



# **DESIGNING URBAN NATURE**

## **Regional Design Visions for a Future River Contract on the Dora River**

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**23-27.02.2026**

ORE 09:30 – 19:30

### **Organized by**

Politecnico di Torino, Italy  
MSc in Urban and Regional Planning (DIST)  
MSc in Architecture for Sustainability (DAD)  
Federal University of Goiás, Brazil (PROCIDADE)  
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (PROURB)

### **Partners**

University of Firenze  
Polytechnic University of Valencia  
Municipality of Turin  
Metropolitan City of Turin  
Municipality of Alpignano  
Municipality of Collegno

# **DESIGNING URBAN NATURE**

## **Regional Design Visions for a Future River Contract on the Dora River**

*Visualizing socio-ecological futures through regenerative planning  
From river control to co-evolution: imagining a new territory of life for the city*

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Politecnico di Torino  
Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning (DIST)  
MSc in Urban and Regional Planning  
Dipartimento di Architettura e Design (DAD)  
MSc in Architecture for Sustainability

Federal University of Goiás, Brazil  
Graduate Program in Project and City (PROCIDADE)

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Graduate Program in Urbanism (PROURB)

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### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Type:** International Intensive Workshop

**Duration:** 5 consecutive days

**Total workload:** 50 hours

**Credits:** 2 CFU

**Dates:** 23–27 February 2026

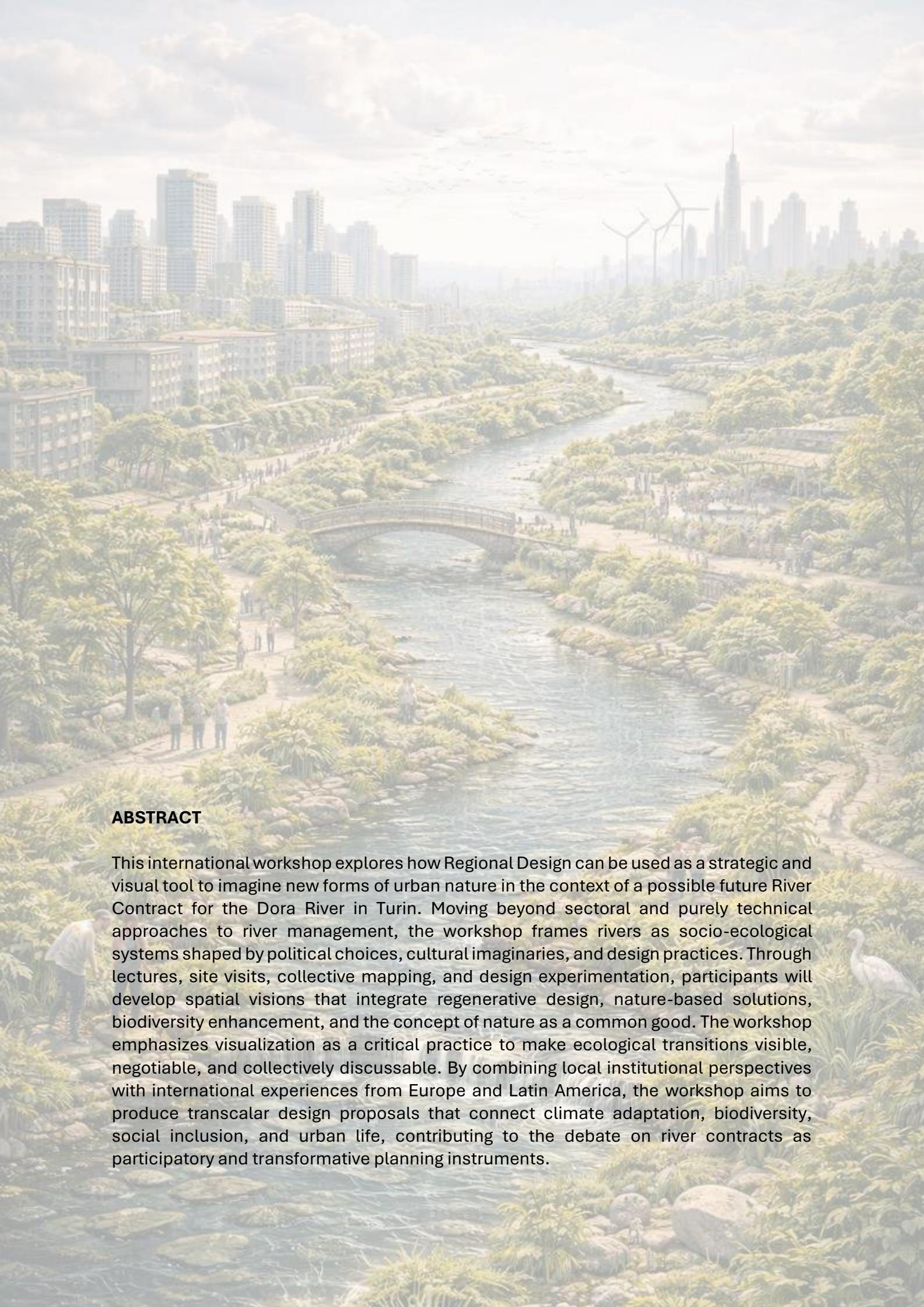
**Daily schedule:** 10:00 am – 8:00 pm

**Lunch break:** 1:00–2:00 pm

**Location:** Politecnico di Torino and Dora River study area

**Language:** English and Italian

**Participants:** Master and PhD students, early-career researchers and professionals, government stakeholders



## ABSTRACT

This international workshop explores how Regional Design can be used as a strategic and visual tool to imagine new forms of urban nature in the context of a possible future River Contract for the Dora River in Turin. Moving beyond sectoral and purely technical approaches to river management, the workshop frames rivers as socio-ecological systems shaped by political choices, cultural imaginaries, and design practices. Through lectures, site visits, collective mapping, and design experimentation, participants will develop spatial visions that integrate regenerative design, nature-based solutions, biodiversity enhancement, and the concept of nature as a common good. The workshop emphasizes visualization as a critical practice to make ecological transitions visible, negotiable, and collectively discussable. By combining local institutional perspectives with international experiences from Europe and Latin America, the workshop aims to produce transcalar design proposals that connect climate adaptation, biodiversity, social inclusion, and urban life, contributing to the debate on river contracts as participatory and transformative planning instruments.

## PROGRAMME

	Monday 23	Tuesday 24	Wednesd. 25	Thursday 26	Friday 27
9:30 - 13:00	Seminar 1 (Zodiaco)	Seminar 2 (Zodiaco)	Seminar 3 (Zodiaco)	Workshop (3VM)	Development material (3VM)
14:00 – 17:00	Site Visit	Workshop (3VM)	Workshop (2VM)	Workshop (3VM)	(Astengo) (3VM)
18:00 - 19:30	Workshop (Astengo)	Workshop (3VM)	Workshop (Astengo/2VM)	Presentazione (Zodiaco)	(Astengo) (3VM)

### DAY 23/02

09:30 – 10:00 | Opening

Opening Issues – Angioletta Voghera

The Design Issues – Camilo Amaral

10:00 – 11:15 | Seminar 1.1. Approaches

- Piemonte Region - Paolo Mancin
- Municipality of Turin - Francesco Tresso  
*Environmental Challenges and the PRG of Turin (local plan)*
- Metropolitan City of Turin – Gianna Betta  
*River Contracts as Participatory Planning Instruments*
- Municipality of Colegno - Silvia Contu  
*Towards a River Contract*  
coord: Angioletta Voghera

11:20 – 12:20 | Short round-tables

- Andrea Minella, Camilo Amaral, Fernanda Ramalho

12:20 – 13:15 | Seminar 1.2. Approaches

- *Angioletta Voghera & Roberta Ingaramo*  
*Regenerative Design, Nature-Based Solutions, and River Agreements*
- *Valeria Lingua*  
*Regional Design for River Agreements*

14:00 – 16:00 | Site Visit – Dora River

17:00 – 20:00 | Studio Work 1 – Introduction: Area, Issues and Solutions

### DAY 24/02

09:30 – 11:00 | Seminar 2.1. Environmental Planning

- Claudia Cassatella  
*Environmental and Landscape Planning in Chiusella*
- Loris Servillo  
*Turin and its rivers: reversing the gaze*
- Camilo Amaral  
*Co-evolution of Urban Environments: Design, Nature, and Subjectivity*  
(Discussion)

11:00 – 12:15 | Seminar 2.2. Environmental Planning

- Wagner Rezende  
*Invisible Rivers: Challenges Seen from the Global South*
- James Miyamoto  
*Diverse Waterfront Approaches: Reshaping Rio's Landscape*
- Giancarlo Cotella  
*Ecological Governance Models for non-standard geographies: a European perspective*  
(Discussion)

12:15 – 13:00 | Round Table 1 (Collective discussion with students and tutors)

14:00 – 16:30 | Studio Work 2  
17:00 – 20:00 | Studio Work 3

## **DAY 25/02 – Institutions and Development**

09:30 – 11:00 | Seminar 3.1

Opening by the Director of DIST

- *Oksana Udovyk*  
*From Crisis to Transformative Recovery*
- *Irene Ardito*  
*The Sense of Place: Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies. Lessons from the Valence Experience*
- *Municipality of Alpignano - Steven Palmiere*  
*Towards a River Contract*

11:15 – 12:45 | Seminar 3.2

- *Fernanda Ramalho*  
*Urban Nature as Commons*
- *Ilaria Cazzola*  
*Recent Environmental Planning in Barcelona*
- *Maicol Negrello*  
*NbS and Regenerative Design*
- *Benedetta Giudice*  
*Nature and City*

(Discussion)

13:45 – 14:30 | *Round Table 2 (Collective discussion with students and tutors)*

14:30 – 16:30 | Studio Work 4

17:00 – 20:00 | Studio Work 5

## **DAY 26/02 – Final Developments and presentation**

09:30 – 13:00 | Studio Work 6

14:00 – 17:00 | Studio Work and Final Supervision

Evening | Final Presentations and Discussion

17:30 – 19:00 | Public Presentation & Exhibition

- Group presentations

19:00 – 20:00 | *Round Table 3: Collective discussion with:*

- invited stakeholders
- Michele Talia (presidente INU)

## **DAY 27/02 – Design Synthesis and report**

10:30 – 12:00 | Synthesis of outcomes

14:00 – 17:00 | Development

17:00 – 20:00 | Final Delivery

## KEY CONCEPTS OF THE WORKSHOP

### 1. Regenerative Design and Co-Evolution

Regenerative design shifts the focus from minimizing damage to actively enhancing socio-ecological systems. It understands cities and rivers as co-evolving entities, where human actions can reinforce ecological processes rather than disrupt them.



*Every project should leave nature better*

This theme introduces regenerative design as a framework that exceeds sustainability and resilience by focusing on long-term co-evolution between urban systems and ecosystems. Applied to the Dora River, regenerative design calls for interventions that restore hydrological functions, enhance biodiversity, and support new forms of social use and governance. Participants will explore how design can act across scales, from river basin strategies to localized spatial actions, fostering feedback loops between ecological regeneration and social practices. Rather than treating nature as an external system to be controlled, regenerative design frames nature as an active agent in urban transformation. This approach encourages designers to think in terms of processes, adaptation, and learning.

### 2. Regional Co-Design and Sense of Place

Combining analysis, visualization, and cultural meanings to construct shared territorial futures.



*Making futures visible and negotiable*

This concept highlights co-design as a spatial, social, and political practice that connects Regional Design with the lived experience of places. Sense of place is understood as a key dimension of socio-ecological transformation, emerging from interactions between environments, memories, practices, and collective imaginaries. Through mapping, narratives, and visual scenarios, participants will explore how design can articulate shared meanings and values related to the Dora River. Co-design processes are emphasized as tools to integrate institutional knowledge, expert perspectives, and situated experiences, transforming abstract policies into spatial visions that can be discussed, negotiated, and collectively appropriated. The river becomes a medium through which future territorial identities are imagined and debated.

### 3. Ecosystem-Based Adaptation

Nature-Based Solutions (NbS), Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Ecosystem Services to integrate ecological restoration with climate adaptation and social benefits.



*Designing with nature, not against it*

This theme focuses on the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into urban and territorial design. Participants will explore how NbS can address flooding, heat stress, and ecological fragmentation while generating co-benefits such as public space quality and social well-being. The concept of Biodiversity Net Gain introduces measurable goals for enhancing habitats through design interventions. Applied to the Dora River, this approach encourages participants to rethink riverbanks, floodplains, and adjacent urban areas as interconnected ecological networks. Design proposals will consider green-blue infrastructures, habitat connectivity, and adaptive management, moving beyond isolated projects toward systemic ecological strategies embedded in spatial planning.

### 4. Territory of Life in the City

Summing up shared care and shared futures, rivers can become living urban commons, where ecology, everyday life, governance, and design converge to shape inclusive living territories, rather than resources to be exploited or merely protected.



*From ownership to shared responsibility over living territories*

This concept brings together the ideas of nature as commons and territories of life to frame rivers as shared socio-ecological infrastructures. Nature is understood not as a commodity or a protected object, but as a collectively cared-for entity shaped by practices of use, stewardship, conflict, and cooperation. The Dora River is explored as both an ecological corridor and a social space, where governance, access, and care are negotiated. By extending the notion of territories of life to urban contexts, participants will examine how rivers can structure new forms of urban living, social inclusion, and ecological awareness. Design acts as a mediator, making commons visible, accessible, and governable, while articulating spatial narratives that reconnect everyday life, ecological processes, and long-term territorial visions.

## METHODOLOGY

The workshop adopts a research-by-design methodology combining lectures, field observation, mapping, and collaborative design.

Each day alternates between theoretical inputs and studio-based work. Participants will work in multidisciplinary groups, engaging with territorial data, institutional frameworks, and on-site observations.

Design is treated as a form of inquiry, where drawings, maps, and diagrams function as analytical and speculative tools. Emphasis is placed on transcalar thinking, linking regional strategies with local spatial interventions.

Collective discussions and interim reviews will support iterative learning and critical reflection. Individual preliminary research and final out-of-class work are expected.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

By the end of the workshop, participants are expected to produce:

1. Regional-scale maps and diagrams of the Dora River system
2. Spatial visions for a future River Contract
3. Design scenarios integrating NbS and biodiversity strategies
4. Visual narratives linking river, city, and climate adaptation
5. Collective representations for stakeholder discussion
6. Exhibition-ready panels and graphic materials
7. A shared methodological framework for Regional Design and co-design

## EXPECTED LEARNING RESULTS

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1. **Interpret rivers as socio-ecological systems**, understanding the interdependence between hydrological, ecological, social, and institutional dimensions.
2. **Apply Regional Design as a strategic tool**, using analysis, visualization, and scenario-building to imagine future territorial transformations.
3. **Integrate regenerative design, Nature-Based Solutions, and Biodiversity Net Gain**, translating ecological principles into spatial strategies and design proposals.
4. **Operate across scales**, connecting regional and river-basin perspectives with urban and site-specific interventions.
5. **Engage in co-design and collaborative processes**, working in multidisciplinary teams and interacting with institutional and expert stakeholders.
6. **Communicate complex planning and environmental issues**, producing maps, diagrams, and visual narratives suitable for public discussion and participatory decision-making.

## **ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVITIES / TEACHING APPROACH**

Teaching activities combine frontal lectures, design studio sessions, site visits, and collective critiques. External experts and institutional representatives contribute to grounding design work in real planning processes. The workshop emphasizes learning through doing, peer exchange, and iterative feedback.

**The workshop work may be used as the basis for the student's Master Thesis.**

## **CREDITS – CRITERIA AND RULES (2 CFU)**

Credits are awarded based on: Minimum 80% attendance; Active participation in group work; Final presentation of results; Submission of design products and visual materials

## **PREREQUISITES**

Participants are expected to have basic knowledge of urban planning, territorial design, or environmental studies. Familiarity with mapping, spatial analysis, and design representation is recommended. The workshop is open to students, researchers and professionals interested in socio-ecological transitions, river planning, and collaborative design.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The workshop directly engages with:

- SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)
- SDG 13 (Climate Action)
- SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)
- SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

A selected bibliography on Regional Design, river agreements, regenerative design, nature-based solutions, and commons will be provided at the beginning of the workshop. Reading materials will be shared digitally.

## **PROFESSORS**

Angioletta Voghera (POLITO); Benedetta Giudice (POLITO); Camilo V. L. Amaral (UFG); Claudia Cassatella(POLITO); Daniela Ciaffi (POLITO); Giancarlo Cotella (POLITO); Loris Servillo (POLITO); Maicol Negrello (POLITO); Oksana Udovyk (Polytechnic University of Valencia); James Myiamoto (UFRJ); Roberta Ingaramo (POLITO); Valeria Lingua (UniFI); Wagner Rezende (UFG)

## **INSCRIPTIONS**

**To apply** please send an **email** with a manifestation of interest by **13 February** to [camilo.delima@polito.it](mailto:camilo.delima@polito.it) with copy to [irene.ardito@polito.it](mailto:irene.ardito@polito.it)

Applicants are requested to submit **at least two** of the following: a short **curriculum vitae**, a **portfolio** (if available), a **letter of motivation** (250 words max) and/or an **extract of grades**.

The email must clearly indicate: **Full name, Institutional affiliation(s), occupation** and/or **student ID** (if apply).

Selected participants will be contacted after the evaluation of the submitted materials.