

The Image of Places

How to use cultural expressions and landmarks in rural areas



Off Season Art Gardening

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Content

1. Building the image.....	3
2. Structure and identity	4
2.1 Imageability	4
2.2 The city image and its elements	4
2.3 Landmarks	5
2.4 Element interrelations.....	5
2.5 The shifting image	5
2.6 Image quality	6
2.7 City form	6
2.8 Design the paths.....	7
2.9 Design of other elements	7
2.10 Form qualities.....	7
2.8 Disadvantages of imageability.....	8
3. How to use the method.....	9
3.1 Sence of Place Wadden area The Netherlands	9
3.2 Ukmergė Municipality Lithuania	10
3.3 Mariestad Municipality Sweden.....	13
4. Discussion	17

This report is inspired by the work done by Kevin Lynch, Lynch (1960), where the image of the city has focused on how to build cities for people to work and live in with respect for human needs, and logistical and practical care. The ideas taken from Lynch (1960) are here interpreted to fit more rural areas or non-urban areas in smaller cities and municipalities and places for reflection and retreat such as an island of sand surrounded by water. The angle of this interpretation also narrows down into how cultural entrepreneurship can help rural areas to attract visitors and broaden the views for their inhabitants, all for the benefit of citizen dialogue, investments and to identify resources for building sustainable competitive advantages.

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1. Building the image

“Every citizen has had long associations with some part of his city, and his image is soaked in memories and meanings”, Lynch (1960)

To understand how the ideas of the image of the environment can be used, an inventory must first be drawn up. Initially, it is easy to start in the centre of an area that should be examined. If there already are buildings there, start with the biggest one, like the old church on the hill, and expand the area of investigation. All impressions are experienced in relation to their surroundings, which is why it is useful to get an overview to be able to see, hear and experience with all the senses (as far as possible). What does the area look, sound and smell like, for example? Is there an architectural design that can be taken into consideration when building roads and more nodes for crossing streets, finding ways to modern “waterholes”? And what about the important element of nature? Can that be used to create harmony and wellness for the inhabitants and visitors? It is important to find elements that divide the area of investigation and its image; these may be different **nodes, districts, paths and landmarks.**

To get a feeling of a place and to create or change an image, it is important to understand how moving elements are structured, such as people coming and leaving big factories at certain times with traffic jams can be as important as understanding stationary physical parts (Lynch, 1960). Just think of how you yourself understand a place; it can be fragmented, mixed with memories from your childhood and with other places; seldom do you see the place as a whole image. The benefit of working with rural areas is that nature and the environment are close and can be sensed (for big cities there are more impressions about ugliness, bad air and concrete, far away

from green areas). The potential for places to be attractive for many people to stay, live and rest in are huge, but must be used wisely. In Japan, the expression “forest shower” is used for stressed city dwellers who need to recover and come into contact with nature again. In this project we will meet places in Sweden, The Netherlands and Lithuania, all of which offer a close connection with nature that will help build the image of the places.

To understand places, we can use different way-finding devices such as maps, street numbers, road signs and house signs (Lynch, 1960). In rural areas we find signposts for walking trails and virgin forests as complements for devices used in big cities. No one wants to get lost when visiting a city or a place, so making the surroundings easy to understand with patterns and signs is important for us to feel safe.

Creating environmental images requires a two-way process between an observer and his/her environment (Lynch, 1960). Depending on the observer’s needs and desires, selections of what is worth seeing and experiencing vary from person to person. The mental picture will gain identity and organisation through long familiarity. If a visitor meets objects in a place for the first time, the impression can be totally different from that of inhabitants who grew up in the place. Depending on what materials or designs are chosen, the observer will have different expectations regarding the standard and quality of the object, house, or decoration in a park, for example. How this is organised changes throughout the world, where culture and prerequisites of climate, landscape, sea, or forests create possibilities and limitations.

2. Structure and identity

To develop a place or an area, even if it is not possible to compare it with a big city, there is a need of structure and identity. To make a place understandable and relatable, it must be possible to navigate and to sense the place. This identity is built by the inhabitants, the visitors and rumours about the place, all glimpses of a whole.

2.1 Imageability

To understand how imageability can be used, the area needs to be investigated, for example by travelling the area by car from one end of the municipality to the other, taking pictures, making sketches, studying maps and interviewing people in the area, both inhabitants and visitors. The more you understand of the imageability of a place, the more you can participate in the development of the place.

2.2 The city image and its elements

The elements can be defined as follows (Lynch, 1960).

- Paths – channels along which the observer moves
- Edges – linear elements (not used as paths) where there are boundaries between two phases, for example railroad cuts
- Districts – medium-to-large sections for the city or place, which can be considered to have a centre (within the bigger area)
- Nodes – nodes are points where the observer can enter, for example junctions or street corners or a square
- Landmarks – point-references such as physical objects like churches, tall buildings, towers, and hills

2.3 Landmarks

In this project we use cultural interactions and interventions as landmarks, or to highlight areas which are already landmarks but might have been forgotten or be in the need of activation. Cultural interventions are both stationary and short-term installations made by mouldable material. The cultural interventions are included in the nature and interact with wind and the sun to reshape and change where the observer can follow the development of the place. Sounds and smells are important landmarks that can help the observer to orient him/herself, like the smell of the countryside; flowers like colza or manure in fields, sulphate in paper mills, the foundry and a hay harvest.

2.4 Element interrelations

All the available landmarks can be used as pieces to fulfil the environmental image of the city or the perspective of the place. Lynch (1960) claims that elements can be grouped with similar objects and then examined with regard to how some groups of elements can interact with other groups in the same area. The elements together can strengthen the image when seen as a whole. Some of the elements are probably more visible or large in appearance and can therefore strengthen or, if used on their own, reduce the prerequisites and qualities of other elements. Paths and nodes can strengthen the experience of the place for an observer since the pattern makes sense; it is possible to have an overview and it provides structure, safety, and parts of surprises. The cultural impact of planning movements in a place or a city is important since the experiences are helpful for observers to enjoy, experience and find lasting landmarks.

2.5 The shifting image

It is more common to find a set of images for the environment being examined (Lynch, 1960). Some of the images overlap and relate to each other. Since inhabitants experience the image of a place as children, teenagers and grownups, there are already different angles of perspective in the

light of their ages. What is more, the image may be preserved since the childhood and upon returning after several years elsewhere, the image can be disturbed from what the observer remembered and suddenly, they may not even recognize themselves. Places in the countryside are often grown from local farms, trade places, harbours or something similar, where the landscape itself provides the panorama to frame the place. However, there might not be architectural interventions with large scale programs with skyscrapers but more like windmill parks that really impact the local environment for the people living nearby. To understand how to develop places, it can be useful to look at older maps and see how patterns have changed over time.

“The map was rarely torn and sewn back together in another order. This continuity is necessary if the image is to be of any value”, Lynch (1960).

2.6 Image quality

Make sure that the images of the place are comparable. The quality of different images can be set from different criteria. Some images may show paths and nodes in detail, like aerial photography, or a sketch showing only a road or an abstract form of a vision. Therefore, the images can be set up in groups of structural quality.

- showing free elements with no structure or interrelation
- structure became positional where parts are related with directions or distance
- flexible structure with movements of elements (can be confusing)
- maps help observers to move within an area where connections multiply so the total structure of the area can be described with images in different hierarchical order.

2.7 City form

“The visual environment becomes an integral piece of its inhabitants’ lives”, Lynch (1960).

When developing or creating a city or a place, there are possibilities to forming the new ideas into an imageable landscape that is visible, coherent, and clear (Lynch, 1960). Since places have multi-purposes and shifting organisations, there may be different functions and, in the best of worlds, also a response to the citizens’ desires and needs. Lynch(1960) claims that there are fundamental functions regarding how the city forms can be expressive: circulation and movements, major land-uses, and key focal points. When the practical and emotional parts are in concert, it becomes a true place that is remarkable and unmistakable. To understand how to examine a place, there is an inventory of almost oppressive strengths; like how the streets are designed and what material is used (limestone, exotic wood and iron, among others). The central area will be studded with landmarks, where each one has its own history and name. If the place is old and not filled with visible landmarks, it may be re-furnished with ancient but newly-produced landmarks. In what

used to be the Soviet Union, there has been destruction of churches, for example, that had been rebuild after the second world war, important landmarks for the citizens that are more than just buildings, they are signs of freedom and their own culture. The place that develops should be used in the best sense, made by art and shaped for human purposes.

2.8 Design the paths

Characters should be applied to give paths continuity. Aligning different paths with each other consists of habitual or potential lines of movement through a place or an urban complex. The paths must be marked off, compared to other lines, roads or similar routes where different qualities are given. Some examples are lighting patterns, unique set of smells or sounds, plants or a shopping street, or connections to landmarks like a building or an area. Lines of motions must have clarity of direction to help the observer to find their way. Different gradients can help the observer to plan the route, like up or down; arrows and colour codes can be used to help visualize the paths. In rural areas it is easier to plan the movements since there are not so many junctions or roads to cross, but there is still a need for clarity and simplicity. Paths for walking, hiking, cycling and also for vehicles can be developed to harmonise better in rural areas, even paths for horses are built in the city plan in some areas (see example in Skövde municipality in Sweden, where the riding school has its path directly in one part of a new build city structure of houses and schools).

2.9 Design of other elements

Edges are important to display where paths or landmark end or change. Instead of being viewed as a barrier, they can help to stitch areas together. One way of increasing the visibility of an edge is by increasing its accessibility, as when opening a waterfront to traffic or recreation, or making overhead edges like a bridge, visible from long distances (Lynch, 1960). Landmarks must not be huge buildings, they can be natural shapes like dunes, they can be small objects, but their location is crucial. Certain zones receive more perceptual attention than others, which can be floor surfaces, nearby facades at or slightly below eye-level (Lynch, 1960). Often the design of one area is homogeneous in its spatial quality but can be linked to the next area that is not designed in the same way; different links can therefore be used as landmarks.

2.10 Form qualities

Common themes can run through the set of an area where urban design is developed. The design can simplified and consist of the following.

- Singularity of figure-background, where sharpness of boundary is noticed

- Form simplicity gives clarity and simplicity of visible form in the geometric sense
- Continuity where edges or surfaces are linked to each other (like street-corners)
- Dominance shows what landmark/form has greater impact than others by means of size, intensity, or interest
- Clarity of joint – high visibility of joints and seams to navigate movement
- Directional differentiation gives information about asymmetries, gradients and radial references (uphill, to the sea, and so on)
- Visual scope – hot qualities can increase the range and penetration of vision, actually or symbolically
- Motion awareness, both visual and kinaesthetic senses by the observers own actual or potential motion (like a sharp bend)
- Time series – series sensed over time where elements are aligned with each other
- Names and meaning – non-physical characteristics that can enhance the imageability of an element (names like South Station hint to where the location is)
- The above qualities work most in a context and can stand alone when planning the development of an area or a place. Repetition and clarity are needed to plan movements in an area to help the observer to navigate with interest, safety, and curiosity.

2.8 Disadvantages of imageability

Just to reflect on the development and usage of imageability, it is wise to understand its limitations or possible disadvantages. A highly visible environment may have its disadvantages (Lynch, 1960). For example, an area or landscape filled with magical meanings may inhibit practical activities (for example landing-places are forbidden in New Zealand since the area is of mythical import for the Maori, or other places recognized as sacred). In some cases, there may be like tourist magnets, for example, the New Forest area in the south of Great Britain, where sensitive moorland is “invaded” by people who want to use the place as a gathering for witches. If the understanding of cultures can be broadened, there may be compromises about how to use land areas by being more open-ended in analysing the environment with new meanings and new poetry, which leads to the use and control of outside forms and their influences (Lynch, 1960). In China, for example, some areas must be handled carefully due to the presence of an evil wind and spirits. Possible interpretations together with understanding of folklore and the culture in specific areas are crucial to finding solutions for the practical modern use of an area while taking into consideration the long-standing traditions of its inhabitants.

3. How to use the method

For those who are interested, there is an interview sheet developed with a battery of questions that can be used for the specific area that you would like to examine (see Lynch, 1960 page 140-143). The questions cover the observers' views and impressions of how they travelled, how they experienced the area, and so on. The summary of all the answers provides guidelines for areas of improvement and areas that are appreciated – a good background for development projects for a place or an area. In this report, three areas are described more briefly with the purpose of showing rural areas using cultural expressions as landmarks and how the images of the places are worked with. The areas/places are the Wadden area in the Netherlands, Ukmergė Municipality in Lithuania and Mariestad Municipality in Sweden.

3.1 Sense of Place Wadden area The Netherlands



Art piece at Wadden area (Svensson, 2020)

Sense of Place renders the invisible visible: the slow, unstoppable processes which characterises the Wadden Area; the beauty of this stunning UNESCO World Heritage and its almost-forgotten history. Cultural landscape projects such as this serve to rediscover and enhance these phenomena. Sense of Place is dedicated to raising awareness among the Dutch public of the rich nature, landscape and cultural history of the Wadden Area (UNESCO world heritage) by staging cultural landscape projects. The secondary purpose of these projects is to boost the local economy and strengthen the local social fabric.

In addition to staging its own projects, Sense of Place often also supports initiatives by local communities and helps them to bring these to fruition. These projects respect the area's culture and natural environment and tell a story of the location and scenery. Through these varying interventions in the landscape, the various locations add to the appeal of the area and imbue it with meaning: A Sense of Place.

A variety of cultural landscape projects has been scheduled for the next several years, ranging from Den Helder to the Dollard bay in the Wadden Sea, on the islands, and on land. Artists, landscape architects, researchers, residents, users, NGOs, businesses, and governments are all brought together to engage in innovative landscape development with a high level of cultural integration.

Source: <https://www.sense-of-place.eu/en/over-ons/>

3.2 Ukmergė Municipality Lithuania



Administrative centre – Ukmergė

Area – 1395 km² (14.3% of the county's area)

Population – 45 868 (5.4% of the county's population)

Wards – Deltuva, Lyduokiai, Pabaiskas, Pivonija, Siesikai, Šešuoliai, Taujėnai, Ukmergė town, Vepriai, Vidiškės, Želva, Žemaitkiemis



Dog Keksas from Ukmergė (Svensson, 2020)

The largest part of the **Ukmergė district municipality** is situated on the Aukštaičiai Upland and Plateau, its northern part – on the Nevėžis Lowland. The uplands are separated from the lowlands by the Šventoji River, with tributaries the Siesartis and Armona. There are the Berzgainiai historical landscape, Armona geological, Barnėnai and Kintynė botanical (cranberry) reserves. There are about 30 lakes (the largest – Lėnas, Žirnai and Siesikai) and 2 ponds. Soils are mainly light loam and turfy, suitable for agriculture. Mixed forests are predominant; the largest forests – those of Taujėnai, Šešuoliai, Viliukai and Siesikai. Agricultural land makes up 54%, forests – 31.8%, roads – 2.2%, built-up area – 2.4%, water bodies – 2.6%, other land – 7% belongs to the municipality.

There is one town – Ukmergė, and ten townships – Deltuva Lyduokiai, Pabaiskas, Siesikai, Šešuoliai, Taujėnai, Vepriai, Vidiškiai, Želva, Žemaitkiemis. The centre of the district municipality – Ukmergė – is one of the oldest settlements in Lithuania, built in 1255 by Duke Dausprungas. In 1791, it was granted Magdeburg rights. Until World War I, the town was called Vilkmėrgė.

The town is an important transport centre. At all times, Ukmergė was an industrial centre, famed for its cabinetmakers, metalworkers, and light industry workers.

Ukmergė town is crossed by the Šventoji River, on the right bank of which is the Ukmergė castle mound and the Old Town of Ukmergė, which is a monument of urban development.

Important architectural monuments – the church of Sts. Peter and Paul the Apostles, a synagogue, the railway station building. The town is next to the Pivonija wood.



New renovated area close to the river Sventoji, (Svensson, 2020)

Ukmergė district is a region of Lithuania that is rich in its historical past and prospective future. It is surrounded by lakes, forests, cosy villages, castle mounds, mansions, characterised by a distinctive landscape, tied together with the blue ribbon of the Šventoji River. The past is reminded of by Ukmergė, Šinkūnai, Juodausiai, Bartkūnai, Sukiniai and other castle mounds, Taujėnai and Daugailiai mansions and parks, the church of St Bartholomew the Apostle, the church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Taujėnai, the Evangelical Reformed church in Deltuva, and the belfry of the Šešuoliai church. In 1435, a battle between the armies of Sigismund Kęstutian (Žygimantas Kęstutaitis) and Švitrigaila took place at Pabaisk. The village of Užulėniai is the homeland of the first president of Lithuania, A. Smetona.



Girl with wolf, Wilkmerge statue in Ukmergė (Svensson, 2020)

Source http://regionai.stat.gov.lt/en/vilniaus_apskritis/ukmerges_rajono_savivaldybe.html

3.3 Mariestad Municipality Sweden



Mariestad Municipality is a municipality in Västra Götaland County in western Sweden. Its seat is located in the city of Mariestad. The city was founded in 1583 by Duke Charles (hertig Karl son of king Gustav Vasa) and the city was named after his wife Maria af Pfaltz.

The current municipality was formed in 1971, when the *City of Mariestad* was amalgamated with four surrounding rural municipalities. The number of inhabitants was 24,537 in December 2019. Area: 1,503 km². The city was during many years a city of administration where the residence was used by the local governor. The area is also characterized as a working society with big factory buildings where production of paper among others has a long tradition in the area.



Mariestad with dome and artist piece Chrysalis by artist Ulrika Jansson (Svensson, 2020)

The five building blocks of the vision that Mariestad municipality work with:

The vision consists of five different building blocks. Below you can read about these building blocks.



Mariestad - the proud lake town

In 2030, we will be an attractive "living city". We take full advantage of our unique location, with a living archipelago and the soothing canal as obvious starting points. We have built on the harbour area, which is now teeming with activities for all ages. Bathing and boating attract visitors from near and far with new, unique attractions. Across the municipality, the marine element is very noticeable – not least in business and education.



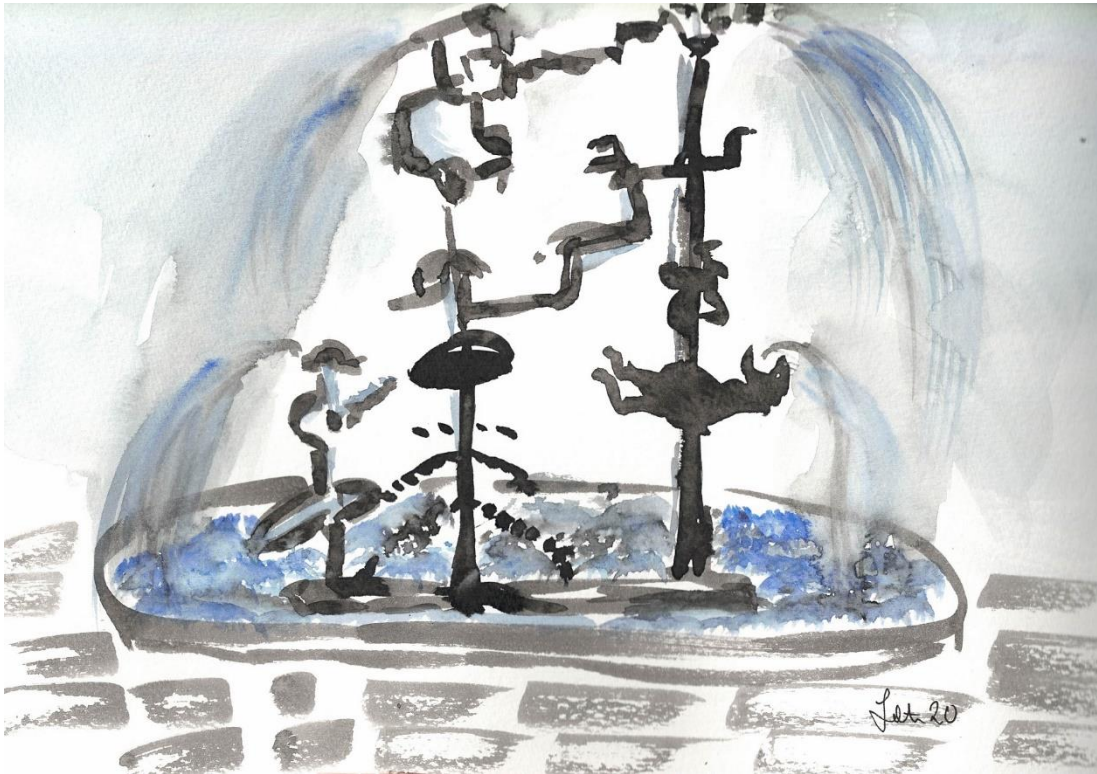
Mariestad - center for garden crafts

In 2030, we will be a thriving municipality in every sense. We have become the entire Nordic region's leading centre for garden crafts, which is reflected in the beautiful park environments and gardens throughout the municipality.



Mariestad - a leader in the craft academy

By 2030, we will be a well-known and reputable university city that attracts thousands of students from all over the world – with unique educations, groundbreaking research and spin-off knowledge companies that quickly take root in an environment that welcomes entrepreneurship and innovation. Through its collaboration with the university, the upper secondary school's vocational education will have become Sweden's leader.



Vänerskutan – landmark in Mariestad center (Svensson, 2020)



Mariestad – international model area

In 2030, we will have highlighted the biosphere reserve's opportunities as an international model area for sustainable development; we will have created the conditions for a high quality of life in nature, where a safe living environment, ecotourism and entrepreneurship are important elements. We are an attractive municipality with strong growth, both in rural areas and in the smaller communities, as well as in the city centre.



Mariestad - a natural meeting place

In 2030, Mariestad will be a natural meeting place. Close and fast communications with the big cities will play an important role, as will exciting conference environments that reflect our unique benefits and provide space for new thoughts and ideas. We will be open to new impressions and new people. We will have an expansive business community and thriving tourism.



Fishing by Lake Vänern at Årnäs, Lugnås (Svensson, 2020)

Source: <https://mariestad.se/Mariestads-kommun/Kommun--politik/Vision-2030.html>

4. Discussion

The image of places is inspired by the work of Lynch (1960) where the focus was to bring order and stability to big cities in the USA. My interpretation of his work can be used to develop rural areas where the infrastructure is pretty much given, the landscape is directly connected to nature and it is extremely importance for people's wellbeing. To increase interest in rural areas and help those areas to develop, the tool of cultural interventions has been used. Many skilled artists have worked together with officials in municipalities, NGOs and universities to make changes in local places. Both physical and long-lasting elements have been built and other more perishable artwork has been presented. Behind all this is the idea of sustainability, wellness and the chance for the people walking the paths and visiting those places to reflect and react. It is important to

promote such rural areas and help their firms to flourish in authentic ways that create sustainable competitive advantages (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Porter, 1980). The combination of resources needed to find and develop location-type factors that are strategic resources for non-urban firms (such as in joint activities) can lead to co-produced, sustainable competitive advantages, not only for single companies but also for the regional community. The linkages between the development of a region and that of different companies can be understood as joint cooperation among local actors (Svensson, 2012, 2016). The image of the place helps us to navigate and to develop the movements needed for observers living and visiting rural areas of interest for the future.

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- Source: <https://mariestad.se/Mariestads-kommun/Kommun--politik/Vision-2030.html>
- Source: http://regionai.stat.gov.lt/en/vilniaus_apskritis/ukmerges_rajono_savivaldybe.html
- Source: <https://www.sense-of-place.eu/en/over-ons/>

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