



Interview with Fanny Romain PhD student in landscape (architecture) sciences, Ecole doctorale Agronomie, Alimentation, Biologie, Environnement et Santé (ABIES), AgroParisTech

1. THE THESIS

1.1 Could you present your studies before the Doctorate? What is your initial Diploma? Why did you decide to prepare a doctorate?

After two years on literature (DEUG on Languages, Literatures and foreign civilizations, simultaneously with a Licence in modern literature at the Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg), I completed a curriculum on applied arts (BTS (advanced vocational diploma) of visual artist on architectural environment, at the *Ecole nationale supérieure des arts appliqués et métiers d'arts: Olivier de Serres*, Paris). Then, I completed the DPLG landscape architect studies at the ENSP in Versailles. This double interest in practice and theory lead me towards this doctorate in landscape architecture, in order to complete my training through the understanding of the challenges related to this profession, in the context of urban development.

1.2 Please precise the doctoral school where you are registered

Doctoral school - Agronomie, Alimentation, Biologie, Environnement et Santé (ABIES), AgroParisTech

1.3 Please mention your thesis Directors and your research laboratory

Pierre Donadieu, geographer, professor, and Hervé Davodeau, geographer, associate professor, research laboratory at the ENSP in Versailles-Marseille (LAREP).

1.4 Could you precise the title of your thesis? What do you want to point out?

“La construction des paysages fluviaux urbains. Nouvelles représentations sociales du fleuve dans les villes nord méditerranéennes (le cas de Montpellier et de Perpignan)”

“The construction of urban river landscapes. New social representations on river in north Mediterranean cities (case study Montpellier and Perpignan)”

After having rejected culturally and physically the river natural space, the urban development in North Mediterranean cities, is focusing on river, which has become one the main urban center and one of the strong identity references of the city. I would like to point out one important evolution of the city “making”: landscape becomes a vector of urban transformations, here through natural space and/or “green” space, not only in being an integral part of the urban environment as Lewis Mumford stated, but in structuring it.

1.5 You are now in the second year of your thesis. Are you facing any difficulties? If yes, could you describe them?

The surmountable difficulties are mainly related to time management. The methodology and bibliography updating is also long.

1.6 Are you receiving a research grant? (Or other subsidies?) From which organization? How much is the monthly net amount?

I receive a net monthly salary from LAREP – ENSP Versailles of 824 € as research grant (semi grant) (research grant from the Ministry of Agriculture).

2. THE THESIS AND THE LANDSCAPE PROJECT

2.1 Which role, according to you, should have your research results in the design of a landscape project?

The results could have important outputs: on one side, downstream the projects, as far as the thesis presents an inventory of what has been done in river development. And on another side, upstream the project, as far as the knowledge on a cultural context (here practices and imaginative views on river) may directly influence the development propositions, at the river scale (and more generally at natural spaces scale in city) and at the city scale.

2.2 For you, what are the relations between the practice of the landscape architect profession and your doctorate?

The three thesis years constitute for me the occasion to develop a clear conscience on the challenges related to my future practice as landscaper (or contract management assistant). The objective is to strengthen my understanding on meanings and forms which we can be proposed to a collectivity.

3. THE THESIS AND EUROPE

3.1 Do you know any other doctorate in landscape architecture in Europe? Which one? What do you know about this doctorate?

I got information during the meeting held last June at the ENSP in Versailles on doctorates related to landscape profession: presentation of doctoral programs in Europe, differences in the designations («development and urbanism» in France, «Landscape project» in Italy, «landscape architecture» in the United Kingdom). For a French student who aims to complete his thesis overseas, it is quite difficult to identify the different doctoral studies available.

4. YOUR RESEARCH APPROACH

4.1 What are the three main concepts in your thesis? Could you define them?

Urban fluvial landscapes:

The concept of landscape is here used to translate the notion of objective and subjective perception on space: the seen and read space, notions addressed by the classic geography for the seen space and the social geography for the read one. The two terms enable use to address the question of river crossing in the city through the physical forms framed by “the permeation between fluvial and urban milieu” (Valette, 2006) as well as the schemes created by this permeation. In addition, the links city-river do not limit to the river banks, but extend to the overall urban structure as far as it is affected by the river.

Social representations:

The space representation is defined as a ‘mental and/or *objectal* construction framing a geographical space’ (*Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, 2007). In this perspective, the river representations refer to the conceptions developed by the individuals or groups on these landscapes (named “*mental*”

representations”) as well as the forms taken by these conceptions (named “*objectal or stabilized*” representations).

The analysis of the fluvial representations is the research starting point to understand the development of certain urban forms realized today. Therefore, the approach is mainly focused on the analysis of social representations rather than individual.

Spatial practices:

The spatial practices are one of the stabilized illustrations of the social representations of the river. The urban morphology (urban fabric development; relationships between the different elements of this fabric) (Allain, 2004) and the strategies of fluvial development constitute here the constitutive components of it.

4.2 What are the main tools and methods you are using? Their assets? Limits?

The social representations of the river are described through the analysis of the spatial practices and fluvial imaginary views of the selected territories (Perpignan and Montpellier).

- The spatial practices are analyzed through the urban morphology and the landscape development projects.
- The fluvial imaginary views are analyzed through semi-directive interviews (qualitative approach) of decision makers, users and project managers who have participated to the development of the studied rivers.

These methods enable us to multiply the angles to approach the river representations, which have various impacts: the analysis of spatial practices enables us, for example, to observe the urban policies implementation and their reception among the users; the interviews analysis enables us to compare the gaps between these policies and the different actors' stories.

Their limits rely on their complexity, which require in the thesis time defined, to study only two cases among the north-mediterranean rivers in France. The validation of the hypothesis addressed would require the multiplication of the study cases.

4.3 Are you using resources available on Internet? Which one? Why?

Resources on Internet are very useful, in particular for the bibliographic research (sudoc, and the catalogues of different libraries) and to identify easily resource persons to be interviewed.

4.4 What role is your thesis Directors playing?

They helped me to organize my thesis project at the starting point; answer to my questions and read my work as one goes along. They assist me in my methodological and bibliographical methods.

4.5 What role plays your thesis committee? Who is part of it?

Officially, my thesis committee is composed with my two thesis directors (Hervé Davodeau and Pierre Donadieu) and Roland Vidal, research engineer in ENSP Versailles.

4.6 Which courses are you following (or will you follow) during your thesis? Why?

I followed studies relating to my professional field, which provided me with better knowledge on job opportunities accessible with a thesis and advices on CV, motivation letter and interviews. I also followed

courses on oral communication. Lastly, I attended several conferences on themes related to my research subject as well as doctoral symposiums in ABIES in Paris.

4.7 Today, which idea do you have on your final thesis work?

I have a classical idea: an arguing publication (at least 300 pages) which will certainly address and analyze my initial hypothesis. A work, which I hope, will be useful and used for others researches.

4.8 What are you planning to do after your thesis?

To practice the profession of landscaper or contract management assistant
To combine these professions with teaching and research