Understanding the idea of nature in the city

Contents

Idea of nature

Landscapes that reflect the idea of wilderness or untamed nature are important vignettes of our surrounding environment. The locations selected for the study are based on different preferences like the degree to which a scene is natural or manmade, the topographic variation, and scale and openness of the scene. This study focuses, specifically, on the experiential quality of these landscapes. It consists of five case studies having a varied range of backgrounds; which exist within urbanity as part of our surroundings and everyday spaces. This is a context specific study of such landscapes within Ahmedabad. The intention is to explore and understand the composition of these landscapes and to abstract them. This abstraction can then be further developed as a tool in designing landscapes.

Any such landscape, whether a woodland, a ravine, rows of trees along a road or a puddle is usually viewed as one single entity. It is however, composed of several components forming the total experience of the landscape. The ground, the sky, trees, - several fragments having different compositions, all these combine to form the landscape. For analyzing these landscapes there was a need to have tools and approaches for successfully translating the essence in a measurable way. The study first explores the bits and pieces through observing and mapping and then combines all the elements together to understand the overall character of the space.
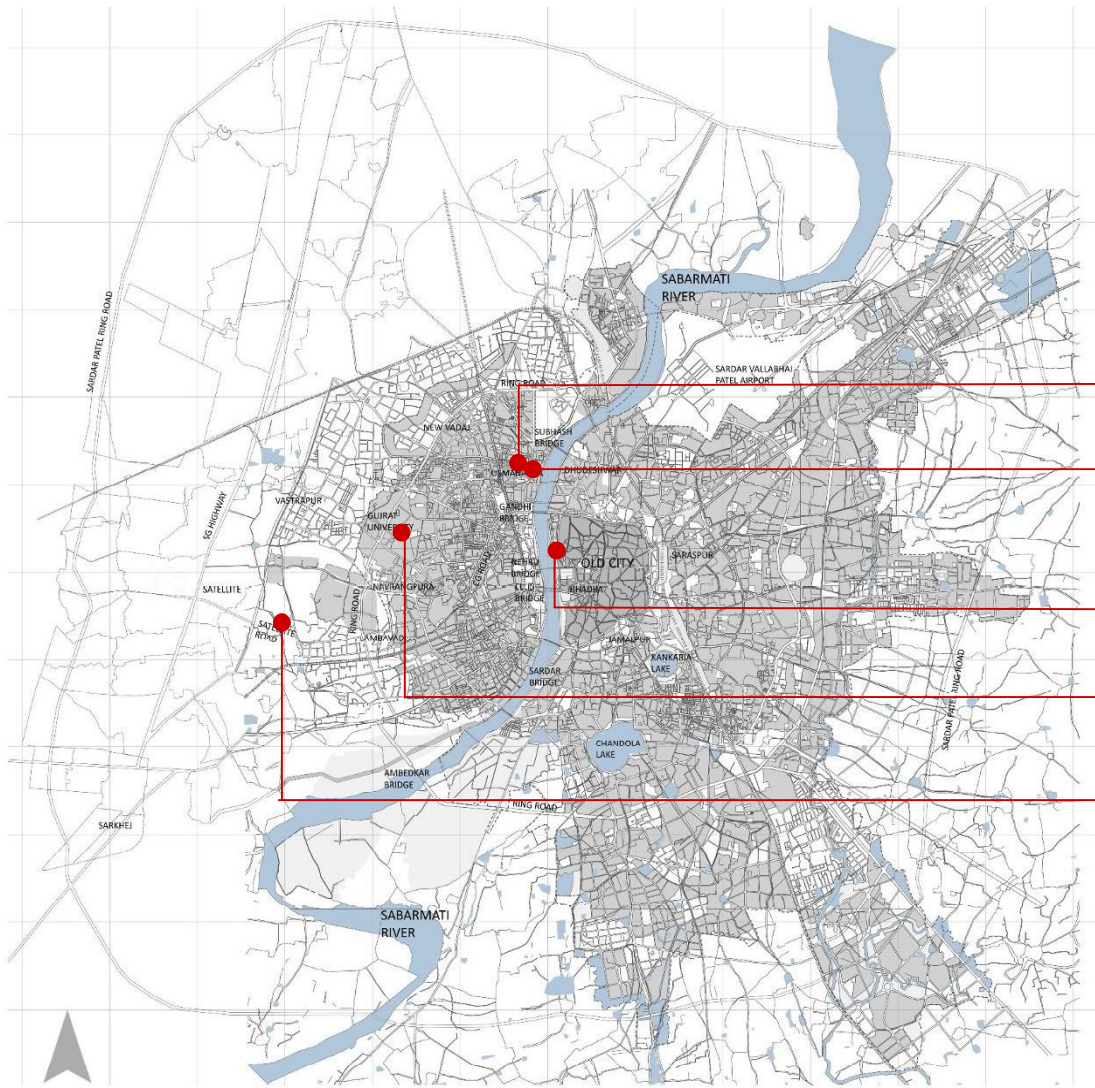
The study examines the specific character of the components and then the overall organization using the following methods:

Observations: perception while moving:	This includes identifying small sections from the whole and observing and understanding them spatially. This is done through a simple plan analysis.
Layers defining depth and height:	Here the aim is to understand the multiple layers forming the depth and height of the space. This includes understanding the setting of the foreground and background of the scene; and the multiple storeys it possesses.
Observing the sky:	This is an attempt to read the sky as a landscape element by understanding and analyzing the sky cover and character of the perceived sky. The perceived character of the sky at different spaces is portrayed here either as coarsely sieved, fine sieved, clear sky or distant horizon, depending upon the openness or degree of enclosure and the medium through which the sky is perceived.

Observing the ground:

Here the aim is to portray the ground as a landscape element by looking at the topography and ground cover .

Components:

This involves identifying the variety of plant species of the area.

Inferences with typological examples:

This combines all the above analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the landscape, its components and its spatial qualities. I have also tried to look at how each of the above influence the others.
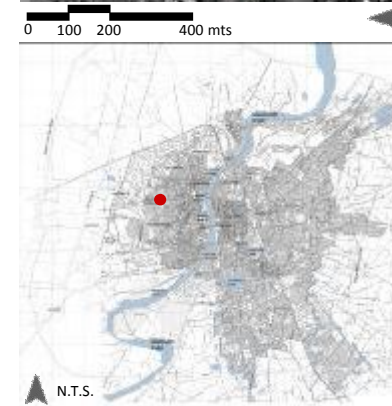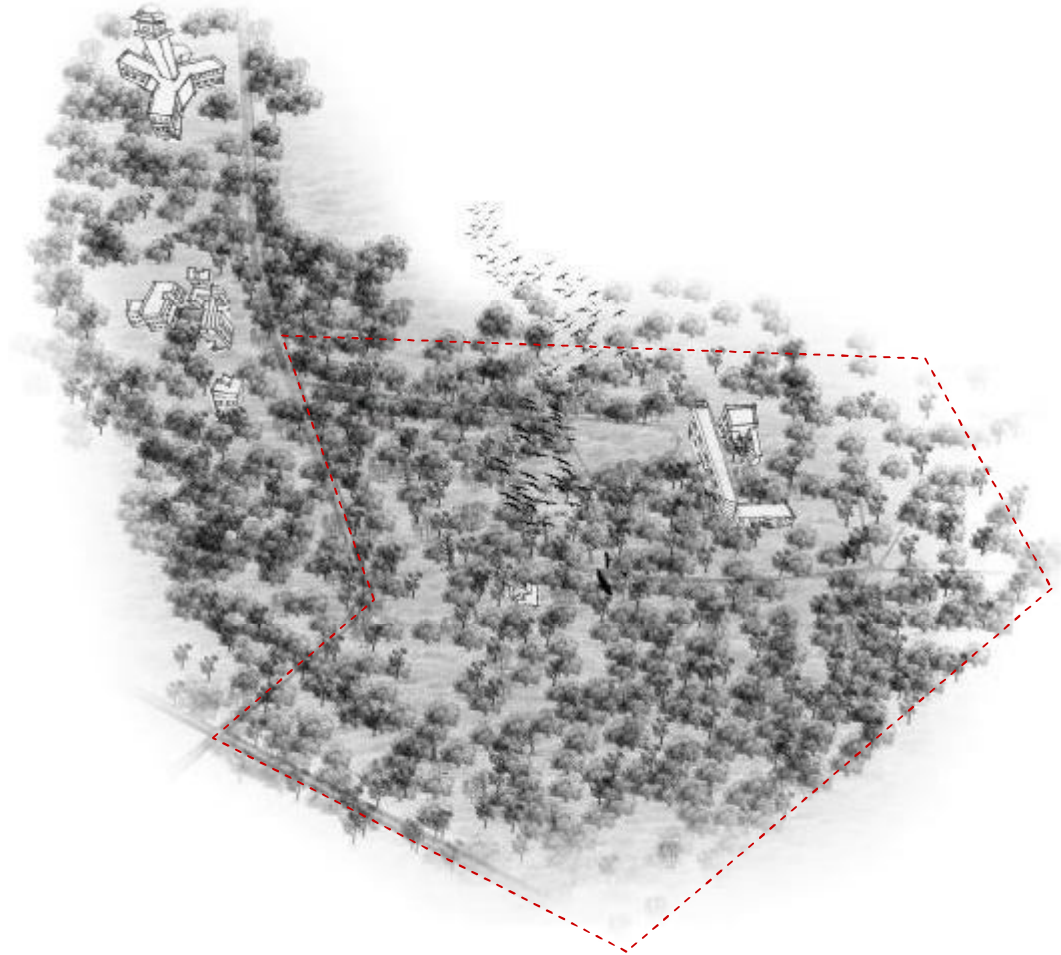
Vadaj

Dandi bridge

Road edge

ATIRA
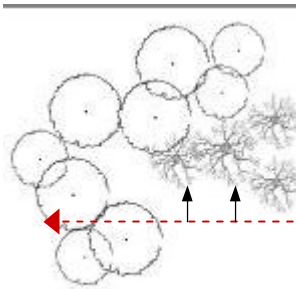
Sundervan

ATIRA

Perceived characteristics

Sparse woodland cover
Low stature trees
Sieved sky
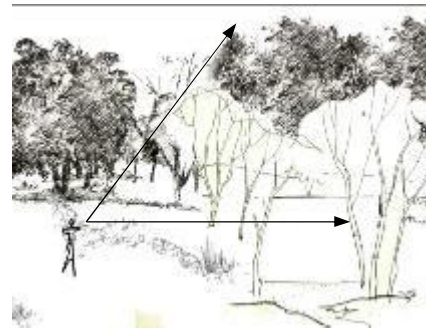Littered ground
Light and shade
Wildlife- resident birds
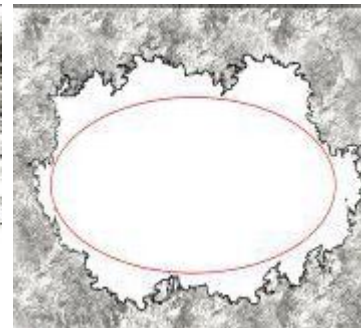
0   100 200   400 mts

N.T.S.

Clusters of leafless trees within the woodland draw interest towards themselves.
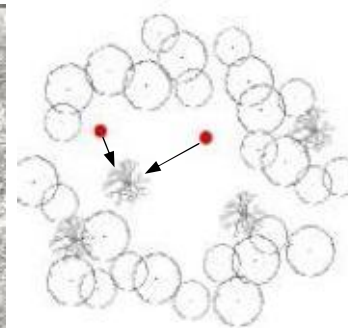
Trees with low height, sparse spacing and absence of shrub layer allow vision through, towards the sky and the distant layer of trees.

Open spaces within the woodland with varying textures and dense edge create habitat for birds like Indian peafowl (Pavo cristatus).

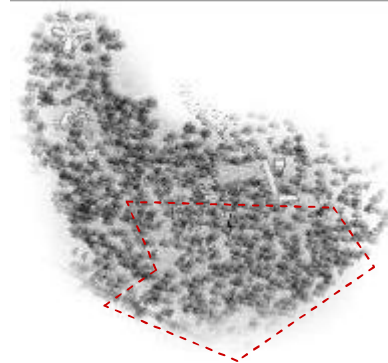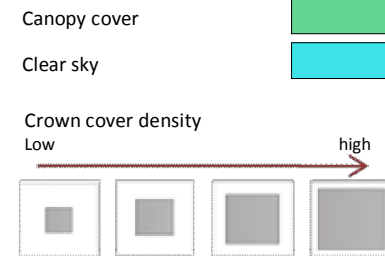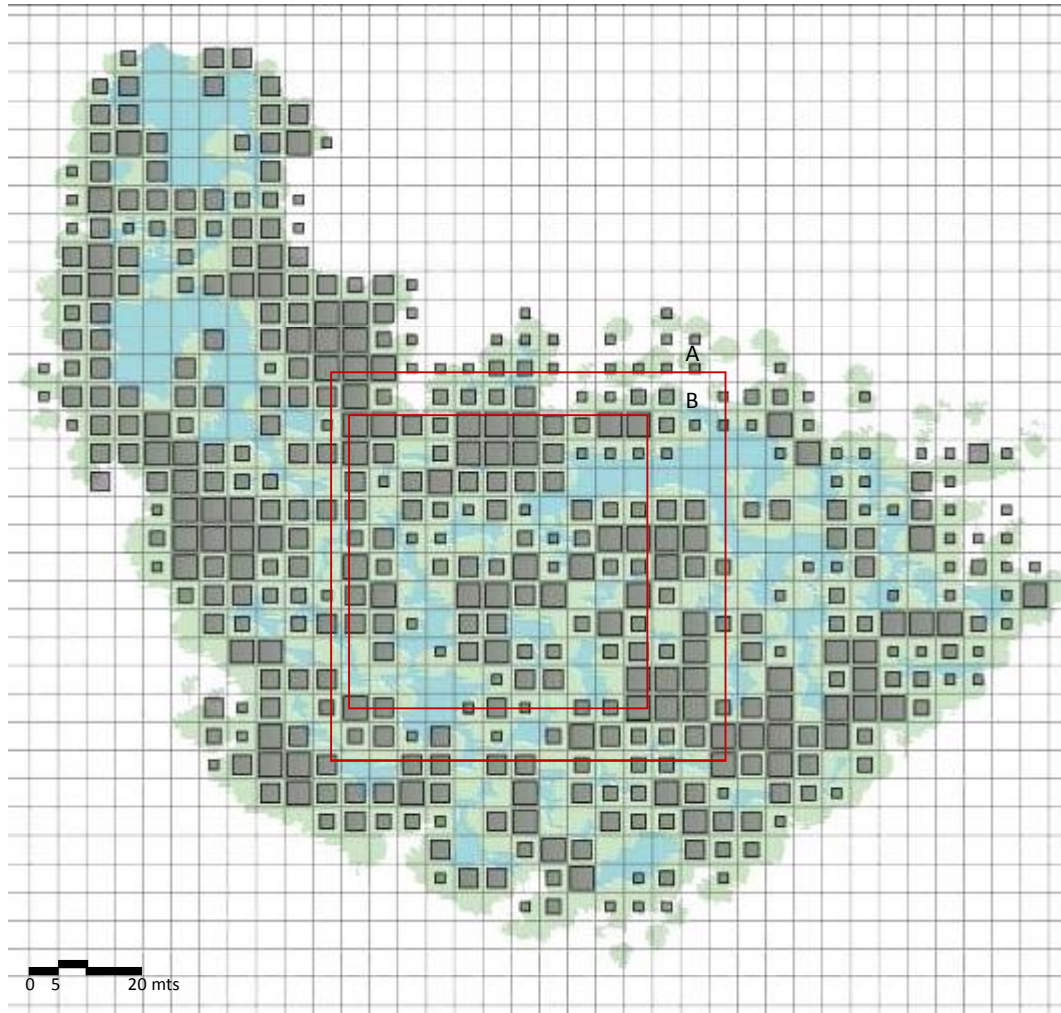Large and small open spaces, where interest is directed towards specimen trees.

Observing the sky

Canopy cover map

The larger vista of the canopy cover is similar to the smaller fragments of the area.

The crown cover, as observed in the area covers around 45% of the ground. The same percentage can be seen when we focus on smaller fragments as shown in figure A and B.

Canopy cover

Clear sky

Crown cover density

Low   high

0 5   20 mts

Ground

ATIRA complex is a sparse woodland; with clusters of trees occurring at a distance from each other. The sparse large trees and the minimal middle storey expand the perception of the enclosure to the furthest layer of shrubs and grasses. The eye is drawn to the edge of the landscape and/or to the sky. This large stretch of vision is punctuated by specimen trees or by the fauna which inhabit this space. This feeling of vastness is contrasted and broken by the highly textured ground and at places, even the sky. The extremely littered ground provides both an intimate scale of perception as well as draws attention to the immediate ground. Similarly, while the distant sky is clear, the immediate sky gets filtered by the branches of trees of varying density and texture.

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