

COLONIAL ECHOES, URBAN FUTURES

Archives, Memory, and *Generative AI* in Postcolonial Critique

Call for Participation – Multidisciplinary Seminar & Workshop

Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning

Castello del Valentino, Turin, Italy

Keynote Speakers



- **Prof. Patricia Morton**, *University of California, Riverside & Past President of Society of Architectural Historians (SAH)*

Visualizing the French Empire: The Question of the Archive

- **Prof. Roger Louis Martinez-Davila**, *University of Colorado, United States*

The Archive Is Not Innocent: Digital Narratives through Generative AI and Historical Responsibility



Topic

The initiative focuses on how colonial archives and urban histories might be reinterpreted through Generative AI.

Activity Structure

The initiative combines a thematic seminar for theoretical grounding with a workshop for critical experimentation.

Day 1 establishes a shared critical framework on colonial archives and microhistories of resistance, foregrounding marginal voices and alternative readings of visual and spatial sources, while examining how generative AI may reproduce or reshape Eurocentric narratives through algorithmic bias and the politics of representation.

Day 2 is a collaborative workshop extending the seminar through experimental, pedagogical activities focused on critical awareness, comparative analysis, and the ethical and cultural implications of AI-generated imagery.

Objectives

- Exploring how algorithms reshape colonial narratives and visual representation.
- Collective discussion on the ethical and methodological implications of using AI in urban studies.

Scientific Coordination

- Pelin Bolca, Asst. Prof. (RTD-A), DIST
- Alessandro Aliberti, Asst. Prof. (RTD-B), DIST

Registration details


Participation in the workshop is free of charge.

Dates: 04-05 June 2026

Apply: Motivation letter (max. 1 page); CV (PDF)

Submission Link: [Here](#)

Contact person: pelin.bolca@polito.it



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04-05 June 2026

AGENDA – Day 1 (04.06.2026)

08.30 – 09.00 Registration

09.00 – 09.15 Institutional Greetings

09.15 – 09.30 Introduction by Organisers: Colonial Archives, Postcolonial Readings, and Algorithmic Imaginaries

Scientific Coordination

Pelin Bolca

Alessandro Aliberti

Teaching Committee

Alessandro Aliberti

Pelin Bolca

Patricia Morton

Roger Louis Martinez-Davila

Derya Karadag

Manuel Sánchez García

Tommaso Cherubini

Activity Structure – Day 1

The initiative is structured by combining a thematic seminar as theoretical grounding and a workshop as critical experimentation, designed to progressively move from critical historical reflection to experimental and analytical engagement with digital tools.

The first day is conceived as a thematic seminar aimed at establishing a shared critical framework:

- Part I focuses on colonial archives and microhistories of resistance, highlighting marginal voices, overlooked actors, and alternative readings of visual and spatial sources across different geographical contexts.

- Part II addresses the role of generative AI in reproducing, amplifying, or reshaping Eurocentric narratives, with particular attention to algorithmic bias, visual canon formation, and the politics of representation.

Talks

Part I: Colonial Echoes

09.30 – 10.00 Reading microhistories of resistance at the margins of colonial visual sources, Manuel Sánchez García (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain)

10.00 – 10.30 Urban Memory and the Afterlives of Colonialism: Rethinking French Mandate Legacies, Pelin Bolca (Politecnico di Torino, Italy)

10.30 – 10.45 Q&A

10.45 – 11.00 *Coffee break*

Part II: AI-Generated Visuals

11.00 – 11.30 Prompting the Machine: Understanding Algorithmic Mechanisms in Generative AI, Alessandro Aliberti (Politecnico di Torino, Italy)

11.30 – 12.00 Urban Icons and Invisible Others: Digital Tools and Generative AI, Derya Karadag (FMV Işık University, Turkey)

12.00 – 12.30 Exploring How Artificial Intelligence–Generated Images Construct Cultural and Emotional Narratives Beyond Traditional Practices, Tommaso Cherubini (New Media Artist, Generative AI Expert, Italy)

12.30 – 12.45 Q&A

12.45 – 14.30 *Lunch break*

Part II: AI-Generated Visuals

14.30 – 15.30 THE ARCHIVE IS NOT INNOCENT: DIGITAL NARRATIVES THROUGH GENERATIVE AI AND HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY, Roger Louis Martinez-Davila, University of Colorado, United States

15.30 – 15.45 Q&A

15.45 – 16.00 *Coffee break*

Part I: Colonial Echoes


16.00 – 17.00 VISUALIZING THE FRENCH EMPIRE: THE QUESTION OF THE ARCHIVE Patricia Morton, University of California, Riverside & Past President of Society of Architectural Historians (SAH)

17.00 – 17.15 Q&A

17.15 – 17.30 Conclusion remarks

17.30 – 18.30 *Guided visit Castello del Valentino*

Keynotes



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AGENDA – Day 2 - *Workshop*

Scientific Coordination

Pelin Bolca
Alessandro Aliberti

Teaching Committee

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Pelin Bolca
Patricia Morton
Roger Louis Martinez-Davila
Derya Karadag
Manuel Sánchez García
Tommaso Cherubini

Activity Structure – Day 2

The second day will focus on a collaborative workshop involving both students and teaching staff.

Drawing on the themes and discussions developed during the first-day seminars, students will engage critically with generative artificial intelligence through guided exercises based on historical materials.

The workshop will conclude with a plenary session in which participants present the outcomes of their work, followed by a discussion on how AI-generated visuals represent colonial realities from a comparative historical perspective.

Introduction by Organisers: Colonial Echoes in AI-Generated Visuals

Framing the workshop:

- How do AI-generated visuals reshape historical narratives and colonial memory?
- What kinds of biases and epistemologies are embedded in generative systems?

Presentation of objectives and structure of the workshop

Part I - Exploration & Experimentation

Participants engage in guided collaborative sessions combining historical sources with AI-generated visual production. Through prompt-based experimentation, they explore how archival materials are translated into visual narratives, critically reflecting on biases, omissions, and the reproduction or disruption of colonial imaginaries.

Part II - Critical Exchange & Refinement

Participants engage in a structured peer-review session, exchanging feedback on visual outputs, prompting strategies, and narrative approaches. This phase fosters critical reflection on biases, ethical implications, and the role of AI in shaping historical representation, leading to the refinement of each group's work.

Part III – Presentation of Outputs

Participants present their experimental outputs, outlining their methods, visual results, and key insights. The session concludes with a collective discussion, reflecting on the potentials and limitations of AI in reinterpreting historical narratives and shaping contemporary understandings of heritage.

Plenary Session and Critical Dialogue

Closing Remarks

Aperitivo and Farewell



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TEACHING COMMITTEE

Alessandro Aliberti is a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Politecnico di Torino (DIST). He holds a PhD in Computer Engineering and works on artificial intelligence, machine learning, and IoT for smart environments. His research focuses on data-driven models for energy and cyber-physical systems. His work bridges theory and practice, advancing intelligent, sustainable digital systems, with a strong focus on real-world impact and interdisciplinary research.

Pelin Bolca is an Assistant Professor (RTD-A) at Politecnico di Torino, specialising in cultural heritage, postcolonial urbanism, and community resilience. She holds a PhD in Architecture and Landscape Heritage. Her research critically engages with postcolonial perspectives, examining how colonial legacies continue to shape urban space, heritage narratives, and socio-environmental vulnerabilities. Her work explores digital heritage, memory, and disaster-related transformations in urban environments, with a focus on inclusive and interdisciplinary research approaches.

Patricia Morton is former President the Society of Architectural Historians and Associate Professor in the Media and Cultural Studies Department at University of California, Riverside. She is author of *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris*, and she has lectured and published widely on architectural history and race, gender and identity. She is a past editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*.

Roger Louis Martinez-Davila is Professor of History at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, specializing in medieval and early modern Iberia, Sephardic Jews, and converso identity. His work integrates archival research with digital humanities, including AI and immersive technologies, to explore memory, power, and ethics across the Iberian Atlantic world.

Derya Karadag is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture, FMV Işık University, Istanbul. Her research focuses on computational design, artificial intelligence, and digital pedagogies. She investigates human-AI collaboration, generative tools, and their implications for studio culture, critical design thinking, and architecture and design research, education, and practice in contemporary contexts.

Manuel Sánchez García (PhD 2022, PoliTo + UGR) is the first Ramón y Cajal fellow ever appointed at ETSAM-UPM, following his research experience at Dumbarton Oaks (Harvard University). His work focuses on colonial cities across the Spanish empire through the analysis of foundational plans and maps combined with notarial documents and lawsuit records. Additionally, he also conducts research on Ibero-American modern architecture and the depiction of architectural cultures in the videogame industry.

Tommaso Cherubini is a visual artist working with generative AI, data processing and immersive installations. His practice translates archives and datasets into layered visual narratives that explore memory, time and landscape. His work reflects on environmental and social issues, using technology to create new forms of awareness.