

Conceptual Landscapes on Skidmore

A space is not simply a space. In *The Image of the City* Kevin Lynch argues that “environmental images are the result of a two-way process between the observer and his environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer - with great adaptability and in the light of [their] own purposes - selects, organizes and endows with meaning what [they] sees” (Lynch, 1960:6). Cities are unique environments with spaces that foster diversity through the exchange of cultures and ideas and diverse identities. We understand university campuses as a microcosm of an urban center. Both cities and colleges have high

accessible and easy to navigate, Skidmore College uses its green space effectively, I often think about the environmental impacts of my actions.

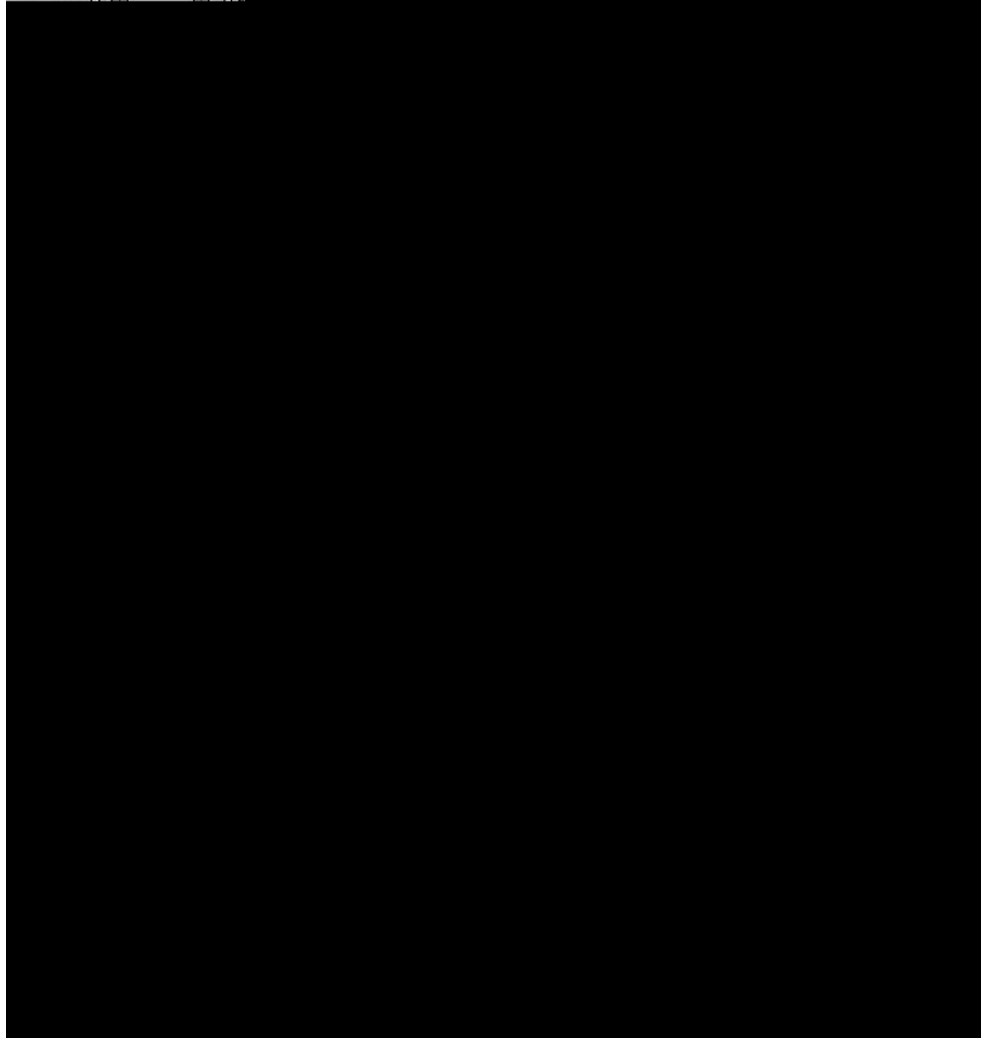
The Likert Scale may provide an imperfect measure of feelings, as individuals often have difficulty placing authentic feeling on a numerical scale (Jamieson, 2004). However, we

how much time they spend outside and whether or not they consider the environmental impacts of their actions, participants' illustrated their environmental ethic. The majority of Environmental Awareness Surveys and Interviews noted that individuals were unsure of how much time they spent outside on average because the amount of time fluctuated so much depending on the season. In the winter, very few individuals noted that they spent anytime outside, while in the spring and summer, individuals craved the outdoors and would make time to go outdoors everyday. The environmental ethic of participants was shown through their response to whether they think of the environmental impact of their actions. The majority of participants found that they actively thought of the environmental consequences of their actions, and in further questioning, the participants noted that the Skidmore Community is, overall, aware of the environmental costs or benefits of their actions.

The notion of accessibility created a tension in our findings and results. The Environmental Awareness Survey forced participants to choose answers that fell within a numerical system; however, their answers to the same notion of accessibility and ease of navigation often differed. Accessibility, in terms of able-bodiedness, was not what most thought of during the Environmental Awareness Survey process. Though in the interviews, when participants had more time to think on their responses, there were discrepancies between Survey responses and Interview responses. The campus was thought to be accessible and easy to navigate on the Surveys, but during Interviews the majority of participants noted that the campus would be incredibly difficult to get around if physically disabled. Also, there were conflicting responses about the ease of travel across campus and the effectiveness of the existing pathways.

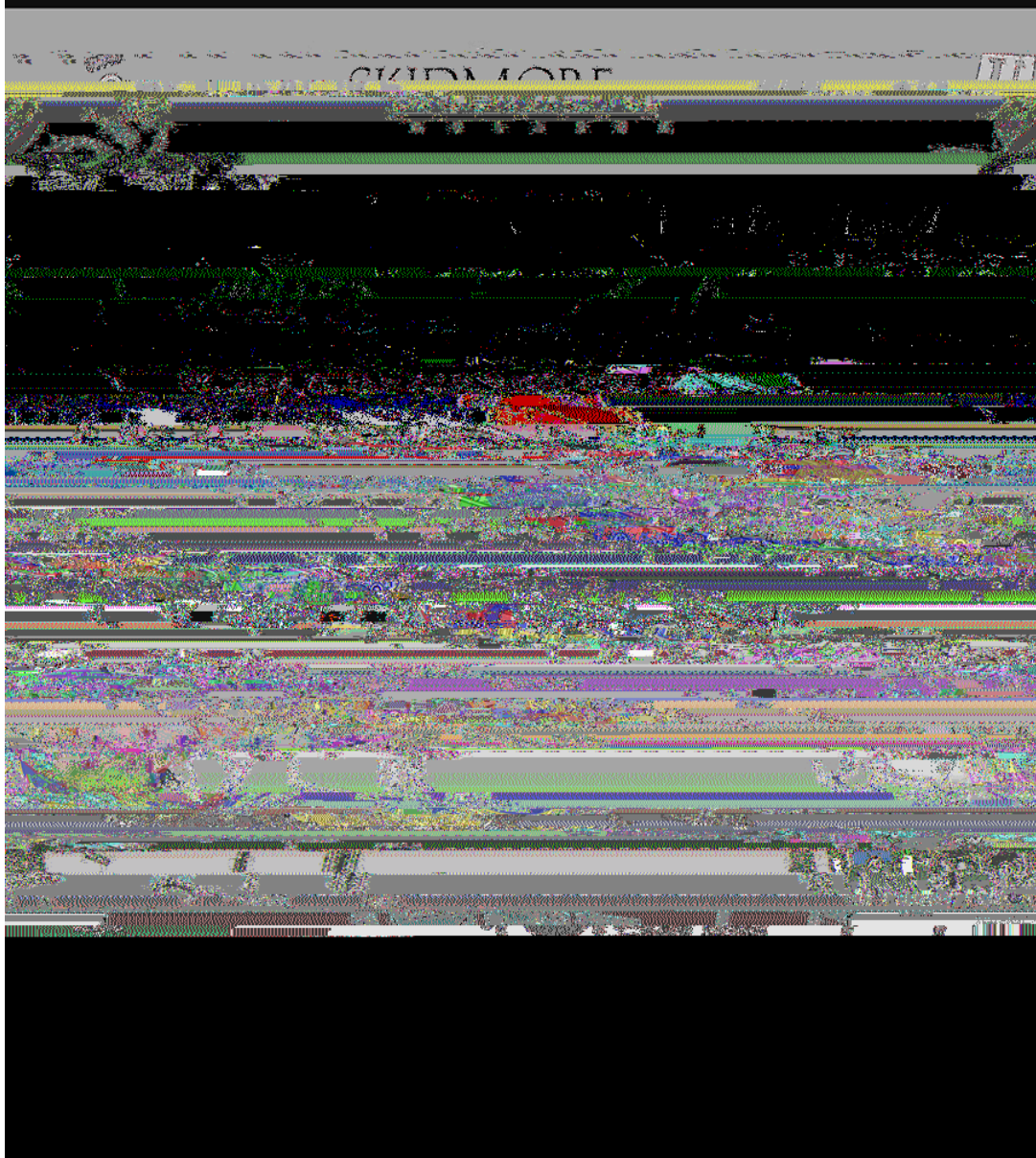
Results

Each map showed unique clusterings of dots based on responses from the three prompts. Clusters consist of four dots or more in a specific area. Areas with less than four dots were deemed insignificant to our study. The first map, areas best suited for picnic tables, had 138 responses showing five areas with significant clustering (indicated in red). There were 27 dots by Haupt Pond, 9 dots on the Library Green, 7 dots on Case Green, 5 dots in the wooded area outside of Burgess/Case Center and 4 dots in the North Woods.



The second map, avoided or unfrequented areas, had 76 responses showing three areas with significant clusters (indicated in yellow). There were 15 dots placed by North Hall, 9 dots by the Broadway Entrance and 8 in the area between Zankel and JKB Theater.

The third map, areas that should be improved, had 66 responses showing six areas with significant clusters (indicated in blue). There were 8 dots placed by Haupt Pond, 7 dots on Case Green, 7 dots in the space between Ladd and Wilmarth, 7 dots on the Library Green, 4 on the green between Dana Science Center and Saisselin Art Building, and 4 in the space by JKB Theat(s) -0.2 , 4 on the



The purple areas are where the points of preference overlap and bring attention to spaces that could be made more effective and better utilized. An emerging trend we found is that places that participants look for improvement greatly overlap with the spaces marked as spending the most time. These areas include the pond, case green, and dining hall that are all are favored and indicated that need improvement. Responses showed that case green and the library green might be improved and made more effective with something as simple as picnic tables, adirondack chairs, or hammocks. The benefit of adirondack chairs is that people can pick up chairs and change the space to tailor the space to an activity. Another trend that appears with the overlapping maps is that where people want picnic benches are also where people indicated where they never go and looking for improvement. These spaces are more or less frequented in relation to the season. The Skidmore community also pointed to the inaccessibility for people with disabilities to get around campus. For example, getting from the Northwoods Apartments to the Tang is nearly impossible, requiring people to go all the way around Case Center. Participants also mentioned the flickering lights by Zankel and poorly planned paths going

through Dana Green. A complete list of recommendations from the points of preference maps are in Appendix C.

Methodology

Mental mapping is a qualitative research technique well suited for describing the social constructions associated with a particular landscape. The technique asks participants to draw an

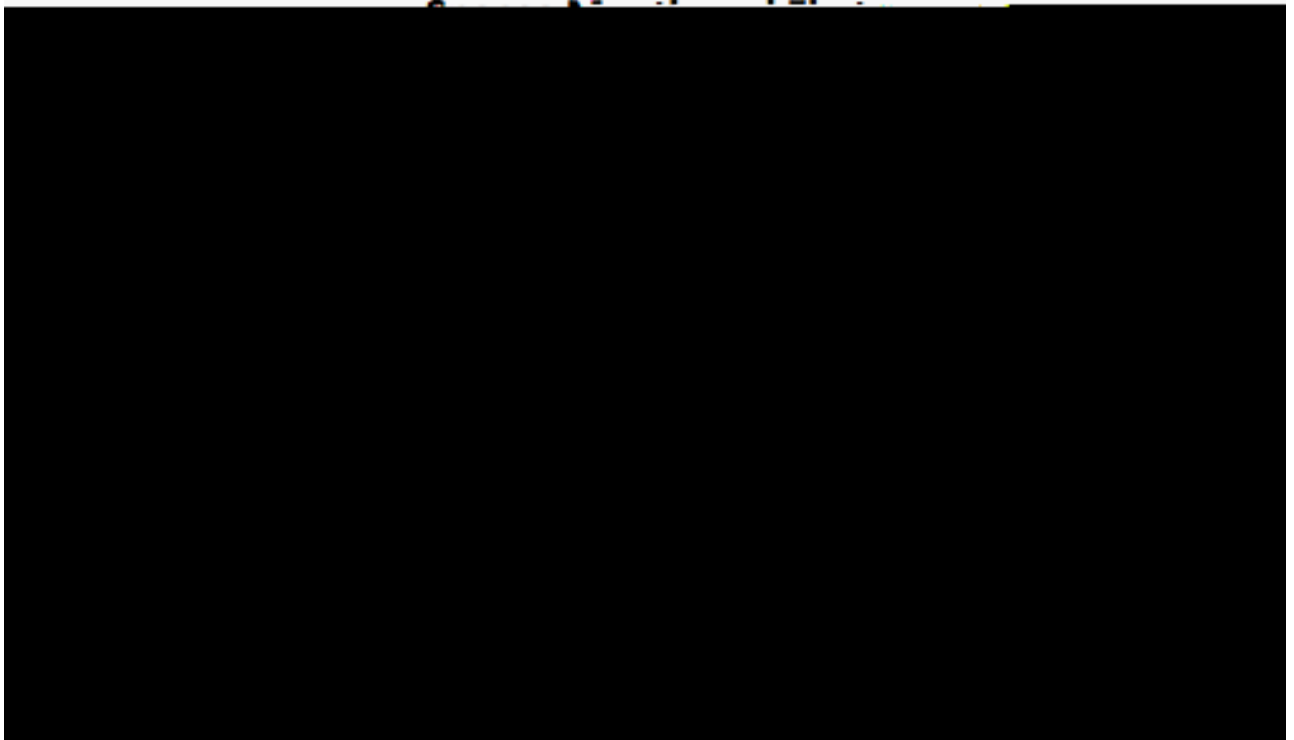
Example of Mental Map: Xavier '14

To analyze the data gathered through the 75 mental maps, we input all of the spaces mentioned by participants into an excel sheet. We then acknowledged the spaces on campus that were mentioned the highest number of times. Based on the number of times each space was mentioned in participants' mental maps, we exaggerated the sizes of the spaces to create a cartogram of the campus. Cartograms "distort a geographical map by distorting the area of a region according to some variable of interest (e.g. population) while keeping the map, as much as possible, recognizable" (Henriques, Bacao, and Lobo, 2009).



Mental mapping allowed us to rank the top spaces mentioned by our participants. The Dining Hall was mentioned in 88% of the maps that were drawn, with a total of 66 mentions. The Academic Buildings, Case Center, Library, Dorms and the North Woods were the next most frequently mentioned spaces on campus. There were a total of 38 spaces mentioned in the 75 mental maps we collected.

We also noted the spaces that participants drew first in their maps and counted the number of times those spaces were mentioned first. The Library was drawn first in 36% of the mental maps. Perimeter road was the second most frequently drawn first space. Perimeter road was drawn first in 22% of the mental maps. The Dining Hall was the third most frequently drawn space, and was depicted in 20% of the mental maps.



There were a total of 27 spaces that were indicated as favorite spaces on campus. The Dining Hall was favored the most as was stated in 37% of the mental maps. The Case Green, the

There were 33 spaces that were mentioned as needing improvement. The spaces that were indicated as spaces that need improvement the most frequently were the Academic Buildings, Case Center, Case Green, and the Library. The Academic Buildings were indicated as needing improvement in 17% of the mental maps, and Case Center, Case Green and the Library were mentioned as needing improvement in 20.7% of the mental maps.

Discussion

Cognitive maps act as “frames” for individual’s conceptualization of space, allowing for feelings and emotions to be visually quantified. By asking participants to create mental maps, we

recognition of the spaces. Outdoor spaces are often more difficult to label as there are no well-known names of many spaces; however, outdoor spaces that were more heavily utilized or well known like Case Green, the North Woods, or the Pond were mentioned frequently. Unlabeled outdoor spaces are significant in demonstrating that there are spaces that exist in the core of campus that are not well utilized. The green space in between Wilmarth and Ladd, for example, was never specifically drawn or labeled when participants drew a map of the campus. Skidmore may consider developing or improving that space, rather than expanding the campus outwards.

The spaces that participants used to begin their mental maps are significant for a myriad of reasons. Where a participant initially conceptualizes their mental image of a three-dimensional space represents a symbolic representation of Skidmore: the participant's home, the center of the campus, the most important part of campus, or the boundary of campus. Based on the information from the mental maps, we see that most people began with the Library, the Dining Hall, or Perimeter Road. The areas first noted on the mental maps were often edges or nodes. Edges, like the perimeter road, are significant because they illustrate the notion that the Skidmore community views the campus as an enclosed, holistic, space. Nodes, like the Library or the Dining Hall, are "major points where behavior is focused, typically associated with the intersection of major paths or places where paths are terminated or broken" (Bell, Fisher, Baum, and Greene, 1984). As we first asked the participant to draw a map of Skidmore Campus, edges and nodes often are spaces that orient an individual visually in order to draw a cognitive map.

In comparison to participants initial drawings of the campus, which focused on the core of campus, the spaces that were favorited did not necessarily correspond with the center of campus. The favorite spaces were evenly spread out across campus. This indicates that enjoyable spaces are subjective and there needs to be a variety of spaces to appeal to different types of individuals. Participants favorited the Dorms and the Dining Hall because that is where they spend time with their friends. However, participants also posited that the Academic Buildings were their favorite because that is where they have classes and study. The Surrey was mentioned several times as it is a unique place that most other people do not know about and allows for peaceful seclusion. By understanding the wide variety of, and meaning behind, different types of favorite spaces, Skidmore can generate a larger diversity of spaces for students to utilize and enjoy. The spaces(a) 0.2 (5(f)-0.5 (a) 0.2 (vor() Tj ET.2 (s) -0.2 (t) 0a) 0.2 (c)0.2 (e) 0.2 (s) -0.2 (s) -0.2 (o p

The research on conceptual landscapes on the Skidmore College campus leads to a myriad of other project designs and gives a basis to others who seek to find out the perceptions of the Skidmore community. The methodology and results from our project is new to the environmental studies capstone, as we focus on environmental psychology and environmental sociology related fields. We also utilize technologies, the iPads and the ShowMe application, that previous years have not had access to. Our methodology allowed us to collect interesting and new data from the campus, which could be utilized in the future as a stepping stone for, not only future environmental studies capstones, but other research projects as well. For instance, as time constraints did not allow us to focus on the demographics of our participant population future

- any path here would be great
- walkway
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