

Dhanya Rajagopal

Participatory Urban Design | Place Management | Creative Strategy

Legionowo, Poland

[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Email](#)

+48 571052005

Experience

Community-led Initiative, Thiruvanniyur Heritage Precinct

2025 - Present

- Raised 1.5 lakh INR from [Socratus Foundation](#) seed funding to reclaim public spaces in a heritage neighbourhood in Chennai. - [Video Link](#)
- Researched & designed Digital Neighbourhood Archives & Walk guide - [Link](#)
- Organised a successful 2-day pilot event and spatial improvement - [Link](#)
- Secured support from Ward Council & City Commissioner for Permanent improvements.
- Volunteer & local talent mobilising for project outputs.
- Social Media Communications, Project Identity & Outreach Strategy

Participatory Design-Researcher, The Thinking Cauldron | Poland/Global

Apr 2024 - Present

- Researcher: [2026 Happy Cities Index](#) for the city of Rzeszów, Poland
- Rebranding workshop facilitation for Amura Healthcare startup in Chennai, India
- Aditya Birla Group: Design-research consultant for a new coffee shop chain, including competitive analysis, sensory observations, user insights, a comprehensive brand design workshop, and insights & recommendations.
- Co-lead for urban infrastructure audits, scoring checklists, and content strategy for Chennai's [Inclusive Design Guidelines](#), impacting 60% of the city's population.
- Developed Place Brand Strategy for [Ramsgate Experience Improvement District \(UK\)](#), including website copy & advocacy manifesto.
- Co-drafted the *EU Parklet Manifesto 2025* with City Space Architecture.

Founding Member & Part-Time Program Manager | [Placemaking India](#) (Remote)

Feb 2018 - Present

- Administered and managed a national public space project bank, securing funds for 3 local initiatives through strategic storytelling, grants and international partnerships.
- Matched 10 project teams with mentors, facilitating ongoing project needs, capturing success stories for newsletters and social media.

Architectural & Research Writing Tutor, Part-time | Delopus, India (Remote)

May 2024 - Current

- Online courses for architecture students - Architectural & research writing,
- SEO basics and ethical AI practices for writing.

Director of Placemaking | [MIXD](#) (Renamed XDGLabs), India/Singapore

Sep 2022 - Apr 2024

- Designed and co-authored 2 whitepapers on [Experience Improvement Districts](#) cited in a New South Wales Policy paper on improvement districts, and adopted in BKC Mumbai, & Ramsgate, UK.
- Selected UNEP Role Model Cities Generation Restoration Grant entry on behalf of Jaipur District and [Dhun](#) Regenerative Village.
- Place Brand strategy for Cultural & Innovation District models in India.
- Represented MIXD and presented at Urban Land Institute, India events

Design Curriculum (Temporary) | [Learning Community at Quest](#), Chennai, India

May 2023 - Sep 2023

Delivered an urban design curriculum and mapping workshops for middle school.

Technical Skills

Project Management

Product management, Notion, Trello, Project Charter, feasibility studies, Budgeting, Agile Methods, Theory of Change, MS Suite

Design

Adobe Suite, Figma, Miro, AutoCad, Sketchup, Design Workshops, AI Image prompting

Research & Mapping

Google Analytics, QGIS, User Journey Research, StoryMaps, OpenStreetMaps, Photovoice, Zotero, Notebook AI, Brand research

Communication

Notion, Report & Grant writing, Newsletters, Blogs, Wixsites, Hootsuite, MailChimp, Chat GPT, Perplexity, SEO Basics

Languages

Fluent: Tamil/English
C1 in Sanskrit/Hindi
A2 in Polish

Online Courses

1. [2024 Google PM](#) Professional Certificate
2. [2023 CSR: Business for Good, LSE](#)
3. 2021 Radical Transformational Leadership - BBI Mapping Course
4. [2020 Community Engagement, University of Michigan, Edx](#)

Affiliations & Licenses

Placemaking India, Founding Member (since 2017)

Council of Architecture, India (since 2016)

[Debating Matters India](#) Alumnus

Director of Programs | [PLUS](#), Chennai/Bengaluru, India

Mar 2021 - Aug 2022

- Led a team of 5 landscape architects and collaborated with external partners.
- Delivered SMEs consultation workshops, site study and participatory mapping of Adyar River Basin with extensive coordination with government stakeholders
- Led '[Cities for Play](#)' community engagement & [report](#) in a slum resettlement site, impacting 120+ children, and leading to the creation of inclusive spaces & programs.

Programs & Communication Associate | [Design Trust for Public Space](#), NYC

Aug 2018 - Aug 2020

- Involved in RFP process, interactive digital campaigns, and in-person events.
- Asset mapping for "[Staten Island Future Culture](#)" project
- Research for NYC Plaza Program, Community Land Trust map for South Bronx Unite.
- Created interactive social campaigns, website content and weekly blogs and supported the Peer-Learning program by our Design Trust Fellows.

Placemaking Consultant | [Agora Partners](#), NYC, USA

Mar 2020 - Aug 2020 (Part-time)

- Cultural Programming, feasibility studies and placemaking interventions for multiple [mixed-use development](#) and [recreational spaces](#) across North America.

Spring Research Intern | [Gehl Institute](#), NYC, USA

Feb 2017 - May 2017

- Updated the [Gehl Public Life 2.0 Toolkit](#) to make it more contextually adaptable.
- Created an open-source database for all community-based tools available
- Conducted interviews for the [Public Life Champions](#) blog.

Graduate Assistant | [Pratt Institute](#), Brooklyn, US

Feb 2018 - July 2019

- Researched funding models of 15 NYC Plazas & Business Improvement Districts
- Co-curated Pratt Career Development Expo, attracting 100+ companies.
- Mentored 25 undergrads, resulting in placements and interviews.

Architect / Researcher | [Studio Decode](#), Bengaluru, India

Oct 2015 - Jan 2017

- 3D & 2D drawings: Concept to Construction drawings
- LEED documentation, feasibility studies, and client presentations.
- End-to-end interior renovation, BOQ, tender drawings, and material study.
- Large-scale campus planning, site visits and vendor interactions

Education

MS Urban Placemaking & Management

2017 - 2019

Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, USA | 3.75 / 4 GPA (Hons.)

2018 Cuba Spring Studio Travel Fellowship, Pratt Institute GCPE

Bachelor of Architecture

2010 - 2015

MCE Anna University Affiliated, Chennai, India | 8.3 GPA

Thesis selected to be showcased at NIASA 2015

Certification: Teaching English as a Foreign Language Course (TEFL) 2024

The TEFL Academy, UK

Volunteer Work

Youth Mentor: Professional advice & academic support for design graduates.

2020: [Ann Foundation](#), English Tutor for 20 children in rural Tamil Nadu.

2015 [Debating Matters India](#), Alumnus, Mentor & Organising Team

Research

2018 ICSD Columbia University, '[Los Sitios: Connecting People to People Assets](#)'

2019 -2021 [Crowdsourced data for COVID Critical Infrastructure](#)

2020 [Citizen Matters: Public Spaces as Critical Infrastructure](#)

Awards & Recognition

2025 Featured Articles on the Community Design Initiative, Chennai, India - [Link](#)

2019 Winners, Reimagine Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia - [Link](#)

2018 Pratt Institute Graduate Student Engagement Fund, Brooklyn, New York - [Link](#)

Workshops + Teaching Engagement

2024 '[Make it Happen](#)' podcast by Azbah Ansari, Peacemakers Pakistani

2023 US Consulate in Chennai, Earth Day Inclusive City mapping for educators

2023 CEPT University, India M.Arch, 'Coastal Commons lecture series'

2020 [Journal of Public Space Webinar](#), Future Safe and Sustainable Urbanisation

2019 [Landscape Research Group Webinar](#): selected international Landscape Justice project

I hold a valid legal work & residence permit for Poland - Karta Pobytu (as of March 2025).