

Original Research Article

Territorial Landscape: Explaining the Relationship Between the Concept of Territory and Landscape*

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Abstract | Landscape and territory are concepts that refer to the relationship between human societies and their environment. Despite their widespread use in various studies, these concepts have sometimes been used interchangeably in an unclear manner, leading to ambiguity in their conceptual relationship and proper application in scientific research. Considering this issue, this study aims to clarify the relationship between the two concepts by examining landscape and territory, to ensure their correct usage in future research. Accordingly, this study addresses the following questions: What interpretations of the concepts of landscape and territory exist among different studies? And based on these interpretations, what conceptual relationship can be envisioned between the concepts of landscape and territory? This study is qualitative, and the data collection included a thorough search in both domestic and international databases. The data was analyzed using content analysis methods. The findings of this study indicate that territory is inherently a landscape and can be considered a type of landscape, conceptualized under the term “territorial landscape.” However, this large-scale landscape is itself composed of a collection of smaller landscape units, whose collective perception gives the territory and its identity distinctiveness. Additionally, the “Territorial landscape” refers to a concept different from “Landscape ecology” or “Territorial planning,” and unlike them, it adopts a holistic approach, considering both the objective and subjective dimensions of the territory. It emphasizes that territory is a historical, social, economic, ethnic, cultural, and ecological, unit that gives rise to a set of essential, unifying identity-giving characteristics within a geographical area.

Keywords | *Landscape, Territory, Territorial Landscape, Objective-Subjective Phenomenon, Human-Made Space.*

Introduction | “Landscape” and “territory” are both concepts that refer to the relationship between humans and their environment. Consequently, these concepts have been a focal point in many propositions made by environmental science researchers in fields such as geography, urban planning, landscape studies, and others (Raffestin, 2015; 2012; Cosgrove, 2003; Socco, 1998; Sorlin, 1999; Nogué & Vicente, 2004; Tilley, 1994; Harvey, 2000). In many of these propositions, researchers have attempted to articulate their understanding of the concepts of “landscape” and “territory” and explore the conceptual relationship between them. These concepts are semantically very close to each other, which has led to their

interchangeable and sometimes unclear use in some scholarly works. This manner of usage has created ambiguity in the precise definition of “landscape” and “territory” as well as their conceptual relationship. In some propositions, landscape is seen as an aspect of territory, while in others, territory is considered an aspect of landscape. This ambiguity in the use of the concepts “landscape” and “territory,” along with the varying interpretations of them, has led to occasionally contradictory scientific outputs. This underscores the need for a precise clarification of the relationship between these two concepts to ensure their correct application in future studies and research across various disciplines, particularly in the field of landscape studies. Therefore, this study aims to examine,

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analyze, and refine the concepts of “landscape” and “territory” and to accurately determine their conceptual relationship.

Research Questions

Based on the above, this study seeks to answer the question of what new conceptual relationship between the concepts of landscape and territory can be offered based on a reinterpretation of these concepts. Additionally, this study will address the questions of what interpretations of the concepts of landscape and territory have been presented in various approaches, and how the conceptual relationship between them has been discussed.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. It was conducted inductively and used content analysis methods to analyze existing scientific propositions related to the concepts of “landscape” and “territory” and their relationship. The data collection method in this study is primarily based on library research. The research methodology consists of three stages. In the first stage, a literature review of theories proposed by other researchers in various disciplines was conducted to identify, categorize, and analyze propositions that discuss the relationship between the concepts of “landscape” and “territory” in previous studies. This part of the study involved referencing both domestic and international databases, particularly Google Scholar and Proquest. Keywords used in the referenced databases include “Territory and Landscape,” “Territorial landscape,” “Territory and Landscape planning,” “Territory and Landscape architecture,” and in Persian “منظر و سرزمین”¹, “منظر سرزمینی”², “منظر سرزمین و برنامه‌ریزی منظر”³, and “سرزمین و معماری منظر”⁴. After this stage, the data were categorized and analyzed based on how they discussed the relationship between the concepts of “landscape” and “territory.” In the next stage, the concepts of “landscape” and “territory” were studied separately. Initially, to gain a precise understanding of the concept of “landscape,” definitions of this concept in different approaches were reviewed through database searches, mainly in Google Scholar. In the following stage, after refining the concept of “landscape” and with the aim of re-identifying the concept of “territory,” a linguistic and conceptual study of the term was conducted. For this purpose, the term “سرزمین” in Persian, the word “territory”

in English, and “territoire” in French were examined from a lexical perspective using linguistic resources and dictionaries. In the next step, the concept of “territory” was re-examined using library methods, database searches, and reviews of propositions in articles and books, and its different definitions were categorized within diverse research contexts such as philosophy, political geography, human geography, political science, humanities, and others. After refining the concepts of “landscape” and “territory,” the final stage involved discussing the relationship between these two concepts based on the studies conducted in the previous sections, and subsequently, presenting the new conceptual model proposed by this study to explain the relationship between the concepts of “landscape” and “territory.”

Research Background

By reviewing the existing propositions in the current body of research, the relationship between the concepts of landscape and territory can be broadly divided into two main categories (Fig. 1). In the first category, researchers have viewed the landscape as an aspect of the territory. In this context, Claude Raffestin (2015), a Swiss geographer, considers the landscape to be a two-dimensional image of the territory that arises from human observation. He perceives the landscape as a series of images and representations that emerge from the territory as a geographic area inhabited by a group of residents. For him, the difference between landscape and territory is the difference between the “seen” landscape and the “lived” territory (ibid., 2012). Similarly, Denis Cosgrove, a human geographer, assumes territory as a region, while the landscape is viewed as an equivalent to nature, serving as a visual aspect of the territory (Cosgrove, 2003). Socco (1998) also notes the connection between landscape and territory, describing the landscape as a collection of images that play a crucial role in shaping the territory’s features. Studying these images can provide cognitive information about the territory. Here, too, the territory is presented as nothing more than a geographic area, a phenomenon with unique material characteristics that distinguish it from other regions.

In another subset of propositions within this category, the landscape is no longer just an image of the territory but rather a mindset or perception of it, something that exists only in

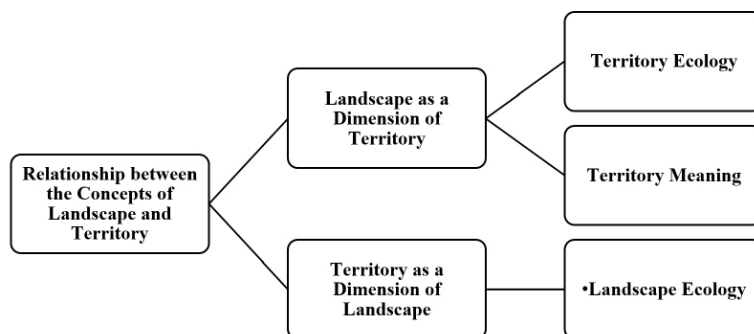


Fig. 1. The relationship between the concepts of landscape and territory in the existing body of research. Source: Authors.

human minds and through which the territory's meaning and identity are attached. In this regard, Sorlin (1999) classifies the landscape as a symbolic element produced by the perception of human societies of the territory as their living environment, which generates memories, a sense of belonging, and attachment among the various inhabitants. Similarly, Nogué & Vicente (2004) mention the concept of territory as a geographical space indicative of social power and introduce the landscape as a phenomenon distinct from the territory that imparts value, essence, and meaning to it. In other words, they also consider the landscape as a subjective matter that results from the perception of the territory as a physical and tangible phenomenon.

In the second category of related propositions, it is the territory that is considered an aspect of the landscape. In these propositions, the territory usually gives form to the landscape, and the landscape, which is subjective in nature, manifests or is shaped through the territory (Tilley, 1994). According to Harvey (1997), territories and their associated patterns, as physical structures in nature, are factors in shaping landscapes, and understanding their form and essence leads to an understanding of the landscape's meaning (ibid., 2000). Similarly, Zedeno (2016) refers to the territory as land or resources that provide the physical foundation for the formation of the landscape. Thus, the territory is a material phenomenon equivalent to space, mainly referring to parts of nature, and human interaction with it results in the creation of the landscape as an environmental concept with subjective and meaningful characteristics (Zedeno, 1997). In this vein, Ferrari et al. (2019) regard territory as a spatial-geographical area with material and concrete dimensions, while in their view, "landscapes" are environmental areas produced through human interaction with the territory, generally possessing subjective characteristics associated with emotional, social, and aesthetic concepts.

Research Findings

• Conceptual analysis of landscape

The term "landscape" is complex and multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of meanings and dimensions (Alehashemi & Mansouri, 2018). This complexity has led to various definitions of the concept (Mahan & Mansouri, 2017). However, four primary perspectives on the concept of "landscape" can be identified (Table 1):

- Landscape as an objective phenomenon

In this perspective, "landscape" is discussed from an objectivist approach as a physical form, a geographical area, or a segment of land. This objectivist view is particularly prominent among geographers and is used to refer to a geographic unit, synonymous with terms like "region" and "area," which denote a specific form of land (Sauer, 1925). This perspective is also reflected in UNESCO's definition of "Cultural landscapes" as historical forms resulting from the interaction between nature

and humans (UNESCO, 1996). Objectivism in landscape theory is also traceable in the ideas of ecology scholars. For instance, prominent ecologist Almo Farina views landscape as a dynamic ecosystem, defining it as a mosaic space or an organized environment (Farina, 2006, 2010). Environmental experts emphasize the objectivity of landscapes, viewing them as phenomena with ecological and morphological values (Brook, 2019). Urban and regional planning researchers also emphasize objectivism, describing landscapes as a type of environment (Bourassa, 1988). Similarly, landscape urbanists, with a comparable approach, consider landscapes as mediums structurally connected to spatial transformations driven by specific economic orders (Waldheim, 2016).

- Landscape as a subjective phenomenon

In the second perspective, the landscape is considered solely as a subjective phenomenon, existing as an image in the mind of the observer. This approach to landscape is particularly valued among cultural geographers, landscape designers, archaeologists, and landscape historians. Here, the landscape is viewed as a cultural image and a way of seeing the world, structuring and imbuing meaning into the surrounding environment (Daniels & Cosgrove, 2007, 1). In this context, landscape is an ideological concept that represents a way of seeing, wherein cultural interpretation and representation by specific human groups ascribe meaning to nature within a hypothetical and subjective relationship (Cosgrove, 1998, 1989, 1985). Consequently, natural elements such as rivers, shores, cliffs, soil, etc., are seen as components of a signifying system through which society explores, structures, and reproduces concepts in the form of memory (Tilley, 1994; Schama, 1995).

- Landscape as objective and subjective phenomenon

In the third perspective, the landscape is generally discussed as an objective phenomenon that can also contain subjective meanings. Here, the landscape is first considered as a material entity, and subjective characteristics may then be applied to it. Thus, the landscape is seen as a union between the environment and its representation. This perspective is prevalent among some geography scholars, where the landscape is discussed as a collection of social assets at the level of spatial objectivity. These assets, when imbued with meaning, can evoke powerful images and emotions, helping to understand societal values and playing a crucial role in social, political, and economic identity (Duncan & Duncan, 2001; Mitchell, 1996, 2008).

- Landscape as an objective-subjective phenomenon

In the fourth perspective, the landscape is a phenomenon that encompasses both objective components and, simultaneously, subjective elements due to its semantic characteristics (Berque, 2013; Donadieu, 2013; Maghsoudi et al., 2020). This view, commonly favored by scholars in landscape disciplines, suggests that the landscape cannot be analyzed and described solely through objective scientific methods. It also requires subjective observation and experience, embodying

perceptual, aesthetic, artistic, and existential meanings (Antrop, 2019; Luginbuhl, 2012; Rose, 2002; Ingold, 2000). Therefore, the landscape is not merely a space filled with various objects but a totality of existential meanings, deeply rooted in culture and history, and reflecting the identity of a place through environmental, social, and economic patterns (Antrop & Van Eetvelde, 2017; Bell, 2012).

• **Etymological examination of the term “Sarzamin” (territory)**

In Persian, the term “Sarzamin” is used to refer to a portion of land that belongs to a particular group. This term is distinct from “Zamin” (meaning “land” or “earth”) in Persian and is typically preferred over it. According to “Dehkhoda Dictionary”, “Sarzamin” is defined as a territory, country, region, land, or domain, and is considered a place that belongs to a specific people (Dehkhoda, 2014). Similarly, in “Amid’s Dictionary”, “Sarzamin” is defined as a homeland or country, and it refers to a vast piece of land inhabited by a tribe or community (Amid, 1979).

Structurally, “Sarzamin” is a compound word formed by combining the words “Sar” (head/top) and “Zamin” (land). In “Sokhan Dictionary” (Anvari, 2002), about twenty-five different meanings are associated with the word “Sar”

(Imani & Rafiei, 2020). In Persian, the word “Sar,” which originally refers to a body part (i.e., the head), carries additional figurative and metaphorical meanings in various contexts (Karimi Bavariani & Bamshadi, 2016), often highlighting notions of time, place, rank, status, or other significant attributes (Table 2).

In various lexical combinations, the term “Sar” (head) plays a referential role, manifesting differently depending on the context. The human body, as the first tangible reality recognized by humans, provides numerous referential points that allow people to objectify many of their abstract concepts (Estaji, 2008). In these combinations, “Sar” refers to something or a phenomenon with a high status, similar to how the head, located at the top of the human body, holds special significance compared to other body parts. In other words, “Sar” imparts a distinctive quality to things and phenomena, setting them apart from their counterparts. This interpretation also applies to the word “Sarzamin” (territory). The inclusion of “Sar” in “Sarzamin” signifies a piece of land that is distinguished and holds a prominent position relative to other lands.

In English, the equivalent term for “Sarzamin” is “Territory.” “The Oxford Dictionary” defines “territory” as a large area of land with specific distinguishing and identity-related

Table 1. Different approaches to the concept of landscape and the various definitions provided. Source: Authors.

Approach Type	Discipline	Definition of Landscape
Objective	Geography	A specific form of land
	Cultural Landscape	A historical structure resulting from nature and humans
	Ecology	A mosaic space of ecological processes
	Environment	A space encompassing ecological and morphological values
	Urban and Regional Planning	A type of environment
Subjective	Landscape Urbanism	The spatial manifestation of the economic system
	Cultural Geography	A cultural image and a way of seeing the world
	Landscape Design	Cultural representation and interpretation
	Landscape Archaeology	A meaning-giving system
	Landscape History	Memory
Objective and Subjective	Geography	The union between environment and representation
Objective-Subjective	Landscape architecture	A place, a totality of existential meanings with objectivity

Table 2. Various meanings of the word “sar” (head) in compound names. Source: Authors based on Rasekh Mahand & Ranjbar Zarrabi, 2013 & Karimi Bavariani & Bamshadi, 2016.

Different Meanings of the Word “Sar” (Head) in Compound Words			
1. Important - Main	Sargorooh (Leader) - Sardasta (Head of group)	5. Personality and Identity	Sarshomari (Census) - Sarshenasa (Well-known)
2. The top point of everything	Sardar (Gate) - Sarsooton (Pillar)	6. Thought, mentality, and belief	Saboksar (Fickle) - Sarseporda (Devoted)
3. The starting point and beginning	Saraghaz (Beginning) - Sarcheshme (Source) - Sarpul (Bridgehead)	7. The endpoint and conclusion	Sarangam (End) - Sarakhar (Finally) - Sargozasht (Life story)
4. One of the body’s organs	Sardard (Headache) - Sarboland (Proud)	8. Primary and Superior	Sarashpaz (Chef) - Sardabir (Editor-in-Chief)

characteristics (Akbarian, 2012). In French, the term is usually spelled “territoire.” Michel Lussault, a French geographer, broadly defines “territory” as an assumedly unified area of land that has been altered in some way (Lussault, 2007). Jacques Lévy, in the *Belin Dictionnaire de la Géographie* entry for “territory,” offers several definitions, including a concept distinct from space, a synonym for place, social space, demarcated space, biological realm, and designated space (Lévy, 2003). Sheppard (2013) distinguishes between the terms “territoire” and “terroir,” defining the latter as a geographically homogeneous area in terms of resources and production (often agricultural) with specific cultural communities. He considers “territoire” as a political-spatial or natural realm with defined boundaries. Etymologically, the words “territory” and “territoire” in English and French derive from the Latin words “terra” and “territorium” (Donald, 1872; Brachet, 1882). In Latin, “terra” means “dry land” or “earth” (de Vaan, 2008), and “territorium” is a derivative of “terra,” formed with the suffix “-torium,” typically used to refer to a specific place (ibid.). The suffix “-torium” implies “belonging to or surrounding something or somewhere” (de Carvalho, 2016). Therefore, similar to “Sarzamin,” the word “territory” is a compound term referring to land that is distinguished by its final suffix, indicating its spatial quality.

• Examination of the concept of territory

The concept of territory is typically discussed in scholarly work from two different perspectives. The first views territory as a political space, while the second considers it as a human space, intimately connected with human existence (Fig. 2). The following sections will explore the concept of territory from both perspectives.

- Territory as a political construct

In this view, territory is seen as a political entity and a product of political processes. In this context, Picon (2010, 97) describes territory as a space controlled and governed by institutions or corporations, often associated with administrative actions. Gottmann (1973, 71), in his seminal work “The Significance of Territory,” argues that “no one can understand a government, a political institution, without defining its spatial aspect, that is, its territory.” Thus, territory serves as the physical foundation for materializing political institutions (Allies, 1980). This perspective aligns with the conventional understanding of territory, rooted in the tradition of political geography from the 15th to the 20th century (Agnew, 2005), emphasizing meanings such as borders, identity, integrity, sovereignty, and spatial cohesion (Elden, 2010). Here, territory is effectively regarded as “land” or “soil” with defined physical boundaries, embodying a set of political-economic and political-strategic relationships (ibid.). In this view, the institution of power plays a central role in the creation of territory, such that the existence of territory is essentially impossible without the presence of power (Mirheydar et al., 2001). As Foucault (1994) explains⁵, “territory is undoubtedly a geographical concept, but before anything else, it is a juridical-political area, controlled by a specific form of power.”

- Territory as a human construct

In this perspective, territory is understood as a phenomenon that extends beyond a mere physical and political entity, emerging through the presence of human communities (Elden, 2010). The role of humans in their creation and formation is therefore crucial. In this view, territory is a tangible reality and a product of human life (Delaney, 2008),

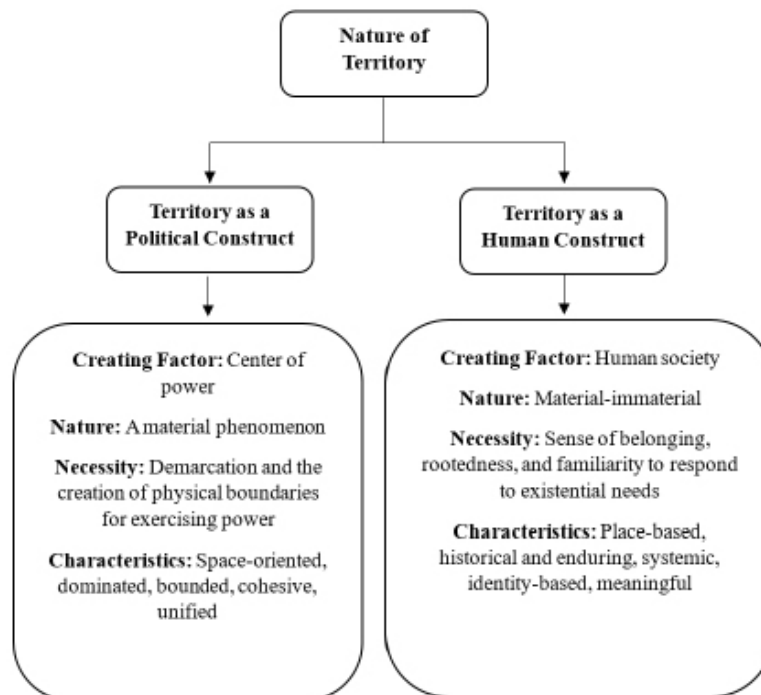


Fig. 2. Diagram of definitions related to the concept of territory. Source: Authors.

resulting from a diachronic process⁶ and the continuous transformations of subjects and history (Raffestin, 2015). Thus, the creation of territory is considered the result of human labor (in the form of energy and information), applied by a community to a portion of space and nature with the aim of reorganizing its order and content (ibid., 2012). This body of human work, referred to as 'territoriality', encompasses actions and relationships arising from interactions between humans and their environment at various scales. Through this process, communities, while maintaining their relationships with space and nature, transform them into something distinctly different from the land and space on which they were originally based (Raffestin, 2012; Sack, 1986, 1983). As Deleuze & Guattari (2005, 315) explain in "A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia", this human work is not merely material intervention. They describe territory as the result of actions that alter environments and their milieus and rhythms, thereby "territorializing" them. Consequently, environmental components become dimensional and not only directional. They become expressive, rather than merely functional. The formation of territory is defined by the emergence of meaning. What defines the emergence of a territory is the emergence of the meaningful (qualities). Therefore, the process of creating territory involves not only physical actions but also mental interventions (Raffestin, 2012), transforming the territory into an artifact that "contains" and "conveys" various meanings (Delaney, 2008), derived from cultural and social systems (Raffestin, 2012). Under these circumstances, territory is no longer just a rational mechanism for demarcating and controlling different areas, but can also function as an emotional and identity-defining mechanism (Brighenti, 2010). Through the formation of territory, material aspects and physical elements like land, functional elements like spatial control, and mental and symbolic dimensions like social identity combine to form a "material-semiotic system" (Bonta & Protevi, 2004), composed of a collection of places, each with its own specific semantic content (Mansouri, 2010).

Discussion

• The relationship between the concepts of "landscape" and "territory"

Based on the discussions in the previous sections, it can be concluded that the concept of "landscape" as an objective-subjective phenomenon and "territory" as a human construct are undeniably interconnected (Raymond et al, 2021). A landscape, as an objective-subjective phenomenon, represents a form of a place and therefore cannot be equated with land, filled space, or a geographical boundary. In this context, "territory" as a political construct fundamentally lacks a semantic connection with the concept of landscape, as this definition of territory typically refers to a geographical-spatial boundary or demarcated land. However, "territory" in its definition as a human construct shares spatial qualities with the landscape.

Both landscape and territory, as human constructs, are inherently historical phenomena that have evolved over different periods. Consequently, they possess elements and characteristics that, when interpreted, can reveal the environmental and human processes and transformations that have occurred within them. Furthermore, both landscape and territory can be regarded as human products, emerging from the interaction between humans and their environment, shaped in response to human needs. Additionally, in the definitions provided for landscape, this concept is referred to as a whole, composed of material and immaterial elements that operate in an inseparable relationship with one another, a characteristic similarly attributed to the concept of territory. In other words, territory is also a system or whole, comprised of physical and symbolic components that cannot be separated and interact with each other. Therefore, as many texts have suggested, landscape does not merely represent the appearance or meaning of a territory, and territory does not solely correspond to the tangible aspect of a landscape. Instead, landscape and territory are both concepts with shared characteristics, seemingly referring to phenomena with similar attributes. This connection between the concepts of landscape and territory is also evident in the etymology of the word "landscape." The roots of the word landscape in English, such as "Landschaft" in German or "Landskab" in Danish, were historically used to refer to specific territories, particularly places with communities that had long-standing political, economic, and social traditions (Olwig, 2005). In its Northern European context, this word originally had a dual meaning: one referring to the territorial domain of human communities and the other to the appearance of a territory as perceived by us. The second meaning later became more common in the English language (ibid., 1996). Thus, etymologically, the concept of landscape originally encompassed both the idea of territory as a political, social, identity-based, and spatial construct and the idea of a natural view, meaning a portion of the earth's surface and sky visible to the observer. However, from the 16th century onward, with the entry of the term "landscape" into English and the loss of its territorial meaning, it became predominantly associated with natural scenery (ibid.). With the development of the political concept of territory between the 15th and 20th centuries, the notion of territory as a human construct gradually faded from the semantic framework of the word "landscape." For a long time, landscape was generally equated with a scene, a painting, or a style of garden design, without considering the social context, human impact, or the role of humans on the geo-bio-physical background (Luginbuhl, 2013). However, it is important to note that since the late 19th century, with the emergence of new sciences such as human geography, the meaning of landscape as the "inhabited territory of a social group" has gradually gained attention (Donadieu, 2013).

• Territorial landscape

As previously discussed, the construction of territory results

from material and immaterial interventions within the interactive process between humans and their environment, to organize the environment, known as territorialization. This process can occur on various scales, ranging from a small garden in a backyard to a neighborhood, village, city, or even a geographical region (Sack, 1983). All constructs resulting from the process of territorialization can be inherently considered a type of landscape, given the embedded territorial meaning within the term “landscape,” although they are fundamentally different in nature. To distinguish these different types, the term “landscape” is often used in combination with the specific type being referred to (Mansouri, 2014). For instance, the constructs resulting from territorialization at the scale of villages and cities are distinguished as “rural landscape” and “urban landscape,” respectively (ibid., 2010). Similarly, territory, as a construct resulting from territorialization on the scale of a broad geographical region, can be considered a type of landscape, conceptualized as a “territorial landscape” to differentiate it from other types.

However, territory at the scale of a geographical region encompasses a collection of landscapes at regional and national levels, which emerge from a process referred to as “articulation of territory.” According to this concept, each territory includes natural landscape features such as mountains, rivers, pastures, and forests, as well as artificial elements like cities, agricultural lands, water infrastructures, roads, bridges, and industrial facilities. These elements have been socially and culturally reproduced and represented through various mediums (Sörlin, 1999), transforming these landscapes into symbolic and subjective components deeply ingrained in the image and perception of the territory (ibid.). These landscapes reflect the natural features of a territory, such as topography, soil, and hydrography, as well as past human activities, choices, planning, and local actions (Raymond et al., 2021). Therefore, each territory, composed of a collection of landscapes, is made up of objective-subjective units that represent the fundamental processes of territorialization, distinguishing a territory and its landscape, or “territorial landscape.”

In this context, it can be argued that the territorial landscape itself arises from a collection of landscape units within a geographical region, shaped and developed over time through the process of territorialization and the interaction between humans and the environment. Due to its objective-subjective characteristics, the territorial landscape plays a key role in forming the identity of the territory and the human community residing within it. On the other hand, the essence of the territorial landscape is defined by its dependence on the entirety of the territory. Therefore, the existence and continuity of the territory are essential for the persistence of the territorial landscape. In other words, changes, transformations, or destruction of parts of the territory will affect the territorial landscape and its constituent landscape units, subsequently altering the territorial and human identity derived from it.

Given this definition, it is important to note that the concept of “territorial landscape” fundamentally differs from other terms in the scientific and professional literature in Iran related to territory, such as “landscape ecology” and “territorial planning.” In fact, “landscape ecology” is a term that studies the territory with an ecological approach, focusing solely on the use of lands, patches, and green corridors, and attempting to analyze the territory and its spatial transformations quantitatively using numerical indicators (Masnavi & Mohseni Fard Naghani, 2023; Zebardast et al., 2012). Thus, in landscape ecology, the territory is considered only as a habitat comprising vertically and horizontally related life elements (Masnavi as cited in Mortazi Mehrbani, 2015), regarded as a heterogeneous assemblage of several distinct ecosystems such as pastures, forests, agricultural lands, residential areas, and aquatic ecosystems (Fakharan as cited in Mortazi Mehrbani, 2015). On the other hand, “territorial planning” is another term that focuses on the concept of territory, generally involving land-use planning, long-term development plans (Maghsoudi, 2019; Zandeh et al., 2021), and the preparation of land-use policies based on the qualitative and quantitative assessment of the territory’s potential for various human uses (Makhdoom Farkhonde, 1999). In this term, territory is primarily derived from natural and ecological features that must be reorganized and coordinated in connection with technological, economic, and human-financial factors to meet the socio-economic needs of human communities and improve their material and spiritual well-being (ibid.). Therefore, both terms focus exclusively on the planning and evaluation of specific aspects of the territory, such as nature and ecology, and inadequately address human-related aspects of the territory, often neglecting them in their studies.

It should be noted that these two terms, with their reductionist approach, focus solely on the objective dimensions of territory. In contrast, the concept of “territorial landscape” seeks to adopt a holistic approach, incorporating both the objective and subjective aspects of territory into the processes of study, evaluation, and planning. It considers the territory not only as a specific geographical unit integrated with natural and ecological conditions but also as a historical, social, economic, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural unit. This concept emphasizes a set of essential and unique identity-defining characteristics that are unified within the physical expanse of the territory, capable of bringing various human groups together under a single, cohesive identity.

Conclusion

This study aimed to clarify the conceptual relationship between the terms “landscape” and “territory” to promote their accurate use in scientific research. The findings indicate that “territory” is generally addressed in existing research in two main contexts. First, territory is seen as a product of political will and power, often associated with tangible concepts such as soil, land, and borders. In this context, territory is primarily

considered a material entity. Second, territory is regarded as a creation of human societies, representing a specific kind of land shaped through both physical and cognitive human interventions, a process known as territorialization. In this case, territory is viewed as a material-immaterial (semiotic) system that functions simultaneously as a functional mechanism for spatial control and as an expressive mechanism that provides identity to human communities.

An examination of the terminology for “territory” in Persian, English, and French languages revealed that the concept of territory, as defined in these languages, aligns with the idea of a human-made construct, encompassing both material and immaterial aspects. This definition seems to provide a precise understanding of the concept of territory. Additionally, the study of the concept of “landscape” revealed four different interpretations among researchers: as an objective phenomenon, a subjective phenomenon, a combination of objective and subjective phenomena, and ultimately, as an objective-subjective phenomenon.

The analysis showed that when territory is defined as a human construct, it shares a conceptual affinity with the idea of landscape as a material-immaterial phenomenon. Both concepts appear to refer to a similar entity. Further exploration of the etymological roots of the word “landscape” in German and Danish languages indicated that in addition to its meaning

as a “view” or “scenery,” the term was historically used to refer to the lands of human communities in Northern Europe, although this meaning gradually diminished after the 16th century.

Given the conceptual meaning of “landscape,” it was determined that territory inherently constitutes a landscape and can be considered a particular type of landscape. This specific type of landscape, which encompasses a geographical region, can be distinguished from other types of landscapes by being referred to as “territorial landscape.” Moreover, the study demonstrated that territory, as a landscape, is composed of a combination of natural and artificial landscapes. The integration of these elements creates the territorial landscape of a region, which plays a fundamental role in shaping and transforming territorial identity.

Therefore, the concept of territorial landscape fundamentally differs from other common terms related to territory, such as “territory ecology” and “territorial planning.” Unlike these terms, which primarily focus on the material aspects of the territory, such as nature and ecology, the concept of territorial landscape seeks to integrate immaterial aspects—such as identity, memory, sense of belonging, aesthetics, and symbolism—into an inseparable connection with the material dimensions of the territory.

Endnotes

* This paper is extracted from the PhD thesis conducted by Amin Maghsoudi under title of “The Role of Oil in Territorial Landscape Transformation in Khuzestan, Iran” and supervised by Dr. Seyed Amir Mansouri and Dr. Saeed Hagher in Faculty of Fine Arts.

1. Landscape and territory
2. Territorial landscape
3. Territory and landscape planning
4. Territory and landscape architecture
5. Foucault provided this definition of territory in his response

to the geographers of Herodote magazine in 1976. Elden (2013) refers to it in his article titled “How Should We Do the History of Territory?” as one of the indicators of Foucault’s interest in the concept of territory.

6. Diachrony: An approach to studying semiotic systems, first introduced by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (2011) in his book *Course in General Linguistics*. In this approach, the semiotic system is viewed as a continuous chain extending over time, focusing on the study of the changes that signs undergo over time.

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