Reassessing the Values and Utility of the Boundary Walls

Aradhana Maheshwari[1], Ridhima Madan Seth[2], Mansi Joshi[3]

[1,3]Student, Department of Architecture, SDPS Women's College, Indore, India
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, SDPS Women's College, Indore, India

Abstract—**Boundary walls acts as the dividing line between two domains. These are usually meant to be constructed for the purpose of security, safety, privacy, among other reasons. However, their construction is raising concerns with the social interaction, integration and crime control etc. in many cities. This study is thus aimed at studying about boundary walls, its history, importance; utility and rethinking about its values and to explore the possibilities of using the design of walls to enhance them in addition to fulfill the purpose for what it is made. The study includes the mixed method approach to gather the following data. Recommendations made included the adoption of standardized boundary wall designs and front walls that allow for views into residences, the formation of otlas in the front to maintain the social interaction among the neighbours and an area in the backyard for privacy.**

Index Terms—**Boundary wall, domain, social interaction, integration, otlas, backyard.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Boundary walls and fences designate the dividing line where one property ends and another begins, and further designates the responsibility relating to these properties. Boundary walls are constructed for safety, privacy, security, territory demarcation, among other reasons. Of course, it should protect the privacy of your home, but more importantly, the outer boundary wall design for a home should elevate the overall style of the façade.

Their construction is now raising concerns with the social interaction, integration and crime control etc., in many cities. Neighbour's property and public property is something that should always be taken care during the construction of boundary walls as not to encroach their property.

The dimension and placement of the wall should always compile under the municipal or city corporation regulations as the wall has to be brought down one day after it is constructed.

We know that the basic purpose of a boundary wall is to provide security, privacy, protection from prying eyes, but also to glorify beauty of our house. Therefore, to ensure that both of our criteria's are considered, one should lay the wall with a proper height. Then what actually the height of the wall needs to be? So, the height of the wall can vary but it should always lie in between the range in which both the style and the functionality are maintained.

Besides beauty, one should consider other practical elements such as an appropriate height that prevents burglars from easily jumping over the wall. If the house is on a busy street, than a taller wall can minimize the street noises as well as pollution. Therefore, it is wise to determine the height after considering these factors.

Fig. 1. Boundary wall

Since ancient times, the city walls are a mark of boundary, security and prevent intrusion from enemies. Boundaries are considered as a mark of a restricting entry or progress by means of walls for privacy, boundary marking, city walls and other general terms as known by the society. The ancient times saw many creations in the form of walls to mark territory or protection; these walls carry history along with it. The various markings, drawing and carvings over these walls are a historical glory even in the form of ruins.

The need for protection and creation of boundaries arise since ancient times. People want a sense of belongingness and separation from a broader group along with the idea of protection from enemies.

The study explores the possibility of using the design of walls to enhance integration, safety, reduce crime and effect change to the urban environment through social interaction while maintaining aesthetically appealing streetscapes.

II. OBJECTIVE

- To study about the boundary walls, its history, importance, values and utility.
- To ascertain the veracity of the assertions that boundary walls provide.

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- Rethinking about its values and utility.
- To explore the possibilities of using the design of walls to enhance them in addition to fulfill the purpose for what it is made.

III. SCOPE OF THE WORK

The scope is this study is to explore the possibilities of the design of walls to improve the social interaction and safety, reduce the crime rates and enhance integration while maintaining the urban design and aesthetical streetscape and also to make sure that these design recommendations enhance the boundary wall in fulfilling the purpose for what it is made.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A mixed approach research design was adopted to make sure that all pre-conceived ideas of the researcher are reduced considerably.

The following methodology has been adopted in the present study:
- Detailed study about boundary walls.
- By analyzing data through literature study.
- Study of researches done before on the same topic.
- Using survey questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with relevant stakeholders. A structured questionnaire was used to bring together information on the overall perceptions of specific components of urban boundary walls. The questionnaire was segregated into three sections ,
  Section A; ascertains the reason why respondents choose to stay within the boundary wall, Section B; focuses on perceptions on life within the urban boundary walled homes/neighborhood, and finally, Section C; sought to seek the general information about residents.
- Drafting inferences and conclusion.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

An exterior structure when made of wires is known as a fence whereas when it is made of bricks and masonry it is termed as a wall, that separates two domains, keeps out people and animal trespassers.

Fig. 1. Exterior structure

The building bears huge, solid electric fenced walls on the periphery. This totally prevents passersby from relishing the aesthetics of the architectural design of the building. It is believed that walls depict affluence and status and also prevent intruders or any skeptical activity. However, the issues of walling have not been put on security and residents' privacy with least or no input by professionals and local authorities.

These boundary walls commonly adjoin the public and private space and therefore, architects heed their design and construction as the walls will be observed by many people and therefore scrutinized in the context of a long-term corridor which helps in aesthetic planning as well as local community planning. Moreover, walls further intensify the beauty of a building, whilst preserving compatibility with the architectural style of the residence which they serve.

A. Reasons for the Increase in Boundary Wall Construction

The main reason for the rapid increase of the construction of the boundary wall was to protect properties and to define the leisure space of retirees. The studies claim that the fundamental purpose behind the development of the boundary wall construction is increasing crime rates.

B. Theoretical Concepts of Walls

Two theoretical concepts for the construction of the boundary wall is the fear of crime and violence and privacy, security and safety.

1) Fear of Crime and Violence

Fear is an unpleasant emotion or thought that something dangerous or bad might happen. It is an inherent part of our nature which provokes us to seek safety and security when something dangerous or bad comes into view.

2) Privacy, Security and Safety

In the project 'Privacy' is explained as a method by which security of 7 information is accomplished. The said information pertains to the person and property contained in the home. The concept of privacy is an important aspect for the nurturing of relationships and personal expression in the home. Additionally it enables the restriction of others' access. The concept helps in restraining the reach of public in extracting information from within the home and maintains the superiority for decision making.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data from survey was analyzed descriptively with percentages and frequencies. Bar graphs and pie charts were used to provide a graphical representation of the survey data. Looking beyond the descriptive representation of the data, and to deepen the understanding of the issues of urban boundary walls, the study also developed a content analysis strategy, a fluid form of analysis of data that can be heard and seen, this directed toward summarizing the information contained in the data.

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A. Respondents Reasons for Staying in Walled Homes

Majority of the respondents represented by 36% indicated "Security "as the most important reason they would move into a boundary wall neighborhood/home. The second most important reason determined was Privacy (32%) while Community Interaction and the availability of Amenities were observed as the least important being represented by 8% and 4% of the total respondents respectively.
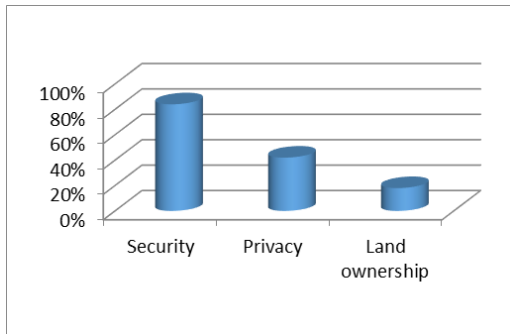
Fig. 1. Bar graph showing the reason to stay in the boundary wall neighborhood/house

B. Life in the Urban Boundary Home

(Safety and security) From the findings, 78% of the respondents suggested that the presence of a boundary wall made them feel safer than if there was no wall. Additionally, as much as 62% of the respondents have active security systems in operation within their resident walls. However, the results show that more than half (~57%) of the respondents have either personally been robbed or heard of a robbery in their neighbourhood.

This, perhaps, contributed to the reason why more than half (~52%) of the respondents suggested not feeling safe/secure living in a boundary wall resident.
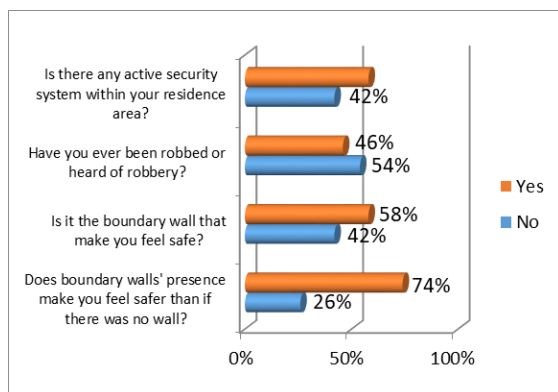

Fig. 2. Bar graph showing respondents' perception on security

C. Social Interaction

The study identified marriage ceremonies, outdooring parties, funeral events, and communal labours among other community gatherings within the study areas.

The results showed that respondents were mostly involved in Marriage ceremonies, Funeral events and Outdooring parties.

However, very few of the respondents according to the findings participated in Communal labours and other community activities within the neighbourhoods at which gatherings issues of security could be discussed. Again, this may account for the reason why about 40% of the respondents suggest that the boundary wall had negative impacts on their relationship with other residents within the community as indicated in Figure 4 below. This finding however contradicts Low (2003) suggestion that individuals who moved into gated developments did so in search of community interaction. Meanwhile in Accra the case is different since people who move in to gated communities do so mainly because of security reasons as well as the quest to isolate oneself from ills of society. 4.4. Effect of Boundary Wall on Streetscape From the study, though only 20% of respondents choose to live in boundary walled homes because of their aesthetic appeal, as much as 56% of the total respondents who live in boundary walls feel unique or different from other residents in the neighbourhood. Also, 42% believed the boundary wall designs had a positive effect on the beauty of the street although 22% were not sure if it did or not.
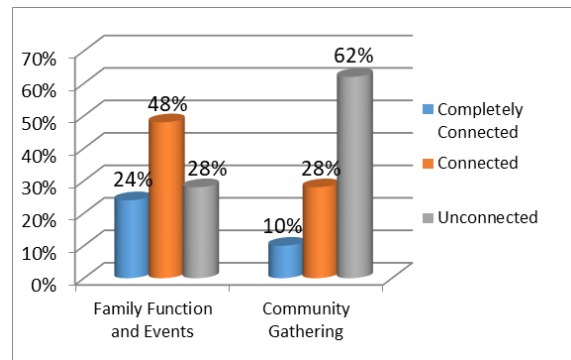

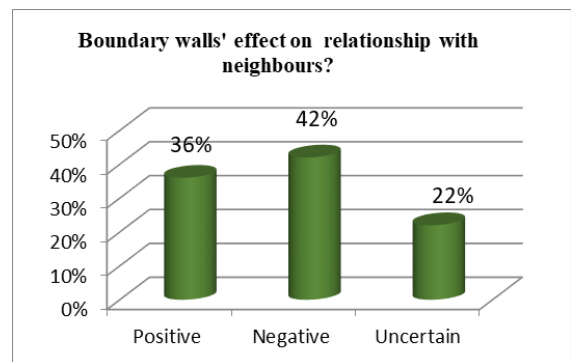Fig. 3. Bar graph showing respondents' involvement in various activities

Fig. 4. Bar graph showing effect of boundary wall on Social Interaction

VII. CONCLUSION

Modern lifestyle patterns have adversely affected our society. We have imprisoned and dehumanized ourselves and our families. There is a need of innovative solutions to shift mindsets, a strategy that reintroduces the concepts of humanizing ourselves through the other.

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In the multifaceted hues of present era, people do seem to want the intimacy of community but clearly this should not come at the cost of their privacy. In contrast to the rifling image of working and poor neighbours, may be a modern cogitation of staying way of desisting from relationship and moving out in response to problem and conflicts.

Crime statistics show that more walled residences are targeted by criminals compared to those without them. "The criminal mind is about not being seen. For us to provide a service, a (high) wall is a problem. The walls are actually in our own minds. It's the community that makes you feel safe. We need to take back the streets,

1. The security that a boundary wall brings to a house is almost zero. Its cameras, sensors and anti-theft systems which bring security. A 6′ wall is meaningless as it can be easily jumped. We have mentality of making boundary walls around everything because it gives an illusion of safety.
2. It destroys the urban design of the city making pockets of mini cities in the city itself.
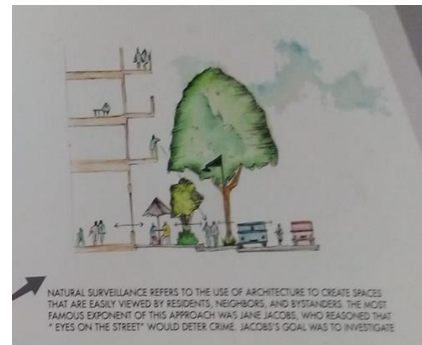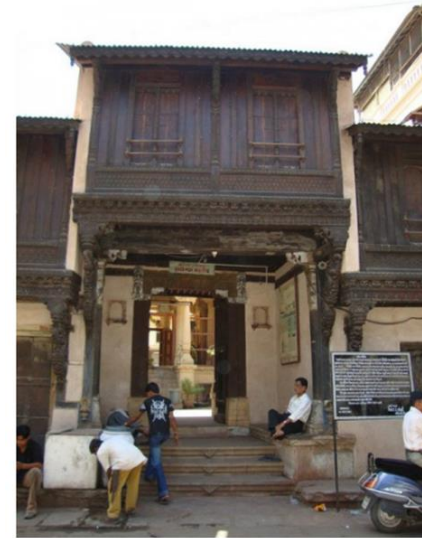3. It hampers the sight of the buildings.

If there were no boundary walls may be the mentality would be different because then the people would be interdependent on each other, the neighbour would have an equal part in taking care and security of each other's house (if we talk other than the technical gadgets).

Recommendations made include:
- The installation of CCTV cameras,
- Adoption of standardized boundary wall design and front walls that allow for views into residences,
- Good fences make good neighbours ensuring that they live next to each other but not with each other thereby, diminishing the chances for conflicts. An example of intimacy depending separation.
- The fencing with greenary so that you have your enclosure and outside world is also visible,
- Bamboo partitions instead of walls in our house just like it's done in Kerala.
- Any kind of demarcation techniques e.g. hedges of shrubs, temporary fencing material.

- Construction of semi-covered backyard for private out sittings.
- Construction of Otla, a space where families receive a sense of social and physical security, a sense of belonging and a sense of place in the broader society. It is the first point of contact of the house. It becomes a center for informal gatherings of small groups adding life to the street.
- Natural Surveillance to and through the residence to reduce the crime rate of the area.

References

[1] http://www.dut.ac.za/rethinking-the-value-and-benefits-of-high-boundary-walls/