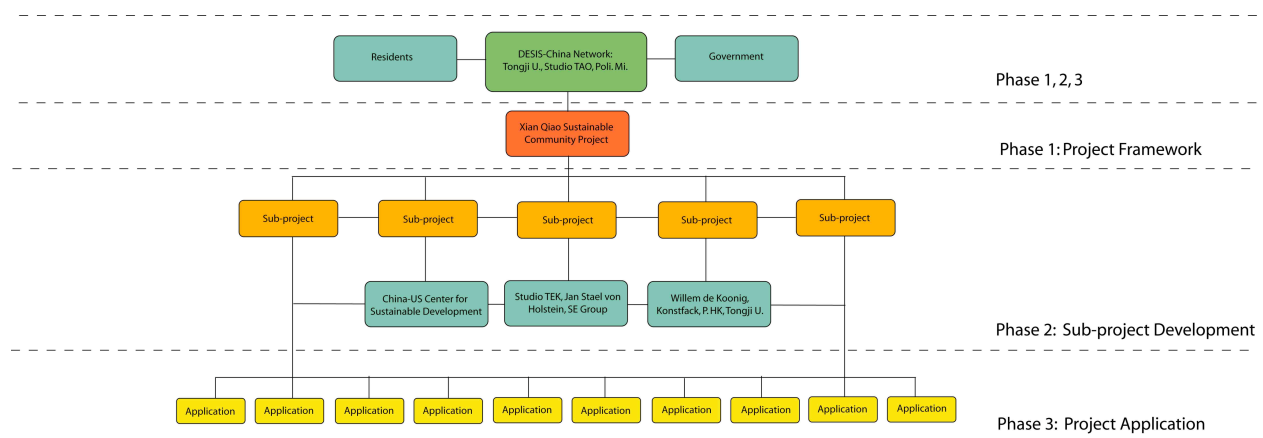


Chong Ming Island: the Design roles

Design leadership

The Chongming sustainable community project is a design driven project. It comes from the vision of sustainability, the insight of the present context and the understanding of the particularity of the area. It is a sustainable community project based on a design research initiative led by Tongji University and Studio Tao a urban design Think and action tank focused on sustainability which is coordinating all the participants in the project, including the local Chong Ming island government, village communities of the island, business partners and University resources. The Chong Ming initiative is, in other words, an attempt to use design as a new tool to promote solution towards a sustainable future for rural China and to design a social innovation prototype to be used in other design processes to improve human life in China and beyond.



Designers' role in the project has been preponderant. From the strategic point of view it has been that of mobilizing the social capital proposing comprehensible, viable, attractive scenarios and solutions by mediating between providers and users. All the roles, or the stakeholders, have been motivated by the design activities and solutions.

The key issue of the project has been the quality of the scenarios and proposals and how much the stakeholders could be activated. Given that designers intervened at different levels of the project using different design tools.

Investigating

Chong Ming project has activated a strong field immersion phase with the aim to:

- discover, analyze and visualize/communicate the territorial capital (natural, artificial, social) and its potentialities in terms of revitalization of the Island;
- map social innovations: finding, describing and representing the local creative communities and their initiatives.

Tools used in this area of intervention have been: on the field observations, data collections and analysis, interviews, cases mapping and understanding.

In the case of Chong Ming Island the process of investigating showed that its identity is based in agriculture, nature and ecology along with a few associated traditions of farming on the verge of being forgotten. Land remains designated from government initiatives with strong village support both in terms of social meaning and economic production. In other word the government, while a top-down system, directly affects the life-world of rural inhabitants on a daily basis who, in turn, simultaneously promote it from a bottom direction. Socio-cultural connection are also not limited to one village but happen among a network of neighbouring villages for nursing aid, food collection, selling home made products and business services. These village government initiatives and entrepreneurial-type residents provide the capability to develop and improve a community with more opportunity given by the designer.

The context is characterised by the presence of creative communities.

1, in order to collect the existing resource, the studio Tao did a lot of field research at the starting stage. (booklet, storyboard)

From 2009 to 2010, several thematic workshops were hold on for the project (urban planning, rural kitchen, creative economy), The participating students investigated onsite for specific tasks and presented with design tools.

2, Following the CCSL China (2007) clue, the social innovation initiative was collected around this area. (housing renting for the retiree, organic food purchasing, agritourism), presented in the storyboard)

<http://chongmingtao.blogspot.com/>

The term “creative community” was introduced into this project, while it doesn’t mean it has been found in this specific area. The case Ainonghui (<http://sustainable-everyday.net/cases/?p=113>) which was collected for the CCSL, happened in a similar context with the Chongming project, Besides the potential commercial opportunity, the autonomous collaborative service in the local community is a direction in the future.



A view of Island house



On site observations and interviews

Facilitating

(the tools from participative design are used to support interaction and convergence between the parties involved...);

The mutual understanding of stakeholders is something that really oriented the direction of the project. And it has been one of its main difficulties. In fact most of the village island residents are less educated elder and women, some of whom only speak the Chongming dialect and could not understand the mandarin. How to satisfy the latent requirements, and how to involve them into an active co-design process, therefore trigger the social entrepreneur among the villagers challenged the designers' creativity.

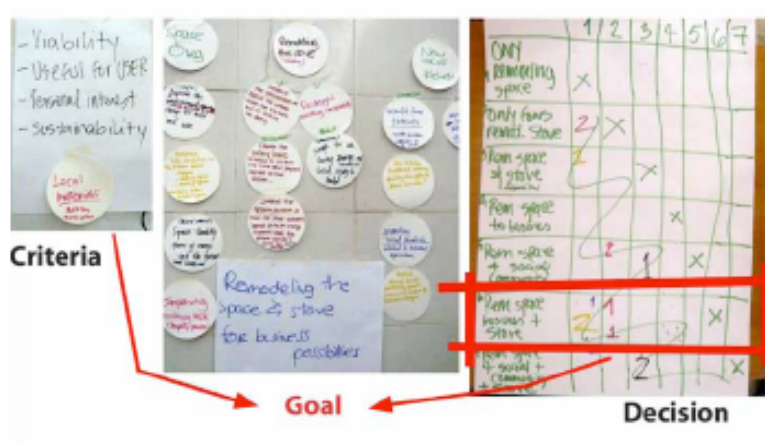
This represented an opportunity for design to act as mediator by designing different co-design activities to make communication among people as clear as possible. This facilitation activity brought to envisioning scenarios of choice where village leaders, residents, local government business and other societies have affected their relationship to the system in which were operating.

In the Chong Ming case partners are sought from government, community, academic and business levels to brainstorm and conduct workshops aiming at envisioning i.e. building solutions that bring meaning and significance to the local village community and to define a new socio-economical model for them.

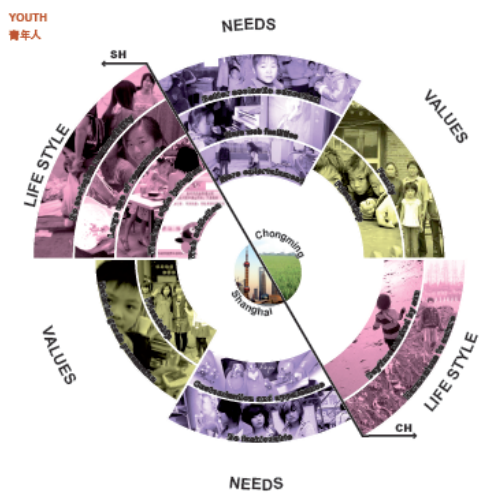
For example, empty rooms in house to be used for rental purposes or small business provide multiple kind of socio-economical potential for some residents who may already have the resources to benefit from. Another scenarios is that the production of organic agriculture from communal gardens and field can be the basis for a high quality food brand.



A moment of consensus getting during a workshop with villagers



Idea mapping



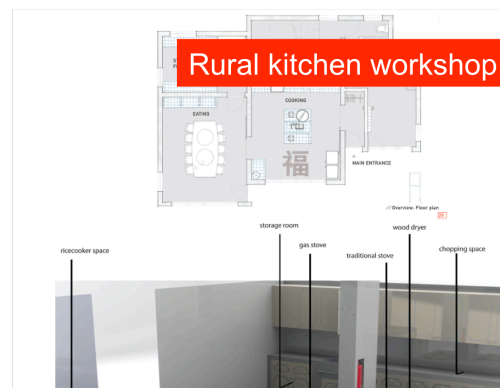
Consumers analysis



Focus group technique to collect and analyse ideas

Envisioning

The aim of this area is to create a set of sustainable design solutions for the transition between rural Chong Ming communities and urban Shanghai communities this can be achieved by the design of systems that balance technology, activities and services that enrich the users lives.



Rural creative community workshop



The workshops series with designers

A series of workshops have been hold on with different topics: rural public space planning, rural kitchen, and creative enterprenuear. The former two workshops focused on the infrastructure of

the local rural life, while the latter one emphasized particular on the potential business opportunities of the villagers.

Results from the latter one were represented from 5 services ideas in different field:

Food: Ping Heng Dao is a service that aims to transform the village into the land of balance where eating has a natural role in healthy lifestyle. It provides the balance and the connection between food and life by discovering and exploiting traditional medical food.

Agriculture: Bio Ming is a service that brings to the urban customer an organic choice of products from the island. Fruits and vegetables are local seasonal and regularly delivered to different point of sale in shanghai.

Hospitality: Renmù is a service that valorizes the local habits of the villagers in welcoming visitors. It encourages the renovation of traditional constructions for accommodating the visitors, instead of building new ones and stimulates interactions and cooperation with villagers.

Mobility: Hi Field is a service that makes fields paths accessible by the visitors and more attractive for the villagers by creating a system of trails allowing them to get closer to the intangible pleasures of nature.

Health: H+ is a service that provides health packages on the island, making participants practice open air activities while enjoying nature.



Oneday, Mrs Chen passed by one Changming fresh food distribution center close to her home. The girl who worked in the distribution store gave Mrs Chen one leaflet and introduce to her.



Mrs Chen went back and checked the website of the distribution center and found kinds of Changming fresh food delivery service. She choosed one.



On Saturday, Mrs Chen went to the distribution center and received the fresh tomatoes she booked.



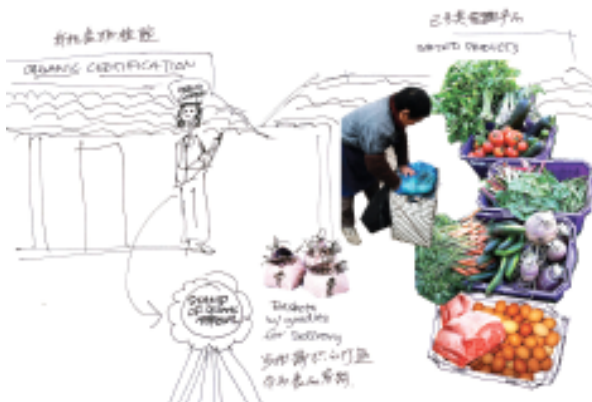
In the evening, Mrs Chen cooked the fresh tomatoes with her daughter according to the cooking manual on the leaflet.

A storybord for the interaction with the service center

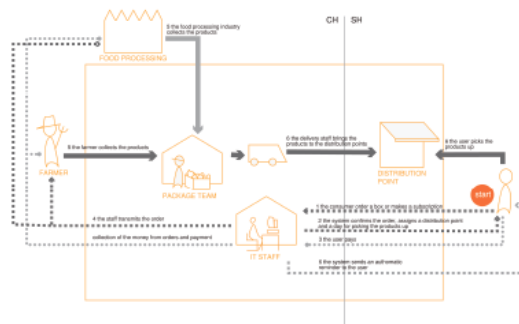
Specific design tools used to support envisioning have been: moodboard, storyboard, system map, physical prototype that helped participants to visualize solutions, modify and adapt them, to generate new ideas.



Moodboard



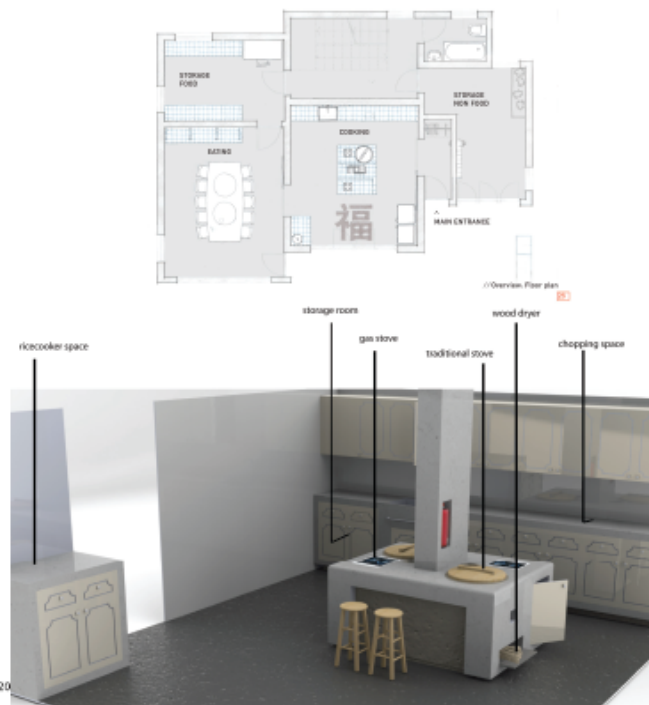
Storyboard



System map



Physical prototypes



Rendering and digital prototypes

Systemizing

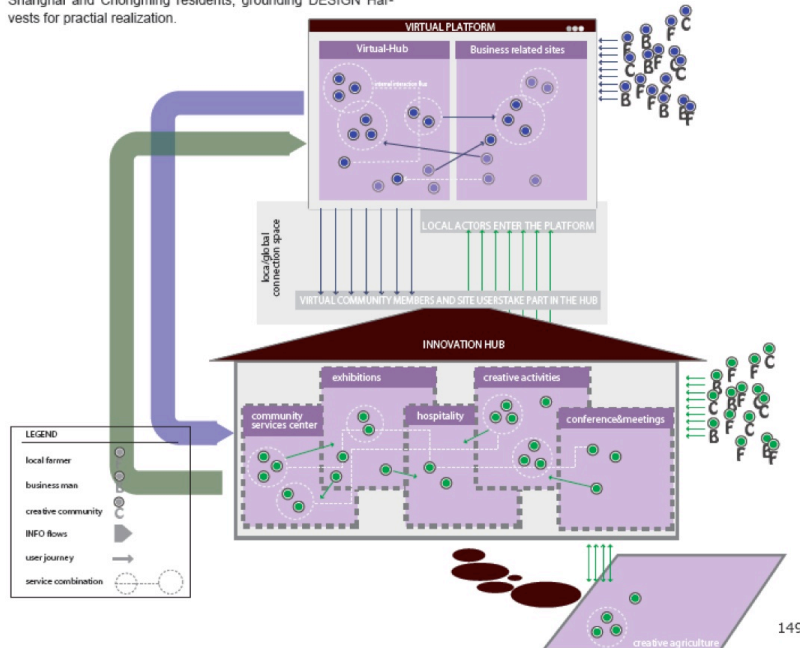
This design action was about linking design solutions in a local system, creating mutual connection and relating them to the external environment. Here the design role has been to organize the project services network. This meant finding design solutions to connect the different services and to understand how they could support one another and to frame a consistent scenario.

Systematizing proceeded by finding synergies between analogous, complementary and compatible activities. These has been obtained by:

- sharing some operation and infrastructures and creating a critical mass;
- understanding if there are output of one activity that can become input for another one
- understanding which solutions, if combined, can generate mutual virtuous savings and reinforcement.

The result of this activity has been the map of synergies reported below.

Shanghai and Chongming residents, grounding DESIGN Harvests for practical realization.



Map of the project synergies

Enabling

To make stakeholder independent in their activities design also conceived the digital platform of the project by the means of which to interact with different services dedicated both to the people from urban area who want to access the island and or its facilities and to different stakeholders and promoters that would offer new service.

A visualization of the services that the digital platform would make available

Communicating

Another activity that design performed in the project has been the elaboration of the communication strategy and channels to make the project visible. This first required the elaboration of the project identity and brand and the implementation of different tools to make brand and identity tangible.

To reach this goal communication design, interaction and information design skills have been applied to realize different communication tools to disseminate and communicate the project.



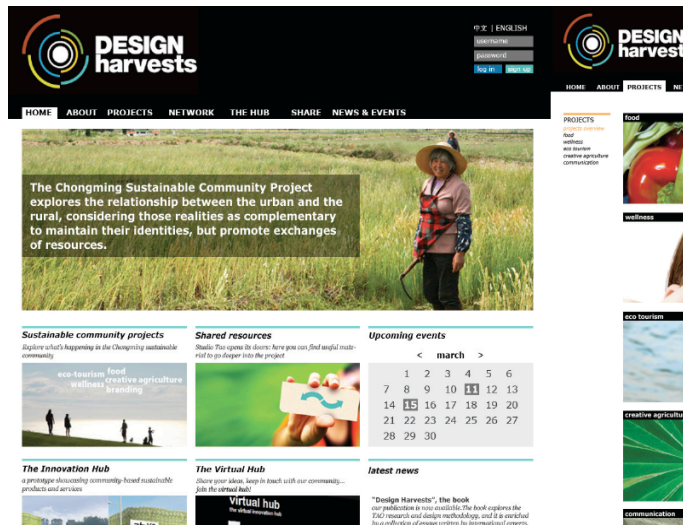
Call for Chong Ming design project



Project presentation during public events



Communication tools to expose and communicate the project during exhibitions



The project digital platform that serves both as external communication tools as well a to access services around the island