
A REVIEW OF PLACE, URBAN AND LANDSCAPE IDENTITY: KEY CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES OF STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Different types of identity exist and have been studied over time. Common types of identity within the spatial environment include place, urban and landscape identity. Common among these types of identities is the ability of a given place to be unique and distinct as to distinguish it from the other. This paper covers a desk review to collect and classify key concepts on the different types of identity, namely place-urban-landscape identity and the different research designs that have been used in understanding them. This paper postulates that a city's uniqueness and distinctiveness lie in its landscape identity and should not be neglected. The paper explores the different types of spatial identities in terms of their key concepts and the research methods used in understanding them. The need for a unified definition for landscape identity has been put forward by several landscape studies and has been addressed by a definition formulated in this study. Urban landscape identity is adopted in this study as the overall term that includes other identities and is defined in this study as the resident's perception of the special features that help them to differentiate between places creating images that they can recognize. This study first identifies and illustrates the different types of identities, secondly the spatial scales within which the different identities are found the lastly develops the conceptual framework for landscape identity formation that results from the three common aspects of physical, functions/activities and lastly meaning aspect that cut across for all the types of identity. The review concludes that all the types of identity have common aspects in their formation and only vary at the different scales in which they act and are considered. The paper calls for a unified definition for landscape identity as an emerging concept across spatial disciplines.

Keywords: Place identity, Urban identity, Landscape identity, Urban landscape identity, Urban landscape studies, Spatial studies



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1. INTRODUCTION

Various types of identity have been classified throughout time. The types include place, urban, regional, national, cultural, personal, community and landscape identity. All these identities have been proved to contribute to the identity of a local place. Although, there seems to be difficulty differentiating between these terms (Shao et al. 2020; Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011). All these identity terms have been introduced at different physical scales within landscape studies but their boundaries are not clarified (Shao et al., 2020). Concerning the relationship of the different identities, Shao et al. (2020) propound that landscape identity consists of existential identity and spatial identity. These comprise place identity and attachment, personal identity, cultural identity. All these contribute to sense of place through their physical attributes, human attachment, memory interaction and social interaction (Shao et al., 2020).

With world emerging trends in globalization, cities are striving to be unique and distinctive and to attract and promote world trade and tourism and as such city identity has become of great importance. In accordance, this study postulates that a city's uniqueness and distinctiveness lie in its landscape identity and should not be neglected. Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) opine that identity is a concept considered in various facets. This has implications on the way different concerned people are considered. Several terms with overlapping components have been used by different researchers. These include place-identity, urban identity and, recently, landscape identity. This paper aims to elaborate on the various types of identities in terms of the major aspects in their formation and the various possible research designs that have been used in other studies to get an understanding of their key concepts. The paper culminates into a conceptual framework after adopting a unifying definition for landscape identity.

The rest of the paper is organized into sections that first considers the different types of spatial identities that culminates into a definition formulated for urban landscape identity in this study and a resultant conceptual framework in its formation. The study then considers the possible research designs that have been used in other studies to understand the different types of spatial identities. The paper then considers conclusion and recommendations at the end based on the discussions of the key concepts and methods of research discussed in previous sections.

2. TYPES OF SPATIAL IDENTITIES

2.1 Place Identity

Existing literature on place identity has been propounded by several studies among them Speller (2000) on place as a space for interaction and the meanings associated with it, Norberg-Schulz (1979) on the spirit of place "genius loci", Hauge (2007) on interaction of people and place that is based on environment and influences identity. Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) posit that place identity is associated with a smaller area within a given landscape that refers to the uniqueness and striking objects that can easily be recognized that exist within a place. Relph (1976) focused on identity of the people of and with a given place. Identity of a place refers to "persistent sameness and unity which allows that place to be differentiated from others. Place identity is described by Relph in terms of three interrelated components: physical settings then activities, situations and events and lastly the individual and collective society meanings.

Stedman (2003) questioned whether landscape characteristics contributed to a sense of place. Physical landscapes due to some characteristics can cause enabling or constraining of the experiences that generate

meanings among the people with the places they interact in (Stedman, 2003). Recently, Ziyae (2018) studied the components of place identity within the city and the role of each urban element in describing place identity. The author assessed identity in terms of forms, functions that illustrate activities and lastly semantics. Semantics includes various meanings and symbols attached to various elements. Components of the landscape include first the natural forms, then man-made forms and lastly the links.

2.2 Urban Identity

Urban identity is another term that is often found in the literature and is mainly employed by Geography and built environment disciplines. The attributes pointed out to constitute urban identity are, however similar to those of landscape identity in terms of meanings, memories from spatial, social, cultural and economic dimensions. Existing literature on place identity has been propounded by several studies among them Ujang (2012) and Kaymaz (2013) that stressed the how important and necessary the identity in urban spaces was and that it was undeniable due to their extensive use by citizens. According to Okesli and Gurcinar (2012), urban identity can be broken down into several sub-types that include first, environmental identity in terms of natural attributes and artificial attributes and secondly, social identity in terms of socio-cultural identity, socio-economic identity and psychological identity. Socio-cultural identity is in terms of historical characteristics, demographical characteristics and cultural characteristics.

Urban identity is similar to identity of a place according to Relph (1976) and as consists of three components that are inter-related. This include *physical features* that characterize the appearances of different places, *observable activities* and *functions* that are carried out by the people within these places and lastly *meanings* or symbols that are associated by the people within these places. This definition is also similar to urban identity as propounded by Okesli and Gurcinar (2012). Oktay and Bala (2015) posit that how the visual forms, as part of the physical environment are perceived highly affects how people make use of the city. They point out that the elements that organize a city are the “district” and the “public domain” which have the highest significance on the urban identity. According to these authors the relationship between buildings and urban spaces is vital component that should be analyzed as part of urban identity of a city (Oktay and Bala, 2015). Ziyae (2018); Cheshmehzangi (2015, 2012); Okesli and Gurcinar (2012) and Relph (1976). Beyhan and Gurkan (2015) posit that urban identity is formed by elements in both the *natural and artificial environments*. Natural elements include geographical features, flora, climate and topography. Artificial environment comprise buildings, monumental structures, paths in terms of streets and roads, city squares and urban furniture. Lastly, the social, economic and cultural factors also shape urban identity in a given time (Beyhan & Gurkan, 2015).

2.3 Landscape Identity

The concept of landscape identity builds on both place identity literature and landscape studies although it is lacking a clear definition in most literature. There is therefore need for a unified definition of landscape identity. Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) defined *landscape identity* as the “perceived uniqueness of a place”. Shao et al (2020) opine that, of all the identities, physical aspect of landscape identity is the major medium that reflects a person’s identity within a given place. According to Shao et al. (2020), the term *physical aspect* consists of *architectural and landscape environment* in terms of the way a place is formed and the architectural styles within it. It acts as the important medium through which people interact with their environments. The physical aspects constitute the negative perceptions people have about the landscape identity while *social aspects have more meaning* to the people. This is because the activities they carry out

within such places usually have memories that are either individual or collective that is associated with them (Shao et al., 2020).

According to Butler and Herlin (2019), several studies have attempted to address landscape identity and bridge the relationship between landscape character and landscape identity. These authors examined the duplex nature between the physical identification of landscapes and the role it plays as a medium that constitutes the identity of a given people. They focused on landscape change and landscape identity and delved deeper into understanding what landscape identity means in relation to transformation.

Ramos et al. (2016) sought to question the different landscape characteristics that are related to identity and the different scores assigned to them. They were interested in how much identity is needed, how landscape identity content is identified and lastly the acceptable change to have landscape identity affected. They first reviewed the connection between the landscape and identity of the people. Secondly, they identified landscape identity contents within the landscape. This was in terms of attributes used to define landscape identity. They considered the relationship between people and their landscape as interdependent aspects. Landscape identity according to these authors is formed through the mutual interaction of people and the landscape within two levels. There is *a level of perceptions and a level of actions*. Swanwick (2002) argue that the term “identity of the landscape” is related to landscape character. Landscape character refers to “a distinct recognizable elements within the landscape one different from the others” This also leads to a sense of place (Antrop et al., 2013; Naranjo, 2012). Ramos et al. (2016) argue that urban identity or urban landscape identity in different sources of literature is referred to as as “place identity”, “placeness”, “character of a place”, “image of a place”, “sense of place” which are all related to “distinctiveness” of urban identity.

All the studies on place/urban/landscape identity reviewed above seem to concur that the three main factors that shape identity are physical forms (natural and manmade), the activities (functions) of the users within the different spaces and lastly the meaning they attach to the experiences they get by interaction within the given spaces. It is also evident that the different identities act at different spatial and physical scales in terms of size whether at the city level, or small urban quarters e.g. neighborhoods, streets or at the largest scales in terms of regions. In using the term landscape identity, Shao et al. (2020) attribute this to the fact that all these identities act within the landscape as a medium. The following table summarizes the various reviewed studies on place/urban/landscape identity breaking down the main elements and the sub-elements they considered.

2.3.1 Definition of Urban Landscape Identity

From all the literature reviewed above there seems to be common aspects that shape place, urban and landscape identity with respect to physical aspects, social, cultural functions aspect and meaning attributes of the given place that all end up in shaping memory associated with a given place. The definition of urban landscape identity for this study therefore is the resident’s opinion and perception of the special features that help them to differentiate between places. This is by creating images that they can recognize. It encompasses the forms/physical aspects, functions/activities (social-cultural aspects) and meaning aspects. All three aspects combine to create memories to the residents (Author, 2020, modified from Shao et al. 2020).

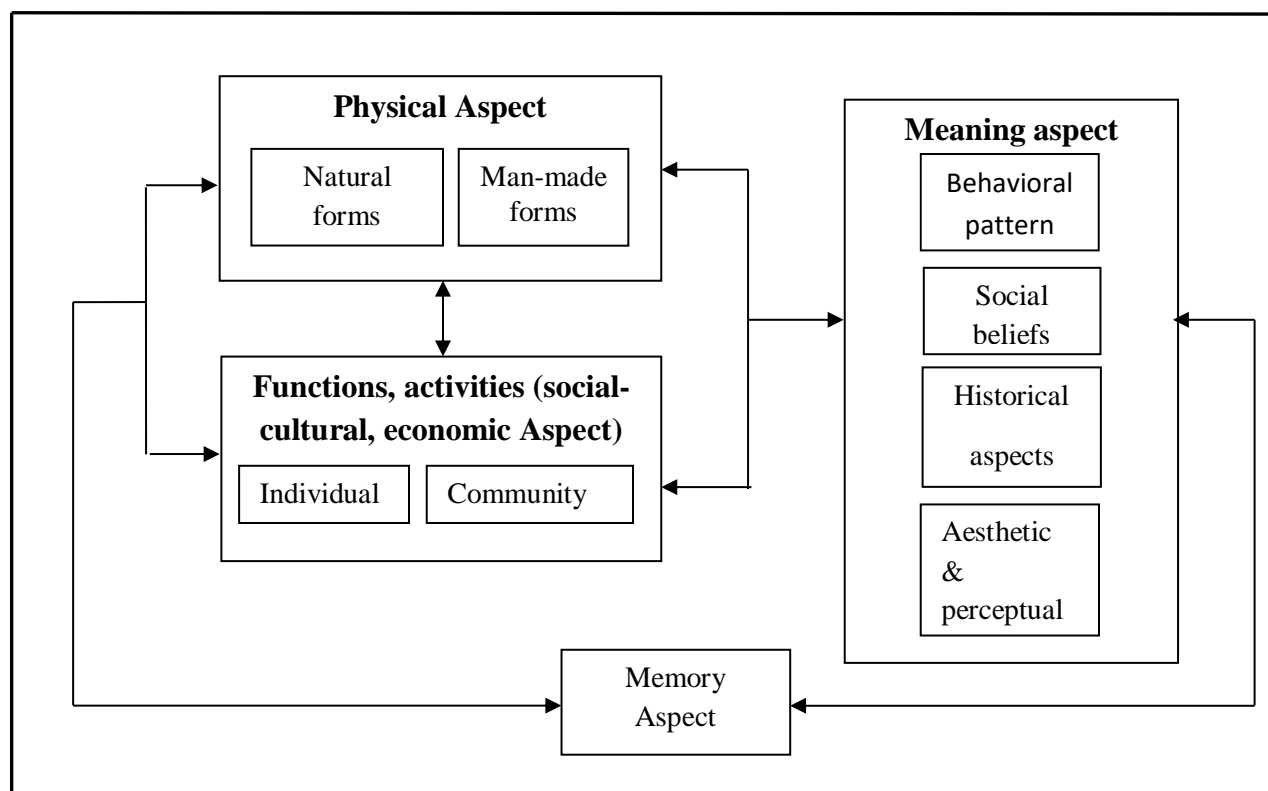


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for landscape identity
Source: Author 2021, modified from Shao et al. (2020)

2.4 Studies on Types of Spatial Identity

This section covers various studies that have been reviewed in terms of the type of identity they studied, the main elements they considered and finally the sub-elements of the study. This is important in understanding the various key concepts that these studies considered in exploring the types of identities at varying spatial levels.

Table 1
Summary of literature reviewed in terms of the types of identity, main components and sub elements

Authors	Type of identity	Main elements	Sub-elements
Ziyae (2018)	Place identity (considered the physical aspect, socio-cultural meaning)	-Natural forms -Manmade forms -Immaterial -Links	-Natural forms like topography, vegetation, climate and water bodies -Manmade aspects like shapes of spaces, access, buildings, furniture) -Social beliefs and patterns of behavior and rules -Links in timing of processes, methods
Moshaver et al. (2015)	Place identity (Considered the physical meaning)	-Natural elements -Absolute elements -Living elements -Human factors	-Natural elements like landforms surface, plain forms, highlands and water forms. -Weather like light conditions -Living elements- vegetation covers for ground and animals -Human factors-structures, buildings and other man-made material objects
Kaymaz (2013)	Place identity (Considered social meaning)	-Place attachment -Sense of belonging	-Place attachment: person, process and place
Montgomery (1998)	Place identity (Considered the physical and social meaning)	-Form -Activity -Image	-Forms- scales, landmarks, building ratios, vertical size, public realms. -Activities-diverse, street public life, cultures and traditions of local people -Images(cognitive, perceptive: Symbolic meanings, memories, images and how legible and receptive they are
Punter (1991)	Place identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	Descriptive components e.g. -physical setting -meaning -activity	-Physical settings: townscape, built forms, landscape, urban furniture -Meanings: legibility, associations of culture, functions perceived -Activities: uses of land, flow of pedestrians, vehicles, noises and smells

Proshansky et al (1983)	Place identity (Social meaning)	-Place attachments -Comprehensions -Perceptions	-memories, thoughts, values, settings
Relph (1976) (Discipline: Geography)	Place identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	-Physical components and how they appear -Activities -Meanings and symbolism attached	-Physical features: natural environments (land, mountain, lake), manmade environments (building, streets) -Activities: events, situations and functional patterns -Meanings & symbols: experience and interaction in places
Lynch (1960)	Place identity and place attachment (Physical meaning)	-Urban form elements	-Paths, edge, districts, nodes, landmarks
Okesli and Guranor (2012)	Urban identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	-Environmental identity -Social cultural identity -Social, economic identity -Psychological identity	-Environmental/natural: topography, climate ,flora), artificial: buildings, streets, squares, elements and symbolic components. -Socio-cultural (historical characteristics, demographics, cultural character).
Domoniczak et al. (2011)	Urban identity (Physical aspect)	Physical elements	-Layout of streets, public space distributions, architectural buildings; materials, colour
Beyhan and Gurkan (2015)	Urban identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	-Natural elements -Artificial elements -Socio-cultural/socio-economic	-Natural elements: flora, climate, topography -Artificial elements; buildings, monumental structures, paths, squares, urban furniture
Yaldiz et al. (2014)	City/urban identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	-Geographical characteristics -Products of culture -Norms of society -Architectural character	-Character of architecture: buildings, monuments, squares, streets.
Oktay and Bala (2015)	Urban identity (Physical aspect)	-Urban form elements	-Public spaces, squares, boulevards, streets
Enache and Craciun (2013)	Urban character and identity (Physical aspect)	-Urban form elements	-Urban plazas, streets, height and depth of perspectives, visual sequences
Shao et al. (2020)	Landscape identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	Landscape appearance at small scale (physical aspects, social aspects,	-Physical aspects: architectural environment, landscape environment

		sensory aspects and memory aspects)	-Social aspects: social activities e.g. annual festival -Sensory aspects; Individual past life events and experiences -Memory aspects: cultural meanings from historical relics, monuments & spirit and history (intangible heritage)
Redzinska & Szulczewska (2019)	Landscape identity Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	-Place identification (natural elements, cultural elements -Meaning of landscapes in the forms of urban structures	-Building forms, street grids, water elements, character of greenery
Ramos et al. (2016)	Landscape identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	Landscape and people in terms of perceptions and actions	-Landscape character-landscape changes -People's individual & collective identity-societal changes
Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) (Interdisciplinary)	Landscape identity (Considered the physical social meaning, activity)	-Spatial identity -Existential identity -Cultural identity -Personal identity	-Spatial identity-visual aspects of landscape based on forms, patterns and elements -Existential identity-objects and features of physical environment, associations, memories and symbolic meanings attached to physical landscape -Cultural identity-socio-cultural meanings linked with places, features, events in landscape -Personal identity-associations, memories, meanings attached to places in landscape, landmarks, routes

Source: Compiled by author, 2021

As shown in Table 1, the different studies on place/urban/landscape identity considered different aspects such as physical, social and activity while some considered all the components. It is, however, clear that all three components shape place/urban/landscape identity and what varies is the physical scale at which they were considered. Place identity is considered on the smallest scale (Stobbelaar & Pedroli, 2011) while urban identity and landscape act on the urban/city level. This is supported by Shao et al. 2020; Ziyae (2018).

The figure 2 below shows the different physical scales on which the urban/landscape identity and place identity act and with their various components based on the literature.

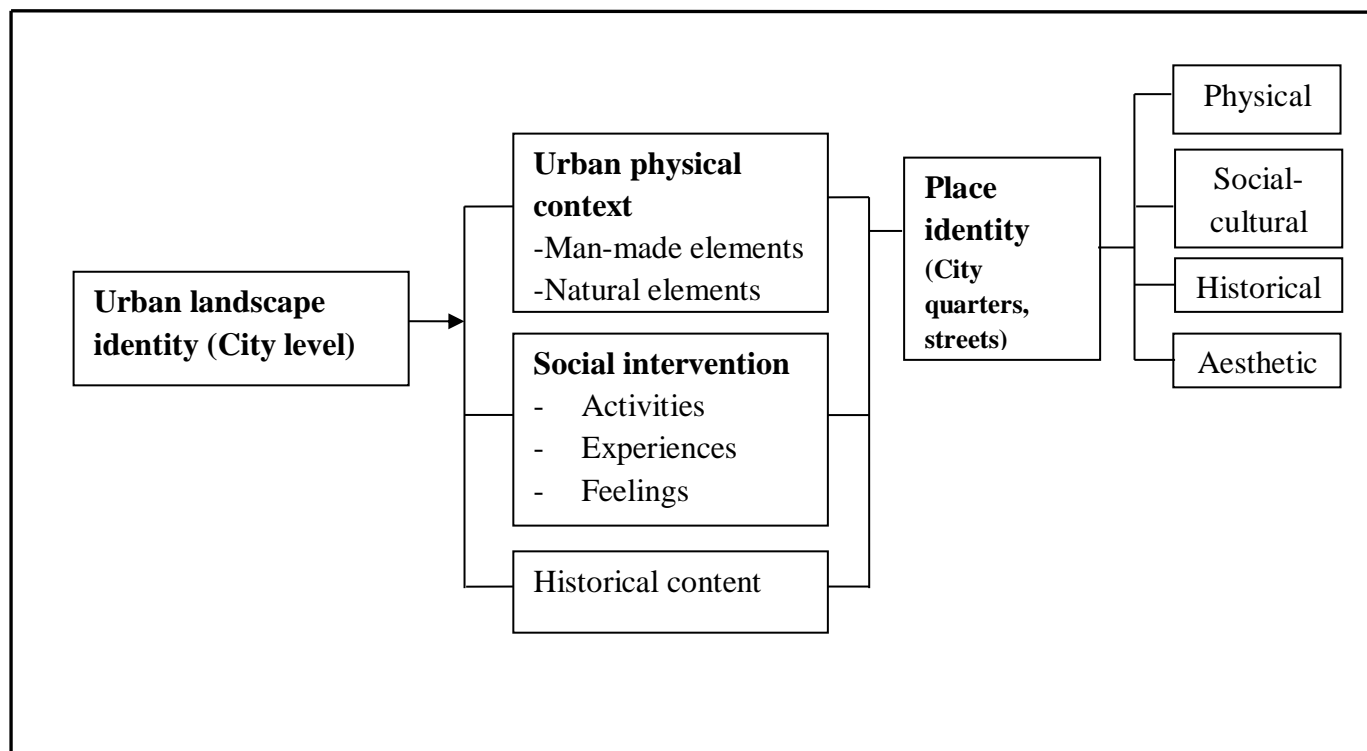


Figure 2: Types of identities at varying scales

Source: Author (2021) modified from Shao et al. 2020

2.5 Overview of Possible Research Designs

According to Kothari (2004) and Yin (2003) research design is the structure that guides how research is undertaken. As a blueprint, it guides how data is collected, measured and analyzed. This study used descriptive and analytical approach based on case study method that relies on gathering facts and information about the problem at hand. Creswell (2014) and Kothari (2004) state that qualitative research as an approach explores and aims to understand the meanings that individuals or a group relate problem in the society. This research includes investigating people's attitudes or opinions and find out their feelings about particular subject in question within the society. The research process involves questions and procedures that emerge, collecting data where the participants' are found and analysis of data. The researcher then makes interpretations of the meanings of the analyzed data through themes (Creswell, 2014; Kothari (2004).

From the literature reviewed, several studies were identified that dealt with similar ambition of analyzing public opinions related to landscape/urban/city identity in various contexts to discern the components that form identity within the city. Table 2 below summarizes the aspects carried out in the various case studies, the type of research carried out and the research design they used in the collection and analyses of the data to study the type of identity.

Table 2
Reviewed studies and their research designs

Authors	Aspect under study	Research approach	Research design		
Shao et al. (2020)	Landscape identity	Qualitative Case study in China	-Data collected about elements under study area on what constitutes the identity.	Interviews 50 local and 50 non local participants	-Analysis based on physical, social, sensory, memory -IBM SPSS statistics 20 for analysis
Hu & Chen (2018)	Sense of place, Identity	Qualitative Quantitative	-Field Investigation of physical elements of urban form -Urban form aesthetics -Identity attitudes	Random sampling of 283 participants for on-site field survey across 3 sites -Field investigation	
Oyinloye et al. (2017)	Urban renewal strategies	Case study of Makoko community, Nigeria	-Data collected through structured questionnaires, 250 respondents randomly selected	-Used aerial photographs, Google Earth images	-SPSS for analysis Univariate analysis used -Analysis using GIS
Layson & Nankai (2015)	-Public satisfaction with urban renewal project	-Case study Of Kariakoo, Tanzania	-Field survey questionnaires (Both open & closed). 292 respondents	-Purposive sampling of respondents	Analysis in form of tables, figures and charts
Oktay & Bala (2015)	Urban identity	Case study of Girne (Kyrenia)	-Data collected on unique features e.g. sea, old harbor, square, streets, housing and settlement pattern that constitute identity	-Used field surveys questionnaire 250 participants from households -Random sampling	-Analysis based on identifiable & memorable formal attributes -Meaning attached by city users
Eren(2014)	Urban identity	2 case studies (Istanbul & Bursa) Turkey	-Data collection on physical dimension (climate, flora, topography,	-Field observation, documentation and analysis	

		-Parameters of that constitute Urban identity -Comparison method before and after regeneration	building island, streets)		
Ujang (2012)	Urban place identity	-Qualitative, quantitative	-Influence of physical elements, activity and image. -Influence of culture and user roles on attachment to place	-Field survey 330 respondents -Interviews face to face 12no -Probability sampling strategy	
Baris et al. (2009)	Urban identity	-Qualitative on public perception	-Data collection on the elements that constitute urban identity. The changes in urban identity, urban form elements over time	-Random sampling -Field survey with 272 participants	SPSS for analysis

Source: Author (2021)

From Table 2 above, most similar studies are case study research that used questionnaires and interviews for data collection. The field survey questionnaires either were open or closed ended or both in collecting data from sampled city residents. The field surveys employed the use of simple random sampling method and purposive sampling. Most studies on landscape identity/urban identity gathered the data by investigating the perceptions of the residents on various elements of the urban form e.g. streets, squares, buildings and other natural elements like sea, topography, and flora.

3. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that the different types of spatial identities all have common aspects in their formation with only the scale at which they act or are considered varying. The common and overlapping components in terms of the physical setting, the activities or functions within the physical settings and lastly the meanings that people attach to the physical settings and activities of the different places in which they are found. The different identities seem to act on different scales but all within a given landscape. The study provides an insight into landscape identity as an emerging type of identity within the spatial disciplines and especially within landscape studies. The existing studies covered showed that the concept of landscape identity is still evolving within the various studies and hence justifying the need for more studies and adoption of a unified definition that can be used across the various disciplines. This study recommends the adoption of a unified definition of landscape identity to be used across disciplines as suggested in operational definition. The most obvious finding of this study was clarifying the key concepts that are common among all the spatial identities and the fact that they have similarities in the three major aspects

in their formation with the scale at which they are considered being the varying factor. The study culminates into a conceptual framework for landscape identity as the unifying actor for place and urban identity at the city level. Several methods that include qualitative and quantitative approaches have been used to get an insight into various key concepts of types of identities within varying spatial scales within various case studies in various parts of the world. The review recommends that more landscape studies and spatial disciplines should strive to adopt the concept of landscape identity and deepen understanding of its key concepts within different parts of the globe.

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