

# 2021-2022 FMP

## “URBAN AUTISM”

How can we support and assist young people (20-28 years old) working in a foreign city reduce the symptoms of "urban autism"?

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# The brief of FMP

## WHAT :

My research topic is about the psychological problem of young people feeling lonely when they struggle in a foreign land caused by the rapid urbanization, which is also called urban autism. My question is 'How can we support and assist young people (20-28 years old) working in a foreign city reduce the symptoms of "urban autism"?'

## WHY :

With the rapid urbanization of the world, our life is also changing. The faster and faster pace of life, more and more migrants, more and more pressure... There are so many strangers in every city, people live in close quarters, but few know their neighbors. This has led to many psychological problems, of which loneliness is the strongest and most common. Urban autism is a kind of lonely psychological problem caused by the fast pace of life in the city. Loneliness will become a "social plague" spreading around the world in this century. Urban loneliness, extreme individualism and single population swelling were prominent problems in the second half of the 20th century. While physical contact between people is weakening, the distance hidden behind it is constantly expanding. If a person feels lonely for a long time, it will not only cause psychological pain, but also physical pain, such as accelerated aging, weakened immune system and other problems. And "urban autism" is very harmful, should be prevented, Therefore, in today's society, this problem urgently needs to be solved.

## WHO :

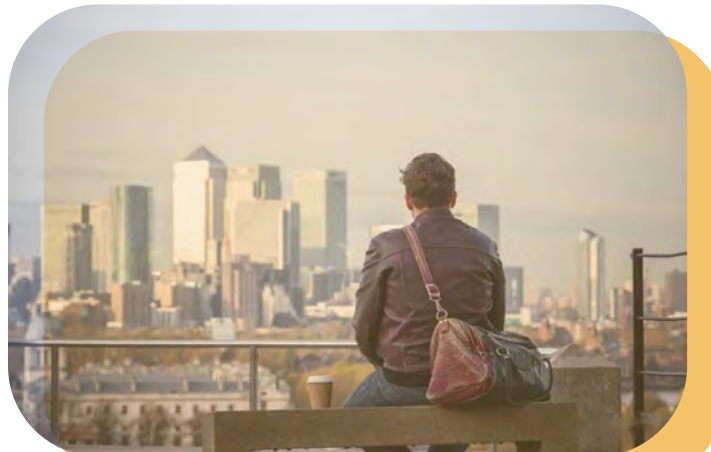
My target group is young people between 22 and 28 working in a foreign land. According to the Mental Health Foundation, nearly nine out of ten of the 2,000 people questioned said they felt lonely, and this was the 18-24 years old age group. This shows that loneliness often occurs in young people. This is because on the one hand, urban people lack understanding and trust with each other due to the great pressure of work, resulting in negative psychological problems such as loneliness. Once one person becomes "lonely", others will be affected to become "lonely" and have a psychological reluctance to contact others. On the other hand, when they first arrive in a strange city, they may have a strong sense of belonging at first. I hope that through my design works, young people working in foreign lands can reduce lonely, and at the same time solve their social and psychological needs, so that they can not only relieve the feeling of loneliness, produce psychological comfort, but also help them make friends, so that they can feel warm in foreign places.

## HOW :

In order to reduce the symptoms of "urban autism" and relieve the loneliness of young people

working and studying in foreign lands, I plan to design a social app. According to the research, it is found that "urban autism" is the loneliness caused by people's lack of social activities. Although there are many people in the city, because of the fast pace of life, they do not have channels and a lot of time to get to know the friends they talk with, so they have a strong sense of loneliness. From the point of view of the users, modern young people still rely on the Internet to make friends, especially mobile apps, so I plan to design a virtual pet social app. The main purpose of this app is to enable young people in foreign lands to make friends with them while keeping virtual pets. The app can be divided into different communities according to their hobbies and interests, so that users can find the community that meet their hobbies and have a sense of belonging. This not only alleviates the loneliness of users, but also enables them to make friends, which I think is a feasible approach.

# BACKGROUND



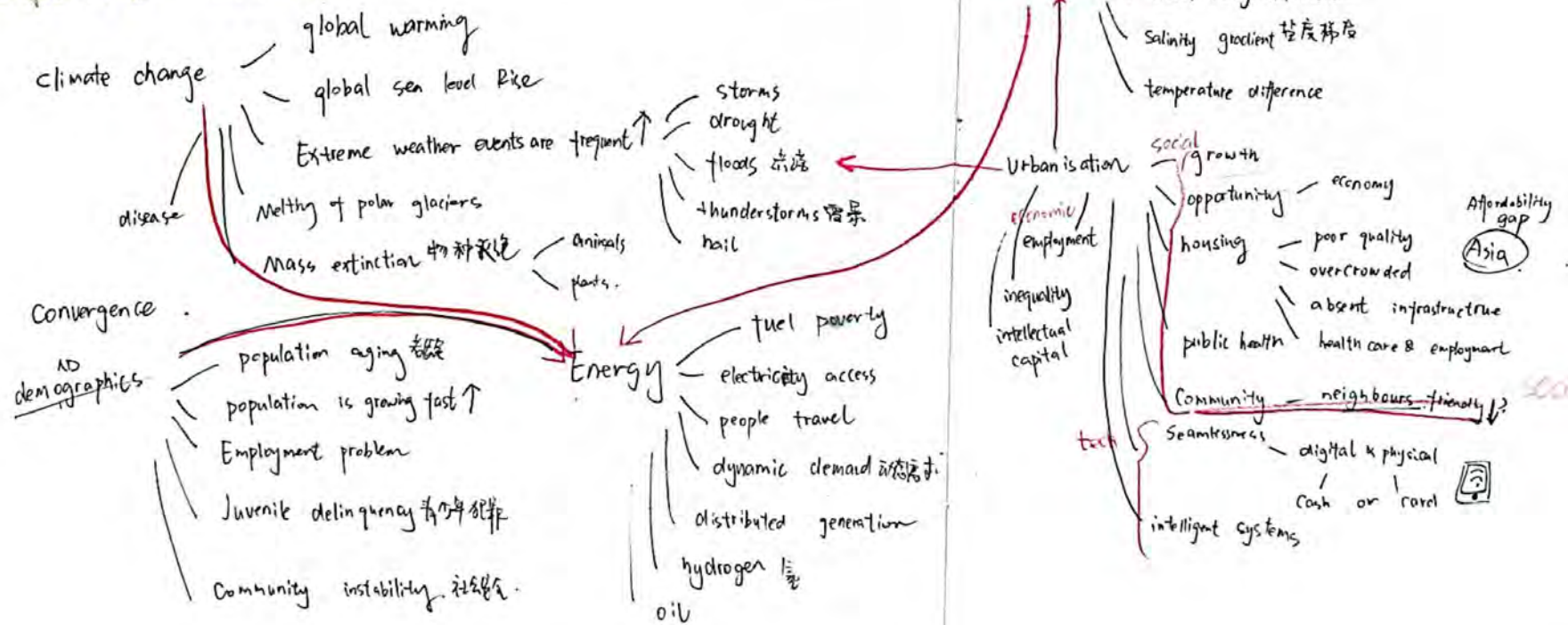
Urban Autism, different from congenital autism, is acquired. It is a kind of feeling of no place to rely on, and busy and stressful life is normal. Urban autism will be a new mental disorder in the middle of the 21st century, and the more educated people are, the more likely they are to suffer from it.



# RESEARCH

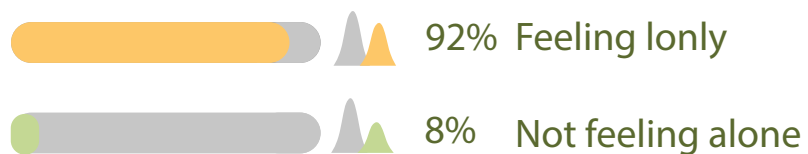
## 1. MIND MAP

### MIND MAP

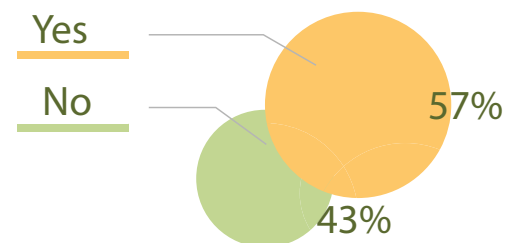


## 2.DATA

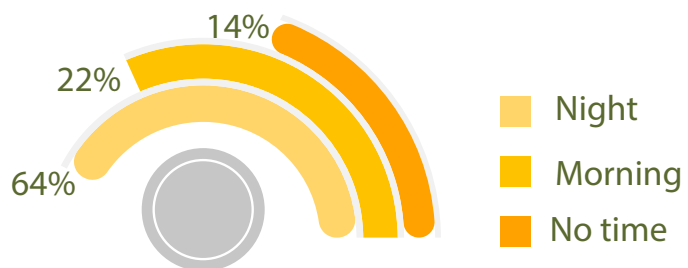
### Do you feel lonely?



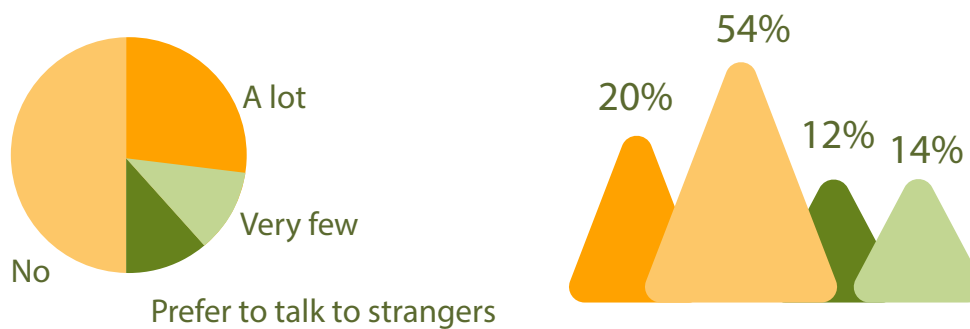
### Do you feel lonely when in a strange city



### When do you feel most lonely?



### Do you have someone you want to talk to?



### 3. THE REASON

1

#### Fast pace of life

As the pace of life in the city is getting faster and faster, people's nerves are very tense and people have great psychological pressure.

2

#### Less face-to-face socializing

Although they all live in the same building and neighborhood, many young people do not know their neighbors.

3

#### Reliance on social networking

Online social media is emerging in an endless stream, which is popular among young people, but the sense of distance hidden behind it is constantly expanding

4

#### Lack of communication

Due to the lack of friends and communication with others, the loneliness of young people is becoming more and more serious.





## 4. THE HARM

1

### Spreads to those around it

Due to the lack of mutual understanding and trust, urban people are not interested in all things around, resulting in extreme crisis of trust, distrust of anything around, and even hostile mood.

2

### Affects quality of life

Because of loneliness and lack of interpersonal communication, they have extreme doubts about their living environment and space, and are prone to mild hysteria of spirit.

3

### Harm physical and mental health

Because of loneliness, there is a lack of emotional lubricant. If you are depressed for a long time, you can't get the comfort and have no way to vent. It may seriously harm your physical and mental health.

Through searching materials, I found that urban autism is a very common phenomenon among young people, which can make people feel lonely and even affect their health. Next I will focus on young people working in foreign countries.



# 5. QUESTIONNAIRE

## 1. What's your gender?

- female
- male

## 2. What's your age?

- Under the age of 19
- 20-29
- 30-45
- 46 and more

## 3. What is your educational level?

- junior college
- undergraduate
- master
- doctor

## 9. Do you feel annoyed when you forget your phone or when it runs out of battery?

- Very be agitated
- Be agitated
- general
- a little
- no

## 10. Which state do you find more intolerable?

- No one to talk to and understand yourself
- Being alone in a space, separated from others

## 4. Where you live?

- hometown
- nonlocal

## 5. Where do you live now?

- First-tier cities
- Second and third-tier cities
- Fourth and fifth tier cities

## 6. Do you often feel lonely?

- often
- general
- sometimes
- Once in a while

## 11. Which will make you feel more comfortable, the Internet or the reality?

- network
- reality

## 12. why you feel lonely

- Far from home
- single
- The lack of friends
- Career setbacks

## 13. Are you an introvert

- yes
- no

## 7. Do you feel stressed?

- A large
- big
- general
- little
- A small

## 8. Do you think you are much different online than you are in real life?

- A large
- big
- general
- little
- A small

## 14. Do you think you lack social skills

- yes
- no

## 15. Do you often feel that no one understands you?

- often
- sometimes
- never

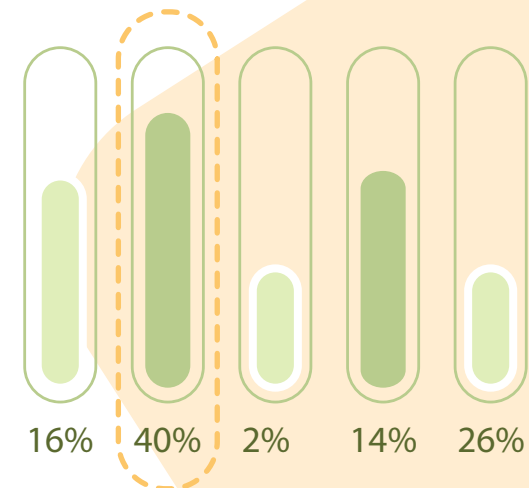
## 16. Do you have the desire to be alone

- often
- sometimes
- never

Question 2: What is your age? [Single choice question]

Options #	Subtotal#	Proportion
Under 18	7	16.67%
20-28 years old	17	40.48%
29 -35 years old	1	2.38%
36-45 years old	6	14.29%
Over 46 years old	11	26.19%
Number of valid entries in this question		42

As can be seen from the data, 'urban autism' are mainly young people aged between **20 and 28** with a bachelor's degree or above.

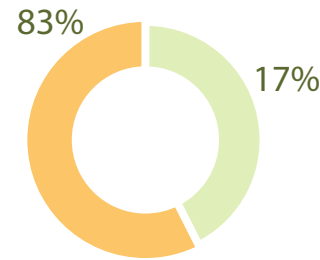


Question 4: May I ask where you live? [multiple choice]

Options #	Subtotal#	Proportion
hometown	7%	16.74%
Out of town	35%	83.26%
Number of valid entries in this question		42

Question 5: Where do you currently live? [Single choice question]

Options #	Subtotal#	Proportion
Second and third tier cities	11	26.19%
Tier 1 cities	29	69.05%
Fourth and fifth tier cities	1	2.38%
other	1	2.38%
Number of valid entries in this question		42



It can be seen from this data that most people choose to work in other cities than their hometown, accounting for **83.26%**, and only a small number of people choose to work in their hometown. Most of them chose to work in first-tier or second-tier cities, accounting for more than **90** percent in total.



Statistics show that a large number of people feel lonely working in cities, and "often", "frequently" and "generally" are the main parts.

Question 7: Do you often feel lonely? [Scale question]

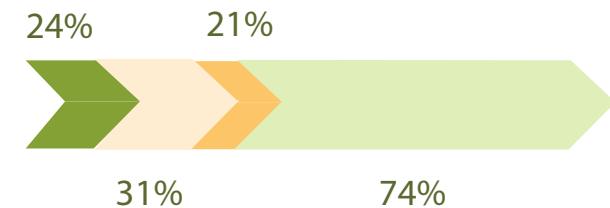
Average score for this question: 3.38

Options #	Subtotal#	Proportion
often	10	23.81%
frequently	15	35.71%
generally	12	28.57%
sometimes	3	7.14%
Occasionally	4	9.52%
Number of valid entries in this question		42

Question 13: Excuse me, the reason why you feel lonely is [multiple choice]

Options #	Subtotal#	Proportion
Leave home	10	23.81%
single	9	21.43%
Lack of friends	13	30.95%
Career/academic setbacks	31	73.81%
Number of valid entries in this question		42

The overwhelming majority, **74** percent, blamed work stress for urban autism.



## 6. INTERVIEW



Interviewees

Young people with urban autism feel very **lonely**

They are eager to **make friends**, but there is no proper way

They need a **suitable** way to make friends

## INSIGHT

## 7. COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS



### Talking Tom Cat

The first virtual pet on the phone, Tom can talk to users and imitate their speech. Simple interaction, but not functional



### Cat Home

A cat raising game, users can run a cat flower shop, through the game to earn money for cat, but there are too many advertisements



### Travel Frog

A game to raise frogs, frogs through travel to bring back gifts. However, the uncertain travel time can easily make users lose interest.



### Meow Bookkeeping

An app combining pets and bookkeeping can help users keep accounts. Functional and interesting, but lack of interaction with users



# USER MODELING

## 1. EMPATHY MAP

### Says

"I feel lonely in this city." "I want to know more about the city." "No one wants to listen to me"  
"I want to make friends, but there is no suitable way." "Under pressure."  
"I want to have a pet." "Feel very tired." "Don't have time."  
I don't know my neighbors "I want to relax."

### Does

I've tried social apps, but it doesn't feel good.  
Become fake on social software.  
Very dependent on mobile phones.  
Become very autistic and don't know how to make friends



### Thinks

I don't know how to change this situation.  
I feel this city is strange, but I don't know how to know it  
I have thought about keeping pets, but my time and energy are very limited.

Feel very lonely, especially after work.  
Without friends listening, I become more silent.  
Often produce negative emotions.  
Often feel very tired.  
I want to know others, but don't want to be too deliberate.

### Feels

## 2. PERSONAS

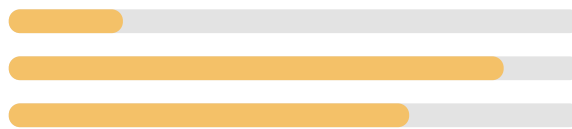
# PERSONA

### DEMOGRAPHICS

- Name: Jay zhao
- Age:27
- Occupation: programmer
- Location: Bei Jing

### PERSONALITY

- introverted
- social
- loneliness



### NEEDS

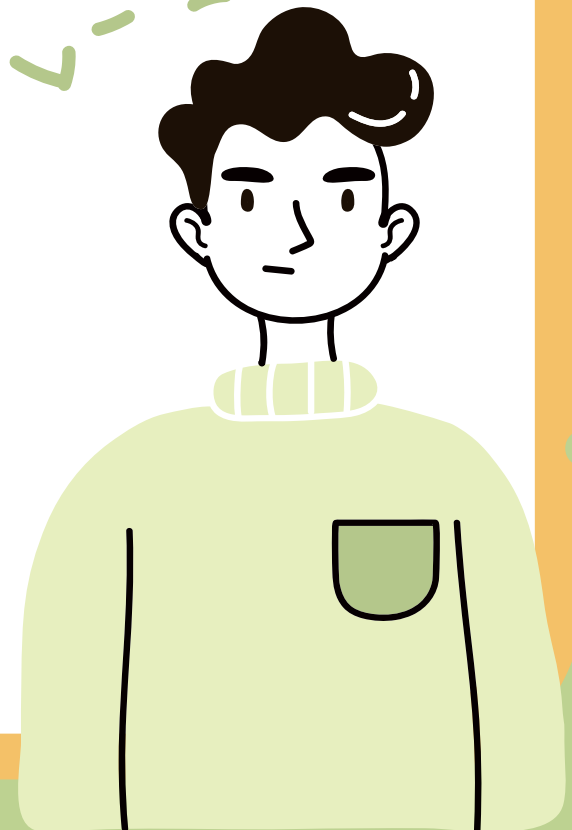
- He yearned for a calming way to ease his loneliness
- He enjoys be alone at a place more than social activities

### FRUSTRATION

- Although Jay participates in many social activities, he often feels lonely
- Loneliness leads to psychological problems such as insomnia

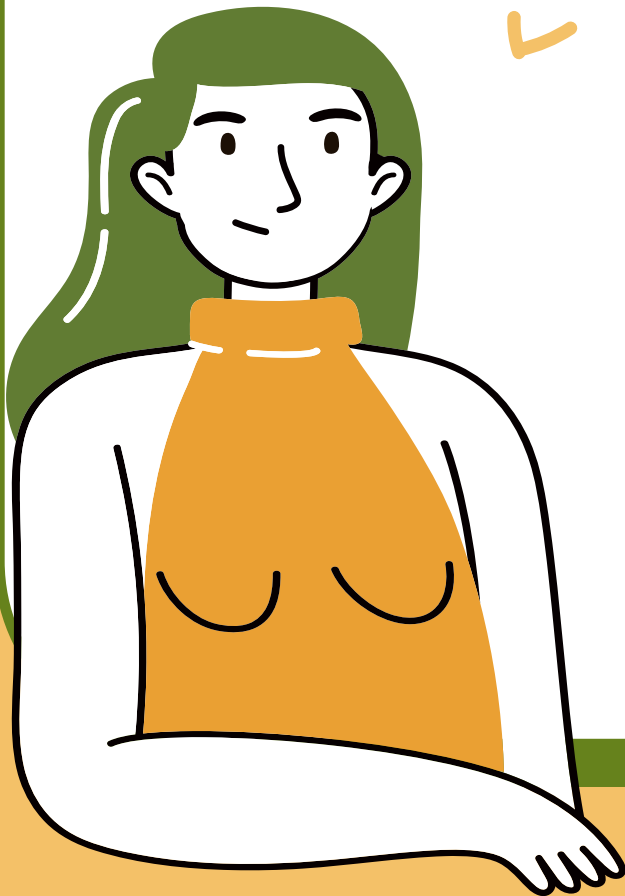
## JAY ZHAO

Jay Zhao is a boy from a small city. He has been working in Beijing for five years. In others' eyes, Jay is a lively and cheerful person, but in fact, Jay always feels very lonely, he always suffers from insomnia at night, he does not know how to solve this loneliness.



# LUCY LIN

LUCY LIN is a girl from Wuxi who works in Shanghai. This is her first year of working in Shanghai, and she feels a lot of pressure. As an introvert, she always goes to work or goes shopping alone. She has no friends in the city. Lucy is very dependent on her mobile phone. She felt lonely and often emotional.



# PERSONA

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- Name: Lucy lin
- Age: 24
- Occupation: Designer
- Location: Shang Hai

## FRUSTRATION

- She often feels very lonely in this city
- She tried social networking apps, but didn't think they would work for her

## NEEDS

- She desperately wanted to ease the loneliness, especially after work
- She wants to be able to manage her emotions

## PERSONALITY

- introverted
- social
- loneliness





## people

### Physiological aspects

- people who live in foreign city
- 20 to 28 years old
- Office worker



### Psychological

- loneliness
- high pressure
- feel indifferent to everything
- anxiety when communicate to others



### Environment:

- internet ,computer
- mobile phone
- ipad



### Social:

according to the user's preferences,  
classification into different communities



## content

## activities

### Time

- busy on weekdays
- more free time at night and weekends



### Complexity:

- track users habits
- Recommend things of interest to users



### Goals:

In user's free time, help them to alleviate  
loneliness in foreign places



# PACT

### Medium:

Mobile app



### Input

- geographical location
- information about users
- hobby and interest



### Output

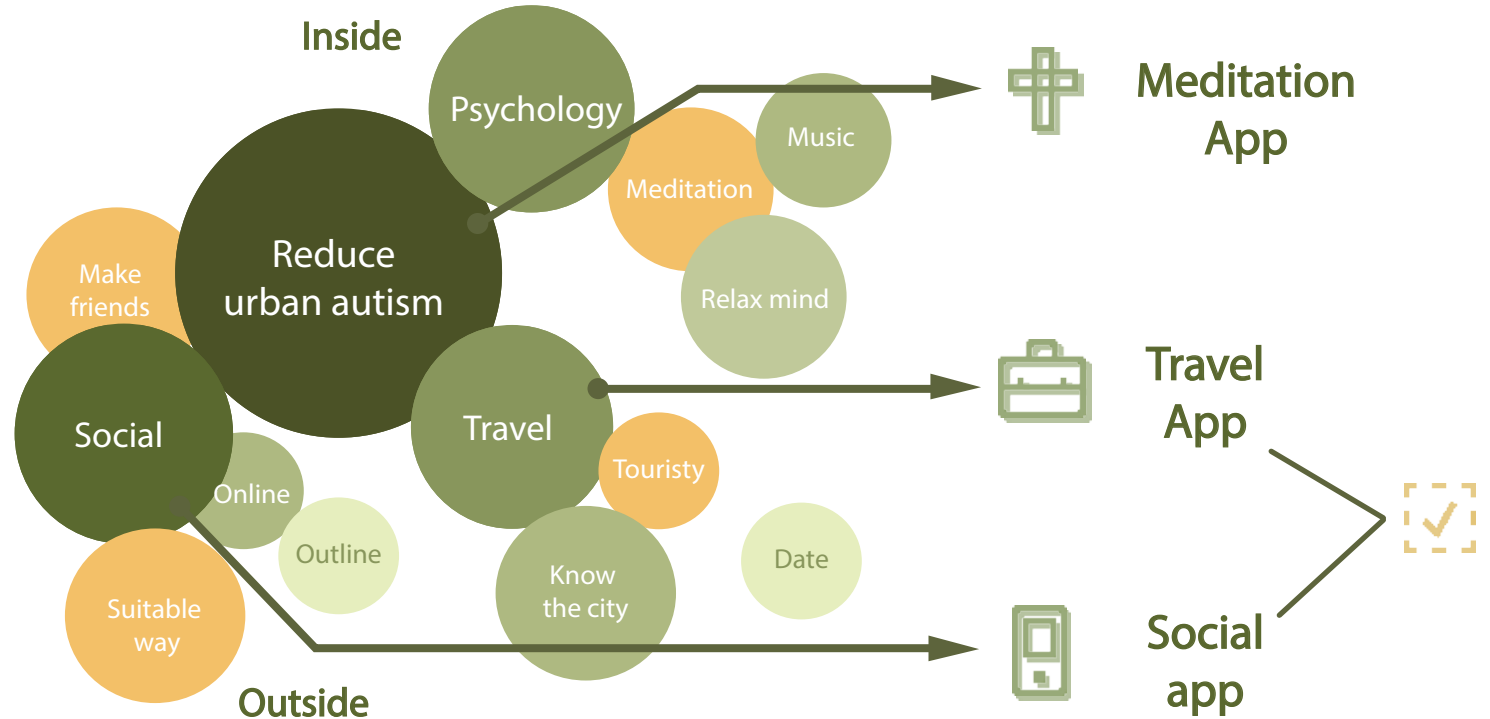
- different community choice
- recommended games
- chat frame



## technology

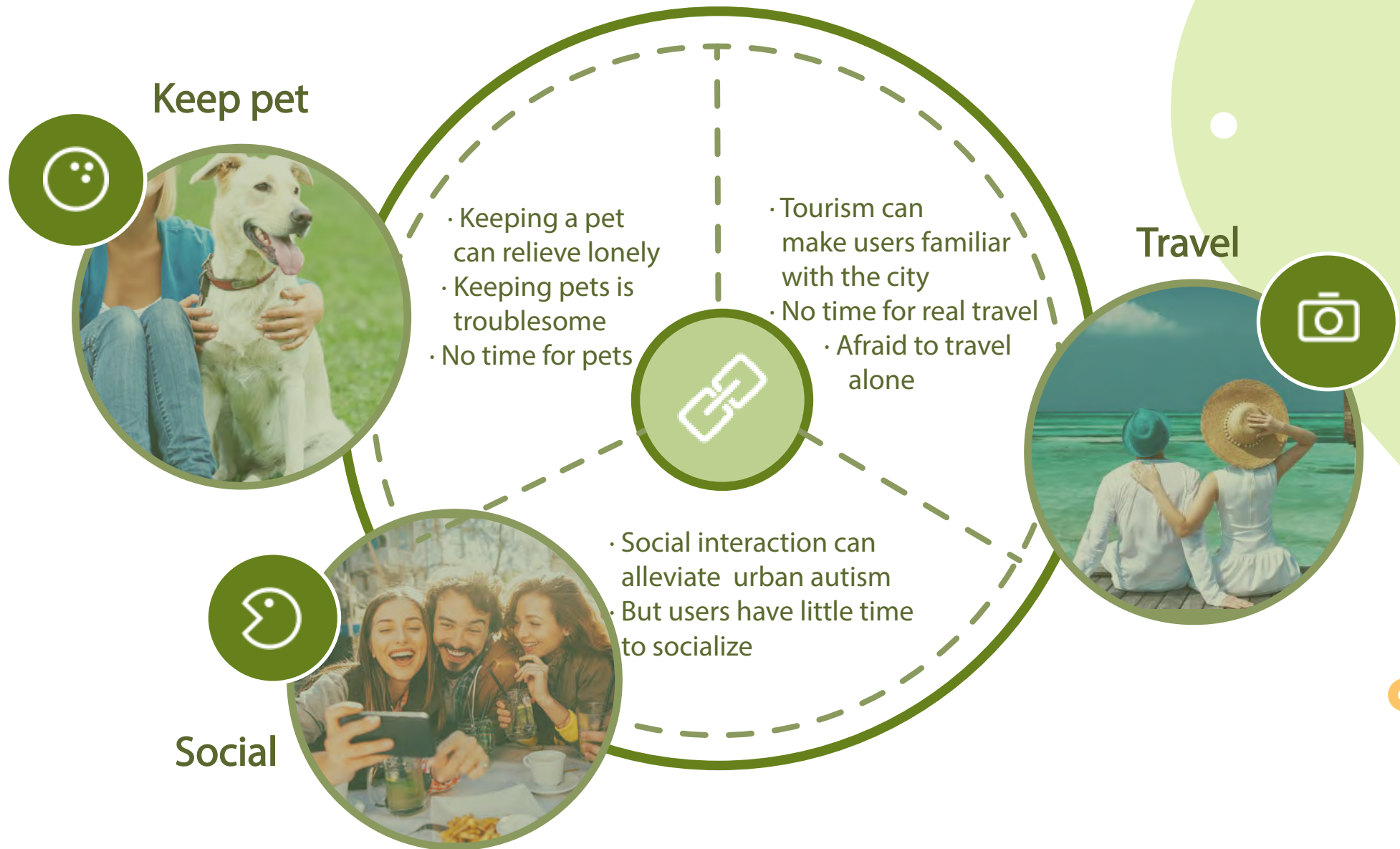
# IDEA

## 1. SOLUTION

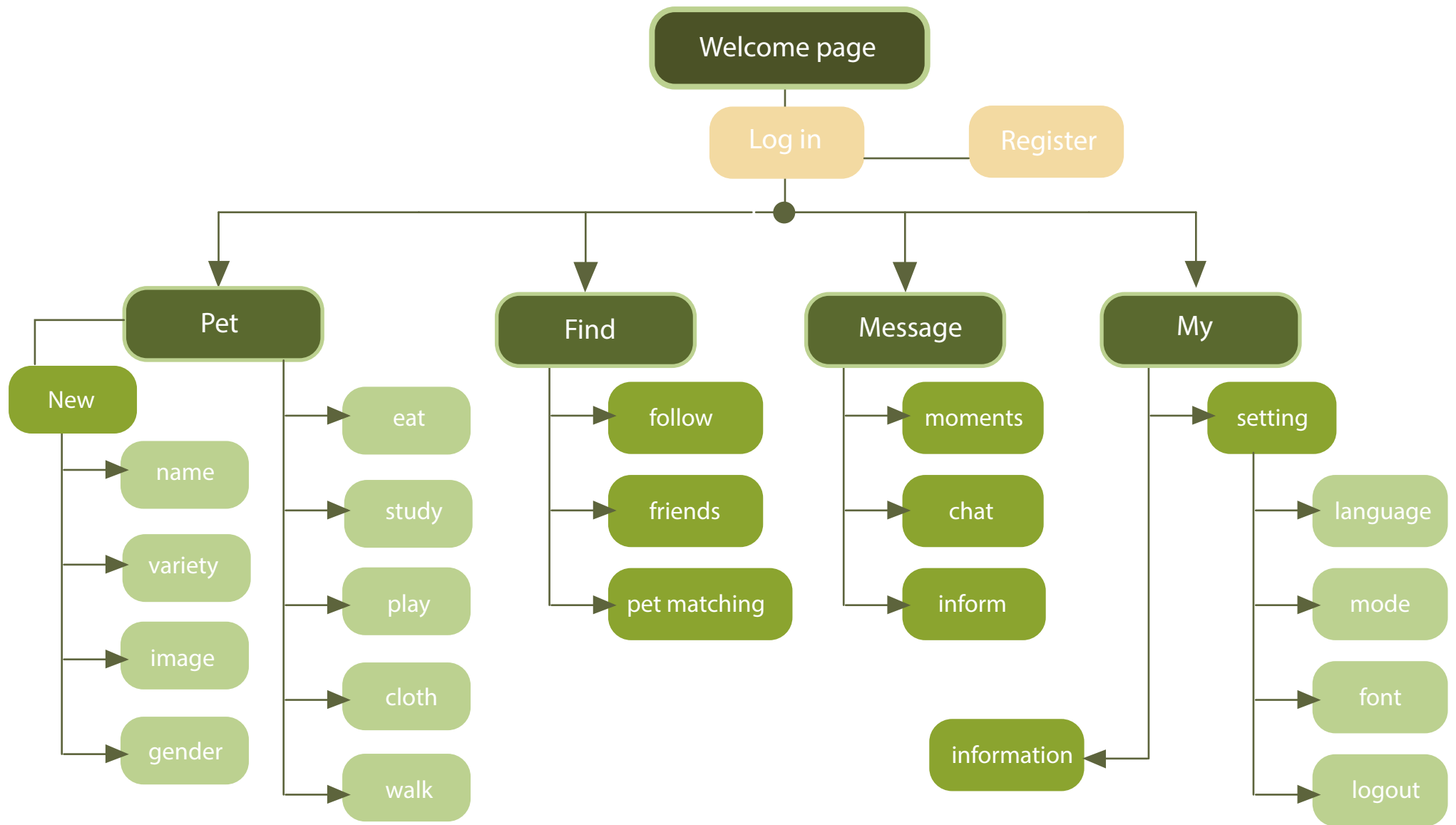


I adopted the idea of combining social software and travel software to connect urban autistic people in the city.

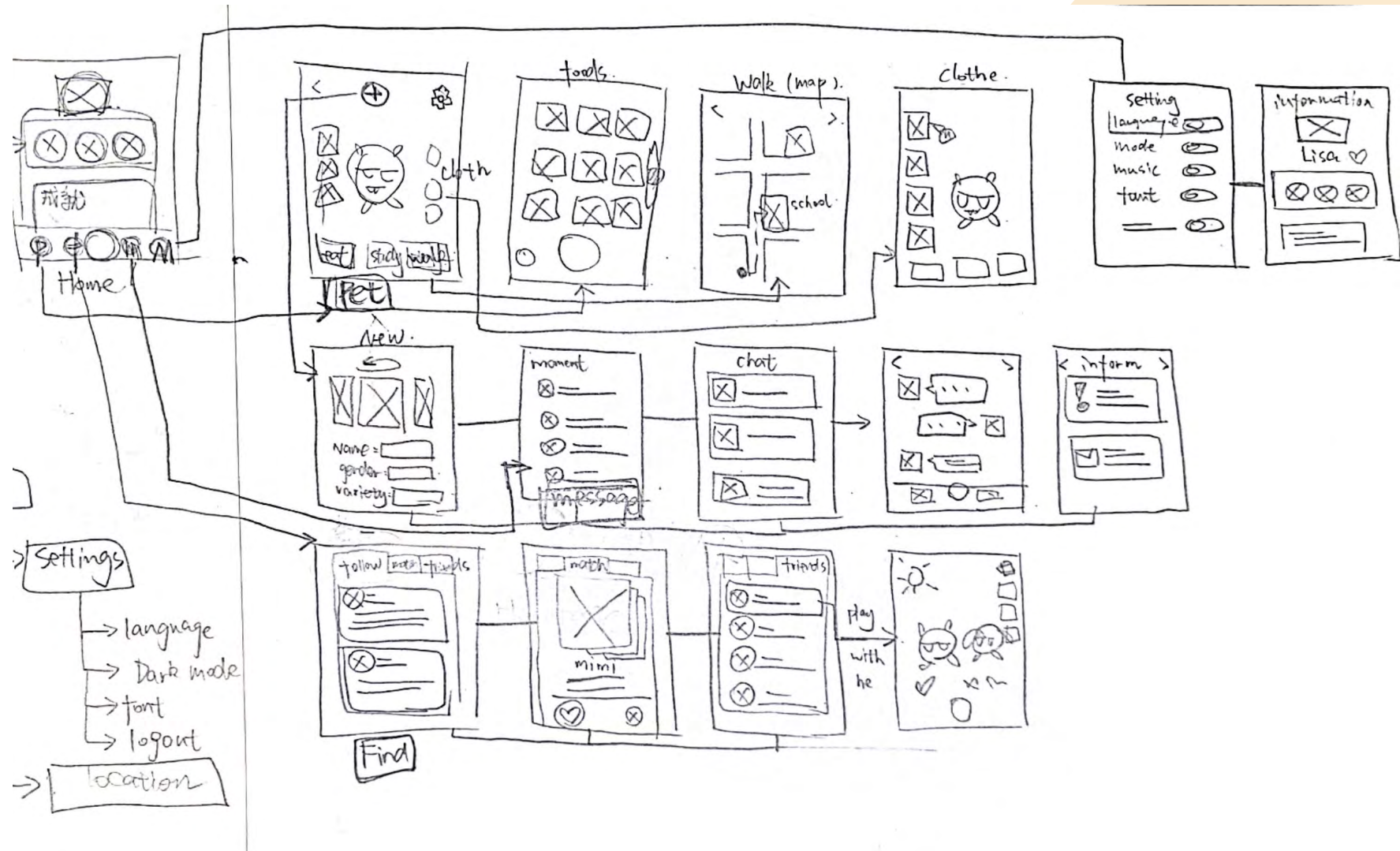
## 2. FUNCTION DEFINE



### 3. FLOW CHART

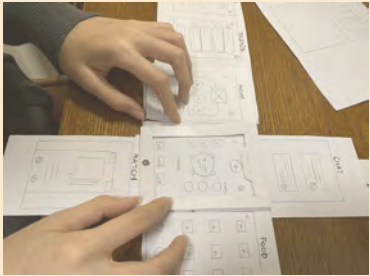
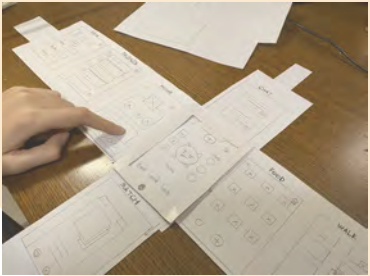
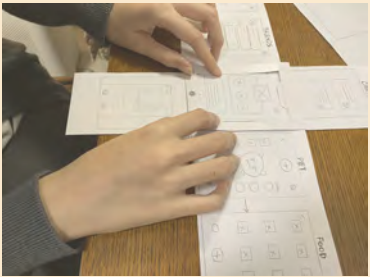
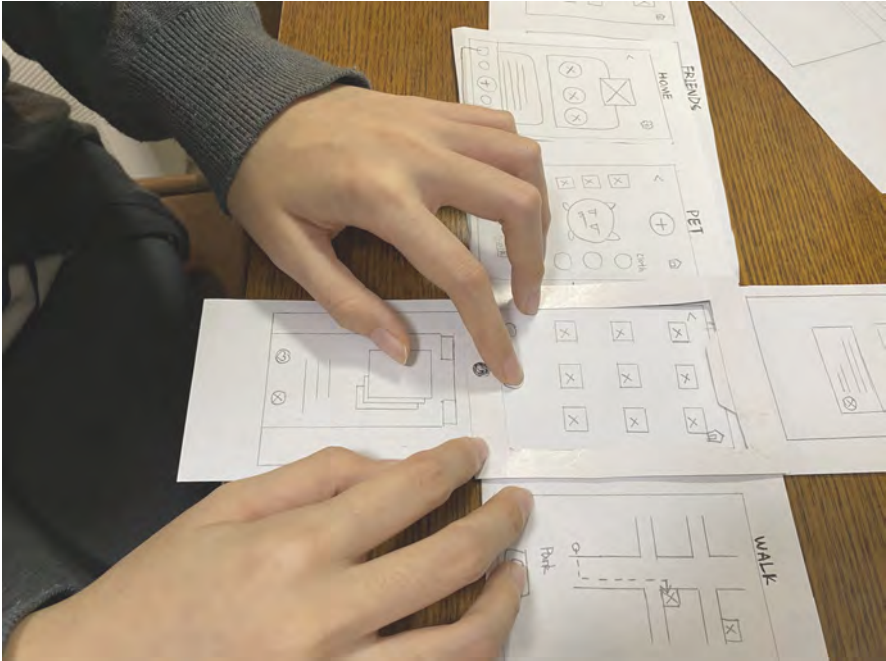


## 4. PRELIMINARY WIREFRAME





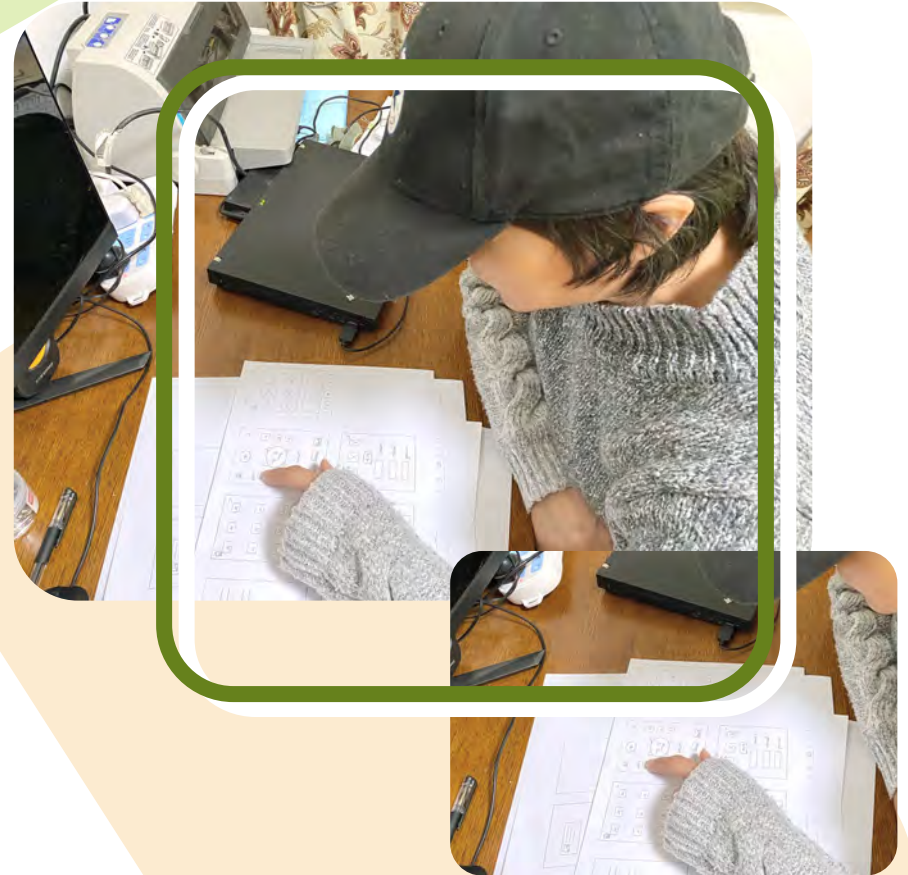
# 5. PAPER MODEL TEST



## 6. FEEDBACK

### Feedbacks

1. The icon is too large to display on the mobile phone
2. There are too many words in the welcome interface, which makes users unable to grasp the key points. It is recommended to pay attention to font differentiation.





# 7. PROTOTYPE



PET

# FIND

## HOME

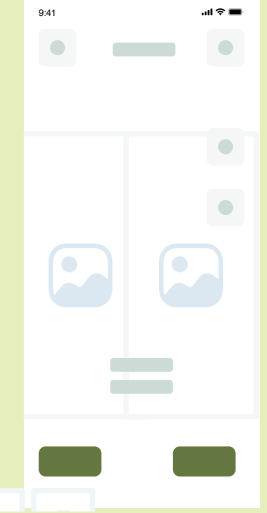
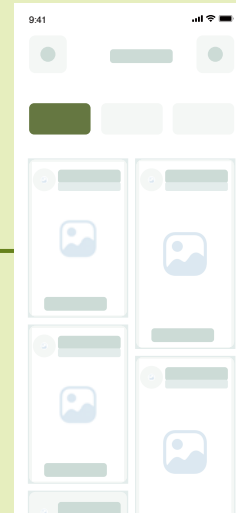
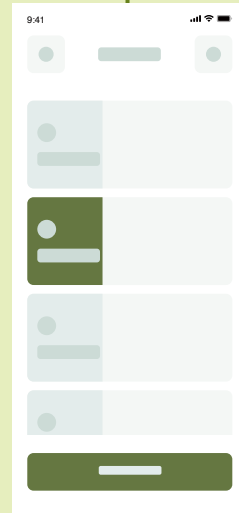
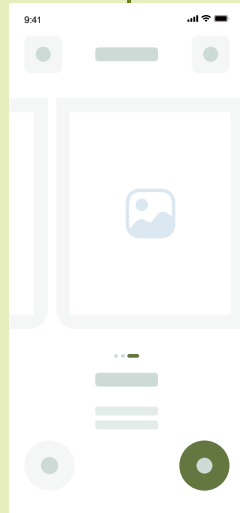
f-match

f-follow

f-moment

f-friends

f-friends2



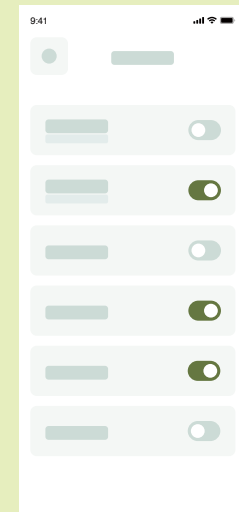
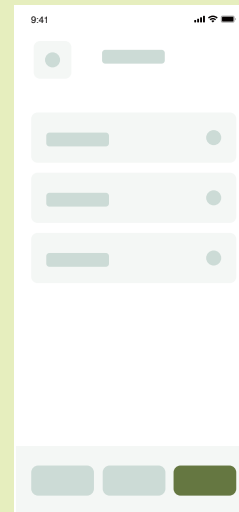
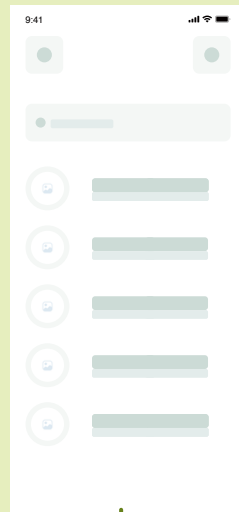
m-chat

m-chat2

m-information

my-Settings

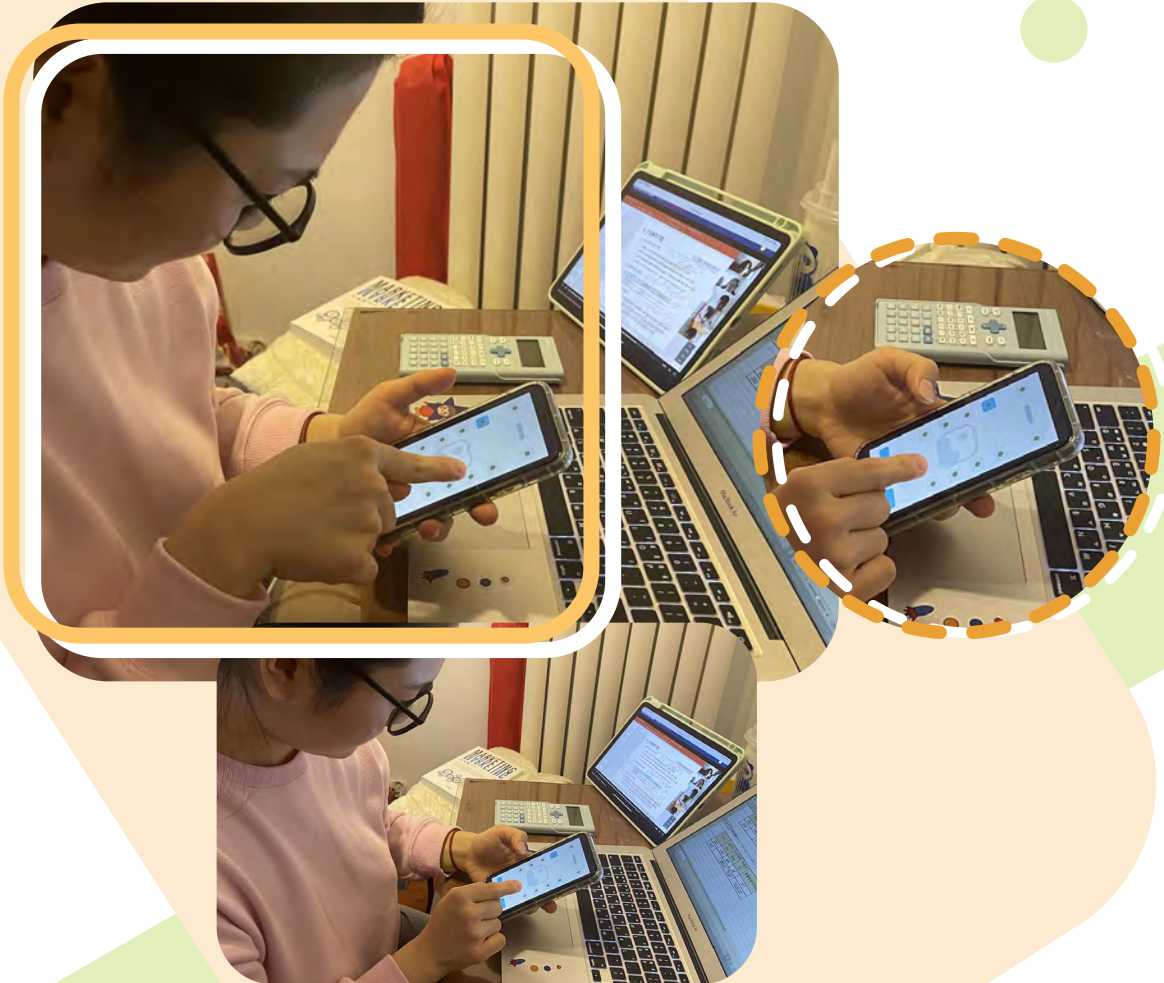
my-Profile



## MESSAGE

## MY

## 8. TEST FEEDBACK



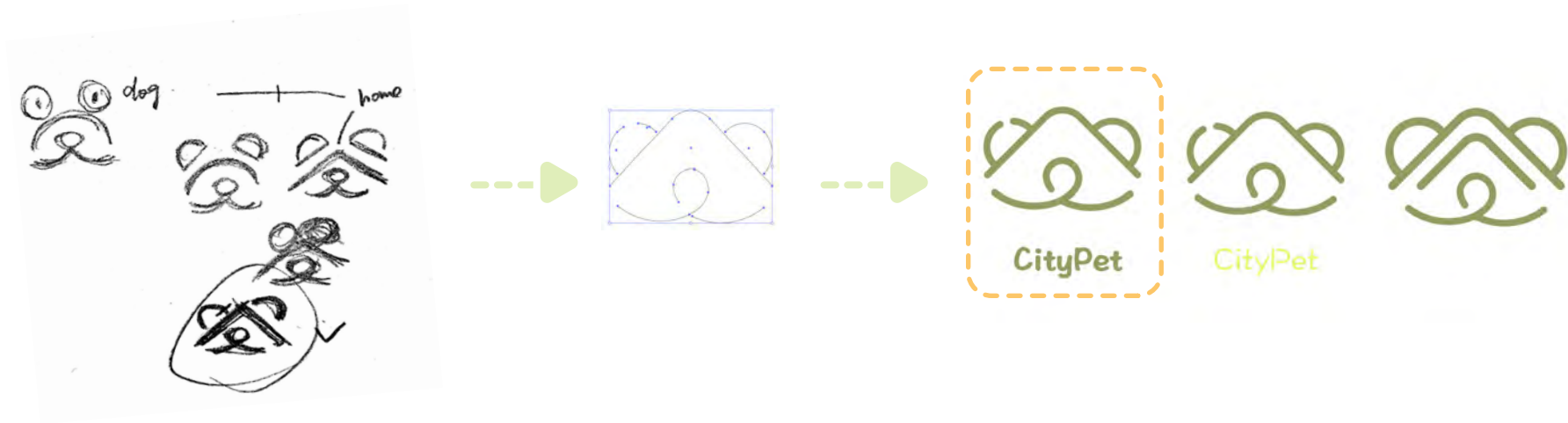
### Feedbacks

1. The interface is clear, enabling users to quickly find buttons.

2. Individual functions can be further deepened and improved. For example, walking pets can guide users to really go out and walk their pets.

# DESIGN SYSTEM

## 1. LOGO



CityPet



CityPet

The inspiration of my logo design is a pet dog in the city. I simplified the dog's eyes, retained semi-circular ears, and showed the nose and mouth through simple lines. The line between the nose and ears can not only represent the outline of the dog, but also show the square buildings of the city. I hope users can give virtual pets a home in the city.

## 2. COLOURS



Green  
4B5226



Green  
5A692F



Green  
66821C



Green  
BDD291



Green  
E7EFBF



Orange  
EAA033



Orange  
F4C168

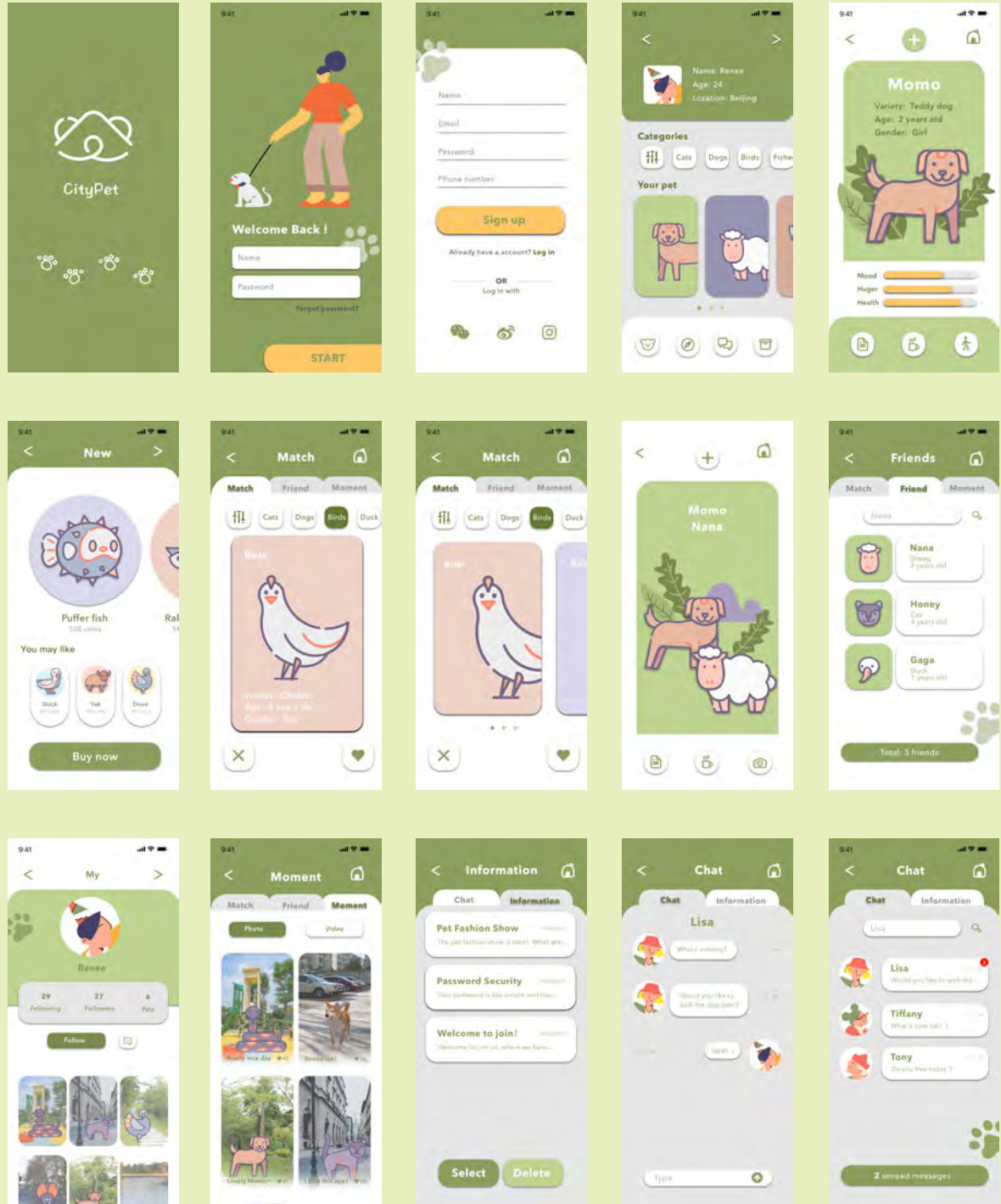


Orange  
FCEBD0



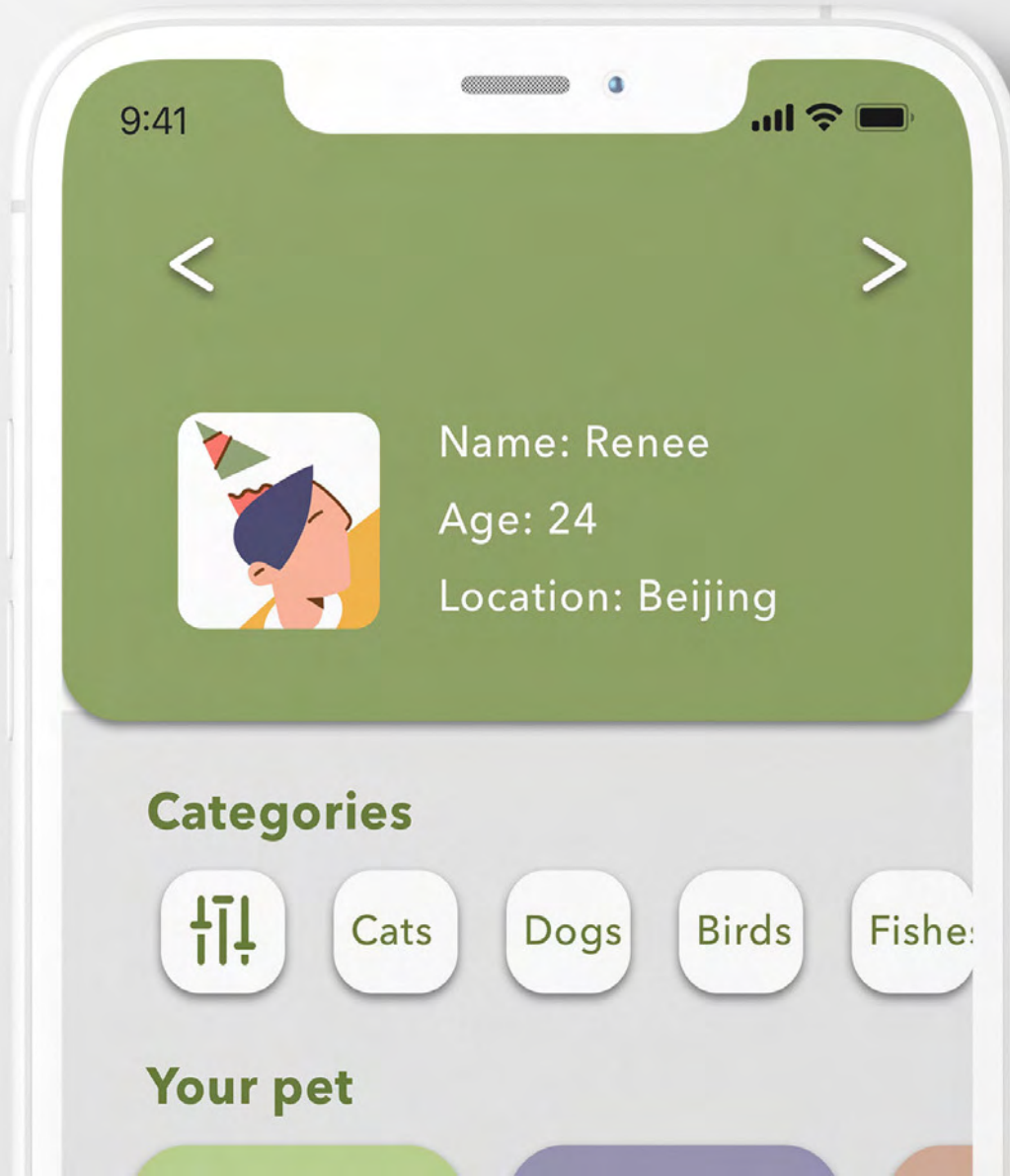
## ICONS

# 3. HIGH-FIDELITY PROTOTYPE





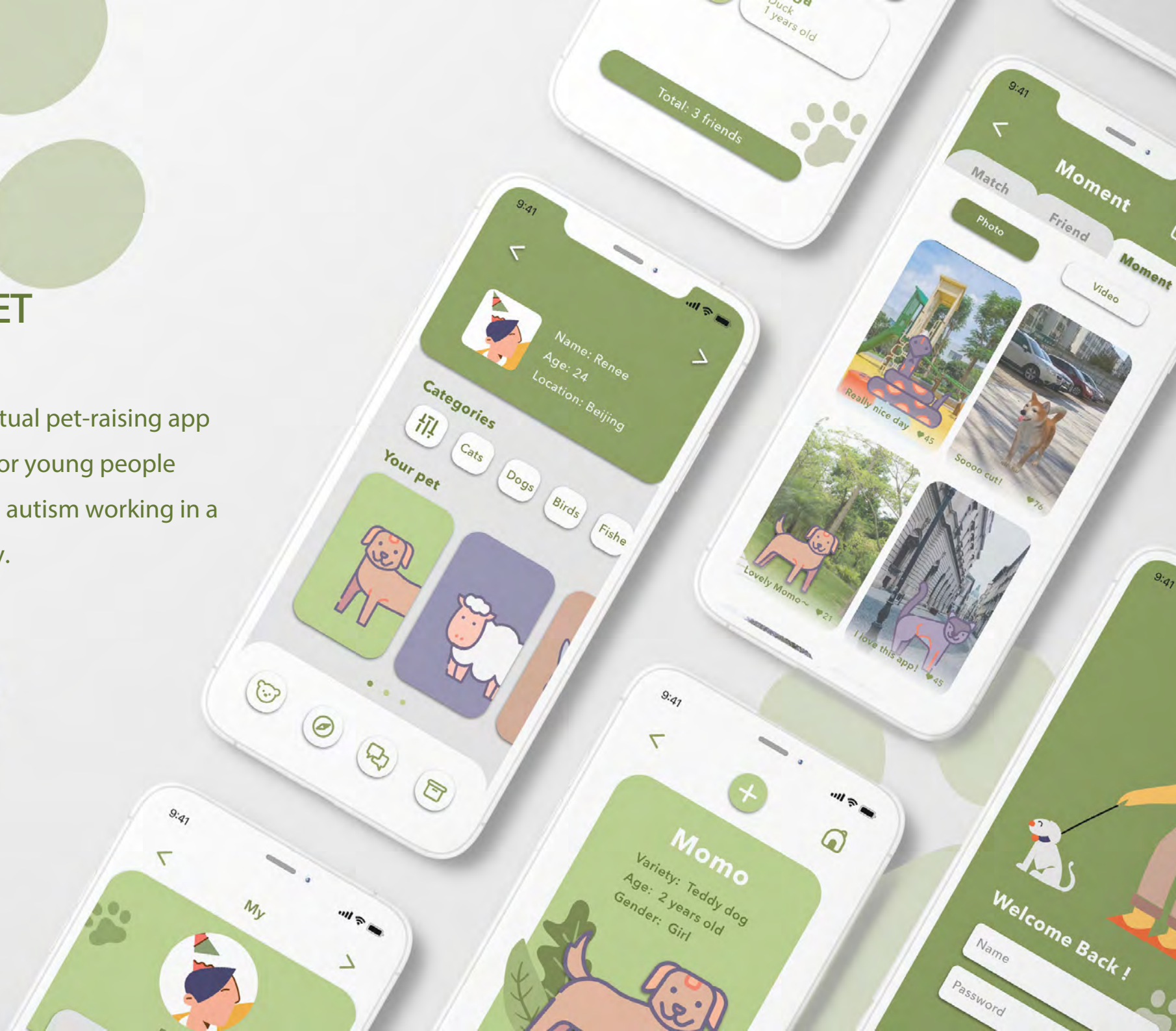
# OUTCOME





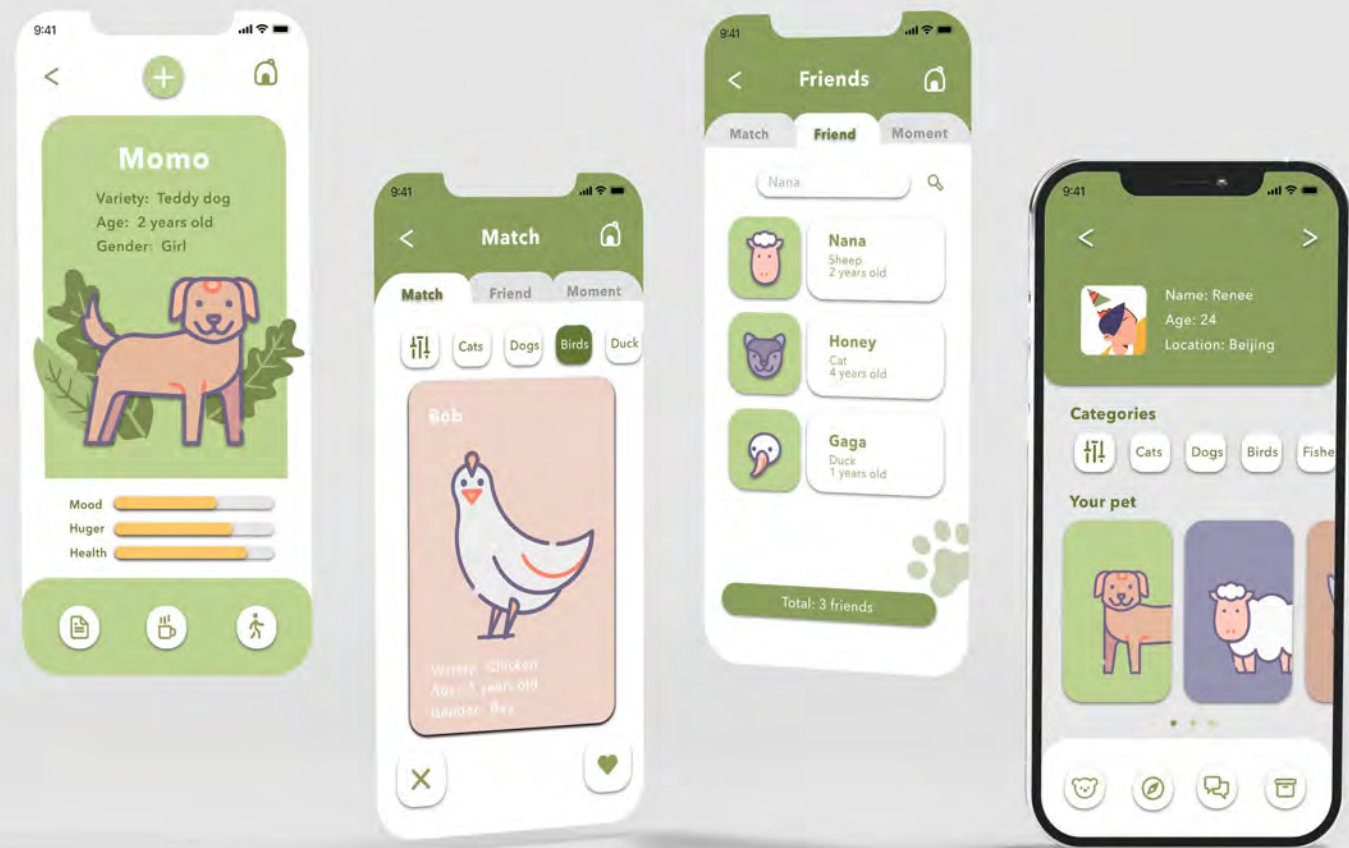
# CITY PET

This is a virtual pet-raising app designed for young people with urban autism working in a foreign city.



# KEY FUNCTION

The main functions of this app are pet, find, message and settings. Each main function contains many small branches.

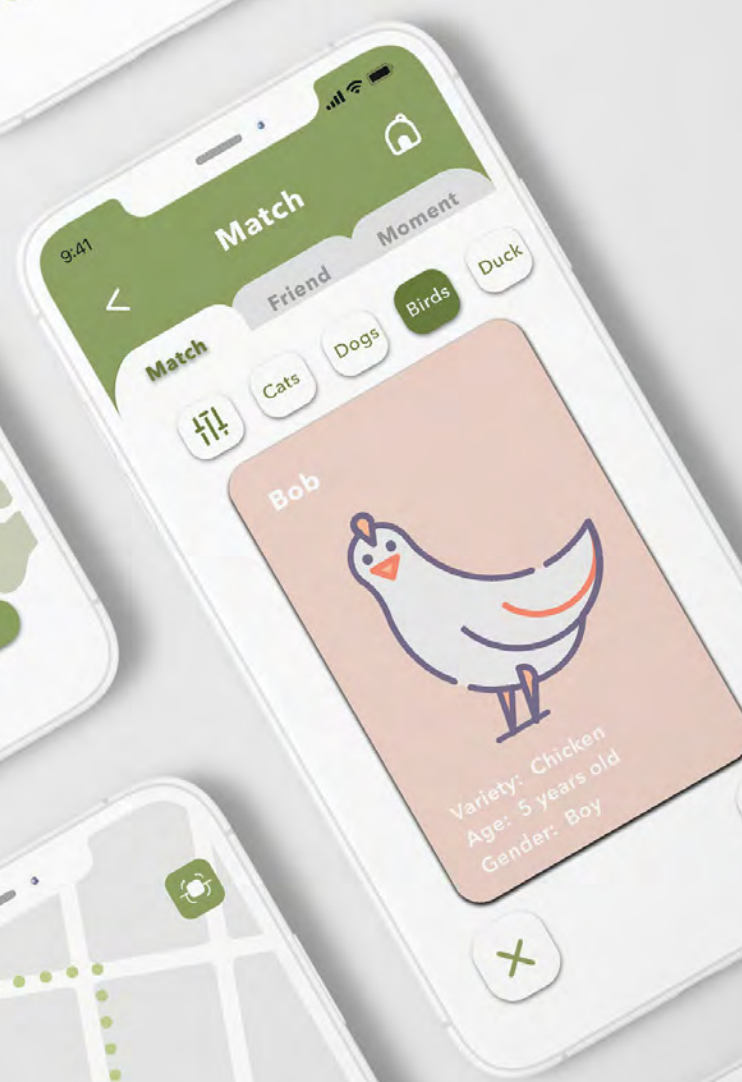
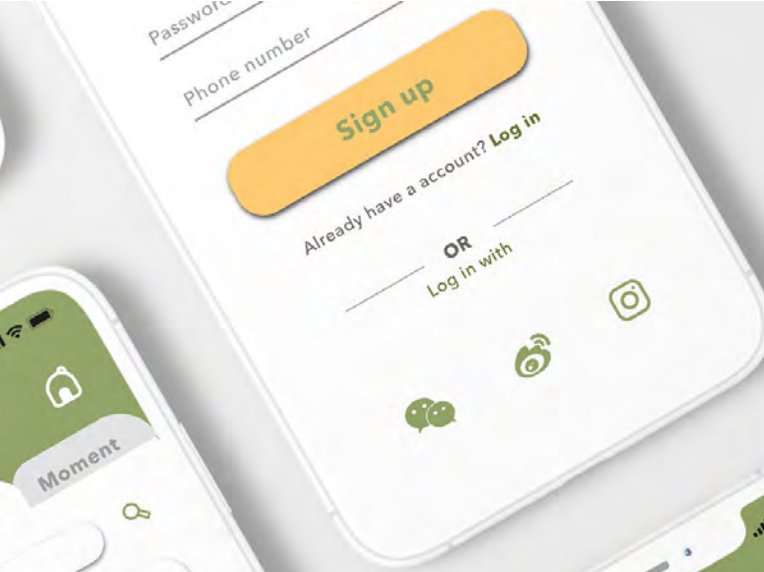




## KEY FUNCTION

There is an AR function in the pet walking function. Use this function to see how the virtual pet looks on the real street.







# Final Reflective Report

## Describe:

This semester is the last semester of my graduate study. Compared with the previous two semesters, there are not many classes in this semester, but leaves more time for our independent study. Through the study of the first two semesters, I have basically mastered how to complete a project completely. Therefore, this semester, I have gained a lot in the process of independent learning by using the previous knowledge.

First, we were asked to identify a topic at the beginning of the semester. I chose the topic of "urbanization" and further determined the scope of my research after consulting materials and literature works. In particular, I watched a French movie *Someone, Somewhere*, which tells a story about the loneliness and helplessness of two young people suffering from "urban autism" working in a big city. This unfamiliar word attracted me and led me to decide on a theme: 'Urban autism'.

Spanish newspaper *El País* predicted loneliness would become the "social plague" of the 21st century. Urban autism is not a real illness, but a psychological condition in which people in cities feel chronically lonely. Obviously, this is a new type of problem caused by the rapid urbanization process. Although the population in cities is growing, loneliness is getting worse. According to a 2019 survey of more than 2,000 Britons by the British Mental Health Foundation, a whopping 88 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds reported feeling lonely, far more than the over-55s. According to this data, I determined that the user group is young people. Then I began to understand the causes and harms of the issue, among which work pressure became an important reason, so I further determined the target group is 22-28 years old young office workers working in foreign land. Through literature review, I found that it was difficult for them to blend in at the beginning because they were in a foreign land, and they would feel nervous when they were in an unfamiliar place (Rapp, 2017), so it was difficult to make friends, which was the main factor leading to loneliness. When they are in this state, they experience intense loneliness, persistent negative emotions, and become more resistant to communication with others. Only by comprehensively understanding the needs and pain points of user groups can we design more specifically. Therefore, I have done a lot of preliminary research and obtained a lot of convincing data.

## Interpret:

After completing my preliminary research on urban autism, I came up with three insights.

The first insight is that I want to let more people know about 'urban autism', so that they can understand and care about their own and others' mental health. But in fact, this is a very common psychological problem, and simple propaganda and appeal cannot completely solve this problem. Therefore, after thinking about it, my design purpose shifted from focusing on the problem to solving the problem.

The second insight is to mitigate the effects of urban autism on young people in a more

holistic way, by alleviating loneliness and negative emotions. Through research and literature search, I found that travel, exercise, meditation and other methods can alleviate loneliness, so I focused on the theme of "meditation" at the beginning, because when people meditate, Positive psychological factors can be produced to reduce negative psychological factors (Shapiro, Schwartz and Santerre, 2002). However, after many tutorial discussions, my teachers and classmates gave me suggestions, hoping to solve the problem more directly rather than temporarily alleviate it. As a designer, I should not only care about the superficial problems, but also find and solve the core of the deep problems. Therefore, after re-thinking, I decided to change a way of thinking, face the key to the problem and solve the problem.

This was my third insight, and I decided to focus my work on how to connect the user community. Then after the questionnaire, I found that most young people think that not being listened to is more terrible than being alone, that is to say, the main factor for them to feel lonely is the lack of friends to communicate with in the city. Through further investigation, I found that the loneliest moment for them is when they walk on the road at night and see the lights on in every house. That is to say, they long for a corner of their own in this strange city and a kind of psychological sustenance and companionship. Therefore, how to relieve their loneliness psychologically and make friends are the focus of my work.

## **Evaluate:**

Through preliminary primary and secondary research, I have determined what is the focus of my current work. Then I made a user model, PACT analysis chart, Personas and Empathy Map based on the survey data, which enabled me to more clearly identify the needs and pain points of users. Among them, social needs and psychological needs are the two most urgent needs of users.

In terms of social needs, I first downloaded and used several well-known social apps, such as Tinder and Tantan. To be honest, my personal experience is not very good, because these social apps have many people's purpose is not just social. Then I interviewed some users who said they had such a bad experience too. Therefore, I think this kind of social app with strong purpose is not suitable for target groups. How to carry out natural social communication is my next step to think about, for example, to meet friends in activities or games.

In addition, as strangers, they are full of strangeness to this city. How can users quickly get familiar with this city? Traveling is the most direct and fast way to let them know the city more comprehensively.

Therefore, I decided to combine the three aspects, social, pet and travel together and explore an appropriate expression to present it.

## **Plan:**

Based on the above research and thinking, I have two ideas about the expression of the final work.

My first idea is to make an interactive animation installation. The protagonist is a pet snail, which can interact with users, and exhibit it in various places in the city and organize some

offline activities. In this way, users can not only feel the psychological comfort brought by pets, but also meet some friends in the exhibition. However, due to budget and COVID-19, I had to give up this idea.

Young people in the Internet age are very dependent on mobile phones, so my idea 2 is to design a virtual pet social app to help people get rid of the "urban autism". The core content of the app is pets, social contact and tourism, which enables users to experience the happiness of social contact and tourism while raising virtual pets.

The app is divided into three main functions. The first is pet raising. Users can let their pets work during the day, and the gold earned can be used to buy food or clothes. The purpose of the "work" function is to let the user feel that when he is at work, his pet is also accompanying him to work, so that the user can have empathy and make his psychological accompanying effect.

The second function is to walk the pet. Users need to walk the pet according to the place they want to go. The App will display the map navigation system to help users reach the destination. Upon arrival, THE 3D image of the pet can be scanned onto the ground with AR technology to interact with the pet. At the same time, if there are other pets around, your pet will play with them, which enables users as owners to get to know each other and achieve offline social interaction.

The third function is chat and socializing. Since pets can make friends with each other, users can get to know their owners through their pets. I've also designed games that allow users to meet new people.

I think the highlight of my app design is the combination of the three elements, which can make people feel bright. Then there is the use of AR technology, at first I did not think of to design with AR, I thought about just limiting it to mobile maps, let users never leave home can virtual travel. But my teacher advised me to do some more offline social, so I put the two way social into online and offline and AR technology is used to display 3D pet image. However, as I have never been exposed to AR technology before, learning and making AR pet models in a short time is indeed a very challenging thing. In the future, the real world and the virtual world will be more and more integrated. As designers, I should also strive to learn new technologies and design techniques to adapt to the changes and progress of society.

After completing the final design, I am once again familiar with the complete design process, research, user model, ideas and the final design work presented. In the future design work, I will remember my teacher often stressed the words "ideas, ideas, ideas!" She made me understand that the idea is the most important thing in design, and I will adhere to this concept and design more creative and practical works.

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