Regen Pondy

Towards a Regenerative Region

Rob Roggema, Nilima Bhat, Greg Keeffe and Seán Cullen, March 2026

With: Visalakshy Loganathan, Lalit Verma, Jayanta Ganguly, Sasi Kanta Dash, Avinash Madhale, Arun Prasath, Lisa Vos and Melanie Latham

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città ideale
the urgency of a new vision

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Regenerative Regions symposium held in May 2025 in Monterrey, Mexico, brought together an extraordinary group of thinkers. They exchanged ideas how to make regions more regenerative, i.e. create visions that could balance the current turmoil of global change with the vulnerable conditions of nature and human beings in regions around the world. On a sunny morning wandering over the TEC campus in Monterrey, Nilima Bhat mentioned to me, Rob Roggema, how wonderful it would be to bring a group of likeminded people to Puducherry, India, and organize a conclave in which international thought leaders would bring their visionary ideas and co-develop them with local experts and students of the Puducherry region. And so it happened that a diverse group of people gathered in January 2026 in Aurodhan Art Gallery, just outside the French Quarter of Puducherry. All were full of expectations and ambitions. The challenges of the region are evident, as the city is growing fast, and has to deal with problems that are common to many Indian cities: a dangerous air quality, chaotic traffic, neglected ecological and green spaces, a water system of which the water quality is concerning, is disconnected and suffers at times from a lack of and too much water, a coastline vulnerable for sea level rise and cyclones, and has to deal with waste everywhere in the public space: dog poo, sewage, plastic, organic and construction residues. On top of this all, the decision-making system is complex and full of uncertainties. In such a complex condition the design process should be emergent, because the complexities and interrelations can be unexpected or offer opportunities that beforehand could not be see. It should also be oriented towards the (bio)regional scale and the longer term. When problems are huge a small-scale intervention or focusing on one theme does not make a difference. On the contrary, when small projects or single themes are implemented and the conditions do not improve, disappointment and apathy could enter the process. Therefore, the conclave focused on regeneration of the region with a 100-year horizon. The danger of this is that solutions, visions and concepts become so abstract they can easily be dismissed hence it was important to continuously link these abstractions to concrete actions. When problems and complexities are large and solutions may seem far away it is essential to have fun and be able to use one's imagination. Drawing and designing is a powerful way to do this, as it is a tactile way activating the right brain half, where creativity is stimulated. And that is what was needed, and what we did (Figure 1). Not a moment was boring or overly serious, the room was full of energy and excitement. Results came and foundations for next steps were laid. This report presents the highlights of the conclave. The momentum for change is there. But this momentum will not stay without continued attention of all involved. We all have the task of broadening the movement, continuing the design-led, creative way of thinking and to infect others, friends, family, colleagues to join and become active members. This is also a call to Minister Shri K. Lakshminarayanan Minister for Public Works (PWD), Tourism, Civil Aviation, Fisheries & Fishermen Welfare, Law, and Information Technology, to support this process and the people involved, morally, personally and financially. Only when the stars of ministerial attention, continued local activation and involvement of world-leading expertise align, the regional regeneration of Puducherry will come true. Let's not wait and return to our normal busy lives but start the preparation for the second conclave in 2027 today!

Figure 1. The group of participants

CHAPTER 2
BEING FISH

"As a fish I would like to have water around me. Lots of water, clean water full of oxygen, fresh and sparkling, so I can swim up and down the creek. I want to play with my friends and the other species around me, in between water plants and trees that stand in the water. I need some places to hide from predators and a quiet place to mate. And if the flood comes, I need to be able to move along with the water levels up- and downstream. I want to swim up the creek all the way to the airport and calmly surf down almost to the ocean. Reality is that I don't have this. The creek is nearly empty, and the humid substance I am trying to wrestle through is full of sewage (Figure 2). Whenever there is a flood the sewage dissolves in the water and extracts all oxygen. The creek suffocates me. Every day I am hit by a shower of urine splashing into the creek. I smell the ugly odors of human ignorance and neglect. It is impossible for me to move let alone play with others. It is a place where every day I die a little. I also have the right to live. Help me."

Figure 2. The creek

CHAPTER 3
Emergent design

The process of the conclave is programmed but not set in stone. This is purposefully done, because of several reasons. First and foremost, the group of designers is unfamiliar with the process, so depending on their focus, interests and backgrounds the design activities need to be flexible enough to keep enthusiasm high. Secondly, the themes of the conclave, regenerative visions for waste, food and water at the regional scale, is complex to comprehend and must be able to be adjusted when needed. Finally, the spiritual energy in the room always demands immediate responses in case the attention drops, activities must be reassured or new ones must be deployed. The program could anticipate all that would emerge during this part of the conclave. We started with a rough scheme of keynote presentations, fireside chats and the design work that was programmed beforehand but could be and was adjusted during the conclave. The design work was curated by Rob Roggema and Greg Keeffe (Figure 3) according to the needs on the day. The emergence of visions, people, ideas and insights led them to design the program emergently.

Figure 3. Facilitators, Rob Roggema and Greg Keeffe

The activities undertaken were as follows:

Tuesday 13 January 2026

Tuesday started with an inaugural session in attendance of the Guest of Honour: Shri K. Lakshminarayanan, Minister for Public Works (PWD), Tourism, Civil Aviation, Fisheries & Fishermen Welfare, Law, and Information Technology, Puducherry (Figure 4).

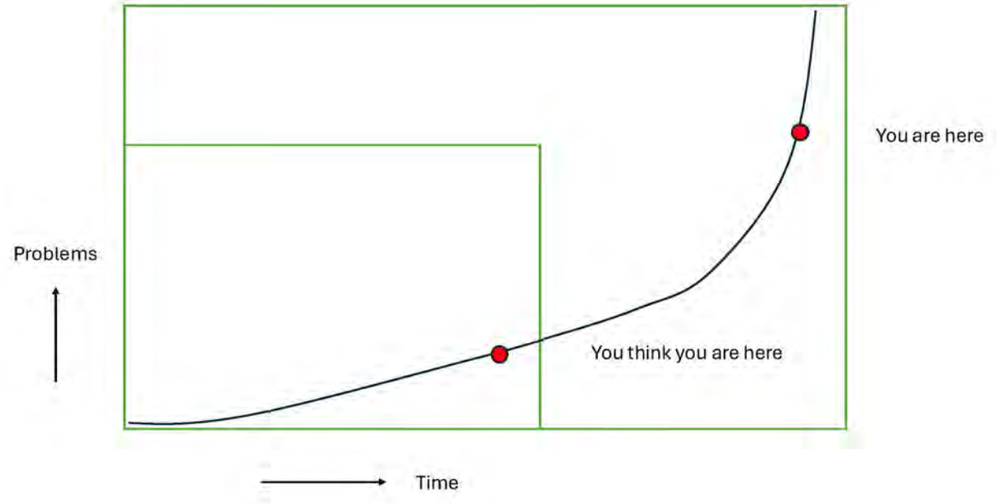
Figure 4. Opening Ceremony

After the opening ceremony, the first fireside chat took, place in which Nilima Bhat had a conversation with Dr. Sasi Kanta Dash, Former Registrar Pondicherry University around one of the Panchabhoota (Five Elements) themes, in this case Earth & Fire. The following plenary discussion, led by Prof Rob Roggema and Prof Greg Keeffe, aimed to set the scene and to celebrate a visionary Pondicherry. During this discussion the participants were invited to think about long term visions, along the lines of the following principles:

1. Nothing is impossible. Everything is possible (to make things better). In designing the future, we do not have to limit ourselves to current habits and even (political) agreements. In our minds we can be free to imagine everything that can make our city better. Remember: there are always a thousand reasons why something seems to be impossible, but you need only one reason to still make it happen.

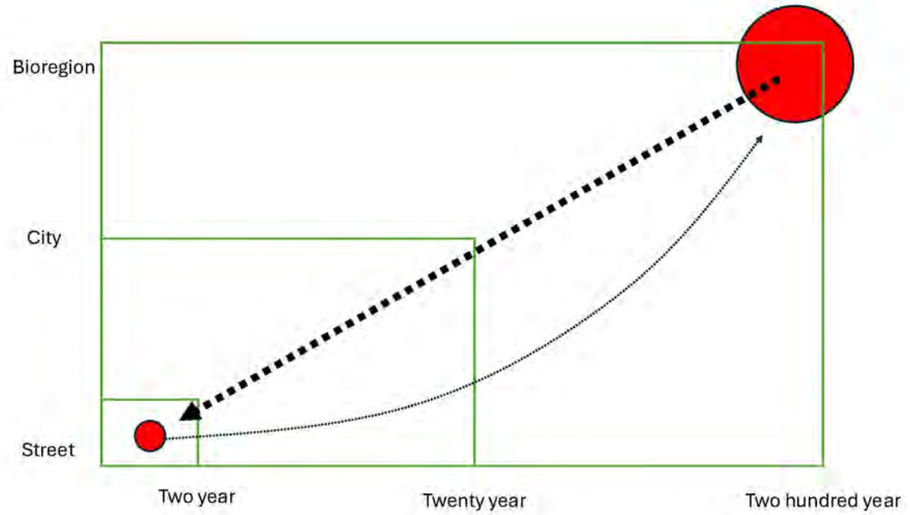
2. It's more urgent than you think. In perceiving our current challenges, we tend to relate back to the recent past. In many cities this recent past does not yet show us the magnitude of (combined) problems we are facing. In reality, the urgency is much higher than we think (figure 5). By neglecting real complexities and challenges we postpone actions that would be immediately taken if we were conscious about the polycrises we are in.

Figure 5. The urgency of transformative regeneration



3. Think big scale and long term. Design emergence cannot be practiced without imagination. Only when we can imagine the future, we can make decisions now that work towards that future. When we project the future close to the here and now our minds will naturally repeat what we have practiced in the recent past. This way we never will reach the imagined future. Therefore, it is necessary to think on the long term, and also at the large scale (Figure 6). Then it will be possible to leapfrog current discussions and debates, that often make change difficult. The longer term, that is decades of centuries away, allows us to plan for seven generations ahead (Krznaric, 2020). This is cathedral thinking that allows us to create a world for generations we will never meet. It suddenly is possible to imagine an ecocathedric city (Roggema, 2023). Given the interconnections within this ecocathedric city, between the soil, the hydrology and ecosystems, local performance depends on the embeddedness in bioregional networks. Once a desired future is established, such as the example of a green Monterrey metropolis (Roggema et al., 2025) shows, it is easier to judge which local and immediate changes are needed to work towards that longer term and regional vision.

Figure 6. From large scale and long term thinking towards local and immediate actions



4. Everything can be drawn. Not written. The visualization of ideas, desires and analyses tells us more than a written text of dozens of pages. In every phase of the design emergence drawing stays central. A new image will give others immediately new ideas, explain complicated thinking and inspire people to think in different ways than before. Moreover, everyone can draw, it is the first thing you learn as a child. Drawing systems, images, thoughts and ambitions helps to get disconnected from the treadmill of policies, papers and reports, which are often difficult to read, as they are full of jargon, and seem to have no end. These principles guide us during the entire design workshop and will permanently be referred to. This helps to stay focused and prevent lagging back in current and familiar approaches and objectives.

During the first exercise the group is divided in three subgroups (Figure 7). Each group will draw and write as many things as possible they know about how the food or water or waste system functioned in 1926, 100 years ago. After a short time of six minutes the groups rotate and will add more to the existing list of the former group. After another six minutes the groups rotate again, and complete the list on each of the themes, followed by a short presentation about the 2-3 main components for every theme. The results give us an image of how the water, food and waste systems functioned in the past.

Figure 7. Working on the first task

In the afternoon, the group was sent out to picture the current status of food, water and waste in Pondicherry (Figure 8, 9 and 10). In groups the assignment is to visualize the current situation. Each person makes 3-4 pictures and as a group the best three pictures are selected for presentation.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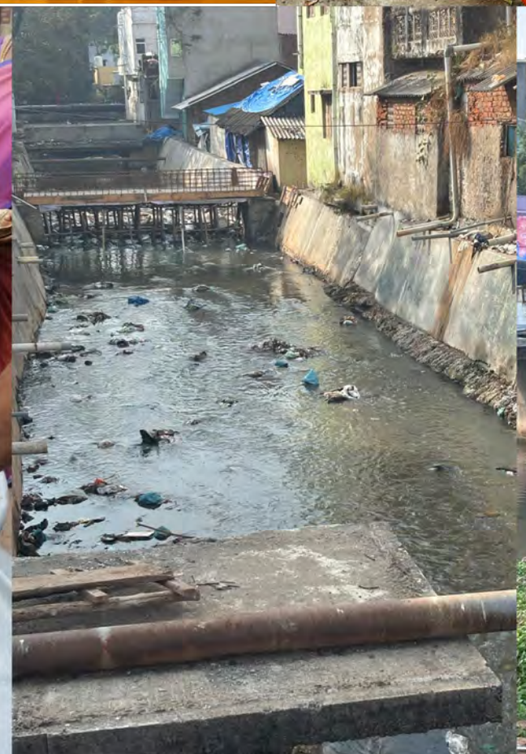


Figure 11. Presentation of visions

The last part of this day was dedicated to developing visions for the long-term future. In three groups spatial visions for 2126 are created for the themes water, food and waste. First the groups needed to formulate a two-sentence ambition for the long-term and drawn on large sheets of paper. The day was closed with their presentations (Figure 11 and 12).

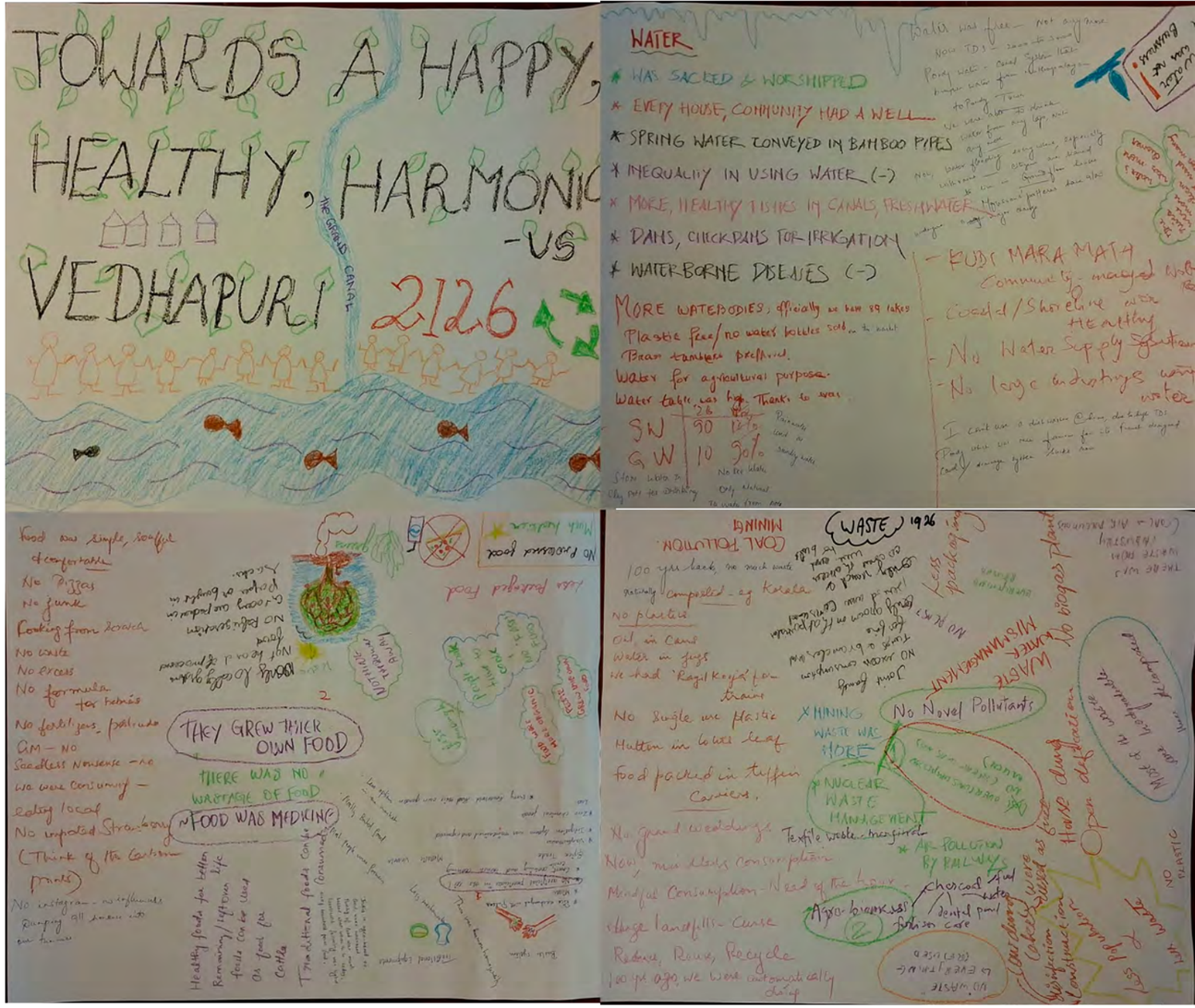


Figure 12. Results of the vision workshop

Wednesday 14 January 2026

The second day started with two inspirational keynotes by Lalit Verma, Founder Aurodhan and Jayanta Ganguly, Member Svarnim Puducherry, Sri Aurobindo Society. These keynotes were followed by the second fireside chat in which Nilima Bhat had a conversation with Prof. Rob Roggema, founder of Cittaideale. The discussion shaped around the Panchabhoota (Five Elements) theme of Air.

The first task of the day was developed around the theme of waste. Given the problematic situation of waste throughout the Pondicherry region, it is paramount to pay attention to systemic change and solutions that could create a better and cleaner environment. The question to the participants was how to envision the waste system to solve the emergencies of climate change, social inequity, biodiversity loss, pollution of air, water and soil in Pondicherry. This started with an analysis of the current waste system, divided over four main waste streams in four groups: sewage, plastic waste, construction waste and food waste (Figure 13). The task is to draw a diagram how the different flows of waste look like (Figure 14).

Figure 13. Working on the current waste systems

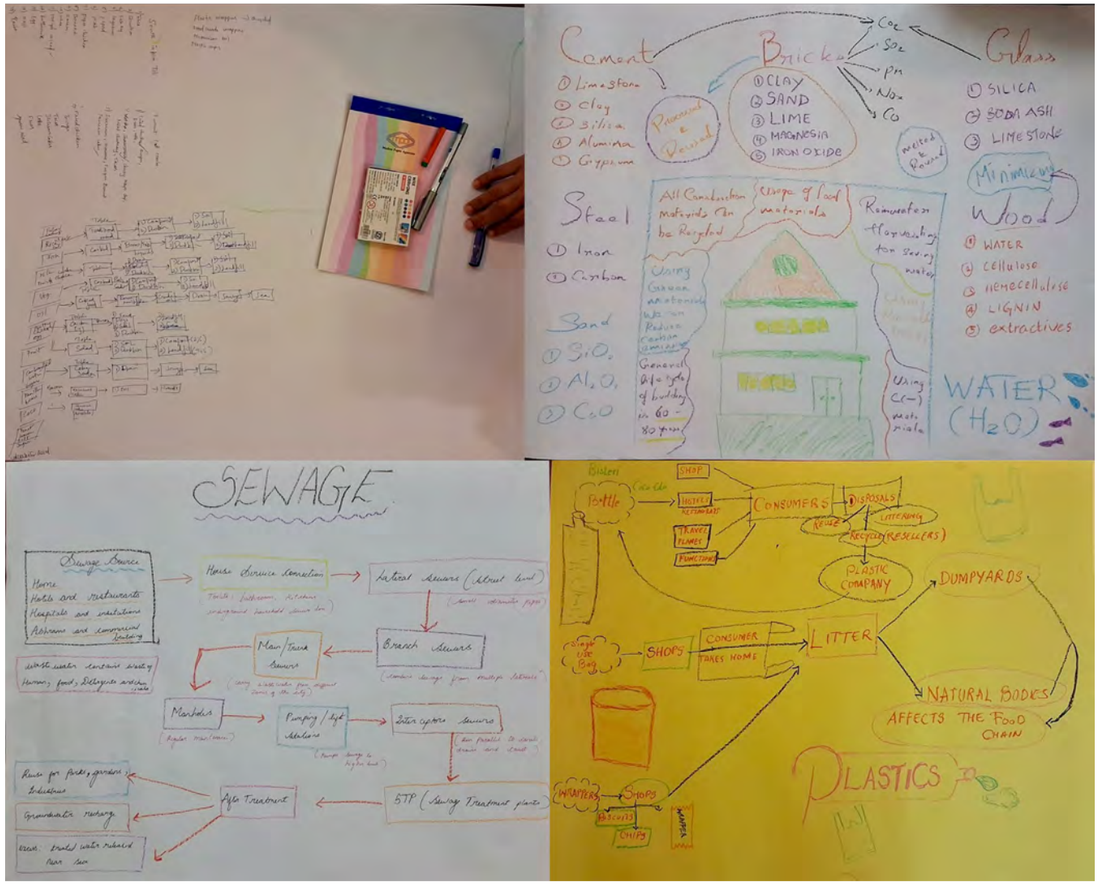
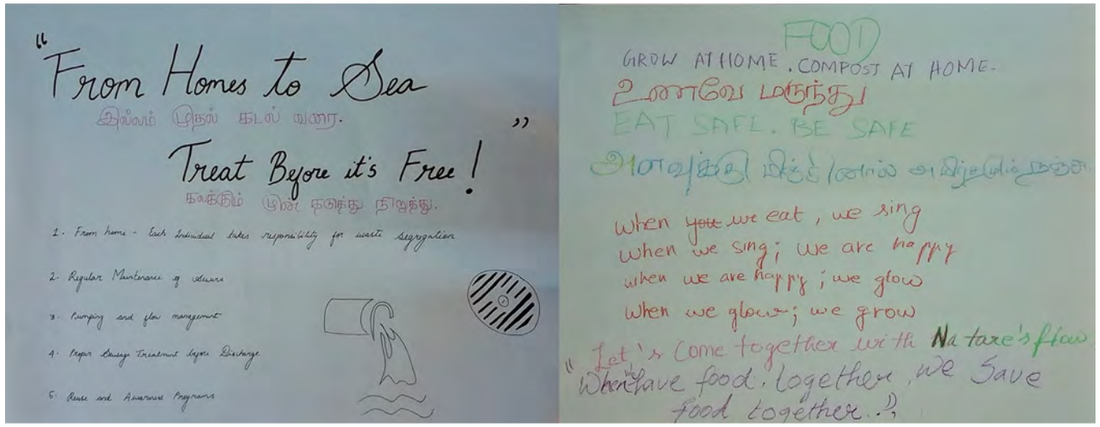
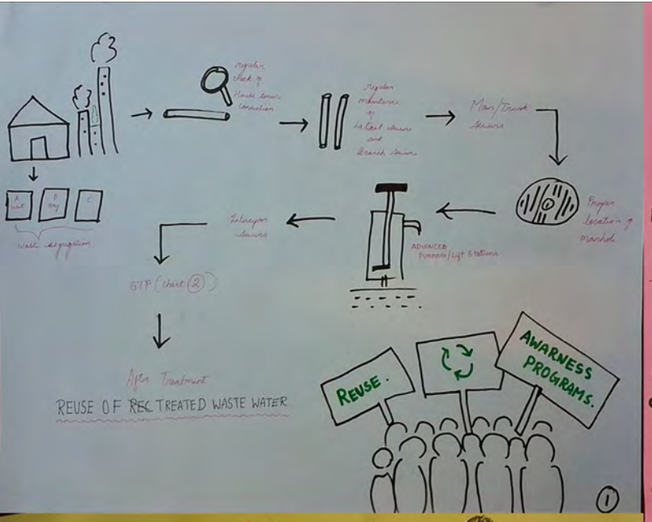


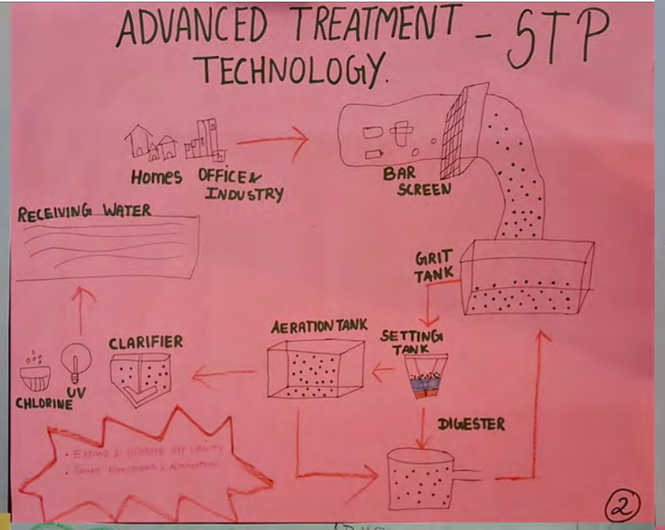
Figure 14. Diagrams of current systems of waste flows: food waste, construction waste, sewage and plastics

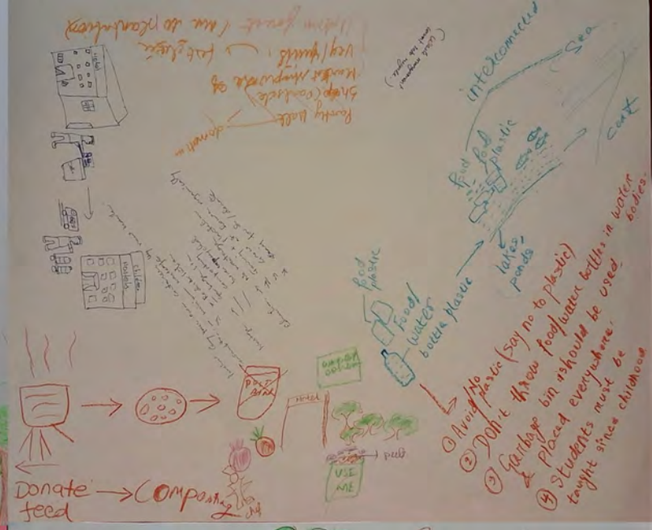


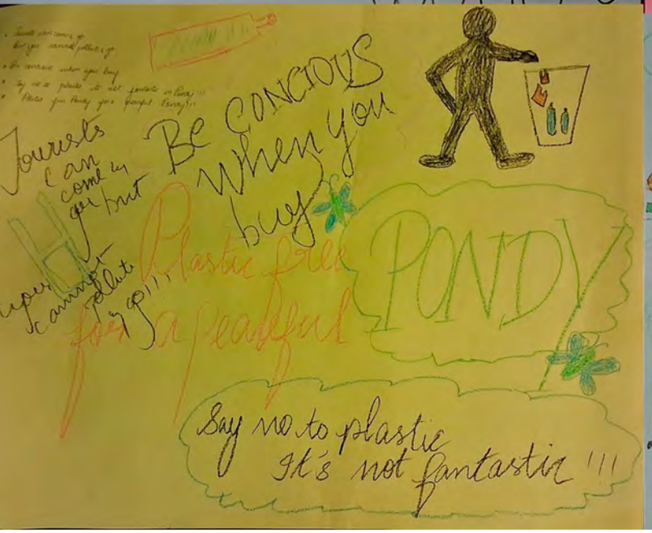
In a second stage of this task, the groups were asked to formulate a manifesto. In this manifesto the key ambition for the specific theme is reflected in one concise sentence (Figure 15), supported by a compelling reasoning.

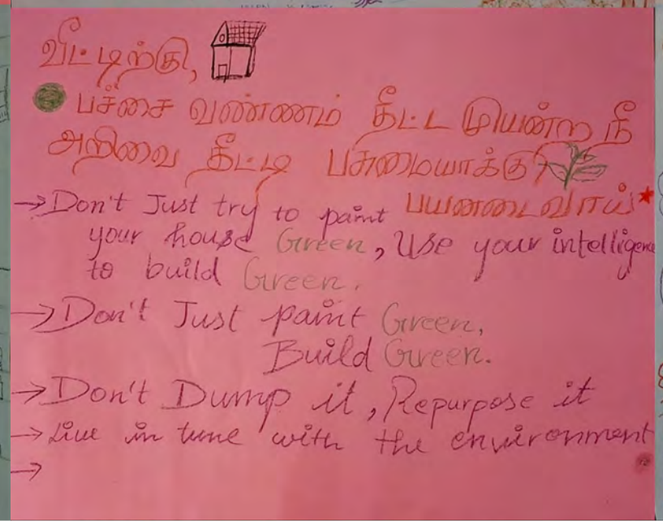
Figure 15. Two of the slogans and manifestos











This manifesto is then translated in drawings on maps reflecting the new, or proposed system for the several waste systems, each on a specific spatial scale (Figure 16 and 17).

Figure 16. Designed future systems for sewage and plastic waste

Figure 17. Designed future systems for food and construction waste

Figure 18. Presentation of the future system of waste flows

Figure 19. Designing thematic solutions

The last part of the afternoon was used to draw a spatial vision for each theme on three scales, region, city and street (Figure 19 and 20). The groups presented their views and findings (Figure 21 and 22).

Figure 20. Design teams at work

Figure 21. Teams presenting their visions

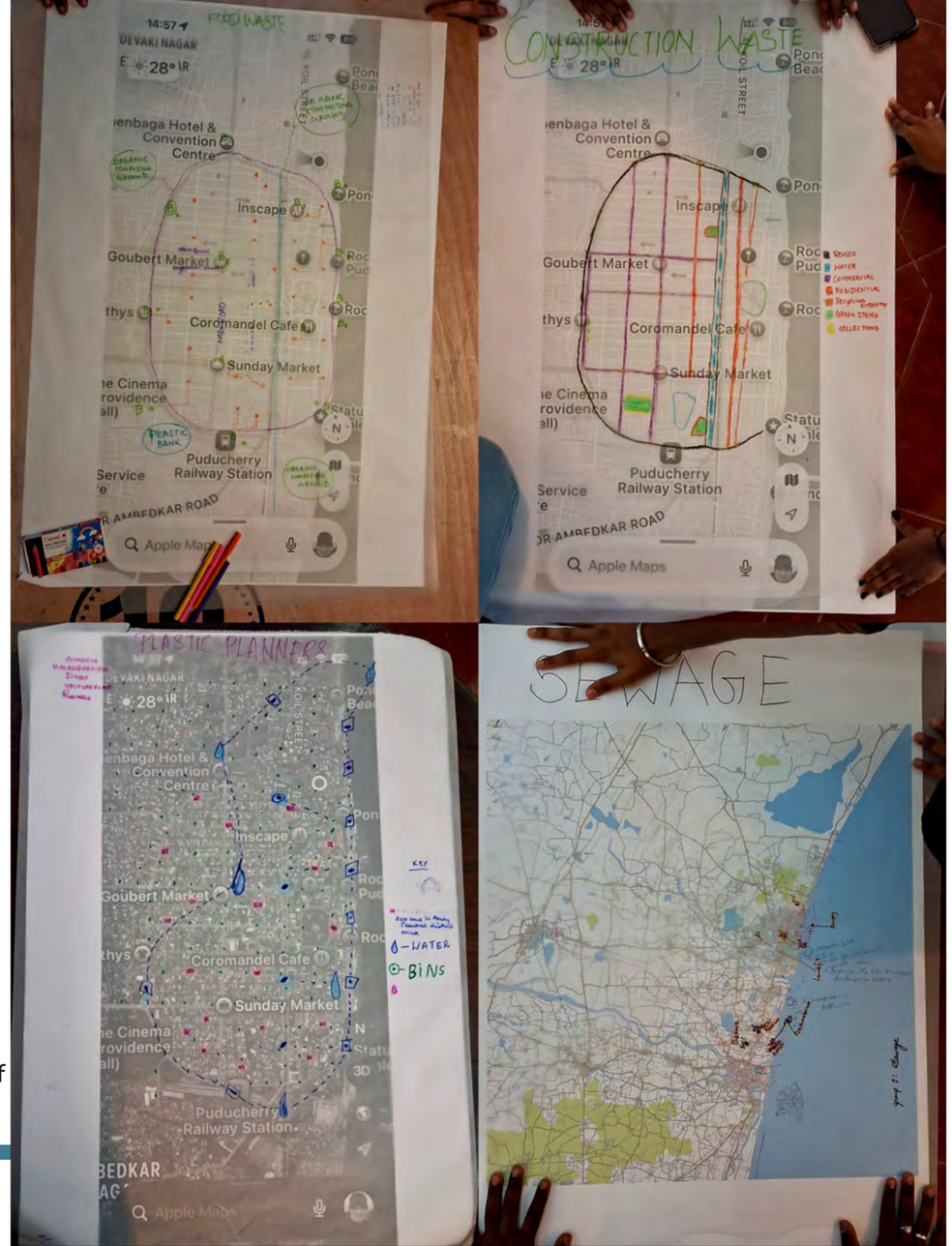


Figure 22. Results of the sketching

Thursday 15 January 2026

The third day started with a visit to the Pondi Marina, where the Pongal festival was organized. The participants could enjoy the festival and understand the cultural background of the festival (Figure 23 and 24).

Figure 23. Traditional cooking practice at the Pongal festival

Figure 24. Enjoying the Pongal festival

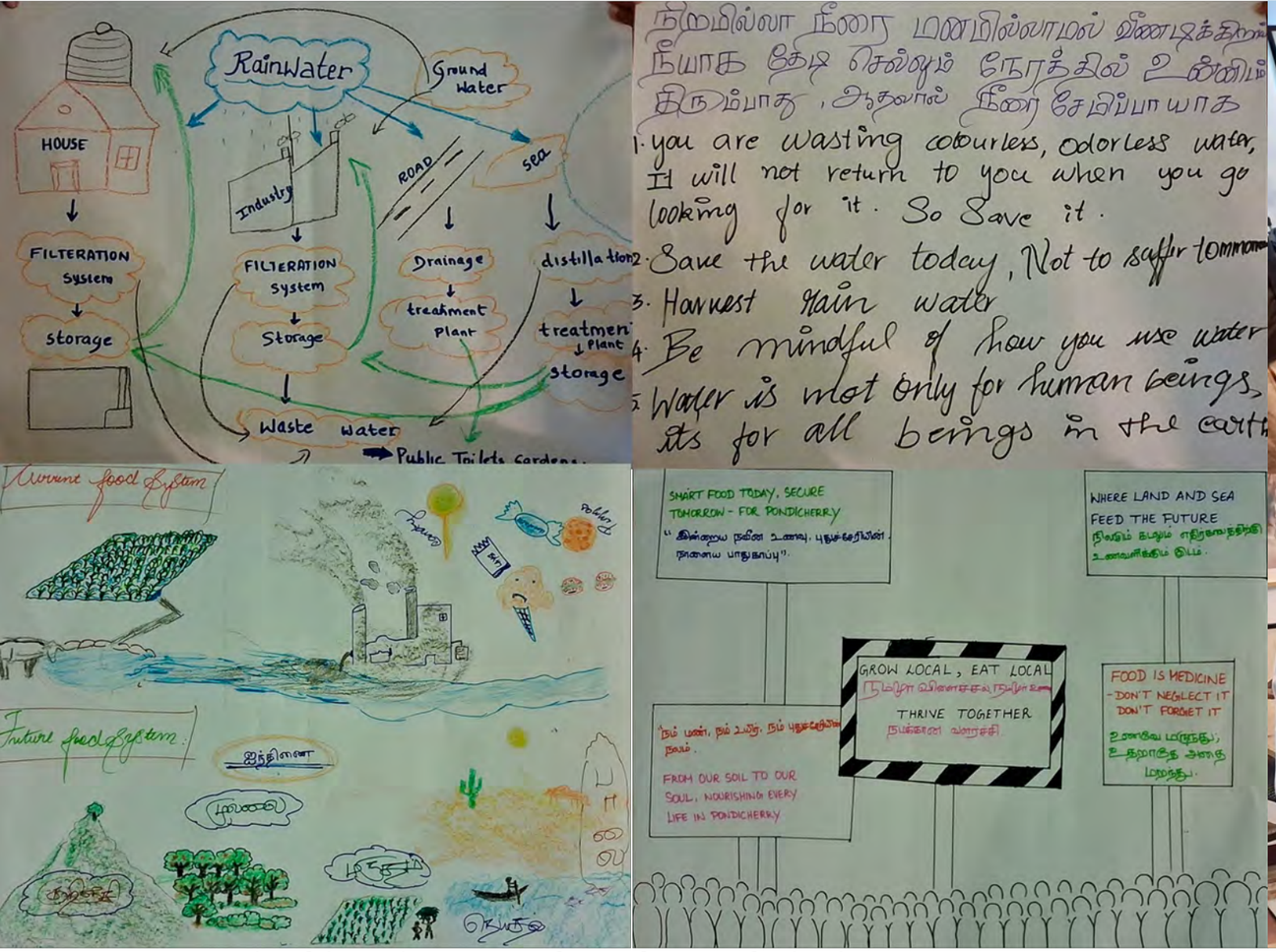


Figure 25. Results of the work on systemic futures for water, food and waste

Figure 26. Presentation of the systemic futures by the teams

After return to Aurodhan, two inspiring keynote lectures were given, by Prof R. Arun Prasath, UNESCO Chair RCESD, Dept of Green Energy Technology, Pondicherry University and Prof Greg Keeffe, Queens University Belfast.

The afternoon assignment asked the participants to work on refining the systemic visions for future flows of water, waste and food (Figure 25). The results were presented by the four teams (Figure 26).

Figure 27. Discussing and designing the integration per theme

In the afternoon, the participants continued to work on integrating the designs per theme (Figure 27). The teams designed the future of water, food and waste (Figure 28). After the design session, the teams presented their work.

Figure 28. Results of the thematic design work

Friday 16 January 2026

Day four started off with two inspiring keynote lectures by Avinash Madhale, Sustainable Urban Development CEE and Prof. Rob Roggema, Founder Cittaideale. These were followed by the third fireside chat in which Nilima Bhat held a conversation with Probir Banerjee, Founder PondyCAN, on the the Panchabhoota (Five Elements) theme of Water.

In the afternoon, the group worked on creating a video of two minutes expressing their bold vision for the future of a regenerative Pondicherry. They needed to follow a basic script, starting with an opening scene to introduce the makers. This is followed by several scenes explaining a compelling message: what is the problem, what is the solution, how does it look like and what are the benefits. The closing scene contains an appeal to the viewer to join this solution and initiative. The videos are performed at the end of the day.

Saturday 17 January 2026

The final day of the conclave started with the last fireside chat. Nilima Bhat held a conversation with Visalakshy Loganathan, Founder Conscious Spaces Foundation on Inner Stillness to hold safe spaces for Regeneration. This conversation focused on the Panchabhoota (Five Elements) theme of Space.
After this the rest of the day concentrated on creating an artistic message that would be visual to the people of Pondicherry and leaves a lasting memory. All participants were asked to visualize a message of hope for the creek (Figure 29), that runs close to the Aurodhan art gallery. In a drawing or powerful message everyone expressed their wish for how the creek should be in the future. Is it full of life, clean, a symbol, does it have fish, birds and plants, is it a metaphor for regeneration, any outing is welcomed. The message should be created on a 60x60cm piece of canvas. It can be a large drawing, with not too many details. It also can be one sentence, both in English as well as Tamil. The canvas needs to be visual for passersby from the street, so it must be big.
All canvases are sewed to a large rope, and these ropes are brought to the creek (Figure 30) where they were attached to both sides of the creek and connected both sides as a line of flags (Figure 31).

Figure 29. Creative process of preparing the flags

Figure 30. Bringing the line of flags to the creek

Figure 31. Attachment of the line of flags to both sides of the creek

CHAPTER 4
REGIONAL DESIGN

To regenerate a region, it is essential that the large scale and local scale are interlinked. No impact can be expected when it doesn't fit in an overarching strategy. This is also a long-term strategy, because not all smaller scale projects can be realized at once. This long-term vision for the region must be based on those elements in the landscape that have shaped the region. It is no surprise that these elements are the ones that formed the landscape before there was human occupation. The approach is coined Landscape First (Roggema, 2021; Roggema and Monti, 2021; Roggema et al., 2021a; 2021b; 2021c) or nature-driven urbanism (Roggema, 2020a). It departs from the point of view that every plan or design should understand and plan for the landscape and natural elements first. The soil, ecosystems, the hydrological system, geomorphology and the topography (elevation) are therefore analyzed and used as the drivers for regional planning and design first, after which all kinds of urban uses can be embedded. Examples such as the urban design for Westerpark (Roggema, 2020b), the plan for Western Sydney (Roggema and Monti, 2021; Roggema et al., 2023), the Moeder Zernike plan (Roggema, 2021) and the plan for a Green Metropolis Monterrey (Roggema at al., 2025) all illustrate the power of this approach. Nature and landscape can form a strong spatial framework that exists and operates regeneratively, and to which urban elements can be added. For Pondicherry a similar approach has been explored. The first step for this regional plan is to regenerate the hydrological system (Figure 32). It consists of the main rivers and backwaters, the smaller creeks, the ponds and the hidden and/or covered waterways.

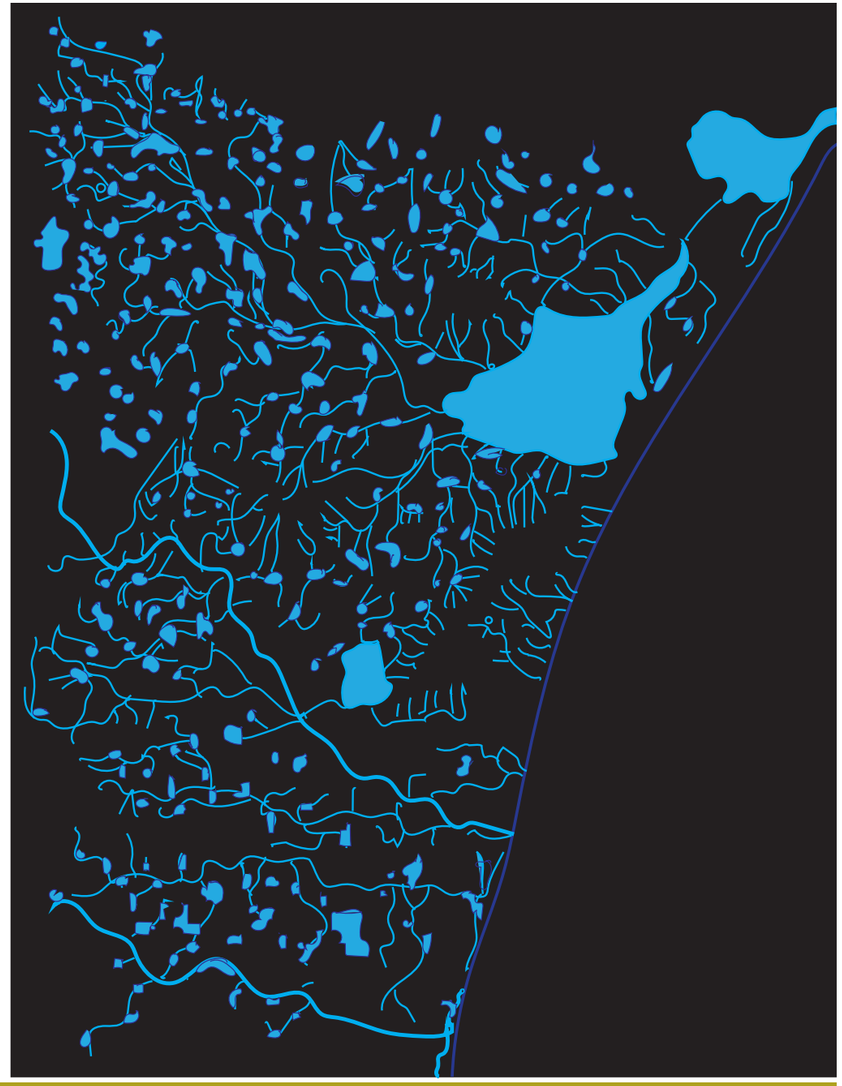


Figure 32. Step 1: The current hydrological system

The second step in the planning process is to surround every pond in the region with a robust green edge, roughly 50-100 mts wide (Figure 33). This makes the ponds all green ponds, which will then improve in ecological and water quality. Also, it forms the beginning of space with a clear natural focus within the urban context.

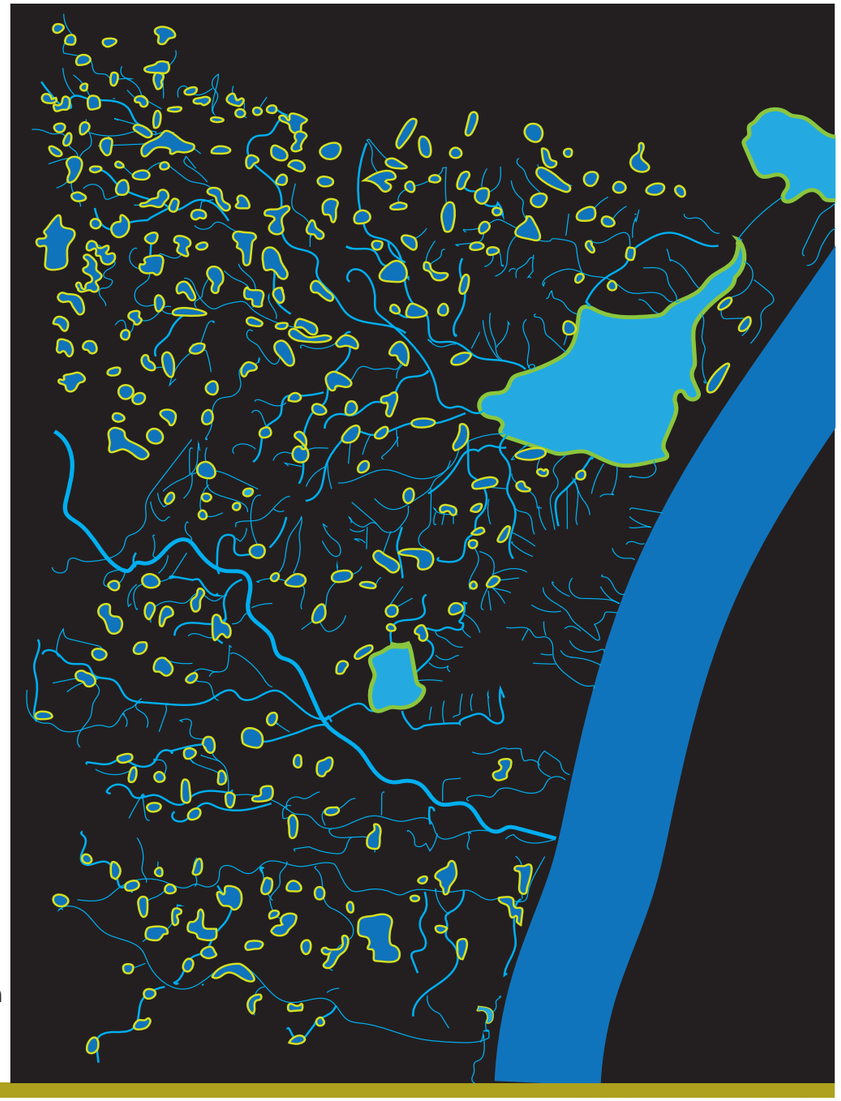


Figure 33. Step 2: Green spaces surrounding the ponds

Expanding the waterways throughout. Room for the River, making space for flood events, so the water can flow into spaces surrounding the riverbeds of the ‘normal’ waterways (Figure 34).

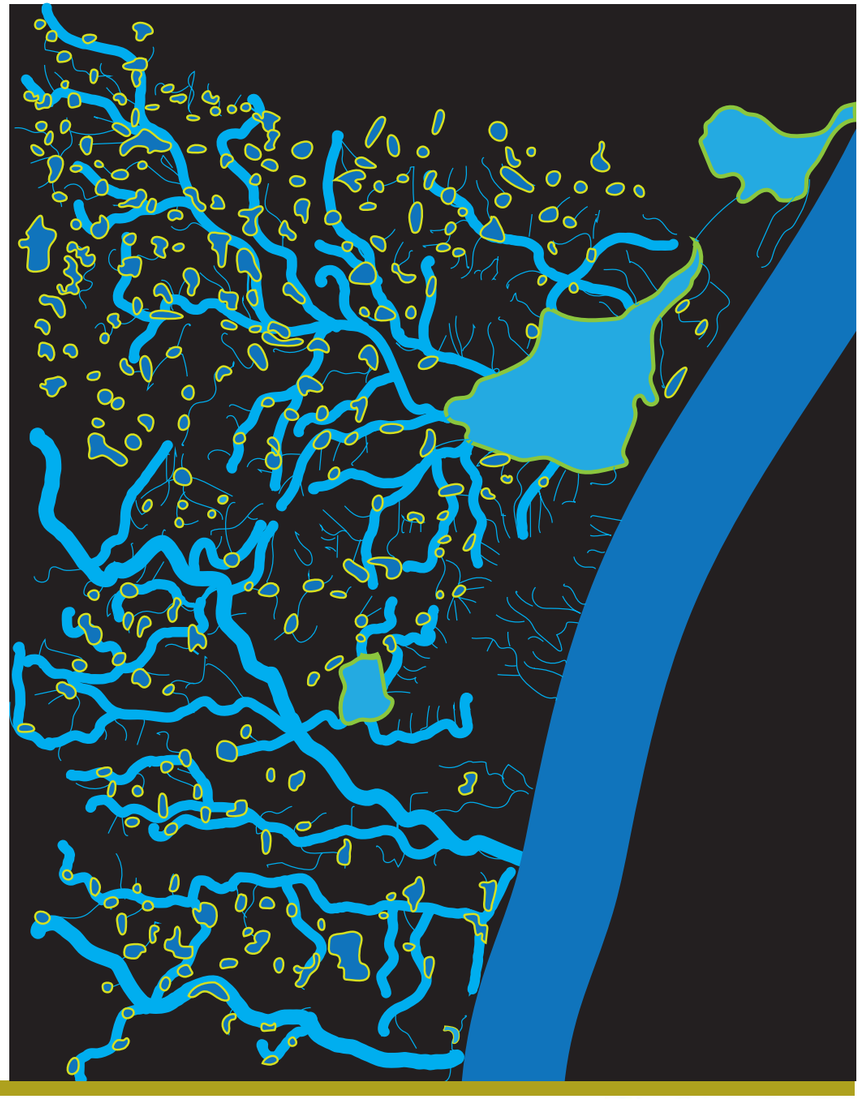


Figure 34. Step 3: Making Room for the River system

The next step in the planning for a regenerative region is the realization of a green blue framework (Figure 35). This is achieved by creating a wide ecozone alongside every waterbody, pond and waterway. This way the green spaces will connect with each other and form an interconnected network through which ecological exchange and water purification is possible. The green riparian zones are minimal 100 meters wide on either side to establish a robust system which cannot be disturbed by a single disruptive intervention. The whole framework will be so robust that it can regenerate sources of natural spirit: water, ecology, soil and human health.

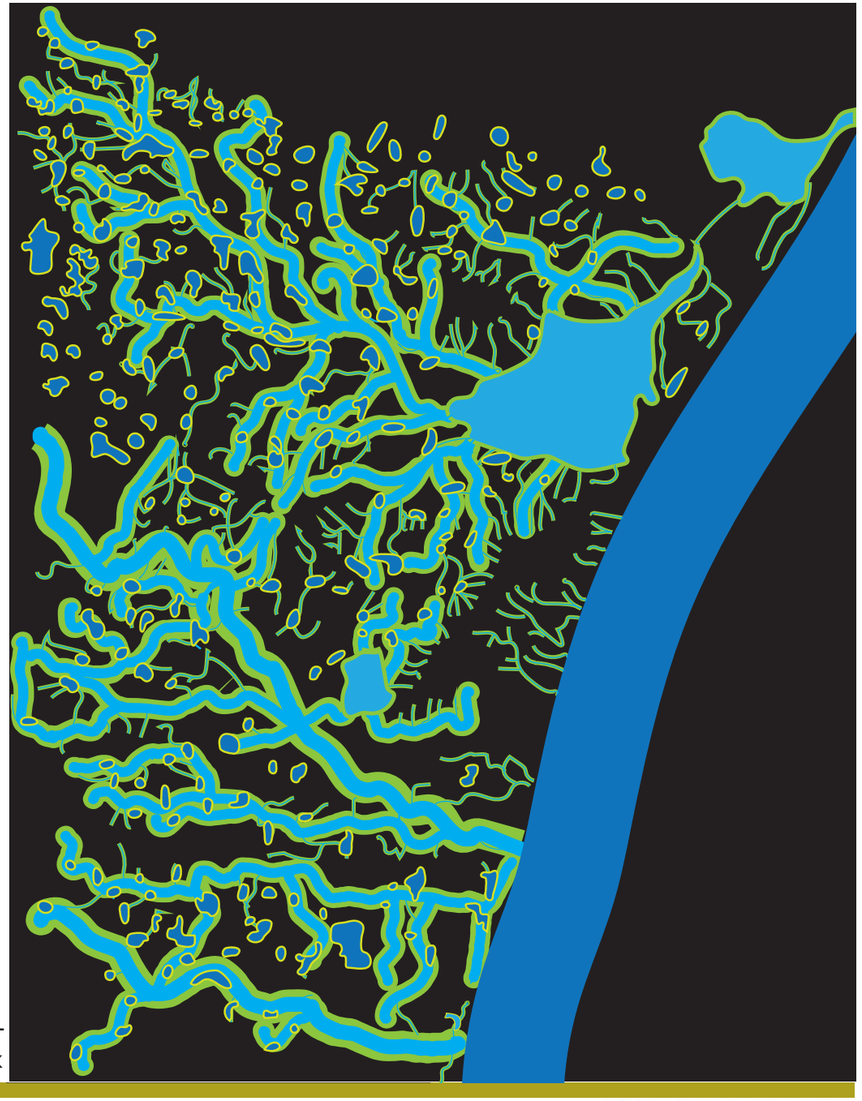


Figure 35. The eco-hydrological framework

The final stage of the planning process is then to embed urban uses, such as infrastructure, housing, commercial use and industries in this framework (Figure 36). Each use will need to return as much water, nature and soil to the regenerative framework as it uses. This means that resources used by traffic, industrial activities, living and retail must be returned in the same quality (or better) to this eco-hydrological network. This will ensure that this framework can regenerate and is built for longevity.

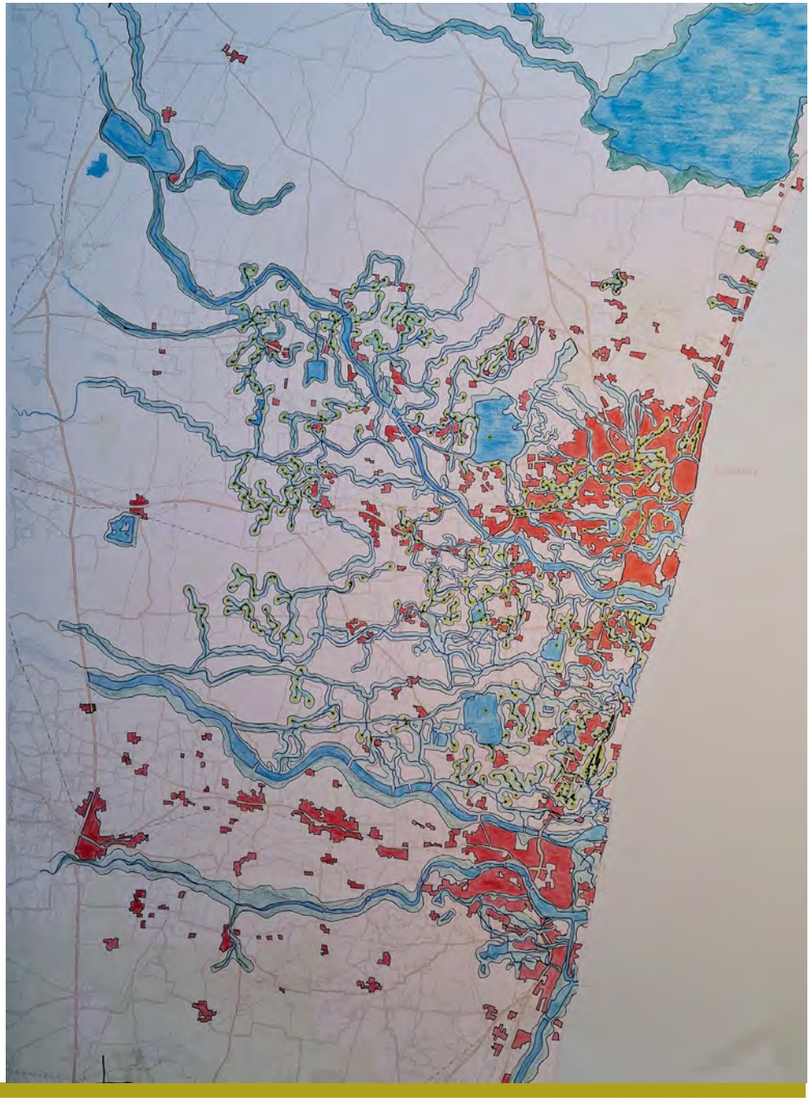


Figure 36. Urban uses embedded in the green-blue network

CHAPTER 5
FIRESIDE CHATS

5.1 A Yoga of Collaboration (YoC)

The preceding chapters have detailed the thematic inquiries, design explorations, and implementation pathways emerging from the Regenerate Pondy Conclave. Complementing these tangible outputs was an intentional focus on the behavioral and cultural conditions necessary for long-term regenerative success. The Conclave recognized that ecological transformation is inseparable from the evolution of individual and collective consciousness. In this context, a curated series of Fireside Chats titled "Behavior Change from the Inside Out" was convened to examine the inner dimensions of leadership and collaboration. These dialogues introduced the Yoga of Collaboration as a reflective and practice-based framework to support sustained, coherent, and regenerative collective action.

Overview to the "Behaviour Change from the Inside Out" Fireside Chats as part of the Regenerate Pondy Conclave | 11–17 January 2026
At the heart of the Regenerate Pondy Conclave was not only a design process for ecological regeneration, but a deeper inquiry into the inner ecology of the regenerator. While spatial visions, systemic redesign, and long-term planning were central to the week, an equally important layer of work unfolded through the series of Fireside Chats titled "Behaviour Change from the Inside Out." These conversations were anchored in the framework of the Shakti Leadership Mission's Yoga of Collaboration (YoC), a living methodology for conscious collective action. We gathered in the spirit of a shared experiment. The underlying premise was simple yet demanding: outer regeneration without inner regenera-

Figure 37. Fireside chat with Sasi Kanta Dash

tion is unsustainable. Unless each regenerator tends to the Panchabhoota — the Five Elements within themselves — they risk not being truly embedded in the field they seek to heal. Earth calls for groundedness and responsibility. Water asks for adaptability and emotional flow. Fire requires clarity and disciplined courage. Air invites connection and shared breath. Space demands stillness and the capacity to hold complexity. When these elements are not consciously cultivated within, burnout, fragmentation, or unconscious replication of the very systems we aim to transform become almost inevitable. Grounded in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother — whose Ashram has deeply shaped the spiritual ethos of Pondicherry and continues to permeate the city's subtle field — the Yoga of Collaboration rests on the understanding that collective regeneration requires a higher collective consciousness, and a higher collective consciousness requires disciplined inner work. The outer work is an expression of the inner state of those who undertake it, as collective consciousness is the sum of the individual consciousnesses of those involved in it. Each Fireside session therefore invited participants to examine their personal drivers and shadows, to take responsibility for their emotional and energetic states, and to recognize that leadership in times of planetary transition demands self-awareness as much as technical competence. Participants were encouraged to devote themselves to an ongoing balance of self-mastery and selfless service — holding the principle that conscious collaboration is not merely coordination of tasks, but a shared yoga. The Yoga of Collaboration evolves a shared language, agreed norms for dialogue, and practices for navigating disagreement and conflict with maturity. It affirms "power with" rather than "power over." This orientation created a field of psychological safety and spiritual intentionality that influenced the entire Conclave process — beginning with the spirit in which Nilima and Rob initiated their co-creation and planning, and extending through the plenaries, the design workshops, and the final river installation. Even as numerous human and technical challenges emerged during the week, there remained a conscious commitment to tending the collaborative process itself, not only the outcomes.

5.2 Four Fireside Conversations

"Behaviour Change from the Inside Out"

Each Fireside conversation was aligned with one of the Five Elements and served as an experiential anchor for the thematic work of the day. The first conversation, aligned with Earth and Fire, brought Nilima Bhat into dialogue with Dr. Sasi Kanta Dash, Former Registrar of Pondicherry University (Figure 37). The discussion explored how inner conviction and disciplined passion fuel long-term ecological commitment, drawing on Dr. Dash's work in large-scale tree

Figure 38. Fireside chat with Rob Roggema

plantation and institutional stewardship. The central inquiry revolved around how one keeps the inner fire tended without burning out. The exchange demonstrated that systemic change requires both grounding and purification, and offered a living example of mission-driven persistence within institutional frameworks. It set the tone for regeneration as both personal tapas — inner heat — and public action.

The second Fireside, aligned with Air, featured a conversation between Nilima Bhat and Prof. Rob Roggema, founder of Cittaideale (Figure 38). Breath served as both metaphor and method for collective transformation. The discussion examined how ideas circulate, how inspiration travels, and how dialogue oxygenates systems. The inquiry asked how life-force, or prana, can consciously circulate through communities working toward regeneration. The conversation framed regeneration as a dynamic and relational process, elevating dialogue from discussion to conscious co-creation. Through real-life stories of overcoming resistance and ridicule, Prof. Roggema illustrated how creativity, courage, and self-belief allow regenerative ideas to take root and prevail.

Figure 39. Fireside chat with Probir Banerjee

The third conversation, aligned with Water, brought Nilima Bhat into dialogue with Probir Banerjee, Founder of PondyCAN (Figure 39). This exchange focused on adaptability and emotional intelligence in the face of climate crisis and civic complexity. The inquiry explored how inner flow can be cultivated to respond wisely to outer volatility. The conversation modelled citizen leadership in action and emphasized resilience through collaboration rather than confrontation. Probir Banerjee shared his ten tenets for conscious regeneration of Pondicherry and offered a powerful mythic framing of ecology as a love story between Earth and Sky. This narrative dimension deepened the emotional and cultural resonance of the Conclave's work.

Figure 40. Fireside chat with Visalakshy Loganathan

The final Fireside, aligned with Space, featured a conversation between Nilima Bhat and Visalakshy Loganathan, Founder of the Conscious Spaces Foundation (Figure 40). The dialogue centred on the importance of inner stillness and safe space creation in regenerative processes. The inquiry asked how one cultivates inner spaciousness to hold complexity, diversity, and disagreement. This conversation deepened the understanding of regeneration as a holding practice, not merely a building practice. It integrated art, architecture, and consciousness into a unified field of action, beginning with Visalakshy's own home as a conscious space for incubating community gatherings and involving her family in acts of service. The session anchored the final collective installation in contemplative awareness.

5.3 Evaluation: Why This Series Was Critical

The Conclave was not designed as a conventional sustainability workshop. It was a field-building intervention. The Fireside Chats established behavioural norms for the week, reduced egoic polarization in group work, encouraged vulnerability and reflective depth, and legitimized inner work as an essential component of civic responsibility. They modeled intergenerational and interdisciplinary dialogue, demonstrating that regeneration requires both technical expertise and interior maturity.

By embedding the Panchabhoota lens into each thematic day — Waste, Food and Soil, Water, and Space — the event maintained coherence between ecology, psychology, culture, design, and spiritual intentionality. This integration prevented fragmentation between vision and implementation and allowed participants to experience regeneration as a holistic process.

5.4 Looking Forward

The Yoga of Collaboration practiced at Regenerate Pondy offers a replicable template for future regeneration efforts. It begins with inner readiness before outer action, shared purpose before structural design, and conscious process before accelerated implementation.

As Regenerate Pondy evolves — from river interventions to university incubators and eco-preneurship pathways — the YoC framework can serve as its cultural operating system. Regeneration is not only about restoring landscapes; it is about restoring the consciousness that inhabits them. Unless the regenerator regenerates themselves, the work cannot sustain.

CHAPTER 6
BACKTRACKING TO 1926

By going back in time, we can encounter a situation which was more regenerative than it is today, although not every aspect of society 100 years ago was more regenerative then now. We use the findings as an inspiration for creating a more regenerative future. For three important themes the way the systems worked in 1926 were explored: food, waste and water.

6.1 Food

In 1926 the food system was strongly related to the local community (Figure 41). People grew their own food and food waste did not exist as any leftovers were fed to their cattle. The food was simple, soulful and comfortable, and people took time to cook. The idea of 'fast-food' was absent. Only locally grown food was consumed, which was exchanged in the community. Every household had their own food-gardens, so there was no need to import food from outside the region. Food was consumed when available, as there were no refrigerators. The food was healthier, and even used as medicine, and had no or less packaging, therefore, unlike today, plastics were not used. Also, different from the present day, the irrigation systems were maintained and expanded to supply the growth of food with water. In the past, there were many more markets to choose and exchange food. In 1926 there was no junk food, no pizzas and no excess food, meaning there was nearly no waste. For growing food, no pesticides and fertilizers were used. Moreover, food-influencers, recommending unhealthy food-choices, did not exist

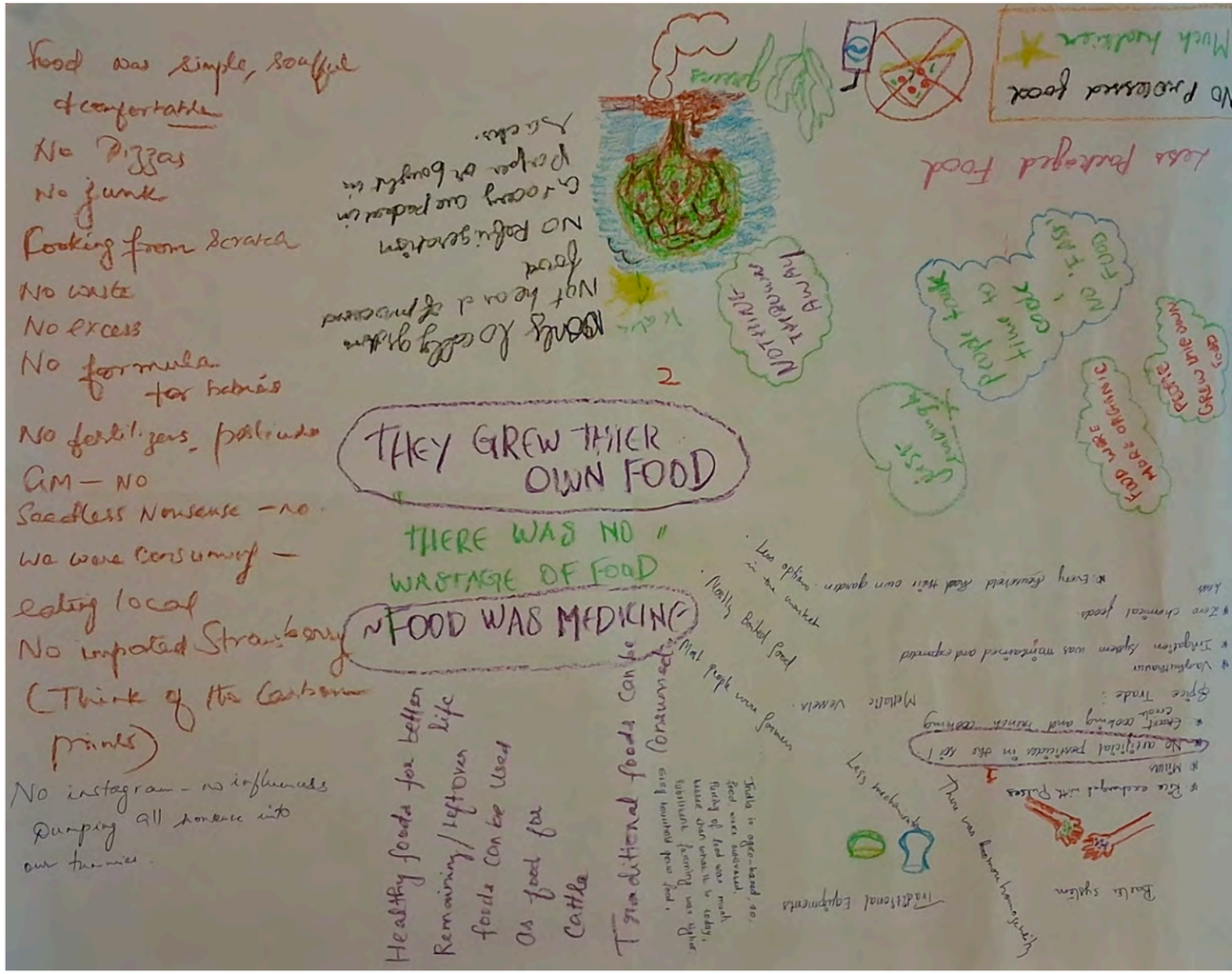


Figure 41. Food in 1926

6.2 Waste

100 years ago, there was not much waste (Figure 42). Oil was in cans, water in jugs and the food was packed in tiffin carries. Single-use plastics were not in use. If there was waste at all, most of it was biodegradable and could be decomposed. Most of the currently so-called waste was reused. This, in contrast to today, where large landfills create also new pollutants. The near absence of waste could be maintained because consumption was mindful. Consumption only happened when there was a real 'need of the hour'. Cow and horse dung were used as fuel. Currently, the region has to deal with excess consumption and excess waste in the form of plastics, sewage problems and industrial and commercial pollution, such as air and water pollution resulting from mining. Charcoal, turf and wood branches were used for making fires, leading to a poor air quality. This was problematic and still is. Textile waste is mismanaged.

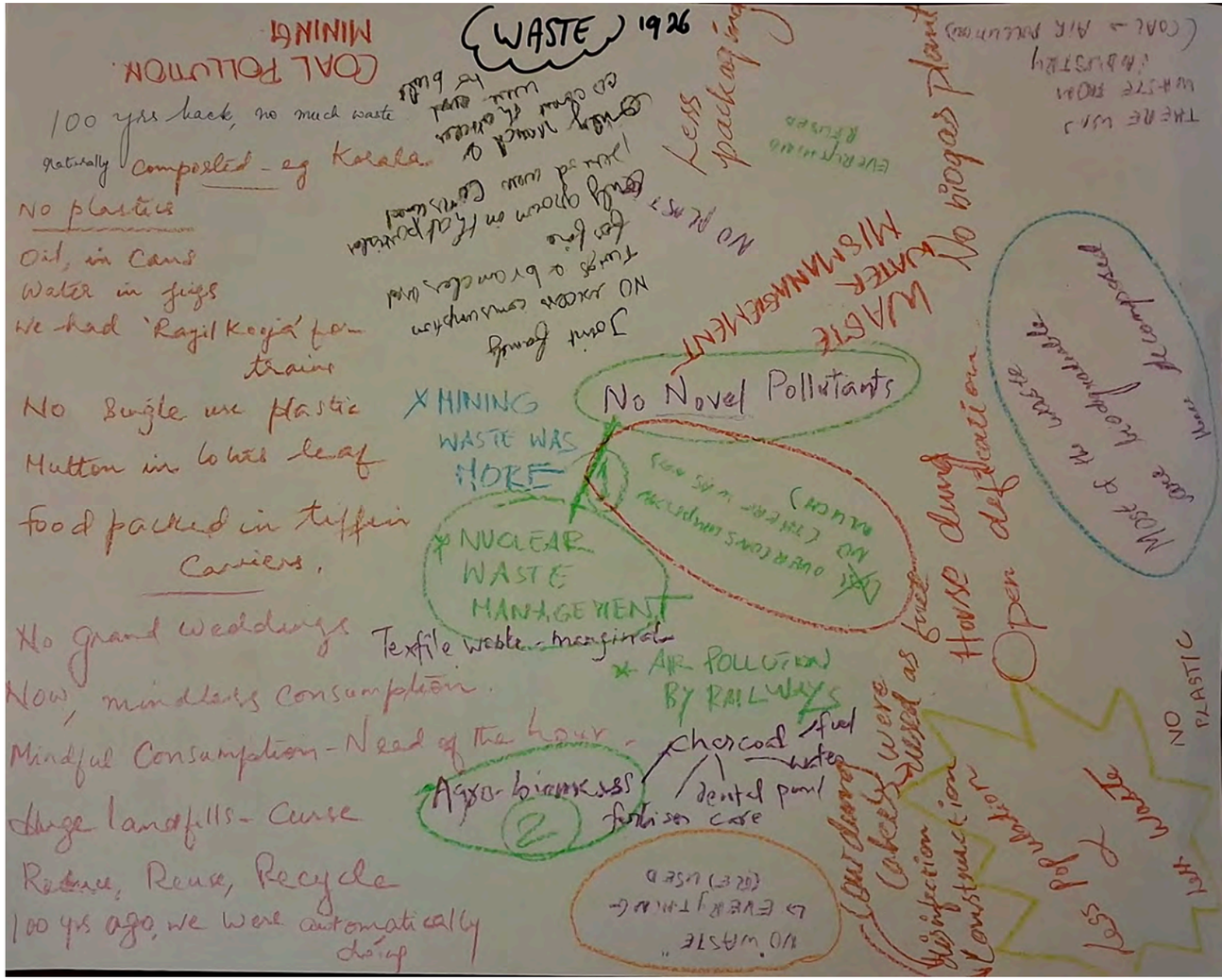


Figure 41. Waste in 1926

6.3 Water

In 1926, water was sacred and worshiped (Figure 43). Water used to be free, while nowadays it is seen as a business. Every house or community had a well and people stored their water in clay pots for drinking. Often also rainwater was used as drinking water, which nowadays would be impossible due to the level of pollution. The rudimentary water supply system used bamboo pipes to convey the water from springs. The Kudi Mara Math system existed through which the community managed their water reservoirs. The canal system that connects Pony to Muthirapalayam used to bring drinkable water. This is not the case anymore. The drainage system, designed by the French is mismanaged today. It has not been maintained, and no investments are put in this system. This causes problems in daily use, for instance dish washers cannot be used due to the high levels of total dissolved solids (TDS). 100 years ago, not everyone had access to using water. There was no ice-water. The canals and freshwater bodies were cleaner and contained more and healthier fish. There used to be many more waterbodies and ponds, which were all free of plastics. Nowadays, only 89 of them remain. Dams and check dams were used for irrigation and the coast and shoreline were healthier. Dur to climate change the monsoon patterns have changed. This causes regular heavy flooding. In urban conditions this problem is exaggerated because of the increase in sealed pavements and impermeable surfaces. In 1926, industries did not use water in large quantities. No plastic was used. Instead, brass tumblers were preferred. On the downside, there were significantly more waterborne diseases.

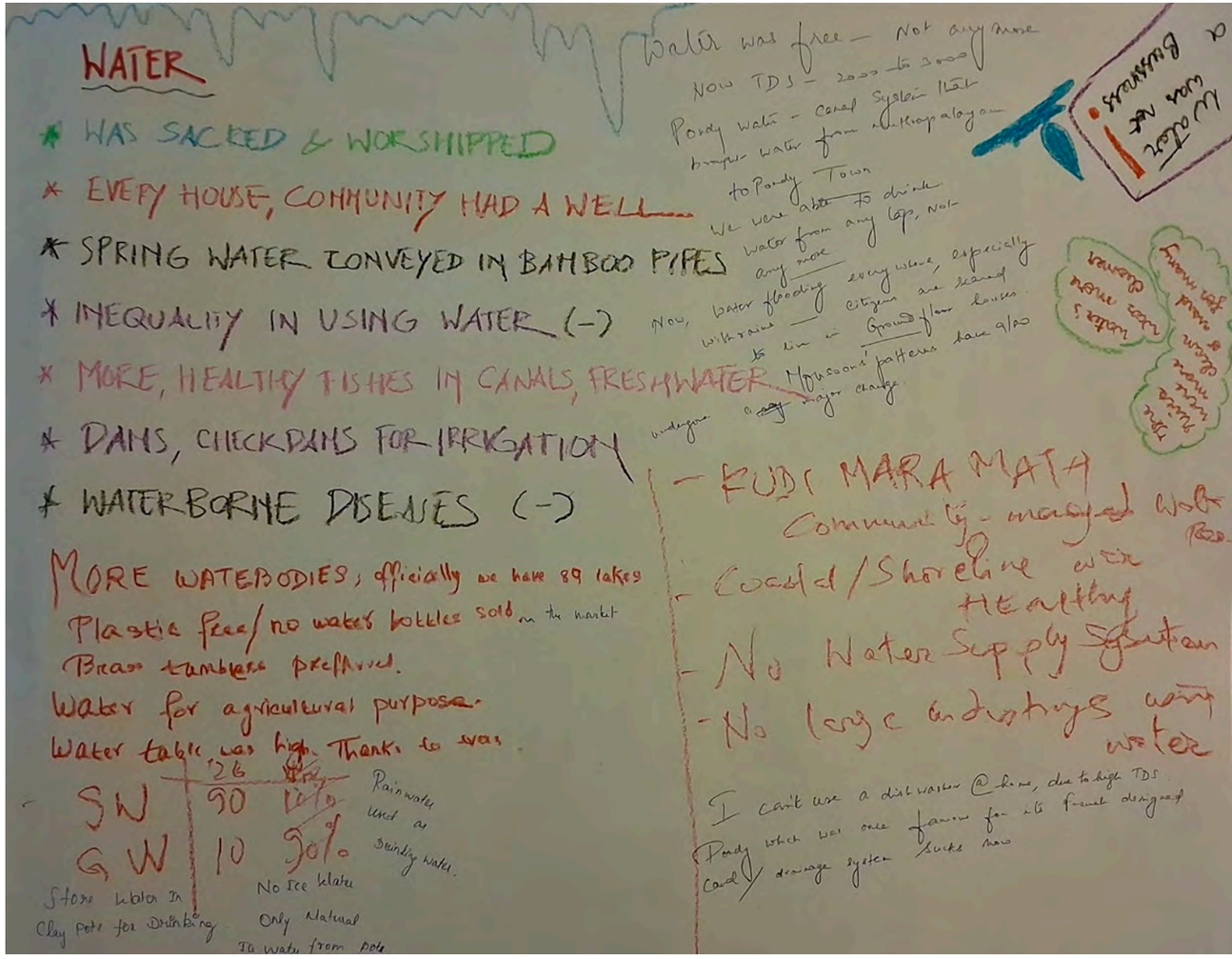


Figure 43. Water in 1926

CHAPTER 7
SYSTEMIC DESIGN

The following diagrams trace the inputs, outputs and waste flows of food, construction materials, sewage and plastic in the city and region. They aim to follow how, where and what is used, treated and disposed of. They were produced during the workshop and digitized thereafter. During the digitization process questions marks (?) were used to indicate uncertainty, key questions or where further information is required and exclamation marks (!) were used to indicate notable risks, concerns or hazards.

Food Waste

Food flows indicate the inputs (+) and waste (>) elements or products (red) in the process of preparing and cooking food for various food groups. The diagram also indicates the waste (>) from meals and the management and disposal processes and site in the city.

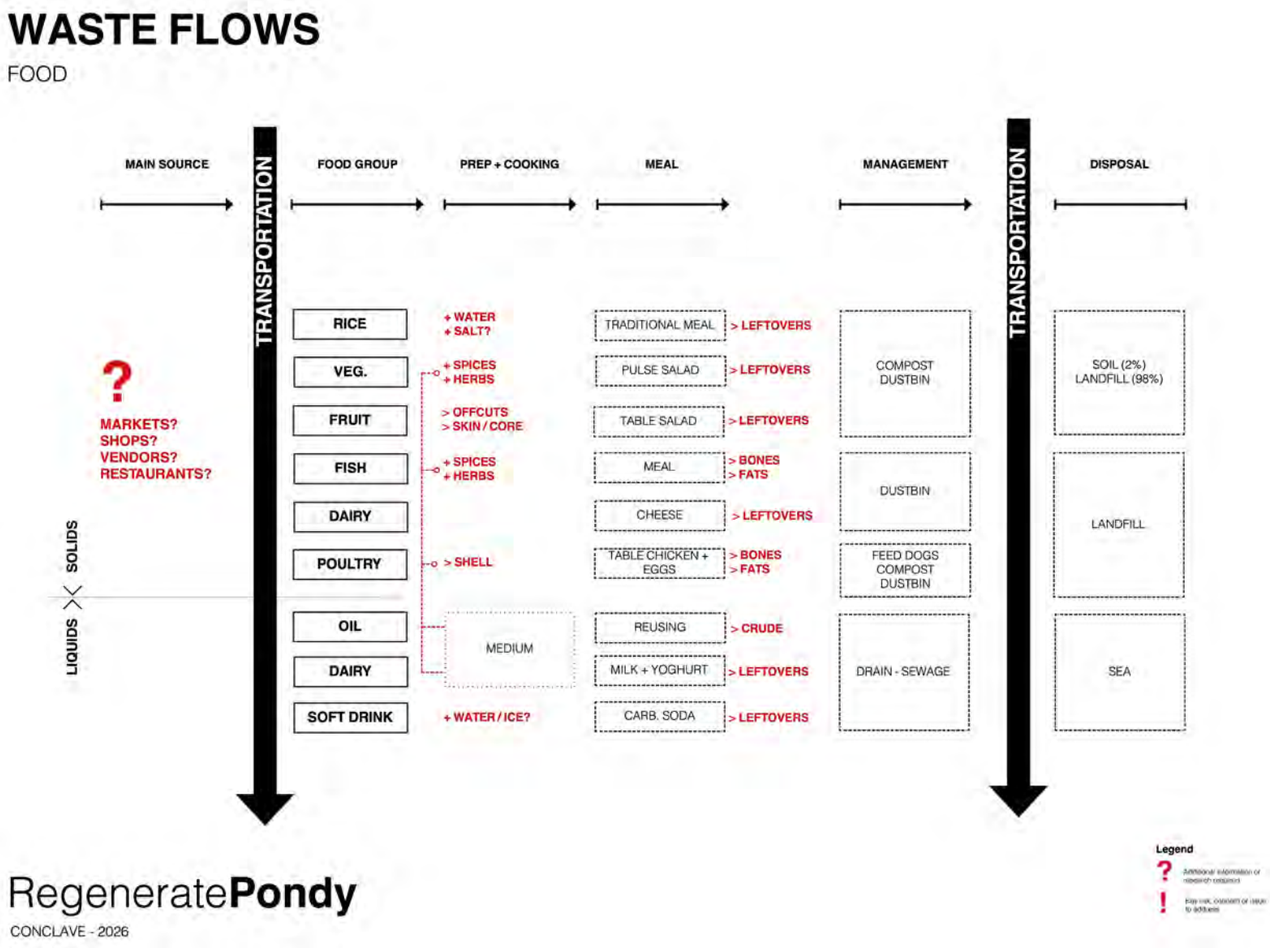


Figure 44. Food waste flows diagram

Construction waste flows

Construction materials constitute a significant waste flow in the city. The diagram indicated the primary construction materials used in the city, their constituent elements or compounds and the processing inputs required. Future research should aim to establish the sources of these raw materials and the energy and water used in their processing and transportation. Similarly, the diagram indicates the pollutants associated with processing and transportation of the materials to site.

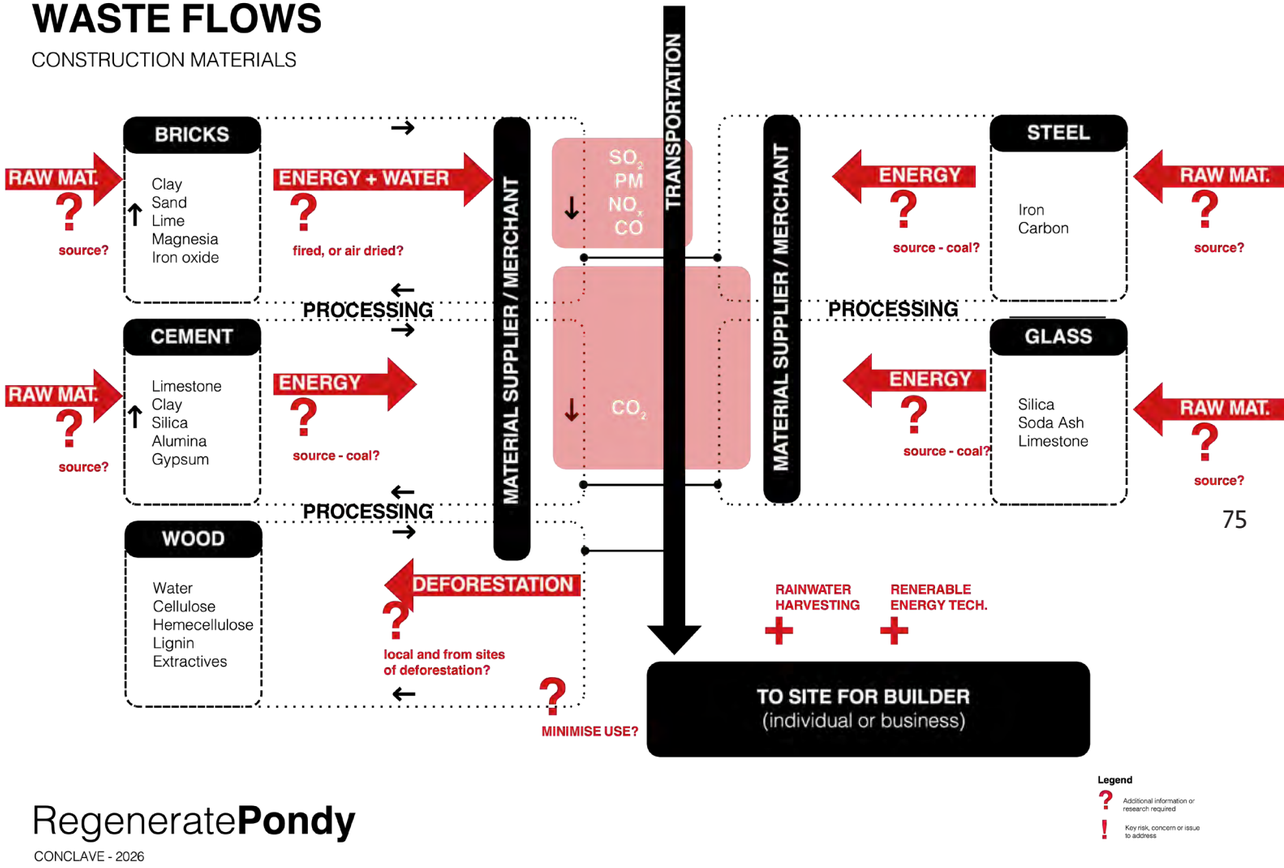


Figure 45. Construction waste flows diagram

Figure 46. Sewage mixing with the creek and river system

Sewage waste flows

Sewage discharge is a complicated mix of human waste, food waste and other industrial and household detergents and chemicals. In some cases, direct discharge of waste to open waterways is occurring in the city. Where service connections exist, the maintenance of existing systems is critical as leaks can cause direct pollution.

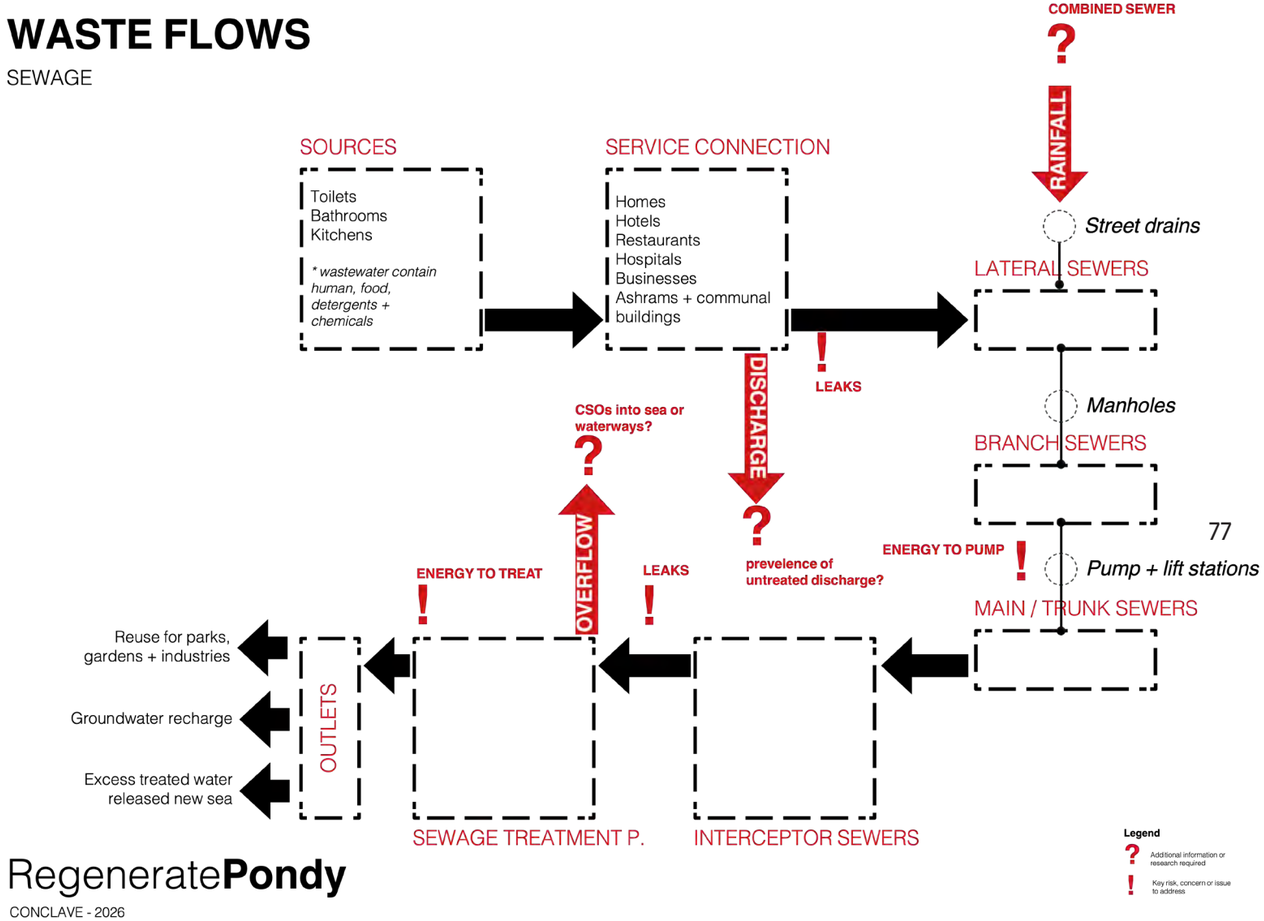


Figure 47. Sewage waste flow diagram

Figure 48. Plastic waste in public space

Plastic waste flows

Plastic is a major waste material that primarily comes from plastic bottles, food wrappers and bags. Hotels, restaurants, shops and venues for functions are the notable sources of plastics products. There is considerable uncertainty about the quantities that emerge from homes from each of these sources and requires additional research, as well as the rates at which informal recycling takes place. Two major risks are around the quantities of water required to recycle wrappers due to food residue and the effects of plastic pollution on the food chain itself.

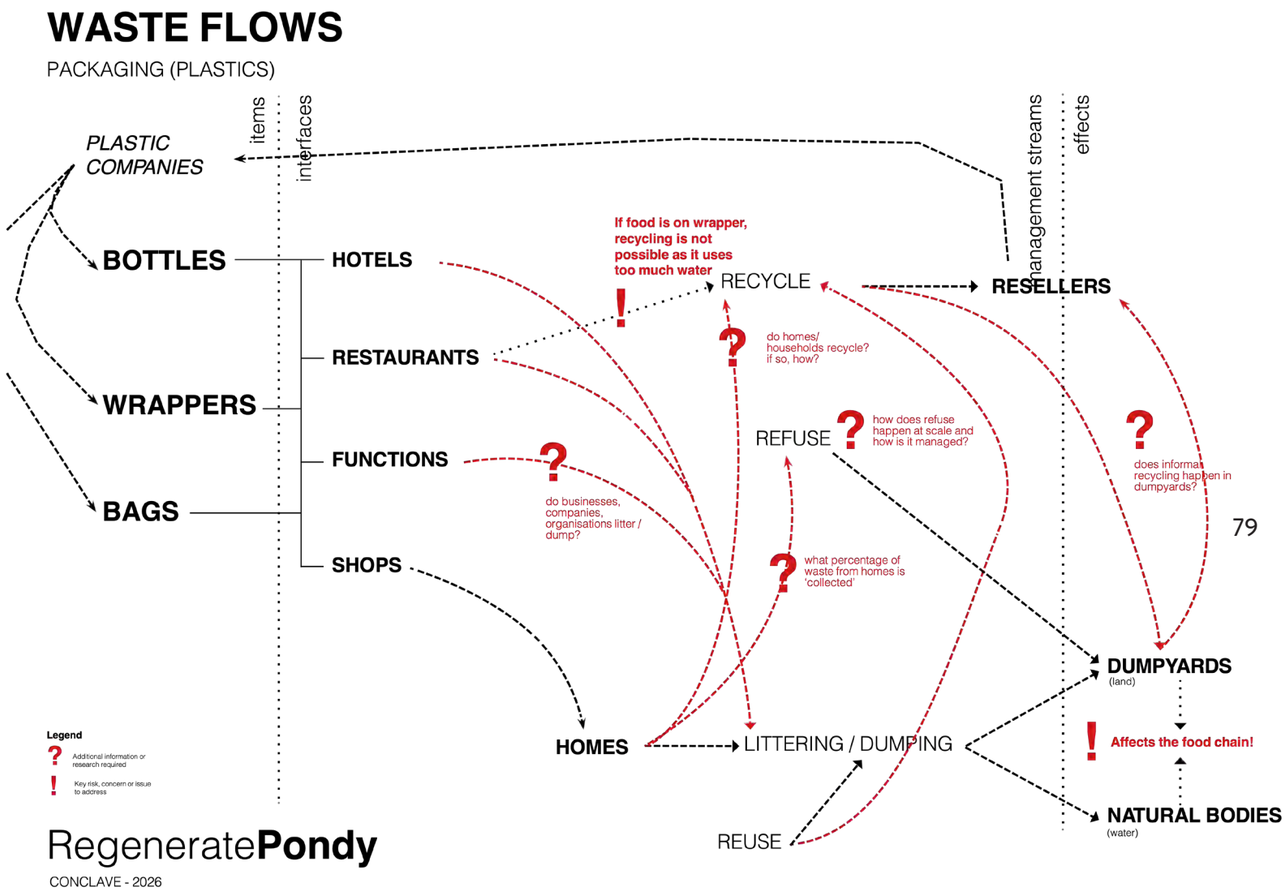


Figure 49. Plastic waste flows diagram

CHAPTER 8
A multi-scalar vision for 2126

As mentioned before, the design of a regenerative Pondicherry region should start at the (bio) regional scale. The regional scale must therefore be seen in a broad time-perspective. Long standing cultural and spatial landscapes must be connected with a future vision on the long term. This happy, healthy, harmonious Vedhapuri (the original Tamil name for Pondicherry) in 2126 should be directed by the following aspects:

– Each part of society should be involved as a stakeholder and steward for change.

– People need to be made responsible and accountable for their actions.

– Civil society should be more included in the governance of the region.

– The urban region should be planned based on a harmonious balance between the needs of nature and society.

– Therefore, the Jeeva Saahdhis Influence (human-nature interactions) should be restored.

– Traditional and local knowledge must be reinforced by scientific temperament and spiritual consciousness.

– The best of multi-cultural traditions and practices should be taken forward in a holistic manner.

– The energy, transport, water and natural systems must be made pollution free.

– Urban landscapes shall be designed for wellness, mutual care, and food and water security.

– A healthy future must be created that uses natural medicines and healing methods.

These objectives need to be designed at the regional scale, but also on the urban and street scales. Moreover, the ambitions are valid for the food, waste and water systems to begin with, but after these also for the way people are living and form a society. In our design process we embraced the landscape First approach, and this means we needed to dive into the food, waste and water systems at the different scales first. The regional design (see chapter 4) shall be taken as the basis for any further thematic elaboration or further detailing at lower scales.

8.1 Food

At the regional scale the Pondicherry region can become self-sufficient. A renewed perspective on healthy diets can give the amounts of specific local crops and food that needs to be produced within the regional boundaries. This way import from outside will no longer be necessary. For this plan, the use of the Lancet diet (Rockström et al., 2025; Ganpule et al., 2023) should be used to identify the amounts of food per category that is required to feed the regional population. At the street level (Figure 51) it is proposed to strategically position vegetable gardens, which grow local crops for the neighborhood. In several locations the vegetable gardens are combined with an aquaponic polytunnel, in which crops are cultivated using fish. The fish is fed with food waste and with their produced poop the nutrients are used to grow vegetables. In the street there are also several collection points foreseen to bring in organic waste. This waste can be used as fertilizer for the vegetable garden or for feeding the fish. This depends on the sport and quality of the organic waste. To ease the collection of organic waste and the distribution of produce, a specific bike lane throughout the neighborhood is proposed. Across the neighborhood specific spaces (meadows) for cows are sought, this to give the cows a safe and healthy space to eat grasses and herbs instead of polluted waste materials (Figure 50). All street facades are transformed in productive walls, where herbs and spices can be grown.

Figure 50. Cows eating polluted waste on the street

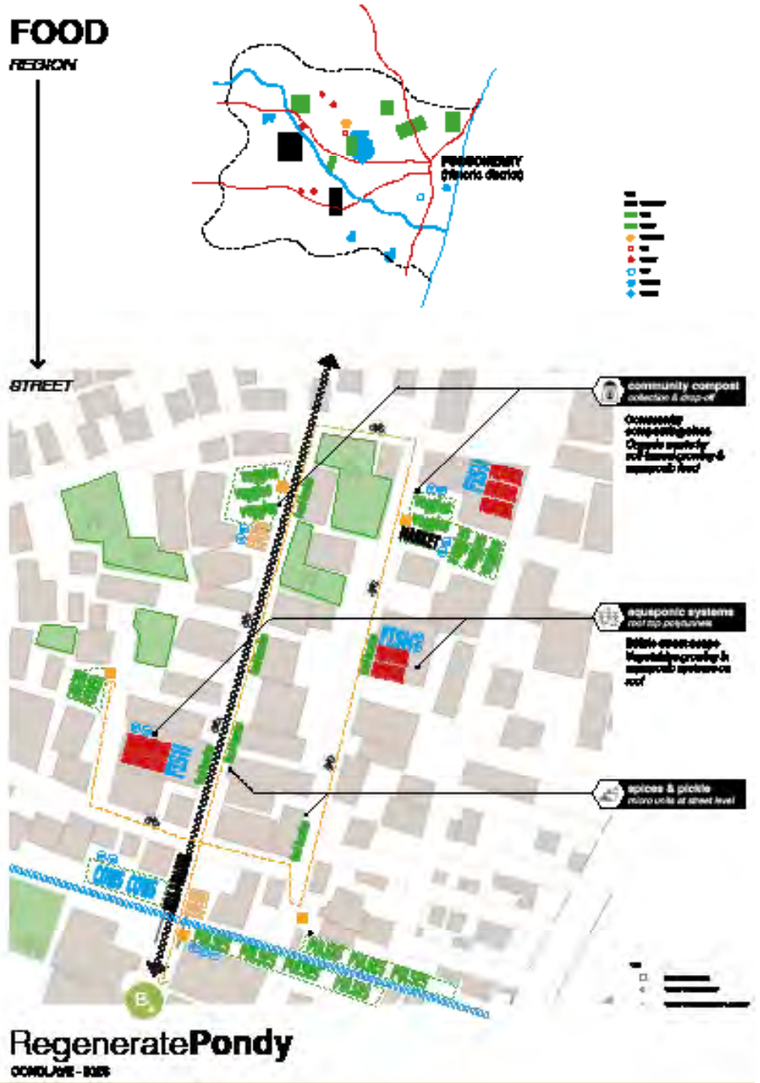


Figure 51. Proposal for the design of the food system at the street level.

8.2 Waste

Generally, waste must be turned into new resources at the lowest possible scale. The resources that are returned to the regional level, will, as cleaned waste streams, restore natural conditions. It can replenish fertile soils and clean water, refilling aquifers and restoring mining quarries. In this design workshop we have planned for four different waste flows: food, plastic, sewage and construction materials.

Food

At the city scale it is proposed to distribute major collection points for organic waste throughout the city (Figure 52). These points are located where major compost sources of food waste can be expected, such as hotels and restaurants, supermarkets, the beach and public transport hubs. Linked to these base points a route where small electric carts run along smaller places, collecting organic waste and add it to the bigger collection points.

Figure 52. Proposed vision on regeneration of food waste

Plastic

In Pondicherry, plastic waste is all around and widespread. It is essential that the plastic waste stream is reduced and plastics in the public spaces are collected and cleaned.
At the regional (or even state and national scale), the production of plastics for packaging or single-use drinking bottles and bags should be prohibited. This way the plastics will not enter the urban system. This will lead to cleaner and healthier urban environments. The abandoned factories and plastic distribution system can be regenerated and be turned into cores of nature, so to improve the regional biodiversity and contribute to the eco-hydrological networks.
At the city scale the vision (Figure 53) proposes to realize more than 200 plastic collection points. This to 'harvest' plastic. It is also suggested to connect urban farms and vegetable gardens next to each of these points. People who bring in their collected plastics, will receive crops in return. The collected plastic can be used positively, for instance by turning it into a huge shrine, as an artwork that can be worshipped.
Besides these plastic collection points there will be approximately 20 spaces safeguarded for cows. Here new meadows are realized where the cows can wander and eat their healthy grass and herbs free from any plastics. Finally, at the city scale more than 50 clean water hubs are created where people can tap drinking water in their refill bottles, so they do not have to use single-use plastic bottles.
At the street scale this vision for reducing plastic waste needs to be elaborated and detailed into space designs for specific places and parts of the street, for example a cow-meadow, a refill water point and a collection point, integrated in a whole street design.

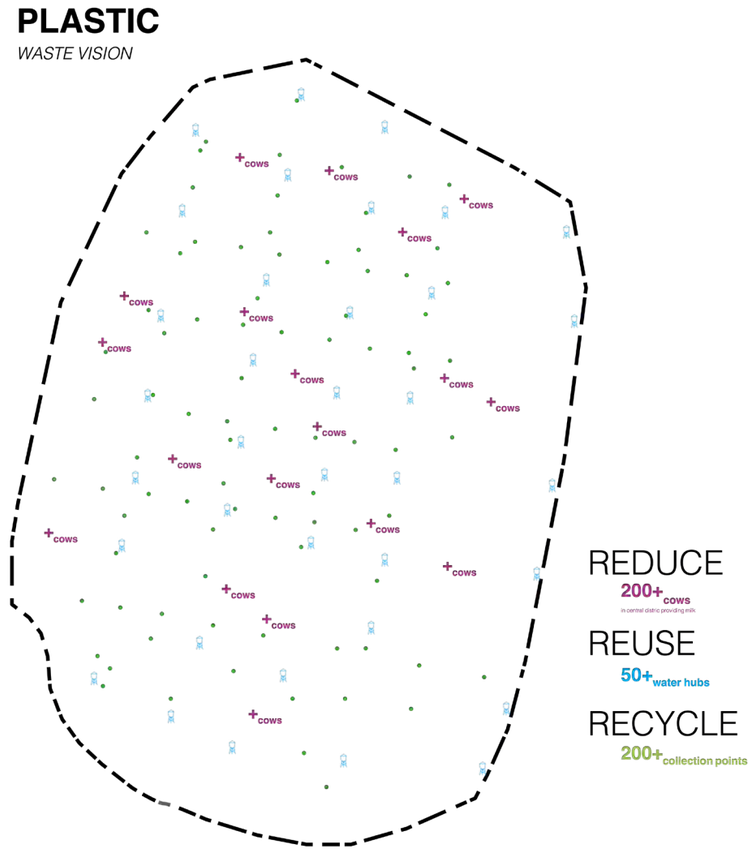


Figure 53. Vision for the plastic waste flow at the city scale

Construction materials

As we have seen in chapter seven, construction waste comes in different shapes, such as bricks, cement and wood, but also added with steel, glass and sand. Often these materials are used in constructions in a blended way, which makes them difficult to demount.
To prevent construction waste the first step is to use less materials. This requires a renewed vision by architects, on how buildings can be built in a lean way. Moreover, the newly constructed buildings should be built for a longer term than the current lifetime of 60-80 years. A lifecycle of a building should be enhanced and last for centuries. Secondly, the architect needs to start thinking about designing and using compartments of a single material, that can be extracted from the building when it is demolished. This makes it easier to reuse these materials in new buildings. When existing buildings are demolished, all materials should be separated and brought back in their original state, such as sand, clay, or limestone. These materials can be returned to their original source to regenerate the landscape.
The plan at the regional scale should include several locations where separated construction materials can be collected and cleaned. These places must be located as close as possible to their original extraction places or quarries.
At the city scale, locations for exchange of construction material should be created. Here, the brought in (left-over) materials can be of use in another building project. At 25 strategically located crossroads these trade points of construction waste are projected, as these places are the best accessible ones (Figure 54). Any surplus materials will then be transported to centrally located hubs where further recycling and/or collection takes place.
At the street level, the specific crossroad collection and trade points will be designed in further detail. Special attention is needed for the accessibility, and low impact routes.

Sewage

At the household and street scale, it is important to separate solid and fluid part. Each part is purified in specific local spaces (gardens, streets, parks), in an organic, natural way. These shall be nature-based solutions, such as helophytes (for the fluid part) and tanks (for the solid part).
The overflow of the purification processes at the household and street scale goes to a natural purification plant at the city scale, where the rest of the waste stream is purified until it is clean water.
At the regional level the clean water given back to ponds, natural creeks and rivers.

Figure 54. A city level vision for construction waste

8.3 Water

The perspective for the water system is derived from the regional design (see chapter four). The main ambition is to let the hydrological system flow as natural as possible. Therefore, additional water connections are established, and each waterway will be surrounded by a wide ecozone. At the city scale it is essential to separate the different qualities of water and treat them accordingly (Figure 55).

The sewage treatment plants are separated from other qualities, only the effluent, only when it is of a high quality, can flow in the natural creeks and rivers. Used drinking water (grey water, in purple) is collected and purified using purification tanks (in orange) or, even better, helophytes to purify the water before it can flow in the purified water system (in blue).

Figure 55. Vision at the city scale for the water system (in which: PT – Purification tank, DW – Drinking water, SW – Sewage, PW -Purified water)

The water qualities also have been separated in the streets (Figure 56). Rainwater is collected in existing or newly created natural ponds. Used water from households, schools, and larger institutional or commercial buildings is collected and, after the main pollution has been removed, led to green purifying bioswales in the streets. These swales clean the water before it flows into natural creeks and rivers. There is no need to transport it to a larger sewage plant.

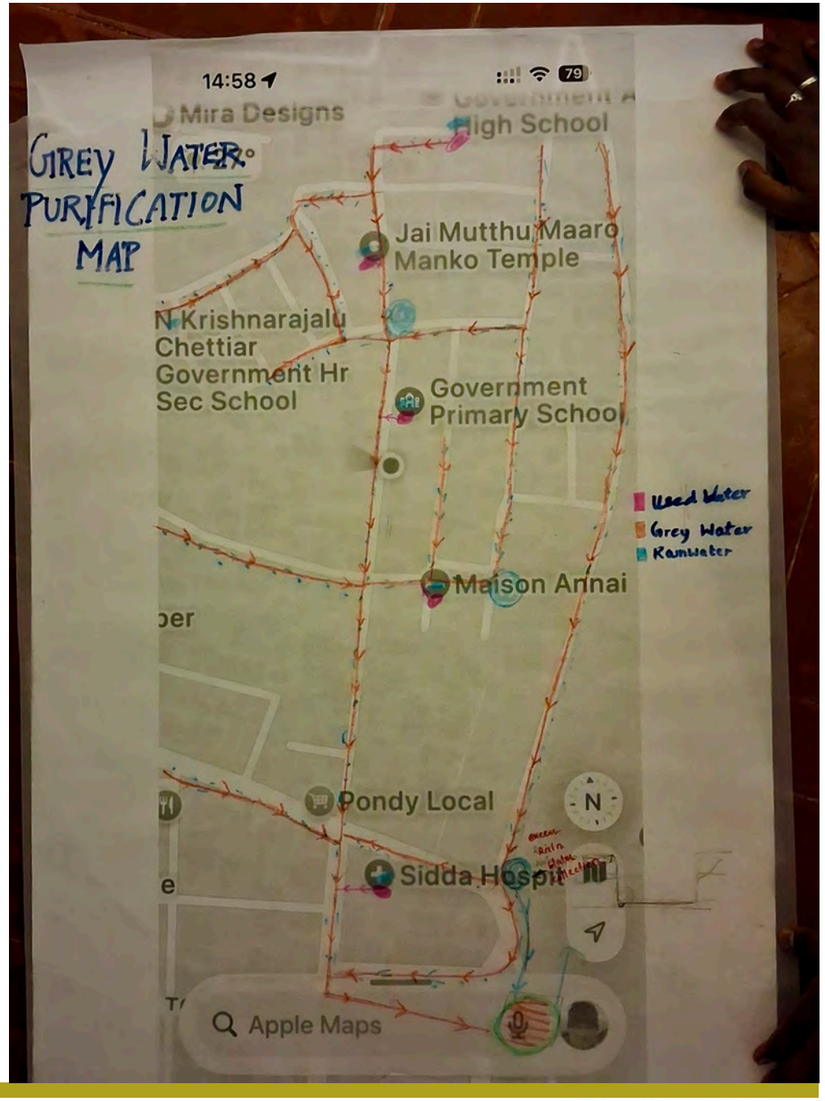


Figure 56. Plan for localizing and transportation of different qualities of water at the street scale

CHAPTER 9
YOUTH COUNCIL

The future is of most importance of the current youth. Often, in many councils and institutions decisions are taken by elder people, mostly men. During the conclave a well-mixed (in gender, college/university, background) participation of younger people was established (Figure 57, 58, and 59). This also implied a high level of commitment, energy, attachment and responsibility was taken up by this younger generation. However, in practice they are generally not asked to make decisions on topics regarding the future. Therefore, a major outcome of the conclave has been to install a youth council for a regenerative future. In this council the participating students can all take a seat. Several tasks of the youth council can be defined (more to be added if needed):

- The youth council is responsible for developing advice on all regenerative topics. The topics can be environmental, such as the quality of the water, waste or soil, and the development of ecologically inclusive plans and nature-driven urbanism. Moreover, topics can also touch on societal aspects such as participation of residents in the planning process, or the concern about welfare of animals or the health of citizens. The youth council will need to develop an agenda in which these topics are planned and objectives and deadlines for results are clearly communicated.
- The youth council will have to organize themselves. A clear structure of responsible leaders, including a chairperson and specific working groups for different topics must be arranged.
- The role and responsibility of the youth council must be clearly articulated, and a formal decision must be made by the responsible governmental organizations, including the support of individual key players (ministers, aldermen, core industry partners, etc.)
- The youth council cannot be successful without a budget. Direct payment of members of the council will not be needed, but a working budget is required for publications, meeting venues and facilities and eventual hiring of expertise from outside.

Figure 57. Members of the future Youth Council

The council will need to operate as an official advisory council for the minister. This role needs to be formally adopted by a decision and support of the government. Moreover, a process condition for implementation should be arranged in the form of a mandatory obligation to respond to any advice of the council by the responsible Minister and/or government.
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Figure 58. More members of the future Youth Council

Figure 59. More members of the future Youth Council

CHAPTER 10
HANGING HOPE

"The creek that I am swimming in, as a fish, is dirty and full of mud. It is difficult to swim upstream, or to reach the ocean. There are not too many places for hiding or find breeding grounds, due to the minimal plantings and riparian zones alongside the creek.
Last week, we suddenly witnessed a sign of hope. A large group of committed people were putting ropes across the river attaching large white canvases. At first, we thought that this activity was yet another form of pollution, but then we started watching the drawings on these white flags. Our hearts started glowing, because the messages were so heartwarming (Figure 60 and 61). To see those good intentions and the commitment of these people to keep the creek clean and make sure we have an aquatic environment that gives us a healthy life, is exactly what we need. We believe that these messages should be turned into action. The beautiful line of flags (Figure 62, 63 and 64) will be seen and acknowledged by the residents and everyone passing the bridge, but it is worth nothing if the creek stays the same, a dirty sewage system. Let's turn it into a green corridor from its origin to the sea and make sure that no pollution can reach the creek-bed. This way the water will be cleaned and we, and with us many other organisms can stay alive, improve our health and enhance the development of a biodiverse creek where many more species will come and stay. And the best thing of this all is that it also brings a healthier air, water and soil to humans. We would like to ask you not to keep it with those great messages but put these into action."


Figure 62. Warm messages for the creek

Lets not make the creek weak
I HAVE SEEN LIFE - LET ME GIVE IT AGAIN
WHAT YOU DO TO ME
YOU DO TO YOURSELF
Nandri
ONE COMMUNITY, ONE CREEK
ONE COMMUNITY
REVIVE THE CREEK RESTORE THE LIFE
OUR CREEK OUR PRIDE
POLLUTING THIS CREEK POLLUTES OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE
LET THE CREEK BREATHE AGAIN
One Creek three Worlds in our hand
WATER REFLECTS YOUR CHOICE
CHOOSE BETTER
WATER IS LOVE!
WATER IS LIFE
"IF THE WORLD CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT WATER, NEITHER CAN WATER EXIST WITHOUT RAIN" - THIRUKKURAL
WATER IS INDISPENSABLE FOR ALL EXISTENCE, AND ITS CONTINUOUS SUPPLY DEPENDS ON THE NATURAL CYCLE OF RAIN
A TAMIL VERSE OF THIRUVALLUVAR
GIVE THE WATER RIGHTS!
Keep the Creek Blue and the nature true!
HELP!!! HELP!! HELP!! HELP!!! HELP!!
It's a CREEK NOT a GUTTER!!!
KEEP MY CREEK CLEAN
WATER = LIFE
ATTENTION
1 OBSERVE
2 RESEARCH
3 BASKET
We are not designing a creek - we are giving space for water to remember how to be free
Let the Creek Flow Let Life Grow

Figure 63. Many messages wishing the creek a healthy future

Figure 64. The line of flags for the future

CHAPTER 11 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDA-TIONS

We can look back on a very intensive and rewarding first conclave, in which we engaged the students and other participants very much (Figure 65). This first conclave was not so much about the content, but on creating a commitment base with local people, scholars and students. It lays the foundation for follow-up steps. These steps however require efforts and budgets to flourish.

Figure 65. Wonderful team of Conclave participants

Six main elements can be part of a continued effort to make Pondicherry regenerative.

Keep the kids engaged.

The energy and enthusiasm of the students was excellent and should be tapped into continuously. I think we should guide and support them in developing several small projects, one could be the cleaning of the creek, working from the bridge to upstream. We need local mentors (as guides: Nilima, the involved academics (Sasi Kant, Avinash?) Joy and Visa?), supported by foreign mentorship (Greg and Rob, to report and present to). To be undertaken at first is to make a planning with critical deadlines for first results. I am thinking in months from now, to create a collaborative project between students and local residents to clean the first part of the creek and also make a communication effort (flyer with explanation) to gain awareness of the importance to keep the creek clean).
Responsible for first next step: Sasikant, Avinash, Nilima

Advance the regional plan

Based on the results of the conclave (and combine with existing plans at this scale).

Start the process of expanding the results drawn on the three different scales and integrate with existing knowledge and maps (for waste, water and food). This to provide an integrated long-term vision on Regenerating Pondicherry. We need a collaborative effort with Sasikant, Avinash, Greg, Sean, Probir, Joy and Rob. This effort should start with understanding the findings of the conclave jointly and then integrate in available maps (of PondiCAN and others), firstly through zoom meetings. Gaps that are identified after the first conclave are:
At the regional level a thorough vision of food is lacking. This foodshed plan has yet to be developed, using the Lancet diet translated to this region. For the food topic als a design at city scale is lacking, which should be an application of the principles developed for the straat level design. Also, a plan/design for foodwaste at the regional and street scale is missing and should be developed. Finally, a plan should be designed for the construction waste at city and street level.
The current spatial visions at the city scale, can be overlapped and integrated to one integrated urban design. This integrated plan for the city scale can then be upscaled to a regional regenerative plan for Pondicherry.

Plan for a second conclave

We need to start planning for the second conclave (2027), firstly with finding a good date (climate wise, and availability of keypersons). For this second conclave the travel and stay of Greg and Rob (and Lisa and Mel) need to be covered. Additionally, we should invite 2 extra foreign guests (who need to arrange their own budget for travel and stay). This could be Chrisna du Plessis, Rod Simpson, Barbara Schaffer?
The aim of the second conclave should be to enhance the findings of the first one and add new layers of knowledge and insights on top of this. Also, I believe it would be good to involve the students of conclave one, but to ask them to mentor a new cohort of fresh students for the second conclave. Further ideas and program need to be discussed.

Develop the youth council to an institutional entity of advice to the minister

We should work on formally install the Youth Council. This requires a formal acceptance by the minister of the council and a statement that he would respond to each advice given by the council. Topic that the council could embrace can be dealing with waste (different forms, plastic, sewage, food), cleaning of water courses, growing local food areas, etc. The council can propose policies, and concrete hyperlocal projects to be realized (and financed by the ministry). We need to install a formal board of male/female leaders of the council, ideally recruited from different colleges/universities. Also, we need to describe the protocol and responsibilities, including reporting lines of the council. The council needs a (small) budget.

Prepare for first biennale

(and gain support, including budget, from the Minister).

The first Biennale of a regenerative urban design and art in Pondicherry need to be planned for from ASAP. If we estimate a Biennale in late 2027/early 2028, preparations should start now. For this to be successful, the Biennale should be proposed to the minister and quite a large budget needs to become available.

- Costs are for providing spaces where entrants of the Biennale can exhibit their proposals/projects. This means spaces for realizing small green and ecological projects, clean water projects, reused waste projects, etcetera.
- Costs for travel and remuneration of the curator(s) of the Biennale. Preferred to start the first Biennale with foreign curators, Rob and Greg, who will need to receive a small remuneration and covering of travel and stay (a couple of times to discuss the Biennale with local project team and the Minister). The curators will write the brief, make the planning, connect to international artists and designers, and invite the global community to enter a submission and come to the Biennale in Pondicherry). Further they will open their networks to make the Biennale a true international fest for art and design urban regeneration.
- Advertising and communication costs, such as flyers, website and publications.
- Remuneration for local project team (suggested Nilima, Lalit and support from many

others). The local project team is responsible for arranging the permissions and needs locally.

- Project costs (a working budget)

Responsible for a first next step: Lalit/Nilima

Set-up of an incubator network

An incubator network — embedded within participating universities and colleges — could support students and graduates to become regenerators: eco-preneurs, regenerative entrepreneurs, and applied researchers. The aim is to help young people transition from undergrad and postgrad programs into funded research, paid roles, or viable regenerative ventures, aligned with grants, fellowships, and CSR support. Apart from the current colleges and universities involved, we need to add a school of architecture/urban design.

Responsible for first next step: Nilima

Figure 66. Visit of high interest for the line of flags

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