

Colour methods: the colour, material of urban poïetic (In the structuring of urban landscaping)

X. Ollier

PhD researcher in Applied Arts, SEPPIA research centre (Knowledge, Praxis and Poietics in Fine & Applied Arts)

Art Department, University of Toulouse Le Mirail, 31000 Toulouse (France)

Corresponding author: X. Ollier (xaviereollier@yahoo.fr)

ABSTRACT

What is the role of colour, within an analysis on the urban and collective habitat? How is colour likely to define a territory?

By adapting the concept of a master colour scheme to the collective habitat, or even, by sometimes daring to go in the opposite direction of historical inheritance, it is vital to understand how colour can promote structure and confer life to fragmented territories.

Colour displays its various virtues when it consists of restoring a spatial consistency while conserving original identity of each territory.

Surface aspects, combination of greens, lightings; colour can contribute in various ways. And when it amalgamates the various level of urban landscape, it binds places and people together.

The purpose of this study is to analyse methodologies, methods of colouring and the way they are schematised.

1. INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGICAL AXES

With the primary goal is understanding colour as material within different methods of colouring, it seems essential to carry out a methodology which is at the same time comparative and differential. Indeed, as part of the work of a colourist, the aim is to emphasize on methodologies and methods of colouration, colour being at the heart of all problematic. This is based on the fact that these methods include elements, knowledge and know-how coming from various modes of instauration of a city.

Primarily centred on a colouration method of the collective habitat, this research raises the question of "living in" and of the use of a particular area. To live in an area is more than just being merely lodged in a space; it means being fully integrated in its daily functioning. Indeed, it is not a case of collective lodging, but in fact of collective habitat. Thus, the individual not only finds his identity there, as a living and conscious subject, but he also brings innovation to his daily life.

At this stage, we shall approach colour as a material during the elaboration of a collective habitat.

This study on collective habitat and territorial design allows one to gain a better understanding of the existing relationship between the different modes of expression, focussing on urban practice and that of a colourist.

Emphasising on this new dimension, being poïetic and aesthetic, Le Corbusier stated «*La couleur modifie l'espace, la couleur agit physiologiquement sur nous et réagit fortement sur nos personnalités.*» (colour influences the territory, colour acts psychologically on one and reacts to a great extent on our personality.)¹

Bearing that in mind, he foresees the issue of colour, not only on a political and artistic angle but also on a sensible approach. The inhabitant then becomes part and parcel of colour.

Colour can be considered as a social tool used to restructure this type of lodging, the way it is handled and its integration within the city.

What is the role of colour within an analysis on suburbs and its social habitat? How does colour contribute towards enhancing a territory? Last but not least, in its intimate relationship between

territory and subject, how does colour bring a different approach to understanding space, between individual habitat and territorial lifestyle?

Colour is inclined to contribute to a transformation of the living space and hence modifying its parameters. It is within all these issues raised that a better lifestyle will emerge from a collective habitat. Hence, bridging a gap within a scattered city...

CONSIDER THE CONTRIBUTION OF COLOR CONCEPT AS A THOUGHT OF URBAN BOND

Collective habitats, which formed part of emerging construction projects of post-war periods and have gone through enormous deteriorations, are actually investigated: suburbs are then part and parcel in urban projects, either through reconstruction projects of areas which have deteriorated, hence complete demolition, or through the upgrading and opening of cities.

The bulk which emerged in the mid nineteen fifties always in length and height was not integrating into existing cities.

Initially seen as the future of the city, it has fallen into isolation due to its numerous particularities.

Presently, the whole set-up bears a rather foreign characteristic: foreign to the city, its history, and its patrimony as well as to its infrastructures.

Nevertheless, life is well present and the existing demographical concentration creates a lot of trouble. In fact, the skyscrapers shadow the characteristic of its inhabitants.

How a colourist finds himself in the creation of this urban project?

How an analysis on colour contributes to the process of suburban development, together with aesthetic and poetic?

There exist two schools of thoughts, on one hand, the technicians and 'urbanists' who look after the urban shape and on the other side, those in charge of social relationships. However, there often exist no relationship between both.

The inhabitants and the casual visitor cannot adhere only to a functional city and the colourist contributes to that idea by changing the existing space through his perception. This fructuous collaboration between the colourist and architect, 'urbanist', engineer and sociologist happen to bring a valuable element which eventually aims at bridging gaps:

"The prescribed details regarding materials, textures and colour constitute the shortest pathway to the decline of architectural approaches"²

2. METHOD

A PRIVILEGED GROUND: THE METHODS OF URBAN COLOURING AND THE TRADE OF COLOURIST

a. Adopting a territorial approach

In the first instance, while analysing and focussing on the concept of *geographie de la couleur* (geography of colour)³, let us try to understand the bridge that is established between the structure of the collective habitat and the city: when colour functions within the territorial scale and building works, but still remaining close to the inhabitant.

In the service of everyday life, the consulting colourist is also sometimes in the service of tradition, because he really wants to be in synchrony with creation of the past, without being totally reduced to it.

This creator of daily life seeks to compromise between his will to find new forms and colours, "as much via new material and inventive cultural schemes" and his wish to respect the patrimony. Hence, the methodology, purely pertaining to the work of Jean Philippe Lenclos, professional colourist and theorist, via his concept of geography of colour, is deeply inscribed in the culture behind each and every area. This is crucial to the contribution towards respecting the patrimony. Raw materials are considered on an individual basis, often vital to the choice of dominant colours within architectures. He also shadows sheer objectivity as per his will to complete a thorough analysis. By

considering different tones and shades of a particular region or city, he is able to see an improvement from the ground to the territory.

Regarding the collective habitat, the challenge within this study is to understand how to adopt the master colour scheme of coloration to collective lodgings while respecting its particularities: proof of our history, it overcomes all regional parameters and shadows a hybrid identity. Using colour as a material to set-up a particular task as well as a social problematic ought to be considered as an endeavour to create a territory.

Hence, it is primordial to dare contrast to the historic patrimony, thus providing better understanding onto how colour can contribute to structure and even define territory on spaces less marked by history.

Without neglecting the emotional aspect, the essence of creation and approach which is not always considered when developing modern cities.

b. Moving towards territory identification

The city is by essence, where each one is always confronted to others. It is a location of identification:

in this case the urban colourist studies the material, within the cultural and social sphere as and when he encounters them. He tends to link location to people.

Onsite work is essential and has to be achieved at the earliest with the inhabitants.

Colour as a material is then proved to be useful to both the space and the location. Hence adapting into various forms from lighting to refurbishment, it contributes in various ways.

At this stage, the function of the colourist-artist is as follows: between a “haptical” vision (tactilo-optic, obtained through the intermediary of a close vision) and an optical vision (as a global vision, far –off objects), he intervenes at different levels of the landscape and make use of a variety of tools within private and public locations, adapting various levels of perception. He creates a bridge between those different active lives by combining architecture, both interior and exterior surfaces, but also to urban design and collective infrastructures.

With the aim of ensuring consistent atmosphere while maintaining specific identities, it is necessary to make optimum use of coloured material.

At times, in order to regenerate a city into a lively one, the inhabitants themselves try to intervene in an anarchical approach on their habitat.

A study conducted by Bénédicte Florin⁴, (lecturer in Geography, University of Tours) gives Cairo as an example (city of 13 millions inhabitants with brick as main construction material):

Faced with the lodging crisis in the fifties, buildings have emerged even in deserts. The city of Ayn al-Sira, containing 30 000 flats (1000 identical blocks) has been gradually transformed by its inhabitants.

Then, each one makes some city and builds up some territory : gardens are installed by inhabitants in empty spaces, windows are removed and extensions materialised.

With the poor infrastructure and know-how, these irregular changes are often perceived as inhibiting natural development. However, via appropriate communication, proper transformation can take place.

Indeed, it is essential to analyse patiently and thoroughly each and every case. While a unique and miraculous answer does not exist, there are various alternatives:

structuring of territory, transforming architecture, diversifying space, going through history and linking places to people: all these answers find themselves within the process of colouration (surface aspects, lighting and coloured filters, green spaces, characterised signalisation elements are indeed materials that pertains to livelihood.

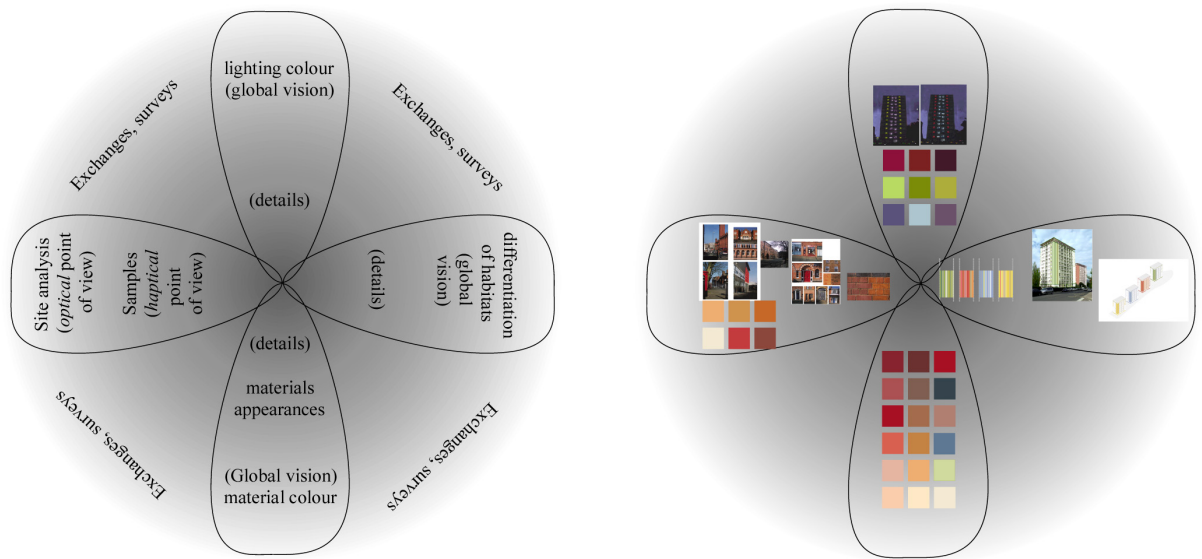


Figure 1: Example of a colour schema in an urban project: habitat from an “haptical” and optical point of view.

3. CONCLUSION

Analysing existing methods and affirming the power of colour as material is crucial to offer substantial alternatives on collective lodging to architects and other technicians. Those alternatives pertaining to the habitat rather than to lodging spaces (in the sense that they have to do with daily way of life) will contribute, due to their innovative approach, to a better standard of life. For example, by proposing a new thought of revetment, exploiting the material used for outer surfaces of building or common and pedestrian spaces, based on the setting up of colour charts and certified colour schemes, the collective lodging can find its breathing space, growing towards ‘re-animation’.

References

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