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THE IDEAL CITY

Author: Charles Correa

Editor's Note:

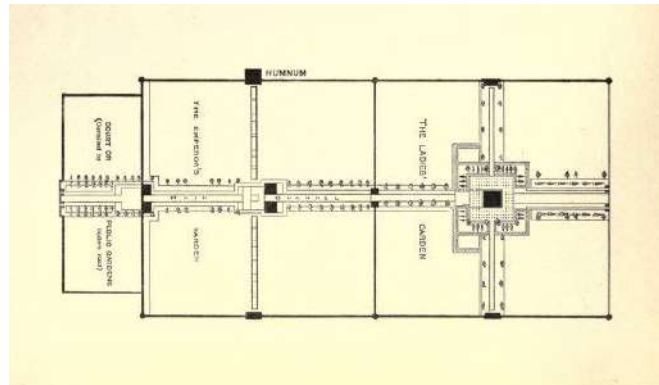
The following is an excerpt from Charles Correa's essay 'The Ideal City,' published in his collection of essays, 'A Place in the Shade' (pp. 130–133). As we look ahead to our upcoming Z-axis conference, 'The Ideal City,' we return to Correa's reflections as a starting point for thinking about the cities we imagine, inhabit, and aspire to build.

Cities, since the beginning of time, have embodied the dreams and aspirations of a society. They represent a kind of platonic ideal of what life could be. Thus, we have Srirangam, an island on the Godavari River in Tamil Nadu, seven concentric rings with a sacred centre — a model of the cosmos, no less, based on the ancient *vastu purusha mandala* of the Vedic seers. And we have Jerusalem, the mythic City of God. And the *charbagh*, coming out of ancient Persia, embodying the sacred imagery of the Islamic Garden of Paradise.

It is not just the ancient cities: even the towns that the Spanish built all over South America in the 16th and 17th centuries were based on an ideal city, promulgated by the 'Laws of the Andes,' which stipulated very clearly how cities should be built. As Joseph Rykwert has pointed out, these laws proposed an ideal platonic model, a kind of mandala with a grid of streets running precisely north-south and east-west. The centre must always be empty — a large public open space, around which will be sited the important public buildings of the community, e.g., the cathedral and the



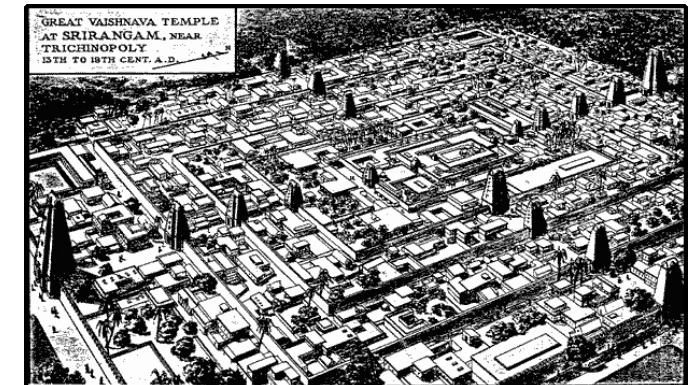
Jerusalem: the City of God
Madaba Map, 6th Century AD mosaic Church of Saint George, Jordan
Photograph by Garo Nalbandian (Retrieved from library.biblicalarchæology)



Charbagh: Garden of Paradise
C.M. Villiers Stuart, *Gardens Of The Great Mughals*, London 1913

mayor's palace. So it really is a version of the sacred mandala — an empty centre surrounding a grid of streets oriented strictly N-S and E-W. This platonic diagram the Spanish took to North America as well — and it has determined the form of the vast majority of U.S. cities, from New York to San Francisco.

Sadly, today we have lost all this. Grappling with our cities today, we have become overwhelmed by the sheer dimensions of the problems in the developing world — by the growth of vehicular traffic, the shortage of municipal services, the ever-increasing numbers of squatters and so forth. Yet, this need not be so. Man does not live by bread alone. And to the architect, even the humblest material, like mud, need not be a handicap to creating great architecture — as the grand mosques of Mali and the houses of Hasan Fathy so clearly demonstrate. So why cannot urban planners do the same?



Srirangam: Model of the Cosmos
Illustration from Percy Brown, 'Indian Architecture, Buddhist and Hindu', Taraporevala, Bombay, 1941, pl. LXXV

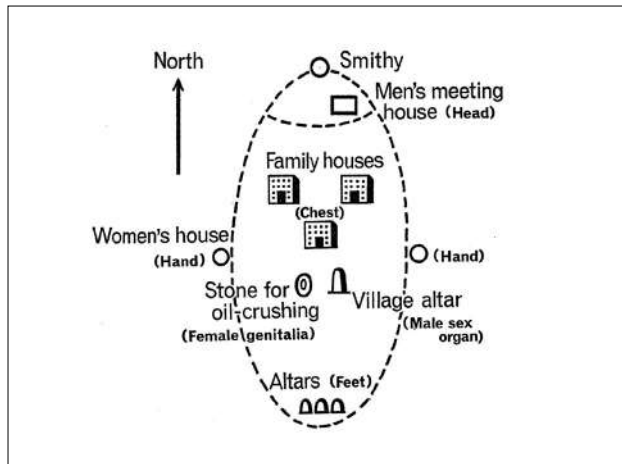
FEATURE ESSAY: THE IDEAL CITY by Charles Correa

The mythic imagery that underlies our habitat still plays a crucial part in our perceptions. Let's look at two examples, one from Africa and one from the U.S. The first are the towns that the Dogon people of Zaire, in West Africa, build for themselves. They are very clear diagrams, structured like a human torso (with the headman's house at the top and the other sections as arms and legs, including stomach, genitalia, etc.). But when you see the actual town, it's utter chaos! Yet most Dogons, asked to describe their town, will perceive — and point out to you — only the idealised form, the mythic image, which they see very vividly.

And precisely the same thing happens at the other end of the world — in New York! When you visit that city, do you really see it as it actually is — a decaying and monotonous grid of traffic intersections, with buildings like pigeonholes — much like Cleveland, Detroit or any other prosaic North American city? No. Instead, because we realise we are in New York, we see that mythic entity: Manhattan! Fifth Avenue... Central Park... 42nd St... their very names are magic! We do not hear them for what they really are: mere numbers on a map, planners' shorthand — which have been transformed into cultural myth.

So also with Kolkata. To the visitor, it is a morass of chaos and decay, but to Bengalis, it is the stuff of which dreams are made.

For the city that we each experience is, of course, much more than just a physical plant — it is also a set of powerful mythic images and values that give sustenance and enrichment to our lives. This, in the final analysis, is what cities are about. What culture is about. And what, hopefully, our towns and cities could once again become.



Dogon Villages: the mythic image...
Griaule, Marcel, 1898-1956



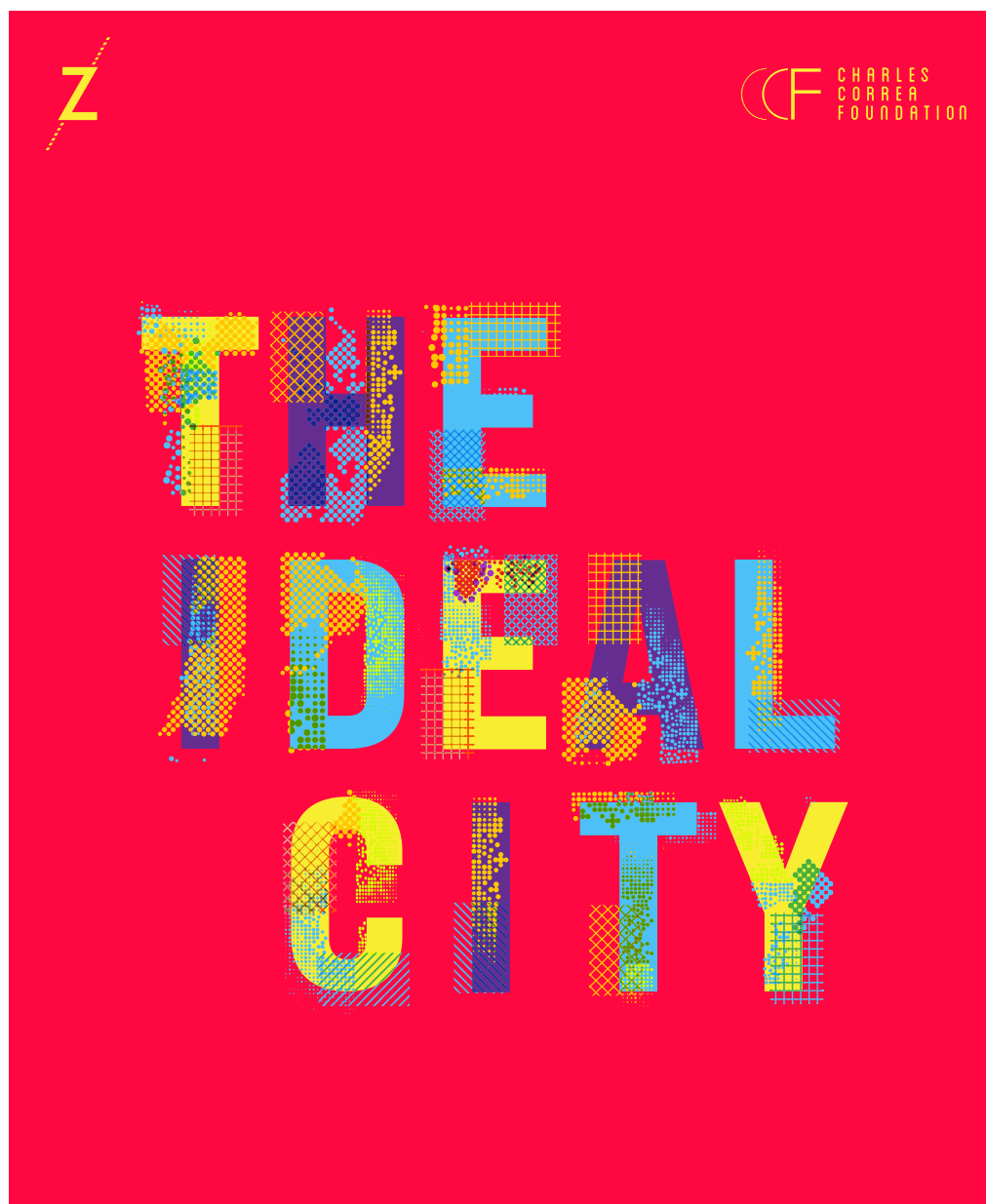
...and the reality
Photograph by Zadnoz (retrieved from phombo.com)



Manhattan: the mythic image
Retrieved from rawpixel.com



...and the reality



SAVE THE DATE | Z-AXIS THE IDEAL CITY

MARCH 19 - 21, 2027

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS (NCPA), MUMBAI

Cities have always been expressions of human aspiration. From ancient walled cities and imperial capitals to garden cities, the City Beautiful, smart cities, and eco-cities, every era has imagined its own version of the ideal city — a place where social, economic, and cultural life can flourish in balance with its environment. Yet cities are also places of contradiction. They are shaped as much by conflict, inequality, informality, and adaptation as by design and planning.

The question of what constitutes an “ideal city” is especially urgent in India, where urbanization is unfolding at an unprecedented scale. Is it a city that is sustainable and climate-responsive? One that is inclusive and affordable? A city of efficient infrastructure and mobility? Or one that preserves its public life, cultural memory, and capacity for diversity?

The Charles Correa Foundation is organizing a three-day conference that brings together architects, planners, policymakers, historians, scholars, artists, and citizens to explore the ideal city as a product of imagination, investment, planning, and lived experience. Through conversations around themes such as the Sustainable City, the Governed City, the Inclusive City, the Public City, the Resilient City and beyond, participants will examine both global ideas and local realities.

The conference proposes that the ideal city is best understood as an ongoing project, like Habermas’ unfinished project of modernity, a collective act of imagination that must continually respond to changing environmental, social, and political conditions. By bringing together diverse voices and disciplines, the conference aims to open a broader conversation about the futures we desire for Indian cities, and the values and principles that should guide their transformation.

For further updates, visit [here](#).



Image credits: Dibakar Roy on Unsplash

NAGARI 2026

Indian cities stand at a critical threshold. Shaped by decades of uneven and haphazard planning, many urban centres are already grappling with strained infrastructure, housing shortages, and growing pressure on natural resources. Layered on to this is the climate crisis, amplifying and compounding these stresses, with its impacts most acutely felt in urban life.

Nagari 2026 invites filmmakers to document not only the crisis, but to explore what resilience actually looks like within our cities: the initiatives working today, the solutions still unfolding, and the deeper question:

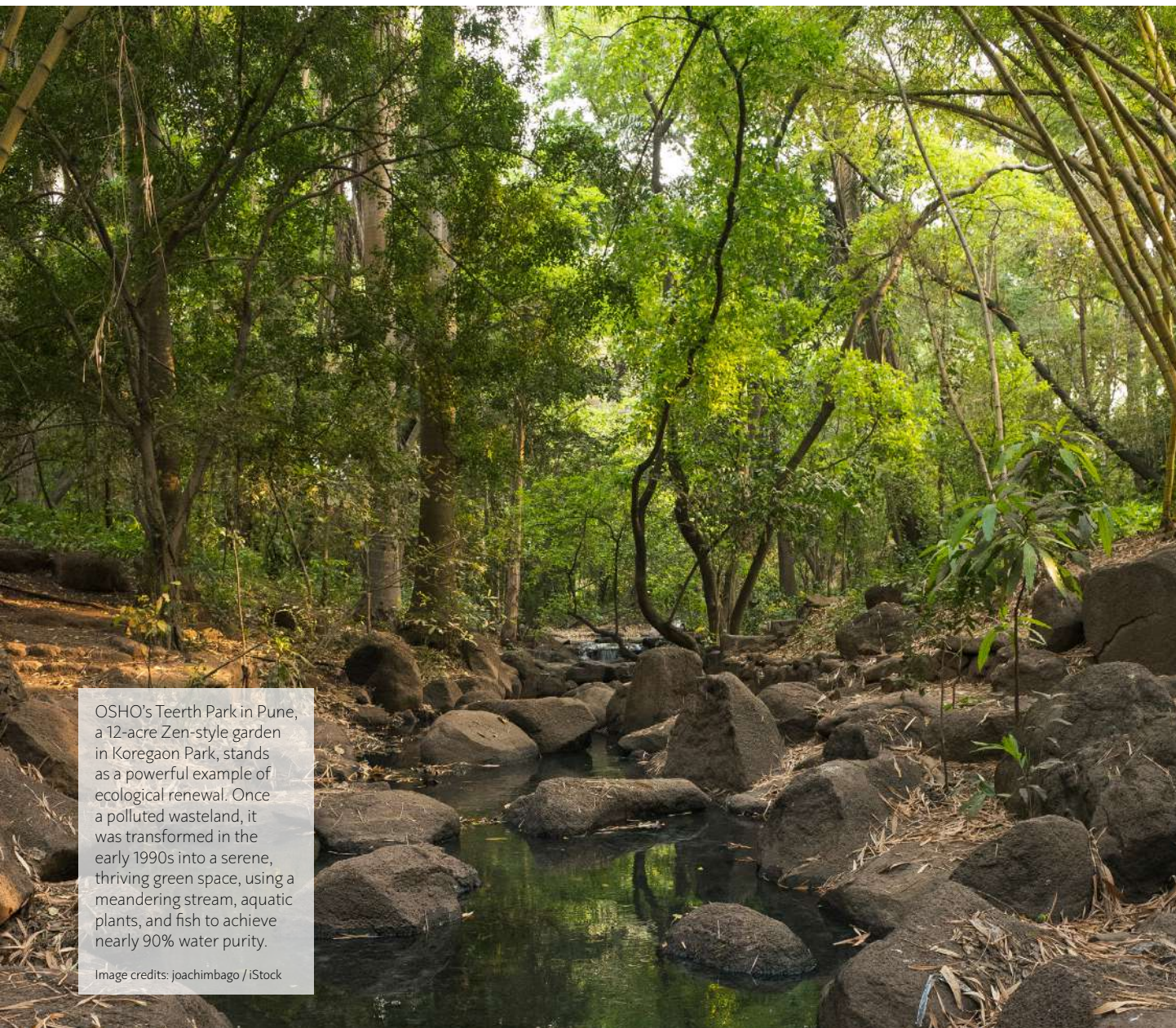
What does it mean for our urban centres to respond to change, rather than resist it?

The past editions of Nagari have addressed the themes of [Public Realm in Urban India](#), [Mobility in Urban India](#), [Reclaiming the Urban Commons](#), [Water in Urban India](#), [People and Livelihoods](#), and [Housing Adequacy](#) in rapidly growing towns and cities across India. This edition looks at **'Sustainable Futures for a Changing Climate'**.

Nagari is unique as it has been conceptualised as a guided exercise, with a panel of mentors on board to help participants on their journey to creating a film.

Visit the following link to read more about the subject, films, competition, mentors and jury.

To learn more about Nagari [click here](#).



OSHO's Teerth Park in Pune, a 12-acre Zen-style garden in Koregaon Park, stands as a powerful example of ecological renewal. Once a polluted wasteland, it was transformed in the early 1990s into a serene, thriving green space, using a meandering stream, aquatic plants, and fish to achieve nearly 90% water purity.

Image credits: joachimbago / iStock

THEME

Whatever the entry point, we ask filmmakers to carry three questions into their work:

What is the identifiable climate concern?
Who does this solution help and who does it leave out?
Have these solutions sustained over time?

Nagari 2026 seeks to document **acts of resilience across four interlinked themes:**

ISING TEMPERATURES

What specific policies, programs, or initiatives are people using to make cooling a shared and accessible right in cities rather than a privilege?

WATER

How might cities design solutions that treat water not as a threat or shortage, but as a shared system to be understood, governed, and sustained?

ECOLOGY

What approaches are cities adopting to enable growth without erasing the ecological systems that sustain them? And how are these being implemented on the ground?

AIR QUALITY

What would it take to reimagine mobility and urban life in ways that make clean air a collective, lived reality rather than an individual escape?

PROJECT UPDATES: NAGARI SHORT FILM COMPETITION 2026

RISING TEMPERATURES



As cities heat up, those who work, travel, and live in the city's most exposed environments; streets, construction sites, markets and dense housing often bear the greatest burden. Follow these lived realities and examine how design, access, and social inequity shape who finds relief and who must endure.

WATER



In cities across India, water can be both abundant and absent, flooding streets during the monsoon, yet disappearing from taps in the summer. Tell the story of a landscape or community negotiating this paradox, and look closely at how older ecologies, infrastructures, or everyday practices might offer ways of co-existing with water.

ECOLOGY



Urban expansion continues, often at the cost of wetlands, coastlines, river edges, tree cover, and older built fabric. Through the lens of a site in transformation—a construction zone, redevelopment project, or endangered landscape, explore what is lost, what is gained, and what is at stake.

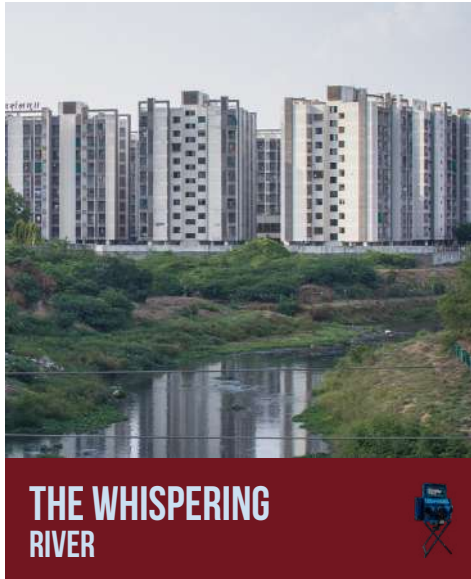
AIR QUALITY



Air pollution in Indian cities is shaped by mobility systems, vehicular emissions, construction, industry, and patterns of urban growth. Yet its impacts are not evenly felt. Trace how air moves through the city across roads, homes, and bodies, and reveal how infrastructure, policy, and everyday choices contribute to the air we breathe.

PROJECT UPDATES: NAGARI SHORT FILM COMPETITION 2026

This year we received 49 entries from across India, of which 12 film abstracts were shortlisted to be made into compelling short films. Following are the short films that make up this year's anthology:



THE WHISPERING RIVER

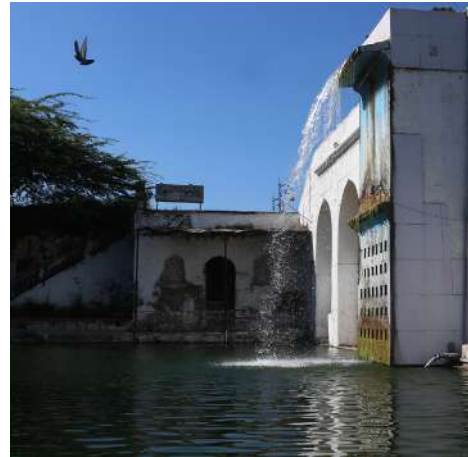


Commencing with archival footage from the 2005 floods, 'The Whispering River' traces Vadodara's changing relationship with the Vishwamitri River in Gujarat. Through the memories of residents and local experts, the film examines how shrinking floodplains, urban expansion, and ecological degradation have made flooding an increasingly familiar part of the fragile city life.

A Film by:
Pranshu Shah, Amrut Bhatt & Anannya Rawat

Mentored by:
Avijit Mukul Kishore

Location
Vadodara



TRACING WATER



'Tracing Water' follows the Aurangabad's centuries-old Nahar aqueduct system, which still carries water through hidden tunnels, channels, and reservoirs. Amid ongoing water scarcity, the film explores how this fragmented infrastructure connects neighbourhoods, memory, and everyday life, revealing the city's evolving relationship with water and historic systems.

A Film by:
Rushikesh Daud, Aditya Tanpure, Vicky Thorat & Anil Kumar

Mentored by:
Sourav Sarangi

Location
Aurangabad



Image credits: Wild Otters

WHAT'S YOURS, WHAT'S MINE



On Goa's Chorao Island, 'What's Yours, What's Mine' explores the relationship between fishing communities and otters that depend on the same river for survival. Through the perspectives of a young fisherman and an otter researcher, the film examines how conservation and livelihoods can coexist in the face of growing urban development.

A Film by
Aidhi Malik, Anu Jakhar & Vedika Bhardwaj

Mentored by
Avijit Mukul Kishore

Location
Chorao Island



TAPOVAN



'Tapovan', set in Nashik, follows Gaurav, a resident involved in protests against proposed tree felling for the Kumbh Mela development. The film explores his growing understanding of the Tapovan ecosystem, its trees, river, and wildlife, and reflects on the importance of protecting riparian zones within urban development planning.

A Film by
Kaustubh Sabnis & Anand Borse

Mentored by
Deepa Dhanraj

Location
Nashik

PROJECT UPDATES: NAGARI SHORT FILM COMPETITION 2026



Image credits: Prabhdeep Singh

VERY GOOD SOCIETY WITH 40% GREEN AREA



In the rapidly urbanising neighbourhood of Neharpar in Faridabad, Haryana, 'Very Good Society with 40% Green Area', follows Prabhdeep and his neighbour, Mr Verma, as they transform a 600 sq.ft dumping ground into an urban forest. The film explores how ecological knowledge, memory, and collaboration shape citizen-led greening efforts in rapidly urbanising cities.

A Film by
Shivam Rastogi & Poshali Gøel

Mentored by
Deepa Dhanraj

Location
Faridabad



BAOLI KI BAHALI



In Delhi-NCR's Mehrauli, 'Baoli ki Bahali' follows community efforts to revive a 12th-century stepwell within the dargah of Bakhtiyar Kaki. Led by Fauzan Ahmad Siddiqui and conservation experts, the initiative explores how restoring traditional water systems can support local water needs amid growing scarcity.

A Film by
Sadia Akhtar & Dr. Mohammad Ahmad Usmani

Mentored by
Jabeen Merchant

Location
Delhi NCR



HOME



The shifting coastline of Chavakkad in Thrissur, Kerala is at the heart of 'Home', which documents communities facing rising sea levels and severe coastal erosion. Through the lives of displaced residents, the film records homes and settlements being lost to the sea, while also engaging with expert insights on the causes and possible responses to the crisis.

A Film by:
Abhinav C, Steffi E & Aravind Jayan

Mentored by:
Bina Paul

Location
Thrissur



DHAU KI JAD



Set in Mangar Bani in the Aravalli range, 'Dhau ki Jad' follows conservationist Sunil Harsana as he works to protect a centuries-old sacred grove from expanding urban development. Through local memories and community stewardship, the film explores how preserving shared landscapes can strengthen climate resilience for future generations.

A Film by
Raghav Kakkar, Tahani Khan & Riddhijit Chattopadhyay

Mentored by
Sourav Sarangi

Location
Mangar Bani, Aravalli Range

PROJECT UPDATES: NAGARI SHORT FILM COMPETITION 2026



WATER REGENERATION



'Water Regeneration' examines how treated wastewater and rainwater harvesting helped restore a neglected lake, recharge groundwater, and improve water security for a drought-prone community in Bengaluru. Through local voices, the film explores how collaboration and circular water practices can build resilience in the face of climate change.

A Film by:
Vaishali Bhatia & Prabhakaran Ramu

Mentored by:
Bina Paul

Location
Bengaluru



LIQUID TREES



Set in Kochi, 'Liquid Trees' explores how shrinking green spaces are driving new approaches to cleaner air. The film examines the science behind algae-based bioreactors that absorb carbon dioxide while asking how technological innovation and ecological restoration can work together in rapidly growing cities.

A Film by
Nawas Ali, Naithik Mathew Eapen & Murshid M

Mentored by
Deepa Dhanraj

Location
Kochi



AAGE PEECHE [BACK & FORTH]



Hyderabad's Old City provides the backdrop for 'Aage Peeche (Back and Forth)', a film that follows social worker S.Q. Masood and local residents as they navigate recurring monsoon floods. Through lived experience, the film explores how communities build practical knowledge of water, infrastructure, and risk while adapting over years to an increasingly uncertain urban future.

A Film by:
Mechana Myadam & Manish Chandra Vullengala

Mentored by:
Pankaj Rishi Kumar

Location
Hyderabad



તડકે ઉભા "TADKE UBHA" STANDING IN THE SUN



Set in Ahmedabad's Akharnagar Naka, 'તડકે ઉભા (Tadke Ubha) – Standing in the Sun', follows the Bhil family of Adivasi migrants as they wait for daily work under extreme heat. The film traces their journey from climate-affected villages in Dahod to Ahmedabad's labour 'nakas', highlighting exposure, displacement, and unequal access to urban cooling infrastructure.

A Film by:
Yug Dipal Mehta, Kinjal Pillai, Shelly Kulshreshtha & Sandeep Paul

Mentored by:
Jabeen Merchant

Location
Ahmedabad



Image credits: Global Water Alliance

THE SECRET LIFELINE

This blog talks about how East Kolkata Wetlands naturally treat sewage, reduce urban flooding, support agriculture and pisciculture, and protect Kolkata against climate change.

Read the Blog [here](#).



Image credits: Illustration by Gabriela Marie Gomes

HEAT & GOA'S CHANGING SEA

The gentle climate that once blanketed the Garden City appears to be slowly shredding under relentless concrete expansion. This blog traces how Bangalore's weather has changed over time and how the urban fabric has responded to it.

Read the Blog [here](#).



Image credits: Sam Sam/Pexels

SLOW DISAPPEARANCE OF BANGALORE'S WEATHER

This blog explores how traditional Goan houses and building methods embody a deep climatic intelligence that often goes ignored through contemporary shifts in construction, creating spaces that might not be suitable for elderly residents who spend much of their time within the home.

Read the Blog [here](#).



Image credits: Amritansh Srivastava / Pexels

THINKING GLOBAL, ACTING LOCAL

This blog discusses the simultaneously global and local facets of the climate crisis, how India's urban centres are uniquely placed to address it, and the incredible opportunity that documentary filmmakers have to bring out untold climate stories.

Read the Blog [here](#).



Image credits: Manish Patel / Unsplash

READING A CHANGING SEA

This blog examines how shifting ocean conditions are making it increasingly difficult for fishing communities to read the sea and track fish populations, placing growing pressure on their livelihoods.

Read the Blog [here](#).

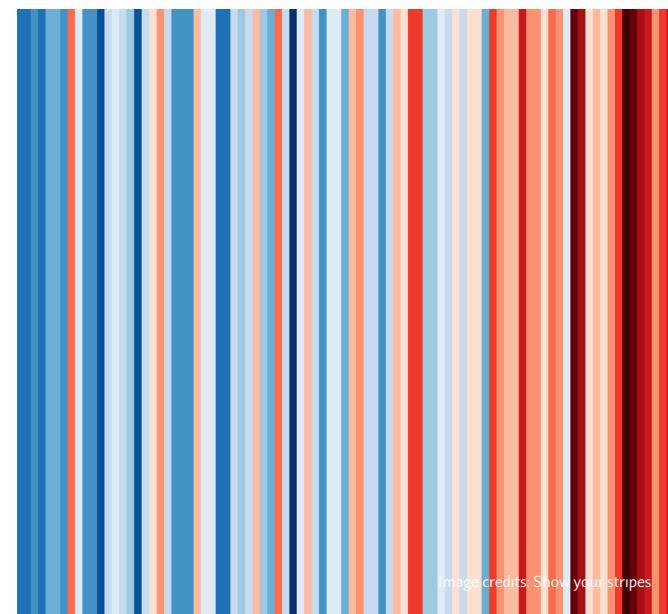


Image credits: Show your stripes

LOOKING AT CLIMATE CHANGE BEYOND STATISTICS

This blog highlights why documenting climate change is essential, not just to prove it exists, but to make its impacts visible.

Read the Blog [here](#).

PROJECT UPDATES: NAGARI EDUCATION PROGRAM



"Institute and Placemaking" studio from Anant National University (left & center) decoded screened films using a deconstruction matrix while studio "Resilience Thrift" interacted with filmmakers about capturing urbanity through cinema (right)



Discussions at AmdavadNXT (left), U-CAN city mixers with Artha Global in Mumbai (center), and Shelter Associates in Pune (right) on themes such as mobility, biodiversity, community resilience, efficient governance and housing policies

The Nagari Education Program was initiated to develop film as an exploratory device to educate students and local municipal bodies about pressing urban issues. The program is structured around two complementary approaches. Module A integrates films into academic curricula, enabling students through course integration to explore urban challenges using Nagari films. Module B supports practitioners by incorporating films into training and capacity-building modules for local governments and municipal institutions.

Over the last six months, CCF has collaborated with Anant National University and CEPT University in July, integrating Nagari films into existing studios as part of Module A. Through Module B, CCF facilitated discussion with NGOs and government organisations across various cities in India. Some of these were part of larger events, including AmdavadNXT and Placemaking India Weekend, while others were held in collaboration with U-CAN's city mixers in Bangalore, Pune and Mumbai.

Institutions & organisations interested in the Nagari Education Program can reach out to us at : nagari@charlescorreafoundation.org



The Charles Correa Gold Medal is an award initiated in 1998 by the Indian architect & urbanist Charles Correa. The medal recognises quality & talent among young architecture students for their undergraduate thesis project in a first professional degree course. The format of the Gold Medal seeks to challenge students and schools of architecture to focus on pressing issues, and to reinforce what Correa often stated – “at its most vital, architecture is an agent of change.”

Since 2025, the Charles Correa Gold Medal has focused on thesis projects that address ‘Equitability through Design’. By raising the question, ‘who do we design for?’ the Gold Medal seeks to reflect on the responsibilities that we as architects have in creating spaces that are equitable and inclusive. This encompasses equal access to space, shelter, infrastructure and the commons.

The thesis projects will be evaluated in terms of how they address current spatial injustices through design, and how they approach equity and inclusion at different scales.

Visit the following link to read more about the competition, [Charles Correa Gold Medal 2026](#)

All theses are archived and available for reference on the CCF website under the [Charles Correa Gold Medal Store House](#).



Nagari screening organised by Rishika Waghmare at School of Environment and Architecture (SEA), Mumbai.



Nagari screening organised by Archita Deshmukh from School of architecture and Planning, MIT-ADT, Pune



Conducting exercises with students based on the Nagari film initiative at Heritage Yatra 26, Pune

2025 - 2026 STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The 2025-2026 Student Ambassador Programme has concluded bringing together ambassadors from 37 architecture institutes across 25 cities in India. Over eight sessions, ambassadors were introduced to the Charles Correa Foundation's initiatives, including the Correa Archives, C20, Nagari Short Films, the Charles Correa Gold Medal, and Storehouse, and our publications.

Building on these sessions, the ambassadors organised screenings, discussions, heritage walks, sketching sessions, talks, and other student-led activities within their institutions, encouraging their student body peers to engage in conversations around architecture, cities, and Charles Correa's ideas.

The Student Ambassador Programme is now live on the CCF website, bringing together past editions and showcasing the work undertaken by ambassadors during the 2025–26 programme. [Visit here.](#)

THE CHARLES CORREA FOUNDATION

STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM 2026-27

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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

2026 - 2027

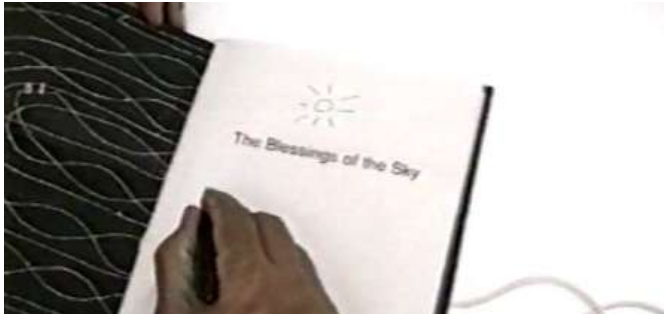
Ask your HOD to nominate:
education@charlescorreafoundation.org

The 2026 - 2027 Student Ambassador Program is set to begin shortly. We invite colleges to nominate one student from their institution to join this year's cohort.

This is an opportunity for all third year undergraduate students from architectural universities across India to host and facilitate design exercises & collaborative activities based on CCF's initiatives such as the Correa Archives, C20 initiative, Z-axis, Nagari Short Films, Charles Correa Gold Medal & Storehouse and more.

Eligibility:

1. A student from the 3rd year of a Bachelor's program in Architecture, Urban Design, or Urban Planning.
2. Highly interested, motivated, individuals who are interested in building a network, and contributing to our repository of resources.



Introduction
Frames from the Film

BLESSINGS OF THE SKY

Directed by - Charles Correa
Film duration - 26:12 mins

You can watch the film [here](#)

Throughout human history, the sky has earned a profound and sacred meaning. Man intuitively perceived it as the abode of the supernatural. Hence, to climb a path to the top of the hill, where the Gods dwell, is a paradigm of such mythic power that it has been central to the beliefs of almost every society, since the beginning of time. Such spaces have an infinite number of variations: one step out of a room...into a verandah...and then on to a terrace...from which one proceeds to an open courtyard, perhaps shaded by a tree...or by a large pergola overhead. True Enlightenment cannot be achieved within the closed box of a room – one must be outdoors, under the open sky. - Charles Correa, February, 1995

Part of the "Charles Correa" exhibition catalogue held in Borusan Art Gallery, Istanbul, May 22 - June 24, 2000



IUCAA Pune
Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"

Blessings of the Sky is a 26-minute film of Correa's projects which embodies three of the following conceptual relationships with the sky:

- I Courtyards and Terraces**
- II Ritualistic Pathway**
- III Model of the Cosmos**

Each section starts with a diagram in its primitive form, depicting the specific architectural metaphor which connects the living to the sky. Through the Belapur housing project, Correa establishes the importance of open courtyards by framing visual snippets of mixed activities and interactions that enhance quality of life. This section also dwells on his own house in Bangalore, offering a similar experience of intimacy and quality living organised around a central courtyard, which is generally considered to be a ritualistic

focal point signified by the presence of a living entity (a tulsi plant) in Indian homes. Extending the same metaphor to contemporary high-rises, Correa shifted the lens to one of his iconic buildings, "Kanchanjunga Apartments", which offered double-height terraces (analogous to verandahs) at corners of the plan. These balconies were an essential reincarnation of traditional outdoor spaces integrated within a modern vertical habitat, effectively pulling the sky into the built form.



Open space - Belapur Housing (left) . "Urban Window" - Kanchanjunga (right)
Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"



Courtyard (left) Through an opening (right) - Koramangala's house
Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"

CORREA THROUGH FILMS: BLESSINGS OF THE SKY

Correa's second metaphor focused on a ritualistic pathway where a user discovers embedded thematic layers within a curated progression of space, either referring to a building or to the context in which it's set. The film captures fragments of the sky, transitioning from closed to open spaces, and showcasing subtle changes spatial quality. The camera follows the experiential flow through open-to-sky courtyards, which is an essential reconfiguration of the architectural syntax of temples from the south and palaces from the north. By showing the National Crafts Museum and the British Council in Delhi in addition to the JNIDB in Hyderabad, Correa zooms in on how the visitor progresses layer by layer into the building while discovering spaces through a narrative form. Few pathways are linear while others are complex and woven across courtyards, often composed as a pattern to pause or meander around. The National Crafts Museum in Delhi resurrects an intimate experience of an Indian street, whereas the British Council's circulation consists of a layered cultural progression of India as an architectural palimpsest, unfolding itself as a journey.

The film's final metaphor essentially comes alive through Correa's superimposition of the "Model of the Cosmos" through two of his built projects, Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur & the IUCAA institute in Pune. Beginning with the city of Jaipur, this section opens with the visuals of

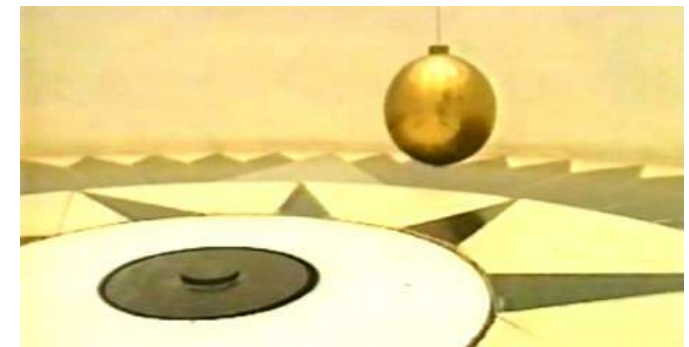


Bindu (left) Char Bagh (center) Age of Reason (right)
British Council, Delhi | Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"

Kala Kendra and its central void, which is surrounded by nine compartments/planets. This complex as a whole is a built abstraction of the mandala diagram into a spatial sequence, carefully organised around the centre "Surya". This experience draws its mythical quality from the ancient Indian structure of the cosmos, "The Navagraha". While the former version is an archaic imprint of astronomy, Correa also attempted a modern interpretation of this very metaphor through his project IUCAA in Pune, culminating the film's climax. Following the contemporary model of the cosmos, Correa attempts to carve scientific diagrams onto the built form and the landscape. The camera highlights various objects and visual structures, including Foucault's pendulum,, Speranski's Triangle, and the Samrat Yantra. Correa described these creations as a "challenging quest", since most of the modern scientific ideograms had to be abstracted from scratch to establish a cosmic narrative.



Jain Cosmograph - Oculus allowing "light" inside
Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur | Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"



Foucault's Pendulum
IUCAA Pune | Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"



Corridor - JNIDB Hyderabad (left) & "Village street" - National Crafts Museum Delhi (right)

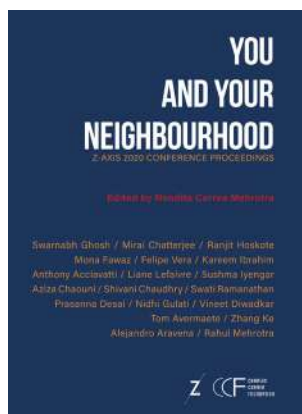


Central Kund (left) & Traditional symbol of Rahu, depicting the eclipse (right)
Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur | Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"



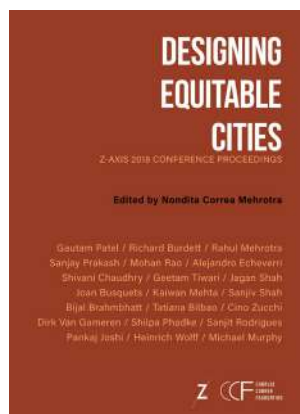
The Expanding Universe - Landscape(left) & Samrat Yantra (right)
IUCAA Pune | Frames from the Film "Blessings of the Sky"

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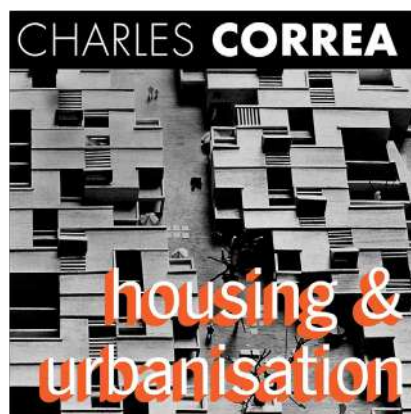
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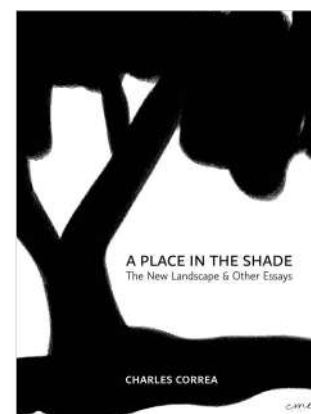
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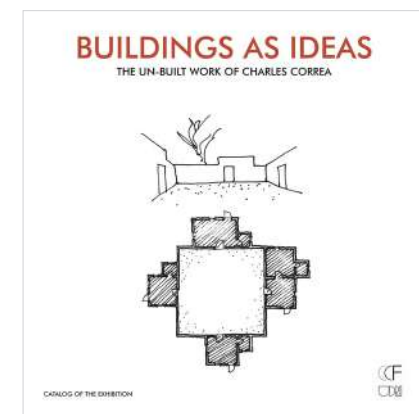
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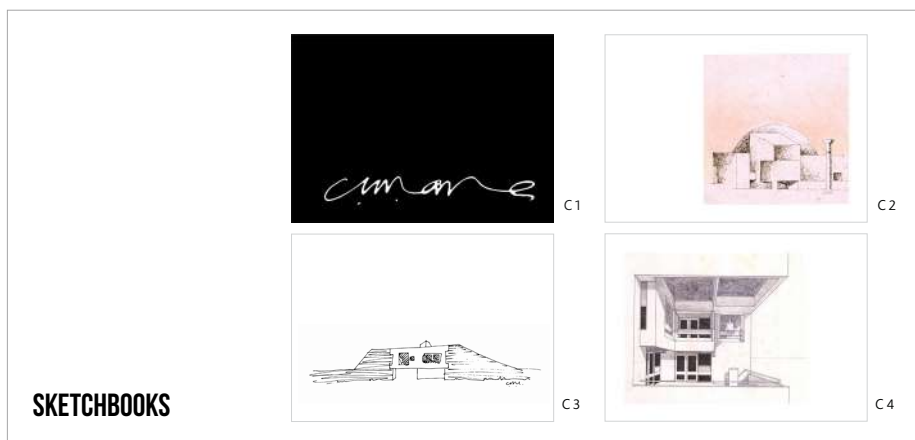
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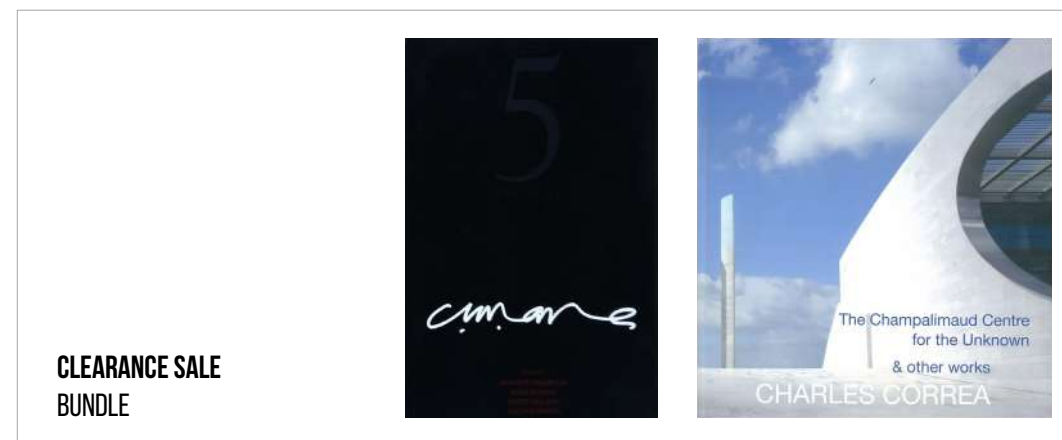
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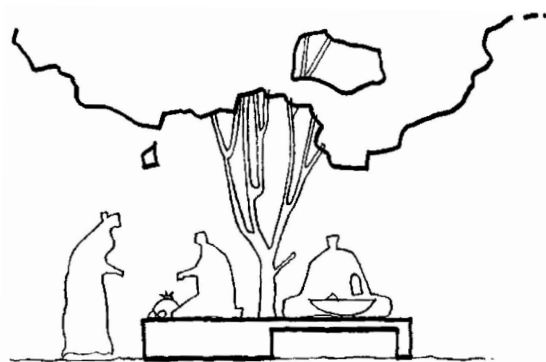


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FROM THE ARCHIVES: HAWKERS & PAVEMENTS



Street Platform with Hawkers
Archival drawing from the Charles Correa Archives.

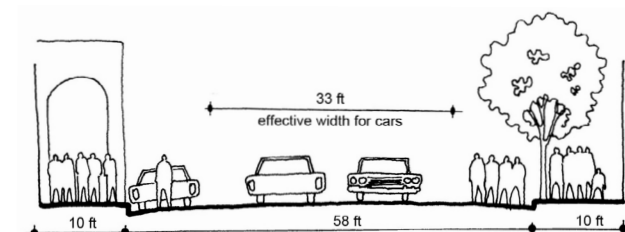
Hawkers & Pavements, Bombay 1968 (Unbuilt)

Cities have long been viewed as centres of opportunity and engines of economic growth. People migrate to these centres, especially from rural settings, for employment and the hope of leading a better life. During the 1960s and 70s, Charles Correa predicted an informal yet steady growth pattern across cities in third-world countries. As per demographics, the growth of urban population was projected to be around 100 million in 1971 and was expected to grow at twice the rate of rural population¹. Taking Bombay as a case study, Correa explicitly pointed out the inability of Indian cities' structure to accommodate such rapid growth, and this became evident in the form of squatter settlements, which grew from 9% to 50% between 1965 and 1980². Such informal settlements and pavement dwellers were often densely populated near the economic zones (southernmost points) of Bombay, where job opportunities were high along with land prices.

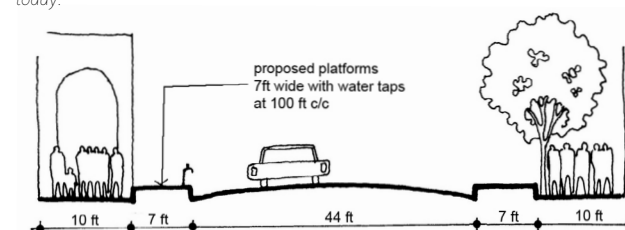
After failing to get jobs within the city centre or any other administrative hubs, it is natural that rural-turned-squatter populations of the city looked for ways to initiate living. By investing minimal financial capital, some sections of the squatter population eventually proceed towards selling low-cost goods for the broader working class. Essentially, they turn into what is now called "hawkers" who economise on the city streets informally, sometimes moving between areas. Their stoic resilience in surviving with dignity makes them the foot soldiers of Indian micro-economics.

Although hawker businesses remained habituated to the streets of Bombay, the roads were filled with a chaotic mix of cars, scooters, and heavy trucks. This disorderly traffic as a chaotic layer, overlapped on the existing urban fabric and erased the very existence of urban boundaries. Additionally, the traditional concept of an Indian footpath needed to be reimagined for modern urban India, since pavements' primary purpose of handling pedestrians wasn't really made for growing small-scale vendors and informal dwellers. Therefore, the hawker population, although thriving, continued to operate without formal organisation.

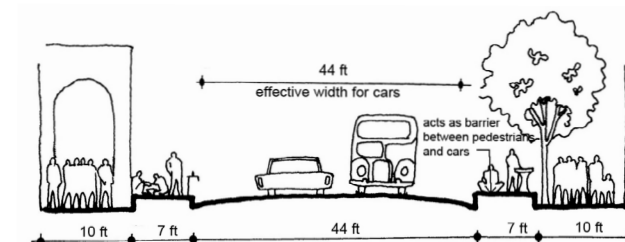
Correa envisioned an experimental retrofit for this specific problem in 1968, foreseeing the growth of informal economies on Indian streets. His proposal accommodated the hawkers & squatter groups who operated their livelihood at different times along the pavements of DN Road, Bombay. As per the scheme, rows of 2 X 2 X 0.6M platforms (otlas)³ at 30m intervals were introduced along the edge beside the 3m pedestrian path, enabling hawkers to set up their stalls during the day. In the evenings, these platforms, equipped with water taps, can be washed clean by municipal workers and prepared for people who want to sleep throughout the night.



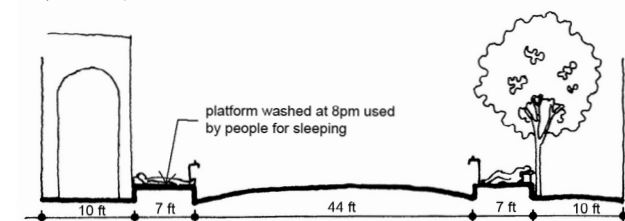
today:



proposed platform:



Daily 9am to 7pm



Night 9pm to 7am

Archival drawing from the Charles Correa Archives.

¹Refer to the bar graph (figure 1) from 'The New Landscape' by Charles Correa

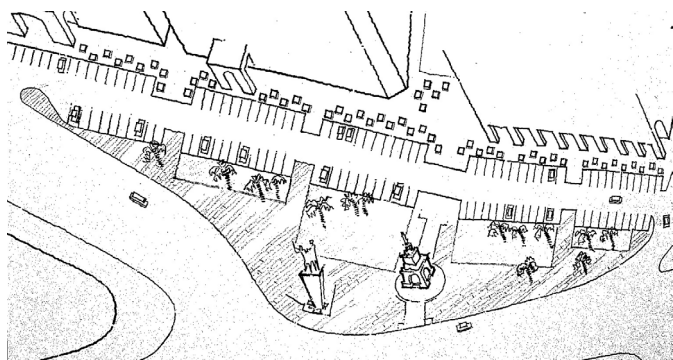
²Refer to the pie chart (figure 2) from 'The New Landscape' by Charles Correa.

³An otla is a traditional, raised outdoor platform in Indian architecture

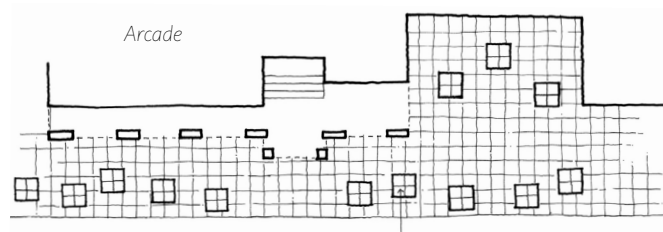
FROM THE ARCHIVES: HAWKERS & PAVEMENTS

Although this scheme was dropped midway, a reincarnation of this platform model was proposed near the Flora Fountain Plaza. This time, the platforms (otlas)³ were planned to accommodate 4 hawkers across their 4 quadrants with engraved (in-situ) license numbers for sellers' registration. In this scheme, the otlas are incorporated as groups of two or four, spread across the urban plaza.

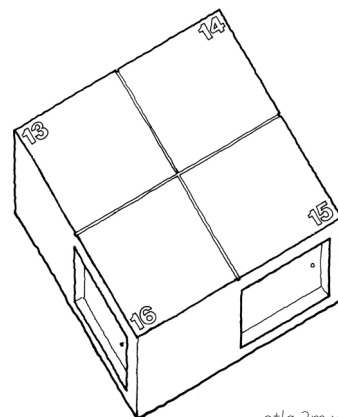
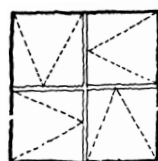
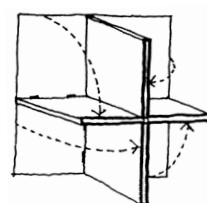
To fix the chaotic Indian street's synergy, Correa essentially observed a pattern of living operations happening on either edge of a street to a significant degree, noting how livelihoods transformed from day to night. This holistic approach to visualising a street not for automobile engines but for people and their livelihoods is truly humane. Looking at the current state of Indian cities, the relevancy of this pattern remains intact even after 58 years of Correa's proposal in Bombay. If the New Bombay proposal was a macro-level change in framework dismantling the growing congestion, hawker intervention was its micro-level intervention, bringing order to internal street chaos and thus preserving different scales of human forms from streets & markets to housing across cities.



Street Platform with Hawkers (Flora Fountain Plaza)
Archival drawing from the Charles Correa Archives.



Platforms for hawkers



otla 2m x 2m

Street Platform with Hawkers
Archival drawing from the Charles Correa Archives.

As citizens, we often come across squatter populations and pavement dwellers around traffic lanes, still prevalent across Indian metropolitan cities after decades of urbanisation. But planning commissions continue to neglect informal settlements, hawkers and dwellers by proposing infrastructural growth schemes centralising within a single corridor of the city and therefore benefiting the higher-income populations.

In response to this exact cut-and-paste technique of urban planning, Correa advocated for innovation tailored specifically for third-world urbanity, as Western rulebooks have proven to be irrelevant to these contexts⁴. Unlike Western streets with rigid separation, streets in India serve as a dynamic urban common and an elastic resource, around which people from different classes orient their lives. Modern urban planning seemingly neglects such dynamic shifts in Indian cities by imposing abstract values of first-world countries without considering how living patterns emerge and differ according to the governance and the people who abide by them. Considering recent dehumanising shifts in developed countries, conceived to prevent the homeless from resting on urban furniture⁵, Correa's model counters this through an honest attempt to integrate the underprivileged back into the fast-paced city by providing a platform and urban support that allows them to get back on their feet.

This project is detailed in the book 'Housing and Urbanisation'.
Click [here](#) to purchase it.

References:

- 1, 2 & 4. Correa, C. (1989). *The New Landscape*.
3. Marnane, K. (2023). *In-between urbanism: the physical, functional, socio-cultural, and identity-forming role of the otlā in informal settlements in Ahmedabad*. *Habitat International*, 140, 102912. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2023.102912>
5. Rosenfeld, J. (2024). *Hostile architecture | History, Definition, Examples, & Facts | Britannica*. In www.britannica.com. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hostile-architecture>

⁴ Refer to the chapter 'Mobility' from 'The New Landscape' by Charles Correa

⁵ Refer to "Hostile Architecture" by Brittanica



Ashmita Gupta

2024-2025 (Research Fellow)

Current location: Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh, India

Joining CCF right after my research-based master's program, I got to learn the other side of research: dissemination. How do you make people recognize the inherent issues and gaps that exist in our cities? While leading Nagari, I got to explore various answers to this question. One of which was developing and executing an academic course using documentary films. This allowed me to take forward the idea of socially conscious design and architecture as a social service. These beliefs, borrowed from Mr. Correa's philosophy, were only strengthened by the people around me with whom I have formed lifelong friendships. I value my time with them at CCF and have forever become an ambassador of Nagari. I now carry these beliefs forward as I build my independent research practice.



Ankritya Diggavi

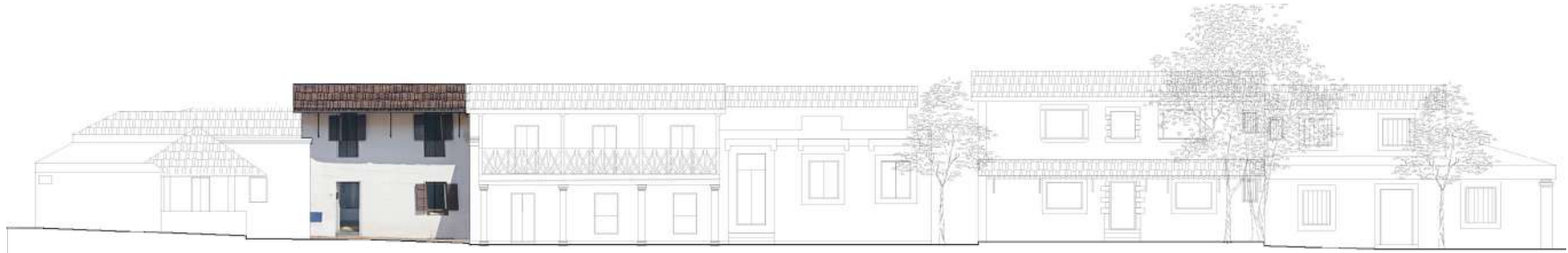
2024 - 2025 (Research Fellow)

Current location: Bangalore, Karnataka, India

The most illuminating aspect of the fellowship was the city itself. A key aspect of being an urban research fellow is to understand the immediate context of the precinct we are placed in. Panjim, as an urban agglomerate and in light of the nature of inquiries we form at the Foundation, makes a case for heritage conservation, the scale of our neighbourhoods, and their relationship with three water bodies.

Studying our cities and settlements in depth was aided by working closely with the archives and the team at the Foundation.

I look forward to translating these learnings and epiphanies, in practice, currently in Bangalore.



The Charles Correa Foundation exists not just to preserve Charles Correa's work, but to continue asking the kinds of questions he believed architecture should ask of society. We believe that architecture helps society imagine itself, and that better cities emerge not simply from better design, but from better conversations.

As an independent public-interest institution, CCF creates spaces for architects, designers, planners, policymakers, scholars, artists, and citizens to come together to debate the challenges shaping India's built environment. Through research, publications, exhibitions, films, conferences, and public programs, we seek to foster meaningful dialogue that can influence policy, inform practice, and inspire action.

Our work begins by identifying issues within the built environment where design can become a catalyst for change. We then develop these ideas into thoughtful, well-researched initiatives that translate conversation into tangible public outcomes. Rather than prescribing solutions, we aim to convene diverse voices, test new ideas, and build the partnerships needed to realize them.

The Foundation occupies a modest studio in the historic precinct of Fontainhas, Panaji, where it sits among the neighborhood's heritage houses as part of the everyday life of the community. More than simply an office, it is a place for conversation, collaboration, and exchange. Located at street level, our doors are always open to anyone interested in engaging with our work.

The CCF Newsletter will be distributed quarterly, issued to all our subscribers. To subscribe for future issues, please [click here](#).

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