



STREET ART BRIDGING CULTURES GENERATIONS AND IDEOLOGIES

Akshita Ahlawat, Dr. Karuna

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Visual Art, Banasthali Vidyapith, Banasthali, India.

Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Art, Banasthali Vidyapith, Banasthali, India.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the purposes of street art and its ability to bridge cultural, generational, and ideological divides by transforming the public realm of Delhi. The finding reveals how street art acts as a dynamic platform for dialogue between diverse community groups, fostering a shared sense of cultural identity while addressing pressing social and political issues such as inequality, gender, and environmental concerns. Moreover, it explores several forms of street art through the eyes of the urban audience, aiming to develop an understanding of how individuals engage with and respond to this art and facilitating the exchange of ideas between younger, mid and older generations. Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines qualitative techniques such as interviews with quantitative techniques, data was collected through spontaneous conversations conducted while walking through the art district, as well as published journals and books. The study's focus on Delhi's diverse cultural settings contributes to a better understanding of public art's transformational potential in fostering conversation, solidarity, and civic engagement. These results highlight the significance of street art not only as an aesthetic form but as an essential tool for urban regeneration and social change in urban Indian society.

Keywords Keywords: street art, graffiti, urban space, cultural expression, society.

1. INTRODUCTION

The connection between art and the urban environment is evident in the presence of civic memorials and spiritual structures, which highlight the essential role of art in shaping cities. Over recent years street and graffiti art have gained prominence in India's metro cities. Artists are increasingly turning to public spaces as a platform to convey their ideas and connect with a broader audience, influencing societal awareness and behavior. Themes addressed in street art include racism, social inequality, gender discrimination, human rights, environmental issues, and other pressing concerns (Ross, 2021; Kucukali, 2023). The significance of public art in urban spaces has become a key focus of discourse in global urban studies (Stevenson, 2017). Public spaces, characterized by routine social interactions and cultural representations, have emerged as crucial sites for artistic engagement and expression. In contemporary urban contexts, art has transcended the traditional boundaries of galleries, museums, and private spaces, becoming more accessible in public areas. Public art, particularly street art, serves as a vital conduit between the city and its residents. A city devoid of public spaces is a city devoid of culture history, and social dynamics of the urban environment. Therefore, street art has become a vital medium for enhancing the aesthetic quality of metropolitan environments and promoting community involvement and cultural expression.

Street art in Delhi pulses with socio-cultural meaning it challenges norms, gives voice to the unheard, and transforms walls into windows of expression. In the heart of urban recreational spaces, it becomes a powerful tool of commentary and activism, shedding light on pressing issues like gentrification and environmental decay (Hernandez, 2018). India's

artistic legacy runs deep from the timeless cave murals of Ajanta and Ellora to today's vibrant street murals, art has always mirrored the values and struggles of its people. In this continuum, Delhi's street art stands as a living bridge linking the city's storied past with its fast-changing urban present, blending heritage with modernity in every stroke. It acts as a bridge between the younger generation, which is influenced by global art movements, and the older generation, who reinterpret cultural symbols and historical narratives in the context of current contemporary issues (Chakraborty, 2017; Nagar, 2019). In Delhi, the historical Lodhi Colony has been transformed into India's first-ever official art district where murals have brought together local and international visitors as well as become a way to interact among a diverse group of people, including those who may not typically participate in direct social and political dialogue. Freed from the constraints of legal or institutional frameworks, street art serves as an unfiltered and direct form of expression that bypasses censorship and allows it to communicate political ideologies and social commentary (Hunter, 2018). These artistic expressions transcend cultural divides, fostering conversations that contribute to the city's evolving urban identity (Sharma, 2018). By challenging the status quo, street art amplifies the voices of marginalized communities and becomes an essential part of the socio-political landscape of the city.

This research examines how street art in Delhi bridges cultural, generational, and ideological gaps. It seeks to explore how street art serves as a unifying force, blending local traditions with global influences while simultaneously addressing socio-political issues. Specifically, the study will investigate how murals of Lodhi Colony reflect the city's diverse cultural fabric, foster intergenerational dialogue, and challenge entrenched power structures. As Delhi is a city shaped by historical legacies, rapid urbanization, and contemporary global influences, this research will explore how street art integrates these diverse cultural elements to contribute to a more inclusive urban identity. Additionally, the study will analyze how street art provides a platform for younger generations to express their concerns, aspirations, and cultural identities, while also serving as a tool for older generations to engage with new forms of artistic expression. The broader goal of the research is to examine how street art functions as a socio-political tool that challenges ideologies and power dynamics, thereby fostering social change and community engagement in an ever-evolving urban environment. In this context, the primary objective of this study is to investigate how street art in Delhi serves as a powerful socio-cultural tool, bridging generational gaps, integrating diverse cultural narratives, and fostering ideological dialogue. The study employs a mixed-method approach, incorporating field observations, Interviews, and a review of relevant literature.

Through qualitative and quantitative techniques, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how street art in Delhi contributes to shaping the socio-political and cultural landscape of the city. The paper is structured as follows: the first section provides a literature review on the role of street art in urban spaces. The second section explores the methodology used in this study, followed by an analysis of the murals in Delhi's art districts in discussion section reflects on the broader implications of the study, concluding with recommendations for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Street Art of Delhi: Bridging Culture, Generation and Ideologies

Street art has emerged as a transformative form of socio-cultural expression, particularly in Delhi, where it plays a vital role in bridging cultural, generational, and ideological divides. It challenges established norms, giving voice to marginalized communities, and addressing pressing societal issues such as inequality, gentrification, and environmental degradation. In cities around the world, including Delhi Street art become an essential medium through which artists engage with the city's complex identity, drawing on historical influences while engaging in new and transformative ways.

Delhi's layered cultural context—shaped by Mughal, colonial, and indigenous traditions has fostered a street art movement that reflects and critiques the city's evolving character. Artists draw from this rich past while infusing global influences, blending miniature paintings with modern graffiti, creating a vibrant mix of old and new. This fusion allows artists to comment on themes like migration, identity, and social transformation (Gupta, 2017; Malhotra, 2016).

As street art becomes increasingly recognized in Delhi, it also serves as a tool for cultural preservation. Sethi (2019) highlights how murals and graffiti can reclaim public spaces that have been neglected or commercialized. In this way, street art acts as a form of resistance against urban gentrification, allowing marginalized communities to assert their presence in areas that might otherwise be subject to rapid development and displacement. Singh & Jain (2020) emphasize that street art in Delhi is not just a creative endeavor, but a way to engage with and preserve aspects of the city's cultural heritage, providing an alternative to the mainstream commodification of art. In this context, public art becomes a platform

for marginalized or underrepresented communities to share their stories and viewpoints, giving voice to those people who do not have access to conventional forms of expression. Singh (2020) argues that this art sparks an essential conversation, encouraging citizens to engage with significant social, political, and cultural issues.

Alongside its role in cultural preservation, street art in Delhi is also deeply political, challenging the dominant power structures and ideologies that shape the urban environment. Street artists in Delhi, particularly those associated with collectives like "St+art," have used their art to address pressing issues such as environmental degradation, housing rights, and social justice. Jha (2020) notes that Delhi-based street artists often create works that critique governmental policies, such as those related to urban development or the environment. These artworks employ a visual language—slogans, symbols, and imagery that is highly effective in mobilizing public sentiment against political or social issues, thus serving as a form of visual protest.

Street art in Delhi also plays a key role in bridging generational gaps. The younger generation in the city, often described as digitally connected and globally aware, has adopted street art as a way to express their concerns, identities, and aspirations (Kumar, 2021). Kapoor and Sharma (2018) argue that street art provides a platform for youth to address both local and global issues, from socio-economic inequality to urbanization, in ways that traditional forms of expression do not allow. This generational divide is further reflected in the way young artists engage with traditional Indian art forms, such as miniature paintings or folk art, and reinterpret them within a contemporary global context (Sinha, 2017). Rathore (2019) suggests that this blending of traditional and modern forms of art facilitates intergenerational dialogue, where both younger and older generations can explore their shared cultural roots while adapting to a rapidly changing urban environment.

In addition to fostering generational dialogue, street art in Delhi also plays a pivotal role in promoting social inclusion and community empowerment. Shar et al. (2020) argue that public art, particularly street art, has the potential to create spaces for marginalized communities to voice their concerns and challenge oppressive historical narratives. Tunnacliffe (2016) further highlights how street art engages with social themes, particularly environmental concerns, and transforms passive spectators into active participants. This engagement with environmental issues, for example, not only allows individuals to confront the urban challenges of pollution and waste management but also empowers them to take part in broader conversations about social and environmental change.

Street art also serves as a means of fostering cultural identities within local communities. Garcia (2019) and Jenkins (2017) contend that street art allows communities to embed their stories, struggles, and cultural identities in the fabric of the city, creating a visual dialogue that connects people across social, ethnic, and political divides. In this way, street art becomes more than just an aesthetic expression; it acts as a narrative tool that reinforces community ties celebrates diversity, and promotes social cohesion. By embedding local histories into public spaces, artists create a shared cultural experience that transcends generational and ideological divides, turning urban landscapes into cultural exchange and reflection sites.

However, street art's global dimensions are just as significant as its local impact. Waclawek (2011) and Baird & Taylor (2011) argue that street art creates a global dialogue by blending universal themes—such as social justice, protest, and resistance—with localized cultural contexts. Delhi's street art is an example of this fusion, where global issues like climate change, gender equality, and human rights are articulated through a local lens. In recent years, art in the public realm has increasingly served as a medium for social commentary and critique, addressing important issues such as environmental politics and social justice (Marcondes, 2020). Artists use the public realm to provoke thought and spark debate on significant social matters. Contemporary art murals place a strong emphasis on community involvement, urban renewal, and tackling environmental challenges (Cheng et al., 2023). Notably, this art raises awareness about social inequalities related to race, gender, class, and sexuality (Zebracki, 2020). Additionally, modern public art reflects and responds to political conflicts, wars, and acts of violence (Kot et al., 2024). Artists use public art to remember victims of violence, to protest against war and injustice, and advocate for peace. (Hunter, 2018) further notes that street art provides a platform for marginalized communities to express their political views when traditional forms of communication are restricted or unavailable, helping bridge cultural divides and creating connections between urban spaces worldwide.

The interplay between global influences and local relevance in Delhi's street art scene also raises important questions about the commercialization of public space. Shar et al. (2020) discuss how street art's transformative potential can sometimes be undermined when it is co-opted by urban regeneration projects prioritizing middle-class aesthetics over

community needs. In such cases, the original subversive nature of street art may be compromised, reinforcing the very power structures it sought to challenge. Nevertheless (Bruni and Rauhut Kompaniets., 2024) emphasize that street art remains a valuable tool for cultural regeneration, offering a space for community participation and sustainable development in urban areas. By engaging local populations in the artistic process, street art can contribute to the social and economic vibrancy of urban environments.

Furthermore, street art in Delhi has played a significant role in enhancing the city's urban identity and stimulating economic growth. Khurana (2020) notes that commissioned street art projects in Delhi have revitalized neglected or underdeveloped areas, attracting cultural tourism and stimulating investment. While these projects can contribute to the beautification of urban spaces, they also raise concerns about gentrification and the displacement of marginalized communities. Richards and Duif (2019) argue that public art, including street art, can enhance a city's identity and competitiveness by attracting tourists and contributing to the local economy. Through creative place-making, street art helps to redefine urban landscapes, making them more vibrant and distinctive. However, scholars like Shar et al. (2020) and Bruni and Rauhut Kompaniets (2024) also highlight the challenges associated with street art's integration into urban regeneration projects, suggesting that its transformative potential must be carefully managed to avoid reinforcing existing power structures. Nevertheless, street art remains a crucial medium for fostering dialogue, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting social change in rapidly evolving urban environments like Delhi.

The literature review highlights that art in public realm worldwide addresses crucial socio-political issues reflecting the distinct challenges and complexities of each country's historical and societal context (Røyseng, 2021). These murals serve as a platform for open dialogue, thoughts, and active engagement with urgent issues, solidifying their role as a vital element of the cultural background (Simoniti, 2021). Additionally, public art plays a transformative role as a vital element of the socio-political environment by sparking discussions on key social and political matters or fostering cultural understanding and tolerance through the representation of diverse cultural viewpoints (Müller, 2019). Furthermore, it encourages civic participation by inspiring individuals to engage more actively in public life (Iannelli & Marelli, 2019). By offering a public space for cultural expression, it fosters intercultural communication, enabling marginalized groups to share their voices with broader audiences. Additionally, street art serves as a platform for younger and older generations to connect, share ideas, and celebrate their common histories. Furthermore, its ability to challenge political ideologies and social norms makes it a powerful tool for ideological resistance and political engagement. While much has been written on the cultural and political aspects of street art, there is still much to learn, particularly in terms of its global reach, digital transformation, and non-Western manifestations. As street art continues to evolve, it remains a vital and dynamic form of communication that bridges divides and inspires change.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the content of the murals and understand how they communicate cultural, generational, and ideological messages.
- To understand how people engage with street art in their everyday environment, the socio-cultural dynamics at play, and the significance of the artwork in public spaces.
- Explore how street art bridges generational gaps, facilitating dialogue between older and younger generations and reflecting the evolving cultural landscape of Delhi.
- Examine how street art acts as a tool for social commentary, addressing contemporary societal issues such as inequality, racism, gender discrimination, and environmental degradation.

Through these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection of street art, public spaces, and socio-cultural transformation in Delhi's urban context.

4. BACKGROUND

Street art, as a form of urban public art, has gained significant attention for its ability to challenge societal norms and create spaces for dialogue. This review examines how street art transcends its visual appeal, engaging with broader issues of cultural identity, generational change, and political commentary. The integration of global influences with local traditions in Delhi's street art scene offers a unique perspective on the city's socio-cultural transformation.

This paper adopts a narrative review approach to consolidate the existing research and understand the significance of street art in Delhi. Data were gathered through multiple sources, including published literature, news articles, websites, and first hand observations. The primary qualitative data collected from spontaneous conversations during field visits to Delhi's art districts, along with interviews with residents from various generational backgrounds, are examined. These conversations provided insights into the ways in which different age groups engage with street art and perceive its role in the urban cultural dialogue. Additionally, quantitative data from public art project evaluations and surveys contribute to understanding the broader impact of street art on the city's socio-cultural dynamics. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of street art's role as a cultural bridge in the context of Delhi's diverse urban landscape.

5. STREET ART BRIDGING CULTURES, GENERATIONS AND IDEOLOGIES

The public realm in which people live daily has a massive impact on people. Now art has come outside of galleries and reached more audiences, making it a more influential tool for raising a voice for the community. Street art has become a powerful vehicle for cultural expression, allowing marginalized communities and individuals to communicate their stories, ideologies, and identities in public spaces. Street art offers an accessible platform for urban communities to engage in cultural and political dialogues that often go unnoticed in traditional galleries or museums. Throughout its history, street art has evolved from the margins of society to a globally recognized form of artistic expression, transcending geographical, cultural, and generational boundaries. Street art in Delhi reflects a diversity of themes that resonate with the cultural tapestry of the city and socio-political climate. The St+art India Foundation has played a vital role in bridging culture, generation, and ideology through street art in Delhi.

The three sub-points are divided to identify to what extent street art in Delhi is bridging culture, generation, and ideology, and how artists are conveying their thoughts, culture, and identity and helping to enhance economic vitality. Three underlying sub-points for this study are:

- (1) Street art: A universal language of bridging culture
- (2) "Street Art in Delhi: A Platform for Generational Expression and Activism"
- (3) "Aesthetic Appeal of Delhi Street Art: Ideological Expression"

6. STREET ART: A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF BRIDGING CULTURE

Street art also serves as a form of cultural preservation, documenting the histories, traditions, and identities of diverse communities. In many urban recreation spaces, street art murals serve as visual archives of local folklore, historical events, and cultural movements, providing residents with a sense of continuity and connection to their heritage (Campos, 2016). Through the preservation of cultural memory, street art contributes to the resilience and cohesion of urban communities, ensuring that their stories are not lost to the passage of time (Cooper & Clark, 2020). In cities like Delhi, this form of art reflects the dynamic interaction between global influences, and the aesthetic appeal of street art in Delhi lies in its vibrant use of colours, innovative techniques, and powerful visual storytelling. It combines traditional Indian art forms with contemporary styles, creating striking and thought-provoking pieces that engage viewers. By celebrating the richness and diversity of urban culture, street art fosters a sense of belonging and collective identity among residents, strengthening social bonds and fostering a shared sense of heritage. Schacter (2014) emphasizes that street art is often a hybrid of global artistic influences and local cultural practices, making it an ideal vehicle for cross-cultural communication. In Delhi, artists blend traditional Indian art forms, such as Madhubani or Warli, with contemporary global street art styles, creating a visual dialogue between the old and the new. International festivals of street art and collaborative projects highlight the uniting power of street art, representing how it can break down cultural barriers and foster mutual understanding. Each piece conveys an idea, a story, or a protest, contributing to the city's urban fabric. The universal appeal of street art lies in its ability to communicate ideas visually and emotionally without requiring a shared linguistic or cultural background, making it a "universal language. Street art, therefore, acts as a meeting point where cultural traditions can coexist with the forces of globalization, creating a space for dialogue and mutual understanding. This blending of the old and new in the public space allows street art to bridge the gap between historical cultural legacies and modern creative expressions.

• The Murals and Their Cultural Significance:

Delhi's street art murals particularly in areas like the Lodhi Colony and Connaught Palace are intertwined and connected with the city's cultural fabric, reflecting a dynamic fusion of contemporary and traditional artistic practices. These murals beautify public spaces and also serve as powerful vehicles for cultural expression, addressing themes such as **identity**,

gender equality, social justice, and globalization (Sharma, 2018). Artists like Aaron Glasson, **Aravani Art Group**, and **Neethi** merge local iconography with global street art techniques, creating works that engage with both the local community and international audiences (Dey & Pandey, 2019). "Street Art Festival" has become a big tourist draw, resulting in an estimated 30% boost in local business income during the festival season. This shows how public art could boost local businesses while encouraging cultural interaction (Brown, 2020). In doing so, they reflect the **hybridity** of urban Indian life, where **global and local narratives intersect** (Bhabha, 1994). The murals act as visual archives, preserving the history, cultural movements, and pressing social issues of the time, while also keeping local traditions and folklore alive (Campos, 2016). In addition to preserving culture, these murals encourage essential conversations around topics like gender roles and environmental sustainability, using street art as a medium for both social commentary and community engagement (Robinson, 2017). By tackling these complex issues, Delhi's street art challenges conventional public art ideas, transforming everyday urban spaces into platforms for reflection, dialogue, and cultural exchange (Leal, 2019).

- **A Fusion of Tradition to Modernity**

Many street art pieces celebrate India's rich cultural heritage, depicting historical figures, traditional art forms, and architectural landmarks. As art historian Geeta Kapur argues, modern art in India often serves as a bridge between traditional cultural narratives and the dynamic changes of the contemporary world. The intersection of ancient symbolism with contemporary techniques (such as surrealism and abstraction) makes these artworks both accessible and relevant to today's audience (Kapur, 2000). One of the murals "*The sacrosanct whole*" at Lodhi colony Delhi shown in Figure 1 about the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley which is reflective of the cultural past of India hundreds of years ago. The mural therefore builds a narrative of interconnection and unity with metaphysical, surreal, and enigmatic Aaron's piece of art evokes a comforting sense of cultural history and identity. These artworks serve not only as visual representations but also as narratives that reinforce and rejuvenate cultural identity among residents and visitors. Artist Ravi Agarwal asserts that street art enables communities to actively interact with their cultural history, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity (Agarwal, 2014). By making such murals, artists create a visual dialogue between the past and present, making cultural heritage accessible and relevant to a contemporary audience.



Figure 1. "*The sacrosanct whole*" by Aaron Glasson at Lodhi colony Delhi 2019

- **Social Justice and Gender:**

A significant portion of street art in Delhi addresses social issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, and human rights and one of the key social issues depicted in street art is the fight for human rights. Artists often use city walls to highlight attention to the issues of discrimination, gender inequality, racism, and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community (Wheatley, 2022; Lewin & Jenzen, 2023; Cox, 2023). These works often carry significance both locally and globally. Figure 2 shows gender equality and the title of this mural is "*Trans Lives Matter*" by transgender community Aravani art project at Lodhi Colony Delhi. 10 Trans people and numerous volunteers played a key role in the creation of the wall, turning it into a communal celebration of uniqueness and representation. These artworks often serve as powerful statements of dissent or call to action, engaging viewers in critical discourse and prompting societal introspection.



Figure 2. “*Trans Lives Matters*” by Aravani art project at Lodhi Colony Delhi 2019

- **Community and Inclusivity:**

Delhi’s Street art frequently acts as a platform for civic engagement and inclusivity. Artistic collaborations involving residents, schools, and NGOs contribute to a sense of ownership and pride in neighborhood spaces, fostering a shared feeling of inclusion among various communities. A recent collaboration of the St+art India Foundation with the Gates Foundation, a non-profit organization, created a mural titled “*Instante*” shown in Figure 3 by Paola Delfin that showcases the people cultures, and artists who observed every activity in Delhi such as portraits of various individuals who shape the streets- flowers sellers who have witnessed the evolving cityscape, children from the slums who play together every evening, two sisters supporting one another in their journey towards independence and numerous animals that inhabit the colony. The diverse stories highlight the contrasting lives within the community. This mural emphasizes the intricate socio-economic realities and underscores the idea that despite the division we create, it is what binds us together that truly matters. The mural is deeply rooted in the significance of community, bringing people together through shared experiences. So, street art effectively bridges cultural divides in Delhi, by using street art as a medium to celebrate and connect various cultural narratives. This mural portrays how artwork interacts with nature and the ability of art to encourage, unite, and bring us closer together as human beings.



Figure 3. “*Instante*” by Paola Delfin at Lodhi Colony Delhi 2023

In the context of Delhi, street art emerges as a dynamic and evolving form of expression that plays a crucial role in bridging cultural divides in this vibrant and diverse metropolis. As a public art form, street art in Delhi has become an important tool for cultural exchange, enabling artistic voices to reach a broad audience beyond traditional galleries and museums. This public visibility allows the art to transcend the boundaries of class, religion, and socio-economic status, fostering communication across different cultural, social, and ethnic groups. Whether through vibrant murals in historical neighborhoods or thought-provoking messages in commercial districts, street art in Delhi fosters a deep sense of intercultural understanding and exchange. Drawing on the concept of “relational aesthetics,” Delhi’s street art exemplifies art that bridges divides between the artwork, the artist, and the public. Murals and graffiti allow for a seamless blending of diverse cultural perspectives—whether local, such as the city’s rich history of Mughal architecture, or global, influenced by Western pop culture and contemporary global movements. This synthesis of cultural influences creates an ongoing conversation, not just within the city’s walls but also between the city’s heritage and its evolving future. In conclusion, street art in Delhi serves as an important bridge between cultures, providing a space for both the artist and the public to engage in meaningful exchanges. It enables marginalized voices to participate in shaping the city’s urban landscape and

creates a visual language that unites people across cultural, social, and ideological divides. As Delhi continues to grow and evolve, street art will remain a powerful tool for cultural expression, dialogue, and the unification of diverse communities.

7. Street Art in Delhi: A Platform for Generational Expression and Activism

In Delhi, street art has transformed from a simple urban decoration to a powerful medium of self-expression, particularly among the city's youth. In cities plagued by urban light and disinvestment, street art can catalyze community-driven regeneration initiatives, attracting tourists, businesses, and residents to previously overlooked neighborhoods (Vannini & Franzini, 2018). By beautifying and activating vacant or derelict spaces, street art contributes to the revitalization of urban landscapes and enhances the quality of life for residents (Franke, 2018). It offers a platform for young people to share their thoughts, challenge societal norms, and communicate their experiences in a rapidly altering environment. Street art has become a way to shape youth identity, reflecting the complexities of life in a modern, globalized city while navigating the tension between tradition and progress. This art form creates an intergenerational dialogue between youth, middle-aged, and older generations in the city, on the other hand, for the older generation it is often experienced as a symbol of urban rejuvenation, creativity, and social change. Kim and Park (2021) examined how public art impacts youth participation in community projects. In their research, which involved focus groups of 50 urban youth, they discovered that engaging in public art initiatives led to a notable increase in youth involvement in local activities. A majority of participants shared that these experiences made them feel empowered and encouraged to contribute to their communities through art. The different ways that various generations in Delhi engage with street art provide an insightful glimpse into the city's evolving cultural landscape. Street art in Delhi is more than just a visual representation of urban culture; it serves as a medium through which generations express, experience, and engage with both global and local issues. The city, with its rich historical heritage and modern dynamics, presents an intriguing backdrop for street art that merges tradition with contemporary urban expression. In understanding how different generations in Delhi react to, interact with, and think about street art, it is essential to consider how these artworks both reflect and influence societal change.

- **Generational reactions and interaction to Street Art Murals in Delhi: A case Study**

Delhi's street art scene is dynamic, evolving rapidly evolving expression, blending diverse artistic forms, political statements, and global trends. However, generational responses to street art in the city vary significantly due to cultural, socio-political, and technological shifts. According to *Rao (2020)*, this fusion of old and new underscores Delhi's dynamic identity, bridging generational gaps in the perception of female empowerment. Street art and graffiti have made a remarkable mark in Delhi's Lodhi Colony, a historic residential area established during the British era, known for its iconic architecture (Aksoy & Sağlam, 2017). Since 2015, the St+Art India Foundation has gathered 50 well-known street artists from around the world to transform Lodhi Colony into the vibrant Lodhi Art District, marking it as India's first official art district. This transformation has captivated not only residents but also attracted visitors from around the world, including tourists, and art enthusiasts all eager to experience the dynamic and creative expressions found in street art.

- **Mural at Lodhi colony and Connaught palace Delhi:**

A mural in Lodhi Colony reflects **climate change activism shown in figure-4** "*climate05- reclaiming air and water quality*" by Italian artist Andrea Conte. This mural is about a serious concern regarding air and water pollution facing New Delhi and India as a whole. This mural, which features vivid imagery of nature and wildlife, calls attention to the environmental crisis. The climate-themed mural in Delhi has sparked diverse reactions across generations, highlighting the varying perceptions of environmental activism through street art. While walking in Lodhi colony one young individual, named Ananya Sharma (22), a college student engaged actively, viewing the mural and said "*The artwork speaks volumes about the state of our environment, especially the air and water pollution we're constantly dealing with and the awareness is crucial because a lot of people don't realize how serious the pollution issue is. But at the same time, I do believe this kind of street art can spark action. It's hard to ignore something this big and vibrant. It makes you stop and think. I hope it pushes people to take personal responsibility, but also demand action from our leaders*". On the other side middle-aged Ravi Mehta (42) a government employee, expressed cautious support, appreciating the awareness it fosters but questioning its policy impact. "*It's nice that the mural gets people talking, but will it make a difference in reducing pollution or improving air quality? That's what matters in the end*" and Shams Khwaja, a Senior Advocate at the Supreme

Court and a resident of Lodhi Art District, shared his perspective on the transformative impact of the mural street art in Lodhi Colony. *“He believes that these artworks have a profound effect on the community by subtly raising awareness about environmental issues and the need for sustainable living. According to him, these murals are making a meaningful impact by encouraging people to reflect on the challenges posed by Delhi’s escalating air quality index (AQI), pollution, and traffic congestion”*. Meanwhile, older individual Sushma (68), says *“I’ve been living in Lodhi Colony for decades, and I’ve seen how much the area has changed. But street art like this is more than just decoration on walls. It has a way of getting into the minds of people, making them reflect on things they might otherwise ignore. This mural, especially, hits home because of the environmental challenges we face in Delhi—rising AQI levels, traffic pollution, and the water crisis. The beauty of this art is that it’s not just a painting, but a conversation starter. And that’s the first step toward change”*. Furthermore, Khwaja highlights the importance of the locality, noting that it is home to many ministers and political figures, which can influence higher-level political decisions. Through artistic expression, the residents are prompted to reflect on the issues impacting their community and consider proactive measures for positive change. The street art in Lodhi Colony acts as a powerful catalyst for fostering community engagement and raising social consciousness.

As visitors stroll through the Lodhi Art District, they not only experience a celebration of creativity but also encounter a powerful reminder of how street art can bridge generational divides. The vibrant murals serve as a testament to art's ability to foster meaningful dialogue, inspire action, and unite people of all ages around shared concerns. In this unique space, street art becomes more than just a visual expression—it acts as a catalyst for understanding and collaboration across generations. The district stands as a symbol of how art can spark conversations that transcend age, encouraging a collective commitment to a better future.



Figure-4 “climate05- reclaiming air and water quality” by Andrea Conte at Lodhi Colony, 2019

Furthermore, when I moved towards another mural three generations paused before *“Colours of Soul”*, in Figure-5, by Senkoe to take some pictures with the mural. The artist painted this mural of birds, inspired by Mexican culture, to symbolize diversity, identity, and freedom. Each generation perceives the artwork differently. I asked **Ritika**, a 17-year-old student, who excitedly pulled out her phone to take a picture of that mural. What does this mural make you feel? Excitedly she answered *“This is amazing! The colors, the energy—it’s like the bird is breaking free. It belongs on my Instagram. Look at the window in its body—maybe it’s showing us that nature still exists if we just look for it.”* Beside her Rajat, a 52-year-old marketing professional, nods thoughtfully. *“You know, back when we were kids, birds like these were everywhere. Now, we see them only in murals. This is a reminder of what we’re losing in the city. Art like this makes you think—maybe we need to preserve more green spaces.”* A few steps away, Aruna, a 65-year-old retired teacher, observes in silence before finally speaking *“It’s beautiful, no doubt. But I don’t understand this modern street art. In my time, we had Madhubani and Warli paintings that told stories. What does this one mean?”* Rajat smiled towards the lady and said, *“Maybe it’s telling us to reconnect—with nature, with each other.”* This moment captures how public murals bridge generations—sparking inspiration in the young, reflection in the middle-aged, and nostalgia in the old, all while fostering a shared dialogue about culture, nature, and identity. They are met not only with a splendid portrayal of nature's liveliness but also with a powerful reminder of humanity's duty to protect and preserve the natural world. The artwork encourages viewers to celebrate diversity, recognize the interconnectedness of nature, and take active, climate-conscious steps to ensure the planet’s future for generations ahead.



Figure 5. “colours of Soul” by Senkoe from Mexico at Lodhi Colony in Delhi 2016

Additionally, when I visited Connaught Palace, I saw a mural that reflected deep social concerns and ignited public discourse. The mural shown in Figure-6 “Missing Girls” by Harsh Raman, in collaboration with Leena Kejriwal, located in Connaught Place, Delhi, addresses the urgent issue of missing and trafficked girls in India. The artwork portrays a sequence of a girl’s life stages, ending abruptly with a black silhouette, symbolizing the countless girls who disappear due to trafficking and gender-based crimes. The artists intend to push both public and governmental bodies toward stricter action against these issues, advocating for a society where girls can live without fear. The mural provokes raw emotions and compels viewers to reflect on the pressing issue of gender security. A boy kshitij Mehta (**Student, 22**) was looking at a mural. When I asked him what do you feel while seeing such artwork? Instantly he answered “*This mural hits hard. I walked past this spot every day, but this time, I had to stop and think. It makes me angry—how can we let this keep happening? My friends and I shared this on Instagram because people need to see this. Maybe if we keep talking about it, and raising awareness, things will change. I feel like street art like this is necessary; it’s activism in its purest form.*” Whereas Abhishek Dhankad (**42**) answered by getting emotional “*As a father, this mural unsettles me. It reminds me of the safety concerns we have for our daughters every single day. My wife and I always tell our daughter to be careful, but that shouldn't have to be the reality. It’s not just a painting; it’s a wake-up call. We need stronger policies, better law enforcement, and a cultural shift where girls are respected and protected. This artwork forces us to acknowledge the crisis instead of ignoring it.*” Indra Singh (**68**) is a **Retired Teacher**, “*I remember a time when girls were kept indoors for their own 'safety,' but the threats still existed. This mural is painful to look at because it tells a story we have seen for decades. It’s tragic that even after so many years, we are still fighting for the basic safety of our daughters and granddaughters. It’s a reminder that society has failed them. I just hope the young generation fights harder than we did.*” The mural serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing crisis, urging reflection and action across all generations.



Figure 6. “Missing Girls” by Harsh Raman at CP in Delhi 2015

- **Result: Street art bridging generations**

Street art in Delhi bridging generations, fostering dialogue, reflection, and activism. This case study reveals how different age groups engage with murals in unique ways. For the youth, street art is a form of activism and digital engagement, where murals become symbols of resistance and awareness, often amplified through social media. The middle-aged

generation, while appreciating the awareness it brings, tends to view it through a more practical lens, questioning its long-term impact and advocating for policy-driven solutions. Meanwhile, older individuals approach street art with nostalgia or skepticism, sometimes struggling to connect with modern artistic expressions but recognizing its role in societal change. Despite these varied perspectives, street art unites communities by highlighting shared concerns such as gender justice, environmental issues, and cultural identity. It transforms public spaces into platforms for social discourse, proving that art is not just about aesthetics but also about influence and action. Murals in locations such as Lodhi Art District and Connaught Place serve as cultural mirrors, compelling society to confront both its achievements and its ongoing struggles. Ultimately, this study highlights the power of street art as a tool for intergenerational connection, demonstrating that visual expression transcends age and background, fostering a more inclusive and conscious society.

8. Ideological Expression of Delhi Street Art:

Street art profoundly impacts social and political development by encouraging crucial changes within society. Firstly, public art projects encourage community members to develop a sense of belonging and enhance their cultural identity (Kopiiyevska et al., 2023). This promotes a more inclusive society and raises awareness of diversity. It encourages diversity and fosters an appreciation for it. Some street art initiatives also empower individuals to take ownership of public spaces and promote positive change (Cheng et al., 2023). Street art enhances civic engagement and strengthens community belonging. In addition, some street art murals address significant social justice, such as human rights, inequality, and discrimination, thereby raising awareness and engendering support for activism (Topaz et al., 2022). Street art has a positive impact on urban areas, drawing investment and creating economic opportunities (Demir Turkozu & Caliskan, 2021). Street art in India is contributing significantly to the city's economic growth and the capital of India attracts not only locals but also everyday individuals, foreign tourists, and international dignitaries eager to explore the dynamic and creative expression of street art in Lodhi Colony. The St+Art India Foundation a non-profit organization dedicated to street art since 2014 and in 2016 this organization declared Lodhi Colony the first open-air art district of India with over 60 large-scale murals created by national and international artists. These murals have turned the area into a vibrant cultural hub, attracting locals, tourists, and art enthusiasts from across the Globe. The street art not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the district but also contributes to its economic growth, making Lodhi Colony a unique blend of art, culture, and urban development. In the context of socioeconomic development, public art encourages economic growth by attracting tourists and investors to an area (Lee et al., 2020). Public art is most impactful when it is engaging and interactive, as it has the power to connect people with their surroundings and each other in meaningful ways (Milne & Pojani, 2022). Several art festivals have been held in Lodhi Colony to date, further establishing it as a major hub for street art in India. These festivals, shown in Figure-7 organized by the St+Art India Foundation and other local organizations, bring together a diverse range of artists from around the world. The festivals feature live painting, workshops, exhibitions, and community engagement activities, attracting both residents and international visitors. These events have not only promoted the growth of street art but have also significantly contributed to the local economy by increasing tourism and providing a platform for artists to showcase their work.



Figure-7 “St+Art foundation street art festival” at Lodhi Colony Delhi, 2023

Moreover, Street art in Delhi has increasingly become a medium for raising awareness about climate change, urging the city’s residents to reflect on the environmental challenges that threaten both present and future generations. Artists across Delhi have used murals, graffiti, and installations to visually represent the devastating effects of climate change, such as

air pollution, water scarcity, and the loss of biodiversity, while also highlighting the urgency of collective action. The mural shown in Figure-8 by the artist Aaron Li-Hill speaks to the issues of species extinction and contemplating climate change. By placing these environmental messages in highly visible public spaces, artists are ensuring that the topic of climate change is not just relegated to academic discussions or government policies but becomes a part of everyday conversation.



Figure- 8 “*Nature’s Arch and Visions of Altered Landscapes*” by Aaron Li-Hill at Lodhi Colony, Delhi 2018

Furthermore, Street art Initiatives in Delhi have enabled women to reclaim public spaces and challenge gender norms, initiating dialogues about gender equality and women’s visibility in male-dominated professions (Roy & Chatterjee, 2020). An example of Delhi street art shown in Figure 9 is “*The Mural of Women Empowerment*” by Shilo Shiv Suleman in the Lodhi Art District. The artwork highlights gender equality, addressing social issues while using art to provoke thought and dialogue on women’s rights. The political nature of street art can mediate between the artist’s intention and the public’s reception. Some might view it as a form of protest or social justice, while others may appreciate the rebellious spirit or message of empowerment. The aesthetic appeal here may lie in the power of the message conveyed, which often transcends conventional artistic norms. The paintings displayed in the Lodhi Art District not only celebrate the strength and achievements of women but also bring attention to the severe challenges faced by impoverished women, particularly those from marginalized communities. Through their impactful work, these artists address pressing social issues, particularly the struggles of women living in poverty, and passionately advocate for a more inclusive and empathetic society. Their art acts as a catalyst for change, raising awareness, fostering empathy, and inspiring a collective effort to build a better, more equitable world for women everywhere.



Figure 9 “*From your strength, I weave beauty*” by Shilo Shive Sulemon at Lodhi Colony Delhi

2016

In addition, street art also serves a social function by highlighting events, identifying key figures, providing social commentary, expressing political views, and presenting alternative visions (Bridge et al., 2000). Given the constantly shifting political landscape, street art remains highly adaptable, with its themes evolving to address emerging issues. Petronienè & Juzelèniènè (2022) argue that when community members engage in the creative process, the resulting artwork reflects their values, experiences, and aspirations. Moreover, the impact of public art extends beyond the local community, with the media frequently covering its broader influence (Røyseng, 2021).

Street art is frequently linked to political protests, serving as a powerful medium to amplify the voices of protesters and symbolize the collective call for transformation. Street art in Delhi became a medium of ideological dialogue and social reconciliation between different community groups. It fosters community engagement and social and political issues and this is how this art form is transforming the public realm (Khan, 2023). Socio-political factors such as government policies, social movements, and historical events have a profound influence on the themes and forms of artistic expression (Johnstone & O'Hare, 2023). This connection underscores how culture and art mirror socio-political trends, creating a dynamic and multifaceted relationship within society. The mural shown in Figure-10 "*The Untouchable*" by Harsh Raman at Hauz Khas village of Delhi is a powerful commentary on ideology and social hierarchy. For instance, during times of political protests or social movements, public art often serves as a powerful form of expression, conveying messages of resistance or hope. Therefore, public art is not only a reflection of socio-political development but also a dynamic force that can shape and influence it. Street art is inherently ideological, usually serving as a voice for the marginalized and a platform for political and social commentary. It also challenges the status quo and stimulates public discourse. It's more than just decoration—it tells the story of a nation, reflecting its history, culture, and values in a way that people can see, feel, and connect with (Cheng et al., 2023). That is why such artworks can be effective in promoting national identity (Grindon et al., 2023). Its aesthetic appeal goes beyond simple visual appeal, as it incorporates and expresses multifaceted tales rooted in diverse philosophies. It is used as a visual medium to promote awareness and spark discussion about urgent social issues, and it is intended to be a strong communicative tool for conveying complicated concepts and connecting profoundly with the audience (Bilozub et al., 2023). Street art helps as a platform for expressing various ideological perspectives within Delhi's multicultural society. Whether arguing for political change, celebrating cultural diversity, or challenging present narratives, Delhi's Street art dynamically contributes to shaping public discourse and collective memory. These ideologies influence its role in revitalizing spaces, promoting beautification, and bridging tradition with modernity.



Figure- 10 "*The Untouchables*" by Harsh Raman at Hauz Khas village Delhi, 2020

Street art in Delhi serves as a vibrant and transformative force that bridges diverse ideologies, fostering dialogue and understanding across generations. As a powerful tool for political, social, and cultural expression, it reflects the city's evolving socio-political landscape while simultaneously shaping it. Street art not only gives voice to marginalized communities but also challenges the status quo, prompting critical discussions on urgent social issues. By blending tradition with modernity, these artworks contribute to the revitalization of urban spaces and the promotion of national identity. In doing so, Delhi's street art stands as a dynamic platform that connects people from different backgrounds, generations, and ideologies, creating a shared narrative that celebrates both diversity and unity. Through its aesthetic, ideological, and communicative power, street art in Delhi continues to influence public discourse and inspire positive change within the city and beyond.

9. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the evolving role of street art in Delhi, revealing its significant influence on cultural dialogue, generational exchange, and ideological discourse. By analyzing key murals in the Lodhi Art District and other urban spaces, it becomes clear that street art serves not just as a visual expression but as a powerful social tool, shaping both public perception and community engagement. The study demonstrates that street art in Delhi is uniquely positioned to

bridge the gap between generations. Younger artists, driven by contemporary issues, bring fresh perspectives, while the mid-generation sees street art as both a cultural reflection and an evolving art form, bridging traditional values with modern expressions. On the other side, older generations contribute with their wisdom and cultural heritage. This fusion creates a multi-layered conversation about the city's identity, past, and future. In this sense, street art becomes a living archive of urban evolution—an art form that speaks to both historical context and modern transformation. Ideologically, street art serves as a space for challenging the status quo and stimulating political and social discussions. Its ability to critique, question, and protest societal norms makes it an important vehicle for social change. It raises awareness about issues ranging from climate change to gender inequality, turning public spaces into arenas for public discourse. However, this ideological function also highlights the tension between artistic freedom and the regulatory measures often imposed by authorities, creating a paradox of public art as both a space for expression and an object of control.

The broader implications of these findings point to the significant role street art can play in shaping urban identity and policy. As cities like Delhi continue to grow and diversify, street art becomes a critical part of the conversation about how cities balance heritage and progress. It forces us to reconsider how public spaces are used, who controls them, and who gets to speak within them. Moreover, street art can be a tool for strengthening community ties, fostering solidarity, and offering marginalized groups a platform for expression.

Looking to the future, the impact of street art will only expand as new technologies and platforms (such as social media and digital murals) allow for greater interaction with a global audience. This presents both opportunities and challenges—while the reach of street art grows, the question of authenticity, commercial co-optation, and the preservation of the original purpose of these works will become increasingly relevant. Further research into these dynamics, along with the role of street art in shaping global social movements, is needed to fully understand its evolving role in modern urban landscapes.

In conclusion, street art in Delhi is more than just a form of creative expression; it is a dynamic, transformative force that influences how we engage with urban spaces, reflect on social issues, and communicate across generations and ideologies. As it continues to evolve, its potential as both an artistic and social tool will only grow, making it a critical area for future study and civic dialogue.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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