

# Welcome to SSHRC Research Partnership 895-2022-1003: Quality of the Built Environment in Canada: Roadmaps to Equity, Social Value and Sustainability.

## Introduction

This five-year research partnership (2022-2027), national and international in scope, aims to understand and redefine the notion and processes of "quality" in Canadian buildings and public spaces. Changing societal dynamics have led to a shift in perceptions of quality, with new emphasis on sustainability, equity, inclusion, accessibility and reconciliation with aboriginal peoples. In sum, the quality of built environments is assessed through the filter of these social values.

Our partnership operates as a collective framework, emphasizing the importance of a multi-faceted approach. We are convinced that a comprehensive understanding of accessible, inclusive and sustainable environments requires input from a variety of stakeholders. The aim is to bring these perspectives together to form roadmaps that will guide future policies and methodologies for the design and realization of quality built environments.

Organized into local and national quadripartite teams, the partnership integrates the viewpoints of (1) citizens, (2) cities and public procurement, (3) professional organizations and (4) university researchers. The 14 university-led research teams, while developing a variety of issues and methodologies, each relate to one or more of four thematic clusters:

- Spatial justice
- Integrated resilience
- Inclusive design
- Processes and policies.

Our immediate objectives include developing **roadmaps to quality** to inform and possibly adjust current practices, as well as renewing training approaches. The ultimate goal is twofold: to propose concrete approaches to circumvent obstacles to quality, and to offer theoretical frameworks conducive to policy transformation and adjustment in the various scales and sectors concerned with the built environment. At the heart of our collaborative efforts is a digital platform - the *Living Atlas of Quality* - which serves as a forum for the discussion, exchange and repository of case studies, viewpoints and proposals.

Link to website: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/presentation>

We welcome you to this partnership and look forward to your contributions and initiatives in the service of the common good.

## **This partnership is between the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and you.**

Students are at the heart of the partnership: almost 70% of the total budget granted by SSHRC is devoted to funding training activities, salaries for assistantships and travel to national meetings. The success of this partnership depends on your commitment and initiatives.

The contract you sign with a research team at your university binds you to that team for a fixed period. But you can also get involved and stay in touch with students in other teams in a more global way, in ways that complement both your professional commitment and your academic training. **So, in addition to the work you'll be doing at one of the 14 research sites, there are three main types of student involvement in this project:**

- 1- **Common Integrative Seminars (CIS):** every month we organize a common integrative seminar. A Partnership expert takes 1h30 minutes to share their ideas on a Partnership-related topic with you, the students.

It's a great way to broaden your knowledge and go beyond the topics you research on your own sites. Each seminar is usually recorded and subsequently published on the website. Feel free to consult the archives and listen to previous seminars that interest you.

Link to seminars: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/articles/seminars>

These seminars are an integral part of the training component of the partnership. The main objectives are to foster a new culture of collaborative research and to create a link between students from different sites. As such, time spent participating in the seminars is remunerated.

- 2- **Graduate Student Committee (GSC):** this committee is made up of 15 students (1 representative per university + 1 indigenous student representative). The GSC has a budget of \$15,000 per year to organize a variety of student initiatives intended to support the voice and research goals of the students within the context of the partnership. If you have any suggestions for how we can better meet the needs of the students and collective research goals of the partnership, or a proposal for a student-organized activity, please reach out to your research site's GSC representative for consideration. We strongly encourage you to propose your ideas as we are committed to ensuring that the budget is utilized by the students to make their ideas a reality.

Not sure who represents your university? Check out the composition of this year's GSC, available here <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/students/committee>

- 3- **Annual Conventions:** we organize two national conventions each year where representatives from all research sites (including site leaders, students and

partners) meet to discuss the ongoing research and topics relating to quality in the built environment. One convention is online (usually in November) and the other is in person (usually in early May), hosted by a different university each year. The in-person convention may feature guest presentations, roundtable discussions, and site visits, and is a great opportunity to network with other students, academics and professionals across Canada, and to share our diverse knowledge, approaches and solutions to Canadian challenges. We strive to involve students as much as possible in these events. Part of the overall budget for this research project is earmarked for student travel to the in-person convention.

## **Resources**

The partnership website is the main source of information on the research activities that have been carried out. Here is a list of links you can consult to familiarize yourself with the work carried out within the partnership.

**Why are we doing this research?** Jean-Pierre Chupin (Partnership Director) explains why it's important to conduct quality research in cross-sector partnerships. In other words, why we do what we do. Link: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/articles/32>

**Overview of the 14 research sites:** click on the sites to find out more about what's going on at each university: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/research-sites/situated-research-projects>

**Student directory:** take a look at the students who are part of the partnership. To be included, send an e-mail to Dimitri Weibel (Dimitri.weibel@umontreal.ca), enclosing your photo. Link to the directory: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/students/directory>

**Reports and resources:** Everything we've done so far. Here you'll find a collection of annual and round table reports from each site, as well as a compilation of lived experiences gathered in the run-up to the Calgary convention (May 2023). Link: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/47w3ctgjzh0passlgorva/h?dl=0&rlkey=sj07nnk26hgcx1f9dzua07oom>

**Student News:** You can also read the student news, found through *Living Atlas*. In this section, we focus on student activities and introduce you to the various research site teams. Link: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/articles/students>

**Calendar:** A very important link is the calendar, which will show you all the upcoming events for the Partnership. You can use it to block important dates in your diary in advance. Link: <https://livingatlasofquality.ca/calendar>.

**LinkedIn:** be sure to connect with us on LinkedIn, where you can stay up to date with all news and connect with fellow researchers and partners across Canada. Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/living-atlas-of-quality/>