

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

Torino, 10th - 11th - 12th July 2008

Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with
Conference of Italian Design Faculty Deans and Programme Heads.

In the framework of WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL TORINO 2008 | © ICSID
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DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

**Enabling replication of promising initiatives for sustainable living in
Brussels and Paris**

Abstract

Shared housing, alternative mobility... spontaneous social innovation may reveal new and more sustainable solutions in daily urban ways of living.

How to improve these initiatives and make them more accessible for a larger share of users keeping their initial social qualities? How to scale them up fostering their duplication at the local scale maintaining their environmental benefits? What can strategic design bring to support these social innovators? What are the new approaches to co-design within a social fabric of creative users?

This paper will present and compare the results of two parallel research projects in Brussels and Paris focusing the design of social innovation. Teams of designers from the École Supérieure des Arts Visuels of La Cambre in Brussels and the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris experimented real size participative design processes with groups of citizens willing to start or improve collaborative solutions. The two groups of cases focused are respectively:

- car drivers promoting local urban hitchhiking initiatives around different areas of Brussels¹.
- single seniors offering spare rooms through cohabitation opportunities to students in Paris²;

In particular the presentation will focus on the start-up phase catalysing the new solution and on the projective approach used by the designers to stimulate social conversation between the players involved and support them in the discussion and construction of their customized solution. These collaborative design sessions with current and future promoters allow to describe the key-characters and possible options of a 'meta' or 'generic solution' used during workshops or interview sessions to facilitate appropriation of complex product-service systems and to enable non-professionals to design their own life's solutions.

¹ VAP, Comobil, Kotvoiturage/Taxistop and Myoto, Brussels, Belgium.

² Logement Intergénération, Paris and Rouen, France e Prendi uno studente a casa, Milan, Italy.

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The text will first describe the different starting points of the two parallel experimentations: whether solutions were already implemented, as for the cohabitation of seniors-students, or if the initiative is in a launching phase as for the urban hitchhiking. Compared analysis of the solutions will focus on the different barriers for the diffusion of the initiatives and possible up-scaling strategies.

The second part of the text will describe the definition of generic solutions and its tentative decomposition into a set of *solution elements*. Co-design sessions between current and new groups of local promoters of the different solutions allow to progressively explore the different facets of the solution beyond its current implemented forms and embed it into a set of enabling cards.

The third part of the text will draw from these on-going experiences the different characteristics and applications of strategic design to support the design and diffusion of the mentioned *enabling solutions*. In particular, it will describe how to present and give visibility to a complex enabling solution; how to support the strategic conversation between a group of participative promoters; how to customise solutions to particular context of use and set a temporary *visual agreement* between the actors involved; and finally how to discuss and organize progressive development stages of the solution from launch to a mature service.

A conclusion will enlarge the focus and discuss the meaning and consequences of this emerging situation of co-creation both from the point of view of users taking more and more part in the ideation and implementation of products and services they use and designers' task evolving towards elaborating *open semi-finished solutions* enabling these users to design their own daily living.

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Fig. 1: working sessions between groups of promoters and design teams using enabling cards to discuss and build their own customized solutions