

Castello del Valentino Dialogues 2026 (Torino, 9–11 Jun 26)

Castello del Valentino, Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino,
Sep 9–11, 2026

Deadline: May 11, 2026

Sofia Nannini

Castello del Valentino Dialogues 2026.

"Multispecies Voices from the Architectural Archives: Exercises in Style".

The Castello del Valentino Dialogues is a platform that aims at creating a dynamic forum for crafting alternative ways of thinking, exploring and writing the urban. Bringing together PhD students and early career researchers with an interest in architecture and urbanism along with established scholars, writers and publishers, it invites a reflection that can challenge conventional modes of thinking and research. Participants will debate topical issues in the field of urban and architectural studies, try out new creative writing techniques and methodological tactics, and enhance their skills for presenting and publishing research.

After the first and successful edition "Tentacular Thinking! Tentacular Writing?", inspired by relational thinkers, the second edition of the Castello del Valentino Dialogues turns to the archives as places where architectural knowledge is constructed. The Castello Dialogues 2026 explore the environmental turn recently experienced in architectural history scholarship and adjacent disciplines. As architectural history is being influenced by the questions and modes of the environmental humanities, architectural archives change and expand, challenging the very notion of human exceptionalism which is at the roots of the built environment.

The Castello Dialogues 2026 engage with the following questions: How to look at archives as dynamic objects, where human choices and more-than-human agents are, over time, layered, combined, disassembled, then rearranged together? How to listen to the plant, animal, and mineral voices preserved in human-made archives, explore their agency, and how do we speak on behalf of different entities through archival traces? How can we treat ecologies, cities, and landscapes as archives, with their own patterns of sedimented memories? How can archival knowledge be helpful when facing the crisis of narration and the unthinkable posed by the new climatic regime (Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, 2016)? We may also ask: what and where is the archive if we consider the forest to be an architectural record? (Paulo Tavares, "An Architectural Botany," *Environmental Histories of Architecture*, 2022); where to find the traces of the countless more-than-human actors that contributed to the making of architecture (for example, André Tavares, *Architecture Follows Fish*, 2024)?

Furthermore, we are living in a historic moment – archives are not isolated and walled-off entities

produced by top-down institutions anymore. The internet has increasingly ingurgitated our capacity to produce, alter, and erase collective memory. More urgently, generative artificial intelligence chatbots are now luring us into the promise that all knowledge can be sourced from one single repository – one that is free from the burden of materiality and that is utterly anthropocentric and capitalocentric. We seemingly have the whole sum of human knowledge on our fingertips, making paper documents and analog archives sound outdated. Is this true, or is it the dystopian dream of tech companies that seek to centralize data ownership? How can we reactivate traditional archives as a place of epistemic production, by simultaneously recognizing their often hierarchical and top-down nature, their specist attitude and colonial origins? Against the virtuality of online data, how can we activate the archive's own materiality, observing archival records as tangible objects that hold traces of past encounters with humans and non-humans alike? What do the many species that formally disturb the archival practices (such as fungi, mold, moths, etc.) tell of the archive as an environment with its own ecology, and of the documents as ever-changing, almost living entities?

We welcome applications from PhD candidates and early career scholars in the history and theory of architecture, urbanism, and urban planning, as well as in environmental, social, and cultural histories. We also invite applications from candidates in adjacent disciplines such as human geography, design studies, urban anthropology, philosophy, science and technology studies, and the arts.

We are particularly interested in candidates who are willing to rethink their own archival research in light of the many challenges that we currently face today and that give new status to archival materials, such as the environmental and biodiversity crisis, the loss of material artifacts in a virtually-driven world, and the ever-so-complex coexistence among different species. The workshop will consolidate the theoretical knowledge of researchers and will animate their methodological and field-specific creativity. Combining lectures, discussions, writing exercises and group works, it will offer a great opportunity to jump-start a PhD research project or advance knowledge on an existing one in a supportive environment by benefiting from peer analysis, constructive critique, and debate.

On the event

A maximum of twenty participants will be selected to attend the residential workshop, which spans 3 days and will contain the following strands:

- Presentation of work-in-progress: participants are invited to present on aspects of their own work, with a view to encouraging discussion of theoretical and methodological frameworks while conducting archival research and supporting publications.
- Writing ateliers: participants will engage in an exercise of "archival telling" especially designed for them. They will work in small groups with expert tutors to discuss archival investigations and writing techniques.
- Lectures and discussions: hosted in the seventeenth-century Castello del Valentino overlooking the river Po, the program will include keynote lectures, archival explorations, and roundtables on architectural history journals and publications.

Keynote speaker

André Tavares, University of Porto

With the participation of
Gerlinde Verhaeghe (Politecnico di Torino/SNSF Postdoc)
Markus Lähteenmäki (editor-in-chief of Architectural Histories)

Invited tutors

Gabriele Neri, Francesca Favaro (Politecnico di Torino), Martina Motta (independent researcher)

Admission

The Workshop will be held in Turin, Italy and hosted by the Invisible Cities Lab and the Environmental History Group at the Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino. The participation fee is €200, including a welcome aperitivo, lunches, and specific workshop materials. Participants are expected to organize and pay for their own travel and accommodation. Nevertheless, we are happy to assist you in planning your stay. Situated in the city of Turin, the Politecnico di Torino provides an inspiring location for scholars to come together from across disciplines and geographies

How to apply

Send an email to sofia.nannini@polito.it with the following attachments:

1. A short "Expression of Interest" providing an outline of your current research/ PhD project, tracing connections with the theme of the Castello Dialogue 2026 and explaining your motivation [<1000 words]. If you are a PhD student, please, include the name(s) of the supervisor(s).
2. Short Curriculum Vitae (max. 2 pages), detailing education, professional experience, publications, awards, and working languages, as well as any other relevant information.

Application deadline: May 11, 2026.

You can read the full call for applications here:

<https://ehg.polito.it/news/castello-del-valentino-dialogues-2026/>

Organising committee

Albena Yaneva, Alessandro Armando, Sofia Nannini (Politecnico di Torino)
with the help of Lorenzo Murru (Politecnico di Torino)

Reference:

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