

## Special Issue Newsletter, Vol. 2: October 2019 UNESCO GLOBAL NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES



### FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEARNING CITIES 1 – 3 OCTOBER 2019, MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

#### CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS



of governance structures in place along with policies that cities have developed to support inclusion, improve access to learning for disadvantaged groups, and foster inclusive citizenship.

Parallel thematic working groups had the opportunity to discuss in more depth the development and implementation of policies aimed specifically at vulnerable population groups, including people living in deprived neighbourhoods, refugees and migrants, imprisoned people, and others.

To access the various conference materials, including presentations, please go to:

<http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/fourth-international-conference-learning-cities-presentations-and>.

Members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) from around the world had the opportunity to exchange and discuss effective lifelong learning policies and practices at this year's very successful International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC). It was held in Medellín, Colombia, from 1 to 3 October 2019, and was opened by the President of Colombia, Mr Iván Duque Márquez.

The conference theme was 'Inclusion – A principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities'. Showcasing how lifelong learning policies and practices can support the development of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities, this event has paved the way for a renewed focus on the so far under-researched challenges confronting vulnerable groups.

The conference provided participants with an overview of the types

'Only with education do we close the social gaps. Only with education do we overcome the vicious circle of violence and poverty.'

Federico Gutiérrez,  
Mayor of Medellín

## MEDELLÍN MANIFESTO

Medellín Manifesto: Learning Cities for Inclusion

With the adoption of the Medellín Manifesto during the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) pledged to boost inclusion in their communities in the coming years.

The Medellín Manifesto can be accessed here: [http://uil.unesco.org/system/files/iclc2019\\_medellinmanifesto\\_final\\_0.pdf](http://uil.unesco.org/system/files/iclc2019_medellinmanifesto_final_0.pdf).



Conference participants also adopted the Strategy for the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and launched a fund to support lifelong learning programmes in cities around the world.

The Strategy of the UNESCO GNLC is applicable from 2019 to 2021. In order to strengthen the network and improve knowledge production and sharing, tools development, policy learning and capacity-development, seven thematic groups have been set up based on the issues and concerns which members of the network deem to be of highest priority. This work will be supported by a multi-donor funding modality scheme.

To find out more about the Strategy of the UNESCO GNLC, please visit <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/unesco-learning-cities-boost-inclusion>.

In the run-up to the conference, 10 learning cities received the UNESCO Learning City Award 2019 in recognition of their good practice in promoting quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The awardees are:

Aswan (Egypt), Chengdu (People's Republic of China), Heraklion (Greece), Ibadan (Nigeria), Medellín (Colombia), Melitopol (Ukraine), Petaling Jaya (Malaysia), Santiago (Mexico), Seodaemun-gu (Republic of Korea), and Sønderborg (Denmark).

Federico Gutierrez, Mayor of Medellín and co-host of the fourth ICLC, explained the key to his city's success: 'Only with education do we close the social gaps. Only with education do we overcome the vicious circle of violence and poverty. In Medellín, we invest in opportunities endorsed by its citizens. Medellín is

a city that is known for rising from its darkest hours.

Its people have found in education a possibility of resilience and transformation.'

The newly awarded cities have shown exemplary progress and commitment towards the main aims of the Learning City initiative:

Promoting lifelong learning for all;

- Enhancing individual empowerment and social inclusion; and
- Furthering economic development, cultural prosperity and sustainable development.



## MEDELLÍN LIBRARY PARKS

### Visits in Medellín

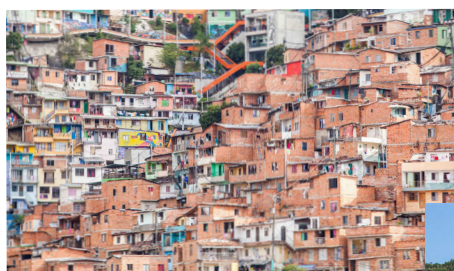
Conference participants had the opportunity to participate in a full day of site visits in Medellín. Two excursions, one to La Sierra and one to the Comuna 13 neighbourhood, were both led by the Mayor of Medellín, Federico Gutiérrez.

La Sierra is a neighbourhood, within Villa Hermosa (Comuna 8), which is hidden in the mountains on the east side of Medellín, reachable by cable car, which is part of the metro system.

Comuna 13 is an area of the city that was once notorious for being a hotspot for trafficking, conflict and danger.

Local governments decided to tackle the problem and managed to attract a variety of investments in public infrastructure projects in the area, such as the construction of a Library Park, the escalators connecting it to other parts of the city, and the establishment of Historical Memory Committee, among other projects.

The space has also become a canvas for the community to express itself through murals and graffiti. As such, the revitalization project has been successful in fulfilling an aesthetic function as well as a social one, helping to promote civic culture and respect for public spaces.



### Transforming Medellín: The role of library parks as community places of lifelong learning and culture

During the 1990s, Medellín was regarded as one of the most dangerous and violent cities in the world due to intense fighting between local drug cartels. However, after a decade of national negotiations, citizen participation and government interventions, the Colombian city has reinvented itself. One way in which it did this was by placing its 'most beautiful buildings [...] in our poorest areas,' as the then mayor, Sergio Fajardo, is quoted in The New York Times.

As part of this regeneration process, the city established nine 'Library Parks' (library buildings surrounded by expansive green space for public use) in and around the poorest neighbourhoods; today, the Parques Biblioteca are architectural landmarks, connected to modern means of transportation, that provide the community with a trusted place to learn, meet, enjoy and grow beyond their difficult past. For more information on this topic, please visit: [http://uil.unesco.org/system/files/medellin\\_library\\_parks\\_article\\_final\\_10.09.19\\_mm\\_final.pdf](http://uil.unesco.org/system/files/medellin_library_parks_article_final_10.09.19_mm_final.pdf)