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Sustainable Development through Inclusivity:

'Maidans' as Institutional venues for community empowerment, Mumbai

Subtheme: Goal 11 - Sustainable cities & communities.

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Abstract

Mumbai is referred as the 'City of Dreams & Nightmares'. An odd success story inspires many to leave their hometown and seek shelter in the ever-growing metropolis. The paper presents the migration patterns and its impact on the residual spaces within the city. These unaccounted residual spaces often act as the first shelter for marginalized communities. The paper identifies the connect of such residual spaces with the cultural background and the resident locals. The shaping of the metropolis culture is from the inclusivity the open spaces or 'Maidans' of the city offer. The paper identifies the parameters that can be used to evaluate inclusivity. The paper is a dialogue on cultural mapping of the history through, visual journey and the associations that have memories connected with the image of the city. The dialogic communications that exist in the City are a testimonial evidence of the sense of inclusivity the City dweller associates with the 'Maidans'.

The paper correlates the idea of peoples participation as a tool to harness the use of such open spaces to remain operationally democratic. The paper identifies the open spaces not just as venues for sports, jogging tracks or walking areas, but as the source of peoples participation and creating a cultural dialogue that provides and sets value system for being cared. The paper identifies the role of various local self help groups and nongovernmental organizations as the collaborators for bringing about peace, justice and sense of belonging for the City. The paper shall Follow United Nations Toolkit Guidelines for the evaluation of Urban Open Spaces for Local Policies and Practices. The paper enlists intervention to be provided as well as avoided to allow the engagements that provide for sustainable co-existence of mixed communities. The paper is driven by the notion of crime prevention through implementation of economic empowerment, care, justice, protection of human rights and inclusivity for all.

Keywords: Inclusivity; Marginalization; Engagement; Community;

1. Introduction

The City of Mumbai has a great influx of population as migrant communities travelling in search of job opportunities, better lifestyle and promise of a better future.

BY DECADES; 1901-2001 (in '000)

Decade	Total Population Growth (in '000)	Natural Increase	Net-Migration	Percentage share of	
				Natural Increase	Migration
1901-11	221	-129	350	-58.37	158.37
1911-21	231	-168	399	-72.73	172.73
1921-31	18	-58	76	-322.22	422.22
1931-41	402	4	398	1.00	99.00
1941-51	1194	243	951	20.35	79.65
1951-61	1158	558	600	48.19	51.81
1961-71	1818	947	871	50.50	49.50
1971-81	2274	1203	1071	60.42	39.58
1981-91	1682	1400	282	83.23	16.77
1991-2001	2053	1254	799	61.08	38.92

Source: K. C. Zacharia, 1964, Migrants in Greater Bombay; Table 1.6, pp. 15. Estimates for decade 1961-2001 are based on vital statistics method.

It is evident that migration population has been a significant contributor to the population growth in Mumbai. In 1951 the migration component stood at 51% while in 2001 it stands at around 38%. The immediate impact of the population rise and increasing density has been on the size and qualitative aspects of the open spaces or maidans of the city. The ever increasing demand for quality open spaces has led to formation of gated communities and the new found comprehensive luxury housing projects that are marketing the provision of such guarded open spaces on premium prices as commodities for the elite few.

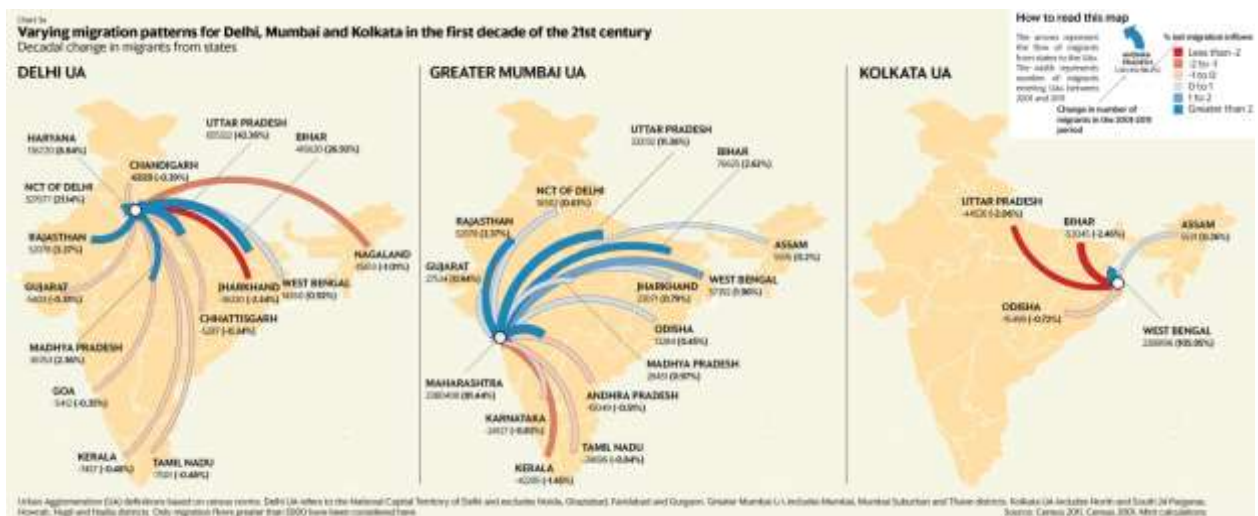
The discriminatory policies to discourage migrants by reservation system in jobs has further necessitated development of cluster encroachments by occupying the urban peripheries. These marginalized communities are the work forces that travel back to the city and engage in labour intensive services. In the working paper published in the Economic and Political Weekly in 2012, and a 2018 working paper by the Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru, written by Navneeth Bharathi, Deepak Malghan & Andaleep Rehman, discusses 'Isolated by Caste: Neighbourhood-Scale Residential Segregation in Indian Metros'.

It is in such a scenario of diversification and re-congregation, cities must shape itself on the lines of providing inclusivity as a reality. Architect P.K. Das an Urban Activist clearly envisions ways in which the city of Mumbai can be transformed through his article on 'Open Mumbai: Re-envisioning the open spaces in Mumbai' published on the portal on the online portal of 'thenatureofcities.com'.

Most new migrants to metros between 2001 and 2011 came from urban areas

% inflow of migrants who have shifted from urban or rural compared to overall migrants

Urban Rural



Source: Census 2011, Census 2001

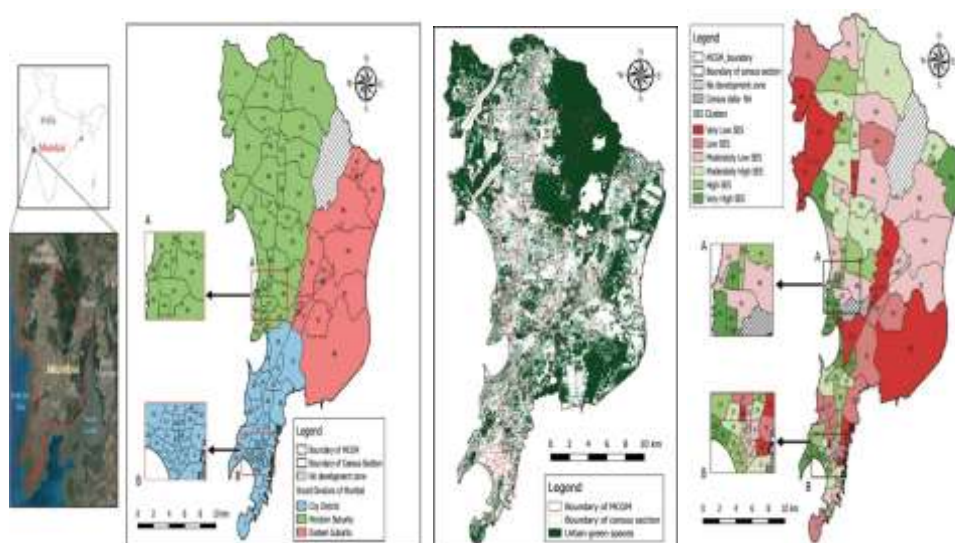
	Bangalore UA	Chennai UA	Hyderabad UA	Kolkata UA	Mumbai UA	Delhi UA
Work/Employment	27.92	15.08	16.26	-1.13	1.63	7.89
Business	1.63	0.41	2.23	1.72	2.1	0.72
Education	2.51	1.88	2.24	0.12	0.38	1.43
Marriage	12.98	12.57	8.74	29.75	11.17	29.06
After birth	3.92	9.55	5.01	13.69	6.59	3.53
Household	23.89	34.32	21.26	31.01	41.64	41.79
Other	27.16	26.19	44.26	24.84	36.49	15.58

Source: Census 2011, Census 2001

The paper demystifies the myth that exists around rural to urban migration by providing statistical data and supportive analysis to clarify, on the contrary to common understanding of most migrations taking place from Rural to Urban as projected in most fictional literature and theme subject of movies, the migrations are usually from similar grade of towns for better quality of life, opportunity for work or nuptial migrations, thus having similar expectations and cultural background with the existing communities of the city dwellers, taking example of Mumbai as the metropolitan city as the subject of case study.

Urban Migration Reality:

- Overall, the migrants that India's biggest cities attract are largely from other towns and cities, and from a similar social milieu as the original inhabitants of the city.
- Our cities are much less cosmopolitan than we imagine them to be.



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Geographical-location-of-Mumbai-and-map-of-census-sections-in-Mumbai-Note-Numbers-on_fig1_328969328

The migration patterns observed in the aforementioned graphics are indicative of the quality of migrants and the patterns of migration from various tiers of the cities as well as a representation of the co-relationship that exists between the sizes of open spaces (OS) with respect to Socio Economic Status (SES).

2. Indicators of Inclusivity in Public Spaces (Maidan)

The 2015, Un Habitat announced 'Global Public Space Toolkit: From Global Principles to Local Policies & Practices' that identified the following areas as high priority zones of addressal:

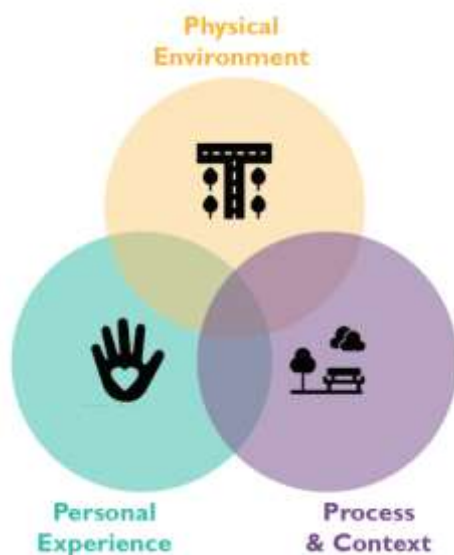
- Public space is the banner of urban civility
- Public spaces are our urban commons
- Public spaces promote income, investment and wealth creation
- Public spaces enhance environmental sustainability
- Public space increases transportation efficiency
- Public space improves public health
- Public space enhances urban safety
- Public spaces promote equity and social inclusion
- Public spaces are tools for gender and age-friendly cities
- Public spaces offer ideal opportunities to generate citizen involvement
- Public spaces make for great cities

The Maidan as an Urban Space is a significant representative of various parameters listed above. The spaces are an indication of the care the Civic Administration invests in its people. The inclusive nature of the various elements defines the environmental ecology that's effective for participation by all. The qualitative aspects of maintenance and finishing provides the much needed value addition to the entire neighbourhood. The ease of access and connection with nature is a way to ensure onset of healthy habits by facilitating healthy initiatives by the surrounding communities. The provision of adequate supply and unhindered access to common essential public utilities is an investment that has far reaching benefits as far as the factor of inclusivity is concerned. The design of spaces in terms of sizing, shading and the overall character determines the sensitivity that the space offers irrespective to gender, age and abilities. A well maintained and accessible maidan or public space has the unique potential to become the unifying factor of the community and the citizens its care takers. The involvement of administrative authorities in caring for the open space also facilitates their direct connection with the community while improving accessibility to various resources and services meant to reach the masses.

2.1 Parameters for the Study of the Maidan

The public spaces are complex eco-system, addressing variety of users and stakeholder expectations. As per Stella L. Zhou, UBC SCARP, in her 'Greenest Scholar Project 2019' titled 'Understanding 'Inclusiveness' in Public Spaces' identifies:

- *The Physical Environment*
- *The Personal Experience*
- *The Process & Context*



Graphic 1: Page 19, 'Understanding 'Inclusiveness' in Public Spaces', 'Greenest Scholar Project 2019', Stella L. Zhou, UBC SCARP

2.1.1 Physical Environment

As per the study, The physical Environment is a measurable parameter involving following degree of accessibility that the space offers to its variety of stakeholders.

Physical Accessibility:

Physical Accessibility of the space, in terms of providing barrier free access to all age, gender and abilities is the single largest indicator of the inclusivity that the space is able to offer. A study on the physical features such as provision of kerbs with slopes, ramps, well demarcated walkways, non slip selection of surfaces and finishes along with provision of hand rails and supports as required acts as a way to ensure inclusive features in urban spaces.

Social Accessibility

The idea of community space comes from the associations the local are able to establish with the built environment through various features, symbolic messages and the subliminal signals that the place provides by generating a sense of well being and belonging for its inhabitants. This is regional character in nature and varies as per site specific context.

Activity Access

The spaces can be organized to support variety of activities such as gathering, walking, observing, resting, reading, cultural meetings, making announcements, declarations, addressing the community and likewise. Many a times it is an outcome of spatial characteristics that provides for the activity to take shape and resulting outcome.

The overall physical connectivity of the space with the surrounding neighbourhood is an inseparable aspect that determines the inclusive component. The way pedestrian and vehicular traffic is segregated, interchange in mode of transport facilitated and the manner to tackle the accessibility for the disabled are areas of special concern. The interconnection with the immediate neighbours is essential to maintain the non obtrusive vigilance and sense of safety around the space. The provision of dead vehicular parking especially transport vehicles at night is a serious threat to the scale and homogeneity of inclusivity that open space can offer. Provision of physical infrastructural facilities such as drinking water fountains, benches, reading areas, garbage disposal facilities, maintained public utilities, bird feeders and bird baths etc. are the features that score high on determining the component of inclusivity that the space can offer.

2.1.2 Personal Experience

The greatest challenge is to provide an all inclusive experience to all the users at all times of the day. The utilization factor of a space depends on the manner the space derives different meanings for its various users having variety of expectations. The involvement of the neighbouring community plays a significant role in the dynamics of the spatial experience. It is the organization of various events and spatial utility that matters. Creation of moodboards, thought for the day plates, space for laughter clubs, senior citizens nook, childrens playtime activities are all some of the ways that can bring about variety in use of a single space for multiple purposes and meanings.

Involvement of the local groups in organizing weekend programs, summer workshops, hobby sessions and community connect programs is an essential act of increasing the neighbourhood engagement and building upon sense of belonging and pride. The same spaces can expand its purpose beyond the utilitarian needs of the neighbourhood by acting as venues for variety of campaigns, streetplays, public addressal, celebration of common festivals and days of national significance.

The traditional use of Maidans as a space for community gathering, rallies, announcements and addressal has been a strong socio-political unifier and a democratic driven purpose. Organization of festivals, melas, exhibitions and participatory competitions or sports have always been the hall mark of inclusivity that the place can offer.

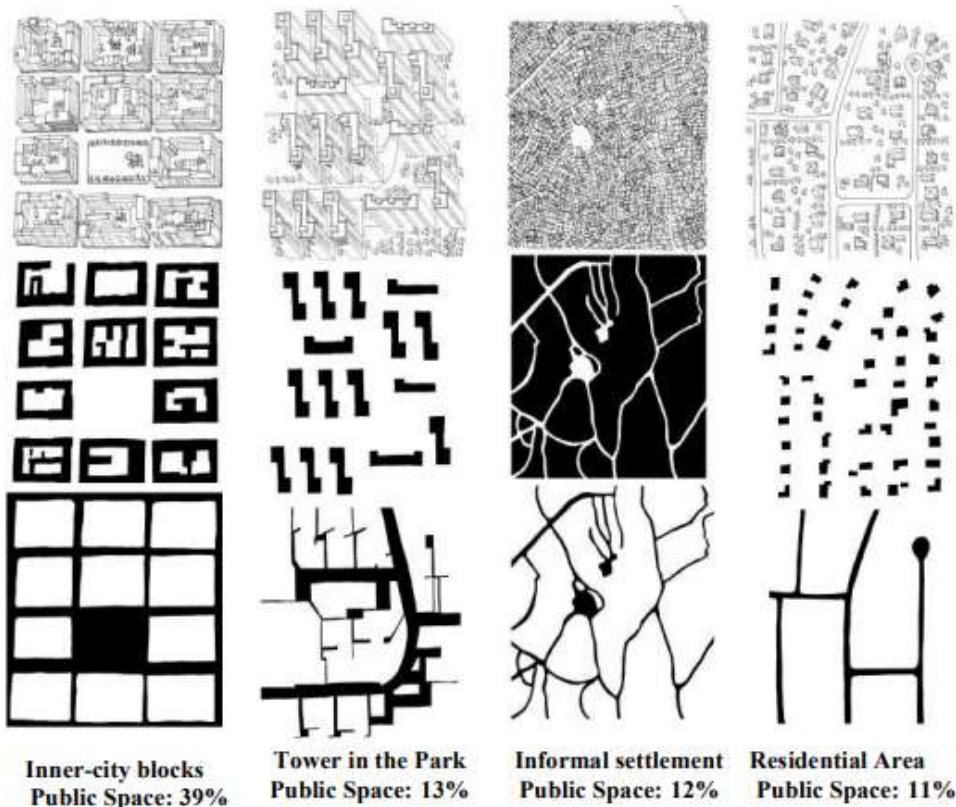
It is in one and many ways the unbuilt spaces that contribute to multi-utility of the space. The more the spaces are confined, barricaded and divisive the utilitarian purpose diminishes.

2.1.3 Process & Context

Irrespective to the aforesaid parameters, the pulse of the place is a significant parameter of the spatial performance. The historic context of the space is ingrained in the Architectural fabric around as well as the way it is placed in time. The maidans in every city in context are named after some historic event or linked with the personality having influence over the neighbouring district. The factor of administrative control or jurisdiction over the open space also has a bearing on the way the spaces are perceived, managed and utilized by the masses. The recent trend of barricading, providing gated points of exits and entry are a way of communicating decisive nature and increasing vulnerabilities by creating seclusion. The Vegetation cover around the space also has a significant impact on the visibility and the ability of the community to maintain the vigilance.

Gendering studies on spatial functioning is a critical area that has an impact on the manner women find the spaces comfortable. The ability to analyse the space on the manner it serves, children, women, elderly and disabled are empowered to use the space becomes a benchmark of convenience for all. Keeping the parameter of safety, robust details, climateproof designs are simple ways to ensure qualitative outcomes.

Valuing local customs, practices and sentiments is a way to ensure contextual response while being open for all is a way of maintaining the local richness in a globalized society. Many a times these associated values of locality, generate sense of place and enrichment to regional value systems. The continuum of local arts, crafts, food and livelihood have great potential for exploration through creating a space for accommodating the same. The spatial enhancement with mobile carts that occupy space for certain hours of specific traffic inflow is suitable strategy to provide for the utilities as needed.



Graphic 2: UN-Habitat (2015). *Habitat III Issue Paper 11, Public Space, page-04*

The above graphic represents the significance of the context of the spatial narrative and its impact on the inclusive component, establishing a direct relationship between the availability of urban space and the contextual densities/porosity.

3.0 Matrix from the Study.

As per the references from the Book 'The Social Life of Small Urban Space', by William H. Whyte, the recordings from observations made over the period of time, using technique of mapping and time lapse videos have revealed the true patterns in usage of public open spaces. According to William Whyte, the barriers society chooses to add around the urban landscapes of open spaces are divisive by nature and attempts to discourage usage that is in alignment with human behavioural pattern.

The research by Whyte clearly explains the fallacy in orthogonal planning and expectation by designer that the masses shall follow the set paths. Instead it was clearly observed in his findings that people choose the path of 'least resistance'.

Table 1: *Table of Observations and Characteristics by the Author*

Parameter	Element	Factors that determine inclusivity
Physical Environment	Sense of Safety	Natural vigilance.
		Selection of Non slip surfaces and finishes.
		Controlled points of entrance and exits.
		Continuity with the existing landscape
		Sense of space ownership and utilization of space
		Segregation of traffic zones.
	Sense of Belonging	Cultural Continium
		Existence of historically significant attributes
		Free from encroachment
	Sense of	Flesibility of space for multiple utilities

	Empowerment	Participation of various local and self help groups or Non Governmental Organizations.
		Hobby Activities, Summer Schools, Drives, Campaigns and Community engagements.
Personal Experience	Connect with the Space and Dependence	Spatial organizations that offer inclusivity for all ages.
		Sense of Privacy and scope to build interaction
	Comfort with surroundings	Visual relief from the clutter of overlapping services, signages and various signals from surrounding elements.
		Shade and climatic comfort from excess heat, light, smell, sound, dust, wind, rains etc.
		Overall cleanliness, segregation of waste and ease in maintenance of surroundings.
	Gendering of Spaces	Spatial hierarchies that can be classified as passive recreation spaces and allows gentle walks and interaction.
Spatial Performance	Local livelihood dependence	The footfall in Public spaces, attracts local vendors serving variety of snacks, artefacts, toys, candies etc. adding to the aromatic and savoury experience to the space.
	Landmarks	The local histories about surrounding community and the site plays a significant role in creating the ambience for the context of the site.
	Activity Generation	Arenas, rings, amphitheatres, benches, rings, equipments for exercise/play, raised/ sunk platforms/ gazebos, bridges, shades etc.
	Illumination	Combination of bollards, low, medium and high rise lighting fixtures.

The above table assumes the role of a checklist to categorically identify the features of an neighbouring maidan, to capture the pulse of the place. A survey document based on the aforesaid parameters clearly reveals the experience of the daily users of space for different contexts of spaces in the same neighbourhood.

Methodology Applied:

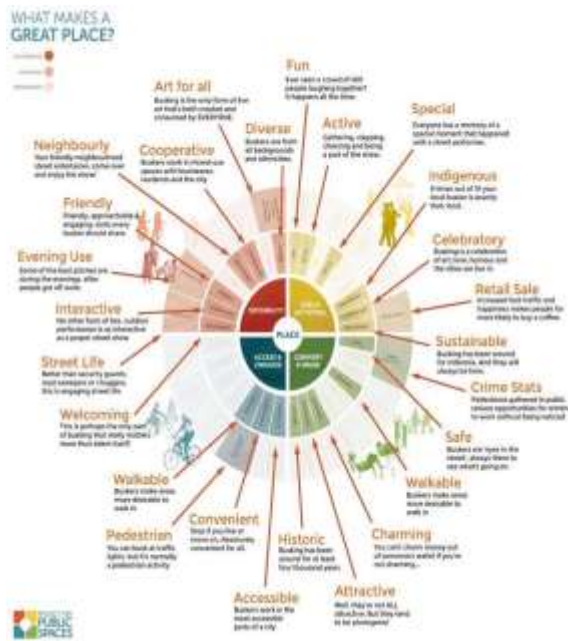
The aforementioned indicators were used as the questionnaire and observations were recorded through physical surveys and data gathered from the primary resources of the site. The wide spectrum of data that was gathered in the form of qualitative and quantitative units was converted to comparative charts and tables using regression method of analysis to arrive at conclusions that are the outcomes of the investigation of research.

The methods included Mapping Flows, Counting, Mapping of space and its utilization in various hours of the day and different times of the year, Interviews of the stake holders, Camera recordings with time lapses, On ground recording of observations.

Source of the Methodology: 'The **Social Life of Small Urban Space**', by **William H. Whyte**, the recordings from observations made over the period of time, using technique of mapping and time lapse videos have revealed the true patterns in usage of public.

As per the guidelines of United Nations, Involvement of the local groups in organizing **weekend programs, summer workshops, hobby sessions and community connect programs** is an essential act of increasing the **neighbourhood engagement** and building upon **sense of belonging and pride**. The same spaces can expand its purpose beyond the utilitarian needs of the neighbourhood by acting as **venues for variety of campaigns, streetplays, public addressal, celebration of common festivals and days of national significance**.

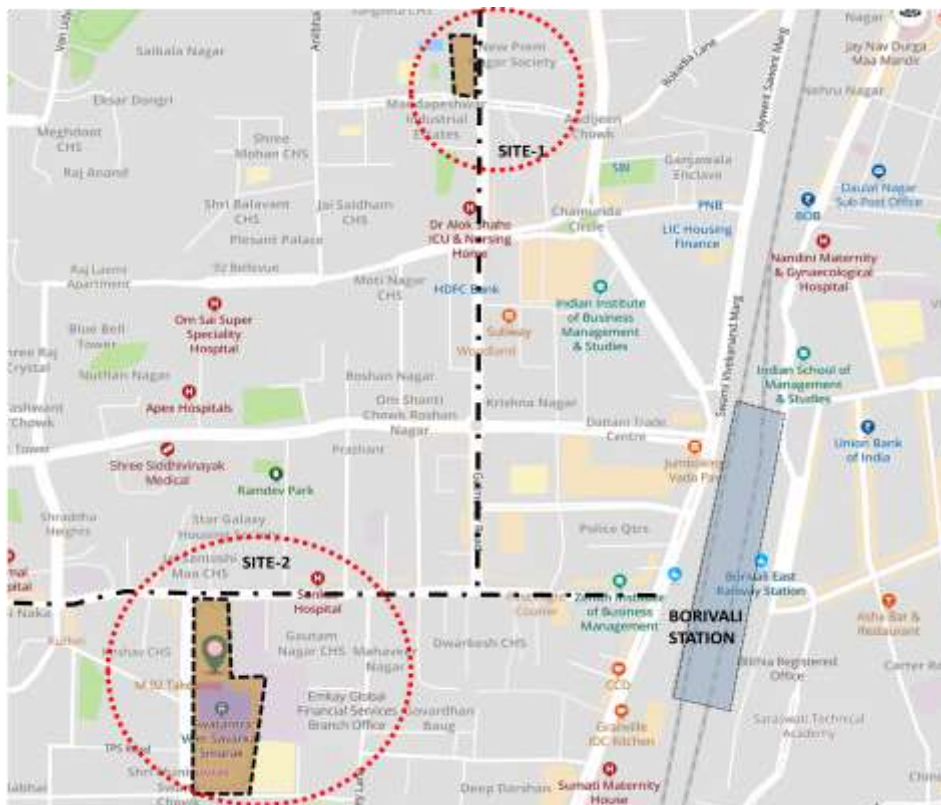
The traditional use of **Maidans** as a space **for community gathering, rallies, announcements and addressal has been a strong socio-political unifier** and a democratic driven purpose. **Organization of festivals, melas, exhibitions and participatory competitions or sports** have always been the **hall mark of inclusivity** that the place can offer.



Source: <https://twitter.com/architerapia/status/883112649646624772>

3.1 Study of local sites

Comparative analysis between two identified neighbourhood spaces within the suburbs of Borivali West, Mumbai.



Graphic 3: Demarcation of Sites under reference of Study by the Authors.

Site:1 Mandapeshwar Civic Federation (MCF) Garden

Site of MCF is shadowed within the residential neighbourhood of Borivali West, the extended suburbs to the north of Mumbai. The mid rise residential area around is a more than 40 year old development, with most of the residential

projects around now undergoing redevelopment. These residents have been re-inhabitat in the redeveloped projects and are the continual beneficiaries of the open space. The maintenance of the park is looked after by the community and thus has active participation of the local residents. Being in the proximity of the neighbourhood residents and ease of access, the park is most visited by young children accompanied by their parents and grand parents. The park is one of the most suitable example of an inclusive space as it addresses the needs of all the special stake holders, such as toddlers, kids, women, Senior Citizens and Specially abled.

Site:2 Veer Savarkar Udyan (SVU)

The park as an open space is five times the size of the MCF garden and is more as a shared facility amongst the larger neighbourhoods in the precinct of the Borivali West. It has a strong presence owing to the scale and the level of footfall the place receives. The flow of the visitor varies seasonally. The space has multi-utility and a security system as a check point for entry and exit. The sheer size of the space makes natural vigilance difficult and thus dependence on other surveillance system becomes a requirement. The alcoves and special features of the space allow for segregation and gathering of gender and age specific needs of the visitor.

Methodology of study

Taking in to consideration both the contexts within a single suburban locality. Although planning and suitability favours one over the other in terms of scale and ability to provide more amenities and promising a better maintained space. The methodology of recording observations as a quantifiable score for both the spaces, irrespective of size reveals the inclusivity component when measured from the lenses of listed parameters.

The findings from the survey of two distinct neighbourhood spaces indicated following results as indicated in the pie charts given below:-

Figure 2: Comparison between the level of satisfaction expressed by the local residents of Borivali for the 2 Public Gardens (MCF and VSG) in the Neighbourhood, with respect to Sense of Safety.

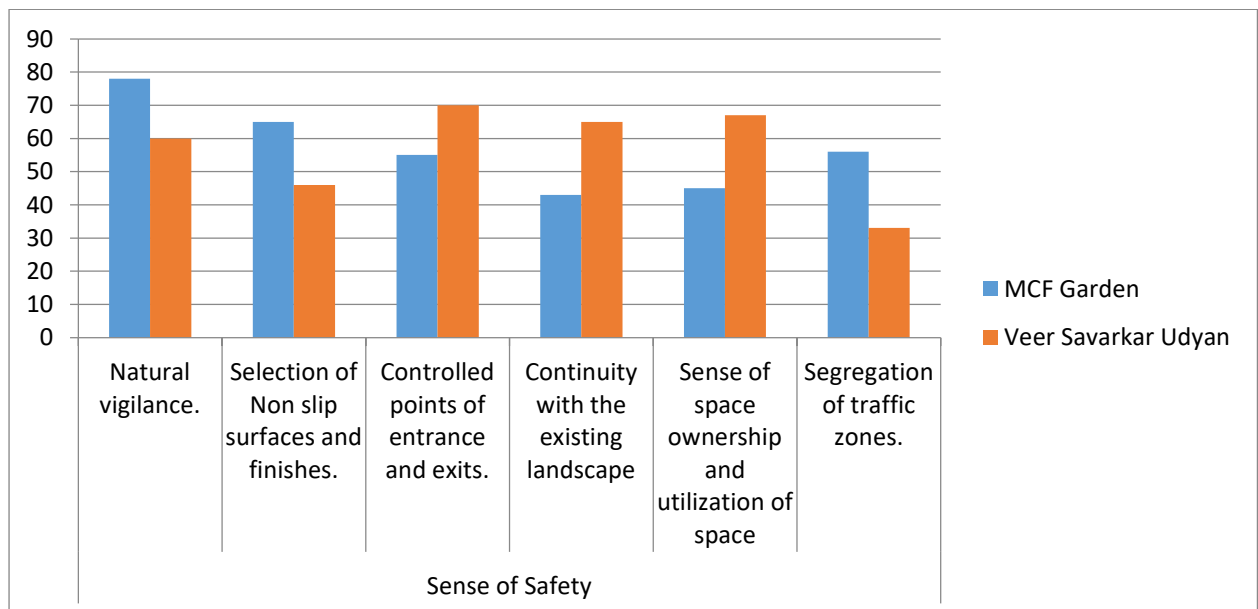


Figure: 3 Comparison between the level of satisfaction expressed by the local residents of Borivali for the 2 Public Gardens (MCF and VSG) in the Neighbourhood, with respect to various parameters as listed.

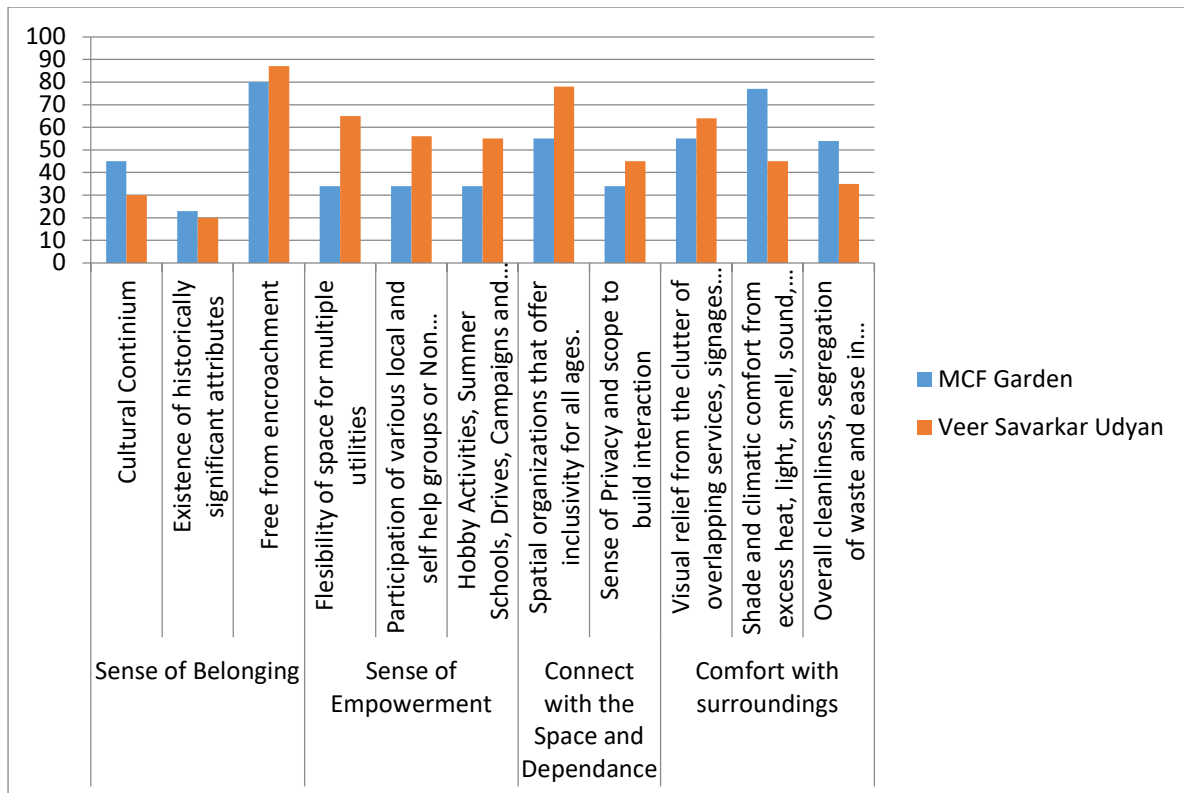
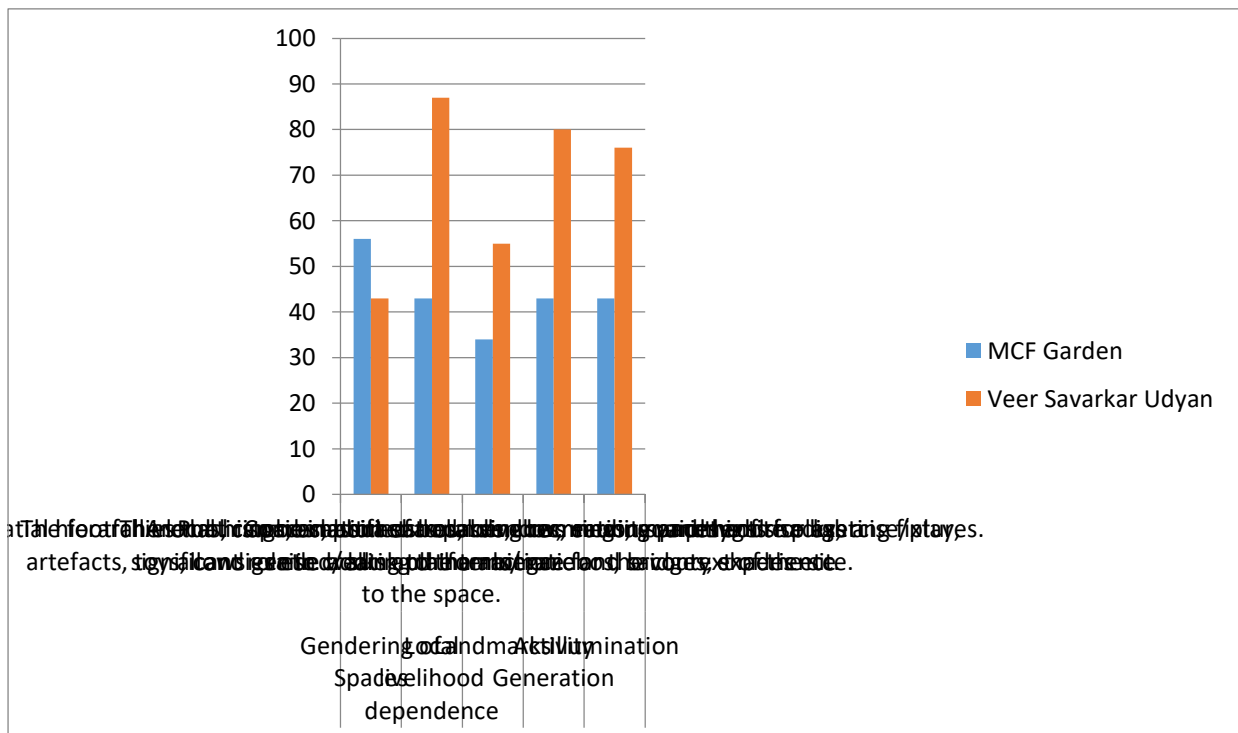


Figure-4 Comparison between the level of satisfaction expressed by the local residents of Borivali for the 2 Public Gardens (MCF and VSG) in the Neighbourhood, with respect to various parameters as listed.



4.0 Inferences from the study:

Notably it has been found that small, urban gardens have an higher inclusivity factor than large garden/ maidans that are strategically located with many features. The study establishes, through meticulous identification of various parameters the overall level in the sense of satisfaction. The sense of belonging, parameter also has to do with the

age of the surrounding space and the connected memories of the residents. The shortcomings in the facilities are overcome while imparting scores in the survey due to the personalized value to the special experiences shared by the neighbourhood. A place that allows for gradual changes as incremental growth that is driven by the people and added bit by bit over the period of time has a greater sense of inclusivity ingrained than through a well refined program.

Much of the satisfaction from the survey was found from the comfort expressed by the kids of the neighbourhood in accessing and using the spaces without inhibitions or reservations. The predictable nature of space utilization, that does not require signages for indication or direction not only eases navigation, but also makes the experience as a flow of events than a completed guided journey. The increased factor of inclusivity in the operative use of Open spaces, has enabled the use of such spaces as Institutional spaces for inculcating social virtues and acting sites of increased sense of community empowerment.

1. **Small urban gardens** have an **higher inclusivity factor** than large garden/ maidans that are strategically located with many features.
2. The **sense of belonging**, parameter also **has to do with the age of the surrounding space and the connected memories of the residents**.
3. The shortcomings in the facilities are overcome while imparting scores in the survey due to the **personalized value to the special experiences shared by the neighborhood**.
4. A place that allows for gradual changes as **incremental growth that is driven by the people** and added bit by bit over the period of time **has a greater sense of inclusivity ingrained** than through a well refined program.
5. The **predictable nature of space utilization**, that does not require signage's for indication or direction not only eases navigation, but also **makes the experience as a flow of events than a completed guided journey**.

The increased factor of inclusivity in the operative use of Open spaces, has enabled the use of such spaces as Institutional spaces for inculcating social virtues and acting sites of increased sense of community empowerment.

5.0 Conclusion.

The idea of sense of safety, belonging and pride amongst the locals are the virtues imbued only through participatory role of the communities that surround a space. Participation of the community as the daily or routine occupants of the space uplifts the role of participant community as a caretaker than just being one of the stakeholder. Multiple smaller spaces, well spread within the neighbourhood zones work as efficient centres of interaction and social growth. The reasonable strength of population that the space is able to cater acts as a deciding factor in developing a relationship with the inclusivity that locals are able to associate with the space. The parameter based benchmarking is a procedure that can be adopted to draw parallels and comparatives that are not directly visible. The study establishes the nexus between the co-relationship between the accessibility that the open space offers to its community as a factor for determining the social, cultural and economical security to the region. The catalytic presence of certain ambiances as identified in the survey and the parameter table has clearly established the linkage of communities sense of empowerment with the general characteristics of urban spaces as Inclusive Institutional venues.

1. The idea of **sense of safety, belonging and pride** amongst the locals are the virtues **imbued only through participatory role of the communities** that surround a space.
2. **Participation of the community** as the daily or routine occupants of the space **uplifts the role of participant community as a caretaker** than just being one of the stakeholder.
3. **Multiple smaller spaces, well spread within the neighbourhood zones work as efficient centres** of interaction and social growth.

4. The reasonable **strength of population** that the space is able to cater **acts as a deciding factor** in developing a relationship with the inclusivity that locals are able to associate with the space.
5. The **parameter based benchmarking** is a procedure that **can be adopted to draw parallels and comparatives that are not directly visible.**
6. The study establishes the nexus between the co-relationship between the **accessibility that the open space offers to its community as a factor** for **determining the social, cultural and economical security** to the region.
7. The **catalytic presence of certain ambiances** as identified in the survey and the parameter table has clearly established **the linkage of communities sense of empowerment with the general characteristics of urban spaces as Inclusive Institutional venues.**

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