

Viewpoint/ Critical Review

Wall a Platform for Forming Dialogue in the City How is the Wall Effective in Democratizing the City Space?

Mohammadreza Sartipi Isfahani

*M.A. in Landscape Architecture, School of Architecture, College of Fine Arts, University of Tehran,
Tehran, Iran.*

Received: 08/05/2023

Accepted: 20/08/2023

Available online: 23/09/2023

Abstract | One of the (apparently) most well-known elements of architecture and urban planning is the wall, and much has been written about its features and characteristics. A physical-functional element that also has meanings and myths in its core, and in this respect, it can be seen from the examples of landscape; considered as an objective-mental phenomenon. The wall, especially in the architecture of Iranian buildings and gardens, is an integral part of the concept of these spaces and perhaps it is very difficult to imagine an Iranian garden or house without a wall. Adjusting the air and creating a microclimate, protection against adverse and harsh weather outside, wild animals and thieves, sacred protection against the entry of the devil, and other important features are the characteristics of this fundamental element of Iranian architecture. Sometimes these walls are made as clay for village garden alleys, and sometimes they form the high and stable walls of the Karimkhani Citadel, sometimes it is a simple wall without decoration, and sometimes it is decorated with all kinds of flower arrangements, brickwork, tiling, and other Iranian decorative arts (although In general, the wall in Iranian culture is simple and unpretentious, and if there is a decoration, it is mostly for the entry of the complex or building), sometimes they are rigid and impenetrable, and sometimes they expose the transparent with the function of Safavid-era Tajir gardens walls to the visitors. One of these characteristics, which is perhaps less discussed, is the potential of expressing the views of citizens. The wall is a “popular media” with a large audience on the scale of a city’s landscape, which is usually not paid attention to, or they express a specific point of view in society in a structured and structured way, and in this sense, they violate freedom of expression. Now the question that arises is why the wall in most cases (except for special times such as street protests), works incompletely if it can help the society in the direction of becoming more democratic.

Keywords | *Wall, Freedom of expression, Grammatical graffiti, Urban landscape, Democracy.*

Introduction | Why could not the wall, as a landscape and public media element in the city, function as a platform for dialogue between different opinions? To answer this question, the value of the wall as a basic element in the city landscape needs to be verified first. “Wall” is undoubtedly one of the most important elements in the architecture of the city, gardens, and buildings. The physical-semantic boundary between the inside and outside of the city (a mansion or a garden) values the identity inside it

and separates “it” from “others” (whether this “it” is a city, a building, or a garden). A climate element that protects the inside of the garden and the house from the entry of adverse weather outside and also makes it livable by shading and locking in the moisture of the plants and ponds inside the area, by creating a favorable microclimate. From a mythological point of view, the shield wall prevents the devil from entering. Not only in terms of climate but also in terms of security, it will protect the interior from wild animals or bandits. An element that makes the collection introverted and safe

*Corresponding author: +989392258145, mohammad.sartipi@ut.ac.ir

from evil looks. From a mythological point of view, the shield wall prevents the devil from entering. Not only in terms of climate but also in terms of security, it protects the interior from wild animals or bandits. An element that makes the collection introverted and safe from changing looks. Much has been said about the mentioned features as well as more features about the wall's functional, physical, climatic, security, and semantic values. These are the features that make it impossible to separate the wall from the Iranian garden concept as if they penetrated and intertwined. But in addition to all the characteristics of the wall in the urban landscape, the wall also has a more important role that we will discuss further.

Criticism Of Structure

The walls also express the thoughts of the people inside the building. In the past, the walls gave a special monotony to the texture of the neighborhoods, as if the city was a single mass of one substance that took shape all at once (and not gradually due to the construction of the neighborhood and houses) and reached its current shape. Single material and simple walls. This is if today's relativistic world sees walls with different characters. Silent walls that do not reveal the words of their owners or passers-by. In the science of semiotics (hermeneutics), the city, as an expressive text, will contain messages, symbols, and meanings that express the ideals, ideas, and generally, the views of any society. The meanings derived from the society's point of view are perceived by the citizens through the analysis of the visible and hidden signs of the city. Whether these meanings and signs are ordered from upper authority to lower one, or whether they are produced spontaneously and unorganized by citizens. Some of these signs will be included in the sub-category of a type of street and folk art that is called "graffiti". Graffiti is often considered among the arts that are outside the legal framework of governments. Regardless of the evaluative point of view (separation of phenomena into good or bad) or legal standpoint (whether this is considered against the law and as a crime or not), this part of street art will be a part of the culture and a phenomenon from an urban point of view. This comment is worth considering. In countries where this type of art is recognized and supported by the government, they will find a place and opportunity to express their art, and in return, there are artists (and sometimes ordinary people) who express their thoughts and art by engraving the body of the city in the form of words or images and symbols. But far from the artistic aspect of such drawings and paintings, which may be called "murals" due to the canvas of their appearance, "walls" will be a vital element in this type of art. It is a canvas and platform that will convey the artist's point

of view and message to the objective world outside. If we consider "artistic mural painting" (which has a high artistic goal in itself) as the upper limit of the range of mural painting, the lower limit of this range will be the writings that the public writes on the wall. Perhaps the most obvious example of this phenomenon is the famous example of "parking = flat tire" or "please don't throw garbage here", which addresses others with different literature and tones. On the other hand, the wall will be a platform for installing all kinds of advertisements, from opening a sewage well to a photo of a recently lost cat. This can be seen most clearly at urban protest events. People who spray on the walls of the city remember the slogans resulting from their point of view. This story continues with another person distorting the previous slogan and writing a new slogan with the opposite point of view of the previous person. Regardless of which person is right or whether the action of both of them is against the law and damages the view of the city as public property or not; the "wall" here is a platform that people use to express their views and form a dialogue. In urban wars, the wall becomes a propaganda-political platform (component of power) that will own and dominate the area. Each group that dominates the area engraves its flag or writing on the wall (almost similar to what happens to express the rule of the Ganges over urban areas or the images that ISIS left on the walls of Syria and Iraq). Therefore, the wall, along with all the features and values of the landscape that we know, is also a platform for establishing a dialogue between people, which in the process of urban protests is more complete than the other examples presented because in this case, the monologue becomes a dialogue between the supporters of two different points of view. It is painted on the walls. Now the question that is raised is when there is peace in the cities (except for when in urban protests, citizens step beyond the border and the rule of law and turn the wall into a stage of debate and war of their ideas) Why the city walls do not fulfill the function of exchange of views and do not actualize the potential of dialogue? It is worth mentioning that in recent years, in urban beautification projects, walls have been provided to artists to paint on them (which will be a positive step towards democratizing the urban landscape). However, the main problem is that the theme of these murals is also specified and applied in a grammatical framework that fits the ruling ideologies of the society.

While, according to the speech freedom principle and considering the special potential of the wall in the urban landscape, there is an empty space to express opposing and more radical views to build an "effective urban dialogue". A clear and always controversial example of this commanding view on the walls of the city is the murals of Valiasr Square in Tehran (Fig. 1). Even if all the

messages of this mural are assumed to be ideal, the basic problem of monologue remains. A mechanism should be provided so that, within the framework of the law, certain walls from the city of be considered as a platform for opposing views. Although there are brief and often humorous dialogues between the citizens, freedom of expression has been neglected at the level of the urban landscape, and this unspoken anger manifests itself in the capillaries of the urban landscape in the form of graffiti under bridges or unsupervised passages in the form of writings that is considered a crime.

Conclusion

In addition to all the important roles that the wall plays in the urban landscape, the wall has a special role in democratizing the urban space, which is to provide a

platform to write sentences and expose them to the audience. Sentences with literature and different themes, from car warnings about tier to the most extreme political slogans of Down with or Viva. This explains why the city walls, except in the exceptional cases of street riots, play an incomplete role in daily life. The walls have become a platform for the appearance of a specific monologue (as a thesis) that has no room for its antithesis, and this has no reason other than an imperative on murals. Therefore, from this point of view, perhaps a short ruined wall of a shanty house around Valiasr Square, which has witnessed the writing of two opposing slogans on its body, is more valuable than the huge wall of Valiasr Square, because it has provided a platform for the synthesis of the ideals of all people in society with a plurality of views (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Monologue expression in the scale of the urban landscape, wall painting of Valiasr Square, Tehran. Source: www.time.news.com.



Fig. 2. Writing slogans on the wall as an expression of opinion against guns as a symbol of force, a sequence from the movie Mosul (2019). Source: Screenshot from the "Mosul" movie.

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the authors with publication rights granted to Manzar journal. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Sartipi Isfahani, M. (2023). Wall a Platform for Forming Dialogue in the City (How is the Wall Effective in Democratizing the City Space?) . *MANZAR*, 15(64), 58-61.

DOI: 10.22034/MANZAR.2023.396253.2241

URL: https://www.manzar-sj.com/article_178499_en.html

