Participatory Public Media Arts for Social Creativity
Context.

Taicang is a city near Shanghai. It is a natural sea port. It became the number one port of the world in Ming dynasty, where Zheng He set off his voyages to explore the world. Taicang’s cultural heritage is deeply rooted in being a sea port to the world ever since. Only recently Taicang decided to exploit this past importance and fame as one of the development triggers to a new culture and creative industry in the region. One of the ongoing projects is to build a new living and leisure area at the spot of the original shipping embankment.
Moon Rising from Sea.
A public media art installation was designed to be located at the center square of the area. The installation is roughly 10 by 10 meters on its base and 8 meters high. The base features wall reliefs and public displays, and inside it is going to be used as an exhibition space. On top of the base are constructions that give the impressions of a large sail, and the moon rising from the waves. On the surface of the sail are reliefs of Taicang’s sea culture. The inner space of the “moon” is also used for mounting projectors. Images, animations and videos can be projected onto the inner surface of sail in the evenings. Projection mapping and edge blending techniques will be used to correct the projection results on the curved surface with reliefs on it. Together with the sound systems installed nearby, it offers a platform for presenting digital media, and for public participation.
The design process.
Inspired by cultures
Inspired by traditional dynamic arts
Sensitizing workshops
Cardboard Modelling
Acting out
Video prototyping
In this concept the installation allows the public to contribute their photos from social media, for an interactive photo show to induce the feeling of social connectedness, and to reinstate the historical values of Taicang as port to the world, the place where Zheng He left to explore the world and bring back treasures and cultural influences from overseas. People from Taicang, who live and work overseas, will be able to send back photos and show to the people of Taicang what they are doing and seeing elsewhere in the world, Local viewers are able to interact with the photo show either with a tangible steering wheel, or with their own mobile devices.
Participatory public media art form emerges from traditional art forms and from the technology development. It integrates the physical and digital forms and content, requires the artist to take into account the future inclusion of the contributions from the public, and opens the possibility to allow social creativity as part of the creation process, aiming at an artifact (in many cases, a system) that grows with the contributions and along with time. What the artist creates is not an artifact in its final form, but a platform for social creativity. The participation process is an interactive process, although the interaction is not necessarily real-time at the same spot, but can be over time and over distance, thanks to the new technologies of digital media and connectivity.
References

