

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT

ARCT 421 Introduction to Urban Design and Planning

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Mid Term Paper

“The Image of the City”
Kevin Lynch



Student Name: Abida Khan

ID: 201002229

Email: ak1002229@qu.edu.qa

Instructor Name: Dr. Anna Grichting

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Abstract

One of the most influential works of Kevin Lynch is the City Image. It's a book concerning how the cities seem, and whether this appears any significance, and whether it can be distorted. He used three different cities as case studies for his research in U.S which are Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles. Kevin Lynch stated that users understood their environment in steady and predictable ways, creating mental maps with five essentials: **Paths** which are the channels in which people travel. **Districts** are relatively large sections of the city illustrious by some uniqueness or character. **Nodes** are focal points. **Edges** perceived boundaries. **Landmarks**, readily particular objects which serve as an external reference point for the city.

Introduction

Lynch's most famous work, *The Image of the City* published in 1960, is the result of a five-year study on how observers take in information of the city ¹. Lynch's core concept was the idea of the "legibility" and "image ability" of the built situation or environment. That is, how simple can the parts of the cityscape be structured into an identifiable outline. He conducted three cities in U.S. as case studies: Boston, Los Angeles, and Jersey City. He used two main methodologies. First, by observation, he conducted extensive fieldwork observing the physical layout of the city. Secondly by interviewing the residents of the city in-depth to understand better the mental image of people that they have of their built environment. Lynch identified five key elements that make up an individual's perception of their city: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.

Image of the City has had a significant and strong influence in the fields of urban planning and environmental.

Author



Kevin Andrew Lynch, Born in 1918 in Chicago, Illinois, Died on 1984 Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. He was an American urban planner and author.((2012). *Kevin A. Lynch.*)

Biography

He commenced his study of architecture at Yale University in 1935; then Taliesin (under Frank Lloyd Wright), 1937-1939 and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1939-1940 appointed instructor in city orchestrating at MIT in 1948, assistant edifier in 1949, associate edifier in 1955, and pedagoga in 1963. Lynch retired from MIT in 1978 to found, with Stephen Carr, the design firm Carr, Lynch and Associates.(Kevin Lynch papers.2009)

His most influential books include *The Image of the City* (1960) and *What Time is This Place?* (1972). *Image of the City* has had paramount and vigorous influence in the fields of urban orchestrating and environmental psychology.

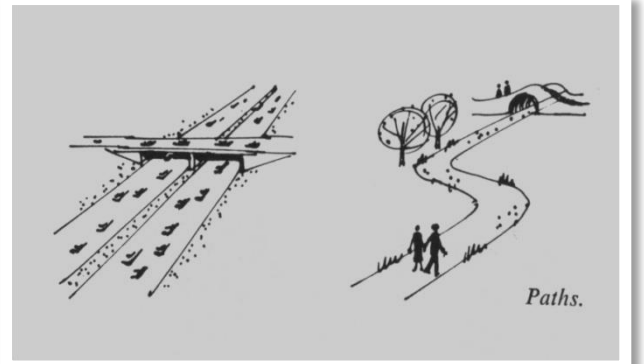
THE CITY IMAGE AND ITS ELEMENTS

One of Lynch's innovations was the idea of legibility, which is basically the ease with which people identify the layout of a place. By considering this idea there seem to be a public image of any given city. Each individual picture of the city is different and unique, with some content. *"The analysis limits itself to the effect of physical, perceptible objects. There are other influences on imageability, such as the social meaning of an area, its function, its history or even its name."*¹

Lynch's was able to separate distinct features of a city, and visually perceive what concretely is making it so lively, and attractive to people. First and foremost people create a mental map to understand the layout of a city. Mental maps of a city are mental image of what the city include, and its layout according to the individual. These mental image, contain five unique essential elements, paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks which are defined by Lynch.

Paths

Paths are the dominant elements in urban space. It's the channels along which people move along in their travels. Examples of the paths are roads, trails, and sidewalks. For many people, these are the predominant image in any city, they observe the city while moving through it. Fortify the image of particular path by unique façade decorations is very important.



Moreover, paths with clear and well-known origins and destinations have stronger identities and help tie the city together. In general, it is impossible to create a clear city image while its paths remain confused and disordered. (Wenhao Yue (2014)).

Thus, along these paths the other elements are arranged and related, therefore paths considered the connectin elements between them.

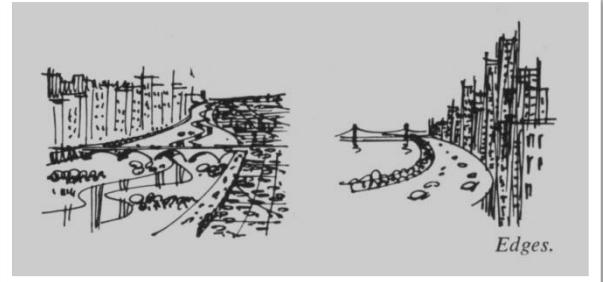
¹ V. Gordon Childe, (2011). 'PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN DESIGN'. In: K. Lynch (ed), **The City Reader**. 5th ed. : Routledge. pp.499.

Edges

Edges are the linear elements that act as boundaries which separate two districts with visually predominant and continuous form.

*"While continuity and visibility are crucial, strong edges are not essentially impenetrable; such edges may be barriers, more or less passable, which close one region off from another, or they may be seams, lines along which two regions are related and jointed together"*². Consequently linear breaks in continuity such as: shore, railroad cuts, edges of development, walls.

Although these edges are not dominant as paths, it more or less holding together generalized areas, as in the outline of the city by water or wall.



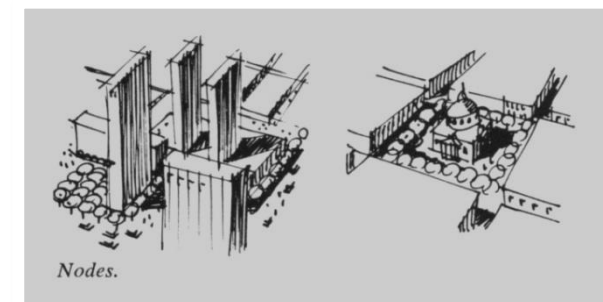
Districts

Districts are sections of the city, which are recognizable as having some common identifying character. Districts are also relatively large city areas with ordinary characters which observers can mentally go "inside of". (Wenhao Yue (2014)). Thematic constancy is the substantial characteristics that determine districts, which consist of an infinite variety of components: texture, space, form, detail, and symbol etc. These components are known in a characteristic cluster in order to establish a remarkable contrast. (Wenhao Yue (2014)). Besides, a certain reinforcement of clues is needed to produce a strong image of an entire district.



Nodes

Nodes are strategic spots which observers can enter, they are external. Moreover, nodes are not only small points, but also squares, linear shapes and central districts, etc. A successful



² V. Gordon Childe, (2011). 'PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN DESIGN '. *In*: K. Lynch (ed), **The City Reader**. 5th ed. : Routledge. pp.499.

node should have unique features inside, and intensify some surrounding characters as well.

Landmarks

Landmarks are another type of the reference points, but in this case it's external to the observers. Which can be distinct as simple physical elements may vary widely in scale, such as building, sign, store, or mountain. (Tao Fan, (2002)).



"Some landmarks can be the key physical character of the city which can be seen from many angles and distances. They may be inside the city or at such distance that for all practical reason they symbolize a constant direction"¹. Such as golden domes isolated towers and great hills, etc. other landmarks are primarily local, being only observable in limited locations and from certain approaches such as trees, storefronts, innumerable sign and other urban details.

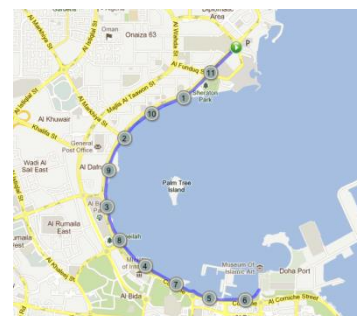
Creating a spatial predominance landmark through contrast with surrounding elements, this will make them unique and memorable in an urban context.

Elements interrelations

All the elements described above are simply the raw materials of the environmental image of a city. Moreover these elements are interdependent therefore they must be patterned together to provide a satisfy form. In Lynch's view of the city we can visually perceive a paradigm of structure which enables us to understand the urban environment more clearly. (Tao Fan, (2002)).

Relevance to the city of Doha

Similarly Doha is a city that contains these main five elements, first of all the paths, as it's been discussed earlier, it's the main element for people to experience the city such as the Corniche road which is basically waterfront



Al Cornish path

walkway typically paralleled by a main road. For some people in Doha it's the predominant image of the Doha city, since they observe the city while moving through it.

The second element is Edges, which physically go along to separate two regions, such as 22 February highway in Doha which actually separate the Doha itself in two parts.



22 February high way

The third element is the districts which is the small parts or sections of the city that have some common identifying character, for instance Musheireb district, Aspire district and Al Markhiya district. These are some examples of districts in Doha and these districts; each one has different character which makes them create a separate zone in the big city.



Musheireb district

The fourth element of the city is Nodes, which is the strategic points of the city, and one of the main strategic points in the city of Doha is the main Karwa bus stop – Al banks street- which one of the busiest intersection point that act as gathering live nodes in the city.



Nodes in the heart of Doha

The fifth and the last element of the city are the landmarks, which are essentially the mark or the sign of the city that people can remember, for example the Museum of Islamic art is one of the recently most important buildings that act as a landmark for the city. Also Aspire Tower (torch) and The Pearl Qatar is one of the examples of different types of landmarks in the city Doha. Therefore Doha is a good case study to reference to it, and as it's very clear that some



The Museum of Islamic art

cities may have more than one landmark, node, district, edge and path.

Conclusion

To *sum up*, paths, nodes, districts, edges and landmarks are the basic elements to create an environmental image at the city scale. They must be combined together to create satisfying form; therefore these five elements are essential to create the city form. Also there are some challenges that architects and urban designers may face, such as creating a new image for the city which will be important to incorporate all the elements of the city and to be take in consideration that can be the key to make the project successful. As

"Districts are structured with nodes, defined by edges, penetrated by paths, and sprinkled with landmarks. None of all elements are isolated. Elements are regularly overlapped to each other."

Lynch (1960)

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