Chapter 3

THE CASE STUDY CITIES
Santiago de Chile, Johannesburg, Gaborone

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Abstract: This chapter examines the “sense of place” of Santiago de Chile, Johannesburg and Gaborone, reflecting on their environmental, physical, socioeconomic, policy and development perspectives. In each individual case study city, short textual episodes and topical themes are used to focus on the distinctive urban settings and sustainability experiences of previous and newly born generations of Latin American and African urban dwellers. For this chapter, the background information is resourced from individual DIMSUD project city reports covering a wide range of urban narrations and descriptions aiming at supporting more sustainable urban practices. After two years of investigation by DIMSUD partners, this chapter draws on synthetic rendering to try to come closer to understanding the individual qualities and dynamics of these three rapidly expanding cities.

Key words: Latin American city, urban morphology, sustainability, apartheid, urban environment, integrated development planning

1. SANTIAGO DE CHILE – A CITY OF RHYTHMS

1.1 Urban Development after the Spanish Conquest

In order to understand the factors influencing the urban development of Santiago de Chile, it is necessary to understand the influence of the following historical periods: the “mercantilist” colonial period (1500–1750), the period of “outward growth” (1750–1914), the crisis of the “liberal model” period (1914–1950) and the current “period of transnational capitalism” (Galafassi 2002, Violich and Daughters 1987).
The origins of contemporary Santiago City planning are to be found in the Spanish Law of Indies (1573). Initially, the small village borne next to the Mapocho River and at the foot of the Huelén Hill began to extend towards the surrounding areas, first in an “organic” and later on in a “planned” manner.

Towards the end of the century of the Conquest and upon the arrival of Governor García Hurtado de Mendoza, Santiago became the heart of the administration, competing with the city of Concepción, the military center (Barros, Inostroza and Allison 2002). The characteristics of this period up to the beginning of the Industrial Era point to close ties between tradition and progressive developments. Spontaneous urban segments became interlocked into the more regularly defined new quarters. Through the process of continuous metamorphosis, a new geometry was imposed over informally planned semicircular enclaves of the original settlement, gradually transforming the village into a more permanent urban milieu. Colonial Spanish planning left the old areas with important buildings and other structures intact, spreading an unvarying grid over 27 km² of the outlying terrain of the Mapocho Valley and its intruding hills (Barros, Inostroza and Allison 2002).

During the time of the “mercantilist” colonial period, when the expansion and changes within the historic core started to change the city’s image, the concept of a restored gridiron, based on balancing the new developments with restoration and conservation activities, tailored the city’s urban mosaic. The central parts of the city, designated for governmental institutions and elite residences, were punctuated with parks, plazas, squares, avenues, and religious, educational and other ancillary uses. The reorganization of blocks allowed the development of different building types, changing densities in a more or less very stable manner. Fueled by a mining boom during the early years of the Republic – founded in 1810 – and numerous ideas of fine thinkers, scholars and administrators, Santiago continued to produce fragments of elegant and sustainable urban design with clear expressions of sensitive perspectives and well-balanced proportions.

During the late 18th and at the beginning of 19th century, Santiago grew rapidly and acquired the first ring of poorer districts surrounding the Belt Road created by Vicuña Mackenna. It was the beginning of a new era when emerging industrial activities transformed the urban landscape and changed the life of people living in traditional residential quarters. At the same time, this was the period of “outward growth” when the city was dependent on primary exports and the processing of local and imported raw materials.

Industrialization created a new urban form essentially by dividing the urban fabric into special districts based on differentiated land values and transformations of ownership. An influx of new immigrants wishing to come and live in the city was inevitable, and the city government reacted by encourag-