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Stakeholders of Mistra Urban Futures (The Gothenburg platform)

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SOCIETAL OUTCOME REPORT GOTHENBURG MISTRA URBAN FUTURES

SOCIETAL OUTCOME REPORT GOTHENBURG

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Study

Mistra Urban Futures is an international research and knowledge centre for sustainable urban development studies primarily focused on joint production of knowledge between researchers and practitioners¹. The centre was set up in 2010 and became fully operational in 2012. In April 2014, the consortia partners of the Gothenburg platform of the centre, commissioned Ramböll Management Consulting to conduct a study of the platform. The purpose of the study was to identify how the platform has contributed positively to society in terms of outcomes and benefits. The study has been produced alongside a "Progress Report" of the centre summing up the first years of operations. These two reports are made in preparation for the international evaluation of the centre scheduled for 2015.

The data collection of the study consists of six group interviews carried out in Gothenburg during the period June to August 2014. In addition, RMC has carried out eleven telephone interviews. The overwhelming majority of the respondents to this study consists of practitioners that in one way or another work with issues relating to urban development in public organisations around the Gothenburg region. A few interviews have been conducted with politicians. All in all 44 respondents have been given the opportunity to contribute to the study.

In order to sort and present the data collected in this study, RMC has developed an analytical framework consisting of two dimensions. The first dimension of the framework consists of the societal level that the benefits and outcomes are played out. In this study we have identified three such levels: the individual level, the organisational level and the policy level. The second dimension of the framework consists of four themes that are inductively deduced from the data collection and can be said to reflect different drivers for change needed to bring about societal change. The four themes—Interaction, Knowledge, Discourse and Momentum—are presented below together with the findings in the study.

Increased and Enhanced Interaction Among Stakeholders

The data collection in this study clearly suggest that Mistra Urban Futures has created a platform for interaction that has resulted in that researchers and practitioners—and their respective organisations that they are representing—have come closer together on a practical level. Respondents specifically highlight the following perceived benefits and outcomes related to interaction:

- New interaction patterns and new means of interacting between researchers, practitioners and their respective organisations
- Increased interaction among practitioners and their respective organisations
- Developed internal dialogue among practitioners, particularly on interdisciplinary areas of knowledge and practice
- New practical solutions generated through enhanced knowledge and information transfer

¹ Professionals within urban development and urban planning

- A potential to decrease stakeholder conflicts later on in the development process by establishing an earlier dialogue between relevant parties
- Mistra Urban Futures acting as a node in facilitating networking
- Mistra Urban Futures directly interacting with politicians may create favourable conditions for influencing policy
- Strengthened interaction with citizens and external stakeholders

Impact Through Knowledge Production

Producing new knowledge relating to sustainable urban development constitutes the core of Mistra Urban Futures. In the study it is suggested that this activity and its output generates benefits and positive outcomes for a wide range of stakeholders. Four types of benefits and outcomes relating to knowledge production are highlighted among respondents to the study:

- Individuals seem to learn a lot by participating in projects
- Joint knowledge production and individual learning seems to generate organisational spill-over
- Knowledge is dispersed to a wide range of relevant stakeholders through external events
- Knowledge from Mistra Urban Futures influence policy and decision making

New Ways of Approaching Urban Development

Many of the respondents to the study argue that Mistra Urban Futures plays—and aims to play—a more transformative role, exceeding knowledge production in a traditional academic sense. It is therefore suggested that Mistra Urban Futures—to some extent—works as a platform for changing and challenging the overall debate—or discourse—relating to urban developmental practice. The following outcomes and benefits relating to discursive change are suggested among the respondents:

- A new widened and more sustainability focused perspective on urban development
- Changing or defining concepts can impact on how stakeholders relate to urban development
- The explorative ambition and working methods of MUF has transformative potential for Urban Development practice
- A more coequal practice in relation to co-production of knowledge has led to increased reflexivity and critical thinking attitude among practitioners

Building Momentum to Bring About Change

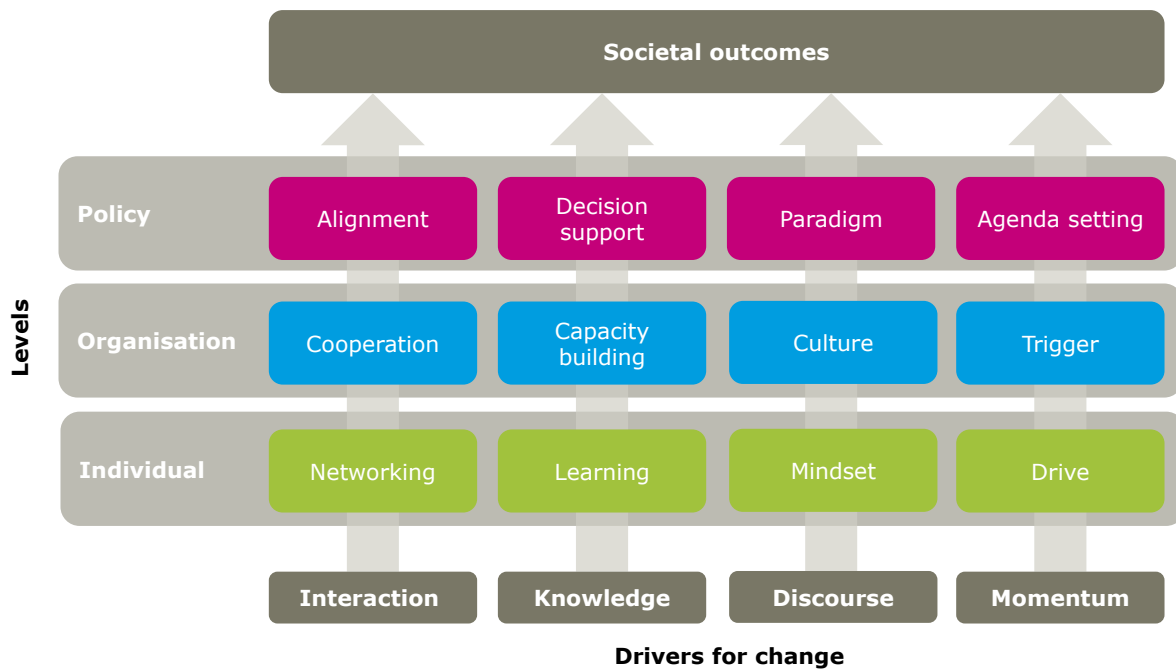
Building momentum is often key in bringing about change. Momentum is also one of the recurring themes in the data collection. Respondents to the study highlight the following outcomes and benefits from Mistra Urban Futures relating to momentum as a driver for change:

- Mistra Urban Futures brings about personal drive, organisational momentum and external knowledge push that are all drivers for building momentum relating to sustainable urban development
- The legitimacy that Mistra Urban Futures provides is key in building momentum behind issues relating to sustainable urban development

- Mistra Urban Futures has an important role to play in attracting external funding

The societal footprint of Mistra Urban Futures is summed up analytically in the framework presented below.

Figure 1 Analytical framework conceptually summing up the various benefits and outcomes identified by the respondents



Realising the Potential of Mistra Urban Futures

Through the data collection respondents have been encouraged to discuss what they perceive as being key challenges and opportunities for Mistra Urban Futures. The following six key areas of development are highlighted among the respondents:

- Disseminating knowledge and increasing participation from participating organisations
- Increasing the political involvement in Mistra Urban Futures
- Finding the right way to measure results and effects from Mistra Urban Futures
- Strengthening the national and international perspective and links
- Finding and adjusting the focus of Mistra Urban Futures
- Developing the organisation and activities of Mistra Urban Futures

On the basis of the qualitative data collected in this study, Ramböll Management Consulting, concludes the report through four final reflections that may be used as points of discussion on how Mistra Urban Futures may improve its operations in the future:

- The collaborative approach for producing knowledge reveals potential
- Striking a balance between a probe-driven, a needs-driven and an academic excellence-driven approach to knowledge production
- From regional to national to global

- Involving additional actors and reaching out to political decision makers

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Appendix 1

List of Respondents

1. MISTRA URBAN FUTURES

1.1 Mistra Urban Futures

Mistra Urban Futures (MUF) is an international research and knowledge centre for sustainable urban development primarily focused on joint production of knowledge between researchers and practitioners². The centre was set up in 2010 and became fully operational 2012. Since its inception the MUF has been under continuous development. The ambition of the centre is to become a world class excellence centre and a hub of knowledge with regards to issues relating to sustainable urban development. The knowledge developed within the centre will support policy-makers regionally, nationally and internationally—with innovative solutions to meet future challenges.

The work conducted inside the centre focuses on both theory and practice. A primary aim is to find new approaches and methods and to produce new relevant knowledge of the development of sustainable cities and complex societal challenges linked to this. The research and knowledge projects implemented involves collaboration between researchers from different disciplines and practitioners which differs Mistra Urban Futures from other research and knowledge centres. In this way the core of the operations is run from a common production of knowledge as well as a way to bring different perspectives to enhance the ability to contribute to the solution of the complex societal challenges and to facilitate the application and change.

MUF consists of five international platforms; Gothenburg (Sweden), Manchester (UK), Kisumu (Kenya), Shanghai (China) and Cape Town (South Africa). The Gothenburg platform acts as the main platform and is hosted by the Chalmers University of Technology.

Operations are financed by Mistra³ and Sida⁴ and seven consortia partners in West Sweden, representing academia and local and regional public bodies. In addition to these, the centre has a number of associated partners representing government agencies, research institutions and private firms.

The consortia partners are: The University of Gothenburg, Chalmers University of Technology, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, City of Gothenburg, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities, The Region of Västra Götaland and The County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland.

In order to develop an overview of MUF, its activities and how they relate to the overall goals and ambitions, Ramböll Management Consulting (RMC) has constructed the following Theory of Change for MUF and the Gothenburg platform. The Theory of Change can provide a framework

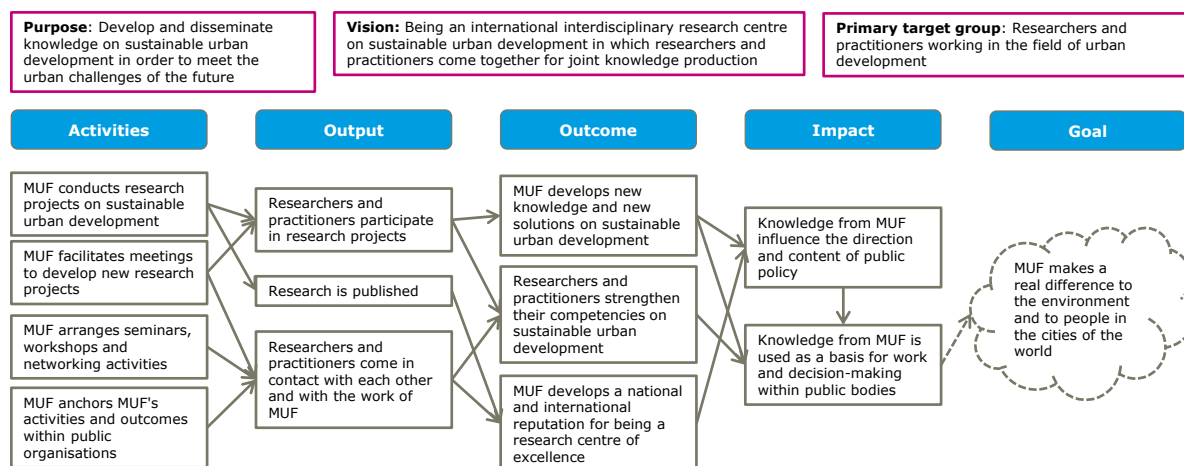
² Professionals within urban development and urban planning

³ The Swedish foundation for strategic environmental research

⁴ Sida is a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government, with the mission to reduce poverty in the world.

for analysing and or evaluating the centre. It may as well be used as a common basis for discussing strategy and overall organisational development among stakeholders.

Figure 2 Theory of change for Mistra Urban Futures (source: RMC)



1.2 About the report

In April 2014 Ramböll Management Consulting (RMC) was assigned by the consortia partners of MUF to carry out a study of the Gothenburg platform of MUF. The primary purpose of the study has been to identify the different ways that the centre has contributed to society in terms of benefits. The ambition of the study has not been to evaluate the impact of the centre, but rather to illuminate and analyse different kind of perceived outcomes and benefits—and if possible illuminate areas of development.

This societal outcome report has been produced alongside a Progress Report of the centre summing up the first years of operations. These two reports are made in preparation for the international evaluation of the centre scheduled for 2015.

Primary research questions for this study are:

- What benefits do individuals and organisations experience from participating in MUF?
- What are the conditions for knowledge produced within MUF to impact policy?
- Are there synergies between MUF and other work relating to sustainable urban development?
- What are challenges and opportunities in order to realize the potential of MUF?
- How can collaboration between MUF and other public organisations be strengthened in the future?

The data collection of the study consists of six group interviews carried out in Gothenburg during the period June to August 2014. In addition, RMC has carried out eleven telephone interviews. Respondents to the study have been selected by MUF and represents municipalities, regional development agencies, city development organisations, government agencies etc. All in all 44 respondents have been given the opportunity to contribute to the study.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents to this study consists of practitioners that in one way or another work with issues relating to urban development in public organisations around the Gothenburg region. These practitioners—active on different operative levels in their respective organisations—have participated in one or several MUF projects. A few interviews have been conducted with politicians.

Practitioners and politicians working closely with MUF have been prioritised in the selection of the respondents. It should be noted that researchers—representing the academic partners of MUF—have not participated in this study. The primary reason for that has been the focus on societal outcomes, not academic output. In retrospect, providing a possibility for academic researchers to weigh in on the study, may have contributed positively in providing a nuanced and balanced account.

It has been the wish of MUF to incorporate illustrating quotes from the data collection into the report. These quotes have been translated by RMC and recreated as close to the transcription as possible.

In order to prepare for this study a working group consisting of the Västra Götaland Region, the City of Gothenburg, GR (The Gothenburg Region Associates of Local Authorities) and the County Administrative Board has come up with a first set of conceptualization of societal outcomes, i.e. parameters or themes focusing on different ways MUF may have contributed to individuals, participating organisations and society at large. These parameters are:

- Commitment
- Policy Impact
- Individual Learning
- Organisational Learning
- Citizens' Utility

In this study RMC has developed this framework further into an analytical framework that has been used in order to sort and present data in this study. The analytical framework may also potentially provide guidance in relation to the upcoming evaluation of the centre.

In reading the report and assessing the value of such an analysis we would like to stress that MUF is still in the early phases of development in relation to the overall ambition of the centre. It is unlikely that MUF at this stage will have had any significant societal impact retrospectively. What this analyse tries to do is to anecdotally and conceptually illustrate the potential of the centre. This should be taken into account when reading the report.

Moreover, it is notoriously difficult to trace or attribute specific policy outcomes or decision making to specific project learning outcomes, networking activities etc. To be able to do that, more in depth case studies would have been a more appropriate method.

Lastly, and speaking about organisational and policy outcomes, it has been the ambition of this study to look at these concepts broadly, taking into account also process perspectives. One of the respondents to this study puts it rather well:

"It is easy to talk about effects and results, but what we also should talk about is the process in itself. The concrete outcomes of the project is one thing, but what the process creates and makes visible is what is really interesting. This is difficult because we cannot be sure. The process is difficult to describe. But the process where we as municipality, region, state and academy come together is nevertheless interesting."

1.3 How to read the report

Following this introduction, Section 2 introduces the footprint of MUF. Section 3 provides a summary of respondents view on challenges and opportunities with MUF. Finally, Section 4 provides reflections and recommendations on how MUF could improve its operations further.

2. INTRODUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF MISTRA URBAN FUTURES

“When truly knowledgeable people that are experts in their respective fields come together to discuss a common objective—that constitutes the very essence of innovation.”

In this chapter we will present the various benefits and outcomes of MUF that have been identified by the respondents to this study. As has previously been pointed out, the ambition of this chapter and study is not to assess or evaluate the outcome or impact made, but rather to illustrate what benefits and outcomes that MUF contributes to produce according to the people involved in the various activities of the centre. However, we will try to put the perceived benefits and outcomes into a more coherent framework. One dimension forming such a framework is at what level the benefits and outcomes are played out. In this study we have identified three such levels. We argue that these levels are key in analysing and understanding the way MUF may impact society, particularly in the inception phase of development:

- **The individual level** – primarily focusing on specific perceived benefits among individuals participating in MUF activities
- **The organisational level** – primarily focusing on the way MUF impact participating organisations
- **The policy level** – primarily focusing on the way specific or soft output from MUF impact policies and decision making that may have an impact on all governance levels

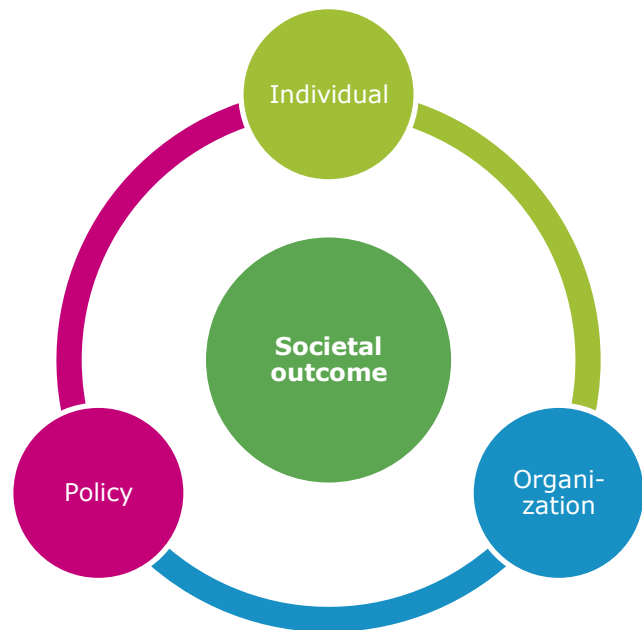


Figure 3 Three levels of societal outcomes

Although theoretically and analytically separate, these levels are in reality tightly interlinked. Simplified, change is often triggered at the individual level but materialized at the organisational level through more leveraged and long-term impact. Similarly, policy level outcomes derive from change at the individual and/or organisational level which in turn has an impact on these levels. Hence, the level at which various outcomes and perceived benefits are being played out can support the analysis as such, but does not provide sufficient analytical clarity for presenting the outcomes and benefits in a coherent way.

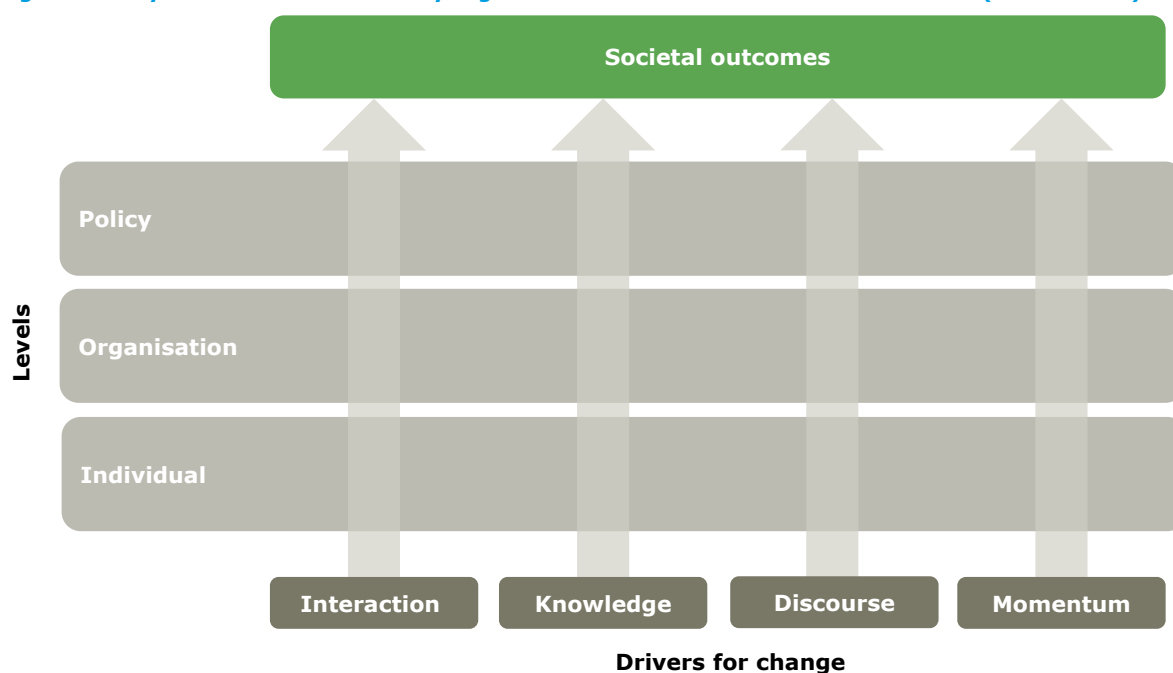
In order to do this we have instead chosen to structure the collected data into four subchapters or themes. The themes are inductively deduced from the data collection and can be said to reflect

different drivers for change needed to bring about societal outcomes from MUF. The four thematic subchapters are:

- Interaction
- Knowledge
- Discourse
- Momentum

The analytical framework applied to this study is presented in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 Analytical framework for analysing societal outcomes of Mistra Urban Futures (source: RMC)



The four subchapters are presented below followed by a summative discussion. The themes—drivers for change—will be introduced at the beginning of each subchapter.

2.1 Increased and Enhanced Interaction Among Stakeholders

Increased and enhanced interaction among stakeholders can be seen as both a means and an end to what MUF tries to achieve. In this chapter we will try to look at MUF from both those two angles. The data collection in this study clearly suggest that MUF has created a platform for interaction that has resulted in that researchers and practitioners—and their respective organisations that they are representing—have come closer together on a practical level.

2.1.1 New interaction patterns and new means of interacting between researchers, practitioners and their respective organisations

On an individual level MUF has led to new interaction patterns and new means of interacting between researchers and practitioners. One respondent sums it up like this:

"Through MUF it is clear that new forms of cooperation between research and practice has been established. It is a learning process and we continuously learn how to do this".

Another respondent puts it like this:

"My network has expanded in directions I wasn't even aware existed before. I have worked in the City of Gothenburg many years. Now I have been to Chalmers a thousand times because of MUF. [...] My work has become much more fun. Now I have direct access to people, academic research and dialogue. These kind of conversations did not exist before MUF. [...] This has meant a lot for me personally."

A large number of practitioners seem to value these newly established networks with researchers. One respondent puts it like this:

"The possibility to set up a meeting between a researchers and a practitioner is highly valuable, whether on short notice or at all".

An important aspect here has to do with the possibilities for practitioners to be involved in formulating the research questions. One respondent puts it like this:

"We can take an active position in affecting or influencing researchers on how they should formulate their research questions. When researchers and practitioners sit down together and formulate the research questions that is a whole other thing than ordinary academic research. In this there is a real receiver. It is rather strange that this type of interaction has not been used before"

The organisational impact of these new interaction patterns between practitioners and researchers is difficult to assess at this stage. A respondent does however suggest that MUF at least to some degree has changed the way the region of Västra Götaland interacts with the academy: (1) from a passive role where the academy apply for funding, (2) to a more proactive role where the Region is involved in formulating the research questions, (3) to lastly a role where the Region provides funds, is involved in formulating the research question and takes an active role in co-producing knowledge through various research constellations.

2.1.2 Increased interaction among practitioners and their respective organisations

In parallel to the above described new interaction patterns between researchers and practitioners, it is also clear that MUF in a rather significant way seems to have contributed to strengthened interaction patterns between practitioners. On the most concrete level this has led to new contacts between colleagues in other organisations. One respondent mentions that he has *"got new contacts with colleagues in neighbouring municipalities where there previously existed none"*. Regarding the value of this contact the respondent refers to *"a new common ground from where you can build further around related issues. Moving the positions forward together makes it so much easier to discuss more difficult subjects later on"*.

Within the city of Gothenburg and the Region of Västra Götaland several respondents also refer to a strengthened cooperation within their respective organisations, particularly between individuals working in related fields such as society building, planning, sustainability and society development etc.

As with the new interaction patterns between practitioners and researchers it is hard to assess the overall organisational impact that the new interaction patterns between practitioners has had on their respective organisations. That would require a different methodology.

Reaching a deepened inter-organisational cooperation is a task that will take time. It comes down to a question of how deeply MUF has penetrated respective organisations. Most respondents do however suggest that the inter-organisational cooperation has been improved, in some areas a lot, but that it varies greatly across various entities inside the organisations. One respondent to this study suggests that *"This is merely the beginning of a long-term process of tearing down the organisational borders"*.

Many respondents also refer to MUF as having created a broader sense of collegiality and belonging; a broader context for all individuals involved in MUF. This sort of expanded working community across organisational boundaries is highlighted by many respondents as something typical of MUF. A practitioner puts it like this: *"We are working a lot with these issues but have felt a bit lonely. Now we have met other colleagues sharing our daily work and experiences. We have acquired new friends. The external contact is so important"*.

On an organisational level the new interaction patterns between individuals seem to some extent to reproduce. One respondents points at a *"strengthened cooperation between city districts in the city of Gothenburg, particularly around Göta Älv"*. Another respondent points at increased interaction between the Region of Västra Götaland and the City of Gothenburg.

2.1.3 Developed internal dialogue among practitioners, particularly on interdisciplinary areas of knowledge and practice

According to some respondents, MUF also seem to have a positive impact on the way practitioners interact and communicate in their respective organisations. One respondent refers to an increased quality of dialogue internally: *"For us MUF has led to a more developed dialogue internally in our organisation, and that has meant quite a bit for us"*.

A strengthened internal dialogue seems to particularly have taken place due to increased interaction patterns between practitioners working in separate but related fields. One respondent argues that:

"The dialogue internally has improved due to MUF because of the intersectional nature of urban development issues. We who are involved in so many different activities and businesses, we could early on identify a need for more networking and internal knowledge

sharing with regards to these issues. It is particularly interesting since different units / departments in the region have different managements and different missions in terms of knowledge development. MUF has raised cross-sectorial knowledge internally."

2.1.4 New practical solutions generated through enhanced knowledge and information transfer

Summing up the many stories from the data collection reflecting various sorts of enhanced cooperation, networking and dialogue it is also clear that these new forms of interaction has led to enhanced knowledge and information transfer between participating individuals and organisations. This seems to have both deepened the level of understanding and knowledge sharing among them, but also increased the speed that relevant information is dispersed among stakeholders. The speed that information and knowledge travels has to do with both research content and content of more practical nature. Keeping up to date on current activities and agenda items among practitioners and between participating organisations is a kind of serendipitous knowledge transfer that is highlighted by several respondents to this study. One respondent puts it like this:

"One meets regularly and picks up a thing or two from what's going on in other organisations and municipalities. Someone says something in a subordinate clause and you get the opportunity to ask more about it. These things provides you with an important exchange."

Drawing from the perceived benefits highlighted among the respondents with regards to strengthened interaction, the networks within MUF also seems to be used to test new ideas and receive instant feedback on specific questions/problems that are current among participating organisations; In this regard MUF acts as a forum for sending out test balloons if you will.

Many of the practical solutions to specific problems in relation to urban planning and transport provision is standard practice. Several respondents point at situations where researchers involved have been able to find combinatory middle ground solutions to problems that previously were dealt with according to standard practice, meaning avoidable trade-offs being made. In this way—through networking and co-production of knowledge among researchers and practitioners—researchers are able to disclose innovative practical solutions for practitioners that would otherwise likely be condoned.

The overall working method of having individuals from relevant stakeholders involved in project research and network activities seem to be a recipe for success for disseminating knowledge from MUF to participating organisations, but also to feedback relevant needs. One respondent illustrate this with the following quote:

"The dissemination of knowledge is made through key actors. In the WISE project we had key participants from the Swedish Transport administration, The Region of Västra Götaland, GR, The city office of Transport and Västtrafik who brought with them key questions and results from WISE into their daily work. They also brought with them questions

from their respective organisations to the academic researchers and technical experts. In that way the questions became highly adapted to the needs of the practitioners. It led to knowledge in the participating organisations"

2.1.5 A potential to decrease stakeholder conflicts later on in the development process by establishing an earlier dialogue between relevant parties

From an authority/agency perspective, MUF and the interaction patterns typical of the activities at the centre, show potential with regards to cooperation among organisations on a regional and national level. A representative from a public authority involved in MUF see a great value and potential in strengthening the interaction between the public authority and the regional and local actors. According to the respondent a changed pattern of cooperation in early phases of societal/urban development has the potential to decrease areas of potential conflict between actors and organisations:

"The interest from hands-on practitioners in my organisation to be part of society building in early phases is big. If this doesn't become the case it often leads to points of conflicting interests later on in the process with several stakeholders involved. Working together in early phases can help to avoid that."

2.1.6 Mistra Urban Futures acting as a node in facilitating networking

Contacts and networks are transient and need to be entertained and updated on a continuous basis. Not least for that reason it is interesting to look at MUF as something more than a network facilitator. The question is whether MUF is able to host a platform and act as a node for networking on a more sustainable and institutionalized level. A few respondents in this study suggest that that is the case and that MUF in itself, because of the critical mass of people involved, has the function of a networking node. A respondent to this study puts it like this: *"Now I know exactly whom I should contact. At the same time, these contact networks are quickly becoming obsolete"*.

Whether it is the practitioner getting closer to their previously unknown colleagues elsewhere, the practitioner who uses MUF to get feedback from a researcher on a practical matter, or the politician who expands his or her global network, MUF seems to channel and facilitate these points of interactions in a way that previously wasn't there. Many respondents seem to see it that way. One respondent can illustrate the way MUF functions as a node through this quote: *"The research connection is crucial here. When one invites people through the MUF network you get both instant access and a broad repertoire to relevant participants."*

Other respondents refer to the centrifugal and snowball character of networking through MUF. There has to exist a sort of a critical mass, but once that exists more and more people can benefit from using the centre as a node for getting in contact with the right people. One respondent argues that *"by constantly getting new people inside the centre new areas of contacts are created. In this way, the head of business relations in my municipality has gotten several new areas of contacts through MUF"*.

2.1.7 Mistra Urban Futures directly interacting with politicians may create favourable conditions for influencing policy

One aspect that is raised by a couple of respondents to this study has to do with the difficulty of connecting research with political decision making. One of the respondents see MUF as unique in this regard: *"What's good and unique about MUF is that research and politics cooperate and comes together in the work. It is an exceptionally good thing that politicians get in direct contact with MUF"*.

2.1.8 Strengthen interaction with citizens and external stakeholders

New working methods applied within MUF has also meant opportunities for enhanced dialogue through platforms with other stakeholders, outside of MUF. One respondent refers to the KAIROS⁵ project where a sort of informal process and platform for interacting with a local social movement called the Panthers have been setup. According to the respondent this process has created a platform where the city of Gothenburg has been able to talk to this group on a more informal basis establishing trust and confidence between the parties.

Another respondent refers to a subproject in the KAIROS project dealing with poverty and citizens dialogue that—according to the respondent—has led to new means of interacting with citizens: *"The citizens dialogues that we have conducted in one of the projects have led to a learning process that we have been able to transform into practice. This has led to a more brave dialogue"*

In yet another project, WISE⁶, a respondent gives one example on how MUF has applied new methods for establishing a dialogue with citizens and societal stakeholders. Through the use of social media MUF has facilitated a better dialogue and understanding among key organisations and other stakeholders relating to biking. One respondent argues that MUF has been important in creating a new platform for dialogue in relation to biking.

"An understanding of the importance of bicycle communities; That the general public is gathered and are involved as a party when planning the city. The WISE project resulted in a Facebook group around biking with over 1 000 members where politicians and practitioners listen and discuss. The discussions in this group has played a role for us internally at the Traffic office at City of Gothenburg to better understand the needs and drivers of the cyclists."

Lastly, tools for visualizing urban development have been developed by MUF that can support the dialogue and interaction with citizens and stakeholders. One such tool referred to by a respond-

⁵ KAIROS is a transdisciplinary research project with focus on the social dimension of sustainability. The premise of the project is the way in which globalisation, migration and urbanisation characterise our time and place new demands on participation and co-creation. KAIROS-Knowledge about and Approaches to Fair and Socially Sustainable Cities

⁶ The overall aim of the Well-being in Sustainable Cities (WISE) project is to facilitate joint knowledge production between scientists and expert civil servants in order to support the transition towards sustainable cities. WISE is carried out in cooperation between Chalmers University of Technology, City of Gothenburg, The Swedish Transport Administration and Region Västra Götaland.

ent is the tool Urbania which is a digital map tool that can be used by experts and laymen to visualize urban planning.

2.2 Impact Through Knowledge Production

Producing new knowledge relating to sustainable urban development constitutes the core of MUF. In this chapter we will try to elaborate on this core activity by presenting the views of the respondents to this study on how they perceive and think about the benefits stemming from the knowledge production.

2.2.1 Individuals seems to learn a lot by participating in projects

Much of the learning in MUF is a result of collaborative activities described in the previous subchapter and is realized within the work of specific projects and project networks. There seems to be a rather unanimous view among individuals participating in these projects and project networks that the individual learning and development component is strong. One respondent describes the individual learning as "amazing" and that she has through MUF *"gained incredible access to learning and individual development of competencies that comes to use"* in her daily work. She relates the change to do with *"both the transformation of knowledge into practice, but also new ways of thinking about the issues at hand."* Another practitioner describes the individual learning as "very strong" and that "one really learns a lot.". She says that she has *"been involved in many network activities within MUF and across them all learnt a lot and gained new insights."*

2.2.2 Joint knowledge production and individual learning seems to generate organisational spill-over

The predominant view among the respondents to this study is that the knowledge that is being created and shared through the project activities within MUF also lead to organisational learning and knowledge spill-over to individuals not directly taking part of the work of MUF. The accounts on how this is done varies. Some respondents point at the importance of the documentation that is produced. Through research and knowledge reviews common ground can more easily be found. One respondent involved in a literature review says that: *"We made a literature review on urban planning. Now all colleagues more or less share the same knowledge framework. As an organisation we have jointly increased our common knowledge"*.

This form of knowledge dissemination throughout the organisations of the participating individuals seems to play a more important role for some organisations than others. Several representatives from less resourceful participating organisations, primarily within GR (Gothenburg region association of local authorities), see MUF as crucial in accessing knowledge and getting a knowledge overview that they otherwise would not have had the means or capacity to access. It is further suggested by the respondents to this study that practitioners and their respective organisations get access to relevant research and knowledge much faster than would have otherwise been the case. In any case, drawing from the many accounts of the respondents to this study, MUF seems to be playing a part as knowledge facilitator and knowledge accelerator for the consortia organisations.

2.2.3 Knowledge is dispersed to a wide range of relevant stakeholders through external events

Since its inception MUF and the Gothenburg platform has hosted a significant number of external events. According to the MUF webpage around 70 external events have been hosted. Some of these events have been arranged as part of specific concept series, such as *Urban Lunch-Time* and *Mellanrum*, others have been arranged on a more ad hoc basis relating to specific project outcomes. The general view among the respondents to this study is that these events do play an important role in disseminating knowledge from MUF. An account from one of the respondents is rather typical: *"The rather traditional knowledge sharing activities through Urban Lunch-Time, seminars etc., probably have had the same impact as any other good knowledge sharing"*.

2.2.4 Knowledge from Mistra Urban Futures influence policy and decision making

The various accounts of how knowledge from MUF has been used for policy development and decision making are numerous. On a general level there seems to be somewhat of a unanimous view among the respondents that MUF does influence policy and decision making.

A politician interviewed in this study says the following: *"Without hesitation there exists an interplay between MUF and politics. Results from MUF can and are being used in policy development, decision making and the overall development of the public sector"*. Another account suggests that *"we produce loads of reports that County Administrative Boards, but also ministries, read"*. A third respondent—from the Region of Västra Götaland—provides the following account, particularly relating to the knowledge transfer from the KAIROS project:

"There exists a knowledge transfer, both among practitioners but also in relation to politics. Politicians follow the project and its progress and participate in presentations. Feedback through knowledge, learning and dialogue is a significant part of the learning process."

The respondents do however vary in their accounts on to what extent the knowledge that is being produced translates into policy and if they are able to trace the decisions and policies to specific knowledge produced within MUF. This has both to do with the generic difficulty of providing accounts of how knowledge support decisions and the fact that many of the activities in MUF are associated with other initiatives and developmental activities. Respondents are therefore generally speaking unable to or unwilling to causally connect knowledge output from MUF with policy outcomes. This being said, the general view among the respondents is that there exists a rather vital knowledge transfer/push towards decision makers. One respondent describes this as follows:

"Much of the discussions that we had in our MUF network made an impact on how we later proposed our municipal master plan. [...] We talk about cities and city borders. It is hard to tell, but MUF had an influence."

Many of the respondents to this study highlight the different on-going evaluations that have been conducted within the framework of MUF. One of the respondents tells about the following impact

that the on-going evaluation has had on their municipal policies and processes when it comes to "Vision Älvstaden":

"The researcher recently presented a final report for the city council after which the council took a decision to develop its dialogue with the citizens. [...] This has now been decided and wouldn't have happened if the MUF hadn't supported and initiated the evaluation. Apart from the concrete policy outcomes, the evaluator has been present at many occasions and in various contexts in relation to the municipal work. At these meetings the evaluator continuously provided feedback on the process to the public officials in the municipality which has had a huge impact on the overall work."

One of MUF's strong points that several respondents highlight is the independent nature of the knowledge produced. That the centre is widely perceived as having an independent reputation. This position is highlighted as a strength by several respondents in relation to how knowledge translates into policy and decision making.

2.2.5 WISE – a case on how knowledge translates to policy impact and decisions

The projects that is most frequently mentioned among respondents to this study when discussing policy impact from MUF is the WISE project. Drawing from the accounts of several respondents the knowledge transfer from MUF seems to have been rather significant. One respondent refers to the impact the project has had on the discussion about congestions fees: *"Much of the theory development in relation to the investigation on congestions fees in Gothenburg has taken place within the WISE project"*. Another respondent highlights the importance of a seminar on congestions fees hosted by the WISE project:

"How the congestion fee is perceived and being accepted is a matter of extreme importance. It does not only have to do with how it is being reported on in the media. It is about what actually happens in peoples' lives. I know that many people from the Traffic Office in City of Gothenburg listened in on the seminar. We have been trying to make research on drivers that affect peoples' attitudes and acceptance. Now we have continued with an EU-application with nine other European cities".

The WISE project is also referred to as having had a rather significant impact relating to the national policy level. A concrete example where knowledge from MUF seems to have impacted policy relates to a subproject to WISE on decision models for future transport provision. By focusing on the input figures that are being used to calculate societal benefit-cost-ratios on infrastructure investments, the WISE project could spark a discussion on the discrepancy between the forecasted figures used by The Swedish Transport Administration and the target figures set out in the 2050 strategy. By showing this discrepancy the WISE project has contributed to a discussion within the Swedish Transport Administration on the reliability of the strategic forecasts as well as on how to apply a more goal-oriented approach in relation to strategic planning. The WISE project has also influenced the agency to enforce a routine of constructing sensitivity analysis on road related projects exceeding a certain fixed sum, according to a respondent to this study.

Another respondent argues that: *“the work we did on models for forecasting became a highly successful lever in the work with revising the national plan for the Swedish transport system.”*

A respondent to this study suggests that the overall discussion raised with regards to forecasting and planning moreover has resulted in that politicians and officials in the Gothenburg region *“had to decide where to allow construction of new housing. We raised the issue of housing. Now we use the results from WISE to discuss the dimensions of future housing and traffic provision.”*

According to respondents the WISE project has also made a significant contribution to the strategic work with the climate program in the City of Gothenburg. A respondent from the City of Gothenburg gives the following account:

“We participate in MUF because we need knowledge. Regarding this we knew that there existed a lot of knowledge that we knew that we never would have been able to process ourselves. Through our participation in MUF and the WISE project we have been able to work in parallel with the strategic climate program [for the City of Gothenburg]. The various processes have been synchronized and connected to each other. We have been able to share individuals participating in MUF and we have all along been able to feed back our needs to MUF. [...] In one of the subprojects we have made a report—Climate Adaption—that has received wide spread attention. The report has made an impact and is widely referred to as a source, particularly regarding the consumption aspect that is being stressed in the report.”

2.3 New Ways of Approaching Urban Development

When summing up the many accounts given by the respondents to this study on what they perceive as outcomes and benefits that can be attributed to the activities at the centre, it becomes somewhat evident that both the ambition and impact of MUF exceeds knowledge production in a traditional academic sense. Many of the respondents to this study argue that MUF plays—and aims to play—a more transformative role. In this subchapter we will present the views of the respondents on MUF as a platform for changing and challenging the overall debate—or discourse—relating to urban developmental practice.

2.3.1 A new widened and more sustainability focused perspective on urban development

Several respondents refer to MUF as playing an important role in putting established concepts and professional fields into perspective. One respondent sums up this viewpoint by arguing that:

“MUF helps putting things into perspective. One often finds oneself working in silos and MUF helps to avoid that practice by applying more of a holistic perspective. [...] Through MUF I become more confident in thinking about what our major challenges for the city are.”

Perhaps the most evident way that MUF has contributed in shifting the perspectives is on the key concept of sustainability and sustainable urban development itself. One respondent puts it like

this: *"MUF has really contributed to an increased focus on the sustainability aspect of urban development"*. This is raised by several respondents.

Another such core aspect of the MUF that is mentioned by several respondents is the social dimension, i.e. integration and segregation, which in context of MUF has been highlighted in new ways in relation to urban development and urban planning.

2.3.2 Changing or defining concepts can impact on how stakeholders relate to urban development

There seems to exist a well spread set of views among individuals who are and have been working closely with MUF on the importance of language as a carrier of meaning. Several respondents in this study point at the role of MUF in creating and changing concepts and definitions which already have impacted or have the potential to impact in the future the way key actors relate to their work or policies with regards to urban development. Respondents refer to an interplay between, on the one hand, language used and topics raised within MUF, and on the other hand, the buzz among politicians in relation to these topics.

One such concept developed within MUF that is being described as having such an impact—or potential to impact in the future—is the concept of "Urban station communities". A respondent argues that: *"It was interesting about MUF that concepts were gradually filled with content. One example was the concept of Urban Station Communities and how it was gradually developed what that could be"*. Another respondent elaborates on this:

"When people talk about station communities it becomes something to gather around. Our politicians start talking about the city as more of a concept now. They hear what other politicians and practitioners talk about. [...] Not being part of the discussion becomes something to be ashamed of. That creates a buzz. Our politicians cannot turn back now".

Another such concept discussed by the respondents relating to the development of new concepts is the concept of urban access. A respondent puts it like this:

"We gathered what was already written about accessibility and called it urban access instead. Ideas from that work transplanted into the Traffic strategy of the City of Gothenburg. Now the traffic strategy is named: "Traffic strategy for a close metropolitan city". The whole communication strategy is built around Gothenburg as a close metropolitan city instead of a large town. That is a pretty good output from a MUF project wouldn't you say? MUF has really had an impact on the mental picture"

2.3.3 The explorative ambition and working methods of Mistra Urban Futures has transformative potential for Urban Development practice

The rationale and ambition of MUF to focus on intersecting areas of knowledge and practice has in itself a transformative potential. Several respondents refer to the explorative way many of the

MUF projects are carried out, moreover set up and thought out, as both innovative and successful. One example was brought forward by one of the respondents:

"We have a few projects that are more explorative. Looking at cities as value networks is one example. That requires a few broad-minded economists that starts to become interested in that concept. We all agree that urban development is in need of paradigmatic development. If that is to happen we need to have projects that aren't directly aimed at impacting policy since there are no immediate receivers of knowledge. The trick is to find uncharted areas where no one is present today"

This explorative funnel based working method is mentioned by several respondents as apt in identifying problems and solutions with high relevance for the society. Another respondent uses another example:

"We had a project on Urban Green Areas where we knew that we had gigantic areas in connections to our infrastructure where we also had key biological diversity. When we sat down in the project to discuss why these areas always are given low priority we could see that it has to do with us not making eco systemic values visible. When we started connecting an economic value to this we were also able to make these areas visible. [...] Out of twenty different ideas we decided to continue with one of them. We have now received 8,5 million SEK in funding. The work has also resulted in a government commission (SOU 2013:68) and activities at the Swedish Transport Administration."

2.3.4 A more coequal practice in relation to co-production of knowledge has led to increased reflexivity and critical thinking attitude among practitioners

As has previously been described in chapter 2.1, MUF facilitates new forms of interaction between practitioners and researchers that practitioners value greatly. According to many respondents this has made a profound impact on them and their work. One respondent describes this change like this:

"MUF has provided an area of interaction and a discourse that wasn't present before where we have fought for a more egalitarian view on knowledge production between academy and practice. This isn't easy. [...] Our traditional role is as commissioners. That all participants contribute to knowledge production has been a fundamental ideology at the centre."

Several respondents refer to the different logics and cultures that exist between practitioners and researchers. It is evident that for many individuals participating in MUF that MUF has made a significant impact on the way they perceive their daily work. One such difference in perception and attitude relates to how practitioners think about and make use of research to support their decisions. One respondent suggests that practitioners participating in MUF projects has become more "humble towards evidence based decision making.". Another such related change in attitude among practitioners has to do with reflexivity and critical thinking that they apply in their daily work. One respondent describe this like this:

“Looking at individual colleagues I can tell that they are acting differently after participating in MUF projects. I think it has to do with the ability and the tendency to think critically. You become more probing and more prone to utilize academic knowledge. We are now talking about local knowledge repositories for our practitioners. Learning about research methodology makes a difference “

Another respondent argue along the same lines:

“It has to do with a different kind of thinking. As practitioners we belong to the speaking culture. It is not part of our DNA to take a pause and reflect critically. We do by quick decisions. Now, after having participated in MUF activities, we almost find it hard to deal with our own organisational culture.”

Lastly, increased understanding among researchers for the development potential within public sector organisations and how they can relate their research to this potential is another benefit raised by a single respondent. A piece of evidence supporting this—according to the respondent—is that practitioners now get more proactive questions and requests from researchers aimed at understanding the practice and connecting their research to the practice.

2.4 Building Momentum to Bring About Change

Building momentum is often key in bringing about change. Momentum is also one of the recurring themes in the data collection. In this chapter we will briefly describe the various accounts from the data collection relating to building momentum. A respondent sums it up by suggesting that:

“Other people talk about this. It’s in Gothenburg it’s happening!”

2.4.1 Mistra Urban Futures brings about personal drive, organisational momentum and external knowledge push that are all drivers for building momentum relating to sustainable urban development

Momentum—as it is discussed by the participating individuals—relates to all levels in the analytical framework. On an individual level personal drive and perceived appreciation from the participating individuals is something that is mentioned several times in the interviews. To be able to put yourself outside of your daily work and take on a new role is by several respondents put forward as something that provides them with a *“boost of energy”* in their profession.

Organisationally, several respondents refer to MUF as having a positive impact on the discussions locally. One respondent concludes that *“being part of the network within MUF has created a momentum locally for these issues related to urban society development”*.

Opening up the issues discussed within MUF to a broader public—for example through Urban Lunch Time—also help to build momentum behind the issues inside the participating organisa-

tions and moreover generally speaking in the Gothenburg region. A respondent to the study put it this way:

“By making the work of MUF visible to a broader public the discussion within the city of Gothenburg has improved. Only the fact that the processes within MUF themselves are being exposed—for example through Urban Lunch Time—help to fertilize the overall discussion. The improved discussion has made us able to act and has supported us in moving the positions forward on these issues.”

2.4.2 The legitimacy that Mistra Urban Futures provides is key in building momentum behind issues relating to sustainable urban development

Key in moving the “positions forward” on sustainable urban development—as one respondent phrase it—seems to be the legitimacy that MUF can bring to the discussion. Many respondents refer to MUF as providing legitimacy for issues relating to sustainable urban development. For practitioners the connection to the academy and the status that MUF brings about is key. One respondent suggests that *“because of the academic component in MUF it creates a sort of legitimacy for these issues”*. Another respondent suggests that *“If the research has looked at something and it exists some kind of academic basis for decision-making, it makes it so much easier to make decisions together”*.

Getting decision makers on board is key in building momentum. Many respondents refer to a political interest generated for sustainable urban development issues. One respondent puts it like this:

“Participating in a MUF workshop with both researchers and practitioners puts a totally different weight behind the discussions. That weight is crucial for attracting politicians. Politicians—generally speaking—aren’t willing or don’t have the time to look up the knowledge themselves.”

The MUF project on Urban station communities is a recurring example from the interviews that to a particularly high degree seems to have attracted interest from politicians and decision makers in the region. One respondent suggests that: *“the project has been very ambitious”* and that they *“have succeeded in attracting interest and participation from the politicians”*. The respondent further argues that they *“never would have been able to do this [them]selves. Instead [they] got the project tailor made to [their] needs. The respondent sums up by concluding that “small municipalities like ours would not have been able to do this without MUF”*.

2.4.3 Mistra Urban Futures has an important role to play in attracting external funding

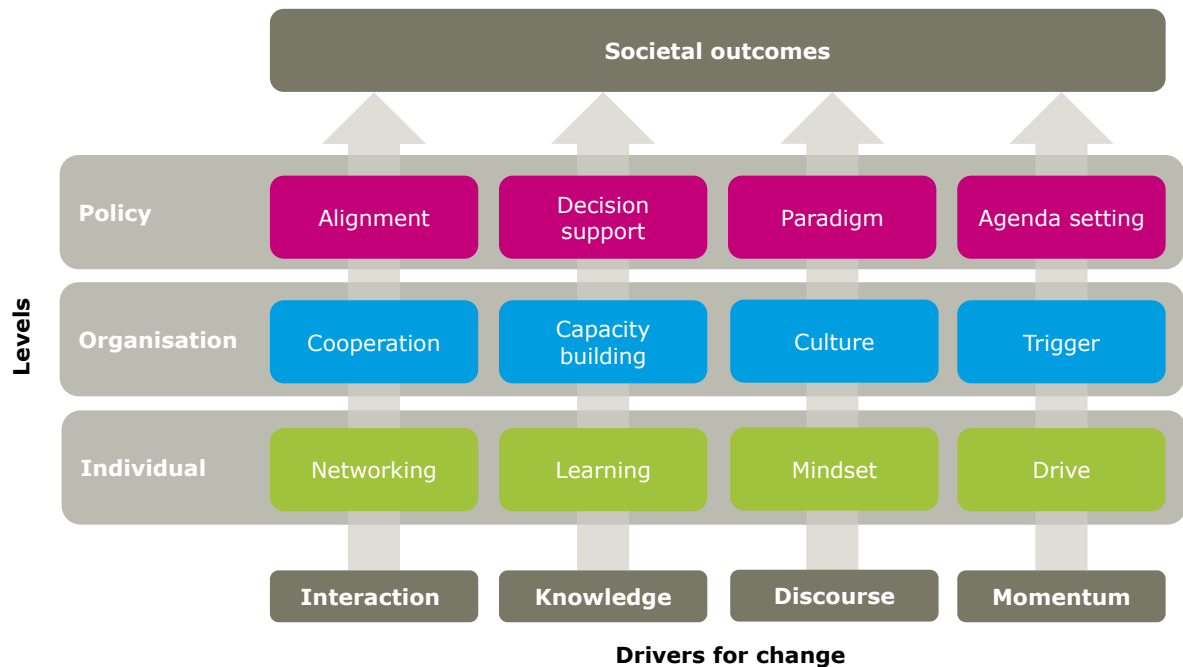
Lastly, the respondents to this study suggests that MUF may have an important role to play in attracting external funding, for the Västra Götaland Region, nationally and for research related to sustainable urban development. A respondent argues that MUF has become rather successful in identifying and attracting external funding, particularly in a complementary role in relation to the science parks locally:

“What’s happening right now is that we have found contact channels important for finding new funding. Together with the Science Parks we have become an application machine”

2.5 Summing up the footprint of Mistra Urban Futures

In this subchapter we will try to sum up the views of the respondents to this study by putting them into a more coherent framework. In Figure 5 below we have tried to summarize the outcomes/benefits identified in the previous subchapters and put them into the analytical framework of this study. Hence, what is presented below is a conceptualized illustration of how the various outcomes/benefits identified in the data collection relate to each other along the thematic dimensions (X) and impact dimension (Y).

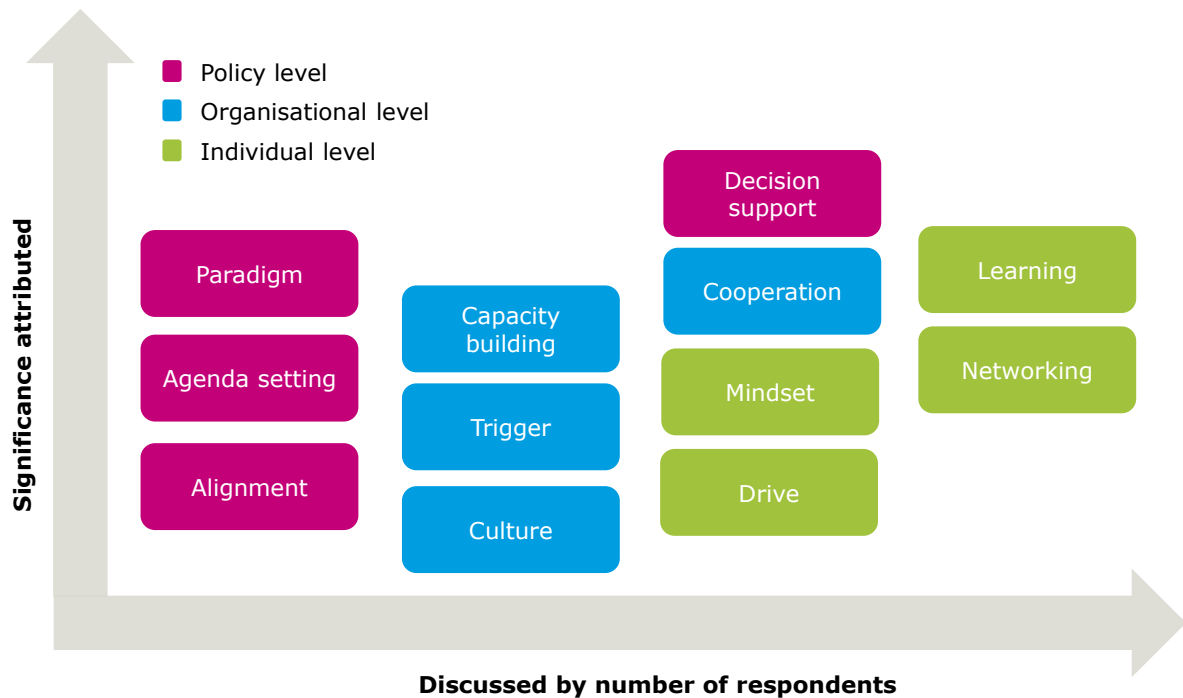
Figure 5 Analytical framework conceptually summing up the various benefits and outcomes identified by the respondents



As has previously been pointed out, this study has not had the ambition to quantify the impact made or even the level of perceived impact among respondents. However, in order to provide the reader with a more comprehensive analysis of the societal footprint of MUF, we have below in Figure 6 tried to summarize the views of the respondents. In order to do this we have qualitatively plotted the twelve conceptualized outcomes/benefits identified in the analytical framework along two dimensions. On the first dimension (X) the outcomes/benefits are plotted according to how many respondents that have discussed issues relating to the conceptualized outcomes/benefits. Fewer respondents corresponds to the left side. More respondents corresponds to the right hand side. On the other dimension (Y), the outcomes/benefits are plotted according to our qualitative and summative assessment of the significance or importance that the respondents attribute the outcomes/benefits in relation to the overall ambition of MUF having an impact on the society at large.

In reading the figure we would like to stress that the illustration is based on our qualitative assessment of the data collection and that we are aware that the methodology is insufficient for assessing the outcomes. That being said, and interpreting the illustration through that lens, it is our hope that it can be used as a basis for further discussions.

Figure 6 Qualitative assessment of how many of the respondents that discussed each identified driver (X) and to what degree they attributed significance (Y) to the driver



3. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES SUGGESTED AMONG RESPONDENTS

Through the data collection respondents have been encouraged to discuss what they perceive as being key challenges and opportunities for MUF. In this chapter the various accounts of the respondents are presented in six subchapters or themes.

3.1 Disseminating Knowledge and Increasing Participation from Participating Organisations

One of the challenges identified in the study is how to further disseminate knowledge developed from MUF and to get more people involved from participating organisations. Respondents to this study refer to a risk that knowledge produced within the centre stays with individuals closest to the centre. Respondents representing municipalities are particularly concerned about this. There is a significant risk that if more people are not involved in realizing the benefits from the municipal participation, it may lead to MUF becoming less prioritized. A respondent puts it like this:

"Municipalities often have difficulties in prioritizing Mistra Urban Futures in relation to ordinary business. Hence, management have difficulties in prioritizing and spending resources on research activities if it is not linked to the work."

Respondents also express that the time to work with MUF is limited which affects the influence of MUF in the everyday work. The complexity of the understanding on how MUF works might discourage people to become involved.

"The way of working in Mistra Urban Futures is rather difficult to understand. It took some time to understand. If the goals are to be realized then it is an important task to make people understand the model of working."

3.2 Increasing the Political Involvement in Mistra Urban Futures

The political involvement in MUF is identified in the interviews as a development area. Direct contact between politicians and researchers is identified as an important issue in order to increase the knowledge about sustainable urban planning and development. As the politicians are the ones making decisions influencing local and regional development over time it is an important challenge to get them involved. Increased knowledge from the work of MUF among civil servants and politicians is a way to really influence future decisions of politicians and to gain new knowledge. From interviews with representatives of the municipalities the political involvement is mentioned as one of the key factors to bring about change. A respondent suggest the following.

"It would be important to reach politicians even more. We now work with civil servants and different experts. It would be important for politicians with an even broader perspective of the Gothenburg region. Politicians should invite themselves. It might be important with focused activities where researchers and politicians can meet."

In the interviews different opinions about what prevents politicians from participating is mentioned. One such obstacle mentioned in the interviews has to do with that many politicians are politician in their spare time. Resources are aspects that might influence the possibilities for politicians to participate. To find incentives and activities where politicians have the possibility to attend would increase the engagement of the politicians even more is suggested in the interviews. As one of the respondents points out it is important for politicians to participate in unconditional dialogues.

"Politicians have few occasions for unconditional dialogues as it is often about traditional politics."

The representatives of the municipalities emphasizes that they request more involvement and activities with politicians as well as arranging meetings outside the city of Gothenburg. One suggestion is that politicians from one municipality invites politicians from other municipalities to show local footprints from MUF.

3.3 Finding the Right Way to Measure Results and Effects from Mistra Urban Futures

The complexity of sustainable urban development and in the work of MUF is identified as a challenge in interviews. The complexity and the interdisciplinary approach make it difficult to measure the results in a more traditional way. There might be a resistance both in the academic and in the public sector organisations to work across sectors and disciplines according to the respondents. To bridge the gap between sectors demands a good capacity of cooperation. Transdisciplinary methods and tools is something that could become an important niche for Mistra Urban Futures according to one interviewee. For researchers, measuring academic results is often about quotations. This is said to be a challenge in interviews. The work of MUF might need new ways of measuring the participation from research.

Working with trans disciplinary research, cooperation research- societal partners and sustainable urban planning is complex. To show and market the results would make the work that MUF performs easier to understand. One of the respondents points out the importance of having "advocates /strong people that can talk about the results and build the brand".

"I think it is important to build the brand, and to get people to communicate the possibilities."

Showing results demands time. According to the respondents short term results are expected at the same time as issues handled within the work of MUF are more of long term character by nature. More time is needed and one of the respondents explains:

"If we can proceed with the work a little bit longer, then this will be a way of working that will be long term."

3.4 Strengthening the National and Anternational Perspective and Links

MUF has the ambition of being an international knowledge centre. According to interviews this aspect can be further developed in the future. Cooperation with the international nodes (South Africa, U.K, Kenya and China) within MUF is a potential that can create value added both locally and in the different nodes.

"We have a potential in the international network. We could do more things together. There is a great potential to learn from each other."

According to some of the respondents there are indications that the brand of Mistra Urban Futures has become more well-known internationally. Still there are more actions to consider to make the centre even more well-known. One of the respondents points out:

"Being an international player demands having an established international exposure".

From one of the interviews in the focus group it was emphasized that it will be important to have a long term commitment in building an internationally leading knowledge centre. It has to be done gradually and it is important to have a strategy of how it should be done.

There are different suggestions from interviews on how to become a more global knowledge centre in the future. One of the respondents points out that being visible and to communicate MUF is essential. It will also be important to choose some focus areas within the organisation where the centre can build international expertise and reputation. Other respondents suggest to develop an international exchange within areas where the city of Gothenburg node is working today such as "Cities as value networks". Cities are in many ways facing the same challenges regardless of location. Other respondents suggest that there shall now be a focus on building the national networks and then creating more links internationally.

Building MUF in a national perspective is brought up from some of the respondents. It is seen that there is a non-productive competition between knowledge centres on sustainable urban development in the regions of Västra Götaland (Mistra Urban Future), Stockholm (Stockholm Resilience Centre) and Skåne (Malmö kommissionen⁷). The competition when it comes to research funding hinders the different centres to agree on a common direction. One of the respondents explains:

"There is some kind of dividing between the different larger cities which is difficult to stop. It would be more productive to look ahead."

Finding complementary roles between the different knowledge centres on sustainable urban development is suggested in the interviews as well as to disseminate knowledge and research between the centres.

3.5 Finding and Adjusting the Focus of Mistra Urban Futures

When discussing challenges and opportunities with MUF the respondents identify the importance of focus. It is identified by several of the respondents that MUF has to focus even more and that environmental aspects might have been too dominant.

"It is important that Mistra Urban Futures is not only a focus on environmental aspects, it needs a broader societal perspective. Social sustainability is extremely important if the city of Gothenburg is going to be a sustainable city".

From one of the interviews in the focus group there is a suggestion that MUF should contribute to develop ways of working with sustainability in urban planning. Social inclusion could be a profile area according to the same focus group. Social inclusion is an area where researchers and practitioners can create knowledge together.

⁷ A temporary Commission and not in the same sense a knowledge center as Mistra Urban Futures and Stockholm Resilience Center

"The Politicians have high ambitions about social and inclusive sustainability. Globally there are a few cities that have as high ambitions as the city of Gothenburg. This area can create possibilities for researchers and practitioners. All cities are facing challenges with social inclusion. As a knowledge centre, this could be a profile."

Respondents points out the risk with having a too broadly defined focus. A broad focus could make it difficult to become really strong as an organisation in certain areas when it comes to attracting resources (both financial and human). In the future it will be important to be able to choose areas of expertise where one way of choosing might be to pinpoint areas where there is a possibility for researchers and practitioners to expand together. It is important to become more precise about the needs of the cities and municipalities One of the respondents suggests that MUF should be more of a "reach-out" organisation and to explore the needs of knowledge in the different public organisations.

" In the beginning we discussed that it would be good idea to have a travelling team meeting together with the different organisations involved. But then the centre needs to be more extrovert. It has to do with how you perceive development of knowledge".

Other areas identified in the interviews regarding the focus of MUF is urban development from a cultural perspective and the role of culture in city development. The perspective of urban versus rural is another area identified as interesting. Proposals regarding the organisational development of MUF are to use the platform of cooperation even more and to make public organisations to participate even more. One of the respondents suggests that the platform of MUF should be used between public organisations when it comes to new assignments from the government within societal development. Another interviewee suggests that MUF develops into a meeting point.

"It is important with a physical and creative locality. Maybe that place should be designed for learning."

To make a change it will be important to choose focus based on knowledge and political decisions. One of the focus groups suggest that on-going evaluation is a good method that can create results in practice. With on-going evaluation decision makers and civil servants will identify results from MUF at a higher pace. According to one of the focus group interviews this will in turn increase the interest from the public organisation.

3.6 Developing the Organisation and Activities of Mistra Urban Futures

Different aspects that can challenge the development of MUF are identified in the interviews. One of the challenges might be the restraints within the societal organisations to participate.

One of the respondents raise the question that MUF is being more adapted to the academic side than to practitioners. The same respondent would like to see a more radical use of the knowledge centre.

"I would like to use Mistra Urban Futures as a way to find methods, structure, management and courage to question today's way of working. Mistra Urban Future can be a forum that looks truth in the eye. Mistra could further on support politicians to see their role in the society and to bridge the large gaps between political goals and the organisational activities".

Organisational issues identified in the interviews regards to importance of having a long term perspective in building the centre, increased marketing and branding, creating a larger office function and to develop follow-up routines for the steering group. More time and more capacity in home organisations regarding implementation of the knowledge developed is another suggestion from one of the respondents.

"We have to do our own homework. More time and space in home organisations for implementation. More time and capacity in Mistra Urban Futures to capture the needs and challenges of practitioners."

Different proposals are raised regarding activities for developing MUF. From several interviews it is seen as important to reach a larger target group than the people who are involved today. Reaching out to a larger number of people will create even better conditions for change. Another suggestion is to involve the city management level even more. One of the respondents suggests that MUF should work with business intelligence regarding the area of sustainable urban development.

"Mistra Urban Futures could help in sorting out what is interesting and important within the area. Targeted newsletters could be sent out filled with global knowledge".

4. FINAL REFLECTIONS

Through this study RMC has been in contact with various stakeholders in relation to MUF. After having summed up and providing an overview of the MUF societal footprint, we would lastly in this report take the opportunity to make some reflections. Based on these reflections we would also like to make a few suggestions on how MUF could improve its operations further. The arguments made in this chapter solely reflects the views of RMC.

4.1 The Collaborative Approach for Producing Knowledge Reveals Potential

Dealing with issues relating to sustainable urban development involves dealing with different stakeholders having disparate roles, stakes, interests, perspectives and time frames. The interdisciplinary nature of the subject increases that complexity. The tendency or risk of implementing sub-optimal solutions from a societal viewpoint is ever apparent. For that reason it is important to work proactively in trying to incorporate multiple perspectives which requires stakeholders to come together, share information, share knowledge and to be willing to invest time and energy to be part of joint initiatives. Fostering social and inter-organisational affinity—in terms of understanding and trust—is key in reaching this.

Mistra Urban Futures is a research and knowledge centre that has a unique focus on joint knowledge production between researchers and practitioners. This means that the overall method for producing knowledge draws heavily on input and output from both theory and practice. The ambition of the centre is to develop and refine this working method and its procedures enabling and encouraging strengthened collaboration among and across professionals. After having carried out this study RMC can conclude that this method of trying to solve complex societal challenges and identifying current gaps of knowledge shows promising results and reveals great potential, particularly when dealing with intersectional fields of knowledge, such as sustainable urban development.

At the same time we believe it is important to acknowledge that the overall working method applied is rather new for most involved actors. It is unlikely that the practice and method as such has been sufficiently fine-tuned as of yet.

However, the centrifugal character described in chapter 2.1.6 suggests that there is reason to believe that many aspects of the activities in the centre will gradually improve over time because more and more relevant people—in one way or another—develop a connection or an affiliation to the centre. Building up a critical mass of advocates for the collaborative working method among researchers and practitioners will likely support the activities and the ambitions of the centre.

Whereas the development of the method as such is taking place at the individual level, the organisational dimensions is key, both in terms of organisational commitment and support, but also in terms of increased involvement/interconnection between organisations. Finding the right forms for co-producing knowledge between researchers and practitioners is likely to take time.

In evaluating and assessing the overall value of MUF in relation to activities and funding we would like to stress the importance of taking the full range of societal outcomes and benefits of the centre into such an assessment. The collaborative working methods of MUF are unique. It is likely that many of the outcomes generated by the centre goes beyond output in terms of academic research.

Recommendations:

- Develop a model for the evaluation with the ambition to capture the full complexity of the working methods applied at the centre and the type of change that MUF has the ambition to bring about. In this study we have develop an analytical framework that can support such an endeavour. We therefore recommend the evaluation of MUF to further build upon this framework in developing parameters that may complement the evaluation, particularly relating to academic excellence.

4.2 Striking a Balance Between a Probe-driven, a Needs-driven and an Academic Excellence-driven Approach to Knowledge Production

In this study, it has been suggested that now may be a good time for each participating organisation to clarify their respective expectations on what they would like to benefit from supporting and investing in MUF. This to ensure a continuous feedback between academy and public organisations on how the needs and various drivers of the respective actors should be integrated into the work. The argument that we are trying to make is rather well put by one of the respondents to this study: *"In order to become a good collaborator, we must define what we want from the collaboration. This should take place as high up in the organisation as possible"*.

Strong sustainable collaboration and co-production often requires—among other things—a joint vision building on short term success, common understanding of working methods as well as an understanding of what each participating actor has to gain from the collaboration. In attaining this it is important to understand and communicate different drivers for collaboration among the participating entities.

What RMC can derive from this study, MUF seems to be successful in striking a balance between a probe-driven, a needs-driven and an academic excellence-driven approach to knowledge production. It is important to stay focused on striking that balance.

In working collaboratively with urban sustainability all these three approaches are relevant and all three perspectives has the potential to contribute to the overall success of the centre. However, it is important to continuously pay close attention to how this balance is struck in the future. If projects become too needs-driven it may pose a risk to the independent reputation of the centre and on the ability of attracting academic stakeholders. If projects become too probing, explorative and visionary, it might pose a risk to the short term outcomes and the relevance per-

ceived among stakeholders. If the centre becomes too academic excellence-driven the centre might risk losing important regional stakeholders. RMC is not suggesting that these drivers are mutually exclusive or working against each other. We do however suggest—on an overall level—that it is important to pay attention to the development of the project portfolio in relation to these drivers because the balance struck has an impact on how attractive the centre is perceived to be among key stakeholders.

Recommendations:

- Analyse and pay close attention to the underlying drivers behind key stakeholders to make sure MUF continuously become a more attractive partner.

4.3 From Regional to National to Global

In the interviews regarding Mistra Urban Futures among participating actors in the Region of Västra Götaland it has become clear that these actors believe that they have benefited from the work of Mistra Urban Futures. Different kinds of benefits have been identified by different actors. Simultaneously, there has been an ambition to be an international centre which in turn has the aim of becoming a world leader of knowledge production for sustainable urban development. RMC assesses that during the build-up of Mistra Urban Futures, the focus has mainly been to create relations and work methods on a regional level. The conducted interviews with regional and national representatives of different organisations imply that they perceive a strong regional concentration of the work. This could be seen as a natural process. Identifying and developing working methods among actors in the vicinity and finding new means of cooperation and collective action is likely easier. In the analysis it has however become obvious that the involved parties also view a great potential to increase the number of activities and contexts internationally. On the international stage it is both important to strengthen the brand Mistra Urban Futures and to attract interesting international science collaborations. Moreover, it also concerns how international research can assist e.g. a municipality's work with sustainable urban planning. To this end, the work of Mistra Urban Futures is about how production and exchange of knowledge can be created within different areas that face the same type of challenges as that of the Gothenburg region.

In the analysis of Mistra Urban Futures it has become evident that many today perceive that there is a sense of competition and lack of cooperation between different knowledge centres in Sweden in the area of sustainable urban planning. There is an unexploited potential to create cooperation and also to clarify the strengths between the different knowledge centres. The strengthening of cooperation nationally can also be a first step in defining the focus of the operations. This in turn may facilitate the international aspirations.

Recommendation:

- Develop the national and the international dimensions and collaborations in Mistra Urban Futures. New steps can be taken and participating actors expect that these steps will be developed.

4.4 Involving Additional Actors and Reaching out to Political Decision Makers

The bottom line of Mistra Urban Futures is that the knowledge that is developed in cooperation between public actors and researchers will lead to new working methods and improved blueprints for future decisions in the area of sustainable urban planning. Accordingly, Mistra Urban Futures has the ambition to contribute to change. In this study different suggestions that are believed to affect prerequisites for change have been brought forward. One important aspect of change is that participating organisations today perceive that they have increased their knowledge as a result of Mistra Urban Futures. This study suggests some organisations even believe that the work of Mistra Urban Futures has led to actual change.

An important prerequisite for change is to obtain an increased participation of politicians at the meetings and gatherings that are organized Mistra Urban Futures. Suggestions on how politicians from different municipalities need to strengthen their knowledge exchange in the area of sustainable urban planning have also need identified. A third measure is to involve more people and to attract their interest regarding the knowledge that is developed within the framework of the centre.

The political dimension can be added as an additional layer to add to this complexity. Politicians must also have the ability and the willingness to work out decisions based on evidence based knowledge.

This study also emphasises the importance that Mistra Urban Futures strengthens strategic communication work. The communication work should be twofold; first Mistra Urban Futures should use a storytelling technique in order to inform about its aim and second Mistra Urban Futures should communicate the benefits and results from the project. According to RMC's earlier experiences, the strategic communication is also a tool that can contribute to continued strategic cooperation and deepened alliances between the actors.

Recommendations:

- Develop the analysis how change is meant to be obtained and what which underlying success factors of that change may be
- Analyse how different activities can be designed so the knowledge that is developed within Mistra Urban Futures better can reach the political representatives
- Develop the strategic communication of Mistra Urban Futures. It is further necessary to analyse how results can be communicated and how the story Mistra Urban Futures should be told. Here it may also be important to clarify the message and target groups of the communication

APPENDIX 1
LIST OF RESPONDENTS

1.1 Interview Respondents

Birgitta Losman (MP), Regional Council, Region Västra Götaland

Carina Krantz-Rönnqvist, SDF Västra Hisingen, City of Gothenburg

Christian Mattsson, The municipality of Lerum

Johan Nyhus (S), City Council Gothenburg and Board of Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Lars Lilled, The City of Gothenburg

Malin Andersson, Gothenburg City Traffic and Public Transport Authority

Micael Nilsson, The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning

Nils-Gunnar Ernstson, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Pernilla Hellström, The City of Gothenburg

Peter Örn, The delegation for sustainable cities (2008-2012)

Ylva Berglund, Museum of Gothenburg

1.2 Group Interview Respondents

Group 1 – Consortium Coordinators

Ann-Louise Hohlfält, Mistra Urban Futures

Hanna Blomdahl, Region Västra Götaland

Lisa Ström, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Group 2 - Consortium Council members

Helena Nilsson, Region Västra Götaland

Helena Söderbäck, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Mikael Cullberg, The County Administrative Board

Pia Borg, City of Gothenburg

Group 3 – Project participants (Traffic)

Alice Dahlstrand, Swedish Transport Administration

Jan Gustafsson

Linda Billberg, Region Västra Götaland

Mira Andersson, Swedish Transport Administration

Per Kristersson, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Group 4 - Project participants (WISE, KAIROS)

Berit Mattsson, The Region of Västra Götaland

Birgitta Guevara, The County Administrative Board

Jesper Svensson, The Region of Västra Götaland

Lars Paulsson, The Region of Västra Götaland

Åsa Lorentzi, City of Gothenburg

Group 5 - Project participants (The River City)

Bo Aronsson, Älvstaden Utveckling AB

Hanna Areslätt, Älvstaden Utveckling AB

Group 6 – The Gothenburg region municipalities (Mistra Urban Futures network)

Amie Ramstedt, The municipality of Stenungsund

Annika Friberg, The municipality of Ale

Elisbeth Börlin, The municipality of Mölndal

Henrik Levin, The municipality of Kungälv

Johanna Carlsson, The municipality of Alingsås

Jonas Åker, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Katarina Stensryd, The municipality of Öckerö

Kerstin Andersson, The Swedish National board of Housing, Building and Planning

Lennart Dahlberg, The municipality of Härryda

Lisa Ström, Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities

Liv Bergdahl, The municipality of Tjörn

Magnus Blombergsson, The municipality of Ale

Saba Shahriari , The municipality of Kungälv

Tinna Harling, The municipality of Tjörn