



**Politecnico  
di Torino**

## **Honors Thesis**

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**Master of Science in Architecture Construction City**

**Abstract**

**Chinese countryside: Yangtze River Delta.  
A Typo-Morphological approach in Hufu zhen**

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The research carried out during this Double Degree Master thesis deals with the study of morphology and building typology in Chinese countryside, particularly, the Water towns of the Yangtze River Delta.

This thesis, like a stool, is based on 3 legs: Chinese Countryside, urban Morphology and building Typology. The first three chapters deal with analysis of Chinese countryside and its transformations from the ancestral to the contemporary period; the study of the history of urban morphology and building typology, applied to the Chinese context; the development of new theories such as the study of Water towns as four elements (water canals, bridges, buildings and streets).

A multiscale and multitemporal analysis is carried out on the Yangtze delta, which identifies 3 characteristic elements: the water towns, the waterways and the railway system. These elements played an important role in the development of the design proposal. The last chapters before the project's one are based on the typological and morphological study of four "cities of water": Tongli, Wu zhen, Zhouzhuang and Hufu zhen, having a common urban morphology and similar architectural typologies.

The persistence of Covid-19 pandemic has entailed strong limits and new opportunities for this research project. It impeded on-site analysis and limited them to virtual inspections through satellite images and street views. At the same time, this allowed me to study Chinese urban morphologies from an innovative point of view and to develop the project in an original way.

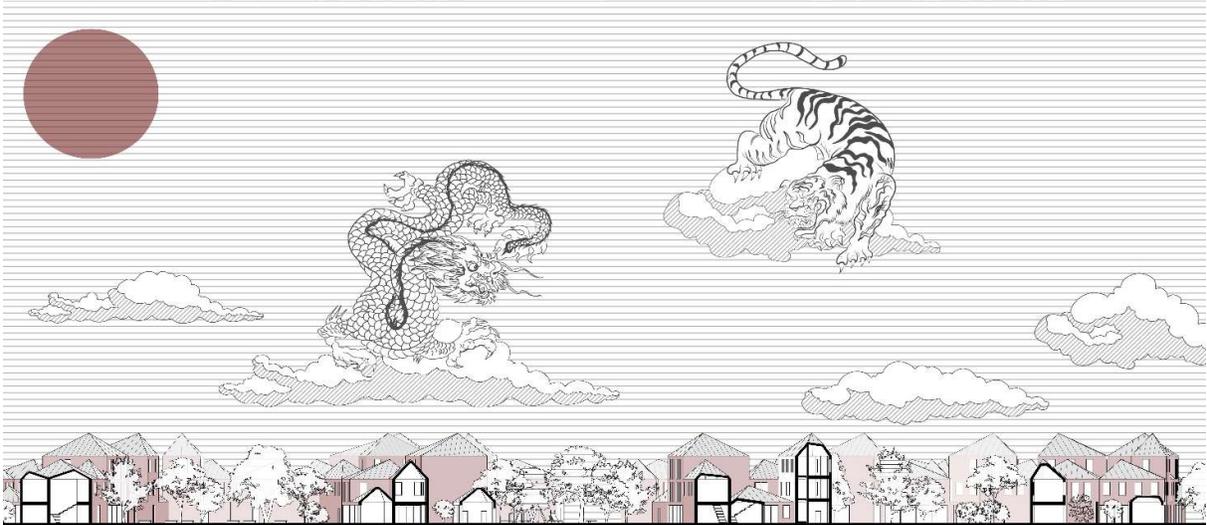
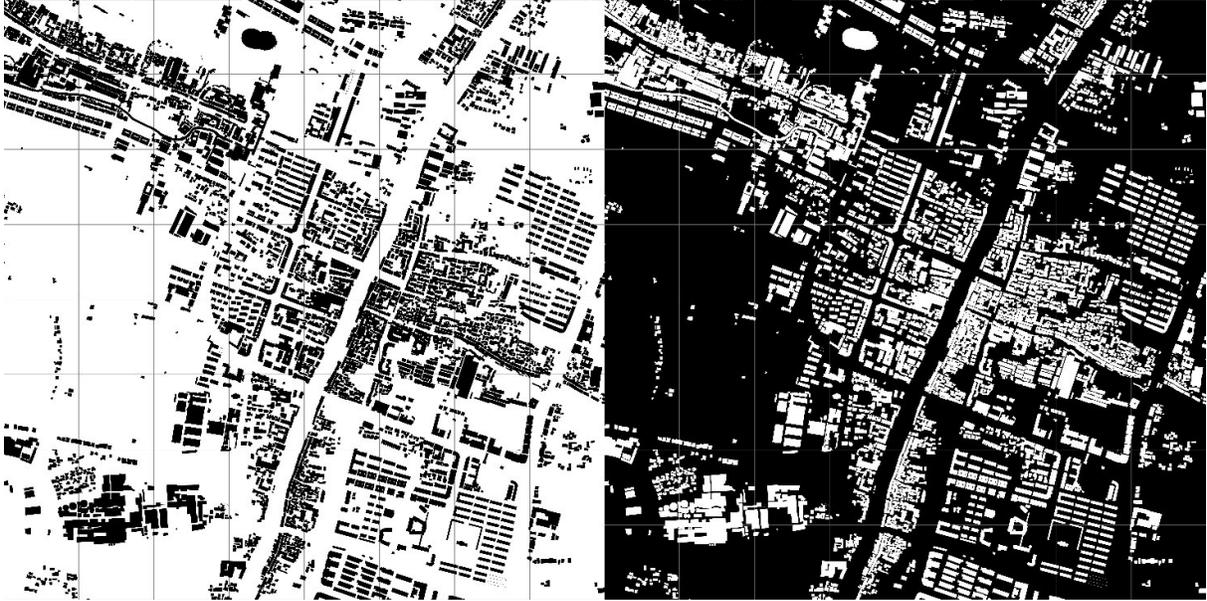
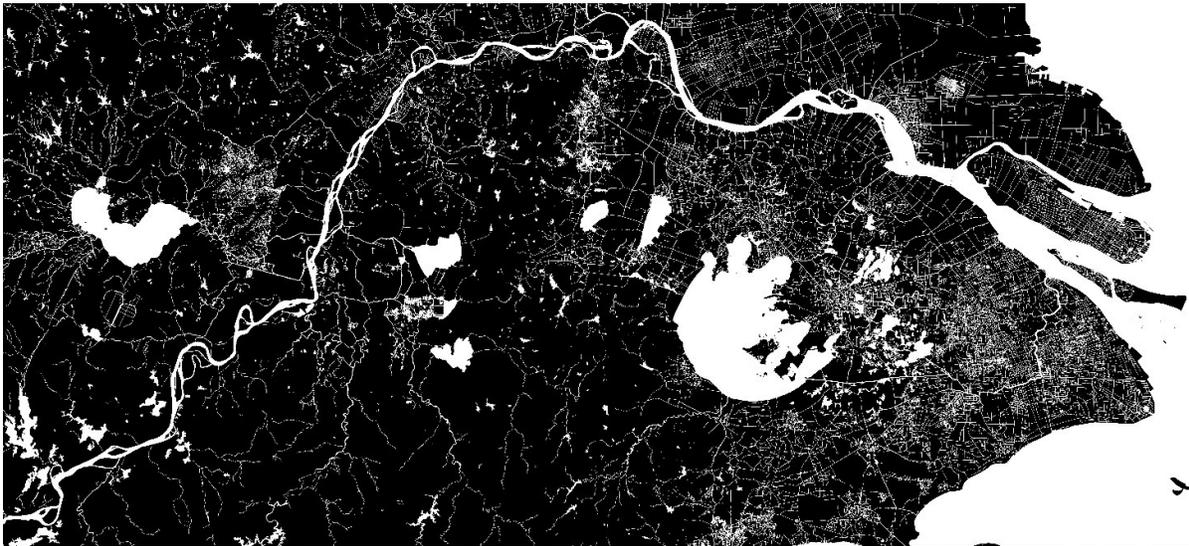
This thesis proposes the typo-morphological research approach in Chinese urban design, as a mean to maintain local cultural identity in the era of rapid globalization. Typo-morphology is a tool that can help to solve a common problem in Chinese cities that are congested by "placeless" architecture based on the "international-style". The rich and complex Chinese cultural history seems to be gradually excluded from its architectural representation.

This study does not limit itself to theoretical contemplation of urban morphologies and building typologies but extends it through them to the design of a district in Hufu zhen, a town in the Chinese countryside. It overcomes the current limits of urban grid, taking into consideration the identity of the place and the social identity of its inhabitants.

The post-Covid scenario allows us to imagine a phenomenon that was already partially taking place in China: the return to the countryside. In recent years, the Chinese government has started to encourage this, due to the exponential overpopulation of cities and in order to bring people and skills back to the countryside. The project is designed for the new Chinese middle class who wants to have a high quality of life, away from the city, but at the same time to work remotely or to commute to large cities.

In the following page: Yangtze River Delta – Morphological study of Wu zhen – Design's urban section

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