Social Representations of Istanbul: Socio-Spatial Analysis via Visual and Verbal Techniques

MEHMET KARASU[1], SERCAN KARLIDAĞ[2], GÖKLEM TEKDEMIR[3]

[1] Department of Psychology, Faculty of Letters, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van, Türkiye

[2] Department of Psychology, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Altınbaş University, Istanbul, Türkiye

[3] Department of Psychology, Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University, Istanbul, Türkiye

The aim of this study is to examine how Istanbul is represented visually and verbally adopting the approach of Social Representations. A field study was carried out with 158 undergraduate students in Istanbul. A questionnaire form was administered in the first stage of study including questions about the demographic characteristics of participants, and their metaphors about Istanbul. The drawings as a visual technique were used in the second stage. The results were analyzed by inductive content analysis. The prominent themes in drawings were grouped as 'panorama of Istanbul,' 'problems of Istanbul,' and 'behaviors and appearances of residents in Istanbul.' The results of metaphor analysis revealed the following salient themes: 'contrasts,' 'diversities,' and 'problems.' The social representations of Istanbul are influenced by its socio-cultural diversity, spatial properties, historical background, problems, people's daily activities there.

Keywords: Istanbul studies, social representations, visual technique, metaphor analysis, socio-spatial analysis

Cities are rendered real not by their buildings, shops or streets, but by the people living, imagining, feeling, and experiencing them (Pile, 2005). Therefore, the perceptions of cities are a kind of social reality (Milgram & Jodelet, 1976). Social Representations Theory offers the framework to study the social reality of a city focusing on different perspectives such as urban life, mental cartography, and social and emotional geography (de Alba, 2011).

Several studies have been conducted on how the world's leading cities (e.g., New York, Paris) are mentally represented (Milgram et al., 1972; Milgram & Jodelet, 1976). Transforming and marketing Istanbul as a world city had been the primary urban transformation project of several governments in Türkiye and the city was claimed to be the showcase of Türkiye (Öktem, 2006). Western values and culture were adopted as a model in such projects (Yardımcı, 2007 cited in Alvarez & Yarcan, 2010) while Istanbul remains to be strongly associated with the country's conservative values in terms of its symbolic importance in the city's relationship to Islam and Ottoman identity (Çınar, 2001). Based on this context of contrasts surrounding Istanbul and constant propagation of these contrasts, our aim is to examine how Istanbul is represented visually and verbally, adopting the approach of Social Representations Theory.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

Social representations are shared values, beliefs, opinions, images, concepts, practices, meanings that provide social order and mediums of communication (Moscovici, 1973). "The purpose of social representations is to make something unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar" (Moscovici, 2000, p. 37). Abric (1993) suggests that social representations are composed by two components: the central system and the peripheral system. The central system links to collective memory and the history of the group, while the peripheral system allows the integration of individual experiences and past histories. The former system ensures the homogeneity of the group, while the latter enables the heterogeneity of the group. Thus, the central system is stable and not very sensitive to the immediate context, while the peripheral system is flexible and sensitive to the immediate context.

The formation of social representations consists of two processes: objectification and anchoring. Objectification is a mechanism by which a socially shared concept is transformed into a relatively concrete image and metaphor (Moscovici, 1984). Anchoring is a stage that completes the objectification process. In this process, the new 'thing' or object is positioned within the network of existing meanings and relationships (i.e., individual and group thought system) (Rateau et al., 2012). For example, AIDS was accounted for in terms of venereal

diseases like syphilis or on a religious basis as God's punishment when it was first acknowledged (Markova & Wilkie, 1987). Thus, a new object is given meaning through the process of anchoring, and it is given its structure through the process of objectification. The objectification process is realized by means of figures of speech such as metaphors (Arruda, 2015). Creating and utilizing metaphors increases familiarity with the new object (Wagner et al., 1995). Although not all metaphors are instances of objectification and vice versa, the authors claim that some objectification processes might be analyzed in terms of metaphorical reference.

There are several classical studies about representations of cities. The studies indicated that the touristic and central aspects of cities were emphasized by the participants. For example, in the study of representations of Paris, the participants referred to the symbols of the city with high touristic value such as the Seine River, Triumphal Arch of the Star, and Eiffel Tower most frequently (Milgram & Jodelet, 1976). In another classic study by Milgram and his colleagues (Milgram et al., 1972), it was showed that of the five main boroughs (Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island) of New York City, Manhattan was the best known. Regardless of where the New Yorkers lived in the city, Manhattan was overwhelmingly prominent on the city's cognitive map. In a study examining the representations of Tripoli, which is the capital of Lebanon, the participants emphasized central sections or neighborhoods of the city such as the Tell, the Qubbah, Abu Samra, and the Mina most frequently, rather than individual buildings and landmarks (Gulick, 1963).

We aim to examine how Istanbul is represented visually and verbally adopting the approach of social representations. Our goal is to determine the social representations of Istanbul and to see how these representations are related to the city's present structure and historical significance. Through this research, we will be able to demonstrate the synergistic application of visual and verbal techniques in the study of social representations, as well as present a holistic view of social and personal representations of Istanbul.

METHOD

Participants

The data was collected from different universities in Istanbul, Türkiye in 2019 using convenience sampling. These universities are public and private universities in Istanbul. Istanbul University is a public university with the oldest psychology department in the country, while the others are private institutions with relatively young psychology departments. Based on the adoption of convenience sampling in the study, relative heterogeneity in the data (i.e.,

data richness/diversity) was targeted. Therefore, these public (50 participants from Istanbul University) or private institutions (71 participants from Altınbaş University, and 37 participants from Arel University) were preferred when collecting the data.

The sample consisted of 158 participants (140 females, 18 males) who study psychology. The participants are second ($n = 15$), third ($n = 43$) and fourth year undergraduate students ($n = 98$). The age range was between 20 and 52 ($M = 22.68$; $SD = 2.82$). The average years of residence of the participants in the city is 13.64 years ($SD = 9.13$) ranging from 1 to 45 years ($Median = 19.50$). The two extreme values (1 and 45) are shared by only two participants. 25.2% of the participants' families are natives of Istanbul, 37.4% of them have emigrated to Istanbul and 37.4% of them live outside Istanbul.

Procedure

The use of multiple techniques for determining social representations of phenomena is recommended (Farr, 1993; Sotirakopoulou & Breakwell, 1992). Thus, we chose to use drawings and metaphors as techniques in our study. Using these techniques enabled us to trace the social representations through visualization and verbalization: drawings functioned as a visualization tool, and metaphor functioned as a verbalization tool in this study.

Drawing Technique

Drawings such as cognitive or mental maps do not only convey the physical properties of space. They reflect complex experiences, representations, and space memories in relation to people's interaction with the city (de Alba et al., 2020). They project urban experience through drawing in which the social representations of urban spaces are displayed geographically and figuratively (de Alba, 2011; de Alba & Dargentas, 2015). They also include the individuals' experiences, expectations, subjective evaluations, and meanings about the space (Göregenli, 2015). Drawings provide the means to examine the social representations of space visually.

The visualization techniques used in social representations studies consist of maps to be drawn by participants. The participants are asked to imagine a city or a certain region in a city and to draw images, symbols, anything that is of importance for them reflecting their own interaction with the environment (Arruda, 2015). What a person chooses to include in one's drawing of a city (whether it is a monument or a street), and the ways in which these elements are located in the drawing reflect an output of visual language (de Alba & Dargentas, 2015).

Metaphor Analysis

Metaphor analysis highlights human cognitive structure (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphor analysis, as an approach produced in the field of cognitive linguistics, refers to the expression of thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are analogies created by moving a schema (or expression) to another schema (Moser, 2000). Metaphors contribute to communication processes and decision-making, as well as understanding and interpreting the social and physical world. Metaphors are also tools that influence our cognition (Ottati et. al, 1999).

Metaphor studies in psychology are mostly conducted in the fields of cognitive psychology and clinical psychology, however, metaphor studies are easily used in social psychological studies on situation, context and culture (Moser, 2000). Imagining a city relies on metaphors (i.e., figurative expressions or analogies) and many metaphors allow us to understand the city with its positive aspects reflecting stimulation and emancipation (e.g., "theme park," "theatre") and negative aspects (e.g., "labyrinth," "nightmare") (Knox & Pinch, 2010). Metaphors help to reach holistic representations (Schnotz, 1988 as cited in Moser, 2000). Metaphors are also powerful cognitive tools in revealing and conveying feelings about any phenomenon (Ortony & Fainsilber, 1989), Therefore, metaphors can help to understand the affective outcomes of Istanbul on people.

The study was conducted in an anonymized manner. The study was conducted in two stages. A questionnaire form was used in the first stage, including questions about the demographic characteristics of participants (e.g., gender, age, grade and duration of living in Istanbul) and their metaphors about Istanbul. Metaphors on Istanbul were collected by using the prompt, "Istanbul is like ... because ...". The drawing technique was used in the second stage. The participants were asked to "think about Istanbul and transfer the images in your mind on blank paper." Both steps took an average of 40 minutes in total.

Analysis

Data were analyzed by inductive content analysis using MAXQDA 18. Inductive open coding allows the construction of new categories and concepts by discovering various commonalities in data (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Coding was carried out by the first and second authors and independently reviewed by the third author. Disagreements regarding the coding were discussed, and the codes were finalized.

In the first stage of coding, initial codes were created by evaluating participants' responses and each component of drawings. Afterward, categories were developed by combining clustering the codes. In the last stage, the categories were grouped into themes.

Some participants did not add any written explanations to their drawings, while others added words (e.g., Bosphorus Bridge, crowd) and sentences (e.g., people and children trapped in high-rise buildings). The coding process was based on the drawings and expressions of the participants.

RESULTS

Analysis of Drawings

The three most frequently expressed themes in drawings were grouped as "panorama of Istanbul" (50.59%), "problems of Istanbul" (36.44%), and "behaviors and appearances of residents in Istanbul" (5.90%), indicating that Istanbul is conceived of as a multifaceted city. These results highlight the aesthetic aspects of the city along with its challenges and behavioral aspects of urban life. Table 1 shows the themes determined in the drawings about Istanbul.

Table 1

Frequency of Themes in Drawings

Name of elements		f	%
Panorama of Istanbul			
Istanbul's Touristic Aspects		271	35.52
Istanbul's Public Spaces		38	4.98
Istanbul's Neighborhoods		39	5.11
Other Elements		38	4.98
	Subtotal	386	50.59
Problems of Istanbul		278	36.44
Behaviors and Appearances of Residents in Istanbul		45	5.90
Socio-Political Topics (e.g., "everything will be fine" slogan against opponent)		14	1.83
Positive Affections toward Istanbul (e.g., happiness, peace)		10	1.31
Other (e.g., Nazım Hikmet, a Turkish poet, having picnics)		30	3.93
	Total	763	100

Note: Table 1 presents the frequency (f) and percentage (%) of drawing themes.

Istanbul's panorama consists of Istanbul's touristic aspects (e.g., Bosphorus, Maiden's Tower), Istanbul's public spaces (e.g., shopping centers, parks), Istanbul's neighborhoods (e.g., Karaköy, Taksim), and other items (e.g., public transport vehicles, new airport "Istanbul Airport"). This theme reveals various aspects of the city ranging from its attractive sites for tourists, regions filled with choices for social life to its characteristics as a modern city.

An example of a drawing presenting Istanbul's panorama is presented below (Figure 1). The historical Galata Tower (formerly an observation tower), one of the most prominent structures presented within the silhouette of Istanbul, is located at the center of the drawing. Behind the Galata Tower, the buildings of the city stretch from one end to the other. The Marmara Sea, a bridge, and other objects are presented in front of the tower. The drawing reflects images used in many postcards, representing the silhouette of Istanbul.

Figure 1

Panorama of Istanbul

Note: Figure 1 presents the panorama of Istanbul featuring a 23-year-old female, currently in her 4th year at Istanbul University, and having lived in Istanbul for 3 years.

The theme of *Istanbul's problems* includes topics such as environmental conditions, and matters related to transportation and population density. These problems indicate the challenges faced by its residents experiencing the city daily. Instead of focusing on aesthetic aspects of the city, emphasizing the problems of the city while visualizing Istanbul alludes to the idea that Istanbul is conceptualized just like a living organism, beautiful on the outside yet challenging

when it comes to interacting with it. An example of a drawing representing *Istanbul's problems* is presented below (Figure 2). The participant highlights *Istanbul's problems* as high rise and dense buildings, narrow streets, and heavy traffic in her drawing. Her drawings demonstrate her awareness of the city's problems as a resident in Istanbul.

Figure 2

Problems of Istanbul

Note: Figure 2 presents the problems of Istanbul featuring a 22-year-old female, currently in her 3rd year at Altınbaş University, and having lived in Istanbul for 22 years. The expression 'High rise and dense buildings, narrow streets and traffic problem' is the English translation of the Turkish phrase depicted in the figure.

While the theme, *behaviors and appearances of residents* in Istanbul describe the daily urban behaviors and activities of people such as fishing and walking represented in this group of maps, the *socio-political topics* include the reflections of current socio-political developments in Türkiye since the data of our study was collected during the period of the Istanbul mayoral election. The current Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, used the slogan "everything will be fine" in this election against his opponent. In some of the drawings, we detected this slogan as well as political elements, including protests against the ruling party and criticism of land rent. Considering that the Istanbul mayoral elections have affected Türkiye's mainstream political agenda over time, it is no surprise that such aspects become salient.
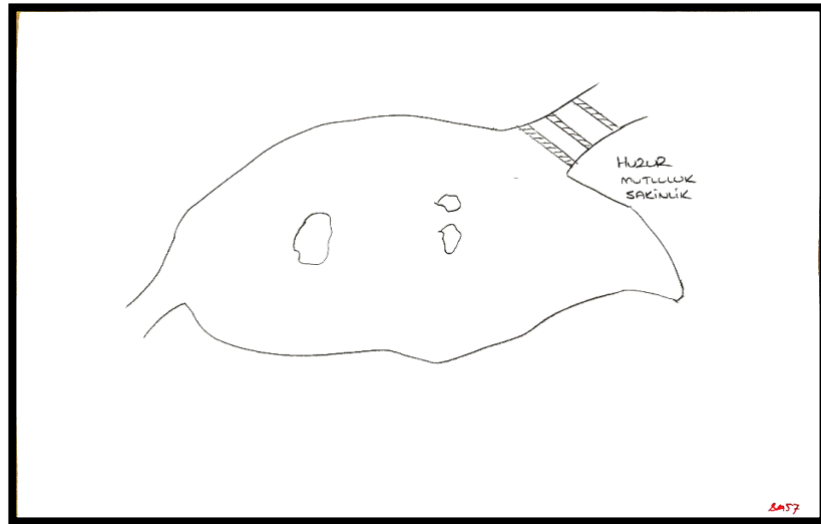
The theme of *positive affections toward Istanbul* indicates positive emotions, and feelings evoked by the city. For example, a participant drew a map of Istanbul positioning herself as an individual surrounded by favorable sides of living in this city in terms of positive affections such as peace, happiness, and serenity (Figure 3). She drew a topographical image

of Istanbul around the Marmara Sea, as a kind of sketch, on her drawing, and added her affections about Istanbul to the part that connects Asia and Europe. This clearly demonstrates how a socio-spatial object may be associated with affections.

Figure 3

Positive Affections toward Istanbul

Note: Figure 3 presents the positive affections toward Istanbul featuring a 26-year-old female, currently in her 4th year at Altınbaş University, and having lived in Istanbul for 26 years. The expression 'Peace, Happiness, Serenity' is the English translation of the Turkish phrase depicted in the figure.

The drawings of Istanbul provide an understanding of how certain aspects or features of Istanbul are prioritized and chosen as landmarks to represent the city. The focus of drawings is based on emphasizing the immediate context dissected into parts relevant to the city itself as well as the individual as a resident (e.g., social life in Istanbul, current socio-political reflections, over-population, historical and well-known buildings and regions) rather than a more holistic representation. The drawings reveal physical and social characteristics of the city that are interpreted as rich and hybrid, accompanied by personal experiences.

Analysis of Metaphors

The most frequently expressed themes in metaphors of Istanbul[1] were grouped as "contrasts" (38.85%), "diversities" (17.99%), "problems" (17.99%), "opportunities" (6.48%), and "beauties" (5.76%). Participants' metaphors of Istanbul are presented in Table 2.

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[1] 19 statements (e.g., hard city, complicated city, beautiful and ugly city) were not analyzed as they were not metaphors.

Table 2

Frequency of Metaphors

Name of elements	f	%
Contrasts (e.g., "love-hate relationship," "Yin and yang")	54	38.85
Diversities (e.g., "rainbow," "culture soup")	25	17.99
Problems (e.g., "congested metrobuses," "exam")	25	17.99
Opportunities (e.g., "light," "mirror")	9	6.48
Beauties (e.g., "fairy tale," "masterpiece")	8	5.76
Belongingness (e.g., "home," "family")	4	2.87
"Ball of Yarn," "Labyrinth" (Reducing human agency)	2	1.43
"Dark Room," "Book" (Uncertain city)	2	1.43
"Women / love"	1	0.72
"Guest House"	1	0.72
"Battleground"	1	0.72
"Beautiful Woman" (Mysterious)	1	0.72
"Couch Grass" (Indispensableness)	1	0.72
"Painting" (Relativity)	1	0.72
"Matryoshka Doll" (Potential to be discovered)	1	0.72
"Summary of Türkiye" (Inclusive)	1	0.72
"A Big Casino"	1	0.72
"Cat" (Need for care)	1	0.72
Total	139	100

Note: Table 2 presents the frequency (f) and percentage (%) of metaphors.

The metaphor of *contrasts* reveals the contrasting affections the city evokes in people and a critique of the unequal or unfair living conditions of Istanbul. The theme emphasizes a juxtaposition of the positive and negative qualities of Istanbul. Two examples of this theme are presented below.

> *Istanbul is like a love-hate relationship because it represents love when you think of its beautiful features and history, while it represents hate when you think of its traffic, chaos, and overcrowding.*
>
> Female, 22 years old, Altınbaş University, 4th grade, 16 years in Istanbul

Istanbul is like Yin-Yang because some parts of Istanbul are completely poor and have negative conditions, while some regions of it have positive conditions.

Female, 21 years old, Istanbul University, 4th grade, 21 years in Istanbul

Diversities as the second group of metaphors indicate that many differences including people, cultural products (e.g., tastes, languages) may coexist in Istanbul. These metaphors are about the heterogeneous characteristics of the city. The theme of *contrasts* implies a kind of discomfort created by conflicting aspects of the city, while the theme of *diversities* offers a positive description of the city. The participants in this category attribute positive meanings to heterogeneous characteristics of the city. The differences and diversity are put forth as the ornaments of the city. Two examples for this theme are presented below.

Istanbul is like a rainbow because it has a wide variety of people, cultures, tastes, languages and religions. All of them are beautiful together, each of them is also beautiful.

Female, 24 years old, Arel University, 4th grade, 24 years in Istanbul

Istanbul is like a culture soup because the city has hosted many civilizations and is in a position to reflect the interaction of various cultures including people of many religions, languages and races.

Female, 22 years old, Altınbaş University, 3rd grade, 22 years in Istanbul

The theme of *problems* consists of metaphors that indicate problems related to urban life in Istanbul including, over-population, expensiveness and pollution. Compared to the *diversities* theme, this category alludes to the unappealing aspects of the city. The theme of *diversities* is accompanied by pleasant feelings, while the theme of *problems* calls for uncomfortable and negative feelings. In the first two themes (i.e., *contrasts* and *diversities*), the general structure and appearance of the city are emphasized more, while the negative effects related to the human factor in the city are highlighted in this theme. Two examples for this theme are presented below.

Istanbul is like an open prison because it contains multistorey buildings, crowded and smelly public transportation vehicles, uninterrupted noise, endless traffic, insufficient green spaces and hectic life.

Female, 22 years old, Arel University, 4th grade, 5 years in Istanbul

Istanbul is like an exam because for example, you can waste too much time on the stairs or in the elevator, be late for your destination because of the city crowd and people's bad manners, and you maybe fight with people every day, and you can't know what will happen to you when you stand up for your rights.

Female, 22 years old, Istanbul University, 4th grade, 4 years in Istanbul

Opportunities are metaphors that point to the aspects of Istanbul providing suitable conditions and situations for its residents to develop themselves. Contrary to the theme of *problems*, this theme indicates that the city opens new doors to its residents. If people become aware of these opportunities and take advantage of these opportunities, they can maximize their own benefits. However, individuals must put in the effort and have enough endurance in order to benefit from such opportunities. In this sense, although Istanbul is presented as a city of opportunities, the representation of Istanbul as a city of contrasts is again implied in terms offering opportunities while making them hard to reach. Two examples of a metaphor for this theme are presented below.

Istanbul is like a light because it is in your hands to sink or exit this city. If you improve yourself, improve your intellectual level, Istanbul will be a light for you. This city reflects its light, its brilliance to you. But if you can't, Istanbul offers you the opposite life.

Female, 25 years old, Arel University, 4th grade, 6 years in Istanbul

Istanbul is like a mirror because you discover your potential and who you are in this city. Istanbul reflects what you want to be and what you can be. It is the city of opportunities. It is a love for those whose battery will not run out.

Female, 24 years old, Arel University, 4th grade, 6 years in Istanbul

Metaphors regarding *beauties* are about the historical and natural beauties (e.g., Topkapı Palace, Hagia Sophia, Marmara Sea, islands) of Istanbul. The participants in this group see Istanbul as unique and impressive claiming that these beauties can transport people to a different time and space. This theme is similar to the drawings where Istanbul's panoramic aspects were put forth. This implies that Istanbul as a city is perceived primarily on an aesthetic level emphasizing its uniqueness. However, as we see in the second example below the representation of Istanbul as a city of *contrasts* is mentioned again. The analogy of a masterpiece is used when it comes to the city's face value, yet the living conditions the city offers for its residents are not compatible with that image.

Istanbul is like a fairy tale because this city has thousands of years of history. Thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of people have lived in this city. Each one has a different story. All the buildings we see have a story. Some are dark and some are sunny, just like a fairy tale. This city hosted many civilizations from Byzantium to Ottoman and many more.
Female, 25 years old, Arel University, 4th grade, 7 years in Istanbul

Istanbul is like a masterpiece because it is rich in historical artifacts and natural beauties. If only Istanbul had no traffic!
Female, 22 years old, Istanbul University, 4th grade, 22 years in Istanbul

When metaphors of Istanbul are evaluated as a whole, these metaphors reveal how people relate to the city and what they pick and choose to construct an understanding about the city. They select and prioritize what is to be included in the texture of the city and modify its texture in line with people-based interactions with the city as agents, with a higher category classification. The texture of the city is furnished with themes of *contrasts, diversities,* and *beauties* in relation to the overall urban structure of Istanbul. The representations of people-based interactions reify the city by clarifying the *problems* and *opportunities* it offers to its residents.

The themes with higher frequencies (e.g., *panorama of Istanbul* or *contrasts* metaphors) are central representations and those with lower frequencies (e.g., "other" theme or "cat" metaphor) are peripheral representations in both tables. The drawings and metaphors highlighting facets such as the *problems* and *beauties of Istanbul* may be regarded as robust

central representations of the city. These are relatively less susceptible to immediate context. This implies that they maintain a lasting relevance and evoke a profound resonance in encapsulating the city.

It is noticeable that the drawings emphasize the spatial and social aspects of Istanbul on a sensory and perceptual level, while the metaphors construct Istanbul as an entity, a living organism interacting with its residents offering conflicting and diverse conditions for daily experiences on a cognitive and affective level. Overall, the results of the analysis indicate that Istanbul is a modern city with affordances and obstacles surrounded and decorated by fascinating historical and natural beauties.

DISCUSSION

In this study, our aim was to examine how Istanbul is represented visually and verbally, adopting the theoretical approach based on Social Representations Theory. This is a relevant aim because the theory provides an apt framework for presenting a comprehensive and holistic perspective of Istanbul, effectively integrating visual and verbal techniques through a functional approach. The results show that Istanbul's representations converge on collectively shared symbols of the city (e.g., a *panorama of Istanbul* including historical and touristic aspects) as well as on individuals' actual experiences there (e.g., daily activities including fishing, walking), with an emphasis on difficult living conditions.

Social representations contribute to maintaining both the homogeneity of the collective memory of a city, and also heterogeneity by enabling integration of individual experiences of its residents (Abric, 1993). In our study, Istanbul was constructed as a multifaceted city of symbolic buildings and regions, shared and agreed upon by all, as well as a city of urban life with diverse problems and opportunities. This is because Istanbul's urban life is characterized by continuous change, contradictions and incompleteness (Yurekli & Inceoglu, 2011). In addition to these shared (social) representations, it is also possible to mention some individualized representations. The themes with lower frequencies in both tables showing the results of the analysis of drawings and metaphors can be evaluated as such. The representation of Istanbul with the Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet or the representation of Istanbul as a cat in need of care are examples of personalized representations. Such representations, in terms of their uniqueness, can serve to personalize the relationship between the city and its inhabitants. In return, it can be argued that these representations might be less resistant to change and less transferable than social representations. This is because social representations are shared by

others and constantly transmitted through communication channels, while personal representations might be idiosyncratic.

Our results indicated that the participants' drawings provide more detailed information about the 'face value' (i.e., more fragmented or atomistic perception) of the city, while the findings of the metaphor analysis provide more detailed information about the "big picture" (i.e., more holistic perception-coexistence of the good and the bad) of Istanbul. The analysis of drawings revealed the participants' orientation toward focusing on components of the immediate context such as historical and well-known buildings and regions, behaviors and appearances of residents, and current socio-political topics when they were asked to visualize the city. However, the results of the metaphor analysis indicated more holistic knowledge about the city, including its essence characterized by *contrasts* and *diversities* embedded in apparent and accessible characteristics.

Collecting and analyzing the drawings of the city allowed us to obtain more detailed information about interactions between the participants and the city, their personal experiences and how they perceive their physical and social conditions as agents (Arruda, 2014, 2015). This suggests that drawing techniques are convenient tools to understand the effects of the immediate context. In line with that claim, in our study, the effect of the Istanbul mayoral election was evidenced in some of the drawings. The use of metaphors, however, enabled the participants to construct and manifest a holistic representation of Istanbul beyond the immediate context. They expressed both the components constituting the texture of the city and consequences of people's interactions with these components. This may be related to the fact that metaphors are more suitable for abstraction because analogies make it easier to move from one representation to another (Moser, 2000).

News, photographs, videos and drawings reflecting uniqueness, centrality and a panoramic view of Istanbul had been circulating in mainstream media and on social media platforms. We think that repeated exposure to such common contents about the city through daily interactions and activities contributes to shaping representations of Istanbul. For example, the European Union chooses the European Capital of Culture every year. Istanbul was selected to be the 2010 European Capital of Culture. During that period, Istanbul was presented as a 'City of the Four Elements' including earth, air, water, and fire. City promotion plan was based on the idea that each element reflected one of the four seasons. 'Earth' (1 January-20 March) symbolized Istanbul's historical and cultural heritage. 'Air' (21 March-21 June) implied the city's spiritual spaces and different belief systems. 'Water' (22 June-22 September) referred to

the Bosporus and its major waterways, and 'Fire' (23 September-31 December) indicated the orienting to the future through sustainable urban renewal and cultural assets. Indeed, when the drawings related to the theme of *panorama of Istanbul* and the metaphors regarding *beauties* are examined, it is seen that these drawings and metaphors were very similar to these contents used and circulated in that process (Istanbul ECOC 2010 Initiative, 2005 as cited Akçakaya, 2008). Such a correspondence indicates an image of Istanbul as a touristic city (see Milgram & Jodelet, 1976). Considering that social representations are formed in the complexity of everyday discussions and communications within a social and spatial context (Moscovici, 1984), the impact of the promotion campaign and its contents on participants' social representations of Istanbul is clear in our study.

Our results also show that Istanbul is represented on a dimension of affects. This dimension becomes more salient in participants' drawings compared to their metaphors. More precisely, positive affects in relation to Istanbul were more clearly expressed in the drawings. In the metaphors of Istanbul, on the other hand, affective evaluations were expressed more indirectly. For example, affective evaluations of Istanbul were presented as 'criticisms' in the theme of *contrasts,* as 'positive meanings' in the theme of *diversities*, and as 'uncomfortable feelings' in the theme of *Istanbul's problems*. These themes support the idea that metaphors are appropriate tools for emotions (Ortony & Fainsilber, 1989). In addition, these affective aspects mentioned in these representations of Istanbul may be considered as a "thread that weaves these representations" (Arruda, 2014, p. 18). Such aspects not only help to understand the meaning of Istanbul comprehensively and in-depth but may also contribute to the process of appropriation of the city by its residents (Cruz & Pol, 2005). Considering the fact that affects contribute to the formation of spatial cognition and are part of the assessment of spaces (Hanyu, 1993; Russell & Lanius, 1984), the affective aspects of Istanbul can facilitate the formation of an urban identity by paving the way for constructing and interpreting personal experiences with the city (Lalli, 1992).

The verbal and visual representations of Istanbul were similar in terms of emphasizing Istanbul's historical and natural beauties accompanied by its problematic issues. These contradictory aspects were presented as the two sides of the same coin: the problematic city causing frustrations and a city evoking positive affections. Istanbul is a mega-city that presents many challenges to its residents but also affords strong ties for them. However, it should be emphasized that the pattern of the *problems of Istanbul* indicate that the city is becoming unbearable for its residents. Indeed, as can be seen from the drawings and metaphors of the

participants on the problems about the city, warning bells have started ringing for Istanbul for a while, with its over-population and heavy traffic, unequal living conditions, and continually decreasing green spaces. Therefore, we think that the expressions and drawings of our participants on this issue are crucial signals for policymakers.

One of the most important contributions of this study to the scientific literature is that it shows how to use visual and verbal techniques together when exploring social representations. It also emphasizes that these techniques have their advantages in revealing different aspects of social representations. Secondly, with the results highlighted above, this study made concrete contributions to the development of the social representations approach, especially its imaginary aspects. Thirdly, with these methodological and theoretical contributions, this study presents a holistic picture of the collective and personal representations of Istanbul which includes the shared symbols of the city, its problems, opportunities, contradictions, and the subjectivities and individualities of the participants.

In relation to the limitations of this study, our sample is limited and reflects specific demographic characteristics (i.e., undergraduate students, mostly women). The number of female students is always higher than male students in psychology departments in Türkiye. Therefore, our study can be framed as 'women's representations of Istanbul.' However, when compared to the drawings and metaphors of a small number of male participants, it is noticeable that there are no salient differences between men and women in terms of social representations of Istanbul. This may be related both to the fact that the instruction of our study consisted of a very general statement (i.e., it does not promote gendering) and to the fact that the city of Istanbul contains variations in every respect. In other words, Istanbul contains so much *diversity, contrasts* and *problems* that the participants seem to emphasize this common ground in their social representations of Istanbul, regardless of gender. On the other hand, if our study had been designed to explore the role of gender differences in social representations, we would undoubtedly have encountered examples in which we could have captured the traces of these differences. Therefore, future studies may focus on this issue. In addition, long-term residents of the city might have drawn the city with more accuracy including more spatial details and different focal points than short-term residents since they would have seen and experienced different parts of the city (Beck & Wood, 1976). In this respect, it would be useful to consider duration of residency as well as possible gender differences in future studies examining social representations of urban environments.

When the results are considered as a whole, the themes and elements reported as representative of Istanbul are the socio-spatial products of this city as a physical and social reality. These products are linked to personal and collective experiences about the city including its socio-cultural diversity, spatial properties, historical background, residents' problems, and their daily experiences. Thus, the city of Istanbul exists with its complex and contrasting qualities and characteristics in people's minds.

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MEHMET KARASU is an assistant of professor of social psychology at the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University. His research interests include social representations, human-time-space relations, and peace psychology. E-mail: karasumehmet@yyu.edu.tr

SERCAN KARLIDAĞ is a research assistant at the Altınbaş University Within the discipline of social psychology, identity and intergroup relations and social representations are among his research/interest areas. He is a member of the Association of Psychologists for Social Solidarity (TODAP) and the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP). E-mail: sercan.karlidag@altinbas.edu.tr

GÖKLEM TEKDEMİR is an associate professor of psychology at the Istanbul University. Her areas of expertise are language-based social psychology, social constructivism, qualitative methods used in psychology, speech as social action, and linguistic strategies. She has published extensively on social psychological topics (e.g., social identity, group membership, gender roles) via qualitative methods. E-mail: tekdemir@istanbul.edu.tr