MHC 250   DESCRIBING CITY FORM

Lynch (1918 – 1989)

- Architect, urban designer, planner
- Author of seven books about the city
  - Image of the City (1960)
  - Managing the Sense of a Region (1976)
  - Good City Form (1981)
  - Fields of influence
    - architecture, urban design, planning, geography, computer science
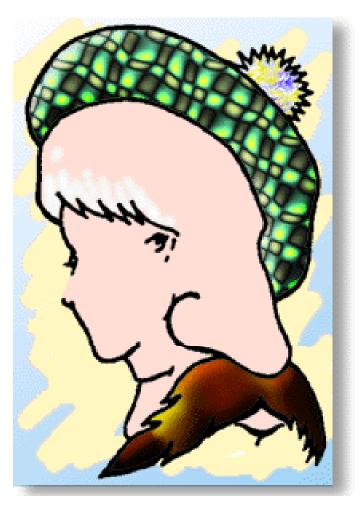
What makes a "good" city?

- The apparent clarity of a cityscape

    "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and organized into a coherent pattern"

- Why is legibility important?

- Does legilibility mean boring?

- How do you create a legible city?

How to create a legible city?

- Environmental images
  - a two-way relationship between the observer and her environment
- Three components
  - Identity
    - Identifying the object, distinguishing it from other objects as a unique entity
  - Structure
    - Deciphering the spatial or pattern relationship to other objects and to the observer
  - Meaning
    - Creating practical or emotional meaning to the observer

Identity, Structure and Meaning

Credits: Psychologist G.H. Fisher, 1968 "Mother, Father and Daughter."

Creating an imageable city

- Case Studies of central areas of:
  - Boston, Massachusetts
  - Jersey City, New Jersey
  - Los Angeles, California
- Area approximately 2.5 miles x 1.5 miles
- Sample (30 in Boston, 15 each in other cities)
- Two types of analyses
  - Systematic field reconnaissance of the area on foot made by a trained observer
  - Interviews with city residents which included sketches
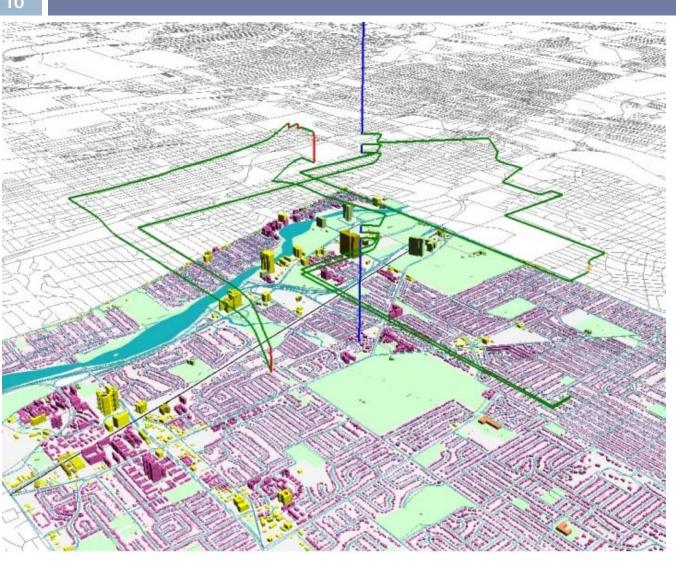
Paths

Edges

Districts

Nodes and Paths

Landmarks

The City Image and its Elements

- Paths
  - Channels along which the observer moves

- Edges
  - Linear elements not usually considered paths by the observer/user

- Districts
  - Medium to large sections of the city conceived of having a two-dimensional extent (homogeneous character)

- Nodes
  - Points, strategic spots in a city; junctions, crossing of paths, etc. urban cores,

- Landmarks
  - Landmarks are a point reference, orienting device, typically an observer does not enter them; a simply defined physical object

Image of the City/Main Points

- The five elements of city image are critical to understanding and explaining a city's imageability

- An imageable city is legible (its structure and identity are clear and meaningful to the viewer)

- City form can create certain emotions

- Elements can be used to in a conscious way to design "good spaces/places"