



Susta-Info

Expert meeting International Cooperation
on Local Sustainability

&

Mid Term Seminar on Susta-Info tool

20 and 23 March 2007

Seville, Spain

Report

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Introduction

The mission of the Susta-Info project is to make information on sustainable urban development easily available for local practitioners. Susta-Info is one of the projects that is based on the Memorandum of Understanding between UN-HABITAT and the European Commission concerning international co-operation on urban research. Within the Susta-Info database EU and UN-Habitat research results and a selection from the UN-Habitat Best Practices Database can be accessed in a standardized and user-friendly way.

In March 2007 a mid-term version of the Susta-Info Information System on local sustainability was presented publicly, in order to get feedback from the audience for the further development of this knowledge exchange tool. In combination with this first presentation of the system, an expert meeting on research priorities for local sustainability was organized. The event was organized on the day before the 5th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Seville, Spain. On the last day of this Conference, the Susta-Info partners also presented the first version of the Susta-Info website and database in a specific tools session. This report provides the conclusions reached and feedback received during both events.

The first section provides a summary of the main messages on research priorities and on the further development of the Susta-Info tool. The second section contains a more detailed description about the discussion on research priorities. In the third section Susta-Info and the URBACT I and II programs are presented as tools for knowledge exchange among cities and between cities and researchers. The last section lists the detailed feedback on the first version of the Susta-Info tool. At the end of the report the participants lists of the Susta-Info event and the list of Susta-Info partners is included. The power point presentations can be accessed at www.susta-info.net.

For the Susta-Info partners the events in Sevilla have been very helpful in determining the way forward towards the launch of Susta-Info at the end of 2007. We would like to thank all participants for their contributions.

The Susta-Info Team



Summary of Main Messages

Research priorities

The European Commission should take the following priorities and observations concerning international co-operation on local sustainability into account

- **Knowledge management**
 - The development of a mechanism to sustain existing knowledge, rather than keep on trying to add new knowledge
 - Institutionalising 'community knowledge', integrating the local knowledge of the urban poor
 - Capitalize on end-user experiences (See for example URBACT programme)
 - Present research often remains predominantly one-dimensional. This has to radically shift to more team-thinking, think-tanking, building on various disciplines, but particularly opening up new transdisciplinary groups/works, including new institutional settings reflecting transdisciplinary contents.
 - The enabling of implementation: how to implement existing knowledge effectively?
 - Integration of knowledge databases such as Susta-Info and Urbact;
 - Systematically capitalize on knowledge and methods developed in Susta-Info and similar initiatives. Move from experimental projects to systematic compilation, selection, assessment and selective replication in a system of "Strategic Knowledge Management", specifically adapted to worldwide learning and exchange

- **Priority sustainability topics for further research**
 - Intense recycling and /or no-waste systems
 - Water-systems with full re-use for variety of purpose
 - Alternative energies, stimulating energy conserving
 - Alternative modes of transport
 - Co-productive set-ups of engagements to increase participation and commitments
 - Non-monetized local economic exchange activities
 - Cultural diversity: potentials and limitations
 - Counteracting the trend of exporting waste
 - Urban forestry as a solution to a range of urban environmental problems

- Knowledge transfer between Europe and other continents:
 - Europe can transfer knowledge towards other continents on:
 - Financial incentives to change behaviour; the creation of standards and labelling and the development of the polluter-pays-principle
 - History of relative dense urban living forms and modes
 - The increased formation of “urban regions” as units of development and networks of towns and cities
 - Trans-border cooperation in urban development
 - Emphasising solidarity and redistributive efforts in urban facilities/ infrastructures/ services
 - “Good governance” as democratic principles
 - Experience of post-industrial regeneration and of urban renewal
 - Recognising cultural diversity and heritage as important asset
 - Europe could take up experience from other continents on:
 - Participatory budgeting
 - Urban agriculture
 - Several good LA21 practices
 - Community development and local democracies
 - Resource-conserving modes of living
 - Waste management approaches
 - Narrowing the gap between rich and poor: a strategic priority?
 - Complementarity between formal and informal
- Overlaps between EU’s 7th Framework Programme and (future) UN-Habitat research themes:
 - Sustainable urban mobility
 - Urban governance
 - Social inclusion
 - Urban conditions



Recommendations for further development of Susta-Info

Technical changes

The **user interface needs to be simplified**. The current large amount of possibilities can confuse first time users of the system. The first steps into Susta-Info need to be made more intuitive. The project needs to be careful with technical terms. Several help functions should be added.

The participants provided useful suggestions for **concepts to be taken up in the thesaurus** and for **standard filters** that can be used for search queries.

Communication strategy

Susta-Info takes the notion of sustainability seriously by validating the best practices on the **different dimensions of sustainability**. This added value of Susta.info should be used more clearly in the communication.

In general there should be a more complete **explanation about the methods** for validation, classification and abstraction.

The Susta-Info webpages should speak **the language of local authorities and politicians**.

Future positioning and content

Susta-Info should be an **open system** that is able to connect to other database and knowledge networks.

Susta-Info should look beyond UN-Habitat and Framework programme documents and include **other sources for local community initiatives**. One option is to provide the possibility for cities to upload their own experiences (in an easy to use format).

To reach a wider impact Susta-Info like systems need to be **complemented** by regional **meetings** bringing together cities and scientists and by **training** of civil servants and politicians.



Research priorities local sustainability

The perspective of KU-Leuven

Prof. Han Verschure opened with the question: **‘what research and capacity building for sustainable urban development?’** His introduction intended to stimulate discussions and to highlight some proposed strategic priorities, for EU and related institutions worldwide, in research and capacity-building. He focussed on sustainable urban development, capitalizing on the Susta-Info project and related initiatives. In particular he formulated answers to the questions: Which priorities are to be emphasised in the coming years? & What is role of the European Commission?

His Visions for urban sustainability are Creative, Prospective, Visionary and Imaginative explorations of possible future (not be confused with ‘utopia’), some based on present trends (and their likely implications), but much more based on new/modified/alternative modes of living. Exploring new/modified/alternative urban forms (housing, neighbourhoods, public domains, landscapes), urban infrastructure, urban brown- and green agendas, urban forms of co-operation and co-production, new urban economies (e.g. urban agriculture, social economies, etc).

Some examples:

- more compact cities (countering sprawl) with improved accessibility, neighbourhood-scale related facilities more equitably distributed, high-density low-rise housing predominantly public transport systems (less roads, more networks)
- “beginning-of-pipe” water systems (drainage, etc)
- new modes/forms of water/land based living
- community-based co-productions
- intelligent/ flexible systems (incremental development, adaptive re-use, etc.)
- equitability as a local and global practice in urban development (“pro-poor”)

Trans-disciplinary approaches (“new disciplines”) research and exploration: Urban matters are complex and never relate to one discipline only. Whereas sometimes social sciences may have a greater role, sometimes the design sciences or engineering sciences may be leading; most urban problems however require cross-sectoral approaches. Present research often remains predominantly one-dimensional. This has to radically shift to more team-thinking, think-tanking, building on various disciplines, but particularly opening up new transdisciplinary groups/works, including new institutional settings reflecting



transdisciplinary contents at academic, governmental (local / regional / national / international) and private institutions (eg. Earth Institute,)

More in-depth research into particular technical and organizational “alternatives”. Some priorities:

- intense recycling and / or no-waste systems
- water-systems with full re-use for variety of purpose (recreational / consumptive / overflows, etc)
- alternative energies, stimulating energy conserving systems as utmost priority
- new modes of transport : non polluting, collective and space-saving, including non-motorised
- co-productive set-ups of various types and various degrees of engagements to increase participation and commitments
- non-monetized local economic exchange activities (e.g. urban agricultural produce in exchange for services at neighbourhood level, or at the scale of the rural-urban interface)
- cultural diversity: potentials and limitations

Local agenda's for global use. In all of the above, EU research and capacity building should capitalize on specific European experiences relevant for worldwide application.

Examples of particularly strong European experiences are e.g.

- history of relative dense urban living forms and modes, with a sound range and balanced proximity of small / medium / large cities
- the increased formation of “urban regions” as units of development and / or forming networks of towns and cities
- Trans-border cooperation in regional / urban development good experiences / priorities for public transport of various types, even as re-discovery after ‘wave of neglect’
- balanced welfare state policies and practices, emphasising solidarity and redistributive efforts in urban facilities / infrastructures / services (social security to be rediscovered in EU policy making?)
- “good governance” as democratic principles and as generally functioning practice
- Interesting experience of post-industrial regeneration (e.g. Emscher Park, Germany) and of urban renewal
- Recognising cultural diversity and heritage as important asset

Learning from the global: At the same time Europa can learn from experiences in other continents, like for example:

- participatory budgeting
- urban agriculture
- several good LA21 practices
- community development and local democracies



- resource-conserving modes of living
- waste management approaches
- narrowing the gap between rich and poor: a strategic priority?
- complementarity between formal and informal

Capacity building into all of the above particularly targeting:

- re-training professionals (undoing previous models/ capitalizing on creativity)
- transforming university curricula and research into transdisciplinary systems (e.g. University of the Common Good)
- stimulating the very young to explore creative models, and to keep developing those for various age groups (e.g. life-long learning of urban sustainability)
- sensitise decision makers (“inconvenient truths”)

From global knowledge to local sustainability

Systematically capitalize on knowledge and methods developed in Susta-Info and similar initiatives. Move from experimental projects to systematic compilation, selection, assessment and selective replication in a system of “Strategic Knowledge Management”, specifically adapted to worldwide learning and exchange.

Relevant themes in the European 7th Framework programme

Vincent Favrel, European Commission DG Research spoke about the ‘Possibilities for international cooperation, research projects and knowledge transfer on local sustainability in the 7th Framework Programme’.

Under the sixth framework programme the European Commission is carrying out activities that follow from the Memorandum of Understanding with UN-Habitat that was signed in February 2006. Susta-Info is one of these initiatives. Within FP6 the participation of partners from outside the EU was encouraged and even required in a number of thematic research projects.

FP7 thematic areas with Urban related activities:

- Information and Communication Technologies
 - Integration of technologies: intelligent infrastructures
 - ICT meeting societal challenges including health; inclusion and equal participation; mobility; environment; risk management & sustainable development; governments.
- Energy; Energy Efficiency and Savings



- Integration of strategies and technologies for energy efficiency; renewable energy technologies; energy demand management measures and devices.
- Demonstration of minimum climate impact buildings
- Transport; Sustainable Surface Transport
 - Ensuring sustainable urban mobility:
 - Innovative organization schemes
 - Safe and non-polluting means of transport
 - New public transport modes
 - Rationalisation of private transport
 - Communication infrastructure
 - Integrated town planning and transport
 - Improving safety and security
- Socio-economic sciences and humanities
 - Combining economic, social and environmental objectives:
 - The role of cities, urban development and related governance issues, as well as cities and social cohesion
 - Major trends in society and their implications
 - The implications of demographic change for urban development;
 - Interactions between diverse cultures in urban spaces;
 - How culture and creativity have interacted in the historical experiences of European cities?
- Environment (including Climate Change)
 - Climate change, pollution and risks:
 - Pressures on environment and climate: Megacities, air quality and climate; Climate change and consequences for cities; adaptation strategies to climate change.
 - Environment and health: Indoor air pollution; Integrated assessment of environment and health; Urban green areas and health
 - Natural hazards: floods; multirisk assessment and mitigation strategies
 - Conservation and sustainable management of natural and man-made resources
 - Urban metabolism and urban resource optimization
 - Externalities of urban activities
 - Common approaches to promote sustainable urbanization at world level
 - Development of geo-spatial tools for the monitoring of urbanization processes to meet the MDGs.
 - Environmental technologies
 - Natural and man made environment: sustainable water management in urban areas; technologies for waste sorting; tools for soil contamination assessment and characterization; low resources consumption buildings and infrastructure





- Protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, including human habitat: technologies for cultural heritage monitoring and preventive maintenance
- Earth observation and assessment tools
 - Earth observation
 - Forecasting methods and assessment tools

International co-operation in FP7

- All activities are opened to participants from countries outside the EU (“third countries”)
 - ICPC and Industrialised countries can in principle participate in all themes
 - ICPC may be funded in all cases, while Industrialised countries only if indispensable
 - In some areas of mutual interest, the participation of third countries may be encouraged
- Specific co-operation actions in each thematic area dedicated to ICPC
 - Dedicated calls or separate dedicated parts of calls targeted to ICPC countries within each theme
 - Specific consortium requirements: 2 MS + 2 ICPC
 - Specific evaluation criteria

Dissemination, knowledge transfer and broader engagement in FP7

- Specific actions (brining together researchers and potential users) to disseminate results from across a range of projects (including outside FP7)
- Dissemination to policy makers to facilitate use of results
 - Synthesise knowledge/results
 - Organise dissemination and awareness events
 - Special events targeting the European Institutions
- Cordis services
- Initiatives to foster dialogue and debate with actors beyond the research community (science and society)

Expectations from this meeting

The objective of the meeting is to contribute to the development of a vision for international co-operation in the field of research for local sustainability. This is done by:

- Identify critical issues and research questions
- Define suitable ways to stimulate the capitalization, dissemination and uptake of knowledge





UN-Habitat on research needs and knowledge transfer

Diana A. Lopez Caramazana, UN-HABITAT spoke on Research needs and knowledge transfer in the context of international cooperation by UN-Habitat

The UN Habitat research mandate is derived from:

- The UN Secretariat Work Programme, Chapter 15, "Human Settlements Programme"
- Specifically, Subprogramme 2 of Human Settlements Programme, i.e. "Monitoring the Habitat Agenda"
- Subprogramme 2 Objective: To monitor and assess progress towards the attainment of the Habitat Agenda goals and the Millennium Development targets on slums, drinking water and sanitation

The strategy is:

- Global collection, analysis and dissemination of data, including development of indicators for measuring progress towards the attainment of internationally agreed human settlements goals
- Research-based assessment of the effectiveness of the policies and strategies recommended in the Habitat Agenda, as well dissemination of lessons learned and best practices identified
- Research-based identification, field testing, dissemination and mainstreaming of new and innovative policies and strategies

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Monitoring through:

- Collection, analysis and dissemination of global data for monitoring the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development targets on slums, drinking water and sanitation
- Developing and maintaining global databases on human settlements statistics and indicators
- Main databases: UrbanInfo Database; Best Practices Database
- Main research output: *The State of the World's Cities* report (one of UN-HABITAT's flagship reports, published every two years)

Policy Analysis and Dialogue:

- Analysis of human settlements conditions and trends and reporting results to Governing Council & UN General Assembly
- Raising awareness of emerging human settlements issues through global dialogue





- Main research output: *Global Report on Human Settlements* (the main flagship report of UN-HABITAT, published every two years)
- Other outputs: (i) *Global Dialogue on Human Settlements* (occasional research paper series); (ii) UN-HABITAT Lecture Award Series, UN-HABITAT Flagship Reports

Future Research Priorities are:

- Presented in paper titled "Urban Research Priorities Identified in the Implementation of the Habitat Agenda" (UN-HABITAT, 2002)
- Priorities fall into three broad categories
 - a) Enhancement of knowledge on human settlements conditions in a globalizing and urbanizing world
 - b) Evaluation of the efficacy of past and current human settlements policies
 - c) Indicator-based monitoring of human settlements conditions and trends, including progress towards realization of relevant Millennium Development and Habitat Agenda goals

PRIORITIES

Enhancement of Knowledge

- Shelter conditions (slums, secure tenure and rental housing)
- Rights (housing rights and the right to the city, social inclusion and gender equality)
- Urban conditions (urban poverty, new urban social structures, social exclusion, safety and HIV/ AIDS)
- Urbanization and the economy (impact of macroeconomic variables on urban conditions, livelihoods and urban poverty, urban-rural linkages in an urbanizing and globalizing world)

Assessment of National and Local Urban Policies

- Slum policies and strategies
- Financing of urban infrastructure and services
- Urban governance and planning (role of local authorities, decentralization)
- Identification and analysis of best practices and good policies

Indicator-based Global Monitoring of Urban Trends

- Goal 1 of the Habitat Agenda: Adequate shelter for all
- Goal 2 of the Habitat Agenda: Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world
- Millennium Development target on slums, including access to drinking water and sanitation

FUTURE TOPICS FOR THE GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS



- 2007: Enhancing urban safety and security (confirmed)
- 2009: Revisiting the role of urban planning (confirmed)
- 2011: Partnerships and human settlements development (not confirmed)
- 2013: Urban mobility and transport (not confirmed)

Group discussion on research priorities

The workshop participants were divided in three groups for simultaneous workshops on the knowledge priorities for local governments in their change towards sustainability, as well as the EC research priorities.

On the one hand, local governments and especially cities have the advantage of being close to the citizens and having a staff that is large enough to dispose of the right means and knowledge as well as small enough to enable integration of several topics. Moreover, cities are self-governed and legally responsible.

On the other hand, cities face concentrations of problems that are often of a larger scale and difficult to address on a local level, such as climate change. Cities not only often lack the funding, but also have to deal with given situations influenced by others. The majority of unsustainable influences (pollutions on other territories, production et cetera) are out of their control (energy prices, income levels, water management etcetera).

Also a lack of open minds and political entrepreneurship could threaten the cities' transition towards sustainability.

With this in mind, various viable challenges for cities were identified. For example: tackling trans-boundary problems, changing management and methods, education, learning from experiences and city-to-city cooperation.

According to the brief sessions, the European Commission should focus its research on the following topics:

Concerning knowledge management

- The development of a mechanism to sustain existing knowledge, rather than keep on trying to add new knowledge
- The integration of programmes and streamlining of EC projects
- Institutionalising 'community knowledge', integrating the local knowledge of the urban poor
- End-user experiences

Concerning methods

- Lessons learned: how to prevent developing countries from repeating mistakes?



- Public Private Partnerships (PPP), to bridge the gaps between the community, the politicians and the universities.
- The enabling of implementation: how to implement existing knowledge effectively?
- Integration of knowledge databases such as Susta-Info and Urbact;

Concerning incentives

- Financial incentives to change behaviours; the creation of standards and labelling and the development of the polluter-pays-principle (based on EU experience)
- Environmental education and awareness raising

Concerning sustainability topics

- The trend of exporting waste
- Urban forestry as a solution to a range of urban environmental problems
- Other (non-motorized) modalities: strategies for promoting non-polluting modes of transport

Group 1: Environment

Subjects: Water, waste and air; Lead by: chair Maarten van Bemmelen, rapporteur Leire Iriarte; the following issues were addressed:

What **strengths or opportunities** do local governments have in dealing with the thematic issues?

- Service provision: local authorities are in charge of providing several services and they have the ability to innovate as service providers
- Legal: local authorities are legally responsible and have the competences to address these issues
- Regulatory: local authorities can set up incentives and disincentives schemes to influence citizens' behaviour and private companies towards more sustainable choices (e.g. allowing clean vehicles to enter a congestion charging scheme where other cars are forbidden could be part of an air quality plan)
- Public awareness: local authorities can more easily communicate with citizens as they are the closest level of governance, and they know best the local problems (they have local expertise on the environment and socio-economic issues)
- Local authorities are self-governed and therefore they are most flexible to adapt to local needs

What **weaknesses or threats** do local governments face dealing with these issues?

- Concentration of air quality problems

- Local authorities do not have all the powers to tackle air pollution due to traffic (e.g. the car industry has a role to play in the reduction of emissions)
- Local authorities do not control the inputs, they only deal with outputs (e.g. they have to tackle waste, but they do not have control on the waste production)
- Local authorities often have to rely on funding from higher levels of government
- Environmental problems, like air pollution, are transboundary. Therefore they may have to tackle air quality problems which are coming from a territory they have no powers on; this also can be the case for water pollution (e.g. rivers)

What **viable challenges** can be created for cities to better address the weaknesses identified? (“**what?**”)

- Tackling trans-boundary problems (e.g. water and air pollution)
- Addressing the issue of the trend of exporting waste, e.g. by awareness raising and training on waste related problems
- Tackling different sustainability aspects together (e.g. in Brazil and India there are initiatives that combine waste collection and poverty empowerment through recycling)
- Creation of standards and labelling as developed in EU (eco-label/EMAS/ISO/Euro standards for vehicles....)
- Environmental education and awareness raising
- Indicators to know what cities have done and where they are in their transition to sustainability
- Addressing global challenges together (e.g. climate change, migrations...)
- Lessons learned: how to prevent developing countries from repeating mistakes? (e.g. unnecessary packaging that creates extra waste....)
- Development of the polluter-pays-principle (basing on EU experience)
- Urban forestry as a solution to a range of urban environmental problems (absorption of pollutants - air and noise; water management; liveability; shade’s energy reduction)
- Financial incentives to change behaviours towards more sustainable life-styles (for households and companies)
- Promotion of stakeholders cooperation and participation
- Technology: see presentation from Han Verschure

Is there room for **international cooperation** towards implementing these opportunities and what shape should it take? (“**how?**”)

- Direct cooperation between local authorities
- International learnings involving different stakeholders (local/regional and national governments; research and academic field; the industry; consultants; NGOs; user and interest groups and associations...)



- Technical visits and 'on site' learning and exchange
- Exchange of experts
- Long-term projects

Group 2: Planning, Transport and Energy

Subjects: Transport & Mobility, Energy, Building sustainable cities; Lead by: chair Paul van Beek, rapporteur Pauljan Kuijper; the following issues were addressed, with a focus on cities (as local authorities):

What **strengths or opportunities** do cities have in dealing with the thematic issues?

- Local authorities are the most accessible governments to citizens and therefore the most in contact with the end-users.
- In cities, inhabitants show a relatively large willingness to change.
- The knowledge base of the government staff is practical instead of theoretical on a low government level and quite large in a city.
- With the different departments close together, local governments do have considerably large possibilities for integration and capacities for change.

What **weaknesses or threats** do cities face dealing with these issues?

- Local government officials often show a lack of political will; e.g. the demand for spacious urban housing often outweighs the wish for sustainable urban transport. Urban sprawl is the result, with increasing travel distances and less possibilities for sustainable transport modes.
- Policy making is only partly (election periods!) a democratic process.
- Local governments lack financial bases; most taxes are controlled and collected by higher level authorities such as provinces and national administrations. This depends on the position of the local government with respect to the national government.
- Local governments sometimes lack the technical capability to solve complex problems, related to the extent of their staff.
- Local government officials and politicians tend to have 'closed minds'; this could be called a lack of mission or a lack of entrepreneurship.

What **viable challenges** can be created for cities to better address the weaknesses identified? ("what?") and is there room for **international cooperation** towards implementing these opportunities and what shape should it take? ("how?")

- Changing towards sustainability starts with transparency and accountability towards the citizens.
- Changes in management, like working in multidisciplinary teams (also between cities), are an important basis for changes in policy and pollution.
- Cities should focus on the enabling of implementation, combined with a more intensive involvement.

- The end-users should be taken into account seriously, e.g. through research funding for end-user experiences, such as community planning or other forms of extensive participation methods.
- Research and policy should for an important part focus on non-polluting modes of transport such as slow modes.
- An education programme for municipality counsellors may change their political will and involvement.
- Programmes in which cities learn from examples of other cities (such as the STEER programme of the EC) how to implement sustainable transport should be developed further.

Group 3: Socio-economic

Subjects: Urban governance, Poverty reduction, Culture / cultural assets; Lead by: chair Han Verschure, rapporteur Daan van Tassel; the following issues were addressed:

What **strengths or opportunities** do local governments have in dealing with the thematic issues?

- Creating awareness on the self-governing roles within the communities: a large part of the strengths of local governments exists within the community and the civil society
- Policy incidence campaign?
- Public Private Partnerships (PPP), to bridge the gaps between the community, the politicians and the universities.

What **weaknesses or threats** do local governments face dealing with these issues?

- As government officials are elected for a limited period, they will be replaced by other persons. This change of government causes inconsistencies, and threatens sustainable governance.
- In local governments many officials show a lack of interest in learning new issues. Rather, many officials tend to have a culture of recycling old practices. The problem is thus also to be tackled via 'behavioural sciences'.
- There are laws that try to force government sectors to work more together and streamline the efforts; however, this often leads to a clustering, rather than to a real cooperation.
- Fragmented and sectoral approaches are mainly due to a 'brain problem', since people are not trained to think in integrated ways.
- Integrated approaches are not as evident as it may seem. The resistance to share power leads inevitably to a fragmented approach, in which each official has his own working field and where the will for teamwork is not present. A good example of a common programme is the one in Bogota (Columbia) where strong leadership was the key to overcome this.





- Funding resources, donors and agencies, such as the World Bank, often wrongly dictate the issues to be tackled due to their conditionalities for funding.
- One of the reasons for the fragmentation of knowledge, is language: case-studies (offered in Susta-Info) thus should be available in many different languages.

What **viable challenges** can be created for cities to better address the weaknesses identified? (“**what?**”) Is there room for **international cooperation** towards implementing these opportunities and what shape should it take? (“**how?**”)

- To develop and disseminate more knowledge is not such a priority. The emphasis should be on how to capitalize on existing knowledge that is there at the local governance level, and to continue building on existing experience. Hence knowledge development can become more sustainable in itself and become part of the local cultures.
- There should be research about how to develop a mechanism to sustain existing knowledge, rather than keep on trying to add new knowledge.
- As a knowledge provider, it is important to start from the existing gaps and concerns that are present in most councils and local governance institutes. The provided knowledge should be made “attractive for absorption”, and based on a process of consensus building.
- The funding mechanism of the European Commission leads to the emergence of many projects, such as Susta-Info, but there are many similar projects that actually should be more streamlined from the start (cfr. URBACT, etc). This is also the task of the EC. EC should focus on integrated programmes.
- Build methods / tools to rethink governmental approach: Institutionalising ‘community knowledge’, integrating the local knowledge of the urban poor. The priority is to empower poor communities and to hear their voices.

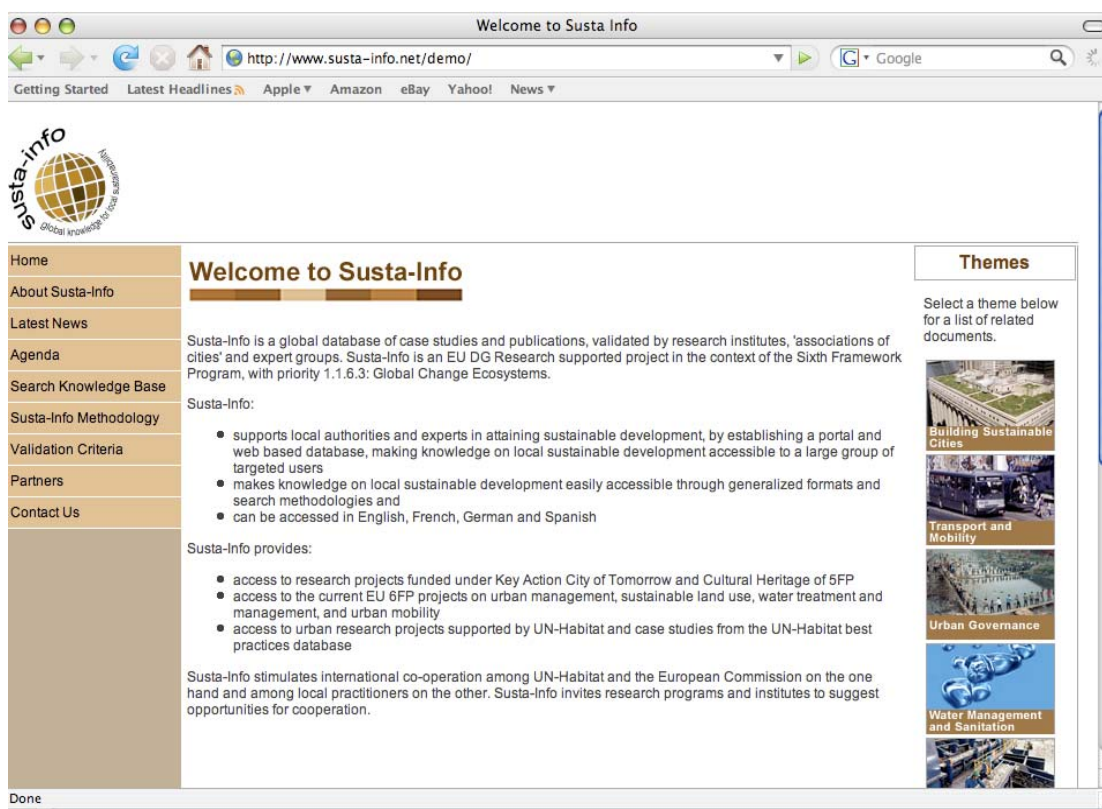




Stimulating knowledge exchange

Susta-Info as tool for knowledge exchange

Maarten van Bemmelen, Goudappel Coffeng explained the Susta-Info project stating as its objective: to support local authorities and experts in attaining sustainable development by establishing a web-based database.



Susta-Info does this through:

- Providing integrated access to EU framework programme projects, UN-Habitat research and a selection of UN-Habitat best practices
- Making use of state-of-the-art technology
- Disseminating/promoting the website
- Ensuring the sustainability of the website





The added value of Susta-Info is:

- Content selected on needs of city users
- Content classified to determine relevance for your city context
- Best practices validated for six elements/themes
- Easily find experts related to your theme

Susta-Info believes it is of value that:

- It is a Global information system (containing updated global content)
- Allows Free public access
- Focuses on sustainable urban development

Basis for the content of Susta-Info is:

- European City of Tomorrow Key Action of the 5th Framework Programme
- EU projects from 6th Framework programme
 - Water
 - Sustainable land use
 - Urban Mobility, Civitas
- UN-Habitat best practices database 2002
- UN-Habitat research publications

After a selection round of relevant documents/projects for the number of documents to be included:

- 100 EU research projects and their related documents
- Approximately 300 best practices
- 250 UN-Habitat research documents
- In the beta release of today over 100 Susta-Info documents included
- Susta-Info also searches over 3000 EUKN documents

Susta-Info approach: Abstraction, Classification, Validation :

Susta-Info uses a standardized sheet with abstracts and classification of best practices and *research* projects/documents. When finding a document this standard sheet is shown to the user facilitating a quick and complete assessment of its relevance.

For *best practices* a validation procedure has been implemented to determine the level of sustainability of the practice, involving the following elements:

- Strategic
- Participatory
- Replicable
- Localised
- Inclusive
- Empowering
- Building sustainable cities
- Transport & Mobility





- Urban Governance
- Water management & sanitation
- Waste management
- Air quality
- Energy
- Poverty
- Culture

The Susta-Info mid term seminar is organized as follows:

- Presentation of the beta release to a group of users
- Hands-on test of search engine and interpret search result
- First insight into the type of content included in the system
- User can provide feedback

After the Mid Term Seminar Susta-Info faces the following:

- Ensure the continuity of the Susta-Info system after the period of the European project
- Website will be on-line for two years with the content included by fall 2007
- How to make sure that the project is sustained longer?

Susta-Info has three future scenarios under consideration (time horizon 5 years):

- Maintain final product for five years
- Maintain final product and update the content
- Update content and increase impact on user community
- The feasibility of each scenario is obviously strongly linked to the organisational model and financing

Options for future partnership are:

- System adopted by a city network
- Joint UN-Habitat and European Commission project
- System adopted by EUKN
- Research institute
- Partnership with URBACT programme





Knowledge exchange and capitalisation in the URBACT programmes

The URBACT experience in capitalisation and dissemination of knowledge of European exchange projects was presented by Melody Houk of the URBACT Secretariat.

Urbact I was A Community Initiative Programme aiming to:

- **Develop exchanges of experience** and good practices between URBAN cities through networking
- **Capitalise lessons learned** from the exchanges
- **Disseminate knowledge** to policy-makers and practitioners in European cities
- **Develop capacity building** among urban policy makers

Field of intervention were:

- **Beneficiaries:** Cities having benefited from URBAN I-II and UPP programmes, and from 2004 on NMS cities (+20 000)
- **Territorial focus:** Areas experiencing difficulties
- **Thematic focus:** Integrated urban regeneration (physical, economic and social issues), addressed from different perspectives by the networks:
 - Social inclusion
 - Local economic development and support to businesses
 - Public-Private Partnerships
 - Participation
 - Cultural heritage, Cultural activities
 - Large housing estates, etc.

Over 180 cities involved in 30 thematic networks & working groups

Thematic Dossiers :

- **A thematic space** on the URBACT website
- **Presenting a selection of outputs** produced by different URBACT networks on a cross-cutting theme (case studies, toolkits, guidelines, reports, etc.)
- **Including references to external** (non-URBACT) relevant material and links to other relevant websites
- **6 thematic dossiers** set up so far:
 - Local Economic Development
 - The role of inhabitants in urban management
 - Young people
 - Urban security
 - Ethnic minorities
 - Physical regeneration

URBACT II (2007 – 2013) has:

A new context: Mainstreaming, the Lisbon-Gothenburg agenda, « Regions for Economic change »



A wider objective : To improve the effectiveness of sustainable integrated urban development policies in Europe with a view to implementing the Lisbon-Gothenburg Strategy

A wider field of intervention :

- all EU cities eligible
- themes related to the Lisbon-Gothenburg agenda :
 - Priority 1 - Cities, Engines of Growth and Jobs
 - Priority 2 - Attractive and Cohesive Cities

URBACT II Themes are:

Priority 1 - Cities, Engines of Growth and Jobs

- **Promoting Entrepreneurship** (support to SMEs, PPPs, social economy, development of clusters building on opportunities such as culture, care, etc.)
- **Improving Innovation and Knowledge economy** (ICT strategies at city level, fighting the digital divide and fostering the use of ICT among the « weakest », promotion of innovation through partnerships with universities, the private sector, etc.)
- **Employment and Human Capital** (improving qualifications for innovation, adaptability of workers and enterprises, expanding and improving education and training systems, improving employability/ employment of target groups, etc.)

Priority 2 - Attractive and Cohesive Cities

- **Integrated development of deprived areas and areas at risk** (integrated policies/ tools/ partnerships for sustainable urban development)
- **Social integration** (immigration, young people, health, security, culture, etc.)
- **Environmental issues** (integrated transport policies, brownfields, waste management, monitoring of environment, improving air quality, water quality and supply, renewable energies, etc.)
- **Strategy and Governance** (citizens participation, horizontal/ vertical territorial governance, urban planning, etc.)

Learning lessons from URBACT I:

- **A wealth of existing knowledge** to build on (inside URBACT and outside)
- **A large variety of outputs** produced by the networks/ working groups (quality, format, content)
- **Impact** on local policies to be improved
- **Difficulty to capitalise beyond URBACT**, in cooperation with other programmes/ networks (including EU programmes)

'To improve capitalisation & dissemination processes at project level

- **Strengthening expertise:** 1 expert for the whole duration of the project
- **Preparing the projects:** preparatory phase, baseline study
- **Improving networks' outputs:** guidelines for products





- **Increasing the impact at local level:** local action plan, local URBACT group, capacity building option

To improve capitalisation & dissemination processes at programme level

- **Building on URBACT I:** Website and Thematic dossiers
- **Organizing capitalisation:** « Thematic units »
- **Increasing dissemination:** Thematic regional conferences, Brochures in national languages
- **Developing partnerships:**
 - with other EU programmes
 - with other EU/ national networks
 - with dissemination points at national level in various MS
 - national associations of local authorities

See URBACT website at: www.urbact.eu





Feedback on the Susta-Info tool

Organisation of the feedback process

The objective of the afternoon was to introduce the Susta-Info Data Base System and to get feedback from the audience: Which recommendations does Susta-Info need to take into account before the official system launch in the fall of 2007? It was also an objective to discuss the future of Susta-Info: How to sustain a system on sustainable urban development?

The afternoon was closed with a wrap up of the days experience and a lively debate on the possible future scenarios of Susta-Info.

In a debate on methods for knowledge exchange and the role of Susta-Info, three questions were asked:

- What methods are preferred by users? Websites, other media, research literature, meetings ?
- What content is preferred? Academic-non academic, overview-only one topic, background info, best practices?
- Who could be responsible for future Susta-Info? International-European, public-private, UN-Habitat, ICLEI, ... ?

At the end of the meeting a questionnaire was handed out to the participants to gather their individual opinions. The results of the questionnaire are discussed in this chapter.

The member of the Susta-Info team tested the Susta-Info tool with small groups of participants. This one on one approach was repeated during the tools sessions of the Conference on Friday the 24th of March. The feedback obtained during these hands-on sessions are also included in the report.

Conclusions from the plenary sessions

These are the core comments during the debates in the plenary sessions:

- Representatives of local governments, who take part in seminars like this, often give very little feedback to their colleagues afterwards. The lessons learnt from these seminars are not absorbed well enough in the sphere of administration.
- To be effective as a knowledge network, it is important to work at the local level via intermediaries and local institutions.
- How to assess the impact of knowledge providers such as URBACT and SUSTA-INFO on the work of local governments? What could be the indicators?





- It is not enough to improve sustainable approaches at the policy level only.
- The awareness for urban sustainability is there, but it is not shown enough nor sufficiently expressed. Very often, the notion of sustainability is not used seriously. We need to move into a higher gear, and reach a 'next level of seriousness'. There's no other way out.
- We don't need more programmes, but fewer, and better linked to each other. Knowledge providers should act complementary.
- Currently the fragmentation between funding programmes within the European Commission leads to overlapping projects.
- Is the targeted dissemination of knowledge on sustainability (to local governors) comparable to '*preaching the converted*'? Dissemination should be designed in such a way that it can trigger bells and that it can raise new issues that are convincing enough.
- How to interface with knowledge networks? Emphasis should be on connecting existing networks rather than creating new ones. How to know about other networks?
- Not everyone is able to use web-pages
- A message from the discussion is that FP7 does not have to focus too much on creating new knowledge. The focus should be on how to capitalise existing knowledge. An important research priority would be: What is the added value of knowledge bases on websites? What is the added value of other methods? For example organising platforms, regional meetings? What about bringing together research producers and research users? Training of civil servants and politicians?

Reflections of the day:

- Are we serious about sustainability? Sustainable urban development should be a major commitment; to be the key-agenda. Cfr. 85% of the day people work in mechanistic ways, to get practical things done. The rest of the time; only 15%, is used for reflexion and critical thinking. This 15% needs to be spent well.
- Susta-Info is an interesting tool, however, people should be able to use it. Things should be simplified.
- Susta-Info should explain better how labels and scores have been given.





- Find the balance between research and end user experiences. There should be a mechanism to recognize experiences of ordinary people that are maybe not always able to provide information in required templates and/or research language.
- Thinking inside the box vs. outside the box: Research is the reflective part of practice, which is able to make links and develop new tools adding value to what exists.
- Shortcoming of the Susta-Info website: It does not speak the language of local governments. Its content should be oriented towards questions as; *how many voters are going to be reached if you do this or that*. Local governments are not dealing with the kind of information that is currently presented in the database. Rather, they are interested in fact sheets, stories, complement information, etc. The knowledge presented should be translated into more political language if it wants to have impact on local governments.
- Many databases tend to provide the same stuff, but re-processed.
- If local governments really are the main target audience of Susta-Info, then it is important to understand the soul of the politician and the bureaucrat; which is to win the hearts and souls of the voters and of the people that matter for them. One needs to know how decisions are made. The project will only be heard and used if it understands that, and if it takes account of it in its presentation of the knowledge-base.
- How to find the windows in which to reach people? One needs to come down from the theories of sustainability, and find ways to go around notions as 'global warming'. Those are too abstract. The focus should be more on the advantages, not on the clichés and the 'fashionable' issues.
- Cfr. URBACT programme; cities are committed to a local action plan, which is linked to an URBACT theme in the database. This can give incentives for governments to use it.
- Cfr. The INHAF platform has been successful for 40%. The provided knowledge tries to be relevant for various stakeholders, from civil society, development actors, etc.
- There's not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of dissemination. Universities are often closed systems, because academic outputs are required. The peer review system also creates obstacles for having the necessary experience in the field.
- There are two important issues that influence change at the local level: 1. the political will. 2. the media. It is essential to translate research into media messages/products so that people can understand. This is one of the key-elements in making sustainability touching people in their daily behaviour.





- A follow-up of the Susta-Info project should first go through an assessment phase to prove the usefulness of these types of tools. It needs to focus more on dissemination towards the development world. There is also a need to look beyond EU and Un-Habitat content. There are a lot of local community initiatives documented in other sources. These should be included.
- In the future a link between Susta-Info (the knowledge base) and training programmes needs to be created. Also combine with tests in cities and explore whether a practice/research results is used in different contexts.
- A guidance on how to reference to Susta-Info should be developed.



Results of Seville questionnaires

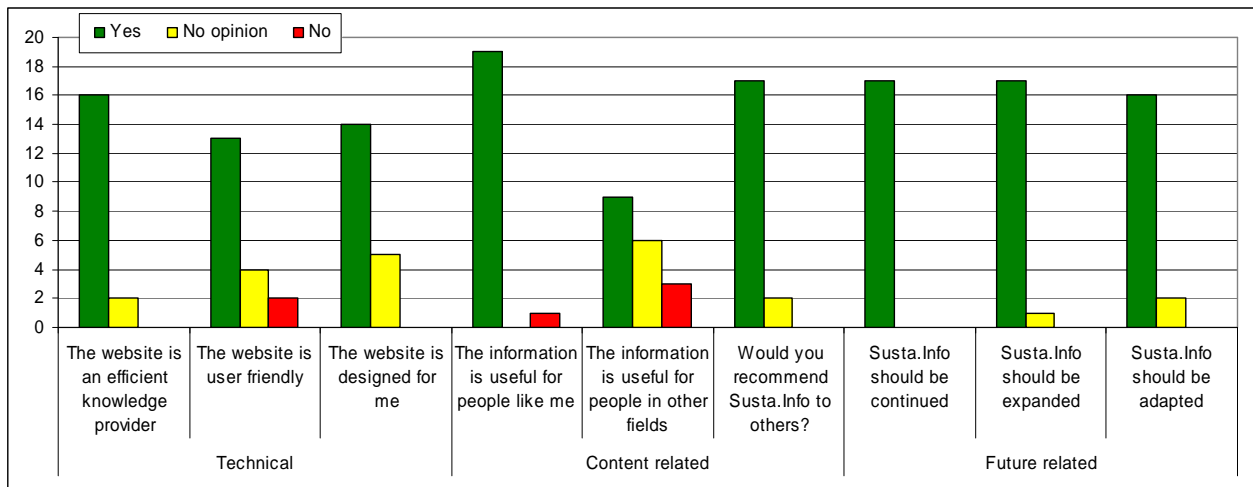
Feedback by future users during Mid Term Seminar, Tuesday 20st of March 2007
Congress Centre Fibes, Sevilla

General

This document gives a full report of the feedback by 21 test users from all over the world, during the Mid Term Seminar of Susta-Info. This seminar was held during the side-event of the Seville congress on Tuesday 20st of March 2007.

The report gives a summary on each topic, as well as the full comments. Only a few comments were adapted in order to improve the readability. In case more people made the same comments, these were summarized and given a number.

In general, the test users gave a positive feedback on the user friendliness and usefulness. They also value the continuation and expansion of Susta-Info. Because of their interest, many useful recommendations were given on the other hand. The questions on user friendliness and usefulness for others gave the most doubt.



Technical topics

What do you think about the website? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

The questions on the technical functionality of the website were answered in two ways. In general, there was a broad demand for simplification, explanation and help functions. More specific, many recommendations were given on the use of the thesaurus and the term 'outstanding' for instance.



Make it easier to use (6x):

- One needs a lot of practice to become an efficient user.
- For local government people it seems a bit too complicated.
- Too many complicated options that most users won't use.
- Could be a little more user friendly.
- Need for simplification, could be more intuitive.

Make it easier to understand (4x):

- Terminology definitions and selection need to be revised.
- Be careful of terminologies used.
- The 'concepts' is new; communication will be needed to get users thinking this way.
- It's not clear what Susta-Info does; is it adding content or just validating and presenting information that is already documented by others?

Make help functions (6x):

- Pop up help boxes to assist with search functions.
- Make 'How to' interactive to a help operator through email.
- More guidance and demo needed on the site.
- Maybe an introduction explaining the way someone can use it easily and using every part of the website to select information.
- Perhaps a tutorial or example online on how to apply the 'concepts' concept
- Good job
- A user guide - upfront - can be intimidating for a novice
- No, positive (2x)
- It just takes hard work with the information load.

Complete thesaurus (4x):

- Ensure key themes are also concepts, e.g. waste management is missing in the thesaurus
- Add cycling and non-motorized transport to the thesaurus.
- Include urban forestry.

Do more with 'outstanding' (4x):

- Include reference to 'outstanding' projects (in the search result list) (2x)
- Include 'outstanding' as a way to search directly too
- Explain how the 'outstanding' ranking was given

Specific practical wishes (6x):

- Some geographic selection might be helpful
- Less scrolling
- When window is refreshed, it should pop-up to the front.
- A link to clarify the ratings by colour.



- Maybe another language for the site-use.
- Could use more graphic images.
- Make it possible to search also on 'concrete solutions for...', 'how much would it cost if...' or 'tools for...' (not just themes).
- The database only picks one word for searching. E.g. "participation" and "ICT" only gives results on participation.

Content related topics

How do you judge the usefulness of the information? What information is missing?

When asked about the content, there were three main answers given. In general, many test users said to need a broader knowledge base or more time before judging the content. More specific, recommendations were given on the distribution over the different themes for instance.

No, positive:

- It will probably not be 100% (complete) ever.

A lot is missing (5x):

- The information is limited. A lot of topics are showing no results.
- Certainly a lot.
- Nothing that I can see with this limited number of entries.
- The content seems to be Euro-centric at the moment; I look forward to information on developing countries.
- More projects / practice examples should be added.
- The matching of the thesaurus and search needs to be more precise.

Specific wishes:

- The 'real world' experiences are missing. Most of these documents are not showing how they handled corruption for instance.
- Environment education, UNESCO, UN etc.
- Social aspects of sustainability (education, security, governance, gender), it is still very environmental oriented.
- How will Susta-Info help to document cases that aren't yet documented?
- I hope the cases describe the barriers and how there were dealt with, not just the successes
- Does a low ranking on 'participation' tell everything about the real participation or just on the documented participation?

Lack of time or content for this (3x)

- The time was too short for this evaluation.
- Nothing that I can see with this limited number of entries.





Future related topics

What do you think about the future of Susta-Info? How could it be continued, expanded, adapted?

Regarding the future of Susta-Info, many different answers were given. According to the questionnaires, widening the sources and listening to end-users are the most important way to continue and expand Susta-Info.

By widening the sources (2x):

- By networking outside the EU and UN-Habitat database, with similar initiatives form across the globe.
- Let majors, community leaders and private sector people tell their own stories.

By marketing: how will you make this more attractive than the many other (similar) websites?

By recommending it from one to another.

By listening to end-users (3x):

- Reviewing end user opinions.
- More end-user tests.
- With inputs along the time from users that utilize it on a real scenario.

By completing the database (2x)

By running the project 'continuously'.

By ensuring the financing (1x):

- Continuous funding or sponsoring; the ultimate goal should be self sufficiency, not relying on EC- or donor funding.
- User pay?
- National funding requests after national refinement and national hosting (of regional inputs).

Keep in mind: it should be strategic, participatory, replicable, localizes, inclusive and empowering.





Hands on Demonstration Sessions

Mid term seminar

During the Mid-term seminar the participants tested the system in small groups facilitated by a member of the Susta-Info consortium.

General feedback

- Users found the possibilities for refined search complicated. Several people felt it as not enough intuitive. One should be able to easily grasp the logic of searching, also in a refined search.
- A lot of documents are missing. There is very little on environmental education, non-motorised mobility and social issues (off course this is due to the simple fact that for the demo version 101 were inserted so far while at the end we expect many more.).

Specific feedback

- It is not clear who gave the label “outstanding” to the practices. According to some people ‘outstanding’ shouldn’t be a label only.
- The term recursively is not clear
- The publications from UNESCO should be included in the knowledge base

Tools session during Seville Conference

A number of the members of the consortium presented the Susta-Info tool hands on, at the Tools Market of the 5th Sustainable Cities and Towns Conference, in Seville. They started with a general introduction, but soon found out that one-on-one searching with a number of laptops with WIFI, proved to be very successful. About 25 individuals were guided to search for their most wanted document; this was very successful and people were very pleased with the ease and effectiveness of the system. As soon as individuals have a need for information and are standard skilled in working with search engines, Susta-Info holds no secrets to them.

General

- Most people were enthusiastic at first sight and promised to try the demo version at home or to try to stay informed on the proceedings (final version).
- It is positive to have a place where one can quickly get an overview of European research on a topic related to sustainable urban development. At the moment this is not easy to find.
- Several business cards were gathered from people that want to be kept informed about Susta-Info

Specific

- Waste management and resource management are missing as concepts in the thesaurus





- The link 'add-selected' concepts is too small

Further hand on demonstrations

Susta-Info will further develop the one-on-one dissemination as it is a convincing way of introducing people to searching the abstract field of sustainability in city development. Also during the Launch Conference in Bali a breakfast session with hands-on demonstrations on several lap-tops is foreseen.



List of Participants 20th of March

Last name	First name	Organisation
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Miranda	Liliana	Cities for Life
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Revora	Silvia	City of Buenos Aires
Kelly	Rob	RWKelly & Associates Ltd – Transport and Urban Planning
Segovia	Diana	City of Buenos Aires
Teubner	Wolfgang	ICLEI Europasekretariat
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