In October 1998, on the occasion of the first conference on design education, Richard Buchanan, then Director of The School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University, envisioned doctoral education in Design as a "neoteric enterprise", aimed at finding novel ways of addressing the new problems, "thereby creating a new body of learning and knowledge". Twenty years after, these words can still be shared: the new problems affecting our globalised, bewildered and worried society are growing in numbers and in complexity, and novel ways of sorting them out are more sought-after than ever.

The present book is part of a series that, since 2017, documents the production of the Politecnico di Milano Design Programme, presenting a summary of the doctoral theses defended each year. Eleven essays are here gathered into four sections: Design Education; Collaborative Processes; Cultural and Creative Companies; Technology for Social Change.

In the variety of the researched topics, a common trait can be found in the continuous need of updated ways of addressing complex problems. It is such need that drives the evolving boundaries of design research forward, not just within our Doctoral Programme, but within all the national and international Doctoral Programmes in Design we are acquainted with.

Lucia Rampino is an Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design. In her research activity, she explores theories of design and the nature of design processes, in particular as they pertain to knowledge creation and product innovation. She has taken part in various research projects and serves as reviewer for both Design Journals and Conferences. Since 2009, she is on the Design PhD Faculty of Politecnico di Milano.

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Over the last few years the international design research network has become an important reality, which has facilitated the sharing of ideas and opinions, improved understanding of the subject and increased awareness of the potential of design in various socio-geographical contexts.

The current expansion of the educational network allows teachers, students, researchers and professionals to meet, both online and in person.

It would seem therefore that the time is now right to propose a new series of books on design, contributing the construction of the international design community, helping authors bring their work onto the world scene.

The Design International series is thus born as a cultural setting for the sharing of ideas and experiences from the different fields of design, a place in which you can discover the wealth and variety of design research, where different hypotheses and different answers present themselves, in an attempt to draw up a map of Italian design, though in a continuous comparison with the world scene.

Different areas of design will be investigated, such as for example: fashion, interior design, graphic design, communication design, product and industrial design, service and social innovation design, interaction design and emotional design.

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ADVANCEMENTS IN DESIGN RESEARCH

11 PhD theses on Design as we do in POLIMI

edited by Lucia Rampino and Ilaria Mariani
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Intermediate urban space. 
Design and light art as catalysts for change: participation beyond fruition

Isa Helena Tibúrcio
Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano

Abstract

Many interventions in the world transform the urban space without considering the opinions and needs of the people involved daily in the dynamics of the city. In this context, the issue of participation has gained importance in several initiatives in the areas of art, architecture, design and the management of spaces, be they public, private, or both. The weight and the degrees of participation attributed to the various parties involved in the design process are, however, very debatable. The purpose of this study is to inspire the production of interventions in the urban space, which can, simultaneously, be closer to people’s needs and offer aesthetic experiences for any kind of person. While referencing Light Art, Tactical Urbanism, and Design for Social Innovation, the research methodology encompasses case studies of interventions involving light; interviews with light artists; and a workshop with students of interior design. Case studies tend to encourage more participation of ordinary people in the early stages of the process. The interviews indicate a sort of openness to people’s participation, more related to fruition. The workshop shows examples including such participation beyond fruition. The main contribution of this study is to shift the focus from the participation of ordinary people to the beginning of the design process, “the conception phase of the design process”. Another contribution is to present and discuss the concept of “intermediate urban space”, seeking to unite the physical and symbolic aspect into a single concept relative to the space of the urban experience.
Introduction

The thesis that originated this chapter is based on a broad and general motivation to try to unite, in participatory design processes, two types of knowledge: specialist and popular, in a seam that is always arduous and that accumulates many conflicting forces. One difficulty is trying to approach seemingly opposing and mutually repelling things. Another difficulty is not being able to naturally satisfy the various interests at stake when you test the experiences of consolidated practices.

Situated in the fields of Spatial Design and Light Art, this theoretical and applied research aims to identify a possibility of contribution by Light Art and Design to improve the quality of the urban experience, considering the involvement of ordinary people in the design process.

Many interventions in different parts of the world are often carried out in order to transform the urban space, without considering the opinions and needs of the people involved daily in the dynamics of the city. This limitation has a connection with the writings of Jane Jacobs (2001). In the 1960s, she called special attention to people’s real needs, rather than those idealized only by specialists who, in many cases, overlook such needs. Design plays an important role in supporting the participation of the various actors interested in the restructuring processes of urban spaces. For this, it is necessary to be in tune with the new challenges of the Twenty-First Century.

As the intention here is not only to reduce the solutions to primary needs, the idea of working with the potential represented by light is precisely to make room for the dream, for the unusual, for the invisible. “Art challenges notions of identity, of belonging, and estrangement, and questions borders and the distribution of privilege, to mention only some of the things it is capable of doing” (Eliasson, 2017, p. 13). Several examples of Light Art show that light has the potential to activate the aesthetic experience of people in indoor or outdoor spaces. Considering the complexity involving the engagement of ordinary people in the design process, the choice of light as the central element of intervention can give potential to efforts aimed at activating the urban space, encouraging a more inclusive experience in the city. Here, light is a metaphor for the intermediate urban space, that space that is within the scope of the symbolic and of all the possibilities of bridges and connections that it entails.
Background knowledge

Challenges in times of neoliberalism

To begin with, space is not only a physical dimension (place, position). Space for me is inhabited. To inhabit is connected to habitus, with everyday life, with lived experience (Augé, 1994; de Certeau, 1998).

Discussions about living, empowerment, sense of belonging, and urban commons have become an imperative in the 21st century against policies of neoliberalism. Many cities and metropolitan centers have adopted neoliberal urban policies to address certain problems that we are daily subjected to, such as the deterioration or abandonment of an urban space, whether public or private, central or peripheral. Harvey (1996) and Mongin (2009) warn of this fact, of how some cities have adopted neoliberal strategies to interfere with the urban space, with the pretext of revitalization or urban renewal. In practice, neoliberal strategies applied to well-intentioned and creative urban initiatives intervene, many times, negatively in the city. Therefore, it is important to be attentive to ensure that such innovations are not captured by profit-focused principles (Campbell, 2015, pp. 28-31; Harvey, 2008).

Design has had an important role in this context (Manzini, 2016; Manzini, 2015; Cardozo, 2012). Various agents have been invoked to participate in the construction and restructuring of the urban space process, such as professionals, local communities, public and private bodies. The designer acts as one of the facilitators of such actions, and similar operations can be observed regarding artists, architects, and urban planners today. As said by the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, we can understand “the artist not as a creator for contemplation but a motivator for creation” (Campbell, 2015, p. 7), and this is reiterated by the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson (Beccaria, 2013). This can also be observed in the field of tactical urbanism, where architects and urban planners play a role as guides in the creation process.

However, this role of facilitator or administrator of processes involving the participation of various agents can compromise the role of the designer as a creator, “where creative ideas and design culture tend to disappear”, as argued by Manzini (2015, p. 65), about the participation-ism in the emerging design practices.
Emerging design and tactics on a micropolitical scale

Emerging design

Manzini (2016) outlines a redefinition of design, aiming to add value to the specific skills and culture of design experts. The concept of design has changed to what he calls “emerging design: a problem-based, solution-oriented design, the defining characteristic of which is not the products, services, and communicative artifacts it produces, but the tools and methods it uses” (Manzini, 2016, p. 52). For him, emerging design could and should be the agent of change (cultural, social and environmental) in the 21st century society, but the absence of a debate in its cultural dimension prevents the full expression of its role in the contemporary world. This culture, at the heart of emerging design and identified by Manzini as “solution-ism” and “participation-ism” remains, therefore, both limited and limiting.

According to the author, emerging design has features that differ from those of traditional design theory and practice of the early 20th century, which saw design as an expert activity strongly connected with the industrial production and its idea of time. He points to three changes as evidence: the focus shifts from the design of “objects” toward “ways of thinking and doing”; design processes become co-design activities; and the term design expands, now having three different meanings (diffuse design, expert design, and co-design) (Manzini, 2016, p. 53). Regarding the co-design activities, it is fundamental to understand the different levels of participation.

Participation degrees

On an evaluation scale ranging from “non-participation” to “authentic participation”, Souza detects eight categories divided into three subgroups: “heteronomy”, which involves situations of “non-participation” and corresponds to the lowest range of categories (“coercion” and “manipulation”); “pseudo-participation”, represented by intermediate categories (“information”, “consultation” and “co-optation”); and “authentic participation”, represented by the highest-ranking categories of the scale (“partnership”, “empowerment” and “self-management”) (Souza, 2006, pp. 202-207, p. 389).

It is perceived that, in so-called participatory design processes (co-design), differentiation of the different degrees of participation are not always established, which I think is essential if we really want to engage in the generation of inclusive design processes. In other words, using the same partici-
patory design term for processes with such different degrees of participation may aggravate an already distorted focus from the main aspect that the term seeks to achieve. In my view, such a focus should be on at least the three highest degrees of the scale, i.e. the categories of ‘authentic participation’. One of the situations where one can observe the attempt to implement authentic participation is in the realm of tactical urbanism.

**Tactical urbanism**

Tactical Urbanism is a form of intervention in the urban space in which the architect and urban planner are usually inserted into a transdisciplinary team, which operates within a micropolitical scale and proposes restructuring, projects, and interventions that are very close to everyday realities.¹ The agents or actors, including users of spaces, participate more actively as protagonists in the practices and creation processes, where decisions are taken more horizontally (bottom-up) than in strategies of mainstream urbanism, which tend to be top-down oriented.

De Certeau’s (1998) thinking is fundamental in this issue of shifting the focus to a micropolitical scale, where bottom-up tactics become preponderant in relation to top-down strategies.

We could draw a parallel between Manzini’s considerations about emerging design – the difficulty to evaluate the results, reach, and sustainability of still relatively recent experiences – and the fields of architecture and urban planning, specifically tactical urbanism. There are several similarities in the procedures of emerging design and tactical urbanism since both seek to adopt, to a greater or lesser degree, the same approaches: user-centered design, participation of different stakeholders and actors, co-design and exchange of knowledge between experts and ordinary people. Is it possible to predict difference between them? Apparently, Manzini’s criticism would be less appropriate in many examples of tactical urbanism. This happens because the architect-artist-designer does not act as a mere facilitator of the process, but also as a creator who can reach thought-provoking results through an exchange of popular and expert knowledge, the boundaries of which are blurred.

Another aspect of tactical urbanism that can be highlighted is that the

¹ As examples, I would cite several projects by Alejandro Hayek, Santiago Cirugeda, Todo por la Praxis, and other groups.
technical, aesthetic, and innovative quality of the projects is relevant, unlike the usually negative expectations when the co-design effectively involves ordinary people, whose daily experiences are considered and affected. The expert continues to have a very active role both in conducting the creation process and in the creation itself. Here it would appear that the power balance follows a direction that tends to be more bottom-up than top-down. In this kind of approach, it is important to note that the results are naturally more fluid and open, for lack of a previous prescription that can pre-define them.

**The concept of the intermediate urban space**

By introducing the concept of “intermediate urban space” in this study, the idea is to construct a possibility of “neutral” and “porous” space to debate the paradox of the designer’s role today.

The intermediate urban space (IUS) is here defined as a part of the city fabric, an outdoor or indoor space that can be residual, degraded, marginal, central or peripheral, used or not, empty or not, populated or not, small or large, public, semi-public, or private. It has the property of being “in-between” in relation to different and characterized urban areas and/or cultures.² It is a physical or symbolic entity, often associated with conflicted areas in the city, with “no places”, as well as a terrain for as of yet open experimentation (figs. 1 and 2) (Tibúrcio, 2017b; Augé, 1994).

A good metaphor for the intermediate urban space is when two people who speak different languages wish to communicate through an intermediate option that brings references of both languages, mixing them up and creating a third possibility of communication that does not completely correspond to any of the languages.

The interesting thing to note is that communication happens, even if there are mistakes which, curiously, can collaborate a lot to better understanding one’s own language and that of the other. This new language, or dialect, if you will, has the property of providing comfort (by bringing familiar parts of the language itself) and discomfort (by bringing parts that are foreign to the language itself) to both interlocutors, placing them on equal footing. The beauty of all this is that the intermediate space built by the parties is enriched, while at the same time guided by a sort of neutrality.

² Related to this definition, see also the concept of In-between urban space in Piccinno and Lega (2012).
Fig. 1 – Intermediate Urban Space (IUS). Schematic diagrams. Author’s sketches, 2015.

Fig. 2 – IUS: Bovisa Station Parking. Milan. Source: Author’s archive, 2017.
Potential between light art and participation

Light art can provide transformation in the intermediate urban space with some kind of enchantment and displacement of common sense, because it has the ability to stimulate the perception of space, encouraging a more immediate, emotional and exciting experience in it. The way the artists James Turrell, Carlo Bernardini, and Olafur Eliasson use light to give expressiveness to space is quite impressive because sometimes the generated ambiances create states of such fantasy that it seems to plunge the viewer into a parallel reality, as if by magic:

Non è propriamente l’installazione a cambiare in funzione dello spazio, quanto invece l’opera a trasformare il luogo in cui si trova. Sono proprio gli aspetti non visibili che si possono leggere nel vuoto, a suggerire le nuove coordinate percettive. (Carlo Bernardini, in Tibúrcio, 2017c, p. 61)

For example, the scenario of the historical and architectural landscape can, through art-design synergy, encourage more involving experiences by stimulating the creativity of the spectators and users themselves, who also benefit through this intuitive approach (fig. 3).

Another potentiality is how light interventions can stimulate an interaction between the viewer and the artwork, beyond fruition. The installation Beauty (Olafur Eliasson, 1993) is, according to Beccaria (2013), a key work to understand how the viewer is indispensable for the completion of Eliasson’s art:

The perception of the rainbow and its colours depends on each viewer’s position, since the optical phenomenon can only be seen when standing at a particular angle to the curtain of droplets, and disappears once one moves away. (Beccaria, 2013, p. 20)

Beccaria (2013) complements:

Moreover, Beauty can be considered in relation to Eliasson’s engagement within the social sphere. He maintains that ‘Beauty is political’ since, while not responding to any particular requisite, the work opens up a space of personal freedom, offering each visitor an experience of self-realisation. (Beccaria, 2013, p. 21)

³ “It is not exactly the installation that changes according to the space, but how the work transforms the place it is in. It is precisely the invisible aspects that can be read in the void, to suggest the new perceptive coordinates” (Carlo Bernardini, in Tibúrcio, 2017c, p. 61).
The transparent aspect also attracts a lot of attention in some Eliasson’s works, since the artist literally exposes the components, the cables and feedstocks of them. This allows the viewer to know the intricacies of how the artwork is built.

All these characteristics approximate the argument developed throughout this thesis, emphasizing the aspect of communication between the expert and the public, a way to distribute knowledge.

Fig. 3 – Carlo Bernardini. Submerged Breath, 2013 (vision of dusk). Fiber-optic installation, H 4 x 37 x 28 m. Metz, Moselle Canalisée, Square Du Luxembourg, Moyen Pont. Source: Courtesy of Carlo Bernardini.

Methodology

The main question, objectives, and focus

The study begins with a more general question, which gradually develops into a more specific question, main question: How can design meet light art to improve the use and the aesthetic quality of urban environments, with greater inclusion of ordinary people in the design process?
The overall objective of the study is to stimulate the generation of urban environments and urban furniture that are thought-provoking and suitable for daily living in the contemporary city, in an inclusive way, with the authentic participation of the ordinary people in the design process.

The specific objectives are the following:

1. Strengthening the participation of ordinary people in the conceptual phase of the design process. That is, by inserting their participation in crucial, decisive moments, and not only in the moments of fruition of the results defined by other agents;
2. Looking for references in the broad and rich repertoire of contemporary art, and particularly in Light Art, to create intriguing and instigating environments that could stimulate a differentiated, active and interactive experience with urban space;
3. Seeking references in initiatives that act on micropolitical scale for the creation of environments connected with the daily micro-reality of users, as is the case of several examples found in the scope of Tactical Urbanism and Design for Social Innovation;
4. Giving potential to the intermediate urban space (IUS) as a possible place for dialogue between experts and ordinary people.

To approach the authentic participation suggested by Sousa (2006), it is necessary to address the efforts to that stage of the design process that is believed to be the most important one in defining the final outcome of the intervention, the conception phase of the design process.

By the conception phase of the design process this study refers to the creative stages usually occurring at the beginning of the design process and which can decisively influence the final result, be it a product, service or urban intervention. Obviously, it is not a very simple task to accurately identify such a phase, since the design process is complex and has many inputs with significant influence over the final result.

**Methodological approach**

**The methods and tools used in this study**

The methodology of this study contributes to the discussion through case studies, interviews, and a workshop. Different tools were utilized such as surveys, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, direct observation and more. Because of the space constraint, I will give more emphasis in this chapter to the analysis of the case studies.
Case studies

The case studies are related to the relationship between light and participation in a number of contemporary art experiences. Three case studies were considered in the methodological approach of the thesis: *Metis Lighting lives in via Padova* (Metis Lighting + Padova Street is better than Milan), *Borderlight* (Borderlight/NonRiservato) and *Green Light Workshop* (Studio Olafur Eliasson + TBA21). There are also collateral case studies involving participation experiences in instances of tactical urbanism and design for social innovation, aiming to gather data about the strengths and weaknesses of both.

Interviews

The criterion for the interviews was choosing light artists, whose work evoked a strong visual fascination and offered the possibility of raising questions about potential forms of participation and interaction with the public. Another relevant aspect was the availability of the material in the works (easy access, preferably to be visited personally in shows, workshops, and other events). Other informal interviews and conversations have also taken place with lighting designers, architects, and other artists working with light in urban contexts.

The table below shows the number of questions asked to each interviewee, the number of answers received and what interviews were published partially or totally, with the respective number of questions and answers of each one (tab. 1).

*Tab. 1 – Light Artists Interviewees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Paolo Scirpa</th>
<th>Carlo Bernardini</th>
<th>Pietro Pirelli</th>
<th>Marco Brianza</th>
<th>Balint Bolygo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS ASKED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANSWERS RECEIVED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONS / ANSWERS ALREADY PUBLISHED</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews with five light artists were conceived in order to have a glimpse of the authors’ willingness to include, among their inputs in the
creative process, the contribution from viewers, and not just in terms of fruition of the works.

The methodology adopted is qualitative, using semi-structured questions. The questions were varied in number (from five to ten) and of content based on the type of work created by each artist. They involved the relationship with the public space, with the users, with the concepts of time and space, the relationship with technology, and the possibilities of future development of the works.

The questionnaires were carried out in English or Italian, based on the native or most comfortable language of the interviewees, and sent by email. The selection of the interviewees was also based on the proximity between the respective artistic works and the issues addressed in the study; particularly with regards to the change in perspective and therefore the change of atmosphere in a specific urban space (internal or external).

Workshop: Co-designing and participation in the conception phase of the design process

This consisted in a co-design activity, involving 43 interior design students, three light artists and two architects, in order to propose light interventions in some intermediate urban spaces (IUS) of Milan, in order to make them attractive, exciting and usable spaces for the ordinary citizen, the user (or the frequent visitor) of the place. The activity was developed in four phases over one week, and ended with an exhibition of the nine proposals (one by group) assembled in mock-ups (fig. 4 and 5).

Students have had access to a large repertoire relating to light art, including conceptual and technological aspects, as well as contact with three artists chosen from the previous interviewees, and their respective works. The concepts relating to the type of space (IUS) to be addressed in the workshop were introduced and discussed by me and another architect.

\[4\] More details about this workshop were presented in a paper at the UD17 Doctoral Forum Noisewise - Design Research in face of current challenges to knowledge, 16-17 October 2017, Porto, Portugal.
Results

Case studies

The initiatives analysed in the case studies tend to boost more participation in the early stages of the process. However, weaknesses have been identified in the processes involving the public, as mentioned by critics who maintain that there is a “weakening of the design culture” with post-it and similar design (Manzini, 2015). Another weakness is the difficulty encountered in the continuity of participatory initiatives, in addition to the paradoxes of participation itself.\(^5\)

The lighting design studio Metis Lighting (Italy) with the project “Metis Lighting lives in via Padova” developed beautiful and moving works in a symbolically peripheral area of Milan (Zone 2, via Padova).\(^6\) This initiative involved several local agents, bystanders, and children from a neighborhood school. Relating to the participation, one of the editions was more effective than others, but the effect of the whole project in the context contains a certain poetry, even if temporary.

\(^5\) Anna Seravalli (personal communication, Milan, 20 June 2017).
\(^6\) For further information: http://www.metislighting.it/metis/urban-outdoor/jellyfish-invasion and http://www.metislighting.it/metis/urban-outdoor/il-giardino-che-non-ce
For example, in the project *Jellyfish Invasion* (Metis Lighting, Milan, 2011), the creation of the intervention was properly done by a team within the Metis Lighting studio. Thus, the participation of users in their creative process takes place only to a certain degree, even closer to fruition. However, from the beginning, there was an involvement of the local association “Via Padova is better than Milan” in the process of viabilization and realization of the imagined installation.

In several *Borderlight* initiatives (*Borderlight/NonRiservato*, Italy) we see a clear desire to involve ordinary people from the neighborhoods in at least some point of the creative phase. An example would be the collaboration of citizens in the mapping of the peripheral places to be “enlightened” with the intervention, sometimes based on a light module previously defined within the scope of the collective. This module installed with the participation of people in a workshop created in the neighborhood, is subject to a potential margin of change, which in the end causes it to assume different configurations, evolving the initial module. This also includes the possibility of bringing non-specialized people closer to different values and possibilities of light, doing something that may lead some poetry to the forgotten contexts of the city.\(^7\)

The *Green Light Workshop*, carried out since 2016 in different cities and contexts by artist Olafur Eliasson together with Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA21), goes in a similar direction, relating to the participation of ordinary people in the design process. It is based on the assembly of lamps by a network of people including refugees, asylum seekers, and members of the public, oriented by teachers and experts. It is not just about the construction of lamps, but a participatory project that aims to include these people in a wide way, engaging them, integrating them, teaching them European culture and languages, through a multifaceted program of shared learning (Francesca von Habsburg, in Zyman and Ebersberger, 2017, p. 8).\(^8\)

During the workshop, participants have the opportunity to go through various stages of the assembly process from dyeing, drying, gluing, and fixing components to the completion of each module. Finally, they arrive at several volumetric solutions, whether or not they join other modules.


\(^8\) For further information: olafureliasson.net and greenlightworkshop.org.
But how does one proceed from the assembly of a light module to social change? The journey might seem long and convoluted, yet a simple but crucial first step is to trust the potential in the non-spectacular situation of sitting down together and doing something basic with our hands – in this case, working on a lamp that is more easily assembled by two pairs of hands that one. (Olafur Eliasson, in Zyman and Ebersberger, 2017, p. 14)

Regarding the way the people involved in the process are inserted, as well as the scale of the interventions, it is interesting to observe the proximity between the methodological approaches present in the Green Light workshop, in the interventions of the Borderlight Collective or in various experiences of Tactical Urbanism.

**Workshop**

The workshop identified possibilities of interaction between design and light art to improve the aesthetic experience in urban environments. It stimulated the participation of students as users and allowed them to not have to take part from the middle of the design process, but from the beginning: from its conceptual phase. The proposals enriched not only the physical dimension of the space but, more fundamentally, the symbolic dimension, transforming it into space for exchanging and favoring better experiences for users. This interaction between light art and design pointed to a kind of ordinary people’s participation in the process of creating space, beyond fruition.

**Interviews**

In general, the responses of the artists interviewed highlighted some intentions to promote an interaction between the public and the work of art. In some interviews, for example, expressions such as the following were mentioned:

[Pirelli] “various levels of reading” | “artistic research can (...) ‘reach’ the public” | “the work shows a touch” of magic, [if] one knows how to create awe, disorientation and even poetry” (Tibúrcio, 2018a, p. 53).10

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9 Four among five interviews were already published (see References) and another one is forthcoming.

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Copyright © 2019 by FrancoAngeli s.r.l., Milano, Italy. ISBN 9788891786197
[Scirpa] “the so-called ‘street man’, ‘ordinary person’” | “the best spectator” | “attracted by an innovative beauty” | “participates beyond any conditioning cultural stereotype” (Tibúrcio, 2017a, p. 41).\(^{11}\)

Brianza admits that some operations in his work allow for the interaction of the public with the work, to the point of being able to modify it, but only to a certain extent. It is up to the artist to establish the control point.

Bolygo also emphasizes the importance of the interaction of the spectator with the work and adds that the experience behind the scenes of the work also counts (Tibúrcio, 2018b, p. 37).

The visions of Bernardini and Scirpa are very similar in terms of the subjective space and the use of imagination to create something beyond our habitual perception (Tibúrcio, 2017c, p. 60; Tibúrcio, 2017a, p. 40). Scirpa mentions the use of light to sculpt the architectural space, a strategy widely used by other artists of Light Art, including James Turrell. Scirpa provokes a displacement in the gaze of the spectators, taking them out of their comfort zone of seeing the same views that have always been seen and transforming them into the protagonist of a journey to “further spaces” (Tibúrcio, 2017a, p. 41).

Scirpa (like Bernardini and other artists) focused on forgotten spaces and uses his work as a way of drawing people’s attention to this type of space, causing a kind of “displacement” of the gaze, an operation also very present in several examples of contemporary art.

**Discussion**

Regarding the case studies, similarly to the process we can see in the *Borderlight* (*Borderlight* collective/NonRiservato) example, and again in the *Green Light Workshop* (Studio Olafur Eliasson + TBA21), the module project is developed by the studio, and not by outsiders included in the respective participatory project. However, there is participation here, too, in preparatory stages. In the case of Borderlight project, ordinary people collaborate in the collective mapping to choose the locations where the module should be installed, and in modifying the module before and during its in-

\(^{11}\) [Scirpa] “il cosiddetto ‘uomo della strada’” | “il miglior fruiitore” | “attratto da una bellezza innovativa” | “partecipa oltre ogni stereotipo culturale condizionante”

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stallation. In the case of the Green Light Workshop, they prepare fragments of the module for the actual workshop itself.

Despite the limitations observed in the case studies, all the analysed participatory projects are therefore a first step in giving the “strangers” a sense of belonging. These initiatives are so important that they must be continually studied, understood, disseminated and improved due to their significant symbolic and social impact, in addition to the visual aspect, but without ruling out the latter as a strong and seductive element for the success of the project. Including and integrating someone from a context considered symbolically peripheral to carry out an intervention is also a revolutionary act, even on a micro-scale.

Relating to the workshop, the students that participated in it were not experts in light art, but they had the opportunity to improve their knowledge on this topic. The technological aspect and the vast repertoire of resources on light art, presented through a number of lectures at the beginning of the workshop, were strongly apparent in the students’ interventions. This was one strength of the collaboration between students and light artists. Of course, students (“future specialists” in Interior Design) do not seem to be typical examples of ordinary people but, in this case, being themselves users of the spaces in which they were invited to act as co-designers, they assumed that role.

The concept of IUS and its strong not only physical but symbolic dimension was reinforced between students and architects. The IUSs chosen by students were varied, rich and exceeded initial expectations. This may be due to choices that were real and corresponded to the students’ daily experiences. The proposals show that people alone are not enough to transform a “place” into a “space” (de Certeau, 1998). The results suggested that light can act as a bonding element, promoting the interaction between people.

The permission granted to the public to peek behind the curtain of Bolygo’s work, according his interview, proved to be an important strategy that has also been adopted by Eliasson in several of his works (Beccaria, 2013). It is a decision of the artist that reveals itself as a kind of generosity towards the public, undoubtedly encouraging to a less static enjoyment of the work. This strategy, which is repeated in several works of light art, can be interpreted as a way of sharing knowledge with the audience that favors them, promoting a more complete experience and provoking an interaction that corresponds to a sharing of knowledge, advantageous to the action of the performer and to making a type of participation viable, to some degree.
The interviews and the workshop are, in this research, a pilot test that serves as a reference for the analysis of information and correlations with the case studies. Obviously, sample interviews and the workshop can be expanded to broaden the scope and depth of the analysis, which could characterize future research.

Conclusion

When Alejandro Aravena says that “architecture is about giving form to the places where people live” mentioning that it is not just about the “basic needs”, but also related to the strive to “integrate needs + desire”, I agree with him because I understand that "desire” must be included in the packet of “needs”, in order to achieve the sense of “intangible dimensions” defended by him.12

Light is considered in this study as a possibility to overcome barriers between experts and ordinary people. The potential contribution of light art in this discussion is seen from four points of view. The first concerns the ability of light art to cause displacements capable of creating perceptible changes in spaces, thus increasing aesthetic quality in a wide range of internal and external environments. The second refers to its potential to stimulate, even in very different people, common initiatives involving a certain kind of participation. The third is the democratization of access to the specific techniques and technologies used in light art. This favors a diffusion among ordinary people of other possibilities and methods of interaction towards new aesthetic characteristics, including sophisticated and refined forms that they usually do not have access to, thus increasing their ability to extrapolate beyond the limits of common sense. Finally, if associated with a particular phase of the design process – to idealize the intervention – light art could contribute to increasing the level of participation of ordinary people, promoting social inclusion and helping to mitigate a fragile point identified in the design processes, advancing the degree of participation at one of the highest levels of the scale pointed out by Souza (2006).

Regarding the contribution of this study, I would propose two new concepts: the intermediate urban space (IUS) and the conception phase of the design process. Comparing it with existing ones, the concept of intermediate urban space seeks to unite the physical and symbolic aspect into a single con-

12 Alejandro Aravena (personal communication, Milan, 18 July 2016).
cept relative to the space of the urban experience. The concept of conception phase of the design process is addressed and seeks to understand one of the bottlenecks in participatory design processes, and proposes a step forward in the concept of participatory and interactive art. The comparison of the two created concepts with existing ones adds, respectively, something to the area of urban studies and something also to the topic of design processes.

The findings of this study are also a modest attempt to suggest contributions to fill two aspects of the gap within the emerging design culture. These two aspects are the problems of post-it design pointed out by Ezio Manzini (2016), and the difficulty of the intervention duration in time after the designers go away.

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