

SHARED ISLAND REPORT

Our Learning Island, Our Learning City, Shared Island Conversations

Cork Lifelong Learning Festival 2024



Shared Island Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

Cork City – History of a Learning City

Ireland has long been known as the *'island of saints and scholars'* and the settlement which was to become Cork City, began as a monastic centre in the seventh century, founded by St FinBarre. The city has always been international in its outlook. It developed as a port in the time of the Vikings, received its charter in 1185 and grew, particularly in the 18th century, to become a key trading port on the international sea routes from Europe and the British Empire to the 'new world' of the Americas and Asia. A University City since 1845, Cork City was first named a 'City of Learning' in **2002** with its inclusion in the City Development Plan and The Cork City Development Board publication, *"Imagine our Future 2002 – 2012: an Integrated Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development."* Cork City held its first Lifelong Learning Festival in **2004**, which ran for four days with 65 events, creating a great beginning for our prestigious Lifelong Learning celebration. The festival continued to grow and the culture of celebrating learning continued and 2010 saw the potential beginning of a network with the twinning between Cork City Lifelong Learning Festival and the Belfast Féile. In **2011**, Cork City was invited to join the Learning Cities Network and Pascal international Exchanges. Utilising this opportunity and learning from our international partners, Cork held its first international learning seminar and in 2013 the International Ecowell conference in Cork City, focusing on interagency cooperation

was held. Beijing was the host city of the first International Conference on Learning Cities in 2013. This culminated in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities and the Key Features of Learning Cities. The conference laid the foundation for the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and its outcome documents serve as the guiding documents for the network. Cork City Council furthered its commitment to this concept and adopted the UNESCO Declaration in **2014** joining the global network.

The movement needed governance to remain sustainable and 'Growing Lifelong Learning In Cork – the Learning City Working Group' formed in **2015**, this year was a great success as the group signed a Memorandum Of Understanding at the second International Conference of Learning Cities held in Mexico. Cork City was delighted to win its first UNESCO Learning City Award at this event. Never a city to sit on its laurels, Cork City hosted more than 600 participants from over 80 UNESCO Member States in September **2017**, the conference provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and good practices, create and strengthen partnerships, foster twin cities, and discuss the topic 'Global goals, local actions: Towards lifelong learning for all in 2030'. This occasion was the third International Conference on Learning Cities. At this stage, Belfast City had hosted its fourth successful 'Festival of Learning' and joined the Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018. Dublin City and Derry -Strabane began to explore the concept of the global network and Irish colleagues came together and the Irish Network of Learning Cities was formed.

“A shared dedication to strengthening friendly relations and enhancing cooperation between the peoples of the cities and city regions...”

IRISH NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES

The Irish Network of Learning Cities was formed in November 2018, following its first meeting in Cork, as part of Cork hosting the ‘Learning Cities Conversations’ event. The network includes Cork, Limerick, Belfast, Derry-Strabane and Dublin Learning Cities. Since 2019 all five cities are members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, (GNLC). In keeping with the mission of the UNESCO GNLC the network members share learning and best practice and offer support to each other on issues of common

interest to their learning cities, with Waterford City & County, joining INLC in 2023. In 2019, the Lord Mayors of Cork, Dublin and Belfast and the Mayors of Limerick and Derry City and Strabane Region formally signed an agreement to commit each city to work together and provide mutual support to help deliver on the vision of a Learning City for all citizens. The Memorandum of Understanding between Cork City, Dublin City, Limerick City and County, Belfast City and Derry City

and Region highlighted “a shared dedication to strengthening friendly relations and enhancing cooperation between the peoples of the cities and city regions... to carry out Learning City exchanges focused on the principles of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities.

Waterford City was the newest member to join the Irish Network of Learning Cities in 2023, and is a welcome addition to this vibrant, growing national network.

Irish Network of Learning Cities Partners



Cork, Belfast, Limerick, Dublin, Derry Strabane, Waterford

The Shared Island Programme, supported by the Irish Government Dept. of the Taoiseach and the Dept of Housing, Planning, Local Govt. and Heritage, supports projects and initiatives between Local

Government partners North and South. The Irish Network of Learning Cities is a fortuitous opportunity to collate work that is happening on the island with each learning

city, and inherently shares the principles that underpin The Shared Island Programme, allowing for the development of peer support and empathy which are key drivers of our learning city partnerships.

IRISH NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES PARTNERSHIP

The Irish Network of Learning In 2019 and again in 2022, Irish Network of Learning City members signed a Memorandum Of Understanding, formally committing each city to work together and provide mutual support to help deliver on the vision of a Learning City for all citizens. Reiterating the common aim to share resources and support one another, to support quality learning cities in keeping with the mission of the UNESCO GNLC. As a network, Irish Network of Learning Cities work together to celebrate learning, highlight what's on offer across the cities and city regions and to celebrate the achievements of learners. As part of the support that the network members give each other, members often attend and present at each other's events hosted by each of the member learning cities and contribute to each other's research and learning, for example, in 2024 all Irish Network members attended and contributed to a launch event at Cork Lifelong learning Festival at Triskel Christchurch with UNESCO colleagues and international partners. The seminar on *Learning for Sustainable Development: International Innovations in Action, Inspirational and Transferable Examples from Learning Cities around the world* was collaborative and innovative. Irish Network of Learning Cities partners presented examples of best practice with international colleagues and UNESCO partners from across the globe.



Learning in Action - Green Campus at UCC



IRISH NETWORK OF LEARNING IN CONTEXT

The Irish Network of Learning Cities was created by members in various roles, as all share a common mission and face similar challenges. The Network was formed as a means of supporting each other's efforts to deliver on the vision of a Learning City in the different contexts each city works in.

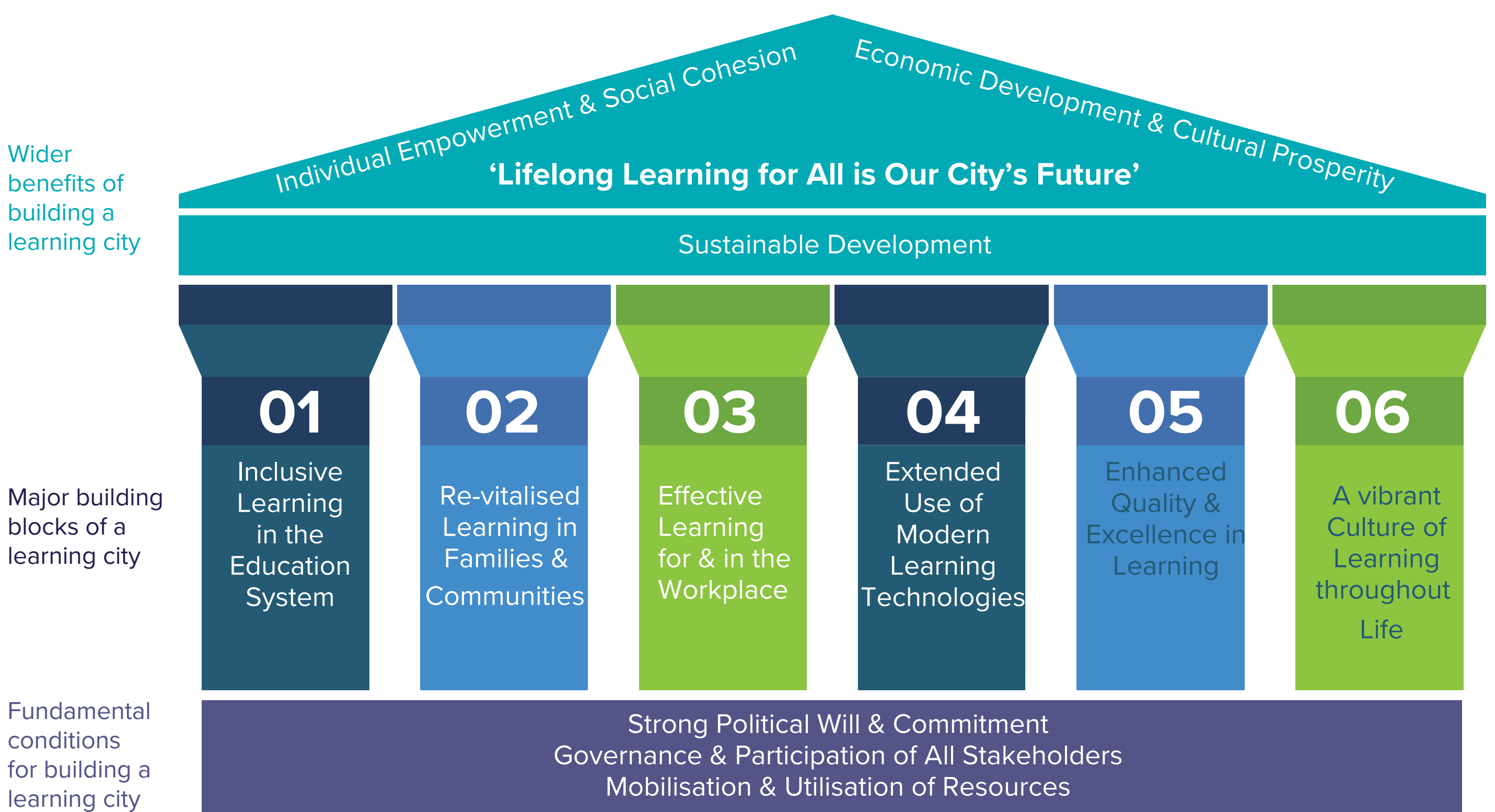
At the heart of a vision of a learning city, is the commitment to using learning to improve the lives of all citizens, regardless of age or background, principles which are growing in importance in modern Ireland. Learning can be used to create a more equitable and inclusive society, a more sustainable and healthy society and create inclusive opportunities for decent work and entrepreneurship.

The Irish Network of Learning Cities facilitates a national conversation, sharing the experience of learners and those who provide formal, non-formal and informal education, at city level, with colleagues from all corners of the island, in a supportive, knowledge and best practice sharing environment. The Network is inspired by the vision and mission of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, and is committed to the implementation of UNESCO Learning City policies, in particular: The Beijing Declaration on Learning Cities, and the Mexico Statement on Building Sustainable Learning Cities, which reiterate the Key Features of Learning Cities, which include.

The collaborative nature of INLC enhances the ability of each city to meet each area of focus INLC adopted The Cork Call to Action on Learning Cities – To implement lifelong learning strategies pertaining to the Social, Environmental and Economic dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals that promote:

- Equitable and inclusive learning and living environments
- Green and Healthy learning and living environments
- Opportunities for decent work and entrepreneurship.

The Framework of the Key Features of Learning Cities





CORK LIFELONG LEARNING FESTIVAL 2024

Morning session

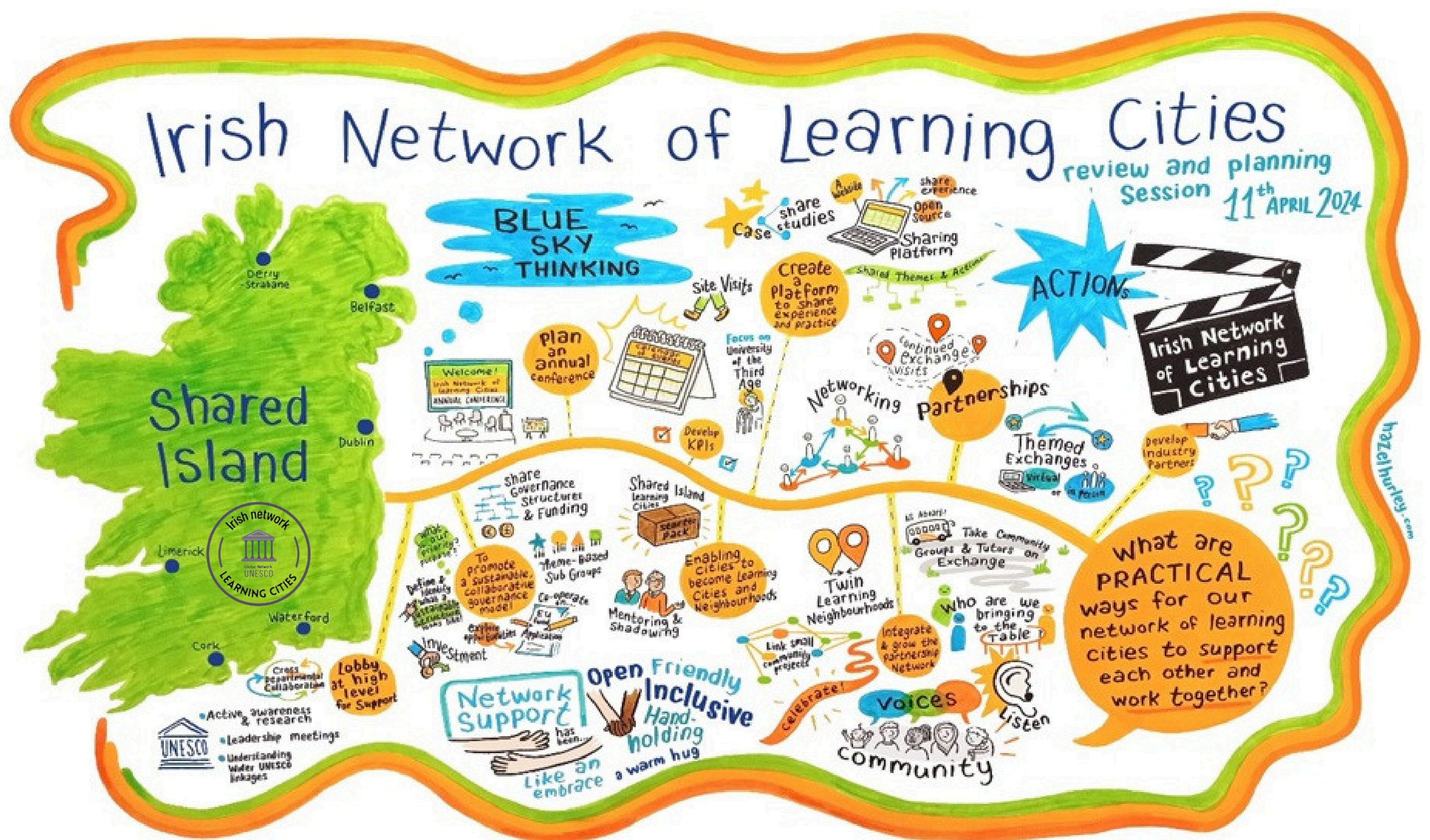
Delegates from UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, ASEM Asia Europe Lifelong Learning Hub, European partners from, Austin, and Lowell USA, Irish Network of Learning Cities and Cork Lifelong Learning partners were represented at the international event which launched Cork Lifelong Learning Festival 2024 in Triskel Christchurch.

Dublin, Austin USA, Cork, Bangkok Thailand, Derry/Strabane, Waterford, Limerick, Evry Courcouronnes France, Oss Netherlands, Durban S.Africa, Lowell USA, Belfast



‘OUR LEARNING ISLAND’ A SHARED ISLAND LEARNING CITIES CONVERSATION

Afternoon session



INLC partners came together and attended an afternoon workshop with the question “*What are practical ways for our networks of Learning Cities to support each other and work together*” utilising consensus facilitation technique to structure the session.

Consensus facilitation was chosen as it is a way to engage all partners, it is a tool that promotes an inclusive & participatory discussion, this process ensures all group members are included and encouraged to participate.

Further, the needs of all stakeholders in the room are included in the deliberations. It is agreement seeking & process oriented and is a truly collaborative process. Its ethos aligns with UNESCO GNLC and INLC principles. All members of the group contribute to a shared answer to a proposed

question and shape it into a decision that meets all the concerns of group members as much as possible.

In line with relationship building & whole group thinking, this modality has an over-arching goal of building group relationships through discussion. The effort to gain widespread agreement and include all perspectives is intended to support positive relationships between consensus participants. The resulting shared ownership of decisions and increased group cohesion can make implementation of decisions and future consensus discussions proceed in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation as well as a cooperative model of reaching group unity, an essential step in creating a culture that values cooperation over competition, always putting the learner at the centre.

POINTS REACHED

ON DAY

The results of the discussion is as follows:

01

Create a platform to share experience and practice



- Share case studies
- Open source sharing platform
- Sharing Experience e.g. on digital platform
- Website – hosting podcasts, contacts , specialisms
- Shared Branding and identity
- Focus on University of third age
- Site visits
- Shared themes and actions

02

Plan Annual Conference



- Calendar of Events
- Annual joint conference of events
- Joint Annual Conference

03

To Promote a sustainable Collaborative Governance Model



- Share governance structure and Funding
- Themed based sub groups
- Define/indemnify what a sustainable structure looks like
- What is our priority purpose
- Cooperate on EU fund Applications
- Agree Joint Projects – Funding Opportunities Explored
- Continue the bi weekly Meeting
- Investment

04

Partnerships



- Some in person
- meetings
- Case studies
- Purposeful Meetings
- Best Practice
- Show and Tell
- Themed Exchanges/ in person/virtual
- Networking
- Continued exchange
- Visits

05

Enabling Cities to become learning Cities and Neighbourhoods



- Shared Island Learning City
- Starter Pack
- Creation of Shared folders for Partners to Use
- Mentoring and Shadowing
- Integrate & Grow
- Partnership Networks
- Who else can we bring to the table
- Community
- Ingrain life long learning into other initiatives
- Celebrate Community
- Voices
- Twin learning
- Neighbourhoods
- Listen
- Community Ambassadors
- Link small community Projects

06

Lobby at High level (UNESCO and Government) for support for Lifelong Learning Cities



- UNESCO – Active awareness of research, Leadership meetings, Understanding wider UNESCO linkages
- Cross department Collaboration

07

Develop Industry Partners



- Invite partners from industry
- Develop Key performance indicators
- Track, Measure success

A number of thematic areas were identified on the day, creating the start of a longer conversation, enhancing the work of the vibrant and dynamic INLC and aligning with the fundamental principles of building a Learning City.



Shared Island Initiative

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