## PhD in Architecture. History and Design

### Research Title: URBAN REGENERATION IN CHINA

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<th>Funded by</th>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>Gustavo Ambrosini, Michele Bonino (contact person: <a href="mailto:michele.bonino@polito.it">michele.bonino@polito.it</a>), Filippo De Pieri, Antonio De Rossi, Giovanni Durbiano</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://watersheds.polito.it/">http://watersheds.polito.it/</a> website of one of the recent activities of the research team</td>
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### Context of the research activity

In the last decade, the Chinese government has strongly pushed the establishment of innovation clusters and the creation of research centers and incubators over the country. Besides, the investments provided to the applied research are increasing year by year, revealing a growing bond between Research and Public Institutions and Administrations.

In line with this trend, South China University of Technology (SCUT) and Politecnico di Torino (Polito) have been successfully cooperating for years: see for instance the Bachelor Double Degree in Architecture, the joint Exhibition “Watersheds. A narrative of urban recycle” at the 2013 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Biennale, and most notably the project SESE Sino-Eu Doctoral School (2013-2017) in the framework of the SEEEP/Cluster Consortium. From this background, the two universities have decided to share their strengths towards an applied-research-based initiative.

**Torino China Lab** is a joint project between Politecnico di Torino and South China University of Technology, to be opened in May 2015 (start-up phase from November 2014). The Laboratory is designed to be a multidisciplinary platform in Guangzhou (Guangdong Province, South of China) where Research, Education, Industry and Urban design can combine their best skills, services and resources. The main issue of the Lab is to provide expertise, consulting and design services to real projects in Guangdong. Some Phd Students from both Universities are already involved in the project, collaborating to the Lab activities and developing their research in the field of studies on Chinese Urbanization.

### Objectives

Within this context, applied research will be based on 3 principles:

- **Urban regeneration** – the starting point of the Lab – as an inclusive process, able to attracting different disciplines and putting them into a system (an aspect that is mainly lacking in China, where a rigid breakdown of the design process is in use);
- **Design as a negotiation**, capable of leading to an agreement around the forms (with the possibility of influencing the innovation of processes and governance);
The key research-question is whether - and according to which processes - is it possible for a critical knowledge produced by academic research to become ‘performative’, and stimulate real effects on the Chinese urban environment. Engaging and analysing real cases of urban regeneration in Guangdong, PhD students will run a scientific evaluation of some values of the project, and the priorities according to which they act in different contexts. Integrating design work and research will permit to figure out how urban regeneration acts differently in the symbolic exchange and the bureaucratic exchange. How the project will produce knowledge through successive cycles of social conventions. How the project will produce effects, by calculating the implications of its own deviations. And also how it can collectively build narratives thus allow a social identification in the new places of transformation.

Some methodological notes. The research will contribute to the incremental construction of a sino-european work team, able to gradually adapt during the collaboration. It will be based on a necessarily dialogical operational model, and focused on the need of a know-how flow from one country to the other. The strong emphasis on the processes makes it clear that the collaboration would not be aimed at formalising solutions, but would be effective on a prior level: starting processes, accompanying them, targeting new ways to operate in a context such as that of China, where many things relating to urban regeneration are happening (with regard to dimensions and characteristics) for the first time. To these ends, the two operations implemented most effectively will be of a narrative nature – narrating exemplary stories - and of an organisational nature – making operative the energies available. That is an important resource with respect to a research that will deal with the lack of available sources in China, the language barriers and very different working traditions: a method which usually is conceived as scientific will become rather effectively investigative, midway between reportage and inquiry.

Skills and competencies for the development of the activity

Phd Students to be involved in this program are expected to have an international CV, to prove their skill to work within a global environment. In order to take part to the Lab’s applied researches, both theory/history or design oriented competencies are appreciated. The knowledge of Chinese language is not compulsorily required, but it would be a valuable qualification. Instead, the availability to spend 8 to 12 months in South China along their PhD program is a basic requirement for all the applicants. Financial support for flights and visas will be provided by the Lab (budged to be reconfirmed Nov. 2016). The subject of the research and its methodology will be agreed between the student and the supervisor.