Gdansk Shipyard – mental maps workshop

Methodology: what are mental maps?

Mental maps are graphic representations of individual understanding of spaces, surroundings and places. They are subjective constructs influenced by one's everyday activities, experiences, prejudices, emotions and cultural values associated with a particular place or area. The mechanism of individual interpretation of space plays a vital role when creating mental maps. When interpreting people usually simplify geographical or physical spaces that surround them. Thus, mental maps are usually abstract and no cartographic rules apply to them (fig. 1). A mental map shall reflect places/areas/spaces as one experiences them through all the senses; e.g. areas where specific odour can be smelled or certain noises can be heard can be indicated on the map. The more experiences/remarks/observations reflected on the map, the more complete this "imaginary" map is and the more valuable it is for further analysis.
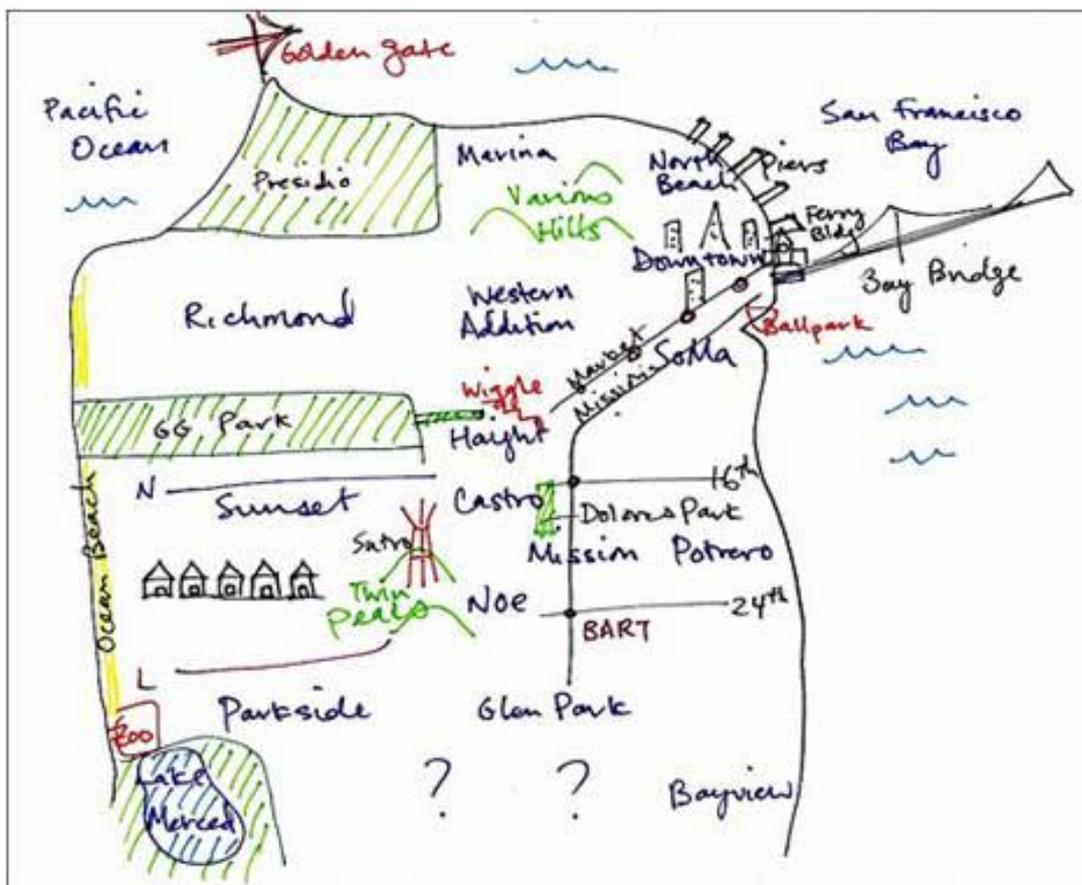

Fig. 1. A mental map of San Francisco
Source: *Visualizing Mental Maps…*, 2019

The first researcher to introduce the mental maps methodology was Kevin Lynch who published *The Image of The City* in 1960. In his publication he determined a set of five key categories of the analysis (fig. 2). They are as follows:

1. **paths**, i.e. the streets, walkways, roads, along which we move while observing the city. Paths form the basic frame of reference to other elements. Their direction, turns, continuity and unidirectionality determine the identity of the city;
2. **nodes**, which are treated as strategic spots in the city. They include crossroads, intersections of tram lines, squares, bus stops, underground stations, airports or railway stations. These are places which we enter and from which we set out while travelling around the city. Nodes are related to paths in terms of their crossing points and to districts in terms of places that epitomise a given area, concentrate its activity, being regarded as a symbol;
3. **landmarks**, i.e. physical objects, including buildings, stores, mountains, monuments, which are an external frame of reference making it possible for us to orient ourselves in the city. Landmarks are the most easily identifiable elements that stand in sharp contrast to the surroundings
4. **edges**, i.e. linear elements such as shores, railroads and walls, which are not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are barriers, more or less penetrable, which close one part of the city off from another;
5. **districts**, i.e. the medium-sized sections of the city. When we are in a district, we are aware of being "inside of it", while also recognising its distinct character. Districts are usually identifiable from the inside and, when seen from the outside, they allow us to determine their interconnections with other areas. This plays a vital role in structuring the image of the city.

PATH   NODE   LANDMARK   EDGE   DISTRICT
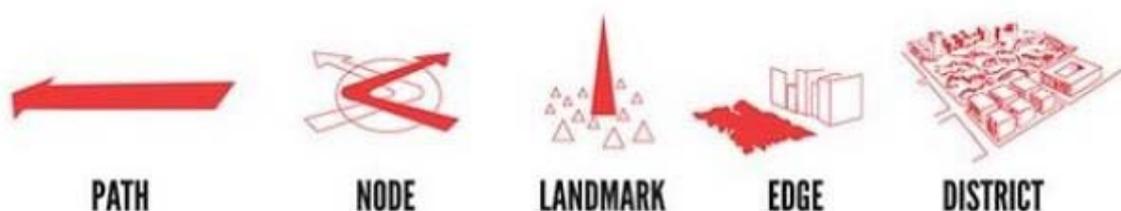
Fig. 2. Elements of a city by Kevin Lynch
Source: *Planning Tank*, 2019

Additionally, all the above-mentioned elements may be differentiated by using different drawing techniques or colours.

The task: workshop purpose, participants, agenda

The main objective of the workshop is gathering mental maps of the Gdansk Shipyard made by different groups of space users visiting the area. Those groups include: 15 students of the Fine Arts Academy in Gdansk, 15 students of Gdansk University, 6 artists taking part in the *Memory of Water* project and a group of former workers of the Gdansk Shipyard. In the first group (students and artists) there will be people who have never visited the shipyard

before and they have no experiences connected with this space – a special study tour will be organised for them.

Then, after a short introduction on the methodology all participants will draw mental maps. After finishing their work, they will be asked to comment on their maps. It will be a short interview during which each participant will describe his/her experiences connected with the task, difficulties with transferring emotions on the maps. They will also be asked to determine the most memorable objects or areas. Those interviews will be recorded and they can be used during a special exhibition of the created maps. Moreover, an article in English will be published, summarising the research done.