

## **Neighborhood Sensitization Exercise**

### **B. Arch. Semester VIII. Jadavpur University**

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In our 10 semester architecture curriculum, the semester VIII design studio follows a semester of practical training where students usually go to other places to also widen their exposure. After staying in another place for close to six months, the students mostly tend to see their own city differently from what they were used to on return.

On the other hand, as in many institutes, the major thrust of the semester VIII design studio is to work on an urban insert in any dense fabric of a city. This is due to the fact that architecture is never experienced in isolation and is invariably a part of its surrounding. The context is as important to us as is climate in shaping architecture.

In order to reorient students back into the academic framework after practical training, a short, fun exercise is usually introduced so as to prepare them for the rigour later in the semester. The students are asked to either make short films, infographics or installations, and so on, on some aspect of their city they chose to like or dislike.

Seeing their enthusiasm hearing Amit Chaudhuri in the department early last year, we felt encouraged to introduce an extra exercise that would further make them sympathetic towards their built surrounding. Besides making a 3 minutes film on Calcutta, they were also asked to study an old house in the area they had filmed.

Studying these houses to redesign with little changes for a probable reuse helped us in 3 ways. One, it helped us document the houses before they were destroyed. Two, it helped us show the need and ways to restore and reuse for sustainable development. Finally, three, it helped us see ways to design while respecting the surroundings.