19th SLOVENIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE CONFERENCE

DIALOGUES ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN A DIVIDED AND DIVERGING WORLD

SSSC 2026

JUNE 8-9, 2026
LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

ORGANISED BY

unesco
Management of Social Transformations Programme National Committee

Fakulteta za informacijske študije
Faculty of information studies

SLOVENIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

SUPPORTED BY

unesco
Slovenian National Commission

Erasmus+

Published by: University of Novo mesto,
Faculty of Information Studies

Published in: 2026

Edition: 1 st

Edited by: Teja Štrempfel

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani
COBISS.SI-ID 301079811
ISBN 978-961-96549-4-1 (PDF)

Editors' note: Participants were asked to submit papers written in English. Keywords were chosen by participants, and their number has not been reduced. Authors of submissions are responsible for the reliability of contents and other statements made in their work. Submissions are not proofread.

Programme

Day 1 – Monday, 8 June 2026

Venue: Ljubljana, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel and ZOOM

09:00–10:15 – Opening and keynote (plenary)

- Welcome addresses:
  - Professor Bandana Purkayastha, University of Connecticut, vice-president of the International Sociological Association;
  - Professor Janez Povh, acting rector of the public University of Novo mesto;
  - Professor Matej Makarovič, president of the Slovenian National Committee of the MOST Programme of UNESCO and dean of the Faculty of Information
  - Assoc. prof. Tamara Besednjak Valič, president of the Slovenian Social Science Association
- Keynote speech: *Crisis of Liberalism: Toward Dialogical Liberal Project* – Professor Sari Hanafi, American University of Beirut

10:30–12:00 – Parallel sessions

- **Room A – Rethinking social transformations**
  - Rethinking the Social Foundations of Democracy in a Divided World: Configurations of Support across Regime Types – Olga Kutsenko, Andrii Gorbachyk
  - Possible Delegitimacy of the Chosen Path: the case of Social Acceptance of the Privatization in Bulgaria – Antoaneta Getova
  - The Epochal Crisis of Liberal Democracy: The Relevance of Plato's Critique in the Age of Post-Truth and Digital Transformation – Dejan Jelovac
- **Room B – Social Fragmentation, Polarisation and Memory**
  - A Polarized Society and the Right to Memory – Zdeněk Uherek, Veronika Beranská
  - Under Siege, beyond one path: Trauma and divergent political responses – Janja Mikulan

- Navigating Fragmentation: Dynamic Adaptation and Social Transformation among Ukrainian Refugees in Times of Crisis – Tetyana Panchenko
- War-Induced Displacement and Social Resilience in Ukraine: Analyzing Inequalities and Adaptive Strategies from 2022 to 2026 – Oleh Ivanov

13:30–15:00 – Parallel sessions: Inclusive Communities for European Industry 5.0 (Jean Monnet Chair IC4U)

- **Room A – Youth, Families and Belonging**
  - Youth, Inequalities and Identity Crisis: Portrait of a Suspended Generation – Roberto Flauto
  - Youth Transitions and Political Engagement in Post-Crisis Armenia: Navigating Social Transformations in a Divided Society – Marina Galstyan
  - Intimate Boundaries and Secular Belonging: Interfaith and Inter-Caste Families in a Divided Society – Swati Sucharita Nanda
- **Room B – Identities, Religion and Belonging in Divided Societies**
  - Innovations in the context of human-centred development; The potentials and threats of rising collectivism – Tea Golob, Matej Makarovič
  - Rethinking Secularization: Lived Spirituality and the Transformation of Religiosity in a Post-Secular Society – Anna Vostruhová, Jiří Buriánek
  - Tribal Status for Social Betterment: Hattee Community of Himachal Pradesh (India) – Kashmir Kashyap

15:30–17:00 – Parallel sessions

- **Room A – Environmental and Green Transformations: Justice and Power**
  - Governing Industrial Symbiosis for Social and Environmental Resilience: Policy Lessons from Slovenia's Circular Transition – Erika Džajić Uršič
  - Who Can Afford the Transition? Poverty, Policy, and the Politics of Green Transformation in the EU – Alenka Pandiloska Jurak
  - The Future is Green... But for Whom? Green Startups in Times of Polycrisis: Entrepreneurship, Extractivism, and Gender in the Global South – Camila Ponce Lara

- What Comes Next? Europe's Green Transition and the Strategic Role of Azerbaijan – Rasul Yusibov
- Epistemic Climate Repair: Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Sustainability Governance in a Divided World – Oludele Solaja, Comfort Oyafunke-Omoniyi

- **Room B – Civil Society, Knowledge and Local Sustainability**
  - Rethinking civil society: between pluralism and socio-cultural hegemony – Igor Bahovec
  - Citizen Science as a Tool for Farmer Empowerment and Mental Resilience in a Diverging World – Tatjana Rožič, Maruša Gorišek, Nuša Kovačević Tojnko
  - The Role of Scientific Knowledge in Local Sustainable Practices: Addressing the Challenging Relationship between Science, Politics and Public – Maruša Gorišek
  - Food Security: The Greatest Hidden Peril in a Divided and Diverging World – Ma Huidi
  - Situation of Roma Teaching Assistants in the Czech Republic – Lucie Cviklová

Day 2 – Tuesday, 9 June 2026

Venue: Ljubljana, Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel and ZOOM

09:00–10:30 – Parallel sessions

- **Room A – Digitalisation, AI and Social Fragmentation**
  - Algorithmic Persuasion and the Commercialization of Digital Public Spheres – Mateja Rek
  - Fake news epidemic and erosion of trust: the role of social media and bots – Blaž Rodič
  - Digitalisation and the Digital Divide: Transformation vs. Exclusion – Swapnil Singh

- **Room B – AI, Work and Digital Inequalities**
  - AI-Driven Platform for Social Inclusion: Addressing the Student Housing Crisis in Slovenia – Denis Kantić

- Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work in Nigeria: Navigating Class Inequality in the Era of Technological Change – Adebukola Olufunke Dagunduro
- Digital Pathways to Divided Citizenship: E-Governance, Social Hierarchies and Digital Inclusion in Rural India – Dhirendra Kumar Sahoo
- AI TCO Blindspot – Janez Kolar

11:00–12:30 – Parallel sessions

- **Room A – Governance of Emerging Technologies and Digital Sovereignty**
  - Governing Emerging Technologies in a Divided World: Strategic Timing and Diverging Quantum Innovation Trajectories – Tamara Besednjak Valič, Karin Dobravc Škof
  - From Big-Tech Dependence to Digital Sovereignty: The Role of Open Source in European Public Administration – Vladimir Šterle
  - A System Without a Shared Reality: How Fragmented Perceptions Undermine Intellectual Property Effectiveness – Urša Lamut, Ana Hafner
  - Unseen Influences? Youth Agency and the Normalisation of Digital Media Environments – Jan Gałkowski, Dorota Rynkowska
- **Room B – Social Movements, Resistance and Political Participation**
  - Dalit Resistance Across Borders: Strategic Framing and Sub-National Venue Shopping by Dalit Activists in India and the United States – Satadru Bhattacharyya
  - The Student Movement in Serbia and the Formation of a New Political Generation – Jelena Božilović Ljupković, Aleksandra Nikolajević
  - The Role of Youth as Non-State Actors in Peacebuilding Efforts in Nigeria's Conflict Zones – Tope Shola Akinyetun et al.
  - Political Clientelism, Weak Institutions, and the Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria: A Sociological and Criminological Analysis – Comfort Oyinlola Oyafunke-Omoniyi

14:00–15:30 – Parallel sessions

- **Room A – Labour, Precarity and Organisational Transformations**

- Job Insecurity and Social Transformation in the Gig and Informal Economy: Lived Experiences of Workers in Ogun State, Nigeria – Bawalla Oluwatoyin Gbenga
- A new life for Open Innovation: Considering a region-centred view on the factors impacting OI – Cristian Gangaliuc
- Explaining uneven development in industrial localities: social fields approach – Kseniia Gromova
- Assessing the Nexus Between New Media Adoption and Sustainable Customers' Engagement in Selected Commercial Banks in Nigeria – Jumoke A. Salau et al.

- **Room B – Politics of Resources, Welfare and Social Policy**
  - Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect on Food Consumption in Bangladesh – Mahajabin Haque Anisha, Shaikh Mohammad Kais
  - Volunteering in older age in Lithuania: Perceived opportunities and barriers – Inga Gaizauskaite, Dovile Daugeliene

16:00–17:30 – Parallel sessions

- **Room A – Education, Pedagogy and Social Transformation**
  - Developing Digital Pedagogical Competence in Universities: Educators' Challenges and Professional Development Needs – Edit Lezha, Eranda Bilali (Halluni)
  - Truth, Trust, and Technology: Digital Information Literacy and Social Fragmentation among Adolescents — A Cross-National Analysis Using PISA 2022 – Sandeep Kaur
  - Data, Power, and Inclusion in Music Education: Rethinking E-Administrative Platforms in the Digital Age – Lorena Mihelač
  - New trends in teaching International Human Resources Management – Svitlana Buko, Boštjan žabar

- **Room B – Inequalities, Migration and Everyday Life in a Divided World**
  - Cultural changes in the everyday life of Ukrainian migrants: A case study of migration to Poland – Joanna Stepaniuk
  - Frozen Minds and Fixed Voter: A Case Study of Cultural Transformation in a CASTE CURRENCY in the governance in Bihar – Suman Suprita

- Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence in Democratic Uruguay: Institutional Progress and Persistent Social Inequalities – Aurelia Gierlicka
- From Collectively Empowered to Individually Powerless: How Everyday Frustrations with Living under an Autocratizing Government Motivate Emigration – Jacob Thomas
- Why Do Most Who Consider Emigrating Never Do So? – Jacob Thomas

17:30–18:00 – Closing (plenary)

- Short plenary wrap-up and conference closing remarks

Abstracts

The Role of Youth as Non-State Actors in Peacebuilding Efforts in Nigeria's Conflict Zones

Tope Shola Akinyetun[a], Ikponmwosa Ebomoyi[b] & Ambrose Osariyekemwen Iyase[b]

[a]Department of Political Science, Lagos State University of Education, Lagos State, Nigeria

[b]Department of Political Science, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

akinyetunts@lasued.edu.ng

Abstract: Conflict is ubiquitous in Africa with countries such as Cameroon, Sudan, and Nigeria among the ten countries in the world, with devastating conflicts in 2024. Nigeria is a hotspot of conflict, with the phenomenon pervading its six geopolitical zones. The two most protracted conflicts recorded in the country are the Niger Delta and Boko Haram insurgencies in the Niger Delta and Northeast regions, respectively. Despite having a youth bulge believed to give impetus to conflict escalation, a comparative study of youth as non-state actors in peacebuilding is understudied, particularly considering the two most intractable sources of conflict. This study contributes to the literature by presenting a discussion of the role of youth in peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and Northeast conflict contexts. It appraises the factors that contribute to the success of youth-peacebuilding initiatives in these regions and the challenges that constrain youth-led peacebuilding efforts in both contexts. The findings show that youth activity in the Niger Delta differs from that in the northeast region in several ways. Furthermore, youth in the Niger Delta seem to have a broad perspective on a range of issues necessary for peacebuilding success. Meanwhile, funding remains a major challenge for youth-led peacebuilding in both the regions.

Keywords: Boko Haram, conflict, Niger Delta, Northeast, Peacebuilding, youth

Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect on Food Consumption in Bangladesh

Mahajabin Haque Anisha & Shaikh Mohammad Kais

University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

haquemaha84@gmail.com

Abstract: The global community has fallen short of meeting the 2023 targets for achieving food security (SDG 2) and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13). As a result, securing a sustainable future for the next generation has become increasingly uncertain. Food, an essential element of culture, reflects diverse global customs and is affected by climate change throughout its entire journey—from production to consumption and consumer choices. Consequently, the evolving food behaviors of urban populations are increasingly linked to man-made climate disasters. Located in a climate hotspot, the city of Dhaka has witnessed an alarming increase in temperatures, rising about 6 degrees Celsius in just 10 years. This contributes to the formation of an urban heat island (UHI) in the city. The UHI effect is the phenomenon where urban areas experience significantly higher temperatures than rural areas due to human activities, such as the concentration of buildings, roads, and other heat-absorbing surfaces. This effect has a profound impact on the food consumption patterns of Dhaka's 25 million residents.

The aim of this study is to understand how UHI affects food consumption. Specifically, the objectives were to examine the correlation between extreme heat and food behavior, illustrate the impact of heatwaves on food consumption patterns through availability and accessibility, and explore variations in opinions about the severity of extreme climatic conditions based on the participants' gender. To achieve these goals, a questionnaire survey was conducted with 97 participants in three locations in Dhaka. The findings reveal dietary changes among city dwellers driven by extreme summer heat. Additionally, the results indicate an increase in food expenditure and highlight gender differences in opinions regarding the effects of heatwaves on food consumption. This research suggests policy measures to enhance food security, develop awareness programs on food safety and healthy lifestyles, and promote the production of specific foods to address the challenges posed by extreme heat in urban areas of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Climate crisis, Food consumption, Gender, UHI effect, Urban Bangladesh

Rethinking civil society: between pluralism and socio-cultural hegemony

Igor Bahovec

Faculty of Theology, Institute for University of Ljubljana

igor.bahovec@guest.arnes.si

Abstract: The paper focuses on the role of civil society in a democratic society.

In the first part, we present the socio-political role of civil society in Slovenia. We pay particular attention to two periods: the time of democratic changes around 1990 and the last decade.

Developments in recent years show that the relationship between civil society and democratic governance in these two periods differs greatly. The way in which a significant number of CSOs have operated before and after the 2022 and 2026 parliamentary elections requires the rethinking of different approaches to civil society.

There are several approaches to civil society, but the greatest differences seem to be between pluralistic and hegemonic perspectives. An important aspect is the question of the avant-garde self-understanding of certain civil society organizations and associations.

The critical analysis of different understandings of civil society is complemented by a brief comparison with two other theoretical perspectives: the perspective of intermediary institutions (Durkheim, Berger) and contemporary democratic communitarianism.

The paper concludes by identifying some challenges for future research and social action.

Keywords: Civil society, democracy, social avant-garde, intermediary institutions

Job Insecurity and Social Transformation in the Gig and Informal Economy: Lived Experiences of Workers in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Oluwatoyin Gbenga Bawalla

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

bawalla.oluwatoyin@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract: This study examines job insecurity within the gig and informal economy in the context of ongoing social and labour market transformations in Ogun State, Nigeria. As economic restructuring, digitalization, and the expansion of non-standard employment continue to redefine work relations, an increasing number of workers are engaged in precarious forms of labour characterized by income instability, absence of formal contracts, and limited access to social protection. To provide an analytical lens, the study is anchored in Precarity Theory, which explains how contemporary labour market changes produce insecure and fragmented employment conditions, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Guided by this framework, the study explores how gig and informal workers experience, interpret, and respond to job insecurity in their everyday lives. It adopts a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to capture the lived experiences and meanings workers attach to precarious employment. The study population includes gig workers (such as ride-hailing drivers and delivery personnel) and informal economy participants (including artisans, traders, and casual labourers) in Ogun State. Using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, participants with relevant experience are selected to generate rich data.

Data are collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, allowing participants to narrate their experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies. Participant observation is also employed where feasible to provide contextual understanding of work environments. The data are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to job insecurity, survival strategies, and social inclusion or exclusion. The study highlights how broader processes such as technological change and shifting employment relations shape workers' vulnerabilities while also revealing their adaptive strategies. It contributes to industrial sociology and human resource management by offering context-specific insights into precarious work in Nigeria and informing policy discussions on labour protection and inclusive development.

Keywords: Job Insecurity, Gig Economy, Informal Economy, Social Transformation, Lived Experiences

Governing Emerging Technologies in a Divided World: Strategic Timing and Diverging Quantum Innovation Trajectories

Tamara Besednjak Valič & Karin Dobravc Škof

Rudolfovo · Science and Technology Centre Novo mesto

tamara.valic@rudolfovo.eu

Abstract: The governance of emerging technologies is increasingly challenged by geopolitical fragmentation, uneven technological capabilities, and diverging policy priorities. Quantum technologies, often positioned as central to future competitiveness and technological sovereignty, illustrate these dynamics particularly clearly. While national strategies are commonly understood as instruments to steer innovation, their temporal relationship to technological development remains insufficiently explored.

This paper examines the alignment between the timing of national quantum strategies and innovation activity, asking whether public policy acts as a driver of technological change or predominantly follows existing trajectories. Focusing on the period 2014–2023, the study combines qualitative analysis of national policy documents with quantitative evidence from Patsnap patent data. The analysis covers major actors in the quantum domain, including the United States, the European Union, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Japan, and China.

The results reveal a consistent pattern of temporal misalignment. Global patenting activity peaks in 2022, whereas many national strategies are introduced only in 2023, suggesting that policy interventions frequently lag behind technological developments. At the same time, cross-country variation is significant. Early strategic initiatives, such as those in the United States and the Netherlands, do not necessarily translate into immediate increases in domestic patenting, while other countries appear to adopt more reactive policy approaches. China presents a distinct trajectory, combining high patenting intensity with a less transparent strategic framework.

These findings challenge linear assumptions about policy-driven innovation and point to more complex, path-dependent dynamics. In a divided and diverging global context, the timing of policy interventions plays a critical role in shaping technological development and coordination. The paper underscores the importance of fostering informed policy dialogue across public, industrial, and research actors, particularly to support more anticipatory and context-sensitive governance approaches in rapidly evolving technological fields.

Keywords: Quantum technology governance; Policy–innovation alignment; Technological sovereignty; Patent dynamics; Geopolitical fragmentation

Dalit Resistance Across Borders: Strategic Framing and Sub-National Venue Shopping by Dalit Activists in India and the United States

Satadru Bhattacharyya

University of Connecticut

satadru.bhattacharyya@uconn.edu

Abstract: This paper extends Clifford Bob's (2007) framework of strategic framing and venue shopping to analyse Dalit anti-caste mobilization in India and the United States from a comparative standpoint. The central theoretical puzzle is why Dalit activists in both contexts pursue subnational venue shopping in targeting city councils and state legislatures rather than unresponsive national governments. Two hypotheses are advanced: first, that activists go local when national level efforts fail because that is the only way to legitimize the movement; and second, that they sustain and deepen sub-national engagement when locally salient frames emerge that amplify their claims to specific audiences. The paper argues that sub-national venue shopping is a well established feature of Dalit advocacy in India, and that diaspora activists in the United States have adopted similar strategies, and this paper investigates the precise mechanisms of transfer. The US case raises questions about whether Hindu nationalist resistance to anti-caste legislation is a new, diaspora-specific phenomenon or a continuation of the opposition that Dalit advocates have long faced in India. Both trajectories represent a refinement of Bob's model and have implications for the broader venue shopping literature. My paper also will talk about the role of institutions in this process and the need to take into account the policy failures by governments and where they can intervene for the betterment of people of marginalized castes both in India and the United States.

Keywords: Dalit rights, strategic framing, venue shopping, sub-national politics, transnational activism, caste discrimination, diaspora

The Student Movement in Serbia and the Formation of a New Political Generation

Jelena Božilović Ljupković & Aleksandra Nikolajević

Faculty of Philosophy, University in Niš, Serbia

jelena.bozilovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Abstract: The student movement in Serbia was born after the tragedy that occurred on November 1, 2024, with the collapse of the canopy at the train station in Novi Sad. The scale of the tragedy contributed to the awakening of a generation of young people who were believed to be apolitical, uninformed, uninterested in social problems, and living within digital space. Contrary to the assumption, students in Serbia politically mobilized, organized, and articulated demands, demonstrating their willingness to fight against corruption. Starting from the thesis that social movements arise from unsatisfied social needs, in the paper, we will present the aspects of society with which students are dissatisfied, and we will deal with the extent of this dissatisfaction. Taking into account that the student movement in Serbia represents a heterogeneous social group, the paper deals with the analysis of the influence of socio-demographic variables and socio-economic status on the assessment of the current socio-political situation and political beliefs of the analyzed student population. Given that the results show that the socio-economic milieu models the attitudes of the student movement in a weak and moderate intensity and does not significantly affect the differences in student dissatisfaction, the thesis of the paper is that a new political generation is arising. This claim gains particular importance if it is taken into account that solidarity and mass support for students was provided by secondary school students in Serbia. Although ideologically heterogeneous, the new generation agrees that Serbia is on the wrong track and that the socio-political crisis can only be overcome by establishing the rule of law, independent institutions, media freedom, and above all, fair elections. These principles, based on liberal values, constitute the basic demands of the student movement. The paper is grounded in data obtained from a survey of student attitudes conducted at three state universities in Serbia (Belgrade, Niš, and Kosovska Mitrovica), during the spring of 2025, on a sample of 531 respondents.

Keywords: student movement, political generation, democracy, Serbia

New trends in teaching International Human Resources Management: case study of internationalization of curriculum for Slovenian adult learners

Svitlana Buko & Boštjan žabar

School of Advanced Social Studies

svitlana.buko@gmail.com

Abstract: This case study examines the pedagogical design, use of AI chatbots, implementation, and student outcomes of the International Human Resource Management (HRM) course, a graduate-level program offered in a hybrid and bilingual format at a Slovenian university. The course is collaboratively taught by two professors, with lectures conducted in English and seminars in Slovenian, and both languages are used interchangeably to promote intercultural dialogue. The instructional design integrates Zoom-based synchronous sessions, hybrid teaching, recorded lectures, and structured group work, use of AI chatbots, while Moodle serves as the central platform for course materials, communication, and assessment submission. The pedagogical design emphasizes practice-oriented, digital AI-driven, student-centered learning, combining case-based analysis, collaborative projects, and simulations to develop competencies in HRM within intercultural and global contexts. Innovative teaching methods are further supported through the use of AI-based tools, such as GPT chatbots, to assist students in preparing training and onboarding materials for international teams.

A total of 74 graduate students participated in an online survey administered via the university-wide quality management system, one week after course completion, to evaluate the effectiveness of the new teaching didactics and assessment methods. The survey employed a Likert-scale format and focused on several thematic categories, including quality of teaching, instructor engagement, course organization and assessment, learning materials, and learning outcomes. Descriptive analysis of the data reveals consistently high satisfaction across all dimensions of the learning experience. Mean ratings ranged from 4.42 to 4.61, with the highest-rated aspects including the appropriateness of course content ($M = 4.61$; $SD = 0.83$), the respectful behavior of instructors ($M = 4.57$; $SD = 0.90$), encouragement of discussion and participation ($M = 4.58$; $SD = 0.92$), and the applicability of course materials to real-life HRM situations ($M = 4.56$; $SD = 0.95$). Instructor performance was rated very positively across items such as presentation skills, accessibility, clarity of communication, supportive behavior, and fostering critical thinking. Students also reported positive learning outcomes, highlighting gains in theoretical knowledge, acquisition of expected competencies, and the practical application of course content to professional contexts.

The findings suggest that the course's design effectively integrates internationalization, flexibilization, and innovation, aligning with key trends in higher education context both Slovenia and the European Union. The hybrid, bilingual, and AI-enhanced structure supports the development of intercultural competence, practical HRM skills, and professional readiness. Additionally, the case study confirms that curricula that are flexible, inclusive, and responsive to labor market needs enhance graduate learning experiences and contribute to improved employability and professional preparedness.

Overall, this case study demonstrates that thoughtfully designed, technologically supported, and practice-oriented graduate programs can achieve high levels of student satisfaction and meaningful learning outcomes. The International HRM course serves as a model for integrating global perspectives, digital tools, and experiential learning into graduate education, offering insights for curriculum development, pedagogical experimentation, and assessment in international and multicultural learning environments. The consistently positive student feedback confirms the strategic importance of such programs in preparing graduates to navigate complex, multicultural, and digitally evolving professional HRM contexts.

Keywords: Internationalization of curriculum, Flexibilization of higher education, Human resource management education, Practice-oriented learning, AI Artificial intelligence in HRM, Hybrid and online teaching, Assessment methods in graduate programs.

SITUATION OF ROMA TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Lucie Cviklová

Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové

lucie.cviklova@uhk.cz

Abstract: The introduction and gradual institutionalization of Roma teaching assistants (RTAs) in the Czech Republic have been seen as examples of a number of preventive measures to improve Roma pupils' low achievement levels in the education system, which contribute to their subsequent difficulties in finding jobs and to the clustering of a significant part of them in socially excluded localities. The core methodological approach to the topic of racial discrimination of Roma people in the Czech Republic is the legal and sociological analysis of various statistics and legal regulations concerning the institutionalization of RTAs. For example, the decision handed down in the case D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic was very critical of the current activities of teachers and psychologists in the Czech Republic, which unjustifiably consigned a number of Roma children to special schools for children with learning disabilities or segregated them in 'Gypsy classes' in primary schools. The sociological part of this article addresses Roma activists and teachers, as well as RTAs, while excerpts from interviews focus on perspectives regarding teaching assistant educational requirements and duties, effective cooperation between RTAs and teachers, and communication between RTAs and parents. Interviews with RTAs have highlighted many problematic issues related to the influence of RTAs in the Czech education system, such as debates about the educational requirements and duties of RTAs, the role of RTAs as a buffer between teachers, school administration and Roma parents, the remuneration of RTAs from public resources at the expense of satisfying other material needs such as the purchase of new computers and interactive boards, etc.

Keywords: Czech Republic; Education; Intersectionality; Race; Roma Teaching Assistant.

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work in Nigeria: Navigating Class Inequality in the Era of Technological Change

Adebukola Olufunke Dagunduro

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

dagunduro.adebukola@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract: Globally, Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming and shaping the labour market across sectors. While there have been apprehensions about AI taking over the roles of human at work, AI has also opened a world of opportunities to workers and potential workers to improve on their skill sets in order to adapt to the new job demands. Despite these developments aimed at easy execution of tasks, there is the nagging fear of threat to human tasks and deepening existing class inequalities. Hinged on theoretical insights from Technological Determinism and the Labour process theories, the study examines Artificial Intelligence and the future of work in Nigeria while navigating class inequality in the era of technological change in Nigerian service sector. Adopting a mixed method approach, primary survey data were collected from workers across the selected sectors of the Nigerian economy, while qualitative data relied on secondary and contextual evidence to assess the uneven distribution of opportunities and risks associated with AI integration in the service sector. Findings show that while AI has the potential to enhance productivity and create new forms of employment, it threatens low-skilled and routine jobs predominantly occupied by the working class. This dynamic risks widening socio-economic disparities, particularly in a context characterized by high unemployment, informality, and limited access to digital infrastructure and skills development. The study argues that without inclusive policies, AI may exacerbate inequality rather than promote equitable growth. The study concludes by recommending proactive labour policies, investment in human capital development and also proposes policy recommendations for inclusive and equitable labour market outcomes.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Class Inequality, Future of Work, Labour Market, Oyo state service sector, Socio-economic disparities.

Youth, Inequalities and Identity Crisis: Portrait of a Suspended Generation

Roberto Flauto

Università di Napoli Federico II

robefla17@gmail.com

Abstract: Contemporary young generations inhabit a historically unprecedented social condition, shaped by a fundamental contradiction: on one hand, a process of precocious adultification driven by media, education, and technological acceleration; on the other, an interminable adolescence, in which entry into the adult world – stable employment, housing autonomy, family formation – is indefinitely postponed. This tension generates a deep cognitive dissonance, a structural malaise rooted not merely in psychology but in the material stagnation and growing inequalities that characterise several contemporary societies, particularly in Southern Europe.

This contribution argues that the condition of youth represents one of the most revealing fault lines of today's divided and diverging world. The inequalities young people face are not only intragenerational but deeply intergenerational: the cumulative outcome of political, cultural, and economic choices made by previous generations that have systematically foreclosed opportunities for those who came after. In this sense, the youth question is inseparable from the broader crisis of social reproduction and intergenerational solidarity reshaping contemporary societies.

The rapid digitalisation of social life and the rise of artificial intelligence have further complicated this picture. Rather than reducing the gap between generations, digital transformation has in many cases widened it, producing new forms of cultural asymmetry in which young people command technological competencies their parents lack, yet remain structurally dependent on them. This paradox – culturally ahead, economically behind – fuels resentment, disorientation, and a growing disconnection from mainstream political and institutional channels.

This disconnection partly explains a striking phenomenon: the tendency of young generations to embrace populist and anti-scientific rhetorics, despite being among the most educated cohorts in history. This can be read as a symptom of what the contribution terms “passive active citizenship” – a politically mobilised but directionless participation, incapable of generating constructive agency and prone to feeding the polarisation and fragmentation that characterise our divided world. The COVID-19 pandemic and the enforced retreat into domestic and digital spaces further eroded the social fabric of youth experience, with

measurable consequences for mental health, social bonds, and civic engagement.

The contribution concludes by arguing that addressing youth malaise requires more than technical policy fixes: it demands a genuine cultural transformation, centred on quality employment creation, educational reform, and the construction of a citizenship grounded in scientific rationality, civic responsibility, and a shared orientation toward social and environmental sustainability – precisely the kind of inclusive dialogue the social sciences are called to facilitate in a diverging world.

Keywords: Youth Condition; Identity; Social Change; Intergenerational Inequalities.

Volunteering in older age in Lithuania: Perceived opportunities and barriers

Inga Gaizauskaite & Dovile Daugeliene

Vytautas Magnus University

inga.gaizauskaite@vdu.lt

Abstract: Volunteering in older age is increasingly recognized for its benefits at the individual and societal level. Volunteering is associated with positive outcomes to physical and mental health, self-fulfillment, fostering social relationships, and reducing feeling of loneliness. Beyond individual well-being, volunteering in older age also provides added value for communities and society in general.

However, in Lithuania, one of the fastest aging countries in the European Union, the scope of participation in voluntary activities in older age is limited. As recent data indicates, involvement in volunteering decreases with age (STRATA, 2020) and in the 65+ age group, only 6% reported their participation in official voluntary activities (Official Statistics Portal, 2023). Lithuanian national policy does recognize volunteering in older age as a resource to respond to the challenges of population aging and aims at promoting volunteering among older adults. It is therefore relevant to address the gap between policy objectives and observed reality of underutilized potential of volunteering in older age.

The presentation addresses this gap along three lines of reasoning. First, it identifies the characteristics (social, economic, demographic) of older volunteers in Lithuania using data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). Second, it explores perceived benefits and challenges of volunteering in older age based on the findings of qualitative research with older adults: data from individual in-depth biographical interviews with older adults (65+) who participate in voluntary activities (N=10 interviews), and data from focus group discussions with volunteering older adults (N=8 discussions). Finally, the presentation aligns the findings with the national social policy objectives and discusses policy implications.

SHARE survey data confirmed that the current capacity for volunteering among older Lithuanians is limited. It is also gender imbalanced as women are the main contributors to voluntary activities across older age groups. Qualitative data revealed that values associated with volunteering and helping others are formed throughout life, especially in the early years of life. Significant turning points in choosing voluntary activities in older age include job loss, retirement, encountering and overcoming a serious illness, and informal caregiving experience. Volunteering also reflects previous life experiences, accumulated

knowledge, abilities, and skills, which are readapted depending on the volunteer's internal and external resources. Qualitative data also revealed individual, cultural and organizational barriers, restricting the potential of volunteering in older age in Lithuania.

Keywords: Lithuania, volunteering in later life, SHARE survey, qualitative data.

Unseen Influences? Youth Agency and the Normalisation of Digital Media Environments

Jan Gałkowski & Dorota Rynkowska

University of Rzeszów

jgalkowski@ur.edu.pl

Abstract: The role of digital media in shaping young people's decisions, aspirations, and life trajectories is widely recognised in contemporary social science. However, recent empirical evidence generated by a research team led by Hubert Kotarski – of which the authors of this paper are members – reveals a persistent discrepancy: young people tend to attribute only marginal influence to digital media and content creators on their educational and life choices, emphasising instead their own autonomy and agency. The data are drawn from a large-scale online survey (N = 1,700) conducted among final-year secondary school students in the Podkarpackie Province, Poland.

This paper seeks to explain this discrepancy by situating it within the framework of late modern reflexivity, as developed by Anthony Giddens. While late modern subjects are understood as reflexive and self-aware actors, the findings suggest important limits to such reflexivity in digitally mediated environments. In particular, the paper examines the tension between declared agency and structurally embedded, yet weakly perceived, forms of media influence operating within processes of platformisation and datafication.

For contemporary youth, digital media constitute a normalised and taken-for-granted environment rather than an external source of influence. Through everyday immersion in these environments, young people acquire not only information but also interpretative schemas that shape their perceptions, preferences, and decision-making processes. Precisely because this environment is ubiquitous and "transparent," its influence may remain difficult to recognise at the level of individual self-report.

Against this background, the paper proposes a conceptualisation of "unperceived media influence" to account for the gap between objective patterns of influence and their subjective recognition. It argues that reliance on self-declared autonomy may systematically underestimate the role of digital media in youth decision-making. By integrating empirical findings with a theoretically grounded account of reflexivity and normalisation, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on agency under conditions of digital mediation.

Finally, the paper outlines policy implications, particularly in the domains of media literacy and education, suggesting that strengthening critical reflexivity among young people requires addressing not only media content but also the infrastructural and algorithmic conditions under which choices are formed.

Keywords: youth decision-making; agency; reflexivity; normalisation; digital media.

A new life for Open Innovation: Considering a region-centred view on the factors impacting OI

Cristian Gangaliuc

Rudolfovo · Science and Technology Centre Novo mesto

cristian.gangaliuc@rudolfovo.eu

Abstract: The European Union (EU) is currently experiencing one of its most turbulent periods, with many of its competitive and economic vulnerabilities exposed. In these circumstances, the need to radically transform the EU's market structure through the Twin Transition has never been more urgent. This has led to a notable increase in research output focusing on the needs of Digital and Sustainable transitions, their patterns of cooperation, processes, risks, and related areas. Whether it is the need to co-create with customers or to develop a product with system design in mind, one aspect is becoming increasingly relevant in this process: the need to share assets, processes, and know-how, and to engage in joint innovation. Therefore, Open Innovation (OI) is no longer just a theoretical perspective on the entire innovation process, but has increasingly become a routine element in the innovation cycle of modern companies. Given their importance for competitiveness and the transition, understanding what encourages OI practices should no longer be viewed solely at the organisational level. The research operates on the assumption that meso-level factors surrounding an organisation also contribute to the development of OI. As such, the research formulates its main question: What conditions and combinations of conditions can explain the prevalence of OI practices over closed innovation in a regional context? The analysis will consider a sample of 20 European regions, varying in their innovation, economic, and industrial settings, to identify the most common factors that may be prerequisites for explaining OI. The analysis will employ the fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) methodology. This approach is suitable for investigating complex phenomena such as innovation and innovation cooperation in management and development studies. Its main advantages lie in its ability to consolidate a set of causal rules that allow for equifinality of the outcome and present a configurational perspective. In this context, it enables the identification of the importance of particular conditions, as well as possible combinations of conditions that can independently lead to the same result.

The analysis will contribute to research on OI through its methodological approach, focusing on aspects that are non-actor-specific yet lie at the level of regional networks and institutional configurations. Thus, it also makes a

practical contribution by outlining important contexts, conditions, and circumstances for policymakers to consider when promoting OI.

Keywords: Open Innovation, Innovation, Regional Innovation Systems, Innovation Cooperation.

Youth Transitions and Political Engagement in Post-Crisis Armenia: Navigating Social Transformations in a Divided Society

Marina Galstyan

Center for Educational Research and Consulting

galstyanmarina@gmail.com

Abstract: The paper examines the social and political transformations of young people in Armenia following a sequence of multi crises: COVID 2019, 2020 war, large-scale displacement of the Armenian population of Artsakh - over 120,000 people - to Armenia. These crises disrupted the previously assumed "linear" model of youth transitions, producing delayed, fragmented, or contradictory pathways, often described by research participants as "growing up too fast," "maturing early," or "losing childhood." This effect was compounded by the preceding COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions. Youth, as a unique group in the transitional phase from childhood dependency to independence, are more acutely affected by environmental changes, especially during crises. Youth are not yet fully independent, and crisis render them doubly vulnerable (Furlong, 2013). In crisis contexts, the study of youth holds academic, methodological, and practical significance and necessity.

The paper draws on mixed-methods research, including secondary data analysis, a nationwide survey of 1,000 young people, and qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with youth aged 13–35. This design enables both macro-level assessment of structural transformations and micro-level insight into young people's lived experiences.

The paper discusses non-institutional forms of youth participation in times of crisis that can offer valuable insights into broader institutional transformations. This paper aims to examine the participation practices of Armenian youth in the post-war period, focusing on how young people navigate, reinterpret, or withdraw from political and civic life in a context marked by uncertainty and crisis.

Youth civic and political participation in Armenia today is characterized by a significant gap between interest and the perceived ability to exert real influence. While most young people believe they can affect decisions at the community level, far fewer express confidence in their ability to influence national-level decision-making. Data on institutional forms of political participation indicate a relatively moderate willingness to participate in elections. Nearly one third of eligible young voters express readiness to participate in local and parliamentary elections, which may reflect both distrust and political uncertainty. Most young people are not members of any organization; however, among civil society

organization members, girls and young people aged 13–22 are predominant, highlighting gender- and age-based differentiation in civic engagement.

The report presents also policy recommendations aimed at promoting youth participation that recognize visible and invisible forms of civic engagement. The study contributes to broader international debates on social transformations in an increasingly fragmented world.

Keywords: youth transitions, youth participation, institutional participation, non-institutional participation.

Possible Delegitimacy of the Chosen Path: the case of Social Acceptance of the Privatization in Bulgaria

Antoaneta Getova

Sofia University

tonyge22a@gmail.com

Abstract: The privatization of the industry in Bulgaria (as in many countries in Eastern and Central Europe) began in the 90-ties as part of its post-socialist transformation. Although 2017 can be considered as the end of the Bulgarian privatization (the government then transformed the institution responsible for the privatization deals), the problem of the effects of the privatization is still actual: including some politicians and parties in the country periodically insist of re-nationalization of some of the big privatized companies. Such acts cannot be explained only by political opportunism, the evaluation of the results of the privatization is criticized in media and by experts. While in the beginning of the privatization it looked like the "right path" to be chosen, after its end the effects of the privatization are questioned (and even proposed to be "corrected" by re-nationalization). This tendency shows that the chosen path of the country towards more open, liberal economy is questioned in the public discourse and respectively its social legitimacy begins to erode. The paper focuses precisely on the problem of possible social delegitimacy of the Bulgarian privatization: both by political leaders and by the public. With this purpose, analysis of media materials and results of representative survey of the long-term effects of the privatization are included in the presented paper. The main hypothesis is that the social delegitimacy of the privatization erodes the trust in the chosen path of social transformation of the last decades that may lead to more deep social and political crisis in the country.

Keywords: privatization, social transformation, social legitimacy.

Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence in Democratic Uruguay: Institutional Progress and Persistent Social Inequalities

Aurelia Gierlicka

International Relations, Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Jagiellonian University

aurelia.gierlicka@student.uj.edu.pl

Abstract: This presentation analyses the phenomenon of domestic violence and gender-based violence in democratic Uruguay. Despite the country's high level of stability and recognition as one of the most democratic in the region, violence against women remains a structural problem. Institutional data show that the number of reported cases of violence remains high, while at the same time there is an observed increase in the brutality of these cases and a particular vulnerability of girls and women to violence in the home and in public spaces. The presentation highlights the paradox of Uruguayan democracy, where extensive legal norms and the operation of specialized monitoring institutions coexist with limited effectiveness in implementing policies to combat violence.

The analysis indicates that cultural norms, the normalization of violence, and structural issues such as disparities in unpaid care work and the limited representation of women in public life play a key role in perpetuating the phenomenon. The presentation also addressed the impact of global processes such as migration, economic changes, and the expansion of organized crime, as well as globalization and the associated spread of gender equality ideals and the dissemination of feminist movements' views.

Keywords: gender-based violence, domestic violence, globalization, feminist movements, Uruguay.

Innovations in the context of human-centred development

Tea Golob & Matej Makarovič

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

tea.golob@fis.unm.si

Abstract: Recent political, economic and climate challenges are rendering global crisis and shifting socio-economic conditions that contribute to values shifts. One can observe a renewed inteerst in collectivist values across societies that have been oriented towards individualism since the modern era. A variety of studies (Bréchon 2021; Foley 2017; Grant 2017; Sadowski 2024; Strauss & Howe 2009) indicate at least a partial shift from excessive individualism, especially in the global west, to (re)affirmations of certain collective loyalties. The paper examines the emergent dynamics of this trends emphasising both the potentials leading to more universalistic, planet-centred values orientation and identities and also threats associated with exclusive identities, prioritising one's own nation, ethnicity, race, political or religious group, etc. By identifying conditions under which collectivist practices contribute positively to human well-being, the paper proposes a balanced framework that integrates solidarity with reflexivity and personal agency.

Keywords: global value shifts, collectivism, reflexivity, planet-centred orientation.

The Role of Scientific Knowledge in Local Sustainable Practices: Addressing the Challenging Relationship between Science, Politics and Public

Maruša Gorišek

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

Institute IRSA

marusa.gorisek@fis.unm.si

Abstract: The aim of ensuring sustainable development has been in the forefront of political and public discourse in the last decades. It envisions growth without harming opportunities for future generations with special emphasis on social and environmental dimensions. The United Nations points out that science is ''at the heart of sustainable development. It establishes the factual basis, anticipates future consequences, and contributes to finding pathways to sustainability transformations''. As such science can provide advice for policymaking. These challenges, although global in their nature, are increasingly affecting local communities. On the one hand, local communities are often the ones dealing with the consequences of severe weather disasters caused by the environmental changes, especially on the infrastructure. On the other hand, local communities are the source of community-driven actions towards a more resilient and sustainable society focusing on the local ecosystem.

The recent global pandemic showed that there are several limitations in using scientific knowledge for the greater benefit of the society. Despite fast technological and scientific progress management of the pandemic remained challenging. It became even more evident that utilization of scientific knowledge for public good depends on the complex set of relationships between science, politics, and the general public.

This contribution examines the use of scientific knowledge for sustainable development at the local level, emphasizing the relationships between science, politics, and the public. While science and technological innovation offer solutions to global challenges, including climate change, their application depends on effective collaboration and public trust. Drawing on literature and selected case studies the chapter explores how local governments and communities engage with scientific knowledge through policymaking, deliberative initiatives, and citizen science. It identifies limitations in knowledge utilization, evaluates collaboration between actors, and highlights local initiatives' potential to bridge gaps between science and society for a more sustainable future.

Keywords: science-politics-public relationship, sustainable development, local sustainable practices, deliberative democracy.

Explaining uneven development in industrial localities: social fields approach

Kseniia Gromova

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

kseniia.gromova@fis.unm.si

Abstract: Industrial localities play an important role in regional development by concentrating production, driving innovation, and strengthening regional competitiveness. However, while some localities manage to successfully respond to changing economic and social conditions, others might face stagnation and decline. This contribution deals with the question of uneven local industrial development and presents the conceptual framework of an ongoing doctoral study that examines the social foundations of local industrial transformation. Particular attention is given to the role of organisations, public institutions, social connections, and shared ways of thinking. From this perspective, local industrial transformation is understood not only as a matter of economic restructuring, but as a historically conditioned and socially embedded process in which three main social forces – institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames (Social Fields Approach – SOFIA) – shape how local actors interpret opportunities, coordinate actions, mobilise resources, and respond to structural change, thereby either enabling or hindering new path creation. The research compares industrial localities with distinct development trajectories and different levels of innovative performance. The current contribution presents preliminary reflections following the first interviews conducted in Aalborg (Denmark) – an industrial locality that has successfully transitioned from an old industrial base towards a knowledge-oriented economy. These initial insights are used to outline the potential of the Social Fields Approach to understand uneven local industrial development, while also laying the foundation for later comparative analysis of different industrial development trajectories.

Keywords: industrial localities; local industrial transformation; Social Fields Approach (SOFIA); path creation.

War-Induced Displacement and Social Resilience in Ukraine: Analyzing Inequalities and Adaptive Strategies from 2022 to 2026

Oleh Ivanov

International Sociological Association, RC01 Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution

dr.zanuda@gmail.com

Abstract: The Russian invasion of Ukraine has intensified social and political divisions, heightening inequalities and exclusion in a landscape of geopolitical shifts and autocratization. This paper integrates micro-level insights from the Life in War Survey (LIWS)—a unique two-wave panel study conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) before and during the full-scale invasion—with aggregate humanitarian indicators from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO) and the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM DTM) spanning 2022 to early 2026.

The first wave of LIWS took place from January 18 to February 8, 2022, just before the onset of the invasion, using stratified three-stage random sampling to represent Ukrainian residents aged 15 and over in government-controlled areas (n=1,531 via computer-assisted personal interviewing with the ESS 10 questionnaire). The second wave, conducted via computer-assisted telephone interviewing from August 24 to October 6, 2022, re-interviewed 595 panel participants (39% retention) and introduced new items on war exposure and displacement. These individual-level data capture personal experiences of economic pressures, psychological strains, and relational disruptions, alongside adaptive behaviors such as civic participation and rising institutional trust. Pre- and post-invasion comparisons point to incremental gains in well-being despite ongoing challenges.

When merged with HNO and IOM DTM aggregates—tracking people in need, vulnerability assessments, and displacement patterns— the analysis reveals an initial surge in internal movement followed by a gradual decline, though regional imbalances endure, especially in eastern and southern areas where elevated humanitarian severity limits recovery. Higher displacement concentrations correlate with amplified disparities, constraining adaptive potential, while widespread community initiatives emerge as pathways to counter exclusion. These patterns reflect broader societal transitions, including shifts toward community-driven responses amid technological change and transparency erosion.

Recommendations emphasize equitable resource allocation to support inclusive rebuilding, informing discussions on navigating transformations in fragmented societies. Limitations include the panel's focus on the conflict's initial phase and potential underreporting in contested regions; extensions could draw on emerging 2026 metrics for refined longitudinal insights.

Keywords: war-induced displacement, social resilience, conflict-induced inequalities, adaptive strategies, humanitarian transformations in Ukraine.

The Epochal Crisis of Liberal Democracy: The Relevance of Plato's Critique in the Age of Post-Truth and Digital Transformation

Dejan Jelovac

School of Advanced Social Studies

dejan.jelovac@gmail.com

Abstract: The proposed paper revisits Platon's critique of democracy in order to examine its analytical relevance for understanding the contemporary crisis of liberal democratic systems. Rather than treating this critique as a historically bounded or normatively obsolete position, the paper proceeds from the assumption that Plato identified structural tensions within democratic order that continue to manifest themselves, albeit in transformed forms, in present-day societies. The analysis focuses on several interconnected deficiencies articulated in The Republic: the relativisation of truth, the marginalisation of knowledge, the absence of political competence, the diffusion of responsibility, the ambivalence of equality, and the inherent instability of democratic arrangements. These elements are not approached as isolated phenomena, but as mutually reinforcing dynamics that shape the internal logic of democratic governance. Particular emphasis is placed on the transformation of doxa into a dominant epistemic principle under conditions of digital communication. In contemporary media environments, structured by algorithmic selection and amplification, the distinction between knowledge and opinion becomes increasingly blurred, while visibility and resonance tend to prevail over argumentative validity. In such a context, the classical opposition between logos and doxa acquires renewed explanatory force.

The paper further situates these processes within broader developments commonly associated with the current phase of social transformations: intensifying political polarisation, the rise of populist forms of mobilisation, the erosion of epistemic authority, and the growing impact of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, on the formation of public opinion and political decision-making. From this perspective, contemporary developments appear less as contingent deviations and more as intensifications of structural tendencies already identified in classical political thought.

At the same time, the limits of Plato's position are explicitly acknowledged. As emphasised in critiques such as those advanced by Karl Popper, any attempt to ground political authority in claims of superior knowledge raises the problem of legitimacy and opens the possibility of exclusionary or authoritarian outcomes. The paper therefore does not advocate a return to anti-democratic models, but

rather treats Plato's critique as a conceptual instrument for interrogating the tensions between majority rule, knowledge, and political responsibility.

The paper concludes that the present crisis of liberal democracy should be understood not simply as decline, but as a transformation in which its internal contradictions become more visible and more consequential. In this sense, Plato's critique remains a relevant point of departure for a more reflexive understanding of contemporary democratic challenges.

Keywords: post-truth; digital transformation; political polarisation; epistemic crisis; social transformations.

AI-Driven Platform for Social Inclusion: Addressing the Student Housing Crisis in Slovenia

Denis Kantić

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

contact@deniskantic.net

Abstract: This paper explores the potential of artificial intelligence and modern software architectures to mitigate escalating social inequalities within the real estate market, specifically focusing on the student housing crisis in Slovenia. As university centers face a dual challenge of skyrocketing demand and a stagnating supply of affordable units, students, particularly those from marginalized, low-income, or international backgrounds, frequently encounter systemic exclusion, information asymmetry, and significant trust-related barriers.

To address these challenges, I present "Domko" (domko.si), an AI-powered platform engineered to optimize and secure the matching ecosystem between students and private landlords or institutional housing providers. From a technical perspective, the platform is built on a robust, high-performance stack utilizing Golang for a scalable backend, Nuxt.js for a responsive frontend, and PostgreSQL for complex data relational management. The core innovation lies in the implementation of multi-criteria intelligent algorithms that automate the matching process. Unlike traditional search engines, these algorithms prioritize socio-economic indicators and apply trust-based security protocols to ensure fair and transparent transactions.

The study provides a comprehensive empirical overview of the platform's development lifecycle, from identifying market gaps to implementing automated verification systems. By digitizing the vetting process, the research demonstrates how specialized AI tools can effectively reduce human unconscious bias and streamline access to housing, which is a fundamental prerequisite for academic success.

Furthermore, the paper argues that such technological interventions are not merely convenience tools but are essential components for achieving social sustainability in increasingly divided urban environments. It discusses the broader societal impact of deploying decentralized digital solutions to foster social inclusion. In conclusion, the research offers "Domko" as a scalable and adaptable model for other European regions facing similar structural housing transformations, emphasizing that the intersection of software engineering and social policy is critical for building a more equitable digital future.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Student Housing Crisis, Social Inclusion , Algorithmic Matching, Digital Transformation.

Tribal Status for Social Betterment: Hattee Community of Himachal Pradesh (India)

Kashmir Kashyap

Higher Education, Himachal Pradesh

k.c.kashyap.edn@gmail.com

Abstract: The word hattee is based on local dialect 'haat' which means a market. The term is in vogue for the people of Sirmaur District of Himachal Pradesh in Trans-Giri area. The people used to sale or barter the essential items in those areas. These people find their ancestry from the kuru dynasty of epic age and follow the related customs. Primitive customs such as child-marriage, bride-price, and polyandry are prevalent in hattee society. The hattees have age-old relations with the people of Jaunsar-Bawar of Uttrakhand state, who already are enjoying the tribal status. Cultural similarity is a strong base for hattees to demand the tribal status. Geographically, entire area is hilly with least means of livelihood. Constitutional benefits available to scheduled tribe people include the reservation in Government services, admission in educational institutions and assistance by central or state schemes. Hattees are eager to avail all these benefits. To improve the socio-economic standard, these people demanded the tribal status from Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. The Hattees adopted constitutional and peaceful ways to achieve the goal of the tribal status. They formed 'Central Hattee Committee' for the purpose. Consequently, the Government considered their demand and granted the desired status. But the 'Gujjars Social Welfare Council' and 'Trans-Giri Scheduled Castes' Rights Committee' have challenged the grant of tribal status to hattee people. Consequently, status could not be continued. Presently, the matter is pending in court for judicial review.

A relevant research question is as to how tribal status can improve the socio-cultural life of hattee community? The paper reviews efforts of hattees for tribal status with related issues. The research is based on Historical Method. Sources of information include the Administrative and Census Reports, Print media Ground Reports, Ministry of Tribal Affairs Reports, Policy documents of Human Resource Development (Government of India) and selected secondary sources.

In India, socio-cultural diversity is a distinguished feature. Ancestry of hattees to epic age is also a unique identity. Cultural identity and healthy social practices are promoted by Indian Government. No doubt, grant of tribal status will improve the financial position of hattees. But, cultural renaissance is the need

of hour to reform the social evils. Social reformers and thinkers should motivate the hattee people for socio- economic betterment.

Keywords: Hattee, Community, Tribal Status, Ritual, socio-cultural.

Truth, Trust, and Technology: Digital Information Literacy and Social Fragmentation among Adolescents — A Cross-National Analysis Using PISA 2022

Sandeep Kaur

Guru Nanak College of Education, Ludhiana, Punjab, India

sandeepaneja27@gmail.com

Abstract: In an increasingly digitalized yet socially fragmented world, adolescents' ability to critically engage with information and sustain meaningful social connections has become a pressing global concern. While digital technologies expand access to knowledge and interaction, they also intensify risks related to misinformation, weakened social trust, and growing polarization. This study examines the relationship between digital information literacy, social trust, and social fragmentation among adolescents across diverse national contexts.

The study employs a cross-national secondary data analysis using data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, conducted by the OECD. Composite indices for Digital Information Literacy, Social Trust and Belonging, and Social Fragmentation were constructed using standardized indicators of ICT engagement, peer relationships, and student well-being. Reliability and construct validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis, implemented in the R statistical environment. Multilevel modelling was applied to account for the hierarchical structure of the data, with students nested within countries.

The study is expected to reveal that higher digital engagement does not uniformly translate into stronger social cohesion, particularly in contexts with lower levels of social trust. The study highlights the mediating role of social trust and reveals cross-national variations shaped by socio-economic conditions. The findings underscore the need to promote critical digital literacy and socio-emotional competencies to address emerging challenges of social fragmentation in the digital age. The study contributes to ongoing global dialogues on social transformations in increasingly divided and digitally mediated societies.

Keywords: Digital Information Literacy; Social Fragmentation; PISA 2022; Cross-National Analysis; Social Trust.

AI TCO Blindspot

Janez Kolar

Rudolfovo · Science and Technology Centre Novo mesto

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

School of Advanced Social Studies

janez.kolar@fis.unm.si

Abstract: AI – TCO blind spot. Is this a matter of digital optimism, or should we speak about deep systemic naivety?

Leading narratives about AI in mainstream media often suggest that modern social and political discourse is saturated with uncritical digital optimism. This perspective presents artificial intelligence as a "bodiless," inexpensive—or even free—solution to complex social problems. This paper challenges such euphoria by placing the concept of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) at the center of the debate. The author argues that, as a society, we lack a consensus on the full price of AI that will eventually have to be paid, as current valuation models systematically ignore the "hidden" costs beneath the surface of visible progress. Ultimately, the paper questions whether our current reliance on AI represents genuine progress or merely a form of systemic digital naivety.

To address this, the author deconstructs the TCO of artificial intelligence through three scientific pillars that reveal the material and ethical price of these systems. First, the Ecological TCO analyzes the material base of AI, from the mining of rare metals to the massive consumption of water and energy, framing it as a long-term planetary debt (Crawford, 2021; Dauvergne, 2020). Second, the Systemic and Labor TCO exposes the "ghost work" of underpaid, invisible workers who maintain the datasets necessary for "autonomous" systems (Gray & Suri, 2019). Third, the Cognitive TCO highlights the dangers of "stochastic parroting" and the erosion of human skills caused by uncritical trust in algorithmic decision-making (Bender et al., 2021; Logg et al., 2019).

Within the Slovenian context, this digital naivety—defined as the gap between technical skill and a lack of critical understanding of system externalities (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017; Buckingham, 2015)—is clearly reflected in national digital strategies. In these frameworks, TCO is often reduced to direct financial investment, while risks such as technological dependence, cybersecurity gaps, and high energy demands are overlooked, which could be fatal for a small ecosystem like Slovenia. Without a radical redefinition of TCO that includes ethical, ecological, and social costs, digital transformation remains

trapped in "technological solutionism" (Morozov, 2013). The paper concludes with a provocation: is the universal move into AI that we are observing today a true strategic shift, or just a manifestation of collective naivety because we fear the inevitable bill that AI is presenting to society?

Keywords: AI, TCO, Digital naivety.

Rethinking the Social Foundations of Democracy in a Divided World: Configurations of Support across Regime Types

Olga Kutsenko[a] & Andrii Gorbachyk[b]

[a]Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine

[a]Thechnical University of Berlin, Germany

[b]Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine

olga.kutsenko.ua28@gmail.com

Abstract: At a time when democracy is increasingly challenged not only by institutional erosion but by deep social fragmentation and epistemic polarisation, its very foundations must be rethought beyond institutionalist frameworks. Democracy does not rest solely on formal rules and procedures; it is sustained—or undermined—through socially structured configurations of support embedded in inequalities, resources, and everyday practices. Recent debates on democratic backsliding and resilience point in this direction but often remain at the level of aggregate attitudes. This paper advances a configurational approach to the 'social bases of democracy', conceptualising them as patterned combinations of normative orientations, agency-related resources, and participatory practices distributed across social structure.

Empirically, the study draws on WVS/EVS data (2017–2022) and compares six countries representing different regime types: established democracies (Germany, the United Kingdom), a consolidated post-socialist democracy (Lithuania), a hybrid regime under existential threat (Ukraine), and post-Soviet autocracies (Russia, Belarus). Democratic support is operationalised through six dimensions: (1) democracy vs. authoritarian alternatives, (2) democratic values, (3) internal political efficacy, (4) attitudes toward state control, (5) rejection of political violence, and (6) political participation. Using k-means clustering, we identify typical configurations within each country and compare their structural distribution.

Across the six countries, four analytically distinct configurations emerge. First, a consistent democratic configuration, combining strong normative support, high efficacy, active participation, rejection of political violence, and low acceptance of state overreach. Second, a normative-passive configuration, marked by declarative democratic support but low efficacy and participation. Third, an ambivalent (security-oriented) configuration, combining democratic preferences with acceptance of strong leadership and expanded state control. Fourth, a non-democratic (authoritarian-leaning) configuration, characterised by

low democratic commitment, acceptance of authoritarian alternatives, and weak participation.

These configurations are unevenly structured by education, cohort, and spatial inequalities. In Ukraine, war intensifies the ambivalent configuration, reflecting a shift toward security-oriented attitudes; however, consistent democratic support remains anchored in younger, educated, and civically active groups. In contrast, Russia and Belarus show a higher prevalence of non-democratic and ambivalent configurations, while Western democracies display stronger consolidation of consistent democratic patterns.

The findings suggest that democratic resilience depends less on aggregate support than on the balance and interaction of configurations within social structure. The paper contributes to understanding how democracy is reproduced and contested in a divided and diverging world.

Keywords: Social foundations of democracy, Democratic resilience, Configurational analysis, War and social transformation, Comparative analysis.

A System Without a Shared Reality: How Fragmented Perceptions Undermine Intellectual Property Effectiveness

Urša Lamut & Ana Hafner

Rudolfovo · Science and Technology Centre Novo mesto

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

ursa.lamut@rudolfovo.eu

Abstract: This paper explores fragmentation in the Slovenian intellectual property (IP) support environment as a case of broader social and institutional divergence in the perception of value, purpose, and what counts as meaningful action. Although the IP support system has significantly developed over the past decade, including the establishment of formal structures and policy instruments, its performance remains limited.

Drawing on qualitative data from focus groups and semi-structured interviews with representatives of higher education institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the business sector, the paper argues that the key challenge is not the absence of institutional mechanisms, but fragmented interpretations of IP among stakeholders. Different stakeholder groups operate on fundamentally divergent logics of IP. The paper identifies three dominant logics. An academic logic focused on publication and long-term knowledge production, a market logic driven by speed and profitability, and a developmental logic oriented toward project-based system building. These logics are shaped by different goals and motivations, resulting in varying perceptions of what constitutes value, success, and even relevance, and leading to a fragmented system that lacks coordination and coherence.

This discrepancy is conceptualized as a misalignment of institutional logics, in which stakeholders are embedded in different normative and cognitive frameworks. By incorporating the theory of planned behavior, the article explains how these fragmented perceptions translate into actions or inactions. The findings reveal a persistent “activation gap,” in which stakeholders are aware of IP but do not engage with it, as differing interpretations shape their perspectives, perceived norms, and sense of control.

The paper demonstrates that fragmentation is not only structural but also rooted in differences in meaning and interpretation. Stakeholders are not only divided in their goals, but in their understanding of what is relevant and worth pursuing. The paper contributes to discussions on social and institutional fragmentation

by showing how divergent perceptions within a shared system can weaken collective outcomes, even in the presence of well-developed formal structures.

Keywords: Institutional Logics, Fragmentation, Intellectual Property.

Developing Digital Pedagogical Competence in Universities: Educators' Challenges and Professional Development Needs

Edit Lezha & Eranda Bilali

University of Shkodra

editlezha@gmail.com

Abstract: Over the past decade, the growing presence of digital technologies in higher education has increasingly shaped how teaching and learning are organized within universities. As digital tools become embedded in everyday academic practice, the ability of educators to develop and apply digital pedagogical competences has gained particular importance. While many institutions encourage the integration of technology into teaching, the process through which educators acquire these competences often remains uneven and influenced by a range of contextual factors.

This meta-analytical study examines existing research on the development of digital pedagogical competence among university educators. By synthesizing findings from previously published empirical studies, the review aims to identify common patterns in how educators adapt to technology-enhanced teaching environments and to highlight the challenges that frequently emerge in this process. The analysis suggests that several issues continue to shape the development of these competences, including limited opportunities for targeted training, varying levels of digital literacy among faculty members, and uncertainties about how digital tools can be meaningfully incorporated into pedagogical practice.

At the same time, the literature indicates that when institutions provide sustained professional development and supportive learning environments, educators are more likely to engage with digital technologies in ways that enhance teaching and student participation. The findings therefore underline the importance of structured professional development initiatives and institutional strategies that encourage continuous learning among university staff. Strengthening digital pedagogical competence appears to be an essential step toward improving the quality and effectiveness of technology-enhanced education in contemporary universities.

Keywords: digital pedagogical competence, higher education, university educators, professional development, technology-enhanced learning.

Food Security: The Greatest Hidden Danger in a Divided and Diverging World

—Based on the Data from ‘‘Food-Self Provisioning" questionnaire survey in China

Huidi Ma

Chinese National Academy of Arts

mahuidi@china.com

Abstract: In an increasingly divided and diverging world, compounded by climate change, regional conflicts, and ecological degradation, the issue of food security has become ever more prominent. Excessive technological intervention, land degradation, and water scarcity are undermining the resilience and sustainability of global food systems. Engels’ warning of "nature's revenge on humanity" is becoming a reality. Taking China as an example, between 1980 and 2025, grain production increased fivefold, and meat production increased tenfold. Yet beneath this material abundance lies the toll of soil contamination, ecological imbalance, and deteriorating food quality. The growth cycle of broiler chickens was compressed from 180 days to 38, intensifying public anxiety over "what to eat." Meanwhile, the domination of food systems by capital and technology is exacerbating social divisions and fueling the rise of consumerism. Industrialized, intensively produced "food with additives" not only poses serious health risks, but also erodes the food ethics of "following nature's course" and "diligence and frugality." We have strayed into the labyrinth of "technology + capital", shaking off the constraints of nature, humanity, and ethics.

Two rounds of the "Food Self-Provisioning" (FSP)questionnaire survey conducted by Chinese scholars collaborated with European counterparts in 2019 and 2022 provide important empirical shows. First, the public is widely concerned about the impact of technological intervention on food properties and health. Second, food shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened the awareness of food autonomy and prompted people to engage in FSP practices. Third, FSP not only ensures safety but also passes on agricultural techniques, rebuilding reverence for nature and the tradition of diligence and frugality. Fourth, frequent disasters and the risk of war have heightened the urgency of preparedness. These findings reveal the multidimensional nature of the food issue and its ripple effects.

We conclude that policymakers should: re-examine the role of technology in food systems and establish mechanisms for ethical regulation; support localized practices such as self-produced food to enhance community resilience and public participation; advocate a development philosophy of "de-growth, less

consumption, more nature" to restructure urban-rural integration and harmonious human-nature spatial relations; and reshape food ethics centered on moderation, sufficiency, and shared responsibility. "Food is the first necessity of the people" remains a fundamental principle of survival. Addressing food perils requires exploring alternative food system networks—not only as a path to crisis response but also as a fundamental way to resolve the deep-seated contradictions among technology, capital, nature, and humanity in modern society.

Keywords: Food security, techno-capital manipulation, food self-provisioning, food ethics, alternative food system networks

Data, Power, and Inclusion in Music Education: Rethinking E-Administrative Platforms in the Digital Age

Lorena Mihelač

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

School Center Novo mesto

lorena.mihelac@fis.unm.si

Abstract: The present study examines the influence of digital technologies and e-administrative platforms on the promotion of inclusive practices within music education. While data-driven pedagogy is frequently perceived as a means of enhancing equity and personalization, this paper critically interrogates fundamental assumptions concerning data, power dynamics, and inclusion within educational frameworks, particularly in relation to emerging social inequalities and digital transformations in education.

The paper proposes a conceptual framework that merges student-centered music activities, e-administrative platforms, and digital music instruments to enhance data-informed inclusion in music education.

Drawing on over ten years of professional experience and employing a qualitative, practice-based, and interpretive methodology, this study examines the utilization of administrative and pedagogical data. It explores how these data are employed not only to support learners but also to structure visibility, categorization, and decision-making processes within the context of inclusive education. In doing so, the study situates data practices within broader socio-technical systems, increasingly shaped by digitalization and elements of artificial intelligence.

The research findings indicate that the integration of diverse data sources can benefit students with a broad spectrum of sensory and cognitive requirements. Conversely, this integration also prompts critical inquiries regarding the identification of needs, the representation of learners through data, and the degree to which such systems either reinforce or mitigate existing educational disparities and forms of exclusion.

This study reexamines data, viewing it as a socio-technical construct embedded in institutional practices and power dynamics, rather than as a neutral tool for assessment. It recognizes data's dual role in inclusive education, both supporting and limiting it.

By linking micro-level classroom practices with broader questions of technological governance in education, the study contributes to ongoing debates on the societal impact of digital and data-driven systems. It also offers initial reflections relevant for educational policy and practice, particularly in ensuring that data-informed approaches support equity rather than reproduce inequalities.

This study makes a significant contribution to the field by presenting a data-driven and critically informed approach to inclusive music education, emphasizing the importance of combining technological innovation with ethical and reflective pedagogical practices.

Keywords: data-informed pedagogy, inclusive music education, learning analytics and power, digital education systems, digital transformation in education.

Trauma-Informed Social Ecological Typology of Political Socialization and Mobilization in Gaza

Janja Mikulan

School of Advanced Social Studies

janja.mikulan@fuds.si

Abstract: Mainstream approaches to political mobilization and trauma often rely on Western-centric models that decontextualize development from chronic structural violence. This study develops a trauma-informed socio-ecological typology of political socialization and mobilization under conditions of absolute siege. Drawing on nine in-depth life-history interviews with Palestinian men in the Gaza Strip, conducted between January and March 2026, it integrates Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model with Kruglanski's Significance Quest Theory and Rousseau's distinction between self-preservation and socially mediated recognition. The analysis examines how continuous traumatic stress reshapes the search for dignity, agency, belonging, and survival across the life course.

Findings identify three divergent trajectories. The first, militant alignment, emerges when personal loss, humiliation, and insecurity are interpreted through networks that frame armed resistance as a route to recognition, protection, and collective purpose. The second, sumud and professional agency, reflects active non-radicalization, in which family support, education, work, faith, and community service preserve non-violent pathways to dignity and social worth. The third, disillusionment and exit, develops where external violence intersects with internal repression, factionalism, corruption, and institutional distrust, producing political withdrawal and a focus on survival or departure.

The findings show that trauma does not determine political outcomes. Rather, trajectories are shaped by relational environments, political trust, institutional legitimacy, and the availability of non-violent routes to agency. The destruction of educational institutions—scholasticide—therefore represents not only material devastation but the removal of pathways for future-oriented, non-violent socialization. Effective psychosocial and stabilization interventions must consequently combine trauma-informed support with institutional reconstruction, human rights, and meaningful opportunities for agency.

Keywords: Gaza; trauma; radicalization to violent extremism; social-developmental model, decolonial psychology.

Intimate Boundaries and Secular Belonging: Interfaith and Inter-Caste Families in a Divided Society

Swati Sucharita Nanda

DAV PG College, Varanasi

swatinanda2001@yahoo.co.in

Abstract: Contemporary societies are increasingly shaped by processes of social transformation that intensify divisions, inequalities, and debates over belonging. In India, interfaith and inter-caste marriages challenge historically entrenched norms of religious and caste endogamy, positioning intimate relationships at the intersection of social change and enduring hierarchies. Situated within a context marked by persistent social divisions and inequalities, this paper examines interfaith and inter-caste families as a lens through which to explore evolving meanings of belonging and secular coexistence.

Drawing on qualitative research based on in-depth interviews with 50 interfaith and inter-caste couples living in different parts of India, the paper explores how such families negotiate caste hierarchies, religious identities, patriarchy, kinship expectations, neighbourhood scrutiny, and encounters with state institutions in their everyday lives. These negotiations reveal how secularism and equality are not only constitutional ideals but fragile social practices shaped by everyday interactions and community norms.

The study argues that interfaith and inter-caste families function as micro-sites of social transformation, where broader processes of inclusion, exclusion, and boundary-making are enacted and contested. While these families challenge rigid community boundaries and expand possibilities for coexistence and individual choice, their experiences simultaneously expose the persistence of social hierarchies and the limits of institutional protections.

Importantly, the paper highlights how such families also carry the potential to serve as foundational sites for cultivating pluralism, tolerance, and empathy. Through everyday practices of negotiation, mutual respect, and shared living, they embody forms of coexistence that transcend inherited divisions. In doing so, they not only reconfigure personal identities and familial norms but also contribute to the gradual emergence of more inclusive social imaginaries.

By foregrounding intimacy as a critical arena of social life, the paper contributes to broader debates on social transformations in divided societies. It demonstrates how everyday negotiations within families crossing caste and religious boundaries illuminate the changing contours of belonging, citizenship,

and coexistence in a world marked by increasing social divergence. The paper also proposes policy recommendations aimed at supporting and protecting such families, with particular attention to legal safeguards, institutional accountability, and mechanisms that foster social inclusion and security.

Keywords: Interfaith and Inter-caste Families, Everyday Secularism, Intimacy and Citizenship.

Political Clientelism, Weak Institutions, and the Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria: A Sociological and Criminological Analysis

Comfort Oyinlola Oyafunke-Omoniyi

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

oyafunke-omoniyi.comfort@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract: This study interrogates the structural, cultural, and institutional foundations of political corruption in Nigeria. Moving beyond moralistic explanations, it situates corruption within a broader framework of clientelism, neo-patrimonialism, and weak institutional enforcement. Drawing on sociological and criminological theories—including strain theory, elite theory, differential association, and routine activity theory—the paper demonstrates how Nigeria's political system incentivizes illicit accumulation and redistributive patronage. Empirical evidence is drawn from both international and Nigerian scholarship, as well as case studies of anti-corruption efforts, particularly the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The findings reveal that corruption is systemic, socially normalized, and politically sustained. The paper concludes that meaningful reform must integrate institutional restructuring with cultural transformation.

Keywords: Corruption, Clientelism, Neo-patrimonialism, Nigeria, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.

Who Can Afford the Transition? Poverty, Policy, and the Politics of Green Transformation in the EU

Alenka Pandiloska Jurak

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

Rudolfovo - Science and Technology Center Novo mesto

alenka.pandiloska@fis.unm.si

Abstract: Contemporary social transformations across Europe unfold within a context marked by deepening socio economic divides, political fragmentation, and growing uncertainties surrounding the green and digital transitions. While the Sustainable Development Goals provide a global framework for integrating economic growth, social well being, and environmental protection, their implementation faces significant social and political constraints. Achieving a just transition towards a low carbon and sustainable future requires not only technological adaptation, but also a profound understanding of the political economy that shapes winners and losers, perceptions of fairness, and the distribution of adjustment costs.

In the European Union, the Green Deal and the accompanying Fit for 55 legislative package outline an ambitious roadmap to climate neutrality by 2050, including strengthened carbon sink measures, reforms to the emissions trading system, and the creation of a Social Climate Fund to support vulnerable households and small enterprises. Yet, these policies enter societies already marked by widespread inequality. Data from OECD (2021) reveal that more than 73 million people in the EU are considered poor and more than 57 million are at risk of poverty according to EUROSTAT (2021).

Such extensive socio economic precarity poses a critical challenge for achieving broad public support for the transformative policies required to address climate change and environmental degradation. Without social consensus and inclusive governance, the EU risks stagnation, political backlash, and delays in implementing sustainability measures.

Additionally, sociological theories such as the theory of relative deprivation consistently show that social deprivation leads to feelings of frustration, injustice and anomie. These processes can lead to increased crime, social unrest and a greater willingness to support violent or militaristic solutions. Or, from the other perspective, sociological and economic theories show that societies with less social deprivation, higher human and social capital and inclusive institutions are significantly more receptive to technological innovation. Social threat due to

perceived impact limits access to resources and trust, leading to slower diffusion of new technologies.

The author argues that sustainable transitions must be approached as political, moral, and knowledge based struggles, rather than purely technocratic processes and highlights the need for inclusive, evidence based dialogues that bridge divisions between social groups, economic sectors, and member states. As a policy recommendation, increasing social legitimacy and trust in the implementation of the Green Transformation is suggested.

Keywords: EU policy, Green Transition, policy recommendation

Navigating Fragmentation: Dynamic Adaptation and Social Transformation among Ukrainian Refugees in Times of Crisis

Tetyana Panchenko

Karazin Kharkiv National University

t.panchenko@karazin.ua

Abstract: Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered one of Europe's largest displacement crises, forcing about 6 million Ukrainians to seek refuge abroad. This study explores how Ukrainian refugees in Germany navigate the fragmentation of social, political, and personal realities—balancing between the desire to return home and the need to integrate into uncertain host environments. Based on longitudinal qualitative research (2022–2025), including multiple rounds of in-depth interviews with 21 refugees, were identified five dynamic adaptation models focused on stay or return intentions and potential for integration. By analysing the dynamics and transformations of these models over time, the study illuminates the complex interplay between uncertainty, resilience, and social transformation. The five patterns—Passive Return Expectation, Motivated Return Preparation, Undecided but Open-Minded, Frustrated by Ukraine and Ready to Move On, and Conscious Migration—reveal: Diverse responses to uncertainty, from hope-driven coping to pragmatic preparation; the fluidity of affiliation, as loyalty and commitment are renegotiated over time; structural inequalities in adaptation, where pre-existing resources or vulnerabilities shape opportunities; the contrast between proactive strategies and reactive survival, highlighting how agency interacts with external constraints; transnationalism as a coping mechanism, as refugees maintain ties to Ukraine through remittances, activism, or cultural preservation; the impact of life events (e.g., family reunification, health crises) as tipping points that reshape intentions.

These models challenge binary narratives of "stay or return," instead forming a continuum of resilience where individuals reconfigure belonging, livelihoods, and identities. The research exposes how fragmentation and inequality influence adaptation, with some leveraging migration for upward mobility while others remain trapped in precarity. The study also exposes structural inequalities: while some leverage migration for upward mobility, others remain trapped in precarity, exacerbating divisions within the diaspora.

Against the backdrop of global autocratization and digital polarization, the findings underscore the need for inclusive policies that recognize diverse needs—from reintegration support to flexible migration pathways.

By centring refugees' voices, this work contributes to broader dialogues on sustainable responses to forced displacement, emphasizing the role of social science research in informing equitable solutions. Ultimately, the Ukrainian case illustrates how fragmentation is not merely a barrier but a catalyst for innovation—in personal lives, community networks, and advocacy efforts. Understanding these dynamic processes is essential for fostering cohesive, adaptive societies that bridge divides.

Keywords: Ukrainian refugees, adaptation models, fragmentation, transnationalism, integration policy, social transformation.

The Future is Green… But for Whom? Green Startups in Times of Polycrisis: Entrepreneurship, Extractivism, and Gender in the Global South

Camila Ponce Lara

Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt

camila.poncelara@gmail.com

Abstract: The convergence of climate crisis, structural inequalities, and transformations in modes of production configures what scholars have termed a "polycrisis": a historical moment in which multiple systems of social stabilization collapse simultaneously. In this context, green startups have emerged as relevant actors in debates about ecological transition, frequently framed as innovative alternatives to dominant extractivist development models. This paper critically examines that assumption through a comparative study of green entrepreneurship led by young people in Chile and Tunisia — two Global South countries sharing colonial legacies and rapidly expanding startup ecosystems.

Drawing on approximately forty in-depth interviews conducted between 2023 and 2026, the paper analyzes three interrelated dimensions. First, it examines the tension between market logic and transformative commitment in these ventures, asking to what extent they challenge or subtly reproduce extractivist dynamics under new forms. Second, it identifies three distinct entrepreneurial profiles — pragmatic solution innovators, commercially-oriented "shrewd" entrepreneurs, and "inspirers" driven by explicit environmental activism — exploring how each negotiates the relationship between profitability and ecological impact. Third, it foregrounds gender as a specific analytical axis, showing that women green entrepreneurs build their projects from non-linear trajectories in which motherhood, care work, and everyday experience operate not as obstacles but as genuine sources of innovation and ethical orientation.

The paper argues that green entrepreneurship in the Global South cannot be assessed solely by its immediate environmental impact. It must also be read as a sociocultural practice that reconfigures identities, community relations, and conceptions of development. By situating these cases within broader debates on green extractivism and polycrisis, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of young entrepreneurs as agents of change — or of reproduction — within the global ecological transition.

Keywords; green startups, polycrisis, green extractivism, gender and entrepreneurship, Global South.

Algorithmic Persuasion and the Commercialization of Digital Public Spheres: Rethinking Media Literacy in Platform Societies

Mateja Rek

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

School of Advanced Social Studies

mateja.rek@fis.unm.si

Abstract: As digital platforms become infrastructural to contemporary communication, digital public spheres are increasingly shaped by algorithmic systems that are frequently optimized to maximize user engagement. Within these platform environments, persuasive communication is no longer confined to clearly demarcated advertising formats but is embedded in the very architecture that structures visibility and algorithmically curates content for individual users. Influencer promotion, sponsored content, branded messaging and algorithmically curated feeds operate within the same communicative spaces as news, civic debate and interpersonal interaction, contributing to the commercialization of digital public spheres.

This paper argues that algorithmic persuasion constitutes a structural feature of contemporary digital societies rather than a peripheral marketing practice. Platform architectures systematically organize what becomes visible, how content circulates and which actors gain recognition, thereby shaping not only consumer behaviour but also patterns of public attention and civic perception. Commercial logics are thus deeply intertwined with communicative infrastructures that underpin contemporary democratic life. The normalization of targeted advertising and data-driven personalization blurs boundaries between informational and promotional content and complicates citizens' ability to distinguish persuasion from public discourse.

Against this backdrop, prevailing approaches to media literacy require reconsideration. Media literacy is often framed as the capacity to critically access, evaluate and create digital content. However, such frameworks frequently overlook the structural embedding of algorithmic persuasion within platform environments. A critical rethinking of media literacy in platform societies must therefore include systematic awareness of data extraction, targeting mechanisms, personalization logics and persuasive design as constitutive elements of digital communication.

Media literacy is conceptualized not merely as an individual skill set but as a form of civic competence necessary for navigating the commercialized elements

of digital public spheres. Strengthening citizens' understanding of algorithmic persuasion is presented as an important element for informed participation, autonomy and democratic resilience in digital societies. By situating digital marketing communication within broader processes of platformization and commercialization, this presentation contributes to theoretical debates on media, power and public spheres, and calls for a structural reorientation of media literacy under conditions of intensified platformization.

Keywords: algorithmic persuasion, platformization, digital public spheres, commercialization, media literacy, democratic resilience.

Fake news epidemic and erosion of trust: the role of social media and bots

Blaž Rodič

University of Novo mesto, Faculty of Information Studies

blaz.rodic@fis.unm.si

Abstract: Today we are witnessing two ongoing social transformations associated with the post-truth era: one is the global change in human information behavior, where people are increasingly turning to social media and influencers for information on relevant issues, from healthcare to politics, while the second, related social transformation is the erosion of institutional and social trust.

These two social transformations are causally connected via another phenomenon, which is a defining characteristic of the post-truth era: the fake news or misinformation epidemic, increasing group polarization, and creating a positive feedback loop with potentially disastrous consequences for social cohesion. The fake news epidemic is largely driven by a technological change, i.e., automation of content generation and dissemination, made possible by the digital and connected nature of social media and abused by political actors aiming to manipulate public opinion and polarize their voters.

The goal of our research was to establish a theoretical model of the fake news epidemic and associated phenomena in order to identify areas where further research may result in novel measures to help curtail the fake news epidemic and/or reduce its adverse social effects. We review the role of social media and social media bots in the fake news epidemic in the context of the post-truth era and examine the consequences of exposure to misinformation, and conclude this review with the presentation of our theoretical model of the fake news epidemic and our recommendations for the stakeholders and policy developers.

Keywords: social media bots; misinformation; fake news epidemic; post-truth; societal polarization.

Citizen Science as a Tool for Farmer Empowerment and Mental Resilience in a Diverging World

Tatjana Rožič[a], Maruša Gorišek[a] & Nuša Kovačević Tojnko[b]

[a]Institute IRSA

[b]Alma Mater Europaea University

tatjana.rozic@almamater.si

Abstract: Citizen science approach is often praised for fostering openness and integration between the scientific community and the general public. In participatory research projects individuals contribute their intellectual effort, specialized knowledge, or resources to the scientific process. They are increasingly prevalent in agriculture, as farmers represent a vital source of indigenous and local knowledge that is often marginalized in traditional, top-down academic frameworks. These initiatives improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills of participants; their most crucial objective is the empowerment of farmers.

Farmers are often burdened by a convergence of volatile factors, including environmental and climate instability, economic market pressures, and rapidly shifting social conditions. Despite the rising importance of participatory approaches, it remains unclear how the inclusion of farmers in the co-creation of knowledge acts as a buffer against these stressors. Through a systematic literature review, this contribution investigates whether the empowerment of farmers via citizen science can serve as a protective factor for their mental health, thereby fostering both social and environmental sustainability within the agricultural sector. By bridging the gap between scientific expertise and rural experience, this approach seeks to mitigate the structural exclusion of agricultural workers and promote a more resilient and equitable future.

Keywords: citizen science, participatory research, farmers, mental health.

Assessing the Nexus Between New Media Adoption and Sustainable Customers' Engagement in Selected Commercial Banks in Nigeria

Jumoke A. Salau, Rotimi Olatunji & Noeem Taiwo Thanny

Lagos State University, Nigeria

adekitanolajumoke16@gmail.com

Abstract: The Nigerian banking sector is experiencing rapid transformation driven by the adoption of new media platforms such as social media, mobile banking applications, and digital customer service channels. Recent industry observations show that over 75% of bank customers in Nigeria actively use digital and social media platforms, yet only about 45% of commercial banks consistently leverage these platforms for sustained customer engagement and service interaction. This gap has raised concerns about the effectiveness of new media adoption in strengthening customer relationships, trust, and long-term engagement in the banking industry. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between new media adoption and sustainable customer engagement in selected commercial banks in Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design. The population comprised employees and customers of selected commercial banks in Nigeria, with a total population of 2,050 respondents, from which 360 respondents (i.e. customers) and 50 personnel in the Corporate Affairs Unit were selected using stratified random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential tools presented in tables and charts. The findings revealed that new media adoption significantly enhances customer engagement through improved communication speed, service accessibility, and personalized banking experiences. However, challenges such as inadequate digital skills among staff, cybersecurity concerns, and inconsistent digital strategy implementation were identified as key constraints. The study further showed that banks with well-structured digital engagement strategies recorded approximately 38% higher customer retention rates compared to those with weak or informal new media usage. The study concludes that effective adoption of new media is critical for achieving sustainable customer engagement in the Nigerian banking sector. It recommends continuous digital skill development, stronger cybersecurity frameworks, and the implementation of integrated digital communication strategies across commercial banks.

Keywords: New Media Adoption, Customer Engagement, Digital Banking, Commercial Banks, Nigeria.

Digital Pathways to Divided Citizenship: E-Governance, Social Hierarchies and Digital Inclusion in Rural India

Dhirendra Kumar Sahoo

KIIT University, Bhubaneswar

dhirendrahcu@gmail.com

Abstract: In an era marked by deep social divisions and diverging developmental trajectories, digital governance has emerged as a pivotal site of both convergence and contestation. This study offers a sociological inquiry into e-governance and digital inclusion in rural India, using rural Odisha as a critical case. The research interrogates whether digital technologies bridge or deepen existing societal fractures. Drawing on the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework, it explores how digital infrastructures Common Service Centres (CSCs), Aadhaar-linked welfare systems, and online service portals mediate state–citizen relations within deeply stratified rural communities.

The study employs a mixed-method design, combining household surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies across two purposively selected blocks in rural Odisha, with 140 respondents representing diverse caste, gender, and class positions. Findings reveal a paradoxical transformation: while e-governance enhances administrative transparency and procedural efficiency, digital participation remains profoundly uneven. Caste-based exclusion, gendered digital divides, and class-based disparities in access to technology and literacy converge to produce a diverging digital citizenship—where privileged groups gain streamlined access to entitlements, while marginalized populations face new forms of bureaucratic alienation. Rather than flattening social hierarchies, digital platforms often reproduce and re-inscribe them, transforming old inequalities into new digital barriers.

The study argues that in a divided and diverging world, digital inclusion cannot be reduced to technological expansion alone. It is a socially embedded process shaped by power, identity, and local cultural dynamics. Without deliberate institutional mechanisms for equity, ICTs led e-governance risks creating parallel digital publics—one included and empowered, the other invisibilized and excluded. The conclusion calls for reimagining digital governance through participatory justice and structural inclusion, recognizing technology as an arena of social struggle rather than neutral progress.

Keywords: Digital Citizenship, Digital Inclusion, ICTs, e-Governance.

Digitalisation and the Digital Divide: Transformation vs. Exclusion

Swapnil Singh

Banaras Hindu University, India

swapnil.singh@bhu.ac.in

Abstract: India's rapid digitalisation and the consequent transformation present one of the most significant paradoxes of contemporary world. While digitalisation potentially democratises the process of accessibility to the services, accelerating economic growth for India, it simultaneously deepens the pre-existing social and economic inequalities, thereby creating digital divide. Digital divide refers to the lack of access, knowledge or infrastructure to required digital resources, creating a barrier and increasing digital disparities among the marginalised sections. In Indian context, certain sections have been historically socially excluded based on different identities (caste, gender, tribe etc.) and the increasing advancement of digitalisation and specifically the use of AI further converts this social exclusion into digital one. The present research examines the ongoing tension between the digital transformation and digital exclusion in contemporary India, based on the government policy framework and empirical research on the social dimensions of digital divide. It is true that the benefits of digitalisation have been observed across fields-from AI powered telemedicine, to education dissemination to Kisan e-Mitra (virtual assistant supporting farmers), yet these benefits remain unevenly distributed. The meaningful digital participation cannot be ensured only through providing access to digital resources and technology but requires further investments such as infrastructure, affordability among others to allow inclusive participation. The study tries to map India's digital divide across three dimensions- access (availability of digital devices and resources), usage (digital literacy and ability to use digital platforms) and outcomes (digital engagement translates to tangible gains). It is to be noted that while the issue of accessibility has narrowed owing to availability of affordable devices, yet the second- and third-dimension related gaps remains wide and even growing with the requirement of advanced skill sets to participate in AI driven transformations. The study further highlights the inherent risks of augmenting structural inequalities if sufficient safeguards and inclusive strategies are not implemented. The paper concludes that digital divide in India requires a resilient governance model which treats digital inclusion as an indispensable requirement for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: AI, digitalisation, digital divide, exclusion, transformation.

Epistemic Climate Repair: Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Sustainability Governance in a Divided World

Oludele Solaja & Comfort Oyinlola Oyafunke-Omoniyi

Department of Sociology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria

solaja.oludele@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract: Current climate governance practices are increasingly framed within a bifurcated world of social divisiveness, political polarization, inter-institutional distrust, growing social inequalities and persistent gaps between promises of sustainability and practice. While dominating climate paradigms tend to focus on technical expert knowledge, regulations and uniform policies, they often neglect local grounded ecological rationalities that maintain legitimacy, participation and adaptability within vulnerable communities. Climate justice, the article claims, therefore, requires moving away from technocratic environmental governance toward inclusive sustainability dialogue that treats indigenous ecological knowledge as a legitimate institutional resource that is conducive for navigating social changes within conditions of social divisions.

Drawing upon literature from environmental sociology, decolonial theory and governance studies, the article elaborates the notion of epistemic climate repair to conceptualize how marginalized ecological knowledge systems may help restore fragmented relations between societies, institutions and decision-making processes related to the environment. Epistemic climate repair refers to the capabilities of indigenous ecological knowledge to provide socially legitimate pathways for ecological cooperation, accountability and context-specific adaptation when formal institutional mechanisms suffer from lack of trust, poor legitimacy and absence of deep social embedment.

Methodologically, the article takes a qualitative interpretive design approach following a decolonial methodology, while adopting the method of a multi-case study analysis. Empirically evidence is drawn from purposively selected communities from Southwest Nigeria where indigenous ecological knowledge practices are actively used to regulate land use practices, water resource management and social controls over environment management. The data for this research were generated from semi-structured interviews with traditional leaders, farmers, women, community environmental managers, followed by focus groups, participant and non-participant observation as well as document analyses of community-based ecological norms as well as national policy documents related to climate change interventions. Through thematic coding, iterative analysis, the data are coded to understand connections between

indigenous ecological management systems and legitimate social functioning, compliance and participatory adaptation.

The results suggest that poor implementation outcomes for many climate interventions may be attributed not just to a policy gap, but to lack of social embedding in an ecological rationality that underpins institutional legitimacy and long-term compliance. The paper therefore outlines an inclusive sustainability governance framework emphasizing the creation of multi-knowledge platforms, institutionalized indigenous engagement and greater incorporation of local ecological intelligence into climate change adaptation planning to improve environmental cooperation and socially grounded transitions in divided societies.

Keywords: Climate Justice, Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, Sustainability Governance, Epistemic Climate Repair, Environmental Sociology.

Cultural Changes in the Everyday Lives of Ukrainian Migrants: A Case Study of Migration to Poland

Joanna Stepaniuk

Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Poland

asiastepaniuk@wp.pl

Abstract: The presentation explores cultural changes in the everyday lives of Ukrainian migrants living in Poland. The process of cultural change among Ukrainian women and men will be presented through the lens of their sociocultural status and diverse life experiences. Theories and research on the cultural change of Ukrainian citizens are currently key issues that directly relate to social practice, the development of integration policies, and the building of positive relations with Polish society. The presentation covers the cultural and social change of Ukrainian migrants, as well as the individual dimensions of identity and the mechanisms of their transformation, based on the experiences of Ukrainian migrant women and men who have come to Poland since 2014.

Keywords: everyday lives of Ukrainian migrants, adaptation, migration, cultural changes, Poland

From Collectively Empowered to Individually Powerless: How Everyday Frustrations with Living under an Autocratizing Government Motivate Emigration

Jacob Thomas

Corvinus University of Budapest

jrt@uni-corvinus.hu

Abstract: Much past research has analyzed the obvious, overt, and sudden impacts of autocratizing government on the most politically engaged segments of populations. Yet as autocratization trickles down into even the less politically aware and engaged segments of the population, it gradually has many banal second-order effects on the more apolitical portions of the population, transforming their relationships with their government, foreign governments, and fellow residents. Previous scholars of autocratization have conceptualized distinct types of reactions to autocratization as tactics of "camouflage" (Frei 2023), yet have less extensively examined changes in civilians' subjective understanding and experiences of autocratization in non-political domains. I analyze narrative data from a subset of 452 oral history life interviews with participants in the Hong Kong Emigration Project (HKEP), a social survey of Hong Kongers (N=4869) conducted with both Hong Kong residents and former Hong Kongers in 16 countries. I illustrate how, between the repression by police of the anti-extradition bill protests in 2019 and Hong Kong's domestic codification of the National Security Law in 2024 (Article 23), many Hong Kong residents who considered emigrating shifted from feeling collectively empowered during the protests to feeling individually powerless after its repression by the government. My analysis focuses on a part of this individual-level disempowerment through which Hong Kongers began to notice, over time, that they could no longer practice their occupation or conduct their personal lives as freely as before in Hong Kong and had to either adapt to the autocratizing constraints or emigrate to a freer society to continue their career as they had before. They trace how they increasingly engage in self-censorship in casual conversation, show wariness about what they say in public places, embrace a more paternalistic relationship between government and civil society, avoid the news, and become increasingly apathetic and cynical toward government and authorities. In occupational domains, they recount how they become anxious and confused about the boundaries of their professional obligations to clients/customers and the government, fearful of others complaining about in political ways, worried about the consequences in taking an oath to the government, receiving incompetent orders from superiors that infringe on their

professional autonomy, and new employees suddenly joining their workplace and began changing its structure, organization, and practices in more autocratic ways than in the past. This paper deepens our understanding of how people's experience and understanding of power transform in everyday ways within "non-political" spheres.

Keywords: autocratization, censorship, tactics of resistance, adaptation, migration.

Why Do Most Who Consider Emigrating Never Do So?: How Subjective Dimensions of Migrant Selectivity in Mental Health, Political Identity, and Traumatic Experiences of Historical Events Raise the Hazard and Speed of Emigration

Jacob Thomas

Corvinus University of Budapest

jrt@uni-corvinus.hu

Abstract: Why do only a minority of people discontent with political changes who say they want to emigrate actually do so? Hong Kong provides an ideal case study for this question: Since February 2019, due to events of political unrest, private and public property damage, police brutality, repression of public demonstration, criminalization of speech and press, and evidence of a rapidly autocratizing government and law. the Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific Studies (2021) surveys in September 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 found that 37-43% of Hong Kongers "wanted to emigrate" and 15-16% had "prepared to emigrate". Yet the Hong Kong Government (2022-2019) reported that Hong Kong's population did not change between August 2019 and July 2020, fell by only 1.2% between August 2020 and July 2021, and 1.6% between August 2021 and July 2022, and increased by 0.4% between August 2021 and July 2022 (HKSAR Government 2019-2022). To answer this quantitative puzlze, I assess migrant selectivity using Cox Proportional Hazard, logistic regression models, and linear duration models, with data I collected from 3,784 Hong Kong residents who considered emigrating and have not emigrated to other locations, as well as data from Hong Kong emigrants before they emigrated. A statistically significantly higher proportion of emigrants (non-emigrants) cited political (economic) reasons as being the main factor triggering them to leave than non-emigrants (emigrants). Participants who emigrated had a higher risk of emigrating and emigrated more quickly if they were married, female, college-educated, ideologically pan-democrat (relative to ideologically pro-establishment/neutral, had higher self-rated physical health, had lower self-rated mental health, had a strong sense of belonging, and were very concerned about the current political situation in Hong Kong. Ideologically localist or self-determinist participants (relative to pro-establishment participants) had higher hazard of thinking about emigrating, but not actually emigrating. I show that those who emigrated were more or less likely than those who did not to mention five historical events as the three that most traumatized/triggered them to think about emigrating, whereas those who did not emigrate were significantly more

likely to mention three other specific events. This paper advances research about what type of potential migrants in fact migrate after a society autocratizes.

Keywords: migration, autocratization, mental health, political ideology, belonging.

A Polarised Society and the Right to Memory: The Example of the Czech Migration Group

Zdeněk Uherek & Veronika Beranska

Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences

zdenek.uherek@gmail.com

Abstract: When discussing memory and the right to memory, the attention is usually focused on large groups of people: nations, generations, or social strata and their polarisation (Mälksoo, 2009). For instance, in his analysis of the development of European cooperation after World War II, Peter Verovšek (2025) identified three generations of leaders of European integration. Their distinction is based on the premise that their generations differ in social experiences – social memory. Our argument is based on polarisation within much smaller units inside nation-states and generations, where social memory of World War II may, in fact, be reactivated precisely at the moment when relatively strict control of memory after World War II and its subordination to written history began to loosen. It happened in the 1960s in the West and in the 1990s in Eastern Europe (Assmann, 2008). While historians' power over eyewitnesses faded, the debate over the right to memory became a significant agenda item in the social sciences (Mälksoo, 2009). Through the public articulation of social experience, polarisation within societies took on a new dimension.

In our example, migration experience significantly influences differences in opinions and memories. The empirical data we will present focus on the transfer of social experience and memory across different environments. This concerns the transfer of social experience of resettlers of Czech origin from Ukraine to the Czech lands after World War II, and then, from 1990 to the present. Their social experience and relationship to Ukraine are also brought to life by the current war, which often affects them personally. Generationally reproduced memories also strengthen a generationally reproduced sense of internal solidarity within the migration group and a sense of otherness toward the surrounding environment, even though other aspects of difference are not immediately apparent. We collected data through both quantitative and qualitative surveys. This presentation will be based primarily on the qualitative data.

We contextualise their experience alongside other significant differences in the perception of the past within the Czech environment, which is being revived by current events.

Keywords: Right to memory; migration; social polarization; Ukraine; Czechia.

Rethinking Secularization: Lived Spirituality and the Transformation of Religiosity in a Post-Secular Society

Anna Vostruhová & Jiří Buriánek

Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology

anna.vostruhova@ff.cuni.cz

Abstract: Czech society is frequently portrayed as one of the most secularized in Europe, typically based on conventional indicators such as religious affiliation or declared belief. However, such measures risk overlooking important transformations in how individuals relate to spirituality, meaning, and transcendence. Addressing the conference theme Dialogues on Social Transformations in a Divided and Diverging World, this paper reconceptualizes secularization as a process of differentiation rather than decline, marked by the emergence of individualized and "lived" forms of spirituality.

The paper introduces a newly developed measurement instrument designed to capture spiritual and transcendental orientations beyond institutional religion. The Czech context provides a particularly relevant case: shaped by the legacy of state-enforced atheism, contemporary identification as "non-religious" often functions as a cultural shorthand rather than as an empirically grounded absence of spiritual needs.

Empirically, the analysis draws on pilot data from a representative survey of the Czech population (N = 811). The results demonstrate that the proposed scales achieve strong internal consistency and reliability. More importantly, they reveal distinct patterns of lived spirituality among individuals who would be classified as secular using standard measures.

Building on these findings, the paper proposes a multidimensional framework of religiosity that moves beyond the traditional one-dimensional continuum between religion and atheism. This approach enables a more nuanced typology of belief, practice, and meaning-making, capturing the coexistence of secular self-identification with diverse forms of spirituality. The validity of this typology is further supported by its meaningful associations with selected value orientations and attitudes.

By offering an empirically grounded alternative to established indicators, the paper contributes to debates on post-secularism and the transformation of religion, while also responding to broader questions of how social sciences can better capture emerging forms of meaning-making in contemporary, differentiated societies.

Keywords: Post-secular spirituality, Religiosity measurement, Social transformations, Czech society.

What Comes Next? Europe’s Green Transition and the Strategic Role of Azerbaijan

Rasul Yusibov

Azerbaijan State University of Economics

rasul.yusibov@unec.edu.az

Abstract: Europe's energy architecture has been severely upended by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, turning the EU's green transition from a project primarily motivated by climate change into a pressing issue of geopolitical and economic security. The abrupt cutoff of Russian gas supply revealed structural weaknesses in the EU's reliance on outside energy sources and sped up REPowerEU's diversification initiatives. Through the Southern Gas Corridor, Azerbaijan has become a significant alternative provider in this context while also establishing itself as a possible collaborator in renewable energy. However, it is still unclear how this developing alliance will affect Europe's decarbonisation plan in the long run.

This article focuses on the conflict between long-term climate neutrality promises and short-term energy security imperatives. Although Azerbaijani natural gas supplies helped stabilise European markets beyond 2022, building more fossil fuel infrastructure could exacerbate the impacts of carbon lock-in and postpone more significant structural change. However, there may be a chance to reshape bilateral energy relations beyond hydrocarbons given Azerbaijan's increasing involvement in offshore wind projects in the Caspian Sea and potential green electricity export projects. This paper's objectives are to analyse how the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has altered the political economy of the EU's green transition and to evaluate Azerbaijan's changing strategic role in this process. Using a framework of political economy and energy security, the study makes use of recent EU-Azerbaijan cooperation agreements, trade statistics from 2020–2025, and EU policy documents. It assesses whether recent events signify a structural reorganisation of Europe's foreign energy partnerships or a transient geopolitical adjustment. The results show two dynamics. On the one hand, Azerbaijan's geopolitical significance as a gas provider has increased due to the securitisation of energy policy. However, new renewable cooperative projects present opportunities to match decarbonisation objectives with energy security. This shift is still reliant on infrastructure development, investor security, regulatory harmonisation, and open governance procedures.

The study has wider ramifications for comprehending sustainability shifts in a disjointed global system. Geopolitical factors are increasingly influencing green transformation, necessitating coordinated external alliances rather than just internal reforms. The following are some policy recommendations: (1) integrating renewable energy targets into strategic agreements between the EU and Azerbaijan; (2) defining explicit sustainability standards for partnership in transitional gas; (3) speeding up cross-border green electricity infrastructure projects; and (4) encouraging institutional dialogue platforms that combine energy security, climate policy, and regional development goals.

Keywords: Green transition, Energy security, Azerbaijan, European Union, green energy.

From Big-Tech Dependence to Digital Sovereignty: The Role of Open Source in European Public Administration

Vladimir Šterle

School of Advanced Social Studies

vladimir.sterle@fuds.si

Abstract: Digital sovereignty has become one of the central issues of European policy in recent years. The Snowden revelations in 2013 exposed the extent of surveillance conducted by U.S. intelligence agencies and demonstrated Europe's dependence on non-European digital infrastructures. Several years later, the Cambridge Analytica scandal further intensified concerns over the misuse of personal data and the lack of European control over digital platforms. These developments contributed to the emergence of the European Union's regulatory approach, based on instruments such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Digital Markets Act (DMA), and the Digital Services Act (DSA).

However, recent geopolitical developments suggest that regulation alone is no longer sufficient to ensure digital sovereignty. In particular, Donald Trump's return to power and the renewed deterioration of relations between the United States and the European Union have strengthened concerns regarding Europe's dependence on American cloud services, office software, and digital infrastructure. The increasingly unpredictable nature of U.S. foreign and economic policy has highlighted the risks of relying on foreign providers for critical digital services.

This paper argues that the European understanding of digital sovereignty is increasingly shifting from the regulatory level towards concrete technological and infrastructural choices. Particular attention is devoted to the growing trend of European cities, ministries, and public institutions adopting free and open-source software (FOSS) and open digital platforms as a means of reducing dependence on foreign technology companies. The paper analyses several recent examples, including the transition of the Danish Ministry for Digital Affairs to LibreOffice, the initiatives of the cities of Copenhagen and Aarhus to reduce their dependence on Microsoft, the Franco-German development of an open-source alternative to Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace, and the EU OS project, which aims to create a shared Linux platform for European public administrations. The paper also demonstrates that open-source software in the European public sector is no longer merely a technical or financial issue, but is increasingly becoming an instrument of digital sovereignty. The adoption of FOSS enables the reduction of vendor lock-in, greater control over data,

increased transparency, and stronger technological autonomy. It concludes that the future of European digital sovereignty will depend not only on the European Union's ability to regulate global platforms, but also on its capacity to develop and use its own open digital technologies.

Keywords: digital sovereignty, eu, administration, open source, big-tech.