

Title: Water Cities

Submission date: 10 July 2025

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Linked Content & Themes:

- Economic Opportunities and Financing
- Climate Action and Urban Resilience
- Social Inclusion and Equity

Content & Themes that are marginally linked:

- Digital Transformation and Innovation

(Your submission must directly relate to the themes and priorities of the U20 2025 Cycle)

Abstract Content and Length (683 words – max of 800 words permitted):

Context & Objectives

What are water cities, and what can we learn from their past and present for their future?

Whilst all cities depend on access to water, we define a water city as any city, from the world's most ancient to new ones being built today, that has a close connection to one or more water sources – be they rivers, lakes or coastlines. Whilst this connection helps them thrive, it can at times be a hazard.

What resilience does a water city require?

To survive and prosper over time, a water city must maintain a good state of resilience which includes care and respect for the water sources and bodies it is next to, and the provision of safe and clean water for its residents. A resilient water city is an urban area where people and nature thrive together. It is a city that uses its proximity to water for sustainable economic and social development and takes risk-informed actions to address water hazards, vulnerabilities, and exposures in an appropriate way.

Our Objective

The objective of this initiative is to learn from millennia of urban development on and next to water to explain what water resilience for cities meant in the past, what it means today, and what water cities need to have in place to ensure a thriving and resilient future. Our focus is intended to cover and include U20 cities.

Existing material on water cities

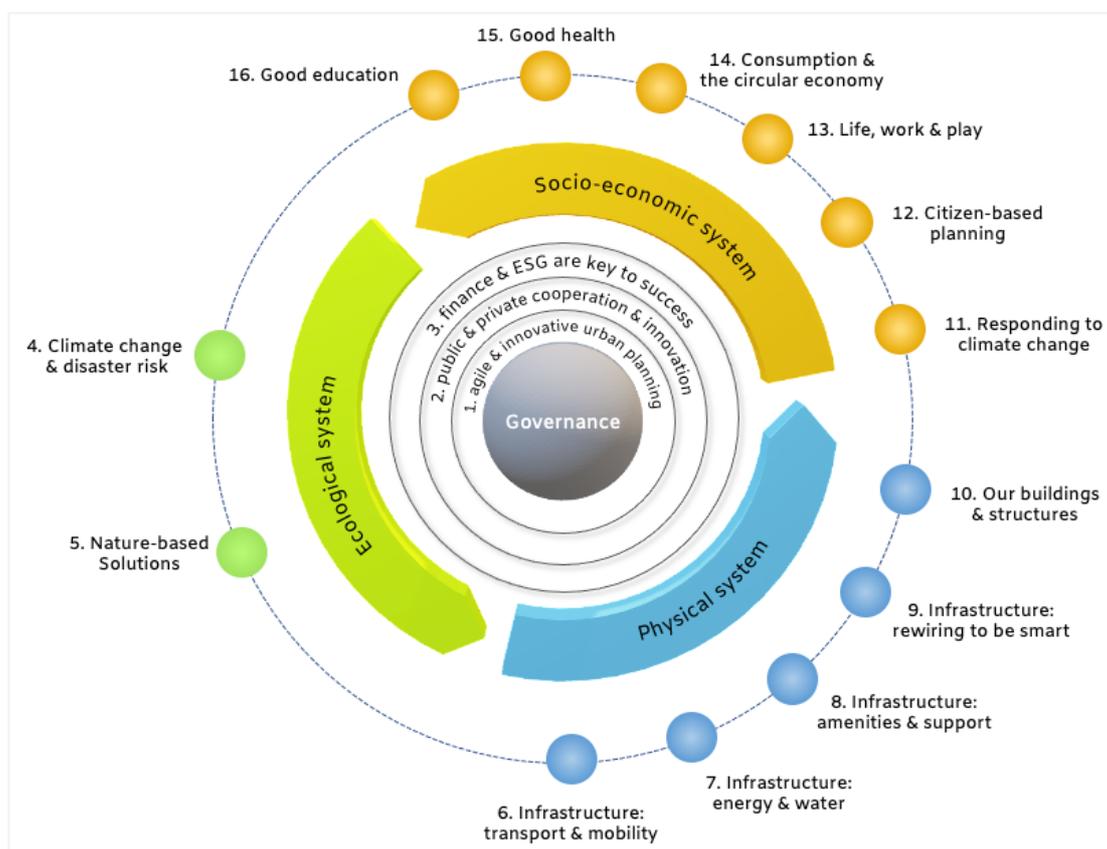
Some excellent material about water cities exists, much of which was researched and created several years ago. We believe that our initiative can offer fresh perspectives and updates to build upon this valuable work, using our proposed approach.

Our Overall Scope and Approach

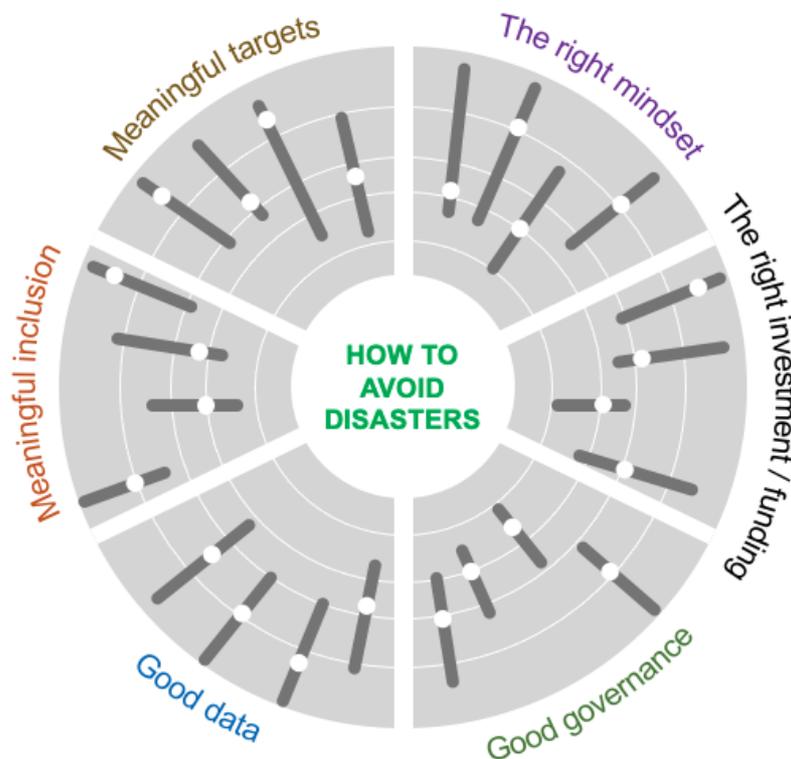
We intend to focus on water cities of varying sizes and contexts around the world, which relate to the U20 and G20, that are located on rivers, lakes, and/or coastlines. We will draw learnings from these urban environments and the water systems they are linked to, and how these learnings can be applied for resilience and prosperity today and in the future. The learnings will be linked to how land is used and developed, and how water in different contexts is managed. We will also ask questions to people who are involved in or are studying these cities about next steps and learnings for others.

We will use two ongoing and interlinked initiatives that we own to assist with and support the structure of our analysis and outputs. The first of these initiatives is [the Urban 2.0 framework](#), which was devised by G Byatt in 2020 and provides a systems approach to how the world’s urban environments can be thriving, nature-positive, and resilient. The second is [the Disasters Avoided initiative](#), which began in 2022 and was co-developed by G Byatt and I Kelman to provide compelling examples and case studies of how disasters can be and are being avoided, including in urban environments. These initiatives incorporate the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, including the application of a draft set of urban-specific indicators which link to SDG Global Indicators.

[The Urban 2.0 system](#) © G Byatt



[The Disasters Avoided model](#): © G Byatt, I Kelman & A Prados



The fit of this initiative with the Urban 20 (U20) 2025 Cycle

Per recent email correspondence with yourselves, we believe that this research proposal is a strong fit with the U20 2025 Cycle. Everybody has a right to clean water and sanitation, and this matter is a fundamental and critical area for cities around the world to address, including all cities that are part of U20, in order to ensure that the world's urban environments are thriving, resilient and sustainable places.

Given U20's overarching purpose of raising the profile of urban priorities in the G20 process, we believe that a focus on water management can help the U20 to achieve this purpose (we are aware of [the G20 Call to Action on Strengthening Drinking-water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services published in July 2024](#), as an example, and [the G20 Best Practices for Water Management from the G20 2023](#), which are general and not purely urban-focused).

Experience of the team to work on this initiative

Gareth is an independent consultant who supports projects and activities for urban risk and resilience, disaster risk and resilience and the private sector.

LinkedIn profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/garethbyatt>

Ilan is Professor of Disasters and Health at University College London, England and a Professor II at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway. His overall research interest is linking disasters and health, integrating climate change into both, with extensive work comparing urban and non-urban settings.

LinkedIn profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ilankelman>

Supporting websites for work undertaken by both research leads:

<https://urban2zero.com> (Urban-focused website)

<https://surediscities.com> (supporting Urban-focused website)

<https://disastersavoided.com> (website on disasters avoided)

<https://www.riskinsightconsulting.com> (consulting-focused website)

<https://ilankelman.org> (research-focused website)