

2015 Discussion topic

The case for felicitous public space

Enhanced by light and the arts

In the introduction to his work "La poétique de l'espace" (The Poetics of Space) (pub. PUF, 1970, p17), the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard states: *Indeed, the images we want to examine are the quite simple images of felicitous space (...) space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent, (...) subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in.*

Robert Auzelle, in "Plaidoyer pour une organisation consciente de l'espace" (Plea for a conscious organisation of space) (pub. Vincent et Fréal, 1962), insists on the *importance of emptiness in urban art*. He recommends that students preparing to become architects should read Bachelard's book.

All of us—users, elected representatives and professionals—operate in the public space in its broadest sense. Contracting authorities and project managers share the responsibility for creating our living environment. Residents' opinions are increasingly heard in the governance of our living conditions.

The topic proposed by the Robert Auzelle Seminar (*Séminaire Rober Auzelle - SRA*) asks public service managers and representatives of the professional bodies concerned, elected representatives, professionals working in the living environment sector, students and teachers, to consider the following question:

Can the public space be a felicitous space?

Compliance with the rules of "good design", taking account of exposure to sunshine, wind direction and noise issues, etc., should lead to the creation of public spaces that improve the quality of life for all residents. How light, street art and sharing contribute to the creation of felicitous space.

The "**Plans lumière**" (Lighting Plans), adopted by many towns and cities, showcase the landscape, monuments, water and garden features. They enlighten the night life and disseminate a feeling of safety throughout the public space...

"**Street arts**", as a mode of expression for artists through the creation of paving, wall paintings, fountains, statuary, frescoes and street furniture, in addition to billboards, shop-fronts and advertising along with temporary, festive events such as outdoor shows... all contribute to the urban landscape and consolidate the identity of public space...

Public space is meant to be shared in a context of social diversity that allows everyone to participate in the "theatre" of street life in complete safety, including people with different disabilities whose access to services is facilitated by appropriate modifications to the public space...

This will preferably include small to medium-sized towns and rural settlements.

The proposals will be presented according to the procedures set out in specific regulations. The projects for the International Competition and the operations presented for the National Prize shall take account of the quality of the living environment based on the following three criteria:

architectural quality, quality of social life and respect for the environment.

Academic guides to be consulted include the references mentioned on the www.arturbain.fr, website and in the Robert Auzelle Seminar files: **Référentiel pour la qualité du cadre de vie** (Guidelines for the quality of the living environment) and **Vocabulaire français de l'art urbain** (French lexicon of urban art).