Ethnographic Research Methods
Contextual Inquiry Revisited

ID 405: Human-Computer Interaction
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What makes a good interviewer?

Context, comfort and curiosity
- Tell the interviewee why you're there
- Start with general questions about tasks and flows
- Follow up on interesting points
- Start with broad context before focusing on the product or technology

Active listening skills
- Look alert and interested; use open body language and provide eye contact
- Be comfortable with a moment of silence now and then

Effective Question Types

Open-ended questions

- A closed question usually receives a single word or very short, factual answer.
- Open questions elicit longer answers. They usually begin with what, why, how. An open question asks the respondent for his or her knowledge, opinion or feelings. "Tell me" and "describe" can also be used in the same way as open questions.
- Closed-ended questions however are good for confirming your assumption, clarifying a doubt or concluding a topic.
- A misplaced closed question, on the other hand, can kill the conversation and lead to awkward silences, so are best avoided when a conversation is in full flow.

Effective Question Types

Funnel Questions

o This technique involves starting with general questions, and then homing in on a point in each answer, and asking more and more detail at each level.

Q: Are you going to deliver a package?
A: Yes
Q: Where do you have to deliver it to?
A: I have to deliver it at IDC
Q: Do you know how to get there?
A: I don't exactly know. But I think it is near the arch
Q: How do you know that?
A: Oh I have seen it the previous time I was in the campus
Q: Seen IDC or the arch?
A: The arch
Q: How do you know IDC is near the arch?
A: I called up IDC office and they told me it is near the arch
....

Effective Question Types

Follow-up Questions

o Some follow-up questions can be prepared in advance of the interview, but, most often, they arise in the interviewers' mind in the midst of the interview itself.

> Q: Where do you want to go?
> A: I want go to the Mechanical department
>
> Q: Would you be coming again to the campus?
> A: Yes. I have to come again next week for a meeting

Effective Question Types

Probing Questions

o Asking probing questions is another strategy for finding out more detail or depth.
o Sometimes it's as simple as asking your respondent for an example, to help you understand a statement they have made.
o At other times, you need additional information for clarification.

Q: Did you find the address on the map?
A: Yes I think so
Q: So you now know the exact direction to get there?
A: Well actually no. I found out the general direction to go and the main road to take. After that I will ask along the way.
Q: What do you mean by "ask along the way"? Ask someone on the raod?
A: Oh no! I meant call up my contact who is expecting me and ask her for the specific direction.
Q: Do you always do that, or was the map not very helpful?
....

Effective Question Types

Leading Questions

o Leading the user in a certain direction, giving him/her the idea that there's a specific response that you're looking for.
o Leading questions are generally undesirable as they result in false or slanted information.

Q: Isn't it difficult to find places in the campus?
Q: What is experience of finding places in the campus?

Q: Do you find that there are not enough directions signs?
Q: What do you think of the directions signs?

Q: Wouldn't be great to have a smart phone app for campus navaigation?
Q: What do you think will help to better navigate the campus?

Effective Question Types

Loaded Questions

- Loaded questions are designed (deliberately or by accident) to do more than get straight answers. Typically they seek to change minds by coercive stealth rather than open inquiry.
- Loaded questions often contain assumptions, whereby the question is directed in a way that a straight answer needs that the person answering accept that which the questioner is assuming.

Q: How often have you lost your way in the campus?
(assumes you have lost your way at least once)

Q: *What is the most frustrating part of the campus map?*
(elicits a strong negative opinion)

Q: Are the IIT campus security people helpful in providing directions?
(a better question is, "How helpful are the IIT campus security people compared to other such security persons in providing directions?")

Effective Question Types

Hypothetical/predictive Questions

o   Avoid "Would you like this Ferrari?" type questions.
o   When you test a prototype or a new product with users they are almost all likely to answer 'yes' when you ask them whether would buy or use this product.
o   No one can (accurately) predict future behaviour and there are so many factors that will impact actual product usage, that asking 'would' questions will provide you with fairly meaningless insights in return.

Q: If we create a navigation app, would you use it?

Q: Would it be helpful if there were more direction sign boards?

Effective Question Types

Double barrelled Questions

o A double barrelled question is when you combine two questions into one, yet allows only for one answer.
o Keep the questions as short and specific as possible.

Q: How often and how much time do you spend on each visit to the IIT campus?

Q: Do you think that there is a good market for the product and that it will sell well?

Q: Should the government spend less money on the military and more on education?

Assignment review

Mental Maps
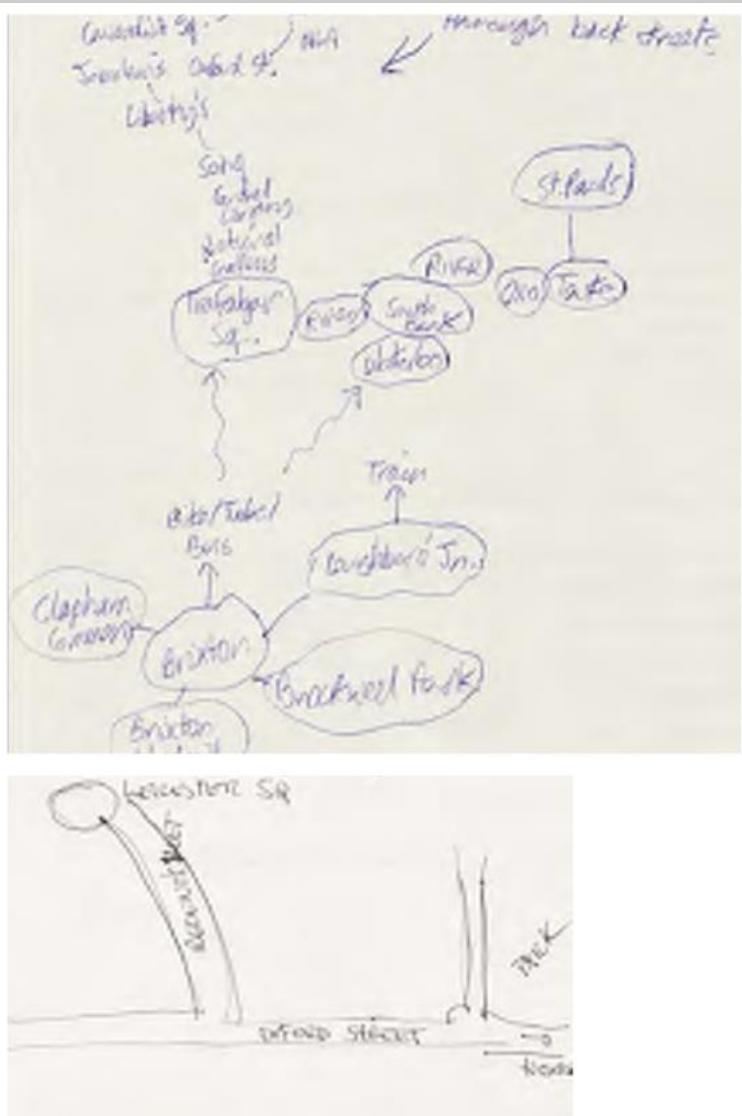
Linear
This mental map demonstrates the importance of backbone walking routes. Broad and reasonably straight, Fleet Street provides the perfect spine from which roads jut off to the north and south. Names are in the right order, but not geographically. The level of detail and familiarity with the street names suggests that the person responsible has worked in this area for some years.
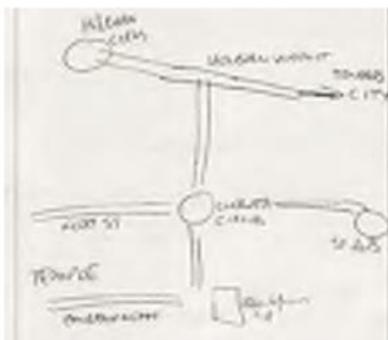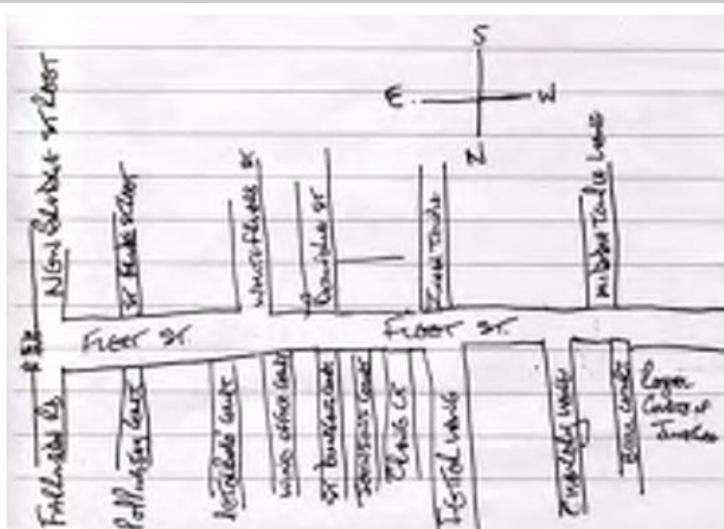

Stick and ball
This map is defined by destinations (drawn as circles and named) rather than the routes (drawn as parallel lines and left unnamed). It is probably influenced by the Tube map, and emphasises the arrival rather than the journey.

Human A–Z
Possibly the work of a professional. The level of detail is exceptional, with accomplished draftsmanship and a thorough understanding of geographical relationships. Note the number of important landmarks (to the author!)

Mental Maps
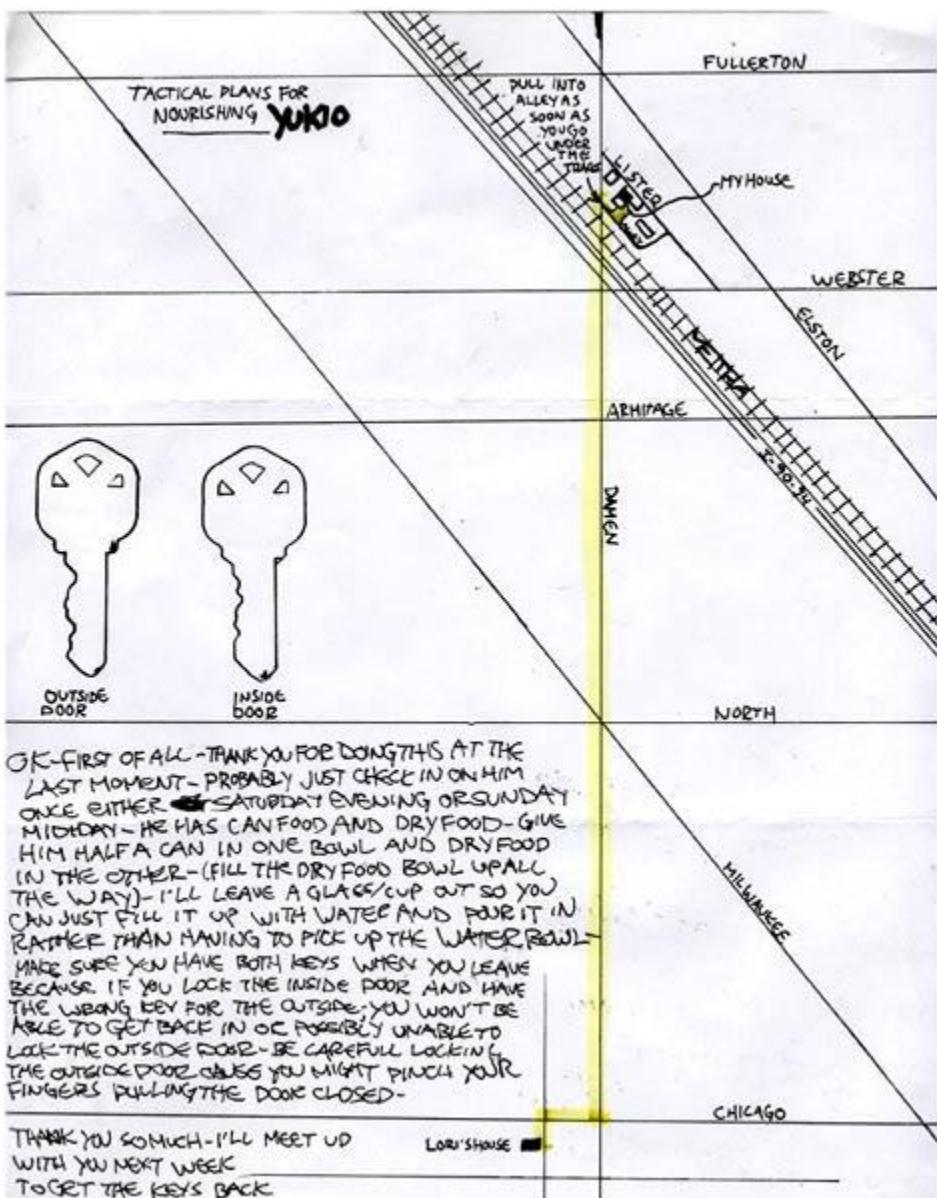
Mental Maps

o Where am I in the city?
o From here to there
o What's around here?
o Where I went and what I did

Mental Maps

- Individually tailored "Made for an audience of one." In a moment, ephemeral

- Taking note of people's intuitive strategies – as park planners might in some cities after the snow.

Directions

- Steps
- Intermediate goals
- Progressive disclosure

Efficient

- Edited, only necessary information
- Shorthand notation to accompany verbal description

Rotate and distort

- Orientation e.g. Riverside, seaside maps
- Geometry e.g. 'rectilinear correction'
- Scale
- Detail, 'granularity'

Supportive

- Annotated
- Error detection, "If you reach the toll road, you've gone too far"

THE IMAGE OF THE CITY

Kevin Lynch

What does the city's form actually mean to the people who live there? What can the city planner do to make the city's image more vivid and memorable to the city dweller? To answer these questions, Mr. Lynch, supported by studies of Los Angeles, Boston, and Jersey City, formulates a new criterion — *imageability* — and shows its potential value as a guide for the building and rebuilding of cities.

The wide scope of this study leads to an original and vital method for the evaluation of city form. The architect, the planner, and certainly the city dweller will all want to read this book.

What the reviewers have said:

". . . Kevin Lynch has come up with a readable, tautly organized, authoritative volume that may prove as important to city building as Camillo Sitte's *The Art of Building Cities*." — *Architectural Forum*

"City planners and urban designers everywhere will be taking account of his work for years to come . . . The importance of this book in the literature of urbanism is obvious . . . we have lacked a theory of the city's visual perception based on objective criteria. For some strange reason, in the period dating from the late 19th Century in Germany and lasting until Lynch's efforts . . . there was no experimentation in the matter of how cities are perceived. All of us can be grateful for the resumption of this line of thought. The impact of this volume should be enormous." — Leonard K. Eaton, *Progressive Architecture*

"This small and readable book makes one of the most important modern contributions to large-scale design theory . . . To understand Lynch's audacity, one must go back to 1953, the year when he began his studies in perception with a travel period in Italy. This was several years before all the 'urban design' conferences, before the coming of the phrase, and at a time when respectable planners were concerned with anything but the exploration of urban form. It took a rebellious young teacher . . . fired by the inspiration of F. L. Wright (his sometime mentor), to turn the tables on thirty years of planners' neglect." — David A. Crane, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*

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Lynch: The Image of the City

Kevin Lynch:
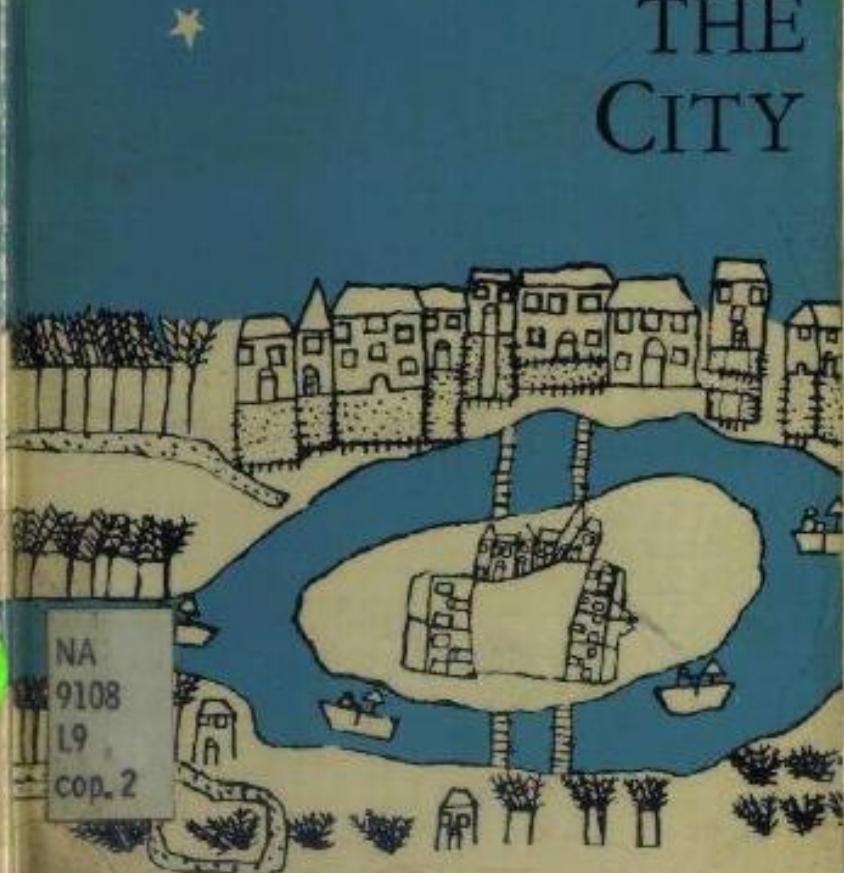
THE IMAGE OF THE CITY

The Image of the City

o Mental maps used by Lynch to isolate distinct features of a city and deduce their impact on public experience

o Imageability, or legibility, of a place has 5 elements:

     1. Paths   – routes
     2. Edges   – other lines eg. shoreline
     3. Districts   – realms
     4. Nodes   – foci, centres
     5. Landmarks