

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to position a multi-disciplinary logic of inquiry which combines the interpretive and structuralist paradigms in qualitative research as well as reviewing a methodological framework that incorporates both semiotics and hermeneutics as a 'pluralist' approach to interpret the social world. This proposed methodological framework is considered as an important contribution as it introduces new ways of looking at buildings in particular to mosque's architectural attributes as a system of 'sign' as well as proposing various indicators in order to investigate this matter in depth. This study builds upon the theories and concepts outlined by Saussure on sign relations, Barthes on levels of signification and Gottdiener on reading the material culture as reliable ways for analysing and understanding the religious building. Furthermore, this paper also introduces a new approach in comprehending the meaning of the built form that depends on the building patron's situation. This research builds upon concepts outlined by Wallace and Barber in their model of leadership to develop a new methodological framework in order to understand the patron's ideological intentions. This framework of inquiry is beneficial namely for architectural researchers and social scientists as it enables the analysis of the built environment from three aspects of concern. Firstly, reveals the symbolic meaning embedded in the design of the built form and their mundane settings. Second, elucidates on the structural relationship that exists between the built form and the human culture. Thirdly, uncovers the patron's intentions and associated actions during the creation of the built form. As a result, specific interpretations of meaning of the socialphysical phenomenon were developed in narrative form and holistic fashion. As a sample of discussion, states mosque were used as a case study to show how its symbolic and representational meaning are portrayed in denotative and connotative manner. This includes descriptions on all possible influencing codes and conventions that reveal the rules explaining how the Muslim cultures and societies organise their ideologies, to give meaning and make sense of the state mosque design. This paper offers new insights which not only add to knowledge by widening and strengthening the understanding of new methodological approach to understand the meaning of built form and their attributes, but also is valuable for range of associated fields including architectural semiotics and non verbal communication. This is because this paper reveals deep understandings of the built form and material environment - (state mosque) operating as a 'sign' in the Muslim cultural and social context.