The Cognitive Mapping of The City Through Its
Mass Rapid Transit System

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ABSTRACT

Kevin Lynch has always emphasized through his written works that better planning, design and management of environments could be undertaken for people if they were done with people. Therefore by attempting to understand people’s preferences, perceptions and images toward their environments, planners and designers will then be able to plan and design adequate environments that benefits the people.

In many high-density cities like Hong Kong, Tokyo and Singapore, rapid transit is the main form of public transport. For Singapore, it aims to cover its entire island in a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) network by the year 2030. In the future, most people will then be moving around the city by the MRT and much of the city will be experienced through the MRT system.

In order to better design the future city of Singapore which will be network dominated, we need to first understand the current cognitive map of the city of MRT users now, from which the pros and cons of the present mental map will be used to perfect future urban plans.
Information on the current city perceptions of MRT commuters was obtained through surveys done with 120 frequent MRT commuters. The survey attempted to unveil 3 main parts of the cognitive map that commuters had of the city. First, is the mental image of the city as perceived from the MRT network. Second, is whether people had a better sense of location of places through the MRT network. Last, is the cognitive distance perception on the MRT network.

From the survey information, analyses were made and to the end, implications to the survey analysis were suggested, mainly relating to urban planning and design issues.

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