

4.4. Co-creation of knowledge for sustainable urban development

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| Project | Co-creation of knowledge for sustainable urban development aiming at fair, green and accessible cities |
| Organisation | Mistra Urban Futures |
| Research location | Gothenburg, Sweden |
| Cooperation partners | See the description of the seven partners under Organisational Background |
| Team | Multiple researchers are involved from the various consortium partners, depending on the objectives of specific projects |
| Funding sources | MISTRA (Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research) and consortium members |
| Website | www.mistraurbanfutures.org |

ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND ●●●

Mistra Urban Futures is an international centre for sustainable urban development. Mistra Urban Futures was established in 2010 as a 10-year research programme and research centre to address issues on sustainable urban development with a trans-disciplinary approach using co-creation and co-production of knowledge with stakeholders, advocacy groups and citizens, as the basis for all activities. The purpose is to contribute towards making a real difference to the environment and to people's lives in the cities of the world. Practitioners and researchers cooperate closely to produce excellent and relevant knowledge. The centre offers an arena for development and engagement as well as for dissemination of knowledge, in which cooperation with business, interest groups and the general public is developed. Over fifty projects have been carried out at the centre, involving over 600 people. Each project is organised in dual project management with one academic and one practitioner. The team leader is the director of Mistra Urban Futures, Professor David Simon, who is the director of the research centre and research programme, and Mr Mikael Cullberg, who is the director of the Gothenburg platform. The application is based on six selected projects:

1. Urban Station Communities, partnering with Royal Institute of Technology, Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities, and Trafikverket;
2. WISE – Well-being in Sustainable Cities, partnering with Chalmers University of Technology, and Region Västra Götaland;
3. KAIROS – Knowledge about and Approaches to Fair and Socially Sustainable Cities, partnering with University of Gothenburg – Dept. of Global Studies, City of Gothenburg, and Northeast;
4. Divided City, partnering with Royal Institute of Technology, Chalmers University of Technology, and City of Gothenburg;
5. Embedded Research of the River City Vision, partnering with University of Gothenburg, and Gothenburg Research Institute;
6. Urban Food, partnering with UPRISE/Urban and Sustainable Futures, University of Salford.

Projects are performed within the Gothenburg Consortium, which is a result of the Mistra call in 2009. A total of seven main partners have the role of founder and funder of the consortium. These are Chalmers University of Technology (host of the consortium), University of Gothenburg, City of Gothenburg (Public authority), Region Västra Götaland (Regional parliament), Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (Association of local municipalities surrounding Gothenburg), County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland (National government authority with regional jurisdiction), and IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute (National research institute in the sustainable society and building sector).

Following the “local interaction platforms” in Gothenburg, similar platforms are being formed in Greater Manchester (UK), Kisumu (Kenya), and Cape Town (South Africa).

FUNDING ●●●

The Consortium partner submitted a proposal as a response to the call from Mistra in 2009. The programme is funded jointly by Mistra, the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, and a Gothenburg consortium of two universities, four public bodies including the City of Gothenburg and the region, and an environmental research organisation. Since that time all partners have contributed financially to the Mistra funding on a “matched” basis which includes both cash and funding in kind in the form of time for employees and officials to actively take part in and work on the projects.

PROBLEM BEING ADDRESSED ●●●

Cities are among the most complex systems on the planet. They involve social structures, laws, people, ecosystems, built environments and cultures. They are ever-changing and firmly rooted in their local context. New cities are emerging and many existing cities are becoming larger as the world is undergoing increasing urbanisation. The majority of the world’s population lives in urban areas and according to the UN 66 % of the world’s population are predicted to be living in urban areas by 2050. This means that more city space is needed in the next thirty years which requires adaptations to address complex social challenges. Cities should be convenient and easy to live in but not adversely affect the environment, economically prosperous without social exclusion. Cities have the potential to answer future human needs. The benefits of living together are substantial. It’s in cities you’ll find the greatest opportunities to optimise resources and make them available for all.



RESEARCH DESIGN AND SOLUTION ●●●

Mistra Urban Futures gathers actors from research and practice to work together to co-create and co-produce knowledge. This sharing of knowledge, understanding and expertise from both fields is needed to enable sustainable futures. Since many different competences are also needed, academic and professional experts from a range of fields, from business to sociology, political science, architecture, biology, physical resource theory, law, human ecology, engineering sciences and design, are involved in different research projects. The research approach that Mistra Urban Futures follows can be described in three stages. The first step is to identify challenges and questions that need to be met and to mobilise resources. The second step is to generate knowledge and understanding through different research projects. The third step is to enable implementation of the results, working towards sustainable urban development.

Mistra Urban Futures has so far initiated some seventy different projects, more than fifty of which are linked to the Gothenburg platform. The various target groups, audiences and stakeholders were included in the projects from the very beginning through the creation of the “Gothenburg Consortium”. The consortium has appointed an engagement officer who provides support on a regular basis for the involvement of different stakeholder groups in the various projects. This involvement is based on a firm belief that the challenges of urbanisation, global climate change and sustainability can only be met through collaboration and joint action. This inevitably leads to other challenges, such as integrating varying frames of reference and modes of operation.

Transdisciplinary research and knowledge production include acknowledging the values of all kinds of knowledge – not only academic knowledge. Consequently this also includes a responsibility to communicate in a transparent and participative way.

GRAND CHALLENGE BEING ADDRESSED ●●●

Urbanisation, global climate change and sustainability are major societal challenges and they cannot be solved through technological breakthroughs alone. On the contrary, there is a general understanding that these challenges can only be met through collaboration and co-production of knowledge, working across disciplines and societal sectors.

Mistra Urban Futures was formed to contribute to this development, particularly focusing on the issues concerning sustainable urban development. A consortium of partners, including researchers, practitioners and policy-makers have committed themselves to develop and work in trans-disciplinary and collaborative ways, with all stakeholders including citizens involved, to find academically excellent and practically relevant solutions to the challenges that exist.

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ●●●

Mistra Urban Futures uses general communication tools, such as a website, reports, books and book chapters, policy briefs and articles – each with their respective target groups. Social media plays an increasingly important role, not least with the opportunities social media offer for feedback and true two-way communication. The international review panel paid particular attention to this, and recommended adding an “engagement manager” to be appointed, not only to develop communication and dissemination, but also to contribute to the design of projects to allow as much dialogue and as many participative features as possible.

EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION ●●●

The research group at Mistra Urban Futures is well developed and has a relatively strong presence in academia and practice. The researchers are well recognised and have wide-ranging contacts. The team organises many events on a regular basis and for example holds two conferences (200-400 attendees) each year. The research model can be replicated anywhere where the combination of local stakeholders' initiatives and interests co-exist with an open and inclusive academic environment. This is shown through the replication of the model in other regions, e.g. Manchester, Cape Town in South Africa and Kisumu in Kenya. The research team has presented a wide range of publications aimed at the scientific community and a wider group of stakeholders in cities, governments, regions, public authorities, industry and NGO's. In total 71 journal publications and conference proceedings were included dating from 2010 or later and published in various journals such as *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, *Social Dynamics: A journal of African Studies* and *Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Furthermore, twenty books and book chapters were mentioned, as well as a selection of 32 reports published since 2013.