

REPORT

Nighttime Design  
City Lights

## CITY LIGHTS, NIGHTTIME DESIGN: A RESEARCH- BASED, PROTOTYPE PILOT WITH CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

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with Citizen Participation

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Urban design often neglects the nocturnal city. It is time to recognize the changing character of public space after sundown. The practice of Nighttime Design is a critical response to the after-dark experience, proposing new lighting solutions based on the in-depth study, for example, of local mobility, spatial elements, and activities. Nighttime Design positively impacts public health: illuminated streets extend walking hours, increase the number of social encounters, and stimulate economic activity through after-dark cultural and retail offerings. It also improves general wellbeing and feelings of safety in the community through crime reduction.

Smart Everyday Nighttime Design is a collaborative research project spearheaded by Arup's Lighting team with urban-lighting leader Leni Schwendinger; Don Slater, co-director of the Configuring Light research group at the London School of Economics; Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano and Despacio (local mobility research partners); iGuzzini (technical partner); Findeter (Development Bank); and Citelum (site engineering and installation). Smart Everyday Nighttime Design focused on innovative ways to improve the nighttime experience in Getseman í, a UNESCO world-heritage district in Cartagena, Colombia undergoing rapid gentrification. While tourists are drawn to the area's colorful authenticity, culture and nightlife, the neighborhood is becoming synonymous with deep inequality and division. As LSE's Don Slater observes, *"Good Nighttime Design is a knowledgeable response to the needs and the life of a particular space, based on real social knowledge, a spatial knowledge and a technical knowledge as well."* In an area undergoing so much upheaval and discord, where stakeholders have conflicting interests, the project's team wanted to know, as Schwendinger emphasizes, *"Is it possible to build better communities with light?"*

Nighttime Design values local design solutions. In the case of the Cartagena-sited project, workshops and social/technical research led to the development of a universal LED lantern customized and localized for the area's streets. The project team had two overall ambitions: the first was to conduct research and develop a sustainable Nighttime Design concept and methodology; the second was to improve community connections and galvanize local stakeholders through the use of private property for public lighting. During a community work session, in July 2016, operational 3-D lantern sketches were created to show how a neutral, modern object could be localized according to a specific urban environment — its culture, values, and symbols. With its blend of old and new components, the lantern prototype accentuated the character of Getsemani. Its collaborative methodology brought together the interests of residential and commercial actors.

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Following the workshop, a “pop-up” prototype pilot installation was conducted on a commercial street. The one-day workshop and pilot were a point of departure for addressing critical issues of social/urban policy. The workshop included community stakeholders including politicians, artists, designers, cultural organizations and, most importantly, local residents. Historical preservation, infrastructure, heritage, tourism, mobility and visual effect were all discussed and debated.

Beyond this, the future is glowing for Nighttime Design as an emerging discipline in city-making around the globe.

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