

PARK PERCEPTION IN BROOKINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN COGNITIVE MAPPING

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1 ABSTRACT

The Image of the City (Lynch, 1960) provides a theory of how people perceive the built environment through cognitive mapping. According to Lynch, five major feature classes help to construct these mental maps: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. The mind organizes city features into these classes to simplify the encoding process. However, the role of parks and public spaces within this theory is largely undefined. This paper aims to identify this role. Initial research conducted by landscape architecture students at South Dakota State University showed that landscape features were largely absent from participants' cognitive maps of the university campus (Burger, 2018). This paper changes the scale of the SDSU study to examine whether this holds true for the cognitive maps of residents in Brookings, South Dakota. Participants were interviewed using a similar method to Lynch's study consisting of a mapping exercise, an oral description of their daily commute, an inquiry on their favorite place in Brookings, and follow-up demographic questions. The data was analyzed to indicate how many times parks were mentioned on individual surveys as compared to other mapped features. A content analysis of this data revealed that parks are fairly prevalent in cognitive perception, but the role they play within Lynch's theory varies greatly depending on the method of recall. Our hope is that the results of this study will open a discussion on the role of parks with regards to city perception and promote further research on the relationship between cognitive mapping and park design.

1.1 Keywords

Cognitive Mapping, Lynch, Parks, Wayfinding, People-Environment Relationships