

THE GOA SPATIAL PLANNING COURSE



Interdisciplinary, Inclusive, Inspirational

Venue: V. M. Salgaocar College of Law

29th Nov - 20th Dec 2025



INTRODUCTION



The Goa Spatial Planning Course was a 24-hour pilot initiative conceived as an invitation to rethink how natural resources are governed in Goa. It was initiated to create a space for deeper engagement with how land, law, and development intersect in the State, particularly at a time when planning decisions significantly shape ecological balance, livelihoods, and cultural landscapes. Designed for students from multiple disciplines, including law, architecture, life sciences, engineering and related fields, the course brought together diverse perspectives to explore the legal and ethical foundations of spatial planning within Goa's evolving socio-ecological and socio-economic realities.

Blending lectures, Satsangs, report writing, and creative exercises, the course aimed to make planning interdisciplinary, accessible, and grounded in lived experience. The satsangs functioned as guided conversation circles where participants reflected collectively on the week's themes and deepened discussion beyond the lectures. Through this approach, the course sought to nurture informed and critically engaged individuals capable of meaningfully contributing to the planning processes that shape Goa's future.

Alongside lectures and discussions, participants were invited to respond to weekly creative templates. These exercises were intentionally designed to move beyond text-heavy analysis and encourage a more imaginative and reflective engagement with spatial planning in Goa. By drawing, mapping, writing, and visualising ideas, participants could express their own interpretations of law, development, environment, and governance. The templates helped surface personal insights, tensions, and hopes that may not always emerge through formal academic writing.



WHY THIS REPORT TAKES A CREATIVE FORM



This publication brings together creative outputs from a four-week course on spatial planning in Goa. Rather than offering solutions or prescriptions, it traces how participants observed, questioned, and reimagined planning across legal, ecological, economic, and governance contexts. Creative methods were used as tools of inquiry, allowing imagination, reflection, and critique to surface patterns in how planning is understood, experienced, and contested.

The prompts were thoughtfully developed to align with each week's theme, translating complex discussions into visual and reflective formats. By foregrounding these participant responses, the report highlights how students from diverse disciplines engaged with spatial planning not only as a regulatory framework but as a lived and evolving process shaped by responsibility, tension, and possibility.



WEEK 1

Where Planning Begins

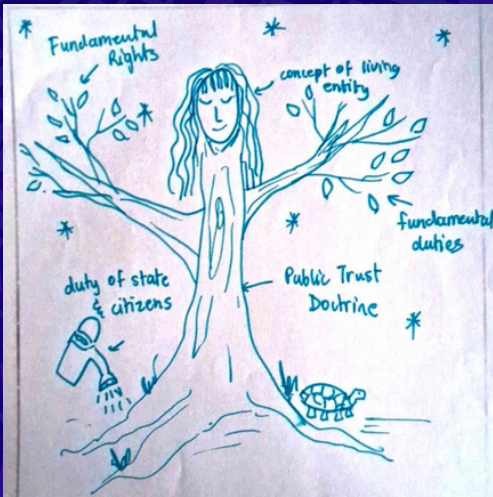
*Constitutional Values, Rights, and
the Ethical Foundations of Spatial Planning*

The first week focused on setting the foundations of spatial planning by exploring constitutional values and international principles that shape how planning is imagined and practised. Participatory planning processes, are envisaged under Articles 243ZD and 243ZE of the Constitution of India, which emphasise the involvement of people in decision-making at the local level. It examines how these processes are closely linked with the objectives of the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV). Further, we delved into how effective participatory planning contributes to the realisation of Fundamental Rights, particularly the Right to Life and the Right to Equality.

Participants were encouraged to meditate and imagine planning principles as living forms. By visualising constitutional and international frameworks as embodied structures, the exercise encouraged participants to consider how foundational values support, constrain, or sustain spatial planning in practice.

The week ended with an open satsang circles that asked a simple but important question: who are we really planning for, humans, nature, or economic interests? The creative outputs shared here, including participant templates and constitutional creatures, reflect how these foundational ideas were understood and interpreted. The brief reflections that accompany them draw out whether planning frameworks are seen as protective, under pressure, evolving, or still aspirational.

WEEK 1

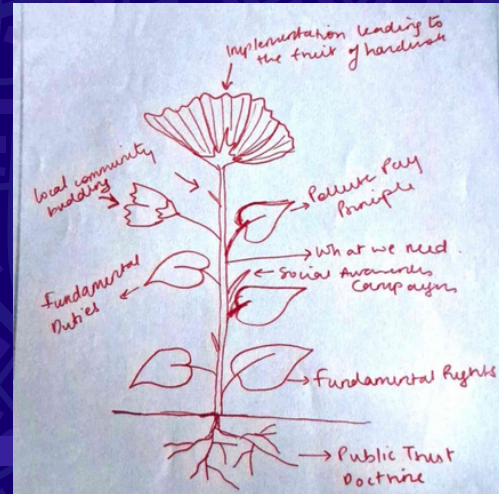


Planning is imagined here as an interconnected living organism. Fundamental Rights and Duties extend outward like protective limbs, while the Public Trust Doctrine anchors the structure at its core. The illustration conveys that planning has the capacity to sustain life and balance interests — but only when actively upheld by both the State and its citizens.

-Artwork by Nandita Couto

Planning is depicted as a growing plant: rooted in the Public Trust Doctrine: a principle that entrusts natural resources under the care of the Government who acts as a trustee. This is supported by social awareness, and shaped by constitutional principles. When these align, it produces equitable and sustainable outcomes.

-Artwork by Alisha Fernandes



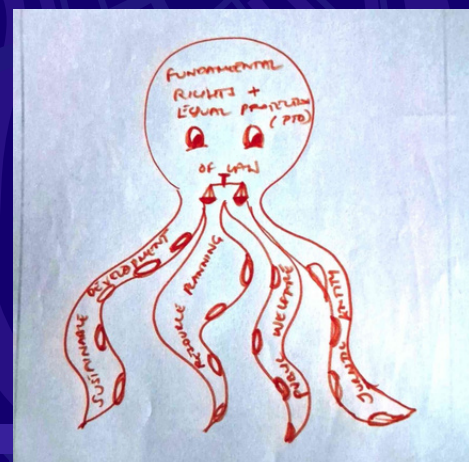
This illustration envisions constitutional values as a bird in flight. The Constitution, created by the people, forms its head and guiding force. Its wings, representing global frameworks and municipal laws, enable movement and direction. Yet the absence of a heart draws attention to what is missing: an ethic of legal animism, or deeper recognition of nature within human-made laws. Without this moral centre, the flight remains incomplete.

-Artwork by Joanna Pyres



Here, planning is portrayed as an octopus whose central head represents Fundamental Rights, particularly Article 14 and the promise of equality. From this core extend multiple arms, each carrying a distinct planning principle. The form suggests adaptability and reach, but also interdependence; when the central commitment to rights weakens, the entire system risks losing coherence.

-Artwork by Aaron De Souza



WEEK 2

When the Landscape Writes Back

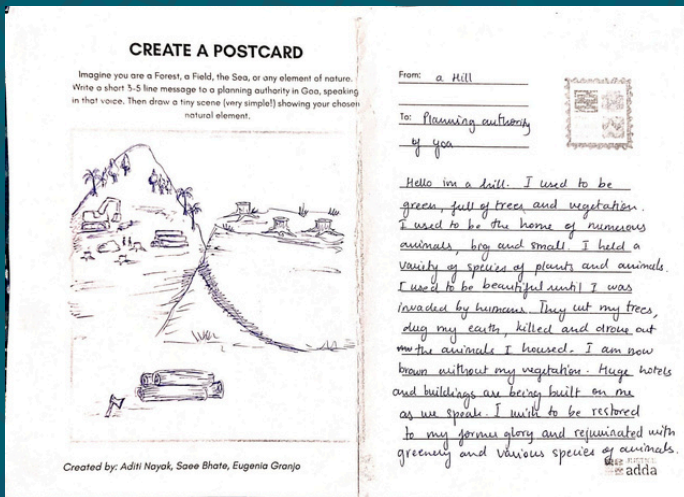
*Natural Resources, Ecological Voice,
and the Governance of Place*

The second week shifted the focus from principles to place, exploring how natural resources are governed, used, and experienced in the shared past, present and future of Spatial Planning in Goa. Through discussions on forests, agriculture, fisheries, and water systems, participants engaged with the legal, socio-economic, cultural, and the policy measures that can be used to protect them such as natural resource planning, with particular attention to the Western Ghats and local livelihoods.

As part of this engagement, participants were invited to write postcards from the perspective of a river, forest, coastline, or other natural entity. Drawing on the idea of legal animism which recognises that landscapes can be imagined as possessing a voice and agency. This exercise encouraged participants to momentarily step into the position of elemental natural entity themselves, reflecting on governance, conservation, and livelihood tensions from the standpoint of the landscape rather than the planner.

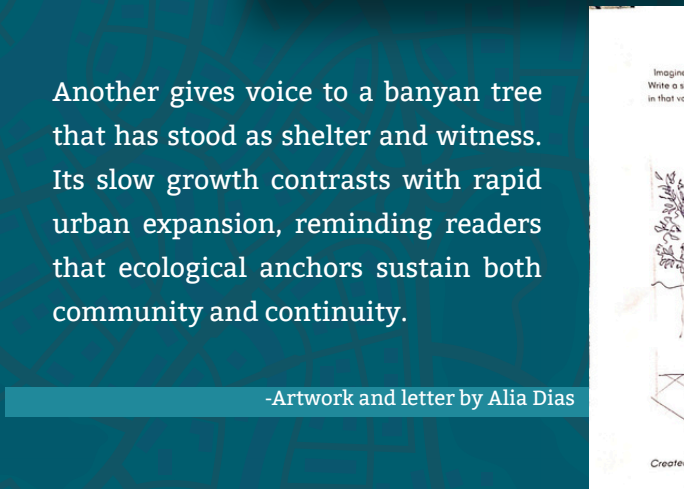
The satsangs created space to reflect on lived struggles such as Amche Mollem and questions of water management, highlighting how rivers, forests, and commons are recognised differently across legal and socio-cultural systems. The creative outputs from this week, presented as postcards written from the perspective of natural resources, reflect a growing attentiveness to voice, care, and responsibility, and reveal how participants grappled with the tensions between conservation and livelihood.





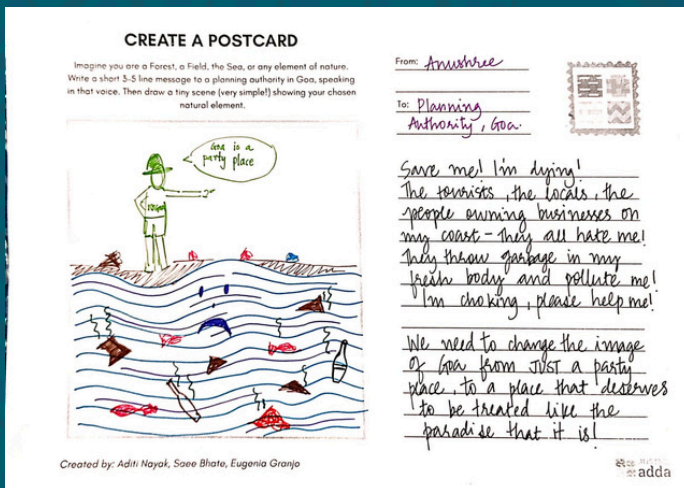
One postcard depicts a hill once abundant with trees and wildlife, gradually eroded by human activity. It reflects on how development often prioritises short-term gain over long-term balance.

-Artwork and letter by Nandita Couto



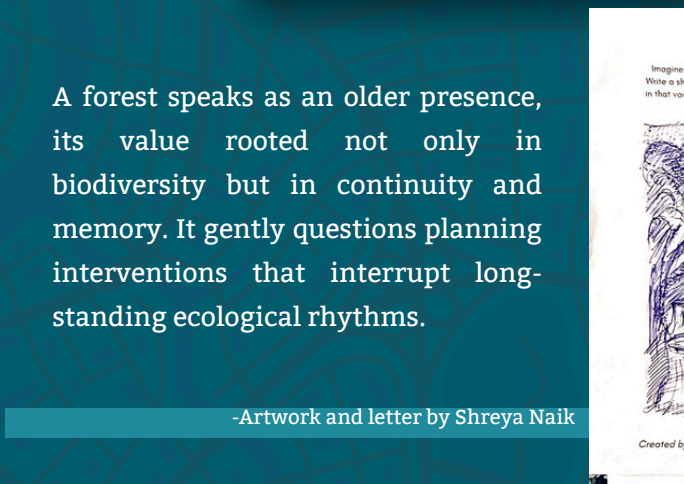
Another gives voice to a banyan tree that has stood as shelter and witness. Its slow growth contrasts with rapid urban expansion, reminding readers that ecological anchors sustain both community and continuity.

-Artwork and letter by Alia Dias



From the sea's perspective, anxiety emerges around unchecked tourism and pollution. Economic use is acknowledged, yet accompanied by a plea for restraint and care.

-Artwork and letter by Anushree K



A forest speaks as an older presence, its value rooted not only in biodiversity but in continuity and memory. It gently questions planning interventions that interrupt long-standing ecological rhythms.

-Artwork and letter by Shreya Naik

WEEK 3

Mapping Growth and Its Costs

Tourism, Mining, and the Socio-Economic Development

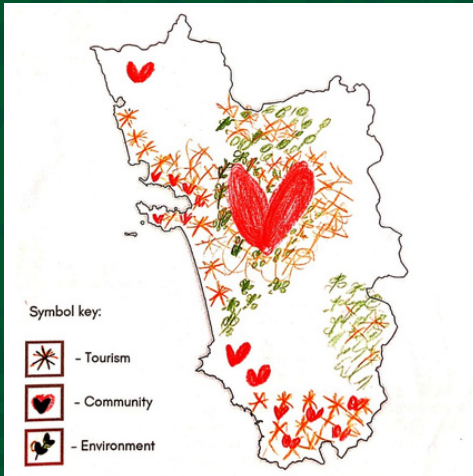
The third week focused on socio-economic planning in Goa, using tourism and mining as key lenses to understand patterns of growth. Although these sectors appear different, they revealed similar extractive tendencies and the consequences of inadequate planning, including environmental stress, congestion, and increasing challenges for local communities. Discussions on river tourism, mass tourism, and infrastructure highlighted how unplanned expansion affects cities, ecosystems, and everyday life.

Through lectures, panel discussions, and mapping exercises, participants explored how economic growth is closely linked with ecological systems and social realities. Concepts such as externalities, market failure, and intergenerational equity helped frame these reflections, encouraging participants to consider whether development can balance immediate gains with long-term sustainability and responsibility towards future generations.

The week emphasised the importance of participatory and thoughtful planning that places both people and the environment at its core. It also highlighted a shared aspiration for more conscious development practices, reinforcing the idea that a Goa that works well for its residents ultimately supports a more sustainable and meaningful model of tourism.



WEEK 3

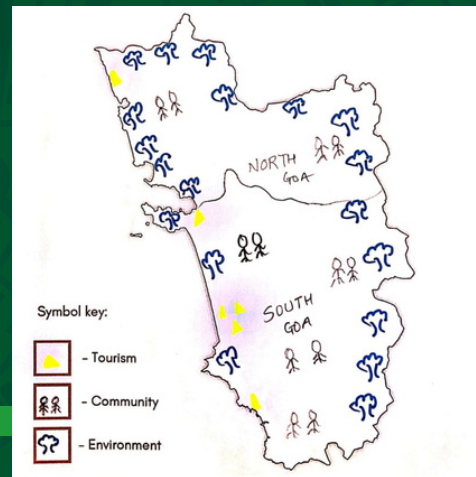


Tourism appears densely concentrated around central and coastal regions, overlapping with community symbols and environmental markers. The clustering suggests that economic activity is deeply embedded within ecological spaces and local life, indicating both reliance on and pressure upon shared landscapes.

-Artwork by Arya Kamat

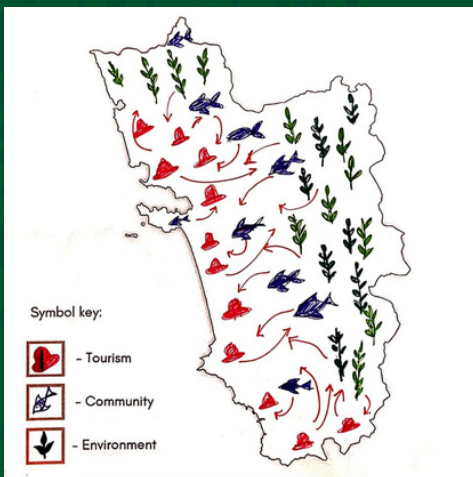
Tourism symbols are sparsely placed compared to widespread environmental markers, especially across North and South Goa. The visual separation suggests uneven development patterns, where tourism enters ecologically rich spaces, raising questions about balance and carrying capacity

-Artwork by Richa Pai Kudav



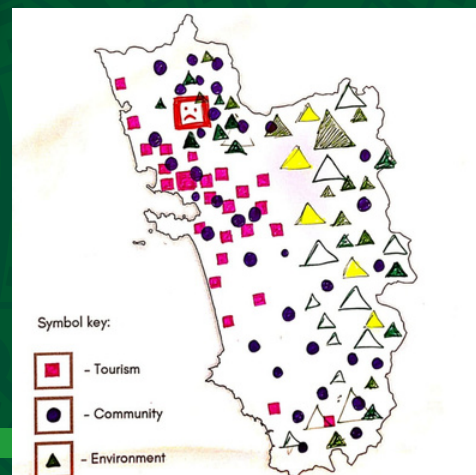
Arrows visibly connect tourism, fish (community), and vegetation (environment), illustrating circular movement and mutual dependence. The flow suggests that tourism depends on thriving ecosystems and local livelihoods, while simultaneously influencing and reshaping them.

-Artwork by Anushree K



The distribution shows tourism spreading into areas marked by environmental symbols, with a distinct marker highlighting Mopa Airport. This points to infrastructure-driven expansion, suggesting that economic growth can alter ecological balance and community spaces.

-Artwork by Dattaraj Naik



WEEK 4

Signals from the Ground

Law, Enforcement, and Public Accountability in Planning

The final week focused on the institutional and procedural landscape of town and country planning in Goa. Through discussions on the TCP Act, Regional Plans, and ODPs, participants examined how plans are drafted, revised, and implemented, and how they are shaped by political pressures and public response. Particular attention was given to provisions enabling the regularisation of illegal construction, raising concerns about transparency, enforcement, and the long-term implications of retrospective decision-making. The satsang on regularisation invited participants to grapple with questions of legality, public interest, and political will, while also reflecting on the role of civic awareness and democratic participation in influencing outcomes. The week concluded with insights from the launch of *Justice Making, Justice Spaces, and Justice Users*, situating planning within broader conversations about justice, technology, and constitutional values.

Alongside these discussions, participants engaged with the prompt “Signals from the Ground,” which encouraged them to step outside policy texts and reflect on lived experience. Rather than analysing planning solely through formal frameworks, they were asked to observe and interpret the signs visible in their own surroundings. Using a red, yellow, and green framework, they identified patterns that suggested warning, uncertainty, or possibility.



WEEK 4



CONCERNS

- Political domination
- Poor enforcement
- Lack of accountability
- Dilution of environmental laws
- Lack of detailed Plans
- Lack of expertise



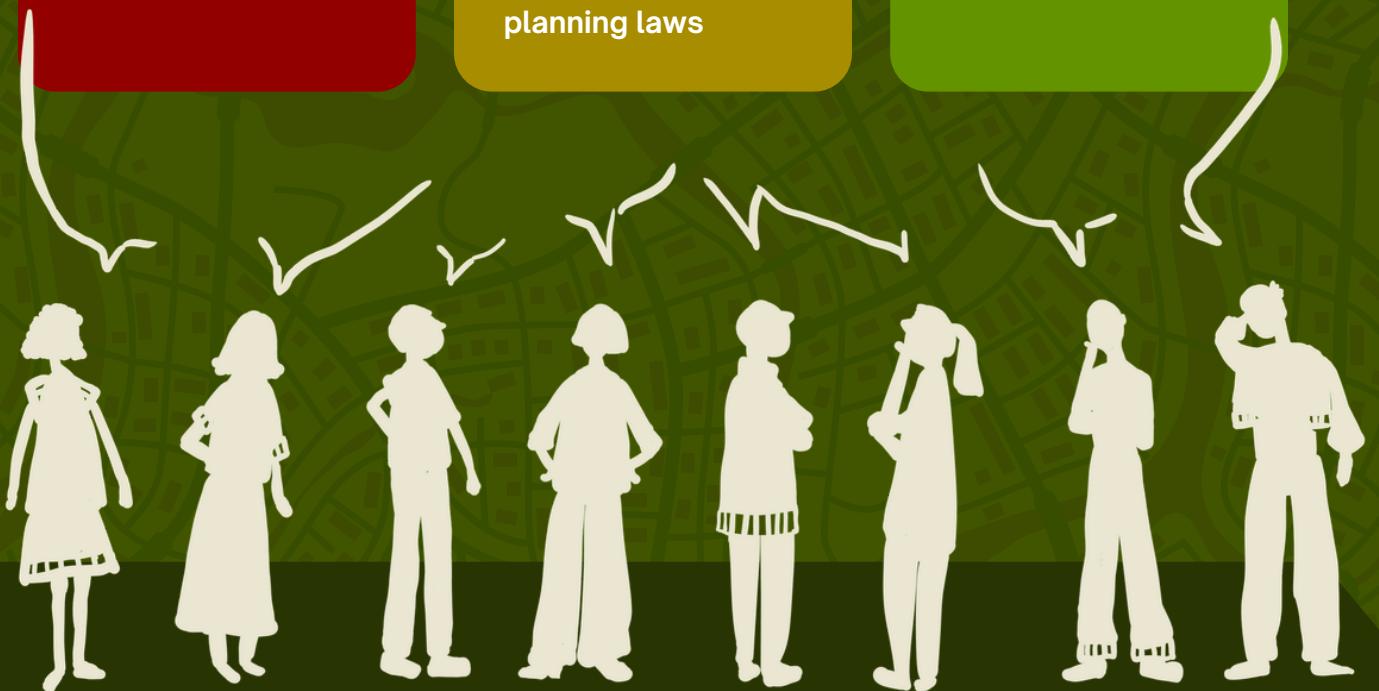
UNCERTAINTY

- Balance between residential & Commercial
- Legal framework is inadequate
- Coexistence of development and nature.
- Amendments to planning laws



HOPE

- Public Participation
- Growing awareness
- Legal activism
- Goa becoming a pioneer for planning in India



EDITOR'S NOTE

The Goa Spatial Planning Course was conducted as a 24-hour pilot initiative to explore how law, ecology, and economics shape and should collectively guide decisions on land use in Goa. Bringing together students from diverse disciplines, the course encouraged critical engagement with the principles and processes that guide participatory and conscious spatial planning in the State.

This illustrated report foregrounds the creative outputs that emerged from weekly prompts. Through drawings, maps, letters, and symbolic reflections, participants interpreted and questioned themes ranging from foundational planning principles to natural resources, economic growth, and town and country planning.

As a pilot, the course was exploratory in nature. The creative exercises served as tools of inquiry, allowing participants to reflect, critique, and imagine alternatives. We hope this publication serves as both a record of that learning journey and an invitation to continue rethinking how space, law, and responsibility intersect in Goa.

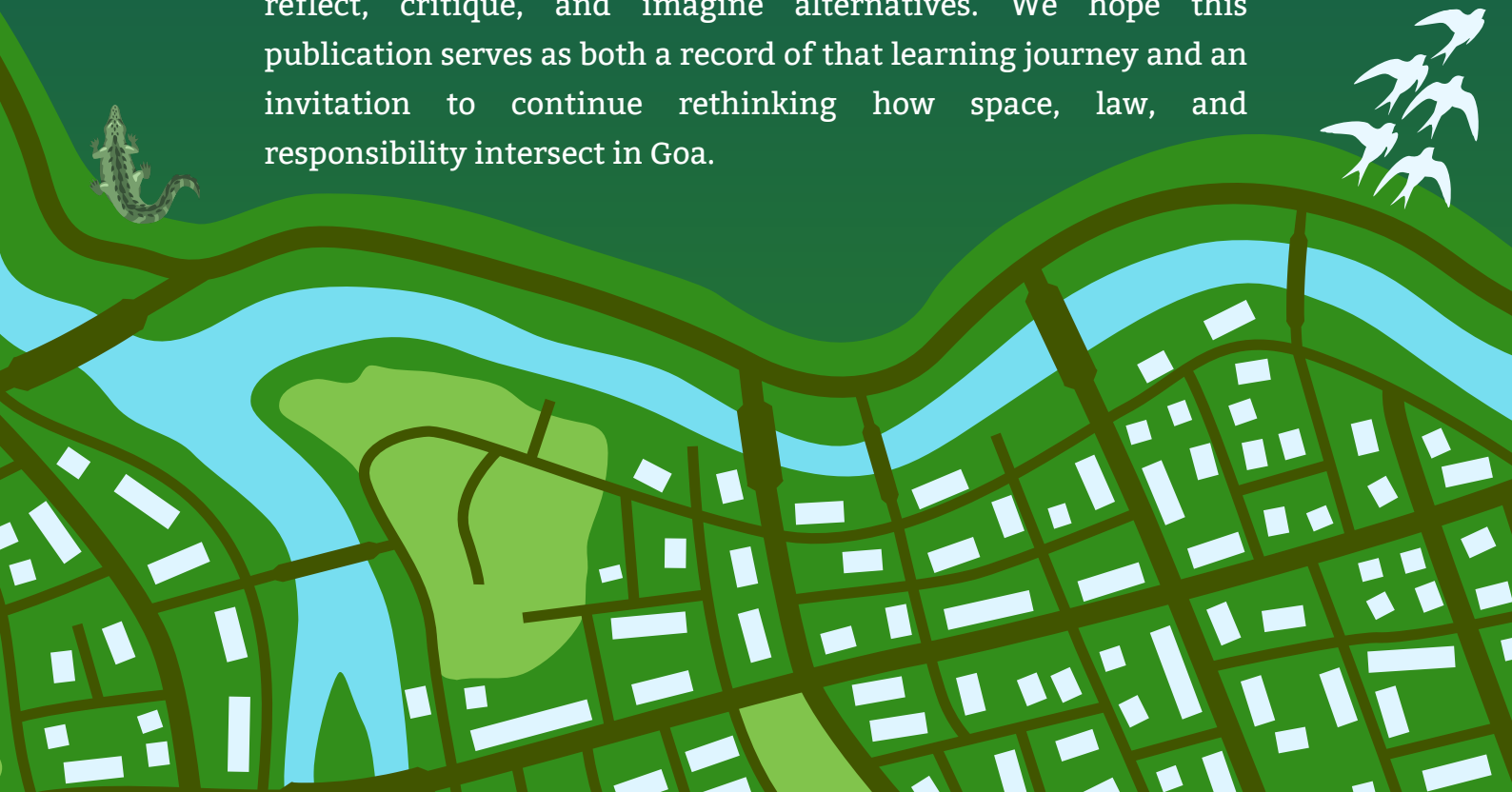
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