New Wuxi and New Life (NeWu)

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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 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 “DESIS Research Center” in School of Design, Jiangnan University as further indepth cooperation between two universities. Following Chita08, DESIS09 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 DESIS seminar and DESIS10 workshop in Wuxi to exchange with national and international research communities in this field, and to develop the design proposals and interventions.

At this stage, WuNe is still a spontaneous action by some researchers in JU and some people in different fields beyond of university who have interests on this topic. Therefore, not only the objects of project are mainly in a bottom-up perspective, but also the project itself. Until now, this project is funded by JU but more drive of it is the interests and intention of team partners. Usually they have personal interests on such issues or have related social ideals. While, we do have strong links and collaboration with local government and institutions, for example, the Municipal Bureau of Science and Technologies, Wuxi (National) Industrial Design Park and etc. And some of the projects activities and local projects are sponsored by the municipal government and institutions. In China, the government would like to give strong support when they can see some effective outcome already. We are still in the first stage to generate the outcomes, which is hardest step. While once it works, it will run very fast further.
Until now, project keeps exploration in a large field on the theme without particular limitation. However, given the local context and former experiences, some specific fields could be highlighted as key directions. They are Sustainable food network, Community services and engagement, Sustainable Mobility, Public initials and so on.

2 Local context

2.1 About Wuxi

Wuxi, a city with a history of 3,000 years, is one of important origins for the Wu Culture, which has dominated the region of Yangtze River South. In Ming and Qing dynasties, Wuxi was already an agricultural center and a significant national rice market for the dynasties. Today, Wuxi is recognized as the "Most Aspiring City of Prosperity and Civilization in the Southeast of China", and is one of cities with thriving economy and frequent exchanges with the outside world.

Wuxi has a total area of 4,787 square kilometers and the water surface area occupies about 30% of itsland (see figure 6.3). The city’s population is around 4.5 million. Industrial sectors including textile and manufacturing, plus recent added high-tech industries, have greatly increase the city capacity of economy. Economic growth and environmental conservation have always seemed like two different approaches. Many investment projects along banks of the Lake Tai have become significant in environment pollution. The city is one of China’s most popular tourist destinations with historical and cultural significance. It provides more than 200 tourist sites, including its classical gardens, parks, temples, lakes, and more. Each year, millions of tourists travel in Wuxi including its tour and sightseeing destinations Lake Taihu. Wuxi Clay Figurines and Yixing Teapot are the most well-known folklore handcrafts and are the best traveling gifts for your family and friends.

2.2 Challenges and Opportunities
Wuxi is an industrialized city in the Yangtze River Delta which is the best economically developed area in China. In a classical point of view, it’s a typical developed cities where people have relative good incomes and living conditions. Therefore, Wuxi faces some typical challenges of Chinese mode of development in last decades. Firstly, in terms of environmental sustainability, the pollutions and désolation of ecological system more and more threaten the people's everyday life; in terms of economic sustainability, the industries in Wuxi is based on manufacture, today there is no potentials to move head for the limitation of resources and advantages; in terms of social sustainability, the rapid urbanization in last decades largely destroy the social fabric and infrastructure, the context of communities and neighbourhood. After being sufficient in material life, people start to face the spirtual crisis and lose the trust. In a word, the former way of production and life may change in quantities, but couldn’t improve the quality of life. As matter of fact, the real life quality of people are strongly doubted.

However, there are also plenty of opportunities to change and way of developing and living. Firstly of all, from central government to municipal government, it’s widely recoganized that we have to change the way of living and producing toward sustainability, shifting from quantity to quality, from focusing on physical products and considition to compréhensive dimentions; in particular, Wuxi is the polit city to construct harmonious society as a key municipal Policy in next years; Secondly, the high developed economy provide the financial condition to make changes; thirdly, the people in Wuxi still have good sensibility on quality of life as it was a rich and peace city in history; forthly, the geografical diversity of Wuxi also offer the more condistion and possibilities to radical transition. Furthermore, Wuxi is in construction to be the centre and base of industrial of Network of Everything, which offer the good technological condition for those change.

3 Design workshops

3.1 Chita08
Chita 08 is formal collaboration between two universities with a project agreement. Two parties commitment to co-organized a workshop in Jiangnan university according to project proposal. The workshop was launched in July 1st and last five months to proceed a complete project of service design. Leaded by Prof. Ezio Manzini, the instructor team including other six PhD researchers from Polimi and three lectures from JU. The former are Miaosen Gong, Francesca Valsecchi, Joon Sang Baek, Chakrapipat Assawaboonyalert, Musstanser Tinauli, Irina Maria Suteu; the laters are Prof. Jie(greg) Sheng, Ming Cao and Xing Liu. The instructor term building consider the background of members and needs of project, for example, five PhD research from Polimi are in charge of different aspect of inputs, including service design, communication design, interaction design, movie design, ICTs trends and MCTs system. During the project, six PhD researchers from Politecnico di Milano visited Jiangnan university as visiting researchers and stayed for from three weeks to three months. We organized the workshop together with Chinese professors and gave 14 input lectures including 6 public lectures. 29 senior students and graduates in industrial design department participate the workshop. They, divided into six groups, develop six service design concepts about food network, mobility, health, stories connecting places, migrant workers and outdoor sports. 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 on Nov. 16, 2008
3.2 Desis09-JU
DESIS 09: Social Innovation and Connection is collaboration between Politecnico di Milano (Polimi) and founding members of DESIS-China, promoted and coordinated by DEISS-China under the umbrella of DESIS-International. It is a didactical and researching project for design-oriented phenomenon observation and exploration of design for Chinese social innovations. It focuses on 1) cases collection and analysis of grassroots social innovations by ethnographical research to investigate the emerging initiatives of Chinese urban sustainable lifestyles with particular intention of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and MCTs (Mobile Communication Technologies) and 2) design exercises to explore the design intervention on collaborative services of them.

The main part of project is joint workshops organized by founding members with the same theme, didactical toolkits and inputs toward different local context of each member. A toolkit will be prepared by Polimi and it is to facilitate participant institutions to manage the workshop independently. During the workshop, Prof. Ezio Manzini (Polimi) and probably other professors will give the distance lectures by Internet didactical platform of LeNS (the Learning Network on Sustainability).

At the School of Design of Jiangnan University, 28 students joined the project from the third-year BA and the first-year MA courses of industrial design and advertising departments respectively. The course started in May 2009 and within the following six months, it went through four stages: 1) Cases screening, 2) Field research, 3) Data analysis, and 4) Design interpretation. The workshop was managed by Zhang Xian and Salil Sayed.

4 Local projects
As a framework project, NeWu is approaching by some self-standing local projects. Given that NeWu is still at a very early stage. Most of local projects in NeWu are still design proposals that are prepared to be concept of running projects. Certainly, there are also several working local projects. In follows, a group of selected design proposals and working local projects will be presented.

4.1 Design Proposals
Taxi pooling
Service idea: between some particular places in the city, Taxi pooling can be organised by mobile phone to decrease overall taxi transportation and increase the economic benefit to users. The taxi pooling concept is a particular case example of a car-pooling system in the local context, where people flows between some areas in the city are particularly heavy and where bus transportation is not enough nor feasible to meet the needs. This service can facilitate people who would like to take a taxi together by organising taxi pooling by themselves easily.

Footprints
Service idea: Footprints is a local-based service for independent travellers who can access relevant information and share their experiences with others in real time during their travels. It is a service system that works through peer participation between travellers, especially those who like travelling for adventure. It is convenient for users to share their happiness and experiences during their travels with each other as well as with family and friends.

Pride House
Service idea: through a mobile digital platform, migrant workers share and exchange experiences and skills and face problems together. Pride House is a service concept for migrant workers who form a large group in specific social contexts. As a new phenomenon, there are still many problems regarding their physical conditions, social and cultural environment including
problems related to social exclusion. This concept aims to use mobile phones to enable social communities to form and the use of social resources in a P2P mode.

Mom’s Talk
Service idea: Mom’s Talk is an MCT-based service to facilitate the connection between pregnant women, new mothers and doctors in order to deal with problems and share experiences together. Pregnancy is a particularly intense period for women who will experience certain specific physical and psychological pressure. Physically, they stand out slightly from ‘normal’ life and community and may lack a social life, while psychologically, they have stronger needs to express their experiences and feelings. With mobile devices, this service system provides them with access to communities and participative activities, which brings them more strength, confidence and happiness to be pregnant women.

Finding the Fresh (F&F)
Service idea: a Community Supporting Agriculture service, F&F is a network matching the needs of urban residents for organic food and small-scale and/or family food producers in the suburbs. Urban people today increasingly recognise that food quality is important to their health and food produced in a traditional way has better quality. On the other hand, there are still a number of people in the countryside who cultivate local vegetables and fruits as traditional family producers, and in general, the harvest is more than they need. This network intends to connect
these distributed and unstable resources and diffused needs with local organic food and countryside experiences.

**Yesterday Once More**
Service idea: People who have experiences from a certain place can keep the memory of that place and share its stories with a mobile-specific local service. This concept has evolved from the local context where large-scale city rebuilding and expanding and population influx results in the collapse of social infrastructure and fabric. The idea of “yesterday once more” aims to protect social capital and common resources in a bottom-up way, to ultimately enrich people’s everyday life and reinforce social cohesion.

**4.2 Working projects**

**Public Square Dance**
There is an emerging phenomenon that in the evening people gather together in Public Square and participate self-organized group dance. It becomes popular in Wuxi in last years. And this is a very positive initial to enrich the healthy life and social fabric of people. in this project, some active promoter facilitate the activities while the process is so sophisticated that I has to be so-designed between the organizers and large number of participants and other stakeholders such as some volunteers of dancing teachers. In this local project, the possible design intervention
can be done is a product-service system to promote this kind of square dance by a toolkit.

**88008800 Taxi Line**
This is a local project of Taxi booking system enabled by GPRS. With local-based service and wireless communication technologies, the system has a dynamic and real time map of all the taxi cars in the city. So when a user call for taxi from a specific place, the system might identify a nearest taxi car from the place. This project launched two years ago and works well. It highly increase the efficient of Taxi system and also booking system, as results, it contributes to the economic and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, it changes the user position in the service system and process.

**Organic Food Delivery**
This is local project and service by TianLanDiLv company who is engaged in organic food production and consumption. They design and develop a food delivery system to book and delivery the food to the final users directly from their agriculture base. By this system, urban people can book the organic food easily with relatively low cost.

**5 Follow-up Perspectives**

After Cumulus Conference, a DESIS Seminar and Workshop will be hosted at School of Design, Jiangnan University at Wuxi. The DESIS Seminar, with the theme of “Design and Social Innovation for Local Development”, will be co-organized by School of Design, Jiangnan University and DESIS –China on September 12, 2010. The seminar includes presentations and round table. Prof. Ezio Manzini will be invited to be the keynote speaker. This is an occasion to exchange and discuss the topic of theme with research experiences from national and international communities. The DESIS10@Wuxi workshop will follow the DESIS seminar since 13rd of September until 28th. The theme of it is “The New City, the New Countryside and The New Lifestyle: Design for Food Network”. This workshop is based on an initial research that aims to investigate the food network toward sustainable lifestyle and new relationship between urban and rural in local context of Wuxi. It’s another collaboration between Dis-Indaco, Politecnico di Milano and School of Design, Jiangnan University under the framework of DESIS-China after Chita08 and DESIS10 workshop. The workshop is leaded by Prof. Gong Miaosen (Jiangnan) and Dr. Zhong Fang (Polimi). Prof. Ezio Manzini is invited to be scientific coordinator of it. A group of Professors and researchers from both universities will be involved into the lecturer team. 28 students were enrolled to participate it.