

Delft, The Netherlands

Cultura

A communication toolkit for designers to gain empathic insights across cultural boundaries

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The value of trade in products as well as in commercial services has nearly doubled over the past decade (WTO 2016).



Designers need to see their offerings 'from the users' side'¹, where more and more, that user comes from a different culture than the designer.

¹. Fulton Suri, J. (2003). Empathic design : Informed and inspired by other people's experience. Empathic design: User experience in product design, 51–57.

Empathic communication techniques, e.g.
using **personas**¹ to represent their users as people



Empathic research techniques, e.g.
contextmapping² to obtain data for the personas



1. Pruitt, J., & Grudin, J. (2003). Personas : Practice and theory. Proceedings of the 2003 Conference on Designing for User Experiences, 1–15.2.
2. Sleeswijk Visser, F., Stappers, P. J., van der Lugt, R., & Sanders, E. B.-N. (2005). Contextmapping: Experiences from practice. CoDesign, 1(2), 119–149.



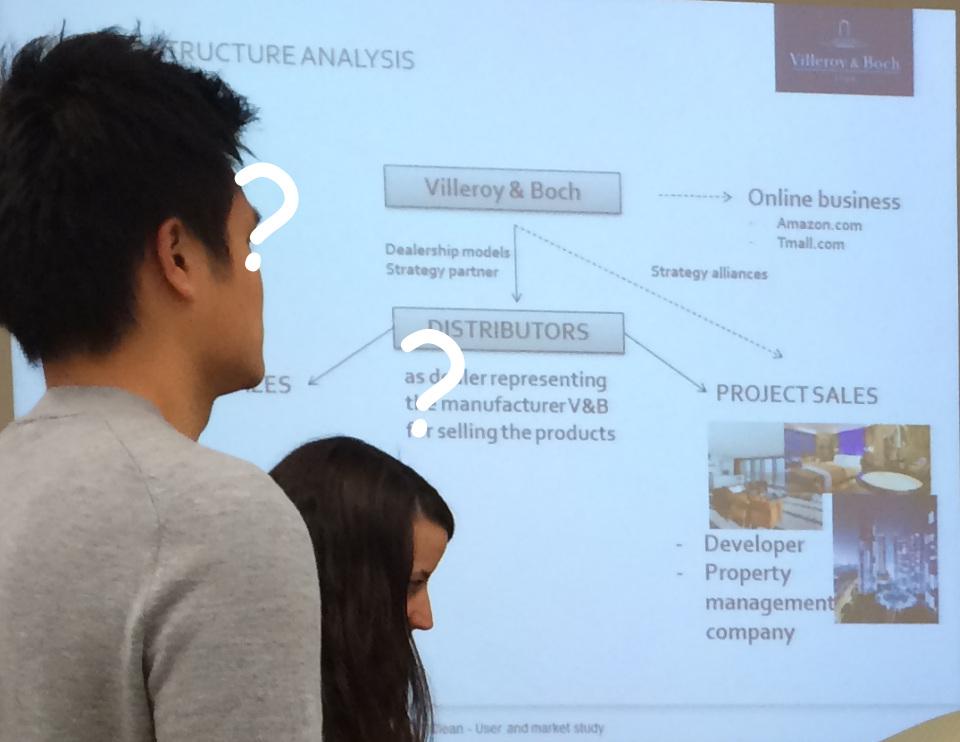
In most reported work, designers and users have been from the same culture, so the empathic understanding could build on a tacit shared basis. **But...**

的早期风格



"I used my first salary to buy my parents a premium shower toilet to show them my love and devotion."





"I used my first salary to buy my parents a premium shower toilet to show them my love and devotion."

STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

Villeroy & Boch

Online business
Amazon.com
Tmall.com

Dealership models
Strategy partner

Strategy alliances

DISTRIBUTORS

as dealer representing the manufacturer V&B for selling the products

PROJECT SALES

- Developer
- Property management company

Clean - User and market study

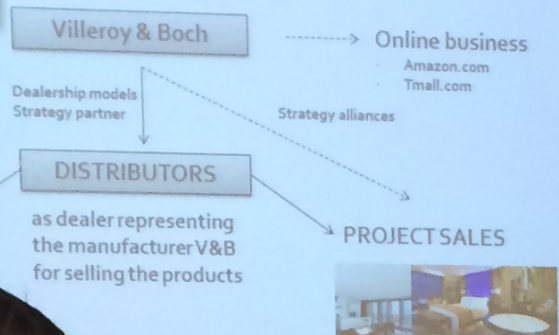
"I used my first salary to buy my parents a premium shower toilet to show them my love and devotion."

Filial piety (孝)





THE PROBLEM



Techniques that place the *individual* at the centre can cause the relatively invisible *socio-cultural* values to be overlooked.



RESEARCH GOAL

To develop **structured tools** for designers that adds a **larger social-cultural basis** to the often individual and anecdotal perspective of user insights



RESEARCH METHODS

1

ANALYZING
CULTURAL MODELS

2

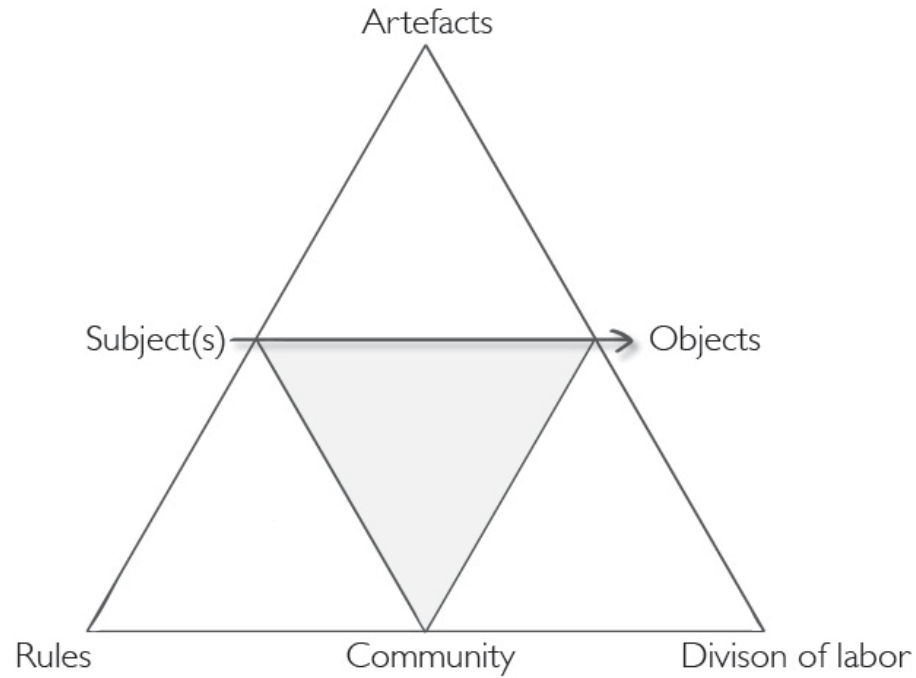
DESIGNING
THE TOOLKIT

3

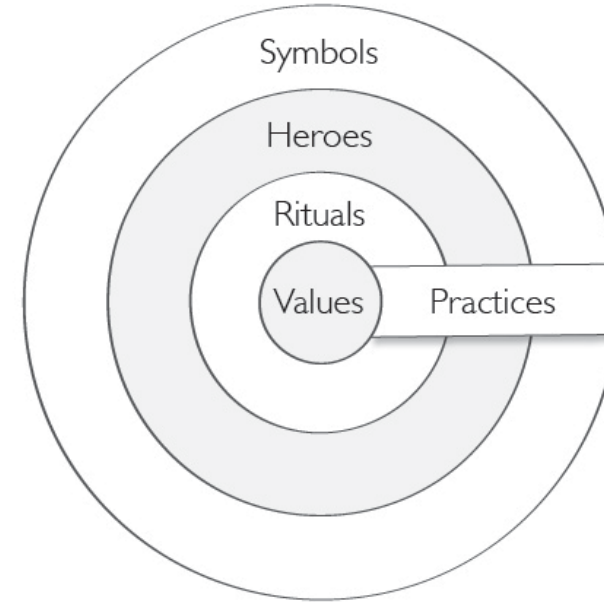
EVALUATING
THE TOOLKIT

1

ANALYZING CULTURAL MODELS



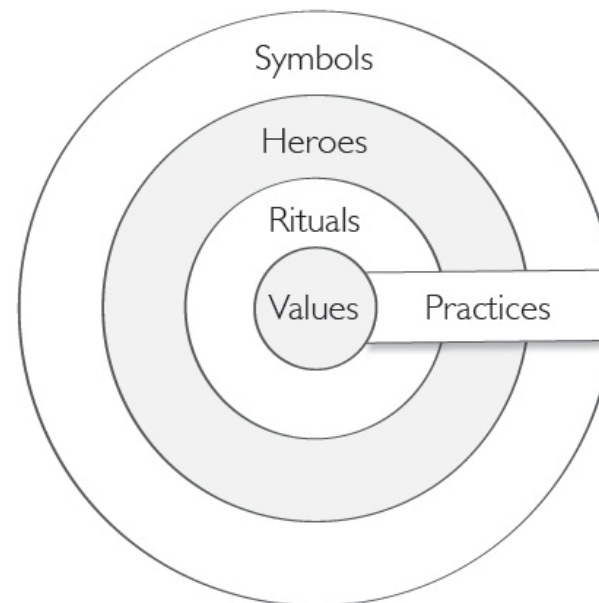
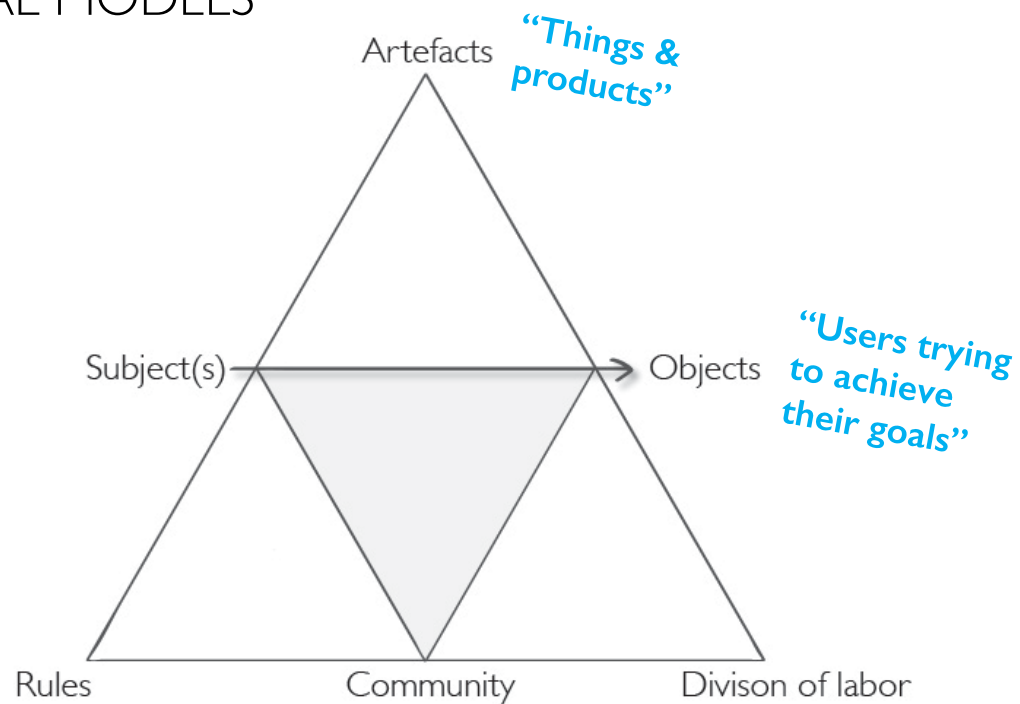
Engeström's model of an activity system



Hofstede's onion model

1. van Boeijen, A. G. C. (2015). Crossing cultural chasms: Towards a culture-conscious approach to design. Doctoral Thesis. Delft University of Technology.
2. Postma, C. E. (2012). Creating socionas: Building creative understanding of people's experiences in the early stages of new product development. Doctoral Thesis. Delft University of Technology.
3. Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133-156..
4. Hofstede, G.H., Hofstede, G.J., & Minkov, M. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of mind* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill

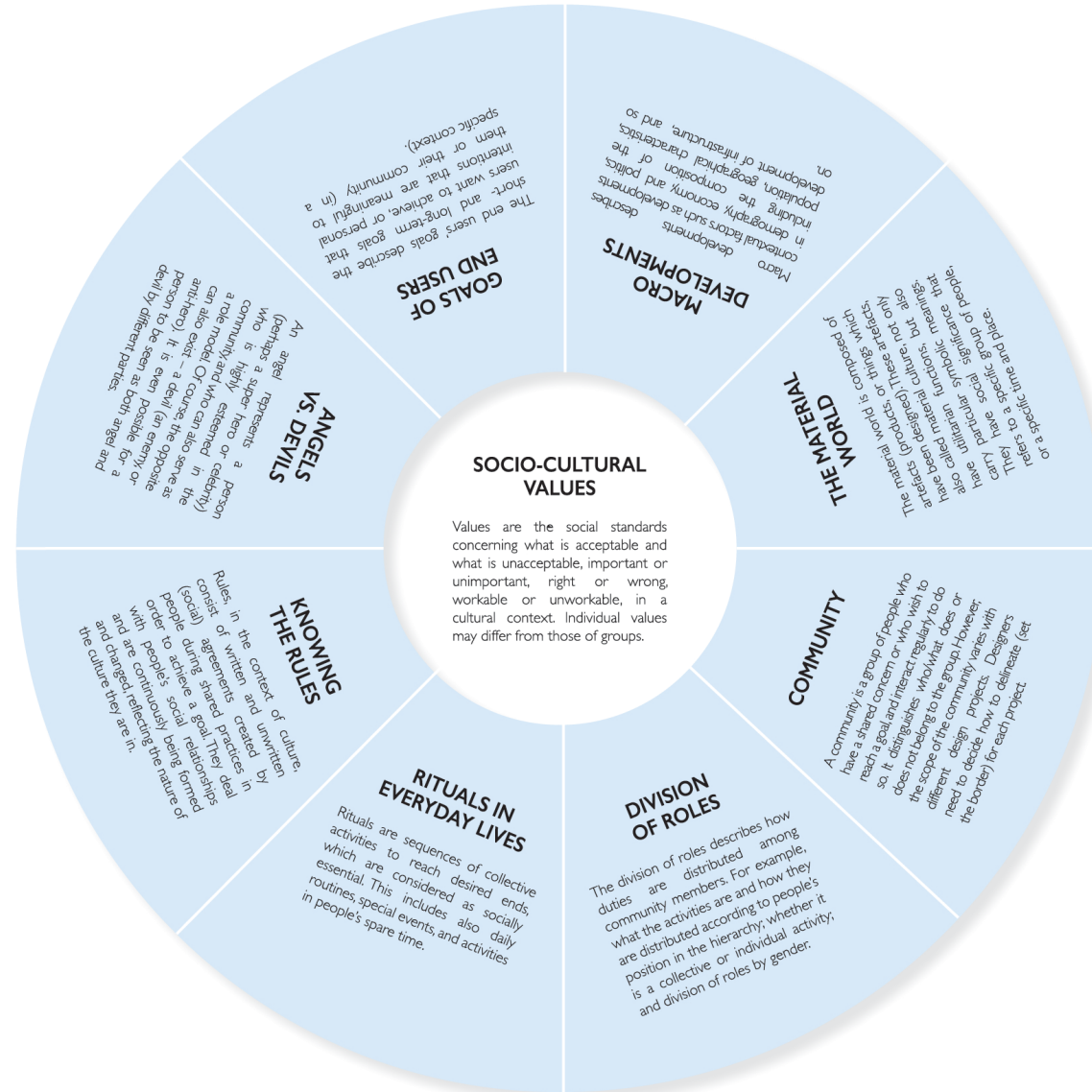
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ANALYZING
CULTURAL MODELS

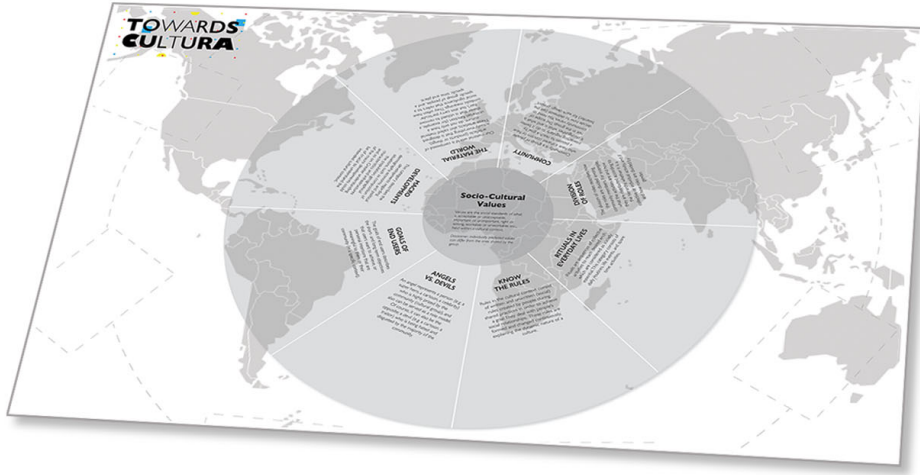
Turning the cultural models into the **“language”** that the designers can recognize
Should be handy for a **half day design session**

1 ANALYZING CULTURAL MODELS

The **cultural wheel** showcases **9** aspects of culture



2 DESIGNING THE TOOLKIT



Cultural Wheel,
showcasing 9 cultural aspects



Insight cards with quotes,
images and anecdotes



Video clips of users and
their contexts



TOWARDS CULTURA

Socio-Cultural Values



Socio-Cultural Values

Values are the social standards of what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, etc., held within a cultural context.

Disclaimer: individually preferred values can differ from the ones shared by the group.

Harmony

The importance of maintaining harmony in the group is a key value in many cultures. It is the idea that everyone should get along and that conflict should be avoided. Harmony is often seen as a sign of a well-functioning community.

Humility

Humility is the quality of being modest and not having an inflated sense of one's own importance. It is the idea that everyone has something to learn from others and that no one is perfect. Humility is often seen as a sign of wisdom and maturity.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the quality of being reliable and honest. It is the idea that one can depend on others and that they will do what they say. Trustworthiness is often seen as a sign of integrity and character.

F

3 EVALUATING THE TOOLKIT



26 students from a university in Shanghai joined **3 group sessions**.

A week prior the session, each of them was ask to

- fill in **a sensitizing workbook** regarding the topic of “my university life & me”
- record a 1-2 minute **documentary video**

3 EVALUATING THE TOOLKIT

14 European based **designers** formed 4 design teams, **evaluated** the **Cultura** toolkit through design sessions under 2 conditions. The design brief was “to design products and services enhancing university students’ social relationships in China.”

Session	Before session	Design session
A		Cultura toolkit
B	Sensitizing workbook	Cultura toolkit



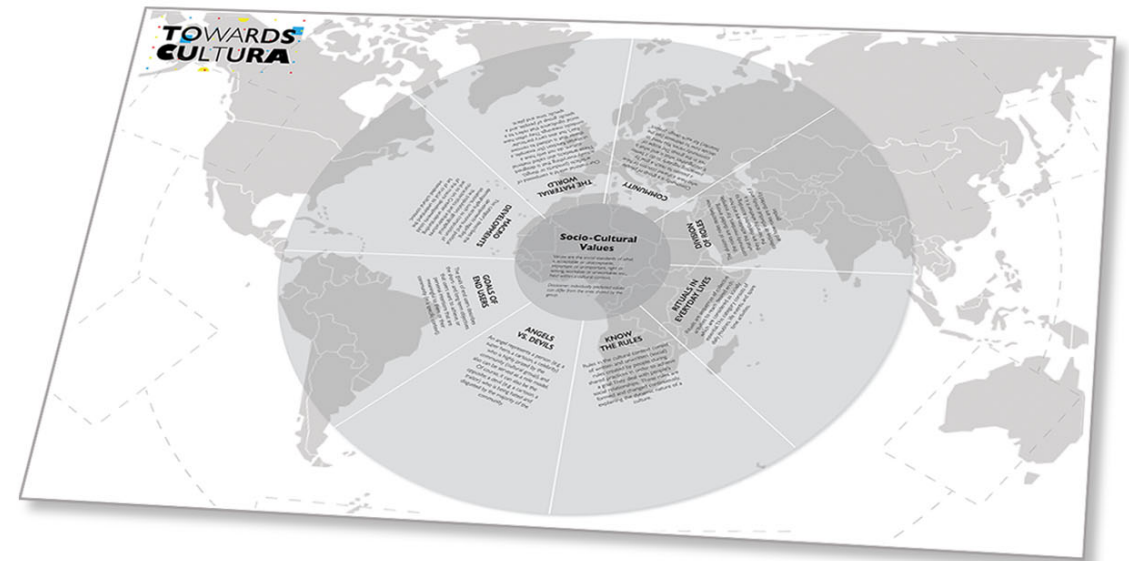
FINDINGS

Cultural wheel

- Gave a **clear overview**
- Helped designers manage, and keep track of user information
- Each aspect served a **different purpose: new** to designers; could **inspire ideas**; to **select/confirm** ideas

” Somehow I would consider people’s roles or their community in my normal design process, but not explicitly. So the way it emphasized these aspects was helpful.”

“The aspect of rules was really new to me, and it triggered us [to have] many ideas”





FINDINGS

Insight cards & video clips

“The Video gave the realness whereas the cards gave insights, the two aspects paint the story in a complete way.”

- Video showed the behaviors of the users which were missing in the cards
- The cards gave elaborate info





FINDINGS

Sensitizing workbook

- Served as an ‘**accelerator**’
- Led to more discussions and more ideas (7/8 vs. 4/6)
- Designers attached more to the differences
- When the difference was too large, designer found it hard to relate to their own experiences





The Cultura

- gave a **structured cultural basis**
- helped designers **build connections & understanding** among the UX insights
- **guided** designers through the design session
- made the UX insights more **appealing** to the designers, and triggered their **curiosity**
- helped **broaden designers' mindset**



There is room

- for improving the **divisions of these cultural aspects** (e.g. adding a behavioral related aspect)
- to extend the cultural wheel **to a research tool**, which can serve as a lens for designers to collect/analyze relevant data

Thank you for your attention.

Questions?

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KNOWING THE RULES

Rules, in the context of culture, consist of written and unwritten (social) agreements created by people during shared practices in order to achieve a goal. They deal with people's social relationships and are continuously being formed and changed, reflecting the nature of the culture.

