

Foreword

Lighting is a technique, it is an art, it is a narrative, it proposes a visual experience which can be shared. It is broad, it is universal. Many professionals contribute to explore and understand further what can be done with light: in physics, medicine, material science, biology, art, architecture, photography, events organisation, etc. It is therefore essential to establish platforms for exchange between these fields. The large scope of contributions in these proceedings demonstrates how broad this could be.

Over more than 100 years, lighting practice has developed with two major objectives: to satisfy basic visual requirements (primarily, for indoor activities) and to guarantee safety of citizens in urban areas (for displacement outdoors at night). This led to definitions of minimum lighting requirements for lighting installations.

In the pyramid of Maslow which displays the hierarchy of needs (Abraham Maslow, 1943), these two aspects concern the basic fundamental needs related to physiology and safety. The next two layers (belonging, esteem) are other levels of fundamental needs. They are related to the position of the individual in a group. This is where the issue of identity becomes essential. Identity is a fundamental need.

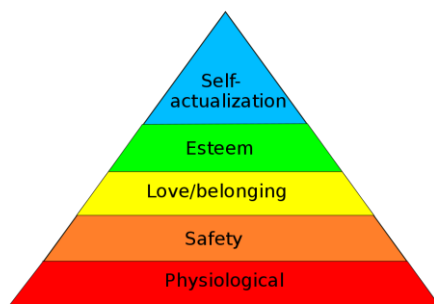


Fig. 1. Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (1943).

But identity is both an individual need and a social need.

As an individual need, we need to establish a link with our origin, with our environment, with the place we were born, with our climate, etc.

As a social need, we need to relate to our family, our friends, our city, our country, or cultural history, any value we share and cherish.

It is important to note that images and more specifically lighting are the important elements of this identity. One can mention, for example, religious and non-religious festivities with candles, or light constructions (Christmas trees, Christmas decorations, fireworks, candles placed on a windowsill in Lyon, France during La Fête des Lumières every year on the 8th of December, etc.).

Cities play a significant role in social identity. With the development of electric light during the XXth century, street candelabra became significant elements of urban identity of a city. After 1960, with the development of high power arc lamps, lighting techniques expressed, at nighttime, facades, bridges, and monuments, thus, enhancing the character of places of importance for the inhabitants and the visitors. Later, with dynamic lighting and video display, new “immaterial” approaches became common.



Fig. 2. Church of Savior on Spilled Blood in St Petersburg, an essential element of the city's nightscape.



Fig. 3. New York Times square, with dynamic displays.



Fig. 4. Las Vegas Strip, with powerful animated lighting effects.

However, other, more subtle ways to express identities of places with light exist. For example, Copenhagen urban lighting offers a subtle balance between light produced by the luminaires hanging above the streets, and the wall lamps next to building entrances.



Fig. 5. Hanging lamps in Copenhagen streets.

Lighting strengthens the character of a city, it can also propose new events, which progressively become part of a city identity, such as the rotating light on the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, which is an add-on effect of a landmark that creates an “immaterial” landmark.

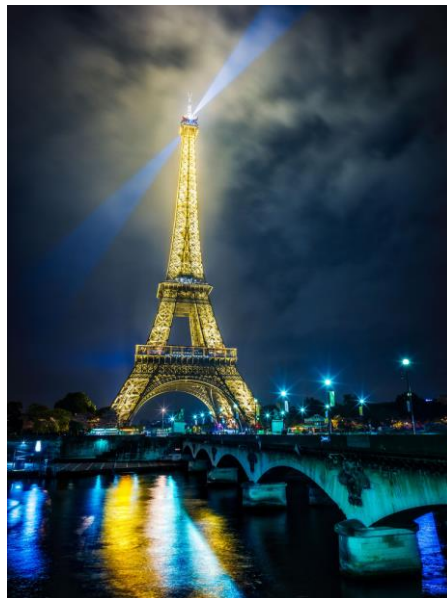


Fig. 6. Rotating projector on the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Lighting can definitely contribute to the identity of a city. But what is most important is that it contributes to strengthening the relations between citizens and their place, as well as visual memories of visitors.

By proposing a conference on “Identity through the Light Environment”, the organizers aimed to address the extraordinary potential of light for narration – i.e: production of scientific, artistic or emotional content. Lighting is a modern tool, and new digital lighting

technologies are offering new possibilities to analyse or develop our relation to the luminous environment. This will create new opportunities which are largely discussed in the following papers. Contributions are from a broad domain, and they demonstrate benefits of the interdisciplinary approach.

We hope you will find inspiration in this document.

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