

Based on the literature review, the author assumed that using the signs in the neighborhood would be associated with the special architecture of Morocco. However, the observations of the center of the neighborhood show there is more

to the fountain than meets the eye. The fountain is more important than any other signs in the center of the neighborhood because they are characterized by the meaningful features.

## Endnote

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1. Urban Tourism

1. Soorey- ye anbia, Aye-ye: 30.

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City is like a text full of signs whose inhabitants perceive it differently based on their culture. The more signs make the cities look more familiar to the audience and similar to the mindset, they would have a larger share in the identity of the city (Johnson, 2004). Lynch argues that signs are diverse; Each sign is different from the other one. Sometimes they are very different from their environment. Lynch states the signs are unimaginable, and this feature makes them more unique and memorable. He argues that the sign that is in contrast with its context in terms of form, and role can be easily recognized (Lynch, 1971: 144).

The wall fountains are not a sign because com-

pared to the other element, this area is elevated or its scale is different. In fact, the fountains are defined in the scale of the center of the neighborhood and are located on the wall. However, they differ from other elements and such difference can be seen in their decorations. In fact, the decoration of wall fountain has made it different from its context. The walls, tap water, basin, the top of the fountains, sometimes sunshade, are decorated. The wall fountains are located on the walls of the center of the neighborhood and different from the spring coming out of the ground. Due to the importance of water, the fountain water should not be wasted and its flow should be controlled (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. The shade on the top of the fountain has made a difference in some neighborhood center. Fes, Fes, Rabat. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat. Shojaei. Morocco. 2016.

## Conclusion

This paper was an attempt to understand why the "fountains" are inseparable elements of the center of the Medina. To this purpose, data were gathered through observations from fifteen neighborhoods of the Medinas across six cities. The analysis of data shows that the fountains are the identifying element of the neighborhood center. They give identity to the center of the neighborhood. The center of the neighborhoods is also the landmark of the Medina. The fountains influence the center of the neighborhood. This element has been so important that the constructors and the inhabitants have decorated them and some attempts have been made to make them more distinguished. Such distinction,

decorations, and details have attracted the attention of the audience. Understating how the wall Fountains have turned into meaningful and distinguished elements requires knowing how they have been used. As the data shows the wall F-fountains have been mounted in the center of Medina, to serve the basic need of the residents and have been used to serve public service or create a platform for social gathering, This feature has kept its originality over time and in various locations in Morocco. Other elements of the center of the neighborhood do not have an identity, they simply change and are seen elsewhere in another shape. The fountains give meaning to the center of the neighborhood, and the milestones got identity with the water.

mains in mind for a while. According to Benveniste, “the role of the sign or landmark is to represent something else” (Coupal, 2007, cited in Benveniste). The sign is a part taken from an element in the mind of the audience. The position of signs in urban semiotics is as follows:



Fig. 7. Developing religious, social and cultural space next to the fountains in Moroccan cities of Medina. Tetouan. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat. Shojaei. Morocco. 2016.



Fig. 8. Differences in the fountain wall using natural elements such as river rocks and sea oyster. Tangier, Tetouan, Tetouan. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat. Shojaei. Morocco. 2016.

ty a a constant entity of object does not change even if the object goes through changes (Mansouri, 2014). The fountain is a part of the space constructed based on the mindset of the architect. Also, given that this element is frequently repeated and of great importance to Moroccan inhabitants, it reflects different people's thoughts including its constructors and the the wall fountains are different from a simple element in terms of identity. This identity is not defined in association with time and place. For this reasons, over the years, the fountains all over Morocco are similar to each other.

### **The quality and nature of the inseparable element of the neighborhood center**

At the first glance, the wall fountains seem to be an element whose function is limited to supply drinking water for the residents and passersby. However, there is more to the fountain than meets the eye

The fountains are associated with other spaces of the neighborhood center. Users of residential, commercial, religious spaces use the fountain water. It is the reason that they attend the space. In some neighborhood centers, some sitting areas are built next to the fountains. The wall fountains create an urban hangout spot for the passersby who stop to wash their hands and face or drink some water, relax for a while. Neighborhood residents often get together in this space, discuss and talk with each other or watch events.

To use the water, they leave their houses and attend the space. They use the fountain water for washing the dishes and clothes and drinking. Small shops in the neighborhood center are also of interest to tourists and residents. They spend some time in the shops, drink water, and wash their hands and face to feel refreshed in the hot weather of Morocco.

The religious function of space at the time of prayer is important to the Muslim residents. Muslims use water to observe the religious codes (ablution and cleansing) before entering the mosque. In Islam, water is a way to get connected to God. Ablution means understanding that you are endowed with the mercy of God

and returning back to your origin (Lingz, 1995: 605). Some educational and cultural space are in the walking distance to the center. In fact, the fountains in the center of the neighborhood link nature with society and they are connected with the surrounding spaces (Fig. 7).

The wall fountains are in contrasts with its context in terms of color, form, and texture. The walls around the fountain have been tiled and in most cases, tiles are full of designs. In some of the neighborhoods where residents have low financial status, this contradiction has been created by changing the material. The wall fountains are different from each other, in terms of the location of the arch (over the fountain or basin). The wall fountain` mounted in the Jewish neighborhood is decorated with sea oysters and river rocks. The arch on the top of the fountain is in shape of a horseshoe in some cases, its interior has an ornamented vaulting known as "muqrans (Fig. 8).

A contradiction is a logical connection between the various components of an artwork. Using contradictions in art makes its effect more meaningful, more powerful, showing feelings, and communicate messages more effectively. The contradiction can be examined in terms of size, direction, mode, color, darkness, brightness and texture of the figures, or the filled space and empty space, positive volume and negative volume, tensile and prominence, shape and field.

The fountains are well decorated. The shops and walls of the houses in the center of the neighborhood are simple, devoid of any decorations, and colors. However, the tiles of the wall fountains consist of different colors. Creating such a contradiction and making the wall fountain unique show how important are these elements. These contrasts trigger the mind of the audience and allow the audience distinguishes this element from its context. Such a distinction makes the audiences' experience about the fountain meaningful.

Distinguishing the fountain from its context turns it to a sign in the center of the neighborhood. The mental image of a city element re-

tain .No matter if both audience and constructors are from a different culture ,for instance ,Islamic ,Jewish or Christian culture ,experiencing this uniqueness of the art is culture-free .The reason is the perceptions of beauty and decorations are equally possible for any audience.

The fountains are repeated in the centers of the Medinas cities .This recurrence underlies the importance of this element for the residents of the neighborhood .Pedestrians in the middle of the neighborhood of Medina frequently see them and the images of the space are imprinted on their minds .When the audience sees the fountains, they easily realize that they are in the hangout spot in the center and understand the importance of fountains .The audience no longer considers the center of the neighborhood important .The recurring element ,the fountain ,links the center of the neighborhoods to one another and highlight the importance of the fountains as an integral part of the space .Repeating an element sequentially and uniformly encourages the audience to be in search of these elements and reflects the importance of fountains among the residents.

As it was mentioned before, the fountains are well decorated. The decorations of the fountains

are similar to the ones in important spaces such as mosques and schools in Morocco. The horseshoe arch placed over the space this arc is visible in the mosques and schools. “Mosaic work and corbel called muqarnas “ are seen in the mosques and schools. Also, the tiling style of the wall fountains is similar to the one in the yards of houses. The exterior design of Moroccan houses is very simple while their interior designs are quite beautiful. According to some travelogues, the interior spaces of the houses are the jewels of the texture.

What has been discussed shows that, fountains and water elements are of the spiritual importance to the inhabitants. Perhaps it is because that the wall fountains are similar to the important spaces in terms of decorations (Fig. 6). This study is not interested to know why the fountains have now increased in spiritual importance. This study is an attempt to understand their current status quo than their history.

Based on the discussion presented, the wall fountain is an integral element of the space giving identity to the center of the neighborhood. Every building as a part of the culture objectifies a mental thought through the form. This objectivity is called “identity” (Toufan, 2006). Identi-



Fig. 6. Similarity shared between the decorations of the fountains and those of important buildings. Morocco, Fes, Fes. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat.Shojaei.Morocco. 2016.

**The importance of the inseparable element of the neighborhood center**

city the through way their find can audience The easily environment perceive to manage can they if ,Lynch) images or patterns interconnected through a of element inseparable an Identifying .(1971 its of image mental the understand to helps place In .city the of pattern the recognize and audience tightly that features the understanding ,regard this :important is context its with element an bind in cherished been has value a as art Decorating more requires and societies human and cultures all goal The .environments made-man in attention pleasurable a evoking is arts creating in artists of .audience the in feeling visual

The wall Fountains lying at Medina’s centers are decorated .Tiles are used for decorating all or half of the wall fountains .Examining the economic condition of residents of the neighborhood shows that economy is tightly associated with the extent of decoration .Large tiles are most often seen in the Medina’s centers including several shops or a mosque-like building .Most of the houses are located at the smaller centers where decorations of the fountains are limited to the tile designs (Fig. 5). What is important is that the audience can perceive the beauty ,difference ,and the uniqueness of the art ,and realize that the fountains have made the place more beautiful .The audience’s culture can be different from the constructors of the foun-



Fig. 4. The Fountain, the common element at all the milestones in the cities of Morocco. Fes, Meknes, Tangier. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat.Shojaei.Morocco. 2016.



Fig. 5. Differentiating the walls of the fountains in Medinas from the context using colors . Chechaouen, Fes, Essaouira. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat.Shojaei.Morocco. 2016.

social groups can gather together. Square (Agora) is one of the main –element of the Greek cities. In the ancient Roman cities, the square (Forum) was the central core of social communities, religious communities, bath, amphitheater, and sporting events etc (Boroumand, 1996 cited in Bastani Rad, 2013).

### •The importance of water

Being in contact with nature is the most important condition to be recognized as an artist, the artist is human; he is nature itself; he is a part of nature in the natural space “(Paul Klee). The importance of nature and its accessibility to human beings are also highlighted in Islamic thoughts. In Islam, nature as the part of the system of creation reflects the attributes of God and the elements of nature are referred to as the verses of God’s being. Water as one of the manifestations of nature has received a wide attention. God in the Holy Quran states that all living beings are created from the water<sup>1</sup>. There are some verses in the Quran describing the different forms of water. These verses are referred to as divine verses (Fig. 3).

In the center of the Medinas of Morocco, water and fountains have created a spiritual atmosphere. Fountains, important elements in nature, lie in the centers of the neighborhood, and water is easily accessible to the residents. The natural substructure of Morocco and its underground water in developing Medina shows the importance of water. Due to such importance, the fountains seem to play a key role in developing the center of the neighborhood in Morocco.

### A Dual Function of a place: Neighborhood Centers as the landmark of Medinas

Signs are reference points whose role are often experienced by people (Bentley, 1985: 121). Since “meaningful signs shaped based on mental images, are rooted in the society and culture, in most cases, these signs serve as the landmark of urban space” (Soltani, 2009).The centers of the Medinas or their “signs” and the “indigenous elements” are referred to as “landmark” of Medinas. Colin believes that a landmark (a pillar or a

turn into the center of the neighborhood. However, all the neighborhood centers cannot serve as landmarks. Some elements are only available in the landmark space. In the cities of Morocco, the fountains are common elements that exist in all the center of the neighborhoods (Fig. 4).



Fig. 2.The center of the neighborhood in Central Asia serves as the platform for social relations. Photo: Planning For The Historic City Of Samarkand, 39.



Fig. 3. Holy phrases and the name of God on the walls of the fountain. Tetouan, Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat.Shojaei. Morocco. 2016.

crossroads) helps the audience with the geographical position, and assures us that this is the place we are looking for (Cullen, 1961). In fact, the landmark space is different from the other places in terms of some features, and it is what the audience is looking for it .The landmark space can

largest community of people used to gather and comes into contact with others in the neighborhood center. Each neighborhood was run in a semi-independent way and used to provide a comprehensive service to the public, provide them with access to the center and satisfy their needs.

The center of the neighborhood was the space for local residents to get together and spend their leisure time (Bagheri, 67: 2009). The new era brought about drastic changes in the structure and function of the neighborhoods.

Though these centers are different in shape and structures, they share similarities in terms of functions. All neighborhood centers serve as a platform where people can hang out, rest, gather together and meet other locals.

### Neighborhood Centers in Iran

In the past, water reservoirs were mounted in the community centers such as bazaar, neighborhood centers, and caravansaries (Ghobadian, 2004: 298).

According to Soltanzadeh many Sassanid “Fire temples” were built at the core of the neighborhoods, and after Islam, they were replaced with mosques (Soltanzadeh, 1983: 268). In her article, Javadi stated that “Chartaghi”, fountain and tree, three elements of the center, were associated with each other and gathered in one place. “Old trees near the fountains, wells, and rivers were revered by native inhabitants and many shrines were built around them. In Sassanid Empire, some of these shrines (Chartaghi) served the function of fire temples”(Javadi, 2013). (Fig 1).

Apart from shrines, some other religious places used to play a key role in the centrality of the neighborhood: the schools, the tombs, and the revered elements. In many of the old neighborhoods, the neighborhood centers were developed in relation to cultural places. Sometimes a revered religious place and a non-religious element, for example an old tree used to serve the function the neighborhood center. Such places were affected by the changes in the center and such changes used to influence the city’s texture

and structure (Ziatavana, 1992: 173-200).

### Neighborhood Centers in middle Asia:

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the neighborhood was the main constituent of the city’s structure. in the cities of Central Asia including Islamic cities, neighborhood was the place where residents used to spend their time. In each neighborhood, there was a center consisted of a tea house, a mosque, social and commercial spaces. The neighborhood center was a platform where residents were connected through their personal and family contacts. They were associated with succeeding generations, used to participate in social activities and family events, get together to help out each other with common problems (The Aga Khan Trust For Culture, 1997cited in Kasravi, 2011); (Fig. 2).

### Neighborhood Centers in the cities of Greece and ancient Rome:

The structures of the square or center of the neighborhoods in Iran are different from the ones in Greek and Rome. The fountain has been recognized as an important element in ancient Greek and Roman lands. The centers are also larger than the ones in the local centers of Iran. In fact, the centers serve as places where various



Fig. 1. The association of the spring, tree and Chartaghi, Neshalge Village, Isfahan. Photo: Fatemeh Al-sadat. Shojaei. Iran. 2013.

## Introduction

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Most of the Moroccan cities are old and surrounded by new textures. The old textures are walled in and connected to the new ones through the gateways. These parts of the cities called “Medinas”, are car-free areas and have narrow streets. The organically shaped textures are jeweled with the houses. The walled residential houses find the way to the streets through the small doors and windows. The houses are devoid of any decorations and not characterized by special features. The interior designs of the houses are beautiful and different from their exterior ones. Bazaar, the business axis running through the textures, connects the gates to each other.

Medinas are the indigenous elements of Moroccan cities. Like other cities, they contain the neighborhoods in which the flow of life has been maintained. Within the neighborhoods of the old textures, some open areas are located within a short distance of each other. The spaces serve as the center of the neighborhoods and are the places where the residents of the

neighborhood can hang out and rest. Around these areas, some places) e.g. mosques and schools (serving important functions are formed. On the walls at the center of the neighborhood, a fountain is mounted. This element is frequently repeated in the centers of the Medinas in the cities of Morocco.

Identifying the recurring elements of the cities is of importance because they evoke a mental image in the mind of its visitor and make the urban space meaningful to them. Therefore, this study is an attempt to investigate how fountains as the inseparable parts of the Medina make the neighborhood center unique.

The field observations suggest that the formation of the center of the neighborhood in Medina can be influenced by the residents' need for a behavioral and spatial site characterizing the features of the neighborhood. The role of such elements in shaping this space cannot be overlooked because these elements have received a wide attention in both Islamic culture and Christianity.

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### **Water, the recurring element of the center of the neighborhoods at Medinas**

In the past, in small and large historical dwellings, there were one or more neighborhoods in which some places served as a platform for people to gather together and exchange their ideas. This interactive space in each of the neighborhoods was called the center of the neighborhood. Nowadays, the neighborhoods are considered as the main elements of the cities and the centers of the neighborhoods serving as a bridge connecting the city with its citizen.

One of the spatial characteristics of the neighborhood is its center. In Norberg Schultz' words, every dwelling is characterized by the features of its center. Bullenau defines the center as the point where human, a being with the mentality, dwells, wanders around and experiences life in the space (Norberg Schultz, 2002).

The centers which often lie at the heart of the neighborhood consist of spaces and service elements. The features of the neighborhood are influenced by different factors such as climatic conditions, geographic characteristics and economic potential of urban residents.

The location of the neighborhood center is often selected based on different criteria, for instance, its distance from Bazaar and the main gates of the city, service providers' and peoples' opinions.

In other words, a variety of factors determines the type, quality, and amount of the space allocated to the facilities and service elements [center] of the neighborhood for example, the characteristics of the city, the customs of the residents, the economic conditions of the inhabitants, and the size of the neighborhood (Soltanzadeh, 1983: 156).

A careful perusal of literature shows that the

# Wall Fountains as the Accreditation Factor for Moroccan Neighborhoods\*

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## Abstract

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The hangout spot in the Medinas of Morocco has been recognized as the center of the neighborhood. The centers are featured by the inseparable elements of the space or fountains. The fountains and their features are of special importance to the centers. This paper is an attempt to examine how fountains and their features make the neighborhood unique. The purpose of this paper is two-fold. In the first section of this paper, the role of the fountain in evoking the image of the neighborhood in the minds' of its audience is examined. The fountains are frequently repeated in the center of the neighborhoods. The recurrence of an element makes it memorable and transforms it into a sign. What make fountains more unique are their contrasts with other elements in the texture. In the second part, nature and quality characteristics of the fountains are delved into and it is attempted to show that there is more to the fountain than meets the eye. The similarity shared between the decorations of the fountains and those of important spaces such as mosques, schools and the yards of the houses show that this element is of the spiritual importance to the inhabitants. In fact, people identify themselves with the fountains. Data were gathered through observations. To this purpose, fifteen neighborhoods of the Medinas from the six cities were chosen. The analysis of data shows that the fountains are the sign of the centers of neighborhoods in the Medinas. The neighborhood can be identified with them and the spaces with no fountains fail to serve as the neighborhood center.

## Keywords

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Landmark- Neighborhood Center- Wall Fontaine- Accreditation- Moroccan Medinas.