

MUMBAI CHARETTE-REIMAGINING URBAN LANDSCAPES

Negotiating Mumbai's Paradoxes

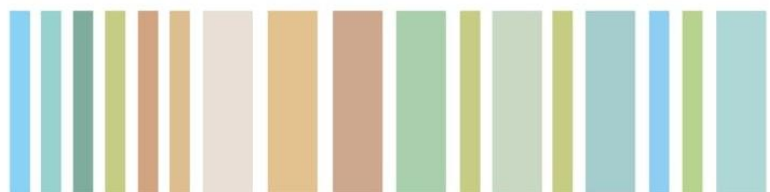
IFLA Global Studio Program (GSP) 2025: An introduction

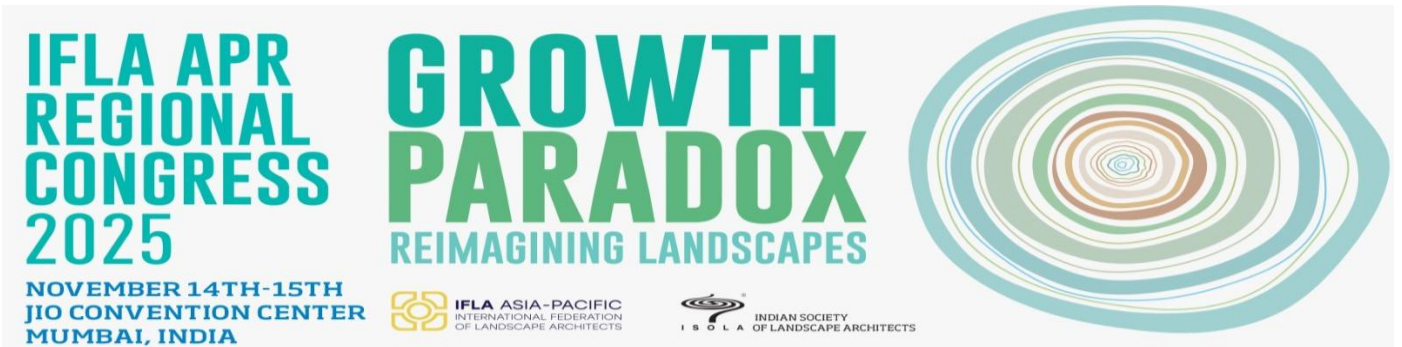
Launched in 2024, the IFLA Global Studio Program (GSP) represents an ambitious and exploratory initiative aimed at fostering international collaboration in landscape architecture education. Conceived as a platform for cross-cultural engagement, the GSP connects academic institutions through a series of student charettes held in conjunction with key events across the IFLA regions. English serves as the program's official language, facilitating a shared discourse among a globally diverse cohort.

The GSP marks a foundational effort toward establishing a transnational academic network in landscape architecture, one that prioritizes both the nurturing of future disciplinary leadership and the development of a globally integrated pedagogical framework.

The inaugural edition, held in 2024, brought together undergraduate students from institutions across four cities- Istanbul (Turkey), Taipei (Taiwan), Tepoztlán (Mexico), and Riyadh (Saudi Arabia)- each charette strategically aligned with major regional gatherings.

Building on this momentum, the 2025 edition expands participation to include students from master's-level programs, signalling a deepening of both academic engagement and disciplinary ambition. The GSP this year will run across Nantes (France), Santiago (Chile) + Mumbai (India) and Wuhan (China).





GSP MUMBAI CHARETTE PROGRAM | 2025:

Title of the Charette: **REIMAGINING URBAN LANDSCAPES: Negotiating Mumbai's Paradoxes.**

Organizers of the Charette: **Indian Society of Landscape Architects.**

Chair of the Charette: **Ar. Bhakti Thakoor.**

Co-chair of the Charette: **Ar. Uttara Nalvade.**

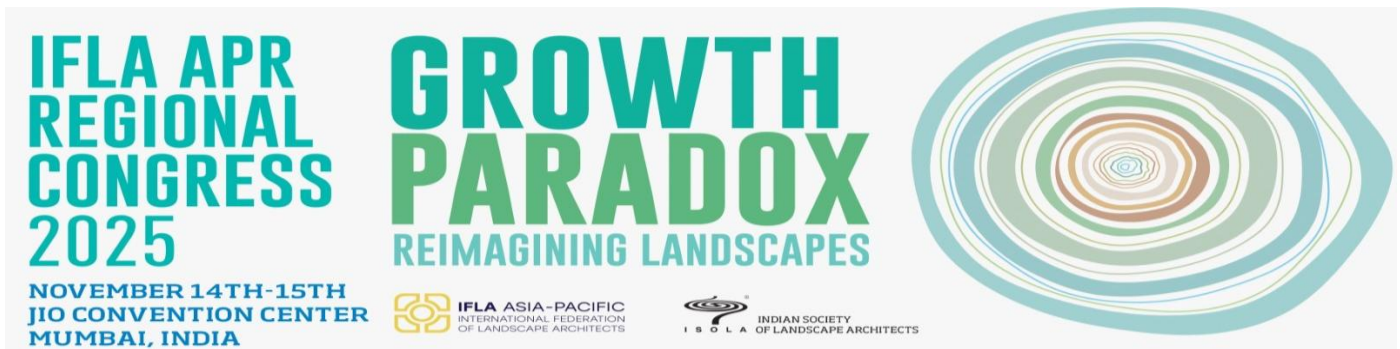
Program duration: **8-12th November 2025. (5days).**

Venue: **Vivekanand Education Society College of Architecture:** <https://vescoa.ves.ac.in/>



Photo credit: Google





GSP Mumbai Charette | 2025:

REIMAGINING URBAN LANDSCAPES: Negotiating Mumbai's Paradoxes

The Mumbai GSP Student's Charette will take place in the city of Mumbai as an allied event to the IFLA APR Regional Congress 2025 titled '**Growth Paradox: Reimagining Landscapes**'. The organisers of the event are the **Indian society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA)**. This Charette is grounded in the belief that cities are not singular entities but complex systems of systems- ecological, infrastructural, social, and cultural, interacting in layered, often contradictory ways. Within this intricate matrix, natural processes and human-generated interventions continuously converge, conflict, and co-evolve. This charette, therefore, becomes more than a design exercise; it is conceptualised as a space of inquiry- an intensive, collaborative platform where students can critically engage with the messiness of real urban conditions in the global South.

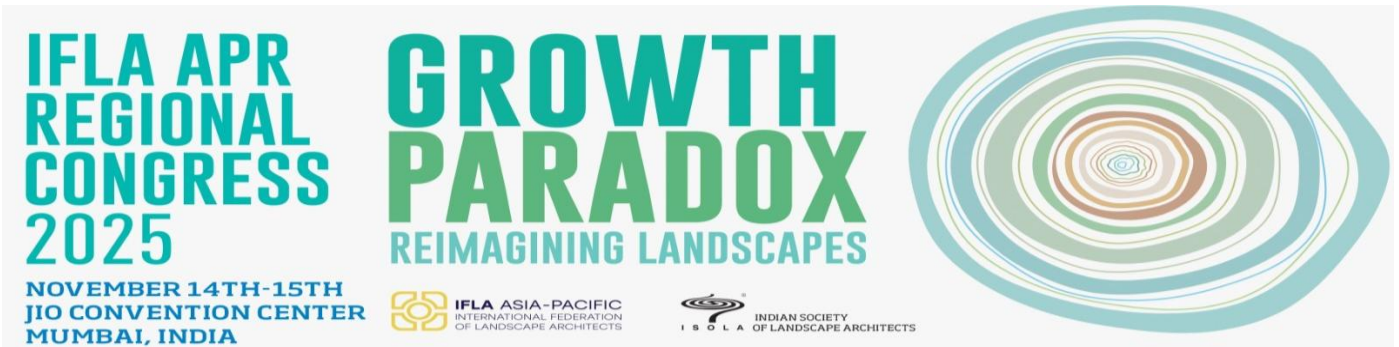
"Reimagining Urban Landscapes: Negotiating Mumbai's Paradoxes" invites students of landscape architecture to engage deeply with the city of Mumbai—a city marked by stark contrasts, coexistence of extremes, and a continual negotiation between ecological precarity and urban aspirations. The charette seeks to nurture context-sensitive design thinking by positioning '**reading the city**' as a precursor to **intervening in it**. Students are encouraged to see design not as an immediate solution, but as a thoughtful outcome of a **structured process rooted in contextual diagnosis and interpretation**.

Through immersive site visits, close observation, and participatory mapping, students will unpack the spatial, social, and ecological contradictions embedded in the Study sites which are chosen as representative of the city's complex urban fabric. Supplementing this field-based learning will be a series of curated lectures featuring voices from academia and practice, aimed at framing critical issues and offering local insights.

Each team will be mentored by a local Academician/Landscape Practitioner with in-depth knowledge of Mumbai's landscape dynamics to help the team navigate the visible and invisible forces that have shaped the city and are continually doing so. The intention is not merely to produce polished proposals but to conceptualise grounded, responsive, and imaginative ways of thinking through landscape. It is expected that the participants will express a broader landscape led strategy along with some specific interventions that would help root the approach.

Base plans, site information, and logistical material will be shared with the selected teams closer to the charette date.





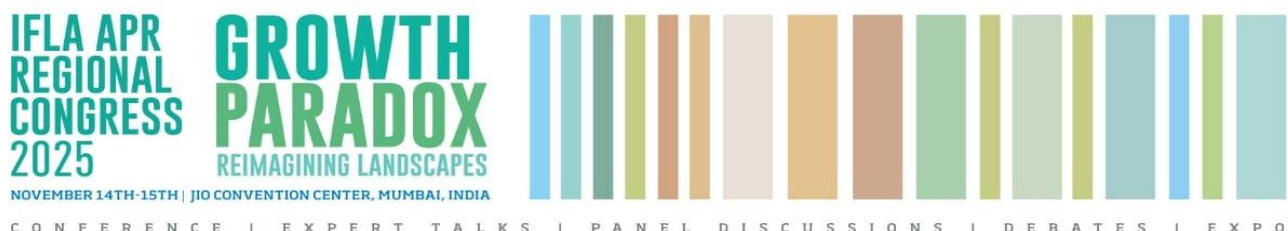
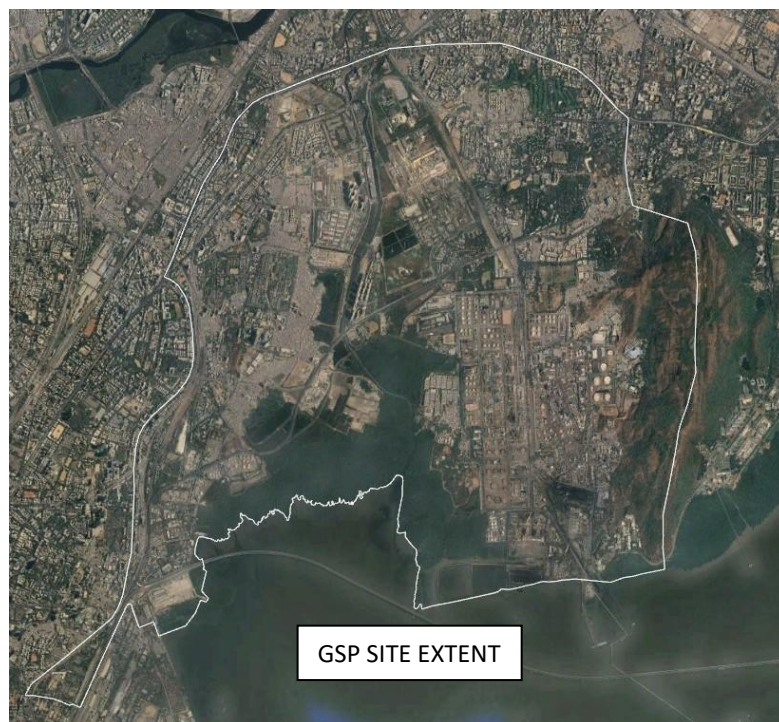
In working through the paradoxes of Mumbai, students are invited to engage not just with Places, but also with the growth process—to generate interventions that are as layered as the city they emerge from.

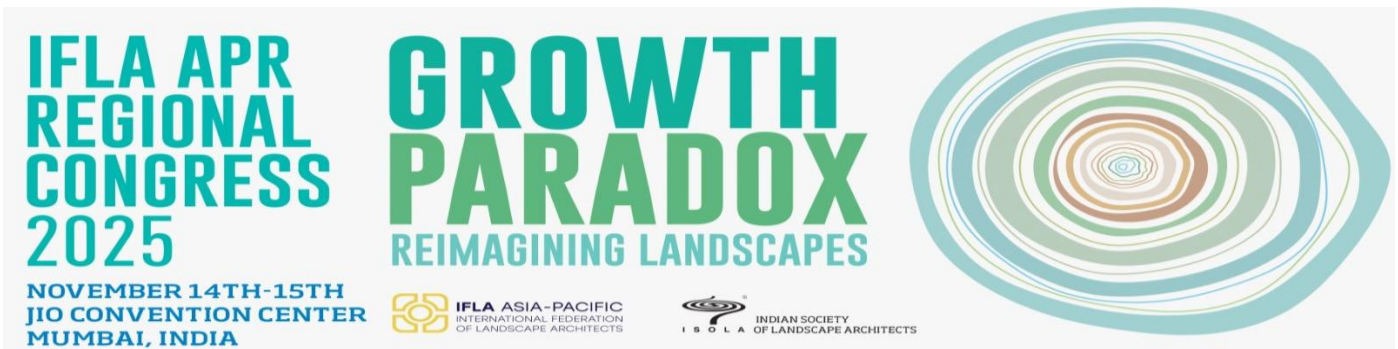
Welcome to *Aamchi* Mumbai!

GSP Mumbai Charette | The Context

Long before its bustling streets and soaring skyline took shape, Mumbai began as a constellation of seven islands scattered along the Arabian Sea. These islands were once separated by creeks and tidal inlets, each with its own distinct identity and culture, inhabited by fishing communities and dotted with hills and coconut groves. In the 18th and 19th centuries, a series of ambitious reclamation projects, most notably the Hornby Vellard, gradually filled in the watery divides, linking the islands into a single landmass. The British recognized the strategic importance of Mumbai's deep natural harbour and invested heavily in infrastructure, constructing docks, railways, and roads that catalysed commerce and migration.

Today, Mumbai stands as a true megacity—vibrant, resilient, and ever-changing. It's journey from seven tidal islands to an urban expanse is a testament to the city's capacity to reinvent itself while negotiating the paradoxes of modern urban life.





GSP Mumbai Charette | The Site

Intrinsic Ecological Context

The site identified for the Charette was an erstwhile part of an estuarine system of the **Mithi River, Mahim estuary and Mahul estuary**. It comprised of vast stretches of tidal mudflats and thriving mangrove ecosystems. At the turn of the 20th century, vast segments of this landscape were reclaimed to support the city's expanding service zone. A shoreline vista of the Thane creek transformed rapidly into an urbanised, access-restricted zone.

Ecological Remnants

Over time the Mahul estuary became a backyard wastewater stream (nallah). Scattered wetlands survive now as vestiges of the former estuarine channel and as thin mangrove fringes. Once offering ecological services, these are now heavily degraded.

Environmental Concerns

This area is recognized as one of Mumbai's most polluted areas because of adjoining land-uses like refineries, industrial services, harbour support and warehousing apart from and unregulated waste discharges.

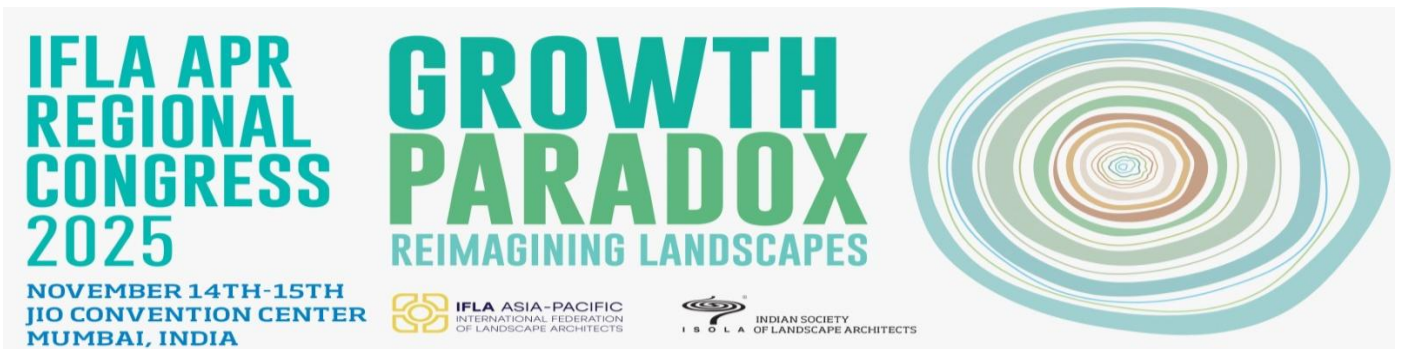
Planning and Land Use

According to the city's Development Plan (DP), the territory is designated as a transport corridor and industrial area. This zoning has increased pressure on the land, contributing to informal settlements and a continual loss of ecological integrity. In a continued search for housing the city's population, parts of the Eastern waterfront of Mumbai have seen a steady rise in private Real estate development.

Connectivity and Transport

The primary artery of this territory are the 19th century roads and railway lines which now include and accommodate the advent of 21st century infrastructure projects such as the Atal Setu (Trans-Harbour Link) and the Eastern Freeway. These corridors have transformed the traverse an unhurried commute into a high-traffic corridor in the quest to link South Mumbai to the city of Navi Mumbai, along the dockland corridor.





Cultural and Historical Value

The territory holds considerable heritage and cultural value, including landmark forts like Sewri and Sion, old settlements like Mahul Gaothan (urban village), and carries markers of the Industrial and commercial revolution in the city's history such as the Harbour railway line, old warehouses and creek side jetties. The territory has seen a cycle of creation and neglect and now holds nostalgia for a section of the city's inhabitants.

Sites for the Charette

The above GSP site extent will be further sub divided into smaller zones and assigned to different participating groups. These sites for the charrette weave through various touchpoints in this territory. The charette aims to create a strategic direction for this part of the city focussing on its natural and cultural essences and their edges.

