



## What is Evolutionary Learning Community?

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Evolutionary Learning Communities (ELCs) are flexible environments where people can learn about the interconnected nature of our world, the ecological impact of our individual and collective choices, and the joy of finding a meaningful way to contribute to our communities. They are learning spaces that embrace and reflect values of partnership and sustainability for a higher quality of life.

The three interrelated concepts — evolution, learning, and community — that constitute the notion of ELC make explicit some of the assumptions and aspirations of this image of an expanded view of education (Laszlo & Laszlo, 2000):

- It is a *community* based educational system. Rather than functioning on the assumption that we need to go to school to learn, to work to be productive, and “away” to enjoy and have fun, ELC suggests the integration work, learning, and enjoyment throughout life (i.e., intergenerational learning) in all our communities (e.g., family, neighborhood, organizations).
- It is a *learning* oriented education, rather than a teaching one. Its focus is lifelong learning and the development of the human potential.
- It promotes self-directed, flexible, ongoing collaborative learning through *learning community*. This is not simply accumulative individual learning, but synergistic collaborative learning: learning content issues together while at the same time learning process issues about *how to be* community.
- It seeks alignment with the *evolutionary* processes of which we are a part and empowers people to participate in conscious evolution.

ELCs are human activity systems that strive toward sustainable pathways for evolutionary development in synergistic interaction with its milieu, through individual and collective processes of empowerment and evolutionary learning (Laszlo & Laszlo, et. al., 1995). “ELCs do not adapt their environment to their needs, nor do they simply adapt to their environment. Rather, they adapt *with* their environment in a dynamic of mutually sustaining evolutionary co-creation” (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998, p. 65).

Just as the concept “system” is more a pattern than a thing, ELC is an ideal image of community. Loye and Eisler (1987, p. 57) indicate the need for new visions of the future; a need for “a clearer sense of system goal states or prohuman images of the

future.” ELC is an image that can serve as a beacon for the design of new social systems appropriate for a new evolutionary era.

## References

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