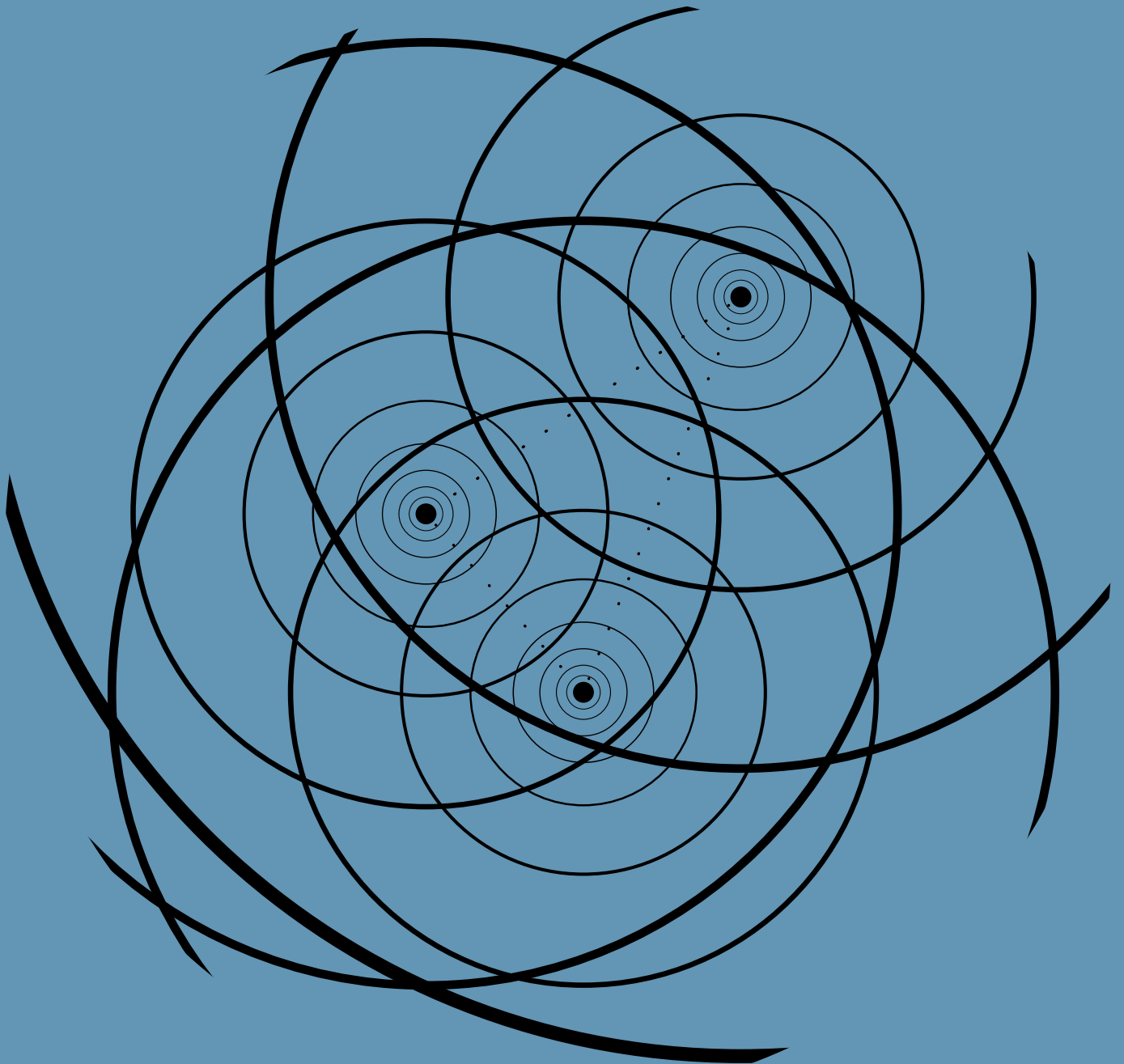


GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON CITIES IN EXTREME CONDITIONS



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NGO Roles and Responsibilities



Collecting Data



Understanding Ministers' targets



Briefing the design and planning



Preparing the technical documentation necessary for design and planning



Funding and carrying out the design, planning and engineering



Coordinating between institutions, managing the flow of information



Organising gatherings Such as meetings and workshops



Managing communication



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report follows a participatory workshop held at the Barbican Centre in London on 22 January 2025. Titled *Global Perspectives on Cities in Extreme Conditions*, the scope of the workshop was to bring together 60 international experts, enthusiasts and practitioners from 15 countries to discuss best practice in urban design, economic recovery, social integration, and cultural conservation in cities and urban centres recovering from extreme conditions, such as disasters and conflicts. This report documents key takeaways from the event, alongside sharing attendee knowledge, and future considerations. Bringing together architects, academics, city leaders, policymakers, NGOs and design practitioners, the workshop was a catalyst event and launchpad to chart the way forward for cities and communities in crisis.

The event positioned three exemplar revitalisation projects as examples to guide a broader conversation on post-disaster and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. The projects showcased included the revitalisation of Hatay in Turkey following a devastating earthquake in 2023; the transformation of Bilbao following years of industrial decline, flood disasters and social discord; and the ongoing recovery effort in response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Each project presented a unique strategic approach to building urban resilience in the face of extremity.

Case studies were presented by representatives closely involved in their recovery stories. Mehmet Kalyoncu, Founder of the Türkiye Design Council and the initiator of the event itself, presented Hatay as a paradigm for rapid, collaborative post-disaster masterplanning. Idoia Postigo, Director General for Bilbao Metropoli 30, presented the transformation of Metropolitan Bilbao, outlining the importance of a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan to the city's evolution. Finally, Silvia Botti and Francesca Pintus, Director and Associate Director of One Works Foundation respectively, spoke about their ongoing work on the recovery of Ukraine as it navigates reconstruction in the context of continued conflict.

Each presentation was followed by a roundtable discussion, where expert participants reflected on the case studies presented, considering how their extensive evidence base could inform a blueprint for successful post-disaster and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

How to read this report

The report is divided into three sections. The first section details the three case studies presented during the workshop, summarising the central narrative of each post-crisis context. The case studies outline the major lessons and trajectories from their experiences of recovery.

The second section summarises the three roundtable discussions that followed each case study presentation. The summaries list the salient considerations noted by participants, collecting the content of their discussions under a list of prevalent themes.

The final section is dedicated to what comes next. Here, the report begins to ask questions on how a roadmap might be structured following the outcomes of this initial event – what are the major takeaways from each separate case study? What are the commonalities between all three? Where should future focus lie, and how can design professionals, communities and stakeholders organise efforts to design holistic preparedness and recovery?



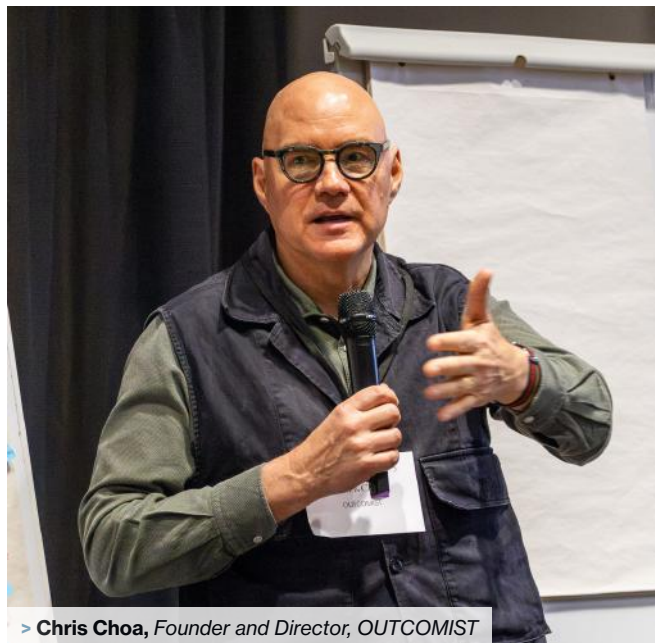
> **Mehmet Kalyoncu**, *Founder, Türkiye Design Council and Initiator, GHUSO*



> **Idoia Postigo**, *Director General, Bilbao Metropoli 30*



> **Lara Kinnair**, *Head of Creative Innovation Practice, Policy Lab UK*



> **Chris Choa**, *Founder and Director, OUTCOMIST*



> **Prof Greg Clark** *CBE FAcSS, Global Urbanist*



> **Nadine Bitar Chahine**, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Baladiya Catalyst



> **Francesca Pintus**, Associate Director, One Works



> **James Close**, Head of Climate Change, NatWest Group



> **Andrew Caruso**, Partner, HATCH - Urban Solutions



THE HATAY REVITALISATION PLAN

▣ SPEAKER

Mehmet Kalyoncu, *Founder, Türkiye Design Council and Initiator, GHUSO*

▣ SUBJECT

The Hatay Post-Disaster Recovery Project developed by the Türkiye Design Council and its interdisciplinary Hatay Design and Planning Collaboration Group

▣ KEYWORDS AND THEMES

NGOs as initiator and mediator; building community trust; negotiating immediate recovery needs with addressing long-term trauma

In February 2023, the districts of Pazarcık and Elbistan were hit by two earthquakes, their force of magnitude – 7.7 and 7.6 respectively. The earthquakes brought far-reaching devastation and the scale of destruction, including 50,096 reported deaths, was the worst seen in Turkey’s modern history. Hatay, home to the ancient city of Antakya, was the most affected region. The damage was unprecedented in a region of rich historical significance and strategic geo-positioning, as a bridge between the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Following, the Hatay Revitalisation Plan was rapidly deployed, initiating a holistic and restorative action strategy for the region. The integrated masterplan and pilot project sought to put community-driven design at its core.

Assessing scale of damage

The case of Hatay demonstrates the strategic agility required for different scales and speed of damage in post-disaster and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. For example, 90% of the Antakya city centre was destroyed, an area as large as Switzerland or the Netherlands. The totality of this destruction required a holistic vision and a masterplan for the complete redevelopment of the city at both granular and monumental scales.

Dimensional collaboration

The starting point was bringing community voices into the recovery process. They conducted dozens of meetings to discuss ambitions and developments. The diversity of participants ensured authentic and just representation of affected communities. A key factor highlighted by Türkiye Design Council was how they provided spaces for local stories to be told. This measure helped the community process trauma and informed practical design decisions.

Hybrid public engagement

The project conducted a hybrid public engagement process. This included an online platform that helped community members process their trauma and recall memories of the earthquake and its impact.

Focus on mapping intangible elements

The online platform served as a functional archive that could record and map intangible memories – such as familiar smells – creating a profound image of what had been lost.

Physical community space as meeting point

A physical community centre was set up to facilitate community-based discussions about the city’s future. 40 collaborative meetings were conducted including children’s workshops and different types of community engagement sessions. Around 8,000 people participated and it was an important endeavour, both as a meaningful form of community participation and to build trust between the recovery team and the community.

Genuine effort to build trust and transparency

The design team shared tents with displaced residents during the initial phases of the revitalisation efforts. This was just one example of a genuine desire to build trust and promote transparency from the very start of the process. From then on, modes of engagement were trusted, and seen as diverse and equitable.

Receptiveness as methodology

The masterplan design married community desires with best practice in urban design, prioritising measures that would achieve the best quality of life for residents. For example, green areas were a focal point in the masterplan, tripling the green footprint while maintaining pre-disaster levels of living space.

Listening first

The global ambition became to make Hatay more liveable, durable, and worthy of community pride. Architects and urban designers were therefore encouraged to adopt a ‘listen-first’ approach, fostering an inclusive decision-making process that would reflect tangibly in design outcomes.

Critical and flexible assessment

Hatay’s revitalisation effort, through its comprehensive

LESSONS FROM HATAY

thinking and rapid phasing of implementation, presents a benchmark for post-disaster governance. It is especially unique in its set-up. As an NGO-led urban planning effort, it poses a new model for post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction and recovery through mediation. Crucially, the work in Hatay embraced uncertainty, recognising that crises present an opportunity for change whilst acknowledging uncertain futures that can only be forecasted, not precisely predicted.

Critical evaluation

Hatay's core message as a post-disaster exemplar project was the need for critical evaluation and an understanding that success is not just about celebrating design but assessing the practicality of implementation and its long-term impact.

Alternative models of governance

The nature of Hatay's recovery effort was fully participatory, as the design and planning was entirely managed by an NGO. The lessons from Hatay point to the benefits of flexible governance models and context and place specific strategic 'tolerances', which promotes continuous adaptivity in the management of cities. Hatay's recovery project stressed the importance of building trust and enabling dialogue early in the process of recovering whole places and restoring cultural pride.

Economic and social recovery

Aside from its strong focus on community inclusion and dialogue, Hatay's plan understood the need to align urban reconstruction with economic recovery. To achieve this, Hatay's revitalisation plan focused on:

- A design vision that ensured small businesses and local workers could be supported.
- A strategy where revitalisation protected pre-existing communities by managing gentrification.
- Commercial benefits designed for the local population as well as investors.
- Training and up-skilling of local workers to boost employment and attract investment.
- An inductive approach to economic recovery that begins in grassroots and grows outwards.

A network of action

The Hatay Revitalisation Plan demonstrates how NGOs, local communities, and international experts can work together to rebuild a city in an inclusive and people-first way. The lessons learnt within the revitalisation process can today act as an example for other recovery efforts globally. Like any post-disaster region, Hatay demands critical and ongoing assessment. Yet in its early stages, it already represents a blueprint for future resilience and sustainable urban development.

PRE-CRISIS PLANNING

Every city should have a pre-crisis plan informed by lessons from other disaster-affected areas. Hatay advocates for the creation of a global catalogue of best practices in post-disaster recovery.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Recovery should not be imposed – it must emerge organically from within the affected community. The process must respect local culture and prioritise people and economic interests.

POST-DISASTER GOVERNANCE

The governance model used in Hatay could be adapted to other cities facing crises. It promotes a 'plastic' organisation approach – one that is flexible, able to support local governments, and connects community efforts with capital investment.

“

One of the key elements was the focus on telling local stories of the people who experienced the earthquake. Victims of the earthquake became key players in the design process and in the fuller process of shaping the city's future. Overall, the success of the plan relied on a collaborative spatial strategy planning process.

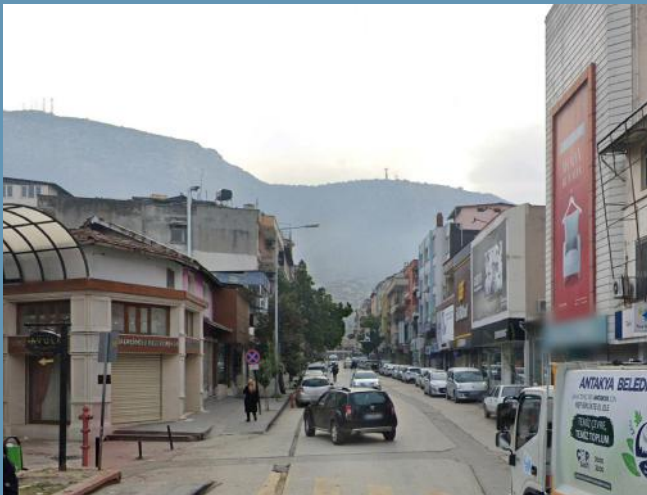
Mehmet Kalyoncu
Türkiye Design Council

HATAY'S REVITALISATION

> Before earthquake



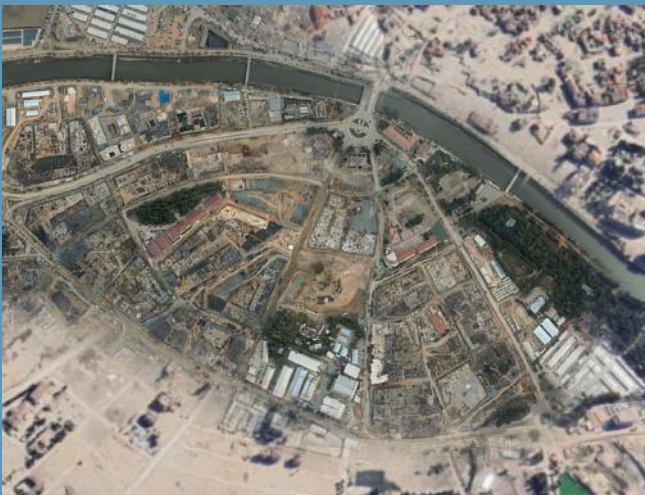
> After earthquake



> Present



> Future



A CIVIC APPROACH TO RECOVERY

How can citizens, stakeholders, decision makers, designers, and civic groups collaborate to rebuild trust, hope and identity through the recovery process?

The strength of the Hatay Revitalisation Plan lies in its ability to map out a clear strategic framework, which focuses on regaining residents; preserving elements of the urban fabric; addressing future needs; maintaining the city's character; and adopting urban resilience standards. However, its core focus was championing a collaborative approach. Its roadmap has been built on findings from extensive public participatory sessions, making Hatay an exemplar for collaborative models of reconstruction.

Understand the role of memory

Participants discussed the need for city reinvention to be seen as an evolution rather than a hard break from the past, ensuring continuity with local histories that are an essential part of people's identity. The preservation of collective memory is also an essential component to building trust; validating community experience; and preserving lived experience.

Build trust and accountability

Trust is built by keeping communities informed and including them in decision-making. In the case of Hatay, the Türkiye Design Council made clear gestures to assure communities that the recovery process would be built on parity, respect and shared motivation. It became clear that NGOs can play a neutral role in bridging gaps between locals and international expertise. Trust is everything – without citizens, there is no city.

Maintain a goal of equity

Observations were made about the need to balance dominant voices against marginalised voices such as non-native speakers, disabled individuals, and the homeless. Considerations should be focused on who benefits economically from rebuilding efforts. Economic revitalisation should prioritise decentralised growth, bringing resources to all levels of society.

Process trauma

Conversations around renewal should be rooted in how people lived before any given crisis, acknowledging the extent of trauma to help envision new futures. Time must be allowed for processing before moving toward rebuilding efforts. The presence of a restorative physical space helps people feel comfortable discussing their individual and shared experiences.

Create inclusive models of governance

A collaborative governance model was essential to Hatay's revitalisation plan. Across the board, discussions touched upon how cities need to have pre-crisis plans prepared ahead of foreseeable threats. These should be informed by global experiences and provide models for governance structures where citizens can meaningfully contribute and interact with decision-makers.

Work through active listening and participation

Participants discussed the need for community engagement practices to begin with active listening, resisting the imposition of pre-designed plans. This should involve meeting with community leaders before holding public meetings which can discover pressure points and distinct needs early on. Modes of engagement must be the most transparent and hospitable possible for collaboration. Creating physical spaces for interaction, such as community centres, is key to facilitating dialogue. Recovery efforts must focus on fostering civic engagement and shared community values.

Record differing interests and needs

A hierarchy of needs should be identified in the recovery process. Such needs include immediate relief (saving lives, removing debris); basic needs (shelter, food, water); and long-term re-construction (large-scale city infrastructure). Power dynamics should also be acknowledged, highlighting differing interests between local communities and international planners.

Create a hierarchy of knowledge

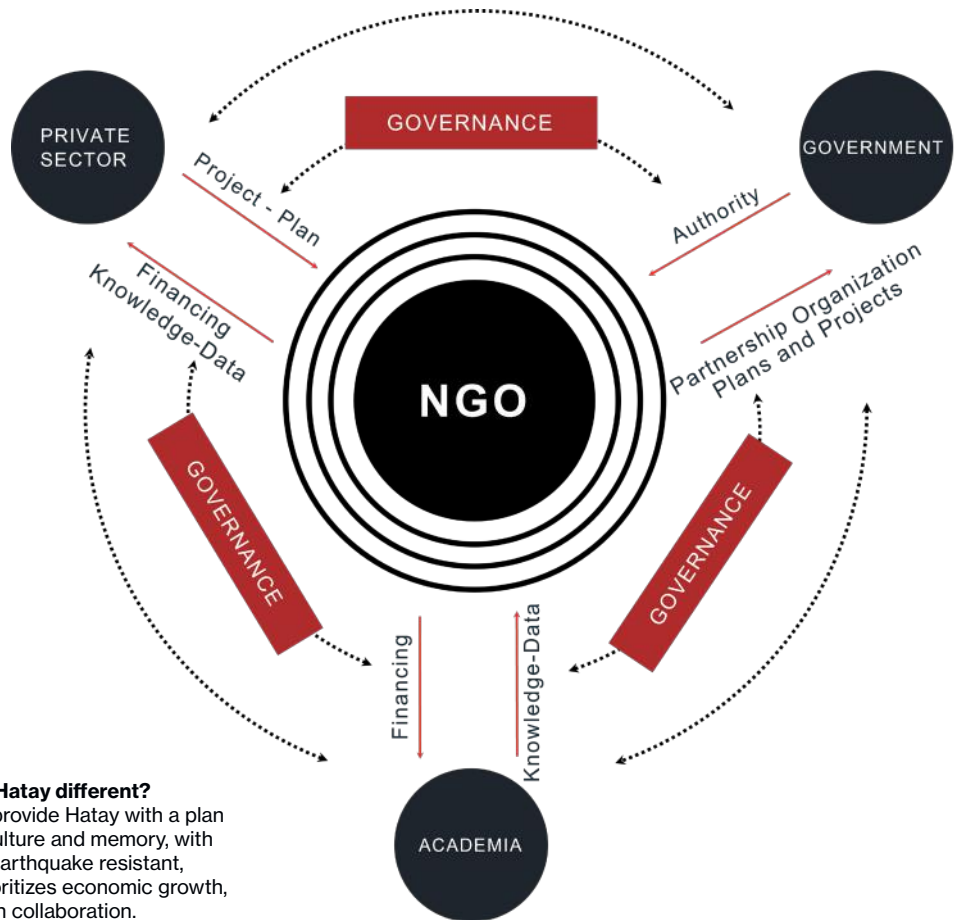
The communities of post-disaster urban regions should be considered the best experts in the rebuilding process and should be involved in decision-making from the start. The expertise of international architects and planners should assist rather than dictate decisions. Knowledge should be shared across different levels, locally, nationally and internationally. Hatay also demonstrated the importance of carrying out recovery works at different scales simultaneously.



Start with finding the identity of the city through extensive research of its multiple layers, whereby you bring the most relevant elements to the surface by listening to communities.

Loukia Illiopoulou
Foster + Partners

NGO MODEL



Why is the revitalisation plan in Hatay different?

Türkiye Design Council aimed to provide Hatay with a plan that is based on its rich history, culture and memory, with more green areas. A plan that is earthquake resistant, protects the local people and prioritizes economic growth, and is designed humanely through collaboration.

THE BILBAO TRANSFORMATION STORY

▣ SPEAKER

Idoia Postigo, *Director General, Bilbao Metropoli 30*

▣ SUBJECT

The revitalisation process of Metropolitan Bilbao

▣ KEYWORDS AND THEMES

Fostering civic pride; designing a landmark building; need for strong marketing campaigns; conservation of cultural identity

In June 1992, the strategic plan for the revitalisation of Metropolitan Bilbao was approved. The closure of its factories and shipyards in the 1980s led to great decline for the region's industrial sector. A period of unemployment, social conflict, and a struggling economy followed. The city was forced to diversify its economic base and deploy new strategic infrastructures. Unlike Hatay, whose post-disaster efforts were focused on reconstruction after a singular event, Bilbao's need for reinvention was in response to a compound crisis. Certainly different in its experience of extreme conditions, Bilbao presents an important example of recovery as its plan for revitalisation, introduced throughout the 1990s, led to significant improvements in mobility, urban development, and environmental regeneration. This was all in parallel with one of the world's most well-known examples of bold cultural rejuvenation, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Addressing slow crises

The transformation of Bilbao stands in contrast to the example of Hatay's revival plan and can be classed as a response to a slow crisis. Bilbao was once a wealthy industrial region, and its economy only declined in the late 20th century. In 1983, a traumatic flood fuelled the civic collapse already inflicted by the city's economic downfall. Along with all of the above, decades of terrorist violence added to economic decline and social problems resulted in social momentum being stunted, and the city's ability to secure a prosperous future becoming uncertain.

Joined-up action

Bilbao's crisis was multi-layered and evolved over a protracted period of time. Its urban response, being so composite in nature, required synthesised action and broad strategic consensus. Therefore, the city launched its urban vision on the strength of public and private collaboration, combining efforts and resources from government, businesses, and the community itself. The plan for revitalisation emphasised:

- Management of human resources.
- Building new services within a modern industrial region.
- Ensuring world-class mobility and accessibility.
- Enabling long-term environmental and urban regeneration.
- Prioritising cultural identity.

Prioritising the intangible

Metropolitan Bilbao is known today as a beacon of cultural reinvention – an area that has focused on intangible elements, rather than just infrastructure, and has become an exemplar for civic success. Its strategic plan demonstrated the profit inherent in investing in culture and identity and taking bold decisions in redefining the *raison d'être* of an entire metropolitan area. Crucially, it strove for economic diversification, moving beyond its former industrial dependence towards a modern, service-oriented economy.

Environmental uplift and quality of life

The strategy also had a mandate for environmental regeneration, with major projects such as the cleaning of the heavily polluted Nervión river becoming symbols of renewal. The river, which flows through Bilbao along a 23-kilometre stretch from the capital of Bizkaia into the Cantabrian Sea, traverses an area of intense industrial and commercial activity and is a vital shared natural resource. Its reconstitution fostered collaboration among diverse groups of people. This joined broader thinking about the improvement of the 'everyday' citizen's journey, including the enhancement of mobility and accessibility across the city.

LESSONS FROM BILBAO

The power of a landmark

The regeneration term known as the “Bilbao Effect” refers to cases where a city is catalysed by the building of a prominent landmark, resulting in significant economic and social revitalisation. Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry and opened in 1997, became a global icon of transformation, one that helped Bilbao rebrand itself internationally. Although the metrics for its success are complex, its transformative power remains uncontested. The building’s indelibility as an architectural icon, partnered with its own global marketing campaign, has continued to attract global attention, giving credence to the power of design to drive change. For locals, the project became a prompt for rediscovery, a built emblem of hope, and a driver of renewed civic pride. The Bilbao Metropoli 30 initiative was established to align efforts of different stakeholders. Its focus on the renewal of cultural heritage aimed to recreate tangible memories and shared civic experiences. The purpose of an architectural monument was about more than international attractiveness, but about the spirit of rebirth and resilience.

Measurable impact

The transformation of Bilbao has been extensive. It has experienced economic growth, with the city successfully diversifying its economy which reduced its dependence on heavy industry, and it has become a global cultural destination. The transformation has restored local confidence, making residents proud of their city and local identity after a period of dramatic civic decline. Its transformation has also been one of instruction, converting a narrative of downturn into a model for metropolitan regeneration. Today, Bilbao’s transformation is seen as a success, yet also as a complex process that required balancing economic renewal, cultural heritage, and social inclusion. It serves as a tested model for post-crisis urban recovery, showing the power of identity and cultural vision as drivers for longevity.

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Transformation must be rooted in local values and derive its learnings around infrastructure and identity from the history of place – what has already worked, what hasn’t, and why.

CRISIS AS OPPORTUNITY

Strategic crisis recovery is a breeding ground for creative reinvention, but it requires a long-term vision.

ECOLOGY OF APPROACHES

A balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches can be a recipe for success as it engages government, stakeholders and communities and promotes parity.

CRITIQUES AND CHALLENGES

There is a need for awareness of potential critiques and/or impacts that might arise as a result of major decisions made in recovery efforts. Almost three decades after its opening, some argue that the Guggenheim Museum’s impact has overshadowed smaller, equally important initiatives. The influx of tourism and concerns around gentrification and affordability are questions still posed by the phenomenon of the “Bilbao effect”, calling for further analysis of long-term civic engagement and sustained community ownership.

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The Guggenheim Museum was not just about the building—it was a symbol of Bilbao’s transformation. The strategy was about repositioning Bilbao globally while strengthening local identity.

Idoia Postigo
Bilbao Metropoli 30



> Bilbao and its river



> Abandoibarra 1



> Abandoibarra 2



> BEC



CRISIS AS A CATALYST FOR CITY-WIDE REINVENTION

How can recovery from crisis inspire citizen pride and civic engagement to reinvent the city?

Bilbao's transformation began in the 1990s with a plan for the major infrastructural revitalisation of its entire metropolitan area. After years of work and measurable achievements, including the consolidation of several individual projects, Bilbao's recovery action shifted from infrastructure to values. Overall, the city's progression has served as a global exemplar for uplifting intangible aspects of identity with equal importance to those which are tangible – a lesson that merits integration into international best practice for recovery efforts.

Determine scales of crises

A crisis brings people together on a single point of focus. Bilbao's gradual crisis story shows how cities should always have a plan to tackle devastation or degradation. Discussions turned to how planning for downturn means having a vision and beginning with engaging with the city. Cities face varied crises, and each require distinct responses. Natural disasters, like Hatay's earthquake, demand immediate rebuilding; war-torn contexts must navigate constant instability, while economic decline necessitates slower reinvention. Slow crises, such as urban stagnation, can be hard to measure and sometimes even feel imperceptible. Ultimately, each crisis demands tailored governance strategies.

Champion ownership and urban planning

Bilbao saw tensions linked to the identity of a formerly mono-industry economy, which tied closely to ideas of civic identity. The need to understand how lessons might be yielded from an industrial past – for example the potential re-use of facilities – has to exist in reciprocity with strategic expansion. Participants discussed how ownership in crisis recovery requires reclaiming authority over urban space. Inhabitants must be given the opportunity to regain a sense of control through participatory planning, ensuring transformation benefits them. Processes of engagement should be transparent, where shared vision works against monopolisation, ensuring economic revitalisation benefits all.

Create a just process

Similar to the example of Hatay, participants discussed the need to involve marginalised groups in engagement processes, understanding how urban justice might be felt differently by varied groups. The need to respect concerns and be mindful of accountability is essential when defining shared identity. The issue of closed-door planning and design meetings is an example of barriers to inclusiveness but can rarely be avoided. Discussions touched upon how designers have a responsibility to inform citizens of significant decisions; inform them that change is happening; and demonstrate how incremental action can build on the city's shared mandate for renewal.

Prioritise belonging and the genius loci

The genius loci or spirit of a place speaks to the capture of shared ideals – which is essential in crisis recovery. In Bilbao, the cleaning of the Nervión river – an element of natural heritage that transcends crisis – became a symbol of renewal and cooperation. It showed how successful reinvention must balance heritage and transformation, ensuring residents can play a part in reclaiming their right to the city. Belonging emerges from civic pride, cultural heritage, and everyday rituals. Ultimately, belonging exists in the act of preserving connection to place.

Rely on tiered goals

Small, incremental goals can help maintain motivation and a sense of progress. Strategic planning should:

- Balance immediate needs and long-term impact.
- Integrate economic, environmental, and mobility ambitions.
- Build on existing strengths while allowing flexible, phased transformations.
- Pursue small, achievable milestones to create a sense of progress and foster civic engagement.

Find ways to embody reparation

The example of Bilbao brings focus to how architecture and urban design can give physical form to civic identity. Shared memory has the power to guide urban recovery. Heritage sites, natural elements, and local traditions are transcripts of that memory and can serve to reconnect communities with their past, even after decline. This may not always translate to a grand landmark or event, but it does mean giving people something to attach to that relates to the future, without undermining a shared past.

Build hope in the aftermath

Bilbao shows how in unprecedented circumstances, communities channel fortitude, resilience and determination to unite for change. The trauma of crisis can often be converted into hope and into creating new opportunities for places that are beloved. This speaks to a wider global need for pre-crisis plans that integrate collective resilience, demonstrating that cities and urban centres should actively seek out improvement opportunities ahead of crises.



What were the activities people practiced in the area? What did they do in their private and work lives [pre-crisis], and how do you bring back the identity that they were so attached to?

Haitham Elmoheen
BCIStudio

MYKOLAIV AS A PILOT FOR RECOVERY

▣ SPEAKER

Silvia Botti, *Director, One Works Foundation*
Francesca Pintus, *Associate Director, One Works*

▣ SUBJECT

An analysis and approach for Ukraine's urban recovery

▣ KEYWORDS AND THEMES

Conserving natural capital; building a narrative; adaptable plans; compactness and density

The post-disaster efforts of Hatay and Bilbao exist on different points along a spectrum of speed and activation. Both were initiated in the aftermath of crisis, albeit at different paces. The example of Ukraine is in stark contrast. Ukraine's crisis is ongoing as a country navigating the devastating impacts of invasion whilst everyday rituals must continue.

The Ukrainian government has prioritised forward-thinking by commissioning the development of revitalisation plans early, which will catalyse reconstruction efforts once the war has ended. Ukraine is an example of anticipatory renewal, where crisis becomes the launchpad for future goals – such as, for example, the focus on a national energy transition. The recovery of the post-industrial city Mykolaiv is a current focus, its urban re-birth functioning as a nucleus for widespread renewal. Mykolaiv is a shipbuilding city in southern Ukraine, located on the estuary of the Southern Bug River which is approximately 65 kilometres from the Black Sea and a garrison for engineering and industry. The strategy is to reconnect the riverfront to the community, enabling new industry and newly envisioned innovation districts.

Context and composition of war regions

The war in Ukraine has brought devastation on multiple scales and manifestations – from mass forced displacement to humanitarian emergencies, psychological trauma, economic impacts, agricultural ruin, and infrastructural and heritage destruction. According to the UNHCR, the conflict has created 4 million internally displaced people, whilst 6.8 million refugees have fled Ukraine altogether. Any recovery strategies borne of the war must therefore focus on the rebuilding of human capital, which requires incentivising the return of skilled professionals, especially young people, to the country.

The cost of recovery

The physical cost of Ukraine's reconstruction is estimated at \$600 billion, with only 20% expected to come from public funds. The remaining 80% will need to be raised from private investment, making the shift from a funding approach to an investment model critical.

Security and decentralisation

Since 2014, Ukrainians have increasingly considered decentralisation as a response to ongoing security threats. This approach has wider, universal bearing on urban planning and design, and poses a legitimate case for 'pilot' projects. This means strategic planning incorporating regional renewal, such as the case of Mykolaiv, acts as a scalable precedent for recovery.

Mykolaiv as a pilot city for recovery

The Ukrainian government has developed a post-industrial strategy for Mykolaiv. The port city has suffered heavy damage from Russian attacks, with its vital infrastructure and water supply being severely impacted. Despite this, the city remains a defensive stronghold and a symbol of resilience. Its urban transformation will serve as a test for conflict-related renewal in Ukraine and beyond.

Diversification

The city that could be considered as the "Bilbao of the Soviet Union," has similarly had to contend with declining industry and halted maritime trade – culminating in a damaged civic identity. Mykolaiv has the potential to become an expedited version of Bilbao, and its revitalisation includes equally exhaustive measures. The reconnection of the riverfront to the community forms a central part of its revival project and will transform former industrial areas into mixed-use innovation districts. The finished project will capture a more diversified economy which moves beyond the city's traditional shipbuilding industry.

Selling a vision

It is impossible to contemplate the urban revival of any war-torn region without placing investment strategies at the forefront of redevelopment plans. So how can a city attract funding when its identity has been fragmented by historic economic events and pervasive ongoing conflict? The Ukraine urban recovery approach stresses the need for defining a narrative of place – a deliberate crafting of the story of a city, and in tandem, the story of its future. By constructing a visionary narrative, city-makers can more easily give shape to the industries they foresee as leading development. Building a clear narrative also ensures renewal masterplans can be easily understood by locals. Any future-oriented strategy must be transparent and straightforward.

Mykolaiv's narrative

Narratives for recovered cities must be inclusive and include voices from all spectrums of society. Narratives or visions of recovery must be dexterous, able to accommodate not exclude. Gentrification remains a prevailing concern for renewal plans. Small local businesses are vital to sustaining the local economy, particularly during reconstruction, and must not be displaced. In the case of Mykolaiv, the goal is to maintain a diverse range of enterprise, ranging from manufacturing, craft-based and traditional industries, to start-ups, and digital data centres. This is crucial for igniting a vibrant economic ecosystem.

Agile spatial and economic planning

The example of Mykolaiv exemplifies the need for cities to adapt quickly and experiment with different land uses. This rapid adaptation must be paired with economic incentives for private investment. This means reducing bureaucratic barriers and providing policy support to new industries. It also means finding ways to build social needs into economic revitalisation. Its reconstruction is not merely a humanitarian or infrastructural effort, it is also a commercial one. The world must watch Ukraine's recovery closely, as the conversation on building models of agency takes place in real time. The innovation connected with the survival of a besieged country; and how that survival is paid for, are also key areas to watch.

INCENTIVISATION

Ukraine sets a precedent for investment-driven recovery, emphasising human capital restoration, with a focus on bringing back skilled professionals; decentralisation and regional economic balance; and the prevention of intra-national competition. It builds a case for avoiding regional economic competition and instead leveraging European funding opportunities.

PILOT PROJECTS AS ENABLERS OF SCALABLE RECOVERY

Strategic planning experiences like Mykolaiv act as models for Ukraine's wider urban and economic transformation. Crucial to its success is diversification and adaptation. The focus away from expansion and onto the creation of a city that is malleable to the needs of local communities will promote gradual prosperity.

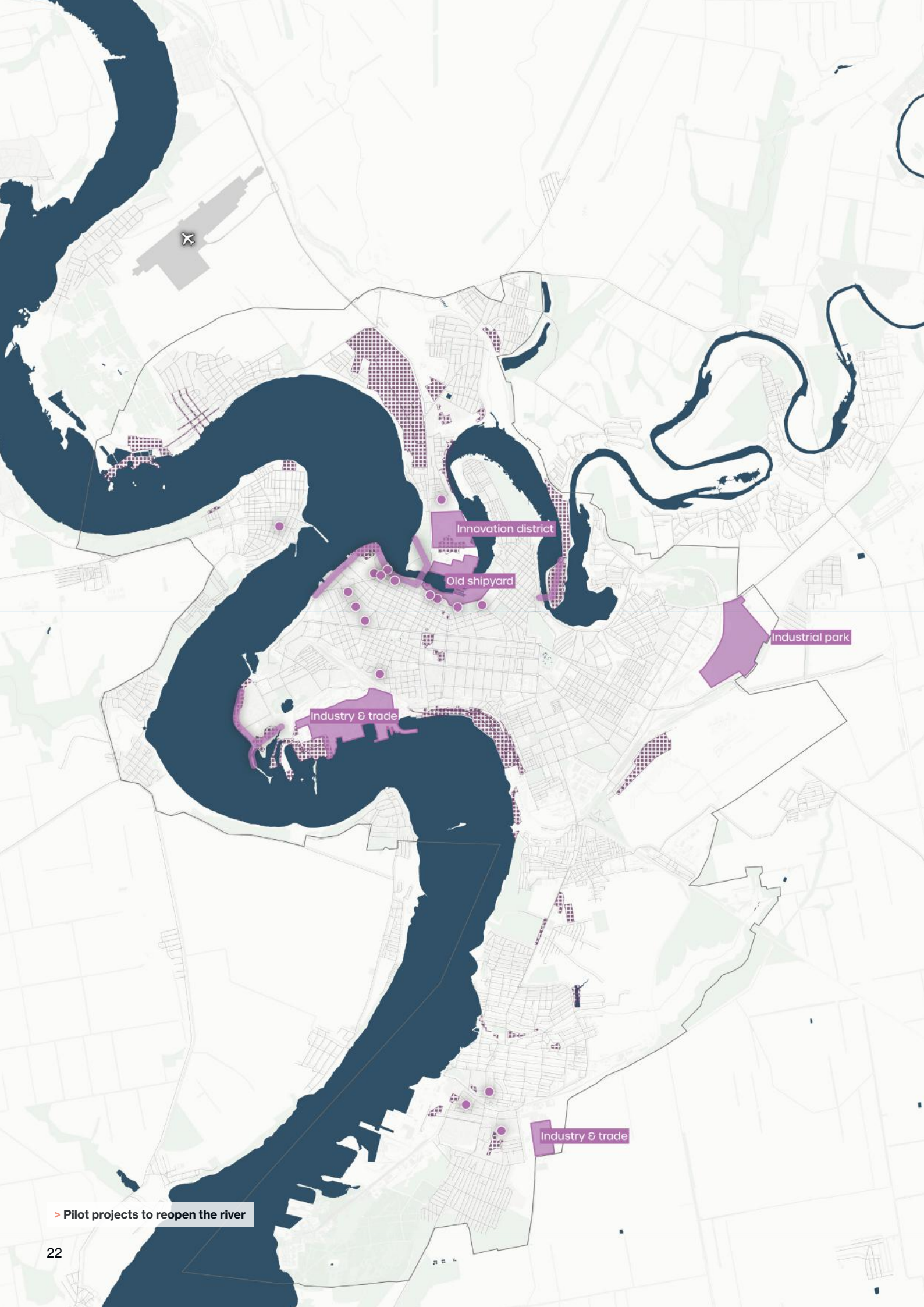
PEACE IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS

Peace must be sought as the universal foundation for recovery. Ukraine is a leader for post-war urban recovery, using investment-led growth and flexible governance as key tools for success. Its success will ultimately rely on international aid, alignment and collective action.

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Mykolaiv and Kharkiv propose a new way to approach city planning in Ukraine, which can be replicated in the rest of the country.

Silvia Botti
One Works Foundation



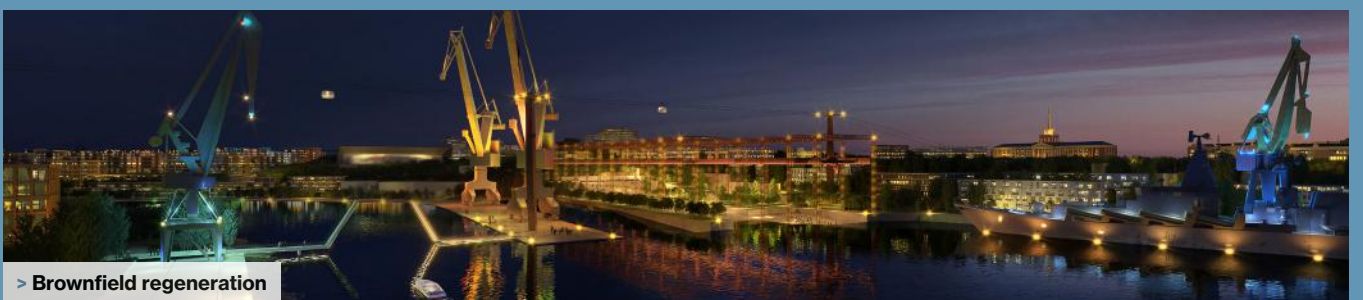
> Pilot projects to reopen the river



> Promoting new mixed-use districts



> Innovation District



> Brownfield regeneration

ECONOMIC REVITALISATION AT THE HEART OF RECOVERY

What are the key ingredients for future economic revitalisation, and how can the economy be better prioritised in recovery?

The conversation on the recovery of war-torn Ukraine, aside from the urgent need for a resolution to the conflict, must inevitably start with the subject of investment. Mykolaiv, Ukraine's ninth largest city, has been enlisted as a national pilot project. Guided by an international team and local experts, it showcases the renewal potential of a phased masterplan for reconstruction. Mykolaiv's strategy meets the challenge of restoring one of most important cities in Ukraine. But who will pay for it and how?

Market regional potential

The discussion on Mykolaiv brought to light the need for economic strategies to leverage a region's strengths, avoiding direct competition with neighbouring areas. Strengthening regional trade and logistical advantages – for example, unleashing river access and securing agricultural hubs – could enhance economic resilience. The success of recovery relies on successful positioning within broader economic ecosystems.

Define the role of tourism, heritage and identity

Evidence that cultural heritage strengthens people's connection to places is clear and a leitmotif between all three case studies. Heritage and cultural focused tourism should be used as a strategic tool for economic recovery. Economic revival must balance preserving historical sites with introducing new developments, ensuring tourism benefits the local population.

Build specificity in funding structures

Funding strategies require tailoring and careful analysis against distinct contextual parameters. Yet in all cases, avoiding the monopolisation of capital is important as economic revitalisation must ensure just distribution of wealth and opportunity. Consideration must be taken towards the long-term debt implications of recovery efforts, ensuring that financing does not commit the government to unsustainable growth models. In cases of crisis, a shift from funding calls and schemes to investment models, where private sector engagement plays a significant role in financing reconstruction, should be optioned.

Create an agile economic ecology

Participants discussed the need to introduce capital at the lowest levels of the economy to stimulate growth and create security for struggling communities. Economic revitalisation should balance large-scale projects and small-scale initiatives, ensuring that both are given the necessary resource.

Prioritise native capital

Reconstruction should use local resources and expertise in a bid to retain economic benefits within the community. Using a region's existing materials and skills to maintain sustainable economic practices promotes internal prosperity. Crucially, recovery implementation should consider the issue of land value and how it might be captured by local communities, not just investors, and land titling should form part rebuilding processes.

Maintain stability

Recovery is redundant without the sustainable, just and dignified return of people in post conflict settings. Infrastructure rebuilding should serve as a foundation for economic networks and investment, while also ensuring continuity beyond redevelopment. Flexible frameworks are needed to allow adjustments as cities evolve.

Champion education as a tool for longevity

Training and upskilling programmes should be incorporated into reconstruction efforts, helping to build long-term employment opportunities. Investing in education ensures that native workforces remain competitive. NGOs play a vital role in capacity-building, enabling local communities to take ownership of their future in meaningful and demonstrable ways.

Consider new generations and the future

Ukraine and Mykolaiv show how recovery plans can focus on harnessing regional value and giving focus to the talent of young generations. The push to invest in education and training in growing expertise areas, such as green skills, will equip future generations with employment opportunities and incentivise external investment. Planning should look toward emerging industries and economies rather than solely focusing on traditional sectors. Fundamentally, the soul and legacy of a place should be retained in meaningful ways.



Good data and good modeling are essential for engaging with investors: they show you how to link design proposals to investment returns. You need to give people the confidence to invest.

Prof Tim Stonor
Space Syntax Limited

WHAT NEXT?



The examples of Hatay, Bilbao and Mykolaiv demonstrate that every crisis must be approached with nuance and specificity. There will always be commonalities across crisis recovery including the need for strategy, communication, transparency, and funding, yet singular places, across distinct moments in time, will inevitably respond differently in the face of extremity.

The conversations and case studies discussed collectively during the workshop highlight the need for every city to have a pre-crisis plan. Literature on post-disaster reconstruction of cities remains scarce, and a framework for natural disaster and post-conflict contexts is yet to be appropriately defined.

A key recommendation from this event is the creation of a shared catalogue of crisis response: a database overviewing recovery effort across a series of post-crisis cities. This would allow for the analysis of similarities and differences in post-disaster reconstruction scenarios and become a reference text for governments, NGOs, and all parties involved in post-disaster and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

HATAY

Bridging the gap between institutions and leaders

Hatay's Revitalisation Plan has the potential to serve as a governance blueprint, offering guidance beyond the subject of design. While design needs may vary across contexts, a roadmap for governance structure would ensure holistic outcomes and bring about cohesion at crucial early stages of recovery. The case of Hatay showed that the reconstruction of a city should be seen as a collective effort, requiring the active collaboration of designers, planners, stakeholders and community. Its successful implementation and strength in mediation between different players supports the idea of building a 'mediatory organisation' that could advise local governments, joining up the many institutions and initiatives active in reparation efforts. This group/organisation would connect with community and capital, get the ball rolling, add pressure where needed, and then hand responsibility back.



Bringing together local, national, and international architects ensures a recovery that is rooted in the needs of the community rather than imposed from above."

Mehmet Kalyoncu, *Founder, Türkiye Design Council and Initiator, GHUSO*



BILBAO

Prioritising culture and intangible assets

Bilbao's transformation was presented as a mature case study of revival. This in itself signalled a need to measure uncertainties, errors and unexpected outcomes as well as the successes of any recovery plan. Analysis enables fine-tuning and provides opportunity for future frameworks to be built on past innovation. In the case of Bilbao, the overt message of its transformation was the early prioritisation of culture and intangible aspects of identity. This also means the parts of a city that relate to the everyday and the common good. The managed evolution of a city over time requires tailoring expectations, and a consistent effort to clarify intentions. The task of shaping a city's aspirations is large and often includes a mandate to foster boldness and maintain cultural diversity. Participatory engagement must negotiate between promoting boldness and preventing over-complicating the global conversation.

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Transformation is about the pride and civic engagement tied to the psychological effects of change, collectivity, and the recreation of a sense of self-sufficiency. After a crisis, as important as physical and infrastructural regeneration is the emotional recovery of the collective state of mind, preserving the capacity to face the present challenges of the future.”

Idoia Postigo, *Bilbao Metropoli 30*



MYKOLAIV

Government alignment and building on economic strengths

The ongoing recovery work at Mykolaiv centres on native capital. Its strategy posits that without the ability for a city to offer jobs, people will move away. As such, it is important to conserve and recover the physical attributes of a city, but it is equally vital to protect and bolster its workforce. Understanding the local-skill sets available is crucial for designing a self-sustaining future. The key takeaway from Mykolaiv's strategy is to prioritise future generations. In its ongoing implementation, Mykolaiv's recovery strategy shows that economic revitalisation and spatial change should go hand in hand. Added to this is the need for coherent local partners to be involved in order to realistically enact change. This might be a civic group or recovering local government. Efforts to re-equip governments to harness future capability is vital for long-term transformation.

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A crucial factor in Ukraine's revitalisation will be the people. For instance, in Mykolaiv, a lot of young people are actively engaged in the municipality, and the city's location on calm freshwater makes it particularly well-positioned for agricultural logistics.”

Silvia Botti, *One Works Foundation*

CONTINUING THE COLLABORATION

SHORT-TERM

Creating a catalogue of crisis impacts and associated responses

Capture and dissemination

Documentation is not just about success but should also encompass failures in response action. The workshop discussed the significance of recording both the short and long-term effects of implementation. Dissemination of catalogues, examples of variances in responses, and the explicit communication of what is common or different in each post-crisis city was seen as vital to future planning. Emphasis was also placed on the need to use ordinary language in recovery content and guidance which promotes accessibility to knowledge.

Planning for a spectrum of post-recovery timelines

Incremental action plans

Participants placed emphasis on the need to deliver a 'compendium' of crisis strategies. This means showing commitment for how to address the immediate, intermediate, and long-term impacts of recovery planning and demonstrating the need for different timelines of change.

LONG-TERM

Signalling the need for a post-crisis knowledge-sharing, strategy and stewardship

Networks and interlocutory roles

Before a qualitative foundation for post-disaster recovery work can be formalised, the global gap for its need must be understood. To begin with, awareness should be raised on formal means of connection in a bid to attract all stakeholders and motivate all to participate in recovery efforts. This could mean NGOs become the connecting medium that motivates investors to participate in recovery plans, which might inspire other NGO's globally to connect and share experiences of developing recovery masterplans.

ONGOING

Training communities for crisis action

Preparedness and knowledge sharing

One of the major takeaways from the workshop event was the need for preparatory thinking. Participants discussed the necessity for alertness, shifting to a scenario where everyone in a built environment profession is trained in how to be an agent, councillor, or therapist of change. This was tied to the idea of crisis as opportunity, understanding how the weaknesses and exposures that cities are prey to could also present potential for innovation.

Cities must be prepared both for predictable crises and those which are unknown. Training and knowledge-sharing should therefore be built for a 'constant crisis state'. Content from post-disaster cities should be distilled, made visible and shareable. Post-crisis case studies require critical analysis, understanding what works and what does not and exposing practical lessons as a means to translate them into usable tool-kits.

ACTIONS

1. CREATE A COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICE POST-CRISIS STRATEGIES

- Bring together lessons from a diversity of contexts and crises.
- Analysis of common opportunities and pitfalls in post-recovery action.
- A typology of crisis strategies and common factors.

2. BUILD AN EVIDENCE-LED FRAMEWORK FOR CITY RECOVERY

- Using global best practice examples to inform transferable lessons.
- Translate guidance into an overriding and adaptable framework.
- Create an urban recovery model that is derived from post-crisis experiences and include stakeholder maps and sample workflows for likely scenarios.

3. CONVENE A GLOBAL NETWORK OF RECOVERY SPECIALISTS

- Host further workshops in different geographical contexts to build a network.
- Establish a mailing list drawn from events and peer to peer connections.
- Create a formal advisory community.
- Seek out associated organisations and businesses.

4. ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT BODY TO MEDIATE AND IMPLEMENT POST-CRISIS STRATEGIES

- Set up a design and planning focused NGO to collaborate with global institutions on recovery plans.
- Use the independent organisation as a mediator between stakeholders, communities and authorities.
- Leverage knowledge and un-biased expertise towards funding and investment efforts.
- Act globally, adapt to varied contexts, scale of crisis, and/or legislation.

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