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The Environmental identity from the urban scope

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Abstract

The study addressed the issue of environmental identity theoretically, as the concept of environmental identity is considered one of the new and emerging concepts in the field of urbanism, which is closely linked to the surrounding environment.

The natural context and the social (cultural) context formed the basic, most influential and distinctive pillars, which in turn influenced the urban context and gave it a unique identity.

The research problem is based on the lack of clarity of the concept of environmental identity from an urban scope, as the concept of environmental identity is confused with identity in general, which provided the opportunity to study and address the concept of environmental identity since its inception and emergence, especially in the physiological and urban aspects.

As a result, the research applied the theoretical (literary) methodology in reviewing and analyzing the literature to extract the most important definitions, elements and components of environmental identity by reviewing previous research from the urban scope and physiological scope and analyzing it comprehensively by introducing bibliometric study from Scopus researches, to reach a clear concept and identify the differences and similarities between the concept of environmental identity from an urban and physiological scope.

The research concluded by presenting a model of the components and elements of environmental identity based on several basic and sub-contexts, namely (the natural context - the social context - the (artificial context) urban).

Keywords: Identity -Urban Identity -Environmental Identity -Natural Context -Social Context -Artificial Context- Urban context

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1. Introduction

The rapid growth of modern cities, combined with ongoing changes to traditional urban areas, has resulted in disparities between the physical characteristics of urban environments and their environmental identities. As a result, this issue emphasizes the importance of paying close attention to the environmental, cultural, and social dimensions when transforming places through urban design and planning processes. In response, we present a theoretical framework that prioritizes a settlement's environmental identity.

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As Urban identity involves the representation of natural, cultural, and manmade elements within a city. The concept of place identity delves into the visual aspects of a location, exploring its physical appearance and the shared elements that contribute to the individual perceptions of those who observe it [Ziyadeh, M. 2018].

An effectively planned urban environment is characterized by the presence of meanings, memories, and identities for its inhabitants. The concept of urban identity can be examined from various perspectives, including spatial, environmental, social, cultural, and economic considerations. Besides, the historical aspects of the city [Ziyadeh, M. 2018].

Recently, there has been a lack of clarity in the concept of environmental identity from an urban perspective and it has been confused with the physiological perspective in particular, due to the similarity between them in some points , as the concept of environmental identity is confused with identity in general, which provided the opportunity to study and address the concept of environmental identity since its inception and emergence, especially in the physiological and urban scopes.

This difference appeared through the following research questions:

- ☐ What is the concept of environmental identity from the urban and physiological scopes?
- ☐ What are the determinants of environmental identity and identity in general?
- ☐ What are the most important points of similarity and difference between the concept of environmental identity from the urban and physiological scopes?

The main purpose of this research is lead to reach a clear concept and identify the differences and similarities between the concept of environmental identity from an urban and physiological scope.

2. Materials and methods

The research relied on the inductive theoretical study (literature reviews) in addition to the bibliometric study of the concept of environmental identity from the urban and physiological scopes, by reviewing the most important concepts and definitions presented by scientists in both directions and extracting the most important similarities and differences between them in the time period since the beginning of the emergence of the term in both directions until the time of the study(1960: 2024). Also, the bibliometric study from the period (2014 :2022).

3. The concept of Environmental identity

Different interpretations of this concept reflect the long history of scrutiny and investigation into the topic of identity, which has been studied not only in urban contexts but also in the fields of philosophy, literature, sociology, and anthropology. In the context of the built environment, the debate concerning the identities of cities and places has attracted the interest of many architects and urban planners, leading to a multitude of definitions originating from different angles.

In the realm of social sciences, the concept of identities is commonly understood as being 'socially constructed,' as articulated by Wendt (1994). However, the authors assert that these identities are profoundly shaped by the surrounding environment and the occurrences within it. Consequently, identity within an urban setting is, to varying extents, determined by the elements of the environment and the activities or events transpiring within that context. Environmental identities serve as significant entities that facilitate the development of spatial inter-relations and foster a connection between socio-environmental values and the inherent nature of the space. [Cheshmehzangi, A., & Heat, T. 2012]

There are many different perspectives on the idea of the city's identity, and various writers have defined it in accordance with distinct factors. Others, like Prohansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983), focused on the emotional aspects and memory of the city, while Charles Correa (1980) acknowledged the role of natural elements and climate in shaping the city's identity. Still others relied on the built physical structure of the city.

In the research of [Hasan Mansour. 2016] Instead of viewing the city as a three-dimensional physical object, give it a fourth dimension: time. This timeline of events is tangible as long as the city is human, and humans change over time due to all of the previously mentioned factors. The city also has a three-dimensional memory that extends into the past and future and constantly reflects current reality in a unique and special way. It is also understood by examining the city's physical, social, and architectural aspects. This is why the process of shaping a city's identity is inextricably and directly linked to time.

A bibliometric study was conducted to assess the current state of the literature on environmental identity. Figures (1 and 2) show a visual map of the analyzed aspects of the selected articles. The term "environmental identity" was searched in the Scopus database, with priority given to publication years from 2014 to 2022. The open-source software VOS Viewer was used to enter the collected data. The study was based on 143 papers, with the most frequently cited terms in the related literature being: (1) identity, (2) sustainability, (3) social identity, (4) cultural identity, and (5) human. Various studies are attempting to enhance environmental identity based on multiple factors. The previous analysis method was employed for the search.

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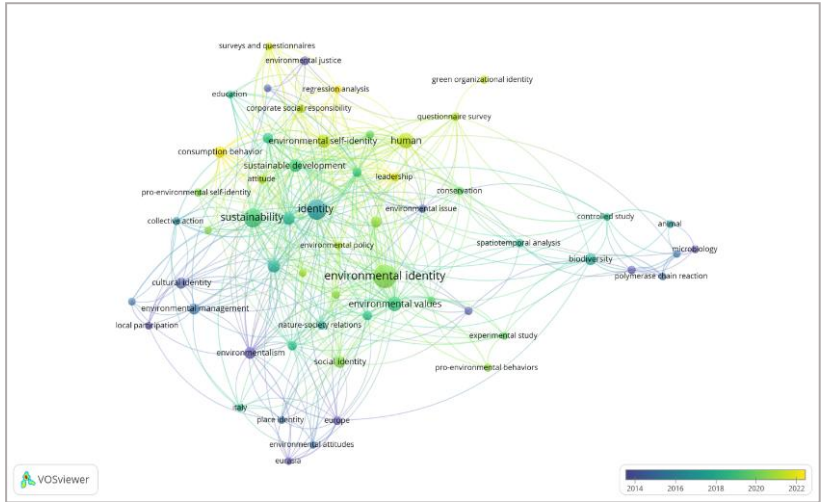


Figure 1: visual map where the environmental identity of the selected articles was analyzed from (2014:2022).
Source: created by Vos viewer retrieved from Scopus data

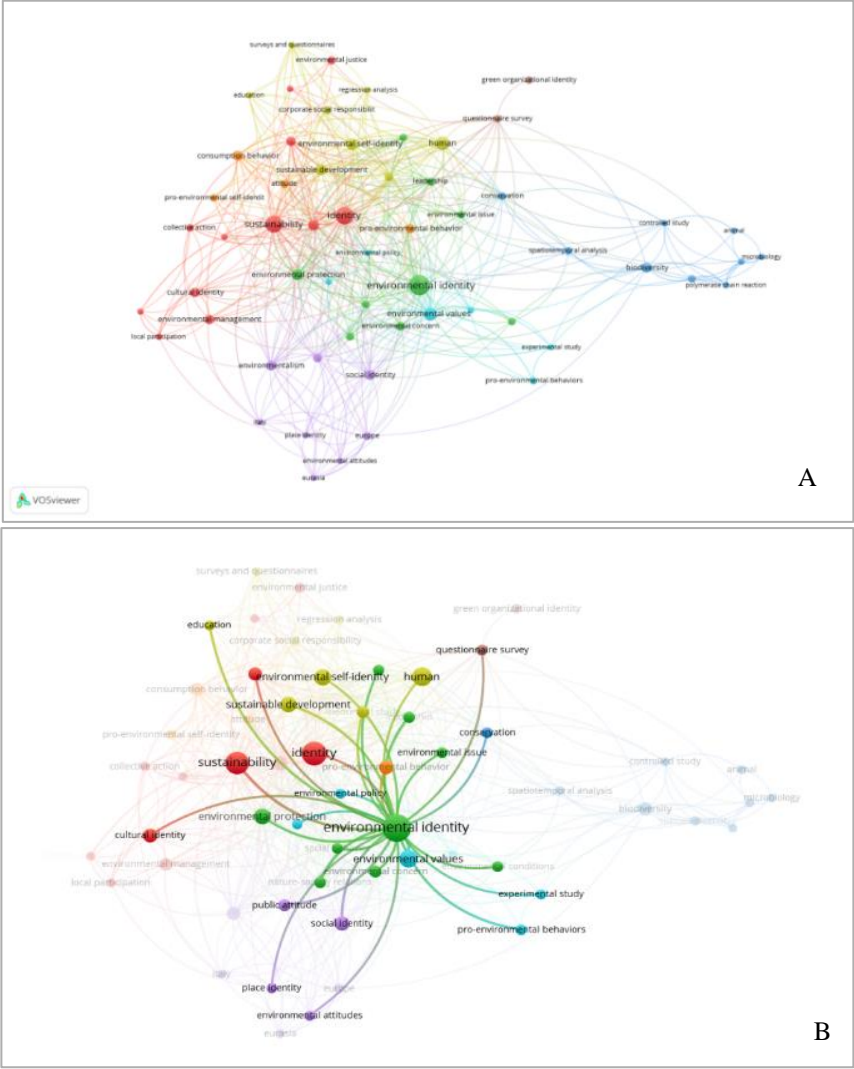


Figure 2: (A, B) Various studies related to the environmental identity
Source: created by Vos viewer retrieved from Scopus data

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4. Definitions of Environmental identity

There are many definitions associated with the concept of environmental identity, which is more commonly used in the psychological scope than in the urban scope, and whose connection has appeared since the beginning of 2000 with psychological and the emergence of the first research that touched on the definition of this scope, which gives weight to the connection of this concept with humans and its connection with the environment. In this part, the concept is identified. The term environmental identity from a psychological and urban scope through readings and research in this field is as follows:

4-1- Environmental identity from the psychological scope

Research in psychological sciences has shown that identity in its known form is not built in relation to people and relationships with different groups and contexts only but rather depends on the individual's relationship with the environment surrounding him.

In 1988, the beginnings of defining environmental identity appeared by Frankfurt when he argued that people will identify with what they care about [Frankfurt, 1988]

Due to [Stets & Biga, 2003] environment identity, defined as “the meanings that one attributes to the self as they relate to the environment.”

According to Clayton, S. as one of the first researchers in this field, it also made it clear that environmental identity in its sense is part of the individual's self-concept, which is based on the belief that “the environment is important to us and is an important part of our identity.” (Clayton, S. 2003). Environmental identity, along with attitudes and subjective norms, is associated with the intention to act in an environmentally friendly manner. Therefore, environmental identity has become more prominent in relation to behaviors in which individuals have the freedom to act [Poortinga, W., Whitmarsh, L., & Suffolk, C. 2013].

According to table (1) the researcher collects the most important definitions of the environmental identity:

Table (1) Environmental identity definitions from the psychological scope

year	Author	Definition
1978, 1987, 2003	Proshansky and Fabian, Twigger-Ross et al.	“Environmental identity (EID) is considered an aspect of one's identity describing individuals' identification with the physical and natural world, and it is thus viewed as a sub-identity similar to other sub-levels, such as personal identity, social identity, and place identity. ”
1981	Rosenberg	“EID is defined both as a product and a force: It is considered a product because it is the result of personal history and the emotional connection the individual has developed toward the environment.”
2003	Clayton, S	“An environmental identity increases a person's awareness of participation in a communal, interdependent system. This involves understanding one's place within natural ecosystems. With this understanding, one can appreciate the significance of the environment and how human actions impact environmental rights.”
2010,2015, 2018, 2021	Whitmarsh & O'Neill, Whitmarsh et al., Brick & Lai, Masson & Fritsche	An environmental identity “reflects the extent to which people indicate that environmentalism is a central part of who they are”
2021	Clayton, S., Czellar, S., Nartova-Bochaver, S., Skibins, J., Salazar, G., Tseng, Y.-C., et al.	EID is defined as “a sense of connection to some part of the non-human natural environment that affects the way in which we perceive and act toward the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are”
2024	Ferrajão, P.; Torres, N.; Martins, A.Q.	“Environmental identity is a dimension of personal identity that reflects an individual's sense of connection with nature and personal view of nature as part of her/his identity.”
2024	Doherty, T., Artman, S., Homan, J., Keluskar, J., & White, K. E.	“Environmental identity encompasses one's sense of self in relation to the natural world and other species, and is an important sub-identity analogous to gender, sexual and other forms of self and social identity.”

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Based on the provided definitions, environmental identity (EID) can be described as an aspect of personal identity that reflects individuals' connection with the natural world and the surrounding environment. This identity is viewed as a component of personal identity as a whole, similar to social, personal, or place-based identity. Environmental identity is understood as both a product and an influence; it results from personal experiences and the emotional relationship that individuals establish with the environment, and at the same time, it is a force that influences their actions and understanding of their role within the ecosystem.

Environmental identity enhances individuals' awareness of the importance of their participation in a shared and interconnected ecosystem, allowing them to recognize their place in this system and understand the impact of human actions on the environment. This close connection to the environment emphasizes its significance as a part of one's identity and reflects the degree to which individuals identify with environmental issues and view them as a fundamental aspect of themselves.

Based on these definitions, environmental identity can be considered an essential component in shaping individuals' perspectives toward nature. It is an important factor in determining the extent to which the environment influences their choices and behaviors toward the world around them.

4-2- Environmental identity from the urban scope

Scholars researching environmental identity presented a variety of definitions; some focused on urbanization separately and noted it as the main factor of identity, while others focused on the natural environment as an essential component of identity in the context of a place. A review of the key definitions that scholars have studied in this field is provided in the table below, Table (2).

Table (2) Environmental identity definitions from the urban scope

year	Author	Definition
1960	Lynch	"Identity is a case where an object is unique."
1976	Relf	"The main characteristics which form spatial identity are the physical structure forming the space, the facilities it embodies, and the meanings created by users."
1979	Norberg-Schulz	"Environmental factors are one of the most important factors impacting the identity an urban area adopts, and the people living in that environment add their own culture and lifestyles to that urban area in time, thus they allow the urban area to stick in minds."
1980	Correa	"Identity is not a 'found object' but a process. We develop our identity by reacting to our problems and our circumstances."
2011	Bell & Shalit	"Cities reflect as well as shape their inhabitant's values and outlooks in various ways"
2012	Ujang	"In urban studies, identity is a translation of the distinct characteristics of the place or a mixture of the individuals as a total object"
2013	Yaldız, Aydın, & Sıramkaya,	"Urban identity, architectural identity and the urban images about them are sometimes formed by very different components in a long period in urban space."
2017	SAĞLIK, E., & KELKİT, A	"Identity is defined as the natural and artificial elements of a city, its social, cultural, and historical characteristics. Among these characteristics, the most obvious and impressive are the identity of that city. Every feature that differentiates one city from the other and appears differently is counted as the identity component of that city"
2018	Ziyade, M.	"Urban identity is a way of representing the city's natural, cultural, and manmade components."

After reviewing the most important definitions in this field, the researcher found that the most accurate definition in describing environmental identity is the definition of Norberg-Schulz, (1979), which he presented as a mixture of all surrounding environmental factors, whether urban, social, or natural. All of these factors are a major component. Because of the impression of spatial identity on individuals, and that people live in this environment and influence it with their customs and culture over time, which allows it to be linked in their minds.

While Ujang (2012) interpreted identity as a translation of the distinctive characteristics of a place or a mixture of individuals as a whole, it affects the place and is affected by it.

What is meant here by environmental identity is the sum of characteristics, whether (Natural factors, represented by climate, soil, surface characteristics, and components of nature in general) as well as (Human factors, which is

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represented by social, cultural customs and traditions) in addition to urbanization, influencing and being affected by each other over time. That distinguishes it against others and raises its value.

5. Comparing between Environmental identity from the psychological scope and the urban scope definitions

The definition from the psychological scope focuses on environmental identity (EID), a form of personal identity linked to individuals' connection with nature. The urban scope centers on spatial and urban identity, emphasizing how physical, cultural, and historical features shape the identity of places and cities.

5-1- Points of Similarity

A. Connection to Surroundings

Both definitions emphasize the link between identity and the Environment. Environmental identity connects individuals to nature and ecosystems, while urban identity connects residents to physical structures and spaces within cities. Both underscore that identity is shaped by an individual or community's relationship with their surroundings.

B. Dynamic Process

Both views understand identity as a process rather than a static object. Environmental identity develops through personal experiences and an emotional connection to nature, while urban identity is shaped over time by interactions with and adaptations to the urban environment.

C. Influence of Environment on Behaviour

Both concepts highlight how identity influences actions and perspectives. EID guides individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward environmental issues, while urban identity shapes community values and residents' outlooks based on the physical and cultural elements of a city.

5-2- Points of Difference

A. Scope of Influence

Environmental identity is an individual-oriented concept that reflects a personal connection with nature. Urban scope, in contrast, is community-oriented, representing shared characteristics and features that define an entire city or space.

B. Components of Identity

Environmental identity is primarily about individuals' emotional and perceptual relationship with natural surroundings. Urban scope, however, is formed by a blend of natural, cultural, historical, and architectural elements that create a distinctive character for cities and spaces.

C. Purpose and Focus

Environmental identity is centered on an individual's sense of self in relation to nature and their environmental awareness. Urban scope, however, involves a collective sense of place, representing the unique characteristics and memory of a city that distinguishes it from other places.

While environmental identity and urban scope both explore how surroundings shape identity, they differ in their focus on personal versus collective perspectives. Environmental identity reflects an individual's personal relationship with the natural world, while urban identity captures the distinctiveness of a city shaped by its physical and cultural attributes. Both perspectives view identity as evolving and rooted in interaction with the environment, yet they differ in the components and scope of this identity.

6. The components of Environmental identity from the urban scope

The city's identity belongs to the city itself, and it is the sum of the city-specific components that distinguishes it from others and adds value to it. These elements are also crucial in the formation of that city's identity. The concepts that represent urban identity are classified into two categories: (SAĞLIK, E., & KELKİT, A. 2017).

- environmental identity
- social identity.

According to SAĞLIK, E., & KELKİT, A. 2017 The relationships and interactions of these concepts that contribute to urban identity.

Ocakçı (1995) explores the components of urban identity categorized into three groups: those stemming from the natural, human, and human-made environment.

- Elements of identity originating from the natural environment encompass factors such as topography, climate, the water element, geological conditions, and overall location.
- Identity elements derived from the human surroundings involve individuals and society, including sub-elements related to demographic, institutional, and cultural structures.
- Identity elements originating from the human-made comprise artificial environmental elements, action areas addressing ongoing human needs in the city, and objects crafted by human hands.

Rolph (1976) argued that identity of place comprises three interrelated components, as shown in table (3):

- Physical features
- Activities

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- Meaning and symbols

Table (3) the components of urban identity according to Relph (1976)

Physical features	Natural	Land -mountains – lake, ets
	Manmade	Buildings – streets -squares -furniture, ets
Activities	Events – situations, ets	
Meaning and symbols	Through experience and interactions of the users in place	

Source: Relph (1976)

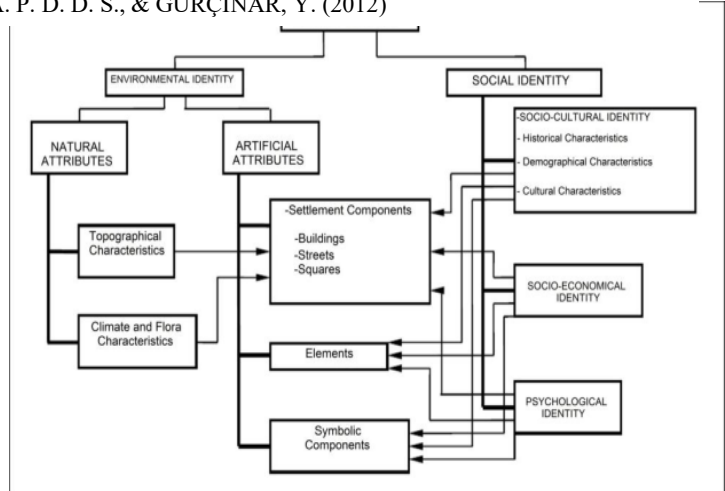
ÖKESLİ, A. P. D. D. S., & GÜRÇINAR, Y. (2012) Contended that urban identity is a blend of "social" elements encompassing sociocultural, socioeconomic, and psychological aspects, along with "environmental" factors encompassing both natural and artificial components. Explored the artificial attributes defining environmental quality in relation to settlement, elements, and symbols, influenced by political, economic, social, and cultural values. Emphasized that the physical traits of urban environments inevitably undergo transformation based on values, but stressed the necessity to manage the scale, conditions, and impacts of these changes to safeguard urban identity, as shown in Fig. (3).

urban identity according to Ha, T. T. V. (2018)	the natural environment
	the physical elements
	the non-physical elements

Figure (3) the components of urban identity according to ÖKESLİ, A. P. D. D. S., & GÜRÇINAR, Y. (2012)

Source: ÖKESLİ, A. P. D. D. S., & GÜRÇINAR, Y. (2012)

Ha, T. T. V. (2018) divided the components of urban identity into three main parts: the natural environment, the physical elements, and the non-physical elements. He considered the buildings, streets, and urban morphology to be the physical components that strongly influence the vision of the city, each according to the scale in which it is located, while the non-physical elements, which are the population, their customs, traditions and their celebrations, which affect the activities of the users of the place. He gave the largest share to the natural environment, as he said that it has the greatest influence on shaping the identity of the place, as shown in Fig. (4).

**Figure (4) urban identity according to Ha, T. T. V. (2018)**

Source: Ha, T. T. V. (2018)

Due to Ha, T. T. V. (2018) he divided the elements into the natural environment and the material and non-material elements and identified the characteristics of each element and divided them in terms of their ability to change over time and their impact on the area.

Table (4) The components of urban identity according to Ha, T. T. V. (2018)

Elements	Characteristics	Changeability	Effect on the area
Natural environment	Topography and soil	Mountains -sea-island	Unchangeable
	Weather, climate, cycle of disasters	Hot all year round and small number of disasters	Changes have been noticeable during recent years
	Hydrological conditions: water tides	Unstable diurnal	

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	edge, submerged area, saline intrusion...						
	Ecology system		Diverse, including many coral reefs				
Non-physical elements	Diversity of population		Kinh people takes the majority, then Khmer people		Slow changes but they have been noticeable during recent years		Affected by the Kinh and Khmer cultures with many traditional
	Cultural customs of communities		Maintenance of customs of coastal communities				
	Local economy		Main source of economy is from tourism		Rapid changes		Affect activities of space users
	Daily activities		High potential for international integration		Rapid changes		
Physical elements	Morphology		Changed according to development of area		Very small changes		Strongly impact the vision of the area
	Street system		Axes heading to the sea		Very small changes		
	Beachfront block\lot forms		Variety in scale regarding building function		Small changes		
	Building form		Depend on culture, aesthetic and economy		Frequent changes		
	Facilities in public spaces		Urban facilities serving current activities		Frequent change		Affect on small spaces
	Natural land scape				Small change		Create identity on larger scale

Source: Ha, T. T. V. (2018)

As in Table (4) This classification of components is considered a comprehensive and powerful classification that combines the study of the impact and impact of each component of environmental identity and its impact on the surrounding environment. The researcher presented a detailed study of the components, specifying the properties of each component in detail, but it lacks a specification of the order of these elements in terms of importance.

On the other hand, Mansour, H. M., Alves, F. B., & da Costa, A. R (2023) describe the components of urban identity as the follows, Fig. (5) Divide the components of urban identity into material dimension (including natural and man-made) and immaterial dimension (including activities and meaning) as the urban memory depends on sensory and mental aspects.

According to the Fig (5), Mansour, H. M., Alves, F. B., & da Costa, A. R ,2023 relied on completely classifying the elements of urban identity into material dimension and immaterial dimension, and did not take into account the complete definition of environmental elements, but rather merely mentioned them under nature and summarized them in three points: (topography - hydrology - vegetation).

7. Results

The research relied on the theoretical study and review of the literature on the term (environmental identity) from the urban and physiological aspects due to the lack of a specific concept for this term from the urban aspect and its greater

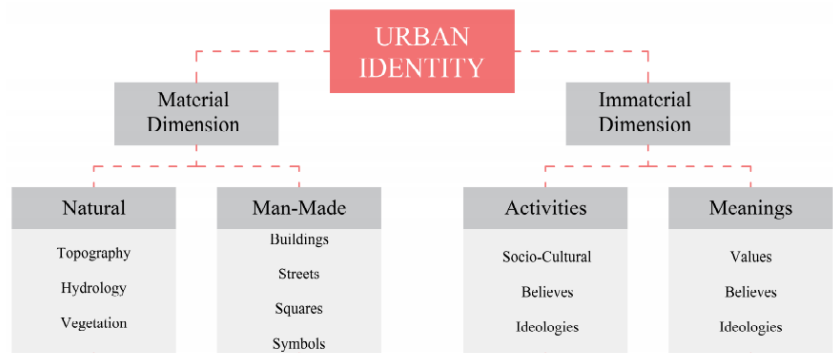


Figure (5) The components of urban identity according to (Mansour, H. M., Alves, F. B., & da Costa, A. R ,2023)

Source: (Mansour, H. M., Alves, F. B., & da Costa, A. R ,2023)

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reliance on the psychological impact in the physiological aspect. Where 143 research were reviewed in the period from (2014 to 2022) to study the most important definitions and studies that relied on the use of the concept of environmental identity and its association with other topics, whether urban or physiological

the researcher found that the natural environment is the greatest influence in forming the identity of a place through its geological, morphological and climatic components, which should not ignore the role of the social element (with its customs, culture, activities, as well to the psychological factor) that helps in forming this identity, and in turn the environmental and social element affects To form the urban or physical element, which gives the place its distinctive identity. The idea can be clarified through the following Fig (6), which defines the relationship of the components to each other and explains the role of each element of urban identity:

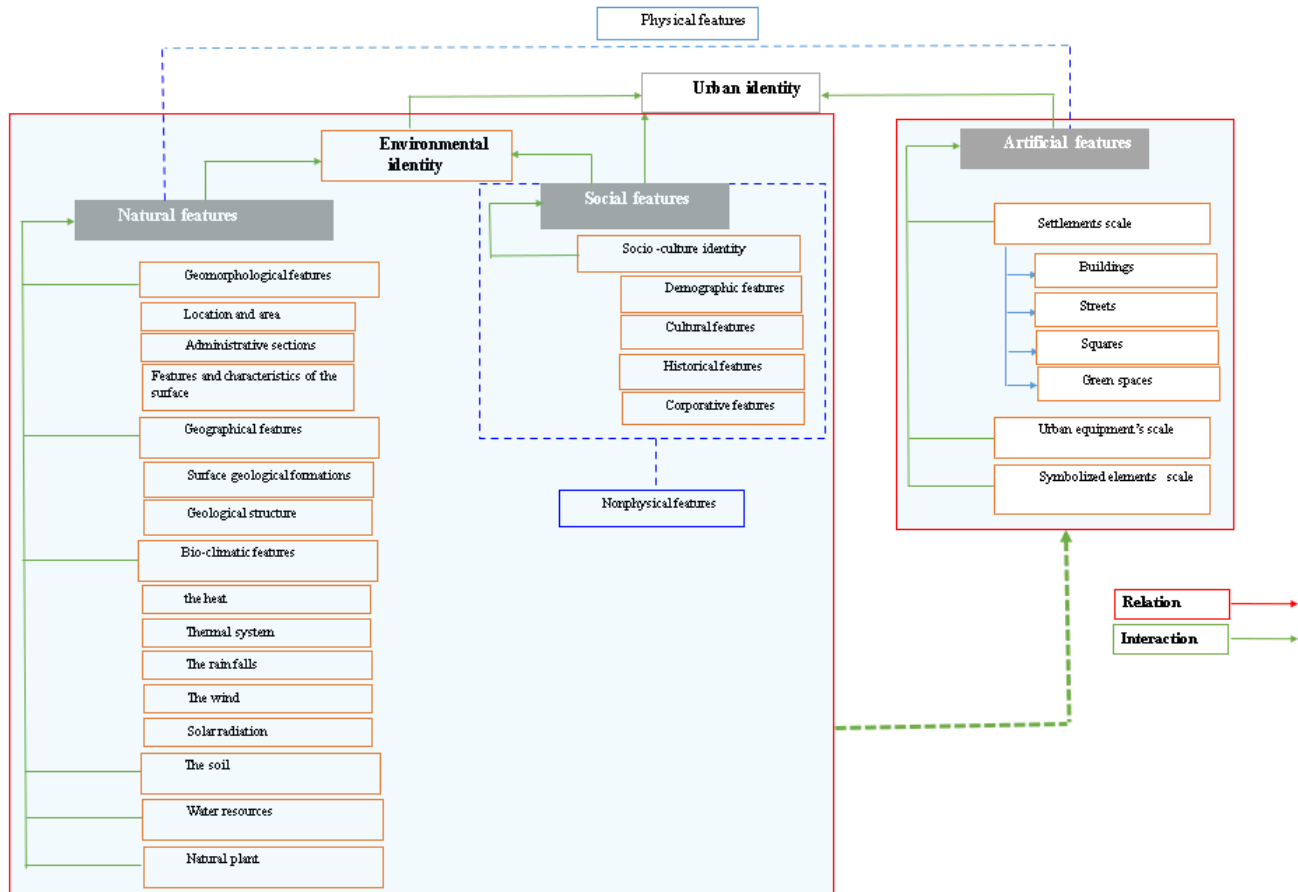


Figure (6) The components of urban identity according to the researchers
Source: from the work of the researchers

8. conclusions

After reviewing the literature and theories in the field of environmental identity from the behavioral and urban scopes, it became clear that the concept is related in both cases with a difference in application, as the concept of environmental identity in the behavioral scope depends on the relationship of human behavior to social relations, influenced by the surrounding environment around him. While in the urban scope, it was found that the concept of environmental identity revolves around a mathematical process consisting of the sum of the characteristics surrounding the urban context, whether (social context and natural context), affected and influencing the artificial context existing in that environment over time as shown in Fig(7), which distinguishes it from others, increases its value

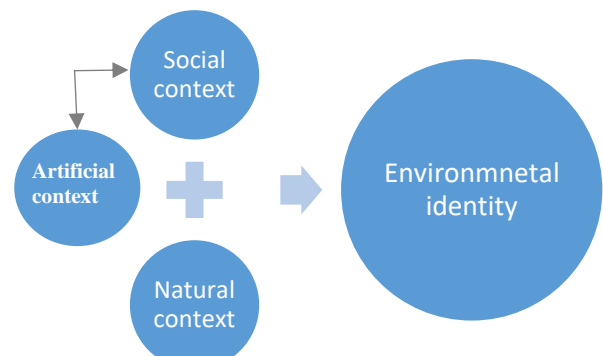


Figure (7) A mathematical process consisting of the sum of the environmental identity characteristics.

Source: from the work of the researchers

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and connection to each other over time, and gives it a distinctive character consistent with the surrounding environment.

The natural context contains (Geomorphological features- Geographical features- Bio-climatic features - The soil- Water resources - Natural plant). The artificial context contains : (the features of Settlements scale as (building -streets - squares-green spaces) also Urban equipment's and Symbolized elements. Both the natural context and the artificial context defined as physical features. Social context contains (Socio -culture identity- Demographic features - Cultural features - Historical features - Corporative features) which defined as non-physical features.

9. Recommendations

The researcher recommends the practical application of Fig. No. (6) in studying the elements and components of environmental identity, as it included the study of Physical and non-Physical elements and the study of their relationship and influence on each other. The study of the model can be applied through several mechanisms such as (geographic information systems or direct field survey of these elements). To preserve the environmental identity of urban areas and their unique elements.

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