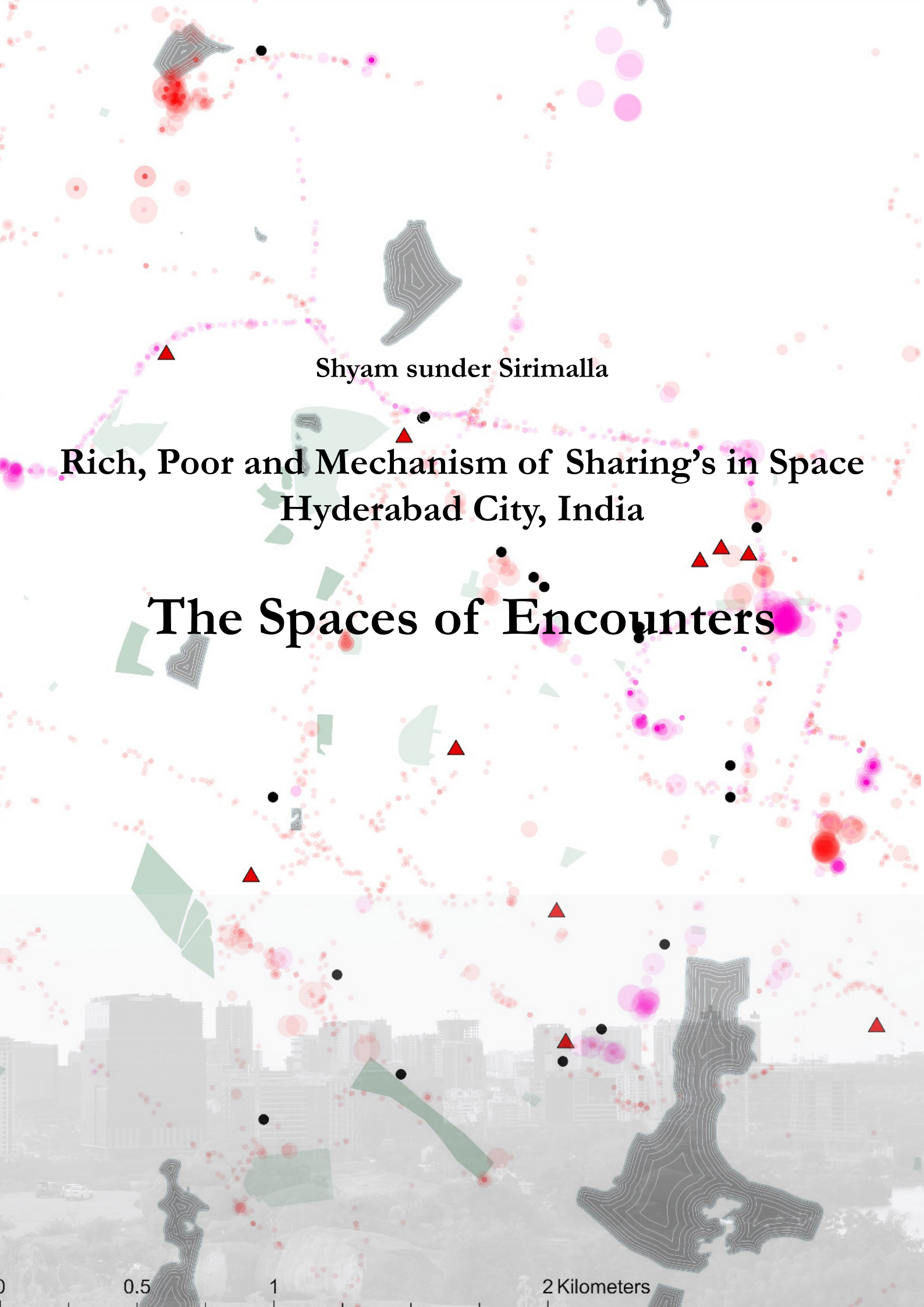




Shyam sunder Sirimalla

Rich, Poor and Mechanism of Sharing's in Space
Hyderabad City, India

The Spaces of Encounters



Doctor of Science
Doctoral Program Architecture and Sciences of the City (EDAR)
School of Architecture, Civil and Environmental Engineering (ENAC)

EPFLglobalLeaders fellow



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 945363.

Special thanks to

Yasushi Ikeda Lab
Architectural informatics
Department of Architecture
The University of Tokyo



(Under the Bilateral Japanese Swiss Science and Technology Program,
ETH-JSPS Doctoral Exchange)

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Accepted upon the recommendation of jury
19 May 2026

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MSCA EPFL Global Leaders
Lausanne, EPFL, 2026

Dedicated to
Street Vendors
of India

Prologue

This thesis opens with the reflective prologue of a poem by Kabir.
Kabir Das was a 15th-century Indian poet, weaver, and saint, in my reading, an artisan-mystic,
a producer and wanderer. If one imagines this weaver in today's city, he might appear as a
street vendor artisan.

In the poem, Kabir sings :

I'm A Bird From Another Country

Lakes, trees, saints...
...and clouds that rain.

For the supreme truth,
these four took form.

Kabir's house is on a peak,
the path is treacherous.

An ant's foot slips there,
So man, why load your bullock?

I live in a country where
there's no sky or earth.

Going beyond bodies
I meet the Word.

Path without foot.
Land without settlers.
Man without body
Kabir's message.

I'm A Bird From another Country, my friend.
I don't belong to this country!

People here
are unconscious.

Every moment they
stumble into oblivion.

O seeker friend, I don't
belong in this land!

And what is my country like?

To speak without a tongue,
to walk without feet...
...without wings to fly away.

Longing for such awareness,
I play in the boundless.

Sitting in shade, I'm on fire.
In sunlight, I'm cool.
My true guru is beyond,
sun or shade.
I dwell in the true guru.

Wise ones and meditators...
...have worked themselves to
death in that country!

That great giver's
form is formless...
...but he takes on the
form of a name.

Not mind, not breath
can reach that country.

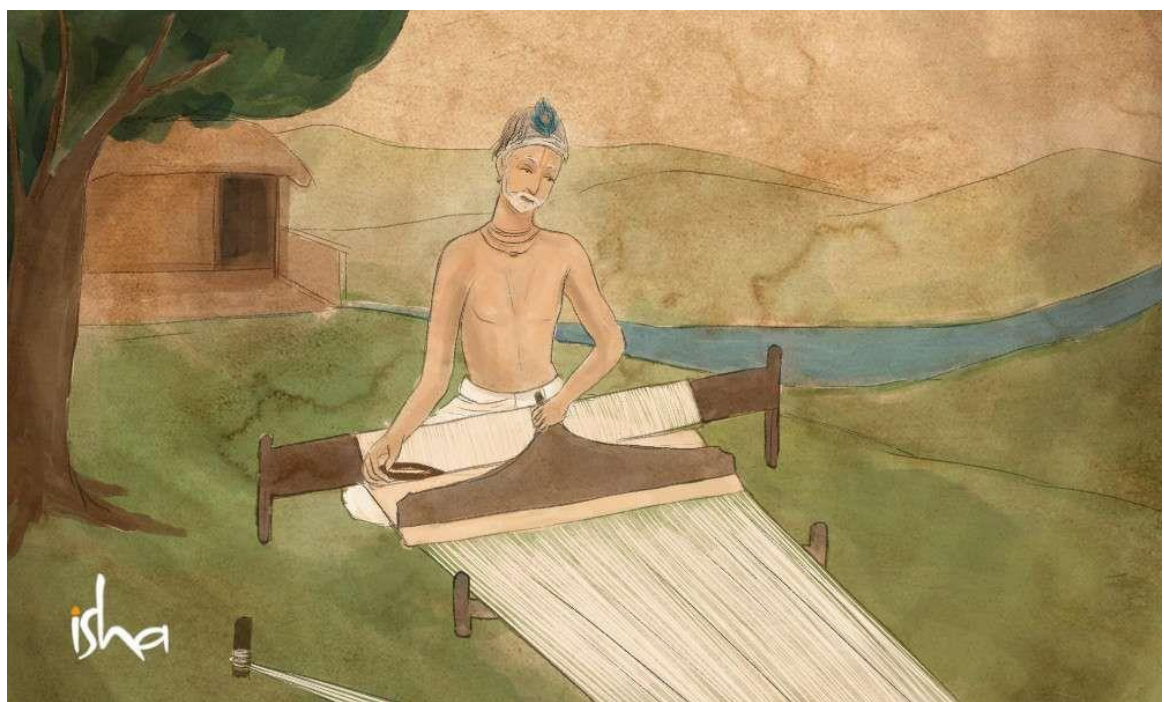
This body with feet,
head and eyes...
...the true guru
has made it deathless.

This body with feet,
head and eyes...
Kabir says, meet
the formless!
And you're free
from death and decay.

I don't belong to
this country!

I'm A Bird From Another
Country, my friend.

Kabir Das
15th century
Art Credits
Isha Foundation,
2019



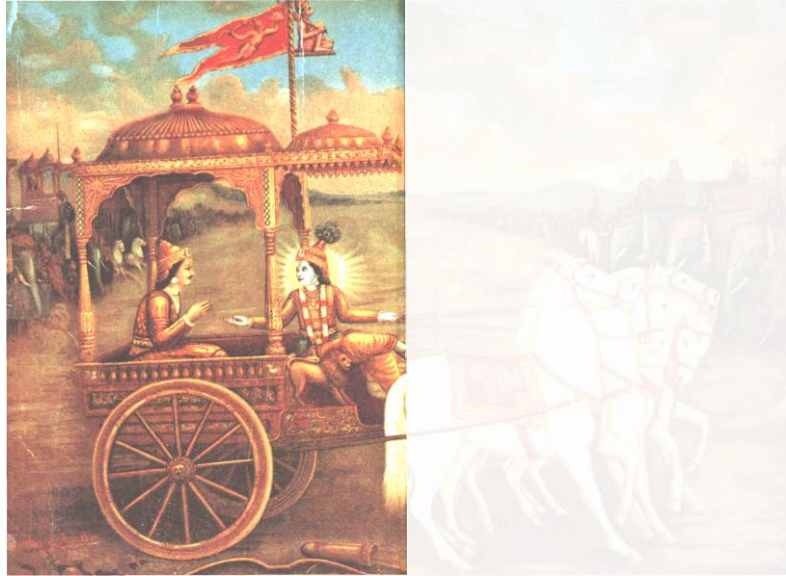
Swadharma (स्वधर्म)—one's own duty or righteous path

In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna speaks—
(c. 2nd century BCE)

śhreyān swa-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt
swa-dharme nidhanaṁ śhreyaḥ para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ

“It is far better to perform one's natural prescribed duty, though tinged with faults, than to perform another's prescribed duty, though perfectly. In fact, it is preferable to die in the discharge of one's duty, than to follow the path of another, which is fraught with danger.”

Bhagavad Gita Verse (3.35)



Kurukshetra war illustration, Conversation between Krishna & Arjuna, Gita Verse, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, La Bhagavad-gītā telle qu'elle est (Paris: Éditions Bhaktivedanta, n.d.), chap. 3, v. 35.

Acknowledgments

Paola Viganò

Thank you for believing in me and my work. Your deepest passion, love, trust and proactivity imparted in this work of uncertainty, a hope and a path to discover its meaning.

Vincent Kaufmann

More than your active push and support, I appreciate your sharp efforts in being there at critical and at much needed moments throughout this PhD journey, making it a smooth ride.

Yasushi Ikeda

My academic journeys had begun with you in Japan over the past 11 years, thank you for encouraging this work of thought and being there whenever needed.

Elena Cogato Lanza & Luca Pattaroni

Your support, through close and detailed observations in courses and PhD meetings, helped in framing and instilling the foundation of this research.

Special thanks to my mentor **Dieter Dietz**, for your mentorship, solidarity and collegial support in making this PhD a rewarding one.

Colleagues

Your empathy, kind friendship, discussions at personal level, knowledge sharing made this journey a fun stimulating one. Thanks to Sylvie Tram Nguyen, Anna Karla Almeida, Tommaso Pietropolli, Flore Guichot, Elena Calafati, Noémie Lecoanet, Phi Nguyen, Igor Vlasenko, Marine Villaret, Ben Gitai, Loan Laurent and but not least Valérie Pahud.

Satish Kumar & Vandana Shiva

Your dialogue on Gandhi, eco-feminism, gardens of hope planted the seeds of inspiration to this work.

Friends of Hyderabad

Friends of Tokyo

All the Interviewed participants in Hyderabad



Hyderabad street vendors, Khairatabad Bada Ganesh festivity, Fieldwork 2022

In Harijan founded by Gandhi, a weekly newspaper, Harijan means “Children of God” (A name Gandhi gave to Untouchables), he wrote:

**Life will not be a pyramid
with the apex sustained by the bottom.
But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the
individual always ready to perish for the village**
(by M.K Gandhi, Harijan weekly journal, July 28, 1946)

Abstract

This thesis gazes into spaces of encounters in Hyderabad City within the conceptual and methodological framework of 'spatial proximity' and 'street vendors as agents of change' to affirm : Can a street vendor act as an agent to produce social and spatial porosity in a city?

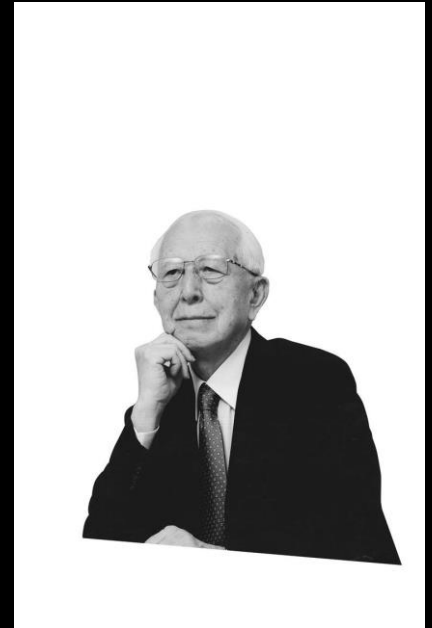
The positionality of street vendors as a subjects of spatial rationality—as agents to reveal and produce social and spatial porosity—identifies the spaces of encounters, interpret the proximity, overlap, crossings and juxtapositions in public space between the urban elite and urban poor in Hyderabad city. Street vendors are invisibilised, though they can be considered as a crucial articulation between rich and poor and their divided territories in Hyderabad city. If one wants to make a more inclusive city, one needs to better understand socio-economic encounters between the urban elite and urban poor in public spaces. Street vendors move fluidly between social classes, interacting daily with the affluent and the poor, aware of their movements and their potential encounters in public spaces, which remained largely unstructured and underexplored in public space. Recognizing and embracing the spatial and social informality of street vendors, and to develop from there a renewed - spatial and social – urbanity is crucial.

The fundamental observation of this research came from the socio-spatial phenomenon of “the existing close physical proximity between the urban elite and urban poor in space in the city of Hyderabad India, transformed by the informal, trust-based socio-economic interactions, in other words the spatial proximity, translated into the unique mosaic urban fabric of the wealthy neighbourhoods and pockets of slums in juxtaposition to most western megacities, whereas seclusion between these two parties is rather explicit. It is apparent that, despite the colossal indifferences between the affluent and poor, there is no ghettoization, at least spatially. This spatial relation of proximity is generating incentives for the poor to locate in close physical proximity to affluent as sources of labour and services (Sirimalla 2017).

Prerogative to support my assertion, based on life experience as a burgess of Hyderabad city, and field research, methods are constructed to reveal the actual spaces of encounters between the rich and the poor in public spaces through empirical investigation, through the voices of the subaltern, with vendors and drivers as agents, by investigating their spatial practices through micro studies—including behavioral observations, GPS tracking, interviews, census and palimpsest strategies, territorial and ethnographic mapping—references of “Porous City” project of Greater Paris (Secchi and Viganò, 2011) as a cartographic guide.

The resulted Spaces of Encounters are analyzed and interpreted through three tales (storytelling through maps, folklore and anecdote inspired by work of Mahasweta Devi and Spivak in *Imaginary Maps*, 1995): The street vendor pterodactyl, The porosity producer, and the porous city. The street vendor pterodactyl narrates the lost roots and dispossessed territories of Subaltern (a Dalit, a tribe) in Telangana state. The Porosity Producer narrates the tale of the capacity of spaces of encounters in creation and production of social porosity across the boundaries and segregations of socio cultural, socio economic and socio ecological dimensions. And finally, The Porous City narrates the spatial policy and design of the Hyderabad metropolis, envisioning the extension of spaces of encounters to the metropolitan scale, as the starting point of an integrated system of public, green, water, and economic spaces.

Oku (奥)
Fumihiko Maki
1928-2024



*Photo credit © 2026 dreamideamachine
ART VIEW*

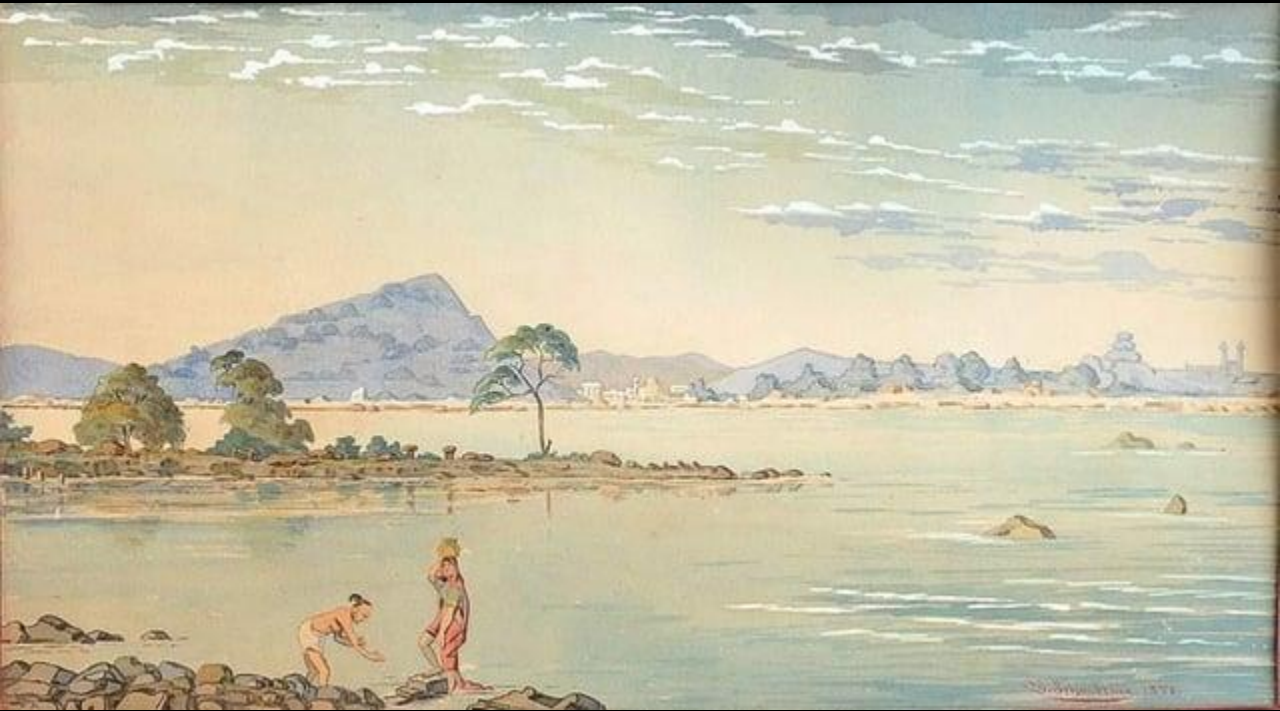
Theory of Oku (奥)

Investigations in Collective Form, 1964
The city and inner space, 1979
Layers of space, 1979

Oku (奥) is a foundational concept in Japanese architecture and spatial theory, referring to a dynamic perception of depth that unfolds sequentially through human movement, evoking an inner or hidden spatial core often approximated in Western terms as a **"depth strategy."** Or **"Sequential Depth Mechanism"**. *Oku* is often associated with the concept of *ma* (間), which refers to "in-between" space or time.

The theory of Oku in this study can be understood as revealing the social porosity in a city (hidden spatial core) by the mechanism or depth strategy.

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'Hussain Sagar' lake Hyderabad by artist T. Schmittina year 1879. It's a historic lake constructed in the year 1562 during the rule of Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah.