

# Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

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

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**Liat Rogel [liat.rogel@gmail.com]**

**DIS (Design and Innovation for Sustainability), Politecnico di Milano, Italy**

## P-KIT, PICTURE LISTENING FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING

**A simple and effective design research tool for facilitators and inhabitants in participated urban processes.**

### Abstract

This paper discusses a new possible role for designers in participated urban processes: the creation of tools designed for the facilitation and improvement of communication between two main stakeholders in urban participated development. The paper describes one new tool in detail, P-KIT – picture listening for community planning. This tool has been designed specifically to ensure effective communication in urban areas with a high concentration of immigrants. The P-KIT concept opens a wide range of new possibilities for new tool development.

The circumstances in participated urban planning are not easy to approach: an elevated number of people, their heterogeneity and the work with non specialists. The most common difficulties arising in this situation are different view of problems, communication difficulties and major conflicts. The two key groups that have to deal with this problematic situation in the field are the inhabitants and the facilitators. Good communication between those two groups is crucial for the success of the whole process. Best results would be achieved if both sides knew how to understand each other better.

### How could designers sustain the communication between inhabitants and facilitators, in order to obtain the best project concepts?

Methods for this purpose exist already and are a great help. The most known are examined and explained in this paper, starting with a categorization made by Luigi Bobbio. Most of the methods are theoretical and rather complex. More so, very few consolidated tools are available for facilitators, for example *Planning for real*. To achieve better results, facilitators tend to invent tangible tools each time they approach a problem. Facilitators could benefit from “ready to use” tool frameworks that can be personalized for each case they have to approach.

P-KIT is an example of an effective new tool developed to address these needs. It is specifically designed to facilitate the communication with immigrant groups within a community. The main problems of participated processes increase when dealing with neighborhoods having a large concentration of foreigners. One has to deal with language expression difficulties, general shyness or lack of confidence, and indifference.

P-KIT is designed to support mostly the phase of ‘listening’ using the language of photography. It is a low-tech tool, that is used with the inhabitants in six different phases ranging from expressing problems to creating future scenarios. With this kit, problems are discussed using photos and images made by the

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inhabitants themselves in the beginning of the process. P-KIT has been tested and modified during a community participation workshops that took place in the “Satellite” neighborhood in Pioltello (Provincia di Milano). It was clear how well the kit helped “break the ice” between inhabitants and facilitators, enabling the inhabitants to better express their problems and develop a positive attitude towards future solutions.

In a situation in which everyone is called to design their own solution, new definitions and discussions about the designer’s role are important. In a participated process the creator of the solution is not the designer. P-KIT represents an effective design research tool that can be placed in the hand of inhabitants and facilitators, providing them some of the designer’s capacities to work with, towards best project results.

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