# International cities: case studies

## City case studies from outside Europe and the US

In these short case studies – Medellin (South America), Seoul (Asia) and Cape Town (South Africa), inclusive growth initiatives related to spatial development are examined, focusing especially on public transport and housing – linking suburbs and people living in the urban sprawl to the 'urban core'. This was a key theme that emerged when reviewing the evidence for these case study cities and is important because it promotes residents' access to jobs and services and helps make the cities more sustainable economically and environmentally. Another aspect of connectivity is linking disadvantaged neighbourhoods to each other: it enables peace building in Medellín and reducing racial and social segregation in Cape Town.

## Medellín

### Introduction

Medellin, the second largest city in Colombia with a population of 2.5 million people, was awarded the title 'the world's most innovative city' in 2012 and is seen as a testing ground of progressive architectural and urban innovations. The city's industrial development started in the 1930s, and from the 1960s the population grew rapidly as internally displaced people running away from political and military conflict within Colombia moved to Medellín, setting up 'barrios', unplanned, extremely poor settlements on the hillsides on the outskirts of the city. From the 1970s, the barrios were increasingly ruled by drug cartels and by 1992, Medellín was one of the most dangerous and murderous cities in the world. As a result of positive changes in national politics, facilitated by the capture of Colombia's infamous drug lord, Pablo Escobar, and an innovative urban development strategy, life in the city's poorest neighbourhoods has changed considerably. In 2014, the homicide rate was less than a quarter of what it was in 2000, even though drug trafficking is not eradicated and there are still strong divisions between the legal and illegal settlements and a wealthy south and poor north parts of the city.

### Strategy, Vision and Leadership

A small group of experts at the department of 'social urban planning' (urbanismo social) at the Medellín Academy started to think about how to re-conquer spaces torn by violence: "it was a both a concept and a physical strategy, a mixture of ideas and bricks" (Vulliamy, 2013). These ideas have been put into practice through a strong collaboration between scholars and professionals, business and civic networks and local government. Public transport is a key part of this strategy: it is viewed not only as a means to enable ordinary people to move around the city and get to work faster and more comfortably, but also as a symbol of uniting the rich and poor areas of the city and enabling different segments of the population to meet. It also represents an example of 'building on the informal' and so harnessing existing energy for the common good.

These ideas were taken forward by Mayors Luis Perez (1999-2003) and Sergio Fajardo (2003-2007), who were able to take advantage of the positive political developments: after the death of the drug lord, Pablo Escobar in 1993, the paramilitary groups reached an agreement with the national government. As mayor, Fajardo was able to draw on important support from the local business community. The private sector in Medellín brought investment to social programs in the city's

marginalized, violent neighbourhoods.

## Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Impact

The developments in Medellin illustrate local government facilitating the private sector to develop infrastructure.

Preparations for the Medellín Metro started in the late 1970s, led by the Medellín municipality. The overground train lines opened in 1995, and then starting from 2004, a network of chair-lifts connecting the Metro to the poorest barrio communities (MetroCable) was built. MetroCable greatly reduced the time and cost of commuting from the barreos to industrial and commercial centres along the Medellín River, stimulating employment and social integration (Lowenthal and Mejia, 2010). Later additions to the public transport network include buses (Metroplus) and a 28-storey high escalator in one of Medellín's poorest neighbourhoods, so that residents can safely ride down the steep hillside. Other infrastructure such as bridges connecting the barrios to each other was also established.

Another important element of the plan was building new schools and libraries in the poor neighbourhoods near the public transport network, complete with literacy initiatives and cultural events. A business coalition helps the local authority monitor and evaluate public schools. Nine of the city's largest firms came together in 2006 to invest in *Parque Explora*, a science museum that provides free entry to Medellín's poor majority. The renovated Botanical Garden, which has brought life back into a formerly depressed neighbourhood, was partially funded by local environmental organizations. One of the city's universities runs a program in which business executives and scholars train community and NGO leaders on how to incorporate business basics regarding organizational efficiency into their social mobilization (Lowenthal and Mejia, 2010).

Another very successful public-private partnership is the unique construction of the local utility company Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM), which is responsible for water and waste water management, electricity and gas networks and landline telephone in the metropolitan area. The company is owned by the municipality, but it operates and pays taxes as a private enterprise and charges the city for the use of its services, just like any other customer. EPM is highly profitable, and pays 30% of its profits to the municipality, enabling it to invest in the development projects described above.

The company's leadership believes that positive social and environmental impact is achieved through business itself, through ethical management. Since 1998 EPM has extended its network to supply services to the informal neighbourhoods and introduced a 'social' pricing strategy: prices are adjusted to people's income – as a result, all households have drinking water and sewage and 97% of households have electricity.

## Synthesis and Conclusion

The key learning point from the Medellín experience concerns the leading role of the local government and its strong partnership with the business and civil communities. 'Social urbanism' described above can be conceptualised as  a form of local state activism: the local government has played a key role in developing infrastructure (in partnership with the private sector), public services and thus, promoting social inclusion.

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# Seoul

**Introduction**

Seoul Special City is the capital of the Republic of Korea. The city itself has 10 million residents, and the Seoul-Incheon Metropolitan Area has 25.6 million, half of the country's population.

The economic development of South Korea has been exceptionally fast, and combined with equality: the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, was 0.31 in 2010 (compared to 0.36 in the UK). Seoul is a business and financial hub on a global scale. The Metropolitan Area is also home to manufacturing industries: primarily information technology, electronics and electronics assembly, but also printing, publishing and food and drink manufacturing. The headquarters of major Korean companies, such as Samsung, LG and Hyundai are also in Seoul city. Rapid industrial growth and urbanisation have made South Korea one of the most energy-intensive economies of the OECD: the development of 'road- oriented transport' is a major cause of the high energy consumption and air pollution. Seoul and is metropolitan area are characterised by a high degree of urban sprawl or 'scattered development' and a lack of green areas. The following examples illustrate how the leadership of Seoul has tried to make the city more sustainable in the environmental and social sense.

Historically, the main form of public transport in Seoul was the bus network which developed 'organically', without any co-ordination or indeed control of the authorities. As the rate of private car ownership grew from 2 cars per 1000 people in 1970 to 215 in 2003, the roads became increasingly congested and buses became less and less popular. From 1980, the growing urban rail / underground network helped ease the problems of public transport but air pollution, noise and traffic accidents made living in Seoul increasingly unhealthy and the needs of road transport (roads and parking space) reduced the remaining green areas in the city. For example, one of these formerly green areas, the Cheonggyecheon stream in the centre of the city, was first paved then built over, giving way to an elevated road in the 1970s. The area under the road was neglected, considered unsafe and thus little used by the public.

**Strategy, Vision and Leadership**

The reform of the bus network was initiated and overseen by Mayor Lee Myung-bak, who was elected in 2002 after a campaign focusing on the issue of public transport (he then went on to become the president of South Korea). The reform strategy had three main goals: reducing carbon-dioxide

emission, making the system of public transport more people- oriented and supporting economic growth. The reform entailed a transfer of responsibilities from a variety of different agencies to the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SGM) which played a key role in strategic planning and then in building, maintaining and managing the new transport infrastructure. Despite the general consensus that a reform was necessary,

key stakeholders, such as Korean Rail, the bus companies, and bus drivers' unions had their own interests and the negotiations were challenging. In the end, the research process and the negotiations took two years: during this period weekly transport policy meetings took place. The City sent a letter to all 16,000 bus drivers to explain the reform and 27 briefings were held, where the Mayor himself was present. Civil society representatives and local people were also part of the negotiations via the Bus Reform Citizens' Committee. The project for restoring the stream was framed as a form of flood prevention and the new park improving Seoul's image around the world.

## Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Impact

The strategy proposed a 'semi-public operation system', where decisions on routes, schedules and fares are made by the SMG, but independent private bus firms continue to operate the network. Before the reform, bus companies owned the routes and managed their revenues. In the new system, bus operators are paid on the basis of 'vehicle kilometres' and not on the number of passengers or trips and fares are pooled from the whole system. A

'bus operation council' with representatives from every bus company manages the distribution of the joint revenues.

All bus routes were redesigned and new routes were established, the number of dedicated bus lanes was increased and a Bus Rapid Transit network with 'median dedicated bus lanes' and 'bus corridors' were introduced. Since 2010, all inner city buses run on compressed natural gas. In addition, a unified fare structure was introduced for the buses and the underground: the fares for a single journey went up, but transfers (within a time limit) are

now allowed, including not only buses but also the underground. Finally, a smart card – based payment system (locally known as T-money) was introduced.

While the bus transport reform was being prepared, the Cheonggyecheon stream was restored: the road covering it was ripped out and a 3.6-mile-long new public park was established on its banks, with parallel roadways for traffic, including a dedicated bus lane.

## Synthesis and Conclusion

Environmental and social aspects of sustainability are intertwined in the comprehensive redesign of Seoul's bus network which emphasised 'connectivity'. While the redesign required substantial resources, it was still cheaper than expanding the underground network. The highly visible rehabilitation of the Cheonggyecheon stream ensured that public support for the Mayor's vision was maintained.

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# Cape Town

## Introduction

Cape Town is the second largest urban area in South Africa and the seat of the national parliament. The metropolitan area, including the suburbs and 'exurbs' is home to 3.7 million people (2011), almost 70 per cent of the population of the entire Western Cape Province, where it is located. Cape Town is a popular tourist destination and was the World Design Capital (2014), but it faces many challenges, including wide-scale poverty, high unemployment, social marginalisation and criminality, and pressures on natural resources. Due to high migration rates and a suspicion of attempts to categorize the population, demographic statistics in South Africa have a large margin of uncertainty (Findley and Ogbu,
2011).

The Mayor of the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality is Patricia de Lille (Democratic Alliance): before her election as Mayor in 2011, she was active in the trade union movement and a member of the national parliament and the provincial government.

Under Apartheid, the city was conceived with a white-only centre, surrounded by townships for the black and coloured labour forces. The settlements are separated from each other by highways and rail lines, rivers and valleys, and in most places buffer zones of scrublands divide them from the affluent white suburbs (Wainwright, 2014). Townships did not have any public space apart from churches and the marketplace and getting to work involves a long commute to the core city.

After the end of Apartheid (1994), as white-only areas have opened up to others, there was a movement of black middle-class residents from townships to formerly all-white suburbs: it has been argued that what was once a racial divide has increasingly become a class divide, although the two are closely intertwined (Findley and Ogbu, 2011). The city centre was the centre of economic activity, while the townships, where the majority of population growth is taking place have few economic and job opportunities. While the national government has built more than a million new housing units, the majority of these are at the edges of townships, exacerbating the problems associated with spatial division. As there is large scale immigration to the city / metropolitan area from other parts of the country, 71 per cent of households in the Cape Town metropolitan area are in informal structures (shacks).

## Strategy, Vision and Leadership

The city's main framework for spatial development is the City of Cape Town's City Development Strategy (CDS, 2012). It speaks to Cape Town's place in the region until 2040 and aims to create a city of social inclusion and economic opportunity. CDS was developed through citizen engagement and consultation with stakeholders from academia, civil society and businesses. The Strategy is supported by the Economic Growth Strategy, Social Development Strategy as well as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). All municipalities in South Africa have to create an IDP as the overall framework for local development. Cape Town's IDP has five pillars: (1) the opportunity city, (2) the safe city, (3) the caring city, (4) the inclusive city and (5) the well-run city.

There is also a national programme, the Urban Network Strategy (UNS), funded by the National Treasury which supports the eight largest South African cities to create links between the city centres and the townships, through planning and infrastructure grants. This programme is seen as an important opportunity for cities to remake the spatial form of the apartheid city through 'transit-oriented development'. In order to access UNS funding streams, municipalities have to declare 'Integration Zones'.

## Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Impact

After significant research, the Voortrekker Road Corridor was chosen as an integration zone. Among other sources, information from the ECAMP system was used in the planning phase: it pulls together various data streams from the City's SAP database into a scoring matrix to rank areas according to economic opportunity and performance.

Given Voortrekker Road's already existing transport capacity (rail, road and bus networks); and its proximity to industrial, logistical and service nodes, new housing developments are proposed in the area to give home to the city's growing population more centrally. Since the start of the programme, the City has invested in infrastructure upgrade, such as wastewater treatment, electricity substation, a transport control centre, flood prevention and a network of green open spaces near the Elsieskraal River as well as housing (Fieuw, 2016).

A part of the development is also classified as an 'urban development zone' and in such zones tax savings are available for business which invest in new commercial and residential building developments, including low-cost housing (City of Cape Town, 2014).

However, the project faces challenges: first, the jargon of spatial planning strategies, such as the Integration Zone, nodes, corridors, and the open space system are difficult for developers and citizens to relate to. Secondly, there is tension between formality and informality as the City is clamping down on buildings that violate the zoning and use code and regulations on health and safety, fire risk, and overcrowding. While these buildings significantly contribute to urban decay, it is important to be sensitive to the needs of people who stay there – especially given the memories of evictions under Apartheid. Finally, there are other urban developments underway in Cape Town which do not meet the criteria of a 'compact city'. The building of WesCape at the edge of the city has just started, despite strong critique from experts who claim that the city is spending funding in peripheral locations (Fieuw, 2016).

## Synthesis and Conclusion

The most important task for Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality is to overcome the extreme segregation caused by decades of Apartheid, and this can only be achieved by using the method of spatial targeting.

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**Observations from the three cities**

The examples may seem very distant from UK cities because of their rather different contexts and because they focus explicitly on overcoming spatial segregation and achieving social and environmental sustainability through 'transit-oriented developments'. Yet there are learning points for cities in the UK.

The key messages are:

- 'Connectivity' is seen as crucial to inclusive growth – as evidenced by the approach linking informal settlements (Medellín) and townships (Cape Town) as well as formal suburbs (Seoul) to the 'urban core'.
- In Cape Town and in Medellín, connecting the poor neighbourhoods to the core of the city is also expected to strengthen the economic activity in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- In addition to a focus on connectivity, substantial investments have been made in the infrastructure in the poor neighbourhoods of Medellín and Cape Town: libraries, schools and parks and public spaces are established in locations that were originally developed only to house workers (i.e. they were 'bedroom communities'). These examples show how the
'formal' can build upon the 'informal'.

Strong leadership from local and national governments is important to enact policies aimed at 'spatial targeting'. In South Africa national government grants are only awarded to projects that focus on connectivity and integration – not simple 'place-based developments.'

The urban developments discussed in these case studies are very expensive and innovative forms of financing have been introduced:

- Medellín: the local authority raises revenue through a public services company which is owned by the municipality.
- Cape Town: in areas with developed transport links (and only in these areas) tax incentives are designed to encourage private sector investments, including in social housing
- Seoul: joint management of revenues from the bus network.