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Modernization Alignment of Tehran Urban Symbols with Tehran Citizens Ways of Conceptualizing

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This study investigated whether urban symbol modernization in Tehran was in line with the modernization of citizens' ways of conceptualizing. For this reason, Tehran citizens' conceptual metaphors toward two important Tehran urban symbols, Azadi and Milad towers, were analyzed. Azadi tower is a traditional and a memorial symbol while Milad tower is a symbol of technology and modernity. It was intended to find out if old and young citizens differed in their ways of conceptualizing. The result indicated that both young and old citizens showed a disinclination toward the urban symbol of Modernity; Milad Tower. In this regard, the study suggested a Tradernization model to reconcile tradition and modernization in the city of Tehran and in fact to summon for the homogeneity of development patterns between Tehran urban symbols and Tehran citizens' ways of conceptualizing.

Keywords: Urban symbol, Metaphor, Modernization

1. Introduction

The construction and deconstruction of urban symbols within cities are directly involved in a particular process of signification which gives meaning to some specific symbols but not others (Nas, P. J., 2011). There are different forces and influences involved in the shaping of urban space and in the signification of urban symbols. Obviously, the more powerful these actors are the more successfully is their hand revealed in these dialectics. These actors and policy makers of the urban symbolism in all countries are increasingly trying to be in line with the rapid change of information age related symbols in the cities bringing the Globalization, technological and organizational development all in this alignment process (Dochtermann, A., 2000). However, the alignment process has made the cities to lose their identities and be transformed



to similar and monotonous masses around the world. Walter Bor (Bor, W. G., et al., 1967) mentions that the extraordinary similarity among cities in today's world is a serious danger to the cities' identities. According to many researchers such as Dutton (Dutton, W. H., Kraemer, K. L., & Blumler, J. G., 1987) and Sui (Sui D. Z., 2003) this transformation of identity has been accompanied by technological optimism. However, this has to be admitted that some of the modernized symbols in the cities are not so welcomed by the urban citizens particularly in Middle Eastern cultures. This is because the technological advances try to shape the ways that citizens implement their traditions. As Mumford (Mumford, Lewis., 1938) believes the main concern in modern urbanization is the "lost of urban identity". There is even a negative relationship between urban symbolism and identity in a city, resulting in more or less 'wounded cities' (J.Schneider & I.Susser, 2003). In this regard, the citizens also have been meant to reshape and adapt to the changes. This reshaping process is conceptual and takes place within the citizens' minds. Since this process is entirely abstract and within citizens' minds one good way to observe how this conceptual adaptation to the information age symbolism has occurred is through the language used by the citizens. One of the recent cognitive linguistic theories in analysing individuals' conceptions is conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M., 1980). Lakoff and Johnson explained that the locus of metaphor is no longer confined to language, but extended to thought as well.

2. Review of Literature

There are some significantly related studies that will be mentioned here. Arbak in Turkey studied the transformation of urban identity in Bodrum, a fisher town in Turkey which later in 1970s became more of a tourist town. The analysis of the study used development plans, reports, base maps from four periods, old photographs and written sources about the previous condition of the area. The reasons behind the changes, the purposes, and roles of the local municipalities, public authorities were taken into consideration. This study revealed what was lost and what was gained instead in Bodrum. With the help of Lynch in his outstanding book, *The Image of the City* and his theory of the city image, concentrating on the city's "environmental image" and its three components: identity, structure, and meaning, the outcome of the study revealed that after 1990s tourism became a dominant economic activity all around the area with many destructive impacts.

Another study by Xiangzhan (Xiangzhan, Ch., 2008) suggested that environments can be divided into natural and constructed environments. This study also was supported by the Lynch's theory of the city image. Traditional Chinese city-design philosophy emphasizes the harmonious relation between city and natural order. However in the light of the global urbanization, it was realized that the modern man has lost the dimension of nature, the paper thus indicated that the citizens have been alienated from the natural world, living in the forest of high buildings of concrete and iron.

In another study, Marková and Tichá (Marková, B., & Tichá, I., 2011) focused on the impact of Globalization on cultural policy in the city of Ostrava. They found that the city of Ostrava is a place whose socio-spatial structure has been heavily influenced by the totalitarian political regime in Communist period. The Velvet revolution brought the involvement in global structures which required a strategy to promote the image of the city of Ostrava on a global scale. Thus the city participated in the competition for the title of the European Capital of Culture to improve its image, stimulate urban development and attract visitors and investment.

Up to now the images and symbols of the cities were under the analysis of a comprehensive theory of Lynch [10], however this study tends to have a more specific look at the urban image and symbolism through conceptual metaphor theory. Some significant studies have been done in this area too, Dutton and a group of international experts (1987) invented a contemporary metaphor of the city with the publication of an outstanding book named *Wired Cities: Shaping the Future of Communications*. In that book they developed the *Wired City* as conceptual metaphor which was optimistic toward technology and modernization. The wired city metaphor could blend the communication and information technique with a deeply Modernist utopian vision of the city.

Another study by Sui [5] suggested The Technopolis metaphor that has put one more step forward to see the city as a collection of the Modernist commitments to Utopian Urbanism blended with the postmodern investments of cyberspace and the information age. Sui [Ibid] goes on to mention that the Ecumopolis metaphor emerged after the Technopolis for the city. Here the environmental destruction that has become associated with urban growth has led to a rethinking of the almost irresponsible policies of Modern urbanism. The metaphor continued to influence throughout the twentieth century, and today is embodied in the notion of the Sustainable City. Simply put, the sustainable city tries for the harmonious urban community and natural environment (Haughton & Hunter, 1994; as cited in [5]). The assumptions of the Ecumopolis stood against the motivating assumptions of the Technopolis. In fact, many of the problems that the Ecumopolis identifies in the contemporary city are because of the unchecked progress of technology in the Technopolis. In particular, the designs and plans of the Modern growth lack the tradition and subordinate the environment to the logic of the Modern City.

Another experts' identification of conceptions of the contemporary city can be identified as The Anthropopolis, a city of and for the people [2]. The ultimate success of the Anthropopolis city is offered by the satisfaction of human needs in the contemporary and modernized world. It is the Anthropopolis aspect of today's city that has tried to distinguish itself from the paradoxes of the modernized world. Here the city reveals its significant meaning and provides a clear picture of the origins of things; this is called contemporary city's 'authenticity' (Appleyard, D. & Jacobs, A., 1982). The development of the city's authenticity is the city's key answer to the isolation and departure associated with the Modernization.

All of these studies have performed a great effort to suggest the modernized conceptual metaphors of the cities, whether negative or positive, however these metaphors of the cities around the world were suggested by experts and not by the citizens. The current study therefore has the interest to put on the citizens' glasses and analyse the new and old urban image and symbolism through their suggested metaphors. As for the case of the city of Tehran, it is also observed that the Tehran symbols are moving fast to jump on the bandwagon of the global technological revolution. However it is hypothesized that this rapid change is not happening with the same rate in the citizens' cultural thought patterns, for instance citizens look at these modernized symbols in their city as what Marc Augé (Augé, M., 1995), calls Non-places. Augé [Ibid] believes if a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity becomes a non-place.

In this fashion, the question of whether these modernized urban symbols are welcomed by the citizens or not has not been explored thoroughly and answered experimentally. Hence, this study aimed at finding out whether Tehran citizens' cultural thought patterns have changed in line with the modernized urban norms and symbolism or not, trying to figure out why if not and proposing a suitable pattern for their alignment. Hence this study bridged the gap between the modernization of urban symbolism and the modernization of the citizens' conceptualization in the city of Tehran with the help of conceptual metaphor theory [8].

3. Research Question

What are the Tehran citizens' conceptual metaphors toward the two outstanding urban symbols in Tehran, the Azadi Tower and Milad Tower?

Bearing in mind that Azadi Tower is a traditional and memorial symbol while Milad Tower is a symbol of technology and modernity. It was also intended to find out if old and young citizens differed in their conceptual metaphors.

4. Methodology

Participants and Materials



Data were collected from 100 citizens in Tehran in March 2013. Tehran citizens were asked to participate in a small survey answering to two questions and suggest their own metaphors toward the each of the Azadi and Milad Towers in the city of Tehran.

5. Data Analysis and Results: Part A (qualitative analysis)

Here Prototype theory (Lakoff, G., 1987) under the support from Grounded theory (Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A., 1965, 1967) was employed. Cognitive psychologists (Clair, f. St. R. N., 2002) think that people do not categorize their experiences of the world by the traditional logic. Instead humans create their own logics for building categories for things, places, events, and experiences. For example, the category of bird is represented by an ideal bird, which in North America, is the robin. In Australia, it may be the canary and in Brazil, parrot. These ideal examples are called prototypes. Although one would like to believe that these categories refer to the real world, they do not. Categories are phenomenological. They reflect the perceptual structure of the perceiver and what constitutes a prototype is usually culturally defined (Clair, f. St. R. N., 2002).

In Grounded theory (Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A., 1965, 1967) the theory is built at the end of the analysis from the data. Grounded theory involves the process of constant comparison. As Glaser and Strauss [Ibid] put it, by comparing the similar or different features, we can generate new categories. So in this regard, first an attempt should be made to observe salient features, common elements, and similarities among the metaphors until some general conceptual categories representing citizens' beliefs emerged (Turunen P., 2003). This process involved three levels of coding, first was, 'open' coding to assign the features identified from the data, the second was 'axial' coding to identify relationships between the features and third was 'selective' coding to ensure that main available features were associated with an emerging core category. Eventually, a situation of theoretical saturation was attained where no new categories or properties could emerge from the available data. Thus according to the applied analytical methods in this study, grounded theory and prototype theory, the final categories from the citizens' metaphor are represented in the figure below:

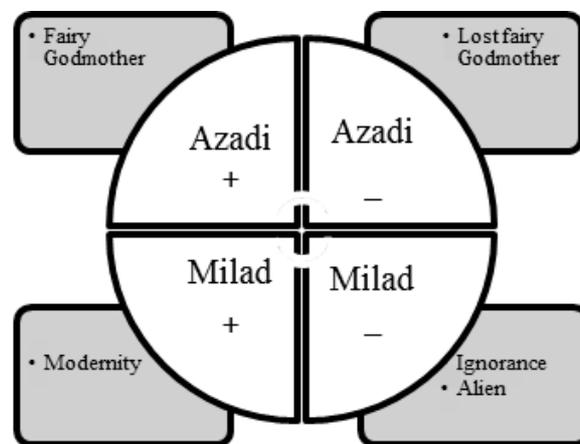


Figure1. Conceptual metaphors driven from data analysis.

According to the figure1, the plus and minus symbols indicated positive and negative metaphors of the citizens toward each of the Azadi and Milad Towers in general. Azadi Tower created a better mental image for citizens because it is unique, there is no similar monument and tower for that neither in Iran nor in any city all over the world, while Milad Tower is a parody of other communications towers in terms of shape and architectural design such as communications towers in Dubai and Toronto. Azadi Tower to those who suggested positive metaphors was a symbol of a female character, a hugging and trustable friend, a strong and old mentor or a patient mother who encourages, comforts and empowers. These

features were categorized under a character called a Fairy Godmother. Azadi Tower to those who suggested negative metaphors was a symbol of a Lost Fairy Godmother who had all of the above features of a Fairy Godmother, but she was lost, extremely missed and craved.

Milad Tower to those who suggested positive metaphors was a symbol of fashion, money, nice appearance and development. From the other hand, Milad Tower to those who suggested negative metaphors was symbols of Alien and Ignorant. These two symbols were classified in a dichotomous status of enemies. Alien is an enemy from outside while Ignorant is an enemy from inside. The prototypical metaphors mentioned in the figure 1 were thus the sum of the features found in the citizens' suggested metaphors.

6. Part B (quantitative analysis)

In the next step (part B of the study), an analysis of percentages, chi-square and P-value was run to investigate which conceptual metaphor was referred to with the most frequency (whether positive or negative) towards the symbols of Azadi and Milad Towers in Tehran by its citizens. Table 1 shows the frequencies in percentage for different metaphors retrieved from figure 1. The Azadi Tower has gained 89% positive conceptual metaphors which were categorized under the Fairy Godmother metaphor and 11% negative conceptual metaphors which were categorized under the Lost Fairy Godmother metaphor. However, Milad Tower has gained 28% positive conceptual metaphors which were categorized under the Modernity metaphor and 40% negative conceptual metaphors which were categorized under the Ignorance and Alien metaphors each of which with the same frequencies. The rest of metaphors for Milad Tower were scattered and with low frequencies so they were not considered significant and thus not included.

From the data available in table 1, two tests of chi square were run to find out whether the differences between positive and negative metaphors for both Azadi and Milad Towers were significant or not. Based on the results, chi square and P-value for Azadi positive metaphors and Azadi negative metaphors indicated that their difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. The chi square for Milad positive metaphors and Milad negative metaphors indicated that their difference is considered to be not statistically significant. These analyses revealed that a vast majority of citizens looked positively at the Azadi because their P-value was extremely significant, however the P-value for Milad Tower was not considered significant, therefore it was revealed that positive and negative perspectives were given same significance.

Crosstab Analysis					
	Tower		Positive	Negative	Total
Group	Azadi	Count	89	11	100
		% within Group	89%	11%	100.0%
	Milad	Count	40	28	68
		% within Group	58.8%	41.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	129	39	168
		% within Group	76.7%	23.2%	100.0%

Table 1. Percentage Analysis Azadi/Milad by Positive/Negative

7. Discussion

In this study the prototypical metaphors driven from citizens' suggested metaphors approved that Tehran citizens, both young and old, showed a clear inclination toward the Azadi Tower which is considered a traditional urban symbol and also a neutral inclination toward Milad Tower, a modernized urban symbol

which was because of not finding a statistically significant relationship between positive and negative metaphors toward this symbol. Thus it was revealed that there could not be found any alignment between the modernization of Tehran urban symbols and Tehran citizens' ways of conceptualizing. In this regard a pattern was offered which was to reconcile modernity to tradition that could work in a Middle Eastern city like Tehran.

With the inspiration from the conceptual metaphor theory [8] the features of both information age related and traditional related urban symbolism were put together to find a pattern for reconciliation. The fairy godmother for Azadi Tower indicated sacredness and spirituality while the ignorance and alien for Milad Tower indicated animosity, there was also the metaphor of modernity for Milad Tower which indicated development and progress. Spirituality and sacredness were in opposition to alien and ignorance. They represented goodness versus evil. Now the main question was raised for designing the pattern that how one can reconcile goodness to evil. The history of religions gave the answer to this question according to all the Abrahamic religions that there is no way of reconciliation between the two. However, symbolizing Milad Tower as modernity here came to help for the reconciliation pattern. A modern fairy godmother was identified as the ideal pattern. The features of modernity metaphor found in the citizens' suggested metaphor are put together with the features of fairy godmother found in the citizens' metaphors. Therefore the suggested reconciliation pattern became a mingled metaphor as a "modern fairy godmother". This metaphor amalgamated symbols of modernity and spirituality, a symbol from the welcomed tradition and culture inside the country amalgamated with a symbol from the welcomed modernity and progress outside of the country. This new conceptual metaphor was found to be in harmony with Spiritual Progressive theory of Lakoff (Lakoff, G., 1995). In fact, Lakoff believes that spiritual progressives have a Nurturant form of religion, which in turn implies that they have mixed science with spirituality.

8. Conclusion

The world in which we live is being updated, and thus the way we act think believe, etc. should be updated as well. The industrial age has become the information age and thus the meaning we attach to the terms, symbols and concepts should change. However these changes should be evolutionary not revolutionary so that individuals gain feeling for the change and welcome it. The challenge remains for policy makers and power handlers to incorporate the information-age mindset into the cultural thought patterns. However, power relations change over time and dominant actors will be replaced by others. Hence it is of significance to mention that what urban citizens think of symbols and rituals is not static and independent of the passing of the time.

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