

# Project Development

## Project development at Mistra Urban Futures' Gothenburg Platform – From ideas to implemented projects.

This document aims at setting out the main features of project development at GOLIP, and to form the basis for communicating them with the partnership and the urban research community.

While we focus here on project development, it is important to keep in mind that the Platform should be larger than sum of projects. Non-project activities is a negative definition, better call it starting and taking part in processes, networking, participating in the public debate, feeding into policy processes; developing the platform in several ways. In essence it is about building trust, which is essential as it is also about risk-taking, being allowed to fail – truly innovative activities require mistakes. Are we perhaps a 'social science park'? In order to achieve the objectives – Realising Just Cities that are Fair, Green and Accessible – we need to protect the independence from structures that obstruct change, to guard the possibility to take a critical view. This requires careful attention to the role of different stakeholders in SUD, and to the role of various funders, be they public or private.

Mistra Urban Futures provides an arena for processes to generate and enable implementation of knowledge that promotes sustainable urbanization, not least through an international network, Local Interaction Platforms (LIPs), local and national networks, trans-disciplinary research capacity and experience – a unique setting. The aim is to find the good ideas and then match them to the appropriate funding, internal or external – or rather in suitable combinations. We are a broker, an intermediate between ideas and resources, quite unlike research funders. Hence, we do not do 'calls'.

### SUMMARY

Mistra Urban Futures projects are about sustainable urban development and urban transformation, of high scientific quality, with the objective of **Realising Just Cities**. Just cities are described as Fair, Green and Accessible.

The four basic principles for Mistra Urban Futures projects are that they should be trans-disciplinary, be based co-creation, build on broad co-funding and include international collaboration or comparison. In relation to 'Just Cities', a cross-cutting perspective in all projects and processes is to address the gender dimension in a relevant and systematic way.

Taken together, this means that projects should:

- be able to contribute to debates and understandings on co-creation and co-production of knowledge (this does not mean to apply a single method),

- involve academics and practitioners,
- make contributions to theory AND policy/practice,
- constitute a 'case' for meta-analysis around the themes of governance, knowledge and urban change processes,
- relate to core characteristics of a just city which we have framed as fair, green and accessible,
- include at least 2 Mistra Urban Futures partners, and
- have a comparative element.

As a guideline, projects could be about:

- Formulating problems, pathways and futures
- New concepts and models
- New knowledge and tangible solutions
- New methods and ways of working
- Impact evaluation and assessment

International comparison should, as far as possible, be embedded in the projects. Comparison is to be carried out by the project actors themselves. Five modes of comparison could be used:

1. Local projects compared internationally: similar project criteria with comparative components/instructions
2. Locally or trans-locally clustered projects: clustering projects by topic to produce new knowledge and insights. Clustering could take place within one LIP or across LIPs.
3. Internationally-initiated project with local co-production
4. Fully international projects: initiated and carried out by international project groups.
5. PhD studies

The initiative can come from several sources:

- International partners
- Partners at the LIPs, within research and practice
- Calls by research funders, EU funds, etc.
- Stakeholders, civil society and business

All partners can launch ideas for new projects. We are also open for ideas from outside the partnership. The process to generate new projects should be inclusive, but is based on the GOLIP partnership.

Ideas can be presented to all the partners of GOLIP and to the GOLIP Director. For idea to be developed as a Mistra Urban Futures project, the initiative must be supported by the partners concerned and the GOLIP Director. The idea will then be presented to the co-ordinators' group which meets monthly. It advises on if and how to take the idea forward. All partners will be invited to participate. The decision to support projects within the yearly GOLIP Project Development budget is taken by the GOLIP Director within the framework of operational plans and the annual budget. The main budget allocation is made in the annual Centre budget which is approved by the Centre Board.

Where possible, project funding is spread over several sources. The aim is to attract co-funding and seek external resources, in order to gain as much added value as possible.

If needed, we can be the main funder of projects that are essential to our aim and that cannot attract sufficient funding. But the aim is to step down support once the area matures and can attract external funding.

Normally, the Centre would provide seed money to start up the project process, and then if needed, a certain part of the cash funding for the actual projects. The share of the Centre depends on several parameters, such as the external funding available and the amount of in kind financing by the partners. Additional funds are available for dissemination, communication and implementation that would not naturally be covered by the projects' budgets.

## THE FRAMEWORK FOR NEW PROJECTS

The process to develop new projects needs to be transparent and possible to communicate. The responsibilities and decision-making process needs to be clear and documented. What is a Mistra Urban Futures project and what is not? Basically, if the partners agree that it is a project within GOLIP, it is a Mistra Urban Futures project.

### Objective, Framework and Methodology

Mistra Urban Futures projects are about sustainable urban development and urban transformation, with the objective of **Realising Just Cities**. Just cities are described as Fair, Green and Accessible. These concepts have been defined:

- **Fair:** Securing urban equity, social inclusion and urban commons.
- **Green:** Managing resource constraints, urban environments, ecosystems and climate change sustainably.
- **Accessible:** Promoting efficient and equitable access to urban qualities, opportunities and services.

The Local Interaction Platforms (LIPS) have sets out a structure for this in the joint programme for Phase 2 (2016–2019) to frame the activities of all the platforms. Underpinning the 'Just Cities' concepts are mechanisms and processes, three core processes (the HOW questions):

- **Urban change:** understanding processes of urban transformation which facilitate or constrain cities in becoming more just – the dynamics, drivers, practices and barriers to urban change processes for fair, green and accessible cities.
- **Urban knowledge:** innovating in the social organisation of different knowledges and practices within cities required to value and harness multiple forms of expertise to support transitions to more just cities.
- **Urban governance:** improving relationships and processes amongst governance stakeholders in order to ensure decision-making and urban management practices that will help achieve just cities.

The current issues of the platform gravitate into three areas of principles and practices (the WHAT questions), called TRACKs, ‘transformative research action through co-producing knowledge for sustainability’:

- **Socio-ecological transformations:** bi-directional impacts between cities and their social and biophysical environments and with issues of urban ecological sustainability.
- Socio-spatial transformations: urban life and human development in cities.
- Socio-cultural transformations: the built environment and spatial form of cities.

The projects within this framework should deal with understanding and addressing complex urban challenges and issues. They can of course cover several of the points above. We deal with these urban challenges and issues through trans-disciplinary research with co-creation methodologies at LIPs.

In relation to ‘Just Cities’, a cross-cutting perspective in all projects and processes is to address the gender dimension in a relevant and systematic way.

Trans-disciplinary projects are carried out in collaboration between different research disciplines and ‘practice’ – or between research-based and experience-based participants and organisations. Transdisciplinary research is defined as Different types of knowledge production for societal change which are based on in-depth collaborative processes that integrate knowledge from different disciplines (interdisciplinary) with values, knowledge, know-how and expertise from non-scientific (experience-based) sources.

That is done through a participatory process that we call ‘co-creation’ (Sw. *medskapande*) in which the relevant organisations and main stakeholders identify challenges and needs, formulate questions, build knowledge and analyse and, finally, implement and reflect. In other words, co-creation is about co-design, co-production of knowledge and co-implementation. Throughout the process the projects should reflect on the methods and as a result refine or modify them as they go along. The ethos is simple: “All are bearers, creators and users of knowledge”. One cornerstone is that each project has both a research-based and a practice-based leader.

Furthermore, Phase 2 projects should be international or internationally connected, in that they include international collaboration or comparison. The conditions for this need to be formulated for each project according to the issues, stakeholders and context at hand. The different types of international projects are described below.

Hence, projects at Mistra Urban Futures are **trans-disciplinary** and **collaborative**; they build on **co-creation** methods. They should build on **co-funding** from several sources, including in-kind contributions and (as appropriate) external funding, as described in the funding principles below, and should involve **international** connections, in the form of collaboration and/or comparisons. The outer framework is set by the budget of Phase 2, and the projects are guided by the Strategic plan (as revised!) supplemented by the ‘Realising Just Cities’

Programme for 2016–2019, the framework for collaboration between the LIPs (to be the discussed and developed) and the yearly activity plans (Centre Operational Plan, COP, and Local Activity Plans, LAPs). However, this does not preclude new initiatives and responses to evolving urban challenges, especially which include more stakeholders such as the civil society.

### Project Criteria

Taken together, the objectives of the Centre and the framework for its research processes and projects, in combination with the methodology the Centre mean that projects should:

- be able to contribute to debates and understandings on co-creation and co-production of knowledge (this does not mean to apply a single method),
- involve academics and practitioners,
- make contributions to theory AND policy/practice,
- constitute a ‘case’ for meta-analysis around the themes of governance, knowledge and urban change processes,
- relate to core characteristics of a just city which we have framed as fair, green and accessible,
- include at least 2 Mistra Urban Futures partners, and
- have a comparative element.

Furthermore, the intention is to apply the model of ‘embedded researchers’ across the board at GOLIP. Therefore, the projects in Phase 2 should, if appropriate, include a PhD student (or several). If so, the supervisor should be part of the project. Projects that can realise this will be given priority. A broader connection with teaching and course work should be the objective, not least by connecting a number of master students’ theses to the project.

### Guiding questions

To guide the formation of new projects, as well as the evaluation at the other end, a set of questions have been formulated at GOLIP:

- 1. Formulating problems, pathways and futures:** In which way will you contribute to making visible, creating a shared vision of and structuring the issues involved?
- 2. Concepts and models:** Will you contribute to new ways of presenting or structuring your issues? Will you seek to develop new concepts?
- 3. New knowledge and tangible solutions:** Which proposals for tangible solutions do you aim at contributing to? What kind of knowledge and conclusions do you hope to draw from your work? Will you carry out test and demonstration activities?
- 4. Methods and ways of working:** Which results (preferably supported by scientific publications) do you aim at concerning methods and ways of working?

**5. Impact evaluation and assessment:** How will results make a sustainable difference? Who are the ‘real’ stakeholders, the end beneficiaries? Where will benefits of the project be taken care of? Who will carry the knowledge, results and learnings forward?

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

The Mistra Urban Futures projects can have several different kinds of funding and partner set-ups, in order for the Centre to be able to address the various challenges of urban development and the priorities of the partners. An essential aspect in Phase 2 is the international comparison that should be embedded in the projects. For the Centre as a whole, five modes of comparison have been identified. They are complementary to each other and can co-exist within a single project or be undertaken in different projects, depending on the starting position of respective LIP and partnerships. Importantly there can be movement *between* modes. For instance, out of clusters of projects a single comparative project may emerge. The replication of a local project may strengthen the clustering of a group of similar projects around a topic.

For each mode, the following general points apply:

- Comparison should, as far as possible, be embedded in the project and carried out by the project actors themselves.
- Each mode of comparison is designed to produce comparative outputs. A number of common publications can be envisaged, including scientific papers and briefings, as well as discrete publications on specific topics and contexts. Specific conferences and workshops can also be envisaged.
- Co-production as a methodology will be developed and refined and lead to international dissemination (conferences, papers, publications).
- A key outcome of different modes is the identification of gaps in existing structures and ways of thinking and doing. This would have impacts on the ground, as new practices will emerge and be established cross-context.
- Meetings/workshops across the LIPs and partnerships will eventually have to be established for each mode of comparative work to produce and coordinate outcomes.

The five modes of comparison are described briefly here. An important aspect in connection to these, is how the various international projects are initiated. The general rule applies here too, that is that the Centre is open to initiatives from all stakeholders. However, projects within mode 1 are most likely to be locally initiated, whereas projects within modes 3 and 4 are likely to be initiated by the LIPs together. Mode 2 is about clustering, so it is likely to build on locally initiated projects.

### 1. Local projects compared internationally

Local projects with a similar content or research focus, will be compared, reflected and analysed across the LIPs and partnerships. For *new projects*, this comparative mode will



require similar project criteria with comparative components/instructions. For *existing projects*, they may be retrofitted or replicated to be able to undertake international comparison:

- **Local projects retrofitted:** Some local projects may need to be re-designed or adapted. For example, in at least three of the LIPs there are existing projects relating to urban food production. However, these are of different character and addressing different local issues of food production. Each of these projects might need specific ‘add-ons’ to facilitate comparison, identified in relation to the other projects. This may require project co-ordination and additional expertise at different LIPs.
- **Local projects replicated:** Some local projects have been particularly inventive and successful, such as the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships at CTLIP and the ESRC Urban Transformations ‘Jam and Justice’ project at GMLIP. Such projects, or elements thereof, could be replicated at other LIPs. This would require leadership from the initiating LIP with the particular experience and knowledge to offer guidance to the adopting LIP or partnership.

## 2. Projects, locally or trans-locally clustered

Another kind of comparison could occur through clustering projects by topic to produce new knowledge and insights. Clustering could take place within one LIP or across LIPs. Clustering would require project co-ordination, which could be one of the actors already involved in any of the projects within the cluster, or a new resource. The added value of this mode of comparison is to strengthen as well as evolve existing or new fields for research and practice. It would contribute to the development of the international debate on and knowledge of urban life.

## 3. Internationally-initiated project with local co-production

These projects are internationally conceived through co-design. They could emerge from international agendas or as locally urgent topics. These would be presented for consideration as a common topic to address within Mistra Urban Futures and the different LIPs. Each LIP would then initiate local co-production partnerships and activities to deliver the research as part of an international comparative agenda. This type of research may require extra research capacity at each LIP/partnership.

## 4. International projects

These types of projects are initiated and set up by multi-local teams co-designing, co-producing and delivering different projects. The comparative element here lies primarily in trans-local co-creation and learning, compared to the more top-down origin of international-initiated projects in type 3. The projects established could, in their turn, be compared according to many of the previously mentioned models – with other local projects, as clusters

etc. – or be projects initiated to investigate the core processes. Such projects would require coordination and possibly extra researchers beyond the ones already engaged and involved. This could also be connected to PhD studies.

## 5. PhD studies

Since PhD students are dependent on different institutional agreements, it can be difficult to ‘steer’ PhD projects into a comparative framework, especially where these are co-funded. An international comparative urban dimension could be one possible precondition for funding from Mistra Urban Futures. Another option would be to emphasise a co-production approach as a precondition for funding and cluster PhD students around this theme. To enhance the production of this kind of PhD research, a common research agenda between LIPs/partnerships might need to be established. The feasibility of establishing a research school (initially at GOLIP, possibly later at each LIP) with international pedagogic exchanges will be explored.

An additional comparative outcome from this mode of comparison would be the PhD thesis itself. Comparative urban studies will identify gaps and create juxtaposed urban knowledge. A research school would ground methodologies of transdisciplinary research and co-production, both locally and internationally, for the next generation of scholars.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Mistra Urban Futures platforms, through its partners, lead the processes to set up projects. They are usually initiated by one or, preferably, several of the partners of the Centre, should be supported by the GOLIP co-ordinators’ group and, as appropriate by the other LIPs. Projects have the overarching aim to build and consolidate the platforms, their networks and knowledge and capacities infrastructure. The implementation and communication of the results should be intimately linked to the platforms. The results of the projects are regarded as part of the operations of Mistra Urban Futures and will be communicated through the channels of the Centre.

### Initiatives and Decisions

GOLIP projects require the co-ordinators’ support, as well as the participation by two or more partners in the process to develop the projects. The framework is provided by decisions on multi-annual and annual budgets, as well as by the strategic and operational plans, and of course the criteria for MUF projects.

The initiative can come from several sources:

- International partners
- Partners at the LIPs
- Calls by research funders, EU funds, etc.



- Stakeholders, civil society and business

All partners can launch ideas for new projects under the Mistra Urban Futures flag. We are also open for ideas from outside the partnership. The process to generate new projects should be inclusive, which means that interested partners are given the opportunity to participate from the earliest possible stage in the process.

To develop an idea as a Mistra Urban Futures project, the initiative should be presented to, and supported by, the co-ordinators of the partners concerned, as applicable, and to the GOLIP Director. They will then present the idea to the co-ordinators' group which advises on if and how to take the idea forward. All partners will be invited to participate, and possibilities for other specific partnerships explored.

Specific project development funds are allocated in the annual budget which are to be used continually over the year, within the framework of the priorities of the operational plan. Decision on how to use the yearly Project Development budget are taken by the LIP Director in consultation with the co-ordinators.

The overall budgetary allocation between different uses, including project development, is made in the annual Centre Budget which is approved by the Board of the Centre. The Centre Director can decide on allocations up to Skr300,000 within this budget. Proposals for processes or projects with budgetary consequences, or to be included in next year's budget, are developed by the GOLIP Director and the co-ordinators and presented to the Centre Director, for decision by the Board. This decision is normally taken in the annual budget process, but could also take place during the budget year from reserved funds. Equally, the project development budget is fixed annually, and delegated to the Platform. This should be used to:

- form process or project groups,
- commission syntheses, overviews, 'state of the art' reports and pre-studies,
- build collaboration with the other platforms of Mistra Urban Futures, and
- set up applications for funding from external sources, with the aim of scaling up Mistra Urban Futures own resources, as well as creating associated projects.

The partners through the co-ordinators sponsor the initiatives in suitable ways, not least with networking activities, also with the support of the Secretariat of the Centre. The co-ordinators' group is responsible for co-ordinating various initiatives and integrating with other operations and the 'full picture' of the Centre.

We need to consider how GOLIP should maintain a watch on current calls; should this (as up to now) be a shared responsibility between the organisations? Should some kind of system be in place for spreading and announcing these on the web page and in the newsletter (or as now on a case-by-case basis)? In what way should the Centre provide support on methodology? Today, this is mainly done through the network of the platform.

## A Continuous Co-Creation Process

One way to set up the process to design the programme and projects for Phase 2, is to see it as a set of steps that would correspond to the process of 'co-creation'. One key advantage is that it would allow time for reflection; it seems essential to get the full picture, the whole context and to consider what the priorities should be in consequence, before choosing what paths to pursue – what to select and what to discard. Experiences from Phase 1 at GOLIP clearly speak in favour of such an approach.

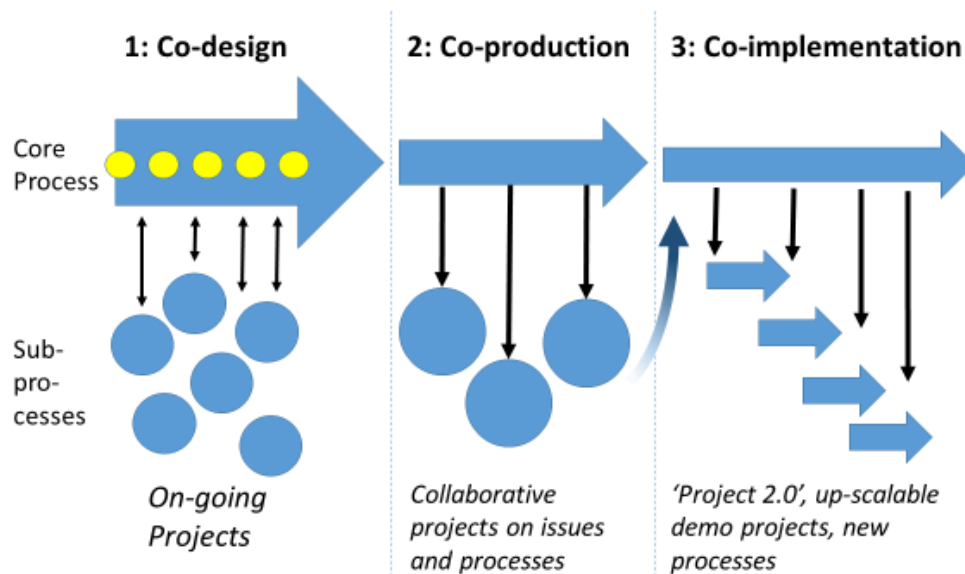
**Step 1 'co-initiation' and 'co-design':** Start a 'core process', which would consist of a series of workshops and preparatory work in between, such as pre-studies, synthesis, etc. as defined during the process. Evaluating results of Phase 1 would naturally be included. The aim is to establish a common understanding of challenges, issues, interests and priorities, which will define the 'common ground' for future collaboration.

Activities that are already in operation will inform the core process, and be informed by it.

**Step 2 'co-production':** Based on shared interests and priorities, a number of knowledge projects are set up to deepen the understanding of particular issues and processes.

**Step 3 'co-implementation' and 'co-evaluation':** The results from projects in step 2 will feed back into the core process. Based on this, the project portfolio can be developed in suitable ways to ensure that the knowledge is implemented and makes a difference. This can be done e.g. by taking the projects in step 2 to a new operative level, or by starting up-scalable demo projects. New processes may also spin off from here. The aim should be to deepen and broaden understanding and participation in our own contexts (city regions), as well as to spread the knowledge to others.

This process needs to be conducted at several levels at the same time, which must inform each other continuously. It can also be repeated – or perhaps rather branch off – in several separate areal and constellations (e.g. two or more LIPs), as the programme for Phase 2 is gradually refined. Throughout, research and practice must be involved, i.e. all partners, and preferably other stakeholders, at our respective LIPs.



**Figure: The 'co-creation' process (based on prof. Ulf Ranhagen)**

A case-by-case approach is used: For certain areas, it might be suitable to form a dedicated overall process group (i.e. for a core process or the TRACKs). However, in other cases a pre-study or process group could be established for a selected area, but also for a selected proposed project. These groups could consist of one or several researchers and representatives of the other partners based on interest. Possibly other stakeholders could be included, or otherwise they should be consulted. The groups should work along the lines that are sketched above, running a process that will lead up to written material on current knowledge and issues (such as 'state of art' or 'state of play' documents), as well as project proposals.

## FUNDING PRINCIPLES

During Phase 1, a limited number of projects received a large share of the cash funding, whereas a fairly large number of projects were given seed money or were associated to the Centre, but received most of their funding from external sources. In Phase 2, the aim is to spread the funding of the projects over a variety of sources. It is essential that projects can attract co-funding and seek external resources, in order to gain as much added value as possible from the funding provided by the Consortium, Mistra and Sida. The objective should be to invest for the future and establish the basis of long-term sustainability. Preparing for 'Phase 3', the 'post-Mistra' period from 2020 needs to be in focus. Essentially, we need to provide space for reflexion, building the platform, exchanging of experiences and spreading knowledge outside the partnership.

At the same time we want to be able to fund projects that are essential to our aim that no one else wants to finance. Otherwise, if we operate areas that are already highly interesting to other actors, there is an obvious risk that we will fail to meet the objectives by being mainstream. This requires courage to enter into avant-garde knowledge areas – but also to step down support once the area matures and can attract external funding.

Taken together, this means that we need to spread activities over time, let issues evolve, investigate before committing. A typical model would be to start core processes, define the big picture and priorities (cf. Ranhagen's model for a continuous project development process above), then decide on where to invest and how much.

Funding in cash by the Centre will depend on priorities and strategic assessment. Normally, the Centre would provide seed money to start up the project process, such as a pre-study or funding application, and then if necessary, a certain part of the funding for the actual project once it is up and running. The share of the Centre depends on several parameters, such as the external funding available and the amount of in kind financing by the partners. Especially, the Centre could finance the comparative international dimensions and other activities that might not be a priority for local funding.

If needed, however, we should be able to be the main funder of projects that are essential to our aim and that cannot yet attract sufficient funding. But the aim is to step down support once the area matures and can attract external funding.

Additional funds would then be available for dissemination, communication and implementation that would not naturally be covered by the projects' budgets. This could also be used for further publications that could spin off the projects in order to make full academic, as well as applied, use of the results.

Funding during phase 2 should be spread over the four years in an incremental way, allowing to start new projects gradually, and to step up financing as they define their priorities and start building components of various kinds. Financing should initially, focus on bridging from phase 1, allowing for synthesis, adding value to and disseminating what has been achieved. Describing the 'state of the art' might be required, and to gather stakeholders to define the issues (the 'co-initiation and co-design' part). In sum, this means that the financing should not necessarily be distributed evenly across the years.

In Phase 2, we need to explore further possibilities to fund of international projects. This could be international co-operation funders, bilateral co-operation between Sweden and partner countries, the World Bank, EuropeAid, etc.

## **THE DAY-TO-DAY PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

The lead project partner should normally co-ordinate the project, in which case, a contract is needed to define responsibilities and roles for the Centre and the Project lead. Financing will be paid in two or more annual tranches, linked to specific delivery, such as progress and annual reports – and a final report. If this proves unpractical GOLIP, with support from the

secretariat, can take charge of the day-to-day financial and legal management, setting up contracts for individual participants, etc.

The objective is that the bulk of the projects, including core projects, will be led and managed by the partners of GOLIP. The lead partner would then set up a framework contract with the Centre, which would provide for financing in yearly instalments, a part of which would be payable in arrears on presentation of the agreed reporting. The lead partner would maintain the project 'within its books', and provide financial reporting yearly. In kind financing of the project would be included in this.

If such a set-up would prove impossible in certain cases, the Secretariat will provide the administrative services.

Generally, the GOLIP partnership and the Secretariat offer the projects:

- Support for research applications
- Resources and contacts within the partnership
- Methodological support for trans-disciplinary learning
- Forums for international exposure (LIPs, international partnerships, other international collaboration, participation in international conferences)
- Publications series
- Templates, newsletter, webpage, other media
- Seminars and events: Urban Lunchtime, Urban Research, MUF Conference, GOLIP Conference, etc.
- Facilitating exchange between the projects at GOLIP and at other LIPs

In addition to the academic output of the research, the projects are required to:

- set up a project plan for the whole duration of the project,
- provide progress reports in September on the first eight months of the year\*,
- provide yearly plans in September each year as a basis for the operational planning of the coming year\*,
- provide annual reports on previous year in January each year\*,
- provide final report at the end of project period,
- maintain a web page on [www.mistraurbanfutures.org](http://www.mistraurbanfutures.org),
- produce reports and policy briefs in the Mistra Urban Futures series,
- acknowledge Mistra Urban Futures and the funders (Mistra and Sida) in all publications, presentations and alike,
- use the graphic profile and logo of Mistra Urban Futures,
- adhere to the Centre Administration and Communications Guide
- respect Chalmers guidelines on travel and other expenses,

The Project *Administration and Communication Guide* gives further detail on how projects at GOLIP are managed.

(\* applicable to projects with a duration of more than one budget year).