# The Challenges in Understanding Urban Identity

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**Abstract**

Despite the inherently dynamic nature of the urban identity concept and its interconnections among various academic disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, environmental studies, and urbanism, the term is employed in distinct contexts within each field. This divergence in usage has resulted in ambiguity and a lack of clarity regarding the meaning of urban identity.

This research aims to scrutinize the existing literature on identity and urban identity across various scientific disciplines, reaching a better understanding of the term.

As a methodological approach, we undertake a systematic analysis of the theoretical debate to identify and comprehend the descriptive and analytical perspectives on identity and urban identity concepts, the evaluation processes of urban identity, and the identification of primary debates, issues, and related gaps. The findings of this research will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the urban identity concept and its identification, thereby contributing to the evolution of academic research on urban identity.

## 1. Introduction

The multi-faceted concept of 'identity' remains an enigmatic area of study, despite its exploration across multiple scientific disciplines. As a subject that stretches from the days of ancient philosophies to modern urban design studies, it repeatedly circles around existential inquiries such as 'Who are we?' and 'What is our purpose?' Consequently, the exploration of identity in relation to the observer and the place presents continuous challenges (Sidelle 1992) (Casakin, Hernández and Ruiz 2015) (Genereux, Ward and Russell 1983).

The concept of individual identity has been probed through numerous theoretical perspectives, ranging from the Hippocratic model's suggestion of bodily humours influencing identity, to Freud's psychoanalytic approach, to the contemporary consensus which highlights the critical roles of both genetics and environment in identity formation. Despite their varied origins, these perspectives have collectively informed our understanding of individual identity and influenced policy formulation of healthier identities, by learning from application and experimentation (McAdams 2013). Paradoxically, the same level of comprehensive understanding is not paralleled in the context of urban identity, especially concerning its relation to the urban environment (Bell and Shalit 2011).

Urban identity, despite a rich theoretical base, remains largely elusive and under-scrutinized, particularly in empirical studies. Existing research frequently focuses on micro-environments or limited case studies, frequently exploring individual's 'sense of place' rather than the identity of the urban environment itself. Consequently, this results in a disjointed discourse that hinders the development of effective urban policies (Lalli, Urban Identity 1988) (Proshansky, The City and Self-Identity 1978) (Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff, Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self 1983).

The lens of environmental psychology, majorly influenced by Proshansky's work on 'Sense of Place,' initially guided the urban identity studies leaving its stigma on urban identity being solely socially constructed. However, these early studies primarily concentrated on the relationship between urban dwellers and their environment, largely focusing on subjective and social aspects of urban identity, and inadvertently led to a narrowed understanding of 'place' as merely homes, workplaces, or neighbourhoods (Lalli, Urban Identity 1988) (Casakin, Hernández and Ruiz 2015) (Walmsley 1988).

Despite the narrow early focus, subsequent research expanded the study's scope to include built environment and heritage, prompting diverse theories and viewpoints on urban identity (Cheshmehzangi, Identity of Cities and City of Identities 2020). Consequently, historical value and its impermanence in the broader context of a city's evolving identity became a central focus, igniting debates and critiques of the modern movement (Koolhaas 1995) (Mumford 1937) (Oktay 2002).

Even with such expansive research, the critical intersection between urban identity and urban management policies remains largely unexplored. This oversight stands as a research gap, considering urban identity embodies subjective, symbolic, cultural, and political dimensions that influence, and are influenced by, urban management policies (Hassen and Giovanardi 2021). Simultaneously, the operationalization and application of urban identity in urban planning and management have received minimal attention despite the myriad conceptualizations of urban identity, such as 'Place Identity,' 'Sense of Place,' 'Genius Loci,' 'Character of Place,' and 'City Image.' The often-isolated analysis of these concepts and misinterpretation of them could lead to fragmented and inconsistent urban policies (Cheshmehzangi, Urban Identity as a Global Phenomenon: Hybridity and Contextualization of Urban Identities in the Social Environment 2015).

The lack of rigorous empirical studies further compounds these challenges, creating a significant gap in the literature. While theoretical perspectives are abundant, the validation of these theories through empirical studies is alarmingly scarce, which hampers our understanding of urban identity and limits the development and effectiveness of urban policies and management strategies (Cheshmehzangi, Identity of Cities and City of Identities 2020) (Lalli, Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings 1992).

Addressing these challenges, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of urban identity and to scrutinize its critical intersection with urban management by thoroughly analyzing its various interpretations across different scientific disciplines. We aim to provide a nuanced understanding of urban identity, exploring its influence on policy development, and illuminating potential improvements in urban management. To achieve these objectives, we will undertake an analytical examination of various interpretations of urban identity across different scientific disciplines and their empirical substantiation. By doing so, we aim to elucidate the role of urban identity in informing policy development and urban management, thereby fostering a more nuanced and critical understanding of urban identity.".

## 1.1. Methods

To achieve the outlined objectives, this study employs a dual-methodological approach, combining a comprehensive literature review and content analysis. This combination of methods ensures a more robust understanding of urban identity concept and its identification.

Literature Review: A review of relevant literature is conducted, focusing on the fields of environmental psychology, social sciences, and urban planning. This review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical context, theoretical underpinnings of identity and urban identity, and their relationship with urban management policies.

Content Analysis: Following the literature review, content analysis is performed to identify and categorize the descriptive and analytical approaches to identity and urban identity concepts. This analysis examines the evaluation processes of urban identity, the primary debates, issues, and related gaps in the existing research. Content analysis allows for the systematic examination of large volumes of textual data, enabling the extraction of meaningful patterns and trends.

By employing this mixed-methods approach, the study offers a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the urban identity concept and its implications for urban planning. The findings contribute to the development of urban identity assessment methodologies and inform strategies for preserving and enhancing urban identity in the context of rapid urbanization.

## 2. Understanding Identity

*"Only once have I been made mute. It was when a man asked me, Who are you?"*

(Gibran 1954) (p. 4)

Despite our ability to define identity in a very simple manner, by saying "Identity is what a thing is!" as stated by (Gleason 1983) (p. 910), it is a philosophical concept that becomes increasingly complex as we examine the components that make this thing what it is. Therefore, we may end up agreeing with the author's statement that "identity has come to mean so many things that by itself it means nothing" (Gleason 1983); apud (Lovejoy 1948) (p.914).

How do we define a concept? How do we establish our identities? Can we condense who we are into a single phrase or sentence? On a daily basis, we seek our origins, characters, and selves, thus it is logical to assert that the concept of identity has accompanied us throughout history (Cheshmehzangi, Identity of Cities and City of Identities 2020) (Cheshmehzangi, Urban Identity as a Global Phenomenon: Hybridity and Contextualization of Urban Identities in the Social Environment 2015). According to Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "identity," the term "identity" was first used in 1690 in an article about human understanding, however, the beginning of academic studies on the concept of identity is obscure. Al-Farabi was one of the first to define Identity (874-950 AD). He defined Identity in Arabic as "an indication of a thing's character, peculiarity, and unilateral existence" (Al-Jabri 1986) (p.822).

Identity has long been a subject of investigation and observation in urbanism, philosophy, literature, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, leading to numerous definitions of this issue (Lalli, Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings 1992) (Table 1).

| Author | Field | Definition |
|---|---|---|
| **(Frege 1967) (p.20)** | Philosophy | "Identity is the relation between names, understood as signs expressing senses, of denoting the same denotation." |
| **(Hegel 1812) (pp.38-39)** | | "self-equal in its absolute negativity, through which otherness and relation-to-other has vanished in its own self into pure equality-with-self" |
| **(Ibn Khaldun 1858)** | Sociology | Each of the accidents, whether a subject or an action, must have a nature that is specific to it in itself, and in what is exposed to it in its circumstances. |
| **(Clifford 1988) (p.344)** | | "Nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject." |
| **(Ferguson 2009) (p.15)** | Psychology | "Notions of identity that emerge…are constituted as relations rather than entities. In the context of everyday life, identities describe how people and things are interconnected". |
| **(Jenkins 1996) (p. 4)** | Sociology / Psychology | Identity "refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities." |
| **(Relph 1976) (p.62)** | Geography / Urbanism | "The identity of place is not a simple tag that can be summarized and presented in a brief factual description…. The identity of place takes many forms, but it is always the very basis of our experience of this place as opposed to any other." |
| **(Lynch, A Theory of Good City Form 1981) (p.8)** | Urbanism | "The identification of an object, which implies its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity. It is not in the sense of equality with something else but with the meaning of individuality or oneness." |

**Table 1**: Definitions and notions of "Identity" in different fields of study

The academic exploration of the concept of identity has evolved significantly over the years, originating from philosophical and psychological investigations into individual self-understanding. This exploration began to incorporate the idea of place and built environment in the 1960s, as research began to focus on how the physical surroundings impact an individual's self-perception (Fearon 1999) (Lalli, Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings 1992). These early studies underscored the importance of place in identity formation, giving rise to the concepts of place identity and self-identity. A critical examination of these studies, however, revealed several limitations, such as insufficient measurement tools, inconsistent theoretical frameworks, and a lack of empirical studies (Lalli, Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings 1992).

In the ensuing years, the connection between place and self-identity became a central theme in the scholarly discourse on identity. A number of theories emerged during this period such as: social identity theory, place-identity theory, and identity process theory (Hauge 2011).

Although these theories contributed significantly to our understanding of urban identity, they primarily focused on the influence of place on the self, neglecting the concept of the place's identity (Lalli, Urban-related identity: Theory, measurement, and empirical findings 1992). It was not until the later part of the 20th century that urban identity studies began to emphasize the identity of the place itself. However, both narrations are referred to as urban identity.

Urban identity, as a concept, considers how the physical characteristics of a city, its history, culture, and the experiences of its inhabitants contribute to a unique identity that sets it apart from other cities (Manahasa and Manahasa 2020). It encompasses aspects such as architecture, public spaces, landmarks, and cultural practices, among other elements. The exploration of urban identity has been multidisciplinary, with contributions from urban planning, architecture, sociology, and geography to name a few.

It's important to note that the concept of urban identity is complex and multifaceted. Different academic fields have brought unique perspectives and methodologies to its study, resulting in a diverse array of definitions and approaches. Terms like "place identity," "sense of place," "genius loci," "character of place," and "city image" have all been used to describe aspects of urban identity. Each of these terms captures a different facet of the broader concept, reflecting the multiplicity of factors that contribute to the identity of an urban area.

Debates within identity studies further complicate the matter. Issues such as individual versus collective identity, inherent versus constructed identity, and stable versus fluid identity fuel ongoing discussions (Burke and Stets 2009). These debates expose the contentious nature of identity, revealing it to be a concept that is not universally agreed upon but rather multifaceted, complex, and fraught with tension. Moreover, critical evaluation of the mentioned theories, such as the social identity theory, and place-identity theory, reveal the need for a more nuanced understanding that takes into account the impact of intersectional factors on identity formation (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). For instance, how do race, gender, class, and other elements interact with place and the built environment to shape identity?

In conclusion, the evolution of identity and urban identity concepts in academic literature reflects a growing recognition of the complex interplay between individuals, society, and the physical environment in shaping identities. From early philosophical and psychological investigations into individual self-understanding, the discourse has expanded to encompass the impact of place and the built environment on identity, and more recently, to consider the unique identities of urban environments themselves. As our cities continue to evolve and face new challenges, so too will our understanding of urban identity, offering new insights into the relationship between people and the places they inhabit.

### 2.1. Urban identity of a place and urban identity of people

Urban identity and people's urban identity, while often interrelated, are distinct concepts that carry unique implications for the study of urban environments and human behaviour.

Urban identity of a place, as a concept, encapsulates the distinguishing characteristics that make an urban area unique. It's a multifaceted construct that is shaped by an interplay of physical elements such as architecture, urban design, and natural features, and immaterial elements like social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics of the city (Lynch, The image of the city 1960) (Relph 1976). The urban identity of a place is also strongly linked to its history and heritage, and thus reflects a shared, collective memory and experience of its inhabitants (Zukin 1995).

In contrast, people's urban identity, often referred to as urban social identity, focuses on the individual and collective identities of people in relation to the urban environment they inhabit. It reflects how individuals and groups identify with and perceive their city and how these perceptions shape their sense of self and belonging (Proshansky, The City and Self-Identity 1978). For instance, a person may identify as a "New Yorker" or a "Londoner", embodying not just the geographic location, but also the values, behaviours, and lifestyles associated with these cities. Urban social identity is shaped by a myriad of factors including socio-economic status, cultural background, personal experiences, and the physical characteristics of the urban environment (Twigger-Ros and Uzzell 1996).

The main difference between the two concepts lies in the level of analysis and perspective. Urban identity of a place is a broader, more encompassing concept that represents the collective, shared characteristics of an urban environment, influenced by historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. It offers a macro perspective on the unique identity of an urban

area. People's urban identity, on the other hand, provides a micro perspective, focusing on individual and group identities within the urban context. It's an exploration of how the city's characteristics and the individual's experiences within it shape their sense of identity and belonging. (Figure1)
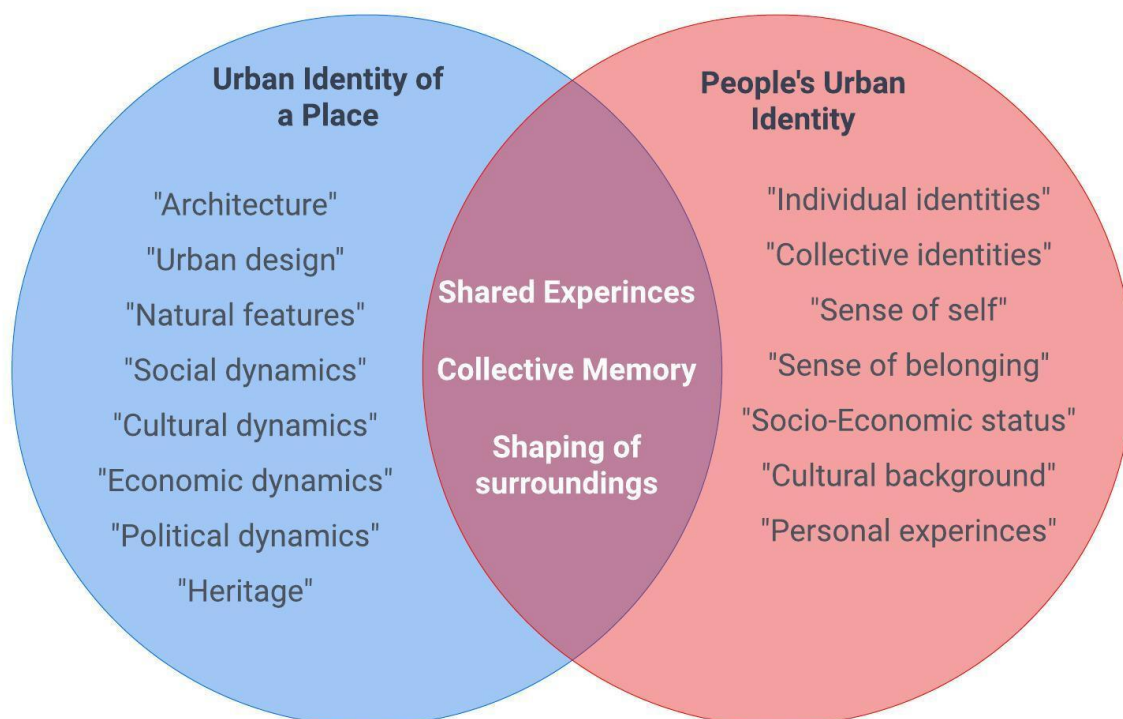


**Figure 1**: Intersection of Urban Identity of a Place and People's Urban Identity

In recent years, an appreciation for the role of urban identities, both of places and of people, has emerged as an essential consideration for urban management policies. The interaction between people and their urban environment is an intricate, dynamic process that can offer critical insights for effective urban management, and ultimately for the creation of cities that are harmonious, vibrant, and reflective of their diverse identities (GÜR and HEİDARİ 2019) (Van Eijk 2020).

The urban identity of a place, constituted by its unique historical, architectural, and socio-cultural characteristics, can act as a guide for urban planning and management policies (Krsmanovic 2020). Urban planners and policymakers often use the distinct urban identity of a place as a framework for developing strategies that preserve and enhance a city's unique elements, informing decisions related to urban design, historical site preservation, urban renewal projects, and policies aimed at preserving the city's character (Hudson, Nyseth and Pedersen 2019). This understanding of place identity has the potential to be harnessed as a branding tool to drive tourism and investment, and guide urban regeneration strategies (Kavaratzis and Hatch, The dynamics of place brands: An identity-based approach to place branding theory 2013).

In parallel, people's urban identity, the way individuals and communities perceive themselves in relation to the urban environment they inhabit, can shape urban management policies from a more grassroots perspective. Knowledge of the population's perception of their city can inform policies to align with residents' sense of self and belonging, leading to increased cooperation and policy success (Hassen and Giovanardi 2021). This perspective fosters policies

catering to inhabitants' needs and aspirations, resulting in urban development that genuinely reflects its citizens (D'Ovidio 2021) (Hanitio and Perkins 2017).

Despite these advances, the academic literature reveals significant gaps in our understanding of urban identities and their practical applications in urban management. The complexity and fluid nature of urban identities, their interactions, and the implications for urban management are areas requiring further exploration. There is a critical need for more empirical research mapping the transitions of urban identities and how these transitions inform dynamic policy adjustments (Hudson, Nyseth and Pedersen 2019). Moreover, interdisciplinary research, bridging the gap between sociology, psychology, and urban planning, could lead to more effective, identity-conscious policies (GÜR and HEİDARİ 2019).

Furthermore, rapid urbanization, particularly in developing nations, presents unique challenges in preserving cultural heritage while accommodating growth. These contexts warrant focused studies on urban identities to formulate more effective and inclusive urban management policies (Cheshmehzangi, Urban Memory in City Transitions. The Significance of Place in Mind 2021) (Soccali and Cinà 2020). Similarly, understanding how a mismatch between the urban identity of a place and people's urban identity could lead to policy resistance or failure is a critical research gap. Studies exploring this interplay could yield significant insights for improving policy design and implementation (Cheshmehzangi, Identity of Cities and City of Identities 2020).

Ultimately, the integration of a thorough understanding of urban identities, both of the place and the people, into urban management policies is crucial for policy success. These considerations, when effectively leveraged, can guide the creation of more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban policies and contribute to building cities that not only respect and preserve their unique identity but also foster a sense of belonging among their inhabitants.

### 2.2. Urban Identity and Urban Identification

Understanding the subtle differences between urban identity and urban identification is crucial in the academic discourse of urban studies.

Urban identity is often defined as the unique characteristics that differentiate one city from another (Lynch, The image of the city 1960) (Relph 1976). This, however, is a somewhat limited perspective. To expand the definition of urban identity, it's essential to consider not just the unique aspects, but the entirety of a city's characteristics, including both unique and shared elements. This comprehensive view of urban identity aligns more closely with the broader sociological and psychological understandings of identity as a totality of characteristics, not just those that differentiate one entity from another (Fearon, 1999; Jenkins, 2008).

On the other hand, the term urban identification could be employed to specifically denote the unique attributes of a city. This term, then, would concentrate on the aspects of a city that set it apart from others. The identification of a city could include its distinctive architecture, its unique blend of cultural influences, or its particular history and heritage (Zukin, 1995; Southworth & Rugerri, 2010).

In other words, urban identification focuses on the city's unique, differentiating features, while urban identity encompasses a broader range of characteristics, including both unique and shared aspects. This distinction reflects the difference between identification (focusing on distinctive features) and identity (acknowledging the entire array of characteristics).

The confluence of shared and unique characteristics in urban identity reflects the interplay of global and local influences in city development. Cities around the world are shaped by broader

socio-economic trends and global cultural influences, leading to shared characteristics. At the same time, local factors such as history, geography, and culture result in unique elements that contribute to urban identification (Bourdieu, 1984; Castells, 1997).

This nuanced understanding of urban identity and urban identification offers a more comprehensive and flexible framework for studying cities. It allows for the recognition of shared and unique characteristics and the complex interplay between global and local influences in urban development.

While this comprehensive view of urban identity and urban identification indeed offers a nuanced perspective in urban studies, it raises critical challenges for urban management and policy-making. Urban managers must understand both the unique urban identification and the broad urban identity of the cities they oversee to create effective policies and strategies. Urban management policies must then navigate the tension between preserving a city's unique identification and fostering an identity that aligns with global trends and shared characteristics. This necessitates a highly sophisticated and responsive approach to urban management, which may be challenging in the context of current policy tools and processes.

The interaction between urban identification and urban identity has significant implications for the framing of urban management policies. Policies aimed at preserving and promoting unique urban identification must be carefully balanced with strategies designed to integrate cities into global socio-economic trends. Moreover, urban managers must consider the dynamic nature of both urban identity and identification, which evolve over time due to various factors such as demographic changes, economic developments, and cultural shifts. This adds another layer of complexity to urban management, as policies must be adaptive and flexible to accommodate these changes (Stubbs, Lemon and Longhurst 2000).

Current urban management tools and policies may not be fully equipped to address these complexities. Traditional urban management frameworks may be based on static, homogenous views of cities and may not adequately account for the dynamics of urban identity and identification (Cheshmehzangi, Urban Identity as a Global Phenomenon: Hybridity and Contextualization of Urban Identities in the Social Environment 2015). Furthermore, there may be a lack of effective mechanisms to capture the diverse perspectives of city inhabitants, who are key contributors to and stakeholders in urban identity and identification (Fainstein 2010).

To address these challenges, several strategies can be considered. First, it is necessary to further develop the academic understanding of the interaction between urban identity and identification, and how these dynamics can be effectively managed. This requires cross-disciplinary research that bridges the gap between urban studies, sociology, psychology, and urban management.

Second, urban management frameworks and policies must be adapted to accommodate the dynamic, diverse, and complex nature of urban identity and identification. This could involve the development of more flexible policy tools and strategies, and the integration of participatory mechanisms to involve city inhabitants in the policy-making process.

Lastly, capacity-building efforts are needed to equip urban managers with the knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of urban identity and identification. This includes training in areas such as participatory planning, adaptive management, and the use of innovative tools and approaches to capture and respond to the dynamics of urban identity and identification.

## 2.3. Urban Identity and Place Identity

The notions of urban identity and place identity, though intertwined, cater to different aspects of the complex interplay between individuals and their surroundings. Both are pivotal for a comprehensive understanding of how people and places mutually influence each other, emphasizing that our environments are more than mere physical spaces; they are saturated with meanings, memories, and identities that mold our experiences and perceptions of the world (Gieryn, 2000; Tuan, 1977).

Both urban identity and place identity, while different in scope, contribute to our understanding of the multifaceted relationship between people and places, showcasing how the environment influences the individual and the collective identity, and vice versa. Their interplay is crucial in the development and maintenance of sense of self and understanding of the world around us. As we continue to navigate our urban landscapes, the study of these identities will remain central to our understanding of the urban experience and the dynamic relationship between people and their environments (Tuan, 1977; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Manzo, 2003; Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007; Knox & Marston, 2014).

Place identity, as conceptualized by environmental psychologists, denotes the complex blend of meanings, emotions, convictions, and behaviors that individuals tie to a specific place (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky, et al., 1983). This concept is highly individual and subjective, underscoring the emotional and symbolic bonds that individuals forge with places over time. It can pertain to a wide range of physical locations that an individual feels connected to, including homes, neighborhoods, cities, or even countries (Relph, 1976). As part of the broader concept of self-identity, place identity is deemed a "sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives" (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Breakwell, 1986).

Contrastingly, urban identity refers to the distinguishing features of a city that set it apart from other urban landscapes. It is sculpted by various aspects of a city, including its physical characteristics such as architecture, urban design, and natural attributes, and also its cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions (Lynch, 1960; Relph, 1976; Hall, 1998). Urban identity mirrors the collective memory, shared experiences, and cultural heritage of a city's inhabitants (Zukin, 1995; Low, 1992). It emerges from the interplay between a city's physical form and its socio-cultural dynamics, as well as the narratives and images associated with the city (Amin & Thrift, 2002).

The primary distinction between the two notions lies in their individual focuses. Place identity centers around the individual, delving into personal meanings, attachments, and identities that people construct vis-à-vis specific places. It echoes the personal perspective, swayed by an individual's experiences, memories, convictions, and emotions (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Manzo, 2003). Conversely, urban identity adopts a wider view, focusing on the collective and shared characteristics that render a city unique. It encapsulates not only individual perspectives, but also shared cultural narratives, historical evolutions, and socio-political dynamics that mold a city's unique identity (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007; Knox & Marston, 2014).

In sum, place identity revolves around the subjective and personal experience of place, while urban identity pertains to the collective and shared identity of a city as an entity. They both contribute significantly to our understanding of the intricate ways in which people and places interact and shape each other, further underscoring the fact that our environments are not

merely physical entities, but are imbued with meanings, memories, and identities that shape our experiences and our understanding of the world (Gieryn, 2000; Massey, 1994). Table 2.

In essence, the concepts of urban identity and place identity capture different dimensions of the intricate and dynamic relationship between individuals and their spatial contexts. These notions, deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and psychological literature, underscore the profound influence of our environment on shaping our identities, emotions, and behaviors. They remind us that our surroundings, whether it's a small neighborhood or a bustling city, are more than just physical spaces; they are rich with meanings, memories, identities, and experiences that shape our perception of the world and our place in it (Gieryn, 2000; Massey, 1994).

|  | **Urban Identity** | **Place Identity** |
|---|---|---|
| **Scope** | Collective, shared characteristics of a city | Individual, subjective feelings and meanings tied to a specific place |
| **Focus** | Distinguishing features of a city (architecture, urban design, cultural, social, economic, political) | Emotional and symbolic bonds individuals forge with places over time |
| **Components** | Physical characteristics, cultural heritage, shared experiences, collective memory | Meanings, emotions, convictions, and behaviors tied to a specific place |
| **Contribution to Understanding People-Place Relationships** | Highlights the role of shared and collective features in creating a unique city identity | Highlights the role of individual experiences, memories, and emotions in creating a unique, personal identity with a place |

**Table 2**: Comparative Analysis of Urban Identity and Place Identity

Urban management policies significantly influence both place and urban identities. For instance, land use planning, zoning ordinances, urban design guidelines, and preservation policies directly shape the physical characteristics of a city that contribute to its urban identity (Knox and Marston 2016). Likewise, policies related to housing, social services, and local economic development can impact the subjective experiences and emotional attachments that people associate with specific places, thus affecting place identity (Manzo 2003). However, current urban management frameworks often overlook the psychological and emotional dimensions of place identity, focusing mainly on the tangible, physical aspects of urban development (GÜR and HEİDARİ 2019).

This gap can result in policies that are insensitive to the lived experiences of city inhabitants, potentially leading to displacement, gentrification, and a loss of sense of belonging. For example, urban renewal projects, while intending to improve the physical environment, can inadvertently disrupt existing social networks and sense of place, leading to a loss of place identity (Hassen and Giovanardi 2021) (Fullilove 2016).

There's a pressing need to incorporate the dynamics of place identity and urban identity into urban management policies more effectively. This could involve adopting a more participatory approach to policy-making, where local communities are actively engaged in the decision-making process. Such an approach can help ensure that policies reflect the unique identities and attachments of the communities they serve (Healey 1997) (Hudson, Nyseth and Pedersen 2019).

Furthermore, cross-disciplinary research involving urban studies, psychology, and policy studies could aid in the development of urban management tools that better account for the interplay of place and urban identities. Such research could lead to the development of

'identity-sensitive' urban policies that acknowledge and respect the emotional and psychological attachments people form with their environments, thereby enhancing the wellbeing of city inhabitants and fostering more sustainable urban development (Fainstein 2010) (Breakwell, Coping with Threatened Identities 1986).

### 2.4. Urban Identity, City Image, and City Branding

Navigating the nuances between urban identity, city image, and city branding can provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of urban development and place-making. Each of these concepts, while interlinked, offers a unique lens to view and understand cities.

Urban identity is a broad and multifaceted concept that encompasses the distinctive characteristics and qualities that set a city apart from others. These characteristics are often deeply rooted in a city's historical, cultural, social, and environmental context (Lynch, 1960; Relph, 1976). Urban identity is influenced not just by a city's physical form, but also by its social and cultural dynamics, and the lived experiences of its inhabitants (Zukin, 1995). It is a dynamic and evolving construct, shaped and reshaped over time through ongoing processes of urban transformation (Brook, Mooney and Pile 1998).

City image, on the other hand, refers to the perceptions and associations that people – both residents and non-residents – have of a city (Lynch, 1960). It is shaped by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, media representations, and word-of-mouth (Govers and Go 2009). Kevin Lynch, in his seminal work "The Image of the City" (1960), argued that individuals construct mental maps of their urban environment, which he referred to as the city image. This image is not just a reflection of the physical layout of the city, but also encompasses individuals' emotions, memories, and associations related to the city. It is important to note, however, that city images can vary significantly among individuals, and may not necessarily align with the objective reality of the city (Burgess, 1925).

City branding, meanwhile, is a strategic process aimed at crafting and promoting a desirable and distinctive image of a city to attract residents, tourists, investors, and businesses (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick? 2006). It involves the use of marketing techniques to shape perceptions and create a positive and compelling city image (Kotler, Haider and Rein 1993). City branding can be seen as an attempt to manage the city's image, to enhance the city's attractiveness and competitiveness (Hanna and Rowley 2011). It typically involves the articulation of a unique 'brand proposition' that highlights the city's strengths and distinctiveness (M. Kavaratzis 2004).

In summary, while urban identity, city image, and city branding are interrelated concepts, they each focus on a different aspect of the relationship between cities and their inhabitants, visitors, and potential investors. Urban identity is about the characteristics and qualities that define a city, city image is about the perceptions and associations that people have of a city, and city branding is about the strategic efforts to shape these perceptions and create a positive and distinctive city image. Each of these concepts plays a crucial role in shaping the way cities are understood, experienced, and transformed (G. Ashworth 2009). Figure 2.
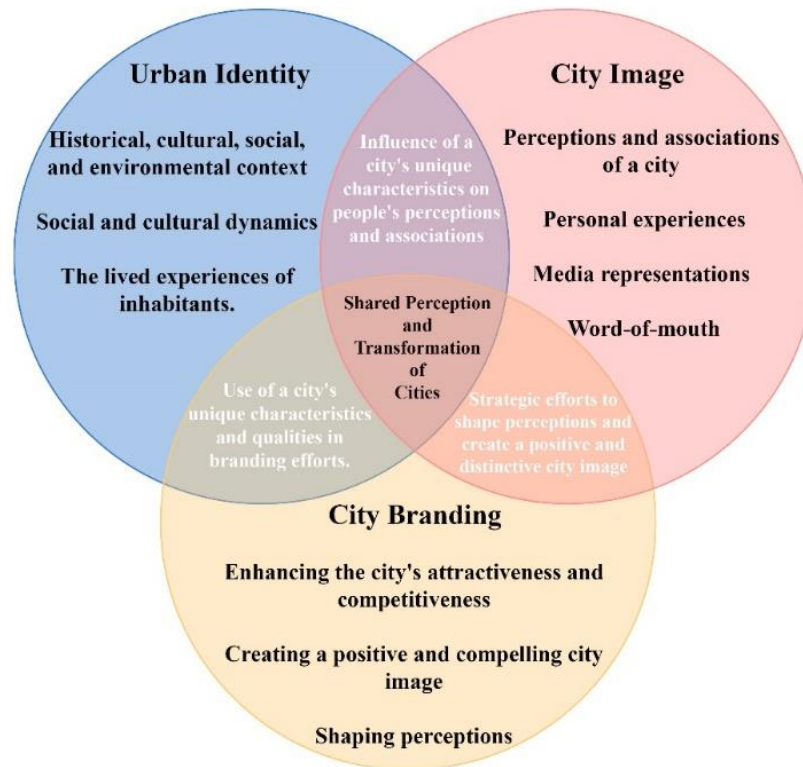
**Figure 2**: Interplay of Urban Identity, City Image, and City Branding in Urban Development

Urban management policies directly influence the formation and transformation of urban identity. These policies determine how a city's unique characteristics, which form part of its identity, are preserved, promoted or altered. For instance, heritage conservation policies contribute to preserving a city's historical and cultural attributes (Cheshmehzangi, Urban Memory in City Transitions. The Significance of Place in Mind 2021) (Soccali and Cinà 2020). Similarly, urban planning and design policies can shape a city's physical form and thereby its identity (Carmona 2021).

The city image, too, is intricately linked with urban management policies. Policies relating to public safety, sanitation, infrastructure development, and public transportation, for example, significantly impact the perceptions people have of a city (Lynch, The image of the city 1960). The issue arises when city images, shaped by both residents and non-residents, are at odds with the lived realities within the city. Policymakers may face challenges in managing these perceptions and reconciling them with their policy objectives.

City branding is an explicit policy tool that urban managers use to promote a positive image of the city. It is utilized to attract investment, tourism, and to foster civic pride among residents (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick? 2006). However, city branding efforts can often oversimplify or misrepresent the complex realities of a city, resulting in 'placeless' branding that lacks authenticity and connection with the local context (M. Kavaratzis 2004).

A glaring gap exists in integrating these concepts into the policy-making process in a balanced and context-specific manner. An overemphasis on city branding, for example, can undermine the authentic urban identity and contribute to gentrification, social exclusion, and homogenization of urban spaces (Zukin, 2009).

A potential solution lies in creating urban management policies that embrace a holistic approach. These policies should aim to preserve and enhance the unique urban identity, accurately reflect and manage the city image, and create authentic, inclusive city branding strategies. Public participation in decision-making processes can also ensure that diverse voices and experiences are included, leading to policies that truly reflect the city's unique identity and realities (Healey 1997).

## 3. Results and Discussion

Our research underscores the complex, multifaceted nature of urban identity, affirming its inherent complexity, continuous evolution, and influence on the livability, sustainability, and resilience of urban environments. Simultaneously, our findings stress the crucial role urban identity plays in urban management policies, which must incorporate a nuanced understanding of these identities to facilitate effective urban planning.

Urban identity, both in terms of place identity and people's urban identity, emerged as critical constructs. Place identity provides a macro perspective encapsulating unique features that differentiate one urban area from another, ranging from physical characteristics to immaterial elements such as social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics. On the other hand, people's urban identity provides a micro perspective, delving into individual and group identification with their cities, consequently influencing their sense of belonging and cooperation with urban management policies.

In the context of urban management, our findings shed light on an apparent disconnect between the conceptual discourse of urban identity and its application in urban management, a gap that calls for a praxis-oriented approach. This approach emphasizes the importance of interweaving conceptual and applied strands of research to guide the formulation of urban policies that respect the unique identities of cities and their inhabitants. The balance between preserving a city's heritage and allowing for its natural evolution is key, acknowledging the dynamic nature of urban identity.

Further, our research reveals the fundamental interconnection between urban identity, place identity, city image, and city branding, providing distinct but complementary perspectives on urban experiences and perceptions. These concepts can serve as tools for urban development and place-making, influencing urban identity and shaping the image of the city both for its residents and non-residents. However, city branding strategies need careful crafting to avoid oversimplification or distortion of a city's complex realities, which could result in inauthentic branding and undermine the city's unique urban identity.

Additionally, our research indicates significant knowledge gaps and challenges in understanding and integrating urban identities into urban management. These include the inherent complexity and fluid nature of urban identities, the rapid urbanization in developing nations, and potential discord between the urban identity of a place and people's urban identity. To bridge these gaps, we propose focused studies, interdisciplinary research, and capacity-building efforts, aiming to shape more effective and inclusive urban management policies and strategies.

Finally, our research highlights the necessity of recognizing both unique and shared characteristics of cities in shaping urban identities. Policymakers and urban managers are called to navigate the tension between preserving a city's unique identification and fostering an identity that aligns with global trends. To this end, we propose strategies that involve developing the academic understanding of these dynamics, adapting urban management frameworks, and policies to accommodate these complexities.

In conclusion, understanding and integrating urban identity, both of the place and the people, into urban management policies is crucial. Such an approach not only paves the way towards creating more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities but also fosters a sense of belonging among their inhabitants. By adopting a praxis-oriented approach, urban environments can respect and preserve their unique identities, promote a sense of belonging among inhabitants, and contribute to the creation of sustainable and resilient cities that genuinely reflect their diverse identities.

## 4. Conclusion

Our comprehensive exploration underscores the multifaceted nature of urban identity and the significant interplay between individuals and their spatial contexts. Throughout this process, we found that urban identity is both a product and a driver of urban management policies. However, a confrontation between theoretical conceptualization and applied strands of research was observed, calling for a more integrated praxis-oriented approach.

The complexity of urban identity, with its intimate intertwining of physical, social, and cultural dimensions, points to the necessity for adaptive urban management policies. While we've made strides in theoretical exploration, a gap exists between these theories and their practical applications, emphasizing the need for additional empirical research. Indeed, the findings of our study underscore the pressing need for urban management policies that more effectively incorporate the dynamics of place identity and urban identity, as well as city image and city branding.

Further, we highlight the central role of urban management in shaping place and urban identities, and the challenges faced in this process. Many current frameworks often overlook the psychological and emotional dimensions of place identity, focusing primarily on the tangible, physical aspects of urban development. This can lead to policies that disrupt inhabitants' sense of belonging, causing displacement and gentrification.

Our research also identified the need for urban management policies to adapt dynamically to the constant evolution of urban identity and identification, underscoring the necessity to consider both unique and shared characteristics. Therefore, to bridge this knowledge gap, we propose a tripartite strategy: deepening the academic understanding of urban identity dynamics, adapting urban management frameworks to the evolving nature of these constructs, and building capacity among urban managers.

To create more effective, inclusive, and sustainable urban environments, our study presents a compelling case for integrating urban identities into urban management policies. An identity-conscious approach, guided by a nuanced understanding of the complexities of urban identity, can foster sustainable and resilient cities that respect their unique identities while also promoting a sense of belonging among inhabitants. Future research should aim to empirically evaluate the impacts of such 'identity-sensitive' policies on urban development outcomes, potentially providing further evidence to support our recommendations.

In conclusion, this study has underscored the importance of reconciling conceptual understanding and practical application in urban planning, with a specific focus on the dynamic, multifaceted concept of urban identity. As our world continues to urbanize, it will be increasingly important to bridge these theoretical and practical divides, creating urban environments that are not only responsive to the physical needs of their inhabitants, but that also respect and enhance their unique and shared identities..

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