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# Creating and sharing new knowledge on sustainable cities

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Led by five world-renowned academic institutions, the PEAK Urban project produces and explores ground-breaking research on the greatest issues facing the contemporary city.



UK Research and Innovation



## Who are we?

PEAK Urban brings together five world-renowned urban research institutions:

- **University of Oxford**
- **Peking University** (Beijing)
- **The African Centre for Cities** (Cape Town)
- **Indian Institute for Human Settlements** (Bangalore)
- **EAFIT University** (Medellín)



**Principal Investigator** [↗](#)

Professor Michael Keith, at University of Oxford.

## What is PEAK?

PEAK Urban aims to improve cities' capacity to address contemporary urban challenges and development dilemmas. Our work focuses on five key areas:



**City Governance** [↗](#)



**Sustainable cities** [↗](#)



**Sustainable growth** [↗](#)



**Health and wellbeing** [↗](#)



**Migration and cities** [↗](#)

PEAK Urban's collaborators bring complementary contributions to the project, united around four central pillars that guide research across radically different contexts. These are:

**P**

**Prediction**

What can we now forecast about cities?

**E**

**Emergence**

What types of urban structures and systems are emerging?

**A**

**Adoption**

How to cities adopt new ideas and technologies?

**K**

**Knowledge Exchange**

How can we share knowledge globally?

## Why now?

### **“Makes cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”**

- Goal 11 of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG11)

For the first time ever, cities have been formally identified as integral to the development debate. Continuing urbanisation brings with it environmental and social sustainability challenges, yet the answers so far remain unclear. This is particularly true for the fastest-changing cities, where distribution of resources is most inequitable, governance structures are complex, and formal knowledge is in short supply. Overcoming these challenges will be a major factor in worldwide sustainable development outcomes in the years to come.

With the majority of the world’s population predicted to be living in cities by 2050, the relevance of PEAK Urban is clear. Our work is our contribution towards SDG11, providing a steer at both project and programme level:

#### **Project level:**

Most of PEAK Urban’s activities are implemented through its constituent 35-40 independent projects, across five academic partners and five themes.

#### **Programme level:**

PEAK Urban (through its ‘central unit’ at COMPAS) supports projects by providing opportunities for cooperation, peer-learning and cross-fertilisation across projects.

### **Conceptual advancement results pathway**

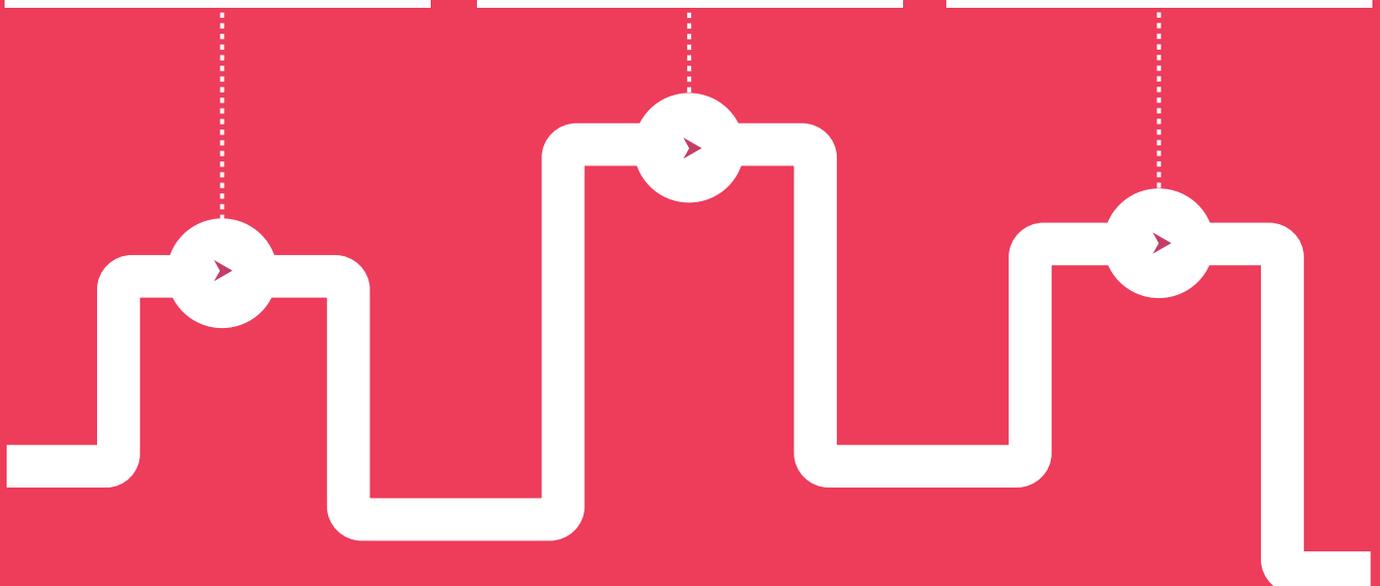
An important component of PEAK Urban’s impact pathways are its academic results. We provide high-quality, innovative, relevant research and contribute to conceptual advancement via academic publications, tools and datasets. We’re also an authoritative voice in scholarly urban debates.

### **Research Into Use (RIU) impact pathway**

By bringing together a wide variety of context-specific stakeholders for discussion and collective work, we’re influencing decision-making processes in policies, practices and investments. While the focus of PEAK Urban is at the city level, RIU processes also target national- and global-level decisions about cities.

### **‘New ways of working’ impact pathway**

PEAK Urban is building a global network of people who are engaged with urban futures – people who have developed the ability to “see like a city”. This network addresses urban issues in a challenge-led way, unencumbered by professional and disciplinary silos.



# Researchers in the spotlight

The PEAK Urban project began on October 1, 2017 and is expected to run until 2022. By the end of our programme, PEAK researchers will constitute the first cohort of urban champions. They'll be able to approach urban issues from a wider perspective, drawing on a wide range of expertise and experimenting with innovative approaches and methodologies. The PEAK model is intended to help shape this new way of working.



**Aromar Revi** [↗](#)

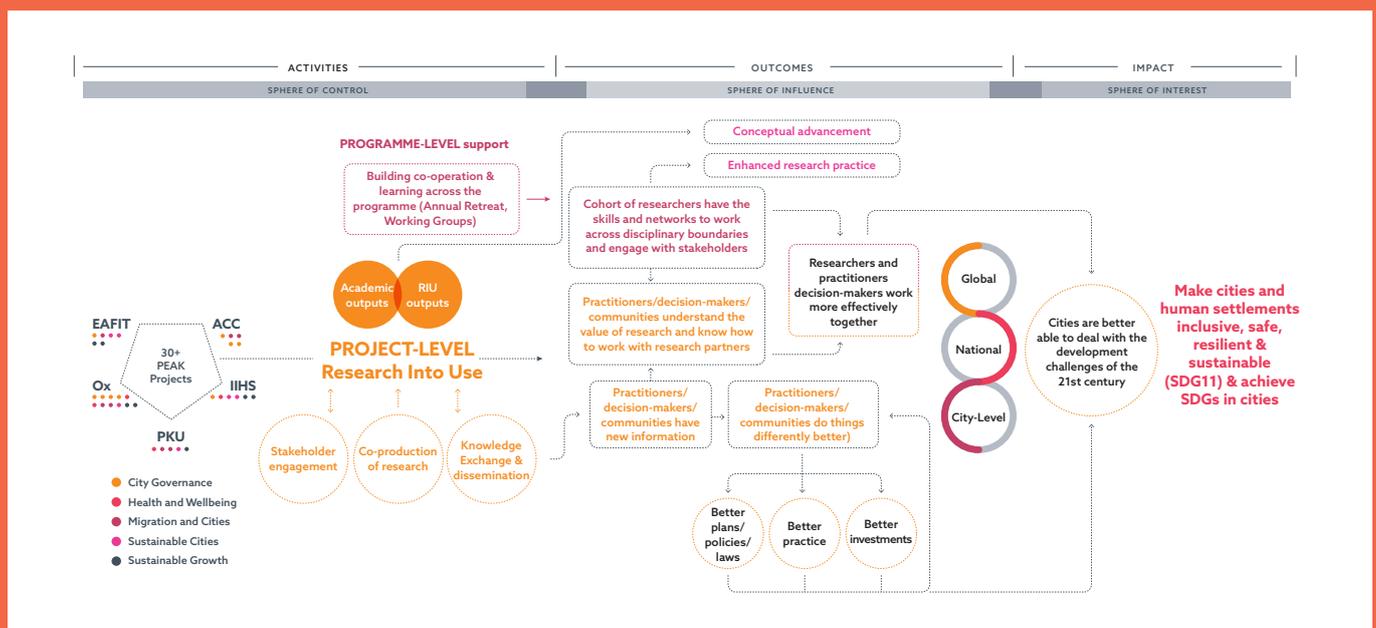
Aromar is Founding Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, a global practice and thought leader, and an educator with 35 years of urban interdisciplinary experience. As Co-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), he helped lead a successful global campaign for an urban-centric SDG11. He has led 125 major practice, consulting and research assignments worldwide, and has published over 95 peer-reviewed articles, books and other publications.



**Amy Weimann** [↗](#)

As an urban geographer in the field of Urban Health, Amy Weimann's current research at the African Centre for Cities focuses on new approaches to addressing urban health challenges, particularly in the context of informal settlement housing. She also has research experience in exploring the spatial distribution of HIV, tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases in South Africa, and has previously worked in local government analysing the South African Census data, crime data, and developing monitoring indices.

# PEAK Urban's Theory of Change



# Project spotlight

## Project 1 -

### **Spatiotemporal modelling of urban growth using machine learning** [↗](#)

**Who:** EAFIT University

**Where:** Rionegro, Colombia

**What:** This project uses freely available satellite imagery to predict urban population growth of any city world-wide at low cost.

**Why:** to demonstrate the translational nature of PEAK Urban research and how it can help local governments to better respond to rapid population growth.

## Project 2 -

### Transitioning cities: The complex interactions between behaviour, transport and urban society [↗](#)

**Who:** Peking University

**Where:** Cities in China

**What:** This project studies the complex interaction between behaviour, transport flows and urban society, proposing policy scenarios for sustainable transport in transitioning cities.

**Why:** To provide insight into long commutes and their demographic variation in a megacity, embedded in their relationship with job and housing distribution.



## Project 3 -

### Everyday mobilities and gendered opportunities in African urban transport systems [↗](#)

**Who:** University of Oxford

**Where:** Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

**What:** This project aims to understand how systems are positioned to respond to the transport needs of growing cities through an ethnographic study of minibuses and shared taxis.

**Why:** To offer research critical for effective local public policy and provide a useful reference point for those working in similar contexts in cities of the Global South.



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**Our research can only be effective through partnerships and knowledge sharing. Get involved by getting in touch.**

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