AfterDark Placemaking Weekend India 2025

Feb 14-16 Bengaluru
After Dark
PLACEMAKING
WEEKEND INDIA 2025

EVENT REPORT

A Bengaluru Convening on Nighttime Public Life

What happens to our public spaces when the sun goes down? Who are they for and how can they be made safer, more inclusive and more vibrant after dark? These were some of the key questions at the heart of AfterDark Placemaking Weekend India, a unique gathering that took place in Bengaluru from February 14 to 16, 2025, at BLR Design Centre on Churchstreet.

Co-hosted with the MOD Foundation, the event brought together an interesting mix of designers, urbanists, researchers, artists, educators and community practitioners from across India and beyond. Across two vibrant days, participants explored the often-overlooked world of nighttime placemaking - an emerging field that looks at how our cities transform after sunset.

From eye-opening sessions on light pollution and biodiversity to lively walks through Bengaluru's public spaces, the convening blended theory and on-the-ground experience in a way that was as thoughtful as it was fun. Conversations flowed freely, fuelled by curiosity, shared challenges and a collective desire to make cities more people-friendly at all hours.

This report captures the spirit of the gathering: the ideas exchanged, the places explored and the new connections made. Most importantly, it highlights how after dark placemaking can become a key part of building safer, more inclusive urban futures in India.

Participation

The event saw participants from 13 Indian cities, along with international participants from Rome, Paris, Barcelona and Lahore.

NEW DELHI

AHMEDABAD

VADODARA

KOLKATA

BHUBANESHWAR

MUMBAI

PUNE

HYDERABAD

BELAGAVI

PANJIM

VELLORE

BENGALURU

MYSURU

THRISSUR

ROME

PARIS

BARCELONA

LAHORE

Day 0 | Thursday, 13th February
Namma Sthala, Namma Sukha

The Politics of Placemaking
Architect Vijay Narnapatti, Affiliate Member, IUDI

Architect Vijay Narnapatti's keynote unpacked the deeply human and often contested nature of placemaking in Indian cities. He explored how public spaces evolve into meaningful places through everyday negotiations, community action and political will.

Focussing on Bengaluru, Narnapatti emphasised that public spaces carry the imprint of those who inhabit, shape, and contest them. He highlighted how parents demanding safe play areas or local communities asserting cultural identity are not just participating in urban design but actively shaping the politics of space.

"Placemaking is as much about belonging and memory as it is about planning and design."

Key Takeaways:

- Public spaces are shaped by who participate in them. Parents, artists, officials, and residents all bring different values and visions.

- Designing for wellbeing means going beyond infrastructure to include memory, identity, and daily lived experience.

- Placemaking is inherently political. Each design decision reflects a choice about whose needs and stories are prioritised.

Recovering a City
Soumitro Ghosh, Matthew and Ghosh

Bangalore-based architect Soumitro Ghosh (Matthew & Ghosh Architects) explored the evolving relationship between urban design and public space in rapidly growing Indian cities. Reflecting on Bangalore's exponential growth, Ghosh spoke about how demographic shifts, migration and infrastructural pressures challenge traditional urban forms. He emphasised the architect's role in designing not just buildings but meaningful, inclusive civic environments that respond to both memory and future needs.

"The new public space is actually a private space."

Soumitro discussed several of his firm's projects across typologies and scales. These included:

Byg Brewski

Called Asia's largest brewpub, this was designed as a community-centric environment that blends built form with natural elements. Drawing from both Roman and vernacular inspirations, the space uses recycled materials, open courtyards and water features to create an immersive public experience.

Freedom Park:

A former colonial jail reimagined as a large public park and democratic space in central Bangalore. The design maintains key elements of the old prison, such as courtyards and platforms, while inserting new cultural and public uses including pavilions, reading zones and event spaces.

Triangulating Public Space, Social Housing and Public Facilities: The European Experience

Architect Xavier Bustos Serrat,

Cities Connection Project, Barcelona

Architect Xavier Bustos Serrat as part of the Cities Connection Project explored the triangulation of social housing, public space and community spaces, and how their intelligent integration transforms neighbourhoods. Case studies from Switzerland, Belgium, France and Spain showed how incorporation of these spatial domains led to inclusive, resilient and socially cohesive urban environments.

The presentation brought together 20 exemplary urban architecture projects, each demonstrating how thoughtful design can reshape everyday life in cities.

The Cities Connection Project itself has involved over 320 architectural studios and 80 institutions across Europe, acting as a cultural and professional connector through exhibitions, site visits and public dialogue.

Hunziker Areal, Zurich

Completed in 2015, this project stands out for its social and environmental vision. Located in Zurich's northern quarter, Hunziker Areal combines over 400 cooperative housing units with community gardens, shared courtyards, workspaces and cultural venues. It's a model of affordable urban living, supported by sustainable building materials, green roofs and energy-efficient systems. Social cohesion at the site looks like its residents participating in managing shared amenities and planning neighbourhood activities.

Key Takeaways:

- Urban design becomes transformative when social housing, public space and community facilities are not treated in isolation but as interdependent parts of daily life.

- Architecture rooted in social responsibility can reimagine cities as places of equity, dignity and collective belonging.

- Collaborative frameworks between citizens, designers and institutions are essential to building resilient and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Inaugural Panel: Creative Nights – Culture and Placemaking in the 24-hour City

Moderated by Prathima Manohar, Founder, The Urban Vision
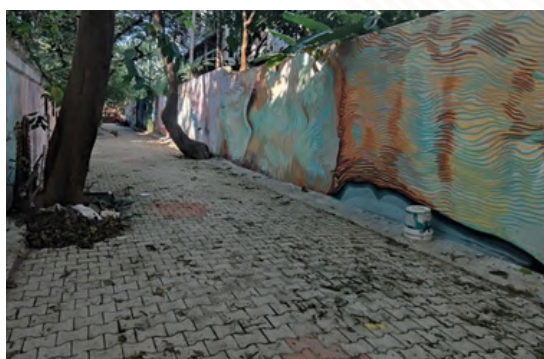**Panelists:** Amitabh Kumar, Artist
and Kanchana KV, CEO, NICE Network

The opening panel of Placemaking India Week 2025 brought together experts from urban planning, art and business to discuss how placemaking can shape a city's identity, economy and social fabric. The conversation explored how cities can evolve into 24-hour hubs that are not just functional but vibrant, inclusive and creatively stimulating.

Kanchana, Prathima and Amitabh in conversation

"Culture is not just an afterthought in urban planning—it is essential to making cities more livable, dynamic and future-ready."

Evolution of Amitabh's public art project

Insights from the Panelists:

Amitabh Kumar focused on the role of public art in shaping urban experiences. He highlighted how murals, installations and interactive artworks can turn neglected spaces into thriving community hubs. He emphasised that art should be accessible to all and creativity should not be restricted to galleries but should flow into the streets, making culture an everyday experience.

Kanchana KV addressed the importance of structured collaboration between policymakers, businesses and artists. She stressed that for a city to function as a 24-hour space, it needs an ecosystem that balances economic growth with cultural vibrancy. Successful placemaking requires a mix of smart urban design, safety measures and creative opportunities that encourage both locals and tourists to engage with the city at all hours.

Key Takeaways:

Culture as the Driving Force of Urban Identity – Cities thrive when cultural spaces are prioritized. Art, music and design must be embedded into urban planning to create places where people want to live, work and connect.

Public Spaces Need to Be Inclusive and Interactive – Art and creative interventions in public areas create a sense of community and belonging, making urban spaces more engaging and accessible to all.

Collaboration is Key to a 24-hour City – Policymakers, businesses and artists must work together to design cities that are safe, vibrant and functional at all hours, ensuring a balanced mix of commercial, cultural and social life.

Government-led Placemaking: Success Stories and Learnings

Jeenal Sawla, Consultant, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs

Jeenal showcased transformative government-led placemaking initiatives from the nationwide Placemaking Marathon, conducted under *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* and the Smart Cities Mission. The presentation underscored how thoughtfully designed public spaces, created with community involvement, can enrich urban life. Key insights included the role of adaptive design, policy integration, and strategic funding in ensuring long-term impact, illustrated through successful real-world projects.

The session underscored the role of government initiatives in shaping inclusive, functional and community-driven urban spaces, offering valuable lessons for future placemaking efforts.

The Placemaking Marathon was a nationwide initiative under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and Smart Cities Mission (SCM). As part of this campaign, 31 cities transformed 50 neglected or underutilized spaces within just 75 hours. Tactical interventions included improved streets, revitalized parks, upgraded Anganwadis and enhanced public health centers—turning drab urban spots into vibrant, people-friendly places.

Placemaking Typologies & Some Examples Shared

Parkscapes

Maa Mangla Pokhari
Waterbody rejuvenated near temple premises

City
Bhubaneswar

Area
4,046.86 sq.m

Cost
₹ 14.9 Lakh

Time
Planning Time :
6 Days
Execution Time :
70 Hours

Team
Bhubaneswar Smart City, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar Urban Knowledge Centre, IBI Group, and Quantum Leap Solutions

Before

After

Childcare & Healthcare Spaces

Vadsar Flyover Anganwadi
Flyover underside reclaimed for an anganwadi play and learning area

City
Vadodara

Area
600 sq. m

Cost
₹ 9.85 Lakh

Time
Planning Time
1 Week
Execution Time
75 Hours

Team
Vadodara Smart City, Vadodara Municipal Corporation, WRI India, Van Leer Foundation, SMAID - College of Architecture & Design, and Local Anganwadi

Before

After

Urban Climate Adaptation through Underground Placemaking

Mahak Agarwal, Steering Board Member, ITACUS Network

"Look below the surface —our cities' future may be underground."

As climate challenges intensify, underground spaces offer a hidden opportunity for urban adaptation and resilience. Mahak's workshop explored how rethinking underground spaces, beyond just subways and parking lots, can create safer, cooler and more liveable cities.

An interactive activity engaged participants in mapping their home cities and recalling their first impressions of underground spaces. Common associations included subways, parking lots, coffee shops, eerie environments and chaotic layouts. These perceptions highlighted the need for thoughtful, human-centric design to make underground spaces more inviting and functional.

Key Takeaways:

- Rethink Underground Spaces: Beyond transit and parking, they can enhance urban resilience and liveability.

- Perception Matters: Thoughtful design and governance can transform underground areas into safe, inviting spaces.

- Sustainability & Smart Planning: Repurposing existing underground spaces is a cost-effective, eco-friendly solution for growing cities.

Walk the K100: Citizens' Waterway Meet

MOD Foundation conducted a guided walk along the K100 Citizens' Waterway, offering participants an in-depth look at the rejuvenation project.

The Project showcases how smart urban planning can solve flooding issues while creating active public spaces.
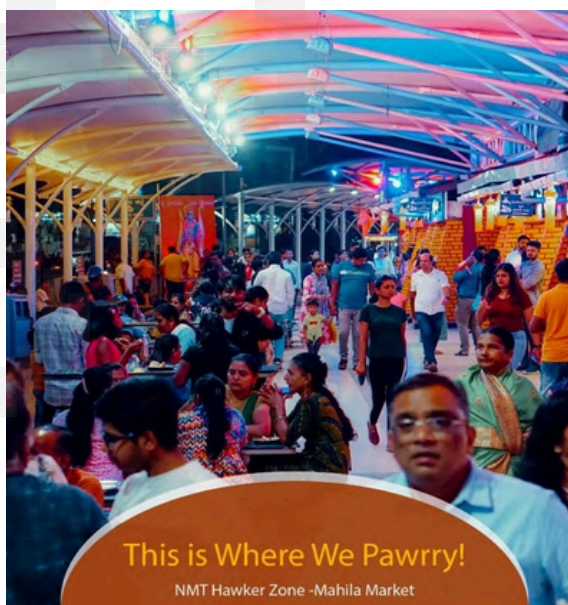

The K100, a 12km stormwater drain running from Majestic to Bellandur Lake, was once a seasonal stream but deteriorated into an open sewer due to encroachments and pollution. In 2020, the Government of Karnataka launched a revival effort, removing 30,000 tons of silt, diverting 100 MLD of sewage and reconstructing key infrastructure. MOD Foundation, which played a crucial role in conceptualizing and managing the project, facilitated the walk, allowing participants to engage with the design team and understand the transformation process.

Celebrating the City at Night:
Mahila Night Market

Syeda Afreen Banu, Managing Director, Belagavi Smart City

Syeda Afreen Banu, MD of Belagavi Smart City, presented the Mahila Night Market (Tinisu Katte – Khau Katta), an initiative aimed at creating a safe, vibrant, and inclusive women-led night market in Belagavi. The market is designed to boost local economies, support female entrepreneurs, strengthen community bonds and enhance public spaces in Belagavi.

This is Where We Pawrry!
NMT Hawker Zone -Mahila Market

The Mahila Night Market overcomes challenges like congestion, inadequate vendor facilities and waste management issues and addresses infrastructure gaps while ensuring safety and accessibility.

Key Takeaways:

💡 **Women-Led Entrepreneurship:** A ₹1.2 crore investment supports self-sustaining businesses run by women. The market not only boosts local businesses but also enhances women's confidence in public spaces.

💡 **Improved Infrastructure:** Features include proper sanitation, lighting, Wi-Fi access and modern vendor stalls.

💡 **Sustainability & Smart City Integration:** Waste management, eco-friendly practices and digital services like online ordering ensure long-term success.

Lahori Raatein: Lahore After Dark

Khurram Farid Bargatt, Urban Planner and Founder, Place Making Pakistan

Khurram Farid Bargatt offered a compelling look into Lahore's vibrant night-time culture - a city alive with food streets, heritage sites and community spaces that shape its unique identity after dark. Mr. Bargatt shared how inclusive, people-centered design can transform public spaces.

"Lahore at night is a fascinating blend of history, commerce and community life. By adopting a people-first approach, we can create urban spaces that celebrate our cultural heritage while ensuring sustainability."

Artistic interventions, community-led initiatives and the adaptive reuse of heritage areas are creating engaging, accessible and lively urban spaces in Lahore. Addressing key challenges such as safety, mobility and sustainability, he emphasised the need to blend modern urban planning with historical character.

VIDEO LINK

Kolkata by Night
Swati Mishra, The Makers Collaborative
& Placemaking West Bengal Hub

VIDEO LINK

Swati Mishra's video compilation, Kolkata by Night (Raatire Kolkata), captured not just the visuals of nightlife, but the everyday rhythms and perceptions of people who inhabit the city's public spaces at night. Tracing a vibrant route from Maula Ali to Allen Park and Park Street, it highlighted how neighbourhoods, festivals, and familiar landmarks come alive in unique ways, mapping an emotional and social landscape of the city's nocturnal life.

Saif: There's a difference in people's mood in the morning and in the evening or night. They are calmer, even look happier, are not in a hurry unlike in the mornings when everyone is rushing.

Public space is not just about infrastructure—it's about people, their perceptions, the need for community and the right to belong, even after dark.

An important element of this exercise was its interviews, which revealed striking differences in how perceptions of public space differ across gender, and how narratives can either empower or restrict people's freedom to move and express themselves in the city.

Men often spoke about the need to return home early, and expressed concerns about safety and reliable transport, especially in relation to women's security.

Women shared how they enjoyed being out after dark, and most said they felt safe in public spaces. Several noted that media narratives, more than personal experience, shaped their sense of vulnerability.

The City at Night: A Cinematic Compilation
Anand Varadaraj, Bengaluru International Film Festival

Urban landscapes have been used to frame some of the most iconic love stories in South Indian films. Anand Varadaraj showcased a video compilation on how regional cinema has captured the romance of city nights.

The video took the audience on a nostalgic journey through Kannada cinematic history, highlighting how nightscapes have served as powerful visual metaphors for love, longing and connection. From classic black-and-white films to modern-day urban romances, the video showcased how filmmakers have skilfully used the city's nocturnal charm to enhance storytelling.
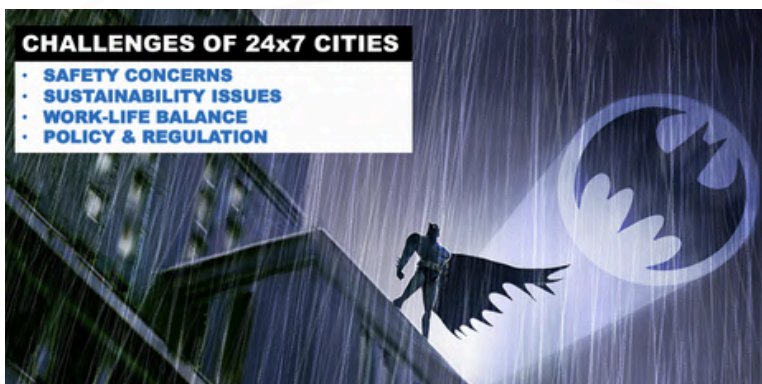
VIDEO LINK

Making Bengaluru Loveable Again:
No Bedtime for Urban Design

Naresh Narsimhan, MOD Foundation

In his inimitable style, Naresh explored how placemaking after dark can transform Bengaluru into a city that is not just functional but truly lovable 24X7.

What are 24X7 cities?

A city that operates seamlessly both day and night, providing:
- Reliable transport and public services around the clock.
- A safe and inclusive environment for all citizens.
- A thriving night economy that supports diverse lifestyles and businesses.

Why are 24X7 cities important?

Naresh highlighted the economic, social, and infrastructural advantages of cities that embrace a 24x7 model:
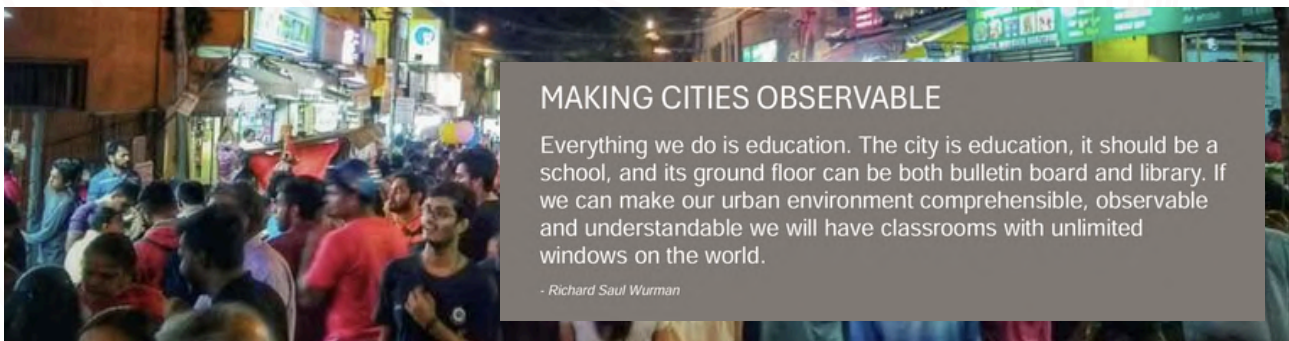- Boosts economic activity by extending business hours
- Improves urban efficiency by spreading out infrastructure usage
- Enhances cultural and social vibrancy, making cities more engaging and inclusive

Placemaking has been biased towards daytime.We need to create cities that function 24x7, ensuring accessibility, safety and vibrancy beyond traditional hours.

Challenges and What's Needed

While the concept is promising, challenges such as safety concerns, regulatory barriers, sustainability and work-life balance need to be addressed. He stressed the importance of placemaking that goes beyond what is visible, focusing on "infra-culture"—the underlying urban systems, such as drainage, mobility and information networks, that support a city's functionality.

Naresh spoke about MOD Foundation's project on Church Street as a successful example of after-dark placemaking. Pedestrian-friendly design, lighting and public amenities have revitalized the street into a dynamic, accessible urban space.

MAKING CITIES OBSERVABLE

Everything we do is education. The city is education, it should be a school, and its ground floor can be both bulletin board and library. If we can make our urban environment comprehensible, observable and understandable we will have classrooms with unlimited windows on the world.

- Richard Saul Wurman

Key Takeaways:

- **Placemaking shouldn't end at sunset** – Cities must be designed for life after dark, ensuring accessibility, safety and a thriving night economy.

- **Urban design must go beyond what's visible** – Infra-culture, including drainage, mobility and sustainability systems, is key to a functional city.

- **Sustainable urbanism is the future** – Thoughtfully designed projects like Church Street and the K100 Waterway demonstrate that integrating sustainability, public space activation and infrastructure planning can create cities that are resilient, inclusive and future-ready.

Bengaluru Tindi Beedi: A Culinary Walking Experience

Led by Rajeev Malagi, this immersive food walk took participants on a journey through Bengaluru's rich street food culture and iconic urban streetscapes. Beginning at Church Street and travelling via Namma Metro to National College Station, the group made its way to the legendary *Thindi Beedi* (VV Puram Food Street), a bustling stretch renowned for its rich street food.

Participants sampled some of the city's most beloved dishes at handpicked stalls, each known for their culinary legacy and local flavours. From soft *Thatte Idli* and buttery *Benne Dosa*, *Masala Puri* and *Gulkand* Ice Cream, each stop offered a taste of local heritage and community spirit.

This walk through *Thindi Beedi* was a vibrant sensory journey, celebrating food as a gateway to Bengaluru's local identity and its living street culture.
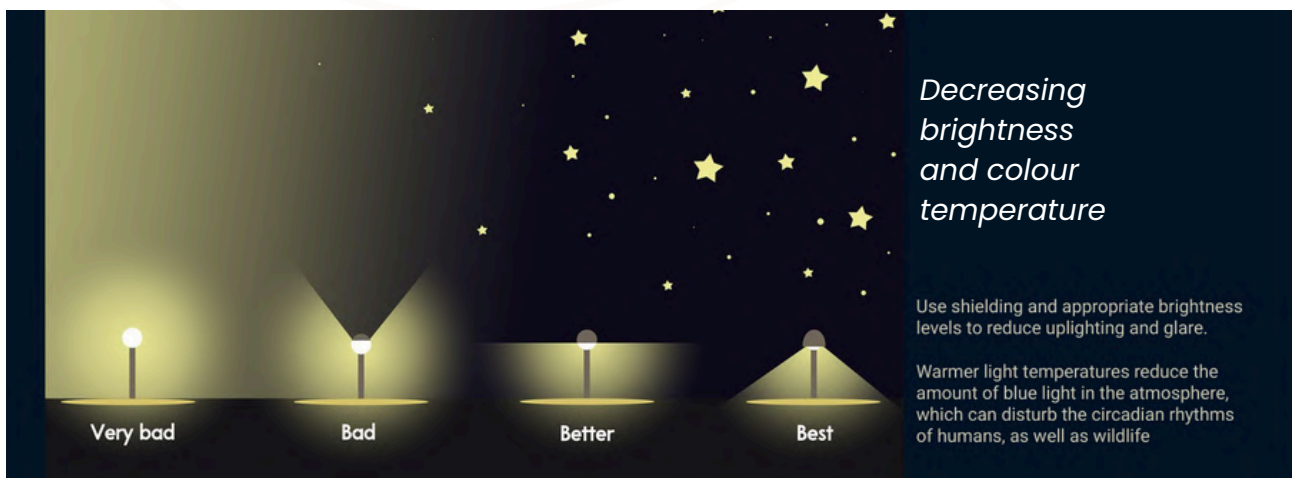
Shaping the Dark: Designing Public Spaces for Beauty and Biodiversity

Meghana Manjunath, Public Landscape and Urbanism Studio;
Dr. Ganesan Rengaiyan, ATREE

As cities grow and artificial lighting dominates the night, we often overlook its impact on nature. Meghana Manjunath and Dr. Ganesan Rengaiyan brought attention to how thoughtful urban design can enhance biodiversity while creating more beautiful and sustainable public spaces.

Their work in Bengaluru's urban gardens and lake parks demonstrates how integrating native plant species, ecological mapping and community participation can transform neglected spaces into thriving ecosystems.

Decreasing brightness and colour temperature

Use shielding and appropriate brightness levels to reduce uplighting and glare.

Warmer light temperatures reduce the amount of blue light in the atmosphere, which can disturb the circadian rhythms of humans, as well as wildlife

Very bad   Bad   Better   Best

1. Planting species that are important for nocturnal insects such as moths, fireflies and beetles

Flying Foxes in the Urban Sky

Gliding like kites at dusk, these large fruit bats roam the city in search of young foliage, flowers, and fruits. Their favorites include:

1. Mango leaves and fruits
2. Banana
3. Grapes
4. Mahua
5. Kadamba
6. Horse radish
7. Cannonball tree blossoms.

A major challenge highlighted was light pollution—a growing issue in Bengaluru that disrupts nocturnal wildlife, including migratory birds and insects. The presentation gave key insights on how to design public places after dark keeping in mind:

- Safety and Psychological Security
- Alternate Sensory Input
- Biodiversity

Dog-nosed fruit bat feeding on Ramphal in Sampigehalli

Key Takeaways:

Balance Light and Nature: Thoughtful lighting strategies, such as minimizing artificial brightness and using warmer tones, can help cities coexist with nocturnal wildlife.

Plant for Biodiversity: Introducing native species supports local ecosystems, providing food and shelter for pollinators, fruit bats and amphibians.

Community as Stewards: Engaging local communities in conservation efforts fosters long-term ecological and social benefits, turning public spaces into shared natural sanctuaries.

The Night Watch: Governing Public Spaces After Dark

Moderated by Rajeev Malagi, WRI India
Speakers: Shekhar H. Tekkannavar, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru; Chandri, Aravani Art Project; Nalini Shekar, Director, Hasiru Dala; waste workers and youth

This important session focused on what it means to govern and protect public spaces in Bengaluru after dark, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized communities like women, transgender persons, waste pickers, youth and informal sector workers.

The discussion began with an introduction to Bengaluru's polycentric identity, where urban, peri-urban and diverse socio-economic realities coexist. The panel brought together voices from policy, enforcement, community art and grassroots work to explore how the city functions, and who gets to feel safe after dark.

The session underscored that night-time governance is not just about infrastructure—it is about equity, visibility, and empathy for every person who calls the city home.

Key Contributions from Speakers:

Nalini spoke powerfully about the lived realities of waste pickers, their lack of recognition, the risks they face while working at night, and the collective wins—like ID cards and better working conditions—secured through persistent advocacy.

DCP Shekhar H. Tekkannavar outlined the police's efforts, from 112 emergency response to gender-sensitization training and CCTV surveillance, emphasizing responsiveness and public trust-building.

Chandri, representing the Aravani Art Project, shared how public art empowers transgender communities, shifting narratives and reclaiming space with dignity.

Youth participants and waste workers shared on-ground experiences of harassment and called for self-defense training, safe transport and inclusive opportunities.

Key Highlights:

Recognition and Protection for Informal Workers: Waste pickers and domestic workers urgently need safer, more dignified workspaces and continued inclusion in policymaking.
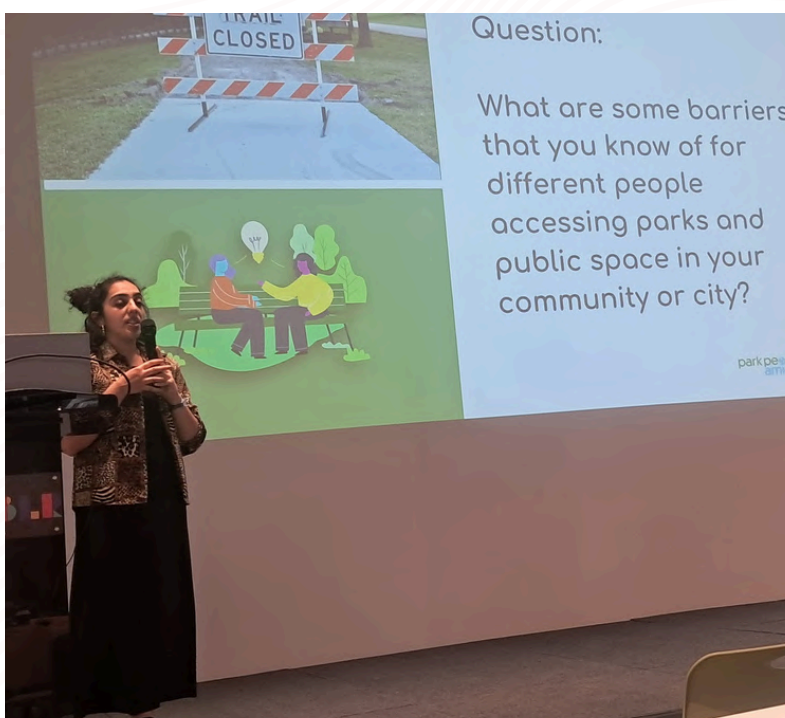
Safety Beyond Surveillance: While emergency systems and policing matter, true safety comes from community engagement, responsive governance and changing societal attitudes.

Art as Resistance and Inclusion: Transgender and marginalized groups are using public art to reclaim space, build respect, and foster inclusive urban narratives.

Workshop: Engaging Diverse Communities in Urban Parks
Ayesha Talreja, Park People

Drawing insights and examples from her work at Park People in Canada, Ayesha Talreja focused on the importance of making public parks more inclusive and welcoming for diverse communities. Through an interactive session, participants were encouraged to share their own experiences, identify barriers to inclusivity and explore strategies for creating more accessible and vibrant public spaces.

26

Canadian park users

Community Safety & Cultural Connection

Ayesha posed an essential question: What does community safety in parks look like? This discussion highlighted the need for both physical safety measures (better lighting, security) and social safety measures (community engagement, shared responsibility). She also touched on the importance of cultural initiatives in public spaces with examples from her organisation showing how parks can be platforms for cultural exchange and deeper community connections.

Key Takeaways:

- **Understanding Barriers:** Identifying the social, cultural, and physical challenges that prevent diverse communities from accessing parks is crucial to creating truly inclusive spaces.

- **Community-Centric Strategies:** Inclusivity should be designed with the community, not just for them. Active engagement and listening to local voices are key to effective placemaking.

- **Promoting Safety & Connection:** Parks should be safe, welcoming spaces where people can connect. Cultural initiatives, safety discussions and community programming can help build stronger, more inclusive public spaces.

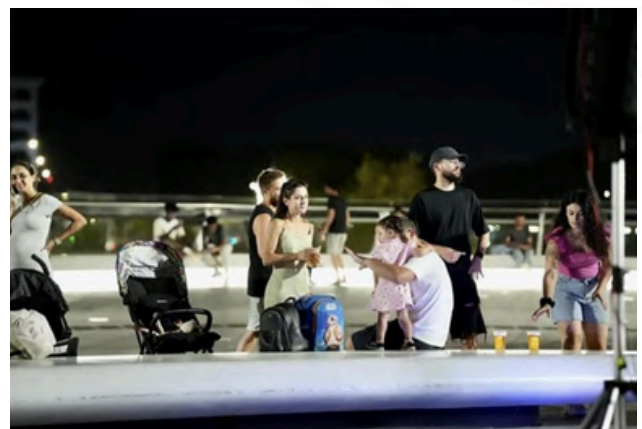# Rights to the Night: Managing the 24x7 City for All

Simone d'Antonio, EU Urbact CitiesAfterDark & Global Covenant of Mayors

Simone d'Antonio explored the evolving concept of the night-time economy, particularly in European cities, and how cities can be more inclusive, safe and vibrant after dark.

Across Europe, cities are embracing the night in creative ways. **Tallinn** empowers youth to co-design night activities in parks, creating a sense of ownership. **Nicosia** has turned public squares into dance floors and classrooms for aspiring DJs, while **Braga's** night nurseries that support parents working after dark aim to reshape the narrative of night-time economy in Europe.

Braga's night nurseries and Nicosia's public squares turned into dance floors.

> ## "A well-managed city at night isn't just functional – it's alive."

Governance plays a key role in making this vision work. Cities are adopting integrated action plans to balance safety, sustainability and economic growth while ensuring that night-time spaces remain accessible to all.

Key Takeaways:

- **Inclusive Night-Time Economy:** The need for urban spaces to be accessible and enjoyable for all citizens during nighttime.

- **Innovative Governance Models:** The importance of integrated action plans and collaborative approaches to manage the night-time economy effectively.

- **Community Engagement:** Successful initiatives involve local communities in the planning and execution of night-time activities, enhancing cultural vibrancy and social cohesion.

Masterclass: Public Space Illumination

Maria Guell-Ordis, Founder, La Invisible Studio, Barcelona;
Assisted by Girish Rao, K-Lite

Maria Guell-Ordis explored the poetic and practical role of light in shaping public spaces, offering participants a deep dive into lighting as a tool for enhancing atmosphere, perception and experience. Drawing from La Invisible Studio's interdisciplinary practice, the session emphasised that light is not just a technical element, it communicates emotion and can transform environments.

Participants were introduced to foundational concepts such as colour temperature, light-material interaction and the strategic use of direction and location to shape mood and function. Through project examples, the session highlighted how lighting design can balance aesthetic storytelling with architectural integrity.

Maria showcased her studio's work across museums, homes and civic spaces following the approach of "designing experiences through light".

From the softness of the Empordà House, to the innovative LED display at the Balenciaga Museum, and the sensitive restoration of Saló Sant Jordi, each project reflected a commitment to blending artistic vision with human experience.

The masterclass concluded with a **hands-on demonstration**, where participants engaged directly with a variety of lighting fixtures provided by K-Lite. With lights of different shapes, sizes, and intensities laid out, Maria and Girish encouraged everyone to touch, observe and discuss how each light could be used in different spatial contexts and for different design intentions. This tactile segment offered a practical and accessible introduction to the world of lighting, making abstract concepts immediately relatable. It was a fitting close to the session given the theme of **After Dark Placemaking.**

Day 3 | Sunday, 16th February

Placemaking India Project Bank Showcase

Across the country, hyperlocal projects led by designers and civically engaged communities often face challenges in accessing resources for implementation. Existing funding mechanisms don't always meet their needs. To address this gap, **Placemaking India launched a call for projects in 2024 with the goal of collectivising these efforts,** categorising them into themes, and connecting them with potential funders. We also aimed to explore grant opportunities and provide mentorship to projects in need of support.

We received 30 entries, from which 10 projects were selected to receive funding and resources. The remaining were connected with mentors and received feedback to help them evolve from the idea stage into implementable projects. We continue to handhold these project teams as they evolve their capacities and pitches.

If you are a local funder or part of a CSR initiative interested in supporting our efforts, please reach out to us.

People | Place | Paani – Reimagining Sawantwadi's Moti Talav
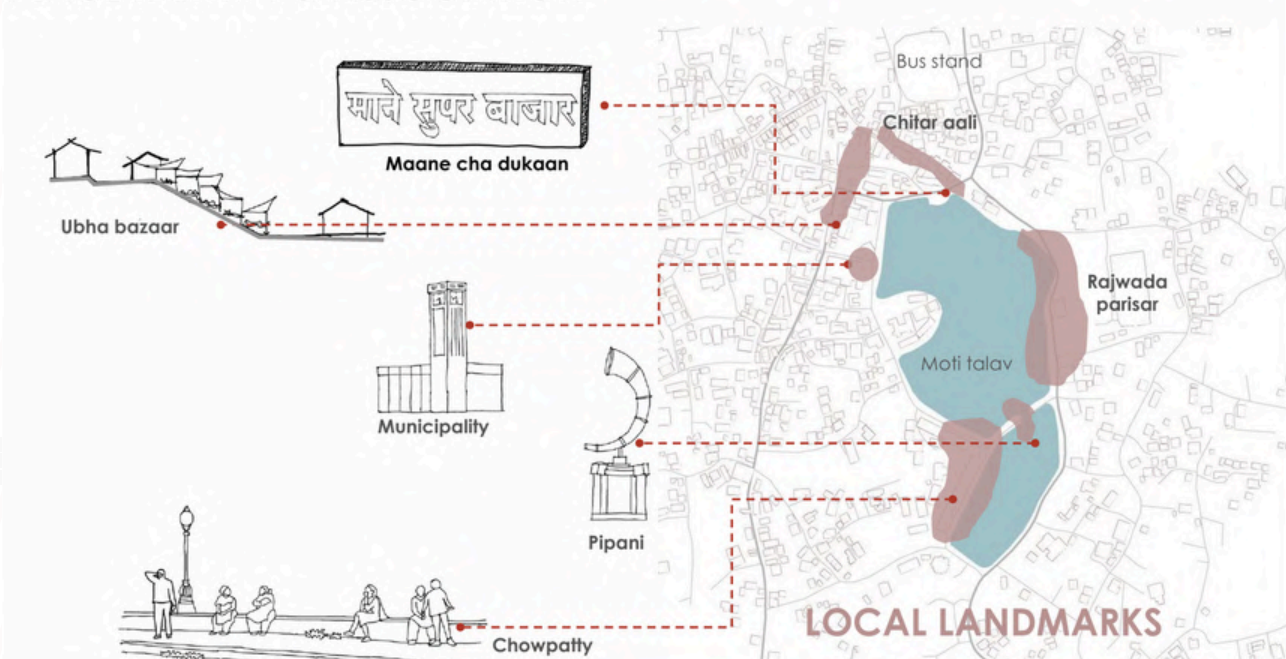Swarada Poyarekar, ThirtySquare

Moti Talav, nestled in the heart of Sawantwadi, is a historic town on the Maharashtra-Goa border that brings together history, culture, and community. Swarada's **People | Place | Paani project** is breathing new life into this precinct, turning it into a thriving public space where people can connect, celebrate, and reclaim their shared heritage.

The project aims to transform Moti Talav into a vibrant, multi-functional space that serves as a community gathering spot, an economic catalyst, and one that celebrates its own local heritage. It also ensures the lake and its surroundings remain ecologically healthy, accessible, and integrated into daily life, so it continues to be a source of joy and connection for generations.

Key Takeaways:

💡 **A Place for People:** Streets like Chitari Aali and Bazaar Street will be reimagined with native plants, better walkways, and smarter water management, making them more inviting and accessible.

💡 **A Boost for the Local Economy –** Increased foot traffic will create opportunities for small businesses, from lacquerware artisans to street vendors, strengthening local livelihoods.

💡 **A Celebration of Culture & Heritage:** Sawantwadi's rich history will come alive through heritage walks, cultural programs, and interactive storytelling, keeping traditions relevant and engaging.

💡 **Sustainability at the Core:** The project integrates ecological restoration strategies, including improved drainage and water conservation, to maintain Moti Talav's environmental balance.

💡 **Community-Led Transformation :** Local voices play a key role in shaping this space, ensuring it reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who use it every day.

PLACE IDENTITY & ASSOCIATION

माने सुपर बाजार
Maane cha dukaan

Ubha bazaar

Municipality

Pipani

Chowpatty

Bus stand

Chitar aali

Rajwada parisar

Moti talav

LOCAL LANDMARKS

Light in the Heart of Darkness: Transforming Santhal Country

Sreejith Ajith, **Carousel of Dreams**

Carousel of Dream's Orion Park Project is a beacon of hope in the heart of Santhal community in Dumka, Jharkhand. Designed to provide safe, sustainable, and joyful spaces for children from marginalized communities, the project has transformed an abandoned, littered piece of land into a thriving hub of play, creativity, and community engagement.

The project began with the vision to give every child the right to play and grow. What was once an uneven and waste-ridden plot is now a vibrant playground, built using 95% recycled and natural materials. This initiative didn't just create a play area; it empowered the community by involving local stakeholders, training them in maintenance, and engaging children in the final stages of construction. The playground was built in just 30 days with funding arranged by Placemaking India, demonstrating how collaboration, sustainability, and vision can create meaningful change in a short time.

VIDEO LINK

- 💡 **Play is a Right, Not a Privilege :** Every child deserves a safe space to play, and this project ensures just that.

- 💡 **Community-Driven Change is Sustainable :** By training locals and involving children in the building process, the project fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, ensuring long-term maintenance.

- 💡 **Small Initiatives Can Spark Big Transformations:** With limited resources but a strong vision, the project turned an overlooked piece of land into a haven of joy, learning, and inclusion.

Indigenous Placemaking in the Eastern Ghats

Kumareswari Rajendran, DCube

The Jawadhu Hills in the Eastern Ghats are a living repository of indigenous wisdom, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. This project led by Kumareswari highlights the urgent need to preserve and uplift the region's people, environment, and traditions, ensuring sustainable development while honouring its rich history.

Efforts are underway to document traditional knowledge, map biodiversity, and protect historical sites. Awareness initiatives, including nature walks and educational events, engage both local communities and external stakeholders in the effort to preserve these assets.

Beyond preservation, the project tackles urgent community needs, such as sanitation, poor infrastructure, and limited livelihood opportunities. By building essential amenities and launching women's entrepreneurship programs, it creates sustainable solutions that improve daily life.

Collaboration is key. Guest lectures and expert training introduce sustainable practices, while efforts to document and promote indigenous traditions aim for UNESCO recognition, securing a future where heritage and progress go hand in hand.
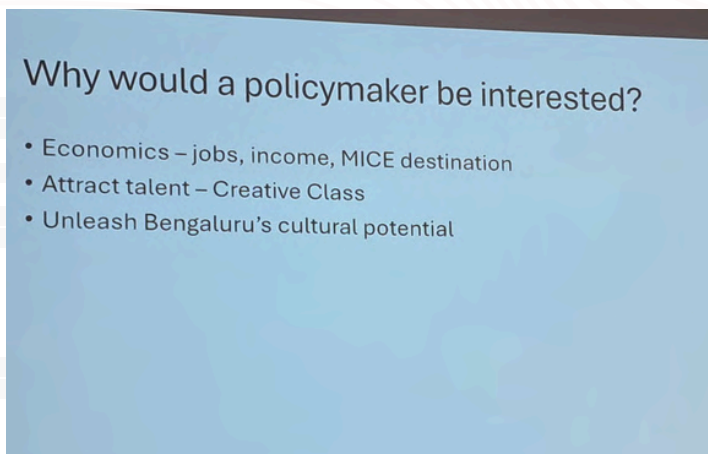
Key Takeaways:

- 💡 **Conservation isn't just about preserving history:** It's about securing better living conditions, economic opportunities, and dignity for indigenous communities.

- 💡 **From toilets to safer roads:** Basic amenities are critical for health, education, and community well-being.

- 💡 **Indigenous knowledge holds the key to sustainability:** Preserving traditions while building futures ensures that the Jawadhu Hills thrive for generations to come.

Concluding Keynote
Rajeev Gowda, Ex-Member of Parliament

Rajeev Gowda's keynote painted a compelling vision for Bengaluru—a city brimming with creative potential yet underutilized cultural infrastructure. He spoke not just as a policymaker but as someone who grew up near Bengaluru, witnessing both its growth and its missed opportunities. While the city is globally recognized for its tech industry and pleasant climate, its cultural identity remains undefined.

Drawing parallels with London's West End and New York's Broadway, Gowda argued that a thriving arts and nightlife scene could transform Bengaluru into a cultural and economic powerhouse. Beyond entertainment, he stressed that a well-developed evening culture would fuel job creation, tourism, and the MICE sector. Bengaluru has all the ingredients to be a global creative hub—what's needed is the vision and collaboration to bring it to life.

Testimonials

It was a fantastic opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences, reinforcing the importance of building a strong community of action and thought. The sessions were of excellent quality, and the range of topics sparked truly enriching discussions. I came away with deeper insights into the challenges of urban development in India, which I know will inform my future work here. Beyond the intellectual stimulation, I was moved by the warm, welcoming atmosphere you created; a real spirit of camaraderie.

Special thanks to the panelists and the entire BLR Design Center team for making this event so engaging. Looking forward to staying connected and continuing the conversations!

Laïla Melaz,
Consultant,
Sustainable Urban Development

Many thanks to Vineeta for inviting us to share our work in the placemaking space—it was an incredible experience! The energy and openness of the event were truly special. I do wish I had a chance to explore future collaboration possibilities with more of you.

A warm thank you to the BLR Design Centre and MOD Foundation for your generous hospitality!

Xavier Bustos Serrat,
Cities Connection Project

"I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences with all of you. A heartfelt thank you to Vineeta, Placemaking India, and the MOD Foundation for the warm invitation and thoughtful care throughout the event.

It's always a privilege for us to deepen our understanding of India, and this experience was both inspiring and enriching.

I look forward to staying in touch and hopefully seeing you again soon."

Maria Guell Ordis
La Invisible Studio

Thank you for curating such a thought-provoking and inspiring Placemaking India conference focused on after-dark placemaking. I found the experience incredibly enriching.

The sessions on nighttime strategies and the impact of light pollution particularly resonated with me. I hadn't previously considered the role of thoughtful lighting design in supporting both biodiversity and vibrant public spaces—this was an eye-opener.

I deeply appreciated the blend of theory and practice. The walks through Bengaluru's public spaces brought the sessions to life and made the experience even more impactful.

Beyond the sessions, it was a pleasure to engage with passionate peers and exchange knowledge. I left feeling energized, with new perspectives and a renewed commitment to creating inclusive, vibrant urban spaces.

Kirti Zala
aProCh

AfterDark Placemaking Weekend India 2025

Agenda

Thursday, 13th February   DAY 0 Pre-Event

1. **NAMMA STHALA, NAMMA SUKHA: The Politics of Placemaking** - Architect Vijay Narnapatti, *Affiliate Member, IUDI Keynote*

2. **Recovering A City** - Bangalore Architect Soumitro Ghosh, *Matthew and Ghosh*

3. **Triangulating Public Space, Social Housing and Public Facilities: The European Experience** - In dialogue with Architect Xavier Bustos Serrat, *Cities Connection Project, Barcelona*

Friday, 14th February   DAY 1

1. **Inaugural Panel Creative Nights: Culture and Placemaking in the 24 hour city** - Prathima Manohar, *Founder, The Urban Vision*; Amitabh Kumar, *Artist*; Kanchana KV, *CEO of Nice Network*

2. **Government-led Placemaking: Success Stories and Learnings** - Jeenal Sawla, *Consultant, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs* (by video)

3. **Workshop: Urban Climate Adaptation through Underground Placemaking** - Mahak Agarwal, *Steering Board Member, ITACUS Network*

4. **Walk the K100 Citizens' Waterway Meet** - *MOD Foundation*

5. **Celebrating the City at Night: Mahila Night Market** - Syeda Afreen Banu, *MD, Belagavi Smart City*

6. راتیںLahori **(Lahori Raatein)** - Khurram Farid Bargatt, *Sheher Saaz*

7. **Kolkata by Night /** রাত্রির কলকাতা - Swati Mishra, *The Makers Collaborative*

8. **The City at Night in Popular Cinema: A Compilation** - Anand Vardarajan, *Bengaluru International Film Festival*

9. **Making Bengaluru Loveable Again** - Naresh Narasimhan, *MOD Foundation*

10. **Journeys After Dark – Thindi Beedi**

Saturday, 15th February   DAY 2

1. **Shaping the Dark : Designing Public Spaces for Beauty and Biodiversity** - Meghana Manjunath, *Public Landscape and Urbanism Studio (PLUS)*; Ganesan Rengaian, *Atree*

2. **Workshop: Engaging Diverse Communities in Urban Parks** - Ayesha Talreja, *Park People*

3. **The Night Watch: Governing Public Spaces After Dark** - Shekhar H. Tekkannavar, *Deputy Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru;* Chandri, *Aravani Art Project;* Nalini Shekar, *Director, Hasiru Dala;* waste workers and youth
Moderated by Rajeev Malagi, *WRI India*

4. **Rights to the Night: Managing the 24x7 City for All** - Simone d'Antonio, *EU Urbact CitiesAfterDark and Global Covenant of Mayors*

5. **Masterclass on Public Space Illumination** - Maria Guell-Ordis, *La Invisible Studio, Barcelona;* Assisted by Girish Rao, *K-Lite*

6. **Theme Dinner hosted by *The Smart Citizen***

Sunday, 16th February   DAY 3

1. **People|Place|Paani in Sawantwadi** - Swarada Poyarekar, *ThirtySquare*

2. **Light in the Heart of Darkness in Santhal Country** - Sreejith Ajith, *Carousel of Dreams*

3. **Indigenous Placemaking in the Eastern Ghats** - Kumareswari Rajendran, *DCube*

4. **Concluding Keynote** - Rajeev Gowda, *Ex-Member of Parliament*

5. **Farewell Lunch hosted by *The Urban Vision***

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Feb 14-16
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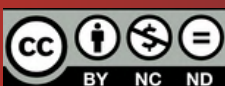**Event Logo**: Saurav Roy, *Roy.Studio*

Photos: Pooja L, Harika H and Maneesh

This report is written and produced by Swati Mishra of *The Makers Collaborative*, and designed by Abhishek Mitra.

The Makers
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Metrobhoomi is an urban consultancy based in Pune and the organiser of Placemaking Weekend India 2025.

Placemaking India is one of 30+ global affiliates of PlacemakingX based in Brooklyn, NY.