Jiajia Gong
Exchange Ph.D.
Research Title: An evolutionary framework for Featured Towns identification and strategies for policy making and planning

Zhejiang province saw a strong economic development after the reform and opening up due to the prosperity of the private economy. However, this region, which has once created the 'Zhejiang Pattern', is currently faced with economic development challenges, partly representing the obstacles suffered by the nation. Central government considered the innovation and supply-side reform to be the approach to social economic transition and economic boom. To promote the innovative economy and reinforce the traditional industrial transition, governor of Zhejiang province initiated the Featured Town, claiming to develop 100 featured towns with a total investment of at least 500 billion RMB (68 billion eur).

The Featured Town has no pronounced definition when initiated, inextricably leading to different interpretations from different subjects who are related to the initiative, the central government, the provincial government, local government, the firms in the Featured Towns, the researchers, etc. They have different ambitions about the initiative, but are their aims reliable, and how to achieve their goals?

Identifying the Featured Towns with an evolutionary framework, this research aims to understand the driving forces of economic welfare brought about by the initiative and innovation, and generate the approach to enhance the initiative by selective cases study of the Featured Towns and the empirical research of European cases. The research will start with the study of the firms in the Featured Towns, and then the networks and spatial environment, and finally the city. With this research framework, we can answer the main research question, that is: How to make proper policies and formulate planning to meet the expectations and needs of the Featured Towns and make them succeed?