

PhD studentship (Full-time)

Institution	Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
School	School of Design
Supervisors	Principal supervisor: Dr Roberto Podda (XJTLU) Co-supervisor: Dr Alessandro Cece (XJTLU) Co-supervisor: Dr Fei Chen (UoL)
Application Deadline	Open until the position is filled
Funding Availability	Funded PhD project (world-wide students)
Project Title	A Morphotypological investigation of Chinese "New Towns" for harmonized remodelling. The case of "One City-Nine Towns" project.
Contact	Please email roberto.podda@xjtlu.edu.cn (XJTLU principal supervisor's email address) with a subject line of the PhD project title. The principal supervisor's profile is linked here: https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/staff-details/staff/roberto-podda

Requirements:

The candidate should have a first class or upper second class honours degree, or a master's degree (or equivalent qualification), in Architecture.

Evidence of good spoken and written English is essential. The candidate should have an IELTS score of **6.5 or above**, if the first language is not English. This position is open to all qualified candidates irrespective of nationality.

Degree:

The student will be awarded a PhD degree from the University of Liverpool (UK) upon successful completion of the program.

Funding:

The PhD studentship is available for three years subject to satisfactory progress by the student. The award covers tuition fees for three years (currently equivalent to RMB 99,000 per annum). It also provides up to RMB 16,500 to allow participation at international conferences during the period of the award. The scholarship holder is expected to carry out the major part of his or her research at XJTLU in Suzhou, China. However, he or she is eligible for a research study visit to the University of Liverpool up to six months, if this is required by the project.

Project Description:

1. Abstract

According to a rigorously Morphotypological and therefore non-stylistic approach, the research project aims to investigate the "New Towns" phenomenon developed during the massive urban expansion in China outlined by the 10th Five-Year Plan. This is in light of the continuous revisions of successive plans and their alleged failure due to the country's rapidly oscillating population, the current economic slowdown and the diversification of the construction industry. The research will focus on the Shanghai area and the "One City Nine Towns project" (promoted by Shanghai Mayor Huang Ju in 2001/02). The investigation above, starting from the analysis of the case studies, intends to highlight their generative morphogenetic processes to develop a specific re-generative meta-planning theory on which it will be possible to base future operational actions for the reconfiguration of the "New Towns" urban territory.

2. Research Background

In the early years of the 21st century, the Government of the People's Republic of China embarked on a bold mission, unveiling a visionary plan to construct 20 new cities annually for the subsequent two decades. This initiative led to the development of approximately 400 new cities by 2020, as documented by Fang and Yu (2016) and Shepard (2015). This transformative process has wrought profound alterations in the interplay between central cities and their surrounding environs. Additionally, it marks a transition from an erstwhile landscape characterized by scattered industrial satellite towns, predominantly devoted to rural agricultural pursuits, to one distinguished by the emergence of suburban New Towns. These developments contribute significantly to the evolution of a coherent global city-region. (Wu 2016).

As He and Qian (2017) illuminated in their comprehensive overview of the academic discourse about urban China, one central theme revolves around the intricate interplay between the extraordinary and the commonplace. In this context, the 'One City Nine Towns' project is distinguished by its 'themed' cities (The Chinese City, The English City, The Scandinavian City, The Spanish City, The Canadian City, The Dutch City, The German City, The Italian City) stands out as a prominent exemplar of the quest for cultural fusion between the East and the West, an aspiration that often carries an "exotic" allure.

Today, the economic landscape and prospects have undergone profound changes, necessitating a thoughtful response to the intricate challenge of managing and potentially divesting or regenerating an extensive inventory of structures. This challenge unfolds against the backdrop of shifting economic conditions, a rapid evolution in the nation's population, and the evolving dynamics of the construction industry.

Addressing this issue necessitates adopting a revised "cosmopolitan approach", which facilitates the comprehension of how distinct Chinese attributes coalesce with Global characteristics (Pow, 2012).

In light of this scenario, the research endeavour commences with a detailed examination of concrete cases. Its primary objectives are to delineate the morphogenetic characteristics

inherent to the contemporary "New town" in China and to proffer analytical and theoretical tools for re-design, re-using and re-generation. These hypotheses consider the delicate equilibrium between the imperatives of modernization and the profound regard for tradition.

3. Objectives and Research Questions

The research proposal is based on the morphogenetic methodology, centred on the theoretical foundations born in the Italian school of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s on which the international morphogenetic actual discipline is informed. This approach emphasizes an interdisciplinary and multicultural perspective and draws inspiration from historical experiences of urban design and regeneration. The Italian approach to urban design has always revolved around the delicate balance between tradition and innovation (Riondino, 2014). It departs from the international language promoted by the Modern Movement, respecting different cultural and geographical identities and proposing a new form of modernity adaptable to the context (Tafuri, Dal Co 1977). Among the protagonists of this Italian approach are Saverio Muratori, Giuseppe Samonà, Ludovico Quaroni, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Aldo Rossi and a second generation of architects and urban planners such as Vittorio Gregotti, the architect of the Pujiang project, one of the case studies. In the 1960s and 1970s, these professionals initiated extensive urban studies that integrated aspects of history, morphology and urban typology. During this era, urban history coexisted with morphological and typological studies, giving rise to what could be termed an operational analysis method centred on the reconstruction of a city's formative and transformative processes (Muratori 1966). This approach is deeply rooted in the "urban morphogenetic" concept, with the primary objective of reconstructing a city's formative and transformative processes. On this interdisciplinary basis, the research project seeks to examine primarily the newly founded cities of China. The aim is to understand the processes that have shaped their urban form. To this end, the research project involves surveys, literature analysis, data collection and qualitative analysis using private archives and municipal sources. The ultimate goal is to create an objective understanding of urban development, corroborated by graphical and analytical representations, and to develop a specific theory on the "Morphogenetic of the New Chinese Town" closely related to the selected case studies. The aim is to analyze, understand, systematize, compare and, based on this, propose new processes and theories to support future urban interventions and regeneration.

4. Research Methods and Approach

The research method is the "Operative Historical and Contextual Readings as a base for the future modifications" (Muratori 66).

In the words of Vittorio Gregotti: "These contextual readings aim to identify (urban) materials or systems of aggregation of them, even very complex ones, as long as they are sufficiently stable to be presented according to recognisable figures and then intentionally manipulated according to new structures capable and new meanings" (V. Gregotti 1966).

In this short sentence, Gregotti clarifies the Method and Objectives:

5. Method:

To identify (urban) materials, or systems of aggregation of them, even complex ones, as long as they are stable enough to be presented according to recognisable figures.

To this end, the research project involves selecting case studies, surveys, literature, data collection, and qualitative analysis using private and municipal sources to create an objective understanding of urban development, corroborated by graphical and analytical representations.

6. Objectives:

Develop a specific theory on the 'Morphogenetic of the New Chinese Town to make "urban materials" intentionally manipulable according to new structures, capable of providing new meanings for future urban regenerations.

Based on these principles, the investigation aims to explore the potential of architectural design at the urban scale as an actor in determining urban morphogenesis within settlement systems.

Step1) Observation

Consequently, we intend to set the discourse from the general concept of Morphology as an investigation of the laws of form and the modification of form from its structure and, in the case of urban morphology, from the analysis of settlement systems taken in their essence of dynamism. Understanding morphology is thus not a mere cataloguing or organisational rule of forms in their fixity but the observation and understanding of the confirmatory rules on which states and their mutations are based.

Step2) Discovery

In light of the morphogenetic concepts, the candidate will investigate the settlement forms of some specific case studies of new Chinese foundation cities. The analysis will run through the various levels and factors of configuration in search of requirements of generality that can serve as applicable cognitive paradigms for a theorisation with a sufficient degree of abstraction to be applied for control and prediction purposes.

Step3) Invention

The main effort will be to arrive, through the study of the documentary sources of the projects and the concrete observation of the phenomena, at a synthetic and syntactic diagrammatic translation of the interpretative models of the processes of formation and transformation of complex urban phenomena in their "characteristic form" configuration. So, starting from the specific Chinese case studies, the doctoral research theorises morphogenetic trajectories to predict the phenomena of form mutation from the genetic constants of settlement systems through conversion thresholds and transmutation of forms into degrees of the following scale according to the study of paradigmatic transformations.

Step4) Creation

This body of theories and operational models will be disseminated and made available to the scientific community to be tested in reality. It will thus be able to offer an implementation of terms for understanding the urban phenomena of the 'new Chinese foundation towns'. Interpretations of the physical principles of proximity, the civic and collective value of urban

spaces, the importance of public buildings as symbols of community, and the social and functional mix, considering the concepts of historical and environmental permanence as elements that hold the past, present together and future.

For more information about doctoral scholarship and PhD programme at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), please visit

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/global/entry-requirements/>

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/global/fees-and-scholarship>

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are advised to email Roberto.podda@xjtlu.edu.cn (XJTLU principal supervisor's email address) the following documents for initial review and assessment (please put the project title in the subject line).

- CV
- Two formal reference letters
- Personal statement outlining your interest in the position
- Certificates of English language qualifications (IELTS or equivalent)
- Full academic transcripts in both Chinese and English (for international students, only the English version is required)
- Verified certificates of education qualifications in both Chinese and English (for international students, only the English version is required)
- PDF copy of Master Degree dissertation (or an equivalent writing sample) and examiners reports available