

Suzhou City Portrait

Iuav School of Doctorate Studies

Palazzo Badoer, San Polo 2468, Venezia

25th-26th May 2020



Promoters:

Iuav School of Doctorate Studies and Suzhou University of Science and Technology (SUST), Xi'An Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU)

in collaboration with WHITR-AP Tongji, Department of Asian and North Africa Studies of Ca' Foscari University and URBES Joint research center Iuav CAUP-TJ

Motivation:

The **Suzhou City Portrait** conference comes as the latest event of an array of city portraits established within the Iuav School of Doctorate Studies since 2011. The year 2020 marks two significant occasions, the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relationships between Italy and the People's Republic of China and the 40th anniversary of the sisterhood agreement between the cities of Venice and Suzhou. The **Suzhou City Portrait** would be a unique opportunity to both draw a *city portrait* of Suzhou, as in the tradition of the Iuav School of Doctorate Studies, as much as a *cross portrait* of the two cities, intended as a medium to observe and relate, to comprehend and dialog. Bound by the mythical figure of explorer Marco Polo, the two famous water cities share a glorious past and together symbolize the relationships between the East and the West. Nowadays, both cities are facing contemporary challenges due to rapid times of globalization and are bearing common complex questions. The aim of the symposium is to explore the capacity of this ancient water city, a fragile but complex and globalized one, to cope with XXI century challenges.

The **Suzhou City Portrait** conference will take place across as an additional opportunity to provide a platform for exchange, discussion and an exhibition platform for young researchers who studied - or aims at getting a better understanding of - the city and territories of Suzhou, within the framework of relationships between

Suzhou and Venice. Interventions from different disciplinary fields are welcomed, in order to discover and analyze the Suzhounese metropolis from different perspectives.

This specific call is addressed to **young researchers**, who wants to participate to the Suzhou City Portrait conference with their own contributions.

The call proposes to reflect mostly on two main topics that strongly defines Suzhou and its territory: **Suzhou as a water city**, due to the pervasive presence of the water in the suzhouese landscape, and **Suzhou as a productive city**, and so the development and transformation of the city industrial system and economic base in the last few years. For this reason, the symposium is organized in two main sessions.

Two main sessions:

-Suzhou productive city:

Since the beginning of the Chinese economic reforms and the establishment of the YRD as a Special Economic Zone in 1995, the socio-economic structure of Suzhou has experienced radical changes that have had significant territorial effects. In the 1990s with the establishment of two large industrial parks, SND and SIP, a masterplan which envisioned the city expansion in following the metaphor "one body, two wings" (where the body was the historical city and the wings the two new industrial areas), Suzhou evolved into a modern *ville industrielle*. The impressive economic and demographic growth that Suzhou has been experimenting in the past XX years, is closely linked to the new industrialist vocation of both the city and its territory. A vocation that has allowed a population growth, and the construction of territorial imaginaries revolving around the metaphor of the factory city, as in the Modern Era. Nowadays, in another phase of transition of the Chinese economy, with the end of the "Cheap China" one, and the implementation of new environmental protection policies, the city's economy is increasingly targeting high-tech and high-value-added industry, tourism and knowledge economy. Within this frame, which spatial and territorial implications this new transition will entail? What socio-spatial effects do the new economies rooted in the city and erode the local industrial vocation?

-Suzhou water city:

Suzhou, as an ancient Chinese capital located between the Yangtze River delta, the Tai Lake (Tai Hu, meaning literally large lake) and crossed by the Grand Canal, is a city strongly marked by the rationality of water. Rationalities which are strongly anthropized, and that for centuries have defined not just the territory but also local economy and society. With the arrival of major industrialization in the area starting from the 1980s, with the Chinese economic reform processes, this ecosystem is facing different challenges. The water system consequently is changing its role within this territory, passing from being a spatial dispositive of organization to a marginal element, that is mainly linked to waste discharge. Today, in a context where environmental concern is increasingly emerging and the transition towards a more sustainable economic model is affirming - as the central theme of the administration of Xi Jinping political agenda - how Suzhou will manage a territory strongly marked by an extraordinary albeit dispersed economic growth characterizing these recent years? How will a water-city such Suzhou face new challenges posed by climate change and rising water levels? Which strategies, rationalities and scenarios can be envisioned to sustain an ecological condition that defines peculiar territorial and social identities?

Organization:

After the evaluation of the proposals, different contributions will be organized in different sections. Each participant will have 20 minutes to present their work inside the Suzhou City portrait event.

Discussion will be followed by debate, a confrontation and synthesis between all the Suzhou city portrait participants.

Schedule:

25-26 May 2020, at Università Iuav di Venezia, Ca Badoer, Venice

Participation:

We welcome perspective on all periods and submission varying types to encourage academics, practitioners and professionals of all disciplines and backgrounds to participate, e.g.:

- 15-minute presentation short papers;
- poster presentation

Respondents should indicate what type of submission they are proposing along with the abstract required for the selection. Submission should take the form of an abstract of maximum **250 words** in length, submitted as a MS Word document containing the following information:

- title, authors, affiliation, contacts, key words (three);
- mode of presentation: paper or poster;
- main presented argument

Deadlines:

Abstracts or Posters(with its relative abstract) should be received by **March 4th, 2020** at the following email address:

suzhoucityportrait2020@gmail.com

Successful participants will be notified by **March 18th, 2020**.

Any queries can be forwarded to suzhoucityportrait2020@gmail.com for further information.

Proposals will be selected by the academic committee Christian Nolf (XJTLU), Paola Pellegrini (XJTLU), Maria Chiara Tosi (Università Iuav di Venezia, Venice), Paola Viganò (Università Iuav di Venezia and EPFL), Margherita E. Turvani (Università Iuav di Venezia) and Elena Longhin, Luis Antonio Martin Sanchez, Maria Leonardi (Call & Event Curators, Iuav School of Doctorate Studies).