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# BOUNDARY WALLS

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF PHYSICAL ENCLOSURES  
IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF A CITY

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## ABSTRACT

Walls are objects largely associated with force, division, separation and fear. And yet the practice continues in the name of demarcation, privacy and security. The purpose of this research is to investigate the practice of physical enclosures in architecture. Boundary walls, compound walls, fences- built around a house, a residential building or any built form is a feature that one encounters each day entering a property, exiting it or simple strolling down the street. The research sets out to follow this common mundane object of architecture, whose habituation has made it almost invisible.

The study engages with Boundary walls within a city on a holistic level. It explores the perceptions, assumptions and conclusions on 'walls' in architecture theory, both from symbolic and technical viewpoints. It then highlights the limitations of such bifurcated epistemological approach about the object concerned. And lastly, drawing its methodology from Actor-Network Theory it conducts an ethnography of the walls of one neighborhood of one Indian city.

ANT allows the fieldwork to be firmly located in its context to produce new knowledge. Knowledge, based on observations and conversations that unfold when an object is followed rather than re-explaining it through a historic, universalistic and symbolic lens. The study follows the walls of one neighborhood of one Indian city, through their multiplicities in practice, maps relations and examines interactions between the humans and non humans that are carving the walls and the different doings of the walls. It is not trying to solve problems, it is simply acknowledging a frequently occurring object of our surrounding and foreground its heterogeneity.

Apart from highlighting the non existence of the topic in the Indian context, the main objective is to understand how architecture and its objects are shaping, changing, distributing and facilitating everyday sociality. An ethnography of this sort, showcasing the different shades of social interactions between the actors of our neighborhood is not only archival but also specially relevant to ensure that our hasty designs of urban renewals don't destroy the transactional capacities of our age old urban forms.

The study aims to evoke questions about how architects, architecture and its objects could break out of autonomy and start responding to their immediate surroundings. My study will not answer the questions but it will chalk out the field of realities which could be a base for finding those answers.