

especially of spatial ideas, despite our cultural downgrading of visual communication (a downgrading that may now be reversed, at least in a passive sense, for the current TV generation). Much can be read from amateur maps, in supplement to verbal comments, if one allows for common drafting difficulties. Drawings convey emotional tone as well as substance, just as actual speech does.

Whereas researchers worried over our methods, designers were fearful that these same methods might usurp their central creative skill—that a “science of design” might suddenly seize their territory. Image analysis would then lead automatically to form decisions, untouched by the free imagination. But their fears were quite unfounded. Analysis can describe a present situation and its consequences, and even—much more uncertainly—predict the consequences of some altered arrangement, but it is powerless to generate new possibilities. This is the irreplaceable power of the creative mind. Image studies, although they may threaten designer pretenses about how other people feel about places, are no more threatening to the central act of design than is an analysis of structure or of climate. On the contrary, perception studies could support and enrich design.

The most critical attack of all was that the study was overblown, if it meant to identify a basic principle of place quality. It focused on way finding, which was surely a secondary problem for most people. If lost in a city, one can always ask the way or consult a map. The study may have analyzed the nature of the way-finding image accurately enough. But it only assumed its importance and never demonstrated it. What do people care if they have a vivid image of their locality? And aren't they delighted by surprise and mystery?

This was a more direct hit. 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 knowledge, the satisfaction of identification with a distinctive home place, and the displeasure of being lost or of being consigned to a drab environment. Succeeding studies have continued to collect this indirect evidence. The idea can be linked to the role of self-identity in psychological development, in the belief that self-identity is reinforced by a strong identity of place and time. A powerful place image can be presumed to buttress group identity. The pleasures of perceiving a complex, vivid landscape are frequently experienced and recorded. Mature, self-confident people can cope with drab or confused surroundings,

but such places are crucial difficulties for those internally disoriented, or for those at some critical stage of their development.³ It is reasonable to think that a featureless environment deprives us of some very important emotional satisfactions. These convictions have been reinforced by many expressions of popular culture, as well as findings in psychology, art, and the sociology of small groups. (As to the role of surprise and disorder, I return to that below.) Nevertheless, it is true that this central assumption remains an assumption, however it may be shored up by anecdote, personal experience, or its connection to the structure of other ideas.

If these four criticisms—of sample size, method, design usurpation, and basic relevance—were the important ones made at the time, there were also other unremarked cracks in our structure, which only opened up later. The first, and most immediately dangerous, was the neglect of observer variation, which we passed over in order to show the effect of physical variation. This neglect was deliberate and explicit, as the role of visual form had been widely ignored, and it was also important to show that a given physical reality produces some common images of place, at least within one culture. Image variation among observers—due to class, age, gender, familiarity, role, and other such factors—was expected to be a finding of subsequent studies. Indeed, it was. Broader samples, such as those interviewed by Appleyard in Ciudad Guayana,⁴ made clear how social class and habitual use cause people to see a city with very different eyes.

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 the 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 all the rest. There was no attempt to reach out to actual inhabitants, because that effort would waste time and might be upsetting. 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 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