Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland

Te Herenga Auaha

Faculty of Engineering and Design

PhD Position

Regenerative Future Urban Industry

Description

The School of Architecture and Planning at the University of Auckland is seeking a highly motivated PhD student to join Prof Paola Boarin's research group. This PhD in Architecture is funded by the recently activated 2025 MBIE Endeavour Research Programme "Future Urban Industry: integrating economic, built and ecological systems for resilient cities" and will support the activities of Working Group 2- Built Environment.

The successful candidate will work on the application of regenerative design and development principles and practices to an industrial zone in Auckland, New Zealand, including aspects such as (but not limited to) holistic and system thinking, place-based and ecosystem-centric design, circular economy and resource flows, net-positive impact.

We are looking for candidates with prior exposure to regenerative principles or sustainability frameworks, ability to positively engage with multiple disciplines and stakeholder groups, and a strong focus on creating real impact.

Candidate Requirements

- A Master's degree (or equivalent) in Architecture, Sustainability, Built Environment, Building Science, Urban Design, or related field (GPA or GPE > 7.0; IELTS at least 6.5 with no bands lower than 6.0 for international applicants).
- Strong interest in regenerative design and development, and system thinking.
- Excellent analytical, written and verbal communication skills.
- The ability to work with professional stakeholders.
- Ability to work collaboratively across disciplines and international teams.
- Excellent use of Microsoft365 software.

What we offer

- Full PhD scholarship for 3 years (fees + stipend, subject to funding conditions). Please note the scholarship will not be extended beyond the third year in the programme.
- Access to world-class research facilities and mentorship.
- Opportunity to be part of a major research project funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

- Opportunities to collaborate with leading researchers in New Zealand and internationally.
- Engagement with industry partners in New Zealand, including Māori enterprises.
- The successful candidate will also engage with the community of doctoral students in the Future Cities Research Centre PhD Student Lab based at the School of Architecture and Planning.

Please note this is a full-time only enrolment and no part-time option will be available due to external funder requirements.

Application process

Interested applicants should email the following to Prof Paola Boarin (p.boarin@auckland.ac.nz):

1. A cover letter (1 page max) outlining:
   a. The reason for your interest in the topic.
   b. The reason for your interest in undertaking a PhD.
   c. Any relevant prior experience (professional and/or academic) in the field of research.
2. An outline of your proposed research (1 page max, inclusive of any image/diagram), including aims, proposed methodology and expected outcomes.
3. Curriculum Vitae including:
   a. Any prior professional, industry and/or academic experience.
   b. Any prior collaboration with research activities.
   c. The details and links on any publications.
4. Full academic transcripts.
5. Contact details of two academic referees.

Please include the following in the email subject "FUI-WG2 Doctoral Application". Any email received without this subject will not be considered.

A selection panel comprising a representative from the leadership team and up to two members from Project's Working Group 2 will assess all applications.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a live online interview.

Key dates

- **Closing dates for applications:** 31 December 2025, 4:00pm NZDT.
- **End of January 2026:** interviews with shortlisted candidates.
- **Mid-February 2026:** candidate selected.
- **Candidature commencement date:** ideally by the end of April 2026.

Contacts

For academic information about the PhD and the MBIE Research scholarship opportunity, please contact, please contact Prof Paola Boarin (p.boarin@auckland.ac.nz).

Additional information on the "Future Urban Industry" MBIE Endeavour Programme

Our research asks: "How can future Urban Industrial Zones (UIZs) be designed to integrate resource-efficient economic principles, ecologically-sustainable technologies, and inclusive practices to drive economic, environmental, and social resilience whilst adapting to increasingly uncertain futures?"

We adopt a holistic approach to UIZs to outperform traditional models economically, environmentally, and socially. By integrating ecological-economic systems with multi-sector expertise, we can create efficient, resilient, and high-performing urban economies that drive long-term prosperity.

As cities face mounting pressures from climate change, biodiversity loss, and overburdened infrastructure, it is imperative to rethink urban development. Current approaches struggle to cope with escalating climate-related events, threatening business continuity, public infrastructure, and economic stability. Aotearoa-NZ's economic resilience depends on smarter, future-focused urban environments.

Led by a transdisciplinary team from the University of Auckland, Market Economics Ltd, The Urbanist Ltd, AUT, University of Otago, University of Waikato, and Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research, supported by the Auckland Council, and in partnership with architecture-engineering-planning practices and business organisations, our programme will transform Aotearoa's UIZs into thriving economic hubs.

Our cutting-edge tools – Urban Industrial Zone Digital Twin, Ecological-Economics Simulation Model, socio-technical Post-Occupancy Evaluations, biodiversity and ecosystem services analyses, and multisensory analysis – will provide actionable strategies for decision-makers, businesses, and regulators.

Collaboration is at the heart of our approach. By engaging Māori, local and national government, local communities, businesses, professionals, and policymakers, we co-develop transformative solutions that enhance business resilience, reduce economic risk, and improve ecological and societal outcomes.

This research lays the foundation for a flourishing economy that is not only sustainable but also more competitive, adaptive, and resilient to future shocks. Together, we redefine urban industrial success in Aotearoa-NZ.