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It's About People 2026: ***Answering Current Challenges in Society, Health and Technology***

*The 14th Annual Conference of Europe's Sciences
and Arts Leaders and Scholars*

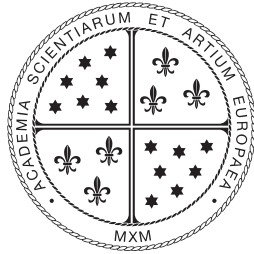


BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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The 14th Annual Conference of Europe's Sciences and Arts Leaders and Scholars

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organised by Alma Mater Europaea University, European Academy of Sciences
and Arts and World Academy of Art and Science

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It's About People 2026: Answering Current Challenges in Society, Health and Technology
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INVITED TALKS: PLENARY

WELCOME ADDRESS

Ludvik Toplak, Emeritus Professor, Rector
Alma Mater Europaea University

Dear President of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Klaus Mainzer, Dear Vice-Presidents of the World Academy of Art and Science, Donato Kiniger-Passigli and Aleksander Zidanšek, Dear President of the Global Security Institute and Representative to the United Nations and to the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, Jonathan Granoff.

Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 14th International Scientific Conference It's About People 2026: Responses to Contemporary Challenges in Society, Health and Technology opens a discussion on how, in a world of increasing conflicts, we can preserve peace, democracy and human dignity. At previous It's About People conferences, we addressed numerous questions concerning the role of science and education, the significance of new technologies in modern society, and the challenges of security, resilience and sustainable development.

The It's About People conferences follow the fundamental principles of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts: interdisciplinarity, transnationality and the building of bridges – among academic disciplines, among cultures, among nations and states, among generations, and between the Global North and the Global South.

The co-organization by the World Academy of Art and Science, together with the participation of its vice-presidents and distinguished international members, represents an important enrichment of this international conference, particularly in light of the vision of the Global Peace Offensive initiative. The Vice-President of the World Academy of Art and Science, Donato Kiniger-Passigli, leads this initiative, within which special trust has been placed in the World Academy of Art and Science, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Alma Mater Europaea University, which have jointly established the Global Peace Offensive Center.



Ludvik Toplak, Rector of Alma Mater Europaea University, delivering the welcome address. Photo: Marko Pigac

I would like to thank all our distinguished guests, speakers and conference participants for their contribution to peace and coexistence in the world and in the hearts of people through science and the arts. I would also like to express special gratitude to our distinguished guests who are with us here today.

In these dangerous times, it is particularly valuable to hear the responses of the most important scientific institutions, such as the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and the World Academy of Art and Science. Today we will hear about principles and policies for responding to the dangerous challenges of our time from Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute, Trustee of the World Academy of Art and Science, and Representative to the United Nations on behalf of the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates.

The conference program will also open discussions on key issues of contemporary society. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, Founding Governor of the Westminster Foundation, will address democracy and political security and the influence of hybrid warfare and disinformation on electoral processes. Professor Alena Kobesova of Charles University in Prague will speak about the relationship between medicine, technology and the human dimension in the age of artificial intelligence. A special perspective on the future of international cooperation will be presented by Professor Ferenc Mészlivetz, Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Kőszeg, who will introduce the initiative for a new United Nations University institute in Hungary entitled Peace, Security and Transformative Technologies. During the coming week, the conference will bring together more than 300 authors from 40 countries.

As the conference also has a strong educational dimension, the work of the sections, which will take place online throughout the week and involve students and researchers from all three levels of study, is particularly valuable.

As we seek answers to the challenges of our time, I invite all participants to look ahead together and to contribute proposals for the sustainable development of science, technology, culture and the arts, and for the well-being of all people.



From left to right: Alenka Slavinec, Franci Demšar, Paul Dziatkowiec, Thania Paffenholz, Klaus Mainzer, Barbara Toplak Perovič, Damir Boras, Ludvik Toplak, Jurij Toplak, Igor Emri, Gordan Akrap, Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, Sebastjan Kristovič and Maximilian-Niklas Bonk. Photo: Marko Pigac

RESOLUTION: IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE 2026



Resolution of the 14th Annual Conference of Leaders from Academies, Institutions, and Scholarly Communities

It's About People

Answering Current Challenges in Society, Health and Technology,
13 - 18 March 2026

The Scientific and Programme Committee of the 14th international scholarly conference *It's About People: Answering Current Challenges in Society, Health and Technology*, organised by Alma Mater Europaea University in co-organisation with the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and the World Academy of Art and Science between 13 and 18 March 2026, with the active participation of representatives of the universities and other academic and public institutions from more than 40 countries and all parts of the world, proclaims the following:

RESOLUTION

1. The pressing issues of our time, marked by wars, geopolitical tensions, hybrid threats, democratic erosion, rapid advances in artificial intelligence, and deepening inequalities, require humankind to urgently balance sustainable development in harmony with nature, uphold the dignity of every human being, and actively pursue global peace through proactive, knowledge-based strategies. We, the academic community, therefore, appeal to European institutions, governments, and global partners to provide organisational, infrastructural, financial, and material support for dedicated mechanisms that address these challenges and secure a peaceful and sustainable future for humanity.
2. In an era dominated by partial interests and human egoism, including within civil society, which has generated profound contradictions, the academic sphere needs to remain dedicated to its core mission. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the academic sphere exists, yet remains without real power, as political actors have taken the key levers of decision-making into their own hands. We, the academic sphere, therefore, appeal to decision-makers and political leaders to assume responsibility and join us in a decisive turn toward humanism and a New Renaissance, restoring the central place of ethical judgement, empathy, and human dignity in every technological and societal transformation.
3. The mission of the academic sphere is to foster dialogue and to build bridges between people, cultures, languages, nations, faiths, generations, and between the global North and South. We therefore appeal to opinion makers, religious and thought leaders, and policymakers to actively support and strengthen platforms of interdisciplinary and intercultural cooperation that preserve democratic processes, social cohesion, and cultural heritage in the face of disinformation and external pressures.
4. The need to overcome contemporary instabilities calls for a renewed focus on peace and security, in political, ethical, scientific, and diplomatic terms. According to the spirit of the Global Peace Offensive, we therefore appeal to all stakeholders to support the concrete academic initiative launched by WAAS, EASA, and Alma Mater Europaea University, centred on dialogue, education, strategic de-escalation, trust building, science diplomacy and cross-cultural cooperation as a unified pathway to address root causes such as inequality and poverty and to build lasting human security.



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5. Moral principles of the Nuremberg Code, especially dignity and personal responsibility should apply equally to artificial intelligence and biotechnology. Universities must safeguard historical memory and truth, and educate younger generations in responsibility, mercy and respect for human life, following the principle of people before technology.

6. The assembled scholars reaffirm the need to integrate science, technology, and the humanities to meet the needs of present and future generations, with special attention to health, ageing societies, youth mental health, and green innovation. We therefore appeal to academic and public institutions, including the individual EASA and WAAS members, to act as role models by placing the human being, endowed with rights, empathy, and ethical judgement, at the centre of all transformations, thereby fostering a New Renaissance for Europe and the world.

Organisers of the It's About People conference affirm their intention to pursue these objectives together with academic and societal stakeholders, continuing the networking and action-oriented goals of the Global Peace Offensive.

Garry Jacobs
World Academy of Art
and Science, President

Professor Dr Klaus Mainzer
European Academy of
Sciences and Arts, President

Professor Dr Ludvik Toplak
Alma Mater Europaea
University, Rector

INVITED SPEAKER

CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

Klaus Mainzer, University Professor
President of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts

The European Academy of Sciences and Arts is deeply rooted in the ancient origins of science and the arts. In the Renaissance, ingenious artists such as Leonardo da Vinci tried to unify science, arts, and engineering. Humanistic scholars such as Erasmus of Rotterdam requested universal tolerance and founded European values. With seven classes of humanities (class I), medicine (class II), arts (class III), natural sciences (class IV), law, economics, social sciences (class V), technical and environmental sciences (class VI), and world religions (class VII), the academy reflects and integrates the European tradition of science and arts.

Since the 17th century, Europe was the historical origin of modern science, technology, and industrialisation. Discoveries in science and inventions in engineering had been transformed into innovations which were successful at the markets. In the age of globalization, economic growth and the welfare of nations decisively depend on scientific innovation.

But Europe is no longer the centre of the world. In the 21st century, new centers of science, technology and innovation (China, India, USA, ...) are emerging, competing and surpassing Europe – endangering its economic prosperity and welfare. A typical example has been the Silicon Valley which combines IT with business and capital. Young researchers in institutes and faculties of a university separate from the university in “start-ups” to transfer their discoveries and inventions into successful innovations at the markets. With the support of strong investors, they sometimes become even powerful and dominating big companies. Global IT, machine learning, generative AI, physical AI companies, and AI factories are dramatically changing our lives and the world of work. Progress is measured by successful business models. China's goal of becoming the world's leading AI innovation center by 2030 is based on an ambitious blueprint that encourages individual cities to develop and strengthen their AI ecosystems with the help of academic institutions, tech enterprises, and hefty local and national government investment. There is a strong competition in the AI market between the global powers of US and China.

Thus, the sovereignty of Europe is endangered. What we need is competitiveness which has been declared as the official slogan of the EU for 2026. An AI-Act with all its legal and ethical regulations is fine, but must avoid overregulation and bureaucracy, which stifle innovation and competitiveness. Otherwise, European sovereignty is endangered. Europe must become more independent not only in energy supply, but in general technologically, economically, politically and militarily. On the other hand, innovation and competitiveness needs international cooperation. Therefore, the European Academy has not only European members, but also non-European members as far as they have permanent cooperation with European research institutions.

In a competition, competitors are driven and motivated by different values and interests. Are there only national and capital interests? A trademark of Europe should be the connection of innovation power with Europe's Green Deal and responsibility for our planet Earth. Europe should strive to become a leading innovation power to support the welfare of its countries but also integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its technologies.

Europe is challenged in a rapidly changing multi-centered world with local conflicts and hybrid wars which can initiate a global war. Drones and automated AI-powered weapons, but also unlimited nuclear rearmament make it possible. Therefore, it is time again to remember the Russell-Einstein Manifesto against atomic weapons (1955) which should be reconsidered in the age of AI when

weapons combine atomic and AI power: "The time has come when man must give up war. It is no longer rational to solve international problems through war." In times of conflicts and wars, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts also has a great societal and ethical responsibility in Einstein's and Russell's spirit.

Our goal as European Academy of Sciences and Arts is an internationally and interdisciplinarily working and cooperating academy: Humans who cooperate for common problem solving do not shoot at one another, but they are committed with the real common problems of mankind. Thus, our Academy is deeply connected with the European values according to the slogan of this conference: "It's about People".



Klaus Mainzer delivering his lecture on the challenges facing Europe and the role of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.
Photo: Marko Pigac

PLENARY SESSION 01

REPRESENTATIVES OF NATIONAL ACADEMIES

INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN-CENTRED SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Klaus Mainzer, University Professor
President of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts

ABSTRACT

The session examined the role of national academies and research institutions in interdisciplinary dialogue. The moderator, Prof. Klaus Mainzer, President of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, began by highlighting the current and future role of academies. Academies can no longer be merely distinguished associations of elderly dignitaries. Science and research are undergoing dramatic change. Cutting-edge research is no longer confined to university institutes and faculties, but is 'migrating' to large research institutions, start-ups and major companies. This applies even to basic research, as the awarding of Nobel Prizes in recent years demonstrates. This makes interdisciplinary platforms all the more necessary, where leading scientists from various disciplines – ranging from the humanities and social sciences to engineering and the natural sciences – can discuss the major problems facing humanity and the challenges of our time together. After all, the world's problems do not do us the favour of fitting neatly into the disciplinary boundaries, departments and faculties of yesterday.

Prof. Igor Emri, a world-renowned expert in mechanical engineering, represented the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He emphasised the importance of the technical excellence that scientists must possess in order to be able to solve problems collaboratively across disciplines. Prof. Damir Boras, a member of the Academy of Educational Sciences of Croatia and former rector of the University of Zagreb, presented a current model of how research and teaching can be conducted at university level, both nationally and internationally, within interdisciplinary consortia. Prof. Ernst Pöppel represented the long-established German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. As a neuroscientist and cognitive scientist, he has founded an interdisciplinary institute in Shanghai together with a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which promotes international and interdisciplinary dialogue. Prof. Andrew Balas is the delegate of the European Academy in the United States and represents American research organisations dedicated to the health and life sciences. The health and life sciences are a prime example of interdisciplinary and human-centred research and teaching. All four scientists are members of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and make an outstanding contribution to interdisciplinary dialogue within the European Academy.

Keywords: European Academy of Sciences and Arts, interdisciplinary platforms, cutting-edge research, neuro and cognitive science, health and life sciences



From left to right: Igor Emri, Klaus Mainzer and Damir Boras.

Photo: Marko Pigac

INVENTIVENESS AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Igor Emri, Professor
Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of artificial intelligence is transforming the way societies interact with knowledge. Information that once required years of study to access can now be retrieved, organized, and interpreted within seconds. In this new environment, the distinguishing contribution of human intelligence lies not in the possession of knowledge itself, but in the capacity for inventiveness—the ability to generate new ideas and connect existing knowledge in unexpected ways.

This contribution argues that inventiveness represents one of the fundamental drivers of human civilization. Scientific discoveries, technological breakthroughs, and societal transformations have historically emerged from creative insights that convert knowledge into new possibilities. However, inventive ideas rarely arise in isolation. Their probability increases significantly within environments that encourage curiosity, interdisciplinary interaction, and intellectual freedom.

Such environments may be described as innovation ecosystems, where universities, industry, government institutions, and society interact to transform ideas into practical innovations. While technological innovation often receives the greatest attention, the development of new forms of cooperation and institutional organization—societal innovation—may be equally important for addressing the complex challenges of modern societies.

Within the European context, the effectiveness of innovation ecosystems is particularly important for smaller countries. Scientific excellence must be demonstrated through international competition, while national cooperation between institutions enables knowledge to generate tangible societal impact.

The central message is that societies progress not merely through the accumulation of knowledge, but through the environments they create to nurture inventiveness.

Keywords: inventiveness, innovation ecosystems, artificial intelligence, societal innovation, knowledge transformation



Igor Emri and Klaus Mainzer.

Photo: Marko Pigac

SCIENTISTS ARE NATURAL AMBASSADORS – ACADEMIES PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK

Ernst Pöppel, Professor

Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Germany

Shanghai International Studies University, China

ABSTRACT

Independent of history, cultural constraints, languages, religions, political systems, financial opportunities, scientists are the only ones that create a unity of trust across countries. Even during the „Cold War“ the Leopoldina, the National Academy of Sciences in Germany, kept the door open between East and West. Personally, being a member of the Leopoldina, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and other academies, I have used these academic platforms for international work in the domain of brain science and psychology; young and not so young researchers from many countries have worked together developing global friendships and creating trust.

This internationality is combined with interdisciplinarity. Members from different countries participate with their specific expertise. One has to distinguish between horizontal and vertical interdisciplinarity. „Horizontal“ indicates that different research areas are related to each other; for example, scientists from the humanities, the arts, natural or life sciences create links between their expertise. „Vertical“ means that the data generating mechanisms are explored to better understand, for instance, subjective phenomena like aesthetic appreciation in visual arts, music or poetry. „Neuroaesthetics“ is typical for this vertical interdisciplinarity.

Both types of interdisciplinarity within the context of internationality require a new concept of academic education. To be educated, to be „cultured“, my suggestion is to think about a tripod: 1) Everyone should be a specialist. One is dedicated to one specific domain; an eminent inventor once said that one should be the best in the world in one's area of expertise. 2) But to be a specialist is not sufficient; it would be absurd to be only a specialist. One has to gain a broad landscape of knowledge; i.e. interdisciplinary education provides this broad frame. This is the task of universities, and the pride one gains through academic education as a specialist is accompanied by modesty. One knows that one cannot be a specialist of everything. 3) On the basis of this knowledge one gets the third prong in the tripod for free which is respect. One appreciates the special expertise of others. Respect is not tolerance, which comes from above; respect is appreciating others on equal level. Given this tripod of academic education „scientists are natural ambassadors“.

Keywords: interdisciplinarity, internationality, education, brain science

PATHWAYS OF HIGH-IMPACT RESEARCH: FROM REPRODUCIBILITY TO REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Andrew Balas, Professor

Biomedical Research Innovation Laboratory, Augusta University, USA

ABSTRACT

A substantial proportion of biomedical research fails to achieve its intended impact due to systemic inefficiencies across the research lifecycle. Evidence indicates that more than 75% of pre-clinical findings are not reproducible, with major industry efforts reporting higher rates. Design and conduct deficiencies—ranging from inadequate power calculations to flawed statistical analyses and incomplete reporting—further compromise validity. In clinical research, 40–74% of trials yield uninformative results, and more than half remain unpublished or incomplete, representing significant avoidable waste.

This presentation examines the underlying drivers of low-impact research and proposes a structured pathway toward high-impact outcomes. Drawing on empirical evidence and historical exemplars, it emphasizes that impactful science is not the result of isolated breakthroughs but of sustained, iterative inquiry. The trajectory described by Nobel Laureate Thomas C. Südhof—characterized by cumulative insights rather than singular “eureka” moments—illustrates the importance of continuity, validation, and expansion of findings over time.

Central to this framework are seven “golden rules” of productive research: (1) anchoring work in significant practical or theoretical problems; (2) committing to long-term, multi-project efforts; (3) ensuring reproducibility through iterative validation; (4) exercising effective leadership in team-building and resource acquisition; (5) developing a balanced trajectory of collaborations, funding, and dissemination; (6) maintaining alignment with real-world applications through partnerships and innovation; and (7) focusing on and communicating solutions that benefit broad populations.

Research leadership plays a pivotal role in operationalizing these principles by fostering team culture, ensuring methodological rigor, and aligning scientific goals with societal needs. By addressing systemic deficiencies and promoting disciplined, problem-oriented inquiry, the proposed pathways aim to reduce research waste, enhance productivity, and ultimately generate more and better scientific, public health, and economic impact.

Keywords: research reproducibility, research leadership, clinical trial efficiency, scientific impact, research waste

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES TO RESPOND TO THIS DANGEROUS TIME

Jonathan Granoff

President, Global Security Institute

Trustee of the World Academy of Art and Science

Senior Advisor and United Nations Representative of the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summits of Nobel Peace Laureates

Signatory to the Global Peace Offensive

NEVER FORGET WHY

The currency of human relations, including amongst nations, is trust. Success depends upon it. Today, two alternatives are before us. Because of nuclear weapons, climate change, biodiversity loss, and the disruption of nature's regenerative systems we can destroy ourselves. Through the wise use of science and technology, and the tools of law, diplomacy and trust we can advance cooperation and human security and thus eliminate poverty, cure diseases, and build a flourishing, peaceful global civilization.

The powers arising from science and technology are at the heart of this dual capacity. These powers arise from the application of the scientific method—a relatively recent development in human history, only about 400 years old. This method, based on experimentation, measurement, predictability, and replication, has enabled extraordinary control over the natural world. It has transformed knowledge into practical capability, giving humanity tools of immense consequence.



Keynote Speaker Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute. Photo: Marko Pigac

While science excels at answering “how,” it often neglects the deeper question of “why.” This imbalance has led to distortions across human activity. Without guiding values and the insights arising from wisdom, knowledge can produce law without justice, medicine without healing, art without meaning, finance disconnected from meeting human needs through producing goods and services, religion devoid of love and transcendence, and technology—especially weapons—without effective legal and moral constraints. The most extreme example of this distortion is nuclear weapons. The more this weapon is improved, the less security is obtained. Despite the illusion of security they provide, their existence increases global insecurity and places the future of humanity at constant risk of annihilation by accident, miscalculation, or intent.

Inquiring deeply into the “why” remains paramount. What purpose does our work serve? Does it enhance the human condition? These are not technical questions but moral ones, and their answers arise not from data but from the core of our humanity. In sum, learning to live together as human beings and respond realistically to common threats is both a moral and practical necessity.

Some of modernity’s wisest men, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell and Joseph Rotblat were instrumental in the creation of the World Academy of Art and Science. They understood that scientific advancement must be integrated with ethics, law, diplomacy, and moral responsibility. Their insight underscores a key argument: knowledge alone is insufficient. Without wisdom and values, the powers granted humanity through intellectual applications are dangerous.

WAAS’ Peace Offensive is designed to address the current crisis in global instability and extraordinary threat. It is resonant with “Remember your humanity, and forget the rest”, the central plea of the 1955 Russell-Einstein Manifesto, signed by Joseph Rotblat, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, and nine other Nobel Laureates, several of whom also created the Nobel Peace Laureate organization, the Pugwash Conferences which urge scientists to adopt the Hippocratic Oath “to do no harm.”

In sum, “Love people, use things—never love things and use people.” This phrase encapsulates the broader message that human security and dignity must always guide our efforts and never become subservient to technological pursuits. Ultimately, the survival and flourishing of humanity depend not on the expansion of our capabilities, but on the alignment of those capabilities with compassion, responsibility, and a renewed commitment to our shared humanity.

PLENARY SESSION 02

PEACE OFFENSIVE ROLLOUT - WHAT IT TAKES

Donato Kiniger-Passigli, Vice-President
World Academy of Art and Science

This plenary session brought together distinguished international experts and senior practitioners from the fields of peacebuilding, diplomacy, and strategic policy to discuss the practical, institutional, and political conditions required to advance inclusive and sustainable peace in an increasingly complex global environment.



From left to right: Jonathan Granoff, Thania Paffenholz, Paul Dziatkowiec and Donato Kiniger-Passigli.
Photo: Marko Pigac

*In times of heightened political polarization and violence, there is great need to provide a concrete way for people in all their diversity to get involved in building and securing peace, based on the principles of de-escalation, multistakeholder engagement, and drawing on local knowledge. This idea of launching a proactive, dialogue-driven peacebuilding strategy, spearheaded by the academic community in collaboration with civil society, came to me while revisiting the work of Charles Egerton Osgood, a pioneering behaviourist known for his cross-cultural research and the Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT) theory. Osgood explored how reciprocal, unilateral gestures could help deescalate hostilities and spark cooperative behaviour: *The Peace Offensive: A New Strategic Framework for Conflict Resolution*¹ and *Time for a Peace Offen-**

1 Donato Kiniger Passigli, "The Peace Offensive: A New Strategic Framework for Conflict Resolution," Cadmus Journal, July 10, 2025.

sive, are the first two articles published in *Cadmus Journal*² that expanded and brought up to date this theoretical framework. A third article: *The Global Peace Offensive: A common framework for roll-out* will be published in the upcoming issue of the same journal.

1 THE PEACE OFFENSIVE AND ITS VISION

A Peace Offensive is a concentrated attempt by one nation or group to bring about peace actively, especially by means of conciliatory gestures or proposals (Collins Dictionary).

Promoted by the World Academy of Arts and Science (WAAS), the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA), and the Alma Mater Europaea (AMEU), with the active support of the Club of Rome, this initiative has already established a first Global Peace Offensive Center (GPOC) in Maribor, Slovenia. The operational points of this initiative for peace are reflected in the *Vision for a Global Peace Offensive* (October 21, 2024)³ and the *Call for Action* (March 14, 2025)⁴, co-signed by WAAS, EASA, Alma Mater Europaea University, and a growing network of academic and civil-society organizations.

This aim is to promote peace globally, allowing science and art, knowledge and experience to converge on finding comprehensive solutions to the most intractable conflicts and existential threats. Its timeliness is compelling given the heightened political polarization and violence, the failure of global leadership to address such challenges at a more official level, and the ongoing surge of social movements, groups and individuals (young people in particular) interested in meaningfully contributing to peace efforts. Moreover, within the academic sphere we seek to harness an interdisciplinary approach as well as an intergenerational and cross-cultural 'coming together', something that few other peace-building initiatives currently manage to actualize.

2 THE GLOBAL PEACE OFFENSIVE: CORE PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

GPO's distinctive feature is to focus on issues and solutions; the what, where, and how of a conflict, so as to promote a clearer understanding, based on key facts, narratives, examples, and thus to establish the scope for tension reduction.

The three core principles outlined in the Global Peace Offensive endorsed by the collaborating institutions (and to be shared with those wanting to get involved) are:

- **A focus on localized initiatives leading to de-escalation:** Focusing on incremental progress toward sustainable, issue-specific problems and solutions (as opposed to a focus on grand schemes and agreements that may be less well anchored among people and interest groups on the ground),
- **Partnership development and deepened trust-building:** Creating a living repository of interested institutional partners (and pioneering individuals in those institutions), in order to create a sense of joint purpose and a facilitated process of peer learning at all levels (among members of academia, grassroots organisations, other civil society organisations, municipalities or other local government, other socio-economic actors such as the media, unions, interest-based organisations etc.); momentum building and creating a sense of community, reinforced by effective inter-communal and public communications.
- **Iterative processes of dialogue facilitation:** Engage in iterative processes of dialogue facilitation with a cumulative effect towards lasting peace, through cultural, scientific, educational diplomacy, and traditional diplomatic channels.

2 Donato Kiniger Passigli, "Time for a Peace Offensive," *Cadmus Journal*, July 31, 2024.

3 Available at: https://worldacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Vision-for-the-global-peace-offensive_oct2024.pdf

4 Available at: https://worldacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/GPO_call-for-action_march2025.pdf

3 THE NEED FOR A COMMON DIAGNOSTIC FRAMEWORK

While the GPO embraces diversity in how tools are used and findings interpreted for dialogue, a shared diagnostic approach among those involved is crucial for effective implementation. Such a framework offers several advantages:

- **Facilitates broader participation:** It lowers the bar for getting involved, reducing the need for re-inventing methodologies and approaches while still allowing for local adaptation and improvements through iterative testing.
- **Ensures adherence to shared fundamental principles:** Guarantees that core values and minimum standards are upheld within the framework based on integrity, independence and impartiality of the facilitation process under the GPO umbrella, maintaining a cohesive vision.
- **Enhances comparability and peer learning:** Improves the ability to compare lessons learned across diverse contexts, fostering peer learning.

Examples of problem-solving and knowledge generation for de-escalation	- Initiatives to increase cultural understanding and peace education, - Youth involvement - Emergent civil society networks working for de-escalation - Available conflict/peace research or other forms of documentation, knowledge generation	- Areas that need further documentation or where there is scope for civic engagement
Potential areas where there is scope for tension reduction	- Areas where there is momentum and ongoing activity that has proven or potential peace effects on the ground - A broad mapping of domains that interlink at macro (socio-cultural/economic), meso (institutional), and micro (individual or community/neighborhood levels)	- Identified areas where there appears to be scope for a range of micro-solutions to contribute to an overall de-escalation – to be further explored as part of GPO action research and facilitation

Underlying questions:

- How can existing efforts by academia and civil society play a role when it comes to trust-building and alignment of interests that lead to tension reduction and de-escalation?
- Who needs to be involved? Who is currently excluded?
- How would narratives and storylines have to shift to support peace efforts?

Employing a systems thinking approach, the focus should be on identifying key actors, their interests, and points of connection or contention that either align or fragment relationships. Understanding these dynamics can de-escalate conflict and promote peace.

(i) Focusing on Positive Pivot Points for Localized Action (Building Trust and De-escalation)

A 'positive pivot' means a turn of events – big or small – based on new *relational connections* among people (citizens), grassroots groups, academia, or other civic engagements that gradually and incrementally build a foundation for a potential shift in systemic patterns of conflict.

The GPO intends to support peace efforts globally, through citizens' diplomacy and peacebuilding initiatives, starting from the most promising localized initiatives. These efforts seek to unleash local capacities and ownership to create momentum for peacebuilding efforts, using cultural, scientific, economic, educational, and environmental diplomacy, engaging political, economic, and media systems. The focus is on what brings actors together in joint problem-solving and understanding in each context, rather than focusing on lofty long-term goals. The idea of localization also means co-creation of a set of principles and ideas that are shared (with sufficient clarity and leadership to form an agreed foundation), while still allowing for local adaptation and dissemination.

(ii) Engaging Academia, Civil Society, and Policymakers (Bridging Sectors for Peace)

The GPO initiative should serve as a motivating and unifying „umbrella“ where peers can learn from each other and share lessons internationally, drawing on a wider network of institutions and academia. While many localized and global processes for peacebuilding already exist, many do so in parallel, and few make it to the forefront of policy dialogue, which lately tends to focus on rearmament with little attention to civic engagement. The idea behind the GPO is to create a broader common platform and framework where lessons can be shared, and insights can be used for peer learning while also drawing global attention to the positive impacts of civic action.

The GPOC in Maribor is an effort to set up such a hub for practical peacebuilding, enhancing expertise and know-how. It builds on numerous similar peacebuilding initiatives but differs in that it seeks to be a clearinghouse for knowledge exchange for people-driven efforts. It will host workshops⁵, conduct research, provide training, and facilitate dialogue among peacebuilders from different countries. To that end, emphasis should be placed on the importance of non-official mediation, involving academics, NGOs, the business community, youth networks, and individuals, in addressing the deeper causes of conflict. One popular approach is the problem-solving workshop, aiming to improve relationships between conflicting parties and address root causes.

As such, the peer learning component will be central to make sure that localized action is featured and shared at a global level. To support this, regional knowledge hubs in host institutions, such as GPOC in Maribor (in host institutions), can support efforts for peer exchange while linking emerging lessons with other knowledge strands or themes, securing the interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving.

4 BREAKING CYCLES AND PRIORITIZING HUMAN SECURITY

Mutual deterrence tends to freeze constructive initiatives, necessitating a deliberate move away from patterns of military escalation. When addressing ongoing conflicts, prioritizing civil peace is essential because it stabilizes society and prevents violence, whereas liberal peace, which promotes political and economic changes, is part of an ongoing peacebuilding process rather than a final achievement. Consequently, peace agreements should be viewed as starting points for change, not as final solutions. We need both a long-term strategic perspective and immediate concrete action, characterized by unwavering firmness paired with sustained patience in the pursuit of benevolent interdependence. Since war originates in the minds of people, weapons alone cannot provide lasting solutions to human conflicts.

There is an urgent need to exercise imagination and creativity in our approaches, while prioritizing dedicated support for the United Nations and its essential role in the maintenance of international peace, sustainable development, and universal human rights, in accordance with the principles established in the UN Charter.

A solution-oriented approach in peacebuilding should be consistently adopted, recognizing that there exists no simple duality of good versus bad actors. In all violent conflict situations, no party can be considered entirely right or entirely wrong, requiring a nuanced understanding and balanced engagement with all stakeholders.

5 CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

The Global Peace Offensive represents a vital effort to promote sustainable peace in an era increasingly marked by conflict and global division. By adopting a comprehensive common diagnostic framework and implementing its three strategic pillars, the GPO can effectively engage diverse actors, foster meaningful collaboration, and drive transformational change at both local and global levels.

As reiterated above, the GPO's framework is fundamentally based on three core principles. The first principle emphasizes a concentrated focus on localized initiatives for de-escalation, anchoring progress in sustainable, issue-specific solutions that are carefully tailored to meet the distinct needs of communities and interest groups operating on the ground. The second principle underscores the critical importance of partnership development and trust-building, creating an expansive network of institutional partners and pioneering individuals to cultivate shared purpose and facilitate cross-sector peer learning. The third principle calls for iterative dialogue processes facilitated through cultural, scientific, and educational diplomacy, complementing traditional diplomatic channels to support lasting peace.

5 A recent example of a workshop conducted by WAAS, BSUN & GPOC: Challenges to Peace in the Black Sea and the Role of the Tatars for a Future Based on Security, Trust & Cooperation (5 December 2025) ([<https://worldacademy.org/challenges-to-peace-in-the-black-sea-and-the-role-of-the-tatars-for-a-future-based-on-security-trust-cooperation/>])

Crucially, the GPO also recognizes the urgent need to break free from the destructive cycle of mutual nuclear deterrence and military build-up, instead prioritizing a broader understanding of human security that reflects people's basic needs, equity, aspirations, and opportunities, while addressing common root causes of conflict and social tensions to anticipate and prevent worse consequences. Social engagement and political participation through deliberative processes foster genuine peace and security in the long run.

As these foundational principles gain traction across diverse stakeholder groups, the critical next step lies in their effective operationalization to transform theoretical frameworks into tangible, measurable peacebuilding outcomes.

This debate wishes to add additional perspectives to the relevance and urgency of the Global Peace Offensive. Participants will address a main question: "Peace Offensive - What it takes". Speakers will consider:

- 1 How can we expand the circle of those directly involved in the Global Peace Offensive?
- 2 How to bring changemakers together and around future-oriented conversations (especially experts, researchers, businesses and grassroots leaders)?
- 3 How to raise a sense of collective responsibility, while identifying concrete actions?
- 4 How human security can be central to this paradigm?

THE PEACE OFFENSIVE: ALIGNING THE WORLD'S "INITIATIVES OF VIRTUE" FOR COHERENT GLOBAL ACTION

Jonathan Granoff, President
Global Security Institute

ABSTRACT

Today, facing geopolitical fragmentation, rising authoritarianism, and accelerating global risks—from nuclear proliferation to climate instability and pandemics and even war—it is necessary to amplify the numerous and presently fragmented initiatives that offer pathways to peace. Across the world, countless actors are advancing human rights, environmental sustainability, public health, disarmament, and social justice. Yet these efforts remain siloed, insufficiently coordinated, and strategically underleveraged.

The Peace Offensive can identify, connect, and amplify what may be called the world's "initiatives of virtue"—those efforts rooted in the protection of human dignity, ecological balance, and long-term human survival. These initiatives reflect deeply aligned values and often share overlapping constituencies. Individuals and institutions committed to environmental sustainability are highly likely to support human rights; those committed to human rights are often aligned with nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; and those engaged in disarmament frequently recognize the necessity of international cooperation and the rule of law. These are not artificial alignments but natural coalitions—organic expressions of shared human values.

By contrast, many dominant political coalitions are "astroturfed"—constructed through identity signaling, fear amplification, and historical contingency rather than genuine value coherence. In the USA, for example, the passionate anti-abortion advocates are highly likely to be politically aligned with authoritarian leaders implementing increased militarism, more prisons and fewer schools, less health care, fossil fuel profligacy, and environmental irresponsibility, and yes, even war.

There are numerous examples of successful coordinated initiatives within particular sectors such as nuclear nonproliferation and climate change. The World Academy of Art and Science has significantly advanced human security. The Peace Offensive aims to improve on this process through a dedicated "coherence infrastructure." This includes mapping aligned initiatives across sectors, identifying patterns of value convergence, convening diverse actors, and developing shared narratives that reinforce cooperation over division. It will be an antidote to fear-based political manipulation, which undermines trust, weakens adherence to international law, and erodes the foundations of collective security.

At its core, the Peace Offensive recognizes that the majority of the world's people—and nations—support cooperation, stability, and the rule of law. The challenge is not persuasion but organization. By transforming dispersed efforts into a more coherent, mutually reinforcing network, the initiative seeks to unlock latent global capacity for coordinated action.

Ultimately, the Peace Offensive is grounded in a simple but urgent premise: that humanity already possesses the values, knowledge, and institutional pathways necessary to build a safer and more just world. What is required now is the strategic alignment of those assets—bringing heart and action together—to move from aspiration to implementation at scale.

We are informed by our deepest human values that manifest as living in peace. It is resonant with an insight: The heart without the hand degrades into mere sentiment. The hand without the heart is dangerous. When the virtues of the heart are brought into action the mystery of goodness that makes us fully human flourishes.

Keywords: global cooperation, peacebuilding initiatives, human security, value alignment, collective action



Jonathan Granoff and Thania Paffenholz.

Photo: Marko Pigac

THE PEACE OFFENSIVE ROLLOUT: WHAT IT TAKES

Thania Paffenholz, Founder
Inclusive Peace, Switzerland

ABSTRACT

Introduction & Key Message: In a world marked by accelerating geopolitical fragmentation, rising militarisation, and eroding trust, the risk of escalation is higher than at any point in recent decades. The Peace Offensive responds to this moment with a clear proposition: reversing current trends requires a collective, action-oriented effort that places human security, bridge-building, and societal resilience at its core. Peace is no longer a sectoral endeavour—it must become a shared societal responsibility.

Purpose and Goals: The initiative aims to catalyse a coherent global response to contemporary insecurity by linking dialogue, knowledge, and action. Its goal is not coordination in a narrow institutional sense, but the creation of a collective and coherent effort across fragmented actors and networks.

Core Findings & Essential Thoughts: The central finding is that existing peacebuilding efforts remain too fragmented, reactive, and insufficiently connected to broader societal dynamics. Addressing this gap requires a structural shift toward integrated approaches that combine inclusive dialogue, knowledge, and mobilisation.

Methods & Approach: Three Pillars. (1) *Future-Oriented Conversations* Reality-based, action-driven dialogues bringing together diverse actors—policy-makers, researchers, artists, civil society, and grassroots leaders—to co-create responses. These conversations must move beyond analysis toward actionable outcomes. Maribor, positioned between East and West, offers a strategic space for such bridge-building dialogues. (2) *Mobilisation and Action Network* weaving to connect existing initiatives into a broader collective effort. This includes identifying priorities, launching joint campaigns, and fostering collaboration across sectors. The emphasis is on coherence rather than centralised coordination. (3) *Serving Research* Research acts as a supporting instrument, not an end in itself. It synthesises lessons learned, produces concise evidence-based strategy papers, and informs both dialogue and action. This includes short, policy-relevant outputs that translate existing knowledge into usable insights and directly support conversations and mobilisation.

Conclusion: The Peace Offensive proposes a shift from fragmented interventions to a systemic, collective approach. Its success depends not only on linking dialogue, knowledge, and action, but on ensuring coherence across these elements. Collective does not mean centrally coordinated; rather, it implies a shared direction, mutual reinforcement, and a common orientation toward addressing the drivers of insecurity. By fostering alignment without uniformity, the Peace Offensive seeks to enable diverse actors to contribute to a broader, interconnected effort capable of responding to the complexity of today's global challenges.

Keywords: Peace Offensive, human security, collective action, inclusive peace processes, research and knowledge



Thania Paffenholz giving an inspirational speech.

Photo: Marko Pigac

PEACE OFFENSIVE

Paul Dziatkowiec

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ABSTRACT

We are living through a time of upheaval in the international system. Old systems are faltering, and in the newly emerging order there will be serious gaps to fill. It is therefore an opportune time for new thinking, and for adapting the tools and methods that we use to address conflict. Peace processes tend to focus largely on two thematic categories: politics and security. However, there is often more complexity in a conflict; and for peace to take hold, there are deeper grievances to deal with – an array of fears, needs, perceptions and misperceptions, and the imperatives of a more broadly defined human security.

Besides the politicians and the fighters, other actors – such as civil society – often bring a deeper understanding of these factors, and possible solutions. Thus involving them in the dialogue can increase the likelihood of a durable peace. Applying a multidisciplinary lens can also expand the options. Apart from the security and political domains, there are other disciplines that may present 'entry points' and good ideas. One is the academic/scientific community. At times, science diplomacy can create the most viable entry points for dialogue. Identifying shared threats can build convergence and promote joint efforts between conflict parties. The Cold War can serve as inspiration: even in tense periods, the superpowers could work together on issues of mutual concern: the eradication of Smallpox, and the closure of the hole in the Ozone layer. Another set of actors worth considering in peace processes is business, or at least pro-peace business. While this should be done with great care (not least because business can be a spoiler), there are times when business can bring important strengths to peace processes – not least visionary ideas.

Finally, several initial steps could be considered in defining the scope of the Peace Offensive: (1) Conducting a mapping of similar initiatives, to ensure a clear niche and added value; (2) Assessing the demand for the Peace Offensive's offering (as well as the supply-side capacity); (3) Establishing a community of exchange between science, business and government.

These early phases of the Peace Offensive could provide proof of concept, applied to a limited selection of early projects. Once their impact is assessed, lessons are drawn, and the concept accordingly refined, a further scale-up of the Offensive could be considered.

Keywords: inclusivity, multidisciplinary, science diplomacy, business



Paul Dziatkwiec presenting the Peace Offensive initiative.

Photo: Marko Pigac

INVITED SPEAKERS

PHYSIOTHERAPY IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Alena Kobesova, PhD, Professor

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This lecture explores the evolving role of physiotherapy in an era increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence, robotics, and advanced diagnostic technologies. While modern medicine continues to benefit from technological innovations that enhance patient care and rehabilitation outcomes, the lecture emphasizes that the foundations of effective physiotherapy remain rooted in clinical reasoning, patient communication, and hands-on examination. The central message highlights the need to balance technological progress with traditional clinical skills to ensure holistic, patient-centered rehabilitation.

The introduction situates physiotherapy within a rapidly advancing medical environment. New technologies, including robotic-assisted rehabilitation, motion analysis systems, and digital monitoring tools, have significantly improved diagnostic precision and therapeutic effectiveness. These innovations enable people with severe disabilities to achieve levels of mobility and performance that were previously unimaginable. However, the lecture raises an important question: as healthcare increasingly relies on technology, can objective instruments replace the clinician's observational skills, tactile assessment, and communication with patients?



Alena Kobesova delivering her keynote lecture on physiotherapy in the era of artificial intelligence and modern technology. Photo: Marko Pigac

The primary research problem addressed is the potential overreliance on technological diagnostics at the expense of comprehensive clinical evaluation. The lecture challenges the assumption that technological measurements are inherently more reliable than human observation. Instead, it proposes that physiotherapists must integrate both approaches. Technology should confirm and complement clinical findings rather than replace them.

The methodological approach of the lecture is primarily educational and illustrative. It presents several clinical case studies, supported by imaging technologies such as MRI, dynamic MRI, high-resolution manometry, and 3D motion analysis. These examples demonstrate how combining modern diagnostic tools with traditional physiotherapy methods can lead to accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. Clinical examination techniques including posture assessment, movement analysis, neurological evaluation, and patient history (anamnesis) play a critical role in identifying the true causes of musculoskeletal disorders.

The discussion highlights several key findings from the presented cases. One case demonstrates how detailed movement observation revealed dysfunctional muscle coordination that could not be fully detected through imaging alone. Another case shows how a patient suffering from severe low back pain experienced immediate improvement after manual treatment of a decades-old surgical scar, an issue that technological diagnostic methods had not identified as the primary cause. Additional examples include the treatment of gastroesophageal reflux through diaphragmatic activation and physiotherapy techniques measured with high-resolution manometry, and the rehabilitation of an elite rower whose chronic back pain was traced to subtle biomechanical deviations identified through advanced kinematic analysis.

These case studies reinforce the lecture's central argument: accurate diagnosis requires understanding the "larger clinical picture." Pain and dysfunction often result from complex interactions between posture, movement patterns, past injuries, and repetitive strain. Even small biomechanical errors, when repeated thousands of times, can lead to significant structural changes in the body. Therefore, physiotherapists must assess the entire patient rather than focusing solely on the site of pain.

The lecture also emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration and patient engagement. Successful rehabilitation often requires cooperation between physicians, physiotherapists, and other healthcare professionals. Patients themselves must also be active participants in their recovery through proper exercise and lifestyle adjustments.

Ultimately, the lecture concludes that although AI and technological innovations will reshape rehabilitation medicine, they cannot replace the essential human elements of clinical expertise, empathy, and hands-on care. The most effective healthcare professionals will be those who integrate advanced technologies with strong diagnostic reasoning, practical skills, and a holistic understanding of the patient.

Keywords: physiotherapy, clinical examination, rehabilitation technology, musculoskeletal disorders, holistic patient care

A NEW UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE IN HUNGARY: PEACE, SECURITY AND TRANSFORMATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

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Institute of Advanced Studies Köszeg (iASK), Hungary

The plenary lecture presents the vision and ongoing development of a new United Nations University (UNU) Institute in Köszeg, Hungary, focused on peace, security, and transformative technologies. The initiative builds on over a decade of interdisciplinary work at the Institute of Advanced Studies Köszeg, which has aimed to transcend traditional academic silos by integrating natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The project highlights the need to reevaluate conventional institutional frameworks in order to more effectively address the complex global challenges of the 21st century.

The central message emphasizes the importance of innovative, flexible, and globally connected academic structures that balance academic excellence with practical engagement. The proposed UNU institute seeks to avoid both the rigidity of traditional universities and the isolation of purely theoretical "ivory tower" models. Instead, it promotes a hybrid approach that integrates research, education, and real-world problem-solving, particularly through interdisciplinary collaboration and regional development strategies.

The purpose of the initiative is to establish an international "synergy campus" that promotes collaboration among academic institutions, policymakers, and local communities. The institute aims to contribute to addressing pressing global issues such as poverty, climate change, pandemics, and escalating conflicts, while maintaining sensitivity to regional and local contexts. Special emphasis is placed on developing new postgraduate programs, including PhD and postdoctoral training, aligned with the priorities of the United Nations.

The project is grounded in interdisciplinary, evidence-based research and long-term international partnerships. It builds on existing networks with European and global institutions, as well as UNESCO programs, and incorporates both theoretical inquiry and applied development practices. The "Creative Cities, Sustainable Regions" (KRAFT) framework exemplifies this approach by linking cultural heritage with innovative regional development.

A notable aspect of the initiative is its location in a small border town, which is seen not as a limitation but as a strategic advantage for fostering intercultural dialogue and cross-border cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. The project also responds to growing criticism of traditional institutions by proposing a more adaptive and socially responsible model of higher education and research.

Ultimately, the lecture underscores the urgency of fostering peace-oriented, collaborative research environments in a rapidly changing and increasingly conflict-prone world, positioning the new UNU institute as a catalyst for both regional and global transformation.

Keywords: interdisciplinary research, United Nations University, peace and security, transformative technologies, regional development

PLENARY SESSION 03

INTERNATIONAL INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

THE CASE OF RUSSIA, AND HOW DEMOCRACIES SHOULD RESPOND

Nigel Baker

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Former UK ambassador to Bolivia, the Holy See and Slovakia

ABSTRACT

My presentation examines contemporary Russian interference in European domestic politics and elections, arguing that such interference should be understood not as episodic "meddling" but as a sustained strategic effort to erode democratic resilience. Rather than primarily aiming to alter vote counts, Russian activity focuses on delegitimising democratic institutions, amplifying social polarisation, and internalising influence through domestic actors. I trace the evolution from earlier cyber operations and hack-and-leak campaigns towards complex "ecosystems of influence", characterised by foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), AI-enabled content generation, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, and the use of domestic proxies.

Drawing on examples from the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Central and Eastern Europe, I illustrate how interference increasingly exploits socioeconomic anxiety, institutional trust deficits, and uneven democratic resilience. I highlight three core strategic objectives underpinning Russian interference: delegitimation of democratic processes, polarisation through support to political extremes, and the internalisation of foreign narratives within domestic political discourse. These dynamics expose structural vulnerabilities within our democracies, including fragmented national responses, lagging regulation of political finance and online platforms, and legal constraints that complicate timely intervention.

I conclude by emphasising that effective responses, including in Slovenia, must go beyond technical election security. Drawing on European success stories from Estonia, France, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and EU institutions, I advocate a whole-of-society approach that combines institutional capacity, network exposure, strategic communication, and civic and media literacy. Protecting democratic legitimacy, even when politically inconvenient, remains central to countering interference and reaffirming the value of liberal democracy.

Keywords: Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), democratic resilience, Russian interference, polarisation and delegitimation, European elections



Nigel Baker during the session.

Photo: Marko Pigac

ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN CROATIAN INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Croatia has a very "rich" history of dealing with threats coming from outside (inside also). Especially from the Homeland War until today. The experiences from the Homeland War help us in today's early recognition of these processes and easier identification of the real managers and instigators of those activities. If we focus only on the last ten years, we can conclude the following: (1) The process of information laundering should not be neglected. That is, the process of transfer/impact on the information environment in Croatia from another country by transferring (dis)information published in another country through different communication channels to different audiences as the truth. Most often, during the process of transfer those disinformation sources are described as "relevant" and "independent".

(2) Non-governmental organizations (individuals), associations and parties with a populist narrative, interested (for various reasons: ideological, financial, political) individuals and legal entities, media workers (I deliberately do not write journalists because many call themselves journalists, but they are not in the same profession or engaged in the same job as real, serious and truly independent journalists) often act as amplifiers of disinformation that are placed in the information environment, whether they are conscious of it or not. These individuals and groups are located both in the Republic of Croatia and abroad.

(3) The main "players" behind these activities today are Russia, Serbia, some circles within the Muslim community from Bosnia and Herzegovina who want a unitary state of Bosnia and Herzegovina modelled on the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

(4) Members of politically marginal and radical left and right political options who in such a way, by encouraging a radicalizing and exclusionary narrative, try to bring divisions into society in order to gain visibility. The media, on the other hand, are playing into their hands because they are looking for extremes, on which they can build their media visibility and thus attract financial resources that make their work more lucrative.

(5) If a foreigner came to Croatia for the first time and started to follow the media, including social networks, (s)he would think that (s)he is in the time between 1941 and 1948. That is because the main narrative in Croatia, nominally, is still World War II and is deliberately imposed. In this way, trivial topics (trivial because modern Croatia, which is clearly and unequivocally stated in the Constitution, laws and practice, is based on the Homeland War with a clear condemnation of the Ustasha regime) occupy a leading place in the public information environment in the way of introducing deep social divisions, which tries to prevent decision-making on topics that we have to deal with for our individual and common future. Both nationally and internationally.

(6) There are a large number of examples that have led to these conclusions. From the media and information influence operations of Carla del Ponte, the Serbian state leadership that directly, but also through their intermediaries from Montenegro, are trying to create divisions in Croatia and antagonize their national body against Croatia and Croats, the processes of accusing the Croatian authorities of inciting Islamist terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as examples related to Russian and pro-Russian (Serbian and pro-Serbian also) investments (successful and unsuccessful) in Croatia, key food, transport and energy infrastructure, as well as investments in media and tourist sites that can also serve as gravitational strongholds for covert and clandestine forms of operation (SIGINT, for example).

Keywords: foreign interference, disinformation, information laundering, hybrid warfare, Croatian information environment



From left to right: Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, Nigel Baker, Gordan Akrap, Marcin Walecki and Jurij Toplak.
Photo: Marko Pigac

FOREIGN POLITICAL INTERVENTION – A CONTRASTING CASE

Paul Flather

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, foreign – or “external” – intervention in national affairs is taken to be hostile. The Russia’s ‘special initiative’ is clearly an external invasion of a sovereign country, Ukraine. There is espionage, surveillance, and misinformation. Today, there are a host of other forms of foreign intervention or ‘soft imperialism’ - including cyber hacking, AI propaganda, financial donations and bribery to curry influence, disinformation campaigns, political bullying, purchase of key utilities or companies, even building costly infrastructure projects engendering pressure loans.

But what if a national government is breaking its own laws, or abusing international human rights? What if persecuted groups invite ‘foreign intervention’? My personal involvement in delivering underground lectures, smuggling in – and out – banned or samizdat books and money for academics denied work in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe in the 1980s might well be deemed welcome external interventionism.

To be clear, I and many professorial colleagues were followed, surveilled, and even expelled. Many of us were put on the Index of Undesirables by the Communist-run Czecho government. So, officially, we would appear as guilty of undesired foreign interference.

Yet our lectures, seminars, talks, delivered under the auspices of the Jan Hus Education Foundation, set up in Oxford in 1981, to support the underground Patochka University, only started following a personal invitation from a banned professor, Julius Tomin. We went in to forestall the Government’s ‘illegal’ ban on academic freedoms, student rights to study freely, and to combat distorting official propaganda.

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the 1989 Velvet Revolution, led by Vaclav Havel, we were warmly and publicly thanked for our, albeit rather minor, contributions in the story. We were given official medals and commendations, and now the story of the JHEF is woven into the fabric of opposition to the authoritarian Communist regime.

Our ‘work’ also affirmed the purpose and values of Charter 77, set up by Havel and other dissidents, in the wake of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. It echoed the 1966 UN convention of Political and Social Rights, not to mention the 1960 Czech Constitution itself. There were valuable personal legacies for all of us involved, but also for the country now enjoying a buoyant, extensive, legacy in an unusually wide range of university philosophy teaching.

I would argue that this interventionism can now be seen as very much within the umbrella of the Responsibility-to-Protect norms agreed by the UN in 2005. Individual scholars were at risk, removed from jobs, denied proper welfare, restricted in academic thought, families victimised, children harassed in their schooling. Perhaps not as openly as facing absolute peril as in Rwanda, not ethnic cleansing, or war crimes, nevertheless being persecuted by their own government, justifying foreign intervention.

Keywords: foreign intervention, human rights violations, academic freedom, Responsibility to Protect, dissident movements

INTERNATIONAL INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

Marcin Walecki

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Comments draw both on my academic work and on my practical experience working in more than fifty democracies on the regulation of political finance, elections and on anti-corruption frameworks. My experience from these countries provides a comparative lens for understanding how foreign political financing operates in practice, how it evolves, and why it remains such a persistent challenge for democratic governance.

Financial resources have always been an integral part of political life. Countries differ significantly in how they structure their political finance systems, particularly with respect to sources and limits on donations, reporting requirements and transparency standards. Despite these differences, there is one area where a relatively broad international consensus has emerged: concern about the risks posed by foreign financial involvement in domestic politics. Reflecting these concerns, more than seventy percent of countries globally prohibit political donations originating from foreign sources. International norms have also addressed this issue directly - in 1991, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 46/130, which called on states to refrain from financing or otherwise supporting political parties or political groups in other countries, whether openly or covertly, and to avoid actions that could undermine the integrity of electoral processes abroad. The UN Resolution and Council of Europe Recommendations reflect a widely shared principle that domestic political competition should not be shaped by external financial influence. At the same time, there are many examples of legitimate and constructive forms of international assistance to democratic institutions. Such support is often provided transparently as part of broader democracy-support programmes, designed to strengthen democratic institutions and encourage collaboration between political parties in established democracies and their counterparts in emerging or transitional political systems.



From left to right on the big screens: Paul Flather and Marcin Walecki.

Photo: Marko Pigac

Foreign financing of politics itself is not a new phenomenon and if we take a longer historical perspective, external actors have attempted to shape political developments across borders for more than two centuries. In the late eighteenth century, Poland provides a well-known example: foreign powers, particularly the Russian Empire, were widely understood to influence parliamentary decision-making through bribery and patronage directed at members of the Sejm, contributing to the paralysis of reform efforts. During the First World War, Germany facilitated the return of Vladimir Lenin to Russia, hoping that revolutionary instability would weaken the Russian war effort. After the Second World War, Italy became one of the principal arenas of geopolitical competition. Both the United States and the Soviet Union invested significant resources in influencing political developments there: Washington sought to strengthen anti-communist forces, while Moscow supported the Italian Communist Party. Foreign financial influence in politics was therefore deeply embedded in Cold War geopolitical competition. The late Cold War period also offers important lessons. Support for democratic movements in Central and Eastern Europe, including assistance to the Polish Solidarity movement, demonstrated how external resources could support democratic forces under authoritarian rule. These experiences contributed to the establishment of institutions such as the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. Their purpose was precisely to institutionalise transparent, pluralistic support for democratic development abroad rather than covert electoral manipulation.

Today, foreign funding has simply adapted to new geopolitical and technological realities. Importantly, the actors involved are no longer limited to states. They include oligarchs, multinational corporations, diaspora networks, transnational ideological movements and sometimes organised crime groups. These actors operate through complex financial ecosystems involving business structures, foundations, consultancy contracts, media networks and digital platforms.

The Kremlin in particular, continues to employ a broad array of grey-zone strategies that are partly rooted in Soviet traditions of so-called "active measures." These methods combine political influence, financial leverage, disinformation and covert networks rather than relying solely on conventional military power. In the Russian strategic worldview, the so-called colour revolutions in Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004 were not domestic democratic uprisings but externally orchestrated operations by Western powers. Russian military and political leaders increasingly framed these events as a new form of hybrid warfare designed to destabilise states at relatively low cost. This perception was codified in the 2015 Presidential Decree on Russia's National Security Strategy, which identified "foreign-sponsored regime change" and the incitement of "colour revolutions" as major threats to national security. Within this framework, Russia has developed an external strategy that relies heavily on political influence operations. The objective is to shape political environments in ways that advance Russian strategic interests - loans, financial support and opaque economic relationships have become an important component of these efforts. Financial backing for populist or fringe political actors demonstrates that Russian influence operations extend far beyond online disinformation campaigns or military interventions. The goal is to exploit regulatory gaps in political finance systems. By supporting polarising political actors, encouraging unrest, undermining electoral integrity and eroding public confidence in democratic institutions, Russia seeks to create political environments more favourable to its geopolitical agenda.

Several high-profile cases illustrate these dynamics. In 2014, when Marine Le Pen's National Front required financing for its political activities, a Russian-linked bank provided a €9.4 million loan, a transaction that drew widespread scrutiny and highlighted the role of opaque financial channels in political influence operations. In the United Kingdom, the 2020 Intelligence and Security Committee report on Russian activities pointed to the "members of the Russian elite who are closely linked to Putin are identified as being involved with political organisations in the UK, having donated to political parties, with a public profile which positions them to assist Russian influence operations."

The European Parliament's report on foreign interference in democratic processes noted that Russia actively seeks contacts with political parties, political figures and movements across Europe to legitimise Russian geopolitical positions and mitigate the consequences of international isolation. Russian influence operations combine financial networks, political alliances and information campaigns in a systematic attempt to reshape political dynamics inside democratic states. The post-Soviet region offers perfect examples of how external influence interacts with oligarchic political

systems. Ukraine under Viktor Yanukovich demonstrated how financial and energy networks connected to Russian interests could translate into political leverage. Georgia and Moldova have also experienced periods of intense oligarchic influence. Figures such as Bidzina Ivanishvili in Georgia, Vladimir Plahotniuc in Moldova and Victor Orban in Hungary illustrate how concentrated economic power can dominate political institutions. Oligarchic political systems create structural vulnerabilities that Russia exploits.

Several cases in Latin America illustrate how Venezuela under Hugo Chávez used financial resources and political networks to support allied political movements in the region. One of the most frequently cited examples concerns Nicaragua, where Venezuelan assistance played a significant role in strengthening the political position of Daniel Ortega after his return to power in 2006. Through the regional oil initiative Petrocaribe and bilateral agreements managed partly outside Nicaragua's formal state budget, Venezuela provided billions of dollars in subsidised oil and financial support. Investigations by journalists and international organisations indicated that a portion of these funds was channelled through structures linked to the ruling Sandinista party and used to consolidate Ortega's political power and patronage networks. Another widely discussed case involves Argentina, particularly the 2007 presidential campaign of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. U.S. authorities investigated the so-called "suitcase scandal," in which Venezuelan businessman arrived in Buenos Aires carrying approximately \$800,000 in cash, intended to support the Kirchner campaign.

Iran has also used financial support as an instrument to build political influence in several countries across the Middle East. A prominent example is Iraq, where Iran has provided financial, logistical and organisational support to a range of Shia political parties and militia-linked political movements that emerged after 2003. Another example is Lebanon, where Iranian assistance has helped sustain Hezbollah not only as a militia but also as a major political actor embedded within the Lebanese political system. Iranian funding has supported Hezbollah's political infrastructure, social welfare networks, media operations and electoral activities, enabling the organisation to function as a hybrid actor combining armed capacity with a strong parliamentary presence. These cases illustrate how Iranian support often focuses on building durable political movements rather than simply financing individual election campaigns, creating long-term influence within domestic political institutions.

China represents a different model of foreign political influence from the more disruptive and often covert approaches associated with Russia, Venezuela or Iran. Rather than focusing primarily on direct electoral financing or short-term destabilisation, China has invested heavily in building long-term political networks through party-to-party diplomacy and elite engagement. Since President Xi Jinping came to power, relations between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and foreign political parties have been elevated as a major channel of China's international strategy. Institutions such as the CCP's International Liaison Department, the United Front Work Department and the Propaganda Department maintain extensive outreach to political elites, parties, think tanks and business communities around the world. Through initiatives such as the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties forums and regional political party forums, China has created dense transnational networks designed to gradually normalise the CCP as a legitimate global political actor and shape elite discourse around China's development model and geopolitical initiatives.

China's influence is not limited to open party-to-party diplomacy. Beijing has also been repeatedly accused of cultivating individual politicians through donations, business incentives or political patronage networks linked to the CCP's United Front system. In Australia, investigations into political donations connected to Chinese-linked influence networks have led to major political scandals and legislative reforms aimed at limiting foreign political interference. In New Zealand, subsequent investigations raised concerns that Chinese influence networks were cultivating relationships with politicians, business elites and diaspora organisations as part of a broader United Front strategy to shape policy debates. Similar concerns have emerged in Europe, where intelligence services have warned about attempts to recruit political figures, advisers and officials to promote Chinese geopolitical interests or provide access to sensitive information. In several documented cases, political donations or personal incentives were used to cultivate individuals who could influence domestic political debates or policy positions. Taken together, these examples illustrate that China operates through a dual strategy of influence. On the one hand, it promotes formal and highly visible networks of cooperation with political parties across the ideological spectrum. On the other hand, it

also cultivates individual politicians, advisers and opinion leaders through financial incentives, political patronage and long-term relationship-building.

Finally, in recent years, the transatlantic conservative political movement associated with Donald Trump's MAGA network has also begun to establish a more visible presence in European political debates. One example is the expansion of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) into Europe. In 2025, CPAC organised a major gathering in Poland just days before the presidential election, where prominent U.S. conservative figures openly supported Karol Nawrocki, presenting the event as part of a broader ideological alliance between American and European conservatives. The same network has been building a recurring platform in Hungary through CPAC Hungary, which has become an annual meeting point for American MAGA figures, European populist leaders and nationalist movements, often timed close to key political moments in the region. At the same time, new forms of political influence increasingly operate through digital platforms and informal support rather than direct funding. High-profile interventions by global business figures—such as Elon Musk's public engagement in debates around recent German elections—illustrate how social media platforms and influential individuals can shape electoral narratives without necessarily providing direct financial donations. Meanwhile, the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy has also raised questions in Europe, as it states that the United States should support the growing influence of "patriotic European parties" and even calls for "cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory within European nations." Taken together, these developments raise a broader analytical question for European democracies: should we expect a more direct and organised involvement of transnational conservative political networks, including PAC-style organisations, in European political competition in the years ahead?

To conclude, cryptocurrencies, offshore corporate structures and complex financial instruments allow political funding to move across jurisdictions with unprecedented speed and opacity. In many countries financial disclosure systems were designed in an era when campaign finance was relatively straightforward. Today, however, politicians may suddenly claim to have accumulated wealth through speculative investments in digital assets. This creates a situation in which regulators struggle to determine whether funds originate from legitimate investments or from disguised political financing. Cryptocurrencies therefore risk becoming a vehicle for political money laundering, especially where beneficial ownership transparency and financial monitoring remain weak.

The key challenge here is that we are trying to address three different political eras at once. Firstly, in geopolitical terms, we are going back to a world that often resembles the early twentieth century, with regional and global powers competing to preserve or expand their spheres of influence. Historically, imperial or hegemonic powers have used financial support for allied elites, parties or movements as a relatively low-cost method of shaping political outcomes in neighbouring or strategically important countries. By cultivating political actors who are sympathetic to their interests, external powers can indirectly influence policy choices, geopolitical alignments and domestic institutional development. In this sense, foreign political financing can be seen as a continuation of imperial practices—seeking influence over another state's political trajectory through networks, resources and patronage rather than territorial control.

Secondly, most of the legal frameworks governing political finance, political parties and elections were designed during the second half of the twentieth century and reflect the liberal democratic values and institutional realities of that period. They assume a model of politics centred on nationally organised democratic parties, territorially bounded electoral campaigns, a mixture of public and private funding of politics, and relatively slow, traceable financial transactions. Constitutional frameworks and political finance regulations were therefore built on the premise that politics operates primarily within a domestic arena, small donors and members together with public funds cover all financial needs and where national authorities monitor donations, enforce disclosure rules and oversee electoral competition.

Yet the money now moves through twenty-first century instruments — cryptocurrencies, offshore structures, shadow companies, complex beneficial ownership chains and digital payment networks — which allow donors and particularly foreign-linked resources to be transferred, disguised and layered across jurisdictions far faster than regulators can detect them.

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

Michael Pinto-Duschinsky

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ABSTRACT

Foreign interference in domestic politics is highly topical, very important but frequently misunderstood and greatly oversimplified by commentators and policymakers. Six of the commonest propositions are: 1. Outside meddling in national elections and of political life more generally has been substantially increasing; 2. It is fundamentally malign; 3. This is because the essence of democracy is that citizens in each country, not outsiders, ought to choose and dismiss governments in free and fair elections; 4. The principal interferers are Russia and China. Their main adversary is the United States; 5. International meddling primarily is a game played by superpowers; 6. The explosive growth of the internet and social media has had a revolutionary effect on political communication. It has made international influence campaigns cheaper and harder for domestic governments to control.

What are we to make of these statements? (1) International law clearly condemns only violent interference by foreigners in the domestic affairs of other countries. In exceptional circumstances, non-binding UN General Assembly resolutions oblige nations to interfere to safeguard inhabitants of other countries threatened by genocide and other forms of grave humanitarian disaster. Public international law is vaguer when it comes to more normal forms of international political interference.

(2) Motives of foreign groups and foreign governments for aiding internal political forces abroad are not always hostile, secret or forced upon reluctant local political organisations and activists. On the matter of non-malign political aid, in 1989-1990, I was asked by the policy planning staff of the UK foreign office to help devise a British democratisation policy based on a variation of existing US, West German and Canadian schemes. My recommendations which then formed the basis of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy: We should feel free to aid political parties and other groups in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa on three conditions: every grant had to be publicly listed with the precise amount given; grants were to be decided and administered at arm's length by a sponsoring British political party; the UK government would itself not choose a favoured foreign party in a country receiving financial assistance.

(3) Foreign political interference comes in a myriad of forms including but not limited to (a) assistance to labour unions by their foreign counterparts; (b) foreign investment and ownership of newspapers and other media; (c) funding of NGOs: these may function as off-shore islands of political parties; (d) 'lawfare' – namely the funding of politically sensitive litigation in the law courts of the country receiving assistance; and (e) funding of religious organisations: places of worship – according to some commentators – frequently provide powerful, unregulated political pulpits. The possibility of many alternative channels of help makes it much harder for governments wishing to regulate foreign political funding and activity to be effective. (4) Case studies show clearly that foreign political interference is largely but not only conducted by superpowers. (5) Studies by Dov Levin reveal numerous cases specifically of electoral meddling during post-war decades both by the USA and by Russia. (6) It is too early to assess the effects of the internet and social media on political campaigning and thus on foreign influence on campaigning.

Keywords: foreign political interference, international law, electoral influence, political funding, democratisation assistance



Michael Pinto-Duschinsky presenting his lecture on foreign political interference. Photo: Marko Pigac

SCIENCE POWERING GREEN INNOVATION

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World Academy of Art and Science

ABSTRACT

The green transition has great potential to clean the environment, to create clean, cheap energy, and generate enormous economic growth, turning poverty into abundance. It can also contribute to global peace when oil prices drop significantly, so that oil revenues can no longer fund wars.

Today, only a small percentage of global energy comes from green sources, and about 75% still comes from fossil fuels. Green energy refers to energy produced from renewable sources or technologies that don't pollute the environment, such as solar cells. Last year, for the first time, the price of solar energy fell below that of energy produced by any other source. But challenges remain, particularly in energy storage: we need better batteries and supercapacitors. Here too, silicon plays a role: it is replacing graphite anodes in the new generation of lithium-ion batteries.

The materials we are discovering generate needs, and those needs also generate the geopolitics of commodities, which can sometimes have dramatic consequences. Therefore, it is important that new materials don't become a new source of conflict.

Beyond today's materials, entirely new opportunities are opening. A film of MXene thinner than a human hair has very low thermal conductivity, preventing heat from escaping or penetrating from outside. A film ten times thinner than a human hair can make very warm clothing or significantly reduce building energy consumption, which accounts for about 30% of global energy use. We need the creative use of existing materials and the discovery, development, and manufacture of new materials for green technologies, including energy generation, storage, and conservation.

Another emerging field for a greener future is plasmas—gas discharges: either as fusion (where European institutes and industry are actively leading in processes and materials) or as a field of low-temperature and technological plasmas that provide dry, green technology for material engineering, or active processes ranging from energy conversion to energy storage, from materials for batteries to direct gas conversion, and from pollution control to a crucial role in biomedical and agriculture applications.

When clean energy becomes cheap, it is easy to provide drinking water, grow food, and address many other societal issues. When energy is expensive, there is war over scarce resources.

The best way forward is to democratize energy by decentralizing it. The path to this brighter future relies on science as a universal language that unites all of humanity. If we attract the best and brightest young people in science, we can clean our environment, make energy clean and affordable, and turn poverty and wars into prosperity and peace.

Keywords: green innovation, clean energy, new materials, Mxenes

EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

SCHOLARLY PANEL

LOGOTHERAPY AND PREVENTIVE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING REGARDING THE CRISIS OF MEANING

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ABSTRACT

The crisis of meaning has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in the developed world, manifesting itself in forms of existential boredom, feelings of emptiness, and a lack of purpose, and potentially leading to various forms of destructive behavior, including aggression, addiction, depression, and suicidality. Logotherapy, as a psychotherapeutic approach whose core focus lies in the question of meaning, proves to be particularly well suited for understanding and addressing such forms of distress. Through systematic preventive efforts, the occurrence and impact of a crisis of meaning can be limited and reduced. In their work, volunteers are frequently exposed to the severe life circumstances of individuals in distress, which constitutes a significant psychological burden and may, over time, increase the risk of developing a crisis of meaning themselves.

The study is based on a qualitative research approach and is designed as a case study of the volunteer organization Zaupni telefon Samarijan, which provides telephone-based support to individuals experiencing psychological distress. On the basis of a review of relevant literature, eight key domains of preventive action against the crisis of meaning were identified from a logotherapeutic perspective. The empirical component of the study involved individual interviews with active members of the organization, and the collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

The findings indicate that Zaupni telefon Samarijan operates preventively against the crisis of meaning across all eight identified domains. The organization supports its members in meaning-making processes, the development of empathy and relational attitudes toward others, the strengthening of values and conscience, the assumption of responsibility, the meaningful structuring of leisure time, the reinforcement of spiritual resilience, the recognition of defense mechanisms, and the awareness of unconscious contents.

The results further confirm that the volunteer organization effectively contributes to the prevention of a crisis of meaning among its active members, primarily through regular supervision, education and training, peer support, and the volunteer work with callers itself. Nevertheless, opportunities for further improvement remain, particularly in the areas of the conscious formation of conscience, responsibility, and educational activities that would more explicitly address the prevention of a crisis of meaning. The study confirms a causal relationship between active volunteering and preventive action against the crisis of meaning.

Keywords: logotherapy, meaning, crisis of the meaning, prevention, volunteering

INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE PUBLIC SPACE

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ABSTRACT

In the last several years, the global civilisation has been confronted with challenges, in the SSH fields recognised as polycrisis or even civilisation collapse. It seems that the mechanisms of historically dominant governmentality are becoming visible, and even more unscrupulous. The governmentality based on the exploitation of all available resources (natural, technological, and human) is reflected in radical discursive antagonisms demonstrated in publics over every globally important issue. The symptoms are obvious: facts and provable truths are victims on the altar of the fight for the ultimate post-truth, forming the postrealities. Polarized discourses are accompanied by hatred, reflected in the dissolution of the mundane human ties. In the described cultural and sociopolitical era, it is the role of the intelligentsia to intervene in public discussions by transcending polarization of public opinion and, as recommended, avoiding the discourse of any political parties or dominant political discourses. For the participation of the intellectuals in the public sphere, several models could be used. In the present paper two approaches are discussed which are best used if combined: a) the historical thinking consisting of several elements used in the didactics of history, e.g. epistemology of history and proofs of presented facts, understanding continuity and change, the role of empathy and ethics, the importance of history-aware operationability; b) the public pedagogy providing the systematic and complex approach to publics.

Keywords: intellectuals, public sphere, polycrisis, historical thinking, public pedagogy

FROM FEEDBACK-INFORMED TREATMENT TO FEEDBACK-INFORMED SUPERVISION: INTRODUCING AI SUPERVISOR

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ABSTRACT

AI Supervisor introduces the European platform for augmented supervision in psychotherapy, seamlessly integrating Feedback-Informed Treatment and Feedback-Informed Supervision with ethically and legally compliant artificial intelligence. The tool directly addresses a core common factor across all psychotherapeutic approaches – the quality of the therapeutic process – through three breakthrough components: (1) a supervised corpus of anonymised, peer-reviewed real-world clinical cases; (2) multi-modalities, conflict-aware decision support that preserves theoretical diversity (psychodynamic, humanistic, CBT and systemic approaches) while transparently displaying expert different opinions; and (3) an architecture designed from the ground up for the EU AI Act (high-risk system) with mandatory human oversight. By providing therapists with access to collectively generated and continuously evolving supervision knowledge while fully preserving data sovereignty and privacy (in accordance with ISO/IEC 27559), the platform substantially reduces administrative burden and burnout risk, strengthens reflective practice, and is expected to contribute to improved client outcomes. The ongoing pilot project validates safety and efficacy on 30–40 complex, multi-supervisor-annotated cases. AI Supervisor thus strengthens the mental-health workforce, contributes to European strategic autonomy in trustworthy AI, and establishes a new standard for supervision-focused digital innovation in mental health care.

Keywords: feedback-informed supervision, psychotherapy, trustworthy artificial intelligence, supervisory case-base, common factors

COMMUNITY LEARNING AS A MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Violence is a complex family and social issue with long-term consequences for victims, particularly regarding mental health. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being that enables individuals to cope with life's challenges, realise their potential, and actively contribute to the community. In this context, preventing violence and promoting mental health are responsibilities not only of families but also of educational institutions at all levels, including higher education, and the wider community. This contribution draws on experiences with the introduction of the service-learning model, which has been systematically implemented at the Faculty of Arts, University of Rijeka, since 2011 as part of the Pedagogy study programme. The core idea of the model is to combine academic knowledge with the active involvement of students in the local community. In this article, we extend the learning model to gerontology. Violence against older people is increasingly recognised as a serious but often overlooked problem that requires systemic prevention, community involvement, and an interdisciplinary approach. The community learning model is discussed as a comprehensive pedagogical approach that encourages the development of reflection, responsibility, and professional and social competencies in future professionals. The model enables students, in cooperation with nursing homes, non-governmental organisations, and social welfare institutions, to participate in awareness-raising programmes, preventive activities, and support for older people and their families, thereby contributing to a comprehensive understanding of mental health and violence prevention in old age.

Keywords: education, community learning, violence prevention, mental health, gerontology

EXPRESSIVE ARTS FOR INTEGRATING ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a pedagogical approach that uses expressive arts therapy to deepen students' understanding of academic content during the preparation of seminar papers. The method is grounded in the assumption that knowledge becomes more meaningful and accessible when learners move beyond purely cognitive processing and engage in a multimodal, creative experience. In this model, students first transform the central theme of their seminar paper into an artistic form, such as drawing, collage, or clay work. The artwork then becomes the basis for a structured, Gestalt-informed dialogue in which students interact with different elements of their creation. Through personification and imaginative dialogue, various parts of the artwork "speak," revealing intuitive insights, emotional tones, and previously implicit aspects of the chosen topic. The study explores how this process supports deeper cognitive-emotional integration, strengthens students' sense of authorship, and enhances clarity and originality in written academic work. Particular attention is given to students' subjective perception of the shift from analytical thinking to embodied creative exploration, and how this fosters a more direct, personal relationship with the material they study. Preliminary observations indicate that expressive arts interventions increase engagement, reduce anxiety, and facilitate more authentic understanding of complex concepts. Further analysis of perceived effects will be included in the full paper.

Keywords: expressive arts therapy, creative learning, knowledge integration, Gestalt dialogue

JOB BURNOUT AMONG FARMERS AND NON-FARMERS IN SLOVENIA: SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES AND GROUP DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that agricultural workers worldwide face various mental health challenges due to the specific conditions in which they live and work. This population is exposed to substantial psychosocial burdens, including long working hours, social isolation, hazards related to weather and market conditions, limited opportunities to take time off, and restricted access to psychosocial services. We therefore aimed to examine the relationships between job burnout and selected sociodemographic characteristics among farmers and non-farmers in Slovenia and to explore how these two populations differ in their job burnout scores. The survey was disseminated both online and in paper form using convenience and snowball sampling. A total of 215 farmers ($M_{age} = 45.7$, 65% male) and 333 non-farmers ($M_{age} = 45.3$, 22% male) completed the survey between July and October 2025. The questionnaire included the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) and socio-demographic measures. Across the combined sample ($N = 548$), significant associations emerged between levels of perceived burnout and socio-economic status, sex, and age. Younger participants, female participants, and those with lower socio-economic status reported higher levels of burnout. When comparing the two groups, non-farming participants reported slightly higher overall perceived burnout than farming participants, with a small effect size. Subscale analyses further indicated that non-farmers scored higher on psychological distress and cognitive impairment, whereas no group differences were observed for exhaustion, mental distance, emotional impairment, or psychosomatic complaints. These findings are interpreted within the cultural context and societal norms surrounding agricultural work in Slovenia.

Keywords: BAT, mental health, farmers, agricultural workers, sociodemographic factors

STUDY PROTOCOL FOR THE AI-SUPERVISED TRIAL: A PILOT RCT FOR AI SUPPORTED SUPERVISION IN PSYCHOTHERAPY TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

Background: The persistent shortage of individual supervision in family therapy training severely limits the frequency and depth of self-reflection, a core mechanism for developing therapeutic competencies. This study evaluates the effectiveness of a guardrailed, fully offline generative AI-Supervisor in providing scalable, always-available reflective support to trainee family therapists, compared to standard written reflection without AI feedback.

Methods: This pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT, N=20) randomly allocates postgraduate Relational Family Therapy (ZDT) trainees in Ljubljana, to six weeks of either standard written reflection or the AI-Supervisor condition. Participants will be randomized to the Intervention Group (IG) or Control Group (CG). They will all write weekly reflections (≥ 300 words) on clinical encounters from their practice and IG will use a customised GPT (RAG-based open-source LLM with strict guardrails prohibiting any diagnostic, interpretive or therapeutic action, crisis escalation protocols, and ZDT-specific knowledge base containing core relational-systemic literature) to engage in immediate structured reflective dialogue. Both groups will complete the same assessment questionnaire via the platform to track real-time progress.

Discussion: Results will provide the first empirical evidence and ethical blueprint for safe, scalable AI supervision models in European psychotherapy education, directly answering the urgent calls of Maurya & DeDiego and Cioffi et al.

Keywords: generative AI, psychotherapy training, supervision, self-reflection, ethical AI, guardrails, relational family therapy, burnout prevention, hybrid supervision, pilot RCT

LOGOPEDAGOGY: EDUCATING THE HEART, MIND, AND HANDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents logopedagogy as an original and holistically grounded educational approach rooted in the anthropological foundations of logotherapy and existential analysis. At its core lies an understanding of the human person as a free and responsible being oriented toward meaning, whose development transcends mere cognitive training and necessarily includes emotional, ethical, and practical dimensions of personality. The concept of "educating the heart, mind, and hands" signifies the integration of three fundamental domains: the formation of inner attitudes and values (heart), the cultivation of critical thinking and reflective judgment (mind), and concrete, responsible engagement in the world (hands).

Logopedagogy moves beyond reductionist models of education that confine the learner to functional efficiency or the accumulation of information. Instead, it advances a paradigm of integral human growth in which the question of meaning occupies a central place. The educational process is understood as a space for awakening personal responsibility, fostering inner freedom, and strengthening the capacity to realize values in everyday life. In this framework, insights from pedagogy, psychology, and andragogy are integrated with an existential-anthropological perspective that emphasizes the human openness to transcendence (selftranscendence), to the other, and to the community.

The paper will outline the theoretical foundations of logopedagogy, its methodological implications, and its practical applications within contemporary educational contexts. Particular attention will be given to the ways in which such a holistic approach may contribute to personal maturity, psychological resilience, and quality of life across different stages of the lifespan. Logopedagogy thus emerges as a timely and necessary response to the crisis of meaning in modern society and as a paradigm of education that unites inner formation with responsible action in the world.

Keywords: logopedagogy, logotherapy, education, pedagogy, meaning

THE SOCIAL-THERAPEUTIC LSCI MODEL IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

The author addresses the social-therapeutic LSCI model, which is based on relationship building and a therapeutic, verbal approach used to work with children and adolescents in crisis, whether in home or institutional care. Its primary goal is to enable children and adolescents to develop self-regulation and impulse control in future situations. Behavioral change is facilitated through strengthening self-confidence, reducing anxiety, and increasing the ability to understand one's own and others' emotional states. A key aspect of the LSCI model is understanding the child's perception of the situation and their role within it.

To examine the research questions, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with ten educators from Slovenian educational institutions. The study aimed to evaluate educators' knowledge of and experience with the LSCI model, while identifying obstacles and support needs for its implementation. Most participants were familiar with the model; however, proper application requires additional training and practical support. The main obstacles were group overloading and staff shortages, which limit comprehensive use. For quality work, effective team coordination, understanding of trauma, clear structure, open communication, and attention to the emotional needs of children and adolescents are essential.

Keywords: social integration, aggressive behavior, trauma-informed care, LSCI socio-therapeutic model, educational institution

FATHERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS: THE ROLE OF EMOTION REGULATION AND SELF-DIFFERENTIATION IN PARENTING STRESS AND PARENTING SENSE OF COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

Although throughout most of history parenting has been equated with motherhood and the role of the father has been continuously neglected in research, in recent decades, fatherhood has increasingly attracted the attention of many researchers. This study examined the contribution of emotion regulation, self-differentiation, and fathers' perceived difficulty of parenting in explaining parental stress and parenting sense of competence (PSOC). Independent-samples t-tests revealed significant differences between groups of fathers in their levels of parental stress and PSOC. Correlational analyses indicated that higher parental stress was related to lower emotion regulation and greater perceived difficulty of parenting, while self-differentiation was positively associated with PSOC. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that sociodemographic variables (education, socioeconomic status, relationship status, number of children, child's gender), emotion regulation and perceived difficulty of the parenting role significantly predicted parental stress, explaining 34.6% of its variance. In this case, self-differentiation did not emerge as a unique predictor. Additional analyses with PSOC as the criterion indicated that sociodemographic variables alone were not significant predictors. Emotion regulation did not significantly predict higher PSOC. The inclusion of self-differentiation increased explained variance, with the full model accounting for 36.5% of the variance in parenting sense of competence.

Keywords: parental stress, parenting sense of competence, fathers, emotion regulation, self-differentiation

HAZING ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL IN PUBLIC SPACES

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ABSTRACT

Hazing takes place on the first day of school in larger Slovenian cities where there are several secondary schools. It takes place on city streets and in city centres, where older students (from the 2nd to 4th year) draw various letters and symbols on first-year students with waterproof markers of different colours or spray them with sprays that are harmful to the skin, from head to toe, on their clothes and bare skin. Eggs and flour are also used, thrown indiscriminately, even at random passers-by, building facades, and city buses. The participants and perpetrators of the hazing are minors, except for the fourth-year students, who are mostly of legal age. This article presents a detailed description of the events on the first day of school in Ljubljana, an overview of various rituals and rites of passage, with an explanation of the transition from liminal to liminoid, based on the explanations of two anthropological authors, Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, according to whom the events can be classified as rites of passage. Slovenian legislation, or rather certain articles, is explained from the perspective of misdemeanours and criminal offences and the procedure for reporting violence against minors. It also presents new aspects and the escalation of events and calls for the involvement of various organizations and services in the events themselves throughout the day, as the hazing has become a mass event without leaders, a program, or restrictions.

Keywords: hazing, high school, rite of passage, violence

MEANING IN LIFE AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR FOR MENTAL HEALTH AMONG ADULTS AGED 50 AND OVER

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ABSTRACT

Population ageing raises important challenges not only for physical health and care systems, but also for understanding the existential and psychological dimensions of later life. Old age should be understood not merely as a period of biological decline, but as a developmental stage in which questions of meaning, personal worth, belonging, and life fulfilment become increasingly significant. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between meaning in life, quality of life, and mental health among adults aged 50 and over in Slovenia.

The study employed a quantitative research design. Data were collected from a sample of 1,047 adults aged 50 and over in Slovenia in cooperation with the Anton Trstenjak Institute of Gerontology and Intergenerational Relations. The analysis focused on the associations between meaning in life, perceived quality of life, and mental health in later adulthood.

The findings indicate that a stronger sense of meaning in life is associated with better mental health and a higher perceived quality of life. Meaning in life emerged as an important psychological resource that strengthens resilience in coping with loss, uncertainty, loneliness, and other vulnerabilities associated with ageing. The results further suggest that mental health in later life is shaped by life-course factors such as relationships, values, lifestyle, and educational influences.

These findings support the view that mental health in old age is not only a late-life issue, but also the outcome of processes developing throughout the life course.

Keywords: meaning in life, mental health, quality of life, upbringing and education, ageing

QUALITY OF LIFE AFTER PERMANENTLY ACQUIRED DISABILITY AND THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL FAMILY THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

An acquired spinal cord injury resulting in paraplegia or tetrapegia represents one of the most profound turning points in the life of an individual and their family. Established notions of the body, identity, and everyday functioning are suddenly disrupted, requiring deep psychological and relational adjustment. The challenges faced by persons with permanently acquired disability extend far beyond physical limitations and frequently include emotional distress, loss of self-esteem, uncertainty about the future, changes in the experience of closeness, and shifts in partnership symmetry. The family system must also be reorganized. The partner often abruptly assumes the role of caregiver, which affects power dynamics, feelings of connectedness, intimacy, and one's understanding of their place within the relationship. Research, however, indicates that with adequate internal and external resources (psychological resilience, support from significant others, an adapted environment, and appropriate therapeutic approaches), individuals can develop new ways of living after such a radical change, re-establish a sense of meaning, and experience post-traumatic growth. Because acquired disability acts as a systemic event that reshapes relationships, communication, emotional regulation, and roles within the couple and family, it is best addressed through approaches that holistically integrate both intrapsychic and interpersonal processes. Among such conceptual models is Relational Family Therapy (RFT). RFT emphasizes affect regulation, a compassionate therapeutic relationship, and the processing of unconscious wounds that influence current responses and patterns of behavior. In the context of permanently acquired disability, RFT provides a framework for understanding how unconscious material, emotional regulation, and relational patterns are activated within the partnership system and how they shape experiences of distress and relational dynamics.

The aim of this paper is to theoretically illuminate key relational and psychodynamic processes triggered by spinal cord injury and to position RFT as one of the conceptual models that can explain how the partnership system regulates emotions, roles, and relational stability after such a turning-point event.

Keywords: quality of life, permanently acquired disability, Relational Family Therapy (RFT), emotional regulation, couple dynamics

WHO STIGMATISES AND WHO UNDERSTANDS? ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC STIGMA EXPRESSION AMONG PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORKSHOPS THE POWER OF CONVERSATION – THE WEAKNESS OF STIGMA (OMRA 2021–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Mental health problems are often associated with public and personal stigma, which can hinder help-seeking and treatment adherence. This study used the AQ-27 Questionnaire on Stigmatising Attitudes and Beliefs toward People with Mental Health Problems (Corrigan et al., 2003) to examine associations between public stigma and selected sociodemographic variables among participants of the Power of Conversation – Weakness of Stigma workshops, conducted online and in person (N = 397) between 2021 and 2025 as part of the OMRA programme. Participants with personal experience or a strong interest in mental health showed the greatest empathy and the least stigmatising attitudes toward people with mental health problems (OTDZ), whereas those encountering OTDZ in their professional roles were the most distant. Gender significantly shaped emotional and behavioural responses ($p < 0.05$): men more often reported anger, while women reported avoidance. Higher education was associated with lower support for authoritarian treatment.

Keywords: Public stigma, mental health, AQ-27, sociodemographic factors, OMRA programme

EVALUATION OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION TREATMENT USING THE SOCIAL ANDRAGOLOGICAL METHOD

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ABSTRACT

With the Social Andragological Method, Dr. Janez Rugelj enhanced the system developed by Dr. Vladimir Hudolin in Slovenia. The essence of the method lies in delayed personal maturation and the comprehensive formation of individuals who, due to pathological parental influences, have entered severe relational and personal crises and are willing to make long-term efforts to improve themselves. In his approach to treating individuals dependent on alcohol and others in distress, Rugelj introduced more than fifty educational-therapeutic measures. The implementation of these measures, together with authoritative leadership of therapeutic groups, represents a unique innovation in psychotherapy and has proven highly effective in treating individuals with alcohol dependence. In this cross-sectional study, we examined the records of the Mitikas Institute to determine how many individuals with alcohol dependence were treated between January 2012 and December 2019. We assessed how many of them had completed the basic three-year treatment program by 2022 and how many maintained abstinence three years later, in 2025. We found that between 2012 and 2019, a total of 37 individuals with alcohol dependence received treatment. Of these, 12 (32.4%) did not complete the basic three-year program and relapsed. Twenty-five (67.6%) completed the three-year program, of whom three relapsed. Complete and continuous abstinence for at least three years or more after finishing the basic program was maintained by 22 individuals, representing an 88% success rate. The results indicate that the Social Andragological Method is highly effective compared to other treatment programs. Due to its demanding nature, it is suitable only for a limited number of alcohol-dependent individuals and their partners. The method is recommended for those who are willing to make above-average efforts to reorganize their lives and establish long-term, complete abstinence supported by a transformed lifestyle.

Keywords: alcoholism, treatment program evaluation, social andragological method, long term abstinence

WHICH VALUES DO WE LIVE BY? LOGOTHERAPY IN THE PRESCHOOL AND EARLY SCHOOL YEARS

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ABSTRACT

The question, „Which values do we live by?“ is a complex one. The question of whether universal, timeless, sacred values exist and, if so, what they are, is a fundamental one. In what manner ought children to be nurtured in an epoch that renders all matters relative?

The following are some of the questions that will be addressed, with particular reference to the teachings of the founder of logotherapy, Viktor Frankl, the Viennese neurologist, psychiatrist, and philosopher. The following discussion will proceed in two directions. First, the fundamental logotherapeutic tenets will be examined. Next, the logotherapeutic perspective on human nature will be analyzed, with a particular emphasis on its potential benefits for child development. A central question guiding this analysis will be that of responsibility. From the earliest stages of development, an individual's perception of the world is shaped by the experiences, opinions, and words of those in their immediate environment, primarily their family, but also other individuals who play a significant role in their lives and upbringing. Through their attitudes, values, and approach to problem-solving, children develop the capacity for independence. Consequently, adults must assume responsibility, as articulated by M. Winterhoff, to facilitate the optimal development of children.

The responses to these inquiries are derived from the foundational tenets of logotherapy, as articulated by Viktor Frankl, complemented by the logotherapeutic decalogue developed by E. Lukas. These principles are further enriched by the ten logopaedagogical theses proposed by Johanna Schechner and Heidemarie Zürner.

Keywords: values, logotherapy, Viktor Frankl, preschool, school

DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION AND SELF-PERCEPTION OF EXPERTS ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL ROLE IN THE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Early identification of children with developmental difficulties is important for their involvement in appropriate early intervention and developmental support. The best practices include services that are implemented in families and in the local communities where they live. In Croatia, identification is mainly carried out by specialized experts for children and adults with disabilities, as well as pediatricians. This work presents a professional perception and self-perception about their competences in the early identification and screening of developmental deviations and difficulties. The research was conducted among early and preschool educators, specialized professionals and associates, community nurses, and pediatricians. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data. The results show that the greatest attention of experts is focused on pediatricians and primary health care.

Keywords: health care providers, educators, perception, early identification, developmental disabilities

MEASURES OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of higher education systems can be measured in many ways, using both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The most common approaches rely on sets of indicators related to educational outcomes, such as graduation rates, time to degree completion, graduate employment levels, and earnings. Quality-of-teaching indicators also play an important role; these include student evaluations, external accreditations, the modernity of curricula, and the student-to-faculty ratio. A crucial element of assessment is financial and organizational efficiency, described by data such as the cost of educating a single student or graduate, academic staff productivity, and the effectiveness of administrative processes.

For research-oriented universities, significant weight is given to research performance, including the number and quality of publications, grants obtained, international collaboration, and the commercialization of research results. Increasingly, broader social and economic impacts are also taken into account, including knowledge transfer, community engagement, and contributions to regional development. Additional tools include international comparisons and rankings, such as THE, QS, or OECD analyses, though these require careful interpretation. The measurement is further complemented by economic models, including cost-benefit analysis, methods of technical efficiency, and indicators of equity in access to education. Together, these approaches provide a multidimensional picture of how higher education systems function and how effectively they achieve educational, research, and social objectives. The paper describes various currently used methods for measuring the performance of higher education systems and also proposes an alternative approach.

Keywords: higher education, efficiency, university

THE ETHICS OF CARE AND STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN SCHOOL TRANSITION: AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH TO STUDENT WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

In the context of contemporary educational developments, the transition of students from primary to lower secondary education represents a critical phase that directly influences their emotional, academic, and social formation. This process extends beyond adaptation to new curricula and involves the construction of personal identity and a sense of belonging within a school environment characterized by new pedagogical and social demands. The purpose of this study is to analyze the challenges and factors affecting students' adaptation during the transition between educational cycles, emphasizing the role of teachers, school climate, and psycho-social support in improving this process. The core hypothesis of the research asserts that educational transition difficulties are more closely related to emotional and interpersonal dimensions than to cognitive ones, and that the lack of structured pedagogical and psychological interventions may negatively influence students' self-esteem and motivation. The methodology follows a mixed quantitative–qualitative approach. The study involved 68 students and 27 teachers from representative public schools. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and professional observations, analyzed using hermeneutic interpretation and data triangulation to ensure reliability and validity. Findings reveal that 54% of students experience mild or moderate emotional difficulties during the transition period, while 37% report a lack of belonging and academic insecurity. Additionally, 72% of teachers acknowledge that they have not received specific training for managing student transitions and providing emotional support. These findings confirm that the absence of consistent institutional interventions affects both the school climate and students' motivation. The conclusions highlight the need for educational policies that integrate specialized programs for managing school transitions, developing emotional competencies, and strengthening cooperation among teachers, parents, and school psychologists. Building a safe and supportive environment contributes to preventing school stress, enhancing emotional resilience, and fostering self-esteem thus laying the foundation for an education oriented toward student well-being and the ethics of care.

Keywords: educational transition, emotional adaptation, pedagogical ethics, student motivation, well-being in education

INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATIONAL NEUROSCIENCE: REDEFINING COGNITIVE LOAD AND LEARNING EFFICACY

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping educational practice by offering personalised explanations, instant feedback, and adaptive learning environments. At the same time, educational neuroscience provides crucial insights into how the brain learns, highlighting the roles of attention, working memory, motivation, and cognitive load. Although AI has the potential to increase learning efficiency, it may also lead to reduced active thinking, cognitive offloading, and weaker sustained attention. This creates a central paradox: AI can simultaneously enhance and undermine the cognitive processes required for meaningful learning.

This study investigates how AI-supported learning influences key cognitive mechanisms compared to traditional learning contexts. Drawing on neuroscience-informed frameworks, the research examines the effects of AI on students' attention, motivation, perceived cognitive load, and depth of reasoning. It further explores students' subjective experiences with AI-based tasks and identifies both benefits and challenges associated with AI-assisted learning.

The findings aim to support responsible, evidence-based integration of AI in the classroom. By bridging artificial intelligence and educational neuroscience, the study contributes to more effective instructional design, improved school policy, and learning environments aligned with how the brain processes and retains information. Practical recommendations will be offered for teachers, pedagogy experts, school leadership, and future research.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, educational neuroscience, cognitive load, attention, motivation, learning efficacy

EXPERT PANEL

ADDICTION TO INTERNET AND GAMING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE (PRIMARY SCHOOL)

Andreja Havoj Mandić, Teacher
DOŠ I. Lendava, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Addiction – a trap where an individual loses a sense in a certain segment in life. A lack of discipline is the largest and strongest shape of autocracy as a main reason. Among all addictions that we know about, alcohol is present in the largest percentage. Over the years of addiction development, drug addiction followed – soft or hard. As villages turned into towns and cities started to grow, buildings with lights started to develop too, with dimmed windows, lights extremely noticeable and a sign 0-24 – casinos. More and more people started to spend their time there – so gambling addiction appeared. In many research, we come across that internet and gaming addiction are placed into a category of active technological addiction (Griffith, 2017). Working as a primary school teacher, a pedagogue and a class teacher, during the school lessons we are noticing the student's inability to focus and concentrate, outbursts in their behavior, constant fatigue and more and more mental illness... addiction to the internet and computer or internet games appears. At the same time, almost every school year there is a parent, who leaves the home to go to work with their family modem in hands; a parent who describe their own very young children how a child knows every English song on YouTube; or a grandparent who proudly praise a grandchild masters every application or typing on the phone better than themselves (talking about pupils under age 10). Young people in the classroom have an increasingly meaningless life; education has no value to them. They do not find meaning in it; at the same time, they are not able to connect different knowledge from different subjects, solve problems on their own, think critically, use their imagination (constant leadership is what they want), there is no creativity present. As mentioned before, it has been erased from the lives of young people by the screens of all forms (mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc.). During the time of COVID-19, mental illness among young people have grown. At the same time, we have proven what we are capable of online. Children have spent a lot of their studying time and free time on screens. Children remained in their "sitting position", they only changed the content. I believe that during those times of isolation, they were looking for a way to have fun after learning and already spending their time online, consequently on the internet and playing games. In our presentation, we will first explain the aforementioned concepts through theory. Present, what the world organization stands for and against addition to internet and gaming worldwide and a case in Slovenia. Afterwards, we will present the method of prevention through the educational system, the method of improvement among young people.

Keywords: internet addiction, gaming addiction, mental health, primar school

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONAL FAMILY PSYCHOTHERAPY IN POST-MODERN SOCIETY

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Kleopatra Kodrič, Expert

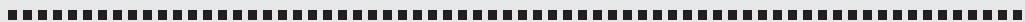
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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the importance of relational family psychotherapy as one of the tools for resolving family dynamics in postmodern society. Human beings are, in essence, unique, one-of-a-kind, and irreplaceable. They are relational beings. The need for a secure relationship is innate and deeply rooted within them. In relationships, they want to be seen, heard, understood, and accepted. Relational family therapy (RFT) is based on the premise that humans, as relational beings, are marked by the modalities of relationships and the affective atmosphere of the family from which they originate. Such relationships and feelings, even if they are dysfunctional, are then unconsciously built and relived throughout life.

They represent security and belonging, while at the same time encouraging and forcing the person to recreate similar dysfunctional relationships and longing for resolution. Relational family therapy is based on the assumption that the relationships and atmosphere with our loved ones that we experienced in childhood are unconsciously repeated in adulthood. Relational family therapy is based on the belief that the family is a unique social system with its own structure and patterns of communication. These patterns are determined by many factors, including the beliefs and values of parents, the personalities of all family members, and the influence of the extended family. The empirical part of the paper includes findings of statistically significant correlations between personality resilience, difficulties in regulating emotions, burnout, and overall well-being among healthcare workers.

Keywords: family, relational psychotherapy, postmodern society, personality resilience



PHYSIOTHERAPY



SCHOLARLY PANEL

COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHROTH METHOD, CORE STABILIZATION EXERCISES, AND PILATES ON SPINAL MOBILITY, COSMETIC TRUNK DEFORMITY, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH IDIOPATHIC SCOLIOSIS: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: Idiopathic scoliosis (IS) is a complex, three-dimensional spinal deformity of unknown etiology, characterized by lateral curvature measured by the Cobb angle (CA) and vertebral rotation assessed by the Angle of Trunk Rotation (ATR). These changes may lead to trunk asymmetry, reduced spinal mobility, muscular imbalance, and impaired psychological well-being, ultimately affecting quality of life (QoL). Various physiotherapy interventions are used in the conservative management of IS. Among them, the Schroth method has demonstrated moderate to high levels of evidence, particularly in improving CA and ATR compared to core stabilization and Pilates exercises. However, its comparative effectiveness on broader outcomes such as spinal mobility, cosmetic trunk deformity, psychological factors, and QoL remains less clearly defined.

Aim: This narrative review aimed to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of the Schroth method with core stabilization and Pilates exercises in adolescents and young adults with IS.

Methods: A comprehensive literature search was conducted in PEDro, PubMed, and Google Scholar for studies published in the last ten years. After applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, four studies were included in the final analysis.

Results: Across the included studies, Schroth-based interventions showed statistically significant improvements in CA, ATR, spinal mobility, trunk appearance, psychological factors and QoL compared to core stabilization and Pilates groups ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: These findings suggest that the Schroth method may be more effective in improving spinal deformity, trunk symmetry, and psychological outcomes in individuals with IS.

Keywords: idiopathic scoliosis, adolescents, Schroth method, core stabilization, quality of life

FIVE-WEEK STRUCTURED PHYSIOTHERAPY AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PLAN FOR EARLY REHABILITATION AFTER TRAUMATIC ULNAR NERVE INJURY: A CASE REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Background: Traumatic ulnar nerve injuries severely affect hand function and daily activities. Although surgical repair restores neural continuity, functional limitations often persist. Early rehabilitation is essential, using modalities such as electrical nerve stimulation (ENS), interferential current (IFC), peripheral magnetic stimulation (PMS), therapeutic exercise, sensory re-education, and occupational therapy. This case highlights the effectiveness of a structured, multimodal program in promoting early functional improvements.

Case Presentation: A 24-year-old man sustained a traumatic right forearm laceration from a falling windowpane, resulting in complete transection of the ulnar nerve, ulnar artery, ulnar vein, and FCU muscle. After emergency surgical repair, he entered rehabilitation one month later with motor and sensory deficits, hypersensitivity, reduced grip strength, and a QuickDASH score of 100. Clinical examination confirmed severe ulnar nerve-mediated impairment. The patient was enrolled in a structured rehabilitation program integrating ENS, IFC, PMS, therapeutic exercise, sensory re-education, and occupational therapy.

Conclusion: Within five weeks, the patient showed improved motor control, grip strength, range of motion, sensory modulation, and daily functional performance. The QuickDASH score reached 0, reflecting full upper-limb function without disability. This case underscores that early, coordinated, multimodal rehabilitation can optimize recovery after traumatic ulnar nerve injury and surgical repair.

Keywords: ulnar nerve injury, early rehabilitation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, functional recovery

CARDIAC REHABILITATION AFTER MINIMALLY INVASIVE MITRAL VALVE SURGERY IN A PATIENT WITH BARLOW'S DISEASE: CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the diagnostic, surgical, and rehabilitation approach to a patient with severe primary mitral regurgitation caused by Barlow's disease, emphasizing the importance of timely intervention and integrated postoperative care. The patient, a middle-aged individual with left atrial enlargement and preserved left ventricular function, underwent comprehensive multiparametric echocardiographic and cardiac magnetic resonance assessments, which confirmed severe regurgitation. Following the decision of a multidisciplinary heart team, the patient successfully underwent minimally invasive mitral valve repair with annuloplasty ring implantation and creation of artificial neochords. The procedure was uneventful, and postoperative echocardiography confirmed complete elimination of regurgitation and preserved ejection fraction. The patient then participated in a three-phase cardiac rehabilitation program consisting of supervised aerobic training, rhythm monitoring, patient education, and psychological support. After completing rehabilitation, the patient achieved NYHA functional class I within three months, with improved exercise tolerance documented by a longer six-minute walk distance and a marked reduction in dyspnea. This case confirms that early diagnosis, timely surgical intervention using a minimally invasive technique, and individualized rehabilitation lead to optimal hemodynamic and functional outcomes and significantly improve patients' quality of life.

Keywords: Barlow's disease, cardiac rehabilitation, case report, minimally invasive surgery, mitral regurgitation, mitral valve repair

REHABILITATION AFTER ACL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE INFLUENCE OF VARIOUS FACTORS SUCH AS GENDER, AGE, AND BMI: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction (ACLR) is one of the most common orthopedic procedures performed in physically active individuals. Despite the use of standard rehabilitation protocols, postoperative outcomes vary significantly between patients. Recent research's indicates that personal factors such as gender, age, and (BMI) influence the recovery process, functional outcomes, and return-to-sport performance. Understanding these factors is essential for optimizing physiotherapy and achieving the best rehabilitation outcomes. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to review and analyze the existing literature on the impact of gender, age, and BMI on rehabilitation outcomes after ACL reconstruction and to determine whether personalized physiotherapy approaches can improve recovery and functional performance in patients. **Methodology:** This study is a literature review that includes 9 selected research studies after screening randomized controlled trials (RCTs), cohort studies, and systematic reviews published within the last decade. Electronic databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, Cochrane Library, ResearchGate, and Medline were searched. Studies that met inclusion criteria focused on postoperative rehabilitation outcomes and patient characteristics were assessed using standard quality assessment tools. **Results:** The literature reviewed shows that gender, age, and BMI play an important role in rehabilitation outcomes. Female patients often have slower neuromuscular recovery and lower psychological readiness to return to sports. Younger patients lean to recover faster but have a higher risk of graft failure or recurrent injury, while individuals with higher BMI generally report longer recovery times and poorer functional outcomes. The data support that integrating these factors into personalized criteria-based rehabilitation protocols enhances recovery and overall outcomes. **Conclusions:** The findings of this literature review suggest that gender, age, and BMI significantly influence rehabilitation outcomes after ACL reconstruction. Implementing personalized, evidence-based physiotherapy programs may improve the quality of recovery, reduce the risk of re-injury, and support a safer and effective return to sport.

Keywords: ACL reconstruction, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, gender, age, BMI, return to sport, functional recovery

PHYSIOTHERAPY AND BIOMECHANICS IN ENHANCING THE PERFORMANCE OF HORSES AND RIDERS

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Mateja Znika, Professor

Jasminka Potočnjak, PhD Candidate

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ABSTRACT

Physiotherapy techniques and methods applied to horses aim to enhance mobility, coordination, and movement symmetry, while in riders they promote improved balance and a more harmonious interaction with the horse. The horse-rider relationship is conceptualized as a bidirectional form of communication grounded in biomechanical interdependence. Biomechanics is essential for understanding movement, force distribution, and the rider's influence on the horse, whereas physiotherapy contributes to injury prevention, rehabilitation, and the optimization of functional capacity. The synergy between physiotherapy and biomechanics enhances the performance of both horse and rider. A thorough understanding of equine movement biomechanics during riding enables the rider to use their own body more precisely as a means of communication. The integration of training and physiotherapy allows for faster and safer post-injury recovery, helps prevent chronic conditions, and supports an individualized approach tailored to the specific needs of both horse and rider. An interdisciplinary approach incorporates preventive strategies that reduce the risk of chronic injuries and overuse in riders, as well as postural and musculoskeletal disorders in horses. Continuous monitoring and adjustment of training, informed by biomechanical and physiotherapeutic principles, make it possible to address movement irregularities at an early stage, before more serious consequences arise. Safeguarding the health of both horse and rider is fundamental to the advancement of equestrian sport in recreational and professional settings.

Keywords: biomechanics, physiotherapy, horse, rider, balance

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO PHYSIOTHERAPY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN INDIVIDUALS WITH CHRONIC LOWER BACK PAIN

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Physiotherapy programs for individuals with chronic lower back pain (CLBP) aim to improve function and prevent the progression of disability. Clinical practice guidelines recommend several approaches, including the McKenzie method, therapeutic exercises, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), traction, and thermotherapy. These modalities are often combined in daily practice. The objective of this study was to compare two physiotherapy programs that integrate different combinations of these treatment methods in patients with CLBP. **Materials and Methods:** Sixty patients were randomly assigned to two groups. Group I received the McKenzie method, passive modalities, lumbar traction, and a walking program. Group II received therapeutic exercises, passive modalities, lumbar traction, and a walking program. Both groups underwent treatment for six weeks. Assessments were conducted at baseline, after three weeks, and after six weeks using the visual analog scale, Finger-to-Floor test, the Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Questionnaire, and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale.

Results: Both groups demonstrated significant improvements in pain intensity, functional disability, lumbar flexibility, and self-confidence after six weeks ($p < 0.0001$). No statistically significant differences were observed between the groups ($p > 0.05$). **Conclusions:** Findings confirm the effectiveness of both physiotherapy programs, suggesting that either can be considered a viable treatment option for patients with CLBP. However, the study is limited by the relatively small sample size and short follow-up period. Future research should explore long-term outcomes and include larger, more diverse populations.

Keywords: McKenzie, therapeutic exercises, traction, TENS, walking

DETECTION OF MUSCLE DAMAGE BY BIOCHEMICAL METHODS

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University of Applied Sciences Ivanić-Grad, Croatia

Goran Bobić, Professor

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology, Croatia

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the role of biochemical markers in detecting skeletal muscle damage and to analyse their advantages, limitations, and diagnostic value compared with traditional assessment methods. Muscle injuries, particularly those affecting skeletal muscle, are a common problem in medicine and sports. Timely recognition of injuries is crucial for diagnosis, rehabilitation monitoring, and prevention of recurrent problems. Along with clinical examinations and imaging methods, biochemical procedures play an important role because they allow detection of cellular changes caused by structural disruption. The most commonly used biochemical markers are enzymes and proteins released into the bloodstream after damage to muscle-fiber membranes. These include creatine kinase, lactate dehydrogenase, aspartate aminotransferase, alanine aminotransferase, myoglobin, and aldolase. Elevated values indicate different types and severities of tissue damage. Their application is important in sports medicine, where they help monitor physical load and guide training adjustments. In clinical practice, these markers assist in distinguishing acute from chronic conditions and in evaluating treatment effectiveness. The paper provides an integrated overview of their clinical and sports applications to improve understanding of their diagnostic reliability and to support informed decision-making during rehabilitation and return to physical activity and overall safer functional recovery for patients.

Keywords: laboratory analysis, rehabilitation, serum enzymes

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREOPERATIVE CHEST PHYSIOTHERAPY IN PATIENTS UNDERGOING ELECTIVE CARDIAC SURGERY AT THE CARDIAC SURGERY CLINIC IN PRISTINA

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University Clinical Center of Kosovo

ABSTRACT

Postoperative pulmonary complications (PPCs) are a major source of morbidity in patients undergoing cardiac surgery. Preoperative chest physiotherapy (PRP) shows promise in reducing these complications, yet its use in Kosovo remains limited. This quasi-experimental study evaluated 69 adults undergoing elective cardiac surgery in Pristina, assigned either to structured PRP or standard care. Analyses included chi-square tests, t-tests, and logistic regression. Patients receiving PRP had significantly fewer PPCs ($p < .001$) and shorter hospital stays ($M = 7.43$ vs. 9.59 days, $p < .001$), with a large effect for hospitalization duration (Cohen's $d = 1.597$). Although PRP showed a protective trend in reducing oxygen therapy needs, smoking remained the only significant predictor ($OR = 5.8$, $p = .001$). The intervention group was younger, which was considered in interpretation. Overall, PRP is an effective, low-risk intervention that improves postoperative outcomes and may reduce healthcare resource use. Routine integration is recommended, while patient age and smoking status should inform preoperative planning.

Keywords: preoperative physiotherapy, cardiac surgery, pulmonary complications, hospitalization, smoking

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC REHABILITATION IN PATIENTS WITH ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS AT THE RHEUMATOLOGY CLINIC IN PRISTINA

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University Clinical Center of Kosovo

ABSTRACT

Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS) is a chronic inflammatory condition that limits spinal mobility and reduces quality of life. This study assessed pain, functional improvement, and quality of life among 60 adults with AS treated at the Rheumatology Clinic in Pristina. Participants were randomly assigned to pharmacological therapy alone or combined with physiotherapy. Analyses included t-tests, Pearson correlation, and regression. Pain intensity did not differ significantly between groups ($t = -0.430$, $p = .669$). Physical activity correlated positively with functional improvement ($r = .254$, $p = .031$). Age negatively affected quality of life ($B = -0.411$, $p < .001$), while longer physiotherapy participation had a positive impact ($B = .714$, $p = .009$), with the model significant ($F = 3.612$, $p = .034$). Although physiotherapy did not reduce pain beyond medication, sustained activity and longer program engagement improved function and quality of life, supporting individualized long-term physiotherapeutic care.

Keywords: ankylosing spondylitis, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, functional improvement, quality of life

KADER ABDOMINAL THERAPY: THE ABDOMINAL NEXUS – A MULTISYSTEM INTEGRATION OF STRESS PHYSIOLOGY, FASCIAL DYNAMICS, LYMPHATIC FLOW, VISCERAL MOBILITY AND AUTONOMIC REGULATION

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ABSTRACT

Modern lifestyles marked by chronic stress, emotional overload, sedentary habits, disrupted breathing patterns, and increasing postoperative interventions have turned the abdomen into one of the most affected and least understood regions of the human body. Abdominal tension, reduced visceral mobility, lymphatic stagnation, and autonomic imbalance often arise not only from isolated biomedical factors, but from the way individuals internalize social pressure, emotional strain, and the demands of contemporary life. Kader Abdominal Therapy (KAT) introduces the concept of the Abdominal Nexus—a multisystem interface where stress physiology, fascial tension, lymphatic flow, visceral motion, and autonomic regulation converge. Because the abdomen mirrors how human beings absorb and store the impacts of stress culture, somatic overload can shape emotional regulation, relational dynamics, and overall social functioning. Supporting abdominal balance therefore contributes not only to physiological regulation, but also to the inner conditions from which deeper forms of social stability can emerge. This presentation positions KAT as an emerging conceptual framework grounded in clinical observation and informed by physiology, psychology, and lived experience. The aim is to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue on the abdomen as a central regulatory hub linking body, emotion, stress, and society. Future directions include structured pilot studies and the development of standardized research and training pathways within this evolving field of manual abdominal therapy.

Keywords: abdominal nexus, autonomic regulation, fascial dynamics, visceral mobility, somatic resilience

COMPARISON OF MEASUREMENTS OF SAGITTAL SPINE CURVES MEASURED WITH A PLUMBLINE AND FORMETIC 4D RASTEROGRAPHY DEVICE IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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Mladen Herc, Lecturer

Mateja Berčan, Assistant Professor

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Accessible and reliable posture assessment is key for early detection of abnormalities. The plumb line method is widely used for its simplicity, while newer systems like Formetric 4D provide more precise, repeatable measurements. Methods: Data from 35 participants were analyzed. Distances from the vertical line to C7 (PSC7) and L3 (PSL3), as well as the sagittal index, were compared. Measurements were evaluated by BMI, sex, and age, and checked against normative values. Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS 29.0 with significance set at $p=0.05$. Results: A significant difference between methods was found at PSC7 ($p<0.001$), but not at PSL3 ($p=0.252$). Sagittal indices correlated well ($ICC=0.864$). Plumb line measurement confidence intervals fell within normative ranges. Discussion and Conclusion: Overall, the methods were comparable, with differences mainly at the cervical level. BMI and age did not affect results, and sex differences appeared only at PSC7. Standardizing positioning and protocols would improve comparability across studies. The findings support the value of non-invasive posture assessment and suggest that combining both methods provides a more complete evaluation, especially for children and adolescents.

Keywords: posture, sagittal alignment, plumb line, Formetric 4D, children and adolescents

PHYSIOTHERAPY AND SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY IN THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY AGING

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Ivana Živoder, Lecturer

Vesna Hodić, Lecturer

Nikolina Zaplatić Degač, Lecturer

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ABSTRACT

Population ageing has emerged as one of the most significant demographic and public health challenges in contemporary societies. Croatia, in line with broader European trends, is experiencing a steady increase in the proportion of older adults. However, unlike many Western European countries, Croatia faces the additional demographic burden of extensive emigration among younger populations, which further accelerates the ageing process. These demographic shifts underscore the need for systematic adaptation of health and social policies, alongside the development of integrated and transdisciplinary models of care aimed at preserving functional ability, autonomy, and social participation among older adults. Social gerontology, as an evolving interdisciplinary field, investigates the social dimensions of ageing and emphasises a life-course perspective in understanding later-life outcomes. Social gerontologists are equipped with competencies essential for coordinating transdisciplinary teams and facilitating effective collaboration in the promotion of active and healthy ageing. Complementing this role, physiotherapists contribute substantially to maintaining physical functioning, preventing falls, enhancing mobility and independence, and managing chronic conditions common in later life. Evidence shows that structured physical activity programmes not only support physical health but also promote psychological well-being, reduce loneliness, and strengthen social engagement. Some developed countries are already educating and implementing geriatric physiotherapy, which focuses primarily on clinical practice, and gerontological physiotherapy, which emphasises health promotion, prevention, and policy development. These approaches offer valuable guidance for the Croatian context and other ageing European societies seeking to modernise their models of care. Global initiatives such as the Decade of Healthy Ageing and the Integrated Care for Older People framework highlight the importance of integrated, person-centred, and transdisciplinary care. Within this framework, collaboration between physiotherapists and social gerontologists can represent a crucial foundation for promoting health, functional capacity, and dignity among older adults in contemporary society.

Keywords: aging, social gerontology, physiotherapy

PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC MANAGEMENT OF ACUTE LATERAL ANKLE SPRAIN: REST OR EARLY MOBILIZATION? – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical Background: The ankle plays an important role in the human locomotor system, as it is involved in almost every movement. A lateral ankle sprain is one of the most common injuries of the lower limb. It can lead to long term reduced mobility and ankle instability. Therefore, an appropriate therapeutic approach is crucial for successful rehabilitation. In the acute phase, protocols advocating immobilization and rest or early mobilization are used. *Method:* We used a qualitative research approach. Data were searched in the PubMed, PEDro, Science Direct, ProQuest, COBISS, and Google Scholar databases. Articles included in the research were selected based on inclusion criteria. *Results:* We included 12 studies in the literature review. All studies addressed rehabilitation approaches after an acute lateral ankle sprain. They also included at least one component of protocols advocating rest or protocols supporting early mobilization. *Discussion:* In the systematic review of the literature, we compared protocols advocating rest with those supporting early mobilization after an acute lateral ankle sprain. We found no significant differences between the protocols in reducing pain and increasing mobility. We determined that successfully reducing pain in the acute phase influences faster improvement in mobility. Early mobilization proved to be a more effective approach for increasing joint stability, and it also showed positive effects on the long term functionality of the joint.

Keywords: ankle sprain, PRICE protocol, acute phase and early mobilization

THERAPEUTIC TOUCH IN MANUAL THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

Therapeutic touch is a central component of manual therapy, extending beyond technical execution to include relational, emotional, and ethical dimensions. The purpose of this study was to explore how physiotherapists understand and apply therapeutic touch in their practice, what meanings they attribute to it, and how they address ethical and professional challenges associated with touch. A qualitative research design was applied using semi-structured interviews with four physiotherapists from public and private sectors in Slovenia. Two interviews were conducted in person and two by telephone. The collected data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. Results show that physiotherapists understand therapeutic touch as a fundamental professional tool that merges technical competence with empathy, communication, and ethical awareness. Touch was described as "a dialogue between the therapist's hands and the patient's body." The participants emphasized the importance of professional boundaries, ongoing informed consent, and the therapist's self-reflection. Technical and relational touch were perceived as interdependent rather than separate categories. Therapeutic touch is thus seen as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires clinical skill, ethical sensitivity, and relational competence. Integrating ethics, communication, and reflective practice into physiotherapy education could strengthen professional awareness and ensure safe, person-centred care.

Keywords: therapeutic touch, manual therapy, ethics, informed consent

PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC MANAGEMENT OF FLAT FEET IN THE ADULT POPULATION – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Tatjana Horvat, Lecturer

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ABSTRACT

Flatfoot represents a deformity of the foot complex, primarily characterized by the flattening or lowering of the medial longitudinal arch (hereinafter referred to as MLA). The etiology of deformation is broad, the condition can be either congenital or acquired. It may present in a flexible or rigid form. Treatment options are available within both conservative and surgical frameworks. With high-quality, well-planned, and evidence-based conservative treatment of flat feet, the need for surgical intervention can be avoided. For this reason, we were interested in physiotherapeutic methods and techniques that are evidenced the most effective in the treatment of flatfoot in the adult population. The aim of the thesis is to examine physiotherapeutic methods and techniques and their effects on flatfoot, in order to determine which have been most effective in improving the condition of flatfoot in adults. The research was conducted using freely accessible databases, through which we selected 11 relevant and high-quality studies that were included in the study. We reviewed and compared selected studies, highlighting physiotherapeutic methods and techniques that have proven to be the most effective in the treatment of flatfoot in the adult population. Based on the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that the management of flatfoot requires a structured and carefully planned physiotherapeutic approach. In cases of symptomatic flatfoot, myofascial release techniques can be effective in reducing pain. The main therapeutic options also comprise kinesiotherapy, the application of kinesiology or rigid tape, and the use of various orthoses. Correct and consistent implementation of these interventions is crucial, as it helps to prevent the progression of the condition. The findings of our research provide physiotherapists with guidance in selecting an appropriate approach to ensure high-quality management of flatfoot.

Keywords: flat foot, conservative treatment, physiotherapy treatment, adult population

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF ANIMAL-ASSISTED PHYSIOTHERAPY IN CHILDREN WITH CEREBRAL PALSY AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Animal-assisted therapies are increasingly used as a complementary approach in the treatment of children with cerebral palsy (CP) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The aim of the research was to assess their impact on motor functions, sensory integration, psychological well-being, and social inclusion of children, and to define the role of the physiotherapist in the implementation of these approaches. Methods: A professional review of professional and scientific literature was conducted within the framework of a descriptive research method. Studies on the effects of hippotherapy, canine-assisted therapy, and dolphin-assisted therapy were included. Six relevant studies were selected using the PRISMA diagram. Data were analyzed using the compliance method, comparative analysis, and the use of categorization and coding techniques, which enabled the classification of key themes and effects of the therapies. Results: The literature shows that animal-assisted therapies contribute to improvements in motor control, balance, and sensory functions in children with CP, and to improved communication, reduced tension, and increased social engagement in children with ASD. In addition to functional effects, positive psychological aspects were also observed, such as increased motivation and emotional stability. The physiotherapist has a key role in this process, as they ensure professional guidance, safety, and an individually tailored therapeutic process. Discussion: Animal-assisted therapies represent a promising complementary approach to standard physiotherapy treatment; however, the evidence—especially for ASD—is still limited. Additional research using methodologically stronger approaches is needed to more precisely evaluate the effects and to develop guidelines for clinical practice.

Keywords: hippotherapy, canine-assisted therapy, animal-assisted therapy, cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder

STUDENT PANEL

EFFECTIVENESS OF VIRTUAL REALITY WALKING EXERCISE IN STROKE PATIENTS – LITERATURE REVIEW

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Uroš Marušič, Professor

Alma Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

Matej Koprivnik, Expert

UKC Maribor, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Theoretical background: Stroke frequently leads to gait impairments that require targeted and intensive rehabilitation. In recent years, virtual reality (VR) technologies have increasingly been implemented as an adjunct to conventional physiotherapy. The aim of this study was, based on a review of scientific literature, to investigate the types, suitability, impact, and effectiveness of gait training using VR technology in patients after stroke. Methods: A systematic literature review was conducted in the online databases PubMed, ScienceDirect, COBISS, and PEDro. The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using the PEDro scale, and the selection process was presented using a PRISMA flow diagram. Results: Nine randomized controlled trials (RCTs) were included in the analysis. The results indicate that gait training using VR contributes to improvements in spatiotemporal gait parameters. Beneficial effects were also observed in balance and functional mobility, particularly in more intensive and function-oriented programs. Discussion: The most pronounced effects were associated with programs that combined VR-based gait training, higher-intensity interventions, and real-time feedback. Some approaches achieved effects comparable to conventional rehabilitation, while offering additional advantages such as increased engagement and individualized training. Immersive systems demonstrated greater potential in several studies; however, interpretation is limited by protocol heterogeneity, small sample sizes, and a lack of long-term follow-up.

Keywords: stroke, gait rehabilitation, virtual reality, physiotherapy, virtual reality technology

THE ROLE OF THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST IN PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical Background: Chronic non-communicable diseases are among the greatest public health challenges of modern times, as they contribute to premature mortality, morbidity, and a significant financial burden. Since they are mostly the result of unhealthy lifestyles and behavioural factors, they can be prevented through appropriate measures. The aim of this study is to present the importance of prevention and health promotion, as well as the role of physiotherapists in their implementation. Research Methodology: The study was quantitative, conducted between May and June 2024 using an anonymous online questionnaire on the 1KA platform, with the participation of 100 Slovenian physiotherapists. Results: Physiotherapists demonstrate a positive attitude toward prevention and health promotion and consider them an important part of their profession. Most are familiar with the Canadian guidelines and the WHO guidelines for maintaining adult and older adult health. Those who educate themselves on healthy lifestyles more frequently implement preventive and promotional measures. Disease and injury prevention, as well as patient education, are key aspects of their work. The greatest barrier to performing these activities is a lack of time. Discussion and Conclusion: Physiotherapists, with their knowledge and direct patient work, contribute significantly to health promotion and disease prevention. Preventive and promotional measures can prevent or detect diseases early, reduce mortality, prevent the worsening of conditions or recurrence of injuries, and enable patients to take independent care of their health.

Keywords: prevention, health promotion, health, physiotherapy, physical activity

PHYSIOTHERAPY FOR SACROILIAC JOINT PAIN: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Pain in the sacroiliac joint is a common cause of discomfort in the lower back and pelvic region. This joint transfers loads between the trunk and the lower limbs. Problems may arise due to inflammation, degenerative changes, or mechanical dysfunction of the joint. The aim of this study was to determine which physiotherapeutic treatment is most effective in alleviating pain. Methods: A review of eleven randomized controlled trials was conducted, focusing on physiotherapeutic methods for pain management and functional improvement in patients with chronic sacroiliac joint pain. The results were analyzed using qualitative methods of coding and categorization. Results: The study showed that the most effective treatments for pain reduction include the use of manipulation combined with active exercises for the sacroiliac joint, as demonstrated by Javadov et al. (2021), where pain decreased from an average of 5.8 to 0.4 on the VAS scale within three months. This was followed by stabilization and active exercises specifically targeting the sacroiliac joint in the study by Nejati et al. (2019), which reduced pain from an average of 5.52 to 0.35 over three months. The third most effective approach was the use of manual techniques combined with focused shockwave therapy in the study by Tan et al. (2024), which reduced pain from an average of 5.23 to 0.36 within two weeks. Conclusion: The most effective intervention for reducing pain was reported in the study by Javadov et al. (2021), which combined manual therapy and active exercises. This approach led to consistent pain reduction from the first week through to three months. Manual therapy contributed to rapid initial pain relief, which was then maintained and further improved by patients through active exercises even after the completion of treatment.

Keywords: sacroiliac joint, chronic pain, physiotherapeutic treatment, treatment effectiveness, methods and techniques

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATION DURING THE WAITING PERIOD FOR PHYSIOTHERAPY IN PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN

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ABSTRACT

Background: Chronic low back pain (CLBP) is one of the leading causes of disability. Long waiting periods for physiotherapy treatment may lead to a deterioration of individuals conditions; hence, it is prudent to evaluate the effectiveness of potential interventions during the waiting period for physiotherapy treatment. Purpose: To evaluate the impact of a single educational session of tailored therapeutic exercises on pain and function in CLBP patients awaiting physiotherapy. Methods: Sixty patients were divided into control and experimental groups (N=30 each), stratified by age (< 65 and ≥ 65). The experimental group received one session of individually tailored exercises. Pain intensity (VAS) and disability (ODI) were measured at baseline and four-week follow-up. Results: The experimental group demonstrated statistically significant pain reduction and improved functionality compared to controls. Age did not affect outcomes ($p > 0.05$), though individuals with lower initial physical activity achieved greater functional improvement ($p = 0.04$). Conclusion: A single targeted educational session during waiting periods is a feasible intervention that significantly improves CLBP outcomes, potentially shortening rehabilitation time and relieving healthcare system pressure.

Keywords: chronic pain, lumbar spine, physiotherapy, patient education, waiting periods

PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC APPROACH IN PATIENT AFTER HEART TRANSPLANTATION – A LITERATURE REVIEW AND CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical Background: After heart transplantation a comprehensive rehabilitation is required for a successful recovery and the restoration of physical capacity, which includes an individually tailored physiotherapeutic approach. *Purpose:* To collect and present data on the most commonly used physiotherapy methods in the rehabilitation of patients after heart transplantation. *The aim was to research which limitations a physiotherapist must consider when working with a heart transplant recipient. Methods:* We searched the PEDro and PubMed databases for studies that were appropriate for our literature review. We conducted a case study with a heart transplant recipient. As part of our research, we also conducted two semi-structured interviews. *Results:* Rehabilitation of heart transplant patients includes various methods and techniques, which the physiotherapist individually adapts to the limitations of the patient. This is crucial in planning a safe and successful rehabilitation programme. *Discussion:* We found that high-intensity interval training under the supervision of a physiotherapist is a safe and effective method for improving functionality and quality of life in patients after heart transplantation. However, its long-term effects are eventually comparable to those of moderate-intensity continuous training. A comprehensive physiotherapy approach includes monitoring of physiological responses, gradual strengthening of physical capacity and observation of adverse symptoms.

Keywords: heart transplantation, physiotherapy, methods, limitations

FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF VOJTA THERAPY AND NEUROPHYSIOTHERAPY IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY: A CASE STUDY

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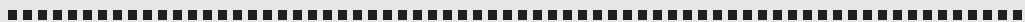
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Global developmental delay is one of the most common developmental challenges in pediatrics, affecting children under five years of age with delays in two or more areas of development and a prevalence of 1–3%. Accurate and timely diagnosis is crucial for developing an appropriate treatment plan, predicting the course of development, and providing support to the family. Method: The research is based on a case study of a two-and-a-half-year-old girl with global developmental delay. In the quantitative part, we used the GMFM-88 functional scale and the PEDI questionnaire to assess functional abilities. In the qualitative part, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a neurophysiotherapist who provided a professional subjective assessment of progress. Results: The GMFM-88 results showed progress in all assessed areas: the girl scored 36.7% in the first measurement, 48.9% in the second, and 64.8% in the last. The results of the PEDI questionnaire also significantly improved; in less than a year, the first part improved by 15.3%, and the second and third parts by 32%. Qualitative data from the professional assessment confirm progress in gross motor skills and functional abilities. Discussion: The findings indicate that the combination of Vojta therapy and neurophysiotherapeutic techniques brought significant functional improvements to the treated girl. The results support the use of a comprehensive neurophysiotherapy approach in children with global developmental delay, while also highlighting the need for further research to generalize the findings more broadly.

Keywords: global developmental delay, neurophysiotherapy techniques, Vojta therapy, gross motor skills, functionality



DANCE ART



SCHOLARLY PANEL

DANCE AS CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

SLOVAK FOLK DANCE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Slovak folk dance has a long journey which spanning several centuries. During this period it evolved and formed into the form we can see today. Traditional folk dance is not only an exclusive product of Slovak ethnicity, but he was formed by geographical, historical and cultural-social factors. It has become an integral part of life in the Slovak countryside, and due to its functional importance, it belongs to the manifestations of traditional folk culture. Due to the change in the way of life in the rural environment, the folk dance lost its original meaning and the continuity of the transmission of the tradition was also disrupted. Traditional folk dance is getting a second chance at life in the new urban environment. It's function as well as the space for implementation are fundamentally changing. Serious scientific interest supported by research on folk dance in Slovakia begins after the Second World War. The obtained information serves as a preserving agent archiving the original dance forms, but also as a source for scenic processing on an artistic level.

Keywords: folk dance, folklore and folklorism, dance culture, folklore movements, Slovak ethnochoreology

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CONTEMPORARY FLAMENCO: CRAFTING INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS THROUGH DIGITALISATION BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

The dynamic evolution of contemporary flamenco dance as a global cultural phenomenon positions it as a powerful case study in contemporary multicultural society. The paper argues that the means of digitalisation that have been opening the horizons of possibilities for the expansion of the genre, its expressions and re-interpretations have played a crucial role in the expansion and have even made it possible. The discussion focuses on the genre's transformation and adaptation outside of its traditional Spanish context, where artists forge new identities through the lens of a nostalgia for the unlived and the re-emphasis on emotional expression as a key trait of their contemporary artistic practices. We examine the practices of non-spanish artists who engage in the retroactive creation of tradition, driven by the "nostalgia for the unlived"—an aesthetic strategy where an uninherited past is reinterpreted to create a new myth by obtaining knowledge in-situ (in Spain) and through digital platforms. This creative resistance legitimizes autonomous creation and critical appropriation, moving beyond simple imitation. We rethink how flamenco has changed through digitalisation becoming a means and medium to construct artistic identities. The paper explores how contemporary flamenco, much like digital culture, uses reconstruction and recontextualization as strategies of subjectivity. Furthermore, it investigates how contemporary projects merge flamenco's rhythms with contemporary sound/digital environments, demonstrating the genre's capacity to evolve into a language that is relevant and responsive to the digital age. The active reinterpretation of a tradition requires artists to deeply understand the structural rules before inventively transcending them, and their need for critical thinking and cultural competency. The work asserts that contemporary flamenco transforms traditional creative practices into a universal artistic tool for the 21. century with the help of modern technology, digital platforms and global networking.

Keywords: contemporary flamenco, nostalgia for the unlived, retroactive tradition, autonomous creation, digitalization

DANCING WITH WORDS: LINGUISTIC VARIATION, GENRE-SPECIFIC USAGE AND NON-SLOVENE TERMINOLOGY IN SLOVENIAN DANCE DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the current state of Slovenian dance terminology and analyzes its use in texts from the online portal 'Parada plesa'. Although Slovenia has a rich dance tradition, contemporary terminology remains unsystematically defined and inconsistently used. Existing reference works, such as the 'Ples' lexicon (1990), are outdated, while newer resources—including the 'Fran' portal and the 'Gledališki terminološki slovar'—cover dance terminology only partially. Attempts at Slovene adaptation, for example in jazz-dance manuals, show that translations are often inconsistent and rarely adopted in practice, largely because original French and English terms are deeply rooted in global dance pedagogy. Interviews with practitioners highlight that Slovene equivalents frequently hinder communication in training and international contexts, reinforcing reliance on foreign terminology. The study analyses dance terms from Parada plesa by excluding general, theatrical, sports and musical vocabulary to focus solely on domain-specific terminology. The collected terms are classified by dance genre—ballet, flamenco, oriental dance, contemporary dance, standard and Latin American dances, and urban dance—and by general dance vocabulary. Findings show that 85% of terms are non-Slovene, largely citations, borrowings and partially adapted loanwords, with high variation in spelling and usage. Additionally, about 20% of the vocabulary consists of genre-specific jargonisms with divergent meanings across dance styles. The research concludes that Slovenian dance terminology is extensive but lacks national standardization, resulting in inconsistent practical use.

Keywords: dance, terminology, foreign language, dance genre, jargonisms

RECONFIGURING DANCE BETWEEN ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Dance, despite its universality and long-standing presence in human culture, has remained theoretically underrepresented within the philosophy of art. Its fundamentally ephemeral nature – a performance that vanishes with the final movement – challenges the classical frameworks of aesthetics, traditionally oriented toward stable, material art objects. While painting or sculpture leave tangible artifacts behind, dance persists primarily through memory, recordings, or imperfect notation systems. This has limited its critical recognition and epistemic legitimacy. This paper argues for a necessary epistemological shift: from conceptualizing dance within a rigid “framework” inherited from canonical aesthetic theory, to understanding it as an emergent, dynamic “field” of embodied knowledge. Such a field acknowledges the hybrid and permeable reality of dance, where movement, affect, materiality, music, scenography, and technology are in continuous interaction. The study foregrounds the complementarity of two philosophical lineages that have shaped modern dance theory: the analytic approach, centered on conceptual clarity and definition, and the continental approach, grounded in lived experience and phenomenology. By integrating these perspectives, dance can be repositioned as both a theoretical and creative practice, deserving of equal standing alongside other established arts. The proposed framework supports a pedagogical and research model that treats dance not merely as movement, but as a form of bodily thinking and a living aesthetic experience.

Keywords: dance theory, embodied knowledge, analytic philosophy, phenomenology, aesthetics

CONTEMPORARY DANCE BETWEEN DIGITALISATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary dance is currently created within a field in which live bodily presence encounters digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Digitalisation entails the systematic transformation of dance into digital records: video recordings, online archives, databases and interactive platforms. Dance circulates as a file and as "content", accessible via social media, digital libraries and archives. On another level, artificial intelligence enters as a system that uses these digital traces of the body as a data basis for analysing and generating new movement material. With the help of AI, it becomes possible to create new movement phrases, structures or even entire choreographies, which choreographers and dancers then test, embody, transform or reject. This raises key questions for contemporary dance: How is our understanding of the body transformed when it is simultaneously live and datafied? Who is the author when AI is involved in the creation of choreography? And what are the ethical and political implications of the fact that bodies and their movement histories are stored as data that can be processed, shared and commercially exploited?

Keywords: contemporary dance, film, video, digitalisation, digitisation, artificial intelligence

BALLET PEDAGOGY AND SOMATIC PRACTICES

CORRECTIVE TRAINING FOR THE FIRST YEARS OF CLASSICAL BALLET AT THE HUNGARIAN DANCE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the academic year, all students newly admitted to the classical ballet dancer training course at The Hungarian Dance University are assessed at the child development and therapy center called Báránfyelhő. After the assessment of their motor and neurodevelopment, children can have special skills development training integrated into their curriculum.

Among the 33 children assessed in September 2020, significant differences were found in regard to cross-body movements as well as the independent use and coordination of the upper and lower extremities. In the seventh month following the evaluation, the ballet masters of these classes reported development in the children's concentration, coordination, balance, and attention, as well as the independent use of the limbs and proprioception.

The skills development training has a compound effect: as students' coordination skills improve, they experience more success and, as a result, become more self-confident. This kind of specific skills development at the Hungarian Dance Academy not only addresses a gap in professional dancer training but is also unique among professional dancer courses.

Keywords: ballet, movement development, basic therapy, motor skills problems related to neuromotor immaturity, coordination, developmental gross motor skills

APPLICATION OF THE VAGANOVA METHOD IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT: PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS WITH A FOCUS ON THE SLOVENIAN SETTING AND THE INTEGRATION OF MODERN APPROACHES IN HETEROGENEOUS LEARNING GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

This contribution examines the relevance and applicability of the Vaganova methodology in contemporary ballet pedagogy, supported by insights from modern psychological and educational approaches. The theoretical foundation includes core principles of the Vaganova system alongside concepts such as differentiation, the Midway Model, safe practice, and intrinsic motivation in the context of optimal learning experiences or "flow". The central premise proposes that, despite its classical origins, the Vaganova methodology remains a highly efficient, structured, and adaptable system. It enables the development of both technical precision and artistic expressivity in a broad student population—regardless of age, previous experience, or anatomical predispositions. The decisive factor lies in the teacher's ability to integrate contemporary pedagogical and psychological strategies into the existing methodological framework. Such integration is comparable to training approaches used in high-performance sports, where supportive coach-athlete communication has been shown to enhance motivation and performance outcomes and aligns with psychological models of intrinsic motivation and "flow" states. The analysis draws on over two decades of pedagogical experience and long-term observation of different ballet education models in Slovenia. This reflection is complemented by contemporary pedagogical perspectives on ballet methodology within the Slovenian context. Particular attention is given to measurable progress in students' functional turnout en dehors and body awareness, achieved through age-appropriate progression, clear methodological structuring of practice, and informed individual guidance. The contribution highlights the importance of systematic support for methodological consistency within ballet education in Slovenia. Furthermore, it argues that long-term planning and alignment of methodology have a significant impact on motivation, technical growth, and the professional development of young dancers.

Keywords: Vaganova methodology, ballet pedagogy, intrinsic motivation, flow theory, differentiation, safe practice, Slovenian ballet context

APPLIED ANATOMY AND BALLET TANDEM-TEACHING MODEL (AABTTM): A PROPOSAL FOR CONTEMPORARY DANCE STUDENTS LEARNING BALLET

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, William Forsythe has been challenging his dancers and audiences alike to "dismantle the ossification of thinking", and to re-think ballet as a contemporary art form. For students embarking on a contemporary dance education with little or no previous knowledge of ballet, its patina of historical exclusivity can present itself as overwhelming. This paper shares convincing insights from Winter Semester 2024-25 at AMEU Dance Department, Ljubljana. In the Applied Anatomy and Ballet Tandem-Teaching Model (AABTTM), Randi Randolph-Liebnau and Darrel Toulon instruct in tandem, as students investigate a systematically organized body of knowledge: cognitive processing, associative thinking and embodied awareness. AABTTM is a trans-disciplinary model developed for de-mystifying and re-purposing ballet's information into attainable bite-sized pieces, to make it accessible for students acquiring a contemporary dance education in the 21st century. When cognitive and physiological insights of experiential anatomy are trans-mutated into the ballet schema and idiom, there arises a new understanding of what is still regarded as a "dismissive, elusive and unattainable" form of dancing. The ballet aesthetic, its use-ability as a universal language not rooted in the customs of a particular culture, is decluttered from 19th century romanticism, for pragmatic transferability of knowledge.

Keywords: anatomy, ballet, contemporary dance, teaching, trans-disciplinary, accessible knowledge transfer

NEUROMUSCULAR CONTROL OF POSTURAL AND CORE STABILITY IN STUDENTS OF DANCE THEATRE ACTING

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Monika Jakowczuk, Professor

Faculty of Acting, National Academy of Theatre Arts in Krakow, Poland

Katarzyna Cholewa, Graduate

Laura Pasiowiec, Graduate

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Neuromuscular control is crucial for both aesthetic expression and efficient movement in actors. Methods: The study included 52 students of acting, major: acting in dance theatre (13 men and 39 women). Dynamic balance (DB) was assessed using the Y-Balance Test, core stability (CS) with the McGill protocol, and hand strength (HS) using a JAMAR® PLUS+ dynamometer. Results: In the Y-Balance Test, normalized anterior reach was lower than posteromedial and posterolateral reaches (58.3%, 106.7%, 108.9%), with inter-limb differences of 3.5–4.9 cm. For core stability, average trunk muscle endurance times were: extensors 101 ± 38 s, flexors 105 ± 59 s, right forearm plank 80 ± 27 s, and left forearm plank 83 ± 28 s. Normative values were achieved by 7.69%, 13.46%, 50.00%, and 40.38% of participants, respectively. In the HS test, mean dominant and non-dominant hand strengths were 27.37 ± 9.03 kg and 26.43 ± 9.84 kg, respectively, with normative values met by 44% and 48% of participants.

Conclusions: University programs for future dance theatre actors should incorporate targeted training to enhance dynamic balance, core stability, and hand strength, supporting performance quality and reducing the risk of injury.

Keywords: actors, dancers, Y-balance test, Mc Gill approach, hand strength

SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

SCHOLARLY PANEL

COMPETENCES, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FOR WORKING WITH OLDER ADULTS: SOCIAL GERONTOLOGIST

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper was to shed light on the competencies that students acquire in social gerontology study programs, where they are employed, what are their competencies and work tasks for working with the older adults in various living environments and how they use them meaningfully. Social gerontology, which began to develop in Slovenia as a subdiscipline of gerontology, studies how active age is lived and how it can be improved. Various educational programmes have been developed abroad, which, after completing their education, enable social gerontologists to work with their competencies in various fields, as they are aware that they are indispensable staff for the growing elderly population, whether at home, at dormitory or in a hospital environment. Since Alma Mater University is the only faculty in Slovenia that educates social gerontologists, who play an important role in the Long-Term Care Act, we present the competencies that graduates of social gerontology acquire abroad and in Slovenia, and where they are employed. The comparative method was used to collect, compare and analyse domestic and foreign scientific and professional literature. A social gerontologist has become indispensable in the care of older adults in Slovenia. For more than a decade, a study programme in social gerontology has been developed in Slovenia and, as a result, experts who are empowered to work with older adults have entered the market. However, they will only be able to start exercising their competencies when the basic conditions for filling a suitable job have been systemically regulated. The research proves the historical value of the placement of social gerontologists in the Slovenian legislative space and confirms the need for their education.

Keywords: aging, older adults, social gerontology, social gerontologist, UAM

INTEGRATING ELDERLY IN THE DIGITALLY ADVANCED HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

With the technological developments, life is becoming easier, many services are becoming more approachable and quite many tasks are now less time consuming and more efficient. The positive effects are especially important in healthcare, where the smallest change may have an enormous success and influence on individual's life, health, or in some specific cases, it could even save a life. While technology may have enriched our lives with a snowball of positive effects, it at the same time leaves certain people with somewhat negative consequences. The thing is that within the idea of digital development in healthcare, no one really thinks about the people who do not have the resources, skills or the knowledge on handling these new digital or technological devices. These are in most cases elderly people, the group of people that uses and needs the healthcare services the most. Slovenian as well as other nations' healthcare systems are quite rapidly integrating their data and services into the online environments. With each change in practice or by each change in the legislation, institutions forget to take measures for integrating elderly into these newly developed apps, online platforms and more. A great percentage of people, walking throughout hospitals, clinics and other healthcare facilities are elderly people. Yet, they are not given the same opportunities to be familiarized and taught about the procedures, steps that should be taken when you register yourself at the machine. That does not leave elderly without the needed procedure, medical examination or treatment, but with a very inconvenient situation, with a feeling of being even more left out and alone. Integrating elderly in the digitally advanced healthcare systems should not be a recognised fallout in our healthcare systems, but a common measure, connected to every technological development that directly impacts them and their usage of healthcare.

Keywords: elderly, digitalisation and elderly, digitalisation of healthcare, elderly and healthcare, inclusion of elderly in digital environment

NURSING STAFF SATISFACTION IN LONG-TERM CARE HOMES (LCHS)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Staff shortages and increasing care demands continue to place sustained pressure on long-term care homes (LCHs), with significant implications for employees' well-being and retention. *Methods:* A cross-sectional online survey was conducted between June and August 2025 among nurses and caregivers employed in two LCHs in the Maribor area. A purposive sampling strategy was used, and thirty-five nursing employees participated. The study examined potential determinants of job satisfaction, including fair workload, team respect, salary and benefits, and the number of employees, based on items from the Nursing Home Administrator Job Satisfaction Questionnaire. Data were analysed using t-tests, Spearman correlations, and multiple regression analyses. Respondents expressed their opinions on a 7-point Likert scale. *Results:* The sample comprised of 18 nurses, 16 caregivers, and one guardian. The mean overall job satisfaction was moderately positive ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.89$) and did not differ significantly between nurses and caregivers. The relationship between perceived psychosocial support and job satisfaction was strong and positive ($r = .87$). Only one significant predictor emerged – salary and benefits ($\beta = 0.536$) – explaining 28.7% of the variance, while other predictors (fair workload, mutual respect, staffing sufficiency) were not significant. *Conclusions:* For nursing staff in Slovenian LCHs, job satisfaction appears to be primarily driven by remuneration and benefits, while strong collegial support is closely associated with higher satisfaction levels. To improve retention, interventions should prioritise competitive and transparent reward systems, foster supportive team environments, and ensure equitable workload distribution. Future research should include larger, more diverse, and longitudinal samples to validate these results and explore potential mediating effects of organisational culture, leadership style, and interprofessional collaboration on job satisfaction and staff retention in long-term care institutions.

Keywords: job satisfaction, long-term care, work environment in social care

ERGONOMIC STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING LABOR SHORTAGES IN AN AGING WORKFORCE

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ABSTRACT

The global workforce is aging, leading to challenges in labor supply and increased health-related workplace issues. This study investigates how ergonomic interventions can mitigate the negative effects of workforce aging, reduce absenteeism and presenteeism, and improve overall productivity. Using a survey of 80 employees from Slovenian companies, the study examines physical, personal, and psychosocial factors influencing workplace efficiency. The findings indicate that poor ergonomic conditions exacerbate age-related health issues, leading to increased work absences. Implementing proactive ergonomic measures such as improved lighting, flexible working hours, and frequent short breaks significantly enhances productivity and employee well-being. The study proposes an ergonomic integration model for modern organizations, which highlights the economic and operational benefits of ergonomics in workforce management.

Keywords: ergonomics, aging workforce, labor shortage, absenteeism, presenteeism

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS: A COMPARISON OF RESIDENTIAL CARE AND HOME SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Social isolation and loneliness are major challenges affecting older adults, with significant impacts on physical and mental health. This article reviews 13 studies comparing older individuals living in care homes with those residing in private homes. Findings show that private homes often result in limited social networks and greater isolation risks, while care homes provide more structured interactions. However, the quality of these interactions is crucial in reducing loneliness. The article emphasizes tailored interventions such as group activities, technological solutions, and personalized therapies to enhance social connectedness and quality of life among older adults. The role of technology in fostering communication—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which intensified loneliness—is highlighted. This review offers a comprehensive understanding of aging dynamics in different living environments and stresses the need for strategies to combat social isolation. Proposed solutions include developing local community centers, intergenerational programs, and improving sleep quality to strengthen social integration. The findings are essential for understanding factors contributing to loneliness and for designing effective interventions. This article provides valuable insights for advancing practices and policies that promote social inclusion and well-being among older adults.

Keywords: social isolation, loneliness, older adults, care homes

REHABILITATION OF OLDER ADULTS AFTER HIP FRACTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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ABSTRACT

Falls are one of the most common adverse events in older age. When they result in a hip fracture, the situation becomes serious and requires systematic treatment and rehabilitation due to the high mortality rate, long-term disability, and reduced quality of life. Timely rehabilitation is key to achieving successful recovery and early mobilization after surgery. This rehabilitation can be provided to the patient in the Republic of Croatia in several forms, including inpatient rehabilitation in physiatry departments within clinics or general hospitals, in specialized hospitals, commonly referred to as spas, or through home or outpatient physical therapy. All of these options are available to the patient through the Croatian Health Insurance Fund (HZZO) free of charge, provided they are approved by the HZZO commission, based on the condition and diagnosis, at the recommendation of a specialist. The rehabilitation model in the spa is based on the inpatient care model and includes various therapeutic procedures, usually lasting from 21 to 42 days. Therapeutic procedures for such patients include kinesiotherapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, magnetotherapy, and occupational therapy, aimed at recovery and early mobilization. Institutions where this type of rehabilitation is carried out include Krapinske Toplice, Varaždinske Toplice, Lipik, Naftalan in Ivanić-Grad, Crikvenica, and Makarska. If the patient is not a candidate for rehabilitation in stationary institutions due to relative or absolute contraindications, rehabilitation is provided at home at the expense of the Croatian Health Insurance Fund, with the goal of early mobilization and preventing complications arising from reduced mobility.

Keywords: falls, hip fracture, rehabilitation, spa, Croatian Health Insurance Fund, physiotherapy, older adults

TRIAGE OF ELDERLY PEOPLE WITH HIP FRACTURES ACCORDING TO THE AUSTRALASIAN TRIAGE SCALE IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Older adults in emergency departments (EDs) present a unique set of challenges. With the increasing number of elderly individuals seeking care, the assessment and management strategies must adapt to the physical, cognitive, and social changes associated with aging. Hip fractures in the elderly require immediate attention, as they are associated with significant complications, including post-operative infections, functional decline, and delirium. Effective triage in the ED is crucial for identifying patients who require priority intervention to minimize these risks. In Australia, New Zealand, Oceania, and Croatia, the Australasian Triage Scale (ATS) is the standard tool for categorizing patients in EDs. In addition to the ATS, additional tools such as the Identification and Response Scale (ISAR) for Seniors at Risk, the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS), and the 4AT for Acute Confusional States are employed to assess frailty and cognitive impairment, which are especially important in elderly patients. The use of these combined tools helps prioritize care for patients with hip fractures, allowing for timely and accurate identification of those at greater risk of complications. This multi-faceted triage approach not only enhances the efficiency of care but also contributes to better outcomes by reducing postoperative complications and improving recovery. By implementing these triage protocols, EDs can significantly lower mortality rates and improve the quality of care for elderly patients with hip fractures.

Keywords: emergency department, triage, elderly, hip fracture, ATS

TOWARDS EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM CARE IN EUROPE: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The study we present explores the quality and accessibility of long-term care systems across European Union Member States, analysing how welfare traditions and policy frameworks shape service provision and sustainability. Based on three research phases, identification of good practices, assessment of their applicability, and synthesis of systemic findings, the study examines structural diversity and converging trends in European long-term care. Through a comparative analysis of key EU policy documents, including the European Care Strategy, European Pillar of Social Rights, and recent Long-Term Care and Ageing Reports, Member States are classified by welfare models (Nordic, Continental, Southern, Eastern), focusing on financing mechanisms, quality standards, and organisational approaches. Findings reveal persistent disparities reflecting cultural and institutional contexts. Major challenges include workforce shortages, demographic ageing, unequal access between urban and rural regions, and limited digital integration of health and social care. Nevertheless, innovative, community-based, and person-centred models are emerging as promising pathways toward more inclusive and efficient systems.

The study concludes that sustainable long-term care in Europe requires aligning policy innovation, digital transformation, and social solidarity to strengthen equity, efficiency, and dignity in ageing societies.

Keywords: long-term care, accessibility, social services, comparative analysis, sustainable development, social policy

DIGITAL INCLUSION AND INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN OLDER ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: In a digitally transformed society, gaps in digital competencies can deepen social exclusion but also enable new forms of intergenerational learning. Technology plays an increasingly important role in connecting younger and older people. This pilot study examined how the digital skills of older adults influence intergenerational communication, willingness to cooperate, and perceptions of younger people. The research was conducted from 27 September to 28 October 2025. Methods: Two surveys were carried out: one among young adults (18–25 years; N = 66) and one among older adults (65+; N = 58). Questionnaires were developed based on relevant literature, and their validity was confirmed through expert review and pilot testing (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82\text{--}0.85$). Data analysis included descriptive statistics, index construction, and Pearson correlations. Results: Older adults who used more digital devices and spent more time online showed higher readiness for intergenerational activities ($r \approx 0.35$). Digital engagement was weakly associated with self-rated communication with younger people ($r \approx 0.23$) and minimally related to changes in perceptions based on experience ($r \approx 0.14$). The stereotype scale showed high reliability ($\alpha = 0.85$), but associations with positive experiences remained weak ($r \approx 0.10$).

Conclusion: Technology can support intergenerational connectedness, but its full potential relies on structured and continuous intergenerational learning. Strengthening digital skills among older adults is a key step toward more inclusive, sustainable, and digitally empowered communities.

Keywords: digital inclusion, intergenerational connectedness, older adults, youth, digital competencies, pilot study

IMPLEMENTATION OF DEINSTITUTIONALISATION IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE OF RESIDENTS OF THE HOME FOR THE CARE OF ADULTS VELENJE

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ABSTRACT

The Velenje Adult Care Home, built in an era of hierarchical institutional models, began a thorough transformation after 2010 toward modern approaches. The key goal was the establishment of autonomous work teams and the active role of residents as co-creators of their living environment. The most significant professional developments were achieved during and after the building's reconstruction and extension. This demanding process included relocating 190 residents to a temporary location, demolishing the old building, and constructing a new one based on the principles of the Culture of Harmonious Relationships, followed by moving residents back from the temporary accommodation. The Culture of Harmonious Relationships model proved essential in preventing distress, ensuring smooth transitions, and maintaining a sense of homeliness, thereby contributing to the deinstitutionalisation of the institution. Residents were involved in the changes throughout the entire process, which strengthened their trust and reduced uncertainty. The findings are based on in-depth interviews with employees and residents, who provided insight into their experiences. Today, the Home embodies the principles of the fourth generation of care homes: deinstitutionalisation, individualisation, and the normalisation of everyday living.

Keywords: deinstitutionalisation, concept of the culture of harmonious relationships, relocation of residents

SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY AND THE SYSTEMS OF LONG-TERM CARE AND DISABILITY PROTECTION IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

Long-term care in Slovenia focuses on strengthening community services that enable older adults to remain in their home environment. The aging population and the increase in the number of people needing care have become pressing social issues in the last twenty years. Slovenia has been increasingly facing significant demographic changes, most notably the rapid ageing of its population. The growing share of older adults is creating a rising need for various forms of support and is shaping the development of modern social policies. An important field in understanding these processes is social gerontology, a scientific discipline that examines the biological, psychological, and social aspects of ageing. Its key goal is to improve the quality of life of older people and promote their active participation in society, including intergenerational cooperation and greater social inclusion. As the population ages, the need for an effective system of long-term care has become even more prominent. In recent years, Slovenia has introduced important reforms in this area. Long-term care includes assistance with basic and supporting daily activities, as well as various professional and informal care services.

It is intended for individuals who, due to age, illness, or disability, require continuous help and represents a crucial element of a safe, dignified, and supportive living environment. Another essential pillar of social policy is disability protection, which provides legislative measures and social support for people with disabilities. The aim of the system is to ensure equal opportunities, social inclusion, access to necessary services, and support in education and employment. Together, these three areas form the foundations of social security, dignity, and solidarity in contemporary Slovenia.

Keywords: Population ageing, social gerontology, long-term care, disability protection, social inclusion

DIGITAL ERGONOMICS ACROSS GENERATIONS: HEALTH CHALLENGES AND AWARENESS IN A LONG-LIVED SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Ergonomics is an important part of public health. It helps prevent health problems and supports physical, cognitive and psychosocial well-being throughout life. In a society that is ageing and becoming more long-lived, it is useful to understand how different generations see the role of ergonomics in health, work ability and quality of life. Ergonomic risks such as long sitting, poor workstation design and the fast growth of digital work affect younger and older people in different ways, while both groups face digital overload and technostress. This paper examines how younger and older generations understand ergonomics, with a focus on digital ergonomics as a growing part of public health. The study is based on a quantitative online survey carried out in two age groups. The questionnaire covers ergonomic awareness, exposure to physical and digital risks, self-reported health effects and views on ergonomics as a preventive measure. The expected results will show differences between generations and point out where education and preventive programmes could be improved. The aim is to support the growth of health-friendly environments and highlight ergonomics as a key part of a resilient, long-lived society.

Keywords: ergonomics, digital ergonomics, public health, ageing society, generational differences

NATURE AND DEMENTIA CARE: A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ON GREEN SPACES, PARTICIPATION AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Living with dementia shapes everyday routines, relationships, and responsibilities for both the person and their caregivers. Research on older adults shows that contact with nature and green spaces can reduce stress, improve mood, support physical activity, and strengthen social connectedness. People living with dementia, however, are rarely the focus of studies on green spaces, age-friendly environments, and nature-based solutions. This narrative literature review brings together evidence on how outdoor environments relate to well-being, participation, and sense of identity for people with dementia and their caregivers. The review includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies from community and care settings that address everyday contact with nature, organized activities in parks and gardens, and some outdoor leisure and tourism. Findings consistently point to benefits in terms of emotional relief, moments of agency, reminiscence, and shared experiences, alongside substantial physical, cognitive, and social barriers to access. The literature also highlights several recurring principles of dementia-friendly nature settings, including familiarity, clear and legible paths, sensory richness, and appropriate support for caregivers. The review concludes that nature represents an important but still underused resource in dementia care and dementia-friendly community development.

Keywords: dementia, nature, green spaces, carers, well-being, dementia friendly environments

INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE AGING HUNTER: CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF LATER-LIFE ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Engagement in subsistence-oriented or recreational hunting may represent a meaningful, culturally embedded modality of physical activity for older adults, with implications for physical, mental, and social dimensions of healthy aging. Empirical evidence from studies among Indigenous populations in Canada indicates that hunting can yield moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (PA), often meeting or exceeding public health guidelines for weekly PA duration. In one such study, participants recorded substantially greater light, moderate, and vigorous activity during hunting days compared to non-hunting days, suggesting that land-based hunting is a viable pathway for maintaining cardiovascular fitness and functional capacity even at older ages. Moreover, traditional and recreational hunting appears to confer benefits beyond physical health. A study of land-based activities found that participation in hunting was positively associated with general and mental health outcomes among adults, suggesting psychological well-being through engagement in culturally resonant, natural-environment practices. For many older individuals, such activities serve not only as exercise but also as a means of maintaining identity, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and community belonging—dimensions frequently emphasized in gerontological frameworks of “successful aging.”

At the same time, literature on aging and outdoor recreation underscores potential barriers for older adults: age-related declines in mobility, physical capacity, and safety concerns may limit participation in strenuous or logistically demanding activities such as hunting. This underscores the need for adaptive strategies—whether via modified hunting practices, community support, or infrastructure adjustments—to enable older adults to engage safely and meaningfully in hunting or similar outdoor subsistence activities. In light of these findings, this paper argues for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary research agenda: one that integrates gerontology, public health, anthropology, and environmental studies to assess how hunting and related land-based subsistence practices can contribute to healthy aging. Key research priorities include quantifying functional health outcomes (e.g., mobility, cardiovascular health), mental health and well-being, social and cultural resilience, and the role of contextual factors (environmental access, community support, cultural significance) in facilitating sustainable participation among older adults.

Keywords: elderly, law, social gerontology, hunting, healthy aging

IT AND ROBOTIC SOLUTIONS IN NURSING AND SOCIAL CARE OF ELDERLY ADULTS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Nese Odabas, Lecturer
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ABSTRACT

The growing demand for high-quality care for elderly adults has intensified interest in innovative technological solutions that can support nursing and social care systems. This systematic literature review examines current evidence on the use, effectiveness, and challenges of IT and robotic technologies in elderly care. The review includes studies published in the last decade, focusing on assistive and social robots, telecare systems, remote monitoring, artificial intelligence-supported tools, and digital platforms designed to enhance independent living and care delivery.

Findings indicate that IT and robotic solutions can improve safety, autonomy, and overall well-being of older adults, while simultaneously reducing caregiver burden and supporting professionals in routine and complex tasks. Technologies such as companion robots, fall-detection sensors, and smart-home systems demonstrate strong potential in promoting social engagement, preventing adverse events, and facilitating continuous care. However, the included studies also reveal significant barriers to implementation, including cost, ethical considerations, limited digital literacy, and concerns regarding reduced human interaction.

The review concludes that digital and robotic systems can meaningfully complement, but not replace, human caregiving in nursing and social care. To ensure sustainable integration, further research is needed on user acceptance, long-term effectiveness, and ethical frameworks that safeguard dignity, privacy, and person-centered care for elderly adults.

Keywords: information technology, assistive robots, elderly adults, care quality, technology acceptance

AGEING IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE: CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Ageing has become one of the central social issues of the 21st century. Demographic changes, increasing life expectancy and rapidly transforming lifestyles shape how older adults live, perceive themselves and participate in their communities. Contemporary culture simultaneously promotes ideals of active, healthy and productive ageing while still maintaining forms of ageism, stereotypes and unequal opportunities that influence the social position and lived experience of older people. In this context, social gerontology plays an increasingly important role in understanding ageing not only as a biological but also as a culturally constructed experience.

The topic examines key cultural dimensions of ageing in contemporary societies and considers how norms, symbols and values shape the ways in which later life is perceived and lived. Particular attention is given to current challenges such as social participation, persistent stereotypes, symbolic marginalisation and shifting cultural notions of what constitutes "good" or "successful" ageing. By outlining these issues, the paper opens space for further reflection on how social gerontology can contribute to building societies that recognise the diversity of ageing experiences and support the active, dignified and equitable inclusion of older adults in contemporary cultural life.

Keywords: ageing culture, social gerontology, contemporary society

PSYCHOSOCIAL SYMPTOMS OF OLDER ADULT RECEIVING PALLIATIVE CARE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This thesis examines how psychosocial symptoms in the palliative care of older adults are recognized, controlled, and addressed. Despite the holistic nature of palliative care, these symptoms are often overlooked and remain a secondary concern. The purpose of this research was to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of professional staff working in this specialized field. We also aimed to determine the impact of psychosocial symptoms on the quality of palliative care and the quality of life for older patients, staff, and family members. *Methods:* We conducted 15 interviews with professional staff directly involved in the palliative care of older adults. All participants provided informed consent for the interviews. We used a qualitative methodology with content analysis, which allowed for a structured processing of textual material. The analysis was conducted using a four-step process to ensure the credibility and comprehensiveness of the results.

Results: The interview analysis confirmed that psychosocial symptoms are extremely common and are inextricably linked with physical ones. It was found that emotional pain, such as loneliness, grief, and depression, can trigger physical discomfort and increase suffering. The research identified five thematic categories (with corresponding subcategories and codes): (1) Symptoms in older adults in palliative care, (2) Recognition and impact of social pain, (3) The role of social support, (4) Psychosocial impact on others, and (5) The concept of holistic palliative care. The consistency of the vocabulary used across the interviews indicates a unified understanding of the key challenges. The most frequently mentioned words were: pain, depression, loneliness, social (pain, support), and anxiety.

Discussion and Conclusion: The results confirm that to provide effective and holistic palliative care, it is not enough to simply alleviate physical symptoms. It is also crucial to consider psychosocial aspects, such as loneliness and social exclusion, as they significantly impact the quality of life of older adults. The findings also reveal systemic shortcomings that hinder holistic palliative care. The results also highlighted the need for better training for professional staff. This research represents an important contribution to the development of palliative care for older adults in Slovenia.

Keywords: palliative (holistic) care, older adults, psychosocial symptoms, social support, social pain

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF OLDER ADULTS' PARTICIPATION IN STUDY CIRCLES IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

In later life, when children leave the parental home, obligations decrease, adults retire or reduce their workload, and more leisure time becomes available to pursue personal interests. Lifelong learning has recently become increasingly important, and lifelong learning activities have expanded significantly over the past decade. In particular, the retirement of the baby boomer generation and increased life expectancy have led to a growing older population. Today's older adults represent the most affluent and highly educated segment of the population to date. They are discerning consumers who demand more to satisfy their needs and desires, while also wishing to continue learning. One form of learning is participation in study circles. Therefore, this study explores the social effects of older adults' participation in study circles as a form of non-formal education within the local community. The theoretical framework is based on the concepts of lifelong learning, social inclusion, and social capital, which emphasize the importance of learning for quality of life in later stages of life. The empirical part is grounded in a qualitative case study, with data collected through observation of the study circle process and semi-structured interviews with participants. The data analysis revealed that participation in study circles significantly contributes to reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Participants reported the development of new social ties, a stronger sense of group belonging, and greater involvement in the local community. Study circles proved to be a space where learning and social processes intertwine, fostering active participation and a sense of active citizenship. The paper highlights the role of study circles as an important mechanism for strengthening social capital and social cohesion in local communities and points to their potential in the development of active ageing programs.

Keywords: older adults, study circles, social inclusion, social capital, active ageing

EXPERT PANEL

ART AS A SPACE FOR CONFRONTING DEATH

RISK PREVENTION IN RELATION TO PHOTOGRAPHING AN INDIVIDUAL BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH BASED ON THE CASE STUDY OF THE ARTISTIC PROJECT FACING DEATH

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ABSTRACT

The project enters the sensitive field of personal data protection, human dignity, and an individual's freedom of choice regarding what happens in the final stage of life. The common lay assumption is that patients or candidates, as vulnerable persons, require additional protection. However, this can also result in excessive protection from relatives, other organizations, and even within the Slovenian Hospice Society, which may infringe upon the individual's autonomy and dignity. During its implementation, the project developed a specific strategy for assessing and preventing risks, which will be outlined in this contribution along with the risks themselves and the methods used to mitigate them. The key elements include informed consent, an interdisciplinary approach, regular reflection, and the empowerment of all involved.

Keywords: reducing ethical risks, interdisciplinarity, reflection, dignity and consent, legal certainty

FACING DEATH PROJECT OVERVIEW: PHOTOGRAPHING TERMINALLY ILL INDIVIDUALS BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR DEATH

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ABSTRACT

This artist talk presents the Facing Death art project, a powerful initiative that directly addresses the cultural avoidance of mortality and contributes to essential health system dialogue. The project's core methodology is the creation of a unique photography diptych: a terminally ill individual is photographed in the same mirror-like, profile pose both before and after their death. This artistic juxtaposition intertwines life and death, transcending both through the medium of art. Facing Death adopts a constructivist, interdisciplinary paradigm, mobilizing a „concentric circles“ of collaboration. Its success depends on the voluntary, public participation of the dying individual, their relatives, the artistic team, and professional stakeholders from the Slovenian Hospice Society, medical institutions, and social work centers. By making death visible and facilitating conversation, the project challenges deep societal taboos and systemic discrepancies, moving beyond mere deconstruction to the integration of relationships with dying. We argue that this artistic intervention is a vital tool for strengthening public awareness of end-of-life processes, driving cultural transformation, and ultimately informing a more ethical and compassionate approach to health system reform and population well-being.

Keywords: mortality acceptance, photography diptych, palliative care, cultural taboos, interdisciplinary art

FACING DEATH: AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATORY PORTRAITURE IN PALLIATIVE CARE

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ABSTRACT

Facing Death is a long-term participatory art-research project in which we co-create photographic portrait diptychs with terminally ill participants before and after death. The paper focuses on the aesthetic experience of these photographs, showing how collaboratively developed concepts and visual motifs transform personal narratives of dying into multilayered artworks. For Emil, we magnified his photograph to the point of disintegration and translated its smallest particles – the pixels – onto the cloak and background. Together with the motifs of white noise and the cosmos, they reveal the multilayeredness of life on the micro and macro level and thus articulate a circular experience of transition. Jožica's portrait uses a backdrop of fresh poppies, her favourite flower, that is later photographed in a withered state, visualising a processual passage from vitality, through the analgesic effects of opiates, to decay. For Albin, who cannot speak because of throat cancer, abstract-expressionist applications of acrylic paint with a syringe onto canvas and shirt materialise his sensory experience of dying and others' perceptions of it. I argue that such visual, symbolic and abstract layers unobtrusively enable aesthetic and phenomenological engagement with mortality, opening a dialogic space among the dying, relatives, and palliative-care professionals.

Keywords: aesthetic experience, art photography, palliative care, multilayered artwork, participatory art

THE ROLE OF THE SLOVENIAN HOSPICE ASSOCIATION IN THE FACING DEATH PROJECT

Tadeja Gotar, external contributor on projects

Anamari Tkalec, external contributor on projects

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ABSTRACT

The Slovenian Hospice Association recognized the Facing Death project in 2018 as an important contribution to the destigmatization of death and to opening public discussion on the situation of people at the end of life. Within the framework of its involvement, the Association began to systematically and structurally monitor shortcomings in the system, as well as the importance of adequate support provided to candidates participating in the project. It found that an individual's readiness to take part in the project is directly related to the fulfilment of their basic physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs, including appropriate living conditions, managed physical symptoms, access to care, stable interpersonal relationships, and social and financial security. During the implementation of the project, the Association observed a trend of increasing expectations regarding the role of accompanying staff, often in ways that exceed the boundaries of professional relationships and raise questions of ethical and legal responsibility. It also identified heightened expectations concerning an expanded scope of rights in the fields of healthcare and social care, revealing structural gaps within existing support networks. The contribution will highlight the importance of comprehensive hospice care in the final phase of life, addressing challenges related to professional closeness and distance, as well as key aspects of health and social support.

Keywords: comprehensive hospice care, professional closeness and distance, health and social support

ARCHIVAL SYMPOSIUM

SCHOLARLY PANEL

ARCHIVES OF THE SEVENTH GENERATION: FROM THE PRESERVATION OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIETY'S DIGITAL MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses the transformation of archives in the context of the digital society and is grounded in the research question of whether digital records can still be adequately managed using conceptual and organizational models rooted in the analog paradigm. It advances the thesis that the central challenge of contemporary archival science is no longer merely the preservation of digital objects, but primarily the assurance of their meaning, context, authenticity, integrity, and long-term usability within a complex

information environment. The study is based on a conceptual-analytical approach, supported by the author's professional experience in the development of the Slovenian digital archive e-ARH.si, which is examined as an empirical point of departure for reflecting on the further evolution of archives.

The discussion first outlines a developmental typology of archives, leading to the definition of seventh-generation archives as archives of the digital memory of society. These transcend the traditional understanding of archives as repositories of documents by encompassing the management of data, metadata, information systems, digital processes, and the broader context of records creation and use. On this basis, a model of seven principles of seventh-generation archives is proposed, including the archive as digital infrastructure, lifecycle management of records, assurance of authenticity, technological sustainability, interoperability, the use of advanced digital technologies, and the archive as custodian of the digital memory of society. The paper emphasizes that contemporary archives are becoming strategic infrastructural actors within the digital society and key agents in preserving its reliable and meaningfully interconnected memory.

Keywords: digital archives, digital preservation, seventh-generation archives, digital memory of society, e-ARH.si

MODULAR STUDY OF ARCHIVAL CONTENT AT ALMA MATER EUROPAEA UNIVERSITY: TESTING THE INITIAL CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT

The paradigm of contemporary archival theory and practice has been changing significantly since the turn of the century. Changes are particularly noticeable in the segment of digitalization of archival professional procedures, in the standardization of archival environments, in the establishment of complex national information infrastructures and new archival professional procedures. The starting points and models of evaluation of archival content and the related tools and methods of evaluating meta- and para-data are also changing. At the same time, we perceive the intertwining of procedures and results of work carried out in the field of documentation management by archival professional workers at creators on the one hand, and by competent documentalists for the needs of managing archival materials in competent archives on the other. In practice, all this affects the requirements for relevant, often special archival professional knowledge and skills. The requirements for new, additional archival knowledge and skills for the needs of documentation management are realized by individuals in different ways. They often use "ad hoc" informal solutions that can successfully fill perceived gaps in professional knowledge or skills, but they have the disadvantage that they are not always included in the formalized education system. As an alternative to the existing approach, a "modular approach" appears, with the following starting points: (a) In addition to the functioning system of knowledge sources, which are initially managed mainly at the Department of Archival Sciences, other sources of knowledge should be included, mainly from departments within the University of AMEU (UAMU) or other comparable external organizations. (b) Specialization of studies, mainly in the second part of the study process at the first and second levels, would form specialists for individual fields with the necessary understanding of broader archival professional problems. (c) Compulsory and elective courses within the modular approach should be mainly theoretically oriented at UAMEU. (d) In order to acquire core practical skills and knowledge, a system of micro-credits should be implemented, which candidates would acquire both within the department and within and outside UAMEU. (e) More intensive connection of UAMEU with the archival service in the form of organizing learning databases in archives both in Slovenia and abroad.

Keywords: profiles of archive employees, education model, digitalization, competencies, archival theory and practice

"THE DICTIONARY OF POLISH BOOK PROFESSIONALS" AS A SOURCE OF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION – YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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ABSTRACT

Since 1972, the "Dictionary of Polish Book Professionals" has remained the basic source of knowledge about people professionally involved in various aspects of creating and disseminating books in Poland. In the years 1972-2016, 5 volumes were published, containing a total of approximately 4,850 biographies. Since 1992, the SPKP Archive has been located at the Department of Information, Library and Book Science of the University of Lodz, storing historical materials deposited during each stage of creating subsequent volumes. The most interesting part of it (apart from the organizational and reporting documentation) is the catalog along with folders containing biographical information collected from the authors of the biographies. The aim of the presentation will be to discuss activities related to the SPKP Archive, as well as to outline the prospects for its further actions.

Keywords: biographies, library and information science, dictionary's archive

ARCHIVES AND THE SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE

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ABSTRACT

When discussing archives, we often think of the past; however, archives primarily speak to the future – what we, as a society, will leave to coming generations. The link between archives, environmental protection, and our responsibility toward the future is therefore essential. Archives are not merely repositories of documents but institutions that actively shape the future. Archival materials preserve collective memory while also warning of the consequences of human decisions. An important framework for this reflection is the Seventh Generation Principle, rooted in traditions of the Iroquois, which emphasizes that every significant decision should consider its impact on people seven generations ahead. This principle symbolizes long-term thinking and sustainability, encouraging the preservation of nature, space, and archival materials for the distant future. Archivists work for people who do not yet exist. The materials, preserved today, will one day be used by researchers, historians, and citizens seeking to understand our time. Archives remind us that the future is not given but co-created; therefore, we bear responsibility for preserving the past and present thoughtfully for future generations.

Keywords: archives, archival science, Seventh Generation Principle, environment, sustainability

TO TRUST OR NOT TO TRUST: ARCHIVAL RECORDS AND MEASURING RESEARCHERS' CONFIDENCE IN THEM

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ABSTRACT

In his 1996 work, "Archive Fever," philosopher Jacques Derrida offered the Greek term "arkhe" as meaning, in part, the concept of commandment. As such, he posited that those persons who manage archival records are duty-bound or commanded to secure them so completely that the information they hold would remain authentic, credible, and with integrity. The aim was (and is) to instill confidence from those who consult archival records as being carriers of trustworthy information. The theme of the 2026 "It's About People" Conference was, "Answering Current Challenges in Society, Health and Technology." Regarding one challenge in our current society—that being the measure of confidence in the validity of information contained within archival records—the author will discuss an administered survey of archivists and researchers and its results. The author's purpose is to quantitatively determine and/or measure if researchers can trust and have confidence in the evidence espoused via archival records that purport to accurately represent past human experience.

Keywords: archival science, confidence, trustworthiness, security

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING LOCAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SOLUTIONS IN ARCHIVAL PRACTICE: BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The reflection addresses the challenges of introducing local AI solutions into archival practice and the gap between high expectations and the actual capabilities of such systems in everyday use. Because of the nature of archival records, the need for professional judgment, traceability, and the protection of sensitive data, the archival environment differs significantly from ordinary information environments. For this reason, artificial intelligence cannot be adopted uncritically. It is important to distinguish between solutions intended for the general public, solutions designed to support archivists in their professional work, and research and development environments in which institutions gain practical experience.

The reflection emphasizes that one of the main reasons to use local large language models is to maintain control over data, system behavior, and conditions of use. Alongside security and legal concerns, there is also the unpredictability of cloud-based models, which are constantly changing: their filters, biases, responsiveness, and sometimes even their overall performance may shift over time. For archival institutions that require stability, verifiability, and long-term reliability, this is a serious limitation.

Based on current experience, local solutions appear to be especially valuable as a developmental and learning environment. They enable technical experimentation and also help institutions define processes and professional criteria more clearly, better understand the limits of artificial intelligence, and improve cooperation between archivists and external developers. The central point of this reflection is that the value of local solutions lies not only in technological independence but also in the gradual building of knowledge, institutional sovereignty, and trustworthy approaches to the use of artificial intelligence in archival practice.

Keywords: archival practice, local large language models, artificial intelligence, data sovereignty, trustworthy AI

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SCHOLARLY PANEL

ORGANISATION IS SOCIAL COMPLEXITY: EDUCATING AND PREPARING NEW GENERATIONS TO INHABIT UNPREDICTABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The complexity of social and organisational systems is a very particular kind of complexity (complexity = the constitutive, systemic and relational dimension of living and social beings), marked by non-linear, irreversible dynamics that cannot be traced back to or reduced to the mere application of mathematical formulas, algorithms and/or infinite sequences of data. Despite the profound processes of transformation underway, many organisations - even at the international level - continue to be anchored to old myths of efficiency, control and (total) rationality and to underestimate social, relational and cultural factors and organisational well-being. Governing complexity - assuming that this is possible (?) - requires us to fundamentally rethink, first and foremost, "how we think", to fundamentally rethink epistemologies, education, training and scientific research itself - still anchored to mono-disciplinarity, reductionism and determinism, still anchored to logics of separation and confinement of knowledge and skills - seeking to bridge the gap between the human and the technological, going beyond the atavistic separation between culture and technology. Because the future belongs to "hybrid figures" - who, as I have explained in many years of study and research, are not 'experts in everything' - to managers of complexity, to those who will be able to see opportunities for change and innovation in boundaries, tensions and distances. Without rethinking/reimagining our thinking, our system of thought, without rethinking epistemologies and methodologies (not to be confused with technologies), without changing our way of observing phenomena - opening ourselves up to the unobservable and the indeterminate - any possibility of revising and transforming the development model will prove to be nothing more than an illusion, a simulation ... a missed opportunity, as has already happened in recent decades. From "Technology vs. Culture", through "Technology and Culture", to "Technology is Culture/s". Open dialectics. Complex and non-linear evolutions.

Keywords: paradigm shifts, systems thinking, transdisciplinarity, new epistemology, emergent properties, transforming education and research, sustainable development

OPTIMISING EX-ZONE REQUIREMENTS ON ADRIATIC WWTPS WITHOUT BIOGAS DIGESTERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the proportionality of EX-zone classification on wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in Adriatic coastal states, with a specific focus on facilities without anaerobic digesters, where methane is not intentionally produced. In such plants, methane forms only slowly through limited anaerobic micro-processes, and available monitoring data show concentrations far below the lower explosive limit under normal operating conditions. Despite this, certain regional practices apply conservative ATEX classifications, resulting in extensive use of explosion-proof equipment and high-intensity mechanical ventilation, which significantly increases investment and operational costs. The analysis demonstrates that the only realistic scenario in which methane could approach explosive concentrations is within fully enclosed spaces where gas can accumulate beneath the roof. Because methane is lighter than air, a simple passive opening at the highest point of the enclosure is sufficient to prevent accumulation by enabling natural upward dispersion. This measure is fully aligned with IEC/EN 60079-10-1, which allows non-hazardous classification when ventilation prevents explosive atmospheres, and with ATEX 1999/92/EC, which requires proportionate, risk-based prevention. It also reflects widely accepted engineering practice (NFPA 820, Irish Water, UK HSE). The findings support adopting targeted ventilation and proportionate hazard assessment to ensure safety while reducing unnecessary EX-related costs.

Keywords: methane accumulation, EX-zone classification, natural ventilation, wastewater treatment plants

ETHICAL INTELLIGENCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

It's About People 2026 positions human dignity, ethical responsibility, and collective intelligence at the centre of Europe's sustainability transition. Building on emerging insights into the transformative, yet ambivalent role, of artificial intelligence, this paper explores how digital technologies can support, rather than substitute, human judgement in addressing climate challenges, social inequities, and systemic risks. AI offers powerful capabilities for transparency, resource optimisation, environmental monitoring, and data-driven policymaking, enabling unprecedented opportunities to accelerate progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Yet as highlighted in recent analyses, AI also carries significant ethical risks, including bias, surveillance overreach, opaque decision-making, and high environmental footprints. This conference contribution argues that sustainable development in the digital age requires a governance paradigm rooted in human values, inclusivity, and precaution. It proposes AI as an enabler of ethical co-creation: a tool that amplifies human foresight, strengthens democratic participation, and supports resilient socio-ecological systems. It's About People 2026 thus calls for a balanced approach that unites technological innovation with ethical stewardship, ensuring that intelligence, whether human or artificial, serves the well-being of people, communities, and the planet.

Keywords: sustainable development, ethical AI governance, transparency, human-centred innovation

FROM COMMODIFICATION TO CARE: AN ECOLOGICAL AND WU-WEI APPROACH TO AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study synthesizes a broad body of literature on ecological universities, wu-wei, AI systems, and three decades of reflective practice in higher education to propose a new paradigm for the sustainable integration of AI in universities. It advocates a paradigmatic shift from neoliberal values of commodification toward the sacredness of human life and ecological principles rooted in care, reciprocity, and interdependence.

The paper advocates for epistemological flexibility, vulnerability, and humility in pedagogy, fostering relational becoming within a collective consciousness. Drawing on principles akin to wu-wei and ecological university models, the proposed framework addresses the need for shared responsibility, non-dominance, and gratitude—aligning technological progress with human flourishing and planetary well-being in our pedagogy and governance. This framework also responds to epistemic risks posed by AI systems that reinforce historical social biases embedded in pre-trained data and algorithms. The paper calls for reimagining the university as a sustainability-oriented ecosystem that recenters human dignity, uplifts indigenous knowledge systems, and advances epistemic justice in AI development and application. Internal stakeholders, including faculty, administrators, and students, must cultivate critical digital literacy, connect personal consciousness to collective consciousness, practice synergy with existing circumstances, and foster trust-based relationships in an AI-driven world.

Keywords: AI in higher education, ecological universities, wu-wei philosophy, collective consciousness, epistemology flexibility

PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE ETHICS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH: RECLAIMING GANDHIAN VALUES IN 21ST-CENTURY INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary India, economic growth stands as both a marker of progress and a source of moral concern. The rapid pace of globalization, technological innovation, and consumer-driven development has created unprecedented opportunities while deepening social and ethical divides. Within this shifting landscape, the voice of the public intellectual becomes crucial in questioning the moral assumptions that underpin economic policies and cultural aspirations. The need to balance prosperity with principles of justice, equity, and human well-being calls for a return to the ethical foundations of thought that once shaped India's national consciousness. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy offers a profound framework for rethinking the ethics of economic life. His ideas of trusteeship, simplicity, and human dignity present a vision of development grounded in compassion and responsibility. The notion of trusteeship encourages the sharing of wealth for the common good, simplicity challenges the excesses of materialism, and the emphasis on dignity affirms that true progress respects every individual's worth. These values speak powerfully to the challenges of a globalized, technologically driven society seeking meaning beyond material success. The objective of this paper is to explore how Gandhian principles can guide ethical economic reform in twenty-first-century India by reconnecting progress with moral and spiritual values that place people before profit.

Keywords: Gandhian philosophy, ethical economics, trusteeship, public intellectuals, sustainable development, human dignity

GREEN FISCAL REFORMS AND THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the role of green fiscal reforms in advancing the transition toward sustainable development across the Western Balkans, a region marked by structural economic constraints, limited fiscal space, and persistent environmental pressures. Although all Western Balkan economies have expressed growing commitment to the European Green Deal and to aligning with EU climate and environmental requirements, progress remains uneven. Countries in the region continue to face significant challenges in the design and implementation of carbon pricing, energy taxation, pollution charges, and the effective use of green public investment.

By examining Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the study provides a comparative assessment of how key fiscal instruments—such as environmental taxes, incentives for renewable energy, and targeted public spending—contribute to environmental outcomes and economic resilience. The analysis draws on a mixed-method approach that incorporates descriptive fiscal indicators, cross-country comparisons, and policy evaluation frameworks consistent with OECD and EU standards.

The findings indicate that, despite a gradual expansion of green fiscal measures, implementation gaps remain considerable, largely due to institutional limitations, fragmented regulatory systems, and administrative capacity constraints. Nevertheless, experiences from the more advanced reformers in the region demonstrate that coherent green tax systems, structured carbon pricing mechanisms, and strategic green budgeting can play an essential role in supporting sustainable transitions. The paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations outlining a practical roadmap for Western Balkan governments to strengthen the effectiveness of green fiscal reforms, advance alignment with EU climate objectives, and foster an inclusive, low-carbon development path.

Keywords: green fiscal reforms, environmental taxation, sustainable development, Western Balkans, climate policy

HUMAN-CENTERED DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: REIMAGINING INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

India's digital transformation is reshaping its economy and society at an unprecedented pace. Through initiatives such as the Unified Payments Interface, Aadhaar and the Open Network for Digital Commerce, the country has created a digital infrastructure that connects millions of people to financial, commercial and public services. These innovations have enhanced efficiency, transparency and participation in governance while opening new opportunities for entrepreneurship and inclusive growth. Yet, the promise of this transformation is accompanied by complex challenges related to privacy, data protection, algorithmic fairness and digital literacy. Large sections of the population, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, still face barriers that prevent them from fully benefiting from the digital revolution.

This paper emphasizes the need for a human-centered approach that places people, rather than technology, at the heart of digital progress. It highlights how participatory design, ethical data practices and inclusive policy frameworks can create a more balanced and equitable digital ecosystem. The discussion focuses on reimagining India's economic growth in a manner that strengthens social trust and cohesion while safeguarding human dignity. The paper explores how India can align technological innovation with social inclusion, ensuring that digital advancement contributes to collective well-being and empowerment for all citizens.

Keywords: human-centered digital transformation, social inclusion, digital equity, technological innovation and India's economic growth

DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF DATA FOR THE TRANSPARENCY OF DIGITAL HONEY VALUE CHAINS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BEEKEEPERS AND CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how different types of data are perceived in terms of their importance for enhancing transparency and traceability in digital honey value chains. Transparent access to data is crucial for preventing fraud, enhancing product quality, and fostering consumer trust. The research aimed to identify which data should constitute the foundation of an open and trustworthy platform for honey traceability. The study was conducted in Poland between 2024 and 2025, employing a mixed-methods approach that included 30 expert interviews and a CAWI survey of 949 beekeepers and 1006 consumers. Data analysis was based on descriptive statistics and the Mann–Whitney U test. In total, 21 data items were identified and grouped into four key categories: (1) Honey (e.g., honey types, laboratory tests), (2) Apiary (e.g., region, exact location, number of hives), (3) Beekeeping Practices (e.g., disease treatment, supplementary feeding), and (4) Beekeeper (e.g., years of experience, informal education, age). Statistically significant differences were observed between the two groups in the perceived importance of these data types. The results provide a preliminary data map that can support the development of intelligent and sustainable digital traceability systems for honey products, fostering greater trust across the entire value chain.

Keywords: honey value chain, data transparency, traceability, digital platform, beekeepers, consumers



HEALTH SCIENCES



SCHOLARLY PANEL

THE FUTURE OF NEUROMODULATION: HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING THE SPECTRUM OF CLINICAL OUTCOMES – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND CLINICAL VIGNETTES

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s, deep brain stimulation (DBS) has developed from a bold experimental procedure into a well-established treatment for Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders. Traditional DBS systems provide continuous, open-loop stimulation, which has drawbacks: high energy consumption, occasional side effects caused by current spreading beyond the intended target, and limited ability to adapt to constant symptom variability. In recent years, adaptive DBS (aDBS) has marked a significant step forward by utilising real-time neural feedback to fine-tune stimulation parameters. Clinical studies are increasingly demonstrating that this approach can lead to improved motor control, reduced side effects, and a longer device lifespan compared to conventional DBS. Another significant development has been the introduction of segmented electrodes, which enable directional steering of the electrical current, thereby widening the therapeutic window and reducing stimulation-related complications. Although the motor benefits of DBS are striking, clinical practice also reminds us that psychiatric and behavioural changes can sometimes overshadow otherwise excellent results. In the future, the most promising direction lies in combining adaptive algorithms with directional stimulation.

Keywords: DBS, Parkinson's disease, adaptive stimulation, segmented electrodes, neuromodulation

HOW TO PREVENT OBESITY IN THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT: IMPLEMENTATION AND PILOTING OF A NEW MULTILINGUAL COURSE ON DEVELOPING HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS (EDU-FIT PROJECT)

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ABSTRACT

Helping to prevent obesity and its consequences and to develop healthy lifestyle habits will only be achieved by creating a multilingual methodology and didactic tools that can be used in HEI programs, as the White Paper signifies (White Paper (COM(2007) 279 final of 30.5.2007)) on nutrition, overweight, and obesity-related health issues. The White Paper focuses on actions that can be taken at local, regional, national, and European levels to reduce the risks associated with poor nutrition and limited physical exercise while addressing inequalities across member states. In higher education study programs, students are rarely offered any curricula or didactic materials on problems associated with obesity and overweight. It is crucial to develop an efficient, sustainable, and permanent way to directly inform students about how to prevent obesity, develop healthy lifestyles and eating habits, and build literacy in this sensitive field. EDU-FIT: INCLUSIVE SOCIAL EDUCATION FIT FOR HEALTHY LIFE-STYLE -PREVENTING OBESITY IN YOUNG ADULTS (No 2023-1-SI01-KA220-HED-00015400) was designed to address precisely the before-mentioned needs and a lack of a consistent and methodologically well-developed approach, supported by didactic material, tools and guidelines, to inform the students at various studying programs (not only medical students) on the dangers of obesity and the necessity of developing healthy lifestyle and eating habits. The project was a collaborative effort involving partners from five countries: Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Slovakia, and Norway, financed by the European Union. The project's outcome was a curriculum for a course to be offered at the University of Maribor in 2026/27 as an elective course for all 17 faculties. The curriculum consists of 5 modules and can also be integrated into other HEI programs. The paper focuses on the methodology and results of implementing the curriculum at the University of Maribor. The research also considers the importance of appropriate, sensitive communication in the field of obesity.

Keywords: obesity, preventing, curriculum, sustainability, European Union, EDU-FIT

DETERMINANTS OF NURSES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION IN SLOVENIAN SECONDARY GENERAL HOSPITALS: A LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Nurses play a central role in in-hospital cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), where their attitudes can influence the timeliness and quality of their response. This study aimed to identify key factors associated with nurses' attitudes toward CPR. A cross-sectional study included 321 registered nurses and nursing assistants from eight Slovenian secondary general hospitals. Attitudes were assessed using validated questionnaires. Binary logistic regression was used to identify predictors across six attitude outcomes ($p < 0.05$), with results presented as adjusted odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals (aOR, 95% CI).

Self-assessed ability emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor. Higher self-evaluation reduced uncertainty (1.21, 1.05–1.38) and nervousness (1.20, 1.08–1.32), increased confidence in knowing what to do (0.71, 0.63–0.79) and taking command (0.62, 0.55–0.71). Similarly, recent real-life CPR experience (<1 year) decreased uncertainty (0.46, 0.22–0.98) and nervousness (0.43, 0.26–0.71), increased the odds of knowing what to do (2.50, 1.51–4.15) and taking command (2.61, 1.55–4.40). Higher education predicted greater theoretical confidence (2.28, 1.11–4.68), while older nurses reported more likely to assume command (0.97, 0.95–0.99). CPR preparedness is primarily shaped by self-assessed ability and recent hands-on experience. Training strategies should strengthen both competence and confidence, particularly nurses' leadership readiness.

Keywords: nurses, in-hospital cardiac arrest, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, attitudes, self-assessed ability

AWARENESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT HPV INFECTION AND HPV VACCINATION

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical background: Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is the most common sexually transmitted disease. Vaccination is the most effective measure for preventing the infection and its consequences; however, its potential remains insufficiently utilised in Slovenia. Higher public awareness of HPV infection and vaccination significantly contributes to higher vaccination uptake. With adequate knowledge, secondary school students are better equipped to make informed decisions. The purpose of the study was therefore to determine the level of awareness among secondary school students regarding HPV infection and HPV vaccination. Research methodology: A quantitative research method was used, employing a questionnaire designed on the basis of a literature review. The research sample comprised 264 secondary school students from Gymnasium Ormož. Results: Most students are aware that HPV causes infections of the genital organs, yet only few know that it can also cause infections of the anus and the oropharynx. Awareness of HPV transmission, effective prevention methods and the purpose of vaccination is generally insufficient. Significant differences in awareness were identified between genders and between vaccinated and unvaccinated students. Discussion and conclusion: Secondary school students' awareness of HPV infection and vaccination is inadequate. The findings highlight the need for targeted educational activities aimed at promoting HPV vaccination.

Keywords: awareness, secondary school students, infection, vaccination, HPV

DIALECTICAL SYSTEMS THINKING IN INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL: A USOMID-BASED COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK FOR LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE IN HOSPITALS

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ABSTRACT

*Legionnaires' disease is a serious waterborne threat in European healthcare, disproportionately affecting older and immunocompromised patients. Although the problem appears technical—linked to hospital plumbing, temperature control, and microbiology—it ultimately raises ethical questions about vulnerability, trust, and human dignity in institutional care. The paper explores how a USOMID-based communication process can turn hospital water safety management from a technical task into a human-centred practice of responsibility and care. Building on Dialectical Systems Theory as a framework for managing complex socio-technical systems, we developed a process algorithm and supporting application tool (USOMID) for hospital water systems. In a hospital, continuous monitoring of temperature, pH, conductivity, flow, and residual chlorine was combined with visual inspection and microbiological testing for *Legionella pneumophila*. Structured communication was ensured through unified documentation that created traceable feedback loops between observation, risk assessment, and corrective action. USOMID's structured communication improved decision transparency, shortened response times, stabilised water microbiology, clarified responsibilities, and empowered staff. Integrating structured communication, responsibility, and systems thinking can reduce preventable disparities and strengthen a culture of care; the USOMID model offers a complementary, internally focused framework aligning technical risk management with human-centred values in hospitals and long-term care.*

Keywords: Legionnaires' disease, hospital water systems, structured communication, hospital infection prevention and control, systems thinking, USOMID

PERSON-CENTERED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The growing presence of artificial intelligence in healthcare is also beginning to influence occupational therapy practice, creating new opportunities while raising important ethical questions. This scoping review synthesised recent evidence on artificial intelligence applications relevant to occupational therapy, with a particular focus on person-centred practice and professional values. A structured search of PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science (2020–2025) identified six peer-reviewed studies examining artificial intelligence-supported assessment, rehabilitation technologies, documentation, and clinical decision-making. Reported benefits include increased efficiency, improved measurement precision, and more person-tailored interventions. However, the literature also highlights concerns related to data privacy, transparency, algorithmic bias, and the risk of compromising therapeutic relationships and a person's autonomy. Across studies, authors emphasise that artificial intelligence should support, rather than substitute, occupational therapists' clinical reasoning, empathy, and relational skills. For artificial intelligence to be used responsibly, ethical governance, digital literacy, and interdisciplinary dialogue are needed. Ultimately, technological innovation must remain aligned with occupational therapy's core commitments to dignity, participation, and justice, ensuring that artificial intelligence enhances meaningful occupation rather than efficiency alone.

Keywords: therapeutic reasoning, ethical governance, digital literacy, client-centred

ECG HEARTBEAT CLASSIFICATION USING CNN-LIQUID NEURAL NETWORK ARCHITECTURES: A NOVEL APPROACH WITH GAN-BASED DATA AUGMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the first application of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) combined with Liquid Neural Networks (LNNs) for ECG heartbeat classification. We address class imbalance through Generative Adversarial Network (GAN) based data augmentation using the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database from PhysioNet. Our study introduces two novel architectures: CNN+LNN and CNN+LNN+Attention for classifying five heartbeat types: Normal, Atrial Premature, Premature Ventricular Contraction, Fusion of Ventricular and Normal, and Fusion of Paced and Normal. Results demonstrate that CNN+LNN+Attention achieves 98.10% accuracy with superior minority class detection, while our GAN augmentation strategy improves minority class F1-scores by up to 23.87%, establishing LNNs as an effective alternative to traditional recurrent networks for ECG temporal modeling.

Keywords: liquid neural networks, ECG classification, GAN data augmentation, class imbalance, arrhythmia detection

METABOLOMIC APPROACH IN BIOMARKER DISCOVERY FOR DIAGNOSIS AND MONITORING OF DEMENTIA

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ABSTRACT

Dementia is a complex neurodegenerative syndrome affecting millions of people worldwide, characterized by the gradual decline of cognitive abilities such as memory, learning, abstract thinking, and spatial orientation. Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia are the most common subtypes, yet their early and accurate differentiation remains a challenge in clinical practice. The identification of reliable biomarkers is crucial for improving diagnostic methods, gaining a better understanding of the disease's pathophysiological mechanisms, and developing more effective therapeutic strategies. Metabolomics, as a contemporary approach in biomedical research, provides insight into metabolic changes that reflect the complex biological processes involved in the development and progression of neurodegenerative diseases. Since metabolites are the final products of all biochemical reactions in the body, their analysis can provide valuable information about early changes associated with dementia and enable more precise differentiation between different disease types. Understanding the metabolic changes in dementia can contribute to the discovery of new therapeutic targets, better prognostic models, and the development of non-invasive methods for monitoring cognitive health. Ongoing research is focused on identifying key metabolic markers associated with cognitive decline and exploring their role in differentiating Alzheimer's disease from vascular dementia. The obtained results could enhance the existing knowledge of the disease's molecular mechanisms and pave the way for new diagnostic tools that will allow for earlier and more accurate recognition of dementia.

Keywords: dementia, Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, metabolomics, biomarkers, cognitive decline

EFFECTS OF MATERNAL ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA CONSUMPTION ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Maternal consumption of alcohol and marijuana during pregnancy poses significant risks to fetal development. This review synthesizes current research on the effects of prenatal exposure to these substances. Alcohol is a established teratogen, with prenatal exposure causing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), which encompass lifelong physical, cognitive, and behavioral impairments. Prenatal cannabis exposure is similarly linked to adverse outcomes, including low birth weight, preterm birth, and increased risks for childhood behavioral problems and cognitive deficits. Critically, emerging evidence suggests that combined use may have synergistic effects, leading to more severe neurodevelopmental disruptions than exposure to either substance alone. The findings underscore that no level of prenatal alcohol or marijuana consumption is without risk. This highlights an urgent need for targeted public health initiatives to promote abstinence during pregnancy and calls for further longitudinal research to clarify long-term developmental trajectories.

Keywords: prenatal exposure, alcohol, marijuana, child development, FASD

DETERMINANTS OF THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS AMONG HEALTHCARE WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare technologies often evolve faster than clinical practice, raising questions about how they are integrated into care. It is unclear how organisational position shapes healthcare professionals' responsibility for monitoring new developments and how this relates to openness to innovation and reservations. I conducted a cross-sectional survey of healthcare professionals (n=211) using a questionnaire and purposive sampling. Descriptive statistics, correlation and cross-tabulation analyses ($p < 0.05$, IBM SPSS 26) examined links between organisational position, openness to innovation and the perceived importance of knowing about the latest health technologies. Organisational position influenced this perceived importance ($p = 0.001$; Cramer-V=0.322). Leaders more often rated knowledge of new technologies as important, whereas employees/subordinates – the largest group – were heterogeneous, with the highest shares both following new technologies (38.9%) and not following them (31.8%). Openness to innovation also had an effect ($p = 0.001$; Cramer-V=0.273): those who were rather or fully open more often rated technological knowledge as important. Among those fully open, 37.4% follow new technologies and 10.9% do not, indicating a non-linear relation between openness, perceived importance and behaviour. These patterns suggest attitudes to new technologies reflect prior experience, risk perception and trust in information, so implementation must address risk concerns through targeted communication and trust-building beyond training.

Keywords: healthcare innovations, technological developments, healthcare professionals' attitudes, organisational position, openness to innovation

BREAST CANCER DETECTION THROUGH THERMOGRAPHY: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Infrared thermography is a non-invasive, radiation-free technique approved by the FDA as an adjunctive tool for breast cancer detection. It functions by mapping heat patterns associated with abnormal metabolic activity, making it suitable for women of all ages, including those with dense breast tissue. This review aims to evaluate recent clinical evidence on the diagnostic performance of breast thermography.

Methods: A systematic search was conducted in PubMed and Google Scholar between April and May 2025, focusing on studies published from 2019 to 2024. Studies were screened based on predefined inclusion criteria and assessed for methodological quality and relevance. Results: Ten studies comprising 12,771 participants were included. The pooled analysis revealed a mean sensitivity of 92.37%, specificity of 78.49%, and accuracy of 87.72%, suggesting strong diagnostic potential for thermography. Conclusion: Thermography, particularly when enhanced by artificial intelligence, shows promise as a supplementary method for early breast cancer detection. However, methodological variability across studies highlights the need for standardized protocols and further clinical validation.

Keywords: breast cancer, thermography, detection, diagnosis, prediction

EXPERT PANEL

ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM MODULATION IN AGEING: HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACHES TO LONGEVITY

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ABSTRACT

Ageing involves progressive loss of physiological resilience, increased disease susceptibility, and reduced homeostatic capacity. The endocannabinoid system (ECS) regulates multiple processes implicated in ageing, including inflammation, neuroprotection, metabolism, and stress adaptation. Both endogenous and plant-derived cannabinoids are increasingly investigated as modulators of healthy ageing and longevity. This narrative review synthesizes preclinical and clinical evidence on ECS modulation and cannabinoid exposure in the context of ageing, age-associated diseases, and lifespan regulation. Preclinical data across diverse model organisms demonstrate that cannabinoids can extend lifespan, enhance stress resilience, and mitigate age-related cognitive decline, primarily via anti-inflammatory, antioxidative, and neuroprotective mechanisms. In human populations aged 50 years and older, cannabinoids show potential benefits for chronic pain, sleep disturbances, and appetite regulation, though findings for cognition and mood remain inconsistent. Emerging evidence indicates that low-dose cannabinoid modulation of the ECS may beneficially influence fundamental ageing processes such as inflammaging, proteostasis, and mitochondrial function. Interactions between the ECS and conserved longevity pathways, including mTOR, AMPK, and sirtuin signaling, underscore its relevance to ageing biology. Rigorous, age-specific clinical trials incorporating standardized dosing and validated biomarkers of biological ageing are essential to determine whether ECS-targeted interventions can enhance human healthspan.

Keywords: endocannabinoid system, ageing, longevity, cannabinoids, inflammaging, neuroprotection, healthspan

NURSING BREAKROOMS FOR A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Nursing is among the most demanding healthcare professions, requiring sustained physical, cognitive, and emotional effort. Despite this, many hospitals and facilities still underestimate the role of well-designed breakrooms in supporting staff well-being during high-stress shifts. Evidence shows that restorative breaks help reduce stress, improve job satisfaction and patient outcomes. Yet studies reveal that nearly one in three nurses rarely take breaks, citing high workloads and insufficient staffing. With the Health Resources and Services Administration projecting a shortage of over 78,000 registered nurses in the U.S. by 2025, the need to address workplace well-being has become urgent. The National Academy of Medicine now recommends routine rest breaks as a standard. This presentation highlights five key strategies for effective nursing breakroom design: prioritizing comfort and functionality, offering healthy refreshments, integrating relaxation features, fostering community, and incorporating staff feedback. A responsive and supportive breakroom environment not only improves nurse satisfaction and morale but also strengthens retention and engagement. Investing in breakroom design is therefore a practical, evidence-based intervention to safeguard the health of nurses and the quality of patient care.

Keywords: nursing, stress reduction, workplace well-being, staff retention, breakroom design

YOUTH, BODY IMAGE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA: THE THIN LINE BETWEEN INFLUENCE AND EATING DISORDER

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ABSTRACT

Eating disorders are serious mental disorders in which food becomes a means of coping with internal distress. Among the most common are anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder, and increasingly common are bigorexia and orthorexia. Their development is influenced by individual, family, and cultural-social factors, among which social networks play a special role today. Research conducted using a qualitative approach and analysis of professional literature has shown that social media significantly contributes to the development of eating disorders among adolescents. There is comparison, competitiveness, and normalization of unhealthy behaviors, which leads to body dissatisfaction and excessive control over diet. Negative comments, cyberbullying, food content addiction, and diet promotion further increase the risk. The most vulnerable are adolescents aged 15 to 19, especially girls, who are more often under pressure from beauty ideals. Filtered and processed images create unrealistic standards, and influencers often present them as achievable goals. As a result, feelings of inferiority, shame, and an unhealthy relationship with food arise. The field is poorly researched in Slovenia, so further research is necessary to better understand and raise awareness of the severity of eating disorders.

Keywords: eating disorders, social media, adolescence, body image, media influence

INTEGRATING PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH INTO PALLIATIVE CARE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Palliative care (PC) is recognized by the World Health Organisation as an essential service. The percentage of people receiving it, is estimated 14%. PC has been mostly defined in a narrow way as a type of professional health care in which people with palliative needs and their families are cared for. It is now widely discussed that such definition limits the possibilities to increase access to such care. A public health approach alongside professional health services is needed to obtain sustainable palliative care systems.

Gorenjska palliative network project includes public health approach, integrating the community in the process of care along the disease trajectory. It connects all health care institutions, senior homes, pharmacies, centers for social work, community nurses, home care support. A lot of emphasis is put on empowering patients'proxies to undertake basic medical interventions such as medicine administration and psychological support and to establishment of supportive groups to help with basic care of the patient and the family. Such strong community support diminishes the fear of the disease, the dying process itself and encourages people to care about their beloved in the preferred home enviroment. It can also change the public opinion about death and dying.

Keywords: *palliative care, public health, dying*

MENTORING AS A KEY EDUCATIONAL PILLAR OF THE ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Entering the profession of nursing, particularly within the complex work environment of health-care institutions, presents numerous challenges for new employees. Feelings of uncertainty, stress from new responsibilities, and expectations of rapid skill acquisition can affect both the quality of work and employee satisfaction. Structured mentoring therefore represents a key educational pillar that not only facilitates knowledge transfer and emotional support, but also provides personal and professional development, and retention in the organization. Drawing on more than 4000 hours of one-to-one mentoring experience, this contribution illustrates how systematic guidance – beginning with observation, progressing through stepwise practice, and reinforced by weekly evaluations – creates a safe and effective learning environment. Four interconnected dimensions of learning are emphasized: teaching (knowledge transfer), training (repeated skill practice), conditioning (behavioral reinforcement), and play (experiential learning under stress). These elements ensure that mentees develop both technical competence and confidence, while mentors also benefit from reflection. Organizations that invest in mentoring programs not only improve employee satisfaction but also reduce turnover and increase the overall efficiency of the healthcare system. Mentoring thus emerges as a dynamic and human-centered process essential for professional development and organizational sustainability.

Keywords: mentoring, nursing, professional development, new employees, dynamic process

PREVENTIVE CARE IN THE HEALTH SYSTEMS: IMPACT ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF POPULATION HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Preventive care is a fundamental component of health systems, aiming to reduce morbidity, enhance population well-being, and lessen the overall burden on healthcare services. Through interventions such as vaccinations, health education, screening programs, and routine medical check-ups, the onset and progression of chronic diseases can be limited, quality of life improved, and system efficiency strengthened. In many health systems worldwide, preventive strategies are increasingly recognized as essential for promoting long-term public health and reducing avoidable healthcare costs.

Objective: This study analyzes the impact of preventive care within health systems and its contribution to improving population health outcomes at a broader, non-country-specific level.

Methodology: The study is based on a comprehensive literature review, utilizing national and international scientific publications, institutional health reports, and case studies focusing on the implementation and outcomes of preventive care programs across different health systems.

Conclusions: Findings indicate that integrating preventive care—particularly vaccination programs, health education initiatives, and disease prevention strategies—has a measurable impact on population health improvement. These measures reduce healthcare costs, increase system efficiency, and contribute to building a healthier and resilient population. Strengthening preventive policies and expanding evidence-based programs are essential for advancing public health and ensuring the long-term sustainability of health system.

Keywords: preventive care, health systems, population health, disease prevention, health policies, public health

PELVIC DISORDERS: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN CLINICAL MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Pelvic disorders are frequently associated with female reproductive organs, despite the fact that their etiologies are heterogeneous and they also occur in men. In both sexes, PD significantly affect their functioning and are often regarded as a taboo subject. In women, the predominant etiological categories include postpartum sequelae, uterine, bladder, or rectal prolapse into the vaginal canal, urinary incontinence, and dyspareunia. In men, the principal causes comprise prostatic inflammation and hyperplasia, sexually transmitted infections, and urinary or fecal incontinence following prostatectomy for carcinoma. Among women, PD are most prevalent during the reproductive years, with an estimated prevalence of approximately 15%. Urinary incontinence, however, is most frequently observed in older women, with prevalence rates reaching up to 20%. Pelvic pain is frequently concomitant with low back pain; although coincidence is possible, radiologically incidental degenerative changes of the spine are often asymptomatic, lacking clinical functional or neurological deficits. Misinterpretation of imaging findings without correlation to the clinical presentation exacerbates patient distress and imposes additional burdens on healthcare systems through unnecessary diagnostic procedures, inconsistent therapeutic interventions, and prolonged occupational absence. In chronic cases, secondary psychopathological manifestations such as depression, hypochondriasis, somatization, and catastrophizing may further complicate the clinical course.

Keywords: pelvic disorders, pelvic pain, functioning impairment

REGULATORY FRAGMENTATION VS. FOUNDATIONAL RIGHTS: SECURING THE RIGHT TO HEALTH IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL AI STANDARDS

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ABSTRACT

As global economies diverge on AI regulation, a fragmented landscape of standards emerges: often prioritizing market innovation over fundamental rights protections. This paper analyzes the tension between global regulatory models—such as the risk-based approach common in developed markets and human-centric models preferred in emerging economies—and their collective impact on the Right to Health. The core argument is that this regulatory competition, particularly concerning cross-border data flows and liability for high-risk health systems, risks creating systemic loopholes that undermine patient safety and ethical oversight. The analysis critiques the current status quo, advocating for a principle of „rights-by-design“ that places the universal constitutional value of non-discrimination and health justice above technological expediency. This study suggests pathways for international regulatory coherence to secure global health outcomes in a fractured technological environment.

Keywords: regulatory coherence, right to health, human rights, ai standards, digital fragmentation

MOVE4BRAIN: BEYOND SPORT THROUGH A 'NO BRAIN, NO GAIN' PROJECT: THE BEAUTIFUL MINDS

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Marina Umeton, Expert
PlayMore!

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Children with mild disabilities often lack access to evidence-based physical activity programs that support both motor and cognitive development. Building on the Erasmus+ BRAIN project, which successfully tested multisensory enriched environments with typically developing children and in pilot work with children with disabilities, MOVE4BRAIN (ERASMUS-SPORT-2025-SSCP; GA: 101243543) aims to implement cognitively challenging physical activity programs tailored to children with mild disabilities. Methodology: A consortium of Alma Mater Europaea (Slovenia), AETOI Thessaloniki (Greece), and PlayMore! (Italy) will design, implement, and evaluate enriched environment activities. Outputs will include guidelines for multisensory program implementation, professional training, workshops, and summer camps across partner countries. Additionally, an online VLOG channel will offer accessible instructional materials and exercises. Results: Expected results include improved executive and motor functions, increased participation in physical activity among children with disabilities, and strengthened professional capacities of educators and sports teachers. The project will generate pedagogical guidelines, inclusive sports activities, and foster cross-border collaboration. Conclusion: MOVE4BRAIN contributes to EU priorities of equality and inclusion by improving access to high-quality physical activity for children with mild disabilities and sustaining long-term impact through open digital resources.

Keywords: inclusion, physical activity, children with disabilities, multisensory environment, Erasmus+

NEUROSTEPS: BRIDGING SKILLS IN SPORTS COACHING FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

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Association Movement for the Brain 'No Brain, No Gain'

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Children with mild disabilities often lack access to appropriately adapted grassroots sports programs due to limited specialized staff. NeuroSteps (KA182-SPO), led by Društvo gibanje za možgane "No Brain, No Gain" (Slovenia) in partnership with AETOI Thessaloniki (Greece), aims to strengthen coaches' competencies to support motor-cognitive development and inclusive participation in sport. Methodology: The project uses the Erasmus+ Mobility of Sport Staff framework, including preparatory visits, job-shadowing, coaching observations, and co-development of adaptable training programs. A multidisciplinary team—kinesiologist, physiotherapist, neuro-cognitive psychologist, and sports teacher—will collaborate with Greek experts to observe inclusive coaching, participate in practical sessions, and develop training approaches for children with mild disabilities. Results:

Expected results include improved capacity for inclusive coaching, enhanced advocacy for inclusive sport, and strengthened professional networks across Europe. The creation of weekly programs and summer camps for children with mild disabilities will answer European initiatives of inclusion, while the international collaboration will contribute to policy dialogue and the exchange of best practices. Conclusion: NeuroSteps advances Erasmus+ priorities of inclusion, diversity, and evidence-based practice by integrating neuroscience, education, and international collaboration.

Keywords: inclusive coaching, disabilities, professional training, mobility learning, Erasmus+

SMARTSTART: ENHANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INTEGRATED MOTOR-COGNITIVE SPORTS ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Optimal early childhood development is highly dependent not only on genetic factors but also on the quality and diversity of experiences, including sports-structured motor-cognitive stimulation shown to support neuroplasticity, executive functions, and pre-literacy skills. In Slovenia and Italy, however, structured physical activity in preschools remains limited. SmartStart (ERASMUS-SPORT-2025-SSCP; GA: 101243582), led by the Municipality of Piran with "No Brain, No Gain" (Slovenia) and BOR Association (Italy), will introduce an evidence-based motor-cognitive program to support optimal early development. Methodology: The project adopts a cross-sectoral, evidence-based approach. Activities include the development of program guidelines, capacity-building workshops for educators, and policy recommendations for integrating structured physical activity into preschool curricula. A digital platform with an online VLOG tool will allow institutions to exchange practices and maintain communication beyond the project's duration. Results: Expected outcomes include increased physical activity among preschoolers, improved motor and executive functioning, and enhanced educator competence. The project prioritizes inclusion by improving access to high-quality physical activity for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Conclusion: SmartStart supports EU priorities of equality, health promotion, and digital transformation by investing in early education, educator training, and accessible digital tools.

Keywords: early childhood, motor-cognitive development, preschool education, physical activity, Erasmus+

GREENWHEELS: SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN BIKING FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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Kris Dassena, Expert
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The cross-border Istrian region of Slovenia and Croatia is facing declining participation in grassroots sports and increasing environmental challenges. GreenWheels (ERASMUS-SPORT-2025-SSCP; GA: 101244788), led by MTB Club BOSHK with Vergo Bike Academy and the Municipality of Piran, addresses these issues by promoting safe, sustainable mountain biking as a tool for physical activity, environmental responsibility, and community engagement. Methodology: Using an interdisciplinary and user-centered approach, the project's activities include research, awareness events, workshops, and mentorship programs for young MTB instructors, strengthening community and professional capacities. Trails will be mapped and shared on the Trailforks app, and guidelines and research findings will be published in an accessible online report. Results: Expected outcomes include increased recreational mountain biking for recreational purposes, improved physical and mental well-being of locals, strengthened environmental awareness, and a larger pool of trained instructors. Long-term impact is supported through digitally available trails, educational materials, and transferability to other EU regions. Conclusion: GreenWheels aligns with the European Green Deal and Climate Pact by combining physical activity, sustainable mobility, and digital innovation to promote environmental stewardship and healthy lifestyles within local communities.

Keywords: mountain biking, sustainability, environmental education, grassroots sport, Erasmus+

STUDENT PANEL

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS?

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ABSTRACT

A physician's role in upholding human rights is not explicitly stated in human rights legislation. Human rights can be defined as a roadmap of legal, moral and societal codes. This paper discusses the unique role of medical professionals deciphering these codes. Analysing their role in human rights discourse, policies, as well as the role of human rights in clinical spaces. Drawing on international declarations, medical codes of ethics, and public health issues, this paper analyses the role of medical professionals who must deal with conflicts of rights, dual loyalty, and powerlessness. Tensions arise when the rights of an individual come into conflict with collective rights or when there is corruption and state law that does not align with human rights principles. Their role as advocates for the dignity of their patients and trusted information sources, can help influence social justice movements aimed at changing policies to serve the most vulnerable. Physicians act as a bridge between state powers and the public, allowing for active engagement of human rights principles in daily practice, improving human rights literacy and also advising policymakers and states to make better decisions in both health and underlying human rights.

Keywords: human rights, healthcare professionals, policy, social justice, vulnerable populations

FRONTAL THETA SYNCHRONY, PARIETAL P300, AND ENTROPY REVEAL NONLINEAR NETWORK DYNAMICS UNDER INCREASING COGNITIVE LOAD IN A VISUAL ODDBALL TASK

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ABSTRACT

Cognitive workload is often self-rated, but neural data can reveal instabilities missed by subjective reports. We combined EEG and NASA-TLX to study changes in frontal-parietal activity with task complexity during a visual oddball paradigm. Five healthy adults completed three target-detection blocks (6, 9, and 12 letters). EEG was processed using filtering, ICA, with artifact, and bad epoch rejection. We extracted frontal theta inter-trial coherence (ITC θ) and parietal P300 amplitudes (Target-Standard) as salience and evaluation markers, plus computed spectral entropy for neural complexity. NASA-TLX was used after each block. ANOVA showed significant block effects on EEG: frontal ITC θ ($F(2,8)=13.5$, $p=0.003$) and parietal P300 ($F(2,6)=12.9$, $p=0.007$) dropped at medium load but only frontal ITC θ recovered under high load (12-letter block), P300 remained low. In contrast, NASA-TLX ratings increased monotonically with task complexity, reflecting perceived effort. Subjective frustration positively correlated with parietal spectral entropy ($p=0.625$, $p=0.030$), linking perceived workload to neural complexity. Thus, subjective and EEG measures captured different workload aspects; EEG revealed nonlinear neural responses and related frustration to complexity. These results highlight the value of neural measures for understanding and optimizing behavioral interventions, including "nudge" strategies. Insights can inform communication and design in education, healthcare, and public engagement.

Keywords: EEG, cognitive workload, NASA-TLX, task complexity, nudge strategies, behavioral interventions, decision-making, healthcare

HIGH SCHOOL RESEARCH

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
II. GIMNAZIJA MARIBOR**

STUDENT PANEL

INTRODUCTION

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High school research work offers students an opportunity to develop critical thinking and a research-oriented approach, to work independently under the guidance of mentors, and to broaden their knowledge in a field that interests them. It also provides additional motivation for gifted students and helps develop their potential. At II. gimnazija Maribor, we have been encouraging young people to engage in research for more than three decades. Many students have thus had their first research experience, acquired new knowledge and skills, and, with this experience, chosen their field of study and future profession. Quite a few of our former students are now established researchers and fondly remember their first steps in research.

Encouraging young people to engage in research is crucial for the future of Slovenian science, and responsibility for this does not rest solely with the school the students attend; cooperation with the university is also important. In this way, we enable their early inclusion in the scientific community and open the door to the academic world. We also provide them with access to advanced equipment, current research topics, opportunities to collaborate with experts, and the chance to present their work to the wider professional community. All of the above substantiates the importance of cooperation with Alma Mater Europaea University, which offers students the opportunity to connect with its experts and to participate in its conference, It's About People. The research problems addressed by the students demonstrate their interest in current issues of contemporary society and the potential of young people, which we must support.

EFFECT OF ORGANIC ACIDS ON STARCH HYDROLYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Organic acids, including acetic acid found in culinary vinegar, have a long-standing tradition of use in gastronomy. In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward their potential beneficial effects on human health. Research indicates that vinegar may inhibit the activity of α -amylase, thereby slowing the hydrolysis of starch and subsequently reducing the rate of glucose release into the bloodstream. This mechanism is particularly relevant for individuals with diabetes. The influence of salivary pH on starch hydrolysis was examined through in vitro experiments, with the findings subsequently translated to in vivo conditions. Using continuous glucose monitoring, interstitial glucose levels were compared following the consumption of a starchy meal with and without the addition of acid. As vinegar intake proved to be an effective strategy for moderating postprandial glycemic responses to starchy meals, its inclusion could be considered as a complementary approach to improving glycemic control in diabetes management. Such implementation should be supported by appropriate education to ensure its safe and effective use.

Keywords: starch, vinegar, glycemia, starch hydrolysis, diabetes

SEMAGLUTIDE TABLETS AS A MEDICATION FOR OBESITY IN ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Obesity is a global health issue, and effective and safe medications are available to address it, including semaglutide in the form of subcutaneous injections. In a retrospective study of 93 obese adults, based on data obtained from two specialized endocrinology clinics, we aimed to determine whether treatment with oral semaglutide at a dose of 14 mg daily was associated with changes in body weight, body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, blood pressure, heart rate, and Edmonton Obesity Staging System (EOSS) score after one year. We also assessed its safety. A total of 12% of participants discontinued the medication due to adverse effects. Among the remaining participants, baseline body weight was 105±18 kg, BMI 35±6 kg/m², waist circumference 113±13 cm, and EOSS score 2±1. By the end of the one-year study, the average body weight decreased by 5.7% (5.9 kg), and BMI was reduced by 2 units. We observed an increased heart rate (+1 bpm) and a lower EOSS score (-0.1). A total of 52% of participants achieved a ≥5% reduction in body weight. Adverse effects were mostly mild and gastrointestinal, with no serious events reported. Based on existing research, the medication is considered safe and comparable in efficacy to older treatments. It may be particularly suitable for patients who refuse or lack access to injectable therapy or as an initial treatment phase with semaglutide.

Keywords: semaglutide tablets, obesity, changes in body weight, adverse effects

COMPARISON OF COMMUNITARIANISM AND MORAL UNIVERSALISM AS AN EXPLANATION OF THE POLITICAL SHIFT IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

Moral universalism is a component of liberalism, the implicitly dominant philosophical theory of the Western world. Communitarianism is a majorly contrasting philosophy formed as a critique of the liberalist narrative. In the research paper, I consider the ethical aspect of both philosophies. I present universalism through Kant's ethics and Rawls theory of justice, two of the most influential universalist philosophers. I introduce communitarian arguments through the writing of MacIntyre, Walzer, and Etzioni, who are also some of the most visible proponents of the communitarian view. I analyse arguments and critiques of both ethical approaches and consider them in relation to the present political shift in Europe. This paper proposes that the philosophical background and the reality of political events will coincide to a substantial extent.

Keywords: universalism, communitarianism, MacIntyre, community

THE FACE, THE FINGER, AND THE CODE: BIOMETRICS IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

This research thesis examines the impact of artificial intelligence on the development and use of biometric systems from both a computer science and a psychology perspective. It analyses how facial, voice and fingerprint recognition algorithms contribute to increased cyber security and how new methods such as deepfakes challenge the reliability of authentication. The psychological aspect of the research focuses on the perception of different biometric methods among high school and university students and their trust in the security and privacy of these systems. The research finds that young people perceive biometric methods as simpler and more reliable, but that digital security has a strong impact on the psychological experience of users. Mistrust and a sense of loss of control over one's own data are common consequences of cyber-attacks or data leaks. It also highlights a number of current ethical dilemmas and the importance of digital security in modern society.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, biometric systems, cybersecurity, deep forgeries, two-factor authentication, identity theft, privacy breaches

SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

STUDENT PANEL

AESTHETICS OF YOUTH AS A SOCIAL NORM

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Maša Belas

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ABSTRACT

The paper Aesthetics of Youth as a Social Norm explores the relationship between self-image, self-esteem, and aging among older adults, with a particular focus on the influence of media and societal standards. The main research problem addresses how the idealization of youth and beauty affects the perception of aging and self-worth in individuals over 65 years of age. The study combines a theoretical overview with empirical research conducted through a questionnaire on a sample of 121 older adults. The research examines exposure to media content promoting youthful appearance, the use of anti-aging products, and attitudes toward cosmetic procedures. The results indicate that media and advertising significantly contribute to dissatisfaction with one's appearance, as more than half of the participants reported decreased self-confidence due to aging and exposure to youth-centered ideals. Although most respondents do not opt for cosmetic procedures, many have purchased anti-aging products, suggesting the presence of social pressure to maintain a youthful look. The findings confirm the hypothesis that media influence increases dissatisfaction with physical appearance among older adults. The broader significance of the study highlights the need for a more realistic and respectful representation of aging in society. Promoting acceptance of aging as a natural process and encouraging critical thinking about media messages may contribute to improving the self-image and well-being of older individuals.

Keywords: aesthetics of youth, aging, self-image, media influence, social norms

ASSISTANCE IN SUICIDE AND THE RIGHT TO A DIGNIFIED DEATH

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ABSTRACT

This seminar paper discusses assisted suicide and the right to a dignified death, with a focus on older people. It highlights that the decision to end one's life is complex and influenced by multiple factors, including serious illness, chronic pain, mental health issues, loneliness, and difficult social or financial conditions. Older individuals are particularly vulnerable due to isolation and reduced social connectedness. Suicide is thus understood as the result of an interaction between internal factors (e.g., depression) and external circumstances. In Slovenia, it remains a significant public health issue.

The paper distinguishes between assisted suicide and euthanasia, outlining different forms of euthanasia (active, passive, voluntary, and non-voluntary). It emphasises that these issues raise profound ethical and legal questions. While some argue for individual autonomy in deciding about one's death, others stress the sanctity of life. Consequently, both euthanasia and assisted suicide are currently prohibited in Slovenia, although debates on their legalization continue.

The role of healthcare professionals is also addressed, as they are often the first to encounter patients' wishes regarding death. They are responsible for providing support, maintaining dignity, and communicating with families, which can be emotionally challenging. The paper further underscores the importance of psychological support and palliative care, as emotional suffering and hopelessness strongly influence such decisions. Overall, the topic is presented as a complex intersection of medical, ethical, psychological, and social dimensions, requiring sensitive understanding and improved end-of-life care.

Keywords: assisted suicide, euthanasia, dignified death, elderly care, ethical issues

COGNITIVE OVERLOAD DUE TO INFORMATION CHAOS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how information chaos and the overabundance of information affect older adults, with a focus on cognitive and psychological overload in a modern digital society. In an environment characterized by rapid information flow, multiple media sources, and often contradictory content, individuals are increasingly exposed to more information than they can effectively process. According to cognitive load theory, working memory has a limited capacity, and exceeding this capacity leads to reduced efficiency in information processing. Older adults are particularly vulnerable due to age related cognitive changes, such as decreased working memory, slower processing speed, and lower digital literacy. These factors contribute to difficulties in filtering relevant information and increase susceptibility to stress, confusion, and emotional distress.

The empirical part of the study is based on a qualitative methodology using semi – structured interviews with 16 older adults (aged 67 – 90) living in a retirement home. The findings indicate that most participants experience information overload, primarily due to excessive and negative news content (war, politics, health issues). Common consequences include fatigue, irritability, reduced concentration, and withdrawal from information sources. Participants reported various coping strategies, such as limiting media exposure, avoiding news, engaging in hobbies, and seeking social support. The results confirm the hypothesis that a greater quantity of information leads to higher psychological burden, with the oldest group (85+) being the most vulnerable.

The study highlights the importance of understanding information overload in social gerontology, as it significantly impacts quality of life, emotional well – being, and social inclusion among older adults.

Keywords: information overload, cognitive overload, older adults, digital literacy, coping strategies

ECOLOGICAL ANXIETY OF AGING

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ABSTRACT

Ecological anxiety of aging represents an individual's emotional and psychological response to perceived environmental changes in connection with the aging process. It refers to feelings of concern, uncertainty, and fear regarding the future of the environment, one's own life, and future generations, where the problem is the perception of limited time for action in older adults. The research question of the paper was whether ecological anxiety increases with aging.

Key vulnerability factors include physiological, health, environmental, psychosocial, and health system-related factors. These increase the sensitivity of older adults to negative environmental influences and, consequently, to the development of anxiety. It is also important that older adults face such challenges, as they significantly affect them. Older adults have access to information about what is happening in the world and the possibility of social support through conversations with relatives and others, which means that they are not isolated from information.

The empirical part is based on a quantitative survey with a questionnaire in which 112 older adults (65+) participated. The results show that the general level of ecological anxiety is not particularly high, but it gradually increases with aging. The highest values were detected in the oldest groups, especially when it comes to concerns about the future of the environment. The respondents mentioned heat waves as the most common experience in the last year, which confirms their direct exposure to environmental changes. The results thus confirm the hypothesis that ecological anxiety increases with aging.

Keywords: ecological anxiety, aging, older adults, climate change, mental health

DIGITAL DEPENDENCY ENVIRONMENT IN OLDER ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the impact of digitalization on older adults and analyzes differences in digital inclusion between the age groups 65–75 and 75+. The theoretical section defines the concept of digitalization, the processes of aging, and key domains such as e-government, e-banking, and e-health, highlighting both the benefits and risks of the digital environment for older populations. Particular attention is given to issues of accessibility, digital literacy, privacy, and dependence on institutional and technological systems.

The empirical part is based on a qualitative study conducted through ten semi-structured interviews. The analysis includes the use of digital devices, internet access, information-searching abilities, use of public digital services, and the level of dependence on assistance from others. The results indicate statistically and substantively significant differences between the two groups. Individuals aged 65–75 demonstrate higher levels of digital inclusion, greater independence, and a more positive attitude toward digitalization. In contrast, the 75+ group more frequently reports limited competencies, lower usage of services, and greater reliance on assistance.

The calculated digital inclusion index confirms the hypothesis that digitalization has a more negative impact on the older elderly population. The findings emphasize the need for the development of tailored digital solutions, improvement of digital literacy, and the provision of support mechanisms. Despite sample limitations, the study contributes to a better understanding of digital inequality and provides a basis for further research and the development of inclusive policies in an aging digital society.

Keywords: digitalization, older adults, digital inclusion, digital literacy, aging population

DIGITAL MANIPULATION AND DISINFORMATION AMONG OLDER ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

This abstract summarizes a seminar paper that examined digital information and disinformation in relation to older adults, with a particular focus on their ability to critically evaluate online content. The research addressed how older individuals engage with digital environments and whether their level of education influences their ability to identify misinformation and disinformation. The working hypothesis assumed that older adults with higher levels of education are better able to recognize misleading or false information online. The theoretical part of the paper discussed key concepts such as disinformation, online manipulation, and digital literacy, while also addressing the specific vulnerabilities of older adults in digital environments. It highlighted factors that may limit their active and informed participation in the digital world.

The empirical part was based on a quantitative research method using a questionnaire conducted among individuals aged 65 and over. The analysis focused on the relationship between education level and trust in digital information sources, as well as general patterns of media use. The results showed that older adults often have limited knowledge of digital environments and the ways in which online manipulation can occur. They also tend to trust traditional media, such as television and radio, more than online sources. Due to the small sample size and the similar educational backgrounds of participants, the study could neither confirm nor reject the hypothesis. Older adults can therefore be considered a vulnerable group in the digital environment. The findings suggest the importance of regular educational seminars or courses that support the development of basic digital skills. Such initiatives can improve independence and confidence in using smartphones and personal computers, and support safer and more effective participation in the digital age.

Keywords: older adults, digital literacy, disinformation, education, online manipulation

THE SILENT PRESSURE OF PRODUCTIVITY IN OLDER ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we explored the subtle and unsaid pressures of productivity experienced by older adults in modern societies. Although later stage in life is frequently associated with retirement and retreat from work, older adults are increasingly encouraged to remain active, independent and overall productive. In the main research question, we investigate how these silent pressures are constructed and manifested in the everyday lives of older adults, and what implications they have for the well-being and sense of self for those who internalize it.

The study looks at how society talks about so called active aging, the expectations that older adults should still be independent and how people may start to measure their own worth based on their productivity. It also focuses on the tension between personal choice and social expectations and how media influences these negative ideas.

Findings suggest that, even though engagement and activity can enhance quality of life, the non-stop expectation from society to remain productive, can lead older adults to stress, unworthiness, self-doubt,... These pressures are often internalized, making them less visible, especially those who are sick or in any other way limited in their daily lives.

Our research was based on interview with 20 older adults (8 men, 12 women), with an average age of 76. We found out that, if we exclude individuals with health limitations, most participants do not feel much pressure of productivity. They generally felt satisfied with their life and believe that what they had achieved was enough.

Keywords: older adults, pressure, productivity, well-being, society



SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE



SCHOLARLY PANEL

BUILDING SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INTEGRATED LONG-TERM CARE IN EUROPE: LESSONS FROM INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The study we present explores how social infrastructure underpins the development of integrated and person-centred long-term care systems in Europe. It examines how physical, digital, and community infrastructures enable better coordination between social and health services and improve the accessibility and quality of care. The research is based on findings from two related studies conducted within the Interreg SLO/HR CENTINOSS project, which analysed good practices, their applicability, and systemic approaches to long-term care across the European Union. Through a comparative and practice-oriented lens, the study identifies innovative models as examples of how social and digital infrastructure can support ageing in place, enhance user autonomy, and reduce inequalities in access to care, especially in rural and cross-border areas. The results highlight that social infrastructure is not limited to facilities but includes human networks, digital systems, and governance mechanisms that enable collaboration across sectors.

Strengthening social infrastructure is therefore essential for addressing workforce shortages, demographic ageing, and the fragmentation of care provision. The study concludes that building integrated social infrastructure is a strategic investment for the future of long-term care in Europe, one that fosters sustainability, inclusiveness, and dignity in ageing societies.

Keywords: social infrastructure, integrated long-term care, innovative practices, ageing population, accessibility, quality of care

QUALITY OF LIFE OF OLDER ADULTS: THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY-BASED HOUSING

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ABSTRACT

Population ageing is one of the major demographic challenges of our time, creating an urgent need to improve the quality of life of older adults. Standard housing options, such as remaining at home or moving into institutional care, often fall short of meeting their complex needs, especially in relation to social inclusion, safety, and psychological well-being. This presentation examines innovative community-based housing models, including co-housing, assisted living, senior villages, the SHOP model, and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs). In contrast, living alone without sufficient support is often associated with isolation and poor mental health. The presentation also discusses the concept of aging in the right place, which highlights the need to adapt housing to individual needs. It concludes by stressing the importance of integrating these models into housing policy and encouraging longitudinal, culturally sensitive research on their long-term impact.

Keywords: quality of life, innovative community-based housing, older adults, social inclusion, aging in the right place

INTEGRATION OF REHABILITATION INTO THE NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ELDERLY CARE

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ABSTRACT

Data on the burden on the healthcare system in Slovenia clearly show the growing needs of the ageing population, particularly in the area of injuries and long-term care. The length of hospitalisation due to injuries has fluctuated between 6.09 and 7.07 days over the past twenty years, reflecting the complexity of treating the elderly and the frequent need for further rehabilitation after discharge. The number of beds for extended hospital treatment is increasing, rising from 0.35 per 10,000 inhabitants in 2003 to 1.83 in 2020. Meanwhile, the number of rehabilitation beds has remained almost unchanged, at approximately one bed per 10,000 inhabitants, with a slight decline in recent years. These discrepancies between the needs of the aging population and the available capacity highlight the urgent need to integrate rehabilitation into the national infrastructure for elderly care. It might make sense to establish so-called rehabilitation hospitals and effective home care and long-term care services, which would reduce the length of hospital stays and improve the functional outcomes of older adults. The systematic integration of rehabilitation is therefore key to sustainable adaptation to demographic trends and maintaining the quality of life of older people.

Keywords: rehabilitation, elderly care, health system capacity

BENEFITS AND BARRIERS OF IMPLEMENTING VR IN ELDERLY CARE INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

We are witnessing major effects of technology on all aspects of our everyday life, especially from the start of the 21.st century, as well as the ageing of the world population. Also, there is a global deficit of work force in all health and social care institutions. All of the above-mentioned makes it more difficult to achieve an adequate standard of quality of life. The process of implementing new technologies in everyday life is demanding, regardless the technology being implemented and the age of users, including implementation of VR, that has great potential to positively affect different aspects of our lives. When talking about implementing VR in elderly care institutions and its benefits, it is important to point out barriers that are present before the staff and users. Some of the most important benefits that VR could potentially provide in this setting are improving social involvement, reducing loneliness as well as elevating physical and cognitive well-being. Regarding barriers, they include organisational, resource and human factors, mainly because of lack of staff and time that implementation of these technologies demands.

Keywords: virtual reality, VR, older adults, elderly care institutions, long-term care homes

CLINICAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTIVENESS OF SMART HOME TECHNOLOGIES FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING OF OLDER ADULTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Global population aging is increasing the need for innovative technological solutions, such as assisted living environments (AAL), which enable older people to maintain their independence and remain in their home environment. The purpose of this review article is to synthesise empirical evidence on the impact of smart home technologies on the functional independence of older people and to assess their economic sustainability. An analysis of ten selected studies reveals that the effectiveness of these systems is not universal but is closely related to their level of technical sophistication and the specific characteristics of the target population. Key findings show that advanced multimodal systems supported by artificial intelligence bring significant clinical benefits, including improved assessments of activities of daily living (ADL) and a reduction in the number of falls by up to 42%. The successful implementation of AAL technologies in practice requires addressing challenges such as privacy protection, the digital divide, and the need for technical training of users. The importance of this work lies in identifying the factors that distinguish effective interventions from ineffective ones, which provides a basis for the development of user-oriented policies.

Keywords: AAL, smart home, independent living for older people, gerontechnology, activities of daily living

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: CHALLENGES OF INFRASTRUCTURE, TRUST, AND SHT/AAL IN RURAL AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Smart home technology (SHT) and Assistive Technologies for Independent Living (AAL) offer key potential for supporting the ageing population in living independently. However, the promise of these solutions is hampered by the inevitable digital divide between urban and rural areas. The motivation for this paper is the critical need to understand and bridge this gap, which keeps rural, financially constrained older adults in a 'digital grey gap', denying them access to advanced care and an improved quality of life.

Key findings show that successful solutions are those that radically bypass infrastructure barriers, for example by developing low-cost IoT systems (e.g., IndoorCare) and offline technologies (e.g., the ACHO voice assistant). Wearable devices have also been shown to achieve high levels of acceptance in this population. Trust in automation is critical and is built by reducing system errors (false alarms) and by involving multidisciplinary clinical teams and counselling agents who improve the digital literacy of caregivers and users. The synthesis emphasizes that successful implementation requires a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond technology alone: it includes participatory co-creation with users, promoting solutions with an emphasis on economic savings (e.g., energy monitoring), and investing in community-level education programs.

Keywords: digital divide, smart home (SHT), assistive technologies (AAL), rural areas, trust in automation

DIGITAL INCLUSION AND COGNITIVE HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The ageing of the population worldwide is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century, as it has not only demographic but also far-reaching public health and socio-economic consequences. Within this context, preventing cognitive decline and dementia has become an urgent global health priority as the number of people affected continues to rise. Dementia, which affects key cognitive functions such as memory, thinking and orientation, is not only a personal tragedy, but also places enormous pressure on health systems and society as a whole. Dementia is closely linked to the development of depression, anxiety and chronic stress. Dementia brings functional limitations that directly threaten an individual's ability to live independently at home without additional assistance. Declining abilities in areas such as orientation, memory and executive functions cause difficulties in daily activities. Sources emphasise that the need to maintain control over one's own life and avoid a patronising attitude from those around them is key to maintaining quality of life. The aim of this article is to contribute to a better understanding of the potential of digital solutions in promoting cognitive health and developing effective strategies for preventing and managing dementia in an ageing society.

Keywords: dementia, cognitive decline, digital isolation/exclusion, social isolation

PHYSICAL FUNCTION AND INDEPENDENCE PRESERVATION IN OLDER ADULTS WITH SARCOPENIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Sarcopenia is defined by the progressive loss of skeletal muscle mass, strength, and function, representing a major public health challenge, particularly in older adults. In gerontological practice, sarcopenia is a key contributor to functional decline, increased fall risk, and loss of independence, significantly affecting quality of life and increasing care dependency. Reduced muscle reserves limit the ability of older adults to cope with everyday physical demands and physiological stressors, resulting in slower recovery after illness or injury and increased vulnerability to adverse health outcomes. Consequently, sarcopenia is a multidimensional geriatric syndrome with important functional and social implications. This review addresses non-pharmacological strategies for the prevention and mitigation of sarcopenia-related functional decline, with a focus on structured, person-centered exercise interventions. Current evidence shows that regular, progressive physical activity, especially resistance and balance training, significantly improves muscle strength, postural control, and performance in activities of daily living. These improvements are essential for maintaining functional independence and supporting safe aging within the community. Additionally, combining exercise with appropriate nutritional support, particularly protein intake, enhances functional outcomes. From a gerontological perspective, implementing individualized exercise programs represents a cornerstone of comprehensive care, contributing to preserved autonomy, reduced care burden, and improved long-term quality of life.

Keywords: sarcopenia, functional independence, exercise, older adults, geriatric rehabilitation

DIGITAL EMPATHY IN THE PROMOTION OF DIGNITY IN THE ELDERLY POPULATION

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ABSTRACT

The accelerated ageing of the population on a global level represents a problem in itself and, together with the overburdened healthcare system, which is reflected in the lack of healthcare staff in some countries, it is on the verge of collapse. Based on this, a model was proposed for the introduction of artificial intelligence and social robotics in the care of older people. This review paper is a synthesis of recent research (2022.–2025.) with a focus on digital empathy and the ability of such technologies to detect, simulate and respond emotionally. The aim is to evaluate the impact of artificial intelligence for the purpose of preserving the dignity of users. Through comparative analysis, we concluded that the risk of loneliness is indeed reduced, but with numerous ethical dilemmas raised by the authors. The suggestion for the use of digital empathy is in the form of scaffolding (support) to human interaction and it should not be its replacement. Violating autonomy in geriatric care could negatively affect the authenticity of people.

Keywords: digital health, elderly, artificial intelligence ethics, empathy

EFFECTIVENESS OF TELEREHABILITATION FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE AFTER STROKE

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ABSTRACT

Telerehabilitation uses various telecommunications systems, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of modern technology. The aim of the review is to determine the effectiveness of telerehabilitation in older adults after stroke, the impact on independence as a result of better balance and gait, trunk stability and fine motor skills of the hand in order to increase progress and prevent potential risks. Summarizing previous research, the advantages of telerehabilitation are: lower time and travel costs, accessibility regardless of location, psychological and emotional well-being, individualized exercises, rapid recovery, benefits for the family and the health system. The disadvantages observed are: non-traditional approach, investment in technology, instability of the Internet connection, older age and inexperience with technology, avoidance of exercise due to anxiety, depression, lack of social support, it is necessary to standardize the technical minimum, clinical protocols and those for managing potential risks and informed consent. The success of telerehabilitation depends on the functional status of the patient and the degree of impairment. The most important thing is to make an adequate assessment and choose the appropriate therapeutic program for the observed problem. The favorability and satisfaction of all respondents is evident. Further research is needed to broaden horizons and possibilities.

Keywords: telerehabilitation, elderly people, stroke, exercises, functionality

SCHOLARLY PANEL

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY¹

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Michael Burnard, Professor

Anna Sandak, Professor

Jakub Sandak, Professor

Miklos Kresz, Professor

Rok Prislan, Professor

University of Primorska, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The built environment plays a fundamental role in shaping societal wellbeing, influencing how people live, work, interact, and envision their collective future. This panel brings together experts from material science, advanced manufacturing, information technologies, acoustics, sustainability, and citizen science to explore how buildings and public spaces influence not only individual comfort but also community health, cohesion, and resilience. The discussion highlights evidence linking environmental qualities, such as daylight, air quality, and acoustic conditions, to human health, emotional balance, and social connectedness, reinforcing the need for design approaches that prioritize wellbeing. Citizen science will be presented as an important bridge between scientific research and lived experience, empowering residents to monitor and cocreate their environments while strengthening the relevance and inclusiveness of research on sustainable built environments. Within this context, the panel will also reflect on the values and working principles of the New European Bauhaus - Beautiful, Sustainable, Together, as the framework for renovation and transformation of the built environment. The discussion will explore how renovations and future buildings as well as public spaces can actively support biodiversity, social inclusion, and cultural enrichment. Finally, the panel will also address the emerging role of robotics and intelligent systems in shaping better built environments, from environmental monitoring and data-driven design to safer and more efficient construction and maintenance practices. By integrating these diverse perspectives, the panel aims to inspire new thinking about how the built environment can become a catalyst for healthier, more inclusive, and resilient societies.

Keywords: buildings, timber, sustainability, well-being, NEB

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

SCHOLARLY PANEL

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION AND THE ROLE OF SCIENTISTS IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Between scientific skepticism caused by fake news and alternative facts or trust crisis in science, discourses on the challenges of the relationship between democracy and science as well as polarization, science is facing increasing difficulties in the struggle for legitimacy and interpretive authority. Science communication, which is described in communication and media studies as "external" because it is aimed at a non-academic audience, is becoming a source of hope for understanding. It is significant that it is increasingly scientists themselves who, as ScienceFluencers, disseminate their research results beyond traditional forms of publication (Haken forthcoming) and are active on social media. This gives not only science communication, but above all the communicating scientists themselves, a transformative power on account of the numerous critical and crisis-ridden discourses. In my contribution, I would like to explore from a sociological of knowledge perspective how these processes of change are transforming communication in the field of science. Reflecting on a potential change in such a culturally and historically meaningful realm of society is a necessary undertaking, especially in the context of current multiple crises facing the global community.

Keywords: science communication, ScienceFluencer, sociology of knowledge

EMPOWERING THE VOICES OF CHILDREN WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DISORDERS IN EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SPACES

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the role of strategic communication management in the inclusion of children with special needs, particularly those with speech and language disorders, into social and educational processes. The starting point is the idea that communication is not just the transfer of information, but a strategic tool for empowerment and inclusion. The article presents models and approaches that enable the creation of environments where children's communication needs are recognized, understood, and supported, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration among professionals in the fields of speech therapy, communication management, and education. The aim is to show how strategic communication can contribute to the development of an empathetic and effective communication culture that promotes equal inclusion of children with speech and language disorders in the broader social discourse.

Keywords: strategic communication, communication management, inclusive communication, children with special needs, speech and language disorders

MONEY THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES: THE ROLE OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND THE SCREEN IN DEVELOPING FINANCIAL LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

Financial literacy in childhood represents a crucial foundation for later economic behavior, yet the question remains open: how do children truly understand money, and how is this understanding influenced by the digital age? The research aims to examine how children aged 6 to 15 conceptualize financial concepts and what sources and methods of learning they consider most important. A special focus is placed on the role of the family (conversations about money), school as a formal source of knowledge, and the influence of social networks and online content on children's understanding. The study uses a combined qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews with children and the draw-and-explain method (projective drawings). Drawings provide insight into how children think about money before they can verbalize it. Children are divided into two age groups (6–10 and 11–15 years) to capture important developmental differences. The data will be analyzed using content and thematic analysis to discover common and specific themes in children's narratives and drawings. Expected results indicate that younger children view money as a concrete object, while older children develop a more abstract, economic understanding. We also anticipate that digital media will have a strong influence on informal learning. The findings will offer insight into where educational gaps arise and how we can create better communication strategies for teaching children about money, thereby contributing to the design of more effective financial education.

Keywords: developmental financial literacy, financial socialization, digital financial socialization, money conceptualization, qualitative child research

FROM (IN)VISIBILITY TO AWARENESS: PUBLIC TRANSPORT HARASSMENT IN ZAGREB – DOCUMENTING THE PROBLEM AND ANALYZING THE 2025 CITY CAMPAIGN

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Lana Novoselac, Researcher

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women (physical, psychological, sexual and verbal) is on the rise, as evidenced by numerous devastating statistics. Experts believe that the real situation is much worse, since victims mostly remain silent and do not report the violence. There are multiple reasons for this: fear due to what they have experienced, shame and guilt, stigmatization by the community and the media, as well as distrust in institutions, all of which represent major obstacles in dealing with an unpleasant and often traumatic experience. At the same time, the increase of violence in society and the media's treatment of it can lead to desensitization of recipients, as well as the normalization of such a condition, which often manifests in the passivity of (co)participants in real-life situations. This is further supported by the increasing number of sexual harassment cases involving women and girls in Zagreb's public transport, whose traumatic experiences, shared in local neighbourhood groups on social networks or forums, are mostly published in local media or local columns. An invisible social issue is thus slowly becoming a news topic aimed at raising public awareness. In November 2025, the month dedicated to combating violence against women, the City of Zagreb, following the example of other European cities (London, Amsterdam, Vienna, Barcelona), and in cooperation with the Zagreb Electric Tram (ZET) and the Zagreb Police Department (PUZ), launched a communication campaign aimed at combating sexual harassment and violence against women. The main task is to help victims, but also to educate potential witnesses of the event and ensure safety in public transport. The aim of the paper is to provide a comparative overview of the Zagreb campaign on combating violence against women with previously implemented European campaigns in order to identify similarities and differences, and to determine recommendations for strengthening awareness on this topic. Furthermore, the second part of the paper presents a case study describing the implementation of the campaign (key messages, distribution channels and target audience).

Keywords: violence against women, victims, media, sexual harassment, public transport, campaign

CAN WE BRIDGE DIVIDES? STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND PATHWAYS TO DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE: DISCOURSE ON X DURING THE 2019 AND 2024 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN SLOVENIA

Luka Jesenšek, PhD

ABSTRACT

As digital platforms increasingly mediate public discourse, many believe that ideological fragmentation and echo chambers threaten inclusive democratic debate, contributing to increasingly divided society. Yet, such discussions often remain on a normative level, while most empirical research examines single time points in large countries, limiting understanding of polarization trajectories in smaller European democracies. This study analyses over 100,000 tweets from Slovenian political discourse during 2019 and 2024 European elections, examining community structure, information flows and temporal changes in network fragmentation. Results reveal deep ideological clustering in both periods with minimal cross-group interaction. Fragmentation intensified between election cycles, with network topology suggesting a shift from isolated echo chambers to broader „echo platform“ dynamics, where entire platforms function as ideological silos. Findings challenge optimistic assumptions about social media enabling dialogue and suggest structural barriers to cross-ideological deliberation. Findings inform recommendations for platforms, policymakers, and civil society; and provide baseline evidence for assessing how emerging AI technologies may further reshape fragmented digital public spheres. The results inform evidence-based interventions as pathways toward democratic resilience: algorithmic transparency, platform features and civic initiatives supporting deliberation; and invite critical reflection on how European regulatory frameworks correspond to the empirical reality of contemporary communication environment.

Keywords: political communication, polarization, public sphere, echo chambers, social media, X, Europe

VALUE-DRIVEN DIGITAL DIALOGUE OF GENERATION Z: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHICS, TRANSPARENCY, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

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Marta Skorić, Student

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z is increasingly taking on an active role in contemporary social processes, bringing strong expectations regarding ethics, transparency, and sustainability. This paper explores how Gen Z's communication patterns shape dialogue in the digital sphere, and how preferred social media platforms, interactive formats, and digital campaigns contribute to connecting academia, institutions, and the broader public, creating a value-driven dialogue characteristic of Generation Z. A particular emphasis is placed on Gen Z's ability to use digital tools to promote inclusive, fair, and socially conscious discourse, thereby contributing to the development of a sustainable and participatory communication culture grounded in shared values and collective meaning. The research is based on a qualitative approach that enables an in-depth understanding of the motivations, experiences, and value frameworks of young people in the digital environment. In the first phase, the study included three focus groups, each with five to six participants, aimed at analyzing group dynamics, shared interpretations of societal issues, and processes of collectively shaping communication narratives. In the second phase, three to five in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore individual perspectives and the emotional elements underlying young people's digital communication. The combination of these methods provided a comprehensive insight into the communication practices of Generation Z. The findings indicate that young people—through creativity, authenticity, and high levels of digital literacy—possess significant potential to redefine contemporary patterns of public communication and strengthen socially responsible dialogue.

Keywords: gen Z activism, value-driven dialogue, digital storytelling, online authenticity, participatory culture

CUSTOMER CENTRICITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

Customer centrality has long been a cornerstone of strategic marketing, yet the rapid spread of digital technologies, has significantly transformed its scope and practice. This paper provides an overview of the customer centrality literature and examines how digitalization has changed and expanded customer-centrality approaches, including personalization and hyper-personalization. As data-driven tools, algorithms and real-time analytics evolve, companies can predict customers' needs and create more tailored value propositions for their customers. Alongside these developments, influencers have emerged as key actors who bridge companies and customers by shaping perceptions, building trust and translating brand messages into relatable content. At the same time, influencers themselves adopt customer-centric strategies to better engage with their followers and how this engagement can also create parasocial relationship with them. In the second methodological part, the paper illustrates these dynamics through a detailed case study. The findings aim to contribute to the deeper understanding of customer centrality in the digital age and highlight how both companies and influencers can leverage these practices to better serve their customers and communities.

Keywords: customer-centrality, marketing, parasocial relationships, influencer, consumer behavior

FROM POLITICAL SATIRE TO ALLEGED HATE SPEECH: A DWORKINIAN ANALYSIS OF MLADINA D.D. LJUBLJANA V. SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

The case Mladina d.d. Ljubljana v. Slovenia (No. 2) provides a paradigmatic example of the tension between political satire and the tendency to interpret harsh political expression as morally unacceptable or even comparable to hate speech, revealing a discrepancy between national judicial reasoning and the interpretative approach adopted by the European Court of Human Rights. The paper analyses the case through the lens of Ronald Dworkin's theory of judicial decision-making, as explored in Law's Empire. Methodologically, the paper adopts a normative and interpretative approach, conceptualizing law as a normative phenomenon that actively shapes and responds to social dynamics. The paper argues that judicial sensitivity to allegedly hateful expression is inherently non-neutral: the boundaries between offensive and hateful speech shift depending on the social status of the expression's target, thereby exposing implicit value judgments within judicial reasoning. Through Dworkin's theory of law as integrity, the analysis demonstrates how the case of Mladina v. Slovenia enhances the coherence of European free speech doctrine by reconciling national adjudication with international human rights standards.

Keywords: freedom of expression, ECHR, Dworkin, pluralism, satire

FREEDOM AND ETHICS – BASIC POSTULATES OF RELIGIOUS CREATIVITY

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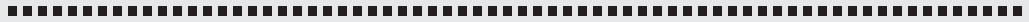
ABSTRACT

Ethical research is placed at the very foundation of religious communication and in that regard it must arrive at the essence of the creative potential because it represents depth and warmth of the spirit where both intellectual and spiritual effort come together without which there may not be soaring. Freedom of spirit and personal spirituality are the most efficient elements for improvement of not just individual but social life as well, for establishment of moral attitudes and values, development of cultural heritage and creation of an internal balance. Freedom of spirit and civilisation are not a privilege of a few members of society because culture and religion are not biologically transferrable complexes, there is not anyone at such a low level of cultural life who does not have some higher cultural pattern or even the very civilisation derived from religious and philosophical ideas available. If it is however necessary to speak in a manner which reduces the level, because it shall require "stooping" towards individuals or mobs and their cold minds, the conversation shall spread to them "down below" thanks to the influence left by freedom and civilisation. Freedom, being a need at the foundation of creative potential, in the process of religious communication, may never be too emphasized because origination of spirituality within a man, and its development depend a great deal on the freedom of spirit and thus we come to the conclusion: the more free one is the more one is independent within oneself and towards oneself and more understanding with others. In that regard, communication shall be directed to cooperation and joining with others, similar to oneself, since "only those who are similar may communicate."

Keywords: freedom, creation, ethics, society, religion, communication



PHYSIOTHERAPY



SCHOLARLY PANEL

IMPLEMENTATION OF SENSOR-BASED MONITORING AND VISUAL FEEDBACK TO ENHANCE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MOTIVATION IN OLDER ADULTS DURING AND AFTER HOSPITALIZATION: A MULTICENTER RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: One of the primary goals of physiotherapy for older adults is to restore functional levels lost during hospitalization, which often leads to declines in mobility and independence. The SENS4ME project was developed to address this issue by enhancing motivation for physical activity through digital technologies integrated into both inpatient and home-based rehabilitation. *Materials and Methods:* Patients admitted to the Geriatrics and Cardiothoracic Surgery units of Policlinico San Martino in Genoa were enrolled and randomized into two groups: a control group, monitored only through wearable sensors, and an intervention group, which received the same monitoring plus motivational feedback during hospitalization and, after discharge, an interactive pedal device to support home exercise. The Italian sample included 6 control participants and 5 intervention participants, with a mean age of 83.5 years (SD 7.74). The system delivered personalized prompts aimed at increasing engagement and adherence. Continuous sensor-based monitoring enabled clinicians and researchers to remotely track functional progress and identify early signs of reduced mobility, while caregivers could also follow the patient's activity. *Results and discussion:* Preliminary findings suggest that this technological and motivational approach can support improvements in mobility and functional recovery. However, in Italy many older adults showed reluctance toward digital tools, mainly due to limited familiarity with technology. This represents a challenge for implementation in the current population but may become more feasible for future generations. Strengthening digital literacy and designing user-friendly tools will be essential for successful adoption.

Keywords: bedrest, physical inactivity, hospitalisation, technology assisted physical activity, visual feedback

AGE-RELATED CHANGES IN COUNTERMOVEMENT JUMP PERFORMANCE AND KINEMATICS IN YOUNG BASKETBALL ATHLETES: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

Francesco Frontani, Lecturer
Alma Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Background: The purpose of this study is to investigate how jumping patterns evolve throughout the physical development of basketball players aged 13 to 16 years. Understanding these changes is crucial for performance evaluation and injury risk assessment in young athletes. *Material and methods:*

Jumping performance was assessed using video analysis and the OptoJump system during the Countermovement Jump (CMJ) test. Participants included male basketball players aged 13 to 16 years, categorised into age groups of 13, 14, 15, and 16 years. Key kinematic parameters were measured. Differences between adjacent age groups were assessed. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify significant factors contributing to jump performance. Results: Results indicated that from ages 14 to 15, players exhibited a decrease in ankle dorsiflexion, likely due to ankle plantar flexor stiffness and imbalances in muscle-tendon development. By age 16, however, athletes began to display a more consolidated jumping pattern, characterised by increased ankle dorsiflexion and reduced trunk involvement. In contrast, younger players relied more heavily on trunk movement and limited ankle dorsiflexion, likely as compensatory mechanisms for insufficient lower limb power. Logistic regression confirmed that knee and ankle dorsiflexion, along with knee valgus, significantly contributed to jump performance. *Conclusions:* This study highlights the importance of monitoring jumping kinematics in young basketball players to optimise performance and mitigate injury risks. Additionally, an interpretable machine learning model based on the Naive Bayes method was developed to predict jump performance in young athletes.

Keywords: jump, young athletes

ROLE OF THE BRAIN-DERIVED NEUROTROPHIC FACTOR (BDNF) IN NEUROGENESIS AFTER REHABILITATIVE TREATMENTS IN PATIENTS WITH NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Matilde Buffa, Student

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ABSTRACT

Neuroplasticity refers to the central nervous system's (CNS) ability to reorganize in response to internal and external stimuli. The Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) plays a key role in this process, enhancing neuronal survival, differentiation, and synaptic plasticity. Recent studies have shown that physical exercise and rehabilitative treatments can modulate BDNF levels, supporting functional recovery in patients with neurological disorders—both traumatic (e.g., stroke, spinal cord injury) and degenerative (e.g., Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis). This systematic review aimed to evaluate changes in BDNF levels following motor rehabilitation in adults with CNS disorders and identify which interventions most effectively boost its expression. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, studies were selected from PubMed and Cochrane databases. Inclusion criteria were adults (≥ 18 years) undergoing rehabilitative interventions with pre- and post-treatment assessments of BDNF and motor outcomes. The most effective interventions included high-intensity aerobic training (e.g., HIIT), aquatic therapy, combined aerobic-cognitive programs, exercise with vitamin D, and PNF after stroke. Low-intensity or short-duration protocols showed limited efficacy. Individual response was influenced by factors such as the Val66Met BDNF polymorphism. BDNF emerged as a promising, though variable, biomarker of neuroplastic changes and functional improvement.

Keywords: BDNF, neuroplasticity, rehabilitation, neurological disorders, exercise

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENT ON BALANCE DIFFICULTIES IN PATIENTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL COORDINATION DISORDER (DCD)

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ABSTRACT

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), also known as "clumsy child syndrome," is a common neurodevelopmental condition affecting approximately 5–6% of school-aged children with typical development. It is characterized by significant motor coordination difficulties that cannot be attributed to neurological, sensory, or cognitive impairments. One of the most affected domains in children with DCD is balance control, with prevalence estimates ranging from 73% to 87%. This represents a critical feature, as it increases the risk of falls, impairs motor and functional development, and limits participation in social activities. Reduced engagement, combined with awareness of one's own difficulties despite adequate cognitive abilities, can have negative repercussions on psychological well-being. Since DCD is a chronic condition that often persists into adulthood, early and targeted pediatric physiotherapy interventions are essential to improve outcomes related to balance and coordination development impairments. This systematic review aims to examine the effectiveness of physiotherapeutic interventions in enhancing balance coordination disorder in children with DCD, with the goal of supporting the development of personalized and comprehensive rehabilitation pathways. Improving balance through physiotherapy represents not only a motor objective but also a broader milestone for autonomy, emotional well-being, and full participation in the daily life of these children.

Keywords: balance coordination disorder, children, clumsy child syndrome, coordination development, pediatric physiotherapy

LAW & POLITICAL SCIENCE

EXPERT PANEL

PARLIAMENTS IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER: RENEWING DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY IN INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

PARLIAMENTS AS DEMOCRATIC ANCHORS OF MULTILATERALISM

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Senior Advisor, European Parliament

ABSTRACT

At the Alma Mater Europaea Conference 2026, the panel "Parliaments in a Changing Global Order" opened a timely discussion on the role of parliamentary institutions in strengthening the legitimacy of global governance. In his introductory intervention, Klemen Žumer (European Parliament) argued that while international decisions are predominantly negotiated by executive actors, their democratic legitimacy ultimately rests with representative institutions.

The presentation identified three structural gaps in current global governance: a legitimacy gap, as citizens often do not see how their representatives shape international decisions; an accountability gap, due to limited parliamentary oversight of international negotiations; and a sustainability gap, as shifts in executive leadership can weaken long-term commitments to multilateral cooperation.

Building on this analysis, the intervention advanced the hypothesis that parliaments can act as democratic anchors of multilateralism through three core functions: oversight of international commitments, budgetary support to multilateral institutions, and communication with citizens. Particular attention was given to the European Parliament as a unique supranational actor capable of linking domestic democratic processes with global governance.

The discussion highlighted a shared recognition among participants that strengthening the role of parliaments is both timely and necessary. The panel contributed to advancing the debate on how parliamentary institutions can support the resilience, legitimacy, and public trust of the multilateral system.

Keywords: parliaments, multilateralism, united nations, democratic legitimacy, european parliament

PARLIAMENTARY LEGITIMACY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN GLOBAL DECISION-MAKING

Alojz Peterle

The first Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Member of the European Parliament, and former Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The contribution presented at the Alma Mater Europaea Conference 2026 offers a political perspective on the role of parliaments in global governance, drawing on the experience of Alojz Peterle, former Prime Minister of Slovenia and former member of both the Slovenian and European Parliaments.

The contribution emphasizes that democratic legitimacy requires greater involvement of parliaments in international decision-making. It is argued that many critical decisions, including those related to war and peace, are often taken without sufficient parliamentary consultation, and that "many parliaments might not support certain wars if they were consulted," as they reflect the views of the citizens they represent.

Furthermore, the importance of budgetary authority is highlighted as a key leverage point through which parliaments can influence international cooperation. At the same time, the need for early and meaningful parliamentary engagement in international processes is stressed in order to ensure the long-term political sustainability of multilateral commitments.

The notion of "moral predictability" and responsibility is introduced, suggesting that democratic consultation strengthens both legitimacy and accountability. It is also noted that parliamentarians can contribute unique perspectives to international negotiations, often raising questions that diplomats cannot address.

Overall, the contribution underscores that parliamentary involvement must be substantive rather than symbolic, and that strengthening democratic participation is essential for the future credibility of the multilateral system.

Keywords: parliamentary democracy, multilateralism, accountability, political legitimacy, European governance

VISION AND OVERSIGHT: PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN MULTILATERAL GOVERNANCE

Toril-Iren Pedersen, Director

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ABSTRACT

United Nations Development Programme works with governments and parliaments in more than 170 countries, these questions about legitimacy, multilateralism and democratic accountability are not abstract. They play out every day in the functioning of institutions and in the relationship between citizens and the state. Bilateral and triangular cooperation between parliaments is important to strengthen capacity and facilitate learning. For parliaments to fully realise this role, sustained investment in their institutional, and oversight capacities is essential.

Parliaments play a central role in restoring democratic legitimacy in an increasingly complex global environment was emphasised. With the constitutional authority over legislation, budgets, and oversight parliaments are uniquely positioned to provide long-term national vision which global governance required.

The role of parliaments is central to bridging global ambition with national implementation and to renewing public trust in multilateral cooperation. Translating global commitments into national action through legislation, budget decisions, and policy oversight, this can benefit from being an iterative policy cycle in which global norms informed domestic priorities while national experiences fed back into global policymaking. This strengthens both the effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of multilateral processes. The unique position of the European parliament, as a supranational institution, has over time help raise the ambition level for global governance.

There is room for Parliaments to play a more proactive role in shaping national discourse leading up to global policy processes. By initiating early debates, commissioning analysis, and engaging citizens and experts, parliaments could help shape inclusive national positions and strengthen governments' negotiating mandates.

Keywords: democratic legitimacy, multilateralism, accountability

SCHOLARLY PANEL

AI AND THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: FROM CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES TO PLANETARY WELL-BEING

AI AND THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: FROM CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES TO PLANETARY WELL-BEING

Boldizsár Szentgáli-Tóth, Professor

Eötvös Loránd University, Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Legal Studies, Hungary

ABSTRACT

This panel examines the dual nature of artificial intelligence (AI) in environmental governance: AI as a practical enabler of environmental justice and rights-based decision-making, and AI as an emerging source of environmental risk through its energy, data, and infrastructure footprints.

Building on comparative research at the intersection of constitutional environmental rights, it explores how legal systems, institutions, and publics can harness AI to advance the right to a healthy environment while safeguarding planetary well-being and accelerating sustainable development.

The panel consists of experts in constitutional environmental law, AI governance, environmental science, and sustainability studies who will discuss three questions that cut across all of these fields. First, how does the growing ecological footprint of AI – energy-intensive model training, water use in data centres, critical mineral extraction for hardware, and rapidly expanding e-waste streams – intersect with the legal obligations emerging from constitutional environmental rights and international sustainability commitments? Second, in what ways can AI be designed, audited, and governed to support equitable access to environmental goods such as clean air, water, land, and energy, and to strengthen procedural environmental rights, including transparency and participation? Third, what legal tools and moral frameworks do we need to make sure that AI systems help, not hurt, the planetary systems that sustainable development depends on?

Together, these viewpoints surface a central paradox: AI is increasingly vital for biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and efficient resource stewardship, yet it can also intensify resource use and environmental harm. The panel proposes a portable governance and judicial-review toolkit that aligns AI development with planetary stewardship – translating principles into practical review questions and accountability mechanisms that judges, regulators, technologists, and civil society can apply in real cases.

Keywords: AI governance, right to a healthy environment, constitutional environmental law, sustainable development and planetary well-being, environmental impacts of AI

ASSESSING THE EU AI ACT: DOES IT SUFFICIENTLY ADDRESS THE ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS AND ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Neringa Gaubiene, Professor
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ABSTRACT

The EU Artificial Intelligence Act represents a significant milestone in the regulation of AI, introducing a comprehensive risk-based framework aimed at safeguarding fundamental rights, health, safety and, to some extent, the environment. While the Act acknowledges environmental protection as a regulatory objective, its primary focus remains on human-centric risks rather than the ecological footprint of AI systems.

AI technologies offer notable benefits for environmental sustainability, including climate modelling, energy optimisation and biodiversity monitoring. However, their development and deployment are resource-intensive, requiring substantial computational power that leads to high energy consumption, increased carbon emissions and growing environmental impact. These lifecycle effects—from data processing to model training and infrastructure use—pose tangible ecological risks.

Despite these concerns, the AI Act only partially addresses environmental issues. As noted in recent scholarship, including concept of "green blind spots," the regulation does not comprehensively tackle the environmental impacts across the AI lifecycle. Similarly, it is highlighted that existing sustainability provisions rely largely on voluntary codes of conduct rather than binding legal obligations for AI providers.

Although the AI Act is an important step toward trustworthy AI governance, it falls short of fully integrating environmental considerations. Significant regulatory gaps remain, particularly regarding enforceable measures to mitigate AI's ecological footprint. This suggests a need for future EU digital governance frameworks to more incorporate environmental sustainability as a core regulatory pillar.

Keywords: artificial intelligence regulation, EU AI Act, environmental sustainability, ecological footprint, digital governance

AI, ENVIRONMENTAL LIMITS AND JUSTICE: ASSESSING DIGITAL INNOVATION BEYOND PLANETARY BOUNDARIES²

Leila Neimane, leading researcher

Institute of Legal Science, Faculty of Law, University of Latvia

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI)'s ability to maximise resource allocation opens up new opportunities for environmental justice. However, the functioning of this tool is energy-intensive, resulting in increased ecological footprint and distributional consequences. Against this background, this study examines the tension between AI growth and the need to adhere to environmental constraints in order to ensure the protection of the right to the environment at the same time. Against this background, the study questions whether current legal and governance frameworks are able to offer solutions where it is necessary to regulate the environmental impact of AI, taking into account what are known as planetary boundaries.

To address this question, the study first develops a conceptual framework linking AI innovation, environmental limits, environmental justice, and governance. Second, it employs a multidisciplinary approach combining conceptual analysis with a comparative legal perspective. Third, it investigates how constitutional environmental law, regulatory instruments, and judicial mechanisms can be employed to assess the AI-related environmental harms. In this context, the discussion is further informed by the ongoing AQUA4DEV-BS project on inland aquaculture in the Baltic States, providing a practical context in which emerging decision-support tools illustrate both the opportunities to improve sustainability and the importance of remaining within ecological constraints.

The results uncover a governance gap: current AI regulation primarily focuses on data protection, security, and market concerns, but fails to sufficiently integrate environmental constraints. The study contends that embedding planetary boundaries into AI governance is crucial to align technological progress with environmental sustainability and justice.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, planetary boundaries, environmental justice, aquaculture, AI governance

2 Acknowledgement: This work is an output of the research project and has been financially supported by the activity 1.1.1.9 "Post-doctoral research" of the Specific Objective 1.1.1 "Strengthening research and innovative capacities and introduction of advanced technologies in the common R&D system" of the European Union's Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021-2027 research application No. 1.1.1.9/LZP/2/25/218 "Potential of traditional and recirculation inland aquaculture for inclusive and intelligent fisheries development in the Baltic States (AQUA4DEV-BS)."

OLD AND NEW PRINCIPLES FOR A BETTER HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIP

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University of Parma, Italy

Kristóf Fenyvesi, Professor
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

ABSTRACT

We face accelerating global change in both nature and the society. One strategy to approach the related challenges is to develop a systems perspective, focusing on interactions and networks, integrating data and novel algorithms. The role of diversity and variability is crucial to adaptability of ecosystems but real understanding and really applicable strategies should consider functional diversity. Indirect effects, feedbacks, redundancy and switching among alternative states are key elements of a functional system view. We extend this view to socio-ecological systems, considering carrying capacity, consumption, ecological footprints. Within such systems, adaptation depends not only on ecological dynamics but also on the capacity of societies to learn, relearn, and sometimes unlearn practices and assumptions that undermine long-term sustainability. The final conclusions will reflect on the role of education cultivating systemic thinking and transformative learning processes supporting a better harmony between Man and the Biosphere.

Keywords: systems ecology, interactions, networks, socio-ecological systems

SCHOLARLY PANEL

LAW

EXPLORING AN AI-DRIVEN SOLUTION FOR ANALYSING THE CONSULTATION RESULTS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Nikolaos Archontas, PhD Candidate

Stakeholder Consultation Expert, Better Regulation Horizontal Coordinator, European Commission

ABSTRACT

The European Commission's Better Regulation framework fosters evidence-based policymaking through evaluation, impact assessment, and stakeholder consultation. Yet, the sheer volume, multilingualism, and diverse formats of contributions on the "Have Your Say" portal create significant analytical and resource challenges for Directorates-General. This study investigates how AI-driven tools can support the efficient, reliable, and effective analysis of consultation data, addressing both a pressing operational need and a research gap at the intersection of AI, stakeholder engagement, and policy analysis. Its findings are relevant not only for public consultations but also for targeted consultations and internal staff-related surveys, as well as for public administrations in liberal democracies at multiple governance levels. Employing a qualitative use study methodology grounded in the CRISP-DM process model, the research draws on documentary analysis and expert interviews to identify institutional, methodological, technical, and operational requirements for AI adoption. The output is a conceptual prototype integrating sentiment analysis, summarisation, clustering, and multilingual processing, designed to assess benefits and limitations in a controlled setting. Academically, the study operationalises Large Language Model capabilities for governance, advancing AI-for-governance research. Practically, it demonstrates potential to reduce analysis time, support evidence-based policymaking, and enhance transparency and trust, illustrating how advanced AI tools can enable inclusive, efficient, and accountable policymaking processes.

Keywords: policymaking, transparency, stakeholder consultation, AI-driven solution, natural language processing

COMMON CIVIL PROCEDURE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Ieva Čudina, Lecturer
University of Latvia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the law is to guarantee the freedom, equality, security, and happiness of all people, and everyone may defend their rights and lawful interests in a fair court. A fair trial includes a positive obligation on the state not only to establish and maintain the institutional infrastructure necessary for the realization of it, but also to promulgate and implement legal norms that guarantee that the procedure itself is fair and objective. Fair trial encompasses an aspect of independent judicial authority that hears the case, and a proper process in accordance with the rule of law in which the case is examined. The general concept of the European Union is expected to ensure the right to a fair trial as the highest goal of justice, manifested in the harmonization of civil procedure rules throughout the European Union.

Keywords: European Union, court, civil procedure, property rights, harmonization of laws

STUDENT PANEL

REIMAGINING LAW FOR A POSTHUMAN ERA: AI, LEGAL SUBJECTIVITY, AND LEGAL INFORMATION

Karisma Jaykant, PhD

Asia School of Business, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The posthumanist theories of Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway are transformative paradigms that challenge the traditional notion of humans as unified, autonomous, and self-contained. This radical shift in perspective necessitates a reevaluation of legal frameworks, emphasising that technology is not just an external tool but an integral part of the ever-evolving relationships between humans, animals, and machines. From this posthumanist perspective, there is a radical reimagining of legal information in its content, form, function, and knowledge base. AI is not just a tool for increasing efficiency in legal systems, but a force that directly shapes individual legal statuses. AI is currently being integrated into legal systems, including Technology Assisted Review (TAR) for large-scale discovery, Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) for managing claims, and the automation of administrative tasks like e-filing and case triaging to increase efficiency. Tools such as COMPAS risk assessments in sentencing and AI-driven litigation outcome predictors exemplify the consequential influence of AI on legal decision making. Normative boundaries are sensed, cognitively internalised, and enacted by AI-driven architectures in legal information systems. Such boundaries are what is referred to as 'embedded legal consciousness', a concept that suggests that the subject (the AI system in this regard) has internalised law, turning it from external regulation into AI's internal logic, which is precisely where H.L.A. Hart's concept of the „internal point of view“ acquires renewed relevance. This shift redefines law as a co-evolving epistemic architecture, where meaning is modulated across hybrid posthuman agents.

Keywords: law, artificial intelligence, posthumanism

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HUMANITIES

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NEW RENAISSANCE

SCHOLARLY PANEL

THE NEW RENAISSANCE: A MARIBOR SYNTHESIS

Howie Firth, Director
Orkney International Science Festival, Scotland

ABSTRACT OF THE PANEL

This session with nine speakers converged on the need for a Renaissance-scale transformation of human thought. The context: today's global situation, with interacting problems too complex for simple technical solutions. We need an integral approach, bringing in culture and nature (Dr Darja Piciga). For much-needed morality and ethics, AI has limits: we must look to humans and education (Dr Samuel Abraham). Philosophical foundations help us think about Europe – viewed by Jan Patočka as something historical and spiritual that emerged in ancient Greece with the invention of philosophy. Visualising its future requires going deeper than institutions or economics – to something fundamental: openness to truth (Dr Luka Trebežnik). The human identity question goes beyond individual autonomy or group membership – to planetary consciousness, including the natural world (Prof. Matej Makarovič). Recognising our interdependence leads to the “expanded human” – moving from a war on living things like microbes to recognising mutual benefits (Prof. Rachel Armstrong). The Renaissance saw knowledge for the common good (Dr Raffaella Santi). It opened horizons for science and voyages of discovery; but each turned into dominance, of other cultures and other fields of study. We need a new balance, seeing ourselves not as mastering the world but managing it (Dr Igor Škamperle). This leads to huge practical challenges of war and peace; we heard of the developing Peace Offensive involving Alma Mater European University and the World Academy of Art and Science (Donato Kiniger Passigli). Images of beauty, restoration of women Renaissance artists' works, rounded off the afternoon (Jane Adams).

THE NEW RENAISSANCE – FROM REVITALIZED VALUES TOWARDS THE WISDOM-DRIVEN SOCIETIES

Peter Volasko, Expert

Science Directorate, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Massive global problems interlinked into a complex polycrisis which is not solvable individually. A group of enthusiastic researchers, thinkers and other engaged individuals have come together to further develop the inspiration and vision of the Renaissance and develop ideas for a transformation of our societies according to a concept we call "The New Renaissance".

Humans can rise as well as fall as Pico della Mirandola rightly pointed out almost 600 years ago. Therefore at our panel we will address several issues as: global peace initiatives based on European Renaissance and humanistic values, the revitalization of Renaissance and Humanistic values as a basis for more ethical policies, sustainable societal solutions and decision-making, the importance of excellent knowledge that has to be shared openly and freely, science diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and a new way of the humane living in the built environment. We will also touch upon the future of education in the age of IG or AGI, integral and sustainable Green Europe based on Renaissance and humanistic values, the promises and challenges of individualisation and universalism, Europe as a frame for a spiritual care, the Renaissance as the "Unfinished Morning" and the important role of female artists in Renaissance and nowadays in creating beautiful art.

Keywords: New Renaissance, humanistic values, sustainable societies, science and cultural diplomacy

NEW RENAISSANCE AND PEACE

Donato Kiniger-Passigli, Vice-President
World Academy of Art and Science

ABSTRACT

Peace is not a passive state but an active and deliberate project that must be thoughtfully constructed. The Global Peace Offensive, developed in collaboration with the World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS), Alma Mater Europaea, and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA), exemplifies such an approach. It seeks to mobilize scientific expertise, academic institutions, and cultural and civic actors in order to establish a global movement for peace grounded in knowledge, ethics, and human dignity.

An important step in this direction is the establishment of the Global Peace Offensive Centre (GPOC) in Maribor, inaugurated on September 26, 2025. The Centre serves as a hub for research, dialogue, and coordination, facilitating collaboration among international stakeholders.

Peace is a collective moral responsibility—"a civilizational choice and not the absence of war." It cannot simply be hoped for, nor does it arise automatically from economic growth or political stability, but must be actively built through diplomacy, scientific cooperation, cultural dialogue, and shared ethical commitment. At the same time, history appears to be accelerating, increasing the risks of conflict escalation, geopolitical miscalculation, and technological misuse, while rendering traditional diplomatic approaches insufficient.

Scientists, artists, and intellectuals play a crucial role in shaping public discourse. Scientific evidence can counter misinformation, while cultural diplomacy can build trust. Peace efforts must therefore extend beyond governments and involve broader coalitions across society.

Contemporary crises—environmental, geopolitical, and technological—are deeply interconnected. Climate change exacerbates conflict, while technological disruption contributes to instability. Technology itself is a double-edged force: it can intensify polarization and manipulation, but it can also support peacebuilding if guided by ethical frameworks and responsible leadership.

The pursuit of peace is finally linked to the idea of a "New Renaissance," understood as a renewal of humanistic values. As in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, humanity must be brought back "at the centre of the ring," with science as a "mental art" and art as a form of knowledge. Reintroducing dignity, beauty, and humanism into public life is thus presented as essential for fostering trust, cooperation, and overcoming contemporary fragmentation.

Keywords: Global Peace Offensive, peacebuilding, ethical responsibility, interdisciplinary cooperation

THINK DEEPLY. ACT ETHICALLY. LEAD COURAGEOUSLY

Andraž Ivšek

Slovenian Scientific Foundation

ABSTRACT

We stand at a civilizational crossroads where technological capacity outpaces moral judgment and vast information masks a profound loss of direction where humanity is heading. The speech proposes "The New Renaissance" as a decisive response to the global crisis of environmental decay, geopolitical instability, challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other challenges the humanity is facing today. Drawing inspiration from the humanist traditions of Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, the discussion posits that global challenges cannot be solved through isolated actions, but require a comprehensive transformation of social consciousness. One of the main ideas for this transformation is the "Fifth Freedom" the free flow of excellent knowledge and researchers. In this way science can serve humanity rather than institutional or political interests. The speech explores the role of scientific and cultural diplomacy as "soft power" essential for proactive peacemaking. By integrating humanistic understanding with empirical evidence, global academies can act as strategic de-escalators of conflict as was presented by The WAAS-EASA Global Peace Offensive. Ultimately, the New Renaissance calls for a macro-economic and social model rooted in human dignity, beauty, ethics and other New Renaissance values. The speech concludes that by placing science and art at the center of public life, we can move beyond the apathy toward a sustainable and enlightened future, with a "dawn" of collective responsibility for generations to come.

Keywords: the New Renaissance, New Renaissance values science diplomacy, fifth freedom, ethical AI, WAAS-EASA Global Peace Offensive

AN INTEGRAL GREEN EUROPE AS A WAY TO HONOR AND RENEW THE RENAISSANCE SPIRIT: INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVES AND POTENTIALS ON A PATH OF SUSTAINABILITY

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Integral Green Slovenia

Center for Emeritus Professors and Retired Higher Education Teachers of the University of Maribor

ABSTRACT

The Integral Worlds paradigm by Lessem & Schieffer is a transcultural and transdisciplinary conceptual framework and process, geared to holistically and in a transformative way address the burning issues of our time while building developmental models on specific culture of each individual society. It emphasizes dynamic balance among the integrating and inspiring centre (often fundamental values, the moral core) and four mutually reinforcing dimensions: Nature & Community (South), Culture & Consciousness / Spirituality (East), Science, Knowledge & Systems (North) and Economy & Enterprise (West).

The proposal for an Integral Green Europe smartly integrates the many EU potentials for sustainable development (including key strategies and frameworks), from the European Green Deal and knowledge base by the European Environment Agency to GreenComp, the European sustainability competence framework. Furthermore, to actualize the vision of the integral societal economic renewal (well-being / good life for all and well-preserved healthy natural environment) in a Renaissance mode, this initiative: base development on nature and the community; authentically builds on European culture(s) as well as recognizes contributions of other cultures; revisits the economic paradigm - to rebuild the future of Europe's economy on the wealth of integral impulses from all spheres and sectors of society, promote various economic approaches and paths to sustainability; connects and upgrades a number of European integral green practices; helps Europe to become aware that "Integral Age" and "Societal Renaissance" are emerging in other cultures, too, and to support such integral impulses in developing countries.

Keywords: *Integral Words, Integral Green Europe, sustainable development, smart integration, EU policies*

FLORENCE, THE RENAISSANCE OLD AND NEW: REDISCOVERY, GENDER, AND THE RENEWAL OF CULTURAL MEMORY

Jane Adams, Art Curator

Historian and CEO of Artemisia Gold Company, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This contribution examines the Renaissance as both a historical epoch and a contemporary paradigm of cultural renewal, focusing on the city of Florence as a privileged site of artistic, intellectual, and spiritual transformation. It outlines the key characteristics of the Florentine Renaissance (14th–16th centuries), including the revival of classical antiquity, the emergence of humanism, and innovations in artistic technique such as perspective and naturalism. Particular attention is given to the institutional and patronage structures—especially the Medici family and religious communities such as the Convent of San Marco—that enabled artistic production and shaped the cultural landscape.

At the same time, the contribution critically revisits the dominant historiography of the Renaissance by foregrounding the contributions of women, whose roles as artists, patrons, and intellectual agents have often been marginalized. The case of Plautilla Nelli serves as a central example of female artistic agency within the constraints of convent life, illustrating both the possibilities and limitations of women's participation in Renaissance culture.

The contribution further engages with contemporary efforts of recovery and reinterpretation, particularly through the work of organizations such as Artemisia Gold CIC, which seek to restore, research, and recontextualize neglected artistic legacies. In this sense, the contribution proposes the notion of a “new Renaissance” as an ongoing process of rediscovery that challenges established narratives and expands the canon of art history.

Ultimately, the contribution argues that the recovery of overlooked figures is not merely corrective but transformative, offering a more comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage and the dynamics of historical memory.

Keywords: renaissance, Florence, cultural memory, female artists, Plautilla Nelli

THE PROMISSES AND CHALLENGES OF INDIVIDUALISATION AND UNIVERSALISM

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Faculty of Information Studies in Novo mesto, Slovenia

Slovenian National Committee of the MOST programme at UNESCO

ABSTRACT

The renaissance has provided a major cultural basis for the two long-term trends characterising modernisation: the rise of individual autonomy and the rise of universalism. The latter can be seen as applying of the same norms, rights, principles as demanded for "us" to the increasing range of "others". Both trends, however, have required reconciliation with collective belongings. Studies by Strauss and Howe, Bréchon, Foley, Grant, Sadowski and others indicate a recent shift from excessive individualism to (re)affirmations of various collective loyalties. However, when these collective loyalties are defined too narrowly, they are also undermining the trend towards universalism, re-emphasising the us-them distinction. A possible reconciliation between individual autonomy, collective loyalties and universalism can be found in the notion of planetary consciousness. This notion implies an all-inclusive community of humanity and nature – bridging the us-them divide among people as well as the separation of humanity from nature as noted in research by Golob and Makarovič. It thus addresses both increasing conflicts in the contemporary world and the unsustainable consequences of the prevailing anthropocentric perspective. The emotional and mythological aspects of belonging to the planet, however, need to be combined with critical reflexive deliberations.

Keywords: individualisation, universalism, planetary consciousness, reflexivity

RENAISSANCE VIRTUES AND VALUES. A MESSAGE FOR TODAY

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ABSTRACT

What can we learn from Renaissance philosophy? Among many things, we can learn the very idea of building a human-centred society, where knowledge, wisdom and education are at the core of a scientific development having as primary end the common good. What are those virtues and values that, being recovered from the writings of ancient philosophers, were highlighted and reinterpreted by Renaissance thinkers, and can still be meaningful for us today?

We find particularly interesting the four "cardinal virtues" emerging from Plato's Republic – Wisdom, Justice, Courage (also referred to Fortitude) and Temperance (Self-control) – together with the overall sense of the dialogue, pointing directly to "the idea of the Good". Those virtues and values, reconsidered and relaunched by Renaissance thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, Baldassar Castiglione, Stefano Guazzo, Erasmus, Montaigne and others, were also depicted in the form of powerful "philosophical images", which embellished buildings and rooms, such as Lorenzetti's Allegories of Good and Bad Government (Palazzo pubblico of Siena); Pinturicchio's Allegory of Virtue (Duomo of Siena) and Correggio's Allegories of Virtue or Sapience and of Vice painted for the Studiolo of Isabella of Este.

The dichotomy of virtue and vice, which pervades those images, as well as the writings of many philosophers, makes clear that the choice of living a good life instead of a bad life and, in the case of rulers, the choice of helping to construct a harmonious, peaceful and just society instead of the opposite (good government versus tyranny) is an entirely human choice. What message could be more important for us today?

Keywords: renaissance values, virtue, vice, good government, bad government

EUROPE AS CARE FOR THE SOUL

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Alma Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The Czech philosopher Jan Patočka viewed Europe as a spiritual project, rooted in care for the soul (epimeleia tēs psychēs). For him, Europe is not a geographical or political entity, but a historical and spiritual formation that arose in ancient Greece with the invention of philosophy, stemming from an awareness of the problematic nature of existence and the radical questioning of truth, justice, and responsibility.

Patočka's diagnosis of a "post-European" state, in which organizational and technical logic prevail over existential reflection and create an increasingly fragmented world, confronts us with the crucial task of renewing the fundamental attitude of the spirit. In this context, the new Renaissance means the rehabilitation of humanistic thinking as a critical force within a digital, globalized civilization. It must be understood as a practice of vigilance: the cultivation of reflection, dialogue, and ethical responsibility. Care for the soul becomes care for the common world (polis)—for the conditions of meaning, solidarity, and freedom. The new Renaissance thus calls for the reunification of philosophy, art, and science, so that technological progress does not replace the question of the good life, but accompanies it.

The future of Europe is not secured by institutions or economics, but by maintaining a spiritual attitude – openness to truth through self-examination and public debate that enables critical self-reflection and responsible action. In this sense, Patočka's thought can serve as a starting point for the humanities as a normative compass for contemporary civilization.

Keywords: Europe, philosophy, care for the soul, responsibility, Jan Patočka

THE CRISIS OF THE MODERN WORLD AND POSSIBLE PATHS OF RENEWAL - RENAISSANCE TODAY

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ABSTRACT

Western civilization is in crisis. It raises the question of how to shape a planetary consciousness. As Europeans we want to contribute to finding solutions. Technological and social innovations are so rapid today that it is impossible to predict how humanity will develop in the coming decades. Renaissance can help us understand the contemporary situation of society and man. It can help us to raise human consciousness with societal responsibility to the planetary level. Our problems today are of course very different. Our task therefore is how to act so that a mature, dignified day emerges from the "Renaissance morning"! Numerous transformations of modern society in the 20th century were primarily transformations of the imagination. Historical narratives rely on descriptions of important events, such as wars, social conflicts, conquests, technical innovations and great cultural creations. The new technological paradigm and forms of communication are directing a great collective transformation of the social imagination. Today, in the transition from a bipolar world to a multipolar planetary society, a broader paradigm shift is being manifested in conflicting forms: the transition from real reality to virtual, from human to post-human in the form of artificial intelligence, from democratic sovereignty to a controlled society and from individual freedom to greater adaptability. In Renaissance man first became aware of the great complexity of living beings and the world in his spiritual development. Should "having" or "being" be in the foreground? The difference from Renaissance today is that we should recognize that we are not masters of the world, but we only manage it. We coexist with other beings, and we are also responsible for them! The Renaissance achieved its supreme creations in art and culture, and in science and technology. Let us preserve the value of individual crafts, let us strive for the quality of existence and the world of objects, let us seek an appeal to the spiritual and aesthetic. In Renaissance man did discover new continents, but in order to dominate them. The denial of the broad complexity of phenomena in society and nature leads to tyranny. Today, we are called to responsibly overcome these forms of rational tyranny. Marx once got angry at philosophers for only interpreting the world in many ways instead of trying to change it. Let's turn it around so that when we look at the Renaissance, we say: we don't always have to forcefully change the world. Let's try to understand it first.

Keywords: Western civilization, planetary consciousness, Renaissance, social imagination, technological transformation

SCHOLARLY PANEL

ART AND HEALTH: IVAN ČOBAL'S "BLUE WALL" AT THE MARIBOR UNIVERSITY CLINICAL CENTRE AS A TESTAMENT TO HUMAN-CENTERED HEALTHCARE ARCHITECTURE

Mojca Ramšak, Professor
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Ivan Čobal's 1959 ceramic and metal relief „Times Were Better Once“ (Nekoč so bili boljši časi) at Maribor University Clinical Centre as a pioneering example of art-architecture integration in healthcare environments. The 3.4 x 16-meter blue wall presents a visual narrative of the patient journey—from community admission through treatment to recovery—using modernist and symbolic elements that emphasize both medical efficiency and human compassion. Through analysis of the mural's iconography, including the Maribor coat of arms, patient transport imagery, abstract surgical theater, recovery symbolism, and medical emblems, this study reveals how public art can embody institutional values while fostering psychological well-being. The work demonstrates early recognition of art's therapeutic potential in clinical settings, predating contemporary evidence-based design principles by decades.

Čobal's integration of local identity (community self-funding of the hospital) with universal healthcare themes creates a model for place-based institutional art that serves both aesthetic and functional purposes. The wall's enduring presence over six decades illustrates how thoughtfully designed public art becomes integral to institutional memory and patient experience. This case study contributes to understanding how visual culture intersects with healthcare delivery, offering insights for contemporary discussions about humanistic approaches to medical architecture and the role of public intellectuals in shaping healing environments that honor both scientific advancement and human dignity.

Keywords: public art, healthcare architecture, therapeutic environment, institutional identity, medical humanities, medical heritage

THE DROPOUT PHENOMENON IN HUMANITIES AND TECHNICAL FIELDS OF STUDY IN CONTEXT OF THE STATE'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY – THE CASE STUDY OF POLAND IN COMPARISON TO OTHER EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

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University of Lodz, Poland

Dawid Stawski, Professor
Lodz University of Technology, Poland

ABSTRACT

The aim of the presentation is to show, based on the conducted query, the phenomenon of dropout in Polish higher education, with particular emphasis on humanities and technical fields, as well as to analyse the impact of the state's educational policy on the scale and nature of this process. The systemic conditions, reasons for discontinuing studies, and the social and economic consequences are discussed. The presentation will also highlight the challenges and recommendations regarding actions that should be taken by educational institutions and public authorities to reduce the phenomenon of dropout. The negative effects of the phenomenon on the state education system, universities, prospective students, and those leaving the system have been analysed. Positive effects of the phenomenon on the individual fates of particular people were also considered. To achieve the stated goal, the following research methods were used: analysis and critique of literature, media content analysis, and case study. In order to conduct a query on the selected topic regarding its historical and terminological treatment, a diverse range of subject literature was used, as well as the following information sources: selected publicly available full-text scientific databases (including BazHum, CEJSH, CEON Biblioteka Nauki), catalogs of the National Library in Warsaw and the University of Łódź Library, Google Scholar search engine, social media platforms (such as LinkedIn, ResearchGate), theses, and other scholarly and popular works concerning the fates of graduates from selected programs at two universities: the University of Łódź (Poland) and the Łódź University of Technology (Poland)

Keywords: dropout, university, study

SOCIAL CAPITAL OF PHD HOLDERS IN THE CROATIAN ACADEMIC CONTEXT: THE ROLE OF SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

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Gyne Solutions, Croatia

Miroslav Rajter, Professor
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law, Croatia

ABSTRACT

Social capital represents a key resource in the academic community, facilitating knowledge exchange, career advancement, and scientific productivity. However, the distribution of this capital is often uneven and may depend on a range of personal and social factors. The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between the level and structure of social capital among PhD holders in the Republic of Croatia and their socio-demographic characteristics. The research was conducted using a survey method on a convenience sample of 447 participants employed at universities in the Republic of Croatia. The analysis encompasses a wide spectrum of predictors, including gender, age, scientific field, geographical work location, and academic rank. Special emphasis is placed on the private sphere and family status, examining the role of marital status, parenthood, and grandparent status (having grandchildren) in the formation and maintenance of professional networks. The paper will present results indicating whether statistically significant differences in social capital exist regarding the aforementioned variables. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of networking dynamics in Croatian science and offer insight into how life stages and demographic profiles shape the social resources of scientists.

Keywords: social capital, PhD holders, scientists, Croatia, university

A TEMPLATE FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENT ADVOCACY: THE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS OF FIRST-WAVE ABOLITIONISM

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ABSTRACT

After the Royal African Company's monopoly ended in 1712, Britain rapidly became the Atlantic world's dominant slave-trading power. Nonetheless, Parliament voluntarily ended this profitable system by passing the 1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the culmination of a vigorous abolitionist campaign led by William Wilberforce and others. Britain's emergence as the leading abolitionist force was far from predetermined. Other nations had strong philosophical critiques of slavery, and Britain risked major commercial losses. Abolition succeeded partly because of contingency—such as the persuasive testimony of Olaudah Equiano and Thomas Clarkson's early moral conviction—but also because British advocates made shrewd strategic and tactical choices. They first focused on the slave trade, rather than slavery itself; used graphic narratives, images, and firsthand accounts to make distant suffering vivid; emphasized how the trade degraded British sailors and merchants; seized unexpected legal opportunities to challenge slave-trading practices; and created simple forms of mass participation. Together, these strategies and tactics forged a powerful model of human rights advocacy that offers guidance for those currently seeking peace and justice in our fractured world.

Keywords: British abolitionism, human rights advocacy, strategic activism, public mobilization

ENDANGERED RURAL BUILT HERITAGE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines public participation in the preservation of endangered rural built heritage in Slovenia. It is based on the observation that many rural heritage buildings are exposed to deterioration due to the abandonment of traditional uses, demographic changes, and limited financial resources. Formal heritage protection mechanisms often prove insufficient, making public involvement crucial in the early stages of identifying heritage values, initiating protection procedures, and seeking sustainable preservation solutions. The paper analyses various forms of public participation, including local initiatives, volunteer work, involvement in decision-making processes, and civic actions such as petitions. Although petitions have no direct legal force, they play an important role in raising public awareness, exerting pressure on decision-makers, and integrating heritage protection into a broader social context. The paper concludes that the long-term preservation of rural built heritage is most successful where local communities actively recognise, co-shape, and safeguard heritage as an integral part of their identity.

Keywords: built heritage, rural areas, endangered heritage, public participation, civic initiatives, petitions, heritage conservation

FROM BRAIN DRAIN TO DIGITAL GAIN? EXPLORING OUTSOURCING AS AN ALTERNATIVE

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ABSTRACT

As digital infrastructures proliferate, online platforms increasingly decouple work from place, offering residents of high-unemployment countries access to global labor markets without migrating. Focusing on North Macedonia and Kosovo, this study investigates whether digitally mediated outsourcing can function as a credible alternative to emigration or merely a short-term adjustment mechanism. Grounded in human capital, job-search, and push-pull migration frameworks, we examine how individual characteristics (e.g., education, age, gender, digital skills), country-level conditions (economic stability, governance quality, institutional support, internet readiness), and socio-psychological factors (family and social ties, perceived quality of life) jointly shape choices between domestic remote work and migration. A mixed-methods design integrates a representative cross-sectional survey with semi-structured interviews. Quantitatively, logistic regression and structural equation modeling test direct and mediated pathways from perceived availability of digital outsourcing to intentions to work remotely at home and to migrate abroad. Qualitatively, thematic analysis of interviews contextualizes mechanisms behind observed patterns, including perceived opportunity, security, and life-course considerations. The study contributes empirically by isolating the heterogeneous effects of platform-enabled opportunities on employment and migration intentions in post-transition European economies; analytically by modeling interactions between micro-level capacities and macro-institutional conditions; and practically by informing policies on digital skills, remote-work infrastructure, and fair platform labor standards. By clarifying when and for whom digital outsourcing substitutes for, complements, or delays emigration, the research offers actionable insights for human-capital retention and inclusive growth strategies in the Western Balkans.

Keywords: digital outsourcing, remote work, migration intentions, Western Balkans, North Macedonia, Kosovo, platform labor

INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE AND YOUTH CLIMATE MOVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Our paper explores the concept of intergenerational justice within the context of climate change and highlights the emerging role of youth activism as a driving force behind this shift in political consciousness. A new sense of moral urgency is shaping climate discourse, where demands for justice extend across time and geography. The paper examines how young people are responding to perceived political inaction by mobilising globally, reframing climate change as a question of rights, fairness, and solidarity. It also considers the cultural and structural transformations enabled by this activism, including new forms of civic engagement, educational reform, and the growth of cosmopolitan environmental values. The analysis focuses on how intergenerational justice is not only a critique of past actions related to climate change but also a call for systemic change through activism and reform.

Keywords: climate justice, social justice, youth, climate change, intergenerational justice

DR. MIRAN ERIČ: TRIBUTE TO HIS LIFE ACHIEVEMENTS AND DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This presentation is dedicated to our dear colleague Dr. Miran Erič, who studied as a PhD student at Alma Mater Europaea, Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, and unfortunately left our world unexpectedly, just shortly before the defense of his doctoral dissertation. Nevertheless, he completely finished and submitted the entire paper and received a posthumous doctorate afterwards. Dr. Miran Erič was a unique person and scientist: an academic painter, underwater archaeologist, conservator, diver, and cave explorer. The combination of these specific interests and skills led him to many important discoveries. Therefore, the aim of this presentation is to acknowledge his considerable achievements. Likewise, his doctoral dissertation „Visual Expression and Creation in Archaeology, Presented and Analysed Based on the Example of Underwater Archaeology“, which he did not have the opportunity to present himself, deserves some more scholarly attention. For that reason, I would like to present some of its most important findings. Although I never had the opportunity to meet Dr. Erič in person, his life and career inspired me deeply, and I consider it important to honor the memory of a great person and academic who happened to be a student of our university.

Keywords: Dr. Miran Erič, underwater archaeology, doctoral dissertation

THE POTENTIAL OF BEEKEEPING FOR EFFECTIVE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the importance of shaping post-conflict identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), a country with a highly diverse population in terms of national and religious affiliation. The community includes Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks – a mix of Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam. Using beekeeping as an example, the article demonstrates the potential to create new, overarching identities that are not based on national, ethnic, or regional affiliation, but rather on shared interests such as leisure activities or professional orientation. This approach fosters unity among established forms of belonging. Since the end of the armed conflict in BiH in 1995, landmine victims have remained among the most marginalized social groups. With an unemployment rate of about 85% among people with disabilities in BiH, access to the labor market remains one of the biggest challenges. Beekeeping enables landmine victims and their families to run small beekeeping businesses, establish a strong local support network, and reintegrate into the community, providing a unique form of psychosocial rehabilitation.

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, post-conflict areas, mine victims, social reintegration, identity, psychosocial rehabilitation, beekeeping

DISABILITY IN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS – A BIBLIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Mariya Diassakoula, PhD Candidate
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ABSTRACT

This research project addresses a gap in Polish scholarship by examining the life cycle of literature on disability for children and young adults in Poland from 2014 to 2024. The study will approach the topic from three key perspectives: production (publishers), distribution (librarians), and reception (parents). Its aim is to identify the interest in this type of literature, its availability, as well as the barriers and opportunities present within the publishing process. The project is being developed as part of the author's PhD dissertation. The expected outcomes may contribute to a deeper understanding of the publishing market related to disability-themed literature for young readers. The findings may also offer insights that can help increase interest in this topic among publishers, librarians, public organisations, and cultural institutions, ultimately supporting the creation of a more inclusive society.

Keywords: disability, literature, children, young adults, publishing market, publishers, librarians, parents, Poland

CARING, INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE MUSEUMS FOR EVERYONE

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ABSTRACT

The concepts of care and inclusion are fundamental for cohesive coexistence in the modern world. They could also be associated with cultural heritage and likewise archaeological finds. Therefore, the main focus of this presentation is the interconnection of the concepts of care, inclusion, cultural heritage, archaeological finds and museums. Archaeological finds are most often presented to the wider public within thematic exhibitions in museums. However, those exhibitions should specifically address even more the concepts of care, inclusion and accessibility and include also people with disabilities. My aim is to present care and cultural heritage with an emphasis on the concept of »museums for everybody«, which is about accessibility and inclusiveness. As an example of good practice the international project »Come In!« is highlighted, along with some of the practical solutions and important findings about the inclusive and accessible museums and exhibitions. What is probably most crucial about the subject is cooperation with people with disabilities in all those activities, starting with the very beginning of the creative process of designing the exhibitions and even the artifacts. Caring for the exhibits can also mean caring for people, and consequently creating museums for all people.

Keywords: museums, care, inclusion, accessibility, cultural heritage, archaeology

NEW AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

In his take on Mark Fisher's argument that capitalist realism is the mode of realism that is highly adaptable to ever-changing circumstances of the capitalist order, philosopher Yuval Kremitzer delivers a weighty reading of new authoritarianism, the style of authoritarian politics that has recently infected many areas of the liberal-democratic world, including some of the world's most significant geopolitical centers of power. Kremitzer argues that new authoritarianism normalizes what up until recently was considered impossible or unacceptable, thus stretching the limits of what transgresses the norm and effectively making normality indistinguishable from aberration. In the paper, a philosophical inquiry into such new conditions as well as their implications and consequences is tackled. Even though some influential currents of postwar critical philosophy (such as discourse analysis, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis) sowed seeds of doubt and relativity regarding the questions of truth or ethics, there is no denying that philosophy is still the pivotal scientific field when confronted with those two fundamental pillars of our existence, as the pursuit of the true and the good constitutes the very core of philosophy itself. So, in a way, only philosophy can lead us out of the labyrinth of autocratic cynical nihilism.

Keywords: authoritarianism, transgression, normality, philosophy, truth, ethics, nihilism

THE REVIVAL OF INSTRUMENTAL POST-YUGOSLAV CINEMA IN THE AGE OF BURGEONING NEOCONSERVATISM IN THE REGION (2012–2025)

Aleš Čakalić, PhD Candidate
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ABSTRACT

Back in 2011, when film historian Jurica Pavičić published his monographic overview of the first twenty years of post-Yugoslav cinema, the main takeaway was that in the 1990s, films produced in the successor states of the former Socialist Yugoslavia were predominantly instrumental, either self-victimizing or self-Balkanizing (or both at once), made in conformance with the ruling ideologies and conveying obvious nationalistic messages, whilst in the 2000s, a consolidated or »normalized« line of post-Yugoslav cinema took over the reins and introduced more nuanced and plausible actions and characters while simultaneously featuring less (or none whatsoever) propaganda. The thesis here is that from 2012 onwards, which happens to be the year when Serbian politics fell under a spell of populist neoconservatism and have never since recovered, there has been a resurgence of post-Yugoslav films that are actively pushing for nationalistic agendas and historical revisionism and are fully complying with supposed »national interests«. Contents and contexts of some of the most interesting examples of this new wave of post-Yugoslav instrumental cinema, together with some prominent TV series, are analysed in order to show that audiovisual production remains a major contributing factor to the ideological imaginarium of post-Yugoslav communities to this very day.

Keywords: post-Yugoslav region, instrumental post-Yugoslav cinema, instrumental post-Yugoslav TV series, neoconservatism, populism

SCHOLARLY PANEL

SPIRITUALITY, EMOTIONS, AND THE OTHER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

ESCAPE INTO THE REAL: VIRTUALITY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the assumption that virtuality is problematic because it is less real. It argues instead that virtuality has become difficult to bear precisely because it is too real: too immediate, too responsive, too performative, and too permanent. In this context, the paper examines the growing turn toward the "real world" – nature, silence, and slowness – and asks what kind of reality is being sought in this movement. It suggests that this longing should be understood within a broader social context marked by digital saturation, exhaustion, and the loss of spaces of withdrawal. At the same time, the "real world" no longer stands outside the virtual but is itself shaped by digital imaginaries. The paper therefore proposes that the desire to retreat from the digital may also express a search for a form of experience structurally close to what has historically been understood as religious experience.

Keywords: reality, virtuality, religious experience, escapism, digital culture

THE FACE OF THE OTHER ON THE DIGITAL SCREEN: A LEVINASIAN REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

Levinas's ethics is often understood as bound to direct face-to-face encounters and therefore ill-suited to digital relationships. This contribution challenges that assumption by arguing that, although Levinas places embodied proximity at the centre of ethics, mediated encounters do not abolish ethical responsibility but only diminish its immediacy. Digital media can extend ethical proximity across distance when they sustain genuine attention to the Other. At the same time, contemporary digital technologies increasingly translate the face into data, enabling surveillance, control, and anonymity. Facial recognition, online impersonation, and AI-generated speech threaten the ethical significance of both face and language by detaching them from embodied responsibility. Drawing on Levinas's notion of the immeasurability of the face, this paper argues that digital media must remain subordinate to ethical responsibility. Only by preserving the primacy of encounter over technological mediation can the Other be protected from disappearing into anonymity in the digital age.

Keywords: Emmanuel Levinas, face, digital ethics, anonymity, responsibility

EMPATHY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER IN A DISEMBOodied WORLD

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, communication increasingly takes place without physical presence. Social networks and digital technologies create forms of "connected presence" that lack embodied experience, profoundly reshaping empathy. Instead of affective and bodily resonance, empathy becomes more cognitive, mediated by symbols, images, and algorithms. The reduction of nonverbal cues such as tone, gesture, and facial expression diminishes the sensory and emotional richness essential to deep empathetic connection. Drawing on phenomenological and neurocognitive perspectives, the presentation examines how empathy operates when the body is absent but technologically mediated. It explores whether digital tools (emojis, reactions, or artificial agents) can sustain empathetic engagement comparable to face-to-face interaction. Situated within debates on depersonalisation and the illusion of proximity produced by digital media, the analysis argues that empathy persists in digital contexts but is reconfigured: less visceral, more interpretative, and increasingly shaped by technological mediation.

Keywords: empathy, digital communication, depersonalisation, embodiment, interpersonal relationships

EMBODIED EMOTIONS AND THE EMOTIONAL CYBORG: THEOLOGICAL ECOFEMINIST REFLECTIONS ON RELATIONALITY IN HYPERCONNECTED REALITY

Nadja Furlan Štante, Professor
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ABSTRACT

This presentation examines the role of embodied emotions and the figure of the emotional cyborg through the interpretive framework of theological ecofeminism. It explores how technologically mediated affections reshape human identity, embodiment, and spirituality in hyperconnected reality. Emotions are understood not as private, psychological phenomena but as embodied, relational, and theological forces that mediate the human experience of the self, the other, and the divine.

As affective computing and artificial emotional intelligence increasingly permeate human life, the boundary between human and machine becomes fluid. Within this entanglement, the emotional cyborg emerges as both a descriptive and theological category, illuminating how emotional life, empathy, and care are transformed, simulated, and commodified through technological mediation.

Drawing on posthumanist and ecofeminist thought, this presentation interrogates how emotions circulate between organic and digital systems, producing new forms of affective interdependence, vulnerability, and alienation. Particular attention is given to gendered emotions and the theological implications of embodied affectivity within digital culture.

Ultimately, the paper proposes an affective eco-theology of embodiment that views embodied emotions as loci of spiritual resistance, ecological awareness, and relational healing. By reclaiming the theological and ethical significance of emotional experience, theological ecofeminism offers a renewed understanding of what it means to feel, connect, and exist within technologically saturated worlds.

Keywords: embodied emotions, emotional cyborg, ecofeminism, relationality

SCHOLARLY PANEL

AGENCY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

RETHINKING EPISTEMIC AGENCY, DISEMPOWERMENT, AND RESPONSIBILITY IN HUMAN-AI INTERACTIONS

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Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mateja Centa Strahovnik, Lecturer

Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots represents a pivotal shift in modern communication and knowledge formation, calling for a re-evaluation of the human being as an epistemic agent. This paper analyses the various ways these systems can restructure human epistemic identity and shape key intellectual dispositions. A central concern is the emergence of disempowerment patterns in human-AI interactions: the gradual outsourcing of reasoning, judgment, and inquiry to AI systems risks eroding the very capacities – critical thinking, intellectual vigilance, and reflective self-governance – that constitute robust epistemic agency. Rather than merely augmenting human cognition, LLMs may, under certain conditions of uncritical use, foster epistemic dependence, diminish tolerance for uncertainty, and attenuate the sense of individual responsibility for one's own beliefs and conclusions. The investigation therefore centres on the epistemic and ethical challenges of maintaining genuine agency and responsibility in human-AI partnerships, with particular attention to how institutional, educational, and communicative contexts can either mitigate or reinforce these disempowering tendencies. Ultimately, this work calls for a thoughtful redefinition of epistemic identity – one that consciously balances the enormous utility of AI assistance with a firm commitment to the unique role of human intellectual endeavour and epistemic autonomy.

Keywords: human-AI Interaction, epistemic identity, epistemic agency, responsibility, autonomy

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION: BETWEEN THE PROMISES OF PROGRESS AND THE TRAPS OF ALIENATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into contemporary educational practice, focusing on its potential and limitations. Research shows that AI enables personalised learning, improves learning outcomes, supports early identification of students at risk of failure, and reduces teachers' administrative workload. However, unreflective use of AI increases the risk of alienation, superficial knowledge, reduced creativity, and weakened interpersonal relationships. AI systems may generate misleading information, deepen existing inequalities, encourage passivity, and diminish students' motivation and sense of belonging. Particularly problematic are the effects on the emotional dimension of learning and the social development of children and adolescents. The paper emphasises that AI is not a neutral tool and cannot replace empathy, ethical judgement, or the educational role of the teacher. It argues for a reflective, ethical, and pedagogically grounded approach in which AI supports rather than substitutes teachers, while preserving the human dimension, critical thinking, and resonant relationships in education.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, education, alienation, student motivation, ethics

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

The speaker discusses the following topics: 1. AI as a social actor; 2. the concept of intelligence; 3. what should we be concerned about in relation to the astonishing development of AI; 4. AI as a (primary) communication partner: ignoring the subject/human. The speaker argues that AI is intelligence in the true sense of the word, which does not mean that it is like human intelligence. Quite the opposite. It works entirely differently. Among the things that require our attention and vigilance, he emphasises the use of AI, which is non-transparent and inexplicable. In conclusion, he proceeds from the premise that AI, with which more and more people communicate daily and increasingly, is not a subject. He concludes that even if the human role and perspective in training generative AI remain indispensable, in interaction with chatbots, we increasingly overlook the fact that the algorithms we ask questions to and use their information are neither people nor subjects, despite being aware of this. Therefore, we can say that the subject is neither excluded nor marginalised but increasingly ignored. In other words, we do not turn to it primarily, but increasingly and first of all to AI.

Keywords: concept of intelligence, artificial intelligence as a social actor, pitfalls and dangers of artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence as a communication partner, ignoring the subject/human (in communication)

TECHNOLOGICAL SALVATION: NEURALINK'S CAMPAIGN THROUGH THE LENS OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Neuralink's public communication and promotional strategies through the lens of religious symbolism. The company presents its brain-computer interface (BCI) technology as a groundbreaking medical innovation capable of restoring physical abilities and enhancing human cognition. Using a critical approach to discourse and symbolism, the paper analyses how Neuralink's messaging reflects patterns traditionally associated with religious narratives. Particular attention is given to symbolic parallels with motifs of healing, redemption, and salvation found in the Christian tradition, especially within the New Testament. The paper argues that Neuralink's narrative frames technological innovation not only as medical progress but also as a promise of overcoming human limitations. In this way, Neuralink implicitly promotes a vision of "technological salvation," positioning its technology as a transformative solution within the emerging field of neurotechnology.

Keywords: Neuralink, religious symbolism, technological salvation, brain-computer interface, critical approach

SCHOLARLY PANEL

REPRODUCING ACADEMIC ELITES UNDER TOTALITARIAN SYSTEMS

ROLE OF CHARACTERISTICS IN SLOVENIA ACADEMIA IN LATE 1940S AND EARLY 1950S

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ABSTRACT

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the evaluation of academic staff in Slovenia relied heavily on a system of "character assessments" (Slovene: karakteristike), which was closely linked to the establishment of political control over the university. Due to the small number of communists, one of the key priorities was the building and consolidation of the Communist Party at the University of Ljubljana and the establishment of strict party discipline. This process was accompanied by the defascistisation of professors and students, which functioned as a mechanism of postwar purges and the restructuring of the academic environment.

Character assessments served several purposes: they were used in decisions regarding employment, promotions, and travel abroad, while also creating an official narrative about the political reliability of individuals for the international environment. Particularly important were the character assessments written for non-party members, which developed in several phases: first during the immediate postwar purges, then during the wave of new appointments around 1946, and after the Informbiro split in the period of political consolidation, when the systematic writing of such assessments became a permanent instrument of control over academic elites.

A notable feature of this system was that party members were first required to write a self-assessment, which then served as the basis for an additional evaluation written by another member of the local Communist Party cell. In this way, academic competence, political loyalty, and mechanisms of internal supervision became intertwined in the reproduction of academic elites in socialist Yugoslavia.

Keywords: character assessments, political control, University of Ljubljana, socialist Yugoslavia, academic elites

PROFESSORS AND PEASANTS: UPWARD MOBILITY WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOCIALIST POLAND

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ABSTRACT

*The contribution discusses findings from the author's book *Limiting Privilege: Upward Mobility Within Higher Education in Socialist Poland*, which examines how state-socialist Poland sought to reform higher education and open universities to students of working-class and peasant backgrounds. It analyses how these egalitarian projects met the persistent power of elites, who adapted and reconstituted their privilege within new socialist institutions. The study reveals how mechanisms of elite reproduction operated even within a system designed to dismantle them.*

Keywords: socialist university, upward mobility, reproduction, privilege, Poland

HISTORIANS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AT THE HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT OF CROATIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Institute of the History of the Labor Movement of Croatia as a space where scholarly practice and ideological expectations intersected in socialist Croatia between 1961 and 1991. Although formally established as a research institution, the Institute was embedded within the ideological framework of the ruling party and tasked with producing authoritative interpretations of the labour movement, the Partisan struggle, and the socialist revolution. Drawing on archival sources, internal documents, personnel files, and published works, the paper analyses how historians employed at the Institute navigated the tension between academic standards and political loyalty in their everyday research practices and career trajectories. It focuses on research agendas, interpretative boundaries, and strategies of adaptation that allowed for limited scholarly autonomy within clearly defined political constraints. Particular attention is paid to attempts to ground research on politically sensitive topics in more autonomous, empirically based interpretations of recent history, and to the ways in which such efforts provoked disapproval and were subsequently corrected, restricted, or sanctioned by institutional and political mechanisms at higher levels of the party nomenklatura. The paper argues that the Institute functioned simultaneously as an instrument of ideological reproduction and as a mechanism for shaping academic elites, offering professional advancement and institutional security while imposing firm limits on interpretative autonomy.

Keywords: Institute of the History of the Labor Movement of Croatia, League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Socialist Republic of Croatia, historiography, political control of knowledge

CULTURAL FORMATIONS

SCHOLARLY PANEL

TECHNOFEUDALISM AND FULLER'S NATURAL LAW: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION LAWS IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of AI tools is profoundly disrupting digital communication, from algorithmic content amplification and automated moderation to deepfakes and enhancement of human expression, exerting pervasive influences. Varoufakis' technofeudalism, likening tech giants to feudal overlords wielding AI monopolies to steer debates via moderation, selective amplification, and surveillance, threatens Internet freedom of expression and democratic values. This framework can be paired with Fuller's natural law theory, using its eight desiderata (generality, publicity, prospectivity, clarity, non-contradiction, possibility of compliance, stability, congruence) as a rule-of-law test for AI governance legislation, per Cormacain's approach. These principles enable evaluation and mitigation of technofeudal harms, namely publicity demands transparent moderation; clarity ensures predictable, non-malicious suppression standards; generality promotes uniform, unbiased application; stability and congruence align enforcement with declared rules. This paper thus theorizes Fuller's desiderata as a Cormacain-inspired test to counter technofeudal threats, proposing a procedural moral framework for ethical, legally sound AI in communication.

Keywords: technofeudalism, freedom of expression, communication, legislative quality, rule of law

BEYOND THE LIBERAL OVERTON WINDOW: PLEBEIAN RATIONALITY AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE

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ABSTRACT

*This paper is situated within contemporary critical media studies, communication theory, and political theology. It examines how digital communication networks—particularly the platform X—transform classical models of the public sphere by enabling the renewed visibility of plebeian rationality. In the Habermasian framework, such forms of reason were historically marginalised or normatively excluded as insufficiently rational, overly affective, or too closely tied to particular identities. The analysis opens by interpreting the narrow liberal-democratic Overton window as a form of cultural hegemony, analogous to Gramsci's bourgeois cultural dominance, which long rendered discourses centred on peoples, nations, cultural differences, civilisational imaginaries, and religious metanarratives normatively suspect or politically inappropriate—often under the label of populism. The paper foregrounds the 2004 Habermas–Ratzinger dialogue, in which Habermas insisted on a “translation proviso” for religious arguments, while Ratzinger warned that such translation cedes epistemic primacy to a secular “theology.” This tension is radicalised through John Milbank's critique in *Theology and Social Theory*. Milbank unmasks the supposed neutrality of secular social science as a disguised metaphysics: following the neo-Kantian lineage from Simmel to Weber, modern sociology treats economic-material rationality as the only truly “real” and objective domain, while consigning religion, tradition, and communal structures to the “irreal” realm of subjective valuation. Methodologically, the study combines conceptual genealogy with theoretical, literature-based analysis of the post-Musk transformation of X. The paper argues that the platform's maximalist conception of freedom of expression loosens discursive constraints and permits the re-entry of previously marginalised plebeian perspectives—frequently denounced as populism—thereby reshaping public deliberation and expanding legitimate political subjectivities. At the same time, it stresses the ambivalence of these processes and the need for their critical, non-ideological assessment.*

Keywords: proletarian rationality, digital public sphere, hate speech, cultural hegemony, Overton window

FROM EDITORIAL CONTROL TO ALGORITHMS: MIKI MUSTER AS A MEDIA STRATEGIST

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ABSTRACT

This submission explores the cultural and strategic significance of Miki Muster, Slovenia's pioneering cartoonist, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth. It draws on earlier insights about his iconic character, Zvitorepec, not as an end in itself, but as the visible "frontman" of Muster's broader media and cultural strategy. Muster's work demonstrates a subtle mastery of boundaries: under socialist editorial control, he knew precisely how much could be shown, using humor as social lubricant rather than as a weapon, avoiding frontal conflict, and thereby ensuring the long-term survival and influence of his creations. The contribution introduces a comparative perspective by examining historical constraints alongside contemporary conditions, where cultural production is mediated by digital platforms, algorithms, and "cancel culture." This approach highlights both continuities and challenges in navigating the limits of expression: the visible censorship of editors has been replaced by opaque, algorithmic systems of amplification and suppression. Central to the discussion is the question: can figures like Zvitorepec survive in the algorithmic age? By analyzing Muster's strategic use of humor and the structural dynamics of media, this submission explores valuable lessons on cultural resilience and the conditions for long-term impact in today's digitally mediated public sphere.

Keywords: Miki Muster, Zvitorepec, media strategy, humor, cultural resilience, editorial control, digital algorithms

CENTRAL EUROPEAN DIARISTIC CHRONOTOPE: EDVARD KOCBEK'S DIARY

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ABSTRACT

In the presentation I will analyze concepts of time reconfigured in the diaristic writing of Slovenian writer Edvard Kocbek. I will refer to Walter Benjamin's different conceptualisations of time both within historicism (universal history) and historical materialism. While the first one is founded on the empty and homogenous linear vision of time filled with historical progress, the second one accentuates temporal "constellations" and the present moment, the role of which is not a mere transition but a gateway undermining and shattering the historical continuum. The view of the historical process as discontinuous and in some way comprised in the present moment which, by halting the time, could allow one to experience the past in its fragments is centred on Kairos, individual time of consciousness which also underlies the diaristic practice. Keeping a diary means taking notes always in the present moment. This temporal dimension unique for a journal (its chronotope?) allows its author to shatter the continuity of time and focus on his experiences of being in the world as comprised in the present hic et nunc but concurrently extended towards the past (by rereading the entries of the bygone selves) and towards the future image of the self.

Keywords: Edvard Kocbek, diary, chronotope, Central Europe

TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCES THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The presentation explores the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on archaeological research, situating current developments within the broader history of methodological innovation in the discipline. Archaeology has long relied on the analysis of incomplete and complex datasets, requiring approaches that enable the identification of patterns in fragmentary evidence. In this context, AI does not merely represent a new analytical tool, but a significant shift in how archaeological knowledge can be produced. The presentation focuses on three principal domains in which AI is increasingly applied: first, detection and discovery through automated analysis of satellite imagery, LiDAR data, and aerial photographs, enabling the identification of archaeological structures across large landscapes; second, classification and analysis of artefacts using machine learning-based image recognition, which can support typological studies and accelerate the processing of large datasets; and third, digital reconstruction and visualization of fragmented objects, inscriptions, and architectural remains, contributing to new forms of heritage communication and public engagement. At the same time, the integration of AI raises important methodological and ethical challenges. Issues of transparency, interpretability, and data bias require critical reflection, particularly in a discipline that depends on contextual interpretation and historically uneven datasets. The presentation therefore emphasizes that the transformation driven by AI is not purely technological, but also epistemological, prompting a reconsideration of how archaeological knowledge is generated and validated. It argues that artificial intelligence should be understood as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for archaeological expertise, as core practices such as fieldwork, contextual analysis, and interpretative reasoning remain essential. The future of archaeology lies in the productive integration of traditional methods and advanced computational approaches, enabling new research questions while preserving the discipline's interpretative foundations.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, archaeology, digital archaeology, methodological innovation, epistemology

THE LEGACY OF THE NUREMBERG TRIALS

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ABSTRACT

This contribution analyses the historical, legal, ethical, societal and political legacy of the Nuremberg Trials and their continuing significance eighty years after their conclusion. It argues that the court proceedings of 1945–1946 marked a decisive turning point in the development of modern international criminal law by affirming individual criminal responsibility, the punishability of crimes against peace, war crimes and humanity, aggressive war, systematic mass murder, and the principle that invoking superior orders does not absolve one of responsibility (rejection of »following the orders of superiors«). Particular attention is devoted to the subsequent Nuremberg proceedings, especially the Doctors' Trial, which exposed the ideological and racial abuse of medicine and contributed to the formulation of the Nuremberg Code and the voluntary informed consent. The contribution also situates Nuremberg within the broader prosecution of Nazi crimes, from the wartime Majdanek Trial to later proceedings concerning Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Adolf Eichmann, and John Demjanjuk in 2011. Beyond its judicial achievements, Nuremberg is interpreted as a moral and civilisational response to dehumanisation, state violence, and scientific practice stripped of ethical responsibility. Its principles shaped the post-war international legal order and remain relevant amid contemporary wars, human rights violations, disinformation, and technological change. The contribution concludes that Nuremberg remains an enduring legal, moral, and civilisational compass for scholarship, politics, science, and society, affirming that accountability for the gravest crimes remains a cornerstone of the rule of law, despite the passage of time.

Keywords: Nuremberg Trials, international criminal law, crimes against humanity, Nuremberg Code, historical memory

SCHOLARLY PANEL

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE: CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION AND THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON THE VALUE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SOCIETY

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AS STREAMS OF MEMORY, HORIZONS OF KNOWLEDGE, AND MERIDIANS OF VALUES

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ABSTRACT

The presentation explored the specialisation within landscape studies and suggested future research directions. Originally, landscapes were studied by biology, geology, and physical geography. Later, disciplines such as biogeography, ecology, and evolutionary biology developed. Nature conservation has shifted its focus to protecting ecosystems, habitats, and endangered species, expanding into protected areas like parks, reserves, and sanctuaries.

Interest in landscape as a cultural phenomenon predates nature conservation, extending back to painting, gardening, poetry and early tourism. Related sciences included geography, archaeology, and anthropology. Recently, specialisations such as landscape archaeology, landscape architecture, and heritage protection have emerged, encompassing parks, archaeological sites, industrial, urban, and associative landscapes.

Since 1990, we have observed convergence, marked by the 1992 World Heritage Guidelines recognising cultural landscapes. UNESCO launched programmes with organisations such as IUCN, ICOMOS, and ICCROM, highlighting the role of cultural values in nature conservation. Topics like biocultural diversity emerged, emphasising landscape phenomena. The convergence gained momentum with the 2001 Council of Europe Landscape Convention and the 2005 Faro Convention. Today, we consider that landscapes shape the identities of local communities, and that landscape management should be recognised as part of their heritage rights.

We intend to deepen this initial investigation into issues of landscape specialisation and eventual convergence by exploring a theoretical foundation for landscapes of values, memories, and knowledge, drawing on phenomenology, hermeneutics, axiology, and cognitive sciences, as represented by Merleau-Ponty, Halbwachs, Heidegger, Hartman, and Varela.

Keywords: landscape management, biocultural diversity, local identity, heritage rights

LEARNING IN MUSEUM AS A FORM OF INCLUSIVE HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents knowledge and education, with particular regard to learning processes in museums. Museum learning takes place with the help of heritage content and objects; it is an informal and ongoing process and is related to an individual's perception. The author explains the dangers of limiting knowledge to academic, empirical and technological knowledge and draws attention to the holistic convivial and hermeneutic knowledge encoded in heritage. The method of museum learning is explained, and advantages of divergent discourse are discussed, which establishes reciprocity of learning and involves societal as well social goals. Multidirectional reciprocal paths of museum learning allow the public to increase the museum's knowledge with their own knowledge, as well reduces control and makes learning processes more democratic. It is particularly important that in this way the power of authorized heritage discourse is reduced, while at the same time empowering communities to protect and preserve heritage. Museum learning is designed as a lifelong process that improves individuals' self-esteem and connects the community into a living social fabric.

Keywords: learning, knowledge, museums, community, heritage

CO-CREATING IDENTITY NARRATIVES: OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN HERITAGE COMMUNITIES AND PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how professionals and the local heritage community can collaborate in co-creating a heritage narrative. Because archaeological heritage is largely "invisible" to non-specialists, it is less easily perceived by the local community. Its investigation and interpretation therefore remain mostly in the hands of experts who come from outside the community, while locals are often not even informed of the research results. Consequently, this heritage narrative remains unfamiliar to them and is less likely incorporated into local identity.

Local oral tradition is often tied to places in the home landscape, to sites well known to community members and which often have special meanings, known only to community. Because of this, knowledge of stories about these places, passed down from generation to generation, is an important component of community.

Professional interpretation of places mentioned in local oral tradition has proved promising in raising awareness of their cultural significance within the local heritage community. As a case study, we analysed a story preserved in the folk tradition of Sv. Jurij ob Ščavnici under the title "The Tale of the Great Snake on Stara Gora." The story gives the mythical background to the construction of the church on Stara Gora and may reflect past local knowledge of a pre-Christian settlement at the site; archaeological topography suggests a Roman-period settlement. A public presentation of these findings showed that the local heritage community was willing to accept this expert interpretation as an extension of its own heritage narrative and incorporate it into collective memory.

Keywords: heritage studies, archaeological heritage, oral tradition, heritage communities, collective memory

USING SLOVENIAN HERITAGE AS A STARTING POINT FOR INTERPRETING CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH DESIGN AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the diminishing role of traditional knowledge in contemporary design, focusing on the Slovenian context where local craftsmanship, folk aesthetics, and long-standing making traditions are increasingly overshadowed by globalized and market-driven approaches. It highlights the importance of traditional knowledge as a vital component of cultural identity and a potential driver of sustainable, culturally grounded innovation.

The contribution highlights how traditional knowledge can be re-integrated into contemporary design processes in order to reinforce cultural identity and support the development of socially meaningful and contextually responsive design solutions.

The study is based on an analysis of the current situation in Slovenian design, examining the impact of economic and social shifts on the use of heritage-based practices. In addition, it employs a comparative approach through selected case studies that illustrate different ways of engaging with traditional knowledge in contemporary design and creative practices.

The findings demonstrate that the neglect of traditional knowledge contributes to a weakening of collective identity and a reduced sense of belonging. At the same time, the research shows that its reinterpretation and active integration into design processes can foster innovation, sustainability, and stronger connections between communities and their cultural heritage. It ultimately argues that familiarity with one's own traditions is essential for developing design approaches that are both culturally informed and relevant to contemporary societal challenges.

Keywords: traditional knowledge, heritage reinterpretation, design, heritage design, Slovenian design

FORGOTTEN VILLAGES OF ŽIROVNICA

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ABSTRACT

Žirovnica is a true archaeological and historical phenomenon, marked by an exceptional concentration of prehistoric and medieval settlements—some extensively researched, others almost entirely forgotten. The project Forgotten villages of Žirovnica connects heritage, past, present, and future while embodying the principles of the European Landscape Convention (2000) and the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005). Through interdisciplinary collaboration and the active involvement of the local community, the project explores two nearly forgotten settlements in the municipality of Žirovnica – the prehistoric and Roman settlement of Selce, and the medieval village of Krnica, which, according to oral tradition, was destroyed by a landslide in the 13th century. Research began with the rediscovery of the private collection of late archaeologist and Žirovnica native Janez Meterc, whose findings from the Selce area inspired new investigations and community engagement. Together with local residents, we are collecting stories, artifacts, and memories to complement archeological research. The results will be presented in the form of an exhibition, a documentary film, and a scholarly article. The project will highlight how heritage, memory, and identity are not static remnants of the past, but living elements that thrive through shared discovery and participation.

Keywords: forgotten villages, landscape, cultural heritage, community participation, archaeology, memory, identity

WHEN THE COMMUNITY NARRATES: PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO THE INTERPRETATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

The conference paper explores the role of the public in heritage interpretation processes and is based on a doctoral research project examining participatory approaches in heritage practice. Thematically, it builds on the concept of heritage as a common good, as defined by the Faro Convention (2005), and engages with the critique of the prevailing authorised heritage discourse.

The central research question asks whether involving the public in heritage interpretation contributes to the empowerment of individuals and communities, and whether these effects can be identified and analysed using scientific methods.

Methodologically, the research is based on an analytical case study of a selected heritage community. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted after the participatory process, alongside observation of participants during interpretative workshops. Within these workshops, participants engaged with archaeological documentation and material evidence and co-created interpretations through narrative approaches, such as stories and myths. The research also includes reflection on the role of the researcher.

Preliminary findings indicate that, in the Slovenian context, a one-directional model of knowledge transfer still predominates, with the public not perceiving itself as a legitimate interpreter of heritage. When included in participatory processes, individuals initially express doubt, which gradually transforms into active meaning-making and increased confidence. Workshops proved to be an effective format for gradual engagement.

Finally, the research shows that co-interpretation fosters in-depth discussions about identity, values, and community experiences. Heritage thus emerges as a space of emotional and social meaning, best understood through a hermeneutic approach.

Keywords: public archaeology, heritage, interpretation, participatory approach, Slovenia

WEB AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

SCHOLARLY PANEL

ANALYZING THE VALUE OF USING A PLURICULTURAL AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY INTERSECTION ENCOMPASSING LEARNING, ARTS, AND WEB3D TECHNOLOGY AT K-12 EDUCATION LEVELS AND BEYOND

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to analyze the value of using a pluricultural and transdisciplinary intersection encompassing experiential learning, communication, scientific knowledge, arts and Web3D-based technologies at K-12 education levels and beyond. It is a qualitative analysis founded on blending action research, use cases and computational action approaches. Analysis outcomes indicate added value of applying this type of pluricultural and transdisciplinary intersection in education's trajectories. Such application cultivates participatory, collaborative and sustainable individuals' lifelong learning attitudes, impacting on identifying ones' education, professional training and thinking in a complex way enhancements, meaning social and economic mobility, as well as pluricultural learning and expressing opportunities. Individuals have enhanced their pluricultural skills throughout utilizing an integration of learning and applying K-12 curriculum's scientific knowledge with support of Web3D technology, as three-dimensional (3D) computer graphics programming and information visualization concepts and techniques. For instance, by using Blogger and its Hypertext Markup language editor with X3dom platform for representing aspects of Afro-Brazilian ancestry and contemporary art. It includes utilizing ChatGpt platform for helping to program complex 3D computational interfaces and objects behaviors. This pluricultural learning and technology integration has supported implementation of broader and sustainable movements which have impacted citizens' education improvements lifelong.

Keywords: coding for learning, information production and visualization, human computer interaction, lifelong education and art integration processes

QUANTUM MACHINE LEARNING: A SYSTEMATIC META-REVIEW AND PERSPECTIVES TOWARD QUANTUM ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the evolution of Quantum Machine Learning (QML) as the empirical foundation of Quantum Artificial Intelligence (QAI) and its conceptual extension into Quantum Generative Artificial Intelligence (QGAI). Classical AI, grounded in deterministic logic and statistical inference, has reached its limits in representing complex quantum information and emergent cognitive behavior. QML introduces probabilistic computation and quantum interference, enabling adaptive and context-sensitive learning processes. A systematic umbrella meta-review (PRISMA-UR) was conducted on twenty review papers published between 2013 and 2025, encompassing more than five thousand primary studies. Publications were coded and grouped into thematic clusters covering quantum algorithms, hybrid architectures, applications, theoretical frameworks, and links with Large Language Models (LLMs). The analysis reveals three main trends: (1) the shift from theoretical formulations to experimental validation on NISQ hardware; (2) the growing importance of hybrid quantum-classical models and Variational Quantum Algorithms (VQAs); and (3) the integration of quantum computation with LLM-based architectures, leading to the conceptual emergence of QGAI. Empirical findings in QML support Wichert's theory of quantum artificial intelligence as an emergent synthesis of computation and meaning. The study provides a conceptual framework uniting QML, QAI, and QGAI, establishing a foundation for future research in quantum cognition and intelligent semantics.

Keywords: quantum machine learning (QML), quantum artificial intelligence (QAI), large language models (LLMs), quantum generative artificial intelligence (QGAI), umbrella review (PRISMA-UR)

ENHANCING CRYPTOCURRENCY FORECASTING THROUGH BIO-INSPIRED HYBRID MODELS: GREY WOLF-OPTIMIZED SPIKING LSTM NETWORKS

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ABSTRACT

Forecasting in highly volatile and non-stationary time series remains a significant challenge across various domains, including finance, energy, and climate modeling. In this work, we propose a novel hybrid neural architecture, Spiking Long Short-Term Memory (SLSTM), optimized using Grey Wolf Optimization (GWO), that integrates biologically inspired spiking neuron dynamics into LSTM cells and automates hyperparameter tuning through an evolutionary optimization process. The model combines the temporal precision of spiking neurons with LSTM's sequence modeling capabilities, while GWO jointly optimizes both conventional and spiking-specific parameters, including learning rate, membrane decay, and firing threshold. SLSTM is evaluated on an extensive daily Bitcoin price dataset spanning nearly a decade, demonstrating a substantial reduction in forecasting errors compared to a baseline LSTM: test RMSE decreased from 159.18 to 55.44, test MSE from 25,337.31 to 3,073.56, MAPE improved from 0.08% to 2.51%, and PBIAS dropped from 5.57% to 0.07%. Paired statistical tests confirm the significance of these improvements. The results indicate that integrating spiking dynamics into LSTM networks, combined with evolutionary hyperparameter optimization, can improve predictive accuracy, robustness, and bias reduction in complex time-series settings, offering a viable solution for real-time forecasting and energy-efficient inference in volatile and uncertain environments.

Keywords: Bitcoin, time series forecasting, spiking neural networks, LSTM, Grey Wolf Optimizer, surrogate gradient, evolutionary algorithms

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR DETECTING UNWANTED SMS MESSAGES: ANALYSIS OF METHODS AND EXPERIMENTAL VALIDATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of artificial intelligence methods for detecting unwanted SMS messages, comparing traditional techniques, machine learning algorithms, and deep learning models. The theoretical part presents a systematic literature review, covering rule-based methods, machine learning algorithms and deep learning approaches. The empirical part was based on the UCI SMS Spam Collection, which was preprocessed through cleaning, normalization, tokenization, and vectorization or word embedding. Experiments were conducted with Multinomial Naive Bayes, Support Vector Machine, Random Forest, Convolutional Neural Network, and BiLSTM methods. MNB and SVM achieved the highest F1-scores, while the deep learning algorithms demonstrated competitive accuracy. Machine learning models proved to be the fastest, while deep learning models required the most computational resources, with BiLSTM showing the most stable results among the deep models. The main findings from the literature indicate that deep models generally achieve higher average accuracy, while machine learning algorithms remain highly effective. While we could not fully reproduce previous findings, our results confirm the effectiveness of both machine learning and deep learning approaches for SMS spam detection.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, SMS detection, machine learning, deep learning

CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

At the intersection of global demographic shifts and technological advancements, two prominent trends emerge: population ageing and the accelerating digitalization. While modern technologies can enhance the social connections and access to information of older adults, their lower digital literacy and limited technological experience heighten their exposure to cybersecurity threats. While they are not the most frequently targeted victims of cyberattacks, multiple studies indicate that they are statistically the most vulnerable. The paper's findings are based on a systematic literature review conducted across the IEEE Xplore, Web of Science, Scopus, and ACM Digital Library databases. The search strategy included keywords such as older adults, cybersecurity awareness, silver surfers, online security, and digital divide. Preliminary results indicate that cybersecurity awareness among older adults remains low. They often underestimate the severity of cyber threats, exhibit difficulties in recognizing online fraud, and less consistently adopt protective practices such as using strong passwords and multifactor authentication. Existing research further demonstrates that the likelihood of falling victim to online scams increases among older adults with lower digital literacy, reduced technological self-efficacy, and heightened levels of technological anxiety—factors that are particularly pronounced in rural settings with limited digital infrastructure. Older adults form a heterogeneous population; cybersecurity interventions must be differentiated and tailored to their age, living environment, level of digital literacy, and degree of technological anxiety.

Keywords: older adults, cybersecurity awareness, online security, digital literacy, digital divide

FAST EVENT-DRIVEN PEDESTRIAN CROSSING DETECTION USING SPIKING NEURAL NETWORKS WITH ADAPTIVE MODULATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a novel, high-speed event-driven pedestrian crossing detection framework based on spiking neural networks (SNNs) with membrane accumulators and adaptive signal modulation. The system processes asynchronous event streams from dynamic vision sensors (DVS), converting them into temporal spike representations that are integrated using biologically-inspired leaky integrate-and-fire (LIF) neurons. An adaptive modulation mechanism, implemented through exponential moving averages of spike activity, stabilizes network responses across varying environmental conditions. Experimental evaluation demonstrates robust performance with combined test accuracy of 92.04% for single-frame configurations and 93.08% for repeated-frame configurations, maintaining strong detection capability even under adverse weather conditions. The proposed architecture offers computational efficiency, interpretability, and real-time processing capabilities suitable for intelligent transportation systems and autonomous driving applications.

Keywords: event-driven sensing, spiking neural networks, membrane accumulators, adaptive modulation, pedestrian detection, adverse environments, intelligent transportation systems

CYBERSECURITY EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DEDICATED PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

As cyber threats intensify globally, the Western Balkans region faces mounting pressure to develop robust cybersecurity capacity through higher education. This study presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of dedicated cybersecurity degree programs offered by public universities across six Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The research explicitly focuses on standalone cybersecurity programs rather than individual courses or modules. It examines exclusively public higher education institutions to understand each government's official commitment to cybersecurity education through state-funded universities. Using a systematic mapping methodology, we identify which countries, cities, universities, faculties and departments host dedicated cybersecurity programs, and the academic levels - bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees - at which they operate. The findings illuminate patterns in national cybersecurity education strategies, revealing which governments and HEIs prioritise dedicated cyber programs and which lag. Based on identified gaps and regional distribution patterns, we propose specific recommendations for each country to expand programs and strengthen specialised fields. Future research should analyse the role of private higher education institutions, specific course offerings, and detailed curriculum comparisons to provide a complete regional picture.

Keywords: Western Balkans, education, cyber, HEI, resilience

CLASSIFICATION OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE USING TUH EEG DATABASE AND RANDOM FOREST ALGORITHM

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ABSTRACT

Background: Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that leads to cognitive decline, memory impairment, and loss of functional independence. Early and accurate detection is crucial for effective management, yet traditional diagnostic methods such as neuroimaging and biomarker testing are often costly, invasive, and time-consuming. *Methods:* This study proposes a machine learning-based framework for classifying Alzheimer's disease using the Temple University Hospital (TUH) Electroencephalography (EEG) database and a Random Forest (RF) algorithm. The approach includes systematic preprocessing of EEG signals, extraction of time- and frequency-domain features, and subsequent model training and validation to enhance diagnostic reliability and accuracy. *Results:* Preliminary findings demonstrate a classification accuracy of 92% using the Random Forest model, highlighting its effectiveness for EEG-based detection of Alzheimer's disease. Feature importance analysis further provides interpretability by identifying key EEG biomarkers associated with cognitive decline. *Conclusion:* The results indicate that Random Forest offers a strong balance between accuracy, computational efficiency, and explainability. This framework presents a potential pathway for developing affordable, non-invasive, and interpretable diagnostic tools that could support early intervention and clinical decision-making in Alzheimer's and related neurodegenerative diseases.

Keywords: Alzheimer's disease, EEG, Random Forest, machine learning, neurodiagnostics

THE "SLOW FOOD" OF LABOUR: MEASURING THE HUMAN-CENTRIC NICHE IN AN AI-DRIVEN ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

*As AI systems automate selected cognitive tasks and standardise service delivery, a paradox emerges: the more contactless digital solutions expand, the more the value of human interaction increases. This paper challenges traditional, linear models of technological displacement, which assume that occupations are automated in a predictable, task-by-task sequence. Using O*NET data covering 894 occupations, we empirically validate the Human-Centric Resilience Model (HCRM), showing that resilience in an AI-driven labour market stems not from resisting technology, but from occupying a distinct psychosocial niche.*

The analysis demonstrates a structural divergence: whereas the broader labour market displays a separation between cognitive and manual skill profiles, occupations within the Leisure and Care sector exhibit "psychosocial coherence", a measurable integration of emotional intelligence, physical dexterity, and adaptability. In contrast to AI's "fast food" mode of labour, efficient, scalable, and standardised, these human-centric roles operate as "slow food," offering value through embodied presence and relational authenticity.

Finally, we introduce the "leapfrogging paradox" hypothesis, suggesting that in regions with limited human-centric service infrastructure, AI-based solutions may be adopted more rapidly, bypassing the emergence of these embodied human roles. This raises questions about whether the human-centric niche is a universal labour feature or a context-dependent phenomenon.

Keywords: human-centric resilience, AI complementarity, leisure and care economy, unstructured environments, psychosocial coherence

CONVOLUTIONAL NEURAL NETWORK FOR PNEUMONIA DETECTION IN X-RAY IMAGES

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ABSTRACT

Pneumonia remains a leading cause of global morbidity and mortality, with traditional diagnostic methods facing challenges in accessibility, cost, and diagnostic accuracy. Inter-observer variability among radiologists ranges from 60-80% depending on image quality and experience. This study presents a convolutional neural network (CNN) approach for automated pneumonia detection in chest X-ray images. A CNN model was developed using the publicly available Chest X-ray Images dataset from Kaggle, containing 4,858 images across normal and pneumonia categories. The dataset was split into 50% training (1,172 images), 30% validation (1,406 images), and 20% testing (3,278 images). RGB images were resized to 224×224×3 dimensions and normalised to 64×64 pixels. The CNN architecture incorporated convolutional layers with max pooling, fully connected layers with 16 neurons, and dropout regularisation to prevent overfitting. The CNN model achieved a consistent training accuracy of 72% and a validation accuracy of 73% across 29 epochs. When tested on 10 pneumonia cases, the model correctly identified all cases with 100% accuracy. The architecture learned 1,792 patterns in the first convolutional layer and 18,464 patterns in the second layer, with 131,088 complex features recognised in the fully connected layer.

Keywords: pneumonia detection, convolutional neural networks, clinical implementation, computer-aided diagnosis, medical imaging

BUILDING TRUSTWORTHY AI: VERIFIABLE DATA PROVENANCE AND DECENTRALIZED IDENTITY AS FOUNDATIONS FOR HUMAN-CENTRIC SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

As societies adopt artificial intelligence at scale, public confidence in AI systems is increasingly undermined by opaque data sourcing, copyright disputes, biased models and safety failures. These issues are not only technical, they erode social cohesion, threaten human dignity and risk widening inequality across health, justice and education sectors. This paper argues that trustworthy AI requires systems that are transparent, provable and privacy-preserving by design. Building on emerging implementations of AI provenance through verifiable credentials and decentralized identity, this research demonstrates how a cryptographically verifiable chain-of-trust can document every stage of the AI lifecycle, from data collection to model outputs, while protecting privacy through selective disclosure and zero-knowledge proofs. Using examples from health, government, education and media systems, the paper shows how provenance-based AI supports ethical alignment, safety audits, IP rights, regulatory compliance, and public accountability. Most importantly, it reframes AI as a social infrastructure rather than a commercial utility, one that strengthens democratic dialogue, reduces harm, and contributes to peace-driven technology development. The paper proposes a model where human agency, transparency and shared responsibility become pre-conditions for AI deployment. This approach supports the conference theme by demonstrating how values-based technological design can protect societal well-being and ensure that AI remains fundamentally about people, not merely systems.

Keywords: AI provenance, decentralized identity, verifiable credentials, trustworthy AI, ethics and governance

AI-DRIVEN SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT AND AI-DRIVEN NETWORK SLICING IN 6G NETWORKS

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ABSTRACT

The author wishes to investigate how AI can optimize dynamic spectrum allocation in 6G networks to enhance efficiency, reduce interference, and support ultra-low latency applications (e.g., autonomous vehicles, smart cities) and also how advanced data infrastructure enables AI to manage network slicing, dynamically allocating resources for specific use cases (e.g., healthcare IoT, gaming, industrial automation). The paper should include the analysis of regulatory frameworks for AI-managed spectrum, including liability for AI errors, data privacy concerns, fairness in resource allocation, regulatory oversight of AI-driven slicing and rights of operators when slices prioritize certain services and customers. 6G is expected to roll out by 2030, with AI as a core enabler. Exploring how regulators can balance innovation with accountability is long overdue. Network slicing is a cornerstone of 5G/6G, but its reliance on AI and data infrastructure raises equity and governance questions. Research Questions will be the following: How can AI ensure equitable spectrum access across regions and operators? What legal precedents apply when AI-driven systems cause network disruptions? How can data infrastructure support AI's role in equitable network slicing? What legal frameworks can prevent discriminatory slicing practices? How do global standards impact AI-driven slicing across telecom market?

Keywords: AI-driven spectrum management, network slicing, 6G networks, telecommunications regulation

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

SCHOLARLY PANEL

STRATEGIC RESILIENCE AND THE HUMAN-TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE GROWTH AND SURVIVAL OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the growth and survival strategies of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) within the turbulent environment of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) since 2020. With SMEs representing the foundational elements of economic vitality and social stability in the region, their resilience is crucial for national well-being. The paper analyzes how firms navigate exogenous shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which have tested their adaptability and highlighted the urgency of this research. We identify key internal and external challenges, including persistent financial barriers, a regional shortage of skilled labor, and institutional vulnerabilities. The research posits that a human-centric approach, leveraging both technological and organizational capabilities, is essential for survival and sustained growth. Specifically, we examine the critical role of digital transformation, noting that firms adopting technologies like remote work and e-commerce demonstrated greater employment resilience during crises. Despite a clear ambition for digital integration, a significant divide exists, particularly in the strategic adoption of AI, which is hindered by a lack of leadership clarity and talent readiness rather than a simple lack of access to technology. The conclusion is that SME resilience in the CEE region is a complex interplay between an agile entrepreneurial mindset, the historical legacy of the command economy, and the strategic alignment of human and technological resources to foster a healthier and more stable society.

Keywords: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), resilience, digital transformation, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), entrepreneurial mindset

ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF SUSTAINABLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON PROJECT SUCCESS: EVIDENCE FROM RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has become a very vital aspect of project management, especially within sectors that directly influence environmental and social well-being. There are limited studies that have empirically examined the influence of sustainable project management practices on project management success especially in developing economies like Nigeria. Hence, to fill this knowledge gap, this study examines the influence of sustainable project management practices on project success, focusing on renewable energy projects in Nigeria. The research is focused on determining how the adoption of sustainable principles such as resource efficiency, social responsibility, and environmental protection affect project performance regarding time, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction. A primary data methodology was employed, collecting first-hand information through structured questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with project managers, engineers, and sustainability officers working in selected renewable energy firms. The data collected for the study were analysed using partial least square structural equation modelling processed on SmartPLS2. The findings of the study reveal the extent to which sustainable project management contributes to improved project outcomes and long-term organizational value. The study also provides recommendations for integrating sustainability frameworks into project planning and execution processes in developing economies. It adds to the current discussion on sustainability by addressing important scientific topics and offering valuable insights to the project management discourse on sustainability.

Keywords: sustainable project management, resource efficiency, social responsibility, environmental protection, project success

SYSTEMS THINKING IN CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VSM AND SHINGO MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Organizational culture plays a key role in shaping how people work, make decisions, and respond to change. This paper explores how two well-known models; the Viable System Model (VSM) and the Shingo Model, approach the formation and development of culture in organizations. Through a review of existing literature, the study compares how each model defines culture, the role of leadership, and the systems or principles that influence behavior. VSM views culture as something that emerges from how an organization is structured and how its parts interact. It focuses on feedback, autonomy, and long-term survival. The Shingo Model, on the other hand, emphasizes values, ideal behaviors, and leadership as tools to shape culture intentionally. While VSM offers a way to understand culture through systems and structure, Shingo provides a practical guide for leaders to influence culture through actions and principles. This comparison highlights different ways of thinking about culture and offers insights into how organizations can better understand and shape their internal environments and identity.

Keywords: culture, Shingo Model, viable system model, methods, leadership

HUMAN-AI SYNERGY: A NEW PARADIGM FOR MANAGING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the design and implementation of human-centred AI systems in complex electric production projects, focusing on wind farms and solar power plants. Through a mixed-methods approach combining literature analysis, case studies, and interviews with industry professionals, the research investigates the impact of human-AI collaboration on project efficiency, adaptability, and employee satisfaction. This research addresses the following central question: how can human-centred AI systems be designed to manage complex (electric production) projects? The findings reveal that successful implementation requires balancing AI automation with human expertise, establishing clear boundaries for decision authority, and fostering transparent communication channels. The study identifies four key framework components for effective human-centred AI project management: collaborative intelligence models, explainable AI interfaces, continuous feedback mechanisms, and adaptive governance structures. Implementation case studies from three major European energy companies demonstrate significant improvements in project delivery timelines (22% reduction), resource utilisation (18% efficiency increase), and employee satisfaction scores (+31%). However, challenges including skill gaps, trust barriers, and ethical considerations persist. This research contributes to the burgeoning debate of human-AI integration in project management, providing practical insights for electric production stakeholders interested in using AI while retaining human primacy in complex decision-making processes.

Keywords: Human-centred AI, project management, electric production, artificial intelligence, human-AI collaboration

COMPETENCIES FOR MANAGING SUSTAINABILITY-RELATED TENSIONS IN PROJECTS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Actively contributing to the promotion of sustainability has become more important than ever. A growing movement is encouraging companies to extend their responsibilities beyond purely financial results and to integrate sustainability performance. Project managers often face conflicts when pursuing sustainability goals, and challenges such as organizational barriers and limited authority. These barriers can only be effectively addressed if they are supported by economic arguments. Existing research shows a notable gap in the critical competencies project managers need to manage sustainability-related tensions. Therefore, this study focuses on the micro level and examines the competencies that enable project managers to deal with sustainability-related tensions within projects, thereby improving overall sustainability outcomes. The research question 'Which competencies of project managers have proven to be relevant for balancing sustainability-related tensions in projects?' is answered by a literature review from the period 2015-2025 with a focus on sustainable project management, tension in projects, and competencies of project managers. The result of this study is a competency-based conceptual framework that identifies the competencies that help project managers deal with sustainability-related tensions, thereby laying the foundation for subsequent empirical validation.

Keywords: sustainability tensions, competencies, project manager, sustainable project management

IMPORTANCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROJECT MANAGERS FOR PROJECT SUCCESS: AN INDUSTRY PROJECTS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how entrepreneurial characteristics of project managers influence project success in large-scale industry projects. The importance is driven due to Generation Z, the cohort born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, which will bring unique and different characteristics to the workforce. Understanding the impact on project management is essential. Therefore, first the impact of entrepreneurial characteristics of today's project managers on project success in large-scale industry projects is examined. The research methodology includes a contemporary literature review, and 12 expert interviews based on a pairwise comparison of the importance of entrepreneurial characteristics with respect to project success. The comparison between literature and pairwise voting by project management experts reveals both agreement and disagreement in entrepreneurial characteristics importance. Entrepreneurial characteristics like Positive Response to Challenges, Honesty/Integrity, Responsibility, and Ability to Learn from Mistakes are consistently valued in both contexts, highlighting their critical role for project success. However, characteristics such as Vision and Internal Locus of Control show discrepancies, with higher importance in previous literature than practical applicability for the interviewed expert group out of the large-scale industry projects arena. Additionally, implications based on differences between today's project managers and Generation Z's characteristics are outlined to address future areas.

Keywords: entrepreneurial characteristics and traits, projects, project management, large-scale industry projects, generation Z

COMPARISON OF CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF BLITZ PROJECTS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

In the business field, as technology advances, markets change, and emergencies occur, companies and organizations are facing greater pressure to implement projects with extremely tight schedules (Shenhar and Dvir 2007). Blitz projects are defined as major projects that are the most exposed by time pressure, as they are response to reality that affected community (Li et al. 2023), characterized by rapid execution and high agility, they have become essential for organizations responding to urgent needs and strategic opportunities. This paper compares the challenges faced with implementing Blitz projects within public and private sector contexts. Drawing on a synthesis of literature, case studies, and stakeholder insights, the study identifies key differences in organizational structures, resource allocation, stakeholder engagement and environments. The findings reveal that while public sector Blitz projects are response to some crisis (natural disaster, pandemic...), private sector initiatives are driven by strategic goals, innovation, and market responsiveness. Recently, blitz projects were used as response to COVID 19 pandemic, for example: development of vaccine (Lewis et al. 2023) or large-scale public venues as medical emergency sites (Fang et al. 2020)). Public sector Blitz projects faced complex governance, regulatory constraints, and the need to coordinate multiple stakeholders. In contrast, private sector initiatives were driven by strategic goals, innovation, and market responsiveness, requiring agile management and rapid decision-making. Aim of this paper is to bring new important findings about blitz projects situated in the totally new arena.

Keywords: Blitz projects, time, strategic goals, business, project management

MISALIGNED PMO MATURITY MODELS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT ACCURACY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

Project Management Office (PMO) maturity models are widely used to assess organizational capability and guide continuous improvement. However, growing evidence suggests that many organizations adopt maturity frameworks that are not aligned with their PMO's structure, strategic role, or operational context. This misalignment leads to inflated maturity scores, inaccurate assessments, and misguided decision-making. This paper presents a literature review of PMO maturity models, focusing on the causes and consequences of misalignment. Findings reveal three core drivers: (1) structural misfit between PMO functions and model dimensions, (2) behavioral and cognitive biases such as social proof, consultant-driven influence, and confirmation bias, and (3) institutional pressures including standardization, legitimacy seeking, and award motivations. Consequences include distorted performance insights, poor resource allocation, weakened governance, and reduced project success. The review highlights a major gap in evidence-based guidance for selecting context-appropriate PMO maturity models. The paper also proposes a conceptual framework of misalignment and calls for future research on model selection tools, behavioral mitigation strategies, and context-adaptive PMO maturity frameworks.

Keywords: PMO maturity, maturity models, maturity model misalignment, assessment accuracy, PMO assessment bias

REFRAMING PMO MATURITY MISALIGNMENT: A BEHAVIORAL–PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL INTEGRATING BIAS AND JUNGIAN SHADOW DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

Misalignment between PMO maturity models and organizational context remains a persistent challenge, often producing inflated maturity levels and misguided improvement decisions. While cognitive biases are commonly cited as contributors to these distortions, they do not fully explain the depth or persistence of inaccurate self-assessments. This paper conducts a literature review and introduces an integrated behavioral–psychological framework that combines established bias theory with Jung's concept of the Shadow—the unconscious aspects of identity that organizations deny or repress. The analysis reveals that Persona–Shadow dynamics drive PMOs to unconsciously inflate capability, resist diagnostic models, project weaknesses onto external stakeholders, or, in some cases, undervalue genuine strengths. Embedding Shadow mechanisms into the broader misalignment discussion provides a richer explanation for assessment inaccuracies and reinforces the need for maturity approaches that account for both cognitive and unconscious identity-driven distortions. This integrated perspective strengthens the theoretical foundations for improving PMO maturity assessment validity.

Keywords: PMO maturity assessment, model misalignment, behavioral bias, Jungian psychology, shadow dynamics, organizational identity, maturity model selection, assessment accuracy

SOFT FACTORS AND VALUE CREATION IN HIGH-PERFORMING TECHNICAL ORGANISATIONS EXPOSED TO PROJECTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Engineering-driven organisations (EDOs) achieve global performance through deeply embedded professional mindsets, strong technical identities, innovations and culturally stabilised ways of working. While these elements underpin operational excellence, they also shape how people interpret strategic ambitions, communicate across functions and contribute to value creation. This paper positions projectification not as an organisational shape or quantitative innovation but rather as a brainstorming lens for examining how people in technical organisations adopt, adapt and engage with the soft factors that influence result-oriented behaviour in high-performing technical environments. Therefore, the paper brings findings from the previous research about soft factors in described environment, in relation with people & management in engineering-driven organisations. By synthesising the key insights from the research on soft-side of management through leadership, interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligences and cultural aspects on the line of value creation, the study shed new light on complexity of projectification within engineering-driven organisations. Furthermore, the key findings from the literature provide a basis for further empirical work through interviews and survey research within the selected case of one high-performing EDO. The survey brings additional and new findings on how human aspects of technical work shape the management capacity and volition of professionals in engineering-driven environments to contribute to value creation under continual change. The main contribution of this research lies in new findings on how projectification can reveal the human mechanisms through which value is either enabled or constrained, particularly in organisations where even marginal improvements produce substantial impact. The paper proposes a conceptual foundation for identifying which soft factors may require development and how leaders might more effectively approach and support professionals in engineering-driven environments to enhance their contribution to value creation.

Keywords: projectification, engineering-driven organisations, management, soft factors, organisational value creation

WORK MOTIVATION AND PERCEIVED TOOL SPECIFICITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TECHNICAL AND NON-TECHNICAL EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

In production and service organisations work tools are increasingly complex, while employee retention and motivation remain key challenges. It is unclear how mainly general versus job-specific tools relate to work motivation and whether this relationship differs between technical and non-technical employees. I conducted a quantitative cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey (n=250) with purposive non-random sampling. The sample comprised 128 technical and 122 non-technical employees. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation and Cramer's V ($p < 0.05$) examined links between work motivation and the perceived specificity of tools used. Among technical employees a significant association was found between work motivation and tool specificity ($p = 0.002$; Cramer's $V = 0.293$). 21.1% reported predominantly general tools 18.0% mixed use and 60.9% largely job-specific tools. Higher motivation levels were over-represented among those using specific tools. Among non-technical employees no significant association was observed ($p = 0.574$), despite similar proportions (20.5% predominantly general 18.9% mixed, 60.7% job-specific tools) and motivation levels did not align clearly with tool type. The findings suggest that in technical jobs, job-specific tools are closely linked to motivation, likely because performance and safety depend directly on appropriate tools, whereas in non-technical jobs motivation is driven by factors such as organisational culture, supervisory support and career prospects, implying different intervention strategies.

Keywords: work motivation, perceived tool specificity, job-specific tools, technical employees, non-technical employees

VIRTUAL FDI: HOW ONLINE FREELANCING IS RESHAPING GLOBAL SERVICE INVESTMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether the expansion of online freelancing platforms complements or substitutes traditional modes of international investment, particularly Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the service sector. Developing economies have long relied on call centers, IT parks, and offshore service hubs as pathways for employment creation and export growth. However, the rise of digital labor platforms enables firms to source services globally without establishing physical operations, potentially reducing the need for conventional offshore investment while creating new forms of cross-border service engagement. Employing a desk-based conceptual analysis supported by secondary data on digital labor participation, service exports, and FDI trends, this study advances the notion of "virtual FDI," whereby freelance earnings function as decentralized service export flows. The paper outlines scenarios of substitution and complementarity, highlighting how platforms may simultaneously bypass infrastructure-heavy investor entry while also cultivating skills, networks, and specialization that attract future institutional investment. The findings have important implications for development policy, suggesting that national investment strategies must increasingly integrate digital labor market ecosystems alongside traditional FDI and BPO models as engines of service-driven growth.

Keywords: virtual FDI, digital outsourcing, business process outsourcing (BPO), service exports, global value chains, platform economy, international investment, digital labor markets, emerging economies

MOTHERHOOD AS A FACTOR IN WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SLOVENIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood significantly shapes women's professional and entrepreneurial decisions, as it influences motivation, time allocation, and access to entrepreneurial networks. The aim of the study was to examine whether the impact of motherhood on the entrepreneurial decisions of Slovenian women entrepreneurs has changed since the original study conducted in 2008, and how entrepreneurs with and without children differ in terms of motivation, work organization, networking, and growth orientation. The research is based on a quantitative approach, replicating the original study. Data from an online survey completed by 124 women entrepreneurs were analyzed. Eleven hypotheses were tested, developed on the basis of the original study and adapted to current research questions. The results show that women entrepreneurs with children are more likely to enter entrepreneurship after the age of 35 and perceive flexibility as a more important motivation than those without children. Despite caregiving responsibilities, entrepreneur-mothers do not devote less time to their businesses and actively build social capital. Growth orientation does not differ significantly between the two groups. A comparison with 2008 indicates a shift toward a stronger connection between motherhood and entrepreneurial activity. Today, women entrepreneurs with children demonstrate greater involvement in networking and business development, suggesting improved opportunities for balancing entrepreneurship and family responsibilities. The findings highlight the need for policies that take into account the impact of life circumstances on women's entrepreneurial pathways.

Keywords: women's entrepreneurship, family factors, entrepreneurial decision, life circumstances

EXPERT PANEL

THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AS A DRIVER OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: FUTURE CHALLENGES

NEW ISO 9001:2026 – FROM PROCESS STABILITY TO DIGITAL AND SUSTAINABLE RESILIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The significance of ISO 9001, the world's most widely adopted management system, lies primarily in its ability to capture the proven practices of the most successful organizations and present them as requirements to a broad range of users. The upcoming revision, expected in autumn 2026, is not merely a technical update but a strategic response to a new reality. Why was a new edition necessary? The world in which the 2015 version was published is fundamentally different from today. Digitalization, artificial intelligence, hybrid work models, climate change, and disruptions in supply chains have revealed that process stability alone is no longer sufficient. Organizations need resilience—the ability to withstand shocks and adapt to them. What does ISO 9001:2026 introduce? The key shift lies in enhancing process stability with two additional dimensions: digital and sustainable resilience. For the first time, explicit requirements are included regarding cybersecurity, data integrity, and the use of digital technologies. Requirements related to managing sustainability and climate change are introduced, which organizations must address within their context, risks, opportunities, and strategic planning. There is a stronger emphasis on quality culture, and new requirements for ethical conduct are added—quality is no longer just a matter of procedures; it is inseparable from responsible, ethical, and environmentally conscious behavior. What about the transition? ISO 9001:2026 retains the High-Level Structure (HLS) and the process approach, meaning this is not a revolution but an evolution. After publication, a transition period of approximately three years is expected, during which organizations can align their systems with the new requirements. What can organizations do today, before the official release?

We recommend reviewing the existing management system and identifying gaps in relation to the upcoming requirements: strengthen leadership and employee awareness of quality culture and ethics, enhance risk management—especially opportunities—integrate digital tools, analyze the impact of climate change, and orient the organization toward sustainable operations. These actions will not only ease the transition to the new standard but will also improve competitiveness, resilience, and future readiness.

Keywords: ISO 9001:2026, updates, resilience, transition, recommendations

THE IMPACT OF THE QUALITY SYSTEM ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (ZD)

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents the results of the research conducted within the framework of a bachelor's thesis, exploring the impact of the ISO 9001:2015 quality management system on employee engagement in a selected public healthcare institution. It is based on the premise that employee engagement is a key strategic factor influencing quality, patient safety and satisfaction, as well as the successful implementation of change. A well-implemented quality management system can enhance employee engagement and, in turn, support both organizational performance and the successful digital transformation of healthcare organizations.

The empirical research was conducted in a public healthcare institution using an employee survey and interviews with key management personnel. The aim was to identify elements of the quality management system that have a positive or negative impact on employee engagement and to offer practical recommendations for promoting engagement within this framework. The results show that the system contributes to higher engagement primarily through task and role clarity, collaboration, professional development, and awareness of personal responsibility and contribution to shared outcomes. However, factors related to bureaucratic requirements and poorly understood system elements can also reduce employee engagement.

The paper demonstrates that a meaningful, people-oriented, and appropriately implemented quality management system can become a powerful tool for strengthening employee engagement and supporting future organizational development, including digital transformation. Consequently, it also contributes to the long-term sustainability of the healthcare system. The study closes with practical suggestions for improvements and directions for further research.

Keywords: employee engagement, quality management system, ISO 9001:2015, healthcare, digital transformation

NEW ISO STANDARD FOR AI MANAGEMENT – ISO 42001

Mirjana Ivanuša Bezjak, Lecturer
Alma Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence became an indispensable part of everyday work life in 2025. However, starting with the first quarter of 2026, the picture will change. ISO 42001 is coming – the first global framework that helps organizations establish a system for responsible AI governance. It is a standard designed similarly to ISO 27001 for information security but focused specifically on the particularities of AI.

Keywords: *ISO standard, AI, accountability, ethical use of AI, information security*

SCHOLARLY PANEL

THE CHANGING WORLD OF LABOUR

Zinka Kosec, Assistant Professor, Independent Researcher
Doba Fakulteta, Slovenia

Mirjana Ivanuša Bezjak, Lecturer
Alma Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

Tatjana Kolenc, Independent Professional
Co-Founder of Heart Mentoring Programme, Slovenia

ABSTRACT

The changing world of labour is increasingly characterized by knowledge-intensive and predominantly sedentary forms of work, placing employee well-being at the centre of contemporary organizational research and practice. Rapid technological development, particularly digitalisation, alongside changing employee expectations and evolving organizational values, is transforming how work is organised, managed, and experienced. In this context, organizations increasingly seek ways to support both employee well-being and sustainable performance.

Although many organizations have introduced various well-being initiatives, research suggests that employee well-being is primarily influenced by broader organizational factors such as leadership practices, mentorship, digital transformation, and organizational culture rather than by isolated well-being programs. These systemic factors shape employees' work experiences, motivation, and long-term engagement.

This panel contribution draws on insights from the book "Spreminjajoči se svet dela" or The Changing World of Labour, which explores three interconnected dimensions of contemporary work: digitalisation of work processes, the role of organizational and personal values as a core in this process, and mentorship as an important leadership and developmental practice. Together, these perspectives highlight how organizational environments can support both employee development and well-being in modern workplaces.

Recent studies indicate that higher levels of job satisfaction and overall well-being which are based on their values are positively associated with employee engagement, productivity, and sustainable work performance. In an era marked by rapid technological transformation, shifting workforce expectations, and growing awareness of mental health at work, the future of work will depend not only on productivity and innovation but also on the capacity of organizations to create human-centred work environments that support both employee well-being and long-term organizational sustainability.

Keywords: employee well-being, digitalisation, mentorship, organizational values



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of Sciences and Arts



World Academy of
Art and Science

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MARIBOR | 13-18 March 2026

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10:00 – 10:45
(in English)
onsite in
Maribor &
online

WELCOME ADDRESSES

Ludvik Toplak, Rector, Alma Mater Europaea University

INVITED SPEAKER

Challenges of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts for the Future of Europe

Klaus Mainzer, University Professor, President of European Academy of Sciences and Arts:

Moderator: Igor E. Bergant

10:45 – 11:30
(in English)
onsite & online

01 PLENARY SESSION: Representatives of National Academies

INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN-CENTERED SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Moderator: Klaus Mainzer, President of European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA)

Igor Emri, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Member EASA

Damir Boras, former Rector of the University of Zagreb, Member of Academy of Educational Sciences of Croatia, Member EASA

Ernst Pöppel, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Member of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina

Andrew Balas, Augusta University (USA), EASA – US delegate

11:30 – 11:50
(in English)
onsite & online

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Principles and Policies to Respond to This Dangerous Time

Jonathan Granoff, President, Global Security Institute, Trustee of the World Academy of Art and Science, Senior Advisor and United Nations Representative of the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summits of Nobel Peace Laureates, Signatory to the Global Peace Offensive

(Moderator: Igor E. Bergant)

11:50 – 13:15
(in English)
onsite & online

02 PLENARY SESSION: Peace Offensive Rollout - What It Takes

(Moderator: Donato Kiniger-Passigli, Vice-President, World Academy of Art and Science)

INVITED SPEAKERS

Jonathan Granoff, President, Global Security Institute

Thania Paffenholz, Founder, Inclusive Peace

Paul Działkowski, Director of Mediation and Peace Support, Geneva Centre for Security Policy

Sabina Stadler Repnik, Head of Strategic Studies, Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

15:00 – 15:45
(in English)
onsite & online

INVITED SPEAKER

(Moderator: Igor E. Bergant)

Physiotherapy in the Era of AI and Robotics: Preserving Humanity in Health Care

Alena Kobesova, Professor, Charles University Prague

15:45 – 16:00
(in English)
onsite & online

Pre-session:

A New United Nations University Institute in Hungary: Peace, Security and Transformative Technologies

Ferenc Miszlivetz, Professor, Director, Institute of Advanced Studies Köszeg

16:00 – 17:30
(in English)
onsite & online

03 PLENARY SESSION: International Interference in Domestic Politics and Elections

INVITED SPEAKERS

(Moderator: Nigel Baker, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., British Embassy Ljubljana, Former UK ambassador to Bolivia, the Holy See and Slovakia)

Gordan Akrap, Vice Rector, Franjo Tudman Defense and Security University, Zagreb; Associate Fellow, Bonn University CASSIS Programme; President, Hybrid Warfare Research Institute; and Member of the Croatian Parliament's Council for Civilian Oversight of Security and Intelligence Agencies

Paul Flather, Retired Fellow of Corpus Christi College and Mansfield College, University of Oxford; Founding CEO of Central European University

Marcin Walecki, Academic Visitor, University of Oxford; Senior Resident Country Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Ukraine

Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, Retired Research Fellow of Merton College and Pembroke College, University of Oxford and Brunel University of London, Founder Governor of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and Board Member of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems

16:00 – 17:00
(in English)
onsite & online

04 SCIENCE POWERING GREEN INNOVATION

(Moderator: Aleksander Zidanšek, WAAS Vice President)

Join MEETING

Yury Gogotsi, Distinguished University Professor and the Charles T. and Ruth M. Bach Endowed Chair in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Director of the A.J. Drexel Nanomaterials Institute, Drexel University
Aleksander Zidanšek, WAAS Vice President
Eva Kovacevic, Professor, GREMI, Orléans
Alexandre Nominé, Professor, Mines Nancy
Uroš Cvelbar, Professor, Jozef Stefan Institute, WAAS Fellow

DISCUSSION

EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Saturday,
14 March 2026

9:00 – 10:45
(in Slovenian,
Scholarly Panel)
online

05 EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

(Moderators: Sebastjan Kristovič, Professor; Polonca Pangrčič, Assistant Professor; Jasmina Kristovič, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Join MEETING

Logotherapy and Preventive Role of Volunteering Regarding the Crisis of Meaning

Matjaž Horvat, School of Advanced Social Studies (FUDŠ), Sebastjan Kristovič, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Intelligentsia and the Transfer of Knowledge to the Public Space

Renata Šribar, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

From Feedback-Informed Treatment to Feedback-Informed Supervision: Introducing AI Supervisor

Nuša Kovačević Tojnko, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University; Outpatient Clinic for Mental Health Pamina; Tatjana Rožič, Professor, Sigmund Freud University Vienna – Ljubljana Branch

Community Learning as a Model for Strengthening Mental Health and Preventing Violence at All Stages of Life

Sara Jerebic, Researcher, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana; Jasminka Zloković, Researcher, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, University of Rijeka

Expressive Arts for Integrating Academic Knowledge

Marko Šetinc, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Job Burnout Among Farmers and Non-Farmers in Slovenia: Sociodemographic Correlates and Group Differences

Adela Černigoj, Research Fellow; Lilijana Šprah, Researcher, ZRC SAZU

Study Protocol for the AI-Supervised Trial: A Pilot Rct for AI Supported Supervision in Psychotherapy Training

Saša Poljak Lukek, Professor; Andreja Erman, PhD Candidate; University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Saturday,
14 March 2026

10:45 – 12:15
(in Slovenian,
Scholarly Panel)
online

06 EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

(Moderators: Sebastjan Kristovič, Professor; Polonca Pangrčič, Assistant Professor; Jasmina Kristovič, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Join MEETING

Logopedagogy: Educating the Heart, Mind, and Hands

Sebastjan Kristovič, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Social-Therapeutic LSCI Model in Working With Children and Adolescents in Educational Institutions in Slovenia

Iryna Čečelič, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Fathers of Infants and Toddlers: The Role of Emotion Regulation and Self-Differentiation in Parenting Stress and Parenting Sense of Competence

Dora Glavaš, PhD Candidate, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

Hazing on the First Day of School in Public Spaces

Nataša Novak, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Meaning in Life as a Protective Factor for Mental Health Among Adults Aged 50 and Over

Jasmina Kristovič, Researcher, Alma Mater Europaea University

Quality of Life After Permanently Acquired Disability and the Role of Relational Family Therapy

Sanja Sovec, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana

Who Stigmatises and Who Understands? Analysis of Public Stigma Expression Among Participants in the Workshops The Power of Conversation – The Weakness of Stigma (OMRA 2021–2025)

Nataša Dernovšek Hafner; Lilijana Šprah, Researchers, ZRC SAZU

Evaluation of Alcohol Addiction Treatment Using the Social Andragogical Method

Uroš Perko, PhD, Lecturer, New University; Jure Umnik, Student, FUDŠ - Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije v Novi Gorici

Which Values Do We Live By? Logotherapy in the Preschool and Early School Years

Vladimira Velički, Professor, University of Zagreb

EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Saturday,
14 March 2026

13:00 – 14:00
(in Slovenian,
Expert Panel)
online

07 EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

(Moderators: Sebastjan Kristovič, Professor; Polonca Pangrčič, Assistant Professor; Jasmina Kristovič, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Join MEETING

Addiction to Internet and Gaming Among Young People (Primary School)

Andreja Havoj Mandić, Teacher, DOŠ I. Lendava

The Importance of Relational Family Psychotherapy in Post-Modern Society

Munira Pejić, Expert, Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana; Kleopatra Kodrič, Expert, KRES D.O.O.

14:00 – 15:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

08 EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

(Moderators: Sebastjan Kristovič, Professor; Polonca Pangrčič, Assistant Professor; Jasmina Kristovič, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea ECM)

Join MEETING

Differences in the Perception and Self-Perception of Experts About the Professional Role in the Early Identification of Developmental Disabilities

Zlatko Bukvić, Professor, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb; Renata Možanić, Lecturer, Home Healthcare Association ZNJUK

Measures of the Effectiveness of Higher Education Systems

Dawid Stawski, Professor, Lodz University of Technology

English Language Teaching During COVID-19 in Kosovo: A Mixed-Methods Study on Teachers' Digital Competencies, Technological Practices, and Perceptions of Pedagogical Effectiveness

Ernest Ismeti, PhD Candidate, South East European University

The Ethics of Care and Students' Emotional Resilience in School Transition: An Educational Approach to Student Well-Being

Albana Tahiri, Associate Professor, Albanian University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Education and English; Drilona Nuzi, Expert, Primary Education Teacher, Public School of Tirana

Integrating Artificial Intelligence and Educational Neuroscience: Redefining Cognitive Load and Learning Efficacy

Narrayani Premal, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

14:00 – 15:45

(in English,
Scientific Panel)
onsite & online

09 NEW RENAISSANCE

(Moderator: Howie Firth, Director, Orkney International Science Festival)

[Join MEETING](#)

Discussants (in alphabetic order):

Andraž Ivšek, Slovenian Scientific Foundation

Andrei Marga, Former Rector, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

Darja Piciga, Researcher, Integral Green Slovenia Ljubljana

Donato Kiniger – Passigli, Vice-president, World Academy of Art and Science

Jane Adams, Art Curator, Historian and CEO of Artemisia Gold Company

Luka Trebežnik, Vice-dean, Alma Mater Europaea University

Matej Makarovič, Researcher, Faculty of Information Studies Novo mesto

Rachel Armstrong, Professor, The Catholic University of Leuven

Raffaella Santi, Researcher, University of Urbino

Samuel Abraham, President, Bratislava International School of Liberal Education

Sonja Weiss, Researcher, Faculty of Arts University of Ljubljana

9:00 – 10:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

10 PHYSIOTHERAPY

(Moderator: Tine Kovačič, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Comparative Effectiveness of the Schroth Method, Core Stabilization Exercises, and Pilates on Spinal Mobility, Cosmetic Trunk Deformity, and Psychological Factors in Adolescents and Young Adults With Idiopathic Scoliosis: A Narrative Review

Shkurta Rrecaj Malaj, PhD Candidate, University of Pristina, Medical Faculty, Physiotherapy Department, Republic of Kosovo; Tine Kovačič, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University; Ardiana Murtezani, Professor, University of Pristina, Medical Faculty, Physiotherapy Department, Republic of Kosovo; Mejdi Aliu, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Five-Week Structured Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Plan for Early Rehabilitation After Traumatic Ulnar Nerve Injury: A Case Report

Mimoze Zogaj, PhD Candidate; Tine Kovačič, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Cardiac Rehabilitation After Minimally Invasive Mitral Valve Surgery in a Patient With Barlow's Disease: Case Study

Marin Buljan; Sena Bogdanović, PhD Candidates, Alma Mater Europaea University

Rehabilitation After ACL Reconstruction and the Influence of Various Factors Such as Gender, Age, and BMI: A Literature Review

Valentina Dushi, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Physiotherapy and Biomechanics in Enhancing the Performance of Horses and Riders

Jana Hunjet, Expert; Vesna Hodić, PhD Candidate; Mateja Znika, Professor; Jasminka Potočnjak, PhD Candidate, University North, Department of Physiotherapy

10:30 – 11:45
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

11 PHYSIOTHERAPY

(Moderator: Tine Kovačič, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Comparative Analysis of Two Physiotherapy Intervention Programs in Individuals With Chronic Lower Back Pain

Sylejman Miftari, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Detection of Muscle Damage by Biochemical Methods

Rocco Brlek, Student; Manuela Kušec, Professor, University of Applied Sciences Ivanić-Grad; Goran Bobić, Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology

The Effectiveness of Preoperative Chest Physiotherapy in Patients Undergoing Elective Cardiac Surgery at the Cardiac Surgery Clinic in Pristina

Arben Krasniqi, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University, University Clinical Center of Kosovo

The Effectiveness of Physiotherapeutic Rehabilitation in Patients With Ankylosing Spondylitis at the Rheumatology Clinic in Pristina

Bajram Shyti, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University, University Clinical Center of Kosovo

Kader Abdominal Therapy: The Abdominal Nexus – A Multisystem Integration of Stress Physiology, Fascial Dynamics, Lymphatic Flow, Visceral Mobility and Autonomic Regulation

Minodora-Cecilia Kader, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University

12:30 – 14:00
(in Slovenian,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

12 PHYSIOTHERAPY

(Moderator: Mladen Herc, senior lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Comparison of Measurements of Sagittal Spine Curves Measured With a Plumbline and Formetric 4D Rasterography Device in Children and Adolescents

Mihela Matičič, Expert; Mladen Herc, Lecturer; Mateja Berčan, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Physiotherapy and Social Gerontology in the Promotion of Healthy Aging

Mateja Znika, Lecturer; Ivana Živoder, Lecturer; Vesna Hodič, Lecturer; Nikolina Zaplatič Degač, Lecturer, University North, Department of Physiotherapy

Physiotherapeutic Management of Acute Lateral Ankle Sprain: Rest or Early Mobilization? – A Literature Review

Ema Jereb, Expert; Tadeja Hernja Rumpf, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Therapeutic Touch in Manual Therapy

Martin Pirtovšek; Sandra Marija Orožim, Lecturers; Mateja Berčan, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Physiotherapeutic Management of Flat Feet in the Adult Population – A Literature Review

Rebeka Beranič, Expert; Tatjana Horvat, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Analysis of the Effects of Animal-Assisted Physiotherapy in Children With Cerebral Palsy and Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mateo Matušan, Expert; Patricija Goubar, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

14:00 – 16:00
(in Slovenian,
Student Panel)
online

Join MEETING

13 PHYSIOTHERAPY

(Moderator: Tatjana Horvat, senior lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Effectiveness of Virtual Reality Walking Exercise in Stroke Patients – Literature Review

Zarja Radulović, Student; Uroš Marušič, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University;
Matej Koprivnik, Expert, UKC Maribor

The Role of the Physiotherapist in Prevention and Health Promotion

Špela Šikovec, Student; Nataša Toplak, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Physiotherapy for Sacroiliac Joint Pain: A Literature Review

Jaka Poglavnik, Student; Mladen Herc, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Effectiveness of Education During the Waiting Period for Physiotherapy in Patients With Chronic Low Back Pain

Urban Vantur, Student; Petra Medved Jereb, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Physiotherapeutic Approach in Patient After Heart Transplantation – A Literature Review and Case Study

Zala Leskovic, Student; Tatjana Horvat, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Functional Effects of Vojta Therapy and Neurophysiotherapy in Global Developmental Delay: A Case Study

Ana Paternost, Student; Patricija Goubar, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Importance of Proper Body Posture for the Normal Function of Internal Organs

Živa Arko, Lecturer; Jerneja Nabergoj, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Impact of Posture on the Prevalence of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease and the Importance of Physiotherapy Treatment: A Literature Review

Živa Arko, Lecturer; Manca Troha, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University

10:00 – 11:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

14 DANCE AS CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

(Moderator: Svebor Sečák, Dean of Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy)

Slovak Folk Dance in the Process of Transformation

Matúš Ivan, Lecturer, Faculty of Music and Dance, Academy of Performing Arts, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

The Metamorphosis of Contemporary Flamenco: Crafting Individual Expressions Through Digitalisation Between Tradition and Innovation

Ana Pandur, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy

Dancing with Words: Linguistic Variation, Genre-Specific Usage and Non-Slovene Terminology in Slovenian Dance Discourse

Ana Vodišek, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy

Reconfiguring Dance Between Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology

Simona Noja-Nebyla, Lecturer, Music Academy Gh. Dima

Contemporary Dance Between Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence

Matjaž Mrak, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy

11:30 – 13:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

[Join MEETING](#)

15 BALLET PEDAGOGY AND SOMATIC PRACTICES

(Moderator: Svebor Sečak, Dean of Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy)

Corrective Training for the First Years of Classical Ballet at the Hungarian Dance University

Melinda Szitt, Professor, Hungarian Dance University; Fanni Bogáti, Lecturer, Burattino Foundation Bailart Dance Training; Judit Benedek, Bárányfelhő Development and Therapy Centre

Application of the Vaganova Method in a Contemporary Context: Pedagogical Analysis with a Focus on the Slovenian Setting and the Integration of Modern Approaches in Heterogeneous Learning Groups

Claudia Sovre, Student, Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy

Towards a More Inclusive Classical Ballet Pedagogy

Antoneta Turk, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy

Applied Anatomy and Ballet Tandem-Teaching Model (AABTTM): A Proposal for Contemporary Dance Students Learning Ballet

Darrel Toulon, Lecturer, Anton Bruckner University

Body Landscape: Somatic Awareness, Cellular Memory, and Artistic Body Mapping

Jelena Oleami, Student, Alma Mater Europaea Dance Academy

Neuromuscular Control of Postural and Core Stability in Students of Dance Theatre Acting

Sylwia Mętel, PhD, Lecturer; Marek Pokutycki, Associate Professor, Institute of Applied Sciences Motor Rehabilitation Department, University of Physical Culture in Krakow; Monika Jakowczuk, Professor, Faculty of Acting, National Academy of Theatre Arts in Krakow; Katarzyna Cholewa; Laura Pasiowiec, Graduates of Physiotherapy Faculty, University of Physical Culture in Krakow; Michał Mętel, Student, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Automatics, Computer Science and Biomedical Engineering, AGH University of Krakow

9:00 – 10:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

[Join MEETING](#)

16 SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

(Moderator: Jana Goriup, Emerita Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Competences, Skills and Knowledge for Working with Older Adults: Social Gerontologist

Jana Goriup, Professor Emerita, Alma Mater Europaea University

Integrating Elderly in the Digitally Advanced Healthcare Systems

Suzana Kraljić, Professor, Law Faculty, University of Maribor; Ema Turnsek, PhD Candidate, Central European Academy and Deak Ferenc Doctoral School of the University of Miskolc

Nursing Staff Satisfaction in Long-Term Care Homes (LCHs)

Aleksandra Ločičnik, PhD Candidate; Majda Bastič, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Ergonomic Strategies for Reducing Labor Shortages in an Aging Workforce

Tilen Medved, PhD Candidate; Tomaž Kern, Professor; Zvone Balantič, Professor, University of Maribor, Faculty of Organizational Sciences

Psychological Aspects of Grandparenthood

Janez Mayer, Assistant Professor, University of Maribor

Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older Adults: A Comparison of Residential Care and Home Settings

Renata Šabeder, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

10:30 – 12:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

[Join MEETING](#)

17 SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

(Moderator: Jana Goriup, Emerita Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Rehabilitation of Older Adults After Hip Fracture in the Republic of Croatia

Gordana Šantek-Zlatar; Marina Friščić, PhD Candidates, Alma Mater Europaea University

Triage of Elderly People With Hip Fractures According to the Australasian Triage Scale in Emergency Departments

Marina Friščić; Gordana Šantek Zlatar, PhD Candidates, Alma Mater Europaea University

Towards Equitable and Sustainable Long-Term Care in Europe: A Comparative Perspective

Suzanna Mežnarec Novosel, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Digital Inclusion and Intergenerational Connectedness Between Older Adults and Young People: A Pilot Study

Valentina Vincek, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University; Marijana Neuberg, Associate Professor, University North; Ivana Dvorski Lacković, Lecturer, Fakultet organizacije i informatike

Implementation of Deinstitutionalisation in the Institutional Care of Residents of the Home for the Care of Adults Velenje

Violeta Potočnik Krajnc, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Social Gerontology and the Systems of Long-Term Care and Disability Protection in Slovenia

Urška Kunčič, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

12:00 – 13:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

[Join MEETING](#)

18 SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

(Moderator: Jana Goriup, Emerita Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Digital Ergonomics Across Generations: Health Challenges and Awareness in a Long-Lived Society

Branka Jarc Kovačič, Lecturer, Higher Vocational College, School Centre Kranj; Tilen Medved, PhD Candidate; Zvone Balantič, Professor, University of Maribor, Faculty of Organizational Sciences

Nature and Dementia Care: A Narrative Literature Review on Green Spaces, Participation and Dementia Friendly Environments

Ana Hribar Podkrajšek, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Intergenerational Knowledge and the Aging Hunter: Cultural Dimensions of Later-Life Engagement

Vilma Alina Postić Bezenšek, PhD Candidate, University of Maribor, Faculty of Law

IT and Robotic Solutions in Nursing and Social Care of Elderly Adults: A Systematic Literature Review

Natasa Standeker, Lecturer; Sanja Horvat Grilanc, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University; Nese Odabas, Lecturer, Ankara Yildirim Beyazıt Üniversitesi

Ageing in Contemporary Culture: Challenges and Implications for Social Gerontology

Mateja Buzina; Tanita Knežević, PhD Candidates, Alma Mater Europaea University

Psychosocial Symptoms of Older Adult Receiving Palliative Care

Urška Cankar Bošnjak, Expert, SIND

Social Effects of Older Adults' Participation in Study Circles in the Local Community

Mihaela Kežman, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

16:00 – 17:00

(in English, Expert
Panel)
online

19 ART AS A SPACE FOR CONFRONTING DEATH

(Moderator: Alenka Križnik, Expert, The Slovenian Hospice Society, University of Maribor, Faculty of Law)

[Join MEETING](#)

Risk Prevention in Relation to Photographing an Individual Before and After Death Based on the Case study of the Artistic Project Facing Death

Alenka Križnik, Expert, The Slovenian Hospice Society, University of Maribor, Faculty of Law

Facing Death Project Overview: Photographing Terminally Ill Individuals Before and After Their Death

Matija Tomc, Photographer and Producer, Facing Death Project

Facing Death: Aesthetic Experience and Participatory Portraiture in Palliative Care

Špela Klara Jambrek, Psychologist, Facing Death Project

The Role of the Slovenian Hospice Association in the Facing Death Project

Anamari Tkalec, Expert, The Slovenian Hospice Society

Discussants:

Hana Kodba Čeh, PhD Candidate, Expert, Klinika Golnik

Ema Turnšek, PhD Candidate, University of Miskolc, Central European Academy, University of Maribor, Faculty of Law

10:00 – 13:00

(in Slovenian and
English, Scholarly
Panel), online

20 ARCHIVAL SYMPOSIUM

(Moderators: Peter Pavel Klasinc, Associate Professor; Miroslav Novak, Associate Professor; Zdenka Semlič Rajh, Associate Professor; Tatjana Hajtnik, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Introductory Considerations: The Position of Archives in a Globalized World (Where are they and where they should be)

Peter Pavel Klasinc, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Traditional or digital: Are we ready for the future?

Zdenka Semlič Rajh, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Reflection on the theme of the symposium

Miroslav Novak, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Tatjana Hajtnik, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Special guest:

“The Dictionary of Polish Book Professionals” as a Source of Biographical Information – Yesterday and Today

Agata Walczak-Niewiadomska, Professor, University of Lodz, Department of Information, Library and Book Science

Commentators:

A Perspective on the Digitalisation of Office Management Processes in the Judiciary

Aida Škoro Babič, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Digital Records Are Created, Where They Are Stored, and How They Are Managed

Rudi Jamnik, MA Student of Archives and Records Management, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Archival Technician: Experiences and Challenges from the Perspective of the Physical Preservation of Archival Material

Iva Lana Lanščak, MA Student of Archives and Records Management, Alma Mater Europaea University

Archives and the Principles of the Seventh Generation

Lavrenčič Aleksander, PhD Student of Archival Science, Alma Mater Europaea University

Discussion:

Karen J. Trivette, PhD, Alma Mater Europaea University

Miroslav Milovanović, PhD, Alma Mater Europaea University

Jelka Melik, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Luka Hribar, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Giulia Felis, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University

Dieter Schlenker, Assistant Professor, Director of Historical archives of EU, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Bogdan Florin Popovici, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

9:00 – 10:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

21 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(Moderator: Matevž Vremec, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Organisation is Social Complexity: Educating and Preparing New Generations to Inhabit Unpredictability

Piero Dominici, Professor, CHAOS, International Research and Education Program, University of Perugia, Fellow of the World Academy of Art & Science

Optimising EX-Zone Requirements on Adriatic WWTPs Without Biogas Digesters

Marko Šetinc, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Ethical Intelligence for a Sustainable Future

Richard Pagett, Professor, European Centre for Peace and Development

From Commodification to Care: An Ecological and Wu-Wei Approach to AI in Higher Education

Maria Lai-Ling Lam, Professor, LCC International University

Public Intellectuals and the Ethics of Economic Growth: Reclaiming Gandhian Values in 21st-Century India

Deepika Dahiya, PhD, Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi; Rinki Dahiya; Priya Dahiya, PhD, Lecturers, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, University of Delhi, New Delhi

10:00 – 11:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

22 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(Moderator: Matevž Vremec, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Green Fiscal Reforms and the Transition to Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Western Balkans

Ardita Hykaj, Lecturer; Anastas Angjeli, Professor, The Mediterranean University of Albania

Human-Centered Digital Transformation: Reimagining India's Economic Growth for Social Inclusion

Priya Dahiya, PhD, Lecturer, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, University of Delhi, New Delhi

Evaluation of Alternative Eco-Friendly Gas Mixtures for RPC Operation in the CMS Experiment

Senada Jubica, PhD Candidate, University of Shkodra "Luigi Gurakuqi"; Olta Çakaj, Professor, University of Tirana, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Physics

GLP-1 Users as a New Consumer Segment: Strategic Implications for Sustainable Food Management

Ekaterina Silinkina, PhD Candidate, Daugavpils University

Differences in the Perceived Importance of Data for the Transparency of Digital Honey Value Chains: A Comparative Analysis of Beekeepers and Consumers

Ewa Wanda Ziemba, Professor, University of Economics in Katowice

9:00 – 10:30
(in Slovenian,
Scholarly Panel)
online

23 HEALTH SCIENCES

(Moderator: Tine Kovačič, assistant professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

The Future of Neuromodulation: How Technology Is Changing the Spectrum of Clinical Outcomes – Review of the Literature and Clinical Vignettes

Tadej Strojnik, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Join MEETING

How to Prevent Obesity in the University Environment: Implementation and Piloting of a New Multilingual Course on Developing Healthy Lifestyle Habits (EDU-FIT Project)

Natalia Kaloh Vid; Vlasta Kučič, Professors, Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Determinants of Nurses' Attitudes Towards Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation in Slovenian Secondary General Hospitals: A Logistic Regression Analysis

Lea Rastoder, Researcher, University of Primorska, Faculty of Health Sciences; Boštjan Žvanut, Professor, University of Primorska, Faculty of Health Sciences; Igor Karnjuš, Professor, University of Primorska, Faculty of Health Sciences

Awareness of Secondary School Students About HPV Infection and HPV Vaccination

Nataša Žalar, Expert; Nataša Toplak, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Dialectical Systems Thinking in Infection Prevention and Control: A USOMID-Based Communication Framework for Legionnaires' Disease in Hospitals

Aleš Krulec, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Person-Centered Occupational Therapy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Zorana Sicherl, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Health Sciences

10:30 – 11:30
(in Slovenian,
Expert Panel)
online

24 HEALTH SCIENCES

(Moderator: Tanja Bagar, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Endocannabinoid System Modulation in Ageing: Human-Centered Approaches to Longevity

Tanja Bagar, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University; Walter Chingwaru, Professor, Cell Biotech Institute

Join MEETING

Nursing Breakrooms for a Healthy Work Environment

Peter Kamničar, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Youth, Body Image, and Social Media: The Thin Line Between Influence and Eating Disorder

Sara Pavalec, Student; Šefik Salkunić, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Integrating Public Health Approach Into Palliative Care Development

Mateja Lopuh, Expert, General hospital Jesenice; Anamarija Kejžar, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work

Mentoring as a Key Educational Pillar of the Organization

Peter Kamničar, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

13:00 – 14:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

25 HEALTH SCIENCES

(Moderator: Luka Šlosar, Researcher, Alma Mater Europaea University)

ECG Heartbeat Classification Using CNN-Liquid Neural Network Architectures: A Novel Approach With GAN-Based Data Augmentation

Henok Teklu, PhD Candidate; Meheret Demmissie, PhD, Alma Mater Europaea University

Metabolomic Approach in Biomarker Discovery for Diagnosis and Monitoring of Dementia

Martina Hrvačić, PhD Candidate, Clinical Hospital "Sveti Duh"; Suzana Uzun, Professor, Department of Psychiatry "Vrapče"; Institute for Biological Psychiatry and Psychogeriatrics, Reference Centre for Alzheimer's Disease and Psychiatry; Mariana Penava, PhD Candidate, Department of Psychiatry "Vrapče"; Sara Glavaš, Expert, Croatian Institute of Public Health; Štefanija Kolačko, Other, Clinical Hospital "Sveti Duh"

Effects of Maternal Alcohol and Marijuana Consumption on Child Development

Larisa Bosnić Kovačević, PhD Candidate, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences

Speleootherapy for Asthma at Khewra Salt Mine Pakistan

Syed Ahmad; Idrees Munir, Experts, Salt Innovation Organisation; Sylwia Metel, Professor, University School of Physical Education Krakow

[Join MEETING](#)

Determinants of the Perceived Importance of Health Technology Innovations Among Healthcare Workers

Borbála Biró, PhD Candidate, University of Pécs, Faculty of Business and Economics

Breast Cancer Detection Through Thermography: A Systematic Review

Mejdi Aliu, PhD Candidate; Mit Bračić, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University; Shkurta Rrecaj Malaj, PhD Candidate, University of Pristina, Medical Faculty, Physiotherapy Department

14:30 – 15:30
(in English,
Expert Panel)
online



26 HEALTH SCIENCES

(Moderator: Nataša Štandeker, PhD, senior lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Reforming the Health System for an Equitable Society: Toward an Integrated Governance of Collective Well-Being

Loveline Marechal, Lecturer, ENIP; Schmiderson Aujour, Lecturer, CEFAM; Balmy Belizaire, Lecturer, STEDCEP-E

Preventive Care in the Health Systems: Impact on the Improvement of Population Health

Juventina Ngjela, Lecturer; Erda Qorri, Professor, Albanian University Tirana
Pelvic Disorders: Problems and Challenges in Clinical Management
Breda Jesenšek Papež, Professor, University Clinical Center Maribor

Regulatory Fragmentation vs. Foundational Rights: Securing the Right to Health in the Era of Global AI Standards

Aravindan Anandan, Professor, Vidyashilp University

Beyond Salary: Work-Life Balance and Interpersonal Relations as Key Drivers for Future Nurses

Valentina Pavlović Vinogradac, Expert, Gyne Solutions; Marijan Vinogradac, PhD Candidate, Psiholocum d.o.o.; University of Zagreb, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences; Danijel Bursać, Lecturer, University Hospital Merkur; University North

15:30 – 16:30
(in English,
Expert Panel)
online

Join MEETING

27 HEALTH SCIENCES

(Moderator: Luka Šlosar, Researcher, Alma Mater Europaea University)

MOVE4BRAIN: Beyond Sport Through a 'No Brain, No Gain' Project: The Beautiful Minds

Luka Šlosar, Researcher, Alma Mater Europaea University; Paraskevas Alvanos, Expert, AETOI Thessalonikis; Marina Umeton, Expert, PlayMore!

NeuroSteps: Bridging Skills in Sports Coaching for Inclusive Development

Luka Šlosar, Researcher; Veronika Predovnik, Expert, Association Movement for the Brain 'No Brain, No Gain',

SmartStart: Enhancing Early Childhood Development Through Integrated Motor-Cognitive Sports Activities

Veronika Predovnik, Expert, Association Movement for the Brain 'No Brain, No Gain'; Valentina Serdinšek, Expert, Društvo BOR; Kris Dassena, Expert, Municipality of Piran

GreenWheels: Safe and Sustainable Mountain Biking for Healthy Communities

Simon Godec, Expert, MTB Club BOSHK, Slovenia; Jurica Galič, Expert, Vergo Bike Academy; Kris Dassena, Expert, Municipality of Piran, Slovenia

28 HEALTH SCIENCES

(Moderator: Luka Šlosar, Researcher, Alma Mater Europaea University)

16:30 – 17:30
(in English,
Student Panel)
online

Join MEETING

What Is the Role of Healthcare Professionals in Upholding Human Rights?

Harshini Suresh, Student, University of Manchester

Frontal Theta Synchrony, Parietal P300, and Entropy Reveal Nonlinear Network Dynamics Under Increasing Cognitive Load in a Visual Oddball Task

Filip Ileš, Student, Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb; Tena Popović, PhD Candidate, Croatian Institute for Brain Research, University of Zagreb, Alma Mater Europaea University; Nikola Habek, Lecturer, Croatian Institute for Brain Research, University of Zagreb

Students' Attitudes Toward the Impact of Physical Exercise on Health

Antun Koren, Student, University of Applied Sciences Ivanić-Grad; Goran Bobić, Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology; Manuela Kušec, Professor, University of Applied Sciences Ivanić-Grad

The Effectiveness of Virtual Reality-Based Gait Training in Post-Stroke Patients

Zarja Radulović, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University; prof. Dr. Uroš Marušič, professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

10:00 – 11:00
(in English,
Expert Panel)
online

Join MEETING

29 PARLIAMENTS IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER: RENEWING DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY IN INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

(Moderator: Klemen Žumer, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University, Senior Advisor, European Parliament)

Alojz Peterle, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Member of the European Parliament, and former Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia

Toril-Iren Pedersen, Director of UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance | United Nations Development Programme

Klemen Žumer, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Vienna, Senior Advisor, European Parliament

Jurij Toplak, professor, Alma Mater Europaea University / Fordham University

DISCUSSION

11:00 – 12:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

Join MEETING

30 AI AND THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: FROM CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES TO PLANETARY WELL-BEING

(Moderator: Boldizsár Szentgáli-Tóth, Professor, Eötvös Loránd University, Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Legal Studies)

Leila Neimane, Professor, University of Latvia

Neringa Gaubiene, Professor, University of Vilnius

Ferenc Jordán, Professor, University of Parma

Kristóf Fenyvesi, Professor, University of Jyväskylä

Orsolya Tuba, PhD Candidate, University of Jyväskylä

DISCUSSION

12:00 – 13:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

31 LAW

(Moderator: Luka Martin Tomažič, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)



The Powerlessness of Law

Rok Svetlič, Professor, Slovenian Constitutional Court Judge, Professor, ZRS – Koper

Klemen Jaklič, Professor, Slovenian Constitutional Court Judge, Professor, Catholic Institute

Exploring an AI-Driven Solution for Analysing the Consultation Results in the European Commission

Nikolaos Archontas, PhD Candidate, Stakeholder Consultation Expert, Better Regulation Horizontal Coordinator, European Commission

Common Civil Procedure in the European Union

Ieva Čudina, Lecturer, University of Latvia

13:00 – 14:00
(in Slovenian,
Student Panel)
online

32 LAW

(Moderator: Luka Martin Tomažič, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)



Artificial Intelligence in the Legal System: Regulation and Ethics

Marjeta Shaholli, PhD, Lecturer, European University of Tirana

Reimagining Law for a Posthuman Era: AI, Legal Subjectivity, and Legal Information

Karisma Karisma, PhD, Asia School of Business

The Protection of Personal Data of the Deceased

Ema Turnsek, PhD Candidate, Law Faculty, University of Maribor; Deak Ferenc Doctoral School of the University of Miskolc; Central European Academy

10:00 – 11:00
(in Slovenian,
Student Panel)
online



33 HIGH SCHOOL RESEARCH

in Partnership With II. Gimnazija Maribor

(Moderators: Katja Holnthaner Zorec, Research Coordinator, II. gimnazija Maribor; Luka Martin Tomažič, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Effect of Organic Acids on Starch Hydrolysis

Vita Žigart Rubelj, Pupil, II. gimnazija Maribor,

Semaglutide Tablets as a Medication for Obesity in Adults

Neža Kuhar, Pupil, II. gimnazija Maribor

Comparison of Communitarianism and Moral Universalism as an Explanation of the Political Shift in Europe

Katja Gavez, Pupil, II. gimnazija Maribor

The Face, the Finger, and the Code: Biometrics in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Blaž Jesenik, Pupil, II. gimnazija Maribor

15:00 – 16:00
(in English,
Expert Panel)
online

[Join MEETING](#)

34 SPIRITUALITY, EMOTIONS, AND THE OTHER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

(Moderators: Roman Globokar, Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana)

Jonas Miklavčič, Researcher, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Branko Klun, Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Barbara Simonič, Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Ivan Platovnjak, Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Nadja Furlan Štante, Professor, Science and Research Centre Koper

DISCUSSION

16:00 – 17:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

[Join MEETING](#)

35 AGENCY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

(Moderators: Luka Martin Tomažič, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University, Blaž Podobnik, Researcher, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Vojko Strahovnik, Professor, Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana,
Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Mateja Centa Strahovnik, Lecturer, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
David Kraner, Lecturer, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Bojan Žalec, Professor, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Stjepan Štivić, Researcher, Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana

DISCUSSION

9:00 – 10:00

(in English,
Student Panel)
online

36 SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

(Moderator: Jana Goriup, Emeritus Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Aesthetics of Youth as a Social Norm

Lara Belec; Maša Belas; Klara Kuhta Durakovič, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

Assistance in Suicide and the Right to a Dignified Death

Julija Zupan; Sara Kerez; Sara Žurman, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

Cognitive Overload Due to Information Chaos

Maja Kustec; Lena Kočar; Lia Novak; Neja Čerpnjak; Ivana Kampuš, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

Eco-Anxiety of Aging

Ajda Laznik; Ana Kovač; Larisa Kristan; Nina Pisnik, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

10:00 – 11:00

(in English,
Student Panel)
online

37 SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY

(Moderator: Jana Goriup, Emeritus Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Digital Dependency Environment in Older Adults

Katrina Vukan; Lara Hercog; Matija Bobek; Sonja Špes Wahed, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

Digital Manipulation and Disinformation among Older Adults

Sara Pelc Čeh; Katja Šetar, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

Sport, Body and Aging

Klara Krasnič; Tjaša Bratušek; Ana Roškar; Mark Zobovič, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Silent Pressure of Productivity in Older Adults

Ana Majcen; Monika Mlinar; Zoja Suhadolnik; Tiana Hentak, Students, Alma Mater Europaea University

15:00 – 16:15

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

38 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

(Moderator: David Bogataj, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Building Social Infrastructure for Integrated Long-Term Care in Europe: Lessons From Innovative Practices

Suzanna Mežnarec Novosel, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Small Actions, Big Impact: Enhancing Mobility and Well-Being of Older Adults Through Digital Platforms

Alenka Temeljotov Salaj, Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology Faculty of Engineering

Quality of Life of Older Adults: The Impact of Community-Based Housing

Matic Lesjak, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Integration of Rehabilitation into the National Infrastructure for Elderly Care

Dominika Muršec, PhD Candidate; David Bogataj, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Benefits and Barriers of Implementing VR in Elderly Care Institutions,

Franjo Liška, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

16:15 – 17:15
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

39 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

(Moderator: David Bogataj, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Clinical and Economic Effectiveness of Smart Home Technologies for Independent Living of Older Adults: A Literature Review

Matej Bunderšek Kremlj, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Bridging the Digital Divide: Challenges of Infrastructure, Trust, and SHT/AAL in Rural Areas

Aleš Bunderšek Kremlj, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Digital Inclusion and Cognitive Health of Older Adults

Sanja Horvat Grilanc, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Physical Function and Independence Preservation in Older Adults with Sarcopenia: A Literature Review

Vlatko Brezac, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Digital Empathy in the Promotion of Dignity in the Elderly Population

Doris Desić, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Effectiveness of Telerehabilitation for Elderly People After Stroke

Mateja Kovačiček, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

17:30 – 18:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

40 BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

(Moderator: Andreja Kutnar, Professor, InnoRenew CoE, UP IAM & UP FAMNIT, University of Primorska)

Andreja Kutnar, Professor, University of Primorska
Michael Burnard, Professor, University of Primorska
Anna Sandak, Professor, University of Primorska
Jakub Sandak, Professor, University of Primorska
Miklos Kresz, Professor, University of Primorska
Rok Prislan, Professor, University of Primorska

DISCUSSION

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

Tuesday,
17 March 2026

9:00 – 10:15

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

41 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

(Moderator: Maruša Mavsar, PhD, Research Assistant, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Science Communication and the Role of Scientists in Times of Global Crisis

Meike Haken, PhD, Freie Universität Berlin

Trust and Technology Acceptance in Digital Health Communication: Linking IDEA-CommTrust with UTAUT and TAM

Stjepan Petričević; Marko Mikša, PhD Candidate; Božidar Veljković, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Empowering the Voices of Children With Speech and Language Disorders in Educational and Social Spaces

Maja Damevska, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Money Through Children's Eyes: The Role of Family, School, and the Screen in Developing Financial Literacy

Tjaša Glažar, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

From (In)Visibility to Awareness: Public Transport Harassment in Zagreb — Documenting the Problem and Analyzing the 2025 City Campaign

Tanja Grmuša, Professor; Lana Novoselac, Researcher, Zagreb School of Business

Can We Bridge Divides? Structural Barriers and Pathways to Democratic Dialogue: Discourse on X During the 2019 and 2024 European Elections in Slovenia

Luka Jesenšek, PhD

10:15 – 11:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

42 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

(Moderator: Maruša Mavsar, PhD, Research Assistant, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Communication and Structural Graphic Design Factors That Shape Packaging Interaction Among Older Users

Daria Mustić, Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Graphic Arts

Value-Driven Digital Dialogue of Generation Z: A Qualitative Analysis of Ethics, Transparency, and Sustainability in Communication Practices

Manuela Bukovec; Irena Klepac Mustač, PhD Candidates, Alma Mater Europaea University; Marta Skorić, Student, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics

Customer Centricity in the Digital Age

Blanka Szecsei, PhD Candidate, University of Pécs

From Political Satire to Alleged Hate Speech: A Dworkinian Analysis of Mladina d.d. Ljubljana v. Slovenia

Zala Loparec, University of Ljubljana; Luka Martin Tomažič, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Crisis Communication Focused on Trust: The IDEA-CommTrust Model at the Intersection of Culture, Health, and Technology,

Stjepan Petričević, PhD, Alma Mater Europaea University

Strategic Communication and Nudge Approaches in Emergency Dispatch: Public Trust and Institutional Legitimacy in Healthcare

Igor Pelaić, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Freedom and ethics – Basic Postulates of Religious Creativity

Zdravko Šordan, professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

17:00 – 18:30

(in Italian,
Scholarly Panel)
online

43 PHYSIOTHERAPY

(Moderator: Ainhoa Lizariturry, Expert, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Implementation of Sensor-Based Monitoring and Visual Feedback to Enhance Physical Activity and Motivation in Older Adults During and After Hospitalization: A Multicenter Randomized Controlled Trial

Mirko Zitti, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University; IRCCS Ospedale Policlinico San Martino; University of Rome "La Sapienza"; Silvia Buonopane, Other, IRCCS Ospedale Policlinico San Martino; Fiammetta Monacelli, Professor, DIMI, University of Genoa, Viale Benedetto XV, Genoa

Age-Related Changes in Countermovement Jump Performance and Kinematics in Young Basketball Athletes: A Cross-Sectional Study

Francesco Frontani, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Role of the Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) in Neurogenesis After Rehabilitative Treatments in Patients With Neurological Disorders: A Systematic Review of the Literature

Matilde Buffa, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Effectiveness Of Physiotherapy Treatment On Balance Difficulties In Patients With Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dcd)

(Moderator: Alessia Vosten, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University)

10:00 – 11:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

44 HUMANITIES

(Moderator: Luka Trebežnik, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Art and Health: Ivan Čobal's "Blue Wall" at the Maribor University Clinical Centre as a Testament to Human-Centered Healthcare Architecture

Mojca Ramšak, Professor, University of Ljubljana

The Dropout Phenomenon in Humanities and Technical Fields of Study in Context of the State's Educational Policy – The Case Study of Poland in Comparison to Other European Union Countries

Magdalena Przybysz-Stawska Professor, University of Lodz; Dawid Stawski, Professor, Lodz University of Technology

Social Capital of PhD Holders in the Croatian Academic Context: The Role of Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Valentina Pavlović Vinogradac, Expert, Gyne Solutions; Miroslav Rajter, Professor, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law

A Template for Social Movement Advocacy: The Strategies and Tactics of First-Wave Abolitionism

Andrew Williams, Assistant Professor, LCC International University

Endangered Rural Built Heritage and Public Participation

Mojca Sfiligoj, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

11:00 – 12:00

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

45 HUMANITIES

(Moderator: Gašper Pirc, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Filmmaking in the World of AI Algorithms

Uroš Zavodnik, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Crisis of Trust During Albania's Communist Era: Surveillance, Fear, and Social Fragmentation

Marsel Nilaj, PhD, Lecturer, University of Shkoder "Luigj Gurakuqi"

From Brain Drain to Digital Gain? Exploring Outsourcing as an Alternative

Valdrina Selimi, PhD Candidate, University of Pécs

Intergenerational Justice and Youth Climate Movements

Uroš Popadić, PhD Candidate, European Movement in Serbia

Dr. Miran Erič: Tribute to His Life Achievements and Doctoral Dissertation

Nina Ravnik Palka, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

12:00 – 13:00

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

46 HUMANITIES

(Moderator: Gašper Pirc, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

The Potential of Beekeeping for Effective Social Reintegration of Vulnerable Groups in the Context of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Valentina Cvjetković, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Disability in Literature for Children and Young Adults – A Bibliological Perspective. The Research Project

Mariya Diassakoula, PhD Candidate, University of Lodz

Caring, Inclusive and Accessible Museums for Everyone

Nina Ravnik Palka, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

New Authoritarianism and the Role of Philosophy

Aleš Čakalić, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Revival of Instrumental Post-Yugoslav Cinema in the Age of Burgeoning Neoconservatism in the Region (2012–2025)

Aleš Čakalić, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

15:00 – 16:00

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

47 REPRODUCING ACADEMIC ELITES UNDER TOTALITARIAN SYSTEMS

(Moderator: Tomaž Ivešić, Assistant Professor, New University)

Željko Oset, Researcher, ELTE RCH

Igor Grdina, Professor, ZRC SAZU

Agata Zysiak, Researcher, Research Center for the History of Transformations

Josip Mihaljević, Researcher, Croatian Institute of History

DISCUSSION

16:00 – 17:00
(in Slovenian,
Expert Panel)
online

48 THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AS A DRIVER OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: FUTURE CHALLENGES

(Moderators: Mirjana Ivanuša Bezjak; Tomislav Nemec, Lecturers, Alma Mater Europaea University)

ISO 9001:2026 – from process stability to digital and sustainable resilience

Tomislav Nemec: New

The impact of the quality system on employee engagement in the Community Health Centre (ZD)

Nuša Lisjak, graduate, Alma Mater Europaea

New ISO standard for AI management - ISO 42001

Mirjana Ivanuša Bezjak

DISCUSSION

17:00 – 18:30
(in Slovenian,
Scholarly Panel)
online

49 THE CHANGING WORLD OF LABOUR

(Moderator: Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Motherhood as a Factor in Women's Entrepreneurship in Slovenia: A Comparative Analysis

Neža Jurčević, graduate, Alma Mater Europaea University; Mateja Vadjal, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Tatjana Kolenc, Independent Professional, Co-Founder of Heart Mentoring Programme

Mirjana Ivanuša Bezjak, Lecturer, Alma Mater Europaea University

Zinka Kosec, Assistant Professor, Independent Researcher

DISCUSSION

9:00 – 10:00

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

50 CULTURAL FORMATIONS

(Moderator: Anja Hellmuth Kramberger, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Technofeudalism and Fuller's Natural Law: Freedom of Expression Laws in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Luka Martin Tomažič, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Beyond the Liberal Overton Window: Plebeian Rationality and the Reconfiguration of the Digital Public Sphere

Blaž Podobnik, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

From Editorial Control to Algorithms: Miki Muster as a Media Strategist

Alja Brglez, Researcher, ICK Institute for Civilisation and Culture

10:00 – 11:00

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

51 CULTURAL FORMATIONS

(Moderator: Daniel Siter, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University; Researcher, International Research Center for Second World War Maribor)

Central European Diaristic Chronotope: Edvard Kocbek's Diary

Aleksandra Tobiasz, Researcher, ICK Institute for Civilisation and Culture

Transformation Processes in Archaeological Sciences through Artificial Intelligence

Anja Hellmuth Kramberger, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Legacy of the Nuremberg Trials

Daniel Siter, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University; Researcher, International Research Center for Second World War Maribor

11:00 – 12.30

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

52 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE: Critical Reflection on the 25th Anniversary of the European Landscape Convention and the 20th Anniversary of the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society

(Moderator: Anja Hellmuth Kramberger, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Cultural Landscapes as Streams of Memory, Horizons of Knowledge, and Meridians of Values

Jelka Pirkovič, Assistant Professor, New University, Faculty of Slovenian and International Studies University of Ljubljana

Learning in Museum as a Form of Inclusive Heritage

Verena Perko, Assistant Professor, Gorenjski Muzej Kranj; University of Ljubljana

Co-creating Identity Narratives: Opportunities for Collaboration between Heritage Communities and Professionals

Andrej Magdič, PhD, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, Regional Office Maribor

Using Slovenian Heritage as a Starting Point for Interpreting Cultural Heritage through Design and Public Engagement

Lucija Perko, PhD Candidate, University of Ljubljana

Forgotten Villages of Žirovnica

Kaja Stemberger Flegar, PhD, PJP d.o.o.; Matjaž Koman, PhD Candidate, Institute for Tourism and Culture Žirovnica, University of Ljubljana; Rok Humerca, PhD Candidate, Rok Humerca, University of Ljubljana

What can Cultural Institutions do about Migration and Multiculturalism?

Borut Rovšnik, Expert, Muzej in Galerije Mesta Ljubljane

When the Community Narrates: Participatory Approaches to the Interpretation of Archaeological Heritage in Slovenia

Jana Puhar, PhD Candidate, University of Ljubljana

15:00 – 16:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

53 WEB AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

(Moderator: Matej Mertik, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Analyzing the Value of Using a Pluricultural and Transdisciplinary Intersection Encompassing Learning, Arts, and Web3D Technology at K-12 Education Levels and Beyond

Jorge Ferreira Franco, Associate Professor, IA-UNESP / SME-PMSP

Quantum Machine Learning: A Systematic Meta-Review and Perspectives Toward Quantum Artificial Intelligence

Aleksandar Brodschneider, Student, Alma Mater Europaea University; Matjaž Gams, Professor, Institut Jožef Stefan; Matej Mertik, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Sustainable Persuasion: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence Nudges for Ethical and Pro-Environmental Behaviour Change

Attila Zoltan Györfi, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Business and Economics (KTK), University of Pécs

Enhancing Cryptocurrency Forecasting Through Bio-Inspired Hybrid Models: Grey Wolf-Optimized Spiking LSTM Networks

Francis Noah Walugembe, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University; Matjaž Gams, Professor, Institut Jožef Stefan; Maciej Wielgosz, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University, AGH University of Science and Technology; Matej Mertik, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Use of Artificial Intelligence for Detecting Unwanted SMS Messages: Analysis of Methods and Experimental Validation

Žiga Ikoč, Student; Andrej Dobrovoljc, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Cybersecurity Awareness Among Older Adults: A Systematic Literature Review

Ana Rotovnik Omerzu, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University; Maja Rotovnik, PhD Candidate Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, University of Maribor

16:30 – 18:00
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

54 WEB AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

(Moderator: Matej Mertik, Associate Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Fast Event-Driven Pedestrian Crossing Detection Using Spiking Neural Networks with Adaptive Modulation

Teklu, Henok, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University; Wielgosz, Maciej, Professor, AGH University of Krakow; Sakhal, Mustefa, Lecturer, AGH University of Krakow

Cybersecurity Education in the Western Balkans: A Comparative Analysis of Dedicated Programs in Public Universities

Tal Pavel, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Classification of Alzheimer's Disease Using Tuh Eeg Database and Random Forest Algorithm

Kennedy Addo, PhD Candidate; Uroš Marušič, Professor; Matej Mertik, Professor; Maciej Wielgosz, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

The "Slow Food" of Labour: Measuring the Human-Centric Niche in an Ai-Driven Economy

Ilona Erika Negro, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Convolutional Neural Network for Pneumonia Detection in X-Ray Images

Senzi Mofokeng, PhD Candidate, University of South Africa

Building Trustworthy AI: Verifiable Data Provenance and Decentralized Identity as Foundations for Human-Centric Societal Transformation

Tony Lenko, Expert, Anonymo Labs

AI-Driven Spectrum Management and AI-Driven Network Slicing in 6G Networks

Nina Rechberger, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

10:00 – 11:15

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

55 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

(Moderator: Reinhard Wagner, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Strategic Resilience and the Human-Technology Connection: An Analysis of the Growth and Survival of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Central and Eastern Europe

František Vráb, PhD Candidate, Training & Consulting s.r.o.; Milan Fíla, Professor, College of Applied Psychology s.r.o.

Assessing the Influence of Sustainable Project Management Practices on Project Success: Evidence From Renewable Energy Projects in Nigeria

Abubakar Sadiq Sani, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Systems Thinking in Cultural Transformation: A Comparative Study of VSM and Shingo Model

Nancy Nouaimeh, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University, XcelleratE CaaS

Human-AI Synergy: A New Paradigm for Managing Sustainable Energy Projects

Domagoj Mihaljević, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Competencies for Managing Sustainability-Related Tensions in Projects: A Conceptual Framework

Martina Swoboda, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

11:15 – 12:30

(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

56 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

(Moderator: Reinhard Wagner, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Importance of Entrepreneurial Characteristics of Project Managers for Project Success: An Industry Projects' Perspective

Oliver Maeckel, PhD Candidate, Siemens AG, Alma Mater Europaea University

The Dynamic Interplay Between Organizational Ambidexterity and Project Ambidexterity: A Comprehensive Review

Rouzbeh Kotobzadeh, PhD Candidate; Mladen Radujković, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Comparison of Challenges in Implementation of Blitz Projects in Public and Private Sector

Mirjana Mirić Horvatić, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Misaligned Pmo Maturity Models: A Systematic Literature Review of Assessment Accuracy and Organizational Consequences

Amr Gazzaz, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

Reframing Pmo Maturity Misalignment: A Behavioral–Psychological Model Integrating Bias and Jungian Shadow Dynamics

Amr Gazzaz, PhD Candidate, Alma Mater Europaea University

12:30 – 13:30
(in English,
Scholarly Panel)
online

57 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

(Moderator: Reinhard Wagner, Assistant Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University)

Soft Factors and Value Creation in High-Performing Technical Organisations exposed to Projectification

Jasna Glavočević Gattin, PhD Candidate; Mladen Radujković, Professor, Alma Mater Europaea University

Work Motivation and Perceived Tool Specificity: A Comparative Study of Technical and Non-Technical Employees

Dávid György, PhD Candidate, University of Pécs, Faculty of Business and Economics

Virtual FDI: How Online Freelancing Is Reshaping Global Service Investment

Valdrina Selimi, PhD Candidate, Pecs University; Sihana Hoxha Shala, PhD Candidate, South-East European University

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