

# DAIDA FOUNDATION GLOBAL URBAN THESIS AWARD

## Competition Edition 2024



Chairman's note on the foundation's vision on the competition theme :



Cities, long considered cradles of civilisation, were often born in places where nature had something to offer : fertile soil, water and clement weather, or all of these. In their initial period of growth cities realised their dependence on nature.

Yet, as urbanisation has rapidly progressed, cities have grown at the expense of nature. Cities and nature have almost become binary entities. Cities often exploit nature instead of contributing to it.

- ◆ Do cities have the right to develop in a manner that their "civilisation" douses the embers of nature?
- ◆ Do cities have the right to exacerbate the extinction of those species with whom we have always shared this planet?
- ◆ Do cities have the right to continue to destroy the very environment their citizens depend on?

Knowing that this destruction - be it in the form of polluted air, contaminated water and soil or the cascading effects of reduced bio-diversity (including climate change) - hits the poorest in the cities the hardest.

The theme of this year's awards is **URBAN ECOLOGY** and how, through research and policy, through vision and design - but also through education and action - we ensure that steps can be undertaken to reverse the trend of cities wrecking nature.

- ◆ Can we recycle (and upcycle) our urban waste?
- ◆ Can we use nature-based solutions to achieve our urban goals?
- ◆ Can we repurpose derelict urban areas to achieve goals of bio-diversity that leads to natural resurgence?
- ◆ And can we, in doing all of the above, achieve the goal of helping those in our cities who are the most disenfranchised?

Nature is, to some extent, resilient and forgiving. Thirty-five years after the tragedy in Chernobyl, in the abandoned city of Pripyat, nature is taking over the city abandoned by humans. Not only creepers and trees, but animals such as wolves have returned.

There is still hope. But we need to act fast.

DAIDA Foundation Global Urban Thesis Award, edition 2024, invites entries from students of Master's programs (\*) on topics which address the issue of the contradiction of Cities and Nature. And how to break this impasse.

Sincerely yours,

**Shyam Khandekar**  
Chairman, DAIDA Foundation

\* Eligible participants are Master program students with either design or research component in subjects related to cities and/or urban- environmental landscape. Thesis submitted in the academic year of Master Program 2022-23 and 2023-24 will be eligible for submission in this competition.