1 PhD position, ERC StG “AnimalFarm”, Politecnico di Torino

Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino
Application deadline: Apr 30, 2026

Sofia Nannini

The Department of Architecture and Design at the Politecnico di Torino is recruiting the first (out of three) doctoral fellow within the ERC Starting Grant Project “AnimalFarm: An Architectural History of Intensive Animal Farming (1570–1992)” (2026-2031), under the supervision of the PI, Sofia Nannini (https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101219242). AnimalFarm investigates the architectural history of intensive animal farming from early modern Europe to the present day.

Introduction on AnimalFarm

From sixteenth-century Palladian villas to today’s concentrated feeding operations, the ERC project AnimalFarm starts from the assumption that Western architecture has evolved along the entanglements between humans and domesticated animals—mostly cattle, pigs, poultry, and horses. Over the centuries, the practice of animal farming has been a pivotal field for spatial, material, and technological experimentations. AnimalFarm employs the methods of architectural history to investigate the many printed sources, such as treatises, handbooks, and journals, that allowed animal farming to become a transnational and scalable model. The research is conducted on three geographical and chronological strands, that embrace the beginning of agrarian capitalism (Northern Italy, 1500s-1600s), the dawn of zootechnics (continental Europe and Great Britain, 1700s-1800s), and the great industrial acceleration (US, Canada, Denmark, and the Netherlands, 1800s-1900s). AnimalFarm pioneers a novel research methodology that contaminates the perspectives of architectural history with three interdisciplinary layers, represented by three postdoctoral positions within the team: critical animal studies, the history of veterinary medicine, and history of labor/environmental history. The team will investigate the architectural history of animal farming along three categories: typologies and layouts; building materials and technologies; institutions and politics. AnimalFarm ultimately explores the historical roots of a controversial phenomenon of the Anthropocene, and it fosters an alternative gaze on the spatial, material, and ethical implications of the human-animal relationship through time.

On the PhD position “The Agrarian Villa as Multispecies Architecture”

We are looking for a PhD candidate who will conduct research on the first chronological strand of the project (1500s-1600s), a moment in time when it is possible to pinpoint the beginning of an intensively exploitative relationship to domesticated animals, with the rise of agrarian capitalism and a more systematic extraction of resources from the countryside. The candidate will explore the architectures for animal farming in the Italian peninsula, taking the rich countryside of North-

ern Italy as a geographical focus, especially the regions of Veneto and Lombardy (see Beltramini, Burns, Monicelli, Villa-> Economia, 2017). This area is particularly interesting for the emergence of the agrarian villa, as expressed in many agricultural treatises (e.g. Le venti giornate by Agostino Gallo or Dell'agricoltura by M. Africo Clemente), often influenced by ancient Roman treatises on animal husbandry and agricolture (e.g. De Re Rustica by Columella) and by contemporary French literature (e.g. Olivier de Serres). Such knowledge trickled down to the architectural definitions of the villa in the notable treatises by Palladio (1570) and Scamozzi (1615). The candidate will devote particular attention to the history of the agrarian landscape surrounding the villa (Cosgrove, The Palladian Landscape, 1993) and to the villa as a multispecies site of labour and life of both humans and livestock (Piazzesi, Così perfetti e utili, 2015), including horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, and even silkworms. The research will also focus on the economy and metabolism of the villa (e.g. manure collection from the animals), as well as on the hygienic and medical knowledge concerning the proximity of humans and livestock, as translated into architectural solutions and building materials.

The candidate will conduct research in institutions such as (but not limited to): the Palladio Museum (Vicenza), the agrarian and zootechnical collection at the Biblioteca La Vigna (Vicenza), the National Library of Italy (Rome and Florence), the RIBA Collection (London), the Biblioteca Marciana (Venice), Bibliothèque national de France (Paris). Archival research may also be conducted in State, regional, and municipal archives located in Italy.

The candidate will:

– Focus on the line of inquiry previously described, producing research on the case study as well as bringing their own original ideas to the topic. We suggest potential candidates to attach an initial draft of their research ideas to the application documents.
– Complete the PhD dissertation under the supervision of the PI (November 2026–November 2029, with possibility of a six-month extension).
– Contribute to the activities and outputs of AnimalFarm, such as workshops, seminars, co-authoring articles and book chapters, presenting their research at international conferences, contributing to the project's newsletter and website.
– Actively engage with the courses and seminars of the PhD program in "Architecture. History and Project" and with the events of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Politecnico di Torino.

We are looking for a passionate candidate with a MA degree in Architecture or History of Art or History of Science/Environmental History or closely related fields in the humanities, to be completed by the start of the position.
Previous experience in archival/historical research is welcome.
Working language: English.
Language requirements: English (fluent), Italian (good reading skills of 16th-century Italian is required for conducting research), French (optional).

The submission should be sent following the procedure as indicated in the website of the Politecnico di Torino.

Deadline: April 30, 2026 (2PM, CET time)

Call for applications and further info:
https://www.polito.it/en/education/phd-programmes-and-postgraduate-school/admissions-to-phd-programmes/admissions/call-for-applications
https://www.polito.it/en/education/phd-programmes-and-postgraduate-school/admissions-to-phd-programmes/admissions/call-for-applications/scholarships-with-predefined-research--topic-in-architecture-1

For inquiries on the application system:
https://www.polito.it/en/contact-us/contacts-for-students-and-graduates

For inquiries about the PhD position and the ERC project “Animal Farm”, please send an email to sofia.nannini@polito.it

Reference:
JOB: 1 PhD position, ERC StG “AnimalFarm”, Politecnico di Torino. In: ArtHist.net, Mar 25, 2026 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52065>.