

Post-Crisis Urban Recovery in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey: Co-Creating Strategies after the 2023 Earthquake

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Urban Living Lab

Timeframe: 2025-ongoing



Türkiye

Abdullah Gül University (Co-Coordinator)
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Co-Coordinator)
Middle East Technical University

UK

University of Westminster

With advisory board partners from China, Spain, Portugal, France, Union for the Mediterranean

Urban Challenges Tackled

Inclusive and participatory governance for resilient post-disaster recovery
Heritage-based livelihoods and place-rooted economic recovery
Data-informed and community-grounded water governance for resilient recovery

Funding

Local industry and the Chamber of Architects in Kahramanmaraş.

Following the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, an international academic initiative was launched to guide resilient urban regeneration beyond the immediate emergency response. Conceived as a long-term effort two years after the disaster, the initiative sought to explore transformative methodologies for in-situ regeneration and heritage conservation, while minimising displacement to new towns. As part of this process, design studios have been organised to develop proposals for neighbourhoods in Kahramanmaraş Municipality.

This initiative culminated in a conference titled “Re-developing Kahramanmaraş: Post-Disaster Urban Reconstruction and Transformation Processes”, convened in April 2025 with the support of the National Chamber of Architects of Kahramanmaraş, AGÜ, MSFAU and METU. Diverse perspectives and proposals on the transformative potential of urban planning were presented, addressing both the physical and social dimensions of reconstruction and the urgent needs of building resilient communities.

The event addressed how planning initiative should respond to unprecedented urban crises, bringing together academics, practitioners, municipal experts, local stakeholders.

The objective of this initiative is to translate the momentum generated through meetings, studios, and international events into tangible outcomes. This will be achieved through the preparation and implementation of a series of action plans, involving city residents, the municipality, academics, and national and international experts. The focus of this work is on:

2. Identifying key pilot areas.
3. Leveraging national and international funding through a broad network of partners.

The methodology relies on multi-layered knowledge-exchange process beginning with the co-design of project briefs in collaboration with local authorities, and informed by annual conferences involving local stakeholders, municipalities, ministries, academics and students. Building on this foundation, architecture and planning students globally develop neighbourhood-scale proposals on post-crisis themes, fostering bottom-up placemaking. An international advisory team, composed of participating academics explores innovative methodologies across contexts, contributing ideas for both post- and pre-disaster planning.

The initiative aims to establish the foundations for forming local and global teams capable of translating proposed approaches into actionable projects. Over time, this work is expected to evolve into an Urban Living lab supported by international collaborations positioning the city and Turkey as pioneers in post-disaster reconstruction. An international scientific committee has been established to guide community-led place-making initiatives.

Conference on Redeveloping Kahramanmaraş: Post-Disaster Urban Reconstruction and Transformation Processes.

1. Providing a platform for collaboration to co-create resilient neighborhoods.



The Trans-Disciplinary Dimension

The project combined design studio teaching, research, and an international conference, to stimulate stakeholder engagement.

The process

The establishment of an international academic initiative was launched to guide long-term resilient urban regeneration in Kahramanmaraş, two years after the earthquake. After 2 years of the crisis.

Co-design involved joint preparatory work between AGU and MSFAU, supported by seminars, student exchanges, and planning meetings with the Chamber of Architects of Kahramanmaraş and members of the UfM advisory board. These

interactions shaped a common brief aligned with neighbourhoods and themes identified by the 12 February District Municipality.

Co-production focused on studio projects at MSFAU and AGU, where students and tutors developed neighbourhood-scale proposals addressing local priorities. Their work was exhibited and informed conference discussions. The aim was to translate studio insights into strategic directions for urban recovery. To ensure the continuation of the project an interna-

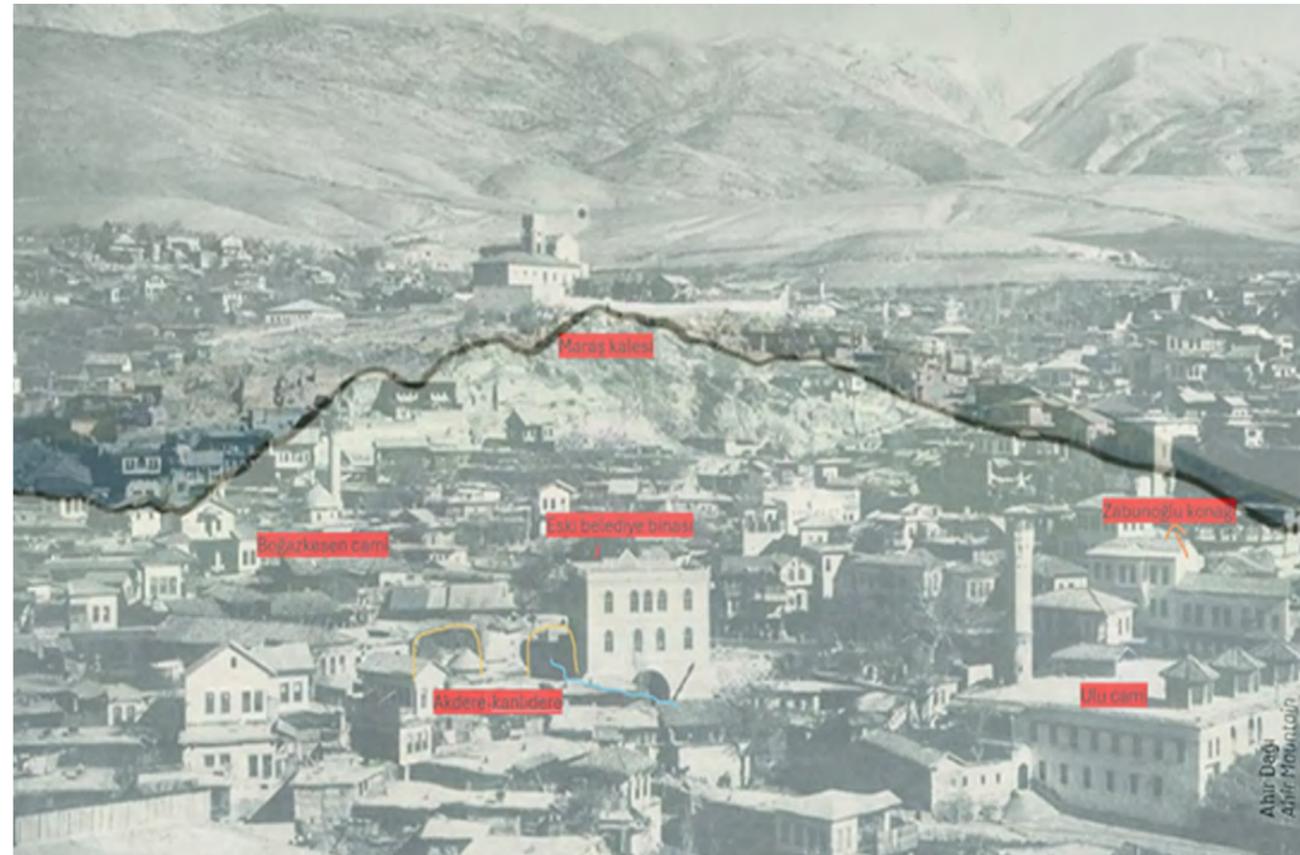
tional scientific committee was established to maintain dialogue with municipal authorities, coordinate future commemorative activities, and prepare joint outputs, from policy-oriented recommendations to funding applications, to support the training of a new generation of practitioners. As reconstruction expands across the metropolitan area, the committee promotes participatory and informed approaches to guide architectural and planning interventions.

In the city center, the implementation largely followed a top-down, large-scale approach due to the urgency of the situation. However, the political context is now evolving, driven by demands from professional bodies and civil society. Architectural operations should be supervised by a scientific board to ensure broad dissemination and promotion of the work

Competences and Skills

Leadership and coordination were shared among institutional partners, with the Kahramanmaraş Chamber of Architects leading stakeholder engagement and an organizing team from AGU and MSFAU coordinating academic participation in the conference. MSFAU and AGU also provided facilitation and inclusive dialogue, advising on knowledge-sharing formats and mediating between actors through their neutral, nonprofit role.

Historic picture of Kahramanmaraş.



Open Dialogue Dimension

Inclusivity

The conference, which has so far brought together students, academics, architects, and decision-makers, aims to lay the groundwork for future initiatives that seek to develop policies in collaboration with the local population and to reconstruct the habitats they have

created in a way that empowers them. This initiative is intended to be carried out as a collaborative effort by a team formed in cooperation with international experts.

Equity

So far, some inner-city and heritage-rich areas have largely been left behind, as efforts have focused on the downtown and newly developed towns.

Therefore, addressing the issue of spatial equity through inclusive policies would be a progressive

step toward fostering social resilience and equitable development. This can be supported by incorporating student work and bottom-up mechanisms into the decision-making processes for re-creating neighborhoods, both in the city center and in peripheral areas.

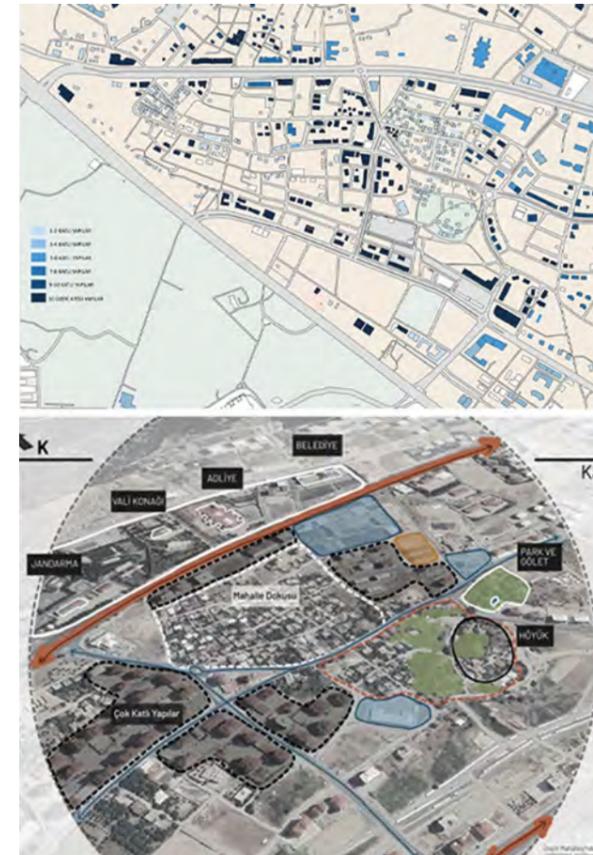
Sustainability

The project proposed a comprehensive and sustainable vision for Kahramanmaraş by integrating social, environmental, economic, cultural, and institutional dimensions throughout the city. Emphasizing a long-term vision exercise, it prioritized investments to ensure a coherent strategy aimed at enhancing urban resilience in daily life. The goal is to limit the uncontrolled expansion of new towns and the creation of disconnected communities, favoring instead in-situ regeneration, consolidation of the city center, urban conservation, and related efforts.

Post-earthquake reconstruction extended beyond damaged areas and central neighborhoods to peripheral and previously neglected regions.

A multidisciplinary team of urban planners, architects, and local development experts from Kahramanmaraş, Istanbul, Ankara, and Kayseri was engaged in the process.

Design Works on Kahramanmaraş Üngüt Quarter. Undergraduate Design Studio led by Güldehan Atay, Department of Architecture – MSFAU.





The Knowledge Valorisation Dimension

- **Social value:** The inclusive co-design process aims to strengthen trust between citizens and local authorities by facilitating knowledge exchange between citizens, experts, and local authorities, thereby enabling evidence-informed decision-making at the local level.
- **Educational value:** Foster cross-cultural understanding through the participation of various Anatolian universities. In the longer term, this educational model is intended to be scaled up through international academic partnerships, enhancing the transferability and impact of the knowledge generated.
- **Economic value:** The multi-actor framework supports the uptake of the project outcomes into policy discussions, planning processes and future investment strategies as long term-responses.

Outputs & Impacts

Outputs
Report: [Re-Developing Kahramanmaraş: Post-Disaster Urban Reconstruction and Transformation Processes Conference Final Declaration](#)

Articles examining post-disaster urban restructuring and transformation processes in Kahramanmaraş, synthesising insights from the Kahramanmaraş Conference to outline challenges, lessons learned, and a strategic roadmap for resilient urban recovery.

Impacts
Research: A British Council Fund on ‘Co-Design of a Curriculum for Resilient Urban Heritage: A UK-Turkey TNE Initiative on Culturally Sensitive Urban Dis-

aster Preparedness’ was granted in November 2025, led by the University of Westminster in partnership with Abdullah Gül University and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. The grant will provide a platform to develop innovative training for the region, including local participatory workshop, during the period 2026-27.

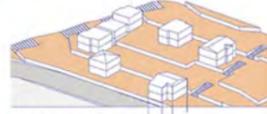
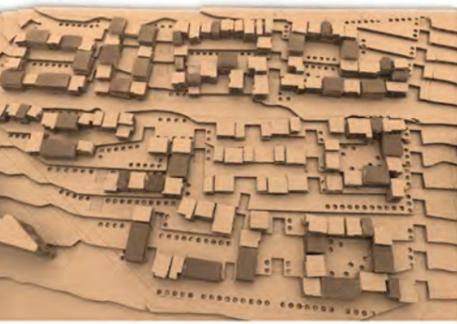
Practice: An [international advisory board](#) was set up in Kahramanmaraş involving staff from University of Westminster, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Abdullah Gül University, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), University of Lisbon, Middle East Technical University, AURA Istanbul, Architecte Conseil de l’État, France, Tongji University.

Field Visit to the Heritage Site of Kahramanmaraş affected by the earthquake.



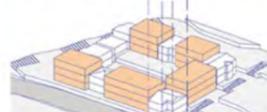
An international conference, informed by the design studio work of three participating universities, catalysed a multi-stakeholder public debate on the city’s future, creating momentum to shift prevailing top-down governance approaches toward more inclusive, bottom-up and sustainable practices.

The momentum generated by bringing together national and international experts has been strengthened through an international grant that supports the training of a new generation of architects and planners in culturally sensitive, post-disaster reconstruction.



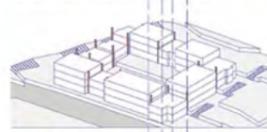
1- Eğim ve Setler
Proje alanının eğimi ve yapı kotları referans alınarak setler oluşturulmuştur.

Slopes and Platforms
The terraces were designed considering the site's natural slope and the proposed building levels.



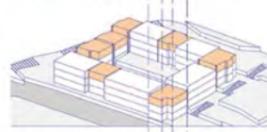
2- Yeni Yapılar (Urban Infill)
Proje kapsamında tasarlanan konutlar iç bahçelerle yapı adalarını tamamlanmıştır.

New Buildings (Urban Infill)
In the project, the residential buildings are organized into complete blocks with the integration of inner courtyard.



3- Ek Taşıyıcılar
Yapı aralarında yerleştirilen kolonlarla komşu yapıların geliştirilmesine katkı sağlanmıştır.

Additional Structural Elements
The insertion of columns between buildings encourages the future development of neighborhood structures.



4- Değişen Üngüt
Zamanla gelişen yapılar organik bir hal alır.

Evolving Üngüt
Over time, the built environment takes on an organic character.

