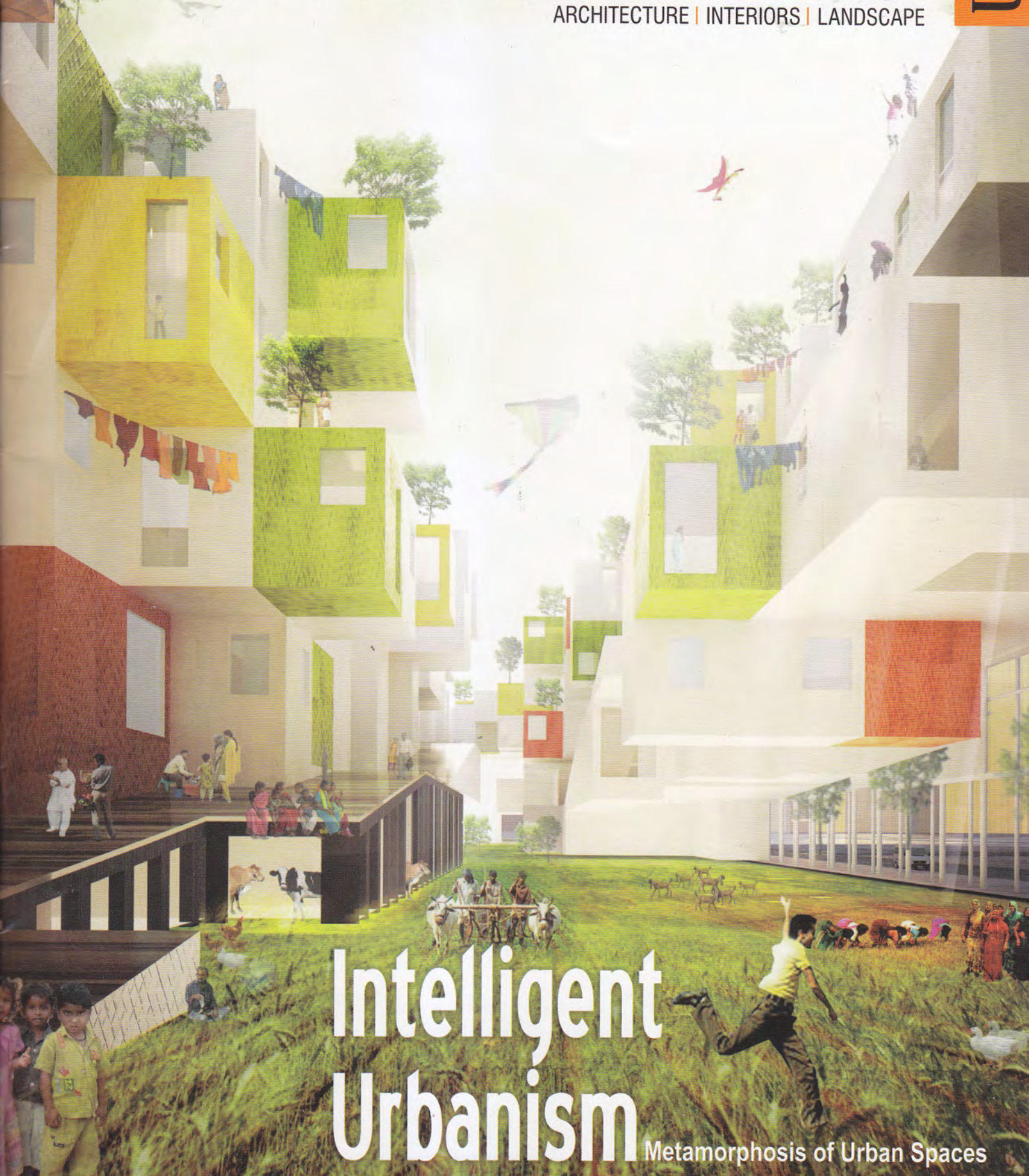


Architecture

ARCHITECTURE | INTERIORS | LANDSCAPE

UPDATE AU



Intelligent Urbanism

Metamorphosis of Urban Spaces



Nupur Prothi Khanna is a Physical Planner & Landscape Architect from SPA Delhi and M.A Heritage Conservation from York (U.K, on A Chales Wallace Trust Scholarship). She is the founder and director of the Delhi-based firm beyondBUILT Pvt. Ltd., consultants on contemporary and historic landscapes. With 18 years of work experience, she has notably contributed as local landscape consultant on the DIAL Terminal 3 project, and associated with CRCI as historic landscape architect on Pinjore Gardens and worked on the Humayun's Tomb WHS with Shaheer Associates. She has been associated as visiting faculty with the departments of Planning, Architecture and Landscape Architecture at SPA, New Delhi for over a decade. She is currently on the EC of ISOLA (Indian Society of Landscape Architects) Delhi Chapter; Chair, NSC on Cultural Landscapes, India ICOMOS and Member, International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscape, ICOMOS; Member, International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISoCaRP).

Text & images: courtesy, the architect

Meta'mall'phosis of Urban Recreation

Landscape Design for L&T ELANTE, Multi-Use Development

Chandigarh, India beyondBUILT Pvt. Ltd.





Landscape Design for L&T ELANTE multi-use development at **Chandigarh, India** by **beyondBUILT Pvt. Ltd** showcases ideas of modernity, technology, and trends, creating pleasing and comfortable social environments that encourage people to linger. In addition, the design helps to augment economic activity to the business of malls, fosters a sense of community, which is vital to healthy city living.

To redefine a generic shopping experience, the landscape design for the mall **L&T ELANTE** at **Chandigarh, India** addressed the need for creating multiple spaces for diverse social interaction. The vision of ELANTE by its landscape designers **beyondBUILT Pvt. Ltd** was to seamlessly integrate a retail mall experience with a 'cultural beat', creating a common civic space inside a shopping Mall that encourages meaningful social dialogue.

ELANTE is a multi-use development launched in Chandigarh in early 2013 by Larsen & Toubro, as their maiden venture into realty development. The brief was to design a space that evoked openness and a cosmopolitan feel akin to the spirit of the city.

ELANTE is a play of contrasts. While the architecture is aimed at grandness, the landscape is intended to be on a human scale envisioning a landscape 'for the people'. The availability of a large central court measuring approximately 80,000-sq ft in the heart of the complex allows it to act as a democratic nucleus for the Mall.

The material palette uses fine craftsmanship, central to Indian design, and is used to make the court visually cohesive and compelling. The paving pattern adds the element of directionality to the space, inviting visitors to exit the Mall and explore the plaza. A set of smaller courts are built into the design of the main plaza. These intimate spaces are woven around differential slab levels, stairwell, and light well cut outs, in order to create a range of experiences within a greater whole.

As a result, the central court encompasses People's Plaza and OAT (Open Air Theatre) for cultural performances and larger gatherings, Plumeria Court and Palm Court for passive recreation, and Pebble Court for children to play or for smaller events.

The People's Plaza is conceived of as a space that fosters robust public engagement. Designed as the largest space within the central court, it is dynamic and flexible, catering to a wide range of uses. Along with the Pebble Court this offers the main green spaces on this podium landscape. The planting concept is built upon seasonality and colours. Both hardscape and planting elements are woven together to create a vibrant and stimulating landscape experience. Flanking the stage is the Palm Court, acquiring its name from a row of Foxtail Palms, meant as an outlet for the office spaces for relaxation, recreation, and intimate gatherings.

The Plumeria Court is at the highest level facing the Mall exit into the central court. It is designed to enable activities in larger areas, informal seating, and display areas. It also offers opportunities to be used for mid-size functions.

The edges of all the plazas are treated such that they form backdrops, seating, or planters, as to showcase the central court as one large space while dividing it into usable and interactive segments. This offers security of long views as well as intimacy of usable segments.

The south-west corner being a predominantly shaded area was envisaged as a Pebble Court reserved for children activities thereby designed with a distinct circular form. Painting competitions, various children's activities, Mall scale events, and informal seating define this space.



The north-west entrance is designed as an inviting space with water and planting, serving as a meeting point and casual interaction. The softscape focuses on reserving larger spaces for planting in the midst of what is a largely hardscaped space. Located wholly on a slab covering a double basement, spaces for softscape are built up with engineering measures adopted for ensuring optimal drainage and waterproofing.





How can we work towards making Malls more inclusive, reflecting cultural ethos, environmental, and social ideologies?

Showcasing an idea of modernity, technology, and trends, a Mall space has moved beyond a mere shopping experience to a way of life for the urban Gen X. Intensively designed with use of contemporary materials and details, for use in day and night, these altogether contribute to what is associated with an uber-contemporary image.

Besides a focus on 'global' aesthetics, conventional Mall design works on 'optimizing' available space in an attempt to fit as many shops, people, and objects as is possible not necessarily comfortable or desirable into a given area.

The concern that gets overlooked in this glitz is the homogenization of urban spaces and an establishment of recreational nodes often disconnected from the current urban reality of context and people.

Reality of Reality: Aesthetics of money

Despite these concerns raised by urbanists, it is a reality today that Malls offer one of the most visited hubs in city life. In many cities they may offer one of the few means to a clean, safe, and pleasant environment to spend time with family and friends, outside of the home.

As a landscape architect, the designer has wondered how one can leverage on the financial success of this trend to create open spaces that are contextual, socially meaningful and inclusive.

Transforming experience: From purse to pulse

Human interaction is the basis of culture and needs to be our focus in creating amenable spaces and rich urban fabric. Creating pleasing and comfortable social environments encourages people to linger, which in addition to increasing economic activity central to the business of Malls, fosters a sense of community, vital to healthy city living.

Through this design the designers attempt to transform the perception of these spaces beyond money power to robust forms of social and cultural interaction. Just like a healthy natural environment, social hubs need to be diverse. To be assimilated in the local ethos, they need to be inviting and inclusive to a wide range of users irrespective of class, age or backgrounds. ▲

fact file:

project	: Landscape Design for L&T ELANTE Multi Use Development
location	: Chandigarh, India
client	: L & T (Larsen & Toubro)
landscape architect	: beyondBUILT Pvt.Ltd. (Architect: Nupur Prothi Khanna; Research Assistant: Matthew C.Cool)
engineers	: EDRC (Engineering Design Research and Consultancy)
contractors	: ECC (Engineering Construction & Contracts (Division of L & T)); Grotech; The Fountains; Harvel
materials/plants	: Hardscape: Brick, concrete, Jaisalmer, Delhi Quartzite, Granite; Softscape: Over 12,000-sq m
commencement date	: 2010
completion date	: 2013
area	: Approx. 16 acres

