



**Politecnico
di Torino**

Honors Thesis

Master of Science in Architecture Construction City

Abstract

**Hybrid Forms on Hybrid Realities,
Characters and Design Proposal on the Chinese Rural-urban Continuum**

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July 2021

The voyage towards the realisation of this Thesis started a long way back and has crossed countless different routes. As in any voyage, the departure was full of expectations, but the realities encountered along the path led to results that were in part different from those expected. If initially the objective was to deal with the canonical rural world, the encounter with the Chinese reality, and in particular with the case study on which the project proposal was developed, revealed a completely different but extremely contemporary course. The few months spent in China helped to discover some dynamics that, because of Covid-19, were then deepened at a distance and on the basis of various and heterogeneous materials, in search of what are the main features of today's Chinese countryside.

In order to operate in a place, *transitional palimpsest* that is continuously altering, it becomes necessary to know not only its immobile present appearance but also its transition over time. However, this transition should not only be considered in its purely morphological aspects, but also in its historical, economic, cultural and obviously social dimensions. Through an in-depth study of these various and related general transitions, it has therefore been possible to get to know those contemporary Chinese territories defined as the *rural-urban continuum* which, as a result of recent intense rural urbanisation, have become the places where the conventional dichotomy between city and countryside blurs to create space for new hybrid mixed entities in all their characters.

Hufu zhèn, the town under investigation and on which the project proposal is developed at a distance, is inserted in this type of territory, a rural-urban landscape of Jiangsu Province in China. It is precisely the observation of this hybrid character that has led the research towards the formulation and application of analysis tools and approaches, both personal and not, useful for understanding first the phenomenon of urban-rural blurring and then the case study on which to act.

The analysis carried out led to some conclusions about the close correlation between different morphological patterns repeated throughout history and the society that inhabits them, and how the concepts of identity, community and rurality in their forms have evolved based on the same morphologies. After acquiring knowledge of the site, architectural and urban planning principles were sought to be used as the basis for an alternative design proposal for the future development of the town. The project proposal is therefore an alternative to the frequent standardised planning that has affected China in recent years, and is addressed in particular not only to today's rural inhabitants but also to China's upper classes, who are increasingly moving from the overcrowded cities to the countryside in search of a place with a greater sense of home and community; this is possible thanks also to the great infrastructural development that makes it possible to live in today's Chinese countryside while working in the city. The formulation of the design proposal was therefore based on successive analyses of the history and culture of the Chinese rural world and, specifically, on the principles that have been the foundation of

Chinese settlements over time such as the courtyard house typology and the water system as a guideline for human settlement.



IUD image, Xiancun urban village, village absorbed into Guangzhou, China, 2015.



Aerial view from Google Earth of the southernmost area of the Pudong New Area of Shanghai, contrast between the planned Nanhui New City and the spontaneous fields and villages in the nearby countryside, China, 2020.



Project masterplan for a possible future development of *Hufu zhèn* village, 2021.