



PLACEMAKING WEEK INDIA 2024 TEMPLE TOWNMAKING EVENT REPORT

PLACE
MAKING
INDIA





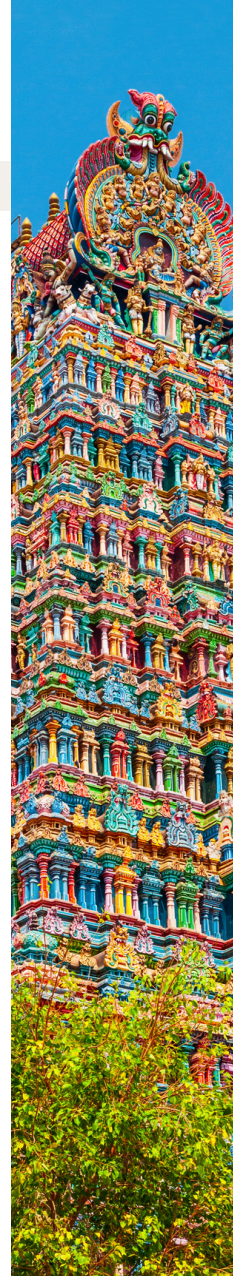
Why Temple Townmaking?

Temples in India have long been integral to the public sphere, serving as free and authentic gathering places for individual and groups. They are not only hubs of spirituality but also centres of community life.

Temple towns have been economic and cultural anchors and given rise to thriving artisan communities. They're quiet havens for young children to study as well as leisure getaways for working-class women. Beyond their structural beauty, temples preserve cultural heritage through classical performances and lively festivals, drawing thousands of pilgrims to the surrounding streets.

Placemaking Week India 2024, held from February 10 to 14, saw placemakers from across India and abroad converging in Madurai to explore the 'organic' public spaces intrinsic to temple environs and to tackle local place challenges. The ancient temple town, dating to the 6th century, is celebrated for its architectural grandeur and rich legends centred around the deity Meenakshi. The Meenakshi Amman Temple serves as a dynamic hub, fostering social, cultural, religious and economic connections among the people of Madurai and beyond.

Placemaking Week India 2024 showcased how historic and religious sites could be integrated into the urban fabric and serve as dynamic public spaces that transcend their primary functions. Presentations highlighted successful strategies and case studies from across south Asia, and capacity building workshops provided fresh perspectives for placemakers, urban planners and policymakers. Live action at local sites fostered collaboration and knowledge exchange among participants, paving the way for continued efforts in placemaking.



Chithirai Festival, Madurai

Madurai, one of the oldest inhabited cities, known as the city of festivals, hosts the Chithirai festival every April-May. Celebrated for over four centuries, this festival transforms Madurai, showcasing its religio-cosmopolitan nature. Centered around the Meenakshi Temple and Vaigai River, the festival, over a 40 km stretch, is a reenactment of the wedding of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi, with Lord Kallazhagar's (Vishnu's) symbolic journey to attend the nuptials.





The core narrative of the festival has sustained over the years, preserving the value systems of local communities and enabling their annual participation. Each ceremony is conducted at a specific time and place, featuring distinct characteristics and leadership from respective communities. New businesses, temporary markets, and the transformation of spaces like restaurants into resting halls for the Gods is a common feature. In the festival this year, 350 commercial shops became temporary resting places.

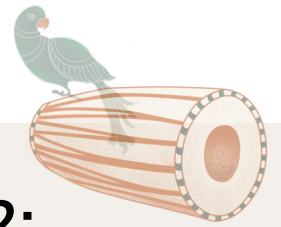
Maniyarasan R. has documented the Chithirai Thiruvizha festival since 2012 through various visual forms. His research documents these urban and rural transformations, preserving this vital information for posterity.



Watch

Our Participants





DAY 1 & 2: Conference

Temples as Places

Dr. Chithra Madhavan, Historian

Chitra Madhavan's opening address at the Temple Townmaking conference set the scene for temples as multi-functional public places. The temples of India were undoubtedly primarily places of worship. However, in ancient and medieval times, they also played other roles in society.



The temple was a major employer – while the structure was being built, many unskilled and highly skilled people were involved in the construction of the edifice. Once ready for worship, many were employed including priests, accountants, security, and also dancers and musicians since dance and music were part of temple worship.

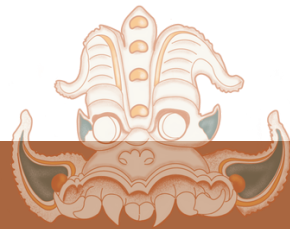
The temple also served as an educational institution since the Vedas and ancillary subjects were taught here. This necessitated a library functioning on the premises. There are inscriptions which mention the presence of libraries with

manuscripts in the Ranganatha Swami temple in Srirangam and the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram.

Gardens were maintained inside the campuses of the temples where flower-bearing plants and medicinal trees were grown. The fruits, roots and bark of these plants and trees were used to make Ayurvedic medicine. Meetings of the administrative assemblies of the villages were perhaps held inside the cool premises of the temples. People could also deposit money with the temples which paid them interest on the amount given.

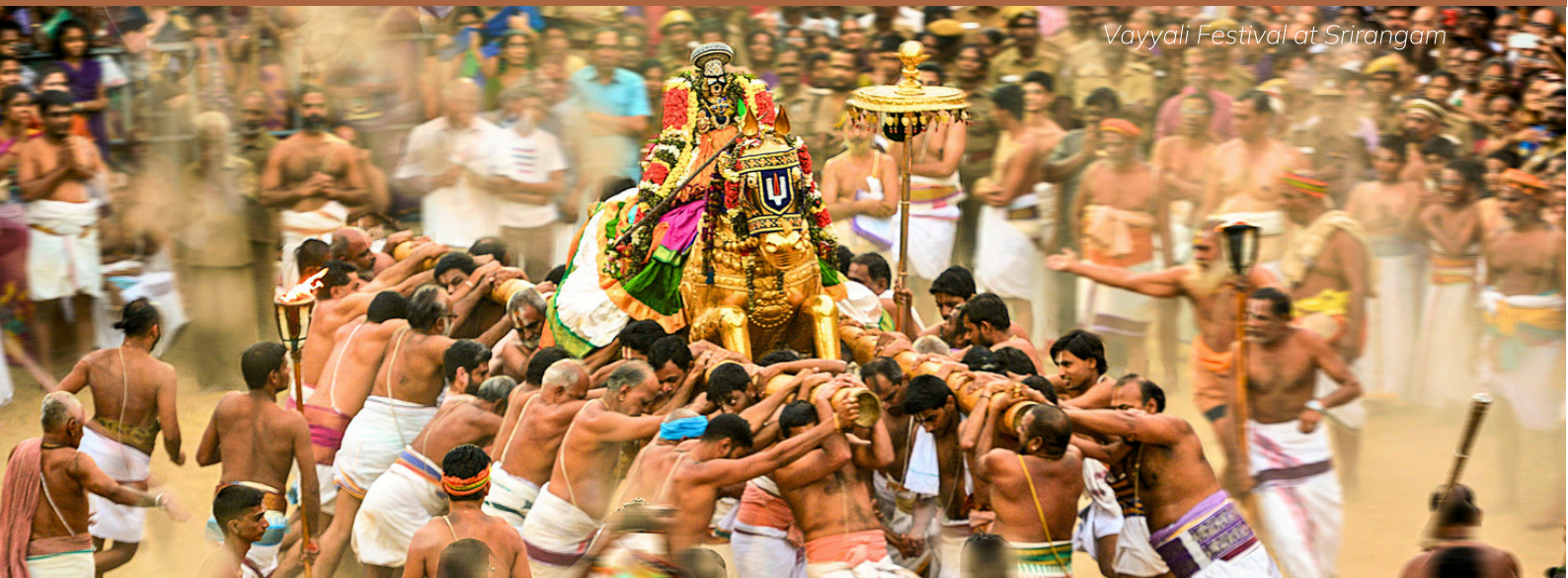
The temples also played an important role in the social life of the people as it was a common meeting place for those living in a town or village. Many premises functioned as granaries, where food was distributed. The temple tanks, while serving ritualistic purposes, were also water-harvesting units and recreational venues.





Srirangam: Preserving Heritage Amidst Modern Challenges

J. Ramanan, Architect & Town Planner



Vayali Festival at Srirangam

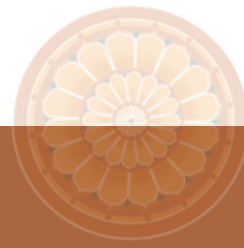
Srirangam, revered as the first of the 108 Vaishnavite *Divya Desams*, is a living example of the Shri Vaishnavite cultural tradition. The sprawling temple complex has seven enclosures projecting the architectural styles from the Chola, Pandya, Nayakas, Hoysalas, Pallavas and the Vijayanagara periods.

As the largest functioning temple in the world, Srirangam welcomes over 10,000 devotees daily journeying from every corner of India. The vibrancy of Srirangam is evident in its extensive festival calendar, with celebrations occurring 324 days a year. Notably, the Vaikunta Ekadesi Festival attracts an astounding 3 to 5 lakh pilgrims during its 21-day duration.

Yet, amidst the reverence and festivity, Srirangam faces challenges to its heritage. Many monuments immediately outside the temple complex are now used as cow sheds, shops or storage spaces.

Architect and urban planner J. Ramanan highlighted the urgency of preserving Srirangam's rich cultural tapestry through meticulous documentation and community engagement. While heritage tourism holds promise, its unchecked growth risk dilutes Srirangam's identity and eroding its authenticity. In this delicate balance between tradition and progress, Srirangam stands at a crossroads. With strategic planning and collective stewardship, it can navigate the challenges of modernity while safeguarding its timeless heritage for future generations.





Shaping Sacred Spaces: The Journey of Transforming the Temple Complex at Thiruchendur

Kavitha Selvaraj, CityWorks



Tiruchendur temple is said to be one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga and attracts millions of devotees every year.

The temple complex serves as an animated public space fostering a sense of belonging and identity within the temple town.

Kavitha Selvaraj outlined the transformative journey of revitalisation of the seaside Thiruchendur Temple complex as a vibrant, religious and culturally significant destination.

The Project include various improvements such as pathways, seating areas, an office building and a redesigned entrance court. Emphasising the importance of placemaking in temple towns, the project aimed to reflect local culture, history and traditions while preserving the architectural and cultural significance of the temple. The proposal among other things includes plans for a beachside view and a promenade for the visitors for increasing engagement and cultural activities.

Watch: aerial footage of Tiruchendur Temple



Thiruvannamiyur Mada Streets: A Community Design Initiative

Pavithra Sriram, Design Co:Lab



A ground-up placemaking project which included interviews of people and vendors, documenting pedestrian and vehicle counts, site survey and mobilising local people into action.

They started engaging with the public through pilot activations while waiting for political and bureaucratic action.

Pavithra Sriram discussed the unique challenges and opportunities encountered while working on the Thiruvannamiyur Mada Street Project, which focuses on revitalising the area around the seventh-century Thiruvannamiyur Temple in Chennai. Community engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration have driven the initiative forward.

Watch



Three takeaways:

Community Engagement:

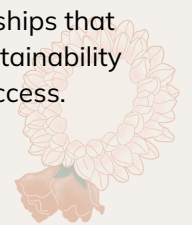
Engaging locals, business owners, and community organisations is crucial for building networks. Community input helps in understanding the needs and aspirations of the people to be able to design workable solutions.

Urban Design Interventions:

Addressing issues such as waste management, pedestrian safety, and parking can enhance the functionality and aesthetics of temple precincts. Improving the infrastructure creates a more vibrant and accessible environment.

Funding and Support:

Crowdfunding, government initiatives need to be explored in order to mobilise resources and build partnerships that can ensure its sustainability and long-term success.





Reminiscences on the Fort Wall and Urban Tank in Nayaka's Diary

Prof. Dr. G. Balaji, Thiagarajar College of Engineering



Professor Dr. G. Balaji led placemakers into an insightful exploration of the historical significance of Madurai, focusing on two sites: the Fort Wall and the Mariam Teppakulam (temple tank). Madurai, with its roots dating back to 1559, was envisioned by Vishwanatha Nayaka as a fortified city adorned with six gates. The Nayakas divided the city into 72 segments, each responsible for defending a bastion.

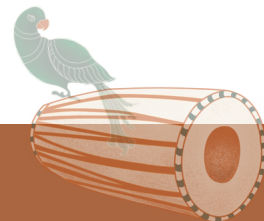
The exigencies of urban expansion led to the demolition of the fort in 1847 under British rule, orchestrated by crafty collector Blackburn. However, the city's vibrant culture has persisted through the ages. The advanced water management system of the fortification, including the moat and gravity-fed tank, showcases the city's engineering achievements. There is a need to preserve these historical landmarks while integrating them into contemporary urban planning.

Suggestions included:

- Repurposing the Fort Wall complex as an interpretation center and creating a museum about the city's history
- Preservation of natural drainage systems to maintain water bodies like Mariamman Teppakulam

These sites were also selected as part of the Placemaking exercise for the participants, the recommendations of which were subsequently presented to Madurai Commission, emphasising the imperative of contextual sensitivity in design and development endeavours.





Transforming A Spiritual Landscape: The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project and Vikas Yatra

Aalap Bhavsar, HCP Ahmedabad



Varanasi's master plan envisages a regenerated environment that caters to the needs of both pilgrims and locals, integrating modern amenities while safeguarding the sanctity of the region. Central to the project are efforts to enhance the pilgrimage experience, manage crowds effectively, and stimulate economic growth through tourism.

Aalap Bhavsar encapsulated the comprehensive vision and strategic approach driving the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project, offering insights into the fusion of tradition and modernity in placemaking endeavours within India's spiritual landscape. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project aims to rejuvenate the historic and culturally significant precinct of Varanasi and is facilitated by the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board.

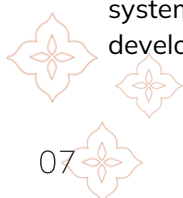
Key elements include revitalising the Mandir Parisar, Mandir Chowk, pilgrimage routes, and administrative facilities. The overarching goal is to elevate Varanasi's economic prospects while ensuring the preservation of its rich cultural heritage. Through initiatives like tent cities, ropeways, and new railway stations, the project also demonstrates a commitment to innovative urban development strategies to place Varanasi as a modern and vibrant spiritual destination.

Making of a Sacred Place and Living History: The case of Sri Harmandir Sahib and the City of Amritsar

Gurmeet Rai, Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative (CRCI)

Gurmeet Rai's talk centered on heritage conservation efforts in Punjab, emphasising the pivotal role of cultural preservation and communities. An exploration of the historical backdrop of Sri Harmandir Sahib reveals that its inception is rooted in the tenets of seva (service) with community involvement. The initiatives aimed at enhancing heritage and placemaking around the Golden Temple include the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment within Amritsar's walled city.

Historic cities have an intrinsic relationship with communities, cultural practices, natural resources and the urban form. Sometimes, development plans neglect these very cultural practices, and are disconnected from natural resources or alienate local knowledge systems, highlighting the need for integration within planning and development processes.





Central to her talk was the imperative of understanding communities, their cultural and natural heritage, values, practices and vulnerabilities in any placemaking and development initiative. She proposed a framework comprising a 'Diagnostic Survey' to understand the current situation, followed by making necessary repairs or 'Reparation' as the New Norm, which would then pave the way for 'Restorative Justice,' serving as a fundamental principle for shaping cities of today and tomorrow.



She also spoke about her firm's Puri Project, focusing on the development of the Shankh Kshetra Heritage Zone.

The Interplay between People, Culture and Place in Temple Placemaking: The Example of Kathmandu, Nepal

Niharika Mathema, Placemaking Nepal, Program Officer - Livable Cities Program, Digo Bikas Institute



Niharika juxtaposed the bustling sensory experiences of urban life with the tranquil ambiance found within temple precincts, asking the audience to reflect on the contrasts of their own experience in Madurai.

Dwelling on Kathmandu, Niharika highlighted how the urban landscape suffers from what can be termed as visual and auditory pollution, while temples offer architectural beauty, the soothing sound of bells, and fragrant atmosphere that enhances the overall place experience. The city's rich cultural and religious heritage, embodied in its temples and sacred sites, plays a pivotal role in shaping Kathmandu's identity and sense of place.

Kathmandu's historic Durbar Squares is an example of one such urban open space that fosters human interaction, reflects local culture and history, and accommodates various activities. Iconic sites like the Boudhanath Stupa provide multi-dimensional experiences for visitors that blur the boundaries between commercial activities and cultural immersion. She advocated for sensory walks as a means to reconnect with urban surroundings and community workshops and engagement initiatives to address challenges, preserve cultural identity, and reactivate public spaces.



The Case of Kathmandu,

Three takeaways:

- Sensory experiences are important in understanding and improving urban spaces
- Significance of cultural heritage in defining a city's identity
- Relying on the community as experts and the effectiveness of community-driven initiatives in placemaking and preserving cultural heritage



Watch: the two different sides of Kathmandu





The Kunja of Braj: Different Shades of a Cultural Space

Sushant Bharti, Heritage Conservationist

Sushant Bharti brought alive the intricate beauty and cultural significance of the Kunja of Braj in Vrindavan. The Kunja, characterised by its central courtyard and elaborate floral carvings, serves as a nexus for sacred gatherings and rituals, and includes spaces that belong to both the private and public realms. The Kunja consists of various rooms such as the sleeping area, lunchroom, and *Jagmohana*, as depicted in historical documents such as the *Kapad Dwara* Jaipur. The space transforms during festivals, notably Holi, the biggest festival observed in Braj.

Kunja has undergone historical evolution and there have been conservation efforts surrounding the Kunja. The space emerges as a multifaceted symbol of cultural heritage, blending aesthetics with functionality, underscoring its importance within the cultural fabric of Braj.

Sushant concluded on a note of concern on the potential impact of a proposed heritage corridor in Vrindavan. He urged considering how such initiatives might affect Vrindavan's cultural landscape, emphasising the importance of preserving its unique heritage amidst modernisation efforts.



Reshaping Places of Relevance: The Bhubaneswar Art Trail

Jai Dighe, Arcadis IBI

Jai Dighe, an urban planner, shared insights into the transformation of places of relevance in Bhubaneswar through The Bhubaneswar Art Trail working with the Bhubaneswar Development Authority. The city, known for its heritage temples and ancient sandstone structures, faced challenges as the old town, where these ancient temples are located, became neglected while the new town developed. The Smart City initiative provided an enabling environment for placemaking initiatives in the old town where citizen participation became integral to decision-making.

Several initiatives, including street art murals and forums like the Bhubaneswar City Lab, fostered community engagement. The Bhubaneswar Art Trail, initiated in 2017, encapsulated the city's monuments, rituals, and aspirations of the artists and the communities inhabiting the place. The 1.3 kilometre trail involved both national and international artists. Private properties opened their *aangans* or semi-public spaces for artists' installations, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among locals.

The Art Trail not only attracted thousands of visitors but also catalysed placemaking efforts in the new town, indicating its success. Despite some challenges, ongoing stakeholder perception surveys have informed further interventions, leading to the

The temple city of Bhubaneswar is also known as the Ekamra Kshetra, loosely translated to mean an area (kshetra) adorned with mango trees (ekamra).

The Bhubaneswar Art Trail serves as a model for inclusive placemaking, emphasising community engagement, cultural preservation, and the revitalisation of urban spaces.



establishment of a dedicated placemaking cell within the municipal corporation. This has successfully reclaimed neglected public spaces for various uses, highlighting the city's commitment to sustainable urban development.



BHUBANESWAR ART TRAIL

Temple for Birds, Pratul Dash,
Terracotta pots and sound, 2018

Heritage Documentation & 3D Stories - Bai Harir Ni Vav, Ahmedabad

Maniyarasan R., CARE School of Architecture



Maniyarasan R. from CARE School of Architecture spoke about the possibilities of photogrammetry as a tool for documentation of heritage sites and public spaces.

The evolution of technology makes photogrammetry more accessible. The distinction between traditional photography and photogrammetry lies in the latter's ability to create accurate 3D models. Photogrammetry eliminates optical errors that are found in photographs and provides scalable models.

Photogrammetry is the process of creating 3D models from photographs. It offers scalable and detailed digital prints, facilitating the documentation of spaces, towns, objects, and heritage sites.

He showcased various projects where he successfully applied photogrammetry as a documentation tool, including the Hoysala Dossier and Tirumalai Nayaka Palace, and in documenting museum artifacts. He gave a glimpse of the diverse ways in which photogrammetry could be applied with an example of his project at Bai Harir ni Vav, Ahmedabad where photogrammetry was used to capture and document an artist's exploration and interaction with the space through performance art.





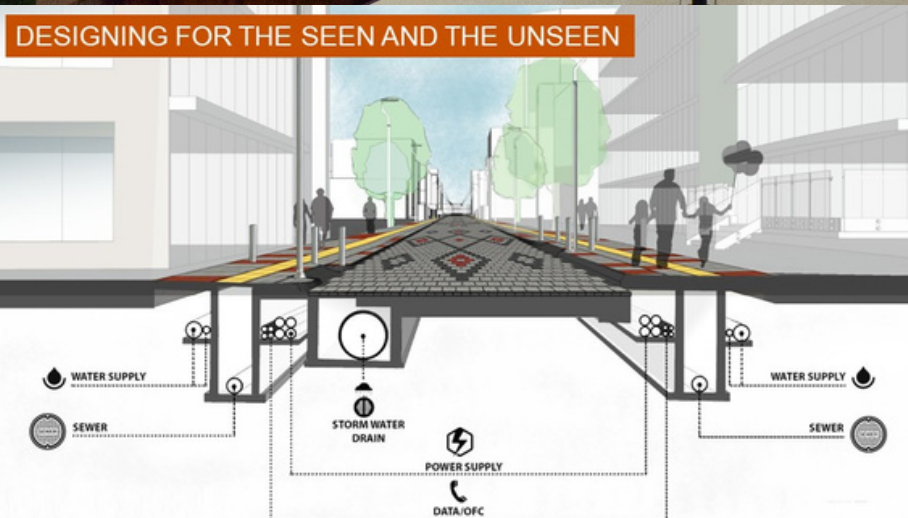
Infra-Culture: Complete Placemaking

Naresh Narasimhan, Founder, MOD Foundation



In a concluding keynote, Naresh Narasimhan, founder of MOD Foundation, spoke about placemaking and its application in Indian urban spaces - how it involves both visible and underlying infrastructural elements, necessitating holistic approaches for urban revitalisation.

Talking about the complexities of Indian roads, which serve as mixed-use public spaces, he highlighted its several challenges such as water stagnation, inadequate maintenance due to inter-agency coordination issues, incomplete infrastructure, and faulty engineering in roads. His recommendations for road improvement include treating roads as tertiary drains, implementing effective surface water collection and disposal systems, ensuring unobstructed connectivity and prioritising ease of maintenance.



"Placemaking extends beyond the visible elements to include the infra-culture beneath the surface, which is often overlooked in efforts of sprucing up public spaces."

He illustrated his concept of 'complete placemaking' through various projects his Bengaluru-based organisation has been working on:

Church Street Transformation (2013-2018):

Narasimhan's team conducted street activity mapping and identified distinct character zones, incorporating local inspiration for surface design, thereby revitalising the street.

Thindi Beedhi Redevelopment Project (Dec 2022):

By analysing day and night usage patterns and addressing challenges like continuous vehicular movement and inadequate infrastructure, the project proposed traffic management solutions and enhanced amenities, resulting in a revitalised public space.

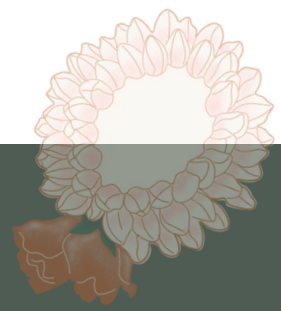
Commercial Street Revitalisation (Oct to Dec 2021):

Addressing flooding issues and damaged infrastructure, they conducted site investigations, resolved property junction issues, and transformed the street into a vibrant community space.



Commercial Street, Bengaluru, visibly transformed by the efforts of MOD Foundation





DAY 3: Open Day



The Department of Architecture at Thiagarajar College of Engineering (TCE) showcased decades of student work focused on Madurai, highlighting their extensive research and projects in an **Open House** on Day 3.

The event was **inaugurated by Thiru Su. Venkatesan, MP for Madurai**, who emphasised the importance of public participation, educational initiatives, and the role of governing bodies in urban development.

Presiding over the event, **Thiru K. Hari Thiagarajan, Chairman and Correspondent of TCE**, highlighted the significance of Madurai's culture and history, and acknowledged the college's contributions to the city.

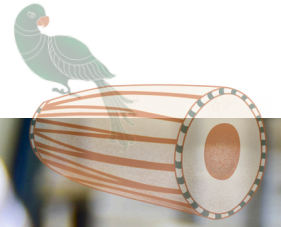
Shortlisted entries from AUDA Academy's Imagining Tomorrow Awards were displayed at the Open House, showcasing innovative solutions for climate change, sustainability, healthcare and transportation. Launched in collaboration with Placemaking India and other organisations, the Awards recognise exceptional designs in Architecture, Urban Planning, Urban Design and Landscape Design addressing global challenges.



Open Day

Department of Architecture, TCE





DAY 3: Capacity Building

Movie Screening



The Capacity Building retreat at the Open Day of the Department of Architecture at TCE commenced with the **India premiere of 'The Place Man,' a biopic of Fred Kent, the progenitor of the placemaking movement.**

Tamil subtitles were provided by Assistant Professor Vidyashankari. The film offered attendees a unique glimpse into Kent's journey and his contributions to placemaking.



Workshop

The Placemaking Mindset
Urmi Buragohain, Placemaking Foundation

The placemaking mindset is a unique approach to creating loved public places, starting with deep comprehension of the site and its inhabitants, leveraging diverse expertise, working with the communities, and enabling community action.





Urmi conducting the session

Highlights



Placemaking Foundation facilitated the **Placemaking Mindset Game**.

- Participants comprising placemakers, urban planners, architects and professionals from diverse backgrounds working in the realm of public places, were divided into teams and assigned specific roles such as a child, woman, businessman, tourist and politician
- Each team was tasked with providing recommendations for specific sites—the Temple Tank, Fort Wall and Market Street that they had already seen and experienced in Madurai—based solely on the needs and desires of their assigned roles
- The exercise aimed to shift participants' perspectives away from traditional thinking that they have been conditioned to and encourage them to think from viewpoints that differed from their personal and professional ones

Three Takeaways

Transcending Conventional Professional Biases:

Encouraging placemakers to adopt diverse perspectives fosters a **deeper understanding of community needs**. By embodying different roles, participants could offer recommendations aligned with the specific requirements of various stakeholders.



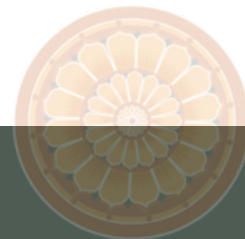
Mindset Shift for Innovation

The workshop underscored the importance of challenging conventional thinking patterns in placemaking initiatives. **By liberating themselves from preconceived notions** of what works or is feasible, **participants unlocked innovative ideas**. This mindset shift revealed untapped potential for creative solutions and enhanced outcomes in urban development projects.

Community-Centric Approach

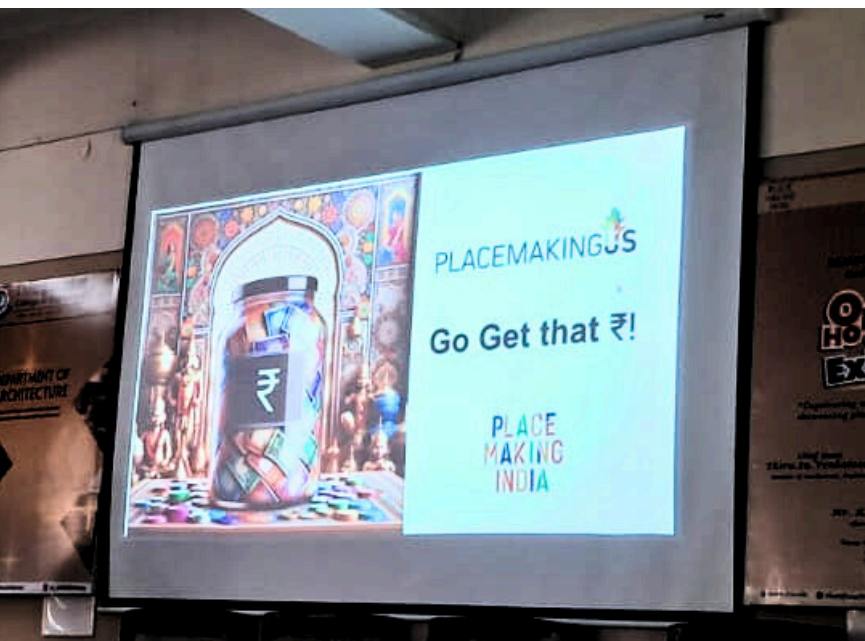
Placemaking thrives on community involvement and empowerment. By **prioritising the voices and needs of children, women, residents, businesses and visitors**, placemakers can create inclusive, vibrant spaces that resonate with the people they serve. The workshop highlighted the **significance of collaboration and shared responsibility** in achieving successful placemaking initiatives.





Expert Session

Funding Your Placemaking Idea: Where is the Money Gonna Come From? Ryan Smolar, Placemaking US



Recognising the need among placemakers to access financial resources to support placemaking initiatives, Ryan Smolar unpacked various funding strategies, ranging from traditional sources to innovative approaches in his presentation.

Talking of placemaking, he highlighted co-creation with communities as a key principle and stressed the iterative nature of placemaking, advocating for small experiments to gauge effectiveness rather than grand master plans.

Three Takeaways

Community Engagement

Engaging with local communities is extremely important in placemaking initiatives. Successful placemaking initiatives have involved the community directly, their input leading to more meaningful and effective outcomes.

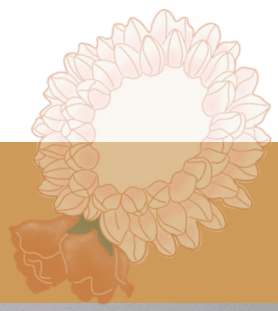
Resourcefulness Over High Budgets

Contrary to the assumption that more funding leads to better placemaking, excessive budgets often hinder the process. One can start with small investments, leveraging in-kind partnerships and volunteer work to maximise impact while minimising costs.

Strategic Funding Approaches

Instead of solely relying on traditional funding sources, placemakers can explore innovative funding avenues. Seeking fee waivers from governments, partnering with existing organisations as sub-grantees and tapping into giving circles or crowdfunding platforms to finance placemaking projects are some examples.





Place Performance Evaluation

- Mariamman Teppakulam
- Fort Wall Pocket Park
- Ezhu Kadal Street

Evenings were dedicated to Place Performance Evaluation of three sites in Madurai. Divided into three groups, each assigned to a specific site, participants examined the historical context and current challenges of the respective sites, based on community inputs gathered by TCE. Strengths, weaknesses and possible outcomes were carefully analysed in design discussions held throughout the week. From these deliberations emerged a list of potential design interventions. Culminating in presentations to the Madurai Commission, each group offered tailored recommendations for enhancing the vitality and functionality of the site assigned to each group.



The **DIY Guide for Place Performance Evaluation** equipped participants with key information and themes to look out for at the sites. It also provided a space for them to record their observations and ideas as they conducted the evaluation.



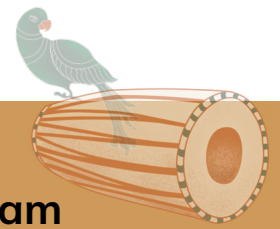
1
Mariamman Teppakulam



2
Fort Wall Pocket Park



3
Ezhu Kadal Street



Place Performance Evaluation

SITE 1: Mariamman Teppakulam



Background

Built in 1645 AD during the rule of Thirumala Nayaka, this temple pond, the largest in south India, is encircled by granite steps and hosts a mandapam to Vigneshwara at its center. Surrounded by roads on all four sides, it serves as a communal hub for various activities.

Strengths

- Accessible from all sides
- Fosters a sense of community with nearby residential areas and educational institutions
- Features public spaces like temples, schools and a green pocket with untapped potential
- Nearby police presence ensures safety
- Vibrant atmosphere post-sunset with diverse activities

Challenges

- Traffic congestion caused by a bus stop near a college entrance
- Inadequate lighting hinders full space utilisation
- Lack of a defined entrance and parking
- Poor waste management



Suggestions for Community Engagement Actions prioritised for ongoing community engagement:

- Surveys, focus group discussions and meetings
- Workshops and design charrettes
- Stakeholder partnerships with local organisations and community groups
- Cultural and educational programming: integrated heritage appreciation through tours, lectures and activities
- Youth engagement through tailored projects and workshops
- Community design advisory committee
- Celebration and recognition by publicly acknowledging community contributions





Possible Design Ideas:

- Implement 'Happy Streets' concept
- Organise zones for different activities like kids' play area, food street, walking tracks and relaxing zones
- Introduce temporary arena with stage facility, light shows, and mobile library



Final Recommendations:

Emphasise community involvement in the design process, incorporate diverse ideas, and ensure ongoing engagement to create a vibrant, inclusive space that reflects the aspirations of the local community.

Place Performance Evaluation

SITE 2: Fort Wall Pocket Park

Photo: G.Moorthy, The Hindu



Background:

The Fort Wall Pocket Park is a significant historical site in Madurai, representing the remaining part of the fort wall. It is centrally located near important landmarks like the Meenakshi Amman temple, railway station, and the Periyar bus stand.



Strengths

- Historic significance
- Strategic location
- Green cover within the site
- Access to public transport
- Potential for commercial sector development around the site

Challenges

- Safety of pedestrians
- Cleanliness
- Air and noise pollution
- Lack of awareness about the site's significance



Design Process

The design process involved studying the historical background and context of the park, analysing strengths and challenges, conducting site visits, observations and stakeholder interviews to understand the architectural aspects (stability, imageability, style, etc) and user preference (needs, wants and wishes of people). Design discussions were held, leading to the identification of possible design ideas.



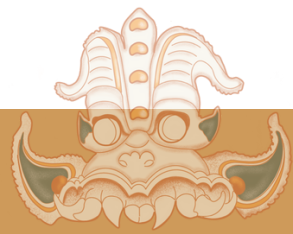
Final Recommendations:

- Develop active and passive zones on the upper level, supporting recreation and relaxation
- Install an elevated connecting bridge from the bus stand to enhance pedestrian accessibility
- Delineate activity zones/event spaces without permanent interventions for flexible use
- Establish an interpretation centre to promote cultural and historic significance
- Designate open-air theatre zones for screenings and AV shows
- Utilise greenery with circular seating spaces around trees
- Provide washroom and drinking water facilities
- Create a welcoming buffer space at the main entry with landscape elements and art installations
- Ensure sufficient lighting and CCTV for safety measures.



Place Performance Evaluation

SITE 3: Ezhu Kadal Street



Entrance of Ezhu Kadal Street in Madurai

Background:

Ezhu Kadal Street, an integral part of Old Madurai's layout, historically led to the Arulmigu Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple. Once housing the Brahmin community, it is now predominantly commercial. The street is distinguished by the incomplete grand Rayagopuram, erected in the seventeenth century by Madurai Nayakkar ruler Mannar Thirumalai. Rayagopuram translates to Entrance Tower of the King, and this monumental structure remains a symbol of Madurai's cultural and architectural heritage.

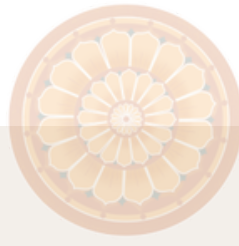
Strengths

- Historical significance as a prime entrance street to the Sundareswarar Shrine
- Cultural heritage value, including the iconic Rayagopuram
- Potential for revival of Ezhu Kadal Theertham for religious activities

Challenges

- Commercialisation and neglect leading to deterioration of traditional Brahmin residences
- Misuse of Rayagopuram for commercial purposes, causing damage to its architectural integrity
- Encroachment of constructions linking with the tower base

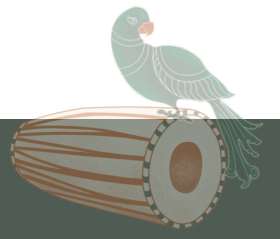




Final Recommendations:

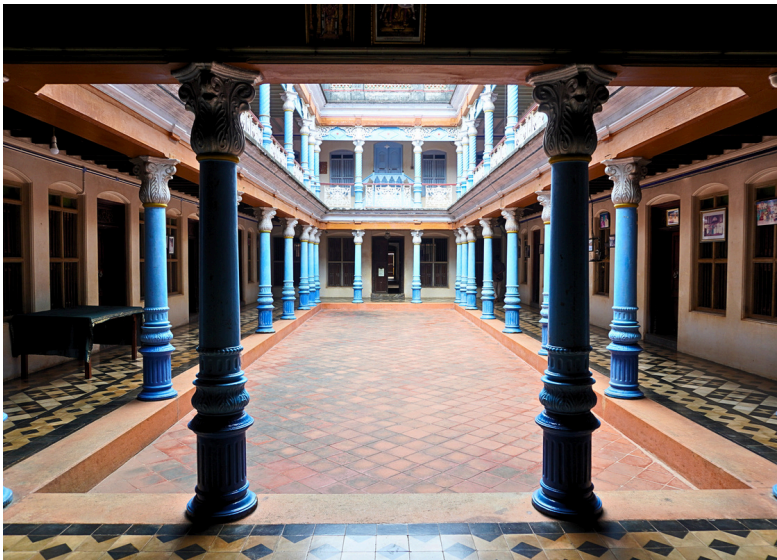
- Prioritising conservation efforts for Rayagopuram and associated structures
- Implementing measures to deter commercial encroachment and promote heritage activities
- Reduce road to its original level using a radical ramp/step combination
- Restoration of the ancient reservoir to minimise flooding of the streets
- Re-allocating Road Space on East Maasi Street:
 - Analysing traffic flow and the total number of vehicles using specific roads will help determine the optimal carriageway width for smooth traffic movement without excessive space allocation
 - Reclaiming unused road space for organised paid parking, signage, seating, city branding, and informative displays highlights Madurai's streets' history and significance
- Pedestrianising Ezhu Kadal Street and around the Nandi statue:
Creating a pedestrian zone behind and around Nandi would enhance the temple complex's tranquillity and improve visitors' safety.
- Pudhu Mandapam as a Market:
Envision the Pudhu Mandapam as a maker's market with direct access from Ezhu Kadal Street to East Chithirai Street and into the temple premises. This would require careful planning to ensure it blends with the temple's atmosphere.
- Accessibility:
Ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities via curb ramps, raised intersections, tabletop crossings, etc. is crucial for providing equitable access and increasing the safety and tourism potential for the temple.





Day 4 was all about immersing ourselves in the rich heritage of nearby Karaikudi in the Chettinad district. The town is renowned for its grand mansions reflecting the wealth of the Chettiar merchant community.

DAY 4: Karaikudi Field Visit



Athangudi Tiles, handcrafted using sustainable local materials, feature traditional and geometric designs, showcasing the artistry of the Chettinad region. We made our own tiles!





Day 4: Farewell Lunch

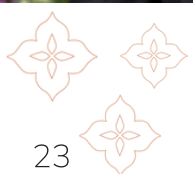
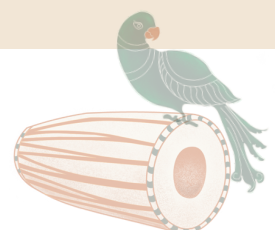


A farewell lunch was hosted by ESAF Foundation at the concept restaurant Cine Suvai to announce Placemaking India's annual gathering in early February 2025. ESAF is the local host of the forthcoming event in Thrissur, Kerala, themed around public markets. George MP, Manager of Programs at ESAF Liveable Cities initiated a call for engagement for the event.



"Spiritual places just scream out at everyone as a place to be and then be remembered, forever."

Fred Kent,
Founder of the placemaking movement,
Project for Public Spaces
and PlacemakingX





Testimonials



Attending Placemaking 2024 in Madurai was an enriching experience that exceeded my expectations. The event presented diverse perspectives and best practices in temple town placemaking. Each session offered valuable insights and sparked thought-provoking ideas, broadening my understanding of urban design.

The exceptional hospitality of Team Placemaking India and Team TCE transformed the event into a shared experience that fostered meaningful connections and lasting memories.

Placemaking 2024 has impacted my approach to future projects, and I highly recommend this event to anyone interested in urban development and the magic of place in cities.

Srikanth K.S.

Assistant Professor, SPA-UoM, Mysuru
Kriakalpa Design Consultants



I had a wonderful time at Placemaking 2024, learning new things and experiencing the best of Madurai. The interactions and work we did here promise to inspire many more placemaking experiences across the country. I look forward to meeting everyone again at the next Placemaking Market Cities event in Thrissur.

Ashwin Suresh
IBI Arcadis Group



To all the participants, organisation leaders, Team TCE, collaborators and presenters who shared their wonderful work, insights and experiences - we thank you and appreciate your dedication and enthusiasm for Placemaking.

We look forward to a future where placemaking transforms public spaces and fosters vibrant community areas that celebrate the unique context, nature, and culture of each place.

It was a joy to connect with everyone, and we hope to meet again soon, making more vibrant and effective Placemaking networks.

Dharmesh Jadeja and Rakhee Kane
Dustudio | Aavartan Pottery Studio
Auroville





Participating in activities, the temple walk, and the tile making workshop was a fantastic experience. As someone who is not from an architectural background, I found the presentations on the first day incredibly informative and easy to understand. Special thanks to Urmi Buragohain for the engaging presentation-workshop and Ryan Smolar for sharing valuable fundraising tips.

Kudos to the organising team for a job well done, and a huge shoutout to the student volunteers. I'll definitely be back for the next placemaking event.

Shrinivas Deshmukh
Urban Research Foundation



It was a pleasure connecting and experiencing the engagement, excitement and passion for what we do in the wonderful city of Madurai! Let's keep the fire burning! I hope we'll meet again to continue sharing as we progress in our journeys. Thank you for the wonderful hospitality especially to Team Placemaking India under the gentle and inspiring guidance of Vineeta Shetty.

Gurmeet Rai
CRCI



The temple town making conference was truly an enriching experience that has sparked meaningful conversations about the role of placemaking in our work.

Ritha Krishnamurthy
MOD Foundation



The past few days have been fun and insightful. Thank you to the organisers, Vineeta, Prashant, and the entire team. A huge shout out to Team TCE for their enthusiasm and support. I'll definitely be back next year and hope to see you all again.

Ananya Amarnath
Heritage Photographer





PLACEMAKING WEEK INDIA 2024
TEMPLE TOWNMAKING

AGENDA

Friday, 9th February (Pre-Event Tour)

PlacemakingX visit to Auroville,
Dharmesh Jadeja, Dustudio, Architect Suhasini Aiyer

Saturday, 10th February

Guided Walk of Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple
Dr. Chithra Madhavan (inside)

Temple Placemaking Conference at Dr. Radha Thiagarajan Auditorium, Thiagarajar Arts and Sciences College

- Registration and Welcome - Vineeta Shetty, Convenor, Placemaking India
- About Placemaking Week India - Prashant Prasad, We'Collab
- Introductory Presentation "Temples as Places" - Chithra Madhavan, Historian
- Representing Place: How We Tell Stories About Place - Srirangam Temple - Architect J. Ramanan
- Shaping Sacred Spaces- The Journey of Transforming the Temple Complex at Thiruchendur - Kavitha Selvaraj, CityWorks
- Thiruvanimiyur Mada Streets: A Community Design Initiative - Pavithra Sriram, Design Co:Lab
- Reminiscences on the Fort Wall and Urban Tank in Nayaka's Diary - Prof. Dr. G. Balaji, Thiagarajar College of Engineering
- Introduction to Place Performance Evaluation Exercise - Urmi Buragohain, Placemaking India, Swati Mishra, The Makers Collaborative
- Place Performance Evaluation: Mariamman Teppakulam, Fort Wall Pocket Park, Ezhu Kadal Street - TCE staff and students, Corporation Staff, Placemaking India
- Dinner buffet hosted by K-Lite at Courtyard by Marriott Madurai

Sunday, 11th February

Guided Walk of Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple
Dr. Vani Senguttuvan, Dr. Chithra Madhavan

Temple Placemaking Conference at Dr. Radha Thiagarajan Auditorium, Thiagarajar Arts and Sciences College

- Transforming A Spiritual Landscape: The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project and Vikas Yatra - Aalap Bhavsar, HCP Ahmedabad
- Making of a Sacred Place and Living History: The case of Sri Harmandir Sahib and the City of Amritsar - Gurmeet Rai, CRCI
- The Interplay between People, Culture and Place in Temple Placemaking: The Example of Kathmandu, Nepal - Niharika Mathema, Placemaking Nepal, Program Officer - Livable Cities Program, Digo Bikas Institute
- The Kunja of Braj: Different Shades of a Cultural Space - Sushant Bharti, Heritage Conservationist

Sunday, 11th February contd.

- Reshaping Places of Relevance: The Bhubaneswar Art Trail - Jai Dighe, Arcadis IBI
- Heritage Documentation & 3D Stories - Bai Harir ni Vav, Ahmedabad - Maniyarasan R., CARE School of Architecture
- Concluding Keynote: Infra-Culture: Complete Placemaking - Naresh Narasimhan, MOD Foundation
- Placemaking Interventions (Group Work and Microplans): Mariamman Teppakulam, Fort Wall Pocket Park, Ezhu Kadal Street

Thiagarajar College of Engineering, Madurai City Corporation

- Vegetarian Chettinad dinner hosted by Hari Thiagarajan on the grounds of Thiagarajar College of Arts and Sciences

Monday, 12th February

Capacity Building Retreat at Multi-Purpose Hall, Department of Architecture, Thiagarajar College of Engineering

- Open Day at Department of Architecture, TCE - Dr. Jinu Kitchley, TCE
- Introduction - Swati Mishra, Placemaking India
- Screening of 'The Place Man' (Tamil subtitles)
- Workshop: The Placemaking Mindset - Urmi Buragohain, Placemaking Foundation
- Funding Your Placemaking Idea: Where is the Money Gonna Come From? - Ryan Smolar, Placemaking US
- Lunch hosted by Thiagarajar College of Engineering (Exhibition by AUD Academy)
- Presentation of Recommendations to Madurai Commission: Mariamman Teppakulam, Fort Wall Pocket Park, Ezhu Kadal Street - Rapporteurs of Group 1, 2 and 3
- Commissioner's Dinner at Geoffrey Bawa-designed Heritage Madurai - Commissioner L. Madhubalan

Tuesday, 13th February

Visit to Karaikudi

- Exploration of Chettiar Mansions - We'Collab (Guided by Meenakshi)
- Banana Leaf Lunch at Thappa Gardens Resort hosted by The Smart Citizen
- Hands-on Athangudi Tile-making Workshop - We'Collab and Mr. Manikanand AL, GM, Chettinadu Tiles Factory
- After returning - Palli Arai Puja at Madurai Meenakshi Temple

Wednesday, 14th February

- Call for Engagement: 'Market Cities' Placemaking Week India 2025, Thrissur
- Farewell Lunch at Cine Suvai hosted by ESAF Foundation



PLACEMAKING WEEK INDIA 2024 TEMPLE TOWNMAKING

Placemaking Week India 2024 owes its success to a number of individuals:

- Joint Secretary **Kunal Kumar** at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, who endorsed the event
- **Jeenal Sawla** and **Mayank Saravagi** at the MoHUA, who provided valuable suggestions
- Madurai Commissioner **L. Madhubalan**, who extended enthusiastic support and encouragement
- Assistant Engineer at Smart City Madurai, **Suba Nagarajan**, who showed unflinching dedication
- **Dr. Jinu Kitchley** and **Dr. G. Balaji** at Thiagarajar College of Engineering, for inestimable local support
- **Kavitha Selvaraj** of Trilogue Studios, Chennai who expertly moderated the conference
- **Faculty** and **Student** volunteers at TCE, who kept the show running

Placemaking India would like to acknowledge in particular the generosity and hospitality of **Hari Thiagarajan**, chairman of Thiagarajar Group of Institutions, **Mridula Ramesh** of the Sundaram Climate Institute, lighting provider **K-Lite** and **George MP** of ESAF Foundation.

Participating organisations included **Arcadis IBI**, **Bhubaneswar Development Authority**, **Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation**, **HCP Design**, **ITDP-India**, **Design Co:Lab**, **Urban Research Foundation**, **University of Mysore**, **MOD Foundation**, **Trilogue Studio**, **The Urban Vision**, **Placemaking Foundation**, **Placemaking US**, **The Makers Collaborative**, **Milletbank**, **Dustudio**, **Aavartan**, **Socratus Foundation for Collective Wisdom**, **Digo Bikas Institute**, **Sponge Collaborative**, **Ekam Sthala** and **ESAF Foundation**.

The organising team consisted of **Vineeta Shetty** of The Smart Citizen, **Prashant Prasad** and **Karthick K A** of We'Collab and **Kavitha Selvaraj** and **Anjhana Kumar** of CityWorks.

ORGANISING PARTNERS



This report was produced by Swati Mishra