ANALYSIS OF TOURISM LANDSCAPE IN HERITAGE SITES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SYMBOLIC SPACE

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Abstract: Research on symbolic space constitutes a unique field and perspective within the study of human-environment relationships, offering a vital avenue for understanding the social and cultural significance of cultural landscapes. Revealing the process of value attribution and transformation in landscapes aids in a deeper comprehension of the cultural landscape's essence and the alterations that tourism development introduces. This article systematically reviews the topic through a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)-based systematic assessment and meta-analysis. Incorporating 38 studies from 2004 to 2023, the results reveal four significant themes within symbolic space research. Based on the outcomes of qualitative analysis, seven criteria for the interpretation of symbolic space are suggested, providing a framework for the analysis of cultural landscapes' symbolic spaces

Keywords: Symbolic landscape, cultural landscape, place-making, built environment landscape symbol.

Introduction

The significance of the landscape to a variety of experiences that are sought or unfold at a visited destination is well established and considered paramount to the study of tourism (Terkenli, 2021). Landscape is central to tourism planning and marketing, serving as both an image of places and a connection between tourists and destinations. Recently, the integration and development of cultural landscapes in tourism have become a significant topic in industry and academia. The cognitive element of tourism, which is related to understanding the cultural heritage of a particular place is a form of tourism activity with its dynamic expansion (UNWTO, 2018).

The notion of the "tourism landscape" emerges as a concept rooted in the framework of tourism development, underscoring the processes through which landscapes are devised and tailored for tourism (Terkenli, 2021). Within the tourism sector, place-making integrates urban design, imagery, and symbolic values (Mansilla & Milano, 2022) while cultural landscapes are employed to establish

urban cultural venues catering to the public's cultural needs. Heritage emerges as a distinctive symbol of a destination and a significant tourist attraction, playing a pivotal role as a local tourism asset that draws visitors to the area (Lei, 2022). Symbolic objects, as tangible elements bearing significance are utilised to convey and articulate specific cultural, historical, and social values (Noaime & Alnaim, 2023).

With the cultural turn in new cultural geography, scholars' examination of space has transitioned from a physical spatial study to an in-depth cultural analysis of space itself (Zhu *et al*., 2010). Research on symbolic space stands out as a distinctive topic and viewpoint for the study of human-land relations, representing a crucial means of recognising the social and cultural value of urban space (Tong & Tang, 2013). Symbolic value plays an essential role in the analysis of cultural landscapes and serves as a useful tool for investigating how tourism spaces are created, how heritage spaces are transformed, and how destination perceptions are shaped.

Despite considerable attention being devoted by researchers to the symbolic value of tourism landscapes at heritage sites, a systematic framework for examining the symbolic space of heritage sites from the perspective of the built environment's symbolic landscape remains undeveloped. This study aims to critically review existing literature and consolidate the conceptual understanding, thematic focus, and research perspectives on symbolic space to provide theoretical guidance for subsequent analyses of cultural landscapes.

Materials and Methods

PRISMA aims to identify, evaluate, and summarise the existing body of knowledge on a subject, thereby offering suggestions and avenues for further investigation. While there are numerous alternative research methodologies for conducting a systematic evaluation of the literature, PRISMA provides a more extensive and robust set of evidence (Taheri *et al.*, 2021; Zheng & Chou, 2023).

A systematic review was thus conducted using the PRISMA technique, following specific retrieval strategies, inclusion criteria, and data extraction protocols. The search strategy involved using the same criteria ('title + abstract + keywords') across each database to ensure consistency in the retrieval process. The databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) were systematically searched to gather data pertaining to cultural landscapes and heritage tourism. The inclusion criteria were meticulously defined to ensure the quality of the articles and comprehensive coverage of the topic. These criteria included: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles only; (2) articles published in English or Chinese only; (3) articles whose focus includes symbolic space or symbolic landscape, particularly in relation to tourist landscapes or destination cultural landscapes; and (4) articles
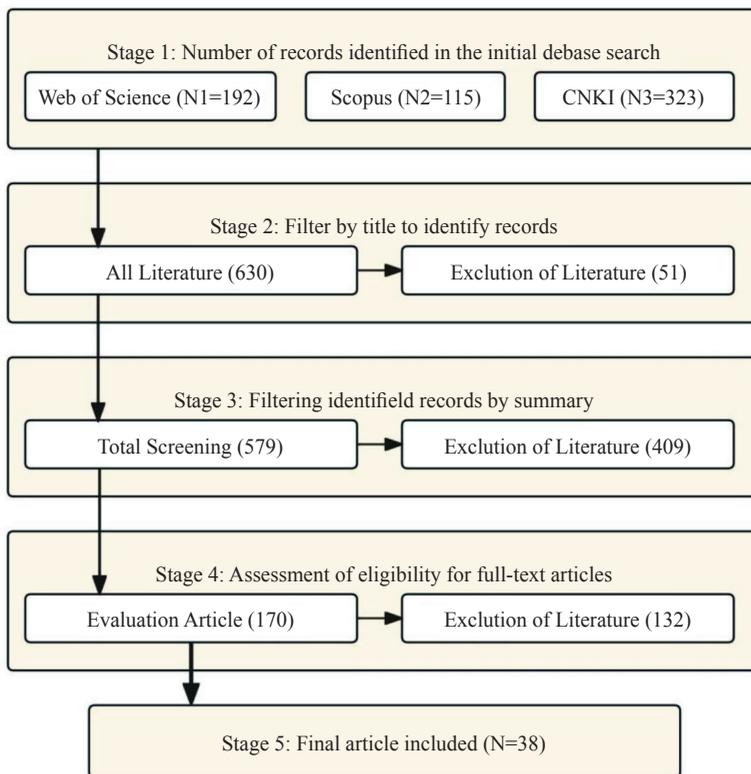

Figure 1: Article selection process

published from 2004 to December 2023 (the period when the search was conducted).

From the initial search, a total of 192 publications were identified through Web of Science, 115 through Scopus, and 323 through CNKI, yielding a total of 630 articles. Upon removing duplicates and conducting subsequent rounds of screening, 28 similar articles were excluded in the second phase, and 579 articles remained after excluding 23 non-journal articles. In the third round, after reviewing abstracts, 409 articles were deemed irrelevant, leaving 170 articles. Ultimately, after a thorough review of these articles, 132 articles unrelated to the destination's cultural or tourism landscapes were discarded, resulting in a final set of 38 articles for in-depth analysis (Figure 1). These 38 articles were analysed using NVIVO 20 to code and synthesise the findings systematically.

Results and Discussion

We conducted a thorough review of the principles, causes, and mechanisms of symbolic space formation. The review's results summarise the research areas and major contributions related to symbolic space. This exploration not only identified the foundational elements that contribute to the emergence and understanding of symbolic spaces but also highlighted the diverse approaches and insights that shape our comprehension of these significant spatial constructs. Through examining the literature, we discerned that symbolic spaces are multifaceted, influenced by various social, cultural, and historical factors that collectively contribute to their formation and significance within both local and broader contexts (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of the findings of the symbolic space (N = 38)

Author	Countries	Research Areas	Main Contribution
Zhang *et al.* (2023)	China	Sacred landscape	The symbolism is the basis of functions and spaces, ritual activities are one of the forms that give meaning to the space.
Van Ostade *et al.* (2023)	Netherlands	Linguistic landscape	Textual symbolic functions can affect the perception of local character.
Jover and Barrero-Rescalvo (2023)	Spain	Urban cultural space	Tourismification creates new urban spaces by reshaping landscapes into commodities. Symbolic landscapes are an important dimension of touristified landscapes and urban spaces.
El-Sharif (2023)	Jordan	Museum, memorial space	Using a social semiotics approach to reveal how museums and memorials integrate nation, culture, religion, and history into militarism.
Noaime and Alnaim (2023)	Saudi Arabia	Historical landmarks	Symbolic objects play a key role in shaping urban identity, enhancing social cohesion, and reinforcing cultural values.
Wu and Dai (2023)	China	Historic districts	The interpretation of symbols necessitates the active engagement of tourists, ensuring consistency in both symbol construction and perception is crucial for accurately interpreting cultural landscape symbols.
Zou *et al.* (2023)	China	Cultural heritage	Three dimensions of tourists' heritage spatial perceptions, THSPs can enhance visitors' place identity.
Hána and Šel (2022)	Czechia	Political graffiti	Political symbolic space is composed and influenced by the political ideas, experiences of its users, and by specific political symbols.

Mansilla and Milano (2022)	Spain	Urban cultural space	The integration of new cultural symbols and attractions brings about a shift in space and meaning.
Zou *et al.* (2022)	China	Museum, memorial space	Cultural symbols and emotional geographies can promote national identity, its construction is a bottom-up process embedded in physical and symbolic space.
Chang *et al.* (2022)	China	Linguistic landscape	The symbolic function of the linguistic landscape needs to be integrated with the environmental climate of the destination.
Aquilino *et al.* (2021)	United Kingdom	Rural landscape	People tend to construct community and meaning by co-creating and assigning meaning within the event space.
Liu and Guo (2021)	China	Landscape symbol	Finding symbols that are widely and frequently used in contemporary times, easily recognisable, with local characteristics and a high degree of identity is necessary in the construction of national identity.
Pretto (2021)	Italy	Cultural landscape	Emotional, personal, and affective values play a role in residents' perceptions of the territory and landscape.
Bender *et al.* (2021)	Portugal	Cultural heritage	Vernacular architecture is an important carrier of the aesthetic value of the urban landscape, with symbolic value and collective memory imagination.
Russo and Bertelle (2020)	Spain	Military heritage	The development of landscapes with historical memory at its core requires empowering local communities and mobilising historical memory through bottom-up efforts to foster a shared identity.
Amrousi *et al.* (2020)	United Arab Emirates	Museum memorial space	Interpretation of the symbolic elements in the monument and clarification of the role of symbolic elements in shaping cultural identity and international image.
Sollerio and García (2020)	Mexico	Urban cultural space	Tourism leads to the reconfiguration and reuse of space. Users' spatial perceptions and experiences are translated into the symbolism of the destination.
Chylinska (2020)	Poland	Military heritage	Proposes a theoretical framework for war space, stating that war space is composed of both physical and symbolic space.
Marosi *et al.* (2019)	Romania	Urban cultural space	Proposes an assessment framework and planning recommendations for urban cultural landscapes.
Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot (2019)	France	Urban cultural space	The combination of public and private interests leads to the reintegration of spaces on the urban fringe and a change in the symbolic nature of space.
Huang and Xu (2018)	China	Therapeutic landscapes	Natural environments, social interactions, and symbolic landscapes work together in the healing process of visitors, with symbolic landscapes playing a dominant role.
Zhang and Chan (2017)	China	Linguistic landscape	The symbolic function of the linguistic landscape is used to create an atmosphere, reflecting different values.
Demski (2017)	Poland	Military heritage	The behaviour of residents and tourists can give new meanings to former military spaces. Symbolic space brings heritage value transformation and renewal, providing new ideas for the development and conservation of heritage sites.

Nikolaou (2017)	Greece	Linguistic landscape	The linguistic landscape as a symbolic construct of public space. The multilingual character of commercial signs is primarily symbolic.
Aulet *et al.* (2017)	Spain	Sacred landscapes	As sacred spaces, monasteries are highly symbolic architectural spaces. Their intangible heritage can be a tool for improving the visitor experience.
Wan and Tang (2017)	China	Fork house landscape	The landscape reinforces local villagers' identity construction and evokes their remembrance of history, sense of belonging to home, and identification with place.
Merantzas (2016)	Greece	Cultural heritage	Museums create symbolic spaces as landmarks of cultural value. The integration of art and heritage conservation re-records the historical memory of the heritage site.
Tang *et al.* (2016)	China	Calligraphic landscape	The calligraphic landscape has a certain symbolic effect on visitors in the dimensions of calligraphy appreciation, cultural symbols, and landscape metaphors.
Shi *et al.* (2015)	China	Symbolic space	As a strategy for human communities to strengthen their identity, ritual activities evoke collective memories and local identities and may shape symbolic landscapes and spaces accordingly.
Yin *et al.* (2015)	China	Urban cultural space	The urban sculpture landscape has three levels of symbolism for residents: Local culture, political significance, and emotional significance.
Wang (2014)	China	Production landscape	The three modes of production in the cultural landscape of porcelain making in Jingdezhen represent three types of symbolic spaces.
Zhang *et al.* (2014)	China	Calligraphic landscape	There is a cultural identity of calligraphy culture in China and Japan. Calligraphic landscape, as a cultural symbol, marks the formation of a symbolic space within the city.
Li *et al.* (2014)	China	Calligraphic landscape	Four dimensions of the perceived value of Chinese calligraphic landscapes: Material type functional value, non-material type functional value, community value, and emotional value.
Yu and Xiao (2013)	China	Production landscape	The traditional porcelain-making workshop in Jingdezhen contains five symbolic spaces, blending technology, architectural language, and philosophy into a special cultural landscape.
Qi *et al.* (2013)	China	Calligraphic landscape	Tourist attitudes toward calligraphic landscapes include cultural perceptions, landscape preferences, and aesthetic perceptions.
Ku (2011)	Taiwan, China	Cultural heritage	Symbolic space is part of the "geography of the imagination" as a reference point for locations and the tourist imagination is a cultural resource that gives meaning to the actions of actors.
Puren *et al.* (2008)	South Africa	Cultural heritage	Symbolising spatial experience at VDWHS can be materialised as a sense of arrival, direction, and experience.

The chapter that follows is organised roughly along these lines: First, the concepts of symbolic space are extracted and summarised; second, the final included papers are categorised according to the various research themes to allow for more focused analysis and organisation; and third, in-depth analyses and summaries are provided to support the study and discussion.

Concept of Symbolic Space

Symbolic space, as defined within the realm of new cultural geography, transcends its physical dimensions to embody a rich tapestry of meanings, symbols, and cultural narratives. It is not merely a geometric entity but a dynamic construct shaped by socio-cultural and political processes, where space becomes a text laden with metaphorical connotations that necessitate examination and interpretation (Zhu *et al.*, 2010).

From this perspective, space is not only a carrier of social relations but also a system imbued with meanings, symbols, and references. Scholars have increasingly focused on unravelling the power of culture embedded in space by analysing the semiotic meanings of landscape and space. Tuan (1978) proposed that the study of human geography emphasises the interpretive nature of space and place, advocating the decoding of the environment through signs, affective signifiers, and symbols as a medium for understanding the human world. This approach positions geography as a discipline that leverages symbols as data to elucidate the role of various social modalities in constructing space. The concept of the production of space further deepens this understanding by asserting that space is actively produced through social practices, encompassing perceived, conceived, and lived dimensions, thereby highlighting that symbolic spaces are dynamic, continually reshaped by societal norms, cultural practices, and power relations (Henri & Donald, 1991).

The symbolic space thus emerges as a primary venue for the expression of urban social-cultural geographical phenomena, where architectural space becomes a repository of

historical, cultural, and philosophical meanings (Tong & Tang, 2013). According to Ormsby (2021) and Yu and Xiao (2013), certain areas within a space serve as symbolic elements, with symbolic space constituting the amalgamation of spatial symbols and the essence of space itself. This interplay of layout, presentation, and decoration within these spaces, guided by underlying social logic, exemplifies the symbolic nature of spaces that convey the historical and cultural significance of a locale (Zou *et al.*, 2022).

Exploring symbolic space often entails case studies of material cultural landscapes, where research themes range from sacred spaces and ritual sites to city squares and monumental buildings (Merantzas, 2016; Marosi *et al.*, 2019; Ormsby, 2021; Zou *et al.*, 2022). This methodological approach not only highlights the process of social development and the negotiation of social and political rights within symbolic spaces but also sheds light on the evolving nature of symbolic spaces themselves.

Cassirer's (1944) assertion that "humans are symbolic animals" underscores the intrinsic human tendency to imbue spaces with symbolic meanings through long-term interaction with the environment. This process is evident in how monuments, cultural practices, and ritual activities underscore the essence of sites, encapsulating communal sentiments and memories (Tong & Tang, 2013; Shi *et al.*, 2015; Chylinska, 2020). The role of symbolic space in tourism, as articulated through "imaginative geographies", highlights its importance in shaping spatial imaginations culturally and historically (Edensor, 2008; Ku, 2011).

In sum, the concept of symbolic space represents a nuanced quality of space that emerges from the interplay between physical dimensions and symbolic elements, grounded in the enduring interactions between individuals and their environments. The study of symbolic space offers a vital lens through which to examine human-land relationships in urban geography, providing insights into the social

and cultural significance of spaces. As such, symbolic space research stands as a cornerstone for understanding the intricate relationship between society, culture, and space.

Research Themes in Symbolic Space

Building upon the conceptual foundation of symbolic space as a nexus of physical dimensions and cultural narratives, this study conducted a nuanced analysis using NVIVO 20, complemented by detailed manual annotation for deeper insight. Through a systematic approach that entailed classification, coding, and iterative refinement of themes, the analysis illuminated three interconnected research themes: Identification of landscape symbols, perception of symbolic space, and the evolution of symbolic space. This multi-layered classification underscores the dynamic interplay among these themes, revealing how they collectively enrich the discourse on symbolic spaces.

Identification of Landscape Symbols

Identification and interpretation of landscape symbols emerged as a pivotal avenue in symbolic space research, drawing upon a comprehensive view that encompasses not only the physical attributes of landscapes but also their economic, ecological, cultural, and social dimensions, as outlined by the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000). This holistic approach facilitates a deeper understanding of landscapes as lived spaces, perceived, and interacted with by communities, thereby imbuing them with symbolic meanings.

In this context, cultural landscapes are viewed as entities that amalgamate symbolic elements with physical locations (Georgescu Paquin & Cerdan Schwitzguébel, 2021). The process begins with the meticulous identification of symbols embedded within the landscape, ranging from architectural features and ornamental elements to colour schemes and stylistic nuances. These physical markers serve as gateways to understanding the built environment's cultural landscape, offering insights into historical narratives, cultural heritage, and social values (Marosi et al., 2019; Ormsby, 2021).

Beyond tangible aspects, symbolic landscapes extend into the realm of intangible cultural elements such as linguistic, calligraphic, and therapeutic landscapes (Qi et al., 2013; Li et al., 2014; Zhang & Chan, 2017; Nikolaou, 2017; Huang & Xu, 2018; Chang et al., 2022). These domains unveil symbolic sources embedded within written materials, narratives, and artistic expressions, highlighting the rich tapestry of place names, stories, and images that contribute to the symbolic dimension of spaces (Huang & Xu, 2018; Chang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the transmission of symbolic information is significantly enriched through cultural practices, including art, ceremonies, dance, music, traditional attire, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage. These elements collectively forge a robust foundation for the formation of symbolic spaces, showcasing the diverse ways through which communities articulate their identity and heritage (Merantzas, 2016).

Perception of Symbolic Space

Compared to the interpretation of spatial meaning, some scholars have closely associated symbolic space with human activities and explored the dynamic interaction between human activities and the perception of symbolic space. Spatial cognition theory (Montello & Raubal, 2013; Demski, 2017) and symbolic interaction theory (Aksan et al., 2009; Tang et al., 2016) are commonly employed as theoretical frameworks. The interpretation of symbols necessitates tourists' physical engagement. The relationship between spatial representation bearing heritage value and tourists' perception of space is a crucial focus in tourism research, as it helps unveil the intricate connection between visitors' landscape perception and spatial representation of heritage (Li et al., 2023). This relationship encompasses visitors' attitudes towards the site, perceived landscape value, and spatial dimension of symbolic heritage, thereby emphasising how

perception extends beyond mere observation to influence identity construction for both residents and visitors.

However, a significant challenge encountered in heritage tourism is the incongruity between spatial representations of heritage values and visitors' perceptions, resulting in misconceptions regarding heritage values and subpar tourism experiences (Li *et al*., 2023). Addressing this issue necessitates innovative strategies to bridge the gap between heritage representation and perception such as augmenting access to interpretive materials and fostering deeper engagement with heritage narratives (Chylinska, 2020).

The multi-sensory approach is widely recognised as a fundamental strategy for reconciling these inherent contradictions. By amplifying sensory stimuli to provide symbolic cues, this approach significantly contributes to a more profound comprehension of the historical significance and cultural identity associated with the space (Merantzas, 2016; Bender *et al*., 2021). Specific implementations encompass augmented reality utilisation, themed tours, and interactive installations, all of which have demonstrated substantial efficacy in enhancing the visitor experience by fostering greater engagement, meaning, and memorability.

Evolution of Symbolic Space

The evolution of symbolic space is significantly influenced by economic, cultural, political, and psychological factors, with urbanisation and globalisation serving as catalysts that have notably accelerated the symbolisation and evolution of spaces. Symbolic space can alter as a result of social system changes or the passage of time; certain cultural landscapes, for instance, are in danger of disappearing. Tourism, as a pivotal force in the evolution of symbolic spaces, introduces new paradigms for cultural landscape preservation. Attractions are often redesigned and historical sites are imbued with new meanings to align with contemporary tourism trends (Sollerio & García, 2020). In urban public places, urban creatures seek and

produce new identities and meanings while old symbols attempt to take on new meanings (Ratz *et al*., 2008).

Critical discourse analysis emerges as a powerful tool in examining the debates surrounding the symbolic meanings of spaces, shedding light on the underlying power relationships, ideological frameworks, and sociocultural shifts (Cottrell & Cottrell, 2020). This analytical approach, applied to specific instances like urban redevelopment projects, reveals how discussions around symbolic spaces are laden with conflicts over heritage interpretation and the pressures of modernisation (Hallin & Dobers, 2012; Cottrell & Cottrell, 2020; Jover & Barrero-Rescalvo, 2023).

The intersection of tourism development and heritage conservation presents notable challenges, including the conflicts between the commercialisation of tourist sites and the preservation of their cultural and historical integrity (Sollerio & García, 2020). Strategies for mitigating these conflicts include the implementation of sustainable tourism practices that prioritise community involvement and heritage preservation, ensuring that the evolution of symbolic spaces remains respectful of their origins while accommodating contemporary needs (Aquilino *et al*., 2021).

Symbolic Meaning Interpretation

The in-depth qualitative analysis of 38 articles, spanning four significant themes within symbolic space literature has illuminated the complex nature of symbolic spaces, revealing a spectrum of dimensions that are anchored in both spatial configuration and symbolic attributes. Seven perspectives are summarised to analyse the symbolic meaning of space (Table 2).

Historical Significance

Historical significance emphasises the intricate relationship between cultural heritage and collective memory, revealing how landscapes acquire symbolic meanings through historical events and figures that shape the narratives

Table 2: Symbolic space analysis criteria

No.	Criteria	Description	Number of Articles
1.	Historical significance	Cultural heritage of historical importance or associated with significant events, persons, or periods in history. It symbolises its important role in history and its historical development.	N = 15
2.	Cultural context	Cultural heritage is influenced by particular cultural contexts, as different cultural values, cultural systems, beliefs, local characteristics, and practices often influence the design, purpose, and meaning of cultural landscapes.	N = 22
3.	Emotional meaning	Emotional values are an important dimension of the perceived value of cultural landscapes, emotional, personal, and affective values play a central role in residents' perceptions of landscapes.	N = 10
4.	Form and function	Cultural landscapes have a clear and recognisable symbolic meaning, which may derive from their form, function, or both. The relationship between the form and function of a landscape can enhance or diminish its symbolic value.	N = 7
5.	Artistic value and aesthetic quality	Cultural landscape is an important carrier of the aesthetic value of urban landscape. It's design and artistic style will play a significant role in guiding the aesthetic role of the surrounding space.	N = 7
6.	Narrative activities	Contextual narratives of cultural landscapes can explain their symbolism and the intentions of their creators, influence visitors' perceptions, with different thematic narratives giving different symbolic meanings to cultural landscapes.	N = 7
7.	Iconic and spatial location	The specificity of their location often symbolises cultural landscapes. Symbolic landscapes are usually regarded as landmarks, boundary markers, territorial markers, and as a means of symbolising a place.	N = 3

and identities of cultural landscapes (Shi *et al*., 2015; Zhang *et al*., 2023). The case of war spaces, monuments, and memorials to martyrs illustrates the dynamic interplay between historical meanings and symbolic spaces, demonstrating how these sites can serve as containers for collective memory and cultural identity (Amrousi *et al*., 2020; Chylinska, 2020; El-Sharif, 2023). By analysing historical meanings, researchers can unravel the origins of cultural spaces and their associated symbols of power, thus, enhancing our understanding of their impact on social identities and memory (Wang, 2014). This nuanced interpretation of historical meanings improves the legibility of symbolic spaces, highlighting their key role in connecting the present with the past and shaping the symbolic dimensions of cultural landscapes.

Cultural Context

The cultural context is an essential element in constructing symbolic space, owing to the convergence of values, systems, beliefs, and practices that come together to shape cultural landscapes (Aulet *et al*., 2017; Wan & Tang, 2017; Pretto, 2021). Drawing on the theoretical foundations of collective memory and the implications of cultural memory spaces, this dimension emphasises the dynamic interplay between cultural heritage and identity within symbolic spaces, highlighting the cultural value of landscapes over time.

The space of cultural memory encompasses both material cultural heritage and the spatial representation of religion, art, text, folklore, and beliefs. In symbolic spaces, different cultures

coexist, with architectural symbols, street layouts, and commercial signs synergistically narrating the area's cultural heritage (Qi *et al*., 2023). Symbols not only anchor places in their historical and cultural roots but also project their identities into the future, serving as an effective way to construct the atmosphere of a place (Wu & Dai, 2023). The cross-cultural comparative analysis further highlights how different cultures interpret and value their symbolic spaces, enriching our understanding of the universality and specificity of cultural contexts in shaping symbolic space.

Emotional Meaning

Emotional meaning is crucial in the assessment and perception of cultural landscapes, serving as a bridge between the physical environment and the emotional responses it elicits. Utilising the principles of affective geography, this dimension examines emotions and the personal and emotional values that shape symbolic spaces (Zou *et al*., 2022). Cultural landscapes integrate the feelings of both builders and users to collaboratively construct their symbolism (Yin *et al*., 2015). The emotional values attributed to various subjects infuse cultural landscapes with new meanings while the evolution of symbolic meanings prompts the transformation and reinterpretation of symbolic spaces (Sollerio & García, 2020).

Furthermore, the emotional bonds formed with cultural landscapes underscore the importance of incorporating emotional values into cultural heritage conservation and interpretation strategies. These strategies not only enhance the visitor experience but also contribute to the sustainable preservation of heritage by recognising and valuing the emotional attachment of communities to these spaces (Wan & Tang, 2017; Sollerio & García, 2020.

Form and Function

Cultural landscapes harbour deep symbolic meanings stemming from the interplay between their physical structure and intended function.

This dynamic relationship is crucial for articulating the symbolic messages of landscapes and for effectively communicating complex concepts and values to diverse audiences. Functional attributes of physical space, including layout, decoration, infrastructure, and the basis of spatial perception (Zou *et al*., 2023), along with the successful combination of form and function can produce more effective symbolic messages. These messages communicate complex ideas and values to audiences (Noaime & Alnaim, 2023).

Artistic Value and Aesthetic Quality

Cultural landscapes play a significant role in conveying the aesthetic value of urban landscapes (Bender *et al*., 2021). The design and artistic styles of these landscapes, particularly when they are in harmony with the surrounding environment can serve as cues and references for the aesthetics of the surrounding space (Tang *et al*., 2016). During the evolution of cultural landscapes, practical purposes frequently transition to aesthetic functions, and the understanding of their symbolic importance shifts from practical experience to aesthetic perception. The aesthetic value of landscapes plays a crucial role in cultural heritage tourism, as it represents the creative symbolic space and contributes to the cultural landscape's significance (Ku, 2011). Cultural landscapes give rise to distinct cultural places, their symbols establish a unique system that sets them apart from the natural environment and offers a fresh perspective that holds local value.

Narrative Activities

Contextual narratives of cultural landscapes elucidate their symbolism and the intentions of their designers, so, shaping visitors' views. Narratives centred around various topics can bestow distinct symbolic interpretations upon cultural landscapes (Ku, 2011). Narrative activities serve as a method for analysing landscapes, offering visitors a more thorough understanding of the environment's significance. By narrating specific locations, these activities

enable visitors to deconstruct the meaning of the landscape and stimulate their imagination, creating a space for personal interpretation (Zou *et al*., 2022). Live performances, guided tours, photo displays, and textual explanations are narrative strategies that can effectively fulfil visitors' desire for "authenticity" and contribute to the creation and conceptualisation of symbolic space (Hallin & Dobers, 2012). Proficient professionals comprehend and ascribe significance to the physical areas, signs, and actions associated with tourism, serving as points of reference that connect the interpretation of places to symbolic environments.

Iconicity and Spatial Location

The iconicity and spatial location of cultural landscapes are crucial in bestowing symbolic significance upon them and in shaping the identity and spirit of the city. Symbolic landscapes are often regarded as landmarks, including boundary markers, territorial markers, and sacred monuments (Ormsby, 2021; Hána & Šel, 2022). Urban landmarks, like the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty, not only transcend their physical existence but also encapsulate the essence of Paris and New York City, respectively, contributing to urban imagery (Lynch *et al*., 2015; Noaime & Alnaim, 2023). Urban skyscrapers, historic districts, large commercial centres, buildings with distinctive styles, or historic squares are regarded as urban geographic landmarks due to their iconicity (Tong & Tang, 2013). Changes in landmark landscapes often indicate a shift in spatial function or the urban centre, reflecting the dynamic nature of urban development and its impact on the city's character and cultural narrative.

To sum up, these dimensions are not isolated; rather, they intersect and interact, reflecting the layered complexity of symbolic meaning. For instance, the intertwining of historical significance and cultural context demonstrates how past events shape contemporary cultural landscapes (Marcuse, 1992). The analytical criteria not only indicate the importance of the cultural landscape's context but also consider narrative perspectives and tourist perceptions. It is indisputable that the tourism landscape serves as a manifestation of the cultural landscape. In practical analysis, these seven analytical perspectives are equally applicable to research on cultural landscapes.

Discussion

Indeed, prior research has already effectively showcased the significant potential of symbolic spaces in heritage conservation, tourism development, and the design of public spaces. Initially, the creation of a unique destination image is facilitated by leveraging the symbolism inherent in heritage (Lei, 2022). Symbolic resources are capable of enhancing the appeal of tourism, preserving the importance of cultural heritage, and supporting the development and transformation of heritage sites.

Moreover, the investigation of symbolic spaces aids in the exploration of distinct local characteristics and cultural values, laying the groundwork for the tailored advancement of future urban areas (Marosi *et al*., 2019). The symbolic landscape plays a pivotal role in moulding local culture. Symbolic elements significantly influence the shaping of city identities, the promotion of social cohesion, and the reinforcement of cultural beliefs (Yin *et al*., 2015; Noaime & Alnaim, 2023; Zou *et al*., 2023).

However, research into the symbolic aspects of cultural landscapes faces several challenges. The absence of a comprehensive theoretical framework leads to fragmented research efforts. Methodologically, the studies largely depend on qualitative analyses, which restricts the depth of understanding of symbolic spaces. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaboration is often lacking, resulting in narrow research perspectives. Regional differences are frequently neglected, impeding a nuanced understanding. Importantly, despite recognition of its significance, there is a gap in translating research findings into practical applications for design and planning.

Overcoming these challenges is vital for advancing our comprehension and application of symbolic spaces within built environments.

The primary goal of studying symbolic space is to grasp the intrinsic relationships between individuals and their spatial environments (Tong & Tang, 2013), ultimately aiming to provide valuable insights into urban planning, design, and the preservation of unique sites. Based on this study's findings, several avenues for future research are proposed. First, it is essential to acknowledge the complex interplay between the assessment of symbolic spatial meaning and individuals' cognitive and interpretive abilities. Therefore, understanding subjective cognition is paramount in investigating symbolic space. This involves examining cognitive qualities associated with symbolic space, including variations in spatial symbol cognition among different groups and disparities in spatial symbol cognition. Second, exploring how symbolic space affects an individual's perception of their surroundings, emotions, attitudes, and spatial behaviour is crucial for comprehending the symbolic impact of landscapes. This understanding is vital for creating environments and locations that align with the needs and preferences of residents and tourists.

Lastly, there is a significant lack of theoretical studies on symbolic space research. Future research should, therefore, concentrate on developing theoretical models, conceptual frameworks, planning guidelines, and design theories related to symbolic space. Addressing these research areas will contribute to a deeper understanding and more effective utilisation of symbolic space in built environments.

Conclusions

Despite certain constraints, this review provides fresh perspectives and recommendations for analysing cultural landscape. The research findings suggest that the examination of symbolic space can be conducted by focusing on three research themes: Identification of landscape symbols, perception of symbolic

space, and evolution of symbolic space. The establishment of symbol space study themes and analytical perspectives facilitates quickly and accurately outlining the interpretative aspects, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding unique cultural landscapes and examining symbol space. Hence, future studies may propose various study frameworks to categorise cultural landscapes, facilitating a more precise interpretation of their meaning and symbolic significance.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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