

Golledge and Moore's *Environmental Knowing*,<sup>11</sup> and Evans' review article, "Environmental Cognition,"<sup>12</sup> summarize this extensive work and lay out the current debates and preoccupations. The original findings have been extended, corrected, built upon, and superseded. In that sense, the work has fulfilled its function. That function was largely unforeseen, except for our hope of attracting perceptual psychologists to an interest in the urban environment. The work has become a small part of a much larger, and intellectually more fascinating, study of the nature of human cognition. Environmental psychology and cognitive geography are now well-established areas of concern in their general fields. Cognitive anthropology is maturing. The function of the human brain is the central mystery, and the study of humankind's perception of its environment has a valid place in it.

On the other hand—ironically—the early work has had only a minor impact on actual city design. Although researchers were quick to take up the idea, and many amateur city-lovers as well, fewer professionals have done so, saving only that early spurt, cited above. Those that have tried it in real situations report that the results are interesting, but hard to put to use. A soil survey or an analysis of a housing market leads quite easily into city design. Why should an analysis of the image of place, first motivated by design preoccupations, fail to do so?

One reason is that there are many mental images of the city. If one is concerned with an area used by many diverse people, it may be difficult to set out the common problems, and these problems may not be central to the concerns of any one group. Therefore, these techniques are more telling in smaller, more homogeneous communities, or in dealing with tourists, who are more dependent on overt visible clues. Yet, even in complex metropolitan areas, certain images are apparently very widely held.

I think that a deeper reason for this lack of application lies in the special place of aesthetics in our culture. Aesthetics is thought to be something separate from the rest of life (which it is not), and the perceptual form of something is believed to be solely an aesthetic issue (which it is not, either). Aesthetics can be considered a sacred issue—the highest goal of human activity once basic wants are satisfied. Or it may seem to be a secondary affair, subordinate to more fundamental needs. In either case, it is thought special, idiosyncratic, and not subject to rational debate. Thus, it is not an appropriate concern for public policy, or at least, it must be dealt with separately, gingerly, and at late stage of decision. Urban

design, which tries to deal with public aesthetic issues in conjunction with other "functional" issues (as if seeing were not functional!), holds only an uneasy position in this country. By custom and by institution, public policy at larger scales deals with economic and social ends, whereas perceptual questions are addressed at the level of small territories, or of single buildings. Decision makers often base their choices on a strong personal image of the environment, but this image is implicit and is not tested against others. Politicians do not base their campaigns on explicit sensuous issues, although such questions are often hidden motives in political battle, and even though there is the pervasive, inarticulate public response to the way localities look. 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 a gifted professional. It may even be no more than a visible gloss, applied to a development "package" to help it glide along the rails of decision. True city design—dealing directly with the ongoing sensed environment of the city, in collaboration with the people who sense it—hardly exists today.

This quirk in our view of the world 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. 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 underbody as safe as possible from defiling amateur hands.

Some attempts have been made to apply image surveys to city policy in this country, notably in San Francisco,<sup>13</sup> Dallas,<sup>14</sup> and Minneapolis.<sup>15</sup> These attempts are dissected in Yata's "City Wide Urban Design Policies."<sup>16</sup> They are not convincing examples of the effectiveness of this particular technique. More work has been done in other countries, notably in Japan, in Israel, and in Scandinavia. In this country, again, there is some application of the method in tourist areas, where images may equate with dollars, or at the local neighborhood level, where a settled and vocal group have an explicit stake in the quality of their surroundings.

But decision makers—and many professionals—still find the technique peculiar. Despite the continuing notoriety of the early study, it has been an enthusiasm of researchers in other fields, or of amateurs and contemplatives, or of beginners in the