

# New Wuxi, New Life

## Design roles

(a very draft to be updated)

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## 1 Introduction

NeWu is an ongoing explorative framework project promoted by School of Design, Jiangnan University (JU) and other partners, stakeholders. It's a design-driven project with multi-disciplinary approaches. It aims to promote new sustainable lifestyles with radical change towards sustainability by identifying, intervening and generating sustainable initials, proposals, projects for harmonious society in the area of Wuxi, Jiangsu Province. The project strategy is to define and network the diffused positive initials as the basic resource on one hand, and to generate and synergy the adapted new proposals towards the local problems on another. There are three basic elements in the framework project. They are "Urban everyday life", "Rural-Urban relationship" and "Ubiquitous networking". The first two are the approaches to reach the goal of project, the last one is the enabling technologies to do so.

As a framework project, NeWu as defined in last months. However, the beginning of project is Chita08 workshop in 2008 as collaboration between School of Design, Jiangnan University and Indaco, Politecnico di Milano (Polimi). It's a research-based design exploration on sustainable lifestyles supported by mobile communication toward Wuxi context. Seven proposals and scenarios were generated as collaborative services. After that, this research line was consolidated by the foundation of "DESYS Research Center" in School of Design, Jiangnan University as further indepth cooperation between two universities. Following Chita08, DESYS09 workshop was organized in 2009, focusing on the community services and sustainable lifestyle in Wuxi. In 2010, the project team in JU have done more field research and interviews with some experts in different related field. Some very interesting initials and local projects have been identified. With those former experiences in Wuxi, we are going to organize a DESYS seminar and DESYS10 workshop in Wuxi to exchange with national and international research communities in this field, and to develop the design proposals and interventions.

## 2 Design Roles

### 2.1 Identifying

This part of work is preparation for the next parts. Although the exchanges between two universities in last years bring some ideas of related topics to Jiangnan University, such as creative communities, sustainable lifestyle, product and service system design, social innovation. For most of students, those topics are still far away what they are learning and doing in general didactical activities. We decide to use the part-1 to give and cult better background of workshop. In practice, the collaboration is launched in July and the student participants were enrolled. However, we need to wait until beginning of next semester in September and those instructors from Polimi will visit Jiangnan University to have an intensive workshop part.

In part-1, we give students an input of toolkit to explain what to do and how to do. With a simple guideline, they are asked to collect some interesting initials from two perspectives: one is collaborative service, some interesting bottom up phenomenon that peoples in collaboration to solve the problem in everyday life; another is mobile social network, some interesting application of mobile communication in social networking and values (see figure 6.4 and 6.5). Students are encouraged to collect the cases by different ways, as a whole, we call phenomenon observation. We assign this part work as homework during the summer holiday.

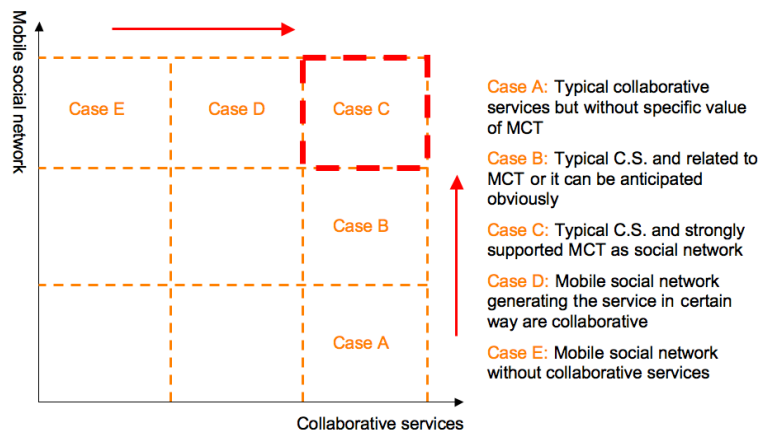


Figure 6.4 Cases matrix

The purposes of part-1 are: 1) through the study of input materials, cases, and observations, the students may have better understand the related topics and background; 2) through the observation and case collection experiences, students may have better sensibilities in social realities, problems and technologies application; 3) the results of part-1 may provide rich initials for part-2 as some starting points.

**Case A :iphone MobileMe**  
Digital Community

**Case B :Mobile ticketing**

**Case C :Baidu Bar**  
[www.nm.xxt.net.cn](http://www.nm.xxt.net.cn)

**Case D :PIN-che company\***

**Case E :Waved-up**

This is a new urban area traffic, and the general bus stop in a fixed location, you can car on the roadside waved, and then in the nearest place alight. Generally, these passengers usually have different destinations, but the line is roughly the same, this can in a nearby car and get off at the local level, a decrease of the station and the itinerary of destinations, at the same time, few people in the same car , Have reduced the waste of resources.

Figure 6.5 presentation of a case

The results of part1 are presented at beginning of part-2 to all the instructors from two universities. Since this part of work is done by each student individually, the quality of results are

various between students. Some of them find very interesting cases that we expected; some just collect related information or general benchmark. Some of them did field research with first hand material; some just do desk research on Internet. But they all become good media to explain our related topics and lead students enter the domain of theme of workshop.

## 2.2 Envisioning

Part-2 is a two weeks intensive workshop, as the main body of Chita 08. With support from Chinese instructors, 29 student participants and 5 visiting instructors from Politecnico di Milano work full time for this workshop. It composes mainly steps: field research; problem definition and idea generation, concept definition and scenario building. In each step, the instructors are divided into every student group to guide with methods, follow the process and involve the discussion. And there are several short presentations by each group to instructor team to give comprehensive review feedback and proceed the design progress.

Considering the disciplinary background of students team, instructor team organizes eleven lectures to introduce the related topics, theory, method and tools. They are:

- Everyday life creativity and sustainability, to give background of design for sustainability and new design paradigm;
- Product design to service design, to understand the service design from product design perspective; to build a bridge between what students learn and what would do in this workshop;
- Field research, to input why and how to do field research;
- Interaction design, to input the idea of interaction design and basic design tools;
- Communication for service design, to introduce the basic tool in service design communication;
- Design Experiences in Product-Service System, to introduce the experience of PSS design in Polimi;
- Designing Systemic Way, to introduce the experiences and cases of Lab synthesis project course structure and operation
- Case study: sustainable solutions on food networks and active welfare, to introduce the experience of two workshops in summer school of designing connected places
- Mobile service and interaction, to introduce the mobile service system and interaction design;
- Designing learning spaces with Web2.0 tools, to introduce the frontier information technologies and social influence;
- LSF 2007 and CHITA 2008: a comparative study on cross-cultural experiences, to give some comparison of two parallel workshops.

Those input lectures, on one hand, provide some fields knowledge like design for sustainability, service design, mobile communication and Web 2.0, and some design methods and tools in service design, interaction design, field research and communication of services. On the other hand, a big part of lectures are about related design experiences with vivid cases of design practices and activities, to help students understand the basic idea and tools quickly.



*Figure 6.6 Input lectures*

The progress of part-2 is starting from the results of part-1 where each student has some personal experience and they share it by presentation. Considering the local context of Wuxi, the student groups then are asked to define a topic under the theme of workshop for further work. Actually even in the part-1, It was already found the students are used to start generating ideas of concept even though what we ask students to do is observation and cases collection. So we ask them to step back to define a topic as the beginning of design process. After the discussion and evaluation, six topics and areas are defined: Food network, Mobility, Migrant worker, Pregnant women, Urbanization and demolishing, Travel. The definition of those areas involves some elements like the interests of group members, some experiences of part-1, relation with theme, local context in Wuxi and hypothesis of problems.

With the working areas, we start the first step: field research, lasting around 2 or 3 days. Meanwhile, we take some input lectures to give related method and experiences, such as on field research methods and tools. After the field research plan, each group visits related places, interviews with related persons to collect the datum and understand the problems. And the fields research are productive, what they find in field research are often different from or beyond of what they hypothesis. Then they need to reshape the research question and objectives of field research. It can happen several in cycles and that's why we prolong the step to 3 days. The students are exiting for what they find in it.



*Figure 6.7 Students in field research*

The second step is to define the problems and opportunities of topics based on the results of field research. We provide each group a “discussion wall” to facilitate the data analysis and discussion. The students stick the photos, notes and organize the related data to visualize the problem elements and opportunities. In practice, the first two steps intersect each other.



Figure 6.8 Definition of problems and opportunities

Based on the field research and results analysis, students start to generate ideas of proposals by brainstorm. The methods and tools in idea generation include persona, moodboard, poster, schema as examples in figures 6.9, 6.10, 6.11, 6.12.

## Persona



### Emma

Age: 27  
Occupation: White-collar in city

She is a normal person who is busy on duty. But she have a well awareness of health. So she is very careful on her diet.



### Hei Tu

Age: 38  
Occupation: Farmer

A very diligent farmer in Dafu village. He have some fields planted with various kinds of vegetables for self-support, but the quantity of vegetables is always over that amount. So he would like to deal with them by trade.

Figure 6.9 Persona





Figure 6.10 Moodboard



Figure 6.11 Poster

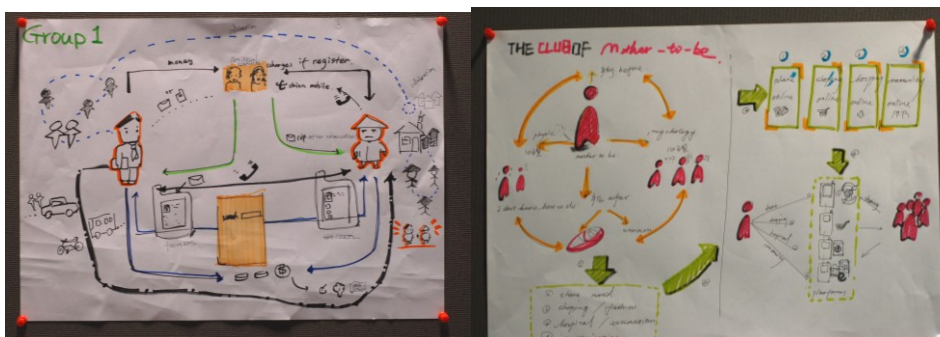


Figure 6.12 Schema

At the beginning of second week, each group presents the first two steps of workshop, reporting the field research and explain the generated ideas. The evaluation of ideas mainly depend on several factors: 1) if the idea respond to the problems and opportunities defined by field research; 2) if the idea is intend to enable the collaborative service; 3) if the idea is related to mobile communication.

The third step aims to define concepts and build scenarios. Focusing on the service idea, the concepts are defined by interaction and system of services with tools of storyboard and system map as figure 6.13, 6.14. The students are familiar to storyboard while not to system map. There are a lot of discussion, brainstorm, review of interaction design and system map. Since the experience is core part of service design, every student group is asked to interview with the potential users or clients by field research again, to improve the concept with directly feedback from target groups or stakeholders.

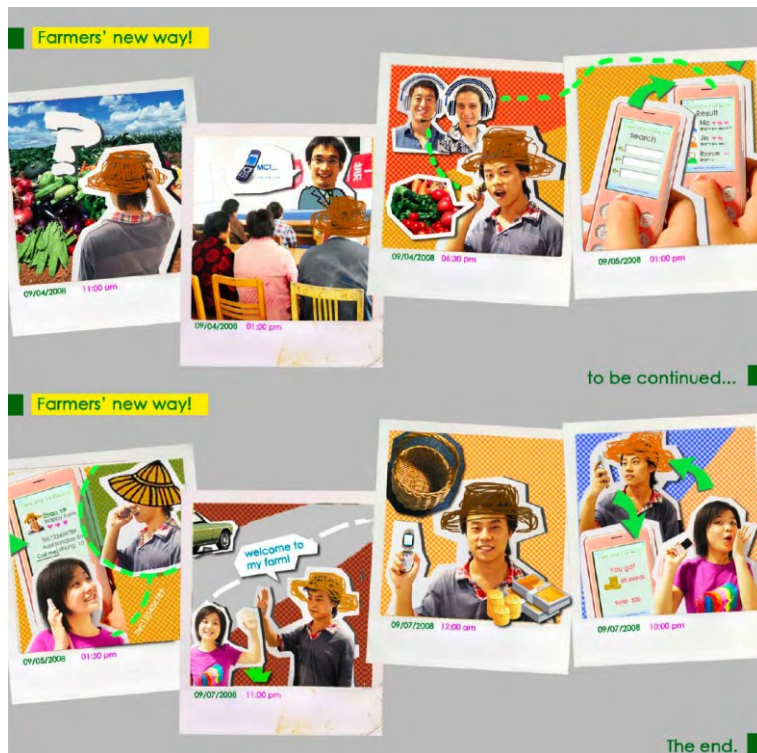


Figure 6.13 Storyboard

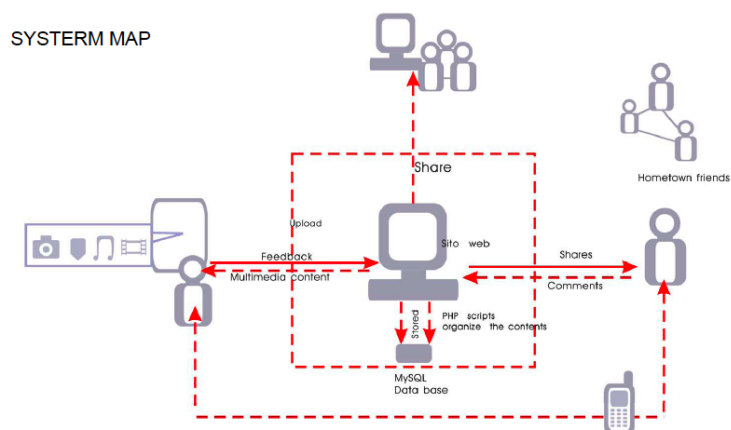


Figure 6.14 System map

Another presentation meeting is organized to review the concepts and design process at the end of second week. Beside the evaluation factors on service idea, the experience quality of interaction and system structure and mechanics are mainly considered.

### 2.3 Visualizing

The concepts of proposals are mainly shaped by the part-2. The part-3 is to enrich the concepts, develop the solutions and simulation and service. The used methods including flow chart, motivation matrix, technological elements and physical evidence list to develop the interaction, system and interface further. Most of those methods are relative new to the students and we take a set of input lectures to introduce those methods and tools during the intensive workshop. After the two weeks intensive workshop, the students have to start other courses and four of instructors members from Polimi need to return back to Milan. So we decide to slow down the process of projects and leave the students free to manage group design activities and instructors review the progress once a week with appointments.

As matter of fact, this stage was struggling to move ahead since solution development would be much complicated than concept design. We shift the focus on the video simulation of concept of solution, which may catalyze students to embody the concepts. Video simulation aims to put designers into the concept context and simulate the process as a testing prototype, and to use the video as a media of storytelling. To do that, we define a guideline for students:

*Video making from each concept*

*3 parts; (totally 3 minutes)*

*Part A: Context (maximum 45 seconds)*

*1) Including the local context of fields like Agriculture, health-care and immigrant worker.*

*2) Problematic context to visualize the problems*

*Part B: Simulation of Service (around 115 seconds)*

*Video versions of storyboards*

*Part C: Advertise of Service (maximum 20 seconds)*

*Resolutions: (widescreen 16:9) 720x 480*

*Format of video file: Mp4*

Following the guideline, students developed the video script for the concept, after checked by instructor team, they started to simulate, shoot and edit the video. It was a great success. Finally six videos were developed as figure 6.15, presenting the proposals well (see the appendix).

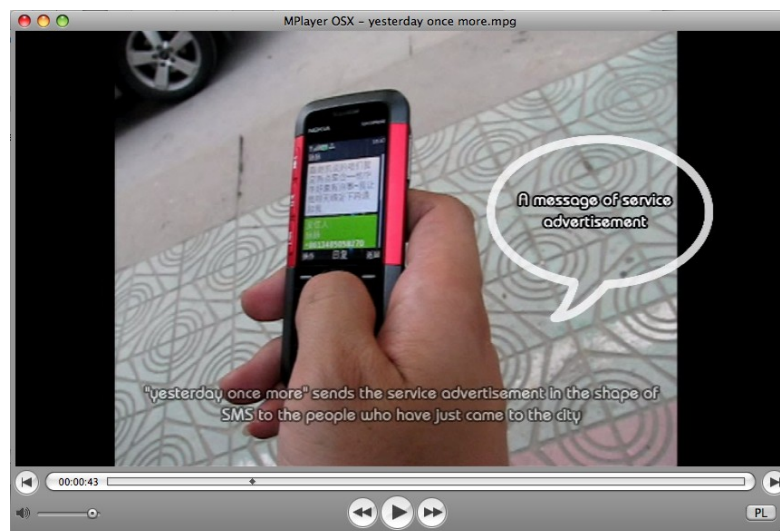




Figure 6.15 Video simulation of a concept

## 2.4 Communicating

The results of workshop were participated 2008 Wuxi international industrial design Expo and international collaboration exhibition of school of design for 50th anniversary of JU. Finally, A press conference was organized in Nov. 16, 2008. China (Wuxi) International Industrial Design Expo is held in November each year. By 2008, China (Wuxi) International Industrial Design Expo jointly held by China Industrial Design Association and Wuxi Municipal Government had been successfully launched for 5 years. Now it is the largest-scale and highest-level industrial design event and has formed a good brand advantage, effectively promoting the development of Chinese creative design industry. The theme of CIIDE 08 is “ Green design, harmonious creativities”.

## 2.5 Facilitating

Performative-Tools kit is a set of meaningless objects that can be given any meaning. But we should be able to configure them on and around our body. We can stick them together, or on our body using Velcro or some other mechanism. These objects should be simple, without any inherent meaning. But they should be attractive and provocative. One should want to grab them and play with them. After making this kit we will have a design event i.e. a co-design workshop where we experiment with the situational identities of our target users and generate and test our design ideas.

We did not have a tool kit to begin with and we did not know the shape of things needed. So we asked each group of students to define the shapes that they would need to pretend perform their respective user identities. Next day we collected the shapes defined by all the groups and unified them into a single set of objects, coordinating the colours and materials to be used. The students proceeded to create the objects. The unified tool kit could be used by all the groups whether the situational identity in question was of a junk-man or an elderly stockholder.

(See Fig. 4)



Fig. 5: Junk collectors group in balloon workshop



Fig.6: Elderly stockholders group in balloon workshop

Experiments were full of fun. The students performed as junk collectors or elderly stockholders while making and trying. The tools being attached to their bodies started to talk new stories. (See Fig. 5 and Fig. 6)

On the other hand, we also realized the shortcomings of the balloon: it is not durable at all and hard to keep in the original shape for a little longer time. After our discussion and trying, we chose the non-woven fabric to be made into the toolkit finally, using Velcro or magnet to fix

different parts. Fig. 7 shows a junk collector wearing the performative tools is trading with a resident. Fig. 8 shows a concept of a redesigned bag connects a chair and an elderly stockholder's body which is flexible for her or his different identities.



Fig.7: Performative tools  
for a junk collector



Fig.8: Performative tools  
for elderly stockholders