

***The role and function of systemic collaborative
intermediary organisations in urban system change: the
case of the Cities Alliance***

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Abstract

Misaligned, single actor and sector driven approaches result in urban system fragmentation which creates barriers to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The study argues for the alignment of the interests, resources and behaviours of actors to work together across local, national, regional and global urban system levels. This is an essential precondition for transitioning towards urban sustainability. It builds on the argument that systems change when developments at all levels link up and reinforce each other. The study contributes to the literature on the role of cross-sector collaboration and collaborative governance in urban sustainability transitions in three ways by: (1) extending the understanding on how intermediary functions are applied to scale urban collaborative governance; (2) developing the concept of a SCIO and a conceptual model for urban system change and describing the role of SCIOs to operationalise the conceptual model; and (3) contributing to the emerging understanding of how to make an abstract global agenda on collaboration, SDG Goal 17, more concrete by discussing the case of a global urban intermediary and multi-stakeholder partnership. It distinguishes between universal and systemic intermediary functions and discuss how these are applied across horizontal and vertical scales to foster collaborative governance and alignment. This contributes towards the understanding of how multi-level urban governance is organised and highlights the challenges and limitations encountered in scaling urban collaborative governance.

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Table of Contents

Plagiarism Declaration	2
Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
List of Figures	8
List of Tables	9
List of Acronyms.....	10
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
1.1 Introduction	11
1.2 The international agenda for sustainable cities.....	11
1.3 Urban system fragmentation: a roadblock on the path to more sustainable cities.....	12
1.4 Collaborative governance and urban intermediary organisations	13
1.5 Research Objectives	15
1.6 Conclusion.....	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Fragmentation – a barrier to urban system change	18
2.3 Complex system change	20
2.4 Conceptual model of urban system change	21
<i>Principle 1. Multiple levels need to link up and align</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Principle 2. Once connected, multiple levels need to reinforce each other</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Principle 3. Developments at multiple levels need to link up, align and reinforce each other around a collective approach and collective action</i>	<i>23</i>
2.5 Urban intermediary organisations.....	24
2.6 Systemic intermediary organisations and system change.....	28
2.6.1 SCIOs create linking mechanisms that create connections within system levels.....	28
2.6.2 SCIOs create linking mechanisms that create connections across system levels.....	29
2.6.3 SCIOs establish mechanisms that reinforce alignment across system levels	33
2.6.4 SCIOs create mechanisms that restructure governance arrangements and create coherence	34
2.6.5 Measuring the success of intermediary organisations	35
2.7 Conclusion.....	35
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology	37
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 Problem statement	37
3.3 Research objectives and questions.....	37

3.4 Research design	38
3.4.1 Research approach.....	38
3.4.2 Case study method, rationale and sampling.....	38
3.4.3 Insider research method	40
3.4.3.1 Insider method rationale	40
3.4.3.2 Insider perspective.....	41
3.5 Data collection	43
3.5.1 Documentation review	44
3.5.2 Participant observations	44
3.5.3 Semi-structured interviews.....	44
3.6 Data analysis	48
3.7 Validity and reliability	49
3.8 Limitations.....	51
Chapter 4: Findings	53
4.1 Linking mechanisms that create connections within regional, national and global levels.....	53
4.1.1 Activities within city and national levels.....	53
4.1.2 Activities within regional levels.....	54
4.1.3 Activities within the global level	55
4.2 Linking mechanisms that create connections across regional, national and global levels.....	55
4.2.1 Establish an overview of the urban system	56
4.2.2 Manage the interface between levels	56
4.2.3 Leverage capacity and integrating modes of intermediation	57
4.2.4 The role of networks, dialogue platforms and institutional mechanisms	58
4.2.5 The role of the Secretariat	58
4.2.6 Strategic use of intermediary functions and resources to address urban system gaps	62
4.2.7 The importance of combining dialogue with implementation	62
4.3 Mechanisms to reinforce change across urban system levels.....	62
4.4 The challenge of working across system levels	63
4.5 Conclusion.....	65
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	66
5.1 Scaling urban collaborative governance	66
5.2 Implications of SCIO functions for the urban system change conceptual model.....	69
5.3 Mechanisms to reinforce change across the urban system	73
5.4 Conclusion.....	73
Chapter 6: Conclusion	75
References	78

Appendix A: Interview Protocol 83
Appendix B: Evolution of the Cities Alliance approach to urban system change 86

List of Figures

Figure 1: Towards defining the urban system gap	19
Figure 2: Factors that influence behaviour	23
Figure 3: Intermediary functions	26
Figure 4: Instruments and approaches to integrate activities and actors across national, regional and global levels	57

List of Tables

Table 1: Interview sampling criteria	45
Table 2: Rationale for selecting respondents	46
Table 3: CA process methodology to foster alignment and collaboration	67
Table 4: Summary of systemic intermediary actions to implement the urban system change model	72

List of Acronyms

AAPS	Association of African Planning Schools
AURI	African Urban Research Initiative
CA	Cities Alliance
CBO	Community based organisations
CP	Country Programme
CIO	Collaborative Intermediary Organisation
CDS	City Development Strategy
JWP	Joint Work Programme
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MLP	Multi-level Perspective
MSI	Multi-stakeholder Initiative
NGO	Non-government organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RA	Regional Advisor
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
SCIO	Systemic collaborative intermediary organisation
SDI	Slum Dwellers International
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SU	Slum Upgrading
SUT	Sustainable Urban Transition
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UST	Urban Sustainability Transitions
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

A large-scale global demographic and societal shift is underway. It is estimated that the current world population of 7.6 billion people will increase to 9.8 billion in 2050 of which 70 per cent will live in cities (UNDESA, 2017). Although all this growth is currently concentrated on only two percent of the world's land mass, cities' need for resources extend far beyond their administrative boundaries (Dodman, 2009). While cities contribute nearly 80 per cent of global GDP, they are also responsible for 70 per cent of global greenhouse gasses and therefore contribute significantly to climate change (World Bank, 2017). In addition, cities contribute disproportionately to loss of biodiversity, land use change and degradation, chemical pollution, loss of biodiversity and water insecurity. Thus, cities are the sites where the battle for sustainability will be won or lost. Although significant technological advances could unlock more sustainable production and consumption, this cannot be realised without a fundamental shift in social interests and behaviours (Ozkaynak et al., 2012). Ernst et al. (2015:2989) emphasize that urban sustainability transitions also require a change in societal goals.

1.2 The international agenda for sustainable cities

In 2015, members of the United Nations agreed to a global vision for a sustainable future, referred to as Agenda 2030 (United Nations, 2015), which is intended to be achieved through the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are the collective ambition of 193 countries to address intractable problems of climate change, poverty and exclusion. The vision for a global future is articulated in 17 ambitious goals and 169 targets that provide a universal framework that binds all United Nations member countries to achieve these goals and targets by 2030.

The vision for cities is encapsulated in SDG Goal 11 to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (United Nations, 2015:26). Even though SDG Goal 11 is regarded as a stand-alone goal dedicated to put cities on a more sustainable path, a recent analysis recognises the interconnectedness between the achievement of SDG Goal 11 and the rest

of the goals. It is estimated that just over half of all SDGs are dependent on local government and cities for their achievement (UCLG, 2016).

The global community responsible for developing the SDGs argued that the achievement of the SDGs is dependent on all stakeholders working together. Through SDG Goal 17, “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development” (United Nations, 2015:30), member countries advocate for collaborative governance as the principle through which to achieve the SDGs.

1.3 Urban system fragmentation: a roadblock on the path to more sustainable cities

Cities are complex systems (Hassan, Scholes & Ash, 2005) that consist of many levels as well as diverse actors and their interests in dynamic interaction with each other. The urban system is comprised of the built environment, planning, administration, institutions, markets, finance, technologies, policies, regulations, diverse governance arrangements and a vast range of actors with multiple interests, resources and capabilities. These components combine to form a complex set of interactions within a geographical space. Technical solutions to urban development challenges, together with social interests and complicated networks of relationships, form complex urban governance networks. This constitutes a complex web of the capabilities required to transform the urban system as envisioned in SDG 11 (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013). The critical question is whether, and to what extent, these urban transition priorities and responses are aligned.

Implicit in higher order goals, such as the SDGs, is the need to fundamentally transform the urban system at local, national, regional and global levels to achieve sustainability. The process of achieving more sustainable cities is referred to both as sustainable urban transformation (SUT) and urban sustainability transitions (UST) (Ernst et al., 2016). SUT is the progressive realisation of more “sustainable urban structures and environment” (Ernst et al., 2015:2990) as a subcomponent UST. UST is the longer term, systemic and purposeful transition which leads to change in the “economic, social, cultural, organisational and physical” (Ernst et al., 2015:2997) dimensions of the urban system. UST is achieved through “long-term oriented governance approaches” which promote “active collaboration amongst stakeholders” and “integrate different perspectives and bodies of knowledge and expertise” (Ernst et al., 2015:2997). These complex

transitions require “a high degree of consensus and coordination between societal actors with diverse interests” (Ozkaynak et al., 2012:420).

In considering the dynamics of urban system change, what happens at the territorial level of the city is not just shaped by the actors at the city level, but also by interests that may be embedded in regional, national and global levels. It can therefore be stated that outside interests exert influence on what happens at the city level, and that relationships and responses are shaped both inside and outside the city.

Decisions and responses, for example on issues related to water and climate change, are often developed at regional and national level but have an impact at a local level (Kern & Alber, 2009). Single actor, sector-driven and stand-alone responses contribute to fragmentation in addressing challenges associated with urban development. Misaligned and incoherent decision making and policy and programme responses have not had significant transformational impact on urban settings beyond the interventions themselves (Cities Alliance, 2013). This has created a fragmented urban environment or “system gap” (Laur, Kloftsen & Bienkowska, 2012:5). The urban systems gap is characterised by misaligned urban system levels, disconnected actors, and incoherent approaches and actions that result in governance gaps. New institutions in the form of intermediary organisations have emerge to perform roles and functions to bring coherence to urban system fragmentation across different levels of governance.

1.4 Collaborative governance and urban intermediary organisations

Collaborative governance has been recognised in several fields of study as a new form of governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Huxham et al., 2000). Ansell and Torfing (2015:316) define collaborative governance as “a specific mode of interaction that is deliberative, multilateral, consensus-seeking, and oriented towards joint production of results and solutions”. It is characterised by the collaboration of state and non-state actors to collectively engage in deliberation and consensus-based decision making that guides actions to achieve a common purpose that would not have been achieved by a single actor (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Collaboration is driven by factors such as the need for additional resources, the need to address large-scale and complex socio-economic issues, fragmentation, lack of knowledge, significant

capacity challenges and opportunities for scaling up impact, reach and influence (Huxham et al., 2000). Huxham (1996) argues that collaboration “is the only way to overcome major societal problems” such as those targeted by the SDGs. UST require a multi-level approach to collaborative governance that includes horizontal and vertical modes of collaboration (Kern & Alber, 2009; Ansell & Torfing, 2015).

Collaboration in the urban sector has found expression in multiple organisational forms such as social contracts (Ozkaynak et al., 2012), urban laboratories (Neuens et al., 2013), city and transnational networks (Kern & Alber, 2009), public-private partnerships (Stoker, 1998), cross-sector social partnerships (Hamann & April, 2013), multi-stakeholder initiatives (Rasche, 2012) and collaborative intermediary organisations (CIO) (Hamann & April, 2013). There has been a growing recognition of the importance of intermediary organisations in urban sustainability transitions (Hamann & April, 2013; Moss et al., 2009; Hodson & Marvin, 2010; Görgens & Van Donk, 2012; Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013; Ansell & Torfing, 2015).

Hamann and April (2013:12) define CIO “as a particular type of intermediary organisation that creates explicit platforms for deliberation and collaboration between diverse stakeholders and different societal sectors”. Such CIOs are “both intermediary organisations and cross-sector social partnerships” (Hamann & April, 2013:12), where cross-sector social partnerships are defined as platforms for structured collaboration between multiple stakeholders with aligning interests to achieve a common objective (Hamann & April, 2013:14).

Systemic intermediaries work across the system or network level to connect, facilitate and align multi-stakeholder platforms (Van Lente et al., 2003; Breukers et al., 2009). What distinguishes systemic intermediaries is their orientation towards managing long-term and complex system transitions (Hodson et al., 2007). A systemic collaborative intermediary organisation (SCIO) is therefore defined as an intermediary organisation that: (1) works long-term across urban system levels, to (2) facilitate multi-stakeholder participation in platforms for deliberation and collaboration to transform urban systems.

The issue of how to scale collaborative governance has received modest attention in the literature on collaborative governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2015). More specifically, current literature does not

address how SCIOs work across the urban system and across multiple levels to affect urban sustainability transitions. Although the Multi-Level Perspective theory (Verbong & Geels, 2007) refers to the coordination of actors at the local level, it does not address how this coordination takes place to affect change at the regime and landscape levels and across the three levels. Rasche's (2012) analysis of the role of multi-stakeholder initiatives to implement global goals is limited to local and global dimensions. Rasche argues for the need to understand whether a regional level would enhance coordination in multi-stakeholder initiatives to implement global goals. Medd and Marvin (2007) conclude that a deeper understanding is required of the different ways in which intermediation translates interests across different scales.

Where urban intermediary organisations have been documented, they are focused on specific sectors such as water (Moss et al., 2009), energy (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013), housing (Görgens & Van Donk, 2012), climate change (Kern & Alber, 2009) or urban infrastructure networks (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011). However, they do not address the urban system as defined earlier. Current literature on urban intermediaries are limited in scalar dimensions to city level (Moss et al., 2009), city region level (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013) or sub-city levels (Görgens & Van Donk, 2012; Hamann & April, 2013). Finally, Hodson, Marvin and Bulkeley (2013:1420) argue that there "also needs to be a richer appreciation of the different roles of intermediaries in various conditions and settings, and the strategic and operational capabilities utilised and required by intermediaries".

1.5 Research Objectives

This research aims to extend the understanding of how collaborative governance of urban systems takes place across local, regional, national and global levels. The objectives of the research are twofold: first, to understand what roles and functions SCIOs perform to link actors and their activities across all levels to catalyse urban sustainability transitions; and second, to understand what mechanisms are required to make change durable once it has been effected.

To achieve these objectives, the research focused on two main questions:

- (1) What role and function do intermediary organisations perform to create links between actors and their activities across local, national, regional and global levels?

- (2) Once linked, how do actors and their activities at city, national, regional and global levels reinforce each other?

This study follows an inductive methodology to engage with the literature on sustainability transitions and develops a conceptual framework for urban system change. For this, it draws on literature on multi-level perspectives, behavioural change in sustainability transitions, multi-stakeholder initiatives and intermediary organisations to develop principles to catalyse urban system change and discuss mechanisms to implement these principles.

The conceptual framework builds on the argument that systems change when developments at all systems levels link up and reinforce each other (Verbong & Geels, 2007). The conceptual framework examines the role and function of SCIOs to create horizontal and vertical links within and across local, regional, national and global levels. The conceptual framework is then applied to the case of Cities Alliance, a global urban intermediary organisation which aims to contribute to UST as envisioned in the SDGs. The Cities Alliance case is described in detail in Chapter 4. The case study aims to develop insights into how an urban SCIO develops scalar relationships and how it creates platforms for deliberation and collaboration.

1.6 Conclusion

The research aims to make the hidden contribution (Moss et al., 2009) of SCIOs to achieve SDG Goals 11 and 17 more explicit. There are very few intermediary organisations that are explicitly set up as such and in most instances, would not identify themselves as intermediaries (Moss et al., 2009). This may result in missed opportunities to enhance their contribution to urban system change. Therefore, much of their work to bridge and facilitate actors is not well documented or understood. To date, advocating for cross sector collaboration as an essential means to implement the SDGs has dominated global debate. Two years have passed since SDG Goal 17 was formulated. Not enough attention has been afforded in SDG implementation debates to how exactly cross-sector collaboration is initiated and sustained, who is involved and what their roles are in informing practical considerations. This study hopes to aid urban actors in identifying their contributions which may enable them to restructure behaviour, policy and programme responses to address urban system fragmentation. Collaborative governance and urban intermediation are

abstract concepts. The study aims to elucidate the practical application and understanding of these concepts.

The literature review in Chapter 2 combines literature on urban sustainability transitions and intermediary organisations to develop a conceptual model for urban system change within which to analyse the role of urban SCIOs. Chapter 3 discusses the choice of case study and insider research strategy and implications for research methodology. The conceptual model, developed in Chapter 2, is then applied to analyse the Cities Alliance case study. The findings are presented in Chapter 4 and analysed in Chapter 5 for its implications with regard to the literature and urban system change conceptual model. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the research, overall contributions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 starts with a review of the literature on sustainability transition and cross-sector collaboration to develop an understanding of how complex social system change. Following that, the concept of SCIOs is introduced, defined as intermediary organisations that: (1) work long term across urban system levels; to (2) facilitate multi-stakeholder participation in platforms for deliberation and collaboration to transform urban systems. The theoretical framework draws on the Multi-Level Perspective and behavioural change in socio-technical transitions to develop a conceptual model of urban system change. The conceptual model on urban system change puts forward three principles to respond to misaligned actors, governance, action and vision gaps across different scales. Lastly, the remaining chapter discusses how systemic intermediary functions are applied to create mechanisms that operationalise the conceptual model on urban system change.

2.2 Fragmentation – a barrier to urban system change

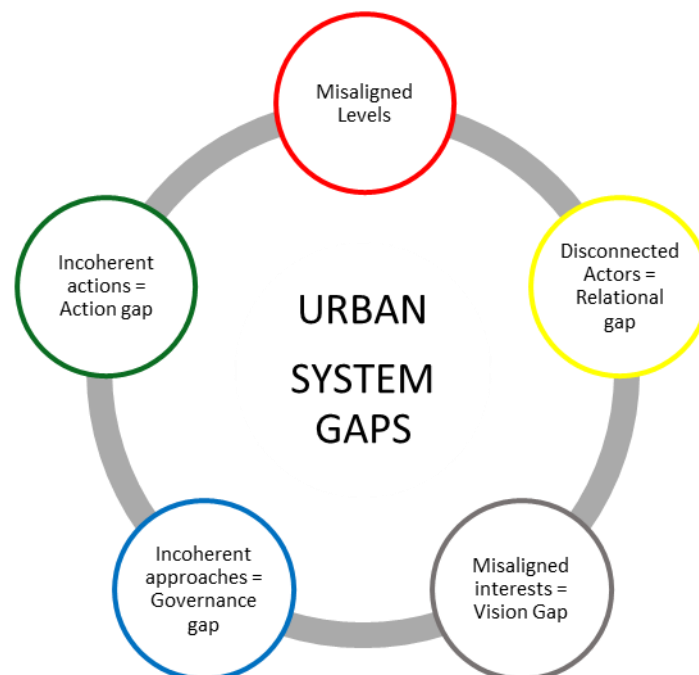
The urban system is complex and consists of many levels, diverse actors and their interests all in dynamic interaction with each other. This creates a fragmented environment or “system gaps” (Laur, Kloftsen & Bienkowska, 2012:5) where governance of the urban system is dispersed across local, regional, national and global levels and amongst a range of actors. The process of UST and SUT creates spaces in between policy and practice, production and consumption and scalar dimensions. It is in these spaces that new forms of collaboration emerge (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011).

Urban development interventions tend to be project based with low levels of alignment and coordination (Cities Alliance, 2013). As a result, the impact on the behaviour of actors influencing the broader system remains low. Hodson, Marvin and Bulkeley (2013) further note a disconnect between the vision of what needs to be done and how activities towards change take place. Thus, the urban system gap is characterised by a complex web of dispersed actors and their interests with incoherent and misaligned visions of what needs to be achieved. This creates fragmented actor relations and governance voids across local, regional, national and global levels. Addressing

the urban system gap is dependent on coherent “capacity and capability to act” (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013:1404) by restructuring social relations.

Based on the researcher’s empirical analysis, the urban system gap is defined as misaligned urban system levels, disconnected actors and incoherent approaches and actions that result in governance gaps. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The disconnect among actors combined with existing power imbalances create a gap in how actors relate to each other. Misaligned interests create a diverse set of interpretations of what needs to be done; translating into a vision gap. Diverse interests result in a multitude of uncoordinated agendas which are embodied in uncoordinated programmes and activities; creating an action gap. Uncoordinated and incoherent responses produced by misaligned interests are embodied in rules, regulations and institutions; creating a governance gap. Finally, misaligned actors, their interests and their embodiment is replicated across the system; this creates misalignment between local, regional, national and global levels.

Figure 1: Towards defining the urban system gap



Source: Author

Having defined the urban system, the remainder of the chapter discusses the literature on complex system change to derive principles that may guide UST.

2.3 Complex system change

Hamann and April (2013:12) describe the characteristics of systemic urban transitions as “purposive, systemic, long-term and vision-led change”. The degree and nature of change is significantly influenced by levels of coordinated responses and are either the outcome of historical processes or purposely determined (Hodson & Marvin, 2010).

Where complex system change has been studied, such as in energy and innovation systems, scholars have noted that the desired change was not catalysed by the proliferation of technological advances alone. Change only happened when the social dimension was addressed which led to a field of study termed socio-technical transitions (Geels, 2002). Social arrangements play an important role in system change and are influenced by their context (Mourik et al., 2009).

Despite significant technological advances to address housing, mobility, energy, health, governance and all the productive aspects of urbanisation, it was still not possible to achieve the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (United Nations, 2015). Therefore, it is of critical importance to combine technical solutions with the social dimension of urban system change. The question then switches from just focusing on the ‘what’ (infrastructure, basic service delivery, secure tenure, etc.) to ‘how’ the process of urban system change comes about. A systems approach is required given the complexity of interactions and interconnections between the different components at multiple levels.

A multi-level governance approach is required to manage UST given that cities are shaped by interests from within and outside of the city. Social interests invariably produce urban governance networks that in turn steer urban transitions. The direction of urban transitions is dependent on whether there is a shared understanding of the endpoint and how this gets translated into action (Hodson & Marvin, 2010).

From a Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) (Verbong & Geels, 2007), complex systems consist of multiple levels that form the context within which system change takes place. The MLP is an important framework for understanding the interrelationship between multiple levels of the urban system and where to target interventions to catalyse system change. Geels (2002) describes three broad levels on which complex system change take place as micro (niche), meso (regime)

and macro (landscape). He also maintains that an interrelationship exists between developments at the different levels. The niche level is the site where innovation takes place, the regime level refers to the rules and social structures that govern the behaviour of networks, communities and institutions, while the landscape level forms the broader political, economic, social and environmental context within which the regime and niche levels play out. Verbong and Geels (2007:1026) argue that systemic transitions manifest when “development at all three levels link up and reinforce each other”.

The MLP provides a useful conceptual tool to analyse the effect of multi-level governance in UST. Although the MLP only refers to the coordination of actors at the niche level, it does not, however, address the question of how this coordination takes place at the regime and landscape levels and across the three levels.

2.4 Conceptual model of urban system change

The challenge to urban system transformation is framed through the concept of the urban system gap, defined in section 2.2, which is the result of fragmented relationships, policy and decision making and uncoordinated activities and behaviours. The conceptual model draws on the concepts of collaborative governance across multiple system levels and behavioural change in sustainability transitions. The aim is to develop principles for creating coherence and alignment which could catalyse and enable urban system change.

The conceptual model for urban systems change builds on two lines of thought. First, for complex systems to change, development at all levels needs to “link up and reinforce each other” (Verbong & Geels, 2007:1026), and second, “change requires collective action and a collective approach” (Mourik et al., 2009:5). From these arguments, the conceptual model for urban system change deduces three principles to respond to misaligned actor, governance, action and vision gaps across different scales.

Principle 1. Multiple levels need to link up and align

In their work on the role of cities in socio-technical transitions, Hodson and Marvin (2010) argue that the various pressures at landscape, regime and niche levels produce social interests. However, these social interests, the relationships they produce and their corresponding governance priorities are spread across the landscape, regime and niche levels. Disconnected actors and their interests create misalignment across system levels which result in incoherent

visions of the required change. Mourik et al. (2009:30) underscore the importance of alignment by emphasizing that “in order to support sustainable change, it is important to align interests on different scales”.

The distinction between linking and aligning is important. Linking is defined as the action of creating connection or couplings between two or more components. Aligning is defined as bringing “into cooperation or agreement” or bringing “into proper or desirable coordination or relation” (Collins English Dictionary, 2010). The first step towards aligning across system levels is to initiate connection, or linkages, between actors and strengthening existing connections where necessary (Van Lente et al., 2003). This is achieved through identifying the most relevant actors to engage (Van Lente et al., 2003), facilitating platforms for dialogue and implementation (Hamann & April, 2013; Van Lente et al., 2003), and articulation of and mediation between different interests (Mourik et al., 2009). Connection is also brought about through establishing a vision around which to align interests (Hamann & April, 2013; Hodson & Marvin, 2010), creating and maintaining vertical and horizontal networks (Rasche, 2012; Ansel & Torfing, 2015; Van Lente et al., 2003), and managing the interface between different system levels (Van Lente et al., 2003).

The degree of system change, and the ability to manage this change, is dependent on the ability to align social interests, resources and governance priorities. The degree of control and influence on system levels may reside inside as well as outside of landscape, regime and niche levels. It becomes important to understand how urban governance networks are constituted and how the members of such governance networks can control and influence responses across the various levels. How these pressures are perceived, translated into responses and operationalised, has a direct influence on the direction and content of urban system change (Hodson & Marvin, 2010).

Governance of complex system change spans multiple levels. Therefore, an urban system change approach requires horizontal alignment of actors’ interests, resources and behaviours within system levels as well as vertical alignment between system levels (Ansell & Torfing, 2015).

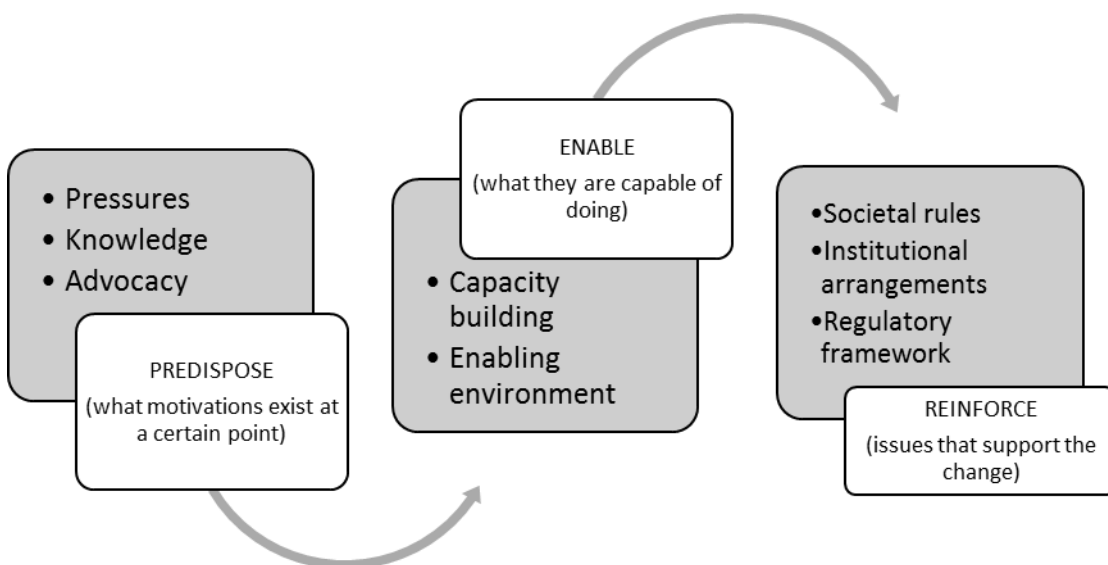
Principle 2. Once connected, multiple levels need to reinforce each other

Mourik et al. (2009:30) advocate for the application of a behavioural change approach across the system to contribute to socio-technical transitions and to “make sense of the conditions for change”. The behaviour of multiple actors is deeply entrenched in the system. Their behavioural

choices are made in relation to their context. Changes in the context can trigger changes across the system. Lasting change is not achieved unless the context also changes. If the context, influences and behaviour of other actors do not change, the target group reverts to its original behaviour (Mourik et al., 2009). Sustaining change becomes an important objective of system transitions.

A combination of motivating, enabling and reinforcing factors are involved to achieve behavioural change (Mourik et al., 2009). These factors are illustrated in Figure 2. Predisposing factors motivate actors to change their behaviour. Once motivated actors need appropriate capabilities and capacity to change behaviour. Enabling factors include learning, capacity building and a supportive environment that influence actors' capabilities. Reinforcing factors take the broader context into consideration to support change over time such as networks, regulatory frameworks, rules of society, feedback from peers and experts, creating new institutions and institutional arrangements. In other words, reinforcing factors serve the purpose of making change durable.

Figure 2: Factors that influence behaviour



Source: Adapted from Mourik et al. (2009)

Principle 3. Developments at multiple levels need to link up, align and reinforce each other around a collective approach and collective action

The term 'collective' refers to two concepts. First, actors who agree to act as a group or 'collective', and second, a voluntary agreement to cooperate. Hodson, Marvin and Bulkeley (2013)

describe the context within which system change takes place as constituted of multiple actors acting over multiple timelines and system levels with different motivations and expectations, contributing to highly fragmented responses to governance and implementation. Mourik et al. (2009:18) comment that “their behaviour (and changes in it) is structured by the particular socio-institutional that they are a part of. Through their actions actors can change this context”. However, individual actors are not capable of changing contextual factors such as societal rules, economic systems and regulations, by themselves.

A new form of governance, collaborative governance, is a means through which to achieve collective action. Collaborative governance has been recognised in several fields of study and is characterised by collective deliberation and consensus-based decision making (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Huxham et al., 2000). A collective approach can only be effective if the participating actors perceive to be adequately represented and trust that the common goal, collective decision making and pooling of resources are aligned to their interests. Adequate representation of interests and a facilitated process that balances power and allows for collective decision making is essential to create legitimacy.

Huxham et al. (2000:348) comment that the “collaborative advantage relies on the diversity of the members. It is the potential to harness the differences that creates the possibility for synergy”. This can only be achieved through working together. Effective coordination of capacities and resources is an essential requirement to affect system change (Hodson & Marvin, 2010). System change is not achieved without the fundamental transformation of behaviour and governance arrangements.

Intermediary organisations perform functions that create mechanisms to operationalise each principle. In the following sections the literature on cross-sector collaboration and identifying systemic intermediary functions to operationalise the three principles considered above, will be discussed.

2.5 Urban intermediary organisations

There are very few intermediary organisations that are explicitly set up as such and in most instances these organisations would not identify themselves as intermediaries (Moss et al., 2009).

Görgens and Van Donk (2012:11) describe this phenomenon aptly when they reflect on the role of intermediaries:

Given the diversity of intermediary roles and the complexity of the upgrading process [...], it seems likely that these intermediary functions will be played by a spectrum of organisations (engaging in different ways and to different degrees with stakeholders) rather than all of the intermediary functions located within an individual organisation.

Urban intermediaries mediate between actors' interests, priorities, resources and modes of engagement to coproduce solutions to urban development challenges. Urban intermediation can be performed by different institutions such as non-government organisations (NGOs) that negotiate priorities between urban poor communities and local government, city networks that provide spaces for learning and lobby stakeholders on behalf of cities, and local government associations that facilitate the relationship between national and local government. Intermediation can also be done by city improvement district organisations that negotiate between the needs of the private sector and public policy, city departments that mediate between the supply and demand of energy, and national urban forums that mediate between priorities to develop policy and translate it into programmes. Through performing these intermediary roles, actors, through various institutional forms, are able to influence and restructure the relationships that shape SUT and UST.

There are at least four ways of identifying intermediaries:

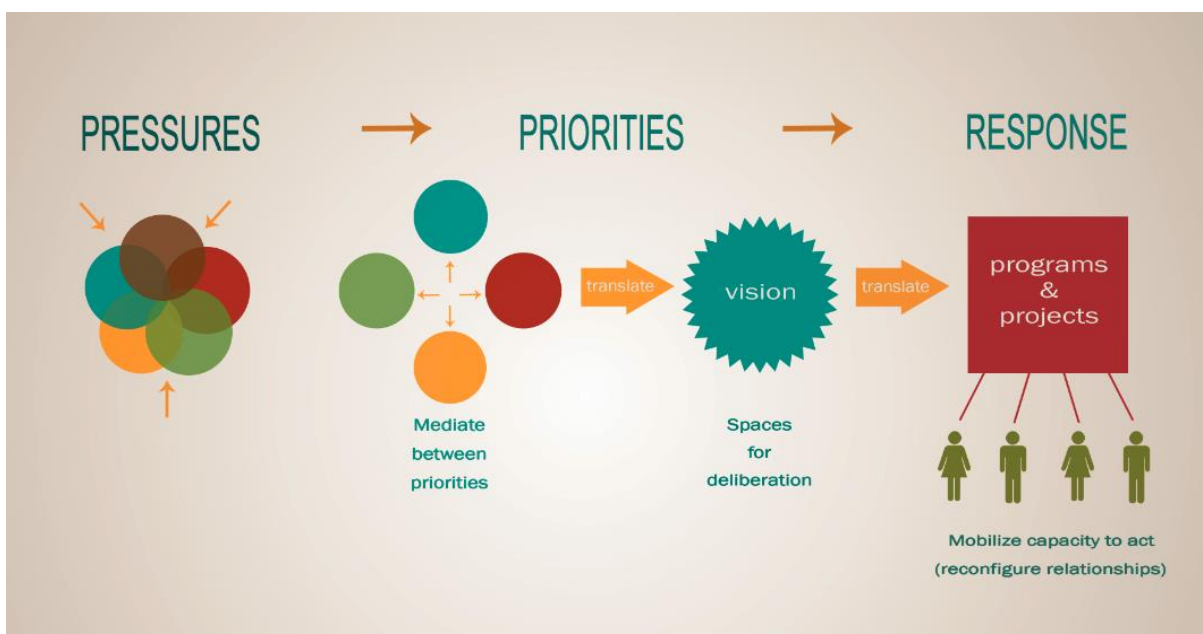
- (1) The key distinctive characteristic of intermediary organisations is their 'in between-ness' to open up relationships and mediate action between actors (Mourik et al., 2009; Moss et al., 2009).
- (2) Collaborating across urban system levels create new institutional spaces which intermediaries seek to fill (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011).
- (3) Although intermediaries fill these spaces through different institutional forms, e.g. an individual organisation, a network or a programme of work (Moss et al., 2009), they are primarily distinguished by the intermediary functions they perform. These can be to facilitate, advocate, learn, lobby, fund, advice, mediate, and translate (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011; Moss et al., 2009).
- (4) Intermediaries work across boundaries between different actors, spatial dimensions, geographical locations, production and consumption, deliberation and implementation

(Hamann & April, 2013), different action arenas (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011), technology and social contexts (Moss et al., 2009) and strategy and practice (Moss et al., 2009).

The context from which intermediaries emerge informs their function, organisational capabilities and their interests, given that they represent the needs of their stakeholders. Intermediary activity can be distinguished by the time frame of their activities which can range between short term and longer term programmatic interventions (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013). Project intermediaries tend to focus on connecting and facilitating collaboration between a small number of actors and are limited to a project framework. Systemic intermediaries play a broader role in urban transitions and work long term across the system or network level to bridge, facilitate and align multi-stakeholder networks (Hodson & Marvin, 2010; Van Lente et al., 2003; Breukers et al., 2009).

Figure 3 illustrates the core intermediary functions, i.e. mediating between priorities in response to pressures, creating spaces for deliberation, translating interests and priorities into a common vision, translating the vision into implementable programmes and projects, and mobilizing the capacity and resources to implement the agreed vision (Hodson et al., 2013). These functions are applied within urban system levels to foster coordination, cooperation and collaboration.

Figure 3: Intermediary functions



Source: Adapted from Hodson et al. (2013)

The literature on urban collaborative governance identifies several types of urban intermediaries including: (1) 'interpretive intermediaries' referring to the role of architects working across design and regulation (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011); (2) 'cultural intermediaries' and their role in urban regeneration (Andres, 2011); (3) 'civic intermediaries' that promote and facilitate active citizen participation (Le Roux, 2007); (4) 'investment intermediaries' who facilitate institutional investment in urban regeneration (Hagerman, Clark & Hebb, 2007); (5) 'project intermediaries' that work short term and connect a small number of actors (Moss et al., 2009); (6) 'systemic intermediaries' that work at network or system level to influence transition processes (Van Lente et al., 2003); (7) 'strategic intermediaries' "deliberately undertaking work in order to work across a particular set of relationships to a particular end" (Moss et al., 2009:21); and (8) 'collaborative intermediaries' as defined in Section 1.4 (Hamann & April, 2013).

The focus of this study is on CIOs, a concept developed by Hamann and April (2013). A new type of intermediary organisation, they work strategically across the urban system. Hamann and April (2013:12) define CIOs "as a particular type of intermediary organisations that create explicit platforms for deliberation and collaboration between diverse stakeholders and different societal sectors". Such CIOs are "both intermediary organisations and cross-sector social partnerships" (Hamann & April, 2013:12). Cross-sector social partnerships are defined as platforms for "structured collaboration" between multiple stakeholders with aligning interests to achieve a common objective (Hamann & April, 2013:14).

Where urban intermediary organisations have been documented, they are limited to specific sectors such as water (Moss et al., 2009), energy (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013), housing (Görgens & Van Donk, 2012), climate change (Kern & Alber, 2009), or urban infrastructure networks (Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011). They are therefore not reflective of the urban system as defined earlier. Current literature on urban intermediaries are limited in scalar dimension to city level (Moss et al., 2009), city region level (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013), or sub-city levels (Görgens & Van Donk, 2012; Hamman & April, 2013). Medd and Marvin (2007) discuss the role of strategic intermediaries to develop local plans for regional strategies with a brief outline of the challenges involved. Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley (2013:1420) add that there "also needs to be a richer appreciation of the different roles of intermediaries in various conditions and settings, and the strategic and operational capabilities utilised and required by intermediaries".

In the next section the concept of SCIOs is developed and their role and functions in urban system change discussed. How systemic intermediary functions are applied to create mechanisms that operationalise the conceptual model for urban system change will be identified through the discussion.

2.6 Systemic intermediary organisations and system change

Systemic intermediaries work across the system or network level to connect, facilitate and align multi-stakeholder platforms (Van Lente et al., 2003; Breukers et al., 2009). Furthermore, what distinguishes systemic intermediaries is their orientation towards managing long-term and complex system transitions (Hodson et al., 2007). SCIOs are therefore intermediary organisations that work long-term across scalar dimensions of the urban system to facilitate multi-stakeholder participation in platforms for deliberation and collaboration to transform urban systems.

2.6.1 SCIOs create linking mechanisms that create connections within system levels

Hodson et al. (2007) describe the ability to develop a ‘strategic overview’ of the system and the change required as a core systemic intermediary function. This allows the intermediary to develop: (1) knowledge of the capacity within the system to enable it to leverage the capacity and capability of a diverse range of actors, and (2) an understanding of the interrelationships across systems levels.

Having established an overview of the system, intermediaries convene stakeholders in an essential first step towards collaboration. Intermediaries perform a crucial leadership role in convening stakeholders for effective collaborative governance. This type of facilitative leadership builds trust and interdependence, mediates power imbalances, identifies mutual interest, steers towards mutual gain, and generally facilitates the process of consensus building (O’Brien, 2012).

Facilitative and collaborative leadership supports the strategic intermediary function of alignment. Bryson et al. (2006:52) elaborate that “the leadership challenge in cross-sector collaboration may be viewed as a challenge of aligning initial conditions, processes, structures, governance, contingencies and constraints, outcomes, and accountabilities such that good things happen in a sustained way over time – indeed, so that public value can be created”.

One of the core functions of the intermediary is the “articulation and alignment of actors’ interests” (Backhaus, 2010:89). Intermediaries are able to translate visions of urban system change into processes and systems, and implement them. This is done through translating global solutions into local responses (Rasche, 2012) and policy into practice (Backhaus, 2010).

A vision becomes the instrument for aligning priorities and responses. Hodson and Marvin (2010:481) describe visions and goals as providing “a reference point through which networks can be built, gaining commitments to ‘participate’, orientating the actions of the potential participants and constituencies, and in persuading potential participants of the desirability of transition”. A critical aspect in developing a vision is whether it is representative of a narrow set of interests or encapsulates a broad overview of system change.

The process of establishing a strategic overview and vision is often an iterative process, contested by diverse actors that produce a negotiated outcome. Horizontal linkages are also achieved through convening and facilitating stakeholders into platforms for deliberations, learning and collaboration (Davies & Swilling, 2014; Hamann & April, 2013; Van Lente et al., 2003).

2.6.2 SCIOs create linking mechanisms that create connections across system levels

Systemic intermediaries perform the function of not just linking within levels of the system but also across system levels. Working across system levels requires intermediary organisations to constantly make connections between actors and networks across different scales. Scaling is the dynamic process of moving between different levels (Ansell & Torfing, 2015). There is an inherent tension in scaling horizontal collaboration across vertical scales and to scale top down approaches to local practice. Systemic intermediaries are able to mediate this (Ansell & Torfing, 2015). To work across scales, intermediaries are required to negotiate, re-represent and translate interests and priorities in each context (Medd & Marvin, 2007:318).

Managing the interface between disconnected scalar dimensions within the system becomes the point of departure for an integration strategy (Van Lente et al., 2003). In this regard, linkages are created across the levels and between disconnected actors and their networks. Intermediaries “build this capacity through multi-level networks of ‘relevant’ social interests” (Hodson, Marvin &

Bulkeley, 2013:1410). Ansell and Torfing (2015) observe that the secretariats of global partnerships play an important role in bridging collaboration across vertical and horizontal scales.

Van Lente et al. (2003) propose building systems that produce platforms for dialogue and interaction as a strategy to manage interfaces within and across system levels. Such platforms act as the enabler to develop visions and strategies which in turn create alignment and bring together strategic actors. These same platforms and frameworks are utilised to generate strategic intelligence and diffuse knowledge across the system (Van Lente et al., 2003).

Systemic intermediaries have the potential to leverage the diverse ways in which actors mediate to produce either incremental or radical change or a combination of both, depending on how the modes of mediation are integrated and applied (Van Lente et al., 2003; Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013). Hodson, Marvin and Bulkeley (2013) categorise four ways, described below, in which intermediation takes place with reference to: (1) whether the change priorities were initiated externally or originated from within the system, and (2) whether the scale of intervention is targeted across the system or at project level.

The four ways of intermediation are briefly discussed by way of examples:

- Conduit intermediation takes place where priorities were conceptualised and agreed at different levels with cascaded implementation at different levels. A typical example would be global goals and targets such as SDGs that are implemented through national policies (e.g. national policy on climate change) which cascade to built environment standards at the city level.
- Poverty Reduction Strategies or national urban policies (national goals and targets) are good examples of systemic intermediation where the change agenda is imposed onto a systemic context. These instruments encourage responses at the sub-national level that may be once-off and not necessarily connected. However, they can be “long term and systemic in their orientation” (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013:1411) and can reconfigure the sub-national system.
- Settlement level enumerations may be regarded as an example of piecemeal intermediation, given that these priorities are conceived and implemented within the same local level context or scale. Settlement level enumerations require communities to be mobilised and organised. Community based organisations (CBOs) are typically

supported by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to carry out mobilisation and organisation of community members. They also provide support services such as access to technical skills, survey instrument design, access to finances, and training of community enumerators (Lee, 1998). Once the enumerations are completed, the CBOs promote the outcomes and facilitate dialogue between stakeholders and communities to develop responses to developmental challenges identified through the enumerations. These activities may be stand-alone activities or loosely connected with similar projects driven by the need to mediate between different priorities. These can be initiated at different scales such as the need to develop a better understanding at the city or sub-city level.

- Lastly, responses may be initiated within a specific context that mediates priorities within the context and re-orientates responses towards “long-term, systematic and interrelated programmes” (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013:1411). An example of this may be city development strategies.

From a systems perspective, understanding the ways in which intermediation takes place provides strategic entry points: (1) for the appropriate coordination of existing ways of intermediation; (2) to restructure intermediary roles where necessary; and (3) to develop, integrate and apply different ways of intermediation into a strategic set of responses. The integration of intermediary functions is important in managing UST, given that urban governance takes place at different scales (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013). However, the literature on sustainability transitions does not address how the integration of the intermediary function takes place.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) emerge as a new form of institutional infrastructure which, due to their multi-level nature, are well placed to bridge the gap across multiple systems levels (Rasche, 2012). The theory on loose and tight couplings in MSIs (Rasche, 2012) describes how actors relate to each other within and across multiple levels and provides insights into how multi-level governance may be restructured to realise long-term systemic change. Rasche’s work on loose and tight couplings adds an important practical understanding of how linkages can be established and strengthened to create alignment across urban system levels.

Rasche describe MSIs as a form of collaborative governance that functions “at transnational scale” (2012:679) as he examines the role of MSIs in developing local actions to implement global goals.

In Rasche's conceptualisation of the relationship between diverse stakeholders, which he refers to as 'loose and tight couplings', he describes MSIs as relational systems where the frequency and nature of interactions within networks affect the relationships between actors in the network and the outcomes their interactions can produce.

An understanding of the underlying relationships within MSIs and how the performance of these relationships can be supported will shed light on the potential impact of the MSIs (Rasche, 2012). This relates to CIOs which, by their very nature, are MSIs. Establishing links that enable integration across multiple levels of MSI activity makes the theoretical framework on loose and tight couplings relevant for studying the role of SCIO urban system change. Understanding how these linkages function can provide insights into how to reconfigure relationships across system levels.

Links between MSIs participants either exist or are established. The strength of these links is determined by how frequently actors interact, whether there is a direct or indirect relationship between actors, and whether there is a disconnect between the cause and effect of their interactions. It also depends on whether the actions of individual actors or network of actors has an immediate effect on other actors or networks of actors in the system. Loose and tight couplings are used to increase connections, increase the frequency of interactions and the flow of information across loosely or tightly connected actors to strengthen connections and build relationships across scalar levels.

Rasche notes several governance challenges at the global MSI scale: (1) the geographical dispersion of actors limit opportunities for interaction and as a result (2) actors interact less frequently with each other; therefore (3) the relationships tend to be less direct (often through representation). As a result, (4) there is a lesser effect at the global level due to a delay in response across the system ('non-immediate effects'), and (5) higher degrees of uncertainty, given the difficulties in representing a clear, common reference point for diverse interests represented at the global level. To enhance the coordination of MSI initiatives, Rasche (2012:700) argues that "there is a need to better coordinate activities across local networks to address global problems in an organised way [...] [and] well-coordinated global action is unlikely to emerge without strengthening the couplings between local networks". Intermediary organisations play a role in coordinating efforts through convening actors, establishing flows of information and communication, and translating interests into priorities, visions and actions (Moss et al., 2009).

Although Rasche (2010) describes the role of loose and tight couplings to create and strengthen linkages across system levels, the role of intermediary organisations in creating these linkages are not explicitly addressed.

2.6.3 SCIOs establish mechanisms that reinforce alignment across system levels

Changing behaviour is difficult to accomplish, however, “intermediaries can be important facilitators of this process” (Backhaus, 2010:91) through creating platforms for learning and networking (Van Lente et al., 2003, Moss et al., 2009).

Change can be made durable through creating networks that span the boundaries between actors and system levels (Backhaus, 2010). Supporting networks could be positioned as motivating, enabling and reinforcing levers for changing behaviour. These support networks can become an important tool for institutionalising change catalysed through the intervention.

It is also important to create loose couplings to connect the networks that would typically not connect with each other, to allow knowledge and information to spread across these networks. Such linkages act as reinforcing feedback loops and are important to generate and spread momentum and influence across networks.

Mourik et al. (2009:9) observe that the value of establishing networks is that they create “new institutions to support the new behaviour”. Intermediaries intervene in these networks to change the way stakeholders relate to each other with the goal of collaboration.

Long-term change is difficult and on a scale outside of individual actors’ capabilities. The further away one moves from the target intervention, the weaker the ability becomes to exert influence. In the context of systemic change, creating and sustaining multi-stakeholder networks emerges as a strategy to fill the systems gap and manage the interface between system levels with the aim of aligning actions across niche, regime and landscape levels. Such networks provide a platform for dialogue and exchange, facilitating mutual understanding, joint problem solving and developing coordinated responses.

Strategic networks hold the potential to be a tool for realigning and reconfiguring relationships at scale. Therefore the purposes of networks are the following: to provide platforms for deliberation; to facilitate the flow of information and learning; develop and diffuse ideas and build common understanding; to provide frameworks through which motives, interests and resources become aligned to common purpose; to create a mechanism for managing the interface between different interests and levels of engagement; to create a mechanism to facilitate multiple feedback loops, joint problem solving and contextualisation of responses; and to increase responsiveness to address the action gap (Van Lente et al., 2003; Backhaus et al., 2010).

The strength of the network lies in the number of strategic connections established, while the strength of these connections is dependent on trust (Campbell, 2012). The importance of face-to-face communication in collaborative governance is underscored as critical to building trust (Hodson & Marvin, 2010). This may be achieved through fostering local and regional networks and by supporting opportunities to increase visibility and interaction with local and regional stakeholders. The role of the systemic intermediary is to constantly identify and bring connections into the network to leverage their multiplier effect.

Intermediaries are not neutral actors. They are influenced by the context from which they emerge. A disadvantage of this is that they may be selective about the activities, actors and networks they pursue. An advantage is that they understand the context and actors and can adapt to this context (Medd & Marvin, 2007). They can develop policies and instruments that fit the context which acts as a reinforcing mechanism to make change durable (Mourik et al., 2009).

2.6.4 SCIOs create mechanisms that restructure governance arrangements and create coherence

Intermediary organisations not only facilitate the creation of a common purpose, they also facilitate collaborative action. A collective approach can only be achieved if the participating actors perceive to be adequately represented and trust that the common goal, collective decision making and pooling of resources is aligned to their interests. Adequate representation of interests and a facilitated process that balances power and allows for collective decision making is essential to create legitimacy.

The embeddedness of intermediaries allows them to adapt to their context and the needs of the stakeholders they serve. They translate the visions of what needs to be done into implementable programmes. Effective intermediation requires the need to balance deliberation with implementation (Hamann & April, 2013). Moss and colleagues observe that “intermediary activity directed at collective action is the most transformative” (Moss et al., 2009:29). Intermediaries may play a role in creating new institutional frameworks or structures, such as multi-stakeholder partnerships, or delegate implementation to a separate entity (Medd & Marvin, 2007; Hamann & April, 2013).

2.6.5 Measuring the success of intermediary organisations

The impact of intermediaries is hard to establish, given that they tend to influence system change in an indirect manner rather than directly (Moss et al., 2009). Moss et al. (2009:30) comment on the incremental, rather than transformative, nature of the work of intermediaries by observing that “some of the most effective intermediary work is not so much transformative as incremental. The longer term or cumulative effect of small steps taken by often rather invisible intermediaries can be quite substantial”.

Building on Hodson and Marvin’s (2010) argument, there are three ways in which to measure the degree to which intermediaries influence urban system change. First, there is the progressive realisation of SDG Goal 11. This will be measured on an annual basis through collecting voluntary and mandatory reports on the progress to achieve the SDGs. The first set of reports were due to be submitted in 2017. Second, it must be established whether the vision for change, or SDG Goal 11, has been put into practice. The extent to which the goal is embedded into regional, national and city practices would have to be measured given the multi-level nature of SDG Goal 11. Third, it needs to be determined whether there is a fully coordinated network of social interests at the end of the process across all scalar dimensions.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on sustainability transitions and cross-sector collaboration to develop an understanding of the role of intermediary organisations in urban system change. It referred to literature on sustainability transitions to develop a conceptual model of urban system change. The roles and functions of intermediary organisations were discussed and the concept of SCIOs developed. The conceptual model on urban system change has described three principles to

enable urban systems to change and to discuss how SCIO functions operationalise these principles.

The debate on how to scale collaborative governance has received modest attention in the literature on collaborative governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2015). More specifically, current literature does not address how SCIOs work across urban systems and multiple scales to affect urban sustainability transitions. Although the Multi-Level Perspective theory (Verbong & Geels, 2007) refers to the coordination of actors at the local level, it does not address how this coordination takes place to affect change at the regime and landscape levels and across the three levels. Rasche's (2012) analysis of the role of multi-stakeholder initiatives to implement global goals is limited to global and local dimensions. Rasche argues the need to understand whether a regional level would enhance coordination in multi-stakeholder initiatives to implement global goals. Medd and Marvin (2007) conclude that a deeper understanding is required of the different ways in which intermediation translates interests across different scales.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study aims to extend the understanding of how collaborative governance of the urban system takes place across local, regional, national and global levels. It is an empirical study that follows a case study approach to describe the role and function of a global urban partnership and intermediary organisation whose vision is to catalyse and manage urban system change. It uses inductive methods to investigate the role and function of SCIOs to catalyse and govern urban system change across multiple levels. Chapter 3 defines the problem statement and research objectives and discusses how the research was designed to address these objectives. This is followed by a presentation of the research methodology, data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of issues related to the reliability, validity and limitations of the study.

3.2 Problem statement

The urban system is complex and consists of many levels, diverse actors and their interests, in dynamic interaction with each other. This creates a fragmented environment or “system gaps” (Laur, Kloftsen & Bienkowska, 2012:5). This is evident in incoherent and misaligned visions of what needs to be achieved and creates fragmented relations and governance voids across local, national, regional and global levels. Addressing the urban system gap is dependent on the ability to bring coherence by restructuring social relations across all levels of the urban system (Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013). For systems to change, the interests, resources and behaviour of actors across all contextual levels need to align and reinforce each other (Verbong & Geels, 2007).

3.3 Research objectives and questions

The objectives of the research are twofold. First, to understand what role and functions SCIOs perform to link actors and their activities across local, national, regional and global urban system levels to catalyse urban sustainability transitions. Second, to understand what mechanisms are required to make achieved change durable.

To achieve these objectives, the research focused on two main questions:

1. What role and function do intermediary organisations perform to create links between actors and their activities across local, national, regional and global levels?

2. Once linked, how do actors and their activities at city, national, regional and global levels reinforce each other?

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 Research approach

The research strategy follows a qualitative approach to provide a detailed description of a single case study. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand and explore a phenomenon unfolding in a “real world setting” (Galofshani, 2003:600). The nature of the study is both exploratory and descriptive as it attempts to describe the case of a systemic global intermediary organisation and explore its roles and functions in catalysing and governing urban system change. Intermediary organisations are difficult to study given the complex and implicit nature of their work (Moss et al., 2009). Therefore, the empirical study employs a hybrid methodology consisting of case study and insider research methodologies.

3.4.2 Case study method, rationale and sampling

The literature review drew on a modest, albeit growing, body of academic literature on urban intermediary organisations and their role in urban sustainability transitions presented in Chapter 2. Based on the literature review and participant observations, an inductive approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) was followed to develop the concept of SCIOs and a conceptual model to catalyse urban system change within which to locate the role and function of SCIOs. From the literature review, the researcher noted a gap in empirical evidence on how urban cross-sector social partnerships and intermediary organisations can contribute to achieving the SDGs 11 and 17.

The case study method was chosen to address this gap and deepen the understanding of the role and function of urban SCIO. This approach is supported by Hodson, Marvin and Bulkeley’s (2013:1420) argument that there “also needs to be a richer appreciation of the different roles of intermediaries in various conditions and settings, and the strategic and operational capabilities utilised and required by intermediaries”.

The case study method is appropriate to address descriptive, “*what* happened?” (Yin, 2004:2), and exploratory, “*how* or *why* did something happen?” (Yin, 2004:2) questions. The case study method

provides the opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding and to establish a rapport with the research subjects (Yin, 2004). It allows the researcher to study “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1989:13).

An empirical analysis indicated that not many urban intermediary organisations are explicitly created to function as SCIOs. With reference to the definition of SCIOs and to address critical gaps in the literature (see Chapter 1), the case study was required to have the following SCIO characteristics:

- (1) works long-term;
- (2) across urban systems (across individual sectors such as water, transport, climate change, housing, etc.);
- (3) connect, facilitate and align multi-stakeholder platforms for deliberation and collaboration to transform urban systems; and
- (4) scale collaborative governance and translate interests across local, country, regional and global levels where intermediation translates interests across different scales.

A scan of several institutions revealed potential global organisations such as the World Bank, UN-Habitat, Slum Dwellers International that work across urban system levels and perform intermediary functions, both intentionally and unintentionally, towards achieving SDG Goals 11 and 17. However, the Cities Alliance was selected given its long term commitment to multi-stakeholder platforms and deliberation replicated across the local, country, regional and global levels of the urban system.

The CA Charter defines the CA as “a global partnership for urban poverty reduction and to promote the role of cities in sustainable development” (Cities Alliance, 2011:1). The partnership consists of national governments, the private sector and foundations, multilateral organisations and global networks representing local authorities, slum dwellers, and research and knowledge institutions. In 1999 the founding members of the CA, together with the World Bank and UN-Habitat, recognised the need for a platform for cross-sector collaboration that could deliver on the complex challenge of impact at scale and which would move beyond the short-term, ad-hoc, single sector, donor-driven interventions (Cities Alliance, 2013).

The CA was selected with the objective to develop an in-depth description of its architecture for multi-level collaborative practice and to explore what roles and functions it performs to create horizontal and vertical collaborations across different levels of the urban system. This research documents the CA case study from its establishment in 1999 until 2014 and includes the introduction of the 2014 Medium Term Strategy. The case study is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

3.4.3 Insider research method

3.4.3.1 Insider method rationale

An insider research method, also referred to as “work based research” (Costley, 2010:1), was chosen given the researcher’s employment with the CA. This provided access to data sources and complex processes which an outsider is unlikely to obtain without spending extended periods of time with the CA. Insider researchers carry out research on their own organisations from their position within the organisation. This affords the researcher the opportunity to study a phenomenon in depth drawing on insider knowledge.

This insider knowledge also allows researchers to deal with complexity given their knowledge of complex workplace issues, such as power relations and cultural practices, and an understanding of how the organisation really functions (Costley, 2010; Unluer, 2012). Unluer (2012:1) adds that insiders “know how best to approach people. In general, they have a great deal of knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire”. Being an insider, the researcher has more access to participants and is more likely to have established trust and rapport with participants based on professional relationships.

A further advantage is that the insider research method is argued to have the potential to address a real-life work problem (Costley, 2010). Within the context of global and local debates on how the United Nations’ new SDGs will be implemented, the insider research methodology seeks to generate practitioner-oriented knowledge (Costley, 2010) that may inform the debate and operationalisation of multi-stakeholder partnerships as a means to achieve SDG Goals 11 and 17. Practitioner research serves to improve the skills and competency of the practitioner through building a reflective practice (Campbell, 2013). The benefits of reflective practice allows the practitioner researcher to develop a range of knowledge about their profession and develop awareness of their own role in and contribution to the profession (Campbell, 2013). Furthermore,

it serves to inform and improve the profession. The importance of which is underscored by Schön (2017:3) “professions have become essential to the very functioning of society. We look to professionals for the definition and solutions of our problems, and it is through them that we strive for social progress”. Practitioner research may strengthen the urban development profession to make a more effective contribution to attaining ambitious goals such as the SDGs.

3.4.3.2 Insider perspective

Being in the full-time employment of the CA since 2007 provided the researcher with the opportunity to leverage two sets of insider knowledge for this study. Firstly, knowledge of the urban sector and policies, programmes and interventions to steer cities towards sustainable development; and secondly, knowledge of the organisation which provides a comprehensive understanding of the underlying organisational dynamics that shape the functioning and outcomes of the CA.

Over the past 10 years the researcher has been a member of the CA Secretariat. The Secretariat carries out the mandate of the CA and is responsible for the day-to-day management of partnership governance, facilitating member involvement in the work of the CA, promoting the role of cities in sustainable development, developing innovative approaches for urban system change, facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration and overseeing the implementation of CA funded activities.

For the past seven years the researcher has occupied the position of Regional Advisor (RA) for East and Southern Africa. The RA is a member of the CA Secretariat and shares the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the partnership with the distinction of being based either in Africa, Asia or Latin America. The role requires developing a global, regional and national perspective on the challenges and opportunities of urban system change within which to position the work of the CA.

RAs perform the function of multi-directional conduits. Firstly, they act as conduits for interpreting and translating global debates, goals and knowledge into tools and approaches that match the urban transformation needs of the regions and countries in which they are located. Secondly, the RA connects CA members with a regional presence into the work of the CA to create a coherent

effort. The RA acts as a conduit for the flow of knowledge across city, country, regional and global levels. In this way the RA supports agenda setting from countries and regions into the global arena. Another function is identifying and connecting strategic actors and their resources to create an alignment of common agendas in countries and the region. The functions of linking actors and activities includes communication, advocacy, sharing knowledge and facilitating direct interaction between actors.

Day-to-day responsibilities included: (1) participation in meetings and discussions where regional, national and global progress towards achieving sustainable cities and the role of the CA to affect urban system change are reviewed; (2) advice to members and partners on multi-stakeholder collaboration; (3) corporate and regional strategy development; (4) development of the CA partnership strategy and programme design; and (5) managing a portfolio of activities that target interventions of local, national, regional and global scales. The latter included the Uganda Country Programme where CA piloted its country partnership approach. This allowed the researcher to draw on deep insight into the work of the CA.

When commencing the study, the researcher already had access to several data sources:

- A broad professional network built over 10 years with whom the researcher has had several discussions about multi-stakeholder partnerships in urban development.
- Reading reports that propose collaboration in the urban sector, e.g. reports produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations.
- Had undertaken training in partnership management with The Partnering Initiative in London. The training included a review of partnership reports and documents as well as documenting the case of a multi-stakeholder urban partnership in Uganda. In addition, the researcher read several reports on multi-stakeholder partnerships published by The Partnering Initiative; and
- The ability to draw on established relationships with CA Secretariat staff, CA members and partner organisations with global, regional, national and city level representation.

Being in full-time employment for the duration of the research presented both a challenge and an opportunity for insider research. With regards to the latter, insider knowledge of organisational systems and procedures, dynamics in the relationship between the Secretariat and members,

participation in institutional reforms and operational knowledge of global, regional and country activities all contributed to an extensive pre-understanding (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002) of the context.

A researcher's position within the organisation and point of view on the research subject, participants and research process will inform the researcher's positionality (Holmes, 2014). Sultana (2007:382) underscores that it is "critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes to undertake ethical research". Positionality may lead to particular views that could influence the research process and outcomes. Reflexivity is an essential process through which the researcher "should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on the research" (Holmes, 2014:3).

There are several disadvantages to insider research such as role duality, built in assumptions which could overlook certain behaviours or assign meaning, and familiarity which may affect objectivity and bias (Holmes, 2014). The researcher's insider perspective is influenced by certain belief systems and positions developed through years of working for the CA (Mehra, 2002). At the start of the research there was an awareness that role duality could influence responses. For instance, the researcher may have preconceived ideas of what respondents might share in the interviews or that respondents may assume that the researcher has implicit knowledge that would prohibit a detailed response. Familiarity with the context and established relationships may also influence objectivity. The challenge of researcher bias is discussed in more detail in section 3.7 of this chapter. Strategies to address issues of positionality are discussed in sections 3.6 and 3.7. Despite the described advantages of both case study and insider research methods, this chapter also discusses their limitations and disadvantages in more detail in sections 3.7 and 3.8 below.

3.5 Data collection

Primary data was collected through participant observation and semi-structured interviews while secondary data was sourced from various documents.

3.5.1 Documentation review

An extensive review of operational and strategic documents was carried out to build an understanding of the CA's motivations, strategies and approaches to cross-sector collaboration. These documents included evaluations, strategy and program documents (such as the Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Business Plan, program documents, Operations Manual, and Results Framework), progress reports, memorandums of understanding, partnership agreements and other relevant documents. Public documents, such as the Charter, MTS and Results Framework, were accessed through the CA website. A subset of documents of an operational nature, and only accessible to CA staff, were included such as mission reports, progress reports, internal reviews, minutes of staff meetings, email discussions and decision-making documents.

3.5.2 Participant observations

Participant observation was the primary data collection method given the researcher's insider position being involved in the day-to-day management of the CA. See section 3.4.3.2 on insider perspective for a detailed description. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to participate in meetings and discussions on the topic of assessing, designing and evaluating the CA's partnership approach and intermediary role. This included discussions in general staff meetings, Programme Unit meetings, Portfolio Review meetings, interviews with evaluation teams and discussions with CA Secretariat staff as well as CA members and partners. Outcomes and reflections from these discussions were documented in research notes. Participant observation can generate large amounts of unstructured data. The challenge is to ensure that data is systemically collected and analysed. The iterative process of data collection and analysis is discussed further in section 3.6.

3.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

A common error in instrument design and data collection is asking respondents to answer questions they have no knowledge of (Mouton, 2001). One of the sampling challenges encountered was the identification of respondents with sufficient knowledge about the CA to respond to the research questions. A second challenge related to the content of the research. The concepts of intermediation and intermediary organisations are not common concepts used by urban practitioners, therefore there is limited knowledge about intermediary organisations. The

research questions had to be rephrased and clarified in a way suitable to extracting information that would respond to the research objectives.

The interview sampling strategy required careful consideration to identify the most appropriate respondents. It included the identification of internal and external stakeholders who could provide insights relevant to the research: (1) the multi-level nature of the CA's work, (2) how linking occurs across these levels, (3) what roles and functions are performed, and (4) how these activities reinforce each other.

External stakeholder categories included: (1) grassroots community organisations; (2) local government officials; (3) national government officials; and (4) support partners such as funders, capacity building and training institutions, and research and think-tank institutions. All these may have a local, national, regional and/or global presence. External stakeholders were identified based on those having participated in the implementation of CA activities either as a grant recipient or support partner.

Internal stakeholders are CA members and individuals from the Secretariat who have a moderate to intimate knowledge of the CA's work. The criteria for selecting CA members included individuals who have strong knowledge of: (1) CA governance arrangements; (2) mandate and day-to-day work of the Secretariat; and (3) have actively participated in the CA work programme. Not all CA members are equally engaged in the work of the CA. Given the turnover in member representatives since 1999, this limited the pool to seven potential respondents.

Insider knowledge of the complexities of the CA's functioning enabled identification of the most appropriate respondents. Tables 1 and 2 provide summaries of the sampling criteria and rationale for selecting respondents.

Table 1: Interview sampling criteria

Research questions	Criteria
Context: What is the CA approach to urban system change, how has it evolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth knowledge of the CA approach to urban system change • Sufficient knowledge to reflect on how the approach to urban system change evolved over time
How is the CA organised	The CA carries out activities at city, national, regional and global

and how does it function	<p>levels through instruments such as Joint Work Programmes, Country Programmes and analytical and strategic activities.</p> <p>1) Respondents require adequate knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different scales of intervention at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City level - National level - Regional level - Global level • How linkages are created across these levels • How levels reinforce each other once connected • Roles and functions performed by the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members: knowledge on the functioning of the partnership - Secretariat: knowledge of the intermediary role performed by the Secretariat and functioning of the partnership <p>2) Respondents must provide internal stakeholder perspective.</p> <p>3) Respondents must provide external stakeholder perspective.</p>
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The criteria in Table 1 was used to identify potential respondents from both the internal and external stakeholder groups. The rationale for selecting respondents is outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Rationale for selecting respondents

Respondents	Role	Rationale for selecting respondent
Category: Internal stakeholders		
Respondent A	CA Secretariat	Respondent A has been involved with the CA since 2000 and could therefore reflect in depth on the evolution of CA's approach to systemic change, the global dimension of CA's work and CAs SCIO roles and functions.
Respondent B	CA Secretariat	Respondent B has been involved with the CA since 1999 and could therefore reflect in depth on the evolution of CA's approach to systemic change, the global dimension of CA's work and CAs SCIO roles

		and functions.
Respondent C	CA Secretariat	Secretariat staff member who was involved in the design and piloting of the Country Programme (CP) approach and was therefore able to contribute substantial insight on the work of the CA at the national level and across national and city levels.
Respondent D	CA Secretariat	RA and Secretariat staff member who could reflect on the regional dimension of CA's work and how linking occurs across national, regional and global levels.
Respondent E	CA Member	CA Member and national government representative with substantial institutional memory of the CA who was therefore able to reflect on CA's approach to urban system transformation, the global dimension of CA, as well as members' roles and functions and CA's tools and approaches.
Respondent F	CA Member	CA Member and community organisation representative selected based on experience of designing and piloting the CP approach in Uganda. Could reflect on how linking takes place across national and city levels.
Category: External stakeholders		
Respondent G	Expert	An expert on urban intermediaries with modest knowledge of the CA. Given that urban intermediary organisations are not a common concept among urban practitioners, the rationale for the expert interview was to gain more insights on urban intermediary practices that might inform the design and documentation of the case study. Secondly, an expert view might provide opposing views and challenge assumptions made by the researcher especially on the generalisation of findings.
Respondent H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government representative • National level perspective 	A national government representative and partner in the Uganda Country Program. The respondent could reflect on intermediary roles and functions at national level to create linkages across city, national, regional and global levels.
Respondent I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic 	Representative from an academic institution who has been involved with CA in various regional

	institution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional level perspective 	initiatives and was able to reflect on linking across national, regional and global levels.
<p><u>Note:</u> A grassroots community representative involved in the CA Liberia Country Program declined to participate because he felt that he didn't have adequate knowledge to respond to the questions.</p>		

Respondents are anonymised to the extent that personal identifiable information is not disclosed. Their names and designations are not disclosed to minimize ease of identification. Complete anonymity in qualitative research is a challenge and not always possible to achieve (Walford, 2005). Respondent identification is limited to identifying the respondent category they represent (Secretariat staff, CA member, etc) and what role they perform to justify the relevance of their input in the study. Given that the study focuses on multiple levels it was necessary to obtain viewpoints from role players at national, regional and global levels. Confidentiality is ensured through not attributing comments and other data to respondents (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

All the interviews were conducted via telephone or skype except for one face-to-face interview. Each 60 – 90 min interview consisted of between five to 10 questions structured around the themes of the CA's approach to urban system transformation, how the CA is organised to act, what roles and functions are performed, and how actors and their activities are integrated across local, national, regional and global levels. The interview protocol is included in Appendix 1. Each interview was transcribed to allow for data analysis.

3.6 Data analysis

Analysing and interpreting data in qualitative studies is challenging because large amounts of textual data are collected. It is time consuming to analyse these and the researcher must often allow for multiple interpretations (Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, the researcher may risk bias in proving their “pet hypotheses” (Mouton, 2001:110) through not allowing opposing views or explanations. The case study method adds another layer of complexity given that the data analysis is the most complex aspect of the case study method (Yin, 2004).

A two-pronged strategy was implemented to allow for multiple interpretations and to manage bias. The data analysis strategy was underpinned by testing assumptions and allowing for

opposing views and explanations and the researcher asking “what is it that I don’t want to know”, “am I trying to prove a point, and if so, what is that?” and “are there opposing ideas and explanations?”.

The data analysis began as interviews commenced and document sources were reviewed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This allowed for ongoing identification and analysis of themes. First, open coding (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010) was used to explore similarities or dissimilarities as well as potential relationships in the data. This process allowed for the identification of themes and concepts which were then organised into main categories and sub-categories. Once all the data had been collected, themes and concepts were revisited. Results were compared across categories to identify variances, connections between themes and possible nuances in interpreting meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The results from the interviews were triangulated with data generated through participant observations and extensive documentation review (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

Cassell and Symon (2004:324) maintain that “Although a case study may begin with only rudimentary theory or a primitive framework, the researcher needs to develop theoretical frameworks during the research which inform and make sense of the data and which can be systematically examined during the case study for plausibility”. The theoretical framework, developed in Chapter 2, was applied during a second review of the data to identify themes and concepts to address the research objectives. The two sets of coded data were then compared to identify common themes and opposing explanations.

The single case study approach has generated a substantial amount of data from observations, interviews and documentation review. The findings in Chapter 4 represent the most relevant sample of data to respond to the research objectives.

3.7 Validity and reliability

In quantitative research credibility is determined by the instrument, while in qualitative research the instrument for gathering data is the researcher (Galofshani, 2003). The concept of reliability in qualitative research refers to the evaluation of the quality of the research and therefore its ability to develop an understanding of the phenomenon under study. Some qualitative researchers have

questioned the appropriateness of using the term 'validity' in qualitative research. Nonetheless, they recognise that some measure is required to prove that the results are trustworthy (Galofshani, 2003). Given that this study focuses on one case study to develop rich data, it forgoes the reliability of a quantitative survey.

Throughout the process of collecting and analysing data two strategies were deployed to manage bias. The first strategy involved developing a reflective practice. This involved reflection and learning about assumptions and belief systems (Unluer, 2012). Observations and reflections were documented in research notes during the period 2013 to 2015. Three questions were used to guide the reflection process: (1) "Am I trying to prove a point?"; (2) "what is it that I don't want to know?"; and (3) "what are my built-in assumptions?".

The second strategy involved dialogue and exchange throughout the research process with individuals including the researcher's academic supervisor and outsiders. Issues of bias were addressed in written comments from the supervisor based on reviews of the draft text. External perspectives were sought from two individuals with no association to the research or the topic. The first individual is an acquaintance with no knowledge of the subject matter. The second individual was a senior journalist selected for the person's ability to critically interrogate points of view. These individuals were engaged through conversation at different stages of the research: (1) research conceptualisation and formulation of the problem, (2) case study selection, and (3) interpreting findings. These conversations were helpful to bring awareness of assumptions and attitudes. Reflections from these conversations prompted a review of data interpretation for possible bias in the analysis.

The two strategies were combined in an iterative process of interpreting data, developing text and journaling, followed by conversations to test assumptions about emerging findings. Outcomes of the conversations led to re-interpreting data and restructuring the articulation of results and conclusions. At times, it included additional literature reviews to clarify or elaborate concepts. Yin (2004) observes that the need to review additional or different literature is not uncommon in case study methodology.

Given the researcher's established relationship with seven of the nine respondents and sharing similar professional backgrounds or work contexts, the researcher had to guard against the

possibility of inadvertently contaminating data collection and analysis with what Healey (2017) terms 'biographical baggage'. Healey explains the risk that the researcher "lacks objectivity and seeks confirmatory evidence for views and opinions already widely shared by insiders. There is also a risk that the insider researcher subconsciously fills in the blanks with his/her prior experience or knowledge" (Healey, 2017:10). To mitigate against the risk, the researcher purposefully reminded herself of the questions "what is it that I don't want to know" and "what do I assume I already know" in preparing for the interviews (Unluer, 2012). During the interviews, the researcher would ask respondents to clarify or explain statements to mitigate against automatically assigning meaning and interpretation. For this reason, it was also important to record and transcribe the interviews to ensure that actual responses were recorded and not merely the researcher's interpretations.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed except for one. In this instance, the recorder was not working on the day of the interview, however, detailed notes were taken during the interview.

A single case study proved a limitation to external validity that is discussed in more detail in section 3.8 below. External validity is acknowledged as a challenge that had to be managed proactively. The sampling strategy was an essential first step to select a case study which may be relevant to studying other urban intermediary organisations which operate in the same context.

3.8 Limitations

The first limitation relates to the chosen research methodology. The qualitative nature and hybrid research methods brings a set of limitations to the study. The results of insider research are influenced by a professional and organisational context specific to the work environment under study. The results from the study may be useful to practitioners in similar contexts, however, there will be limitations to the extent to which results may be transferred to other contexts. In addition, single case studies are widely critiqued for their inability to generate results that may be generalised (Bryman, 2012).

The second limitation relates to scope. The scope of the study is limited to a minor dissertation. The purpose of the study is to explore and describe the SCIO roles and functions and not to provide an assessment or evaluation of the success or impact of the CA. This required respondents with intimate knowledge of the structure of the CA and how it functions in different contexts. The

reality is that only a small number of possible internal and external stakeholder respondents have adequate knowledge to respond to the research questions. Therefore, the sample of external respondents are limited and serve the purpose to either confirm internal stakeholder views or challenge them. The number of interviews limits representation of a wide range of internal and external stakeholder views.

3.9 Conclusion

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research problem, objectives and questions. Following that, a detailed discussion is provided of the rationale for the case study and insider research strategy and methodologies. Advantages, disadvantages and limitations of the research methodology is included in the discussion. The case study is briefly introduced with the findings discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 4 documents the case of a global urban intermediary organisation, the Cities Alliance (CA). The findings are primarily derived from the insider perspective discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 describes the roles and functions CA performs to link actors within and across national, regional and global levels and the mechanisms it creates to reinforce behavioural change across urban system levels. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the challenges of scaling collaborative governance across urban system levels.

4.1 Linking mechanisms that create connections within regional, national and global levels

The CA creates and facilitates platforms for dialogue and collaboration on regional, national and global levels of urban systems.

4.1.1 Activities within city and national levels

The Cities Alliance Country Programme Operating Guidelines (CA, 2013) describes the Country Program (CP) as a tool to catalyse urban system transformation at the country level. The basic premise of the CP approach is to address shortcomings of previous once-off, sector-driven investments through implementing a strategic and coordinated response to rapid urbanisation through facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Countries are selected based on their developing economy and incipient urbanisation status, and on their national government's commitment to sustainable urbanisation. Urban systems in these countries are usually not well developed and very few actors are active in the urban sector, with the result that responses to rapid urbanisation tend to be neither strategic nor systemic.

Collaborations are established around a common vision between cities and national governments, urban poor communities and national support partners such as training institutions, international donor agencies, national associations of local government and private sector partners. The objective of these multi-level collaborations is to catalyse urban system transformation through developing national policy, developing urban management capacity and building an active citizenry. The approach is to focus on the functioning of the urban system as an entity and to create enabling environments in which these cities can function more effectively and efficiently.

The development of CPs is guided by the following principles:

- Creating a common vision in the form of a national urban agenda;
- Creating synergy and coherence through linking partnership activities into past and ongoing urban initiatives;
- Directing engagement of target beneficiaries through the promotion of urban poor community empowerment and participation;
- Promoting multi-stakeholder participation around the national urban agenda; and
- Mobilising and aligning investment and skills around the national urban agenda.

The Secretariat initiates the CPs through developing a systemic overview of the national urban system. This process includes the identification of urbanisation challenges, relevant interests, stakeholders, resources, and an assessment of collaboration opportunities and barriers. It involves regular dialogue and engagement with a diverse set of stakeholders and takes place over the course of a year or two. The emphasis is on convening multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement through city level forums, also referred to as municipal development forums, and national urban forums. Through these forums a common vision for urban transformation at city and national levels are developed which is translated into the CP Framework. The CP Framework acts as the institutional framework to align and coordinate actors and their resources. The forums are maintained long term to act as platforms for coordination, learning and collaboration.

4.1.2 Activities within regional levels

Regional activities of the CA are focused in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Typical regional level activities would include research and analysis, technical assistance, knowledge production, advocacy and lobbying, establishing networks, and south/south collaboration. Such activities are facilitated through regional strategic frameworks in the form of Joint Work Programmes (JWPs) and Regional Strategies (Cities Alliance, 2014).

Examples include the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) JWP that was developed in response to the Arab Spring and to provide CA members and partners with an institutional framework to leverage resources and jointly respond to this movement. The JWP on Resilient Cities provides a platform to share knowledge and coordinate the proliferation of resilient cities approaches.

The Africa, Asia and Latin America Strategies were formulated through a process of convening a diverse group of stakeholders to develop common objectives and a framework for action to guide strategic interventions and resources at the regional level. Systemic gaps specific to urban system change in Africa, Asia and Latin America were identified and a coherent set of actions formulated to address these. The regional strategy itself becomes an instrument to manage the interface between national and global priorities and programmes.

Using strategy formulation as a lever, the CA creates a platform for dialogue and for organising action through mobilising diverse actors and drawing in resources and networks of national governments, civil society, organised local government and academia.

4.1.3 Activities within the global level

At the global level, the CA advocated for the inclusion of the Cities Without Slums Action Plan into the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (Goal 7, Target 11) which became the common goal around which CA members were mobilised. Through the partnership framework, the CA provided a platform to connect actors, such as slum dwellers and cities, on issues of global urban development. This was achieved by connecting global networks of cities and slum dwellers with international development partners such as the World Bank. Through mechanisms such as JWPs, collaboration among CA members and their partners are facilitated to address global and regional challenges. JWPs are defined as "multi-year programmatic vehicles, facilitated by the Secretariat, through which members and partners of the CA seek to leverage the collaborative advantage as a partnership to find coherence of effort, synergies and intervention gaps on key developmental challenges" (Cities Alliance, 2011). In addition, the CA undertakes selected analytical activities to address knowledge gaps and to influence debates on emerging trends such as the role of secondary cities in USTs and the role of basic services to achieve equitable economic growth in cities.

4.2 Linking mechanisms that create connections across regional, national and global levels

Several tools and strategies are utilised to link ideas, actors and activities across system levels; these are briefly discussed in this section. The need to transcend system levels through alignment was emphasized by a respondent in this statement: "The point is whatever you've got in place, you've got to align the spheres. Half your development effort is undermined if you don't align".

4.2.1 Establish an overview of the urban system

To develop a systemic overview, the CA undertakes analytical activities and facilitates dialogue to develop an integrated assessment of the urban system on all levels. The overview is articulated in different frameworks depending on the context, for instance: (1) Medium Term Strategy and JWPs at the global level, (2) regional strategies for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, (3) CP Frameworks at the national level, and (4) city development strategies at the city level. These frameworks act as the springboard around which a diverse set of stakeholders are mobilised towards collaboration.

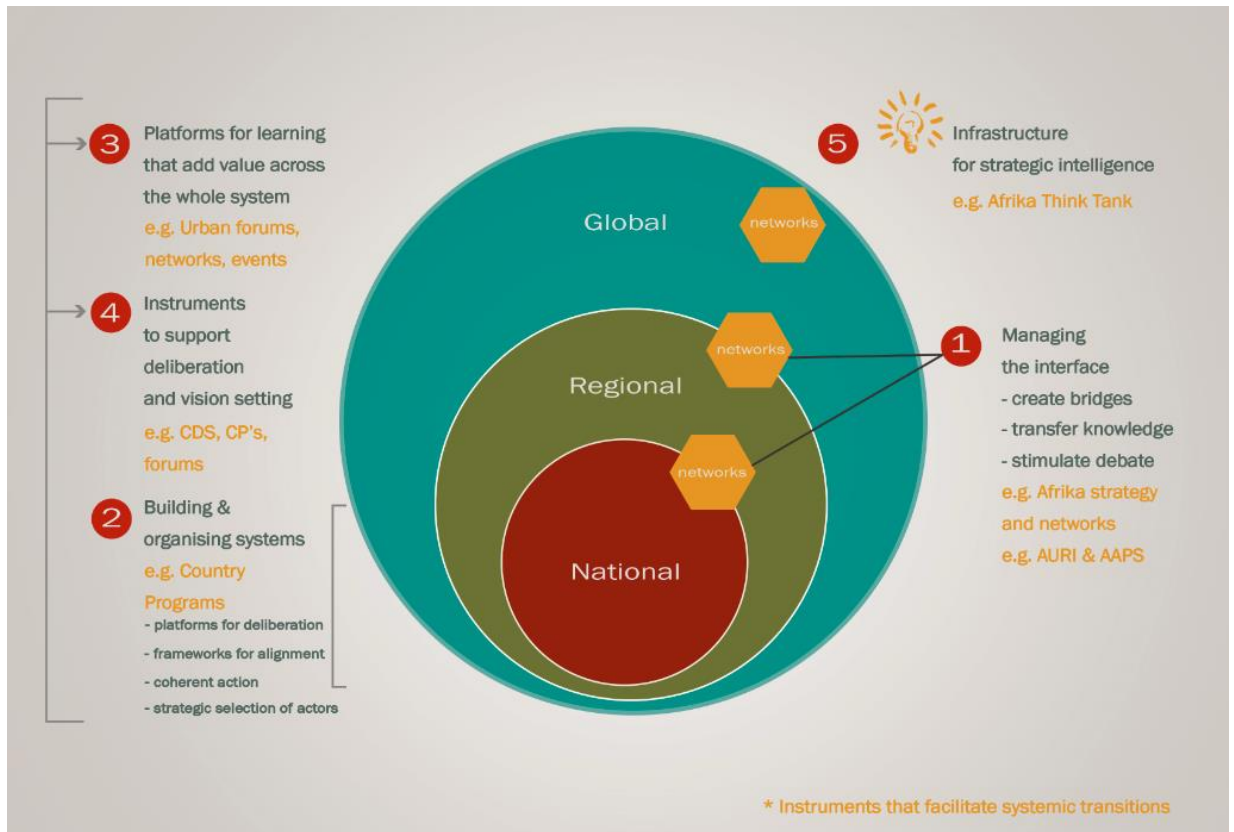
4.2.2 Manage the interface between levels

The introduction of regional strategies, leveraging unique resources of the Secretariat and members, and scaling up the use and application of learning and networks creates mechanisms for linking across the national, regional and global levels of the urban system. This is further illustrated by applying Van Lente and colleagues' (2003) model of five systemic intermediary functions to the CA Africa Strategy which is illustrated in Figure 5 below.

The Africa Strategy (Cities Alliance, 2014) provides a coherent framework around which CA members and partners are mobilised to address urbanisation issues that are specific to the Africa region and that are not sufficiently addressed through current programming and investment. The strategy was developed through a consensus-building process based on an analysis carried out by the African Urban Research Initiative – a network of African research institutions.

To operationalise the strategy, the CA leverages the capabilities of regional networks such as the African Urban Research Initiative, the African Centre for Cities, the Association of African Planning Schools and the United Cities and Local Governments for Africa. The African Urban Think Tank was established to act as a hub for analysis and strategic thinking to inform the Africa partnership about opportunities, challenges and strategies, and to invite responses. In addition, the Africa Strategy provides a framework for integrating country specific interventions, such as the CPs.

Figure 4: Instruments and approaches to integrate activities and actors across national, regional and global levels



Source: Adapted from Van Lente et al. (2003)

4.2.3 Leverage capacity and integrating modes of intermediation

Through obtaining an overview of each urban system level and embedding itself at each level, the CA can identify and leverage a diverse set of actors and resources. It does this through connecting: (1) CA members with each other through the partnership, (2) constituencies across national, regional and global levels (as described earlier), and (3) multiple stakeholders through instruments such as forums, networks, JWPs and Regional Strategies. The importance of mobilising diversity to address complex challenges was highlighted by a respondent:

The general rule we came across is: the more complex the challenge the more diverse the response has to be. Managing a city system is an example of a complex challenge. Multiple systems at multiple scales of change are complex

and therefore you've got to mobilise diversity. It's multiple skills, jurisdictions, spheres of government right up to the global [level].

The Secretariat performs the systemic function of leveraging the diverse resources, capabilities and modes of mediation of its members. For instance, Slum Dwellers International will develop settlement level enumerations and slum profiles (piecemeal intermediation), while UN-Habitat works directly with national governments to develop a national urban policy aligned to the SDGs (conduit intermediation). United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) may support a city development strategy for the capital city (piecemeal intermediation) and the World Bank may target municipal creditworthiness in the secondary cities (systemic intermediation). Having established an overview of the national urban system, the Secretariat then uses the CP Framework as an instrument to integrate members and their modes of intermediation into a coherent framework of action.

4.2.4 The role of networks, dialogue platforms and institutional mechanisms

Connecting national, regional and global levels allows for multi-directional flow of information and influence. The importance of regional networks emerged during the development of the SDGs as mechanisms to address power imbalances between the global north and the global south. Development agendas tend to be driven and set in the global north. Networks, platforms for dialogue and institutional frameworks for collaboration (e.g. regional strategies and JWPs) provide the mechanisms through which dispersed actors at the regional level can be connected and coalitions of interest can be mobilised to influence global debates.

A respondent stressed the importance of a variety of linking tools and strategies by adding:

They're not always ending up in formal partnerships, they could be ad-hoc, sporadic, more of a network, etc. Formal partnerships are few and far between, and that is fine, because you could have a collaborative approach using these tools.

4.2.5 The role of the Secretariat

Previously the activities of the Secretariat reacted to demands from clients and members. The Secretariat would encourage member involvement in grant funded activities but did not actively link members and resources. Over time the role of the Secretariat became programmatic,

including new functions such as brokering, negotiation, mediation between actors and priorities, and aligning different interests to a common goal.

The Secretariat plays a facilitative leadership role in convening CA members and partners to dialogue, share knowledge, develop joint solutions and participate in the governance of the CA. This process creates tighter couplings across system levels and over time starts to break down relationship barriers and create new opportunities for collaboration. An example is the restructured relationship between the World Bank and the organised urban poor. Traditionally the World Bank would only engage national governments. Since the World Bank and Slum Dwellers International are convened as equal members on the CA platform it has allowed for more direct engagement (tighter coupling), identification of common points of interest, and recognition of mutually beneficial contribution of resources towards a common goal of creating more inclusive cities. A direct outcome was the collaboration between Slum Dwellers International and the World Bank to produce the global report on Inclusive Cities.

The value of locally based CA staff is emphasised by respondents as being important in creating connections, responding to a dynamic implementation environment and changing needs at the level where implementation takes place. This respondent emphasised:

Local staff can identify those gaps. Development is hard. There are just so many things that can go wrong and you need someone to debug them. You need to know about it fast and you need to debug them. That's what our conclusion here on our legacy portfolio is: we waste so much money by being out of the touch by the time we make the grant. Sometimes the simplest problems, if it is diagnosed on a timely basis, can be solved if you have somebody (a staff member) with a mandate to go and fix the problem. And often it can be a communication problem within the country. Unless you have people on the ground doing all the leg work, keep everything on track, lobbying and advocating, then all you have invested up to that point is wasted.

From an insider perspective, it is observed that the Secretariat performs the following intermediary functions to create connection and alignment within and across urban system levels:

- Advocate – advocate for the importance of organised urban poor communities and local governments in urban development, and for the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in urban development. This is a consistent message.
- Facilitate – facilitate dialogue and collaboration among a diverse range of stakeholders. Identify and facilitate sharing of information and knowledge across city, national, regional and global levels.
- Foster – foster new ways of working together.
- Coach – coach individuals from member and partner organisations on collaborative leadership and partnership principles.
- Fund – provide funding for dialogue, collaboration and innovation. Also act as intermediary for funding for those members and partners who don't have their own implementation capacity. Make strategic investments into programmes and initiatives that could catalyse urban system change. Use funding as a lever to ensure collaboration, for instance by insisting that constituencies such as slum dwellers and local government work together in settlement enumerations.
- Analyse – analyse trends and develop new knowledge.
- Advice – provide technical advice to members and partners in the design and management of urban policies, programmes, projects and collaboration.
- Manage – provide project management services throughout the project cycle for activities funded by the CA partnership. This function is also provided to select urban sector investors who seek to utilise the CA's implementation capacity. For instance, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation transferred the management of their urban portfolio to the CA.
- Coordinate – the Secretariat coordinates the contributions of its members and partners through facilitating dialogue and developing implementation frameworks such as JWPs and CPs.
- Connect – through the Secretariat and CA members, the CA constantly connects:
 - opportunities for individuals and organisations to achieve global goals and targets;
 - best practice for individuals and organisations and 'how to' knowledge to catalyse urban transitions; and

- strategic individuals and organisations into collaboration platforms to mobilise latent resources and capabilities.
- Steer – steer actions towards achieving a common purpose that would not have been achieved by a single actor.
- Mediate – mediate between different priorities, actors and their interests to produce a common goal and institutional framework for action.
- Champion – through advocating at national, regional and global levels for the importance of organised urban poor communities and local government in urban development, the CA lends legitimacy to their role across all levels.

These functions are applied at each level of the system:

- at the city level through city wide forums to develop inclusive strategies, e.g. city development strategies;
- at the national level through national urban forums to develop Country Programmes (CPs);
- at the regional level through leveraging regional networks (e.g. African Centre for Cities), regional dialogue platforms (e.g. Africities) to develop regional strategies and regional institutions (e.g. Africa Urban Think Tank); and
- at the global level through convening dialogue platforms and developing instruments for global collaboration such as JWPs.

These intermediary functions are also applied to create linkages across levels through instruments such as:

- JWPs which connect global debates, goals and knowledge with the implementation at country level; and
- regional strategies that connect global goals with national priorities.

Respondents noted that CA could position itself in the intermediary role given that it is perceived as a credible and a neutral organisation. Its perceived neutrality is derived from the perception that CA does not represent the individual interests of its members or any particular stakeholder. Rather, it aims to create platforms for dialogue where a common agenda is jointly developed by all the stakeholders involved.

4.2.6 Strategic use of intermediary functions and resources to address urban system gaps

Respondents noted the advantage of using small investments to fill strategic gaps that could leverage additional resources from other actors, lead to downstream investments or provide the critical analysis around which interventions can be designed. The CA often provided funding to bring diverse and dispersed actors together through urban development forums. Urban development forums are used as a mechanism to extend the urban development dialogue across multiple sectors and actors.

4.2.7 The importance of combining dialogue with implementation

At its establishment, the CA advocated for the inclusion of the Cities Without Slum's action plan target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers into the MDG Goal 7, Target 11. Although consensus was reached on relevant goals and targets at the global level, this however did not immediately translate into impact at the level of the slum dwellers (the ultimate target audience) or at the scale intended to transform the urban system (Cities Alliance, 2008).

To complement global advocacy activities, the CA's approach initially involved funding city and settlement level projects to provide instruments for affecting change on the ground. The importance of complementing dialogue with action was emphasized by a respondent: "The way you build trust is in action, not in theory or dialogue. It is far easier to build a partnership on action than talk." Another respondent reflected that: "It is easier to operationalise coherence when you are actually structured around delivery and not just [...] talking."

4.3 Mechanisms to reinforce change across urban system levels

Over time the work of the CA shifted to address policy and national frameworks, given that initiatives which focused on settlements and city levels experienced limited impact due to unsupportive national policy frameworks. Interventions shifted from being project based, targeting settlement and city specific interventions, to incorporating a programmatic and more systemic approach. A respondent commented on the importance of reinforcing the change agenda over a long period by adding that "15 years ago, we were created and our focus is still on slums and cities".

This argument for a sustained long-term approach is further supported by another respondent noting “that it does take a long time to change a power dynamic. It takes a long time for those to change. You just chip away and all of a sudden you notice that people are behaving differently, things are happening differently on the ground. With all that chipping now you suddenly have a place for the river to flow”.

The CA uses tools and strategies to motivate, enable and reinforce collaborative behaviour towards the common purpose of urban transformation. An example of a knowledge intervention with behavioural change potential is the City Enabling Environment Rating co-published by the CA and its members, United Cities and Local Governments for Africa. As a knowledge product, this document is intended to motivate national governments (predisposing factor) to adopt decentralisation policy reforms. The City Enabling Environment Ratings was launched during a public political debate at a high profile regional event that convened policy and decision makers from the countries whose enabling environments were the subject of the study. The public debate compares and contrasts the enabling environments of peer countries. This peer comparison acts as a reinforcing mechanism to commit to a change agenda. The report provides an analysis of the status of local government in Africa and of the reforms required. It also outlines the kind of support that may be provided by CA members and partners at the national level to support the reform process (enabling factor).

Other approaches were applied by the Secretariat to create tighter couplings between local government and the urban poor. The Secretariat has made the collaboration between local government and urban poor a condition for funding. This has served as a reinforcing factor to catalyse behavioural change on the part of actors who typically only target local government or the urban poor but not the collaboration between the two. It serves as an interesting example of how a reinforcing behavioural change factor can lead to tighter couplings that link otherwise disconnected actors.

4.4 The challenge of working across system levels

Several respondents commented on the challenge of collaborating at the global and regional level. First, there are limitations to actors’ ability to influence across the levels due to limited internal flow of communication between their head offices, regional offices and national offices and misalignment of priorities. A respondent emphasised the need to constantly establish and nurture

connections within and across levels and the role of well positioned individuals with the responsibility to play this connecting role. “If you want to link levels, there can be different conduits between them but there needs to be people to work at these connections. If you want to do it well you got to invest in those processes and understand what they are.” Building and maintaining the infrastructure to establish and maintain connections, and to facilitate communication and collaboration is essential but costly.

Respondents noted several challenges when working at the regional level. The proximity of actors is less at the regional level than at country level and it becomes less clear what the motivation is for working together. In addition, the politics of regional collaboration may in some cases overtake the development imperative. A respondent commented that “local and regional debates don’t easily reach the global debates. Powerful global organisations have the ability to block local representation, e.g. voices of cities or communities, as the UN only work[s] through national governments. Only those with the global platform are heard”.

One of the respondents reflected that regional and global initiatives are often driven by individuals instead of strong institutions: “You can take 10 really motivated individuals out of the process and it would collapse”.

Connecting actors and members at the regional level results in high transaction costs for the CA, given the often-disconnected nature of relationships among various actors. This requires a significant time investment by Secretariat staff to establish and maintain communications channels with members and key stakeholders in the region as argued by a respondent:

The Secretariat members often have to help the member to communicate internally and externally, for instance, [give] support to the regional representative to communicate with its own organisation at the global level. To make the connection between disparate activities requires a high level of internal engagement and advocacy.

Another respondent noted that collaboration at country level is easier because of the closer proximity of agents:

People have very specific stakes that are clearly defined. People have a greater understanding of who is who. The missing link is just bringing people together. There is seldom a resistance to coming together.

4.5 Conclusion

The findings indicate that the CA performs a wide range of intermediary functions to create linkages within and across city, national, regional and global levels and across these levels. Central to this approach is to establish an overview of the urban system and convening platforms for deliberation and collaboration within and across system levels. Other mechanisms include strategies to manage the interface between levels, leveraging the capacity of and integrating modes of intermediation, strategic use of networks, dialogue platforms and programme and project instruments (such as Regional Strategies, CPs, etc.) and strategic use of intermediary functions and resources to address urban system gaps. The role of the Secretariat is discussed in detail. The findings raise important considerations for the conceptual model on urban system change which is discussed in the Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This empirical study contributes to the literature on the role of cross-sector collaboration and collaborative governance in USTs in three ways by: (1) extending the understanding on how intermediary functions are applied to scale urban collaborative governance; (2) developing the concept of a SCIO and a conceptual model for urban system change and describing the role of SCIOs to operationalise the conceptual model; and (3) contributing to the emerging understanding of how to make an abstract global agenda on collaboration, SDG Goal 17, more concrete by discussing the case of a global urban intermediary and multi-stakeholder partnership.

5.1 Scaling urban collaborative governance

5.1.1 Universal and systemic intermediary functions

The CA Secretariat applies intermediary functions as linking mechanisms to progressively link actors and their resources into platforms for dialogue and collaboration. Once actors are connected, the Secretariat facilitates interaction and dialogue among actors to define a common challenge and explore common interests. In this process, the Secretariat translates and mediates between different interests to define common interests and priorities. Common interests are translated into a vision or agenda which enables the identification of potential synergies. The common agenda acts as a point of reference to mobilise capacity and resources to operationalise the agenda through creating new institutional frameworks, developing programs, defining roles and contributions. Once implementation commences, the Secretariat coordinates capacity and resources to ensure coherence and alignment. These findings are consistent with the literature on intermediary organisation functions (Moss et al., 2009; Mourik et al., 2009; Guy, Marvin and Medd, 2011; Hamann & April, 2013).

The CA case illustrates that intermediary functions such as advocating, connecting, convening, facilitating, translating, mediating, mobilising, funding and coordinating can be applied to create alignment both within and across system levels and are therefore considered as universal in their application. Table 4 summarises how the Cities Alliance progressively applies universal intermediary functions to foster alignment and collaboration.

Table 3: CA process methodology to foster alignment and collaboration

Process step	Intermediary Function	What / issue	To what end?
1	Convene	Actors	Connect
2	Facilitate	Interaction and dialogue	Define the problem and explore common interest
3	Mediate	Between interests and priorities	Define common interest
4	Translate	Common interest into an agenda or vision	Synergy
5	Mobilise or build	Capacity	Operationalise (programmes, activities, roles, contributions)
6	Coordinate	Capacity and responses	Coherence and alignment

Source: The Author

The CA combines universal intermediary functions with systemic intermediary functions to create alignment between system levels. Systemic intermediary functions include: (1) the integration of multi-stakeholder modes of intermediation; (2) restructuring relationships across system levels; (3) strategies to manage the interface between levels which include developing institutions, dialogue platforms, horizontal and vertical networks, information and communication flows, and boundary-spanning frameworks such as regional strategies and joint work programmes; and (4) the strategic use of intermediary functions such as funding, advocacy, learning, networking and establishing institutional frameworks, to reinforce behavioural change across scalar dimensions. In addition, to work across scales, the Secretariat negotiates, re-represents and translates interests and priorities in each context (Medd & Marvin, 2007:318).

The distinction between universal and systemic intermediary functions expands the literature on how intermediary functions may be conceptualised and applied to create linkages within and across system levels and coordinate multi-level governance (Verbong & Geels, 2007).

5.1.2 The role of the Secretariat

The case study illustrates the role of the Secretariat in carrying out these functions at each level and between levels, using platforms for dialogue and collaboration such as CPs and JWPs. The

dynamics of scaling collaborative governance is time intensive and requires dedicated individuals with knowledge of each system level to connect relevant actors, resources and capabilities on an ongoing basis.

Regional Advisors (RAs) are field-based Secretariat staff members. Given the RAs proximity to regional, national and city actors, RAs can interact more directly with these actors and create tighter couplings. This enables the RAs to identify relevant interests and resources that may be leveraged for collaboration. It also enables the RAs to identify disconnected actors and networks and use flows of information and communication to create loose couplings.

The case study highlights the role of the Secretariat to perform intermediary functions on behalf of the global partnership and to constantly create and strengthen connections between individuals, networks, ideas and activities across the different levels to bring coherence to approaches and activities. Although alignment is the goal, it may not necessarily result in collaboration. Ansell & Torfing (2015:321) succinctly describe a progression towards collaboration:

Cooperation refers to paying attention to the goals of others and exchanging knowledge and ideas. *Coordination* seeks to avoid conflicts and duplication (negative coordination), and to create synergies (positive coordination). Finally, *collaboration* implies on-going and institutionalised forms of interaction that provide for negotiation of conflicting interests, the establishment of shared strategies and goals, and the joint implementation and funding of these strategies and goals.

This progression towards collaboration implies increased intensity in the interaction from cooperation to coordination, and finally, to collaboration. The precondition for alignment is establishing linkages. The case study illustrates the role of the Secretariat to establish and strengthen connections (or couplings) using intermediary functions to facilitate dialogue and interaction which may over time translate into collaboration. This is illustrated by the description of intermediary functions in section 5.1.1 and Table 1.

Literature on urban intermediary organisations is limited on how urban intermediation takes place across the city, national, regional and global levels of the urban system (Moss et al., 2009; Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013; Görgens & Van Donk, 2012; Hamann & April, 2013). The results

therefore extend the understanding of how intermediary functions are strategically applied to create alignment across urban system levels and across sub-sectors of the urban system.

Describing the role of the Secretariat contributes to the understanding of how loose and tight couplings in MSIs are established (Rasche, 2012), how coordination across levels takes place from a multi-level perspective (Van Lente et al., 2003), and how intermediaries re-translate and re-negotiate priorities at each system level (Medd & Marvin, 2007). Furthermore, this contributes to the literature by expanding our understanding of the role of secretariats in partnerships organisations (Ansell & Torfing, 2015) in different contexts (Hodson, Marvin and Bulkeley, 2013).

5.1.3 Managing the interface between different levels

The case study also extends the understanding of how platforms for deliberation (e.g. city and municipal development forums, national urban forums, regional and global events such as Africities and the World Urban Forum) and platforms for collaboration (e.g. CPs, Regional Strategies and JWPs) are established and facilitated at city, national, regional and global levels through the application of universal and systemic intermediary functions. Regional strategies, joint work programmes, the role of RAs, networks and events are used as strategies to manage the interface between all levels to create alignment.

There is anecdotal evidence that participation in transnational networks may contribute to alignment and coherence at global and regional levels through learning, communication and information sharing. The results contribute to the debate on incorporating a regional level in MSIs (Rache, 2012) through the discussion on managing the interface between levels through the role of RAs, regional strategies and networks.

5.2 Implications of SCIO functions for the urban system change conceptual model

The study starts off with defining the barrier to achieving USTs through the lens of urban system fragmentation. Urban system fragmentation is defined through five dimensions that constitute the urban system gap:

- Misaligned levels – created by misaligned actors, their interests and the way these interests are embodied in policies and programmes and replicated across the system, leading to misalignment between global, regional, national and city levels.

- Relational gap - created by a disconnect among actors combined with existing power imbalances in their relationships.
- Vision gap - misaligned interests create a diverse set of interpretations of what needs to be done which translates into a vision gap.
- Governance gap – created by uncoordinated and incoherent responses, produced by misaligned interests embodied in rules, regulations and institutions.
- Action gap – created by diverse and uncoordinated interests that are translated into a multitude of uncoordinated agendas, embodied in uncoordinated programmes and activities.

Drawing on sustainability transitions and cross-sector collaboration literature, the study develops a conceptual model of urban system change to overcome urban system fragmentation. Where current literature on intermediary organisations is limited in scalar dimension and sectoral focus (Moss et al., 2009; Hodson, Marvin & Bulkeley, 2013; Görgens & Van Donk, 2012; Kern & Alber, 2009; Guy, Marvin & Medd, 2011; Görgens & Van Donk, 2012; Hamann & April, 2013), the model and the empirical analysis extend the understanding of how SCIOs work within and across urban system levels to create alignment and collaboration.

The findings illustrate how the CA performs universal and strategic intermediary functions that bridge the urban system gap. The results of the case study help to elaborate the urban system change conceptual model by (1) identifying corresponding response principles to bridge systems gaps, and (2) identifying mechanisms and SCIO actions through which to operationalise response principles. Table 4 provides a summary of systemic intermediary actions to implement the urban system change model and is discussed below.

Creating linking mechanisms that establish connections and alignment *within* system levels responds to the relational gap between actors which produce misaligned interests. CA performs universal intermediary functions, such as connecting, convening, facilitating, translating, and mediating, to create horizontal alignment amongst actors and their interests. In addition, CA convenes disconnected actors into platforms for engagement and deliberation such as city wide forums, national urban forums and Africa Think Tank meetings.

Creating linking mechanisms that establish connections and alignment *across* system levels responds to misaligned levels. As a point of departure, CA provides a systemic overview for instance through JWPs. Universal intermediary functions are performed to create vertical alignment, for instance through convening dialogue between actors across regional and country levels to develop the Africa Strategy. Strategies to manage the interface between levels are implemented such as sharing information and developing feedback loops through RAs as conduits for information flows, creating strategic connections by create loose and tight couplings between strategic actors and networks, convening platforms for collaboration and deliberation, integrating member and partner modes of mediation within strategic frameworks (e.g. regional strategies, CPs, JWPs) and creating loose couplings between various networks. The Secretariat plays an active role in structuring scalar relationships through activities described above.

Mechanisms that reinforce alignment between actors and their activities across scalar levels respond to misaligned interests and actions. Through a deliberative process, CA convenes diverse stakeholders to develop a mix of policies and instruments to fit the context. CPs and regional strategies are examples of instruments that are tailored to their respective contexts. Through its Secretariat and Members, CA shares information and learning through formal and informal networks. These flows of information provide feedback loops that serve to reinforce behaviour change across levels. Governance arrangements, such as collaborative decision making within the CP framework, reinforce the restructuring of relationships and establishing new behaviours.

Creating mechanisms that restructure governance arrangements and create coherence among actors bridge the action and governance gaps. CA does this through convening diverse stakeholders to develop a common vision as a point of reference for action. This is articulated in institutional frameworks, such as CPs and JWPs, which outline coordinated programmes and projects to implement the vision. The process of developing frameworks and implementing actions are mediated and facilitated by the Secretariat. The collaborative approach to design and implementation creates new rules of engagement for the collective that restructure relationships aimed at creating coherence.

Table 4: Summary of systemic intermediary actions to implement the urban system change model

Urban System Change Conceptual Model: System change when all levels link up and reinforce each other around a collective approach and collective set of action			
Systems gaps	Response Principles	Mechanisms	Systemic Collaborative Intermediary Actions
Relational gap Misaligned interests	Multiple levels need to link up and align	Create linking mechanisms that create connections and alignment within system levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply universal intermediary functions to create horizontal alignment • Convene disconnected actors into platforms for engagement and deliberation
		Create linking mechanisms that create connections and alignment across system levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a systemic overview • Apply universal intermediary functions to create vertical alignment • Develop strategies to manage the interface between levels (information, feedback loops, strategic connections, platforms) • Structure scalar relationships (loose and tight couplings, MSIs, networks, modes of mediation) • Integrate multi-stakeholder modes of intermediation
Misaligned interests and levels	Once connected, multiple levels need to	Establish mechanisms that reinforce alignment across scalar levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mix of policies and instruments to fit the context • Develop feedback loops (information flows, learning, networks)

	reinforce each other		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop governance arrangements that continue to restructure relationships and reinforce new behaviours
Governance gap Action gap	Multiple levels need to reinforce each other around a collective approach and collective action	Create mechanisms that restructure governance arrangements and create coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a common vision as a point of reference for action • Develop rules of engagement for the collective (new governance arrangements) that restructure relationships • Develop institutional frameworks to create coherence • Develop coordinated programs and projects to implement the vision

Source: The Author

5.3 Mechanisms to reinforce change across the urban system

The study extends the thinking on ways to make urban system change durable through incorporating a systems approach to behavioural change. The role of behavioural change in socio-technical transitions has had limited application mainly in energy system transitions (Mourik et al., 2009). The case study highlights the potential application of a systemic behavioural change approach in USTs. Although the case study produced limited data, it does point to the potential of combining the use of intermediary functions such as advocacy, funding, facilitating learning and the establishment of networks and intuitional frameworks to create alignment and reinforce behavioural change across system levels. Intermediary functions can be combined with project interventions, such as the example of creating an enabling environment for cities, to reinforce behavioural change across the urban system.

5.4 Conclusion

The results from the study inform how SCIOs functions can be applied to operationalise the urban system change model. The conceptual model for urban system change could be a helpful tool to analyse where there are barriers to coherence and collaboration and where to focus intermediary

interventions. For instance, an initiative may have ticked the boxes for connecting actors, creating a vision, agreeing on coordinated programmes and activities, and having governance arrangements in place. However, if there are aspirations for urban system transformation and the intervention is not designed to create alignment across system levels, then the intervention is unlikely to contribute to systemic change.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The study argues that alignment of actors' interests, resources and behaviours across city, national, regional and global urban system levels is an essential precondition for USTs. Intermediary organisations emerge as a new institutional form that performs functions to bring about alignment, coherence and progressively bridge system gaps. To support this argument, the study discusses how intermediary roles and functions can be strategically leveraged as mechanisms to link, reinforce, align and create coherence across different levels of the urban system.

Alignment is defined as the action of bringing actors into agreement to cooperate. SCIOs perform functions to bring actors' interests, resources and behaviours into alignment. This is realised through identifying the most relevant actors to engage, creating linkages between actors and their interests, resources, behaviours and governance priorities. It is also achieved by strengthening existing connections through facilitating platforms for dialogue and implementation, articulation of and mediation between different interests, creating and maintaining networks and managing the interface between different system levels.

Building on the literature on cross-sector collaboration and sustainability transitions, the study distinguishes between universal and systemic intermediary functions. Universal intermediary functions such as connecting, facilitating, translating and mediating can be applied to create horizontal and vertical alignment. The study describes how systemic intermediaries integrate universal and systemic intermediary functions and apply these to scale urban collaborative governance. The conceptualisation of universal and systemic intermediary functions as strategic levers points to the possibility of developing a process methodology to analyse barriers to alignment and collaboration. This could be used to determine which intermediary function may be most appropriately applied to address barriers to collaboration.

The study reveals ways in which urban intermediation takes place at different urban system levels and contributes towards the understanding of how multi-level urban governance is organised. The analysis expands the understanding of how coordination takes place across urban system levels as well as of the challenges and limitations encountered in scaling urban collaborative governance.

The study supports the argument that there is a lack of empirical and academic research on urban intermediaries. More research is required to develop a practical understanding of urban intermediation and how this may contribute to USTs as envisioned in the SDGs. Four areas are identified for further research:

- (1) *Urban system intermediation and systemic change* – given the limitations of this study further research is required to develop an understanding of the different types of urban intermediary organisations and their role and impact on urban system change.
- (2) *Leveraging latent capacity* - further research is required to deepen the understanding of how to identify and analyse the capacity and capabilities of diverse urban actors, how to harness the capacity of various actors' competencies, and of ways of mediating to strategically leverage actors and their resources across global, regional and national levels.
- (3) *Behavioural change* – the study highlights two examples of integrating a mix of project interventions to create predisposing, enabling and reinforcing factors to support behaviour change. To understand the potential of incorporating behaviour change approaches into urban system change interventions, further research is required to test the application of a behavioural change approach at the urban system level to investigate whether it may indeed contribute to USTs.
- (4) *Strategic application of intermediary roles and functions* – further research is required into the application of systemic intermediary roles and functions to inform the further development of the process methodology discussed here. The process methodology may provide a framework for analysing barriers to coherence and collaboration. It should also be determined which intermediary function may be most appropriately applied to address barriers. Given that intermediary roles and functions need to respond to context, a deeper understanding is required of the stages of urban transitions and which intermediary roles and functions are most appropriate for each transition stage. This may further inform a new way of conceptualising urban system change and could provide new insights into developing a model for urban sustainability transitions.

Finally, the study contributes to the emerging understanding of how to make an abstract global agenda on collaboration, SDG Goal 17, more concrete by discussing the case of a global urban intermediary and multi-stakeholder partnership. Results from this study may be relevant to

understand how the intermediation function of global organisations may be enhanced to achieve SDGs 11 and 17. The case study provides insight into how multi-stakeholder collaboration is facilitated and coordinated within and across city, national, regional and global levels using a combination of universal and systemic intermediary functions.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. Introduction

This research is located within the context of urban systemic change and transformation of the urban system to become more sustainable. It looks at the question of what it takes to change a complex system and more specifically, what it takes to change urban systems in developing economy contexts.

Sustainable urban transition is not just shaped by cities themselves, but rather by multiple actors with different interests exerting multi-directional influence across global, regional, national and local levels of the urban system. This often creates a fragmented environment where governance of the urban transition is dispersed across the different levels. Hence, transition of the complex urban system is characterised by single sector interventions, duplication, and dispersed and fragmented outcomes that do not achieve the desired transformation of the urban system.

This research focuses on the role of intermediary organisations in systemic urban change. The primary objective is to understand the role and function of intermediary organisations to connect actors and their activities across global, regional, national and local levels.

The research follows a qualitative approach to document the case of the Cities Alliance as a systemic intermediary organisation, and the role it plays in systemic urban transformation through linking actors and activities across global, regional, national and local levels. The nature of the research is descriptive and aims to describe the Cities Alliance's architecture of collaborative practice. The research aims to develop new insights into the role that intermediary organisations play in facilitating multi-level collaborative practice. Such new insights hold the potential to uncover new opportunities to maximise the impact of cross-sector partnerships as a vehicle to implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Interview questions

Group 1: Cities Alliance Secretariat and Members

Special emphasis

A. The Cities Alliance Approach

- What is the CA's approach to systemic change? What is the CA's role in systemic change?
- How has the thinking around systemic change evolved over time?
- What catalysed the change in thinking?
- How was the approach to systemic change adjusted over time?

B. How is the Cities Alliance organised and how does it function?

- How is the capacity to act organised with reference to the Secretariat and the members?
- How does the CA identify possible support initiatives? How is this choice made?
- How does the CA organise itself to support an initiative? What activities are carried out and what support is provided by the members and the Secretariat? Who is targeted?
- What types of collaborations are developed at national, regional and global levels?
- How effective are these collaborations?
- What could be done differently to maximise the potential of these collaborations?
- How does the CA create alignment and coherence within each level and across levels? (*with reference to national, regional and global levels*). What activities are carried out to create alignment and coherence?
- How do activities or interventions at national, regional and global level link up and reinforce each other?
- How does the CA play a role to create a bridge or linkage between and within national, regional and global levels?
- Who is involved in creating these links and what role do they play?
- Are there any other activities or support functions that could maximise the work of the partnership within and across national, regional and global levels?

C. What is the effect of the Cities Alliance on urban systemic change?

- What is the role of the CA to affect durability of change? How is change made durable?
- What experience has been gained from the success factors of the CA's intermediary role?

Group 2: Experts

- What would be the role of intermediary organisations in support urban transitions?
- What kind of capabilities should global intermediary organisations build to maximize the work of the partnership?
- What experience have you have gained about the success factors in the roles played by urban intermediary organisations?
- What is the role of the intermediary organisation in making change durable?
- Are there effective strategies to create linkages between different levels of intervention (e.g. city, national, regional, global levels)?

- How would you define/describe the main characteristics of urban transitions in the global south?
- Within that context, what would the role of intermediary organisations be to support urban transitions?
- What kind of activities or support functions can they perform to maximize their impact on urban transitions?
- How would we know that the intermediary was successful in creating change?
- What is the role of the intermediary organisation to make change durable?
- Specific recommendations for the CA as an intermediary organisation – is there anything the CA can do more of, or differently? What is the most useful way for the CA to understand its role in urban systemic change and how should it position itself?

Appendix B: Evolution of the Cities Alliance approach to urban system change

	Phase 1: Establishment (1999 – 2003)	Phase 2: Consolidation (2004 – 2007)	Phase 3: Medium Term Strategy (2008 – 2010)	Phase 4: Institutional Reform (2010 – 2013)	Phase 5: Medium Term Strategy (2014 – 2017)
Goals/targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 To improve the quality of urban development cooperation and urban lending To strengthen the impact of grant-funded urban development cooperation To expand the level of resources reaching the urban poor by increasing the coherence of programmes and sharpening the focus on scaling up successful approaches To provide a structured vehicle for advancing collective know-how 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 To strengthen and promote the role of cities in poverty reduction and sustainable development To capture and strengthen the synergies between and among members and partners To improve the quality of urban development and operation in lending To promote the United Nations’ SDGs 11 and 17 		
Organisational identity	Learning alliance	Funder	Catalyst of urban transformation at scale	Partnership as a vehicle for urban transformation	Partnership as a vehicle for urban transformation
Strategic Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure global political commitment – members (WB, UN-Habitat, G-7 countries, President Nelson Mandela). Secure funding. Develop a pipeline of projects. Develop systems and operations. Governance 	<p>Grow diverse member base (20 members including developing countries or “non-donor” countries).</p> <p>Re-interpret scale to promote city wide approaches.</p>	<p>To increase the CA’s contribution to systemic change and scale, supported by a Theory of Change.</p> <p>To systematically increase ownership and leadership of cities and countries (re-interpret Paris Agenda on coherence of effort and</p>	<p>Large scale institutional reform: review charter and governance arrangements, close open access grant facility, refine tools and instruments to match systemic change context, introduce new instruments such as CPs and Catalytic fund, and more strategic investments that would catalyse systemic change.</p>	<p>Respond to a re-interpretation of the landscape within the CA’s function, responding to new issues and actors.</p> <p>Incorporate the overall theme of equity, i.e. inclusive and resilient economic growth within the boundaries of the planet.</p>

	arrangements.		ownership). Re-interpret scale to promote national approaches, e.g. national urban policies and strategies.	Secretariat plays an increasingly more significant connector role.	Strengthening the CA's partnerships.
Modes of intermediation	Stand alone and often once-off projects, for instance: Episodic (city development strategies) Piecemeal (settlement level upgrading interventions) Conduit (setting MDGs)			Gradually adopt a more systemic approach especially with the introduction of CPs. Target transformation of national urban systems through creating institutional frameworks that provide a strategic context for different modes of intermediation of members and partners.	Consolidate systemic approach: develop frameworks to create coherence among members and partners and provide a strategic framework to incorporate different modes of intermediation, e.g. regional strategies, support networks, linkages across national, regional and global levels.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global: pro-poor urban financing, knowledge exchange, President Nelson Mandela endorsing Cities Without Slums Action Plan, MDG Goal 7 (Target 11). Analytical activities. City level: SU and CDS projects. 	<p>Initiate high quality projects in SU, CDS and Municipal Finance.</p> <p>Analytical activities, knowledge products.</p>	<p>SU, CDS</p> <p>Target enabling environment, e.g. national urban policies, analysis of 50 countries in Africa's enabling environment.</p> <p>Global knowledge and advocacy, analytical activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National urban policies Inclusive city-wide strategies Capacity building Building active citizenry Global knowledge and advocacy Analytical activities 	<p>Expanded thematic focus – inclusive growth, gender, resilience.</p> <p>Consolidate use of analytical and operational instruments such as CPs, JWPs, regional strategies.</p>
Instruments	Open access grant facility.	Open access grant facility.	Open access grant facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalytic Fund Country Programs Knowledge and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalytic Fund Country Programs Analytical activities

			Joint Work Programmes.	<p>Advocacy activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Work Programmes 	<p>(research, knowledge, advocacy)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Work Programmes • Regional strategies
Major impacts	<p>World Bank shift in sub-national engagement, cities supported with sub-national lending.</p> <p>Global shift in opinion towards pro-urban programming of CA members adopting urban poverty policy and strategies to guide aid programming.</p> <p>Increased collaborations between CA members, and CA members and NGOs.</p> <p>Increased urgency to focus on urban poverty.</p>	<p>Grow diverse member base to 20 members, increasing its influence, \$80.5m in programming</p> <p>Members view the CA as highly relevant, enhancing the credibility of their own organisations.</p> <p>Gradual increased coherence amongst members.</p> <p>CDS methodology becomes a tool for bringing together diverse stakeholders that would otherwise not engage with each other.</p> <p>Leverage \$8b in additional investment from external sources.</p>	<p>Positive shifts towards cities and national governments setting the development agenda.</p> <p>Greater inclusion of cities and urban poor in international development agendas.</p>	<p>Pilot integrated approach to urban system transformation at national level through CPs.</p> <p>Develop social capital through actively involving the urban poor in planning and decision making in city development.</p> <p>Pilot approaches to restructure local urban governance through Municipal Development Forums.</p>	<p>Facilitate and participate in several international forums to negotiate SDGs 11, 17 and New Urban Agenda.</p>
Incongruent outcomes	<p>Governance and operations overshadowed the need to establish a learning alliance and scaling up slum upgrading interventions.</p> <p>Difficulty to translate</p>	<p>Weak coordination for coherence amongst members and partners, limited follow-up investment, need for scaling up through influencing policy framework, weak sustainability and institutionalisation.</p>	<p>Some projects are still supply driven, ad-hoc, dispersed with limited impact on the urban system. No strategic approach to funding projects. Need to invest in long-term change and</p>	<p>Need to define roles and responsibilities and partner behaviour. CA implements through its members, however, not all members have implementing capacity.</p>	<p>Risk of un-sustained urban programming.</p>

	<p>global goals to impact at local level.</p> <p>CA member competitive behaviour.</p>	<p>CA members still drive development agenda, lack of ownership in country.</p> <p>CA founding members dominate governance of the partnership.</p>	<p>re-invest beyond single projects.</p> <p>CA founding members dominate governance of the partnership.</p>	<p>Need to take cognisance of the substantive debates and trends such as equity in the context of cities as engines for economic growth, gender and resilience.</p>	
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Source: The Author