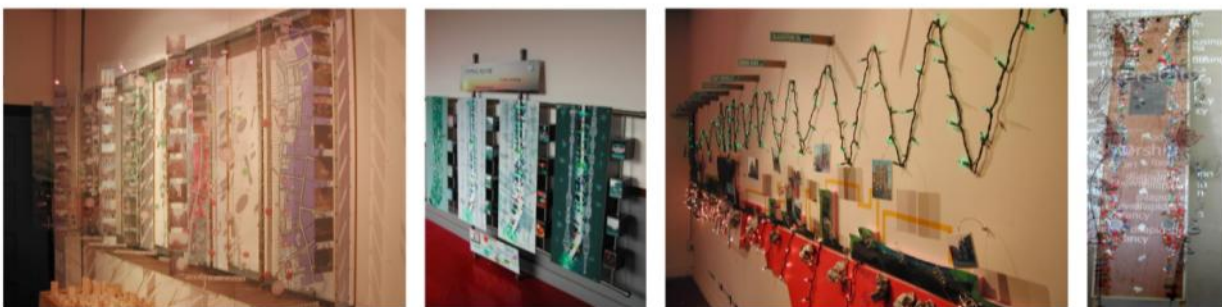


Mental Mapping as Design Initiator of Studio Projects

The world and the cities not only consist of objects but also of our images of them. In design studios at architecture schools there are many specific ways of looking at spaces and analyzing cities as an initiator for design ideas. Besides conventional mapping exercises like plan, section, elevation, sun diagram, etc. it is worth to investigate the impressions and images of our physical surroundings in a subjective way - that is what we call mental mapping, cognitive maps or diagramming space.

Cognitive map is the term used to refer to one's internal representation of the experienced world and includes the various processes used to sense. Cognitive or mental maps also gather "knowledge" via our senses and direct experience of a location. Mental maps and diagrams are a mixture of fact and interpretation, a combination of direct and indirect. Mental maps are not like printed-paper maps with accurate directions and distances, and they seldom stay simple.

The modalities of the diagramming can include vision, hearing, smelling, tasting, texture, and temperature. Understanding how different people view the same places and spaces individually can help students to recognize assets and liabilities of a space, interpret potentials of a location, approach it in their own particular way and find their own design idea. They then not only understand "hard" factors of a certain space like material, topography, location, size, distance, patterns, and climate but also "soft" factors like atmosphere, perception, changes over time, history, memory, emotions, events, culture, fashion, language.



Mental mapping exercises broaden the students' analytical and problem solving skills, and enable them to think about urban design, space and architecture in an imaginative, creative and experimental way.

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