

Mistra Urban Futures

Minutes

Board Meeting No. 35

17 October, 2019

ICOSS Building, 219 Portobello, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Participants:

Fredrik Hörstedt (Chair)
Olivia Bina
Caroline Wanjiku Kihato
John Robinson
Lyla Metha

Ex officio:

David Simon, Director
Stephen Agong, KLIP
Beth Perry, SMLIP
Warren Smit, CTLIP
Barry Ness, SKLIP
Åsa Moberg, Mistra
Jan Pettersson, GMV
Mikael Cullberg, Länstyrelsen, Consortium Council Chair

Invited participants:

Viveka Blomgren, Secretariat
Jan Riise, Secretariat
Henrietta Palmer, Deputy Scientific Director

Apologies:

Elma Durakovic, GOLIP
Benjamin Bradlow

Participation via Skype: Thomas Elmqvist, Nayoka Martinez-Bäckström (Sida)

1. Opening of the Board meeting

Fredrik Hörstedt

The Chair opened the full meeting and welcomed the participants and noted apologies from Elma Durakovic and Benjamin Bradlow.

2. Approval of the agenda and potential conflicts of interest

Fredrik Hörstedt

Agenda approved with reflections on the Annual Conference to brought up under item 11. No potential conflicts of interests were announced by the board members.

3. Minutes from previous meeting and matters arising

Fredrik Hörstedt and David Simon

Minutes from the meeting on 22 June 2019 were circulated and approved by the Board electronically, with items no 4 and 6 reworded from the draft as requested.

An agreement with Mistra regarding an unfunded extension of the Centre to 30 June 2020 with a maximum carryover of 1.51 MSEK. The prognosis has been updated with a more conservative estimate of a surplus at about 800,000 SEK at the end of 2019.



Decision: The Board requested to have the agreement between Mistra and Mistra Urban Futures translated into English and circulated before next Board meeting.

The QME framework

Although further development of the QME framework will not be pursued, the work done and outcome in terms e.g. of scientific papers will be documented and may be added value and parts of the Centre's legacy. For example, GOLIP is interested in adapting this for their future needs. In this context, John Robinson reported that a slimline version of the societal impact framework has been pilot tested on 12 co-produced projects in Toronto, with positive initial results. Academic publications are under review and more are planned, in order to put the lessons into the public domain, especially regarding the 'wicked' issue of societal impact, where we have made an original contribution.

An example of the significance and widespread recognition of Mistra Urban Futures' work with transdisciplinarity was the opportunity to co-organise the TD2019 conference in Gothenburg in August 2019. The conference was a big success, with many sessions regarding "How do we make impact?" A national network for Sweden will be created as a result of this hosted by the Gothenburg platform

Societal impact


This is a key part of the QME framework, and particularly challenging to measure. In addition to the RJC book which contains stories based on the result of the Centre's projects, Dr Eric Jensen and the Innovation Methods Institute were commissioned for an impact study. It was based on interviews with people in the Centre's external network, e.g. at international organisations. A preliminary report was presented to the Board, highlighting e.g. the Centre's contribution within co-production and the role of bridging between theory and practice – but also that there is more to be done. The report includes a draft 'Theory of change' figure. The study may be complemented by some more interviews, e.g. on the national levels, e.g. with existing partners. Job titles of the interviewees will be added, as requested by board members. A potential Sida-funded consolidation phase may address some of the wider societal impact issues, as far as the Sida-funded activities are concerned.

Decision: The Board noted the report and suggested that the analysis be complemented with further interviews, e.g. in national networks and representing partners, and that job titles of interviewees be included.

4. Director's update

David Simon

Several staff members have left since the last Board meeting, having reached the end of their contracts, accepted new jobs or gone on parental leave. This has added to workloads for remaining staff, necessitating careful prioritization of tasks and decisions on what cannot be undertaken by December in relation to the respective portfolios and events. On the positive side, GMV's dual-university mandate has enabled the extension of Kerstin Hemström and Mirek Dymitrow's research contracts until 31 December, enabling completion of key high-profile publications and other outputs. With the Gothenburg Consortium's confirmed new funding for GOLIP from 2020, Sanna Isemo's post as co-ordinator has been made permanent.

Since the end of the Swedish summer vacation, greater clarity has enabled a focus on completion of key tasks such as the QME societal impact study, compilation and implementation of a concerted communication and engagement strategy around key events and outputs. Production of high profile and high-quality outputs as key elements of the Centre's legacy: in addition to a steady flow of research papers, the Comparative TD Co-production book has just been submitted to Policy Press; the Co-production Manual is nearing completion and a decision is awaited imminently from Practical Action Publishing; 

and the Realising Just Cities book is also nearing completion. By the end of the year, our work will have been featured at a variety of national and international conferences around the world.

As reported under item 4, QME Framework, the Centre co-organised the highly successful international Transdisciplinary Network Conference (ITD 2019), hosted at Gothenburg University from 10-13th September. This brought several hundred TD specialists from many parts of the world and provided a wonderful shop window for the Centre's work, which featured prominently in the programme. Henrietta Palmer and Merritt Polk and their team deserve great credit for this.

Similarly, organization of our Sheffield annual conference this week has been a major commitment for our Events team but especially Beth Perry, Nick Taylor-Buck and Vicky Simpson at the SMLIP – to whom we also owe a great debt of gratitude. Once it became clear that this would be the final conference for the Centre, rather than just of Phase 2, we refocused the programme somewhat in order to highlight and represent our achievements as roundly as possible.

5. LIP Directors' update

LIP Directors

SMLIP: The conference has occupied the team, while staff departures are adding to the burden of the rest of the team; two researchers have increased their time commitment to help wrap up by the end of 2019. SMLIP has produced a summary report called "Realising Just Cities UK – An overview of Activity 2016-2019", circulated to conference participants. We will continue municipal co-production. From January we will not have a director as Beth has a new role as co-director of the Urban Institute, and SMLIP will cease to exist from 2020.

SKLIP: The Director reported on efforts to finalise the budget and deliverables. However there are some delays that have caused frustration. The Director was pleased and proud that team researchers have time to reflect. Solid waste project came alive with a policy brief and another policy brief is under production. The future of the platform, from 2020, remains uncertain as the discussions between partners have not been finalised.

CTLIP: The Director reported that all planned activities are on track. The highlight has been the recent launch of the book on 'Mainstreaming of Climate Change'. Six new city officials have been recruited to spend two months each at university co-writing on different themes, such as housing, the contracts of both embedded researchers expire at the end of year, and the third at the end of April 2020.

There are discussions with the municipality for another 3-year extension of the agreement. Many projects are co-funded and will continue in the future. The SDG work will continue until April 2020. Work with Public Finance will continue – there is larger interest than expected in terms of how you finance the SDGs and transition to more sustainable structures.

KLIP: The Director reported that the research work is being consolidated and completed. Two submitted papers were rejected but will be revised and resubmitted. KLIP is an important resource, and engages in rich dialogue with the national treasury They have seen the benefit of working with the platform. Kisumu is increasingly becoming a hub, and the port is being revived and modernized – in part as a benefit of our research. The Standard Gauge Railway may get an extension into the city centre in order to avoid the necessity of using taxis to reach the terminus. Kisumu has been named host of the next AfriCities conference in 2021, about city agendas. There has been good ongoing collaboration with SKLIP regarding solid waste. The Kisumu City Board has discussed with KLIP regarding assets and office space for the future but this has yet to be resolved.



GOLIP: In the absence on sick leave of the Acting Director, the Chair of the Consortium Council reported. The Consortium Council is preparing for the future: eight partners (with the Research Institutes of Sweden (RISE) now a full member) have agreed on a new 4-year period of collaboration, making a combination of monetary and in-kind contributions.

Work on the new strategic plan has started but the Acting Director's sick leave has delayed this. GOLIP will continue as the Centre for Sustainable Urban Futures and hopes to continue with the Research School. A new writing course will start in November.

The ambitious Urban-Rural Gothenburg book project has been paused, due to ownership of text issues which need to be resolved.

SNODE: Thomas Elmqvist reported that the work will continue within the Openlab, although Snode as an acronym will disappear. SNODE wants to continue collaborating at a national level.

6. Update on GSF and GOLIP

Jan Pettersson, Director of GMV

GOLIP: The Acting Director noted that the eight-partner consortium are signing agreement for 4 years, although the budget will be more limited. There are challenges, e.g. the research school, but this might also be part of an international agenda.


Mistra extension: Mistra has agreed to the request to use a potential underspend of up to 1.5 MSEK during the first six months of 2020, although the latest prognosis is an underspend of about 800,000 SEK. It was noted that there are still economic uncertainties that affects the underspend that need to be clarified at short notice.

Sida programme: In discussion with Nayoka Martinez-Bäckström and Maria van Berlekom an application for a one-year consolidation phase for synthesis, analysis and outreach activities, at local, regional and global levels, has been invited. The budget will be smaller than originally envisaged for Phase 3. The proposal will be submitted by the end of October. During this period, there will also be preparations for a longer phase focusing on low-income countries, with a new proposal planned to be submitted end of March 2020.

GSF: The leadership at the two universities appreciate the approach as it may include more researchers at the two universities. It is about collaboration and sustainable development, working with low income countries. Funding only available from 1 January 2020, limiting possibilities for activities before January. 200 research activities involving low-income countries are on-going in the two universities, but they are not organised.

The Mistra Urban Futures' website will be kept and maintained for the future.

In response to a Board member who pointed out that at the last meeting, the material on GSF seemed not to include the co-production approach, the GMV Director answered that it wasn't deemed relevant to highlight the approach at the time but that it is included in GSF. This was underlined by the Chair. He also reminded the meeting that the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB), as previously agreed, would engage all LIP directors + Caroline and Olivia to assist in that work once initiated.

If we want all partners on board for this, unspent Mistra funds would need to be used, since Sida will not finance Swedish or UK LIPs except in relation to collaboration with the Southern LIPs and partners. 

Another point of principle, agreed and underscored by the LIP Directors and Board, is that the consolidation work in terms of the Sida programme and Mistra extension must be done by those involved in the actual research co-production processes concerned. It would be unethical to have other researchers enter the picture to 'mine' and/or publish material with which they have no prior connection.

Nayoka Martinez-Bäckström (Sida) concurred with that point of principle and further underlined the need to give credit for the Centre's achievements. One intention of the funding for 2020 is to enable ongoing reflection and consolidation, and to add further value to what has been accomplished. However, the decision will depend on what will be submitted to Sida and their detailed preferences for how to move forward.

Board members requested further clarification about the Sida consolidation funding application: who would be in charge of this; would the Sida funds be steered by a continued role of the Secretariat? How could the consolidation proceed without the Director, who has been a key driver of the process throughout Phase 2? This was discussed among the Board members over recent weeks, but all remains very vague. How will the 2020 Sida budget be overseen and what governance arrangements will there be? Similarly, there need to be governance arrangements for the Mistra extension – presumably by extending this Board's term of office since we need to sign off on Mistra Funds?


Lyla Mehta sought clarification about who constituted the 'we' being referred to in relation to the various processes and initiatives, since these are evidently not the same. The presentations also conveyed the clear impression that the planning processes had not been co-productive and transparent. Numerous universities work with international partners internationally, but often in paternalistic ways, but the Centre and its legacy must not become associated with such approaches. These two points were agreed and the board requested its roles and mandates in relation to the Mistra extension, Sida programme and GSF to be clarified in the follow-up documentation from the GMV Director (see Decision below).

Olivia Bina expressed concern that the lack of Board papers and any detail in the annotated agenda on these key developments left her unable to contribute meaningfully in relation to the Mistra extension and how these funds should be used, on the Sida applications for 2020 and a potential new phase, and the processes being undertaken, and GSF progress since she had been asked to serve on its Strategic Advisory Board. She also wanted firmer guarantees that the Centre's website would be safeguarded for at least 5 years, and a clear explanation of how this would be done. These concerns were echoed by other Board members; John Robinson also found this whole year to have been very confusing for Board members.

Jan Pettersson agreed to create a written description of these three items (Mistra extension, Sida application, and GSF) for circulation soon as possible so that the Board could form a view as to how best to fulfil its role.

Decision: The Board would be provided urgently with written descriptions as follows:

- the Mistra extension and the availability of unused funds
- Sida: 2020 consolidation and a possible future phase so that the Board can provide its input
- GOLIP plans and preparations for 2020+
- GSF

These will then form the basis for discussion at the next Board meeting on 14 November. 

7. Update on Audit 2018

Viveka Blomgren

The Audit 2018 was submitted in time for Sida, by 30 June.

The audit of KLIP included an additional element about Miyandhe, which was completed 2013, during Phase 1 of Mistra Urban Futures, in order for Sida to decide on the appropriate amount to recoup for construction costs, as reported in previous meetings.

CTLIP will provide an annex to their Audit according to the Terms of Reference, since the original version from the auditors did not fully comply.

The Terms and Reference for the 2019 audit will be sent to CTLIP and KLIP once received from Sida. Provision for this has been made in the respective 2019 budgets.

8. Financial report on T1 and T2 expenditure 2019

David Simon/ Viveka Blomgren

The financial outcome for T1 and T2 2019 was noted.

Action: KLIP assets and furniture: Sida will get back with information about the appropriate deadline for disposal in the light of the planned one-year consolidation funding for 2020.

The Consortium Council Chair pointed out that if the Mistra contract is extended, then the existing Consortium agreement should be extended as well. The Director responded that this might depend on whether there are any unspent Consortium funds by year-end. The Consortium Council Chair further expressed the need to get clarifications on how the unused funds of GOLIP throughout 2019 will and can be used. The Acting GOLIP Director and Secretariat will liaise with him to get a clearer view on these two points.

Action: The decisions made in item 6 were reaffirmed.

NB: Due to the board meeting lasting longer than expected, the GMV Director, Åsa Moberg and the Chair needed to depart for their travels. The Chair asked the Centre Director to chair the remainder of the meeting.

9. Annual and Final reports 2019


Jan Riise

The Mistra unfunded extension agreement provides that the 2019 report will be deferred to include any activities in 2020 with funds carried over and would be submitted by the end of 2020 at the latest. Existing plans for Jan Riise to collect and compile material for 2019 since completion of the 2016 – 19 Progress Report in April should be implemented while all LIPs are in place and able to report. Arrangements for reporting 2020 activities will need to be worked out. Since the existing Board would need to sign off on the use of Mistra funds, its mandate should be extended – this would need urgent consideration.

The information under Item 8 was noted regarding the Annual and Final reports, and a final decision concerning the structure, content and timing of these reports and the associated governance arrangements will be in the agenda of the final Board meeting in November.

10. Next meeting: agreeing date for 2019

David Simon (replacing Fredrik Hörstedt)

#36: 14 November – phone meeting (4-6pm CEST) 

The date and time for this final Board meeting were accepted.

11. Any other business

David Simon (replacing Fredrik Hörstedt)

- Reflections on the Annual Conference – this was not addressed due to lack of time.

Signed

David Simon
Director

Fredrik Hörstedt
Chair of the Board

