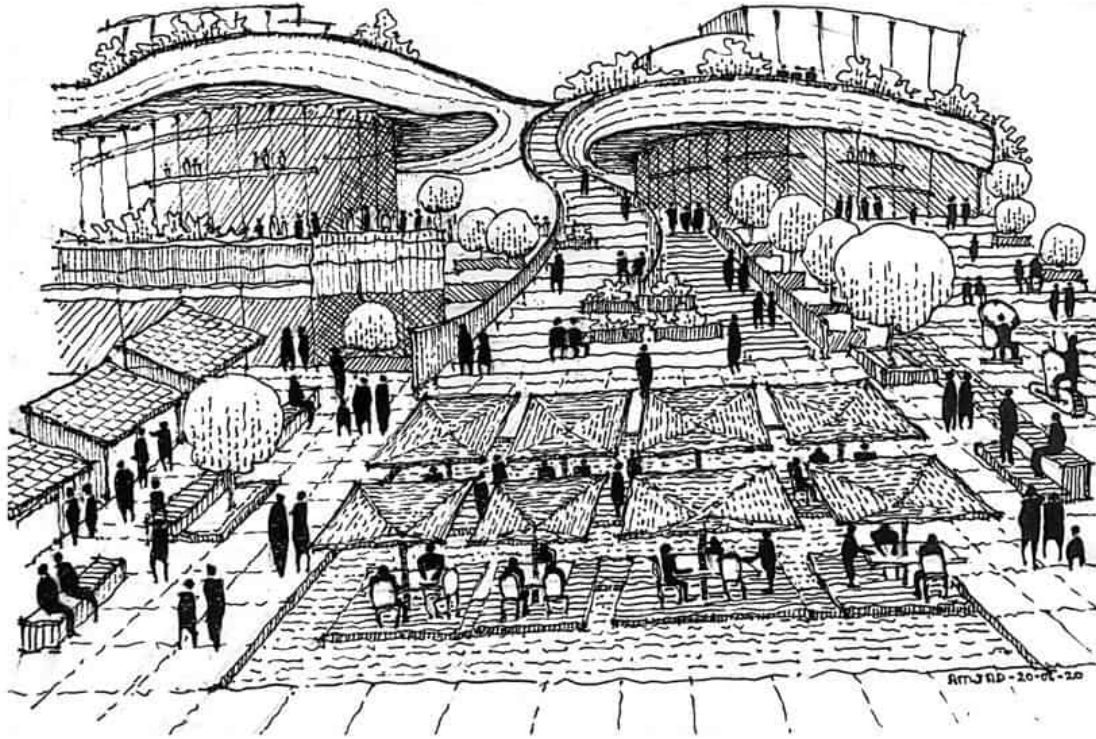


BUILDING A POST COVID NEIGHBOURHOOD



Morphogenesis is currently working on projects which feature outdoor food courts for 500 people.
(Sketch by Amjad VK; Courtesy Morphogenesis)

THE GREAT OUTDOORS | MANIT RASTOGI, ARCHITECT AND FOUNDING PARTNER, MORPHOGENESIS, DELHI

Making the outdoor environment more comfortable using temperature control and passive design methods

In India, the public social space has always been outdoors. In the 1960-70s, this used to be a democratic area, which used to foster conversation and discourse," says Manit Rastogi. Over time, however, with access to energy and the advent of air-conditioning, many social activities such as shopping and retail started moving indoors. India's hot climate had a big role to play in this shift. "Outdoor akhadas (spaces for training in sports and martial arts) moved into enclosed gyms, street-side eating spaces shifted to indoor restaurants and one saw the rise of enclosed shopping malls," says Rastogi, whose firm recently won the FuturArc Green Leadership Awards 2020, which recognize innovative and ecologically responsible buildings in Asia.

This transformational shift, he says, was driven by the fact that indoor spaces could be regulated for comfort through acoustics, lighting and temperature control. Now, Rastogi is hoping for a complete reversal of this phenomenon.

“We hope that the social spaces move back outdoors. The big difference today is that we have the ability to make the outdoor environment a lot more comfortable,” he says. Morphogenesis is currently working on projects which feature outdoor food courts for 500 people. By using passive design methods such as micro-climate creation, the team has been trying to keep the temperature in check. Lightweight tensile roof structures are being used as protection from rain and sun and attempts are being made to harness the wind where possible. They are adding external air filters for better air quality and sonic mosquito control systems to make the outdoors comfortable. “It’s a given fact that during the pandemic, people feel more at ease in open spaces than indoors,” he says.



Manit Rastogi (Right)

He adds that most open spaces in urban setting are underutilized since they are used only for a limited part of the day or year. What if these could be turned into multifunctional spaces? If the outdoor food court could serve as a classroom, or a meeting and training space through the day? “It would be a wasted opportunity if we don’t use all our technological abilities to bring social activities outdoors in a more democratic and accessible manner” says Rastogi