

Revisiting *The Image of the City*:
The Intellectual History and Legacy of Kevin Lynch's
Urban Vision

by

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Introduction

Kevin Andrew Lynch (1918-1984) was one of the leading urban planning theorists of the twentieth century. Devoting his life to writing, teaching, and practicing, he contributed to the field a method of urban study that lies in the vein of environmental design; it is one that analyzes human interaction with built space and architectural form. Lynch's method was decidedly personal, as he sought to uncover the reasons for perceptual responses to built form, with the goal of designing more humane urban areas. Concentrating on studying the everyday user of urban space, his approach was neither stuck in the intellectual realm nor trapped by any preconceived convictions of good design. Rather, he was sympathetic to the urban inhabitant and endeavored to design better cities for the masses.

After spending his youth in Chicago, Lynch briefly attended both Yale University's School of Architecture and then Taliesin, where he studied under Frank Lloyd Wright. After these short architectural engagements he spent a small period of time studying engineering and biology, followed by a stint in the Army during World War II. Lynch's tendency for vacillation continued as he then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's School of Architecture and Urban Planning, which turned out to be the most intellectually fulfilling of all his academic immersions. Upon graduating from MIT with an undergraduate degree in urban planning, he spent some time working professionally at the Greensboro Planning Commission, yet almost immediately returned to academia. Due to a dearth of professors in the growing urban planning field, in 1947 MIT offered him a position as a professor, which he accepted. This position afforded him a great amount of freedom to develop distinctly personal theories, which stemmed from both his excitement by the urban experience and his inclination to the study of architecture.

Lynch's published writings begin with an article titled "The Form of Cities" (1954), appearing in *Scientific American*, followed by "A Theory of Urban Form" (1958). In these efforts he studied the historical basis and themes of the composition of certain modern cities. Tridib Banjeree and Michael Southworth, respectively a colleague and student of Lynch's who together wrote the only biographic account of Lynch's life in their compendium of his work, say that in these initial works Lynch "was beginning to chart a whole new way of looking at the large scale built environment and was searching for a taxonomy to describe the physical city."¹ In this exploration of the physical city he began to form a deep concern for the human experience, which he developed in his

¹ Tridib Banjeree and Southworth Michael eds. *City Sense and City Design: Writings and Projects of Kevin Lynch*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1990. 4.

arguably most important text *The Image of the City*, published in 1960.² The research in this book was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, which bestowed him a grant supporting what turned out to be a five-year long study. This lengthy urban analysis was titled “The Perceptual Form of Cities,” and was executed with his colleague Gyorgy Kepes.³ The resulting text established Lynch’s voice in the long tradition of urban planning theory and is the first example of a method he would continue to develop throughout his life. As Banjeree and Southworth noted, “what was distinctive about [this method] was that he dealt with the immediate experiential qualities of place, which he was fond of referring to as the ‘sensuous qualities,’ or simply ‘sense,’ and their importance in people’s lives.”⁴ Through this approach he added a unique level of humanistic sympathy to the long lineage of urban theory.

Continuing to teach and write, Lynch became very well known through his ensuing work after *The Image of the City* established his reputation in urban planning. His book *Site Planning* (1962) was taught as a textbook in urban planning schools, while his various essays continued to evolve his unique approach to urban study.⁶ Banjeree and Southworth find that his work suggested “a completely different way of defining the scope of city design.”⁷ Through this work he helped to reengineer the perspective of the planner so that it concerned the entirety of urban experience, both physical and emotional, with an emphasis on the relationship between the two.

By the 1970s Lynch was a prominent voice in urban planning and architecture and was frequently asked to pen essays and attend symposia. His writing evolved and

² Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1960.

³ Perceptual Form of the City Files, 1951-1960 (Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

⁴ Banjeree and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 6.

⁶ Kevin Lynch and Gary Hack, *Site Planning*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984.

⁷ Banjeree and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 6.

included investigations of memory of place, children's relationship to their spatial environments, and historic preservation. Yet, even through this varied discussion and continuous academic success, *The Image of the City* stands out as the fulcrum of his theorizing, and constitutes his most concentrated impact on the discourse of urban planning. In fact, the text is one of the M.I.T. Press's best selling books of all time. The first edition has seen over 200,000 printings and continues to be printed at an annual rate of 4,500 to 5,500 copies. In the words of Neil Blaisdell, the reprint manager of the MIT Press, "the conventional wisdom about the life-cycle of your average, garden-variety book is that it sells the majority of its copies the first year of publication... but [The Image of the City,] flirting as it is with quarter of a million copies sold, the "first year" theory flies right out the window."⁸ The book had its greatest impact and influence in the years directly following its publication, as Mr. Blaisdell states: "[It] was one of the titles that definitely put The MIT Press on the map as a serious university press, and helped to shape...our core list."⁹ This initial impression still resonates today, as the book continues to be taught in the classrooms of American architecture and urban planning. It can be safely stated that almost every student in these disciplines is familiar with *The Image of the City*. Its popularity is not limited to the United States, as it has been translated into Spanish, French, German, Japanese, and Italian, holding its influence the world over.

To adequately understand the relevance and impact of *The Image of the City*, Lynch's personal background in the urban planning discourse must be initially sketched. Kevin Lynch arose to prominence in the middle of the twentieth century, preceded by a series of architects responding to the accelerating urban growth of the United States.

⁸ Neil J Blaisdell. "M.I.T. Press Interview." E-mail interview. 9 Feb. 2010.

⁹ Ibid.

What resulted was a shift in the level of attention given to city planning and design, which had yet to become a discipline defined apart from architecture. While Lynch was still in school, those leading the discussion were architects who sought specific interventions in the form of more organic and pastoral elements, as well as classically inflected urban plans. These forerunners established the conviction that architecture and landscape design could be used as tools to alleviate the newly congested and increasingly industrial cityscape. Inspired, Lynch was drawn successively to divergent figures within this discourse, and sought to learn from them aspects of architecture and urban planning. However, he found most systems dated. Thus, he vacillated between schools and ideas, searching for something new, something outside of the set discourse. These separations and iterations are characteristic of the larger and complex deviation between his own interests and those of the established theorists and architect-planners of the time, and they mark the beginning of a new direction in the discussion he was to form.

Although his work was initially an extension of those preceding him, Lynch began to look for solutions on a larger scale and approached city planning from a wider, yet still personal, perspective. In the time between his own schooling and his later position teaching at MIT, where he wrote his decisive book, the urban planning landscape had changed. By 1947 the discourse of American city design had grown beyond pastoral and classically derived interventions with the intention of beautifying the urban landscape, and into a vocabulary of modernism seen in large-scale architectural redevelopment, which sought to systematically enhance the city's functional capacities. The new swaths of city eventually became treated as flat planes and large slabs (see figs. 1 & 2). These abstracted towers and planar open spaces were built as a result of the boom in city and suburban growth after World War II, which congested infrastructure

and rendered old city plans useless. Due to this rather impersonal and directionless type of architectural growth, Lynch and his colleagues led the burgeoning call to reinvest in the aesthetic landscape of urbanism.

The clearest example of this call towards reimagining urban design can be heard in *The Image of the City*. Throughout the book Lynch seeks to invent a new method of urban analysis and thus redirect the planning process. He was prompted by the lack of a design language guiding the new interventions in the American cityscape, since the discipline of urban planning as a profession was in its infancy. Inspired by the lexicon employed by architects, Lynch endeavored to provide the planner with a language. Although his approach strove to shift the discipline, it simultaneously falls into a very specific lineage of urban theory, one that is defined by a penchant for uncovering how aesthetics of physical urban form make some cities welcoming, pleasant, and liked; essentially, what physical characteristics make cities “work.” These writings span the history of urban design; it is an incredibly rich lineage, full of diverse positions. Lynch himself was aware of a number of iterations of this history, citing certain precedents to his work. These can be found in eras as early as ancient Greece and Rome, such as in the tome *Politics* by Aristotle and *Ten Books on Architecture* by Vitruvius,¹⁰ Although the lineage of this topic can be traced to the ancient era, before the turn of the twentieth century it had been specifically addressed only in a handful of canonical texts that were known to Lynch. The authors of these texts include Leon Alberti, who worked partly in Florence during the Renaissance; Camillo Sitte, who wrote *The Art of Building Cities* in the late 19th century in Vienna; and Ebenezer Howard who wrote *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, in 1898

¹⁰ Aristotle, *The Politics*. London: Penguin, 1992.

Pollio Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*. New York: Dover, 1960.

in England¹¹ This tradition carried over through the turn of the century, and can be seen in the divergent visions of Patrick Geddes and Le Corbusier among many others (see figs. 3 & 4). Each one of these theories concerns the aesthetic landscape of the city, and each one is a response to the architectural and cultural contexts of its time. Lynch's *The Image of the City* is likewise a response to its cultural and urban context. However, for the first time in this long line of theory, Lynch called for the process of design to be directed by the common man's visual perception of space and form. He attempted to examine our appreciation of the increasingly complex twentieth century urban environment, an environment that was infused with an augmenting number of architectural styles, economic functions, and shifting populations. Viewing the city as "a complete landscape that is seen, felt, and heard as a complicated sensuous environment that encompasses us throughout much of our life,"¹² he asked the questions: "What is the effect on us of all that we sense while we loiter or bustle through the city streets and squares? What can we do to make this flow of stimuli more satisfying, more inspiring, more humane? That the city today is far from why it is so, except for some elementary notions of too little grass or too much dirt and noise, is not so easy to put."¹³ Although his theory is derived from the context previously mentioned, he did not use a prescribed set of design tools to direct his own urban theory; he investigated the city's physical makeup anew, apart from any stylistic influence.

Spurred on by a simultaneous interest in the aesthetics of city landscape and a fascination with the personal urban experience, Lynch specifically attempted to examine

¹¹ Camillo Sitte, *The Art of Building Cities*, Translated by Charles T. Stewart. Westport, C.T., Hyperion Press, Inc., 1979.

Ebenezer Howard, Frederic James Osborn, and Lewis Mumford. *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., 1965.

¹²Kevin Lynch, "City Satisfactions," August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹³ Ibid.

the connection between psychology and the physical urban environment. He sought to reform the ways in which we approach city design through defining a new set of tools and a new approach. He initiated the simultaneous use of psychology, anthropology, economics, and architecture in the process of urban study. Lynch's work can be seen as a culmination of the earlier theories as spurred along by the necessities of urban design at the moment combined with his own personal convictions. In this way, *The Image of the City* marks a large shift from the canonical texts of the past, as well as from the entrenched design processes of the moment. It is a fresh look, one without dogmatic influence. His book is at once a theoretical evaluation of urban spatial perception, a call for visual urban analysis, and a preliminary handbook for city design.

Attempting to uncover how we perceive and mentally process the city's visual fabric, in *The Image of the City*, Lynch and his colleague Gyorgy Kepes employed a team of assistants and collaborators. They interviewed numerous people in Boston, Los Angeles, and Jersey City, asking them to describe distinctive elements, recognize locations in photos, go on walks, and draw maps. Their choices in movement and responses to the urban space were recorded.¹⁴ To analyze these reactions of his participants Lynch developed a system of spatial reading. The system contains three components: identity, meaning the ability to understand a given physical form as its own entity; structure, that the form must have a spatial relationship to the observer and other objects; and meaning, that the form must include a level of personal or emotional resonance with the observer. From a distinct similarity in the results, he was able to develop a system of, as he called it, "public images." These physical elements of the city he broke down into five different

¹⁴ This approach would be retroactively dubbed "cognitive mapping," appropriating the behavioral psychology term describing the analysis of mental processes influenced by the spatial environment. For further discussion see Rob Kitchin and Scott Freundschuh, *Cognitive Mapping: Past, Present, and Future*. London: Routledge, 2000.

categories: “1) the node (a point of interest, usually traveled to and from), 2) the path (a channel through which the user moves, a street), 3) edge (a boundary, wall or river, delimiting the end of a space), 4) landmark (usually a large physical element used as a point of reference), and 5) district (or a perceived space, like a neighborhood).”¹⁵ From this collection of shared responses he concluded that the city must be grouped into systems that are “easily identifiable” into an “over-all pattern.”¹⁶ Since it was his opinion that comfort and enjoyment in urban space relates to the ability of “way-finding,” a term he coined, Lynch posited that only when one is able to navigate confidently can one make positive personal use of the cityscape. He said: “A good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security.”¹⁷ By this likening of pattern recognition to emotions, he espouses that a “clear image of the surroundings is thus useful basis for individual growth...[it] not only offers security but also heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience.”¹⁸ From this he thinks that a systematic and analytic approach along these lines should be the focus of city design.

This approach was a true evolution from the likes of Sitte and Howard, since Lynch did not in fact propose a distinct set of design standards to be used. Instead, he offered up elements of design inspiration; it is almost a textbook for visual urban education, not design practices. Lynch thought that if we, the user of the city, were able to better understand our space, to “read” it more easily, then we could in turn design more hospitable cities, or even navigate our existing ones more easily.

His new approach garnered much interest upon publication and in the ensuing years it widely influenced the discourse of urban planning and architecture. It did so in

¹⁵ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 46-91.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

different ways. Initially, there were several thinkers who misinterpreted the text. These planners incorrectly drew a concrete system of design directly out of the text. They implemented his five categories of “public images” as they saw fit, using them interchangeably as a magical system of spatial arrangements to ameliorate urban conditions. However, since his system was not in fact a true method of physical design but rather a framework for approaching a visual comprehension of urban space, their own work failed to find success. In contrast to this ostensibly positive response, some reacted against the book due to the drawbacks in Lynch’s scope of analysis. Though they agreed with his general commitment to studying the singular person in analyzing urban space and visual interpretation, they saw his work as too controlled and defined, as he used a sample group of rather homogenous people. In reaction, following work drew from larger and more diverse groups of people, with more culturally nuanced approaches that dealt with a wider range of problems, not simply way-finding and perception.

The last group, and in my opinion the most interesting, drew from and evolved the general idea of Lynch’s approach, which extended from his combination of environmental analysis and psychology specific to the urban experience. Through Lynch their discussion became centered on personal experience in relation to physical space. As the architectural historian William Curtis points out the discourse evolved into “consulting the users; in transforming the entire social system. Or else they were to lie in reconsidering the “text” of the traditional city with all its latent meanings.”¹⁹ This idea of city and architecture as a readable text seems to have informed the genesis of semiotic analysis of urban areas. Thus, not only was Lynch’s work influential in the closed circle

¹⁹ William J. R Curtis. *Modern Architecture since 1900*. Oxford: Phaidon, 2007. 555.

of the urban planning community, but also rippled through the fields of architecture, anthropology, and psychology.

Some key figures who followed in Lynch's wake and further developed his theories were the architect Aldo Rossi, as seen in his book *The Architecture of the City* (1966); the literary theorist and critic Roland Barthes, specifically in his essay "Semiology and the Urban" (1967); and the architects cum theorists Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, in *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972).²² In different ways they analyzed the significance of the perception of form to theorize why and how we understand, enjoy, or dislike, certain visual characteristics. Lynch was one of the first thinkers in the post-war era to study human interaction with human construction at such a large scale; many responded in turn.

As with any text that pushes a new direction of thought within a field, one that spurs new disciplines or lays on the precipice of an intellectual paradigm shift, there were many layers of knowledge, influence, and original thought that led to its formation. However, with Lynch and this groundbreaking work specifically, there is no conclusive study that illuminates his processes leading up to the 1960 text. Only Banerjee and Southworth's introduction to their compendium on Lynch offers any insight into his life.²³ Still, their account is brief and devoid of any critical analysis into the sources of his intellectual development. It is the fiftieth anniversary of *The Image of the City*, and so it is time already that it is dissected at length.

²² Aldo Rossi. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT, 1984.

Roland Barthes, *The City and the Sign*, M. Gottdiener and A. Lagopolous eds., New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas: the Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1977.

²³ Banerjee and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 1-29.

Although Lynch states in the preface to *The Image of the City*: “in any intellectual work, the content derives from many sources, [and is thus] difficult to trace,” this thesis will analyze Lynch’s intellectual evolution by synthesizing a wealth of his unpublished work contained at the MIT Special Collections and Archive. They have recently processed a portion of Lynch’s archives on his study “The Perceptual Form of the City,” which formed *The Image of the City*. The entirety of this collection includes personal letters, annotated class bibliographies, high school writing, college notes, personal journals, and fieldwork for his Rockefeller Grant study “The Perceptual Form of the City.” This archive has opened the potential to truly understand where and how his ideas formed, as well as their contextual relevance. It is a window into his mind. In addition, the archives at the Rockefeller Foundation, which contain their own documentation on the study “The Perceptual Form of the City,” have been combed to develop a broader understanding of the book in its cultural context. Stemming from this discussion of the book’s genesis, this thesis will attempt to place Lynch in a larger discussion of architecture, urbanism, and other fields such as psychology, philosophy, and art during the time he was working in order to illuminate any cross pollination of ideas or influence not recorded or admitted in the primary source material. Following this illustration, I will discuss the text itself and its composition as a designed object. After the production of the book is adequately understood in its cultural context, I will discuss its relevance after publication and the influence it held across disciplines, analyzing who drew from what and how, and to what end. After this is accomplished I will move to place the text and the ensuing theoretical influence in a current context, judging whether or not it holds up in the digital age. In totality this effort will exist as an intellectual history of this stream of ideas and their legacy, with Lynch’s *Image of the City* as the fulcrum.

Lynch himself will be illuminated and hopefully in the process the vast appreciation of his influential text will become more adequately understood.

Chapter One

The Formation of an Intellectual Curiosity

To appropriately appreciate the genesis of Kevin Lynch's intellectual method and analytic process and design intentions, a portrait must be drawn of him as a student and young man. During his pre-college years he seemed to develop a set of convictions that carried over into all of his following studies and defined his system of thinking. These early persuasions also elucidate his intellectual stance for and against general movements in the discourses of urbanism and architecture of the time. This chapter will involve a close reading of his early high school poetry and essays and move into a discussion of his urban upbringing and college years informed by an analysis of personal correspondence. It will show how the intellectual method behind his pioneering theory was in fact generated at the beginning of his academic immersion.

Groundwork Laid

The origins of Kevin Lynch's study of personal experience in urban space stemmed from his immersion in a specific context in time and location as well as an intense inclination toward specific authors, writings, and professors during his formative pre-college years. Lynch was born in 1918 to a family of second-generation Irish immigrants, his grandparents having moved to Chicago after the Irish famine. By the time of his birth his family was well off, having worked up from nothing. From an interview with Anne Buttmier in 1982, Lynch recalled that:

It was a middle class family that I come from, they had been struggling to find their feet and work their way up. On my father's side for example they had very much boom and bust life. There were times when they were living on South Michigan Boulevard, which was one of the fancy areas of Chicago and there were other times when they lived in the county jail when they had no other place to live, because he knew the jail keeper. It was a hard struggle but by the time I had come along it was a fairly established middle class family.²⁴

Their home was on the North Side of Chicago in the neighborhood of Hazel Avenue, a place of single-family homes and lush greenery; it was a decidedly genteel residential area. In 1953 Lynch took a stroll through his old neighborhood, noting in his journal how its general atmosphere had stayed the same: “[It is] still a little island of green and solid one

²⁴ Kevin Lynch. “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch, MIT School of Architecture and Urban Planning,” April 23, 1980. (Box 16, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988, MC.0208, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

family houses.”²⁵ It was here, at home, where Lynch first began his schooling working with private tutors. Following this initial education he was sent to a Catholic parish school, in line with the tradition of most Catholic children of the area. However, just a few years later his mother, a rather liberal thinker, sent him to the Francis W. Parker School in Lincoln Park, one of the first progressive schools in the country. Lynch stated that:

I left because my mother felt I wasn't getting a good enough education and I must say I always think what a lot of courage she had. She was a good Catholic and, every time she went to confession was always asked why I wasn't in the Catholic school. She was feeling that pressure all the time, and yet she decided for herself that she ought to send me to a different school.²⁶

Founded in 1901 by Francis Parker, a disciple of John Dewey, the school implemented a system that strayed from standardized testing and harsh discipline.²⁷ It was a new method developed by its founder, who championed the teaching of arts and sciences, and saw the institution as a place where the young person could develop in all aspects of the physical, mental, and moral self.²⁸ Lynch studied in this liberal and forward thinking environment through his high school graduation in 1935. And in line with the school's founding intentions, it became the first defining influence on his own intellectual

²⁵ Kevin Lynch, quoted in Banerjee and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 10.

²⁶ Lynch. "Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch" (Box 16, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988, MC.0208, MIT.)

²⁷ "A Brief History of Francis W. Parker School." *Francis W. Parker School, Chicago*. Web. 08 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.fwparker.org/Page.aspx?pid=306&srcid=397>>.

²⁸ Mortensen, Henry T. *The Elementary School Teacher and Course of Study*. 5th ed. Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1902. 400-402.

processes and inclinations. He went so far as to say that this academic environment was his “main influence in terms of education, much more so than college.”²⁹

This early education largely formed the later direction of his studies. Lynch said: “I think that was one of the great times of my life. Was those high school years during the depression working in a grade school and a tremendous fervent around in the world outside.”³⁰ Although much of his work from this time is lost, a few pieces remain. They provide insight into exactly who he was studying at this young age and what he found important to his own formation. This work evinces a great humor and passion for academic study. A selection of stanzas from an undated high school poetry project highlights his interest in certain thinkers, and is evidence of the beginning of his leanings. On John Locke he mused:

There’s a man for you!
 Didn’t like those newfangled notions
 About innate ideas
 And such nonsense
 To all this he
 Simply
 And succinctly said
 “Phooey!”

On Marx he stated:

Wild eyed Marx in a dark back room,

²⁹ Lynch “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (Box 16, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988, MC.0208, MIT.)

³⁰ Ibid.

Writing manifestoes with hand unsteady

Orating to himself of capital's doom

Doomsday, doomsday, doomsday,

DOOM!

On Descartes he asserted:

Descartes' philosophy meant nothing to 'im

But his "cogito ergo sum"

For philosophical doubt and skeptical spirit

If you want a genius, Descartes comes near it.³¹

It is evident in this work that the Parker School provided Lynch with a high level of creative flexibility that allowed him to develop his intellect independently, apart from a rigid structure of dogma or influence. His poetry on William James, the turn of the twentieth century philosopher and psychologist, taken from the same set quoted previously, shows just how his mind was forming and begins to reveal which ideas later informed his own theoretical process.

Among America's stupendous names

Looms the one of William James

With system vicious and thoughts subversive

He ranted disloyally in manner discursive³²

³¹ High School Poetry, Untitled, Undated (Box 13, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

³² Ibid.

Although brief and superficially analytical, this short poem hints at his preference for James' oppositional theories, such as "pragmatism," in which theory was applied and tested in the world to estimate its validity. Lynch develops and elaborates on this interest in a thirty-seven page hand written essay, where he demonstrates a strong and opinionated analysis of James' "manner discursive". Although clearly a single essay cannot define Lynch's entire intellect at this early stage, the ideas contained within this work closely anticipate his mature theory. Furthermore, it is one of the only essays from high school he kept and gave to the MIT archives, which signals its special personal significance.

Towards the beginning of the essay, Lynch marked his interpretation of pragmatism as a system of thought that "denies that truth actually represents any exterior fact. Truth is that quality of our concepts or ideas which causes them to lead or to point to and be harmonious with our experience."³³ He is correct in his interpretation of James, who maintained that there must be a separation from rigid dogmas that define truth as a constant and promoted the scientific analysis of concepts that attempt to define the structure of our world. Lynch further noted that for James "truth is plastic, flexible, never cut and dried. Therefore he is always open to suggestions from the other side of the fence."³⁵ It seems as though Lynch was drawn to the idea of intellectual flexibility. Further support of this reading can be seen in his almost hysteric and mocking description of Karl Marx as quoted previously: "wild eyed Marx...writing manifestoes

³³ High School Essay, "William James," Undated (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

³⁵ Ibid.

with hand unsteady.”³⁶ For Lynch, Marx provided a view that was too narrow, too controlled.

This inclination towards a more malleable reading of a given situation or theory can be seen throughout his essay on James, wherein Lynch later agreed: “dogma is one of the greatest objectors to pragmatism. Our concept of truth as a representation of reality has become so a part of us after centuries of use that it has become dogmatic and axiomatic.” He followed this by conceding that the old “dogmatic” approach was, to an extent, applicable in its time, claiming that, “part of the philosophy of the common sense was at one time plastic and just a novel addition by some primitive genius to our stock of truth.” Although Lynch has chosen his stance, by allowing dogmatic philosophy some relevance, he approaches the discussion openly, judging the discourse over time and place. This theme in approach carries over into all of his later work; he never forgoes an attempt to look at situations anew and from every angle.

Lynch carries this method and conviction with him into a discussion on space within the same essay. He stated: “It is the same with space and time...one does not think of space as one. The space in your backyard has no relation to the space you conceive of enfolding the Earth...Time and space were only unified for use in intellectual problems. What we have considered to be absolute facts turn out to be only useful concepts.”³⁷ Although his reading may be somewhat juvenile and incomplete, his inclination towards reevaluation apart from preconceived definition anticipates his work in *Image of the City*. In that text he throws out structured and entrenched methods of analysis and approach to the design of the urban environment. Back in high school, he

³⁶ High School Poetry (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208) MIT.)

³⁷ “William James” (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208) MIT.)

had further stressed his relative opposition to this method, claiming: “It seems to me that dearest ideal that pragmatism breaks is that of the ultimate or absolute truth. We may bear with utility³⁸ for the time being, but to feel that the human mind, our proudest possession, is forever doomed to be out of touch with reality is too much.”³⁹ He professes a desire for the capability and potential of the human mind that reaches the point of reverence. It is clear in his early pontifications that he believes in Man at the most basic philosophical level. “We may be spiraling pragmatically about the core of reality, but we are gradually striking inward.” Lynch states “we” as man; for him the human was actively approaching the knowledge most usually reserved for God.

Not only is Lynch optimistic about man’s potential, but also deeply aligns with the thought that “truth...must be consistent with experience, and experience not be controlled by fancy.” If, for him, truth relates to experience, it is in turn defined by environment. Is it possible to make the leap in assumption that Lynch believes concrete, physical elements in the world have the ability to shape our internal definitions of truth in reality? I would not go so far as to state that, but here it can be inferred that Lynch is invested in the role our physical reality plays in defining our lives. He, like James, stresses a theoretical removal from the abstracted notions of a true form. Not in the platonic sense of ideal form, but instead in a distrust of the idea that our perception of and the environment itself is governed by a set of intangibles, including the way we act ourselves. In fact, James’ theory in *Principles of Psychology* would lay the groundwork for later

³⁸ The use of “utility” refers to the Utilitarianism school of philosophy, as initially laid out by John Stuart Mill. See specifically: John Stuart Mill and George Sher. *Utilitarianism*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2001. For a short collection of his essential his work see: John Stuart Mill. *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.

³⁹ “William James” (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208) MIT.)

environmental psychology. As George Mandler States in his book *A History of Modern Experimental Psychology*:

James was a representative of both the scientific and social establishments of his day, as well as a precursor of...the fascination with psychology and the mechano-physiological models of the organism...[which explored the] explanations of thought or behavior of the organism...in physiological models.⁴⁰

Lynch's study of James directed him towards later study on how the physical environment shapes our decisions and how, in turn, these decisions inform the environment. Furthermore, Lynch professes a liking for James' own metaphysical theory of "radical empiricism," which stemmed from the disbelief in the idea that the "world exists in the mind of the absolute, or God." He specifically highlights James' notion of "pluralism" in saying that it is "the obvious interpretation of the facts which surround us...[since it acknowledges] disorder, lack of relations, bad as well as good..." Yet he finds fault in this as well, saying: "to believe that there may be parts of the universe which are entirely unrelated to other parts, and that all these parts interact haphazardly is hard to swallow." Lynch accepts that "disorder" is present, yet proposes that: "perhaps we could compromise with a unity of purpose. The universe is at present and in part haphazard and irregular, but seems to be driving to a unified goal."⁴¹ Hesitant to say the world is completely disjointed, Lynch shows a lust for its cohesion. This is a goal that he believed could direct our ever-augmenting creations, through scientific study, as if the

⁴⁰ George Mandler. *A History of Modern Experimental Psychology: from James and Wundt to Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2007. 64.

⁴¹ "William James" (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208) MIT.)

universe is machine in the process of being fixed, and that we can contribute to its progression. The inclination towards these definitive tenets, although general philosophical concepts, seems to have seeped into his later reading of urban space. Additionally, as Gestalt psychology rose to prominence towards the end of James' life (1842-1910) and built on his ideas in the realm of perception analysis, this theoretical tradition would continue on as one of Lynch's defining intellectual influences. In Lynch's later academic study he emphasized a need for visual cohesion in urban space, judging it as disjointed and disordered. This he derived through scientific study of individual reaction to the physical environment. In high school he stated that in the world "chaos is still powerful, but will not be so forever." He thought the same of city and later sought to cohere it himself.⁴²

The open environment of the school allowed Lynch to develop lasting personal relationships with several professors who guided him through this passionate study of philosophy. Not only did the school provide him with a formative academic endeavor, but also allowed him schooling on the street at the level of the common man. Lynch reminisced that: "what I most remember are first some great teachers and a school which encouraged you to act and do things."⁴³ In the cultural climate of depression, which first hit when he was eleven years old, the school encouraged an active role in response to the troubles of the time. In the same retrospective interview from 1982, Lynch remembered: "The tremendous years in this country when the bread lines were forming, and there was tremendous political upheaval, a lot of us were being swept up into the social and

⁴² "William James" (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208) MIT.)

⁴³ Lynch "Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch" (Box 16, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988, MC.0208, MIT.)

political questions, walking on picket lines and so on. They were very exciting years.”⁴⁴

With these conditions, his early academic years were unusually engaged in active participation regarding the social questions of the time. The result was a burgeoning care for the common man, directed in part by a socialist proclivity. He recalled:

This [engagement] was socialist mostly, working with labor unions and so on...The Spanish Civil War [1936-1939] for example was probably the first real great political influence of my life. Being involved in that emotionally...we were as kids of that time on the outside but very much wrapped up in that [discussion].⁴⁵

His involvement was generated by his own desires, outside of any influence from his parents, who had allowed him to develop intellectually on his own, as seen in his mother’s push for a more liberal education. His work was, “not through the family, with the family being rather respectable, but with other kids.”⁴⁶

Lynch’s philosophical stance and the active approach the school promoted can be seen in his high school observations on the city of Chicago. He first reviews the city from a socio-economic vantage point, highlighting the stratification of Chicago’s economic distribution and its relation to physical urban fabric. He begins:

The city is Chicago. It sprawls out...disorganized and split up into many communities....Its park system, one of the first in the country conceived and

⁴⁴ Lynch “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (Box 16, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988, MC.0208, MIT.)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

planned as a whole, nevertheless serves only the richer districts with any adequacy. There is a crying need for playgrounds, for breathing spaces in the crowded residential districts.⁴⁷

His appreciation for the city park system was wrapped in social criticism (see fig. 4).

Here, context defined his first proposal for urban revision, albeit very undeveloped.

After further lamenting the poor quality of the inner city areas he concludes:

And yet this city, confused and disorganized, full of conflicting...groups, stricken with poverty and drabness is something that can be loved. There are its physical assets, the blue plane of Lake Michigan relentlessly lapping against the rocks and beaches; the line of buildings along Michigan Avenue, the drive through the large parks; beautiful sunsets and sky-pieces over the flat roofs to the west; summer twilight in a by-street, with the people on the porches and life a little more open and friendly; sunlight on the cottonwood and a dusty ball-field; an infinite series of pictures.⁴⁸

In this poetic portrayal of the city he evinces a fondness for the gentler aspects of a slower, rural life, framed by the expanse of the city. He sees beauty in the city from a flexible vantage, one that ranges from the sun over the rooftops to the dust on a baseball field. His care for the individual life on the street and the systemic issue of class, set on the physical backdrop of the city, formed his life-long interest in the experience of the

⁴⁷ High School Essay, Untitled, Undated (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

city. Lynch's time in high school furnished his intellectual growth in the classroom and the community and throughout his career. he took this progressive approach to learning and creation

Architectural Immersion

Lynch's specific interest in the field of architecture and its involvement in the urban fabric was strong, albeit undirected, in his young years. He states that his first interest in the discipline came from a seventh-grade teacher with whom he studied Egyptian architecture. "The reason I got interested in architecture was a very fine seventh grade teacher who set me to studying Egyptian architecture, and from that it just went on."⁴⁹ This sentiment continued on, as seen in an undated work found in his "High School" file in the Archive at MIT. It is a poem wrapped up in enchantments with a cathedral: it is an ode to architecture. For the enjoyment of the reader, I have included the poem in full:

A Cathedral

Great arches, sweeping into the gloom above,
 Dwarfing little man, whose work it was.
 Soft, mellow light seeping through the tinted window,
 Everlasting but beautiful dusk,
 Great pillars, stately altars around which kneel fervent

⁴⁹ Lynch. "Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch" (Kevin Lynch Papers, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries.)

worshippers;

All persuaded by a silent hush of great awe.

Towering walls, inspired sculpture, art in cloth and gold,

All made by man filled with inspiration and determination

Created by mighty faith

This is a cathedral⁵⁰

Encapsulated within these brief moments of poetic articulation is Lynch's desire. The poem displays his belief in the will of man, which he sees concretely formed in the physical beauty of the building, paralleling the convictions of William James. His veneration for the spirit of the elder building typologies exposes his excitement and interest in architecture. Furthermore, Lynch lived right next to Lake Michigan in these early years, an extension of Daniel Burnham's 1909 plan for Chicago, which attempted to preserve much of Chicago's lakefront (see fig. 5). "One of the things I remember the great Lake Michigan that we swam in the summer and walked along the rest of the year." He found beauty in this natural resource, indirectly thankful to Burnham's vision. Lynch's sentiments towards the city's form was due to both Chicago's great architectural resurgence in the years just prior to his birth and its relevance in the urban planning discourse of his time.

In these years Chicago, along with New York, was the focus of the American architectural dialogue. The conversation specific to Chicago was driven by a select number of urban planners, theorists, architects, and designers. These American minds,

⁵⁰ High School Poetry, "A Cathedral," Undated (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Poetry 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

the most prominent being of Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright, responded directly to the growing urbanity of the United States. At the turn of the century, when this issue was most visibly pressing due to intensive industrialization, these leading voices sought to beautify their growing urban space. Beauty, however, is a word and an idea that has had its meaning twisted and shaped by context, culture, and time, and in this case it was no different. The conception of beauty in this setting was in part a reaction to the increasingly present architectural symbols of industry, urban density, and economic conditions that caused huge shifts in the lives of workers. The economy dictated a change in the role of the lower classes. They moved from more skilled work, usually encapsulating the entire breadth of a specific product's production to a more narrowly defined job revolving around the production of a smaller piece of a larger good. Lynch responded to this shift in high school, actively arguing its detriments with his friends and peers. Many perceived this shift as a devolution from craftsman to cog, parallel to the move from town to city. Observers saw this urban shift as one of general familial degradation and increasing social malevolence. This dramatic outlook responded to the great proliferation of slums and shantytowns that visually defined urban peripheries. The new industrial-urban sprawl was viewed as de-populating the rural town and uprooting the wholesomeness of the individual. Thus, since the city was full of negative connotations, and in many cases conditions were downtrodden, aesthetic speculation focused on the rural home front and the natural landscape for inspiration. The city became a new creative project, an intellectual case for examination, and a place for physical renewal. A level of sympathy was assumed in city planning, establishing for the first time the idea that urban design could promote good.

This general perception was shared by many across the country, and while cities began to grow, their architects shaped them in various ways. In this period of collective growth, the inspiration for American architectural styles was found in Chicago. This was in part due to the physical composition of the city itself. By 1870 the city had amassed 130 square miles of land and 250,000 people into one political union. Coupled with the great fire of 1871, and its destruction of the central city, Chicago became a hub for architects and designers seeking to build it anew.⁵¹ The almost blank slate allowed for a re-imagining of the city, which resulted in a unique level of fervor and excitement for development. The new buildings reached high, marked by a consistent architectural care and precision, most notably in the work of William LeBaron Jenney Dankmar and Alder Burnham and Root and the eminent Louis Sullivan who Frank Lloyd Wright affectionately dubbed his “Lieber Meister.” Sullivan sought to create an American architectural language that did away with reference to the motifs and themes of Classical Europe. For him the American city, and American architecture in general for that matter, needed its own style and voice. This conviction led to the creation of the moniker “Chicago School,” which was applied to his and his colleagues’ collective work in retrospect.⁵² The sheer scope of Chicago’s construction catapulted it onto the national consciousness and this increased visibility resulted in the city’s hosting of a country-wide event, one that reshaped the architectural composition of American cities on different terms from what Sullivan promoted.

The United States government decided to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s first arrival to the New World with a grand exhibition in one

⁵¹ Mel Scott, *American Planning Since 1890*. Berkeley: University of California, 1969. 31-32.

⁵² For further elaboration see Carl W. Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: a History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973.

of its major cities. Chicago, with an intensely augmented civic pride stemming from the development of its infrastructure to accommodate its grand new size, pushed extremely hard to be the host. Through political manipulation, proliferation of propaganda, and a strong urban presence as the nation's second largest city, Chicago won this contest to host the event. The Columbian Exposition, as the event was called, was finished in 1893 and, in the words of the *Chicago Tribune*, was to be: "A vast museum, showing the product of the soil, the mines, and the seas, and the inventive skill of America. It is to cover square rods where the Paris Exposition covered square yards. It is to reveal the material wonders of the continent, while it displayed the artistic skill of a city."⁵⁴ On swamps and sandbars the exhibition's creators, including Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmsted,⁵⁵ constructed a massively scaled collection of cohesive buildings, an amalgam of classical Greek, Roman, and Renaissance styles derived from the *École des Beaux-Arts* of Paris, France (see fig. 7).⁵⁶

The exposition was a fantasy formed in plaster, rendered wholly in white and grounded in typologies of the architecture's past. Afterwards Daniel Burnham was fervent in his desire to shape urban space along the lines of the Columbian Exposition. He envisioned a new waterfront for Chicago adorned with classical motifs, championing the reinvention of the urban style. From this a larger sentiment for urban renewal was formed and subsequently titled "The City Beautiful" by writer George Kriehn. The

⁵⁴ *Chicago Tribune* 28 May, 1890: 4. As quoted in: Mel Scott. *American City Planning Since 1890*. Berkeley: University of California, 1969. 32

⁵⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted was the most prominent landscape designer of this time. His major works include Central Park in New York City, which was designed in collaboration the architect Calvert Vaux. For an elaborate biographic account see Laura Wood Roper, *FLO, A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

⁵⁶ In these years the *École des Beaux-Arts* school in Paris, France led the revival and proliferation of classical Greek and Roman styles and their hybrids, amalgams and cousins. Many of the American advocates of classical architecture at this time studied at the institution. For an in depth history of the school see: Donald D. Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980.

desire was described well by Edwin Howland Blashfield in *Municipal Affairs*, who illustrated that “beauty in high places is what we want; beauty in our municipal buildings, our parks, squares, and courts; and we shall have a national school when, and not until when, art, like a new Petrarch, goes up to be crowned at the capitol.”⁵⁷ It was a municipal art movement that saw the architects as artists and the city as a canvas. At this point the city planner was a designer of image, an architect of buildings or landscape who used his products to enforce a collective identity as defined by the Colombian Exposition (see figs. 5-7). The fair’s vision, and the resulting response to it, stimulated a discourse on American cities; the dialogue promoted the idea that cities should be designed as complete aesthetically pleasing environments, and not as collections of utilitarian buildings. From there arose a purity and totality in the thinking about urban form as yet unseen, however architecturally it was grounded in the past.

The exposition imparted a level of stability and growth through its completeness and scale, which users then projected onto their visions of America. These symbols of classicism influenced the look of many civic buildings all over the country through the work of Daniel Burnham, who was the exposition’s chief architect, along with McKim Mead and White who were included and later implemented the style most notably in New York City. However, Louis Sullivan, with whom Olmsted sided, declared that this look to history was wrong. They found the style overbearing and dull, with no conceptual basis, and were scared that it would proliferate in the veins of American architects. Indeed, it propagated in almost every city. Yet, the face of Chicago partly retained its modern character. The city accommodated the tall building more than any other form, for which these classicizing styles were not quite applicable. This type was

⁵⁷ Edwin H. Blashfield. “Municipal Art.” *Municipal Affairs*, III, 1889. 584. As quoted in: Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890*. Berkeley: University of California, 1969. 45.

already deeply ingrained in the minds of the developers of the city, and so the city was rendered in a mixture of classically appointed structures, as well as modern visions. This dual nature of Chicago's architectural history, simultaneously home to the classical themed Columbian Exposition and its own style, framed Lynch's architectural upbringing.

However, Lynch noted that his passion for architecture was still undefined upon leaving high school. Even so, he immediately pursued the discipline, stating that: "after [high school] I went to Yale...because knowing nothing about where to go I asked the only man I knew who was an architect in Chicago, Holabird, who had one of the big firms in Chicago."⁵⁹ The first iteration of the firm, named Holabird & Roche for its two principles, William Holabird and Martin Roche, practiced along the same lines as Daniel Burnham. Their works included the Marquette Building (1895) and the Cable Building (1893), both manipulations of Beaux Arts approaches to classical architecture. They were also two of the proponents of the Chicago Exposition and the City Beautiful movement. After the deaths of William Holabird in 1923 and Martin Roche in 1927, Holabird's son John Holabird, along with John Wellborn Root Jr., both graduates of the *École des Beaux Arts*, took control of the firm. Their style was inflected by a growing popularity in Art Deco, but it still remained in the Beaux Arts tradition (see fig. 9).⁶⁰ Thus John Holabird's direction for Lynch was to pursue an education in this style and at that time the Yale School of Architecture was defined by this Beau-Arts approach.

⁵⁹ Lynch. "Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch" (Kevin Lynch Papers, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries.)

⁶⁰ Robert Brueggemann, *Holabird & Roche, Holabird & Root: an Illustrated Catalog of Works*. New York: Garland in Cooperation with the Chicago Historical Society, 1991.

Lynch reflected that this advice from Holabird, who said authoritatively “young man you should go to Yale,” was poor.⁶² He further recalled that: “the reason he said that I should go to Yale was because it was the last Beaux Arts school in the country. It was the most conservative and backwards architecture school in the country.”⁶³

Although Yale at that time was not the only school teaching the Beaux Arts manner, it was indeed the last to drop the tradition. One can speculate that Lynch’s retrospective distaste for Yale’s approach was adumbrated during his years in high school. The Francis Parker School provided Lynch his own lived experience in a city that voiced the most visible opposition to classical styles, before and after the Columbian Exposition, and spurred his Jamesian desire to look for answers not grounded in dogma. His intellectual attitude lay in a larger care for the well being of his city and people within it, not simply Yale’s historically reflexive architectural discourse. He stated: “so I went [to Yale], and took a couple of courses and got disgusted and left.”⁶⁴ During this short stint his growing desire to ratify the increasingly depressed urban environment led him to seek out a new type of education, one with a focus on urban study, one that was positioned outside of the instruction of the formal institution that had just disappointed him so greatly. To satisfy this desire he stated: “I dropped out [of Yale], and happened to run across in the library a little booklet by Frank Lloyd Wright. And so, I said that’s where I want to go, and I went with him and spent a year and a half with Frank Lloyd Wright, which is the other great influence of my life.”⁶⁵

⁶² Lynch. “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (MIT Libraries.)

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Master Wright

Lynch now looked to advance his intellectual leanings in the realm of architecture through studying with Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the most enigmatic, flamboyant, and revolutionary architects of the time. Wright had begun his career in Chicago working for Louis Sullivan, and from there set out on his own in 1893, garnering success in the years previous to Lynch's birth. His work diverged from that of his peers and mentors. In the first stage of his career, Wright built family homes, most in the quiet and well to do neighborhood of Oak Park and comparable suburbs just outside of Chicago. These buildings revolutionized the typology of the single family. They were marked by horizontal lines responding to the planarity of the mid-western landscape and centered on the hearth as the focus of family life. They were influenced by certain precedents but contained his own vision; his style developed outside of the common vernacular. He received acclaim for these projects and parlayed this success into the securing of larger projects such as the Larkin Administration Building of 1902-06, located in Buffalo, New York.⁶⁶ Here Wright re-imagined the modern workspace, largely influenced by church architecture and the sentiments of early capitalism. He re-appropriated the high central volume with clerestory windows seen in classical cathedral architecture into a modern vocabulary of flat planes and unique ornamentation. On these interior facades he inscribed single admonitory words such as "hard work, honesty, control," words that further reflect his re-appropriation of older forms and their subsequent transformation into modern ideals. This forward vision was met with

⁶⁶ For further discussion see Jack Quinan, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building: Myth and Fact*. New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1991.

disdain, as it was outside the general aesthetic norm of classicism. However, Wright continued on, implementing this same passion for reimagining building typologies.

In 1905-09 he designed the Unity Temple along these lines.⁶⁸ Rendering it in a rectilinear fashion this work was in direct contrast to most church architecture of the time, which borrowed directly from the spatial and massing configurations of earlier, or sometimes medieval, architecture. Influenced in part by his Unitarian upbringing, which promoted the comparative study of religion as well as a focus on human connection and community, Wright re-imagined the religious building type not as representative of aspirations towards the heavens or god, but rather as a place for human connection. This communal orientation can be seen in the horizontality of the building and its square plan, which defined its democratic and communal seating layout. Again, many looked at his work as different: it was. Wright presented himself as in direct opposition to that which was being taught in the architecture schools of America, the work generated from the Colombian Exposition, and later, in the 1920s, the growing influence of the theories of Le Corbusier and the International Style. By 1936, when Lynch joined him, Wright was one of the most famous American architects, yet his reputation was damaged due to the turmoil of his personal life. Wright ensnared himself in a collection of divorces and affairs that the public did not receive well. Tarnishing his reputation, Wright ruined his professional image, which consequently diminished his career. This personal strife was further complicated by the growth in popularity of the European modernists. Their International Style became famous, symbolically cemented in the American architecture discourse by the 1932 exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, titled “The International Exhibition of Modern Architecture,” curated by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell

⁶⁸ For further discussion see Joseph Siry, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Hitchcock.⁶⁹ Wright was put off by its reverence for the work of such figures as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe as the exhibition defined modern architecture as their creation. Their work was defined by veneration for the machine, the use of glass and steel in planar compositions, and it aspired to the application of these elements towards a singular language of building. Included in the show, Wright begrudgingly sent a projected design for a “House on the Mesa,” combining elements of the modern movement working in conjunction with his own style.⁷⁰ However, Johnson proclaimed Wright the “Greatest Architect of the 19th Century” putting the proverbial nail in his professional coffin.

At this time Wright was on his own, fading into memory in the minds of Americans. During this spell of turbulence, he shifted his focus to the establishment of his own school, the Taliesin Fellowship, founded in 1932. At the school there was no course or curriculum, only the guidance of Wright. The word “Fellowship” was somewhat misleading: this school was more of a studio where the students were apprentices, taught only through Wright’s theory and design.

Although Lynch stated he had dropped out of Yale before joining Wright, this was not the case. The moment Lynch was considering leaving Yale he looked for education outside the realm of formalized school, considering Taliesin immediately. This can be seen in his first letter to Wright, drafted in 1936, while he was still enrolled at Yale:

⁶⁹ For the original publication see Henry-Russell Hitchcock Jr. *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition, 1932*. S.l.: Ayer Company, 1970. For a reflective look see Terence Riley, *International Style: Exhibition 15 & the Museum of Modern Art*. [S.l.]: Diane Pub, 1997.

⁷⁰ Robert Wojtowicz, "A Model House and a House's Model: Reexamining Frank Lloyd Wright's House on the Mesa Project." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Dec. 64.4 (2005): 522-51.

I heard of your school before, and considered it an interesting possibility for the study of architecture, but a few days ago I got a hold of one of your bulletins, and was filled with an enthusiasm to go to a place with such an atmosphere of freedom and creation...

At present I am a student at Yale, entering my sophomore year. Yale's school of architecture has a large reputation but after one course in the history of architecture and a look at the work being done there, I think it is academic and stifling.⁷³

Lynch was drawn to the potential of studying under such an iconoclast apart from the regular schooling system, which he grew to hate. Yet he had concerns that he was not going to learn the technical aspects that lay behind architectural practice, including drafting and engineering. Wright immediately assuaged these apprehensions stating:

1. Your stay at Yale could be no possible help to your work at Taliesin.
2. Your lack of ability to draw is soon rectified...
4. No engineering course will help you here... they are not anterior but posterior to experience in learning the nature of the thing to which they apply. The sense of the whole and its philosophy first. Technique first is the cart before the horse...

⁷³ Letter from Kevin Lynch to Frank Lloyd Wright, Sept. 21st, 1936 (Indexed in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: an index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (N.Y.: Garland, 1988): Fiche Id. L036B10, GS 18, Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence 1900-1959, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California)

7. The best time for an architect in embryo to join the Fellowship is before any time is wasted along conventional educational lines in architecture or engineering.⁷⁴

Wright at once played to Lynch's desires for a new educational environment and presented the school as a keystone, a necessity for the practice of architecture.

In the same correspondence, Lynch declared: "I have hopes for qualifying myself not only for architecture, but for city-planning," and asked the question: "Does Taliesin give adequate training for work in that field, not only in its theoretical but practical aspects? Or...would you advise me to get further training in some school of city planning...before applying to work with you?"⁷⁵ Wright responded: "city planning is a natural feature of our work at Taliesin,"⁷⁶ noting a specific project, his own complete urban vision, *Broadacre City*, published and exhibited in 1935 (see fig. 10).⁷⁷ This city plan reorganized the urban fabric around the automobile, rearranging the typical dense urban form into a semi-rural landscape of single-family homes, each with an acre to themselves. Lynch was immediately drawn, continuing the correspondence between the two, and began attending the school in the winter of 1937.

⁷⁴ Letter from Frank Lloyd Wright to Kevin Lynch, Sept. 9th, 1936 (Indexed in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: an index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (N.Y.: Garland, 1988), Fiche Id. L036C02, GS 18, Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence 1900-1959, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California)

⁷⁵ Letter from Kevin Lynch to Frank Lloyd Wright, Sept. 21st, 1936 (Indexed in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: an index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (N.Y.: Garland, 1988): Fiche Id. L036B10, GS 18, Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence 1900-1959, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California)

⁷⁶ Letter from Frank Lloyd Wright to Kevin Lynch, Sept. 9th, 1936 (Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence 1900-1959, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute)

⁷⁷ Frank Lloyd Wright, and Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright: Critical Writings on Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008.

Although initially established at his home in Taliesin, Wisconsin, Wright was in the process of moving to Arizona by the time Lynch signed up in 1937. In the winter of that year Wright was forced to find a gentler climate due some medical complications and so the school, Lynch included, drove west to build a new facility: Taliesin West. Lynch remembers this time fondly, recalling moving anything from Wright's drawings to sides of beef all the way to Arizona.⁷⁸ The students all took part in the new facility's construction, as the academic environment was very hands-on. Lynch wrote a short essay for Madison Wisconsin's *Capitol Times* in the fall of 1937, when he was 19, which outlined his appreciation of the new environment, stating:

Life for a new apprentice at Taliesin is a welter of new impressions, new stimulations, new jobs to handle...[You] must learn how to handle a tall bundle of corn-stalks...or how to translate a drawing for a building...There are new horizons of work, of creation, of meaning, lifting all around you...

...While I was making up my mind to leave my course at Yale half-finished and come up to Taliesin, my nebulous convictions as to the value of a university training were hammered out into a pretty definite shape. An initial vague dissatisfaction with college grew slowly into the disillusioning idea that something was radically wrong with the whole method of doling out education in standardized buckets, five buckets per year per man...

...College education as a preparation for creative activity later in life is only a period of 'watchful waiting,' and not very watchful at that...It is an

⁷⁸ Lynch, as quoted in Banjeree and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 17. In the summer, the school would be held at the original Taliesin, only one hour away from Madison, Wisconsin, where the *Capitol Times* was based.

attempt by society to cast men into a mould leavened with inertia and lack of enthusiasm, so that they may not question the glaring flaws in the social structure.⁷⁹

Similar in its liberal leaning to the Francis Parker School, Taliesin was a place marked by different streams of thought, those of master Wright.

In this environment Lynch sought to simultaneously learn the practice of architecture and study urbanism. Taliesin provided him just this, yet focused solely on Wright's own visions. They are inscribed in Wright's essay *The Disappearing City*, published in 1932, just five years previous to Lynch's arrival.⁸⁰ The text illuminates Wright's positions for and against the current discourse that was responding to the sprawling growth and heightened industrialization of urban areas in the United States:

The properly citified citizen has become a broker dealing, chiefly, in human frailties or the ideas and inventions of others: a puller of levers, a presser of the buttons of a vicarious power, his by way of machine craft...

A Parasite of the spirit is here, a whirling dervish in a whirling vortex... Perpetual to and fro excites and robs the urban individual of the meditation, imaginative reflection and projection once his as he lived and walked under clean sky among the growing greenery to which he was born to companion.⁸¹

From this general perception Wright went on to posit that:

⁷⁹ Kevin Lynch, as quoted in Banjerree and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 17.

⁸⁰ Wright, *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright: Critical Writings on Architecture*. 235-275.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Before the advent of universal and standardized mechanization, the city was more human. Its life as well as its proportion was more humane.

In planning the city, spacing was based, fairly enough, on the human being on his feet or sitting in some trap behind a horse or two...

So, originally the city as a group life of powerful individualities true to life, conveniently spaced.⁸²

From this he proceeded to derive the ideal city form from his romantic view of a once gentler way of city life. Wright directly called out the *City of To-Morrow* written by Le Corbusier in 1925, repudiating this modal of tall apartment buildings in a continuous parkscape (see fig. 11).⁸⁴ He offered up an alternative vision, saying:

In the City of Tomorrow ground space will be reckoned by the acre: an acre to the family. This seems a modest minimum...

No two homes, no two gardens, none of the three-to—ten acre farm units, no two factory buildings need be alike...

Each factory and farm would be within a ten-mile radius of a vast and variegated wayside market, so that each can serve each other simply and effectively.⁸⁵

⁸² Wright, Pfeiffer ed. *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright*. 253.

⁸⁴ Le Corbusier. *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*. New York: Dover, 1987.

⁸⁵ Wright, Pfeiffer ed. *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright*. 254.

Although Lynch later included this text in a bibliography for his own class at MIT, while he was studying it at Taliesin, Wright's highly specific vision, grounded in a romanticizing of the agrarian past, was too narrow for his broad intellectual desires. After a short time Lynch became very critical of Wright. Hints of this division can even be seen early on, specifically in his preliminary correspondence with Wright after receiving an article on the school, which outlined its cultural background and curriculum. Lynch responded:

I like it very much. The realization that the country is a very vital part of our cultural tradition is a stimulating idea, although I do think the city contributes another vital part to our culture. The real problem is to strip all that is unhealthy out of the city and the country too, and try to integrate those two traditions and give them a common basis and a common expression.⁸⁶

Here Lynch proposes a synthesis of Wright's rural, or suburban, vision and current urban fabric. Lynch's desires are thus grounded in a sympathetic reinvention of American cities, not their destruction and reinvention, or the creation of new independent urban areas.

In this way he viewed Wright's theories as backwards and too focused on an "individualistic society." Yet, although he was critical of the school, in his repudiation of a university education Lynch said that Taliesin was driven by the "attempt to grasp the new ideal of hard work, of creative activity, of 'learning by doing,' of enthusiastic

⁸⁶ Letter from Kevin Lynch to Frank Lloyd Wright, April 12st, 1936 (Indexed in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: an index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (N.Y.: Garland, 1988): Fiche Id. L033E06, GS 18, Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence 1900-1959, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California)

cooperation in solving common problems...[These traits] might make old Elihu Yale wish he had given his money and books to the Iroquois Indians.”⁸⁷ Here Lynch reveals his early inclinations to first hand analysis and engaging a problem head-on, which would eventually materialize in *The Image of the City* and define his legacy. From his time at Taliesin Lynch said that Wright’s intense passion “just radiated the kind of competence and brilliance and interest in form,” and had made him “see the world for the first time, to actually look at things.”⁸⁸ Wright’s dual influence sheds light on Lynch’s intellectual direction at that moment. Lynch was optimistic about the city’s potential, drawn to its density and excited about its future. He sought to study the city’s current fabric, to design its next iteration, and to not reinvent it along the lines of rural community. Again, Lynch he moved on, this time leaving a school after just a year and a half. He explained: “you only became a small Mr. Wright if you stayed.”⁸⁹ Upon his leaving Mr. Wright had a few words for him. Lynch claimed that “[Wright] cursed me up and down. That was the most wonderful bit of cursing I have ever received: it was really poetic.”⁹⁰

Different Directions

Upon leaving Taliesin Lynch pursued a decidedly less theoretical path, choosing the study of engineering as his next academic venture. He enrolled in Rensselaer Polytechnic and studied structural and civil engineering but, in his own words, “[got

⁸⁷ Kevin Lynch as quoted in Banjeree and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 17.

⁸⁸ Lynch, “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (Kevin Lynch Papers, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries.)

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

rather bored with that, and then went over to work with a biologist named Bray.”⁹¹ This shift put a hold on his architectural and urban considerations. Yet in this new discipline he was still considering physical life as his mentor, Professor Arthur W. Bray, attempted to contextualize the role of biology in the social world. The notes from the Albany Chapter Activities of the American Statistical Society on April 26th reflect that: “Dr. Bray’s talk was extremely stimulating in that it attempted to tie up underlying philosophies with the more purely statistical concepts of the present time. There was a lively discussion on the floor.”⁹² Lynch reacted to this approach similarly stating that: “He was a marvelous teacher [since he] was not only teaching biology but its whole connection with social life.”⁹³ The study of the intricacies forming social life can first be evidenced in Lynch’s studies under Professor Bray at Rensselaer. Not only did this approach to discipline inspire him, but the story of Professor Bray did also. Lynch reflected in 1982:

He was a very interesting guy. He had been an apprentice in England, had run away to this country, worked for awhile as a carpenter, then went on the bum and was for a long time a railroad bum, and then he joined the Industrial Workers of the World...then was a union organizer, all with no education of his own, teaching himself. Then he got interested in science and taught himself

⁹¹ Lynch, “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (MIT Libraries.)

⁹² “Chapter Activities.” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 33.203 (1938): 596.

⁹³ Lynch, “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (MIT Libraries.)

biology, and became a professor, all with no degrees at all...That was another great influence on my life.⁹⁴

This warm recount of Professor Bray's story indicates that Lynch did indeed learn from the man. Lynch's later work, which focused on the perceptions of the common man as the basis for design, parallel Professor Bray's stature as a mind schooled and shaped outside of academia. Furthermore, Lynch only ever held an undergraduate degree, something that he was proud of. It almost seems as if Lynch was wary of academia in these ways, yet it was academia that gave him the resources and intellectual connections with other thinkers to create such a body of work.

After Rensselaer Polytechnic Lynch moved back to Chicago, where he worked as an assistant to the architect Paul Schweikher.⁹⁵ Back in his home city he married his high school companion Anne Borders, whose parents were social workers at the settlement house Chicago Commons. It was at this location the ceremony took place on June 7, 1941. Only three weeks after their union Lynch was drafted into the army. By 1944 he was stationed in the South Pacific for the Army Corps of Engineers, and later in Japan during its American occupation.⁹⁶ Upon arrival back in the United States, he enrolled in the Urban Planning program at MIT, which he was able to do under the G.I. Bill.⁹⁷ This,

⁹⁴ Lynch, "Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch" (MIT Libraries.)

⁹⁵ Paul Schweikher studied at the Yale School of Architecture in the late 1920's, yet, divergent from their schooling his designs were in the modern typology, and in fact included in the 1932 MoMA exhibition on modern architecture. For a brief history see "Paul Schweikher (1903-1907)." *The Art Institute of Chicago: Chicago Architects Oral History Project*. Web. <<http://www.artic.edu/aic/libraries/research/specialcollections/oralhistories/schweikher.html>>

⁹⁶ Banjeree and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 18-19.

⁹⁷ Officially titled the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the G.I. Bill was enacted by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and provided the funds for servicemen and women to resume or continue their education upon arrival from World War II. "G.I. Bill History," <http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/history.htm>

in Lynch's words "had long been the dream," and was the final academic step he would take, one that wholly formed and catalyzed his later studies.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Lynch. "Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch" (MIT)

Chapter Two Early Years at MIT and a European Sojourn

Inspired by a reading of Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities* (1947) upon his return to the United States, Lynch sought out a true urban-focused architectural education, one that diverged from the traditional teachings of his previous academic immersions. Mumford's text describes cities as human creations borne from contextual cultural desire; he views the city as "man's method of expression."¹⁰⁰ Through this view Mumford championed a tighter relationship between urban planners and urban residents. This resonated directly with Lynch's inclination towards the human experience and for the first time coupled his personal desires with a care for the urban experience. His background as a resident of Chicago, his care for architecture, and his care for the human experience were finally intertwined in the direction of urban planning at MIT.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis Mumford. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938. 4-5. This book was the first contact Lynch had with Mumford's work, and his incredibly passionate reaction was the first sign of their eventual friendship. Gary Hack, in "Kevin Lynch." Telephone interview. 26 Feb. 2010, notes that when Mumford would come to Cambridge, while Lynch was a professor at MIT, he would sometimes stay at Lynch's home.

Profession and Professor

In 1933 the study of urban planning was integrated into the curriculum of MIT's School of Architecture. Their reasoning was to "encourage in the architectural student a breadth of outlook which will enable him to see city planning problems in a broad perspective," and to educate him so that he may be "qualified to cooperate intelligently with engineers, landscape architects, lawyers, economists, and sociologists in the planning or re-planning of urban areas."¹⁰¹ In the first years Frederick Johnstone Adams was in charge of all city planning courses. He was, in the words of the school, "solely responsible for city planning subjects in 1933 and for establishing its multidisciplinary character."¹⁰² Under his direction the role of city planning in the architecture school enlarged. By 1941 a practice course was established, which led to a Master's Degree program in city planning. However, enrollment in the School of Architecture began to decline during World War II. A recent account written by the school states that during this time:

The profession, including academic and practicing architects and planners, undertook a self-appraisal of the education, training, and practice of architecture to redefine the objectives of the profession. An initial response on the part of the MIT School of Architecture was to alter the architecture curriculum to include a general background of planning, the fundamentals of construction and materials, and the economics of the building industry.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ "History: Department of Urban Studies & Planning: Institute Archives & Special Collections: MIT" MIT Libraries. <<http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/mithistory/histories-offices/urbstud.html>>

¹⁰² Caroline Shillaber, "MIT School of Architecture and Planning 1861 – 1961." 95 (Box 9, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

¹⁰³ "History: Department of Urban Studies & Planning: Institute Archives & Special Collections: MIT" MIT Libraries.

The role of urban planning would only expand. By 1943 it was established as its own program within the School of Architecture, followed the next year by a complete ratification of the school's curriculum. MIT recently recollected: “[by 1944] the School of Architecture became the School of Architecture and Planning to reflect the growing importance of the subject to the profession of architecture.”¹⁰⁴ William Wurster, an architect who had studied city planning at Harvard, was appointed as its dean. The school was divided into “two coordinate departments: Architecture, under the direction of Lawrence B. Anderson; and City Planning, under the direction of Frederick J. Adams.” With this promotion, Adams made sure that “the department [expanded] yearly.”¹⁰⁵

In the post-war years enrollment in the school saw a resurgence as American urban areas continued to grow rapidly. This increasing expansion necessitated specific training to help design infrastructure and plan growth, and so the profession was in demand. In response the City Planning Department became the Department of City and Regional Planning in 1947: this was the year Lynch enrolled. Upon arrival, he almost immediately enrolled in the program. In the following years the program continued to change; by 1954 the department had become a graduate school. In 1982 Lynch reflected: “I was one of the last to receive an undergraduate degree in city planning.”¹⁰⁶

At MIT the augmented role of the planner within the discipline of architecture perfectly suited Lynch, whose previously unfulfilled desire to study urban space at

¹⁰⁴ "History: Department of Urban Studies & Planning: Institute Archives & Special Collections: MIT" MIT Libraries.

¹⁰⁵ Shillaber, “MIT School of Architecture and Planning 1861 – 1961.” 95. (Kevin Lynch Papers, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries.)

¹⁰⁶ Lynch, “Dream and Reality: Architecture and Urban Planning – an interview with Prof. Kevin Lynch” (MIT Libraries.)

Taliesin and Yale now had an outlet and a framework for development. In his year at the institution Lynch penned a thesis titled “Controlling the Flow of Rebuilding and Replanning in Residential Areas.”¹⁰⁷ As his later colleagues Tridib Banerjee and Michael Southworth succinctly outline, this work touched on themes of “change, decay, and renewal that Lynch developed many years later.”¹⁰⁸ In a preliminary outline for possible thesis subjects, dated March 2nd, 1947, he posits the question “can residential localities be designed for systematic discard when obsolete?”¹⁰⁹ It is a question of reuse, dealing with themes of temporality and shifting architectural character within the urban fabric, and parallel to the larger concerns of American city planning. Although he had not yet developed what would later become *The Image of The City*, his urban visions were moving forward, his desire finally fulfilled. His final thesis work garnered much acclaim from his professors, who saw it as advanced and beyond the undergraduate level.

From this success at MIT after graduation, Lynch immediately took up a position at the Greensboro Planning Commission. In this position he worked on urban studies of population, density, and projected growth, which included some architectural and planning designs. He was rather content with his first planning job, but still his time at the Commission was short lived. Just one year into the job he was contacted by MIT, which offered him a position as a professor. Although he only held an undergraduate degree, the institution was in great need of professors in the continuing post-war boom of student enrollment. In MIT’s words:

¹⁰⁷ Lynch, Thesis, May, 1947 (Box 9, Folder Controlling the Flow of Rebuilding and Replanning in Residential Areas, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

¹⁰⁸ Banerjee and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Lynch, Possible thesis subjects, March 2nd, 1947 (Box 14, Folder Student Papers and Early Writing 1934-37, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

Enrollment in the program more than doubled the prewar figures; graduate students outnumbered undergraduates and the demand for planners exceeded the number of students graduating. Because the field was a relatively new one, the members of the new department struggled to obtain enough adequately trained personnel to meet the demand and to maintain high standards of instruction.¹¹⁰

The G.I. Bill increased school enrollments countrywide, especially in urban planning, and placed a burden on the Department of City and Regional Planning that had been reformed during the war. As a result MIT sought out Lynch with great conviction. His thesis at the school, coupled with some time working professionally, was all he needed to obtain the job. Despite being offered a large opportunity for professional advancement, as Banjeree and Southworth state Lynch was, “at first ...ambivalent about a teaching career and was quite content to stay at Greensboro. [His wife,] Anne Lynch, unhappy with this possibility, persuaded him to accept the MIT job.”¹¹¹ After some pressing, and further encouragement by MIT, Lynch decided to take the position. He held it from 1949 until his retirement in 1978.

In the first few years Lynch’s studies and teaching were without direction and seemingly without passion. Despite this, Lloyd Rodwin, a colleague of Lynch’s at MIT, stated that Lynch was “remarkably capable in every area of planning, not just one or two, and that he could have taught any course in the program.”¹¹² Maybe he was intellectually too young to work at such a position, maybe the role of professor did not suit him at

¹¹⁰ "History: Department of Urban Studies & Planning: Institute Archives & Special Collections: MIT" MIT Libraries.

¹¹¹ Banjeree and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 19.

¹¹² As quoted in Banjeree and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 19-20.

that point. However, a few years into his professorship he began to drift into a focus on the analysis of urban architectural form, teaching classes on its history and role in modern planning. This approach to urban study diverged from that which was widely deemed important in the urban planning discourse and therefore signaled his first break from the conventions of the period.

Lynch's developing approach can be seen in 1950, in a bibliography for one of his classes. In this list of canonical texts there is a distinct theme of urban aesthetic history and the inhabitant's role in the visual cityscape. This is evidenced by his inclusion of J. L. Sert's *The Human Scale in City Planning*, Camillo Sitte's *The Art of Building Cities*, Louis Sullivan's *Kindergarten Chats*, Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City*, Henry S. Churchill's *The City is the People*, Sigfried Gideon's *Space, Time & Architecture*, Joseph Hudnut's *The Architect's Place in City Planning*, Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities*, Louis Sullivan's *A System of Architectural Ornament*, and Percival and Paul Goodman's *Communitas*.¹¹³ Each of these texts has a distinct focus on the urban inhabitant and the importance of architectural form in the city. In fact the innovative works of Sitte and Mumford are situated within the lineage of urban theory that Lynch was to later advance. It is in this class that the first signs of his later study began to form.

Following this list of reading material Lynch provided a brief to his students on the professional job of the urban planner. As introduction he posits a "frequently raised" question: "Why should city planners be required to study architectural design?"¹¹⁴

¹¹³ "City and Regional Planning Department: Reading List," Summer 1960 (Box 2, Folder Course Materials, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

¹¹⁴ "City and Regional Planning Department: General Comments Regarding Elementary Architectural Design" (Box 2, Folder Course Materials, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208)MIT)

Answering in three parts, Lynch shows his hand, succinctly delineating his and the school's perception of the role of the urban planner:

One of the city planner's jobs is to coordinate the work of many specialists, including architects, engineers, economists, lawyers, political scientists. To be able to work most effectively with such specialists one must understand the basis upon which they operate. It is our intention at MIT to require one course in each of these fields, offered by a trained specialist in that field...

City planning is very similar to architecture in many of its procedures and techniques. Therefore it is essential that a well-rounded city planner have some understanding of the basic elements of architecture. Both city planning and architecture are concerned with ordering the environment, with spatial relationships, and with provision for circulation. Thus the dividing line between the two is far from clear; the inter-relationships and points where they overlap are many.

John M. Gaus has said that, "Much, if not all, of the social and economic policy which it is urged should be reflected in city planning, will of necessity be registered in physical change." Thus the quality of planning must be judged by visual as well as social and economic criteria. Since the swing away from the "city beautiful" movement in planning there has been a tendency on the part of the planners to slight the visual and the significance of three-dimensional

relationships. We feel that the planner is more likely to appreciate this significance if he has had some training in architectural design.¹¹⁵

It is clear from this brief that the school promoted a more involved role of architectural design in city planning. Lynch's statement that "the quality of planning must be judged by visual as well as social and economic criteria," broke from the general themes of planning at the time.¹¹⁶ Yet, his outline of the profession and the class bibliography conveys a degree of intellectual uncertainty. His personal interest in the perception of urban form had yet to completely take hold of his work, even though it did, even at that time, shine through.

The following year Lynch made the first steps towards focusing this discussion. In April 1951 he outlined a preliminary effort titled "A Study on the Visual Forms of Cities," which sought to answer: "Of what importance are these visual effects to the well-being or pleasure of the individual and the group, relative to other objectives sought for in shaping the urban environment? [And,] in our present developing society, how may this well-being or pleasure best be promoted by the visual arrangement?"¹¹⁷ This study was to be enacted in a class environment, which he felt should "begin by a discussion of the general field, leading to a decision on some of the critical problems worth study. In the second session, a list of projects might be set up which attack these agreed problems, and various projects could be taken on by members of the group."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ "City and Regional Planning Department: General Comments Regarding Elementary Architectural Design" (Box 2, Folder Course Materials, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208)MIT)

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ "A study on the visual form of cities," April 1951 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

¹¹⁸ "A study on the visual form of cities," April 1951 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT)

However this was cut short, as in 1952 Lynch received a Ford Foundation Grant permitting him to study abroad in Europe for one year.¹¹⁹ Along the preliminary lines he was beginning to develop, Lynch then pursued a visual-urban education in Florence. There, his intellect flourished, and he began to form the theories that would define his distinguishing and influential work.

Inspiration Abroad

Lynch touched down in Florence in September 1952, looking to study some of Europe's oldest cities, their history, and their current composition. He traveled to Venice, London, and Paris, but his in-depth analysis was contained to Florence, where he stayed for most of trip with his family. The inquiry sought to further answer the questions he had laid out in his "Study on the Visual Forms of Cities" (1951), including:

Ways in which urban environments have reflected and expressed previous cultures, and how they were achieved? In various urban areas, what is a valid balance now between variety and stimulus versus calm and order? What esthetic elements appear in an existing urban area after systematic observation? How do they interact, and how can they be evaluated? How do visual impressions vary depending on speed and manner of observer approach and motion? How does observer reaction depend on the relation of the visual organization of an area to

¹¹⁹ Banjee and Southworth. *City Sense and City Design*. 20.

its larger setting, physical or cultural, when this setting is only received in the mind of the observer?¹²⁰

To answer these questions he began traversing the city, cataloging his observations in small pocket-sized journals. His notes are in-depth and appear to have been scribbled with haste as he attempted to narrate his entire journey, describing both his observations of city form as well as his social life.

In one entry he begins by noting that he “went in [with a friend] to see [Masaccio] frescoes [at] Carmine & enjoyed them again.”¹²¹ In a conventional touristic response to these world-famous frescoes, he states that it is “interesting how one must be accustomed to dark muddy [palette] of colors... like just listening to harpsichord. [Especially] fond of S. Peter healing by his shadow, the Payment of Tribute, The Expulsion of Adam & Eve...”¹²² Clearly, from the outset it is seen that these journals are very personal responses to his goings on, and are not simply narrative accounts. They are reflections, not only of what he was seeing, but also of his experiences and reactions to his environments, however specific.

This trip to see the frescoes of Masaccio, those that are held in the church Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence, was his second, and it instigated an invested interest in the early Renaissance painter. This is fascinating when considering his architectural and urban intellectual position during these years. He was just beginning to develop inclinations towards analyzing the perception of space, and this work of Masaccio’s

¹²⁰ “A study on the visual form of cities,” April, 1951 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.) <<http://dome.mit.edu/handle/1721.3/35648>>

¹²¹ Kevin Lynch Diaries Volume 2, Florence, Italy, June 28th 1953 (Box 13, Folder Vol. 2 Italy Nov. 14th 1952 to 26th Mar. 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹²² Ibid.

represents some of the earliest spatially defined painting in history. It is influenced very directly by the sculpture of Brunelleschi, a colleague and friend. Masaccio's frescoes here are not only three dimensionally articulated, but also employ two-point perspective for just about the first time. Thus, in the context of his burgeoning interests, Lynch's attraction to the work makes sense

However, these social interactions were not the focus of his study. The major content of the journals consist of observations recorded while Lynch took long walks through the city. Initially these walks were wanderings, during which he came to some conclusions on the positive and negative elements of Florence. These conclusions are found in separate, tiny pages shoved into his journals, as additions to his observations. And although they are brief bullet points, their content is critical in understanding his original positions on the qualities of city life. He notes "what counts in [Florence:]"

- the orientation & domination of the dome
- the contrast of hills & city
- the open cut of the Arno
- the places of assembly: N. of Piazza Signoria...S. end of Republic arcade...
- the small gathering spots: S. Marco, S. Spirito, S. Maria Novella...
- the gates, especially Porta Romana
- a few individual locales: Pazzi Chapel, Bargello Cont., The Fiesole Theater,
The Bapt. Ceiling
- the panoramas: Friesole, the fields¹²³

¹²³ Kevin Lynch Diaries Volume 1, Florence, Italy, Undated (Box 13, Folder Vol. 1 Italy 39th Sept. to 12th Nov. 1952, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.) Although the MIT archives do contain a

Mixing public space, the composition of the river, socially dense locales, specific views and specific architectural highlights, his list is of myriad urban elements. It does not contain a critique of the city as a whole, nor any discernible themes, but instead singles out pieces most prominent in his memory of experience and appreciation. In contrast, his list of disliked moments demonstrates more thematic elements of negative quality.

He begins that list the same way, with: “What counts against Florence.” Included is: “The lack of unity, except for the visible towers...Poor relation to the surrounding country, not visible, difficult to reach. Unclear lines of movements.”¹²⁴ In contrast to the bluntly listed positive elements, these criticisms relate to a level of confusion, or blurred recollection. Synthesizing these elements he concludes that “one of the most important features of a city” is:

That it express relationships...i.e., that it [has] parts of specific, differentiated character, which are already related, so that it is easy to move where you want to go, & so that in one shot you are conscious of the relations with all the other parts...So...it is good to be able to see it as a whole, or to see some classic feature that means “city,” & from the inside it is good to have views of the surrounding country, or have a whole belt of water or movement that leads to the country. Mere [...] does not produce this. But adjacent contrast may.¹²⁵

selection of his photographs from Europe, they are not dated, and do not correlate to the locations of which I am discussing. Therefore, they will not be included.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Kevin Lynch Diaries Volume 1, Florence, Italy, Undated (Box 13, Folder Vol. 1 Italy 39th Sept. to 12th Nov. 1952, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

From these conclusions Lynch refined his analytic approach, further structuring his walks around what he found to be the most perceptually influential elements of the city. For these later walks he broke down the city into specific “areas,” locations of the city he saw as physically distinct. In a journal entry dated June 28th, 1953 he began his walk around “Area 4,” describing it as “principally 19th century and a little modern growth.”¹²⁶ He goes on to break down his description into distinct categories, “a) Spaces...b) Orientation...c) Middle distance...d) Eye level...e) Floor...f) Human [activity]...g) Traffic...[and] h) Noise & Smell.”¹²⁷ These groupings show how through his initial personal observations he has begun to answer the question of “What esthetic elements appear in an existing urban area after systematic observation?”¹²⁸ From these elements he moved on to address the question: “How do they interact, and how can they be evaluated?”¹²⁹ Not only did he study the composition of a given area but also the human interactions within, illustrating his declaration that “another [drawback is] considering that the visual form is something isolated from the other aspects of the environment.”¹³⁰ Here, through including “spaces” and “floor” with “human activity” and “noise and smell,” his approach is all encompassing. He sets up these sensuous characteristics as he perceives them, going on to break down his personal response to them, and the actions of the masses he observes.

¹²⁶ Lynch Diaries Volume 2, June 28th 1953 (Box 13, Folder Vol. 2 Italy Nov. 14th 1952 to 26th Mar. 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “A study on the visual form of cities,” April, 1951 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, Kevin Lynch Papers, MIT.)

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Lynch Diaries Volume 2, June 28th 1953 (Box 13, Folder Vol. 2 Italy Nov. 14th 1952 to 26th Mar. 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

Spaces: generally long corridors, but lower and broader than [area] 1...Entering typically into traffic seas & broad formless space...but also into ordered refined spaces just as S. Spirito, S. Marco...Light falling into most streets.

Orientation: linear, to spaces, and to some extent by landmarks. First glimpses of topographical relation. Contains typically many points of confusion. Little or no disorientation but frequent areas of indifference.¹³¹

In these categories his use of qualitative adjectives like “formless” and “indifference” to describe the visual composition shows how this was in fact his interpretation of the space, and not a scientific study. These words are not supplemented by a structured set of examples and visual descriptions that delineate their physical details. His practice hints that this was for his own intellectual advancement alone. It had yet to form into any discernible thesis and was a reaction to urban space at its most elemental and personal.

Going on, he increases the level of specificity in description, highlighting the details in texture and color, just as in his description of the Masacio’s frescoes:

Middle distance: the dusty light, tan or grey, stone & plaster. Much more in one flat plane...Eye Level: the blank wall [with] little relief, few store windows & there [with] scant goods, the profusion being in the darkness within. Many shops & work places of negative interest...Floor: stone walks...were uneven to feet.”¹³²

¹³¹ Lynch Diaries Volume 2, June 28th 1953 (Box 13, Folder Vol. 2 Italy Nov. 14th 1952 to 26th Mar. 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹³² Ibid.

By exclaiming that there is one of “negative interest,” and detailing his own tactile response to the ground as “uneven to [his] feet,” Lynch is reacting not only to the colors and visual composition of the area, but also to the human response to it.

The next category in his analysis is “Human Activity,” which describes the qualities of human interaction within the “area.” He states that there is “plentiful movement, but little discussion or free use, except in piazzas.”¹³³ Here the use of the area is judged through valuing the interaction (“free use”) and “discussion.” The next category is “Traffic,” which he discusses along these same lines stating that there is “a substantial amount, but [it is] moving faster & more freely in broader streets.”¹³⁴ This is a slightly more technical analysis, a consideration of the functionality of the city. These two categories, although they shed light on his evolving process of urban analysis, are rather general and commonplace observations. When taken in context, however, they show how he is beginning to analyze his own perceptual reactions to the physical characteristics of urban space and trends of human use. The next category develops this line of analysis as relating to personal response.

Following “Human Activity” and “Traffic” he ended his “area” walk with the category “Noises and Smells.” In it he details that the “traffic noise is dominant, but undulating. Foot falls & voices join the background. Smell mostly coal smoke again & some food.” Here the observations are objective sensory facts, concluding his walk analysis with the full experiential picture painted.

¹³³ Lynch Diaries Volume 2, June 28th 1953 (Box 13, Folder Vol. 2 Italy Nov. 14th 1952 to 26th Mar. 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹³⁴ Ibid.

However, Lynch found faults in this method. He expressed his concerns in a letter to his friend and urban design colleague Louis P. Dolbeare, dated May 17th 1953.

Lynch stated that:

I have in particular been trying to figure out just what sensual elements in the city environment are really significant for the observer...I have tried things such as walking or riding a particular route, noting down what impressions came to me though this has its dangers, since the impression shift as soon as you pay attention to them...These are subjective methods.¹³⁵

His impressions could not be divorced from any subjectivity, since he was in essence analyzing himself. Although this method was suspect, he never found a way to develop it. Still, the conclusions he drew in his journal represented the beginnings of the foundation of *The Image of the City*.

For Lynch, the elements that made Florence confusing and visually muddled were not architectural or tactile, but instead related to movement and the ability to “understand” the city as whole. That which he liked were the elements he clearly recollected, the city’s bold characteristics that stuck out in his mind. These physical moments provided him with the ability to move easily through the city without getting lost, and cultivated a romantic memory of the city. This urban assessment appears in all of his later work. The task of *The Image of the City* is in fact to uncover better ways to design cities so that they are easily “readable,” and facilitate the user’s “wayfinding.” His

¹³⁵ Letter to Louis P. Dolbeare, May 17th 1953 (Box 2, Folder City Design Research, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

time in Europe brought this specific concern of his to a point for the first time, which would be developed upon his arrival home.

As soon as Lynch returned home in the August of 1953 he penned the first draft of an essay entitled *City Satisfaction*s. It was the product of his time in Europe, entailing an evolution of the scribbled ideas in his travel journals into formed opinions on the qualities of human interaction with urban space. In his own words, the essay concerns “the psychological and sensual effects of the physical form of the city.”¹³⁶

Inspired by his numerous walks around Florence, as well as his travels to Venice, Paris, and London, Lynch breaks down specific experiences in the city, judging them against the backdrop of their physical setting. He states in the introductory paragraph that he is “drawing the line (though an uncertain one) to exclude the direct functional effects (job security, social groups, good housing, etc.) and the provision of adequate quantities of the environmental elements (houses, stores, playfields, etc).”¹³⁷ His admission that this distinction between the physical and the functional is possibly tenuous shows that this work is indeed very personal, reactive, and not a definitively polished piece of theory. Furthermore the text conveys his own current intellectual hesitancy, but not to a fault. In fact, when considered in conjunction with a collection of critical responses from his peers, contained in a selection of correspondence, it allows a more lucid view of his mind at the time and of the ways in which his later theory was to form.

¹³⁶ Kevin Lynch, “City Satisfaction,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹³⁷ Ibid.

After the introductory passage, which is in part an admission of intellectual apprehension, he begins categorizing elements of cities that can provide the user with “delights.” He states:

In this more limited sector, then, the city can provide several satisfactions, which are summarized here as Orientation, Warmth, Stimulus, Sensual Delight, and Interest; and, in addition, several more directly “functional” satisfactions, which however have such a direct emotional impact as to be worth including; Movement, Shopping, Climate.¹³⁸

These groups are seemingly random and subjective. Even considering these categories from a superficial perspective they are not analogous. “Orientation” deals with perception, “warmth” is a sensory qualification, “stimulus” is general and could relate to the previous two, as well as “sensual delight,” which is also rather open ended, while “interest” is personally qualitative. His categorization of certain “satisfactions” is not scientific, yet they contain themes and analyses that he would continue to develop onwards and into *The Image of the City*.

The first category he dissects is “Orientation.” He states that its importance lies in the fact that “the sense of clear relation of the observer with the city and its parts, and with the larger world around it” can not just facilitate ease in finding one’s location in urban space, but if designed properly, lead to “the satisfaction arising out of an intuition

¹³⁸ Lynch, “City Satisfactions,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

of the city as a whole, with a major structure and a relation to its larger structure.”¹³⁹ To achieve this he enumerates certain elements of urban form. The first is “Directed Lines,” which he says “concentrat[e] transport and intensive uses, from which other points can be related,” through “strongly organized lines, with a visible of felt direction [their utility can be increased].”¹⁴⁰ Here he addresses a thematic element with an abstract solution. This theme continues as he moves on to “Sequences,” which he states can “also be linear but not necessarily directed, positing that “memory of a sequence of detail, of which the mind can absorb a vast amount if the sequence is maintained.”¹⁴¹ This statement lacks any specific criticism or solution, yet does elaborate on an elemental theme that is carried throughout the rest of the work. He is beginning to form ideas on how a total understanding of urban space, as approached from the pedestrian vantage, adds positively to experience.

As his prior study in Europe shows, Lynch personally engaged cities through walking. This method of interaction formed his perception of what urban enjoyment was, and thus directed his conclusions on “city satisfactions.” Indeed, he stated that “motion is the basic way of seeing the city, and the time sequence of pictures is a vital impression... There is pleasure in motion over and under, in and out; in contact and breakaway from spaces and centers.”¹⁴² His categories throughout the work all seem to relate to this point, or at the least to movement in general. This theme of movement would form the basis for his analysis in *The Image of the City* and following studies on the

¹³⁹ Lynch, “City Satisfactions,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

perception of the environment while moving in an automobile, a study that would be advanced by later architects and planners.

The city was an active agent for Lynch. It was to engage the user, stimulate interaction, and direct movement. He highlights a myriad of elements that facilitate this task. They comprise ways to direct a sense of where one is and is going, and are also simple visual agents to pique curiosity, which he deemed necessary. He followed his discussion of “Sequences” with the section on the “Landmark.” In this he defined the general understanding of a landmark, stating they are “isolated objects of peculiar form associated with key locations, and to which observers can be radially oriented by sight.”¹⁴³ However, he elaborated on this standard definition, saying “they can also operate on a smaller scale, as: the color of a house; or: the pleasure of central Firenze arising from the distinctive buildings which are important for their contents or history.”¹⁴⁴ This idea took the basic understanding of a landmark as point of reference into a subjective realm, one that entails personal perception of place. For Lynch, the landmark was not simply a powerful monument, but could also be anything that has deep seeded presence for the user. Thus, it was a general element of urban form that stands out, which is a very vague definition. As it can be seen, his ideas on city enjoyment were forming. Nevertheless, at this point his notions were just those, notions; they were initial categories of certain perceptual elements of cities.

Lynch’s discussion of orientation in cities is followed by the category “Warmth and Attachment.” He defined these satisfactions as “a ... response projected onto the physical surroundings, of ...intimate adjustment to humanity, a sense of protection, ease,

¹⁴³ Lynch, “City Satisfactions,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

and affection.”¹⁴⁵ It is when comfort is found in the urban fabric. He posited that it stems from “familiarity and the sense of history, but it is reinforced by physical forms.” These physical elements range from “evidence of human care and adaptation...[which] comes from forms [that] are carefully tended or...are patently adapted to their use, i.e., functional,” to simply spatial and architectural moments rendered at the “human scale.”¹⁴⁶ He allowed that this latter element is a term “too vaguely used,” but then enumerated several times when he sees it as “pleasant,” in an almost semiotic fashion: “The value of seeing marks of individual effort (doors, gardens), but especially the opportunity of making the individual mark, and thus achieving concrete self-expression.”¹⁴⁷ For Lynch, the smaller scale allows personal inflection or “signs of life” to be seen, as in “open furnished windows; interior glimpses; benches; laundry.”¹⁴⁸ These moments also allow the user ease in orientation, which was one of Lynch’s main concerns. “It is a very great pleasure to have a spot that is markedly ‘one’s own,’ and which is yet visibly set in a larger organization within the city.”¹⁴⁹ Still he circles back to how pieces of city composition direct the user into a perception of it as a complete environment. This idea beginning to germinate is that a great city runs the fine line between permitting personal distance from, yet good awareness of, large scale public spaces and buildings and the vibrant ebb and flow of the masses through them.

This balance is not just seen in concept but also in certain architectural characteristics he highlights. “Occasional areas of ‘superhuman’ scale, with a feeling of

¹⁴⁵ Lynch, “City Satisfaction,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

power and awe, serve to set off the more intimate areas and to magnify men.”¹⁵⁰ Thus he is inclined not just towards smaller form, typically seen in rural city areas, but also the grandeur of the metropolis. Indicative of his larger approach towards the reconsideration of the current state of the city, this is another case where he breaks from the likes of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century planners who designed largely rural, anti-urban places. However, the idea of “human scale” and its use throughout the city fabric also counters the then-prevalent influence of the Corbusian city, which only engages the human scale at the interior of massive housing blocks. In fact, here Lynch exemplifies a unique and progressive approach, as he sees benefit in both rural and hyper-urban typologies. This valuation recalls his earlier conversation with Wright, while he was considering applying to Taliesin. Lynch responded to Wright’s Broadacre City, his rural vision for a new urban locale, stating:

The realization that the country is very vital part of our cultural tradition is a stimulating idea, although I do think that the city contributes another vital part to our culture. The real problem is to strip all that is unhealthy out of the city and the country too, and try to integrate those two traditions and give them a common basis and a common expression.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Lynch, “City Satisfaction,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁵¹ Letter from Kevin Lynch to Frank Lloyd Wright, April 12th, 1936 (“Fiche Id. L033E06, GS 18,” Indexed in Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: an index to the Taliesin Correspondence*, ed. Anthony Alofsin, N.Y.: Garland, 1988: Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence 1900-1959) (Housed at Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California)

Comfortable in this outlook between that of the “Garden City”¹⁵² and the “Ville Contemporaine,”¹⁵³ Lynch expresses “Stimulus and Relaxation,” the kinetic qualifications to his physical partiality, in the next section.¹⁵⁴ It is “the proper balance between the stimulus of activity and participation, and on the other hand the release of pressure, the freedom for casual “private” activity.”¹⁵⁵ These musings deal with his desired level of energy in movement, density of masses, and sensory provocation. He writes that “one of the great delights is the stimulus of a city; the sight of participation in groups; the variety of activities, services and goods offered; the diversity of life; the excitement of being in intense and powerful urban centers.”¹⁵⁶ And he proposes physical ways to mitigate these qualities, so that they do not become “too strong.”¹⁵⁷ Structures and spaces must be organized and built so that they are proper to their function. The interconnectivity between these elements must also be specifically tailored, because he thought that “the pleasure comes in the rhythmical alternation of [density and seclusion], in time and space.”¹⁵⁸ He states his proclivity for urban spaces that draw the user through, by certain methods that excite, intrigue, and provoke curiosity, yet stop short at defining what they are. This is a further example of the theme of movement that runs through the entire essay, and is defined by his own preferred method of city engagement, walking.

¹⁵² For further discussion see Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, eds. Frederic James Osborn, and Lewis Mumford. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., 1965.

¹⁵³ For further discussion see Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*. New York: Dover, 1987.

¹⁵⁴ For further comparative discussion see: Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1982.

¹⁵⁵ Lynch, “City Satisfactions,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

The next section, although devoid of any new information or opinion, does begin with this statement: “communication is perhaps the fundamental city function, but beyond this crucial aspect it has two kinds of immediate psychological effects.”¹⁵⁹ This is the first time he uses the word “psychological,” and it seems as though he begins to understand, or at least articulate bluntly, what the entire essay is really about. That is, how movement through urban space affects our perception of it, and how the certain physical elements and arrangements that we encounter affect us emotionally. However, he does not develop this any further than the simple proposition.

In his conclusion he outlines what he believes to be the themes carried throughout the paper. In his mind they are:

The problems of order and variety, the pleasure of differentiations on an underlying ground. There must be an organized whole holding within it a rich complexity: neither disorder nor an imposed “too perfect” order is pleasing.

Contrast and relation: the delight and tension of two unlike things brought closely and sharply together; the not incompatible delight of seeing the connection hinted between them. Thus arises the tension and importance of the boundary...and regulating its flow.

The concept of optimum, maximum, and minimum [intensity]. Rhythm: periodic fluctuation of intensities or qualities within an optimum range.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Lynch, “City Satisfaction,” August 18th 1953 (Box 14, Folder City Satisfaction 1953, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

All of these closing points are essentially the same. He is dealing with the proposed balance between two concepts, order and variety, in every aspect of urban composition, from the sensory to the spatial, and their cyclical influence on each other. For Lynch, urban space should be varied perfectly; moderation is his schema.

At this moment Lynch had not clearly defined how the physical begets the emotional, because they were interconnected in his mind. The study existed as a personal reading of the cityscape, since he only relied on self-reflection. Nonetheless, it is clear that this initial study developed his system of “reading” space through an examination of personal experience as tied to “wayfinding.” However, it is not developed beyond personal opinion. This can be in part attributed to his lack of fluency in Italian, which discouraged direct engagement with the inhabitants of the Florence. In a letter to Louis Dolbeare, while still in Florence, Lynch noted that: “A well designed questionnaire, or other technique of group investigation, would be extremely useful. I have some idea on the type of questions that might be asked. However, the language barrier frustrates me here: the questions are often misunderstood, all the shades of meaning are lost.”¹⁶¹ This developing idea of engaging the urban inhabitant would form the basis for the research method used in *The Image of the City*. Although his journals and the resulting “City Satisfaction” essay are simple qualitative assessments of urban space, he had begun to develop the beginnings of an analytic method. Coupled with his conclusions on city experience, which also lay the foundation for his later studies, his time in Florence, and its results, can be seen as the first true sign of what would later become *The Image of the City*. Yet, Lynch still needed a specific catalyst to cohere these newly developed ideas and approaches.

¹⁶¹ Letter to Louis P. Dolbeare, May 17th 1953 (Box 2, Folder City Design Research, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

Chapter Three The Conception of a Study

Lloyd Rodwin, a long time friend and colleague of Lynch, reflected that: “Lynch came back to MIT transformed; the fire was burning and from that point on his course was set.”¹⁶² In Florence Lynch’s intellectual direction had finally intensified into the study of perception in urban space, however he still needed an outlet. Just after penning “City Satisfaction,” Lynch returned to MIT in the fall of 1953, and was met with a collegial curiosity about exactly what he had been studying. At MIT the urban planning discipline within the School of Architecture and Planning had been developing against the conventions of the period. The increasing cohesion between the school’s intentions and Lynch’s own passions provided him with great support as well as an audience for his work, and consequently gave him the capabilities and collaborator to direct the studies that would form *The Image of the City*.

¹⁶² Lloyd Rodwin as quoted in Banjee and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 20.

The Support of MIT

The shifting intentions of MIT's School of Architecture and Planning was in part due to the dean, Pietro Belluschi, who had taken the helm in 1951. His mission was to “assist in the training of young minds to be aware of their surroundings and to try to distill beauty from them no matter how grim the conditions.”¹⁶⁴ Although Belluschi's architecture adapted the style of the European Modernists, his theory and approach were directed by a desire to promote the well being of the people he worked for. In this sense, Meredith Clausen outlines in her monograph on Belluschi: “As he put it, his was an approach as different from Frank Lloyd Wright's as it was from the Bauhaus's, with no a priori formal determinants or style. Humanistic rather than formalistic in approach, it addressed the user and his or experience of the building, how it felt rather than simply how it looked.”¹⁶⁵ This was a response to a growing cultural veneration for the architect, seen in the celebrity of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier in previous years. Clausen posits that this was due to “the traditional elitism of the profession, combined with the growing power of mass media to establish cultural heroes and determine future trends.”¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, this increasing reverence for the architect led, in the post war era, to “a new sense of power on the part of the architect, and a certain arrogance.”¹⁶⁷ Belluschi encouraged a softer touch as he, “told [his students]...the architect had to be a man of vision; not a visionary, innovative form-giver, but more literally an expert in the

¹⁶⁴ Pietro Belluschi, as quoted in Meredith L. Clause, *Pietro Belluschi Modern American Architect*. Cambridge: M.I.T., 1994. 201.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 204.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

field of visual and spatial relationships.”¹⁶⁸ This approach also helped shape the school’s divergence from the approaches to urban development in preceding years. Mardges Bacon, in her book *Le Corbusier in America*, states that: “After World War II the misguided path of urban renewal and the promotion of housing towers persisted until they were challenged in the late 1950s and early 1960s by urban sociologists and planners who mistakenly blamed Le Corbusier alone for what were actually American planning policies and market forces.”¹⁶⁹ Although Belluschi did not directly blame Le Corbusier for the composition of American urban renewal, he did push the school away from Le Corbusier’s “arrogant” approach, promoting a more sympathetic design attitude. Furthermore, in this urban milieu the professors of the urban planning school, apart from Belluschi, realized that there was little understanding of, and even less care for, the visual composition of these growing cities. They subsequently attempted to establish a new division in the program along lines of Lynch’s own studies in Florence. Clausen asserts that “even though the planning program was still embryonic when Belluschi took over, administratively the work had been done...Belluschi himself...had no direct role in the Planning Department...other than the opening in 1957 of the [Harvard and MIT] Joint Center for Urban and Regional Studies.”¹⁷⁰ Belluschi played a large role in the initial formation of this center, which began as separate from Harvard and was in part established along the lines of Lynch’s interests.

While Lynch was away in Florence in 1953, the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at MIT established a “Center for Urban and Regional Study” separate

¹⁶⁸ Pietro Belluschi, as quoted in Meredith L. Clause, *Pietro Belluschi Modern American Architect*. Cambridge: M.I.T., 1994. 201.

¹⁶⁹ Mardges Bacon. *Le Corbusier in America: Travels in the Land of the Timid*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2001. 181.

¹⁷⁰ Clausen, *Pietro Belluschi*. 202.

from the school of architecture and planning. This center was headed by Louis B. Wetmore, one of the first recipients of an undergraduate degree in urban planning at MIT. The center would support specific projects it valued important and choose a professor to direct each study. This work, the founders felt, would inform the shape of their overall curriculum. As a preliminary venture they chose three topics for in-depth research: “1) Locational aspects of economic activities in relation to the structure of cities; 2) Dispersal and decentralization in relation to the problem of vulnerability to enemy attack; and 3) Visual aspects of the physical environment.”¹⁷¹ The first two concerns encompassed the breadth of general urban characteristics most important at that moment. And so, the school had been able to secure the funding for these studies, from a private institution and the federal government respectively. However, they had not found a source of support for the third, since the urban planning discourse was decidedly not directed by the care for the “visual aspects of the physical environment.”¹⁷² It was a rather unique concern. In search of support they turned to the Rockefeller Foundation. An interview conducted by the Rockefeller Foundation, administered by Charles B. Fahs, the director of their Humanities division, illustrates their proposal:

Anderson, supported by Adams and Wetmore, explained that they wish to approach the problem of the visual aspect of the physical environment from two points of view. The first is that of design research: techniques for the development, expression, and carrying out of aesthetic ideas. The attempt will be

¹⁷¹ "Conference with: Dr. John E. Burchard, Dr. Lawrence B. Anderson, Dr. Louis B. Wetmore, Prof. Frederick Adams, Dr. Gordon Stephenson," Sept. 18th 1953, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter referred to as RAC), Sleepy Hollow, New York.)

¹⁷² Ibid.

to apply them to the problems of design in larger unities of the urban community. ...Perhaps if the techniques of design could be applied more broadly to the street in this new aspect, solutions could be found which would be commercially acceptable and at the same time aesthetically much better than the present ones. ... The second point of view on which they seek help, and the one in which they seem most interested at this time, is analysis of the effects of urban design from the point of view of the citizen. What is the meaning [that] such design has for people? What is the relationship of form to individuals? They mention, for example, the problem of achieving a sense of location so that the resident both knows his way around and feels at home; also the problem of designing for growing individuals and the function of trees and grass in the urban environment. In this connection Burchard mentioned the contrasting human reactions to the Bois de Boulogne and the Champs Élysées in Paris versus the mass housing that has been put up in Brussels.¹⁷³

The interview reveals that although Lynch was in Florence, the school was in tune with exactly what he had been studying. They were less focused on urban design “solutions ...which would be commercially acceptable,” and more concerned with “the effects of urban design from the point of view of the citizen.”¹⁷⁴ Lynch’s work had begun to shape a central concern of MIT, not only at home but also across the Atlantic. Louis P.

Dolbear had asked Lynch for some suggestions on the school’s proposal while Lynch was still in Florence. In response to a previously cited correspondence between the two,

¹⁷³ "Conference with: Dr. John E. Burchard, Dr. Lawrence B. Anderson, Dr. Louis B. Wetmore, Prof. Frederick Adams, Dr. Gordon Stephenson," Sept. 18th 1953, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC)

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

from May 17th, 1953, Lynch stated: “My only reaction to [your] research proposal is one of delight, and the hope that something will come of it. As to suggestions on projects or approaches, perhaps I can best mention some of the things I have been trying, muddled as they are.”¹⁷⁵ The questions raised in Lynch’s Florentine study were then grafted to the school’s proposal, specifically: “the problem of achieving a sense of location so that the resident both knows his way around and feels at home.”¹⁷⁶ However, Lynch was not the sole contact guiding this discussion. The interview transcription with the Rockefeller Foundation further reveals that the other consultant for this study was Gyorgy Kepes, the director of visual studies in the School of Architecture who, during Lynch’s time in Florence, had been developing a similar approach to urban study: “At the present time one member of [the MIT] staff, Kevin Lynch, is in Florence on a Ford Fellowship, analyzing the reasons for the pleasant impression traditionally attributed to Florence, while professor Gyorgy Kepes is working on a study of the forms of the city.”¹⁷⁷

The intellectual directions of these two men were very similar, and while it appears as though they would have been in constant contact, in actuality only this document shows they were aware of each other’s studies. Lynch ended his letter to Dolbeare stating: “My best to everyone at [MIT] and congratulations to all that had a hand in this proposal, Gyorgy in particular.”¹⁷⁸ So, it can be inferred that although the two were well aware of each other’s work, they were not directly involved in an intellectual conversation at this moment. Their work together on the grant proposal

¹⁷⁵ Letter to Louis P. Dolbeare, May 17th 1953 (Box 2, Folder City Design Research, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ "Conference with: Dr. John E. Burchard, Dr. Lawrence B. Anderson, Dr. Louis B. Wetmore, Prof. Frederick Adams, Dr. Gordon Stephenson," Sept. 18th 1953, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC)

¹⁷⁸ Letter to Louis P. Dolbeare, May 17th 1953 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC)

would bring them close and their ensuing collaborative study would provide the main intellectual inspiration for Lynch's *The Image of the City*. During the proposal process, the two began to teach a class together. In a letter from MIT to the Rockefeller Foundation, dated March 1st 1954, the school noted that "over the past...years [Lynch and Kepes] have jointly developed a graduate course on 'The Form of the City.'"¹⁷⁹ Given Kepes' marked relevance to the study's proposal, implementation, and output, his intellectual evolution to this point must be conveyed.

Inspiration and Collaboration

Gyorgy Kepes, born in 1906 in Selyp, Hungary, spent his formative years in the climate of Hungarian Activism.¹⁸⁰ Studying painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest, Kepes worked directly under the impressionist painter Istvan Csók. However, he soon tired of this craft. This was partially inspired by the leader of the Activist movement, Lajos Kassák, who pushed for a deeper relationship to the social implications of artistic production coining the term "synthetic art;" being, art "in service of society and conducive to man's external and internal liberation."¹⁸¹ This societal role of the artist inspired Kepes to shift mediums to film, the most influential and socially relevant at the time. In 1931 he moved to Berlin, where he found work as a designer of

¹⁷⁹ "Proposed Study, The Perceptual Form of Cities" March 1st, 1954, p. 5 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.)

¹⁸⁰ This artistic movement was most widely regarded for the publication of *MA (Today)*, a magazine ran by the movement's founder Lajos Kassák, which promoted Futurist, Bauhaus, Cubist, and Dada works from all over Europe. For a chronological discussion of this movement and the publication *MA* see Peter Weibel, *Beyond Art: a Third Culture: a Comparative Study in Cultures, Art, and Science in 20th Century Austria and Hungary*. New York: SpringerWienNewYork, 2005. 37-71.

¹⁸¹ Krisztina Passuth. *Moboly-Nagy*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987. 14.

art exhibitions, theater production and print publications. He designed the cover for Gestalt psychologist Rudolf Arnheim's influential book *Film als Kunst, (Film as Art, 1932)*.¹⁸² Kepes' direct contact with the Gestalt school of psychology reveals one of his early influences. The Gestalt tradition revolves around the philosophy of recognition, as initially developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Immanuel Kant. This new vein of psychology was first theorized in depth by Max Wertheimer (1880-1943), extending the ideas of Ernest Mach (1838-1916) and Sigmund Exner (1846-1926),¹⁸³ as well as those of one of Lynch's early influences, William James. Wertheimer's seminal paper, "Experimental Studies in the Perception of Movement," published in 1912, outlined the basic tenets of the discipline. Traveling on a train he observed a child's toy stroboscope that he purchased at the Frankfurt train station, which appeared to slow down the motion of a moving object into static images viewed through its spinning openings. In this observation Wertheimer realized that we perceive motion if an object implies movement even if it does not itself actually move. From this reflection he attempted to uncover why we perceive a sequence of individual sensory events as singular motion. Typical of the discipline at that time, his research did not involve consulting large groups of diverse subjects, but rather individuals trained in psychology.¹⁸⁴ This myopic use of data calls into question the empirical validity of his study; a problem that Lynch would later attempt to rectify in his own perceptual analysis. Wertheimer's participants "reported that they perceived motion without seeing anything that moved," a phenomenon that he referred to by the Greek letter phi, "φ." This discovery found that:

¹⁸² Rudolf Arnheim and Kent Kleinman, Duzer Leslie Van eds. *Rudolf Arnheim: Revealing Vision*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997. 141.

¹⁸³ For a contextual history of these Viennese thinkers, physicist Ernest Mach and physiologist Sigmund Exner, see: Deborah R. Cohen, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty: Science, Liberalism, and Private Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007.

¹⁸⁴ D. Brett King and Michael Wertheimer. *Max Wertheimer & Gestalt Theory*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 2005. 96-99.

Movement is movement. The succession [of events] *a-b* is not essential to it. It can occur as ϕ without being an object. For optimal movement one sees a single object moving, not *a* turning into a *b*. In this contention Wertheimer was following out the tradition of Mach and Exner, but he went further. He insisted on the validity of movement as an immediate experience without reference to basic constituents, on the givenness of ϕ and its irreducibility to terms of space and time.¹⁸⁵

This is the essential postulate of the Gestalt tradition in psychology, which was then extrapolated to the idea that the brain is tuned to organize the information it receives into a set structure that defines what we perceive. Although Kepes' moment abreast of this school of thought was brief, along these lines he developed theories on the analysis of visual communication. He sought to uncover a visual language that structures how we react to what we see. He conducted these studies at the New Bauhaus school in Chicago from 1937 to 1943, working under and along side the famed Bauhaus leader, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy. With this Gestalt influence, Kepes in turn influenced Lynch's later theory that the user's image of the urban environment is created through an unconscious synthesis of individual physical elements and sensory stimuli. However, Kepes' influence was not limited to this Gestalt tradition. His time under Moholy-Nagy at the New Bauhaus further informed what he brought to his work with Lynch.

In 1936, Kepes fell ill in Berlin, and with the invitation to work as an art assistant to Moholy-Nagy in London, he moved. Their work together comprised the development

¹⁸⁵ King and Wertheimer, *Max Wertheimer & Gestalt Theory*. 100.

of displays for the store Simpson's of Piccadilly,¹⁸⁶ as well as other installations and exhibitions. This storefront enabled Kepes to implement skills as a designer that he had honed in Berlin, especially those used for the stage. Moholy-Nagy enthusiastically noted that their "asymmetric advertising" work in the windows "is like a mild electric shock to the eye;" satisfying his precept that "the impact has to come from the familiar object presented in an unfamiliar way."¹⁸⁷ Although not a direct moment of inspiration or influence, Kepes' involvement in this urban project can be seen as consistent with the later work he was to do with Lynch. The public art project considered the random passerby's perception of their standard urban space. Through their work the two manipulated the visual environment to a specific end, something that would have assuredly piqued Lynch's interest on one of his Florence walks. After this project Kepes traveled to the United States with Moholy-Nagy, who in 1937 had established the New Bauhaus school in Chicago, Illinois. It was in fact the architect Walter Gropius, former head the Bauhaus in Weimar and designer of the Bauhaus School in Dessau, who recommended Moholy-Nagy for the position of director of the Chicago effort, which was the brainchild of Norma K. Stahle of the American Association of Arts and Industries.¹⁸⁸

In the Chicago Kepes worked alongside the philosopher and semiotician Charles William Morris, a professor at the University of Chicago who also taught classes at the New Bauhaus. Morris, one of the progenitors of modern semiotics, had developed a philosophy regarding the synthesis of pragmatism, logical positivism, and behavioral empiricism, and was inclined to texts similar to the ones Lynch read in high school, like

¹⁸⁶ Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*. 65.

¹⁸⁷ Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*. 65.

¹⁸⁸ Alan Findeli and Charlotte Benton, "Design Education and Industry: The Laborious Beginnings of the Institute of Design in Chicago in 1944." *Journal of Design History* 4.2 (1991): 97-100.

the work of William James. His theory established the notion that we behave in response to signs, or symbols implicit in our visual surroundings, which have three different categorical relationships in the way they are read. They either refer to objects, people, or other signs and this inherent or applied coding informs the way in which we read our surroundings and operate in our environment.¹⁸⁹ This analysis of our environment through symbols influenced Kepes' own study, which began to take on the assessment of how we visually understand space. Kepes' approach, which analyzed our comprehension of the visually experienced world, also ran parallel to the burgeoning interdisciplinary field of cybernetics.

The central theoretician of cybernetics was Norbert Wiener, a mathematician and professor at MIT, who wrote from the first decades of the twentieth century into the 1950s. The discipline, in essence, revolves around the study of the organization of machines and the structure of their regulatory systems. The theory relates that when an actor in a given system causes some change in the environment, the changed environment in turn affects the actor, creating a cyclical loop of influence. In this study of casual chains, Wiener's seminal work *Human Use of Human Beings* (1950) posits that our environment acts as a large feedback loop, in that we design its physicality, which then manipulates our use of it and directly informs our own actions.¹⁹⁰ He further develops this idea in terms of urban space, stating in an essay on "How Cities Can Prepare for Atomic War," co-written with the political scientist Karl Deutsch and science historian Girogio de Santillana, that: "We have conceived the city as a net of communications and of traffic. The danger of blocked communication in a city subject to emergency

¹⁸⁹ Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2003. 63.

¹⁹⁰ Norbert Wiener, *Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1954.

conditions is analogous to the danger of blocked communications in the human body.”¹⁹¹ This fear rose out of a larger post World-War II sentiment of apprehension and anxiety, derived from the development of the nuclear bomb and its witnessed consequences. It seems, though, that Kepes stayed away from becoming wrapped up in the collective consciousness of paranoia, and instead drew only intellectual direction from Wiener’s work in cybernetics.

The synthesis of these two influences, cybernetics and semiotics, can be seen in Kepes’ own seminal work *Language of Vision*, published in 1944.¹⁹² During the writing of this project he received notes from Charles Morris and sought out Norbert Weiner’s assistance, without receiving it.¹⁹³ Furthermore he explicitly expressed his intellectual proximity to the Gestalt school, stating in the preface: “First of all the author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Gestalt psychologists. Many of the inspiring ideas and concrete illustrations of Max Wertheimer...have been used in the first part of the book to explain the laws of visual organization.”¹⁹⁴ In the book he seeks to understand how we ourselves comprehend the visual environment through examining the spatial qualities and organizations of two-dimensional compositions. He states that:

The language of vision, optical communication, is one of the strongest potential means to both reunite man and his knowledge and to re-form man into an integrated being...The visual language is capable of disseminating knowledge more effectively than almost any other vehicle of communication...Visual language must

¹⁹¹ Norbert Wiener, Karl W. Deutsch, and Giorgio de Santillana, "Cities that Survive the Bomb," 10, undated draft (Box 12, Folder 638, Norbert Wiener Papers, MIT), as quoted in Martin, *The Organizational Complex*. 28.

¹⁹² Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision*. Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1944.

¹⁹³ Martin, *The Organizational Complex*. 38.

¹⁹⁴ Kepes, *Language of Vision*. “Acknowledgements,” 4.

be readjusted, however, to meet its historical challenge of educating man to a contemporary standard, and of helping him think in terms of form.¹⁹⁵

Kepes felt that our mental wellbeing could be increased if we better understood our visual reception of the environment. The introduction to Kepes' ideas in the first edition of *Language of Vision* by the historian and architecture critic Siegfried Gideon further describes these attempts, stating:

Kepes, as we all do, regards art as indispensable to a full life. His main object is to demonstrate just how the optical revolution, around 1910, formed our present-day conception of space and the visual approach to reality...Step by step Kepes follows the liberation of plastic elements: lines, planes, and colors, and the creation of a world of forms our own. The spatial conception interconnects the meanings and fragments and binds them together...[He] shows the contact of modern art with reality and how paintings which, at first sight, seem remote from life, are extracted from its very bloodstream.¹⁹⁶

These comments hint at Kepes' sources in cybernetics, Gestalt psychology, and semiotics, yet Gideon only superficially describes the nature of Kepes' work in a larger cultural context. Delving further into the text further reveals these sources of inspiration, and their relation to societal circumstances. Kepes begins the book: "today we experience chaos...In the focus of this eclipse of a healthy human existence is the individual, torn by the shattered fragments of his formless world, incapable of organizing

¹⁹⁵ Kepes, *Language of Vision*. 13.

¹⁹⁶ Sigfried Giedion, "Art Means Reality" an introduction to Kepes, *Language of Vision*. 7.

his physical and psychological needs.”¹⁹⁷ He elaborates that, “The language of vision...has more subtle and...important contemporary task. To perceive a visual image implies the beholder’s participation in a process of organization.”¹⁹⁸ The description of visual perception as a state of mental organization, and the weight put on the ability to organize as a source of satisfaction, is very much rooted in the larger “organization complex” that ran current through the cultural consciousness of the United States at this time. The term is taken from the title of a book written by Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex* (2003), which outlines the ways in which American culture and self-perception was defined by an increased importance put on control and organization. To this conclusion he outlines how the military industrial complex promoted the further segmentation of industrial production, how advancements in photographic technology used by science revealed our molecular structure, and how cybernetics emphasized the structures of communication between user and system. These elements, Martin finds, promoted increases in systems of societal control and organizational patterns, which defined the style of corporate architecture at that time, and was symbolic of America’s self-perception. He notes that Kepes had underlined this quote in Weiner’s *Cybernetics, or control and communication in the animal and machine* (1948)²⁰⁰: “If the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century are the age of clocks, and the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries constitute the age of steam-engines the present time is the age of communication and control.”²⁰¹ As Kepes stated that visual perception can be understood as a language and can be re-arranged to form a more cohesive total form, it

¹⁹⁷ Kepes, *Language of Vision*. 12.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Weiner, Norbert. *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Cambridge: MIT, 1961.

²⁰¹ Norbert Weiner, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Cambridge: MIT, 1961. 39.

can be said that his views fit into this increasing tendency towards organization.

As Martin concludes, “[Kepes] attempted to make scientific analyses, and especially theories of biological self-regulation...the basis for an aesthetic project.”²⁰² In this sense Kepes’ text *Language of Vision* was at once a representation of the general themes in the culture of organization and control, and a wholly new effort. Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa, a psychologist and professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, stated in his introduction to the book that Kepes desired to “have us...attempt a visual re-education,...compel us to take into consideration the “refraction” of our inherited modes of vision...by showing us what goes into visual experience.”²⁰³ Kepes sought to redefine how we see through enhancing our knowledge of the visual field. Even though he fell into the lexicon of the cultural context, he attempted to break us out of our culturally derived states. In this way Lynch’s focus on city form in the experience of urban space, and his divergence from the standard discourse, found a companion in Kepes’ work.

In this regard, the Rockefeller Foundation noted that Kepes held a conference at Yale University on “Science and Lettering in the Cityscape,” which discussed the influence of graphic lettering to our perceptions of the city, comparing it to Lynch’s “[work] up in Florence.” This relationship would develop Lynch’s urban studies. Some of his ensuing theory on urban perception, which stated “the apparent clarity or ‘legibility’ of the cityscape...[is derived from] the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent visual pattern,”²⁰⁴ was in part derived from Kepes’ analysis of vision as a structured process of mental organization.

²⁰² Martin, *The Organizational Complex*. 67.

²⁰³ S.I. Hayawaka, “The Revision of Vision,” an introduction to Kepes, *Language of Vision*. 9.

²⁰⁴ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 2.

Through the support of MIT, the collaboration between Lynch and Kepes was about to cohere into the first study of visual perception in the urban environment. However, the MIT board in charge of the proposal would go through several proposals before the Rockefeller Foundation agreed to fund their project. This board included Pietro Belluschi, the Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning, Lawrence B. Anderson, head of the Department of Architecture, Louis B. Wetmore, head of the Center of Urban and Regional Studies, Walter Isard, Associate Professor of Regional Economics, and Lloyd Rodwin, as well as Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes.²⁰⁵

The first problem the board encountered was that the Humanities division of Rockefeller Foundation did not normally support work in city planning. Their funds were usually allocated for disciplines typically considered to be in humanities. However, MIT pitched the project as a part of a larger social need. To this, the Foundation responded: "The Rockefeller Foundation is not likely to be able to take an interest in the social science aspects of the project. If we are to continue discussions it will have to be in terms of the aesthetic aspects of the project."²⁰⁶ Thus MIT emphasized their unique approach to visual analysis, about which they had initially stated:

Burchard emphasized that much of what has been achieved [in this visual/environmental study] in the past has been more or less by accident when an architect of imagination happened to have an opportunity for large-scale work. However, it is only once in a while that a Corbusier has a chance to build

²⁰⁵ "Conference with: Dr. John E. Burchard, Dr. Lawrence B. Anderson, Dr. Louis B. Wetmore, Prof. Frederick Adams, Dr. Gordon Stephenson," Sept. 18th 1953, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁰⁶ "Letter to Pietro Belluschi." February. 23rd 1954, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

an Indian Hill,²⁰⁷ and the cost of empirical experiment of this sort is large. Surely something can be achieved by rational analysis and laboratory experiment.²⁰⁸

A main problem the Foundation had with the group's initial presentation was that it lacked specificity and depth. In one iteration Lynch proposed to answer the question, "what are the bad faults of existing city environments, which people dislike most or which harm them most, and what affect could be accomplished by improving these features."²⁰⁹ Yet, the Foundation stated he "hasn't the foggiest idea of how to work on them, beyond a belief that an assistant trained in social psychological research can direct interviewing studies of some group of people, and perhaps in-depth interviews of some of the people, in order to get information wanted."²¹⁰ In contrast, the Foundation felt that "interest and quality in personnel seem to be available in...particularly Professor Kepes."²¹¹ They initially believed that Lynch's approach was that of a novice in the field, which, to an extent, it was. Still, MIT responded by insisting that their concerns were necessary and that they had the men to do it.

²⁰⁷ "Indian Hill" refers to Le Corbusier's 1950s plan for the town of Chandigarh, India. This project is best described by Sharon Irish, in "Review: Intimacy and Monumentality in Chandigarh, North India: Le Corbusier's Capitol Complex and Nek Chand Saini's Rock Garden" *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 38.2 (2004): 105-15, a review of Vikramaditya Prakash, *Chandigarh's Le Corbusier: the Struggle for Modernity in Postcolonial India*, Seattle: University of Washington, 2002. Irish summarizes Prakash's over-arching point, stating: "Le Corbusier 'considered it the true mission of modern architecture to reestablish the aesthetic and poetic forms necessary for the liberation and deliverance of...modern man.' (16) Le Corbusier's monumentalism, then, was imposed on Chandigarh's landscape and the inhabitants with the assumption that he knew best what architecture was appropriate for 'liberation'."

²⁰⁸ "Conference with: Dr. John E. Burchard, Dr. Lawrence B. Anderson, Dr. Louis B. Wetmore, Prof. Frederick Adams, Dr. Gordon Stephenson," Sept. 18th 1953, p. 2 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁰⁹ "Interview with: Pietro Belluschi, Lawrence B. Anderson, Louis B. Wetmore, Gyorgy Kepes, Lloyd Rodwin, Kevin A. Lynch, Walter Isard" February. 17th 1954, p. 3 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Later in the same interview they almost convinced the Rockefeller Foundation's board to go through with the plan. Belluschi and Anderson conveyed, in the words of the transcriber, that: "The role of the architect has changed appreciably in recent years. Whereas before he worked primarily for individual clients, he was now increasingly called upon to work for groups or masses of people."²¹² They posited that a better understanding of the user's response to urban form would be of great concern to the architect and urban planner, who now had to confront this new scope of design. In light of this they felt that the study would be searching in nature, and not directed towards a specific goal. The reviewer of their proposal "now saw [it] in a different light," and further stated that "it seemed to [Lynch] that, in effect, this proposal was not a single research project or a group of three integrally related projects, but was, in effect the basis for a program of development of the visual element of architecture in relation to the Center of Urban and Regional Studies."²¹³ With this the others at MIT concurred, saying that: "it was important to have funds to strengthen this important part of the program...so that the whole program would not be thrown out of balance."²¹⁴ Although the foundation was beginning to be convinced of the importance of the study, they were skeptical as to the outlined process, deeming it "an amateurism adventure."²¹⁵ In response, MIT had to further tweak and refine the proposal.

In the group's final attempt, the school put the larger intentions for the Center for Urban Study in the background.²¹⁶ They focused on Lynch and Kepes' work,

²¹² "Interview with: Pietro Belluschi, Lawrence B. Anderson, Louis B. Wetmore, Gyorgy Kepes, Lloyd Rodwin, Kevin A. Lynch, Walter Isard" February. 17th 1954, p. 4 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

²¹⁶ During Lynch and Kepes' ensuing study MIT's initially proposed Center for Urban Study would be formed in conjunction with Harvard, as the Joint Center for Urban Studies in 1959, and so Lynch's *The*

promoting their uniquely developing interests. The reviewer was impressed with the time he spent with Kepes, who had led him through one of his previous studies²¹⁷:

Kepes described in some detail and with many pictures a two-week intensive study of a small segment of Atlantic Avenue, the fishing wharf district of Boston. This was done last summer with a group of some twenty students, approximately half American...Approximately six hours a day for ten days was spent along the docks, and the results in terms of increased sensibility were striking, according to Kepes.²¹⁸

The Foundation was further impressed once they spent more time reviewing Lynch's studies of Florence, Kepes' *Language of Vision*, and their joint class on urban form. The professors, together with the Foundation, stated: "The group agrees quite readily that it is the work on perceptual forms which is most nearly unique in the MIT program... Lynch and Kepes have done a good deal of thinking with regard to specific aspects of the perceptual form of cities."²¹⁹ The Foundation further consulted with outside architects and planners. Charles B. Fahs, the director of the humanities division, interviewed Louis Skidmore, a founder of the still prominent architecture firm Skidmore Owning and Merrill. Skidmore asserted that:

Image of the City (1960) thus gives credit to the program. However, this credit is unfounded, since the bulk of their findings came in the years before the formation of the Joint Center.

²¹⁷ It can be inferred that this study was done with Lynch, for their co-taught class *The Visual Form of Cities*.

²¹⁸ "Interview with: Pietro Belluschi, Lawrence B. Anderson, Louis B. Wetmore, Gyorgy Kepes, Lloyd Rodwin, Kevin A. Lynch, Walter Isard" February. 17th 1954, p. 4 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²¹⁹ "Visit to MIT" March 2nd, 1954, p. 3 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

Architects in general have been too busy to see beyond the single building or the development of the single plot. It is very important for the development of our cities that a wider view be cultivated. If the concepts can be worked out as proposed at MIT, this intellectual development will have significant influence among architects.²²⁰

This statement further promoted the study's unique nature and its influence on a discipline outside of urban planning.

MIT proposed a "Method of Attack," which included "a systematic survey of the visual factors making up our environment...[and] the study of the 'grammar' of the cityscape." This they stated "must be followed and paralleled by design research," from which would develop new tools and techniques that the urban designer lacked. Lynch also outlined a collaborative discussion-based group they wished to form, which was intended to direct their specific analyses.²²¹ This might have been a necessary measure, since the foundation was wary of Lynch's ability and only very confident in Kepes. This proposal led the board to revise their initial dismissal; they now found it unique and in good hands. On March 7th, 1954 the proposal was accepted and the grant received. The humanities division of the Foundation described their reasoning for acceptance:

The [Rockefeller Foundation] Division of Humanities has no intention of entering the general field of city planning. Urban design, however, is one of the fields in which the arts have the most direct impact on the quality of human life.

²²⁰ "Mr. Louis Skidmore, Telephone Call" March 30th, 1954, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²²¹ "Proposed Study, The Perceptual Form of Cities" March 1st, 1954, p. 1-4 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

In view of the relative neglect of aesthetic aspects in connection with city planning during the last few decades, an effort to restore the balance in thinking in connection with city design seems well justified under the Foundation's program in the arts. The MIT [faculty] has made a good beginning and seems to offer the best opportunity for significant work during the next several years. Both the association with a strong school of architecture and the fact that MIT is likely to have significant opportunities for contractual work in the community planning field, offer opportunities for application of new ideas or techniques which may be developed under this program.²²²

The Study

The Rockefeller Foundation granted the team \$85,000, which was to be administered over the course of three years, being one of the largest of its time. With these funds Lynch and Kepes then outlined their staff requirements, which included an additional urban designer, a photographer, two half-time graduate assistants, a secretary assistant, and sixty man-days of consultants.²²³ The graduate students would assist Lynch and Kepes in interviews, while the photographer would catalog image of the areas they studied. The consultants and additional urban designers would provide them with short studies to guide their own. In fact, the graduate students, who shifted roles throughout the study, would provide the most help in the execution of the work. With the

²²² "Resolved, RF 54034" March 7th, 1954, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²²³ "Proposed Study, The Perceptual Form of Cities" March 1st, 1954, p. 1-4 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

administration of the project outlined, Lynch and Kepes then began to further explore the topic.

On January 6, 1955, Lynch stated that early on he and Kepes had completed “a series of walks through various parts of Boston. The impressions and ideas resulting from this first undirected and subjective approach to the problem were recorded and proved to be basic material for succeeding steps.”²²⁴ In addition, they had begun group discussions with “a series of men outside of the direct field of the principals,” during which they had “[exposed] our ideas to them and [gathered] their comments and suggestions.”²²⁵ They held a day-long seminar with Rudolph Arnheim, the psychologist whose book *Film Als Kunst* (1932) Kepes had designed the cover. This talk, as well as others along the same lines, had “provided solid material for understanding the reaction of the individual to his perceptual world.” In addition, they held several conferences with certain figures in the arts. This included a lecture on December 10th, 1954 titled “Urban Form Seminar,” which included the composer John Cage and photographer Andrea Feininger.

In this talk they discussed the influence of sound in urban perception, which Kepes concluded could be controlled and structured in “isolated areas” to increase the inhabitant’s overall enjoyment of the urban space. Cage opposed this position, countering; “I think it would be better to give up the idea of control and merely enjoy the absence of control.” Still, Kepes stated that “ordered pattern, not a fixed fully controlled or rigid one, but one partially defined...could help to structure our response

²²⁴ Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 6th, 1955, p. 1 (folder 3330.31, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²²⁵ Ibid.

[to the city].”²²⁶ From this stance Reinhold Martin would conclude that Kepes “persistently [attempted] to mobilize organizational principles dating from [his previous involvement with the] Bauhaus...passed through [Gestalt] psychology to regulate the landscape.”²²⁷ Kepes encouraged the view of the city as a complete system, one that imparts great influence on its inhabitant through a structured process of visual perception. This position began to form the basis of their approach. It cohered much of the personal stances Lynch had formed while in Florence, filtering his conclusions on city satisfactions into a framework of perception as structured through mental organization.

In this approach they defined a preliminary framework for their study, dividing several analytic categories into five themes. Lynch outlined their intentions to address urban form:

- 1) In terms of the process of perception, i.e. Distinguishing between immediate biological response, perceptual response, and conceptual response.
- 2) In terms of normative criteria of city form: patterns facilitating existence, understanding, and development.
- 3) In terms of the formal characteristics of city form: rhythm, scale, balance, etc.
- 4) In terms of descriptive elements of city form: spaces, planes, detail, mass...
- 5) In terms of design problems or features: vistas, panoramas, residential areas, river banks, etc.²²⁹

²²⁶ “Urban Form Seminar” December 10th, 1954 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box 1, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT)

²²⁷ Martin, *The Organizational Complex*. 67.

²²⁹ "Letter to Charles B. Fahs, from Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes," January 6th, 1955, p. 4 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

Among these approaches they concluded that the second, “In terms of normative criteria of city form: patterns facilitating existence, understanding, and development,” was the most direct and productive course of study. The third, fourth, and fifth categories were in essence translated from Lynch’s Florence study into a methodological approach. The description of “formal characteristics” as both subjective perceptions and as elements of visual composition shows Lynch’s own conflation of personal experience with “formal” physicality. However, they found that “the third system...is rejected as being too sterile in terms of organization,” further exemplifying Kepes’ authority in the arrangement of their concerns. They decided to focus primarily on the second category.

This second direction, which positions human development, existence, and understanding as products of a patterned urban environment, specifically formed the frame of their investigation. They stated that:

In choosing the second system as a beginning, [in terms of normative criteria of city form: patterns facilitating existence, understanding, and development,] it is intended to stress the normative aspect of the city. That is, we desire to put the human being and his needs at the center of the work, and to emphasize the ideas of purpose and of the remodeling of the city to fit human needs.²³⁰

They are seeking to uncover a thread running constant through people across culture and generation, attempting to reveal some basic elements of urban perception shared by all, explicitly stating that “we shall be looking for basic human values common to all

²³⁰ "Letter to Charles B. Fahs, from Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes," January 6th, 1955, p. 4 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

men, and, to some extent, for values typical of our own time and culture.”²³¹ Even though they concede “[this normative position] is taken in full realization of the multiplicity of human purposes among classes, cultures, and individual,”²³² this statement will become the defining position of the work. This theoretical standpoint shapes not only their window into investigation, but also defines the product of their study.

They elaborate on this point by stating that these common values of “man’s internal structure” are defined by wide-ranging elements of urban experience. They outline the urban experience as drawn from “the stimuli themselves [and] their level of intensity,” advocating that “the degree of variety of stimulation, be in the comfortable range, neither too high or too low.”²³³ This would seem to be dictated by subjective personal response to myriad of urban elements. However, for them these “stimuli” would be investigated specifically in terms of physical form, which they assumed was the same for everyone in a given location. These elements were drawn from the conclusions Lynch made during his urban investigation of Florence. This was then synthesized with Kepes’s focus, who stated that, “the form facilitate the grasp of the largest possible whole along with the most intimate possible comprehension of parts and their relationship.”²³⁴ This collaboratively fashioned opinion would later reframe Lynch’s idea that orientation and consciousness of location in the city is central to a good experience.

Furthermore, as this general approach was indeed formed in tandem, Lynch and Kepes’ individual positions become increasingly intertwined. This can be seen in some of the general questions they personally raise: “[Gyorgy Kepes]: what is the nature of

²³¹ Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 6th, 1955, p. 4 (folder 3330.31, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid., 5.

sequential perception in the city?...What is the role of such perception of: scale, rhythmical experience; observer...What part do analogues, continuities of line, form and color, and contrasts play in this process?”²³⁵ This is Kepes’ detailed approach towards understanding human vision and perception in the realm of two-dimensional painting, grafted onto the city through Lynch’s findings in Florence. It is a three-dimensional realization of Kepes’ personal concerns. Lynch takes a broader approach to these concerns, asking: “How does the city communicate to the observer? [And,] what are the means, and what is the role, of orientation in the city?” This is his individual approach tailored to Kepes’ study of visual “communication.”²³⁶ These individual points are further synthesized into the conclusion that the “development of techniques for expressing such city qualities are spatial pattern or orientation.” This underscores the link between Lynch’s time in Florence and the “City Satisfaction” essay and Kepes’ earlier work in visual language.

Despite the cohesion of their approaches to city analysis, the intricacies of their individual positions are still clear. This can be seen in Kepes’ concern that successful urban forms must “have a maximum coincidence of functional clarity, intuitive sense of use or meaning, and clear and well organized conceptual and emotional symbolism.”²³⁷ This linguistic approach to city analysis is parallel to the concerns raised in his architectural signage lecture delivered the year previous. There is a great deal of semiotic influence seen here, especially in the idea of psychological symbolism of visual forms. It is an approach dissimilar to Lynch’s inclination towards a more abstract examination of spatial form divorced from its historical, cultural and personal influence in meaning.

²³⁵ “A Framework for the Form of City Study and Some Topics For Study” Dec. 22nd, 1954, p.2-4 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Lynch instead seems here to be more concerned with orientation in urban space, specifically how the physical environment directs and facilitates movement. He develops his ideas behind the importance of “orientation” while Kepes develops his position on visual “communication.” Once they lay out their foundations for examining perception, these divisions formed individually pursued studies.

Lynch and Kepes spent these first eight months refining their approach through the “series of discussions and writings...city surveys, readings in various fields...[and] several conferences.”²³⁸ By the spring of 1955 they had begun studying a small urban area, Copley Square in Boston, located in the Back Bay neighborhood of the city, which is defined by its older, small-scale residential architecture. They photographed the area from various angles every approach at intervals of fifty feet, the facades, pavements, architectural details, and human activity (see figs. 12-14). These photos constituted “an inventory of elements and an analysis of size and scale relationships,”²³⁹ and were broken down into three categories: Space, Surfaces, and Volumes. This, they said, showed “very clearly how the city shapes change and flow into another as they are seen in sequence.”²⁴⁰ It was an attempt to provide an object of visual referent, upon which they could base a more involved and analytical study of personal experience in the space.

Following this initial visual descriptive analysis they had marked out plans to further investigate the small urban area. As an introduction to this approach they state that “no attempt will be made to cover a ‘cross section’ of society, but we hope to get a

²³⁸ Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes, January 6th, 1955, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²³⁹ “A Framework for the Form of City Study and Some Topics For Study” Dec. 22nd, 1954, p. 9 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

balance of certain categories, especially in regard to familiarity with the area, design competence, and, perhaps childhood background.”²⁴¹ Their subjects were all very similar in terms of social background and economic standing, and thus their intention of finding out that which runs constant across all people’s perception is tenuous. They state that “these studies will be coordinated to gain a comprehensive picture of the area ‘as it really appears,’ and to analyze the relations of subjective impression to objective environment.”²⁴² To make sure they had little impact on their subject’s experience, they included “not...prepared subjects, but...individuals who have recently passed through the area while preoccupied with other concerns.”²⁴³ This outline ends with the statement: “This inquiry is thus searching and descriptive in nature, rather than directed to a pre-determined goal.”²⁴⁴ However, it is clear that the goals of the project were framed in such a way that they were indeed specific to the conclusions on good city form as ultimately described by Lynch in his essay “City Satisfactions.” They were asking, through directed observational techniques and personal inquiries, if what Lynch felt to be true was true for others as well.

As the months progressed this investigation grew. They stated that the work “concerns a test made by recording the comments of some thirty people, made while walking around a certain block in Boston, and supplemented by their recalling this experience several days later in the office.”²⁴⁵ This experience recall was in part done through the drawing of “mental maps,” which would be later dubbed “cognitive maps.” Lynch felt that these offered a good element to the total picture, but fell short of being

²⁴¹ “A Framework for the Form of City Study and Some Topics For Study” Dec. 22nd, 1954, p. 12 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

truly experiential as drawing skills varied greatly (see fig. 15). So, these simply supplemented a verbal based question and answer system. Later in 1957, Lynch compiled some “excerpts from these interviews in a running narrative, to give the flavor of the general reaction.”²⁴⁶ The introduction states:

We are standing at the corner of Berkeley and Boylston Streets in Boston, with an ill-assorted group of some 27 sight-seers, old and young, male and female, some of them strangers and some who have gone past this corner daily for years. We have asked them just to walk along with us and to tell us what they see and hear and smell and to talk about these things as the spirit moves them. Our group has come willingly, if a little dubiously, this peculiar event, and we have fastened a tiny microphone to the lapel of each one, so that we can record what they have to say. This makes them nervous at first, but they will soon get used to it.

We cannot of course, reproduce exactly their reactions on an ordinary city walk. The mere fact of our own presence, of the recorder, of our request to tell us what they notice, inevitably heightens their interest in their surroundings. Perhaps they remark things that they would never normally do, certainly more of their perception of the environment has been brought up to the conscious level. As one of our victim’s remarks: “when I walk through Boston usually I’m not as aware of the city as I am now. But then I’m never quite unaware of this place the way I’ve been unaware of, say, Newark or many parts of New York.” And another complains later in the walk: “you become so interested in noticing what’s

²⁴⁶ Go Take a Walk Around the Block,” Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

going on around the street that you begin to lose track of people, because usually I'm very absorbed in signs and people.

But never mind. We may be receiving a heightened picture of their normal perception of their city, but it is nevertheless an interesting picture to see. At least their comments are completely unrehearsed, with no hints from us as to what to say, and coincidence is spontaneous.²⁴⁷

From this study they cataloged their subject's responses to specific physical urban elements. They charted the percentage of people who responded to certain areas similarly. In addition, they noted which elements were most readily recalled in the post walk interview, several days later. With this numerical information they concluded that "the tables reveal certain things about these elements [but] it may be better to generalize this in a qualitative way."²⁴⁸ They described that:

The fundamental impressions for almost all observers are certain individual buildings and certain open spaces. Not only is there an agreement on element type but there is high correlation on the particular buildings or spaces remarked upon, and this is consistent between walk and recall. The buildings noticed...are remarkable for certain singularities of style, material, use or association.²⁴⁹

They concluded that the reason for these buildings' high recall rate was to their "spatial isolation or dominance." These buildings, upon further investigation, seem to have been

²⁴⁷ "Go Take a Walk Around the Block," Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 1 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

the largest and most architecturally distinct in the area at that time: it makes objective sense that they were the most recalled images. They further state that: “It is also very noticeable that strong emotional feelings are associated with spatial characteristics: of freedom, confinement, confusion, delight, [etc.]”²⁵⁰ From this observation they concluded that the buildings were principally remembered due to their “spatial isolation or dominance. This revealed that a building’s juxtaposition to open space in relation to the density of the urban area fostered its distinct memory. However, Lynch and Kepes did not in any way offer a quantitative assessment of the area in terms of these spatial definitions. They noted the general forms, but failed to specify their measurable intricacies. Since the study was in essence based on speculation, their conclusions similarly stayed in the realm of speculation.

Some offered objections to this process, which they summarized as: “First, that the perceptual process is too rapid and complex to be reduced to verbal symbols, and that therefore we are getting only a reflection and a fragmentary one, of the true process.”²⁵¹ Lynch and Kepes responded that they were indeed resigned to a “partial picture.”²⁵² The second objection was: “That certain perceptions are not verbalized because they are so common as to be taken for granted, or are culturally not felt to be a proper part of the description of an area.”²⁵³ The subjects felt that this was overcome by the follow-up interview, which was designed to remove any preconceptions, and focused on the lasting image of the place. The third objection was: “There may be a whole important level of perceptual interaction, which is truly unconscious or repressed and

²⁵⁰ “Go Take a Walk Around the Block,” Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 24 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

cannot be brought up even under lengthy questioning.”²⁵⁴ To this protestation Lynch and Kepes could not reply: it was an issue they were not prepared to answer. Even with these concerns, their scope did not change greatly from this approach.

They found that the most descriptive and helpful interviews were those conducted while moving through a predetermined path through the city, on immediate emotional responses, which were then supplemented by a retrospective discussion conducted after the walk. The team of graduate students, as well as Lynch and Kepes, would ask the participants: “Try to put yourself back at the beginning of our walk, and describe to me in detail the sequence of things and events you noticed.” They further probed their subject’s memory: “When they had completed this description, they were then asked various questions; whether they remembered any particular buildings, features of buildings, people, sounds, smell, traffic signs or pavement.”²⁵⁵ The team concluded that “these interviews [were] beginning to turn up useful material. Despite tremendous variations of background, and a wide range of feelings toward certain features...there [was] surprising consensus on some elements, such as spaces, which are of strong impact, and others.”²⁵⁶ Their subjects were all white and generally well off, with half being students or students’ wives, including four professional planners. They admit that their “sample is a small and, in respect to class and age, a biased one.” Stating that the pool was “much too small to be a true sample of the universe of U.S. urbanites.”²⁵⁷ However, this was not a concern, and so they continued to move forward with this process, finding that “even more apparent is the effort to group and organize the scene,

²⁵⁴ Go Take a Walk Around the Block,” Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 18 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.

and the resistance of this material to this grouping.”²⁵⁸ In their subject’s mental pictures of the environment, Lynch found that their ability to find their way through the urban area was directed by the city’s “sensuous” elements, those that he had previously laid out in his “City Satisfaction” essay. Therefore, these experiments are again a continuation of Lynch testing of his preconceived conclusions on city satisfaction. Although the experiments did not attempt to prove anything directly, but rather openly analyze, the study nonetheless never questioned Lynch and Kepes’ hypothesis, and was used to back up their initial findings. That is not to say Lynch’s convictions were false, but rather if this was purported to be a scientific study, its hypothesis should be questioned; yet it never was.

Within this framework Lynch admitted that “such coherence does not arise only, or perhaps even mainly, from physical forms. It is based on the accumulation of personal or group experiences, which associate with the environment.”²⁵⁹ Still, Lynch and Kepes did not consider the influence of personal meaning on the perception of physical form, an authority that calls their entire project into question. To this oversight they indirectly responded, stating: “[Our findings] may now perhaps be generalized somewhat; the individual must perceive his environment as an ordered pattern, and is constantly trying to impute order into his surroundings.”²⁶⁰ Here Kepes’ influence is present, as it frames Lynch’s preconceptions in the jargon of Gestalt psychology. From this they chose to analyze “based on these assumptions, therefore, of the key importance of an environment which can be organized as a whole, and secondly, of the important role that

²⁵⁸ “Go Take a Walk Around the Block,” Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 19 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁵⁹ “The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies” June, 1955, p. 15 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁶⁰ “Go Take a Walk Around the Block,” Letter to Charles B. Fahs, from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 33 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

physical shapes play in this ability.”²⁶¹ However, this was not only derived from Kepes’ previous work and Lynch’s Florence study; the context of urban development at this moment played a large role in their conclusions.

Lynch felt that the urban experience was becoming disjointed as cities became unapproachably complex due to increasing expansion. He conflated organization and structure with enjoyable urban experience, language that was ostensibly tied to the architectural jargon of the European Modernists. Le Corbusier’s “Ville Radieuse” proposal attempted to organize the decrepit slums pervading Paris into large, rigidly structured housing towers. However, the scope of Lynch and Kepes’ idea of “unity” in the urban environment was decidedly non-architectural, they were speaking of a unified perception, in part reacting against these types of Corbusian projects. Along these lines he had earlier stated that an “important [satisfaction] that should be derived from city form” was: “A certain unity, connectedness, or organization in the urban environment allowing the inhabitant to sense the whole.”²⁶²

For Lynch, this unified perception would lead to an increased ability in orientation. In this sense Lynch further declared: “We now face the problem of maintaining continuity in a changing flow, structuring the change itself by means of rhythm, progression, and counterpoint.”²⁶³ This was his response to the new urban scale. The positive elements he cited in Florence became what he sought to reinvest in the augmenting urban landscape. In essence, these “sensuous” characteristics were his datum of good design. Still, they were decidedly non-architectural. Following this line of

²⁶¹ Go Take a Walk Around the Block,” Letter to Charles B. Fahs from Kevin Lynch, January 3rd, 1958, p. 33 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁶² “Visit to MIT” March 2nd, 1954, p. 2 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

²⁶³ “The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies” June, 1955, p. 15 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

characterization, the intention of their study was to define what spatial and physical elements allied with these sentiments, so that they could begin to lay out a new course for urban design. Furthermore, with this new heightened sensuous nature of the city, the inhabitant's ability in orientation would be amplified, and consequently their urban experience would be heightened. However, Kepes attempted to refine Lynch's approach to orientation, signaling a division in their study that would eventually define *The Image of the City*.

Orientation and Communication

As they reached these initial conclusions in their preliminary studies, the terminus of their three-year grant approached. By August 31st, 1957 they were to finish. The Rockefeller Foundation had given them a strict deadline, however by this time they had not used up all of their funds. So, with some pressing, the Foundation gave them two additional years to finish the "Perceptual Form of the City" study. Without this extension, *The Image of the City* may not have been written, as their work was undergoing particular key directional shifts. Just previous to the approved extension, Kepes had been further refining their approach. The best primary illustration of this in a letter to Lynch, dated June 30th, 1955. Kepes writes:

I would like to make some comment on the formulation of the 'orientation' study...I still feel, as I have expressed it before, that in your present formulation, orientation, is synonymous with perceptual organization. If so I would think that

it would be wiser to just use the term, ‘perceptual organization’ and keep the term ‘orientation’ to define the meaning that is generally accepted to cover. Orientation seems to me, is the perceptual process through which we can find a point of location or a line of direction, in certain coordinates. Whether it is mere spacelocus or dynamic participation, orientation implies a part-whole relationship or a space-time position in a space-time frame. In this precise but limited sense of orientation, the aesthetic qualities, as harmony, balance, rhythm, proportion; are not factors of orientation, they do not aid directly in finding one’s way.²⁶⁴

These initial sentiments led Lynch to redefine his focus on orientation, as he later separated his concept of “sensuous elements” from this discussion. Kepes structured Lynch’s approach to the study of the perception of physical forms, apart from any sensory impressions of the cityscape. In this refined approach, Kepes also outlined new individual courses of study, which eventually took hold in the years surrounding their study’s extension. He stated:

I would suggest some basic change in the distribution of our work, which seems to be necessary for me, both subjectively and objectively. What about our extending of the study of a small urban environment and its perception, from the proposed two areas, into four or five and making this study the core of our next year task?... This extended study would also give the chance to find a broader grasp of the needs and the value scales of these needs people acquired, living in an urban setting. This more comprehensive scanning of the City Scape, through

²⁶⁴ Letter from Gyorgy Kepes to Kevin Lynch, June 30th, 1955, p. 2 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

its completeness, could give us a chance to make cross-references both in physical features as well as in subjective reactions... What I would suggest then, that the study of the small environment and its perception, should be our common project, that we distribute; you having the responsibility for [orientation], and I... the communication of meaning study.

From this proposal they agreed to enact individual studies along these lines, which would allow them to pursue their personal inclinations. This could be seen at the outset of the study. Kepes stated: "I...feel that my contribution could be most valuable, if I stick to the areas where I am more at home and this visual exploration of the environment by graphic means, appeals to me very much."²⁶⁵ He began to pursue the study of "communication" of urban forms, similar to what he had discussed in his lecture on "Science and Lettering in the Cityscape" (Yale, 1953); a topic which he had first generated in his *Language of Vision* (1944).

Similar to his previous opinions on visual perception, Kepes felt that a structured system of meaning is projected onto the inhabitant through the visual forms seen in the city. In essence, he saw that all of the city's physicality expresses symbolic meaning: "The cooperation and interplay of city life, the sense of community, depends heavily on communication, and a significant portion of messages are carried out by the material cityscape."²⁶⁶ For this system to work efficiently, Kepes felt that these visual forms must prompt comfort and easy mobility. He further maintained: "Upon the ease and accuracy of the conveyance of meaning hinges both the efficiency with which the citizen can act,

²⁶⁵ Letter from Gyorgy Kepes to Kevin Lynch, June 30th, 1955, p. 2 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁶⁶ "The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 21 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

and the sense of comfort he experiences in his surroundings.”²⁶⁷ This position is parallel to Lynch’s appreciation for orientation, since they both stem from the perception that growth of the cityscape promoted confusion. For Kepes the augmenting urban landscape was further muddled by the intense proliferation of descriptive signage and increased speeds in movement facilitated by the automobile. As a result, Kepes stated that:

These messages have become so complex, so rapid in succession, so redundant, so disorganized in form, as to impose heavy stress on the reader, who is bombarded by them...Such disorganization cries for communication. Not suppression, since many of these messages are essential, and since a landscape without signs loses vitality as well as meaning.²⁶⁸

This statement as is dramatic as Lynch’s own struggle with disorientation; it was another product of the changing cityscape. Kepes continues along these lines, stating that “it must also be in [the inhabitant’s] power to shut off messages when they are not desired, or pick out easily the particular one that concerns him.”²⁶⁹ This priority, however, clashes with the nature of architectural form, which is immovable, and advertising signage, which is put up so that you are forced to look at it, almost against your will. Almost contradictory to this point, Kepes was concerned with the functionality of this system of signs, stating that they “[work] either only at night or only in daytime.”²⁷⁰ As a result, he

²⁶⁷ "The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 20 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 21.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

felt that this “considerably increases” the “sloppiness of our urban environment.”²⁷¹ It can be posited from this assertion that in his somewhat confused approach, Kepes faced a battle that could not be won.

From this position, Kepes outlined his plan of action. He said :

[The inquiry] will [thus] not be confined to lettered signs nor direct pictorial symbols alone, but will also include shapes, colors and textures, such as the shape of a fire hydrant or a church spire or the details by which individuals attempt to convey their position in the world: screen door ornaments; for example. It will be concerned...with the “readability” of the cityscape.²⁷²

Here, Kepes draws his words from earlier Gestalt psychology relating to environmental cognition synthesized with the work of Charles Morris’ on semiotics and the nature of symbolic meaning behind visual objects. In this sense, he was directly applying his own analytic approach to visual study, seen in *Language of Vision*, to the consideration of urban perception. He proposed to do this through analyzing the “coding” of the environment, finding “common denominators of color, shape, or texture to which accepted meanings might be attached, but which could be used without sacrificing the individuality of the discrete elements.”²⁷³ In this way, he felt that these elemental signifiers “had a direct tie with the techniques of facilitating orientation...Such heraldic patterning of our city environment spreading out from our little cluster of presently accepted symbols, is a realistic and challenging possibility today.”²⁷⁴ This further highlights that although his

²⁷¹ "The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 21 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁷² Ibid., 22.

²⁷³ Ibid., 23

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

work had a direct link to Lynch's study on orientation, and although their analytic approaches diverged, Kepes did not seek to engage the urban inhabitant in the same way.

Kepes proposed several processes to study his objective of “[finding] physical means of maximizing meaning and minimizing the effort of reception.”²⁷⁵ The first was a survey of certain locations in Boston for certain signs and symbols running constant throughout, which would highlight a larger “character of communication in the American city.” This section is intended to be left rather open ended, however almost to a fault, since he states that “areas will be chosen to illustrate the typical parts of a modern metropolis.”²⁷⁶ Although the subjects may have respond similarly to certain physical elements, their ascriptions of meaning would seem to relate specifically to their context, and so, this approach would only have skimmed the surface. The second step was a small study of a specific shopping area, “inventorying the messages in detail...and how well they are received.” The third step extended this same approach to a single block of family homes, looking at the character of their architecture and their owner-adorned embellishments. Kepes would ask each subject to “tell us all he can about what he presumes to be the nature of the inhabitants of each house.”²⁷⁷ Fourthly, Kepes stated he would attempt to define certain positive examples in American and foreign cities towards the compilation of handbook for sign writing. The fifth was a simple presentation of the overall idea behind the study, while the sixth intended to use his findings towards creating syntax of physical semantics for development of a designer's vocabulary.

²⁷⁵"The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 23 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

However, at the time Lynch was about to publish *The Image of the City*, Kepes had yet to formalize his analysis on these topics.²⁷⁸

While Kepes was formulating these ideas and analyses, Lynch began his specific study on orientation. He took Kepes' revisions into consideration, and further widened the scope of the study. Lynch employed the same method seen in the initial Copley Square walks, in concert with an additional approach. These he enacted in Boston, Massachusetts, Jersey City, New Jersey and Los Angeles, California. For Boston he used the same twenty-eight subjects, studying them with the same interview techniques. An outline of the analysis reads:

A. Characterize the city very rapidly, and say what first comes to mind when the area is mentioned. B. Draw a quick map of the area. C. Name, roughly delimit, and characterize the subareas within the whole that are thought to be distinctive and nameable. D. Take a series of "imaginary walks." E. In a few cases, be taken out in the area, asked to go to certain goals and to describe the clues en route, and, intermittently, to point or otherwise locate other features out of sight.²⁸⁰

With this method, he found similar results as before. Lynch tailored a new approach as he sought to uncover the specifics behind his subject's orientation abilities. This method was used in each of the new cities, with a similar demographic of subjects. In the winter of 1957 one of Lynch's graduate student assistants, James Wedberg, described the selection of the subjects as such:

²⁷⁸ Still though, Kepes' study of signs and communication in the cityscape can be seen as the precursor to certain postmodern architecture theory following later, which will be discussed later in Chapter Five.

²⁸⁰ "The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 19 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

Most common breakdown for each series of four: two men, two women, one of each young, one of each old...Couples were avoided due to difficulty remembering such conversations, with the exception of couples, happening along in absence of others, which fit the current sample. In attempting to prevent personal prejudice from affecting the sample, friendly- looking individuals were often bypassed, to approach a less personable-appearing, though sample-ideal, person.²⁸¹

Just as in the Copley Square studies, they selected mainly white, middle-class subjects. One general reaction was: “Negroes, often indistinguishable to interviewer, were often sources of difficulty [for the subjects].”²⁸² In many of the walks they found that a latent racism played a role in the formation of the subject’s perceptions. However, they did not revise or widen their subject pool. Although they did not see it, this skewed the results, and called its empirical validity into question. The homogeneity of their subjects impeded their attempts to find that which ran constant across all urban inhabitants’ perceptions. Overlooking this fact, they employed the following method of analysis:

In every case, first question was, “How do I get to ... ?” or, in limited instances when mode of transportation is obvious, “Can you tell me where ... is?” When obvious that the question was answered to the extent of the informant’s inclination, the next was posed: “What does it look like?” or, in all-too-apparent

²⁸¹ "The Direction-Inquiry Technique" Winter, 1957, p. 1 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁸² Ibid., 4.

cases, i.e., Commonwealth Avenue, John Hancock Building, the query, “How do I recognize it?” Last request was, “How long will it take me to get there?”²⁸³

From these questions they found that:

The method worked excellently. The three basic questions, worded in the language of the street and logically ordered, failed to draw suspicion, with minor exceptions, and presumably elicited desired comments. Many implications may be derived from the answers to the three questions, answers which can be broken down into classifications dependent upon the degree of sophistication required in further study. The technique could be effectively adopted to analyze relationship between any two urban geographical points.²⁸⁴

In addition, they questioned traffic policemen, firemen, taxi dispatchers, and “others who must develop a special knowledge of locality.”²⁸⁵ This was supplemented by a “careful subjective analysis in the field...by personnel of the project of the sense of orientation and recognition the city.”²⁸⁶ This last statement is revealing; Since their subject pool was homogenous, and they analyzed the same locations themselves, it appears as if the universality of their perceptual conclusions was impeded., This process was therefore a test of Lynch’s own preconceptions and conclusions.

²⁸³ "The Direction-Inquiry Technique" Winter, 1957, p. 1 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ "The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 19 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT)

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

After processing all this material, maps and photographs of points of interest were developed towards painting a “collective picture of the city area, to find the [physical] elements most commonly used for organization and what their optimum qualities seem to be.”²⁸⁷ This process, with results similar to those seen in the Copley Square analysis, forms the *Image of the City*. Most of the conclusions drawn in the later book stem from this study and those like it. It can be seen thus that their initial scope defined their eventual output. In part due to the limitations of their process and the narrowing of their reach, at its terminus in 1959 this study did not reveal much new information.

Perceptions and Conclusions

Lynch and Kepes’ “Summary of Accomplishments,” written in April of 1959, succinctly summarizes the final products of the project. They say that:

Some new and interesting information on the impact of the visual environment on the observer has been developed but more needs to be done...rather little work has been done directly on the question of new urban forms, except for one highway study now in preparation. However, a great deal of material, suggestions, and criteria for designers has developed from the various studies.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ "The Perceptual Form of the City: Progress Report and Plan for Future Studies" June, 1955, p. 20 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

²⁸⁸ "Summary of Accomplishments: Research Project on the Perceptual Form of the City " April, 1959, p. 2-3 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

This is the admission that their work and their findings are still in flux. They laid a foundation in approach and analysis, but did not come close to their original intentions of creating a new system of design for the urban planner. In fact, one of their conclusions was that “one of the results of the work has been the revelation of a new field of study, the analysis of the sensuous impact of the city on the individual citizen, how what he sees and hears and feels influences both his actions and his inner state.” This is what they in essence set out to explore, and they fell short of carrying the idea through. Instead, they reoriented the study into an exploration of their own preconceived theories, supplemented by investigation of public perception, not truly derived from perceptual analysis. They even acknowledged that there has generally existed, “a consistent shift in method from projects requiring substantial staff assistance to those depending more on the personal effort of the principals, and also from projects primarily descriptive or survey in nature to those which emphasize normative criteria or more abstract analysis.” This has degenerated from a purportedly scientific study into reflections and general analyses. It was at this that moment Lynch penned the first draft of *The Image of the City*.

If *The Image of the City* was born from this earlier study, then it is too something of a work in progress. Yet, Lynch states that his “series of street interviews...when analyzed...produced some original material on the visual elements that seize attention on the city street, how they are organized and how people feel about them.”²⁸⁹ The resultant text is thus a combination of new, albeit rather superficial, findings coupled with vague and generalizing statements on perception. It can be seen that theory is in no way a definitive handbook for design, but a new way of looking at urban design, and a proposal

²⁸⁹ "Summary of Accomplishments: Research Project on the Perceptual Form of the City " April, 1959, p. 4 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box1, 1951-1960, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

for future studies along its lines. Their initial idea to draw from this work towards designing new ways to redesign the city is still in flux. And the ideas laid out in the text “lead directly...into the question of the visual form of the metropolis areas, one of the more interesting of the issues stirred up by the project. If, as now seems possible, an area as large as a metropolis can in fact have an apparent visual form, then how can this form be manipulated and improved? What techniques can be invented to give it shape and continuity?” They have yet to answer how to apply their findings, since in fact their findings have been known all along. They in essence simply proved that the visual form of the city does indeed have an impact on the user, but have not answered how. This is the product of their approach. During the last years of this seemingly confused and still open-ended study, Kevin Lynch wrote *The Image of the City*. Although he held superficial positions, the text was still received favorably by many of the leading architects and urban planners, and influenced a future generation of minds in these disciplines. And so, the question must be asked, how did the book itself take shape?

Chapter Four “The Image of the City”

The Image of the City was published in 1960 under the auspices of Harvard and MIT’s Joint Center for Urban Studies, which was formed in 1959 in part from MIT’s Center for Regional Urban Study. The book was the most concrete and cohesive product of Lynch and Kepes’ “Perceptual Form of the City” study and, eventually, the most successful. It was palpably derived from Lynch’s own urban sentiments, which were fostered during his time in Florence and filtered through the intellectual direction of Kepes. This relationship catalyzed Lynch’s resulting theoretical stance. In the end, *The Image of the City* is a very personal piece, and because of this Lynch’s voice within this synthesis of collaboration will be examined. *The Image of the City* is usually read on its own, apart from Lynch’s other work and outside any knowledge of his sources or previous theories, and consequently its position as the culmination of his intellectual evolution and the role it has played in the larger context of the urban design will be revealed. *The Image of the City* will be discussed in this chapter apart from his later intellectual shifts and resulting work, almost as if it were an artifact.

From Analysis to Output

Lynch and Kepes collaboratively conducted the “Perceptual Form of the City” study (1954-59), which directly produced *The Image of the City*, yet only Lynch’s name appeared on the cover (since he was in fact the writer of the text, this seems appropriate). This was due to the division in the study into two personally directed analyses, one focused on orientation by Lynch, the other on visual communication by Kepes. From these divided directions, Lynch penned *The Image of the City*. In it, he focused a great deal on orientation and included much of his earlier preconceived conclusions on the effects of city form. Professor Gary Hack, who collaborated with Lynch on his later book *Site Planning* (ed. 3, 1984),²⁹⁰ concurs that *The Image of the City* was indeed substantially derived from his own opinions, whose origin can be found in his study of Florence conducted seven years prior. This result may be ostensibly viewed as a failure on Kepes’ part to properly contribute anything to Lynch’s book, or formalize anything of his own, since he did not immediately produce any tangible work. However, this is not the case. The two men worked closely together on all aspects of the study, including much of what went into the final draft of *The Image of the City*. Mr. Hack illuminates that:

I think that Kevin would be the first to say that his ideas really originated with Kepes. He actually said on many occasions that Kepes had been the co-author of the book, but he was onto other things and didn’t feel comfortable claiming

²⁹⁰ Kevin Lynch and Gary Hack. *Site Planning*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984.

credit for something that Kevin wrote. Not that he didn't believe in it, but that he shouldn't get credit for it.²⁹¹

There was a level of mutual respect between the two men, further seen in their letters back and forth and their statements on the quality of each other's work from an early point in their friendship. In Mr. Hack's view, Kepes was "a pretty remarkable man."²⁹² He interestingly noted during the interview that Kepes was not an architect, but an "artist...a painter," exclaiming that "I would love to have one of his pieces on my walls."²⁹³ Mr. Hack's excitement for Kepes' work parallels Lynch's own reception of the man, which stemmed from Kepes' predilection for a fervent academic study that synthesized several disciplines. Mr. Hack stated that "[Kepes] was a man who drew from this incredible range of intellectual terrain, and that's what in part what got Kevin engaged."²⁹⁴ And so, the text can be seen as directly derived from their work together, most visibly in the general observations and conclusions formed in the "Perceptual Form" study.

Lynch begins *The Image of the City* with a rather enchanting description of the city as an ever changing being, moving through time with an ebb and flow of people who shape its form. By the second sentence he hints at his distinctly personal theoretical position on city form. He writes: "Like a piece of architecture, the city is a construction in space, but one of vast scale."²⁹⁵ This likening of the city to single architectural creation highlights his desire to image the cityscape as a total form. It is immediately apparent

²⁹¹ Gary Hack, "Kevin Lynch." Telephone interview. 26 Feb. 2010.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 1.

that in this book Lynch is attempting to define a vocabulary of sorts for urban design, similar to the lexicon that architecture employs. This belief reflects Kepes' work in *Language of Vision*; they both attempt a visual education. Lynch continues by stating that we are “not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with other participants.”²⁹⁶ This sentiment parallels the much earlier musings of Baudelaire, on his concept of the “flâneur.” For Baudelaire the “flâneur” was a gentleman stroller of city streets, a man who walked with the intention of seeing and being seen on the “stage” of the city, specifically Paris.²⁹⁷ Through these two statements, Lynch positions the urban inhabitant as an active player in the formation of urban space, whose reception is affected by its complete form.

Within this realm of general urban engagement Lynch brings up his desire for the composition of a city with a complete physical identity, a notion he admits would be difficult to form in reality. He states that urban form is derived from a wide array of influences on which “only partial control can be exercised...There is no final result, only a continuous succession of phases...The art of shaping cities for sensuous enjoyment is an art quite separate from architecture or music or literature.”²⁹⁸ In this one sentence Lynch breaks from the lineage of urban thinkers before him. In history, the dialogue on urban beauty had been localized to architecture, as seen in Camillo Sitte's *The Art of Building Cities* (1889). Lynch recontextualizes this discussion by placing emphasis on the idea that the art of city form is separate from the single discipline. Instead, he felt it was now up to the city planner to synthesize many disciplines into the process of urban creation. This qualification of urban conception as a distinct discipline was inherently

²⁹⁶ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 2.

²⁹⁷ Rosemary Lloyd, *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

²⁹⁸ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 2.

new and was the result of the growing role of the urban planner as a profession. Moreover, Lynch positions his book as a response to the current compositions of urban America and a call to consider the inhabitants' formal appreciations of their respective environments. Lynch declares that "not one American city larger than a village is of consistently fine quality, although a few towns have some pleasant fragments."²⁹⁹ From this he concludes that "Americans have little idea of what it can mean to live in such an environment."³⁰⁰ And so, he frames the intentions of his book as a corrective to this stagnant position of American urban understanding; it is his attempt to form a collection of design goals while simultaneously endeavoring to push the American mind towards an awareness of the physical environment. Lynch implores for the development of a heightened consciousness through ratified urban design, believing that his personally directed examination of orientation in the "Perceptual Form" holds practical implications.

All of these positions are collected and outlined as catalysts towards his book's overarching intent. He states: "this book will consider the visual quality of the American city by studying the mental image of the city which is held by its citizens."³⁰¹ Lynch reveals for the first time in the text the truly unique quality of his approach: it is a study of the inhabitant's mental construction of the city, the continuance of the "Perceptual Form" study. Though, following this brief he reveals its shallow status. Stating: "As will quickly become apparent to the reader, this is a preliminary exploration, a first word not a last word, an attempt to capture ideas and to suggest how they might be developed and

²⁹⁹ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 2.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

tested.”³⁰² This introductory statement reveals that Lynch and Kepes’ “Perceptual Form” study did not uncover definitive conclusions on urban perception. Although that was their original intent, this status was indeed prophesied some time into their analysis, since they realized the breadth of information needed to truly answer these questions. It must also be noted that the first draft of this book was penned in 1958, two years before the final draft was published, one year before their grant’s conclusion; its general framework and the basic conclusions are thus derived from an incomplete venture.

Lynch makes clear *The Image of the City*’s status as a theoretical exploration in urban design. He notes that “[the book’s] tone will be speculative and perhaps a little irresponsible: at once tentative and presumptuous.”³⁰³ This is a plain attempt to make sure the reader takes his words with some hesitancy and does not jump to conclusions too quickly. The book is presented as an incomplete foray into an as-yet-unexplored topic, and so it is Lynch’s intention that it act as a catalyst for further study and possibly as an initial guide for its future processes, not as a definitive textbook of design principles. And so the book begins.

One of Lynch’s key urban concerns in this larger discussion of urban image creation is a focus on the user’s orientation. He feels that orientation is key to urban enjoyment, especially in the new and confused organization of American urban areas. The concern with orientation arose in his Florence studies, as it was a locale with which Lynch was not familiar. He walked the streets with a novice awareness of the city’s composition and little command of the Italian language. He even expressed this shortcoming, noting that he wished he could do more to engage the city’s inhabitants. It can then be posited that this removal from a familiar environment heightened his

³⁰² Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 3.

³⁰³ Ibid.

concern for finding his way around an urban area, and directly informed his notion that this inability needed to be addressed. Since he was studying Florence's physical character, these concerns were thus meshed. With *The Image of the City*, Lynch sought to understand how the urban form dictated movement. In this sense his concerns parallel Back in the States, this position was then coupled with Kepes' influence; his direction focused on the general methods of perception, with orientation as a specific framework for this larger concern. In a talk given in 1958 the same year he penned the first draft of *The Image of the City*, Lynch says: "When Professor Kepes and I began to investigate the simple problem of finding one's way in a city, we discovered that the subject broadened and deepened steadily, until we found that we were dealing with a fundamental quality of the urban esthetic."³⁰⁴ Lynch concedes that they began with his concerns, which evolved through Kepes' influence. The introduction to *The Image of the City* demonstrates this intellectual progression:

Structuring and indentifying the environment is a vital ability among all mobile animals. Many kinds of cues are used...These techniques of orientation...are described and their importance underscored in an extensive literature. Psychologists have also studied this ability in man, although rather sketchily or under limited laboratory conditions.³⁰⁵

From this he concludes that "despite few remaining puzzles, it now seems unlikely that there is any mystic "instinct" of way finding. Rather, there is a consistent use and

³⁰⁴ Kevin Lynch, "Urban Design," *Planning*. Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1958. (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

³⁰⁵ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 3.

organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment.”³⁰⁶ Therefore, it is his intention to explore these on the urban scale, as seen in the work of the “Perceptual Form” study. With this statement Kepes’ of influence the growth of Lynch’s care for this subject can be adequately understood. It stems from the specific studies he cites as support of this claim, some of which were given to him by Kepes. With this work of other disciplines on orientation he extrapolated a recurring theme: its importance. This served as justification for his own position and resulted in his application of its importance to the underexplored terrain of urban space.

In orientation, these scientific and anthropologic studies are based mainly in organic and natural landscapes, and their framework certainly influenced his conclusions. Lynch acknowledged this when he said that “this [mental] organization [of space, for orientation,] is fundamental to the efficiency and to the very survival of free moving life.”³⁰⁷ From this organization Lynch extrapolates this notion and concludes that “the very word “lost” in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster.”³⁰⁸ In the same talk, Lynch elaborates this point by stating that, “any self propelled animal, including man, must be oriented to stay alive, to be able to find his food, his mate or his shelter. Every act, motion, must be located precisely with reference to his environment. To be able to talk to you at all today, I had to be able to find the door of this room.”³⁰⁹ This juxtaposition makes clear the differing levels of importance orientation has in the wild, such as when locating food and shelter, when locating one’s market or house, or from orientation in the urban environment. This is a hyperbolic statement when tailored to the urban environment.

³⁰⁶ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 3.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁰⁹ Lynch, "Urban Design." (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

The grafting of these conclusions onto a new environment, urban space, which is decidedly safer and more controlled, is a tenuous shift. This is also representative of Kepes' larger influence, as he encouraged the idea that organized images could promote well being in the mind of the viewer, a somewhat hyperbolic and paranoid sentiment. Since the involved descriptions of these citations are tucked away in Appendix B at the end of the book, the reader isn't presented with all the facts in the introduction. In this opening the reader is thus led to believe that the many other scientific texts on the topic of orientation corroborate its importance.

However, this can also be seen as one of the book successes, since Lynch's very strong words and defined stance lure the reader into an excited state. His passion for the topic does rub off on the reader. Given the book's unique scope at the moment of publication, his words were made all the more enticing. The text related to the growing urban areas of America, and their very confused physical states. He cites this specifically in the same lecture: "The huge cities we live in often display the very antithesis of imageability: they are gray, sprawling, incoherent."³¹⁰ He hit the right button. Sigfried Giedion,³¹¹ one of the most prominent voices in the architecture world at that time, stated just this case in the pamphlet introduction accompanying a gallery exhibit curated by Gyorgy Kepes in 1947 on painting's representation of the city through major styles: "Today cities have swollen in number and size as in no other period...Piled up masses of men and houses, without inner cohesion, without scale, without grace, without dignity!

³¹⁰ Lynch, "Urban Design." (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

³¹¹ Sigfried Giedion, who wrote an introduction to Kepes' *Language of Vision*, is most well known for his book *Space, Time and Architecture: the Growth of a New Tradition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2003. This text considered the changing role of the modern movement in architecture, the introductory sentence to the 1961 edition tellingly stated: "At the moment a certain confusion exists in contemporary architecture, as in painting; a kind of pause, even a kind of exhaustion" (xxxiii).

Nerve wreckers.”³¹² Lynch’s position was a facet of a larger concern shared with many that read the book in its first years of publication, as it was initially distributed and discussed in the circles of architects and planners.

Following this discussion Lynch weaves the focus on orientation into the larger position of the book. He conflates orientation with general mental image creation of the urban environment and its role in the construction of a city’s identity in the minds of the user. The supporting point for orientation is where his discussion is the strongest. He states: “We found that it is crucial that our visual environment be an imageable one, that is, that it be so shaped that with our human senses we can form a clear mental image of it, an image which is both vivid and coherent, whose parts are both easily recognized and also well knit together.”³¹³ He positions that a clear mental image of the city, the ability to understand it as a complete whole, is influenced by the ability to move through it while comprehending each part distinctly and their interrelationships. His application of orientation to image creation is the first time in urban analysis where the city is analyzed in time and space at the level of the everyday user. The book’s scope can be illustrated as the attempt to understand how the user simultaneously engages the city functionally and receives it aesthetically, and how these experiences correlate. As has been stated throughout this essay, Lynch’s time previous to the “Perceptual Form” study had great influence on this major breakthrough. The derivation of this recurring concern can be witnessed in a statement from his lecture on the topic in 1958. Lynch said:

³¹² “The Painter in the City,” pamphlet (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC)

³¹³ Lynch, “Urban Design.” (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

A sensuously vivid and visually organized world, such as we might experience in Florence, or along the Chicago lakefront, does a great deal more than simply allow us to find our immediate destination. It gives us a sense of security and balance; provides us with a frame of reference; gives us the stuff of which community symbols are made; deepens and intensifies every experience we undergo in the setting.³¹⁴

This quote harkens back to Lynch's time in Florence as well as to his previously cited musings on the Chicago lakefront, written in high school. His statement encapsulates the framework of the book perfectly, and it can be comfortably stated that Lynch indeed had these cares long before he formalized them in *The Image of the City*: he simply needed an outlet (the Rockefeller grant) and a partner (Gyorgy Kepes) to verify his own sentiments and formalize them into a publishable package.

However, Lynch does not simply state these concerns of environmental awareness in the book, but places them back into their context. He states that cities in their present state are incomprehensible, and therefore need to be redesigned for human use. He attempts to use his findings in the "Perceptual Form" study to support this claim. Along these lines then, the text states processes of the study and formalizes their musings on perception into a discussion of specific urban characteristics of Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles. Through describing the subjects' most agreed upon reactions to the cities, the general findings are formed into a basic idea of how one builds the image of the city. Lynch highlights that this is a two way process, reflecting a cybernetic jargon, adding that it is done in three specific categories of understanding:

³¹⁴ Lynch, "Urban Design." (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

“identity,” “structure,” and “meaning.”³¹⁵ The first two encapsulate the mental process of discerning a given object as its own entity and of developing an understanding of its relationship to the surrounding environment. These are the categories Lynch and Kepes have studied, foregoing “meaning,” as it varies too greatly from individual to individual. Yet again Lynch concedes that their scope was rather basic, their pool of subjects too similar, and that as a result the study constituted only a superficial understanding of perception.

In this small pool of subjects, the largest group reaching only twenty-eight people, some clear similarities arise, and these similarities inform the conclusions that Lynch draws, however broad they are. After discussing certain responses to Boston he states that especially with the older areas of Back Bay and Beacon Hill, where the architecture is rather cohesively designed and there is a good amount of graded spatial variation, the city is “a city of distinctive districts.”³¹⁶ He continues on by saying that in most subjects’ minds “place is never in question.”³¹⁷ He considers this a positive attribute. However, he also notices that “this thematic vividness is typically associated with formlessness or confusing arrangement [due to] the path systems [being] generally confused.”³¹⁸ In these observations certain leanings become clear. For example, Lynch states that “the regular Back Bay grid, a banal characteristic in most American cities, takes on a special quality in Boston by virtue of its contrast with the remainder of the pattern.”³¹⁹ This reflection is clearly parallel to his appreciation for themes of gradation, rhythm, and contrast. This point in the book shows an evolution from just two years

³¹⁵ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 8.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.* 22.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

prior, when he stated in the talk of 1958 that, “there are other important esthetic qualities in the cityscape: stimulus and rhythm, meaning, or delight. But imageability is one of these basic qualities, and particularly useful, I think, in the preparation of the ‘design,’ or visual plan.”³²⁰ After more study Lynch and Kepes found that these themes of urban sensuous experience were all intertwined, all correlated. “Rhythm,” Lynch states, can indeed be controlled by the physical environment, and it is one of the chief aspects of spatial planning. However, in order to localize the study, so that some design output could be made in the future, Lynch and his co-investigators concentrated this theme on solely the physical environment, apart from considering the kinetic stimuli of people or automobiles. Moreover, this classification of rhythm in a purely physical sense properly elucidates his dismissal of “meaning” for the scope of the study.

In the discussion on physical character Lynch becomes more critical and attempts to formalize the findings into categories; he systematically attempts to tease out concrete themes of perceptual reaction. He states that they have very tentatively come to define the basic tenets that a person uses to identify and structure the physical urban fabric. These findings become the main focus of the rest of the book.

Lynch categorizes the different types of urban form that enable mental image creation into five groups. They are the “Path,” “Edge,” “District,” “Node,” and “Landmark.”³²¹ He begins with the Path, which for him is the connective link between locations and usually takes the form of a street. Essentially, it is a physically accessible path between two points. From their findings he states that the successful qualities of these links lie in the concentration of visible uses along its side, i.e. shopping venues or storefronts, and gradation or variations in its width. The clusters of physically that define

³²⁰ Lynch, "Urban Design." (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

³²¹ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 46-91.

useable street-fronts, stores, tend to heighten the user's identification of the path. The gradation of the path from a standard width of a residential street to an extreme of the four lane avenue also heightens the user's appreciation of the path. Lynch and Kepes found that most people remember and comment on wider streets; however, their reactions were affected by the use of the street and its relationship to the surrounding architecture. If the scales of the two were in proportion then the user would enjoy the path, but if not they would have the opposite reaction. Furthermore he notes that abrupt directional shifts and limits in the scale of the street can be used to increase their mental image. These are very obvious realizations, yet they serve to support his main idea that urban quality is defined by visual rhythm and spatial contrast.

The next category is that of "the edge," which is defined as the physical presence of linear division between areas, or boundaries between useable and closed off space. One example he cites is the waterfront, which is a most basic edge. Others can be found in the divisions between the architectural representations of functionality, as in the distinction between factory and residential buildings. These edges could just as easily be called seams, a term Jane Jacobs used, since Lynch defines them as also having the ability to connect disparate areas.³²² This category is somewhat physically undefined, save for the definition of water in urban space as a physical boundary. Lynch's edge classification leaves room open for an element to be simultaneously defined within a number of his categories, including the "node," which will be outlined next. This shows how his categories are in fact characterized not only by their physical compositions but also by their human uses. In his scope these factors are not quite discussed. However, if the study was to truly understand the perception and image-making abilities of urban

³²² As will be discussed in Chapter Five, there are several parallels between *The Image of the City* and Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage, 1992.

residents, then these factors must be counted at the same time. This shows the weakness of their scope as well as the tenuity of their observations. Nonetheless, their work was still a preliminary foray into the topic, and in the book Lynch simply sought to outline a framework for future studies and provide an elaboration of his study's basic findings for the future evolution of other planners and thinkers.

The next category is the “district,” which are large areas the user “can mentally go inside of, and which have some common [physical] character.”³²³ He notes that in many of the participants found Boston to be a confusing city overall: they did, however, note that it had many distinct areas, which helped in their orientation and mental imaging of the city. Lynch further remarks that “the physical characteristics that determine districts are thematic continuities which may consist of an endless variation of components: texture, space, form, detail, symbol, building type, use, activity, inhabitants, degree of maintenance, topography.”³²⁴ He specifies that the continuity or varying of architectural facades adds to the mental processing of a district, noting as well that “social connotations are quite significant in building regions [mentally].”³²⁵ Within these qualities he then discusses certain positive and negative compositions of areas, outlining the identity of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles where the Japanese signage informs the user of the district. He also notes how some districts can have certain focal points, or nodes, whose associations radiate out, defining the surroundings through its presence. This is another overlap in the categories, as a given node can define the area it lies within. He states that through these cases, “[in which] one proceeds within [certain] limits, [e.g. concentrated architectural homogeneity, like signage, concentration of function] one is in

³²³ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 66.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

a recognizable area.”³²⁶ Lynch concludes that “the contrast and proximity of each area moreover heightens the thematic strength of each.” Clearly themes of rhythm, contrast, and stimuli are present in this definition of the “district.” This can also be seen in the description of the “node.”

Lynch defines the node as “the strategic foci into which the observer can enter, typically either junctions of paths, or concentrations of some characteristic.”³²⁷ These typically range from highly trafficked intersections or subway stations where large numbers of people converge in movement; they are areas of “thematic concentration.” Again, this category is not wholly architecturally defined, and Lynch recognizes that the physical does not have great influence on the memory of these sites. Still, he calls out certain physical elements that have been shown to at least heighten the image forming of the area. These include Piazza San Marco in Venice, which is clearly spatially separated from the city but still woven into its central fabric

Lynch next discusses the “landmark,” and draws from many of his observations in Florence to define his term. He classifies the landmark as a physical form visually defined by contrast to its background and prominence within its surrounding. Furthermore, he writes that landmarks can exist on the smaller scale: one example would be a bright painted door that functions as a landmark for the people who live on that street. These comments are almost exactly the same as the discussion of the landmark in his “City Satisfaction” essay of 1952.

These five elements, he concludes, are “simply the raw material of the environmental image at the city scale. They must be patterned together to provide a

³²⁶ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 68

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

satisfying form.”³²⁸ He then outlines certain groupings of these elements that would produce a vivid city image. From these findings he states that “most observers seem to group their elements in to intermediate organizations, which might be called complexes. The observer senses the complex as a whole whose parts are interdependent and are relatively fixed in relation to each other.”³²⁹ This statement is indeed not a truthful conclusion on certain formal arrangements of these groupings. In fact, he explicitly states that “all these elements operate together, in a context. It would be interesting to study the characteristics of various pairings, landmark-district, node-path. Eventually, one should try to go beyond such pairings to consider total patterns.”³³⁰ This seems to have directly influenced several planners and architects in his wake, who designed these groups as formal elements to be rearranged in urban plans, rather than a prescription for design. However, it is very clear that this statement is a proposition for further study on the topic. Lynch goes onto say that: “Our preoccupation here with parts rather than wholes is a necessary feature of an investigation in a primitive stage. After successful differentiation and understanding of parts, a study can move on to consideration of a total system.”³³¹ His language is clearly tentative: he later says that “there were indications,” instead of using the more assertive phrase “we found.”³³²

The only statement of Lynch’s that comes close to a defined conclusion in the entire book is: “one might infer from this that the images of greatest value are those which most closely approach a strong total field: dense, rigid, and vivid; which make use of all of the element types and form characteristics without narrow concentration; and

³²⁸ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 83.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

³³² *Ibid.*

which can be put together hierarchically or continuously, as occasion demands.”³³³ This is a mutable stance, vague and seemingly parallel to his own personally derived city satisfactions. The great importance of Lynch’s book does not lie in these moments of categorization and analysis, they served the purpose of the text’s production, and in a sense seem to validate his positions for a larger audience. The book’s theories are presented as derived from a very clearly outlined scientific study, while still leaving much room to infer: Thus the book generated more questions, which often aligned it with the same themes of his own ponderings. It is more a call to evaluate further and to truly consider the individual’s perceptual response to the urban physical environment.

These findings clearly originated in Lynch and Kepes’ attempt to uncover the types of themes of perception that run constant across all people, putting to use the system of interviews of street walks and reflective discussions, as well as user drawn memory maps. These maps attempt to locate certain city elements and areas in plan. Yet, these are supplemented by a subjective analysis of the same area done by a trained observer. The coupling of these two systems is seemingly more comprehensive, but it is possible that in the more focused analysis the conclusions rendered are less pure. In this system, the approach to understanding the user’s true perceptual method is framed through their subjective catalog of the environment. It seems as though this would promote a heightened importance given to similarly defined perceived characteristics, further bolstered through the subjective analysis. Additionally, even though it is conceded in the study and the book, the subject is taken out of their elemental state in urban engagement, and pointed towards an abstract realization of how they move. As outlined previously, Lynch stated that this heightening of the perceptual awareness was

³³³ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 86.

positive, in that it provided a good basis of understanding the basics of urban perception. However, it duly begs the question that if these responses are indeed so very superficial and unnatural, then isn't the process simply a system of self-validation? To a large extent, it is. That is not to say the findings are wrong: they are just very basic, which Lynch acknowledges. Given the status and presentation of his findings, which have been similar through several iterations and have come out unvaried, unfiltered in this final publication, the importance of the book must be found somewhere else. The lasting nature of its impact must be in its overall approach and the presentation of his argument.

The Image of the City was met with immediate praise from many, not necessarily for its preliminary conclusions but for its scope, direction, topic, and exhaustively passionate call for beauty and for the people while simultaneously being so different than the "City Beautiful" movement. In this sense the book is not so much the definition of a paradigm shift in the planning discourse, but a paradigm shift in the conception of the planner, and a product of a growing concern. Let us now look at the composition of the text and further explore the dissemination of the argument.

The Image of "The Image"

As has previously been discussed, *The Image of the City* does not attempt to define a rigid structure of new urban planning theory, but rather strives to identify a clear trajectory of a new direction within discipline. It attempted to refocus the discipline into a discussion of perceived urban form. It posed questions, supported by studies, and allowed that there was much ground that was necessary cover. If any conclusions can be drawn from the text, these are those conclusions. The book proved that the physical

character of a city was indeed important by showing the ways in which the user was perceptually affected by it. It gave voice to the feelings of the everyday person, a new forum or a pulpit, from which they could express their sentiments on their environment. However, only in passing did the book address the importance the mental “meaning” of the urban fabric for the user. Once Lynch and Kepes allocated their resources to studying residents’ perception of the physical, they had not the time nor the money to further pursue such things in their study. Even with this omission, the book still resonated with professionals, who increasingly shared Lynch’s sentiments on the importance of city form; the book touched a universal nerve. Within this focus Lynch’s engagement of the urban inhabitant was unique and built upon these aesthetic cares, revealing that design had an elemental affect on the common man’s enjoyment of the city. This can be accredited to the scope of the argument, yet the book’s graphic design played a central role in its reception, as it was an extremely accessible visual dissemination of his unique approach and a precise physical representation of his theory.

Unlike many urban planning texts at that time, *The Image of the City* looks flexible, light, and open. It is not visually domineering; it is not a tome. The book is almost pamphlet sized (it reaches only 193 pages) and can easily be placed in a coat pocket. The cover is bright blue and contains a hand drawn sketch of an imagined city area. This urban image, illustrated by Lynch, resembles some of the memory drawings executed by his subjects. It is seemingly child-like, two dimensional, and without proper use of perspective: it registers as friendly. Above this drawing the title is printed in black. It is justified to the top right and runs down the book’s side almost exactly to its middle. This positioning does not command a singular focus, yet separates the cover in half, between the white drawing and blue space that includes the title and his name. This split

composition is complicated as one element of the drawing, a white star, rests in this space controlled by the vertically structured title. This serves to connect the two planes of title and drawing, forming a cohesive whole. The cover's delicately illustrated city image represents Lynch's focus on "the image" of the common man. With Lynch's name italicized towards the top left, almost ancillary to the total composition, the cover design imparts his divergently humanistic method of urban study and responds to an authoritative and ego-driven approach.

However much the design of the book specifically reflects its theoretical contents, it fits into the larger themes in book design of the period. In an interview with David Schorr, a professor of graphic design at Wesleyan University, it was noted that at this time much of high book design used "a post Paul Klee" method of illustration. Paul Klee (1879-1940), a Swiss German artist who taught at the Bauhaus and worked alongside Wassily Kandinsky, employed a very personal style of fine lines, playful color, and seemingly child-like technique. This method was assimilated by designers working in post World War II America "[bringing] the self-expressive sensibilities of the modern artist to advertising and graphic design."³³⁴ In this way, the designers of this era "employed symbols and techniques...often derived from modernist painting and sculpture...strategies such as...childlike drawing...from artists including Klee."³³⁵ This derivation of Klee's style is clear on the cover of *The Image of the City*, however there is no accessible information regarding who employed this method. Similarly, although the archives of Lynch's work do not include any documentation of his work with the MIT Press on the book's design, they do include many of his study subject's drawings, which

³³⁴ Mildred S. Friedman, Joseph Giovannini, and Steven Heller. *Graphic Design in America: a Visual Language History*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1989. 50.

³³⁵ Ibid.

are comparable to the cover illustration. The fact that there is no citation for the cover illustration leads to the conclusion that it was Lynch's own, as derived from his perceptual analyses. It can therefore be inferred that Lynch himself had a good deal of control over the cover design.

This creative control makes sense given the direct link between the book's theory and design. Paul Rand, one of the most successful, famous, and influential graphic designers of this time, stated in his seminal book *Thoughts on Design* (1947), that the designer "unifies, simplifies, [and] eliminates superfluities. He symbolizes...abstracts from his material by association and analogy."³³⁶ The cover does just this by employing a representational technique derived from Klee that is symbolic of the book's spirit and directly relevant to its theoretical content. Schorr said that in this assimilation "you get [the] little star, which looks like it migrated from *The Little Prince*, to this book about design. So you get this funny image of the city, that probably doesn't fit very well to our twentieth century eyes."³³⁷ Although it may not coincide with our current perception of the urban environment, it represented Lynch's conviction that analysis of the common man's perception could help shape a more friendly and humane environment. This marriage of style and content is further seen in the layout and presentation inside the book.

In the first few pages Lynch includes a selection of randomly placed hand-drawn graphic representations of his thematic urban characteristics, such as movement. These small and subtle drawings are set in a margin next to the text, which is offset from the edge about one inch. These images become increasingly related to the text they

³³⁶ Paul Rand, *Thoughts on Design*, New York: Van Nostrand, 1972 as quoted in Heller, *Graphic Design in America: a Visual Language History*. 50.

³³⁷ David Schorr, "The Image," Interview: March 23, 2010. The book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (San Diego: Harcourt, 2000), employs similarly hand drawn stars on its cover.

accompany; they evolve from embellishments to correlated graphic explanations. This is a very specific visual language, and seemingly bespoke for the book. However, this layout of the text is not unique: it is, just as the cover, representative of larger themes in book design at that time.

Schorr further noted that *The Image of the City* rose out of an “odd period before book design had found itself...The high book design of the [late 1950s] was dominated by the Yale style, which was the Swiss heritage of Bauhaus translated to America when, most importantly, Joseph Albers came to Yale.”³³⁸ He notes that although *The Image of the City* was generated at MIT, its hallmarks reveal its graphic design precedents in the Yale style described below:

It is set in Garamond, which was the favored Yale typeface. It develops the system, which had just started a little before in Europe, of wide outside margins, which really form a half column. [These] are used for titling, captioning, and small illustrations. This would take big step forward in book design, especially architecture and museum book design, with three columns, rather than a wide column and a sort of half column.³³⁹

This “Yale” technique of design would be further developed by Muriel Cooper in her work as the head designer for the MIT Press in the mid 1960s through the 1970s. In 1964 she butted heads with Lynch over the design of his *The View From the Road* (1964), in which she used a tweaked “Yale” approach. Following this rift, she similarly designed *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972), which was in part researched at Yale. In an interview

³³⁸ David Schorr, “The Image,” Interview: March 23, 2010.

³³⁹ Ibid.

with Steven Heller, the Co-Chair of the School of Visual Art's "Designer as Author" MFA program and author of countless books on graphic design, he noted that this was "the key book in the late [twentieth] century. The original hardcover version was a marriage of text and image that, I believe, set a standard for architectural books. [This work of] Muriel Cooper was an important paradigm."³⁴⁰ Although it did set a certain standard against which other architecture books were compared, Michael Golec finds in his essay "Format and Layout in *Learning From Las Vegas*" (2009), that, "Cooper's design contrivances were not new. Indeed, the supreme modernist aspiration to immediacy through an adroit combination of image and text can be traced to Lazlo Moholy-Nagy *Bauhaus Bucher* series... [Thus, the design of *Learning From Las Vegas* can be accredited to] the domineering presence of preeminent practitioners like Paul Rand,... [as] Yale had long been the bastion of modernist graphic design."³⁴¹ Indeed, it can be posited that *The Image of the City* was one of the first architecture or urban studies books to employ this style, as it came years before *Learning From Las Vegas*. The structured modernist influence of "immediacy" and control can be in part accredited to Kepes' influence, as his successful book *Language of Vision* (1944) employed a similar style.

The layout of *The Image of the City* was new for its discipline, though it was not a unique format, but rather the use of a preconceived style that fit the book well. Since it was a model that worked, after publication it seems as though the style caught on in books of similar scopes. This is seen in Lawrence Halprin's *Cities*, published in 1963. Halprin's book conveys a comparable urban aesthetic and similar care for urban-experiential concerns as seen in *The Image of the City*. Their layouts and related content reveal that even this early, the themes of urban study book design had been set,

³⁴⁰ Steven Heller, "The Image," Interview: March 27, 2010.

³⁴¹ Michael J. Golec, *Relearning from Las Vegas*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009. 37.

especially for those that promoted a humanistic approach. The subtle layout, which incorporated room for small descriptive illustrations, was the perfect format for their topic. *The Image of the City's* notebook composition reinforces the theory within. It is playful but precise, personal and passionate. Lynch's spirit is clearly seen in its physicality, his voice is translated to the total object.

Chapter Five **Receptions, Reactions, Results**

The Image of the City was published in 1960 and it immediately garnered an unusual amount of attention for an urban planning book. In looking back on moment of the book's publication the conclusion is usually that the response was due to the quality of its content and the fresh take on design it imparted. However, its immediate reception was the result of a larger cultural consciousness and some specific actions of Rockefeller Foundation. Even before its first printing the Foundation had been discussing the work of Lynch's and Kepes' "Perceptual Form of the City" study with a large group of clients reaching far in the planning and architecture world, as their grants assisted many thinkers across the disciplines. In looking at the Foundation's archives of this correspondence, it becomes apparent that they had been in constant discussion about their work throughout its five years, 1954-59. This support laid the foundation for the book's following reception, which propelled the theory into several evolutions and advanced the formation of a new discipline.

Foundations Laid

The Rockefeller Foundation bounced Lynch and Kepes' ideas off of their base of clients, notifying them of the study and asking for their opinions. This was in part to ensure that the Foundation was indeed funding a unique venture, and also to help the men with their work, trying to find new information, sources and collaborators for them to use. Many of these discussions resulted in recommendations for Lynch and Kepes to look at certain texts; it seems most people had their own two cents to offer the men. In the early days of the study, many were skeptical of their approach, deeming it simultaneously too broad and specific. Once Lynch and Kepes defined their final analytic stance a few years into the study, most of these critical voices faded into agreement that their work was well directed. Each contact seemed interested in their vein of study, finding it a concern perfectly in tune to the current state of American cities. Lynch and Kepes also gave many lectures on their topic, further spreading the conversation about their focus. In all of these discussions it was widely agreed that their topic was necessary and their approach unique.

Most in this discourse were aware when the manuscript of *The Image of the City* was finished. The Foundation did not need to directly inform everyone that their study had reached its terminus and that there was a tangible product available to be read, since many were now conscious of their work. An increased level of anticipation built in the long five years it took to complete the research due to the expense of the grant, which totaled \$85,000 and was one of the largest provided by the Humanities division of the Rockefeller Foundation at that time. Since *The Image of the City* was the first and most

cohesive product of their study, it was met with much discussion. At first some were disappointed that this costly grant and involved study had only produced a small book. Many people anticipated a larger, more comprehensive work. However, once the contents of the text were digested, many critics revised their initial reactions. In 1961, just a year after its publication, Joseph R. Passonneau, a professor at a Washington University in St. Louis, sent a letter to Gregory Gilpatric, one of the Rockefeller Foundation's administrators, stating:

When you were at Wash U you asked me about Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City*. I remember that I expressed some reservations about the book. I have recently had the occasion to use it a reference for some work of my own. I have re-read it several times and each time I read it, I find more provocative. This note is a vigorous reversal of my original position.³⁴²

The general responses to the book were along these exact lines, as even in its small package the book provided much new insight.

Some of the more topical responses to the book can be found in the direct correspondence between the Rockefeller Foundation and its contacts. One such communication was between the urban sociologist, activist, and writer Jane Jacobs, and Charles B. Fahs, the director of the Humanities division of the Rockefeller Foundation. In the years of the "Perceptual Form" study, Jane Jacobs had been working on her own study, also supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. She published the result, *The Death*

³⁴² Letter from Joseph R. Passonneau to C. Gilpatric, October 30th, 1961 (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter referred to as RAC), Sleepy Hollow, New York.)

and Life of Great American Cities, in 1961. This was her decisive work, her most popular and the most regularly printed to this day. In the text she outlines similar concerns as seen in *The Image of the City*, citing the growth in scale and oppressive quality of American urban development in those years, disparaging the public projects symbolized by Le Corbusier's visions, and defending a more human approach to urban design. She championed a return to designing at the small scale, noting that the most vibrant urban neighborhoods were those with fervent street life. In the introduction she writes: "I shall be writing about how cities work in real life, because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote social and economic vitality in cities, and what practices and principles will deaden these attributes."³⁴³

Analogous to Lynch, Jacobs championed the common man's appreciations as the basis for design. In fact, her conclusions about the urban fabric are very similar to Lynch's, a parallel she readily admits in her conversation with Mr. Fahs. Jacobs said:

I've just read Kevin Lynch's book, *The Image of the City* and enjoyed and admired it very much. I was fascinated to discover that the five elements of city design he has singled out, paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, are the same ones I have figured out as basic for expressing the functional (social and economic) aspects of city order although I gave been calling them streets, borders, districts, centers of activity and focal points. One of the ideas I had arrived at about borders I was sure was right from a function point of view, but I was rather wondering what it would mean esthetically. He has arrived at the very same idea, as being right from an esthetic and orientation point of view. In so many

³⁴³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage, 1992. 4

instances we have gotten to the same place by following entirely different lines of reasoning. However, since we are dealing with the same subject, cities and the way they are used, valid conclusions ought to be the same, even though approached from different directions. For this reason his book is reassuring to me, and I have learned from it too.³⁴⁴

As Michael Nauman states in his essay “Planning, Governing, and The Image of the City”, she “[urged] that we take another look at how cities really work and how people live in them.”³⁴⁵ Nauman finds that both Jacobs’ and Lynch’s work was situated in a burgeoning urban theory that “[called] to expand choices by bringing in more voices...They advocated that decision makers include underrepresented interests that were often shut out the poor and other marginalized groups.”³⁴⁶ Her text, like Lynch’s, attempted to upend the planning process. However, the approach of her study and the sources of her conclusions diverge greatly from Lynch’s.

In contrast to Lynch’s work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* lay more in the themes of “critical pedagogy, and social organizing manifestoes.”³⁴⁷ It did not concentrate as much on the aesthetics of the urban landscape. It was more of a sociological reflection, an anthropological discussion of urban enjoyment, and an observation of architecture’s influence on neighborhoods. Lynch’s work in studying the urban fabric through the inhabitant’s eyes was a new method, while Jacobs’s was more

³⁴⁴ Letter from Jane Jacobs to C. Gilpatric, September 30th, 1960 (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter referred to as RAC), Sleepy Hollow, New York.)

³⁴⁵ Michael Nauman, "Planning, Governing, and the Image of the City." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 18.1 (1998): 62.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

beholden to entrenched processes already in place. Her work was made up of her-own findings stated passionately as fact.

This work of Jane Jacobs, as well as that of several other later theorists, paved the way for public participation in planning to take hold. Stemming from their work, public involvement in planning became visible during 1970s. Ensuing projects reflected this, most notably in the landscape architect Lawrence Halprin's urban visions. Sympathetic urban planning, focused to a smaller scale, began to take hold. This new conception of the planning process was moderately institutionalized at the Federal level in the United States by the 1980s. By then public participation was mandated in their divisions of planning guidelines and restrictions such as environmental impact statements, coastal impact studies, transportation planning, and habitat conservation planning. At the city government level, historic preservation took hold in great part due to Jane Jacobs. She spearheaded the formation of the Greenwich Village Historic Preservation Society. By 1967 it was a municipally recognized group and her battles for its formation with "master planner" Robert Moses are now fabled in history. In contrast, *The Image of the City* re-oriented the intention and vision of the planner through Lynch's revelation that design could be influenced at the most basic level by the perceptions of the inhabitant. In this way, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* influenced a shift in the process of planning, while *The Image of the City* influenced a shift in planner's process. They were the symbols of a paradigm shifts in different realms of American urban planning.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1996. "Paradigm shift" was a term coined by Thomas Kuhn, in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, postdating Lynch's work. He defines this term as when the basic assumptions governing ruling theory of science change, forcing a new approach to most elemental way in which the discipline operates. Although he defines this term as solely applicable to science, and specifically not the humanities, it can still be

This comparison is not intended to champion one book over the other, but rather to show how their concerns were widespread, and furthermore, how in this discussion of urban design reform Lynch's approach was unique. These two works lived divergent afterlives. Due to several reasons, although the planning landscape was indeed changing along the lines they promoted, Lynch's involved system of urban study was somewhat left by the wayside.

Lynch's open-ended text and the definitive stance of directing design from the user's point of view was a revelation for most planners at that time. That there was something to be learned from the common man's perception was not a concept readily employed in planning or architecture. In fact, this position went against the general approach of most designers. For a long time the profession was beholden to the perception that the architect's vision could assuage any problem. It was widely assumed, almost a given, that the correct approach to design was through a professional's analysis and solitary reflection. *The Image of the City* upended that idea. For the first time, the idea that the people being designed for could in fact dictate the scope of the process was presented. This was the main contribution of the book to the discourse of architecture and planning. This is this quality of *The Image of the City* that makes it the symbol and the catalyst for the paradigm shift in planning that was to follow. Donald Appleyard outlines the book's impact in his 1976 appraisal "The Major Works of Kevin Lynch." He writes:

applied to Lynch's work, since *The Image of the City* transformed the foundational ways in designers approach city planning.

Lynch's book offered a totally fresh and remarkably developed analysis of how people view cities. It was apparent to most reviewers that this was a seminal book, which would change the way we would all look at cities. In Kuhn's sense, it merited the title of a new paradigm, an exemplar, not only of new concepts, but of new methods of understanding and planning the city.³⁴⁹

Appleyard further states that the idea behind the parallel to Jacob's method of urban writing through additional comparisons. He outlines that two other urban theorists, Gordon Cullen and Steen Rasmussen,³⁵⁰ "had sketched and written eloquently of the urban landscape, but these were personal views of the authors as professional architects and planners. Asking ordinary people what they perceived and felt about their cities was unheard of in the design fields at the time and still rather rare in planning."³⁵¹ These comparisons support the opinion that Lynch's book was the catalyst for a larger shift. It was not a manifesto of urban concerns like Jacob's *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, but a subtle and pointed analysis of the urban condition through the eyes of its inhabitants.

Even though Lynch's book was almost immediately regarded within academia as an influential work and a distinct break from old trends, those that did draw from it

³⁴⁹ Donald Appleyard, "The Major Published Works of Kevin Lynch: An Appraisal." *The Town Planning Review* Oct. 49.4 (1978): 551.

³⁵⁰ Thomas Gordon Cullen was a major English urban planning figure, art editor of the *Architectural Review* during the 1950s, a publication that sought to upend the modernist tradition in planning in England. His urban visions and theory is very much paralleled to that of Lynch. Cullen wrote on the "art of relationship" between the user and all elements of the city "landscape" and "serial vision," describing the unfurling of a city's image while passing through. His major works include *The Concise Townscape*, published in 1961. Steen Eiler Rasmussen was a Danish architect and planner, whose major works include *Experiencing Cities*. Published in 1964, the book looked at certain socially successful architectural projects in history, and stated along Lynchian lines that: "We must strive to advance by arousing interest in and understanding of the work the architect does. The basis of competent professionalism is a sympathetic and knowledgeable group of amateurs, of non-professional art lovers."

³⁵¹ Appleyard, "The Major Published Works of Kevin Lynch: An Appraisal." 551.

employed the standard entrenched approaches to design. They used his book as a system of concrete design methods, without consulting the user. Lynch, reflecting on the book's reception in 1984 over twenty years after its publication, was very surprised by this. He stated:

What was not foreseen, however, was that this study, whose principal aim was to urge on designers the necessity of consulting those who live in a place, had at first a diametrically opposite result. It seemed to many planners that here was a new technique complete with magical classifications of node, landmark, district, edge, and path that allowed a designer to predict the public image of any existing city or new proposal. For a time, plans were fashionably decked out with nodes and the rest. There was no attempt made to reach out to actual inhabitants, because that effort would waste time and might be upsetting.³⁵²

These applications of his ideas were a product of the same cultural context from which his theory stemmed. The broad professional desire to reform the ever-confusing cityscape led planners to welcome his defined categories as a perfect match. Through his new semantic description of the inhabitants' urban image, these designers saw a method, not a direction for future study. They used his perceptual definitions of urban elements as material pieces, organizing them to seemingly form better environments. Lynch further reflected:

³⁵² Kevin Lynch, "Reconsidering *The Image of the City*" in Banjerree and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 251.

As before, professionals were imposing their own views and values on those they served. The new jargon was appropriated to that old end, and its moral was stood on its head. Instead of opening a channel by which citizens might influence design, the new words became yet another means of distancing them from it. Indeed, the words were dangerous precisely because they were useful. They afforded a new way of talking about the qualities of large-scale form, for which designers had previously had only inarticulate feelings. Thus, the words seemed true themselves.³⁵³

Fortunately, these incorrect understandings were not the only responses. Some paid attention to his warnings that it was an immature work, full of signals to be guided by, and that it was not the correct destination of the long journey that is urban design. These provisos were in the book itself. Their application can primarily be seen in the work of some of his former students and the practices of others abreast of the MIT-based discourse. The beginnings of this influence is evident even earlier than the publication of *The Image of the City*. Some of those who studied in his class on city form at MIT produced a great deal of work on the topic. One example was titled: “An Activities Approach for Understanding Metropolitan Form.” This term paper was written in 1957 by his graduate students Brenner, Langerndorf, Donald Appleyard, and Barr as an academic exploration into perception, produced during the “Perceptual Form of the City” years.³⁵⁴ The early date of this text shows the influence that Lynch had on those

³⁵³ Kevin Lynch, “Reconsidering *The Image of the City*” in Banjee and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 251.

³⁵⁴ “An Activities Approach for Understanding Metropolitan Form” 1957 (Box 9, Folder An Activities Approach, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

around him. Later, after the *The Image of the City's* publication, these designers who knew him personally became the main representatives of his influence and took his preliminary ideas steps further.

The most comprehensive application of Lynch's process was by a team from the MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Study, the same institution that assisted in the birth of "The Perceptual Form of the City Study." The team worked from 1961 to 1966, led by Donald Appleyard and Lloyd Rodwin, colleagues of Lynch, as well as John Friedmann and Lisa Peattie. They applied Lynch's analysis in a study of the city of Guyana, Venezuela, by interviewing many residents and applying the study to their contracted designs for the city. This comprehensive examination was the first project supported by the local and national governments of Venezuela for the region. It was specifically overseen by the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, a public company with powers to build and manage urban areas. This civic body was a product of Venezuela's large economic growth, as they began large scale oil exportation to the West, mainly the United States. Resulting from this economic reliance on the West was a theory of dependence, and consequently an increased desire for a nationally representative urban image. Coupled with a lack of centralization and development in the Southern regions of the country, the Venezuelan government sought to entirely rethink and re-plan the Ciudad Guyana area. This national project is explained by Tom Agnotti, a professor of Urban Studies at Hunter College. Agnotti said that:

Developmentalist alternatives advocating import substitution strategies and national economic planning, which originated in the period after World War II, were given new meaning when the Cuban Revolution took power in 1959. These

ostensibly national strategies would not only spur national economic growth; they would offer a peaceful alternative to revolution as part of the broader Alliance for Progress promoted by the U.S. The approach in Brazil, which initiated centralized planning and a new city in the nation's interior (Brasilia), was very similar to that of Venezuela. However, Venezuela's efforts were guided by a civil regime whose conception of state-led development was not tied to the military visions of national power as it was in other countries.³⁵⁵

Their large-scale Ciudad Guyana project was at once an attempt to manage the economic capital of the southern region and to promote a culturally defined image to the world. Juxtaposing it to the militarily generated bold modern composition of Brasilia, the civil organization of Venezuela's government promoted a more subtle physicality. The cultural and economic importance put on this project heightened the government's ability to enact an extensive and involved method of design. These very specific conditions produced the perfect climate, at least initially, for the application of Lynch's user defined processes. This application is something of an aberration in the larger use of Lynch's methods.

The study and resulting urban design was published as a book by Donald Appleyard in 1976, titled *Planning a Pluralist City: Conflicting Realities in Ciudad Guyana*.³⁵⁶ Yet beyond this one large-scale work, the specific application of Lynch's method is rarely seen: it mainly stayed in the intellectual realm of discussion. This can be attributed to Lynch's previously mentioned statement that it would be exhausting to apply his method

³⁵⁵ Tom Agnotti, "Ciudad Guayana: From Growth Pole to Metropolis, Central Planning to Participation," <<http://urban.hunter.cuny.edu/~tangotti/art2.html>>

³⁵⁶ Donald Appleyard, *Planning a Pluralist City: Conflicting Realities in Ciudad Guyana*, Cambridge: MIT, 1976.

to design in an institutional framework. He said that, “[that] effort would waste time and might be upsetting.”³⁵⁷ Lengthy, in depth studies before the first designs were ever formalized would be a heavy economic burden for any city or private developer. The time and patience they necessitate, before anything physical is built, was viewed as too costly. Lynch posited that the result of this sentiment was the formation of plans along the lines of Corbusian visions. He said:

What is usually called urban design today is more often large-scale architecture, which aims to make an object in one sustained operation, according to the will of the gifted professional... True city design, dealing directly with the ongoing sensed environment of the city, in collaboration with the people who sense it, hardly exists today.³⁵⁸

And so, through indifference on the parts of planners and municipal bodies, and more palpable desire for easier solutions usually in one systematic intervention, his process never quite found its way into design use. Lynch illustrates this point further in his criticism of the public bodies and the planners simultaneously. Lynch pines for a different planning reality, which he made evident when he said:

This quirk in our world-view limits what we do. A public agency is unlikely to support a costly piece of analysis that deals with “mere aesthetics,” and it is also unlikely to see how the results might fit into its decisions. The agency will be cautious about deciding anything on what seem to be such arbitrary grounds.

³⁵⁷ Kevin Lynch, “Reconsidering *The Image of the City*” in Banerjee and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 254.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

The professional, in his or her turn, may prefer to cloak aesthetic judgments in the more dignified mantle of other criteria, and so keep his or her aesthetic [underbelly] as safe as possible from defiling amateur hands.³⁵⁹

However, despite the existence of complacency and ego in the professional realm, one of the major points of the book was to simply spur further research: the book accomplished this goal. Lynch's own list, written in 1978, of works that he felt drew from his studies includes examples of projects by city planning bodies and professionals alike. Examples of these are seen in the work of Robert W. Maran, who penned "A Manual on the Development of an Environmental Study for Design" for the *Detroit Regional Transportation and Land Use Study* in July, 1967.³⁶⁰ In the academic realm these types of studies became very common. In 1971, Brian Goodey, a professor at the University of Birmingham, wrote "City Scene: An Exploration into the Image of Central Birmingham as Seen by Area Residents" for their center for Urban and Regional Studies. Another work was by a former student of Lynch's, Stephen Carr, who wrote *The City of the Mind* published by the Indiana Press in 1967. A comprehensive compilation of these works was put together by David Lowenthal, another former student of Lynch's. This work was initially titled "Publications in Environmental Perception," and published by the American Geographical Society in 1972.³⁶¹ Originally this included eight pamphlets on environmental assessments of New York City, Boston, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Columbus, Ohio and a comparative analysis; "structures of environmental

³⁵⁹ Kevin Lynch, "Reconsidering *The Image of the City*," 254.

³⁶⁰ Robert W. Maran, "A Manual on the Development of an Environmental Study for Design" *Detroit Regional Transportation and Land Use Study*: July, 1967.

³⁶¹ David Lowenthal, *Publications in Environmental Perception*, New York: American Geographical Society: 1972.

association; milieu and observer differences; and semantic and experiential components.”³⁶² Although a tangible result was never produced from these studies, and thus in turn from *The Image of the City*, urban environmental study blossomed in large part out of the book. This field was not in the specific discipline of urban planning, but rather in the more broad study of psychology and perception. For Lynch this psychology was a somewhat unintended influence, one he did not predict, though one he readily accepted it. He reflected: “To my surprise... [*The Image of the City*] led to a long line of research in other fields: in anthropology and sociology to some extent, and to a large degree in geography and environmental psychology... That function was largely unforeseen, except for our hopes of attracting perceptual psychologists to an interest in the urban environment.” He further notes that to this end this specific extrapolation of his scope indeed “fulfilled [the book’s] function.” He personally cites a compilation of essays published in 1978, titled *Environmental Knowing: Theories, Research and Methods*, for which he provided the introduction. It was edited by two men from different fields: Reginald G. Colledge, a geographer, and Gary T. Moore, an architect and psychologist. Their different disciplines illustrate Lynch’s influence across the varied academic discussion and the forthcoming synthesis of academic directions into a new field. A review of this book by Alan M. Baker in the *Journal of the Association of American Geographers* (date) demonstrates Lynch’s influential role in the field. The review asserts:

[Lynch’s] work quickly caught the attention of planners, architects, urban geographers, and others concerned with internal urban structure from the viewpoints of social sciences and urban design. The formation of the

³⁶² Letter 1957 (Box 9, Folder An Activities Approach, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

Environmental Design Research Association in 1969 signaled a widespread interest in this approach, and in one sense most of *Environmental Knowing* belongs to this line of thought, since the majority of the papers in it were presented at meetings of [the] E.D.R.A.³⁶³

Although the work of the E.D.R.A. “unfortunately...was diverted into a niche and had scant impact on planning and its theory,”³⁶⁴ environmental perception studies in the urban context continued on as a very rich discipline. The same review of the book stated that “psychologists have begun to discover a whole new world outside the laboratory.” This was, in part, thanks to Lynch. In these ensuing years the work in this field extended far beyond Lynch’s original analytic scope. However, the fact that his approach never directly informed a design process, save for a few cases in which his former colleagues and students further pursued his direction, led him to express the following sentiment:

I would criticize our original studies because they have proved so difficult to apply to actual public policy. This difficulty is strange, because the principal motive of the whole affair was to change the way in which cities were shaped: to make them more responsive to their inhabitants. To my chagrin, the work seems to have had very little real effect of that kind, except for the first flurry of misuse, now so happily faded away.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Alan M. Baker, “Environmental Knowing: Theories, Research, and Methods. by Gary T. Moore ; Reginald G. Golledge” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*: vol. 68, no 2 (June, 1968). pp278- 283.

³⁶⁵ Lynch, “Reconsidering *The Image of the City*,” 251.

Lynch seems to be distressed that the book did not directly influence large scale planning. However, he accepts the reasons as to why it did not have a real physical impact. Not only was *The Image of the City* limited by its readers desire for easy methods and the impracticability of clients funding studies of resident's perceptions, but it was also an incomplete work in and of itself.

I have touched on the book's incomplete nature, highlighting the fact that it began with conclusions on the importance and meaning of orientation and imageability without proving their proof. Lynch admits this was the most obvious shortcoming in his work. He concluded that, "The study never proved its basic assumption, except indirectly, via the emotional tone of the interviews: the repeated remarks about the pleasure of recognition and knowing."³⁶⁶ However, later examinations of his hypothesis in environmental psychology, found deeper conclusions to its importance. It may have been a lucky fact that his assumption was never truly questioned, as it then would have involved a much different analysis. This would have resulted in a different and much more specific work, one that would most likely would not have produced the defiantly passionate and intricately presented in the final product of *The Image of the City*.

The other analysis that was overlooked in *The Image of the City* was on how personal meaning as attached to perception. Lynch and Kepes excluded "meaning" of form for the subject in their "Perceptual Form" study. Lynch considered this oversight to be a necessary decision that was made in regards to the time and money they had been provided by the grant. In order to properly focus the study, they had to make critical choices. Furthermore, Lynch's concern with the role of physical form in the larger illustration of cityscape orientation was more tangible, at that moment. This concern was

³⁶⁶ Lynch, "Reconsidering *The Image of the City*," 250.

widely felt, as American cities were indeed visually disorganized, growing out of scale. In contrast, the “meaning” behind form has widely diverse social and historical influences, and therefore its study produces more diffuse and less tangible urban analyses. The self-imposed limitations of his study, which resulted in the focus on physical implications of urban form, can be seen as a large reason for its almost universal reception. In spite of this, he stated that:

The original study set the meaning of places aside dealt only with their identity and structuring into larger wholes. It did not succeed of course. Meaning always crept in, in every sketch, and comment. People could not help connecting their surroundings with the rest of their lives. But wherever possible, those meanings were brushed aside...because we thought a study of meaning would be far more complicated than a study of mere identity.³⁶⁷

The exclusion of the meaning of forms allowed for his more specifically directed study. However, as he states, people’s attribution of meaning indeed found its way into the final product. Although, *The Image of the City* did not specifically analyze this aspect of perception, its resulting presence in his text opened the door for later studies to pick up where he stopped short, such as the work of Aldo Rossi and Roland Barthes. These later efforts began to analyze the semantic meaning of architectural form as a specific consideration of the urban fabric. The methods behind their work reflect Lynch’s own reservations when he considered pursuing this discussion. They studies avowed his self-reflection and extended the critique through an entirely different analytic framework.

³⁶⁷ Lynch, “Reconsidering *The Image of the City*,” 250.

The Evolution of an Oversight

The filtration of Lynch's elaborate analytic scope in urban design not only led to incorrect applications but also paralleled a larger shift in urban theory that was to follow. Since his optimistic approach to participatory design was found hard to apply, an increasing separation between theory and planning resulted. There was a shift to more discussions of the city image as tied to personal, societal, and historical meaning. Furthermore the newer semantic urban theories picked up where Lynch's consideration of meaning of form in the urban landscape fell short. His field analysis of perceptual form was therefore extended into linguistic analysis of semiotic meaning of form. Each step in this evolution will be examined through a specific criticism of its respective central figure and their work's relation to *The Image of the City*.

This refined scope of city analysis can be found first in the early work of the architect, theorist, artist, and industrial designer Aldo Rossi. Born in 1931 in Milan, Italy, Rossi studied architecture at the Politecnico di Milano while simultaneously working at the magazine *Casabella* (he served as its editor from 1959 to 1964). During these years he worked specifically in the realm of theory, publishing his groundbreaking work *The Architecture of the City* in 1966. This text examined the historical dimensions of the physical city as rendered in its architecture and sought to uncover how we understand city form in relation to the past. After the book's widespread success he went on to design several built projects, almost all in Europe. These projects, the most famous being the Cemetery at San Cataldo, in Modena, Italy, exemplified the theory he developed in his book. In the transition between pure theory and design his focus on city form never waned. Vincent Scully mused that "he has pointed out from the beginning that individual

buildings have meaning only in relation to the city as a whole. This again is part of the typology that keeps Rossi's architecture strong, because he understands what its proper dimensions are."³⁶⁸ In this sense his analysis of city form is very tied to Lynch's work, even though he was never an urban planner. Similar to Lynch, his understanding of the city is very much tied to his architectural schooling, as he attempted to examine the importance of built form and architectural style within the total makeup of the city. This intellectual trajectory was very much influenced by his European upbringing and the vast proliferation of the modernist style on the continent.³⁶⁹ His position, seen in *The Architecture of the City*, develops the Lynch's ideas of perceptual reaction to built form, further contextualizing it in the history of architecture, especially that of Europe. This divergent addition to Lynch's scope evolves from his attempt to uncover the meaning behind city form as related to and influenced by an ever-changing history.

In this way, *The Architecture of the City* is the first example of a theoretical evolution grounded in the urban and architectural discussion in Lynch's *The Image of the City*. The scope of this work is contained succinctly in Rossi's introduction:

I will consider the problems of description and classification and thus of typology;... the structure of the city in terms of its different elements;... the architecture of the city and the *locus* on which it is imprinted and thus urban history;... [and] the basic questions of urban dynamics and the problem of politics as choice.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Bickford Arnell, *Aldo Rossi*. New York: Rizzoli, 1985. 21.

³⁶⁹ Peter Eisenman, introduction to Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT, 1984. 3-11.

³⁷⁰ Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT, 1984. 27.

His position symbolizes an increasing focus on the user's understanding of the city through historical and cultural influence. That Rossi considers this position through a more personal lens further distances his approach from that of Lynch. Despite these differences Rossi still explicitly draws from *The Image of the City*.

Supporting this introduction to the themes of his book, Rossi notes that “the urban image, its architecture, pervades all of these problems and invests all of man's inhabited and constructed realm with value.”³⁷¹ Likewise, he feels that making definitions and conclusions on the image of the city is problematic, since it is an ever-changing organism. He places his text in a similarly tentative light, much as Lynch did his. Rossi said that he “believe[s] that the urban theoretical scheme in this book can give rise to many different kinds of development, and that these developments can in turn take unexpected emphases and directions.”³⁷² He is open to growth from his findings, an approach surely in debt to Lynch's breakthrough text. However, within this stance Rossi does indeed paint a different picture.

The text is an attempt to go beyond the limits of Lynch's studies. Rossi's focus stems from the belief that “progress concerning knowledge of the city can be real and efficacious only if we do not try to reduce the city to any one of its partial aspects, thereby losing sight of its broader significance.”³⁷³ This position both sets aside Lynch's localized analysis and demonstrates Rossi's evolution past it. Rossi is not attempting to uncover the methods of urban perception, but rather is seeking to analyze the genesis of the physical cityscape to achieve a better understanding of the role of urban form in both

³⁷¹ Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT, 1984. 27.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

its conception and its reception. However, even in this different urban analysis Rossi quotes Lynch at several disparate moments.

Rossi cites Lynch's focus on orientation and sense of space as "the most important feature of some recent American work."³⁷⁴ He elaborates that Lynch's study will serve as the preface for his own historical discussion of spatial awareness and for the resulting design of cities. In the ensuing discussion on the implications of architecture as representative of societal themes, Rossi defines a larger understanding of the city in a fashion similar to Lynch. He prefaces this section with the statement: "the city is distinguished by its various parts, and these, from the formal and historical standpoint, constitute complex urban artifacts."³⁷⁵ These "urban artifacts" are then applied through a Lynchian conception of the city, being that it is understood through a mental organization of individually perceived parts. He gives Lynch further credit by stating that "valuable information also may be obtained from the experiments conducted ... by the American school of Lynch."³⁷⁶ However, he Rossi proposes an evolution of this simple study into "linguistic research, [which] would produce evidence of the deepest layers of the urban structure."³⁷⁷ For Rossi, this "urban structure" is most adequately represented by architecture. He said:

Through architecture perhaps more than any other point of view, one can arrive at a comprehensive vision of the city and an understanding of its structure... This relationship between a collective artifact [the building], which is necessarily an urban artifact, and the individual who proposes and single-handedly realizes it

³⁷⁴ Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT, 1984. 34.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

can only be understood through a study of the technics by which the artifact is manifested.³⁷⁸

As the basis for his overall approach, Rossi's analysis of the history embedded in architecture and its resulting meaning for the urban dweller reveals his evolution past Lynch.

Rossi concluded that architectural representation of the city's intentions is defined by its societal impulses. He closes by stating that "who ultimately chooses the image of the city if not the city itself and always and only through its political institutions."³⁷⁹ This assertion reveals that his urban analysis, and resulting conclusions, offer reflections on the histories of planning and image creation. By examining the histories behind the meaning of form, Rossi advances Lynch's undeveloped idea that the forever-changing city creates a fluctuating image. He likewise moves past Lynch's preconceptions of mental organization that finds our response to the environment is inherently structured in terms of spatial perception. For Rossi thus, as he forgoes the discussion of scale and spatial rhythm in this way, the mental image of place is the image of form as meted and defined by history. Rossi's historical leanings when coupled with his proposed linguistic analysis thus represented a shift in the discourse of urban theory.

This shift also appeared in a little known work by Roland Barthes, the eminent French literary analyst and critic of the twentieth century. Barthes was not an architect, an urban planner, nor was he a designer in any physical capacity. However, a good deal of his writing scrutinize the processes of everyday life, and, in some specific moments, illustrates the intricacies of urban engagement as tied to physical form. He examined

³⁷⁸ Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT, 1984. 113.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

cultural phenomena through a discipline of the study of signs, or semiotics, initially developed by an earlier French theorist, Ferdinand de Saussure. This vein of study in the discipline of linguistics was initially governed by a structuralist framework, defined by the idea that a given field was a specific system of interconnected parts. Jonathan Culler posits Barthes' outlook on the study of signs when he said that "the semiologist has a clear task: to reconstruct the system of distinctions and conventions that enable a group of phenomena to have the meaning they do for members of a culture."³⁸⁰ Semiotics was, in part, the study of a given image or text (the sign, or signifier) and its meaning to the user (the signified).

However, Barthes' essential position began to shift into an area between structuralist analysis and a post-structuralist³⁸¹ conception of the sign's relationship between the signifier and signified. This post-structuralist view was the position that the signified was not purely defined outside of its cultural context, but that it was related to the personal histories and intricacies of modern life. Extrapolating this linguistic analysis to the study of urban form, Barthes' early convictions parallel the intentions behind *The Image of the City* and evolve from Lynch's exclusion of meaning. A year following the first publication of Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* on the May 16th, 1967, Roland Barthes delivered a lecture to the Institute of the History of Architecture at the University of Naples. In this talk he directly cited the work of Lynch, using his studies in *The Image of*

³⁸⁰ Jonathan D. Culler, *Barthes: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 59.

³⁸¹ In this case the post-structuralist stance plainly opposes the structuralist view that there is an independent signifier superior to the signified. In this way the signifier is beholden to the complexities of the environment, in which there is constant difference. This somewhat opposes Kepes' belief that visual perception is an organized system of mental processing, which can be manipulated through specific fundamentals to promote wellbeing. Barthes states in this lecture/essay that "today semiology never supposes the existence of a definitive signifier. In reality...we are faced with a infinite chains of metaphors whose signified is always retreating or become itself a signifier."(Roland Barthes, "Semiology and the Urban" originally published in *The City and the Sign*, M. Gottdiener and A. Lagopolous eds., New York: Columbia University Press, 1986 reprinted in Leach, Neil. "Roland Barthes." *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 167.)

the City to develop a semiotic understanding of the semantics behind city forms. Early on in the lecture Barthes stated that:

Among the urban planners proper there is no talk of signification; only one name emerges, rightly so, that of the American Kevin Lynch, who seems to be closest to these problems of urban semantics in so far as he has been concerned with thinking about the city in the same terms as the consciousness perceiving it, which means discovering the image of the city among readers of this city.³⁸²

Given Barthes' removal from American academics in city planning, he did not at that moment get to see the influence Lynch's work had exerted on those around him. In fact, by 1967 *The Image of the City* had been reviewed in numerous magazines and journals. The general tone of these reviews is succinctly illuminated in the correspondence between Lynch and Charles B. Fahs at the Rockefeller Foundation. Mr. Fahs had asked Lynch for an update on these reviews since 1960, and Lynch responded that "there was a great rash of reviews in newspapers over the country, but they were not very critical. One New York paper ran it under the headline: "Poor Jersey City!" and the little New England papers were gleeful that Bostonians could get lost in the Common."³⁸³ Further investigation reveals that only one review was negative: it asserted that Lynch could have better applied the resources of the Rockefeller Foundation towards directly educating the common man. That review was written by Pervical Goodman, who along with his brother Paul had penned the book *Communitas* in 1947. This was another pioneering

³⁸² Roland Barthes, "Semiology and the Urban" *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 167.

³⁸³ Letter from Kevin Lynch to Charles B. Fahs, 1960, p. 1 (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

work on urban form.³⁸⁴ The passions Percival demonstrates in *Communitas* shine through in his review of *The Image of the City*. He “applauds [that]... Kevin Lynch is looking...[for] a more reasonable urban environment.” He does, however, find troubling the fact that Lynch did not “take the opportunity to do the kind of job Ed Bacon³⁸⁵ has been doing in Philadelphia, and use the machinery, talent, and money to educate the public instead of asking silly questions.”³⁸⁶ Goodman feels that Lynch’s conclusions on perception are very obvious, and thus unnecessary. In this evaluation he misses the overall intention of the book to spur further research along these lines. Since *The Image of the City* was the first study to tackle these topics, the depth of their findings could not have been foreseen. In this sense it is disconcerting that Goodman lauds Lynch’s initial intentions but so quickly writes off his findings. Even though his reactionary stance was somewhat misdirected, Goodman’s general concerns found a parallel in Barthes’ study.

The overarching theme of Goodman’s review can be stated as a desire for deeper findings through the “Perceptual Form” research, a sentiment Barthes shares, albeit from a different standpoint. Following his praise of Lynch’s work, Barthes focuses a

³⁸⁴ Percival Goodman (1904-1989) was an architect and urban theorist, as well as a professor at Columbia University for 25 years. Along with his brother Paul, a sociologist, he wrote *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*. New York: Columbia UP, 1990. The book analyzes American urban areas and the interrelationships between their social, political, and technical capabilities. From these investigations and musings they propose specific physical and social elements implemented to promote the education and well being of the urban inhabitant. Its scope and sentiments are summarized well in the closing quote, taken from the French historian Jules Michelet (1798-1894): “initiation, education, and government- these are three synonymous words”(248).

³⁸⁵ Edmund Bacon (1910-2005) was the Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission from 1949-1970. Bacon garnered much attention in this position through his urban renewal plans, working in the same climate as his counterpart Robert Moses, the “master builder” of New York. Paul Goldberger wrote the article “Philadelphia’s Master Plan Rests on Its Streets” *New York Times*: June 12th, 1988: “Mixed the bulldoze-and-rebuild philosophy of urban renewal with the tentative beginnings of the historic preservation movement.” He penned the influential *Design of Cities* (New York: Penguin, 1976.), which explores the growth of cities in history as well as discusses the interactions between humans and their built environment. This text can be seen as another extension of Lynch’s *The Image of the City*.

³⁸⁶ Percival Goodman “Urban Planning and the City dweller,” January 16th, 1961 (folder 3330.32, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

critical eye on the dearth of the study on “meaning” as imparted by the physical landscape. In the same lecture to the University of Naples in 1967 he states that:

In reality the studies of Lynch, from the semantic point of view, remain rather ambiguous; on the hand that there is in his work a whole vocabulary of signification...and as a good semanticist he has the sense of *discrete units*; he has attempted to identify in urban space the discontinuous units which, *mutatis mutandis*, would bear some resemblance to phonemes and semantemes.³⁸⁷

The direct translation of the Latin phrase “mutatis mutandis” is: “by changing those things that need to be changed.” Barthes is therefore declaring that with some necessary manipulations, Lynch’s conclusion on city elements as individually understood parts can be understood linguistically as “semantemes” (an irreducible unit of meaning) and “phonemes” (the smallest unit in language able to convey a meaning). In using this phrase Barthes is admitting his parallel is somewhat tenuous, yet declaring that it is necessary. In this discussion Barthes clearly finds Lynch’s analysis strong, yet imparts that he is missing a level of discussion, and that his categories of paths, nodes, landmarks etc., “would easily become semantic categories.”³⁸⁸ In Lynch’s semantic grouping then, Barthes defined his analysis as “more Gestalt than structural,”³⁸⁹ since Lynch attempts to find how these parts cohere into a complete perceptual whole.

Under a structuralist guise, Barthes then elaborates that the missing piece of Lynch’s study is a consideration of these discontinuous images individually and as

³⁸⁷ Roland Barthes, “Semiology and the Urban” in *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 167.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

defined by personal meaning. This represents a semiotic take on the creation of mental images, and within this approach Barthes had “[observed] a growing awareness of the functions of symbols in urban space. In many urban planning studies based on quantitative estimates and on opinion questionnaires, we nonetheless find mention, even if only as a note, of the purely qualitative issue of symbolization...the demand for meaning appears.”³⁹⁰ This demand is explicitly seen in *The Image of the City*. As Lynch expressed, “meaning always crept in, in every sketch, and comment.” Barthes’ essay is therefore in direct conversation with *The Image of the City*.

He further cites Lynch’s analytic processes and his methods of experiential simulations, which can be seen in the city walks for his orientation studies. From these he elaborates that “the technique of simulation, even if used in a fairly narrow and empirical manner, leads us to develop further the concept of model, which is a structural or at least pre-structural concept.”³⁹¹ This new method is again a direct development out of Lynch’s work. To begin this discussion, Barthes finds that there exists a definitive difference between the functional purposes of a given urban space and the semantic meaning applied to it. He states that this clash over the physical’s “semantic contents” is “the despair of planners,” since their embedded personal histories are not easily understood and can impede a totally positive reception of a given design.³⁹² Similar to Rossi he states that in this fight between function and meaning there is a “permanent conflict between the functional necessities of modern life and the semantic charge given to the city by its history.”³⁹³ Lynch realized this, and it was one of the foundational

³⁹⁰ Barthes, “Semiology and the Urban” in *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 167.

³⁹¹ For clarification of the term “model” see Françoise Choay, *The Rule and the Model: on the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1997.

³⁹² Barthes, “Semiology and the Urban” in *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 167.

³⁹³ Ibid.

catalysts for the enactment of the “Perceptual Form” study. Whereas Lynch he did not quite cover these grounds due to previously mentioned restrictions, Barthes readily accepted the task. He firsts redefines Lynch’s revelation that there is a rhythm in the physical landscape, between those “imageable” areas and those not imageable. In semiotic language Barthes states that this urban quality is “the alternation and juxtaposition of marked and of unmarked elements.”³⁹⁴ He implies that the mental image of neighborhoods (or “districts”) is a different image than what is truly there. Barthes acknowledged that this is another of Lynch’s findings, but wanted to extend it to the discussion of meaning. He stressed that the findings to date had yet to move past a “metaphorical stage,” meaning the stage of figurative language as opposed to more explanatory revelations.

To achieve a better understanding, Barthes outlines three elements, or “remarks,” which he feels could “usefully point the way to an urban semiology.”³⁹⁵ The framing of his argument, seen in Rossi’s work as well, carries on the admittedly provisional nature of the theory in *The Image of the City*. This stance is likewise beholden to the fact that this topic of study was still rather new. Through this mutable position Barthes further develops beyond the work of Lynch, although his three remarks in the lecture from 1967 are not generated from analysis of the city dweller’s perception. The first remark is that there is no longer a concrete one-to-one symbolism of certain images; the process has extended beyond definitive conclusions on the specific meaning of any given form. The second is that these ever changing significations cannot be defined by a single overarching signification process, in the way Lynch attempted to uncover a singular or completely connected image of the city. The third builds on the first, stating

³⁹⁴ Barthes, “Semiology and the Urban” in *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 168.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

that there is not one particular signified meaning behind a given image. He writes that “in any cultural or even psychological complex, we are faced with infinite chains of metaphors whose signified is always retreating or becomes itself a signifier.”³⁹⁶ The unifying theme of these points is that it is impossible to uncover a singular conclusion about the signified, about the meaning behind an image. It reflects Lynch’s thought that the meaning behind form was too complex to study in the way Lynch was to analyze perception. It can be posited then that Lynch’s decision to not pursue an empirical analysis of meaning was wise. Still, even though Lynch’s process would seem to be a poor fit for the study of these visibly interpreted signs, Barthes’ conclusion reflects the process and spirit of *The Image of the City*. He states:

If we want to undertake a semiology of the city, the best approach, as indeed for any semantic venture, will be a certain ingenuity on the part of the reader. Many of us should try to decipher the city we are in, starting if necessary with a personal rapport. Dominating all these readings by different categories of readers (for we have a complete scale of readers, from the native to the stranger) we would thus work out the language of the city. This is why I would say that it is not so important to multiply the surveys or the functional studies of the city, but to multiply the readings of the city, of which unfortunately the writers have so far given us some examples.³⁹⁷

This calls out the two major oversights of Lynch’s study. The first is Lynch’s removal of meaning from image analysis. The second is the homogenous character of the

³⁹⁶ Barthes, “Semiology and the Urban” *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 169.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

participants in his study, as they were predominately white, educated, and middle class. In essence, though, Barthes' approach was the same as Lynch's; they both promoted the proliferation of urban analyses. *The Image of the City* intended to spur a wide range of further studies directed by many others in many locations. Lynch felt that the book would incite more involved city analyses across lines of race and class, and admitted that his study was preliminary and limited. Although Barthes extrapolated Lynch's analytic spirit, he inflected its processes toward his discussion of meaning. He felt that the city is like "a poem which unfolds the signifier and it is this unfolding that ultimately the semiology of the city should try to grasp and make sing."³⁹⁸ And so, to reach this end he did not promote an analysis of people's perceptions by professionals, as was the basis for *The Image of the City*. Instead, he desired individually carried out illustrations of the cityscape, ones that were undirected by academics. These narratives would then be digested by a wide range of analysts. In this way Barthes' approach diverges from Lynch's, and illustrates a larger shift away from Lynch's intents as applied specifically to planning. This distancing from Lynch's process as well as Barthes' increased focus on the semantics of urban perception signaled a forthcoming theoretical evolution beyond *The Image of the City*. This development was initially illustrated in the work of a contemporary and friend of Barthes, Henri Lefebvre.

The French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre wrote extensively on urban space during the period in which Barthes had been producing his own work on urban semiotics. Unlike Barthes, Lefebvre's urban theory strayed from an analytical approach through linguistics; it involved a more comprehensive vantage and a synthesizing of history, technical production, politics and societal understanding of

³⁹⁸ Barthes, "Semiology and the Urban" *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory*. 172.

urban environments. His approach to urban analysis “[moved] from the abstract to the concrete, from theory to reality, which he performs with the dialectical agility characteristic of his work.” The dexterity in his analytic framework and methodology can be seen in his discussion of “regression-progression, dialectical movement and the theory of forms.”³⁹⁹ This “regression-progression” is a three step process of:

- 1) Description: observation informed by experience and a general theory.
- 2) Analytico-regressive: analysis of the reality as described with an effort made to compare and not fall into vague statements.
- 3) Historio-genic: the study of modifications of the above structures through their evolution and their subordination to more general structures.⁴⁰⁰

This view incorporated a total focus and not simply the discussion of physical forms.

Lefebvre stated:

The analysis of urban phenomena...requires the use of all the methodological tools: form, function, structure, levels, dimensions, text, context, field and whole, writing and reading, system, signified and signifier, language and metalanguage, institutions, etc. One also knows that these terms can attain a rigorous purity, be defined without ambiguity, or escape multiple meanings for the logician, for the literary critic, for the aesthetician, and for the linguist.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*. Eds. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Cambridge, Mass, USA: Blackwell, 1996. 9.

⁴⁰⁰ Lefebvre, as quoted in *Writings on Cities*. Kofman and Lebas. 9.

⁴⁰¹ Lefebvre, “Levels of Reality and Analysis,” in *Writings on Cities*. Kofman and Lebas. 111.

Lefebvre evolved the very localized discussion of urban physicality by tying it to all phenomena, without including Lynch's processes.⁴⁰² He theorized that the image transmitted social, historical, political, cultural, and economic meaning. In this stance he argued against the use of image analysis, concluding that it created an abstraction of the true nature of urban space. This theory championed social events as the defining quality of urban space and its resulting perception. In this way he extrapolated Barthes' discussion, developing a position unlike Lynch's empirical approach, which Lefebvre deemed too limited.

Lefebvre's theory, specific to the emphasis he puts on history's role in the modern conception of urban space, resonates with the ensuing discussion of culture and form as directed by Robert Venturi, and later in Venturi's work with Denise Scott Brown. Venturi's work is devoid of Lefebvre's Marxist-derived urban criticisms, as he focuses on the histories, interpretations, and meanings of architectural forms. His collaboration with Denise Scott Brown, which continued along this theoretical line, was related to the architecture of its period and became the defining theory behind postmodern architecture.

Robert Venturi received both an undergraduate and master's degree in architecture at Princeton in the late 1940's. Upon graduation he worked for Eero Saarinen in New York, followed by Louis Kahn in Philadelphia. In 1954, he won the Rome Prize Fellowship, which allowed him to study at the American Academy of Arts in Rome. Upon his return he worked again for Louis Kahn, this time as his teaching assistant at the University of Pennsylvania, where he eventually became an associate

⁴⁰² In fact Lefebvre never cited Lynch. He is included here to illustrate that this urban discussion had largely moved past the constraints of Lynch's preliminary analytic framework.

professor. It was here that he met his future wife, the architect and planner Denise Scott Brown. Together they wrote some of the most recognized architecture theory of their time, which came to form what is commonly viewed as postmodern architecture.

Venturi and Scott Brown's work developed Barthes' discussion of the importance of the sign in image creation, deeming it important in and of itself and with respect to architectural design. This sentiment likewise developed Lynch's analysis of spatial perception into a discussion of the semantic meaning behind physical forms. As Michael Nauman states in the same essay "Planning, Governing, and the Image of the City," for Venturi and Scott Brown "the symbolic aspects of the image were at least as important as its physical dimensions."⁴⁰³ In an essay from 1968, titled "On Ducks and Decoration," they stated that "we believe a new interest in the architecture of communication involving symbolism and mixed media will lead us to reevaluate the eclectic and picturesque styles of the last century, Pop architecture, if you wish, and finally to face the question of decoration."⁴⁰⁴ This essay, written early on in their collaboration with Steven Izenour, led to their seminal work *Learning From Las Vegas* (1971), one of the best selling architecture theory books of all time. In this essay they attempted to define the ways in which we read architecture as a collection of symbols, and they use these culturally shared meanings to direct their own designs.

They described that there are two types of architecture, the "duck," and the "decorated shed." They defined the "duck" as "buildings where an expressive aim has distorted the whole beyond limits of economy and convenience; and that this, although

⁴⁰³ Nauman, Michael. "Planning, Governing, and the Image of the City." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 18.1 (1998). 66.

⁴⁰⁴ Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, "On Ducks and Decoration" (1968). *Architectural Theory*. Comps. Harry Francis. Mallgrave and Christina Contandriopoulos. Vol. 2. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008. 391.

an unadmitted one, is a kind of decoration, and a wrong and costly one at that.”⁴⁰⁵ For them, this was most prominently represented in the styles of modern architecture, as seen, for example, in the work of Mies van der Rohe and his aesthetic adherent Philip Johnson. In an earlier book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), Robert Venturi wittily proposed: “Less is a bore;”⁴⁰⁶ which was a direct play on the famous Mies van der Rohe quote: “Less is more.” Venturi felt that modernist architecture, through its simplicity, ignored an entire facet of design. He quoted the architect Paul Rudolph, who stated that “Mies... makes wonderful buildings only because he ignores many aspects of the building.”⁴⁰⁷ For Venturi, this architecture “can exclude important considerations only at the risk of separating architecture from the experience of life and the needs of society.”⁴⁰⁸ It was through this contrarian stance that Venturi and Scott Brown, championed architecture of the “decorated shed,” which they defined as “the need [of a building’s function] admitted and the decoration applied where needed.”⁴⁰⁹ This was to be done “not in the way the Victorians did it but to suit our time, as easily as the billboard is pasted on its superstructure; with the building it is applied to be allowed to go on its own conventional way, no more distorted than are the functional windbracing and catwalks of the superstructure.”⁴¹⁰ They felt that this type would lead to “an easier, cheaper, more direct and basically honest approach to the question of decoration.” This talk of decoration and sign aligns closely with the image-making process as dissected by Lynch. They take a similar stance in their attempt to create architecture that is easily read

⁴⁰⁵ Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, “On Ducks and Decoration” *Architectural Theory*, 391.

⁴⁰⁶ Robert Venturi. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art in Association with the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago, 1990. 17.

⁴⁰⁷ Paul Rudolph, “Perspecta 7” *The Yale Architectural Journal*, New Haven, 1961. 51. As quoted in Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art in Association with the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago, 1990. 16.

⁴⁰⁸ Venturi. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. 17.

⁴⁰⁹ Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, “On Ducks and Decoration” *Architectural Theory*, 391.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 391.

by the people, architecture that is easily imaged. Their later studies, located in their influential book *Learning From Las Vegas*, did not consult the user. Instead, armed with their own personal opinions they attempted to define what could be drawn from new commercial architecture, the architecture of ill repute, towards uncovering what were the more culturally applicable and readily consumed symbolic elements of architectural form.

Although the opinions seen in *Learning from Las Vegas* were generated without direct consultation of the user, Venturi and Scott Brown's analytic approach and resulting book design mimicked the work of Lynch first seen in his "Perceptual Form of the City Study" (1954-1959). Begun under the umbrella of the Rockefeller grant and continued on past its completion, Lynch enacted investigations into perception while moving in an automobile. He sought to uncover the ways in which we see a cityscape from afar, including while we approach it in a car. This work, initially titled "The Sensuous Impact of Highway Driving" (08/01/1956), exemplified Lynch's optimistic outlook and intense passion for possibilities usually overlooked by designers. In the introduction he stated that, "As a point of departure, grant the far-reaching dominance of daily automobile transportation... Instead of limiting ourselves to a goal of shortening a trip otherwise looked on as a necessary evil, take the view that it is a fundamental and potentially highly satisfying process."⁴¹¹ These sentiments were sympathetic to the increasing presence of the automobile in the perceptual process, and foreshadowed the later populist stance taken by Venturi and Scott Brown.

⁴¹¹ "The Sensuous Impact of Highway Driving" August 1st, 1956 (Box 4b, Folder Highway General Statements, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208) MIT.)

The initial work done in Lynch's essay would develop into a project with Donald Appleyard and John R. Meyers, titled *The View From the Road* (1965).⁴¹² In this work they criticized the noise pollution of high trafficked areas and the separation of districts large highways cause, as well as the lacking aesthetic care in the design of large roads. They also analyzed the "view from the road" and outlined the perception of urban space and the city as seen from a fast moving vehicle. To accomplish this they narrated long car journeys on directed paths to and from specific points, writing down and filming exactly what they saw. Michael J. Golec states in his essay "Format and Layout in *Learning From Las Vegas*," contained in the collection *Relearning From Las Vegas* (2009), that "the use of cinematography for the study of the city was first introduced in [this work]."⁴¹³ However, this was not the case, as the primary documentation on "The Perceptual Form of the City" reveals. Lynch and Kepes had separately proposed using these methods as early as 1952, twelve years before the publication of *The View From the Road*. In the early months of 1953, while still in Florence, Lynch said that "the movie camera should be a good tool...I have taken a roll and a brief walk along the Corso in Florence, though these particular shots will probably be badly amateur."⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, Kepes had persistently attempted to include film their collaborative work. A record from the Rockefeller Foundation grant proposal meeting from March 2nd, 1954 reveals that Kepes "urged the value of film techniques in showing possible effects of [urban] changes [over time]."⁴¹⁵ These notes also disclose that the method employed for the *The View From the Road* was

⁴¹² Donald Appleyard, John R. Myer, and Kevin Lynch, *The View From the Road*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965.

⁴¹³ Aron Vinegarand Michael J. Golec, *Relearning from Las Vegas*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009. 35.

⁴¹⁴ Letter to Louis P. Dolbeare, May 17th 1953 (Box 2, Folder City Design Research, Kevin Lynch Papers, 1934-1988 (MC.0208), MIT.)

⁴¹⁵ "Visit to MIT" March 2nd, 1954, p. 2 (folder 3330.30, box 375, series 200R, Record Group (RG) 1.2, RAC.)

born in the early moments of the “Perceptual Form” study. They state that Lynch “emphasized the role of film in showing the changing aspect of the city with movement.” The use of film never quite found its way into their early studies until their orientation analysis for *The Image of the City* subsided, when Lynch began his focus on the research for *The View From the Road*.

This later work evolved *The Image of the City*'s discussion on urban form and sought to reveal that the aesthetics of highway form needed to be taken into account in design. Similarly, Venturi and Scott Brown's position was developed as a response to the current fabric of the built environment. They were against modernist architecture in a way similar to Lynch's opposition to the modernist planning vision; both promoted the perceptions of the common man as a design inspiration. However, the genesis of Venturi and Scott Brown's theory diverged from that of Lynch. In their essay “A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas” (1968), which would eventually be synthesized into “Part I” of *Learning From Las Vegas*, they wrote that “creating the new for the artist may mean choosing the old or existing. Pop artists have relearned this. Our acknowledging existing commercial architecture at the scale of the highway is within this tradition.”⁴¹⁶ Contrary to Lynch they felt that the roadside landscape was a proper cultural referent, and that it was essential for design inspiration.

At the Yale School of Architecture, Venturi and Scott Brown held studios on this topic, which served as research for *Learning From Las Vegas*. The only reference to Lynch that appears in the final work came from two of their students in these classes, Daniel Scully and Peter Schmitt. They quoted Lynch, Appleyard, and Myer in *The View From the*

⁴¹⁶ Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, “A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas,” *Architectural Forum*: March 1968, pp. 37-43. As quoted in Vinegarand and Golec, *Relearning from Las Vegas*. 35.

Road by writing that, “[The driving experience is] ‘a sequence played to the eyes of a captive, somewhat fearful, but partially inattentive audience, whose vision is filtered and directed’ [ahead].”⁴¹⁷ Venturi and Scott Brown agreed with this idea that the increased speed of movement in a car diluted and focused perception, yet they stood against its inherently negative valuation of the acquired image from this process. Golec concludes that, “rather than contending, like Lynch, that the city had to be exceptionally organized in ways that were immediately apprehensible, Venturi and Scott Brown suggested that the city, regardless of its apparent organization or disorganization, retained latent patterns that could be discovered and disclosed by the architect-planner.”⁴¹⁸ No longer were they beholden to the “organizational complex” that Kepes had inspired in *The Image of the City*. Instead, they broke away from it, and discovered that the current state of architecture and signage as a source of design inspiration.

In Venturi and Scott Brown’s approach we can see the influence of Lynch finally fading, as they fall into the conventional role of architect (or planner, for that matter) as dictator, misleadingly sympathetic to the user’s own opinions and perceptions. In this way, their work in this way became the defining characteristic of the postmodern movement they spearheaded. It was a discourse involved in a speculative dissection of the image, devoid of Lynch’s analytic framework of engaging users.

The most current example of this postmodern take on Lynchian planning can be seen in the work of Duany Plater-Zyberk. Their approach, which has been called the “New Urbanism,” finds value in vernacular architecture. They feel that vernacular architecture

⁴¹⁷ Daniel Scully and Peter Schmitt, “The Architecture of Persuasion” (1968), as quoted in Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas: the Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1977. 74.

⁴¹⁸ Michael J. Golec CITE *Relearning from Las Vegas*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009. 35.

recalls peoples' preconceptions of specific environments. Through this architectural styling, they attempt to plan towns based on a Lynchian model; they break down urban space into specific elements such as neighborhoods, districts, edges, and corridors. They use these elements, to some extent similar as those who directly followed Lynch's model incorrectly. However, they do attempt to reach out to the community they are designing for, to uncover their desires, or their "images of place." Similarly, they are inclined to Jane Jacob's notions of safety's role at the street level and social cohesion in neighborhoods influenced by architecture. Although they define their work as derived from common sense, theirs is a populist stance with shades of utopian impulses. With these principles, Duany Plater-Zyberk attempted to manufacture a distinct image of place in their Seaside community development.⁴¹⁹ This project was styled through architectural language in an attempt to be perceived as a typical community. It was an articulated, albeit conventional, signifier of domesticity designed to be an idealized American conception of the town. In this sense, they further evolved the positions of Brown and Venturi, realizing a similar intention on the scale of master planning. This directly extrapolates the findings of Lynch. Their ideals are directly in tune with Lynch's approach, yet synthesized through a postmodern perspective, symbolizing the "planner-client relation [as reverting] to a dyad."⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ The architect, planner, and theorist Leon Krier built his only complete work of architecture in this community. Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk deems Krier's theory the precedent and inspiration for the "New Urbanist" dialogue. In essence, he believes that there is no miscommunication in the city image, that vernacular forms directly impart the historical functions they represent. In this way he draws from the classical past to conjure, as he sees it, unconfused images of place. His approach lies mainly in the theoretical realm, more akin to the postmodern discussions of Venturi and Scott Brown than that of Lynch. For more on his theory in this realm see Léon Krier, *The Architecture of Community*. Washington, DC: Island, 2009.

⁴²⁰ Michael Nauman, "Planning, Governing, and the Image of the City." 64.

It can therefore be professed that *The Image of the City*, from its approach to visio-spatial perceptual study, truly had a broad impact. Furthermore, the book intimated Lynch's own character: the object was a vessel and its words a microcosm of an intellect that had been developing all of his life. The focus of his urban concerns was admittedly undeveloped. However, through injecting this intellectual spirit into the discussion, he advanced and redirected the discipline. Although the book was not concretely influential in urban planning, it was the perfect product of Lynch's cultural context and a symbol of the resulting paradigm shift seen in the years following its publication. Through the limitations of his processes and the focusing of his argument, the final product was perfectly pitched for this reception. His scope had aligned with the field's shifting discussion. At the same time, these limitations allowed for further theorizing in the direction Lynch pioneered. Lynch opened the door first, and held it open for many others to follow.

Conclusion

The major influences on Kevin Lynch's work *The Image of the City* have been sketched and their cultural context conveyed. Lynch's relevance and importance are clear, and *The Image of the City* was undoubtedly the central product of his career.

However, the text was not a bookend to his intellectual evolution. Lynch could not quit, since his theories in *The Image of the City* were admittedly preliminary and the framework on which others were to be built. He never stopped teaching and writing. Gary Hack finds that:

[Lynch's] influences were many. First of all he had an insatiable thirst for ideas, in this way he was an amazing person...He was constantly picking up ideas from various sources. He felt that ideas belonged in the public realm, they weren't to be guarded or protected, that copyrights were conveniences but should be a barrier to people trading ideas or sharing them. That was a pretty remarkable quality that he had, and why so many people felt so engaged. They would send him stuff years after they studied with him. He was a great sponge of ideas, giving them off, encouraging people to run with things that he didn't have time to explore.⁴²¹

In this fervor for academic exploration, the "Perceptual Form of the City" study opened many doors and led to the publication of *The View From the Road*, written with Donald Appleyard and John R. Meyers. Following the "Perceptual Form" study Lynch wrote *Site Planning*, the first edition of which was printed in 1962, second in 1971, and third in 1984, with the collaboration of Mr. Hack.⁴²² This book was widely taught in planning and architecture classes all over the country. It further developed the language and understanding of planning as an art form. In this manner, Lynch continuously moved onto other topics, ever evolving the approach he had initiated *The Image of the City* may have been extremely popular, yet for him this was almost a detriment, since many concentrated on this work alone. His later major studies included *Growing Up in Cities* (1977), which was sponsored by UNESCO and written with Tridib Banjeree, containing

⁴²¹ Gary Hack, "Kevin Lynch." Telephone interview. 26 Feb. 2010.

⁴²² Kevin Lynch and Gary Hack. *Site Planning*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1984.

the analysis of children's perceptual responses to their environments, and whose method of analysis is similar to that in *The Image of the City*.⁴²³ His later book *What Time is This Place*, which he reflected was his favorite, analyzed urban renewal and historic preservation, dealing with the influence of time on urban perception. These themes are present in one of his last essays, titled *Wasting Away*, which was later published as a book with the collaboration of Donald Appleyard. This work in fact foreshadowed the current "green revolution" in architecture, as it considered what it means to throw away, reuse and recycle.⁴²⁴ Appleyard, in his reflective essay "The Major Works of Kevin Lynch: An Appraisal," published in the year of Lynch's retirement from MIT in 1978, stated that this work "looks beyond the stereotypical positions of conservationists and futurists to an ethic that emphasizes the needs and perceptions of individuals, and acknowledges the new pluralist context of planning."⁴²⁵ However, these texts were not met with as much success as *The Image of the City*. Since, it can be posited, that they were not as taught in their synthesis of analysis and theory, picture and text, nor as representative of as yet unarticulated desires. Nevertheless, their approaches symbolized the intellectual direction Lynch later took, as *The Image of the City* and his ensuing work rose concurrent with the preservationist and pluralist movement. This later work "[acknowledged] the trends of the [late 1960s and 1970s]...[it] is characterized by an advocacy of pluralism and participation, and a broadening of professional planning and design to include the activities of management and education."⁴²⁶ This, as previously outlined, was also headed

⁴²³ Kevin Lynch and Tridib Banerjee. *Growing up in Cities: Studies of the Spatial Environment of Adolescence in Cracow, Melbourne, Mexico City, Salta, Toluca, and Warszawa*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1977.

⁴²⁴ Kevin Lynch, and Michael Southworth. *Wasting Away*. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990. For further discussion of the "green revolution" in architecture see Jerry Yudelson, *The Green Building Revolution*. Washington: Island, 2008.

⁴²⁵ Donald Appleyard, "The Major Published Works of Kevin Lynch: An Appraisal." *The Town Planning Review* Oct. 49.4 (1978): 553.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 556.

by Jane Jacobs and outlined in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. It was a burgeoning movement that Lynch, in part, spurred on and it became the discourse within which he was involved. In this discussion he still promoted engaging the urban inhabitant and further developed his studies of symbolism in the urban landscape. Evidence of this can be seen in one of his last major works, *Managing the Sense of a Region*.⁴²⁷ This text synthesized many of the directions seen in *The Image of the City*, *Site Planning*, and *What Time is This Place?*⁴²⁸ However, its wide scope, which simultaneously analyzed perceptual experience, sensuous qualities, symbolism, urban policy and management was too vast to truly have an impact like *The Image of the City*, or even *Site Planning*.

There are several themes that run constant through all of this work, however different the task or topic. These are his approach to an environmental awareness, attention to small physical details, the engagement and support of the common urban inhabitant, and the involved process of analytic discussion prior to design. Banjeree and Southworth state that his body of work “which [has] appealed to different audiences for their research, analytical, theoretical, and application values, can be seen as constituting the only extant philosophy of [comprehensive city] design.”⁴²⁹ Yet even in the influence of his oeuvre, *The Image of the City* remains his most cohesive and influential work. It was the symbol of his intellectual development into the discourse of urban planning, and the fulcrum on which all of his later work turned.

⁴²⁷ Kevin Lynch, *Managing the Sense of a Region*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1981.

⁴²⁸ Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P., 1972.

⁴²⁹ Banjeree and Southworth, *City Sense and City Design*. 25.

The question still remains when considering that this text is still popular: Is his theory and analytic approach from this period relevant in for the study of our current cities? Has urban planning evolved past his convictions, or are we still in need of his wisdom?

The Image of the City still excites readers, but does not align with their interpretations of urban perception. This is evidenced in a pseudo-empirical study that I undertook. I have asked several of my peers to read the book and give me their reactions. In the same way that Lynch's subject pool for *The Image of the City* was not broad enough, my pool lacks a comprehensive selection of people across age, gender, race, creed, and economic lines. Despite these gaps in my evidence, I have made sure, to the best of my ability, that there is a range of architectural knowledge and cities of birth in each subject. Even so, my data cannot be construed as truly representative. It is, again to reflect the "Perceptual Form of the City" study, a pseudo-social-scientific effort that is intended to challenge or confirm my own preconceptions. As such, this study will be presented through the lens of my own opinions, supported at times by the sentiments of those I have interviewed.

The first problem I personally encountered when applying Lynch's conclusions to our current cityscape was with the significance he places on orientation. In the book he states that:

To become completely lost is perhaps a rather rare experience for most people in the modern city. We are supported by the presence of others and by special way-finding devices: maps, street numbers, route signs, bus placards. But let the mishap of disorientation once occur, and the sense of anxiety and even terror

that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it is linked to our sense of balance and wellbeing. The very word 'lost' in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster.⁴³⁰

This paranoid position was derived from his studies in Florence, during which he was a passive observer, moving through the city without knowledge of its composition and sans proficiency in Italian. In this permanently "lost" state as a tourist, Lynch placed great emphasis on how the visual environment led him through the urban space. His experience as a visitor in Florence led him to the conclusion that a clearly understood urban image was a crucial facet of the built environment. He said that, "in the process of way-finding, the strategic link is the environmental image, the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world that is held by the individual." This point raises an interesting question: is our mental image of the city still beholden to interaction with its physicality? Or, have our perceptions transformed through the increase in mapping technologies that impede us from getting lost, and the proliferation of narrative and photographic representations of cities? I will posit that the reliance on a mental image of place to orient, and therefore feel comfortable, has subsided through the development of these user-based technologies.

This discussion can be introduced through a very small and unknown project within the "Perceptual Form" study. This project, through its foreshadowing of current technologies, has the most relevance in our current considerations of urban perception. Lynch had proposed a device that would simulate the urban inhabitant's perception of space, so that the designer would be able to know the perceptual implications of the

⁴³⁰ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 4.

proposed design. This mechanism was to be an optical device that was capable of navigating a built model of an urban area. It would provide the analyst with a street-eye view of the proposed design. He felt that this mechanism would adequately convey the user's perception of the space. In the end the device was not realized. However, there now exists a modern incarnation of this apparatus: Google Street View. This internet-based tool strings together images taken by a vehicle driving through the city at street level. The result is a static visual narration of the city's physicality as seen from the vantage of the pedestrian. To activate this tool one must first open Google Maps, which maps the city from a bird's eye view either by a graphic representation of streets and buildings or by a detailed satellite image, or both, with the graphics overlaid on the image. The user is able to click the streets of this map, revealing the "Street View" as a three-dimensionally descriptive supplement. The combination of an almost filmic narrative with satellite photography and graphic description is, at face value, an objective representation of urban space. However, as Antoine Picon states in his essay "Towards a City of Events," published in 2009 and contained in the Harvard Graduate School of Design's *New Geographies 0*, "To map a city is not only to represent it but also to make sense of it...[Maps] are not only a representation of what is; they, in an implicit or explicit manner, make a case for what is really important, what should be kept and what should be transformed."⁴³¹ They project our urban intentions and represent our urban image. In this way, J. B. Harvey states that maps are "far from...a simple mirror of nature that is true or false, [they] redescribe the world- like any other document- in terms of relations of power and of cultural practices, preferences, and priorities." The mapmakers' hand delineates the boundaries of our societies, and therefore constructs a

⁴³¹ Antoine Picon, "Towards a City of Events," Turan, Neyran, ed *New Geographies*. Vol. 0.. Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Design, 2008. 35.

reality that is filtered through his-own socio-spatial perceptions. Google Maps, though, does not fit into this subjective history. Harvey further notes that the “usual perception about the nature of maps is that they are a mirror, a graphic representation, of some aspect of the real world.”⁴³² This has been fostered in part by the cartographer’s promotion of map-making as a science. Who, “within the constraints of survey techniques...and the code of conventional signs,...[attempts to present the map as] a factual statement about geographical reality.”⁴³³ As Google Maps is constructed with documentary images, it is correctly understood in scientific way. Its correlation of graphic representation to satellite image removes any perceived subjectivity, fostering its reception as scientific. Through this map we are able to understand the true physical dimensions of the city.

Nevertheless, the Street View feature complicates our urban perception. By navigating the city with this tool the user is given a notion of its spatiality and physicality yet he is, to appropriate Lynch’s term, divorced from the city’s sensuous character. In an interview for my study I asked what role this tool plays in Lynch’s understanding of urban perception. One subject stated that: “[Google Maps and Street View] promises to be a [representation] of what's really there, a perfect interface between mental image, map, and reality, but perhaps there's something missing. It is truly a wonder, but it lacks all the real physiological connections that Lynch talks about as necessary for enjoying a city.”⁴³⁴ The tool provides a vantage of the urban fabric divorced from the consequences of the city’s dimensions of movement, smell, sound, and human contact. This verisimilitude of reality, when conflated with the perception that it is a scientific tool,

⁴³² J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*. Ed. Paul Laxton. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002. 35.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴³⁴ Angus McCullough, "The Image of a New City." Interview by Henry Ellis. 30 Jan. 2010.

reshapes our understanding of reality. The ability to accede to the urban environment through sensation has been made more specious than ever before.

Our perception of reality is further complicated by hand held global positioning technologies, which direct our movement as we go. Picon notes that “the maps of personal digital assistants or global positioning systems show us the city as we experience it, with the nearby possibilities offered to use.”⁴³⁵ No longer do we actively correlate the map to city form in order to navigate. Rather, our orientation comes from passive response to the device we hold. This separation between city form and orientation influences our mental perception of the urban environment. As we pay less attention to urban physical form during our navigation of space, the images of urban space we previously viewed on the screen begin to manipulate our understanding of the city. We increasingly relate the static image seen on the screen to its true physical self, abstracting our awareness of tangible physical complexities. As the importance of physical urban settings recedes in our minds, the sensuous qualities of space and the human activities going on in them come to the forefront. Through the use of these devices the city becomes increasingly mentally imaged by events going on.

Picon finds that this increasingly prevalent link between place and event has in some cases “reduced architecture to an event, with the hope that such a reduction will enable architecture to speak to both the individual sense and to the collective longing meaning and symbols. The Guggenheim Effect, and more generally the architectural star system, function in this context.”⁴³⁶ In essence, these architectures intend to increase tourism and land value and operate to support the income of the city. To this end they broadcast a commodified image of a given city or place, and image that can be easily

⁴³⁵ Picon, “Towards a City of Events,” *New Geographies*. 35.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.* 39.

understood and accepted. Similarly, this phenomenon can now be witnessed at a smaller scale in our GPS-mitigated urban experience. GPS maps include textual descriptions of the places they illustrate and in most cases serve to advertise, as they are written by the proprietor of the location, whether the owner be a business or the city. Thus, even at the ground level, through these tools our perception of urban space has become increasingly mediated by the presentation of a manufactured image.

However, there may exist an opposition to this stilted image. Through advanced connectivity provided by social networking sites like Facebook, and internet applications like Twitter, people can now connect over space and time in a constantly flowing stream of conversation expressed through personal narration and photographic documentation. Along these same lines, the advent of the blog as a medium for self-expression has heightened this pace of information and narrative dissemination. These tools allow for somewhat unmediated self-expression, which when applied to urban pedestrian experience, could be used to illuminate perceptions. These flowing narratives could be harnessed, mapped, in order to shatter the static images we now have. In hand-held GPS manifestations, energetic and sporadic narratives tied to locations could serve to describe urban space as directly experienced. This constant flow in shared experience would parallel the visions of the Situationist International, working from the early 1950s through the Paris student revolt of 1968.

Their work corresponded to Lynch's but was enacted in a different cultural context, apart from the discourse he involved. Their theories also focused on the urban inhabitant's involvement in urban space, yet they diverged from Lynch's empirical analysis. They felt that shared experiences in the city had become commodified and were increasingly being dictated by capitalist production and the regimentation of

bureaucratization. This stance was symbolized by the central figure of the Situationists, Guy Debord, who authored the influential *Society of the Spectacle* (1960),⁴³⁷ in which he reacted against the contemporary proliferation of mass media. Their take on urban planning during the years of Lynch is suggested in a lecture given by one of their early members, Constant, titled “Unitary Urbanism.” Deriding the visions of Le Corbusier, Constant declared that: “Today’s urbanists are indeed to blame for the failure of the modern city as a human habitat, for the disappearance of a social space in which a new culture could arise.”⁴³⁸ The Situationists were drawn to the chance inherent in the city’s mass collection of people, the excitement of discovery apart from structured cultural conventions. As Tom McDonough states in his compilation *The Situationist and the City*: “For the [Situationist International] the city was less a physical container - an assemblage of structures and routes, of functions and their interrelations - than the space constituted by and constitutive of the drama of self-consciousness and mutual recognition.”⁴³⁹ Thus, the Situationists promoted certain acts to rupture this cultural state by encouraging random experience and unintended interaction.

In the essay “Circulationist Manifesto: Debord on Planning,” for the *Architectural Review*, the author summarized the Situationist approach as:

The function of creative activity to construct situations, that is, the ‘factual construction of transient ambiances for our existence, and their transformation on to a higher emotional plane’... For example, the function of a work of art is

⁴³⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone, 1994.

⁴³⁸ Constant, “Unitary Urbanism”. *The Situationists and the City* Tom McDonough, ed. London: Verso, 2009. 113.

⁴³⁹ Tom McDonough, *The Situationists and the City*. 3.

to create a momentary ambiance, or environment, for the beholder, and to raise his responses to a higher plane.⁴⁴⁰

Applying this stance to urban experience, the Situationists promoted psychogeographic interpretations of the city fabric. Debord elucidated this view of the city:

One of the basic Situationist practices is the *dérive*, a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.⁴⁴¹

With this in mind, Debord and Asger Jorn reconstructed maps of Paris from their standard location-descriptive composition into maps of interactions and events, as encountered on a *derive* (see fig. 16). Similarly, Yona Freidman outlined a vision for a completely connected city that would promote wandering, roaming, and new experience outside of standard cultural parameters. These were projects intended to redefine urban

⁴⁴⁰ "Circulationist Manifesto: Debord on Planning," *Architectural Review*, April 1960: 222-223.

⁴⁴¹ Guy Debord, "Theory of the *Dérive*," *Situationist International Anthology*. Ken Knabb ed. Berkeley, Calif.: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006. 60.

space not through physical visions of architects, who they saw as arrogant and inconsiderate, but rather by what goes on inside of it. Through our current technological advancements in information sharing and personal computing, the Situationist vision of a city of events is in some way becoming a reality. As Picon notes:

What we see through the GPS is intimately linked to where we are, what we have done, and what we intend to do, and to events and scenarios...[This] spectacular development of digital media has reinforced our perceptions of cities as space or territories where things literally take place. Through the pervasive presence of digital media, our life is structured by thousands of events that organize our perceptions of cities, and more generally the world, as “what happens.”⁴⁴²

Their work, which was generated as parallel to Lynch’s, thus finds much relevance now. A deeper examination finds that these technologies not only parallel the intentions of this Situationist work, but could be applied to use through Lynch’s analytic approach, in order to advance his original intentions.

The capabilities of these user-based technologies, when used for the dissemination of urban narratives and not for advertising could potentially be used to form a better understanding of urban perception. This would, however, dispel Lynch’s focus on the physical and exist as an extension to the understanding of what the city “means” to its inhabitants. This approach would in fact parallel the proposal Roland Barthes outlined in “Semiology and the Urban,” which called for a diverse collection of narrative accounts synthesized by several analysts. Therefore, the basis of Lynch’s

⁴⁴² Picon, “Towards a City of Events,” *New Geographies*. 35-37.

studies, as evolved by later theorists, could indeed be more easily realized in our current digital age. In the second to last paragraph of *The Image of the City* Lynch declares:

By the intensity of its life and the close packing of its disparate people, the great city is a romantic place, rich in symbolic detail. It is for us both splendid and terrifying, “the landscape of our confusions” ...Were it legible, truly visible, the fear and confusion might be replaced with delight in the richness and power of the scene.⁴⁴³

Although these fears may have dissipated, this understating must still be further developed. This assertion is a call for active engagement with these new devices; explore and excite in the way of the Situationists. Implement them in studies similar to those that Lynch attempted. Through these technologies the image of our current cities may become more fully understood and appreciated, with the end goal being a more enlivened urban existence. From this the spirit of *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch’s engaging urban vision, may be revitalized.

⁴⁴³ Lynch, *The Image of the City*. 119-120.

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Illustrations



Figure 1. Chicago
558 West DeKoven St.
1952



Figure 2. Chicago
Carl Sandburg Village
c. 1960s



Figure 3, Plan for Pittencrieff Park
Patrick Geddes
1904

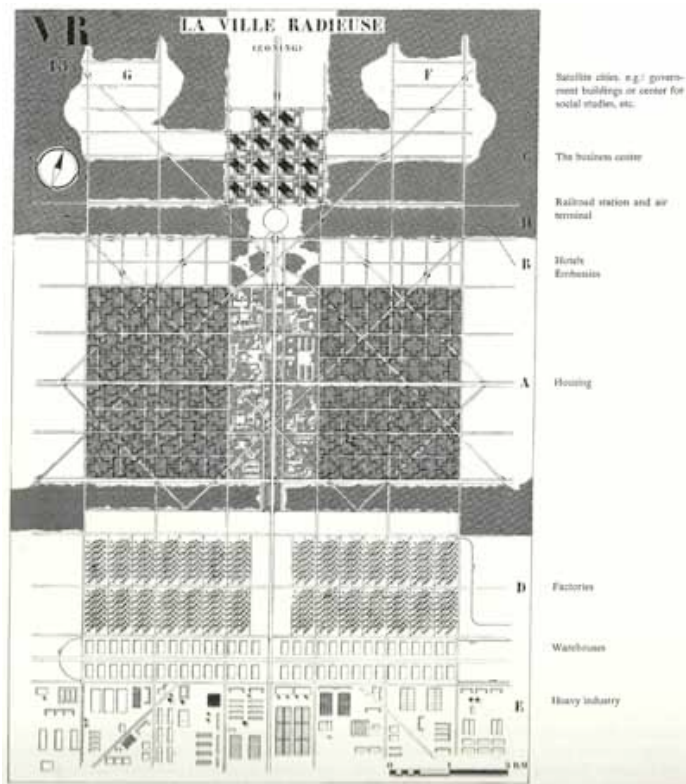


Figure 4, Ville Radieuse Plan
Le Corbusier
1935



Figure 5, Grand Basin
World's Columbian
Exposition
1893



Figure 6, Court of Honor
World's Columbian
Exposition
1893



Figure 7, Grande Salle des Antiquités
École des Beaux-Arts
1863

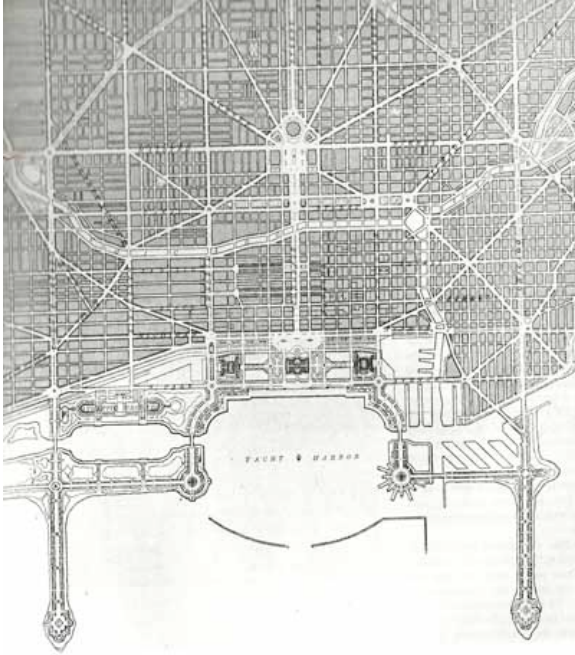


Figure 8, 1909 Plan For Chicago
Daniel Burnham
1909



Figure 9, Chicago Board of Trade Illustration
Holabird and Root
1928-30



Figure 10, Frank L. Wright
Broadacre City
1932

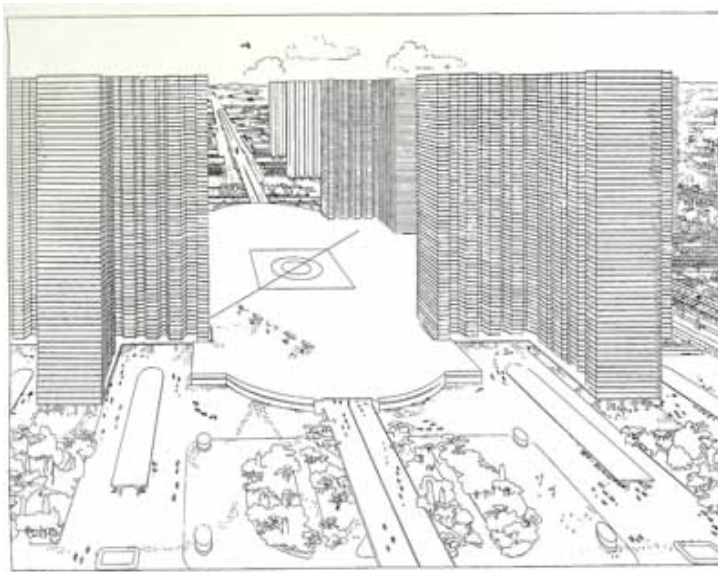


Figure 11, Ville Contemporaine
Le Corbusier
1922



Figure 12, Bedford St. and Washington St.
“Perceptual Form” Study Photo
1955



Figure 13, South End Row Housing
“Perceptual Form” Study Photo
1954-59



Figure 14, Huntington Ave and Blagden St.
“Perceptual Form” Study Photo
1955

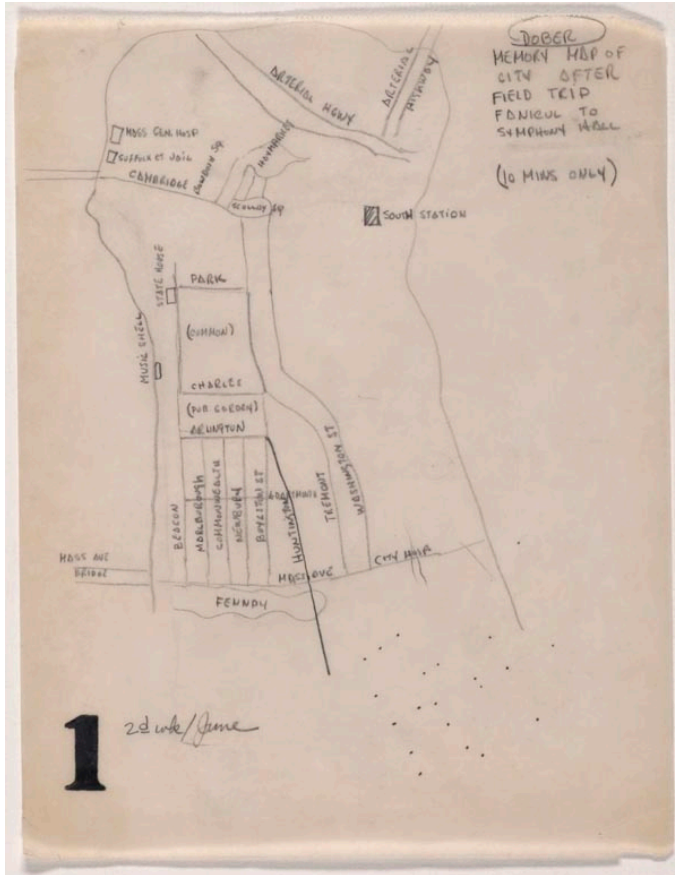


Figure 15, Boston Memory Map
 “Perceptual Form” Study
 1956

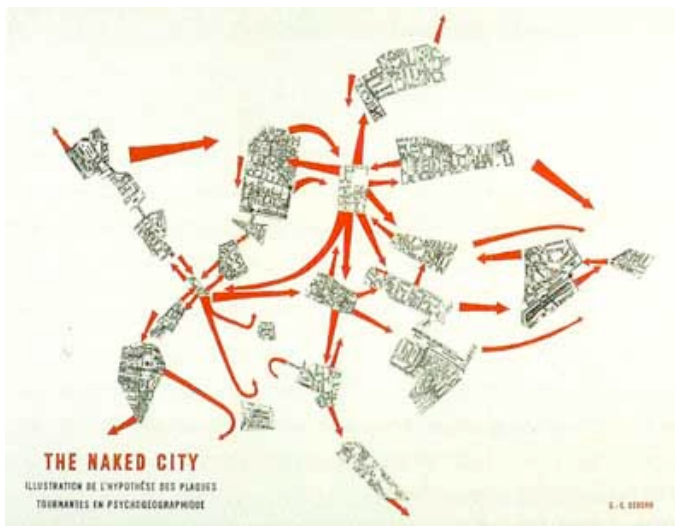


Figure 16, The Naked City
 Debord and Jorn
 1957

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Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

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Figure 7

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Figure 8

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Figure 9

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Figure 10

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Weil am Rhein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, 1998. 47.

Figure 11

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Figure 12

Nishan Bichajian, "Kepes, Lynch Photograph Set," (Rotch Visual Collections, Massachusetts
Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States)
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mit-libraries/3382616654/in/set-72157614966285159/>>

Figure 13

Nishan Bichajian, "Kepes, Lynch Photograph Set," (Rotch Visual Collections, Massachusetts
Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States)
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mit-libraries/3442159302/in/set-72157614966285159/>>

Figure 14

Nishan Bichajian, "Kepes, Lynch Photograph Set," (Rotch Visual Collections, Massachusetts
Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States)
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mit-libraries/3365836442/in/set-72157614966285159/>>

Figure 15

"Memory Map of City After Field Trip Faneuil to Symphony Hall: 1" Second week of
June between 1954 and 1959 (Perceptual Form of the City Files, Box 1, Kevin Lynch
Papers, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries.)

Figure 16

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