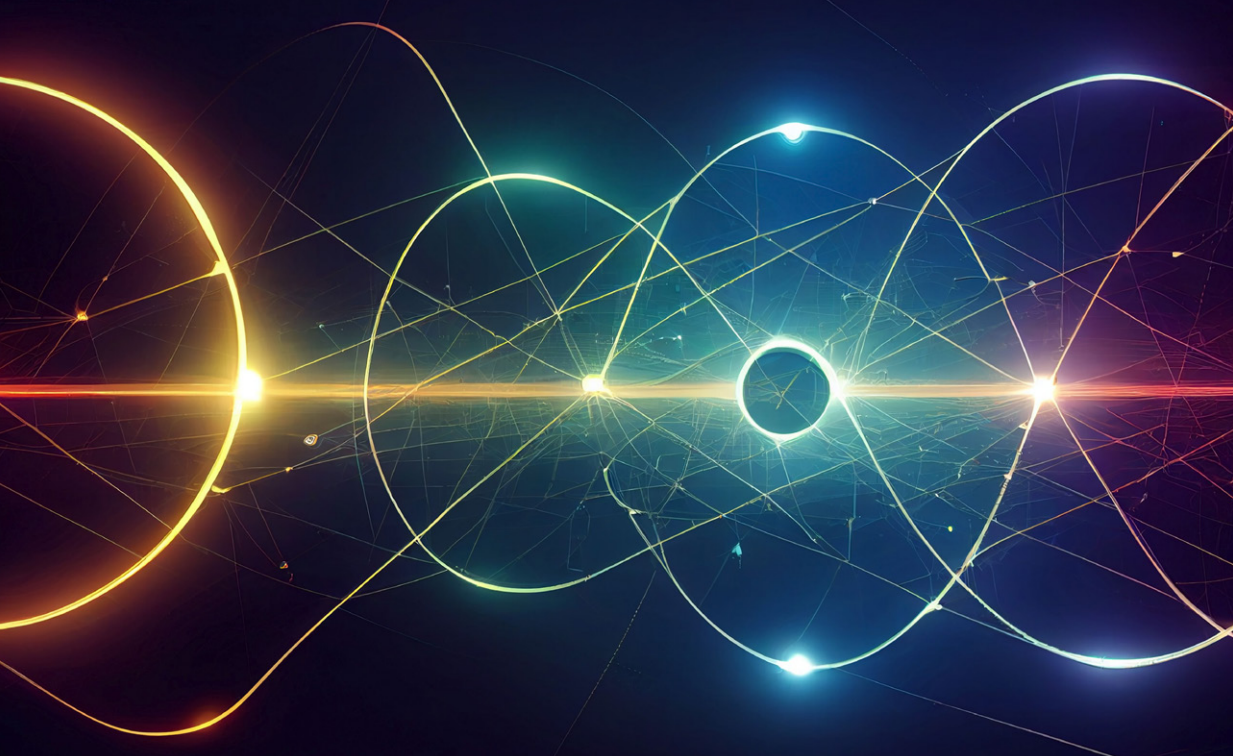




International Symposium  
**ENTANGLED FUTURES: ETHICAL, SOCIAL,  
AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON DIGITALIZATION AND ECOLOGY**

Barcelona, 13–15 May 2026

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS



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BARCELONA 2026

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ON DIGITALIZATION AND ECOLOGY**

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## ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies ZRS Koper and Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture, Barcelona invited their members and affiliated researchers to contribute to an internal symposium dedicated to the ethical challenges emerging from the digital and green transitions. These transformations are reshaping societies, economies, and human self-understanding, raising urgent normative questions that require interdisciplinary reflection.

The symposium aims to foster dialogue between philosophical, theological, and sociological perspectives, with particular attention to their critical, ethical, and emancipatory dimensions.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- *Ethical* implications of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and data-driven societies
- Epistemological Considerations of Mediated Societies: Critical Approaches to the Phenomenon of Algorithmic Dependence and AI-Mediated Cognition
- Social justice, power, and inequality in the digital and green transitions
- Ecotheology, ecological ethics, care for nature, and sustainability
- Theological responses to ecological crisis and technological change
- Human dignity, responsibility, and solidarity in times of rapid transformation
- Intersections between digital technologies, ecology, and social change
- Digital existence, human-computer interaction, and ethical relations with the non-human world
- Media, religion, and activism: understanding emerging movements for social change and participation

## **SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED BY**

Science and Research Centre Koper, Institute for Philosophical and  
Religious Studies, Slovenia

Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture, Barcelona



**Blanquerna Observatory**  
on Media, Religion and Culture

## **ORGANISING AND PROGRAMME COMMITTEE**

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Míriam Díez Bosch, Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and  
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Victoria Vanessa Dos Santos, Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion  
and Culture, Barcelona, and Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia

Luka Trebežnik, Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia and Alma  
Mater Europaea University, Slovenia

## **SYMPOSIUM FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

This symposium has been financially supported by the Slovenian  
Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), through the research programme  
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Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

# PROGRAMME

**International Symposium**

**ENTANGLED FUTURES: ETHICAL, SOCIAL, AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON  
DIGITALIZATION AND ECOLOGY**

Barcelona, 13–15 May 2026

Blanquerna Observatory on Media,  
Religion and Culture

## **WEDNESDAY, 13 May 2026**

venue: Carrer de Sardenya, Passion Façade [Crypt Entrance],  
Sagrada Família. Barcelona

**10.00**

**Mass and Visit to Sagrada Família with fr. Joby.**

venue: Blanquerna, Carrer dels Tallers 77, Room 2. Barcelona

**14.30**

**Reception of participants**

**14.30–17.00**

**Meeting of research programme group**

**17.00–17.30**

Coffee Break

**17.30–18.30**

**Meeting of research project group**

## **THURSDAY, 14 May 2026**

venue: Blanquerna, Carrer de Valldonzella 12, Room B32. Barcelona

**10.00–10.20**

### **Welcome Addresses**

**10.20–11.20**

#### **Nadja Furlan Štante**

*Embracing Sustainable Digitalization Responsibly: Ecotheological and Ethical Perspectives on Technology, Ecology, and Biotic Well-Being*

#### **Pilar Baradat Marí**

*Islamedia: Representations of Islam in the Catalan Press*

#### **Blaž Lenarčič**

*Welcome to the Machine: Human–AI Companionship and the Formation of Hybrid Social Practices*

**11.20–11.40**

Coffee Break

**11.40–12.40**

#### **Pau García Sánchez**

*The (Un)Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Gambia and Human (Im)Mobility Dynamics – a Postcolonial World Ecology Approach to International Migration*

#### **Ian Puis Farrés**

*Care in Hostile Digital Environments: Ethical and Methodological Challenges in Researching the Manosphere*

#### **Anja Zalta**

*Ecological Justice and Posthumanist Feminism: The Attempt at Relativisation of Religious Conditioning*

**12.40–15.00**

Lunch Break

Venue: Ramon Llull University Rectorate,  
Carrer de Claravall 1–3. Barcelona

**15.00–15.10**

**Alba Sabaté**

*Blanquerna's representative remarks*

**15.10–16.10**

**Noreen Herzfeld**

*AI as Space Emissary? An Unlikely Venture*

**Bojan Žalec**

*Resonance, Ecology, and the Digital Age*

**Luka Trebežnik**

*Traces of Otherness in Online Communication*

**16.10–16.30**

Coffee Break

**16.30–17.30**

**Gorazd Andrejč**

*The Challenges of the Humanist Ethics of AI*

**Chiara Fagone**

*"All Eyes on Us!": How Italian Commercial Television Changed the Social Importance of Female Teenagers. The Case Study of Non è la Rai (1991 – 1995).*

**Lana Kazkaz**

*MIDCA: Mapping Interreligious Dialogue in Catalonia*

**17.30–18.00**

**Discussion**

## **FRIDAY, 15 MAY 2026**

venue: Blanquerna, Carrer dels Tallers 77, Room 3. Barcelona

**10.00–11.20**

**Giulia Evolvi**

*Digital Religion, Gender, and Social Change: Reflections on AI and Technology*

**Gašper Pirc**

*The Digital Self is Not Alone Online: Normative Challenges of Virtual Society*

**Victoria Dos Santos**

*Digital Avatars and Religion: Towards an Ethical Understanding of Virtual Embodiment in Immersive Contexts*

**Rosa Ma Alsina-Pagès, Marc Freixes and Aline Ramos**

*Where Silence Speaks: Soundscapes and Spiritual Experience in Catalan Monasteries*

**11.20–11.40**

Coffee Break

**11.40–12.00**

**Signing of a partnership agreement  
between ZRS Koper and Blanquerna URL**

**12.00–13.00**

**Joby Sebastian Kappipparambil**

*Synodal Listening Under Algorithmic Conditions: Digital Missionaries, Ecclesial Communication, and Ethical Mediation in the Network Society*

**Matej Mertik**

*From Neural Networks to Generative Forms: The Evolving Role*

**Maja Gutman Mušič**

*From Spectacle to Algorithm: Is the Attention Economy Really New?*

**13.00–13.15**

**Concluding Discussion**



# ABSTRACTS



## **EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE DIGITALIZATION RESPONSIBLY: ECOTHEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNOLOGY, ECOLOGY, AND BIOTIC WELL-BEING**

**Nadja FURLAN ŠTANTE**

*ZRS Koper*

The accelerated adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies is transforming both society and ecosystems. While digitalization is often promoted as a tool for sustainability, critics point to its significant environmental footprint, including energy-intensive data centers, rare resource extraction, and electronic waste. Noreen Herzfeld (2025) emphasizes that AI and digital infrastructures are not ethically neutral: their design, deployment, and scale have profound ecological consequences that require careful scrutiny.

This paper explores how ecotheology can serve as a critical lens for analyzing these developments. Drawing on Herzfeld's insights and relevant papal documents – *Laudato si'* (2015), *Antiqua et nova* (2025), and Pope Francis's 2024 World Day of Peace message – the paper argues that ethical and spiritual reflection is essential for evaluating the ecological implications of AI and digitalization. *Laudato si'* provides a framework of integral ecology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of technological progress, environmental responsibility, and human well-being, while *Antiqua et nova* highlights AI's dual potential: supporting sustainability efforts but also imposing significant environmental costs. Guided by this framework, the paper addresses the following research questions: How can ecotheology provide an ethical framework for evaluating the ecological impacts of AI and digital technologies? In what ways can moral and spiritual reflection guide sustainable AI practices while minimizing environmental costs? How can ecotheological principles, such as those highlighted in *Laudato si'*, inform responsible design, deployment, and governance of digital infrastructures? How can a relational and ethical perspective help move beyond polarized narratives that present digitalization as either destructive or salvific for the planet? Finally, what normative criteria and practical guidelines can ecotheology offer to align technological innovation with care for creation and human well-being?

By integrating ecotheological critique with technological analysis, the paper moves beyond simplistic dichotomies toward a nuanced understanding that considers relational, ethical, and ecological responsibilities. Ecotheology offers normative criteria and reflective tools to guide sustainable AI practices, fostering alignment between technological innovation and care for creation. Ultimately, this approach underscores the indispensable role of ethical discernment in shaping a digital future that genuinely supports ecological sustainability.

Keywords: Ecotheology; Artificial Intelligence; Digitalization; Environmental Ethics; Sustainability.

**Dr. Nadja Furlan Štante** is Principal Research Associate in the field of religiology at the Koper Science and Research Center. Her current research interests are women's religious studies, ecofeminism, and interreligious dialogue.

## ISLAMEDIA: REPRESENTATIONS OF ISLAM IN THE CATALAN PRESS

**Pilar BARADAT MARÍ**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull*

Recent studies highlight the prevalence of misinformation and bias in the representation of Islam in Spain. According to Pluralismo y Convivencia (2025), 70.5% of disinformation concerning religious traditions relates to Islam. Furthermore, the Observatory of Islamophobia in Media reports that 42.2% of analyzed journalistic pieces contain Islamophobic elements, while Islamophobia accounts for between 9.5% and 14.7% of hate speech on social media (Gracia & Somoano, 2023). Against this backdrop, this study examines how Islam is portrayed in leading Catalan newspapers, focusing on potential biases and patterns of Islamophobic discourse. It explores the role of journalists in shaping such narratives and considers the ethical and professional responsibilities involved in reporting on religious diversity. The research adopts a qualitative content analysis to assess how media coverage influences public perceptions of Islam. A total of 1,425 journalistic pieces were identified, of which 442 were systematically analyzed, alongside one in-depth interview. The study focuses on articles published over a four-month period in three widely read newspapers: La Vanguardia, El Periódico, and El País. The project also incorporates a pedagogical dimension, involving four undergraduate students specifically recruited within the framework of Islamedia. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a more inclusive media landscape by challenging stereotypes, promoting ethical journalism, and strengthening intercultural dialogue.

**Pilar Baradat Marí** is PhD candidate in Communication at the Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations (Universitat Ramon Llull), with an FPU pre-doctoral grant from the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. She contributes to teaching in the Bachelor's degrees in Audiovisual Communication and Global Communication Management (Blanquerna, URL). She holds a Bachelor's in Audiovisual Communication and a Master's in Fiction for Film and Television from the same institution. She is a member of the STReaM Research Group

(Blanquerna, URL) and, since 2023, she has been a member of the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture, where she works on research, dissemination, and digital communication.

## WELCOME TO THE MACHINE: HUMAN-AI COMPANIONSHIP AND THE FORMATION OF HYBRID SOCIAL PRACTICES

**Blaž LENARČIČ**

*ZRS Koper*

AI companions are increasingly present in everyday human interactions, not only as tools but as participants that influence social and emotional experiences. This presentation questions human-AI relational dynamics, drawing on available qualitative and quantitative studies, and reports of user experiences. The aim is to explore how AI companions contribute to the emergence of hybrid sociality, in which social presence and relational norms are co-constructed across human and technological actors. Evidence suggests that users may develop feelings of companionship, trust, and emotional attachment toward AI companions, shaped by features such as responsiveness, personalization, and empathetic interaction. These interactions challenge traditional sociological concepts of presence, intimacy, and reciprocity, highlighting the need for theoretical frameworks that consider both human and AI actors in social networks. The presentation discusses the implications of these developments for everyday social practices, including the redefinition of availability, attention, and emotional support. Ethical considerations, such as dependency, emotional influence, and privacy, are also addressed. By synthesizing fragmented research and offering conceptual insights, it contributes to the theoretical understanding of AI-mediated sociality and lays a foundation for future empirical investigations. It emphasizes the potential of chatbots to reshape relational experiences while remaining cautious about the societal and ethical challenges that accompany these technological shifts.

**Keywords:** AI companions, Human-AI interaction, Hybrid sociality, Emotional attachment, Sociological theory, Digital relationships, Social norms, Ethics in AI

**Blaž Lenarčič**, PhD, is a sociologist and senior research associate at the Science and Research Centre Koper in Slovenia. His work focuses on understanding how digital technologies shape everyday life and migration in contemporary society. He earned

his PhD in Sociology from the University of Ljubljana in 2009 and has been involved in both academic teaching and applied research, including a visiting stint at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. His scholarly output spans analyses of sociality in physical and online spaces and contributions to sociological understanding of technology, migration and community. He is involved in national and European research projects, serves professional bodies, and collaborates with interdisciplinary teams to explore digital society and social inclusion from empirical and theoretical perspectives.

**THE (UN)SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF FISHERIES  
IN THE GAMBIA AND HUMAN (IM)MOBILITY DYNAMICS  
- A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD ECOLOGY APPROACH TO  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

**Pau GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull*

This research explores how the global fishing industry operating in The Gambia, West Africa, affects human (im)mobility patterns in those coastal communities' areas under socioenvironmental stress, which have experienced food insecurity concerns, job losses, and social unrest, among others related impacts to this extractive economy. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this work combines document analysis with ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and participatory action research (PAR), to ultimately co-produce knowledge with local citizens. Using a postcolonial world ecology framework, this work analyses human (im)mobility and international migration by carefully looking at the historically produced regimes of power, accumulation and ecological background surrounding this phenomenon, which operates within the logic of global production chains under neoliberal development models. Additionally, this study challenges the European Union's double-standards on fisheries development policy in this region and critically examines the EU's increasing discourse on securitization and externalization of migration attached to development outcomes. Considering that while the affected individuals are the ones who experience (im)mobilities depending on context-specific scenarios, these occur within postcolonial and necropolitical global structures of the capitalist system that shape individuals' (im)mobility aspirations in The Gambia.

*Keywords:* Extractive Economy, Fisheries, Human (Im)mobility, Postcolonial World- Ecology, Spain-Gambia Relations, (Un)sustainable Development

**Pau Garcia Sánchez** is a PhD candidate in the Communication program at Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull (URL). He joined the Research Institute at the School of Communication and International Relations in 2025, where he conducts his doctoral research under the supervision of Dr. Oscar Mateos and Dr. Valeria Bello as a

Joan Oró predoctoral research fellow (FI). Pau holds a Master's degree in Advanced Studies in International Affairs from Blanquerna – URL (2024), and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) (2022). His research interests lie in migration studies, with a particular focus on critically examining how (un)sustainable development of fisheries in The Gambia, West Africa, shapes human (im)mobility dynamics and its governance. Prior to joining the Research Institute, Pau worked as an administrative assistant at IBEI (Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals) and completed an internship at the European Union and Foreign Affairs Department of the Government of Catalonia.

## **CARE IN HOSTILE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS: ETHICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN RESEARCHING THE MANOSPHERE**

**Ian PUIS FARRÉS**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull*

This paper examines the ethical and methodological challenges of studying digitally mediated male supremacist communities, particularly when focusing on the circulation of practices and discourses of care within the “manosphere”. Developed within the mentorship program of the Institute for Research on Male Supremacism (IRMS), this exploratory study builds on prior work on masculinities and seeks to lay the groundwork for further research on how affect, emotion, and intimacy operate in these spaces.

In this respect, the manosphere is approached as a heterogeneous discursive field across social media platforms –from Reddit and Youtube to Telegram–, structured by anti-feminist and misogynistic beliefs opposing women’s rights and gender equality. While participants within the manosphere –predominantly men– contest feminist power and express gender resentment, practices of care –such as emotional support, advice-giving, and self-improvement– also play a central role. These practices contribute to the emergence of a distinct moral economy in which care is selectively redistributed among men.

Digital features –such as algorithmic mediation, fragmentation, and tensions between anonymity and collective identity surveillance and gender policing –shape the circulation of practices and discourses of care within the manosphere, while also significantly complicating their analysis. Which methodological and ethical challenges arise when researching manospheric groups? What are the limits of applying an ethics of care to subjects whose practices may contradict its normative foundations? The paper offers a tentative exploration of these challenges, focusing on researcher positionality, safety, and engagement in hostile digital contexts.

**Ian Puis Farrés** is a first-year PhD student at Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations (Ramon Llull University-URL) and member of GLOBALCODES research group. He investigates anti-gender politics and mobilisations, with special attention to the organisational trajectories of transnationalisation of three key anti-gender actors. Besides, he is a mentee at the U.S.-based Institute for Research on Male Supremacism (IRMS), where he currently develops a project that looks at practices and discourses of care within male supremacist online spaces.

## **ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE AND POSTHUMANIST FEMINISM: THE ATTEMPT AT RELATIVISATION OF RELIGIOUS CONDITIONING**

**Anja ZALTA**

*University of Ljubljana*

Epistemological challenges and confrontations at the height of the ecological crisis require us to seek answers regarding the role of religious systems in shaping attitudes towards gender and nature. In various approaches to the study of religions, the fact that religions are gendered entities is often overlooked; that is, all the major so-called world religious systems largely arose within and helped shape spaces marked by patriarchal ideology and culture. Through their androcentrism and anthropocentrism, these systems supported particular forms of (mostly capitalist) production and the exploitation of nature. This has been highlighted by various ecofeminist perspectives and numerous authors (Marti Kheel, Carol Merchant, Silvia Federici, Ivone Gebara, Vandana Shiva, Ynestra King, among others). Our perspective is that achieving ecological justice requires movements towards the depatriarchalisation of religious postulates and the decentralisation of the anthropos. One of the theoretical starting points we defend in this inquiry is posthumanist feminism and anti-anthropocentrism. Posthumanism critiques the humanistic ideal of 'man' as the universal representative of humanity, while anti-anthropocentrism challenges the hierarchy of species and advocates environmental justice. According to Rosi Braidotti, posthumanist feminism uses gender as a meta-methodological tool, in which feminism is not only problematizing humanism but must transcend anthropocentrism and embrace non-human life and entities.

As a starting point for our research, we will examine socialisation into religious systems based on the responses of female participants in the online school FER (Feminism and Religion) from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The FER school was established through the initiative of the TPO Foundation and the Ecumenical Women's Initiative, with the aim of critically questioning religious traditions and conducting scientific research on gender issues. For more than six years, it has offered online academic and non-academic courses to participants of various religious and ideological backgrounds from the Balkan region. Their responses will help us understand epistemological production on the one hand, and the analysis of socialisation into religious

perceptions on the other. As a result, based on the posthumanist paradigm, we will explore the possibilities of (posthumanist) methodological approaches to the question of the relationship between religions and ecological justice, and their applications in the field.

*Keywords:* Ecological Justice, Posthumanist Feminism, Religious Studies, Ecofeminism, Balkans, Epistemological production

**Anja Zalta** is an associate professor of sociology of religion in the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, specialising in comparative Religious Studies, religion and Modern Society, and religion and Gender. She also heads the newly established Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at the Faculty of Arts, and serves as a guest lecturer at FER in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and at the Institute of Science, Innovation and Culture in Bangkok (Rajamangala University).

## AI AS SPACE EMISSARY? AN UNLIKELY VENTURE

Noreen HERZFELD

*ZRS Koper*

Elon Musk has long hoped to build human colonies on Mars, or, more recently, the moon, colonies that could provide a fallback for humanity, should we despoil Earth. With the recent merger of SpaceX and xAI, Musk has moved closer to a position held by others, that the “spread of human consciousness” could be better accomplished through AI. Given the fragility and temporality of our human bodies and the rigors of space travel, AI would seem to have many advantages over human space colonization for “spreading human consciousness.”

However, sending AI into space would neither spread nor maintain human consciousness, for AI is neither human nor conscious. In our highly technological society, we tend to forget that we are both bodies and brains, evolved alongside myriad other creatures to flourish within our earthly ecosystem. As underlined in Genesis 2, we are made from the humus, the soil of the earth, bound to keep and till it. Christianity maintains that bond, evidenced in the incarnation, the resurrection of the body, and the materiality of the sacraments. To be human is to be of the Earth.

AI, as we know it, is also not conscious, nor likely to become so. We are predisposed to anthropomorphize seemingly conscious AI. Because we are both conscious and intelligent, we assume the two go together. Consciousness, Thomas Nagel has noted, is internal, the feeling of what it is like to be a given organism. LLMs have no such experience; indeed, they have no experience of the material world at all. Lacking a body, they work only with language, always at one remove from real experience. Without a body active within the material realm, one can feel nothing. Every candidate we currently agree is conscious is also alive, and bound to the ecosystem in which they evolved. Thus, spreading human consciousness to the cosmos is an endeavor that is likely to fail.

*Keywords:* artificial intelligence, consciousness, human embodiment, Elon Musk

**Noreen Herzfeld** is Director of Benedictine Spirituality and the Environment at St. John's School of Theology and Seminary and a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies in Koper, Slovenia. She holds degrees in Computer Science and Mathematics from The Pennsylvania State University and a Ph.D. in Theology from The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. She is the author of *The Artifice of Intelligence: Divine and Human Relationship in a Robotic Age* and *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit*, and co-writer and editor of *Religion and the New Technologies and Religious and Cultural Implications of Technology-Mediated Relationships in a Post-Pandemic World*. As a member of the AI Research Group of the Vatican Dicastery of Culture and Education, she also co-edited *Encountering AI: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations*.

## RESONANCE, ECOLOGY, AND THE DIGITAL AGE

**Bojan ŽALEC**

*University of Ljubljana*

This paper develops the speaker's earlier reading of Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance in relation to nature and ecological crisis by placing it in dialogue with the digital age and artificial intelligence. Rosa's central insight is that the good life depends on resonant relations to the world, whereas alienation arises when the world appears mute, disposable, and available only for control. The speaker takes this as a starting point and aims to show the fruitfulness of this framework for interpreting both the ecological crisis and the existential and ethical challenges of contemporary digitalisation.

The paper argues that the ecological crisis has a distinct existential dimension. For many people in modernity, nature is not merely a resource or object of protection, but also a guide to meaning. More precisely, resonance with nature functions as a guide to meaning. Ecological destruction therefore threatens not only material conditions of life, but also one of the axes through which human beings seek orientation, authenticity, and existential depth. Against this background, the speaker highlights escapism as a characteristic and revealing phenomenon of the existential complexity of the digital age. On the one hand, digital culture fosters escape into the digital sphere through distraction, hyperconnectivity, simulated dialogue, and the promise of immediacy, control, and frictionless communication. On the other hand, the present moment is increasingly marked by escape from the digital in search of silence, embodiment, offline presence, and renewed contact with nature. Yet both movements are ambiguous and may be problematic. Escape into the digital weakens embodied, reciprocal, and non-instrumental relations to nature, others, self, and God, while escape from the digital may itself become instrumentalised, reduced to a consumable strategy of self-management rather than a genuine opening to resonance. The paper concludes that resonance offers an important orientation for resisting both problematic forms of escapism.

*Keywords:* resonance; ecology; digitalisation; escapism; artificial intelligence

**Prof. Dr. Bojan Žalec** (b. 1966 in Ljubljana, Slovenia) is a philosopher at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, where he heads the Institute for Philosophy and Social Ethics. He is a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, based in Salzburg. Professor Žalec has authored around two hundred scholarly publications published in reputable academic journals and by respected academic publishers. His research integrates elements from various philosophical traditions, including analytic philosophy, philosophy of mind, phenomenology, personalism, and existential thought. He has led national and international research projects and is currently the leader of the basic research project “Theology and Digitalization: Anthropological and Ethical Challenges” (J6-60105), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS). At the core of his research is philosophical anthropology, which understands the human being as an essentially embodied and relational being, embedded in the world and, by nature, transcendent.

## TRACES OF OTHERNESS IN ONLINE COMMUNICATION

**Luka TREBEŽNIK**

*ZRS Koper & AMEU University*

Contemporary digital communication presents itself as an unprecedented triumph of connection and connectivity, an infrastructure of permanent availability, instantaneous exchange, and total presence. This paper argues, however, that beneath this surface of hyperconnectivity lies a profound suppression of what Emmanuel Levinas identified as the ethical core of communication: not the transmission of content, but the exposure to the Other that is marked by irreducible alterity. Drawing on Levinas's concepts of the trace and illeity, the paper contends that genuine ethical communication is structured not by presence but by a particular mode of absence, the passing of the infinite through the finite, which leaves only a trace that cannot be thematized, archived, or algorithmically processed.

Digital communication, by contrast, is architecturally organized around the elimination of this productive absence. The platform economy demands presence, visibility, and the reduction of the Other to a digital information, a Said that forecloses the living vulnerability of Saying. Where Levinas's illeity names the always-already-withdrawn dimension of the Other that calls me to infinite responsibility, digital mediation substitutes a simulation of the Other that is permanently available and therefore ethically neutralized. The paper develops this argument in dialogue with Derrida's reading of the trace, where the irreducibility of the Other's withdrawal is shown to be the condition of any genuine ethical relation (and relation in general), and with Blanchot's notion of the *entretien infini*, the infinite conversation that resists closure, archiving, and the finality of the thread.

*Keywords:* trace, digital communication, Levinas, Derrida, Blanchot, ethics of the Other, responsibility

**Luka Trebežnik** is employed as a researcher at the ZRS Koper and as a lecturer at Alma Mater Europaea University. His research work extends to the fields of contemporary philosophy (primarily French post-war thought, especially deconstruction and

phenomenology) and philosophy of religion (studying the relationship between faith and reason, the status of truth in religious and philosophical discursive practices, mystical traditions, Jewish and Christian elements in contemporary thought).

## THE CHALLENGES OF THE HUMANIST ETHICS OF AI

**Gorazd ANDREJČ**

*ZRS Koper & University of Groningen*

In this talk I will discuss two types of panic and ask whether they are interrelated and if so, how: the moral panic in AI ethics which focuses mostly on the negative and possible negative effects of AI on human societies, and the so-called ‘panic of demarcation’ that humanist philosophies allegedly tend to fall into in the pursuit of distinguishing humans from non-humans in a morally relevant way. In the light of the recent criticisms of humanist ethics of AI, I will ask whether posthumanist ethics of AI is a better option or not, and finally, how this is relevant for religious studies

**Gorazd Andrejč** is a Lecturer in Philosophy of Science and Religion at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, and a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies, ZRS Koper. His areas of research are science and religion, epistemology of religion, religion and ecology, phenomenology of feelings and nature, Ludwig Wittgenstein, liberal theology and religious language.

**“ALL EYES ON US!”: HOW ITALIAN COMMERCIAL TELEVISION  
CHANGED THE SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE TEENAGERS.  
THE CASE STUDY OF NON È LA RAI (1991–1995)**

**Chiara FAGONE**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull*

In the late 80s, in Italy, commercial TV entered roughly into Italian popular culture and society thanks to the Fininvest Group, owned by former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Despite the waves of the feminist movement during the 70s, into the Fininvest Television offer there were plenty of shows ruled by sexism and the so called “male gaze”. Programs like *Drive In* (1983 – 1988) or *Striscia la notizia* (1988 – 2026) proposed a female model completely passive and objectified.

In the 90s, while the digital transition was developing, on the same TV channel appeared a new show: *Non è la Rai*. This show was hosted by teenager showgirls and was targeted for Italian teenagers themselves. The program was fresh, new and innovative. It became a cult in Italian Pop Culture. Finally, young female audience had a mediatic representation. This led to the social recognition of the category of female teenagers. Basing the dissertation on this scenario, this paper aims to think about how young female audience shifted from an almost passive position, victim of male gaze, to the use they make nowadays in digital and social media of its opposite: the female gaze.

*Keywords:* Italian Television; Cultural Studies; Gender Studies; Sociology; Pop Culture

**Chiara Fagone** is a PhD candidate and, after winning in 2024 the Predoctoral Fellowship FI Joan Oró, also a Junior Researcher at Ramon Llull University Blanquerna - Faculty of Communication and International Relations - in Barcelona. Graduated in “Lingue, Comunicazione, Media” at Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan where she also got her master’s degree in “Media Management”. The PhD thesis, which goes under the title of “Through the looking glass”: how the female image changed between Cinema and Literature, in Italy and Spain (1945-1978), intends to explore, describe and analyse the different ways of both female and male authors

to describe women in their works. Her main research interests are Cultural Studies, Media Studies and History; Television Studies; Memory Studies; within a Gender perspective.

## MIDCA: MAPPING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN CATALONIA

**Lana KAZKAZ**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull*

Catalonia's religious landscape has become increasingly diverse, with multiple denominations and thousands of places of worship reflecting growing pluralism beyond its historically Christian roots. Although nearly half of the population identifies as religious—predominantly Catholic—religion often plays a limited role in daily decision-making, and engagement tends to be more individual than communal. Public knowledge of religious diversity is uneven, with strong familiarity with Catholicism but significantly lower awareness of other faiths, alongside a generally indifferent attitude toward non-Catholic religions.

In response, Catalan institutions have actively supported the management of religious diversity and promoted interreligious dialogue as a key tool for fostering understanding and coexistence in a democratic society. Within this framework, the MIDCA project seeks to map and analyze interreligious and interbelief initiatives in Catalonia, evaluating their impact on knowledge, social cohesion, and the protection of religious freedom, while identifying opportunities and challenges for future development.

**Lana Kazkaz** is a researcher and lecturer specializing in religion, media, and hate speech in the Arab world. Since 2024, she has been a postdoctoral researcher at the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture. In 2025, she also joined the Blanquerna Faculty of Communication and International Relations as a professor in Global Communication Management. Her research contributions include participation in several national and international projects, including ISLAMEDIA, Catholic Media Influencers, AMINA, and ÀGORES. She is also a 2025–2026 fellow of the GINGKO Interfaith Fellowship, where she engages in dialogue with scholars from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.

## DIGITAL RELIGION, GENDER, AND SOCIAL CHANGE: REFLECTIONS ON AI AND TECHNOLOGY

**Giulia EVOLVI**

*Università di Bologna*

Religious people are increasingly utilizing digital media to discuss social change and engage in activism for social justice. For instance, Catholic feminists often create online spaces to discuss gender equality, where they also debate issues such as marginalization, poverty, and sustainability. In my study with Catholic feminists –which includes interviews and a content analysis of the Instagram page of the group Women’s Ordination Conference –I noticed several reflections connected to the use of technology for social and environmental justice. First, many understand that digital media are powerful tools for activism, but are skeptical about their potential challenges, especially when it comes to verbal violence and hate speech. Second, several interviewees use technology to create community, but are aware that offline communities, which are rooted in and gain meaning from physical spaces, have a stronger relational value. In conclusion, I argue that it is important to discuss digital media and religious-based activism while considering the ambivalent role of technology, seen as both an opportunity and a challenge.

**Giulia Evolvi** is a Marie Skłodowska Curie fellow and assistant professor at the University of Bologna, Italy, where she conducts the project MERGE on the topic of digital media, Catholic social movements, and gender. During the project, Giulia has been a visiting scholar at the Blanquerna Observatory of Media, Religion, and Culture, at Ramon Llull University, Barcelona, Spain, and at the Center for Media, Religion and Culture (CMRC) at the University of Colorado Boulder, U.S., where she also obtained her PhD in 2016. Previously, Giulia worked as lecturer in Media and Communication at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and as postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Religious Studies (CERES) at Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany. Giulia’s monograph “Blogging my Religion: Secular, Muslim, and Catholic Media Spaces in Europe” was published in 2018 by Routledge.

## THE DIGITAL SELF IS NOT ALONE ONLINE: NORMATIVE CHALLENGES OF VIRTUAL SOCIETY

**Gašper PIRC**

*ZRS Koper & AMEU University*

The rapid development of digital technologies and virtual environments has fundamentally altered the conditions under which subjects constitute themselves, interact, and take on social roles. This paper examines the ethical and legal dimensions of the digital self, understood through the concept of the avatar – a digitally mediated self-representation that is not merely an extension of the physical subject but a site where questions of identity, authenticity, moral responsibility, and legal recognition converge in ways that existing frameworks are not yet equipped to address.

Drawing on philosophy of mind, recognition theory, and critical theory of society, the paper argues that the avatar constitutes a genuine form of subjectivity with its own conditions of authenticity and agency. The Proteus effect – the measurable feedback between avatar embodiment and offline behavior – provides empirical support for this philosophical claim, theories of social performativity indicate how digital identity is not given but produced through ongoing acts of representation and interaction. The particular emphasis of the paper will, however, be on virtual society: the metaverse is examined as a normative structure whose internal logic combines the hermeneutical dynamics of play, as theorized by Gadamer, with the structural conditions of platform and surveillance capitalism.

The paper further addresses the pathological potential of digital communicative practices: the reification of political metaphors, the normalization of dehumanizing speech, and the erosion of recognition in algorithmically mediated social environments. These tendencies, the paper argues, represent not merely communicative shifts but emergent social pathologies with concrete ethical and legal implications.

The paper concludes by identifying the central gaps in existing legal frameworks – particularly regarding digital violence, avatar ownership, and platform accountability – and proposes the outlines of a normatively ground-

ded framework for internet law capable of responding to the irreducible ethical stakes of digital existence.

*Keywords:* virtual society, digitalization, the digital selfhood, recognition theory, social philosophy, internet law, digital ethics

**Gašper Pirc** is a researcher in the fields of political philosophy, philosophy of law and ethics, and philosophy of information technologies. Since 2020, he has been the president of the Slovenian Philosophical Society. He serves as a lecturer at the AMEU-Faculty of Humanistic Studies and a researcher at the Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies of the ZRS Koper. In the past, he worked as a researcher at the University of Vienna and the University of Innsbruck. He has participated in numerous international conferences and projects and published several scientific treatises in the field of political philosophy, ethics, and German classical philosophy.

## **DIGITAL AVATARS AND RELIGION: TOWARDS AN ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING OF VIRTUAL EMBODIMENT IN IMMERSIVE CONTEXTS**

**Victoria DOS SANTOS**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull & ZRS Koper*

Understanding the avatar as the user's graphic representation, mostly present in digital games and 3D social virtual worlds, this research aims to approach avatars as a specific kind of bodily extension that allows users to express their religious identity and to experience their faith in online environments. More specifically, it focuses on how avatar– user relationships can open new possibilities in areas such as religious freedom, social inclusion, gender equality, and the creation of ethical and functional digital spaces for spiritual expression. From this perspective, the virtual avatar is not only a tool of representation, but a form of bodily extension that enables new ways of acting, relating, and making sense of the world. Through avatars, users can explore their identity in creative ways and engage with virtual environments beyond the limits of their offline social and cultural context. Existing research from cognitive and social sciences shows that avatars can generate changes in identity and relationships, enabling forms of creative self-representation while also offering new ways to deal with trauma and disability, as well as gender or racial bias.

In the religious context, the digital body becomes a space where religion can be lived, negotiated, and reinterpreted. From here, this presentation explores what digital embodiment means for religious experience and contributes to expanding the study of avatars in the humanities from an ethical perspective. This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, ranging from media and religious studies to philosophy. Some of the main questions emerging from this perspective on avatar embodiment include: a) how avatars are used to challenge or reinforce religious traditions; b) how authority and legitimacy are shaped in virtual environments; and c) how digital bodies expand possibilities for religious practice, identity, and presence.

In this way, the avatar is understood as a key form of self-representation in digital religious contexts, helping us understand how immersive practices not only expand spiritual experience, but also reshape how religion is lived and felt today.

**Victoria Dos Santos** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Blanquerna Observatory of Media, Religion and Culture (Ramon Llull University, Barcelona), where she develops her Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions-funded project DRIVEN, focused on digital religion, embodiment, and immersive virtual environments. She holds a PhD in Semiotics and Media from the University of Turin and is an associate member of the Institute for Philosophical and Religious Studies ZRS Koper (Slovenia). Prior to her current position, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), where she conducted research on digital religious materiality in a project funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).

## WHERE SILENCE SPEAKS: SOUNDSCAPES AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN CATALAN MONASTERIES

**Rosa Ma ALSINA-PAGÈS, Marc FREIXES and Aline RAMOS**

*La Salle – Universitat Ramon Llull*

This study explores how sound and silence shape spiritual experience in Catalan monasteries through a citizen science approach. Based on participatory soundwalks in three monasteries—Pedralbes, Sant Jeroni de la Murtra, and Sant Pau del Camp—it combines listeners' perceptions with field recordings, acoustic analysis, and architectural observation.

Preliminary findings show that bells, birdsong, water, footsteps on stone, and silence enhance spiritual awareness, while urban and anthropogenic noise is perceived as disruptive. Outdoor spaces such as cloisters and gardens often emerge as more spiritually meaningful than indoor sacred spaces. The project highlights monastic soundscapes as part of intangible cultural heritage and shows that sacred environments are experienced not only visually and architecturally, but also sonically.

**Rosa Ma Alsina-Pagès** is Provost of La Salle Campus Barcelona – Universitat Ramon Llull, where she is also Full Professor at the La Salle Digital Engineering School. Her research focuses on signal processing and machine learning applied to acoustics, soundscape analysis, environmental noise monitoring, acoustic event detection, and citizen science. Within La Salle-URL, she has led and contributed to interdisciplinary research projects on urban sound environments, acoustic comfort, and the impact of sound on health, wellbeing, and quality of life, including citizen-science initiatives such as *Sons al Balcó*.

**Marc Freixes** is Full-time Professor at La Salle Campus Barcelona – Ramon Llull University where he teaches Calculus and Health Engineering Projects. He has participated in multiple competitive research projects related to acoustic event detection, urban and underwater soundscapes, acoustic sensor monitoring in home and farm environments, expressive speech modeling and synthesis, and voice biomarkers applied to the diagnosis of rare diseases.

Dr. **Aline Ramos Esperidião** is a civil engineer and researcher specializing in urban environmental quality, housing, and residential satisfaction. She holds a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from the Federal University of Technology – Paraná (UTFPR, Brazil), with part of her research conducted at Universitat Ramon Llull – La Salle Barcelona (Spain).

## **SYNODAL LISTENING UNDER ALGORITHMIC CONDITIONS: DIGITAL MISSIONARIES, ECCLESIAL COMMUNICATION, AND ETHICAL MEDIATION IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY**

**Joby Sebastian KAPPIPARAMBIL**

*Blanquerna – Universitat Ramon Llull*

This paper examines the ethical and theological implications of digital transformation for ecclesial communication, with particular attention to the role of digital missionaries within algorithmically mediated environments. Situated within the framework of synodality, it argues that contemporary digital culture does not merely provide new tools for evangelization but reshapes the very conditions under which listening, authority, and participation are constituted.

Drawing on the concept of the network society, the study analyses how platform architectures and algorithmic logics structure visibility, prioritise certain forms of content, and delimit the horizons of dialogue. Communication within these environments is increasingly governed by the dynamics of the attention economy, where speed, affect, and engagement metrics tend to displace depth, discernment, and truth. This development stands in tension with the ecclesial practice of synodal listening, which presupposes attentiveness, reciprocity, and a preferential openness to marginal voices. Against this background, the paper advances a critical distinction between “Catholic influencers” and “digital missionaries.” While influencers often operate within regimes of visibility and self-referential branding, digital missionaries are interpreted as relational mediators who orient communication toward communion, accompaniment, and Christological witness. Drawing on Bernard Lonergan’s account of communication as the social mediation of meaning and value, the paper proposes that digital missionaries may function as nodes of synodal listening within the network society, fostering dialogical spaces that resist purely performative or extractive logics.

The analysis further identifies key ethical risks associated with digital evangelization, including the commodification of faith, the acceleration of religious discourse, and the erosion of epistemic depth. It also develops an analogy between digital and ecological crises, arguing that both are characte-

rised by patterns of extraction and unsustainable acceleration, thereby calling for an integrated framework of ethical conversion.

The paper concludes with a theological proposition: that digital missionaries may be understood as a contemporary locus theologicus, insofar as they disclose how faith is mediated, contested, and embodied within digital culture. Ecclesial communication, therefore, must move beyond adaptation toward a critical engagement with, and transformation of, the underlying logics of digital environments in light of the Gospel and the demands of synodal discernment.

**Fr. Joby Sebastian Kappipparambil** is a Catholic priest and journalist from Pala, Kerala, India, belonging to the Missionary Society of St. Thomas the Apostle (MST), currently serving as an assigned priest at the Basilica of Sagrada Família in Barcelona. Currently he is pursuing a PhD at the Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations.

## FROM NEURAL NETWORKS TO GENERATIVE FORMS: THE EVOLVING ROLE

**Matej MERTIK**

*ZRS Koper & AMEU University*

Artificial Intelligence increasingly exceeds its role as an analytical instrument and begins to operate as a mode of expression. In generating language, images, and symbolic structures, it does not merely represent reality, but participates in its articulation. This shift invites a reconsideration of media—not as passive channels, but as dynamic forms through which the sensible and the intelligible are continuously configured.

The trajectory from early computational models to contemporary generative systems can thus be read not only as a technological evolution, but as a transformation in the conditions of knowledge itself. Emerging paradigms, such as neuromorphic and spiking neural networks, further gesture toward modes of computation that resonate with event, temporality, and perception, rather than static representation.

Within this horizon, artificial intelligence may be understood as part of a broader reconfiguration of how meaning comes into being—situated between system and interpretation, and between technical process and human experience.

**Matej Mertik**, PhD is an Associate Professor at Alma Mater Europaea, where he leads programmes in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies. His work is situated at the intersection of artificial intelligence, education, and society, with a particular focus on how emerging technologies reshape knowledge, communication, and contemporary forms of expression. He has also been involved in international research environments, including work associated with CERN, where he engaged with advanced scientific and technological systems. His current work brings together applied AI, interdisciplinary research, and a broader reflection on the role of artificial intelligence in shaping contemporary cultural and epistemic landscapes.

## FROM SPECTACLE TO ALGORITHM: IS THE ATTENTION ECONOMY REALLY NEW?

**Maja GUTMAN MUŠIČ**  
*ZRS Koper*

Over the past century, media have shifted from traditional broadcasts to algorithmically driven systems, moving from media to new media, to more media, and finally to immersive, synthetic algorithmic media. As generative AI, conversational interfaces, and large language models increasingly function as co-performers of human cognition, the question of attention—central to media and cultural theory since the Frankfurt School—demands renewed examination. From early Critical Theory to contemporary media studies, the structuring and capture of human attention has been understood as a key site of power. This presentation revisits these frameworks to ask: how has the mediation of attention evolved across successive media regimes, and to what extent do current AI-driven environments represent a qualitative shift? Is the apparent novelty of immersive and personalized media indicative of a new paradigm, or a technological reconfiguration of enduring dynamics with the same organizing principles?

The talk argues that while algorithmic and generative media significantly expand the scope and intensity of mediated experience, their underlying logic remains continuous with earlier principles: the extraction, modulation, and commodification of attention. At the same time, these systems introduce a condition of enforced co-presence between human and machine, reshaping perception, cognition, and agency. To account for this dual dynamic, the presentation mobilizes a set of complementary theoretical frameworks, including Debord's spectacle, Lazzarato's immaterial labor, Baudrillard's simulacra, McLuhan's extensions of the senses, Foucault's panopticism, Deleuze's dividual and rhizomatic networks, and Latour's notion of non-human actants. Together, these concepts provide a critical vocabulary for understanding the contemporary algorithmic paradigm and offer an epistemological understanding of attention as a resource in the age of AI.

*Keywords:* algorithmic media, generative AI, attention economy, immersive media, critical media theory, human-machine co-presence, media evolution, digital cognition

**Maja Gutman Mušič** is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research integrates anthropology, philosophy of mind, media studies, and science & technology studies to advance a fundamental understanding of two interconnected themes: the human-machine relationship and the psychological dynamics of dreams. She holds a PhD in Anthropology and Media Studies (2016) and was awarded a Fulbright postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA's Department of Anthropology (2021), where she co-developed NLP methodologies for detecting archetypal patterns in large-scale dream corpora. Her digital monograph *2020 Dreams: Toward a New Understanding of the Dreaming-Waking Continuum* (Stanford University Press, 2023) demonstrates how global crises permeate collective dreaming.

## NOTES







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