



IUDI

NatCon 2025



SOUVENIR
Kolkata, 07-08 March 2025



Cities in Transition

Inclusion Through Urban Design

IUDI Chapters & Centres



About Institute of Urban Designers India (IUDI)

Amidst the present scenario of unprecedented growth and change across all levels of urban settlements, especially in our part of the world, the need for increased networking and dialogue between the participants of such change becomes imperative. The emerging directions of change and developmental choices as witnessed all around us today raises immense challenges and possibilities towards a dynamic and contributory role of the urban design profession within different societal conditions.

It is at this significant juncture that the Institute of Urban Designers India (IUDI) as a national level association of urban design professionals, academicians and practitioners operate.

IUDI holds various conferences, meets, exhibitions, lectures and congresses to discussion and exchange views and for the exposition of any matters affecting or relating to the practice and/or theory of Urban Design or any allied subject.

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IUDI National Conference 2023: Urban Design & Resilience of the Indian City

Panaji, Goa (September 29–30, 2023)

The Institute of Urban Designers India (IUDI) celebrated a significant milestone in 2023—50 years of formal Urban Design practice in India. To mark this occasion, the IUDI National Conference 2023 was held at the architecturally significant Cidade de Goa designed by Charles Correa, bringing together over 260 urban design professionals, academicians, bureaucrats, and elected representatives.

Under the theme "Urban Design & Resilience of the Indian City," the two-day conference featured discussions addressing climate crisis challenges and urban resilience strategies.

The event was inaugurated by the Honorable Chief Minister of Goa, Shri Pramod Sawant, who emphasized urban design's crucial role in shaping Indian cities. Shri Kunal Kumar (IAS), Joint Secretary & Mission Director of the Smart Cities Mission, shared valuable insights on achieving holistic urban realms.

International perspective came from keynote speaker Esben Neander Kristensen, Partner & Director from Gehl (Netherlands), who showcased Gehl's work across global communities.

The conference paid special tribute to the partnership between Er. Mahendra Raj and Ar. B.V. Doshi, pioneers of Indian architecture.

Sessions covered diverse topics from environmental sustainability to mobility, cultural resilience, and policy frameworks. Each topical session concluded with an inclusive panel discussion moderated by IUDI members, synthesizing insights into actionable directions.

The conference witnessed the formal induction of two institutional members: My Liveable Cities (MLC) and Manipal School of Architecture & Planning. The organizing committee of the West Zone of IUDI, established several precedents for future conferences, including a dedicated NatCon logo, website, and social media presence.

The concluding day featured a General Body Meeting where Kolkata Centre volunteered to host the next National Conference, continuing IUDI's bjective to advance urban design practice and awareness across India and beyond.



Inaugural IUDI National Conference: "Urban Design Matters"

The Raviz, Ashtamudi, Kollam, Kerala (September 20–22, 2019)



The Institute of Urban Designers India (IUDI) marked a significant milestone with its inaugural National Conference themed "Urban Design Matters" hosted by the Kerala Chapter in Kollam. This pioneering event successfully brought together urban design professionals, government officials, academicians, and students from across India, establishing a benchmark for future IUDI conventions.

Co-hosted by Kollam Municipal Corporation, the conference featured exceptional engagement from city officials led by Honorable Mayor Adv. V. Rajendra Babu. The event strategically positioned urban design as essential to municipal development, demonstrating its relevance to policy makers and implementation authorities.

Distinguished participation included J. Mercykutty Amma, Minister for Fisheries, Harbour Engineering and Cashew Industry, alongside Members of Parliament and opposition leaders, who actively engaged in discussions concerning Kollam's sustainable development. This high-level governmental participation underscored urban design's growing recognition in policy circles.

The conference showcased international and Indian expertise, addressing diverse concerns from economic frameworks to ecological considerations, infrastructure development, and participatory approaches. Presentations ranged from conceptual projects to executed works, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in implementing urban design solutions.

The keynote was made by Tay Kheng Soon, urban designer from Singapore. A notable achievement was the conference's focus on second and third-tier cities like Kollam, demonstrating how urban design can create visible impact in emerging urban centers.

The IUDI Executive Committee and General Body meetings, held aboard a houseboat on Ashtamudi Lake, attracted members and potential members, strengthening organizational cohesion and outlining future initiatives.

The meticulously organized event concluded with a cultural excursion to Munroe Island, exploring local heritage while witnessing the aftermath of Kerala's flooding challenges, symbolizing the critical link between urban design and resilience.



Urbanism NEXT: Future in Focus
Talks | Seminars | Workshops | Exhibitions



Yossapon Boonsom
18/09/2021
06.00 PM IST
Join us in Zoom
Meeting ID : 813 5188 4915
Passcode : 18920221
Login : 5.45 pm

Yossapon Boonsom is a Thai urbanist and landscape architect and the director of Shma Company Limited. He received a degree in Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Chulalongkorn University and continued his studies at a postgraduate level in Master of Arts in Urban Management & Architectural Design at the University of Wales (Dorus Academy, Milan). After completing his studies, he worked as a Landscape Architect in Singapore for 5 years before established Shma Company Limited along with two partners.

Shma Company Limited is a Landscape Architectural design and research practice which aims to transform the territory through landscape design with projects across Thailand and Asia Pacific. Shma's projects have been awarded and shortlisted World Architecture Festival (WAF 2012 - 2018) and International Federation of Landscape Architects Asia Pacific Regional Congress (2017).

Dr. Narein Perera
19/02/2022
06.00 PM IST
Join us in Zoom
Webinar ID : 881 6678 0633
Passcode : UNEXT
Login : 5.45 pm

Dr. Narein Perera is a Chartered Architect by profession and a Senior Lecturer in Architecture, at the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

His architectural practice prides itself in the degree of innovation and holistic applicability of its architectural solutions. He has won recognition for design, both locally and internationally. In his home country of Sri Lanka, he was the recipient of the 'Young Architect of the Year' in 2010. On the international stage, he was awarded the Architecture Asia Award for Emerging Architects' by ARCADIA (2014 and 2016), and 'The Energy & Hot Climates Prize of the Green Building Solutions Awards 2016' for the International Platform, France.

Dr Perera's research expertise primarily encompasses urban scale studies that focus on the tropical climatic context. He critically explores the impacts of the haphazard and rapid development that effect tropical cities. His research includes a "Local Climate Zone" based approach to urban planning in Colombo, Sri Lanka. On the building scale Perera's work focusses on passive design strategies for the building envelope in ensuring daylight integration, thermal comfort and overall energy efficiency. A key contribution is as an author / team member for the development of the Energy Efficient Building Code for Sri Lanka.

IUDI National Urban Thesis Seminars

Urban design educator has come a long way since its inception in India in the 60s to its present, where institutes are now providing post-graduate education in the subject. The objective of the annual seminar is to promote shared learning amongst participating colleges and has no component of competition, comparison, or assessment. The idea is to build up a common resource pool in the field of urban design with the hope that there will be larger interactions in the form of juries, joint studios, workshops, etc., contributing to the overall development of pedagogy in urban design.



About

This year with immense pleasure IUDI announces the Third Urban Design National Conference (IUDI NATCON 2025) held in Kolkata, West Bengal, India on 07-08 March 2025. The conference aims to bring together practicing architects and urban design professionals, students, academicians, bureaucrats and elected representatives to discuss and deliberate on ways, means and processes to make Indian cities resilient to the emerging climate crisis.

The conference also provides opportunity to its participants to networking and develop professional relationships. IUDI Natcon 2025 will bring together over 350 delegates, speakers and thinkers of National and International repute to share their experiences and thoughts on Cities in Transition. For two days participants of the conference will discuss and deliberate on the theme and the way forward for our cities.

Theme

Cities in Transition: Inclusion through Urban Design

Kolkata is a city renowned for its rich historical layers, vibrant cultural diversity, and valuable ecological assets, all intricately woven into its urban fabric. This year's IUDI NATCON conference, organized by the IUDI East Zone, takes place in this very city. As Indian cities continue to experience rapid and intense urban growth, this conference provides a platform to address the critical need for designing urban spaces that are accessible, resilient, and inclusive. The event emphasizes sub themes such as equitable access to resources, the preservation and celebration of cultural identity, and the integration of sustainable development practices into the framework of urban planning.

Reimagining a Critical Public Place

Ranjit Sabikhi Memorial Young Urban Designers Competition

YUD'25

The Young Urban Designers Competition 2025 (YUD'25) – the first of its kind, is an initiative by IUDI to catalyze the Young Urban Designers of this country through an innovative, enriching and thought-provoking design exercise.

IUDI as an institution has long felt the need to reach out to urban design colleges, students, and young professionals across the country—creating a group of like-minded professionals with ethics and ability to influence development towards an inclusive, equitable future. This need is even more important today; as we live and work in a context that is increasingly at threat from ecological, environmental, social and technological changes.

In this vein, we were inspired by Ranjit Sabikhi, a pioneer of Urban Design in the country—his thoughtful pragmatism in addressing the complex issues of inclusivity, publicness, and community through his work and his teachings.

Guided by these motivations, the YUD 2025 became an exercise to define an interesting and complex challenge grounded in the realities of Kolkata. We decided the site of the competition to be the IPGMER & SSKM Hospital Campus. With an intricate overlap of history,

social significance, healing, hope, and inclusive access, and the challenges of history, social significance, healing, hope, and inclusive access, and the challenges of modernization, infrastructural requirements, informal use and a huge group of diverse stakeholders—we have a real-world design challenge.

To make this complexity evident and addressable, careful attention was given to the framing of the brief and the structuring of the competition. The detailed brief highlighted critical issues and challenges through qualitative analysis and mapping, but also attempted to clearly frame a goal—that of inclusivity, quality of spatial experience, image-ability, and access.

YUD 2025 was a heartening and humbling experience, to be able to involve and motivate the country's next generation of Urban Designers to get involved in real issues of the cities we inhabit. We hope that the trend continues, and together, IUDI as an institution can really affect better, more inclusive and equitable urban futures for our nation.

Team YUD'25

“The mark of a great city isn’t how it treats its special places – everybody does that right – but how it treats its ordinary ones.”

- Aaron M. Renn

Foreword

Making Urban Design Relevant

A few years ago, one of the PhD themes I mentored was trying to prove that urban design is a false profession that piggybacks on architectural and planning concepts. The successful completion of the research would make me, an urban designer, irrelevant, and I would have dug my own grave. However, I did agree to mentor. It was not for any noetic thrill or a reckless act. There were significant reasons. Before explaining my choice and its connection with the NATCON 25 theme, let me expand on the doubts.

Requiems for urban design, harsh criticisms of its failures, and questions on its relevance have regularly surfaced in the past 69 years of its existence (that is if you consider that urban design was started as a formal discipline by Josep Lluís Sert in 1956 at Harvard). Until recently, it was a struggle in India to issue an urban design graduate degree. Educational regulations did not recognise urban design discipline as independent but as a sub-theme in architecture or planning streams. All these sow doubts in Indian students and make it difficult for young professionals eagerly looking to practice urban design. The feeling is similar to seeing an empty platform when you arrive at the station – not because you are late to the train, but because there was no train in the first place.

Of the two ways to settle these doubts—theory and practice—examining the practice of city building can help immediately and effectively. Urban planning and architecture have played a significant role in transforming Indian cities. They have led to higher

development, increased land value, optimised land utilisation, improved access, secured transactions, provided better utilities and a few more. However, most of these gains have accrued to private properties rather than the public realm. There has not been a commensurate addition of open spaces and walkable streets. There is a loss in the quality of existing spaces, an impoverished aesthetic environment, and decreased access to public areas.

We need a discipline that recovers urban spaces for people, creates streetscapes with a vibrant and diverse life at the ground level, attends to the aesthetic crisis of public spaces, brings cities and their assets, such as waterfronts, together, and nourishes unique visual identities of historic quarters. This is urban design's role. Questions about whether urban design is important are moot. The more useful enquiry is to find ways to further its relevance.

The NATCON 25 theme of inclusive urban design reflects on the principle of urban design, not in self-doubt, but to strengthen the profession. How can the discipline be upgraded and upskilled in the face of new challenges and perspectives? To answer this, the conference focuses on three themes: making urban spaces accessible, resilient and inclusive. There are reasons to pick these issues.

Designing better functioning urban blocks, promoting mixed-use, enabling compact and dense urban form and improving the visual experience of the built environment remain the main focus of urban design. By default, it assumes and serves only the able-bodied

person and overlooks vulnerable populations, including the aged, children and people with special needs. It remains less sensitive to gender issues. These assumptions and status quo need urgent rethinking.

Urban design practice has deftly used technological solutions to ensure engineering sustainability. Can it show equal adeptness in creating environmentally sustainable solutions and places? This is the next critical area to enquire.

How does the discipline engage with emerging challenges such as urban flooding or heat stress? Can it contribute to biodiversity? Market forces and private developers drive large urban developments. How can design and discipline work to preserve public interest in this context? Can it influence public policy to meet public objectives? Earnest and creative answers to these questions will determine the future of urban design.

Successful examples in Indonesia and Vietnam show that design can engage with emerging challenges. For instance, projects in low-income areas in Vi Thanh, a city in Vietnam, have made spaces age-friendly, serve multigenerational needs, and are universally accessible and safe. Many more successful projects have shown that improving traffic calming measures and walkability improves public health. To urban designers, mitigation of urban heat stress, improving water harvesting and reducing surface runoffs have become imperative. They are working to make design adaptive to uncertainties.

Indian urban designers are increasingly and convincingly demonstrating their contributions to urban transformations. Streets in Pune and other cities are redesigned to make them universally accessible. The redevelopment of Lal Chowk in Srinagar shows that urban spaces can be successfully regenerated through community engagement. As they advance, can they scale up without losing core concerns? Are urban designers upskilled to meet new challenges?

NATCON 25, in certain ways, is a stock-taking moment. Deliberations and exchanges, shared experiences, and discussions would examine the efficacy of implemented interventions. They will lay bare the assumptions of professionals and researchers. We would know whether urban design has taken an ecological turn. Have ideas such as 'biophilia' been added to its repertoire? Is the practice conscious of market uncertainties and how they affect design conception and implementation? Deliberations in this conference and many more to follow must help sustain the strategic role of urban design in the building. The articles in this souvenir are but a few examples of the possibilities.

Professor A. Srivatsan
Founding Member, Editor, IUDI



Kaushik Raha

© Kaushik Raha
Zeoline Art Gallery



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Kimaya

“It will be an understatement to say that Professor Ranjit Sabikhi was the Father of Urban Design in India.”

Professor K.T. Ranvindran

Founding President, IUDI

Professor Ranjit Sabikhi was the pioneer of Urban Design in India. He headed the Urban Design Department in the School of Planning and Architecture Delhi from 1969 a mere decade after the discipline began in Harvard University under Josep Lluís Sert. Professor Sabikhi himself was a graduate in Civic Design from the University of Liverpool. Luckily in those days, SPA Delhi was open to progressive ideas from anywhere in the world and the newly developed Urban Design discipline quickly found footing in SPA's open minded and progressive learning environment.

Meanwhile, smitten by the liberal world views of the '68 student revolution and trans-formative writings and talks of J Krishnamurthy, I was already looking for a shift from my practice. An article by Lluís Sert in Progressive Architecture magazine followed by an advertisement for Urban Design in the newspaper by SPA, ignited my curious mind. I slipped out of my four year old, doing-okay type practice and swam ashore to a lifelong journey of Urban Design.



For most of us, Sabikhi was a breath of fresh air. Sabikhi was suave, had an incredibly disciplined hand, who always smiled when in disagreement, instructed and guided without aggression, but with kindness that was always assuring.

My interview was taken by a 40-ish man with uncomfortable, snaky blue eyes. I asked for a month for joining (to wind up my practice) which was promptly granted. First day in the studio, we encountered the man with the snaky eyes, a khadi-clad Kuldip Singh and an affable paunchy Shivnath Prasad. Our cohort consisted of a mixed bag, Ranjit Mitra, two Army guys, and a contingent of eager Maharashtrians. Next two years were exhilarating!

For most of us, Sabikhi was a breath of fresh air. I had only known authoritative, pipe chewing, intimidating professors who kept a distance from the students and ruled by fear. Sabikhi was suave, had an incredibly disciplined hand, who always smiled when in disagreement, instructed and guided without aggression but with kindness that was always assuring. No bunking of classes, for Sabikhi was always on time along with his visiting faculty.

There were also other surprises outside the classroom; turn by turn they invited the whole batch to their homes throwing excellent parties with liberal lubrication and drunken arguments.

Most of us were green horns and not used to such a liberal flow of alcohol. I don't know if they realized at that time, that they were creating a heady brew of rigour, liberality and deep learning in our young minds. Sabikhi defined the DNA of Urban Design studio in SPA Delhi.

To enrich the program Professor Sabikhi brought in many outside speakers, like Charles Correa, pioneering archaeologist Dr. B.K. Thapar, Christopher Benninger, Sociologist Dr. Sarojini Abraham, Structural Engineer Dr. Narayana (who later founded the BEM program in SPA), Professor Achyut Kanvinde, and even the universally respected Professor Josep Lluís Sert. You can imagine how many closed doors were kicked open in our heads! We fully shared our theory classes with the Town Planning students. Tours, travels, combined landscape studios where Professor Ravi Bhan and a young AGK Menon joined our faculty. You can only imagine what-all these exposures did to us. Sabikhi's deep insight, teaching and communication skills actually continue to define the character of Urban Design education, even after five decades across India.



As much as he was a celebrated teacher, Professor Sabikhi was known for his professional practice. Apart from being an architect, professor Sabikhi's Urban Design practice in India and abroad are recognised globally. He used his networks to place me in Iran as an Urban Designer, which was life changing for me. We met in Iran many times and discovered common friends. Even during our Urban Design course he married a girl whom I had met in Chennai. In 1982, when I joined the department as an Assistant Professor, Sabikhi welcomed it. My wife was already known to him socially. When the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts competition was announced, Sabikhi as the Commissioner gave me the responsibility to do the Design Brief. Professor Sabikhi was a great support to me when my position as HoD of Urban Design was challenged as I was only an Assistant Professor at that time. Sabikhi and Achyut Kanvinde backed me to retain the position in SPA. Professor Sabikhi was a solid supporter when the IUDI was formed.

He continued to elevate Urban Design by his constant critical writings and talks. Every now and then he prompted me to act on foundational issues for Urban Design profession. His association with the Urban Design program in SPA and his constant nurturing of the subject elevated the status of Urban Design. In all of us, his students, people whom he nurtured and benefited from his lifelong support, Professor Sabikhi lives on. It will be an understatement to say that Professor Ranjit Sabikhi was the Father of Urban Design in India.

(previous page) Ranjit Sabikhi. Photo Courtesy of Sabikhi Family
(top) Yamuna Apartment, New Delhi. Designed by Ranjit Sabikhi. Photo Courtesy of Sabikhi Family

Integrating Cultural Heritage and Identity in Urban Design: A Study of the Chittirai Festival in Madurai

Vinupandyan Lakshmanan

*Professor, Kalasalingam School of Architecture,
Krishnankoil, Tamilnadu*

INTRODUCTION:

SDG 11.4 emphasizes the importance of enhancing efforts to safeguard the world's Cultural and Natural Heritage, a crucial aspect of the 2030 Agenda (Özünel, 2023). Madurai, a centuries-old temple city in Tamil Nadu, India, is a culturally rich and populous city despite a declining economy and population (Viguier, 2011). Madurai's Chithirai Festival celebrates the marriage of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar, promoting local identity and preserving traditional spaces amid rapid urbanization (Wickramasinghe, 2013). Indian cities are focusing on public space revitalization to improve quality of life, social engagement, recreation, and cultural exchange, incorporating traditional and modern urban needs, as seen in the Chittirai Festival in Madurai (Tipnis, 2012).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN IDENTITY IN MADURAI:

The study examines the Spatial vitality of temple tanks in Madurai, Tamil Nadu,

during the Chittirai Festival, focusing on user perceptions and behavioral patterns. It aims to enhance public spaces, investigate user behavior-environment relationships, and propose design strategies for improved public spaces.

METHODOLOGY:

The study uses Historical Mapping to analyze Festival activities and Urban Transformations, analyzing shifts in city organization and gathering opinions from domestic tourists and local residents.

The study explores the impact of urbanization on historic festival spaces, utilizing stakeholder engagement to understand their cultural and economic significance over time.

RESULT:

This research reveals the importance of considering native cultural heritage as a primary driving factor for Urban Revitalization. The route all through this



event is revived, the Temple tank areas of Vandiyoor Mariamman Teppakulam, that acts as a large gathering space during this event. This caters to the spatial need of the social interaction, celebration, etc. in this Festival time.

Surveys and behavior studies reveal the accessibility, spatial vitality, with a unique heritage identity. HUL method of Management and Conservation approach, helps in delivering effective Urban Design Strategies, that can be considered community centered, dynamic and adaptive. Further, this will help to mitigate the gentrification process and random commercialization, leaving the place socially active and intact.

DISCUSSION:

Festival tourism enhances social unity but can harm unique civilizations and the environment. Study examines how religious or cultural visual images influence public area vibrancy. Figure 1 represents Teppakulam Temple Tank, Madurai.

Figure 2 showing Temple of Azhagar, Madurai. Public areas like parks, plazas, and roads are crucial urban elements for fostering ecological processes, social interaction, and intercultural exchange. Figure 3 illustrates Main Mandagappadi on the Vaigai River, Madurai. A survey was conducted to assess participants' satisfaction and preferences regarding the physical environment, functions, and activities of the Chittirai festival, using random sampling and a large sample size.

Figure 4 represents The Chittirai festival in Madurai offers diverse activities for all ages, with different user groups occupying public spaces based on physical and media/ambient conditions.

Figure 5 shows The Thenur Mandapam in Madurai, India, highlights the importance

of understanding people's perceptions of public spaces to improve their quality, reduce environmental issues, and foster social activities and cultural exchange. Figure 6 illustrates the study investigating human behavior and physical environment in Madurai's public spaces, focusing on diversity, equity, livability, accessibility, and concentration, emphasizing social entities influenced by user interactions.

Figure 7 displays the Route Map of the Chittirai Festival- The processional Route of the Festival, Madurai, (Source: Google Satellite Map). Public spaces are social entities shaped by interactions and perceptions of users, not by cultural or legal designations, and their activity intensity and population density are influenced by social and contextual factors.

CONCLUSION:

The study evaluates the Chittirai festival's spatial vitality in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, focusing on accessibility, variety, equity, concentration, and liveability, incorporating traditional public design elements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

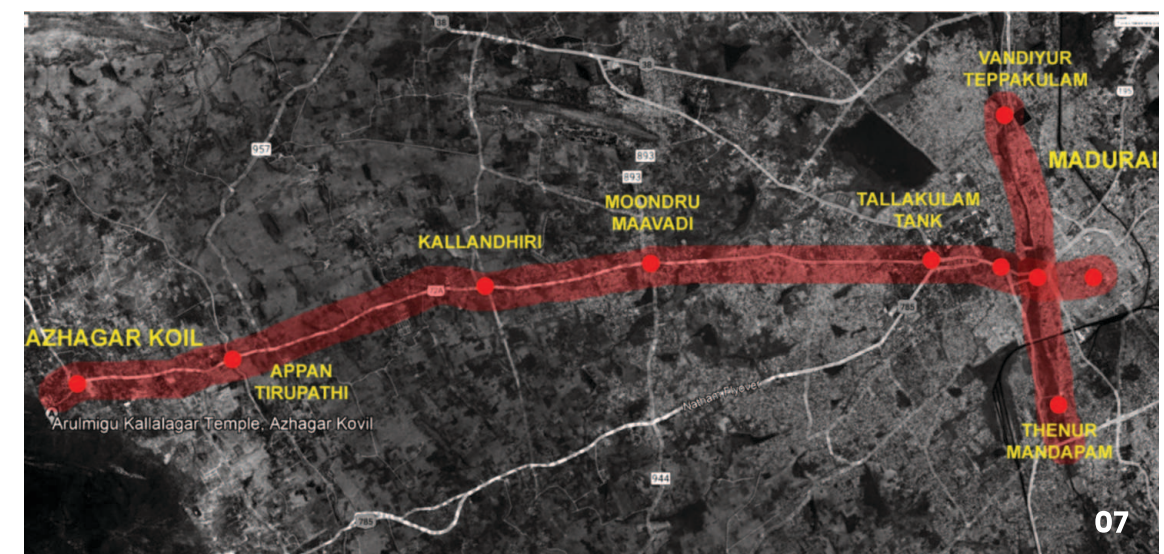
The author expresses gratitude towards the management of Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education for their help and support.

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Specific Streetscape and
Public Space Design

One Green Mile, Mumbai

StudioPOD





Project Details:

Site Area: 1.8 km stretch of Senapati Bapat Marg (SBM), Mumbai, Maharashtra

Year: 2022

Status: Built

Client: Nucleus Office Parks

Owner / Approving Authority: Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)

Designed by: StudioPOD

Design Team: Mahesh Waghdhare, Mansi Sahu, Sarfaraz Momin, Satish Chandran

Photographers: Umang Shah and Suleiman Merchant

Other Collaborators:

International collaboration for under flyover space: MVRDV

Public Art collaboration: St+art India

Landscape Architects: AMS consultants and Enviroscape India

MEP: ARKK Consulting

Lighting: Lighting Concepts

Traffic Analysis: Sustainancy Consultants

Signage & wayfinding: StudioPOD

Structural Design: JW Consultants LLP

Project Management: Turner India

In cities like Mumbai, finding synergies between mobility, infrastructure, and open spaces is required to create liveable urban environments. One Green Mile provides an opportunity for developing a “Complete Street” in the busy financial hub of Mumbai that has a safe, active, and vibrant public realm while ensuring the efficient movement of vehicles. It demonstrates how encroached and underutilised spaces can be converted into a safe public realm and create a safe, and enjoyable environment for all users.

The project is a transformative urban renewal initiative along a 1.8km stretch of Senapati Bapat Marg in Lower Parel, Mumbai. It reimagines a congested roadway to a transformed people’s street, prioritizing pedestrians and creating inclusive public spaces. Our design intention was to address the multifaceted needs of this bustling financial district, balancing vehicular traffic with enhanced pedestrian infrastructure.



Strategically designed to alleviate chronic vehicular congestion and enhance pedestrian experiences, the project employed sophisticated road space reallocation strategies, including geometric corrections and road dieting techniques, ensuring improved traffic flow while maximizing pedestrian safety and comfort. Key to this transformation was the development of under-flyover spaces into active public parks, which introduced essential amenities such as a Vachanalaya or reading room, and playful areas for children, enriching the community's social and cultural fabric.

The project's success relied on extensive collaboration among urban designers, traffic engineers, landscape architects, and public art consultants. Through tactical trials, we secured stakeholder buy-in, demonstrating the feasibility and impact of the proposed changes.

The project was meticulously managed within a public-private partnership framework, funded by the client owning two corporate parks along the street, in the public domain of the city. This investment strategy ensured efficient use of resources while delivering high-quality outcomes. Distinguishing aspects of the resolution include the integration of placemaking principles, which fostered social interaction and cultural identity, and the use of durable materials to ensure long-term sustainability. The One Green Mile serves as a model for future urban design, highlighting the potential of thoughtful planning and design to enhance urban livability and community well-being.

The Paradox of Inclusive “Exclusivity”

Ruchi Saxena

*Visiting Faculty, Department of Architecture,
SPA New Delhi*

The idea of an inclusive public space is often meant as a “public space for all”, signifying that everyone is welcome, irrespective of age, gender, religion, caste, race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, or self-identities, and everyone has equitable access to utilize the free valuable resources provided by the public spaces (Zhou, 2019). The pursuit of equity, or spatial justice for its evident spatial attribute, responds to objects of social sustainability (Talen, 2002). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities) have also emphasised on the need of building inclusive and accessible urban environments (United Nations, n.d.). When everyone feels included, communities become more resilient, vibrant and harmonious.

In these times, when inclusivity is equated with social progress, the concept of exclusivity may seem like an antithesis. However, a closer examination of our public spaces reveals that exclusivity can be a catalyst to our efforts to create truly inclusive spaces. This article explores this paradox, demonstrating how selective exclusivity can foster

inclusivity in unanticipated ways, and yet, there exists a fine line between inclusive exclusivity and discrimination.

On the onset, it is imperative to understand here that Exclusivity, in this context, refers to creating spaces that include people with specific needs or interests, that are usually left out from deliberations in urban planning or urban design. Simple considerations like designing for specific age groups, like creating play zones for children, or skateboarding rinks for the youth or the quiet green corner for the elderly; or people with special needs, like providing accessible ramps for the disabled and a pregnant woman, or putting up a baby care centre for the nursing mother in a shopping mall; or gender specific spaces, like restrooms for transgenders who may face harassment in gender neutral spaces. These “exclusive” additions to the public place, do not create a sense of privilege or discrimination amongst the general users, but is seen as an added facility, a social responsibility that is vital for the aforementioned vulnerable groups, making their life a little bit easier and more pleasant. Similarly, culturally responsive designs for places

that have a particular ethnic character may seem exclusive, but is a way of including diverse communities and creating sustainable and intercultural cities (Kumar & Martin, 2004).

The examples illustrate the paradox of inclusive exclusivity. Instead of striving for a single public space that attempts to accommodate everyone, we can achieve greater inclusivity by designing a variety of spaces tailored to specific needs and interests. This network of

Cambridge dictionary defines “exclusivity”, [noun] the quality of being available only to a small number of people who are rich enough or considered good enough.

“Exclusivity” has abundantly implied discrimination or exclusion based on identity or economic backgrounds, where the goal seems to dismiss or marginalise certain groups, instead of expanding access and opportunities.

The idea of creating truly inclusive public spaces may seem like an illusion, an idealist way of thinking, and may very well be impractical or counter-productive. But, creating truly inclusive spaces is a continuous journey that requires challenging our conventional thinking.

specialized spaces will collectively be more inclusive than any single, universally designed space could be.

While exclusivity can be an improbable ally in creating inclusive public spaces, it is crucial to emphasize on the associated intention, and should be carefully considered to avoid being discriminatory. Prioritising access for individuals with genuine needs, like the elderly, families with young children, individuals with disabilities, etc is judicious and ethical, rather than prioritising on privilege. Yet, as the

A case of the Maha Kumbh, 2025

The Maha Kumbh 2025 is special, it is an event that celestially occurs after 144 years. The Maha Kumbh 2025 is touted to be a beacon of service, inclusion and social harmony (Dixit, 2025). With various social initiatives like special camps for the elderly and the hearing impaired, free food and accommodation services for the marginalised etc, the Kumbh has been appreciated for its inclusive practices, and an attempt at equitable distribution of resources and

experiences. However, the presence of VVIP lanes and 'reserved' ghats at the event raises some ethical questions.

Exclusivity in the form of 'Skip the line' tickets at historic monuments, dedicated VIP lanes for movement, VIP darshan facilities at religious places etc, can reinforce existing social hierarchies where financial means or social status becomes the instrument of gaining preferential treatment. This contradicts the core values of inclusivity. While in case of the Maha Kumbh, the dedicated lanes may be justified owing to security concerns, these largely being used by government officials, celebrities, social media influencers and the likes, the presence of whom in the general public may cause a ruckus, divisions of these kinds exacerbate inequalities and potentially diminish the sense of collective participation.

The idea of creating truly inclusive public spaces may seem like an illusion, an idealist way of thinking, and may very well be impractical or counter-productive. But, creating truly inclusive spaces is a continuous journey that requires challenging our conventional thinking. The idea of exclusivity may seem counter-intuitive in fostering inclusive public spaces, but by embracing targeted exclusivity, a rich tapestry of public spaces can be sought that meets the diverse needs and interests of our communities, ensuring a holistic sense of belonging and empowerment.

While the concept of inclusive exclusivity may be justifiable for certain targeted measures, it is vital to apply it thoughtfully and ethically, wherein the effort benefits the broader community, and is not discriminatory, aggravating inequalities.

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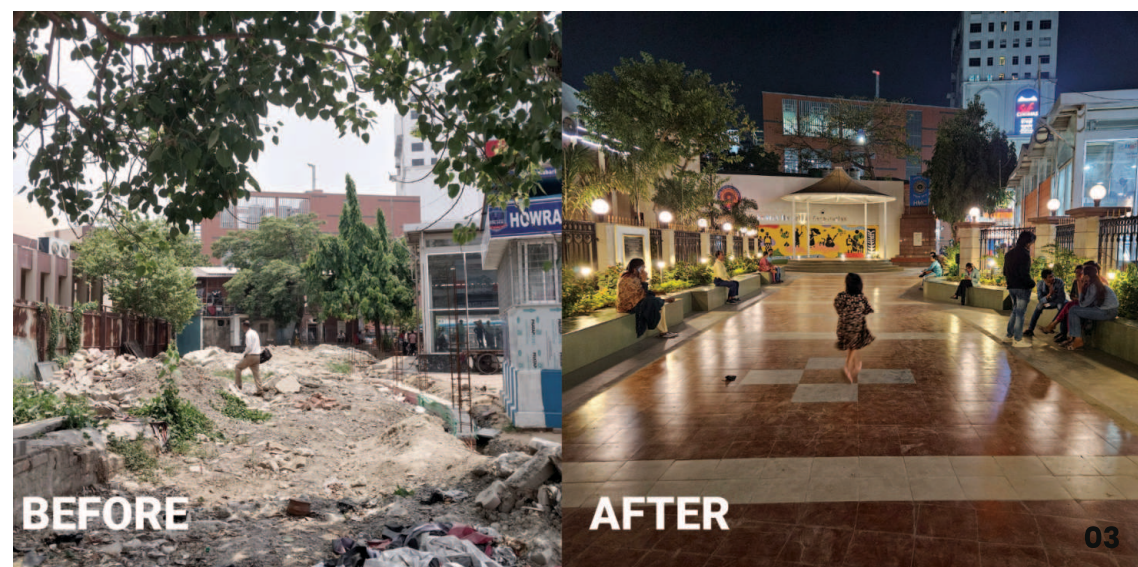
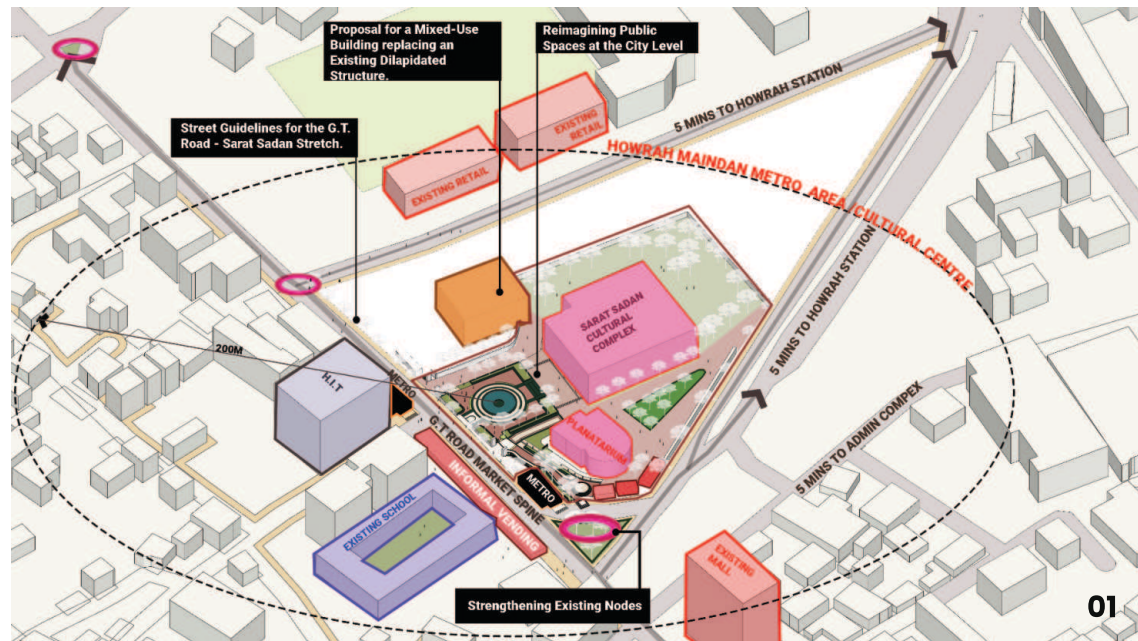
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Master planning, Urban Design,
and Landscape

Strategic Vision Plan for Howrah
GT Road and Adjoining Area:
Catalytic Urban Civic Space
Connecting to Maidan Metro, Sarat
Sadan and Planetarium

AUCollaborative





Project Details:

Site Area for Master planning: Approx 20 acres
Site Area for Built project: 1 acre
Location: Howrah, West Bengal
Year: December 2024
Status: Built
Client: Panchdeep Constructions Ltd. and Howrah Municipal Corporation
Design Team: Debmalya Ghosh, Saheli Ghosh
Photographs and Drawings: AUCollaborative
Description: AUCollaborative

The strategic plan for Howrah addresses critical urban challenges, particularly around the Grand Trunk (GT) Road area and the new Maidan Metro Station. Despite being the second-largest city across the river from Kolkata, Howrah has long struggled with issues of connectivity, lack of cohesive urban spaces, and environmental degradation. The GT Road area, a major arterial corridor, faces severe congestion, fragmented pedestrian pathways, and limited integration with the new metro infrastructure. Additionally, there is an absence of vibrant civic spaces that foster community engagement, social interaction, and recreational activities.

Our strategic plan aims to transform this urban landscape through a multi-pronged approach. Central to this vision is the creation of a dynamic civic space, designed to be inclusive and reflective of Howrah's rich cultural heritage. This involves the renovation and revitalization of the iconic Howrah Planetarium, transforming it into a lively civic hub that attracts both residents and visitors. The plan also includes catalytic projects to improve the city's livability: enhancing streetscapes, addressing air and noise pollution along Foreshore Road, and revitalizing the environmentally detrimental Kadamtala Market. These initiatives focus on sustainable urban development, improving pedestrian mobility, enhancing green cover, and mitigating pollution-related issues. We have integrated eco-friendly solutions like rainwater harvesting, energy-efficient lighting, and green roofs to promote sustainability.

The urban civic space around Sarat Sadan is a key feature of our strategic plan, intended to redefine Howrah's civic identity. Named in honour of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, this space embodies the spirit of democratic engagement and cultural expression. The redeveloped planetarium entrance is designed as a vibrant, child-friendly area, providing educational and recreational opportunities for school children from nearby institutions. The area includes interactive exhibits, outdoor learning spaces, and green pockets that encourage creativity among young minds.

The urban civic space around Sarat Sadan is a key feature of our strategic plan, intended to redefine Howrah's civic identity. Named in honour of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, this space embodies the spirit of democratic engagement and cultural expression. The redeveloped planetarium entrance is designed as a vibrant, child-friendly area, providing educational and recreational opportunities for school children from nearby institutions. The area includes interactive exhibits, outdoor learning spaces, and green pockets that encourage creativity among young minds.

The design incorporates a thoughtful blend of hard and soft spaces, supporting both structured activities and informal gatherings. Music and sound installations add a dynamic auditory experience, while a mist fountain serves a dual purpose: enhancing aesthetic appeal and helping to reduce air pollution. Shaded seating areas, water features, and landscaped gardens provide respite from urban heat, encouraging outdoor activities. This space addresses the city's need for an active urban area and symbolizes a new chapter in Howrah's urban evolution, celebrating its heritage while embracing the future. The strategic plan envisions Howrah as a resilient, inclusive, and vibrant city, with civic spaces reflecting the aspirations of its diverse communities.

Urban Nomads

Including Transient Communities in Cities: A Case of Pastoral Communities

Rama Raghavan

Architect

We sit in our balcony, looking out to open fields beyond, in the backdrop of an urban skyline. A pastoral family arrives with their cattle, setting up a temporary encampment. Their lives are guided by the rhythms of grazing and the changing seasons. As I watch them settle in, I wonder—how does a city built for permanence respond to those who live on the move? This article weaves a personal narrative with pointed facts that explore the challenges faced by pastoral nomadic communities in urban landscapes while reflecting on how cities should embrace inclusion, dignity, and equity for those at the margins.

Our apartment in Pune's PCMC (Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation) offers a rare escape from the concrete jungle. One sweltering afternoon, the fields beyond our balcony, transformed —hundreds of sheep, cows, and a few horses filled the open land. Three shepherds in white kurtas and vibrant pagdis guided the herd, while women in bright red sarees carried cloth sacks, aluminum utensils, and tarpaulin sheets to set up temporary homes. Even the youngest children toddled behind,

adapting with ease. Over the following days, I observed their quiet rhythm. At dawn, fires were lit for cooking; by midday, men led the cattle to graze while women toiled under the scorching sun, fetching water from distant sources. Lunch was taken under a lone tree, and as evening fell, families retreated into makeshift shelters. Their existence was fluid, as if they had always belonged to this landscape.

Then the monsoon arrived—sudden and unforgiving. I watched as wind and rain battered their fragile tarps, offering little protection. Yet, they endured. Witnessing their plight made me wonder what place they truly have in a city that prioritizes permanence. Why do they lack safe shelters to protect themselves, their children, and their livestock? Cities have long favoured those who stay; what, then, does the city offer those who live on the move?

Around 34 million people in India belong to pastoralist communities, playing a vital role in the country's economy and cultural fabric. They contribute



significantly through dairy production and the supply of meat, wool, and leather. Traditionally herding goats, camels, and buffaloes, they migrate vast distances, following seasonal changes in pasture and water availability. Beyond their economic contributions, pastoralists are essential for maintaining and restoring fragile ecosystems through sustainable land management. Yet, despite their ecological and cultural significance, these communities have long been marginalized—facing challenges such as dwindling grasslands and lack of access to basic housing and services.

Key Challenges Faced by Nomadic Pastoralists

1. Restricted Mobility: Myopic Land Policies and the Erosion of Pastoral Routes

Pastoral communities have been severely restricted by short-sighted land policies dating back to British rule. Colonial authorities labeled grazing lands as “wastelands” and converted them to agricultural use. Post-independence, restrictive forest laws and conservation policies further eroded traditional routes, often forcing pastoralists into sedentarization. The lack of consultation with communities has disrupted the balance between pastoral practices and environmental conservation, leaving their way of life under constant threat (Maggu and Mitra).

2. Disruptions in Migratory Patterns Owing to Climate Change

Communities like the Dhangers in Maharashtra now face disrupted migratory patterns due to changing environmental rhythms in urban areas. Continuous drought and shrinking grazing lands force many to seek water and fodder elsewhere, resulting in decreased livestock quality, increased deaths, and economic losses. These challenges undermine their pastoral

production systems and socio-cultural identities in cities built for permanence (Narbat).

3. Lack of Legal Land Rights and Access to Essential Services

Pastoralists often contend with insecure land tenure, settling on unoccupied land without legal protection—leaving them vulnerable to evictions. Their inadequate access to services like water, healthcare, education, and grazing land violates their fundamental rights, including the right to adequate housing. Marginalization, discrimination, and policies that ignore their traditional livelihoods further erode their dignity and quality of life in urban settings (Lim, Anand and Kothari).

Looking out from my balcony another afternoon, I was surprised to find the fields empty again—a blank canvas, as though there never was any prior human or animal life. As quietly as they had arrived, the pastoralists had left without a trace—evicted to make way for agricultural activities. The next day, I saw a farmer and his family sowing seeds in those very fields. Now, when the fields flourish with corn, a sight that should evoke joy, I feel an uneasy weight. Prosperity for some had come at the cost of pushing others to the margins.

Another example of this is the displacement of pastoralists due to restrictive environmental conservation policies. For instance, in the Indian Himalayas, policies favouring conservation and ecotourism have often resulted in the eviction of pastoral communities, disrupting their migratory routes and access to grazing lands (Nori and Scoones). Addressing the challenges of nomadic pastoralists requires thoughtful interventions that respect their natural rhythms while integrating them into urban environments.

Actionable areas in Urban Design and Policy

1. Inclusive Urban Planning

Incorporate designated grazing zones within urban peripheries to ensure pastoralists have access to necessary resources without impeding development. Collaborative planning between urban authorities and pastoral communities is key.

2. Legal Recognition and Land Rights

Grant legal recognition to traditional migratory routes and grazing areas, protecting pastoralists from unauthorized encroachments. Formalize land tenure systems that respect the inherent mobility of pastoral lifestyles.

3. Access to Essential Services

Provide access to healthcare, education, and veterinary care in urban settings through mobile service units or strategically located service centers along migration routes.

4. Participatory Governance

Key government bodies such as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare—must actively involve pastoralists in urban planning and policy-making to ensure their specific needs and perspectives are addressed, leading to more culturally sensitive solutions.

Implementing these interventions requires a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics of pastoral communities and a firm commitment to preserving their way of life while facilitating their adaptation to urban settings. Initiatives such as the Pastoralist Parliament in India exemplify efforts to amplify community voices, enabling pastoralists to share challenges, propose solutions, and advocate for their rights.

Recognising the rights of pastoral communities, ensuring secure grazing lands, and integrating their needs into urban planning are not impossible goals; they are necessary steps. Pastoralists have long contributed to ecosystems and local economies, and it is time they are recognised as rightful stakeholders in the urban landscape.

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Creating the ‘Temporal Civic Space’ for Public Interaction

Hrishikesh Sharad Ashtekar

*Professor, VIT-Padmabhushan Vasantdada
Patil College of Architecture, Pune*

The term ‘Temporal Civic Space’ has multiple connotations based on the context where it is used. Emerging from the historical civic spaces on Greek Agora or locally emerging ‘Chavdi’ or the ‘village square’ in the rural settlements of India, tentatively it means, public areas within cities where citizens from all walks of life can freely access, participate, and express themselves without hindrance (Civicus—the global civic society alliance, 2025). The term ‘Tactical Urbanism’ denotes temporary delineation of urban elements done in streets or public spaces in an urban area to create meaningful and interactive urban spaces for people. Can ‘Tactical Urbanism’ be used as a tool to create ‘Temporal Civic Space’ for public interaction within urban settlements?

The answer was observed in experimental and tactical urban spaces created in various urban villages, to share knowledge about the urban area with local people or stakeholders as part of the studio framework of an architecture institute. The term ‘Temporal Civic Space’, used here was within a broader framework of the 4th year B.Arch

studio and institute’s research project ‘Urbanizing Peripheries of Pune region’, initiated by VIT’s PVP College of Architecture, Pune, between 2017 – 2024 with an aim of understand the character of the the urban growth happening in the peripheral parts of the urban agglomeration of Pune city (Ashtekar, Deshpande, & Buragohain, 2020).

The study of seven areas in urbanizing peripheries of Pune was carried out within a broad framework of seven aspects—image, identity & culture; ecology & environment; amenities & facilities; mobility movement & infrastructure; livelihood, economy & lifestyle; built environment and land use; sense of safety and security. Apart from recording on site observations, the study also involved interactions with various stakeholders like residents, shopkeepers, daily commuters, informal workers, elderly and especially school children. The activity, further evolved into a detailed study, which focused on understanding the various areas in the urban periphery of Pune with respect to both; the commonalities in terms of their character and concerns faced about



the various aspects as above and also highlighting the unique aspects of their culture, local economies, lifestyle etc. This study acknowledged that, instead of taking planning decisions based on any generalizations, peripheral areas in the urban contexts need to be studied in detail leading to identification and proposals of emerging typologies of design for infrastructure, residential and need based amenities.

Doing a detailed study of any urban settlement and sharing the same study with people are two different processes. The idea of creating a 'Temporal Civic Space', evolved through an initial discussion within the faculty & students team. The focus was to put all the studies by the institute in front of people & various types of stakeholders in a format which could be easily understood by them, with an aim of sharing valuable information on the various concerns of their urban areas apart from getting their feedback on the work done by students which could lead to amenities projects in the subsequent architectural design studio. Two formats which were identified, a) Bilingual panels in English as well as Marathi, the local language giving information of the area, more in a graphic form, & b) An audio visual documentary in a local language.

The genius loci of selection – the urban villages which are older settlements located on the outskirts of Pune seem to form the centers in the urbanizing peripheries of the city around which new development has been growing along infrastructure corridors. Almost every urban village has a village square (Ashtekar & Deshpande, 2023) as a genius loci defined by the existence of elements like the main temple, village school, a bus stand, an office of gram panchayat or civic authority and key

locus frequented daily by most people in the area. Identifying an opportunity to get maximum and inclusive footfall of local stakeholders, the 'Village Square' was identified as sites, to create a 'Temporal Civic Space'

Elements of the 'Temporal Civic Space'

The key elements of democratic space were governed by the process of effectively sharing information about the area with the local community. The medium of sharing the information evolved through experience. In the urban village of Bhugaon, the space next to the temple, located along the state highway was claimed for a couple of days. With an active participation of the students from the village school nearby as well as members from the 'Gram panchayat' an open air exhibition was set up by students with paper tube stands having bilingual panels, a large model of the area and an enclave for the screening of audio visual documentary about the impending urbanization in the area.

The urban village of Dehu, the abode of 'Marathi' Sant – 'Tukaram', has a religious flavour of the 'Bhakti Sampradaya'. The village has a small square near the gram panchayat office next to which, similar open air exhibition was set up. With various types of stakeholders visiting the public exhibition, this 'Civic Space', although temporary, became the hub of discussion regarding the area studied with students and faculty members actively engaged with the people, their concerns & perspectives of development. Through the interaction, new information and unknown concerns of people emerged, for example the people of 'Bhugaon' urban area acknowledging the betterment of lifestyle due to development but also raising

concerns on the impact on natural as well as cultural environment due to urbanization.

The 'Chikhali' urban village has a similar village square located next to the 'Palki' procession route. With an active bus stand & village school nearby an open air exhibition & audio visual display space was created on a raised platform fronting the village temple, which lead to large footfall of the local community. Against the popular notion as an outsider, where urban areas with a religious identity are always thought about from the perspective of pilgrimage activities, the people of 'Dehu' & 'Chikhali' laid down opinions and concerns regarding infrastructure & amenities required for developing residential neighborhoods.

A spot identified near the temple on the edge of the urban village of 'Kharadi' having the village school & main bus stand had a tactical democratic space defined by multiple mediums. While the bilingual panels mounted on paper tube stands enclaved a pedestrian zone, an adjacent part of the street was used to stage a 'Street play' at frequent intervals, that depicted the key concerns of the area.

The 'Narhe' urban village square is congested by a very active area defined by various functions like a local bus stop, village school, panchayat office and a lot of eateries & retail shops. Apart from the open exhibition area claimed with the enthusiastic support of the local gram panchayat and various citizens group by the platform near the village temple, an area for street play was also defined. The key focus though of this 'Temporal Civic Space' was the play area through 'Tactical Urbanism' intervention along the roadside which was designed & executed overnight by students of architecture. This remained for a few

days an active urban space frequented by kids in the neighborhood as well as a 'Safe' waiting area for commuters next to the bus stand.

Key learning

Each of the identified spaces in the various urban villages signified as, 'Life continues as usual' nodes in the gross urban growth happening around the city of Pune. Taken note by media as well as civic authorities, The 'Temporal Civic Space' created through the public exhibition defined a 'Different Day' in the lives of both – the people from the local community as well as students of architecture. Each space offered a stage for active public interaction to discuss the various civic issues within the area. For students this activity marked a milestone in their academic journey, which can make them, "Socially Conscious Architects, who can shape the society". For the local communities, this kind of activity gave valuable information about their own areas to the local community. This also led to discussions between them about the common concerns faced while becoming a part of the extended city and gave impetus to further perseverance with the local authorities about them.

*(Previous page) 01, 02, 03 – © Author
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Religious Architecture, Tourism,
and Urban Design

Conservation And Urban Design At Nira Narsingpur, Pune

Kimaya





Project Details:

Site Area: Village Nira Narsingpur, Indapur taluka, Pune, Maharashtra
Year: 2024
Status: Built
Design Team: Anjali Kalamdani, Prachit Kalamdani, Tamanna Maloo, Manohar Patil, Shomit Sarkar
Structural Designer: Jeetendra Marathe
Conservation Engineers: Construction Diagnostic Centre
Description: Kimaya Architects Urban Designers
Conservationists: Valuers Interior Designers
Photographs: Kimaya Architects Urban Designers
Conservationists: Valuers Interior Designers

Nira Narsingpur is a village in Indapur taluka of Pune district, Maharashtra, India. The confluence of rivers Bhima and Nira is 3 km from the temple. The temple is the Kuldaiwat (family deity) for a number of Marathi families of different castes.

When a political head of the state of Maharashtra who is connected to a small but significant village in a corner of Pune district focuses on patronage to a 12th century religious site, deploys the entire government machinery and connects it with better road networks, rethinks the riverfronts of two major rivers of Krishna basin (Nira and Bhima), and makes it a model for rural development and tourism for the state urban design comes to bring new features restrained contemporary buildings that are connected in the material, craft, and sustainability, modern services of roads bridges water supply public toilets converge, it makes an impact on the surrounding landscape and tourism infrastructure.

Use of sympathetic materials such as basalt and brick give the landscape of new amenities such as a new Police Station, Medical Center, Public Toilets and State Transport Hub a contextuality and a sense of place that can be attributed to urban design. New roads along riverfronts, retaining walls to protect the roads, new ghats complimenting the old ones to underline the tirthas and

conservation of the old temple complex are other aspects of this small village of not more than 2500 people to give it a contemporary sense of urban design.

The project received a four-star Griha rating and a special award for passive solar architecture as Griha has no category where existing building elements are integrated into the scheme of things or a rating for conservation of old buildings.

Legend

This place gets its prominence because it is believed that Prahlad took a bath in this Bhima River and with his hand he made an idol of "Lord Narasimha (Lion Faced God)" with the sand and worshipped Him.

History

The Vinchurkar Dani family belonging to Nashik has held its sway over the politics and exconomics of the region in the Peshwa Era. Shivdev Vinchurkar was a prominent warrior in that period who established his power and the Wada of the family continues to be a prominent one besides the Dandavates and several others to this date.

The Role of Urban Design in the Changing Scenario

Nisha Dugar

Architect

Cities have always been at the heart of exchange, shaping economies, cultures, and innovations. But how do these spaces evolve with time? A city is a dynamic composition of buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces, reflecting the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of its people. As urban populations grow and historical spaces are integrated into contemporary settings, challenges emerge. How do we adapt and revitalize these spaces while retaining their essence?

One such case is the 600-year-old plaza, named 'Bhadra', located in the walled city of Ahmedabad, obtained UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination in 2017, encompasses historical and contemporary architecture. Sultan Ahmed Shah in 1411 built Bhadra fort that served as the center of the Royal government of Mughal era. It includes Bhadra fort, Bhadrakali temple, Azam Khan's palace, Akkub Saheb's mosque, and Teen Darwaza. The stretch from Bhadra to Teen Darwaza was designed as the main marketplace of the city. Further, Prema Bhai Hall,

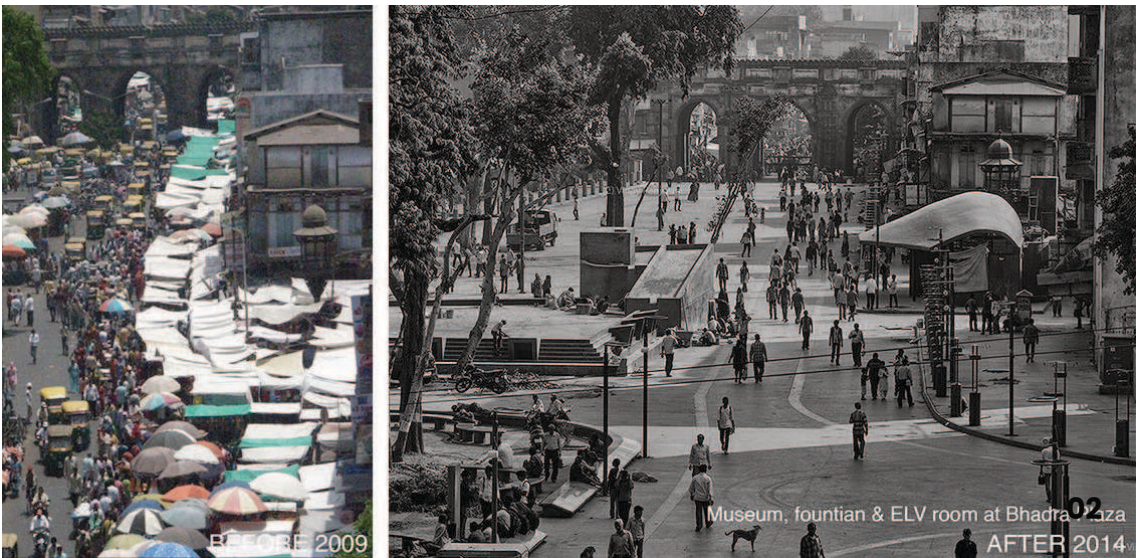
designed by Ar. BV Doshi became a part of this evolving fabric in 1975.

The Revitalization Effort

To address growing urban pressures, the revitalization of Bhadra Plaza began in 2011 under the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Scheme. The project was led by Vastu Shilpa Consultants, headed by the Pritzker Prize-winning architect B.V. Doshi, whose portfolio includes iconic projects such as Aranya Low-Cost Housing, Amdavad Ni Gufa, and the LIC Housing projects.

The primary challenge at Bhadra was how to transform a historically dense and commercially active area into a pedestrian-friendly urban space. Over time, the plaza became a crucial connection between Nehru Bridge and Ellis Bridge, leading to an increase in vehicular movement and informal vending activities. The proposed design sought to pedestrianize the area, restrict mixed traffic, develop commercial zones, and create a vibrant public space.

To achieve this, a pedestrian corridor was introduced from Teen Darwaza to Bhadra Fort, connecting the plaza with



As urban populations grow and historical spaces are integrated into contemporary settings, challenges emerge. How do we adapt and revitalize these spaces while retaining their essence?

the western part of the city via a bridge. The design also included historical restoration, shaded seating, and a central fountain to reference the site's past. Along with the granite flooring, four gates were installed to restrict the vehicular entrance, creating a compact city. Hawkers, a crucial part of the urban ecosystem, were provided dedicated vending spaces to ensure their integration into the new scheme. But do you think that the implementation occurred in the same manner as was envisaged by the designer? And if not, then what happened?

It became a mess!

That's the situation of Bhadra right now, with vendors, vehicular movements, and illegal drug dealings – all going at the same place. But what went wrong?

Implementation Challenges

Despite a well-intentioned design, the execution and management of the revitalization process faced difficulties. The envisioned pedestrian zone was compromised when vehicular access was reintroduced. Vendors, unaware of the official surveys conducted by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation

(AMC), had limited participation in the formal allocation process. As a result, additional street vendors moved into the area, and political pressures led to the allocation of space to nearly 700 vendors—far exceeding the original plan.

One aspect of the project that was never realized was the proposed arcade, intended to accommodate informal activities while considering the site's climate, historical context, and urban edges. Although arcades have been historically significant in Indian architecture, this element was often misinterpreted as a European import. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, it was never constructed.

Another layer of complexity arose when vendors registered under organizations like SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) and SLO (Self Labour Organization) transitioned from being direct users of the space to subleasing it, effectively converting public areas into controlled commercial zones. This shift altered the intended function of the plaza, limiting its accessibility for public engagement.

Reflections on the Design and Its Outcomes

The revitalization of Bhadra Plaza was a well-intentioned effort aimed at preserving cultural identity, promoting sustainable urban development, and ensuring economic growth by integrating vendors into the design. However, the challenges in its implementation highlight critical questions about urban management.

As with any large-scale urban intervention, adaptive strategies and contingency planning are crucial. In hindsight, greater flexibility in accommodating evolving patterns of use and stronger mechanisms for enforcement could have mitigated some of the issues. The project offers an important lesson on the role of governance, policy, and community participation in ensuring the long-term success of urban design initiatives.

While the spatial proportions of Bhadra Plaza remain intact, its experiential and sensory connection to history has been diluted. The presence of vending activities has overshadowed the plaza's historic monuments, shifting the focal point of the space. This raises an essential question: How can urban designers balance historic preservation with contemporary urban demands in a way that remains resilient to change?

The case of Bhadra Plaza serves as a reminder that successful urban transformation is not just about design—it is about long-term stewardship, inclusive governance, and the ability to adapt to the unforeseen complexities of city life.

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Acknowledgement

After the resounding success of the Goa NatCon in 2023, built upon the hard work and tremendous turnout of the inaugural IUDI NatCon at Kollam in 2019, we are pleased with the theme and work surrounding our 3rd National Conference, at Kolkata, hosted by the West Bengal, Orissa, and North–East Centres so enthusiastically.

Ideas take months to convert into reality, and a dedicated group of people have been working around the clock for over a year, to arrive now, where we hope we can engage at yet another level, at the 2025 IUDI NatCon at Kolkata. The NatCon 2025 theme, **"Cities in Transition: Inclusion through Urban Design,"** highlights the critical need for dialogue amidst rapid urban change.

This inaugural and thus commemorative Souvenir publication is an important step in collecting pertinent thoughts and projects that resound with the larger theme.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and express gratitude to delegates and attendees of this year’s NatCon. Your interest and effort in coming to this beautiful venue at history-laden Kolkata, and participating in our program, is what inspires the organising committee to do better each time. Our effort to shift these mega events to different cities, provides opportunities to see and engage with beautiful yet diverse aspects of urban India, and your presence here today, enriches each such city through collective thought.

Secondly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire organising committee, that have been working tirelessly across geographies and through personal and professional priorities to make this event happen – (in no particular order) Rajat Kant, Jasmine Saluja, Brinda Sastry, Vikas Kanojia, Dwaipayan Chakravarty, Partha Ranjan Das, Monica Khosla Bhargava, Ayan Sen, Anjan Mitra, Debatosh Sahu, Saptarshi Mitra, Debmalya Ghosh, Saheli Ghosh, Aditi Kashyap, our ever-enthusiastic immediate Past-President – Prof. Dr. Arunava Dasgupta, and others in the larger Kolkata region that I may have inadvertently missed mentioning here.

This group of enthusiastic organisers found unflinching support and much-necessary guidance from our IUDI National Council Members that include so may seasoned stalwarts like Prof. K.T. Ravindran, Prof. Ujan Ghosh, Sanjay Kanvinde, Anuraag Chowfla, Dr. Manoj Kini, Ranjit Mitra, Dr. Anup Naik, Abhimanyu Dalal, Ramesh Dengle, Nidhi Dandona, Prof. Manu Mahajan, Nikhil Shah, and Nagabandi Shravan Kumar.

I extend a deep gratitude to all the wonderful authors and project contributors who responded in such a short time to make this publication content-worthy. I thank Prof. A. Srivatsan, Editor, Founding Member, IUDI, for expressing his profound thoughts and setting the tone for future Souvenirs to shape up, and Prof. K.T. Ravindran have penned a heartfelt tribute to Prof. Ranjit Sabhiki.

Extending that, I thank the Editorial Team that includes Rajat Kant, Jasmine Saluja, Prof. Anand Wadwekar, Champaka Rajagopal, Prof. Manu Mahajan, apart from myself – reviewing the articles and projects, and helping put reason to the selection in such a short period. A special thanks to Dwaipayan Chakravarty for initiating the actualisation of this Souvenir.

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This Souvenir would have been a heavy burden for IUDI had it not been for the quick support of our sponsors who contributed to this publication specifically, and our principal sponsor – Autodesk. I thank you sincerely.

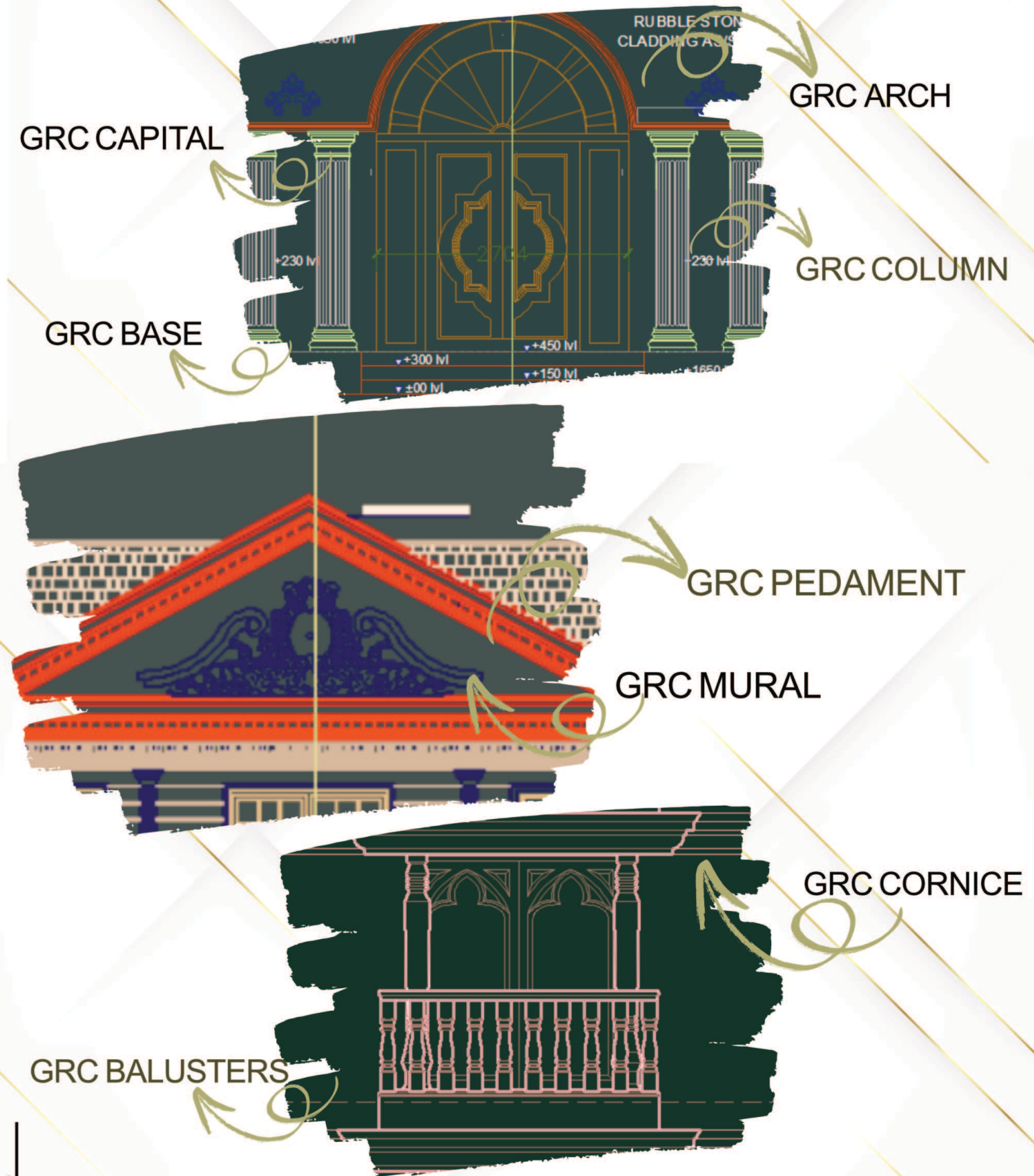
Lastly, but definitely not the least, I thank IHCL and Taj properties, and the event management team at Navkrit Brand Solutions Pvt Ltd. for sorting out the many nitty-gritties of this event.

On behalf of Institute of Urban Designers India, I thank you all and look forward to your extended participation in the next IUDI NatCon!

Pallavi Kulkarni
President, IUDI



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