



# Studying the Effect of Urban Walls in the Spirit of Shiraz Residents (Case study: West Ghoddusi)

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**Abstract:** *Creating visual beauty is one of the important matters which should be considered in all arts. The lack of this factor in architecture and urban design leads to the lack of the relationship between building and citizens. Since the streets' wall is the first picture of the city which remains in the citizens' memory and due to the changes in lifestyle and the emergence of new demands, paying attention to the aspects of designing walls for responding to the spiritual and mental needs of citizens in urban environments, seems more necessary than before. Considering the current changes in human life and the uniformity of today's urban environment, the subject of urban vitality and its affecting factors are crucial issues in cities. Streets due to their features in creation of social interactions and as multi-functional zones involving a wide range of activities, are especially important among other urban spaces. Therefore, the effective factors on the vitality of urban streets will be identified in this study to attract people, concentrating on the physical features of walls. Based on the results, the color is one of effective factors in visual quality of street; therefore, the correct application of colors in walls and various colors of plants in different seasons of year, through increasing the attraction of environment and encouraging people to stay in the environment, can be effective on promoting the vitality of citizens.*

**Keywords:** *Urban Walls, Residents, Vitality, Color, Urban Landscape*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important mental needs of human is happiness and humans' need for happiness is flourished as a demand for living and activity in a lively environment. According to the Socrates statement, the main aim of developing a city is providing happiness, exhilaration, and vitality for citizens, a city can be considered as a tool to achieve happiness, exhilaration, and vitality (Naghizadeh, 2000). Therefore, vitality is one of the main components of urban design because lively urban areas can be a foundation of the social interactions between the individuals and it increases the social capital. Urban spaces are discussed in two forms of streets and squares; According to the lack of defined urban spaces in recent years, the presence of people in the streets for spending their leisure time is considered. Regarding the existing potential in the urban streets to turn into a lively space, identifying and improving the effective factors on streets' vitality is of a great importance. Therefore, this study is aimed to provide the vitality through creating various and attractive urban areas with the definition of visual sense richness (Rastbin et al, 2012).

Based on the definition, urban space is nothing but the daily living space of citizens daily conscious, or in recent years, after the re-emergence of the importance: unconscious along the way, from home to work. (Pakzad, 2007).

Public spaces, the value of urban life, and building facades have become significantly important. The urban view is derived from the set of views, overlooking the public space. These views are homogenous in a way and heterogeneous in another way; They can be homogeneous because of being implemented on the body of the city using a common language. However, as each one of these spaces state their needs and destinations using this language, they are heterogeneous (Dehkhoda, 1998). If a single buildings' facade is considered regardless of other buildings' facade, the homogeneity of urban view will be eliminated in general. There is no common language between the facades in the cities. They neither have a common culture nor use the same materials or follow a particular style; Hence, disturbing, disorganized and inconsistent cities have been developed. An individual does not need to be skilled to recognize the chaos. By only walking in the city, you can see short and long buildings in the vicinity of each other which not only do not have a common rule in terms of architectural style, but also they are too free to use any kind of material that leads to an ugly city appearance (Hegel, Friedrich, 1984).

#### **Problem statement**

These days, however human being is accustomed to all of these issues and is become surrender to all these urban nimieties with a compromising life, they are not aware of its destructive effect to their spirit and body; moreover, these structural disturbances can cause citizens to be double more aggressive and sensitive than people living in environments without visual and noise pollution. In the recent centuries, with a short look at the architectural situation of cities, chaos and confusion can be seen in the constructions in a way that the lack of identity and concentration is really tangible. The lack of identity in buildings not only leads to the visual disturbances, but also has negative effect on the citizens' mental health in long term. The crowd and chaos are the reasons of visual disturbances.

Everything that is exposed to people, can distract and disturb their mental concentration. The less chaos and crowd leads to the less visual stress.

#### **Research questions**

1. What are the effects of urban walls' chaos on citizens' mental and sprit?
2. Which components of urban facades have negative and which ones have positive effect on residents?
3. What components in architecture of urban walls shall be noticed to create more vitality in residents?
4. Among the effective factors on physical diversity, can the color variation of urban walls be effective on residents' morality?

#### **Research goals**

- Improving the quality of the environment by responding to their mental and spiritual needs and considering the type of walls' design
- Increasing the level of ideality and as a result, creating vitality for citizens by using their desirable criteria in designing the walls
- Promoting the presence of citizens in urban spaces through developing positive sensory perceptions, received from the environment
- Creating a coordinated and favorable design to decrease the stress in urban walls

## Literature Review

In the recent years, conducted studies in the urbanism and architecture field, urban streets have been investigated based on general vitality criteria, according to different theorists, (table 1). Criteria such as diversity, land use and activity system, movement and accessibility system, urban landscape system, safety, affectability and flexibility, legibility, sensory richness, and climate comfort have been discussed as the main effective factors on vitality.

The most important books which are written about the importance of vitality and urban spaces, are including “The life and death of American cities” by Jane Jacobs and “City view”, “City shape theory” by Kevin Lynch.

According to the Jane Jacobs statements, the land use and activity diversity are necessary for vitality. Kevin Lynch defines vitality as one of the executive aspects of urban design which is described as a degree that supports the shape of places, from the performance to the biological needs and human capabilities. Lynch has majorly considered the biological and ecological criteria. He believes that vitality along with 5 other factors that are followed as meaning of proportion, accessibility, satisfaction, efficiency, and justice form the functional axes of good city view. Inside the country, a study conducted by Koroush Golkar about the city vitality, he defined vitality and 16 other qualities that are followed as legibility, visual personality, time sense, sense richness, belonging color, informative, affectability, and movement, the mixture of form and land use, comprehensiveness, the quality of public area, climate comfort, safety and security, flexibility, adaptability with nature-energy, efficiency and cleanness of environment as the quality components of urban design. Investigating vitality in streets and urban pedestrians results in enriching the social and cultural life. According to the Jane Jacobs statements, streets and sidewalks are the places of citizens’ social activities and their proper design enriches social and cultural life. Hence; vitality is a crucial factor in order to improve the streets and sidewalks. Some studies have been conducted in Iran by Dr. Mahdizadeh and Pakzad. Dr. Pakzad considered the necessity of vitality in sidewalks as diversity, affectability, flexibility, and safety. According to the studies of Dr. Khastou, attraction and satisfaction have been also stated as the effective factors on the vitality of pedestrians.

**Table 1.** The summary of effective factors in the vitality in terms of theorists, references, author

No.	Theorist	Effective factors in vitality	
1	Kevin Lynch	Biological and Ecological criteria	
2	Jane Jacobs	Diversity	The land use diversity The physical diversity The activity diversity The diversity of people presence
3	Charles Landry	He investigates vitality with four economic, social, environmental and cultural approaches	Environmental: Legibility, sense of place, architectural style, the connection and relations of different parts of the city, the quality of light, the security of the urban environment
4	Koroush Golkar	Vitality in micro level	The diversity of activities: optional and social activity The diversity of people presence The density of pedestrians The diversity of forms in urban landscape The diversity of color in urban landscape
		Vitality in macro level	Vitality is the cause and effect of other qualities of urban design: legibility, visual personality, sense of time, sense richness, the color of belonging, informative, affectability and movement, the mix of land use and form, comprehensiveness, the quality of public area, climate

			comfort, safety and security, flexibility , compatibility with nature and energy, efficiency and environmental cleanness
5	Robert Cowan	The density and diversity of peoples’ presence in different hours	
6	Hossein Sultanzadeh	The architectural aspect: color, water, green space, light, music cultural aspect	
7	Jahanshah Pakzad	In the body: form, material, and lightening In function: land use and activity During the path, in land use and body (color and furniture, landscape), activity (events and behaviors)	
8	Salzano	Social life, social development, and ecological sustainability	

**Research hypothesis**

According to the aforementioned goals and questions as well as reviewing theorists’ ideas about vitality, the diversity and presence of people have been emphasized repeatedly because they underlie other qualities (table 1). It is clear that attraction and encouraging people to be in the space which results in vitality, require the attraction and diversity of environment (table 2). Diversity in the body results in the presence of people and vitality. By using color, diversity and attraction can be created in urban space. Therefore, considering that the visual sense is one of the effective factors on vitality, the research hypotheses are raised:

- Increasing the color diversity in urban wall seems to be effective in creating happiness among residents and attracting them to attend and stay in the urban space, or in other words, the vitality of urban street.
- It seems that the color of wall can be a factor to create an urban street attraction for the presence of people and the promotion of vitality.
- It seems that the chaos in urban walls affect citizens’ feeling and spirit positively, and negatively.

**Table 2.** Effective factors on the presence of people in the environment, reference, author

Vitality requirement	Strategies		
People presence	Attraction: through the land use, physical design, plants, form diversity, the diversity of activity and color		
	Visual affectability		
	Diversity: through the land use, form (paying attention to the details of a buildings’ appearance) and activity		
	Legibility: through physical form and activity patterns		
	Flexibility		
	Visual proportions (legibility and diversity)		
	Sensory richness Means improving peoples’ sensory experiences in order to increase their pleasure	Visual sense richness	Through visual contrasts Through textures Through the color of materials
	The sense belonging		

**The necessity and importance of the research**

The landscape of an urban environment is a set of environmental stimulus. These stimuluses send us information that makes it possible to understand the space in humans’ mind. The perception that occurs consciously and unconsciously, affects the men’s feeling.

Human judges about that space, environment or even time according to these perceptions and information. Men’s feelings are formed in the environment and created humans’ satisfaction or

dissatisfaction. Passing an urban path, different environmental factors attract human and occupy his mind.

Although the human internal emotions are affected by his attitude towards environment to the great extent, the effect of the environment is also significant on his reactions (intensifying or decreasing the sudden feeling). Since walls of the streets are the first manifestation of the city which remain in citizens' mind and memory, paying attention to the aspects of designing the walls in order to respond to the peoples' mental spiritual demands in urban spaces seems to be increased in comparison with past times because of the changes in lifestyle and emergence of the new needs in today's world. The subject of this study "investigating the effect of urban walls on the spirit of residents" has been proposed according to the basic role of urban space users in increasing the qualities of such spaces, particularly, from the observer's attitude of urban bodies in street; to this end, by investigating the negative effects of bodies on its users and figuring out their physical expectations from urban walls, some criteria for the effective design of bodies can be achieved that leads to the increase of the spatial qualities of urban streets.

### **Theoretical foundations**

#### **The image language**

Seeing and imagining are interrelated. Each one creates the other; therefore, it can be named as image visual experience and these visual images are a result of the mutual interaction of powers, each one of which has their own field; on the other hand, the experience of visual images has totality which means their actions are not determined by their singular sections, vice versa, the existence of single sections depends on intrinsic and integrated nature of visual images. Georgi Caps states that the experience of each image is a result of a series of interactions between materialistic, external and internal forces.

The external forces, acting based on their related field, are optical resources (natural or artificial resources). The derived forces of this source bombard the eye and developed some changes on the retina; thus, the persons' internal forces (generated by brain) change the order, form and organization of the external ones in proportion with themselves. This phenomenon is known as form (Azizi and Malek Mohammadnejad, 2007).

#### **Mental image and the manner of its formation**

The human receives information from senses and analyzes them in his brain; then, he adapts them with his subjective meanings; in this stage, the process of social and mental factors as well as individual and collective experiences emerge and result in creating mental images from reality. The processed information in mind is known as mental view or image (Pakzad, 2007: 102).

The quality of mental image, its intensity or weakness in the different minds can be investigated through categorizing them into similar groups in terms of sight, gender, cultural background, history, moods and so on; moreover, according to the differences between these groups, there are some common points in the mental image of citizens as well which is known as a collective mental image. Considering that the human records are only a part of information about environment in any time and space, the limited information provides a complete and comprehensive image of the environment (even wrong); so, it can be said that observing environment means creating the mental image based on the previous experiences and observations; and it is necessary to know the link and relation between components; hence, a set of such interrelated images creates a mental sample or cognitive map from the environment.

### **City legibility**

City legibility means recognizing the city components easily and connected them to each other inside the mind in a continuous form. According to the Michelle studies, legibility is a feature which provides a clear image of that objectivity in the observer's mind (Pakzad, 2007: 145).

In a legible city, all of its details such as streets, neighborhoods and so on, can be recognized from each other or imagined as a continuous complex; therefore, the obvious and clear environment in mind not only creates the sense of importance but also increases the depth and severity of human experiences (Lynch, 2002: 12).

After investigating three American cities, Lynch proposed 10 designing recommendations for better legibility which are followed as:

1. Distinction or resolution of the role: the clarity of city factors' range, enclosure, the contrast in view, form, complexity, the amount of usage and its strength and the spatial situation of city factors (for example, a contrast that an urban component experiences with its environment).
2. Simplicity: lightness, its closeness to geometrical forms and the resolution of components so that the observer can perceive it quickly.
3. Continuity: that means the edges and facades of urban components are continues.
4. Dominance and superiority: a component dominates other ones in terms of size or the intensity of its use.
5. The resolution of joints: the boundaries shall be visible well.

### **Urban Walls**

The walls are buildings' facades, the defining surfaces of space, and adjacent buildings or partitions of urban spaces that designing the floor, and row urban furniture are also a part of their internal design. Visual qualities derived from urban walls, as the main intervening component in determining the urban space, are so important which requires urban architectures and designers' notice.

#### **The importance of skyline in urban walls**

Skyline means the average height of buildings in a city where the empty space of sky begins. The existence of regular and beautiful skyline is maybe the most effective factors on organizing urban spaces. This factor is rarely seen in urban facades these days. Given that even in traditional architecture, there had been an acceptable skyline, the new buildings have been constructed regardless of this matter and spoiled such discipline. The existing discipline in skyline highlights the role of prominent components in walls; For instance, the existence of a minaret or a high tower among regular walls emphasizes on its beauty. On the contrary, the existence of that the beautiful and valuable component among walls with crowded skylines increases chaos in the wall and prevents perceiving its beauty.

#### **The relationship between urban streets and vitality**

In the 5th century BC, Socrates has stated that the main goal of the city is providing vitality and happiness for citizens. This statement shows the old and strong relationship between the city and vitality.

According to this point of view, the city is regarded as a tool for achieving happiness and vitality. John Russ believes that to refer vitality, instead of using its word, "the quality of life" shall be used. He defines vitality as the quality of life like it is perceived and experienced by people in urban space. Robert Cowan defines vitality as a suitable factor for life and a provider of the quality of life in the dictionary of urbanization (Golkar, 2007).

Golkar considers urban vitality as one of the constructive components of urban design quality. According to the importance of vital urban spaces, planning and designing urban streets as an urban space is one of the most sensitive and delicate designs. The theorists such as Jane Jacobs, Gordon Callen, Rob Kerrier, Lynch, Pamir, and Golkar have considered street as peoples' belonging and a vital, legible and safe place with the emphasis on its social role.

**Case study:**

The case study has been selected according to the following criteria of vitality:

- It shall have land use and activity diversity.
- It shall host a great deal of people at different time.
- It shall have active walls with attractive activities such as commercial land use and warm places such as a restaurant, coffee shop and so on.
- It shall have a human scale and small-scale commercial land uses.
- It shall have physical diversity
- The existence of plants

West Ghodusi Street is located in Shiraz which is one of the most vital streets of Shiraz. People have been interested in this city over recent years.

This street has a diversity of residential, administrative and educational use. Yet, it has residential use and there are different groups in the street in terms of gender and age. We can also see the residents of this neighborhood in the street for walking, visiting friends and spending the time alone or in a group such as other people.

The majority of the population on the weekend are young people. They are in the street in the group from the other streets of the city and even the cities around. There are not a lot of tourists due to the shortage of historical places.



Figure 1. West Ghddusi Street in Shiraz

### **Analyzing the questionnaire**

In line with the discussed hypotheses and criteria in the street vitality, a questionnaire was provided and distributed appropriately between the users and people working in the place. Some of them were accidentally living there.

100 questionnaires were acceptable for analysis. 48% of participants were women and 52% were men. 48% of people were living in the place and 27% of them were also working in the street.

68% of participants felt vital in this street which 54% of them were women and 46% were men.

41.2% of employees were satisfied with their jobs. 71.4% of them felt vital in this street. It can be interpreted that occupational satisfaction can affect the sense of the vitality of people.

### **The diversity of activity, use and the time of people presence**

- Why do you usually walk in this street?
- What time do you usually prefer for spending your leisure time?
- To what extent do you agree with the diversity of land use in this street?

**Hypothesis 1: the color diversity of the wall will make the urban street vital through creating a various space.**

- To what extent do you feel happy by looking at the colorful buildings of this street?
- To what extent do you feel happy by walking in this street which has beautiful plants?

### **Conclusion**

Urban street should maintain its vitality as the main structure of a collective life; Also, the urban street has this potential to turn in to a lively place. By studying the effective factors on vitality, the presence of people as pedestrians in streets at different times of a day and for different social and optional, is the most important effective factor to create a lively urban street for presence of people which underlie the effective qualities of vitality. The most important factors to design an environment with a good attraction to encourage people for coming and staying in the urban spaces are followed as: the diversity of path (form, activity, body), flexibility, visual compatibility, affectability, legibility, the sense of belonging and sensory richness.

The role of physical diversity during the path to create the attraction of urban street for improving the citizens' vitality, was investigated in this study.

In the investigation of the effective factors on physical diversity, color has been considered as an effective factor in visual sense richness and visual diversity for increasing the attraction of environment as a low cost factor for promoting vitality. The research hypothesis was also raised on this basis. Through survey, West Ghodduzi street was tested as one of the lively streets of Shiraz. Also, in addition to the discussed problems in hypothesis, other effective factors on vitality were also investigated in this survey.

Therefore, it is obvious that color is one of the effective factors on visual quality of street that the correct application of which in walls and colorful diversity of plants in different seasons of year through increasing the attraction of environment and encouraging people to remain in the environment, can be effective on improving the vitality of citizens.

In the cities and modern urban design, as development and technology cause social and economic complexities, the designers shall notice that they can make the city view meaningful through correct and appropriate design.

The uniform and soulless bodies in today's cities, increase the indifference and coldness to the place. One of the most important reasons that mentioned for this unpleasant condition is the lack of harmony and the wholeness in the wall.



People have voted the inconsistency between the components of the walls among the constructive components of the body, Therefore, to achieve the desired bodies in urban spaces, reaching the generality and coordination in wall are of priority.

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