



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

COURSE OF  
ARCHITETTURA COSTRUZIONE CITTÀ

*Abstract*

**THROUGH A BEIJING FRAGMENT**  
**The danwei of Textile Factory**

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July 2015

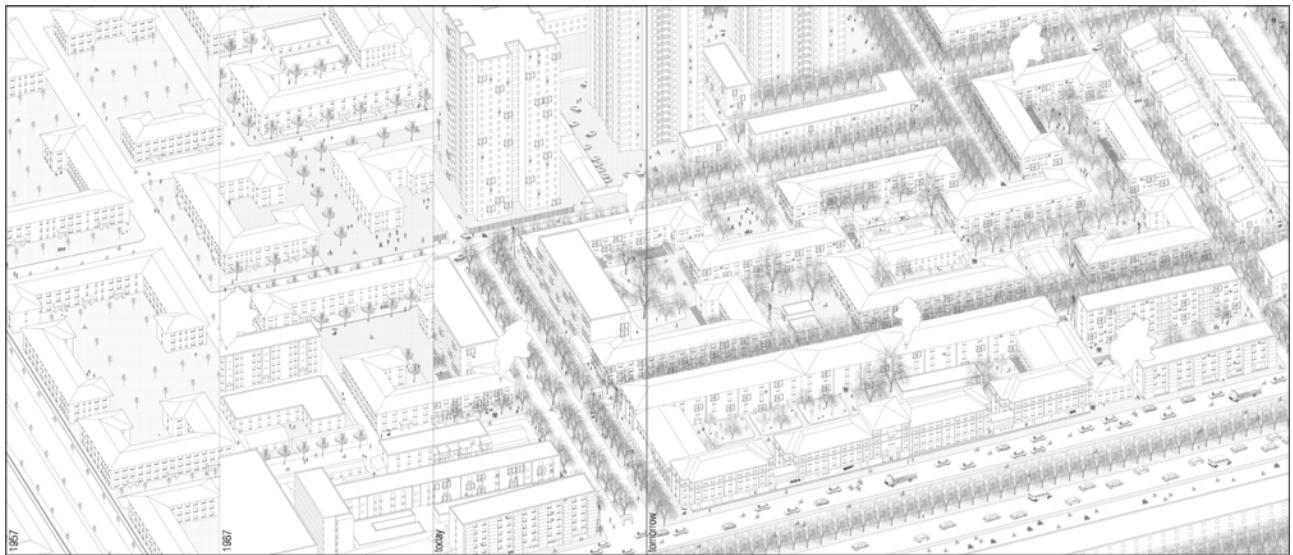
Beijing, meeting point of cultures, core of the East, a complex reality generated by contradictions and opposites that forced us to dive deeply inside the urban space, interpreting and representing it with a distortion of the classic tools.

The aims of our research are numerous: first, portraying the place to preserve its future memory; second, showing a possible methodology for other similar cases; third, focusing the architects and city planners' attention on the *danwei* model's great urban potential; fourth, questioning about hypothetical transformation scenarios originated by listening to the singular site and its inhabitants' stories.

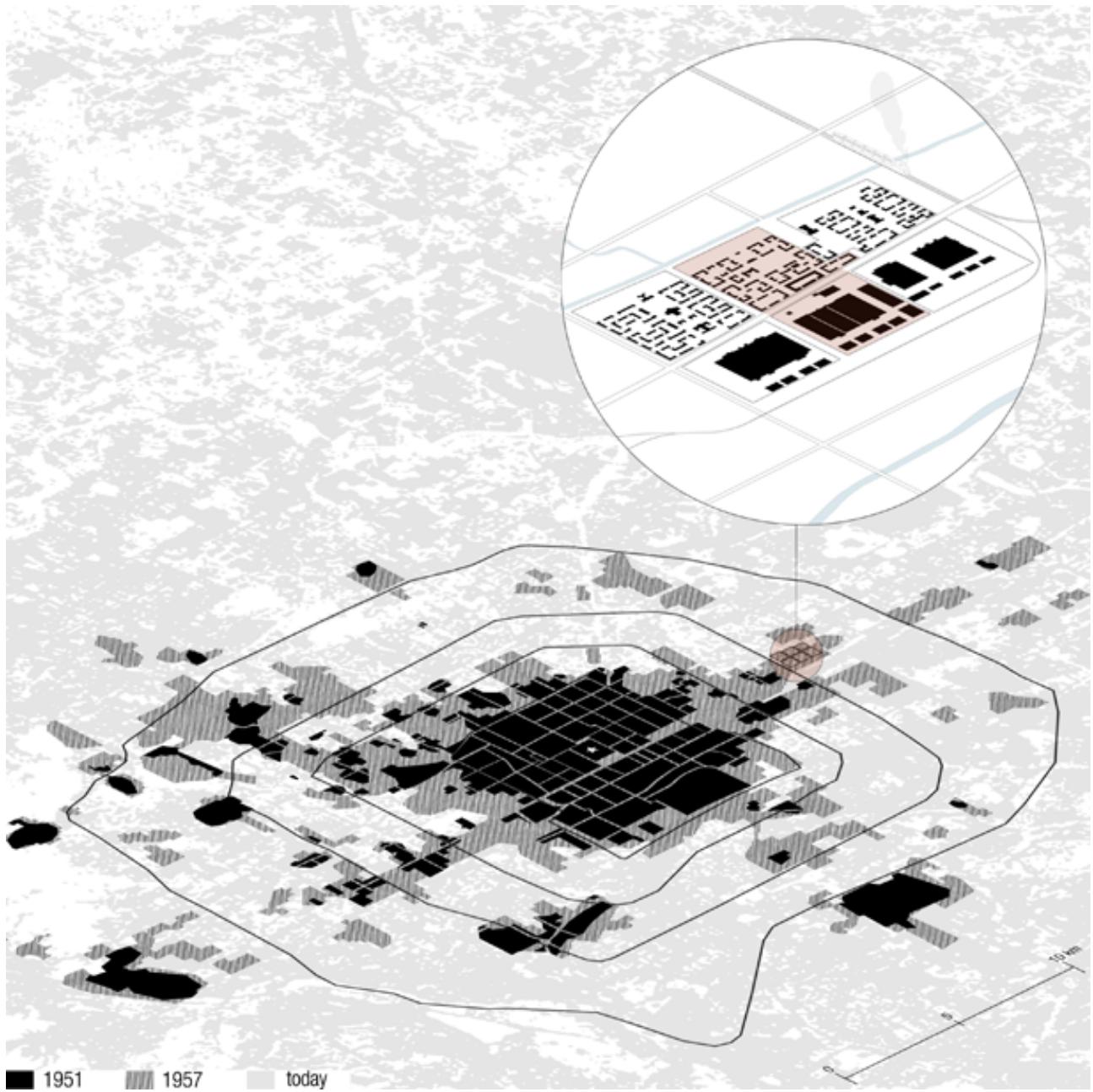
Industrial *danwei* from the maoist period - work units marked by an autarchic spirit - left unavoidable signs in the urban pattern: introverted spaces where workers could not only sleep, but make every gesture of their daily lives too and enjoy services offered by their own compound.

This model's born as a control system where all the details are expected and monitored top-down, but after the Cultural Revolution the first stratifications appear, and informal appropriations of the space start to sprout up.

Their value is linked to their "village" features: these areas were conceived by socialist experts to push for the integration of the crowd coming from the countryside; the new city workers consisted in groups of peasants, devoid of any urban experience background and deprived of their rural traditions and family networks. For this reason it was necessary to create a spatial frame in which social life, working activities and residential areas stay together.

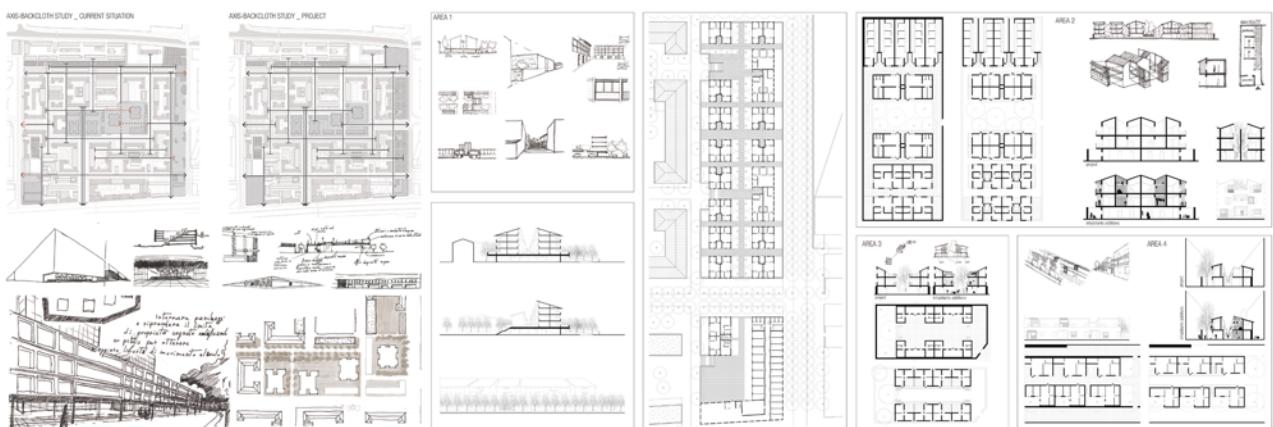


Nowadays these areas keep their great urban potentiality and form a widespread net of human scale spaces, a huge resource to decentralize Beijing services. We chosen the *danwei* of Cotton Textile Factory n.2, a heterogeneous reality rich of stimulus.



At first the role of the architect matches with the *flâneur's* one: you can narrate the city only if you get carried away and then re-emerge to fix some moments; you have to use multiple gazes, complementary instruments able to catch different hints: words, photos, videos, sketches.

During the next step the architect has to support the existing trends without altering them too much, leading the transformations, urban and architectural scale at the same time. We solved the urban scale problems first (practicability, big empty spaces, accesses) and then we achieved the architectural scale for some portions inside the pattern - thinking about the external edge, strong and clear, and the progressive intervention on three informal areas.



This thesis has been also selected for the EAM 2015 Competition  
*European Architectural Medals for the Best Diploma Projects*

Some of the thesis' drawings have been included in

- \_ M.Bonino and F.De Pieri, '*Beijing Danwei. Industrial Heritage and the Contemporary City*', Jovis 2015
- \_ M.Bonino, P.A.Croset e M.P.Repellino, '*Learning from places, as one of the tasks of Urban Design*', in *Urban Design* n.2
- \_ M.Bonino and F.De Pieri, '*Domesticating East Asian Cities*', in *Territorio* n.74

One of the representational instrument of the thesis site was a short video, presented for SHORT on WORK - global short video contest on contemporary work

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