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BP/727/2017

Kevin A. Lynch



Kevin Andrew Lynch (1918 – 1984)

In the 20th century, Kevin A. Lynch was one of the central leaders in community planning and environmental design. Before the concept came into being or became commonly recognized, he was one of the founders of urban planning. During his time in America, architecture was a prominent career and he studied with a variety of architects before teaching and practicing as an urban planner. He studied under Frank Lloyd Wright and finished his MIT Degree in Community Planning, one of the most effective and active institutions in America, which was and still is. He devoted his career to research in research, editing, teaching, and human resource management. He wrote seven books, over twenty-five journal articles and essays, and several

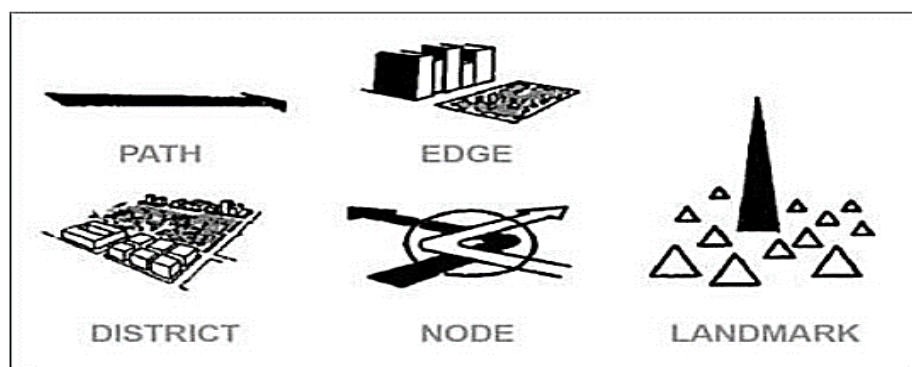
sketches and illustrations. It is almost difficult to study urban planning without stumbling across his observational studies on how people view and manage the urban climate. He was known for his research on the different kinds of sensory inputs that people get from their environment. His most famous work is entitled *The Image of the city*, which illustrates how people make everyday use of the City. This was a groundbreaking fieldwork in which philosophical insights in urban planning came into being through the works in Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl and related philosophers who closely pursued Kevin Lynch 's ideas.

He went to a Catholic elementary school after being first taught by a private teacher, and then to a secular high school with a modern curriculum that encouraged him to see the "true picture" of social issues in particular. Later, Lynch said that he was open to these theory and architecture school gatherings as well as fostering his interest in human circumstances and social justice (Sundilson, 2011). His higher education began in 1935 with a Yale architectural studies year and an eighteen-month Fellowship of trainee architects with the experimental architect Frank Lloyd Wright, followed by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's (1939-1940) study in structural engineering and biology. During World War II, after serving in the US Army Corps of Engineers, he returned to higher education in 1946 and earned a Bachelor of Public Planning (his only degree) in 1947 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He worked as a town planner during his first year in Greensboro , North Carolina. He was asked to return to MIT as a community planning professor in 1948, largely because of his exceptional doctoral thesis on urban green energy with special case-study material from Cambridge (Massachusetts). In 1963, he became a professor and stayed at MIT until 1978, when he retired. Until his premature death in 1984, he maintained his teaching and academic ties with the university. In the meantime, at his company Carr, Lynch and Associates, which he founded with his colleague Stephan Carr, he spent most of his time as a consultant (Hubbard / Kitchin, 2011).

During a one year stay in Florence, funded by the Ford Foundation, he gained a great enthusiasm for the importance of place in a city and the essence of urban form. This recognition led to another research study, under the leadership of Lynch and Professor Gyorgy Kepes, at the MIT Center for Urban and Regional Studies, entitled 'The

Perceptual Form of the City.' The Rockefeller Foundation funded the five-year project which focused on recognizing the people in the urban environment and the emblem of the city and the usage of signs and icons in the urban landscape (Banerjee / Southworth, 1990). This paper is a perceptual study, concentrating on the value of a city's look and the question of how to assign it visual structure. The most notable breakthrough is, in other words, the principle of "site legibility" or urban spatial perception (Carmona / Tiesdell, 2007). As examples of how people interpret the awareness of a town and what is important to the residents of the urban atmosphere, Lynch chose three American cities, Boston, Jersey City and Los Angeles. He discovered that observers create visual maps while perceiving their surroundings constantly and predictably. These visual depictions have shown how the human perceives and experiences urban world architecture (Freestone 2000).

Lynch's most famous work, *The Image of the City* (1960), is the result of a five-year study on how observers take in information of the city. Using three American cities as examples (Boston, Jersey City and Los Angeles), Lynch reported that users understood their surroundings in consistent and predictable ways, forming mental maps with five elements:



1. Paths: Channels along a user customarily moves e.g. streets, walkways, railroads etc. Mostly it is the predominant element in people's city image.
2. Edges: Linear element not seen as paths by the observer e.g. shores, railroad cuts, walls etc. For many users' edges are important organizing features.
3. Districts: Sections of the city with similar character. Most observers structure their city in this way, if a district has a more dominant role to the observer.

4. Nodes: Strategic spots within a city e.g. junctions, crossing, intersections etc.
5. Landmarks: Simply defined physical object such as a building, sign, store or mountain.

In his book Lynch gives a method to deal with visual form of a city. He also offers some principals of urban design (Lynch, 1960). For urban planners, Lynch portrays his work as a purpose. They can plan the city in such a way that three associated 'movements' are given space: planning, studying, shaping. Second, it should be feasible for individuals to develop a simple mental map of their metropolitan climate. Second, through practising, people should be able to understand how to navigate in this environment. Third, persons ought to be able to function and conduct in their community, This book is an extremely important attempt to explain how people in the urban landscape view, occupy, and travel about. It reveals that urban space consists not only of its physical attributes, but also of mental image representations. Mobility is not only (the capacity for) free-flowing travel, but with the help of mental charts, it depends heavily on structuring and recognition of the environment. To several, Lynch 's work was influential. For example, postmodernity theorist Fredric Jameson (1991) refers to Lynch as he argues that the cognitive map is a way of dealing with complexities in cultures by bridging 'objective' and abstract conceptions of space, and 'lived space' subjective existential experiences. Lynch can also be seen as a precursor to Henri Lefebvre's 1974 famous study that space is not only 'out there' as a mathematical subject or concept a priori, but still generated socially. Lynch' work has many implications for urban design and raises various questions about the present role of mobile and locative media technologies in the urban context.

The everlasting question of (the death of) serendipity, too much debated with respect to mobile media and location-based services, is another question posed by Lynch 's work. When our movements are driven and goal-oriented, are local resources weakening the opportunity for innovation and spontaneous experiences with new areas and people? "Lynch himself thinks that disorientation is the source of panic and distress, and maybe a very unusual occurrence for most people in the modern city is often believed to be totally lost. But, under managed conditions, he recognizes that" there is some meaning in the atmosphere in mystification, maze, or confusion.

His next book "Site Planning" (1962) clarified the planning implications of the findings in "The image of the City " and offers detailed knowledge about all practices and issues relevant to the organization of the built landscape of urban environments. This thus acts as an introduction to the practice of site design and its concepts' implementation (Lynch, 1962). Together with Donald Appleyard and John Myer, his subsequent writing "The View from the Bridge" (1962) was influenced by the tremendous construction of freeways in US cities. This discusses the perception of a city's visual climate while in motion (Lynch, 1962). Lynch wrote his third favorite book in 1972: "What time this place is." Lynch reflects on the sensory meaning of the environment in his subsequent publication "Managing the Sense of a Region" (1976) (e.g. what people can see). He describes how those sensations affect the quality of a place and thus the behavior, well-being and understanding of people and how to design and control the area of a large city (Lynch, 1976). In "Growing up in Cities" (1977) Lynch struggles with children's views of their own urban environment. Kids in diverse social environments in various countries were told in a UNESCO-sponsored international experiment how they look and feel about the diverse aspects of their environment. Lynch then analyzed and summarized these reports in a comparative way in his book (Lynch, 1977). Before this study got published as an edited book it was released in two shortened journal articles: "Growing Up in Cities" (1976) and "On People and Places: A Comparative Study of the Spatial Environment of Adolescence" (1976) (Banerjee/Southworth, 1990). Lynch 's study often raises an issue that is extremely important nowadays. Is our orientation and way-finding skill something we acquire (and can also also unlearn as we externalise this to our GPS navigation systems, or is it inherent to humans as well as other animals? In claiming, "it now seems impossible that there is any supernatural" instinct "of way-finding," Lynch takes a strong stand, but it seems to be countered by new biological data on, for example, bird migrations.

Later, in his work "Theory of Good City Form" (Lynch 1981), Lynch investigated the relationship between the city and the fundamental human values, and how they could guide the planning of a good physical and spatial urban design. Beyond this he argues that the city cannot have any normative form of goodness (Grange, 1999). His last book "Wasting Away" deals with the process of environmental decline, decay and renewability. Instead of focusing solely on the subject of "waste and environment,"

Lynch is illuminating the subject from different points of view. The work was nearly completed at the time of his death and posthumously published (Lynch, 1984).

Conclusion

The function of Lynch shaped planning for humanistic design and environmental psychology. He was a planner, however, who played an important part in American city planning. Very few people had talked of the neurological significance of our senses in recognizing urban planning before Lynch, and this led to his work's popularity and recognition. In the 21st century, the ideas of placemaking and place design are firmly based on the work of Lynch, and even participatory and co-design values form the basis for the work of Lynch in urban planning. GIS and imaginative mapping were also tools built based on the principles of mental maps, architecture, and how individuals interpret their world through Lynch. In order to gain a deeper understanding of urban development that affects human activity in their neighborhoods on a regular basis, it is important to recognize how people view their environments.

Why I selected Kevin Lynch?

I chose him because he was a distinguished urban planner and humanist whose ideas, observations, and activities have had a far-reaching effect all over the world on planning. He was one of the pioneers of planning for sustainable growth. His views on urban architecture, embedded in humanism and social study on how people view cities, have had a formative effect on the growth on urban planning approaches in the past 3 decades and have helped drive the emerging urban design profession and new

systems of regulating urban development. He was known for his work on the different types of sensory inputs that people receive from their environment. His most famous work is called *The Image of the City* highlighting how people use the city on a daily basis. His work on *City Sense* and *City Design* was the first of its kind to highlight the importance of design principles in urban planning.

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