

Wuwu Ran

Dr | Architectural Urbanist & Researcher | Manchester, UK

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UK Global Talent Visa (endorsed by the British Academy)

PROFILE

- Architectural and urban researcher, designer, and educator working across architecture, urbanism, digital media, and public space.
- PhD in Architecture from the University of Liverpool, with research on urban screens, augmented public spaces, and state-led urban transformation in Chinese cities.
- Experienced in mixed-methods urban research, including field observation, interviews, morphology-based spatial analysis, policy and archival research, machine learning-assisted classification, and VR-based visualisation.
- Over five years of professional experience in urban planning, ecological design, heritage-sensitive regeneration, and policy-facing spatial research.
- Current interests include media architecture, urban governance, digital public space, environmental adaptation, spatial justice, and emerging technologies in the built environment.
- Holds a UK Global Talent Visa (endorsed by the British Academy), permitting full-time work without restriction.

EDUCATION

University of Liverpool, Centre for Architecture and Visual Arts (CAVA)

Liverpool, UK

PhD in Architecture

Apr 2020 – Jun 2025

- **Supervisors:** Prof. Richard Koeck, Dr Francesca Piazzoni
- **Specialisation:** Urban Screens, Media Architecture, Augmented Public Spaces, VR-Based Data Visualisation
- **Thesis:** *Chinese Urban Screens Evolution — A Historical and Comparative Study of Screen Clusters in Shanghai and Chongqing*. Examined the evolution of urban screens in Chinese cities as socio-technical urban interfaces shaped by state planning, market development and everyday public culture. Moving beyond single-case and qualitative studies, the research combined historical analysis, machine learning-assisted spatial taxonomy and the Augmented Public Space Index to analyse 104 urban screen clusters in Shanghai and Chongqing. It showed how Chinese urban screens have shifted from propaganda-oriented communication tools to clustered forms of augmented public space, reflecting China's compressed modernisation, collective viewing practices and state-market forms of urban governance.
- **Research methodologies:** Mixed-methods urban research, including historical and policy analysis, interviews, fieldwork, morphology-based spatial analysis, computer vision-assisted classification, clustering analysis, and VR-based visualisation. Developed the Augmented Public Space Index (APSI) for comparative assessment of digitally enhanced public spaces.

University of Sheffield

Sheffield, UK

Master of Arts in Urban Design

Sep 2018 – Sep 2019

- Conducted fieldwork in Milan with the Inclusive Design Group (supervised by Beatrice de Carli), focusing on social housing for immigrant communities to promote inclusive, community-engaged urban design.
- Thesis: 'Careful Urban Regeneration' (fieldwork in Berlin-Kreuzberg, supervised by Dr. Florian Kossak), emphasising sustainable regeneration, heritage preservation, and participatory approaches.

Soochow University

Soochow, China

Bachelor of Landscape Architecture

Sep 2009 – Sep 2013

- Key modules: Landscape Architecture Design, Psychology of Environment & Behaviour, Urban Landscape Ecology, Site Design, Project Management, CAD, History of Western Landscapes.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- **Ran, W.** (2025, November). The Evolution and 'Chineseness' of Urban Screens in China. *Media Architecture Biennale 2025 (MAB25)*, Bangkok, Thailand. ACM publication forthcoming, September 2026.
- **Ran, W.** (2024). 'Challenging Surveillance Capitalism in Urban Public Spaces Through Gamified Spatial Practice Simulation with Virtual Reality: A Case Study of Piccadilly Circus'. *ASCAAD 2024 Conference Proceedings*, Barcelona, pp. 553-564.
- **Ran, W., Yin, L., & Yu, J.** (2023). 'Machine Learning-driven Comparative Study: Morphological Taxonomy in Screen-Based Building Clusters'. *ACADIA 2023 Conference Proceedings*, Denver, pp. 596-605.
- He, H., Gao, Q., Shen, X., Wang, M., **Ran, W.**, et al. (2015). *Lujiazui: Where All Dreams Begin – Collection of Shanghai Lujiazui Finance and Trade Zone Planning and Construction Series*, China Architecture & Building Press. ISBN 978-7-112-18439-2. (in Chinese)

SELECTED RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- **VR-Based Spatial Practice Simulation:** Jun 2022 – Sep 2024
Used Design Fiction to develop XR prototypes exploring social impacts of ubiquitous immersive devices. Built interactive systems with Unity, Arduino, and TouchDesigner to revitalise urban spaces via *phygital* feedback loops.
- **Special Research Project on Urban Design for the Shanghai Urban Master Plan (2017-2035):**
The System and Measures for Overall Urban Design of Shanghai Sep 2014 – Oct 2015
This research integrates welfare economics by applying Pareto Efficiency and Rawlsian principles to classify Shanghai's urban design policies into five types. I was responsible for the Quality Improvement Area, which targets underdeveloped suburban regions and historically constrained, ageing inner-city neighbourhoods, aiming to respect the city's heritage while enhancing its spatial quality.
- **Infrastructure Research:** Sep 2016 – Dec 2017
Conducted a study on the demand for industrial community facilities in Shanghai's Industrial Area. The project involved analysing existing facility issues and developing tailored solutions by leveraging GIS technology and principles of spatial equity.

KNOWLEDGE-EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

- Completed FLTHE training Stage 1 (Fellowship of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education).
- Conference presentations: Media Architecture Biennale 2025 Conference, ASCAAD Mixed Realities session, Barcelona, 2024; ACADIA Gestured Sequences session, Denver, 2023 and ANPC Urban and Rural Planning in Mountainous Regions session, Guiyang, 2015.
- Volunteer organiser, Media Architecture Biennale, Toronto Metropolitan University, 2023.
- Participant and Group Leader, DigitalFUTURES Global Workshop (Tongji University) Interactive Content Design in Mixed Reality, 2022 & 2023.
- Student Mentoring: Experience supervising undergraduate students in overseas design master's program applications and portfolio development, demonstrated ability to adapt teaching approaches to individual student needs and learning styles.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Research Institute (SUPDRI), Shanghai, China 2013-2018

The Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Research Institute (SUPDRI) is affiliated with the Shanghai Planning and Natural Resources Bureau. Founded in 1957, it is one of China's earliest and most technically advanced Class A institutions for urban planning and design, land use planning, and engineering consulting.

Urban Planner & Designer & Researcher

- Developed conceptual urban/architectural plans by receiving client briefings, conducting research and site visits, analysing sites, and facilitating team discussions before creating initial designs.
- Produced sketches and presentation documents from conception through project completion, providing recommendations to management regarding contract requirements and work specifications.
- Reviewed drawings and documentation, identifying and reporting issues to departmental managers, iterating through revisions until final approval was achieved.
- Contributed to major urban planning and design projects emphasising industrial upgrading, urban renewal, and cultural heritage preservation across China; received multiple awards for involvement in high-profile projects.

AWARDS & PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Contributing researcher on the £6.75 million Liverpool MusicFutures grant application (PI: Prof. Richard Koeck).
- Second Prize of Shandong Province Excellent Urban and Rural Planning in 2017 (China)
- Project Name: *Urban Design for Industrial Upgrading and Urban Renewal in Zhuzhou Road, Laoshan District, Qingdao*
- Second Prize of Xinjiang Province Excellent Urban and Rural Planning in 2017
Third Prize of China Annual Excellent Urban and Rural Planning in 2019 (National Awards)
- Project Name: *Preservation planning of Mountain, Water and Cultural Heritage Buildings, Urumqi*
- Certified Intermediate Professional Engineer, Shanghai Housing and Urban-Rural Construction Committee.
- Google Project Management Professional Certificate.
- LEAP: The PGR Leadership Programme Certificate (2025) — University of Liverpool.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Proficient in Blender, Unity, Python, Adobe Creative Suite, SketchUp, and Rhino (Grasshopper) for modelling, simulation, and data visualisation.
- Languages: Fluent in English and Mandarin.