies.

In the last two decades, UNESCO has influenced adult learning and education; it has created several platforms like the UIL, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning to gather all stakeholders together in countries and regions responsible for the promotion of adult education. From these initiatives are born the Learning Cities and the promotion of a policy model community-focused, where its success depends on local and regional factors related to economic, social, political and other structures (Slowey, 2017).

When local governments empower communities and social actors to engage in the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and programs, they aim at the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 of the United Nations, seeks to ensure healthy, safe and prosperous living environments for everyone, in the present and in the future generations, to re-evaluate our dominant models of social and economic development, globally and locally (ONU, 2015). Moreover, intend to narrow the gender gap in and through education, support societies to be more productive, resilient, democratic, peaceful and innovative.

In 2015 the guiding documents of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) define a “learning city as a city that promotes lifelong learning for all as a fundamental principle and:

- Effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- Revitalizes learning in families and communities;
- Facilitates learning for and in the workplace;
- Extends the use of modern learning technologies;
- Enhances quality and excellence in learning;
- Fosters a culture of learning throughout life.

In doing so, the city hopes to enhance individual empowerment, social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development” (UIL, n.d.).

Every city is unique in its cultural, socio-economic settings and those cities all around the world that aim at transforming themselves into learning cities, can follow the UIL instructions or watch their videos tutorial and join the UNESCO GNLC. In October 2018 UNESCO launched a series of video tutorials to inspire leaders, politics, education experts, policy makers, city administrators, urban planners, to build a learning city. The steps to become a UNESCO learning city includes six areas: planning, involving stakeholders, celebrating learning, promoting accessibility, monitoring and evaluating progress as well as mobilizing resources (UIL, 2015a).

In 2013 during the first International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), the concept of a learning city was defined in the Beijing Declaration and developed further in the key features of learning cities (UIL, 2013). Further conferences and declarations outlined other strategic directions, like expanding the UNESCO GNLC and opening membership to all cities in UNESCO Member States that wish to implement the key features of learning cities. In 2015 UNESCO created the GNLC, an international policy-oriented network, which today counts 229 cities in 64 countries and it is coordinated by the UNESCO UIL (UIL, 2015b). The GNLC supports its member cities at all stages of development to share ideas and best practices, to benefit from their experience and find solutions to common challenges. It also supports developing tools and instruments to design, implement and monitor learning cities' strategies. Every two years the cities unite to share challenges and solutions to promote lifelong learning in the respective countries. For the 5th International Conference on Learning Cities in 2021, held in Yeosu, Republic of Korea, the main focus has been dedicated to building healthy and resilient cities through learning. Due to the unprecedented crisis that emerged with the pandemic, endangering the health of populations, with more than half of humanity living in urban areas, cities have a key role in promoting learning for health and strengthening resilience and to reinforce the effort of the cities and the quality of the partnership (UIL, 2021a).

The network follows the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to transmute the global goals into local actions. If initially the SDG 4 to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and SDG 11 to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" were priorities, the Network supports its focus also on SDG 5. Education is key to enhancing gender equality and with more than half of the world population living in urban areas, cities are at the forefront. Unfortunately, gender equality in learning and education remains a challenge in many cities around the world, with social norms, stereotyping and a lack of understanding around gender issues. Furthermore, educated mothers have a positive health impact on their own lives and that of their children. Increasing financial investment in the education of women will generate disproportionate savings in health budgets (Nemeth, 2020).

Inspiring and significant case studies have been collected by the GNLC worldwide providing guidance for lifelong learning activities. The examples range from the promotion of inclusion to experiences realized focusing on cultural heritage, bringing together culture, art and learning, enabling people to access their cultural identities and to promote

intercultural tolerance (UIL, 2017) and last but not least, create civic participation networks that encourage citizens to take part in the city's decision-making processes, supported by the use of social media and modern technologies (UIL, 2015c).

Definition of the problem and research question

In Italy public policies over the past two decades have progressively introduced different forms of financing individual demand for training. The budget laws and the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience in 2021 are inspired by a strategy that tends to give priority to investment in training in favor of the highly skilled adults, of those to whom is attributed a function of driving the economy towards new scenarios (Del Gobbo, 2021). OECD reports reveal how in Italy only a small percentage of adults are interested in continuing education and also, the low incidence of the educational institution on the majority of Italians (OECD, 2019). This data opens the debate for the recognition of non-formal education, which does not have a national legal framework and cannot yet answer to quality criteria. That explains in fact, the high levels of illiteracy of Italians, not only instrumental, but also social, cultural, environmental. All these factors relate with the work issue of the educational working professions, which struggle to match the market and be involved in the hidden non-formal education (Orefice & Corbi, 2017). Considering the Italian political scenario concerning adult learning and education, learning cities appeal to the need of a bottom-up strategy, where the dimensions of citizenship education is central. In Italy partnerships are favored by local authorities, because the Italian administrative decentralization confers certain powers and responsibility to local authorities like municipalities and provinces, giving them autonomy.

In order to reach these objectives, among the six steps indicated to build a UNESCO learning city, "involving stakeholders" present on a territory, represents one of the initial challenges to become a full-fledged learning city. The UIL guidelines and the online tutorial of UIL are giving much information about the various steps and the strategy to use, regarding the involvement of all stakeholders in their diversity (UIL, 2015a). To do so it is necessary the creation of a coordinated structure able to link the local with the national development, where all organizations and citizens can participate. A structure able to define roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and require their participation to build the learning city, through dialogue, consensus on the principles and mutual trust. Signing a learning chart or declaration, with an event hosting it, where stakeholders take the responsibility to commit to lifelong learning, it is a proven successful practice that the UNESCO guidelines evidence.

The establishment of a committee of representatives from different sectors, - or a similar form - is essential in the design and implementation of the learning city. When we think about the actors involved, we can consider a broad variety of subjects coming from: civil society, local business, school and colleges, different neighborhoods, community organizations and individual organizations. Their know-how has the potential to strengthen and transform the learning city. One of the first steps indicated is to start with the stakeholder mapping, that can help to identify new potential stakeholders from areas not considered yet and strengthen collaboration, enable governance to calculate and predict possible

scenarios and promptly intervene. Stakeholders should be involved in the whole circle of building a learning city, from planning to implementation and evaluation, building a shared vision they can enrich the city's learning environment. The network should also be expanded by the creation of dedicated spaces, forums, and events that have a central role to introduce new people to the concept of the learning city. In these spaces, people can contribute personally and share experiences or form alliances with other cities, nationally and internationally, in order to share knowledge and best practices (UIL, 2015b). Connections outside the city, with the national ministry of education or relevant institutions from all the sectors, will build political support and increase resources available to the learning city.

This work focuses on the stage of the construction of the network, how it is consolidated and the state of involvement of the local community aiming at answering this question: how is the network of stakeholders built in a learning city? Because what is it that transforms the city into a city that learns if not the participation of all stakeholders?

Research design and methods

To answer this question, this paper compares Lucca and Trieste as case studies of Italian learning cities to identify: the main goals of the learning cities, issues in the community learning activities, the barriers of collaboration of stakeholders, and forms of collecting and sharing knowledge in the learning cities. In particular, the stage of building and consolidating the stakeholders' network will be explored. The challenges of learning cities that apply at a local level the policies of the European Community and SDGs of the Agenda 2030, can find virtuous solutions from experiences realized by other learning cities in the world, which have shared their best practices in the GNLC. Having been identified in several documents from UIL (UIL, 2015c; UIL, 2017), comparative research of learning cities has become an important issue for adult education and lifelong learning in several aspects. This work was born to carry out comparative research at the international level for the International and Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (INTALL) of the 2022 edition of the Winter School, hosted by the University of Würzburg. The purpose is to show how it has been possible to transform a city into a city that learns, respecting given questions, contexts and categories.

The literature analysis detected the presence of learning cities in Italy and from the scientific literature, identified experiences of learning cities and regions. On national and international literature like the UIL website (<https://uil.unesco.org>), PASCAL Observatory (<http://pascalobservatory.org/>) and through the work done by Roberta Piazza of the University of Catania, some information has emerged (Laitinen, Piazza, & Stenvall, 2017). For some cases it has been possible to find documentation and information also on social networks of the Italian learning cities or formal agreements on cities websites, mostly it is rare to find papers, reports and evaluation of progress required to a city that is building a learning city. The study focused on the local level and started taking into account the learning city of Lucca, which has been the first to be thoroughly investigated. In a second moment Trieste has been included into the study and compared with the other Italian learning city. The learning cities of Lucca and Trieste have been chosen because

they represent two of the five learning cities in Italy that have recently joined the GNLC UNESCO in 2020. Today they are both in the process of the involvement of stakeholders and engagement of the community, with the community, in the effort to equip citizenry with fundamental skills and give proper life to a city that learns. Meaning, identify the composition of the stakeholders and possible challenges of participation trying to understand the process of this transformation.

The hypothesis is that to ensure a change of the city, the Italian learning cities have produced best practices in line with those elements required by the GNLC UNESCO. The research approach is qualitative, because methods and tools have been used with the possibility of tracing and interpreting in depth those practices that emerged during the implementation of UNESCO guidelines. The method used is the multiple case study that allows us to compare the practices that have taken place and whether good practices have been produced in Lucca and Trieste. The case study is presented as multi-stakeholders, because different types of actors have been examined. For this paper four privileged actors have been interviewed, three for the city of Lucca, and one for the city of Trieste. The interviews (See Appendix 1 for the fixed questions of the semi-structured interviews) were carried out in January 2022. The sample was selected on the basis of representative elements characterizing the three levels that contribute to the involvement of stakeholder, allowing an in-depth interpretation of the phenomenon from a political, international, operational point of view. The semi-structured interview with open-ended questions gave the opportunity to explore the areas of interest through a base of predefined questions, taking into account the topics required from this research.

The data analysis is done by categories, collected through the interviews whose units of meaning, as mentioned above, were partly predetermined during the drafting of the interview questions and partly emerged during the drafting. Subsequently the data have been elaborated and interpreted in the light of those elements that have determined a specific mode of intervention by the privileged actors and understand, which conditions allow or not the involvement of the stakeholder in the learning city. The triangulation was made among data for Lucca and the limited time for the research did not allow for a broader comparison with other Italian learning cities.

The learning cities of Lucca and Trieste

In 2015 the UNESCO Learning City Awards were born, with the aim of encouraging and rewarding progress made in developing learning cities around the world. The Award is awarded to cities that achieve exceptional requirements in promoting lifelong learning. The Italian cities in the network are Turin, Fermo, Palermo and in 2020 both Lucca and Trieste joined the UNESCO GNLC. The cities have shown that effective lifelong learning policies and practices can support the development of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and thus contribute to the 2030 Agenda. The clusters are the topics identified as high priority that help member cities to network more closely with those learning cities that share their same cluster (UIL, 2021b).

In 2020 both Lucca and Trieste joined the GNLC representing the youngest Italian learning cities today committed to face the first steps of building a learning city and the

involvement of all the stakeholders. The two cities have some similarities like the presence on the territory of two of the 13 special statute PhD schools present in Italy: the IMT Alti Studi Lucca and the Abdus Salam in Trieste. Lucca is in the cluster of Education for Sustainable Development like Hamburg and Shanghai.

Trieste is a crossroads of cultures, religions and ethnic groups and is characterized by a very wide participation in educational and cultural events. With a solid presence, since the 1960s of important schools in the scientific field, it has a very high density of researchers recording a high volume of research produced. With this exceptional percentage of researchers, the city has characterized itself as a City of Science, with a high participation of citizens and their representatives. For the moment it is in multiple clusters and it is developing approaches and actions that configure the future city as a smart city.

Main goals of the learning cities

In the learning city school will not be the only institution to provide education and all sectors must participate in the promotion of education. The interviewee for the politics of Lucca explains how Italy has a solid school education system but there is no structured system of lifelong learning. There are some indicators but the transition to the operational level has to be made. The motivations that are shaping Lucca's learning city model starts in 2017-2018, from the analysis of social issues and research on Martha Nussbaum's capability approach theory (Nussbaum, 2001). All people need tools for social interaction and to solve problems. Leveraging people's skills that might sometimes be not present, explicit or hidden, is an important goal for Lucca's policies. Especially for that part of the population, which does not have these tools. The issues that influence participation in the learning city are strictly related to citizen skills, in Lucca there is 28% of functional illiteracy in adults (Lucca Lifelong Learning, 2021) and needs to counteract early school leaving, improve inclusion and quality of education from the nursery to higher education, increase the number of female graduates, increase the skills of all adults.

In its application to UNESCO GNLC the city of Lucca identified 4 objectives: the creation of a map of the stakeholders who offer training on the territory, the creation of an observatory, the creation of an orientation help desk, based on the storytelling orientation approach and last but not least the creation of a recognition of non-formal paths. Lucca expects to accomplish all these steps for next year (Interviewee 1, Lucca policy level). The map is the first tool created to involve citizens and networks. It represents a step to raise the level of training and participation and shows that within the territory there is a training network that communicates.

Trieste's goals regard the development of approaches and actions to become a smart city taking into account the indications of the 2030 Agenda. The city wants to develop and integrate activities in the field of lifelong learning in these three areas: scientific publication, culture, inclusion of disadvantaged people and the aim is to increase scientific dissemination at every level. The intention is to create interest among citizens and promote the start-up of sustainable economic activities in innovative, high-tech sectors based on clean production (Interviewee 4, Trieste international level). In 2021 a dedicated Urban Center was opened to support business start-ups with many activities for

students and citizens. The aim, like Lucca, is to increase the participation of citizens, stakeholders, organizations that carry out lifelong learning actions (Interviewee 4, Trieste international level).

Issues in the community learning activities

Both Lucca and Trieste face the challenges to increase the participants in the learning activities and the identification of educational needs expressed by the various social groups. Trieste, in line with the objectives of becoming a smart city, shows also the necessity to increase the operational autonomy of stakeholders.

The interviewee for the international level in Lucca highlighted how dialogue for a small city is fundamental to get to know the stakeholders, understand their needs and increase participation. One of the first steps to make the community participate is to build a stakeholder map. The map is a first way to allow citizens and public governance to meet and know each other; it represents the top view of the Municipality of Lucca with all the 120 subjects who signed the contract for lifelong learning considered as a common good (Città di Lucca, n.d.). The interviewee for the policy of Lucca learning city explain that, when the application for UNESCO has been submitted, the presence in the city of some high-level educational institutions such as IMT Scuola Alti Studi Lucca which offers PhD courses, and the University Campus Foundation in the Sciences of Tourism have been indicated but also other small realities that offer a number of initiatives in the territory frequented by adults in different phases of their life (Interviewee 1, Lucca policy level). The interviewee involved in the construction of the map at an operational level, describe how icons and the legend represent the various entities, which are divided according to the sector of interest like, cultural associations, museums, sports associations, institutions (Interviewee 2, Lucca operational level). It has the potential to enable not only Lucca's citizens to participate but also everyone interested in it. The map of the training opportunities is created also for those who find themselves in a disadvantaged situation and often are not aware of it or unable to participate due to timetable or distances (Città di Lucca, n.d.).

In Lucca there is an experiment going on regarding the increase in participation and it is connected with the creation of an orientation help desk. This experiment will anticipate what the national legal framework of 2012 already established. The employment center has not already developed what the national system of certification has committed to them and this experimentation is trying to find a way to recognize, where possible, non-formal educational experiences. The UNESCO chair of the University of Ferrara and of the current Italian Minister of Education, is conducting a statistical analysis of all the 120 realities that have signed the contract for lifelong learning. From the result of this research and other experimental practices, a model will be built (Interviewee 3, Lucca international level).

Another big issue influencing the participation of the community that both Lucca and Trieste faced in these years, is represented by “the new normality” imposed by the pandemic. The use of social media and online conferences gave the possibility to participate in learning events but the digital divide and the difficulties of some to access and interact must be considered.

Barriers of collaboration of stakeholders

The impact of relevant policy, law and financing is crucial to enable the collaboration of stakeholders. In the agreement between the various subjects, mapping all the stakeholders in Lucca gives the possibility to know which institution offers education.

As part of Lucca’s cluster, there is the will to try to implement the strategy of leaving no one behind in a process carried out with the actors of society. An important way to implement and consolidate the stakeholder network is represented by contracts. Generally, the contracts are made with institutions, while Lucca's contract is made with citizens (Interviewee 3, Lucca international level). The date set on the contract becomes a symbol for the community of actions that will bring together local administrations, authorities, the world of schools, associations and individual citizens. In Lucca the contract for lifelong learning was considered as a common good created by the “Shared administration regulation”, which the city council had approved since 2017. The contract represents a tool aimed at channeling the proactive energies of the city in order to stimulate the educational training processes both in the formal and in the informal, non-formal training (Interviewee 3, Lucca international level).

Learning in the learning city happens in between global and local realities at different levels. As it is possible to see in the construction of the candidates for UNESCO GNLC Lucca referred to 4 fundamental SDGs, integrating the most important SDGs for building learning cities with a personalization and they are: the 4th for quality education and the 10th concerning the overcoming of inequalities (ONU, 2015). In Lucca’s case, the 10th has been included to allow the community to access its resources and build its future fighting against social inequalities. The next SDGs included is the 5th, gender equality and last but not least the 11th, dedicated to sustainability and building sustainable communities (Interviewee 1, Lucca policy level). There are many different levels of governance and all these are important global issues that need to be implemented at a local level. Taking inspiration from other learning cities models helps to find answers to these challenges.

The survey revealed how for Trieste too, contracts or other formal way to establish relations among the stakeholders are an important way to implement and consolidate the network. For example, the city signed a protocol in the field of “scientific dissemination” for *Trieste città della conoscenza* between the Municipality and representatives of the scientific world in 2017, counting 18 signatories (Protocollo d’intesa. Trieste città della conoscenza, n.d.). In the cultural field, the *Patto di Trieste della lettura* with 130 signatories from 2018, unites public institutions, publishers, booksellers, theaters, theater companies, academic institutions with the aim to activate new exchanges and cultural initiatives (Patto di trieste per la lettura, n.d.). In the social field, the *Piano di Zona* with 170

subscribers from 2013 defines the integrated socio-health planning and start socio-educational policies and interventions through a strong network of stakeholders (Accordo di programma per l'approvazione del piano di zona 2013-2015, n.d.). Moreover, the consolidation of the network is strengthened by co-realization of projects and events with different partners, through institutional sponsorship, promotion and communication activities. Among the problems related to the barrier of collaboration of relevant stakeholders, the burdens in terms of human resources employed or the timing required for their organization, generates some difficulties in institutional participation.

What is different about the use of the contracts from the two cities, is that Lucca is associated with around 50 universities around Italy but the association has been done also with all other realities. In addition, the technical-scientific committee with different figures gives important guidelines to the political choices (Interviewee 3, Lucca international level).

Forms of collecting and sharing knowledge in the learning city

Learning cities are an extraordinary example of a community of knowledge, with experiences ranging from the work of an association dealing with ancient traditions that want to keep alive the oral memories or even those of the trades. Up to more structured things, but what matters is that every subject, every single reality of the territory feels involved (Interviewee 3, Lucca international level).

The roles of adult educators in the development of learning cities towards SDGs, is crucial to manage the process, guide and make governance and policies operational. The celebratory events that a learning city must promote need adult educators with the ability to organize learning festivals focused on the community and its needs with the aim to raise participation, develop knowledge and skills. Adult educators will be needed in all communities that learn how to learn and leverage on the transformative power of education, at every age. The roles that adult educators can assume in learning cities range from research to administration, project management, instructional design, orientation, and much more to raise the quality of the education, engagement and participation. Media and social media especially during the pandemic have brought many benefits to public discourse and collaborations around learning. The majority of the events took place online and the use of social media like Facebook and YouTube represent an effective way to advertise the events and make them more visible.

The learning fest or events organized for the learning city have an important function of dissemination of knowledge and produce an impact on adult learners. For the second year Lucca organized the "World education day", where some of the partners presented their research along with talk about the strategic lines and positions that UNESCO implemented (Interviewee 3, Lucca international level). Another interesting event that Lucca created is the "Citizenship school", to develop relationships of mutual trust and motivation for active citizenship. In the "Week of Education for Sustainability", schools meet the world of production and businesses, to present initiatives of companies that aim at being sustainable, modifying their production processes or recovering waste, with a view to the circular economy (Interviewee 1, Lucca policy level).

Trieste has recently been selected as the host city of the “EuroScience Open Forum” (ESOF) 2020, the most important scientific event in Europe (Interviewee 4, Trieste international level). An important achievement that triggers both offer and participation

Conclusions

From the data gathered through the interviews, this work revealed that the two Italian learning cities of Lucca and Trieste produced good practices in line with the UNESCO guidelines on the construction and implementation of the network of stakeholders.

In these cases the UNESCO learning city models are applied with the objectives of developing citizen’s knowledge and skills, creating easily accessible learning opportunities on these territories, improve the quality of education for sustainable development and sustainability, promote university-community partnerships, create virtual and face-to-face events with a network of public institutions, academic and local stakeholders, in the intent to create valuable opportunities, both for teaching and for learning. The agreements result in actions able to face some of the problems that prevent the full involvement of stakeholders. The management of the participatory process and co-construction of solutions takes into account many levels and factors that are constantly changing.

In the 2030 Agenda, there are 17 goals, which have 169 targets and it is necessary to start with these very broad challenges and problems and turn them into local missions endorsed with formal agreements like, contracts or memorandum, which in both cases, Lucca and Trieste did. To achieve these targets many different sectors, have to work together in the long run. The concept of a contract to achieve this mission catalyzes investment in many different sectors and shakes the structure of the organization itself. Public administrations are too vertical, inertial, inflexible and communication is fundamental. All the institutions and every subject present in a city taken alone are not enough to accomplish the mission and dialogue is the only way in a small city to make everyone feel involved. If we want to make a learning city work, the human capital requires a good level of skills, knowledge and basic competencies; in order to solve problems and improve their condition creating a sustainable environment. The goals of the smart city resemble a model similar to Silicon Valley and appear quite far from Italian reality but in Trieste the exceptional percentage of important stakeholders in this field, research production, researchers per inhabitant create the right input for that transformation.

Lucca realized all the suggestions that the UIL indicated for the stakeholders' involvement. The map that Lucca realized is a way to strengthen collaboration and allow governance to predict new possibilities. Like the experiment carried out in collaboration with the UNESCO chair of the University of Ferrara of the Ministry of Education, which is trying to find a recognition of the non-formal educational path and make the 2012 law operational (Interviewee 1, Lucca policy level). The next step will be the creation of an observatory and the storytelling orientation desk. The many national, international connections and the technical-scientific committees, with representatives from different sectors, are showing other evidence of Lucca practices.

If we talk about networks that govern together and find solutions to local problems, the human factor should be taken into consideration (Mumford, 2006). The adult educator's role will be crucial in the learning city, occupying teaching and non-teaching roles, with hybrid competence to trigger innovation and manage the process; meaning, strategies, pedagogical devices and process of knowledge (Del Gobbo et al., 2021; Galeotti, 2020). Climate change is the biggest challenge we have to face and the whole system must be reinvented. Storytelling as a tool suggested also for Lucca's orientation desk, will be important to keep the individual at the center (Boffo & Tomei, 2020). Telling and reinventing stories that some people have already told to solve local problems, ignites passions in the actions of the individual and not fear. Vision is becoming an important competency for the next future, not only to imagine new solutions (Mulgan, 2020) but also to let the individual envision him or herself in that future.

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Annex 1: Fixed questions of the semi-structured interviews (Lucca & Trieste), 2021

1. How was it possible to transform the city of Trieste into a learning city?
2. What are the objectives it intends to achieve?
3. In the Learning City of Trieste model, which challenges or problems influence the community's participation in learning activities?
4. How has the network of stakeholders been consolidated over the years?
5. Do you think there are any obstacles that could affect the collaboration of stakeholders?
6. What role do educational events play in relation to citizen participation?