

# Dhanya Rajagopal

Participatory Urban Design | Place Management | Creative Strategy

Legionowo, Poland  
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## Experience

### Community-led Initiative, Thiruvanmiyur 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).*