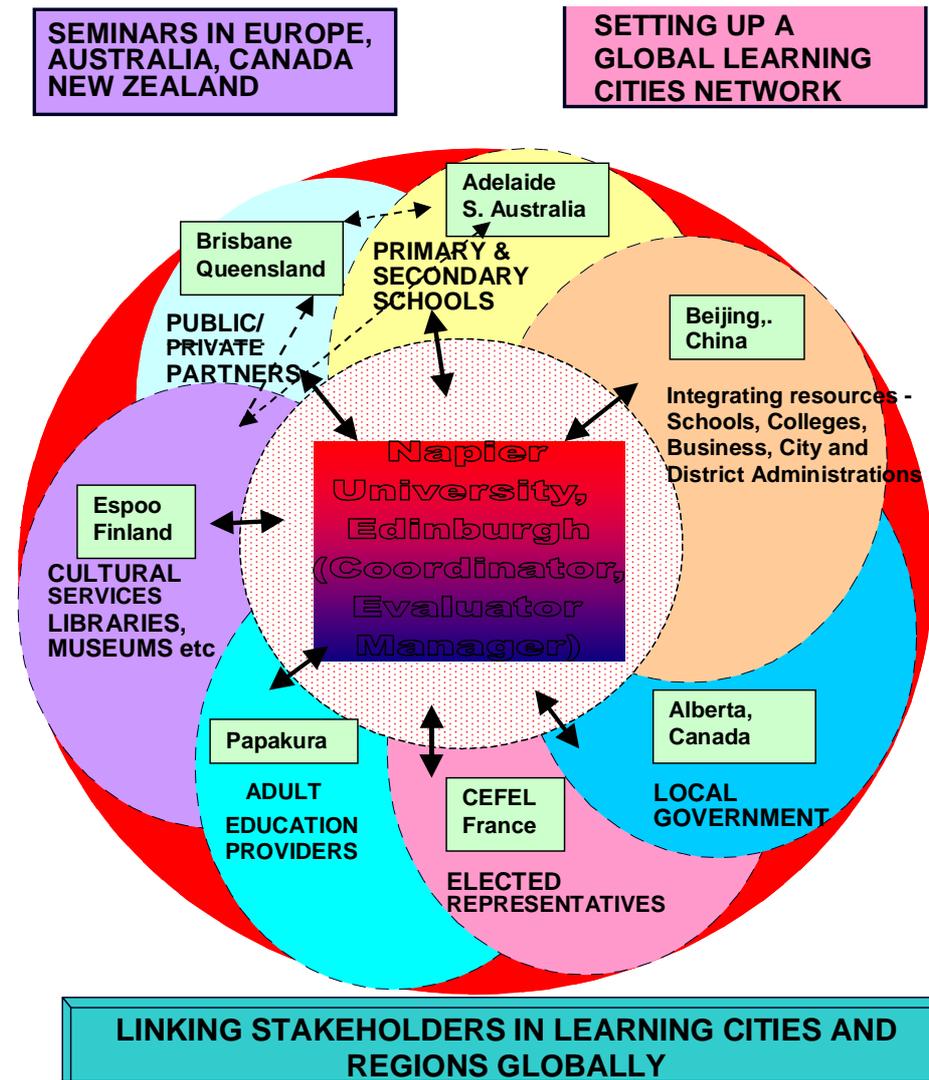


REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

A Strategy for Enhancing Lifelong Learning and Regional Development in Regions through International Links between Stakeholders

The **PALLACE** Project – An Example



Professor Norman Longworth (Norman.longworth@losmasos.com)

Regional Connections - Global Learning Regional Networks and the PALLACE project

'Imagine, if you will, a system of linked learning cities and regions around the globe, each one using the power of modern information and communication tools to make meaningful contact with each other

- *School to school to open up the minds and understanding of young people*
- *University to University in joint research and teaching to help communities grow*
- *College to College to allow adults of all ages to make contact with each other*
- *Business to business to develop trade and commerce*
- *Hospital to hospital to exchange knowledge, techniques and people*
- *Person to person to break down the stereotypes and build an awareness of other cultures, creeds and customs*

And so on – museum to museum, library to library, administration to administration

Imagine that these links include both the developed and the developing world so that say Sydney, Seattle, Southampton, Vancouver, Shanghai and Kabul, to pick 6 at random, form one Regional Network among a hundred similar networks.....

Imagine that such links had started ten years ago..... What difference might it have made to today's world?

Isn't this one of the key challenges to us in the Learning Regions movement? Isn't this a worthy objective?'

OK – so it's a stupid, hopelessly idealistic, idea, BUT..

Imagine the advantages.....

- Thousands more people and organisations contributing to the solution of social, cultural, environmental, political and economic problems
- **A giant leap in mutual understanding and a transformation of mind-sets through greater communication between people and organisations**
- Profitable economic, trade and technical development through contact between business and industry
- **Active interaction and involvement, and a huge increase in available resource through the mobilisation of the goodwill, talents, skills, experience and creativity between cities and regions**
- Innovative Problem Solving and the development of intellectual, human, community, cultural, environmental and economic capital through interaction between experts
- **It's sustainable – because it's so much more dispersed. Governments and NGOs are no longer the only initiators of aid to the underdeveloped. Action is now shared with the cities and, through them, the people.**
- organisations and institutions in the city/region have a real world-class focus and raison d'être
- **Again three major advantages – mutual understanding – mutual understanding – mutual understanding leading to solution - solution - solution**

What an opportunity to make a real difference!

Where is it happening?

We can find the beginnings of such a movement in the European Commission's Pallace project (Promoting Active Lifelong Learning in Australasia, Canada, China and Europe). This pioneering project established multilateral links between regions, cultures and countries to facilitate the development of innovation, economy, social infrastructure and environmental awareness in people and organisations

In its two-year time span, PALLACE linked stakeholders - schools, adult education colleges, cultural services departments, elected representatives and community builders - in

- the Adelaide and Brisbane regions of Australia
- the Auckland region of New Zealand,
- the city of Beijing in China,
- Edmonton in Canada,
- Espoo in Finland,
- Edinburgh in Scotland
- Sannois in France

The objective was to stimulate these stakeholders to develop greater knowledge, experience and practice in helping themselves and each other to understand the nature of a learning region and their own role in helping it to grow. It arose from work on learning cities, towns and regions carried out in Europe, notably the highly successful European Commission's TELS (Towards a European Learning Society) survey of Lifelong Learning practice in 80 cities, and the rapidly increasing Learning Community activity in Australia, Canada, China and New Zealand.

The interaction between these partners was at many levels of the learning region, engaging a variety of individual stakeholder groups in collaborative pilot activities, and increasing knowledge of their roles in learning city and region development. Each partner managed a separate sub-project, as follows:

The sub-projects

- Global **schools** networks are not new, but the network which **South Australia** put together was the first to involve children, teachers and parents in debate about the learning city/region and what schools can do to help create it. There is a huge add-on value to this in that it not only created heightened awareness of what a learning city/region can be but also potentially mobilised hundreds of people to contribute to it. This of course required some creative management and the development of tools such as questionnaires to help increase understanding but its beauty was that the answers came from the future citizens themselves, and were not imposed upon them by others.
- Similarly the Adult Education project led by **Papakura/Auckland** linked students and staff in **Adult Education** colleges in debate about what such an institution and its people can do to help transform their own city into a learning city. Here again a new measurement tool was developed, not only for the development of new insights among the participants, but also in the ways in which they could use those insights in a practical and innovative way.
- Such an outcome was written into the **Cultural Services** project led by the **City of Espoo**, one the world's foremost learning cities. Here the objective was to engage museums, libraries and galleries in debate about their own contribution to the development of lifelong learning in the city. The result was intended to be an attractively presented portable display which any city can use to explain what a learning city is, the place of the arts and education in it, and what the citizen can do to further it. The sub-project was also intended to assess public response to the display, inviting the opinion of citizens and encouraging them to be specific about what their own engagement might be. Awareness, insight, mobilisation, involvement.
- A Learning City/Region needs Leadership and that was the theme of **CEFEL**'s project for **elected representatives**. CEFEL was the French national organisation for the training of councillors at town and city level. Alain Bournazel, its President, organised links between councillors in the French city of Sannois and those in Adelaide. He made use of questionnaires and the results of previous learning city surveys such as TELS, to initiate a debate about the nature of a learning city/region and to decide the strategies they would want to put into place to help create it. We also gained some insight into language and culture differences in this sub-project.
- Two projects addressed the issues of establishing learning communities within a city or region, but they were very different from each other. The City of Beijing is establishing a lifelong learning suburb of a million people. It wanted to explore creative and innovative ways of bringing together the different sectors – schools, adult education, business and industry, community organisations, the city and district administrations – into one huge facility that would promote and deliver lifelong learning. It drew from the experience of the other partners to help implement his ambitious programme, which was intended to explore how people can be persuaded to become active lifelong learning citizens.
- The Queensland project was of a different nature. South and West of Brisbane there was being created a 'Learning Corridor' a scheme to encourage greater community involvement in Lifelong Learning and community activities. The four suburbs involved were different from each other in social composition, age, existing facilities and income, but they had the promotion and improvement of community life as a common aim. Here the two major universities, UQ and QUT, used the internationalism of the PALLACE project to help build lifelong learning structures into community life in the corridor, in places using public/private investment companies.
- Finally, but definitely not least, a learning city will use technology creatively in many different ways. Our Albertan partner is therefore addressing the needs and contributions of the technology providers in the city – how it can improve the learning infrastructure and its performance in the schools, the

colleges, business and industry and higher education. Out of this came a webcast and a seminar for technology providers in the region.

So we had seven sub-projects pushing back the frontiers of what we knew about, and how we build, learning cities, regions and communities using the technology that was available to us. The insights and perceptions gained from running, interacting and participating in these projects were many and various. But the real challenge will come when we can include into these regional networks, cities and regions from the less-favoured countries of this planet. The breakdown of stereotypes and long-standing hatreds is only possible through a combination of education and communication. It won't happen tomorrow or next week or even next year. This is a long process of learning about each other that can take as long as 20 or more years.

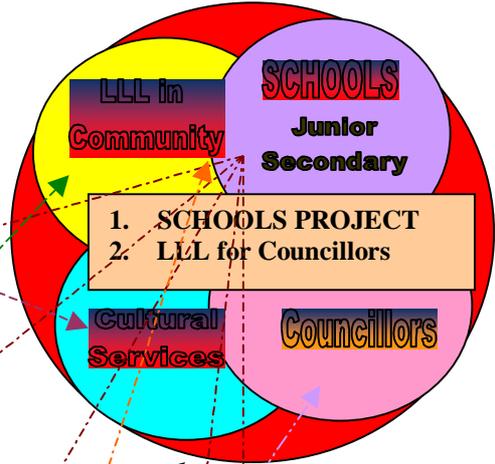
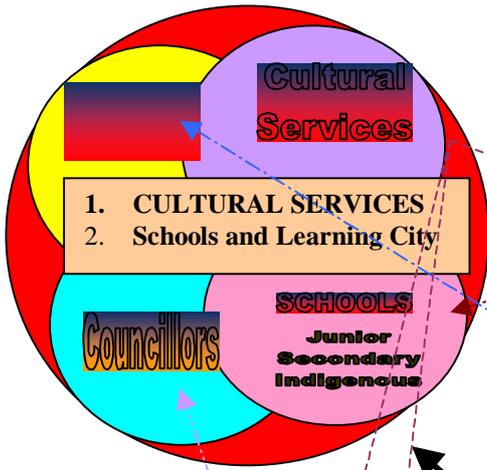
But it must start as soon as possible, and it must include as many people of all ages, so that by the year 2020 we can point to a positive diminution of hatred, terror and mistrust, to replace it with cooperation, knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

Further information from Norman.Longworth@losmasos.com

PALLACE - Linking Stakeholders in Global Learning Cities

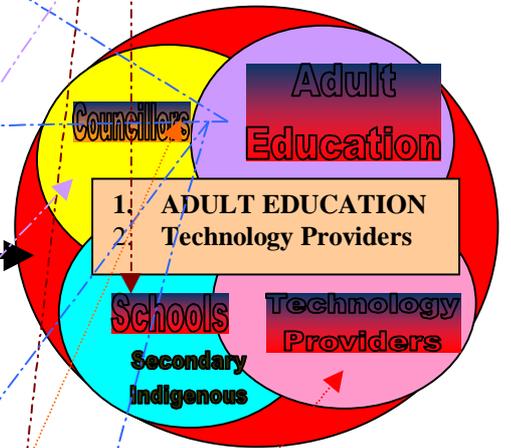
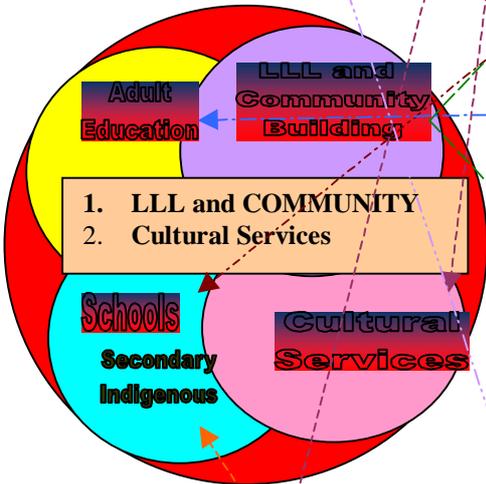
Espoo, Finland
Kristiina Santala

South Australia
Prof Denis Ralph



Queensland
Dr Janelle Allison

Papakura, N.Z.
Prof Ron McDowall



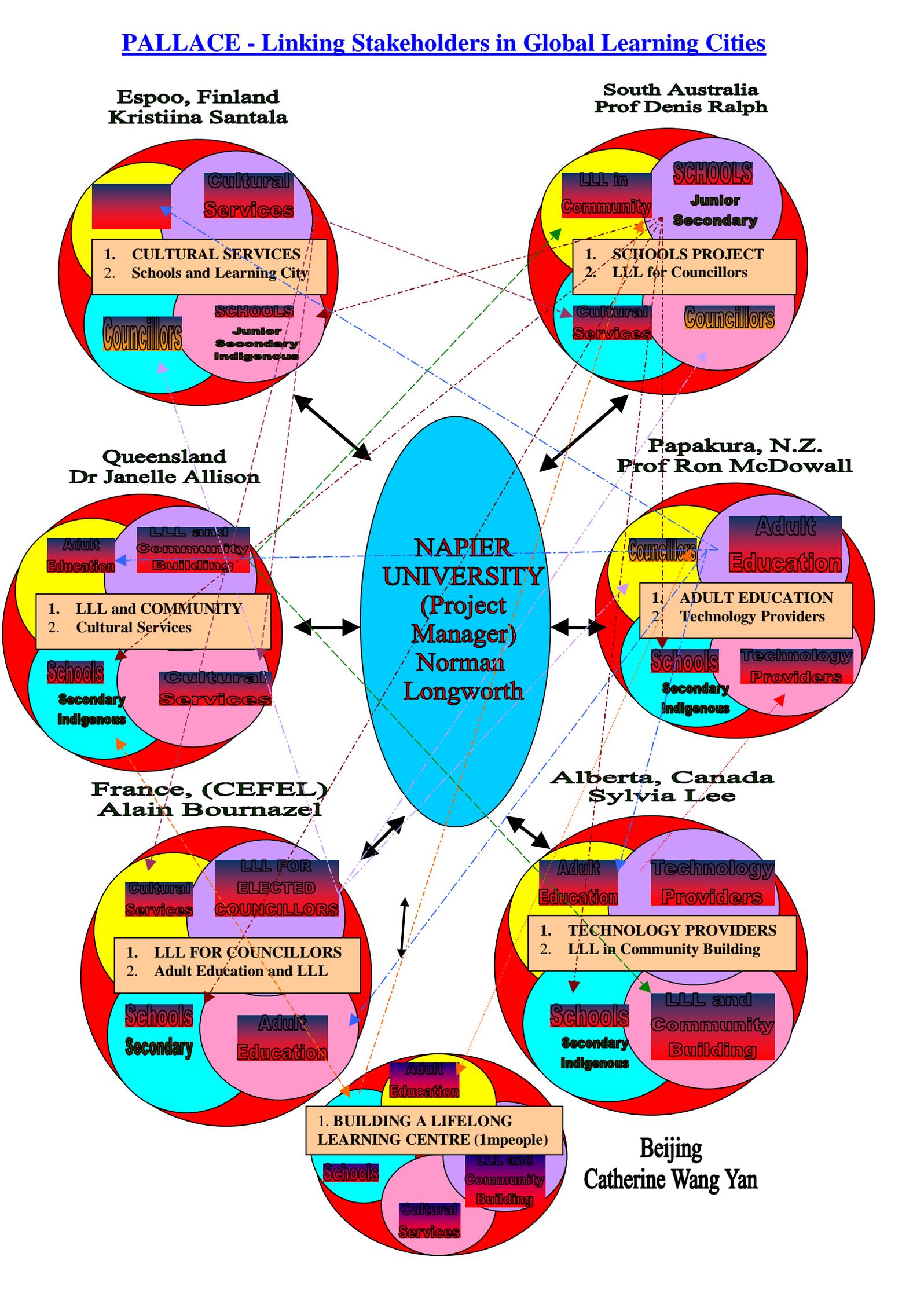
NAPIER UNIVERSITY
(Project Manager)
Norman Longworth

France, (CEFEL)
Alain Bournazel

Alberta, Canada
Sylvia Lee



Beijing
Catherine Wang Yan



Other sources of information

1. The **TELS project** – another European Commission project to encourage cities and regions to become learning cities and regions by auditing key indicators. Completed in 2000, it resulted in a European policy and the R3L programme for projects in the local and regional dimension of lifelong learning. Results on <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/poledu/tels.pdf> and further information from norman.longworth@losmasos.com
2. The **INDICATORS project** – yet another European Commission initiative to help Stakeholders understand their role in a learning region.
lars.franson@stadshuset.goteborg.se
3. The books ‘Making Lifelong Learning Work – **Learning Cities for a Learning Century**’, ISBN 0 7494 2727 2 . ‘**Lifelong Learning in Action – Transforming 21st Century Education**’ and ‘Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities’ all available from the publisher (Taylor and Francis) and through amazon.com
4. The hundreds of **Learning City and Region Initiatives** happening in hundreds of locations around the world, which would profit from a global outlook in order to develop the human, economic and social potential of their organisations, institutions and people.