

# VILLAGE

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POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

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MDes Interaction Design 2012 - 13



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this project is to offer a concrete solutions to all those needs which unite oversea students coming to Hong Kong for achieve their master degree.

The people which benefit of my design are in first place oversea students. Of course is not excluded that the final solution could be used by other students, either locals or Chinese, even thought not the main targets.

Through the research I tried to highlight the most common problems, trace behaviors and understand needs, even where not explicit, of oversea students in Hong Kong.

What emerge from my analysis is that many different problems are faced during the different steps of the experience, with a wide range of possible solutions. I tried to work at a more comprehensive design which doesn't limit to solve separated critical aspects, but a wide offer which can provide a complete answer as a system of solutions.

My final proposal is Village, a system which aims to help and connect oversea students together, in order to improve the whole master experience. Considering the flexibility of the platform it can adapt to the different stages that students will face through the year.





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# RESEARCH

My research has not been a linear and straight path through an easy way. In fact it took me a while to localize urgent and tangible needs to which address my design.

Even though quantitative methodologies have been used, most of the stress was on qualitative research, trying to really understand and feel empathy with my audience. In first place students, later on became only oversea students.

Different kind of interviews have been conducted, direct observation on different flats, a participatory graffiti wall in addition to some literature review.

In particular my research began with a more comprehensive and broad “students living in Hong Kong” than finally get to the final focus on the overall experience of oversea students abroad.





Figure 2: Interview to a local girl with cohabitation experiences

# PRIMARY RESEARCH

## INTERVIEWS

Because of my closeness with a big amount of students sharing apartment with other people it's has been easier for me to start my research directly talking to them.

At this early stage of the project what needed was just a broader understanding of the context, students living in Hong Kong and sharing apartment. There were not yet a precise information which a was looking for. At this stage what I was looking for is just a better understanding of the context and users. Figure out where problems lay and which are the possible need or opportunity for my design.

When possible I asked to the interviewed to write down on a big sheet of paper any relevant thought, word or consideration. Doing so I could make feel more involved my participants and create unexpected connections between ideas, from many different point of views.

What I obtained from these chats is a broader understandings of the reality, not just in my perception but told from many different students. A background picture from which I could start to trace area of interests or just inspirations.

WHO: 10 students from different cultures and different backgrounds. Both female and male, with age from 22 to 35.

WHAT: Deep understanding of cohabitation and living in Hong Kong. Which problems generate? Which feelings are experienced the most? What is a critical aspect and what is not?

HOW: In form of colloquial chat, making feel the interviewed as comfortable as possible in order to get a genuine narration of the reality.  
When possible with a big paper used to write down keywords and build connections between topics.

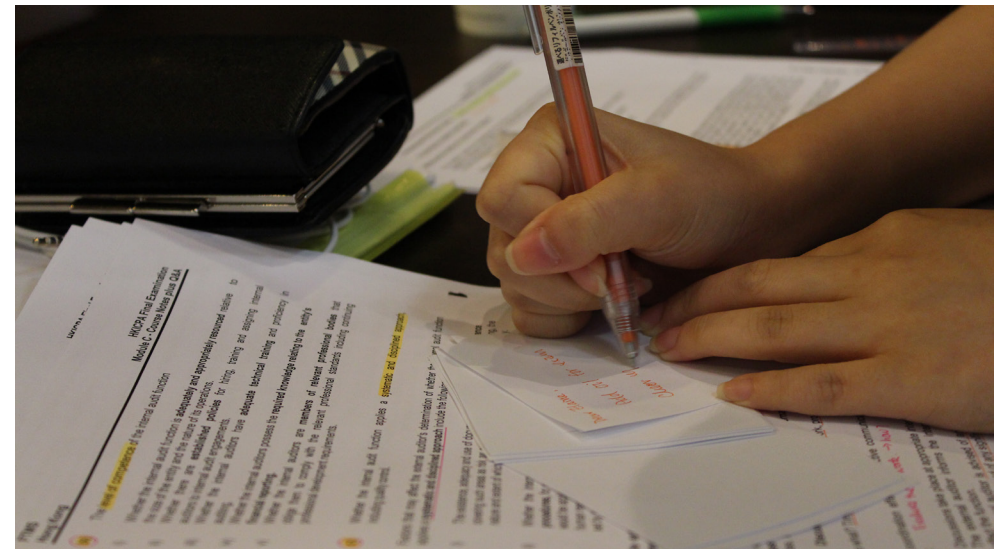


Figure 3: An interviewed writing down critical aspects of cohabitation





Figure 4: Example of interview with Nora, 21 from Hangzhou. She is doing her master in Hong Kong

## EXAMPLE

Name: Nora  
Age: 21 Gender: Female  
From: Hangzhou, Mainland China  
Occupation: Student (MDes Urban Design)

## EXPERIENCE

She lived several years in dormitory (both during her high school and bachelor) sharing a bedroom with different people, always of the same gender.

Currently she is sharing a private apartment with 3 other students, none of them met before this cohabitation.

No experience with people from different cultures.

Because of her studies she is most of her time at uni, spending really few time at home. Usually just before to go to sleep and in the morning once she wakes up.

## COMMUNICATION

She has different schedule from her roommates, so they seldom meet in the apartment. They are not really friends so casual communications are just marginal.

When something concerns all the flatmate, electricity bills for instance, this is left on the door where everyone can notice it and discuss about it as soon as possible. But not appointment by telephone or in other ways are taken. Usually they wait for the weekend to talk about it, when it is more likely that they will meet.

Occasionally post it are left where needed to leave a message, but they are not really an important main for their communications.

## SHE SAID:

“... sometimes happens that I arrive back home really tired and I'd like to relax a bit before to sleep. But my flatmate often tries to start a long conversation. I try to escape from her without offending...”

## STORIES

At the time of her bachelor she use to share a room with 4 different girls. One of them used to have different times from the other making noise late in the night.

Nora has been woke up by this girl numerous times because of her slapping the door or laughing watching TV series.

Even if quite annoyed, she never complained directly with the girl or with others because she didn't think that was worth it to have discussions.

Once had a discussion with a current roommate because she used a wrong sponge for a really oily pan, leaving the sponge greased and dirty. When Nora seen this she tried to make it notice to her roommate receiving back a really angry and aggressive reaction.

So she decided to stop immediately the discussion and to agree with her (even if sure to have the right) avoiding superfluous fighting and just throwing away the sponge.





Figure 5: Diego, 26 from Colombia, shows me his apartment



# PRIMARY RESEARCH

## VISITING THE APARTMENTS

In the next pages are shown pictures taken from many flats which I visited, asking to the tenants to tell and show me about common habits, private and sharing spaces, rules and critical aspects from which happen to have disagreements.

With these visits to different apartments I could improve my knowledge about the actual situations in real life and test the veracity of information previously collected with my interviews.

## AEIOU PROTOCOL

A good protocol, useful in order to collect and organize my data at this step has been the AEIOU methodology, so applied:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| ACTIVITIES:   | Which are the common activities you usually do together? |
| ENVIRONMENTS: | Where in the apartment?                                  |
| INTERACTIONS: | How do you plan, organize and coordinate these?          |
| OBJECTS:      | Do you use any common or private object?                 |
| USERS:        | Between who and why together?                            |



Figure 6: Two happy roommates since 7 years ago



Figure 7: An interviewed student at his personal desk





Figure 8: Daisy & Ashley in their shared apartment



Figure 9: A shared space in her apartment



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Figure 11: A shared facility





Figure 12: Diego opening his apartment's door



Figure 13: Private food, to don't share!



Figure 14: A shared, and intimate, space of his bathroom



Figure 15: Messages left on a public space





Figure 16: Pu, 22 from Nanjing, lives with other 3 guys



Figure 17: A common, and dirty, space of the flat



Figure 18: Lack of facilities in the flat



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Figure 20: Private mails from Morgane's flat



Figure 21: Toilet paper, a critical aspect



Figure 22: Separation between public and private space



Figure 23: Not everyone tolerate smoking





Figure 24: My graffiti wall at the studio's entrance



# PRIMARY RESEARCH

## GRAFFITI WALL

While bringing ahead my research, looking for opportunities to address my design, I conducted a study on how students express their thoughts. In fact, considering communication and messages between roommates as a possible direction, I investigated on how students communicate basic ideas to other people.

What really obtain attention and what is not perceived as compelling.

The protocol of my experiment was simple:

- 4 weeks duration
- a basic question (for instance: “what would makes you happy right now?”). Different each week
- One big board next to a blank paper, located in a busy transit point for students
- markers with different colors and easy to access

At the end of the day what I obtained is a bunch of informations on how people communicate indirectly.

Most important findings is that students are not really willing to share thoughts or ideas unless a precise question or opinion is presented.

Might be because confusion or laziness, but when a clear statement is not displayed the feedback has been low.

This experiment has also been useful for my personal experience.

It shown me how the way to present this kind of research make the difference in participatory studies with the audience.

The way the tools are prepared and presented to the public does make difference.

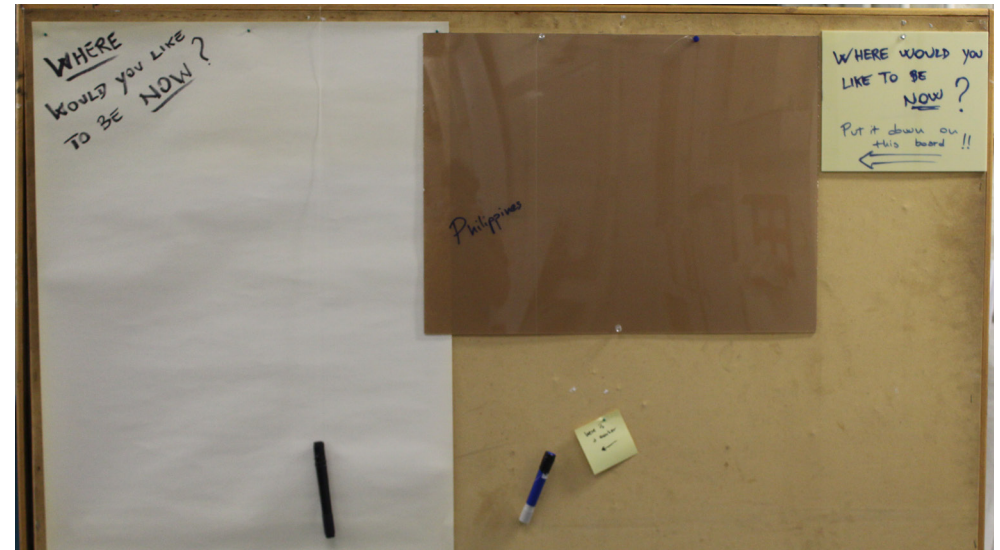


Figure 25: Graffiti wall before

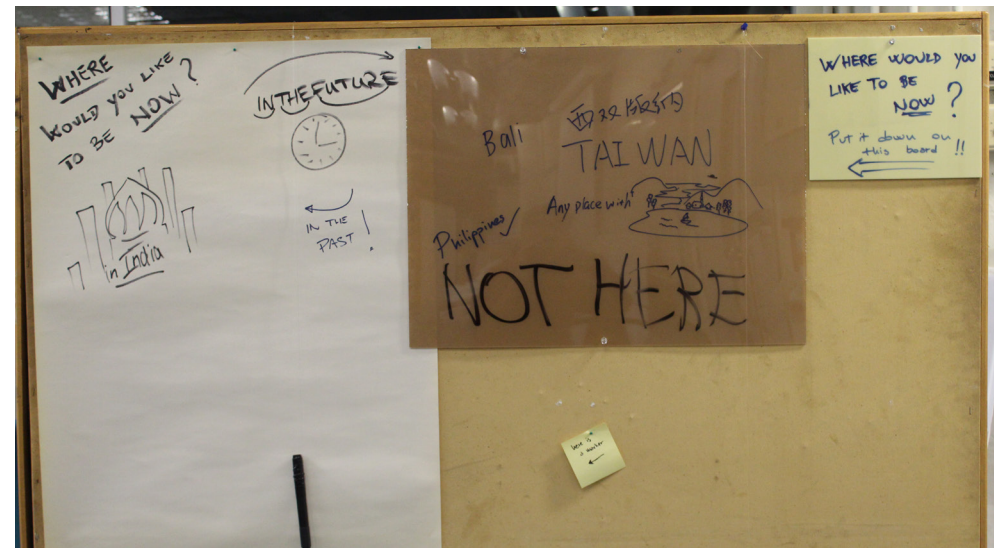


Figure 26: Graffiti wall after



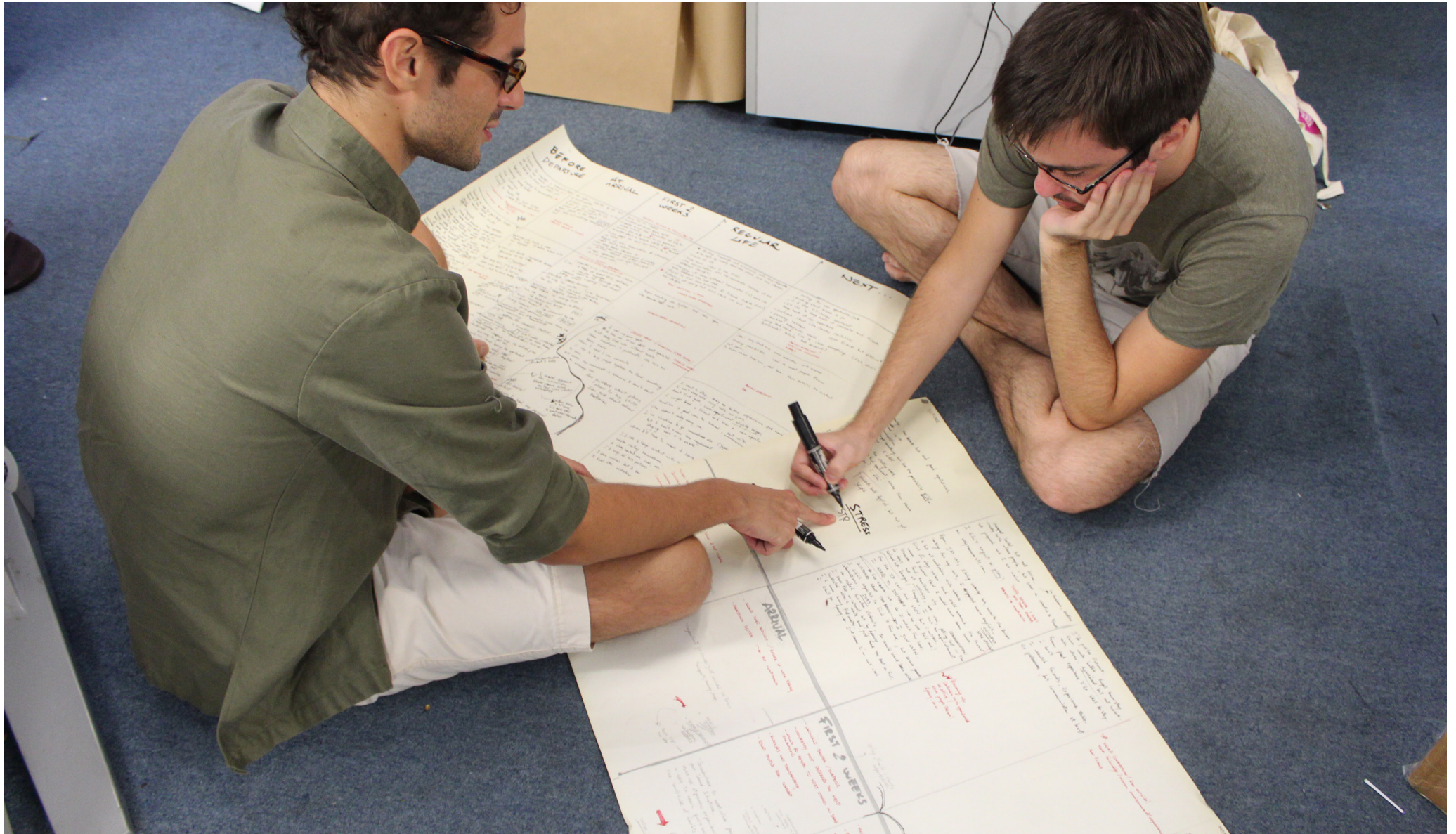


Figure 27: Me discovering other students' experiences



## FINAL AUDIENCE

At this advanced point of the research I could decide which group of people present the greater possibilities for a new design, and so complete this phase of the project with more specific analysis and findings.

Students in Hong Kong, as studied so far, is a huge group of people with different interests and needs.

I decided thus to focus only on oversea students, as seem to present specific and prominent needs, with more palpable solutions.

An additional restriction is about Mainland Chinese, de facto oversea but with consistent facilities respect other countries (language, priority channels to access, numerous services designed and aimed to them).

Special attention is paid not only at the mere act of living in Hong Kong, but to the overall experience of a master abroad.



Figure 28: Vincent, 25 from Canada, while is sharing with me his story

# PRIMARY RESEARCH

## IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

With a clear idea now on what to focus I could complete my research and collect specific data related to my area of interest.

I had the possibility to spend about one hour with my target audience and ask about their experiences and story through the master. From the very first step, when applying on the web, until the graduation.

If it is true that I want to consider the whole master experience for oversea student in my design, the first thing to understand is which phases form a master abroad and students have to face one by one.

What I could collect are different stories from different people with divergent backgrounds and cultures. Once collected enough data, I could define common problems and frustrations experienced by all the studied people.

WHO: 6 current students  
1 graduated student  
1 coming student next year  
All different in nationality, age and gender.

WHAT: I'm looking for frustrations and problems faced in different situations by the students.  
Expectations and hopes in people's imagination.

HOW: In form of story telling, in a colloquial way with duration between 45 and 60 minutes.  
Important track to follow was the separation of the experience in 4 main phases, each with different aspects and problems

## DIVISION IN 4 PHASES

Analyzing the whole process, these 4 are the main component of a master abroad, different for needs, expectations and place.

- BEFORE ARRIVAL IN HONG KONG: Mainly through the web, consist on the lapse of time that goes since the application to the university until the arrival in town
- FIRST 3 WEEK IN TOWN: The time which students spend to orientate in the new city, settle down and start the real living
- LIVING IN HONG KONG: Is the longest phase of the experience, here lay cohabitation and living aspects
- GRADUATION: Once the master is over and it's time to face the job market and the next adventure





> JANNY  
> KERFEGAR



↑  
Before arrival  
in Hong Kong



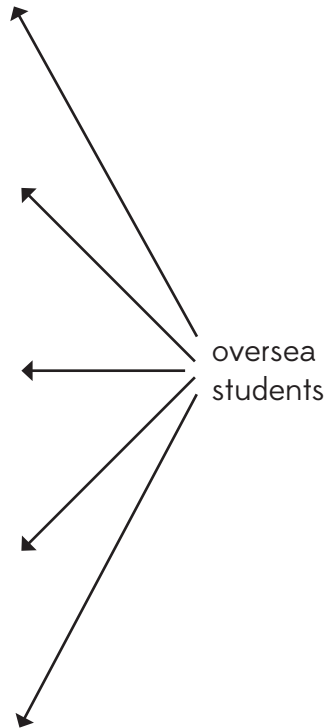
↑  
First 3 weeks  
in Hong Kong



↑  
Living in  
Hong Kong



↑  
Graduation



- > FRUSTRATIONS
- > PROBLEMS
- > EXPECTATIONS

## EXAMPLE



Vincent, 25  
Canadian  
MDes in  
Interaction Design

Confusion about starting day of classes

Unclear/inappropriate housing policy offered by university (price, location and rules)

He expected an office to help him and give him useful tips about the city, but there were nothing like that

Difficulty to find apartment that satisfied his expectations, unclear service by agencies

Stress at the beginning due to the overlapping of classes and finding apartment

He found interesting to discover the city by himself, but sometimes some help would have made the difference

He feels lonely sometimes because lives alone in his apartment. "I would have preferred to share my apartment with someone else"

Different means of communication with classmates (different social media and habits) sometimes make difficult to communicate

He tried to find some connections with students from past year students, just to compare the different experiences

He is unclear about the job market here in Hong Kong. "Is possible to find interaction design jobs here in HK or do I have to go back to Canada?"

Figure 29: Example of interview with Vincent, 25 from Canada.



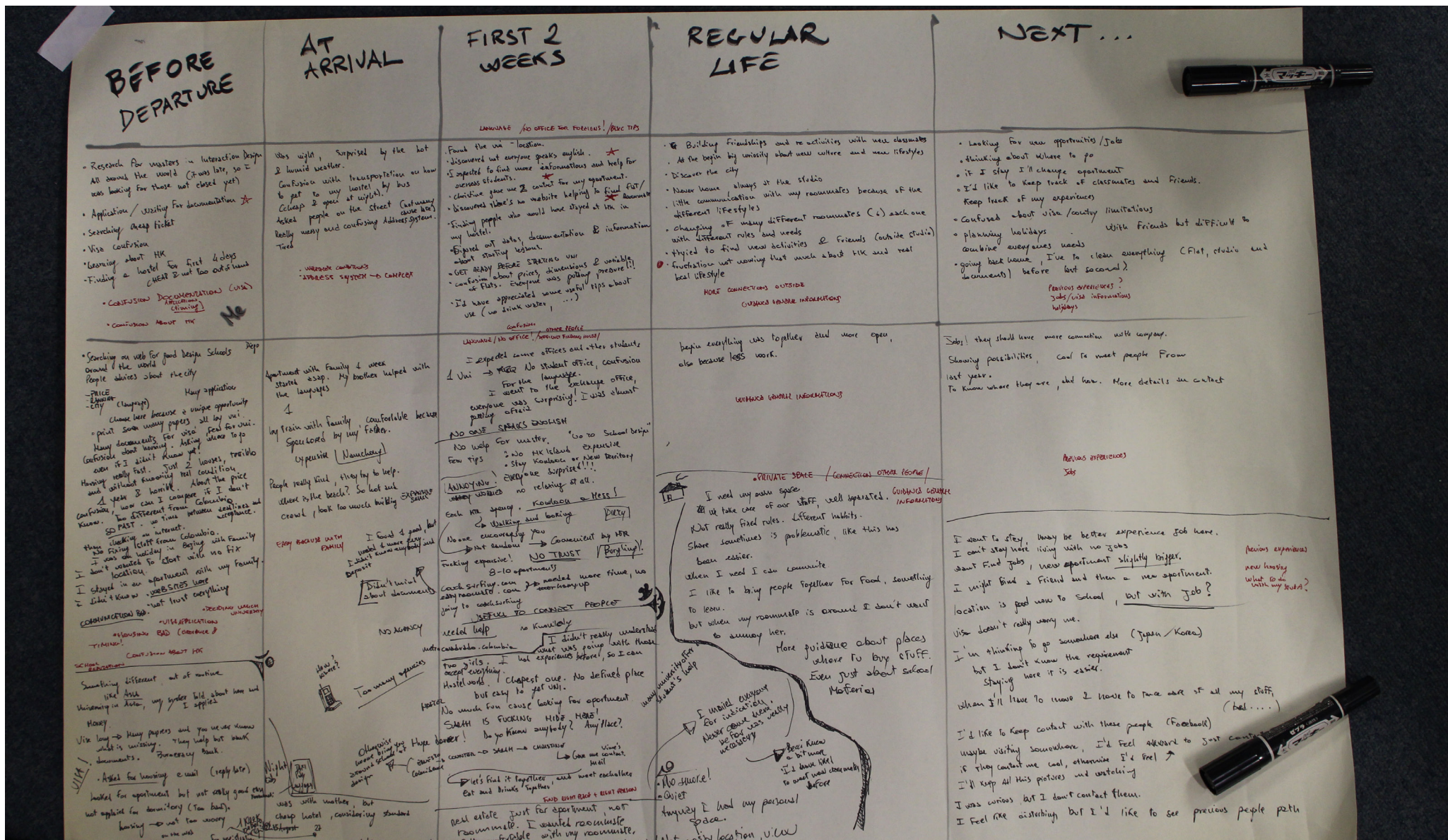


Figure 29: Picture of the material produced during interviews



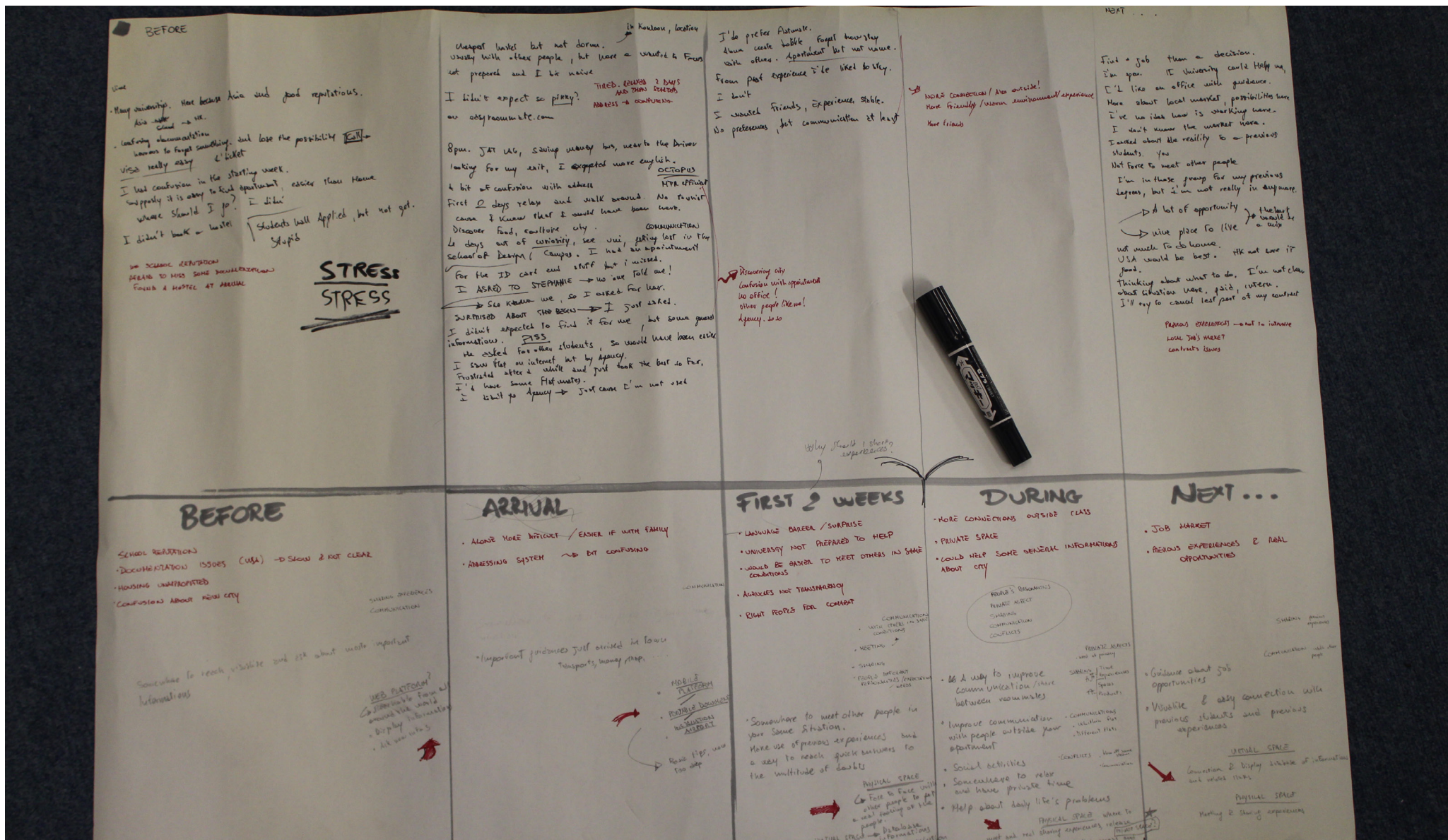


Figure 30: Another picture of the material produced during interviews



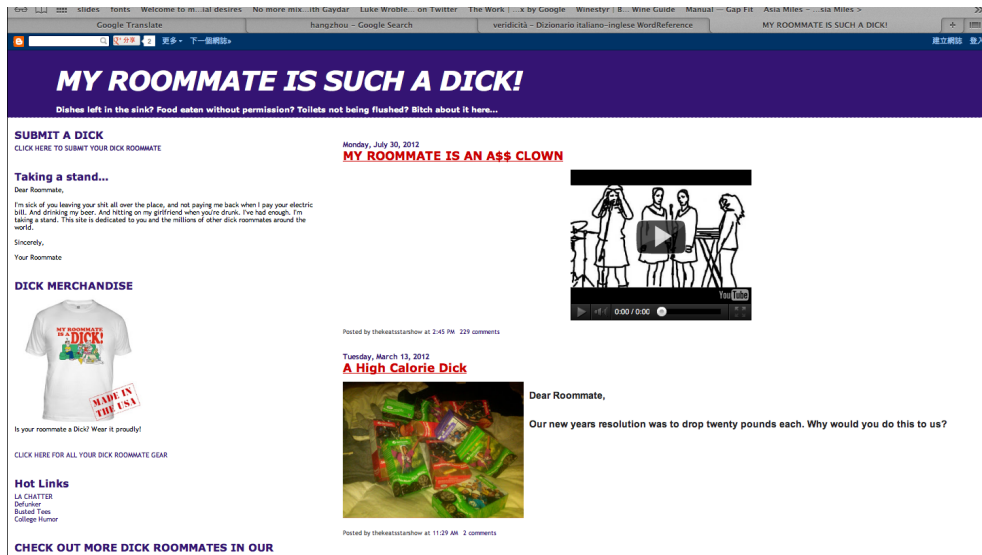


Figure 31: Screenshot from a blog about roommate relationships

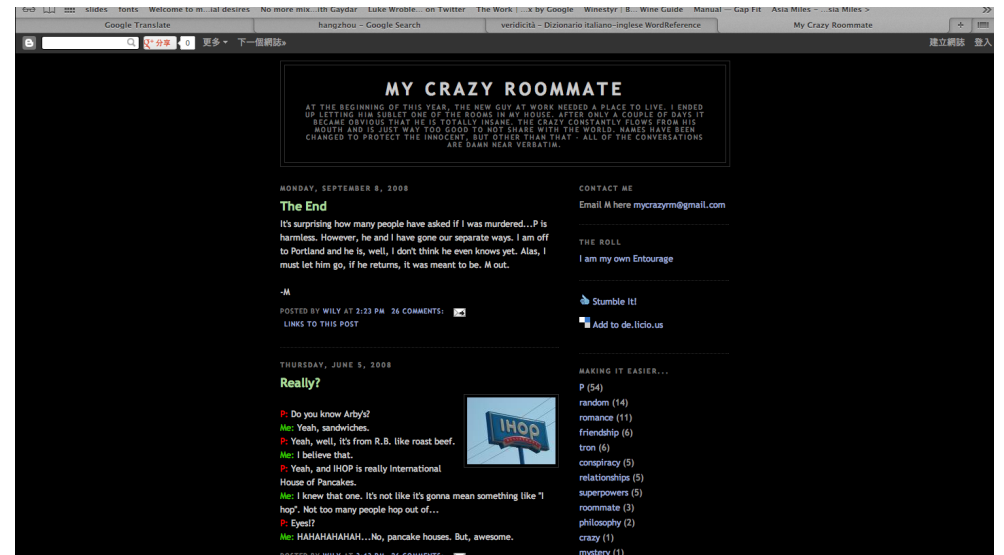


Figure 32: Screenshot from another blog about roommate relationships



Figure 33: Screenshot from a Facebook group

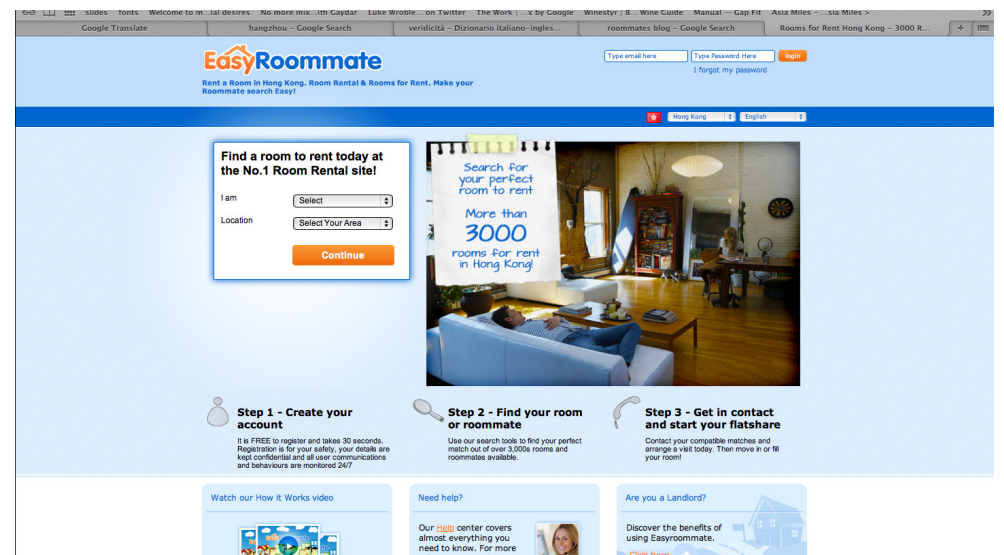


Figure 34: EasyRoommate, website for housing in Hong Kong



# SECONDARY RESEARCH

## MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

So far one of the emerging factor of my research is that each person has a different personality, and cohabitation it's clearly about people living together. Thus has been interesting for me have a deeper understanding about how can different personalities can get along. Is possible to anticipate cohabitations results knowing roommates personalities?

In this direction I enjoyed a little dive in a more psychological matter, obviously without pushing me too deep, about people's personalities. In this field an important milestone is the famous **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**. A quick and easy test to trace different personalities (see references page at the end).

If it's true that specific personalities might have an easier cohabitation, there are many ways which I could think how to implement these theory. Or just taking inspiration.

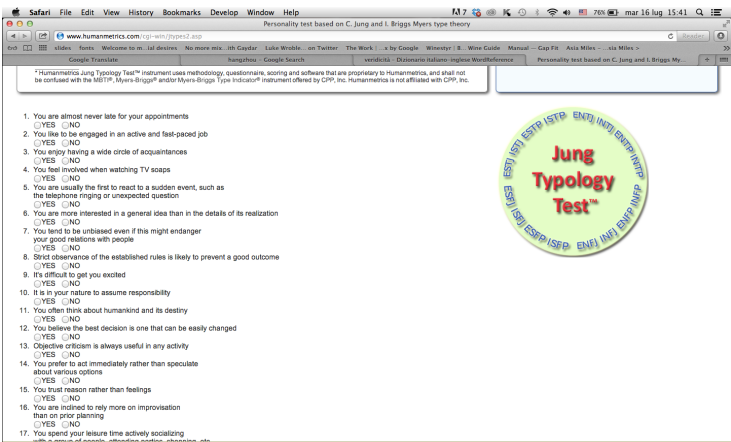


Figure 35: Screenshot of the free test available on internet

## THE WEB ABOUT ROOMMATES

Searching in the web about roommate relationships it's impossible to don't end up in one of the numerous blogs about this matter. The majority of these are aimed to problematics situations, used for sharing hilarious or even bad experiences. Really few, if not none, have the purpose to share good experiences.

What I can assume from this is that people are willing to share experiences, even when not pleasant. It might be a way to blow off some steam and feel empathy with other experience from other people, not only on the web.

## ELINOR OSTROM, GOVERNING THE COMMONS

Talking about cohabitation, sharing is a tough topic. Trying than to understand more on how sharing could work in a easier way or even became convenient between different people, an interesting theory is "Governing the Commons" formulated by the Nobel prize Elinor Ostrom (see references page at the end).

Of course this work was aimed to a more economical implementation, but it might be used as inspiration for adapting some of her principles to a smaller case study, like mine.



## ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Once collected enough data about living experiences from oversea students here in Hong Kong has been time to move on and analyze the big amount of information.

This analysis is important for understanding what is relevant and what is not for my project. Which area seems to offer more opportunities or present needs to satisfy.

In order to visualize all the possibilities and start formulating possible solutions and concepts later on.

In particular an important finding for the further develop of the project, about the way students get apartment, is shown separately.

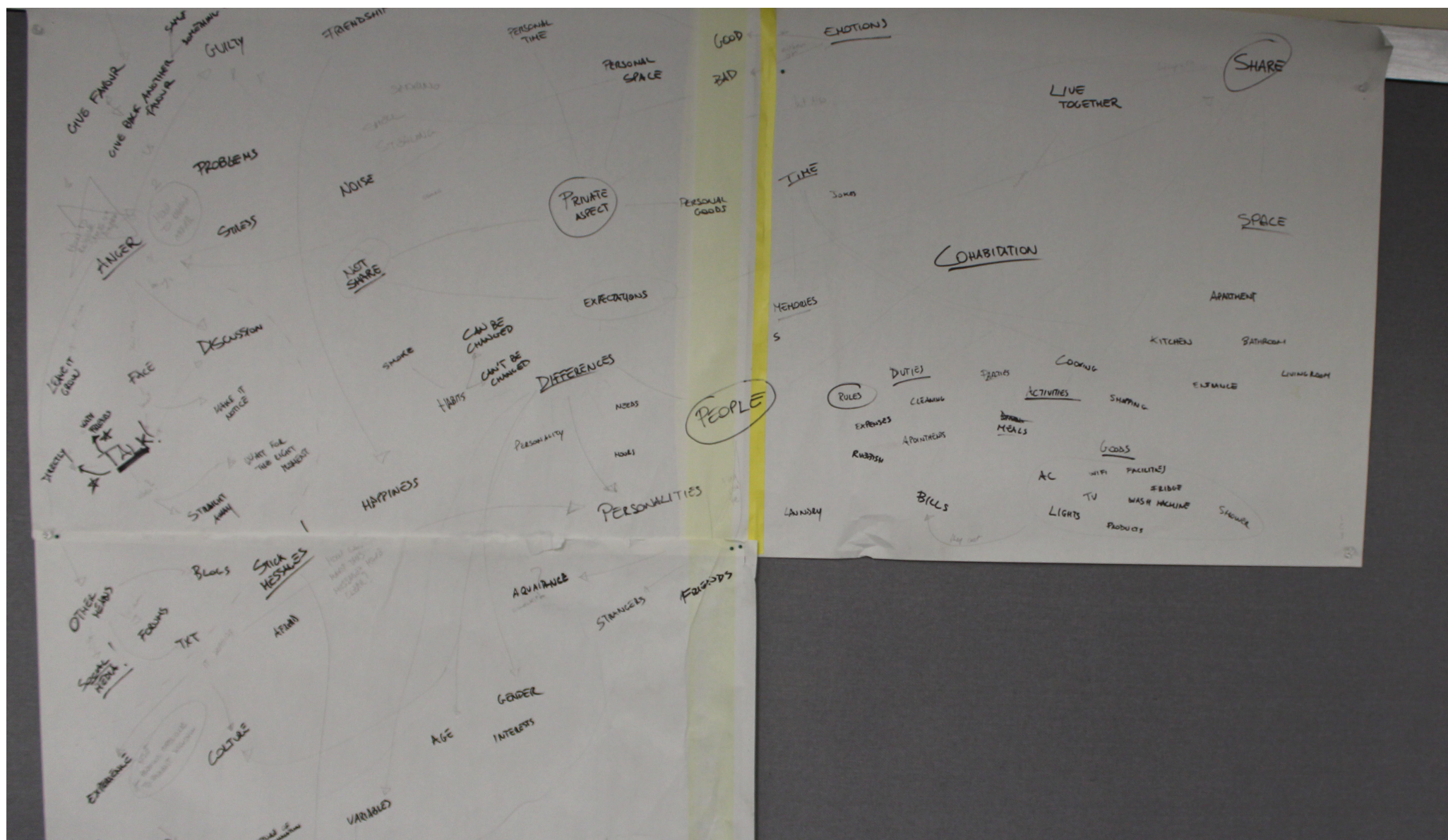


Figure 36: Concept map picture

# ANALYSIS

## CONCEPT MAP

Based on my understanding about living in Hong Kong, I could draw this concept map, analyze connections and highlight 5 key aspects:

**PERSONALITIES:** If cohabitation is about different people living in the same apartment, clear is the importance of the differences between people.

Each individual is different from the other. Different cultures, background, experiences. Divergent expectations about the cohabitation, interests and lifestyle.

It's difficult to predict relationships between people, but it is normal to have a stronger feeling of understanding with a specific person rather than another.

**SHARING:** It's probably the most characteristic aspect of cohabitation. From spaces to time, passing through rules, bills and goods. Cohabitation cannot exist if roommates are not willing to share an abundant part of their lives.

**PRIVATE ASPECT:** In any situation each person need a private zone. Somewhere to feel safe, comfortable and take care of intimate aspects of personal life.

This can touch emotions and feelings, but also more tangible aspects such as goods or belongings to don't share with others.

**COMMUNICATION:** In daily life is important to have a clear and easy communication with other roommates. In order to prevent misunderstandings and, when it's too late for preventing, face them in a constructive and adult way.

**CONFLICTS:** This is the most tabu of the findings emerged from my research.

Especially during interviews, most of the people initially denied presence of conflicts in their experiences. Only after few directed questions people started telling me about past disagreement with roommates.

When visiting the apartments this approach has been slightly different, probably because questioned in front of clear facts.

## EXPERIENCE MAP'S ANALYSIS WITH FINDINGS



- Confusion with documents and consequent insecurity in getting ready to leave home

- Little, if not zero, knowledge about the new city.  
With consequent postpone of settings that could have been arranged before departure, rather than at arrival

- Difficulty finding right apartment and right flatmate

- Confusion with the new city

- Stress and frustration enhanced due to the difficulties on starting the new life without friends or relative' support

- Too little friendships and connections with people outside the class, due to the large amount of hours spent at uni

- Difficulties finding specific information about the city, mostly related to classes matters





- Different means of communication (different social media and habits) between classmates sometimes make difficult to communicate

- Disconnection between students of the same master from different years, talk to graduated people could solve doubts and wonders about the post-master.

- Not only about documents, but also could clearer the idea of new graduates about job markets and opportunities



## EXPERIENCE MAP'S ANALYSIS WITH INSIGHTS

			
<p>Students would be curious to discover new classmates even before to start classes, but unlikely they would find a way to connect with them if not easily accessible</p> <p>At this stage the little knowledge about Hong Kong makes postpone many decision to later on, when in town. Doing so many things that could be ready even before the departure are postponed to later, making the arrival even more stressful and chaotic.</p>	<p>Housing service provided by university is not perceived as adequate, and students would expect a bit more help in the first days in Hong Kong</p> <p>The entire process to find apartment and settle down in a new city is often stressful and frustrating. Being alone only makes thing worse. With the presence of someone in your same situation you feel less pressure and worries</p> <p>Because of the hurry students tend to get in the first decent apartment, without caring about the room-mates. Doing so the possibility to end up with someone incompatible are obviously higher</p>	<p>Many informations related to the master are difficult to reach because of their specific audience (master students).</p> <p>Benefit of these informations from previous students experiences would make the process easier and more convenient</p> <p>Cohabitation with likeminded people is in most of the cases easier</p> <p>Difference provenience of classmates sometimes makes difficult to find a common main for communication (different social media, email accounts and habits are used). A dedicated main of communication might avoid loss of information</p>	<p>Students unlikely would take initiative to contact graduated colleagues from past years because of the feeling to disturb people. However are curious about past students' path and problem faced when time to find a job</p> <p>Lack of information about job market make feel students confused about their future. With additional stress on planning whether to stay or not in Hong Kong (Visa documentation, flat agreement and holiday plans)</p>



we don't live with similar people



- › unknown context
- › pressure / lack of time

Figure 37: Finding illustration



## ANALYSIS

### NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH STEP

The second important area of research, once decided my final audience, has been the discovery of each step which compose the overall experience of a master in Hong Kong for oversea students.

As already mentioned, four are the core phases which students go through when decide to begin a master abroad.

I decided to keep this linear disposition of the findings because I found it efficient in order to keep separated different factors and issues.

Once collected the personal story of each of the eight students interviewed, i proceeded with a comparison step by step, in order to extract common problems faced in the majority of the experiences.

Doing so I obtained the most relevant frustrations and obstacles in a temporal disposition. From the very begin, when applying to the university until the final graduation, passing through the living in Hong Kong (see Figure 29).

## FINDINGS

### INSIGHT

In addition to the findings already shown, I want to put emphasis on the fact that compatibility between personalities is an important factor that can determinate a good or bad relationship between flatmate. Thus we can affirm that a good cohabitation starts even before to the real fact of living together.

From my research emerged that oversea students tend to grab the first decent apartment available, without caring to know the new room-mates.

This hurry is due to two important factors:

**LACK OF KNOWLEDGE:** Being oversea student in the majority of cases means to be in a new city, new context and without knowing other people.

**BEGINNING OF CLASSES:** On average oversea students arrive to Hong Kong 12 days before the beginning of classes, this mean too little time to find an apartment and get ready adequately in most of the cases.

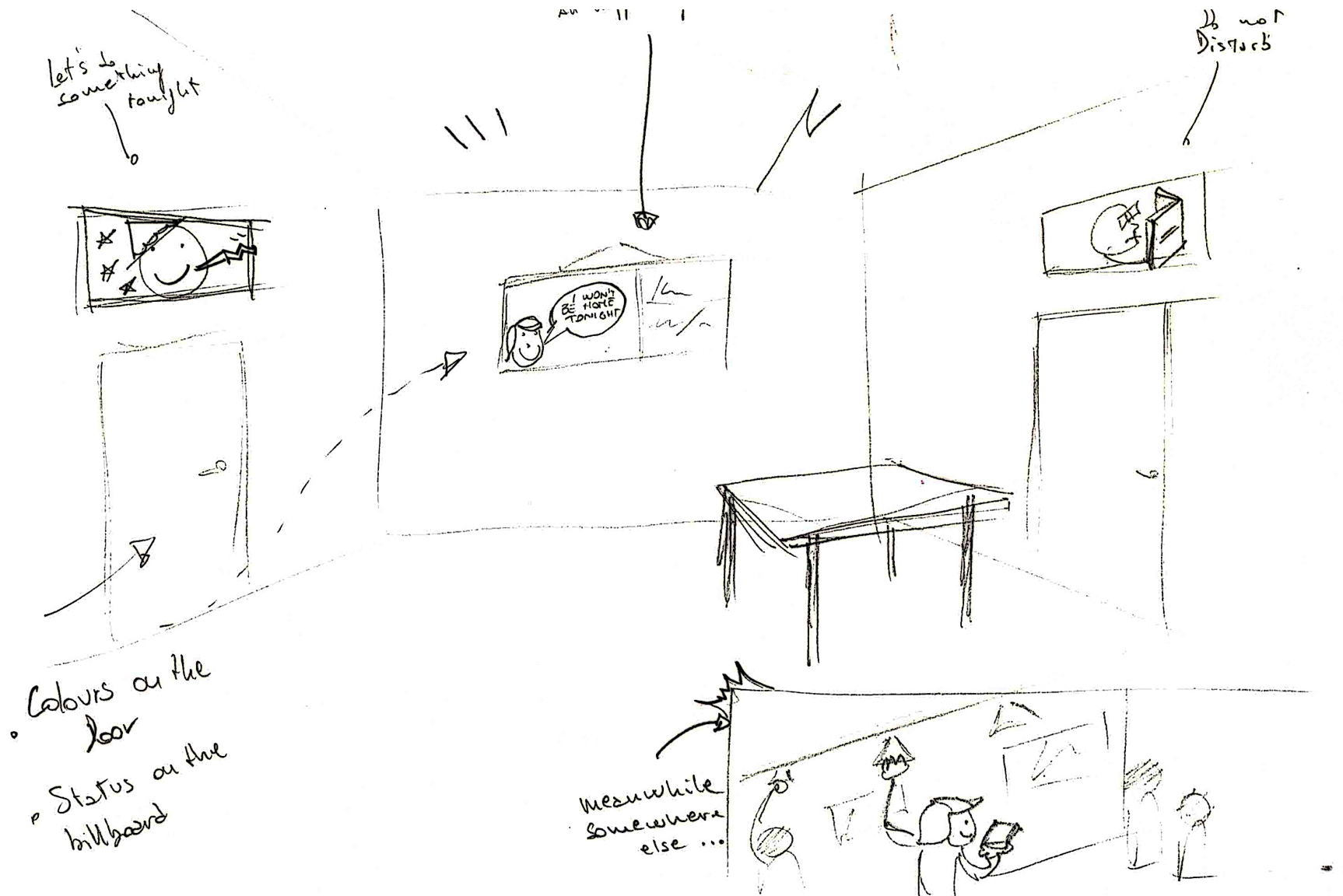


Figure 38: Rough sketches from my design journal

## CONCEPTS

Taking findings and insights as starting point I could finally proceed with the most creative part of my design, the concept generation.

Of course before to reach my final design concept I explored different solutions presented in the next few pages.

I found each of these ideas interesting and worth of further development, but considering the greater area of interest discovered on my research I eventually opted for a broader and more comprehensive design that could offer different answers to different needs, in a complete system of solutions.



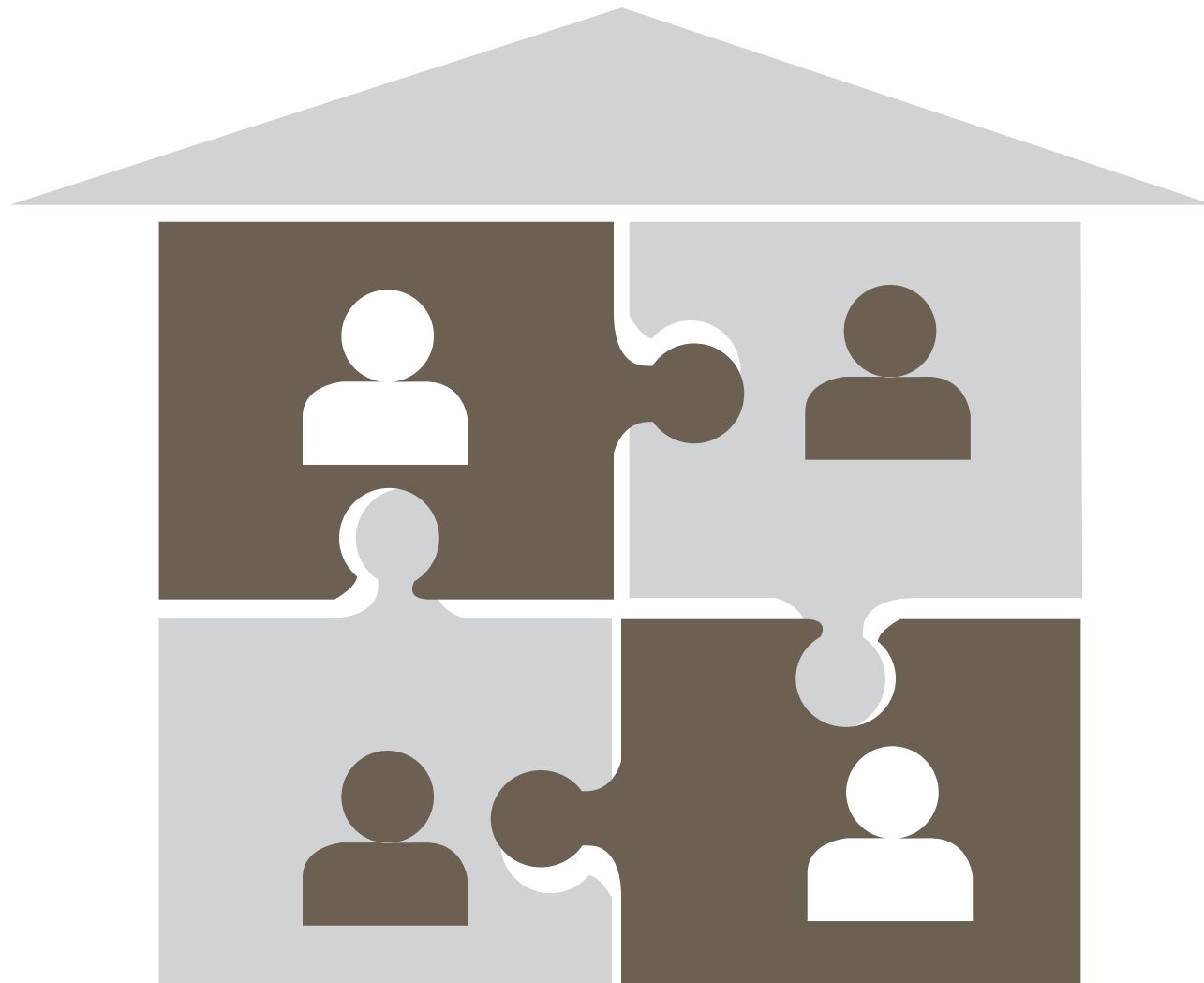


Figure 39: Concept illustration 1

# CONCEPTS

## MATCHING PERSONALITIES

Based on the fact that different people have different personalities, and people might get along or not depending of similar profiles, an early ideas was to “match” right people together.

Taking inspiration from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator already mentioned in my literature review, apply the same concept to new roommates.

Tracing a profile of a person would be easier to understand which kind of roommate would be perfect for him/her.

We can say that this concept would aim to build a perfect roommates team, even before that cohabitation starts.



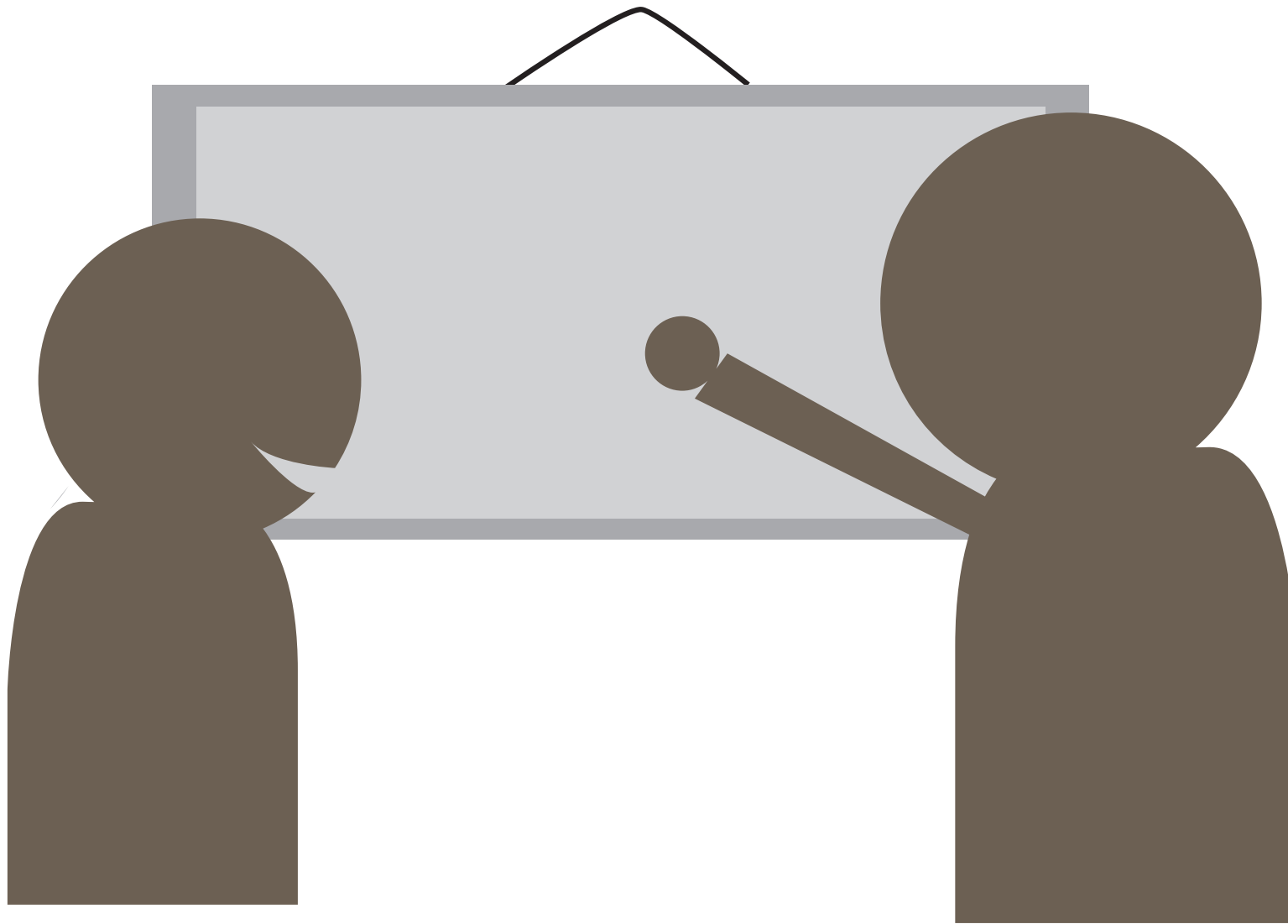


Figure 40: Concept illustration 2

# CONCEPTS

## INTERACTIVE WALL

Related to mere cohabitation, this concept take inspiration both from the numerous blogs on the web about cohabitation experiences and from my experiment with the graffiti wall.

If a good way to release stress and blow off some steam is to express and communicate your frustration, share it with other, why not give a space where to do it.

That's what this concept is about, an interactive wall where each student can write, draw or in any other way share his frustration and feel comforted from the other students experiences which can tell their own story.

Doing so there would be a sense of empathy between students that are all leaving abroad with different roommates.

Thinking about the location, this interactive wall could be in a public space frequented by the students, the university for instance.

Or even could present in each of the students apartment and all connected to a bigger one, used as showcase to the public.

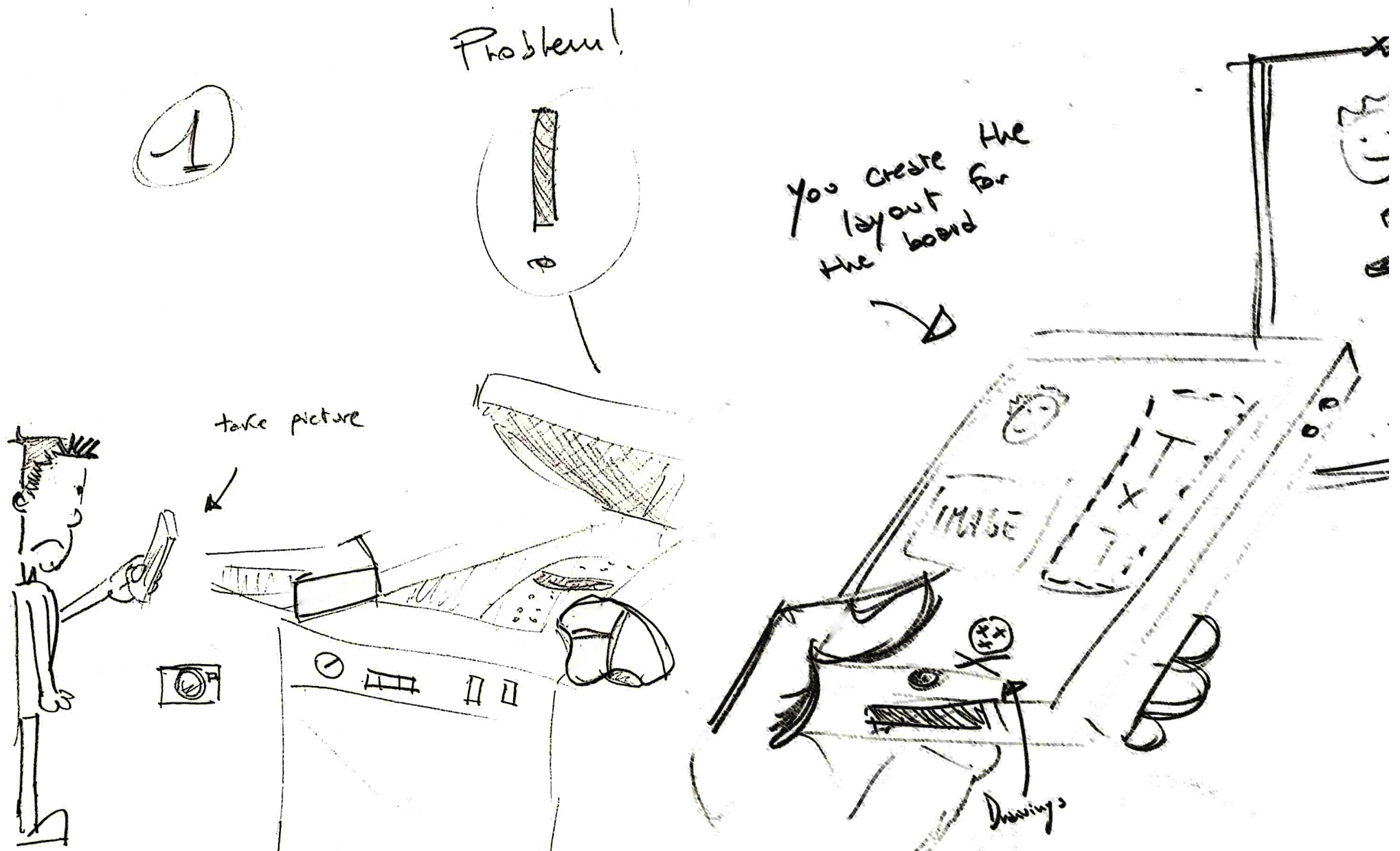


Figure 41: Sketches from my design journal



# CONCEPTS

## CREATING FUNNY MESSAGES

Staying within the flat's walls, a crucial aspect of cohabitation are annoying habits.

In each experience of living together it happened to everyone, at least once, to witness some bothering and annoying behaviors.

Since the only way to prevent or face them is a good communication relationship between flatmate, how to communicate them without resulting boring or harsh?

Tackling this aspect with irony and fun, this concept was about a funny way to capture the annoying habit involved. May be with a simple picture from the smartphone.

Giving the right tools to customize and build a message in such a way to make it hilarious and easy to approach with the concerned person.

Doing so many tough topics and habits usually tabu between roommates can be faced and solved, avoiding further frustrations and misunderstandings.

## REFLECTIONS

If in one hand each of these concepts was an interesting solution to some of the insights emerged from my research analysis, in the other hand none of these was providing a broader solution that could solve problems in every step of the experience of a master abroad.

In my opinion all these ideas so far shown could be re-framed and involved in a more complete solution that could tackle any lack of the actual reality which every oversea student has to face.

That's why I decided to struggle a bit more and try to create a comprehensive concept that follow the student's needs in each phase of the master.

From the very begin until the completion of his studies.

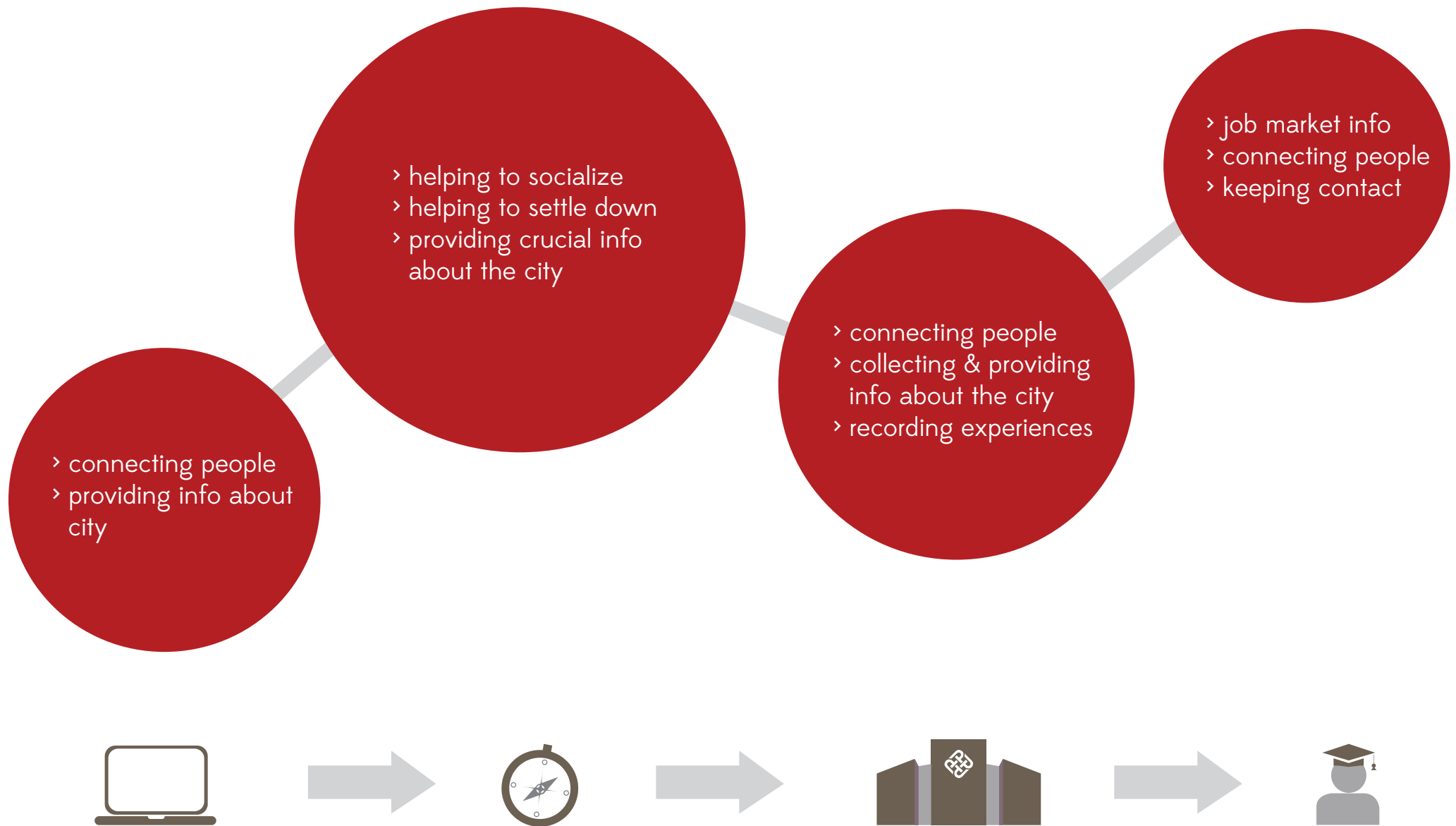


Figure 42: Illustration of the system possibilities

# CONCEPTS

## FINAL DESIGN CONCEPT

I want to provide a system which help and connect oversea students together.

In order to improve the whole master experience, step by step.

Looking at the insights presented in the previous pages, keeping in mind this linear organization, I want my design to offer a solution to each main problematic encountered at the different stages.

In fact, as already said, cohabitation's conflicts many time are just a mere consequence of unadapted chose of flat and flatmate. Possible to avoid with an adequate setting since the begin.

That's why I want my concept to prevent this situations.

How? Creating connections between new coming students, all in the same condition and with similar needs, even before to land in Hong Kong.

When preparing documentation and preparing to leave home my system, accessible on the web, could provide not only connection with new classmates but also guidance and initial help.

Once in Hong Kong my design will provide to new students the possibility to meet in person and together discover the city.

Avoiding the feeling of lost and loneliness, typical when you're in a new city alone and with no one to relate.

At the same time could offer necessary tools to make the entire process of settle down much smoother and easier.

The same design could offer help and follow the students during their studies and living experiences, may be offering a convenient channel to communicate between students and share experiences.

These information, if properly recorded, could be part of a rich database available for the next years' students. Besides to be memory for the protagonists.

At the end of the master, when approaching the graduation and starting to look for jobs, my system might help students to have a better understanding about their possibilities, connecting them with students from past years.





# PROTOTYPE

Once defined a satisfactory concept, the next step has been to build a prototype in order to give a shape to my design, test it with people, observe reaction and interpretation.

When obtained the first feedbacks make necessary adjustments and then present it to the final audience with.

In first place I had to collect the relevant information to implement in my prototype. At this point as been sufficient to ask one more time to my participant help, answering to few questions.

When in possess of the data has been time to actually give a shape to my prototype, first in paper with rough wireframes. Then in more advanced and interactive version, in order to be able to test it with the oversea students.

Even if more sophisticated the appearance of my prototype at this stage must still vague and with no graphic elements, avoiding distructions of my tester from the actual usability.

At this point, after made final modifications, the last stage is to dress my system. I called it Village and tried to implement all the knowledge aquired during the whole design process under the same skin and sem-biance.

The final appearance might be not completely satisfactory under a UI Design analysis, due to my inexperience, but what I concerned the most is that the system offers adequate answers to real needs. Adapting itself to each step of the master experience.

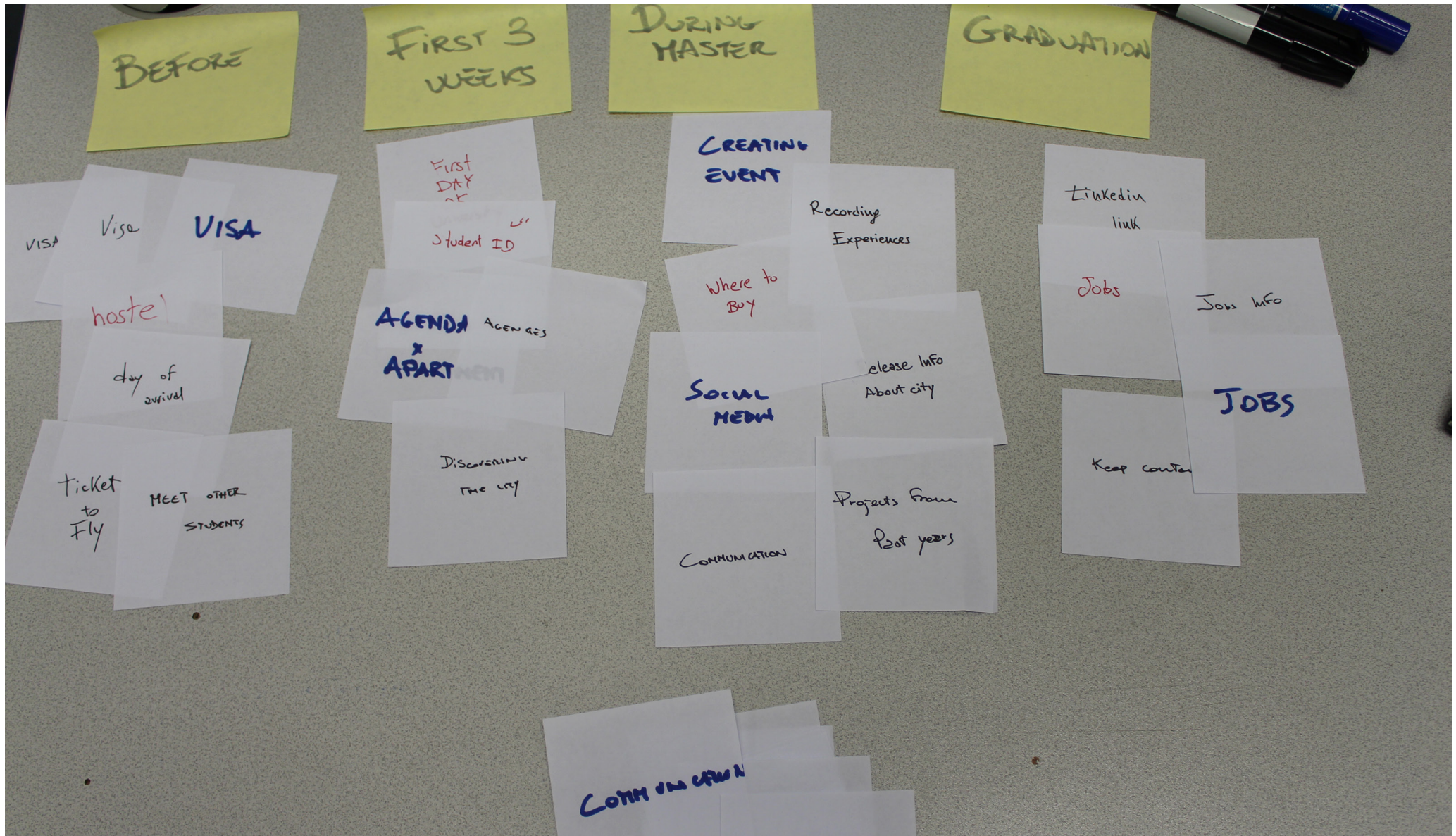


Figure 43: Card sorting of different factor through the four important phases



# PROTOTYPE

## COLLECTING INFORMATION

To give a shape to my system and offer concrete solutions to each problematics present step by step I first needed to understand what oversea students consider important about the master and at which phase of the process.

For instance, before to arrive to Hong Kong, how do you get ready for your new experience?  
What were you looking for on the web before the departure?

For each student I've been studying on I asked to give me the 5 - 10 most important aspects that they took in consideration at every step. Before the departure, once arrived in Hong Kong, during the master and at the graduation.

Once collected a satisfactory amount of data I could proceed sorting the information and giving them an order. Just dividing it by step. When possible I asked to my testers to participate also at this process, avoiding misunderstandings or mistakes.

The tools used are really simple: post-it, pieces of paper and different pens to distribute to the students.

This has been useful to give a flow and order to the information which my system should manage and at which phase display them.

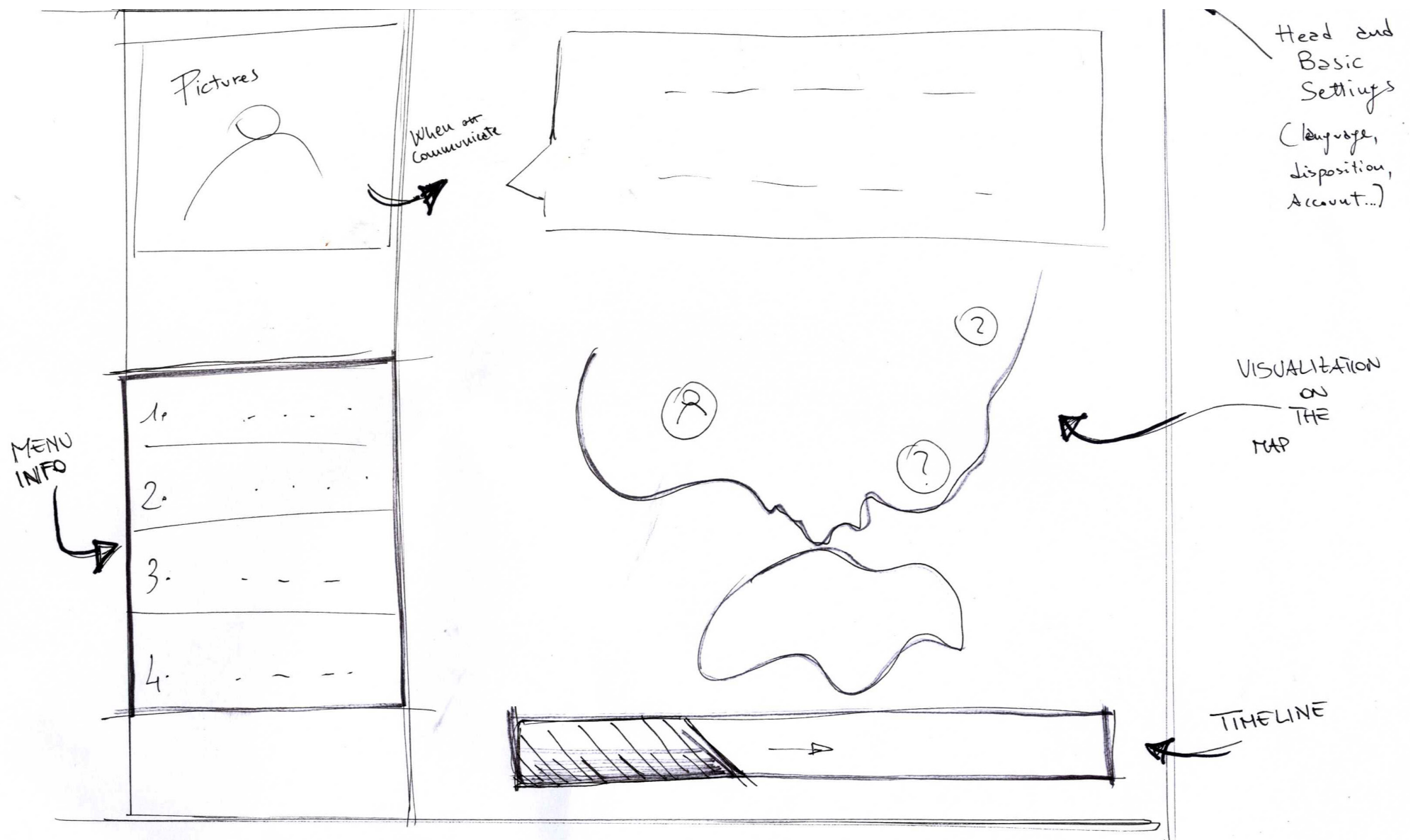


Figure 44: Hand-drawn wireframe of my interface

# PROTOTYPE

## WIREFRAME

With the right information in the right order has been time to display and arrange it in order to proceed with the actual testing with users and create a navigation flow.

There are three key elements in particular I wanted to test because crucial for a clear delivering of my contents:

**TIMELINE:** fundamental because the time indicator. It dictates at which point of the master experience the student is. (just arrived to Hong Kong, half of his studies, etc...)

At its evolution the entire system adapt itself, offering the right tools when needed at the different times (see picture234235235).

**MAP VISUALIZATION:** An important aspect risen from my research is the loneliness which can be felt by students when facing problems such as housing or discovering the city by theirself.

That's why the visualization on the map of the new classmates it doesn't just aim to be functional, but also refer to a more metaphoric way to show empathy with other students and show that you're not alone.

**INFO:** As already mentioned, the information to display are the outcome from people previously interviewed.

At this point was just a matter of pick the most relevant and make them visible and easily manipulated.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Because of my different area of expertise and the lack of experience in building interfaces (basically the first one in my whole career as designer) I couldn't assure the best solution in matter of User Interface design. But I didn't see this as a big obstacle, but more as a opportunity to make some practice and get in touch with this new matter. What really matter in my solution is not the interface, but the concept and system behind it.

After the presentation I had the possibility to talk with a professor in UI Design which gave me some interesting feedbacks and opinions to apply in case of further develop of the project.

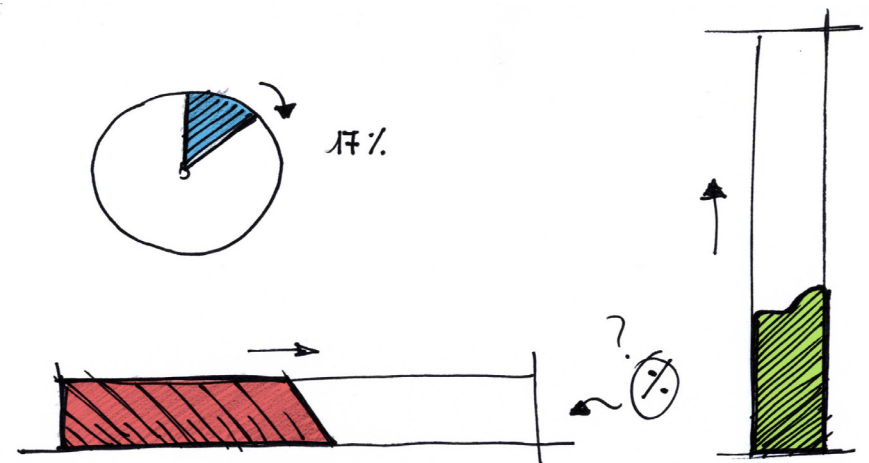


Figure 45: Possible representations of the timeline





Figure 46: A student giving me feedbacks about my prototyping



# PROTOTYPE

## BEHAVIORAL PROTOTYPE

While playing and testing with the possible layout of my interface, I proceed building low fidelity prototypes with dedicated softwares, such as Balsamiq Mockups and Adobe Muse, and tried to understand how people would naturally interact with it.

Without putting stress in the graphic aspect, avoiding possible distractions from my test, I asked to my audience how they would naturally visualize the different components already mentioned. How would they interact and imagine them?

This phase as been useful for my developing because suggested me different ways to present the same contents. Not only with my perception of the design, but with a more important point of view of the other students that one day might benefit of my design.

At this stage the prototype wasn't really functional, without connection between the different steps of the system. The tools used were more verbal description from my testers and the possibility to drag elements within the screen. Important aspect has been my presence, in order to take note and clarify any doubt about the options or navigation between the different components.

## TASK FLOW TESTING

Once the platform' structure was defined enough and connection between the different pages of the system was made, I could eventually test the actual navigation before to focus on the high fidelity prototype.

Since the entire prototype building has been developed through users testing, the final navigation didn't present many difficulties or surprises. Much more interesting it would have probably been test with oversea students completely new to the design. This has been impossible to me due to the short time available and the difficulties on finding new oversea students completely new to the matter.



Figure 47: Another student testing the task flow



Figure 48: Screen shot of the system homepage



# PROTOTYPE

## APPEARANCE PROTOTYPE

After all the considerations of the concept phase, the building and testing of the prototyping I finally reached the ultimate appearance prototype.

## VILLAGE

Village is a system which aims to help and connect oversea students together, in order to improve the whole master experience.

Considering the flexibility of the platform it can adapt to the different stages that students will face, from the very beginning until the graduation. Taking in to consideration many critical aspects such as housing, socializing, lifestyle and adapting to the new culture.

Village can provide the right help whenever needed thanks to the rich database of information and experiences that has been previously recorded and shared by students from past years.

The idea of a Village slowly grown in my head during the whole process.

In fact in my aspects there were this idea to recreate for the oversea students in Hong Kong a familiar environment where it is extremely easy to reach different informations and communicate with other people where everybody it's easily attainable.

Just like in a Village.

In the logo is present an iconic tipi that stands also for A, this is an intentional recall to one of the main symbols of villages in popular culture.



Figure 49: Village's logo

## NAVIGATION

The navigation of the appearance prototype completely reflect the one already tested on the low fidelity ones. For this reason my audience had no much problems browsing through the pages.

Important goal of my design was its flexibility and capacity to adapt itself to the difference phases of the master.

I putted in my effort in this aspect creating different layouts and information displayed every time that the needs of the student evolve. These changes are shown on the figures n. 02020202020 which illustrate the four important stages of the master in a linear order.

As already stated in the previous pages a next necessary step, in order to guarantee a perfect usability, would be test it with oversea students completely new to my design.

The level of details and accuracy is in my point of view high enough to this final test.

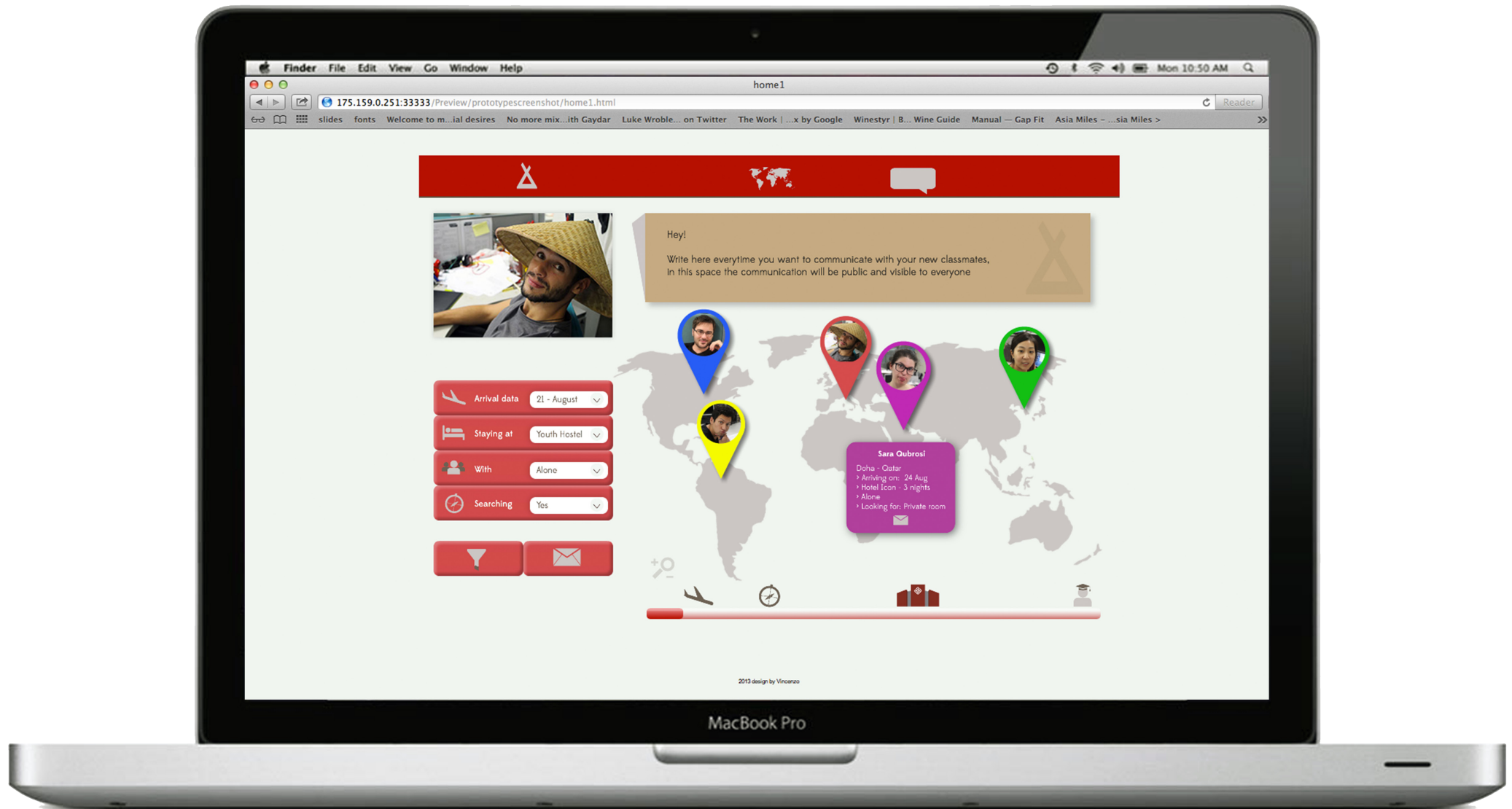


Figure 50: Screenshot of the interface before arrive to Hong Kong

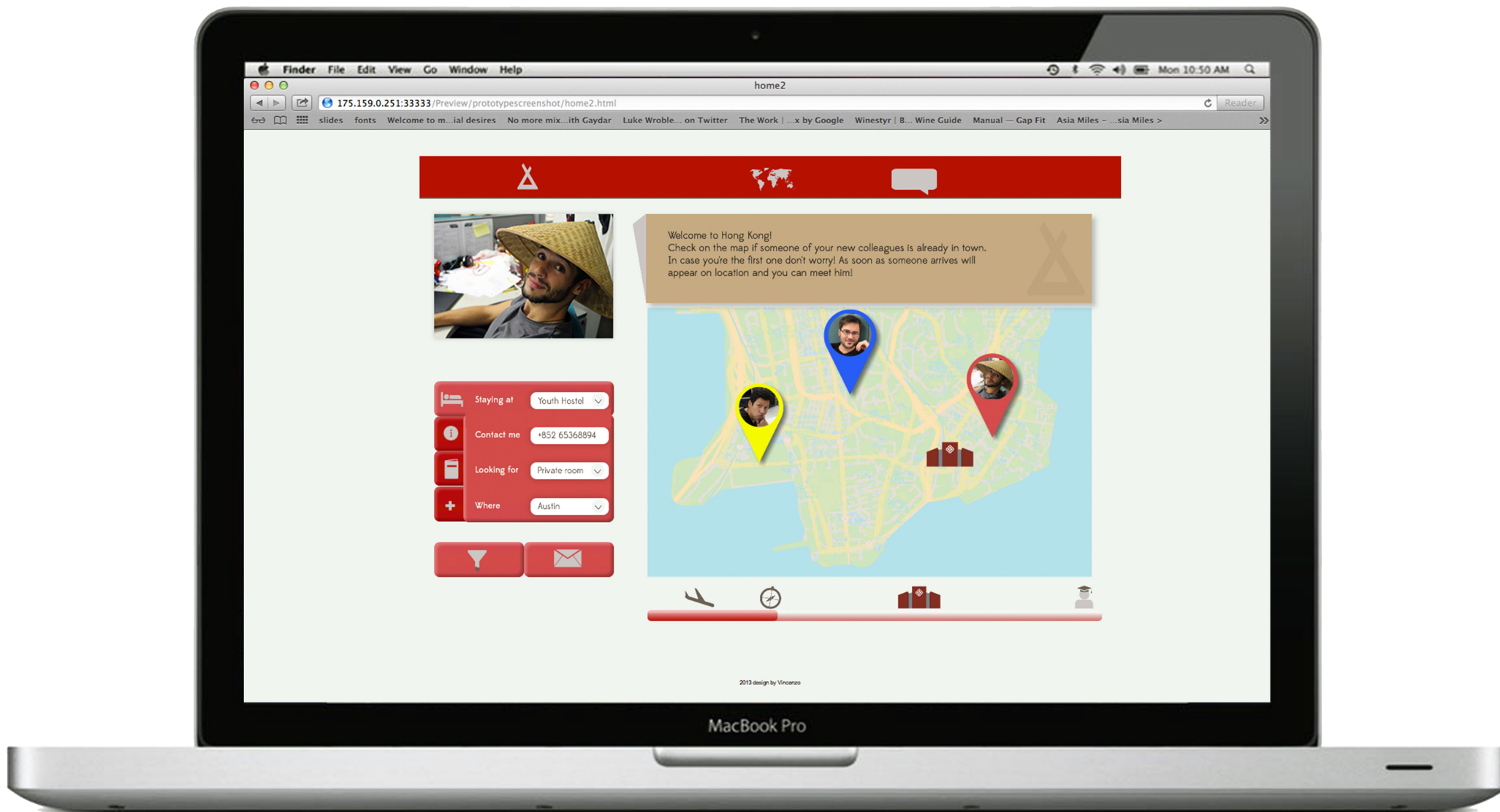


Figure 51: Screenshot of the interface once arrived in Hong Kong



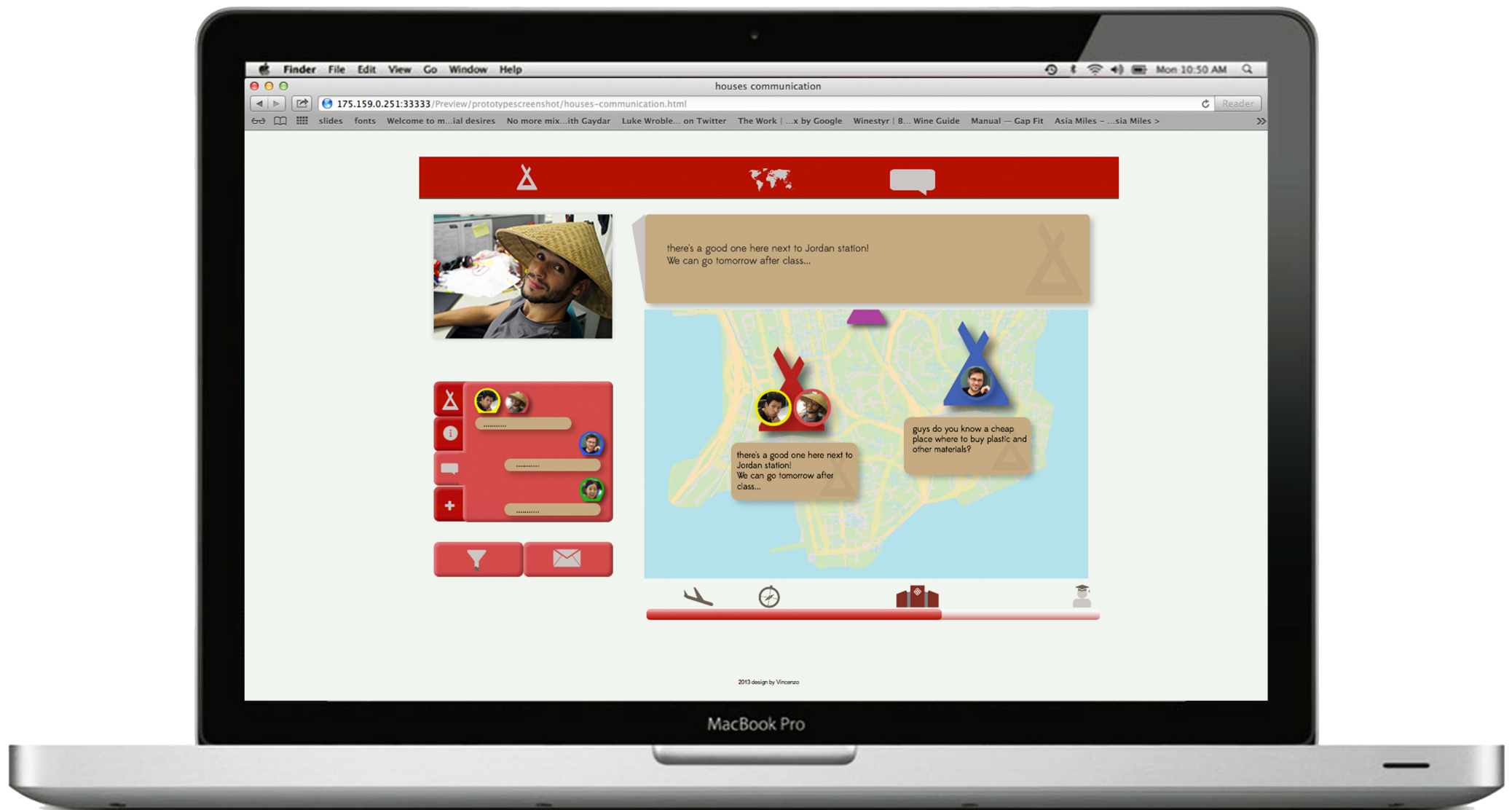


Figure 52: Screenshot of the system during the study at PolyU

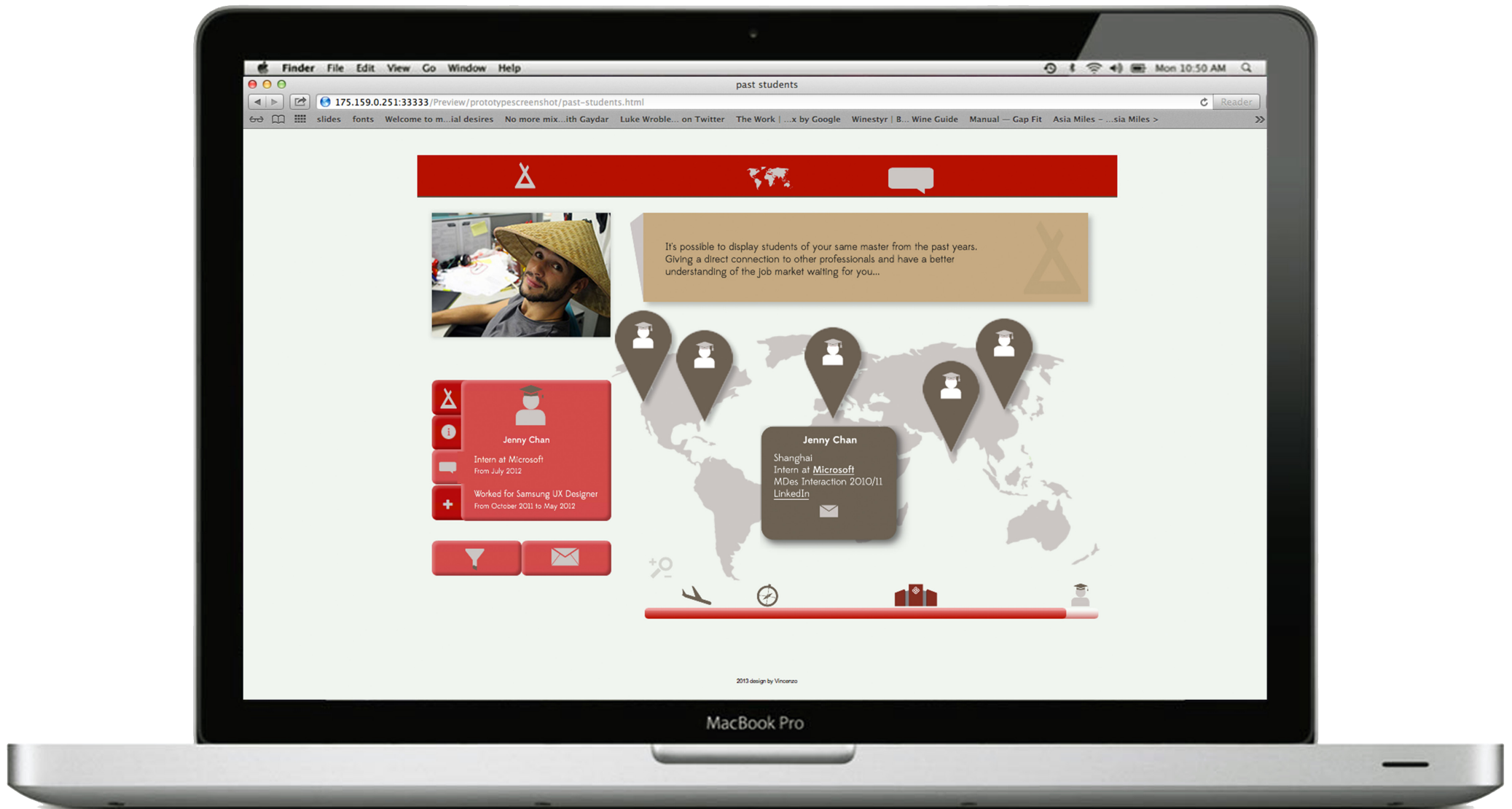


Figure 53: Screenshot of the system when approaching the graduation

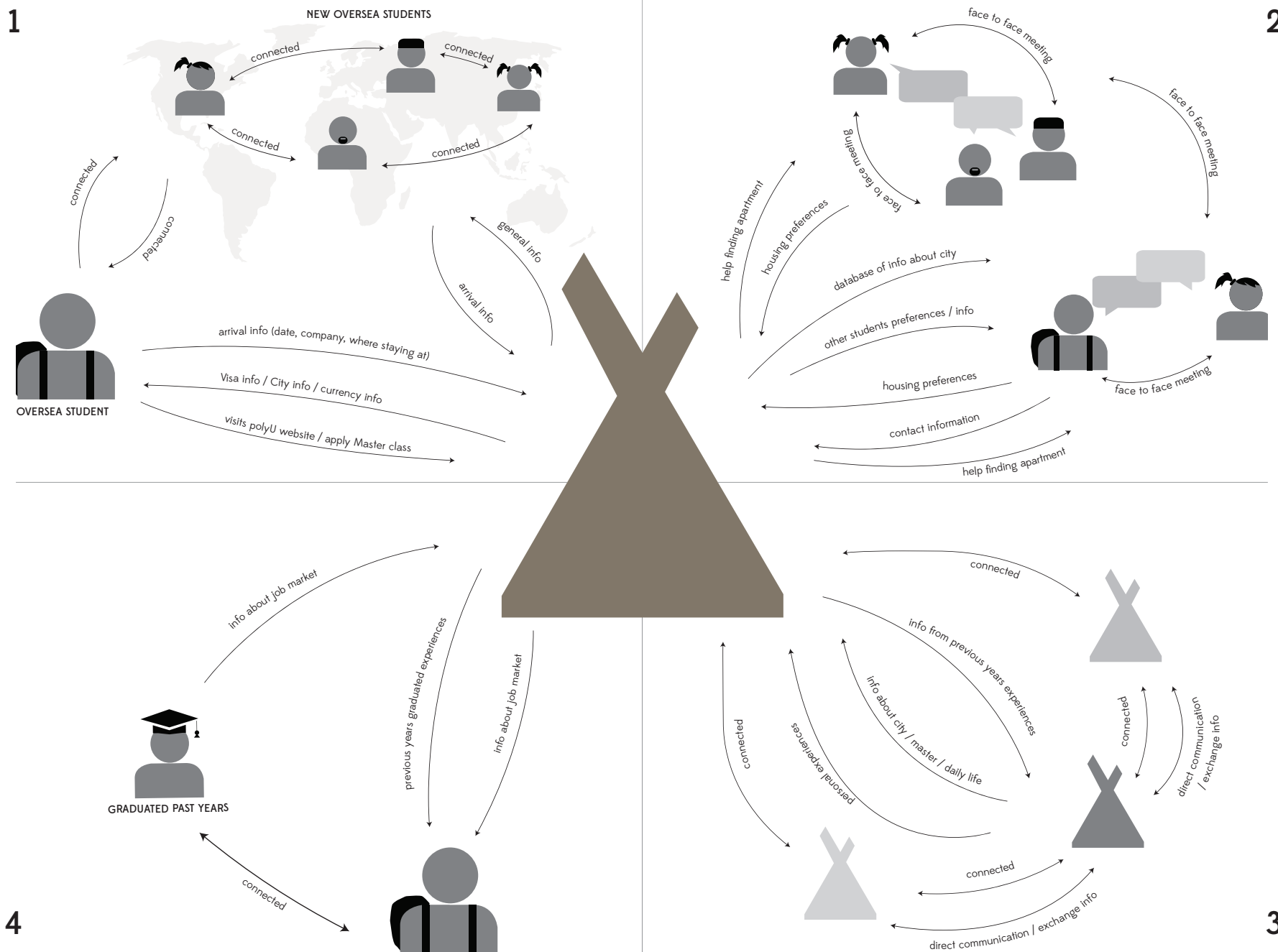


Figure 54: System map through the 4 phases of the Master Experience



## SYSTEM MAP

# VILLAGE

Village is a system which aims to help and connect overseas students together, in order to improve the whole master experience. Considering the flexibility of the platform it can adapt to the different stages that students will face, from the very beginning until the graduation. Taking in to consideration many critical aspects such as housing, socializing, lifestyle and adapting to the new culture. Village can provide the right help whenever needed thanks to the rich database of information and experiences that has been previously recorded and shared by students from past years.

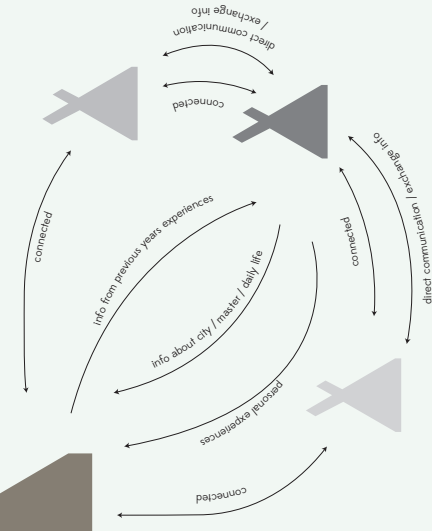
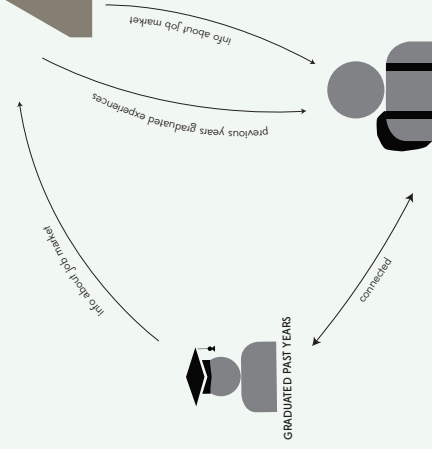
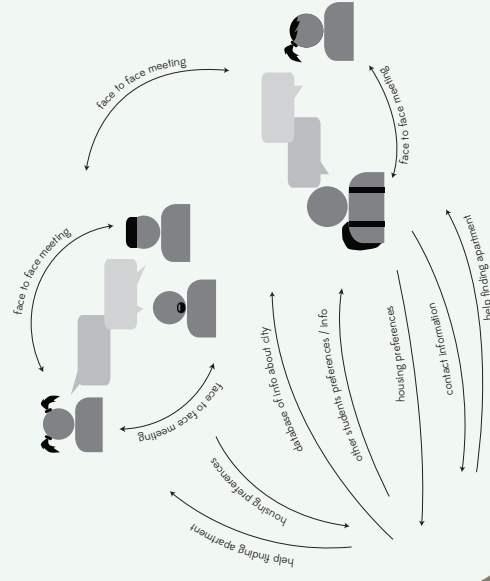
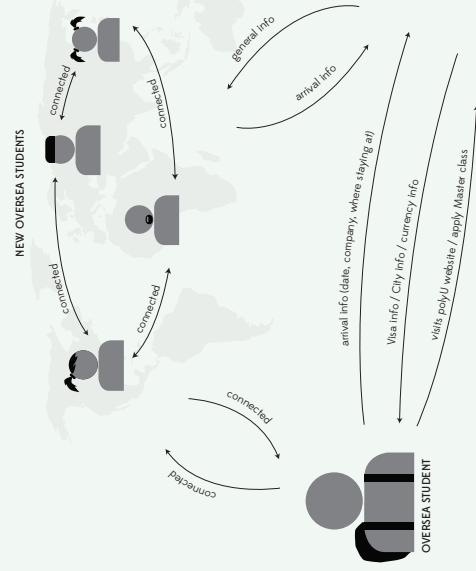
## 1. BEFORE ARRIVAL

connecting people  
providing informations



## 2. BEFORE BEGINNING CLASS

helping to socialize  
providing crucial info  
helping to settle down



## 4. AFTER THE MASTER

connecting people  
keeping contact  
job market info



## 3. DURING THE STUDIES

connecting people  
collecting & providing info  
recording experiences



POSTER





## REFERENCES

Figure 31: <http://myroommateisadick.blogspot.hk>

Figure 32: <http://www.mycrazyroommate.com>

Figure 33: <https://www.facebook.com/ilcoinquilinodim>

Figure 34: <http://www.easyroommate.com.hk>

Figure 35: <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>

### **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**

Carl Gustav Jung, (1921) Psychological Types

Elinor Ostrom, (1990), Governing the Commons Published by Cambridge University Press