GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on Smart, Sustainable and Just:
Higher Education and the Remaking of the Right to the City

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Thinking and acting sustainably involves, among other things, being able to make connections, working inter-professionally, crossing disciplinary boundaries and thinking holistically. This invariably means applying a systems approach to understanding the dynamic inter-relationship between human action and the planetary environment inevitably involving some of the intellectual challenges that complexity and chaos theory throws in. But in practice many of us still work deep within specific professional or disciplinary silos that sometimes act as a break on policies and practices that could fashion a more sustainable world. What is of utmost importance is being able to transcend, and transform established ways of doing things, to move way beyond comfortable habits and routines and to vigorously, but constructively, critique initiatives that fail to make the necessary connections. In other words, everything is in some way related to everything else. Higher education is no exception; quite the opposite.

Its role is, or at least should be, to help make these connections real, apparent and obvious.

Of course, there is more to know and more to learn. Information and data are not the same as knowledge and understanding. New digital media technologies may provide us immense amounts of facts and figures while simultaneously offering all manner of exciting social, technological affordances and possibilities. The brave new digital world of cloud, pervasive and ubiquitous computing has a significant and growing ecological footprint. New media technologies and their associated practices also require a range of interconnected capabilities and literacies for them to be used effectively and democratically: to empower rather than to control citizens, to stimulate rather than restrict social enterprise and sustainable economic activity, and most importantly to facilitate learning that is genuinely social, creative and generative of new conditions of possibility. Digital technologies have the capacity to em-

power and unite, to enlighten and to enhance but also to divide and alienate, to misinform and disconnect, to suppress and to repress. The Rockefeller Institute (2010) has identified the digital imperatives of future urban environments mapping out a planet of civic laboratories and the capacity to do so inclusively. At the same time social, urban and ecological resilience is predicated on clear and identifiable limits. New production processes, such as the 3-D printer (Pearce et al., 2010), may make more with less and have the capacity to do so inclusively. Nevertheless, urban and ecological resilience is predicated on clear and identifiable limits.

Thus, with the majority of the planet's human population now living in urban areas, with economic development proceeding at a pace in India and China, new cities being built within a decade and existing ones doubling in size within a generation, issues of food supply, water, employment, living space, resource use, energy security, health, well-being, peace and co-operation are all priorities. If not of equal importance then they certainly are connected in such a way that not one can be addressed in isolation from another. Thus urban design, sustainable architecture, business development, social learning, local food and digital technology are all constitutive of attempts to fashion sustainable and regenerative learning environments. Terreform Inc. is developing ideas for a green self-sufficient New York City in association with Michael Sorkin and the City College of New York, indigenous and local knowledge is becoming integrated into the way human beings understand and relate to the world about them even if pharmaceutical corporations are overly anxious to slap a patent on ancient remedies that have been otherwise free for millennia.

So how do we pull all this together? Make the necessary connections, traverse disciplines, co-operate inter-professionally, learn sustainably while simultaneously making new and old cities - our increasingly urbanizing world - livable, ecologically sustainable and socially regenerative? What R&D projects, experimental initiatives can be scaled up or down to make things work at neighbourhood and regional level? How can existing institutions of higher learning assist? What should they NOT do? What do we all have to learn and how should we learn? How can we, as urban dwellers, nurture our sensitivity and sensibility to self and others, including the many other species with which we share this Earth? Where does institutionalized Higher Education fit in to all this when learning has to proceed throughout life in a complex of spaces and places, real and virtual? How can space connect with place and learning with a future that does not repeat the mistakes of past generations? What role, then, does a education and learning play in the sustainable, digital, environmentally and socially just city of the future? Does it have to be configured in the way it is at present? How can higher education prevent itself from being a pedagogic junkspace left over after neoliberal economic policies have stripped bare the public realm? How can higher education move beyond its own ideological, metaphorical and physical walls? How can it contribute to the right to the city, indeed, the right to a sustainable and just city? As David Harvey (2008: 23) writes:

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

So many questions and this special issues attempts to address just a few. Antonio Lopez explores the area of media education and ecological literacy showing that understanding media technologies from an ecological perspective is of paramount importance to creating a more sustainable world. The problem is that

media educators are not adequately address-ing education's environmental responsibilities partly because of their own ignorance and partly because at times the dazzle of new gadgetry simply blinding. They often forget or fail to investigate technology's ecological footprint. As Lopez writes, "this footprint is not from a system that treads lightly: it includes air pol-lution from transportation, toxic chemicals that poison local ecosystems at the sites of production and disposal, waste from packaging and manufacturing, and CO2 emissions from the data servers used to run this system". The media also leaves a 'mindprint' which refers to its influence on how we perceive, define and act upon living systems and how we experience place and space. Consequently, universities must develop a green media education frame-work that embeds the media ecosystem within the life support systems of the planet. This will entail operationalizing both an ethic of care and a critical awareness of media's global responsibilities.

Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Lee-Davies's focus is on business education and particularly how corporate social responsibility needs to be fully and effectively embedded in business practice in order to engage and protect a wide range of stakeholders in the process of secur-ing sustainable corporate advantage. The cur-rent economic and financial crisis have given critics of corporate practice and opportunity to reassert the importance of the triple bottom line and the paramount need for big business to demonstrate a greater ethical responsibility and accountability than hitherto. However, this responsibility takes different forms in different places with a marked distinction readily appar-ent in the expressed needs of the developing as opposed to the developed worlds. The authors clearly articulate the view that higher education should not be a spectator in this process but an active and influential player - "Higher Education Institutions hold the baton of responsibility in educating current and future stakeholders so it follows that they themselves should be at the forefront of such practice as they preach it'. HEIs need to become ethical leaders themselves with

their research and teaching having a profound and noticeable transformative effect on society and the way business is conducted. Importantly, sustainable business practice means "an ongoing development journey and will always be so". No quick fixes or magic bullets here.

Jennifer Patterson adopts a feminist per-spective arguing for a fundamental re-evaluation of the rights of the city. Her 'bricolage' is a creative journey in upcycling some existing concepts and critiquing the current paradigms of urban living and power relations. Starting with the seminal work of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre and American urbanist Peter Marcuse, Patterson moves on to discuss the work of Julia Kristeva, the highly influential work of situationist Guy Debord and Michel Foucault. She weaves an intricate discursive fabric that marries issues of space with economy, exclu-sion and identity, and education with belong-ing. Her discussion of radical, alternative and creative educational practices span considerable intellectual and geographical distances at the heart of which is always the necessity for deep reflection. Unfortunately, deep reflection is not something that is always readily apparent within higher education institutions particularly in the UK as the rhetoric of widening partici-pations is supplanted with the new reality of a "managed commercialism". For Patterson, "the self-reproducing hegemonic educational structures of Western citizenship, might need to reposition themselves on global values, incor-porating and critiquing Western traditions but still do not recognize the blinkered systems of exclusions, disenfranchisement and inequality they ideologically operate as educational pro-cesses". If the university is a city, then much of it is inhabitable, she says. If the right to the city is a cry and demand, then so is the right to the university.

Cecilia Fe L Sta Maria-Abalos in many ways continues this cultural and critical excur-sion. Employing techniques of story-telling, im-age making, poetry and reflection the experience of post colonialism is reviewed through the eyes of children, young female learners. Space, place, the familiar, the strange, postdevelopment and

poverty, beliefs, status, urbanism and voice are all elements of this exquisite essay that enables the subaltern to speak clearly and eloquently. The Pier is the site of meaning, of clarity and opacity, of things that are becoming visible ... or maybe not. What the girls' stories, poems and images show though is something that is rather disconcerting but also perhaps a challenge. Sta Maria-Abalos writes, "development as an existing notion which should bring about altering of the condition of the girls is not true to its promise. Development space which is supposedly the Pier is invisible because in reality, the experience of development does not happen for these girls". The Pier was not constructed for these girls. For Sta Maria-Abalos we also need to see the ITS of our own poverty and development for "as we see urbanization take hold of our lives, we witness the slow demise of our quality of lives. But we still swallow and take hold of this urban development as the key and solution".

This special issue concludes with a piece by John Blewitt on the re-imagining and redesign of the public library services in Europe as multi faceted, hybrid, mediatized and heterotopic spaces and places. These newly refashioned libraries offer opportunities for social and inter-cultural learning, community empowerment and an access to opportunities that are occluded by the managed commercialism of institutionalized higher education and media communication. A number of new libraries are being conceived, designed and built that heralding a difference which has to accommodate the current economic and political realities but also to offer opportunities for something that is radically different. Another world is possible and although it may seem to be making an outrageously large claim for a service, institution and practice that in the popular mind has perhaps exceeded its sell by date, it is clear that public libraries are key elements for any meaningful realization of the right to the city. For unlike the Pier, or the uninhabitable university/city, or unsustainable business practices, or an ecologically illiterate media education system, many public libraries are already realizing a paradigmatic change called for by others in their own fields. But public libraries are threatened too because in a world dominated by neoliberal absurdities the public good is far less important than exclusionary private wealth creation. Nonetheless, as Blewitt writes, many of these "new library buildings and service design are about creating [a] living room in the city and a cultural creative buzz". Let the buzz continue and the revolution begin.

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