Colour in Urban Furniture — a methodology for colour planning

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Abstract

This paper aims to present a methodology for urban furniture colour planning, which is part of the research project that is being carried out by Margarida Gamito, within the Design PhD Course at the Faculty of Architecture — The Technical University of Lisbon, under the supervision of Fernando Moreira da Silva, Design PhD course coordinator (FA/UTL). It also presents the results and validation of the research. The research process has been carried out in the City of Lisbon, establishing colour plan guidelines that should be applied to urban furniture at the different quarters of this city. The research aims to establish that colour, applied to urban furniture, should contribute for the improvement of the visibility of these elements, becoming a factor of inclusivity, and it will ameliorate the orientation in the city. This can also be a way for the identification of the city’s different zones, acting as signage. The project is based in a Case Study methodology. For this purpose, three quarters of the city of Lisbon were chosen. The first one, Baixa, is the very heart of the city (CBD) and it was a candidate to the world heritage (2004); the second quarter, Campo de Ourique, is a traditional urban area, both commercial and residential; and the last one, Parque das Nações, is a recent quarter which is still under development. In these quarters, an active research has been carried out and during this research a new methodology was developed, including an extensive direct observation by photographic mapping of both urban furniture and signage, in order to evaluate their visibility and legibility, as well as their colour applications. A sample route was defined for each quarter, where was made a record of the environmental colours, as well as the existent materials and textures, adapting a methodology developed by Jean-Philippe Lenclos. However, in this systematic inventory material samples, not only from the buildings, but also from pavements, vegetation and many of the most relevant additional elements present in the urban environment, were collected. These collections were completed with photographs of the environmental elements and of views from the different blocks, using urban plans and sections, which act as elements of the environment colour components. These records were methodically indexed, using forms previously designed and pre-tested, and resulted in the elaboration of colour synthesis charts that allowed the construction of a scientific data base establishing the chromatic palette of each quarter and, consequently, a coherent and scientific basis for the chromatic plan that will be applied to city urban furniture. This chromatic plan, that is different for each quarter, respects the local history, culture and symbolism, and has as main aim to make a good contrast with the environment in a way to be readable by all. The chromatic palettes, and its application to the urban furniture of the chosen quarters, were afterwards presented to three different focus groups, in order to validate the taken options.