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

Application deadline: Nov 16, 2026
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101219242

Sofia Nannini

PhD position “The Architecture of Zootechnics, ca. 1700-1800”.

The Department of Architecture and Design at the Politecnico di Torino is recruiting the second (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.

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 Architecture of Zootechnics, ca. 1700-1800”: We are looking for a PhD candidate who will conduct research on the second chronological strand of the project (1700s-1800s), in the decades when industrial practices were progressively integrated into the methods of animal husbandry, until the emergence of the discipline of zootechnics in the mid-1800s (see Piazzesi, Del governo degli animali, 2023). By merging scientific expertise from

different fields, such as veterinary medicine, chemistry, engineering, and biology, zootechnics became an established branch of knowledge that produced its own specific built infrastructures. The candidate will focus on the spatial and technological solutions for what we may define as zootechnical architecture, which was promoted and circulated through printed models via zootechnical handbooks, scientific societies, journals and institutional frameworks. The geographical focus is especially on continental Europe, e.g. France, the UK, Germany, and Switzerland, as countries where industrial approaches to animal husbandry were soon consolidated. The candidate will mostly focus on architecture for horses (stables) and cattle (dairy barns), as examples of closed environments where the tie-stall system was most mediated by architectural design and spatial technologies, and in which animal bodies began to be conceived as thermodynamic machines transforming feed into protein.

The candidate will conduct research in institutions such as (but not limited to): the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Archives Nationales (Paris), the British Library (London), the Wellcome Collection (London), and the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (Germany, various locations). Archival research may also be conducted in national and local archives.

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 (March 2027–March 2030, 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), French/German/Italian (optional).

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

Deadline: November 16, 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

and/or

animalfarm@polito.it

Reference:
JOB: 1 PhD position, ERC StG “AnimalFarm”, Politecnico di Torino. In: ArtHist.net, Oct 28, 2026 (accessed Nov 20, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54766>.