

5 May 2008

## Urban Futures

### – Call for pre-proposals

**Mistra invites Swedish universities to establish an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary centre in collaboration with Swedish cities and other stakeholders, including international partners, on the following theme:**

**Rethinking Sustainable Urban Development in an Era of Globalization, Resource Constraints and Climate Change**

#### **1. CALL FOR PRE-PROPOSALS**

Mistra invites Swedish universities to submit pre-proposals for a large-scale, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, internationally competitive *Mistra Centre for Urban Futures*. The Mistra Centre should have a clear geographical centre of gravity in one city or urban region and be organized by a local or regional consortium composed of one or more Swedish universities, at least one city, public bodies and business stakeholders. The Centre should also have its own budget and a board with an international composition.

Mistra's long-term *vision* in this call is to make a difference to sustainable development by building an international network of knowledge and innovation platforms for urban development, here entitled *Mistra Interaction Platforms*, with a world-leading *Mistra Centre* as the coordinating node. Mistra expects a successful applicant to look beyond the immediate future, with the goal of significantly furthering international research, knowledge and capacity for integrated urban development. The ultimate deliverables are new and deeper understanding of the challenges and dynamic complexity of cities, but also new approaches and mindsets and innovative solutions, methods, tools and instruments. Through this strategic investment, Mistra aims to contribute significantly to the development of an international knowledge and innovation system for sustainable urban development, which is highly desirable and needed.

Overall, the key features of Mistra Programmes and Centres are their

- potential for solving major environmental problems
- value to intended users
- world-class scientific quality
- capacity to make Sweden more competitive

- contribution to Mistra's overall programme portfolio
- creation of strong research environments
- sound management and good organization.

Conventional, 'business-as-usual' ways of separating research from policy and practice are not likely to build networks and underpin a more knowledge-based urban development agenda. Mistra is looking for a progressive initiative to promote knowledge, learning, innovation and creativity by linking research more closely with education and training as well as with urban policy and action, and by using methods that emphasize cross-fertilization among these activities.

The Mistra Centre for Urban Futures and the Mistra Interaction Platforms should have the following functions:

- acting as clusters for development of knowledge and innovation for urban sustainability,
- forming a resource base for case studies and scientific analysis,
- ensuring a strong chain from international disciplinary excellence to local knowledge, and
- serving as 'showcases' for other cities and countries.

The Mistra Centre for Urban Futures should start in January 2010. The level of funding for an initial two-year implementation stage could be up to SEK 15 million, while the annual funding for two ensuing four-year stages could be up to SEK 15m. Mistra also foresees a two-year phase-out of the Mistra funding. In addition, Mistra can provide funding for an international network of Interaction Platforms, amounting to SEK 7m annually at the most. The Platform network is expected to be built up over time. The intended concept requires a high level of commitment from local and regional stakeholders, in order to promote and implement the transdisciplinary modes of operation. Correspondingly, the host university and the partner organizations in the consortium are expected to contribute funds in the same order of magnitude as Mistra.

There are two stages of Mistra grant applications:

- submission of a brief (max. 15-page) pre-proposal (open to all comers)
- submission of a full proposal for a Mistra Centre (by invitation from Mistra only).

To facilitate the preparation of full proposals for a Mistra Centre, and to further develop a network of international partners, Mistra can cover planning costs for the selected pre-proposals up to a maximum of SEK 350,000.

**Applications for planning grants, with pre-proposals attached, must be received by Mistra no later than 4.00 pm on 15 September 2008**

## **2. PREPARATIONS FOR THE CALL**

The ideas expressed in this call derive both from experience of previous Mistra undertakings and from a pre-research project involving a wide range of stakeholders from various segments of society and in different parts of the world. The report on a pre-research project, *Rethinking Sustainable Urban Development in an Era of Globalization, Resource Constraints and Climate Change: The Mistra Difference* (Nolmark 2007) was presented to Mistra in November 2007, and is available online at [www.mistra.org](http://www.mistra.org). Mistra strongly encourages applicants to seek ideas and inspiration in the report.

Mistra also advises applicants to seek inspiration related to establishing an interdisciplinary research centre in the report ‘*Review of interdisciplinary environmental science centres of excellence*’ (Tompkins 2005); available on line at [www.mistra.org](http://www.mistra.org).

It is important to note that the evaluations that are to guide Mistra in its decisions will base their recommendations on the account presented in the text of this call only.

## **3. RATIONALE OF THE INITIATIVE**

The rationale for this initiative can be summarized in the following two sentences:

*All analysis of sustainable development at hand today refers to urbanization and development of urban areas as one key challenge for the future.*

*At the same time, contemporary urban transitions and their implications for sustainability are poorly understood and the complexity of these challenges requires a new approach in production, management and implementation of new knowledge.*

More than half of the world’s population live in urban areas (80% in Europe) and urbanization continues at high speed and great intensity in a global perspective. Contemporary metropolitan regions are the predominant sites of resource consumption and the production of waste. For example, 78% of global emissions associated with climate change are related to consumption in the major metropolitan regions. Cities are highly vulnerable to the interrelated impacts of socioeconomic activities, climate change and constraints on resources (e.g. energy, food and water). At the same time, they have the potential to develop and implement novel social and technical ‘solutions’ that can be widely replicated.

Consequently, urban living and urban infrastructures have a very considerable impact on natural resources and on both local and global environmental systems. This is also an issue of good quality of life and a favourable local environment for large numbers of people. Efficiency improvements and technical innovations introduced in cities have repercussions on many people: they have both a ‘mass effect’ and a ‘concentration effect’. In addition, territories and ecosystems far beyond the immediate urban surroundings are affected.

Similarities and differences in diverse urban contexts require concepts to be devised that allow us to coherently understand and research complex, economic, ecological, social, political, technological, institutional and cultural issues. Issues of climate change and resource constraints,

and how these are related to social welfare and economic growth, are not helpfully reduced to the level of individual sectors (e.g. transport, water, energy). Rather, they are best seen collectively, or systemically, in relation to one another. This involves systems thinking in several dimensions. An urban area may be regarded as a complex metasystem composed of several layers of subsystems. This also raises two other questions: not only why cities are crucial to sustainable development generally, but how we can understand their active or inactive roles in addressing the challenges of sustainable development.

How can we create socially balanced, human-friendly and ecologically sustainable urban regions that are nationally and internationally competitive? How can cities provide a good living environment for their inhabitants while, at the same time, stimulating modern enterprise and economic growth? How can local urban governance become more creative and innovative in its regeneration activities? How can cities satisfy human needs without eroding life-supporting natural systems?

#### **4. STRATEGIC RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE MISTRA INITIATIVE**

With reference to numerous seminars, workshops, interviews and desktop studies in recent years, the key challenges to cities in terms of sustainable urban development may be summarized as follows:

- resource constraints and climate change
- social and cultural resilience
- urban governance and management
- a high-quality urban environment.

These key challenges to cities in the next few decades raise fundamental issues about strategic urban responses to climate change and resource constraint agendas, and the sociocultural conditions that form the basis for change. In particular, they raise issues about the stakeholders and social interests involved in promoting these strategic responses and their respective starting positions. This includes the demographic transformations (urbanization and suburbanization), the urban contexts in which these stakeholders advocate transitions in infrastructure and lifestyle, and the repercussions both on the social interests and on urban contexts. Given this complexity of stakeholders, factors, issues and levels, the role of cities and metropolitan regions in transitions to sustainable development, and also relations and interactions between urban and rural systems, need to be conceptualized.

##### *Thematic priorities*

The report from the pre-research project on which Mistra has based this call identified a coherent pattern of research clusters. This pattern consistently emerges as strategically important and as not, at present, systemically or sufficiently addressed in research. These clusters are described in detail in the report entitled *Rethinking Sustainable Urban Development in an Era of Globalization, Resource Constraints and Climate Change*.

The five clusters are summarized in the following headings:

1. Understanding the Reconfiguration of Urban Metabolism

2. Reshaping Cities in Response to Climate Change: Risks, Mitigation and Adaptation
3. Codependence between Social and Cultural Resilience and Environmental Sustainability
4. Livable Urban Landscapes
5. Rethinking Styles of Urban Governance and the Role of Institutions.

These clusters should not be understood as a fixed research plan proposed by Mistra. Rather, they should be seen as inspiration to formulate a research agenda for new scientific paradigms. In applying for planning grants applicants must, in brief, present their own views of the research challenges.

Challenges in urban environmental sustainability are truly diverse in scale, location and character. To obtain the greatest impact on environmental systems, knowledge needs to be built and shared among cities of different types. Mutual learning is an important way forward, and a Mistra Centre for urban development should preferably address a variety and diversity of city types and scales in the research, rather than focusing on one specific type of city.

The Centre and its knowledge platforms should also undertake comparative reviews and provide opportunities for social learning across different urban contexts — world cities, ordinary cities and cities of the global south<sup>1</sup>. This relates both to exchange between research and practice, but also to exchange among cities and researchers. Mechanisms for mutual exchange and learning need to be strengthened at both national and international level, among stakeholders in different countries and various parts of the world. Critical reflection on the organization of its content as well as the research process is an essential part of this ‘social learning’. It is needed in order to build context-specific and wider conceptual lessons that can shape users and policy priorities.

## **5. MODES OF OPERATION, DESIGN OF THE MISTRA CENTRE AND INTERACTION PLATFORMS**

The initiative is based on the establishment of a Mistra Centre with an international network of ‘satellite’ interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary platforms of knowledge and innovation, here termed *Mistra Interaction Platforms* (see below). Mistra invites Swedish universities, local or regional public bodies and business stakeholders to submit joint pre-proposals for organizational concepts and indications of scientific capacity for a large-scale, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, internationally competitive *Mistra Centre for Urban Futures*.

This is an invitation for a long-term joint commitment on the part of Mistra and a Swedish local or regional consortium. Mistra is of the view that the scale and nature of this commitment are beyond the scope of individual scientists or research groups. Thus, Mistra will accept proposals only from the University Vice-Chancellor (Rector) level, indicating cooperation among corresponding management levels in the consortium partners.

The Centre should have a sufficient critical mass for cutting-edge research, but also be given the multiple tasks of innovation, stakeholder interaction and capacity-building at local and regional as well as at international level. The main task of the Centre will be to set up and establish an Interaction Platform in a local and regional context, in cooperation with key stakeholders. A

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<sup>1</sup> The need for capacity building in cities in developing countries is strongly emphasised by organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), and by national agencies like the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

second major but long-term task will be to establish an *international network of satellite Interaction Platforms* in other parts of the world, and to coordinate and facilitate the international activities.

### ***Mistra Interaction Platform***

A *Mistra Interaction Platform* can be formed by a multi-stakeholder partnership team with the multiple tasks of strengthening the local base for research, knowledge and education; helping to build capacity for urban development; and promoting awareness and best practice. One of the main features of a Platform is that it is an instrument for bridging the gaps between generating and absorbing knowledge, on the one hand, and disseminating and using knowledge in policy-making and practice on the other. It can thereby consolidate the system for building knowledge and capacity.

Typically, this kind of partnership may consist of a balanced mix of one or more universities, cities, municipalities, urban regions and businesses involved in 'shaping, producing and managing cities'. Examples are housing companies, infrastructure suppliers (energy, transport, water and sewerage, etc), construction companies, consulting and architectural firms, urban development agencies and businesses. Non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations with urban development on the agenda can also be partners in an Interaction Platform. The same applies to representatives of the individuals, companies and organizations that populate the city and 'consume, explore, experience and give life to the urban landscape'. Mistra emphasizes that the proposing consortia should have a well-conceived and convincing partnership composition, in which each member's participation is well justified.

### ***Centre and Platform modes of operation***

The conventional 'business-as-usual' ways of separating research from policy and practice are not likely to support stakeholder networking and underpin a knowledge-based urban development agenda. Mistra is looking for a progressive initiative to promote knowledge, learning, innovation and creativity by linking research more closely with education and training as well as with urban policy and action, and by using methods that emphasize the cross-fertilization among these activities. The Centre and the Platforms should develop approaches to research and problem-solving in which the core idea is that researchers, practitioners and stakeholders must cooperate in order to address society's complex challenges.

The Mistra Centre and the Interaction Platforms would have the following functions:

- to be clusters for development of knowledge and innovation for urban sustainability,
- to form a resource base for case studies and scientific analysis,
- to ensure a strong chain from international disciplinary excellence to local knowledge
- to be 'showcases' for other cities and countries.

For the vision to be fulfilled, radically new operating approaches are required, with an innovative social organization for knowledge and capacity building. Traditional roles and responsibilities of scientists and professionals in practice and policy-making should be further advanced. Bridging the divide between urban research and practice and strengthening local capacity are key tasks, and forms of mutual co-operation and joint knowledge production need to be developed. Mistra's funding of the Centre and the satellite Interaction Platforms will be generous enough,

and last sufficiently long, to generate a critical mass for in-depth and qualified interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary interaction, and progress in building knowledge and capacity<sup>2</sup>. Mistra also anticipates that the international network will forge strong links with leading global scientific environments.

This way of organizing the research, knowledge and innovation processes has some important characteristics and implications that require particular attention. Researchers, as well as policy-makers and practitioners, will find themselves in new and sometimes unfamiliar positions and contexts. Difficulties may arise in the encounters between the various regulatory systems, professional cultures and traditions that the different parties contribute to the Interaction Platforms. Special methods and mechanisms for their integration will need to be introduced. The specific roles and working methods of a coordinator and facilitator in the Platforms must be developed in the partnership.

When the Centre, with its international network of Platforms, is to be set up the following list of components may serve as inspiration. However, applicants must describe and argue for modes of operation that fit their particular contexts:

- Knowledge Production and Innovation: internationally recognized, cutting-edge research and innovation on urban sustainability
- Learning Partnerships, where research practitioners and stakeholders engage in joint learning processes through communication, education and training
- A Knowledge Hub, with the task of improving knowledge management and dissemination, and for intensive exchange of knowledge and experience on the substantive issues of the programme
- International Comparative Case Studies, to foster social learning in various urban contexts — world cities, secondary cities and cities of the global south
- An Urban Knowledge Forum to serve as an international learning forum for leading researchers and stakeholders, for critical reflection and social learning on the modes of knowledge production represented by the Mistra programme.
- A Facilitating Agent for the requisite in-depth sophisticated strategic coordination and facilitation of the mode of operation proposed for the Mistra programme.

### *Organization*

There are several options for the organizational context of the Centre and the international network of Interaction Platforms. Mistra is not excluding any option in advance. However, to endorse the academic career of the scientists involved, Mistra advocates the Centre's integration in the academic context of the university or universities involved in the network, and the scientists' option of being affiliated with relevant university departments as well as with the Centre. Conversely, the non-university staff involved in the Centre and Platforms should be integrated in the public and/or business service context of the companies, cities, etc involved in the network. A local or regional consortium of one or more universities, in cooperation with non-academic partners (cities, regional organizations and the private sector, for example) is

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<sup>2</sup> Whereas *interdisciplinarity* may be considered to be the mingling of scientific disciplines, the term *transdisciplinarity* here implies a fusion of scientifically based knowledge with experience-based knowledge and know-how from practice and policy-making.

hosted by a Swedish university. The management, leadership and finances of the Centre should be customised and independent from the regular financial systems of the consortium partners.

To create the best possible conditions for interaction between different academic disciplines, as well as transdisciplinary cooperation and interaction within the multi-stakeholder partnership, Mistra believes that a single location for the Centre is best<sup>3</sup>. Proposals for a joint, attractive venue will be favoured. There must be convincing arguments for any deviation from the notion of geographical concentration to enable people with specific expertise to be engaged.

The following organizational parameters are important:

- The Centre must have the full support of the consortium partners' top management.
- The Centre must have its own budget and a board of international composition (cofunding organisations may be represented on the board).
- The scientists involved may be mixed in terms of gender and age composition.
- Attractive academic career opportunities for researchers involved in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research should be developed.
- Once the Centre has commenced operation, relationships among the various components (such as the university, business, public agency, Centre board and director, and scientists involved) must be transparent and contractually regulated.

The satellite Interaction Platforms should adopt corresponding organizational and managerial approaches.

### *Leadership and recruitment of researchers*

Plans for the gradual build-up of staff should be presented. Leadership of the Centre is paramount. Furthermore, the leadership of each satellite Interaction Platform and facilitation of the international network are key to the success of the initiative. Mistra believes that the Centre and the satellite Platforms could start with a small group of handpicked, academically excellent scientists of high international repute and equally handpicked, professionally excellent representatives of the non-academic consortium partners. The scientists or experts in this core group should have an entrepreneurial vision and a shared view on inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to building knowledge and capacity.

In the further recruitment of scientists and experts, it is important to allow time to find individuals with the right professional expertise to be part of the Centre, creating the core values and principles, and progressively develop the research agenda. One should consider starting on a small scale. The Centre should recruit carefully, and also be open to recruiting from all over the world, to build a group of outstandingly skilled individuals who can work together. Personalities matter.

### *Research capacity and agenda*

For the pre-proposals, the core values and principles for development of the forthcoming research agendas must be defined explicitly.

A successful proposer must show a plan for building sufficiently strong and broad scientific bases in the central fields of knowledge for implementation of the programmes. Joint research

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<sup>3</sup> Compared with the model of a network centre with several nodes in different parts of the country.

efforts and intellectual exchange with leading international scientists and centres should be included in the Centre's and the Interaction Platforms' routines. Similarly, close contacts and interaction with leading professional and policy forums should be routine.

## **6. FUNDING**

The funding from Mistra will be divided into a build-up stage of two years, followed by two full-scale stages of four years each, with phasing-out of Mistra funding in a final two-year stage. By then, Mistra expects the Centre to be established as a world-leading body in its field, able to attract its own funding. Each stage of Mistra funding will be preceded by reviews, and further funding will be conditional on excellent progress. The level of Mistra funding for an initial two-year implementation stage could be up to SEK 15 million. Annual funding for two subsequent four-year stages could be up to SEK 15 million.

In addition, Mistra can provide extra funding for an international Interaction Platform network. This could total SEK 7 million annually at most — an amount regarded by Mistra as a share of the total funding of each Platform in the network to be cofunded from other sources. There may, for example, be local, regional or national funding in the countries where the Interaction Platform network partners operate. Mistra foresees that the international Platform network will be established progressively over time.

Achieving critical mass for in-depth interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary interaction and progress in building knowledge and capacity will require expertise in a range of scientific disciplines in social and natural sciences, as well as humanities and such creative disciplines as architecture, urban design and engineering sciences. Furthermore, the concept of Interaction Platforms requires a high level of commitment and involvement on the part of local and regional stakeholders for the transdisciplinary modes of operation to be promoted and implemented.

A successful full Centre proposal (this is not necessary in the pre-proposal) must therefore show a thorough plan for sufficient funding of the Centre, with substantial cofunding from other sources, such as local and regional authorities, private enterprise and universities. The host organization and the consortium partners are expected to contribute resources of the same order of magnitude as Mistra. Rather than tactical reallocation of existing research funds, Mistra expects this cofunding to be mostly new. Mistra appreciates the option of flexibly adding new funds from different organizations.

Planning grants may be provided for the period from October 2008 to March 2009. Each planning grant can be up to SEK 350,000, including overheads and VAT. In the assessments of proposals, Mistra will take advice from an international panel of persons with relevant expertise and experience.

## **7. APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

There are two stages in Mistra grant applications:

- submission of a brief pre-proposal, open to all comers
- submission of a full programme proposal, by invitation from Mistra only.

The pre-proposal must describe how the consortium can fulfil the vision in cooperation with Mistra and should briefly state how to meet the requirements outlined in this call. For the pre-proposal, Mistra particularly emphasizes prospects of sound leadership and a promising organizational framework. The proposal must be signed by the top management of the partners involved (Vice-Chancellor, mayor, CEO or equivalent).

In planning and preparing their pre-proposals, applicants are strongly advised to study Mistra's guide *How to go about it — Applying for funds for research in support of sustainable development*, available at [www.mistra.org](http://www.mistra.org). Applicants are welcome to consult Mistra staff (see below) to discuss specific interpretations of this call and Mistra's mode of operation generally, including information about establishing and running a Mistra programme or centre.

### *Requirements for the pre-proposal*

Specifically, the pre-proposal must contain:

- a description of the research in question and how the research is expected to make a practical, significant contribution to sustainable urban development
- an overview of the possible organization of the Centre
- an account of the partners to be involved in the consortium setting up the Centre, identifying the host of the Centre
- an indication of the extent and degree of commitment to cofunding and/or other substantial resource contributions from other sources
- a plan for identifying the most interesting partners for satellite Interaction Platforms, and steps to develop long-term partnerships within the framework of the Mistra initiative; a brief overview of existing contacts and collaboration partners should be included.
- a brief description of the approach to research, building of knowledge and capacity for sustainable urban development, and the research methods to be used
- details of the Centre's core individuals, the core group's composition and international collaboration
- a general timetable and budget for establishment and operation of the Centre
- a statement from the University Vice-Chancellor (Rector), institute director, company chief executive, and/or senior executive of the city, region or equivalent on how the proposed Centre and its programme for research and building of knowledge and capacity fit in with the strategic planning and priorities of the organization concerned.

General requirements for pre-proposals are that they should:

- describe how the conditions outlined in this call are to be met
- be written in English
- include a request, and an approximate budget, for planning grants if so desired
- not exceed 15 pages (font size 12 points) in length
- enclose one-page CVs (over and above the aforesaid max. 15 pages) for the key persons to be involved in the programme
- enclose a one-page summary of the pre-proposal (included in the aforesaid max. 15 pages)
- not include letters of intent — the cooperation situation must be described in the application text
- be submitted by the Vice-Chancellor of the host university
- be submitted not later than 4.00 pm on **15 September 2008**, both by surface mail (15 copies) to:

**'Urban Futures'**  
**Mistra**

**Gamla Brogatan 36–38  
111 20 Stockholm**

and by e-mail as a PDF document to [mail@mistra.org](mailto:mail@mistra.org).

- If possible, please combine the various parts of your proposal in a single document.
- Only pre-proposals that comply with the above rules will be considered.

### *Timetable*

The two-year build-up stage is expected to commence in January 2010. The planning schedule for the process up to the launch of the Centre is as follows:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 15 September 2008 | Proposals for planning grants (15 pages), plus one-page CVs of the key persons, to be submitted to Mistra. |
| October 2008      | Mistra will award planning grants for the preparation of full proposals.                                   |
| 1 April 2009      | Full Centre proposals (maximum 100 pages) to be submitted to Mistra.                                       |
| June 2009         | Announcement of award of a two-year build-up grant (up to SEK 15 million).                                 |
| January 2010      | Commencement of two-year build-up stage.   |

## **8. SELECTION AND EVALUATION**

Decisions on approval of pre-proposals and invitations to submit full programme proposals will be taken by Mistra after consultation with a review panel comprising a mix of international and national experts, as well as users. Organizational aspects, as well as scientific and practical value, will be considered.

Prior to the Mistra Board decision in June 2009, full programme proposals invited will undergo evaluation of scientific and practical value during April and May 2009 respectively. Organizational and leadership aspects will be assessed in both evaluations.

Based on the evaluations, Mistra can cancel the entire initiative if there are no proposals showing enough scientific creativity and excellence, or only low user value.

Mistra intends to fund only one Centre (including an international Interaction Platform network) based on this call. However, Mistra will invite submission of up to four full programme proposals. Besides approval or rejection, based on recommendations from the evaluations, Mistra can suggest changes in proposals and invite modification or resubmission.

### *Selection criteria*

Evaluation of the pre-proposals will consider only the aims and requirements stated in this call. The full Centre proposal evaluation will also be based on this call but, in addition, consider possible written recommendations from Mistra issued to applicants when it invites them to submit full proposals.

Basic criteria are that the candidate consortium must share Mistra's vision for the Centre and the Interaction Platforms, and that all partners in the consortium must show their commitment to the idea of establishing, operating and supporting a Centre in sustainable urban development.

Important selection criteria for pre-proposals and full Centre proposals are:

- Sound management and relevant organization including prospects for long-term commitment and cofunding requirements. A Mistra Centre is expected to be a large, complex endeavour in which many individuals need to work together towards a common goal. To achieve results, such a Centre must be effectively managed and organised. Another key success factor is excellent administrative, academic and user-oriented support from the host. Mistra believes a Swedish university should be the host, but other organizational models may be discussed.
- Potential for building a strong research environment, including adequate leadership and recruitment of staff, combining interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity with entrepreneurial visions and academic excellence. Mistra's programme investments are expected to promote the development of strong research environments. A Mistra Centre can build on one or more existing strong research environment or foster the emergence of a new one.
- Visions for a research agenda that will make a difference and has the potential to solve important environmental problems. There must be a clear conception of how the research will make a significant practical contribution to solving environmental problems. A dialogue should be established between researchers, policymakers and practitioners to take different views into consideration in the research. Mistra welcomes broad outlines of the organizational forms of this dialogue in the pre-proposals.

Examples of user categories are

- policymakers, including e.g. national and international agencies and multilateral interest groups
- cities, municipalities, regional organizations
- businesses involved in 'shaping, producing and managing cities', e.g. housing companies, infrastructure suppliers (energy, transport, water and sewerage, etc), construction companies, consulting and architectural firms, urban development agencies and companies
- NGOs.
- Prospects of and potential for creating a supportive environment and sufficient critical mass for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary progress. Fulfilling the vision requires new approaches towards modes of operation, with an innovative social organization for building knowledge and capacity. Scientists' and professionals' traditional roles and responsibilities in practice and policy-making should be further advanced. Bridging the gap between urban research and practice and strengthening local capacity are key functions, and forms of mutual cooperation and joint knowledge production need to be developed.
- Prospects of strong and broad scientific bases and potential for reaching world-class scientific quality. The proposed research must be internationally competitive and the Centre should be attractive as a partner in international research collaboration. Mistra attaches importance to collaboration and synergies with international research programmes. Research groups that apply should have well-established contacts and/or be engaged in collaboration with relevant international research groups. Researchers from countries other than Sweden are welcome as members of applicant groups. Mistra encourages recruitment of participants characterized by excellence, both in Sweden and from abroad. The research should be carried out by individuals with the relevant academic qualifications, preferably at least at postdoctoral level.

- Strong recognition and visibility in the local and regional context of activities to raise awareness and build knowledge and capacity. To optimize conditions for interaction among different academic disciplines, and between researchers, policymakers and practitioners, Mistra encourages geographical concentration of the components of the Centre and its research programmes. However, to some extent networking between existing centres of scientific excellence at geographically separated but strong research environments can be considered if well motivated, especially for possible subprojects. A description of, and arguments for, the chosen strategy of programme infrastructure must be provided in the application.
- Overall capacity to make Sweden more competitive: being ‘competitive’, here, refers both to Swedish enterprise and to competitiveness in the broader sense of Sweden being a good country to live in, given a lead in the area of sustainable development.

#### **9. CONTACT**

For questions and consultation, please contact the Director of Funding Opportunities, Olof Olsson, phone +46 (0)8 7911022, email [olof.olsson@mistra.org](mailto:olof.olsson@mistra.org).

Staffing of Mistra’s office will be sporadic between 23 June and 8 August 2008.

This call has been published online at [www.mistra.org](http://www.mistra.org)