



Open spaces in Mumbai

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Landscape Environment Advancement Foundation, LEAF

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Introduction

A space to a place

Open spaces are a critical factor in determining the quality of life in cities. While many of these spaces have been consciously made, many others owe their origins to regular use by people. People and their everyday activities define space; sometimes in a more powerful manner than a given physical definition. Places of interaction give rise to shared, social spaces. This may range from a shared courtyard between neighbours, a street shared with vendors and fellow commuters, to a garden shared by the entire city.

Open spaces in an urban fabric become much needed spaces of leisure, interaction and in many cases, everyday transactions. “Open space is not only for recreation and conservation of environmental and cultural values, it is the foundation of urban livability”.

Mumbai due to its geography and history offers a range of open spaces which are used in a very, very intense manner. While the seafronts, mangroves, designated national parks and historic maidans are the more visible open and green spaces, there is a plethora of smaller open spaces that shape the character of the city. These range from spaces of leisure to spaces of requirement.

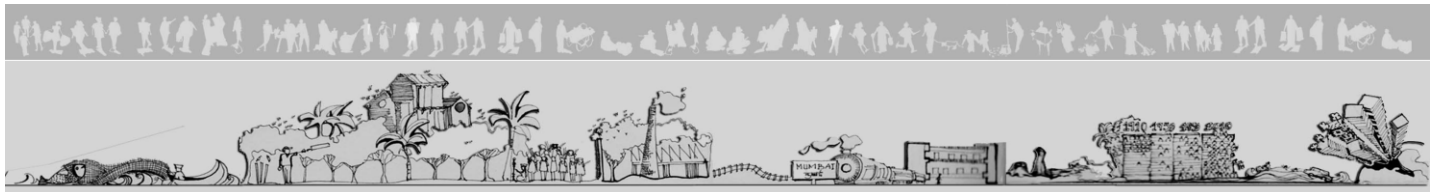
By no means comprehensive, this document studies eleven open spaces in the city of Mumbai to understand their workings. While one cannot argue about the historical and cultural importance of many of these places, the focus in this study is on understanding the current manner of use of these spaces.

The case studies have been chosen keeping in mind a sequential increase in scale; beginning with the space right outside a house (Dadar Parsi colony), to the neighbourhood (Bandra Linking road) to a well known landmark of the city (Marine Drive).

Each of the places is mapped with respect to land use, connectivity, ground surface and tree cover (where relevant). Next, a detailed sketch records the manner in which people use the space; supported by photographs based on site visits. Each of the case studies is then summed up with key observations for that particular case study.

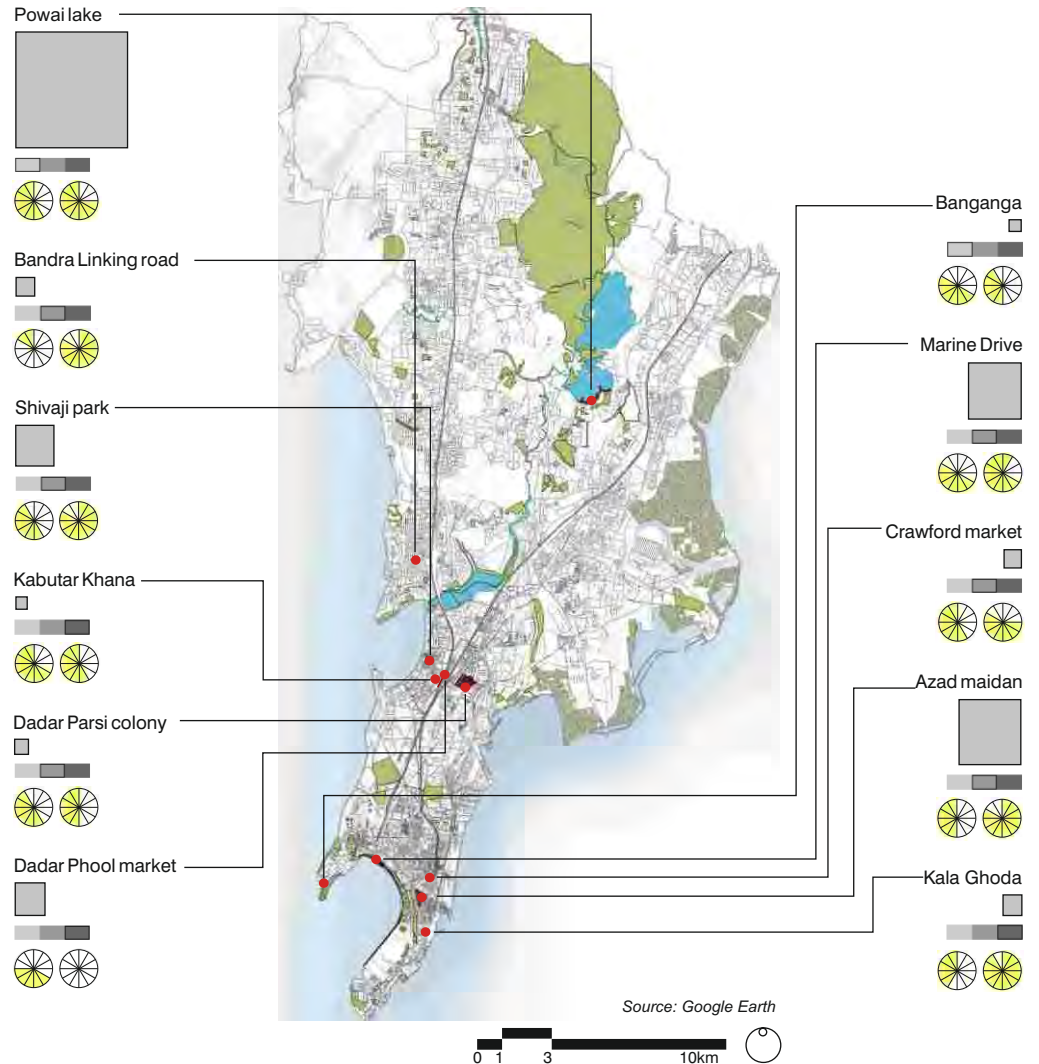
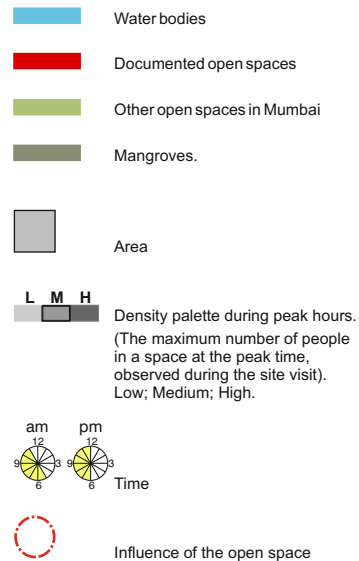
While some of these case studies reaffirm very strongly the well known tenets of good urbanism – ‘eyes on street’, parks without barricades; many others throw up interesting paradoxes (Patwardhan garden on Linking road completely obliterated by shopping).

This study is a documentation of observations made in eleven open spaces in Greater Mumbai. The analysis is based on personal observations and is represented in the form of drawings and images. All the eleven case studies are analyzed differently, according to the primary aspect that governs that particular space like biodiversity, vehicular movement, demography, water, surrounding built context, associated history and attention to details like street furniture.



Base map

Map of Mumbai showing open spaces.





Land use map

■ Residential ■ Commercial ■ Institutional
■ Recreational ■ Religious ■ Mixed use

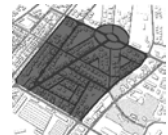


Grain map

Grid (5 m X 5 m)
■ Maidan ■ Grass
■ Tree shade (dense) ■ Tree shade (scattered)

Dadar Parsi colony

Area studied



Area:

311596.93 sq.m

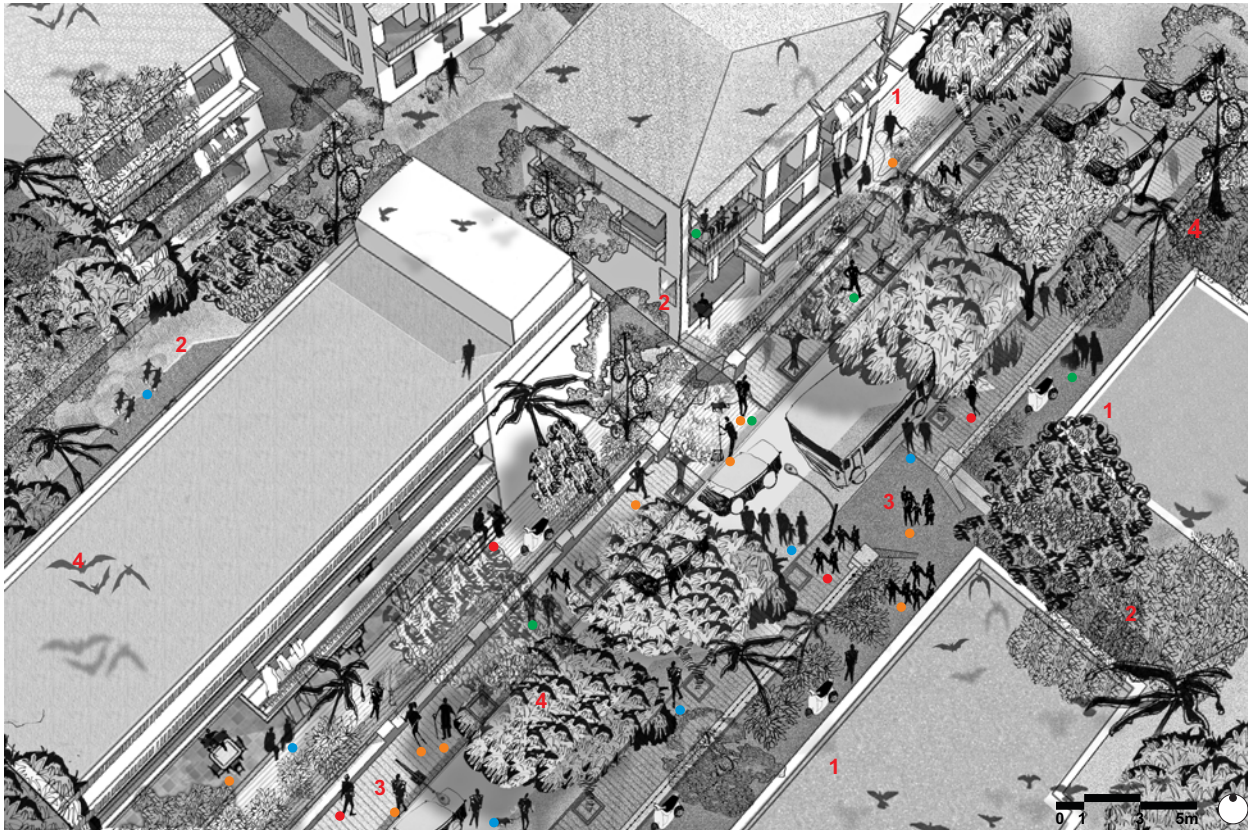
Dadar Parsi Colony is a Parsi colony situated in Dadar west and was built in 1899 -1900 by the British. It was the first planned suburban scheme in Bombay, with specifications of restriction in height and margins between buildings. Unlike the other Parsi colonies built in Mumbai, this one is not surrounded by a wall or fence. The 'Five Gardens' garden which is a part of the colony is used by people residing in Dadar, Matunga and Sion. This case study examines a small 50m stretch of street in this colony.

Wikipedia



Key plan
(n.t.s)





● 07:00 a.m - 10:00 a.m

Walking (H)

Walking to school (M)

Jogging (H)

Reading (L)

Walking dogs (H)

Watering (L)

Cleaning (M)

Walking (L)

● 01:00 p.m - 03:00 p.m

Walking to bus stop (H)

Strolling (H)

Playing (L)

Sitting (L)

● 05:00 p.m - 07:00 p.m

Couples strolling (H)

Walking (H)

Walking to garden (H)

Walking dog (M)

Strolling (M)

Playing (L)

Watering plants (L)

Chatting (L)

● 08:00 p.m - 12:00 a.m

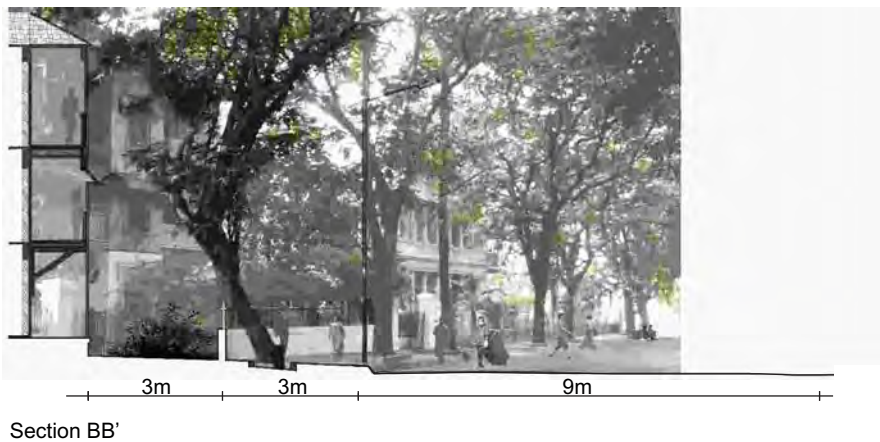
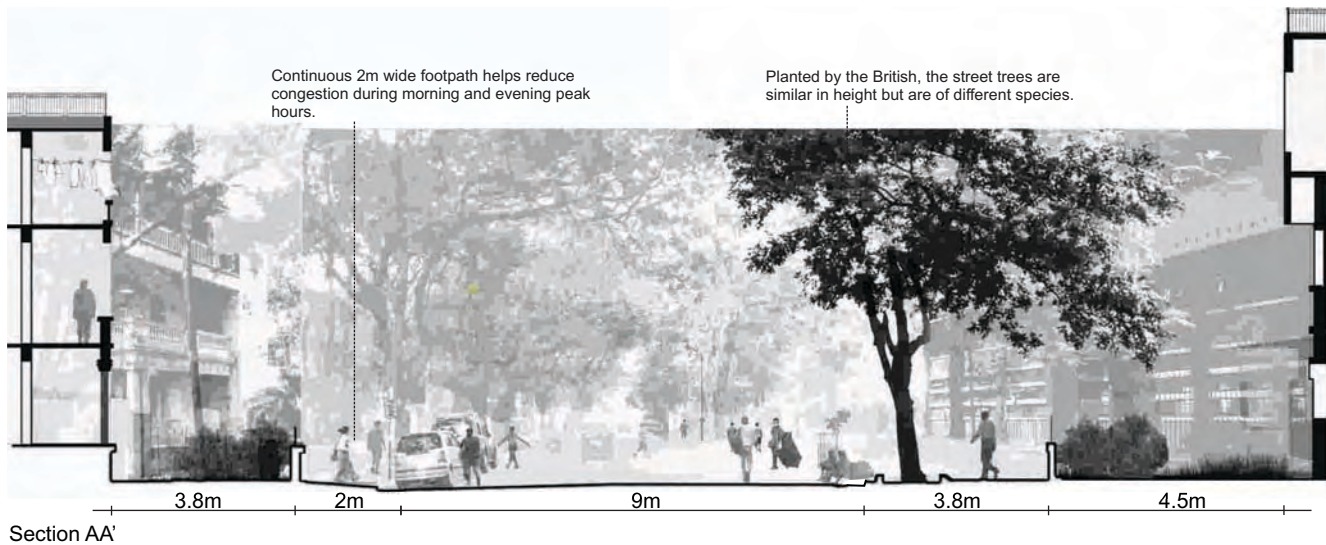
Walking dog (H)

Strolling (H)

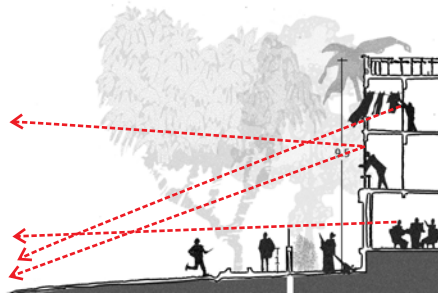
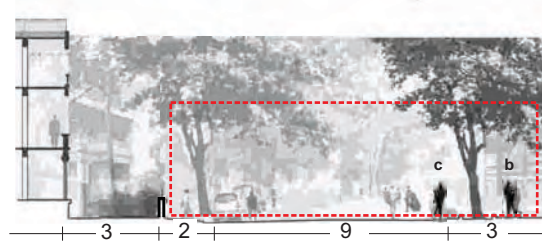
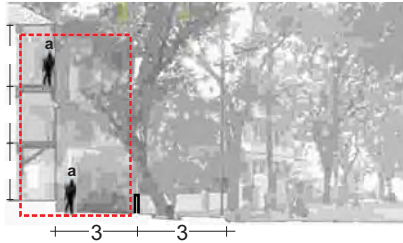
People playing cards (H)

Walking (L)

Intensity of activities: High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)



Key observations



1. Sense of enclosure

The front yard and trees form a tall volume of space for the residents. There is a sense of enclosure due to the presence of the trees. The high fence maintains the privacy of the residents while giving a sense of porosity to the edge of the pavement.

2. "Eyes on the street"

Big openings of the building towards the street and low height compound wall make for constant 'eyes on the street'. This makes the road safe for everyone (children, women and the elderly) at all times of the day. It also ensures that the street remains clean.

3. Canopy formed by trees along the street.

The dense canopy of trees is an extremely inviting feature. The trees are of diverse species, planted at a distance of approximately 8 meters c/c and not in an absolute straight line. The species observed on the studied stretch of road are listed on the left.

Plant species observed on site.

Drypetes roxburghii,
Artocarpus heterophyllus,
Mimusops elengi,
Polyalthia longifolia,
Ficus benghalensis,
Peltophorum pterocarpum,
Nyctanthes arbortristis,

Palm spp.,
Delonix regia,
Syzgium cumini,
Samanea saman,
Sterculia foetida,
Kigelia pinnata



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